The
15
Commitments of
CONSCIOUS
LEADERSHIP
A new paradigm for sustainable success

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This book is dedicated to all of those who have explored conscious leadership before us and all of those who are joining us now in the great conversation.

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PREFACE

Why another book on leadership?

When we asked ourselves this question, we answered, "Because most of the current models of leadership aren't working."

We want to be clear about what we mean. Today's leadership models can achieve certain desired ends quite effectively, such as creating shareholder value, increasing market share, developing new products, beating the competition, giving certain leaders fortune and fame, and giving business schools useful frameworks for training future leaders.

But we have found that these outcomes are not enough because the models are unsustainable on three critical levels.

PERSONAL LEVEL

Our clients range from the top banks and investment firms in the world to leading healthcare organizations and the most cutting-edge technology firms. We work with entrepreneurial start-ups, small businesses, and Fortune 500 organizations. We've coached, facilitated, and consulted with thousands of leaders, including the brightest millennials and baby boomers hailed as best in class.

Many of these incredibly gifted, driven, passionate, and purposeful leaders are fraying at the edges. One Fortune 500 CEO reported to us recently that his equally competent physician wife was shocked at the number of wildly successful twentysomethings who were requesting prescriptions for Xanax and Ambien via text messages because they had no time to come in for an appointment. We've worked with many astounding leaders who enter midlife with broken marriages, fractured families, hardened hearts, and dreamless futures. They can boast many quarters of beating earnings estimates and they have the money to show for it, but they're struggling to find purpose, satisfaction, happiness, and balance.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Burned-out, stressed-out, and frazzled leaders foster organizations that experience high turnover, low employee engagement, steep healthcare costs, and dysfunctional teams that often work against one another. The current models of leadership require organizations to motivate their people largely with fear and extrinsic rewards. Though no one argues that these forms of motivation can produce short-term results, they are usually accompanied by distrust and cynicism in the workplace, which have long-term negative consequences. In this scenario, leaders must continuously ratchet up the fear and anxiety to raise productivity and then use increased monetary incentives to keep scared, cynical, and fed-up people on board. These models are simply not sustainable if the goal is to build vibrant, creative, and profitable organizations with engaged, productive teams over the long run.

The organizations that follow the conscious leadership model are winning the talent war. Once people recognize that there are companies using higher forms of motivation like intrinsic reward, play, and even love, they gravitate toward them. Further, conscious leadership organizations attract the best and brightest by leveraging each individual's unique genius capacities. They transform average workers into outstanding contributors, who in turn, help create impressive organizational results.

According to the *Chicago Tribune* and *Crain's Chicago Business*, the two best companies to work at in Chicago are Athletico and Centro. Both companies practice most of the 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership, a model which is proving to be sustainable, self-rejuvenating, and reinforcing. Sandy Weill, former CEO and Chairman of Citigroup, once said, "What is culture except something you find in yogurt?" We disagree. Culture is the secret sauce—or lethal bacteria—of all teams. Conscious leadership cultures build success in real and concrete ways you will read about in this book.

PLANETARY LEVEL

Most current models are built on beliefs of scarcity and win/lose competition—a deeply rooted, flawed mindset found in most cultures and leaders. Like fear, this view motivates people for a while but it doesn't last. The "not enough resources" belief (money, time, energy, space, and love) and the "I/we are not enough" belief create a zero-sum game, generating winners and losers, haves and have-nots. Because we are afraid there isn't enough for all

of us, we harm the planet and each other, an unworkable approach that won't sustain future generations.

So we offer this book to the great leadership conversation because we believe models like Conscious Leadership are those of present and future pioneers, who will take themselves, their organizations, and the global community to new heights of success. Conscious Leadership presents a radically new and meaningful paradigm that enhances and enriches everyone who embraces it.

We welcome all you pioneers on this journey with us.

TWO LIVES

It's 5:15 a.m. and Tim is up and at 'em. He sets his phone alarm each night but hasn't needed it for nearly four years. His phone and laptop recharge all night long on the table next to his bed. A while ago he gave into his wife's complaints and agreed to turn the ringers off but he leaves them on "vibrate," and vibrate and flash they do… all night.

Like many leaders, Tim exists on five to six hours of so-called sleep. We refer to it that way because if you actually measured his sleep, you would discover that very little of it is deep and restorative. Tim is sleep deprived and doesn't even recognize it.

"No problem," declares Tim. "I'll sleep when I'm dead!" Wandering to the bathroom a bit bleary eyed, he begins scanning his emails for anything that has blown up or could blow up. By 5:17, he has already gotten a solid jolt of his favorite chemical cocktail: adrenaline. His head is in the game. Downstairs, he brews up a double espresso and checks the morning papers and news outlets on his laptop. His adrenaline, combined with his ever-present anxiety, brings his attention to the news with a laser-beam focus most often seen in world-class athletes.

Today's a good day because Tim has time for a workout. He has never really been out of shape since his days as a competitive college athlete but rarely does he hit his target of six workouts a week. These days he says if he's "lucky," he gets three.

After exercising and taking a shower, he wakes his kids. This is an especially good day because he'll share a rare breakfast with them before catching the train to work. Tim loves his kids. In fact, his kids keep him connected to what he says really matters to him. During breakfast, though, he is half-present at best as he handles several critical emails and makes a short but "urgent" call.

A fast goodbye, hugs all around, and a peck on his wife's cheek and he is out the door. Twenty years ago, the goodbye kiss included a moment of looking into each other's eyes and a teasing touch that said "I'll be back for more later," but those days are gone. What was once an openhearted, loving connection is now a functional relationship between two people who co-parent, grow their assets, keep up their image, and occasionally check out who might be a better option.

On the train and in the game, Tim responds to emails and makes quick, determined calls. His juices are flowing— this is what he loves. Sure, the scorecard is fortune and fame, freedom and opportunity, but the game itself is all that matters. It's about being on the edge, constantly being challenged and challenging others. He feels alive. Unfortunately, Tim, and many leaders like him, can't tell the difference between being "fully alive" and feeling a mixture of adrenaline, caffeine, sugar, pressure, compulsivity, addiction, and competition, all driven by deeply repressed fear and insecurity. This shows up in many ways in Tim's life, perhaps most significantly in his inability to be by himself in silence. He can be by himself (he actually likes that), but when alone, he watches TV,

reads, listens to music, does projects—anything that keeps him from facing the stillness, the emptiness, and himself.

When Tim gets to the office, the other players join him on the field and the game escalates. His team is one of the best in the industry. Their motto is "If you don't work on Saturday, don't bother coming in on Monday." They epitomize type As with their drive and competitive juice. Team meetings are intellectual sword fights where everyone is invested in being right and proving it. Mistakes are frowned upon and often covered up. Blame is the order of the day.

This anxiety is hidden and never discussed. In fact, no member of Tim's team, including Tim, would ever admit to being afraid or nervous, let alone scared or sad. Feelings are never mentioned and, except for anger, are seen as a sign of weakness. Though, in a rare honest moment, they admit to themselves that they're growing weary of the game.

Because of this environment, Tim and the other leaders have become master "spinners." They would protest this description, clinging tightly to their belief that they never lie (even though they do). But deep down, they would acknowledge that they rarely expose all their relevant thoughts and opinions. They keep their cards close to their vest because in this game, information is power and influence comes from managing people by manipulating perception.

At the end of the day, Tim grabs a beer with a couple of his closest allies. This post-game debriefing ritual is filled with celebration, strategy, storytelling, and a big dose of gossip. Much of the time is spent talking about people who aren't at the bar, and most of them know that if they don't return the next night, they'll be the target of conversation. Gossip, they maintain, is the glue that builds alliances.

Tim catches the 7:20 train back to the suburbs and works his email all the way. He's home by 8:30 just in time to kiss the kids good night, eat some pizza while watching ESPN and have a few cocktails. The drinks are important. They begin the process of bringing Tim "down" from the high that has been coursing through his veins since early in the day. Sometimes alcohol isn't enough and he'll take a pill or smoke a joint. His goal is to shut off his mind. Sleep finally comes around midnight. The alarm is set, the devices charging and buzzing and blinking.

It's been another good day.

Tim is a highly successful leader.

Tim is an unconscious leader.

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Sharon's day begins with a gentle waking from a great night's sleep, followed by five minutes of intentional deep breathing and stretching. After a cup of tea, she meditates for twenty minutes. When her significant other returns from his morning jog, she meets him in the family room and they connect for a few minutes of authentic sharing and appreciation. They check to see if anything is blocking their closeness. This is Sharon's second long-term adult relationship. Her first ended in divorce, and she is committed to having a close, loving, and playful partnership that supports them both in bringing their greatest gifts to the world. It's working. It isn't without moments of drama, but they have learned to shift skillfully from being "stuck" to flowing in a supportive, creative way.

Her two kids are up by 7:00 and the entire family meets for breakfast at 7:30. The kids are now in first and third grade and like most kids they lead full, active lives. Sharon is deeply committed to being present when she is with her kids at breakfast. She makes a clear distinction between being with her kids and being present with her kids. She does both but breakfast is a time to be fully present, no TV, no computers, no communication devices. She credits her meditation practice with giving her the ability to bring her full attention to her family and if her mind wanders she brings it back to the moment.

At 8:00, Sharon is picked up by her driver and arrives at the office forty-five minutes later. She is dedicated to spending her time doing what she is uniquely gifted to do, which corresponds to what brings her the greatest joy and

allows her to make her deepest contribution to the world. She calls it "living in her genius." Driving is not a genius area for her, so she has chosen to hire someone to perform that task. At first this seemed like an extravagance, but now she experiences it as marvelously supportive.

During the car ride, she opens her laptop to her "system." Several years ago, Sharon mastered David Allen's approach in his book *Getting Things Done: The Key to Stress-Free Productivity* and set up a management system that organizes everything in one location. In a matter of minutes, she can switch from her life purpose, to her current active projects, to twelve-month goals, to roles and responsibilities, to areas of focus, and to action items. Sharon doesn't use her mind to try to keep track of her complex life but rather to do what a mind is good at: thinking creatively, daydreaming, figuring out solutions, and planning next month's sales conference.

Upon arriving at the office, Sharon goes straight to her yoga class. As CEO, she is dedicated to creating a workplace that supports the whole person. One way she expresses this is by offering free yoga classes three times a day to all employees and their significant others. She chooses to practice twice a week at the office. After a shower, she is at her desk by 10 a.m. Years ago Sharon couldn't have imagined starting her official work day at 10 a.m. but she has learned that both the quality and the quantity of her work grow as she pays attention to radically taking care of herself.

Sharon has already identified her top three priorities for the day and set aside ninety minutes to focus on her most important work. Aware that she does her best mental work in the morning, she rarely schedules meetings or calls before noon. Members of her team know that she is accessible if they need her. Together they have developed agreements about what constitutes "needing" one another, virtually eliminating "drive-by interruptions" unless an emergency arises. They follow communication protocols for using texts, emails, voicemail, phone, video conference, and face-to-face meetings, matching the bandwidth of the medium with the significance of their communication needs. For example, meaningful conversations that include complex ideas and a full range of emotions are covered in person or on Skype. This commitment alone has stopped issues from recirculating through endless email chains.

