



THE
HAPPY
HEALTHY
LEADER

ACHIEVE YOUR POTENTIAL
EVEN DURING A CRISIS

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INTRODUCTION

I can count on one hand how many times I have been sailing. For that reason, I know little about the technical aspects of sailing and what is required to have a safe and successful journey. But when coaching leaders, I have found the metaphor of ‘sailing towards your destination’ very helpful. I refer to this metaphor throughout the book as I find it can be easier to remember the metaphor than the science, benefits, consequences and methods. While you will get both, I will share real-life stories from clients I have witnessed move towards being happy, healthy leaders using the steps I provide for you in this book. Towards the end of the book you can also hear some views of other experts on this topic and what they have experienced in their work and life regarding happy, healthy leadership.

Before we set sail, let’s think about where you are right now. My guess is you could tick one or more of the list of thorny problems shown in the following table that are blocking you being a happy, healthy leader.

Table 1: Blocks to becoming a happy, healthy leader

Problem	What this might mean
Fear of failure	You are afraid of failing as a leader, no matter how many hours you put in.
Loss of income	You cannot be without income as you are the sole or key provider and/or just have to get your kids through school and further education. And you have a big mortgage.
Not being respected or accepted, and invisible	You feel your peers and direct reports do not listen to, accept or welcome your opinions and views. And for the most part feel invisible.
Imposter syndrome	You lack confidence in your abilities and feel you cannot ask for help. You believe people expect you to know the answers.
Unhealthy	You are not sleeping, are drinking and eating more, not exercising, and feel guilty and angry with yourself. And just feel tired most of the time.
Shame	You want to avoid feeling shame for not achieving targets and being called out publicly. You therefore may be overly defensive to hide your shame, or demonstrate behaviours you regret later.
Inability to get it all done	You are working long hours and still not getting on top of everything. You are feeling overwhelmed most of the time.
Being stuck in a negative mindset and feeling that something is wrong with you	You are worried that you only seem to focus on the negative and can't get that self-critical voice out of your head.

Problem	What this might mean
Lack of work–life balance	You are losing your sh#t with your partner or kids more often. And feel guilty about your kids when you are at work, and then feel guilty about your work when you are with your kids.
Burn-out	Recently, you have been wondering if it is all worth it.

NOTE: If you are experiencing any thoughts of self-harm or harming others it is very important you seek help. This link provides numbers in every country around the world where you can get help now:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_crisis_lines

Maybe you can relate to one of the following examples.

You have been working long hours without a proper break or weekend for ages. You’ve just come to an agreement with your partner to move to a bigger house to accommodate your growing family, and you still haven’t told your partner that one of your parents may need full-time care, be it in your home or somewhere you will have to pay many dollars for. On top of this, your boss calls you in for a meeting and tells you that your performance, or your team’s performance, is not okay and needs to improve, and quickly.

Or the complete opposite. You believe your career has been going incredibly well, you are happy with where you are and how you are progressing, and there is an opportunity to advance to the next level very soon. The company has just done a 360-degree program on all leaders at your level; you are blindsided by the negative feedback

from your team on how they think you are leading. You thought they loved working with you, but your 360 results suggest otherwise (see ‘What does an unhappy, unhealthy leader look like?’ in Chapter 1 for more on 360-degree feedback).

Or maybe when you first took on this team you had energy and enthusiasm. But there are team members who are causing you or others grief. You have tried to address this. Last night you drank way too much, to deal with a stressful day at work. This is now happening far more often than is healthy. You know you are stressed more than you have been before, but don’t know how to pull yourself out of it. You feel you have a good job, mainly good people you work with, but somehow this is where you are.

Perhaps your boss is an ass. Yep, let’s call it for what it is. It could be the chair, CEO, executive, general manager, team leader ... whoever they are. They publicly put you down, sometimes isolate you from conversations. You are starting to develop conspiracy theories around their motives and know it’s starting to impact your performance. You think it’s time to leave. But there are no jobs out there. Is this as good as it gets?

Perhaps you are about to go through a feedback loop process, such as a 360-degree program, and are worried what people will say about you and your performance. Or maybe you are an aspiring leader and you don’t want to follow in the footsteps of leaders around you, who seem to work all the time, are not happy and definitely don’t look healthy!

Wherever you are in your leadership journey, I am going to help you:

- have more energy and enthusiasm for your work

- be more confident, even with difficult people
- learn to say no and create healthy work boundaries
- make clearer and better decisions
- know you are working towards your purpose and values
- have a resilient and healthier mindset
- build effective and healthy relationships with colleagues
- have greater team engagement and respect
- achieve greater overall wellbeing
- become a happy, healthy leader who gets results.

