



Leaders

BOOK SUMMARIES

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Boundaries For Leaders

Results, Relationships, And Being Ridiculously In Charge

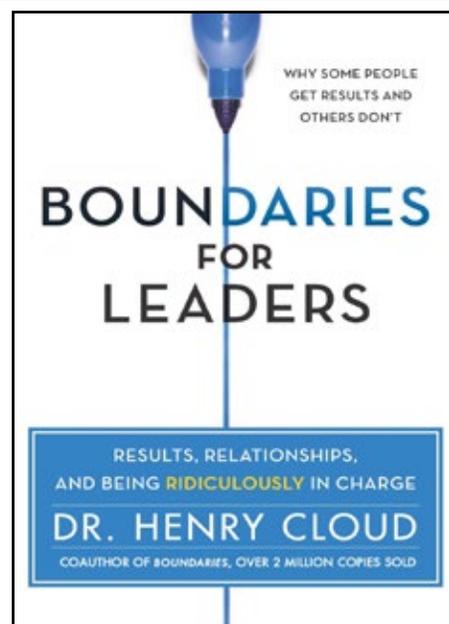
THE SUMMARY

To get results, leadership matters. But there is more to leadership than casting vision, developing strategy, execution, etc. Leaders lead people, and it is the people who get the work done. And to get it done they must be led in a way that enables them to use all their brainpower.

One of the aspects of a leader's behavior that enables that is his/her boundaries. There are seven boundaries a leader must set that make everything else work and set the climate for people's brains to perform at their best.

Chapter 1: The People are the Plan

Ultimately, leadership is about turning a vision into reality; it's about producing real results. And that only happens when people do what it takes to make it happen. This book is about what leaders need to do in order for people to accomplish a vision.



About the Author

Dr. Henry Cloud is a highly sought-after clinical psychologist and leadership consultant for CEO's and companies. He speaks regularly at national events and is the bestselling author of *Integrity, Necessary Endings, Boundaries*, and many other books.

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CEO's and other high-level leaders usually get to their place by being good at the business and being able to devise and execute "the plan." But they also have to be good at something else—getting people to do what it takes to make the plan work.

One leader told me, "I love this work, but the longer I'm at it, the more time I end up putting into *people leadership* issues, and less on the work." Regardless of how much time it "should" take, the time and energy invested in people issues should produce better results and create a culture where energy and momentum thrive. And a key to doing that is setting the boundaries that drive organizational health and that immunize against sickness.

Many of the issues you face in your organization are fixable. The key is to lead in ways that people's brains can follow. When that happens, good results follow also. You can get the results you want when you lead in ways that people can actually follow. If you aren't getting the results you want, there are reasons for it, and answers that work.

Chapter 2: Ridiculously in Charge

Recently I was talking with a CEO, and asked him what kind of culture he would like to have in his company. As he thought about it, he came alive. I asked him why he didn't just build that kind of culture. He started to blurt out a reason why it couldn't happen, but then he paused and said something I'll never forget: "You know,

when I think about it...I *am* ridiculously in charge."

At that point, I knew he got it. He was "ridiculously in charge"...and he owned it. That is critical, as leaders set the boundaries for their organizations. And leader's boundaries define and shape what is going to be and what isn't. As a leader, you always get a combination of two things: *what you create and what you allow*. It always comes back to leadership and the boundaries they allow to exist.

Through a few key boundaries, leaders make sure certain things happen, prevent other things from happening, and keep it all moving forward. Setting these positive and negative boundaries takes a lot of energy and focus. It takes ongoing effort. But it's worth it—good boundaries establish the norms and behaviors that drive success, as well as diminish bad behavior—they form an immune system that protects the organization from being led away from its values, mission, and purpose (and become sick in the process).

Chapter 3: Leading So Brains Can Work

The reason that a leader's boundaries work is that they actually make it possible for people's brains to function as they were designed. Our brains operate in certain ways that are hardwired into our system. If we ignore those ways, the brain flounders. However, as leaders we can set up the right conditions for the brain to operate,

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resulting in better performance for our people. All because we are in alignment with how our brains actually operate.

To be specific, there are three key functions that are needed to achieve any kind of purposeful activity, like reaching a goal. These “executive functions” are:

- **Attention:** the ability to focus on something specific.
- **Inhibition:** the ability to not get off track; to “not do” things that would distract.
- **Working Memory:** the ability to be continuously aware of relevant information.

