

The
Awakened Leader 

Leadership as a Classroom of the Soul

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Personal stories in this book have been changed
to honor the privacy of those involved.

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ESSAY SEVEN

*Dangers and Beneficent
Protection*

*Despite the very real internal and external
dangers of leadership, leaders thrive when they
receive beneficent support and engage in self-effort.*

For all of its rewards and opportunities, leadership brings with it an element of personal risk and danger. As catalysts for change, leaders can challenge the long-held beliefs of those they serve. Their power threatens those who feel powerless, and when people feel threatened, they target the person in authority. As a result, leaders get hurt both professionally and personally.

Publications in the business and nonprofit worlds typically address how leaders impose psychological damage on those they lead through sexual harassment, embezzlement, favoritism, prejudice, and other practices. Far less has been written about the harm leaders experience from those they serve. In the 1940s, metaphysicians Alice Bailey and Torkom Saraydarian wrote about leadership as an opportunity for the soul to grow through the individual's dedication and commitment. They also believed every leader to be susceptible to internal dangers and external attacks. Among the internal dangers they identified were discouragement, isolation, and exhaustion. The authors viewed betrayal, manipulation, and psychic attacks as examples of external dangers. Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky explored similar issues in their book *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, published in 2002. They observed that employees seek divisive ways to undermine the authority of a leader they perceive as challenging the status quo.

THE EXTERNAL DANGERS OF LEADERSHIP

Negative Projections

Many years ago, I had an experience that encapsulates how negative projections can challenge a leader's survival. I fictionalize the story to protect the identities of all involved. The story evolves as follows:

Theresa finds a nonprofit organization that promotes physical and psychological care of preschool children through parent education. She

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believes proper care of young children by capable and loving parents will prevent social and psychological problems in adulthood. She approaches her work with enthusiasm and a willingness to expend endless time and energy to bring her vision into reality. Like-minded people are drawn to her work and soon her corps of volunteers offers parenting classes and personal mentoring services for parents of preschool children from all economic and cultural backgrounds. Because Theresa feels no one should teach others how to parent unless they are psychologically healthy, she requires her staff to pursue their own personal growth and resolve obstacles to their mental health.

During her organization's sixth year, Theresa attends a mental health conference where she meets a woman who insists Theresa accept the name and phone number of a man who heals assaulted human energy fields. Theresa assures the woman that she knows many people who need his skills, never guessing she is the one who will call him in desperation. Shortly after receiving his name, she has a dream:

Theresa stands before an altar at the beginning of a cave. Helpers nearby explain that she must take a dangerous and life-threatening journey deep into the earth. Two women are assigned to go with her to ensure a safe and successful journey. They have each successfully taken the journey and therefore will know when to alert her to danger and when to rescue her. She bows with reverence before the holy altar and with her two protectors begins the journey into the dark underground. Many times she falls into an abyss and becomes lost in the darkness; each time, the women pull her to safety and guide her to the next challenge.

She eventually reaches safety on the other side of the cave. Although she experiences tremendous gratitude for the devoted and competent service of

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the two women, she knows that the true essence within her has provided the spiritual strength she needed to pass this spiritual test.

The script of the dream plays out literally in Theresa's life when Jim, one of her co-workers, challenges her authority in divisive ways. He creates dissension and disunity among the staff by reacting emotionally during staff meetings and asking for on-the-spot help in processing his emotional issues. The staff grows weary tending to his emotional breakdowns and becomes fearful of his occasional angry outbursts. Several times, staff members privately express concern to Theresa about Jim's neediness and anger. Theresa finds conflict uncomfortable and lacks the necessary communication skills and strength to confront Jim about his disruptive behavior. She decides to solve the problem by taking an indirect approach. She assures Jim that she, too, has life challenges and shares some of these with him. She also shares her breakthrough experiences. She hopes her sharing will help Jim feel more included, strengthen his self-worth, and lessen his need to draw attention to himself.

Instead, Jim makes more and more demands on Theresa's time and his emotional processing needs increase. She tolerates his behavior for several months until one morning the words "enough is enough" rise within her. On that day, she recognizes she has the strength to confront Jim with his behavior. She decides to ask him to resign from the organization. The instant she communicates this message, Jim unleashes his rage. He has kept a tally of grievances against Theresa for years. Now he spews them out, one by one. Like venomous darts, he directs them at her and she accepts them as possibly true.

When Jim projects his ferocious negative energy of hatred and rage into her energy field, Theresa nearly faints from nausea and profound energy

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drain. Unable to recover from the assault, her energy field loses its cohesiveness. She senses her survival is in danger. Although she calls upon spiritual resources through prayer, Theresa experiences extreme mental confusion and fatigue within days of the attack. When Jim recruits staff and board



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members to justify his rage against her, chaos ensues within the organization. Theresa is blindsided by the subsequent suspicion of her authority and ethics. She loses her way as a leader, falls into the abyss of upheaval, and wanders in darkness.

