



Michael J. Stabile, Ph.D.  
[mstabile@futurenowed.com](mailto:mstabile@futurenowed.com)  
[www.futurenowed.com](http://www.futurenowed.com)



## SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

A monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas & tools into the Viox culture.

Transformational Stories 1

Your Leadership Opportunity 2

Build Trust Through the Bonding Cycle 3



## Transformational Stories

This month we are highlighting *Care to Dare*, a book by George Kohlreiser, Susan Goldsworthy, Duncan Coombe. It shows you how great leaders all over the world unleash astonishing potential within themselves, their people and their organizations by building the trust, delivering the change and inspiring the focus that underpin engagement and create conditions for innovation. These are "Secure Base Leaders" who masterfully combine caring and daring. Secure Base Leadership works at the personal, team and organizational levels. It is not just a set of skills — the "doing." It is first and foremost a way of "being." You care enough to dare people to reach for their dreams, and in the process, you

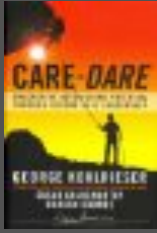
can return to your very humanity.

The story of Anders, a business executive, underscores the power of secure based leadership; "My most important success factor in life is the building of trusting relationships with people. Trust implies honesty, openness and respect. My team deepened its bond through various events that led to building relationships and understanding each other. The more successes we had as a team, the more energy we created in the team. We supported each other and I became a very proud leader of a very powerful team.

A personal incident showed me the success of what we "created" in this

team. I broke my ankle and was totally dependent on others for any transport, movement—everything. On the first day, a team member was at door at 7:00 AM to take me to the office. The team worked out the details and I was supported every day for six weeks without asking for it.

I led this group of people through the process of becoming a deeply bonded, high performing team: its establishment, its successful output. We celebrated our successes by sharing and giving direction to the rest of the company. A few of the team members asked me to be their personal mentor and some of those relationships are still going strong after many years, even through I am now in a new role and position."



## Your Leadership Opportunity

Great leaders all over the world unleash astonishing potential and achieve sustainable high performance simply by tapping into their own secure bases and becoming a secure base for other people. We define high performance as challenging yourself and others to see and achieve what is beyond normal expectations. Attachment theory revolves around the basic premise that all humans have an innate desire to seek closeness to and comfort from a person who gives them a sense of protection. Researcher J.W. Anderson noticed how children would explore but always keep their mothers as a base — a secure base.

A secure base provides protection and encourages risk-taking. A secure base both waits and intervenes. You can be a secure base for others only when you have multiple secure bases yourself. If you only provided safety, you would be a source of great comfort for the other person; however, without inspiring him to explore, take risks or seek challenge, you actually overprotect and limit his potential. Providing only one side of the equation reduces the ultimate performance of the people you want to lead — either because they are too comfortable or because they are too anxious.

In the words of leadership guru Warren Bennis, “The basis of leadership is the capacity of the leader to change the mindset, the framework of another person.” In many ways, being a Secure Base Leader is like “belaying” a rock climber. A rope is looped through an anchor above the immediate climbing area. The climber is attached to one end of the rope. The belayer, using a special device clipped to his harness, holds the other side of the rope so that the climber has enough slack to move, but not enough to fall any great distance. As the climber advances up the mountain or wall, the belayer watches the climber intently and takes up slack as needed.

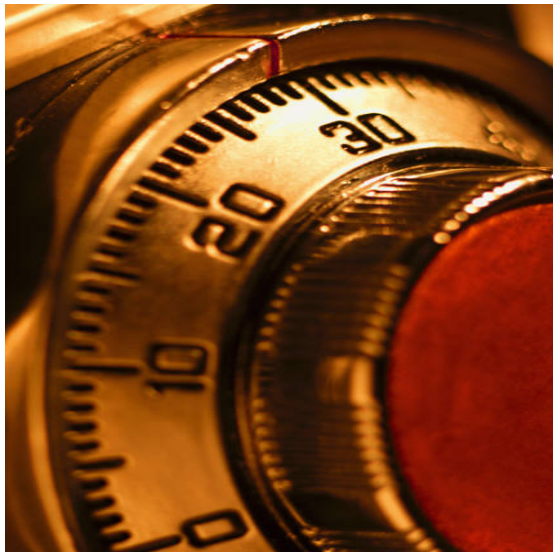
All bonds start as “attachments” that are basic connections. An attachment progresses to a bond when there is an exchange of emotion and a depth of contact — a “chemistry,” if you will. However, bonds are not permanent, nor should they be. “Separation” from a bond at the right time is natural, just as it is natural for a child to leave a parent.

The “Mind’s Eye” is the part of the brain that manages our focus. The Mind’s Eye directs the focus of a “flashlight” to shine on either the positive or the negative. Secure Base Leaders influence the way others make that choice. They ensure that the Mind’s Eye of the individual or team is focused on the goal, the benefit, the desired results, the learning, the opportunity and the possibility.

