

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: EMBRACE THE OBSTACLES

Sorry, but “no pain, no gain” is a reality. Truly remarkable leaders are willing to “lean into” their discomfort; they allow themselves to learn, grow, and sometimes, suffer to get to a better place. It is as simple and difficult as that. All the great athletes, successful people, parents, and leaders accept the reality that, “if it were easy, everyone would be doing it” and, well, everyone is not – but *you* can!

The discomfort a leader faces may be a business challenge, a human resources challenge, or something personal. No matter what it is, the question remains: how do I not only survive this, but thrive? Take Brian, a CEO in a highly regulated industry, whose company is at the beginning of a difficult takeover. And, he just found out that his only brother has a serious illness.

With the help of his executive coach, Brian figured out what he needed to do. Keep these five tips in mind when you face a situation that could lead to your discomfort.

1. **Rely on your integrity.** Having strong values gives you both a bedrock and a guiding star. Brian thought about what outcomes were important to him. These included increased time with his brother and treating people fairly throughout the coming corporate changes. He made a list of the outcomes he wanted to achieve, looked at it every morning, and let it drive his actions and decisions.
2. **Face your truth.** Brian came to realize that he had to acknowledge his truth and look at how he contributed to the business challenges he faced, what mistakes he had made, and work out what he needed to do differently in the future.
3. **Humbly call for help.** Brian was open to the idea that he needed help from his coach, team, board, friends, spouse, and a counselor. He was open with them about the challenges he was facing and clear about what he needed. Even though he was in the top leadership position, he tapped into his humility and asked for help.
4. **Stay healthy.** A lot of people rely on Brian. “Now” was definitely not the time to indulge in self-medication through alcohol (or food). He knew that, if there was ever a time he needed to take care of himself (exercise, sleep, eating well), this was it.
5. **Give yourself the right time and space to think.** [Three Ways to Think Deeply at Work](#), *Harvard Business Review*, September 2009 is about how to boost your creative and productive juices regardless of any challenges. For example, where (and when) you normally work may be wrong for you at this time of increased unease – you might think better walking on the beach than sitting in a busy office.

Brian came through a very difficult time and ultimately became clearer about his values and his direction; he felt stronger and was able to deliver better leadership.

If and when you run into rough times, do you know what you will do to learn and thrive, not just survive?