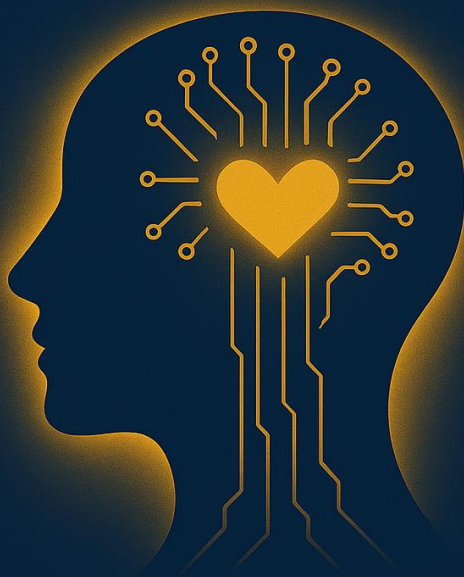


CARE, DARE SHARE

LEAD & THRIVE WITH
HEART, MIND, AI



ALLEGRA PATRIZI

Care, Dare, Share: Lead and Thrive with Heart, Mind, AI

Are you leading a transformation that's destined to fail?

The stark reality of the AI era is that 70-80% of all major business transformations collapse. The reason is the **"Rationality Mirage"** - a fatal reliance on data and dashboards that are blind to the one thing that truly determines success: your people. While competitors optimize algorithms, their most ambitious projects crumble because they ignore the human heart. This book is the definitive antidote to that costly failure.

Authored by a C-suite executive who has driven profound turnarounds at global companies, *Care, Dare, Share* is a battle-tested operating system for leading with heart, mind, and AI. It provides a practical, powerful framework for leaders, founders, and changemakers who refuse to accept failure as a statistic. Its core principle will become your competitive advantage: **Data informs. Humanity transforms.**

This is not just another book on leadership theory. It is a strategic masterplan for the modern leader, built around the **Care, Dare, Share Leadership Flywheel**. Inside, you will learn to:

- **CARE:** Master strategic empathy to build the deep trust and psychological safety required for any real change. Learn to connect with emotional presence, analyse with AI-enhanced insight, respond with tailored care, and empower your teams to create a culture where innovation can thrive.
- **DARE:** Convert human-centric insights into bold, courageous, and winning strategies. This is the engine for innovation, showing you how to dream with strategic imagination, assess opportunities with both data and wisdom, refine solutions until they are unstoppable, and execute with confidence.

- **SHARE:** Create unstoppable momentum by scaling trust and collective intelligence. Learn to synthesize scattered knowledge, harness collaborative energy, align all stakeholders, and radiate success that engages and builds a self-sustaining culture of transformation.

Packed with actionable frameworks, a 24-month implementation masterplan, and real-world case studies from diverse global industries - including Aegon, Novartis, Schneider Electric, and Shopify - *Care, Dare, Share* is the essential operating manual for the modern leader. Stop managing change and start leading a movement. The future belongs to those who deploy humanity at scale.

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Excerpt – Foreword, Chapter 1 and 2

Foreword

The future of leadership is heart-led, AI-powered.

Right now, somewhere in a boardroom, a leader is drowning in data and dashboards. They are making a decision that will ripple through hundreds of lives, armed with more data than any generation before them. Their dashboards are glowing with AI-powered predictions that can optimize supply chains and analyse market trends in milliseconds.

Yet, there's a brutal truth hiding in plain sight: 70-80% of these data-rich transformations will fail.

Why? Because the data, for all its precision, is deaf. The algorithms, for all their power, are blind to what truly matters. This is the Rationality Mirage of modern leadership: a relentless pursuit of optimization that prioritizes data and rationality, creating brilliant yet deaf, data-rich algorithms and transformations that are destined to fail. This book is your guide to escaping it.

Transformations fail not because of poor execution, but because we have abdicated the distinctly human act of leadership - deep, empathic listening - to the cold logic of the machine.

The Transformation Delusion We Are All Facing

We are told that we face a difficult choice: ignore AI and be outpaced by competitors, or lean into AI and risk losing the soul of our organisation.

This is a false choice. The real danger isn't in choosing one over the other. The danger lies in the delusion that AI, a tool of logic, can solve the fundamentally human problems of trust, culture, and purpose. We ask our algorithms to answer questions they were never designed to ask.

If you want to see this delusion in action, consider the widely reported story of Zillow's home-buying business, which serves as a powerful cautionary tale. The following is an interpretation of public events, intended to illustrate a key leadership principle.

The company, a titan of data, launched a bold initiative called "Zillow Offers." Their dream was to use their powerful AI, the "Zestimate," to predict housing prices with such accuracy that they could buy homes directly, make minor repairs, and resell them for a quick profit. It was the ultimate data-driven dare.

For a time, it seemed to work. The algorithms, glowing on dashboards just as we discussed, were a marvel of operational streamlining. But the data, for all its precision, was deaf. The AI could price a house, but it couldn't *care* about a neighbourhood's soul or feel the emotional currents of fear and exuberance that truly drive a market.

Imagine the scene in Zillow's boardroom in mid-2021. The dashboards were glowing with AI-powered predictions that could analyse market trends in milliseconds. The "Zestimate" was a marvel, projecting confident profits on the thousands of homes it was buying. The data was king, and its logic seemed absolute.

Real tensions can arise in such a situation. On one side, the data models are glowing, projecting confident profits with near-certainty. The quantitative evidence seems absolute. On the other side is the qualitative, on-the-ground human intelligence, the whispers from agents and regional managers about a change in market 'feeling.' In a culture heavily reliant on data, it's easy to see how such human insights, while politely acknowledged, might not carry the same weight as the seemingly infallible logic on the screen. This outcome serves as a powerful illustration of a core leadership challenge in the AI era. The situation suggests that daring with data is not enough; it must be integrated with a deep care for the human wisdom that provides essential context. The financial losses, which were widely reported to be over half a billion dollars, highlight the immense cost of a potential disconnect between brilliant technology and on-the-ground human insight.

The future of leadership is not about balancing technology and humanity. It is about leveraging technology with a profoundly amplified humanity. To do this, we must move a powerful truth from the footnotes of leadership to the headline: Data informs. Humanity transforms.

The most powerful intelligence of all is our own humanity.

I have led teams through massive transformations – mergers, market shifts, cultural divides. From my 20-plus years in the C-suite, as Chief Risk Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Chief Executive Officer, one truth stands clear: transformations fail when leaders forget the people behind the numbers.

The most impactful leaders are those who blend intelligence with heart, boldness, and humility.

Most initiatives collapse not from bad technology or flawed strategies. They crumble because we ignore the human heart. We create change fatigue. We deliver short-lived improvements that collapse the moment momentum fades. Organisations revert to old behaviours because we never addressed the soul of the system.

What if I told you that the most powerful act in our frenetic digital age is to slow down and listen?

Here's what I've discovered through all the transformations I have been involved in: AI will revolutionize operations, yes. But the decisions that shape trust, culture, and purpose? Those still rest with us.

The future belongs to leaders who dare to stay human.

No algorithm can carry the weight of moral complexity, trust, culture, or purpose. No machine can read the unspoken tension in a room or know when to push forward versus when to pause and heal. The essence of leadership remains irreducibly human. That's your job, as a leader.

This is collaborative leadership - where AI amplifies human capability rather than replacing it. Where empathy isn't a "soft skill"

but a strategic imperative. Where vulnerability becomes the foundation of unshakeable trust.

This is not a linear playbook - it's a journey of expanding leadership.

It begins with self-awareness, where empathy unlocks insight. It moves through courageous action, where bold decisions reshape outcomes. And it culminates in shared momentum, where trust becomes a cultural force.

This journey of expanding leadership is not a simple linear path; it is a self-reinforcing **flywheel**. Each phase builds momentum for the next, creating a virtuous cycle of human-centred, AI-powered leadership.

The **CARE, DARE, SHARE Leadership Flywheel** below is your master map for this journey.

It shows how the human insights and trust generated in **CARE** fuel the bold innovation of **DARE**. The successes and learnings from **DARE** are then amplified and scaled through **SHARE**, which in turn builds a more intelligent and connected culture, deepening the capacity for **CARE** in the next, more powerful cycle. As the flywheel spins, your impact naturally expands - from the Self, to your Team, to the entire System.

CARE, DARE, SHARE Leadership Flywheel

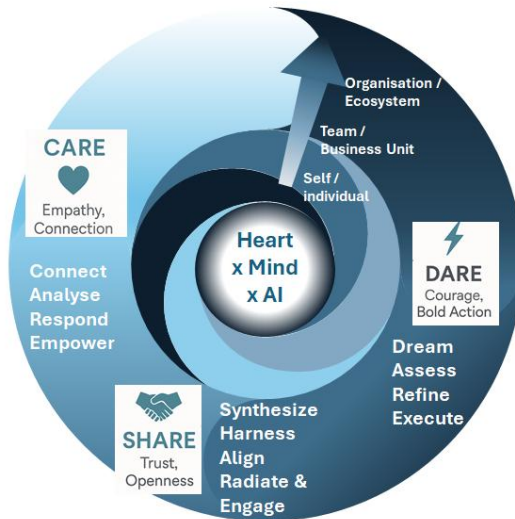


Fig. 1. The CARE, DARE, SHARE Leadership Flywheel: from self to organisation-wide iterations of the CARE, DARE, SHARE methodology create the foundation for successful, long-lasting transformations.

Your Three Leadership Intelligences

Leaders who thrive in this new world master timeless qualities - integrity, vision, resilience, and the ability to inspire - while adding distinct intelligences that are nowadays essential:

- **Empathic Intelligence (EI):** For connection, culture, and trust
- **Human Intelligence (HI):** For strategic insight and lived experience
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** For data-driven precision

These intelligences fuel three leadership pillars that define modern impact:

CARE

Empathy in action. Understanding stakeholder needs through emotional intelligence, enhanced by AI's analytical power. Whether you're addressing a large enterprise that must upgrade its

performance to thrive, team burnout at a tech startup, understanding parent concerns as a school principal, rallying volunteers around a nonprofit mission, or supporting a family member through change.