Theresa experienced a common external danger for leaders—a tendency to absorb projected negative thought forms. Thought forms carry positive or negative energy and, when projected, can penetrate the energy field of the targeted person. The human energy field surrounds and permeates the physical body, energizing and vitalizing organs and the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, and endocrine systems. Emotions and a spiritual connection to Source also reside in our energy field. Positive thoughts of love, respect, and patience can be projected into the energy field as well as negative projections of hatred, aggression, and condemnation. Positive projections or extensions of love create a sense of order, unity, safety, and trust within the receiver. Negative projections, also known as psychic attacks,

bring chaos, disruption, lack of security, and fear, all threatening to the receiver's health.

Individuals like Jim, who consciously or unconsciously project negative thought forms onto leaders, often have a history of severe psychological trauma and abuse. In an attempt to reclaim personal power, they attempt to disempower, control, and even destroy others by using emotional manipulation and psychological attack. Their harmful projections tend to demean, demoralize, and discount the leader and undermine her power and influence. These projections jeopardize the physical and mental health of vulnerable leaders.

The human energy field can be damaged by past physical, emotional, or mental trauma. These traumas cause weak spots in our fields. Through the law of attraction, we absorb projected energy into our field that is of the same resonance as the energy of the trauma. If, like Theresa, we developed a high tolerance for inappropriate behavior due to a family history of psychological or physical abuse, we will accept similar experiences into adulthood. Our energy field will continue to be damaged by negative projections. We may even grow increasingly tolerant of these projections if we do nothing to strengthen or protect our field. *The crux of why we do this is because we believe the projections are true and that the problem is ours alone.* Discouraged, we can be tempted to retreat from our role, satisfying the very intent of the person sending the projection. Unless we receive support, we will lose more and more of our vitality and become ill.

Continuing Theresa's story, we see how asking for help is vital to regaining health and to learning from the experience.

Upon consulting the energy healer whose name she had received



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months earlier, Theresa learns negative thought forms are adhering to her energy field and draining her energy. The energy healer successfully removes the thought forms, but gives Theresa the responsibility of identifying why she is susceptible to these negative projections. She discovers that her low self-worth has led to three communication issues affecting her leadership. First, she lacks discernment about what to say to whom and errs on the side of inappropriate self-disclosure with co-workers. She compensates for her lack of self-worth by speaking in a way that conveys specialness. With Jim, this behavior triggers jealousy, especially when her experiences seem to outshine his. In turn, his jealousy triggers her fears of betrayal, an overarching theme beginning in Theresa's youth when her parents discounted her career goals. Jim's betrayal, however, reveals her core belief in her unworthiness through which she disowns her potential and value and therefore betrays herself. Second, by appearing weak and at times indecisive, she gives others permission to exert their power and pursue their ambition to replace her as leader. By creating disunity among the staff about Theresa's leadership, Jim believes he proved she is not a good leader and that he would make a better one. Third, she is unaware that she does not always articulate her point of view to her staff in a clear manner. Her indirect communications confuse others and they see her as being unreachable. What she is afraid to communicate to others is her need to be heard and validated as a fellow human being.

As her dream predicted, with the help of two women, a psychologist and a spiritual teacher, Theresa survives this threat to her life and leadership and strengthens her skills in communication and right relations with her staff. She recognizes a need to learn to discern behaviors that suggest potential betrayal and to be knowledgeable about how a betrayal scenario develops.

Betrayal

Betrayal is an issue of right relations, perhaps the most traumatic one for leaders. Caught up in the cause they believe in, leaders may fail to consider that their childhood experiences of harmful boundary intrusions from psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse make them vulnerable to betrayal. They may not notice the patterns of behavior of those close to them that speak of potential for betrayal until it is too late. Few leaders have the necessary skills to redirect the betrayer's intent.



The betrayal scenario can be likened to a play with an opening scene to bring together the betrayer and the betrayed, a plot with subplots to escalate and intensify the issues between the players, a defining movement as a turning point for resolution, and a final scene to define a decisive shift in the form of the relationship between the players.

Opponents of a leader tend to discover, through trial and error, that betrayal is the leader's Achilles' heel. Motivated by unresolved issues from their own histories of abuse and neglect and a subsequent misperception of the leader's words or behavior, opponents attack the leader's character and competence, distorting and misrepresenting the leader's views. They encourage others to violate the leader's confidences, inform against the leader, deceive the leader, and conspire to harm and even professionally destroy her or him.

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tween the players. James's story demonstrates how a leader typically experiences a play of betrayal.

