

CHAPTER 1

THE SELF-REFLECTIVE, BALANCED LEADER

Self-reflection is the most important tool in the values-based leadership toolbox. It is the intentional practice of stepping back, filtering out noise and distractions, and looking inward to gain clarity on what matters most to you, personally and professionally. By being self-reflective, you think deeply about issues so you can make choices that are aligned with your values. You also gain a fuller awareness of the impact of your decisions. Self-reflection also provides you with an opportunity to know yourself better, assess your strengths and weaknesses, and understand where you excel and what areas you need to develop.

Without self-reflection it is impossible to become a values-based leader. Unless you pause to reflect on your priorities and what matters most, you can easily become overwhelmed by the sheer number of items on your to-do list and fail to distinguish between real productivity and pointless activity. Self-reflection can be a potent antidote to the all-too-common experiences of worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress, all of which can undermine your intention to be your best self.

Yet even people who understand the concept of self-reflection struggle with how to put it into practice. In the four years since the publication of my first book, *From Values to Action*, I have given more than 500 talks to diverse audiences, ranging from students to senior leaders in business, government, academia, and the not-for-profit sector, and the dialogue and questions regarding values-based leadership frequently center on the importance of self-reflection. In this chapter, we will start with the foundation of how self-reflection can guide you to become your best self, in every interaction and facing any challenge, every day.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-REFLECTION

Self-reflection is the gateway to self-awareness and self-knowledge. The more you understand yourself, the better you are able to relate to other people. Relating to them allows you to influence them, which is how leadership happens. Values-based leadership moves from the inside out, rooted in the knowledge of what you stand for and what matters most—personally and professionally. All of us lead multifaceted lives, with decisions that impact others, including spouses, partners, and children, as well as colleagues, friends, and team members. The choices we make impact our quality of life.

Self-reflection provides an instant window to what is critically important to you—today, in this moment of your life. You'll make some compromises; everyone does. But you can't really know what you're giving up and the impact of these trade-offs unless you stop to reflect. Otherwise, you will move from activity to activity, from one crisis to another, without a sense of direction or purpose. When you are overwhelmed by everything life is throwing at you, you can't possibly expect to be your best self. That's where self-reflection comes in, helping you prioritize and get back on track.

Often when I talk to people, from students to CEOs, I frequently hear that they are surprised by the consequences of their choices—even things that seem obvious, such as a job requiring

extremely long hours or frequent travel. All they know is that they feel out of balance and they aren't living in a way that is consistent with their best selves. The negative aspects of work can quickly become exhausting, even putting a strain on personal relationships and family life. When people suffering from such problems wake up to how stressed and unhappy they are, the source of their trouble often comes as a surprise. The root cause in these situations is typically a lack of self-reflection.

On a business trip to the West Coast, I ran into a former student of mine from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management at Los Angeles International Airport. When "Joe" reintroduced himself, he reminded me that he had been in my class six years earlier. I remembered him as a very bright individual who had really grasped the principles of values-based leadership as we had discussed them in class. However, when I asked how he was doing, he replied, "Honestly, not very well. I'm really surprised at what's happened in my life."

Joe told me he'd gotten married and had two children, a son and a daughter. Because of his job with an investment bank, which paid him a lot of money, he traveled 90 percent of the time. As a result, he spent very little time with his wife and family, and when he was home, he was exhausted. While Joe was doing very well at the investment bank, and there were aspects of the job he really loved, he wasn't engaged in areas of his life that were important to him, especially his family. In short, he'd lost sight of what he said was crucial to him.

Although I was sympathetic to his situation, I couldn't figure out why he was surprised. It appeared Joe had decided that this professional opportunity and its high salary would be good for him, his career, and his family finances, but he did not self-reflect on the job's broader impact. Self-awareness could have improved his decision-making process, but without it, he was surprised by how stressed and unhappy he had become.

Fortunately, self-reflection is a skill that can be picked up at any time. First, Joe needed to look at things honestly. While he was earning a great salary and bonus, if he analyzed what he was being

paid for the actual time he dedicated to his job—accounting for the 80-, 90-, and 100-hour weeks with the pressure of extensive travel and grueling deadlines—he was actually being paid at the rate of a more junior person working a 40-hour week. (When I tell my students this, their faces drop in astonishment, with the realization that *this could happen to me.*)

In our conversation, I never made a recommendation about what Joe should do, or a value judgment about what should be most important to him. He needed to decide that for himself, which he could only do by taking the time (as little as 15 minutes a day of self-reflection) to identify his priorities. If he decided that his career was most important to him at that point in his life, then he needed to be willing to sacrifice time spent on his relationships. That is not a “wrong” or “bad” choice, provided that it is his conscious decision, with a full understanding of the implications. Self-reflection could even help him to identify solutions such as how to spend the little free time he has for the most positive impact and reward.

