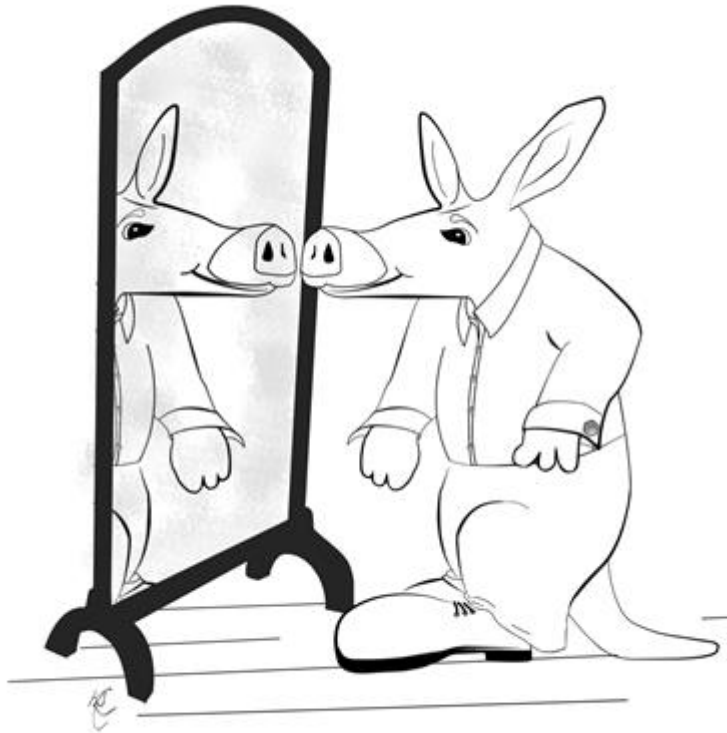


## CHAPTER 1

### Know Thyself



*This above all: to thine own self be true. William Shakespeare, Hamlet*

To thine own self be true.... It implies that we know who we are, but what if we don't? What if we are just muddling through our lives? And what if our muddling has brought us success? What if we have a career, home, and family. But what if this life path is not what we want? What if we don't know what we want? Or who we are? To thine own self be true.... We can't do or be what we don't know.

*Make it thy business to know thyself, which is the most difficult lesson in the world.*

**Miguel de Cervantes**

## **Know Thyself: What Does It Mean?**

We think we know who we are. But, do we? Are we who other people think we are? Let's be honest. I think most folks don't. Who are you?

My client Dean knew one thing about himself: He was not good at marketing or selling. However, an assessment I conducted with him indicated he should be excellent at marketing. Dean was startled to learn this, but based on this new information, decided to experiment with different marketing methods. He learned that yes, he did indeed have an aptitude for marketing. As he honed his marketing skills, his business grew, and his professional relationships improved.

## **Know Thyself: Why?**

*Observe all men; thy self most.* **Benjamin Franklin**

To learn about yourself gives you power. In fact, it's a superpower to truly know yourself. If we can learn about ourselves and truly know ourselves, we can accomplish anything discussed in this book. If we don't, we will muddle.

Knowing ourselves gives us decision-making power, which gives us the ability to shape our destiny. It gives us communication power, which can strengthen our impact and deepen our relationships. It gives us job-hunting power, which gives us a better chance to find a job or career that is a good fit. It gives us leadership power. It gives us courage, which allows us to face fear, stand up for others, and resist social pressure. It gives us power to know and manage our biases, which puts us in a better position to reach out to the world. To know ourselves gives us power to choose how we live life.

Millennial podcaster Megan Tan made the decision to turn down a job offer with a national magazine in favor of beginning her podcast-audio career in a closet. She feared if she took the magazine job, she might get sidetracked and fall off the career path she wanted for

herself. She is now an audio producer in New York City. Her podcasts from her days in the closet are superb and give insight to millennialness. I've listened to every one of them.

### **Know Your Values**

*There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self.*

**Benjamin Franklin, 1750, *Poor Richard's Almanack***

Begin the quest to learn about yourself by exploring your values. What is a value? A value is “a principle that gives meaning to our lives and allows us to persevere through adversity,” write psychologists Barb Markway and Celia Ampel in *The Self-Confidence Workbook*. Values act as our personal code of conduct. Many of us don't know our values. We lean on the values of our parents, church, or society in general. How do we identify our own values?

