

## Leadership Confidence

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**M**ost leadership programs miss the mark in developing leaders. They try to re-create the person or make them into someone else, possibly a specific leader that is revered and admired. Although it is beneficial to read and learn from others, it is crucial to your leadership confidence that you know yourself. In John Mason's Book, *An Enemy Called Average*, he makes the statement, "All of us are born originals but most of us die carbon copies". We do not need anymore "carbon copy" leaders. We need leaders who really know themselves, are self-managed and confident to move organizations forward.

Knowing yourself is self-awareness (the first component in Emotional Intelligence – for more information on Emotional Intelligence read "[Leading with the Whole Brain](#)"). What does it really mean to be self-aware and how does this affect your leadership confidence?

***Controlling behaviors begins with self-awareness.***

Self-Awareness is your ability to accurately read and understand your emotions, to be aware of your triggers, hot buttons and the responses that are provoked when they are pushed or tripped. Have you ever found yourself responding (or not responding) and later recreating it... you then say, I will never do that again, only to "do that" again the next time a similar situation occurs? This inevitably affects our leadership confidence and the confidence others have in us. Controlling behaviors (whether that is to stand up and say something or to learn to be quiet) begins with self-awareness.

There are several things you can do to increase your self-awareness. Below are 6 steps you can take to get started in improving your self-awareness:

1. Journal – when you journal you begin to see patterns of what you are doing well and what you want to change
2. Ask for feedback – as leaders, we all have leadership blind spots. Feedback will reveal things about our leadership we are not aware of – a [360 evaluation](#) as a coaching tool is a meaningful process to get this feedback
3. Identify your values and beliefs – as leaders we need to know our top five values and how they connect to our beliefs
4. Measure how you respond – once you identify your values and beliefs, you can look at how you respond when someone has different values and belief system (these are usually closely related to your "hot buttons" and "triggers"). Are you pleased with your responses, are you getting the

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outcomes you desire? You do not have to change your values or beliefs to change your behaviors in responding, thus changing the outcomes. (We will talk more about this in self-management).

5. Have a support group or at least one accountability partner to support you through desired behavioral changes – a professional coach is a great person to partner with you on this as well
6. Assessments tools such as Emergenetics, MBTI, Strength Finder, DISC, etc. can be very insightful in better understanding yourself: for more info visit:

<http://msbcoach.com/coaching/leadership-tools-and-assessments/>

The next step to building your leadership confidence is self- management. Self-management is your ability to take what you have become self-aware of and manage (take charge/control) of your behaviors and to move to the outcomes desired. Leaders must recognize you cannot control anyone else, only yourself.

Self-Awareness and Self-Management go hand in hand for effective leadership. I was once working with a leader (we had completed a 360 with him and a few other assessments). Without revealing too much, let's just say, this leader had a lot of room for growth. When he was presented with his 360 results he said, "Ok, Ok, I get it... I am a jerk! So now am I emotionally intelligent?" My response was, "Well, you are at least self-aware, can we now move on to self-management?"

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Being self-aware is not an excuse or justification for poor behavior. It is a way to open your eyes, see your leadership blind-spots and set a plan of action to manage behavioral change. As you know from experience, we cannot simply "eradicate" a habit we do not like. It would be nice if it were that simple. For something to have become a habit we have repeated it enough times that we have created a neurological pathway that the brain is very familiar with. Similar to driving home from work; you get in your car, drive home and most likely do not remember anything you passed. Your brain is on "autopilot" (for more information on leadership autopilot see <http://blog.msbcoach.com/leadership-autopilot/>).

When we are responding in situations, (even when we have identified through self-awareness a certain behaviors that do not work), the pathways (habits) are still created and it is where the brain goes. Especially when we are under stress, we go to the familiar and path of least resistance. Sound hopeless to make change? It is not. We can change behavior patterns; however, it takes intentional and purposeful actions, over and over to create new pathways.... New, positive habits.

Here is one thing you can do to begin to manage (change) behaviors. Visualize in your mind the outcome you want. Create a movie, so to speak, of how you see the situation playing out... allow the movie to explore all the possible outcomes and how you will respond to them. Once you have done

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this, when the situation does present itself, you are prepared to respond and are not caught off guard or don't end up with less than desirable outcomes.

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In order to motivate yourself and result in long-term behavior changes, it is important to reward yourself for changing behavior patterns, even in small doses. These rewards do not have to be anything big or costly. For example, you may have a habit of procrastinating certain projects and find yourself continually going to answer emails for instant gratification rather than getting to the important project. You justify in your mind you are working; however, you are still not getting to the important project at hand (you identify this through self-awareness). The next step is to discipline yourself (self-management). For example, work for one hour (or whatever time frame works for you). Then

through self-awareness identify a reward that motivates you. For example, a brisk walk around the building, a chat with a colleague, 5 minutes surfing the internet, a piece of dark chocolate, etc. When you manage yourself through self-awareness and give rewards for small accomplishments, you will not only get more done and be in control of yourself, you will also increase confidence in yourself and the confidence others have in you as well thus leading to a higher level of leadership confidence.

Often when leaders begin to manage their own behavior changes, it effects change in others and ultimately cultural change... somewhat of a domino effect. Here is how it works; there are foundational or corner stone behaviors that liberate behaviors in others. For example you have chosen to be open to ideas different from your own. Instead of saying, "This is how we are going to do it...." You ask, "Does anyone have another suggestion?" Or when someone brings up another possibility that is different from yours or that you have tried before and didn't work, or that you think will not work, instead of shutting them down you say, "Tell me more about how you see that working...." As you begin to be more open-minded to possibilities, you send the message to others to be open-minded, thus over time affecting the culture.

Leadership is a journey. We are constantly learning, growing and developing. Our leadership confidence is affected by understanding ourselves and managing our behaviors. People are not looking for a perfect leader (there is not one, BTW). People are inspired by "real, authentic" leaders who are not afraid to embrace growth, acknowledge room for improvement in their own lives and take steps to make change happen. This type of leader is not only more confident but they are also inspirational.

You can learn more about changing your habits in the new book, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by author Charles Duhigg where he addresses why we form habits and how they can be changed.

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