

Praise for *Be Your Own Leadership Coach*

‘There is no such thing as a born leader. We all have to learn, both from our own experiences and the wisdom of others. Exercising leadership, in any field of endeavour, can be challenging, and sometimes even daunting, but there are few privileges greater than being given the opportunity to lead others and to make a difference. Karen Stein has written an invaluable book, full of wisdom and practical experience that will help you to be the leader who inspires others to reach their potential. I wish I had been given such insights as I travelled on my own leadership journey. I recommend it highly.’

Lieutenant General David Morrison AO (Retd)

‘Karen Stein has written one of the most comprehensive and practical guides for leaders I’ve ever read. Through engaging, evidence-based and high-impact practices, you’ll learn to lead yourself, lead others and leave a lasting legacy. *Be Your Own Leadership Coach* isn’t a book you simply read, it’s a book you *experience* and become better because of it.’

Zach Mercurio, PhD, author of *The Invisible Leader: Transform Your Life, Work, and Organization with the Power of Authentic Purpose*

‘*Be Your Own Leadership Coach* is full of practical advice and tools that I have already started applying to my life. The backpack metaphor works for me. I recommend this book to anyone who is seeking to improve their personal and professional life.’

Sergio Duchini, Chair, Lymphoma Australia

‘Written by a wise and gentle leadership coach, *Be Your Own Leadership Coach* is an easy to read and comprehensive self-help guide for anyone wanting to become a better version of themselves at work. Drawing on research, stories and a wealth of personal experience, Karen provides the why as well as the how-to of self-development, with lots of practical exercises.’

Dr Juliet Bourke, advisor, board member and Professor of Practice,
School of Management & Governance, UNSW Business School

‘In a world calling for leaders who can simultaneously hold space for courage and kindness, *Be Your Own Leadership Coach* disrupts the traditional dominance and power of what it means to ‘lead’ and makes the compelling case for ‘whole human’ leadership development that starts from within. A must-read for anyone driven to create real impact in today’s ever-changing world!’

Mariane Power, clinical psychologist, female founder – The Posify Group

‘I could not think of a better person to write a book on coaching than Karen. Her characteristic warmth resonates on every page and in every strategy and story. Karen has reminded us that we can lead and learn to be and do better in any given moment.’

Kelly Irving, book coach, editor and Founder of The Expert Author Community

SELF-COACHING STRATEGIES
TO LEAD *YOUR* WAY

Be Your
Own
Leadership
Coach

KAREN STEIN



MAJOR
STREET



First published in 2023 by Major Street Publishing Pty Ltd
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A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of Australia

Printed book ISBN: 978-1-922611-75-8

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-922611-76-5

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Cover design by Simone Geary

Internal design by Production Works

Printed in Australia by IVE, an accredited ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 14001

Environmental Management Printer.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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The author's coaching practice is guided by the Code of Practice and Code of Ethics of the International Coaching Federation, which details client confidentiality. The book presents several case studies, all of which were created for teaching purposes. The case studies do not disclose confidential information and are not based on specific coaching clients, nor specific discussions. They are intended to be representative of the nature of the coaching issues the author encounters. The author has deliberately included a range of gender identities in the case studies to reflect the importance of leading with inclusion top of mind.

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Preface



Many leaders dream of having a leadership coach: a dedicated cheerleader and confidant to support their thinking and development, and help them explore their issues and concerns. They imagine a coach helping them increase their self-awareness of their behaviours, emotions and cognitions, and the impact they have on them personally and on those they lead. They picture someone working with them through the many expected and unexpected challenges of leadership – someone who enables them to be their best selves so they can have the leadership impact they hope for.

The great news is, there are plenty of leadership coaches to choose from. It is estimated that there are more than 71,000 coaches globally, with 30 per cent of these coaches describing themselves as leadership coaches and 65 per cent as business coaches.¹ So, based on numbers alone, you are likely to be able to identify a coach to meet your needs.

As an Executive Coach, I can't agree more with the benefits of engaging with a coach. Not only have I had my own coach, I continue to seek coaching through group coaching and coaching supervision. I am also actively engaged in coaching business leaders, as well as women who are hoping to re-enter the workplace after time away from employment. The growth and development I witness in those I coach is always exciting and motivating.

