

# ADVICE FOR LEADERS (OF ASSEMBLIES AND MORE)

BY DAVE ARCH



*As a leadership coach, an author, and a magician, Dave Arch is likely in a unique position to provide advice to anyone who heads up an SAM Assembly, a magic convention, or any other organization. The following articles have been adapted from his book, Transforming Leaders. Here, Dave provides insights that can be useful to those who work with staff, associates, volunteers, on-stage and off-stage assistants, or even come in contact with clients while running a solo magic business.*

## Personalities

At some point early in our lives we each went over to a window and looked at the world — realizing that the world is a place where one could get seriously hurt not just physically but emotionally as well.

Each of us selected a way to protect ourselves from getting hurt, and those compose the four basic personality types. We use the letters **DISC** to help us remember all four.

**Director** personality types decided that the people who get hurt are the people who allow others to make decisions for them. Therefore, Directors decided that they would always seek to remain in control — making their own decisions for themselves and for others where required. You will see from Figure 1 that they are in the upper left hand quadrant of the axis — comfortable with directness but not comfortable with an openness about their family or personal matters.

**Interactor** personalities went to the same window but came to a different conclusion. They saw people getting hurt when other people didn't like them. At that moment, they decided that they

would keep people liking them to avoid being hurt. You'll see them in the upper right hand quadrant in the diagram, both comfortable being direct in their communications and open in their sharing of information about themselves. Compared to the Director personalities, who are primarily "task persons," Interactors are "people persons."

**Stabilizers** left that window saying to themselves, *Slow and steady wins the race. The people who get hurt are the*

their personal life, too. You'll see them in the lower right hand quadrant of our diagram.

**Calculators** left the window saying, "The devil is in the details." They notice that people most often get into trouble when they don't pay attention to details — crossing their Ts and dotting their Is. At that moment they decided that they would always check the fine print before proceeding. They live in the details.

Fortunately, although most of us are primarily of one personality type, no one is *only* one. However, when someone is under stress, they tend to move to a different personality type during that period of time.

If you've ever sat across from someone who talked *louder* or *softer* or *faster* or *slower* than that with which you were comfortable, you know that you were just happy when the interchange was over. In the same manner, with these personality types engaging them in the style most comfortable for them is essential for building maximum bonding and rapport.

It's not unlike an adaptation of "The Golden Rule." Instead of "Do unto others



*people who pull the trigger on a decision without thoroughly processing the ramifications.* They prefer to talk about the weather first prior to getting into the meat of the discussion (indirect). However, they are open to visit about

as you would have them do unto you,” it’s “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.”

Tip: Fortunately, there is a short cut. If you match the other person’s volume and rate of speech, you will connect to their style more often than not.

### The Trust Equation

A leader cannot be a leader without the trust of their followers. “The Trust Equation” helps make trust — a rather abstract concept — very concrete by comparing it to a mathematical equation.

Before I can trust anyone, I must believe that the person is *competent* in their area of expertise. Next, they have to be competent *consistently*. Then they have to be able to show me who they are through their *intimacy* skills. I have to be able to get to know them. I can’t trust an unknown quantity.

All of those together are multiplied by *selflessness*. They’re not doing it for themselves; they put others’ best interests ahead of their own. Theirs is not a self-seeking motivation. If you look at Figure 2 and you consider any one of those missing, you can see the fracture that happens to trust. Trust gets diluted.

Now, will I ever trust someone without all of those aspects? I suppose a very competent surgeon, for instance, I would trust them with my surgery even though they might not be particularly good in their bedside manner. But that’s very rare.

Trust, for most leaders, requires that their followers have a conviction about their competency, their consistency, and has been able to establish a relationship with them. All of that gets multiplied by their selflessness. They put others’ best interests ahead of their own.

The intimacy component is the one that has been most challenging to define by those who I coach. Brene Brown to date has done the best job of breaking that down to its sub-points when she speaks about the intimacy component using the word **BRAVING** as an acronym.

**Boundaries** — the ability to have and maintain personal boundaries and respect mine.

**Reliability** — carrying us back

to the word consistency in the main equation.

**Accountability** — able to accept personal responsibility and hold me responsible too.

**Vault** — maintain personal confidences.

**Integrity** — does what’s right instead of what’s expedient.

**Non-Judgment** — hears me without passing judgment on what I’m saying.

**Generosity** — gives me and others the benefit of the doubt when considering motives.

So, when you wonder why you don’t trust someone, you can come back to this equation.

