FIVE CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

MANAGING PRESENCE IN THE MIDST OF TENSION

MATT RAWLINS Ph.D.

Five Core Leadership Skills

Managing Presence in the midst of Tension

Matt Rawlins

Amuzement Publications
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The nature and quality of the connections human beings have with each other is more important than any other factor in determining results.
Ronald Heifetz

Rather than fulfilling the expectation for answers, one provides questions; rather than protecting people from outside threat, one lets people feel the threat in order to stimulate adaptations; instead of orienting people to their current roles, one disorients people so that new role relationships develop; rather than quelling conflict, one generates it; instead of maintaining norms, one challenges them.
Ronald Heifetz

Five Core Leadership Skills

Managing Presence in the midst of Tension

Part 1

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Chapter 1

5 Keys to Leading in the Midst of Uncertainty

Imagine a situation in which you felt threatened, embarrassed or vulnerable in some way. I don't know about you, but for me, it isn't hard to think of recent situations that felt tense. Perhaps it's:

- Tension in new working relationships.
- Tension in interdepartmental relationships.
- A change in your job.
- The loss of a key supplier or manufacturer.
- Declining profits and sales because your division or company is out of sync with the market.
- Taking on a new leadership position in your company.
- Needing to lead or be involved with a major change initiative.
- Clear displeasure from your boss, who won't talk with you.

The list might never end, or at least it can feel like that at times. Often in our lives, we find no limit to opportunities to respond in courage. But before we contemplate taking the risk of a courageous response, we need to understand the natural—and not so courageous!—response we all have to tension and change. We also need to understand how that response gets us in trouble.

Stage One: Tension

There is tension. Something doesn't "feel" right. What we expected to happen didn't happen. We get a knot in the stomach or just feel awkward and out of place.

Automatically we assume: Something is wrong.

Stage Two: Defensive

We feel the tension and become defensive. At this stage, for 80% of us, that means becoming quiet (the remaining 20% become outspoken and/or aggressive). We retreat and don't reveal our true feelings to anyone. If in leadership, we hide our agenda and don't share what we think is really going on. In hiding our feelings, we seek control. This response usually isn't intentional; it happens automatically. When under perceived threat, we become defensive in order to ensure our safety.

Stage Three: Silence

Now defensive, our view of the world

narrows. We give our own view priority and cannot see others' points of view, as our feelings of vulnerability insist that we protect ourselves. Questions naturally suggest themselves to us, and we desire to get information to figure out what's happening, but we won't ask for fear of exposing our ignorance and thereby increasing the feelings of embarrassment and threat. At this point, we lose our voice as we lose our capacity to question someone else's point of view.

Stage Four: Poor Communication

When we lose the ability to inquire, we quickly lose the ability to advocate effectively. Any limited advocacy comes from our own point of view, which we assume is right. Anyone who disagrees, therefore, is wrong. We slant any communication with data to reinforce our point of view, because we now aim to win and not lose. Winners get the resources and control; losers are weak and left behind. If others try to assert their opinions, we take up our own stance even more firmly, refusing to budge. A tug of war ensues. Politics and bureaucracy are now the norm. People become polarized.

Stage Five: Loss of Trust, Weakened Relationships

The struggle starts to split the group and thus the organization. People stop trusting each other as relationships lose their depth and begin to die. Divisions, boundaries and silos

are established. The organization's values are buried amidst the rubble of poor communication. The system loses its way as power and control become the defining goal for the individuals within it. The values meant to guide the organization and keep it safe have been lost, and the system slowly dies from within.

This predictable pattern happens all too often in relationships and organizational systems. It feels as natural as the polluted air we breathe. Yet it doesn't have to be that way. We can change it.

In order to change that pattern, we have to understand the keys to building courageous relationships that will develop healthier organizations. This book will help you understand the challenges and give options for what patterns to choose in your relationships and organizations.

Consider the following five points:

A) Change exposes us.

It doesn't create anything inside of us. We may be tempted to blame external events for our reactions, but we have to take ownership of our own lives. Anything that change provokes in us was not put there by the change—it simply exposed what already existed. The first opportunity for courage, therefore, starts within us.

B) Self-awareness is the first step.

If you don't understand yourself, you won't understand others. Own your feelings. Be clear about your values and what matters to you. If you don't take yourself seriously, no one else will. Be aware of what is going on inside of you, and own it as a part of your life. If you have the courage to change yourself, you will find the courage to help change other relationships that need your help.

C) The pain of change is loss of control.

Change is not the real enemy here. If someone gave you a million dollars, you wouldn't worry over that change. It would empower you to gain greater control of your life and make further changes yourself. The struggle of dealing with change is the loss that accompanies it, and a major part of that loss is our sense of control.

D) Growth without development isn't always healthy.

We have to recognize that there is a difference between growth and development. Growth is more about size and data. It does not require working with values or with the capacities of people; development does. For example, an athlete may grow stronger in many different ways, but the developmental question is: What event is he or she training for? If I am training for the 100-yard dash and grow in capacity for the high jump, that growth is not really helpful. Work with the opportunities change provides to develop your people, so they can to learn how to be more effective.

E) Cultivate values based leadership.

Developing people as you grow the organization requires adaptive leadership. It requires that you build stronger people who can handle tension, who won't get defensive (or at least who defend the right things) and who will talk at a values level without fear of raising difficult questions. This requires more relationally-based leadership than a top-down system.

With these points in mind, you have already taken your first steps to understanding the relational aspects of leadership needed to develop your people as you grow your organization. It is now time to look at where courage is needed and how we can use it to build effective, strong relationships.

Chapter 2
Tension

Tension is the handmaiden of change.

Change is an opportunity offered to us in a strange package.

The first sign that we need courage, and that things have developed other than we wanted, is that we encounter tension. When I work with a team or an organization, I ask, "What thoughts or feelings come to mind when I use the word tension?" I list their answers on the board or flip chart: Common words are anxiety, stress, fear, conflict, trouble, sleepless nights, concern and anger. On occasion, someone throws "opportunity" into this intimidating collection of words, but this happens rarely, and the word usually appears only once.

The exercise highlights that for nearly all of us, tension makes us automatically assume something is wrong. For most of my life, I too saw tension in this way and responded accordingly without giving it a second thought. Then I began to study difficult conversations and change, and my thinking developed.

The English language has no word for tension that holds a positive meaning. So I have no choice but to attempt to redeem the word tension. I will not try to convince you that tension is good, healthy and needed in relationships—that it's a sign of life and indicates the need for communication. I won't try to show that without it, you have clones and conformity, and thus no relationship. (We do know that conformity is a slippery path that often means lost opportunities.) Let us instead set the bar lower and say simply that tension is neither good nor bad, but neutral: a normal part of a healthy relationship.

Even this can prove too hard to swallow for some of us. After all, I understand that most of the painful relational aspects of our lives have come from tension that feels like a pit bull held on a chain by conflict. So naturally, most of us avoid tension without much thought. We fear that once it's "allowed," it will only get worse. The emotions most easily associated with tension are those that make us feel uncomfortable, frustrated and carry painful undercurrents that give us a sense of being out of control.

Experience can be a powerful teacher, and most of our experiences with tension have brought pain. I can easily remember such experiences myself. If tension and pain didn't go hand-in-hand, we would have no need for courageous relationships in uncertainty. But because they do, we require courage to face the shadows in our lives. And this is why I write.

Whether working as a coach or working with a large organization on a change project, I often start with one question: "Where is there tension?" Like it or not, we're all hardwired to pick up tension in our relationships. Some of us have greater sensitivity to it than others. I know some people who can seemingly detect even a hint of negative thoughts in others, while other people need to be hit with it by a two-by-four. Eventually, we all get the message. Tension is the messenger, but as the saying goes, "Don't shoot the messenger."

I wrote at the chapter's start that tension is the handmaiden of change. In essence, this means that tension delivers the message that a relationship has fallen out of sync. We need to look at the data, the values and the system to identify the issues and then communicate to get back on track. Tension itself is not the problem; it merely alerts us to a challenge or opportunity.

It's important to remember that we seek a healthy amount of tension. Not enough leads to apathy, while too much creates stress. Just the right amount of tension, however, indicates a healthy engagement with life.

How much tension is the right amount? The answer varies based on the person and situation. For me, organizing a project brings too much tension, but public speaking brings me joy. For my wife, public speaking creates far too much tension, but she can organize a project of any size with one hand tied behind her

back. So what causes tension for one person may not cause it for someone else.

So how do you manage tension in a relationship? This has a challengingly simple answer: Talk about it. When tension arises, learn to talk about it with those involved. Only by communication will you learn your strengths, what causes tension and where your sweet spot is in working with others.

Many of us have heard courage defined not as the absence of fear, but rather the character that recognizes fear's presence and moves forward in spite of it. The first step in successful change is finding the courage to embrace tension and the message it brings. Once we do that, we are on our way to resolution and stronger relationships.

Case Study #1
Northlight School

The Singapore educational system (more specifically, a subset of it known as Northlight) will be a brief case study for looking at this material and seeing how this model works in a very concrete way. I will be using the case study developed by the Civil Service College (Lena Leong, Organizational Development and Management: Public Communications and Engagement, August 2009) as well as some personal interaction with the founding principal Mrs. Chua Yen Ching. (I will stay close to the facts of what happened, but I will interpret it into the five core competencies model and thus I may use a different language then the case study uses.)

Fully Present to the Tension

Yen Ching and her team carried the tension of what the educational system could do and what it was really doing. She did not go silent or become aggressive but waited and allowed the tension to grow and wait for the right timing. The timing was important as the society was not ready then.

The challenge for all leaders dealing with a changing world is to be fully present in the tension and not to react to it. To be curious

and engage it in order to learn what message it is trying to send. It is only as a leader engages the tension in a non-anxious way that it creates a safe space for others to join and explore creative ways to adjust the system to a changing world.

When Yen Ching and her team were given the opportunity from MOE to go ahead in 2006, they embraced the tension and began to research school systems beyond Singapore to find one that they could adapt for this group of students. They couldn't find anything that would fit, so they took a risk and started from scratch to build a system that would meet their students' unique learning styles and help the students to experience success.

The teachers felt the tension of building a new system from scratch with so much of uncertainties and no existing model to adapt from. But they were committed to the mission and looked forward to turning up each day at school to face these challenges. It was not easy, and they made a conscious choice to be curious rather than defensive. As the school year went, home visits became a norm as they have helped the teachers to better understand the students and their families and work more effectively with them.

Tension – An Opportunity

Tension is not the enemy, it is an ally that comes to help us understand we are out of sync with reality and our desired goals. It is a

gift given to help us keep in sync with a changing world. Tension is a messenger, and as the old saying goes, don't shoot the messenger -- even if you don't like the message.

As early as 1997, Chua Yen Ching and her team felt the tension in the Singapore educational system for those who were struggling.

Children: Those with unique gifts and learning styles could not pass the exams required to move on in the system. When they failed their PSLE (standardized tests), they were adrift with few places to go and very few options for job training or development. They often interpreted (naming) the pain of this tension to mean they were a failure.

Families: The parents (and siblings of those students struggling) felt the tension (anxieties) as it had a strong influence on their status in Singapore and their future capacity to get ahead. They were being left behind (economically) and could do very little about it.

Educational system: Around 1,200 (3%) students a year dropped out of school without completing their secondary education. As these young citizens entered the social and business system of Singapore each year there was a growing income gap because of a lack of training and capacity in them. How could these students contribute to society when education was such a vital part of the nation's survival and long-term success?

School administrators: The principals and teachers felt the tension as they were responsible for all the students who came to their

schools and they knew that the system was failing some students. The educational system had weaknesses in that it didn't fit the learning styles for everyone who came. Who was responsible for this?

Chapter 3
Getting Defensive

Each one of us has an amazing gift: the capacity to protect and defend ourselves. It helps us survive and develop into who we are today. Without needing to think, we are hardwired to fight or take flight the moment we sense danger. We have great unconscious competence in self-protection and defensiveness. Countless times, this instinct has saved me, whether it takes the form of ducking when I see an object flying toward me, not eating something that doesn't smell right or automatically hitting the brakes when I notice a car out of control in front of me.

However, when it comes to building relationships in the midst of change, this unconscious competence becomes the challenge. For without "thought," I automatically react based on my past or a possible message of pain given to me by tension. This will block the way to developing healthy relationships and thus a strong organization. Reacting is not wrong, it just shouldn't be our only option in every situation.

We need to see that the automatic defensive response so useful in the physical

world is not always healthy in the relational world—specifically when dealing with change. Research is very clear on this. Whenever you and I feel threatened, embarrassed, or vulnerable, we become defensive and usually react automatically, without thinking.

Let me give a personal example here. One day, I was driving with my 26-year-old son beside me and my wife in the backseat. My son turned to me and said, "Dad, your driving makes me nervous."

With those words, tension is introduced into the relationship. Now, I have a Ph.D. in communication. I teach about it and have wrestled with it for years. My brain knew the right response—but what did I do? Instead of responding thoughtfully, I reacted defensively by saying, "Yeah, well, there are some things in your life that make me nervous as well."

A heavy silence filled the car. I felt my wife staring at me with laser beam eyes from her seat. My unconscious competence in protecting myself just got me in deep water. Simply put, I automatically reacted to what felt threatening and counter attacked to protect myself. This wonderful capacity to self-protect has become part of the problem, not the cure. I took a breath and realized that in the presence of tension, I really do need to think about it and only then communicate.

My automatic, self-protective response told me to go deep into silence and hide. Give it time, and the tension will go away. But I didn't listen to this response. I knew better, and

I finally said, "Sorry, that wasn't the right thing to say. I don't want you to lose your voice, son, by my strong reaction. I want you to always have the freedom to tell me when something I do makes you nervous." We can then talk about it and deal with it. One good response may not fix everything, but it does start moving the relationship forward.

What patterns do we see in unhealthy defensiveness in the midst of change?