Imagine:

- having more energy every day because you have learned how to focus on what is important rather than what isn't
- making good and logical decisions that are not reactive
- having confidence in your abilities to deal with difficult people while supporting those who are on board
- having clarity around what is important to you and how to go after it
- integrating your own mind-health program to keep you resilient and mentally fit where your negative voice is no longer pushing you around
- feeling reconnected with the people you care about the most
- enjoying better sleep, better relationships, better overall health
- feeling excited about your future.

Imagine waking up every day knowing that no matter what is thrown your way, you have the confidence and skills to sail through any high seas and bad weather, and bring your crew with you. Most days you will achieve what is important to you, but even if

you don't, you will have a new way of working with your internal negative self-talk so that it doesn't push you around or lead to over-drinking, over-eating, or taking it out on those around you. You will be a leader who is able to stay connected to your values and purpose, and inspire others, while also having time to take care of your own wellbeing – you will be a happy, healthy leader.

WHY LISTEN TO ME?

Why do I think I am some kind of expert on how to be a happy, healthy leader?

Let's start with formalities. I have a Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Honours), a Bachelor of a life of hard knocks, and I'm a registered psychologist with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra). My thesis to achieve my qualification as a registered psychologist was recognised with a Distinction. My thesis studied a group of CEOs' negative self-talk and self-belief to achieve work goals, and if the practice of a technique called Mindfulness positively impacted both of these and their overall wellbeing. My belief is that if the heads of our organisations have better wellbeing they are also likely to perform far better, which benefits all of us and is why I chose this topic. I chose to focus on male CEOs due to the very poor mental health data on males since the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007–08. However, I also did a pilot study (the practice study before the primary study) that included female CEOs and discovered some interesting gender differences (more on this in Chapter 1). The good news is that my results were significant, which means the practice of mindfulness did help these CEOs improve their wellbeing (more on mindfulness in Chapter 5).

I was very proud to receive a distinction for this work, given that I pretty much dropped out of high school.

My first exposure to leadership was when I worked for my dad in his hardware store. I was 11. I used to serve customers and 'do his books', which involved reconciling bankcard receipts and cheques. If you were born after 1985 you are probably not familiar with a bankcard receipt or cheque! Running a business has been in my blood for a long time.

I would describe my dad as a hands-off, laissez-faire leader and parent. Unless there was something that pissed him off. Then my brother and I would know about it, by his raised voice or a whack on the ass. I think he always felt guilty afterwards for losing his sh#t, as he would apologise immediately following the yelling or whack. I found this very confusing. Was I in trouble or not? He never clarified.

This was one of my first lessons in leadership (and I suppose parenting!). Consistency, clear communication and follow through with what you say. Your people want to know what they are showing up for every day. What my dad taught me (without him realising it) was that it is important to mean what you say and say what you mean. Even if it means some discomfort (in particular, my ass!). What he could have done differently was express his frustration clearly and apply some kind of consequence for my or my brother's behaviour that didn't involve a red ass that he would then feel guilty for and have to apologise for. Dad made mistakes; so do all parents and leaders. Sometimes we don't say what we mean or mean what we say. What is important is to recognise this and own it, while still making it clear there are behaviours that are not acceptable at work and there will be consequences if these don't change. To be honest,

Dad didn't whack me and my brother that often, and compared to today's standards I don't think he would have been reported to child services. I loved my dad very much, and it was his underlying vulnerabilities as a dad, leader and human being that have resulted in me pursuing one of my greatest passions and hopes: better well-being for our men.

My next experience with leadership was with my mum. She was the head of our local Brownies and our school Parents and Citizens' association (P&C), and she ran things very differently to Dad. When I was a child, I felt she was strict compared to Dad. Reflecting on this, I see she was far better at creating boundaries. And she was very consistent. She showed up for every Brownies meet that I recall, and was always there for the P&C. This consistency helped me feel safe, and I knew what I was showing up for if I did the wrong thing. She never apologised for telling me I had done the wrong thing, or the punishment required, which was normally early bed or chores. She rarely raised her voice, but this did not mean I didn't feel her disappointment, which was a motivator for changing my behaviour. Mum has been my greatest positive influence in navigating parenthood during a very difficult and confronting period of my life.

Fast forward to my first job out of school, which was working for a boutique company in IT in the late '80s. I loved my boss. He was focused, determined, jovial and kind of let me just grow with this company. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work in Silicon Valley for six months at the ripe old age of 19. We went from six staff to 60 in months, and suddenly we had a lot more leaders in the business. Some good, some not, but what I recall is a lot of highly intelligent software and hardware engineers, earning big money, while running around with no idea how to lead people. I found this

also to be the case 20 years later when I recruited leaders during the mining boom in Australia. Many highly intelligent mining engineers, earning heaps, with no idea how to lead a team.