When you wonder, as a leader, why others aren’t following you or giving you their trust, look no further than this equation. Something in the equation is missing or weak. In the final analysis,



trust is nothing you can take from them. Your followers must give it to you as they discover you are trustworthy. The elements of “trustworthiness” are what this equation makes clear.

When they give you their trust or they don’t give you their trust, you can look at this formula and you can see where you’re weak and where you’re strong. That might be a great place to start right now. Where, in this formula, do you find yourself weak? Where do you find yourself strong?

And it’s not just in who you are, but it’s how you project to yourself. It’s how others perceive you. Is the intent equaling the effect of what you want to have happened? The “Trust Equation” is a foundation for a leader.

*The Trusted Advisor* by David Maister is an excellent source of more information on this foundational subject.

### Confident Humility

I believe some leaders suffer from

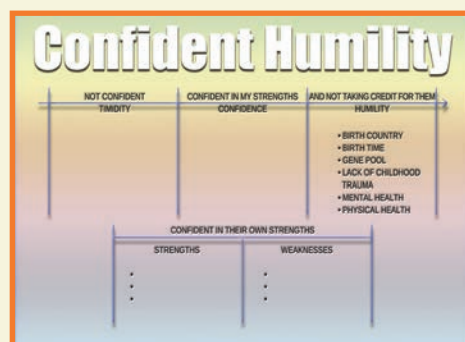
timidity due to a false definition of *humility*. Maybe in their childhood, they were told, “Don’t toot your own horn.” “Don’t get too big for your britches.” “Don’t get a big head.”

They began to think that humility meant being timid. Hence, the title of Figure 3, *Confident Humility*. If you follow along from left to right, you’ll see at the far left end of this continuum, people who are not confident (i.e. people who are timid). Then, you’ll see as you move along the line, you find people confident in their strengths.

However, sometimes those people are unattractive people. They tend to strut, which doesn’t wear well on anyone. So, follow the line along. It moves from not confident and timid to confident in their strength and abilities — and not taking credit for them.

Humility — I know my strengths, I know my weaknesses, but I don’t take credit for those strengths and weaknesses because there are many factors that have affected my strengths and weaknesses — factors over which I had no control or decision. Examples might be the birth country. I could have been born in Somalia, and I wasn’t; the time of my birth — I could have been born when people were dying of the bubonic plague; the gene pool into which I was born; the lack of childhood trauma. All of those were essentially out of my control.

This acknowledgement of things that are beyond the humble leader’s control extends to the present and



future, too. If that acknowledgement is not a part of the leader’s character, then the leader typically resorts to bravado, hubris, denial, and blaming in order to compensate for not bowing to the reality of the situation (i.e. they do not control the outcome of all

things). I have observed that followers tend to be more secure with leaders who realize the limitations of their control as opposed to the leader who tries to compensate for not recognizing that fact. Most followers accept such limitations of their leaders and wish for their leaders to do the same.

So, do I have strengths? Do I have weaknesses? Yes. Can I, as a leader, express those with confidence? Yes, but it's when I start taking credit for them or not openly recognize the limitations of those, that my leadership influence erodes. I look prideful, I look egotistical, simply because I started taking credit for those things over which I had no control.

My hope is, as a leader, you can find that confident humility and balance yourself.

### Unsolicited Advice

In seeking to build and maintain connections with your followers, it's important to remember that unsolicited advice can often be viewed as criticism. That particular insight causes a leader to stop, think, and process before offering advice for which there has been no request.

Those of you who are reading this and have adult children, you know the process. You don't venture out with advice for which there has been no request. And sometimes, you have to allow those followers to go out a little bit further down the road before they even know they need the advice you're about to give.

In the levels of competence surrounding any skill, a level exists called "Unconscious Incompetence," at which level someone just plain doesn't know what they don't know. And it may be, as a wise leader, you'll need to put them in positions that help them discover what they don't know so that when the advice comes, it's welcomed. It's needed. They're prepared for it.

Unsolicited advice, in spite of the best intentions, can oftentimes be viewed as criticism.

Bonus: As one adult speaking to another, asking them if they want your feedback would seem to be a reasonable courtesy. Then asking them whether or not they want to hear it at this time might be a thoughtful follow-up question.

### Eliminate and Concentrate

Great leaders are not "responsibility hoarders." They seldom take on a new responsibility without eliminating a responsibility they currently have. They are as good at ending things as they are at starting things.

