

**Inspirational Presence**  
**THE ART OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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## PREFACE

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Why this book, and why now? Our world is one of expanding economies and increasing global impact and awareness. This web of connectedness demands a new leadership style and a new type of leadership consciousness. Current research on emotional intelligence and intention affirms the importance of emotionally literate and globally aware people. While we live in countries organized as nations, the preponderance of global companies is expanding past national boundaries, past economic systems, and past cultural norms. Leaders in these organizations are explorers in a world of connections yet to be discovered.

The pioneers in this emerging world will be forced to lead from a place of global and enterprise thinking. They will have to rely on people with whom they do not relate culturally, who live halfway around the world, who move in different time zones, observe different holidays, pray to different gods, follow different laws and customs, and who even have different economic values and principles. Yet in spite of those differences, they all must share a common sense of direction, purpose, and global identity. They must experience a connectedness that transcends these differences. In this world, the rule-based leadership in use for the last hundred years or so is becoming less and less relevant.

These leaders must be far more comfortable with ambiguity and with leading through influence. These leaders must be fluent in the language of humanity, in the universal connections of heart and spirit. They must connect through rapport rather than positional power. These leaders must understand the art of inspiration, which breaks the reliance on motivation used for so long in Western culture. These leaders must understand

systems and organizations, rather than organization charts and policies. These leaders must start now.

The skills of inspiration and influence are innate to humans and have been known for millennia. Leaders have used these skills to create change in many settings throughout our recorded history. The issue now has to do with the relative importance of these skills. The magnitude of interpersonal connections being created globally is at a point never before experienced in human history. Our planet is on the verge of massive change that demands global thinking. Even though our focus is on the corporate setting, the main objective is to create leaders who can connect around the world. These leaders must be able to create new perspectives, new thinking, and inspire people to take action in different directions—because people want to, not because they have to.

For example, look at global warming. This issue must be solved by people who are working from a consistent level of global thinking and looking at this issue from a much larger context than ever before. Einstein said: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” Global warming is clearly a case where the limited thinking of past generations created a set of problems that can be solved only by a new way of thinking—and this is only one issue on which we could focus. There are many such issues, and we intuitively know that some of them have not yet come to our attention. We know that a new generation of global leaders must step into the space of creating transformation in our world.

This book is an outgrowth of ongoing action research done through our consulting firm, which specializes in developing unique and powerful leadership in global settings. As such, it is a reflection of grounded theory in action, where the user can take what we have

learned and apply it in his or her work, community, and personal life. Our practice has, through the years, used a meta-model, bringing in the work of emotional intelligence (Goleman et al), leadership models (Posner & Kouzes, Hertzberger, others), and systems thinking (various Gestalt theorists and systems scientists). As we have done successfully with our work in the *Ten Tasks of Change* (Evans & Schaefer, 2001), we have allowed the theory to stay in the background and directed the focus on how it is used. After years of working through large-scale organizational change, it seemed that the focus was consistently on the leaders and how they transformed themselves in order to transform the organization. This work is a culmination of this practice and is published with the intent of sharing what gets results.

*Inspirational Presence* was written for people who want to embody these changes and be the forces for change in the world. Although there are thousands of research studies available that document many aspects of leadership and transformation, it is the work of other volumes to present that information. The work of this book is to teach leaders *how* they can accomplish transformation in the simplest form possible. My highest aspiration for this book is simply for it to be useful. I hope it will open a way of thinking for people who want to transform their environments and provide a guide that will fuel positive and creative change in the world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I have spent a lifetime in a mode of learning and experimentation, with teachers being as many and as varied as you can imagine. My background is a mosaic, earning degrees in literature and history before degrees in human development. Along the line, however, there have been many people who have left a profound impact on the way I move in the world. Some are long gone, and their impact has transcended time and distance. During the course of my life, I have read many books, all of which have contributed some part of the way that I see the world; of those, I will mention a few.

Early in life I was blessed to read the great works of Voltaire, Nietzsche, Payne, and others who profoundly impacted what I thought of democracy and human equality. Together, these set me on a path that embodies many egalitarian values. Among those, Ralph Waldo Emerson had the most memorable and lasting impact. I reread his works when I turned thirty-eight, as that was his age when he was in the prime of his writing. That was a humbling experience. Mark Twain showed me the ability to connect culture and feeling through words and sly humor. His characters leapt off the pages and still had relevance one hundred years after he penned them.

More recently, there are a number of gifted and inspiring authors who have made a huge difference for me. Gary Zukav has written works that have been turning points for me. First, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*; then, more recently, *The Heart of the Soul*. Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* was another pivotal point in my learning progression. Ken Wilber's *A Brief History of Everything* and *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* gave me insight into

integration. Many other fine authors, researchers, and theorists have contributed to my cognitive worldview and, therefore, greatly influenced the content of this book.

