

1

YOUR CENTERED LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

In which we introduce the program that Fortune 100 companies have been using with success to increase their leadership capacity

In 2009 a combative colleague cornered me to ask, “What makes the leaders you interviewed remarkable? What makes Centered Leadership distinctive? What’s your elevator speech?” The tiny voice in my head piled on, *Do you even have one, Joanna?* I froze. “It’s the Force!” I responded. His eyes rolled, and he walked away, as my inner voice chided, *Think you’re Obi-Wan Kenobi? Really? What were you thinking?* Oh, dear; I wasn’t.

The route to Centered Leadership

That conversation prompted me to think hard about the video interviews and what had drawn me to each remarkable leader. Not everyone had magic, but most did and they weren’t born with it. These were people who saw opportunity everywhere. They exuded positive energy. They understood themselves—their thoughts, feelings, and actions—and they were open to others, welcoming opposition. They were eager to connect; they touched others deeply. They faced big challenges and took personal risks with the confidence that if things didn’t work out, they would move on. They bounced back from failures with unstoppable energy. They were driven by purpose; they were a force.

It took years to articulate what my intuition understood—how to explain Centered Leadership in an elevator ride. I was not looking to describe every possible leadership capability or to fully explain leaders. I just wanted to know, in a nutshell, what distinguishes leaders who have a profound and positive impact on us versus other leaders who do a fine but unremarkable job. *I was looking for the smallest combination of capabilities that matter.*

So we—a team of colleagues and experts—set out to explore. After poring over reams of research in relevant academic fields, we were ready. And when we settled on meaning, framing, connecting, engaging, and energizing as the smallest combination, I felt complete without knowing why on a conscious level.

We tested these dimensions in two worldwide quantitative surveys of executives working in a range of industries and companies. And what we found astounded us.

A small segment of men and women—about one hundred people—regularly practiced four or all five of Centered Leadership’s dimensions and reported a high level of leadership effectiveness, a high level of satisfaction at work and at home, and a high level of preparedness for the current challenging environment. My mathematician husband, David, tactfully asked if possibly we had uncovered a random coincidence, but here’s the clincher: In contrast, hardly any of the 1,300 men and women who didn’t practice any dimension regularly felt that way. My resident skeptic then asked for cause and effect: Did these practices really lead to greater leadership success and personal fulfillment, or was it the other way around? Hundreds of workshops convinced us that the practices made the difference. We observed how individuals practiced Centered Leadership to be their best at work more of the time, to feel more in control of their destiny, and to have a positive effect on those around them.

But it doesn’t happen overnight. It’s a journey.

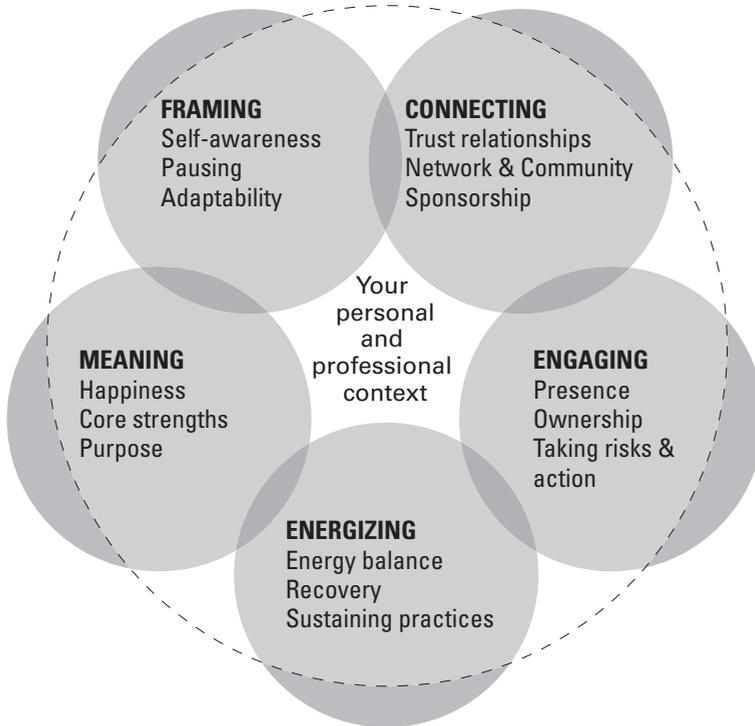
Five parts make a whole

What’s intriguing is that the five dimensions of Centered Leadership work better *together* than alone. Use just one and you’ll be able