DARE

Innovation with courage. Having the courage to focus on what will truly make a difference, to take bold, calculated risks, to disrupt and innovate - backed by human wisdom and AI's foresight. Not reckless gambling, but strategic bravery informed by both data and intuition. Whether you're developing a new billion-dollar business line, pivoting your small business model, redesigning curriculum for better learning outcomes, launching a community health initiative, or making a life-changing career decisions.

SHARE

Trust at scale. Combining vulnerability, inclusion, and collaboration to unite teams and amplify impact. Creating cultures where people feel safe to fail forward, bold enough to dream big, and constructively supported to learn and succeed. Whether you're building culture in a remote team, creating psychological safety in a classroom, fostering collaboration among diverse community stakeholders, or strengthening relationships in your personal life.

What You'll Discover

This book is your practical guide to making CARE, DARE, SHARE your own. Across fourteen chapters, you'll master:

- **The CARE Framework** (Connect, Analyse, Respond, Empower) to activate empathy
- **The DARE Framework** (Dream, Assess, Refine, Execute) to drive innovation
- **The SHARE Framework** (Synthesize, Harness, Align, Radiate, Engage) to foster collaboration

Your Leadership Legacy

Leaders and organisations today face an intricate web of challenges - digital transformation, cultural integration, and ethical decision-making - alongside unprecedented opportunities for innovation and growth. Care, Dare, Share equips you to navigate these with confidence, ensuring your decisions are data-driven yet empathic, bold yet grounded, and collaborative yet strategic.

Every chapter includes real-world case studies, actionable tools, and reflection questions designed to help you immediately apply what you learn. These are based on my own 25+ years of C-level experience, as an executive, as a board member, and as a senior advisor, but also on in-depth documentation and senior interviews with people who were closely involved in the case studies presented. To share the lessons from my leadership journey as openly as possible while respecting confidentiality, some of the case studies have been anonymized. The data, and outcomes described are real, but the names of the institutions and their products, as well as some dialogues, and detailed events, have been adapted.

Transformation isn't something you implement - it's something you embody. And all these case studies should help you do just that, embody Care, Dare, Share.

The most effective leaders of tomorrow will be those who blend technological fluency with emotional depth. Those who understand that AI's role isn't to replace humans, but to amplify their judgment and capabilities.

AI doesn't automate leadership; it demands we deploy humanity at scale. This book is the operating manual for the Generative Leader - the one who uses empathy (Care), courage (Dare), and connection (Share) to make that future a success.

Who This Book Is For

Leadership isn't confined to corner offices or corporate hierarchies. If you influence others - whether you're running a Fortune 500 company, launching a startup from your garage, teaching in a

classroom, leading a nonprofit, coaching a team, or even navigating your own personal transformation - you are a leader. And this book is for you. Because Care, Dare, Share is a philosophy: to lead with utmost humanity, boldness, and humility. This philosophy will transform how you approach influence and impact in our interconnected, AI-augmented world, regardless of your title or setting.

CARE shows up when a startup founder takes time to truly understand why their best developer is considering leaving, using both emotional intelligence and data analytics to address retention.

DARE manifests when a high school principal courageously redesigns the entire grading system to better serve student learning, backed by educational research and community input.

SHARE comes alive when a nonprofit leader creates space for volunteers to share their own stories and ideas, building a movement rather than just managing tasks.

These aren't corporate concepts - they're human ones. The frameworks in this book scale from intimate one-on-one conversations to global organisational transformations because they're rooted in timeless principles of human connection, courageous action, and collaborative trust.

Every meaningful transformation starts with leaders who model the change they seek. Leaders who treat empathy as strength, courage as clarity, and vulnerability as the foundation of trust. These leaders don't just implement change - they embody it. And in doing so, they inspire similar behaviours throughout their large organisations or the few people around them.

That's where transformations become unstoppably powerful and long-lasting: they energise, they are embraced by the people, not imposed onto them.

Data informs. Humanity transforms.

Your leadership journey has the potential to create a future where technology serves humanity's highest aspirations.

The path forward requires leaders who understand that in our quest to build smarter organisations, we must never lose sight of what makes us fundamentally human.

This book is a new leadership compass for the AI era - anchored in emotional intelligence, guided by strategic boldness, and scaled through collective intelligence.

Are you ready to lead with both heart and intelligence?

Let's begin to Care deeply, Dare boldly, Share generously.

Explore The Leader's Compendium: From Insight to Action: a practical toolkit of diagnostics, prompts, and frameworks designed to help you apply the CARE, DARE, and SHARE principles in real time. Think of it as your leadership field guide.

You can find it on www.AllegraPatrizi.com or www.Care-Dare-Share.com

Chapter 1: The Day I Took The Job

Leadership reveals who you are - especially when you've spent years hiding behind competence.

June 15, 2021 – The Hague.

It was 8:02 in the morning, the office was quiet. The announcement of my appointment as CEO of Aegon The Netherlands had recently been published, and I was standing alone by the tall windows of the 2nd floor. Below me, the city moved with its usual rhythm - trams, bikes, busy lives. Inside, I felt anything but rhythmic.

I wasn't nervous. It was something deeper - uneasy. Like I had stepped into a role everyone expected me to fill, but inside, I knew I was crossing a threshold into something entirely unknown. Until that point, I had led mostly technical teams - analytical, focused, fact-driven. This was different. This was about people, legacy, emotion, and transformation.

In this new reality, the data pointed toward clear opportunities: the need for a unified strategic direction, a response to commercial pressures, and a drive for greater operational efficiency. It was the perfect diagnosis for a leader falling victim to the Rationality Mirage, offering a clean, quantifiable, and dangerously incomplete picture.

As those first few days went by, walking the halls revealed a deeper truth the data could not see: a profound disconnection. A human system quietly breaking under the weight of metrics that measured everything except what mattered. The fragmentation wasn't a separate problem; it was the direct result of leading by spreadsheet.

This wasn't just an operational challenge. It was a human one.

And if we wanted to be successful at transforming this business, we had to tackle the human aspect with tact and intelligence.

It dawned on me. I was afraid. Not of dealing with the challenges painted by the data. I was afraid of missing what really mattered.

And I remember telling myself:

Care. Dare. Share.

I didn't know it yet, but those three words would become my leadership compass. It was the compass I needed to navigate away from the purely rational and escape the trap that reduces leadership to a spreadsheet.

A compass, to find emotional clarity when the path ahead was blurred, to make bold moves when inertia threatened to stall us, and to connect people who had stopped trusting in each other.

Since that moment, I have used that compass every single day. In board meetings. In town halls. In moments of crisis. In moments of hope.

And now, in this book, I want to give it to you.

Pause and reflect: Where, in your experience, have you seen data tell one half of the story while human experience tells you the other half?

The Challenge: Beyond the Balance Sheet

The irony wasn't lost on me. As a woman and a foreigner leading in the Netherlands - with less-than-brilliant Dutch language skills - I was about to discover that my tucked-beneath humanity might become my greatest leadership strength.

Somewhere deep inside, I had always known another kind of leadership. One built not just on logic, but on listening. Not just strategy, but soul.

My experience as a single mother of three, my Italian heritage, my years living in different countries - these had given me something precious: deep empathy for people and cultures. An ability to listen across perspectives, to sense unspoken tensions, to celebrate differences, to understand the struggles of normal people going by their normal life.

But in the technical environments I'd grown up in professionally, these human instincts had been quietly parked. There had never been space - or permission - to lead with heart.

The old playbook said: vulnerability is weakness. Cold rationality is your compass. Results come from analysis, not emotion.

The new reality demanded to embrace empathy.

This wasn't just a change in role - it was a transformation in how I showed up as a leader. I had to dare to exercise the parts of myself that I had kept professionally dormant. I had to trust that leading with both mind and heart wasn't just possible - it was essential.

Your turn: what is your leadership style? Do you tend to use your brain or heart as a first resource?

The Transformation: We Started by Listening

Instead of creating another strategy deck, with the executive committee, we did something radical: We connected.

We made a commitment to visit clients – for me, it was two per week, whenever possible. But this wasn't just about me getting closer to customers. We ensured that the entire executive committee would also regularly meet with clients. If we were going to lead the transformation, we needed direct contact with the people we served, not filtered reports about their needs and concerns. And role modelling starts from the top! So, as an executive committee, we needed to be the change we want to see.

We also began listening across the organisation with systematic intentionality. We went around the company, creating space for colleagues to tell us what they saw, what they felt, and what they viewed as the priorities going forward. We held countless town halls. But these weren't the traditional one-way presentations that employees had grown accustomed to. Instead, we created genuine dialogue - authentic two-way conversations with an approachable human leader. And for those who wished to say things in Dutch, despite English being the official language, we did welcome it. Sometimes I needed a bit of help with the Dutch language, but that too reinforced the feeling of approachability and co-creation.

Some of the stories were filled with hope and dreams, some other with pain and frustration. We listened to them all, with no judgement.

Soon, something beautiful happened: formal barriers dissolved. People saw us not as distant executives, but as fellow humans navigating the same complex world.

But we didn't just listen with empathy - we listened with discipline. For every story, we asked: What does this mean for the business? What patterns are emerging? Where does data confirm or challenge what we're hearing? For every insight we gathered, we analysed it rigorously to test for impact and meaning. We listened with purpose, combining human empathy with analytical rigor to understand not just what people were saying, but what it meant for our organisation's future.

Try this: In your next team meeting, spend the first ten minutes asking: "What's one thing about our customers that keeps you up at night?" or "What's the one single biggest pain point our colleagues have to endure in our processes?"

The Breakthrough: Three Pillars Emerge

Six months into the role, we had something that was co-created with our people AND rigorously tested for potential and feasibility, not something imposed from above: a new strategy based on clear and straightforward pillars, that was both the result of listening and analysing.

