



Disruptive leadership - *your way*



From 6.00pm on Thursday, September 12th 2019
until 3.30pm on Friday the 13th

Background Note and Agenda for our 37th Leadership Conversation

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

"They can suck positivity out of almost any situation, which is why some of us call them the Dementors."

Quote from a Leadership Fellow at our Conversation on disruptive leadership in February, when we discussed how disruptive leaders can easily burn out in the face of entrenched opposition to change.

This is our 37th Leadership Conversation.

It follows on from our February 2019 Conversation on disruptive leadership that inspired our Insights Report “Taking on the Dementors”.

At this Conversation we will:

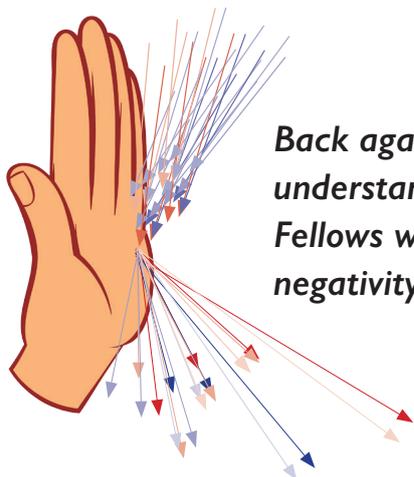
- Ask how serious is the challenge that we face as disruptive leaders in handling negative energies from those who feel threatened by change
- Explore how we might argue our case more persuasively to build a greater critical mass of support and create a more optimistic culture across our organisation
- Examine our own responses towards external Dementors, asking whether we have any experience of our “inner Dementor” being stirred
- Ask whether the notion of an inner “Patronus” could be useful to us as disruptive leaders.



Thursday evening, September 12th Vicars' Hall, 6.00 – 7.40pm

After introductions we break into small standing groups for 15 minutes and share our answers to the question:

- **Have YOU experienced burn-out - or something approaching it - in leading change programmes that others find disruptive?**
- **If you have, how have you managed this?**
- **If you haven't, what's your secret?!**



Back again as one group, we try to gain some shared understanding of the practices and techniques deployed by Fellows who have been most successful in warding off the negativity directed against us by those resisting change.

One specific challenge

Before we leave the Vicars' Hall we will agree on the one specific challenge that want to explore over a working dinner in the House.

We will also identify a Leadership Fellow to facilitate the discussion at each table, to help us keep on track and move forward in our thinking.

Thursday evening, September 12th

St George's House Dining Room, 8.15 – 9.30pm

As we explore this challenge over dinner, we will try to avoid coming up with one single solution.

We hope that you will each look to develop some sort of idea that works best for your particular leadership style.

This is why we always discourage any sort of “table view”.

Which idea excites us the most?

Over the dessert course your facilitator will ask which idea excites you the most, and is most likely to be of use to other members of the group.

We hope that the person championing that specific idea will agree to share it with us the next morning – as their personal idea.

Then after dinner they have time to make the idea even better and more razor-sharp, ready to blow the rest of us away when the time is right the next morning.



Friday, September 13th

Vicars' Hall, 8.45am to 12.30pm

When we start again at 8.45 we give priority to those who didn't have a chance to contribute to last night's discussions, so that it isn't long before every member of the group has had some active part in this Conversation.

We then knit in some of your personal ideas, triggered by our discussions over dinner, in a way that goes with the flow of the Conversation.

As we move forward in our thinking in relation to the issue under discussion, we select another key concern and sharpen up the challenge to take into small groups.

In this way we work through issues that naturally come up during our discussions, flagging up fresh ideas as we go.

Are we happy with how we pitch the case for disruption?

One of the challenges that we hope to take into small groups by mid-morning is how best to pitch the case for disruption:

- **Are there times when the resistance to our ideas has been - at least in part – because of how we presented them?**