### Brain Science & Change

Our brains have a friend or foe “early warning system,” a flashlight that changes focus based on very quick judgments about whether someone is a friend, and therefore treated “fairly,” or whether they are a foe, and therefore treated with suspicion. When the foe system is alerted by a perceived sense of threat, people will shut down, become distant and focus on problems as they attempt to reduce the perceived danger.

Brain science also demonstrates that people are fundamentally motivated by a sense of belonging. Researchers have discovered that social exclusion lights up the same parts of the brain as physical pain. When people say, “I feel hurt,” they really do feel the pain.



## Secure Base Leadership in Action

The behaviors of Secure Base Leaders are clear, practical and learnable. In fact, you may already be exhibiting some of the nine characteristics:

- 1. Stays Calm.** A Secure Base Leader remains composed and dependable, especially when under pressure. This characteristic is so fundamental that a leader needs to master it before he is able to portray other characteristics.
- 2. Accepts the Individual.** Secure Base Leaders show caring for the human being before focusing on the issue or problem. They separate the person from the problem. As far as possible, they avoid judging and criticizing people.
- 3. Sees the Potential.** Secure Base Leaders see the employee's potential talent versus his current functioning or "state." This characteristic is not about short-term potential. Instead, it is about a deeper vision or even a dream for the person's deepest potential — not in one year, but in 10 or 20 years.
- 4. Uses Listening and Inquiry.** Our research reflected a stylistic preference of Secure Base Leaders toward listening and inquiry rather than "telling" and advocacy. They mastered the arts of asking open-ended questions and engaging in a dialogue to seek a greater truth.
- 5. Delivers a Powerful Message.** Secure Base Leaders are masters at coming up with pithy sentences, or what we call "bull's-eye transactions." Secure Base Leaders are good at introducing these bull's-eye transactions when it really matters, not hours or weeks later when the moment has passed.
- 6. Focuses on the Positive.** Secure Base Leaders are good at directing the Mind's Eye of other people to focus on the positive rather than the negative. They help others to see their potential and the opportunity for learning, even in a crisis or time of difficulty.
- 7. Encourages Risk-Taking.** This characteristic goes beyond acceptance and beyond seeing the potential. It takes those concepts into direct action. Secure Base Leaders actively dare people to unleash their potential by providing tangible opportunities for risk-taking.
- 8. Inspires Through Intrinsic Motivation.** When leaders are invited to talk about the people and events that have influenced them, they do not reference money or financial reward at all. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable.
- 9. Signals Accessibility.** People believe that their Secure Base Leaders are always accessible and available rather than detached and unavailable or "too busy." What is important is the perception that the secure base is available if needed. Linked to the bonding cycle and the Mind's Eye, these nine characteristics work at the individual, team and organizational levels.

## Build Trust Through the Bonding Cycle

Central to our mission to humanize organizations, bonding is the guts and emotion of leadership. It is the “caring” part of Care to Dare that we find is often neglected in businesses. A leader can be extremely disciplined, focused and goal-oriented, but without interpersonal bonding, she will probably fail. A form of synergy, we define bonding as forming an attachment that creates more physical, emotional, intellectual and/or spiritual energy than the person or people involved could generate independently.

Bonding is an emotional connection that invites the other person to feel a sense of protection and safety as well as energy and inspiration. Humans cannot thrive without bonding. If you do not bond, you will spend your life in search of what bonding was designed to give. One manifestation of bonding is the ability to feel empathy and compassion for the other person.

A common misconception is that bonding equals friendship. You do not have to like someone to bond with her. You only need a common goal. Hostage negotiators succeed in 95 percent of cases precisely because they are able to bond around a common goal.

When you are bonded, you dare to take a chance on the other person. A Secure Base Leader communicates acceptance and takes a risk toward activating the potential in a person.

Attachment, bonding, separation and grief are the four stages of the bonding cycle:

- **Attachment.** Whether to a partner, a new job or a new project, people first become attached to someone or something. When we are attached, we feel safe enough to let our natural guard down. Attachment is a drive to be in proximity to, to be next to or to be connected.

- **Bonding.** Not every attachment leads to an emotional bond. Bonding flows from what you do with the connection initiated through attachment. When the attachment leads to an exchange or source of energy, and emotion and depth of contact, chemistry between people and the synergy around a common goal, it transforms into a bond.

- **Separation.** All bonds eventually lead to a transition or to an end — an uncoupling, a disconnection or a debonding. Change, if only through the natural passage of time, brings about separation. Separation is all about letting go of somebody or something, and it is a preparation for something beyond grief.

- **Grief.** Grief is an extension of the separation stage. Grief is the experience of saying goodbye in order to say hello. It ideally leads to a new attachment or to a renewal of an attachment. Grief involves the emotional experience resulting from the ending or transition of the bond. If you cannot grieve, you will never be able to bond effectively.





This publication was produced by Michael J. Stabile, Ph.D. at FutureNow, Consulting

Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching.

Call or email for appointments.

[www.futurenowed.com](http://www.futurenowed.com)  
[mstabile@futurenowed.com](mailto:mstabile@futurenowed.com)  
513-460-1015



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"EVERYTHING RISES OR FALLS WITH LEADERSHIP."  
CULTIVATING THE VIOX WORK CULTURE