


































The Physician Leadership Playbook

Develop Yourself. Coach Others. Change the System.

A complete self-implementation guide for physicians navigating complexity at work and beyond.

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 **Hello!**

If you're reading this — you probably don't need another theory.

You want something to change in a meaningful way.

The Physician Leadership Playbook is a **self-implementation guide** for physicians who want to do just that: lead meaningful change — in themselves, their teams, and their systems — *without burning out*.

Built on 1,000+ coaching engagements across 35+ health systems, this playbook distills what actually works: neuroscience-backed frameworks, real-world coaching tools, and simple structures that **fits into the chaos of real clinical leadership**.

It's not about fixing broken systems from the top down.

It's about building a bold, **grounded life from the inside out**.

Whether you're navigating resistance or just trying to move the needle without carrying it all — this playbook is for you.

You don't have to wait for the system to change.

Start here.

Welcome to **The Physician Leadership Playbook**.

With deep love and respect,



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SANDY SCOTT
COACHING GROUP

ASK US
HOW TO



How to Use This Playbook

This playbook isn't meant to be read once and shelved.

It's designed to be used—in conversations, in decisions, in moments of pressure.

Quickstart

Pick one real issue you have right now.

Spend 5 minutes on Reflective Writing (page 18), design one LEAP (page 22), and schedule a 15-minute follow-up with yourself (or a trusted colleague). You'll feel the engine working immediately.

Grab What You Need

Use the playbook like a toolbox, and **start where the pain is most acute**:

- Feeling scattered or reactive? → Go to [Presence](#) (page 15)
- Lots of insight, with little progress to show? → [LEAP](#) (page 22)
- Priorities feel fuzzy? → [Goal Setting](#) (page 37)
- Important meetings stalling out? → [Powerful Questions & GROW](#) (page 41)
- Commitments slipping? → [Clean Agreements](#) (page 48)
- Hard conversation looming? → [Difficult Conversations / Feedback](#) (pages 91 & 96)
- Want to delegate or develop others? → [Who Not How](#) (page 81) / [Situational Leadership](#) (page 84)
- Silos or department misalignment? → [Leading Change In Systems](#) (page 110)
- Want to reach your most important goals 10X faster? → [The New Physician Way Model](#) (page 112)

Follow Your Curiosity

Let go of your self-judgement.

Look at the table of contents, **flip to a page that feels good** and try one thing in your real world.

Guide Posts

- Start by skimming headers and jumping around via links — ***favor doing over reading and pontificating.***
- Don't wait for perfection. **Reps matter more than theory.**
- If a link doesn't work or you have a quick question, [reach out to us](#). We'll get you what you need.

Pick a starting point and get one rep in today.

From there, the rest will compound.

A Personal Note

In 1991, I spent a lot of time sitting in hospital rooms. My oldest son Zachary had just been diagnosed with severe disabilities and disorders. **Doctors told us to prepare for the worst.**

A few months later came the a-ha moment: I couldn't control the system. **I couldn't control my life.** But I *could* choose how I showed up to it.

That decision changed everything.

Over the past 30 years, I've walked alongside more than 1,000 leaders across 35 healthcare systems, most of them physicians. And I've seen a simple truth hold up everywhere:

Real change starts inside.

Not with a better org chart. Not with a new initiative. But with one leader—grounded in presence, guided by purpose, and equipped with tools that work in the real world.

That's why we created this playbook. Not as a replacement for coaching, but as **a structure you can use to lead yourself and others through meaningful, lasting change.**

The frameworks here are drawn from the best of what I've seen work—across specialties, systems, and stages of career. And they're **grounded in research** that changed my life: from the 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership, to Intentional Change Theory, to what I learned holding my son's hand when nothing made sense.

You don't have to carry it all.

You don't have to fix it alone.











You can lead with clarity, connection, and courage — regardless of circumstances — even here, even now.

This is your invitation.

With deep love and respect,



What is Coaching?

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What is Coaching?

The Invisible Playbook for Fixing Healthcare

You'll find coaching in some unexpected places.

It's used by Navy SEAL teams to debrief after missions.

By elite athletes to break plateaus.

And by Pixar's creative leaders to unblock ideas.

What do they have in common?

They already perform at the highest level — and they want to go further.

It's not a job title.

And it's not a personality type.

And it's definitely not about giving people advice or making them feel good.

Coaching is a high-leverage skillset for challenging the status quo, leading with more clarity, and **performing at a high-level in roles that require more than technical mastery.**

Coaching for Physicians?

Have you built a career by solving problems?

Fix what's broken. Take the hit. Keep things going.

Well, here's the quiet truth no one says out loud:

The hardest-working leaders are usually the ones stuck in the deepest ruts.

They don't look stuck on paper.

But inside: they're overthinking, dysregulated and jumbled.

Sound familiar?

That's where coaching comes in.

The primary outcome of coaching is alignment — of ourselves, our teams and our organizations.

Physicians lead themselves and others with coaching principles because it gives them a different kind of leverage:

- Influence without control
- Results without burnout
- Change without having to carry it all

You're not here to enforce compliance. You're here to inspire physicians and administrators to own their roles and transform healthcare.

Coaching gives you the playbook to do that—without wasting time on bureaucracy.

Skill vs. Title

Upfront, I want to make this point:

You can be certified as a coach.

You can also *integrate* coaching skills into meetings, conversations and ways of leading others.

You can *integrate* coaching into your family life.

At its core, coaching is about leveraging your time to define what your ideal life is — and to live more of it.

Can you define coaching?

Even though there are dozens of valid, research-backed definitions of coaching—here's something we tell every leader we train:

If you're going to coach others, or coach yourself, it's worth taking a moment to define what coaching means to you.

It doesn't have to be perfect. And it does need to feel clear and grounded.

Here's our two favorite [definitions](#), used with physician execs across the country:

- *"Coaching is the process of drawing on strengths, questioning assumptions, and aligning values with purpose, to maximize personal and professional potential."*
- *"Coaching helps people dream of a better possibility for their life, then supports them to achieve it through action."*



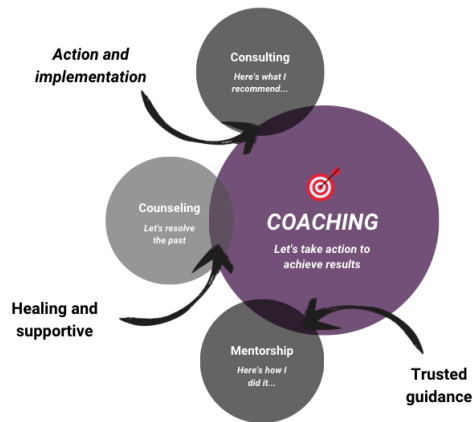
It's a repeatable framework that helps leaders:

1. Think clearly
2. Name what matters
3. Decide what's next
4. Follow through

Coaching vs Consulting vs Mentorship vs Counseling

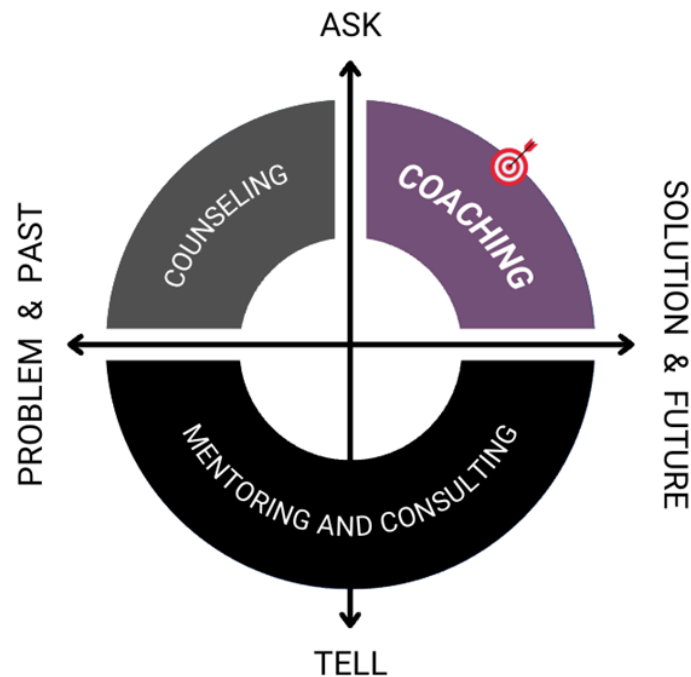
Coaching is a **supportive** and **action-oriented** process — focused on the **future** and driven by **outcomes**.

Here's how it compares and contrasts to other supportive relationships, which can each help:



A simple way to think about it:

- **Consulting:** Hands you a game plan.
- **Mentoring:** Shares playbooks that worked before.
- **Counseling:** Soothes the loss of a game.
- **Coaching:** Asks, “What’s your next move, and why?” — then supports you to win.



The science behind coaching

Coaching leverages how the brain actually works.

It activates:

- **Prospection** (our ability to imagine and plan for the future)
- **Insight + action loops** (which form new neural pathways)
- **Psychological safety** (which is required for self-directed change)

This isn't theory—it's observable, repeatable, and testable.

Richard Boyatzis' Intentional Change Model shows how coaching rewires the brain to bring us closer to our ideal future (Journal of Management Development, 2006):



Coaching works because it's how people actually change—especially high performers navigating the volatility, complexity and uncertainty of healthcare.

Skepticism makes sense

After coaching 1,000+ physicians, skepticism comes down to a few themes – and they make perfect sense:

1. **It sounds vague.** Physicians are trained in clarity and precision. When coaching is wrapped in buzzwords, it feels untrustworthy.
2. **It doesn't match their training.** Most physicians are rewarded for speed, certainty, control and independence. Coaching requires reflection, curiosity, and letting others take the lead—which can feel unfamiliar or inefficient.
3. **They've seen it misused.** Coaching has been confused with performance management or labeled as remediation. That's not coaching. That's optics.
4. **It seems soft.** In a culture that values grit and stoicism, coaching can look like coddling. The truth? Coaching builds resilience—the kind that grit alone can't sustain.

When we name these dynamics without judgment, we can meet each other where we are—then offer a clearer, stronger path forward.

The two most important criteria for a successful coaching engagement?

1. **Coachability** (willingness to engage, reflect and try new ways of doing things)
2. **Logistics** (protected time, scheduling support, relevant materials, etc.)

The most common mistakes

If you've tried coaching and it didn't work, chances are one of these was happening:

- **Fixing instead of facilitating**
Great coaching helps people find their own solutions—so they think, lead, and grow at a higher level.
- **Talking too much**
The best coaches know when to stop talking. Silence is a tool. Listening is leverage.
- **Defaulting to advice**
Advice feels helpful—but often blocks ownership. Use inquiry, challenge, and encouragement instead.
- **Forgetting to ask, "How can I be most helpful?"**
Coaching is about focus. Start with: "What's the most important thing we can talk about right now?"
- **Ending without a clear takeaway**
Every coaching conversation should lead to insight or action. If nothing shifts, it wasn't coaching—it was a chat.

A note about certification

You can coach yourself. You can coach others.

You can be certified. You can be trained. You can be self-trained.

You can practice as an internal coach, an external coach...

Or—our favorite—you can be a leader who uses coaching mindsets and skillsets to drive intentional change in yourself and others.

And no—you don't need 200 hours of certification to do that well.

Most of the time, people chasing certification are looking for confidence, not credentials. (If you want to know when certification does make sense — send me an email and I'll share a few clear criteria.)

Here's my "80/20" recommendation when it comes to practicing coaching without certification:

- [Review and adhere to ethics.](#)
- Learn core frameworks.
- Get reps with real humans.
- Focus on clarity and outcomes (progress) — not perfection.

Putting it together

Think coaching's fluffy?

I offer you a reframe — some coaching is fluffy.

Great coaching is your edge.

For clinical executives: coaching transforms your best physicians from the inside-out — into leaders who bridge clinical and strategic goals.

For HR executives: coaching reduces headaches — while attracting and retaining your top clinical talent.

Now that you have a sense of what coaching is and isn't — let me ask you this: what's your biggest insight or one action step?

Next, you'll learn how to **lead as a coach** in real-world pressure.

How to Lead as a Coach

Some people hear “coaching” and think:

Soft skill. Nice to have. Touchy-feely.

Yes — parts of coaching are intangible.

And coaching as a leadership approach is more than a vibe.

It’s a repeatable, teachable leadership operating system that works in real-world pressure.

Done well, coaching makes others more capable — without making you the bottleneck.



The Two Core Cycles of Leadership Coaching

Coaching is like breathing in and out.

Think of it as **two simple, flexible cycles you can use in conversations every week:**

1. 🧭 Discovery (Inhale)

Slow down. Get curious. Make space.

Clarify what’s actually true — not just what’s loud.

Skills and Tools:

- [Presence](#)
- [3 Levels of Listening](#)
- [Powerful Questions & GROW model](#)
- [Reflective Writing & Exercises \(e.g. Inner Critic\)](#)
- [Validated Psychometric Assessments](#)
- [Discovery Process](#)
- [Goal Setting](#)

Sounds Like:

- “Where do you feel most stuck right now?”
- “What’s the real challenge here?”
- “What would success look like next week?”

Everyday Examples:

- **Your direct report couldn't articulate their goals**, so you gave them a values-based assessment and both pointed out areas of alignment. They used those insights to define a goal that felt intrinsically motivating, not just “required.”
- **A high-performer seemed burned out**. You pause the 1:1 meeting agenda and say, “Before we dive in, what’s taking up the most headspace for each of us today?” He names a personal stressor, so you ask

a few powerful questions while listening. You notice he seems much more present and engaged afterward, even though you didn't solve anything for them.

- **One of your medical directors is venting about a broken process.** You ask, "What part of this do you have the most influence over right now?" She identified one small system tweak and left energized to fix it, without you doing anything about the process.
- **A peer keeps looping in circles about a hiring decision.** You share a reflective journaling prompt to clarify what success in the role really meant. She identifies the crux of the decision and makes a confident decision the next morning.
- **Your teen says they're stressed.** You don't jump into "fix it" mode. Instead, you ask what's most overwhelming and listen as they ramble. Eventually, they realize the root of the stress is just one assignment. Now there's a clear next step and a little relief.

These moments tee up the second cycle — where action happens.

2. Development (Exhale)

Define the commitment. Support the move.

Shift from thinking → doing.

Skills & Tools:

- [LEAP \(Committing to One Bold Action\)](#)
- [Clean Agreements](#)
- [Feedback](#) & [Accountability](#)
- [5-Step Development Framework \(7 steps to dev people\)](#)
- [Acknowledgment](#)

Everyday Examples:

- **A direct report keeps missing project deadlines.** You don't pile on pressure. You say, "*What's one action you could take this week to get ahead of this next milestone?*" They name it. You make a clean agreement. This time, they hit the mark — and show up more confident.
- **Your team is stuck waiting on leadership for next steps.** You ask the group, "*What's in our control today?*" You help create a short list and cleanly divvy up responsibility. Within a week, two key pieces are moving forward.
- **Your partner keeps feeling like they're carrying the mental load.** Instead of apologizing again, you say, "*Let's get clear on who owns what.*" You write it down, agree, and stick to it — and tension eases.
- **A peer seems disengaged in meetings.** You offer a bit of acknowledgment in your 1:1 — not flattery, just specific appreciation for their impact. They start showing up with more presence.
- **A high-potential leader acknowledged their fear of delegating.** You say, "*What's one task you could delegate this week, even if it's imperfect?*" They do — and it goes better than expected.

These moments often tee up another round of the Discovery cycle — where new clarity emerges, etc.

How the Cycles Work Together

You don't need a perfect script or ideal conditions.

And the rhythm and depth matters.

- The more time you spend in **Discovery**, the more precisely you can move into **Development**.
- The more skillfully you drive **Development**, the more meaningful the next Discovery becomes.

That's how it scales.

So Where Should You Start?

This framework isn't just for "coaches."

It's for change makers.

Especially those with influence but limited time.

You don't need to overhaul your leadership style.

You just need to **start** with **one cycle, in one conversation**, this week.

Try this:

- **Feeling stuck with someone?** → Inhale. Start with a Discovery question or exercise.
- **Need to lock in action?** → Exhale. Take a Development step.
- **Want to scale your impact?** → Teach these cycles to your team.

Each tool is simple, repeatable, and effective in a single conversation.

You don't need more time.

You just need to know when to breathe in — and when to breathe out.

The most critical skill to start with is **Presence**—because it's the foundation that improves every conversation.

Presence

Most leadership programs skip it

They give you models, org charts, coaching tools — but they don't teach you how to show up differently.

Here's the truth:

Presence isn't fluff. It's a skill.

And it changes everything.

What is it?

Presence is the ability to stay grounded and available — even when things are moving fast.

It's what allows a leader to regulate their own state so their team can perform instead of spiral.

It's not about being zen or having perfect posture in meetings.

It's about having enough internal resources — mentally, emotionally, and physiologically — to respond instead of react.

In her book *Your Body Is Your Brain*, somatic researcher Amanda Blake defines presence as:

"The felt experience of being here and now, without judgment or reactivity."

The crux of Blake's work is this:

Presence is less about mindset work — and more about nervous system work.

If your nervous system is dysregulated, it doesn't matter how skilled you are — you'll default to reaction.

Your brain can't lead if it's stuck in reactivity. And **most of the clinical leaders I coach have been spending a huge portion of their day in low-level fight-or-flight without realizing it.**

And that's not because they're bad at leadership.

It's because they're human.

And developing presence is what changes that.

The 3 Levels of Presence

Blake identifies three distinct levels of presence, which we've seen play out time and time again in our coaching work with physician leaders:

1. Dysregulated = **The Red Zone**

- You're in fight/flight/freeze. It's hard to think clearly. You feel zero bandwidth.
- Decisions get delayed. Conversations get avoided. Little problems become big ones.

It's not "bad" to be here. It's human. But staying here too long erodes trust and clarity — in you and around you.

2. Modulated = **The Survival Zone**

- You're stable, functional, but it takes a lot of effort. You're managing yourself through tension.
- Think: "I'm holding it together, but barely." This is where most competent leaders live.

It works — until it doesn't.

3. Restorative = **The Grounded Zone**

- You're clear, calm, and creative.
- You respond instead of react. You see the bigger picture. You see more options.
- You become the still point in a fast-moving system.





Others can feel it — and they respond accordingly.

How do you build it?

Presence isn't just how you feel. It's the state you lead from.

We build it like a muscle: with training.

Here's your presence gym:

-  **Box breathing** or [4-7-8 breathing](#) (2 mins):
Box breathing regulates your nervous system fast. Use it before hard conversations.
-  **Meditation** and **centering prayer** (10 mins):
Reduce reactivity and increase your mental clarity, wherever you are that day.
-  **Intentional walking** (no phone, nature if possible):
Boost creativity and emotional regulation, especially when you feel the urge to 'do more'.
-  **Reflective writing** (5 mins):
Literally make better decisions by interrupting your thought patterns and reducing your cognitive load.

Real-World Example

A physician CEO I coach, who's managing massive financial pressures, recently told me:

*"This feels insane. I'm **not doing much of anything**. I just show up and say things like 'I've got your back.' People are thriving. The craziest part is...I'm **getting promoted** — while other regions are flailing. I don't fully understand it, but I think it has to do with presence."*

Instead of fixing everything. Turns out, her presence did the trick.

Bottom Line

As a leader— presence isn't optional. It's your foundation.

And yes — you can train it.

Hit the 'presence gym' today and notice the impact.

Next

Presence creates a signal in the noise. **Reflective Writing** turns that signal into insight you can act on.

Reflective Writing

The rate of change in healthcare is increasing.

Hard — and true.

For many of you, the journey ahead will be marked by complexity, ambiguity and the balancing act of driving quality patient care amidst the evolving demands of an enterprise.

I know CMOs submerged in emails, responsibilities and back-to-back meetings — and I know Directors bogged-down by the **constant clash of clinical duty and admin demands** — and both have little room for strategic thinking.

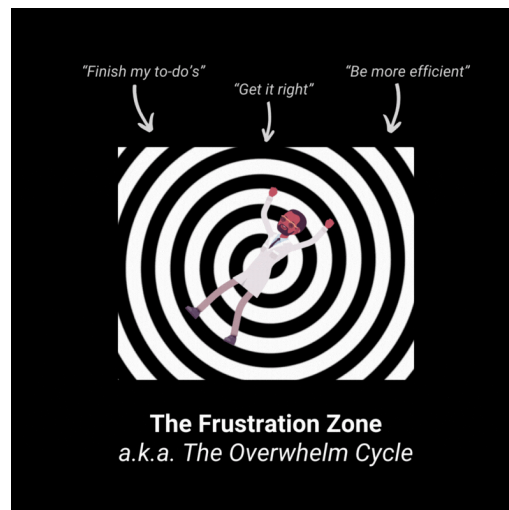
And I've come to understand that it's not just about the workload. It's about feeling in **perpetual motion without much meaningful progress to show for it.**

This cycle of overwhelm isn't just exhausting — it leads many to question if the juice is even worth the squeeze. It can feel like a path without much hope.

When clinical leaders feel frustrated, ineffective or overwhelmed — the most common root cause is a commitment to "doing more".

There's a few good reasons why this happens to the best of us:

1. The "overwhelm-cycle" isn't just the symptom of a busy schedule; it's the result of navigating a highly-matrixed web of clinical and administrative stakeholders. **Objectively, there is a ton on the plate.**
2. Most clinicians I know work with a profound sense of duty to "do the right thing" and "get it right" — in a landscape that shifts beneath their feet. **The harsh reality about admin work, as you know, is that [there is no "right way" in the infinite game of healthcare.](#)**
3. **The thrill of being "the expert" can be a physical rush.** Our brain drives us to excel by rewarding us with a dopamine boost for our achievements. The downside — is that it can trick even the highest achievers to conflate being busy with being effective. This is a force that many new leaders are unaware they're battling.



Many of us believe that if we work harder and conquer our To Do list – the feeling of spinning our wheels will dissipate.

But experience and research show us, again and again, that multitasking and weekend-email-marathons offer minor and temporary relief (Meyer, Evans & Rubenstein, 2001).

The reality?

- We can't do everything on our list, or it would've been done already.
- **There will always be more on our to-do lists than we have time for.**
- Focusing on productivity, efficiency and "creating an extra hour" to work just means you'll spend more of your life working.