Besides that, we developed simple behavioural guidelines that we had all decided to adopt together - not complex corporate jargon that no one can remember even if their life depended on it, but simple words that everyone could understand and connect with.

Language that was ours - shared, not handed down. We called it "potato language", because it had the comforting warmth, the sublime simplicity, and the magic effectiveness of a jacket potato.

We returned to the organisation with these insights through a second round of in-person town halls, and this time the energy was

completely different: we had shown we could listen, and now we dared to tell them where we would go, what we would do, how we would behave, based on all we had understood.

Through those in-person town halls, we addressed directly every employee of the company, at every location. People didn't just hear about change - they saw themselves reflected in it. They recognized their voices in the strategy and the agreed behaviours we were presenting.

The energy and alignment this created were extraordinary. From the executive committee members to the reception clerk, everyone could relate and repeat, in their own words, the meaning of what we had agreed collectively. Some, of course, were more articulate than others, but all represented the meaning pretty faithfully.

And that is when the magic of alignment happens. Thousands of people moving with shared clarity, energy, and rhythm - like a team working in perfect sync.

The results followed swiftly and dramatically:

Commercial momentum built across all business lines as everyone realized their impact on client perception and on the support they could bring to the front-line teams to deliver effective solutions to clients.

Cost control improved as people understood and embraced efficiency, pockets of savings started popping up, and waste was reduced.

Operational excellence took root as silos began to break down, as people felt accountable to “keep the rats out of the kitchen” (that was one of the agreed behaviours that went around the whole organisation, and although clearly a bit iconoclastic, it became the viral mantra in every team to incite people to catch the problems, solve them and share the learnings with the rest of the organisation). People had shifted from hiding problems or passing them on to the next person to being proud of solving them and letting it be known.

Our long-standing balance sheet volatility began to reduce significantly as we addressed fundamental structural issues and as we evolved from a slightly reactive approach to a more proactive approach to financial markets.

But more than the metrics, the mood had changed. Teams were energized, aligned, and cooperative. Customers were responding positively. People believed again - in the work, in the mission, in each other. Performance started to shift upward across every dimension that mattered. And so, quarter after quarter, we would hold some more townhalls to celebrate the success. And that started our flywheel: more energy, more success, more confidence, more energy, more success, more confidence.....

That's when I realized: we had cared, we had dared, and we had shared.

The philosophy wasn't named yet, but it had come to life in the most practical way possible.

We **Cared** - by listening deeply, connecting across the organisation, and treating empathy as a strategic skill. We had demonstrated that understanding people wasn't separate from driving results; it was the foundation for sustainable, relevant transformation. Because at the end of the day, the only really successful transformations are the ones that are built on solving real problems for real people: clients, employees, or investors.

We **Dared** - by changing how we led, not just what we did, and trusting that courage, humility, and kind authority could drive performance. We had taken bold steps in inviting others to co-create our future. We dared to make choices, which is often so difficult in large organisations because every department has its hobby horses. We dared to simplify and to focus on what would make a real difference to the real problems we needed to solve. And we also dared to stick to our decisions, once they had been taken, accepting that it may not be the popular decision, but it was certainly one that had been pondered, taking into account the various perspectives.

We **Shared** - by dissolving barriers, embracing transparency, and building something together. We had moved from a culture of hierarchy and information hoarding to one of collaboration and accountability. We as leaders accepted to own the responsibility when things were not going well with certain actions or projects, and to share the success with everyone involved. The exact opposite of what often happens in many organisations....

The transformation was profound and lasting. We doubled the value of the company while significantly improving our people scores and client satisfaction.

Two years later, the company was sold, for a range of reasons, including its renewed trajectory and strong performance. And to this day, when I meet former colleagues, union and workers' council members, regulators, they still speak of that moment in time. The energy. The possibility. The exhilarating feeling of real, human, collective transformation.

Pause and reflect: Where in your experience did you face a transformation where you needed to Care, Dare, Share? How did you deal with it at the time?

Taking It Further After Aegon

After Aegon, I have had a number of roles, as an Executive, as a Board Member, and as Senior Advisor. In December 2024, I decided to take a break from executive roles to help several organisations with my unique combination of C-level experience and AI expertise, to finalise the gathering and structuring of all the data I had amassed during the last 4-5 years for this book, as well to refine and test all the Care, Dare, Share methodologies in as many environments as possible to complement my previous executive experiences.

Among the companies I have played an important role in, were a mobility services player, a local consumer lending company, a bank based in a European country, a logistics company with global presence, and a top, multi-regional, accounting services firm.

In all these cases, I have actively used the CARE, DARE, SHARE approach.

Large regional accounting firm

For example, the large accounting services firm I helped was facing a “productivity paradox”: highly skilled professionals were overwhelmed by repetitive, low-value tasks that hindered both client impact and job satisfaction. So, applying the CARE, DARE, SHARE approach, we started by listening deeply to a selection of 2000+ employees and many clients, identifying the need to free experts from digital drudgery and deliver faster, more strategic insights to clients. This care for internal well-being and external value creation became the human-centric driver behind its bold AI transformation. A very substantial investment was committed in generative AI, a significant DARE, becoming one of the first large accounting firms in their region to build a proprietary tool, which we shall call “MyPal”. Rather than relying on public models, the firm dared to prioritize trust, building AI within a secure, private environment. They also committed to upskilling every employee on ethical and effective AI usage, transforming their entire workforce into AI-powered professionals. With a strong governance framework about AI usage, they dared to lead with ethics, not just speed.

MyPal got progressively rolled out across the entire regional workforce, enabling the SHARE part: cross-team collaboration and real-time intelligence sharing. Insights on AI usage were tracked and re-shared, creating a culture of collective learning and continuous improvement.

The unexpected positive effect was that this development has also enabled the firm to be credible in advising clients on their own AI transformations, sharing not just technology, but lived experience and ethical frameworks.

Results include 100% workforce AI enablement, the launch of new advisory services, and recognition as a regional leader in responsible AI deployment.

Bank operating in Europe

At the bank based in a European country, a very innovative app, which, for the purpose of this book, was developed, we will call it “Zaya”. Zaya aimed at helping customers perform a vast amount of simple banking tasks, which in normal times would clog call-centres and often take an inordinate time to perform, resulting in frustration both for customers and call-centre colleagues. Zaya got recognitions in its country as one of the best AI applications. Zaya was also one of the first conversational banking platforms in its country, and enabled a whole new level of intuitive and helpful banking experiences for customers.

New products were introduced, such as innovative accounts and unique credit cards propositions. All of this resonated deeply with customers because they spoke to human feelings.

After about 9 months of Care, Dare, Share transformation, the results were strong and very encouraging:

- High single-digit improvement in income
- Improvement in risk, significant
- More than 50% increase in profits
- Above sector average engagement scores with employees
- Double-digit increase in cross-selling

Logistics player with global presence

The large logistics player I was involved with, found itself at the convergence of urgent pressures and strategic opportunity. As global logistics demand surged, fuelled by e-commerce and rising customer expectations, the company faced increasing operational strain, legacy systems fragmentation, and growing scrutiny over its environmental footprint.

The pandemic had further exposed vulnerabilities in visibility, planning, and agility. Recognizing that incremental change wouldn’t suffice, they decided to launch an ambitious transformation. The goal: to build a logistics network that was not only smarter and faster, but greener and more human-centric, capable of serving a rapidly changing world with care, courage, and shared purpose.

So we started by tackling workforce anxiety by launching large-scale upskilling programs and committed to drastically reducing emissions, with different targets over 10, 20, and 30 years. We dared to invest significantly in robotics, AI, and fleet electrification. Finally, we scaled impact across the ecosystem, offering carbon-neutral services to clients and forming partnerships to accelerate collective progress.

The results here, as well, like in the other cases, were strong: double-digit productivity gains, AI-driven efficiency, and industry-wide influence in sustainable logistics.

We will explore all these cases in further depth in this book.

This work, combined with my experience from Aegon NL, convinced me of the power of CARE, DARE, SHARE: how CARE for people, DARE to invest boldly, and SHARE knowledge systemically can transform even the most traditional sectors.

From Practice to Philosophy

These weren't isolated successes or lucky breaks. They revealed a deeper truth: CARE, DARE, SHARE isn't just a management style or a set of tactics. It's a human-centred transformation model that is particularly suited for the age of AI.

If you think of it, the paradox is that as things got increasingly digital across businesses, the level of “transactionality” has gone up, not down, and the level of engagement with people as humans has gone down, not up. Whereas, one could have hoped that as tedious, transactional tasks were being automated, people in help-centres would have been freed up to be more, not less, focused on customers as humans. Zaya or MyPal, for example, freed up humans to deliver empathy where it matters.

CARE, DARE, SHARE aims at resolutely putting the human back at the centre of the business model. It recognizes that humans long to be understood, cared for, recognised in their needs, including emotional needs, and that AI and data insights amplify human wisdom rather than replace it.