All three of these are necessary to accomplish goals and get things done. As a leader who is “ridiculously in charge,” you have to establish the boundaries that support the executive functions of your people. Those boundaries will apply to how meetings are conducted, as well as to interactions with direct reports, teams, culture, etc.

When those executive functions are operating, and the organization is structured in a way that enables people to focus, be inhibited by minimal distraction, and be aware of what is important, the *next level* of the brain’s executive capacities kick into gear (think: the brain on steroids). This is the part of the brain that enables the behaviors that produce results:

- **Goal Selection**—can effectively choose good goals.

- **Planning and Organization**—can identify the steps needed to accomplish the goal.
- **Initiation and Persistence**—can begin & follow through on pursuing goals despite distractions.
- **Flexibility**—can solve problems with creativity & strategic thinking.
- **Execution and Goal Attainment**—can execute the plan.
- **Self Regulation**—can monitor and adjust their own performance

These are normal brain functions for humans, but they only happen when leaders lead in such a way that the three executive functions are present. Every organization has goals and plans, but only a few have the leadership that creates an environment that attends, inhibits, and remembers, thus making high performance possible.

When leaders lead in this way—where people and the organization attend to what is important, inhibit what gets in the way, and stays aware of what is relevant for the next step, the organization becomes *powerful*. This power is felt in several ways:

- The people are engaged and focused.
- The focused energy is producing results and generating momentum.
- There is constant adaptation and learning.
- The people are growing.
- The customers and market feel

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the power—there is a contagious enthusiasm.

Chapter 4: The Emotional Climate That Makes Brains Perform

In the same way that the brain can't work well when the executive functions aren't in place, it also can't work well when it is stressed out or depressed. The fact is that your people think better when they are not feeling bad. Yet many leaders put little thought or energy into creating a positive emotional climate for their people (and sometimes create the exact opposite). Their leadership produces stress, fear, and even depression.

So how do you create positive emotional climates and avoid negative ones? First, take a look at yourself. Research shows that how we view others (positively or negatively) significantly affects goal-oriented behavior. As a leader, you need to know that how your people view and relate to you will affect their performance. You need to foster positive connections with your people. Take an honest look at what kind of mood or energy you are fostering in your interactions—when you enter a room, when you give feedback, when you communicate your agenda, etc.

Second, watch your tone when you set boundaries. People have two basic needs—connection and accomplishment. Everything we do is either relational or goal-oriented, and a healthy leader needs to pay attention to both of those

realities. He provides a positive climate while accomplishing things through people. Leaders need to give people the direction, structure, and accountability that drive good results, but do it in a way that doesn't create stress. To do that, you have to watch your tone. Remember this phrase: *Be hard on the issue, but soft on the person.*

Unhealthy leaders create a climate of destructive fear, where people are afraid of a *person* rather than concerned about an *issue*. Good fear, or positive stress, is when we are concerned about some reality or the consequences of that reality, instead of fearing someone's wrath when we make a mistake. Positive stress is necessary to achieve results. The right kind of fear increases performance—it motivates us to make reality better in some way and avoid negative outcomes. Negative *consequences* can drive good fear also—fear of losing a customer can prompt positive action.

The promise of positive outcomes and the fear of losing something of value are among the most basic drivers of performance. When used together, you have a formula for leading others towards greatness. Talk about both the bad things that will happen if we don't act and the good things that will happen if we do.

As the leader, you are responsible for setting emotional boundaries. Do everything you can to create the "good fear" that drives performance. Also, do everything you can to diminish destructive fear, which is communicated through tone and the threat of relational consequences (anger, shame, guilt, withdrawal of support, etc.) People need to know you are for them

even when they aren't doing well.

Chapter 5: Power Through Connection

During the winter of 2008, Wall Street was not a happy place to work. Jobs were being lost, investment banks had collapsed, the housing bubble had burst, and worry permeated every corner of the world. I was working with the CEO of a division of a large Wall Street firm, and he was very concerned about the affect it was all having on his people.