I asked Joe, “Do you remember how we talked about the importance of self-reflection in class?”

“Of course,” Joe replied. “I used to love those assignments, where we had to write a one-page, double-spaced self-reflection every week on our values, goals, and priorities. I guess I got away from doing it.”

In the whirl of moving to New York City, being a strong performer (the first guy in the office each morning and the last one to leave at night) and highly regarded at his firm, Joe let self-reflection slip. He stopped asking himself what was most important in his life, what his priorities were, and whether he was comfortable making compromises. Again, I wasn’t telling Joe to quit his job at the investment bank, nor do I want to imply that people shouldn’t take demanding jobs. I believed that by returning to his habit of self-reflection Joe would find the answers within and would likely seek out someone to be a sounding board. Similarly, each of us is faced with choices, and what we choose should align with becoming our best selves.

SELF-REFLECTION AND THE BUSINESS ORIENTATION OF LEADERSHIP

Students will sometimes say to me, “Harry, for a guy who was a math major, studied accounting, became a CPA, and was a CFO, you sound awfully soft and qualitative with this self-reflection stuff. Where are the hard-core analytics and business results that leadership demands?”

I tell them that self-reflection is based on an analytical approach that results from three equations (or questions) that prove that values-based leadership begins with self-reflection: First, if I am not self-reflective, how can I know myself? Second, if I don’t know myself, how can I lead myself? Third, if I can’t lead myself, how can I possibly lead other people?

Self-reflection is also valuable as a leadership tool, which I have experienced in my career and have found to be true with other CEOs, who I have the privilege to know. Mark R. Neaman, president and CEO of NorthShore University HealthSystem (see Chapter 6), is a self-reflective leader. One of the ways Mark uses self-reflection is to increase his self-awareness of how he relates to others, so he can exhibit his *best self* as a leader. “When you’re a leader, people look to you, trying to anticipate what you’ll do or say. Through self-reflection, you increase your awareness of how you are communicating with others. Do you show passion and compassion? Are you hard driving and thinking big thoughts, but never losing your humility because you know you can’t accomplish those big dreams all by yourself?” Mark said. “You can’t become delusional about how important you are.”

Self-reflection as a leadership tool encourages out-of-the-box thinking. Jai Shekhawat is CEO and founder of Fieldglass, which makes the world’s most widely used cloud-computing platform for the procurement of contract labor and services. Reflecting on how he picked his first team members (see Chapter 4), Jai chose people with unusual backgrounds to oversee the building and selling of the product. By self-reflecting on what mattered most to him, and

therefore to his company, Jai identified his top criteria as passion for the business and capability of delivering what was expected. These two characteristics were more important than having a particular job title or work experience.

Jai obviously had the right team to build the company. Fieldglass was sold in 2014 to SAP of Germany for a reported \$1 billion. Even before that market validation, however, Jai knew he'd made good choices for his core team because of the close alignment among the key players, right from the start.

As important as it is to take time by yourself to be self-reflective, it is only half the story. It is equally important to obtain input and feedback from others to make sure you are being realistic and honest with yourself. As my wife, Julie, is fond of telling me, "Harry, left to your own devices, you could convince yourself of anything." No wonder that, after 35 years of marriage, when she asks me if I want her opinion, the answer is always yes. Whether your personal advisor is your spouse or partner, good friend, sibling, mentor, or someone else, make sure you are tapping outside perspectives. The viewpoint of another person can help you see clearly whether something supports your best self or if it's out of sync with who you are and who you say you want to be.

ELIMINATING WORRY, FEAR, ANXIETY, PRESSURE, AND STRESS

There are five words that immediately get everyone's attention in virtually every audience I address: worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress. They are a common experience, and yet most people do not admit to facing them. Self-reflection, though, is the way to shed some light on what you're really feeling, and how to minimize the impact of these negative emotions on your life, so that you can get on with the business of being your best self.