My first leadership role was in my late 20s when I set up a local IT recruitment division for global giant Hays. I was exceptional at bringing in new business, and due to my high billings, I was promoted to manager. How many times have you seen this happen to someone and they fail? Just because someone is good at sales, or some other skill, it does not mean they can lead. Keep these people in their lane! Or provide them lots of step-up-to-leadership training. Unfortunately, I wasn't given any training, and my promotion was a big fail. I was now managing my peers, who back then were also my drinking buddies and mates. It didn't help that I had the 'disease to please' gene too, so I avoided difficult conversations hoping the problem would resolve itself, or I tried to solve the problem myself through working ridiculous hours. I eventually had to 'grow some', but then, out of sheer frustration and fatigue, I went to the other extreme – being overly strict – and suddenly found myself with three fewer drinking buddies.

My next leadership role was about two years later, heading up a state office for a highly reputable executive search firm. This was a step-up role again, as I had originally started with this organisation doing business development and placing people. In recruitment, this is really a glorified sales role, but again, it was something I was good at. When I was offered the state management role, I was a little reluctant based on my previous fail. However, the promotion came about due to a change of ownership, with some staff deciding to leave. This meant I was not managing my work friends, and it allowed me to hire some of my own staff. I also made sure I put

some healthy boundaries between me and my team. This was a far better experience. I still struggled with those more difficult conversations with staff, and often wondered if the decisions I was making were the right ones. I could have really used a leadership coach back then. However, the leadership coaching industry was in its infancy then. I also felt like I had something to prove in my 30s, so I thought asking for help could mean I was failing. This may be you right now. I wished I had asked for help.

Even though this was a more positive and successful leadership experience, it burnt me out a little – and it happened around the same time I was starting IVF treatment. I was all over the place with hormones running through my body. My boss at the time gave me a piece of advice I have never forgotten:

Margie, I don't care if you are a bad manager or a good manager – what people want is consistency, so they know what they are showing up for each day.

Not sure this was the best advice I had ever received from a boss, but I got where he was coming from. This piece of advice also resonated with what I learned from Dad about consistency.

Fast forward a couple of years, I needed a break from leading people. I decided I wanted 'skin in the game' and became a partner in a highly reputable boutique executive search firm. I was also leading a small team, but I felt cured from the failures of the past. I was able to lead people without fear of rejection and just focus on helping them achieve what they needed to. I still experienced some disappointment if they failed, but I no longer saw *myself* as a failure.

Some people want to be on board and some don't. I am not going to say I was a remarkable leader, as that wasn't true, but I was on my

way to being a happy, healthy leader. Later, I will share what ensued after this and how I ended up leaving that career, but for now I just want you to know that I have had some wins and fails as a leader, as most of us do.

As I mentioned earlier, my psychology thesis was focused on CEO wellbeing and performance. I was determined to find out how one can lead, perform and also be well. Following the outcomes and learnings from my thesis, I was able to create and apply a model that helps leaders recognise what is getting in the way of them being a happy, healthy leader and how to overcome these challenges to become one. I have proven the model at an individual and team level through pre- and post-analysis, as well as through ongoing, positive outcomes and feedback from clients. The method works.

The Happy, Healthy Leader is not just a book about statistics and outcomes or even leadership. It is the fusion of direct experience, heartbreak, failure, success, enlightenment, tears, belly laughter, uncomfortable decisions and discussions, insight, epiphanies, abandonment, being sacked, being promoted, being loved and rejected ... and much more. I hope you enjoy reading it and, more importantly, can find your way to being a happy, healthy leader.

SO, HOW DOES THIS WORK?

In this book I am going to take you through the **seven steps** that will transition you to being a happy, healthy leader. I will also provide real-life examples of clients (using pseudonyms to respect their privacy and confidentiality) who have addressed each step, and how this positively impacted their journey to being happy, healthy leaders. To keep it simple each step is a chapter, as follows.

Chapter 1 - Where are you now on your leadership journey?

In step 1, I will help you to understand first what can take you off course from achieving happy, healthy leadership. I will also provide some of the important facts, science and reality around unhappy and unhealthy leadership.

Chapter 2 - When your engine overheats

In step 2, we will do a deeper dive into what you do that sets you off course and towards unhealthy and unhappy leadership. This can involve external factors such as other people, market forces, pandemics, even the weather itself (global warming, floods, bushfires, etc.). I will also help you understand your internal compass – that is, mindset, stress and negative self-talk – so that you can begin to develop a new way of navigating these when they show up (because the reality is, they will).

Chapter 3 - What's your destination?

In step 3, I will help you point the compass towards what is important to you by clarifying your values and goals. We will also identify some more immediate goals for you to get some value and quick wins from this book.

