

"Truly inspirational — this book takes you on a courageous journey of looking inside, so you can be the kind of leader you were meant to be."

—Don Miguel Ruiz, Author of *The Four Agreements*

# LEADING WITH GRIT

*Inspiring Action and Accountability with  
Generosity, Respect, Integrity, and Truth*

L A U R I E   S U D B R I N K

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# LEADING WITH **GRIT**

*Inspiring Action and Accountability with  
Generosity, Respect, Integrity, and Truth*

LAURIE SUDBRINK

WILEY

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## ● PREFACE

We all have our challenges in life. Some of those challenges we make for ourselves, while some are what we inherit. Looking back, I realize that in my early years I was too focused on what I didn't have and what I thought I should have had. As I became more aware of myself and my surroundings, I could see that it's not so much about what you have; it's more important what you do with it. Life is a little like poker—we don't pick the cards; we can only do our best with the hand we're dealt. And be grateful that we even get to play the game!

Throughout college and in my first few jobs, I noticed a negativity that many of us seemed to have about going to school and work. People, including myself, acted as if they were trapped and had no choice. It was crazy how miserable we made ourselves with our own thoughts and beliefs! I could remember that when I was very young, I was positive and happy, always looking for the best in other people. But somewhere along the way, I became cynical and sarcastic, because it seemed like that's what you had to do to connect with others, and survive emotionally. Pretty soon this became the norm and it felt familiar and comfortable.

It was a college professor who first opened my mind to the power of my thoughts and beliefs. I was taking evening classes as

I worked full time. Being a single mom, Dr. Thomas Mwanika in the Communications Department allowed me to bring my 7-year-old daughter to class with me from time to time. It was probably a combination of Dr. Mwanika's influence, the course material in general semantics, and my daughter's interest and grasp of the meaning of words and their influence that began my journey back to me. Ever since, I've been on a continuous path of self-awareness and conscious living. One of the many important lessons I continue to embrace is to be aware, without judgment, and do my best. The more I give up the need to be perfect, the better life gets.

Unlike most leadership books, this book begins by focusing on you as an individual. It is intended to accelerate your awareness, and is the foundation to great leadership. It provides a foundation that will help you take responsibility for your life, and enjoy your journey. It helps you answer questions about what is important to you and guides you through making better choices. After working with thousands of people from a variety of industries over the past 15 years, coupled with over a decade of experience as an employee, it became obvious to me that we need to start inside, with our own thoughts and beliefs. Only when we make a shift there will we authentically change our actions and behaviors. When we are happy and whole, we will then be able to intentionally lead others.

Leadership is not a position—it is a calling. Whether we're in a formal position in an organization, contributing our technical expertise, home raising children, or people just naturally turn to you for advice—each of us has an opportunity to make a difference. The question is, what difference do you want to make?

I knew writing this book would be a lot of work when I first outlined the chapters on a flight from New York to San Diego about 10 years ago. I was inspired and committed to sharing this message, and I'm forever grateful for the experience. As with any great challenge, I've learned so much more about myself and my work.

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I believe we are all messengers; it's not that we're creating it all from scratch—it's more about the way we share it with others. Generosity, respect, integrity, and truth are words we are all familiar with. In the unique combination of GRIT<sup>®</sup>, a path is paved for happiness, success, and leadership. I'm grateful and honored that you are reading my book, and I hope you will use it to inspire action and accountability for you and the people you influence.

Cheers!

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## ● INTRODUCTION

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Ask yourself what is really important, and then have the wisdom and courage to build your life around your answer.

—Lee Jampolsky

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We've all worked at places we dreaded going to every day: jobs where we didn't feel valued, trusted, or heard; places devoid of trust, effective communication, and true motivation. In workplaces like these, loyalty goes out the window, little work gets done, and everyone looks out for themselves. Meanwhile, as we suffer, so does the quality of the product or service we're providing. Ultimately, no one is happy. We feel taken advantage of, overwhelmed, and helpless to make changes, and our employer is frustrated by the lack of productivity of his employees. When experiencing these feelings, most of us will gossip rather than communicate openly, blame others rather than examine our own behavior, make assumptions rather than ask for clarification. These behaviors are at the root of a toxic workplace. We may get instant gratification from belittling our coworkers or supervisors, but such behavior doesn't solve the problem and may actually

create new ones. Workplaces like these are full of people who feel miserable, stuck, and unappreciated.

This particular form of unhappiness—workplace misery—generates big business. Movies have been made about it; hundreds of books offer counsel on it. Thousands, if not millions, of people have been told to picture their bosses while throwing punches in kickboxing class, and the initials T.G.I.F. have spawned a chain of restaurants. In all my years of working with organizations I can certainly attest to the presence of workplace misery.

Your workplace may not be a total disaster, but it could probably be improved. Perhaps it could benefit from a decrease in the complaining, or more willingness to share information, or maybe just a little less stress and a little more productivity. Whatever the level of misery, there is usually room for improvement. Sometimes a one- to two-degree shift in perspective can produce a big difference. And if we are mindful of some simple concepts, we can make that shift.

*Leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup>* provides a road map to improve individual and organizational health. In today's challenging times, we need tough characters to get the job done. While grit—having courage, resolution and fortitude—is something we strive for in our personal and professional lives, GRIT<sup>®</sup> provides the way.

The first step is becoming aware that effecting change is a choice. Then, with a desire to make a change, the next step is to learn the principles of GRIT<sup>®</sup>—generosity, respect, integrity, and truth. It is not only the concepts of GRIT<sup>®</sup>, but how they are combined, that make them so effective. Applying GRIT<sup>®</sup> creates personal accountability, inspires ourselves and others to do their best, enhances team performance, and develops authentic leadership. The outcome is a more fulfilling, satisfying, and, yes, profitable, experience for individuals and the organizations they work for. In a workplace with GRIT<sup>®</sup>, it's possible to enjoy work more, feel less stress, and be more creative, productive, trusting, and open. Managers will come to fully appreciate that a paycheck cannot

be their employees' sole motivation for their work. It's simple with GRIT<sup>®</sup> to appreciate others for doing things right and recognize them for it while simultaneously helping them be more accountable. And employees will better understand their responsibility in achieving a more enjoyable workplace. The payoff is employee retention, increased innovation and productivity, and a more positive and profitable workplace.

Understanding and adhering to the principles of GRIT<sup>®</sup> takes determination and perseverance. Not because the elements in GRIT<sup>®</sup> are difficult, but because we are creatures of habit. Most people are not consciously choosing their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. Therefore, GRIT<sup>®</sup> is for people who want to get results and are willing to do the work that it takes to change habits and get those results. With practice, written guidelines, and practical advice, leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup> can become a reality for anyone who wants to minimize workplace misery.

The intent of this book is to help people navigate through the tough times and free themselves from the chokehold of negativity. Using the methods that are shared within these pages, thousands have learned to embrace GRIT<sup>®</sup> worldwide. While it is meant to be a practical leadership guide for transforming the workplace, it can also serve as an individual's path to personal freedom.

*Leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup>* is organized into 12 chapters, with three parts. Part I is geared toward the individual, and is foundational to your success as a leader. It explains choice and each of the GRIT<sup>®</sup> elements—generosity, respect, integrity, and truth. The Five Steps of Change<sup>™</sup> is included to help guide you through the changes you choose to make. This first part is a crucial foundation for the kind of leadership we need today. Part II focuses on communicating with GRIT<sup>®</sup>—making communication easier, more enjoyable and more productive. It is relevant to any area of your life, and it is particularly important for your role as a leader. Part III is how, in our role as leaders, we apply and sustain GRIT<sup>®</sup> in the workplace, creating systems that help keep everyone on track. The stories and examples

are all real. Names of organizations and individuals have been changed in respect for my clients' privacy.