What you may not realise is that it's also possible to have a coach with you on tap – someone who you can access at any time, with no

waiting or scheduling required. This leadership coach is well known to you, and is there to support you day by day, step by step and in the moment. In fact, you know your coach better than most. This coach, my friend, is *you!*

As your own coach you'll have access to your own self-coaching strategies. You won't be waiting for your next appointment with your external coach to better yourself, nor will you be left wondering how to tackle your leadership issues between sessions. This book will help you fill your virtual backpack with self-coaching strategies to support your self-leadership and leadership of others. The strategies in this book focus on helping you lead *your* way so that you can have the influence you desire – creating a positive, long-lasting impact that continues in your absence.

After reading this book, my hope is that, as you prepare to start your work each day, you'll strap on your virtual backpack loaded with your self-coaching strategies. You'll carry it around with you, leaving the flap loosely tied so you can slip your hand in and draw out whichever strategy is appropriate as you face your leadership tasks. In some cases, the strategy you select will support you in being your best self; in other cases, it will support you as you lead others.

By working through the exercises in this book and applying the strategies within, you'll learn to recognise what is helping you and hindering you in the moment. You'll be more attuned to your own effectiveness and able to support and rescue yourself to ensure your continued success.

A trusted partner in your self-coaching discovery

As an experienced International Coaching Federation Professional Certified Coach and senior leader with more than 30 years' professional services experience – including 23 years as a Partner of Deloitte – I am here to build these strategies with you.

As I approached my halfway point (I was getting closer to 50 and am determined to live to 100!), I reflected on how I could live

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out my chapter two in an impactful way. At around the same time I was fortunate to be provided with a coach while on an executive leadership program, and I fell head over heels in love with the process of coaching. It was fabulous! I knew that coaching would allow me to support others to be their best selves and help me to live the impactful, purposeful life I sought.

In 2016, I pivoted into my second career within Deloitte as a Talent Partner and Executive Coach. I provide executive leadership coaching to evolving senior leaders, supporting them to achieve their professional goals. I also designed and lead the Executive Coaching Program for Women Partners of Deloitte, and co-facilitate other leadership programs.

My experience as a senior leader within a professional services environment means I was, for a long time, on your side of the page of this book. I was a leader hoping to bring her best self to her team, her clients, her community and of course herself. Additionally, I wanted to be a role model for the young people in my life. I was hopeful I could help them see leadership in a positive light and guide them as the young leaders and wonderful humans they are.

Leadership can be challenging, frustrating, frightening and overwhelming, but it can also be delightful, fulfilling, engaging and exciting! How you approach it and how you respond to it will draft your leadership story.

I discovered early in my leadership career that the more I discovered about myself, the more positive my leadership impact could be. This set me on a path of learning about who I am, how I relate to others and how I engage with myself. It was only later, in my senior years of leadership, that I became excited about the power of coaching. It opened my mind to new ways of thinking – new perspectives, insights and understanding – which better enabled me to have the impact I hoped for.

Once I trained as an Executive Coach I felt strongly that I wanted to use my newfound knowledge to make a difference in the world.

I am fortunate to work with inspiring leaders each day with varied backgrounds, goals, dreams and challenges. I also provide voluntary coaching to clients of Dress for Success and the social enterprise Bambuddha Group. This book is another way for me to encourage equitable access to coaching and bring these powerful coaching strategies to more people. Coaching leaders to be their best selves improves their wellbeing, which ripples to that of their teams, organisations and communities. Step by step this makes our world a better place.

In this book I draw on evidence-based positive psychology as well as my lived leadership experience and more than 2000 hours of one-on-one coaching. Together we'll set you up to approach your leadership journey with confidence, optimism and a strong sense of self. My hope in writing this book is to enable you, as a leader, to pause and reflect on what your leadership impact is and can be. You too can positively impact our world.

Join me as we build your leadership self-coaching strategies together.

Introduction



‘Tell me, why should I read this book?’ This is a question I’ve been asked many times as I’ve shared my excitement about getting ink on the page. What is the problem my reader might be trying to resolve, and how might this book help them?

During your leadership journey you have likely considered the type of leader you want to be. What impact would you like to have, and how will you achieve this? You probably want to be the best leader you can be and have a positive impact on others (and yourself). However, no one has told you *how* to do this. You may be concerned that you *should* know what to do, you *should* know how to lead. Yet it’s not that simple. You don’t know what you don’t know, but you must work it out if you’re to become a confident, empowered and impactful leader.