1. Keeping your agenda hidden

If someone doesn't know what we're trying to do, they can't stop us. If we keep our goals and values hidden, we make it more difficult for them to "get us". Yet to build healthy relationships, we need to courageously put our agenda on the table so others can see what we're trying to do and choose to join us.

2. Looking to win

We frame the tension as if it were a battle. We feel that we "fight" for our success, or maybe even for our "life." We can't afford to lose, so the only option is to focus on a fight and set out to win. If it is a fight, then it's only fair to call those opposed to us an enemy. This will reinforce the above pattern: After all, you should never tell the enemy your plans, as then they will know how to attack and defeat you.

However, if we take a step out in courage and share our data, what it means to us, and then ask about their view, we lead the way to building a stronger organization.

3. Suppressing negative feelings

In the throes of tension, we don't acknowledge or expose our own negative feelings. This would only make us vulnerable and show others we actually care about something. It would reveal our soft spot. So instead, we hide any weakness, assuming the "enemy" will exploit it. We blame the enemy for our negative feelings and focus on its destruction, hoping the feelings will go away.

Real courage faces these fears and then decides to pursue the best course for yourself and the group. Courage does not avoid pain and knows that failure is one of the best learning opportunities to help us develop and grow stronger.

4. Focusing on rational thinking

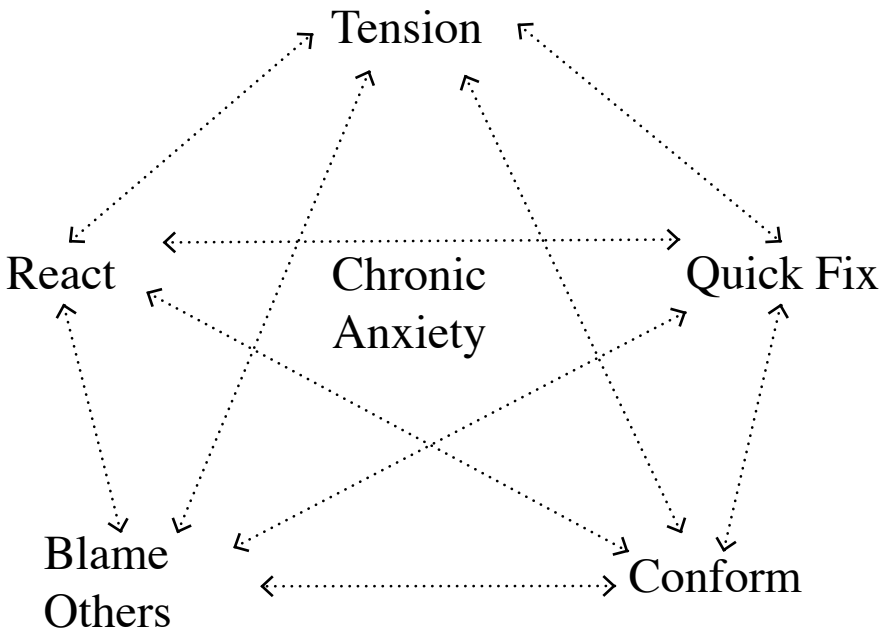
Our defensiveness drives us to create and work with an argument that only supports our own agenda. We only highlight and deal with the data that's favorable to our cause, and we discount anything that doesn't support it.

Courage, on the other hand, looks at all the data and isn't afraid to inquire into others' views. Courage recognizes that there will be different views, and if worked through, the group will be stronger because of it.

These tendencies aren't necessarily wrong or bad—but they shouldn't run the show. We must guard against these subconscious defensive reactions, because when they become part of a system, they create an organization with many problems: bureaucracy, mistrust, conflict avoidance, power struggles, management by crises, lobbying, distortion of facts, majoring on the minor issues, low risk-taking, anti-learning, manipulation, conformity, polarization. I hope you get the point. These things proceed not from any single behavior, but from an organizational culture of relational defensiveness in which such behavior is considered normal. These naturally occurring systemic issues severely limit an organization's ability to successfully embrace uncertainty and change.

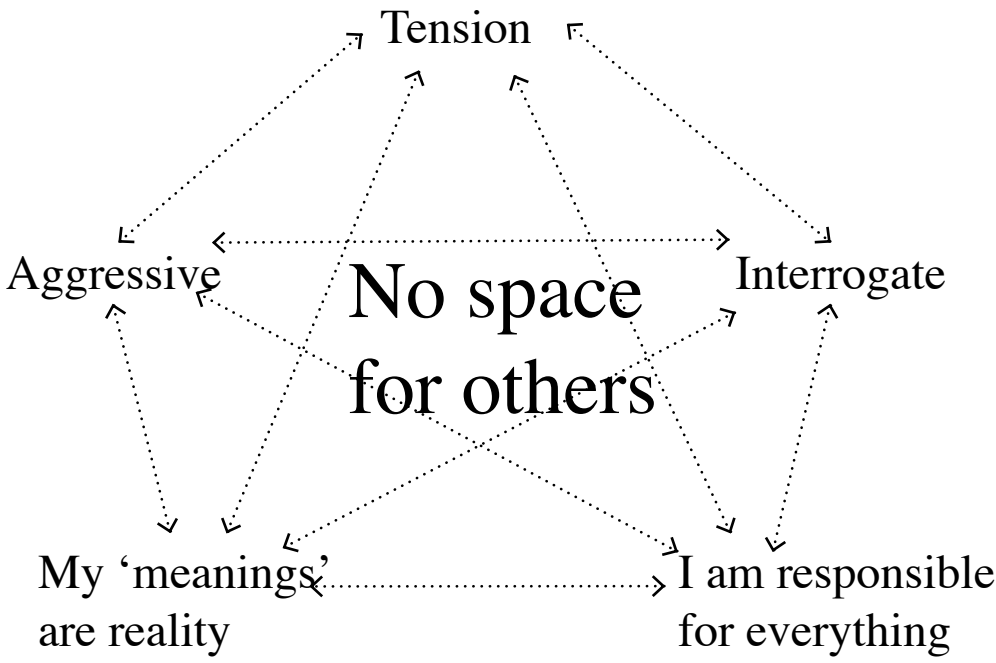
I find it personally fascinating to study defensive leadership. When a leader assumes this style as the normal and healthy model to work from, then that leader's capacity to succeed is going to guarantee others' incompetence. Let me show you how this works. In the above model, as the leader, my competence and definition of successful leadership consists of maintaining control, giving my own agenda priority and ensuring that I always win. I skew information to fit my focus, and others must yield to me and lose if I am to be defined as successful. Therefore, if they can't meet their agenda items—if they lose them in my working mentality of leadership—they are incompetent.

5 Incompetencies for the Unknown



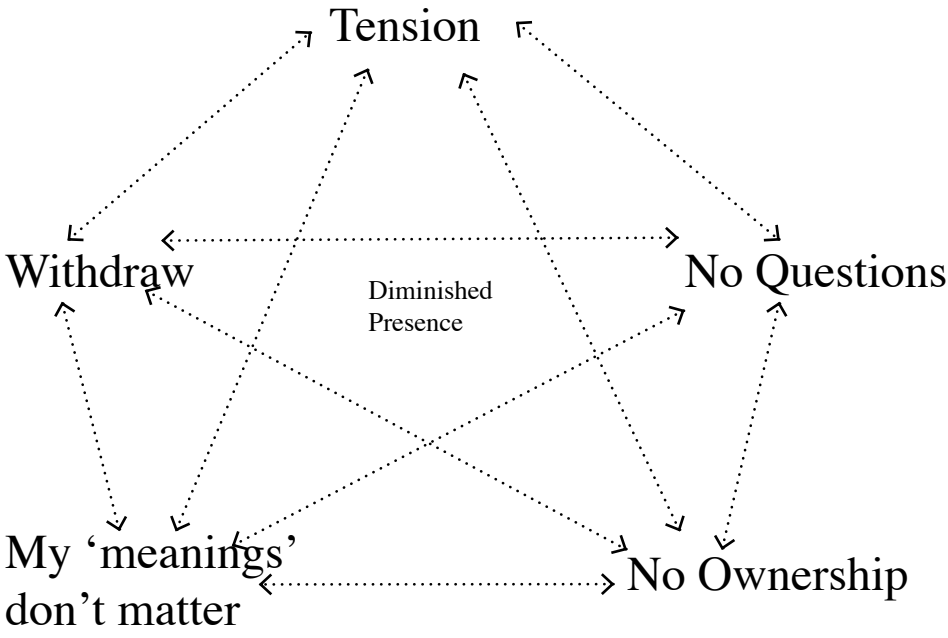
When these incompetencies are at work, any relational system will struggle to adapt and develop the capacities needed for uncertainty in a changing world.

5 Incompetencies for 20% of us



20% of the population becomes aggressive and attacks. They slowly take up all space and leave no room for others. These are the common elements that happens as they do this.

5 Incompetencies for 80% of us

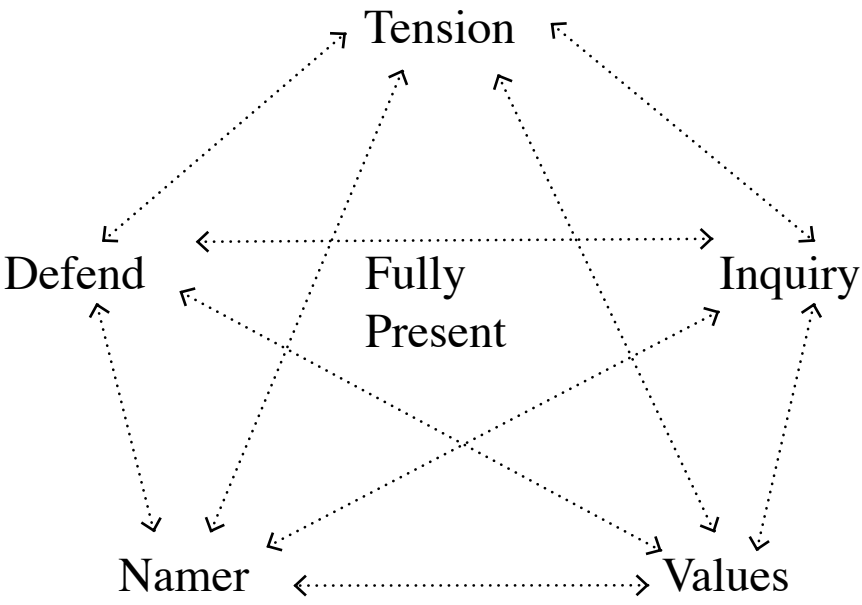


80% of the population withdraws or hides when there is tension. Their presence slowly diminishes. These are the common elements that happen as this takes place.

5 Core Competencies for the Unknown

Context: Past

Systems Thinking



Systems Thinking

Context: Future

If we can develop these capacities in our relational systems, we will be able to effectively face uncertainty in our changing world.

My very definition of competent leadership causes them to be incompetent. This model's natural effects produce ineffective organizations.

Surely there must be another way of leading! Indeed there is. Consider some values that would produce healthier relationships and minimize defensiveness in an organization:

1. Valid information

You must have a reference point rooted in data. Work to get the best information that you can, and get it out as quickly as you can. You seek to build relationships as you look at issues. Even if you disagree, at least you know what you're disagreeing about.

The starting place for courage is to put your agenda—and with it, the data you have—on the table and work with what it means to you. Then inquire into the position of others involved to understand them as clearly as you can.

2. Free and informed choice

This sounds simple, but a key part of getting people to engage the necessary changes is to respect them and their choice. For people to have a genuine choice, they will need all the information they can get to help them understand why changes are required. If they can see the argument, look at the data, values and assumptions, and see the proposed change as the best choice, they will own it and carry it out as their own.

3. Internal commitment to the choice, with follow up

The goal for working with others is to have an internal commitment to the agreed-on decisions. This means they understand the values involved in the choice and agree with them. If they do agree on the values involved, then you don't have to watch over them to ensure they do what you want. You don't have to bribe them or scare them to keep them motivated. You walk with them, find agreement in valuable choices and own it as a team or department.

These three core values are interconnected. Valid information is essential to informed choice. Freedom of choice depends on one's ability to select goals that express one's values. A person is more likely to feel internally committed to a freely made decision. He or she will tend to monitor it to see it implemented effectively. Free, informed choices and internal commitment increase the likelihood of personal successes, which tend to increase confidence for free choice in the future.

Am I saying we must never become defensive—that we should always lay it all on the table? No. You must use discernment to judge when it's safe to share and how much to share in a given situation. But given our tendency for defensiveness, we need to begin a new journey toward choosing greater transparency. The only way to do this is through courage. We must recognize the importance of relation-

ships in our team and organization and work to make them stronger.

If you trade your authenticity for safety, you may experience the following: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment and inexplicable grief.
Brené Brown

Case Study
Northlight School

Defensive

We all need healthy boundaries that have access points that allow interaction with others and the systems around us. It is the core values that form the boundaries of being wisely defensive. When we do it in a healthy way, it creates a safe place for others to join in, be curious and take risks.

Yen Ching and the team worked hard to make their relationships with the students a safe place for them to learn and grow. They worked hard to minimize the anxiety of their student's, their families as well as the educational culture, so they could take risks and try new things. They challenged the students' mental models and catch them doing right instead of doing wrong. For example, the school has their fair share of CCTVs and the messages on the wall were "Our CCTVs record honesty 24 hours daily", "Our CCTVs record good manners 24 hours daily." Another message from the teachers was "all these facilities are for you and if you vandalise them, we will be very sad (instead of you will be punished)." The pain of failure was so real to the students that the teachers' priority was to make the school not just physically safe but also emotionally safe.

Every morning, the first half hour was the family time where the form teachers would help the students to start the day right but on Fridays, the family time was the last period. This was for the form teachers to remind the students to stay on track during the weekend. Friday afternoons was guarded very carefully so that each week, the administration team with teachers could get together in a protected space and learn and keep connected to the reasons why they were there. Nothing was off the table to discuss, which formed the basis of their trusting each other.

The most natural thing to do in the midst of anxiety is to take control and remove other's choices. However, Yen Ching made a clear decision from the very beginning to model risk-taking by not trying to control every aspect of the environment. The teachers were given freedom over their own teaching methodologies so they felt empowered to experiment with new ways of learning and take risks.

