A person with long hair

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Being a Great Leader

to Yourself

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Well hello Friends! I hope you guys had an amazing week.

Before we get into today’s episode, I want to thank you for being here today. And ask that if you like what you hear on this podcast, we’d be grateful if you’d give us a rating or a review on your favorite platform. It helps us reach more people with these coaching concepts and that’s what we’re all about.

So, LAST week, we talked about **How to Stay Strong During Challenging Times**. And in that, I introduced a concept called Inner Leadership which is central to what I teach in my business. So THIS week, I want to take the concept a little deeper and discuss **How to Be a Great Leader to YOURSELF.**

There’s no denying that leadership is a popular topic today. We hear about it in business, politics, sports, religion. In fact, according to Forbes Magazine, it’s a $400 Billion a year industry. And growing.

That’s great because the whole concept of leadership is important. But the thing is, most of what we read about or discuss when it comes to leadership, is one dimensional, usually focused on things like:

How to influence others

How to motivate others

How to manage others

How to inspire others

How to get others to trust you or follow you or whatever.

And notice what these have in common.

First, they’re about the affect you want to have on OTHERS.

Influencing others, motivating others, inspiring others, etc.

And SECOND, they’re about how-to strategies.

Which means, the focus is almost exclusively EXTERNAL. The impact you have on others or what actions you should take to respond to something going on.

But what’s missing is the most IMPORTANT part of leadership. It’s what comes BEFORE all of that, which is how effective we are at leading OURSELVES.

Because whether you’re trying to manage something going on around you or whether you’re trying to manage where your career is going, if you want to get the best results, it all starts inside, right?

BEFORE we can develop the best response to something or lead others through it, we must have a clear perspective on what’s going on.

That we’re not just responding automatically based on whatever unconscious thought loop might be going on in your head. But that we’re doing it from a place that’s free from unconscious judgments, self-limiting beliefs, biases. Whatever.

And for the most part, we’re not taught this right?

That’s why we developed the concept of Inner Leadership. So we can develop what I like to call “SELF-COMMAND.” That’s when we learn how to stop responding to the things and happen and instead, learn how to be the master of our inner world – specifically, our thoughts and emotions. Because it’s from those things that our actions and ultimately our results, come from.

So long before we come up with the answer to what we SHOULD DO about the things that happen to us, we must FIRST work on LEADING OUR MIND as it relates to that thing that happened. This means first becoming aware of how we feel about the thing that happened and then exploring the thoughts that caused you to feel that emotion.

Once you do that, you know you’ve landed on your truth. And then you can decide whether that thought will inspire the kinds of emotions and actions that will lead to the results you want.

And if the answer is NO, then you can shift into a new thought that WILL.

Many times we aren’t even aware of the thoughts swirling in our head when big things are going on. And if you’re like me, you definitely don’t know that our thoughts are a choice. We don’t have to just live with whatever random thought our brain serves up based on programmed patterns of thought that got ingrained somewhere along the way. Those thoughts aren’t just TRUE. We can choose a new thought that WILL lead to the direction you want to go.

Like I said earlier, this isn’t what we usually talk about in business, right? We talk about actions and strategies and stuff. So this internal focus might sound a little woo woo.

But trust me when I say that learning this approach to PURPOSEFUL thinking allows you to practice the kind of INNER LEADERSHIP that puts YOU firmly in charge of you.

Once you master it, you’re no longer the victim of the things going on around you. Instead, you get to decide how you want to think about those things.

Most of us – at least in Western Culture – are taught to pay attention to the external. The things going on OUTSIDE of or AROUND US. And then we’re told that we need to RESPOND to, manage, or influence those external things.

I mean, every self-help article, magazine cover or book title proves that out. We see headlines like:

Like 3 easy ways to do this.

Or the 5 hacks to do that.

And it sounds good, right?

Rational.

As if there’s some off the shelf solution to everything that happens. Like it’s all that easy. Problem solved. Right?

Wrong.

The truth is, if all we do is focus on the EXTERNAL things going on or happening to us, we won’t have the awareness we need to be clear about what we THINK about the things that are going on.

And this is dangerous.

Because if we’re not aware of our own thoughts or beliefs around what’s going on. Or we’re not aware of what we’re making the thing that’s going on MEAN about us or our possibilities or whatever, then we’ll always be fighting lingering negative feelings.

And you know what THAT means?

It means that whatever actions we take in response will be less than ideal. Depending on what your brain serves up subconsciously, they might be coming from a negative or limiting place. And that means we might potentially be left to fight the lingering negative effects of the things that are very much alive and well under the surface.

So, let’s look at something that recently happened to one of my coaching clients.

Six months ago, my client was promoted into a new role within the same company. It was in a different business unit – one where she wasn’t very well networked – and they were now reporting to a new manager and had a new set of peers, none of whom they knew very well.