OPENING SCENE

- ◆ *The potential betrayer is often a colleague in the leader's inner circle who has enjoyed the leader's confidence and trust.*

James, age fifty and a gifted concert cellist, accepted a position as leader of a music conservatory. He had no previous experience as an executive director and lacked management and financial skills. Douglas, a board member who also held a high political office in the community, was the most vocal member of the search committee in support of James's appointment. James's creativity, musical talent, energy, enthusiasm, and abilities as an artistic and educational leader were in stark contrast to the former director, who, over the course of thirty years, had left the conservatory in physical and financial ruin. Realizing James lacked administrative skills, the board conveyed their willingness to help him with the management and financial needs of the conservatory.

- ◆ *Both the leader and the potential betrayer bring childhood scripts into their relationship that enable the eventual betrayal to take place.*

On a personal level, James brought to his new position a history of severe childhood sexual abuse, a history that made him vulnerable to betrayal as a leader. His early betrayal by a trusted relative had resulted in many boundary issues affecting his leadership, including tolerance of inappropriate behavior and failure to set limits by saying no. James was unaware that his vulnerabilities would trigger Douglas's unhealed childhood abuse. James saw Douglas as an ally who would ensure his success as the new director.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLOT

- ◆ *The leader notices certain behaviors of a trusted colleague that are “whispers” of a future conflict.*

For James, a first “whisper” occurred when Douglas warned him that Bill, the treasurer and head of the finance committee, was inept. A second “whisper” came after the board asked Bill to retire. Douglas recommended that Philip, another board member, be in charge of finances by becoming development director. Clearly, Douglas had solicited Philip as a partner to help carry out the details of his plan. A louder “whisper” came within six weeks when Philip began to counter all of James’s administrative suggestions. Unknown to James, Douglas and Philip were political allies in the community.

- ◆ *The betrayer collects reasons to justify attacking the leader.*

Together, Douglas and Philip collected evidence to justify taking over James’s position. Even though James’s lack of management and financial skills was common knowledge, they enlarged upon the effect this lack could have on the organization. Learning from the disgruntled husband of Ellen, a dismissed employee, that James had a bipolar mental disorder, Douglas and Philip added new and elaborate detail to their picture of his incompetence.



Betrayers can use many reasons to justify their attacks.

Betrayers can use many reasons to justify their attacks. For example, they may claim that the leader manipulates them by getting them to do what the leader thinks is right, or that the leader does not give them freedom of choice. They may feel their superior goals and accomplishments go unacknowledged and unappreciated. They may praise leaders to their faces yet slander them to others.

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- ◆ *A betrayer's negative emotions intensify over time and he acts out in the workplace.*

Philip began to act out his emotional state by not coming to work and by neglecting his role as financial overseer. He made errors in financial records and misjudgments in financial decisions, behaviors that soon came to the attention of the board. Because both Philip and James were triggered emotionally when in one another's presence, their working relationship rapidly deteriorated into anger and aggression. James subsequently avoided being in Philip's presence.

- ◆ *The betrayer undermines the leader by influencing how others view the leader.*

Betrayers undermine the leader by sharing their view with others, collecting complaints, and making friends of those who dislike the leader. Philip sought to make friends of those who disliked James and gathered to his side the staff members who had complaints about James's decisions. For example, Douglas and Philip discovered an ally in Ellen's husband, who was enraged at Ellen's dismissal. Having learned from him about James's bipolar disorder, they used him to spread damaging information about James, which he circulated in letters to all major community nonprofits, newspapers, funders, faculty, and board members, as well as on a website.

- ◆ *Incidences of conflict increase between all players—leader, betrayer, other colleagues, and members of the community.*

Betrayers attempt to discover and make public the weaknesses and past errors of the leader's personal life. In addition to using Ellen's husband to spread malicious information, Douglas and Philip used their political positions in the community to malign James.

- ◆ *In an attempt to resolve the conflict, the board may alter the organization's structure by changing the titles, positions, and responsibilities of the players.*

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James's board made several attempts to resolve the issue by changing the roles and responsibilities of all the players. They named Philip management director and James artistic director. Each was given three months to settle grievances. Still on the board and professing support of the changes, Douglas continued his efforts to discredit James in the community.

TURNING POINT

- ◆ *Once the board's attempt to resolve the conflict fails, a catalytic event often occurs that clarifies the action it needs to take.*

Usually an event occurs which serves as a catalyst for the board to ask the betrayer(s) to leave the organization and sever all relationships with the leader, board, or organization. The conservatory board was prompted to action when it discovered that Philip made significant financial errors and was frequently absent on business related to his political position. They fired Philip and asked Douglas to resign.



Skilled leaders can facilitate healing by practicing right relations with members of their organization.

- ◆ *The board restructures and either asks the leader to remain with the organization or releases the leader.*

The board asked James to remain with the conservatory as artistic director and chief fund-raiser. Angie, a staff member who related well to James, was hired as administrator in charge of managing the daily financial functions. An executive director was not named.