In order for an environment to be safe, there must be the freedom to fail and learn from it.

Chapter 4
Inquiry

Another exercise for groups confronted with change is the "I Don't Know" exercise. I ask them to share what feelings they have when they're in a situation where they don't know what to do. I write the words "I Don't Know…" on the board and ask them how they feel. "Anxious," someone says. "Frustrated, angry," says another. The words come quickly now. Stressed, upset, disappointed, stupid, incompetent…and many more like that. Not knowing something makes us feel vulnerable, embarrassed or threatened.

This is a serious challenge when facing change. In a sense, the very essence of change is that we don't know—yet—what we must do or become. If we did know, we'd merely adjust, with a clear goal in sight. This aspect of change requires us to be courageous and pursue inquiry.

The essence of inquiry is curiosity: I encounter something different than I thought, something outside of my expectations, something novel. To a child, this is fascinating, not scary. Children begin by asking questions. In

fact, they learn a language from scratch as an infant, and the only skill they have is inquiry. Their first language is the hardest thing they will ever learn in their whole lives, and they only have curiosity and inquiry with which to tackle it.

Unfortunately, we grow up and get "educated." We lose our curiosity about life and stop asking questions. We develop what Carol Dweck calls a fixed mindset. When we encounter tension and feel tempted to become defensive, the courageous act is to not react, and instead to choose curiosity—to investigate, to see what is really happening and why. This "growth" mindset sees tension as an opportunity to develop and improve by being more curious about life than fearful of it.

A key part of being curious is linked to finding and keeping your voice. You have a valid perspective; what you think matters. Don't cut yourself off! Be engaged, and choose to be interested rather than automatically defensive.

Imagine for a moment that I have just given you a free pass. You can pull it out and use it anytime you want. Now, I'm sure you'd immediately ask, "What is the pass for?" Good question. You can give this pass to anyone with whom you have tension, and they will automatically understand that you can't be expected to know all of the information. They realize that you need freedom to be curious and explore, and they won't think less of you

when you ask questions. In fact, they would honor you for it.

Can you think of a situation in which you'd look forward to using this free pass? How would it change the relationship and the tension you feel? If you can think of situations in which this would really help you, then you probably act defensively in those relationships. Change from a defensive question to a curious question. Think about what you don't know in this situation that the others involved might know or just see differently. What do you need to do to be curious enough to ask questions and understand their point of view and perspective?

This "shift" from being nervous because you don't know something to embracing curiosity is vital to developing healthy relationships in an uncertain world. At the simplest level, this begins with the awareness that two people may use the same words, but they often mean something different and we don't even realize it.

Einstein once said that if he was going to work on a problem and had only one hour, he would spend the first 55 minutes getting the question right and the last 5 minutes working on the problem. He understood the importance of setting up effective questions.

Case Study
Northlight School

Inquiry

When we accept tension as an opportunity and react with curiosity instead of fear, the most natural first step is to ask questions. One teacher took the risk of sharing a question from one of the students ("Why do I need to retake the PSLE so many times when the programmes are the same?") with Mr. Lim Chuan Poh, then the permanent secretary. This was the tipping point that brought the tension to a painful enough realization for transformation to happen.

Yen Ching was constantly curious, investigating and questioning as there was no map to show her the way. The uncertainty and resulting tension created a culture of inquiry where teachers were encouraged to foster an environment that was rooted in inquiry and learning. To do this, she worked hard to keep curiosity high. A key part of that was being comfortable with difficult questions and the tension they created.

Even after the school has worked hard to create the curriculum and establish their priorities, they still constantly questioned what was going on as they knew it was a fluid environment and needed constant exploration / curiosity.

On a personal side, Yen Ching came from a very different family background and did well in school. One question that nagged at her was, "Will I know how to help and empathise with this group of students?"

Chapter 5
Namer

Words have creative power. In a sense, when we use words, we create things that have not existed before our use of them. Let me explain what I mean.

As a child, I took an IQ test in the first grade. My score put me in the category of borderline mentally retarded. That test gives me an "experience," and I have to do something with it. I must figure out what it means to me. This ability to give meaning to something sets us apart from all other animals. The temptation I had as a little boy was to "name" myself or call myself stupid.

Our ability to name something is the creative (or destructive) ability we have with words. The words we give a thing help us define it and then tell us how to relate to it. If I did accept the name stupid, that would define me, determine how I should relate to myself and dictate how others should relate to me. Thankfully, my father accompanied me to talk with the teacher and told me firmly: I was not stupid but very smart. By telling me this—by giving me another name—my father gave me

a choice as to what words to use about myself. I had to decide who to trust, and I chose my dad.

As we organize words into a logical, rational order, we end up with a mental model, a paradigm or map of the world. The words we create, accept and use are not reality; they are our map of reality. And as we all know, the map is not the location, but rather our interpretation of it. We have the creative power to name (interpret) the world, to speak and define life as we want to relate to it. This is the power inherent in our communication.

Words allow us to define ourselves and our relationships. They give us the ability to understand the world around us and share it with each other. I can know what you think and feel because you can describe it with words that I understand. These words we share give us the capacity to work together and agree on a purpose—or fight and deceive each other.

Unfortunately, much of the time, what we call communication is really just marketing. Marketing has a clear agenda, but it doesn't make that agenda clear to others. A car advertisement says, "This car will give you the freedom of the open road, and it will bring beautiful people into your life." What it really means is, "I want you to desire this car and then buy it." It skews the data to rationalize what it wants you to believe about the product. Its only desire is to win you over. When I do this in a relationship, the message it com-

municates is that I am not listening to you and I want you to accept what I say so we can get along. I assume I know what is right or good and just need you to agree with me. Your voice is not needed, as I know what is best.

Marketing skills bring confusion to our attempts to build authentic relationships. You can't market or "sell" relationships. It rarely works, and if it does, it won't last long.

Good marketing might sell products, but it doesn't create trust. Trust is the fruit of good communication. You don't simply trust the words someone shares with you; you trust the person. I speak of courage in regards to relationships because courage is a heart word, or at least it used to be. The root of the word courage is cor—the Latin word for heart. In one of its earliest forms, the word courage meant "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart."

One's words have the power to represent one's heart. At the heart of each person lies the individual's values. The words we use, hold and reveal the values of the heart and give us agreement about how we should work together.

We have the ability to create or even recreate our relationships, and it begins by understanding that we do this through the power of the tongue. We have the ability to name every aspect of the world, and the names we use define our relationships. If we change the names or words we use, then we can change

our relationships. If our relationships are in trouble, then we need to look at the words we have used and the different meanings we attach to those same words.

Deciding to trust my father as a child--to embrace his words instead of the teacher's--was the start of a journey in learning the importance of naming the world and of the power names have in relationships.

Case Study
Northlight School

Naming

Yen Ching and her team worked extra hard to reframe the students' relationship to learning. She was frequently quoted as saying, "We often tell the students that when they failed their PSLE, they have failed an exam, but this does not mean they have failed in life." The school colours of purple and white constantly reminded the students and staff that the darker it gets the brighter they shine. (purple is the colour when the sky is the darkest and white is the colour of the stars)

One of the early assignments was for students to redefine success (name it in a new way) so it was connected to their unique gifts rather than accepting society's definition of success (i.e. beyond academic achievements).

There was constant communication, reframing, feedback, debriefing and reflection for everyone involved. The primary goal was not to get students to do something right, but to be comfortable in their uniqueness. This could only be done through clear and constant communication.

The teachers refused to name the students as victims but chose to value them and hold them responsible for their choices. There was little judgment, but a clear sense that the students needed to own their choices to such

an extent that when there were careless accidents, they learned to pay it back in a way that honored them and the safe place they called school.

Some of the hardest work was the constant communication necessary, they had to question what "learning" was, what "results" meant and how to define "achievement" for those with a very different learning style. (These are names or labels given to them that needed to change in order to transform their capacity to learn)

Chapter 6
Values

We have already learned that values form the basis of all relationships and organizations. Value, like courage, is a heart word. It's the abstract word we use to describe something that we care about. Let me explain this more from my own heart.

As I write this, I'm sitting on a deck in Bend, Oregon. I'm taking a break from Singapore and my work there to be with my family and friends. It's early morning, and the sun is on its way up. Today promises to be a beautiful, clear day with temperatures in the 90s. I could do a hundred different things: Read a fun book, work on a marketing project, go for a long bike ride, play golf, spend time with family, embark on projects around the house, you name it.

Instead, I'm sitting on the porch with my computer in hand, wrestling with how to say this in a way that makes sense. Why? Because I am compelled to do this work. The analytical word I use is that I value it. I care deeply about helping others understand themselves and be effective in their working relation-

ships. I am not getting paid to do this. In fact, there's a very good chance that I won't make enough money from this to make it a logically good investment of my time. Yet despite this, I press on and wrestle with the words to write. I choose to do this over all other choices I could make. That focus, the energy expended, which feels like a very natural internal compulsion: that is what I mean when I refer to values. I do not "do" values. They are an expression of something that I am—an expression of something inside of me that I care strongly about and in which I am willing to invest myself.

Values play a huge role in the midst of uncertainty. The key aspect of uncertainty is that we don't know what to do. We have no map, no clearly defined road that says, "Take this path, as many other people have, and you will be safe." In uncertainty, we must show up. We must be willing to take the risk, be present, and be engaged. Research is pretty clear that when people do change their behavior, they rarely do so because someone presented a logical analysis that shifts their thinking. They change because someone showed them something compelling (valuable) that influences their feelings. Emotions (which are the language of values) trigger this desire to take a risk and be involved. They push us to behave in often radically different and difficult ways that substantial change and uncertainty demand.

At the heart of every successful change effort lies a simple process:
1. People clearly see what the problem is.

2. They feel engaged and have a sense of ownership.

3. They are emotionally compelled to take the risk and do something.

A note on working with emotions. Emotions are the "blood" of an organization. They are life-giving, circulating, carrying nutrients, removing waste, helping with defense against illness and even operating as a messenger system.

Edwin Friedman writes how institutions should be framed as emotional fields, similar to a magnetic or gravitational field. These areas are largely unseen, and yet the effects of emotions are clearly felt and must be worked with. This is not our usual way to frame our organizations, yet in my work with leaders, it is a key aspect in dealing with any tension and change. John Kotter, a noted Harvard change management leader, says that most of the way we deal with organizational change in our relational systems is by presenting people with an analysis of the issue, expecting that they will think about it and change their behavior. In his research, he has discovered that this attempt almost never works. When good change adaptation does happen in an organization, it hap-

pens in a very different way: People are shown something true, something that hits them at a feelings level, which in turn gives them the fuel to change their behavior and adapt to the change.

When dealing with an uncertain world, we have to be aware of the emotions involved in our relationships, or we will miss some wonderful opportunities.

When we don't deal with our emotions, pretend they're not there, or stuff them in their own room with a "do not disturb" sign, they start to build anxiety in the system, making it more and more caustic. This causes people to be more defensive, which means they narrow their vision, do what feels safe and have stronger and stronger reactions to anything emotional. This results in an almost impossible leadership situation.

Courage, as I am using the word here, is the conviction to speak and live from the heart: to put my values in my words and actions and let them be an expression of who I am. John McCain, who modeled courage while being held captive in the Vietnam War, said it this way:

"Courage is like a muscle. The more we exercise it, the stronger it gets. I sometimes worry that our collective courage is growing weaker from disuse. We don't demand it from our leaders, and our leaders don't demand it from us. The courage deficit is both our problem and our fault. As a result, too many leaders in the public and private

sectors lack the courage necessary to honor their obligations to others and to uphold the essential values of leadership. Often, they display a startling lack of accountability for their mistakes and a desire to put their own self-interest above the common good. That means trouble for us all, because courage is the enforcing virtue, the one that makes possible all the other virtues common to exceptional leaders: honesty, integrity, confidence, compassion, and humility. In short, leaders who lack courage aren't leaders."

Courage is not an emotion. Courage is a recognition of something that has value, something worth reaching for and/or protecting. In the midst of fear, courage makes the choice to take the risk for what is valuable to you and others.

- It takes courage not to run when tension appears.
- It takes courage to let our defenses down and seek to understand others even when they don't understand us.
- It takes courage to ask questions when everything in us tells us not to expose our own ignorance.
- It takes courage to communicate and put our perspective into words.
- It takes courage to talk at a heart level about values that are important to us and to the organization.
- It takes courage to not react, but to slow down, to take the time to reflect on what is really important to you and then to act accordingly in light of what you do value.

All of these steps involve values. This is the foundation and the DNA of any relational system and the heart of the issue. It is the birthplace of passion, ownership and engagement. When you live out your values in an authentic way, what you will find, often by surprise, is that you will be creative because each person's perspective is unique. It is in that place of living out our values in authenticity that creativity is often born. And it is creativity that will help us deal with an uncertain world.

The Velveteen Rabbit.

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Case Study
Northlight School

Values

Values is a heart expression. It is a passion that is the engine for growth, maturity and, most importantly, risk. When the values are clear, then and only then are the choices clear. Yen Ching worked extremely hard with consultants and staff to name these passions and agree on a mission and vision statement that gave their values a clear purpose in all their relationships.

One of the core value shifts was from an "efficiency-driven" to an "ability-driven" system. In other words, the goal was to create a system for learning that fit the students' unique learning style rather than making them in a predefined traditional system. (It was a different value set.)

Yen Ching and the staff and teachers were not afraid to face the emotions involved in this difficult task. They first had to face themselves (What if they failed?), before they could give permission to the students to confront their own emotions. A core part of their work was building emotional resilience within the students. This would be the basis of character and would form as much as 40% of the curriculum.

Choice was a very important part for those involved. The teachers were told the vision, but Yen Ching made it clear that it was their choice to join her. Every teacher in the school applied to join the school and none were posted by MOE. It was going to be tough work.