My wife sagely said to me "When you don't say 'no' to someone, you are saying 'no' to someone." She of course meant that when I didn't say "no" to someone who was asking me for a time commitment, I was saying "no" to her. She has



greatly helped me put this into perspective.

There was a time when I could have taken you to my office where you would have seen a four-drawer file cabinet much like the one in Figure 4. Three of the drawers were filled with ideas and projects that didn't work out. One drawer was filled with the ideas from which I was making my living at the time.

Mentally, that's still how it works. What might you need to eliminate today so you can get on with the truly important?

### When Nice Isn't Nice

I believe that "nice" people believe that they are taking the moral high road. "Be nice, and then people will like you," they might say.

However, I have found that being "nice" more often than not is gutless, manipulative, and a passive-aggressive power play.

It's gutless because quite often a "nice" person doesn't stand up straight and speak the truth, taking responsibility for their opinion.

It's manipulative because how are you going to be mean (or even honest) to a "nice" person? Their previous "niceness" just bought and paid for what they're now asking you to do.

It's a power play of an amazing proportion. When truth and "nice" collide within a "nice" person, "nice" always wins, to the sacrificing of truth.

Leaders understand that when truthfulness and nice collide, being called "nice" instead of truthful is never a compliment.

### Maintaining Happiness

This equation gets to the point: Our *happiness* equals *reality* over our *expectations*. When our *reality* equals or exceeds our *expectations*, we find ourselves filled with *happiness*.

When that is not the case, we can:

1. Change our *reality* by stop playing the victim; or
2. Adjust our *expectations*, often-times by stopping the insidious practice of comparing our plight (of which we know too well) to the plight of others (of which we have more limited knowledge).

Wise leaders seek to maintain the balance in this equation and teach their followers through their own example to do the same.

### Defuse A Bomb

Wise advice by David Sandler is to "Defuse a bomb before it blows." The strong leader doesn't wait for an issue to be raised by one of their followers. If the leader knows there's an issue, they bring up the topic before their follower.

The less mature leader hesitates to bring up the topic — hoping the issue might just go away without having to be addressed. The mature leader knows better. The book entitled *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone has proven itself to be an effective model for that conversation.

### Effective Goal Setting

You'll see my quote there on Figure 5: "The goals I set for myself had better be goals over which I have control. Any other goals are only wishful thinking."

I like a fellow who said to me, "What kind of goals are you going to set for yourself when you go fishing?"

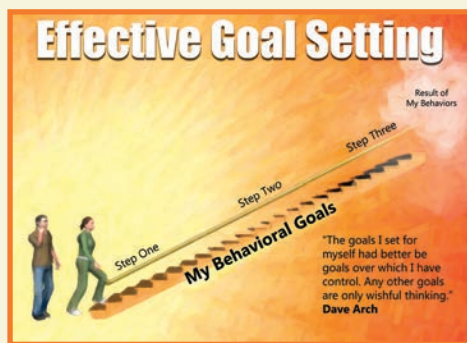
You need goals that are measurable. You need goals that have a definite time period for completion. What are you going to say? "By the time I come home tonight, I will have caught five fish?"



That's wishful thinking. You don't have any control over whether you're going to catch five fish or not. I want to encourage you to start thinking about your goals as being those things over which you have control.

So, instead of saying, "I'm going to catch five fish," have your goals be your behaviors. "I'm going to get up so that I can be at the lake at such and such a time." "I'm going to have these baits that I'm going to try." "I'm first going to try these baits, then I'm going to try these baits."

What are the behaviors that will give you the best chance to get your wishful thinking goal done? Your goals are actually your behaviors. To set goals on things over which you don't have control is only like making wishes.



So you say, "But then I might meet all my goals?" What's wrong with that? If your goals are your behaviors, my hope is you will meet all your goals, because they are the components you have control over.

I think, sometimes, goal setting gets a silly rap, and it's viewed as less than positive by many people because it is viewed as only an exercise in wishful thinking. It can be so much more.

## Vision Creation

Certainly, one role of a leader is to cast a vision for where an organization can be. So that as people follow, they follow the leader to their vision of what could be. As you look at Figure 6, you'll see several moving parts. What? How? Why?

It's important to understand *what* we're going to do, it's important to understand *how* we're going to do it, but it's more important to understand *why* we're going to do it. That "why" becomes

a driving force that many companies don't have.