We set up focus groups around the country, where people began to share about the stress, anxiety, and depression they were feeling. The negative feelings were so strong that their performance was being affected, and not just their results—their ability to just function was being impaired. The pain they were expressing was greater than anyone had expected. But during those meetings, time after time, something very powerful began to happen: they began to connect with each other.

Just getting together and sharing stories about how the downturn was affecting them was changing them. It isn't just that they began to feel better; the experience of connecting was helping their brains actually function again. Connection has a huge impact on human performance—relationships actually change brain chemistry! So the question for leaders is "How do we create and enhance connection?" Or put another way, how

do leaders create the boundaries and structures that will attend to connection, inhibit disconnection, and supply the working memory to keep those connections growing?

The first necessary element is simply the right kinds and right amount of time together. Both quality and quantity matter. You can't grow a plant by occasionally dipping it into the dirt! It takes an ongoing connection to build a root system. I'm not advocating for more meetings here, but the truth is that most of the many meetings we have do little to foster connection and unity. We don't need more meetings, but we do need different meetings if we are going to see a sense of connection develop.

The key here is to structure different kinds of meetings. Build some time to connect into your regular meetings. That could mean just taking 5-10 minutes at the end of every regular meeting to check in: How did we do today on working together? Did we live out our team values? Other meetings on a monthly or quarterly basis can allow more time to set the agenda around the activities that will drive connection, instead of just "getting together."

For example, with the Wall Street firm I mentioned, I structured an activity that allowed the brokers to describe what the previous several months had been like, emotionally, relationally, and in terms of their performance. Creating a climate that allows for vulnerability and trust builds connection. For connection to happen, people have to get real with each other.

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Creating connections is a form of boundary setting. You are setting a positive boundary to form unity and a firm boundary against disconnection. (Remember, you get what you create and what you allow—so create connection and don't allow disconnectedness). We know from neuroscience that certain *kinds* of interactions build connection and unity based on the pattern of the brain's functioning. Here are some of those ingredients:

- Shared purpose—Unity grows when people have a shared purpose or goal.
- Awareness—To connect with you, I need to be aware of you and what you are dealing with, and you with me, and we need to be aware of the big issues facing us.
- Collaboration—Creating a climate where problems and issues are shared and solved via the team's engagement with each other.
- Coherent & Relevant Narrative—We know the brain likes to organize experiences into a story, a narrative about who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. Having a shared narrative fosters unity.
- Conflict Resolution—to create unity, sometimes we have to talk about the hard stuff, the things that people are upset about. High-functioning teams have all had to grapple with some emotion-laden issues before they hit their peak levels of collaboration.
- Emotional Regulation—When

experiencing difficult, even destructive emotional states, connecting with others helps us navigate them and can transform those emotions into more positive, productive states.

- Emotional Repair—All relationships have times of conflict, misunderstanding, etc. In good relationships, long-lasting damage doesn't happen—things get repaired.
- Listening—possibly the most important connection builder; people want to be known and understood. You can't lead them somewhere if they don't feel like you understand where they are.

Imagine an organization with a strong sense of purpose, where the people feel understood and valued, and through the power of their connections they are able to push each other to greater achievements. When things are tough they support each other, and when things go wrong, they fix it. Together. That kind of culture isn't impossible—it happens when leaders set boundaries that foster connection and inhibit disconnection.

Chapter 6: The Gatekeeper of Thinking

In 1991, the book *Learned Optimism*, by Martin Seligman came out. It recounted a study of over 1,000 insurance agents, comparing the results of those who had been hired on the basis of passing an aptitude test to those who had flunked it.

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The flunkies did better—by a lot. How?

It turns out there was another important difference between the two groups. The “flunkies” were optimists, and the “smart guys” weren’t. The lesson? Take someone who can’t, but thinks they can, and compare them to someone who can, but thinks they can’t. The optimist will win every time.

I tell people that “thinking” is like a piece of software; it dictates our outcomes. If it isn’t written in the code, you can click anything you like, but nothing is going to happen. Thinking in individuals and groups is like that—it gets encoded and determines what happens next—even what is *possible* to happen next. The prevailing thinking patterns in an organization will define what it is and what it does. And the leader’s boundaries determine what kind of thinking prevails.

Organizations can get stuck in certain ways of thinking for a lot of reasons, but one of the main reasons is the failure of leaders to set boundaries that prevent negative thinking and encourage optimism. What you create, and what you allow, is what you get as a leader.

