



# LEADERSHIP HEADQUARTERS

## Unlocking Exceptional Performance.

What do you do when you have an employee who is great at getting results, meeting their targets, and great with clients, but when it comes to their team, they are abrasive, abusive and condescending?

What do you do when you're in a relationship and your partner says they will call, and they don't? They say they will show up, but they don't. They say they will be there for you, and they are not. Worse yet, this has been going on for months.

What do you do when you're in a meeting with your direct report who does all the talking all the time, and never asks for input or feedback? What if your employee is not a team player and it's really hurting morale?

It is time for an intervention. It's time to have a courageous conversation.

**Be Courageous:** The essence of courageous conversations is being direct and not fearful. Having a conversation in your head isn't the same as having a real conversation. Being courageous means being connected to your feelings. Feelings of fear and anxiety create distance. When we are courageous we are fearless. When we act with courage, there is a certain grace that is brought to the conversation.

**Be Present:** To have a courageous conversation, we need to be completely in the moment. In order to have a successful courageous conversation, we need to stay present and engaged, aware of our own feelings and those of others.

**Be Reflective:** To have a productive courageous conversation, we need to pause and reflect. Sometimes we react without thinking about how our response might impact the other person. Take time to reflect so that you don't choose an inappropriate response and say something that you may regret.

**Be Human:** Most of us have a limited vocabulary when expressing our feelings, so we are more likely to offer an automatic or habitual response than to connect heart-to-heart. Being human means connecting, understanding, listening, bringing energy to the heart of what is important.

**Be Attentive:** Courageous conversations require great listening. Pay close attention and demonstrate sincere interest in the other person's thoughts and feelings. Be the person who is truly listening by tapping the hidden dialogue, and uncovering what is not being said. When you make more meaningful contact, you are more likely to get the other person's full attention.

**Be Honest:** Courageous conversations require you to be honest and say what you truly feel.

**Be Curious:** A courageous conversation is not a controlling one. Stay open and curious. The more you try to control, the more out of control you will feel. Try to understand what others are saying. This does not mean you accept what they say as your truth, but that you are open to the possibilities.

**Be Accountable:** This means taking responsibility for what you say and how you say it. Do not blame, label or abuse anyone else. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Being accountable will help shift the conversation from blame to gaining understanding.

**Be Committed:** Your commitment to be courageous fosters connection. Being committed to courageous conversation will make your communications clear and compelling.

**Lead From Within:** When we stay focused, we remain our caring human self, able to pay attention to others' feelings and ideas. That helps foster greater understanding.

### EXERCISE: UNLOCKING EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE

This exercise is to identify times in your life as a leader when you have unlocked exceptional performance in your team members as a result of courageous and meaningful conversations.

When have I been successful in courageous and meaningful conversations that unlocked exceptional performance?

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What did I do that others found to be effective? What were the outcomes?

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**RECOGNISE THE PART YOU PLAY.**

Describe one or more situations where you were not effective in having a courageous and meaningful conversation that unlocked exceptional performance?

I was less effective in courageous and meaningful conversations that unlocked exceptional performance when:

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What prevented me from making these courageous and meaningful conversations effective at unlocking exceptional performance?

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Knowing what I know now, what would I do differently in a similar situation?

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