Centered Leadership map of capabilities

PRECONDITIONS

Desire to lead | Talent and knowledge | Capacity for change



OUTCOMES

Leadership impact | Fulfillment | Resilience

SOURCE: The Centered Leadership Project

to make incremental improvements in your leadership. Use them all in concert, and you'll have lasting impact. Centered Leadership practices build on and reinforce one another, bringing you the inspiration, motivation, and energy to continue. It is, like life itself, a gestalt. Here is the unifying map, refined since *How Remarkable Women Lead*.

Since 2008, we have honed the dimensions of Centered Leader-

ship, and Johanne recognized how all of Centered Leadership resides within each dimension:

- **Meaning:** Still the most powerful factor, meaning is the anchor of Centered Leadership. It begins with happiness: Meaningful engagement offers longest lasting fulfillment; and it taps our core strengths (and gives us energy). By knowing what really matters to us we can discover our purpose, which in turn inspires us to gain conviction, courage, and confidence we may not realize we have. We lead through vision, which helps us reframe challenges as opportunities, connect deeply with the hearts and spirits of others, take on risk, and exude positive energy.
- **Framing:** We see the world through invisible frames of our own making. You may think you know yourself, but how self-aware and self-reflective are you in the throes of panic? With practice, we can learn to see ourselves “in the movie” of our own lives—noticing what triggers our emotions and reactive patterns of thoughts and actions. Once we pause, we become aware of our fears—how they serve but also how they limit us. With acceptance we can adapt, choosing to reframe our mindset or belief, which enables a different behavior to emerge. Choosing our experience in any situation releases a rush of positive energy. Reframing opens a window for us to build on strengths, help others move forward, and see more possibilities, too.
- **Connecting:** For some, forging true connection does not feel like real work. Not so! Reciprocity is the currency of work relationships, but genuine trust building turns that transaction into much more. Those who cultivate meaningful community from their networks are able to scale their leadership visions. In particular, sponsors—powerful people who take a risk on us—accelerate our growth. Belonging is a powerful driver of meaning; strong relationships increase our openness to reframing; and, with that support, we take risks and act. This is how Connecting creates energy.

- **Engaging:** Presence happens when you align your intention (what you really want to have happen) with your attention (what you choose to focus on) and your emotions (how you experience the moment). That alignment helps you balance fear with hope. Hope shows you the upside of opportunities and challenges, helps you accept the personal risk of acting, and as you do, you take ownership of your future. As I leaned into Engaging, I felt enormous power—a scary feeling. That power enables our pursuit of purpose, helps us see more opportunity, draws others to us, and, once again, releases positive energy.
- **Energizing:** It is disappointing to learn that work-life balance is a myth, but there is a solution: learning to manage our sources and uses of energy so we can work *and* live more fully. With attention to our bodies, minds, emotional well-being, and spiritual health, we can sustain high performance more of the time, bounce back quicker, and practice recovery when we need it. Energy is the fuel for each dimension, and, at the same time, more energy is released as you unlock each one. Energized leaders and teams build on strengths, pause and reframe in challenging moments, attract and mobilize others, accept risks, and take action!

In practical terms, mastery of these five dimensions enables us to extend our range of choices and actions. Centered Leadership is as much about *doing* as it is about *knowing* and *being*. That helps us become better leaders of teams and organizations: We see more possibilities, handle adversity instead of avoiding it, and transform ourselves to meet complex challenges without easy solutions. Equally powerful for men and women, Centered Leadership works across cultures, across industries, across pretty much everything.

