

Fear isn't the enemy, lack of clarity is

Earle Airey

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Welcome to Victory Leadership, where good leadership leads to victory. Here we help emerging and established leaders win through clarity, confidence and growth. Let's get started.

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Welcome to the leadership pit stop where we help you refuel your leadership with clarity, confidence and growth. My name is Earl Airey and I am with Victory Leadership.

And I am so glad that you're here today because today we're talking about something that many leaders experience but few openly discuss. Fear. It seems at times people are fearful about talking about fear. And it's not the obvious kind, but it's the quiet kind of fear.

It's the kind that shows up right before a difficult conversation, right before a decision, or right before a moment where leadership is required most. So let's look at this from a green flag moment perspective.

So cars are making that, that qualifying lap, they're starting to race, they're all together, they're heading towards the start line, and the flagger is waving the green flag. So as we paint the picture, as the race begins, you, you know, you need to have a conversation with someone on your team.

You've thought about it, you replayed it in your mind, you may have even rehearsed it with a co worker or family member. But the moment never quite feels right. So you wait.

Not because you don't care, but because there is something in you that is saying, this might not go well. This isn't the right time. That is fear. Now, what does fear actually do? And fear is, it is an emotional element.

It is an item that is triggered when we feel that there is a danger. And that's the part of our brain, the amygdala. And you may have heard of something called the amygdala hijacking.

And that occurs in that brief amount of time. Some have said it is as short as 5 seconds, 5 to 10 seconds.

In which when we encounter something and we perceive and our perception is us trying to understand what that is, we're trying to understand what the truth is about that to us, there is our perception and then there is the truth. And then we, we try to make that gap as short as possible. Because when you hear, you may heard something like, oh, you're scared about nothing.

And that might be the actual truth, but the perception, until we gain a little bit more understanding about what's going on, is our truth for the

moment. So the fear in of itself, yeah, there is an emotional tie to it and there's also a function that it, that it carries out.

Because when we are, when our amygdala is hijacked, then we're starting to move into that fight or flight. Fight, flight, freeze, faint, any of those elements that help to insulate us from the potential danger so it can narrow our focus.

We're trying to get a laser precision on where we think the threat is coming from, because that's where our focus needs to be. If I'm in the wilderness and I have a wild animal coming at me, I'm not thinking about the trees or the lake or the ground.

I'm thinking about the threat that's coming right at me. And if I'm thinking about it to the point where I ignore the environment, then I may have, I may, I might be ignoring some elements that can help me.

I can also look at some elements that might put me into a worse situation because I'm not paying attention to them. That is the narrowing of the focus, amplification of the risk. Do I have the ability to fight? Do I need to run?

And then if I need to escape, what can I use in my environment to aid in my escape? And if that is the case, then I'm looking to avoid the situation because now I am trying to reduce the fear by removing myself from it.

Or maybe I have to go head to head and I'm looking to grab a branch or a rock and I'm ready to go to war. So I'm either trying to avoid or I'm trying to control the fear.

And depending on what the fear, you know, what the actual threat is, I may not be handling it very well. Now. Now, from the perspective of leadership, this can show up as silence instead of clarity. So I, I try to, as I say, fly below the radar.

I'm trying to avoid detection. And I'm not seeking clarity because that might mean I need to pop my head up and ask some questions to get a greater understanding.

And there is a point to where either I'll decide to stay quiet or I'll decide to, to speak up. Then there is the delay factor. For several reasons, I might delay making a decision. And that delay can be connected to the fear.

And then there's also the comfort. The comfort instead of growth, not having to make a decision may feel like it's comfortable.

And the growth that I would gain from the knowledge of what happens next may be avoided. So while it feels like comfort, it's really not.

But in the moment, that little bit of respite, It may feel completely necessary, but almost like a substance abuse or, you know, an addiction,

that little brief respite is worth the effort, even if it has setbacks. That's part of the amygdala hijack.

And we're not necessarily thinking logically or creatively in a positive sense or, you know, thinking very, thinking about the best of the situation as it unfolds. But here's the key. The fear, the fear in of itself is not the problem.

The, on the unprocessed fear, those elements that would be the tools to help us deal with it in a meaningful way. In those tools that we don't have or don't have the knowledge of how to use them, that's where, where the problem is.

So if we look at concepts that, you know, that are, that are well known in, in the science, like Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, many people don't necessarily feel that Maslow did his due diligence when developing the, the hierarchical needs. However, it has what I call organic appeal. People can look at it, they can relate to it.

And while there may still be some deficits in the, in the model in general, we could take a look at it and we can see that, okay, that, that kind of makes sense. It's. It's like you're thirsty, you're not going to drink a cup of gasoline versus a cup of water.

You know, we don't necessarily need scientific study to tell us that one versus the other is dangerous. However, there may be some benefit into getting an understanding as to why somebody would choose one versus the other.

So from Maslow's perspective, there are elements, of course, that it doesn't take into account, like substance abuse, addictions, things of that nature. However, as a whole, it can give us some understanding of how we prioritize certain elements under ideal situations or circumstances.