Then there are those who have been my teachers in action. They have shown me ways to work with human consciousness in deep and powerful ways: John Carter at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, who showed me how spiritual practices and working with leaders can be the same thing. Tim Hallbom of NLP California, who taught me (and many others) how to create instant change through our language and thinking. My friend and colleague Chuck Schaefer, who brought me into the professional community of organization development, taught me many concepts of high-performance work systems, and expanded my thinking on many of my projects.

I owe a special thanks to my dad, Dan Evans, who showed me what it was like to be passionate about learning, and to my mother, Patricia Evans, who in her deep passion for writing, taught me to always carry a pen and paper, as I never knew when I would feel like I really needed to write.

Most of all, I owe thanks to my beloved wife, Justina Vail Evans. She is a gifted artist, writer, actor, spiritual teacher, and coach who has loved me, taught me, and learned with me. Justina has prompted my thinking, read my drafts, and provided valuable insights to the concepts, content, and presentation of this work. She has taught me the meaning of inspiration and embodies the example of presence. It is only through her that this book has been written.

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## INTRODUCTION

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*When you pray, move your feet.*

—*Native American saying*

There is a little known reality associated with the skills of leadership. As a leader's sphere of influence increases, the requirement for skills related to emotional intelligence goes up as well. In fact, as much as 90 percent of leader success can be attributed to these skills (Goleman, 2003). Along with that reality comes an associated challenge. That is, it can be difficult for leaders to see or accept this shift. There is a simple reason for this challenge, and it has nothing to do with leaders being slow, dumb, or incompetent. On the contrary, it has to do with people being quick, smart, and competent. The entry point for most organizations requires a high competency in technical ability. Success, as it relates to job mobility and promotions, comes early from using this, which becomes a self-validating reality. This is also true in educational settings. Success comes from what you did last, not where you are going next. However, predicting future success from the use of these technical abilities is like driving by looking in the rearview mirror. It doesn't tell what will create success where you are going.

To further compound this, these transition points for leaders are rarely taught from the perspective of requiring new levels of relationship skills. A natural progression of leadership, without a conscious change in path, would have a leader continually attempting to lead from technically based strategies that served in the past but no longer serve the current situation without a support network or guide to show a new path. Growing into

leadership requires courage, as the new challenges of expanded influence require new and often untested approaches for the leader. This overall generalization led to Laurence Peter's book *The Peter Principle*, in which his premise was that in a hierarchy each employee rises to his or her personal level of incompetency. While this has been used by various people as either a joke or a fact, there is an element of truth within the premise. It can be true of how hierarchies function, but it does not represent an absolute truth about human ability. It is simply a perspective of human development that recognizes the need to use different skills as the situation changes, and these skills are often not obvious to the leaders who need them.

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#### LEADERSHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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The skills and approaches that will guide leaders through a journey of expanded influence are known and learnable. These aspects can be found in the research on high-performing organizations and the research on neuroscience. This research is now becoming clear with regard to how a leader's engagement style can be quantified through performance measures. While there are many correlates to success in emotional intelligence for leaders, we start with two fundamental differences in approach.

The first perspective is one of self-preservation. This makes a leader conservative and cautious. The primary aspects you will see from this perspective are related to control and predictability. These leaders want to be able to repeatedly and reliably replicate the past and thereby produce stability. The strategies at play with this perspective tend to be slow to change and quite risk-averse.

Second, we can operate from a perspective of self-realization. Leaders in this mode are far more experimental and innovative. These leaders tend to become skeptical of previously used strategies and tend to want to leverage them into new ways of operating or achieving new goals. These leaders are change-ready and willing to take risks. They tend to not feel a strong linkage to or need for authority, and they tend to question the value of stability.

In *The Heart of the Soul*, Gary Zuckav brings this down to much simpler terms. He states (and I firmly believe) that we are, at all times, either acting from “love and trust” (self-realization) or “fear and doubt” (self-preservation). This is probably the most basic component of our work. Through this, we work with inspiration, helping leaders connect to the deeper parts of themselves. From there, we take action on that inspiration, in an intentional and connected way. This work will help leaders understand those callings and teach them how to move those ideas into action in ways that support large-scale organization change.

This book will deal with the leader on an individual level as well as larger levels of the system, such as a team or an organization. I started in this field, working with large groups of people as an organization-change consultant, hence my first work on large scale change, *Ten Tasks of Change*. During the years of consulting work, I spent most of my time teaching leaders how to change an organization by first changing themselves. This is the biggest differentiator of *Inspirational Presence* in that it teaches leaders how to effect change across many layers of organization through transformational change.