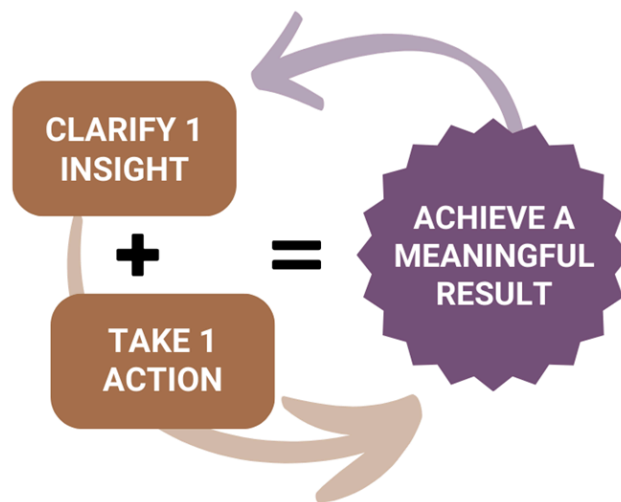
I'm here to tell you: when we feel frustrated and overwhelmed, the solution is rarely to push harder.

After coaching hundreds of physicians to navigate the trenches of healthcare leadership – I can tell you this:

In healthcare, the most positive changes happen when a driven clinical leader makes a daily habit of pausing to pair a single insight with a single meaningful action.

Often they do it in 10 minutes or less.

Here's how:



💡 **They pause to clarify a single insight.** Pausing to reflect allows them to unplug, zoom-out and reframe – giving them the space they need to clarify what's most important for the situation at hand. When they skip the step of clarifying, their actions become disorganized, distracted, and eventually lead to some form of burnout.

🎯 **They commit to taking a single, meaningful action related to their insight.** Taking action pulls them out of our heads and into the real world "where the magic happens". Progress *requires* action. Insight without action keeps us in the zone of feeling productive when, in reality, not much is actually happening.

🎉 These actionable insights maximize their efforts and are exactly how driven physicians move themselves from a state of *spinning their wheels* to one of *consistently achieving meaningful results*.

Unfortunately, in healthcare administration, many people spend most of their time both **NOT clarifying** and **NOT taking action**. This can look like meeting for the sake of meeting, email marathons, etc. We feel productive when, in reality, we're perpetuating the status quo. Many of our corporate environments inadvertently reward this behavior. It's not bad, and it's not creating positive change.

The clinical leaders who actually get things done in healthcare spend most of their time clarifying insights and taking meaningful actions, in a variety of contexts.

Here's the 2-step process highly-effective leaders use to make meaningful progress on what's most important:

Step 1: Generate an insight by writing for 5 min

The most effective executives in the world all take time in private to reflectively write on-paper.

They do it to organize their thoughts and achieve clarity in a matter of minutes, regardless of how chaotic the external circumstances are.

They do it to calm the noise, distraction, worry and fear they feel – by “getting it out on paper”.



What's the secret?

Most of us are stuck, subconsciously circulating through the same thought loops over and over again. We ruminate on the circumstances as we see them, and the options we think might work (Paivio, 1971).

Highly-effective leaders write on paper because it forces their brain to process through their circulating thought loops — which unlocks new ideas and new perspectives that inspire them to take actions they hadn't even considered before. And those actions tend to generate more impact than they thought we were capable of, before they started writing.

And so they rinse and repeat the process.

Simple.

Reflective writing isn't a hobby; it's a necessity for leaders who want to make a difference and get stuff done.

Do yourself a favor and uncover an insight that'll propel you forward today:

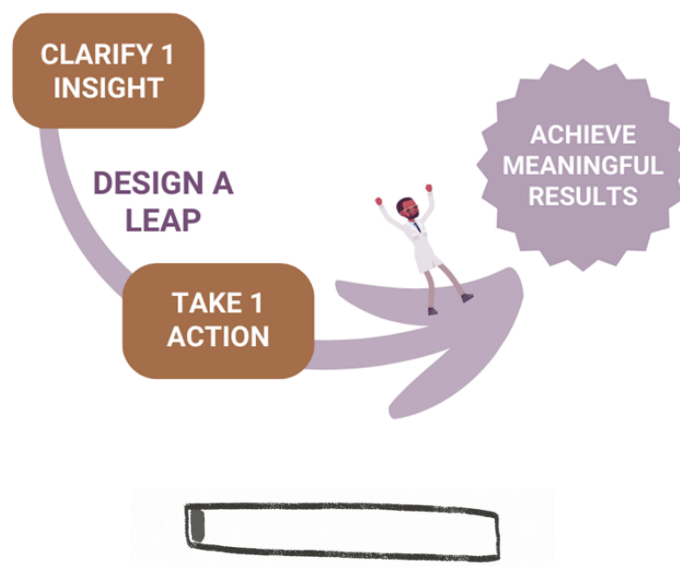
- ✓ (5 min) Set a timer on your phone for 3 minutes and write "[stream of consciousness](#)" with a pen and paper. Then read what you wrote and circle or distill your single biggest insight into a sentence. [Tim Ferris does this every single morning to clear the dull roar of distraction, worry and fear in his mind.](#)
- ✓ (1 min) Buy the [5 Minute Journal](#) and stick it next to your bed. This is the highest return you can get from investing 5 minutes of your day. [It's backed by research and designed for people who don't have time to journal.](#)
- ✓ (10 min) [Break out of your circulating thought-loops by following this specific 5-step process.](#) Use the [Change Map](#) to make progress on a specific challenge or opportunity on your plate. Every single client I've guided through this exercise uncovers something of value. [If you're not convinced it'll help, watch how a physician used it to navigate the unexpected and emotionally-charged furlough of his team.](#)
- ✓ (3 min) Leverage the 5 Why's Framework, a short reflective journey to pinpoint hidden contributing factors. Pick a specific challenge or objective you want to make progress on and write the answer to the question "Why is this happening?" or "Why is this important?". Look at your answer and ask yourself the same question again, five times in a row, to break free from your stagnant thought-loops.
- ✓ (20 min) Anchor yourself in the future with our [guided, audio visualization and journaling experience](#). Here's the deal: 90% of our actions are unconsciously automated and based on past experiences. This audio connects you to insights about your potential by anchoring you into your future.

Step 2: Design a meaningful and exciting action

Insight alone is like an unlit candle.

Action is the spark that illuminates the path.

In the next section, we'll uncover the 5 criteria to design a "[leap](#)" — which is an action that turns our insight into a meaningful result, every time...



LEAP

Quick story for you:

A medical director worked on Saturday to plan his team's annual retreat.

He felt solely responsible to plan and manage the details of the event.

He'd been procrastinating and getting bogged down at the same time.

They usually just met in the break room, and most people arrived late.

(You can imagine the history of lackluster gatherings)

But on this Saturday, he took [a leap](#):

He assigned a few tasks to his team.

Which opened him up to pick an off-site location — and craft a way more engaging agenda. To his amazement, planning this retreat was actually fun.

The end result?

The team asked for their next retreat to be longer 🌳

Question for you:


What if he had kept trying to "figure it out" alone?


If you're settled with how things are going at work: you can skip this part.


If you're stuck on a project or task — **keep reading :)**


Every day, I watch resourceful clinical leaders stuck in their heads trying to “figure it out”.


It makes sense why:

 In medicine, mistakes can have serious consequences. **Since system-level decisions can create massive ripple effects, we assume “I have one shot to get this right”.** Yet, we know striving for flawless execution in admin work limits our ability to adapt and overcome.

 The transition away from full-time clinical work can suck the meaning and purpose out of work. **When we’re not connected to a sense of direction in our work, we lose motivation to take bold, meaningful action.** We can’t help but think, “What’s the point?”

 **Clinical leaders unintentionally overcomplicate things when they feel an urge to solve problems without “burdening” others.** Yet, when we lock ourselves in our office, we literally close ourselves off from meaningful opportunities and perspectives that move our work forward.






 Your medical training was about mastering consistent practices to create predictable outcomes. In admin work, inputs and practices are all-over-the-ice. **It’s natural to doubt your readiness, to think you need to solve it all before acting.** But here’s the thing: growth comes from navigating these very uncertainties. Feeling unsure isn’t a weakness; it’s a call to learn and evolve.

 There are plenty of times where [it’s valuable to thoughtfully reflect, clarify and strategize](#). **Many of us, however, tend to overplay the “strategize” card and erode our effectiveness.**

Most of us experience a combo of these, every day. I know I do.

We believe that if we “figure it out” in our head — the path forward will be easier.

The reality is:

-  You'll never have all the info
-  Projects are always shifting
-  Waiting for perfection stalls progress
-  Isolation overlooks the value of collective strength
-  The days of straightforward solutions in healthcare are over

Bottomline: when you feel stuck — planning and strategizing in your head is almost NEVER the solution.

In fact, sometimes the more you strategize and plan, the harder it is to actually make progress.

After coaching hundreds of physicians to navigate the trenches of healthcare leadership — I can tell you this:

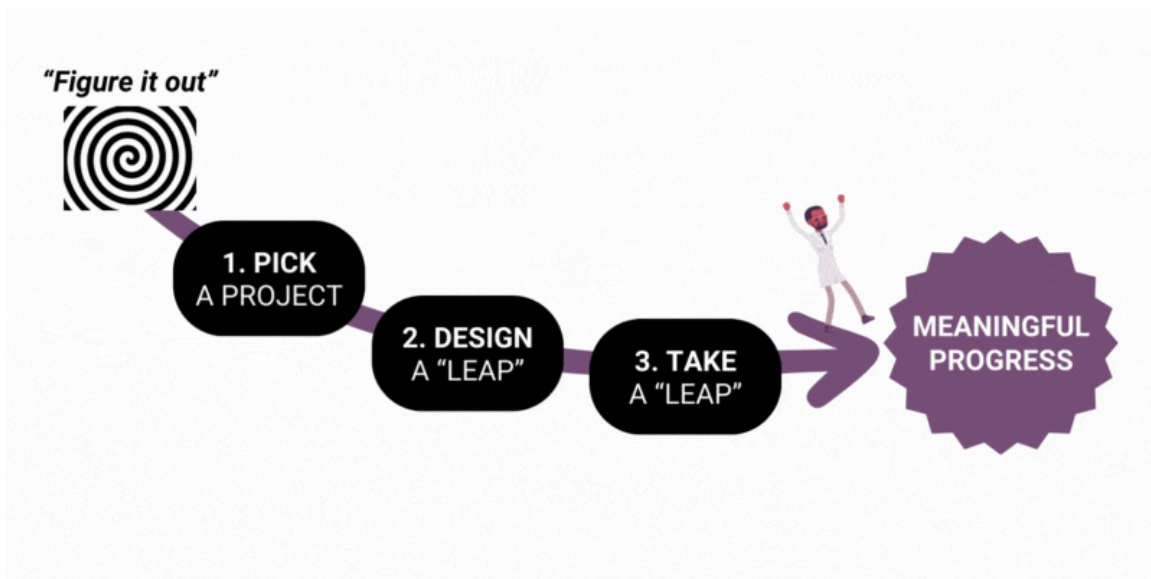
When highly-effective leaders feel stuck — they make progress by taking a SINGLE action.

The secret is designing the right kind of action.

If the actions on our to-do list are boring and mediocre, we tend to not do them.

When you turn the tasks and projects you feel stuck on — into something that "wakes you up inside" — that's when you'll discover the true magic of progress.

Here's the formula:



Step 1: Pick a project to move forward on (1 min)

Look at your strategic dashboard or list of projects.

Pick one project you're procrastinating, avoiding or stuck on.

Step 2: Design a “[leap](#)” to pull you forward (9 min)

Brainstorm 7 actions you can take that meet these five criteria [from Tara Mohr](#):

5 CRITERIA FOR A LEAP

Design and take an action to make progress when you feel stuck:

BOLD

What action gets your adrenaline flowing?
What supports you to move closer to your dreams?
What excites you and feels *impossible*?

NOW

What can be started and finished in the next 2 weeks?

SIMPLE

What action is simple and described in a sentence?


LEARN


What question do you want to answer?


END-USER

What puts you in direct contact with them?


My pro-tips for designing a better leap:

 **Exaggerate the BOLD criteria for maximum impact.** It should feel scary and get you excited. If you feel like you’re taking action before you feel “ready”, you’re on the right track. Keep going.

 Success isn’t achieved by taking a lot of action. It’s about taking a few actions consciously and deliberately. **Quality over quantity.** Most people think too small. Take whatever you’re thinking about and [multiply it by 10](#).

 If you design a leap and it still feels boring, it means there’s a criteria missing. **Go ask a mentor or coach for a quick boost of support to design a better leap.**

 If you have an urge to “get this leap perfect”, **think about your role models and what they would do.**

 A common mistake is to design a leap that doesn’t get you “out of the office”. That’s your brain keeping you in your comfort zone. **Remember to get in direct contact with your end-user.**

Step 3: Take a [leap](#)

Do it.

If you're doing it right, the leap you designed will transform something you're putting-off or anxious about, into something that actually "pulls you forward" and gets you excited.

A powerful example of how a physician used a leap:

A medical director was eyeing a CMO position at a forward-thinking population health organization.

She felt extremely unqualified, to say the least.

With coaching, she overcame her self-doubt and anxiety, and made the leap to apply.

The gamble paid off. She was hired and found herself on-fire for the organization's mission and culture that matched her own.

Ironically, her leap was rewarded with another promotion within a year .

What if she hadn't taken the [leap](#) to apply?

Do yourself a favor and pause right now to invest a few minutes in yourself — so you accomplish more with less effort today:

✓ (5 min) **Send a quick email to a mentor, coach, or colleague — suggesting a 15 minute coffee or walk.**

Send the [leap PDF](#) ahead of time and ask them to coach you through it, holding you accountable to the things that matter most to you. *If it feels awkward, say "my coach made me do this" or suggest you both coach each other through it.* You'll get 10X more out of the experience if you talk to someone else vs DIY.

✓ (15 min) **Design a thoughtful action using the [criteria for a leap](#) (DIY).** If you can't do it right now, block 15 min on your calendar for later today.

✓ (5 min) **Write a list of 7 projects or tasks you're procrastinating.** You'll be surprised by how many of those tasks you can, and will, get done as soon as you physically write the list ([Schrager & Sadowski, 2016](#)).

✓ (2 min) **Order [The Big Leap by Gay Hendricks](#).** Highly recommend this if you find yourself wondering why you feel stuck, no matter what you do.

✓ (4 min) **Get inspired to take action by [reading this story](#) from one of our clients.** When an unexpected heart condition threatened to derail his 100-mile race, [Dr. Jeff Albert](#) discovered the source of resilience isn't in avoiding setbacks, but in the power of a single mindset shift. His journey from likely defeat to an epic comeback underscores a profound truth: victory doesn't happen at the finish line, it happens when we deploy the courage to adapt. [Read the full story here.](#)

Bottom Line

The punchline is this:

If you want to be more effective at work and home — take more thoughtful actions outside your comfort zone.

Here's how:

1. Pick a project.
2. [Design a leap.](#)
3. Take the leap.

"We are kept from our goal, not by obstacles, but by a clear path to lesser goals." —Robert Brault

Next

LEAPs create momentum. The right **Goal Setting** structure keeps that momentum aligned and compounding.

Discovery Process

When I started coaching physicians, something shocked me.

I thought that people desperate for change would get the most out of coaching.

The opposite was true.

The physicians who experienced the most rapid transformation, were the ones who started their first coaching call saying something like:

💬 "Things are pretty good..."

💬 "I was just offered a new leadership role..."

💬 "I'm at a crossroads with a few good options..."

💬 "I feel like something needs to change, but nothing big..."

💬 "We bought our dream lake house, even if we don't make it up often..."

So, why were they hiring a coach?

I realized a lot of physicians feel a combination of stuck and restless — even though things are "pretty good" from the outside looking in.

They don't want to disrupt others—and they know something needs to change.

They aren't at a breaking point—and they feel themselves bending.

They aren't dying—and they don't want to just keep surviving.

When physicians bump into feeling "something's off", they usually try:

- Sticking it out: Our brains don't like change, so it makes sense why we say things like *"I don't want to create more stress for my family and colleagues..."* and *"I've accomplished plenty; more growth feels unrealistic..."*
- Looking for a new job, experience or industry: While it can provide a needed fresh start for some, it won't resolve inner restlessness for most since [a job change often leaves the root cause of the issue unaddressed](#).
- Spending time with others at retreats, events, webinars, etc.: While it's energizing to connect with like-minded people, these events tend to leave underlying issues unresolved after the 'conference effect' wears off.

The hardest part of feeling like "something's off" is usually a combination of:

- ✗ Wanting a deeper connection to meaning and purpose
- ✗ Feeling like circumstances are driving your life
- ✗ Not being able to give your best to others

In my 25+ years of coaching high-achieving physicians, a clear pattern has emerged:

The road to clinical excellence demands a relentless focus on developing technical expertise — often at the expense of developing your 'inner world' (e.g. core values, vision, unique abilities, passions).

That's why, even after achieving remarkable external success, you can feel an unsettled void; like something's missing.

You might realize that your career, shaped mostly by external demands, lacks alignment with your internal compass.

If you feel disconnected from fulfillment and purpose, here's a few secrets I've come across after coaching 800+ physicians:

- 💎 **Purpose is cultivated from within** — it's not a condition provided from the outside.
- 💎 **The idea that everyone else has it 'figured out' is BS.** Chasing what works for others distracts you from discovering your own solutions. A 10X better strategy is to embrace your own unique story.
- 💎 **Blaming external forces is easy.** True growth comes from confronting and expanding our self-imposed limits.
- 💎 **Embrace negative feelings as guidance.** Negative emotions can be valuable signals that reveal the areas of our life that need attention. Follow their direction to uncover deep insight.
- 💎 **Saying 'yes' to every big opportunity that comes your way—without reflecting on its alignment with your inner world—is a fast track to burnout.**

And the biggest one:

💎 **Your maximum level of fulfillment & purpose is limited by the depth of your self-awareness.**

Like a rocket without much fuel, shallow self-exploration can limit the 'maximum height' of our achievements, results and experiences.



If that resonates, here's the good news:

Recognizing that you feel a limit in your life is the critical first step towards realignment.

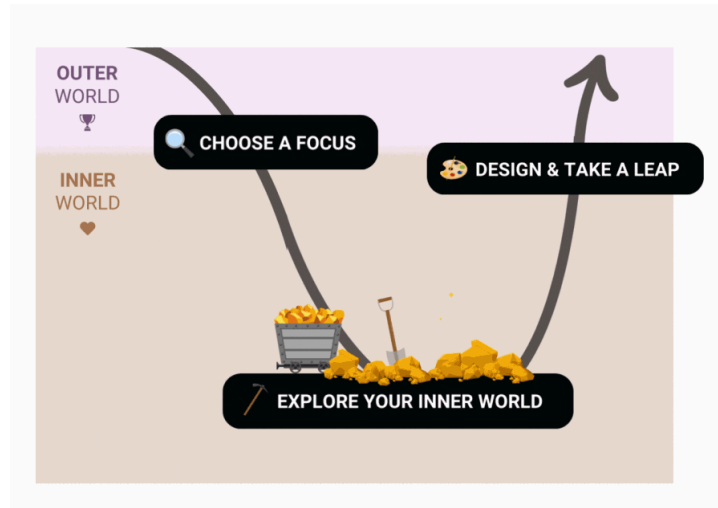
To experience more fulfillment in your outer world — dig deeper into your inner world.

Underestimating your inner creativity and wisdom is like sitting on a buried treasure.

If you think you've dug deep enough, dig deeper.

The more you explore your inner world, the more alignment you're able to create in your outer world.

Here's the proven 3-step formula:



1. Choose an area of life to focus on 🔍

Most people overcomplicate this step — not you!

It can be any challenge, goal, or thing you want to improve.

The main point is to stay curious, keep it simple, and just start.

Your focus needs to get you pumped and excited, or be causing you serious issues. That's what'll get you to actually take action and actually get a real result.

Keep your focus within your scope of influence. Yes, a lot of things are out of our control, and that can be hard. That said, we can acknowledge external challenges AND invest our energy in places where our efforts effect change.

Can't decide where to focus? Jot down 17 people, projects or habits that irk you and then flip the most irritating one into an positive goal. For example: "I'm irritated about my weight → "I want to feel healthier". I included nine more ideas at the bottom of this section.

Examples:

- 🔍 "I want to feel connected to meaning at work again"
- 🔍 "I want to improve my physical and emotional health"
- 🔍 "I want to be a stronger leader at work"

2. Explore your inner world




Use an assessment tool, free write, talk to a mentor or coach, explore a new tool or model on your own, etc.

The main objective is to feel more clarity about what's most important to you.

Let go of 'getting it right'. Keeping it playful and having fun with this part of the process, will lead you to the most fulfilling discoveries.

If you think you've explored enough, dig deeper. Underestimating your creativity and inner wisdom is like sitting on a buried treasure. The more you explore and lean into your inner world, the more alignment you can create in your outer world.

Examples:

-  "I miss teaching residents, it was so rewarding"
-  "Running before work used to fill me with energy"
-  "I want to be the type of leader who has time to listen to their people"




3. Take one bold action aligned with your inner world

The main objective here is to take the [boldest action you can manage](#).

Bold doesn't mean crazy — it means aligned with what's important to you.

I strongly recommend using the [LEAP model for designing a bold, high-impact action](#). To maximize the impact of your action; ask a trusted colleague, mentor or coach to provide input on the design of your leap, and hold you accountable to taking it by when you say you will.

Examples:

-  "I'm going to ask my Chair about teaching for 1 hour/week"
-  "I'm going to jog with my 1 year old to the coffee shop tomorrow"
-  "I'm going to personally round on 2 of my direct reports this week"

Here's the best part:

The deeper you dive into your inner world, the more equipped you are to soar in the outer world.

It's like fueling a rocket for liftoff.



Plus, like all habits, this is a muscle that gets stronger the more you do it.

Here's a few examples from real clients:

1. Feel Good in the Morning

- 🔍 "I want to improve my physical and emotional health"
- 🔧 "Running before work used to fill me with energy"
- 🎨 "I'm going to jog to my favorite coffee shop with my 1 year old tomorrow"




🟪 Not only did it feel great to run again, they realized how great it felt to do something meaningful with their 1 year old, who they'd missed spending quality time with. It also gave their spouse some extra time to get the other kids ready for school (win/win!). I wonder how much this physician would be missing out on right now if she hadn't paused to explore her inner world.


2. Feel Excited about Work

- 🔍 "I feel bored at work"
- 🔧 "Robotic surgery is something I've always wanted to explore"
- 🎨 "I'm going to attend a robotic surgery conference this quarter"

🟪 This physician ended up having a blast at the conference, where "work felt exciting again". Their passion for medicine was reignited and they ended up enrolling with a robotic surgery training program later that year — which "never would have happened if I hadn't paused to reflect on what the issue was".

3. Feel Connected to Purpose at Work

-  "I want to feel connected to meaning at work again"
-  "I miss teaching residents — it was so rewarding"
-  "I'm going to ask my Chair about teaching part-time for 1 hour/week"

 Their Chair immediately says 'yes' — and this physicians was teaching residents within 60 days. He feel back in love with work, in a more *meaningful* way than when he had taught earlier in his career. And to think, he used to be convinced that he needed to move his family across the country in order to be happy with work.