This is the future: Heart, Mind, AI – together, combined through the CARE, DARE, SHARE framework. We started explaining the core of this framework in the foreword, but to be sure we are all on the same page, whether we have read or not the foreword:

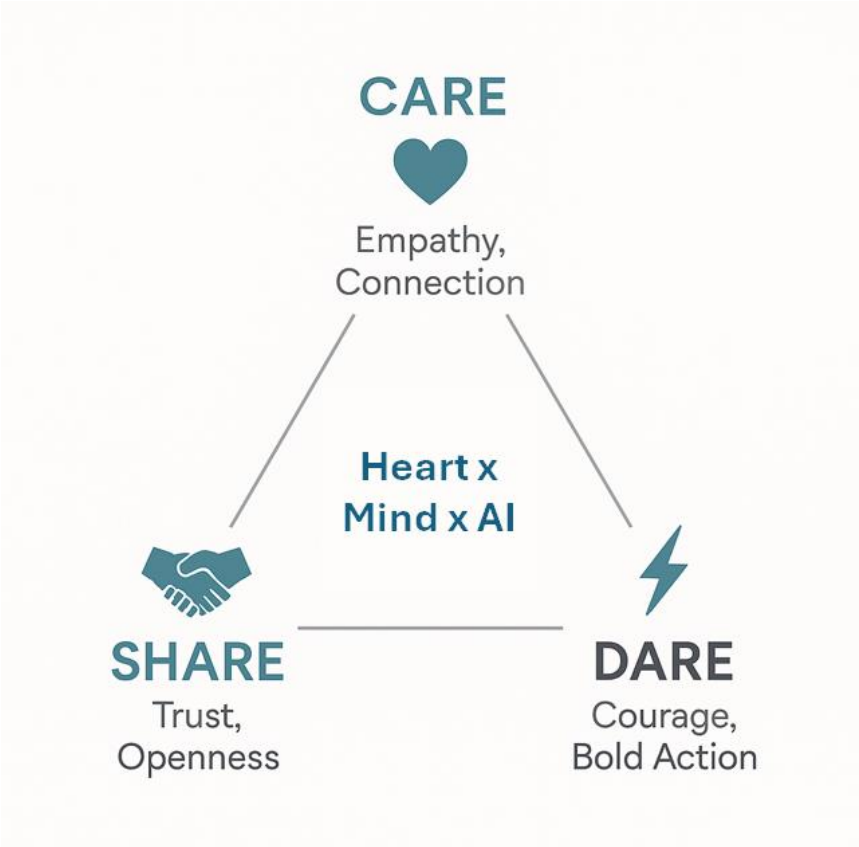


Fig. 2. The Care, Dare, Share model: a compass for bold, emotionally intelligent leadership in the age of AI

CARE is empathy in action - rooted in emotional intelligence and enhanced by AI's analytical precision. It's the deep understanding of stakeholder needs through emotional intelligence, whether addressing team pain points, anticipating customer needs, or dealing with regulatory concerns about operational processes.

DARE is innovation, focus, and simplification with courage - powered by human wisdom, creativity, and experience, sharpened by AI's foresight to take bold, strategic, well-calculated risks. It's about having the courage to challenge conventional wisdom while being grounded in both human insight and data-driven analysis.

SHARE is trust at scale - enabled through vulnerability, inclusion, celebration, introspection, and collective ownership. It's about creating environments where transparency and authentic human connection drive sustainable transformation and constant, honest learning.

Where Do You Stand On The CARE, DARE, SHARE Compass and Why This Matters?

If you don't care enough to truly understand your people, AI will optimize for metrics that don't matter.

If you don't dare to lead with both mind and heart, you'll build efficient systems that slowly hollow out your humanity.

If you don't share the journey transparently, you'll create change that happens to people, not with them.

Leadership is a journey - but not a straight line. It loops, accelerates, and sometimes stalls.

That's why this book offers two practical tools: the **Leadership Flywheel** and the **CARE, DARE, SHARE Compass**.

The **Leadership Flywheel**, which you saw in the Foreword, is your master map. It visualizes the dynamic system for generating leadership momentum, starting with empathy (CARE), moving through strategic courage (DARE), and culminating in collective impact (SHARE). It shows how your influence grows with each cycle from self to organisation-wide.

The **Compass**, on the other hand, helps you navigate your journey on that map in real time. It lets you assess where you are strongest (e.g., CARE) and where you may need to grow (e.g., DARE or SHARE), so

you can consciously apply energy where it's needed most to keep the flywheel spinning faster and more effectively.

Some leaders get stuck in one direction - caring but never daring, or daring without sharing. The Compass brings clarity and intentionality, helping you lead not just from instinct, but with conscious alignment and purpose across all the axes.

Think of the **Leadership Flywheel** as your map for creating momentum. And the **Compass** as your trusted guide for the journey.

We kept the Compass deliberately simple and practical, so that you can come back to it often, as you progress through the book, to assess how you are developing on CARE, DARE, SHARE.

Your scores across CARE, DARE, and SHARE will help you recognize your strengths, imbalances, and areas of greatest potential growth.

Use it not as a judgment - but as a guide. A snapshot of your leadership imprint, ready to evolve.

Step 1: Answer each of these simple questions with a score of 1 to 5 (1 = Rarely/Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Usually, 5 = Always).

CARE

- **Connect: Building Emotional Bonds**
 - Do I listen deeply to understand the emotions and concerns of my team or stakeholders, and do I create psychological safety? (1-5)
 - Do I ask open-ended questions to uncover what truly matters to others? (1-5)
- **Analyse: Leveraging AI for Empathic Insights**
 - Do I combine human intuition with data and AI tools to identify emotional patterns in feedback, moving beyond what is happening to understand why? (1-5)
 - Do I actively create an "Actionable-Truth-Zone" by seeking and rewarding uncomfortable truths that are critical for improvement? (1-5)

- **Respond: Acting with Tailored Empathy**
 - Do I move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions by tailoring my actions and communications to the specific emotional and practical context of my stakeholders? (1-5)
 - Do I act on feedback in ways that show I've heard my team or customers? (1-5)
- **Empower: Creating Conditions for Growth**
 - Do I act as an orchestrator rather than a hero, focusing on building the emotional intelligence and capabilities of others so the team can thrive without me? (1-5)
 - Do I give my team opportunities to act autonomously, take ownership, and make decisions with confidence? (1-5)

DARE

- **Dream: Vision with Strategic Imagination**
 - Do I ground our team's vision in the real human needs we uncovered during the CARE phase, ensuring our boldest ideas solve meaningful problems? (1-5)
 - Do I use strategic imagination to envision future possibilities unconstrained by current limitations, using AI to explore and model what could be? (1-5)
- **Assess: Balancing Data and Intuition**
 - Do I rigorously evaluate bold ideas using a clear framework, combining data-driven insights with my intuition to evaluate opportunities? (1-5)
 - Do I seek diverse perspectives as well as data-driven analysis and AI-powered insights to validate (or challenge) my strategic intuition before deciding and committing significant resources? (1-5)
- **Refine: Crafting Resonant Solutions**
 - Do I use real-world feedback and lived experience to evolve our solutions from being functionally correct to emotionally resonant? (1-5)

- Do I apply a systematic process (e.g. AI or feedback loops) to ensure that what we learn from pilots is codified and designed for successful scaling? (1-5)
- Execute: Leading with Confidence
 - Do I lead implementation by communicating the human impact first ("why this matters to you") rather than focusing solely on the technology or project plan? (1-5)
 - Do I measure the success of our execution across three dimensions: immediate performance, long-term learning, and strategic readiness for the future, leveraging AI predictive abilities and adjusting plans during implementation? (1-5)

SHARE

- Synthesize: Connecting Collective Knowledge
 - Do I actively break down "knowledge islands" and silos by creating systems and rituals that connect scattered insights from across the organization into a cohesive whole? (1-5)
 - Do I act as an architect of collective intelligence, using AI to spot patterns and my human wisdom to help the entire team generate insights that no single person could alone? (1-5)
- Harness: Coordinating Collective Action
 - Do I design and orchestrate collaboration by first identifying the connective tissue between teams and initiatives? (1-5)
 - Do I use AI not just as a communication tool, but as an intelligence amplifier that helps coordinate shared learning and synchronized action across organizational silos? (1-5)
- Align: Uniting Stakeholders with Emotional Intelligence
 - Do I proactively map and address the emotional landscape and differing perspectives of all stakeholders to build a foundation of trust? (1-5)

- Do I align team efforts around shared goals using data and emotional insights, and ensure that all stakeholders understand their role in collective success and feel like co-creators? (1-5)
- Radiate and Engage: Amplifying and Sustaining Collaboration
 - Do I "radiate" progress by sharing successes, failures, and learnings with authentic transparency to build trust and inspire action? (1-5)
 - Do I build sustainable "engagement" by creating systems for recognition, continuous learning, and shared purpose that outlast any single project? (1-5)

Step 2: Sum your results for each of Care, Dare, Share.

Each sub-framework (e.g., Connect, Analyse) has 2 questions. Sum the scores for the 2 questions (possible range: 2–10).

Each framework (CARE, DARE, SHARE) has 4 sub-frameworks. Sum the scores of the 4 sub-frameworks (possible range: 8–40).

Step 3: Plot your footprint on the Compass

The compass is a radar chart with three axes (CARE, DARE, SHARE), each scored from 8 to 40. Plot your scores on each of the CARE, DARE, SHARE axes, and then connect the points as a triangle. The larger the triangle, the better.

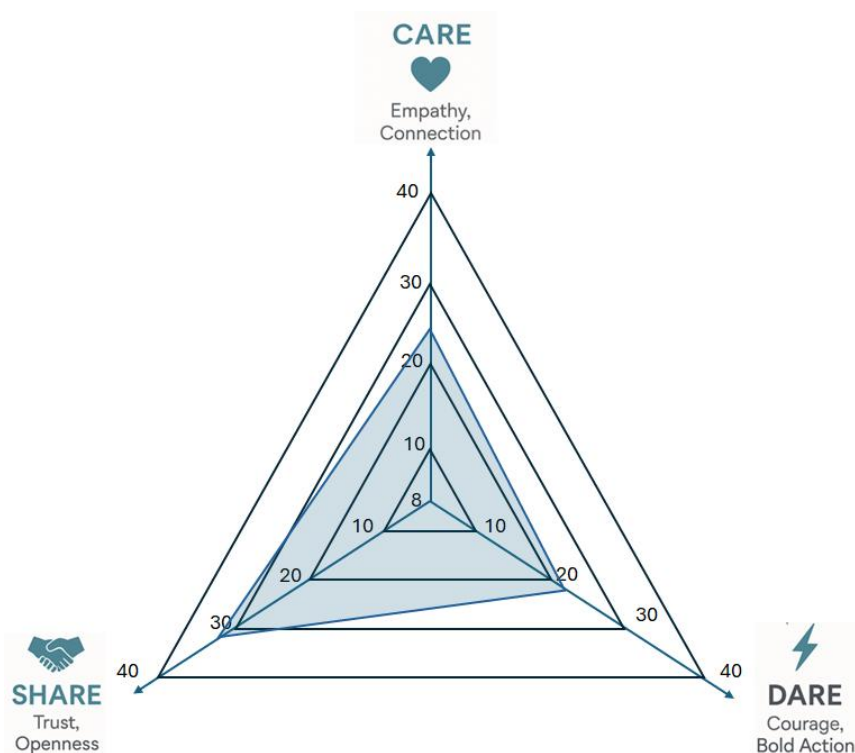


Fig. 3. The CARE, DARE, SHARE Compass, your continuous self-assessment tool to expand your leadership

Step 4: Interpret the Compass

Balanced profile: Similar high-ish (above 24) scores on each of the axes (e.g., 28, 30, 32) suggest a well-rounded leader who integrates empathy, courage, and collaboration. Focus on refining all areas.