Consequently, there are many references in this book to *change*, which might seem odd when you think of it as a book on leadership. In truth, leadership and change are tied

tightly together, as you rarely lead people to where they already are. New undertakings and directions are achieved when people see the world in new ways and spend their days doing different things. Therefore, it is critical to understand the aspects of how people engage new concepts and how a leader can influence this.

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## OVERVIEW

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*Inspirational Presence* presents a framework of what makes a leader and what makes that leader powerful and able to support transformation. The book focuses on transformational change or when the rules of engagement change. This is the sort of change that brings about reform movements and restructures businesses. Transformational change creates new paradigms about what is possible in the world of business as well as humanity.

In this book you will encounter the use of the word *spirit*—it is not meant to be religious but to denote the connection of human spirit and our perpetual desire to be more, to be connected to a higher source or a greater cause, and a yearning to make a deep and lasting impact on the planet in the years we spend here. In the early years of my work in organization development, a colleague told me that most people who spent any amount of time in this field wound up on some sort of spiritual journey through self-exploration. My experience has shown that statement to be true and, if anything, a bit limited. In my studies of literature and history, I tend to see a much more expanded view of that and believe that every human on this planet goes through some sort of spiritual quest in his or her life. Some are deeper than others, some are longer, and some are more life-encompassing than others. At any rate, it is part of being human. We all hold in our core this spiritual being that is connected at much higher levels of consciousness than we realize most of the time.

*Inspirational Presence* is about connecting with that spirit, but it is not necessarily about the quest itself. This book is about what to do with that energy and how to create a world in which those aspirations can manifest. The passion of that direction becomes the energy of creativity and a connection that drives us and fuels us. It is what sustains us when we might otherwise feel all alone in the world, particularly when we are off the beaten path, forging new directions, leading the wave of innovation, or just standing up for something simply because it matters.

Throughout time, cultures and religions have believed and lived out practices that held a time in our lives for a spiritual awakening; a time when we became aware of a higher purpose or a deep calling within us to do more than exist from day to day. In more recent times, this seems to have become more routine than meaningful, so we often have to look for other means of awakening that spirit with us.

This book is written from a belief that we can find that spirit through fairly simple means, as it is always there and always accessible. We simply need to listen. Our beings are perfectly designed to operate from a higher level of consciousness, and it is not something that we have to learn. There may be practices from our ego and our humanity that we need to unlearn that can get in the way of the essence of our being, but those will become clear as we listen. For now, let us just believe that those things will unfold.

The principles put forth here are a synthesis of practices and research in the areas of leadership, systems theory, psychology, emotional intelligence, and consciousness. They are meant to be a guide for meaningful action. The practices themselves are simply mechanisms through which you can access the power of leadership from within yourself

and put it forth into the world in a manner that people can easily join. The practices apply to any endeavor and seem to be cross-culturally applicable.

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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This book is a guidebook, intended to present concepts and practical ways to use them. Think of it as a reference guide to your leadership development. Each chapter presents a concept that stands for a critical piece of the leadership equation. Each can stand alone and, when studied and adopted, will significantly improve your ability to lead. Put together, the chapters form an integrated framework through which you can learn to create and sustain profound change in others. There are a number of competencies presented, and it is intended to be simple.

It is most valuable to allow yourself the latitude of thinking how this book may present concepts in a different way from those you have heard before. Look for the simplicity here and the elegance that you can achieve as a leader, simply by applying a few principles and practicing some simple techniques.

One of the principles of change that has been a centerpiece of our work is that change can occur quite easily. All we have to do is change our minds. Once we see the world in a different way and look for different data, we immediately create new realities. The only things left are ordering all the mechanical aspects of our lives to align with our new way of thinking.

The issues we have found in our years of working through personal and organizational change are not lack of good ideas or desire of people to create different conditions; they have been the strength of organization designs and management systems

that intentionally and reliably function to perpetuate the current state. The effort involved in change is one of constantly disconnecting from old ways and connecting with new, with as much integrity and conviction as we can muster.

Our world and our systems need transformation, and we need leaders to do this. With the size of the systems that we now have in play, we need many, many leaders who are operating at all levels to make these changes. We need world leaders who will take on the transformational aspects of nations and international issues. We need leaders who will lead schools and communities to create more than has previously been imagined. We need business leaders who will create emerging business models that are created holistically and generate collateral good to communities and their environment.

Whatever sort of leader you are, use this guide to enhance your ability to create transformation. Start with yourself, then your sphere of influence, and then increasingly increase your scope. Today, you; tomorrow, the world.