First, you need to acknowledge that worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress are unproductive and unhealthy—just ask your

doctor about the impact of stress on your body. Second, through self-reflection you can see that these negative emotions occur most frequently when problems arise, things aren't going well, or when there's a crisis. Suddenly, you're in over your head. Why? Because at some previous point in time, when the first hints surfaced that *maybe this situation, decision, or choice is not going the way I thought it would*, you weren't practicing self-reflection. If you had, you probably would have noticed things going south, or at least you would have been aware of that possibility. Then you could have decided in advance what corrective course of action you'd take when a situation arose or a problem escalated. Even if the situation you find yourself faced with was unforeseeable or beyond your control, self-reflection can ground you in how to respond as *your best self*.

Here's how: Being your best self allows you to live in reality, instead of dwelling in the extremes of believing the good times will last forever, or that difficult episodes will never get better. Self-reflection will keep you on an even keel, by reminding you that no one's life follows the upward slope of a straight line. For all of us, life is a "sine wave" of ups and downs that, we hope, will have an overall upward slope. Self-reflection keeps us grounded in the moment, whether in the midst of highs or lows.

Let's say that life is good right now, personally and professionally. You've got no complaints. That is just fantastic and truly a reason to celebrate—and you should. At the same time, remembering life's sine wave pattern, you know that things are not always going to go well. At some future point in time, there will be a disappointment, upset, or negative event. It's not that you want to douse your happiness today with negativity and worries about tomorrow—by all means enjoy the good times—but being your best self means that you are a realist, preparing yourself *in advance* for when, not if, the downturn happens.

Being self-reflective means that when you're at the top of that sine curve, you already know what you'll do when things don't go so well. You will be alert and prepared for those initial signs of

disappointment or upset, and you'll act on them quickly, without getting sidetracked, being surprised, or losing precious energy to worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, or stress. Without self-reflection, you have chosen to wait until a crisis hits to figure out what you're going to do, and by then it's often too late. It's hard to see clearly when you're in the middle of a storm.

With self-reflection I am always prepared to act in the midst of a problem, challenge, or crisis. I will do two things: I will do the right thing, and I will do the best I can. These two seemingly simple, but highly powerful statements have significantly reduced the worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress in my life. No matter what happens—and in senior leadership positions, I have faced my share of crises—I know I will do the right thing and I will do the best I can.

This same thinking allows you, as your best self, to manage the good times and balance the bad times in your organization. Let's say that you're the CEO of a company that has posted strong earnings, quarter after quarter. Perhaps this has occurred for several quarters in a row, and with each successful quarter, the bar gets higher. It's only a matter of time before there is a disappointment, and quarterly earnings, while not bad, are less than investors' expectations. Through self-reflection, you will be prepared for how to respond well in advance of that occurrence: You will do the right thing, and you will do the best you can.

You can plan for anticipated difficulties and the unknown by training yourself to keep things in perspective. Disappointments will occur; that's part of life. The two fundamental commitments—to do the right thing, and to do the best you can—will keep you grounded in reality, no matter what occurs.

While you are being your best self, you may find that some people on your team or other colleagues have a tendency to get worked up in the midst of a problem or crisis—and they may want you to do the same. In fact, if they can't get you all wound up and worried, they think they haven't done their job. During my time at Baxter, after 15 or 20 consecutive quarters of increased earnings,

we faced a difficult quarter and, as a result, we were not going to make our projected targets. For example, let's say we had projected quarterly earnings of \$1 a share and it looked like we were only going to make \$0.90. Such an earnings miss means we would need to tell the Street, and that bad news can cause a lot of worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress. However, by being self-reflective and keeping things in perspective, I remained disciplined and was able to avoid being overwhelmed by negative emotions. One of my colleagues, who got really wound up over the news, said to me, "Harry, don't you realize how serious this is?"

I replied: "Let me see: We will have 550 phone lines to London, Tokyo, and throughout the United States with analysts—buy side and sell side—and large shareholders on a conference call with us, at which time we'll have to give them disappointing news about not making our projections, and that will have a negative impact on our stock price. Am I close?"

Of course I got it, but we didn't have time to waste on being worried and upset. We needed to devote all our time and energy on understanding what happened, why it happened, and what we could do to minimize the chances of it happening again. Being our best selves in that moment meant keeping our commitment to doing the right thing and the best we could do.

CENTERING YOUR BEST SELF

Centeredness is where your best self resides. One of the traps that will throw you out of centeredness is to believe that, when upsets happen, life is *unfair*. The problem is one of perception: Someone believes that life is inherently supposed to be fair. Believe me, I'm no pessimist (in fact, most people who know me would describe me as a strong optimist); my optimism, though, is grounded in realism and the realization I've gained through years of self-reflection that life looks like a normal distribution (i.e., a bell curve). The middle is when things are going okay; to the right are the better-than-normal

events (and to the far right the ones that are fantastically wonderful), and to the left are the worse-than-normal events (and to the far left the ones that are tragically so). You, like me, are going to have your share of experiences that fall to the right and left.