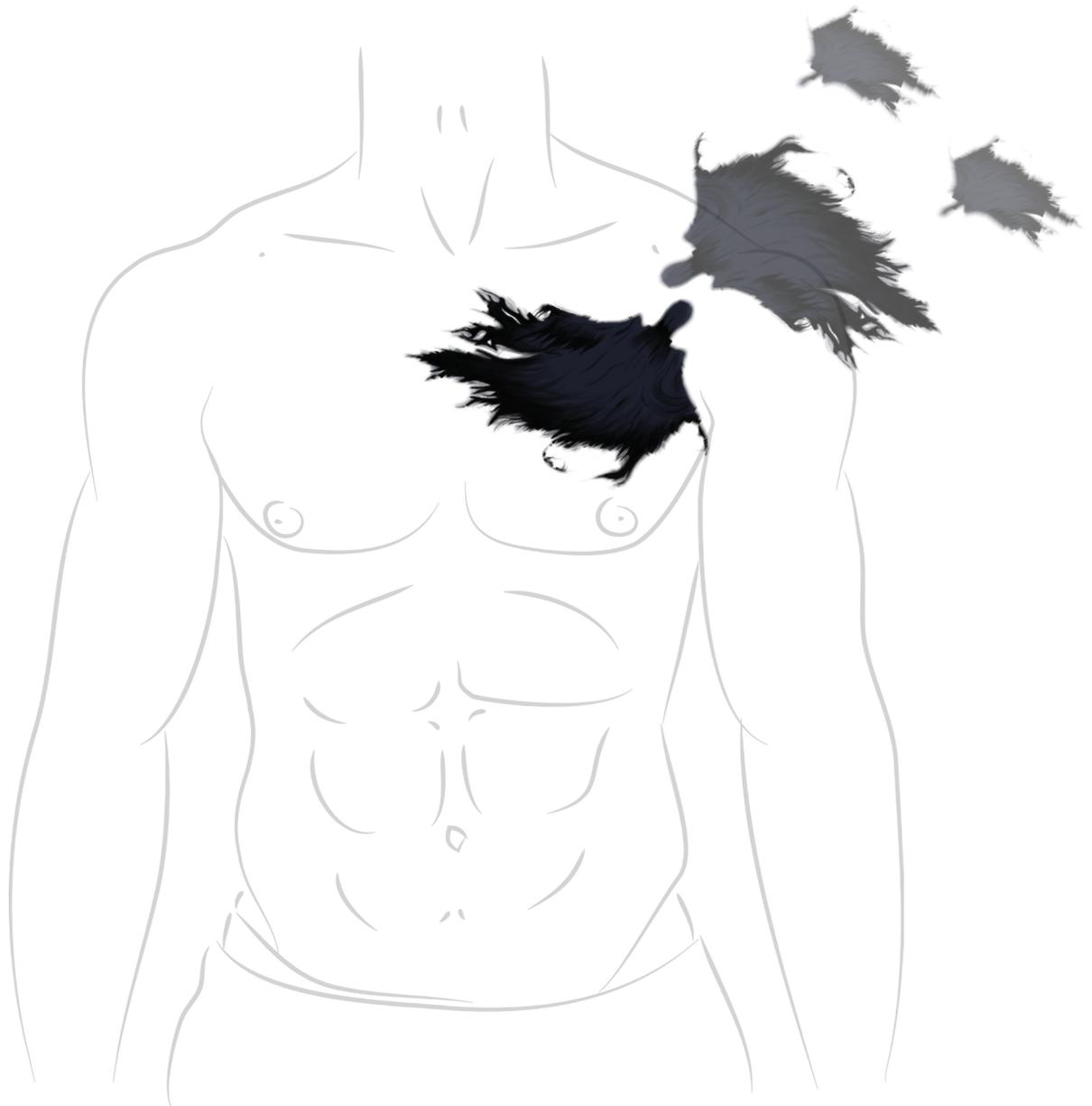
In our Leadership Conversations we always learn a huge amount from the stories and experiences that Leadership Fellows share.

We are sure that we will learn a huge amount from each other about some of the lines of argument that are most likely to trigger resentment and opposition, as well as the phrases and justifications that are most likely to result in more people wanting to support your approach.

Do you have any sense of your own “inner Dementor”?

In the second part of the morning we are keen to explore the idea developed in the Insights report arising from our February Conversation, about how easy it can be to respond to external negative pressures by becoming rather “Dementorish” ourselves.

Through small groups, we would like to ask whether this idea of an inner Dementor rings any bells for you – and if so, how we might develop the equivalent of our own inner “Patronus” as a way of helping us avoid situations where we respond to external Dementors by matching some of their worst behaviours.