#### ***Make a List***

Keep it simple. Make a list. It is surprising how much a list can tell us. What we include. What we don't include.

Make a list of people. Who is important to you and why? For example, you may identify your family or your boss as important. Explore why they are important. One may represent love, and the other may represent livelihood. Perhaps you include your neighbor on the list. Why? Perhaps your neighbor represents community. What emerges? Think about this: Make a list of people who are offensive to you. What does that say about who or what you value?

Make a list of character traits. Write down character traits you admire. Identify the traits quickly, without thinking too much. Stuck? Try watching movies. Observe the characters. What do they do? What do you admire about them? What about them makes you angry? I cannot watch Westerns where buffalo are killed for sport. I get angry. One of my

values is to be kind to animals, to be respectful of wildlife. Movies I like for observing character traits include:

- *Hunt for Red October*: Watch Captain Ramius.
- *Batman: The Dark Knight*: Observe Alfred.
- *Ip Man 2*: Observe Ip in action as well as nonaction.
- *Hidden Figures*: Keep an eye on Dorothy.
- *Key Largo*: Observe all three main characters, especially the decisions they make.

Make a list of things you want to do. Perhaps it's the famous bucket list that identifies all the things you want to do in your life. Perhaps it's a wish list that identifies your dreams for the future. Perhaps it's the glorious when-I-win-the-lottery list. What shows up in these lists?

My bucket list looks like this:

- Learn to scuba dive—done
- Go to Mongolia
- Create a giant garden—done
- Finish my PhD—started
- Write a novel—done

Consider a visual list. Do this by making a vision board or collage or some visual representation of the people, things, or accomplishments you admire or hope to attain. What does it look like?

Make an elimination list. Identify everything you'd like to delete, avoid, or minimize in your life. Perhaps expand your list to the world. What would you like to eliminate? After you eliminate, what is left?

Make a happiness list. Identify all the times you were happy in your life. Why were you happy? Was it pure wonderful play? Was it pride of accomplishment? Was it giving or

being loved? What emerges? Or, do the opposite. Make an unhappiness list. Identify all the times you were unhappy. What triggered your unhappiness? Do you see any patterns?

### ***Analyze a Meaningful Event***

Think about your life. What are the most meaningful events? Think about one striking event that made an impact on you. What happened?

My friend and client, Galin, came to me ready to fight for any cause presented to her. Sometimes she did this without getting all the information or without thinking. She simply took on the fight, usually for the perceived underdog. I asked her to tell me about a significant event in her past. She remembered a day when she was young. The other kids teased and picked on her relentlessly. One bully boy pulled her hair so hard that Galin screeched and swung around to swat him. The teacher saw her strike the boy and punished her for causing trouble. Galin was furious but not allowed to speak in her own defense. The bully said nothing. The other kids cowered along the sidelines and said nothing. The more Galin objected, the more the teacher reprimanded her. Today, she works as a legal advocate for a nonprofit that protects abused moms and children. After analyzing the hair-pulling event, Galin came to see why her most important value today is to protect herself and fight against unfairness. This new insight is helping her to move forward and reshape her future. She is learning how to pick her fights, how to advocate more effectively for victims' rights, and when to let go of some fights.

### ***Align Your Values to Your Behavior***

Does our behavior reflect our values? Does our behavior reflect an ugly side of our values? Clyde seemed like a calm, peaceful man. He told me he was interested in religion, and that his number one value was spirituality. But, that value only pertained to his form of spirituality. He openly despised concepts of spirituality and faith that differed from his. He claimed they were evil. Colleagues said Clyde was *righteous* and *pushy*. He told me he felt it

was his calling to eradicate evil and spread the news about his own brand of spirituality. He requested coaching on how to do this more effectively. I declined him as a client.

Linda said courage was her number one value, yet she refused to do anything she feared. Linda’s performance appraisal noted that she needed to develop *backbone* and learn how to manage risk. Linda has been my client for two years now. She has worked hard on growing and developing her capacity to face fear. And, guess what? She wants to start her own small business.

Both Clyde and Linda were unaware of how their values were not aligned. Clyde’s behavior reflected that he was a bigot, not a spiritual man. At first, Linda’s behavior reflected that she was a coward, not a courageous person. Perhaps Clyde admired spirituality, and Linda admired courage, but neither behaved accordingly. When we think of our values, we must also consider how we behave. Does our behavior reflect what we value?

