



# Cultivating Conscious Leadership

*4 Practices to Transform Your Leadership Presence into a Powerful, Authentic and Masterful Way of Being*



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## Cultivating Conscious Leadership

Deep inside you feel called to contribute in meaningful ways – in a way that makes the world a better place – and so you have stepped into a leadership position as a way to fulfill your calling...your vision.

Whether you're an emerging or experienced leader, your presence as a leader defines how people respond to you, support you, and co-create with you to bring your vision into reality.

### ***How do you bring your vision into reality when the pace of change is increasing at an unprecedented rate?***

Since traditional leadership models no longer meet the current challenges today's leaders face, it's imperative that we ***shift the way we see the world and adopt a more conscious way of fostering our relationships with each other and ourselves.***

<b>Traditional Leadership</b>	<b>Today's Leadership</b>
Stable Environment	Rapidly Changing Environment
Command & Control Relationships	Interdependent Relationships
Win/Lose Outcomes	Win/Win Outcomes
Change driven by necessity	Change driven by innovation and continuous learning
Power through Hierarchy	Power through Networks & Communities
Leadership Approach = People as physical creatures	Leadership Approach = people as complex spiritual beings

Cultivating a conscious leadership presence requires developing a keen sense of ***self-awareness***, building deep ***connections with others***, and taking a ***systems-wide view***.



While your heart and body may be resonating with this notion of conscious leadership and saying – “Yes! This type of leadership is greatly needed today!” – your mind may be saying, “Yeah, it sounds good but if I’m going to get on board, I need to know how this approach benefits everyone.”

If you recognize this to be true for you, it's a great sign that you are on the path of aligning your whole self – heart, body, and mind!

The benefits of a conscious leadership approach are two-fold:

### Individual Benefits of Conscious Leadership

- Greater personal **resilience**
- Ability to bring **clarity** to confusion and **calm** to chaos
- Better able to communicate vision and engage others for **collaborative problem-solving**
- Increase loyalty and **trust** with followers through ability to facilitate strong, empathetic relationships
- More balanced approach to work and life which creates **less stress** and a more sustainable working environment
- Higher level of **performance**

### Organizational Benefits of Conscious Leadership

- Stronger, more **nimble teams**
- **Increased** productivity & **performance**
- Greater **alignment of organizational goals**
- Increased **employee engagement**
- Improved **decision-making** and **problem-solving** abilities

After working with hundreds of leaders over the past two decades to help them cultivate their own leadership presence, I noticed a trend in those who were wildly successful. Interestingly enough, these leaders work in a variety of fields and industries and come from a wide range of cultures.

As different as each of them are, they all share the ability to **look inward, listen** intently, **observe** the environment and approach situations with **curiosity** rather than judgment. In doing so, these leaders communicate powerfully, authentically, and masterfully in a way that:



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- Connects them deeply to their inner wisdom
- Invites others to align with their vision
- Supports them in gaining clarity amid chaos
- Catalyzes transformation

As counter-intuitive as it seems, these wildly successful leaders actually **slow down** so they can be more agile during fast-paced, volatile, and ambiguous times. In doing so, they respond more quickly with greater buy-in and higher quality solutions than their colleagues.

S.L.O.W.  
Be **S**till, **L**isten, **O**bserve, **W**onder



*4 Practices to cultivate Conscious Leadership*

On the following pages are core practices to help you cultivate your own conscious leadership. In the interest of full disclosure, I use these practices myself and share them with the leaders I coach.

The practices can be done in any order and collectively have the power to transform your leadership presence into a **powerful, authentic, and masterful way of being.**

The exercises shared here are merely a sampling of what's possible so I invite you experiment with the exercises for the next 90 days - modify them to make them your own - and track any shifts you notice in yourself and the people around you.



### Practice #1: Be STILL

In order to go slow you have to first get comfortable with yourself. This isn't so much about not moving a muscle during a meditation class (although that's okay too); being still is about getting in harmony with yourself. Harmony happens when we quiet our mind and **ease into the stillness** around us.

Activities that quiet your mind **stop the inner chatter** and connect you to yourself, your surroundings and others. This quiet place, this feeling of connection may seem fleeting if you haven't spent much time being still. It's okay. It's normal. The goal of this practice is to feel the quiet and stillness within yourself.

#### Practice #1 Exercise Take a Wisdom Walk

*Taking an intentional walk in nature helps you to develop greater awareness through your physical, mental and emotional experiences. A Wisdom Walk is a powerful way to connect you not only to nature but also to your own source of guidance. Find a natural area for your walk – a park or trail where you feel safe – and bring a journal to record your observations.*

#### **Before your walk:**

- Take a few deep breaths, feel your lungs expand with each inhale and your diaphragm contract with each exhale.
- Release all judgment and expectations of what your experience "should" be like.
- Take one question with you on your walk. The question may be related to a current situation you're experiencing or something more general like, "What do I need to let go of in order for my leadership presence to fully evolve?"
- Hold this question gently – as if the question is walking alongside you and a little outside your peripheral vision – because the purpose of a Wisdom Walk is to contemplate rather than come to a conclusion.