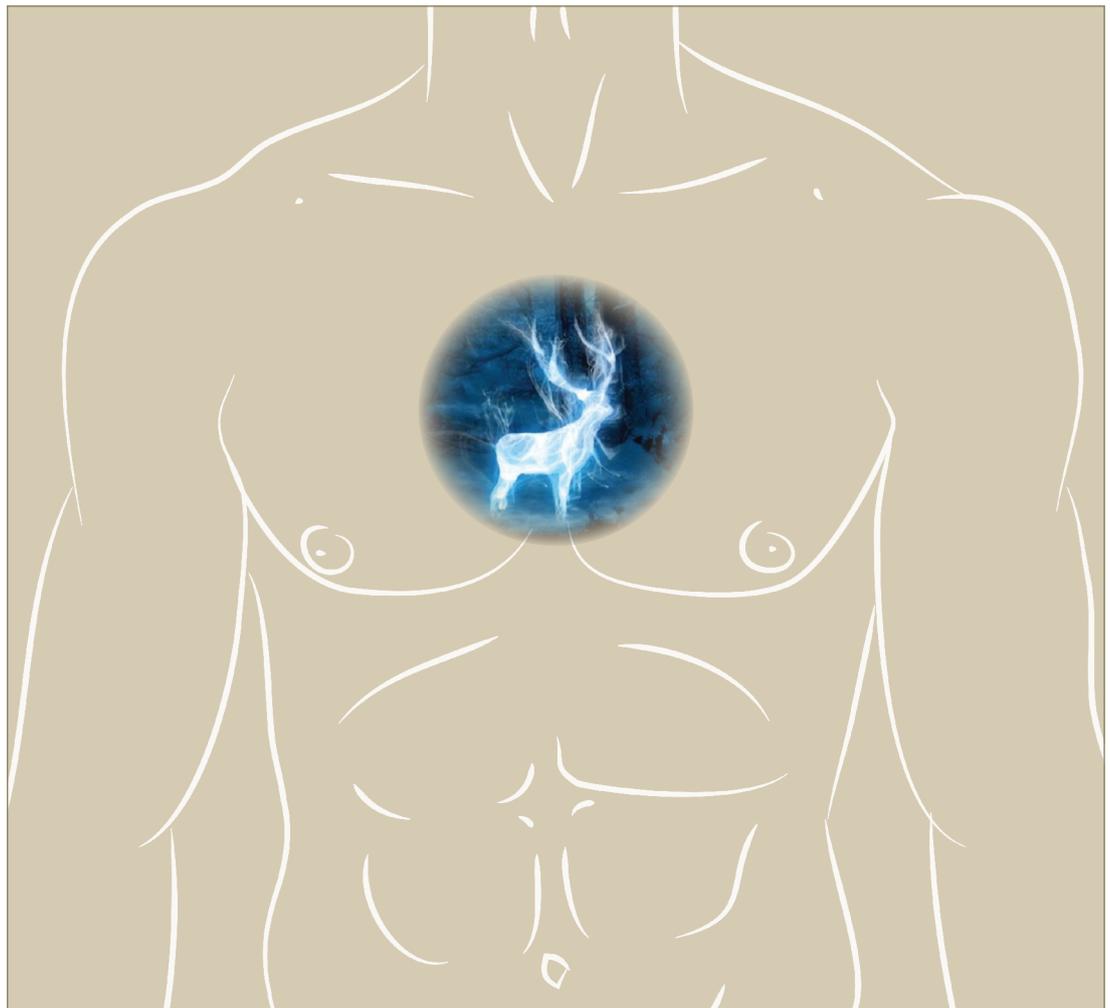
Never knowing despair

Part of the appeal of Patronus is that it can never know despair. It is when we get close to despair that we are most prone to our energy being zapped by Dementors. So the real question here is:

- how we can we **AVOID** pessimism and despair in the face of resistance from Dementors, and in the process **DIMINISH** their capacity to resist our disruptive leadership?

One of our Guiding Principles is that there is hardly ever a single right view, so if you feel that there can be merit in becoming rather “Dementorish” in the face of defensive aggressive behaviours on the part of others, please argue this case.

What matters most is **YOUR WAY** of becoming more effective as a disruptive leader – not anyone else's!



Friday, September 13th

Vicars' Hall, working groups over lunch from 12.30 to 1.15pm

A few minutes before 12.30 we break into new groups of four or five, for a working lunch in the Vicars' Hall.

As before, we will identify a Leadership Fellow to facilitate the discussion at each table and ensure that we keep focused.

Our thinking is that we should ask two key questions:

- 1 What is our top take-away from this morning's discussions, that we can draw on to improve our understanding of how we might best **increase our impact** as disruptive leaders in future?
- 2 What is the number one challenge that requires another burst of collective energy to help us **move further forward in our thinking?**

The answers that we bring back after our team photo on the West Steps of the Chapel at 1.15pm will have a major impact on how we spend our time between now and our finish time of 3.30.

