



## Grace in the Gaps

A week ago, I had appendicitis. Not exactly something you pencil into your calendar between coaching sessions and a leadership debrief. It was sudden. Disruptive. And completely out of my control. Almost immediately, my mind went where many leaders' minds go:

- "I'm letting people down."
- "This is inconvenient for them."
- "I should have...somehow...planned better?" (Yes, even when my body literally rebels.)

So I did what needed to be done. I cancelled sessions. I sent messages. I braced myself for frustration, annoyance, or at best - polite understanding. What I got instead? Grace. Kindness. Zero drama.

- "Take care of yourself."
- "We'll reschedule - absolutely no problem."
- "Your health comes first."

And just like that, the story I had written in my head (and had in my head from years of previous conditioning)...wasn't the story at all.

As leaders, we talk a lot about boundaries and we have a lot of assumptions around them. We *know* boundaries are important, yet we often *feel* like we're failing when we enforce them. I (we) assume the people on the receiving end will experience our boundary as: inconvenience, disappointment, or worse...judgment.

In my past, I would have pushed through. Rescheduled my recovery before my calendar. Minimized what I needed. Maximized what I gave. And I would have worn that as a badge of honour. Now? I see it differently. Because leadership isn't just about how much you can carry. It's also about what you *model*. When you allow yourself to pause when needed, communicate honestly, and honour your limits, you give others silent permission to do the same. The more human you are, the more trust you build. Not less. Because people don't follow perfection. They follow reality they can relate to.

Sometimes leadership growth doesn't come from pushing harder. Sometimes it comes from...stopping. From recognizing that: you're allowed to be human, others are more understanding than you think, and grace - when given - has a way of multiplying. Including the grace you give yourself.

Be Inspired. Be Inspiring.  
Stacie

## Client Story

Client Story: Engineering Director at a Pipeline Company

My client once told me, almost proudly: "I've never cancelled a meeting. Not once." On the surface, it sounded like commitment, reliability, discipline. Her calendar was a perfectly executed machine - every commitment honoured, every meeting attended, every expectation met. However, it came at a cost. She was:

- running on empty more often than she admitted
- showing up physically, but not always mentally
- defaulting to "push through" instead of "pause and reset"

And her team felt it too. Not because she didn't care... but because she hadn't left herself any room to be human.

We worked on something deceptively simple: Redefining what "showing up" actually means. A few small, deliberate shifts:

1. She started telling the truth about capacity (early)
2. She redefined reliability
3. She created intentional space
4. She cancelled...when it actually made sense.

No one questioned her commitment. No one saw her as less reliable. Instead, her team started to notice:

- She was more present
- Her decision-making improved
- Her energy shifted. She wasn't just "getting through" meetings - she was leading them
- Psychological safety increased within the team.

She didn't become less committed. She became more intentional. And in doing so, she stopped modelling endurance at all costs...and started modelling sustainable leadership.

Because whether we realize it or not, our teams aren't just watching what we deliver. They're watching:

- what we tolerate
- what we normalize
- and what we give ourselves permission to do.

And then they follow suit.

GRACE ISN'T LOWERING THE STANDARD. IT'S RECOGNIZING WE'RE ALL CARRYING MORE THAN WE CAN SEE - AND LEADING ACCORDINGLY.