CARE-Dominant (e.g., 36, 24, 26): Strong in empathy but may need to strengthen bold decision-making (DARE) or collaboration (SHARE). Revisit Chapters 6–9 (DARE) or 10–13 (SHARE).

DARE-Dominant (e.g., 24, 36, 28): Excels at innovation but may need to deepen emotional connection (CARE) or alignment (SHARE). Focus on Chapters 2–5 (CARE) or 10–13 (SHARE).

SHARE-Dominant (e.g., 26, 24, 36): Strong in collaboration but may need to enhance empathy (CARE) or execution (DARE). Revisit Chapters 2–5 (CARE) or 6–9 (DARE).

Low Scores (<24 on any axis): Indicates areas for growth. Start with the corresponding chapters (e.g., low CARE → Chapters 2–5) and focus on one sub-framework where you got low scores (e.g., Connect).

High Scores (>36 on all axes): Suggests advanced leadership. Focus on mentoring others or scaling CARE, DARE, SHARE (Chapter 14).

As you progress through the CARE, DARE, SHARE journey, regularly assess yourself on these questions to track your progress in expanding your footprint on the Compass.

Your Next Step

Your Chapter Challenge: What is one way you've been leading with only your mind, when your heart has critical data to contribute?

The future isn't just about building smarter organisations. It's about building more human ones, enhanced by artificial intelligence in service of our highest aspirations.

Your transformation begins with a choice: Will you lead with the wholeness of who you are?

Let's explore how you can make CARE, DARE, SHARE your own.

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, we'll explore the first pillar: CARE - How empathy becomes your AI-enhanced superpower for understanding what others truly need.

Chapter 1 Takeaways & Reflection

Lead with both brain and heart - because data alone doesn't transform.

◇ Key Takeaways

- **CARE - Empathy in Action:** Listening before leading unlocks trust and insight and surfaces what the data missed. Showing up with vulnerability makes leadership more approachable and human.
- **DARE - Courage to Simplify and Focus:** Dare to pause the strategy deck and co-create direction through live, open conversations. Choose clarity over perfection, create shared language (“potato language”) and bold behavioural shifts (“keep the rats out of the kitchen”).
- **SHARE - Trust at Scale:** Make transformation participatory, not performative. People see their ideas in the final strategy - and own it. By celebrating progress and learning from failures openly, reinforces the flywheel of confidence → performance → momentum.
- **When alignment happens, it feels like music.**
Transformation clicks when every team member... acts on the same priorities - rhythm, harmony, shared purpose.
- **AI accelerates - but empathy directs.**
Tools, (e.g. Zaya, MyPal, robots-, can supercharge performance, but only if built on deep human insight.

◇ Reflection Prompts

- *What is your footprint on the CARE, DARE, SHARE Compass and where do you want to expand?*
- *Where do you need to stop talking and start listening?*
- *What uncomfortable decision or simplification are you avoiding right now - and why?*
- *What signals of disconnection might you be overlooking?*
- *What piece of “potato language” could unite the team?*
- *What bold, human-first action are you willing to take this week to re-energize alignment?*

Chapter 2: Connect - Building Emotional Bonds (CARE: C)

You don't lead by directing. You lead by connecting.

Walking the halls during my first weeks as CEO at Aegon NL, the data on my spreadsheets told one story, but the faces of our employees told another. I saw brilliant people working in silos, a sense of fragmentation that no metric could capture. I remember a conversation with a mid-level manager who told me, “You know, every business line at the moment has its own vision, we don’t have a truly connected vision across Aegon NL.”

It was then that I knew that before we could build any new strategy, we had to rebuild our connections. You don’t lead by directing. You lead by connecting.

This is your leadership shift: From directing to connecting. From knowing to understanding. From commanding to caring.

Your Connection Blueprint: The CARE Framework

To solve this profound sense of disconnection, the first step of our leadership compass became essential: **CARE**. We had to build a structured practice for tuning into the emotions, values, and perspectives of their stakeholders, starting with the first principle: **Connect**, which is all about building emotional bonds through deep listening.

This is where the CARE framework comes in:

- **C – Connect:** Build emotional bonds through empathic presence and deep listening
- **A – Analyse:** Extract insights by marrying human intuition with data (for instance, after a series of candid conversations reveal a general feeling of 'burnout,' you could use sentiment analysis tools on internal communications platforms like Slack to quantify how frequently words like 'overwhelmed,'

'exhausted,' or 'stretched' appear. This factualises the empathic insight, allowing you to see which teams are most affected and to track changes over time).

- **R – Respond:** Act in ways that align well with what you've heard and learned
- **E – Empower:** Create conditions where others can connect, lead, and grow

This shift from directing to connecting isn't unique to a Dutch insurer. In fact, it was the catalyst for one of the most remarkable corporate turnarounds in recent history at Microsoft.

When Satya Nadella took over, he didn't just see a business problem; he saw a soul problem. The company's infamous "stack ranking" system had created a toxic, "know-it-all" culture where collaboration went to die. In an early leadership meeting, he confronted this head-on.

"For years," he might have said to a room of brilliant but siloed executives, "our culture has rewarded being the smartest person in the room. What happens when the world requires us to be the best learners in the room?"

The resistance was palpable. One executive later admitted his first thought was that this "empathy stuff" was perceived as "soft fluff". Sensing this, Nadella shifted from corporate strategy to human connection. He shared his personal story of how raising his son with special needs had reshaped him, teaching him to move from a place of certainty to one of deep empathy and curiosity.

By modelling this vulnerability, he gave his leaders permission to do the same. He wasn't just directing a change; he was embodying it. This was CARE in action, creating the psychological safety that would allow a "learn-it-all" mindset to flourish. This wasn't a performance; it was authentic vulnerability in service of connection.

The ripple effects were immediate and profound. Teams that had been competing against each other began collaborating.

Departments that had hoarded information started sharing insights. Employees who had been disengaged began contributing ideas. The shift wasn't just structural - it was emotional. People felt seen, heard, and valued in ways they hadn't experienced before.

The result? A trillion-dollar market cap and a culture where innovation flourished because connection created trust.

As the Microsoft story shows, connection isn't just the first step. It's the anchor. Without emotional connection, your analysis remains academic, your responses feel impersonal, your recommended actions feel imposed, and empowerment risks becoming manipulation in disguise.

Connection is not manipulation. It's not superficial rapport. It is the work of building a genuine, often intuitive, understanding of what really matters to your people, your customers, and your broader stakeholder network. It's about learning to lead with both insight and heart.

But here's what makes connection in the age of AI both more challenging and more essential: as our work becomes increasingly digital, our human need for genuine connection intensifies. Paradoxically, the more automated our processes become, the vaster the data set we can tap into to come to insights, the more people crave authentic human interaction. The leaders who understand this paradox - who can leverage AI's analytical power while deepening human connection - will define the future of leadership.

The Science of Connection: Why Emotional Intelligence Matters

Emotional intelligence isn't "soft" - it's your hardest competitive advantage:

When people feel seen and understood, their brains release oxytocin (the "trust hormone"), boosting collaboration and reducing stress.

Feel ignored or misunderstood? The amygdala triggers fight-or-flight, impairing focus, creativity, and connection.

This biological reality has profound implications for leadership. When you create genuine connection, you're not just being nice - you're literally changing brain chemistry in ways that enhance performance, creativity, and collaboration.

Studies show that emotionally intelligent organisations can boost productivity by up to 30%. And companies that train for emotional intelligence experience 20% higher productivity and 30% better retention. Google's Project Aristotle, which studied hundreds of teams to understand what made them effective, found that psychological safety - largely a function of emotional connection - was the single most important factor in team performance.

This discovery by Google is built on the foundational research of Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson, who first defined the concept of 'psychological safety.' Edmondson found that the highest-performing teams were not those with the smartest individuals, but those where members felt safe enough to be vulnerable, to admit errors, and to take interpersonal risks. Connection, as we practice it in the CARE framework, is the most direct way a leader can cultivate this safety.

Success in leadership is determined more by how well leaders manage emotions - both their own and others' - than by technical skill alone. Why? Because even in what appear to be rational, logic-driven discussions, our decisions are never devoid of emotion. Emotions subtly colour our reasoning, cloud our judgment, and influence what we accept or reject. We feel at peace with a decision only when both our rational and emotional selves are in alignment. When they're not - no matter how sound the logic - we hesitate. We make excuses. We stall.

Think about the last time you had to make a difficult decision. Maybe it was about restructuring your team, changing a product direction, or entering a new market. You probably gathered data, ran analyses, and built compelling business cases. If something didn't feel right -

if your gut was telling you something different - you likely found yourself second-guessing, seeking more information, or delaying the decision. That's the emotional brain at work, and it's more powerful than we often acknowledge.

Whether we like it or not, emotion is always part of the equation. And as leaders, we must acknowledge it, understand it, and work with it - our stakeholders' and our own.

