


Raising
LEADERS



*Using the principles of parenting
at work to become a great leader
and create great leaders*

WENDY BORN



Praise for *Raising Leaders*

I wish that I had read *Raising Leaders* 20 or more years ago, when I first started out managing people. Wendy outlines simple and relatable strategies for the successful management and development of teams. Wendy's generous and courageous sharing of her own personal life experiences clearly demonstrate the alignment of raising children and leaders.

Greg Nielsen – General Manager, Retread Business, Bandag Manufacturing Pty Ltd

Wendy is someone who walks her talk and leads from the heart. Having led in this authentic way for many years, she is positioned to train leaders with clarity and results. In *Raising Leaders*, she brings to life the parallels of parenting and leadership in a relatable and relevant way. Practical application of her wisdom from parenting lessons and as an executive leader/executive coach makes this book a valuable guide for all leaders.

Nicky Angelone – Flourish Mindfully

Wendy brings a style of coaching that is relevant and applicable for both personal and professional development and growth. She is able to break things down into simple relatable concepts, allowing her to connect in a manner that builds an inclusive, shared and valuable learning experience.

Mick O'Malley – Training Manager WPST

Wendy draws on examples from work, life and parenting to create an easy-to-follow guide for raising leaders. An outstanding resource for both new and experienced leaders.

Rob Elliot – Financial Services

Filled with insight, stories and humour, *Raising Leaders* expertly parallels parenting with developing cohesive teams, and shows how love, connection and safety are critical for success. A must-read for anyone looking to elevate their own leadership journey.

Gaye Wealthy – General Manager, People & Culture,
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

After reading Wendy Born's first book *The Languages of Leadership* I couldn't wait to read her second book *Raising Leaders*. Wendy writes with such succinct clarity; the leadership learnings are immediate and can be implemented in your working life with a new-found confidence.

Steve Hayden – Business Development Manager, Workplace
Simulation Training

It's easy for a leader to lose sight of the role they play within the environment they lead. Wendy's grounded advice for practical solutions draws on trust and confidence to nurture a leader and their mindset, encouraging reflection on decisions to encompass a holistic approach to better leadership.

Good leaders are created in an atmosphere of honesty, integrity and trust, those three traits are the benchmarks to develop a healthy culture.

Raising Leaders is an insightful read on the key steps for leaders to adopt in business at every level in an organisation and move future executives to a higher level of business agility and leadership.

Christopher Gray – CEO, The Haystack Group

From the very first event where I experienced Wendy's engaging speaking style, I realised that Wendy is about nurturing inspirational and courageous leadership. Wendy's unique break and rebuild programs have helped me and many business leaders and their teams reach their full potential.

Peter Sandor – CEO, Fearless

We hope you enjoy reading the first chapter of *Raising Leaders* by Wendy Born.

The full version of this book is available from all good bookstores and online from the Major Street website.

First published in 2020 by Major Street Publishing Pty Ltd
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A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

ISBN: 978-0-6487530-5-6

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Internal design by Production Works
Cover design by Simone Geary
Printed in Australia by McPhersons Printing Group



10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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CONTENTS

Foreword **ix**

About the author **xv**

Acknowledgements **xvii**

Introduction: déjà vecu **1**

Chapter 1: Sightseeing **11**

Chapter 2: Life imitating leadership **27**

Chapter 3: The ‘L’ word – what you bring **45**

Chapter 4: Environment – what you create **65**

Chapter 5: Health – what you support **81**

Chapter 6: Language – what you show **97**

Chapter 7: Vision – what you embrace **113**

Chapter 8: Creating your work family **129**

Final words **143**

Keep in touch **145**

References and further reading **147**

Index **161**

FOREWORD

When I talk to CEOs, senior executive teams or organisations about leadership and coaching, I make it very clear that parenting is a very similar role. In fact, parenting can be the most difficult role of all, as you – the parent – are connected emotionally to your child. Consequently, the child can press your emotional buttons in ways that a staff member or colleague or athlete cannot.

So, it was a great thrill to be asked by Wendy to write a foreword for this her second book on the broad topic of leadership. And I must say, the thrill did not diminish as I read her book.

I found myself grabbing and noting sentences, paragraphs, quotes, research articles like the infamous toilet-roll hoarding of COVID-19 – making sure I had everything on the ‘shelves’ that this book has to offer before anyone else could take its wisdom, its poignancy and its significant contribution to demystifying the secret codes of what good leadership IS.

Wendy takes you immediately into the realities of being a mother and parent, the daily juggling of everything at home;

then drop-off to school and the momentary release from these demands before entering the workspace and being confronted by similar demands from her adult staff.

As coach of the Australian Cricket team, and a father of five children, it would often amaze me that there were 35-year-old athletes in the dressing room who had travelled the globe, played in front of large crowds, met world acclaimed dignitaries and celebrities, yet sometimes their behaviour was adolescent, and my role moved from coaching to parenting.