Speaking of emotions, Sharon and her team have become experts at experiencing and expressing emotions in healthy ways that bring life, vibrancy, and great wisdom to each of them individually and to the group as a whole. As a result of this and many of their other practices, employee engagement is at an all-time high, turnover at an all-time low, and heath care costs the lowest they have been in years.

Sharon meets with her team for lunch every day. This isn't an obligation (very little is done in Sharon's world from "shoulds" or "have tos"), but rather an opportunity few of them miss. The lunch is filled with laughter and play. It's not that they're playing ping-pong (though there

is a ping-pong table in the corporate lounge) or telling silly jokes. They're actually having fun dealing with real business issues.

What is striking about Sharon and her team is the way this spirit of play permeates everything they do. One of their mottos is "Nothing is serious. If it seems serious, SHIFT." Now don't misunderstand this. Sharon and her team are wildly successful. They have lapped the field when it comes to all the metrics of individual and team success. Their investors couldn't be more pleased. It's just that Sharon learned (she would say, "the hard way") that taking yourself or life seriously leads to all kinds of physical, emotional, relational, and occupational "issues." Sharon is a deeply grounded person who has a real sense that her security is rooted in something way beyond performance. It just IS. She and her teammates have learned this through direct experience, for them it is not just a set of beliefs.

A good part of what makes work and lunch so much fun at Sharon's firm is the degree to which they value learning over everything else. To them, learning combined with playing is the holy grail of their corporate culture. They aren't that interested in being "right" or proving that they're right, knowing that this takes care of itself if they focus on staying in a state of curiosity and high learning. They all drift in and out of this state but they identify their drifts, don't blame or shame themselves or one another, and shift rapidly back to a high state of learning and collaboration. Drama, gossip, and toxic fear, rarely seen around the firm, are quickly addressed and resolved.

So much of the energy consumed in other companies through these and other forms of toxic sludge is freed up for high levels of creativity, innovation, and collaboration. No wonder the firm is regularly listed as one of the best places to work.

After lunch Sharon returns to her office and "processes" her email. She doesn't check her email constantly. In fact, all alarms to notify her of a new email have been turned off. Processing her email (viewing every message and doing the appropriate thing with it, which is often just filing it) takes about ninety minutes of Sharon's day. She usually does this in two sittings: right after lunch and again before leaving at the end of the day. Her teammates and clients understand that if they need to reach her, she will read and respond to emails within twenty-four hours. If they need a response before then, they know to contact Sharon's assistant or call Sharon directly. She does not live in the "tyranny of the urgent." She gave up that addiction long ago.

The afternoon includes meetings and one-on-one coaching, along with several walks around the building. Sharon has learned that she works best in sixty- to ninety-minute increments separated by ten minutes of walking or moving creatively. She honors this and other rhythms in her life.

Sharon has become an expert at leading a high performing executive team. First of all, she is vigilant about only having people on her team who live the culture. Second, she only works directly with people

around whom her energy increases. She pays attention to this and if her energy starts to drop in the presence of one of her direct reports she has a candid and open conversation to address the issue. Third, she is a master delegator. She lives and works in her areas of "genius" and empowers everyone else to do the same. Accountability is so artfully practiced by Sharon and her team that she would never think of having people work for her that she has to "hold accountable." Everyone on the team gets that responsibility is something you take and not something that anyone else can assign to you. Her team takes responsibility for themselves, for the team and for the organization as a whole. With everyone working in their zone of genius, and no time wasted in drama, Sharon is able to get done in 7-8 hours of work what others could only imagine accomplishing in 24/7.

By 6:00 she is seated in the back of her car and usually spends another twenty minutes meditating. At home she connects with her husband and children for dinner, homework and reading together before bed. Like many leading executives, Sharon travels her fair share, and when she is home, she makes these moments count. Usually in bed by 10:00, she rests peacefully. Everything is okay, just as it is meant to be.

It's been another good day.

Sharon is a highly successful leader.

Sharon is a conscious leader.

This book is for all the Tims of the world who suspect that there is a better way of leading and living. This book is about conscious leadership.

Leading Above The Line

15 Commitments of conscious Leadership
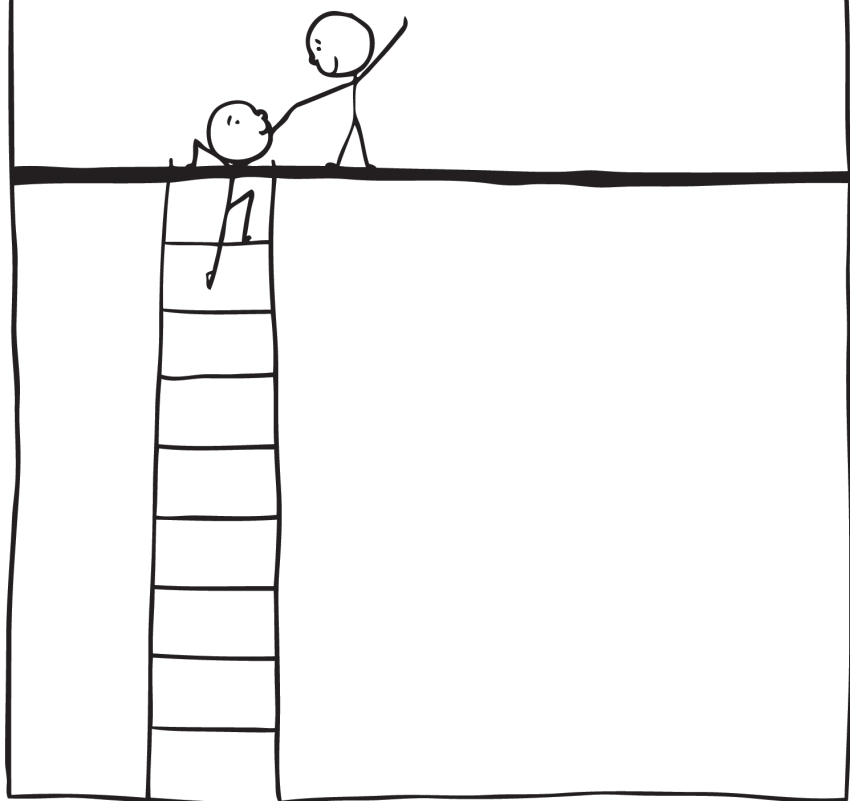
LEADING FROM ABOVE THE LINE

Several times a year one of us is invited to speak to one of the top Wall Street investment banks. We present to the firm's top leaders and their key clients about conscious leadership. Like most investment banks, this is not exactly a bastion for new age, touchy-feely leadership experimentation. It is a hard-edged, competitive, no-nonsense, bottom-line-focused commercial enterprise. And we begin almost every session the same way—by drawing a single black line:

That's right. A black line. Then we step away and say to some of the world's top business leaders, "From our perspective, this diagram is the most important model we know of for being a conscious leader." Often this declaration is greeted with silence and skeptical looks. We're not surprised. These leaders work with complex models and sophisticated concepts, so a statement claiming that a simple black line is the best model for conscious leadership would understandably raise some eyebrows.

We go on to say that this model is binary: it is either/or. At any point, a leader is either above the line or below the line. If you are above it, you are leading consciously, and if you are below it, you are not.

We then ask all the participants where they currently are with respect to the line, explaining that conscious leaders know at any given moment whether they are above or below it. Frustration builds because these types of leaders like to "get it right." In fact, they get paid for getting it right and don't like to make mistakes, especially in public.

This exercise replicates real-world leadership. Leaders make decisions (am I above or below the line?). They make decisions with limited information (I don't know what the model means), and they judge those decisions as right or wrong. Their decisions are subject to public scrutiny, so the world judges them as well. This combination of factors usually leads to some amount of anxiety, and this anxiety is the water in which most leaders swim. Some swim in these waters consciously and others do it unconsciously.

After everyone has committed to being above or below the line by a show of hands, we go on to describe the model. We share with them that when leaders are below the line, they are closed and defensive, and when they are above the line, they are open and curious. Further, we reveal that when leaders are below the line, their primary commitment is to being right, and when they are above the line, their primary commitment is to learning.

After presenting this information, we ask again for a show of hands—who is above the line and who is below it? At this point, interesting leadership and social phenomena kick in. These smart, capable leaders have made a judgment that it is "better" to be above the line than

BELOW THE LINE

CLOSED   DEFENSIVE   COMMITTED TO BEING RIGHT

below it. This belief causes them to distort reality so they can see themselves as above the line, the preferred state, even if they are not above the line.

Into this common distortion (wanting to be right), we offer this coaching. We suggest that the first mark of conscious leaders is self-awareness and the ability to tell themselves the truth. It matters far more that leaders can accurately determine whether they are above or below the line in any moment than where they actually are. Distortion and denial are cornerstone traits of unconscious leaders.

A NORMAL STATE

We then explain to the bank's leaders and their invited guests that being below the line is actually a normal state for many people. According to Dan Goleman in his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence*, we are constantly scanning our environment looking for threats. To be precise, the amygdala, an almond shaped part of the limbic brain, is standing guard "something like an emotional sentinel, challenging every situation, every perception, with but one kind of question in mind, the most primitive: 'Is this

something I hate? That hurts me? Something I fear, if so – if the moment at hand somehow draws a 'Yes' – the amygdala reacts instantaneously, like a neural tripwire, telegraphing a message of crisis to all parts of the brain." (Goleman, pg. 16) When the amygdala senses a threat, it sounds an alarm and our entire system prepares for survival. When our ancestors were confronted with a threat to their survival in the form of a wild animal, they fought, ran, stood still, or fell to the ground to play dead. Their reaction was usually the option with the greatest probability for survival, often with no real thought. It was simply an instinctual reaction. The amygdala was doing its job.

Like our ancestors, leaders are constantly scanning the horizon for threats. But today, those threats rarely endanger their physical survival. There aren't many saber-toothed tigers roaming the campuses of corporate America.

Nevertheless, leaders often have a difficult time telling the difference between a threat to the body's physical survival and an imagined threat to the ego or identity. For example, when our boss frowns at us while we're making a presentation, we interpret this as a threat to our survival, at least the survival of our ego. In a threatened state the brain fires off a chemical cocktail designed to support us in fighting, fleeing, freezing, or fainting. Put another way, when we perceive a threat to our sense of well-being, we go "below the line." We don't choose this at a conscious level. We just do it. We close down. We get defensive and double down on being RIGHT.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BEING RIGHT

What does being right have to do with being below the line? Remember, for most leaders, survival is a matter of protecting the ego or identity or image. And the ego firmly believes that if it is not "right," it will not survive. Being wrong equates to being dead. This is especially true as the level of perceived threat rises. The higher the stakes—for example, we could lose our job or the love of a significant other or control of something we deem important—the more the ego will try to survive by being right.

We see this again and again in our work with leaders. When coaching them, we often use the tool of feedback. We gather lots of data from multiple sources and give leaders feedback about how they are seen in the world and about how they appear to be wired at a personality level. Leader after leader will interpret this direct feedback as a threat to their identity and go below the line. It is a natural reaction.

