



1

What Is Inner Presence?

Managing Yourself

Your inner presence can be your most valuable asset—or your deepest liability. I know that seems like a pretty bold statement—perhaps one you didn’t see coming. Chances are, you’re wondering what I mean by inner presence. So let’s start with a simple definition:

Inner presence is the way you experience yourself.

That may sound a little spiritual, but it’s actually a crucial *practical* skill. Inner presence determines the way you think, make decisions, lead, collaborate, and execute strategies. It directly influences your effectiveness.

Let’s allow that notion to breathe for a moment. What’s your first reaction? Is *your* inner presence an asset or a liability?

**How you
experience
yourself**

22 *Become the Real Deal*

Your inner presence is a moving target.

It's probably both. Why? Because, like so many things in life, the answer depends on the situation.

Your inner presence is a moving target from one moment to the next, since you experience yourself differently under different conditions. One day you beat projections for the quarter and your head swells with pride; another day, you lose a major client, and your confidence plummets.

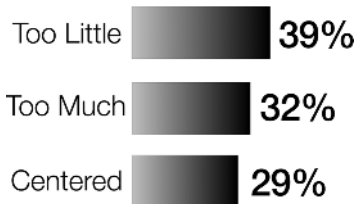
Inner presence is what's happening inside your mind and heart as the world comes at you, judging you, testing you—even bringing opportunities your way.

Your inner presence is *a means to an end*. And a centered inner presence is vital if you want to take your performance and your leadership to the next level.

In my coaching practice, I've seen executives rise rapidly and crash spectacularly based on this single quality. *Everything* rides on it: Influence. Trust. Respect. Relationships. Reputation. Career.

I've discovered one thing, repeatedly and unmistakably: presence—what I call “the real deal”—*begins within*. It's about *being*, not just doing.

Inner Presence Research Results



What Is Inner Presence? 23

I've spent the past 13 years exploring how this works. I've surveyed thousands of leaders across industries and disciplines to find out how and why their presence affects their performance. When questioned about their views regarding the Three Layers of Presence, only 29 percent of respondents said they believed they were strongest in inner presence. The overwhelming majority felt their inner presence was unbalanced in one way or another.

Centering your inner presence is more important today than it's ever been. We live in a radically transparent society. Our organizations are flatter and more open than ever before. As leaders, we're always on—always in the spotlight. That means it's easier for our colleagues to catch us off-balance. And the pressure of our always-on world can itself throw us off balance.

Centering yourself will take work, but that work will pay off. When you're balanced, you set your talents free. When you learn to center your inner presence, you will live and work more effectively. You'll be freer. Happier. More powerful. More purposeful.

But when your inner presence is knocked off-center, you become a weaker version of yourself. Your capacity to lead and contribute suffers, as shown in the graphic.

Think of it as a seesaw. You want to be balanced in the middle. Too *little* inner presence and you're depleted, which can easily cause you to become anxious. Too *much* and you're full of yourself—and tend toward narcissistic behavior.

**Freer.
Happier. More
powerful.**

24 *Become the Real Deal***Steady or warped?**

Your current level of inner presence is a combination of where you came from and where you're trying to go. It's a sense of steadiness—or unsteadiness—drawn from your personal experiences. Most of us have an inner presence that's warped in one way or the other—which means we're wasting our potential. We're not making the impression we want to make, or influencing others the way we'd like. We don't lead the powerfully productive lives we'd like to live.

Remember the word cloud? It's a way to bring the big picture into focus by highlighting the most important themes.

In the Introduction, you chose a word that you would like to define yourself by—something that sums up the way you'd like to feel as you move through the world. Later, we'll talk about how you want other people to see you and hear your messages. But for now, this is all about you. Take another look at your word cloud in the previous chapter.

As you read the next three chapters, keep your word in mind. How often do you actually feel this way? What situations rob you of this ideal quality?

We all get thrown off-center from time to time. But if it happens too often, it will threaten your ability to advance in your career. It's up to you to shift the momentum. Ready to learn more?