Yen Ching also had the audacity to give the students a choice. She invited them to come participate for a day but left the final choice to them. It was only as those involved had a clear choice to be a part that they could then own their own choices and lives, creating values they could live by. It would have been much easier to try and control the process whether than being vulnerable in inviting people into the process. As one of their values was that the children would love to come to school, this could only truly happen if they had a choice in the process.

The whole focus was to create innovative strategies and non-conformist approaches that would allow the students to feel valued and safe.

Chapter 7

Summary
Key Questions in Courageous Communication

A) What is the Big Picture? Define the context.

Step out of an "emotional snapshot" mentality and think "movie." What is the full story? Where are you in the story? The first focus needs to be about the context of the story and the issues involved. Stand back and organize your perspective.

- What is the history of the tension/issue, and how is it affecting the situation now?
- What are the effects of this in your/my/our future?
- What other systems are at work here?
- Where are their patterns, and what is the source of those patterns?
- What is the data that we can agree on that is relevant to the tension?

B) Where are you?

This next step involves stepping back from the situation and being aware of what is going on inside of you. Doing this prevents you from getting caught up in something with-

out first being aware of why it matters to you. It keeps you from reacting with an automated response.

- What is the tension revealing about me?
- What questions am I asking? Are they from a curious place to understand more or are they defensive to protect myself?
- What question can I ask that will keep me in a curious, learning mode? (Change the question from 'Whose to blame?' to 'What can we learn from this?')
- What is the 'name' I would give to the feeling? (Then trace it back to the values at play.)
- Where are you being defensive and how is that affecting others?
- What are key words that represent how I am naming the tension/situation?
- What can I learn from this situation? What do I need to do to calm myself so I can be fully present?

C) Who are you listening to?

The next step requires making an honest assessment of key relationships you have and who has authority in this situation. It demands truthful awareness of the key players involved and their agendas.

- What are the key people trying to accomplish?

- What are the key "names" or words used in this issue? What do the words mean to others and to me?
- What are the emotions connected to these "names"?
- Who am I listening to?
- What are the key values involved with this issue?
- How can I be curious and manage a healthy inquiry/advocacy dialogue with others?

D) What has been done?

This last aspect looks at what has actually happened. No hiding the truth and slanting data to show our perspective; rather, how can we all own this, learn from the past, and figure out how to move forward? This is not about finding fault, but practicing honest communication so that we can learn and grow in our relationships.

- Who is responsible for what in this situation?
- Where are unhealthy defensive positions distorting our ability to deal with the tension/issues?
- What does this reveal about us? How can we be curious and learn from it?
- What are the opportunities this gives us to go deeper in our relationships?
- What do we need to do to restore trust and reinforce our core values?

[T]o believe in something with your whole heart, to celebrate a fleeting moment in time, to fully engage in a life that doesn't come with guarantees—these are risks that involve vulnerability and often pain. But I'm learning that recognizing and leaning into the discomfort of vulnerability teaches us how to live with joy, gratitude and grace.
Brené Brown

Case Study
Northlight School

Conclusion

The goal of working in organizational development is to make the system adjust so that people can be "human" and fully present in the system. The more people show up, take ownership, are curious and communicate, the more effective any system will be.

The above core competencies are the primary ingredients that must be worked with to humanize any system and give it the capacity to change in an uncertain world.

Examples given of what happened in many of the students' lives. (From Yen Ching) The students from the first batch are now about 25-26 years – what happen to them?

Aaron Liew – he has started a scuba diving school and is doing well. Since, every year he brought 900 cups of ice-cream to the schools on Children's Day and gave every child a cup of ice cream. He shared that he would like the students to experience what he has experienced 10 years ago. In 2007, when he was in year 1, a generous sponsor gave every student a cup of Ben and Jerry ice-cream, and he was elated and appreciated the kind gesture.

Asyraf – dropped out of school when he was in P4, he did not even sit for his PSLE. He cried on the first day of school because he was very grateful for the second chance, he thought he would never be able to put on the uniform again. Today Asyraf not only completed his education with ITE but received a BCA scholarship and completed his diploma with Singapore Poly. Now he is serving NS and when he completes his NS he will start work with BCA. His mother shared that it was a dream becoming a reality.

Both Aaron and Asyraf are now serving and leading the alumni council. Their stories are stories of hope and they are a source of inspiration to many of the students. The students can resonate with this quote: "We cannot go back and start all over again but we can begin now and make a new ending." (James R Sherman)

Case Study #2

Singapore Prison System

The Singapore prison system will be a brief case study for looking at this material, seeing how the model works in a very concrete way. I will be using the case study developed by the Civil Service College (Lena Leong, Towards a Society without Re-offending, November, 2014). I will stay close to the facts of what happened, but I will interpret it into the five core competencies model, and thus I may use different language then the case study uses.

Fully Present in the Tension

The essence of this model is that there be a willingness to take a risk and show up in the midst of tension. All the core competencies are there to support this and make this happen in an effective way.

Chua decided to take the risk and use the tension to try new things. He didn't let the tension cause him to react and become controlling but faced it with minimum anxiety, thus giving room for others to minimize their anxiety, become curious and possibly even take a risk.

Chua met with his team every Monday and Friday at an informal breakfast to create trust through open and honest dialogue. He made their relationship safe so that they might

be willing to take the risk and be fully present in the midst of the tension with him.

He also invited the junior prison officers (the first time it had ever happened) to be present in the conversation through workshops and other opportunities. The desired outcome was that all the officers would take ownership in the system.

As the changes started to take place, The leadership team went as far as to invite reporters to come and "be present" in the prison to give them a sense of the inmates as well as staff there.

Tension – An Opportunity

Tension is normal and needed in an uncertain world. It's the only way we can keep connected to the changing reality around us. It's the primary signal that tells us things aren't as expected or planned.

There are two primary tensions that people working in the Singapore Prison System felt: 1) an overcrowded prison that was straining under its infrastructure and resources; 2) a shortage of manpower due to the tension in getting and keeping the staff.

People were overworked, morale was low and they would rather leave the system then deal with it.

In 1998, Chua Chin Kiat was appointed director of prisons and embraced the tension. He didn't immediately try to fix it or give easy, "normal" answers, such as increase the budget or hire more people. He knew the tension

was an opportunity and worked to use it to do something new.

Tensions were a vital part of understanding and working with the system to change it. Some of the common tensions were: Inmates: They had no faith in their ability to change. They had no healthy way to deal with the tensions of life and turned to crime to deal with their pain.

Prison officers: Their work was hard and thankless, and because they had to be careful and deliberate at each moment, there was no safe opportunity to be fully present in their job. A primary question that Chua carried was 'How can you make their life more meaningful in their work?'

Families: The families felt the shame and guilt when another family member was locked up. They needed help but had few options available to them.

Justice System: What needed to change in regards to the laws to help the inmates re-enter public life in the wisest, safest way possible? Community based sentencing? New electronic tagging?

Society: Local communities had feared these inmates because of their crimes and didn't trust them. But in order for the inmates to get a second chance, their communities needed to be included in the process of making space for them.

Inquiry

Chua set up a research team to begin the process of asking questions and digging deeper into the issues. They read literature on prison systems around the world to give them as broad and clear a context as possible. What was working in other nations?

Chua questioned the value proposition that the prison systems focus was a zero escape rate. Were there other values that might re-frame the issues and give them new insight?

Almost half (44.4%) the ex-offenders returned to prison within two years of release. How was SPS creating a safer society if it did not do anything to reduce repeat offenses? Would doing more of the same really change anything?

Research, dialogue, experiments, refinement and further exploration were a vital part of figuring out what would work. There were some failures in their experimentation, but they learned from them and moved on.

Defensive

The whole penal system was set up with a mindset of defence. Every aspect was defined by how to be in complete control of the inmates' lives. When Chua took over, it shifted to learning how to be wisely vulnerable and give the inmates back their dignity. How to be wisely vulnerable is never an easy choice and always requires a risk with tension.

The officers felt the fear of this loss of control and needed help learning how to talk and interact with one another and the inmates in a seemingly radical new way.

The extended goal was to help society learn to be wisely vulnerable to these inmates. There was a whole push to help society see them in a new way and to be willing to give them a second chance.

Someone has to take a risk and be vulnerable in order for any change to take place. This requires a shift in our defensive position and finding a new way to talk with those involved.

Naming

The Prison officials needed a mindset shift, which is nothing more than reframing their relationships through new dialogue with a clear purpose at hand.

A powerful expression of this is renaming the guards as Captains of Lives. They became not only enforcers of the law whose job is to keep strict control over everything, but they were empowered to care about the inmates and interact with them (to be more fully present with them). They had to discover the inmates' strengths, weaknesses and motivations. In order to do this, they had to see the inmates in a different way, which meant giving them back their name and not just calling them by a number. This validated the inmate and showed them that they had value -- they were more than just a number.

Prison officials started a school in the prison to help the inmates learn a new way of looking at life. It was designed to help them rename their place in society, who they were and how they could be involved in society in a different way. They had a choice to be involved in the program in order to help them own their lives.

The Yellow Ribbon Project was started. Based on an old song about a prisoner getting a second chance, its focus was to reframe the inmates re-entry into society in a way that people could identify with.

Stories and testimonies from the inmates gave them a voice and a chance to be known in Singapore.

Communication was a vital part of the change project at every level. This dialogue went deeper and included their personal fears, motivations and purpose with a goal of each person owning their choices and being responsible for them.

Values

Setting a vision is a values exercise. You take the values you're currently passionate about, that motivate you, that keep you and others fully present, and then you project them into the future. The vision is how you want to grow those values into new and more effective expressions.

Chua used a different value set to get to the heart of the issues and change the system. He was going to change it from incarceration

to rehabilitation. A change in values creates a change in focus, language, what you defend and the questions you ask.

Emotions are a vital part of getting to and owning the values of the system. Chua personally faced them and then helped the officers face the fear that better treatment would encourage defiance and compromise security. The leadership team also faced scepticism by the MHA that they were going soft, but their desire for a different future was greater than their fear of tension.

A movie was made to help tell the story of giving the inmates a second chance. Stories are the primary way that values are understood and transferred to others.

A part of the Yellow Ribbon message was that every offender encounters two prisons – a physical prison and a psychological and social prison. This second prison is a internally created one that gets to the heart of the issue in each prisoner. In 2004, they used the slogan, "Help Unlock the Second Prison" to help change how the public viewed the inmates.

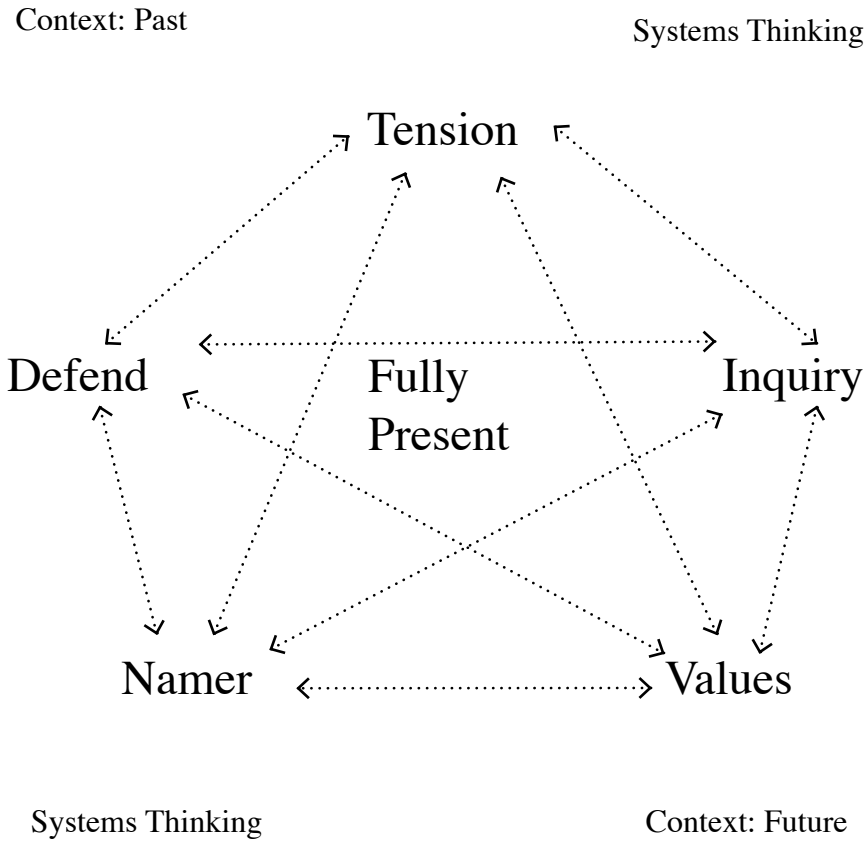
Conclusion

Changing a system is not a problem to be solved, it is an adaptive challenge that includes many different groups of people with potentially conflicting values. There is no "right" way to do it. In order to transform an organization or face an uncertain future, these five competencies must be a part of the process

in order to succeed. The goal is to make the system as safe a place as possible so that the best expression of each individual is an option for them.

"Change was facilitated by collective ownership of a compelling shared purpose." The inmates, families, guards and communities were radically changed. Recidivism was lowered (from 44.4% to 26.5%), the inmates were educated, communities and businesses made space for them to work when they came out. Change came through the leadership risk taken in the midst of uncertainty. By not fearing tension, being curious and asking questions, clarifying the core values and creating a safe environment to talk at a heart (including emotions) level in order to get ownership and buy in to the changes needed, through this the system was transformed.

5 Core Competencies for the Unknown



The goal is to be fully present while creating a safe place for others to be fully present. To do this in a way that maximizes our gifts and minimizes our brokenness.

Humility in the midst of
Uncertainty

Managing Presence in the midst of Tension

Part II

Matt Rawlins

Amuzement Publications
Green Bench Consulting Pte. Ltd.