Self-reflection and your commitment to being your best self allow you to remain centered, which will increase your resilience in coping with challenging situations and your resourcefulness in finding a solution. You may even be able to minimize the occurrences of some negative events, reducing the incidence of good/bad from the 50/50 of our hypothetical bell curve to 80/20, but I've never met anyone who didn't go through pain and disappointments at least 20 percent of the time.

By being self-reflective, you will be disciplined enough to calmly realize challenges are not exceptions. Failures, deaths, accidents, job losses, and other disappointments are all part of the human experience. Rather than getting mired in the question "*Why did this happen to me?*" you choose to focus on what can be done to make the best of the situation. Interestingly enough, by being proactive, you will be more prepared and less surprised, and better able to reduce the impact of negative events.

BEST SELF IN THE REAL WORLD

Occasionally, someone will say to me, "This sounds great, Harry, but how does it work in the *real world*. I've got a team of people who report to me, and I've got people above me. How can I stay centered as my best self, when I'm caught in the middle of people who are worried, fearful, anxious, pressured, and stressed because of what's happening?"

Even when we're being our best selves and staying centered, we do have to deal with the emotions and reactions of others. Let's take these two groups separately. First, there are the people who report to you (whom we address in more depth in Section Two, "The Best Team"). When an issue or crisis arises, your team members may

become flustered and upset because they don't fully understand what's happening, or because they are anxious over what might happen—and so the pressure mounts.

No matter how centered you feel, the anxiety and worry among your team, if left unattended, will escalate into a real problem—even to the point of undermining their ability to respond to the situation. By being your best self and a values-based leader, you can use your own personal example to influence your team. You may need to assure them that they are up to the task in front of them, or remind them of how successfully they've handled problems in the past. As your best self, you will model for others what it means (and looks like) to step back, take a breath, and put the current challenge into perspective. Through your reflective, calm, and thoughtful manner, you will help others adopt a similar demeanor and attitude.

LEADING UP

At this point, you've gotten your personal act together by being your best self, and you've calmed your team by modeling self-reflective behavior for them. But you're still not out of the fire. You still have to deal with *the boss*.

Let's assume that your boss is not self-reflective and does not bring his/her best self to work every day. Instead, this is one of those infamous, out-of-control, the-world-is-coming-to-an-end types of bosses with whom we've all had to deal. This person is not just off-center or lacking self-reflection, but rather a Tasmanian devil! Dealing with this situation requires you to take your best self to another level and *lead up* to manage your boss.

Leading up means using your ability to influence and motivate your boss by your example. You cannot do this without a daily dose of self-reflection on the problems or challenges at hand, the various scenarios and solutions on the table, the personalities involved, your boss's response, and the general state of the atmosphere. As your best self, you are equipped with fine-tuned discernment and

emotional intelligence to navigate what will probably be some stormy seas with submerged obstacles!

In my talks, I give a simplified example to show how this can be done. As a strategy is devised and rolled out, your boss says he wants to head east (the hypothetical equivalent of whatever strategic decision is being made at the time). In your opinion, the organization should really be headed west. How you handle this situation, and whether you can influence your boss to reach a better solution, will have an enormous impact on how successful you will be as a leader. It's not just what you do, but how you do it.

Perhaps your boss has a big ego and a tremendous need to be right. Since your commitment, as your best self and a values-based leader, is to do the right thing, you're willing to park your ego at the door. First, you take the time to talk to enough experts to make sure that west really is the optimal direction, and that you're not letting your own ego get in the way. If the consensus is that *west is best*, then you have to present this information in such a way that you influence the boss into reaching the same conclusion—maybe even allowing the boss to think it was his idea. So you might say, "Would it make sense to go west first so that we can do such-and-such?"

Acting as your best self, your objective is not to prove your boss wrong, but to present a better solution. Without having your ego invested in it, your boss can pick up the idea and run with it as if it were his own.

Now, let's say that your boss doesn't want to hear about west. He is convinced that the only way to go is east. Your self-reflection will help you determine whether this really is a big deal, or if it's suboptimal but in the end will probably work out okay. If it's the latter, then you might decide to get on board the boss's eastbound train and figure out how to reach the objectives from there, while doing the right thing and the best you can do.