In their past role, they’d been well-liked, often sought out for their opinions and always highly rated when it came to annual review time. So, they were usually given the most difficult and high-profile things and they aced them.

But now, in this new role, everything felt different.

While they’re slowly developing a relationship with the new boss, they can’t seem to shake the feeling that they’re the “odd one out.”

The people on the team have worked together for several years. They share a lot of history. Finish each other’s sentences. Laugh at the same things and build off each other’s ideas. And no matter what my client tried; they couldn’t figure out a way to get accepted into their cozy little clique.

And because of Covid, the regular office-based ways of getting to know each other over lunch or coffee or cocktails wasn’t possible, so they were limited to phone, video, and IM chats.

While on the surface, everything seemed cordial, there was no denying that they were not part of the inner circle.

There were lots of little cues.

When my client tried to join in on IM conversations, no one would respond to their comments, but they actively engaged with others. When my client proposed new ideas for how to improve or introduced new processes, no one supported. Instead, they stayed silent or maybe they’d offer up a half-hearted “we tried that and it didn’t work.”

My client knew that when it came to being new in the role, remote working wasn’t helping matters. And for the first few months, they told themselves that it was just going to take longer and more effort to get to know their teammates and once they did, they’d build the same productive relationships they’d had in their last job.

But now that they’re six month’s in, they felt isolated. Rejected. Disconnected from the team. And they can’t figure out a way to change it. Without the usual ways of connecting in office, they felt hopeless and all alone.

So much so that they’d given up on the job and actually came to me for help on preparing for the job search they planned to spin up.

With my clients, I NEVER start with diving into the resume or job search coaching. We always first explore their REASON for leaving. Especially in instances like this. Because my client wasn’t planning to leave because they were seeking an opportunity for growth.

They’d just gotten a promotion. It was a next level opportunity. Leading a team. Learning new things. Inside a company that up to this point, she liked. She believed in their mission and up till now, felt that it could support her desired career growth for years to come.

They were leaving because of how they FELT inside the new job. Which was rejected. Isolated. And increasingly, frustrated.

And these emotions were caused by what she was thinking, which was things like:

These people are cliquey.

They don’t like me.

They’re going to undermine every idea I have.

While on one level, it’s understandable that she’d think these thoughts, as we probed more, the truth of the matter is, she was leaping to conclusions.

She doesn’t really know how these people feel about her. The only thing she can know is that she doesn’t KNOW them.

And we all know how that usually works in business. When people are unfamiliar with someone, many times they don’t trust or support their ideas. Trust and reputation are built over time. And in a 100% remote work environment, building that with an entirely new set of colleagues requires a completely different set of actions.

So as we probed the actions she had taken to GET to know them, she quickly realized the things she’d done weren’t enough. Sure, she’d scheduled a 1:1 get acquainted Zoom with each but she’d thought that she’d build her personal brand and relationship through their regular interactions in meetings and such.

While that might work in an in person environment it clearly wasn’t enough in a remote environment with this particular set of colleagues.

So as we explored their possible reasons for WHY they might be responding in that way, she realized that instead of them not liking her or supporting her, they might actually just be a little hesitant.

They didn’t know her.

They clearly needed more time and interactions before she’d have the easy camaraderie they all enjoyed.

And she also admitted that she couldn’t just expect people she didn’t know to automatically support her ideas. And she realized that she might need to work a little harder to pre-sell them or socialize them with each person individually BEFORE tossing them out there at a meeting.

She realized that, as the newest member of the team, she needed to have a better strategy for not only getting to know them as people but for finding ways to enlist their involvement and support in the ideas she was trying to spin up.

And, as we discussed all of it, she realized that her reasons for wanting to get a new job were probably ill advised. She was actually trying to run away to some unknown greener pasture. When in reality, she’d probably be working remotely there as well and potentially have the same hurdles to overcome with remote colleagues and that it might be in a company she likes less than the one she’s currently with.

She decided NOT to leave. And she decided to choose a new approach which started with the thought, “It’s on me to build the relationships I want with this new team.”

This made her feel focused and determined.

And it led her create an entirely new strategy that included more regular touch bases, more upfront check ins when she was driving a new strategy and maybe most importantly a commitment to stop judging her colleague’s actions and leaping to conclusions but to instead, giving it time.

This is the power of Inner Leadership. This is what we mean by having self-command.

When you learn to not jump to conclusions or have instant reactions or rush to judgment, you can operate from your most powerful place. The place where you’re in charge no matter what is going on. Where you show up as your best, most authentic self.

That’s going to lead you not only to the career you want. But the life you want to.

Doors open this week for Next Level. Go to thepurposefulcareer.com/nextlevel to sign up for the wait list.

Until next time, make it a great week my friends