Level 5 leaders are differentiated from other levels of leaders in that they have a wonderful blend of personal humility combined with extraordinary professional will.
Jim Collins

Our Goal is Wholeness, not Perfection.
Carl Jung

Then it dawned on me: Our problem is not a shortage of Level 5 leaders. They exist all around us. Like the drawing of two faces that transforms itself into a vase, depending on how you look at the picture, Level 5 leadership jumps out at us as soon as we change how we look at the world and alter our assumptions about how it best works… No, our problem lies in the fact that our culture has fallen in love with the idea of the celebrity CEO. Charismatic egotists who swoop in to save companies grace the covers of major magazines because they are much more interesting to read and write about than people like Darwin Smith and David Maxwell. This fuels the mistaken belief held by many directors that a high-profile, larger-than-life leader is required to make a company great. We keep putting people into positions of power who lack the inclination to become Level 5 leaders, and that is one key reason why so few companies ever make a sustained and verifiable shift from good to great.

Jim Collins

Discovering Level 5 Leadership

Why use the word Humility?

It took great courage for Jim Collins to use the "H" word: Humility. The corporate atmosphere makes it easier to swear than to speak humbly. It's easier for a leader to push his or her way to the top and build a company around a personality than to declare that this will not help the organization. In this tainted air, we might find it easier to say I can be all things to all people than to say we have strengths and weaknesses and need others' strengths to make the organization work.

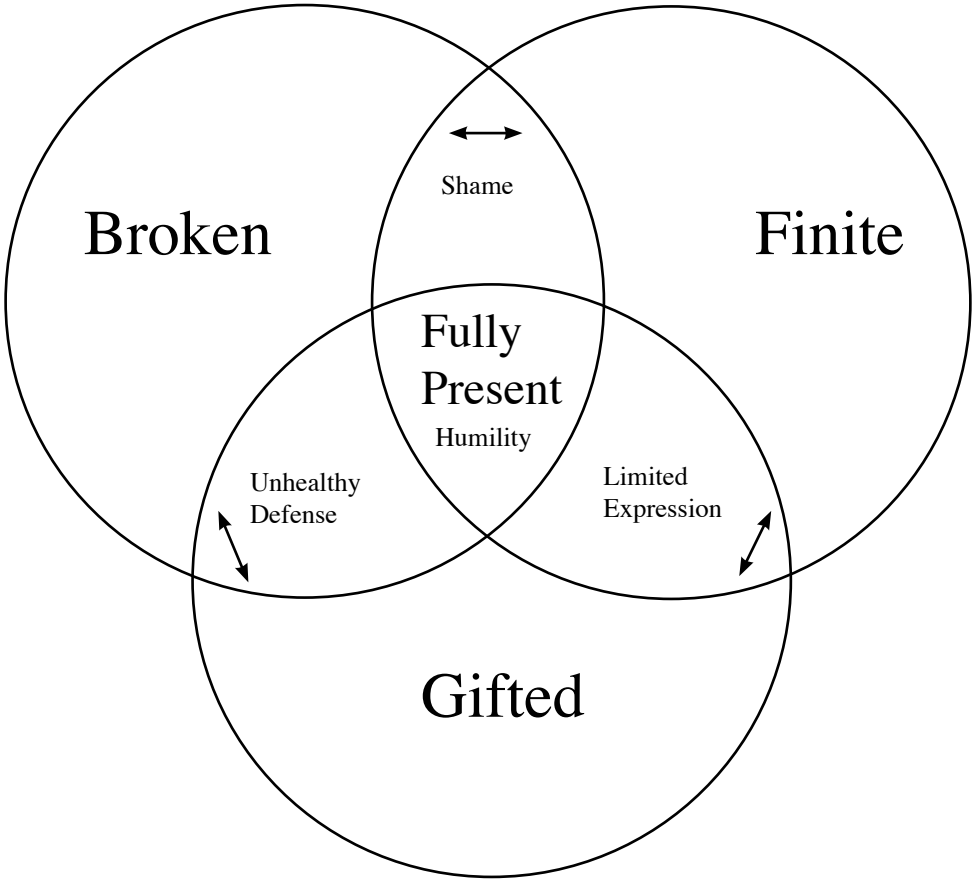
Yet to use the word humble and to define what it means are different things entirely. To some, it's a nicer version of shame, where we are to act like a worthless person. To others, it means to pretend we don't have strengths or capabilities. To yet others, it might mean something you can't talk about, because if you do, it is only proof you don't have it. When is the last time you heard the word humble used to refer to the leader of an organization? I'll wager that for most of us, the answer is never.

I'm not the authority for defining humility; my aim is simply to push the conversation further. After all the failures we've seen in organizations, maybe it's time to change the conversations we have about success.

- Can we talk about humility in a leader?
- Can we have this courageous conversation in a way that builds our understanding of maturity and wholeness?
- Can we engage each other in a dialogue leading to trust and transparency in our leadership and organizations?

* * *

Part I dealt with the core elements needed for leadership in the midst of uncertainty. Now we're going to get personal and look at the human challenges all leaders face when dealing with the fruit of uncertainty: embarrassment, threat and vulnerability. The question is, How can we be fully present in the midst of this
tension?


Broken
Finite
Gifted
Shame
Fully
Present
Humility
Unhealthy
Defense
Limited
Expression

Chapter 1

Risk

Our fear of uncertainty is often seen as the potential for embarrassment, threat and, with it, the need for vulnerability. In essence it requires that we take a risk and step outside our comfort zone. We step into a space where failure is a real option and the results are unknowable. Few people are comfortable with this and for anyone who tries it, the system will push back in the name of stability. Dealing with an uncertain and quickly changing world requires leaders to take a risk and put their reputation on the line. The previous section looked at the five core ingredients and this section will now explore what it means for a leader to walk in humility in order to be fully present.

I offer a personal story to help frame the subject. When my wife and I travel, we have one rule that keeps our relationship intact: There is no wrong turn.

Let me explain. Let's say we travel to Europe and rent a car. I'm driving, while she navigates. Every time we venture out, we face uncertainty, since we're far from roads we know or any familiar landmarks. As we drive

into a town, neither of us knows the way, and we're forced to make snap decisions. As navigator, my wife is working in another language, and even with a map, things aren't always clear. As driver, I too can only make guesses at what the signs say, and I may need to make a decision faster than she can give input. At times, we're both going to make the wrong call on which direction to go. But when either of us make a mistake that takes us off course, rather than blaming the other person, we look at each other, remind ourselves that this risk is part of being in a new place, and then turn back or change direction as needed.

We both know that in new situations our anxiety skyrockets. Reactions grow sharp if we're not careful, and the relationship becomes strained. The fun of exploring a new place quickly evaporates, and it takes a while to repair the emotional system. And so we came up with our rule, there is no wrong turn. Abiding by this teaches us to be fully present with each other in the midst of the uncertainty, not letting it wreck our time together or destroy our chance for adventure. It teaches us:

- In new travels, we don't always know the right way.
- Not to judge the other person for what feels like incompetence.
- To use what we have as best we can and learn from it.
- Risk is part of the opportunity. Fail quickly, learn from it and move forward.

Risk. That inherent part of being human, which is required for gaining something of value. The downside is that it also carries the potential loss of something we value.

In the midst of uncertainty, I sense the threat, I see the potential for embarrassment and feel the need for vulnerability--and I don't like it.

Those words have an emotional punch; they put you on the edge of your seat and give you a knot in your stomach. They keep you awake at night and automatically put you on the defensive, which means you either shut down or your mind kicks in like a rat on a wheel and you spend your energy going nowhere. In the midst of a changing world where uncertainty is the norm, chronic anxiety is a constant undercurrent. An uncertain world requires curiosity, boldness and a sense of adventure. At the very moment we need to take a risk, we aren't prepared for it and we seek out certainty and safety.

The real challenge for leadership is to learn to be fully present (calm, vulnerable and engaged) in the midst of the turmoil of uncertainty.

For me, the image for being fully present is Tiananmen Square in 1989. There was public unrest in China, and the government sent in tanks and troops to deal with it. A picture made it out that captured the challenge: a man standing in the middle of the street, in front of tanks coming to take control of the ri-

ots. The tanks are stopped in the middle of the road. In the midst of so much uncertainty, the lone man holds his briefcase in his hand, facing the tanks, refusing to move out of their way. He was fully present in the midst of a chaotic situation.

I am reminded of different places where natural disasters hit. Almost without exception, the president goes there. Now we all know he can't do much in terms of lifting or moving things around. That isn't the point at all. In the midst of an uncertain situation, what is really needed is to "show up." This is the first and most basic question of leadership in the midst of uncertainty. The very presence has a calming effect. People use different words to describe what's going on: Leadership is there, they are concerned, they know what's happening, he cares enough to come, she sees what has really happened.

Please note: dealing with uncertainty means dealing with a relational and emotional system, first and foremost. Any time we relate to a person or group of people, an emotional system is created, or what we often call a relationship. For most of us, we define and conduct our relationships through emotions rather than logic or facts.

We can see the opposite of this in a leader who is too analytical and shares nothing personal. Often, when there is no emotion, you will find a lack of trust in those who follow. They would say they don't "know" their lead-

er. For in the end, trust is an emotional word—the glue that holds a relationship together. As we explored in the earlier chapters, values communicate through emotions, and we express them in our choices. As we make the choice to engage others, we create an emotional connection that leads to commonality and builds trust.

At one level of our thinking, we all know certainty in human relationships is a myth. But that knowledge doesn't always seem to reach the heart. The heart wants what it wants, and what it seems to want—especially when we feel embarrassed or vulnerable—is certainty.

Unfortunately, certainty in a relational system isn't possible. We have an automatic, pre-programmed response to tension: Fight or flight. Notice that these are escape mechanisms, or defensive mechanisms, aimed to "get us out of there" either by directly attacking the situation or by fleeing and hiding from the threat. These are normal and often healthy responses. But they are, in essence, reactions, not thought out or planned responses.

This desire for certainty is an ongoing temptation. Management consultants even look to make a quick buck off your misplaced need for certainty. "I can guarantee you success in your relationships! If you do A-B-C-D, then you will succeed!"

Such "guarantees" remind me of one of my favorite quotes from Richard Farson:

Think of the difference between seduction and romance. Technique is required for the former but is useless in

the latter. Being vulnerable, out of control, buffeted about by the experience, pained at any separation, aching for the next encounter, wild with jealousy, soaring with ecstasy, and plummeting with anxiety—all these are what make it a romance. If you know how to have a romance, it isn't a romance, but a seduction. Not knowing how to do it makes it a romance… When we begin to understand how something works, we think immediately that we will be able to make it work. That may be true in the physical world, but it is far from true in the world of human relations… In some fundamental sense, we cannot learn how to have relationships, how to raise children, how to lead others—how to be human, if you will. Why? Because to a great extent it is the very condition of not knowing, of being vulnerable to and surprised by life, of being unable to manage or control our lovers, our children or our colleagues, that makes us human.

We assume that by learning a communication technique, we can gain control over others and thus limit the risk to ourselves. This is nothing short of an illusion, and people will eventually see through it. This is because the risk of being yourself speaks most strongly to people and builds trust.

You might ask at this point: If we can find no certainty in our relationships, what do we do? Depending on your stage of life, there are several simple answers that give us a place to start:

- A primary goal of childhood is to survive with the least damage and as much joy as possible.

- A primary goal of adulthood is to be fully and humbly present.
- A primary goal of elders is to pass on what they've learned and to make life as safe as possible for their children and grandchildren.

Let me be quite clear on this: No significant area of life is free from risk. It's the key ingredient in every accomplishment worth celebrating and every relationship worthy of time. Whenever we must make a decision or express an emotion, there is risk. When you and I intertwine our lives, there is risk. When we raise our voice to ask a question, when we defend what we care about, when we go the extra mile to communicate and mean what we say—there is risk. No training or teaching can take that risk away. I can only explain the need for it and help others understand how to work with it.

The goal, then, is not to remove risk. It is not an enemy we must kill or a beast we must subdue. Rather, it is an expression of life that we must understand and embrace. Tension presupposes risk; you can't separate the two. Just as a key will unlock a door, so the tension of uncertainty can open new opportunities in our lives.

This realization has taken me years to embrace. When I was a child, I didn't understand my family, and they didn't understand me. I just wanted to disappear. My favorite book was My Side of the Mountain, the story

of a young boy who lives on his own in a forest and doesn't need anyone. It was safe, and by disappearing, I did survive childhood. But now I'm a working adult. In perhaps a twist of divine humor, it so happens that my work is all about being fully and humbly present with people. When I deal with change, whether in a one-on-one coaching role or with a large group, the most important principle for me is that I show up. On paper, this sounds easy, but experience has taught me that it's quite difficult in practice. My natural reaction to tension and the attendant anxiety is to disappear. My learned adult choice is to show up: to engage others with my gifts while admitting my limitations and holding my brokenness in check. .

As a leader, who you are is the strongest influence you have. When you are fully present, it calms the organization: It creates potential for growth and development, to be connected, to honor and validate the voices within the company but then choose how you want to move forward.

I take this aspect very seriously whenever I work with an organization dealing with tension. For instance, I worked on a large change process with a multinational organization. I agreed to work with the leader on the condition that, before we did anything, I needed some time with her to talk openly about the issues ahead.

I talked with her for over an hour, and we framed her inner world, mapping out where her trigger points were—in other words,

where she would be tempted to just react, rather than crafting an intentional response. We talked about what made her anxious (tension points) and her values in the midst of uncertainty.

The leader will have to hold the tension of the group without reacting. He or she must let people experience and express their emotions without taking the words personally or trying to "fix" them. It gets messy. My work involves preparing leaders for the mess: helping them resist the temptations to react, be anxious, blame others, or get into a quick-fix mode. In the end, there is no stronger influence in the midst of change than a fully present leader walking in humility.

Let me be the first to say: this is not easy for any of us. It does not come naturally, and no one is comfortable with it. Yet it can be learned. The good news is that you don't have to be perfect; a little humility works wonders and can produce great results.