9 Tools Highly-Effective Physicians Use to Unlock Fulfillment & Purpose

Here's our clients' favorite tools and resources they use to explore their inner world and unlock a deeper connection to their purpose.

Try one, I dare you :)




1. The Discovery Assessment

Probe the core of what drives you, explore the depths of your aspirations and uncover hidden motivations by completing the [Discovery Assessment](#).

-  Schedule 15 minutes on your calendar to answer the [Discovery Assessment](#) questions
-  Complete the Discovery Assessment and circle your [single biggest insight](#)
-  Design and take [a leap](#) that aligns with your insight




2. Find Your Why

Don't just manage; lead with intent by uncovering the deeper reasons behind your career choices—this is about thriving, not just surviving.

-  Watch [this video](#) or read [this book](#) or from Simon Sinek
-  Write your Why Statement using Simon's proven 1-sentence formula
-  Design and take a [Leap](#) in alignment with your 'why'




3. The Genius Zone

Discover how to stay perpetually in your Genius Zone, where every challenge becomes an opportunity to showcase your unique strengths. In my experience, the most you resist this idea, the more you will benefit from it.

-  [Watch this video](#) and [read this book](#) by Gay Hendricks
-  Complete the [Genius Zone Email Campaign](#). My clients say it's easier and 10X more powerful than you think — as long as you only send it to people whose answers you're willing to believe without discounting.
-  Design and take a [Leap](#) in alignment with your Genius Zone




4. The Flow Model

Navigate your way to more FLOW states by charting your position on the FLOW diagram and deliberately move towards activities that match your high skill level with equally matched challenges. That's where being a physician leader can feel most rewarding and effective.

-  Read [this short article](#) and locate yourself [on the flow diagram](#)
-  Brainstorm 30 actions you could take that might move you [closer to flow](#)
-  Pick an action that gets you most excited, adjust it to hit the [6 criteria for a leap](#), and then DO IT




5. The Life Wheel

Visualize the balance—or imbalance—in your major life sectors, guiding you to make more informed decisions that enhance your overall quality of life.

-  Do the [Life Wheel exercise](#) and pick a wedge of the wheel you want to invest in. IMPORTANT: Focus on what you want, rather than only focusing on areas with low scores. You may choose to focus on an area of life that you already gave a high score.
-  Brainstorm 30 things you could do to improve your satisfaction in that wedge.
-  Circle the idea that gets you most excited, adjust it to meet the [6 criteria for a leap](#), and then 'just do it'




6. The Lifeline

Visually map your personal and professional journey, to identify patterns and understand exactly how your decisions are shaped by your past without realizing it. By looking back at your highest and lowest experiences with fresh eyes, you identify hidden drivers and barriers to satisfaction, and make more decisions with clearer purpose.

-  Do the [Lifeline exercise](#)
-  [Free write for 5 minutes and circle a single insight](#)
-  Design and take [a leap](#) that aligns with your insight from the Lifeline exercise

7. The Ideal Day

Living your ideal day is easier than you think, because it's a sustainable lifestyle choice that evolves as you clarify and deepen your understanding of your inner world. I highly recommend [designing your Ideal Day](#) through the lens of a core value.

-  Pick a top core value you want to experience more of. I recommend looking at your Hogan MVPI Assessment (scientifically validated, only accessed through a certified coach) and/or taking the [VIA assessment](#) (free version).
-  Complete the [Ideal Day exercise](#)
-  Design and take a [Leap](#) that turns a normal day into an Ideal Day

8. The Inner Mentor Visualization 🌲

Reality check: 90% of our actions are automated and based on our past experiences. This guided visualization taps into your potential and anchors you into your future — to balance out the natural way we anchor into the past. For a few minutes, explore a future where you have realized your full potential, learning from your inner mentor how to navigate present challenges with wisdom gained from experience.

🔍 Listen to [this visualization](#) or [this visualization](#)

🔧 [Free write about the visualization for 5 minutes](#) and circle a single insight

🎨 Design and take [a leap](#) that aligns with your Future Self

9. The 5-Minute Journal 📅

The 5 Minute Journal offers a swift, research-driven reflection process that helps you pinpoint and prioritize actions within your control, refreshing your focus and decision-making for the day in a few minutes.

🔍 Buy [the journal](#) (or [print out the questions for free](#))

🔧 Stick it by your bed and do it for 5 minutes a day

🎨 After a week or two; read what you've written, circle something that gets you excited, and design a [leap](#) around it.

Bonus: Read, Watch and Listen

Explore your inner world by checking out a book, article, podcast or video that challenges your assumptions and gets the reflective juices flowing:

- [The Energy Audit](#)
- [5 Love Languages for Spouses](#)
- [Triad Conversation Guide](#)
- [The Future Self Framework](#) from Dr. Benjamin Hardy
- [The 1-page Future Self Cheat Sheet](#) from Dr. Benjamin Hardy
- [Life Launch: A Passionate Guide for the Rest of Your Life \(5th Edition\)](#) by Pamela McLean and Frederic Hudson ([here's a shorter article version](#))
- ["How to Love a Job You Want to Leave"](#) from The High Impact Physician Podcast (Episode 76)
- [Your Big Leap Year](#) by Gay Hendricks, PhD (a practical guide to complement [The Big Leap](#))
- [The Genius Zone](#) by Gay Hendricks, PhD
- [How Will You Measure Your Life](#) by Clayton M. Christensen ([here's the Ted Talk version](#), which is one of my personal favorites)

Bottom Line

If this is resonating but you feel like you're too busy — here's a perspective I urge you to consider:

Humans are wired to learn and grow.

It's not an option.

Just like a snake can't grow new skin until it sheds the old; we physically can't do the same things for 10+ years. Nature forces us to grow.

You do, however, get to choose how you grow.

So if you're feeling stuck or restless, it might be a sign.

Perhaps it's time to pause and ask yourself:

- What do you want to shed?
- What do you want to make room for?

Do yourself a favor and take 10 minutes right now to explore your inner world.

When done properly, it's the highest ROI thing you'll do for you and your family all year.

Next

LEAPs create momentum. The right **Goal Setting** structure keeps that momentum aligned and compounding.

Goal Setting

Why your goals aren't working

I've coached over a thousand leaders.

Mostly physicians — the majority at the top of their fields.

Some run departments. Some lead system-wide strategies.

All of them are smart, driven, and ambitious.

And yet?

Even the best of them struggle to set effective goals.

That's not a knock—it's a symptom of a bigger issue.

Most organizations don't teach us how to set goals that actually move the needle. Instead, you're left to figure it out alone. And when goals don't "stick," it's easy to assume it's a work ethic issue. *It's not.*

Here's what I've noticed about goal setting, from behind the scenes:

✗ Most aren't connected to what matters.

Goals that don't excite you and don't align with your bigger, deeper "why" won't last. You'll fall back into daily demands. Not because you're lazy—but because **your nervous system is designed to conserve energy unless there's a compelling reason to stretch.**

✗ There are too many of them.

If everything's a goal, nothing is. When we have too many goals on our plate: mental fatigue sets in, our focus fragments, and momentum stalls. It's like trying to lift 10 weights at once—you end up dropping all of them.

✗ There's a complete lack of cadence.

Most of us set big annual goals and rarely revisit them. Then **when circumstances change, we feel like we've failed.** Without a structured cadence to check in, recalibrate, and recommit, your goals become museum pieces.

A better formula: Connection × Clarity × Cadence

Here's a simple, science-backed way to get your goals working for you—not against you:

1. Connection to your Future Self

Effective goals start with identity, not tasks.

Ask yourself: **What kind of physician, parent, partner, or leader do I want to be 1, 3, or 10 years from now? What version of me am I becoming?**

When you anchor to your [future self](#), you rise above the chaos of the moment. You stop making reactive decisions and start making aligned ones.

It's a practical way to minimize future regret.

Try this: Instead of asking "What should I do?" ask:
"What would my future self set as a goal this quarter?"

2. Clarity about the target

You've heard of [SMART goals](#). But how often do we actually use them?

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

It's not new—and it works.

The challenge with this step isn't knowledge. It's execution. **Most of us rush through the SMART or skip it altogether.**

Slow down. Make it clear.

It'll feel slower up front, but it's often the biggest reason we either hit or miss the mark.

3. Cadence of bold action and reflection

Set quarterly goals.

Quarterly is the sweet spot. It's long enough to be strategic. Short enough to maintain urgency.

Every fourth quarter, dive deeper into annual planning. Annual planning without quarterly checkpoints are like ships making a journey without lighthouses—you lose direction when the weather changes.

Then revisit your goals weekly.

Every week, when you review your quarterly goals, ask:


- **What did I learn** from last week's bold action?
- **What's [one bold action](#)** I could take this week to move closer?

This reflection rhythm—plan, act, and [reflect](#)—is how progress is made.

You don't need a perfect plan. You need a quarterly goal and a weekly, action-oriented cadence.

Real world examples


Here are five examples that walk through the formula:

 **Future Self:** I want to be the kind of person who feels **strong, clear-headed, and steady under pressure.**

 **SMART Goal:** Do 3 strength training sessions/week for the next 12 weeks (SMART).

 **Weekly Action:** Book a personal training session, commit to a morning routine for a week, etc.

 I want to be **a present and playful parent.**

 One 30+ minute 1:1 outing with each child per month for the next 3 months.


 Add to calendar with spouse, let child choose the activity, reflect on connection afterward.

 I want to coach and **develop my direct reports more effectively.**

 Hold 1 coaching 1:1 with each direct report every month this quarter.


 Send reflection prompts ahead of time, schedule conversations, etc.

 I want to be **a decisive and strategic executive.**

 Launch one new cross-functional initiative aligned with org strategy

 Brainstorm with dyad partner, schedule 30-min stakeholder interviews

 I want to be the physician **leader people trust in crisis.**

 Respond to all difficult conversations this quarter with curiosity before solutions, measured with feedback from relevant colleagues.

 Identify one convo to prep for each week, pause before reacting, ask 1 grounding question.

Set fewer goals, using the right lens

There's no single right way to set goals.

But there are better lenses to focus through.

Some ideas:

- **Competency-based** (leadership, EQ, etc.)
- **Emotional** (being/doing/feeling states)
- **Project-based** (specific outcomes)
- **Life wheel categories** (health, relationships, finances, etc.)
- **Strategic relationships** (key people you want to invest in)

Once you've chosen a lens, apply it to both your work and your life. Why? Because the physicians who grow the fastest don't just set professional goals—they align their personal growth too.

Our most important recommendation to set better goals:

- **Set 3-5 goals — and never more than 7**

Think of goals like garden beds. Each one needs sunlight, water, and attention. Plant too many and nothing grows.

The Bottom Line

Most goal-setting advice skips the deeper work that actually makes goals effective.

The reality is: **a well-set goal is a promise to your future self.**

When you anchor to your future self, define goals with clarity, and build in a regular rhythm of reflection and bold action, everything changes.

The right goals don't just organize your time—they unlock your potential.

CALL TO ACTION: Take 10 minutes to try the 3-step formula now — to set or refresh one of your goals.

Powerful Questions & GROW Model

Want to Change the System? Learn to Scale Your Time

The fastest way to build ownership, without burning out, is to ask better questions.

If you took on a leadership role, you probably did it because you wanted to drive some sort of change.

Yet, there's one trap that almost every single new physician administrator makes:

When a high-performer takes on a role with more and bigger problems, they give more and bigger answers.

(It makes sense, high-performing physicians are trained and rewarded for solving problems correctly and quickly.)

The simple reality, however, is that:

The best leaders aren't the best problem solvers—they're the best problem framers.

Instead of jumping in with answers, they ask powerful questions that get their teams to generate and own their solutions.

This isn't theory—it's practical.

It's the fastest path to reduce over-functioning, drive better solutions, and scale your leadership impact without losing your sanity.

If you want to keep working hard and figuring it out and doing it all yourself, skip this one. Otherwise, let's dig in!

Important note: This isn't about passing the buck. When we give answers, we add weight to our shoulders. When we ask a powerful question — we provide an opportunity for someone to grow.

What Makes a Question Powerful?

A powerful question is:

- **Open-ended** (Starts with “What..” or “How..” — not “Which..” or “Do you...”)
- **Short and clear** (10 words or less)
- **Curious** (not leading)
- **Thought provoking in a productive way** (challenging assumptions, sparking reflection, etc.)

They literally create space in people's minds for them to think and **generate their own solutions**—not just respond.

Why They Work

- **Insight triggers dopamine** → People literally love their own ideas
- **Self-generated change is “stickier”**
- **Action** is more likely to be taken when it stems from reflection, not reaction

Common Mistakes (and What to Do Instead)

Vague check-ins

→ “How’s it going?” leads nowhere.

 Ask: “What’s the most important thing we could talk about right now?”

2-3 questions at once

→ Creates confusion, not clarity.

 Ask one great question. Then wait.

Giving advice

→ Advice rarely lands and is almost never acted on.

 Stay longer in the explore zone before you move to action.

Asking closed ended questions

→ Blocks creativity and ownership.


 Start with “What” or “How”.

Interrupting

 Ask. Pause. Listen.

Asking “Have you tried doing ___?”

Instead, try:

 “What have you already tried?”

 “What’s the real challenge here—for you?”

 “What does success look like from your seat?”

[Watch this video about common mistakes](#)

When to Use Powerful Questions (with examples)

Use powerful questions in the flow of your week:

- **1:1s:** “What’s one shift that would change your week?”
- **Team meetings:** “What’s the decision we’re actually here to make?”
- **Conflict:** “What do you need that you haven’t said yet?”
- **Strategy:** “What are we avoiding that might impact us later?”
- **Debriefs:** “What surprised you about that?”

[The 38 powerful questions every physician executive needs](#)

[Watch this video about how to use Powerful Questions](#)

These are high-leverage moments.

You’re already in them.

Powerful Questions change how you lead through them.

Try This

Start here:

One question. One conversation. One transfer of ownership.

That’s how you scale your impact — by scaling your time.

And it starts with letting go of the answer.

This week, before you give a solution, pause.

Ask one of these:

- “What’s the real challenge here—for you?”
- “What does success look like, from your perspective?”
- “What’s one step forward you’re willing to take today?”

Then pause and stop talking.

Let them own it.

Because when they do—you don’t have to.

Next

Great questions land best when people feel heard. To do that, you need to understand the **3 Levels of Listening**.

3 Levels of Listening

Your Listening Level Is Holding You Back

If you want to make a difference—listen to what's not being said.

Over 70% of the American workforce would take a pay cut to have their leader fired.

There are multiple reasons.

One of the biggest:

Not feeling heard.

And let's be honest — we're not as good at listening as we think.

That's not a flaw. It's a blind spot.

And in complex, high-stakes systems like healthcare, it's an expensive one.

Because the truth is:

You can't accomplish much of anything as a leader—if you're stuck listening on autopilot.

Great listening is the highest-leverage way to show we care about others.

And here's the kicker: if you're not feeling heard yourself — that's not a cue to speak louder.

It's an invitation to listen better—because research shows: **the opportunity to be heard by others only comes after they feel heard by us.**

Why Listening Actually Matters

Let's strip this down.

The practical benefits to listening well:

- Hear what's real—not just what's loud (or what you want to hear)
- Reduce swirl and rework
- Build trust—people feel seen, not managed
- Get to better decisions faster, with less pushback

Neuroscience backs it up: **When people feel heard — they're not defending, they're engaging** — so they think more clearly and their actions are more effective.

🎧 The 3 Levels of Listening

Listening happens in different ways.

This is the most valuable model I've discovered in my 30+ years of coaching.

This isn't a ranking of "good" vs. "bad." It's a tool for awareness.

Because you can't adjust what you can't see.

Take a look and notice which might be your "go-to" level of listening:

- **Level 1: Listening to reply** (aka self-focus)
You're filtering everything through your own lens. Thinking, "How should I respond?" or "What do I think about this?"
- **Level 2: Listening to understand** (aka other-focus)
You're tracking what matters to them. You're listening with curiosity—not judgment or conclusion.
- **Level 3: Listening for what's not being said** (aka global-focus)
Now you're tuned into what's between the lines: tone, emotion, context, silence. You're sensing what hasn't been named yet.



Hard truth 👉 Most leaders —especially in the complexity of healthcare— hover at Level 1.

But insight, trust, and traction live in Levels 2 and 3.

Listening is a muscle — that's built with intention, repetition, and reflection.

One of the quickest and easiest ways to build your listening muscle, is to build habits that quiet the constant chatter in our own mind (e.g. mindfulness, exercise, creativity, asking for feedback about listening, writing, etc.)



Key Point: Great Questions Start With Listening

You've heard it before:

"Great leaders ask great questions."

But here's what almost no one tells you:

80% of asking a great question... is a direct result of how you listened before you asked it.

If you're not present, even the best-worded question won't land.

It'll feel forced. Or worse—tone-deaf. We all know the feeling. Not the end of the world — but certainly not what we're aiming for.

Powerful Questions + Listening = Insight & Ownership

That's the equation.

And it starts with how you listen.

Good listening turns small moments into big impact.



Try It

Here's how to build your listening muscle:

Next time you're tempted to give someone a quick fix or some advice to move things along:

1. Pause and ask a [powerful question](#), from a place of curiosity.
2. Then track your listening: "What level are I listening from?"
3. Then, instead of fixing or solving or steering — again, ask another powerful question and notice your listening.

Repeat this 3-step sequence until you've asked 5+ questions, without giving any advice or answers in between.

We've watched physician leaders (skeptically) try this for decades and **walk away shocked at how fast the energy shifts.**

You'll be shocked by how much people reveal.

And how much easier leadership feels.



Final Thought

This isn't about mastering a new technique.

It's about unlocking a skill you already have—but less than 1% of leaders in healthcare use to its full potential.

It's not sexy, and it works.

Because when you shift how you listen, everything else follows:

- You ask better **questions**, which leads to...
- More **clarity**, which leads to...
- Better **decisions**, which leads to...
- Better **results**—all with less weight on your shoulders

Punchline: If you want to get different results in life, start by listening differently.

Next

Listening clarifies commitments; **Clean Agreements** keep them specific, actionable and trackable.

Clean Agreements

Drama is Optional (If You Do This)

Most leaders don't realize they're causing the drama they despise.

Not intentionally.

Not because they're careless.

It's because they skipped one small habit:

Clean agreements.

Most people haven't heard of them. I didn't until a few years ago.

The idea almost feels too simple to be effective.

But that's exactly what makes it one of the most powerful anecdotes to drama in healthcare systems.

The Drama You Think Is Emotional... Probably Isn't

Drama for a clinical executive often looks like:

- Missed expectations or milestones
- Circling conversations
- People thinking they were in agreement—only to find out they weren't

Here's the punchline:

We should expect these types of headwinds when we make sloppy agreements—or no agreements at all.

What are sloppy agreements?

They're vague. Implicit. Assumed. Or just missing altogether.

They're normal and surround us everyday:

- *"Let's circle back on that"*
- *"Keep me posted"*
- *"Sounds good, I'll try to get to it this week"*

And they quietly fuel missed expectations, team tension, and over-functioning.

Let's get clear on what we should do instead.

What's a Clean Agreement?

A clean agreement is a short, simple sentence:

Who will do **What**, **By when**

- **Who** specifically will do the task?
- **What** specifically is the measurable task?
- **When** will the task be complete, including date and time?

Clean Agreement Formula:

_____ will do _____ by _____
(who) (what) (when)

The crucial last step is renegotiating the agreement, if needed:

Reach out as soon as you know that an agreement isn't going to be kept, to the other people involved, to inform them — and renegotiate a new clean agreement. (e.g. "I told you I would do [task] by [original date] and I want to renegotiate that timing with you — how does [new date] work for you?")

Clean agreements don't take long to make.

And they save hours of swirl, rework, and relational wear-and-tear.

Here's a [worksheet](#) and [short video](#) if you're curious to learn more.

Why This Matters

Clean agreements:

- **Make feedback easier** (you're not correcting the person—you're referencing an agreement)
- **Surface hidden misalignments before they snowball**
- **Create trust** without micromanaging

These are the moments where physician leaders most benefit from making cleaner agreements:

- End of meetings
- 1:1 conversations (coaching)
- Performance reviews
- Strategic planning
- Family discussions (especially with spouses)

The harsh reality is that most of them probably end with vague next steps or unspoken assumptions right now — and that's okay.

How This Connects to Coaching

If you've been using powerful questions and deep listening, you've probably seen this cycle already:

Powerful Questions + Listening = Insight & Ownership from Others

But insight and ownership are just energy—until you apply them.

Clean agreements are the bridge that we use in coaching conversations to **transform insight into a commitment to action that gets meaningful results.**

It's the simplest way to convert potential into progress.

Try This Today

Next time you're in a meeting, coaching session, or conversation that ends with "cool, I'll take that on"—pause and ask:

"Just so we're aligned—**who's doing what, by when?**"

Then write it down.

Pro Tip: Write the formula on a sticky note and stick it to your webcam.







It'll transform your meetings and your ability to do the work of a true leader, instead of managing drama.

Next

You've learned about coaching and how it can be used as a leadership and personal operating system.

Now, we'll build on that and leverage it in three critical ways: **Self, Others, Systems.**

Leading Change in Self

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Leading Change in Self, Others, and Systems

The Hidden Reason Your Change Effort Is Collapsing

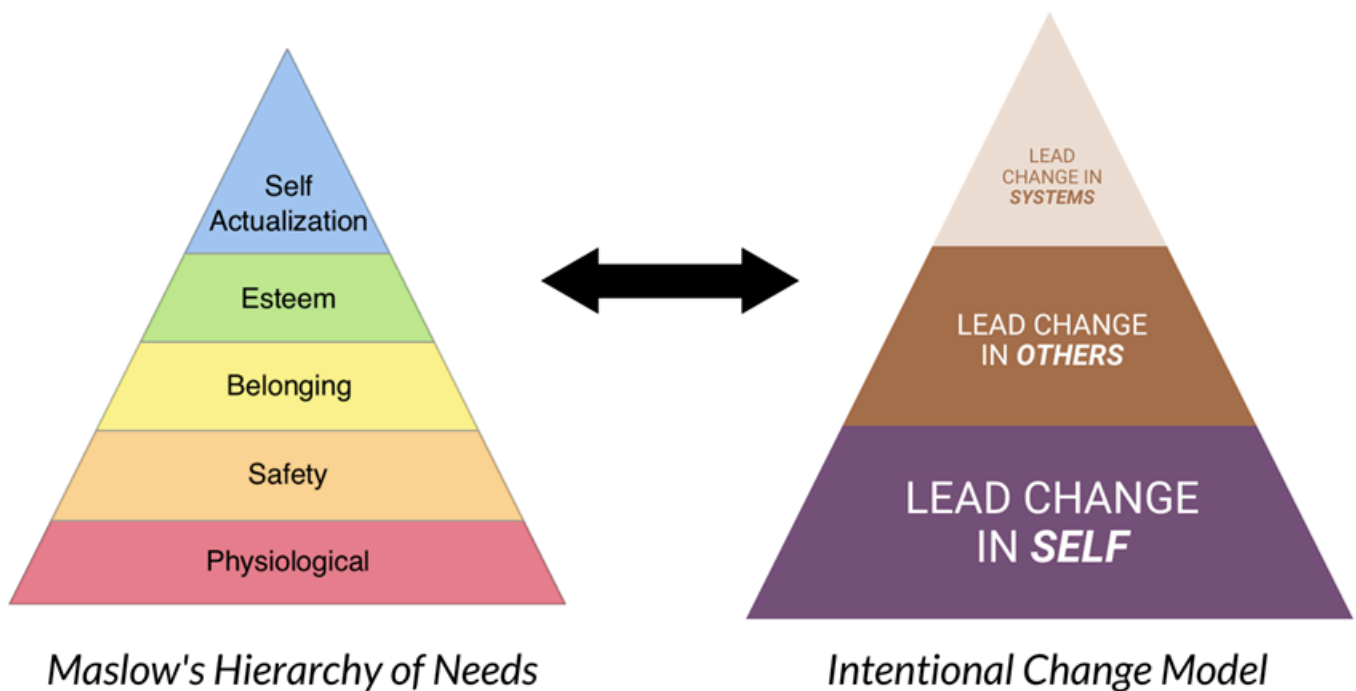
If change isn't working, you might be aiming too high.

