

LEADING  
WITH  
EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE

## CHAPTER 1

### THE FOUNDATION

When I was five years old I woke up from a dream about what I thought was the answer to the mysteries of the Universe. With a burst of energy and newfound confidence, I strutted into my kindergarten class with the intent to share my dream with the other kids. I lined up eight of my peers against the wall and proceeded to do a talk while pacing from one end to another and waving my hands like I was doing a "State of the Union" speech. From the corner of my eye, I spotted a boy at the end of the line who was not paying attention to the knowledge I was sharing, and instead, was looking at the ceiling in a wandering manner. "The ceiling!" screamed my inner ego. I was shocked! I thought, "How is it possible that this boy did not understand the importance of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to understand how the Universe works?" I felt anger. I went up to him, put my hands on his

shoulders, and pushed him downwards to the ground into a seated position. The boy, Pedro, sprung up, took his nail, and scratched my face leaving a crescent moon scar under my left eye.

The lessons I learned that day were perhaps more important than the Secrets of the Universe. The crescent moon shape on my cheek was the beginning of my journey in shaping my approach to leadership. My first organizational cultural change happened inside me.

This is why I decided to start the content of this book with its most essential part: How to become the kind of person who leads with intelligence, compassion, inclusivity, and adaptability, and become an effective leader before leading.

## Investing in yourself

You don't need to get your face scratched by a 5-year-old boy named Pedro to transform yourself into a great leader. Becoming a great leader is an everyday exercise you have to invest in. Putting hours a week into lifting weights and cardio exercises helps build endurance and strength. Putting hours a week into expanding your leadership toolkit will propel you to be an adaptive leader who can enhance any team in any organization. How do you invest in yourself? We already know the answer to this question: take classes, learn from doing, observe, go to other people's meetings, go to seminars, work under someone who you deem to be a great leader, and take notes when you come across bad leaders on "what not to do." It should be easy, and it is. So why are top leading companies having issues with leaders in upper

management? Why is there always someone in the news getting canceled, going to jail, or being sued for doing or saying something inappropriate?

Think about it! Generally, for a person to acquire an upper management position, they have to have been promoted over other people several times. In the 70s, Laurence J. Peter wrote a book called The "Peter Principle" which explains why people get promoted to positions they often become incompetent in. How many times have you personally had a bad customer service experience, asked for the manager, only to surprisingly find out the terrible employee is the manager, and then thought, "How did they get this job?" The problem starts with the pool of those seeking to be promoted on the very first tier of promotions. Many employees don't think of themselves as worthy of moving up in the organization they work for, while others get a higher position simply by having some sort of influence or family and friends connections.

If you don't have family and friends connections, I could tell you to go make some friends! However, if you get promoted through that route, chances are you will become the type of bad leader I have been writing about in the last few paragraphs.

So why not address the root of the problem? Let's figure out why you haven't gotten promoted to a leadership position that's a fit for you.

### Imposter syndrome

Most of us have it, and some of the best leaders at one point had to overcome the narrative that they are not good enough, and not apt to do what the job entails. It could be a false belief developed in early childhood, societal (not having a college degree, not being from a certain economic class), or something else. Imposter syndrome can come and go. Sometimes we feel more

confident than others, we think we can do anything, then an obstacle comes and we change our mind back to not believing in ourselves. Much like body dysmorphia affects those concerned with their physical shape, the imposter syndrome can be considered a mental distortion. But no matter where the imposter syndrome comes from, we have to get rid of it, period!

What is “good enough”? In what way? For whom? It's not a cliché when I say that everyone is good at something. Often in my organization, if someone is underperforming instead of putting them in an incompetent box in my head I move them around and give them tasks that require opposite skills from what they were assigned at first to see if there's a spark. In the book *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott (you will hear me referencing this title and also *Antifragile* by Nassim Taleb a lot in the course of this book), Kim makes a distinction between people who want to advance in their organization and those who want to stay where they are. She also mentions individual contributors,

people who are not team players but still make meaningful contributions on their own. Figuring out where everyone falls in your organization chart will eventually increase productivity.

Please allow me to share another little bit of myself with you again. I am an immigrant Brazilian woman with no college degree. I am also an elected official, President of a City of Los Angeles body, and a City credit card holder (that's right, folks. I have a credit card with the City of LA logo on it.) I'm a Coro Fellowship Alumna and a Concordia LLC's Roundtable Alumna. I sit on the board of the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC,) the Los Angeles County Business Federation (BizFed,) and the UCLA Los Angeles Community Engagement Council, and former board advisor for the Healthy Air Alliance. How did I get here? By increasing, claiming, and acknowledging my worth.