For this reason, we say that knowing when you are below the line is more important than being below the line. Leaders are in real trouble when they are below the line (closed, defensive, and committed to being right and keeping their ego alive) and think they are above it. This leadership blindness is rampant in the corporate world.

But once leaders develop self-awareness and locate themselves accurately below the line, they create the possibility for shifting, a master skill of conscious leaders. Shifting is moving from closed to open, from defensive

to curious, from wanting to be right to wanting to learn, and from fighting for the survival of the individual ego to leading from a place of security and trust.

CHOOSING TO SHIFT

Of course, many leaders ask us this question: "Why is it so important to be above the line?" From our experience, and probably yours, creativity, innovation, and collaboration (all keys to high-level problem solving) occur best when we operate above the line. In fact, they don't occur at all below the line, where it is necessary to be if your physical well-being is threatened and you need to fight, flee, freeze, or faint. In such a situation, survival trumps high-level problem solving, creativity, and collaboration. Most leaders work in environments in which creative problem solving is necessary for winning, but this is available only when leaders lead from above the line.

Since the early 1900s, based on what is called the Yerkes-Dodson effect, scientists have known that increased arousal is correlated with increased performance on a task up to some point and then as arousal continues to increase, performance declines. This inverted U shaped curve has shown up in many studies since. In our model being below the line is a state of hyperarousal (increased heart rate, anxiety feeling, pupillary dilation, change in respiratory rate, increased blood adrenaline levels). In this state certain tasks, especially those that require creativity and collaboration, are more difficult. For simple tasks, the more you are aroused, the better you behave but most leaders we coach are not dealing with simple tasks. We also prefer to see people choosing to lead from above the line because

those leaders experience sustainable happiness. Happiness, as it is measured and researched, is essential to long-term health, engagement, and success.

Numerous studies have correlated happiness with lower levels of stress and better physical health. A critical issue in the corporate world is the high cost of health care. One of the best remedies for that is cutting down on illnesses. Happy people get sick less. And people who lead from above the line are both healthier and happier.

Further, companies spend countless sums of money to measure and improve employee engagement. In our experience, "above the line" leaders are more engaged and create environments with much higher levels of engagement among their team members.

A ROAD MAP

This book is about "location, location, location," as they say in the world of real estate. In our work with countless leaders, we have learned that at any moment, they are living from either a "below the line" commitment or an "above the line" commitment. The following 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership provides a road map to help you constantly determine where you are with respect to the line. Each commitment has an "above the line" version (the commitment of conscious leaders) and a "below the line" version (the commitment of unconscious leaders).

We use the word "commitment" throughout the book and it is important to clarify what we mean. Commitment is a statement of what is. From our perspective, you can know

your commitments by your results, not by what you say your commitments are. We are all committed. We are all producing results. Conscious leaders own their commitments by owning their results.

Here is a simple illustration: We are all committed (the way we use this word) to weighing exactly what we weigh in this moment. How do we know this? Because this is what is. In our experience, most people would "say" that they are committed to weighing more or less than they weigh in this moment. The result—not our words—is the proof of a commitment. As we introduce you to the 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership, we are suggesting that at any moment, you are living either from the "above the line" commitment or from the "below the line" commitment. The results occurring in your life provide the evidence of which one.

Our passion is in supporting leaders to tell themselves the truth in any given moment, to locate themselves as above or below the line, and then, if they are willing, to shift into higher states of leadership consciousness. We offer many shift moves that have had a profound effect on leaders and their organizations.

CONTENT VS. CONTEXT

As you begin your journey with us into conscious leadership it is important for you to know that we place our attention primarily on context and secondarily on content. From our perspective all of life is occurring as one big conversation. Sometimes this conversation is between individual people, sometimes it's between groups

For us, commitment is a statement of "what is." From our perspective, you can know your commitments by your results, not by what you say your commitments are. We are all committed. We are all producing results. Conscious leaders own their commitments by owning their results.

and nations. Sometimes this conversation is between an individual and the universe and often this conversation occurs inside one person and it is between various parts of me.

All conversations have both content and context. Content answers the question, "What are we talking about?" Context answers the question, "How are we talking about the content?" Most leaders and people focus on the content of conversation. For instance, the production line is broken down, what do we do to get it going; we aren't innovating fast enough; our market share is shrinking; our daughter's grades are slipping; I want to go to Tuscany for vacation. All of this is content. It is "what" we are talking about.

Context answers the question "how" are we talking about the content. Or put another way, "From what consciousness are we having this conversation?" Based on what we have talked about so far, we would suggest that all conversations occur either from above the line or below the line. We can talk about the broken production

line from above or below the line. We can talk about market share or our daughter's grades or a vacation from above or below the line. This is a context question. In our experience great leaders pay more attention to how conversations are occurring than to what is being talked about. In fact, a specific leadership question that we see conscious leaders bringing to every situation is "Where are we talking and listening from right now: above or below the line?"

For each of the 15 Commitments we offer different contexts from which any conversation can occur, a below the line context and an above the line context. If leaders pay attention to the context of every conversation, the content will resolve itself much more easefully, creatively and sustainably.

THE FOUR WAYS OF LEADING

The discussion of being above and below the line is part of a larger conversation. The larger conversation is about states of consciousness.

When we talk about our work, we are often asked, "What exactly is conscious leadership?" Let's begin by looking at the word "conscious." If you walk down Michigan Avenue in Chicago and say to the average passerby, "The CEO of XYZ Corporation is unconscious," a normal response would be, "Wow, that's serious. Did he fall and hit his head or did he have a stroke or heart attack? Is he in the hospital? Will he live?"

Most people associate the word "unconscious" with the state that results from a severe blow to the head,

or as the dictionary defines it, "a dramatic alteration of one's mental state that involves a complete or near complete lack of responsiveness to people and other environmental stimuli."

This common definition is also quite useful in our discussion. Unconscious leaders have a "complete or near complete lack of responsiveness to people and other environmental stimuli." They do not really see what is happening around them. They are cut off from an authentic experience of people, themselves, and their lives.

We often describe unconscious leaders as reactive. They react from a "story" about the past or an imagined future, and their personality, ego, or mind takes over. They are not free to lead from creative impulse, nor are they tuned in to what the moment is requiring of them.

For example, many top leaders have tremendous drive, passion, and energy, which sometimes go hand in hand with what the workplace calls "anger issues." It doesn't take long for leaders open to coaching to see that when their anger is out of control, they go on autopilot. They literally can't see what is happening (blind rage). They live out this familiar pattern again and again.

The same holds true for leaders in the grip of unconscious fear. When fear is occurring in them, they can't see it, feel it, experience it, or release it. Here's a typical scenario: A leader receives a report about missing the earnings target, and fear kicks him into reactivity. The next thing

you know he has his direct reports seated around him in a conference room, and once again, he's having a conversation about fault and blame.

Recently we coached the CEO of a highly successful Fortune 200 company. He's being lauded as a bright new star on the leadership front. Yet he confided in us that his autopilot reactivity shows up when he goes to a bar, has several drinks, and starts chasing women. This unconscious leader has been stuck in the same pattern since college.

Unlike unconscious leaders who do not see, hear, or feel authentically and accurately, conscious leaders experience what is here now and respond in the moment. They are not trapped in old patterns. They are free to lead and serve others, their organization, the world, and themselves.

In our experience, conscious leaders are rare. Most people live life largely unconsciously in the habitual trance of their personality, their regret and anger about the past, and their hope, fear, and greed about the future. Let us be clear: We are not judging this way of living. We live this

way quite often ourselves. In fact, we actually think that this is the "normal" (familiar) way of living and it has real benefits. We'll discuss those later but for now we simply want to point out that people can lead and live differently.

FOUR WAYS OF LEADING IN THE WORLD

To help us have this conversation, we want to introduce a second model. We have already introduced you to Above and Below the Line. Like that model and all others, this next one is fundamentally flawed because no model can accurately describe reality, particularly the reality of human consciousness. All models are de facto distortions of reality. Just as a restaurant's menu is not the same as its food but merely a pointer to something much more wonderful, so are models only pointers to something far more complex.

We originally heard about this model in a talk Michael Bernard Beckwith, founder of Agape International Spiritual Center, gave on life visioning. The model immediately resonated with us as a way to describe what we observe in our work with leaders. We have extrapolated from Beckwith's original model by adding our own concepts to his construct.

The model on the next page suggests that there are four ways of leading.

We want to clarify that these four ways of being in the world are states, not stages of development. Stages are progressive sequential eras in the life of a person or organization. For example, a person undergoes the stages

of infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. States, on the other hand, are not sequential. We don't move in a developmental pattern from one state to another, but rather in an ongoing, irregular way. Think of the awake, dreaming, and non-dreaming sleep states. People move in and out of these states throughout the day and night. One is not better or more advanced than another.

FOUR WAYS OF LEADING

ONENESS

AS ME - LIFE IS ME

POSTURE: At one with all

EXPERIENCE: Peace, spaciousness

BELIEFS: There is just oneness
There are no problems, and no one to "solve" them

KEY QUESTION: No more questions - just knowingness

BENEFITS: Experience oneness & non-dualism
Unlimited freedom & peace

TO ME - LIFE HAPPENS TO ME

POSTURE: Victim

EXPERIENCE: Blaming and complaining

BELIEFS: There is a problem
Someone is at fault
Someone should fix this

KEY QUESTION: Why me? Whose fault is this?

BENEFITS: Experience separateness
Defined identity, entertaining drama,
supports empathy, adrenaline high

This is an important clarification for us because when we present this model to leaders, they often interpret it as stages of development and that is not the intention. Indeed, moving from To Me to By Me to Through Me and back to To Me can take a matter of hours or minutes.

Becoming aware of which state we are in at any moment is the first key to shifting. As mentioned earlier in our discussion of above and below the line, location is critical in this work. Where are you living and leading from

THROUGH ME - I COOPERATE WITH LIFE HAPPENING

POSTURE:	Co-creator
EXPERIENCE:	Allowing, flow, wonder and awe
BELIEFS:	I am the source of all meaning. I experience things as perfect, whole and complete Life handles all apparent "problems"
KEY QUESTION:	What wants to happen through me?
BENEFITS:	Non-attachment Unlimited possibility, plenty of everything

SURRENDER

BY ME - I MAKE LIFE HAPPEN

POSTURE:	Creator
EXPERIENCE:	Appreciation
BELIEFS:	Problems are here for me to learn from I create the problem, so I can solve it
KEY QUESTION:	What can I learn? What do I want to create?
BENEFITS:	Personal empowerment Define your wants and desires

RESPONSIBILITY

now? This is a question conscious leaders ask themselves regularly and become masters at answering accurately. Only then do we have the real option to shift to another state of leadership if that is what we want and are fully willing to do.

THE "TO ME" WAY OF LEADING

The To Me state of consciousness is synonymous with being below the line. From our perspective, 95% of all leaders (and people) spend 98% of their time in that state. If I am in the To Me consciousness, I see myself "at the effect of," meaning that the cause of my condition is outside me. It is happening To Me. Whether I see the cause as another person, circumstance, or condition, I believe I'm being acted upon by external forces.