Brain science comes into play here again. Anticipating outcomes, either positive or negative, causes different chemical reactions in the brain. Anticipating good outcomes causes the production of dopamine, which in turn causes the brain to be awake and interested, resulting in a productive, energized state. On the other side, anticipating negative outcomes over time can produce a state of *learned helplessness*.

When we find ourselves in a situation where we are continuously affected negatively, and we have no control over the things that affect us, it can change the software in our brain, and negativity sets in, producing a different chemical cocktail in the brain. When that happens, your brain basically tells you to “do nothing” because your brain thinks “it won’t make any difference.” Initiation, creativity, problem solving—it all stops. That is learned helplessness, in a nutshell.

Often it gets even worse if there is not intervention or reframing. It becomes an entrenched way of thinking, characterized by what Seligman referred to as “the three P’s,” which are: *Personal, Pervasive, and Permanent*.

Think of a salesman who calls a client to offer a new product, and the client turns him down. An optimist would brush it off and move on. But the person with learned helplessness thinks in a very different way, defined by the three P’s.

1. He personalizes it: he explains the event in relation to himself, negatively. “I am a lousy salesperson/loser”
2. He sees it as pervasive: rather than seeing this as a specific, isolated event, he generalizes it to “everything.” He will think “It isn’t just this client; all my clients think that way about me.”
3. He sees it as permanent: this is never going to change; it will always be this way. In short, there is no hope, and no reason to hope.

In the midst of the financial crisis, I found

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this syndrome present in several different industries. The reality of the external negative situation (financial meltdown), was rewriting people's internal software, and they were becoming different people. Until...they discovered they could rewrite the software! In the midst of the crisis, some people started looking for what they *could* control, instead of focusing on what they couldn't. One broker realized that if his clients were upset with him, there were potentially many thousands of clients out there who were upset with their brokers and looking for someone new. He got very busy calling people, asking them if they would be interested in hearing his strategies for surviving the downturn, and his business began to thrive. All because he began to think differently.

As a leader, you need to audit your thinking, and your team's thinking. Your attitude will be contagious, so you need to start with yourself. If you don't think anything can be done, neither will they. If you do, so will they. Lead your team to look honestly at the external realities and then figure out a "non-helpless" way to respond to them. You are ridiculously in charge, and you have to set boundaries on the type of thinking going on in your organization.

Research has revealed over and over again that a belief that one will be successful is among the strongest predictors of goal achievement. Great leaders build this belief into their people, teams, and culture. They believe they can, and when things get tough, they find a way. I call this *optimistic control*, which is the opposite of learned helplessness.

Chapter 7: Control and Results

When Tony Dungy took over as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1996, the team had 13 losing seasons behind them. A lot of reasons for that were being bandied about, but when Dungy looked at them, he discovered that most of them related to things outside his or his players control (including a voodoo curse supposedly placed on the team). Dungy refocused the team on three things they *could* control—lowering turnovers, eliminating penalties, and having great special teams—and that turned the team around. He took that thinking with him later to the Indianapolis Colts, who won Super Bowl XLI.

The lesson? As a leader, focus your people on what they have control of that directly affects the organization's desired outcomes. Two powerful things follow: you get results, and you also change the brains of your people so they function better (producing even more results).

To our previous ideas, we now add another part of the recipe: control. A sense of being in control changes people's brains and affects their performance. Here's how it works: When people's brains are working at their best, they are more creative, better problem solvers, more proactive, and more goal-oriented. They have more energy and a greater sense of well-being. If you give people more control, they will thrive. It turns out that our brains just love control. When we perceive that we have the ability to be in control of things that affect some result, we get amped. It is the

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exact opposite of what happens in learned helplessness.

Neuroscience has shown that the more experiences we have of being in control, the better our higher brains function. It's when we are affected by things outside our control that we hit a brain slowdown. That's why leaders need to turn into "control freaks"—just not in the way we usually think of that term. Leaders must become "freaks" about letting other people be in control of what they should be in control of that drives results. So great leaders do the opposite of exercising control—they give it away. They help people take control of themselves and their performance...and reap the benefit.