**Review: Know Yourself and Your Values**

Tools	Things to think bout
Make a list	Create a list. Consider one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People you like / people you don’t like</li> <li>• Character traits that you admire / that make you angry</li> <li>• Things you want to do list /eliminate</li> <li>• Things that make you happy/unhappy</li> <li>• Create a visual list of any of the above</li> </ul>
Analyze a meaningful event	Describe a meaningful event in your life  How has this event impacted your life?
Align your values to your behavior	Go back to your values and reidentify them  How does your behavior reflect those values?

## **Know What Motivates You**

*Find out who you are and do it on purpose. Dolly Parton*

Motivation is something that causes us to behave in a certain way. It is our willingness to do something. Or, our unwillingness to do something. Motivation is why we do things. How do we find out what motivates us?

### ***Look for Evidence***

Consider examining the past for evidence or clues. Think about the things in the past you worked hard for. Was it saving money, getting good grades in school, buying a car or a house? Was it learning and mastering a skill or sport? Was it building or creating something? Was it in service of a cause?

Then, look closer. What was it specifically that motivated you to work hard? Was it something tangible, such as a paycheck or a reward? Was it something intangible, such as the approval of others? Was it something internal, such as feeling good about yourself, knowing you did a good job? Was it something you needed to survive or protect yourself?

Look for the smoking gun, the answer hidden in plain sight. Ask yourself: What would make me stay seven years in this dull job? What is making me stay in this career field? What got me to work so hard on that project?

### ***Define Success***

When I first met Selina, she said she felt something was missing. She was a successful lawyer: big paycheck, nice house and car, beautiful clothes, a personal trainer, and season tickets to the opera. I asked her to describe what success meant for her. She was enjoying all the perks of her job, at least superficially. But, with time, she realized she was living according to other people's definition of success, mainly her parents. She realized that for her, success meant to make a difference in the world. She wanted to save the world (a

common theme among my clients). She is now a *water lawyer* who fights to protect the underground rivers in the Southwest.

How we define success can motivate us if we are honest about what success means to us. There are things we all need, such as safety, security, food, health. But, what makes us happy as individuals? What makes us *feel successful*? What makes us feel we live a good life? The answers to these questions may surprise us. It certainly surprised me. I am a college-educated, modern professional woman, yet part of my definition of success is to be a good wife. Sounds old-fashioned. I suppose it depends on how you define *wife*. Other parts of my definition of success involve winning the Pulitzer Prize (sigh, not there yet), having a host of happy clients, being a good dog-mom, and creating a giant garden.

Can our definition of success change? Yes. Perhaps it changes as our life situation changes or as we learn new things or as we accomplish important goals or age. Let it change. Examine what has changed. Then redefine success.

### ***Take a Motivation Assessment***

Consider taking a test designed to help you better understand what motivates you on an unconscious level. I use the online PRINT Survey questionnaire at [www.paulhertzgroup.com](http://www.paulhertzgroup.com). The results indicate what unconsciously motivates us, such as being appreciated, being correct, being strong and self-reliant, being successful, being knowledgeable, being safe, being unique, or enjoying life.

The PRINT Survey indicated that I am motivated by enjoying life and being self-reliant. I won't hang around a job if I'm bored. Same with my client, Toby.

Toby loved his government job at first. However, four years in, he was bored, felt listless, and watched the clock. It seemed to me that he had a passive I-don't-care attitude. Toby took the PRINT Survey and learned his unconscious motivator was to enjoy life. He thrived on change and the new and different. He also discovered that he excelled at



innovation. He would never be happy at a job grounded in tradition. He couldn't leave his job right away because he needed to support his family. I asked Toby to develop a long-range plan to slowly transition into a more interesting career. He began volunteering as a consultant who advised start-ups about government contracting opportunities. Then, he took on a few consulting gigs on the weekends. He eventually left his government job to start his own consulting company. He also became an expert in mitigating risk for start-ups.

### **Review: Know What Motivates You**

Tools	Things to think about
Look for evidence	What has motivated you in the past?
Define success	What is your personal definition of success?
Take a motivation assessment	If you took a motivation test, what was the result?

### **Know Your Strengths**

Knowing what your strengths are, especially as an outlier, will help you believe in yourself and have faith in your ideas when no one else does.