And these elements help to contribute towards how we make a meaningful connection with the environment. Because a lot of fear in leadership is tied back to security. So will this backfire? Will this cost me my job?

Will this negatively impact me in some meaningful way? Then we can look at belonging. How will others see me? How will I be seen by my direct reports, by my peers, by my superiors? And then the esteem.

What if I get this wrong? How is this going to make me feel about my own sense of self worth? Do I walk away from this feeling less than adequate?

Do I feel, you know, not up to the task?

And maybe even just as bad or worse, you know, if others, you know, others see me that way, if I feel, if my perception is they're going to see me in a negative light, then that again feels further erodes, potentially erodes my sense of Selfworth as well as if other people are counting on me or depend on me or need me, how does that. How can that potentially impact them?

So while these are deeply human concerns, and even if we are aware of what they are, the awareness alone doesn't move us forward. It just makes us aware. What we need is a process.

I don't necessarily need a map to let me know that I am lost, but I need a map to get back to a place where I am, you know, to a known place. So one of the things that we developed at Victory Leadership is something that we call the clear model. And CLEAR is an acronym.

And the thought is that when we're in our car and if we're in a race or we're on the highway, we have these things called rear view mirrors. Now, the size of the mirror is a lot smaller than the windshield that we're looking out of.

And I love what it says on the passenger mirror to be cautious, that elements in the mirror are closer than they appear to be. And there are things in life where, if there is something that is behind us before we can make a safe lane change.

Because when we make a lane change, we're basically making a strategy decision. We're looking to change direction or advance. And before we make that move to make it safe, we look in our rear mirrors.

We don't hold the glance in our rearview mirror for very long because we got this big windshield in front of us, and that's where stuff is happening. So we'll only look in the rearview mirror, take our eyes off the road, so to speak, just for a moment.

So when we do that, we're looking through this, this clear windshield. And clear is an acronym. And C is for clarify. We want to clarify what it is that we need to be concerned about and define that level of concern.

When we check our rearview mirrors, basically, when we look around us, even where we're going, we need to know where we're at. Then we want to locate where elements are. So the L for locate is where are these things coming from? So.

So if I'm moving forward, if there's something I need to avoid, if I'm about to make a lane change, can I do so safely? You know, I need to locate where the traffic is around me so that I can navigate within that.

And then I want to evaluate, so E. So the next letter is E. And that is what are the consequences of my actions or my inactions. So if I don't make a lane change, is that going to put me further behind. Is that going to risk triggering an accident?

Am I going to miss my exit and then I'm going to have to backtrack? And that's going to take additional time and resources. But once I take a look at all of those, all of those elements, I need to act.

I just can't sit there and just continue to let things go as they're moving along. A decision has to be made and an intentional step to move in a positive direction. It needs to be made.

We can't analyze, you know, you know, analyze so much to the point where we start to suffer paralysis by analysis, you know, looking for perfect information that we many times are, we're just not going to get, but we can get enough information that we can at least take one intentional step towards the direction we need to go and then we wrap it up with IR and reflect. How did that turn out? What else needs to be done? Was that a smart move? What did we learn that we may want to do different next time?

So all of those things come together to help provide clarity. So if we apply this, we can look at a scenario of speaking up in a meeting. Speaking. So the C for clarify.

I might sound wrong I in that and that might sound wrong maybe from the perspective of trying to get an understanding of what's going on. If I ask about something, do I sound wrong and what am I asking? I remember back in school, teacher always said there are no stupid questions.

And of course while there are questions that they do waste time. If you haven't done at least some basic due diligence and depending on the environment, depends on what that looks like or what that is.

So if, if you're working in a bakery and you don't know what dough is. Yeah, that's a stupid question. Question. When you ask, well, what's that lump over? It's dough.

You work in a bakery, you know what you know, so you're not going to ask that question.

However, if there's something that, where there's a lot of black dots on it, especially if you're a culinary art student, then maybe it's raisins or maybe it's, you know, sesame seeds or you know, poppy seeds, those things, then you, okay, those aren't stupid questions, especially when you're, when you're learning.

But we may have a tendency to feel that we may not be able to ask certain things because it just, it sounds, it makes us feel like our sense of self worth is potentially is threatened by asking those questions. So we might sound wrong. And that can. And what's, what is the location, what is the direction that that apprehension is coming from it?

That, that I to locate it might be our own self esteem, it might be what we're thinking about. Do I feel like I'm going to look silly or that I'm going to feel stupid?

And not that there isn't any validation in the way that we feel, the way we feel is the way we feel, but the location of the, of why we feel that way may be based in our own sense of being uncomfortable with our own deficits. Now if we go to E the evaluate then okay, if I might sound

wrong and this is a shot to my ego, what is staying silent going to do? I have to evaluate.

And by staying silent I might need to risk sounding silly to get the information I need so that I can put it towards making meaningful decision or a meaningful course of action. And that's the next step is to act, to share one concise point and then reflect on how that went.

You may reflect and that may change the elements that help to contribute towards your clear path.