Many organizations have lost the "why." They know what they do. They know how they do it. But the "why" they do it has become separated from the "what" and the "how." In that moment of separation, there's a loss of motivation.

Early on in an organization's development, it's typically a very mission-driven organization. It's all about the mission. They're changing the landscape of whatever industry they happen to be in.

But as the organization grows and becomes a thing, the mission orientation can get lost, and the motivation can get lost at the same time. Maintaining that mission feel throughout the history of an organization is an ongoing but necessary challenge.

One of the best examples in today's world is Apple. What does Apple do? Apple sells computers. Ah, but there are a lot of places that sell computers.

What does Apple do? How does Apple do it? The distinction is *why* Apple does it. From its beginnings, it was clearly anti-establishment.

If you walk into an Apple store and you look around at those who are the "Apple disciples," you will see a group of people committed to the mission as they shine their MacBooks and polish the screens of their retina display.

They know why Apple exists. Apple exists to continue to challenge the status quo, pushing it to greater and greater heights. It's on a mission.

"What could be" is the essence of a vision. However, before a leader paints a picture of "what could be," a leader has to help the followers experience the fact that where they presently are is an intolerable situation. Pain motivates.

So, before casting a vision of where you want to go, make sure you've helped your followers understand why staying where you are is not an option. The two questions at the bottom — Why must we do it? And must we do it now? — have to be clearly answered in your mind, and then communicated to the followers that are going to be going with you on this trip.

Why is this an intolerable situation? You may need to wait because it may only be intolerable for you; it may not



be intolerable for them. You may have to wait for it to get to be intolerable for them.

That means you're going to quit supporting initiatives that are only a bandage — helping them stay where they are. They're propelled by having it become an intolerable situation for them. Then, they'll be ready to follow your leadership to what could be.

Vision creation is an indispensable skill of a leader.

## A Velvet-Covered Brick

My hope is that you're enjoying these topics. However, more than enjoying them, my hope is that you're being reminded of key concepts essential to effective leadership. I think of a great leader as a velvet-covered brick — i.e. easy to approach, soft to the touch, and nurturing in their leadership style.

Nevertheless, when pushed against, one can immediately feel substance in the leader. My executive coaching is oftentimes spent fine-tuning the velvet-covered brick in each of those I coach. Some are too "velvety" and need more brick. Some are too "bricky" and need more velvet.

When that balance is struck between velvet and brick, I find I have my strongest leaders. My hope is that these articles help you achieve more of a balance in becoming truly a velvet-covered brick to those who follow you. 🧱

*With his 25-year career as a leadership coach winding down, and his book Transforming Leaders published (<https://amzn.to/415GvKE>), Dave Arch assumed the role of executive director of SAM Assembly #7 (<https://theomahamagicalsociety.org>) and Administrator of the Magic Club Leaders Facebook Group (<https://bit.ly/3NA6XGT>). He can be reached at [samassembly7@gmail.com](mailto:samassembly7@gmail.com).*



# ADVICE FOR LEADERS (OF ASSEMBLIES AND MORE): PART 2

BY DAVE ARCH



*As a leadership coach, an author, and a magician, Dave Arch is likely in a unique position to provide advice to anyone who heads up an SAM Assembly, a magic convention, or any other organization. The following articles have been adapted from his book, Transforming Leaders. Continuing on from the first part of this feature from last month, here are additional insights that can be useful to those who work with staff, associates, volunteers, on-stage and off-stage assistants, clients, and productivity while running a solo magic business.*

## Daily Do List

Andrew Carnegie in his heyday called in a time consultant and said, “Tell me how to get more out of my day. I only got 24 hours in a day. Tell me, tell me — how can I get more?”

The consultant said, “I need you to write in the evening before the next day starts. Write a list of everything you need to do. Then number those by order of priority. What are the most important? Number those down to the least important. Then begin the next day starting with number one and working your way as far into the list as you can, and you will find your productivity going up.”

“How much do I owe you,” said Andrew Carnegie. The consultant answered, “Whatever you think it’s worth.” After experimenting with the time sheet, Andrew Carnegie sent the consultant a check for \$10,000.

It meant that much to him. That’s what you’re getting with a Daily Planning Sheet. It’s a simple sheet. You can organize it yourself.

Before the day ends, before the next day begins, before you start hearing

from everybody who has this urgent need of your time, you make a list of the things you need to do the next day. You number them in order of importance and you work them in that order.

