

# Motivation, Vulnerability and Courage – Leadership Tips for Event and Festival Managers

Given the amount of stress a typical event can bring to its staff, having strong leadership that understands how to get the best of themselves and of their team is crucial. I've recently read some excellent books that touch upon some important ideas, and below you will find some powerful excerpts full of lessons and tips to help you better manage your event team. All of these books below are linked to Amazon for easy purchase if you want to read further.

Quick jump to each book:

1. [Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership: Executive Lessons from the Bully Pulpit](#)
2. [Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution](#)
3. [The Motivation Manifesto](#)

✘ The first book, [Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership: Executive Lessons from the Bully Pulpit](#), is a fascinating look at the 26th President of the United States and his extraordinary talents in willpower, courage, and character. A prolific writer, he left behind a trove of letters, books, and notes that detail his unwavering approach to life. This book captures these and applies them with a business focus.

As the book says, **“The overriding lesson of Theodore Roosevelt is that leadership is a way of life.”**

## General Leadership Lessons:

- Leaders shall focus all energy on the job at hand, without regard to their own future prospects. In so doing, they will be of greater service in the present

and more worthy of leadership responsibility in the future.

- Leaders should visibly love their people more than their positions – and prove their love through their actions.
- Anyone can choose to become a leader at any time; the key is a commitment to service.
- Rather than seeking success, a leader should seek to *deserve* success.

## **On Courage:**

- Courage is the “first virtue” because it underlies all the others.
- Courage (physical and mental) can be developed as an act of will.
- Fearlessness is not recklessness. Acceptable risk should be calculated, based on the value of the endeavor at stake.
- Proven courage under fire can impart to a leader an aura of destiny, of being favored by fortune. This may cause others to repose confidence in him under circumstances marked by great uncertainty and risk.

## **On Continuing Education:**

- To maintain usefulness as a teacher, a leader must always continue to learn and seek information from every available medium.
- Leaders should strive for balanced mental and spiritual nourishment – reading, writing, entertainment, time with friends.
- Develop your powers of observation and listening so that more and more of your daily experience yields knowledge, perspective, inspiration, and insight.
- Utilize lessons learned from earlier times in your life as ready reserves that can be cross-fertilized and deployed in future situations.

## **On Handling Adversity and Mistakes:**

- How an individual chooses to interpret misfortune or mistake can be at least as significant as the objective facts at hand.
- Leaders should strive to view mistakes as learning opportunities; they should not dwell on them when nothing can be done.
- Where a leader makes a mistake in a manifest effort to serve others, forgiveness – by oneself as well as from others – is more readily achievable than where one appears to be acting in one's own interest.
- An individual's ability to carry on in the face of calamitous adversity showcases critical leadership traits, including perseverance, self-containment amidst difficult circumstances, courage, perspective, and an ability to focus on the needs of others rather than oneself. Individuals who have mastered such challenges in their own lives are more apt to be viewed as leaders able to serve others.

## **On Negotiation:**

- A willingness to fight aggressively for one's principles and interests empowers a leader, setting the stage for productive negotiation.
- The contours of many agreements come into view prior to commencement of formal negotiations.
- Define your negotiating role – facilitator, mediator, arbitrator, or advocate – based on the interests you represent.
- Seek to delegate your negotiating authority, and ensure that the other side has complete authority to negotiate.
- Focus resolutely on interests; do not confuse interests with bargaining positions.
- Be manifestly willing to walk away from the table, and do not bluff.
- Create a historical record, and honor and enforce

agreements. Trust is of the utmost importance.

## **On Taking Action as a Leader:**

- Decisive action, backed by intelligent forethought and timed to seize the initiative, is a hallmark of effective leadership.
- Audacious action, especially when taken early and exposing the leader to risk – can establish a position of enduring strength.
- Forethought is the raw material of decision making. The ongoing process of reflection can endow a leader with creative, rapid decision making.

## **On Hiring and Building your Team:**

- Hire people more talented than yourself, and look for the best in each person. Ceaselessly search for new talent.
- Spend the time necessary to evaluate job prospects, but do not prolong consideration of people who will not be hired.
- Ruthlessly replace individuals who do not meet the standards of the enterprise.

## **On Managing Your Team:**

- The welfare of your team is your overarching responsibility.
- A leader should develop leaders, not merely direct followers.
- Demonstrate faith in your team by delegation of authority (with selective intervention).
- Back up and protect your team consistently.
- Recognize strong performers, but acknowledge and forgive acceptable mistakes – including your own.
- Manage by “wandering around” – taking site visits and seeing how your team works in the field.
- Continuously convey gratitude and loyalty to your team,

even after it no longer exists.