There are a lot of ways to deal with learned helplessness and negative thinking. I've designed a program that comprises five key elements that have proven to be very effective at helping organizations get moving again if they have gotten stuck. These five elements are:

1. Create Connections to Deliver the Program. You need structured time and space for people to go through this program together. Groups of 6-10 are ideal, but I've seen great results with just two people. Make sure the length of time between meetings is not so long that you lose the momentum of the previous session.
2. Regain Control Through the "Control Divide." This is simple, but not simplistic, and powerful. In your group, take a piece of paper and divide it down the middle, creating two columns. In the first one, write down all the things that

are affecting you that you have no control over. Now—*worry* about them. Really worry; obsess over them, dwell on them, etc....for 5-10 minutes. This is important—it keeps you from being in denial about those things. When you are done—encircle those items and *stop thinking about that column*. Now go to the second column, and write down everything you *do* have control over that drives results. Once you have that list, I want you to focus on it every single day. Make the things on that list the primary focus of every working day. Work the list! This engages both our brain's executive functions *and* our desire to have control.

3. Take Control of the Three "P's." This can effectively be done by observing, logging, and refuting each of the three P's thinking patterns. First, observe—become aware of them through self-observation, and then write them down in a journal or log book of some kind. Next, review each of the thoughts in the log and identify specific counterarguments and actual facts that refute them, one by one. Once you have refuted them, take action. Do what the "P" was stopping you from doing. That sense of helplessness can be reversed through awareness, counterarguments, and action. (Sharing logs with other group members can be very powerful. The group realizes that they all experience some degree of the 3 P's, that their fears were seldom realized, and that they had much more control than they realized).
4. Add Structure and Accountability.

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Research has shown that when people assign a specific time and place for completion of specific tasks and goals, their chances of success increase by up to 300%. The brain works best in specifics. Occasionally I have encouraged individuals to break down their time into 30-minute segments and plan specifically what they are going to do with that time. It sounds pedantic, but it absolutely works in terms of increasing productivity and fighting off passivity.

5. Take the Right Kind of Action. I don't mean just get busy; the right kind of action is the kind that specifically drives results. And the accountability you want is the kind that drives success, not that just measures results. Remember Tony Dungy. He measured the activities that would eventually lead to outcomes, not just the final score of individual games. Have your people identify what actions they can control that actually affect outcomes.

Change requires energy, and producing that energy is one of the leader's greatest jobs. Learned helplessness can suck the energy right out of an organization; a leader must set boundaries to keep that from happening, by getting his or her people to attend to what they can control, and inhibit what they can't.

Chapter 8: High-Performance Teams

Every team develops certain ways of working. When those ways are healthy, good results follow. When they aren't, there is a lack of results. Those "ways" are a combination of values and behaviors (that follow from the values). Effective teams define the values that drive results. One team I worked with, after struggling with inconsistent results, came up with these values that would guide how they worked together:

- Communicate to understand: We seek to thoroughly understand and be understood.
- Urgency on the Vital: We take action on what's important.
- Customer Intimacy: We build customer relationships that guide our success.
- Connected: We partner with our colleagues to achieve results.
- Deliver: We do what we say we are going to do.
- Build our Talents: We continually develop ourselves and others.

As this list illustrates, great values must be connected to the business and not be empty platitudes hanging on a wall. A team isn't just a group of people; it's a group of people who have shared a purpose or goal. Good teams need both good relationships and a focus on what really drives business results. They need to perform. And performance is driven by the team's values and behaviors.

Chapter 9: Trust Makes Teams Able to Perform

Trust is a key issue when looking at high-performing teams. Trust allows team members to say and hear hard things, to give up their own agendas for the sake of the team, and hold each other accountable. Those things require a lot of trust. So how do you get it? In my experience, it takes two things: a good definition of what trust is, and agreement on how it is going to get executed.

When I work with teams, I talk first about what trust is made of. There are five elements that I think matter most:

Trust grows when we feel understood. People don't trust us when we understand them; they trust us when they *understand* that we understand them. They need to feel it; they need to know they have been connected with, and that takes time and attention. We need to create space to get to know them, and make it safe for them to be vulnerable. In a team, that means there is time and attention given to understanding each person, their role, what drives it, what makes it hard, etc.