Leaders in To Me are "at the effect of" the markets, competitors, team members who "don't get it," suppliers, the weather, their own mood, their spouse, their children, their bank account, and their health, to name a few. They believe that these external realities are responsible for their unhappiness (if only my spouse weren't mean, I'd be happy); for their failures (if only my sales team would work harder, our top line would go up); and for their insecurities (if my board gave me a larger share of the company, I'd be secure).

This "at the effect of" way of seeing the world doesn't mean that leaders are always unhappy or upset. On the contrary, some are quite happy and successful, but the point is that they are pinning the cause of their well-being on external factors.

We call this To Me mindset "victim consciousness". In our experience, a significant difference exists between being a victim and having a victim consciousness. Most people would agree that children abused by alcoholic parents are victims. Thirty years later, if those same children, now adults, are still blaming their parents for their problems and suffering, they are living in a victim consciousness.

Victim consciousness is a choice. As we mentioned, from our experience, most people choose to live this way.

Those operating in the To Me victim consciousness are constantly looking to the past to assign blame for their current experience. They fault themselves, others, circumstances, or conditions for what is happening in their lives. Their thoughts and conversations are often dominated by "why" questions: "Why did this happen to me?" "Why don't they respect me?" "Why are we losing market share?" "Why are my kids failing in school?" They search for answers that assign responsibility for the cause.

To see an example of this, we need look no further than the cable news networks. Whether you watch CNN, FOX, or MSNBC, every conversation goes like this: "Something is wrong. Someone is to blame. And that someone is not us. It is them. And we are right, they are wrong." Of course, they don't all agree on the "someone" or "something" to blame, but their common experience is grounded in the reality that something is wrong and someone "out there" is responsible.

THE "BY ME" WAY OF LEADING

When leaders shift from below the line to above it, they move from the To Me to the By Me state—from living in victim consciousness to living in creator consciousness and from being "at the effect of" to "consciously creating with." Instead of believing that the cause of their experience is outside themselves, they believe that they are the cause of their experience.

To Me leaders think that the world should be a certain way, and if it isn't, something needs to be different. For example, it should be warm and sunny out and it's not, therefore the weather should be different. My children should obey me and when they don't, they should be different. My employees should "get it" and they don't, so they need to be different. Sometimes, however, the world is just the way they think it should be, although this is rare and fleeting for To Me leaders.

The By Me leader chooses to see that everything in the world is unfolding perfectly for their learning and development. Nothing has to be different. They see that what is happening is for them.

We suggest to leaders that life is like one big learning university, where we all enroll in classes that are perfectly designed to support our education. In these classes, we can either be "at the effect of" the teacher, the curriculum, and the other students or "consciously creating with."

To do the latter, a leader chooses curiosity and learning over defensiveness and being right (two cornerstones of the To Me consciousness). Instead of asking "Why is this happening to me?" the By Me leader asks questions like, "What can I learn from this?" "How is this situation 'for me'?" "How am I creating this and keeping this going?"

The gateway for moving from To Me to By Me is responsibility—actually, what we call radical responsibility: choosing to take responsibility for whatever is occurring in our lives, letting go of blaming anyone (ourselves, others, circumstances, or conditions), and opening through curiosity to learn all that life has to teach us. We'll say much more about this in Commitment 1.

THE "THROUGH ME" WAY OF LEADING

Central to both the To Me and By Me states of leadership is "me": I am at the center of the consciousness. This doesn't mean that I don't think about other people or issues or God or the future or the past. Rather, it means that my thoughts in these states are about how everything relates to me. Again, from our perspective, this is not a bad thing. It is just the way the mind/ego/identity functions. From these states of consciousness, we can't interact with the world in any other way.

The "me" in the To Me state is "at the effect of" people, circumstances, and conditions. It is disempowered, invested in being right, and therefore defensive. In contrast, the "me" in the By Me state is "consciously creating with" people, circumstances, and conditions. It is empowered, interested in learning, and therefore very curious.

In the Through Me state of leadership, the "me" starts to open to another. Curiosity begins to guide this leader to a different set of questions, such as, "Am I the center of the universe?" "Is there something going on in addition to me?" "What is the nature of this other?" "Is it possible to be in relationship to this other?"

Let us be clear that in our experience, leaders who ask these questions are not necessarily religious, though sometimes they are. We work with scientists who ask these same questions and conclude that the "other" is the energy of the quantum field. Some leaders experience this entity as love or the universe or presence or God. The key to Through Me is that leaders begin to notice something beyond themselves.

We'll illustrate this with the subject of purpose or vision. To Me leaders rarely have a clearly aligned purpose or vision for themselves or their organization. They might have gone though an HR exercise and created a purpose, mission, and vision, but in their daily experience, they are not living from or for this purpose. This is actually part of the reactive pattern that defines the To Me victim consciousness.

When leaders move through the gateway of responsibility into the consciousness of By Me, they become very committed and aligned with their purpose. They first get clear about their individual purpose and then create organizational purpose. At any moment, By Me leaders are either on purpose or off it and if the latter occurs, they shift and get back on purpose. They come to their purpose by asking the question, "What do I want?" Often we coach them to ask the second, deeper question, "What do I really want?" By Me leaders sit with this question until they have an answer, and then they align themselves with this purpose. This purpose can and often does change, but By Me leaders are clear about their purpose.

For more on Through Me Purpose listen to the audio series on Sounds True by Michael Bernard Beckwith on "Life Visioning."

As leaders open up to Through Me, their purpose question changes. They ask, "What is life's highest idea of itself that wants to manifest in and through me?" The word "life" could be love or God or the universe or presence or the quantum field.

To most people, this question sounds weird at first but as Through Me leaders sit in it, they have a very different experience than their By Me counterparts. Through Me leaders do not try to "figure out" their answer, which would be By Me consciousness. Instead, they listen attentively to what wants to be communicated to them. They understand that there is another moving in the world that wants to make something happen in and through them.

> *...surrender, or letting go, is the gateway to move from By Me to Through Me.*

When leaders follow this practice, we tell them that the communication can manifest in various ways. Some leaders get a sense of words, others experience pictures, sounds or colors, while still others receive just an intuitive impression. What we know is that if leaders are fully willing, the communication occurs reliably. This practice can be used not only by individual leaders but also by entire teams.

The Greenville Health System in Greenville, South Carolina, is one of the largest health systems in the Southeast. CEO Mike Riordan is committed to conscious leadership. He understands all four of these ways of being in the world and knows that he moves in and out of them with regularity and dexterity.

A few years ago, Mike and the senior leaders of GHS were on a retreat and decided to do Through Me visioning. They asked this question: "What is health care's biggest idea of itself that wants to manifest in and through GHS?" They listened with expectancy, knowing that something bigger than themselves was wanting to do something at their organization. Over time (and this is often the case), they collectively got an understanding that what wanted to happen through them was a transformation of health care. Since then, the top leaders of the health

system have been living and leading from this vision. They have gotten very clear about what it means for them to transform health care and they are taking the steps to make it happen. One powerful example: they decided that to transform healthcare, they had to transform the consciousness of physicians. They had to change the way doctors were trained, and to do that, they realized they had to start a medical school. This is no small thing. Rarely do new medical schools begin. In September 2012, GHS welcomed its first class of medical students into a new consciousness of medicine. Wow, this is Through Me leadership.

Just as responsibility is the gateway to move from To Me to By Me, surrender, or letting go, is the gateway to move from By Me to Through Me. For most leaders, this means letting go of control. When we first meet leaders, almost all have a strong control plan, where their ego is invested in the appearance of control. In truth, very little is under our control, but the To Me and By Me leaders believe the contrary.

The letting go of control—or more specifically, letting go of wanting to be in control of people, things, and circumstances we were never meant to be in control of and have never really been in control of—is powerful and often chaotic. We haven't met many people who surrender easily, casually, or comfortably. Most experience ongoing struggles and resistance. Letting go is an action that is taken again and again.

The paradox in leadership is that when we are in To Me, we experience very little control because we are "at the effect of" what is happening in our lives. Part of the fun of By Me leadership is that we experience a sense of control and power. It is the power of being in a place of responsibility, creativity, and ownership. It's exhilarating. Then leaders are asked to surrender, and often their response is, "What? I finally got a sense of empowerment and control and now you [life, love, God] are asking me to surrender." Yes, this is what life asks of all of us. Surrender for the Through Me leader is not optional.

THE "AS ME" WAY OF LEADING

The fourth state of leadership is As Me, the level of consciousness we speak least about because most leaders are not ready or interested in the discussion and experience. We respect that. At the same time, we would like to offer a few words about As Me consciousness to complete the model.

As Me consciousness has two aspects. The first is oneness. Most of the great religions, philosophies, and spiritual teachings have an understanding of oneness, the experience that there is no separation—there is only one reality and it is not divided. Sometimes, this is called non-duality, which simply means "not two." Again, scientists give words to this when they say that energy is all there is and it is not divisible. What appears hard and solid to the senses is actually not so hard and solid. If we magnified everything under the most powerful microscope, we would discover that what appears solid is actually only space. We would also discover that boundaries of

separation that appear solid (the boundary between your arm and the table on which it rests, or between you and me) are not solid at all.

As Me leaders realize this oneness. It is not simply a philosophy or belief for them. It is a direct experience. Once a leader discovers the truth of what is—oneness— and who they are, their consciousness shifts dramatically. Just as a thought experiment, imagine for a moment how you would lead and live in a world without separation; no separation between you and your employees or you and your competitors or you and the environment. From our experience, everything looks radically different from this consciousness.

The second aspect of As Me is the absence of a personal "me." Not only is everyone and everything one—there is no separation—and also no personal center. As one of our teachers Hale Dwoskin says, "In the As Me space, there are no problems and there is no you to have a problem." In To Me and By Me, the "me" is central. In Through Me, the "me" begins to recede in surrender to the other, and in As Me, "me" doesn't exist at all.

One way we teach this Four Ways of Being Model is by looking at the questions asked in each state of consciousness. We have covered some of the questions for the first three. The As Me state is unique because it has no questions. The full realization of As Me is the experience of no more questions, no seeking, no suffering. This doesn't mean that you wouldn't ask a question like, "How do I improve throughput in our plant?" What it

THE FOUR WAYS OF BEING MODEL

	TO ME RESPONSIBILITY ▶	**BY ME** SURRENDER ▶
MONEY	‣ Scarcity = Never enough ‣ I work hard to get it ‣ My value is attached to it	‣ I want more ‣ I can create more ‣ It is a measure of my value
TIME	‣ There is not the right amount ‣ I am stressed because of it ‣ I am overwhelmed, busy/bored	‣ I'm in control of my time ‣ I use time management systems ‣ I use it to do what I want
HAPPINESS	‣ It is a fleeting moment of pleasure (ice cream, vacation, sex) ‣ It depends on circumstances	‣ I choose to make myself happy ‣ I make happiness if I bring the right ingredients
DISCIPLINE	‣ Always too much or too little ‣ It's hard; I "should"; "I have to" ‣ It is necessary to be good	‣ I choose it (to delay gratification) ‣ I use it as a tool to create
PURPOSE	‣ What purpose? ‣ I should have one and don't ‣ I just have roles I play	‣ My purpose ‣ I declare it and go out and get it ‣ Both takes energy and energizing
LEADERSHIP	‣ It's a role; I have it or I don't ‣ It comes with have-tos, burden and incompetent followers	‣ There are skills/techniques to master which create good or effective leadership

THROUGH ME ONENESS ➤	AS ME
▸ It is abundant ▸ It is an energy not a thing ▸ Measurement is irrelevant	▸ It is just another form ▸ It is given and received with freedom and joy
▸ I have plenty of it ▸ There is only now - there is no past or future	▸ I am the source of it ▸ It is an illusion - like all other illusions
▸ It is here now ▸ It has a deep lasting quality ▸ I relax into joy	▸ Happiness is just another state, it is just one of many vibrations passing through
▸ It is effortless ▸ Having and delaying gratification are equals	▸ Can you find the one who is disciplined?
▸ Transcendent purpose ▸ No more wanting ▸ I receive it through listening	▸ What purpose? Being and purpose are the same ▸ Impossible to be off of it
▸ It arises in response to present need; no "one" is the leader in co-creation	▸ There is no one to lead and nowhere to lead to

means is that all questions about purpose, identity, life, and so on, are replaced by the constant experience of life in the moment. When we say that there is no more suffering, we don't mean that pain, sadness, anger, and fear disappear, or that disease and death no longer occur. But in As Me, there is no suffering in the presence of these and all experiences.

