

# HEALTHY LEADERSHIP



## How to Thrive in the New World of Work *an actionable guide for leaders*

From the bestselling authors of  
*Sticking to It: Mastering the Art of Adherence*

Lee J. Colan  
Julie Davis-Colan

## Praise for *Healthy Leadership*

“*Healthy Leadership* perfectly captures the leader of the future, and how you can become the executive your team and company need. Filled with practical and actionable tools to get started with today, this book will revolutionize your work, career, and life!”

**Dr. Marshall Goldsmith**

*Thinkers50* #1 Executive Coach and New York Times best-selling author of *Triggers*, *Mojo*, and *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*

“The principles and practices of *Healthy Leadership* come down to a simple truth I’ve been talking about for years: It’s not about you—it’s about the people you serve. Lee and Julie have created a hands-on guidebook to help you become the kind of leader people are searching for right now. If you believe Healthy Leadership matters in today’s workplace, read this book!”

**Ken Blanchard**

Coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager*<sup>®</sup> and *Simple Truths of Leadership*

“At Edward Jones, we ask our associates to lead with courage in ways that are purpose-driven and leader-led. *Healthy Leadership* is about what it takes to help high-performing teams feel supported and succeed in serving their clients, colleagues, and communities. It’s how to lead with purpose.”

**Penny Pennington**  
Managing Partner, Edward Jones

“*Healthy Leadership* is like Google maps for today’s leader. It’s a trusted guide for leading in a new world of work. The starting point is where you are today. The destination is a win for everyone involved – the leader, the team, and the business.”

**Daniel L. Jones**  
Chairman & CEO, Encore Wire

“Lee and Julie’s insights are always so valuable due to extensive research and work with companies of all sizes. Applying the concepts and tools from *Healthy Leadership* will help your company cement a healthy culture that will make your team members stay and thrive.”

**Valerie Freeman**  
CEO, Imprimis Group, Inc.

“The world of work has clearly changed. This excellent book is a practical guide for leaders who want to thrive in this new world, to be a positive force for good. *Healthy leadership* will change your business!”

**Frank Dulcich**  
Chairman & CEO, Pacific Seafood Group

“In *Healthy Leadership*, Lee and Julie emphasize how healthy leadership is about healthy relationships with everyone we interact with in life. We must invest in our relationships and should celebrate them along the way. Well worth investing your time reading their new book! There are many concepts for you to apply in your daily life.”

**Bill Dyer**  
CEO, Standard Nutrition

“Lee and Julie are dynamic and visionary thought leaders. More importantly, they have hearts for helping others succeed and making meaningful contributions while leading significant lives. Their new book, *Healthy Leadership*, creates a real synergy with people, the organizations they choose to work for, and then decide to stay and grow with.”

**Denis G. Simon**  
Senior Executive Vice President, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

“*Healthy Leadership* concisely outlines the mindset and actions for successful leadership of today’s workforce. The authors’ unique combination of practical science, engaging stories, and proven tools equips the reader to elevate his/her leadership game.”

**Jeanne Mason**  
Sr. Vice President, Human Resources, Baxter International Inc.

“In applying the concept of health to leadership, Lee and Julie provide a powerful framework for growth at every level. *Healthy Leadership* provides a powerful reminder to the enduring power of love, positivity, growth, clarity, connection, and coaching.”

**Raanan Horowitz**  
President and CEO, Elbit America

“*Healthy Leadership* is the most deliberate and practical book I have read on the contemporary requirements for being an impactful leader. It will help leaders and organizations grow and compete in the future. Most writings on this subject are long and theoretical, but this book is concise and gets right to the point on how to be a healthy leader.”

**Dave Loeser**  
Founder, FutureSolve

“*Healthy Leadership* is an excellent read for leaders who desire to lead with purpose. It’s filled with practical tools to help leaders empower their teams to experience monumental professional growth and give their best work back to the organization. Applying its principles and practices will make your organization a sought-after place for people to work and thrive.”

**Sarah Shadonix**  
Founder and CEO, Scout & Cellar

“*Healthy Leadership* is a timely guide that equips leaders to elevate others. That starts with healthy principles that fulfill the needs of today’s worker and practices that engage and encourage people. This book helps leaders transform themselves, their teams, and their organizations.”

**Paul R. Hays**  
CEO, Med-Pharmex, Inc.

“In a world where distancing has become the norm, *Healthy Leadership* brings back the importance of human connection to drive successful leadership. It’s a practical guide that equips leaders with the emotional skills to engage, encourage, and motivate their teams. *Healthy Leadership* is a wonderful addition to my collection of the Colans’ books.”

**Thomas Vanderheyden**  
Vice President, Global Sales, Advanced Energy Industries, Inc.

## **Additional Titles by the Authors**

*The Power of Positive Coaching*

*The 5 Coaching Habits of Excellent Leaders*

*Stick with It: Mastering the Art of Adherence*

*Engaging the Hearts and Minds of All Your Employees*

*Orchestrating Attitude: Getting the Best from Yourself and Others*

*7 Moments . . . That Define Excellent Leaders*

*Leadership Matters: Daily Insights to Inspire Extraordinary Results*

*Power Exchange:*

*Boosting Accountability and Performance in Today's Workforce*

*107 Ways to Stick to It:*

*Practical Tips to Achieve the Success You Deserve*

*Inspire! Connecting with Students to Make a Difference*

*The Nature of Excellence*

*Winners Always Quit:*

*Seven Pretty Good Habits You Can Swap for Really Great Results*

*Getting the BEST from Yourself and Others*

*Passionate Performance:*

*Engaging Hearts and Minds to Conquer the Competition*

*Sticking to It: The Art of Adherence*

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# Leading in Today's World of Work

**S**omething is healthy when it is in an optimal state of well-being. We strive for healthy relationships, a healthy diet, a healthy body, a healthy mind, healthy emotions, healthy perspectives, healthy conversation, healthy awareness, and healthy finances. With all this focus on healthy everything, we asked, “What about healthy leadership?” There are far too many examples of destructive, *un*healthy leadership. Yet in today’s world of work, if you want to be competitive, understanding and applying the principles and practices of healthy leadership is key.

Healthy leadership focuses on the health and growth of all parties: the leader, the team, and the business.

