

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

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As I reflect on my 30 plus years of leading and coaching leaders, a few things stand out for me. Leadership is both art and science. The science is more about mastering leadership in your discipline. The art is more about being connected to the deepest parts of our authentic selves.

The authenticity of leadership is grounded in four characteristics: *mindfulness, the leader's heart, the leader's will, and the leader's courage*. All five are important to creating what matters most for you and the community you impact. This article is an attempt to capture important leadership characteristics that stand out for me over my 30 plus year career as a leader and coach across global cultures.

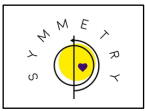
Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.

The heart of the leader is the emotional strength and empathy to endure a multiplicity of circumstances while pursuing what matters most.

The will of a leader is grounded by the heart and belief systems. Will is defined as determined or sure. Operating from a place of conviction.

Courageous leadership relies on the heart with a desire to do what's right and to operate with confidence.

Do you operate from a *place of mindfulness*? Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there's a "right" or "wrong" way to think or feel in a given moment.



When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future (Greater Good Magazine). Operating from a mindful place focuses on what's going on and seeks to understand why? It is understanding where you stand personally, what actions to take, and the impact you want to have. Mindful leaders operate from a place of empathy. Empathy is an appreciation for and understanding of your values and the values of others. It is having sensitivity for cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Circumstances aren't always what they seem; but circumstances require leadership with...heart, perspective, followed by actions.

The heart of a leader is core to his/her success and impact on others. When you look at the word heart, 80% of it is made up of the word hear, which is indicative of the need to listen more. Sixty percent of the word heart is the word art. Art is indicative of operating in the realm of expression and aesthetic principles, resulting in improving the aesthetic quality of something. Operating in the artistic realm requires a leader to operate from the outside/in. In this realm the leader gets in touch with what matters most. The higher you move up in leadership and/or take on leadership accountability the more emotional stamina (emotional intelligence) required. Leaders must have the stamina to recover from and deal with success, disappointment, and discouragement without being distorted in their views. The heart of the leader enables you to have the emotional strength and empathy to endure a multiplicity (i.e., difficult, complex, diverse, etc.) of circumstances while pursuing what matters most.

The will of a leader is grounded by the heart and belief systems. Will is defined as determined or sure. Operating from a place of conviction. It's important to know your heart and understand your source of power and beliefs, as they influence your decisions and actions. For example, are you motivated by values or popular demand; optimal results or fear? It's important to be grounded in knowing what and who drives you to action. So often leaders find themselves knowing what they should do but give up on the art of knowing, being influenced by external influences. "Decisions are easy when values are clear." Unknown.

Courageous leadership relies on the heart with a desire to do what's right and to operate with confidence. A courageous leader must be fearless and have the fortitude to carry out tasks/assignments given to them. You must be willing to take on the risks of leadership and not shy away from obstacles and/or adversity. Leaders often operate during periods of loneliness, despair, ridicule, and rejection. Through it all, the courageous leader must operate with agility through times of prosperity and uncertainty. I encourage leaders to get to know themselves inside out (from the heart, beliefs, motivators, actions). Don't be surprised by your results. Expect the results you want to curate.

Leadership requires the discipline of understanding self and the discipline of development of self. Operating from places of mindfulness, from the heart, with conviction (will) and with courage enable you to know, do, and be as you face the challenge of the times. No matter where you are on your leadership journey, it's always good to ask yourself the following questions. What is it I want to be saying about me as a leader? What impact do I want to have on my family, my team, and my community? Am I utilizing my heart (hearing and art) to create what matters most?

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."
Ralph Waldo Emerson.