Chapter 4 - A map to guide a healthy mind and leader

In step 4, I will introduce you to the first of two key tools that are going to set you on your course to being a happy, healthy leader. This particular tool, the Matrix, is based on psychological science and has been a game changer for many leaders by helping leaders

get team members back on the boat and making it clear who is not on board. This tool will also help you set healthy work boundaries.

Chapter 5 - Your lifeboat: Mindfulness

In step 5, I will introduce you to your second tool, which is going to be your lifeboat for when 'bad weather' arrives, such as unexpected change, bad performance and negative feedback. It will also be your kryptonite for negative self-talk. Mindfulness is not just another Eastern fad, and there is way more to it than just sitting in quiet reflection. Your team is going to love this one, too.

Chapter 6 - Being a happy, healthy leader

In step 6, I'll set you up for success by developing your 10-year happy, healthy leader plan, which includes your key values and goals. You will also see how easy it is to apply your two new tools in the short and long term. My clients love this practical step.

Chapter 7 - Bon voyage!

In your final step, before you set sail, I'll help you prepare for any bad weather ahead that may set you off course from your 10-year plan. You will finish the book harnessed with immediate steps you can do right now, which will set you off on your journey towards being a happy, healthy leader.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Whether you are a CEO, executive, manager, team supervisor, area manager or director on a board, you will most likely

have the responsibility of leading others. For this reason, I use 'leader' or 'leadership' throughout this book as a description, rather than role titles.

- From Chapter 1 on, I've used the abbreviation HHL for happy, healthy leader.



CHAPTER 1

WHERE ARE YOU NOW ON YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY?

INTRODUCTION

Why aren't you a happy, healthy leader (HHL) – what is the problem? What are your fears and desires? It seems straightforward. You probably bought this book because you are NOT an HHL. Or perhaps you think you are but wanted to be sure. Or maybe something else.

Whatever the reason, we need to start by identifying the current problem, gap or challenge that's preventing your journey towards being an HHL. This is kind of Psychology 101: diagnose the problem properly before deciding on the most appropriate treatment. It is time to look at the current state of the boat and see what equipment and supplies you have or do not have. Do you get my drift?

MEDIKA'S STORY

When I met Medika, she was in a senior leadership role working for a large infrastructure and services organisation. As a lawyer, she was responsible for reducing risk in complex strategic and operational issues, and for negotiations with government and other key stakeholders. Medika was very good at her work, highly respected, and was often asked to present at important meetings or events. She was referred to me primarily to focus on her confidence, in particular with public speaking.

I do a lot of public speaking so I was confident I could help her, but as with most of my clients the 'problem' they are referred to me to work on is often not the key issue. The problem is often a symptom of a more complex underlying issue or something completely unrelated! And using the sailing metaphor, the problem is often the tip of the iceberg with the real issue hidden from view. This is where being a registered psychologist has been incredibly valuable as I have the skills and training to help someone identify and better manage any suppressed or difficult experiences and feelings.

In short, what I discovered with Medika was that it wasn't a lack of confidence to speak in public; rather, it was a deep sense of being in the wrong job and the wrong environment. She was going to work and 'checking her values at the door', having to find the energy to show up for her team, her boss and her employer – and hating it. Yes, Medika loved her team and some of the people she worked with, and often this is what keeps people in a job. She was also the main income provider for her family, so she felt enormous pressure to do well in her job, even if she didn't enjoy it. So, her reluctance to do public speaking was in part that fear we all have of standing in front of an audience, but for Medika, her conflict over her values

and those of her employer was the real reason she didn't want to 'speak up' and be heard. She didn't believe in what the organisation was doing. I don't think she was even aware that she was using her fear of public speaking as a cover for recognising that she had nothing good to speak about.

So before you embark on your journey towards being an HHL, we first need to understand where you are now. Understanding where you are now, and what barriers there may be, is essential before we set course on your new journey towards being an HHL.

We do need to drop the oar first, and dig it in, and yep, some of it may raise uncomfortable thoughts or feelings and even hurt a little.

- What do you think is the key barrier or problem?
- Can you detail it, including how it started?
- Are there any underlying factors that contribute to it?
- What keeps it there?

Perhaps you don't know exactly what the problem is; you just know that you are unhappy in your leadership role.

Fears versus desires

Besides not knowing exactly what the problem is, the other big dilemma I see with unhappy leaders is this ongoing internal mental battle of fears versus desires. You may be very clear about your desired destination as a leader and what that looks like, but your fears – which in most cases is fear of failure, looking foolish or perhaps being rejected – stop you. Then there is the frustration you feel that you let your fears stop you. I get it. I have been there too.