Are you going to complete everything? No. But you’re not going to allow

The image shows a 'DAILY PLANNING SHEET' template. It has a header with 'DAILY PLANNING SHEET' and a 'Date:' field. Below the header, there are two main columns. The left column is titled 'To Do List' and the right column is titled 'Priority List'. Each column has a series of horizontal lines for writing tasks. There are also some colored boxes and labels within the columns, such as 'To Do List' and 'Priority List' in yellow and purple boxes.

the tyranny of the urgent rob you from that which is truly important. When you run out of time, you’re going to run out of time on the least important parts of your list. That’s the genius of this simple approach to time management.

## Intuition

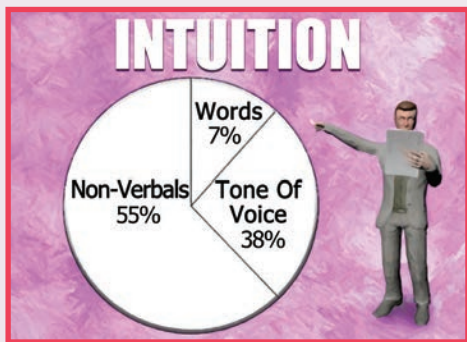
Intuition. It’s a rather esoteric word, isn’t it? What it means in the

world of leadership is how capable am I of sensing what’s going on in a room, taking the temperature of the room, checking the mood of the room.

Those who have good intuition understand this. — dare I say — intuitively. Every message that I send is comprised 7 percent of words, 38 percent of tone of voice, 55 percent of non-verbals. Please imagine my wife and I sitting at the breakfast table, and I’m reading the newspaper. She says to me, “Do you love me?” And I say to her in a gruff voice without taking my eyes off the newspaper, “Yes, I love you.”

She doesn’t believe me. Now, my words were right, but she doesn’t believe me. So, she asks again, “Do you love me?” I say in a sweet tone not looking up from the newspaper, “Yes, I love you.”

She doesn’t believe me. My words are right, and my tone of voice is right. However, I’m going to have to put the paper down. I’m going to have to look at her and say in a loving tone with direct eye contact, “Yes, I love you” if she’s going to buy my message. That shows the power of the non-verbals.



In growing your intuition as a leader, the understanding of body language — non-verbals — is essential. Ignoring those will cause a leader to lose his or her strength. Sometimes it's the rolling of an eye. Sometimes it's a sigh. Sometimes it's just something you sensed, but you've never had the confidence to express it and discuss it. Try this: "If you sense it, say it."

Those leaders who continue to grow in their leadership learn to use the phrase, "I sense that \_\_\_\_\_. Am I right?" They have the courage to ask that question so that they understand not only the words, but the tone of voice. They have confidence in their ability to sense non-verbals and not ignore those non-verbals. That's the power of building solid intuition. That's the power of being able to read a room.

## Difficult Conversations

If you would more often avoid difficult conversations than have them, you might find the book *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone to be of help for you.

He says, in essence, that when having a difficult conversation you're really having three conversations. Eliminating any of those three conversations will cause the conversation not ever to have resolution.

There's a "What Conversation," there's a "Feelings Conversation," and there's an "Identity Conversation."

Let's imagine that something has occurred, and you need to have a harsh conversation with one of your co-workers. "What" tends to be where we start. "What happened?"

Make sure you stay with the "what happened" and don't go to the "why did it happen?"

Going to the "why" causes us to dig around and try to figure out each

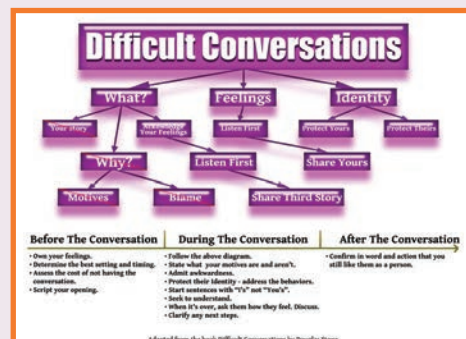
other's motives or to assign blame. They don't move us forward. In *Difficult Conversations*, Stone says, "Stay away from the 'why.'"

I couldn't agree more, and your experience probably tells you, "That's good advice!" So, what are you going to start with?

"Own your own feelings." When you go in, if you try to pretend like you're not hurt (but you are hurt), that's going to emerge at some point in the conversation. If you try to pretend like you're not angry (but are angry), it's also going to negatively impact the conversation.