If the team thrives, so does the business and everyone it serves. In other words, healthy leadership drives healthy growth for all stakeholders. Cultivating healthy leadership is not automatic. It doesn’t just happen on its own. It is a *choice*. If you choose to apply the actionable strategies and tools we share in the pages ahead, you will predictably reap rewards that include:

- A purpose-driven organization and team members;
- A culture that is safe and innovative and makes team members want to stay;

- Intellectually and emotionally engaged teams;
- Team members working in their gifted areas who flourish;
- Excellent execution that drives healthy results.

Healthy leadership matters because unusually high-performing teams are the ultimate advantage for any organization—a business, a nonprofit, a sports team, or a family for that matter. In today's ultra-competitive marketplace, good results just aren't good enough. Innovative or unique products or services might get you into the game, but only your team can create a “wall” that is too high and difficult for your competitors to climb. To win, you need to produce extraordinary results, which only come from extraordinary teams. And where there is an extraordinary team, you can bet there is a healthy leader. That's why leadership—specifically, *your* leadership—matters.

Research bears this out. In fact, according to one study, up to 70 percent of variance in an organization's performance is attributable to leadership behavior.<sup>1</sup> Nothing has a bigger impact on organizational success than leadership—not culture, strategy, processes, or incentive systems.<sup>2</sup> The single most important factor influencing the growth of your company is *how you lead*.

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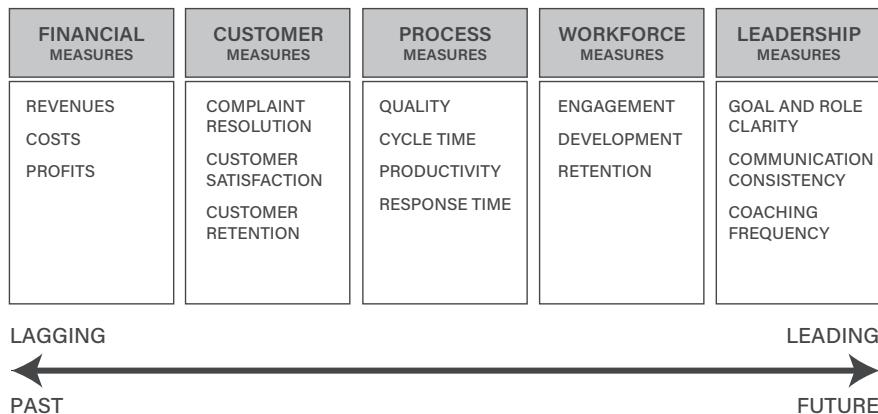
*Grow yourself, grow your people, grow your business.*

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## **Leadership as a Leading Indicator**

Consider a measurement continuum. At one end are *lagging indicators*. These are the results of your team's past performance. They enable you to see if your activities produced the desired outcomes. At the other end of

the continuum are *leading indicators*. These are the drivers of your team's future performance. They provide early warning signs of problems that might appear on the horizon. This continuum illustrates how leadership acts as the most crucial leading indicator of sustained, healthy growth:



Economic and competitive pressures compel many leaders to focus on lagging indicators, typically financial ones. Of course, it's important to consider lagging indicators to know how well you have performed in the past. However, you must be careful not to neglect leading indicators, since you want to be able to predict how your organization will perform six, nine, or twelve months from now. A singular focus on lagging indicators gives you little opportunity for corrective action if your team drifts off course. Healthy leaders look at both lagging and leading indicators, which allows them to connect the past and the future and to paint a more complete picture of team health.

## Today's Employee Priorities

Healthy leadership is more vital today than ever because peoples' relationship to work has changed, and so has the nature of work itself. Expansive

research by Gallup clearly shows that today's worker is more purpose-driven, development-oriented, and focused on strengths.<sup>3</sup>

**Purpose over paycheck.** Your team members don't just work for a paycheck—they want meaning. They want to work for organizations with a compelling purpose. Compensation is important and must be fair, but it's rarely the sole driver of career choices. And Ping-Pong tables, cappuccino machines, free snacks, and such are not strong motivators, either. The emphasis for today's team member has switched from paycheck to purpose, and so must your leadership approach.

**Development over satisfaction.** Today's employees are not pursuing mere job satisfaction. They strive for development—both personal and professional, which are increasingly inseparable. They want self-growth and a position in an enterprise that is itself growing—so that they can contribute to it and be part of its story. As a result, they don't want bosses. They want *coaches*. They want someone in their corner who values them as both a person and an employee—someone who helps them understand and cultivate their strengths.

**Strengths over weaknesses.** Today's team members don't want to focus on fixing their weaknesses; rather, they want your help in building their strengths. Weaknesses rarely, if ever, transform into strengths, while strengths can develop infinitely. Leaders should not ignore weaknesses but instead put employees in positions to maximize strengths. This benefits both the individual and the organization.

This new healthy leadership model benefits leaders at every level, and everyone they work with. It matters in an up economy or a down economy, in a start-up or a mature business, a local company or a global enterprise. It matters when you are in the boardroom and when you are in the break room. Leadership matters . . . and healthy leadership inspires everyone to thrive.

*To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace.*

—DOUG CONANT,  
former CEO, Campbell Soup Company,  
and former Chairman, Avon Products

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## Principles and Practices

Healthy leadership addresses human needs—it's personal. This new approach to leadership is comprised of three principles and three practices that are no longer just nice to do in today's new world of work. Healthy leadership is like a cultural magnet that attracts people to your team and the cultural glue that makes them want to stay. If today's workers don't see healthy leadership, they will look for it elsewhere.

Healthy leadership is not about the leader, but it starts with the leader. It's about the people you serve. As a leader, when you help others grow, you grow—and growing people fuel growing, healthy organizations. The healthy leader's success is measured in what others achieve—the leader's impact is multiplied through others.