Here's what I mean:

When a change effort struggles, most leaders double down on strategy, roll out new initiatives, and push harder for results. But here's the real reason change stalls—it's being led at the wrong level.

That's because every leadership challenge follows a hierarchy:

1. If you can't lead change in yourself, you won't be effective at leading change in others.
2. If you can't lead change in others, you won't create real system-level change.



Most peoples' instincts lead them to start too high in the hierarchy. They focus on fixing systems and influencing others before addressing the foundation—their own clarity, self-management, and adaptability.

If your change effort isn't gaining traction, don't push harder—go down a level.

Mistake #1: Trying to Change Systems Before Developing Relationships

Most change efforts fail because leaders start at the system level—tweaking policies, structures, and workflows—before securing buy-in from key individuals.

Every successful change effort follows a sequence:

1. People buy in first.
2. Teams align next.
3. Systems follow.

If your initiative is stalling, don't look at the system—look at the relationships beneath it.

Instead of assuming alignment, create it by investing in relationships:

- ✓ Ask [powerful questions](#) and [listen at Level 3](#)—fully focused, without judgment or agenda.
- ✓ [Acknowledge](#) people's contributions in a way that makes them feel truly heard.
- ✓ Give [meaningful feedback](#) and [create real accountability](#)—through clarity, not mandates.
- ✓ Make it a routine to [develop your people](#) so they feel equipped, not just expected, to execute change.
- ✓ Navigate [difficult conversations](#) with confidence, addressing resistance before it derails progress.

Systems don't resist change. People do.

And people don't follow new policies—they follow leaders they trust.

Mistake #2: Trying to Lead Others Without Leading Change in Yourself

(The Leadership Blindspot None of Us Want to Admit)

Most of us love the idea of influencing others—and don't want to admit when we haven't mastered the art of developing and growing ourselves. Yet that's exactly what drives the most meaningful breakthrough results in organizations.

If your team is disorganized, burned out, or disengaged, the hardest—but most effective—question to ask is: Am I modeling the clarity, focus, and ownership I expect from them?

Instead of trying to fix others, take an honest inventory:

- Are you [managing assumptions](#) or reacting with unchecked biases?
- Are you operating with [ownership](#) or slipping "below the line" into blame, defensiveness, or avoidance?
- Do you [pause and reflect](#) before reacting, or are you leading from a place of stress, reactivity, or exhaustion?
- Are you leveraging insights from [scientifically-validated assessment tools](#) — to manage derailers and align your work with your core values?
- Do you have a simple system for gathering helpful, candid feedback from others?

If your leadership behaviors aren't intentional, your team's won't be either.

Try to observe yourself for a week. Notice where you are reacting instead of leading.

This isn't sexy leadership work. But it's the work that makes leading others effortless.

The Shortcut to Making Change Easier

Struggling leaders assume they need more authority or new strategic plans.

But real leadership breakthroughs happen one level down.

- If system change is stalling, invest in building trust, relationships and team alignment.
- If your team isn't executing, focus on your ability to manage yourself.

Great leaders don't force change at the top—they shore up the foundation beneath it.

If a project feels harder than it should, ask yourself:

Which level should I be investing my time and energy into this week?

Because when the level below is strong, everything above it moves faster and easier.



Above the Line, Below the Line

The hidden "line" that shapes every conversation you're in.

Most leaders don't realize when they "[cross the line](#)".

And I'm not talking about policy violations.

I'm talking about *the line between open and closed*.

And here's the hard truth:

We all cross it dozens of times a day (myself included).

The real point is:

In fast-moving healthcare systems, those **moments where we drift into reactivity** — can cost us in ways we see and feel but can't explain the root cause of.

This "line" is quietly impacting every conversation you have. And you can't do anything about it unless you understand it.

So let's dig in...

Why This Matters (And Why It's Not Just "Being Calm")

When our ancestors saw a tiger in the jungle — their neurological defense mechanisms protected them.

The tricky part is, **our environment has evolved exponentially faster than our brains**.

We literally perceive a slight from a colleague in a meeting the same way we perceive a tiger trying to eat us.

From a neuroscience perspective — healthcare is literally a jungle.

Most clinical leaders intuitively get this.

When things feel threatening—in a meeting, during a presentation—your limbic system takes over.

- ✗ You react faster
- ✗ You defend your rightness
- ✗ You see problems more than possibilities

So to be clear:

You're not broken → You're a human with a brain.

But **without noticing this invisible force, you literally lose access to the best parts of your brain without realizing it** (e.g. creativity, strategic problem-solving, empathy, collaboration, etc).

And that's why swirl, misalignment, and mistrust creep in—even if your intentions are good.

This isn't about judging yourself.

It's about noticing how your brain works, so you can catch yourself—and, perhaps, choose to show up differently.

What It Actually Is (and What It's Not)

The Conscious Leadership Group created this model (credit to them) to name a phenomenon most leaders feel—but don't know how to see.

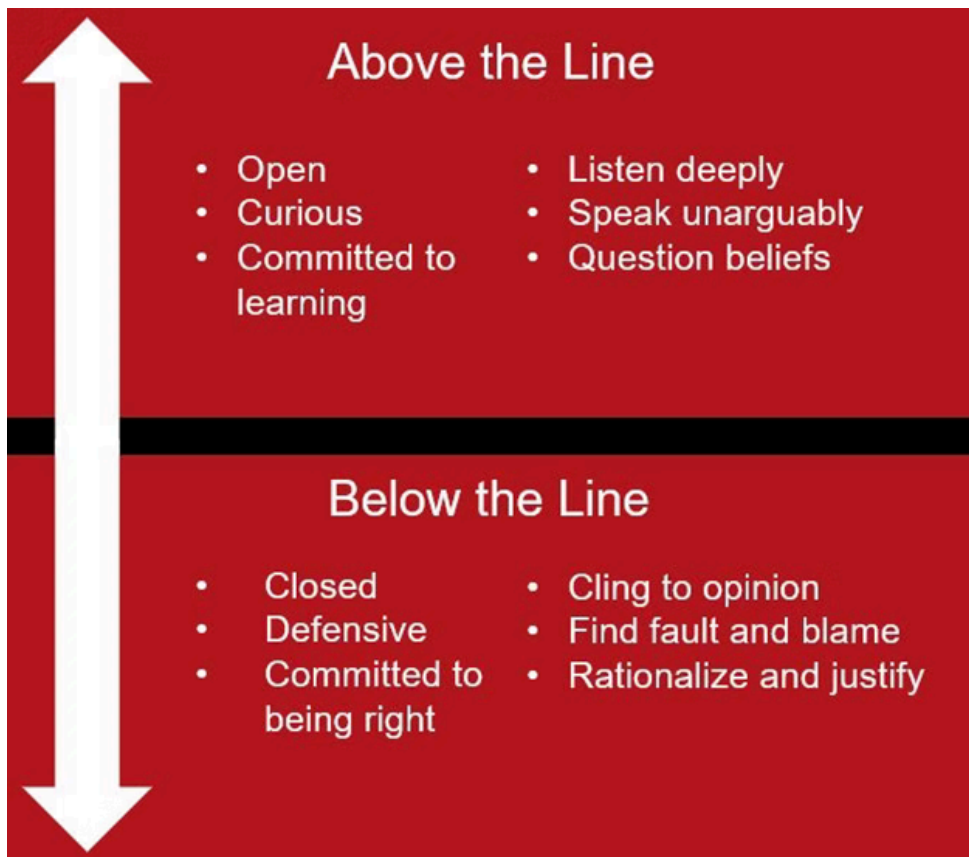
Here's the short version:

- **Above the line = an ownership mindset** (e.g. open, curious, committed to learning)
- **Below the line = a victim mindset** (e.g. defensive, closed, committed to being right)

Every conversation, every interaction—you're either above or below.

One isn't morally better or worse.

One is more reactive and one is more responsive.



A Key Nuance:

WE ALL GO BELOW THE LINE.

OFTEN.

The #1 thing to focus on isn't "staying above" — it's noticing where you are.

Because noticing gives you the power to choose.

[This video nails it.](#)

[Use this PDF to self-diagnose \(and diagnose others\):](#)

LOCATING YOURSELF: ABOVE OR BELOW?



Created with Kaley Warner Klomp & based on the work of hendricks.com

Conscious Leadership Group
www.conscious.is

🔧 How to Use It (Practically)

Use this mental model to shift your presence in moments that matter.

Similar to the nuance of “executive presence”, being above/below the line isn’t about being calm — it’s about being able to **stay in the room when tension rises, without getting pulled under into blaming and complaining.**

Check-in with yourself by asking:

- "Am I open, or trying to prove something?"
- "Am I curious, or am I defending?"

Check-in with your team (even if they don't know the model) by asking:

- "For the next 5 minutes let's listen to understand, instead of listening to make our next point."
- "Let's focus on each learning something here—vs winning something."

Use a simple self-diagnostic phrase to soothe tense moments with others:

- "I'm noticing I want to be right here."
- "I'm feeling closed off—let's pause and step back."
- "I can tell I don't have a great attitude about this right now."

You don't need to force yourself above the line.

You don't even need to say these out loud.

You just need to notice.

That's where presence begins.



Bottom Line

Most leaders know about the importance of listening, the power of great questions, the value of coaching, and the importance of clear agreements.

And yet, that stuff only works if we're **present enough** to notice what's really happening.

[Presence](#) is the #1 “soft” skill used by the best leaders in the world, in the most critical moments, to:

- **See creative solutions** when others spiral into blaming and complaining.
- Inspire others to take **ownership**
- **Get changes to stick**—one conversation at a time.

Above/Below the Line isn't just a coaching tool—it's a presence amplifier.

Ladder of Inference

The Assumption Machine: How Great Leaders Get It Wrong

A practical model for turning swirl into clarity—without slowing down.

You've heard it before:

"Don't make assumptions. It makes an..."

It's true.

And it's useless.

It's not actionable.

So we keep making assumptions—without realizing it.

Here's the dirty secret behind most assumptions:

Your brain builds stories in milliseconds. And those stories feel like facts in our brains.

That's why so many smart leaders end up misdiagnosing issues, reacting to irrelevant data, and confusing assumptions for insight.

The **Ladder of Inference** is the leadership tool that picks up where "don't make assumptions" leaves off.

It gives you the ability to **catch the moment you shift from observation to interpretation**—so you can stop confusing what's true with what you've decided is true — and start making **better decisions that get better results, faster.**

And once you spot your own patterns — you'll earn a reputation as the person who bridges—not fuels—gaps in understanding.

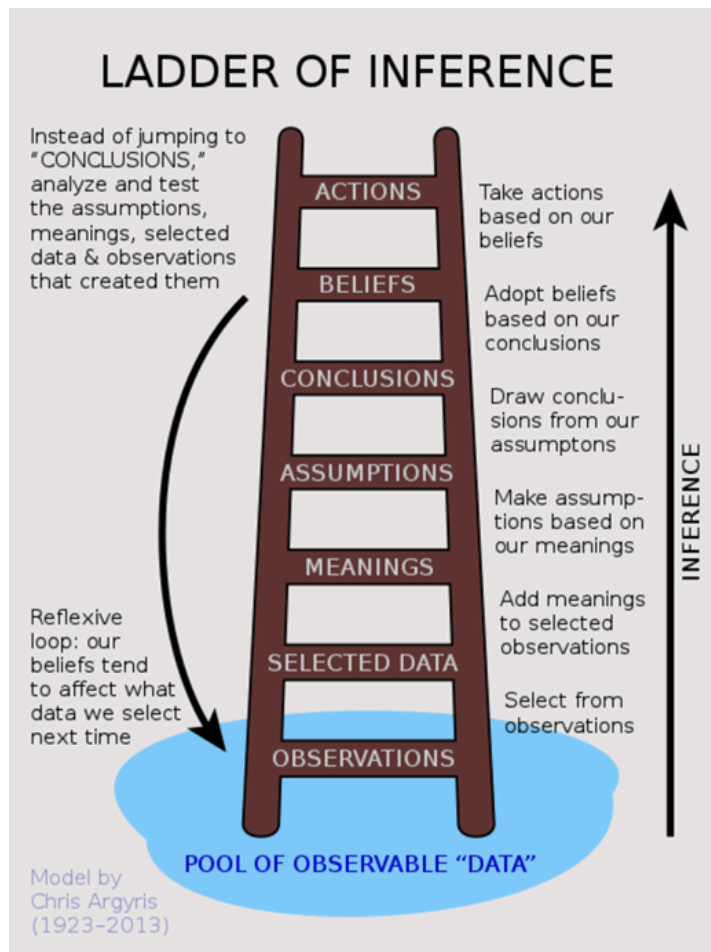
What's the Ladder of Inference?

Here's how your brain processes data, whether you realize it or not:

We Observe Data → We Select Data → We Add Meaning → We Make Assumptions → We Draw Conclusions → We Reinforce Our Beliefs → Finally We Take Action.

Let's call it the ladder of inference.

The #1 issue for high-performers: They tend to "climb" straight to the top of the ladder—and spend little or no time in the middle.



The #1 skill for high-performers to develop: **Instead of jumping to conclusions — analyze and test the assumptions, meanings, selected data and observations that created them.**

Most people don't know they're reacting from halfway up the ladder.

Many confuse fast thinking for clear thinking—and conclusions for facts.

The secret is: the best leaders design their questions and actions from the bottom up.

They *literally* lead from what's real.

And so can you.



Two Situations You Might Recognize

Here's how the choice to climb or stay low on the ladder usually plays out:



#1 — The Meeting Spiral

You're leading a team meeting.

A respected **peer walks in 10 minutes late**—again.

You nod and move on.

Later, **they cut off your idea**.

Option 1: Climb 🧗

- Internally, your brain is firing: *"They're late and disengaged. They don't respect me or the purpose of this meeting. I don't think I can rely on them."*
- Two weeks later, someone suggests putting them on a key project. Even though they're the perfect person for the job — you hesitate and say: *"Let's find someone more committed"*. **Now the project gets delayed while the team scrambles to find someone else to fill the critical role.**

Option 2: Stay Low 🪨

- You pause and ask them after the meeting: *"Hey, you've been running late a few times—what's up?"*
- They share they've been covering a crisis in another department and didn't want to miss your meeting entirely. **You realize their commitment isn't an issue**—it's the context. And you adjust expectations together.



#2 — The Partner Comment

You get home and walk in the door late.

Your partner says, "Wow. Another long one?"

Option 1: Climb 🧗

- You instantly feel irritated: *"They think I'm slacking. They don't get how much I'm managing right now."*
- So you shut down, stay on your phone, and the night drifts off-course.

Option 2: Stay Low 🪨

- You take a breath and ask: *"Was that frustration, curiosity or something else?"*
- They laugh and say, *"Just tired—I was hoping you'd be home earlier so we can watch our favorite show together."* You settle in, and the evening turns into connection instead of conflict.

In both moments, if you chose to climb — your actions are justified in your mind.

The problem is: they weren't based on observable reality.

They were based on the story you climbed into — without realizing it.

Takeaway

Reactions are human. This isn't about cutting off from your feelings. This is about understanding what's driving them — and making a small shift that creates a win for everyone.



How to Stay Low on the Ladder (Where Results Happen)

This is less about “being mindful” and more about having a mental framework that supports you to make fewer preventable mistakes—and lead better in the moments that matter.

Here’s where to focus when trying it out:

Tip 1 — Name What’s Happening

When you feel that “tight” sensation—racing thoughts, rapid rebuttals, and certainty that you’re right...

Try saying to yourself:

- “I’m up the ladder.”
- “What data am I missing?”
- “What story am I already building?”

Naming it interrupts the climb. Then the choice to “climb or stay low” becomes possible again.

Tip 2 — Wondering: “what else might be true?”

When you’re convinced you understand the other person’s intention—and think it’s not good...

Pause and ask:

- “What if I’m missing some critical information?”
- “What if the opposite was somehow true?”
- “What else might explain this strange behavior?”

These questions put you back in diagnostic mode instead of defense mode.

Tip 3 — Listen to Learn, Not Confirm

When someone’s halfway through their sentence—and you’re already crafting your response...

Listen only for the facts behind their view, asking questions to learn:

- “What did you hear/see that led you to that?”
- “Can you walk me through your thinking?”

It’s impossible to stay high on the ladder while genuinely seeking new data.

Tip 4 — Ask One More Question Than You Feel Like Asking

When you think you’ve nailed the situation—and are ready to move on:

Ask one more question before sharing your conclusion:

- “What else do you want me to know?”
- “Is there anything else we might be missing?”
- “What else is going on for you right now?”

One more question = one less assumption.



Leader Who Operate In Reality Get Real Results

Most people don't know they're reacting from halfway up the ladder.

Many confuse fast thinking for clear thinking—and stories for facts.

But now you know the difference.

That gives you an edge.

Most leadership mistakes come from acting on the wrong rung.

The best leaders design their questions and actions from the bottom up.

They lead from what's real.

And so can you.



Try It This Week:

- **Reminder:** Print the visual and stick it next to your webcam.
- **Scan:** After your next team meeting, ask yourself:
"What assumptions did I make—and were they based on observable data?"
- **Challenge:** Choose one high-stakes conversation this week and make your only goal: Notice when you climb. Ask one more question instead.



Inner Critic

Before we jump in: According to our clients, the #1 breakthrough they report—hands down—is finally understanding their inner critic. It's like flipping on a light in a room they didn't realize they'd been living in their whole lives. Once they can name it, they can work with it—instead of being run by it. Enjoy!



Who's Running the Show?

We've all been there:

You leave the meeting, check your phone, or finally get a quiet minute to yourself—and **a sharp voice inside your head cuts in.**

"Why did you say that?"

"You know better..."

"You're behind... again."

That voice isn't random.

It's your Inner Critic.

And as frustrating as it is, it's not inherently bad.

It's doing its job (as part of your "crocodile brain")—to protect you from embarrassment, rejection, or failure.

The problem is: it's using "crocodile logic" to protect a version of you *you've already outgrown.*

Here's what you need to know about your Inner Critic — so you get the best from it, and leave the toxic parts behind.

Meet the Critic: Your Past Trying to Protect You

You're Inner Critic is the part of your inner monologue that's:

- Fast and reactive
- Deeply invested in avoiding risk
- An expression of our safety instinct
- A strategy our brain uses to keep us in comfort zone
- Our brain's way of keeping us physically safe. Unfortunately, it also fires when we feel emotionally uncomfortable (e.g. meetings)

It's the internal voice of "don't mess up," "stay small," and "play it safe."

It evolved with you — and **it thinks it's keeping you safe by keeping you stuck.**

9 Ways to Recognize the Inner Critic's Voice		
Harsh, rude, mean	Voice of "You aren't ready yet"	Irrational, but persistent
Binary	Voice of body-perfectionism	The one-two punch
The tape or broken record	Voice of "You aren't good at math/ negotiating/ technical stuff"	Takes inspiration from critical people in your life

Why It Matters

It's like a name. **Everyone has one.**

It shows up most for high-performers when they're growing, stretching, or leading something new.

Its presence is usually a signal you're doing something meaningful.

It relentlessly scans for what's wrong—in yourself (fueling self-doubt), in others (causing frustration), and your circumstances (triggering dissatisfaction).

Its goal is protection—and it usually operates from [the past](#).

Left unchecked, it traps you in perpetual unhappiness.

And trying to pretend it's not there amplifies its power.

Recognizing and naming it is your first critical step to reclaiming control.

Believing happiness awaits "better" circumstances is your inner critic at its worst. If you feel stuck thinking, *"I'll be happy when I retire, get promoted, or someone else changes,"* you're sabotaging your own growth and satisfaction right now.

What To Do About It

Recognition is the first and most critical step.

You'll recognize it in moments like:

- **Delaying an important conversation** until it's "perfect"
- **Staying quiet** when you have something valuable to add
- **Ruminating** over feedback long after it's useful

Here's how to know the difference between inner critic and realistic thinking:

6 Ways to Discern Inner Critic from Realistic Thinking	
Inner Critic	Realistic Thinking
Definite pronouncements with little real evidence	Curious questions + interest in evidence
Black and white	Able to see the gray
Yes/No questions ("Is it possible?")	Open-ended questions ("How might it be possible? What part is possible?" etc.)
Repetitive	Forward moving
Focuses on problems/lacking areas	Seeks solutions
Speaks in anxious tone	Speaks in calmer tone

To be clear:

We aren't eliminating the inner critic.

We're learning how to manage it so it has less negative impact on your life.

What <u>Not</u> to Do When You Hear Your Inner Critic	
1. ARGUE with Inner Critic	3. ASSUME inner critic means you're on the wrong path
2. Get ANGRY or let person get angry	4. See inner critic as working AGAINST you

Here's 10 Ways to Quiet Your Inner Critic

Identify the Voice

1. Label and notice the inner critic

- What is your IC saying about this situation? What are common narratives from your inner critic?
- When you are stretching out of your comfort zone, what does he/she typically say?
- What are the situations when you feel self-doubt or hear your inner critic loudly?
- How does his/her voice impact the action you take? Now that you recognize that voice, what choices do you want to make about the action you take?

2. Separate the "I" from the Inner Critic

- What would it sound like if you rephrase the inner critic narrative from "I am..." or "You are..." to "My inner critic thinks that..." or shift "I'm feeling..." to "My inner critic is feeling very anxious, fearful, etc?"
- When could you use this rephrasing?
- What will it allow you to do?