## CHAPTER 1—THE CASE FOR INSPIRATION

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*Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Buddha. Jesus. Mohammed. Mahatma Gandhi. Nelson Mandela. Aung San Suu Kyi. His Holiness the Dalai Lama. John F. Kennedy. Indira Gandhi. Sequoyah. Abraham Lincoln. Sir Winston Churchill. Eleanor Roosevelt. Desmond Tutu. Maya Angelou. Mikhail Gorbachev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oprah Winfrey. Al Gore. Jeremy Gilley.

What do they all have in common?

Each of those people is known for the difference he or she made in the world. They made contributions through their ability to follow a passion and inspire others with their commitment and connection with people. They were clear and engaging with others. While in every case, there were people who did not agree with them or did not follow their lead, there also were plenty who did. They have each made big differences in the world. In every case, they can inspire us to become more of who we truly know we could be. Their passion can ignite ours.

There are also other leaders—each of us can name someone—who have made differences through the expression of personal passion and their ability to engage others in their direction. I can think of a small number of teachers and people in industry who stand out for me as having been real leaders in their sphere of influence. I would bet that you can, too. You probably had the teacher whom you fondly remember because of how you were changed forever by him or her at a critical point in life. Or maybe you remember the one boss who truly had purpose and connection, who inspired you to achieve. I know I can.

The moment that these special people opened themselves to the world and allowed others access to their passions and purpose, they became leaders. When we engaged their connection with humanity, we experienced a personal transformation. Through that contact, our world was irreversibly changed. Those people remain in our minds because of the impact they had on each of us as a person. We can still feel the emotions associated with them. We remember the experience of being with them. They had inspirational presence. So can you.

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### INSPIRATIONAL PRESENCE

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Presence is that portion of another human being that you sense without consciously trying to do so. This presence can be small or large, compelling or repelling, indefinite yet palpable; it is the basis of connection between human beings. Each of us has presence, and that presence can be sensed by others around us. We do find, however, that some people have a presence that is more noticeable than others and often more compelling than others. Some are noticeable when they walk into a room. Others we notice when they get close to us. Some, we barely notice at all.

Presence, by itself, can be either positive or negative in its effect on others. We have all been around people who make our skin crawl for no apparent reason. We have been around people who make us nervous. We have also been around people who make us laugh or just feel good. Each of these has a different presence, big enough to influence our own state of being. But how does that presence relate to an ability to lead? Once people notice our presence, what does it take to have them want to move in the direction we are going, to buy in to our passion, and to commit their energy to our path?

When we become inspired, our presence becomes more pronounced. Our energy field gets stronger, and our impact on others is more positive. It feels better to be around inspired people than around people who are not. There is smoothness to their energy that compels us to stop, take notice, and listen. To begin to influence others at a personal level, we must have a connection with our own humanity and purpose and allow that connection to be accessed by others. We need a presence that is powerful and compelling. This is obtained through emotional availability and the resonance of a passionate purpose. Along with this purpose comes the optimism, enthusiasm, and self-confidence to pursue it. Then we can open ourselves and learn the transparency and authenticity that allows others to know us, to know what is important to us, and to connect with us around our passion.

*Inspirational presence is the ability to connect authentically with others; to use our thoughts, feelings, and intuitions to guide action toward our deepest sense of personal mission.*

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### INSPIRATION VS. MOTIVATION

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Inspiration is a word that is used in many areas and in many contexts, but it's not that often associated with leadership. Motivation is a more commonly used word when referring to leadership and management roles. Each of you will have your own preliminary definition or association with inspiration and probably can recall times when you found a person or an event or even a sunset particularly inspiring. We all know the feeling of being inspired and the many and varied ways that the word is used. For this book and this model, however, we want to condense it to a specific definition and a particular usage.

Let us start our exploration of the difference between the energy of inspiration and the energy of motivation with some definitions. The main entry for *inspiration* in the dictionary is "ecstasy," which means to "stand outside the ordinary self." Synonyms for

inspiration are blessedness, bliss, delight, delirium, ebullience, elation, enthusiasm, exaltation, fervor, gladness, happiness, joy, and rapture. The main entry for *motivation* is “excitement.” Its synonyms are action, activity, ado, agitation, drama, enthusiasm, excitation, fever, flurry, furor, movement, stimulation, turmoil, and wildness. These are very different words that describe widely dissimilar emotional states. We can see that inspiration has connotations that allow us to be still within ourselves and in an inspired place. Motivation, with its orientation toward action, is more what we experience when we are bursting with energy and can’t wait to do something.