For those of you who are particularly curious about Though Me and As Me states we offer some of our favorite tools for this exploration in the resource section at the end of the book.

From our experience most leaders are well served by focusing on the shift from To Me to By Me. While we value all four states of consciousness, this book is about moving from To Me to By Me. We place our attention on this movement, and suggest you do as well, because at this point we don't know of an entire organization that is living from By Me on a consistent basis.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We highly recommend that you read and master the first two commitments before moving on to the others. Becoming skilled in responsibility and curiosity are essential to shifting from To Me to By Me, and they create a context that will support you in exploring and practicing the other thirteen and integrating them into your daily life.

With this foundation in place, proceed to Commitment 3, emotional intelligence. Proficiency in the world of feelings is critical to understanding and implementing all the other commitments.

Then continue on to Commitments 4–9, in whatever order you choose. These six commitments describe ways of being in the world. Conscious leaders have the awareness and determination to turn their beliefs into behaviors. For instance, it is easy to believe in eating a healthy diet, but turning that into action requires commitment. The behaviors of candor (#4), eliminating gossip (#5), integrity (#6), appreciation (#7), living in our genius (#8), and play (#9) differentiate conscious and unconscious leaders.

Next, Commitments 10–12 present the worldviews underlying the behaviors of conscious leadership. Some may consider them radical. They include recognizing that the opposite of the beliefs you cling to so tightly could be as true as your beliefs (#10) and that nothing outside you can give you what you most long for—in fact, nothing can give it to you, because you already have it (#11) and you will always have enough (#12).

Commitments 13 and 14 suggest a new way of being in relationship—whether with a partner, a team, an organization, a community, or the world—that supports everyone having different interests and perspectives. Commitment 15 pays homage to Gandhi and other wise revolutionaries who have espoused that we be the solution we want to see in the world.

Each chapter has specific practices to help you embody the commitment. We strongly recommend that you spend time in daily practice. Find a learning partner (or several) so you can encourage each other to live as consciously as possible.

From our perspective this book is both a book to be read and a set of practices to be implemented. Let us be clear. If you think you can read this book and become a conscious leader without practicing you're kidding yourself. This is an ongoing process. The three of us have been practicing all the commitments for many years and we are still learning something new about conscious leadership nearly every day.

We urge you to avoid making this work too hard or taking it too seriously. Enjoy the journey as much as you can. Remember to play and laugh.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
Leading from Above the Line

► Leadership operates from one of two places: above the line or below the line.

► Above the line leadership is open, curious, and committed to learning.

► Below the line leadership is closed, defensive, and committed to being right.

► Leading from below the line is not wrong— it is a common state.

► As a regular practice, conscious leaders notice when they are below the line and choose to shift to above the line.

► The Four Ways of Leading model shows the states of consciousness leaders operate in: To Me, By Me, Through Me, and As Me.

► Leaders are well served by focusing first on the shift from To Me to By Me leadership.
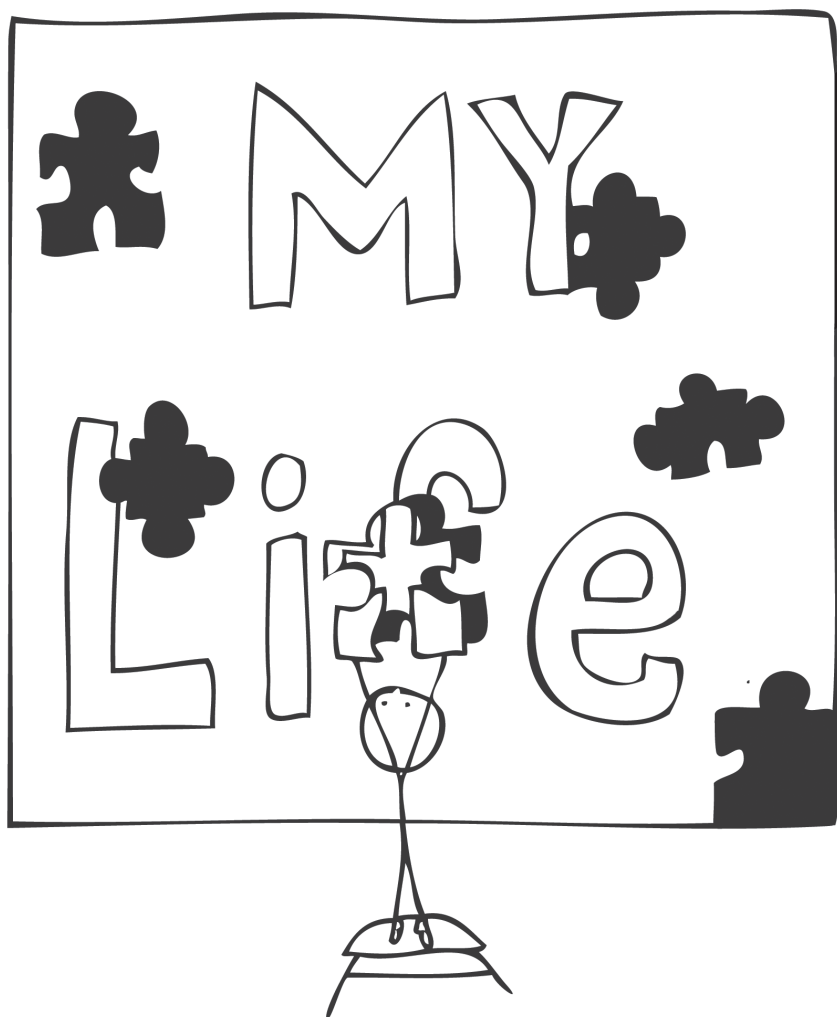
COMMITMENT ONE

Taking Radical Responsibility

I commit to taking full responsibility for the circumstances of my life and for my physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. I commit to supporting others to take full responsibility for their lives.

I commit to blaming others and myself for what is wrong in the world. I commit to being a victim, villain, or a hero and taking more or less than 100% responsibility.

Blame is a powerful motivator. Like its cousins guilt and shame, it is one of the most common forms of motivation used by leaders, parents, politicians, and clergy.

A typical executive team meeting at almost any corporation illustrates this truth.

It's the Tuesday morning Executive Team meeting at "Common Corp." Today happens to be the first meeting after the quarter close, and the numbers don't look good.

The VP of sales begins by defending why his numbers came in below forecast. "I'll cut to the chase," he says.

"Manufacturing didn't meet the deadline. The customer got upset and cancelled the order. I did everything I could to keep them in the deal, but they said they've had it with us missing scheduled deliveries."

To which the VP of manufacturing retorts, "I told all of you that the timelines we committed to were unrealistic and asked the sales team to renegotiate, but they said it was a deal killer to do that. Add the fact that our vendor screwed up and sent us the wrong parts for two of the projects, and we didn't stand a chance. I'm tired of trying to live up to the sales team's unrealistic delivery dates."

Back to the VP of sales. "And I'm tired of my teammates killing themselves to get business and then having manufacturing fail again and again to deliver quality products on time."

At this point, the president steps in. "Here's the bottom line," she says. "You're both to blame, and if you can't work out your differences, I'll find somebody who can. You both know how important the team is to me, and right now neither of you is a good teammate."

With blood pressures rising, and anger and defensiveness seeping out of everyone's pores, the VP of HR speaks up. "Now calm down everyone. Anger won't help us resolve the issues. We all know the economy stinks, and we're fighting serious head winds. I think the core problem has to do with communication. We're just not listening to each other, and I blame myself for that. I've had a communication effectiveness course on my to-do list for

over six months, and I just haven't gotten to it because of the union negotiations."

On and on the conversation goes. We've all taken part in these blame fests, whether at work or at home. When things don't go the way we want them to go—when milk gets spilled at the dinner table, or Johnny flunks math, or Suzy gets a DUI, or the credit cards get overcharged—the default setting for most of us is to place blame and find fault. Depending on how people are wired, they blame either someone else, themselves, or the system. The system is the meta-problem or cause, like the economy, the Republicans, ObamaCare, God, or karma.
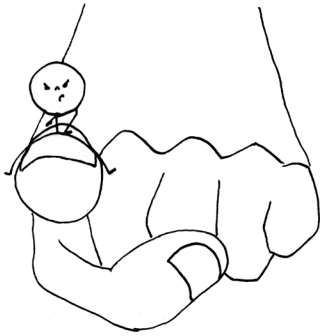
WHY WE BLAME

Blame, shame, and guilt all come from the same source: TOXIC FEAR. When things don't go the way we think they should (whether it be spilled milk or missing our quarterly numbers), the natural human reaction is to become anxious. Once fear kicks in, a common defense mechanism is to blame someone, something, or ourselves so we can keep our sense of identity (our ego) intact.

The pattern is simple and predictable:

1. Something doesn't go the way we think it should.

2. We become stuck in fear (often the anger that we feel is masking our fear).

3. We blame others, ourselves, or the system.

4. Relationships solidify around the roles of victim, villain, and hero.

Let's look at the relationship dynamic that supports a fear-based, blame-shame-guilt interaction.

Victims see themselves as "at the effect of." "It" is being done "to them" by someone or something out of their control. Typically they complain, either overtly or covertly, subtly or loudly, that "this isn't fair." Underneath all their words and actions is a tone of whining.

Villains find fault and place blame. Sometimes they point the finger at a person, at themselves, or at the meta-cause, but they deal with fear by looking for who's to blame.

Heroes hate conflict, pain, and tension and seek to temporarily relieve their discomfort without really dealing with the issue. They habitually over function and take more than their share of responsibility. A good number of the leaders we coach have made successful careers out of behaving in this way. In fact, heroes in many organizations are promoted, compensated, and enshrined as examples of doing "what it takes" to get the job done. Yet we believe that heroing is a primary form of unconscious leadership. It is toxic because it leads to burn out, supports others in taking less than their full responsibility (being victims), and rewards behaviors that ultimately lead to individual and team breakdown.