Focusing on the destination instead of the journey

There is also this human quest for happiness, which ironically causes us to be unhappy. We focus on the destination instead of focusing on the journey. My view – and many other researchers’ view – on happiness and gratitude is that we may feel more satisfied in our lives if we can appreciate what we have today. The focus on what we don’t have is making many of us miserable. And yes, I know a quest for happiness can result in all sorts of positive outcomes. And we do need to have a destination in mind. But I am talking about those days where you feel like you are never going to be happy. On those days, it is essential you do what I have found to be hugely beneficial to many leaders (and myself): write down three things you are grateful for having experienced or having in your life on that day. The truth is, happiness can be experienced in many different ways with less effort than you may have thought.

Sometimes, appreciating even the simplest of things can trigger that sense of happiness. For me, it is my first coffee, a cuddle with my dog and freedom to choose what I do in the first two hours of the morning. If you want to know more about how your quest for happiness may be the problem, do yourself a huge favour and get Russ Harris’s book *The Happiness Trap*. This book is actually what sparked my interest in becoming a psychologist. It is a very easy read and could be a game changer for you.

So, you may wonder why I called this book *The Happy, Healthy Leader*. Well, by using the methods presented in this book, I have moved into a life filled with happiness that is no longer governed by a ‘quest’, nor by the world around me. And I have seen my clients do the same. That’s not to say life is all unicorns and rainbows, but now I see happiness as a *way of being* rather than a *destination*. It is

about learning to identify the barriers or problems as they present themselves, and rather than struggle with them, find new ways to work through them. But first, we need to uncover what the real problems are for you.

WHY BEING AN HHL CAN BE CRITICAL

For men

In my thesis research on male CEOs, I found there was a huge spike in suicides among men aged 35–55 following the GFC of 2007–08. The suggestion was that this age demographic is more commonly where leaders sit, and after the GFC, expectations went up and wellbeing was ignored. Men tend not to seek help (compared to women), and this is why their wellbeing, in particular their mental health, gets ignored. Many men (not all) perceive asking for help as some kind of weakness and feel shame. I have witnessed this first-hand with male leaders I have coached. I started writing this book at the beginning of 2020, arguably before another global recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Menfolk, can I ask that you trust me with what I am about to say next at face value: there is no shame in asking for help. I know it feels like shame, but that is just your mind giving you the wrong information due to genetics, upbringing, and social influence and pressure. You need to go against the tide here and ask for help. I have worked with many men who came to me for coaching but also needed help with their fear of failure and sense of shame. Find a coach who is also a psychologist, or ask your medical practitioner for a referral to a good therapist. No one has to know you are getting the support. You just need to get it. If you have had moments or days where you have lost hope and wondered if ending

your life would be better for you and your loved ones, help is available. Here are the numbers and links you can access anytime – most countries are included.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_crisis_lines

For women

Before undertaking my main thesis research on male CEOs, I conducted a pilot study with female CEOs. I identified a key difference between the female and male CEOs in relation to their self-beliefs about developing their careers: men scored higher. When I found this result, I had one of those ‘a-ha’ moments. In my 15 years of recruitment I noticed that women were far more critical of the skill or experience gaps they may have for a potential new role. You may have heard of the research floating around a few years ago that suggested a man will apply for a job with only two of the 10 requirements for the role, while a woman will not apply unless she has eight. This gets in the way of women advancing their careers. Ladies, this can be resolved through learning how to have a healthier mindset about yourself and your career. You can achieve this by learning new strategies to deal with that inner critic, which my female clients fondly call the ‘inner biatch’. A psychologist, counsellor or coach can help you with this. Women also need to learn how to manage boundaries and visibility more effectively. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I noticed that women took on the role of home educator and provider. Some women told me it felt like we had regressed 30 years. I don’t want to get into a debate about gender roles; maybe that is for a future book. What my research and experience working with women and their careers for over 20 years has highlighted is that

women need to get better at saying ‘no’ and speaking up. I developed a program this year specifically for female leaders, which focuses on the three key areas I see women needing the greatest help with: mindset, boundaries and visibility. I will touch on some of these throughout the book, and I would also recommend you get a coach if these three areas are something you know you need to work on.

For all

By identifying and detailing your problems and fears, by your own reflection or the support of someone else, you will find it far easier to set a plan to work towards your desires. One of the consequences of not understanding the problems and their underlying causes is reoccurrence of contributing factors that got missed. They keep showing up, and you continue in a cycle you cannot seem to break.

WHAT DOES AN UNHAPPY, UNHEALTHY LEADER LOOK LIKE?

