

Lead | Work | Live

16th July 2025

Fortnightly insights to help you perform better - in leadership, in work, in life.



Lead - The power of vulnerability in leadership

Earlier this month, many of us were shocked to see the Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer, physically upset during PMQs and it certainly sparked conversation on social media. Some saw it as weakness, some saw it as an opportunity to turn the screws and apply even more pressure. And the cause of this upset? Some have speculated there was a heated debate with the Speaker of the House that spilled over. Others suggest that there was personal issue which which she carried into her work. Now I'm fairly agnostic about the current government, and being honest, I find them quite vanilla. Here's what raised the hairs on my neck though... we want our leaders to connect with us. We want them to show empathy. We want to believe that they are just like us. Yet on the very (very) rare occasion they do demonstrate some actual humanity, it makes us all a little uncomfortable.



In my experience of being a leader in the British Army, here's why vulnerability matters; when we (leaders) are open about struggles, it builds trust and creates space for others to share honestly. Showing your feelings helps normalise emotional intelligence in the workplace.

By opening the door to vulnerability we invite others to do the same. It builds trust, authenticity and stronger bonds. We might call this 'Psychological Safety'... and that is a great subject in its own right.

Something
to try...

At your next meeting, try this:

"I want to be honest about something that's been tough this week.."

And just see what happens....



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Work - Managing your mental energy

Have you put much thought into how you plan your day? If you're office/admin/IT based, you probably have an online 'To Do' list. Effective teams usually have a group task tracker. Personally, I was always a fan of a piece of paper on my desk. My lovely wife, has an A3 whiteboard on the kitchen wall, because she likes to physically see when tasks have been completed.

Are you one of those people that goes for the easy stuff first? Lots of people do because it makes them feel like there's less on their list.

Or perhaps you wait until you're told that this task has become urgent before you give it any attention. And then you're in panic mode!

Or maybe you're one of those that likes to see where the wind takes you... hour by hour.. Just reacting to the events of the day... until eventually, your exhausted.

When we talk about physical energy, we expect that once we're fully fed and rested, that we have a decent amount of energy. And as the day moves on, that energy becomes less and less. We might become lethargic.

Exactly the same can be said for our mental energy. It is NOT infinite. Perhaps in the morning, you have lots of it. You're fired up and raring to go. And as the day progresses, you might find it harder to concentrate. Especially mid-afternoon. So why not tackle the really big stuff when you have the most amount of energy, and leave the trivia, the stuff that requires little thought, to later in the day?

Here's what I recommend:

- **Track Your Day:** For the next 3 days, write down how you actually feel hour by hour. Energised? Foggy? Distracted? Productive?
- **Spot the Patterns:** When are you naturally sharp? When do you crash?
- **Shift One Task:** Pick one important task and move it to your 'peak energy' zone. Then protect that time like it's sacred.

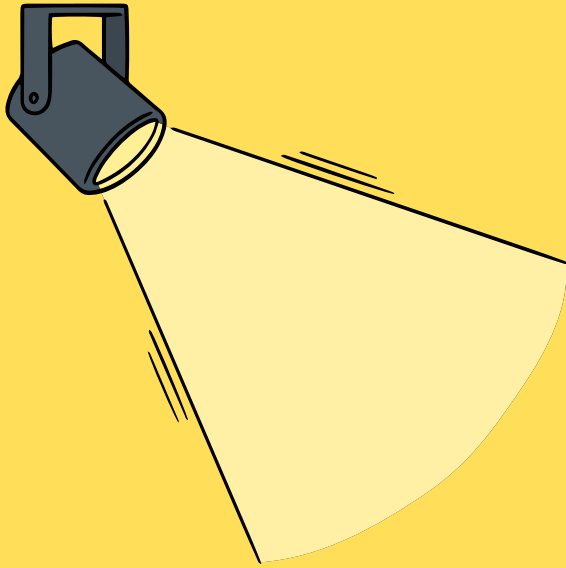


BREAKING
NEWS



A Guardian feature explores how modern organisations are shifting from time-based productivity to energy-based management, a change that's reshaping the way we understand performance in the workplace. Read the full article [here](#).