Heroes hate conflict, pain, and tension and seek to temporarily relieve their discomfort without really dealing with the issue.

At Common Corp, the leaders of sales and manufacturing, as well as the president, were all playing both victim and villain. The VP of sales was "at the effect of" (victim) manufacturing and the customer and blamed (villain) manufacturing. The VP of manufacturing was "at the effect of" an unrealistic deadline and a vendor who didn't deliver the right parts and blamed the sales team. The president was "at the effect of" her team and blamed her colleagues for not being better teammates.

The HR lead stepped into the fray as the hero. Clearly not liking the tension and anger, he wanted everyone to calm down. He wanted the conflict to go away without really addressing the issue. He added a bit of villain when he blamed himself. Some villains prefer that to blaming others.

Toxic fear drives the victim-villain-hero triangle. Blame, shame, and guilt keep it going. As we said at the beginning, blame and its root cause—toxic fear—are powerful motivators. But they also leave a negative residue: resentment and bitterness, along with low learning states, demotivation, and eventual demoralization. These toxic residues lead to high turnover and low innovation, creativity, and collaboration. No team can win with these elements corroding their effectiveness long term.

We have observed that leaders typically use five levels of motivation:

1. Toxic fear: blame, shame, and guilt

2. Extrinsic motivation: money, title, the corner office, and other perks

3. Intrinsic motivation: learning, fulfilling purpose, and autonomy

4. Play, creativity, and expressing our "genius" in the world

5. Love

Levels one and two always leave a negative residue, whereas levels three through five don't. Great leaders learn to motivate using methods that don't leave a negative residue, so they lead from levels three through five.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

The opposite of blaming is taking responsibility. The cornerstone commitment of leaders who move from To Me leadership to By Me leadership is Commitment 1:

I commit to taking full responsibility for the circumstances of my life and for my physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. I commit to supporting others to take full responsibility for their lives.

In our experience, Commitment 1 is radical. The word radical can mean "root or fundamental" as well as "extreme." In this case, Commitment 1 is both fundamental and extreme. It is fundamental

because without it, leaders don't live the other fourteen commitments and never get out of the "To Me" box. It is extreme because it is so counter to the way people normally lead and live.

The key phrase is "taking full responsibility"—as opposed to "placing blame." "Placing" is moving something away from ourselves, and "taking" is moving something toward ourselves. Psychologists refer to this as the "locus of control." When we place blame, we locate the cause and control of our lives outside ourselves. When we take responsibility, we locate the cause and control of our lives inside ourselves.

Victims and villains locate the cause outside themselves, just as they did at Common Corp. Things didn't go the way they thought they should and the cause was something outside themselves: other departments, vendors, the team, the economy, or unions.

In our experience, taking full responsibility is based on a fundamental belief, and this, too, is radical.

Most people believe that there is a way the world should be and a way the world shouldn't be. In fact, we would assert that this is the most common belief among human beings. Of course there are great differences between the way people hold that belief (for example, Republicans versus Democrats), but they all hold their beliefs as right.

As long as we believe that there is a way the world should be (e.g. we should meet our quarterly targets) and a way the world shouldn't be (e.g. milk shouldn't be spilled), life won't work according to our beliefs. Simply put, life won't always turn out the way we think it should. And when that happens, we typically react by becoming anxious, resentful, or controlling and try to force the world to fit our beliefs. One primary means of doing this is placing blame on others, ourselves, or circumstances. We place the locus of control outside ourselves and say life isn't turning out the way it should because "they" messed up.

The alternative is to say, "I [We] messed up," and though some think this is taking responsibility, it is still based in blame and leaves a negative residue. In fact, often when we start working with leaders, they understand rather quickly that blaming others is poor leadership. But since they still believe that the world isn't the way it should be, they resort to blaming themselves and end up modeling self-blame for others. We want to be very clear: self-blame is equally as toxic as blaming others, or circumstances, and it is NOT taking responsibility.

But do a thought experiment with us. What if there is no way the world should be and no way the world shouldn't be? What if the world just shows up the way the world shows up? What if the great opportunity of life isn't in trying to get the world to be a certain way, but rather in learning from whatever the world gives us? What if curiosity and learning are really the big game, not being right about how things should be? Can you see how this would radically change the way we see and live our lives?

What if the big questions of life were not "How can we fix this?" or "How can we keep this from happening?" or "Who's to blame for this being this way?" but instead "What can we learn from this since life is all about learning and growing?" Or "Hmm… I wonder what this is here to teach me about myself and life?"

So the first step in taking responsibility is to shift from believing that the world should be a particular way to believing that the world just shows up. Second, we need to shift from rigidity, close-mindedness, and self-righteousness to curiosity, learning, and wonder (which naturally occurs once our beliefs change). All drama in leadership and life is caused by the need to be right. Letting go of that need is a radical shift all great leaders make.

In our experience, we can boost this shift by taking a third step. So far we're just suggesting that the world shows up the way the world shows up—it's indifferent about outcomes. But what if the world/universe/God/Supreme Reality isn't just benign or agnostic? What if it is actually for us? What if, as Einstein wondered, the world is beyond benign to the point of actually being benevolent? Then what happens is not just a neutral experience, but rather a custom-ordered curriculum for our highest development as people and as members of teams and organizations. Although this third step isn't necessary for taking full responsibility, it does supercharge the shift. From this perspective, we can feel gratitude for whatever is occurring in our lives, greasing the wheels of learning, curiosity, and wonder.

ENCOURAGING OTHERS
TO BE RESPONSIBLE

The second part of Commitment 1 is "I commit to supporting others to take full responsibility for their lives." We've found that the key to making this happen is to take full responsibility for our own lives. When we move away from blaming, criticizing, and living in victim-villain-hero mode, we naturally invite others to do the same—without even saying a word. Step two in supporting others is to form relationships at work and home where all parties make a conscious decision to end blame and criticism and to take 100% responsibility for their lives, committing to learning and curiosity versus being right.

COMMITMENT IN ACTION

If you want to see a place where they are learning about taking 100% responsibility, visit Athletico, a premier provider of physical and occupational therapy as well as fitness services. Located in the Midwest, Athletico has over 70 locations and 1,000 team members. Five years ago, the top leadership of the organization, under the guidance of CEO Mark Kaufman, made a commitment to end blame and criticism. They are creating a culture that values learning over being right and taking 100% responsibility.

Now when situations arise (formerly known as problems, crises, and issues), the standard response of the leadership of Athletico is "Hmm… this is interesting, what can we learn from this?" A second common response is "I want to

take my 100% responsibility and see how I helped create this situation. I want to get all my learnings."

During a recent coaching conversation, Mark brought up a situation with a manager who wasn't meeting her performance goals. As we explored it, Mark's very first line of inquiry was, "What can I learn about this and about my leadership of the organization?" When he wondered about this, he realized that he had not followed his instincts in dealing with this manager, failing to speak candidly with her about his thoughts and concerns. He had avoided conflict and withheld himself, thereby cocreating the situation. When Mark spoke to the manager, he began by sharing what he'd learned and taking full responsibility for what was occurring. He invited her to do the same. There was no blame, shame, or guilt. They both stayed in a high state of learning and curiosity.

Life and leadership don't always go this way at Athletico. Like almost all of us, they "drift" off their commitment to taking responsibility. They slide into blame, criticism, and defensiveness, and wanting to be right. But because the leaders have made a collective commitment to honor Commitment 1, they practice shifting out of blame and into learning. They know how to move away from the victim-villain-hero triangle and into greater co-creativity.

PRACTICING THE COMMITMENT

One tool they use at Athletico, and one that we see many leaders using, is the following Taking 100% Responsibility Worksheet.

TAKING 100% RESPONSIBILITY PROCESS

STEP 1: Identify an issue/complaint about anything going on in your life. State the complaint in "unenlightened" terms. Be dramatic. Ham it up. Blame overtly.

STEP 2: Step into 100% responsibility. Physically find a place in the room that represents your internal shift to being 100% responsible for the situation.

STEP 3: Gain insight by completing these statements, repeating each of them several times, until you have what feels like a breakthrough:

- *From the past this reminds me of…*
- *I keep this issue going by…*
- *What I get from keeping this issue going is…*
- *The lifelong pattern I'm noticing is…*
- *I can demonstrate 100% responsibility concerning this issue by…*

STEP 4: If during Step 3, you do not experience a shift, go back to Step 1 and repeat the process.

LISTENING TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Finally, we have learned that you can tell what kind of a leader you are and what kind of a culture you are creating by paying attention to the kinds of questions you ask.

In blame cultures, where people take more or less than 100% responsibility, we hear leaders and everyone else ask these questions:

- *Who did it?*
- *Why did it happen?*
- *What is the root cause?*
- *Who participated in the chain of events that led to this?*
- *Who dropped the ball?*
- *Who's going to fix it?*

On the other hand, in curiosity/learning cultures, where people take 100% responsibility, leaders and others ask these questions:

- *Am I willing to take full responsibility for this situation?*
- *What do I really want?*
- *If there were no obstacles, what would I be doing with my creative energy?*
- *Am I willing to learn whatever it is I most need to learn about this situation?*
- *Am I willing to see all others involved as my allies?*
- *Am I willing to see myself as empowered in this situation?*
- *How can I play with this situation?*
- *Where and when do I feel most alive?*
- *What am I distracting myself from doing or knowing?*

IN A NUTSHELL

From our experience, making the choice to take full responsibility is the foundation of true personal and relational transformation. The entire game changes when we choose to see that we're creating our experience, and that someone or something is NOT doing it TO US.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
Taking Radical Responsibility

▶ Taking full responsibility for one's circumstances (physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually) is the foundation of true personal and relational transformation.

▶ Blame, shame, and guilt all come from toxic fear.

▶ Toxic fear drives the victim-villain-hero triangle, which keeps leaders and teams below the line.

▶ This leads to high employee turnover and low innovation, creativity, and collaboration.

▶ Conscious leaders and teams take full responsibility—radical responsibility—instead of placing blame.

▶ Radical responsibility means locating the cause and control of our lives in ourselves, not in external events.

▶ Instead of asking "Who's to blame?", conscious leaders ask, "What can we learn and how can we grow from this?"

▶ Conscious leaders are open to the possibility that instead of controlling and changing the world, perhaps the world is just right the way it is. This creates huge growth opportunities on a personal and organizational level.