Emotional intelligence acts as your organisational radar system - sensing resistance before rebellion, burnout before turnover, opportunities before competitors. It consists of four foundational capabilities:

1. **Self-Awareness:** Recognizing your emotional patterns, triggers, and blind spots. Without this, authentic connection with others is impossible. Understand not just what you feel, but why you feel it, and how those feelings influence your decisions and interactions. Leaders who are victims of the Rationality Mirage, and say, for example things such as, "I'm completely rational" are, in reality, not as rational as they would want and unconsciously wield authority in disguise - people comply but resent it. These are leaders who have not developed the humility of understanding their own emotional biases in decision-making. People feel that, and at some point, will revolt.
2. **Self-Management:** Regulating your own emotions - especially under pressure. Leaders who stay grounded in turbulence create psychological safety for others. This isn't about suppressing emotions, but about channelling them constructively. Emotions are amongst the strongest triggers for action one can imagine. By channelling them constructively, leaders and organisations can harness the energy emotions create towards very significant positive transformation and achievement.
3. **Social Awareness:** Reading emotional context - what people feel even when they can't articulate it. This includes understanding the unspoken dynamics in meetings, the

energy shifts in your organisation, and the emotional undertones in customer feedback. I personally find this one the hardest, but also the most powerful. It is a subtle mix of picking up cues, detecting body language, and intersecting these with spoken and unspoken rules to come to an assessment of what is happening behind the words being spoken. This requires cultural knowledge, intuition, and deep attunement

4. **Relationship Management:** Using emotional insight to build trust, defuse conflict, and foster cooperation and inspiration. This is where emotional intelligence becomes leadership intelligence - using your understanding of emotions to create positive outcomes for everyone involved. The stronger the trust the leader establishes, the greater the buy-in to the proposed course of action will be.

The Art of Deep Listening: Techniques for Authentic Connection

Real connection begins with a fundamental shift: Instead of planning your reply while others speak, cultivate **empathic presence** - being fully immersed in their experience. Asking yourself, “What is this person feeling? What are the fears, the hopes, the aspirations?” “Where do they feel safe, where do they feel unsafe?”

This shift from transactional listening to empathetic presence is more than just a behavioural change; it's a neurological one. Neuroscientists speak of 'mirror neurons,' brain cells that fire both when we perform an action and when we see someone else perform it. When we listen with true empathy, we are literally activating the neural pathways that allow us to 'feel with' the other person. This isn't a 'soft skill'; it is a biological mechanism for building trust at the deepest level.

This shift requires the humility to believe that others have insights worth hearing, combined with the professional will to act on what you learn. It's about approaching every interaction with genuine curiosity rather than predetermined conclusions.

Here's how to deepen your listening:

1. **Listen for Emotions, Not Just Facts:** If someone says, "This system is confusing," "The timing for this is not right" the subtext may be fear of underperformance or failure, or job insecurity. Emotional content often carries more weight than factual input. Train yourself to hear the feeling behind the words. Are they frustrated? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Excited but uncertain? The emotion often points to the real issue that needs addressing.
2. **Create Space for Silence:** In a world that values speed, silence can feel uncomfortable. But when you ask a question, wait. Profound insight often follows a moment of quiet reflection. Some of your most important discoveries will come not from what people say immediately, but from what they share after they've had time to think.
3. **Listen With Your Whole Body:** Physical presence matters. Body language never lies. Put away distractions. Turn towards the person. Maintain soft eye contact. These cues tell people they matter. But go beyond the basics - notice your and their posture, your and their breathing, your and their energy. Are you leaning in with interest or holding back with judgment? Your body language communicates as much as your words. For example, if you find the two of you leaning towards each other, in mirror positions, that shows a high level of engagement and communion of minds. Conversely, different or divergent positions show non-alignment. Any shift in position reflects getting closer or further apart. We have all mastered this art as children or even as adults during emotionally charged situations (love, grief, attack...), but we let our language understanding capabilities overtake body language signals in most interactions. But words are very easy to manipulate; body language is very hard. So do use your body language sonar when you want to build trust and rapport.
4. **Listen for Patterns:** Over time, you'll begin to notice patterns in what people share. Are multiple team members

expressing similar concerns? Are customers describing the same emotional journey? Are stakeholders using the same language to describe different problems? These patterns often reveal systemic issues that individual conversations might miss.

5. **Ask Open-Ended Questions.** Good questions open doors. They unlock not just information, but emotions and insights. Closed questions gather data. Open questions build trust. The quality of your questions determines the quality of your connection. Instead of asking, "Are you happy with the new process?" try "What's your experience been like with the new process?" The first question invites a yes or no answer; the second invites a story. Ask for perspective, emotion, and insight. Invite people to share not just what they think, but what they feel and what they need by asking, for example: "What's working well for you right now?", "What's keeping you up at night?", "If you could change one thing about how we work together, what would it be?", "What support do you need to be successful?", "What am I missing?", "What would success look like from your perspective?", "What's the biggest challenge you're facing that others might not see?", "What opportunities are we not taking advantage of?", "Where can we improve?"
6. **Follow-up With Interest:** Great questions deserve great follow-up. When someone shares something meaningful, resist the urge to immediately move to the next topic or offer solutions. Instead, go deeper: "Tell me more about that.", "What does that feel like?", "What would need to change for that to improve?", "How long have you been thinking about this?", "What would you do if you were in my position?". These follow-up questions signal that you're truly listening, not just waiting for your turn to speak. They often reveal the most valuable insights. And as the famous theory of the 5 whys teaches us, by drilling down through a series of dressed-up "why" questions, you can get to the core issue, not just the surface symptoms, and identify actionable solutions.

Practice this Week: In your next three conversations, ask one follow-up question for every initial response. Notice how the quality of information changes.

Making Time to Connect

In practical terms, authentic connection requires time - particularly one-on-one or at most one-to-few time. Don't rush it. A 45-minute conversation can yield more transformation than five rushed meetings. Better to do fewer, deeper interactions - and share the work across your senior team - than to cram connection into an overloaded agenda. Depending on the size of the organisation, once you will have had conversations with 20-30 clients (increase that if you have fundamentally different clients, e.g. businesses in one area and retail in another, lower that if you are a startup), 30-50 internal conversations (triple that if you are a colossal multinational, half that if you are a small business) in different functions and different seniority levels, 3-5 conversations per relevant key stakeholder type (e.g. unions, regulators, large investors, etc.), you and your executive team will have plenty to go by. After that, you can increase the effectiveness leverage by having larger meetings in the form of one-to-many (town hall, open questions sessions, breakfast with the leader, etc.), as the likelihood of finding new themes decreases significantly.

This requires intentional calendar management. Block time for connection the same way you block time for strategic planning. Treat these conversations as mission-critical, not as nice-to-haves that can be cancelled when urgent matters arise.

Consider creating different types of connection time:

- **Weekly one-on-ones:** For regular check-ins with direct reports
- **Monthly skip-levels:** For connecting with people deeper in your organisation

- **Quarterly stakeholder rounds:** For maintaining relationships with key partners, customers, and external stakeholders
- **Annual connection audits:** For a systematic review of all your key relationships

The key is consistency. People need to know they can count on your attention and presence. Sporadic connection efforts often create more frustration than no effort at all.

Cultural Sensitivity: The Global Connection Challenge

In a global workplace, emotional intelligence must be culturally intelligent.

Emotions are universal, but how we express them varies dramatically across cultures, generations, and contexts.

In some cultures, direct feedback builds trust. In others, it damages it. In some, showing vulnerability fosters respect. In others, it undermines authority. In some contexts, silence indicates agreement; in others, it signals disagreement. The key is to approach each interaction with curiosity, not assumption.

When I led the teams at Aegon, at the European bank, or at the logistics company headquartered in Northern Europe, I had to learn to adapt my Italian expressiveness to the local norms. The intention behind my care stayed the same - but how I expressed it had to shift. Connection doesn't mean losing who you are - it means adjusting how you show up. And interestingly, together with the teams, we found a balance which allowed us to have open, genuine conversations, but with the kindness and well-meaning that is expressed so differently from one country to the other.

This cultural sensitivity extends beyond nationality. Different generations have different communication preferences. Different functions within your organisation may have different norms. Different personality types respond to different approaches. The art

is in reading these differences and adapting your style while maintaining your authenticity. And whenever you get it (a bit) wrong, and that will happen more often than you think, be vulnerable, stop and apologize, or at least acknowledge that you realise it may not have come across right and explain where you are coming from. People will appreciate this deeply, as it will allow them to consciously give an interpretation to your behaviour that is different from what they may have instinctively assumed had they just followed the usual pattern of behaviour and interpretation that prevails in their community.

Some practical “speed-adapt” strategies:

- **Observe first:** Notice how different groups communicate before jumping in
- **Ask about preferences:** "What's the best way to give you feedback?"
- **Adapt your medium:** Some connect better in writing, others in person
- **Respect timing:** Some cultures value punctuality, others prioritize relationship-building
- **Understand hierarchy:** Some contexts require formal respect for authority; others thrive on egalitarian interaction

Mining the Digital Goldmine: Listening at Scale

In the digital age, your people and customers are already sharing how they feel - through reviews, surveys, internal chats, and social platforms. You don't need to guess; you just need to listen intentionally.

In the age of AI, you can easily throw vast amounts of unstructured data into a model to extract the key messages. Obviously, the more you structure the question you expect answers to the better the outcome will be.

Here are some advanced digital listening techniques you can leverage:

- **Look beyond ratings:** A 3-star review saying "Product worked, but no one answered questions" reveals more than glowing 5-stars
- **Social listening:** Set alerts for emotional language - "frustrated," "excited," "confused," "delighted"
- **Go beyond satisfaction scores:** Ask about hopes, worries, dreams. Use questions like "Describe your ideal experience with us" or "What would make you excited to recommend us to others?"
- **Internal communication analysis:** Are people asking the same questions repeatedly? Is tone changing over time?
- **Digital body language:** Who's withdrawn in video calls? Working unusual hours? Stopped participating in chats?
- **Response Time Patterns:** Notice how quickly people respond to different types of messages. Delayed responses might indicate discomfort or disagreement. Immediate responses might signal strong engagement or concern.
- **Participation Patterns:** Track who participates, who asks questions, and who volunteers for projects. Changes in participation often reflect changes in emotional engagement.