You may feel a little anxious or vulnerable in this space. Many leaders seek outside support to help them manage this. Leadership coaching is a powerful medium to generate exploration and self-discovery. It allows for learning and growth with the creation of new knowledge, insights and understanding. When you engage with a coach you are entering a safe space where you can consider how to develop the skills, behaviours, emotions and thoughts that will support your achievement of professional goals. I provide those I coach with this judgement-free space where they can consider options to work towards success, navigate obstacles and form new insights.

Inevitably, though, coaching sessions last for a finite period. What happens once the coaching comes to an end? What happens when you can't access a coach in the moment you need one? What if you can't access coaching at all for financial or practical reasons? How do you support yourself?

This is where you need to become your best coach. It's where I – and this book – can help you!

In this book I present 12 practices to be your best coach. Within these pages you'll discover when to use each practice and the value each brings. You'll be equipped to lead *your* way: in support of yourself and in support of others.

Your leadership will evolve over time, and the trajectory of your success will rise when you invest in yourself. By mindfully engaging in self-coaching using the strategies in this book, you'll learn to pay attention to the impact you're having on yourself and others. You will become more intentional and deliberate in how you lead. You will build your self-awareness and sense of self so you are better able to make informed choices as to how you achieve your leadership impact. You will notice more about yourself. You will empower yourself to draw on coaching strategies *in the moment* as your leadership requires this of you. You will become more autonomous, more responsive, more confident and more informed. All of this will assist you with leading your way, with impact, as your best self.

Leadership is not a title

Before we unpack the concept of self-coaching, let's take a look at what it actually means to lead. Most of our conversations around leadership in a professional context tend to focus on the efficacy of a particular leader: 'My CEO is awesome. She is an exceptional leader,' or, 'Our Managing Director is not much of a leader.'

We often reference leaders in positions of power: the C-suite, management, operations or business unit leaders. We use titles to

recognise leadership. We talk of people being leaders based on their role description or where they sit in an organisational structure. We send executives on leadership courses to build their leadership skills, and we train experienced hires to *become* leaders. We seek promotions so we can attain leadership positions, badging ourselves as chiefs, officers, presidents and directors, high up in the organisational pecking order.

These corporate leadership positions have titles that originated deep in the history of power and authority. From the military world of generals and officers to the political world of presidents and vice presidents, these titles bestow high esteem and denote those who require followers to succeed. A chief is defined as ‘the head or leader of a body of people; the person highest in authority’.² The ‘organisational chief’ concept is growing. Google searches reveal a plethora of ‘chief’ titles including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Controller, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, Chief Digital Officer and – my personal favourite – Chief Happiness Officer. The possibilities for leadership roles seem only to be growing!

A common view of leadership is that it lives only in the heights of organisations, where those in the know, or those with significant tenure and experience, are *placed* into positions of leadership. What we often overlook is that leadership is not limited to positional leadership. We are *all* leaders, regardless of our position.

Leadership is an act, a practice, a set of behaviours that can be adopted at *all* stages of life and in *any* situation. It is a culmination of who you are and who you have become. It’s present at every step throughout your working life.

Leading yourself to lead others

Leadership can be hard. You must take a thoughtful approach to acknowledge and manage the many thoughts and emotions that arise

along the way. You might get in your own way, overthink or over-complicate things, or lose your confidence. You might rely on your instincts to guide you, yet not notice how your perspective is distorted. You might overlook feedback, move on too quickly and not realise how you have affected others until it is too late. You might make time for everyone besides yourself and be too busy to stop, reflect and notice what's happening.

Consider too the world we live in, the system in which you form a part. During your leadership journey you will grapple with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity on a global, local and micro scale. Filling your virtual backpack with self-coaching strategies will enable you to better respond to the ever-changing systems surrounding you. Systems theorists tell us that a linear leadership path is unlikely to be found in the future; rather, your leadership path will be revealed as you experience the changing dynamics and what emerges.

With this in mind, it is okay to feel somewhat concerned about how to be the best leader you can be. Leading in a volatile system can require big thinking. But it's so worth it! The system you belong to is not straightforward or programmatic. Your experience of it may feel uncomfortable and awkward, unpredictable and unscripted. Success will require you to heighten your awareness as to what is possible and what you can influence, and the likely consequences (intended and unintended) of the leadership decisions you make. Despite the challenges, leading in this environment can be exciting, stimulating and engaging.

