

By Henna Inam Posted August 22, 2019 In General

Ever hear the phrase, “born leader”?

Sure, some people have a natural ability to get others to follow them, but that doesn't always mean they'll get the best results.

Of course, you can learn to be a leader...a **great** leader.

Maybe you read the latest books on leadership or listen to famous leaders preach their gospel at conferences. And you try to mimic their best practices.

But, that's not how leaders are created.

Do you think Yo-Yo Ma read some books, listened to lots of music and then became a world-renowned cellist?

Did Fred Couples spend his days reading about the greats in golf, then hit the links and become one of the most celebrated golfers in sporting history?

Of course not. They invested in learning their craft and then practiced...and practiced...and practiced, daily.

In my experience as a leadership coach I've discovered that developing that leadership knowledge and daily muscle takes both **discipline and guidance from a coach**.

In this article I'm going to share a simple formula for daily practice, 4 questions to ask yourself about your leadership practice and finally some tips on how to make it all happen.

THREE THINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR DAILY LEADERSHIP PRACTICE:

1. **Make it simple.** Keep your daily practice (what you want to get better at) limited to 2-3 behaviors so they're simple, easy to remember and easy to put into action.
2. **Make it stretchy.** Make sure one of your leadership practices is something that stretches you outside your comfort zone, that helps you grow. Like sharing praise, delegating or dealing with conflict.

- 3. Make it fun.** At least one of your leadership practices should be something you love to do that brings you energy and joy. It could be as simple as reading a **blog** or planning helping to celebrate a project milestone.

What's The Right Leadership Practice For You?

There's not a one-size-fits-all leadership practice. What's right for you may be very different than what's right for someone else.

It takes some reflection and self-awareness to figure out your "exercise regime."

Four simple questions to discover your leadership practice:

1. What's a behavior that helps me express my strengths?

This is important because your greatest strength will help you be most successful. Not sure what that might be? Read more here for some guidance.

My greatest strength is seeing connections...seeing how a person can benefit from knowing another person. My natural leadership practice is to make connections so everyone benefits.

2. What one change I can make to accelerate my impact and meet my leadership goals?

I met a senior executive at one of my seminars who was a brilliant strategic thinker with lots of drive. But peers and direct reports consistently said this leader was so focussed on the agenda they tuned out during meetings.

I suggested this leader work on a simple leadership practice: **active listening**. That meant going around the room at the end of each one-to-one session and asking, "Did you feel heard?"

3. What core value is most important to me and how do I demonstrate it?

I had a brief but impactful encounter with a senior leader at one of my **sessions**. I was so energized I had to ask if she had a leadership practice?

She said her leadership practice was to be present with people so they felt more comfortable in their skin after they'd met with her. What a powerful practice!

Learn about your core values and then choose a practice to demonstrate them.

4. What is one behavior that motivates and energizes me?

Don't underestimate the importance of motivating yourself to keep up your energy. It's really hard to lead others when you're feeling depleted. So pick a leadership behavior that's going to lift you up so you can elevate others.

What's my favourite motivational practice? During my leadership career I would thank at least one person a day for a job well done.

It was such a simple practice, but it made me feel great, and made others feel more engaged and invested in the organization, and their contribution.

How Do I Stay On Track?

We can all learn about better ways of leading and showing up for our team. The real solution is to stay on track with a daily practice.

Pick a way to motivate yourself to stay on track. You know yourself best.

Three that will help you stick to your leadership practices:

1. Keep score! It's like Weight Watchers, except that more points are better. Track how many times you took the opportunity to employ your leadership practice.
2. Make it public. Tell your friends and colleagues about your new 'exercise regimen' so they can give you feedback, keep you accountable...and publicly shame you...
3. Keep reminders. Keep little Post-It notes around. On the bathroom mirror, in the car, on your desk as visual reminders. Or make up a little mantra to repeat before heading into meetings... and keep it simple.

My three leadership practices - you can hold me accountable if we meet at one of my workshops!

1. I'll ask "How can I help you?" when meeting people...then take notes to make sure I follow up. This includes learning to say a "guilt-free No" when someone asks for something I can't take on. *Every leadership practice should have boundaries.* This is my "simple" practice.
2. No matter what their actions or behaviour, I will assume people are doing their best under the circumstances. This is especially true in tough conversations, which I tend to avoid. That's one of my "stretchy" practices.

3. I'll journal about three things I'm grateful for every morning. This practice helps me create great opportunities for my company and build great relationships with others. And I also feel energized and motivated. That's one of my "fun" practices.

A final thought...

Just like mastering music or golf, **don't move on to a new leadership practice until you've mastered one already.** You're not going to alternate between Three-Blind-Mice and Mozart...

And research tells us it takes 21 days of repetition for a new behavior to become a habit...it takes your brain 3,000+ thoughts to rewire its natural instincts, so keep practicing!

With Take the time to develop your own leadership practice...and become a great leader.

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This article was written by **Henna Inam, executive coach, speaker, and author of the book *Wired for Authenticity*.** She works with people to help them realize their potential to be authentic, transformational leaders. They create organizations that drive breakthroughs in innovation, growth, and engagement. Her corporate clients include Coca Cola, The Home