Most of us have experienced the meeting or event that is filled with motivational techniques. We get the bright lights, the loud music, the cheering from the stage. Invariably, these events will have us on our feet, clapping and making plenty of notes about what we will do next. These events can find resonance within us and spur us to action. This sort of energy definitely has its place. It jars us out of our seats, out of our comfort zone, and it charges our adrenaline. It has us making lists and setting goals. This is the key scene of so many feel-good movies, in which we see the rousing and moving half-time speech in the locker room of the big game. It is the speech that stirs our blood, bringing tears to our eyes and power to our limbs, leaving us pulsing with vitality and a renewed sense of determination and purpose. We breathe more freely, and our thoughts are focused. This is the energy of motivation that gets athletes to turn the game around in the critical second half.

But what about the other times? What about the early mornings when no one else is around? What about the quiet places in the day when we are looking for something else or the next place to direct our attention and energy? These times call for inspiration, drawn

from deep within ourselves. It is the energy that we pull up from our deepest, most connected places. It sustains us through good times as well as adversity. We find it possible to be motivated without inspiration following. It is impossible, however, to be inspired without its being followed by motivation. To be truly inspired demands action.

We can take an even deeper meaning of inspiration—that it is the divine breath of life. For our purposes, we need leaders who understand their connection to causes greater than themselves. We need leaders who can connect with the people around them in deep and profound ways, coupling the drive of human passion with the wisdom and intelligence of strategic thinking. We need leaders whose stories can inform us as well as guide us. We need leaders who touch our hearts and awaken our minds. We need leaders who have found their inspiration. These leaders understand the ultimate divine breath of life—to live in the ebb and flow of a force that is greater than one's self; to connect to a purpose that is higher than one's self. This sort of inspiration, coupled with openness and transparency, is the root of inspirational presence.

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## LEADERS WITH INSPIRATIONAL PRESENCE

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Our world needs leaders with inspirational presence, who are connected to a greater truth for their own direction. These leaders, when engaged, are transparent, authentic, and present, and they lead from a place that is outside of their ordinary self. They exhibit a style that is uniquely different, that is noticeable from a distance.

One of the questions I'm asked most frequently is "What do I have to do to be inspirational?" The answer to this is so simple that it sounds flippant: "Be inspired." This is the first place of leadership. Each of us has to find the thing in life that really turns us on,

that lights up our eyes, that makes us want to leap out of bed in the morning because we can't wait to be involved with it. We find our passion in the middle of this space of caring, and we learn that our actions produce results, and create things that we can love. At a basic level, we learn to operate from a place of love that is in action. When we see people who have this energy flowing through them, we will see it in their eyes. We will hear it in their voices. We will feel it through their actions.

We have a choice as leaders, whether we will spend our time trying to get other people to do things and see things in a certain way, or to generally accomplish goals that are of our own making. When we look at leaders who have found their inspiration and have connected in that deep way of being and knowing, we see that they are on a journey and are setting their own pace. These people truly lead by creating the spiritual, emotional, and cognitive journey toward their highest aspirations. They do not propel others in that direction. They compel others to want the same things. That is the deep and profound difference of this leadership style.

The people around this type of leader pick up this energy and literally begin to feel the inspiration as well. They start to respond and move their energy in a like direction and look to their “emotional leader” as a bellwether for what is important on the horizon and how to respond to situations in the here and now.

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### LEADERSHIP AND THE LIMBIC SYSTEM

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Here is where we begin to understand the biomechanical aspect of inspirational presence. Our limbic system is a system of organs, nerves, glands, and portions of our brain that function together to govern our emotions. The significant feature for leadership is that it is

an *open-loop* system—that means that it can take input from outside of the system. In a social group, the interaction of a group of people’s limbic systems is referred to as social contagion (from the same root as the word *contagious*), one of the most pronounced and obvious being laughter. If we go to a comedy club and sit in a room full of people who are laughing, the show likely will seem uproariously funny. If we were to watch the same routine on television, however, we probably would not have the same response because we would be missing the group experience of shared emotion.

This example shows how people experience contagion that is spread across a crowd. There are many different ways that contagion can be played out, although some of the most widely known are somewhat negative—mass hysteria, riots, and other greatly heightened group emotional reactions. The positive effect is felt in group meditations, peace marches, or other times when people share a collective intention and expand on a shared positive emotion. When we move into the same physical space and share emotional experiences, we see the effects of contagion.

We know that we humans connect through the open loops of our limbic systems, as we send and receive energy to everyone and everything around us. It is easy to know, from an intuitive sense, that we actually experience other people’s energy and their emotional states, and we can find ourselves influenced by others around us. Most people can relate to having been with another person whose energy and emotional state was so uplifting that they began to feel uplifted as well. Similarly, most people can relate to spending time around a person who is depressed, soon finding their own energy dwindling to match the other person’s energy.