**The aim is that after
lunch we each have:**

One top take-away
that moves us forward

One top challenge
that we want to return to

Friday, September 13th

Vicars' Hall, 1.20 to 3.30pm: Capturing key take-aways and refocusing on one or two top challenges

Back in a single circle, we hear your top take-aways that you have sharpened up over lunch, and the most challenging issue where we need to push ourselves harder to come up with some fresh insights.

After half an hour we break for another round of small groups to engage with the one or two issues where we need some more in-depth creative thinking from all of us.

Back from groups we hear how you have moved forward in your thinking, capturing key breakthroughs as we go.

We then prepare for our final round of small groups:

- **What is the most useful insight that you take from another Leadership Fellow today?**
- **How will it help you to become a better leader – and can you please build on it in some way to offer us SOMETHING EXTRA?**

We hear your answers to this question and finish the Conversation on the dot of 3.30pm.

I know I can drive through change now I don't get exhausted by the blockers

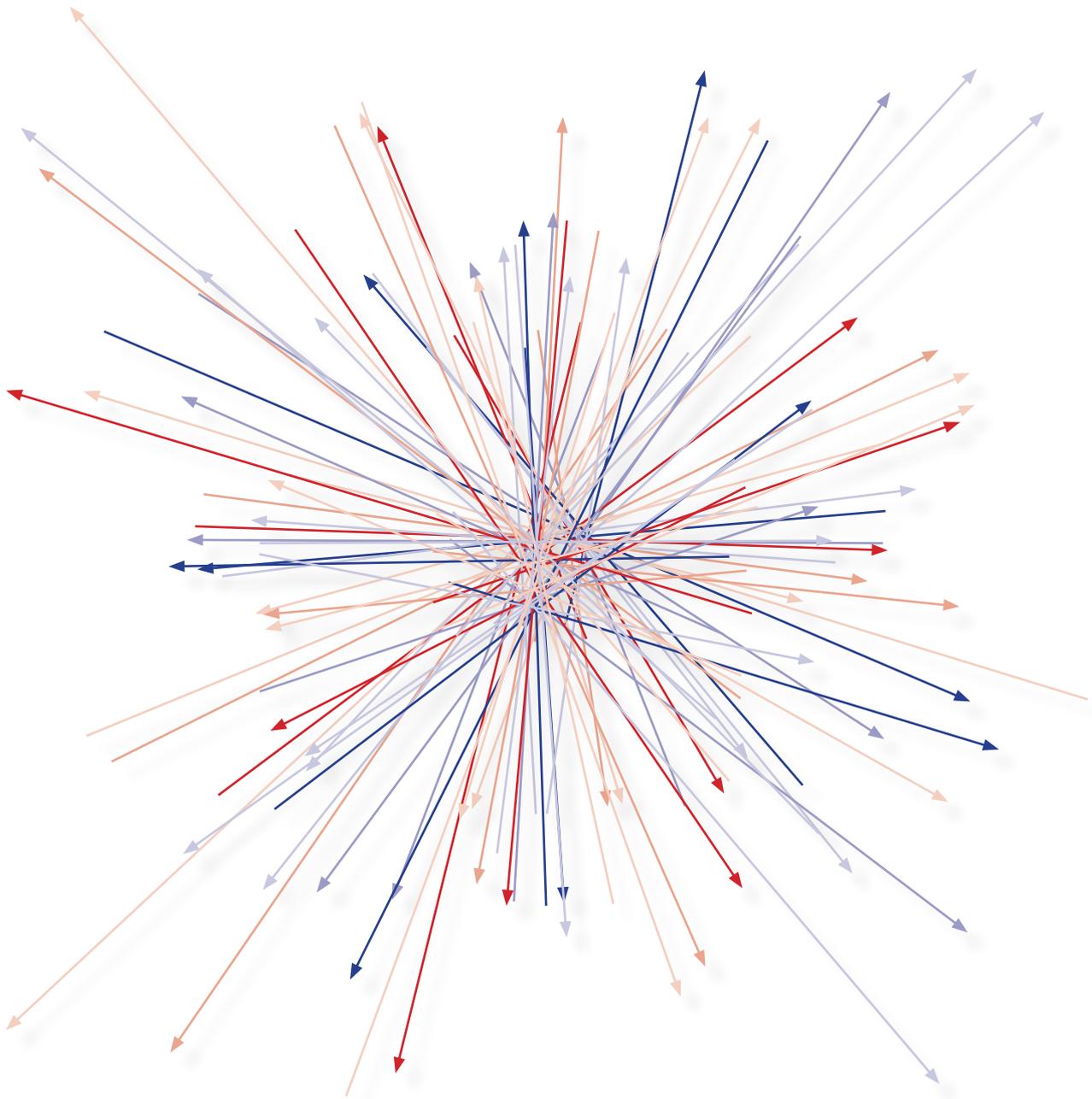
Key timings

Thursday, September 12th 2019

2.30pm+	You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
4.30pm	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
5.05pm	Evensong (<i>optional</i>)
5.50pm	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm
7.40pm	Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
8.15pm	Dinner is served in the dining room in the House
9.30pm	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee with port or brandy