The Trust Equation

In summary, all this boils down to building trust. And as C.H. Green, D. Maister, and R. Galford outlined in their "The Trusted Advisor", trust can be summarized by the following equation, where, as you can see, the various components get determined by the emotional intelligence capabilities and the successful implementation of the techniques that we have just described:

Trust= (Credibility+Reliability+Intimacy) / Self-Orientation

Your emotional intelligence directly impacts each element:

- **Credibility:** It refers to the knowledge and expertise a person has. It encompasses how believable and competent someone appears based on their words and actions. For example, if someone is knowledgeable about a subject, they are seen as credible. For a leader, this is rarely a challenge as their voice is perceived as authoritative.
- **Reliability:** This measures how dependable a person is. It involves whether they follow through on their commitments and deliver on promises. A reliable person consistently meets expectations and deadlines, which builds trust over time. This is heavily influenced by self-awareness. A person with low self-awareness will come across as (emotionally) unpredictable because he or she believes she is using a certain compass to make decisions, while in reality, emotions play a great role and affect the accuracy of that compass significantly. As with a real compass, the gap between the displayed north and the true north varies significantly from one place to another on the globe, and a sailor must take that into account, lest the boat be significantly off course after just a few hundred miles.
- **Intimacy:** It relates to the emotional safety felt when sharing personal information with someone. It reflects how secure individuals feel in confiding their thoughts and feelings. High intimacy fosters deeper connections and trust. The possibility of intimacy is directly influenced by the ability of the leader to self-manage and by the focus that the leader puts in truly hearing the person he or she is talking to.
- **Self-Orientation:** This is the degree to which a person is focused on themselves versus others. A lower self-orientation indicates that a person is more concerned about the needs and interests of others, which enhances trustworthiness. Conversely, a high self-orientation can diminish trust. This is directly linked to how open a leader appears to be to the suggestions and ideas of other people, as opposed to using discussions only to validate his or her

preconceived hypothesis. This is obviously directly influenced by the ability of the leaders to be completely focused on the perspectives of the person they are interacting with through open-ended and follow-up questions, appropriate cultural interpretation, and time allocation.

Reflect: Where is your trust equation strongest? Where does it need work?

The Ripple Effect: From Connection to Transformation

When people feel emotionally connected, they trust. When they trust, they speak up, take risks, feel supported and energized, innovate, and collaborate. Connection becomes your flywheel - each genuine interaction builds momentum for the next.

This isn't just feel-good leadership - it's your strategic multiplier. Emotionally intelligent cultures outperform the rest in growth, retention, and resilience. They adapt faster to change, recover more quickly from setbacks, and sustain performance over time.

Consider the compound effect: when one leader creates genuine connection, it models behaviour for others. When that behaviour spreads, it creates a culture where connection becomes the norm rather than the exception. When connection becomes cultural, it attracts people who value authentic relationships and repels those who don't.

Most importantly, connection creates psychological safety - the foundation for any meaningful transformation. When people feel safe to be vulnerable, to admit mistakes, to share ideas, to challenge assumptions, transformation becomes not just possible but inevitable.

Think about the organisations you've seen that successfully navigated major changes. Almost invariably, they had leaders who had built strong emotional connections throughout the organisation.

These connections created the trust necessary for people to embrace uncertainty, the communication channels necessary for rapid adaptation, and the resilience necessary for sustained change.

When Connection Transforms Business: Case Studies

Case Study: Southwest Airlines - The Employee-First Revolution

Southwest's success wasn't built on airfare - it was built on emotional intelligence at scale. The leadership understood something crucial: if employees feel valued, they will pass that value on to customers.

But Southwest's approach went deeper than just treating employees well. They created a culture where connection was systematized, not left to chance. Every leader, from the CEO to front-line supervisors, was expected to spend time connecting with their people.

Leaders didn't inspect - they connected. They asked questions, removed obstacles, and followed through. When baggage handlers needed better tools, they got them. When flight attendants offered suggestions, they were heard - and changes followed.

The company created what they called "Culture Committees" at each location - groups of employees responsible for maintaining connection and celebrating achievements. They instituted regular "Message to the Field" communications from leadership, but these weren't just announcements - they were conversations that invited response and dialogue.

Southwest also pioneered the practice of "servant leadership" in aviation. Leaders at every level saw their role not as directing work, but as removing obstacles that prevented great work. This required constant connection to understand what those obstacles were.

The result? Consistent customer satisfaction, low turnover, and resilience in tough markets. Southwest maintained profitability for 47 consecutive years - a record unmatched in the industry - largely because its connected culture created customer loyalty that transcended price competition.

Case Study: Starbucks - The Experience Economy

Howard Schultz knew Starbucks was selling more than coffee - it was selling an emotional experience. Connection wasn't a buzzword; it was a business model.

Schultz understood that every interaction was an opportunity to create an emotional connection. He institutionalized this understanding through comprehensive training programs that went far beyond operational procedures.

Starbucks trained employees in the LATTE method to handle conflict with empathy:

- Listen to the customer's concern
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Take action to address the issue
- Thank them for bringing it to your attention
- Explain what you've done to prevent it from happening again

But the real genius was in how Starbucks designed for connection. They designed stores to foster community - comfortable seating, ambient lighting, spaces for both solitude and gathering. They encouraged baristas to learn customer names and remember preferences. They created seasonal drinks and experiences that gave people reasons to connect with the brand emotionally.

Schultz also modelled vulnerability and connection as a leader. He shared his own story - growing up in public housing, his father's struggles with work injuries, and his own journey from salesperson to CEO. This authenticity created a culture where personal stories

mattered, where employees felt comfortable bringing their whole selves to work.

Connection wasn't just good hospitality - it was strategic. It made Starbucks synonymous with warmth and belonging, creating customer loyalty that allowed the company to charge premium prices and expand globally.

Case Study: Microsoft - A Culture Code Rewritten

Under Nadella, Microsoft went from silos and competition to collaboration and connection. But this transformation required systematic culture change, not just inspirational leadership.

Gone were the stack rankings that pitted employees against each other. In came coaching conversations, dialogue, and vulnerability. Nadella himself modelled this - sharing his personal learning journey, rather than broadcasting top-down edicts.

The company instituted "One Week" hackathons where employees across divisions collaborated on projects they were passionate about. These weren't just innovation exercises - they were connection exercises, breaking down the silos that had prevented collaboration.

Microsoft also transformed its performance management system from annual reviews to ongoing "Connects" - regular conversations between managers and employees focused on growth, development, and support rather than evaluation and ranking.

The company created "Inclusion Journey" programs that helped employees understand different perspectives and experiences. They established Employee Resource Groups that fostered connection across traditional organisational boundaries.

Perhaps most importantly, Microsoft leadership began sharing their own learning journeys openly. They talked about mistakes, about changing perspectives, about moments of doubt. This vulnerability created psychological safety throughout the organisation.

The transformation was stunning: soaring engagement, revived innovation, and a growth from \$300 bn to \$2.8 trillion market cap. But the real success was cultural - Microsoft became a place where people wanted to work, where customers wanted to partner, where innovation flourished because connection created trust.

Connection in Action: Your 3-Phase Plan

Here is your practical plan to establish a connection.

Phase 1: The One-on-One Listening Movement

Schedule dedicated connection sessions with your direct reports and the audience you want to connect to (clients, colleagues, stakeholders, etc.). Not status meetings - human understanding sessions.

Your playbook:

- Open with: "How are you - really?"
- Explore: "What's energizing or draining you?"
- Check feelings: "How do you feel about team dynamics?"
- Collaborate: "How can I support you better?"

Map your connections across all stakeholder groups. Of course, depending on which group you are exploring, the big themes to probe should be adapted:

- **Teams:** Do you know what drives each person? What are their career aspirations? What motivates them beyond compensation? What challenges are they facing outside of work that might affect their performance?
- **Customers:** What's their emotional journey with your products or services? Where do they feel frustrated, delighted, confused, or supported? What stories do they tell about their experience with your organisation? If you are in retail businesses, the key is to understand whether your customers feel treated as a person, i.e., are you giving them the recognition for who they are and what they go through in

life (e.g. are you being the no-frills, effective, to the point provider with the busy self-directed professional, while leaving more space for interaction and human connection with the lonely yearning for company)? Equally, if you are in B2B, are your services/products helping them grow their own business, do you make them look good with their own clients, do you reflect in the way you serve them a good understanding of their ambitions, their constraints, their circumstances?

- **Peers:** What tensions or opportunities remain unspoken in your cross-functional relationships? Where are the silos? Where is governance used as an excuse for creating obstacles and derailing initiatives? Where could a better connection unlock better collaboration? What support do they need that you could provide?
- **Leadership:** Do you connect to their pressures and priorities - not just their metrics and directives? What keeps them up at night? What would success look like from their perspective? Are the roles cut for what people excel at?
- **External Stakeholders:** How do partners, suppliers, regulators, or community members perceive working with your organisation? What could you do to strengthen these relationships?

Phase 2: Digital Connection Strategy

- Set up emotional language alerts for your industry
- Redesign surveys to ask about hopes and worries
- Schedule virtual coffee chats with no agenda
- Send personal video messages instead of emails

Phase 3: The Ripple Effect

Document what you've learned. Share insights with your team. Model vulnerability by admitting what surprised you. Create space for others to practice these connection skills.

Measure your progress: Track participation rates, response quality, and voluntary feedback. But most importantly, notice how you feel in conversations and how others respond to you.

Assess yourself with the CARE, DARE, SHARE Compass (chapter 1): Is your Care dimension expanding?