3. Draw Character

- Imagine what your inner critic might look like. A cartoon character, an animal, movie star, stern professor? Helps to personify an image. Begin to doodle and capture part of her/his vibe. What adjectives? Where does she/he live? What does she/he Like to do? Name your character. Experiment using "generative AI" tools like ChatGPT to draw it.

Here's my IC, "Gretchen", created with AI:



Ground in New Perspectives

4. Compassionately sees IC motives

- What does your safety instinct not like about this situation?
- What is your IC trying to protect you from?
- What is it really worried about here?

5. Look for humor in what it is saying

- What about what your IC is saying seems funny? Ridiculous? Absurd?
- What can you laugh at?

6. Check in with Inner Mentor

- What does your IM have to say about this situation?
- What wisdom does your IC have to offer?

7. Choose a core value to lead instead

- If you choose not to let your IC determine your actions, what core value would you place in the lead? (service, community, fulfillment, etc)
- What would you say?
- What else would you do differently?
- What could the impact be of leading from this place in this situation?

Advanced

8. Remove Inner Critic from the Scene

- Where would your Inner Critic love to go on a vacation or somewhere for the next few hours?
- What would make her/him really happy? Imagine her/him there. See her/him having a great time and being fully occupied. Now turn your attention back to you, to what is here when she/he is gone. What do you know to be true? What is the right action to take?
- Put your inner critic on a shelf, or physically take her/his hand and walk her/him out of the room and close the door. Now come back, now let's hear from you- the heart of you. What do you want in this situation? What do you know?

9. Pantomime putting all the inner critic thoughts into a vessel, cup or box.

- See your inner critic thoughts. Put them one by one or all at once into a boat, cup or box. Now turn your attention back to yo- to what is here when she's gone. What do you know to be true? What is the right action to take?

10. Imagine simply turning down the volume on the critic's voice.

- As you hear your inner critic's voice, reach out your hand and pretend to turn down the volume knob and sense her/his voice getting quieter and quieter.
- Now turn our attention back to yo- to what is here when she's gone.
- What do you know to be true? What is the right action to take?

The Bottom Line

Neuroscience confirms: **pushing away or arguing with your inner critic only strengthens it.**

Effective leaders learn to understand and work with it.

You can't silence the Critic. You don't need to.

And, you can stop handing them the mic.

Leadership isn't about having no self-doubt.

It's about being aware of what's driving you—and making a choice from that place of awareness.

This week: Pick one moment where the Critic showed up—and follow the journal prompts in this section.

Inner Mentor

Before we jump in: If understanding the inner critic is most our clients' #1 breakthrough, this is #2. The inner mentor is the tool that turns "future self" from a vague concept into a trusted guide. It helps you access the part of you that already knows how to lead with clarity, calm, and conviction—right now.

Meet the Mentor: The Future Trying to Guide You

If the [Inner Critic](#) is reactive, your Inner Mentor is strategic.

If the Critic says "not enough," your Inner Mentor says "you already are."

Your Inner Mentor is the quiet, steady voice that sees the big picture and reminds you what actually matters.

Imagine speaking to yourself 20 years from now—someone who's already navigated your biggest challenges. That perspective instantly clarifies your next steps and priorities.

If your [future self](#) is the destination, your inner mentor is the telescope that brings it into focus.

It connects you to who you want to become.

Regularly connecting with it will change how you lead, show up, and make critical decisions in the moment — with more calm, conviction, and connection.

And neuroscience confirms: visualization profoundly impacts decision-making and behavior. Experiencing your future self neurologically primes you to make better, wiser choices today.

Trying to intellectually muscle your way through tough situations keeps you spinning. Real breakthroughs occur when you pause and genuinely connect to the wisdom already inside you.

And you don't need years of meditation or a mystical experience. Your Inner Mentor is accessible today, immediately ready to clarify your most difficult challenges and propel you forward.

It's not fantasy.

It's your future self, available in real time.

In short, your Inner Mentor is:

- A future version of your more evolved self
- The loving and wise part of ourselves
- Our spirit, soul or high self

Getting to know Your Inner Mentor

It's hard to access: It doesn't yell. It doesn't interrupt. It waits for space.

If you've heard your Inner Mentor before, it probably looked something like:

- After a big failure, saying: *"That doesn't define you."*
- During a tough call, saying: *"Lead with integrity. You'll be proud you did."*
- When things get loud, saying: *"Focus on what matters most."*

The quickest way to get to know your Inner Mentor is using the visualization, below, which is a guided experience to explore and focus on it — from a place of curiosity.

It's a top 3 tool for most of my clients:



Post-Visualization Journal Prompts

(Remember: highly effective leaders [pause to write, reflect and clarify their objectives](#) before "jumping in")

Free write about what you experienced during visualization; images, feelings, insights, etc.

- What was the landscape around your future self's home like? What did it feel like?
- When your future self came to the door, what did you notice about her/his presence, vibe, style, body?
- What was the inside of her/his home like? What colors, textures, scenes or details did you notice?
- What has been most important about the past 20 yrs?
- What do you need to know to get from where you are to where she/he is?
- How else can you be most true to yourself?
- Any other questions you wanted to ask?
- Does your Inner Mentor have a name, metaphor or symbol?

Pick Words to Connect You to Your Inner Mentor

1. Scan your notes from this exercise and circle 5 key words or phrases that connect you with your best self, future self and/or Inner Mentor
2. Now pick 2 words or phrases that make you feel most connected to your best self, future self and/or Inner Mentor. Write them down and come back to them often.

Advanced Journal Prompts:

What is the difficult situation, dilemma or challenge you're facing?

- What does your Inner Critic have to say about it?
- What are some of your Inner Critic's protective motivations here? (Pause, breathe, get centered)
- What does your Inner Mentor have to say about the situation?
- How would my Inner Mentor approach this situation if she/he were going through it?
- Is there anything else she/he wants me to remember or know right now?

10 Ways to Grow into Inner Mentor

Ask yourself "What would my inner mentor do in this situation? What would she/he say?"	Make a collage, pinterest board, drawing, painting or some photographs that evoke her/him
Reserve specific time during the week to spend as she/he would spend it. ie: Sunday morning/evening	Imagine IM's ideal breakfast, lunch or dinner and prepare meal for self
Choose a day to dress like IM See how it impacts your day and alters the way you see self	Write an email like IM would
Make one change to home or office environment to better reflect her/his taste & style	Bring to mind an important relationship in your life- How would she/he relate to that person?
Identify difficult situations and ask how your IM would see it. Walk over to her/him and listen for shifts.	Before entering a situation , imagine stepping into IM shoes and becoming her. See what she/he does, says, acts.

How to Discern if You are Hearing from Your Inner Mentor

Connected to IM; we hear guidance that:	Clues you haven't tapped into IM guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple & relatively succinct • Feels loving • Does not feel cerebral • Connected to heart and body • May communicate the visual element • May be surprising or baffling • Will be emotionally moving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex • Intricate guidance • Energy or mood feels same as before • Feels like still being "in your head" • Nothing new • Trying to convince yourself of something

Here's another way to think about it:

Your inner mentor is like noise-canceling headphones for your brain.

Connecting with it filters out the swirl of criticism, comparison, and pressure—and lets you tune into the version of you that's calm, wise, and fully present.

When you access your inner mentor, the future feels less overwhelming—and becomes accessible.



Try It Today

Like anything, accessing your Inner Mentor is a muscle that's only developed with time and repetition:

✓ **Make time for it.** Even 3 minutes of quiet reflection helps.

[Visualize your future self.](#) Ask: "What would they say right now?"

✓ **Look for clarity.** What decision aligns with your values and long-term goals—even if it's uncomfortable?

✓ **Try journaling or audio memos.** Put language to what your Mentor sees, believes, or prioritizes.

Putting It Together

This isn't about defeating the Critic or becoming the Mentor overnight.

It's about two parallel moves:

1. **Recognizing the Critic quickly and more often**—so it doesn't run the show
2. **Strengthening the Mentor intentionally**—so it speaks more often and more clearly

Think of your mind like a leadership team — an "internal boardroom":

Your Inner Critic probably sits closest to the mic—loud, fast, and always ready with warnings.

Your Inner Mentor is probably in the back—steady, wise, and easily overlooked.

The rest of your inner voices? They take cues from whichever one you give the floor to.

So the question isn't: "Do I have an Inner Critic?"

The question is: "Who's running the meeting right now?"

The Inner Boardroom is always in session.

You have the power to choose who leads.

The better you run your "internal meetings" — the better every other meeting gets.

This week, test it:

When you face a decision, pause and ask, 'What would my Inner Mentor say right now?'

The Change Map



When Change Gets Messy, Use a Map

Why most change efforts stall—and the tool that helps you get traction again.

You've seen it happen:

The strategy's clear. The priorities are aligned.

But the team? Drifting. Distracted. Quietly disengaged.

Or maybe it's just you—spinning your wheels when the next steps should be obvious.

Most people assume their plan is wrong.

Most of the time — we're just stuck in our own heads.

We, as humans, subconsciously circulate through the same thought loops over and over again.

We ruminate on the circumstances as we see them, and the limited options we think might work (Paivio, 1971).

The good news: There's a fix.

And it's not another theory — it's a map.



Why You Need a Map (Not Another Plan)

Plans are great—until the ground shifts.

When change gets messy, **most people don't need more strategy.**

They need a way to get their bearings.

That's what [the Change Map](#) is for.

You can think of it as a **practical, tactical companion to your change management model.**

Use it when:

- You're spinning on a decision that feels like it should be clear
- Someone says they're on board, but their actions don't reflect that
- You're trying to lead a change—but you feel like the only one pushing

It works for big things. Small things. Team things. Personal things.

And most importantly:

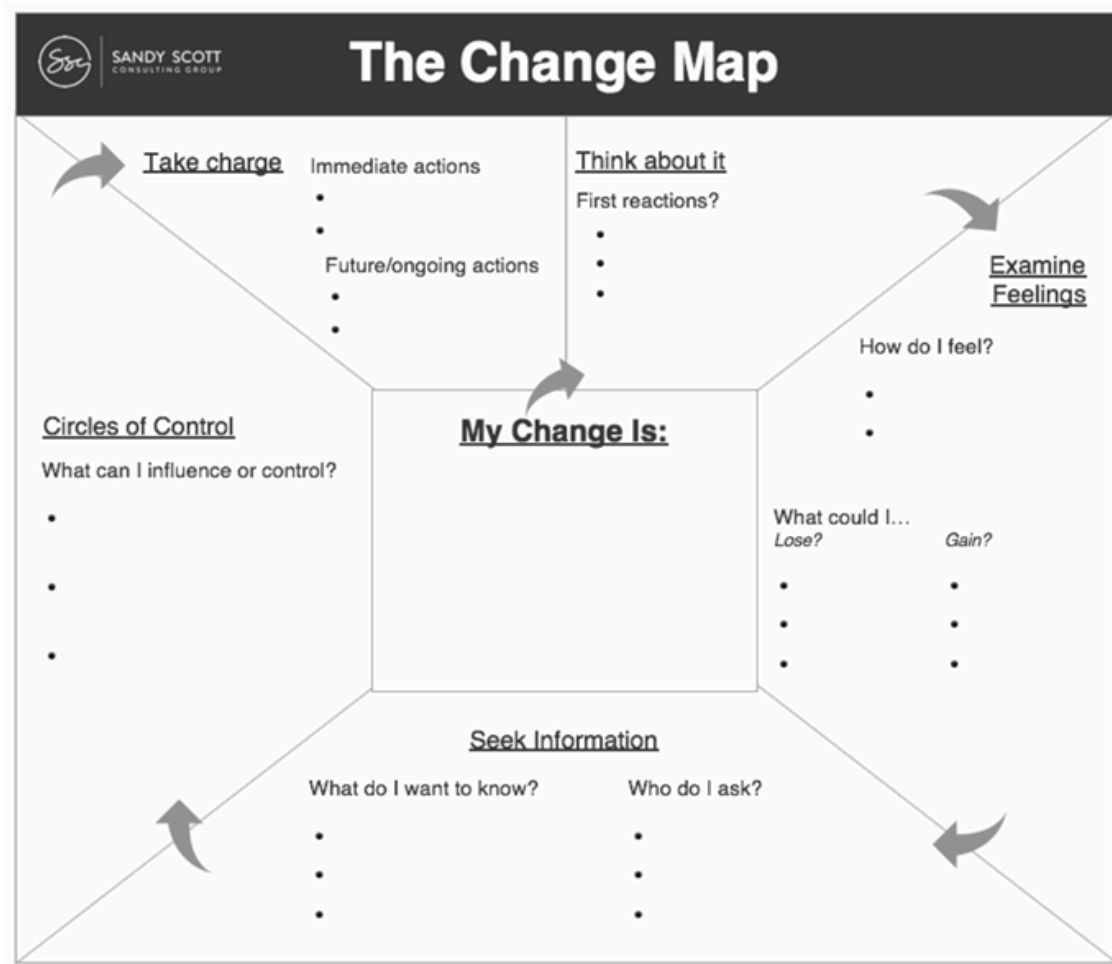
It works **best in real-time, high-stakes situations.**



What It Is (and Why It's Different)

This is not another brainstorming tool.

It's a simple and potent reflective writing structure that helps you see the real terrain of change—so you can lead through it with clarity, instead of guesswork.



Here's how each phase works:

- 1. Start by naming the change ("My Change Is").**
 Most change efforts stall before they start—because we assume everyone's talking about the same thing, when we're not.
- 2. Think about it.**
 We all have fast, automatic thoughts when something shifts—this surfaces them. Not because they're right, but because they're real and drive behavior.
- 3. Examine your feelings.**
 We like to think decisions are logical—yet we know emotion is often driving the bus. This step helps you pause and name fear, resistance, or excitement so you better understand what's influencing decisions.
- 4. Look at what you might gain—and what you might lose.**
 Humans tend to avoid change unless the pain point or promise of reward is compelling enough. Create fuel for the change by defining "what's at stake". Most resistance stems from unspoken fear of loss — this step surfaces it before it festers.

5. Seek information.

Clarity can't happen in isolation. This section reminds you that "I don't know" is not a weakness—it's a signal to ask and learn. The most effective people aren't the most certain — they're the most curious.

6. Define your circles of control.

In my experience, physician leaders are often under pressure to fix what's outside their control. This reminds you to focus energy where it matters—and let go of spending time and resources where it doesn't move the needle.

7. Take charge.

This part turns all that insight into traction. And it's not just about one big step—it's about forward motion that aligns with what matters, even in uncertainty.

You don't have to use all of it, every time.

And, if you've been stuck or swirling inside a big change or project... what do you have to lose?

Why It Works

The Change Map supports leaders to clear log jams fast, because of:

- Neuroscience: Our brains resist change when it feels ambiguous, unsafe, or out of our control. This map **shrinks ambiguity and restores our sense of agency**.
- Team Psychology: The change map builds psychological safety through structured reflection—**naming fear, uncertainty, and desire** out loud in a shared framework.

Three Ways to Use It (Pick One and Try It Today)

1. Use it By Yourself (Lowest Lift)

"For when you just feel stuck."

Try this:

- Print [the map](#)
- Pick one current or upcoming change (work or personal)
- Spend 5–10 minutes filling it out — and consider taking one immediate action

At a minimum, you'll walk away with surprising insights about what's driving avoidance or tension.

2. Use it with a Direct Report or Peer (High Trust)

"For when someone's nodding but not producing results."

Try this:

- Schedule a short 1:1
- Ask them to [fill out the map](#) in advance (mention you're doing it too)
- Use it as a shared reference to reflect and realign

It'll unlock the real source of hesitation (it's usually not what you think), and give you a shared language for discussing hard things like fear and ownership. When done right, you'll tee up their next move—on their terms.

3. Use it With a Team (Maximum Payoff)

"For clearing log jams on larger initiatives and projects."

Try this:

- Print [copies of the map](#) and bring them to a team meeting
- *Key Ingredient:* Put on some music
- Ask each person to fill it out individually (you can pick a change or let them pick their own)
- Ask people to pair and share
- Ask each pair to share an insight or something they learned
- Name common patterns and themes
- Close with a commitment to action



The Bottom Line

Most people try to power through confusion.

High-performers? We're the worst at this.

But leading from a place of swirl and uncertainty costs you energy, time, and trust.

The Change Map gives you a way to pause and ask:

- *"What's really happening here?"*
- *"What's mine to own?"*
- *"What's the next most aligned move?"*

It's not about clarity for clarity's sake.

It's about having a tool that repeatedly gets you the clarity that you need — so you can take the action you need — to get the result you need.



Try It:

- [Print the map](#) and free write for 5 minutes on a current change
- **Share it with a colleague** and ask them to walk through it with you
- **Use it to open your next leadership meeting**—fill it out individually, then pair-share, then group share

BONUS: [Check out this live demo of a physician using the Change Map to navigate a corporate-mandated furlough](#)

Reach out if you're looking for support to integrate this into your leadership rhythms or coach your team through it.

The Personal Scorecard

Build a Scorecard That Moves What Matters

Let's be honest — **most KPIs feel like a burden.**

And... I'm here to tell you that **the right KPIs set us free.**

Most people have too many KPIs on their plate, which leads to diluted effort → diluted progress → disillusionment → stalled growth.

Done well, KPIs help us focus on what actually matters and gives us a powerful way to say no to things that don't matter.

We've worked with hundreds of physician leaders, and the truth is this:

The right KPIs are energizing.

Because they **focus your time, sharpen your attention, and build confidence through small, visible wins.**

Here's how to do it yourself:

Lagging vs. Leading: The Crux That Changes Everything

Too many leaders only track lagging indicators—outcomes that show up weeks or months after the work is done. Think: RVUs. Promotions. Burnout scores. Sleep hours.

But the highest leverage KPIs are leading indicators: the actions, habits, or inputs that actually drive the results you want.

Two quick examples:

- Lagging: "I want to lose 10 lbs."
→ Leading: "*I walk 7,500+ steps per day at least 5 days/week.*"
- Lagging: "I want to build strategic influence in the organization."
→ Leading: "*I schedule 1 strategic 1:1 per week with a cross-functional leader.*"

See the difference?

Leading KPIs give you agency.

They make your impact visible before the results hit—and help you shift your strategy if something's off.

The 3-Step Process for Defining Your Personal Scorecard

This isn't about tracking everything. **It's about tracking fewer of the right things** — that align with your long-term goals and help you course-correct in real time.

Step 1: Start with one goal that matters

Ideally [a quarterly goal](#), [an annual goal](#), or something from your [10-year vision](#). This keeps your KPIs tied to purpose—not pressure.

- Personal example: “Be present with my kids after work”
- Professional example: “Create a culture of psychological safety on my team.”

Step 2: Define a leading KPI to reflect effort well-spent

Ask yourself: **What behavior would make success almost inevitable?**

These behaviors might happen daily, weekly, or even monthly—what matters most is that they're consistent and meaningful. (A monthly 1:1 date with your spouse, child, or close friend can be just as powerful as a daily meditation habit.)

- Personal examples:
 - Meditate 5 mins/day 4x per week
 - Track alcohol intake daily
 - Eat dinner without screens 5 nights/week
- Professional examples:
 - Host bi-weekly 15-min standups with my team
 - Acknowledge 1 person's contribution each day
 - Submit 1 new project idea per month that aligns with org strategy

Step 3: Track in a way that sparks momentum and joy, not guilt.

Make it **visual and visible**.

Some people use habit apps or spreadsheets. I keep mine printed and on my desk.

You can try daily, weekly, or monthly reviews— **the key is consistency** and clarity

(Many of our clients like a quick Monday morning check-in: What's working? What needs to adjust?)

You'll be **surprised how motivating it is to color in a checkbox or tally a streak**—especially when it's tied to something meaningful.

Own your whole-person scorecard.

Your boss might already have KPIs for you. Or they might not. Either way, the most important metrics are **the ones you design** for yourself—because they reflect what matters to you.

This isn't about rejecting your professional metrics. It's about taking ownership of the scorecard that fuels your real growth, on your terms.

And the best scorecards track the whole person—not just work.

Because how you show up at 8 a.m. is shaped by how you slept and who you connected with the night before.

Who you're becoming outside of work shapes how you lead inside of it.

The bottom line

The right KPIs don't drain your energy—they direct it.

They help us focus, take action, and build visible momentum toward the future we most care about.

Try this:

Choose **one leading daily KPI** that supports a goal you care about—and track it for the next 7 days.

Notice what changes when you measure what matters.

Leading Change in Others

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The “Who Not How” Model

Most physician leaders get stuck because **they’re asking the wrong question.**

They ask:

“How can I get this done?”

When the better question is:

“Who can get this done?”

(or *“Who can grow into owning this, sustainably and well?”*)

This isn’t just delegation.

It’s about **a shift in identity** — from someone who mostly *does* to someone who mostly *develops*.



Why You Keep Defaulting to "How"

This isn’t a personal flaw — it’s structural. You’ve likely been rewarded for mastering the **how** your entire career:

- Clinical training was built on mastery and self-sufficiency.
- Your reputation comes from being dependable and capable.
- You’ve been promoted for being the one who steps in and gets it done.

And, you know administration is a different game.

What got you here won’t get you there.

[As Dan Sullivan](#) puts it: **“The question of ‘how can I do this?’ creates paralysis. The question of ‘who can do this?’ creates results.”**



Why It’s Hard — and When It’s Right

[Shifting from “how” to “who”](#) can trigger some predictable objections:

- *“But I can’t just delegate everything.”*
- *“It’ll take longer to explain than to do it myself.”*
- *“What if they mess it up?”*
- *“My team’s already overloaded.”*

Valid concerns — and ones we often hear in coaching.



The myth is believing that competence = self-sufficiency.

It might have served you well in clinical work.

But it limits you as a leader.

This shift isn’t about becoming someone you’re not.

It’s about expanding who you are — so you’re not the bottleneck to your own impact.

That said, it’s not always the right move.

If your team lacks trust, capacity, or clarity — you may need to focus on stabilizing the foundation first.

This identity shift is most powerful when you’re ready to lead through others, not just for them.





The Real Goal: Shrink Your Zone of Indispensability

This doesn't mean abandoning the 'how'.

You still need to be able to zoom in when it counts.

But your job now is to play a **different game**:

 **The goal is to shrink your zone of indispensability — and expand your network of whos.**

That's how you scale impact without burning out.

That's how you build teams that solve problems without you.

That's how you create real leverage.



Quick Self-Check: Are You Stuck in How?

Ask yourself:


- Do I default to “**I’ll just do it**” more than twice a week?
- Am I the one others lean on to **fix, jump in, or clean up**?
- Do my direct reports have clarity on their development, not **just tasks**?
- Do I **feel like I have to know** the answer before I can delegate it?

If you said yes to even one: there's likely an opportunity right in front of you.