This sort of empathic response has a deep physiological origin. To truly understand what is happening, it is helpful to remember that modern people have evolved from primeval packs and tribes. The original social unit was quite small, and early humans lived together to survive. Our earliest survival instincts are embedded deeply within a social structure. This survives in today's family unit, where we have a basic system of interdependency into which most of us are born. This structure is literally part of our physiology, as our nervous system has developed in such a way as to take advantage of others around us for protection, companionship, and security.

Our brains have evolved in such a way as to rapidly process this information and act upon it. The oldest portion of the brain is at the juncture of the spinal cord and the brain and is called the amygdale. It is also referred to as the "reptilian brain" or the primitive brain. This portion of the brain developed millennia before the frontal lobes and the higher order processing that is handled there. The amygdale has some very basic functions. It looks at information in front of us and processes it through survival functions. Is it something we need to kill, eat, mate with, or ignore? This is the location for "fight, flight, freeze, or follow." These primordial functions are what kept humans alive and the species perpetuated.

Through the years, the frontal lobes developed to a point of taking over most of the higher-order processing and dealing with the world in a more rules-based and rational fashion. This, however, has not taken the amygdale out of the equation. It is still alive and well and wired into our hormonal system to provide us with all the energy we need to chase down a mastodon or flee a saber-toothed tiger. Its evolutionary path has been slow and has maintained its old focus through the millennia.

Our emotions are associated with hormonal states in our bodies. There seems to be a correlation effect, not necessarily a cause-and-effect relationship. In other words, emotions and hormone levels tend to be predictably associated. One can expect that with certain hormonal changes, predictable emotions will follow. For instance, if an athlete begins taking steroids and bringing up his testosterone levels, it is fairly predictable that emotional outbursts ('roid rages) will follow.

Another example of this is related to fear. If we watch a particularly scary movie, we begin to feel the fear in our bodies. If it is strong enough, we will even begin to taste the adrenaline response. Our hearts will race; our breathing will quicken. To take that even farther, days later, just thinking about that movie may produce the same effect. The brain does not really know the difference between something fearful being in front of it or our just thinking about something frightening. Let's expand this even more. After we've watched the really scary movie, it is possible that that night will be filled with noises and unidentified shapes that can quickly be identified as terrible threats (usually imagined). The point here is that our hormonal systems and our brains are joined in ways that work together to create our reality. If we get scared, our brains will quickly begin finding more threats. At the same time, if we get calm and trusting, our brains will quickly begin finding opportunities and possibilities. A fearful mind looks for bad things, and a calm mind looks for good things.

Going back to the correlation effect, if we start thinking about threats, our bodies will correspondingly create the hormonal reactions that are associated with fight-or-flight. If we start thinking about creative opportunities, we get an altogether different hormonal

response. Our stress levels go down, we relax more, and our thinking becomes more expansive.

Furthermore, we also know that consistently living in specific emotional states, such as anger, also are followed by a physiological change. Ultimately, we will change at a biological, or cellular, level to be consistent with an overall recurring emotional state. For example, when a cell that has been loaded with the peptide response to anger divides, it creates a new cell that “wants” that same level of anger peptides. At that point, the biological need will trigger the brain to look for reasons to be angry in order to satisfy the cellular need for the hormonal response to anger. By the same token, if we have developed a body that lives in heightened states of happiness, our cells will call out for events that will fill the cellular need for happiness. Either one can impact the other, or they work both ways. Our bodies can become habitually tied to a hormonal and emotional state, and therefore, it becomes the energy that we project to others, just by getting close to them.

What does this have to do with leadership, and why are we talking about it now? The answer goes back to the social evolution of a tribe. While we are talking about the individual phenomenon of the emotional/mental/physical connection, there is also a group connection of the same sort. This is another function of the limbic system.

To fully make the connection to leadership, we need to remember the social aspect of tribal living, with deep similarities to how pack animals operate. We are born with our limbic systems attuned to our mothers. That continues in life, as we learn to attune to others to provide information in social settings. We learn to follow the lead in our family systems of people to whom we give authority to keep us safe or to give us guidance. That continues throughout our lives and shows up in every group setting we experience.

As we move through groups during the course of life, each one of us is transmitting emotional information to others around us as well as receiving emotional information from those same people. As we spend more time together, as when we establish a team or social group, the limbic systems of that group will learn an order of emotional listening and develop a pattern of emotions that plays out predictably when that group comes together. The key for leaders is that every group, at a deep and subconscious level, is looking for the person in that group who is the emotional leader and who will provide group direction and guidance. If there is a social hierarchy at play, those patterns help the group attune to a person more quickly and consistently. For instance, if the group knows that a particular person is “in charge”, the individuals tend to look first to that person for leadership signals before they look elsewhere. In the absence of clear leadership signals, the group will move to any strong emotion that feels compelling—but this can be very destructive.