The simple fact that I believed I could run for office was the first step in overcoming my preset impostor syndromes. It didn't happen right away. In my case, it was gradual. I started by joining a committee as a member of the public, became an alternate, and then ran for selection when a seat became available. When elections came, I decided to run, and go for it! Immediately, the opposition began trolling me on Facebook. They said I hadn't done anything while serving in the seat I earned through selection. I was a newbie to all this so, of course, I was very upset. At that point, I had already produced a job fair, and a small business symposium, and worked on land determent safety measures in one of our toughest corners. Seeing how devastating that was for me, one of my peers told me that my constituents didn't know I did these things because I didn't "brag" about them on social media. Being an objective person I didn't understand at the time the importance of acknowledging my "wins" and letting others know. That was also never the way we

did it at my house. My parents were both in government when they accomplished some task, that was the end. There was no time to reminisce because they had to move on to the next challenge.

So, I started acknowledging my accomplishments, got the votes, and won the elections.

The imposter syndrome comes in cycles like many other things in life. Of course, my new practice of informing others of my productivity activated another breed of people wanting to criticize me. Soon after, some of my male counterparts started saying that I was too weirdly ambitious and would tell me I had to humble myself.

Pay attention to the impact that could have had on me if I wasn't a confident, strong, ballsy, determined person. I could have shied away into a corner and muted my voice. At times, when I encourage other women to run for office they get very hesitant to do it

because of watching all the harassment, mansplaining, criticism, and attacks I have been subjected to, all under the First Amendment right which I wholeheartedly support. This is probably one of the qualities that sets me apart, I embrace and welcome criticism. I use adversity to better myself and learn from my mistakes, and when I am in the right, I use public criticism to flip the issue around to educate others about my point of view and thought process, clarify my statements, and change the narrative, often starting with, "I'm glad you brought that up...".

When the imposter syndrome is real:

But let's say your imposter syndrome is based on the fact that maybe you are not good at what you're trying to do or you are just learning a new skill. That's ok. It's not the end of it all. Maybe you have potential but lack credibility in your field, or maybe your field of

work is oversaturated with people. That's ok too. But at the end of the day, leaders are like their own mini-companies and the public/consumers are investors, and they want to see a return on their investment.

I'm going to show you how to increase your worth.

It's good to know your worth, but sometimes your worth is not there and you have to build yourself up. I want to circle back to talking about how to invest in yourself. Beyond taking classes, championing projects, and learning from someone above you, there are other important and effective ways that show your target market that you are worthy of their confidence.

Transfer of trust

Transfer of trust is one of my favorite concepts! It encompasses cognitive behavior with neuro-linguistic

programming. I am a big fan of pseudoscientific theoretical postulations, I see them as being the foundation for modern-day philosophy. There's no quicker way to acquire worth and trust which can also be considered part of worth itself than transferring trust. If an accredited business, person, or entity in your field supports you, accredits you, and gives you their "seal of approval" by endorsing your skills and overall performance you will almost automatically acquire their audience by default. This is why it's so important to forge relationships and make them public. A client list is a great example of a transfer of trust. A friend of mine opened a new company doing what she has done for years, targeted branding, product launching, etc. I asked her to share a link with me because I wanted to find out more. She's a fairly new friend and I am trying to cultivate a relationship with her because I like her directedness and grace. When I clicked on her client page there was a large list of Fortune 500 companies including BMW and Hulu. I have never

actually seen her work but in my mind, she couldn't possibly be that professionally desirable unless she is delivering quality work.

## Share your expertise

If you are knowledgeable in your field but haven't gotten your break yet, this session is for you. At the beginning of my political adventure, Councilmember O'Farrell put together a City Council meeting dedicated to addressing homelessness, for an entire day. After that meeting, I decided to write a report on what I witnessed at the event in detail. It was picked up by CitywatchLA. I was ecstatic because it is very difficult to get published by them, and since I was writing in a second language the imposter syndrome always kicks in. Needless to say, I was glowing. This article lives forever, and it puts a mark on my timeline I can refer back to when making a future statement. In this day and age, one article can make it into several

different sites and publications, the goal should be to maximize your visibility in your field. Many online publications are looking for content. It's also good to ask your peers to review your piece, and maybe give you a shoutout on their platform.

Being a panelist can be another form of sharing your expertise. Since I graduated from Coro Fellowship, my peers have asked me to be a guest speaker for organizations that encourage the youth and people from different intersectionalities to run for office.

Another colleague from my cohort had me come to her class and talk about critical thinking. I shared an example of when I had to solve a fight between a street utility contractor and a movie director.

Somehow, the City gave them both permits to operate on the same block on the same date and time. The movie director was upset because of the concrete breaking happening twenty feet from his movie set

made it impossible for him to get any usable footage. I was able to mitigate the situation by having the movie crew go on a lunch break while the construction crew finished up their work, then I called the field director for the Councilmember's office to move the construction crew to a different block for the next couple of days. With so much work to be done in the City of Los Angeles, it puzzled me that they had to install fiber optic hardware at that very moment. One of her students later said to her, "If she can do all this while undocumented, so can I."

These are small easy steps you can take immediately. That's why you're here today, it's about nuances, small changes equal big value and profit. Today, you can put on your to-do list, write an article and make a client list, call your peers, and offer to come and speak at their next event.