- Determine a starting and ending point for your walk that serves as a threshold, a definitive beginning for your journey ahead. Create a personal ceremony by taking a moment to pause or close your eyes before crossing the threshold.

### **During your walk:**

- Alternate walking and resting – listen to your body and heed what it is telling you.
- Pay special attention to what nature has to share with you. This may come by way of a tree or rock that captures your attention; a stream that interests you or a bird, squirrel or other animal that crosses your path.
- Feel free to stop and journal what you are noticing within and around you.

### **After your walk:**

- As you approach the end of your walk, you may notice that more feelings have made their way to the surface. Allow yourself space for these feelings.
- Be gentle with yourself and choose the kind of environment that feels supportive for you.
- Reflect on your Wisdom Walk and integrate the various images (plants, animals, weather) that came to you. Nature has a way of offering wisdom through metaphor. Take time to reflect on these images more than once so that you can understand it in different ways.
- Journal any new awareness's or deeper understandings. You may even want to share your experience with a friend.



## Wisdom Walk Journal

My Question:

Things I noticed/felt/experienced on my walk:	What kind of insight does this offer?
	
	
	
	
	
	
	



## **Practice #2: LISTEN**

The way we listen impacts what we hear. The best leaders are intuitive listeners and adept at reading between the lines. They have an uncanny ability to understand what is not being said, witnessed or heard. They're able to do this because they **listen with an open mind and heart**.

You see, when you listen with an open mind and heart you suspend all judgment and listen to the entire message before coming to a conclusion. Listening from a place of openness helps you in finding common ground with the other person. Discovering common ground in this manner also helps to build **greater trust and intimacy**, which, by the way, is one of the foundational elements for building a highly effective team.

### **Practice #2 Exercise Open-Hearted Listening**

#### **Before the conversation**

- Place your hands on your heart (this signals your mind to pay attention to your body).
- Inhale deeply, feeling your lungs and belly expand. Exhale fully, feeling your lungs and belly contract.
- Continue with a few more deep breaths. With each breath, release any tension that you're holding in your body.
- Now invite your Ego to take a break. This may sound peculiar but stay with me here. Your Ego is but one part of your magnificently, multi-dimensional self. Ego likes to play and can, at times, get carried away so let's give Ego a loving Time Out for this exercise.
- Speak directly to Ego (silently or out loud). "Ego, thank you for your commitment to look out for me. You do your job relentlessly and I appreciate all your hard work. I'm giving you some time off for now. Go rest now, it's okay."



### **During the conversation**

*As you enter into your next conversation, listen for tone, intensity, inflection as well as the ideas (not just the words).*

- Remove any distractions – put your cell phone away or at least turn it over so you don't see the screen.
- If you tend to provide your opinions freely or feel compelled to offer a solution - DON'T. Instead, reflect back what you just heard to ensure that you are aligned with what the other person is saying.
- Observe the emotions behind the words and acknowledge the emotion as well as the words when you respond.
- Be quiet. You don't have to respond immediately. Some people are "verbal processors" which means they need to talk through the issue in order to gain clarity. Your quietness may provide the space for them to find the solution.

### **After the conversation**

*Reflect on the following questions...*

- What did you notice about the tone, intensity, or inflection?
- What feelings did you associate with these?
- What impact did the emotions of the other person have on you? (This will help you identify your triggers.)
- What was the main idea this person is sharing? What did he/she really want you to know?
- Were you able to withhold judgment or did you jump to conclusions? What impact did this have on the other person?



### **Practice #3: OBSERVE**

Genuine and authentic communication is obtained when we're able to fully observe others and ourselves in a non-judgmental way. **Observing objectively** gives you more freedom to choose how you respond – and you operate from a conscious rather than unconscious place.

For example, let's say you walk into a meeting and the person across the table from you has his head cocked to one side, his arms crossed against his chest and leaning back in his chair.

Subjective observation is laced with judgment and may sound like, "This guy is a real jerk." When judgments like this are operating, you tend to fall into reactionary patterns. These patterns are typically not conscious and could limit how your leadership presence shines through in a potent way.

However, when you observe objectively, you simply notice the mechanics – head tilted, arms crossed, leaning back – and may think, "That guy appears to be using closed body language. I wonder how receptive he'll be to my ideas?"