Wendy refers to *déjà vecu* – you have ‘lived the experience’ already, as she says, ‘...*Like my children, my team plays one off against the other with the hope of getting in my good books and becoming my “favourite child”. And, like my children, they sulk when they don’t get their own way and complain about me behind my back...*’

Wendy sets further context for the book by introducing a Freud concept of *transference* along with the three ways of seeing using insight, plain sight and foresight. As she outlines, ‘*These are the overarching perspectives through which each chapter should be viewed so, as you read, please consider questions such as the following:*

- *What are the insights I can gain here? What insights do I need to develop?*
- *What is in plain sight that I can use, leverage, develop or take advantage of?*
- *What foresight do I need to develop, create or learn about?*

So, having laid out some of the guidelines for reading the book, Wendy takes us through eight entertaining and

Foreword

easy-to-read chapters that provide insight, plain sight and foresight into how to be your best leader. You might not be awarded the ‘best leader’ title, but you are *your* best, and you deliver on that daily.

In Chapter 1, Wendy shares her brief experience as a young mother, with a less than cooperative child, joining a mothers group. Here she found she and son Harry just did not ‘fit’. The group had their cliques, and none of the children seemed to be a problem. Her reflections as a leader, using her ‘three ways of seeing’ have shown her that society and organisations operate similarly. You are ‘welcome’ here, provided you do not question the system... because, by the way, this system has currency. It is politically correct. There is no room for someone who might have a different opinion, or wants to debate the existing norms.

Wendy concludes the chapter saying, ‘...*the conversation needs to continue, rather than forcing people further into their opposing corners. True inclusiveness is having the courage to accept people for what they are, how they behave and what they think, regardless of whether we agree or not. It’s the ability to agree to disagree, but to keep talking, accepting others from all sides of faith, religion, sexuality, beliefs, values, thoughts and opinions, and forgiving even if it’s hard to...*’, and then she poses her reflective questioning.

The questions are included at the end of each chapter. If time does not permit you to answer these questions immediately, then I do encourage you to go back to the relevant chapters and invest in personal reflection.

Chapter 2 takes us further into understanding Wendy's perspectives on the similarities of parenting, families and leadership, as well as her model for creating an 'organisational family', which is strong, resilient, inclusive, innovative and successful. She uses the following five building blocks:

1. **Love:** This is the cornerstone of any family. It intimately binds people in relationships and is unconditional.
2. **Environment:** For an organisation or a team to grow, individuals must be given the opportunity to extend and stretch themselves. Just like children, the parent is always withdrawing, making themselves redundant, so that the child can learn, develop, mature and become more responsible and accountable. At the same time, good leadership and good parenting realise that errors will be made, the child will 'fall' – so they are there to catch, support, and get them back going again. As Wendy says, organisations refer to this as psychological safety.
3. **Health:** One of the support mechanisms for any child to grow is to be healthy – physically and mentally. This is no different to any person within a business or organisation – the research shows health and wellbeing are critical elements to productivity.
4. **Language:** In her first book, Wendy discusses the languages of leadership, which are the actions, behaviours and words used to influence, direct or control others. Leaders are always leading. Parents are always parenting. So being the example is a never-ending role to deliver.

5. **Vision:** Leaders inspire and challenge their teams with a picture of the future so that they work together to map the journey. Parents allow their children to dream about the future and help them put in place the building blocks that may allow the dreams to come true.

Finally, in this chapter, Wendy touches on one of the principal outcomes of her building blocks of leadership: ‘being your own best coach’.

This is a term that I use to describe individuals who are very good, consistent decision-makers and, as a result, they achieve very good results. It is because they understand what is in their control, that they must do, to give themselves the best chance of being successful in the workplace or in life.

In chapters 3 to 7, Wendy expands on the principles with a wonderful blend of stories, research, personal experiences and questions. In chapter 5, there is a very personal account of Wendy’s son, Harry, whose move to a changed educational system, which combined body and mind, had a real impact on his development and confidence. Taking the family example and showing how similar principles were applied at Johnson & Johnson, provides a very powerful ‘seeing’ of the benefits of health and wellbeing for individuals and organisations.

Language in chapter 6 is not to be rushed. Wendy is courageous in her incredible honesty, telling her life story in short movies and episodes. Understanding the six types of language used by her mother’s husbands, has given her incredible insights to leadership from the positive and negative influences that significant others had in her life.

In chapter 7 we see again the connections that Wendy makes between parenting and family to leadership and teams. Recounting the story of a father and his two daughters alongside the founder of Patagonia, vividly demonstrates her final principle, *'...having purpose in the work you do and thinking strategically about how to achieve your goals, are the two elements in creating a great vision for your family and those you lead. The two are integral in determining the aspirational goals or the vision you want to achieve...'*

The final chapter of the book is really the beginning for everyone's leadership reflection, exploration and continuing journey as she brings together her 'sightseeing' from chapter 1 across her five leadership principles, to provide a framework or roadmap for what she describes as 'all-the-time leadership'.

I am not the best of readers, although I enjoy reading something that makes sense due to its content; while, at the same time, making that content accessible and impactful through its storytelling.

I was unable to put this book down once I started. I know there is so much more contained in these pages, if you spend the time to reflect on the questions posed throughout the chapters.