- ◆ *If the leader stays, he facilitates healing within the organization with the support of the board.*

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James and his board chose to view the crisis as a cleansing and to set the conservatory in a new direction with a sense of commitment and energy. Both enrollment and staff involvement increased soon after the crisis passed.



Leaders learn to discern betrayal behaviors by noticing when a clash occurs between their heart and their observing mind.

Skilled leaders can facilitate healing by practicing right relations with members of their organization. Holding a group meeting in which members can voice their concerns without judgment and fear of confrontation honors everyone's experience and feelings. *The leader acknowledges the crisis in simple terms, expressing no blame.* Before the meeting, leaders can benefit from consulting with a mentor to help prepare the format and communication guidelines for the meeting.

FINAL SCENE

- ◆ *The betrayal play ends when, first, the leader stops communication with the opposing member and wishes him well on his chosen path, and second, when the leader personally initiates healing the cause of his vulnerability to betrayal.*

Leaders require from one to three years to heal emotionally and physically, depending upon the severity of the crisis of betrayal. Their opportunity for learning the soul lesson of right relations is considerable. They learn how to (1) forgive and let go, (2) heal their personal issues of conflict, including tendencies of self-betrayal and betrayal of others, (3) discover why leadership betrayal occurs and how it can be prevented, and (4) facilitate healing the rift that occurs within an organization as a result of leadership betrayal.

Self-inquiry questions help leaders identify issues of right relations that make them vulnerable to betrayal: How did it happen that my once-supportive and faithful co-worker questions my integrity and reveals to others matters I shared in confidence? What are the interpersonal dynamics between the co-worker and me that set the stage for this betrayal? What happened that brought the betrayal into view? What in my personal history has made me vulnerable to betrayal?

Leaders learn to discern betrayal behaviors by noticing when a clash occurs between their heart and their observing mind. The heart holds the potential of right perception while the mind helps the leader to put into words observations of a possible betrayer's actions, behavior, and expressions. By listening to the warning of their heart and relating to others with authenticity, leaders can identify if they are vulnerable to being betrayed and by whom. Hopefully, feelings of betrayal can be dissolved before they become activated.

Criticism

As leaders, we can also be the target of harsh criticism. Criticism projects negative thoughts and words like poisoned arrows into our most vulnerable areas of weakness or limitation. Criticism, whether by an individual or group and whether verbal or nonverbal, is often based on a sense of personal superiority and a love of faultfinding. Metaphysicians Alice Bailey and Torkom Saraydarian write that criticism harms the energy field of the person receiving the projection. Bailey describes criticism as a “virulent poison” because, as projected thought, it uses the energy of the sender's entire personality to attack the weakness in another person. Criticism's intensely focused energy has extreme power.



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Throughout my life, I have been extremely sensitive to and fearful of criticism. As a result, I sought to protect my energy field and eliminate further pain of criticism by pleasing teachers and seeking to be the best student in the class. I also accommodated others, an approach that hindered my ability to evolve my own preferences and define my true feelings. By the time I reached college age, I sensed that any critical words of my academic performance would tip the balance of my psyche and I would spiral into an emotional breakdown. The delicate balance of my psyche reached a turning point when, as a college senior, I pleaded with two clinical supervisors not to give me critical feedback. Their willingness to honor my request validated my feelings and ushered me onto the first step of a long healing journey.

Leadership, perhaps more than any other setting, motivates individuals to heal the wounds of criticism. Whether criticism is expressed or unexpressed, wounded leaders tend to receive it as evidence of failure and unworthiness. Their feelings of low self-worth can emerge even when they deliberately invite critical feedback from others. Leaders with energy fields vulnerable to criticism especially react when they are caught off guard by an unexpected criticism.

Dissolving the negative thoughts that have penetrated our energy field requires a commitment to the healing process. Two approaches used simultaneously are necessary: to engage in inner work to heal the emotional wound while learning ways to protect our field from further harm. Through inner work, we gain insight into our inner conflicts and discover our strengths and resources, and we cleanse our energy field. Helpful psychological and healing modality tools include dialoguing with the pain of criticism, emptying



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out the energy of the pain by venting our feelings, acknowledging what quality was taken from us (such as validation, unconditional acceptance, appreciation), and retrieving the lost quality.

We can protect our field from further damage by refusing the criticism sent to us. For example, we can reframe an unfounded criticism as behavior informing us of the state of mind of the sender. A helpful affirmation from an unknown author is: “If I am willing to look at another person’s behavior toward me as a reflection of the state of their relationship with themselves rather than as a statement about my value as a person, then I will, over a period to time, cease to react at all.” Another way we can protect our field is to step aside and allow the dart of criticism to fly past us as if on the wings of the wind. Jungian analyst Robert Johnson suggests we can refuse a criticism by being a good matador and letting the bull go by. One more way we protect our field is to be mindful not to be harshly critical of others and ourselves. Criticizing ourselves as leaders is as unnecessary and harmful as criticizing others. We do not love what and whom we criticize. Only a spiritually advanced soul can criticize with an absence of emotion and investment in outcome, with impersonality, and with loving recognition of limitation.