Trust grows when we know someone intends to help us. Intent is key to trust. If we know that someone intends to help us, that they are "for us," we open ourselves up to them, give to them, and cooperate with them. But if they aren't for us, they are either for themselves (and neutral to us), or they are actually against us.

When teams realize they are "for" each

other, and that each of them is "for" their shared objectives, they trust each other. Furthermore, they represent the team downward in their own departments. They wear the team hat, instead of the functional hat. That helps tears down the silos that so often sabotage productivity.

Trust Grows When We Display Credibility and Character. It's impossible not to talk about character when talking about trust, even though it can be hard to pin down exactly what we mean by "character." Character includes morals and ethics, personality traits, attitudes, and ways of behaving. We wouldn't say someone who is impulsive or is a poor listener has a moral issue, but we would recognize that they have issues that will affect a team. Ultimately, character goes to having credibility, or believability, as the dictionary would say. A person's character patterns give them credibility in certain domains (or undermines it).

Trust Grows When We Believe in Someone's Capacity and Ability. Another factor influencing trust is a person's capacity to actually do what we trust him to do. Someone can connect well and have good intentions, but not be trustworthy to do something because they don't have the capacity to pull it off. (You wouldn't want to trust me to do brain surgery).

Trust Grows When Someone Has Built a Good Track Record. When a person has a history of bringing results in an area, we trust them to continue to do that. This applies to teams as well as individuals.

Investment is what we are looking for in life. We want people to invest their hearts

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and minds with us. We want our teams to be invested in what they are doing. And we make investments when we trust people's intent is for our good, when they have a history that makes us believe they will act in a certain way, and when they have a track record of good results. Put those together, and we want to invest.

The second part of building trust is how to execute it. To "execute" means to "produce in accordance with a plan or design." So if you are trying to produce a team that has high trust, how do you produce it with a plan or design? Here is a path I have found helpful:

1. Define Trust. Take the elements we talked about above and talk through them in the team. Get everyone on the same page.
2. Define your Shared Objectives as a Team. A team is focused on a shared objective, which means it must have clarity about what those objectives are. What are they trying to do *together*?
3. Define Operating Behaviors & Values That Will Get You There. Ask, "if that is what we are trying to accomplish, what does this team need to look like, and how does it need to operate, in order to pull it off?"
4. Make Specific Covenants for Behaviors. A covenant is a promise to perform. I like to see teams make commitments to behave in certain ways, so when they fulfill those commitments, their values are realized and their objectives met.
5. Develop Accountability Systems. Great

teams are driven by performance, and several things fuel performance—especially measurement and accountability. So teams must discuss and agree on how they will measure how they are behaving, and how they will hold each other accountable. It isn't enough to just measure final results; the things that drive results must be measured.

6. Put in an observing structure. Teams must be able to "observe themselves" and how they work as a team. Observe yourself living out values, and not just counting the number of widgets you are selling. How? Take 5-10 minutes at the end of your meetings and ask the question "How did we do today on practicing our values?"

Chapter 10: Boundaries for Yourself

There is a reality to leadership that many leaders are unaware of, and it can undercut them if they aren't careful. The higher you go in leadership, the fewer external forces work on you and dictate your focus, energy, and direction. Instead, you set your own path, with only the reality of results to push against you. Since that is true, especially with so much depending on it, the question becomes: *How are you leading yourself?*

The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that everything in the universe is becoming less organized and more

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disordered. However, that only applies to a closed system—one that is left to itself and shut off from outside intervention. But in an open system, things are different. Disorder and decline are not inevitable, and can even be reversed if the system receives new energy and a new template (a template is anything that serves as a pattern or model). You need force and you need the intelligence to inform action. If you have these two things, higher order functioning can take place. That is what leaders do when they pump energy and guidance into an organization or a team.

The same thing actually applies to leaders—they will get run down and more disordered if left to themselves. That brings us to the first self-boundary: *Set a boundary on your tendency to be a "closed system," and open yourself to outside inputs that bring you energy and guidance.* Effective, seasoned leaders are well-connected and have a strong support system, a personal advisory board, a coach, and mentors who inject new energy and resources into the mix.

Being an open system means that you are not arrogant enough to think that you have all the answers, or that your organization has all the answers, or even that you should. You know there is experience and energy outside of what you bring that can add to your personal and organizational infrastructure, and you open yourself up to it.