Thank you, Wendy, for writing such a powerful addition to the leadership catalogue, and I do hope your readers gain as much from it as I did.

John Buchanan, former World Cup winning coach of the Australian national cricket team

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendy Born helps leaders maximise their talents and strengths to achieve extraordinary results.

As an engaging facilitator, coach, speaker and author, she works with executives, senior leaders and leadership teams to create high-performance organisations that deliver that WOW-factor.

On any given day, leadership can be rewarding, frustrating, fun, risky and scary – all within the first hour. It can make you feel annoyed, furious, happy, proud and inspired, or like you want to curl up in a corner and rock back and forth.

With Wendy's guidance, leaders learn to build strong and enduring relationships to drive engagement and deliver on real strategic results that make the whole journey easier, more effective and even enjoyable.

Wendy is a highly experienced and recognised coach. She has more than 25 years' experience in corporate and management roles, including 10 years in senior leadership positions in finance, IT, retail, financial services, communications and government.

Wendy holds qualifications in human resources, finance and operations management, and is a certified personal and professional coach. She is also a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School, Executive Education in 21st Century Leadership. Wendy's first book, *The Languages of Leadership: How to use your words, actions and behaviours to influence your team, peers and boss*, was published in 2019.

When she's not working, Wendy is continually challenged by her two kids, Harry and Lucy, who (without knowing it) teach her more about leadership than you ever would think possible.

She wouldn't have it any other way.

wendyborn.com.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I enjoyed writing this book very much and found it easy to write. Perhaps because many of my personal stories and stories from loved ones are in here, it almost feels like a piece of me. However, I have also received much love, support and encouragement from those I love, including family, friends and colleagues, which has added to the pleasure of writing.

Firstly, thanks to my publisher, Lesley Williams, and the team at Major Street Publishing. I always feel so supported by you, and your ongoing encouragement means a great deal to me. Thanks also to Kelly Irving, whose editorial tools, templates and guidance are a constant source of reference for me. I could not have started my writing journey without you both. And thanks to Charlotte Duff, for pulling everything together and making it look like a real book. Your support and guidance has been invaluable.

Thanks to my partner, David Markham, whose constant source of stories, anecdotes, rhymes, songs and topics for new books keeps my mind stimulated and cheeks sore from laughter. Your love and unwavering faith in my abilities is a wonder and inspiration to me.

Thanks to my bestie, Alison Hawkins, for your calmness, common sense, rational advice and love. You're always there when I need you and you inspire me constantly. Also, thanks to my friend Michelle Sales – your support and encouragement with my business is something I will always be grateful for.

Thank you to the teachers and staff of the Frank Dando Sports Academy (FDSA) and Parkhill Primary School for allowing me the privilege of spending time with you and your students. In particular, thanks to Frank and Evelyn Dando, Ziad Zakharia, Paul Fyfield, Sam Battaglia, Jeff Newman and Mark Derrick from FDSA, and to Elaine Brady, Alex Davies, Andrea Crane and Desiree Schlack from Parkhill Primary School.

Thanks also to John Fauvel, Somone Johns, Dale Stevens, Marg Kitsakis, Warren and Annette Born, Narelle Slatyer, and David and Cas Blenkhorn for sharing your stories, experiences and insights into raising children and leading people. Some of your stories made the book while others didn't, but all provided valuable insight into its making.

Thanks to my children, Harry and Lucy, for your constant curiosity and laughter, and for helping me to understand how leadership extends way beyond just our work lives.

And finally, thanks to you, the reader of my book. I hope this helps you to be the leader you want to be and your leadership inspires those around you to be better people, making the world a better place.

INTRODUCTION: DÉJÀ VECU

‘Muuuuuum, where are my shoes?’

‘In the lounge room, beside the coffee table where you left them last night,’ I reply.

‘Mum, do I really have to go to school?’

‘Yep.’

‘Mum, what if I just have this one day off?’

‘Nope.’

‘Mum, can I just this once, pleeeeeease?’

‘No.’

As I retrieve shoes and associated socks, along with school bags, jumpers and hats, I reflect on the time, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, when I actually had a name. I think it was Wendy. Great – back in this time, we are finally out the door.

‘Mum, it’s my turn for the front seat, remember?’ Ah, yes, the prime real estate in a child’s life is either a parent’s lap or the front seat of the car. Over the next five minutes, I negotiate a peace deal between my two kids that results

in me providing some kind of outlay in exchange for one child's possession of a three-minute ride up front.

The peace, however, is short-lived. 'Mum, when are we getting the gear I need for camp?' asks my son.

'Well, I will go through the list on the weekend and determine what you already have and then we will need to go shopping.'

'Mum, how come he gets to go shopping? I want to go shopping for stuff for me.'

Direct evidence suggests that the word 'mum' (in its numerous forms, styles and melodic practices) was the most used word in my household throughout 2019 (according to the survey of household residents at my address, 2019).

Finally, 45 minutes later, I arrive at the office and breathe a sigh of relief as I sit at my desk and turn my laptop on – at last, peace.