What do I mean by an unhealthy, unhappy leader? Let’s talk about unhealthy first. This may seem straightforward; for example, if you are not doing any kind of physical activity on a daily basis and aren’t eating and sleeping well, you could say that is unhealthy. And I would agree. As a psychologist, I also apply the lens of a healthy mind. How do I know if a leader’s mind is unhealthy? Behaviour, such as how the leader handles a stressful day.

What are the behaviours you bring to work and take home, when you are feeling good about the world and when you are not? Do you self-medicate with alcohol, food or drugs (prescription or illicit)? Do you avoid people? Are you grumpier? How do your direct reports, peers and boss comment on how you manage your

day? You may have been involved with some rather confronting 360-degree feedback that gave you all of this information. This might be why you are reading this book.

A WORD ON 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

There is some debate among specialists in organisational psychology and development about whether 360-degree feedback is a valid measure of a person's performance. The purpose of 360-degree feedback (also known as a multi-rater feedback survey) is to seek evaluation of a leader's performance from multiple raters, typically their boss, direct reports, peers, and sometimes customers and other stakeholders. The leader is also required to complete the same survey as a self-evaluation, which is why it is called 360 feedback, as the survey considers all points of view. The reason there is some debate about the efficacy of 360 feedback is that the survey is often completed anonymously, which can sometimes see disgruntled employees making harsh evaluations that may not be a true representation of the leader's performance. Conversely, if the respondent sample is small, it might be obvious who provided the feedback, so some respondents may present a leader in a better light for fear of retribution. Putting all of that aside, if there is consistency of feedback across a decent sample (in my view, six or more) who are saying the same things, then we tend to consider that reliable feedback.

For those who aren't familiar with 360-degree feedback, it might be worth some consideration. And I say 'some' on purpose. It is one data point that, if not managed well, can cause more harm than good. Harm might be receiving the 360 report via email with no explanation of what the feedback actually means and/or negative feedback being used as some kind of weapon or exit process.

Good 360 feedback is delivered by a qualified professional who can explain the results to you and help you with your reactions.

When I use 360 feedback, I am interested in the observations of others compared to what the leader thinks they are portraying. The research indicates 90% of leaders have a different view of what they are showing to the world compared to what is actually being seen. This gap provides a clear opportunity for improvement. We are going to look at this in more depth in Chapter 4.

For now, the behaviours seen, whether you become aware of them through a formal or an informal process (e.g., one of your peers has recently asked if you are okay, or your boss has asked why you are having some staff turnover), can reveal that you're an unhealthy leader. These behaviours might include struggling to make decisions, venting frustrations with your co-workers, avoiding conflict for fear of rejection, drinking more at business lunches or getting behind in deadlines. You know that if you're an unhappy and unhealthy leader, you're going to struggle to be your best every day. Yes, we can all fake it occasionally, like on those days when we've had an argument before work with our partner, kids or both, which has left us feeling a mixture of anger, guilt and sadness. But if you have been struggling with something in your professional and/or personal life for some time, it is going to show. As I have said to many clients, you can only hold a beach ball under water for so long before it pops to the surface and smacks you in the face.

What often lies beneath the surface is fear, anxiety and sometimes anger. It is pretty simple. As a leader you want to be perceived as being fearless with no faults, and therefore it is your job to make sure your fears, frustrations and faults are well concealed. In my

research, my client work and my life, the most common fears I see are failure; lack of respect; not being accepted; imposter syndrome; loss of income; and never getting on top of life or 'getting it all done'. The most common desires are feeling respected and valued; managing stress better; getting better sleep; and having time for exercise, family and 'me'.

As you will learn, hiding your fears and faults is ineffective and can actually make the problem worse. In some cases, it can lead to unhealthy coping behaviours such as avoidance and procrastination; eating and drinking more; and self-medicating with painkillers, sleeping pills or illegal drugs. Other symptoms might be bingeing on Netflix; not taking your dog for a walk or doing any other exercise; and taking out your frustrations at work or at home or avoiding colleagues or loved ones so you don't take it out on them. This is when 'unhappy' rears its head.

WHY YOU NEED TO TACKLE STORMY SEAS

There are short- and long-term benefits to recognising problems you are experiencing as a leader at work or in life. Short-term benefits include finding new ways to manage your concerns, worries and frustrations at work for some quick wins, which you will get in this book. However, you also need to commit to doing a deeper dive into these issues; otherwise, they will just resurface. The long-term benefit of 'looking at and owning your stuff' is being an HHL. If you don't make both short- *and* long-term commitments to yourself, nothing will change. And more often than not I have seen things worsen for leaders, sometimes resulting in unemployment, divorce and bad mental health outcomes.