The three healthy leadership principles and definitions are:

**Love:** Do what is in the best interest of others.

**Positivity:** Manage negative emotions and increase positive ones.

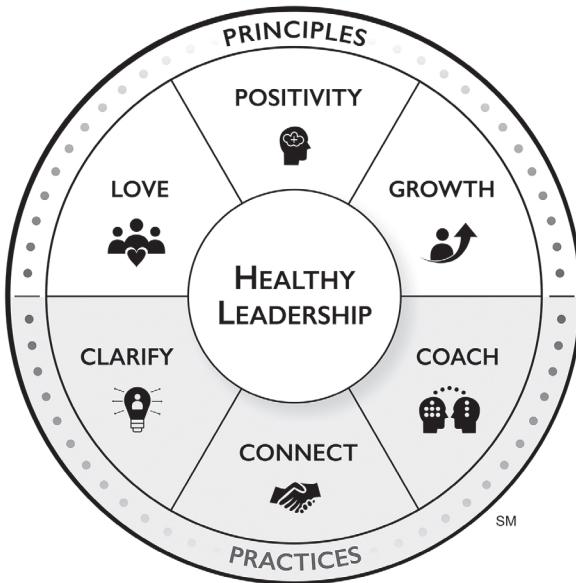
**Growth:** Seek new insights, knowledge, and skills.

The three healthy leadership practices and definitions are:

**Clarify:** Crystalize a desired future and motivation to get there.

**Connect:** Build ties between work and human needs.

**Coach:** Unlock the potential in others.



The three healthy leadership principles are like an operating system. In fact, let's call them *PrinciplesOS*. This operating system supports the “apps” of healthy leadership—the practices. Your ability to implement the principles of love, positivity, and growth will either enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of your apps—healthy leadership practices of clarify, connect, and coach. The alignment between principles and practices is key, particularly with today’s worker, who deeply values authenticity and integrity.

In our work with clients for over 23 years, we have witnessed firsthand how these principles and practices enable leaders to inspire growth for all parties in our new, rapidly evolving world of work. Principles and practices that distinguished great leaders yesterday are basic requirements today. Challenges around sustained remote work and employees’ desire to see the human behind the leader are forcing leaders to elevate their games to be more human, more connected, clearer, and more positive.

In this actionable guide, we will share the art and science of healthy leadership. The art comes into play in how you choose to authentically adapt these tools to your unique style and your team's unique needs. The science comes into play by understanding universal human dynamics and insights about behavior and how our brains work, then applying proven tools to get the best from yourself and those you are leading.

Healthy leadership is a process, not an event. To get in good physical shape, you must exercise each day, but you don't exactly know when you'll see results. You must trust the process. Let's start working your leadership muscle and address the three healthy leadership principles and practices to help you and your team thrive.

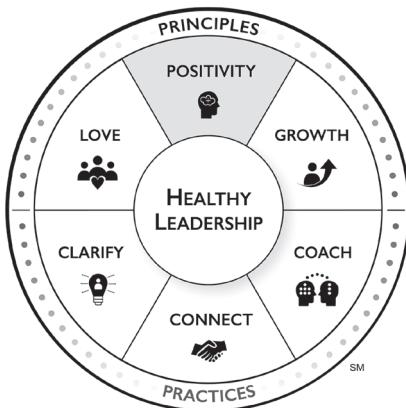


*You can have everything in life you want,  
if you will help enough other people get what they want.*

—ZIG ZIGLAR,  
American author and motivational speaker

## POSITIVITY

Manage negative emotions and increase positive ones



When Sara was a student, she was a terrible test-taker and had a very hard time retaining what she read. At 16 years old, her parents separated, and she lost a close friend who was run over by a car while they were riding bikes together. This trauma, coupled with Sara's learning struggles, created intense emotional and academic obstacles during high school. At one point, Sara's dad handed Sara a set of cassette tapes by Dr. Wayne Dyer called *How to Be a No-Limit Person*. Dyer talked about things like the power of positivity, the ability to visualize and manifest what you want in life, how to embrace failure, and how to train your brain to respond to life's challenges in a way that propels you forward instead of holding you back. In short, mindset.<sup>1</sup>

Upon entering the world as an adult, Sara knew what she wanted to do with her life: become an attorney like her father. So, she did what all aspiring lawyers must do after college: take the LSAT. Unfortunately, she did very poorly on her first attempt. Yet she was undeterred. Her father had raised her to see failure as an opportunity to learn from past mistakes and do better in the future, which is what she planned to do. She signed up for a prep class, studied even harder, took the test, and did even worse the second time.

Sara stepped away from her dream of becoming a lawyer. Even so, she didn't stop dreaming about a great career, though her life certainly wasn't turning out to be the success story she had imagined. After a short-lived job as a chipmunk at Disney World, she got a job selling fax machines. Going door-to-door, trying to convince strangers to listen to her sales pitch, was no walk in the park. Doors were slammed in her face, sometimes she broke down in tears, and a few times the police were even called on her. But still, she didn't give up. She understood that she could benefit from these seemingly negative experiences. She knew she could control how she thought about the challenges she faced. As she later remembered, "During my fax-selling stint, I would spend much of my free time trying to figure out what I really wanted out of life and what my strengths were. I knew I was good at selling and that I eventually wanted to be self-employed. I thought, instead of fax machines, I'd love to sell something that I create and actually care about."<sup>2</sup>

And that's just what she did. After seven years selling fax machines, Sara realized that women needed a better kind of "shapewear" than old-fashioned stockings. So, she founded her own company, Spanx, and used the sales skills she'd honed going door to door to sell her products. This is how Sara Blakely became the self-made billionaire she is today. And she credits this incredible success in large part to what her father taught her about the power of positivity. As Blakely puts it, "I'm now the founder and

CEO of Spanx, a company I built from scratch with \$5,000 in savings. It wasn't because I aced all my classes in school—it was because I studied the art of mindset.”<sup>3</sup>

Positivity changes us for the better, and it builds psychological strengths. Research shows that people who experience more positivity become more optimistic, open, and driven by a sense of purpose. Positivity further helps to build good mental habits and spurs people to find multiple pathways toward a goal or through a problem. Even an individual's resilience is improved with positivity because people can bounce back from challenges more quickly. Positivity also helps people create and strengthen social connections. It leads you to build more and better relationships. Finally, positivity improves physical health by reducing stress hormones and increasing brain chemicals that result in decreased inflammation and improved immune functioning.<sup>4</sup> Positivity is medicine for our minds, bodies, and lives.