#### ***Determine What You Do Good***

Jerome came to me saying, "I suck at details." He is the CEO of a nonprofit organization and excels at strategy, long-range planning, forming alliances, public relations, and leading change. He struggles with details, such as managing a calendar and reviewing long reports. He even struggles if he has to hear details. I asked if he'd rather focus on his strengths. At that time, Jerome was asked to facilitate an alliance for about 100 nonprofits. He started to focus on his strengths of strategic vision and public relations and proceeded to lay the groundwork for the new alliance. Jerome began to surround himself with *detail people* who

not only managed the details but excelled at it. Jerome later told me, “I still suck at details, but I’m damn good at what I do good.”

The idea is to know yourself well enough so that you can focus on what you do best. What are your strengths? If you’re not sure, ask yourself what you *do good*, as Jerome would say. But sometimes, it is complicated to figure out what we *do good*.

### ***Ask Others***

Asking others about your strengths can be an awkward thing. It can feel arrogant or embarrassing. The typical documentation that people often use to identify strengths—performance evaluations and 360 evaluations—have their uses but are more often useless.

Consider being a spy. Observe where and when you get compliments. Identify what others consistently ask you to do. When do others ask your opinion? What tasks does your boss seem to consistently assign you?

Perhaps you are OK asking others. Go ahead and just ask. What are my strengths? Be prepared to listen, be surprised, and be gracious if you don’t like what you hear.

### ***What Do You Enjoy?***

My husband, Ken, likes to look at things, take them apart, learn how they work, and put them back together. When he was a child, his father brought home bags of broken electronic toys. He told Ken, “If you can fix them, you can have them.” Ken enjoyed analyzing why the toy was broken, problem-solving, and then repairing the toy. His strengths are analysis and problem-solving. Today, he is an engineer. What do you enjoy?

### ***What Did You Do as a Child?***

Ken’s story started as fun in childhood. What we did for fun as a child can inform our present. I taught school to stuffed animals and wrote stories. I am now an instructional designer, writer, and coach. My client Bill created machines out of Legos. He is now a

mechanical engineer. Another client, Lee, raised miniature pigs when she was a teen. She is now a veterinarian.

What did you do as a child? It may provide insight about what your strengths are today.

### **Review: Know Your Strengths**

Tools	Things to think about
Determine what you <i>do good</i>	What activities, skills, or tasks do you do well?
Ask others	What types of things do other people ask you to do or ask you for help with?
What do you enjoy?	As an adult, what do you like to do?
What did you do as a child?	As a child, what did you like to do?

### **Know How You Communicate**

We all communicate differently, and if we are aware of how we communicate, we may better understand why people react to us the way they do. It will also give us the power to adjust our communication style to better convey our ideas. This is especially good for outliers who sometimes inadvertently offend others or misrepresent ourselves.

#### ***Observe Your Impact on Others***

How do we communicate? How do we talk to people? Tabitha communicated in short telegraph-like sentences, bordering on abrasive. She didn't use social niceties, such as how-are-you or hello or some other greeting. She even considered her name too long and prefers

to be called Tab in lieu of Tabitha. I appreciate this type of communication style, but Dean didn't.

Dean is the opposite of Tabitha. He communicates with lots of words, niceties, and smoothness. Imagine the following conversation Dean described.

“Hi, Tab,” Dean says. “Could you crunch these numbers for me? They're for the Adams report and the boss wants them this week.”

“Sure,” Tabitha says.

“I wouldn't ask, but the boss moved the deadline up and I have to get the rest of the report ready.”

“Got it,” Tabitha says.

“And you're so good with the analysis piece,” Dean says.

“I said I got it,” Tabitha says.

I was asked to group coach the team that included Dean and Tabitha. During the session, Dean told the group he felt Tabitha was cold and aloof. Tabitha claimed that Dean was overly sensitive. Other team members voiced similar concerns, not about Dean and Tabitha, but about other members in the team. Nobody seemed to have any idea about the impact they had on others.

Everyone has their own communication style. Everyone probably thinks their style is the best or even the only style. If we discover people are consistently responding to us in an unfavorable way, we should consider ourselves first.