Another aspect of being an open system is being open to feedback. Ken Blanchard calls feedback "the breakfast of champions." To be the best you can be, you must develop a hunger for feedback

and see it as one of the best gifts you can get. Set very strong boundaries for yourself against any tendencies you have towards defensiveness, blame, or denial when given feedback. Weak leaders are threatened by feedback; strong leaders embrace it, seek to understand it, and put it to use.

No leader thinks perfectly rationally all the time; everyone has areas where they tend to have distorted thinking. While there is no limit to how many areas that could apply to, there are some patterns that come up consistently: over-identification with results, indecisiveness, conflict avoidance, and resistance to change.

Leaders need to set boundaries on their tendencies to allow single events to define them. You are not your last result! Leaders can't allow themselves to personalize the results they are (or are not) getting. No leader is immune to losses, bad quarters or years, or failures. They are part of the game. What matters is how you learn from these challenges and use them to improve.

Leaders also can't allow themselves to be ruled by fear. It's natural to avoid things that cause you fear or anxiety, but as a leader, you have to act, or not act, despite the fear but never because of it. Great leaders go through a 3-stage process when it comes to facing their fears. First, they fear it and put it off. Then they push through the fear and make the decision (although it's painful). Finally, they wonder why they waited so long to make it after the pain is gone and they have resolved the problem. Remember: you can have fears without being fearful. Fearful is when

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you let your fears make your decisions... so don't let fear make your decisions! Having fears is normal; being fearful is dysfunctional.

Another important self-boundary leaders have to establish is to guard against the tendency to put off changes that they know need to be made. It is easy to procrastinate in the name of "getting more information." Often it is a fear of making a mistake more than it is really that he or she needs more information. Ask yourself: "What *specific* information do I need to make this decision?" You will never be able to completely eliminate risk. Deal with it and get moving.

Finally, leaders need to put some personal boundaries in place:

Leaders must put boundaries around their weaknesses—identifying them and putting structures in place so their weaknesses don't undermine the team's efforts.

Leaders must put boundaries on their time. I recommend doing a time audit so you can make sure you are putting your time into the most important priorities. No one else will make sure you do that, especially as you rise to higher levels of leadership. Time boundaries force us to set priorities.

You also need to set boundaries around your energy usage. Your energy is one of your biggest assets and must be managed. Figure out who and what drains yours. Schedule activities that require lots of energy during the times you have the energy, not after highly draining times.

Conclusion

As the leader, you are ridiculously in charge. You are responsible for establishing the climate for success, for your people, your organization, and for yourself. The one thing that could undercut you is the failure to create a culture where brains can flourish, where people are inspired and empowered to do their very best work. Setting the right kind of boundaries will enable you to create that kind of culture. You will have science on your side, and what's more, you'll have *people* on your side.

The Pastor's Perspective

I think Henry Cloud gets better with each new book he puts out. He's one of the few authors that I diligently read whatever he puts out.

The thing that struck me in *Boundaries for Leaders* was the importance of putting boundaries on our thinking—boundaries that inhibit negative thinking and boundaries that encourage positive thinking.

I've seen first-hand how contagious negative thinking can be. When it is obvious, it is easy to see and spot. Sometimes it isn't obvious; it shows up as a person who always focuses on the negative in the name of being "realistic" or constantly downplaying the positive. It can slowly poison the atmosphere and hinder the functioning of a team. It takes courage to call it out, especially when it can seem like nitpicking, but I think it is absolutely

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essential if you are going to have a healthy, high-performance team.

“Research has revealed over and over again that a belief that one will be successful is one of the strongest predictors of goal achievement.” This idea also really struck me. It isn’t a new idea, but it got me thinking how much that is like faith, which is critical to our success. Whether planting a new church, starting a ministry, or pressing on to meet a new goal, it’s absolutely essential that we take an honest look at what our attitude or belief really is. Conviction that you will succeed brings with it a whole different level of commitment to overcome difficulties, as well as a different level of creativity.

Every leader needs to know where his people are in terms of their attitudes towards the goals. If they stop believing they will succeed, it needs to be addressed right away. Chances are, there are reasons for it, and those can be looked at, brainstormed about, and action plans developed that will restore confidence.

So how is your thinking? And how are your teams?