For men, this is more worrying. As I mentioned, my research found a huge increase in male suicide for men aged 35–55 following the GFC. I worry that we will continue to see this happen again following the financial impacts caused by other events out of our control, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. What I also found in my research and through coaching is that male self-worth is more strongly connected to their work. Women also get self-worth from their work, but they (we) also achieve this through other domains in our lives, in particular through social connections with friends and family. The added advantage of using social connections for self-worth is that having someone listen, or know you are struggling, directly improves mental health and wellbeing. Can I say, many men are sh#t at this.

I remember as I was growing up, hearing men complain how women are such talkers and gossipers, and they could never understand the need for this. My belief (and research would probably back me up here) is that our constant talking and chatter helps our mental health. I used to experience this at work. I admit, in my 20s and 30s, I used to love a bit of office gossip. I also appreciated being able to vent about my boss or someone else at work who was pissing me off. I don't ever remember men getting in on those conversations. Instead, they were raised to 'suck it up'. Suck it up is what is leading to them thinking they are the only ones with the problem, and they feel huge amounts of shame. For some, they would rather end their life than admit they are not coping. This makes me so sad. It is so important women and men embrace our differences at work and in life and start to work out ways to help each other rather than lay blame.

Regardless of your gender identity, the biggest irony is that below the surface or behind that curtain there is nothing to fear. It is the fear of going there that is the issue. If you have seen the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, you may remember that towards the end of the film, Dorothy's little dog, Toto, pulls back a curtain to expose a frail old man at the control of a machine portraying a large, loud and very intimidating wizard. Dorothy and her friends had nothing to fear in the end.

The same goes for you. Once you start applying what you learn from this book, you will start to experience this irony too. You will learn how to work with fear, and not let it stop you from achieving what is important to you.

A very personal example for me occurred in November 2018, when I stopped drinking alcohol. I had been thinking about stopping all that year. However, I was terrified of losing my 'stress parachute' for a bad day at work or home. The irony is, it was the *decision* to stop drinking that was the hardest part, as what followed was a few brief periods of discomfort but an end result of a life with far less stress, far less anxiety, better sleep, better skin, weight loss and way more energy. Plus, my eyes lost that grey look. I have never felt better. If you're thinking about quitting alcohol, I highly recommend it. Get your hands on the book *This Naked Mind* by Annie Grace. What I experienced was nothing like I had imagined and feared.

SO, HOW DO YOU START TO BECOME AN HHL?

1. Write down your **top three fears**. They might be some of the ones I've already suggested in Table 1. If you have more than

three, that is perfectly fine. On first reading this book, though, you may only get to your first three.

2. Now write down what your **top three desires** are. What do you want to be different 12 months from now?
3. Subscribe to blogs and podcasts that provide new thinking on mental health, mindset and stress at work. My favourites are:

The Marie Forleo Podcast – Marie Forleo

Better Than Yesterday – Osher Günsberg

All in the Mind – ABC

Tell Me About Your Pain – Curable

Don't Just Survive, Thrive – Nicola Steel

ANALYSE THE PROBLEM

I don't know about you, but I know I have jumped in to fix a family member's or friend's problems before really understanding the issue, often making it worse and pissing them off! Yes, time is never on our side, and we don't always have the luxury of analysing every problem, particularly when we believe we already have the solution. However, I am going to ask those of you who prefer to get to the solution, or read the last chapter of a book first, to take a breather and follow these steps.

The Four Ps

Psychologists are trained to use a process called the Four Ps to analyse and assess an individual before we commence treatment. I also use this process with all of my corporate clients and find it incredibly insightful and helpful. The Four Ps are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Four Ps for analysing a problem

Precipitating	What are the most recent factors involved in or influencing the problem?
Predisposing	What historical factors might be influencing the problem? What innate traits might a leader have that are negatively impacting their ability to be an HHL?
Perpetuating	What keeps the problem there? What keeps coming up, being repeated or reinforcing the issue?
Protecting	What support mechanisms and resources does the leader have in place that they could access to resolve the problem?

So now you have a basic understanding of the Four Ps, I want you to go through each of these for yourself.

Precipitating

Have a look at your list of top fears. What was the straw that broke the camel's back and led you to buy this book – what are the current stressors in your life getting in the way of you being an HHL? Has something specific happened in the past few days, weeks or year that has resulted in you not feeling happy or healthy about your work and leadership career?

Predisposing

What has happened in the past that may be contributing to the problem?

Examples:

- Were you given some negative feedback some time ago about your approach as a Leader and have been overly cautious since?
- Like me, did you try to be 'mates' with people you manage and it backfired, so now you keep a huge distance?
- Were you told at some point that you were not good enough or felt you were not good enough, so now you get defensive easily or avoid disciplining for fear of being rejected?

Do you have some noted personality traits that are a block to success?

