



Welcome to
LEADER

“All conversations are with myself, and sometimes they involve other people.”

Susan Scott, “Fierce Conversations”



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As you listen, I invite you to pay attention to your internal conversation. That's right, the one that just said, "What internal conversation?"

Start with what you can control - yourself! Allow yourself to explore, to wonder, to examine and to learn.

Pause any need that may arise to explain, defend or avoid what emerges. Consider it all resource for the leader you are committed to becoming!

Having a learning mindset is a key component of leadership.

L is for Learner

Maybe you're saying to yourself, *"I have learned a LOT already. I went to school. I have X number of years of experience etc."*

YES, absolutely. You did. You do. You are probably an expert in many areas. You're paid to be an expert in your field. Being an expert is not the opposed of having a learning mindset. You can have all of your expertise AND choose to maintain a learning stance.

Curiosity, wonderment and humility are beautiful ways of being in the world. They open the space for participation and collaboration and, of course, learning!



Most of the assumptions that prevent learning are *invisible* to us in the moment. They don't even seem like assumptions, they simply seem like the way things are, or the way other people are or the way you are.

Every assumption creates a blind spot, a place we no longer question because we're already decided.

Next time you prepare for a meeting or a conversation, take a moment and ask yourself the following questions:

1. What assumptions am I making?
2. What have I already decided is true about this person or circumstance?
3. What if that is not true or not the whole truth?
4. What else could be just as true or even truer?
5. Take a moment to listen to your internal conversation. What do you notice? How would you describe your attitude towards this person or circumstance?

In the course of a week, pause and ask yourself, what have I learned this week? Who am I open to learning from and who do I refuse to learn from? When was the last time I changed my mind or admitted I was wrong about something or someone?

By noticing the way you listen
you will start to have more room
for inquiry and new choices.

E is for Ears to Hear

Here are some common listening filters, adapted from author and trainer Barbara Fittipaldi. As you read through them, notice which one or ones are your personal favorites. Also, notice if they've been happening even since you've begun this video series.

These filters are biological, they're automatic. We MUST edit, generalize, delete and adapt information. We cannot consciously process the amount of data coming through our senses at any given moment. The purpose of highlighting these filters is to elevate your self-awareness. It's quite possible what you're hearing is not what is being said.

Listening filters:

1. Assessment

We are constantly 'voting' on what we hear. Internally, it sounds like that's good/bad, right/wrong etc. If I hear something that I assess as bad or wrong, I give myself permission to withhold my participation, to distance myself. We do not get to choose whether or not we assess, just what we do with our assessments.

2. I already know

Listening for what we already know or are familiar with, so that we miss or throw out what does not fit into that belief. If what I see or hear fits, I pay attention to it, if it does not fit, I ignore it. When we reduce all the input into what we already know (which is a past-based orientation), we automatically limit possibilities for the future. Our brain is highly predictive, it's part of our survival mechanism. Recognizing this, we automatically lean into already knowing.

3. Description

We have a way we believe everything and everyone 'should' be. It's a natural expectation in our predictive thinking. We have a way life should look, i.e. family looks this way, job looks this way, etc. It is as if we have a perfect world, perfect spouse, perfect boss, perfect children, and even a perfect self (and more) living in our heads. You will notice it by the number of shoulds and shouldn'ts you use every day. This filter naturally looks for blame. Whose fault it is that this situation or individual is not how it/they should be?

Listening filters:

4. Personal

These are my thoughts and my feelings and everyone naturally sees things the same way. It causes me to live in unspoken expectations with others because it never occurs to me to clarify something that is obvious to me. How often have you thought if I just explain all the data, they will come around to my way of thinking? Only to discover that even with the same data set, people do not always see things the way you do! In the personal filter, our assumptions are completely invisible.

By noticing the way you listen and how you are naturally filtering your listening, you will start to have more room for inquiry and new choices.

Ask yourself:

What patterns have you noticed in your internal dialogue?

How would you describe the predominant attitude or mood of those conversations? When was the last time you checked in with someone about what you heard them say?

Having a learning mindset will provide a space for adaptability.

A is for Adaptability

Humans tend to operate out of a universal human paradigm that goes something like this: as long as the world, the other person, the situation show up the way I think they should, then I'll participate. When they don't show up the way I think they should, I withdraw my participation until they shift, straighten up, get it right etc... (you can fill in the blank with your favorite). This paradigm is designed for predictability, for survival.

Neuroscience confirms our brains are highly predictive. We are constantly filling the in blanks. It's a way to preserve our metabolic resource. As it turns out, learning is metabolically expensive - more so than physical action. So, if we recall the "L" for Learner, having a learning mindset will provide a space for adaptability.

Since we're preset for certainty (predictability), adaptability is naturally a challenge for most of us. When the external circumstances are less and less predictable, our need for certainty arises around our opinions and thoughts. When we feel powerless or out of control, we might look for something or someone to blame, to grab on to even temporary stasis.



The more rigid we become, especially in uncertain times, the less relevant we become.

Why? Because when we're rigid we're not present. We're stuck somewhere in the past or in a fantasy of how things should be.

