

GETTING REAL: Authenticity Over Perfection

By Amie Gamboian, CEO & Executive Coach

We specialize in coaching real leaders in real time through real issues. The current times we're leading in present more real challenges than we could have imagined.

Often, we discuss the Stockdale Paradox: the leadership essential of intentionally holding the tension between difficult realities and a fierce resolve that's anchored in hope. More than just talking about it, our goal is to model it. That's far easier said than done.

As leaders, our job is to determine what's real and then get up close and personal with those realities. To do anything less is to quickly risk becoming irrelevant (and lose your influence in the process), miss opportunities for impact, and subconsciously dehumanize self and others. After all, to show up best is to be intensely human – leading from our most authentic self.

It's challenging to lean in during such times of unrest, as we often find more questions than answers, strong emotions, and extra unknowns with reaching goals. While attempting to lead with our very best, our weaknesses, gaps and imperfections seem to stare back at us.

We find ourselves facing some of the greatest realities we'll ever confront – the imperfections within ourselves. Even though leadership rooted in perfection is long outdated, its alternative authenticity can be a scary place to go.

When things as we know them seem to get turned on their heads, our human fears, insecurities, doubts and frustrations rise up. If we're not careful, all spills over those we're leading. It becomes BOTH a surrender AND a discipline to choose not to be sucked into the rushing current that wants to keep us stuck in the land of perfection.

Although many complex models present ways to navigate change and challenge, when it comes down to it, leading well through difficult times doesn't happen perfectly and rarely according to a formality. Making mistakes, apologizing, asking for forgiveness, seeing things through multiple viewpoints minus biases...are all a part of leading authentically, and position us to lead well in real time through real issues.

One of the most impactful changes we've experienced over the past few months is the level of authenticity and vulnerability now present even in the highest of leadership roles. The once popular mindset that "leaders have all the answers" has been replaced out of necessity with "leaders find the answers", operating in extreme collaboration and being the real deal.

This collective willingness to dump the over-professionalism and formalities that often create walls and masks is one of the best changes we've experienced that we must carry with us into the future. We're all going to do some things well while experiencing struggles with others.

I've led well by trusting God, maintaining strong personal rhythms and routines, and challenging myself to step up and into new opportunities that I've yet to master. However, I've struggled with the magnitude of change, shifts in pace, and emotional intensities all around us.

We can all be a part of the movement toward powerful authenticity by:

1. GETTING REAL and ditching the perfection to embrace the progress. Mistakes only lack value if they fail to be leveraged as learns. Our resilience has more claim to our futures than errors ever will.
2. EXTENDING MORE GRACE – I need it; you need it; everyone needs more of it. Strong and authentic leadership lives in the land of free-flowing apologies, asking for forgiveness and dumping the offenses and personal grudges.
3. REJECT any tendency to over-complicate things - Instead, welcome profound simplicity in your leadership and life by understanding who you authentically are and what you're authentically called to do. This increased clarity in BEING will lead to certainty in your DOING.

We are real leaders leading in real time through real issues. On the other side of us is the potential for real impact...if we're willing to trade perfection for authenticity. Getting real may not be easy, but it will free us and others to lead extremely well – especially during times like these.