Liberating your leadership enablers



Leadership is about influencing others to work towards a vision or mission and I've yet to experience anyone asking me to influence them – leadership is rarely something that people give you; it's something you have to take!

"Leadership is the readiness to stand out in a crowd"
John C. Maxwell

We all have the ability to influence others, we do it all the time; persuading a group of friends to go to the cinema rather than the theatre, convincing others that they have taken the wrong route up the mountain, getting a group of colleagues to reconsider a decision they have made, etc.

So, why is it we can do it on some occasions (or in certain situations) and not on others? And why is it that some people seem to be able to do it all the time, regardless of the occasion or the situation?

My personal belief is that it is not the situation itself that enables us to incarnate our leadership capacity but the perception we project on to the situation; it may be the external event that triggers the process but it is our internal perception of the situation that *enables* us or *disables* us in terms of our leadership. I'm sure you've all heard the "little voice" that says, "I can't do that", "they all know better than me", "they are all more experienced than me", "they will laugh at me if I ask that question", etc. We

also have the little voice that says “of course I can ask the question”, “they may be more experienced but I have a great idea” – the incarnation of our leadership depends both on which little voice shouts loudest and on which one we listen to!

“Those who believe they can do something and those who believe they can’t are both right”
Henry Ford

We all have those negative thoughts (what I call leadership disablers), parental injunctions, limiting beliefs, self-fulfilling prophecies, nightmares etc. For each negative thought there is a positive leadership enabler, adult permissions instead of parental injunctions, dreams instead of nightmares, liberating beliefs instead of limiting beliefs, seeing opportunities instead of threats, etc.

Here is a list of what I see as some leadership disablers and the corresponding enablers:

Disablers		**Enablers**
Fears		Hopes
Nightmares		Dreams
Injunctions		Permissions
Vicious circles		Virtuous circles
Limiting beliefs		Liberating beliefs
Negative thinking		Positive thinking
Self-fulfilling prophecies		Self-actualising prophecies
Problems		Solutions
Threats		Opportunities
Failure		Success
Doubt		Trust

For most of us it’s not a black & white affair, few of us are completely on one side or the other, we all somewhere in between and oscillate from one side to the other; in fact I’m not sure that hearing only the “enabling voice” is necessarily a good thing – it can maybe lead us to think that we are somehow superhuman.

So, how can we stay tuned in to our enablers? We need to gag that little voice that is telling me that “*it’s all going to go horribly wrong, that I am going to fail and that everyone will laugh at me*” and tune in to the other little voice that is saying “*it’s going to be really successful, that everyone will appreciate my input and people will thank me for speaking up*”

“Inaction breeds doubt and fear, action breeds confidence and courage”
Dale Carnegie

Although it’s not easy, it is possible to stop giving meaning to events, it is possible to stop judging and evaluating ourselves, thereby stopping the little disenabling voice in our head. If you catch yourself judging yourself (I can’t, I shouldn’t, I must, etc. …), be aware that there was some type of internal thought that you projected onto the situation/event – the judgment is something you added to the event or the thought.

Once you can make a distinction between the event/thought and the meaning you added, the judgment will disappear – or at least diminish.

“If you hear a voice within you say you cannot paint, then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced”

Vincent Van Gogh