At the end of each chapter, a step-by-step guide is provided to help you reflect on what you've read, and what you'd like to focus your attention on so you can make a SHIFT:

**S**can the chapter. List the topics that resonated with you.

**H**one in on one or two areas that will make the biggest impact for you.

**I**mage the impact. Why is this important? How will you feel when you've accomplished this?

**F**igure out your plan and how you will stay on track.

**T**ake action. Start now. Schedule it now and include your follow-up.

*Enjoy! Remember to choose to be happy, every step of the way!*

Although everyone navigates books differently, for this book I suggest that you read it through first to fully understand the concepts and the uniqueness of how they are combined. While they are linear to some degree, the GRIT<sup>®</sup> concepts are also very intertwined. At the end of Chapter 1, there is an assessment to help provide a framework and a personal awareness of GRIT<sup>®</sup>. The personal work in Part I is crucial before moving on. Some people may prefer to read Part I all the way through, then come back to each chapter in Part I before moving to Parts II and III.

While doing the SHIFT exercises at the end of each chapter, go back to the individual concepts you found most challenging. Each GRIT<sup>®</sup> concept can be used as an awareness tool as well. If you find you're out of integrity, it's a great opportunity to look back at your truth. If you're not feeling generous or you're overdoing it, look back at respect, integrity, and/or truth. Keep the book handy as a reference and reminder. Proactively review concepts. And whenever you're feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or frustrated, turn to *Leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup>* for some help.

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*Leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup>* moves beyond the theoretical frameworks commonly taught in business school and emphasizes value-based principles and personal development in a pragmatic approach. *Leading with GRIT<sup>®</sup>* is for both employees and employers—whether you are an entrepreneur or manager, in a formal or informal leadership role, this book is meant to be your guide—to inspire you, to motivate you, and to lead you to make a difference for yourself and others. Enjoy your journey.

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## ● CHAPTER ONE

# FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

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Stop chasing happiness and start choosing happiness.

—Unknown

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Remember the last vacation you took and how you felt while you were getting ready to go? It was exciting! You were passionate and energized just by the thought of it. While you imagined the white sand beaches, the sun warming your skin, and the sound of the waves crashing, your workdays leading up to your departure went by faster, you worked harder, and you were happier.

Now let me ask if you ever felt this way about going to work. Most people answer no to this question. In fact, they look at me as if to say, “Are you nuts? Why would I feel this way about going to work?”

I remember feeling this negative about work myself, years ago when I worked for a manufacturing company in upstate New York. On a typical rainy, windy spring day, after dropping papers into a puddle and having my umbrella flip inside out, I trudged into the lobby, trying to sneak past our overly cheerful receptionist. But she caught me with her usual chipper greeting, “Good morning, Laurie! How are you this morning?” “I’m having

a bad day,” I muttered begrudgingly. In a dramatic gesture, she whipped her arm almost out of its socket to show her watch and exclaimed, “Wow, and it’s only 7 A.M.!” At this point, I wanted to leap across the counter and choke her. It hit me as I walked away that I was *choosing* to let this bother me. How I was acting and reacting was a choice. All of a sudden it was clear to me that I was making myself miserable. It was as if a fog had been wiped away from the mirror and I could see. I had a choice. I could choose to be positive or negative. Rather than letting my mind control me, I could focus my thoughts and attention where I wanted them to be. As the fog continued to clear, I began to realize the amount of freedom and self-control I was gaining!

### **The Choice is Yours**

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I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

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Many of our experiences are based on the choices we make, either consciously or subconsciously. Our life is a reflection of our own beliefs and choices, and often we don’t even realize that we are making choices. Sadly, it usually takes tragedies, near-death experiences, getting fired, or other forms of loss to wake us up. When these life events happen, reality hits us so hard that it makes us aware of life and the choices we have. But do we really need that kind of shock treatment to wake us up? Experiencing a tragedy is also no guarantee that we will wake up and recognize our options and choices. Just imagine if we could become aware and see the value of making positive changes in our lives without first enduring that tragedy. We could realize our plight and potentially prevent negative repercussions, all by making different choices.

We can't always control what happens in life, but we can control the way we react to it. We can blame others or bad luck, or we can ask ourselves what we can learn from our experiences. We can use the faith we have in ourselves and other people to help us through. We can choose to live life to the fullest and do our best with the hand we're dealt. We can find humor in the situation and lighten up a little. Just making a choice to be grateful, appreciative, and happy will return joy to our lives, at work and at home.

I was reminded of this recently when my friend Mike was telling me about his first week at his new job. He previously worked in a physical job, as a mechanic, but switched careers to road construction. Mike's plan was to move up the ladder and become supervisor, but he wanted to start where everyone else did, on the road, laying pavement. Mike admitted that after the first couple of days on the job, he was pretty sore and honestly thinking, "Wow, this is really hard stuff!" He noticed an older man, who looked to be in his 60s, plugging away like the Energizer Bunny in the battery commercials. Mike eventually worked his way over to strike up a conversation with the man because he was curious as to how this guy did it. He complimented him in that tough construction guy sort of way: "Hey man, you've got to be pushing 60 or so, how do you have so much energy? I mean, really, why are you still here, still working?" The man's reply was shocking. He said, "Actually, I'm 82, and I can't wait to come to work every day. I love it. It keeps me young and alive!"

As Mike and his new coworker talked more and more, Mike discovered that this guy had figured out what he wanted from life, and he had built his life around that. He was genuinely positive and did not dwell on all the negatives. He chose to be happy, and you could see the payoff in his health, his attitude, and his productivity.

Of course, we're not all naturally like this. And the construction worker may not have always been that way, either. In fact, in my experience, a lot of people at some point in their lives need

help with choosing a positive attitude. And being positive at work can sometimes be very challenging. A lot of people suffer through each day, counting down the minutes, waiting and wishing their weekdays away for the weekend, for vacation, for anything other than the time they are spending at work. Considering how much time you spend at work, you're spending a lot of time choosing to be negative.

What if we were able to think about it differently? What if we could make some different choices? Perhaps we could become as positive as the 82-year-old Energizer Bunny. Since my 7 A.M. wake-up call on that rainy day in upstate New York, I have been on a path to continuously improve my own awareness and growth and to focus on being more positive. It has definitely entailed making different choices.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Yet isn't that what we continually do? We repeat the same behavior and then complain when things aren't different. So if we took a different approach at work, shouldn't we be guaranteed to produce a different result?

I'm not suggesting a radical change. I'm talking about going back to some basics, tried-and-true principles that have been proven effective. Since change is inevitable, maybe we can play a role in how change unfolds, rather than just let it happen. It's like a farmer and his crops. He can plant seeds, leave them alone, and hope for the best, or he can weed, prune, and water his plants, and the farm will yield a robust crop.

There's no doubt we need a change, not only for our own health and happiness but also because today's organizations will have a difficult time surviving the current competitive marketplace, with its ever-changing technology and the pressure to do more with less. We need leaders who are intentional in developing the culture and the individuals therein. Being an intentional leader begins with knowing ourselves and staying true to ourselves. Then we can give authentically to others. Practicing GRIT<sup>®</sup>—generosity, respect, integrity, and truth—will

enable us to focus on the right issues, develop ourselves and our teams, and create more with less. We might not have much control over the direction of the marketplace, but we can make a big impact with the way we lead.

Once we become aware that we have a choice, we can begin to examine and change our beliefs, beginning with believing that we can make a positive impact. When we choose to cultivate the right mind-set with GRIT<sup>®</sup>, it is possible. Being able to visualize what it could be like and how it would feel propels us into action. However, without an open mind and a positive attitude, there will be no foundation to build upon.