Observe how you talk to people. How do you begin and end a conversation? Listen to yourself talk on the phone. Notice how you ask questions or make requests or give directions or orders. You're looking for your impact. Observe how people respond to you. Notice when they respond in a negative way. Notice when they respond in a positive way. In turn, notice how you respond.

Watch how other people talk to each other. Yes, go ahead and eavesdrop. Notice any rituals of communication with the greeting, the small talk, or the relationship-forming.

Learn how you communicate under stress. Do you become defensive or offensive? Do you lash out and yell? Do you become impulsive and lose control over what you say? Do you clam up and say nothing? Do you get in the last word and quickly walk away?

Observe how people negotiate. Notice the jargon. Notice when the communication is elegant, when it is *rough*, when it is technical, or when it is simple. Watch for the rituals of communication specific to negotiation, such as giving acknowledgment.

I communicate like a farm girl. I don't like lots of adjectives or adverbs. When people talk to me, I will mentally delete the adjectives and adverbs.

### **Review: Know How You Communicate**

Tool	Things to think about
Observe your impact on others	When do people respond favorably to you? When do people respond negatively to you? How do you respond under stress?

### **Know Your Temperament**

*Don't be confused between what people say you are and who you know you are.*

### **Oprah Winfrey**

Gloria and Sally work together. They came to me for coaching on how to better work together. Gloria is an extroverted, strategic, big-picture thinker, and makes fast decisions. Her pet peeve is when other people take too long to make decisions, at which point she becomes irritable, impatient, and bullyish. Sally is an introverted, analytical thinker, careful, and concerned with details. She wants to assess the data before deciding. Her pet peeve is when

other people push her to make a fast decision before she has had time to study the data, at which point she becomes withdrawn and stubborn. The moment Gloria and Sally voiced these things, they understood how their temperaments differed. I was amazed they had not realized this sooner. Gloria now asks Sally how much time she needs and gives her that time. Sally now gives Gloria updates and, for special projects, will work faster.

### ***Learn About Temperament***

Temperament is our nature, our behavior, and how we respond to others when pushed.

Temperament includes our characteristics, our uniqueness, and how we are different from others. Some scientists say we are born with temperament. It is a genetic trait, such as extrovert versus introvert. Temperament is also related to personality. If we are born with our temperament, other scientists say we develop our personality through our life experience.

Tests can help us learn about both our temperament and personality, though they are not usually called tests. They are often referred to as inventories, indexes, quotients, surveys, or questionnaires. Examples include the following:

- The Keirsey Temperament Sorter (helps us learn about our temperament type, with a focus on behavior)
- The Myers–Briggs-Type Indicator (helps us identify some of our personal preferences, such as introvert versus extrovert)
- The Holland Codes (helps match us with career choices based on personality)

Most of these tests must be taken through a certified administrator and are not free.

You can sometimes find free or shortened versions of some of the tests on the Internet, which can be fun and informative.

Beware: Personality and temperament tests are not the final word on who you are. They are not rules. They are not ancient wisdom. They simply provide information and allow us to look at ourselves in different ways. The tests can be inaccurate, even deceiving, for

many reasons, such as cultural bias or changing mores or the test-taker knows how to manipulate the test. There is no rule that you must agree with any of them. After taking a test, notice what resonates with you. What doesn't?

### ***Bake a Cake***

It's odd and not scientific, but it works. Describe how you would bake a cake. How do you plan the cake? Do you need a photograph of the finished cake? (I need a photograph.) Do you quickly scan the recipe to make sure you know what to do? If yes to any of these, think of yourself as a big-picture, strategic personality, perhaps a bit on the spontaneous side. Or, do you carefully read the recipe, check to see if you have all the ingredients, and double-check expiration dates?

How do you mix the cake? Do you bring out the ingredients as you need them? If you discover you are missing an ingredient, do you figure out a substitute? Do you sometimes eyeball a measurement in lieu of actually measuring? If yes, you tend to be creative, more flexible, and perhaps resilient.

Or, do you gather all the ingredients, utensils, pans, bowls, and mixers? What if you are missing an ingredient? No, you wouldn't have missing ingredients because you double-checked earlier. Do you measure carefully with separate measures for liquid and dry ingredients? If yes to some of these, you tend to be a planner, are good at details, and often enjoy the process as much as creating the product.