'Wendy, just before you start, can we talk about this problem I have with the guy who won't sign off on this deal? I'm not sure how to proceed.'

'Wendy, after you're done talking to Simon we need to talk about Michelle. She's really starting to get on my nerves about how I should be running this project.'

'Wendy, what should I do about... ?' 'Wendy, how come Andrew is... ?' 'Wendy, why is she... ?'

Why those you lead are like those you love

Ever had a similar situation – where you thought you were experiencing déjà vu by simply moving between two parts of your life? These kinds of feelings are very common, particularly when you lead people and raise children. To clarify, however, what you're actually feeling is *déjà vecu*, which is similar to déjà vu except that, whereas déjà vu is about having the illusion or feeling of having experienced something before, déjà vecu is the feeling of having 'already lived through' an experience (Funkhouser & Schredl, 2014). So when I arrived at work that day, déjà vecu kicked in because I'd lived through the exact same experience with my kids earlier.

The similarities between my team and my children are uncanny. Like my children, my team bring me their problems for me to sort out, either through fixing the problem myself or through providing them with the solution. Like my children, they complain about other members of the team or other people in different departments, as though I can provide some advice on how to deal with them, or admonish those people with some kind of punishment for behaving badly. Like my children, my team plays one off against the other with the hope of getting in my good books and becoming my 'favourite child'. And like my children, they sulk when they don't get their own way and complain about me behind my back.

When I have spoken to people about the concept of raising children being similar to leading people, I always receive a knowing nod. But you don't need to have raised children to understand this concept. We have all been raised by

someone, and once you're an adult you eventually come to understand what you were like as a child and how you behaved towards your parents. I recall annoying my mother at times, asking for her to do things for me, whinging about not being allowed to do something, asking her to solve my problems for me and negotiating with her for something completely inane that, at the time, I couldn't possibly live without. Then we grow up, go to work and lead people.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not saying the people you work with and lead have the same maturity levels as children or act exactly like children. However, beneath our adult layers of maturity and social sophistication, the same needs, motivations and insecurities can emerge, and these influence how we act.

Many times, in the work I do with leaders, I hear them talk about how their team can be needy, dependent, play games (albeit political ones), behave like kids in the playground, whinge and sulk. Some leaders have described themselves or other leaders as acting like 'mother hens' towards their team members – always looking after their problems (personal or professional), solving things for them, looking after them, helping them and taking them under their wing. It's like their people are transferring their experiences and actions with their parents onto their leaders. Well, actually they are.

Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, developed the concept of transference in his book *Studies on Hysteria*, co-written with Josef Breuer and published in 1895. As noted in 'Transference' (www.goodtherapy.org), Freud described transference as a process in which 'deep, intense and often unconscious feelings'

that someone has about one person are redirected towards another person – in Freud’s case, these feelings were transferred onto Freud, within the therapeutic relationships he had with his patients. Transference is also common between people outside a therapeutic setting, and doesn’t suggest someone has a mental health condition. The process is something that simply occurs, often unconsciously, between people and can help explain patterns of relationships that occur in our lives. An example of this may be when someone marries a person who displays similar behaviours to a parental figure or another significant influence in their life.

The common types of transference are:

- **Paternal:** When you look at someone as a father figure, and so may see them as authoritative, powerful and influential, and look to them for protection, guidance and patronage.
- **Maternal:** When you look at someone as a mother figure, and so may see them as caring, nurturing and loving, and look to them for comfort, support and encouragement.
- **Sibling:** When you look at someone as a brother or sister, and so may see them as supportive, encouraging and cooperative, and look to them for camaraderie, affiliation and connection.
- **Non-familial:** When you look at someone according to a particular version of what you expect of them instead of who they may actually be. This is typical when relying on stereotypes, such as expecting police officers to always uphold the law and clerics to always be saint-like.

Transference can be both positive and negative. For example, when an employee views their leader as similar to a positive parent or guardian, they will want to do things for them, and discretionary effort may increase in order to please them. A negative example could be where two employees are overly competitive – viewing each other as siblings competing for the attention of the parent figure, for example, and always wanting to outdo each other. Building your awareness of your own transferences will help you to manage this with those you lead.

Using your sight

By understanding how you look at others and what your expectations are of them, you will be able to make a connection between the significant influences in your life and those around you. These significant influences are the people who raised you, guided you and influenced you throughout your life. You may be able to identify behaviours, words, phrases and actions that you have in common with these people.

Through this awareness, you can then determine what countertransference (that is, your contribution to the transference) you would like others to have from you and adjust your behaviours to fit. For example, if you want your people to view you as a father figure, you could behave in an authoritative, strong and influential way. Author and businessman Stephen Covey once said, ‘If you want to be trusted, be trustworthy’ and the same applies here.

You need to think about how you would like others to see you, and then behave accordingly. To be respected, you need to be respectable; to be loved, you need to be lovable; and to be admired, you need to be admirable.