Achieving leadership success in an ever-changing world requires you to lead yourself well. Leading yourself is a process of learning to honour your values, utilise your strengths and fulfil your purpose. You lead yourself to design goals, fulfil goals and change your goals. You lead yourself by choosing priorities and making choices that move you closer to the outcomes you want and away from outcomes you don't. You lead yourself to have an impact and to find fulfilment so you can live a purposeful, meaningful life. You lead *your* way.

Your personal leadership may require refinement and development. At times you may struggle to lead yourself appropriately. You may ignore your shortcomings or overlook development opportunities. You may lack self-awareness and perspective. You may wonder how you can better your self-leadership to allow you to make better choices, be more fulfilled and have greater meaning and impact in what you select to do.

Once you coach yourself to build and widen your perspective, enter into quality communication and dialogue, seek feedback and grow your self-awareness, you will be better placed to have the impact you want. You will have what you need to advance, empower, grow, influence and support others. How you do so will be reflective of you. You will need to be aware of how *you* refine your leadership skills as you lead others. You will need to focus on your visibility, how you are perceived and your behaviour towards others so you can build trust. You will need to consider how you communicate and listen as you engage with others and lead your way.

Once you adopt the 12 practices and related strategies outlined in this book, you will have instant access to a new repertoire of skills, behaviours, emotions and thoughts to support you. You will have found your leadership coach – in *yourself*.

Becoming an impactful leader

If you want to be the best leader you can be, you must consider the impact you want to have on others and for yourself. Sheryl Sandberg, quoting Harvard Business School Professor Frances Frei, said, ‘Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.’²³ The essence of this quote is that leadership requires your presence beyond your physical form. Your leadership presence is shaped by how you make people feel, what they hear from you and what they see you do. This presence has an enduring impact that lasts in your absence.

Your leadership impact is the impression you make that inspires and motivates others to be their best selves. It's the perception you create to generate optimism and hope. It's the positive effect you have on others through your role modelling of behaviours, emotions and thoughts. It's building confidence and commitment in others. It's your ability to make people feel like they truly matter. To understand and support those around you requires empathy and compassion, as well as listening skills to learn and consider new and diverse perspectives. An impactful leader utilises open and courageous communication to share their vision and a common purpose, embrace innovation and creativity, delineate goals and priorities, and include and collaborate.

This may sound overwhelming; however, it is only when you leave it to chance, fate or destiny that it is so. To have this leadership impact, this enduring presence, relies on you first leading yourself. The more that you become conscious of how you see yourself and how you behave, think and feel, the easier it will be to determine and influence how you impact others.

Conscious leadership is impactful leadership. As a conscious leader, you are aware of how you engage with others, you notice how you make them feel and, as a result, you build trust and strong relationships. It's even better when you notice how *you* behave, how *you* feel and how *you* think. When you're attuned to your behaviours, emotions and thoughts, you're better placed to recognise which of these you want to draw upon or alter to help you achieve your intended impact. You will become more mindful of the choices you can make to support your leadership.

When approached with a mindful stance, leadership can be energising, fulfilling, challenging and rewarding. Adopting self-coaching strategies will support you in bringing your best self forward as a leader. You can then lead others and have your desired impact, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Leading yourself to lead others and achieve impact



You're sure to be familiar with the notion of applying your own oxygen mask before helping others around you. It's the same with leadership. The greater your ability to lead yourself, the more impactful you are likely to be when leading others. When you support yourself you are building your leadership core: the strength and courage to lead from within as your authentic self, which can then be utilised to lead others. This is how you will build your leadership impact, and it will be advanced as you utilise self-coaching strategies.

The magic of self-coaching

When my former coachee, Nell, emailed me it had been more than 12 months since our last scheduled coaching session. We hadn't had much contact since, but I have always encouraged my coachees to

contact me should they need additional support. My eyes flashed across Nell's email in anticipation as I wondered what support she might require. My instincts told me there may be a number of areas in which she may be seeking support. I reflected on the numerous conversations in which we had explored solutions to leadership issues she was experiencing. During my time working with Nell, she experimented with and learnt from the strategies we discussed while building her self-awareness around her communication style. We had concluded our last scheduled session by identifying the areas in which she intended to further grow and develop.

As I returned my attention to Nell's email my heart warmed and my smile grew. I was delighted to read that Nell had experienced several *leadership choice points*, as I like to call them: moments when she made a significant decision that would impact her and her team. Rather than seeking me out for additional coaching, she was proudly sharing how she had drawn on her self-coaching strategies to support herself. During our time working together we had filled her virtual backpack with self-coaching strategies to steer her through moments like these. She had mastered the art of reaching into her backpack and selecting the appropriate strategy to utilise to be her best self and achieve her desired leadership impact.