Own your feelings about the situation. This will help you determine the best setting and timing. Catching the other party off-guard in the hall might not be the best.

Assess the cost of not having the conversation. Is this a conversation that really needs to be held? If it's not (i.e. if



the cost of not having it is not high) it might be one that you'd want to avoid.

Script your opening. The opening is the hardest. Don't be afraid, in your opening, to say, "This is very difficult for me, but I believe I want to have this for the sake of our relationship." Don't be afraid to talk about your nervousness — your awkwardness. And then, just go ahead and have the conversation.

"Acknowledge your feelings." This means that you acknowledge your feelings to yourself. If you're hurt, admit that to yourself. If you're frustrated, admit that to yourself. You might need to wait until that emotion has a chance to die down before beginning that conversation. If you don't acknowledge your feelings to yourself, that emotion has great potential of sabotaging your difficult conversation.

Listen first.

You'll ask, "What happened in your

situation? What did you see happening?" Seek to look through their eyes at the situation.

Do not share your story. Instead, share what the author calls "The Third Story." That would be the story that would be shared if you had a third party negotiating.

In other words, you would share: "So, if I heard you correctly, then what you're saying is \_\_\_\_\_. And from my perspective, it looks like this. So, where our impasse might be is here."

Isn't that what a negotiator would do?

You already know your story, so you don't have to share your story. You just have to hear their story, blend it with your story, and speak as though you were negotiating between the two parties.

We get through the "what" pretty easily and then we say, "Okay, I guess we got that ironed out," and we leave. But there are feelings that have to be dealt with.

What happens if we don't conduct the feelings conversation is we find ourselves not resolving the situation. Instead, what happens is it bubbles up again. Sometimes in days, sometimes in weeks, sometimes in months, but the feelings were never resolved about the situation.

Dealing with feelings is key.

During The Conversation, we should state what our motives are and are not. I'll declare my motive (i.e. "I'm not trying to be hurtful here. I'm really trying to not hurt our relationship.") so the other person doesn't have to venture a guess as to our motives. All too often when I try to guess at another's motive, I go to the negative side in my assessment.

Admit your awkwardness — protect their identity. You're addressing behaviors, not whether they are worthy of ever being loved again. Start sentences with *Is* not *Yous*.

Seek to understand.

In the second conversation, you'll be sharing your feelings with the other person. After hearing their feelings, you'll start out by saying, "I feel this," or "I feel that." Make sure that whenever you do share your feelings, you actually do share your feelings. However, stating, "I feel like you're wrong" is not sharing your feelings.

It is merely sharing your opinion of their behavior masquerading as a feeling. “I feel hurt” or “I feel frustrated” is more of a true sharing of your feelings about the matter under discussion.

In the statement “I feel that you’re wrong,” you’re certainly using the word “feeling,” but it’s not a feeling. “I feel hurt. I feel sad. I feel discouraged.” Those are feelings.

“I feel that you did this.” That’s not a feeling. This lack of understanding can derail the conversation right at this point.

When it’s over, ask them how they feel — discuss, clarify any next steps. That’s all. A lot of it is part of the feelings.

You’re going to listen to their feelings — first one, “How do you feel when this happened?”

We all have identities. That’s who we are apart from our roles. Our value as a human being, our worth as a person. Our identity is truly about our feeling of worthiness to be loved (or not).

The Third Conversation says to “Protect yours and protect theirs.”

Let them know that you’re speaking to the role’s side. You’re not speaking to their identity. You’re speaking to the problems, not them as a person.

Protect theirs. If you protect theirs, they won’t have to protect theirs. If they know that you’re not going to go after them personally for what occurred, they can drop their guard and speak candidly with you.

After the conversation, confirm in word and action that you still like them as a person. Take some time to reaffirm them.

As we said, ask when it’s over, “How do you feel?” Discuss how they feel. “Did they come through the conversation okay?” And then, as time goes on, confirm that you’re still okay with them.

It was a harsh conversation, it was a difficult conversation, but you’re still okay with them as a person. It did not get personal. It only spoke to events that had occurred. My hope is that this plan helps you to fill in the details and connect the dots more closely. Again, Douglas Stone’s *Difficult Conversations* might point you in the right direction.