## **Leader as Light**

All living organisms move toward things that are life-sustaining and away from those that are life depleting. We see this in action when the plant on our windowsill moves toward the sunlight. Light activates chemical reactions in plants and people that generate life-giving energy. This movement toward light is called the heliotropic effect.<sup>5</sup>

It's a good bet that most if not all of the best leaders in your life have filled you with positive energy and emotions. Healthy leaders act in ways that draw people to them, such as inspiring others, showing integrity, and being genuine in their interactions and relationships. Healthy leaders supply light so that teams can ultimately shine on their own. Employees who work for healthy leaders tend to be more engaged in their work, have an improved sense of well-being, and are more innovative.<sup>6</sup>

Let's look at how you can increase positivity by managing your mind, talking yourself up, and encouraging others.

## Manage Your Mind

Your mind can be your best friend or your worst enemy. It can liberate you or imprison you. We know more than ever that how we think and feel directly affects our brain and body. Effective mind management supports sound mental and physical health. Your intangible mind, which includes thoughts and emotions, changes your tangible brain. To better manage your mind, let's first get a better understanding of how the brain works.

The human brain is the most complex three pounds in the universe. Picture one of those airline flight route maps with a massive web that connects hundreds of points of destination. It is a blur of lines going every which direction. Now, multiply that image by one billion and you are starting to get close to what your vast neural network looks like. The human brain contains approximately 128 billion neurons. Each neuron is connected to 10,000 others. It's quite a map. Brain-imaging research has proven that the brain is neuroplastic, meaning it can change and grow new neural connections. With repetition, your thoughts that fire together get wired together. To change your mind, you need to change your emotions and thoughts. First, let's look at emotions.

When experiencing an emotion, it physiologically lasts for around 90 seconds. However, we often feel it much longer as we ruminate over, or replay, that emotion. For example, if a big project at work goes poorly, you experience the disappointing emotion in that moment. The experience itself is over, but you might continue thinking about it for days, weeks, months, or even years. Your rumination is creating a stronger neural connection associated with that situation. Your negative emotions also limit possibilities you see.<sup>7</sup> When we are enraged, frustrated, or overwhelmed, our peripheral vision narrows, along with our cognitive vision. Just think

of a time when you felt really overwhelmed with a project at work. The brain's natural reaction to this negative feeling was to become narrower and more focused. When filled with negative emotion, we tend to see fewer options or solutions.

To help manage your negative emotions, begin with a practice Dr. Dan Siegel, clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, calls "name it to tame it." The act of noticing and identifying the emotion helps to create some distance between the emotion and the intense feelings that accompany it. Doing so allows you to pause and use your breath to help calm your physiology. According to David Rock, co-founder and CEO of the NeuroLeadership Institute, you can reduce stress by up to 50 percent by simply noticing and naming your emotional state.<sup>8</sup> Ensure that you express the emotion as a passing feeling, not a defined state. For example, instead of saying, "I am sad" (a defined state), a better option is to say, "I feel sad" (a fleeting emotion).

Positive emotions help you see opportunities for growth and improvement, as demonstrated by psychology professor and researcher Barbara Fredrickson's "broaden and build theory." Positive emotions facilitate clear thinking about options and enable us to be creative, playful, and curious.<sup>9</sup> Simply recalling a joyful memory or receiving a small gift can make a difference in your ability to develop creative solutions to daily challenges we face. In fact, Cornell University scientists studied how physicians diagnosed a patient with liver disease by having him think aloud so they could hear their reasoning and the alternatives they considered. When physicians were given a small gift—a bag of candy—those physicians were better at integrating case information. They were also less likely to fixate on their initial ideas and develop a premature diagnosis.<sup>10</sup> So, whether you make a nice gesture or give a small gift, creating positive emotions can serve you well during your next doctor's appointment or any other meeting you have.

## **Mental Framing Tools**

You can go three weeks without food, three days without water, and three minutes without oxygen. But you can't go three seconds without a thought.<sup>11</sup> In fact, we average 30,000 to 50,000 thoughts per day. With all of this unceasing mental activity between your ears, what do you do with negative thoughts that inevitably pop into your mind? The key to changing thoughts is to replace them with others, since you can't just force a negative thought out of your mind. Ask yourself, "Is this thought serving me?" If not, shifting perspectives is an effective strategy. Let's explore two tools to help shift your perspective.

First, take a third-party perspective by giving yourself advice as if you were a good friend. Begin by using your own name. For example, say to yourself, "Julie, all your past experiences tell me that you will do a great job with this upcoming board meeting. You have done this 100 times. You've got this!" This creates psychological distance between you and the situation to help you see it more clearly, while keeping it personal by using your own name.

The second tool is "mental time travel." This helps put your thoughts into perspective by reflecting on how you will feel about the situation you currently face in one week, one month, one year. Will it still feel like such a big deal in the future? This allows your brain to simulate the healing power of time and gain the bigger perspective that it provides. As a result, you can feel more positive emotions. This expands your ability to see more options through the wisdom of future perspective, which in turn can help you deal with the current setback. Mental framing tools help us create time and space between the situation and ourselves, so we can shift perspectives and consider more solutions.<sup>12</sup>

*Nothing in the world is good or bad, but you make it so.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
from *Hamlet*

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## Talk Yourself Up

You talk more to yourself than to anyone else in the world. You are the only one who is with you 100 percent of the time. The conversations you have with yourself have an overwhelmingly high impact on your mindset compared to conversations with others. If you are not your biggest cheerleader, you might just be your biggest enemy.

To better understand the tone of your inner dialogues, begin by asking yourself, “Would I talk to my best friend the way I talk to myself?” or “Am I giving the support, confidence, and hope to myself that I give to others?” Most people realize that they are much harder on themselves than others. If you talked to others the way you talk to yourself, your friendships would change, and you would likely have fewer friends. Instead, Julie gives herself real high fives. She says, “Good job, Jules!” and slaps her palms together high in the air to reinforce self-positivity, congratulating herself for a job well done, from the outcome of a coaching discussion to finishing the laundry. A simple high five can help with self-motivation and positively affect your self-evaluation.<sup>12</sup> Cheer for yourself the way you would for your favorite sports team or your child during a competitive event. You are always with yourself, so encouragement and affirmation are always options for your internal conversations . . . if you choose.