Take a moment to visualize how it would feel if you couldn't wait to get to work. Think about it from the moment you wake up. What would your thoughts and feelings be? How would it affect what you did in the morning, how you interacted with your family, what you wore, how much time you gave yourself to get ready? Do you think you'd feel rushed and stressed, or relaxed and happy? And imagine that when you reach your workplace in the morning, you're greeted by coworkers who are genuinely happy to be there. They take the time to smile and say hello, and they really are interested when they say, "How are you today?" Everyone communicates openly and to the point, without holding back for fear of upsetting someone or rocking the boat. There are no triangulated conversations (full of he said, she said). And when people receive direct communication, they don't get defensive. They listen objectively, consider what is being said, and reply openly, immediately. They do not feel frustrated, angry, or defensive in any way. Everyone's goal is to understand each other, be as productive as possible, and have a good time. Even when they disagree, there is open communication: "I'm just not seeing it that way; can we talk about it a little more?" and the receiver of that message simply says, "Sure, when's a good time?" They continue to go about their business, without wasting time brooding over a misunderstanding. People are generally happy, productive, and completely engaged.

Sound impossible? Consider this: Would you agree that your thoughts about going on vacation are what get you energized and motivated, not necessarily the event itself? You haven't actually felt the warm sun on your skin or heard the sound of waves crashing on the beach, but just thinking about being there puts you in a good mood.

On the other hand, have you ever been excited about attending a New Year's Eve event, only to be disappointed when it didn't live up to your expectations? You had high hopes for the evening, only to be disappointed when it wasn't as fabulous as you imagined.

Think about how much your thoughts control your emotions and feelings. If our thoughts create the mood we're in, could we not change our thoughts about work? Some of you might be thinking, "Work is not at all like a vacation or a fun event, so how could I have positive thoughts about work? Won't I be setting myself up for disappointment, like the New Year's Eve example?" The reality is that just like anticipating New Year's Eve, we're not able to control what actually happens. But we can choose our attitude, how we react, and where to focus our attention.

Consider the aspects you do like about work. Maybe there are only one or two things. Perhaps what you do is having a positive impact on children, or maybe you enjoy helping certain teammates or customers. It could be as simple as appreciating that your upcoming vacation is made possible by this job, or it could be the overall flexibility you enjoy. What is your bigger purpose related to your job? You may not be in your dream job or have found your passion yet, but focusing on the positive aspects will help you get clear on your intentions for being in this position. Whether you love what you do or you're doing it to be able to do what you love, either way, you can choose to put your whole self into it. When you're clear on why you're in this job, you can accept that you chose this job, for whatever reason or motivation, and you can choose to be positive and enjoy it while you're here.

Now you may be thinking, “Okay, I’ve found my motivation and I’m being positive, but I can’t control all the other negativity around me.” Be honest with yourself and consider what, if anything, you might be doing to create, support, or enable the workplace negativity. Do you believe you have any role in it at all? Or is it someone else’s fault, like your boss, the team you’re on, the owner, or even the board?

This isn’t to say that it’s always you who needs to change. But if you are doing everything you can to be positive and productive, then it’s much clearer when it really is the environment that’s negative, not you. Sure, it can be frustrating when you’re in a negative environment—you can maintain your positive attitude for only so long. But you’ll be able to quickly discern this and make a change for yourself, rather than suffering through it, feeling helpless.

Following a formula for creating your own happiness at work simultaneously creates a healthier company. It’s a win-win for both employee and employer. The company can then make a bigger difference in its community, in its country, and, hey, maybe even a little difference in the world. The method is tried-and-true and was used by countless companies worldwide even before it got its name.

When combined and applied, the four elements of GRIT<sup>®</sup> (see Figure 1.1) free us to create a healthier, happier, and more productive experience for ourselves and for our workplace.

GRIT<sup>®</sup> is a mind-set that ensures you’re doing your best. Through GRIT<sup>®</sup>, we learn how to take a look at ourselves on a deeper level. We see that how we’re treating ourselves, what we’re doing and saying to ourselves, directly influences the way we are treating other people. GRIT<sup>®</sup> exercises our mental equipment to ensure that it’s in the best possible shape to properly overcome any challenge.

It’s similar to making sure your car is in tip-top shape so you’ll have the best adventure you can have. Your gas tank is full,



**Figure 1.1.** The Four Elements of GRIT®

your oil has been changed, and your tires are the right pressure. You're in alignment—you're fine-tuned and ready for anything! It's widely accepted that we need to spend time improving our physical being and even, to some degree, our intellect—but what about our mental and emotional being? If we leave just one element out, like not changing the oil, the car will eventually break down.

Many studies have linked illness to our mental state. In 2003, Gallup linked misery at work with unhappiness at home. In March 2010, *Science Daily* (2010) reported that chronic job stress and lack of physical activity are strongly associated with being overweight or obese. Elizabeth Heubeck of WebMD (2007) wrote that a toxic work atmosphere can lead to deteriorating health. Results from a GAZEL study (2012) indicate that “poor psychosocial working conditions are prospectively linked to reduced health functioning, in particular mental health functioning.” Showing a link to stress and our health is not saying that it's the only cause of any illness; if someone has cancer, it

doesn't mean it was definitely caused by stress. But it has been proven that stress can be at least a factor in causing or worsening illnesses. I've witnessed this firsthand in numerous clients over the years, and I'm sure most of you have had some experience with stress and illness.

Not only does our mental and emotional state impact our health but also it affects the way we participate in any relationship, professional or personal. It's difficult to successfully function in any relationship without knowing ourselves and having integrity by making the right choices to support what we want and need. Only then can we authentically give to any relationship.

With all the data and information we have, the question arises, why wouldn't people take care of their thoughts and better manage their thoughts? Perhaps it's too intangible to measure. Or they don't believe it's possible. Or they aren't yet aware that they can control their own stress. Or they don't have a way to do it.

It all starts with your relationship with yourself. GRIT<sup>®</sup> is the tool to fine-tune your mental equipment. So what do you think? Are you ready to explore GRIT<sup>®</sup>?

Before moving into the next four chapters on GRIT<sup>®</sup>, I recommend taking some time to reflect on the brief GRIT<sup>®</sup> assessment provided on the following pages (see Figure 1.2). We'll get more in-depth on the key areas in the coming chapters. This assessment is designed as a framework for understanding the GRIT<sup>®</sup> concepts and as a self-awareness tool.

Although there is scoring, it is meant for your personal development. Be as objective and honest as possible with yourself while answering. It's not a test. The GRIT<sup>®</sup> assessment will help you become more aware of yourself and where you are coming from. This will give you a starting point as we work through the book.

You can approach the interpretation of the assessment in two ways. After you've circled the number that best suits you for each phrase, you can just reflect on the statements and have a basic

TRUTH		
I control my thoughts.	5 4 3 2 1	My thoughts control me.
I know my natural strengths and challenges and I accept myself.	5 4 3 2 1	I'd rather not know what my strengths and challenges are.
I trust my intuition; I use it in decision making.	5 4 3 2 1	I would never rely on intuition; you have to have all the details and facts to decide.
I take time to be still and reflect; I consider myself very aware.	5 4 3 2 1	I don't have time to sit still; my mind is always busy.
I believe I'm supposed to be happy; it is my choice. I focus on the positive.	5 4 3 2 1	I don't believe happiness is a choice; some people are luckier than others.
I am clear on what's important to me to feel successful and authentic.	5 4 3 2 1	I don't really know what I want.
I know my values and priorities in life.	5 4 3 2 1	I justify "other" values when it's convenient; I'm not really sure what I believe in.
My past doesn't predict my future; I am who I choose to be.	5 4 3 2 1	There's not much I can do to change; I am who I am.
Truth Total:		