### Giving Credit

My guess is we all have pet peeves

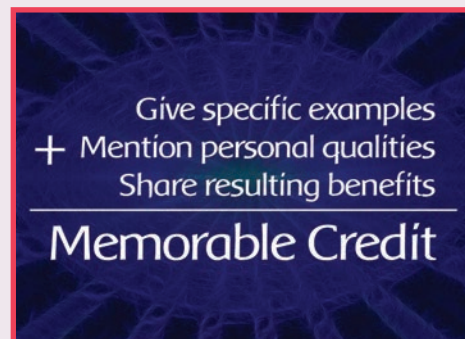
about when people try to give us credit, compliments, or praise. I hate when it’s generic. I hate when it’s perfunctory. I hate when it’s: “Nice job!”

So, here’s a formula for making sure that you’re giving the most powerful praise, the most powerful compliments, the most powerful affirmations possible.

Make sure you’re giving a specific example. What was it you liked about the way they performed a task.

Make it specific, “I really liked the way you \_\_\_\_.” Spell it out. Mention personal qualities about them. “That showed that you were resourceful.” “That showed that you were conscientious.”

Yes, it’s great to hear what we do well. But what is it *about us* that contributed to that? What do you like about who we are (not just what we



do)? So, I can couple a specific example with a personal quality and mention a resulting behavior: “And as a result of what you did, I believe that customer is going to be with us for many years to come. Thank you.”

By coupling those three components together, I’m going to be able to give credit to someone that will really make an impact, that will really be memorable, that will really stick to them.

We all run on that. Nobody I’ve ever met says, “Oh I get way too much praise in my work — way too many compliments.” No, it’s always the opposite.

Here’s a way to make sure, as a leader, your compliments stick.

### Confidence

Managing your fears. Every leader needs to know how to not ignore fears, but manage their fears. There are two components to the management of

fears: the physiological and the psychological.

The fear center in the brain is called the *amygdala*. The amygdala is really there to prevent us from taking too much time to think about things while being chased by a bear. The amygdala is tripped, and sends the adrenalin and all the other chemicals into our bloodstream that we’ll need to run faster and jump higher without our conscious brain having to do any processing. It’s designed for quick assessment of a dangerous situation.

However, we can trip the amygdala by our thoughts. The amygdala has no ability to determine whether the thought is a *real* or a *perceived* fear. When amygdala goes off and chemicals are released, we might start to perspire. Our heart might start to beat fast.

One evening my wife looked over at me and she said, “You’re sweating. What’s happened?” Since becoming aware of these concepts, I replied, “My amygdala went off. It’ll calm down here in a minute.” I am now much more comfortable with that physiological fear reaction, which I now know could be totally without any basis at all. I just live through it. I dare not react. If I did react, I would only become fearful about feeling fearful — greatly complicating my situation.

Psychologically, the fear is always produced by the question, “What if \_\_\_\_?” The blank is always something out of our control.

On a *Dr. Phil* show, there was a lady who called her husband at work thirty times a day. Dr. Phil asked her, “Did you really call him thirty times a day?” And she said, “Yes.” Dr. Phil turned to the man and said, “Did she really call you thirty times a day?” And he said, “Yes.” “Why do you do that,” he asked the lady. And the lady said, “Because I’m afraid he’s going to have an affair.”

And Dr. Phil said this: “No, you’re not.” And she said, “Yes, I am.” And he said, “No, you’re not. You are not afraid he’s going to have an affair. You’re thinking to yourself, *What if he has an affair?* You are really afraid that you couldn’t handle it if he had an affair. You don’t have any control over whether or not he has an affair.”



“What if \_\_\_\_?” You fill in the blank for something outside of your control. That’s always at the heart of a fearful situation. If you play golf, you might enjoy the book, *Fearless Golf*. If you read it, try this. Anytime the word “golf” comes up in the book, just put in the word “life.”

The author asks, “As you stand at the tee, getting ready to swing, what questions are you asking in your mind? *What if I hook? What if I slice? What if I miss the ball entirely? What if the people I’m with laugh at me? What if \_\_\_\_?*” All of those would be fear-producing thoughts.

Dr. Phil also made another comment. In order to get past the fear-producing thought, you have to “play it out.”

On another one of his shows, he had a fellow who was obviously, as seen in the opening video, a virtuoso in terms

that?” “Well, I guess, I could,” the man said rather surprisingly.

What the fellow didn’t see was that there was a stage crew bringing a piano onstage. And then, he turned around to see the piano, went over, played flawlessly. He didn’t faint. He didn’t fall off the bench. Nothing happened. But he had to play out the “what if.”