Before the meeting is even over, many elements may occur and you're building upon them and you're learning and you're reapplying them in a meaningful way. And this is what helps to build confidence. Not saying that the confidence is going to go from 0 to 100 in one meeting.

However, over time when practice it can build. And that's courage, that's courageous. And courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to move forward in spite of it.

So here's what I want to, I want you to consider. So the white flag, that's the last lot. So as you're heading to that last lab, I want you to think about this.

That fear, fear is not a weakness fear, it's information.

And that element that brings us a sense of caution and how we respond to that, you know, that's, that's fear, you know, so fear in and of itself, it's not a weakness, it's information. And then what we do with that information is, you know, what we think about it. We want to consider that avoidance can create long term cost.

So we, we avoid something now. And what does that do down the road? That's that part of the evaluating. What happens if I say something, don't say something, do, don't do.

What does, what does that contribute? And if it sets up a precedence, then who knows what that might lead to? Because if we create an element that is not very easy or very flexible.

Then we might wind up undoing a lot of, of a lot of contributions or a lot of work because we might have to start over. So trying to get some understanding of what that avoidance could potentially manifest itself as.

Not to say that we got a crystal ball, but you may have heard of the saying, if you want to predict the future, then create it. And then the structure, we want to have structure. And that structure helps to give us a guide, a guiding light.

It gives us some thought about what we can reference back to. So we're not starting over from, you know, from zero, from scratch every time.

And one of those is I've shared many times is the SMART Goals or smart and I actually am referring to it as a framework. One of the books that is currently under development is called Smart Victories.

And it looks at utilizing SMART goals and turning it into a system, into something that goes beyond just what it was originally intended. And there are some examples in this coming publication.

But the acronym of SMART is that they are specific, you know, so that their information is as complete as possible to move forward in a meaningful way. Not that it's perfect, but that we can move forward with more assurance.

So the goal should be well defined and unambiguous as possible, clearly stating what needs to be accomplished. And then the measurement, we want that to be measurable so that the progress towards the goal can be quantified, allowing us to track and to assess.

And if we need to reapply or if we need to change course, then it should also be achievable. The goal should be realistic, attainable and considering the available resources and capabilities.

So we may need to get additional resources if we're to move forward so that we can obtain what it is that we're looking to achieve. And then it should be relevant. The goal should align with the overall objectives and contribute to the larger purpose.

And then of course, the time, the timeliness of it, the time bound that the goal should have a defined deadline, creating a sense of urgency in facilitating timely completion. Now these elements, when cultivated into a framework, you can take a look at how it relates to things beyond just achieving a goal.

And since when we ever accomplish and we do something, there is a goal in mind. But when you apply it towards things like change management, how do you apply smart, the SMART model towards change management?

Or how do you utilize it to gather feedback or look for how it can contribute to time management, team collaboration or leadership development? These are just a few of the elements that will be in Smart Victories.

But for now you can look at them in a way, how it can contribute towards the clarity and the reduction of fear in the environment so that we're not stalled.

You know, that are many times you may have seen, especially like in stock car racing like nascar, somebody makes a move that causes cars to, to bump into one another or as they like to say, trading paint, they're swapping paint. And then it goes a little too far, Somebody loses traction and spins out. And then many cars may get tied up in that, that collision.

And as you're moving along, your car may actually stall. It may stall out in the process.

If you can keep your car running and you can maneuver, you can utilize your mirrors in this big huge windshield to provide some clarity.

As you are trying to avoid this, this challenge of avoiding getting taken out of the race, then that will help you, that clarity will help you to build further confidence, your ability to maneuver through those challenging situations and that will contribute to your growth as a leader. So this clarity, confidence and growth, it's not just a philosophy, it's a process.

So if you want to put this into action, think in manageable terms, something small just to get familiar with it. Think about one situation you've been avoiding. Don't solve for everything. Think of it as just the next step.

So if you take that smart framework and you think about how can you apply that to just the next step? You're not all the way to the end of your journey for the moment, but this is just the next step in getting there. Run through the clear process.

Are there elements there that can contribute towards you moving through to the next step, then the next, and then the next, and then the next thing you'll know, you're closer to the finish line than you were from the starting line. Because again, remember that leadership is not about eliminating fear. It's about learning how to lead through it.

And that just shows how good leadership can lead to victory. Thank you so much for spending some time with me today and talking about this challenging subject.

There are additional resources on the Victory Leadership website.

So if you go to victoryleadership.com resources, you'll find additional information that will lay out the clear model as well as some links to smart goals.

And as always, if there's anything that any additional resources or information, you can contact me through our contact page at Victory Leadership or, or you can respond to the corresponding article on LinkedIn. So if you look up Fear isn't the Enemy, then you'll receive, you'll get back some or some search results and you can comment there.

So again, thank you much for for sharing some time. I appreciate it very much and I will see you in the winter circle. Take care everyone.

Earle Airey

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As always, good leadership leads to victory. I'll see you in the winner's circumstances.

Earle Airey

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Sam.