How do you conduct the baking? Do you use nonstick pans, pour the batter in, jiggle the pans, and then pop them into the oven? Do you note the clock on the wall and make a mental note when the cake will be done, or do you touch the cake or wait until you smell the cake to know it's done? If yes to any of these, think of yourself as more intuitive and perceptive, even sensory, perhaps in touch with nature. You might have a minimalist attitude that leans toward efficiency.

Or, do you preheat the oven, perhaps checking for hotspots? Do you butter, flour, and line the cake pans and measure the same amount of batter for each pan, then even out the batter with an inverted spatula? Do you use a timer and test for doneness with a toothpick? If any of this describes you, think of yourself as good with evaluation or adhering to criteria in order to achieve a result.

Each phase of the process will reveal a hidden gem about you. Then, have cake and celebrate. Don't forget to add chocolate frosting.

### **Review: Know Your Temperament**

Tools	Things to think about
Learn about temperament	How would you describe your temperament?
Bake a cake	Describe how you would bake a cake. What does it say about you?

### **Know Your Business Self**

*Know thyself: the entrepreneur's secret weapon.* **Brian Clark**

To be successful in business, no matter what our position is, we've got to know how we handle risks, failure, and setbacks, and especially, what our leadership style is. This is all part of our business self.

#### ***What Is Your Leadership Style?***

We can start by learning how we function and respond as leaders. This applies to all manner of work, whether in the corporate, small business, or entrepreneurial world. It applies even if we are not in leadership positions, for we are leaders of how we do our individual work.



What is leadership? There are countless definitions, though I am going to define *leadership* as the ability to influence others. There are countless theories and models of leadership. Here are the basic types of leadership theory:

<BL>

- Great man theory: Leaders are born to accomplish great things and fulfill a destiny.
- Trait theory: Leaders are people who possess certain traits, such as honesty, courage, visionary thinking.
- Transactional theory: Leaders are in a transaction with their employees, getting something in return, such as doing work for a paycheck.
- Transformational theory: Leaders inspire others and get their voluntary commitment toward a shared goal or vision, often focused on change.
- Contingency theory: Leaders adapt to the overall situation and adjust their style to meet the specific needs of the situation or the people involved.
- Servant model: Leaders serve the needs of the employees, such as helping them grow professionally and personally.

The key to leadership is that there is no one best leadership theory. Sometimes, we have to switch it up. Craig retired as a lieutenant colonel after a 20-year career with the military. For his second career, he accepted an offer to be the director of a company that created training programs for emergency response personnel. He came to me for coaching on how to adjust to this new career.

Craig had passion for the work, but it became a painful truth for him that his former transactional leadership style of giving orders was not going to be successful or even useful. The staff, mostly civilians, seemed to operate in a different world than Craig. The e-learning department was especially foreign to him. It was in a dark basement full of extremely young

people talking in technical jargon. When he gave an order, they sometimes politely refused (yes, they explained why). Conflict after conflict occurred between him and the staff.

Craig came to coaching devastated. He thought he was a good leader. Something was wrong, he said. He had attended leadership schools while in the military, but that world was made up of military troops who followed orders. Craig's strength turned out to be talent development. He was used to training troops, getting them promoted, and then training new troops. He started focusing on training and developing his civilian staff. He took on the more collaborative servant model approach. He took courses on emotional intelligence. He took assessments and participated in leadership workshops. What was his big takeaway? "Know your leadership style and then adapt your style to fit the people and mission you are supposed to lead."

There are other ways to learn about leadership style. Read biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs of the people you admire. They are usually not written in the leadership genre, but they often provide nuggets of leadership wisdom. I like the following books:

- *Mary Kay: The Success Story of America's Most Dynamic Businesswoman*, by Mary Kay Ash
- *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, by Nelson Mandela
- *Hannibal*, by Ernle Bradford
- *The Story of George Washington Carver*, by Eva Moore
- *Night*, by Elie Wiesel

Watch more movies. Again, the movies are not usually produced specifically to illustrate leadership, but they often do illustrate different aspects of leadership (and nonleadership). Movies I like include:

- *The Bridge on the River Kwai*
- *We Were Soldiers*
- *The King's Speech*
- *Apollo 13*
- *Invictus*
- *Star Trek (any of them)*

### ***Know How You Recover From Mistakes and Failures***

We are human, and therefore make mistakes and experience failure. Do we know how we respond to them? Do mistakes and failure devastate us? Or, can we recover? Is recovery a reflective process? Or, does it involve a beer and better-luck-next-time attitude? Some people get right back on the horse and try again. Some are depressed for weeks. It is important to know how we respond in the face of mistakes and failure because it has an impact on those we lead. How we recover from failures and mistakes will set the example for others to follow. If we make a mistake, try to learn from it, and try again, our team will do the same.

