

Personal Beliefs

As long as I can remember, I have had people telling me I was a “born leader,” equipped to be my own boss, or an attorney. I’m not exceptionally extroverted and suffer anxieties associated with performing or public speaking, so charisma and a gregarious nature are not traits obvious to why leadership would be assumed for me. A healthy emotional IQ and possessing confidence and competence enables me to see most obstacles and situations with an objective eye, asking questions that drive clarity. I would call these things my strengths. Strengths that I didn’t fully realize until a specific pivot-point in my early forties.

This pivot put me on a deliberate leadership path and built in me a deep drive for authenticity and real intersection with others. It allowed me to celebrate my unique offerings as a person, as a leader, and to appreciate my individuality. Before, I was hard on myself and critical of others, fearful of being “seen,” which laced professional interactions with sarcasm and a lack of empathy. My effort to fulfill everyone else’s definition of leadership and hide the fact that I was almost paralyzed with fear of failure, fed my false leadership identity. Much like Parker Palmer confesses in *The Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 2017), “I was projecting onto society all the fraudulence I felt but could not face in myself, and I was using that projection as a way of evading my own dividedness” (p. 29). The duality was driving me deeper into a fractured identity.

I came face-to-face with my true self the first time I was unexpectedly dismissed from a middle management position I had worked very hard to acquire. The dismissal was politically and selfishly motivated by new executive leadership. I was let go by the exact persona that I embraced as “leader.” It was a gift, an opportunity that forced me to look in the mirror. I found I had turned into something I didn’t respect. This new awareness helped me peel away layers I didn’t identify with, revealing the exuberant inner child and facilitating a true transformation. Because “transformation” is so critical to the leader I aspire to be, I feel it is important to identify

my personal philosophy of transformation. **Transformation** is *the process of the soul reacting to forces that invigorate and drive self-awareness, engaging deep learning, growth, and new understanding of self and connection to life around you*. As a leader today, I embrace the wonder of my inner child, always looking for growth, learning, and questioning the status quo. This is what gives me a unique voice in this world. A transformational power I'm passionate about sharing and encouraging in others.

I believe embracing our influence takes our whole selves: personality, experiences, character, skills, intellect, spiritual compass, emotional intelligence, etc. I believe we all have it in us to lead, whether we are leading ourselves, our families, our colleagues, or our team. *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) posits, “every one of us has the necessary material to become a leader,” and that the true question is in the desire for growth, “Can I become a better leader tomorrow than I am today” (p. 301)? Not all want to, or care to be good at it. I believe the best leadership springs from those that are intentional in their leadership engagement and passionately engage in relationships for the benefit of those around them, teaching and leading by example. Therefore, I intend to help others see how they can lead from where they are, whether that be middle management, supervision, parenting, or anywhere else.

Leadership Practices

Believing leadership takes the whole person means all the material I have studied would come into practice. Throughout my ORGL Change Leadership Concentration journey at Gonzaga I have synthesized the nexus of my leadership practice.

1. **Have Courage to Lead.** “If we want people to fully show up, to bring their whole selves including their unarmored, whole hearts—so that we can innovate, solve problems, and serve people—we have to be vigilant about creating a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected” (Brown, 2018).

2. **Encourage “metanoia.”** “Increase awareness of change of one’s entire person, a move toward self-transcendence” (Carey, 1999, p. 7) in myself and others, supporting decreased organizational dislocation. My inner teacher, soul, true self, ignites with the wonder of things not yet understood. This is where I find I am most at one with myself and willing to be revolutionary. As Parker Palmer encourages us to embrace our shadow selves in order to fully know and love our true and best self, I will always use his encouragement to embrace the imperfections. This means living fully aware of self, or as Parker Palmer states “undivided” (Palmer, 2009). “We must learn to hold the tension between the reality of the moment and the possibility that something better might emerge” (p. 175). Standing in this tragic gap is a constant awareness of self and others, of light and dark in my own journey and inner life.
1. **Lead toward logos.** *Logos* being “the synthesis of all private truths, the integration of all separate realities, that which is common to all,” (Carey, 1999, p. 39), can only transpire when leading from a healthy awareness across all five management frames; rational, human, systems, political, and cultural. Awareness of all five frameworks leads to a balanced promotion of empowerment, collaboration, and dialogue. To fully understand these three things in an organization, “the leader must not see them as separate activities, but as hierarchical stages on the path toward the *logos*,” (Carey, 1999, p. 103).
2. **Learn together.** Lead from a place of child-like learning and sharing. The entirety of *Leadership Theory and Practice* (Northouse, 2016) opened my eyes to the breadth of study on leadership and what constitutes a great leader. It reminds me that self-transcendence can occur as long as we are seeking to improve and are willing to learn and fail as we grow. I identify with the newer studies on *learning organizations* that embrace a flatter leadership structure and focus on transformational, authentic, and servanthood methods that support leadership from a place of vulnerability, equality, and selflessness.

It may seem a bit out of place to bring quantum physics into this conversation, but there is a connectedness of all things being brought more to light the more we explore the universe. I believe this supports why we need to learn and lead together. “We live in a time of chaos, as rich in the potential for disaster as for new possibilities. How will we navigate these times? The answer is, together. We cannot hide behind our boundaries or hold onto the belief that we can survive alone. We need each other to test out ideas, to share what we’re learning, to help us see in new ways, to listen to our stories. We need each other to forgive us when we fail, to trust us with our dreams, to offer hope when we’ve lost our own (Wheatley, 2006, p. 192).

Leadership Commitments

I’ll take my leadership commitments and instruction from the books that spoke most intrinsically to me and the leader I aspire to be. My ISP results reflect that these are also areas I can focus on as I continue growth in leadership praxis.

3. **I will practice new professionalism.** “In the midst of the powerful force field of institutional life, where so much might compromise my core values, I have found firm ground on which to stand—the ground from which I can call myself, my colleagues, and my workplace back to our true mission” (Palmer, 2017, p. 213). I will keep my core identity anchored to my values, beliefs, and passions.
4. **I will mentor/teach/model** - formally, those that are willing; and informally, those that might be mid-transition. Teachable moments, shared incidences, and memorable stories, “offer you the opportunity to pass along lessons in real time, not just in theory or the classroom...,” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 92).
5. **I will keep leadership an affair of the heart** (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 313). (Brown, 2018)

References

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