In the face of challenging circumstances (and we all have our share), the words you choose for that conversation with yourself will directly impact how long you will find yourself in those situations. Use your words to change your situation, not to describe it. The moment you speak

something—good or bad—you give birth to it as an idea, an expectation, or a desire. By controlling what you say and how you say it—using positive words with enthusiasm—you help to change your physical and mental state.

We remember the year we started our business. We spent a lot of time talking ourselves up. Like most start-up businesses, we had our share of challenges, disappointments, and adjustments. We recall many well-intended friends asking, “Hey, how’s your business coming along?” We could have described our situation by saying, “Gee, it’s been a tough year. We have had to really dig into our savings to keep things going and it’s been a lot harder than we thought it would be to convert existing business relationships into paying customers. Also, it’s a lot more work than we thought it would be.” That type of response would not only drag our friends down, it would have also planted the seeds of doom for our business. Instead, we chose to use words to change our situation. We talked ourselves up in response to friends’ inquiries. We reframed our situation and said things like, “We feel good about our prospects and are confident that we are doing the right things that will pay off long-term. Most importantly, we are passionate about our work, and that’s a victory.” Our words planted the seeds of the success that was to come. Tell people how you *want* to feel, and it won’t be long before you do.

You can also choose your words to reframe your perspective. Small words can change the way we see the world and can even be mind-changing. For example, think of something you *have to* do today. Maybe you have to take out the trash, you have to recruit a new team member, or you have to make an important presentation to a customer. Now, whatever it is you *have to* do, reframe it as something you *get to* do. So now, you get to take out the trash, you get to recruit a new team member, or you get to make an important presentation to a customer. How does changing one word change your perspective? If you are like most people, it turns an obligation (*have to*) into appreciation (*get to*). When thinking about “getting to” do

something, your mind becomes filled with gratitude (a positive emotion). You can quickly think through all the reasons that you are fortunate to “get to” do something that you either took for granted or disliked doing. A one-word difference can change your perspective and your world.

## **Encourage Others**

Although it’s an ambitious goal to change the world as a whole, we often underestimate our singular power to positively change the world for those around us. While we might not all be Gandhi, Mother Teresa, or Martin Luther King, Jr., each of us has the power to change someone’s world with the gift of encouragement. Whether it’s a conversation with an employee, colleague, boss, friend, or relative, or simply placing an order at a restaurant, every word makes a difference. The results of our interactions are rarely neutral; they are almost always positive or negative. Ask yourself, “Do my words, energy, and body language reflect my desire to encourage others and be a positive influence?”

Your words create your world. Humans are unique in that we can comfort each other with words. A compliment at the end of a hard day can calm you down while a hateful word from someone can cause your brain to think there is a threat, thus stimulating negative emotions. Words do not even have to be spoken to have an impact. Text messages can change a person’s heart rate, breathing, and metabolism. Words have a physical effect on your body because various brain regions that process language also control major organs and regulatory systems.<sup>14</sup>

Words can create a lasting impact. They change not just how we feel but what we see as possible for our lives. In fact, a Korn Ferry Institute study found that 65 percent of female CEOs from large companies only realized they could attain that position after someone told them they could.<sup>15</sup> Knowing that words can have such life-changing power, it’s interesting to learn that the English language contains 62 percent negative emotional

words and only 38 percent positive emotional words. So, choose your words carefully. The English language stacks the deck toward negativity. You must intentionally choose your words to be a positive force for your team.

## Share Strength Stories

One exercise that encourages you and others is to share “strength stories.” During strength stories, team members share a verbal narrative about a time when they were at their very best. Have them conjure details of that time: what they were doing, who they were interacting with, what they accomplished, and how they felt. As each person shares their story, observe the joy they express and the joy that others feel as they listen to the story. This exercise helps you savor the past and deepen your understanding of your strengths. As an additional benefit, strength stories connect all parties with a shared positive experience in the moment and well into the future.

Positive, encouraging words are the seeds of success. Plant those seeds in someone’s mind and heart today. You’ll start a positive ripple effect that will be felt by many people and many miles away, not to mention the positive effect you will feel inside. Speak words of strength, opportunity, kindness, and appreciation to bring out the best in yourself and others.

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*Language is very powerful.  
Language does not just describe reality.  
Language creates the reality it describes.*

—DESMOND TUTU,  
theologian and human rights activist

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## Take the Gratitude Challenge

Words of gratitude can also change your world. Try this twist on a gratitude journal. Each day for the next two weeks, write three good things that

happened **and** how *you* contributed. If you do the following gratitude challenge, you will experience positive benefits, including increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms that can last up to six months.<sup>16</sup> Simply type it into your phone's notepad or go old school and write it on paper like this . . .

Day	3 Good Things that Happened Today . . .	How I Contributed . . .
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My son came home from college to spend the weekend with me.</li> <li>▪ My elderly neighbor was thrilled to see the new flowers in her garden.</li> <li>▪ My best friend is feeling better about her job search.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I paid for his flight.</li> <li>▪ I helped plant the flowers.</li> <li>▪ I talked with her, calmed her down, and shared some tools to help her.</li> </ul>

Alternatively, write a letter of gratitude to a person in your life each week for three weeks. Research has shown significant changes in positive neural activity with practices such as these.<sup>17</sup> For a quicker boost of gratitude for your team, use a real or virtual gratitude wall where notes of gratitude and thanks are written for all to see.

Healthy leaders manage their minds, talk themselves up, and encourage others. They become a light that shines on those around them.

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*Feeling gratitude and not expressing it  
is like wrapping a present and not giving it.*

—WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD,  
motivational writer

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## Cultivate Healthy Leadership

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### POSITIVITY

*Manage negative emotions and increase positive ones*

- ✓ Express my emotions as a passing feeling, not a defined state.  
(I feel sad vs. I am sad.)
- ✓ Put my thoughts and emotions into perspective by giving myself advice and relaying it the same way I would to my best friend.
- ✓ Replace “I have to” with “I get to” to create positive feelings of gratitude.
- ✓ For two weeks, write three good things that happened and how you contributed to those good things happening.
- ✓ Create a real or virtual gratitude wall where notes of gratitude and thanks are written for all to see.