To act as you want to be seen, you need to have:

- **Insight** into both yourself and those you lead to create trust and connection as the foundation of your team. You also need insight into the importance of a positive attitude and mindset, and how good work–life balance works in with this, to see how these influence those around you.
- **Plain sight** to see what’s in front of you and within your control as you practise good leadership, establish boundaries and expectations, and create a culture of accountability with your people. Through focusing on the things that you can control, you can feel empowered and in control of what you are doing.
- **Foresight** to determine your purpose, strategy and vision to guide a way into the future for you and your team. By creating a clear picture of the way forward, you set the direction, create purpose and meaning in the work you and your people do, and increase the probability of delivery.

As you progress further through this book, I encourage you to keep these three ways of seeing in mind. These are the overarching perspectives through which each chapter should

be viewed, so, as you read, please consider questions such as the following:

- What are the insights I can gain here? What insights do I need to develop?
- What is in plain sight that I can use, leverage, develop or take advantage of?
- What foresight do I need to develop, create or learn about?

I understand what it's like to raise children, to lead people and to be raised by parents, and I see the similarities in these relationships across the many leaders I have worked with throughout my career. When, in a coaching session or workshop I'm running, my clients describe a situation or circumstance with their people, I often reflect on my feelings of *déjà vecu* (yep, that term again) with what they have described. The likenesses and similarities are many. I have also found that my children perform at their best and want to do the right thing when they:

- have clear structure, boundaries and consequences
- eat well and get lots of exercise
- feel loved and supported, in an environment that is encouraging and caring
- know where they are headed, and how they will get there
- have good role models in their life.

The same applies to those you lead.

How to use this book

What you will find in the following pages are case studies, practical advice and tools to help you become a better leader and create great leaders. I read a lot of business books that have great concepts, theories and ideas, yet I'm left to try to figure out how to implement them. These books lack practical methods you can actually start using. This is not what this book is about. I'm here to support and guide you with pragmatism and common sense – it's what I love doing and what I aim to do within all the work I do with my clients so they get the most value.

I also don't believe in over-complicating anything – in fact, I can't stand complexity. It hurts my brain, and leaves me confused, lost and pissed off. So you won't find anything in here that is confusing. Indeed, the chapters will probably surprise you in their simplicity. Nothing is in here that you haven't heard about before in some way, shape or form – because the information is logical and common sense, which is what seems to be missing in so very many things these days!

In the first two chapters of this book, I describe the challenges that leaders face today, what we have become as a society and how this affects the way we lead our people and raise our children. I also consider how inclusive we actually are as a society, the stress this lack of inclusiveness causes, and how we are losing the attributes of leadership that our people are looking for and that our customers want. Finally, I outline the similarities between raising children and leading people, and introduce you to my five core leadership

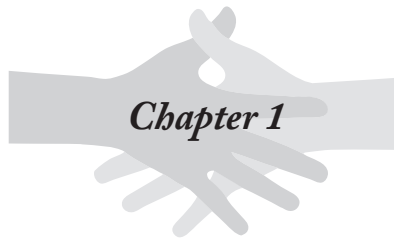
principles: Love, Environment, Health, Language and Vision.

In chapters 3 to 7, I delve into each of my five core principles in more detail, showing how you have already experienced each one, either through your parents or as a parent. I outline how the principles are already being used by leaders or organisations, and include practical steps and techniques to help you implement each one.

The final chapter in the book then considers the broader view of leadership, and the different ways you can assess what you already have with your team, what you already know about your people and what you need to do in the future to create a more cohesive, productive and engaged team.

As English philosopher John Locke said, 'Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours'.

So let's get going and learn about raising leaders, building your knowledge so you can make it yours.



SIGHTSEEING

As I opened my eyes, I felt the intense sensation that someone had poured a bucket of sand in them while I was asleep. I looked at my husband, then at the clock. One hour – one solitary hour had passed since I had gone to bed, exhausted. He looked at me with sympathy and concern as he told me that the baby was awake. *Seriously?* I thought. *How can he have slept for one hour and think that it's now okay to be awake?* But I dragged my sorry arse out of bed and went to his cot, where I tried to feed, soothe and comfort – anything to get him to go back to sleep. My brain was barely functioning, and feelings of anger, frustration and exhaustion flooded my mind and body. Isolation, inadequacy and doubt had become my daily companions. My self-esteem seemed to have ebbed away, slowly eaten by the feelings of helplessness and frustration. I was completely confused about how I could love a child so unconditionally yet feel complete and utter despair.

When I was expecting our first child, I knew sleep deprivation was one thing I would need to endure. What I experienced, however, was deeper and darker than anything I'd expected, and led to more frustration and confusion than I had ever felt in my life. For the first 18 months of his life, my son, Harry, didn't sleep much. No matter how much I cajoled, caressed, walked, cradled, drove around and wore a path in my carpet for him, he just wasn't keen on it. He was going to the beat of his own drum and seemed out of anyone's control. No matter who we consulted for help and support, nothing worked.