INTEGRITY		
I do what I say I'm going to do.	5 4 3 2 1	I often change appointments and have to cancel things.
I can confidently say no, without guilt.	5 4 3 2 1	I say yes to please others, even at my own expense; I don't feel like I can say no.
I am aware that my actions influence others.	5 4 3 2 1	My actions and words shouldn't affect others; people are responsible for themselves.
I take on what I can handle; I know my limits.	5 4 3 2 1	I take on more than I should but if I don't I won't advance in my career.
I don't hide truths from myself or people who are important to me.	5 4 3 2 1	I stretch the truth to impress, or I hide truths from people.
I have lots of energy and feel purposeful at work, and afterwards.	5 4 3 2 1	I feel stretched and overwhelmed at work; I dread Mondays.
I don't hold back saying what is important to say.	5 4 3 2 1	I refrain from saying a lot of things I probably should say; or I say way too much.
I keep focused on what's important and align my activities appropriately.	5 4 3 2 1	I'm so busy I feel like I can just barely handle what's coming at me.
Integrity Total:		

RESPECT		
I value my time and others' time equally.	5 4 3 2 1	It's hard enough to get my own stuff done; I can't think of other people's time.
I realize everyone has their own truth, and I don't know their whole story.	5 4 3 2 1	It's obvious what other people are thinking and feeling.
I adapt to effectively communicate with others.	5 4 3 2 1	I communicate consistently in my own style; people can take it or leave it.
I feel confident 'sitting at the table' with other successful people.	5 4 3 2 1	I feel 'not as good as' or 'better than' others.
I allow other people to have their own experiences; I respect their choices and opinions.	5 4 3 2 1	I jump in to help other people make decisions, and give my opinion and advice.
I can understand and empathize with different perceptions.	5 4 3 2 1	Most things are black and white; true or false.
I delegate all appropriate tasks and I feel good about it.	5 4 3 2 1	I can't delegate tasks because there's no one available or qualified.
I realize the things people do are not 'all about me.'	5 4 3 2 1	I feel people rarely consider me and my feelings.
Respect Total:		

GENEROSITY						
I have enough time to do the most important things.	5	4	3	2	1	I don't have enough time to get things done.
I feel good about where I am in my career; my relationship(s), my life.	5	4	3	2	1	I wish I were somewhere else, someone else, doing something else.
I am willing to set my tasks aside to help others, but not at the expense of myself.	5	4	3	2	1	I frequently jump in and help others and then resent it because I didn't get my own work done.
I am happy for others' success – there's enough to go around for everyone.	5	4	3	2	1	I feel jealous of others' success. I fear if they are successful then I can't be.
I feel good about being happy.	5	4	3	2	1	I feel guilty about being happy.
I look forward to going home at night and I have the energy for personal priorities.	5	4	3	2	1	I have no energy left at the end of the day for my personal interests or priorities.
I feel grateful for what I have; I'm content and satisfied.	5	4	3	2	1	I constantly want more; I often wish I had what I don't have.
I mindfully stay present and listen fully.	5	4	3	2	1	I check out while listening because I have a lot going on in my own world.
Generosity Total:						
Grand Total:						

**Figure 1.2.** GRIT<sup>®</sup> Self Assessment

awareness of your score. Or you can tally up your total score and read the suggestions for each total. Either way, you can use the assessment throughout your progress and keep rechecking yourself to hone in on areas you wish to improve. As you take the assessment, and as you venture through each chapter, remember to enjoy your journey.

### GRIT<sup>®</sup> Self-Awareness Assessment

- In selecting the number that is closest to your true statement, on the left or on the right, remember to be objective and honest with yourself. This is for your eyes only. It is not a test.
- When you find yourself saying, “It depends,” do your best to select the appropriate number for your most likely scenarios.

Because the purpose of this assessment is to provide a framework for GRIT<sup>®</sup> and for your own self-awareness, it's up to you how you'd like to interpret it. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Simply scan your answers and be mindful of them as you read through the upcoming chapters.

- If you prefer to obtain a score, add each section and then add all four sections.

Each section pertains to a GRIT<sup>®</sup> concept, and you'll be able to see your highest and lowest scores. The lowest score per section is 8, and the highest is 40.

The lowest total assessment score is 32, and the highest total score is 160. Remember, this isn't a test: if you get the lowest score that doesn't mean you failed. Recognizing and accepting where you are, without judgment, is the first step toward self-improvement.

### **Total Score Suggestions**

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- 32–70 As you probably realized while taking the assessment, your GRIT<sup>®</sup> may be a bit out of alignment, and that's okay. In fact, it's great because you now have the tool you need to increase your GRIT<sup>®</sup>—this book! Congratulations for taking the first step. As you are reading through the upcoming chapters, continue to practice being aware without judging yourself. As you notice an emotion or a resistance, just notice it. Accept it. Practice being as open as possible, while also questioning things. If you find that difficult, reread Chapter 1 and skip to Chapter 6. Then go back to Chapters 2 through 5.
- 71–121 You may have noticed that some areas were higher for you and some were lower. Since you're right in the middle of the road, pick a few areas that you feel would benefit you the most, and begin by focusing on those areas. As you read through the upcoming chapters, continue to be aware of those areas, and notice if there's any resistance. Continue to question while balancing that healthy skepticism
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with being open to consider other ways. As you increase your GRIT<sup>®</sup> in the focus areas that you initially chose, you can retake the assessment to see your improvement and then refocus on other areas to continue your development.

- 122–160 If you scored in this category, then you're most likely already living with GRIT<sup>®</sup>, and most likely leading that way, too. Because you scored here, you probably agree that there's always room for improvement. As you reflect over your assessment, be aware of any areas in which you scored lower than a 3, and as you read the upcoming chapters, continue to reflect on these areas, especially as you consider your leadership role.
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No matter what your score, the goal here is to provide a framework and an awareness that leads to development of your leadership skills. Don't be too hard on yourself. Enjoy the journey and have fun as you work your way through this book.

Each of Chapters 2 through 12 contains a reflection called SHIFT at the end. As you are completing this reflection exercise, take a moment to come back to this assessment. Feel free to adjust any of your selections if you feel differently. Reviewing the assessment may help you hone in on an area of focus for you.

And remember, make it a conscious choice to enjoy your journey!

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# PART I

## GRIT<sup>®</sup>—THE FOUNDATION

GRIT<sup>®</sup> is the foundation we need to lead effectively. Part I focuses on our individual development of GRIT<sup>®</sup>.

Part II will focus on communicating with GRIT<sup>®</sup>—making communication easier, more enjoyable, and more productive. Part III will hone in on implementing GRIT<sup>®</sup> as a leader in the workplace.

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## ● CHAPTER TWO

# TRUTH—THE CORE

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Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are.

—Kurt Cobain

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I never realized how lost I was—how many masks I wore, just trying to please others around me. Did this come from being a middle child in a large family? Was it the guilt trips put on me as a child that made me too worried about what others thought about me? Or was it just something I was born with? I'm not entirely sure, but what I do know is that it negatively affected my life—at work and personally. At times, I would take on so much, and then feel like a victim for being taken advantage of. It seemed to me that the situation was totally out of my control, and I felt no responsibility for getting myself there. The more work I would agree to do, the more positive attention I seemed to be getting. Even my family and friends were feeling sorry for me for “the way corporate treated me.” Little did I know it was depleting me

and I was on the verge of burnout. Yes, somewhere I had taken a turn and was becoming disengaged. I didn't want to come to work. When I was there, I couldn't really concentrate—I may have been at 50 percent capacity at times. This went on for years . . . until I discovered my truth.

**W**e've all heard the expression the truth will set you free. It dates back to biblical times when Jesus said, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32 ESV). Only once you discover your truth—what's important for you—will you be free to live the life you want. You'll be able to make choices that are based on your truth, giving you the freedom to be truly happy.

Discovering your truth is significant because everything stems from it, affecting us both personally and professionally—especially in the way we lead others. Taking time to self-reflect and getting to know our core self produces gratifying results, at work and elsewhere.