My favorite failure happened when I was working as the safety officer at a state mental hospital in Columbus, Georgia. I was faced with two huge projects. I had time for only one. I chose the most urgent project and ignored the other. No, I didn't have the good sense to renegotiate the second project. I excelled at the urgent project and made the hospital look good. The day came when I had to face Gladys, the director of nursing, and admit that I had ignored her project. In front of all, I admitted my failure and apologized. Gladys looked over at me and simply said, "Welcome to the human race." Then, she asked her staff to assist me with the project. Thank you, Gladys!

How we respond to mistakes and failure can fuel or destroy the spirit of innovation. If innovation is critical to your business, find a way to professionally deal with mistakes, such as lessons-learned sessions, a thinktank, or an innovation lab.

## ***Know Your Tolerance for Risk***

For our purposes here, I am going to define *risk tolerance* as our ability to deal with the possibility of loss. Taking risks is often part of business. Risks could include how we invest, advertise, and hire, and what projects we accept. Almost all businesses involve some element of risk. There is really no such thing as business as usual.

Do you know how much risk you can tolerate? One clue can be your gas tank. When do you fill up? Half empty? When the red light comes on? Ten miles after the red light comes on, and then turning off the air conditioner or heater and coasting on the downhills to allegedly save fuel?

If you learn you have little tolerance for risk, don't try a start-up. Don't go after your own business. Don't go into real estate, sales, or any other business where there is a higher level of uncertainty.

How about your job? Suppose you are assigned a large, expensive project. What is the impact if the project fails? If it does, a lessons-learned session about the failure is not going to save the company or your job. How about a job or career change? As a career coach, I would be remiss if I didn't discuss risk with my clients as it relates to career change. Sometimes a client has a high risk tolerance, but their situation does not. It could be disastrous if a single mom whose only income was from waiting tables quit her waitress job today to seek her fortune as an artist. We would talk about risk first. We would talk about how to manage the risk second.

The classic methods to mitigate risk usually involve a risk assessment and a detailed risk management plan. Here is a simplified method:

- Identify the consequences if you fail.
- Do your research (funding, expertise, potential market).
- Have a Plan A.

- Have a Plan B (contingency plan).
- Stay focused on the outcome.
- Stay relevant (you may have to reinvent the business or learn new skills).

### **Review: Know Your Business Self**

Tools	Things to think about
Understand your leadership style	Describe your leadership style.  Describe a time when your leadership style didn't work. What might have worked better?
Recover from mistakes and failure	Describe a failure in your life.  How did you recover from that failure?
Know your tolerance for risk	If you own a car, describe when you typically fill the tank.  What type of risk do you encounter at your workplace?  How do you manage risk at your workplace?

### **Know Your Blind Spots**

*Know thyself? If I knew myself, I'd run away.* **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

Blind spots are our preferences, biases, and inherent prejudices. We all have them. Blind spots can potentially cloud our perspective of ourselves and cause us to behave poorly. They often are in stealth mode. We don't see them and remain unaware of their presence. But, they are present and interfere with our lives.

#### ***Know How You Give Credit***

Think about the last victory you experienced. What credit did you take? If it included others, did you give them credit? If not, you are a victim of self-serving bias. This blind spot is a way

of thinking that makes a person see themselves in an overly favorable manner. It's this person who continually claims all the credit for success.

My suggestion is to always give credit to others. This is especially true when you are in a leadership position. Give all the credit to the staff. Think about that victory as an award, and part of your acceptance speech is to give credit and thank others. This is so true in business. Give credit. A leader or manager or boss has no business taking the credit unless it is on behalf of the troops or the staff or the workers.