9.45pm	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing from the Sitting Room (<i>optional</i>). After the tour, please join us for a nightcap in the Sitting Room

Friday, September 13th

7.45am	Breakfast is served in St George's House. Please clear your luggage from your bedroom, because the domestic staff need to service the rooms. You are welcome to leave it in the Sitting Room or bring it down to the Vicars' Hall where we will be for the remainder of the Conversation
8.45am	<i>Vicars' Hall.</i> We start again promptly
12.30pm	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups.
1.15pm	Team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (<i>weather permitting!</i>) then we are back together as one group
3.30pm	<i>Prompt!</i> Close of the Conversation



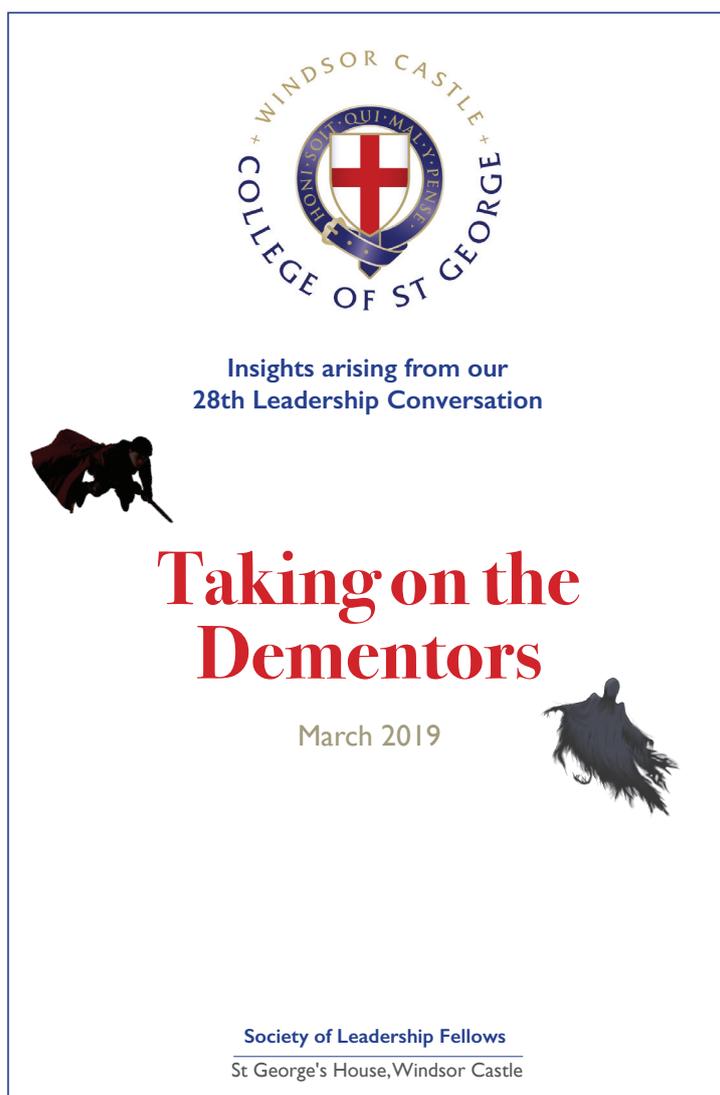
Video link-up: Wednesday, 11 December

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will also arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in December to swap notes. This will give us all a chance to hear how much progress we have each made in taking forward our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time is for Fellows to share a very brief email beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have acted on your resolves, and especially which ones you found the most challenging – and we then take it from there!

Suggested time for Video Link-up: 3.00 to 4.00pm on Wednesday, 11 December 2019

Key background reading



From the end of March this Insights report will form one of the Chapters in Volume 4 of Nurturing Wisdom on our Leadership Insights page