My commitment to **Positivity**:

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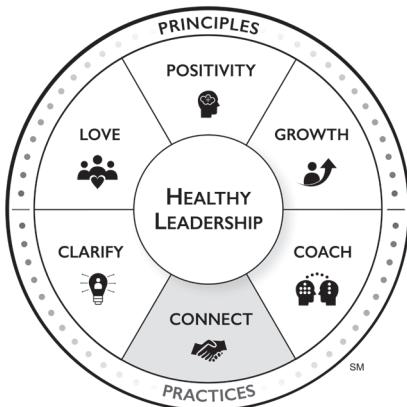
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Change your mind, and it changes everything.

## CONNECT

Build ties between work and human needs



After hijacked planes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania on Sept. 11, 2001, thousands of flights around the world were forced to land at airports that weren't their intended destinations. A whopping thirty-eight of these rerouted planes touched down in the small town of Gander, on the Canadian island of Newfoundland. In a matter of hours, the 10,000-person population of Gander increased by more than half with the arrival of over 6,500 "come from aways," as locals refer to outsiders. But the townspeople chose not to treat the passengers as outsiders. Instead, in a tremendous showing of hospitality, they treated them like new neighbors in need of care and leapt into action.

They opened their homes and schools for the disoriented passengers and provided them with food and places to sleep. Local pharmacists made calls all over the world to make sure the new arrivals got their medications. But they didn't stop there. They also wanted to get to know their guests and have a good time with them. Townspeople organized excursions into nature—after all, why go to Canada if you can't see a moose? They held musical events and huge barbecue cookouts. And most generous of all, they didn't expect anything in return.

After five days, the unplanned social experiment that took form in Gander came to an end when the last of the diverted planes took off. Yet the passengers wanted to return the town's kindness. And indeed, they did, leaving \$60,000 in Gander's local suggestion box.

Lifelong bonds were created in Gander the week after Sept. 11. A decade later, hundreds of stranded "plane people" returned to Gander to commemorate the anniversary, remember the tragedy, and visit the friends they had made. In one case, a British man and a Texan woman met, fell in love, and got married after their return. Among those present at the 10th anniversary were Irene Sakoff and David Hein, a couple with a growing list of plays to their name. They spent the anniversary interviewing many of the Gander residents and plane people. Those interviews became the basis of the hit Broadway musical, *Come From Away*. Several of the plane people set up a scholarship fund for local students to which over two million dollars has been donated. What this strange and wonderful incident left behind is a stunning example of kindness and generosity, but also something else: The human desire to connect with others, and the incredible power of such connections.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Power of Real Connection**

Healthy leaders create emotional bonds with their teams, like the citizens of Gander did with their guests. We are wired to seek connections in our

world. Humans are social creatures by design—and healthy leaders know and prioritize this truth. They excel not only at connecting directly with their team members, but also at helping team members connect with one another—in healthy ways. We often hear people speak with envy about companies like Starbucks, Ben & Jerry's, Southwest Airlines, Harley-Davidson, Nordstrom, The Container Store, and FedEx, to name a few. Outsiders are constantly looking for secrets to success in these companies. One “secret” is their culture of connectedness. They intentionally create strong connections to meaning, to team, and to contributions that fulfill the human needs of purpose, belonging, and appreciation.

To illustrate the power of connections, consider an experiment conducted to study the effects of relationships on group performance. The researchers compared the performance of groups of three friends to groups of three acquaintances. Each group was asked to follow specific instructions for building models made with Tinkertoy® pieces. The friends built an average of 9.0 models versus 2.45 models for the acquaintances. “The friends were able to challenge one another's ideas in a constructive way,” said Karen Jehn, one of the researchers. “In the groups of acquaintances, people were almost too polite.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the fastest ways to connect with others is to find common ground. This is true whether you are building a new relationship or building a bridge to mend an existing one. Consider two people who are at odds and walk away from negotiations as a lost cause. Then in walks a skilled mediator who quickly identifies a win-win solution. The contentious parties were focusing on differences while the mediator focused on commonalities.

So, what is the lesson here? Connections among teammates increase team health as measured by engagement and productivity. Sure, digital connectivity greases the wheels of high performance, but emotional connection is the engine. Another compelling study demonstrates that a

feeling of connection can alter how our brains process the challenges we face. Researchers found that if a person is looking at a hill and judging how steep it is, the simple presence of a social support (like a friend) made the hill look 10 to 20 percent less steep than if the individual were alone. You or your team's perception of a task, goal, or project is transformed for the better when the presence of others is felt on the journey to achievement.<sup>3</sup> A healthy leader makes sure his or her team is looking up that hill, not alone but together.

Here's how you can build ties between your team's work and three emotional needs: purpose, belonging, and appreciation.

### **Connect to Meaning to Fulfill the Need for Purpose**

Healthy leaders are bridge builders. One important bridge they build is between a team member's work and a bigger purpose. There are two levels of purpose that leaders connect employees to: organizational purpose and team purpose. Organizational purpose relates to making the world a better place or improving the human condition through work.

For instance, one of our clients distributes products to homebuilders. Their purpose did not seem very inspiring to the leadership team or to employees, yet a deeper look revealed a purpose worth connecting to: This company was a key link in the distribution chain, getting raw building products to sites where homes were being built for first-time home buyers. In essence, this company realized that they helped make the American dream of homeownership a reality. This new, more profound sense of purpose sparked a stronger sense of connection.

An organization's purpose can come in a variety of forms. Perhaps it is to create a sustainable product, to make the world a better place, or to innovate the best products to ease peoples' lives. Coca-Cola employees work diligently to achieve the company's purpose: "to refresh the world and

make a difference.” Google’s mission is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” Southwest Airlines’ purpose is “to connect people to what’s important in their lives through friendly, reliable, and low-cost air travel.” McDonald’s purpose is “to be our customers’ favorite place and way to eat and drink.” Nordstrom aims “to give customers the most compelling shopping experience possible.” All these companies connect business to purpose, and they connect purpose to employees’ roles.