### ***Know Your Prejudice and Behave***

We all have our personal prejudice. If we think we have no prejudice, we are either naïve or an idiot. What is your prejudice? Identify it. Learn about it. My prejudice? Pregnant women. I was scared to write this and cringed when I did. My editor said she cringed when she read it. I hate to admit it, but in the spirit of transparency and honesty, I do admit it. I'm sorry ladies. It started when I was in the Army. When a female soldier got pregnant, she was pulled from regular duty. Someone else had to fill the gap. Often it was me. Between light duty and maternity leave, that female soldier was not available for regular duty for over a year. Later, as a manager and director, I experienced the same with female civilian staff. Always the pregnant female got special treatment. I came to resent pregnant females.

Do I get to justify my prejudice? No. Do I get to manifest it? No. Do I get to preach my prejudice? No. I get to identify it, and then behave in a respectful manner. To never allow that prejudice to interfere. I even wondered if, as a female, I was perhaps jealous of pregnant women. I had decided, after all, not to have children myself. It didn't matter. I had to keep that prejudice swallowed up and managed so that I could allow respectful behavior to grow and hopefully become authentic. To my knowledge, I never allowed that prejudice to interfere with how I treated a pregnant lady. Not once.

Then I came to understand that all employees get special treatment sooner or later. One staff member wanted to come to work an hour late so he could exercise every morning. Another person needed to work from home once a week to take care of kids. Someone else went on a six-month sabbatical. And, someone else got to cross-train in another department she was interested in. My administrative assistant and I both left work early twice a week to go to school. Every one of my staff got some type of special treatment. Wow, what a motivated staff that was! I still feel fortunate that I was able to make that happen. Thank you, pregnant ladies.

Know your prejudice and behave.

### ***Know Your Hot Buttons***

A hot button is something that causes us to behave poorly. You might hear someone say, “They pushed my buttons.” My friend John has a hot button about incorrect grammar, spelling, or language use. He corrects the e-mails he receives from colleagues and returns them. This irritates some people. I find it charming. Clients Vince and Tomas have hot buttons concerning people who arrive late to meetings. Vince is a fire safety instructor and locks the door when he starts class. Ironically, this may be a safety violation. Tomas is a chief financial officer, and when conducting a meeting, he will point out the late person with passive-aggressive comments such as, “I hope our meeting didn’t interfere with your coffee break.” Another client, Annie, has a hot button dealing with disorganization. When she comes to your office, she will start to organize the stuff on your desk. Seraz, a colleague, has a hot button about people who don’t have a positive outlook. He will debate, argue, and become defensive whenever someone says no.

How do you know if you have hot buttons? Watch for an immediate, automatic response in yourself, as if you can’t control it or are protecting yourself. How do you know if

you are behaving poorly? Watch for the response in other people. Are they resisting? Are they getting upset or mad? Are they, in turn, behaving poorly?

We all have hot buttons. However, if the hot buttons cause you to feel too intense or become uncontrollable or trigger a traumatic response, please seek help. There are many resources out there, such as counselors, therapists, hypnotists, spiritual leaders, support groups, and doctors. Seek them out. You are worth it. If money is an issue, some of these resources are free, such as some support groups.

*Learn to know yourself...to search realistically and regularly the processes of your own mind and feelings. Nelson Mandela*

**Review: Know Your Blind Spots**

Tools	Things to think about
Know how you give credit	In business, how do you give and take credit for a job well done?  When do you withhold congratulations, kudos, or words of praise when others succeed?
Know your prejudice and behave	What are you biased against?  Why do you think you have this bias?  How does this bias impact your professional life?  What could you do to manage this bias?
Know your hot buttons	When do you automatically and reflexively respond poorly?  When do people respond poorly to you?

*Before we change the world, we need to change ourselves. Patrick Daniel*

**Be Ready: The Universe Will Test You**



The universe will test us. One day, we will be asked to prove ourselves, to stand up, and defend our values. Life is not all fluff and goodness. There are challenges and heartbreak and unfairness. There is stress. There is disappointment. There is death. All these things can tempt or test us. And, we probably won't be tested in any expected way.

I value life. It is precious. Each person is precious. Each creature is precious. For both, I wish life. The universe tested me when my mom died. I had to decide when to stop treatment. She was suffering as her heart valves failed. She asked for my cappuccino and apple fritter, which she consumed with gusto between gurgling breaths. Then, she touched my hand. I gave permission to stop treatment, to administer the morphine to ease any pain and Ativan to ease anxiety. I held her hand until her last heart valve stopped working. What I remember most is how she relished the coffee and fritter. A perfect last supper.

Have no doubt, the universe will test you.