We can see many examples of groups where the emotional leadership arises from a basis of fear. British psychoanalyst W. R. Bion said that the natural leader of a group would be the one who was the most paranoid and the first to find a reason to enter an emotional state of fight-or-flight. In context, Bion was working with British soldiers during World War II who had just been evacuated from Dunkirk and were suffering from “shell shock,” as it was called at the time. (We would now term this post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.) These men had every reason to feel traumatized and paranoid at that time, but the significance here still remains clear. Leadership of a group can come from a place of fear, distrust, and doubt. The limbic system works either way, and a group follows either way. As we talk about leadership, it becomes increasingly clear that the emotional state of a

leader is absolutely critical. Also, every group will eventually find a source of leadership. Whoever is the formal leader of a group either can lead it—or watch it be led.

Daniel Goleman's work *Emotional Intelligence* (1996) points out some other more positive examples of why the emotional state of the leader is important. It is clear from the research on emotions and leadership in the workplace that positive moods have a positive correlation to productivity and job performance. By the same token, moods like anger, resentment, and hostility can have a negative impact on job performance and increase turnover in the workplace. I believe that we all know this correlation from our experience in life. How many of us have found ourselves making errors at critical times, simply because we are in a bad mood? Or, when we have felt great, we've noticed that all of our tasks seem to be easier and faster. Many of the leaders with whom I have worked have described this correlation as intuitively obvious, to the point of labeling it with the Disney tune of "Whistle While You Work." Indeed, intuition is a strong part of our ability as humans to lead others, to navigate social networks, and to create a path through uncharted regions. Most of us know this from experience. If we are in a relationship of any sort—work, family, romantic, or social—where the mood is unhappy, heavy, or depressing, we feel ourselves dragged down. We will feel uninspired. Conversely, if that same situation has optimism and enthusiasm, we will feel that mood moving through us as well. How often, in even the smallest ways, has a social setting inspired us to try something? People who are in emotionally safe, trusting, and supportive environments take more risks. They feel freer to be creative and spontaneous.

Try this out for yourself—based on your experience, can you feel the difference in your own performance based on mood? The Dali Lama states it this way: “Choose optimism. It feels better.”

Here I am, making a point for leadership. While there are many, many research studies that basically illustrate the correlational impact of emotions and job performance, discussing those in depth would talk to your head. In order to fully grasp the leadership concept discussed in this book, I ask you to take a different approach. The type of leader described here is balanced in approaching the world through his or her head, heart, and gut. At this point, if you can access the body and emotional memory you have of the impact of emotions on your productivity and levels of inspiration, you will begin to live from this model. That which you become aware of in yourself and consciously access will begin to shape your life. When you feel this, you begin to develop the empathy that helps you understand what a group of people needs at any given time. From there, you begin the journey of learning to lead through your presence.

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### LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

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It's time to make another clear distinction—what we are *not* talking about here. Very often the word “leader” is used euphemistically to mean “boss” or other authority figure. In those cases, it is used to indicate who is in charge through his or her formal authority and also to elevate the importance of what that person is doing. In reality, a large percentage of people who have the title or designation of *leader* are not leading at all. They may be directing or providing managerial functions, but they are not leading. They are in positions to exercise power through authority.

Renowned sociologist Max Weber outlined three different types of authority in his “tripartite classification.” He described charismatic authority, traditional authority, and rational formal authority. Each of these is a description of how authority is established within a group of people in order to achieve consistent social behavior. All of these are useful in understanding how power is used in society and how various social behaviors can occur or not occur. He describes the charismatic authority of historical figures, such as Jesus and Mohammed, and how their deep personal beliefs and powerful presence achieved authority over society to such an extent as to have people change their beliefs and social practices to follow their way. He noted the social phenomenon of “routinization of charisma,” which occurs when others take the personal authority granted to a person and create a formal and rational authority base to replicate it. An example is the charismatic authority Jesus possessed that was later adopted into organized religions that claimed a heritage of authority based on following his teachings. In this manner, the charismatic authority was transferred into the formal authority of religion.

Yet this only describes authority and not leadership. While Jesus might have had the personal power to tell people what to say or do, it is doubtful that he would have been so direct or so controlling. It is more likely that he honored choice in every way. By the same token, when we look at the writings of the Buddha, we get the same sense of engagement with others. While he might have shown people how they could achieve enlightenment, he was not out to direct their behavior or to control what they did or did not do. Instead, both of these people presented a series of personal choices. As they stood in the place of enlightenment, they beckoned others to join them.