Projections of Dependence

As exemplified in the following story, energy drain can occur when an emotionally needy person projects a negative form of dependence onto a leader. I experienced this with Pamela, who repeatedly sought my consultation. Despite my help, Pamela did not improve and continued to seek support. My staff observed she would leave my office filled with light, while I looked pale and drained. I chose to view the feedback as irrelevant. My health began to suffer.

Later I understood that Pamela sought from me the love and energy her mother

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had not given her. She disowned her own authority by attaching the energy of “perfect parent” onto me as the leader. Unknown to me, she drew energy from my field to meet her emotional needs. I ignored the irritability and dis-ease I felt in her presence and discounted my intuition that I was not the appropriate helper for her.

The weak spot in my field triggered by Pamela’s projections related to an unconscious motive I had for helping others. I believed that to help others I had to sacrifice my own well-being for theirs. By giving them the energy they needed, i.e., my energy, I believed I earned the right to be loved by a punishing God. Consciously, I did not think I still believed in a punishing God. At an unconscious level, however, I was holding on to my early training in a fundamentalist religion and believed I needed to please God through good works. I gave away the energy of my personal field in my service rather than allow the ever-flowing energy of Source to flow through me. With the help of a mentor, I recognized I attracted people who were looking for someone who saw service in this way. I was advised that my physical health would be compromised if I continued misusing my energies and accepting Pamela’s negative projections of dependence. I terminated the relationship and referred Pamela to a therapist.

THE INTERNAL DANGERS OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders experience internal as well as external dangers. A leader’s inner vulnerabilities take the form of discouragement, isolation, and exhaustion. Internal dangers deplete the leader’s vital life energy and spawn thoughts of giving up and resigning. Whereas discouragement emerges from pressure to perform and from a failure to ask for help, isolation stems from sensitivity to leadership demands and from unmet needs for connection. Never-ending mental and emotional stress

leads to exhaustion. Leaders experiencing internal dangers can learn to seek counsel from their heart to determine the origin of their vulnerabilities and to discover the path to transcend them. Home to intuitive wisdom, the heart radiates courage, connection, and vital energy.

Discouragement

Discouragement occurs when we fall out of alignment with the stream of energy from our heart. Courage, derived from the French word *coeur*, meaning *heart*, is the mental and moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Courage gives us strength in times of opposition, danger, or hardship by allowing us to be resilient and firm of mind. Determined to achieve our goals, we persist and will not admit defeat.

When dis-couraged, we choose our mind over our heart and give others the power to define us. Our heart's strength and courage is adversely affected by the stress of relentless opposition of others to our leadership role. After an incident a few years ago in which a staff member vigorously opposed my role as leader, I spontaneously commented to a trusted friend that I had been "talked out of my heart" by this person. I had allowed another to steal my ideal to be a heart-centered leader.

Mark, a colleague who heads a consulting agency, had a recurring dream that illustrates the dangers of discouragement. A later dream guided him towards resolution.

Mark is teaching a group of unruly people who interrupt him and engage in conversation with fellow students. They ignore his attempts to bring order to the class. He persists in his attempts, shouting a demand for them to cooperate until he eventually awakens confused and discouraged.

One night, the same dream contained a turning point:

Mark tolerates the students' behaviors for a time. He then stands and announces, "I quit." As he walks out of the classroom, a student follows him and says, "There is one person in the group undermining you. This person's beliefs about you have affected all of us in the group."

The dreams made Mark consciously aware that he had not been able to resolve an organizational conflict concerning his authority at work. He felt inadequate and overwhelmed when dissension occurred. He became discouraged and quit his leadership classroom. The final dream acted like a great light in his inner darkness. He recognized the true cause of his discouragement—he believed he had to solve the problem alone, without assistance. With the remedy in clear view, Mark asked for help in identifying the interpersonal dynamics of the conflicted situation. He also sought regular guidance for his leadership from a mentor. The dream never recurred.

Leaders commonly feel discouraged when those they lead do not meet their expectations. Steve, director of a homeless shelter, spent endless hours facilitating the creation of a shared vision with a disinterested staff. He compensated for his unfulfilled mental and emotional expectations of the staff with self-pity, anger, and resentment. Defeated by his inability to inspire staff involvement, he began to experience sleeplessness and emotional strain. It took courage for him to accept the fruits of his leadership actions and decisions.

