

# A Day in the Life of a Courageous Leader

By Rick Denley

June 3, 2026

Most people think courageous leadership looks like confidence from the moment your feet hit the floor. Truth is, most mornings start with something far more human: that flicker of “*Am I doing enough? Am I enough?*”

Imposter syndrome doesn’t disappear just because you’ve led teams, built companies, or stood on stages. It just becomes something you learn to work *with* instead of run from.

For me, the day starts quietly. No phone. No inbox. No scrolling. Just a journal, a pen, and a few minutes to get honest with myself. Gratitude first — because it grounds me. Intentions second — because they guide me.

Then I move. A stretch, a light workout, or a walk. Nothing heroic. Just enough to remind my body and mind that I’m in control of the pace, not the world around me.

Only after that do I fuel up: high protein, no sugar, a tea or coffee. Simple. Clean. Intentional. And then I dive into the work I love — the work that aligns passion with purpose.

Because courageous leadership isn’t about powering through chaos. It’s about **starting the day on your terms**, so you can show up for others on theirs.

## Leading With Purpose Throughout the Day

Before I open a single email, I ask myself one question:

**“How will I add value to my team today — both in the work and in their lives?”**

Every person on your team has a path they’ve chosen and communicated. A courageous leader doesn’t just manage tasks; they help people move forward on that path. That might mean coaching, listening, challenging, or simply acknowledging effort that often goes unseen.

Harvard Business Review has been clear on this: the most effective leaders today are those who combine **clarity with compassion, direction with empathy, and accountability with humanity**. Forbes echoes it — modern leadership is less about authority and more about *presence*.

One of my favourite lines on this comes from Marcus Aurelius: **“Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one.”** Leadership is action, not theory.

So I read. Every day. Something that sharpens my thinking, expands my perspective, or challenges my assumptions. Knowledge compounds — and so does ignorance.

And at the end of the day, I measure success with three simple questions:

1. **Did I help someone?**
2. **Did I do something for my future?**
3. **Did I do something for myself?**



If the answer is yes to these questions, it was a day worth showing up for. Don't let the noise convince you otherwise.

Stay positive. Stay optimistic. Stay energetic. Carry yourself with confidence — not because you have all the answers, but because you're committed to finding them.

That's courageous leadership.

## Closing the Day With Intention

Evenings are where the real reset happens. Thirty minutes before bed, No electronics. No doom-scrolling. No "just one more email."

I wind down with a book — right now, Marcus Aurelius again — and I'm embracing more of the Stoic mindset in my own life. Not the cold, emotionless version people misunderstand, but the grounded, intentional, *present* version. The version that reminds you that you control your actions, your reactions, and your energy.

Sometimes I'll finish the day the same way I started it: with a gratitude journal. A few quiet minutes to acknowledge what went right, what I learned, and what I want to carry into tomorrow.

Because courageous leadership isn't a title. It's a lifestyle. A discipline. A choice you make every single day.

And if you're reading this, you're already on that path.

Keep going. Lead boldly. And remember — when we align PASSION with PURPOSE = PROGRESS.

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Cheers,

Rick