Truth is a very deep topic, and the word itself has many different connotations. For the purposes of GRIT<sup>®</sup>, we are defining personal truth, and this includes a few components. It begins with a more global belief in your own potential and your purpose here to be happy. It is what is important to you—your purpose, your intent, your *why*. It is who you are and what you believe in. Truth is comprised of your passions and priorities, your strengths and your challenges, and knowing your goals and where you want to be. It is also about your reality in this moment in time, your tendencies, your preferences, and your thoughts and beliefs. It is who you are right now, and it is who you are meant to be.

## **Out of Touch**

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Open your eyes, look within. Are you satisfied with the life you're living?

—Bob Marley

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The notion of truth, above all, connotes honesty. Are you honest with yourself? Do you really know who you are and what you believe in? Or are you wearing masks just to please others? Can you look objectively at your situation, while still having confidence in yourself? Or are you playing victim, so others feel sorry for you? It's about being who you really are, fearlessly, rather than worrying what others think about you. When you're aligned with your truth, you don't change who you are to meet someone else's expectations; you change only to align better with your personal truth. (We'll cover aligning to your truth more in the next chapter on integrity.)

Brené Brown, in *The Gifts of Imperfection*, says, “Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are” (Brown, 2010). In the GRIT® model, authenticity combines both truth and integrity. Authenticity is aligning to your truth. But first we must start at truth so we have something to align to. This is where we begin to examine our beliefs and what is truly important to us. Throughout our lives, other people have influenced us. Along our path, many of us have lost ourselves; we’re out of touch with who we truly are and what makes us genuinely happy. We’ve altered our behavior or made choices to please our parents, teachers, partners, or friends.

Most of us are not in the practice of taking the time to get to know ourselves. As Mark Twain said, “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” We’re always in a hurry, trying to get everything accomplished, doing and being it all. We don’t ever stop to ask ourselves if what we’re doing is making us happy! When is the last time you reflected on what it is you really want out of life? We rarely pause and step back to decide if this is how we want to spend our time and energy. No wonder we feel empty, overwhelmed, unsatisfied with our accomplishments, and aimlessly seeking more out of life. And when we don’t know our own truth and direction, it’s pretty hard to successfully lead others. Try driving somewhere with no destination in mind. It would be hard to begin, let alone to keep going, without knowing your destination! How do we expect people to follow us?

Knowing our destination or where we want to be and what drives us—our intent—gives us direction and inspiration. Our intent is our meaning, our significance. Intent can be viewed as our overall life purpose or life force; in some contexts, then, intent is synonymous with truth. It is the truth we create. Intent can also be looked at as what is driving you in this single moment, why you are acting the way you are. Is it helpful or harmful? In both views, intent is related and connected.

When we are clear on our purpose or our meaning in life, our intent is positive and productive. When we are not clear—or perhaps we just aren't being mindful—our intent can be coming from a place of confusion or fear and can be harmful rather than helpful. For example, if I get frustrated and lash out, my intent may be to get even or punish. If I know and keep my truth in mind—for example, to help people become aware and make choices for themselves—then my intent will align to that and I won't lash out when I'm frustrated. I can use my frustration as an awareness for myself to align with my truth. My intent drives my actions and also helps me with awareness.

As leaders, when our intent is positive and helpful, the result is a productive, innovative, and enjoyable workforce. Our actions are a direct result of our intent; therefore, our intent is influencing what we are creating. If everything around you constantly seems negative, hold up a mirror and take a good hard look at yourself and your intent. What do you see? Are you operating out of fear? Is greed driving everything you do? Is there a feeling of scarcity or insecurity? Do you lack general trust of others? If so, what do you think this might be creating?

Intentional leaders have a positive and helpful intent. They are focused on helping develop and grow people. For example, when something becomes frustrating to an intentional leader, she remembers her purpose and her intent is to help, not hurt. Intentional leaders mindfully focus on the right issues and how to help the situation.

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## Where Does Our Truth Come From?

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Can you remember who you were, before the world told you who you should be?

—Danielle LaPorte

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When we are young, we are constantly told what we should and shouldn't believe by our parents, teachers, and other role models. At such a young age, most of us don't question what we're being told. We simply adopt these beliefs as our own. Until we become aware and start questioning those beliefs, most of us are not aware of what our truth is. We're just repeating what we've heard. Likewise, we're not consciously making choices; we're simply reacting to what happens to us. When something negative happens, we tend to look outside ourselves to blame it on something or someone else. We end up feeling trapped, frustrated, stressed, sad, helpless, angry, and/or apathetic.

Messages that we receive growing up stick with us, like a tape recorder. We've heard things like "It's hard work to make a good living" to "All people who are rich are greedy." Are those statements really true? Are they useful or helpful in any way? Until we erase those tapes, we'll keep living those lies. Yes, lies. I know that's a strong statement, but thinking about it as lies may encourage us to erase them more quickly.

We take whatever we hear, and we continue to repeat that to ourselves. We even create our own lies. It can actually be comical when you really start to listen to the voices in your head. Why would we say those things to ourselves? When you examine the statements, they're simply not true.

You can see how it happens. You hear something growing up, you attach to it subconsciously, and you repeat it, storing it on your tape recorder—usually without even thinking about it. We've all witnessed this in children who mirror mom and dad in

words, behaviors, and even emotions, as young as two years old. These thoughts and beliefs can become deeply rooted emotionally, planted in our subconscious for later misuse.

Years ago, I volunteered to help teach entrepreneurial skills for an inner-city youth program. What a learning experience it was for me! It took a while for the students to warm up to me, but once they did—talk about being authentic! They openly shared their passions and their talents. I had so much fun learning about each one of them.

One day we were talking about turning some of those passions into goals and how that could create a better life. I had always assumed that a person would want to do better, and that given a chance, people would take it. Of course, I realized there would be some lack of confidence and maybe a little disbelief to deal with. I never imagined what I learned that day. My students told me that they believed that if they left and created a better life, it would be like dissing their families: “It’s like we don’t love them.” They watched other family members leave in the past, either never to return or at odds if they did. The word was that those family members didn’t respect what had been done for them. They were talked about as if they were selfish and thought they were better than everyone else. It had alienated them. To stay connected, to feel loved, these kids felt they couldn’t leave. They felt very torn between staying where they were, and following their passion and making a better future for themselves.

Over the next few weeks, we spent hours questioning our thoughts and beliefs and talking about awareness, love, and choices. We agreed perhaps they could do it differently than others had in the past, and perhaps there was a way to be true to themselves and stay connected with the families they loved. Whatever these kids ended up choosing in life, at least now they would do it with awareness and positive intent. They will feel more empowered; they won’t have to be victims.

We need to question our lies and beliefs and identify where they came from. Ask yourself, is it real for me still? Does it

continue to serve me in a positive way, or was it a belief that served its purpose and needs to be renewed? Is there something emotional attaching me to that belief? We need to keep challenging our thoughts and beliefs to discover and remain true to ourselves.

## Becoming Aware

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What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Many of us find ourselves complaining about the job we have, the team we're stuck with, the lack of resources, the jerk of a boss, the idiots who know nothing in this company, and even our spouse. Really? That's how we want to spend this one life, complaining and feeling stuck? Think about it. Who chose to be in each one of those relationships? And who's choosing to stay? The choice is ultimately our own responsibility. It can seem like we just stumbled here, and sure, maybe a lot of our choices weren't made with awareness. It's true, we can't control the family we're born into or the neighborhood we're raised in. But at some point, we have to take ownership of our lives. As adults, it was our choice somewhere along the path that has gotten us here, and how we react to it is also our own choice. Awareness is the first step toward discovering our truth.

Sometimes we become aware just by luck, or so it seems. Something happens, and you get an aha moment. Other times, perhaps someone does or says something that inspires you to take a good objective look at yourself. Maybe it's not a pleasant experience, but it may bring awareness. I suppose this is what happened with my 7 A.M. wake-up call!