At the time, I was part of a mothers group, consisting of peers who had all had their children around the same time. I went to early meetings with high hopes that I would be able to talk to other people who were going through the same thing that we were. I was disappointed with my experience. I think I was one of the eldest mothers in the group, which may have influenced how I perceived the other girls, and they seemed quick to form subgroups and cliques I wasn't part of. I gave up going after a month. I couldn't connect with anyone there – perhaps because I looked too desperate or needy, but also because they all appeared to have perfect children, perfect families and perfect lives. They all talked like motherhood was so fulfilling and rewarding. Ugh! It made me want to vomit.

Our friends were also having children at the same time and they also seemed to not understand me when I tried to talk about what we were experiencing. Their children seemed to have no problems sleeping, settling and generally existing. When I tried to explain what was happening, I was met

with confusion or blank looks as though I was speaking another language – a language that not one other person on the planet could comprehend. I felt alone. I felt isolated. I felt lost.

And things didn't get much easier. As a toddler, Harry had two speeds: unmanageable and asleep. He was always on the go – at home, at kindergarten, everywhere. We were often told by his carers that he wasn't cooperative, would lash out at the other kids, and wasn't able to transition between activities without disrupting other children or becoming frustrated and angry. We sought the advice of many paediatricians and child psychologists and were provided a list of behaviour management strategies that just never seemed to work. Harry definitely had a mind of his own and didn't want to do anything that we asked him to do if it wasn't also what he wanted to do.

As parents, we both felt restricted in what we could do and where we could take Harry. Any change in environment seemed to bring a whole new set of triggers for his behaviour. He could be set off into a fit of rage in what seemed like the blink of an eye and often without a foreseeable trigger. While our friends were taking their kids out everywhere, including overseas, we felt confined to a set environment trying to keep things consistent, constrained and limited.

If parenting were a paid job, at the time I probably would have been on performance management. I couldn't get my son to do anything for me or be compliant with what I wanted him to do – at best, he would say, 'Yes, Mummy, okay' and then do the exact opposite. I couldn't negotiate, influence, cajole, persuade, entice, sweet-talk or coax him

to do anything he didn't want to do. My confidence was diminishing daily and I couldn't see a way forward or out of what I was living. No matter what I did, nothing seemed to get any better, and I started to question my abilities.

These feelings of self-doubt and frustration can also be experienced by leaders in the workplace. As a leader, you can find it difficult to get your people to own their work, be accountable for what they are doing and follow through on what they have agreed to. They may work with some team members and not others, rarely collaborate or share knowledge with each other, and some may actively work to sabotage you and your department. They can be difficult, temperamental, needy, uncaring, unsociable and downright nasty at times. On top of this, adequate help and support doesn't seem to be available, no-one understands what you're experiencing and any strategies you are given seem to be useless. Yes, leading a team is like raising children.

Both roles can be blindingly frustrating. As a parent or leader, you can sometimes resort to strategies like yelling and scolding your people – and then packing your bags for the guilt trip you're about to take. Or you try to negotiate an outcome with them and end up with a deal that is nowhere near what you wanted, yet somehow you've been made to think you're the winner (until you discover you've been conned). Or it's an arm wrestle won by whoever has the stronger will for getting their own way, again resulting in the guilt trip or the threat of having the sugar police on your doorstep – because, say, you gave your child chocolate to get in the car because they were refusing to do anything when you needed to get out the door to an important meeting, the outcome of which would result in either the downfall of humanity

or making your boss an obscene amount of money, which you would receive no actual acknowledgement or return for because you missed buying company shares because your toddler vomited on the application form and you were too embarrassed to return it. Sigh!

Like me with my mothers group, you no doubt also compare yourself to your peers and this can make you feel inadequate, underperforming or incompetent as a leader, parent or both. Every other parent has the perfect home, perfect partner and perfect children who always behave, do as they're told instantly and have little halos floating around above their head, along with big smiles that sparkle and glint. Basically, everyone else's children are well-mannered, polite little bunnies just like in the movies! And every other leader at your work and beyond has the perfect team, achieves all of their goals, leads people who collaborate and innovate and is the boss's favourite employee. You have no actual evidence of this, but know it to be true – so there! You end up hating your job, your peers, your team and yourself. You feel like you get no support from anyone, everyone from the CEO to the cleaner seems to be working against you, and everything you do is never quite right or good enough. Leadership, like parenting, is lonely, hard and often thankless.

What have we become?

If you live a life of frustration in an environment that is unaccountable, unsupportive and uncollaborative, your stress levels will increase considerably. When you're constantly stressed, you face higher potential for illness, disease or an early death. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics

(ABS) 2018 National Health Survey, approximately one in eight people, or 2.4 million Australians, experienced ‘high or very high levels of psychological distress’, influenced in no small way by work. When you are under stress, your body produces hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which increase your blood pressure, causing hypertension. Also according to the ABS, approximately one in ten Australians, or 2.6 million people, report having hypertension or high blood pressure, with the proportion of people aged between 35 and 44 with hypertension having tripled since 2014–15.