Leading from good to great does not mean coming up with answers and then motivating everyone to follow your messianic vision. It means having the humility to grasp the fact that you do not yet understand enough to have the answers and then to ask the questions that will lead to the best possible insights.
Jim Collins

Chapter 2
Limited

The first aspect of humility is that we are finite or limited. In essence, we have limitations and they are an expression of our life. This is not wrong, evil or something to be overcome--it is part of our very definition of humanity. We are born, we live and then we die. In a very real sense, it's okay to say, "I don't know." The very basis of being curious and taking a risk is that we embrace the need to learn, grow and develop as a core expression of who we are.

Most people acknowledge this with their heads--we all know that we can't and won't ever know everything. However, at an emotional level, there is this gnawing feeling that there is "more" we should have known. We have this feeling that says, "If we just knew enough," everything would be OK. If we just knew the "right way," then we would take the risk and do what is needed. But this presupposes that there is a 'safe' risk, which isn't true. Every leader must learn to gather the data, but then there's a point where you must step out and make a decision when you don't have all the data you'd like. Making decisions with limited information is what leaders must do.

Linked to this is brain research that reveals that we don't notice around 75% of the physical changes going on around us. The brain has a screening mechanism that filters out information it doesn't see as relevant. It often can't see changes because it doesn't know what it should be looking for. The answer to a changing world isn't knowing more to keep up with it, but learning to be curious as a natural part of being. The answer in a world of uncertainty is not in the right answer, but in learning to question as a vital part of leading. We ask questions because we are limited and that is the healthiest expressions of life for us.

One of the clearest ways to see this is in situations where people are making assumptions about life that, when we look back on them, are rather funny. For example:

Linda, 23, was visiting her in-laws, and while they went to a nearby supermarket to pick up some groceries, several people noticed her sitting in her car with the windows rolled up and her eyes closed, both hands at the back of her head. One customer became concerned after an hour and walked over to the car. He noticed that Linda's eyes were now open, and she looked very strange. He asked her if she was okay, and Linda replied that she'd been shot in the back of the head and had been holding her brains in for over an hour. The man called the paramedics, who broke into the car (the doors were locked, and Linda refused to remove her hands from her head). When they finally got in, they found that Linda had a wad of bread dough on the back of her head. A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded

from the heat, making a loud noise that sounded like a gunshot, and the wad of dough hit her in the back of her head. When she reached back to find out what it was, she felt the dough and thought it was her brains. She initially passed out, but quickly recovered and tried to hold her brains in for over an hour until someone noticed and came to her aid.

In a split second, she did an analysis of the facts and came to her conclusion. She had a good basis for it, and maybe some of us would have thought the same...OK maybe not. She made the wrong assumption in the moment, not in the moral sense, but in the sense that she had no idea what was going on and her mind was trying, as best as it could, to make sense of it.

How about some more humorous expressions of our humanity?

A couple drove their car to Wal-Mart, only to have it break down in the parking lot. The man told his wife to carry on with the shopping while he fixed the car. The wife returned later to see a small group of people near the car. On closer inspection, she saw a pair of male legs protruding from under the chassis. Although the man was in shorts, his lack of underpants turned private parts into glaringly public ones. Unable to stand the embarrassment, she dutifully stepped forward, quickly put her hand up his shorts, and tucked everything into place.

The wife stood back up. She looked across the hood and found herself staring at her husband, who was standing idly by.

The mechanic, however, had to have three stitches in his forehead after his head-jerk response to her thoughtful adjustment.

OK, we can make mistakes and even in hindsight have a good laugh at what our limited framework causes to happen. But how about these real life statements made by people with clear conviction who we assume should have known better. These are some very "smart" people who we must always remember are limited and therefore they can make assumptions that are not true or real.

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." Lord Kelvin, British mathematician, physicist and president of the British Royal Society, 1895

"With over fifty foreign cars already on sale here, the Japanese auto industry isn't likely to carve out a big slice of the U.S. market for itself." Business Week, 2 August 1968

"A severe depression like that of 1920-1921 is outside the range of probability." The Harvard Economic Society, 16 November 1929

"I think there is a world market for about five computers." Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of IBM, 1943

"There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home." Ken Olson, president, Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977

"We don't like their sound. Groups of guitars are on the way out." Decca Recording Co. executive, turning down the Beatles in 1962

"No matter what happens, the U.S. Navy is not going to be caught napping." Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, 4 December 1941, just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

"To affirm that the aeroplane is going to 'revolutionize' naval warfare of the future is to be guilty of the wildest exaggeration." Scientific American, 1910

Based on the best data they had and the context of their time, these statements were certainly "true": seemingly established as facts by some very credible people. In the same way, you and I now view certain aspects of life with clear convictions that they are true. However, in 50 years, they will seem like nonsense.

When we have a fixed mindset of certainty, we become preoccupied with data. The underlying assumption is that if we just had enough data, we could make the best decisions. In reality, decisiveness matters just as much as having the "right" data, for it comes of the conviction that you have something to give to the organization. Put simply, there is never enough data to give you emotional certainty in the tough decisions you must make.

In an uncertain world, mistakes are part of life. They aren't automatically a sign of incompetence; rather, they provide an opportunity to realize the limits of our best efforts,

to stand back and reevaluate the situation, and finally to learn and grow. People rarely learn anything from success, but mistakes are worth their weight in gold if we will learn from them. Satya Nadella is the CEO of Microsoft. He was speaking at a conference for women in computing, and during the Q&A time at the end of his session, he made a statement regarding women's roles that stirred people up. As time passed and he had more time to reflect, he used it to help change the culture at Microsoft and change its bias against women. He went on to say, "In some ways, I'm glad I messed up in such a public forum because it helped me confront an unconscious bias I didn't know I had, and it helped me find a new sense of empathy for the great women in my life and at my company."

The first step in learning to deal with uncertainty is to realize that not knowing is not a guaranteed sign of incompetence. Instead, it represents a place to start asking questions and communicating with others. It's a mentality rooted in a growth mindset and is not focused on certainty. When we choose not to ask questions and communicate, R. D. Liang captures the ensuing dynamic beautifully:

There is something I don't know
that I am supposed to know.
I don't know what it is I don't know,
and yet am supposed to know,
And I feel I look stupid
if I seem both not to know it

and not know what it is I don't know.
Therefore, I pretend I know it.
This is nerve-wracking since I don't know what I must pretend to know.
Therefore I pretend to know everything.
I feel you know what I am supposed to know but you can't tell me what it is because you don't know that I don't know what it is.
You may know what I don't know, but not that I don't know it,
and I can't tell you. So you will have to tell me everything.

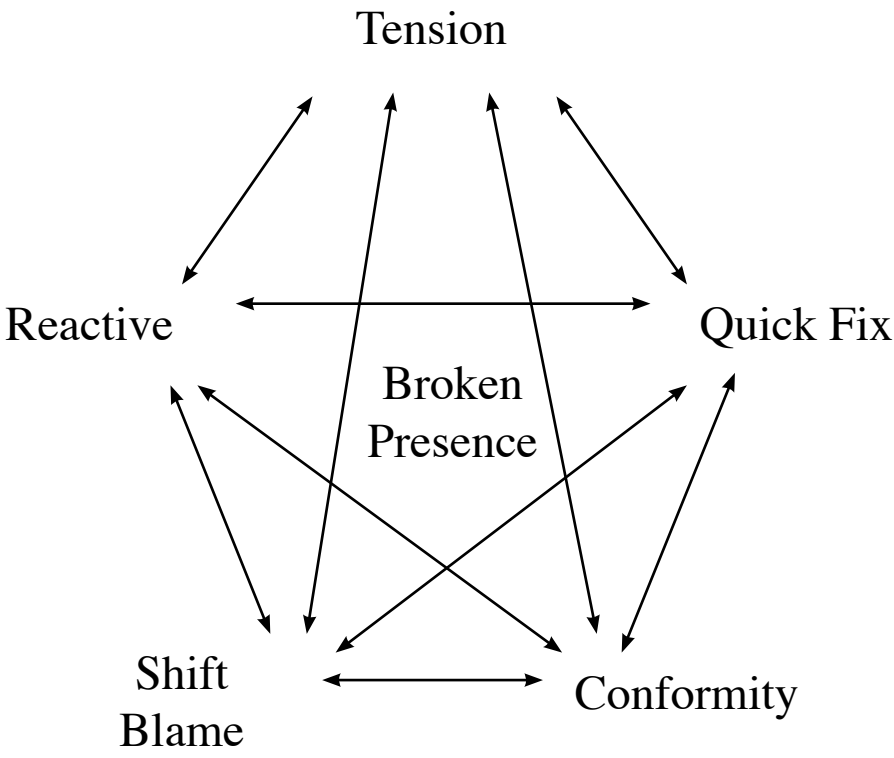
The first facet of a humble leader is the freedom gained by embracing their humanity, specifically that they can't and don't have to know everything. They will make mistakes. This is highlighted even more in an uncertain world where change is the norm. Their strength is not in having answers but using questions to point people's thinking in the right direction.

Confronting the potential pain of not knowing allows you to become curious and ask questions, letting questions define your view rather than answers. Getting curious and enjoying the challenge of humbling yourself, admitting you don't know and focusing on what you need to learn in order to move forward.

The great lesson here for all imaginatively gridlocked systems is that the acceptance and even cherishing of uncertainty is critical to keeping the human mind from voyaging into the delusion of omniscience.
Edwin Friedman

Chapter 3
Broken

The power for authentic leadership, [Vaclev] Havel tells us, is found not in external arrangements but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting—from families to nation-states—aim at liberating the heart, their own and others, so that its powers can liberate the world… A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light upon some part of the world, and upon the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A good leader has high awareness of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good.
Parker Palmer



None of these are evil or even necessarily wrong in and of themselves. But when put together as a systems perspective of our ability to function in uncertainty, it creates anxiety and limits the leadership capacity of the person / group dealing with the tension of an uncertain world.

The second facet of humility in a leader is embracing that aspect of his or her life that is broken. Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung called it the shadow or dark side of our personality. In psychology, it is often called the alter ego, the id or the lower self. Robert Bly's image of the "big bag we drag behind us" is a favorite metaphor for some. Although the language has changed over the years, the idea of a broken or dark side to humanity has been with us from antiquity.

Twenty-six years ago, my brother died of cancer. The process involved immense pain--both to deal with his death and to watch his four young children face not having him for the rest of their lives. We went with the kids later that year to the state fair, and as we walked past one booth, Micah, one of the boys, got his heart set on one of the stuffed toys offered as a prize for knocking down a few bowling pins with three baseballs. I had watched him earlier that year cry himself to sleep on his dead father's body, and so I thought I could bring a bit of joy to his life by winning him the prize he wanted. Having been a fairly good athlete most of my life, I thought I stood a good chance. I bought the balls and lined up to throw them. I hit the pins but couldn't knock them over. I tried again, with the same result.

At that moment, the ache in my heart seemed almost unbearable. My weakness loomed foremost in my mind: I couldn't do it. I can't remember wanting anything more in life than just offering Micah a little comfort

and joy, but I couldn't do it. I wasn't "strong" enough. I was weak—meaning inadequate. In that moment, I was very aware of the weakness of my life. More than that, it revealed a shame, that broken aspect of my heart that turned on me and implied that because I was weak and couldn't do it, something was wrong with me. In that moment, I felt like being a weak human was a curse, like I had no value and my existence was part of the problem. Being inadequate speaks of being powerless, and that opens the door to shame. That exposure terrifies us, possibly more than anything else.

Over the last 30 years, I've worked with leaders from different cultures, ages and walks of life. One thing I can tell you: This broken piece, this trigger, is common to us all. This was highlighted recently with Brené Brown's TED talk, which has been viewed over 32 million times. She talks about the power of vulnerability and being connected at a heart level. In her research as a sociologist, she clarified the pain of shame and its cancerous effect on ourselves and relationships. We have all developed the capacity to take the pain of our limits and relationships, turn it to shame, hide it and then seek power and control to protect ourselves. This second aspect of humility gives us permission to not be perfect or not assume that only perfection can protect us from our shame. My cousin and I were only one year apart, and we learned to fly small airplanes together. We both enjoyed the challenge immensely. As we grew up, I went overseas to work, and he

stayed in the U.S. and continued to fly. On the way back from a trip in Eastern Oregon, he was taking off from a field, with a friend in the passenger seat. The tanks were full of gas, it was a hot day, and there was luggage in the small bush plane, so getting altitude took a while. At the end of the field were some large pine trees. As the plane approached them, my cousin pulled back on the stick as hard as he could in order to clear the trees, but his landing gear clipped them. The plane stalled and crashed to the ground. When it hit, it caught fire.

The friend traveling with my cousin opened the door and made it out OK. When he turned and looked back, my cousin was stuck in his seat belt. The friend ran back, unbuckled my cousin, and pulled him out of the plane. The prognosis: third degree burns over 80% of his body. He was in bad shape. They flew him to a burn center in Portland, where he began months of agonized recovery as they peeled skin off of him, grew it and then put it back on. He had to wear a skin-tight suit to keep his skin from wrinkling too much. It is beyond my capacity to even understand the pain of it all. His wife, overwhelmed by the situation and their not-so-strong marriage, left him.

Months passed. Slowly, he learned to live with the pain and disfigurement. Long after the process was over, he was asked what the most difficult part had been.

"I would rather go through the pain of the fire again than face the pain of the divorce," he said.

When I heard that, I have to be honest: I was stunned. He put into words this fear that resides deep in me and in so many others who I've worked with. The pain of rejection, of loss of self, of being alone is the most painful fear we can face. Whatever words we use to describe it (fear of failure, abandonment, rejection, loneliness), the prospect terrifies us. It breaks the heart, and in order to be fully present, we must acknowledge and deal with this potential pain.

I am using the word "broken" specifically because it represents both the shadows in us as well as our capacity to take this fear, this deep pain and let it twist, turn and distort our life and our relationships. When triggered, we pursue power as a means and control as an unhealthy end. For some of us with little power in the organization, we use the only choice we have and disappear. We silence our voice, and any contribution we could make is lost. We misuse our ability to defend ourselves and become reactively defensive. If we carry significant leadership, we build silos, and focus on power and control to protect ourselves, even at a cost to the organization. Either of these choices can lead to loss of trust, distancing in relationships, elephants in the room and an unhealthy bureaucracy

In essence, if our brokenness is triggered, shame acts like a black hole. If given its own lead, it hides, refusing to be discussed, letting no one know of its existence. It creates a feeling of being worthless and encourages

people to hide their true selves so others don't judge them. I believe neglecting to deal with this is the root of almost all corruption in any organization or politics.