In the context of health, of any kind - physical, emotion, mental, spiritual - adaptability, the willingness to be flexible, to try on other perspectives, thoughts, actions, movements, is what contributes to long term health. Adaptability has never been more important than it is right now.

With the continually shifting circumstances of our lives, our willingness to adapt and move in new directions, find and generate new resource and step into differing perspectives is more vital than ever.

Check in:

How would you describe yourself? The members of your team? The people in your family? Are you aware of how you approach each individual?

When there is a breakdown, do you say things like "that's just the way I am" or "that's just the way they are"? In your workplace, do you have a variety of personalities and talents or have you unwittingly assembled an army of clones?

Direction is knowing where you're headed, having a vision to move into.

D is for Direction

What makes direction powerful is choosing a vision that will call you through the pain or suffering transformation requires. Take a look at the chart below. It is grounded in current reality. Current reality encompasses everything that is: your circumstance, experiences, feelings, thoughts, preferences, choices, education, family background, assumptions AND, also, OTHER people and everything that is for them.

Exploring current reality provides insight into what is present, what is missing and what is next on the journey towards vision. Moving from where you are to where you are headed requires transformation. Transformation is fraught with tension! Two kinds, the first is the tension that tempts you to settle for the status quo, for what's easy, predictable, comfortable, flattering. That type of tension reveals itself in doubting the vision, telling ourselves we set our sights too high, that we're being unrealistic or unreasonable or allowing our past narrative to dictate what is possible in the future. It's a powerful draw and we can find it in the smallest of commitments. Notice what happens to your vision for health or exercise right after January 1st and watch this type of tension work!



The second type of tension is the one that draws you to get up and go again.

And again. And again. It's the relentless draw of purpose, of why you're here on earth, of what you have to contribute, of what you see possible. You can attempt to numb it out or avoid it but it calls to you in your dreams. You don't need to judge the tension when it appears. Simply allow it to alert you that there is something beautiful at stake. Keep moving forward.

Ask yourself:

1. What do you do with the tension when it arises?
2. Is your vision driving your daily decision-making or do you find yourself in continuous fire drills?
3. How often do you check in with your team or family on how they see their individual role in the bigger vision?
4. In what ways do you communicate identity, purpose and values?
5. Based on results, how well is your team oriented? Do you invest the time in grounding yourself daily?

We cannot shift what we cannot see.

E is for Environment

Ask yourself, am I an invitation for people to step into their greatness or do I spend my energy manipulating or controlling, feeling like it is my job to make someone do something? Am I feeding my hero and the heroes around me? What is your conversation about the people that you are leading? What is their purpose? What is your purpose? What do you assume people are up to? Notice how your assumptions influence the results that you get.

We cannot shift what we cannot see. Start by noticing the tenor and context of your internal conversations. Write down what you notice and you will get immediate insight into your attitude. Once you have a sense of what lives internally, look externally and see how your environment mirrors your private conversations. Consciousness creates the possibility for choice. When you become aware of your contribution to the environment, you can begin to make necessary changes to realign your attitude to your values and vision.



Sometimes it's great to wonder...

Am I a party people want to come to? If your mood or attitude was an invitation or a dis-invitation, what you notice? What type of relationships seems to populate your life?

Check in:

1. Describe the overall attitude of your team. Ask yourself, how have I contributed to what I see?
2. When someone new enters your space, how does he or she experience the culture?
3. Have you asked them? Does the culture inspire growth?
4. Are people stepping up into leadership and growing or do people need to leave to advance

In our culture, responsibility often gets collapsed with blame.

R is for Responsibility

When someone says ‘whose responsible for this or that?’ what they mean is ‘whose fault is it?’. What if responsibility is simply an indication of who can affect change? Who can make a difference in this situation? Wouldn’t that be all of us?

One way to tell if you’re avoiding responsibility in a situation is to notice how many reasons you can come up with to explain the results you do have, when those results are not what you committed to originally. There is an inverse relationship between reason and results. For example, let’s say the result I’m committed to is a 50% increase in sales by year end. When the year-end comes, if I have a 30% increase in sales, I definitely will have 20% worth of reasons to explain why. Ironically, most of the time we have those reasons initially, right when the commitment is made and we use them to validate being right about what wasn’t going to work out in the first place.

It’s impossible to effect change in any area where you cannot see your contribution, your responsibility, what you can own. The clearer you are about your contribution, the more potent your participation.



Here is a simple way to prepare and plan with your team:

1. What are your goals? This is an opportunity to hear from each person. Often the team is working on different goals without even knowing.
2. How confident are you that you will reach the goal? I ask for a percentage from each person. It lets me know what conversations may be lurking underneath the surface.
3. What reasons or excuses do you already have in your mind about why this will not work? Exposing the existing beliefs ready to sabotage success is a great way to address them before it is too late. Often the reasons or excuses point to valid concerns that need to be discussed. Once out in the light, they can be addressed before moving forward.

Ask yourself:

1. What are your organization's results telling you?
2. When you identify a problem, are you also able to see your contribution?
3. How does your team investigate both what works and what has not been working?