But let's say that your boss's plan of going east will result in a major problem or setback, and that west really is substantially better (e.g., less risky, significantly more cost-effective or efficient, etc.). If

so, it may be time to shoot a so-called *silver bullet*. With self-reflection and being your best self, you will be able to do this because you understand your own motivation. You're not looking for kudos or rewards, to make your boss look foolish or to take his job. You care about the team and the organization, and want the strategy to be successful.

Therefore, with true self-confidence (which we discuss in Chapter 2), in an open and transparent way, you let your boss know that there is a significant difference between going east and going west, and that it makes sense to sit down with the boss the next level up and discuss the situation.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

When you are operating as your best self, you have the calmness, centeredness, and clarity to see through the fog. This can only happen if you take the time for daily self-reflection. Personally, I find it best to write down my thoughts in a journal, otherwise it feels too much like just daydreaming. By putting your self-reflection in writing, you also establish a record of your priorities and what you've committed to do.

For me, self-reflection is an activity that's best done at the end of the day, when things calm down from my different jobs and activities (including teaching, speaking, serving on boards of directors, and working in private equity—plus being a husband and father of five). At night, when the children are in bed and I've gotten through my calls and emails, it's time for me to find a quiet place, such as on my back porch or sitting in my favorite chair. For other people, self-reflection is a morning exercise. They center themselves while jogging or walking the dog (jotting down notes on their thoughts afterwards). Others take a 20-minute break during the day and, instead of picking up the phone and calling three more people, they take a walk around the block or the complex. The optimal time and routine will be up to you to discover.

My self-reflection involves a list of questions I ask myself to assess my day and determine whether I've been my best self. For example, did I act in a self-reflective manner, or did I allow myself to get caught up in the emotions and urgency of the day? Did I do what I said I would do, or did I fall short of my own expectations? What did I do well? Where could I have done better? What could I do now to better prepare myself for the next day? How did I treat people? How did I lead people, and how did I follow people? Am I proud of my interactions? Did I keep myself centered, or was I out of control?

As I engage in honest self-reflection, I ask myself what I would do differently if I had the day to live over again. I know I'm a work in progress, and I have the ability to get better. Given what I've learned today, how can I operate better in all dimensions of my life, personally and professionally? The more self-reflective I become, the better equipped I am to be my best self, every day.

BALANCE AND PERSPECTIVE

One of the benefits of becoming self-reflective is gaining balance and greater perspective in your life. As a principle of values-based leadership in action, balance refers to your ability to see a bigger, fuller picture and make decisions accordingly. You don't just rely on what you think or what you know; you purposefully extend your perspective by engaging others. Self-reflection is the tool that allows you to achieve balance most effectively, by allowing you to see when and where you need more input and from which people.

When people are not self-reflective, they also tend to be in a hurry. They're consumed by worry, fear, anxiety, pressure, and stress, and so they think that the only way to counter these negative feelings is by moving quickly. They don't take the time to self-reflect (their first mistake) and they surely don't invest in gathering the input and opinions of others (their second mistake). To them, that would be wasting time, but this viewpoint often leads to a fatal mistake.

When people make quick decisions based on strong opinions and emotions, they usually fail to acknowledge that there are many different perspectives. If understood, other insights could have an enormous impact on anyone's ability to make the best decisions (not just fast ones) and to motivate a team that may have different views on a topic. In my classes and talks, I sometimes encounter immediate negative reactions to this point: "Harry, don't you want me to have a strong opinion and be decisive? Don't you want me to act in an authoritative way as I lead my team? Don't I need to demonstrate that I am, in fact, a decisive leader?" My response is that, in my opinion, it's best to develop strongly held views *after* you have taken the time to truly understand all sides of the issue. (As I tell people, I have *opinions*, not *answers*, and these allow me to keep a balanced perspective.)

I also get pushback from people who say, "I've got a lot to do. I don't have time to hear the opinions of everyone on my team. I have to get an answer to my boss quickly." This argument is based on the narrow perspective that this is a binary choice: Get the team's opinions *or* make a decision quickly. To me, there is no choice involved. As I like to say, if the question is whether to seek the opinions of people who can add value *or* to make a decision quickly, the answer is *yes*.

At every level of the organization, being your best self means you value balance and perspective in your decision making (which we will revisit in the dynamic of a *best team*). That doesn't mean you will drag out the process, engage in *paralysis by analysis*, or procrastinate by chasing after the trivial and tangential. If the decision you have to make can be better, stronger, or more assured by reaching out to a colleague or team member whose input you can gather quickly, then being your best self demands that you do both.