Bringing the broken, painful parts to the surface, talking about the temptation (with close friends) and not using this power to protect ourselves is desperately needed. Being open with key people is the most powerful way to keep us from building silos or, worse yet, creating what Scott Peck called militant ignorance. We refuse to hear what others say about our role or performance because it affects our value as a human and exposes our pain.

This is all part of looking at the risks involved in humbly leading in the midst of uncertainty—becoming a Level 5 leader.The goal here is to get to the roots and see that it's still a values question at a heart level. This is the unspoken pain of the heart—the unspoken belief that I am nothing. If left in the shadows, it begins to manipulate and twist how we view the world and how we want others to view us. It takes our natural and healthy desire for power and control and adds a caustic anxiety that divides the organization.

When leaders confront the tension of uncertainty, and they slow down enough to avoid the kneejerk reaction of self-defense, the first and possibly most important response is to face themselves and own their own "stuff."

The seduction, at this point of tension, is to look to data and techniques; it takes the focus off of us and gives us an illusion of control.

"If I just get a bit more information or learn the right technique," we think, "then I can move forward and don't have to worry about being exposed." This symptomatic response, like a Band-Aid on a cancerous mole, fixes nothing and is rooted in fear and shame.

But leadership, as we've learned, takes courage: to step back from the tension and take responsibility for your life. Courage in humility means facing the fear, acknowledging that your life has value, and not letting anxiety define your reaction.

When we instead allow ourselves to get triggered by our brokenness and try to defend and protect ourselves, we fall back on some unhealthy patterns. Many of these likely look familiar.

Blame shifting—"It's not my fault; the situation caused this in me. It's the company's fault. It's the other managers. It's the economy. It's these stupid workers." We avoid responsibility for our choices and act like we had nothing to do with it.

Playing the victim—"They made me do it. I couldn't help it. It's beyond my control to do anything." Victims take the stance that they are powerless and therefore can't be held accountable.

Disappearing—We just simply don't show up. Even when physically present, we have no voice and take no action. We don't have feel-

ings or thoughts and just do what we're told, letting things run their course and hoping the trouble passes us by.

Attacking—The other side of the "disappearing" coin: We become aggressive. We say or do something sharp, extreme or hurtful in an attempt to destroy what exposed us, so that we can once again feel safe. We often do this with our words behind people's back.

Polarized thinking – Painful emotions take charge and we downshift in our thinking. We treat the issue like it's a problem to be solved by data. We make an enemy of anyone who thinks differently and seek safety in a shallow, limited answer to give the illusion we are in control and can make it all go away.

These defensive mechanisms distort our communication and limit our ability to ask questions. Remember, the goal is to recognize and own our lives: to be responsible for our choices, to value ourselves and others, and to create a sustainable and successful organization.

There is an important distinction I must make at this point. We must not confuse the first risk—seeing our limitations—with the shadows of a broken heart.

We are all broken and have shadows. The question is not whether we have them, but rather: do we spend our time trying to hide

them and defend ourselves in such a way that we control how everyone else sees us?

When a leader is not willing to deal with his or her shadows, it creates an acidic culture, as their presence is distorted at best and missing at worst. Peace and "being nice" become the highest virtues, and the team, group or organization settles for mediocrity; they don't want to deal with the issues that confrontation or change would expose.

Many years ago, I went skiing with my young son Joshua. We came to the rope tow and found ourselves in the company of many parents helping their young children learn to ski. Some children rode between their parents' legs and skied down the hill.

Standing with Joshua, I looked back on the line and noticed a little boy, perhaps four years old, trying to get control of his skis. He began to run toward the line of people waiting, but soon he was moving faster than he could control. His mother, an experienced skier who had trained him right, yelled, "Sit down!"

The boy sat down immediately. It worked like a wonderful brake, and he stopped short of the people without causing any damage. His mom helped him up—crisis averted. When we use power as a means to protect ourselves from our shadows and the pain of our power-hungry self, then we need to heed the warning signs, humble ourselves and "sit down." How to start putting this safety measure into place? Find someone you trust who will listen to you. Begin a conversation with

him or her to map out your shadows. Remember: having shadows is not the real danger—everyone has them. The real danger is pretending that you don't and letting brokenness unconsciously dictate your reactions.

Our broken parts are hard to find and easy to ignore. Add to this that we don't really want to find them, and you have a perfect mix for willful ignorance. A good leader does the work to avoid this blindness. This is best done with someone who can walk with you and ask you questions, someone who won't judge you in any way, welcoming the chance to share the pain and help you see it differently.

To discover the broken trigger in yourself, take a moment in the midst of stress or threat. Step back from the uncertainty and ask yourself some questions:

- Do you sense fear in yourself? Do you sense anger? What emotions are going on inside of you? (Anger is a surface emotion and there is always pain beneath it.) Name them and own them, as they are yours.
- Reverse engineer the emotions: What values lie beneath them?
- Where did you learn those values? Who taught them to you? Do they link to any painful experiences in your past?

Peter Senge uses the Greek word metanoia to speak about repenting, turning or changing how we think. This path of transformation is not easy, but it's worth the risk to

find new freedom and opportunities in the face of uncertainty. Remember the principles examined in the second book: Tension only reveals what is already in us; the roots of the issue lie in our values; we must resist the natural urge to get unhealthily defensive, seeking control to avoid the pain of uncertainty. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Where are you? (What is going on inside of you?)
- Are you insecure (feelings linked to an unhealthy defensiveness)?
- Where is there chaos that you assume it is your responsibility to fix?
- Where does your responsibility stop, so that others may engage and grow through the process?
- Are more rules, projected rigidity and procedures really going to clear this up?
- Have you framed this as a competition with only one winner, and you must win to justify your position?

If you can't talk about it,
you can't change it.

Why must we go in and down? Because as we do so, we will meet the darkness that we carry within ourselves—the ultimate source of the shadows that we project onto other people. If we do not understand that the enemy is within, we will find a thousand ways of making someone "out there" into the enemy, becoming leaders who oppress rather than liberate others... That is the choice before us when we are "pinned under a boulder" of any sort, the same choice Nelson Mandela made by using twenty-eight years in prison prepare inwardly for leadership instead of drowning in despair. Under the most oppressive circumstances, people like Mandela, Havel and uncounted anonymous others go all the way down, travel through their inner darkness—and emerge with the capacity to lead the rest of us toward community, toward "our complex and inexplicable caring for each other."

Parker Palmer

Chapter 4
Celebrating our Strengths

The third and final facet that is vital to our understanding of humility is recognizing that we all have strengths. Just as each of us has a unique fingerprint, so the combination of personality, values, preferences, cultural upbringing and capacities is unique to each one of us.

Consider a farmer preparing and planting a field. He first turns and plows the soil—this is the first step of identifying our limitations. The second area also involves preparation. The farmer finds the weeds, rocks, soil conditions and other obstructions that would prevent the seeds' growth, then adds fertilizer to make the soil richer and ready for the seeds. The reason you focus on the first two tasks is to prepare the soil for the joy ahead—the fruit and the harvest. In our terms, the fruit of humility is wholeness, development and a richer quality of life for you, as well as a stronger organization.

The fact that you are unique and bring a unique contribution to the organization is seen in many different areas of your life. At three months old in your mother's womb, you had

already developed fingerprints. The whorls of your fingers, seemingly so small and insignificant, had formed and marked you as unique from any other child on the face of the earth. From the very beginning, something in your DNA declared you a unique and valuable human being.

Yes, we have the same basic body and appearance, but this DNA at your core continues to declare its unique expression through you. Stand in front of a mirror and stick your tongue out. This marvelous little organ has up to 10,000 taste buds that are replaced approximately every two weeks. It offers you delicious insight into sweet, salty, sour or bitter flavors. And it is unique—there's no other tongue on the planet that is the same as yours. While you're standing in front of the mirror, look closely at your eyes. They can differentiate between 500 gray shades and distinguish up to a million different colors. The patterns in them are absolutely unique. No one else has the same eyes. Move away from the mirror and say something out loud. As the wave patterns we call "voice" go out, they too are unique; if we had the right machine, we could identify you from any other person on the planet simply based on your voice.

Add to this personality types, geographic opportunities and challenges, language, family background, personal history and diverse relationships, and you have quite a sum. Truly, each one of us is unique. Beyond the individual, Harold Morowitz calculated the odds

of humanity existing in all its wonder in this unimaginably large and complex universe—at one chance in 10,100,000,000,000. No matter how you frame it, I think we could say humanity is a wonder.

Here's what this means for us in leadership. As a unique human being, one who has the ability to pass through life thinking, seeing, feeling and focusing on things like no other person who has existed and will ever exist, you have value. You have something to give that others need. This is the potential you bring to every job that you do and every person to whom you relate. Looking a little closer, I believe the reason our brokenness hurts so much is because we know, deep within us, that we have value and long to be respected.

With this message of uniqueness and a little encouragement, you'd think the task of celebrating your strengths would be easy. Unfortunately, it's not. We grow up in institutions that try to make us into something that fits society's needs, attend a school that recognizes only a few types of intelligence. The system isn't evil, just very limiting, and if you lose yourself in trying to please those who run it, you will lose something far greater.

I don't, of course, promote individualism as the solution to a problem. After all, the problem doesn't have one single, fixed solution, and we all face this tension-filled dilemma: How can I be me and still work in institutions that want very little creativity? You and you alone can figure that out. I simply of-

fer this as the starting place—value your life. You have something to contribute to others. I believe in each of us there is a longing to walk this out, but it is harassed and terrified by the reality of our limitations and our shadows.

When I coach people, the question I usually get right about now is, "OK, I get it. So, how do I be me?"

Even though I know to expect this question, I'm always at a bit of a loss as to how to respond. Why? Because they are still asking for someone else to define them. Others can reflect back to us who we are and give us insight into our identity, but the DNA of valuing ourselves must come from within.

How do you be you? How to be fully present, coming into life with your limitations and shadows? How to celebrate your unique gifts?

All I can say is, welcome to the human race. For that is a journey we are all on.

When I talk about showing up, this is the fun part. We pull the fear from it, and find joy in the belief that we really are unique. This will create a curiosity about life, a playfulness in life's adventure. You will, slowly, naturally, start to not fear risk so much, and will be willing to try new things. If you're not careful, soon you'll find yourself in leadership, because others will see something in you that they like and want to follow. You're modeling the courage to be yourself and work well with others. A whole new opportunity awaits you!

There is a temptation for many leaders to get lost in the power of their position and think it's what gives them value. This is backwards or broken thinking. We all have value, and the use of our gifts is simply the expression of our uniqueness.

We must be clear that valuing self is not the same as selfishness. There is a very clear difference between having value, and thinking you have more value than others because of your role or gift. Our goal is not to elevate ourselves above others, but to recognize that each of us has a unique value—not just a few in power at the expense of the rest. Recognizing our individual value is a crucial step to flourishing. If workers see no value in themselves, they will seek power and control to get it, they will cling to roles to keep it, which has dangerous implications for unhealthy defensive routines.

Once we recognize our value, we become able to open our eyes to our gifts. In its simplest definition, a gift is simply something you're good at, something you do well. You do it naturally, and often it doesn't seem to require "work." It just comes out of you as a natural expression of who you are. It's so natural that sometimes you can't understand why anyone would call it a gift, and you don't understand why others don't find it as easy.

For example, when working with a group dealing with tension and listening to someone talk, sometimes I'll stop the group and ask, "Now, did you hear what words that

person used? Did you hear the emotion in it?" They stare at me in confusion, so I give them an explanation. For me, it's the most natural thing to hear someone's heart and emotions, to use their words to perceive where they're at. I have to say, I get frustrated at times when people aren't as quick to understand this. But perceiving others' emotions is a gift—one that some have, while others have different gifts, all of them unique.

Within almost all of us is something positive and unique, but which is all too easily injured, and which only grows when exposed to the sunlight of someone else's recognition and praise. To see the good in others and let them see themselves in the mirror of our regard is to help someone grow to become the best they can be.
Jonathan Sacks

1) What are you deeply passionate about?
2) What are you are genetically encoded for—what activities do you feel just "made to do"?
3) What makes economic sense—what can you make a living at?
Those fortunate enough to find or create a practical intersection of the three circles have the basis for a great work life.
Jim Collins

Chapter 5
Interdependence

Now, as with the image of the farmer, all three pieces of the process are needed in order to bear fruit. Plowing the soil (accepting our human limitations), then clearing away the weeds and stones while adding fertilizers (facing our shadows) and finally, planting the seeds (using our gifts). We need to understand all three areas to be able to wisely take risks. I'd love it if I only had to take my gifts, as seeds, throw them anywhere I want and have them bear fruit—no soil preparation or character needed. However, in working overseas for most of my adult life, with hundreds of people from many different cultures and organizations, I've learned that all three areas are interdependent and part of humanity.

Let me explain some common traps that people often fall into in their misunderstanding or limited view of humility.

I am my gift; nothing else matters.

Sometimes we want to only pay attention to the third area: gifts. You are unique, which gives you gifts and capacities that others don't have. There is no one else like you. I wish

we could stop there and just deal with that. But we can't, because it doesn't fit with reality. Let me give a personal example.

Years ago, I took a test called SIMA that looked at my gifts and motivations. In essence, it said I love to take complex ideas and make them simple. I have found over the years that this is true. Later in my life, I had the opportunity to pursue graduate school and get a PhD. It required real discipline for my divergent mind and took a lot of work, but it helped me develop my gift and capacity. However, after I got my PhD, I could feel the broken part of me whispering seductively: Now you're a more valuable human being. The degree, it implied, made me somehow better than those who didn't have it.