We are also becoming a society that is less tolerant and more critical of each other. We have become very opinionated, unsympathetic and intolerant of each other’s views and opinions. We call out other people – for their biases, views, opinions, dress sense, friendships, personality flaws, food preferences, social standing, social media opinions, social justice choices (and the list goes on), along with the important issues of racism, homophobia, bigotry and misogyny – at every opportunity, for even the smallest indiscretion. Don’t get me wrong – I believe that racism, homophobia, bigotry and misogyny must be called out at every opportunity. However, when we are calling out every other useless thing – which usually just comes down to personal opinion – calling out the bad things gets lost in the noise of the trivial stuff. When everything is important, nothing is important, and we waste time and energy on the rubbish at the expense of the important messages. Sadly, I also think the reason for calling out the small stuff is some kind of need to feel better about ourselves or to look and feel more self-righteous. In its current form, I think this is plainly and simply bullying, and it needs to stop.

In a 2016 study completed by Robin Kowalski, Allison Toth and Megan Morgan on bullying and cyberbullying in adulthood and the workplace, they found that 20 per cent of respondents had been bullied or cyberbullied as an adult, with 30 per cent being bullied at work. Similarly, a 2014 study on online harassment by the Pew Research Center found that '73% of adult internet users have seen someone be harassed in some way online and 40% have personally experienced it'. The American Osteopathic Association has highlighted that online bullying can lead to sleep loss, headaches, muscle pain, anxiety and depression, and, according to a Norwegian study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in 2015, online bullying has also been identified as a precursor to suicidal thinking. We condemn bullying in its physical form, yet we seem to accept it in its online form. I find this appalling and frightening.

In his December 2019 speech to shareholders, the chairman of Orica, Malcolm Broomhead, commented:

It's a great shame that 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, where there was great hope of a future united world, we seem to just be pulling ourselves apart in a frenzy of self-righteousness. And there's an attitude of 'I'm right and I'll shout down anyone who disagrees', and it's becoming increasingly prevalent.

This type of behaviour is dividing our world more than ever, reducing empathy and compassion while increasing judgement and unacceptance. If we continue to do this, the future for our children frightens me.

Opening our eyes

I often hear organisations espouse their values of diversity and inclusion. Yet, to truly be an inclusive society, we need to be less judgemental and accept everyone for their views, acknowledge their entitlement to them and live and let live beside them. In his book *Leadership in the Age of Personalization: Why standardization fails in the age of 'me'*, Glenn Llopis cites his survey of more than 14,000 leaders and their employees at a broad range of companies across the US, highlighting that the number-one thing employees wanted in order to be their authentic self at work was 'a safe environment where no-one is judged'. This was twice as important as 'feeling valued and respected' and having 'trust and transparency from their supervisor'. It's incredible that we want this at work, we want this for our children, yet we find it incredibly difficult to actually live it.

So, how do we start to live in a world where we accept others openly, we create connection and we become someone that others aspire to be like? Let's start with comparison. When I compared myself to the other mothers in my mothers group, I felt inferior, like I wasn't coping and that everyone had it easier than I did. The fourth rule in Jordan Peterson's book *12 Rules for Life: An antidote to chaos* is, 'Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today'. In this rule, he talks about making small changes to yourself and your circumstances each day, every day until they're incorporated into your life. Then stand back and look at how far you have come. Comparing yourself to the person you were at the start of these changes to who you are

sometime later is more rewarding and relevant than comparing yourself to someone else.

When you make small changes to the way you are, the things you say, how you behave and what you do, these add up to significant changes over time. Through focused effort on small improvements we can actually impact more broadly on our world.

Now let's consider kindness, compassion and empathy for others. Where have these gone? It's like we have suddenly woken up devoid of these emotions. These are such valuable commodities in leadership, yet we've become a society of hard-arse, judgemental and inconsiderate pricks. Yet the value of these attributes to organisations is evident. In a *Harvard Business Review* study of 84 US companies focusing on the level of compassion and forgiveness held by the CEOs, researchers found companies with a CEO who had higher levels of these characteristics outperformed their peers by almost 500 per cent.

Additionally, Audun Farbrot for the BI Norwegian Business School researched 1500 leaders and their employees and found that leaders who show good self-insight, are humble and good role models for their people 'are rewarded with committed and service-minded employees'. The self-insight Farbrot refers to means these leaders had a strong understanding of their emotions, behaviours, abilities and needs, and when faced with challenges, they are proactive rather than reactive.

Sightseeing

Intellectual excellence owes its birth and growth mainly to instruction, and so requires time and experience, while moral excellence is the result of habit or custom.

Aristotle

Creating *insight* into the things we do and say is the first place to start to create a better world for our children, as well as those we lead. Reflection should become a part of your daily routine, a habit built around understanding what you do and what you can learn from it. Evidence suggests that the habit of reflection can lead to increases in wellbeing, productivity and meaning in our lives. In a 2015 article published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Laurenz Meier, Eunae Cho and Soner Dumani found a correlation between reflection and increased wellbeing and mood. Additionally, research conducted by Giada Di Stefano, Gary Pisano, Francesca Gino and Bradley Staats for the Harvard Business School found that daily reflection of just 15 minutes can increase performance by up to 23 per cent.