As leaders, we reconnect to courage when we listen to the silent voice of the heart and learn its language. With heroic discipline, we elevate our vision so we



As leaders, we reconnect to courage when we listen to the silent voice of the heart and learn its language. With heroic discipline, we elevate our vision so we can see the bigger picture and the greater good of the whole.

can see the bigger picture and the greater good of the whole. Heroic discipline helps us see a reality beyond discouragement. We release our hurt and resentment and reopen our hearts. Courage allows us to present ourselves in such a way that others can use us as a ladder to their growth and as a source of inspiration to transcend certain limitations in their lives. Our heart is in a communication line with the heart of the universe, and it is from this source that courage comes.

Isolation

Isolation occurs when as leaders, we do not sense a heart connection with others. Connection occurs when our heart is open. Our heart opens when we connect to its energies and radiate appreciation to those around us. We express positive heart feelings more frequently and hear our heart's intuition. We gain support from others as we share our heart energy. We are not alone.

Feelings of isolation arise easily in leadership situations because boundaries are needed to maintain authority and to hold the vision. We may discover, however, that few think and feel as we do and that others are not interested in knowing and understanding our inner reality as a leader and human being. When we dwell on our own needs and disappointments, we tend to close our hearts. Our mind reinforces the belief in separation and creates psychological isolation.

Loneliness is an illusion stemming from the belief that we are separate from the world of souls. Jeannette, director of a community dance studio, felt increasingly isolated from her students and their parents. The more isolated she felt, the more self-absorbed she became. The more self-preoccupied she became, the more she perceived others as not



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seeing her as a human being with feelings and vulnerabilities. Left unchecked, her isolation led to distorted perspectives, depression, and despair. She could not see the true picture of her situation in order to correct it. Her physical health suffered when her feelings of isolation continued over an extended period of time.

We can dispel the illusion of separation in leadership in four ways. First, we act as if we have a heart connection with others even while recognizing we do not feel its reality. Second, we identify a person in the room with a genuinely open face who conveys a connection with us. Third, we see each person from our heart and acknowledge his or her soul and humanity. Finally, we identify at least one person within our organization who understands our vulnerabilities as leader.

The energy of the heart melts our sense of separation and brings us closer to one another. When we look at the world and people through the heart's love and wisdom and not through emotions and feelings, we feel a kinship with humanity. We recognize we are not alone and have not been left comfortless.

Exhaustion

The greatest cause of low vitality and fatigue for leaders is emotional and mental dis-ease. Ease occurs when we learn to rest our body, thoughts, and feelings. Rest, an essential ingredient in the recipe of a life, provides us with energy and vitality. Tiredness, not exhaustion, is a natural state after a day of activity. Our goal is to have vital energy during the day and peaceful sleep at night.

How we manage emotions, especially anxieties, determines how much vitality or fatigue we experience as a leader. Chaotic emotions cause energy drain. Jack, chair of a committee to improve the city's water supply, frittered away his vital energy through self-judgment and emotional insecurity. Unable to convince the

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community bureaucracy of the need for a new reservoir, he became frustrated and overwhelmed. His relentless emotional energy drain created fatigue and diminished his ability to be present during meetings. He was only half there for the committee members and the community he served.

Irritation, anxiety, fear, dread, and blame are emotional pollutants that leave us susceptible to fatigue and disease. They interfere with access to inner wisdom and to the true picture of what is happening in our leadership. The mind tells us to push on, while the body and emotions say stop. Unable to see beyond our own complaints, we easily fall into self-pity, negativity, and discouragement. Overwork,



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lack of sleep, and poor diet further compromise our vitality.

Healing exhaustion begins with healing the heart. We ask the heart to help us learn emotional management and how to balance and recharge our vitality. The heart helps us note the times, circumstances, and emotional responses that give us more energy. The heart tells us when our pace is too fast. We learn to periodically focus in our heart during each day and become present to ourselves and to others. When we make a sincere effort to maintain heart awareness, we can stay conscious of our energy levels and make needed adjustments to sustain our vitality. We nourish and regenerate our emotions and our physical body through exercise or a brisk walk in the fresh air. We have energy to communicate, relate, and enjoy our day. We do not slip into emotions that rob us of our vitality.

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As a conduit of divine energy, our healed heart emanates health, joy, and endurance in our leadership. In the midst of any leadership storm, we can call on our connection to the heart and anchor our reality in a safe harbor of vital energy.

SELF-EFFORT AND BENEFICENT SUPPORT FOR LEADERS

We can use a leadership classroom to purify obstacles to soul growth. Situations involving external dangers of negative projections, betrayal, and criticism illuminate obstacles to be burned away. As obstacles dissolve, we free ourselves to grow. Our internal dangers of discouragement, isolation, and exhaustion decrease, and we move a step closer to fulfilling our role as leader. Self-effort and beneficent support are antidotes to external and internal dangers that repair, balance, and protect our energy fields. Antidotes include intuition, doing inner work, receiving bodywork, embracing synchronicity, appreciating beauty, developing courage, learning to use true analytical insight, accepting beneficent feedback, and having a spiritual practice.