David sees humanity at its best in Centered Leadership's five-dimension design. Johanne sees mindset and behavioral change infused throughout. I feel a force just waiting to awaken—what I thought I had been missing but actually had inside me all the while.

Now *that's* what I call an elevator pitch.

The road ahead

You picked up this book for a reason. Something about your professional hopes or aspirations wants your attention. Something about your untapped leadership potential is longing to be heard. Ask yourself what that might be. As you read, notice whether you're experiencing the high positive energy of hope, excitement, and joy or the high negative energy of fear, anxiety, and stress. Every now and then, step back to integrate what you are experiencing and learning, discussing your insights with others. How are you changing, and what is changing in you? You are the scientist, but you are also the subject.

Each section on your Centered Leadership journey begins with a chapter explaining the key concepts and their effect on me—your guinea pig. Mind you, I put myself out there, showing you the “before” and “after” and how I transformed. That’s a pretty vulnerable place to be (just sayin’)! Then, we teach you the specific tools, skills, and practices using Johanne’s exercises that enable you to interact with them, using your real life challenges. We’ve relegated further resources to footnotes so that you can remain in the learning experience. After each “tool kit” chapter, you’ll find stories of remarkable men and women leaders who demonstrate that practice in action. Here is a quick summary (tools, skills, and practices are in italics):

- **What you’ll find in Meaning:** We’ll help you discover your core strengths and show you how to tap into them in pursuit of your leadership vision. Specifically:
 - Recognize and use your *unique strengths* by reflecting on what energizes you and what you value most about yourself.
 - Dig into what really matters to you through *visualizing your far future* and using *appreciative questions* that help you unblock the path to it.
 - Reflect on your past, your future, and your essence, integrating them to inform discovery of your *purpose*.
 - Begin to give voice to your *vision* for your leadership today.

- **What you'll find in Framing:** We'll help you recognize the frames through which you are currently experiencing difficult or draining situations. Then we'll teach you how to use choice to shift your mindset and broaden your range of behaviors and actions in line with your growth aspirations. Specifically:
 - Become *aware of the fears or unmet needs* that get triggered in you, knowing that, through acceptance, you regain your power to choose your actions.
 - Access your natural ability to *pause in the moment* of an upset to see yourself and the pattern of how you tend to react.
 - *Make the choice* to shift your belief in order to experience new behaviors.
 - Create your own *sustaining practice* to help you integrate your desired mindset and behaviors.
- **What you'll find in Connecting:** We'll help you learn how to build trust, develop your network strategically, forge a close-knit community, cultivate sponsor relationships, and become an effective sponsor yourself. Specifically:
 - Build *greater trust*, creating greater belonging and meaningful relationships.
 - Develop your *desired relationship network* and forge *communities* in service of your leadership vision.
 - Coach your (potential) *sponsors* to be more effective in helping you make your vision a reality; pay that forward by learning to be a better sponsor.
- **What you'll find in Engaging:** We'll help you build or expand your presence to live into your intention, and offer you ways to assess risks and take action to lead positive change in your team or organization. You will:
 - Align your *attention* with your *intention* and *emotion*, allowing others to see you and hear you more clearly through compelling *storytelling*.
 - Enlist hope to balance fear, *learning to say no by saying yes* first to your priorities and listening to the *internal voices* that tap into hope.

- Build courage to take risks and bolder actions through *tools that help you assess risk*.
 - Solicit counsel through a “*mini-board*” process that increases support and coaching.
- **What you’ll find in Energizing:** We’ll help you actively manage your own energy sources and uses to refuel in the short and longer term. Specifically:
- Heighten your *emotional literacy*, recognizing positive and negative emotions and their impact on your energy and your effectiveness in that moment.
 - Cultivate *mindfulness* through practices that develop your capacity to reflect and stay present to your experience.
 - Build in *daily recovery routines* to refill your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy during the workday.
 - Adopt your own *sustaining energy practices* to renew for the longer term.

Our destination? Positive impact. Fulfillment. Resilience.

Can you think of anything better?

We cannot.