

Personal Beliefs

As long as I can remember, I have had people telling me I was a “born leader,” equipped to be my own boss, or an attorney. I’m not exceptionally extroverted and suffer anxieties associated with performing or public speaking, so charisma and a gregarious nature are not traits obvious to why leadership would be assumed for me. Being self-aware and possessing confidence and competence enables me to see most obstacles and situations with an objective eye, asking questions that drive 360-degree clarity. I would call these things my strengths. Strengths that I didn’t fully realize until a specific pivot-point in my early forties.

This pivot put me on a deliberate leadership path and built in me a deep drive for authenticity and real intersection with others. It allowed me to celebrate my unique offerings as a person, as a leader, and to appreciate my individuality. Before, I was hard on myself and critical of others, fearful of being “seen,” which laced professional interactions with sarcasm and a lack of empathy. My effort to fulfill everyone else’s definition of leadership and hide the fact that I was almost paralyzed with fear of failure, fed my false leadership identity. Much like Parker Palmer confesses in *The Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 2017), “I was projecting onto society all the fraudulence I felt but could not face in myself, and I was using that projection as a way of evading my own dividedness,” (p. 29). The duality was driving me deeper into a fractured identity.

I came face-to-face with my true-self when I was laid off by a newly-appointed, regional leader of the national corporation I worked for. I was let go by the exact persona that I had embraced. It was a God-send. The time helped me see I had turned into something I didn’t respect. It helped me peel away layers I didn’t identify with, revealing the exuberant inner child. As a leader today, I embrace the wonder and excitement that inner child still brings to situations, questioning the status quo is what gives me a unique voice in this world. It’s a bit of a super power. A power I’m passionate about sharing and encouraging in others.

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I believe embracing our influence takes our whole selves: personality, experiences, character, skills, intellect, spiritual compass, etc. I believe we all have it in us to lead, whether we are leading ourselves, our families, our colleagues, or our team. *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) posits, “every one of us has the necessary material to become a leader,” and that the true question is in the desire for growth, “Can I become a better leader tomorrow than I am today,” (p. 301)? Not all want to, or care to be good at it. I believe the best leadership springs from those that are intentional in their leadership engagement and passionately engage in relationships for the benefit of those around them, teaching and leading by example.

Leadership Practices

Believing leadership takes the whole person means all the material I have studied would come into practice. Walking through the texts we’ve studied thus far, I have synthesized the nexus of my leadership practice.

1. **Be revolutionary.** Embrace revolutionary leadership to common goal-setting and goal attainment. Organization is “a highly educational process in which leaders and people together experience true authority and freedom which they then seek to establish in society by transforming the reality which mediates them,” (Freire, 2000, p. 178).
2. **Encourage “metanoia.”** “Increase awareness of change of one’s entire person, a move toward self-transcendence,” (Carey, 1999, p. 7) in myself and others, supporting decreased organizational dislocation.
3. **Lead toward logos.** *Logos* being “the synthesis of all private truths, the integration of all separate realities, that which is common to all,” (Carey, 1999, p. 39), can only transpire when leading from a healthy awareness across all five management frames; rational, human, systems, political, and cultural. Awareness of all five frameworks leads to a balanced promotion of empowerment, collaboration, and dialogue. To fully understand

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these three things in an organization, “the leader must not see them as separate activities, but as hierarchical stages on the path toward the *logos*,” (Carey, 1999, p. 103).

4. **Be a kid at heart.** Lead from a place of child-like learning and sharing. The entirety of *Leadership Theory and Practice* (Northouse, 2016) opened my eyes to the breadth of study on leadership and what constitutes a great leader. It reminds me that self-transcendence can occur as long as we are seeking to improve, which I feel the numerous studies, surveys, new discoveries and trends speak to. I especially identify with the newer studies on transformational, authentic, and servant methods that support practicing leadership from a place of vulnerability, equality, and selflessness.

Leadership Commitments

I’ll take my leadership commitments and instruction from the two books that spoke most intrinsically to me and the leader I aspire to be. My ISP results reflect that these are also areas I can focus on as I continue growth in leadership praxis.

1. **I will practice new professionalism.** “In the midst of the powerful force field of institutional life, where so much might compromise my core values, I have found firm ground on which to stand—the ground from which I can call myself, my colleagues, and my workplace back to our true mission,” (Palmer, 2017, p. 213). I will keep my core identity anchored to my values, beliefs, and passions.
2. **I will mentor/teach/model** - formally, those that are willing; and informally, those that might be mid-transition. Teachable moments, shared incidences, and memorable stories, “offer you the opportunity to pass along lessons in real time, not just in theory or the classroom...,” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 92).
3. **I will keep leadership an affair of the heart** (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 313).

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