Love The questions
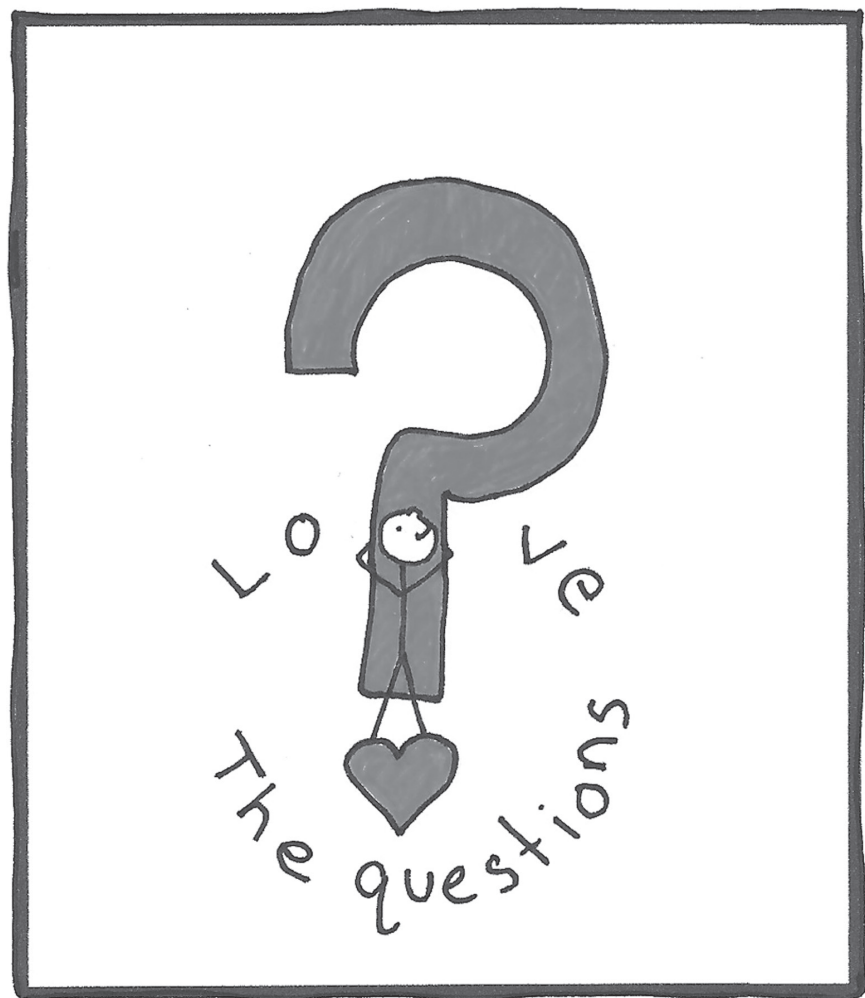
Learning Through Curiosity

I commit to growing in self-awareness.
I commit to regarding every interaction
as an opportunity to learn. I commit to
curiosity as a path to rapid learning.

I commit to being right and to seeing this situation as something that is happening to me. I commit to being defensive, especially when I am certain that I am RIGHT.

Current research on leadership shows that over the course of our career, four competencies trump all others as the greatest predictors of sustained success: self-awareness, learning agility, communication, and influence. The last two deal with how leaders interact with their world, and the first two address leaders' internal relationship to "reality." Self-awareness and learning agility are what Commitment 2 of Conscious Leadership is all about.

Several times a year we hold The Conscious Leadership Group Foundation retreats to introduce successful leaders to the 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership. Many who attend have outstanding professional pedigrees, but none better than Sarah, a recent participant. A graduate from Yale with an MBA from Harvard, Sarah was a

competitive collegiate athlete. She went on to found a very successful company that Fortune magazine listed as one of the best technology start-ups of the decade. When we met her, she had just sold her share of the business and was looking for her next professional adventure. To say the least, Sarah is extremely bright, highly motivated, and uniquely skilled.

But Sarah wasn't curious or interested in self-awareness. This combination of superior executive skills and deficient self-awareness is not uncommon. We see it in our work all the time and recognized it in Sarah at the very beginning of the retreat. We also picked up on her defensiveness, which started out mild and grew in intensity until she was seething with anger. Many of the processes we do at The Conscious Leadership Group Foundation retreats involve giving and receiving feedback. Most of the leaders who attend have risen to the place in their career where they are isolated from direct feedback, so for many, hearing it from their peers is a new experience—as it was for Sarah.

Some of the early feedback Sarah received concerned her lack of congruity, meaning that she was giving off very mixed messages: saying one thing with her words, but something entirely different with her posture, facial expression, and tone of voice. At first, she responded to the comments with a laid-back attitude, looking detached and impenetrable (a common posture for leaders in a new environment in which they do not perceive themselves to be in control). When offered observations from the group about her lack of openness and curiosity, Sarah simply

brushed them aside. But as the day wore on, she became more passive-aggressive and at one point suggested that it would be more beneficial for her to just go for a walk. When the group invited her to honor that preference and come back when she was willing to participate, she chose to leave for the afternoon.

When Sarah returned the next day, she demonstrated even less interest in self-awareness and curiosity. She received specific feedback about integrity glitches in her life, areas where she was not fully telling the truth and keeping her agreements. She first criticized the leaders and then the group as a whole. Her behavior culminated in her being asked to leave the retreat. Once she left, the entire group breathed a collective sigh of relief. They recognized that Sarah's defensiveness was consuming huge amounts of group energy and was no longer supporting their learning and growth. (By the way, this often happens in organizations: a leader's defensiveness hijacks group energy, bringing down the entire collaborative effort.)

Sarah was incredibly successful and will probably be successful again in her next venture. Also, she's still relatively young, so she will likely have the opportunity. In our experience, though, her style of relating to feedback does not sustain long-term success. Almost certainly, her defensiveness and lack of curiosity will catch up with her. Like many unconscious leaders, Sarah was far more interested in being RIGHT about her view of reality than in learning and growing.
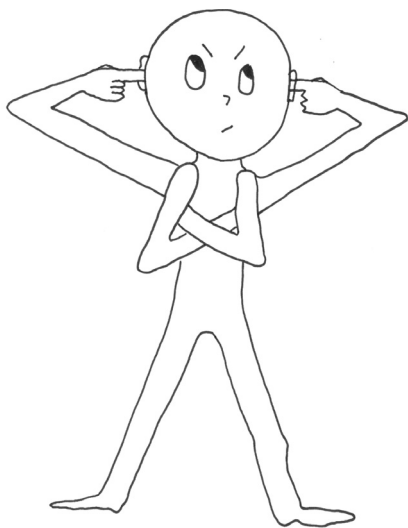
STUCK ON BEING RIGHT

I commit to being right and to seeing this situation as something that is happening to me. I commit to being defensive, especially when I am certain that I am RIGHT.

Quite possibly, no other commitment is more central to the core of unconscious people than the one to being right. This is for good reason. As we said in the introduction to the book, being right is connected to survival and survival is all that matters. Our brains are hardwired for self-preservation—we are constantly seeking to protect not only our physical well-being but our ego as well.

Please understand, the issue isn't "being right" but rather "wanting to be right" and "fighting to be right" and "proving we are right." When talking to a group, we often illustrate this by asking everyone to think of a simple, unarguable arithmetic axiom that they're confident is "right." Once this comes to their mind, we ask them to observe how "attached" they are to being right about this rule. How much energy do they have to fight for or defend the fact that 2 + 2 = 4 (the arithmetic axiom most people think of)? Usually they observe that they have very little energy to fight for the rightness of

their belief. Why? From our perspective, it's because they know they are right and don't need to defend this law as though their identity or ego depended on it.

Next, we ask the same leaders to bring to mind an "issue" that they are fighting to be right about at work or in their private lives. It doesn't take them long to find one. When we invite them to notice the difference between their need to defend, justify, and explain why they are right about this issue and their need to defend 2 + 2 = 4, they often have an epiphany.

Usually they discover two things. First, if they are honest with themselves, they see that they aren't nearly as certain about the "rightness" of their viewpoint as they act. Second, they realize that wanting to be right, being seen as being right, and being validated and appreciated for being right are what they really want. This attachment is all about the ego. What is "right" doesn't need to be defended. The equation 2 + 2 = 4 doesn't require us to fight about its validity.

ABOVE AND BELOW THE LINE REVISITED

As we mentioned in the introduction to this book, one of our favorite models is this one:

Yes, it is only a line. But it has a profound meaning in this conversation. In our experience, at any point in time, we are either ABOVE the line or BELOW it. When we are

ABOVE THE LINE

OPEN   CURIOUS   COMMITTED TO LEARNING

BELOW THE LINE

CLOSED   DEFENSIVE   COMMITTED TO BEING RIGHT

defensive, closed, and committed to being right, we are below the line. Or put another way, we are committed to the survival of our ego.

When we're open, curious, and committed to learning, we're above the line.

The grip of toxic fear drives behaviors and beliefs below the line. Presence brings forth behaviors and beliefs above the line. Below the line is a "To Me" experience, whereas above the line is a "By Me" experience. When we go below the line, the ego is fighting for survival and we become firmly entrenched in the scarcity belief: that there isn't enough—not enough love, time, money, energy, security, control, and approval. Above the line is opening to the big fun game of learning and growing, and we trust ourselves or Source (people have many different words for source like God, Allah, Universe, Presence, Love, Jesus, the Tao) to provide us with plenty of love, time, money, energy, security, control, and approval.

In our experience, conscious leaders choose to spend a lot of time above the line in high learning states. This "learning agility," mentioned in the beginning of

the chapter, gives them a competitive advantage, since most people today are knowledge workers. In contrast, unconscious leaders spend too much time trying to be right, defending their ego, and being defensive, thereby diminishing their edge in the marketplace.

SHIFTING

This is not to say that conscious leaders don't go below the line and get defensive, closed, and invested in being right. They do. Remember, this response is hardwired into our survival instinct. But, contrary to unconscious leaders, conscious leaders regularly interrupt this natural reactivity. That means they take a moment to pause, breathe (literally take a conscious breath), and ask themselves this important question: "Where am I—above or below the line?" They're committed to self-awareness, so they answer it honestly. If they recognize that they've become reactive and are below the line, they don't shame or blame themselves or others. Actually, the first thing they do is accept themselves for being there. One breath of acceptance for what is true is essential. In fact, awareness and acceptance are the first two steps of all transformation.

One of our favorite models is the "Drift/Shift" model. We love it because it so represents our experience and the experience of many leaders. At the top of the model is presence. Presence is the state of being here… now in a non-reactive, non-triggered way. When a leader is present they are totally available to the moment and to what the moment is bringing to them. In presence they can be with what is occurring without being distracted by

their personality, drama, anxiety, blame or beliefs about scarcity. In presence a leader can be with others, really be with others. They can listen, empathize, confront and create. In presence a leader can innovate, improvise and respond from their highest self, their genius. When two people in a relationship are in presence they can co-create, play and problem solve with incredible dexterity. Presence is the space from which intimate partners can really experience connection and intimacy.

THE DRIFT SHIFT MODEL
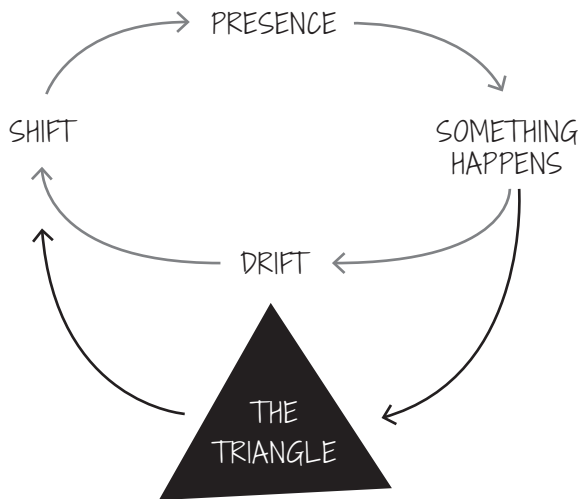
Presence can be called many things. It is called being in the flow or being in the zone. Athletes, artists and musicians all know what it is to be in presence. And so do great leaders. Our mentor Gay Hendricks, PhD says that most people currently stay in presence for about 4 seconds. At that point "Something Happens."