## **Your Team’s Compelling Purpose**

Cheryl Johnson was a client of ours when she was a leader at Fossil, a watch manufacturer and lifestyle brand, and then at Ulta Beauty. Now she is chief human resources officer for Paylocity. A discussion Lee had with her illustrates the importance of team purpose. They talked about how connecting to meaningful work ignites a personal passion to go the extra mile. Cheryl was reflecting on one of her first jobs during college—as a dishwasher in a hospital. Interestingly, she didn’t see her job as that of only a dishwasher. Most people would wallow in the mundane task of washing dishes, but Cheryl’s boss painted a picture of something much more significant. On the first day of work, he told Cheryl that her department’s purpose was “to help ensure a clean, healthy environment so patients could heal as fast as possible and go home to their families.” And it was Cheryl’s role to contribute to that purpose by keeping the dishes clean. Wouldn’t you be more passionate about washing dishes if that was *your* purpose?

No matter how large or small your team, healthy leaders define a compelling purpose for their teams. The most important motivational question a leader can answer for his/her team is, “Why am I doing this?” Sometimes articulating the answer is difficult because it requires a deep look at your business. For example, at one customer call center, the purpose is to provide a fair solution and brighten the day of every caller.

A technology department's purpose is to improve personal productivity. No matter what it is, a compelling purpose must create positive meaning in employees' lives.

You must also keep your compelling purpose real and relevant, since people can commit only to what they understand. A purpose is your team's bridge to a brighter, more connected tomorrow. Healthy leaders build bridges between each job and the team's purpose. Before you spring into action, keep in mind that a project goal is not the same as a purpose. Neither is a financial target nor a strategic plan. Most (non-sales) employees will not get emotionally charged up about a 10 percent net profit, a 20 percent return on investment, or a 30 percent increase in market share. A true purpose is a reason to be excited about getting up and going to work every day.

## **Involve Your Team**

As a leader, it's powerful to involve your team to help define or refine the purpose. And you can bet, if your team is part of the process, they will be more engaged and committed. Work with them to answer these questions:

**Why do we exist as a team?** Since people tend to respond with what they do—their function—rather than *why* they do it, keep asking why, why, why? This will help reveal the core purpose of their work.

**How does our team's purpose make you feel?** If you hear responses like “proud,” “important,” “connected,” “helpful,” or “like a winner,” then you’re on the right track. If not, then ask, “What is missing?” or “What is a purpose that would make you feel excited?”

**Does our purpose make you look at your job differently?** What can you change or do differently to better support our purpose?

Discussions about these questions will help your team work more purposefully. Today's worker is more focused on purpose than ever, so engage them to find meaning in their work and in your team.

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*It's not enough to be busy. So are the ants.  
The question is: What are we busy about?*

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU,  
American poet and philosopher

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## **Connect to Team to Fulfill the Need for Belonging**

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in V formation, you might consider what science has discovered about why they fly that way. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than it would have if each bird flew alone. When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly falls back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front of it. And when the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the formation, and another goose flies in the lead position.

People are remarkably like geese. When we share common goals and a sense of community, we can get where we are going more quickly and easily because we are traveling with the support of those around us. Likewise, it is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs the way geese do. These birds also honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. We all need encouragement along life's journey, whether it's a pat on the back or an appreciative email (but probably not a honk). Finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by a gunshot and falls out

of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own or join another formation to catch up with their group. It's up to a healthy leader to create this geese-like sense of belonging and shared direction.

We long to belong. So, success is rarely achieved alone. It is almost always achieved with the help of others along the way. If we use the approach of the goose, we will make progress alongside one another. Geese are defined by how they stay connected to one another. Healthy leaders and their teams are defined the same way.

## **Rituals Connect Us**

Back in your childhood, you may have belonged to a club that had a secret handshake. Just knowing that handshake made you feel like you were a part of the group, right? It was a “belonging” factor that made you feel connected. The handshake was something special that only members could do or know. In your work life, feeling like part of a team provides that same sense of belonging. When this need goes unmet, however, you feel alone and disconnected. If you don't feel connected to others, you come to work each day, but you leave your heart at home.

Rituals make members feel connected to one another through unique yet common experiences. As a result, they create strong and long-lasting personal connections that are group specific. Now, before you think we are suggesting that you start teaching secret handshakes at onboardings for new employees, let us translate the practice of rituals into the business setting. Every team has rituals, regardless of whether you recognize them as such. Organizations have rituals around hiring, recognition, production, innovation, quality, promotions, family, customer service, community service, learning, and numerous other practices. To be clear, we are not advocating rituals for ritual's sake. They should be intentionally designed

to meet a business need or the team's need for connection. Healthy rituals fit your leadership style and the chemistry of your team—they feel natural. And they are performed with 100 percent reliability. If you celebrate team members' birthdays monthly on "Last Friday Birthdays," but you forgot to do it twice last year, then it's not a ritual. Healthy rituals are reliable and positively anticipated by teams. Here are a few ways you can use team rituals to enhance a sense of belonging:

What do you want to reinforce?	Which rituals fit your leadership style and team culture?
<b>Outstanding performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Ring the bell" to announce success!</li> <li>• Pass a fun trophy to someone who has gone above and beyond (should be public and ceremonial).</li> <li>• Take the "star" to lunch. Use a simple cardboard star as a symbol of outstanding performance; present it to the recipient, then take him/her to lunch.</li> </ul>
<b>Productive relationships/ teamwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with morning huddles to identify your focus for the day (yes, regular meetings are a ritual).</li> <li>• Assign "buddies" to new team members.</li> <li>• Host Last Friday Brown Bag Lunches or First Monday Donut/Bagel Days, whether in-person or virtually.</li> <li>• Make the rounds each morning to say "hello" to your team (walk around or call around).</li> </ul>
<b>Community service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a relay team for an annual weekend walk/run to support a local charity.</li> <li>• Package or serve meals as a team at a local food bank once a quarter.</li> <li>• As a team, tutor children at a local school on a regular basis.</li> </ul>

To be intentional about your team rituals, start with a specific team need, and then determine if you already have a ritual in place that reinforces that need. If not, create one. For example, at one client, the sales and marketing departments were very siloed and not communicating about

important prospecting data. To resolve this, the manager started a Taco Tuesday lunch where both the sales and marketing teams ran through the prospect list and their respective plans to garner the new business, aiding in collaboration and coordination between departments. Not only did members of each team get to know each other and work better together, but they were able to close more sales.