I had a choice to make—and still have a choice in tense circumstances, when I feel vulnerable. My insecure heart creeps in and wants me to hide in my education, I have to turn off the trigger of my brokenness and deal with the emotions. I start with this: I am valuable as a human being, not because of any gift or achievement. With that unearned value as a foundation, I am free to offer my gift to others when they need it.

I have another choice to make as well: I choose to remember that, no matter what my gift or capacity, it comes with limitations. I am still human. I will not see everything. I will make assumptions and mistakes. That is normal and healthy. I need to give freedom to others to question me and encourage tension

between my strengths and others' capacities. Remember, a strength or gift is nothing more than a unique capacity someone has—it never makes a person more than human, above making mistakes, knowing all things, never needing help.

The temptation with this "seed" focus and no soil preparation is believing that my gift defines me. If others accept my gift, I feel valued and respected. If they don't, then I think I'm worthless. If you only focus on this one area, your seeds will not take root. When the time comes to harvest, your land will be a mess with little fruit.

I am so bad, nobody will accept me.

When we only look through the lens of our shadows or brokenness, all we see is what's wrong with us. We see our shortcoming and reactions, and it's not a pretty sight.

For most of us, this looks like one of two things. We either give up on life and withdraw, hiding all this pain as deeply as we can, never talking with anyone about it. We do only what is expected of us and never take a risk lest we be exposed. Or, we become caustic and angry, lashing out so that others never get close enough to know our pain—which often becomes violence (through control) in its ugliest form.

Because we only pay attention to the weeds and rocks, we can't see that we have any gifts or capacities that others might need or appreciate. Even when others offer to help

us or say nice things about us, we reject it because we know that they will one day see who we "really" are and we won't let that happen. Thus our gifts are lost, hidden where no one can find them, seeds never sown. A unique life without true expression is a sad thing and a loss to organizations and communities.

I am insignificant.

When we only focus on our limitations, the things we don't know and can't anticipate, we end up thinking we're only a pile of dust, that we're insignificant. We assume we have nothing to contribute, which means we are useless and of no importance to the organization.

If we are small, we must be insignificant. Our shadows love to come at this point and whisper: Prove to others that you're something! (Notice the assumption: If you have to prove yourself, you are starting from a place of being worthless.)

You can spend your whole life just churning and churning the soil, only aware of your limitations and the mistakes you've made. If you do ever notice a gift in yourself, you're likely spend your time second-guessing it, minimizing it or denying it. At the end of the day, you've exhausted yourself, and you planted nothing.

Tied to this is this idea of learning "enough" to protect yourself by doing everything right. You go to workshops, seminars, training programs and are in a never-ending cycle of learning, but it's all in the name of end-

ing your limitations or insignificance, which will never happen.

These three areas cannot be separated. As with a three-stranded rope, all three facets are woven together. Understanding how to link them and work with them is the only way to have strength in your leadership. We must be equally careful not to be so consumed with trying to figure it out that it stops us. The best way to understand is to take the risk and try out what you're learning. Remember, the goal for your leadership in the midst of uncertainty is to be fully present, all parts of you--even the darker side. (When you are triggered, apologize, simply acknowledge what was inappropriate and move on.) Own your limitations. That, in the end, is the ultimate risk of life—to be you. Take the risk:

- To raise questions when you don't understand.
- To accept tension as a healthy part of life.
- To let tension expose you and own what it exposes in you.
- To give others a safe space to own their life and what the tension exposes in them.
- To be curious and explore new ways to discover life.

As you gain understanding, communicate about it with others. Include them in your process of maturing and taking responsibil-

ity. As you talk about it, the shadows will lose their authority over you.

Take time to reflect and step back. Look at your values and the foundation for your choices. What are your passion points—those things that are vital to your relationships and the organization? Talk about them and the emotions that go with them. That will feel like a huge risk, as you will feel vulnerable in the process.

And lastly, take the time to be honest about what you're really defending. Are you looking for power and control to protect you from others seeing your shadows? Are you not raising your voice to bring change on a project that needs help? Are there things that you see that need clear feedback but you are too "shy" to talk about it? Maybe your leadership style is different from what your organization expects, and you find it easier to hide your abilities rather than risk bringing something new. Separate these things out. Be clear about them, and talk about them with others.

All these words--"limitations," "broken shadows" and "strengths"--are often seen through emotional filters; they're not based solely on reason or logic. The way to work with them is to acknowledge them, name them and seek to understand them. Reverse engineer your emotions to get to your values, slow down enough to reflect and deal with the issues exposed. It's not easy, but remember, any movement toward understanding yourself brings healthy ripple effects in many other ar-

eas of your life, leadership and in the organization.

As we've talked about, the real work in the midst of uncertainty is that leaders must be aware of and own their emotional response, deal with their shadows and limitations, and not bring those reactions to their leadership. As they do this, they can be more fully present, which will have the effect of easing other people's anxiety and bring life to the organization.

Remember, the goal of any system is to release potential. A system filled with anxiety is the single most limiting aspect to potential. It creates a mentality of defensiveness, shuts down creativity and begins a downward cycle for the life of an organization. In essence, it stops people from being humbly present. People react by working longer hours, treating work like a problem to be solved, and looking for easy, safe answers. Rarely under these conditions will people reframe the issue and change the questions involved. Instead, they think in simple, either/or terms, with one "right" way to solve the problem.

Each of these is a reactive choice: a learned and usually automatic response that requires little thought, no reflection, and minimizes pain. In life, there are times that require such an approach and it works—but in uncertainty and change, it is not the answer. It quickly becomes part of the problem.

What is needed is a reflective choice: an action that is thought through. Before taking action, you step back and look at the questions you're asking. Are they good questions, or do they need to change? What does the tension expose in you? You reframe the anxiety as an opportunity, and you reexamine your values, clarifying to yourself the communication needed to build on your relationships. Then you take action.

Summary

Humility is not something to be feared, but it does take great courage to face yourself and then to give space for others to walk in it as well. There is no magic, it's not about personality or culture. In the end, it's about character--about authenticity and integrity and not losing our humanity in the midst of the uncertainty all around us.

Where to start:

Be honest. Start with the assumption that you are unique and have gifts, strengths and capacities that others don't have. Be willing to express it as best as you can (you are limited) to help your organization or community. If you are honest about your passions and how you see reality, more often than not, you will find yourself being creative and contributing.

Be aware that you have shadows, broken places in your heart that want to sabotage you (and others). If you don't watch over the brokenness, you will be triggered to do anything to avoid exposure so you can keep working away in the "dark." Expose them to the light in key relationships, so that others might help you walk through these broken places.

Where there is pain, forgive those who, out of their own brokenness, have wounded you.

Here are some key questions as you face tension in the midst of uncertainty and you find yourself reacting:

Where are there shadows in your life? (These are seen most clearly through the windows of our emotions, and they will always be attached to our values in some way.)

What choices do you make in the midst of tension? Are there healthier ways to respond?

Who can you talk with about these painful aspects of life? (If you say no one, then nothing in your life and organization can truly change, as communication and transformation are two sides of the same coin.)

Accept that you are limited and will make mistakes. You don't need more information or the right technique; rather, you need to trust that even failures provide opportunities to learn and grow. They are not a reflection of your value as a human being. Each person has value, and we don't need to do anything to earn it. When we make the choice to live with this truth in mind, we can view these facets with far more courage.

Don't frame your leadership as an answer to all the questions, but consider that leadership in uncertainty is asking the questions that get the organization focused on where you are going and discovering how to get there.

Remind yourself:

Limitations—Being weak or not knowing doesn't diminish me. It gives an opportunity for growth, development and learning. This frees me from living under the myth of certainty. I am free not to know; I need not be god (a burden none of us can carry). I don't have to fear mistakes. They are a normal part of life, an opportunity offered to me.

Brokenness—Not only am I limited, but I am also broken. There is a painful side of me and I have a trigger that wants to get power so I can be in control and not admit I'm broken. It wants to prove that I'm valuable and deserve others' respect. But underneath, I know I'm in painful trouble. The dysfunction tells me that because I am broken, I have no value, and if anyone found out, they would cut me off. The truth is that I have value, unearned. When I understand and believe this, then brokenness doesn't scare me as much. All of us are broken; it is a part of life in this world.

Gifts—This unique capacity that I have is now an expression of who I am and can be offered to others to make the team or organization more effective. It doesn't give or take away value; it is just me. I don't have to be afraid of my limitations—they are normal—and I need not fear that brokenness will diminish me.

In any type of institution whatsoever, when a self-directed, imaginative, energetic, or creative member is being consistently frustrated and sabotaged rather than encouraged and supported, what will turn out to be true one hundred percent of the time, regardless of whether the disrupters are supervisors, subordinates, or peers, is that the person at the very top of the institution is a peace-monger. By that I mean a highly anxious risk-avoider, someone who is more concerned with good feelings than progress, someone whose life revolves around the axis of consensus, a "middler," someone who is so incapable of taking well-defined stands that his "disability" seems to be genetic, someone who functions as if she had been filleted of her backbone, someone who treats conflict or anxiety like mustard gas—one whiff, on goes the emotional gas mask, and he flits. Such leaders are often "nice," if not "charming."
Edwin Freidman

When [what you are deeply passionate about, what you can be best in the world at, and what drives your economic engine] come together, not only does your work move toward greatness, but so does your life. For, in the end, it is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work. Perhaps, then, you might gain that rare tranquility that comes from knowing that you've had a hand in creating something of intrinsic excellence that makes a contribution. Indeed, you might even gain that deepest of all satisfactions: knowing that your short time here on this earth has been well spent, and that it mattered.

James C. Collins

Appendix

Sometimes it's hard to know what is going on inside of you. For those who are not used to it, it feels like going to a foreign land where everything is done in a way that confuses you.

One tool that people use is called "the left-hand column." It was developed by Chris Argyris to help people understand what is going on inside of them. Here is a way to use the tool.

Take out a piece of paper and write the issue in a paragraph at the top of the paper. Then draw a line down the middle of the paper. On the left-hand side, write what you are thinking and feeling, but not saying. On the right-hand side, write what you are saying or what is being said. This will give you insight into the unspoken thoughts and feelings going on inside of you. (The goal is not to get them all out, but just to understand them so you can own and deal with what is going on inside of you.)

Example:

Left Side		Right Side
Unspoken thoughts or	*	I said…
feelings going on	*	She said…
inside of you	*	I said…
I feel…	*	She said…
I am thinking but I am not saying…		

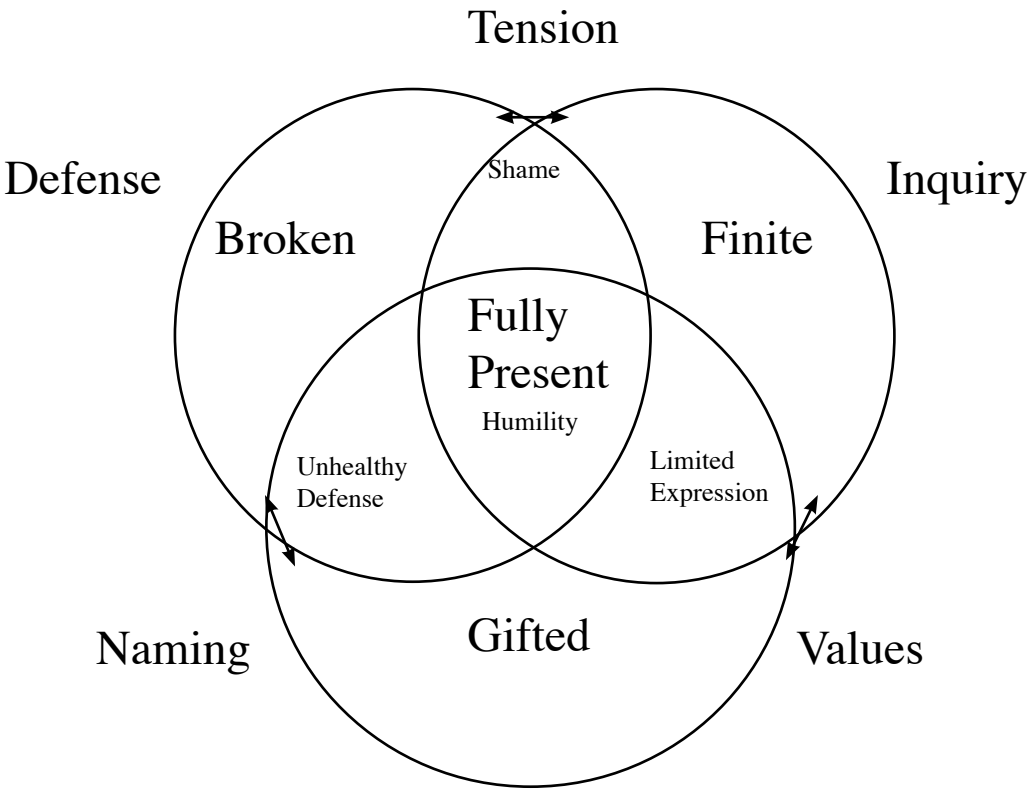
This exercise is for you. Don't tell the other person everything that is going on inside of you. That will not help at all. It is for you to help you understand what the tension is revealing in you so that you might clarify it, see what expression of humility it is and then learn to work with it and not let it create reactions that are unhealthy for you, the relationship or the organization.

You have stayed with me this long: thank you. If they have helped you, I would enjoy hearing about it.

Email: mrawlins@mac.com
Facebook: Green Bench Consulting
Website: thegreenbench.com

I will finish with an old Irish blessing:

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.



Ingredients in the Art of being Fully Present. It is no small challenge, for all of us, but the quality of our relationships and health of our organizations depends our our willingness to wrestle with it.

About the Author

Matt Rawlins is the CEO of Green Bench Consulting. He has traveled and worked in over 25 nations around the world. He has a Ph.D. in Organizational Change and Leadership Development with a focus on Communication or difficult conversations. He has lived in Singapore for 18 years and works with many different organizations in helping build a culture of inquiry, deal with change issues and develop the capacity to communicate in difficult situations.