Your Connection Journey: The Foundation of CARE

Here's your leadership choice: Continue operating with transactional efficiency, or embrace connection as your strategic multiplier.

The most effective leaders create cultures where connection becomes the norm, not the exception. Where empathy isn't a "soft skill" but a strategic imperative. Where vulnerability becomes the foundation of unshakeable trust. This is the first and most critical step in bursting the Rationality Mirage, which thrives on disconnection and transactional relationships.

But in a culture governed by the Rationality Mirage, advocating for 'connection' can feel like a career-limiting move. The key is to translate it into the language of the boardroom. Connection isn't just about feeling good; it's a primary strategy for risk mitigation. High-trust, high-connection teams identify and solve problems faster, before they escalate into crises.

Think of it this way: what is the cost of disconnection? It's the cost of employee turnover, of disengagement, of an idea that is never shared. The single greatest expense on any company's P&L is the cost of untapped human potential. When you frame it that way, building connection isn't a soft initiative; it's a core financial strategy.

Your Chapter Challenge: This week, have one conversation where you ask, "What am I missing?" and then truly listen to the answer. Notice how both the quality of information and the quality of relationship change.

Connection is the foundation that makes everything else possible. The insights you gather through genuine connection will inform every other leadership act to come.

Connection is also an ongoing practice, not a one-time achievement. The relationships you build require continuous nurturing. The emotional intelligence you develop needs constant refinement. The cultural sensitivity you cultivate must evolve with changing contexts.

It all starts with this: the intention to see the human being behind every role, to listen not just with intelligence but with empathy, and to lead with both head and heart. This isn't about becoming a different person - it's about becoming more fully yourself while remaining genuinely curious about others.

The connections you forge today are the roots of your future impact. Every authentic conversation, every moment of empathic presence, every act of genuine care creates the foundation for the transformation you want to see.

And the intuition you develop through this practice - the ability to sense what people need before they can articulate it, to recognize patterns in emotional responses, to identify the human problems behind business challenges - becomes your most trusted compass. This intuition, grounded in genuine connection, will guide every other aspect of your leadership journey.

Transformation begins with connection. Everything else builds from there.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, we'll explore how to turn your emotional insights into analytical clarity - blending empathy with evidence to understand what your stakeholders need, and why. We'll learn how to combine the human intelligence you've gathered through connection with artificial intelligence and data analysis to create insights that are both emotionally resonant and strategically sound.

Chapter 2 Takeaways & Reflection

Lead with both brain and heart - because data alone doesn't transform.

◇ Key Takeaways

- **Connection precedes clarity:** Deep listening surfaces what data alone can't: fear, hope, misalignment, and unspoken tensions that determine success or failure.
- **Emotional intelligence changes outcomes:** Practicing self-awareness, attunement, and presence shifts brain chemistry - reducing threat responses and enabling trust, collaboration, and performance.
- **Listening is a leadership discipline:** Intentional, open-ended, follow-up questioning reveals what metrics can't. Leaders who make space for silence, emotion, and nuance unlock deeper insight.
- **Digital doesn't mean distant:** AI can amplify listening at scale - but the act of noticing who's silent, withdrawn, or emotionally checked out still falls to the human leader.
- **Connection is pattern recognition:** Noticing recurring emotions, themes, and non-verbal signals helps you move from isolated anecdotes to actionable insight.

◇ Reflection Prompts

- *Where have you mistaken communication for connection?*
- *What emotional signals might you be missing - in self or others?*
- *What's one conversation you need to slow down and really listen to this week?*
- *How are you building trust across cultural, generational, or functional lines?*
- *What practice - personal or team-wide - could make connection more consistent and systemic?*

Advance Praise for *Care, Dare, Share: Lead and Thrive with Heart, Mind, AI*

“A book that brings leadership to its fullest expression: combining strategic clarity, courage in decision-taking, and human depth. *Care, Dare, Share* provides a rigorous framework for action, grounded in real-world experience, to lead lasting transformations in the age of AI. An inspiring and immediately actionable guide for today’s leaders.”

- Nicolas D’Ieteren, Chairman of the Board of Directors of D’Ieteren Group

“Allegra Patrizi masterfully shows that in the age of AI, our most powerful intelligence is our humanity. She provides a roadmap for leaders to escape the "Rationality Mirage" by blending empathy, courage, and collaboration.”

- Diane Govaerts, CEO of Ziegler Group and Manager of the Year, Belgium 2022

“Allegra Patrizi expresses a profound truth when she says that “data informs, humanity transforms”. She defines a rich path to impact in the world that is emerging: more technology leveraged by (much more) humanity.”

- Pierre Gurdjian, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Solvay, Founder of Belgium’s 40 under 40

“*Care, Dare, Share* - Allegra Patrizi leads you through her concept of leadership in times of AI by giving insights into her own personal journey. A worthwhile discovery!”

- Clara C. Streit, Non-Executive Chair of Supervisory Boards

“Why has the life expectancy of Fortune 500 companies shrunk to less than 18 years and the one of CEOs to less than 7 years? How can you reverse this trend and improve your chances of success? In the age of AI and big data, Allegra Patrizi, in her book *Care, Dare, Share*, delivers a compelling human centric answer.”

- Enrico Cucchiani, Chairman of Open Fiber, former CEO of Intesa Sanpaolo, former Chairman of Allianz spa

“Collaborating with Allegra Patrizi in my role as chairman of the works council of Aegon, we have had many constructive conversations about the impact of organisational changes on people and vice versa, about the influence of people on the intended changes. I am happy and also a little proud to see that these conversations have co-contributed to this excellent book *Care, Dare, Share* by Allegra Patrizi.”

- Han de Vos, former Chairman of the Works Council of Aegon The Netherlands

“Allegra combines deep executive experience with humanity, and it shines through every page of *Care, Dare, Share*. She shows that lasting transformation is never just about strategy or technology, but about leaders who connect, dare, and build trust at scale. This book is a practical compass for anyone serious about leading change with both courage and heart.”

- Peter Slagt, Partner at Bain and Company

“This book is a powerful reminder that true leadership isn’t about perfection or control. It’s about courage, empathy and presence. In a world increasingly shaped by technology, it dares to ask: what does it mean to be a human being?”

What I found most inspiring is its insistence that bold leadership begins with listening, not just to data or strategy, but to people. It explores how we can work alongside technology without losing sight of human sentiment, intuition, and emotional intelligence. Allegra Patrizi doesn't shy away from complexity. Instead, she offers a vision of leadership that is both future-facing and deeply grounded in humanity.

If you're navigating change, managing teams, or simply trying to lead with integrity in a digital age, this book will challenge and uplift you. It's not just a guide, it's a call to lead without ignoring the heart."

- Lilia Christophi, EMEA Data and AI Financial Services Partner at
PWC

"What does it take to be a better leader in the era of AI? With her warm and authentic tone, Allegra shares actionable strategies and real-world case studies that genuinely inspire leaders to blend Empathic Intelligence and Human Intelligence with AI. A must read!"

- Isabelle Langlois-Loris, Partner at Egon Zehnder, Chairwoman of
the Solvay Schools Alumni Association

"A three legged stool is better than a pedestal. *Care, Dare, Share* is that solid platform for transformation. Read, absorb and practice Allegra Patrizi's unique, robust methodology and you won't go wrong."

- Sue O'Brien, Founder and CEO of the Mentor Hub

"At Aegon The Netherlands, I saw *Care, Dare, Share* turn scepticism into real momentum. Combining the proven concept with AI, elevates leadership to a whole new level."

- Chantal Spoelstra, Deputy Company Secretary Aegon Asset Management, former Deputy Company Secretary Aegon Nederland N.V.

“Allegra Patrizi masterfully resolves the central tension of modern leadership blending human empathy with AI-powered strategy. *Care, Dare, Share* is a powerful guide for creating sustainable value.”

- Basil Geoghegan, Partner at PJT Partners

“How do you harness AI’s transformative power while keeping people at the heart of everything you do? *Care, Dare, Share* delivers exactly that blueprint, providing leaders with a modern framework to innovate boldly yet thoughtfully.”

- Richard Huston, Founder and CEO of Vamos.dev

“Allegra Patrizi manages to tap into the Zeitgeist with ambition and foresight. Her book *Care, Dare, Share* is a manifesto not only for success in business but also life in general. Make her manual your operating system.”

- Stephanie Ferrario, Founder and CEO of SHECAN Media

“In her book *Care, Dare, Share*, Allegra Patrizi captures the essence of true leadership: “Humanity”. Drawing on her experience as a Director and CEO of major listed and non-listed companies, as well as her role as a mother of three, Patrizi uses examples of management failures and successes to explore leadership. With disarming simplicity, she uses difficult moments in her life to remind us that excessive reliance on data, rationality, and AI yields negative results when key factors such as emotional intelligence are underestimated. In short, her vision aligns with that of ancient

Greek philosophers and of major religions in that it places people at the centre. It is a wonderful read that I recommend to everyone.”

- Giacomo Di Marzo, European Parliament’s Vice-President’s Secretariat, former advisor to Antonio Tajani, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and of the Conference of Committee Chairs in the European Parliament

“A profound and essential read. Allegra Patrizi brilliantly demonstrates that in the age of AI, our humanity is the ultimate competitive advantage. *Care, Dare, Share* is the playbook for unlocking it.”

- Ronan Breen, Managing Director in Investment Banking

“In our world, you can’t rely on spreadsheets or authority. You succeed through empathy, courage, and trust – or you fall. We watched Allegra Patrizi start riding at 40 and achieve what seemed impossible and improbable through sheer resilience and an intuitive grasp of these principles. Her book *Care, Dare, Share* brilliantly codifies the very philosophy she used to build an international equestrian partnership from the hoof up. It’s proof that to achieve any bold vision, in life or in business, you must first lead with heart.”

- John Hardwick and Adrien Cherpôn, International Riding Instructors and Coaches