Rituals that are well designed stand the test of time; even so, occasionally a ritual can become “stale” or it no longer reinforces the need. In that case, change up the elements that aren’t working or replace the ritual with a new one. If you do not have a ritual in place, get creative and develop one that feels fresh and organic. Then systematize it so it’s easy to sustain. Finally, make sure to involve your team in this process—they are often the best source of ideas for rituals.

## **Connect to Contributions to Fulfill the Need for Appreciation**

Charles Plumb was a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, one of the original Top Gun pilots, and a pilot in Vietnam. On May 19, 1967, during his 75th combat mission (five days before the end of his tour), his plane was shot down. He ejected and parachuted into enemy hands, where he spent six years in a Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now speaks to share his lessons learned from that experience.

One day, Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant when a man came up and said, “You’re Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!”

“How in the world did you know that?” Plumb asked cautiously and curiously.

“I packed your parachute,” the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, “I guess it worked!”

Plumb assured him, “It sure did. If that chute hadn’t worked, I wouldn’t be here today.”

That night, thinking about the man, Plumb couldn’t sleep. He thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully folding the silks of each chute, holding someone’s fate in his hands.

Plumb later said, “I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform—white hat, bib in the back, bell-bottom trousers. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said, ‘Good morning, how are you?’ because, you see, I was a fighter pilot, and he was *just* a sailor.”

We all have someone who supports our success the way that sailor ensured Plumb’s survival. Focus on each person and their individual contributions, not their titles. Remember, at the end of the day, your success is based more on what your people do than on what you do.

So, who’s packing *your* parachute, and are you making them feel appreciated?

## **Big Value, No Cost**

People want to feel valued for their work. In fact, lack of appreciation is a key reason people leave jobs. Showing appreciation is a common blind spot for leaders—and for people in any relationship, for that matter. You no doubt feel appreciative of your team; yet, it’s highly likely there’s a gap between how much your team feels appreciated and how much you really appreciate them. Why is that? This disconnect exists because people typically do not convert every thought of appreciation into words and actions. While we judge ourselves by our intentions, others judge us by our actions. What is important is not how much you *think* you appreciate your team’s contributions, but rather how much you *demonstrate* your

appreciation. The ultimate goal is that your team feels seen, valued, and recognized.

A survey of 15 million people worldwide illuminates the business benefits of appreciation. This Gallup study by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton found that people who receive regular recognition at work displayed a host of positive behaviors such as:

- Heightened productivity;
- Increased engagement with colleagues;
- Greater likelihood of staying with the organization;
- Higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers; and,
- Better safety records and fewer accidents on the job.<sup>4</sup>

Appreciation comes down to basic psychology. It feels good, so we do more of what we are appreciated for, and this increases motivation. As a leader, first reinforce those behaviors that you want to see more frequently. Next, look for opportunities to recognize and appreciate your team's efforts and results. Finally, catch your employees doing something right . . . and encourage them to do it often. Research from Gallup revealed that the most effective teams have at least a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. Demonstrating appreciation for contributions is a powerful way to create a positive interaction. On the home front, this same research found the ratio for the most effective marriages is at least 5:1. Bottom line: It is wise to apply this ratio for your home team and your work team.

When it comes to demonstrating appreciation, you have complete control. No budget limitations or excuses here—there are literally thousands of ways to demonstrate your appreciation at little to no cost. You can occasionally offer a gift card or some other token of modest value, but you should rely more on your creativity and knowledge of the employee

to personalize the gesture. The key to demonstrating your appreciation is making it sincere, specific, and meaningful. Don't fall into the trap of blurting out the robotic, "Good job." Take time to explain why you appreciate an employee's performance, such as, "I really appreciate the way you kept our customer happy without incurring additional cost."

In our work at client organizations, we have seen more than a few handwritten notes of appreciation on employees' desks. Often these cards are several years old (five-plus years in several cases), yet they are still prominently and proudly displayed. That speaks volumes about emotional connection. We often wonder if the bosses who wrote them understand how much discretionary effort their three-minute investment yielded or know how meaningful those cards were to those employees. Greg Brown, chief customer service officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, says, "The little things you do are more important than the big things you say." He sends electronic anniversary cards to each of his 1,000-plus leaders. He also makes a habit of writing notes to anyone he catches doing something right.<sup>5</sup> Find a way to express your appreciation that is natural to you. Not everyone is a note-card writer, but every leader can find a way to demonstrate appreciation that feels authentic.

## Appreciate Progress

We often hear leaders say that they will appreciate their teams once a certain goal is achieved. These leaders do not understand the power of appreciating progress. Healthy leaders appreciate results *and* progress. They understand that employees want to feel connected to their leader, their organization, and their purpose—not just after the final buzzer when the team wins, but throughout the game.

Let's say a team member has a sales goal of closing ten deals by the end of the quarter. If you wait until the end of the quarter to discuss the

employee's performance, you will have missed the opportunity to positively encourage their progress along the way. But if you notice a team member made the targeted fifty calls today, you can recognize this progress and increase the probability that this employee will make the targeted number of calls the next day. By the same token, if your team member makes only twenty-five calls in a day, you have an opportunity to encourage him or her and explain how the current call volume directly affects the team's results.

There are different ways to create a feeling of connection among your team—through purpose, belonging, and appreciation. Healthy leaders know how to activate pathways of real connection so that everyone reaps the benefits. People do more for those who appreciate them, and they do more of the behavior that is appreciated. This is a powerful human dynamic that healthy leaders know how to leverage.

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*The way to develop the best that is in a person  
is by appreciation and encouragement.*

—CHARLES SCHWAB,  
American investor and financial executive

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## Cultivate Healthy Leadership

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### CONNECT

*Build ties between work and human needs*

- ✓ Connect to meaning by asking my team these questions about our purpose:
  - Why does our team exist?
  - Does our purpose make you look at your job differently?
  - What can you change or do differently to better support our purpose?
- ✓ Connect to team with rituals that fulfill the need for belonging:
  - Meet a specific need.
  - Feel authentic to my leadership style.
  - Perform with 100 percent reliability.
- ✓ Connect to contributions to make my team feel appreciated:
  - Ensure at least a 3:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions.
  - Be specific in my expressions of appreciation.
  - Acknowledge progress as well as results.

My commitment to **Connect**:

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*Communication—the human connection—is the key to personal and career success.*

—PAUL J. MEYER,  
pioneer of self-improvement