What It Looks Like In Action

Here are a couple of practical examples:

 **An overwhelmed dyad leader** decided to delegate a recurring 10-minute strategic update to a direct report — and watched them step up to the challenge while she reclaimed 2 hours/week.

→ The win-win: *Time savings + talent development.*

 **A department chief** brought her 5 direct reports into the hiring process instead of running it herself — and ended up with better hires, stronger ownership, and fewer onboarding issues.

→ The win-win: *Efficiency + alignment and buy-in from team*

In both cases, the objective wasn't about being less involved.

It's about being more intentional — and more scalable — in how they led.





How to Start Playing the 'Who' Game This Week

This isn't about transformation overnight.

It's about simple, strategic shifts that compound.

Try one of these this week:

- 🔍 **Audit your calendar:** What meetings are you leading that someone else could prep, lead, or run entirely?
- 🧩 **[Use this simple guide](#) to develop your direct reports** in <1 hour/month
- 🧠 **Spot one place** you're being a bottleneck and ask, "Who could own this in the next 6 months?"
- 📖 **Order and read ["Who Not How"](#)** by Dan Sullivan and Dr. Ben Hardy



Bottom Line

If you want to increase your impact, reduce friction, and grow others...

Don't just ask how to solve the next thing.

Ask:

Who do I need to develop — so this challenge solves itself next time?



The Situational Leadership Model

The Fastest Way to Frustrate Your People

The fastest way to irritate high performers? **Give tons of directions.**

The fastest way to set up a new leader to fail? **Too much autonomy.**

Most leaders default to **one leadership style**—and apply it to everyone.

The *most effective* leaders match their approach to **the person in front of them.**

The Situational Leadership Model

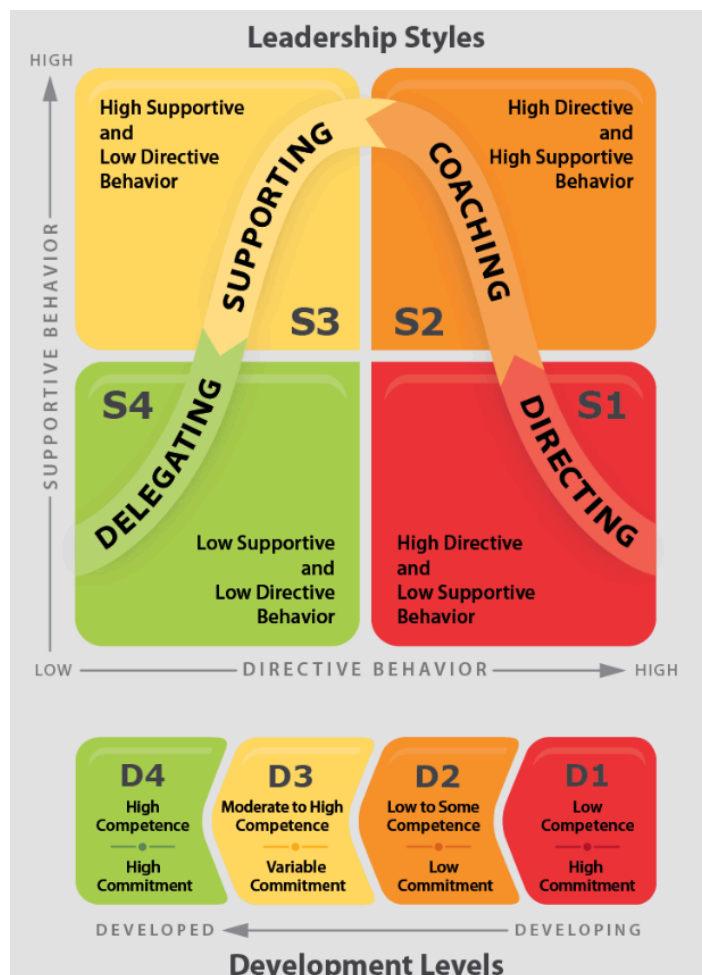
Every person in an organization is in one of **four development phases**, depending on two things:

🧠 **Competence** – Do they have the skills and experience to succeed?

🔥 **Commitment** – Are they motivated and confident enough to follow through?

A new leader usually starts at a **D1 development level**, grows through **D2 and D3**, and eventually reaches **D4**—but only if they get the **right support at the right time**.

No one stays in the same "box" — and we all go through cycles.



Each development level (D1-4) tends to respond best to a specific leadership style (S1-4):

🔴 S1 | Directing → Be crystal clear.

When we step into a new role or take on a big project, we're often eager and under-experienced.

Lead people at this level with **step-by-step expectations, clear goals, and direct feedback** to build competence, before they take ownership.

🟡 S2 | Coaching → Lay a strong foundation.

This is where reality hits and confidence dips, where we realize the new role or challenge is harder than expected.

Keep people at this level on track with **clear direction, regular check-ins, and opportunities to develop critical skills** before they disengage.

🟡 S3 | Supporting → Reinforce their strengths.

When we have experience but lingering self-doubt — the last thing we need is micromanagement.

Support these folks by **asking thoughtful questions, providing encouragement, and creating space for independent decision-making** so they build trust in their abilities.

🟢 S4 | Delegating → Expand their impact.

Highly competent and committed leaders don't need supervision—they need challenges.

Let them run things, and **keep them engaged by expanding their scope, involving them in bigger decisions, and acknowledging their contributions**

Diagnose Before You React

❌ Problems happen **when there's a mismatch** in what's needed and provided.

And **we create mismatches all the time**, without realizing it.

That's because it's natural to lead others **how we wish we were led**—or how we needed to be led earlier in our careers.

Once you see the pattern, you can stop making the same mistakes and start leading in a new way.

Before jumping to conclusions about someone's performance, ask yourself:

📝 **Do they know what's expected?** → Consider a directive approach (🔴 S1)

💪 **Do they have the skills to do it?** → Consider a coaching approach (🟡 S2)

🙋 **Are they unsure of themselves?** → Consider a supportive approach (🟡 S3)

😎 **Are they fully capable and confident?** → Consider more autonomy (🟢 S4)

This one check will give you big insight into how to adjust your leadership **so you stop creating friction and start unlocking potential**.

The Classic Challenge

Physicians are **some of the smartest people on the planet**. They've mastered complex clinical decision making in a way that makes my head spin.

And, without a clear roadmap, I notice high performers who take on leadership roles tend to rely on what worked for them in the past:

- **Doing the work themselves** vs. [developing their people](#)
- **Correcting mistakes** when they'd benefit more from building long-term competence
- **Setting high standards** without meeting people where they're at

It's not personal.

It's not a lack of potential.

It's often a case of "what got you here won't get you there".

The best physician leaders adapt their approach —the same way they adjust treatment plans — **based on reality, not assumptions**.

If you want more time back, **lead people based on what they actually need—not what's easiest for you in the moment**.

Because when leadership is **custom-fit instead of one-size-fits-all**, everything moves faster.

The Easiest 5-step Routine to Develop Your People With

(so you get more done in less time)

Most leaders think it takes work to develop their team.

You're already stretched thin.

Why add "team development" to an already overflowing plate?

The truth is: tapping deeper into your team's strengths —and aligning them more tightly with your organization's goals— *is the most efficient and impactful way for a physician executive to work.*

And when done right, it saves you more time than you can imagine.

Many managers think they need more resources or training to see real growth in their team.

What most managers *actually* need is a system —a sustainable routine that builds engaged, high-performing teams— without the fluff or complexity.

Here's one of those systems: a simple 5-step routine that gives you and your team the structure they need to achieve better results.

Ready to unlock more of your time?

Let's dive in.

The 5-Step Process:

Small Steps → Big Gains

[Each of these five steps can be accomplished in brief](#), focused meetings, with each step building on the previous one.

Expect this process to take about **3-4 hours/person over a quarter**.

While that's a lot of time, think about it:

How much time do you spend currently — chasing half-finished tasks, stepping in to solve others' problems, or re-aligning priorities?

The busier you feel now, the more you need to do this—it's the difference between constantly managing and having a team that's firing on all cylinders.

Step 1: Pick your core priorities

Pinpoint what matters most.

Set aside 10 minutes to write down 7-10 goals that matter most to the organization this quarter or year.

Think BIG: What's essential for growth? What changes will make the biggest impact? What projects will benefit most from team alignment, or are struggling the most because of a lack of team alignment?

Defining these core priorities not only sets your focus but also creates a clear roadmap for others, so they can see how their effort will make a difference, and feel confident moving forward independently.

Step 2: Pick your impact player(s)

Select for future potential and alignment with priorities.

Identify one person who's ready to take on more responsibility—someone whose abilities align with your high-priority goals and who is positioned to make a meaningful contribution. Starting with one person keeps the process focused and manageable, so you see significant gains by not diluting your efforts. If you're confident you can deepen development for more people, go for it. But if you're just getting started, begin with one person, and ask for feedback on the process. Going 'deep' with one individual builds trust and allows you to capture insights that can guide a larger development approach, creating a flywheel of momentum.

Step 3: Name their strengths in clear terms

Engage each person in a strengths-first conversation.

Meet with them and guide them to identify their unique strengths. Ask questions like, "What work has felt most fulfilling recently?" and "What do you feel naturally better at than others?" Recognizing strengths drives motivation far more than focusing on gaps ever will.

Most leaders underuse the power of strengths recognition, yet it's the fastest way to spark motivation. For best results, use a scientifically-validated psychometric assessment tool—and for an additional boost, here's [a quick writing exercise that makes this conversation even simpler and more impactful](#).

Step 4: Unleash their strengths onto real needs

Give them ownership of something that matters, not just assignments.

In this same meeting as the strengths conversation, discuss the organization's priorities. **Share your 7-10 core goals and invite each person to identify 1-2 specific projects they'd like to lead.** This reinforces their role and guides them to invest their effort into the work that matters most. [Use or adapt this worksheet to bring it all together for you.](#)

Step 5: Meet regularly and keep it brief

Development is a routine, not an afterthought.

Commit to short, regular check-ins — starting out meeting more often, then meeting less often when it feels right. **Shorter, more frequent meetings drive alignment without overwhelm.** Development works better as an active, ongoing process rather than a one-time event, because consistent and actionable conversations are what drive growth sustainably.

The single best way to reduce your workload here: request people answer the [three "looking back" questions of this Leadership Development Agenda](#) before your meeting.

BONUS: Celebrate progress over perfection

Leverage the compounding effect of celebration.

Most leaders are too focused on the next milestone to ever look back and celebrate wins. Which makes sense, because high-performers are wired to look for the gaps, not gains. But when we skip celebrating progress, we fuel burnout and a constant feeling of 'never enough'.

That's why it's mission-critical to pause, reflect, and recognize how far you've come. **Without it, even the highest-performing physicians end up feeling undervalued and unmotivated—caught in a loop of chasing goals without any wind in their sails.**

Takeaways

Here's the essential lessons my clients use to turn their team's potential into performance:



Development isn't extra work—it's how you get your time back.

Leaders constantly firefighting lose hours every week. Invest a few hours up front, and you'll cut down on "management by crisis" once and for all.



Ownership is better than assignments

Want real buy-in? Give people projects they own, not tasks they check off. Ownership isn't optional; it's the only way to see meaningful growth.



Clarity is the shortcut to team autonomy

Set priorities. Define outcomes. Give team members a clear path, and you'll free yourself from micromanaging.



Strengths are the real "secret sauce"

Working on weaknesses is overrated. Mitigate blind spots and then quickly move on to identify each person's unique strengths and deploy them where they'll be most effective. It's no secret: people engage when their strengths contribute in a meaningful way — and engaged teams get results.



One strong, simple process replaces 100+ small fixes

Stop band-aiding problems. Instead, implement a process that builds skills, fuels engagement, and keeps you out of the day-to-day grind.



Celebration can feel awkward—and it fuels progress

High achievers tend to skip celebrating. It's a mistake. Recognizing wins energizes teams, builds momentum, and keeps burnout at bay.



Focus on "who" more than "how"

As a leader, your job isn't to figure out how to do everything; it's to build a team of skilled "who's" that can. Start with one person and watch the ripple effect unfold. As your "who" capabilities expand, your future becomes more exciting and energized.

Your turn

Ready to reclaim your time and energy?

The most successful leaders know it's not just about working harder —or even working smarter— it's about knowing who you can empower.

By developing others, you're creating something that amplifies your impact and brings your vision to life... in a way you never could by yourself.

When you give others ownership of key projects and responsibilities that play to their strengths, they'll bring more of themselves to their work.

Think about what could be accomplished with that kind of team behind you..

So, which of these five steps can you try today?

 **Start with one**

Difficult Conversations

Let's get real:

The core problems in healthcare aren't about physicians or administrators.

They're rooted in our systems.

And the most significant reason they aren't improving?

Our collective avoidance of difficult conversations.

Superficial discussions are keeping us stuck — far from our goals.

After coaching over a thousand physicians and administrators, I've discovered that the most significant breakthroughs in organizations come as a direct result of addressing tough issues, through the power of difficult conversations.

The secret is this: the most effective leaders spend 80% of their time preparing, which allows "the conversation to do the work".

If you think avoiding a difficult conversation might be what's holding you back from making progress this week, this one's is for you.

Here's 5 high-leverage tactics for having easier difficult conversations:

1. Use a high-leverage framework

Get out of your head.

[Use this proven checklist.](#)

The reason it's so effective: **preparation.**

Preparation is 80% of the "difficult conversation equation".

It supports leaders to let go of the charge that we need to convince others.

Because when we're charged, it's not a conversation.

It's a covert attempt to control — which is ineffective.

[Try this instead:](#)

Guide for Having Negotiations and Difficult Conversations

(Remember: 80% of success comes from preparations BEFORE having the conversation)

Opening comments

Come in with the mindset that we could solve something together.

- I'd like to talk about___ with you, and I'd like to get your point of view."
- I think we have different perspectives about _____. I'd like to hear your thoughts on this."

Questions for inquiry

Discover about them. Articulate what you want them to understand.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • What do YOU want to achieve? | • What could it look like? |
| • What is important to YOU about that? | • Who would we need to consult? |
| • If you got that, what would that mean for you? | • What would a good solution have to include? |
| • How could we.... ? | • How do you want to take this? |
| • What if we...? | • What really matters to them in the end, on which they absolutely will not compromise? |

Questions for problem solving

Focus on brainstorming, exploring solutions & advocating your desired outcomes

- | | |
|---|---|
| • What would be the ideal situation for you? | • What would happen if we took this portion of your proposal and this portion of my proposal and put them together like this? |
| • What would it take to make this work and meet both our needs? | • If I were willing to do ___ for you would you be willing/ able to do ___ for me? |
| • Which parts of the proposal are most important for you? | • If we could put the solutions together, where would you want to start? |

Questions for commitment

Decide who will do what & by when

- | | |
|---|--|
| • To clarify, you're agreeing to do ____ and I'm agreeing to do _____. Have I got that right? | • What could get in the way of following through on your commitment? |
|---|--|

2. Pick ONE topic

Most difficult conversations fail for one reason: we try to have 5 of them at once.

The fix is dead simple: Name the topic at the beginning of the conversation—and only one.

Take a familiar example:

You walk in the door late from clinic. Your spouse says: “You’re never home on time. You didn’t text. You missed dinner again. And you said this year would be different.”

Now you’re off balance, defensive, and unsure what to respond to.

That’s what happens when five conversations get collapsed into one.

But when you name the topic—clearly, calmly, and early—everything changes.

You give the conversation a center of gravity.

You create safety.

And, together, you make progress.

3. Stop using “hedge words”

This concept was a game changer for me, personally.

I discovered my subconscious tendency to use “hedge words” — as a way to connect with others by softening my message.

The reality is, these words stem from a lack of confidence.

Remove these from your vocabulary, and watch your difficult conversations become easier:

Just	Just a little of your time...
Actually	Am I making sense? Does that make sense?
Kind of	Rushing and piling on clauses
I’m no expert, but...	I’m just thinking off the top of my head...

4. Role play with low-stakes

The more you practice in low-stake conversations; the easiest it is to have a conversation with higher stakes.

To relieve the tension before difficult conversations, realize that you already navigate a TON of “micro” difficult conversations every day — and you can now use them as simple opportunities to practice.

For example: Talking about “Where do you want to go to dinner?” with your partner is really 2 people with 2 different ideas coming together; and it can induce conflict and/or it can spark new ideas.

Practicing your technique now with another person gives you reps — which gives you the confidence you’ll need when you need it.

5. Convert complaints into possibilities

Ever felt frustrated by chronic complainers?

Harsh truth: Most complaints are just requests in disguise.

Imagine you're in a restaurant and a draft is blowing on you.

You could sit there shivering and say to your date: "Ugh, it's freezing in here with that AC blowing on me."

Or you could ask the server, "Would it be possible to turn the vent or move tables?"

That simple shift—from complaint to clear request—opens the door for action.

No drama. Just clarity.

Here are [two strategies](#) to help you flip someone's complaint back into their court (in a good way):



Requesting and Challenging

People are more resourceful than they realize. In fact, people often know the answers to the things that frustrate them most. **Requests** are a way to help people take clear action and be accountable to themselves. Big requests can be in the form of a challenge. **Challenges** are simply inviting people to extend themselves beyond their self-imposed limits; a way to step out of their comfort zone. The intent is to help people maximize their learning or accomplish something important to them. People can respond to a request/challenge by saying "yes, no or suggest a counter-offer."

Exercise #1: How to make a request

Complaints are often uncommunicated requests. In a restaurant, if you've got a complaint about the draft blowing down on you from the overhead air conditioner, you can sit with your complaint or you can make a request. When an appropriate request is made, action often happens to either take care of the complaint or help someone learn something new.

The formula for a request is "Would you (insert name) be willing to (insert action) by (insert date)?" There are 3 possible responses when offering a request to another person:

1. Yes,
2. No or
3. Counter-offer.

Now, make 2 columns. In the first column make a list of 10 complaints you personally have in life. This could be related to chores, work, exercise, sleep, relationships, finance, expectations, etc. In the second column write a request.

Complaint	Request

Bonus

[Negotiations and Difficult Conversations = Relationships + Results](#)



[This super short video](#) serves as a reminder that negotiations need to be about relationships AND results. Most people struggling with negotiations are fixated on one over the other. When you figure this out, it's a lightbulb moment to say the least....

The Bottom Line

True progress lies just beyond the edge of discomfort.

If you pick a tip from above, and put it into action — don't be surprised if you experience *a result that far exceeds your expectations*.

Remember, it's the conversations we're avoiding that hold the most potential for breakthrough.

Let's get real and "let the conversation do the work".

6 Step Feedback

Feedback Is Desperately Needed

Some real-world feedback from one of our clients, a hospital CMO:

"We lost three nurses in a single quarter. All had quietly left the department—each citing the same issue: a high-producing surgeon who was a jerk to work with.

In the past, I would've avoided it. Told myself it wasn't the right time. Justified it with 'he's valuable' or 'that's just how surgeons are.'

But this time, I used the feedback model. I saw him Monday, asked for five minutes Tuesday. Didn't sleep that night. But I stuck to the script. I didn't embellish. I followed the steps.

When I said, 'This is the third nurse who's left the department in the last three months citing interactions with you,' he blinked and said: 'Huh?'

Not defensive. Not angry. Just surprised.

We wrapped it up. It ended well. He heard me.

And now, we haven't lost a nurse in two quarters."

Our client's insight?

This CMO didn't say anything radically new.

He just had a feedback model that made the hard thing doable.

And he used it.

Give Feedback With Precision

Most people avoid feedback.

Or deliver it in a way that makes things worse.

And most people think they're good at feedback, when they're not.

The truth? Feedback is one of the highest-leverage tools for alignment, growth, and trust—and yet **it's one of the most underdeveloped skills in leadership.**

 Feedback isn't a confrontation. It's a scalpel.

Used well, it cuts with precision—removing what's not working, without damaging what is.

There are lots of frameworks and models out there. I encourage you to explore them and leverage what works best.

The [6-Step Feedback Model](#) balances simplicity and nuance—and it works especially well for physicians in part- or full-time leadership roles.

The #1 Mistake and Tip: Preparation

80% of successful feedback is determined before you start talking.

If you skip preparation, your feedback is already doomed.

This [6-Step Feedback Model](#) is effective because it demands clear, written preparation.

The real benefit of structured preparation isn't just having clearer feedback for others—it's about achieving clarity in your own mind first.

When you don't prepare, you inevitably end up rambling, creating confusion, overwhelm, or defensiveness.

Preparation feels inconvenient and awkward at first, yet **practicing out loud even a few times dramatically boosts your clarity, confidence, and impact.**

The Model

[This model works](#) by building the confidence of BOTH the person receiving (and giving) the feedback:

1. State Purpose

- State what you've observed; highlight one behavior
- Share the reason why an improvement is beneficial (to team members/ patients/ others)
- *"I'd like to talk with you about _____ (behavior) at _____ (location)"*
- *"What I have observed is _____"*

2. Ask Their Opinion

- Ask **open ended questions** and listen
- Encourage people to reflect on their performance. Build trust
- *"What is your view of the situation?"*

3. Seek Ideas

- Draw out **their solutions** to their challenge
- Encourage them to generate different, specific ways to enhance their own performance
- *"How else could you handle this situation?"*
- *"What is blocking you from being effective?"*

4. Provide Feedback

- Provide **feedback on their ideas**. Ensure the ideas generated will improve performance
- Give "big picture" details, share organizational perspective
- Explain how their ideas could affect them, the team, or unit
- *"What I like about your idea is _____"*
- *"Another thought I want to offer is _____"*
- *"What other resources would support you?"*

5. Action Plan

- **Ask them to summarize the next steps.** Reaffirm their commitment to be accountable for results
- Ask the team member what they are committed to doing differently
- *"What would you be willing to do next?"*
- *"How would you like me to follow-up with you?"*

6. Provide Support

- Express confidence and support. Describe **why you believe the person will achieve these goals**
- *"I want you to be successful"*

The 4 Most Common Mistakes (and What to Do Instead)

1. **MOST COMMON:** Not being centered—so you end up making it about yourself.

When you're stuck in your head ("I'm bad at this," "this conversation will go terribly" — the effectiveness of feedback collapses.

Instead: Find your method to get grounded and centered beforehand. Take a deliberate deep breath, briefly do a "frame exercise" or **find your personal way to shift the attention away from you and onto supporting the other person.**

2. Talking too much.

Rambling feedback overwhelms, confuses, and disengages the recipient.

Instead: Bottom-line quickly, then immediately ask open-ended questions to actively engage them. Feedback is a two-way conversation, not a one-way lecture.

3. Believing you're objective or "naturally good" at feedback (you're probably not).

Humans are unreliable evaluators—we have unconscious biases and subjective filters. Most leaders genuinely suck at feedback, yet assume they're an exception.