## **On Creating Your Vision:**

- Craft and present a compelling vision along with priorities for the achievement of your vision.
- Exhibit invincible optimism, and strive to exemplify character.
- Attend to important relationships outside the enterprise (having a healthy work / life balance).

## **On Public Speaking:**

- Believe in your message and don't exaggerate your case. Communicate unreservedly with their audience.
- An effective public speech is a poster, not an etching; just a few impactful words or phrases is what sticks the best.
- Strive for clarity of expression; use simple stories to communicate complex issues.
- Master every available communication medium.

## **On Handling Criticism and Responding to Charges:**

- No matter how personal the attack, your response should be aimed entirely toward advancing the goals of those you serve.
- As much as you can, plan the timing, audience and content of your response on your own terms.
- Carefully consider from whom the response should come, and to whom it should be addressed.
- When responding to general charges, be specific and always adhere to the truth..
- Anticipate truth-twisters, and keep contemporaneous records for future use.
- Don't attempt to change to suit the notions of critics.

## On Leading by Example:

- Leaders can rise to the level of events by honoring and applying examples of heroic lives to new circumstances.
- Words, no matter how well chosen and crafted, approach the heights of eloquence only when recognized as aligned with actions.
- A leader's example can have an almost infinite reach across space and time.

✘ ✘The second book I'll mention here is actually part of a set of three books from Brene Brown, P.H.D., entitled [Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution.](#)

The first book, [The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are](#)✘ , has the message of **"be you"**.

The second book, [Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead](#)✘ , has the message of **"Be all in"**.

Rising Strong's message is **"Fall. Get up. Try again."** In Rising Strong, Brene focuses on the fact that being brave – being a leader – requires us to be vulnerable. In fact, Brene even uses a famous quote from Theodore Roosevelt in Daring Greatly:

*It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly;...who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while Daring Greatly.*

All of her books – [and her TED Talks as well](#) – are some of the

most insightful and empowering books I've read on the subject.

Some of Dr. Brown's biggest takeaways can be summarized as such and go into much greater detail in her book:

- I want to be in the arena and dare greatly, choosing courage over comfort.
- Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it's having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. **Vulnerability is our greatest measure of courage.**
- If we are brave often enough, we will fall; this is the physics of vulnerability. Daring is saying, "I know I will eventually fail and I'm still all in."
- Once we fall in the service of being brave, we can never go back. Courage transforms the emotional structure of our being. We now know when we're showing up and when we're hiding out, and we can't fake it anymore.
- This journey belongs to no one but you; however, we cannot go it alone.
- We're wired for story. We feel the most alive when we're connecting with others and being brave with our stories – it's in our biology.
- Creativity embeds knowledge so that it can become practice. We move what we're learning from our heads to our hearts through our hands.
- Rising strong is the same process whether you're navigating personal or professional struggles.
- Comparative suffering is a function of fear and scarcity. The opposite of scarcity is not abundance; it's simply enough.
- You can't engineer an emotional, vulnerable, and courageous process into an easy, one-size-fits-all formula.
- When you approach a potential interpersonal conflict as thinking of it in terms as "the story I'm making up is...", you maintain proper perspective that perhaps the way you're interpreting the situation isn't the same way

they are.

- Writing down the “story you’re making up” – Brene includes this as part of “The Rumble” – in a private place that goes through the entire story – what you’re feeling, what you believe, how you acted, and eventually sharing it when you’re ready is a very powerful tool to help communicate and come to a better understanding or resolution with the conflict. The goal understand and learn what’s in the *delta* – the difference between what we make up about our experiences and the truth we discover through the process of rumbling.
- Courage is contagious. Your experience can profoundly affect the people around you, whether you’re aware of it or not.
- Rising strong is a spiritual practice, which in this context is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to one another by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and belonging.  
“Grace will take you places hustling can’t.”

And below are two posters you can save as PDFs, [courtesy of her website](#):

# DARING GREATLY

## LEADERSHIP MANIFESTO

Leader\ ˈliːdə\ n: Anyone who holds her- or himself accountable for finding potential in people and processes

To the CEOs and teachers. To the principals and the managers.  
To the politicians, community leaders, and decision-makers.  
To all of us from all of us.

WE WANT TO SHOW UP, WE WANT TO LEARN, AND  
**WE WANT TO INSPIRE.**

WE ARE HARDWIRED FOR CONNECTION, CURIOSITY, AND ENGAGEMENT.

WE CRAVE PURPOSE, AND WE HAVE A DEEP DESIRE TO CREATE AND CONTRIBUTE.