Spotlight



With each addition, I'll be highlighting organisations, people, or initiatives that align with the values of The Human First Project.

This week, I want to shine a light on South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, where one department trialled a simple but powerful initiative:

A 15-minute "pause space" at the start of each shift.

No tasks. No training. Just a quiet moment for staff to settle, breathe, and check in with themselves before the chaos began.

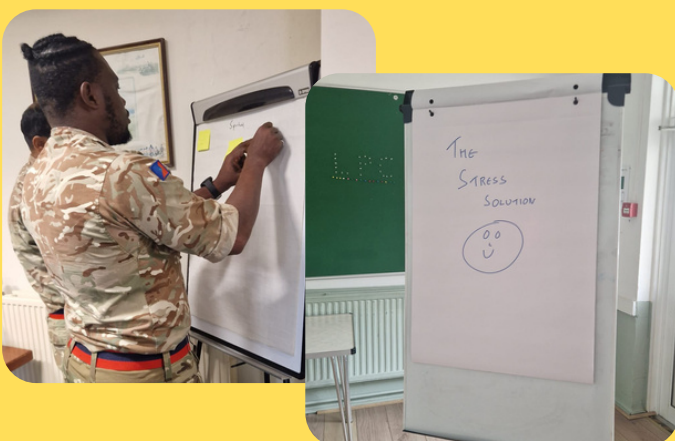
What happened?

- Staff reported feeling calmer and more focused
- Team culture improved
- Morale lifted without a single new hire or extra funding.

This is Human First leadership: small shifts that protect people's energy and dignity, even in high-pressure environments. It's not always about massive programmes or expensive wellness packages. Sometimes, it's just about recognising that people are human. And giving them the space to be human.



On the road....



A busy few weeks so far which I'm extremely grateful for. Highlights include a trip to Oxford to deliver my Well-Being in Action workshop to 7 Regiment RLC, a British Army unit.


I also have a regular 'gig' in Portsmouth supporting the 'Positive Pathways' initiative. This project aims to support those who are unemployed with their mental well-being and general life skills. So far, I've delivered my stress management workshop and opened the huge topic of Mental Resilience.

Live - The key the better relationships

Spoiler alert.... it's emotional intelligence. I mentioned earlier that I'm supporting a Hampshire based organisation, 'Community First'. One of their projects in the Portsmouth area is 'Positive Pathways'. A scheme that seeks to support those who are economically inactive through coaching and volunteering. The long-term aspiration is for them to return to the workplace.

This week, the topic was centred around understanding emotions. Where they come from, how they are formed, and crucially, how we might prevent them from ruining our life! Using real-life (and deeply personal) scenarios, we unpacked what happens in the body and mind when emotions spiral, and more importantly, how to catch the warning signs early.

Consider this example.. let's imagine that you've had a really crappy day. You've over-slept, the kids are running late for school, at work you're pulled into boring pointless meetings that seem to waste your time. On the way home you're stuck in the roadworks, and when you do make progress that some idiot cuts in front of you causing you to slam on the brakes. When you eventually get home you're hungry and tired, and just had enough of today. And then, your partner/wife/husband says something about you being late. About how the kids are driving them mad, about the housework, about anything... and that's it... the final straw... you snap.... you respond... and it escalates into an argument... and before we realise it... everyone is miserable. Now imagine if we were aware of that anger building inside us and instead of releasing it on the people we love the most, we actually did something to disrupt the anger so that it didn't take hold. What if we recognised the signs of frustration in our partner? And understood and validated their feelings rather than becoming confrontational. What difference would that make to your day?



**Something
to try...**

Before you get out of the car, take 2 minutes to take some really deep breaths. Whilst doing so, have a think about one great moment from your life. Something amazing. Perhaps a holiday, or the birth of a child, or the day you met the love of your life.

Concentrate on that moment as if it were happening right now.

It's really quite simple... instead of focusing on all the crappy things that have happened that day, we're purposefully focusing on something positive. And just see what that does to your mood.



That's it for my first edition. Take what you need and leave what you don't. If you found this valuable, don't forget to subscribe using the links below, and I'd love to have your feedback so feel free to get in touch. Thanks for reading - Dave

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