Instead: Practice humility. Acknowledge your biases. Lean on a structured method (like the 6-step model) that intentionally engages the other person's perspective, rather than purely your own judgment.

4. Thinking "feedback" means you solve the other person's problem.

We've all mistakenly approached feedback as "fixers," prescribing solutions. Especially high-performers who've been promoted into more senior roles.

Instead: Use a coaching mindset. Hold clear expectations for change but trust the other person to identify and commit to their own solutions.

The Best Tips (from Real Physician Executives)

1. "Role-play, even briefly, makes feedback clearer and I feel more confident."

Almost everyone hates role-playing, yet practicing aloud—even privately or for just 2-3 minutes with someone trusted (peer/spouse)—immediately clarifies your feedback and boosts your confidence.

2. "Prioritize 'holding the feedback container'."

Preparation isn't just about content. It's also about your mindset:

- a. Hold clear, unwavering expectations that improvement is needed (this isn't negotiable).
- b. Then trust the recipient's capability to define and commit to their own effective solutions.

3. "Feedback is uncomfortable—accept that, and you'll be years ahead of your peers."

Nobody likes giving feedback — so therein lies the opportunity for you to develop a leadership edge. Over time and with reps, structured feedback conversations move from awkward and dreaded to straightforward and intuitive.

The Bottom Line

Physician executives who rigorously prepare, courageously engage, and intentionally practice feedback don't merely "manage difficult conversations."

They **transform feedback into a high-leverage leadership tool that elevates relationships and results.**

One of my clients said it best:

*"Effective feedback isn't complicated—it's just uncomfortable at first. Most people refuse to practice because of that discomfort. **The difference between exceptional and mediocre leaders, in my experience, is often their willingness to intentionally push through initial awkwardness.**"*

Acknowledgement Formula

Want to understand a team's culture without a single survey or email?

Watch what gets *acknowledged*.

Teams where acknowledgment is vague, absent, or robotic are usually teams running on obligation.

But teams where acknowledgment is direct, specific, and sincere? Those teams get stuff done — with more clarity and less drama.

Acknowledgment isn't just about feeling good.

It's about **making sure people know who they are when they're at their best**—and inviting more of that every day.

Let's clarify exactly **how to leverage this potent, invisible culture driver in your personal and professional life**.

An acknowledgment recognizes who someone is being

It is not praise or compliments. It is not "cheerleading". In fact, if you are not sincere, you may erode your relationship or even destroy your credibility.

Acknowledgments often highlight a value or strength that is important to the person being acknowledged.

Acknowledgment helps people see what they sometimes discount in themselves out of a sense of humility.

Simply put: think of acknowledgement as identity-level reinforcement. It doesn't praise the task—it spotlights the strength behind it.

What makes acknowledgement powerful?

1. It's direct
2. It's specific
3. It reflects a unique contribution
4. It's honest and sincere (not cheerleading)

4 ELEMENTS OF A POWERFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1 DIRECTNESS:
ADDRESS THEM PERSONALLY
"I wanted to personally thank you _____, for..."

2 SPECIFICITY:
POINT OUT CONTRIBUTION OR QUALITY
"Your ideas about _____ led to..."

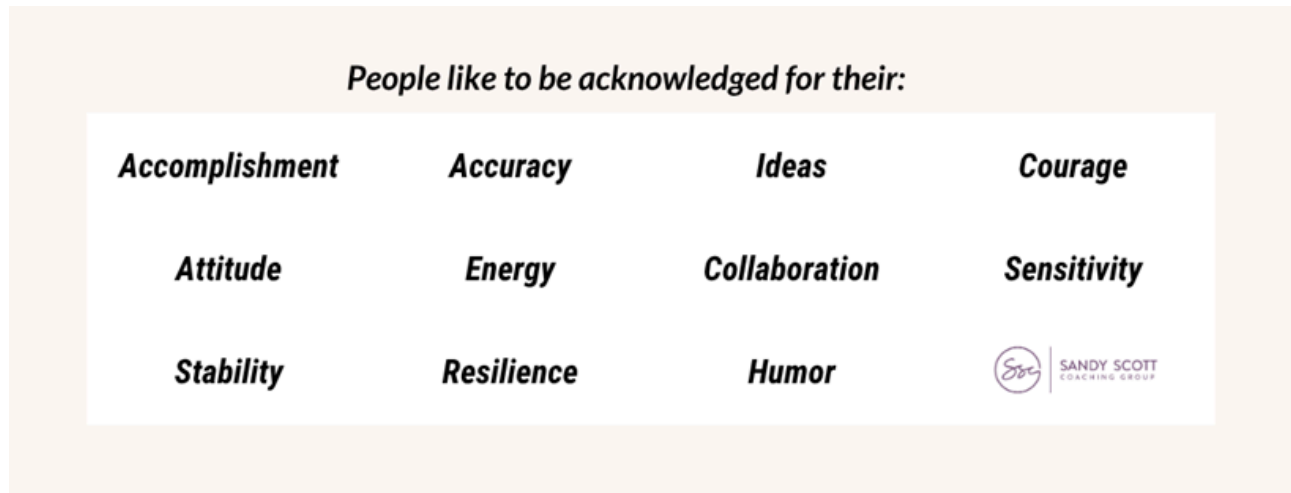
3 UNIQUENESS:
WHAT SETS THEM APART
"The approach you took to solve _____ was..."

4 SINCERITY:
INSINCERITY HARMS CREDIBILITY
"Your commitment to _____ is truly heartfelt..."

What do people want to be acknowledged for?

When we're acknowledged, we do more of it.

When we aren't, we wonder if it matters.



In a world flooded with chaos and burnout — **one sincere, specific acknowledgment** can trigger a neurochemical cascade of oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin—that **shifts someone's brain from protection mode to contribution mode**.

Great acknowledgements literally support us to be more productive.

The best acknowledgements connect your people to a capacity they didn't realize they had.

The acknowledgement formula isn't a leadership bypass

It only works when it's genuine.

If you're "not feeling it," pause and reconnect authentically before acknowledging.

Leaders who fake it not only lose credibility but miss out on the true power of meaningful recognition.

Real World Example: A physician executive we coached initially dismissed the practice as ineffective. When asked how he felt during his first attempts, he realized he was mechanically applying the technique without genuinely feeling appreciative. Next time he tried it, genuinely, and was shocked at how well it worked.

Proven Templates

I appreciate how you . . .	Your enthusiasm for . . . <u>has provided</u> . . .
Your ideas about . . . led to . . .	I appreciate the thoroughness with which you . . .
The agenda you created provided . . .	Your willingness to . . . has enabled us to . . .
The sensitive way you handled . . . was . . .	Your plan was well-detailed and easy to . . .
The approach you took to solve . . . was . . .	Your timeliness in . . . enabled us to . . .
Your energy around . . . has helped us to . . .	Your attention to . . . made it possible for us to . . .
The words you used to express . . . were . . .	Your recognition of . . . has engaged . . .

Adapted from the [Physician Coaches Institute](#), Francine Gaillour, MD and CEO.

The most common mistakes

Acknowledgement can be one of the highest-leverage ways to boost retention, engagement, and performance in your people – though **most leaders undermine its power by unintentionally making these three critical mistakes:**

1. Making It About You (Using "I")

Instead of: *"I really liked your presentation."*

Try: *"Your clarity during the presentation helped the whole team align quickly."*

When acknowledgements begin with "I," it shifts attention away from the other person, reducing the impact. Effective acknowledgements start with "You," keeping the focus firmly on the person being acknowledged.

2. Praising Tasks over Values or Identity

Instead of: *"Thanks for completing the Excel sheet."*

Try: *"Your attention to detail on the Excel sheet gave us the clarity we needed to make confident decisions."*

Acknowledging tasks alone is superficial and forgettable. Real acknowledgement spotlights who the person needed to be—their strengths, values, or unique contributions—creating a deeper, lasting impact.

3. Being too Frequent, General, or Vague

Instead of: *"Great job today."*

Try: *"Your thoughtful approach today helped us identify the root cause of those challenges clearly—now we're in a great position to move forward fast."*

Overly frequent, generic acknowledgements become meaningless noise. Powerful acknowledgements are rare, specific, and direct, clearly reflecting a unique ability or contribution.

4. Doing It Selfishly

If you're acknowledging someone to relieve your own guilt or discomfort —like feeling bad they worked extra hours—it backfires every time. People intuitively sense insincerity, which damages trust and credibility.

High-leverage opportunities for clinical leaders

Common situations where an acknowledgment create a disproportionate return on your effort:

1. **A team member who stayed present during a high-stakes conflict**
→ Acknowledge how they created space for others to stay engaged.
2. **A clinician who set a clear boundary to protect their priorities**
→ Acknowledge their leadership in modeling sustainable success.
3. **A direct report who named a tension early, preventing escalation**
→ Acknowledge the courage to speak up and the clarity it created.
4. **A colleague who supported a tough change initiative, even if they didn't fully agree**
→ Acknowledge their maturity, buy-in, and long-term thinking.
5. **A rising leader who took ownership of something messy and didn't need the credit**
→ Acknowledge their quiet integrity and trustworthiness.

Most of these moments are missed.

Catch them—and prepare for the best.

Call to Action

Today: Pick one person.

Think of a moment.

Acknowledge them. One sentence. Out loud or in writing. No fluff.

The goal isn't to make them feel good.

It's to help them see who they are at their best—and bring more of it forward.

Accountability Assessment

Most attempts at accountability don't work

It's usually one of two reasons:

- 👉 We get reactive and blame others
- 👉 We overthink and avoid it

The truth is: **most direct reports actually want accountability.**

But they rarely experience the right kind.

And that's what makes it such a high-leverage leadership skill—because almost no one is doing it well.

When you do, people notice. And they respond.

If you want different results, we must lead differently. And you don't need to do this forever — just try something new this week.

The Accountability Assessment

Use this [3-step](#) process to pinpoint what's really going on—and how to shift it.

1. Label the project or team.

- Choose one area where follow-through is stuck or unclear.

2. [Run the assessment](#).

- Use this simple tool to reflect on how you're showing up as a leader. Are you setting clear expectations? Seeking commitment? Following through? (You'll answer 18 quick yes/no prompts.)

3. Pick 1 insight. Take 1 bold [action](#).

- Choose a bold action to take this week based on what you uncover.
- We recommend something that meets Tara Mohr's LEAP criteria:
 - It gets you learning by doing
 - It feels like a stretch
 - It puts you in contact with those you want to influence
 - It has a real-world outcome

This assessments can come in handy before giving [6-step Feedback](#) — helping you lead upstream by diagnosing what's actually blocking accountability.

Even just one action can create a ripple effect on a stuck team or slow project.

When to use it

- When someone's not delivering and you're not sure why.
- When a project feels stalled or ambiguous.
- When you've been blaming others, but want to explore what's in your control.
- When you need a clearer conversation with a direct report or peer.

The Bottom Line

Accountability doesn't have to feel awkward or reactive.

Use [this tool](#) to spot the real crux of stuck projects and take a bold, clear step forward.

Try It

1. **Pick one project.** [Run the assessment](#). Watch what changes.
2. Or — **share [the tool](#)** with a peer or direct report. Sometimes the biggest insight is just finally talking about what's not being said.

Team Retreats

The Hidden Power of a Better Team Retreat

Most team retreats don't fail from lack of effort — they fail because they **try too hard at the wrong things**.

We **over-plan, over-schedule, and over-script...** and still walk away wondering why nothing changed.

But the highest-leverage retreats aren't flashy, over-engineered, or packed with content. They **create time, space, and structure** to elevate what actually matters (think: important but not necessarily urgent) — and they translate that collective clarity into **ownership** and **traction**.

The key is to stop thinking about retreats as a strategy download or an off-site event.

Start thinking about retreats as a *container*.

Then get out of the way and **let the structure, tools, and conversation do the work**.

Here's the lowest hanging fruit you can leverage, to capitalize on these rare chances we get to help our teams become more honest, aware, and effective — together:

The Most Common Mistakes

✗ **Waiting until things are already broken.**

The best time for a retreat isn't when trust is eroding — it's when momentum is building and you want to protect it. Waiting until the wheels fall off makes retreats feel like reboots instead of realignment.

✗ **Filling the agenda with updates.**

Slide decks are fine for Zoom. But in person? Choose candor over content. Prioritize discussion over download. No one flies in to read bullet points.

✗ **Treating it like a presentation.**

A retreat isn't a performance. If you spend most of it talking at your team, don't be surprised when nothing shifts.

✗ **Forgetting the human experience.**

Most leaders arrive stressed, sleep-deprived, and overloaded. They need time to arrive, regulate, and shift gears before diving into strategy. Expecting people to think clearly in the first 15 minutes is wishful thinking.

High-Leverage Tactics That Actually Work

Before the Retreat

👉 Stop planning it all yourself

This is the #1 reason why retreats either miss the mark or just don't happen.

One person can't anticipate every need or blindspot.

Instead — **get input before the retreat.**

Even better — **delegate ownership of topics** (note: don't delegate for delegation's sake — assign ownership where someone has credibility, interest, or context)

This approach:

- Frees you up to **participate** as a leader, not just perform as a presenter.
- Creates **early buy-in** from the team — they'll show up more prepared and engaged.
- They'll surface cruxes/perspectives you wouldn't get if you planned everything..

You don't (and shouldn't) carry the whole thing.

The Beginning of Retreat

📌 Start with an Opening Exercise that Regulates, Connects, and Energizes

Your team doesn't need a cute icebreaker. **They need to arrive fully** — mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Most leaders walk into retreats carrying clinical stress, inbox overload, and mental tabs from 12 different priorities. If you dive straight into strategy, they'll still be somewhere else. That's why a thoughtful opening exercise is one of the most high-leverage things you can do.

The goal: movement + emotional connection + nervous system regulation.

Our favorite: the [3-Pictures Exercise](#)

Everyone picks 3 meaningful photos from their phone, then rotates through brief 1:1 conversations to share what the pictures represent. Afterward, the group reflects on themes and observations about others, and themselves.

It normalizes vulnerability. It builds warmth. And it shifts the energy in the room fast.

❤️ Set the tone with a vulnerable leadership story

Start the retreat by sharing a story from your own journey where you felt uncertain, challenged, or stretched. With high performers (especially physicians), vulnerability from the top sets the tone — fast. It creates permission and presence.

The Middle of the Retreat

Use assessments to surface real awareness

If you want your retreat to surface meaningful insights, don't rely on opinions or hunches. Use **scientifically-validated psychometric assessments** like Hogan or Kolbe — and socialize the results with a skilled facilitator.

Here's why it works (in non-obvious but critical ways):

1. It makes blind spots feel less personal.

- Instead of "You're difficult," it becomes "This trait shows up under stress." That opens the door to reflection, not resistance.

2. It replaces awkward feedback loops with a shared language.

- Teams stop saying things like "We just don't gel" and start saying "We've got conflicting motivators around risk and control." The nuance increases empathy and collaboration.

3. It gently challenges overconfidence.

- High performers often assume they already know how they show up. Seeing a data-driven mirror — especially one that highlights derailers — breaks that illusion without shame.

Note: Assessments only unlock this value when handled well. To avoid unnecessary harm, we highly recommend a **human, skilled facilitator** to interpret the results, guide the discussion, and hold the container. These conversations often surface real sensitivity, and they need to be managed with empathy and rigor.

Address the real crux of the issue

Don't default to "team building" just because it's safe.

Bring in **real business challenges** that are holding back progress and let the team **pressure test it**.

This gives people a reason to show up fully and deepens buy-in.

Wrapping Up The Retreat

✓ Use a 3-step formula for accountability that works:

1. Have each person reflect on the retreat — then commit to a single bold action

- One specific, time-bound step they'll take within 2 weeks.
- Each person's action should:
 - Align with retreat objectives
 - Be inside their scope of influence
 - Be clear enough to know when it's done
 - Feel meaningful and a little bit bold

2. Document the actions

- Capture each person's action commitment before you leave the room.
- You can have people share with an admin to compile, drop it in a shared doc, or fill out a simple Microsoft or Google survey form.

3. Gift the team with a simple accountability structure

- Here's three ways to make it easy for your people to follow through on their commitment:
 - Pair people up with an accountability partner and schedule a check-in before leaving the room
 - Schedule a 30-day follow-up meeting with the same group
 - Start your next team meeting with 10-minute LEAP updates

Your people don't need pressure — most are actually craving clarity, structure, or a nudge when it comes to holding themselves accountable.

Bottom Line

Your retreat doesn't need to be longer, louder, or more elaborate. **It just needs to be simpler and sharper.**

Use just a few well-placed moves — the right agenda, the right opening exercise, the right framing, the right accountability — and you'll walk out with more clarity, more energy, and more aligned momentum than any slide deck could deliver.

Start here:

- Pick one idea from above.
- Schedule 30 minutes to plan it into your next retreat.
- Forward this to a peer or facilitator with the subject line: "Let's make this one actually matter."

Leading Change in Systems

Leading Change in Systems

Why Most Change Efforts Stall — and What to Do Instead

First, Let's Get Clear on the Hierarchy of Change

Every change effort happens at one of three levels:

1. **Self:** Internal mindset and behavior change
2. **Others:** Supporting other people to change — as a coach, leader, or manager
3. **Systems:** Driving change across groups, departments, or organizations

It's critical to understand that **these levels work like a hierarchy**:

1. If you can't lead change in yourself, you won't be effective at leading change in others.
2. If you can't lead change in others, you won't create real system-level change

This next section focuses on level 3 change: Leading Change in Systems.

The Most Common Mistakes with System Change

Everyone is “doing change” their own way.

Without a shared model, change efforts lack clarity and alignment. Conversations become political or personal. You waste time getting buy-in over and over again because there's no common anchor.

People end up in meetings saying, “Where are we in this?” or “What are we even doing again?”

→ Lack of structure = lack of momentum.

Skipping the “people side”.

They focus on perfect plans and ideas, and put behavioral change on the back burner. But systems don't change unless people are on board.

Believing change = more work.

The quiet killer of momentum. If it feels heavier, people will resist.

Effective change actually reduces friction — that's how you know it's working. Remember to communicate how the change is making their lives easier.

Jumping into system-level change without the capacity to lead change at the team level.

If you haven't helped your team navigate personal change — mindset, skillset, culture — then scaling it will only amplify the gaps.

Models We Recommend (And How to Use Them)

✓ For organizing SYSTEM-LEVEL change efforts → Use [Kotter's 8-Step Model](#) (or something similar)

This is the clearest model we've found for system-wide change. Use it when:

- You're aligning across departments
- You need visible traction and urgency
- You need to keep momentum past month 1

Expensive Knowledge: Most system-level efforts die because we **don't mobilize early enough** or don't communicate the vision often enough.

 ["Our Iceberg is Melting" is a super practical guide for any leader facing significant system-level change, offering tools to help you and your team thrive.](#)

 For MINDSETS and CONVERSATIONS → Use these mental models

[The Change Formula](#)

This equation applies at any level: leading change in self, others, or system.

 A powerful way to **pinpoint exactly why something isn't changing**.

[Bridges Transition Model](#)

Demystifies how people experience change (emotionally, psychologically).

 **Helpful when navigating grief, loss of role identity, or resistance to new norms.**

[E = Q × A](#)

Effectiveness of Change = Quality of idea × Alignment.

 It's a multiplier. So if alignment = 0, effectiveness = 0. **No matter how great the idea is.**


[Adaptive Leadership \(Heifetz\)](#)

Helps you distinguish between the need for technical and adaptive solutions.

 Adaptive problems require a specific kind of relationship work, not just logic or data.

[Strategic Planning & Alignment](#)

Not necessarily a change model — and strategic plans can be the glue to make change stick.

 The organization's goals must be clear, coherent, and aligned with team priorities, so change **efforts can rally around a central plan**.

Bottom Line

If you want to lead change at scale, you need more than good intentions.

You need structure, shared language, and the humility to work from the inside out.

Start with a model (Kotter).

Use the mental models to shape better conversations.

And don't skip the foundation: leading change in ourselves and others is the gateway to lasting change in systems.

The New Physician Way Model



An Operating System for the Real World

“You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.” - James Clear

I’ll never forget coaching my first neurosurgeon.

I was walking him through our coaching program—models, frameworks, outcomes, etc.

He listened carefully, then said:

“This all sounds great—and I’m excited. **I just have no idea what you’re talking about.** I’m a neurosurgeon. Can you put this in a checklist for me?”

So we did.

And everything changed.

The program got tighter. Results came faster. And clients like him—especially those used to solving complex problems under pressure—**finally had something they could fit everything into without getting overwhelmed.**

That’s when we realized:

For all the ways coaching is expansive and transformational, **great coaches always benefit from structure.**

Not arbitrary rigidity.

The right kind and amount of structure — that drives clarity and action around a meaningful vision.

That structure is what eventually became **The New Physician Way (NPW)** — a simple, evidence-aligned operating system for physician leaders who want to stop overfunctioning and start leading with more fulfillment, results, and peace of mind.



Quick Clarification: What NPW Is (And Isn’t)

Let’s get specific—because the difference matters.

Coaching principles, skills and tools are things like:

- Listening and asking good questions
- Guiding without solving
- Exercises that uncover insights

Coaching structure and systems—like NPW—are different.

While a single conversation can be powerful — we get repeatable, meaningful results by **organizing our lives with a system that leverages our natural rhythms.**

You can leverage this system for your personal life, professional life, or both!

Why the “Old Way” Still Feels So Familiar

Before we dive into the NPW, we need to name what it's not.

The “old way” is more than a mindset—it's leadership muscle memory.

That old way trained physicians to:

- Power through.
- Own it all. By yourself.
- React fast.
- Get it right. The first time.

It worked.

It's respected.

It's rewarded.

But it was built for a time when change moved slower—and the answer to most problems was more grit.

Today? Change isn't only constant — it's accelerating.

Even Bezos and Buffet can't solve it.

And most physicians I know didn't step into leadership to just “keep up.”

They stepped up to fix what's broken, and to reconnect with the purpose that brought them into medicine... with the systems they're now in a position to shape.

The Case for a Better Structure

That's where the New Physician Way comes in.

It's not another mindset or leadership theory.

It's a **structure**—a practical rhythm that helps high-performing physicians become high-performing leaders.

And here's the real leverage point:

NPW works not despite the chaos of healthcare—but because of it.

In complex, high-stakes environments, **simplicity** isn't just nice—it's necessary.

It doesn't replace your expertise.

It helps you access and apply it—more effectively, more often, and without burning out in the process.

It's built on the neuroscience of change.

Because the research is clear:

- Without structure, insight fades.
- Without rhythm, momentum stalls.
- Without alignment, even the best leaders burn out.

After 30+ years coaching thousands of physicians across dozens of systems, I can say this with confidence:

NPW is the simplest, most effective structure I've found for leading from clarity—at work and at home.

And here's the deeper truth:

Compound interest works both ways.