**WE WANT TO TAKE RISKS,**  
EMBRACE OUR VULNERABILITIES, AND BE COURAGEOUS.

**WHEN LEARNING AND WORKING ARE DEHUMANIZED –**  
WHEN YOU NO LONGER SEE US AND NO LONGER ENCOURAGE OUR DARING, OR  
WHEN YOU ONLY SEE WHAT WE PRODUCE OR HOW WE PERFORM –  
WE DISENGAGE AND TURN AWAY FROM THE VERY THINGS THAT THE WORLD NEEDS FROM US:  
**OUR TALENT, OUR IDEAS, AND OUR PASSION.**

**WHAT WE ASK IS THAT YOU ENGAGE WITH US,**  
SHOW UP BESIDE US, AND LEARN FROM US.

**FEEDBACK IS A FUNCTION OF RESPECT;**  
WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE HONEST CONVERSATIONS WITH US  
ABOUT OUR STRENGTHS AND OUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH,  
WE QUESTION OUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND YOUR COMMITMENT.

ABOVE ALL ELSE, WE ASK THAT YOU SHOW UP,  
LET YOURSELF BE SEEN, AND BE COURAGEOUS.  
**DARE GREATLY WITH US.**

from *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown

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# DARING GREATLY



## ENGAGED FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

I KNOW I'M READY TO GIVE FEEDBACK WHEN:

**1** I'M READY TO SIT NEXT TO YOU RATHER THAN ACROSS FROM YOU

I'M WILLING TO PUT THE PROBLEM IN FRONT OF US RATHER THAN BETWEEN US (OR SLIDING IT TOWARD YOU)

**3** I'M READY TO LISTEN, ASK QUESTIONS, AND ACCEPT THAT I MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE

I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT YOU DO WELL INSTEAD OF PICKING APART YOUR MISTAKES

**5** I RECOGNIZE YOUR STRENGTHS AND HOW YOU CAN USE THEM TO ADDRESS YOUR CHALLENGES

I CAN HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE WITHOUT SHAMING OR BLAMING YOU

**7** I'M WILLING TO OWN MY PART

I CAN GENUINELY THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS RATHER THAN CRITICIZE YOU FOR YOUR FAILINGS

**9** I CAN TALK ABOUT HOW RESOLVING THESE CHALLENGES WILL LEAD TO YOUR GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

I CAN MODEL THE VULNERABILITY AND OPENNESS THAT I EXPECT TO SEE FROM YOU

- from *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown -

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✘ Our final book, [The Motivation Manifesto](#) ✘ by Brendon Bruchard, is a very direct and powerful call to action utilizing his nine declarations – master these to inject more

purpose and success in your life. The book starts with a declaration of personal power; a pledge to take action. There is a chapter devoted to each declaration as well as a separate section that touches on human nature and our personal freedom, the cost of fear, and sustaining motivation.

## The 9 Declarations:

- **Meet life with full presence and power** – harnessing the roles of observer, director, guardian, warrior, lover and leader.
- **Reclaim your agenda** – write our own manifestos and plans and execute them with heart and discipline
- **Defeat your demons** – working to vanquish Defiance and its three parts – Doubt, Delay, and Division – with Faith, Action, and Love.
- **Advance with abandon** – knowing that all the resources needed to win are within, rather than being driving by scarcity, that there isn't enough to make it happen.
- **Practice joy and gratitude** – being thankful for your blessings and making it your aim to live a joyous life.
- **Do not break integrity** – recognizing the six practices of integrity – *think before you act, never commit to anything where we lack passion, keep our word, always treat others with respect, tell the truth, and always favor within.* Also making sure to recognize the seven temptations – *impatience, disappointment, desperation, aggression, hurt, loyalty* (when loyalty is chosen over truth), and *power*.
- **Amplify love** – working to meet others with loving intent and fire, a full and vibrant energy instead of apathy or bitterness.
- **Inspire greatness** – demanding the nine virtues of greatness from others: *honesty, responsibility, intelligence, excellence, courage, respect for others, vigilance, service, and unity.*
- **Slow time** – remembering that we are not supposed to miss

this moment, and that time is finite. To slow down the moment, we must heighten our senses – even just stopping to take a deep breath while enjoying a sold out crowd at your festival can help you slow time. Try to hold everything you do – from breathing to looking around to eating – to an extra two beats.

Despite the content of these three books being written as much as 100 years apart, the common themes of *showing courage by being vulnerable, showing integrity and character through action, and exuding joy, trust, and love to others* appear time and again. By applying these ideas in both our personal and professional lives, we will undoubtedly become better as a friend, a family member, and a leader.

Have any other great leadership books you've learned from? Please feel free to share in the comment section.