[“What if the spectator sees your double lift?” “What if the prop opens and the audience spots the hidden assistant?”] Do you have a plan? If you don’t have a plan, you won’t be able to take care of it. So, rather than simply asking “what if,” it’s much better to replace “what if” questions with, “What’s my goal?” “What’s my plan?”

As I’m looking at the next project, “What’s my goal?” “What’s my strategy?” Plan A. Plan B. “What if this goes wrong?” “What if that goes wrong?”

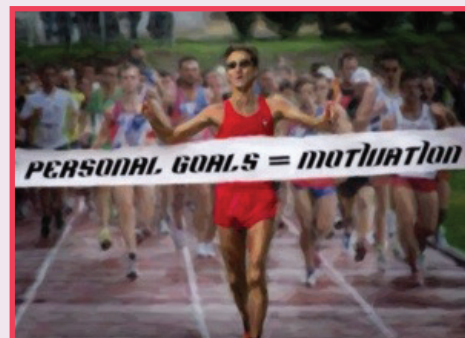
Play it out. As you play it out, you will remove a lot of the potency of the fear. Then you’ll be on your way to managing your fears and creating a greater confidence not only in yourself, but in the people who are following you.

### Goal Setting

I remember watching the end of a Summer Olympics marathon. The runners had understandably been jogging most of the way.

Suddenly, their eyes fell upon the stadium in which they knew they would find the finish line. The jogging turned into sprinting.

Upon crossing the finish line, without exception each runner expelled a burst of air from their mouth, bent over, and



shook their arms and legs — releasing the energy that had been compressed and focused throughout the race.

That’s when I understood the power

of a clearly visualized goal/finish line. It has the power to harness our finite amount of energy and bring it to focus on a specific objective.

Leaders seek to model and instill in their followers the discipline of goal setting — living intentionally rather than reactively.

### The Tombstone Test

It’s a simple exercise that can yield profound results: “What do you want written on your tombstone following your death?”

Your answer to that question will bring to the surface those values that are most important to you — those for which you want to be remembered.

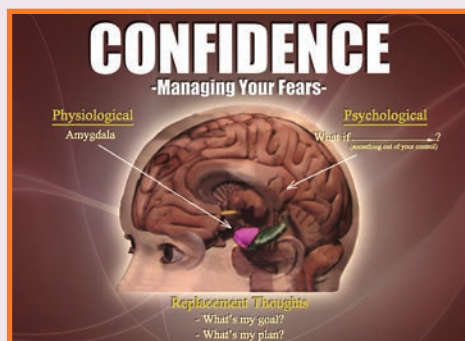
Of course, the only remaining question is, “Are you contributing to the epitaph by how you’re investing your life today?” Leaders do make sure



that in spite of all they do, that focus remains. Leaders find within their desired epitaph an energy, passion, and drive for accomplishing their daily responsibilities with an eye on their ultimate legacy.

Bonus: The above metaphor works equally well for an organization as it does for an individual. If suddenly your organization ceased to exist, what would it be remembered for? Is that what you want it’s purpose to be? 🍀

With his 25-year career as a leadership coach winding down, and his book *Transforming Leaders* published (<https://amzn.to/415GvKE>), Dave Arch assumed the role of executive director of SAM Assembly #7 (<https://theomahamagicalsociety.org>) and Administrator of the Magic Club Leaders Facebook Group (<https://bit.ly/3NA6XGT>). He can be reached at [samassembly7@gmail.com](mailto:samassembly7@gmail.com).



of a pianist playing flawlessly. Dr. Phil’s viewers were shocked to hear that the man wouldn’t play in public. As he interviewed this fellow, Dr. Phil said, “What are you afraid of?” And the man answered, “I’m afraid that I’ll faint. I’ll become so nervous that I’ll faint.”

And Dr. Phil asked, “What would happen, then?” “Well, then I’d fall off the bench,” the man replied. “Then what would happen?” Dr. Phil asked. “Well, then I’d probably wake up,” the man said. “Then what would happen?” Dr. Phil asked yet one more time. “And, then I’d look at the audience embarrassed, and then I’d run off stage,” the man continued to play out his fears. “And, then what would happen?” Dr. Phil asked yet one more time. “Well, I guess, that’s it,” the man finally said. And Dr. Phil said, “Could you live with