Without structure:

- Noise compounds.
- Stress compounds.
- Misalignment compounds.

With the right structure:

- Clarity compounds.
- Alignment compounds.
- Results compound.

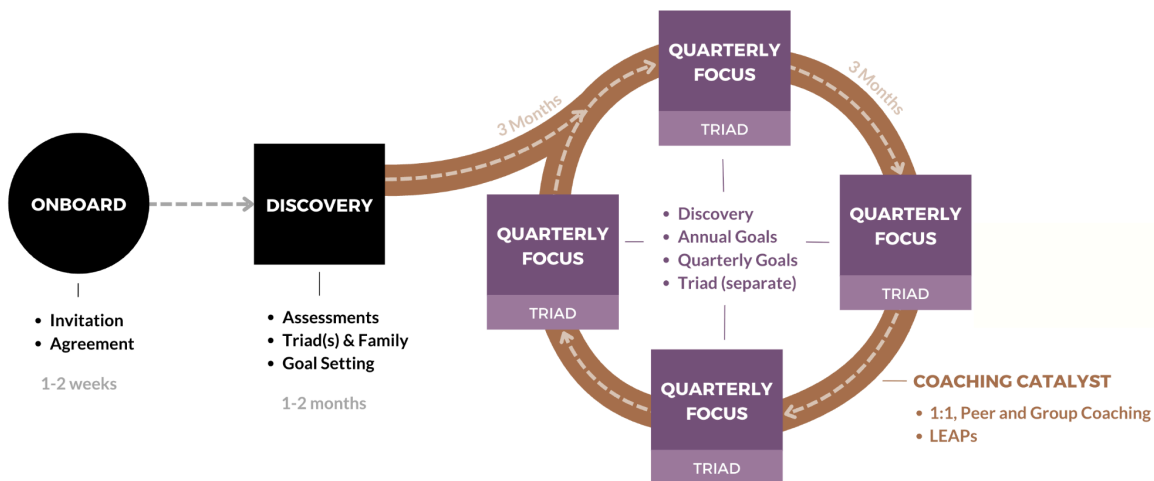
That's the heart of NPW.

A **rhythm** that turns noise into meaningful results—and supports physicians to lead themselves and others, regardless of how fast or how much the circumstances change.

What It Includes: Four Simple, Sticky Elements

These aren't stages or tasks.

They're rhythmic leverage points designed to help you (and others) lead with more clarity and less swirl.



1. Onboarding: Is This Worth Your Time?

The NPW is a super-high-leverage structure designed specifically for super-busy-physicians.

And, like anything worth doing, it only works if you work it.

If you're likely to treat this like a "flavor of the month," — I would recommend you don't bother.

And, if you give it just a little time and space — you can use it to move mountains in your life that have had you stuck for decades.

Here are three signs you're ready to get something real out of this:

1. You're prioritizing your growth

We recommend protecting 1 hour per week, and committing to 1 quarter, or three months.

Instead of banking on "finding time," make space on your calendar—for reflection, action and accountability.

For high-performers, one hour's enough to start seeing major shifts in how you lead, work, and feel.

2. You're open to getting honest—and trying something new

To get the best results, you don't need to be fearless — you need to be real.

This process only works if you're willing to be honest with yourself, and take action from that clarity — often slightly outside your comfort zone.

3. You've got (or want) a thought partner

We recommend choosing someone to check in with—weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.

That could be a peer, a coach, your manager, or even someone in your family. We'll share more later in this section about how to find the right fit for this role. For now, the key is that you value accountability.

2. Deep-Dive Discovery

We can't change what we haven't clearly named.

This is where things begin to shift.

Discovery helps us diagnose the gap between what we're *doing*—and who and where we want to *be*.

It's not just journaling or personality tests.

It's about clearly identifying what matters most, what's in the way, what we need to let go of, and what we need to take ownership of.

The best discovery processes distill qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources — into an inventory of our inner world that leaves us saying, "I've never been able to name that in such clear terms":

- Scientifically-validated psychometric assessments
- Insights from family, peers, mentors, managers, etc.
- Deep, guided reflection on the past and future

And we use that honest inventory to crystallize the most meaningful and compelling vision for your future that we can manage.

3. Quarterly Focus & Goal Setting

Big shifts happen when we align our inner and outer worlds.

This is the element that grounds the whole system — turning vague aspirations into specific traction.

It connects our vision for the future to our daily life by:

- Anchoring how we plan our months, weeks and days
- Filtering how we prioritize our time when distractions come up

It also gives us a rhythm for reflecting and checking in on progress, without waiting until the next crisis.

My secret sauce?

Set SMART goals that align your personal vision for the future, with the urgent needs of the organization.

If you do that step right (as crazy as it sounds) — you can feed your soul without burning out *and* make your boss happy.

Punchline: Think of this quarterly rhythm as your strategic anchor.

It helps you align your actions to your goals, day by day, without getting buried by the noise.

Triad calls are facilitated feedback calls, where you gather candid input from people you trust and respect.

4. Coaching Catalyst: Accountability and Results That Stick

Big results come from consistent, intentional action—aligned with your quarterly goals and future self.

Again: *“We do not rise to the level of your goals. We fall to the level of your systems.”*

If we’re honest, most of us already know what we need to do.

The challenge lies in the follow-through.

You know you need to prioritize your energy, set boundaries, delegate better, or stop checking email during dinner.

So why aren’t you doing it?

In our 30+ years coaching over 1,000 physician leaders across more than 30 systems, we’ve found the most effective, time-efficient way to connect our aspirations with our actions, and it’s with a **custom combination of these four types of coaching**:

1:1 Coaching

- The deepest, most personalized path (100% tailored).
- This can be your manager, an internal coach, or an external expert (100% confidential).
- It’s the most expensive, so use it where the leverage is highest (e.g. high-potential leaders, new roles, or someone managing a high-stakes change)

Group Coaching

- More scalable and cost-effective. It’s efficient—and less personalized than 1:1.
- Group coaching helps teams build a shared language — which accelerates alignment and traction.
- The magic number for group size is 7–12: great discussions without room for anyone to hide.

Peer Coaching

- Great for socializing learning
- Sparks meaningful collaboration—especially between leaders who don’t usually work together.
- Downside: becoming a highly-effective peer coach usually means years of training and practice

Self-Coaching

- Every leader needs internal accountability.
- A word of caution: self-coaching works best when supported (if we could do it on our own, we would)

Not every type of coaching is right for every situation.

And some people can get results relying only on self-coaching— or an occasional mentor or peer check-in.

But when you’re looking to make big meaningful changes in your life:

Coaching is one of the most efficient, high-leverage ways to make the changes and make them stick.

How to Use It (And Choose What Fits)

The NPW is designed to flex, depending on what an individual or organization needs.

Most people either implement it **on their own** or **with a coach**.

Either can work.

The key is finding the right fit—for *you and/or your organization*.

And if you're thinking, "I'm too busy" or "I'm doing just fine without this" — then you're probably right!

That's okay. Don't waste your energy testing a "flavor of the month" you're not ready to commit to.

When you're ready to do something real—here's our tips on how to get the most out of the NPW:

Option 1: Implement NPW On Your Own

This is the lowest-friction way to start.

No formal coaching. No program. Just you, your calendar, and the structure.

- You reflect.
- You experiment.
- You repeat.

For some, this is enough to spark meaningful change.

Especially when paired with a little accountability (like a peer, manager, or family member).

And it's a great way to test the waters before diving deeper.

Option 2: Implement NPW With a Coach

This is where the NPW shines.

You can dive in solo as an individual by exploring:

- **1:1 coaching**
- **The New Physician Way: Inspire** (a highly-vetted community of mission-driven clinical leaders)

Or you can scale it inside your organization with:

- **Individuals (1:1 coaching)**
- **A Cohort of 7-12 individuals (1:1 + group + peer coaching)**

Each option builds momentum by giving you a sounding board, thought partner, and rhythm for getting results — in a 100% confidential setting.

Not every physician needs a coach.

And when coaching *is* the right tool for the job— the ROI is exponential.

One Final Thought: Why Clarity Matters

You've probably [seen the metaphor](#).

A teacher **fills a jar with sand — then rocks.**

The rocks don't fit.

Not even close.

Next, the jar is emptied.

But this time, they **put the rocks in first** — then the sand.

It fits?!

Same jar. Same sand. Same rocks.

Different order.

One way everything fits.

One way, the rocks are cast aside.

The rocks go in *first*—or they don't fit at all.

The metaphor:

- Sand = emails, meetings, etc.
- Rocks = goals aligned with your vision for the future, family vacations, team culture...

This one simple insight might change your entire life:

The stuff that matters—your goals, values, and relationships—won't fit into your life if they're squeezed in.

And that's where most of us, especially busy physician leaders, live:

Dealing with sand, and then acting surprised when our rocks don't fit.

The New Physician Way doesn't give you more time.

It gives you a system to protect what matters most—before the sand takes over your life.

Try It Where It Matters Most

Want to see how powerful this is?

Start by using it somewhere personal.

- A values-aligned conversation with your spouse
- A weekly reset that helps you show up differently at home
- A simple conversation with peers that turns reflection into action

When it works there, you'll trust it everywhere.

The New Physician Way isn't about adding more.

It's about structuring your time to create the clarity you've always wanted—so you can lead with more of what already makes you great.

Because when smart, creative people operate from clarity, **everything speeds up.**

The Neuroscience of Change

The Neuroscience of Change is the science under the hood—the research that explains *why* the tools in this playbook work and how to make them stick. Everything you've practiced here is applied; this section shows the wiring that makes it reliable.

The shift you've felt coming is here

Seasoned physician leaders carry a specific type of tension:

A sense that what got them here won't be enough to take them where they want to be.

It's not because they're lacking.

It isn't a strategy problem.

It's most often neurological.

And it's well researched by [Dr. Ben Hardy](#):

The "neuroscience of change" is your brain's built-in system for predicting the future, filtering out distractions, and making decisions — **based on how you frame your past, connect to your future, and decide what to say 'no' to.**

Once you understand how to use it, you won't just "feel better."

You live better.

From the inside out.

It boils down to a 3-step process:

1. Define your **past and future self**
2. Set a seemingly **impossible goal**
3. Raise your **floor**

Here's what the research says:

Step 1 — Define Your Future Self

Dr. Ben Hardy puts it clearly:

Your PAST SELF is your identity, shaped by your subconscious framing of past experiences — defined by your brain encoding emotional experiences and using them to predict future outcomes.

It's helpful... until it isn't.

When past stories are laced with fear or unresolved meaning, your brain leans on protection instead of possibility. You hesitate. You downplay. You default. That's why you might over-function in conflict, hesitate to lead boldly, or revert to perfectionism: your brain is reacting to a past version of the situation—or of you.

Reframing the past doesn't mean forgetting it. It means choosing what it now means to you.

For example: Growing up as a kid (or working for a previous boss), maybe conflict meant escalation—or silence. That wiring still kicks in during hard conversations at home or at work. You find yourself holding

back—or charging forward—when what’s really needed is presence. What if that instinct wasn’t wrong... just *outdated*? You might *reframe your past experience* to say "I'm someone who sees hard conversations as opportunities to build trust".

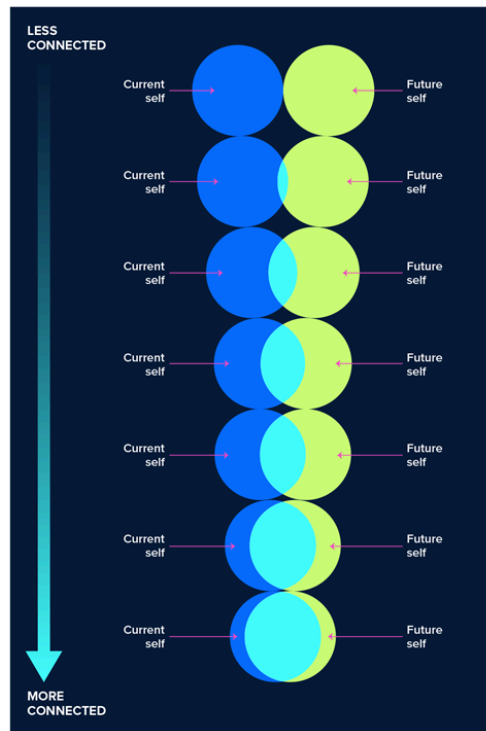
Your FUTURE SELF is a deeply meaningful vision of yourself, 1-10 years in the future.

The kicker is: unless the future vision feels emotionally real, your brain won’t engage with it.

This is called **prospection**—and it’s how the **brain drives present behavior by simulating the future**.

Turns out Simon Sinek’s “Start With Why” isn’t just a branding trick.

It’s science-based living.



[Be Your Future Self Now](#)

Try It: Define your future self in clear terms today — and refresh it often after harvesting insights from self-reflection and feedback (I recommend quarterly):

- Be Your Future Self Now (Dr. Ben Hardy): [Book](#) & [YouTube Video](#)
- [Deep Reflective Writing \(includes Future Self prompts\)](#)
- "Define Your Why" Formula (Simon Sinek) [Article](#), [Book](#) & [Video](#)

Step 2 — Set a "Seemingly Impossible" Goal

The brain engages differently when goals feel just out of reach — especially if they're deeply tied to the kind of person we want to become (hint: Future Self).

In other words: **Small goals protect the current version of you.** Seemingly impossible goals stretch it.

The secret is: the stretch triggers **cognitive dissonance** — the tension that arises when your goals outpace your identity.

And it works.



Your brain starts reorganizing your internal model to close the gap.

You subconsciously filter your surroundings for new possibilities.

You notice what you used to miss.

You see connections that others don't.

As a result, you make more progress than others — because you're not drowning in distractions like everyone else.

The secret sauce is: **your seemingly impossible goal must align with your future self.**

Without that connection, your brain checks out. And you get more of the same.

Try It: If you want tips on how to set the kind of goal that gets you *jumping out of bed in the morning* — I highly recommend digging into [this book](#) and [this video](#).

Step 3 — *Raise Your Floor*

Anyone can envision the future.

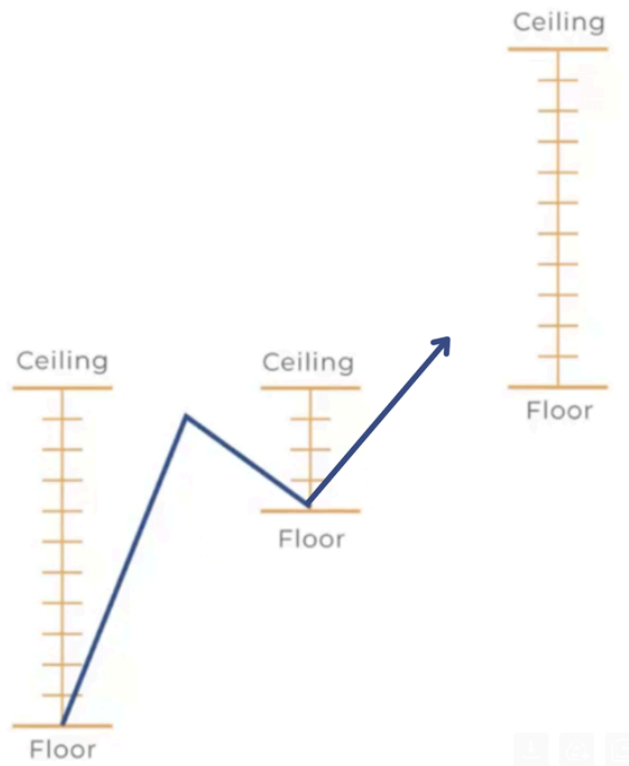
Anyone can write big goals.

But your "**floor**" —**your line of decision and action**, below which lies everything you're no longer willing to tolerate— that's where the magic happens.

We raise the floor in service of the future (self) we've committed to — so our present behavior stops contradicting it.

In other words, your floor is your filter: it removes the projects, people and tasks that distract you from your most important goals.

If you're doing it right, **raising your floor reveals few (sometimes only one) viable path forward to achieve your "seemingly impossible goal"**. And that's the crux of how it works.



Until you raise your floor, you're lying to yourself.

Once you do?

You move faster. You lead cleaner. You achieve your impossible goals.

Because "raising the floor" removes what's quietly slowing you down.

If you relate to one of these, it's probably time for you to raise your floor in alignment with your future self:

- Tolerating meetings, habits, or dynamics that exhaust you
- Saying "yes" when you mean "no"
- Blaming systems instead of drawing a line

Start with This Video: [Raise Your Floor - The Power of "Minimum Standards"](#)

3 Real-World Examples

Example #1 — Feedback

Past Self: You tend to sugarcoat tough conversations. You've told yourself you're "protecting relationships," but really you're avoiding discomfort. You have a history of bosses that have modeled inappropriate behavior to you and others.

Future Self: "I'm a leader who creates a team culture where feedback is expected, normalized, and used to drive excellence—not fear."

Possible Goal: "Give more timely feedback." (Plausible, and too small)

Impossible Goal Aligned with Future Self: "Build a culture where direct, constructive feedback is shared across my team weekly—with no surprises at performance reviews."

Raising the Floor: Every 1:1 starts with "What feedback do you have for me about ____?" Team norms shift to build low-stakes feedback directly into the end of meetings.

Result: Palpable trust, faster growth, less drama.

Example #2 — Boundaries at Home

Past Self: You answered every email within 5 minutes—even during dinner. You told yourself it made you efficient. But it made you absent.

Future Self: "I'm the kind of person whose family feels my presence—not just my stress. When I'm at work, I'm at work. When I'm home, I'm home."

Possible Goal: "Check email less during evenings." (Vague. Negotiable.)

"Impossible" Goal Aligned with Future Self: "Protect the hours between 6–9PM as sacred—every day—with zero notifications from work, unless I'm on call."

Raising the Floor: Move email apps off your home screen. Enable do-not-disturb + auto-response after 6PM. Set a visible family check-in ritual during that window.

Result: You're more fulfilled, which supports you to do more of your best work.

Example #3 — Delegation

Past Self: You jumped in to fix problems because it was faster. You told yourself it was "just this once." It became your brand.

Future Self: "I'm the kind of leader who builds other leaders—not dependencies. My team owns their decisions, and I own my calendar."

Possible Goal: "Delegate more effectively." (Might result in a modest improvement.)

"Impossible" Goal Aligned with Future Self: "Every person on my team leads at least one strategic initiative that doesn't directly involve me."

Raising the Floor: You delegate projects with deadlines—not ideas for review. You stop attending meetings you've delegated authority for.

Result: Team autonomy flourishes. You get time and energy back to invest in strategic decision-making.

Put It Together

Big results happen much faster than you think, as soon as you:

1. **Define your future self**
2. **Set seemingly impossible goals** in alignment with that future self
3. **Raise your floor** to delegate, delete or defer distractions not in alignment with your vision for yourself and your goals

The results don't come from working harder.

They come because your **brain is finally out of conflict**.

You stop sending mixed signals to your:

- colleagues
- calendar
- family
- *yourself*

It's not about hyping yourself up.

It's about setting yourself up with clarity.

And neuroscience gives you a way to get there—faster, sustainably, and without burning out.

For leaders willing to look inward, this isn't just another framework.

It's an edge.

And a powerful way to lead change—without losing yourself in the process.

Now What?

You now have a practical framework to lead yourself, coach others, and shift systems.

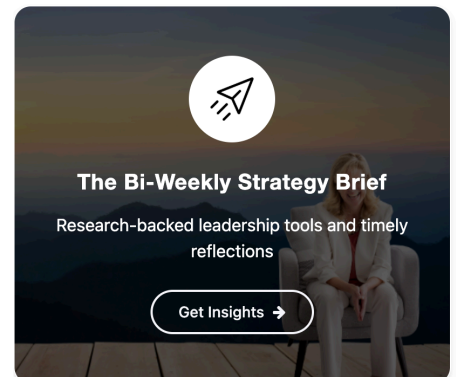
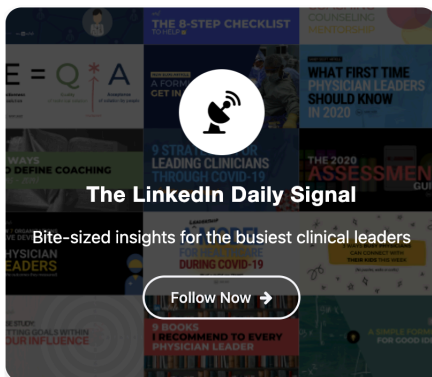
You have two doors:

- **Door 1 — Self-led:** Pick one arena (Self, Others, or Systems) and practice for the next two weeks. Use the checklists and one-pagers inside this playbook. Small reps compound fast.
- **Door 2 — Partner:** If you want faster lift with less headaches and mistakes, connect with us. We work with physicians and health systems through 1:1 coaching, group programs, and team intensives. [Send us a note](#) and we'll reply within 24 hours.

Whichever door you choose, remember: the system doesn't change until you do—and you don't have to do it alone.

Stay Connected & Keep Learning

Want to keep compounding what you've started here? These resources make it easy to stay connected, keep learning, and apply the playbook in real time.



[Define Your Physician Coaching Strategy](#)

[Send us a note](#)



We coach mission-driven clinicians to lead meaningful change in themselves and others —*regardless of circumstances.*

Stay ahead of the curve by partnering with a Top 1% Certified Coach



**750+ PHYSICIANS
COACHED**

**30+ YEARS COACHING
EXPERIENCE**

Our clients describe their experience as transformative

"I have worked with Sandy in two different health systems. She has an incredible ability to connect with physicians and to break through their guarded skepticism to unlock their true passion for patient care, empathy, and leadership. The result is **a resilient physician leader that can shift the culture of the organization.**"



Chief Clinical Officer, Intermountain Health

"Sandy is an expert at coaching physicians. She influences the professional, personal, and emotional lives we have as doctors. As a physician who has been coached by Sandy--she **changed my life and the lives of my colleagues.**"



Chief Medical Officer, Colorado

"I learned to practice **delegation by setting goals and time lines to monitor progress.** This helps me not get so focused on the details that I forget the big picture."



Chief Medical Officer, Arizona

"As a surgeon and leader, I was losing effectiveness, getting overwhelmed and couldn't figure out what to do differently. Through coaching, I began to better understand my team and developed the ability to **delegate and hold others accountable.** That gave me energy to start communicating our vision and work more strategically."



Chief of Surgery, California

"During my coaching... I set clearer expectations and guided my team to come up with a solution which they implemented. **Staffing, morale, and patient care have all improved.** I learned I don't need to fix things by myself."



Medical Director, Mississippi

"With [Sandy], I developed a new understanding of how to be **deliberate and proactive in situations with conflict.** Through iterations of practicing specific skills, my approach has improved, and results are better."



Medical Director, Maine



We're delighted to play a role in your future.
Send us a message to review our case studies.



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