Examples:

- Are you a born worrier, or always late, or struggle with detail, or perhaps ask for too much detail?
- Do you prefer to leave things to the last minute, or are you always ahead of schedule, which means others struggle to keep up?
- You may have done a personality test to discover you have more of a leaning towards hard facts and therefore struggle with team members who prefer to solve problems using abstract ideas and concepts. Or you may know you are an anxious person, and when anxiety gets hold of you, you micro-manage or lose your sh#t.

Look, we all have them. I am a born worrier, self-confessed control freak and often ahead of schedule!

Perpetuating

What is causing the issue to reoccur? You may feel you have tried everything to 'fix' the problem or be an HHL. You may have read

books, listened to podcasts, gone on retreats, had a coach, walked the Inca or Kokoda trail where you felt you finally had peace, only to return to work and find that two weeks later, after the inner glow has worn off, the same thing keeps happening.

There are also likely to be external factors that are outside your control keeping the problem there.

Examples:

- Your boss has a communication style that you struggle with.
- You turn up to work most days feeling like you are checking your values at the door as you walk in.
- You may be trying to meet unrealistic goals or expectations not set by you.
- You may have financial obligations you cannot immediately change (e.g., mortgage, kids' schooling, debt), which may mean you feel trapped in a job you don't enjoy or a toxic environment.
- Bad health of a family member may require your time, attention and financial support.
- Any unexpected event – pandemic, cyclone, bushfires, bad health, company shutdown or buy-out that was not shared with you – could be having an impact.

Protecting

What do you have that is helping and supporting you?

Examples:

- Who is in your corner at work?
- Who supports you at home or socially? Who is your go-to person?

- What skills, knowledge and training do you have to solve the problem?
- What are your inherent strengths?

Why are the Four Ps important?

While I don't analyse my leaders as I may a clinical client, I have found using the Four Ps has helped leaders themselves to uncover blocks that they had missed or buried. This process also helps you identify what supports you do have and may not be accessing.

You can use them to unpack the issue to fully appreciate the obvious and not-so-obvious underlying factors (the latter often being key to solving the issue – a bit like the missing piece of evidence in a crime show that leads to discovering the perpetrator).

I don't expect you to have all the answers to all these Four P questions. The purpose of considering them is to help you understand fully where you are now. It is important to be honest with yourself, even though that might not feel great. It's time to look below deck and below the iceberg. Even though it may sting, once aired it will mean you are able to move towards being an HHL.

You may also like to summarise your Four Ps into 100 words or less. This formulates your current state so that we can then move on to your 'intervention'.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Understanding (and not avoiding) the facts around happy versus unhappy leaders and how these manifest is an important first step towards becoming an HHL.

- As painful as it is, applying the Four Ps to reveal what is getting in the way of you being an HHL is key. Don't avoid this step! Because ...
- Analysing the problem may provide you with the clue you have been missing to solve the problem and be an HHL.

You will have noticed I love metaphors! I find them easy to remember, as do my clients, rather than a whole lot of theory and steps. So, even if you only absorb the following metaphor (which will probably only make sense if you have actually read the chapter), you are more likely to achieve your goal of happy, healthy leadership.

If you want to arrive at a different destination to where you are now, before setting your course you need to find out what is or isn't in your boat to start with. Only then can you start making modifications, and certainly this needs to be done before you set sail. I see way too many leaders skip this important step and end up back where they started, feeling more frustrated and unhappy.

MEDIKA REVISITED

You may remember my client Medika at the beginning of this chapter. By taking the steps to understand Medika's real problem, which was NOT her self-confidence or inability to do public speaking, we were able to identify she was experiencing a values clash with her employer that ultimately impacted her confidence to speak. Medika expressed she really wanted to work for a charity or not-for-profit organisation. Understanding this opened the door to focus on the real problem, which was to find a new job that also enabled her to unhook from her limiting self-beliefs. You see, Medika also learned that her unwillingness to speak was a lack of belief in herself, too.

By working in an environment she didn't believe in, over time she lost confidence in her abilities. I see this all too often. If you have done everything you can to build your skills and experience but are still lacking self-belief in your ability to do your role, you may be in the wrong role or environment.

When I started working with Medika, she had expressed anxiety regarding upcoming redundancies as at that point she didn't believe she could get a better job somewhere else. About two months after we finished her program, she was offered a redundancy which she accepted. Medika told me that it was time for her to accept she was unhappy and to face her fears. She had started to regain confidence in herself, her abilities and what she could offer a new employer. Medika took about six months off and then, during a global pandemic, she emailed me saying she had found a role in a not-for-profit organisation and was delighted. She thanked me and said, 'Margie, I am happy.'

Medika, I am so happy for you. You did the work and faced your demons. And, it seems, it was worth it!