We can also learn about our people through understanding their stories, in turn strengthening the trust and connection we have in our relationships with them. And, according to ‘The Neuroscience of Trust’ by Paul Zak (published in the *Harvard Business Review*), when we have strong foundations of trust in our teams and organisations, we see increases to productivity, energy and engagement, and decreased stress levels, sick days and burnout. Through this insight, you are able to influence the health, wellbeing and mindset of your

people and ensure you practise good work–life balance for the benefit of the team.

When you see what’s in *plain sight* of you and within your control, you become self-sufficient, resilient and empowered. Your words, actions and behaviours are the only things that you can control and once you start to focus on that, instead of on what you can’t control, your world becomes larger. In Stephen Covey’s best-selling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he talks about your circle of influence and circle of concern and how, if you focus on the things you have influence on – for example, your own self – you find that your circle of influence grows. Additionally, having a proactive focus leads to positive energy, which also enlarges your circle of influence. So, when we are proactive in establishing boundaries and expectations and create a culture of accountability for our people to operate in, we build autonomous, independent and empowered teams.

And when we have the *foresight* to understand the true purpose of the work we do, and the vision and strategy to build a better world, we inspire the people we lead. Research completed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (and included in their report ‘Putting Purpose to Work: A study of purpose in the workplace’, released in 2016) found that almost 80 per cent of leaders believe that their purpose is fundamental to their success. Additionally, a survey completed by Sean Czarnecki in 2018 found that consumers are more loyal to brands that are purpose driven and believe them to be more caring.

It is critical to your business to engage your people in the process of developing your strategy, so they can find and connect with your purpose to make their work meaningful,

and clearly understand your vision of where you want to go. Until you have all three, you run the risk of not achieving what you set out to. As Bill Cushard highlights, studies show only 14 per cent of your employees understand your organisation strategy and only 41 per cent understand its overall direction. (For more information in this area, see also articles by Donald Sull, Stefano Turconi, Charles Sull, and James Yoder, published in 2017, and David Witt, published in 2012.) If this is the case, your odds of achieving anything are significantly reduced. Investing the time and effort into helping every single employee understand your vision, strategy and purpose will reap your organisation rewards in the long term.

Through creating insight, looking at what's in plain sight and having foresight, you are able to develop and adapt to what needs to be done, build the confidence in yourself and your people to build something incredible together, and become a successful, high-performing and empowered team of people through understanding, empathy, connection and trust. Learning and adapting throughout your leadership journey is key to becoming a leader who people respect, are inspired by and want to work for. It's what leadership is all about.

The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails.

John Maxwell, author and speaker
(also attributed to William Arthur Ward)

Something to think about

The last few months of 2019 saw a number of instances in the media where people were criticised, chastised and bullied for not having the same views, beliefs or behaviours that others believed they should. For example, American comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres being friends with former American President George Bush was seen by some as inconceivable, given the two have such opposing beliefs. To some, it's clearly not possible for two people to be mature enough to acknowledge each other's views and opinions are opposite yet still be able to look past that to who the other person actually is. Having the respect to say to each other that they will agree to disagree, and keep open the possibility that one day, one of them may even change their mind about how they currently see something, seems an impossible concept to some.

Other examples include people's reactions to rugby union player Israel Folau's homophobia and his views on gay marriage, climate activist Greta Thunberg's address to the United Nations and Australian underworld crime figure Mick Gatto working with The Salvation Army to help the homeless on World Homeless Day. To some, this final example is abhorrent given the disparate beliefs of each party and, well, Mick couldn't possibly care about the homeless, could he?

I often come across people who are fearful of putting forth their views because of being misinterpreted, judged or labelled something terrible, so they remain quiet and keep their thoughts and views to themselves. Creating a safe work environment is a key skill for leaders, and one that encourages this diversity of thinking and a tolerance of inclusiveness to come about. Hate speech, homophobia, sexism and racism are never okay. But the conversation needs to continue, rather than forcing people

further into their opposing corners. True inclusiveness is having the courage to accept people for what they are, how they behave and what they think, regardless of whether we agree or not. It's the ability to agree to disagree, but to keep talking, accepting others from all sides of faith, religion, sexuality, beliefs, values, thoughts and opinions, and forgiving even if it's hard to do.

We could learn a lot from crayons; some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, while others bright, some have weird names, but they all have learned to live together in the same box.

Robert Fulghum, author and minister

Ways to improve your sightseeing

- Consider your own childhood experience with your parents. How has this influenced the way you lead? Are you transferring anything onto those you work with?
- Reflecting on your last year, month or day, what are the things that you thought went well? What things didn't go well?
- When you think about the things that went well or didn't go well, what about the situation did or didn't work? What about your responses did or didn't work? What was your mindset like at the time?
- If you are a parent, what similarities can you see between raising your kids and leading your people? What can you learn from this? How can you use similar strategies?

Sightseeing

- Are you taking on the role of mother/father/sister/brother with any of your people? Is it working? Can you change the way you respond?
- Are you comparing yourself to others and feeling like you're coming up short? When you think about what you were doing five years ago and what you are doing now, do you see a different comparison?