At times, there may be something that's blocking you from getting to your truth, and you may not even realize it. In other

words, you don't know what you don't know. You just know you're not happy, or not fulfilled, or something is just not feeling right. You can use your emotions to help you become aware.

If we pay attention to how we are feeling, we can learn a lot about ourselves. I remember being stuck in a construction zone one day as I was racing to the post office to mail an important document, about 10 minutes before it closed. I felt myself becoming very impatient and irritated as I watched while no one was allowed to cross into the post office. They were painting the lines on the road. As I watched the seconds tick by, I could feel my anxiety growing. Because I had been practicing paying attention to my emotions, I quickly noticed this, took a deep breath, and realized the workers weren't deliberately keeping me from crossing the street. I smiled at the man holding the flag and asked if there was any way to get me into the post office in the next 5 minutes before it closed. I'm pretty sure that had I been irritated and short with him, he would not have so eagerly looked for a solution for me and helped me meet my deadline that day.

Recognizing that I had the power to choose a different response changed my perspective and allowed a successful resolution to my dilemma, while staying true to myself. It's about not allowing a situation to change us, and we end up doing something we regret. With mindful awareness, I also learned more about my overall self. Waiting until the last minute seemed to be a pattern of behavior with me. Our emotions are a great awareness tool.

The problem is that most of us have been taught to stuff down our emotions. They can be uncomfortable, so we avoid them or resist them. I'm not saying we should all feel free to express whatever we are feeling whenever we want. That might not be very respectful to others around us, especially in the workplace. But if we can just pay attention to an emotion as we feel it, that's a start. Think of your emotions as a tool to help you be aware. The next time you feel frustrated, stop and ask yourself, "What's going on with me right now? Why am I finding this situation so stressful?" What we tend to do is point away from ourselves and blame it

on something external. It's not to say that stuff doesn't happen, but we know it's more about how we react to it. If we can turn the incident into an opportunity to examine why we're reacting, we may discover more about ourselves.

Some of us would rather avoid our truth. It can be uncomfortable to start poking around in there. Who knows what we might stumble upon and then have to deal with! You may be hesitant to open that can of worms. But if we don't take the time to self-reflect, then we're leaving our lives, happiness, and future up to sheer luck. Think about it: This is your one shot at this life! Each one of us has a lot more control over our lives than we typically give ourselves credit for. With some time spent on getting to know our truth and choosing what we want in order to align with our truth, we can create the experiences we want, therefore living the life we're intended to live.

### **Prevent Ego from Interfering**

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He who is in the thickest fog blows his own horn.

—Anonymous

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There may be people who are just not willing to self-reflect and look objectively at themselves—that's the reality of it. We need to respect where they are and their choices. If we are feeling too responsible for someone else's happiness, we need to hold up the mirror, ask ourselves why, and keep asking until we really discover our reason, our truth. Could it be our ego? Perhaps we're not respecting their journey and allowing them the opportunity for awareness?

Our egos are just the social mask we wear. Our egos seek approval. It's not really our true self, the core of who we are. Our ego is driven by fear. It wants power and control. Our true self is the perfect balance of confidence and humility, not controlled by fear.

Our egos have an interesting impact on our perception of our truth, causing us sometimes to feel too self-assured and sometimes not assured enough. This can certainly get in the way of recognizing our truth. On the one hand, when you're too self-assured, you might think you already know something, you attach to that, and it's very difficult to remain open to other possibilities. On the other hand, when you're not assured enough, you might keep second-guessing yourself. If we acknowledge our ego is there and admit what it might be doing, we can prevent it from getting in the way of our truth.

### **There Are Many Paths to Find Your Truth**

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Over every mountain there is a path, although it may not be seen from the valley.

—Theodore Roethke

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With mindful awareness, we may be able to discover our truth on our own. We can schedule time to reflect, be still, and pay attention to our feelings, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Practicing silence helps us find our true selves. All the noise, the voices, the television, the opinions, the books, the music—they drown out who we really are, and we lose touch. Not that you should stop these things completely, although minimizing some would no doubt benefit you, but schedule some quiet time to just be.

We can practice being present in the moment to quiet our minds. Our minds are typically in one of two places: in the future or in the past. We're either worrying about what we need to do or regretting what we've done. It's all right to take a quick trip to the future and consider your goals and aspirations, or to take a quick trip to the past to learn from it, but it becomes a problem when we stay in either place too long. Then our minds are too busy to

find our truth. We forget about the present moment. We neglect to enjoy ourselves in the here and now.

There are things we can do to practice present moment awareness. For example, while brushing your teeth, think only of brushing your teeth. How the bristles feel on each tooth, spending the same amount of time on each tooth, paying attention to the direction you brush—you get the picture. It's actually pretty difficult to do because it's an activity that doesn't take thought, so we tend to let our minds run wild. When you catch yourself thinking of something else, bring your mind back to your teeth. This is not to say you shouldn't brush your teeth while thinking of other things—it's just a great example of how you can practice being present in the moment.

Not judging things can also quiet your mind and help you find your truth. We spend so much time with our opinions, such as this is good or bad, right or wrong, healthy or not, pretty or ugly. We're in such a habit of doing this we don't even realize it. Just try an hour or two of not judging anything. As you practice, it gets easier. You're training your mind to be quiet, so the real you can be heard. All the judgments we make keep our minds so busy and feed our ego, so we don't really know the real truth. Think of being still, like a calm lake. When you toss a pebble in (your intention), you can see it ripple and spread. But if we're not still, if we're like a roaring turbulent water, even if you toss in a boulder, you won't see the ripple. So even if you're screaming for something you want, it won't happen.

Yoga is a great way to practice being present in the moment. As we practice being still and focused, it helps us clear our minds and can help us get to our truths. After yoga, I feel a lot less stressed. I'm more focused, creative, and productive. I feel like I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be. Others may prefer activities like fishing, golfing, skiing, or sewing, for example. The key is how you feel during and after the activity. If you are frustrated, annoyed, overwhelmed, or feeling any other negative emotion, it may not be helping you and therefore is not a mind-quieting

activity. If it's not, but you really want to continue the activity, you can learn to quiet your mind during this time; it's kind of like the chicken before the egg syndrome. Some activities naturally help us be present; others we need to practice being present while in the activity.

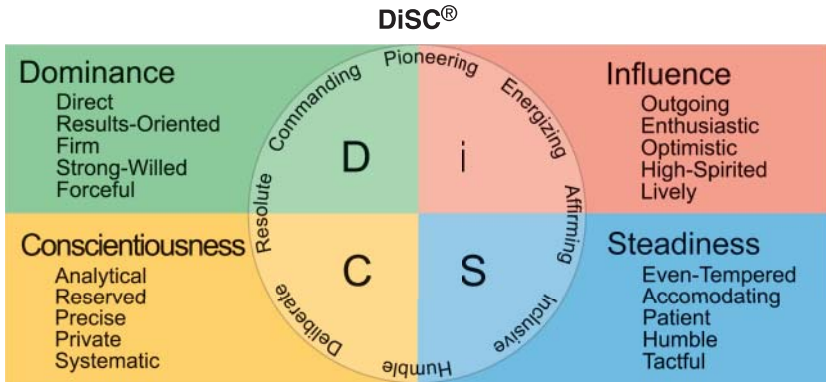
There are many inspirational authors who can help us to discover our truth through their books, such as Eckhardt Tolle, Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra, Don Miguel Ruiz, Brené Brown, Byron Katie, and Dan Millman.

Another way to help you discover your purpose is attending personal retreats. One of my favorite retreats has been with Don Miguel Ruiz, who wrote *The Four Agreements* (Ruiz, 1997). During the retreat, many guided activities helped us be present in the moment, to not judge, to accept ourselves, and ultimately helped us be more aware of our truths.