We love this phrase "something happens" because it is so benign. The something can be that a car cuts us off on the freeway, or we get a new email in our inbox, or our wife frowns at us, or a thought of worry or anxiety flashes through our mind. Anything can be a "something happens." And when something happens we "drift" out of presence. Instead of being in the flow or in the zone, in peak performance, we are now just off. Something has changed. Our energy starts to go flat, our body and breath constrict and we start to become reactive and triggered. Our buttons are beginning to be pushed. This state we call a "drift."

DRIFTING

All leaders can resonate with the difference between being in presence and being in a drift. Drifting can look and feel many different ways.

See examples of drifting on next page.

EXAMPLES OF DRIFTING

BLAMING

CONCEALING

WORRYING

COMPLAINING

GETTING TIRED

SPACING OUT

CORRECTING

IGNORING

EXPLAINING

INTERRUPTING

INTELLECTUALIZING

FACEBOOKING

RUSHING

COMPARING

TRYING HARD

INTERPRETING

WHINING

CARE TAKING

BEING SARCASTIC

GETTING CONFUSED

GETTING OVERWHELMED

GETTING SHY

ANTICIPATING

WAITING

REHEARSING

WATCHING TV

GETTING EMBARRASSED

DISMISSING

SEEKING APPROVAL

PROCRASTINATING

GETTING ENLIGHTENED

SHOPPING

ORGANIZING

SPACING OUT

CLEANING

SMILING

ASSUMING

BEING MISUNDERSTOOD

GETTING RIGHTEOUS

LOOKING INTERESTED

WITHHOLDING

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

DRINKING AND DRUGGING

EATING

EMAILING

COMPULSIVE WORKING

CHECKING MY PHONE

The issue for leaders is not "will we drift?" We will! The issue is how long do we stay in a drift before we shift. Everyone drifts, not everyone shifts. People who really get stuck in a drift find themselves in the drama triangle. Again, the issue is not, "Do leaders get into the drama triangle?" We do! The issue is how long do we stay in the drama triangle before we shift. Leaders are always drifting and shifting. Shifting is the master skill of all conscious leaders. This book is all about how to shift.

Once conscious leaders have accepted themselves for being in a drift or a defensive, reactive state, they ask themselves the second key question: "Am I willing to shift?" This is one of the most powerful questions leaders

can ask themselves. The shift is from being closed to open, defensive to curious, and committed to being right to committed to learning.

SHIFTING

Shifting is a master skill of conscious leaders. We find that they practice it like professional golfers practice putting. In our experience, shift moves are a reliable way to move from a closed to open consciousness. Shift moves can be put into two categories. Shift moves that change our blood and body chemistry and shift moves that change our consciousness. When we are triggered or reactive our blood chemistry changes. The fight flight chemical cocktail courses through our veins and the body assumes reactive postures. Before we can shift our consciousness, the way we are seeing and being with our experience, we need to shift our blood and body chemistry. The first two shift moves reliably do that.

Conscious breathing: Whenever we're in a threatened and defended state, we hold our breath or breathe shallowly. A conscious breath shifts our breathing pattern and breaks the hold of our reactivity. Four conscious breaths with a four second inhale and a four second exhale deep into our belly literally shift our blood chemistry and breathing pattern.

Radically changing our posture: When we're defensive and more interested in being right than in learning, we each assume certain body postures. Most of us with a moment's thought can identify a defensive posture. Literally, defensive thoughts require certain body

postures. So, by significantly shifting our posture we shift our defensiveness.

Once we have shifted our biology and neurology we are available to shifting our perspective. Trying to shift our perspective while still being amped on adrenaline and cortisol is impossible. This book is all about shift moves. Each chapter contains at least one. The shift move we want to introduce you to at this point is wonder.

WONDER

Wonder is both a shift move and a state of consciousness. Effective leaders learn to get into a state of wonder on a consistent basis. What is wonder? To find out—and to see it in action—we need look no further than at a child. Before the age of six, children are natural wonderers. It's as though they move through the world saying, "Hmmm… I wonder what this is or I wonder how this works—or tastes or feels or smells—or I wonder what happens if I do this?" Wonder is open-ended curiosity. It is asking a question for which we don't know the answer, and we don't know—or care—if there is an answer. Wonder is as much about the question as it is about the answer.

In our experience, most leaders replace natural wonder with "figuring it out," a very different consciousness. Figuring it out presupposes that there is AN answer and the goal is to use the mind to find it. You can experience an example of "figuring it out" by solving a word puzzle.

Unscramble the following letters to form a word:

N E I C E S N

To really get a sense of what "figuring it out" energy is like for most leaders, you would need to set a timer and give yourself a defined time to come up with the answer. In fact, you would need to give yourself a very small amount of time, far less than you think you'd need. You would also need to make this a win/lose game with significant stakes for winning and losing. Having done all this, you would have introduced anxiety and fear into the game and replicated the common business environment. Your brain chemistry would respond accordingly and adrenaline would surge through your system.

So, ticktock, ticktock, ticktock. What's the answer? Everybody else reading this chapter already has the answer—why don't you? (Comparing yourself to others is also an essential part of the fear-based environment.) This is not to say that figuring things out is unimportant. But it is not wonder, and it is not really as much about learning as it is about being right by finding the right answer. (By the way, the right answer to the word scramble is "incense.")

Wonder is a very different experience. It is not about figuring anything out. It begins with a willingness to explore and step into the unknown, which involves taking a risk and letting go of control—not an easy commitment. Once we're willing to be surprised by the unknown, the next step in accessing wonder is to ask a wonder question: an open-ended question that has no "right" answer.

Wonder is a very different experience. It is not about figuring anything out. It begins with a willingness to explore and step into the unknown, which involves taking a risk and letting go of control—not an easy commitment.

Wonder questions go beyond our current knowing, our past experience, and our current paradigms. Einstein was famous for asking wonder questions and then living in them. Leaders who are curious, above the line, and committed to learning ask lots of wonder questions. They make it a practice to generate them.

Here are a few examples of what might be wonder questions (remember that it's not so much the actual words of the question but the consciousness from which the question is asked):

- *I wonder what outrageous customer service would look like?*

- *I wonder what I can learn today that will benefit everyone?*

- *I wonder how we could get more done in less time?*

- *I wonder what choices I could make today that would allow me to experience greater and greater fun and creativity?*

- *I wonder what I could do today that would allow for a breakthrough in my life?*

- *I wonder what I can learn from the issue that keeps coming up with my partner that would expand my leadership?*

- *I wonder how abundance is showing up in my life today?*

Conscious leaders practice these and many other shift moves.

DEDICATION TO SELF-AWARENESS

Conscious leaders are passionately committed to knowing themselves. This is the basis of their willingness to "regard every interaction as an opportunity to learn" and their willingness to source a state of curiosity and wonder. An astute person once said that all information falls into three buckets:

1. What I know

2. What I know I don't know

3. What I don't know I don't know

Though conscious leaders have a good grasp on what they know and are interested in what they don't know, they are inexorably drawn to what they don't know they don't know. When it comes to self-awareness, they spend their time in the unknown by opening themselves up to feedback. When most people think of feedback, they think of written or verbal comments given in a performance-review type setting. For us, feedback is much more than that. It's information coming to us from a limitless set of sources. For example, our bodies are giving us feedback all the time in the form of sensations and feelings as well

as perceptions and thoughts. People are also giving us feedback all the time, and the vast majority of it is never verbalized.

One of our favorite and most reliable forms of feedback is results. They give us immediate feedback about what we are committed to at an unconscious level. We said under Commitment 1 that radical responsibility is looking at your results to see what you're actually committed to. This source of feedback is a direct channel to powerful self-awareness.

COMMITMENT IN ACTION

Remember our friend Sarah at the beginning of this chapter? She was a poster child for a lack of self-awareness, wonder, and curiosity. In the midst of her defensiveness, she directed her anger at Diana telling her, "I don't believe you live this conscious leadership stuff, because your body shows that you lack discipline." Sarah didn't appear to be speaking from love but from fear and self-righteous anger and was probably trying to hurt Diana.

It would have been so easy for Diana to blow off her comment and let it go. But we've noticed that skilled conscious leaders commit to learning from all feedback, regardless of how it's given. Indeed, they learn that the feedback they most react to has the most learning potential. Diana is a master at this. For this reason, it didn't surprise the people in The Conscious Leadership Group when she posted on our web page several weeks after her interaction with Sarah:

When I was at the last Foundation retreat, I got feedback from one of the participants that my body looked like I did not have discipline around food. I got really curious about the feedback. First I giggled inside thinking that if she knew how much I want to eat versus what I allow myself to eat, she would be in awe of my discipline... food is ecstatic to me, and my lusty personality wants MORE! MORE! MORE!

Then I got curious about what gift she was giving me and I found that there was a whole new layer of discipline I could be experiencing around eating and caring for my form. So I have used this woman's voice as a wonderful challenge and have devoted myself to a whole different kind of discipline. It's not willful but instead devotional. The results are surprising in that there has been a significant difference in my sensitivity and my intuition is markedly more keen. And the shape of my body changing is wonderfully fun!

PRACTICING
THE COMMITMENT

1. Commit to learning over being right. Decide that even though you will get defensive at times, you will make the choice to shift to curiosity whenever you recognize you're defensive and below the line. Also decide that you will consider everything in life as a learning opportunity and value learning above all else. Share this commitment with key people in your life and request their support.

2. Ask yourself regularly, "Am I above or below the line?"

3. If you are below the line, can you accept yourself for being just where you are?

4. If you're below the line, ask yourself, "Am I willing to shift?"

5. If you are willing to shift, choose a shift move to open yourself to learning.

6. Ask wonder questions. Keep a list and share them with people close to you.

IN A NUTSHELL

Commitment 1 and Commitment 2 are really the foundation for being a "By Me" leader. Commitment 1 says I'm done blaming and complaining and I see myself as the source of my experience. Commitment 2 says I value learning over being right. I value growing over the survival of my identity. I choose curiosity and wonder. These two commitments open a world of possibilities.

CHAPTER SUMMARY
Learning Through Curiosity

▶ Self-awareness and learning agility are known to create sustained success in leaders—they form the foundation of conscious leadership.

▶ Conscious leaders are passionately committed to knowing themselves, which is the basis of their willingness to live in a state of curiosity.

▶ At any point, leaders are either above the line (open, curious, and committed to learning) or below the line (defensive, closed and committed to being right).

▶ Being "right" doesn't cause drama, but wanting, proving, and fighting to be "right" does.

▶ Even though conscious leaders get defensive like everyone else, they regularly interrupt this natural reactivity by pausing to breathe, accept, and shift.

▶ The issue is not whether we will drift but how long we stay in a drift before we shift.

▶ There are two kinds of shift moves: those that change our blood and body chemistry (such as conscious breathing and changing our posture) and those that change our consciousness (such as speaking unarguably and appreciation).