

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

TAKING A PRINCIPLED STAND AND STAYING EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED

WHAT'S INSIDE?

The moment of truth is when most leaders experience failure. Instead of maintaining a principled stand while staying emotionally connected, the leader does only one of two, or even worse, does neither. Narcissistic leaders may win the day temporarily, but they are sowing the seed for mutually assured destruction. Maintaining an emotional connection is key for leaders. The following tips help to achieve this balance of principled leadership and emotionally connected leadership; inside the system (e.g. the workplace) and outside the system (e.g. homelife).



ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK, ANXIOUS CHURCH ANXIOUS PEOPLE BY JACK SHITAMA

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INSIDE THE SYSTEM

1. STAY EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED

One failure is for the leader to maintain her stand, but to withdraw emotionally. Unless a leader is able to maintain her position AND stay emotionally connected, she will face problems. When a leader is self-defined, but not connected, it heightens anxiety and its symptoms in the system. Because there is no emotional connection, the anxiety from the system's shakeup has no outlet except through greater and greater dysfunction.



2. CONSIDER FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Using a systems perspective, you realize that someone is upset, and it is not always because of the issue at hand, but because of unresolved issues in her own family of origin. That's real empathy. It can reduce your anxiety because you won't take things personally, and it will help you stay connected emotionally.

3. TALK TO YOURSELF

One of the hardest things is to say, "This is what I believe. I know it upsets you, and I am sorry. I care for you, but I'm not responsible for how you feel." It is probably best to leave the italicized phrase in your head. But you need to tell yourself that, so that you won't give in, even as you stay connected. Leader's who just say, "This is what I believe," without showing care for those who are upset are missing the point of leadership through self-differentiation.

4. DON'T GIVE IN & WITHDRAW

The worst failure of nerve is to give in AND withdraw. To give in and withdraw emotionally is the beginning of the end. What is often missed in leadership growth is how family of origin affects the ability to lead. In fact, the more you work to deal with your unresolved issues in your own family of origin, the more likely you will be able to maintain self-differentiation in the moment of truth. That being said, there are some things you can keep in mind to help you in the moment of truth.

5. KEEP THE BALANCE

Keep the balance between maintaining your stand and being narcissistic. Just because you believe you are right, doesn't mean you shouldn't listen to what others think or pay attention to how others feel. Just because you do so, doesn't mean you have to give in. The moment of truth is about being firm, but fair. It is the hardest thing to do. But it is the only thing to lasting change.

6. FOCUS ON YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS

This will keep the situation at hand in perspective. As the saying goes, "It always looks like failure in the middle." Keeping the long view helps you to understand that this is just one more bump in the road.

7. FOCUS ON THINGS YOU ENJOY

Don't let the crisis at hand consume your world. Maintain your emotional functioning as a whole person, both in the person and outside of it. Not every interaction in the system has to be about the crisis. Let the crisis be what it is: one thing, but not the entire thing. Continue your activities outside of the system, whether professional or social. Focus on the things you enjoy. Not letting the crisis become the center of your universe will better equip you to deal with it when it does come up.

8. TRY TO KEEP THINGS LOOSE

Use humor and playfulness to help others be less serious. Anxiety is poison, and humor reduces anxiety.

9. MAINTAIN CONNECTION WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Continue to connect with your friends and family without allowing your own anxiety about the crisis to infiltrate everything that happens. Share with them so they can support you, but don't drag them down by allowing it to be the only thing you ever talk about.

OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

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