Personality type assessment tools are helpful to discover our preferences and tendencies and, when used appropriately, can be very beneficial in a workplace. I've used Wiley's DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment for many years in almost every training program. It's an efficient and effective way for team members to understand and appreciate each other. In essence, we begin with an awareness of our truth—behavioral strengths and limitations. Through sharing our individual truths with our team, we then take it to a level of working effectively together, based on those truths.

DiSC<sup>®</sup> is grounded in William Marston's 1930s model, with Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness representing the four behavioral styles. Basically, it is about a person's preferences or tendencies, and it's very useful for us to understand our own and then be able to adapt to effectively interact and communicate with others. The best way to experience DiSC<sup>®</sup> is to take the assessment yourself (contact us at [info@unlimitedcoaching.com](mailto:info@unlimitedcoaching.com)).

Figure 2.1 shows the styles and some of the general characteristics of each.



**Figure 2.1.** The Four Styles of DiSC®

And sometimes, it just takes time, friends, and even professional help to be objective so that you can find your truth.

## Look Objectively

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Freedom is knowing who you really are.

—Linda Thomson

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Awareness of our own truth is powerful. It's the beginning of freedom, happiness, and success! However, when you discover a truth about yourself, you may need to proceed with caution. Many people have a tendency to be negative when recognizing a truth about themselves. Once uncovered, they beat themselves up, either for actually being that way or for not recognizing it sooner! For example, I shared in Chapter 1 how I became aware of my negative attitude, with the help of our overly cheerful receptionist. When I think back, I probably spent a bit of time beating myself up over acting that way. It's what we do—we discover something we think should be different about ourselves, and we

agonize over it. That actually keeps us there longer. It's better to just move on, rather than hang there and fixate on it.

That's exactly what Dan was doing when I began coaching him. In his leadership role, Dan was expected to be open and receptive to his team. His 360 feedback report indicated that his team, as well as his boss, perceived he was not. Dan spent a lot of time making excuses for it, and then he was upset that it took the 360 assessment for him to be aware of it! We laughed about that later. Once Dan understood the value of being objective, he moved on and we began our work.

Look at your situation objectively. Accept where you are. When we accept our situation rather than resist it, we can be open rather than closed. Resistance causes us to put even more focus on what we don't want, and it persists. Acceptance helps us to be able to move on. The cool thing is that, with awareness and acceptance, you now have the power to change something—if you want to. Be grateful for the experience. This awareness is helping you become who you long to be.

### **It's Your Choice**

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Be happy, or be stupid.

—Don Miguel Ruiz

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Once you're aware, you have choice. It's that simple. Just imagine being miserable every single day at work. Is this how you want to be spending your time? Being miserable, at all, anywhere? Is it really working? Is that really your truth? I highly doubt it. Some people don't believe it's possible to be happy; they are addicted to suffering. After all, a lot of us believe you have to suffer to make money. Isn't that a belief in being miserable? Maybe somewhere deep down, for some reason, we don't think we deserve to be happy. Perhaps being miserable and

suffering gets attention, and that attention fills a need. So while “Be happy, or be stupid” is simple in concept, it may take practice in awareness to help us make this choice.

Drama can be addictive, and most people who are drama addicts don’t even realize it. Until they become aware and figure out why (aha, the truth!), they will not know that they can choose happiness. It’s difficult for them to see the benefit because they can’t even see that they are stuck. Maybe their path is just different, and maybe they have more to experience before they can make a shift. And some people may never shift, in which case we need to respect where they are. After all, we can’t fully know a person’s path or their truth. (We’ll expand more in Chapter 4 on respect.)

When you know your truth, you have clarity, and you’re more confident. You make decisions that align with what’s important to you. It’s much easier to know if a particular situation is right, if a person is right, or if a job is the best fit when you are clear on your truth and have the courage to stay true to yourself. As Shakespeare said, “To thine own self be true.” You trust yourself and your judgment. You don’t constantly second-guess your situation, your relationship, your sanity! You’re not continually doubting yourself or making choices to please others. Knowing your truth makes it easier to choose whether to stay in a relationship or leave, be it a bad marriage or a dysfunctional work environment.

Sometimes we have competing priorities. Decision making then becomes a question of what is most important to you. Consider the adolescents who participated in the inner-city youth entrepreneurial program and the competing priorities they had: They felt torn between their family’s love and acceptance and the possibility of a future with more security and less tragedy. Without awareness and questioning, we may never be able to see the competing priorities and gain clarity. We might end up just reacting and feeling stuck like a victim.

Take the time to rank-order your priorities. This will help you consider your choices and more efficiently and effectively make

decisions. Rather than think *either-or*, this allows you to consider *how* you can get the results you want. When we know what's most important to us, in what order, we can use that knowledge to guide our decisions.

When we discover our truth and align our decisions with our truth, we learn to trust in ourselves again. We trust our intuition more. We go with our gut instead of overanalyzing and overthinking everything. It's not that we don't use our logic. We balance the two. Our logic and intuition can work in harmony together. Even Albert Einstein said, "I believe in intuitions and inspirations . . . . I sometimes FEEL that I am right. I do not KNOW that I am."

Most definitions of intuition include a component of both self-awareness and direct knowledge. The key is awareness—knowing yourself and trusting that instinctual feeling. In a study by W. H. Agor, *The Logic of Intuition*, it was found that many executives have admitted to relying on intuition when making some of their most successful decisions. When we can rely on our intuition, decision making is more efficient and reliable.

## **Change Your Story**

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Remember, no matter where you go, there you are.

—Confucius

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As we all know, reputations are easily created and much harder to change. Reputations are not your truth; they are perceptions that other people have about you. People latch onto an image, and it sticks. It is said that it takes only seven seconds to make a first impression. We then look for things to support this image. To change our reputation, it starts with changing our own story. Then, of course, we have to align our actions, but it

will be much more effective if we are confident in our beliefs about ourselves first.

Perhaps as you begin your search for your truth, you uncover some thoughts or beliefs you're not happy about. Maybe those thoughts or beliefs have led to actions or behaviors that you don't want to continue doing anymore. Happiness is the best gauge. Yes, I know, it sounds like such a cliché. But happiness really is what it's about. It either works for you or it doesn't. Do you like the consequences you're getting, or not? It boils down to how you feel. That is how you'll know if you are aligning to your truth or if you want to make a change.

For example, perhaps you've been blunt, insensitive, or even verbally abusive in your role as a leader. In other words, you have a reputation as a jerk. In a sense, you believe it does take being a jerk to get things done, and so you see yourself as that jerk. Maybe you wouldn't use the same word, but you can admit it's the same thing and that your actions are responsible for this reputation. You also realize that it is your thoughts and beliefs that have prompted your actions. If you can change your thoughts about what it takes to lead successfully, and believe that people want to follow someone who is authentic and caring yet direct and fair, you can change your actions and your reputation.

If you don't believe it is true that people will be more productive, creative, and efficient with a leader who is authentic, caring, direct, and fair, then you will not change your actions, and you will not see yourself in that image. You will not change your story, and if you do happen to change your behaviors, perhaps because your boss has insisted, it won't last. You'll go back to old habits and, in time, to being the jerk. In this case, the work that needs to be done is around changing your thoughts and beliefs, and you may need evidence to help you see and believe what it takes to be a successful leader. This book is a great start. A leadership course and other books can help, too.

## What Do You Want in Life?

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Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it.

—Julia Child

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Your biggest challenge with truth might be to discover what you really want in life. As Dr. Seuss said in *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (Seuss 1960) "Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find, for a mind maker-upper to make up his mind." It's not always clear where we want to go. Ironically, sometimes you just need to let go of the need to know where you're going. When we let go, things flow. Similar to when you can't think of a song although it's on the tip of your tongue. As soon as you give up trying to remember it, it comes to you.