This distinction of authority is one of control and power. This is crucial to understanding true leadership. When we talk about leadership, we lean toward having people who follow because they want to, not because they have to. When we get into the social nuances of empowered systems, we see that this type of leadership is generous and allows others to share in the direction and to expand on their own passions as well. This allows for the synergy of groups and allows the natural phenomenon of collective consciousness to do the creative designs on its own.

In this book, leadership is described as an act and a practice. A person who is in a position of authority and who has extended impact over the lives of others must also lead. Calling a person a leader does not make him or her one. Giving a person a supervisory, managerial, or executive position does not make him or her a leader. It simply gives that person authority. This distinction is called personal and positional power. People in authority roles have positional power, but they also need to develop their personal power. Many times, this will seem paradoxical, as such people will wonder why they need to develop the ability to cause other people to take action because they want to—rather, these people may feel they have the authority to *make* other people take action, even if they don't want to. In truth, a sustainable organization is built through a shared intention of a group of people, not the control actions of one. This comes through the peoples' collective choice to follow the passion of its leadership, whether one person or many.

As you develop your personal ability to lead, remember that all groups want leadership at a primordial level and will find it without any external stimulus. The most compelling and constructive leadership for groups comes through calm, assertive, and deeply inspired direction. One does not need to use power to lead a group but will use

whatever power is available toward an external mission. When you lead from a place of inspiration, people will naturally gravitate toward you. Your ability to sustain that passion and maintain your direction will keep them with you.

In summary, we have examined several aspects of leadership and why the ability to inspire others matters. Our ideal of a connected and dynamic leadership starts from a place of solid personal inspiration. It is about the power of purpose—of passion—and it leads to an engaging style of personal connection. This leadership runs deeply through the limbic system and creates a web of emotional connection through the phenomenon of contagion. Leaders who come from a place of inspirational presence have an effect on groups that stimulates their creativity, opens their sense of vision, and expands their thinking. These leaders offer a compelling direction for others and lead through their passion and heart connections, rather than through power, control, or authority. While there are compelling reasons from a human perspective to lead from this stance, there is also strong evidence of the positive impact it can have on organizational performance. Let us take some first steps in learning how to embody this leadership style.

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### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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#### Inspiration

- When have I felt the most inspired?
- What was I doing, thinking about, learning, or living?
- Am I still doing that?
- Can I get more of that in my life?

Presence

- Whom have I known whose presence I felt from a distance?
- What was it about that person that got my attention?
- What do I know about how that person lived that made him or her unique?
- How transparent am I?
- How do others experience me?

Power

- How important is the use of power to me?
- Do I know when I most want to use power to get my way?
- Whom have I seen use power in the most advanced and constructive way?

Authority

- What is my tendency to lean on authority in my relationships with others?
- How does authority impact me? Do I rely on a person's authority to inform me how to relate to them?
- What is the most positive and constructive way I know to use authority?

Exercise for advancement

Take some time to write out a description of how you will be when you are leading from a place of inspiration, and you have opened yourself to others in an authentic way.

Pick the time frame in the future. Include all of your senses. Write down how others will perceive you and what this ability will allow for you in your life.

## CHAPTER 2—LEARNING TO LEAD

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*You can't teach what you don't know, and you can't lead where you won't go.*

—Rev. Jesse Jackson

Although we talk about leadership as if it is a new science, it is a topic that has been explored for millennia. Many different approaches to leadership have been well documented and studied. When you begin a deeper study of the subject, you will find that there are numerous starting points. Some are based on the ability to manipulate others (à la Niccolò Machiavelli) or to lead armies to victory (à la Sun Tzu); some focus on skills and behaviors (à la Kurt Lewin); some look at the motivational ability of the leader (à la David McClelland); some are based in power (à la John Kotter); and some are based in authority (à la Max Weber). Each of these has its success story and obviously makes sense in some context. This approach to leadership is a combination of two groups of skills: individual and group. The group skills are essential to overall leadership ability, but the basis is in the individual, with who you are as a person and where you want to go.

The act of leadership is a combination of skills and unique worldviews that combine to allow leaders the flexibility to create new conditions, to move the hearts and minds of others, and to manifest reality that would not have emerged otherwise. There have been many individuals who have exhibited great leadership in their fields, including (among others) artists, scientists, scholars, musicians, and explorers. Their pioneering efforts created new possibilities and encouraged change around them from people who had learned from either their example or their tutelage. Many of these pioneers had little or no