Another aspect of balance is to recognize that you don't have all the answers. No matter how much experience you have or how high up you are in the organization, there are others (and often they are junior people) who have valuable perspectives and

experiences. One example is social media, which many organizations are still trying to get a handle on pairing with their traditional marketing and communications strategies. If you're the chief marketing officer, you may be a best-in-class expert in the traditional channels, but when it comes to employing social media, the person with more knowledge may be a 20-something. When it comes to very fast-moving technology, someone with only one to two years in the organization may actually be more knowledgeable than a more senior person. (Personally, I am the first to admit that my 12-year-old son, Daniel, is far more adept at electronics than I am, and if it weren't for him, my DVD player would blink 12:00.)

Being your best self means you acknowledge the critical importance of gathering diverse opinions and viewpoints from people of different ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and genders. Furthermore, being your best self as a values-based leader means you are committed to motivating and elevating your team. Balance and perspective also enable you and your team to gain a broader understanding that enhances your contribution—or, as I like to say, you can see the trees and the forest, rather than getting caught up in the root system!

A BALANCED INDIVIDUAL

When you act with balance, others will perceive you to be a balanced individual—a true sign of someone being his or her best self. Consider the example of one executive vice president at a company where I was asked to give a presentation. As we discussed the importance of balance in all aspects of life, this executive, whom we'll call Mary Ellen, said that she believed that exercise was key to her health and was something she definitely needed to do. "I am trying to exercise more," she said, "but I just don't have the time to do it."

I asked Mary Ellen if she put exercise on her calendar with the same regularity and commitment as her nine o'clock meeting and her noon client lunch. "If it's not on your calendar," I told her, "you

won't do it. You'll tell yourself that you'll wait until everything else is done. But guess what? You'll never get everything else done."

At this point, Mary Ellen's colleague, we'll call him Ron, piped up that he had a similar problem. Ron's job required him to travel extensively and very often the fitness centers at his hotels closed at nine in the evening. I explained that I travel about 50 percent of the time, and very often I don't get to my hotel until after ten o'clock at night, which is why I try to avoid staying in hotels that don't have 24-hour fitness centers.

The point to this story is simple: If you say something is important to you—if it is key to balance and being your best self—then you have to make it a priority. Otherwise, you will not come across as disciplined, focused, consistent, and credible—to yourself or others. Saying you *don't have the time* for something really means it's not a high enough priority for you to *make* time. (As I discuss in *From Values to Action*, we all have 168 hours per week. The only question is how we spend that time.) With self-reflection and balance, you can make choices for yourself that enable you to become your best self in everything you do.

SELF-REFLECTION AND BALANCE— COMPLEMENTARY TOOLS IN THE LEADERSHIP TOOLBOX

Your pursuit of balance and perspective is accomplished most effectively through self-reflection. How else are you going to see what you need and whom you need to engage? As you reflect on what is being asked of you—the options you are weighing, the decisions you need to make—you will identify those experts who can provide valuable perspective and input.

This is a powerful benefit of self-reflection. While self-reflection remains highly important for heightening your self-awareness, providing you with feedback on your actions, and letting you know whether you are being your best self, this foundational principle is

really an all-purpose tool. Self-reflection isn't limited to talking to yourself like a hermit in a cave. Inner dialogue, while meaningful, is not the only dimension of self-reflection.

Being your best self means you utilize self-reflection to enhance your engagement in community with others, which improves your balance and broadens your perspective. Purposefully seeking out feedback from others keeps you grounded in reality instead of slipping into a kind of dream world of unexamined perception.

YOUR BEST SELF, EVERY DAY

At every level, leadership starts with you. While living and working in the real world puts you in contact with others, you cannot move too quickly into the communal and organizational before you've done sufficient work on the personal. At a fundamental level, your best self—the core of the concentric circles of *bests* that radiate from you through the organization and into society—determines what you stand for, what matters most, how you will act, and how you will treat others. People need to take the time to define what best self means to them. Once they have a clear picture, they can self-reflect each day to determine if they lived and demonstrated it. Becoming one's best self starts with self-reflection. By being honest with yourself, you will know how well you are keeping your word, honoring your values, and living in accordance with your priorities. You will limit or even eliminate unpleasant surprises, and carry out your twin commitments of doing the right thing and doing the best you can do. Self-reflection will help you achieve balance and a broader perspective. Others will perceive you as being focused, disciplined, consistent, and credible in everything you undertake, professionally and personally. In short, you will be well on your way to being your best self, every day.