Relax and pay more attention to how you're feeling. What resonates with you can point you in the direction of your passions (your truth). Don't force it. You'll cause resistance. It's okay not to know everything. Understand that you don't have to have the total picture in focus to find your truth. Your truth at this moment is that you are where you are. Be good to yourself about where you are. Give yourself permission to take your time to figure it out. Don't be in such a hurry. Sometimes it's simply patience that we need. As I've been teaching my 3-year-old grandson, patience is waiting and being happy. The message we often get about being patient is negative—someone yelling at us to be patient. Practice being present in the moment to help you with patience, and you will find that you get all the time you need.

Once you are clear on what you want, enjoy conjuring up a picture and a feeling of how it will be when you're there. For the jerk who wants to be a successful leader, it's seeing yourself less stressed, getting a lot more done, people respecting you, and you're actually enjoying yourself. Visualize it. Dream about it.

Sense it. Feel it. There's real power in being able to visualize a future image. We trick our minds into believing we are already that image, and we begin to act that way.

While you're visualizing, pay close attention to your thoughts and beliefs. Do you believe that you can change? Do you believe in yourself and that if you really want something, and you really focus on it, you can make it happen? Are your thoughts supporting it, or are the voices denying it? Often we need to work on changing our thoughts and beliefs.

## **Change Your Thoughts**

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All that you achieve and all that you fail to achieve is the direct result of your own thoughts.

—James Allen

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Similar to changing your story, many people don't realize that you really can control your thoughts. And if your thoughts are negative all the time, well, garbage in, garbage out, right? Consider how negative thoughts might be impacting you. If you are putting in unhealthy thoughts, food, or anything else for that matter, what can you expect as a consequence? Our thoughts are something we can manage and take care of. Consider this—would you leave your toddler unattended to do whatever he wanted? Then why would you let your thoughts wander negatively? They are both dangerous situations. You can guide your thoughts in a better direction if you are aware of them.

It's those voices in your head. Start paying attention to what they are saying. Just kind of stalk yourself for a while to notice the message your voices are telling you. As soon as you catch yourself being a Debbie Downer, for example, coax your mind back. Refrain from judging it—just steer it back onto the road of positive thinking.

Often it takes rewiring our subconscious mind to get it to think differently, and consequently, we will feel and act differently. Positive affirmations, or mantras, are an effective way to do this. Take one of the messages in your head that you'd like to change, and turn it into an opposite and positive statement. For example, "I have to work so hard and suffer to make a good living" becomes "I work smart and enjoy my time, and I make a better living this way." If you repeat this phrase often enough, your subconscious will replace the older negative statement with this newer, more positive version.

Our subconscious mind plays a major role in our actions because this is where all our thoughts and beliefs are stored. The subconscious mind influences the conscious mind. The good news is that it takes a small investment of time to work on changing the subconscious mind. It has been discovered through research on our thoughts and dreams that the last 15 minutes before we go to sleep greatly affects our dreams. Whatever we are thinking about gets played over in our minds 15 to 17 times. So you are essentially brainwashing yourself! If indeed we are brainwashing ourselves, why not make it a positive experience? Wayne Dyer says to "marinate" in your mind as you sleep. Give yourself a dose of positivity every night!

I know by the way I feel in the morning if I need to change something I did the night before. Occasionally I'll get into a habit of falling asleep with the TV or radio on, and all that crap is imprinting my brain all night. As soon as I'm aware that I feel tired and not really inspired in the morning, I know I need to make a change in my nighttime routine. Just reading something positive, engaging in a great conversation, or spending quality time with someone you love can make a big difference. I feel better. I'm not positive there's a correlation, but it sure seems like I need less sleep when I focus on the positive things before going to bed.

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## The Impact of Truth

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That which is false troubles the heart, but truth brings joyous tranquility.

—Rumi

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Consider how all of this affects a workplace. A group of people are placed together to be productive, to create something. As we know, we each carry our own baggage to work every day. When we interact with others, the baggage comes out in ways that people misunderstand, resulting in turf wars, miscommunications, lack of trust, avoidance of accountability, abuse, condescending attitudes, elitism, and gossip.

No one but you can know what your truth is and what baggage you're carrying today. Your boss may know what you're capable of in the past, but he can't know if that's your truth right now. And your truth may not look the same from one moment to the next or to the next person. Everyone's personal truth is different on different days, at different times. You might be affected physically, emotionally, or mentally, for better or worse. Your output will depend on whether you are feeling happy, angry, sad, ill, or tired. If you overdo it, you may end up depleting yourself, so that your output on the task at hand or the next one may not be what you are normally capable of. This can also lead to feelings of failure, and you end up performing subpar to what you normally would.

When you know your own truth, you know what you are capable of in any given moment. For example, the quality of your work may vary, but you do the best you can do, in each moment, under the circumstances, which are always changing. If you expect yourself to be perfect by someone else's standards (someone else judging you), you are no longer in your own truth.

Similarly, if you expect others to be your definition of perfect for them, you'll certainly be disappointed.

When you are authentic, you are creating what you are capable of, nothing more, nothing less. At the same time, when you take actions that align to your truth—managing your thoughts and beliefs, not allowing garbage in—you stay closer to your truth.

Consider who you are in your role at home, in your social circle, at work—do you really know yourself? Do you know what makes you happy? Have you chosen the people, the places, the career that fits you? Are you taking full responsibility for where you are right now (and not blaming or complaining)? Maybe you've found yourself in a very negative, toxic work environment. You might be thinking, "I chose this job, but I certainly didn't choose to work with these idiots." It's true, we don't always know what will result from the choices we make. But we do know that we can always make different choices. Maybe not leave the instant you discover it's the wrong environment for you, but take ownership that you are the one who chose to be here, and you can choose to get yourself out of it. It may take time to figure this out and make the next choice for yourself. You might decide to stay and choose to look at it differently because there are different priorities for you right now. Your truth might be, you have a family to take care of and bills to pay. And still, it boils down to choice. If you are clear on your priorities, your truth, and your intent, you'll continue to make decisions that align for you. You'll feel empowered rather than victimized.

A few years back, a good friend packed up his family and moved to an area that was better for them as a multicultural family. Joe had sought out a well-paying job in the field he loved and found a neighborhood that proved to be perfect for them. All was well, until he was laid off. Now what? Joe searched for months for another job in the same area, to no avail. With the agreement of his wife and children, they chose to move to another state and start over. They moved to a beautiful neighborhood and a comfortable home with an inground swimming pool and many

great amenities. However, the neighborhood was not what they expected. And the job turned out to be about the worst corporate culture he could ever have imagined. Since I've known Joe, he has always been aware of his priorities and aligned to them. In this situation, he had done his best to do just that. But it doesn't always turn out as one imagines, and once we discover it's not what we want, it's time to make new choices. And that's exactly what Joe did. It wasn't practical for him to quit and move instantly, but over time, he found a new job, back near their old neighborhood, and within a year Joe and his family moved and he was settling into the new company and culture. Just imagine, he and his family could have suffered for years in that situation, had he not chosen to align to his priorities and make a change. In any situation, with an awareness of our truth, we will be clear on our priorities and align our choices, which will result in efficiency, productivity, satisfaction, and happiness in our lives.

Finding your truth is not a one-time, fix-all, never have to work on any of it again kind of thing. As you evolve and grow, your truth will evolve and grow. If we trust our emotions and use them as an indicator of when we are aligning with our truth, we can make choices. *We will be free* to live the life we were meant to. And then we can authentically lead others.

Before you venture into Chapter 3, take some time to reflect.

### **What SHIFT Will You Make?**

Scan the chapter. List the topics that resonated with you.

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Hone in on one or two areas that will make the biggest impact for you.

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Imagine the impact. Why is this important? How will you feel when you've accomplished this?

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Figure out your plan and how you will stay on track.

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Take action. Start now. Schedule it now, and include your follow-up.

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*Enjoy! Remember to choose to be happy, every step of the way!*

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