In the Western world, we are taught to give the head and the intellect precedence over the heart and intuition.

When we discount the knowing of our intuitive heart, we deny the voice of wisdom.

- ◆ *Developing our intuition is an antidote for discouragement and for sensing and protecting ourselves from negative projections.*

Our intuition arises when we ask our heart for help. In a state of peace and balance, intuition comes to us through images, feelings, or thoughts. Sometimes we receive intuitive impressions through whispers, the quiet feelings we barely notice.

In the Western world, we are taught to give the head and the intellect prece-

dence over the heart and intuition. When we discount the knowing of our intuitive heart, we deny the voice of wisdom. Theresa convinced herself of the unimportance of warnings about Jim's behavior. I overrode my intuitive whispers about Pamela with rational thought.

- ◆ *Inner work provides the greatest protection against negative projections.*

Through inner work, we explore our life patterns, habits of thought, and reactions, and discover our strengths and resources. Some of the inner work approaches I used when addressing boundary and relationship issues with Pamela were journaling, dream work, emotional processing, and dialoguing with different parts of my psyche. Faithfully attending to our inner work allows us to attain wholeness.



*Appreciating beauty
provides an antidote
for both inner and
outer dangers.*

- ◆ *Seeking energy work to balance our energy field prevents damage from exhaustion and from negative projections.*

Once the projections have penetrated our field, skilled energy workers, such as the energy healer who helped Theresa, can rebalance our field and make corrective adjustments. Our energy field maintains balance when we practice care of the self on all levels—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Playfulness and being in nature also help balance our field.

When we do not carry negative emotions or thoughts ourselves, protection from negative projections from others is easier to attain. Fears, for example, lead to weakness and weakness leads to the disintegration of our energy field, producing a weak spot or gap. Our energy field is protected when our consciousness is fearless. Regular energy work is important for the overall well-being of a leader.

THE AWAKENED LEADER

- ◆ *Embracing synchronicity also protects leaders from negative projections and from feelings of isolation.*

Synchronicity, a natural flow of energy, takes the form of a seeming coincidence. All animate and inanimate beings and objects connect in a meaningful way at the level of the collective unconscious. Synchronicity illustrates that minds are joined; we are not separated and isolated from one another in the world. Synchronicity provides us with guidance, comfort, and healing, and works even when we do not consciously recognize it. The more we align with this connectedness, the more synchronistic events appear in our leadership. We experience synchronicity as paths of opportunity that open easily. A silent yet powerful force supports us in our leadership. Sensing this, others select themselves as our followers.

In Theresa's crisis with Jim, synchronicity took the form of the unexpected when a stranger gave her the name of the energy healer and a dream foretold the nature of the inner journey before her and promised support. Through synchronicity, we are given necessary knowledge and understanding for our well-being and for the successful evolution of our leadership. We learn we are not isolated and alone when we recognize the universe helps us by providing the right amount of help in the right way for the right reason at the right time and in the right place.

- ◆ *Appreciating beauty provides an antidote for both inner and outer dangers.*

The regenerative and healing influence of beauty is expressed in many forms, from the music of Mozart to the shores of the Pacific to the sweet face of a newborn child. Beauty sinks into our unconsciousness, stimulates our memory, and awakens us to the sacredness of life and its symbols. Beauty holds a promise of enticing us out of our darkness into a realm of vitality, compassion, and transcendence. Beauty catapults us out of our contracted sphere of experience and into a

universal place where all is well and right in our world. Our unknown realities and potential can be revealed through an experience of beauty.

In *The Republic*, Plato writes, “The aim of all education is to teach us to love beauty.” Seeing leadership as a beautiful, creative art form is healing. If leadership can educate our soul, then it can surely teach us to love beauty. We can wed the outer realities of our leadership with the inner journey of our soul. I sometimes imagine I am painting or sculpting my leadership life. At other times, I feel more as if I am composing a symphony or conducting a philharmonic orchestra. My inner strength expands and flows when I wed leadership with beauty.

◆ *Developing courage is a matter for the heart and serves as an antidote for the internal dangers of discouragement and its companion symptoms of isolation and exhaustion.*

Because the heart is where we go when the mind has no answers, we must engage heart intelligence to move through a crisis in our leadership. The heart has the capacity to reveal the cause of the crisis and can show us the path to take to find its resolution. New understanding emerges as we learn how to manage our emotions with the heart and access its intuition and wisdom.

Many spiritual traditions have long acknowledged the subtle workings of the heart. Today, science confirms the neurological connection between the heart and brain and verifies that head/heart coherence enhances powers of creativity, intuition, and wisdom. Ways to cultivate heart consciousness are found in metaphysical literature, especially in the writings of Torkom Saraydarian and Joseph Chilton Pearce. Based on their recent findings in neurocardiological research, the Institute of HeartMath in Boulder Creek, California, has developed methods to help individuals establish head/heart coherence. Those who use these methods experience significant improvement in physical and emotional health.

