

A FULLYALIVE *White Paper*

Getting more of what you want and less of what you don't want

"It all comes down to these three."

The Core Great Leadership

The ten **Fully Alive Leadership PRACTICES** are specific actions that great leaders do consistently. The **PRACTICES** have enormous impact on those who look to you for leadership and are at the heart of a day-to-day great leadership mindset – or perhaps “heart set” would be better terminology.

Daniel Goleman said it best in his groundbreaking work, Emotional Intelligence¹, explaining that we humans are not thinking beings that feel; we are feeling beings that think. That is to say, we are primarily driven by our senses, our feelings and then later – perhaps not much later – we justify our decisions and our actions with the logic of the highly developed, analytical neo-cortex part of our brain. Thus, we decide to purchase the red convertible with the big engine because of the rush we feel when we drive the demonstrator and because in doing so we feel young and free. Then we explain our decision to our spouse by saying that the red convertible will have demonstrably lower depreciation versus the boring sedan. We are, indeed, feeling beings that think.

The application of that to leadership is that great leaders – defined as those who inspire others to be great followers and to give their all – do things that touch their followers in feeling ways. That is the driver, the power behind influencing people to decide to give their very best, their A-game.

That does not mean that all great leaders are touchy-feely types – far from it. Touchy-feely is simply one of many styles. Great leaders can be extremely demanding.

The real core of the issue rests on three simple and enormously powerful messages that great leaders communicate over and over and their delivery style may vary depending on circumstances.

First, great leaders are fully present – **Fully Alive** – with those who look to them for leadership. This is about being right here, right now, giving full attention and focus.

This is a fast-paced world for most of us and it seems that everyone is maxed out, so we go fast, trying and usually failing to complete our to-do list each day. That leads us to multi-tasking, pretending that we can do a quality job of two things at once. But when it's time to interact with others – time to be a leader – multi-tasking is disastrous.

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Study after study² has shown that multi-tasking is an illusion, especially when either of the tasks being attempted requires more than minimal concentration. What actually happens is that our brains rapidly switch back and forth between the tasks, giving the illusion of multi-tasking. The result is that we quickly gain, lose, regain, then again lose focus and concentration on each task and that produces two unwanted results: first, it takes longer to complete the two tasks than it would have had they been attempted one at a time; second, and so very negative for leaders, is that we do a poorer quality job of each task.

So, for example, when one of your direct reports comes into your office to talk about something of importance, if you check emails or scan the papers on your desk while attempting to listen, the quality of your presence will be compromised. Your direct report will experience it as a lack of focus - a lack of interest - in him/her. Clearly, in such an exchange, you would not be fully present and it has a significant negative impact on your direct report.

You may have many things vying for your attention, but your job as the leader requires you to set them all aside when you are with those who look to you for leadership. You must be “with them” when you are with them. If you want the very best from your people, do what great leaders do: Be fully present.

The second part of the Core of Great Leadership is that great leaders let their followers know that they care about them. Of course, that can be done in the aforementioned touchy-feely way, but it can also be demonstrated in a demanding way by telling followers that you insist on them delivering their best because - and this is critical - they are too important to be any less than their best. That is to say, you care so much about them that you require them to be the very best version of themselves - for themselves.

This isn't about others being their best because of what that will deliver to you. Their excellence will, indeed, redound to you, but that is an outcome, not the reason.

Finally, great leaders always let their followers know that they believe in them. Like delivering the “I care about you” message, this can be demonstrated in many different ways. Sometimes it is an overt message, like, “I know you can do this,” or, “I know you have it in you,” or, “I see something in you.” Sometimes the message is delivered with a touch of stealth, such as, “This project is challenging. That's why I'm giving it to you.” Sometimes it is delivered in the straightforward statement, “I believe in you.”

The differences in these examples is only that of style. The underlying message is consistently one of a leader's belief in a follower, a validation.

And those three Core of Great Leadership messages of being **Fully Alive**, fully present, of delivering the message of caring and of offering validation - the “I believe in you” message - produce the most remarkable effect upon followers, those who look to *you* for leadership.

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Your people will make their own decisions about how much of their discretionary effort they will give. Your job as the leader is to influence their decision so that they give their A-game.

And the three pieces of the Core of Great Leadership is how to do it.

¹ *Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman, 1995. Revised 2005, Bantam Dell, New York.

² An interesting take on this can be found in *Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction*, Matt Richtel, New York Times, November 21, 2010. Studies have been done by the Insurance Industry of America, The University of Minnesota and many others, all finding the same connection between multi-tasking and lower quality performance.