From this place of objectivity, you have primed the pump to notice the cause and effect of interactions and see patterns emerge. Seeing patterns emerge equips you with the ability to be more **purposeful** in what you say and how you say it.



Practice #3 Exercise  
Objective Observation

**Step #1: State observations that are purely factual.**

Example: "It's 2:00AM and the volume on your stereo is loud." is an observed fact. "It's way too late to be playing music loudly. You're so inconsiderate." is an evaluation based on your own standards.

**Step #2: State the feeling the observation is triggering in you.** Naming the emotion without judgment allows you to connect in a way that is conscious, present and attuned to the genuine needs of yourself and others.

Example: I see you looking away while I'm talking (*objective observation*). I'm feeling uncomfortable (*feeling*).

**Step #3: State the need that is the cause of that feeling.** When our needs are met, we have happy, pleasant feelings; when they are not met we have unpleasant feelings. By connecting with the feeling, you can find the underlying need.

Example: I see you looking away while I'm talking (*objective observation*). I'm feeling uncomfortable (*feeling*) because I need connection right now.



## **Practice #4: WONDER**

Being inquisitive helps leaders generate deep questions, promote **innovation**, and catalyze **transformation**. Asking questions invites people into conversation that sparks creativity. And being genuinely open to hearing answers engages others and builds strong relationship.

It also requires some level of vulnerability to not always have the answers. After all, you've probably gotten as far as you have because of your expertise and ability to be decisive.

***But have you considered how your ability to model the behaviors required to innovate correlates to your team's level of innovation?***

At its core, wonder, is about **noticing**. And when we wonder we use our power of observation more fully. We tap into what is happening in the present to discover the unfamiliar in the familiar.

However, getting to this state of wonder requires a shift in perspective as we listen with an open mind and observe without judgment.



**Practice #4 Exercise  
Shifting Perspectives**

It's easier to find innovative solutions when you look at the issue from different angles. Use the following exercise to shift your perspective about a specific situation.

**Step #1: Think about a current situation that is challenging for you.**

How do these perspectives shape you as a person?

**Step #2: Consider the source of these perspectives.**

How do your life experiences, education, and people you surround yourself with influence these perspectives?

**Step #3: Reframe the situation by envisioning it from another person's perspective, asking others for their perspective or by doing a Meditation Walk (see Practice #1 Exercise).**

What lessons is this situation attempting to teach me?

In which way do I need to grow for this situation to not feel so challenging?

From what other perspective could I view this situation? In what ways does that shift how I feel about the situation?



## Final Thoughts

Cultivating your own style of leadership presence will evolve over time. Be compassionate with yourself and allow yourself to experiment with these practices. Tailor them to fit who you are, not who you think you should be.

Remember, powerful leadership presence requires you to:

- Be **still** and look inward
- **Listen** intently with an open heart and mind
- **Observe** your environment objectively
- Approach situations with **wonder** rather than judgment

If any of these practices resonate with you and you'd like to discover how to become the leader you know you're meant to be - without compromising who you are - I'd love to hear from you. You can email me at [jenna@jennastoliker.com](mailto:jenna@jennastoliker.com) or connect with me on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jennastoliker>.



### About

**Jenna Stoliker** is the Founder of the **Center for Conscious Leadership LLC**, a boutique coaching & consulting firm that helps leaders engage all of their strengths so they may:

- **Communicate** with greater credibility and influence
- **Connect** with others more authentically
- **Collaborate** effectively with more ease

She is passionate about redefining what leadership looks like. She knows that leadership is a powerful force for change when we pause long enough to listen deeply, reflect on our own mindsets, and choose curiosity rather than judgment. Jenna has a unique way of making even the hardest conversations comfortable by listening deeply and compassionately and then providing direct feedback when you need to hear it the most. Clients come to her for concrete strategies and meaningful results to help them navigate uncharted waters, especially when it comes to stress that occurs during career pivots, new pressures that come with expanded leadership roles, and the uncertainty that arises from organizational change.

In the field of Learning & Organizational Development since 1993, Jenna has developed transformational leadership programs and coached hundreds of high-potential and high-performing leaders and their teams from a myriad of industries located throughout North America, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Her ability to see each person's strengths and needs is her secret sauce to successfully partnering with clients from diverse backgrounds.

Jenna holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Madonna University and is a credentialed coach with the International Coach Federation. She is also an award-winning Authorized Partner for the Wiley Everything DiSC® & The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team brands and is certified in a variety of behavioral assessments including: Everything DiSC®, The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team, MBTI, StrengthsFinder, VIA Character Strengths and Leadership Agility360.

Jenna has a gift for helping her clients lead from a place of unadulterated confidence and clarity, so they make clear, powerful choices in the midst of chaos and change.

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