Nell wrote about how she had practised self-reflection, preparation, deliberation and consultation with others. She shared feedback from her team that reflected their gratitude and high regard for her in supporting them through difficult times. Best of all, she felt empowered in herself. I could feel her success radiating through the email. She had led herself, she had led others and she had had a positive leadership impact – enduring beyond her presence with her team.

My intention with this book is to help you build *your* skills in self-coaching, just as I did with Nell. Self-coaching is a skill that requires practice and attention. It is not something you try on and have it fit comfortably the first time. It requires reflection, consideration and adjustment to best suit your needs.

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Of course, you can also engage an experienced and well-qualified external coach to support your self-coaching if that option is available to you. This is the approach my coachee Nell, and many others like her, have taken. My book is intended to guide you to build your own self-coaching skills, which can then be supplemented with support from a qualified coach to enhance your discovery of alternative perspectives, reflections and insights.

The more that you invest in yourself – through both self-coaching and external coaching – the more you'll be supported to better understand your assumptions, reactions, beliefs and behaviours, and the more comfortably you will lead as your best self.

The benefits of self-coaching are many:

- You will be less reliant on hindsight to teach you and correct your ways. Instead, you will use foresight to make considered decisions about how you lead.
- As you become more connected with your choices and responses, you will truly *experience* more of your leadership. I refer to this as *being* a leader, rather than just *doing* leadership.
- You will become more empowered, confident and reflective. You will be more attentive to your potential as you grow and develop through self-coaching.
- You will learn more about yourself. You'll learn about what you do well and what might require further development. You'll learn what engages and excites you, and what drags you down. You'll learn how to solve issues and lean into challenges, and when to seek support from others. You will get to know yourself even better than you do now.
- You'll learn to respond faster. Once you have mastered the self-coaching strategies, you'll be more adept at drawing on them more readily. You'll know where to find them in your backpack and will keep your favourite strategies near the top!

- Your learnings will ripple to your team, clients, customers, family and friends. You will positively impact others with your heightened understanding of yourself and your leadership impact. You will make this world a better place.

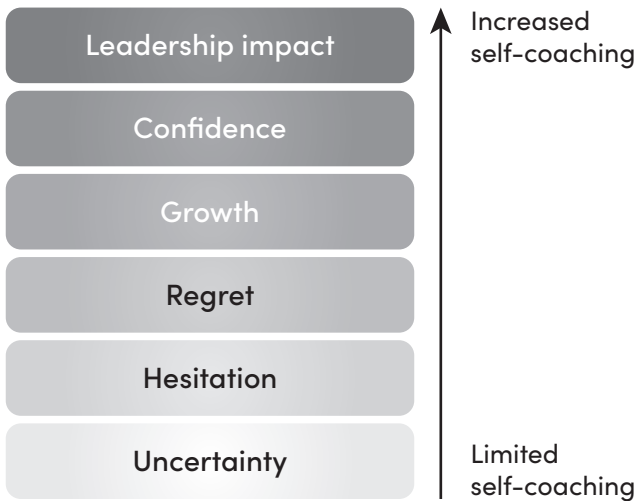
Self-coaching requires some things from you:

- *Self-reflection*: You will need to make time to draw your attention to how you are behaving, thinking or feeling in a given situation. This requires you to observe yourself objectively as an outsider might.
- *Self-assessment*: After reflecting, you will need to assess what is helping you and what is hindering you in relation to your objective. Which of your identified behaviours, emotions and thoughts are helpful and which are less so in this moment? Which alternative behaviours, emotions and thoughts could better assist you at this time, and what might that look like? What patterns are you noticing that are becoming more evident through ongoing self-assessment? What questions can you ask of yourself to alter your perspective and gain new insights?
- *Experimentation and learning*: Which self-coaching strategies can you put into play to assist you? What might you pull out of your backpack to support you in this moment? Your experimentation and learning can be transformational.
- *Further reflection and action*: What are you noticing of yourself and others as a result of your self-coaching strategy? How is it advancing you towards your positive leadership impact? What might you do more of or less of?
- *Practice*: To move from a novice to mastery-level leader, you will need to practise your self-coaching strategies to improve, grow and develop. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen with practice. This is what will help you lead yourself, lead with others and have the leadership impact you are seeking.