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- ◆ *Learning to use true analytical insight is an important antidote to the negative projection of criticism.*

When we use analytical insight, we can explain why something is incorrect with a calm tone and without mixing emotions with explanations. Our unwillingness to do harm, engender fear, or experience bitterness frees us to support the group members in learning the lesson of cooperation. A sense of humor, laughing at ourselves and with the world, and “sitting light in the saddle” carries us through difficulties with ease. Silence and reflection for the leader and the group, according to Alice Bailey, releases them from criticism and preoccupation with the activities or motives of others. Saraydarian adds that condemning others can impede the leader’s progress. He suggests leaders not point out mistakes or try to correct the person who makes a mistake if doing so will damage a good relationship, sup-



*Beneficent feedback can emanate from unseen sources at levels
other than physical reality.*

press the worker’s creativity, or create a reaction. Leaders who serve with a sense of beauty, efficiency, directness, and sincerity can eliminate many of the negative elements in the workplace.

- ◆ *Accepting beneficent feedback is an antidote that removes our sense of isolation and assures our protection from negative projections.*

Feedback from the universe helps us correct our assumptions and misperceptions. Such feedback is impersonal and informs leaders of the truth beneath words and behaviors. Correctly understood, feedback saves a leader time, energy, and

heartache. One way to experience beneficent feedback is to seek out at least one person in our work life who offers us unconditional support. Bryan Smith and Charlotte Roberts, in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, refer to this person as a “partner,” one who serves as a “sounding board, colleague, and personal consultant.” Without such a supporter and confidante, we may be tempted to lower our vision, withdraw, or feel isolated when faced with stress, emotional tension, resistance, and hostility. We also might deny that our stress is significant enough to impact our well-being. Although we can reduce stress through meditation or exercise, we also need a trustworthy person from whom we receive unconditional and loving feedback.

Trusted mentors can also give beneficent feedback. In the midst of a painful leadership crisis, my mentor explained that the situation occurred because I had abdicated my leadership. Because he spoke in an impersonal, accepting, and loving tone, I recognized his feedback as the truth beyond appearances. I knew instantly how I could move the situation toward resolution.

Beneficent feedback can emanate from unseen sources at levels other than physical reality. When asking for help from unseen realms, we state an intention that the right form of help will come to us at the right time for the good of our soul and for the souls with whom we work. Metaphysical levels of feedback come from spiritual teachers, spirit guides, dreams, and our inner voice. Authentic beings from the unseen realms offer support and protection that does not impose itself on our integrity and choices. They offer help by sending or suggesting thoughts and ideas. They make it clear, however, that we are to check these thoughts and ideas using our intuition and reason to determine their usefulness. Help from beyond is offered with an attitude of invitation and consideration. We are free to accept or reject the help. Unseen helpers never suggest ideas or actions that would cause psychological, physical, or spiritual harm to others or ourselves. They discourage blame, justification, and victimization and place emphasis on compassion, right

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action, and true understanding. Unseen helpers provide a universal philosophical context in which to view our experiences of life on earth.

- ◆ *Having a spiritual practice protects leaders from negative projections and serves as a conduit for courage, energy, and connection.*

Through meditation, prayer, and contemplation, we align ourselves with the unchanging and eternal qualities of Source. This alignment fills our spiritual vessel and supports our ability to lead with equipoise in all that we think, do, and say. A steady mind and balanced energy field help protect us from personal attacks.

When we are buffeted by our reactions to circumstances, our energy field becomes unbalanced and chaotic. We lose our alignment with the energy of Source and become vulnerable to negative projections. Making wise decisions in this state is nearly impossible. A daily spiritual practice assures us that we are not left comfortless or without help and guidance during times of challenge.

Practices of protection of the energy field, such as invoking spiritual guides and surrounding ourselves in divine light, are helpful. While visualizing myself in the center of this light, I often use this simple prayer of protection: *Light above me. Light below me. Light around me. Light within me. Light cleanse and protect me. I am Light. Light I am.*

CONCLUSION

Despite the very real internal and external dangers of leadership, leaders thrive when they receive beneficent support and engage in self-effort. Beneficent support from intuition, dreams, synchronicity, and mentors provides guidance and protection. Self-effort allows leaders to take responsibility and control over their circumstances. By adopting physical, psychological, and spiritual strategies for protec-

DANGERS AND BENEFICENT PROTECTION

tion, healing, and inner strength, leaders are able to sustain their spirit through challenging times. As positive interactions with others increase, joy becomes an integral part of their leadership and the organizations they lead.

Reflection

What dangers and beneficent protection have I experienced in my role as leader?

What have I learned from these experiences?

How have they impacted my understanding of those I lead?