Self-coaching will help you move from uncertainty, hesitation and regret to growth, confidence and impact (see Figure 2).

The process of self-coaching requires you to refrain from leading on autopilot. Rather, you must become connected with your own sense of self as a leader. As you work through the practices you will refine and shape your leadership so you feel most comfortable with how you lead and what you represent. You will soon recognise more leadership choice points and become more accountable and responsible for your own behaviours, emotions and thoughts.

Figure 2: The impact of self-coaching



How to use this book

The 12 practices in this book will guide you through the process of self-coaching for leading yourself and self-coaching for leading others. I suggest selecting a notebook to record your responses and work through the exercises within. You can also visit my website – **karensteincoaching.com** – to download an e-journal, which has workspace for your use.

In the first seven practices we'll focus on leading yourself. Self-coaching supports you to lead as your best self – to honour your values, lead with purpose and use your strengths. It helps you confirm why you matter. You will become self-aware of your behaviours, emotions and thoughts, allowing for continuous learning and self-development. You will sooner identify your goals and motivating factors, and grow in confidence and self-belief. You will become better equipped to respond to challenges and solve complex problems, increasing your resilience and mental toughness. Lastly, you will experience improved wellbeing as you experience more positive emotions, hope, optimism and engagement.

In **Practice 1** we'll build your coaching strategies to *lead as you*. By understanding your values, strengths and purpose you will be able to connect (or perhaps reconnect) with your sense of self. This is your true north – your navigational system that will support you as you lead your way. By honouring your values, drawing on your strengths and acting in line with what matters to you (your purpose), you will experience a more positively minded leadership. You will be better informed to make deliberate choices, and to notice what you are spending your time on and how that supports your purpose. By adopting the self-coaching strategies presented in the chapter, you will become more hopeful, energised, optimistic and confident. Your wellbeing is likely to increase as you lead as your best self.

Practices 2 and 3 will direct you to consider where you are heading in this ever-changing world. What *goals* would you like to achieve, and why do they matter to you? How will you increase and sustain your *motivation* to complete them and lead yourself towards success? How can you shape your goals so that they match your values and purpose and become meaningful to you?

Practice 4 supports you to build *self-awareness* and seek feedback. The intention here is to deepen your understanding of your behaviours, emotions and thoughts so you can lead your way through the transitions you experience. I'll help you identify the assumptions and beliefs you hold and suggest coaching strategies to monitor them.

Practices 5 and 6 consider how you manage your *time* and *energy*. Both of these go to the heart of how you lead yourself and the impact that results.

Practice 7 introduces the concept of your *personal board of directors* – your support crew. Who will you surround yourself with to support you in being your best self? Who will you engage as your advocates, mentors, coaches and reciprocal mentors?

The final five practices support how you lead others.

Practice 8 focuses on *exploring your leadership impact*. Using a number of different lenses, we will sharpen your focus on your visibility, trust, perceptions and behaviours as you explore your leadership shadow.

Practice 9 will assist you in *empowering* and delegating to others. We will focus on how you enable others and build their self-determination by considering how you are impacting their autonomy, competencies and sense of relatedness. How can you help your people feel that they matter and are engaged, empowered and entrusted?

Practices 10 and 11 tackle how you *listen* and *consciously communicate* with others. What is the impact of your communication? How can you become more in tune with how efficient, engaging and respectful you are?

Practice 12 will help you create a psychologically safe and *kind* space for those you lead. We will unravel how to create an environment that allows for diversity, inclusion, growth and engagement. This is essential for establishing your enduring leadership impact and ensuring people feel that they are of value.

Once you have worked through each chapter and begun applying the 12 practices, you will be better able to reflect on and influence the impact of your presence on others. You'll notice that you are inspiring, motivating, engaging and supporting others through your leadership. That is the leadership impact most people aim for. It allows others around you to feel they too can be their authentic selves, bringing their diverse backgrounds, points of view, cultures and ways of seeing the

world to work. It's where your people feel encouraged and supported by you as they strive to fulfil their hopes and dreams, their goals and learnings. They feel safe and supported, that they are significant and that they matter.

Your experience of leadership is also bound to improve. You will find yourself more fulfilled and better able to share your journey with others in a positive way. Your leadership presence will continue in your absence and better the lives of those you engage with.

It's time to start self-coaching!