

SERVANT LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

TOPIC THIS ISSUE: *Leading in Crisis: Wisdom from John Maxwell*

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“The true test of leadership is how you will function in crisis.”
Brian Tracy



A DECISION THAT IS A TURNING POINT?

By: Michael J. Stabile



This edition of the Servant Leadership Focus Newsletter was written with this in mind: to **encourage your heart, empower your thinking, and equip you as a leader.** I have had the great privilege of having John C. Maxwell as one of my mentors over the years. I have been influenced by his books and speaking for over twenty-five years. He is a leader who models

the way, especially during this time of world crisis. His heart, courage, teaching, and leadership have impressed me during this unprecedented time in the history of the world.

John shares when it comes to a crisis...

**The dictionary defines crisis as “an intense time of great difficulty.”*

**The medical term crisis means “a turning point.”*

**In Greek, crisis means decision.*

And John Maxwell’s definition combines all three: **“A time of intense difficulty, requiring a decision, that is a turning point.”**

With all the uncertainty in the world, it is evident that we need leaders who will fight for the highest good of those they lead whether in our homes, at work, or in our communities.

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We are living in a time of intense difficulty, which requires a decision or a series of decisions that are turning points.

Accidental living is living by chance, unintentionally. It is hoping for things just to work out or get better but not doing anything to make it occur. It is living by default and not by design. Accidental leadership is similar. *We just hope our children do what they are supposed to do. We just hope people just do their job, because that is why we hired them, right?*

Crisis leadership is just simply intentional living and leading by our willingness to **make a decision each and every day** to look in the mirror and say what am I doing today **to get at least 1% better today?** *What am I doing today to focus on what is in my control and I can take action on? What decision must I make today that will take me out of my comfort zone?*

The decisions we make today are like seeds. Once they are planted and nurtured they have the opportunity to grow and mature. Leading intentionally means I must face the brutal realities about myself, the Middle East crisis, the world, and recognize I need to make a decision. ***Do I want to remain in the default mode or am I ready to embrace the difficulty, trials, and testing that it brings? Do I want to live in a hopeful reality? Do I want to decide to live with a growth, positive, above the line mindset? Do I decide today, to embrace the challenges that a world in conflict has provided and see the opportunities that lay before us?***

I hope that the following articles will encourage, empower, and equip you to make a decision that will be a turning point for you and all that you influence.



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HOW TO BE CONFIDENT IN A CRISIS

By: John C. Maxwell

*This article originally appeared in the March 2017 issue of *SUCCESS* magazine. It is not only timely, but also right on target for our current World Crisis.

“He who smiles in a crisis has found someone to blame.”



I laughed when I came across this quote because, like anything that humors us, this saying has an element of truth to it. Sometimes the only person thinking positively about a crisis is doing so because he has figured out why it’s not his own fault.

But there are many reasons to think positively in times of crisis. For one thing, within every problem we can find the seeds of opportunity. They might seem small, especially when compared with the enormity of the crisis. But opportunity exists nonetheless.

Furthermore I believe great leaders can handle any crisis with confidence and grace. We might not feel like smiling, but we move forward with the knowledge that a solution is available and attainable. The key to managing crises with confidence is to be thoroughly prepared in order to make informed decisions.

If you are a leader, you know a crisis is never far away. Use the following tips to face an upcoming crisis with the maximum amount of confidence.

4 Keys to Building Your Confidence

I. Prepare for every possibility.

Legendary University of California-Los Angeles basketball coach John Wooden said his favorite part of being a coach was the practices. When practice is perfected, the late coach said, the game becomes automatic. Conversely, when it’s game time and you slacked off in practice, it’s too late to prepare. If you wait to prepare until you’re confronted with a crisis, you’re too late.

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Prepare by listing a variety of possible scenarios and determine your response to each one. Also spend time learning from experts in your industry. Ask them questions about their past crises. Chances are they have encountered the same challenges you are likely to face and can offer sound advice and strategies.

No one can prepare for every contingency, but you can prepare for the known possibilities. Think ahead, be prepared and practice your plan whenever possible. Then, when the crisis comes, your response will be automatic. The more familiar the scenario, the more confident your reaction will be.

2. Define reality.

Iconic management expert Peter Drucker once wrote, “*A time of turbulence is a dangerous time, but its greatest danger is a temptation to deny reality.*” Instead of denying reality during a crisis, an effective leader defines it. This means seeing the situation realistically.

When a crisis arrives, spend some time alone describing the problem. What is it? What caused it? How can you address it?

Ask your team for their assessment. Break it down into measurable parts by separating the solvable from the unsolvable. This is very important. You have to acknowledge what’s in your control to fix and focus on that. Finally, establish a game plan for solving the solvable and commit to it. A defined, measurable plan allows you to proceed with confidence.

3. Communicate often.

This goes back to defining reality. You need to do this for those you lead as much as for yourself. In the face of a crisis, it’s tempting to put your head down and focus only on the problem. But that behavior won’t inspire confidence in others. Be open and describe the problem to your team. Getting things out in the open will clear the air and let them know you are with them. Communicate the game plan for solving it. As you continue to deal with the crisis, repeat this communication process.

My friend Andy Stanley, a great pastor in Georgia, says, “*Vision leaks.*” In other words, leaders can’t expect to share a vision—or a solution to a problem—just one time. Team members need to hear it often to truly embrace and trust it. Your consistent communication will build the team’s confidence in your leadership and in its own ability to overcome the crisis.

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4. Learn to grow.

The California pastor Rick Warren says, “*The moment you stop learning, you stop leading.*” You’ve probably heard the saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. Stop the vicious circle. Instead try to learn why your method didn’t work so you can do something different next time. Intentionally reflect on the experience because experience alone is not the best teacher, *evaluated* experience is. Dig deeply into the tough times for all they can teach you.

The difference between average people and achievers is their perception of and response to failure. The same could be said of crises. Once the crisis has passed, reflect on your leadership during that time.

What did you learn, and where can you improve in leadership, communication, problem-solving and team-building? Debrief your team to discover where they think you can improve and what they learned from the experience.

Crises are stressful and stretch us in ways we don’t enjoy. **But the reality is that difficult times and tough decisions come with the territory in leadership.** But if you prepare beforehand and effectively problem-solve during, you’ll have the necessary tools to get through any crisis with confidence.

7 Principles for Handling Crisis

By: John Maxwell

Recent events in world have reminded us of a stark reality: **we cannot escape crisis situations.** Although unable to avoid them, we can learn to lead people through them. **In fact, dark, difficult times may be the moments when leadership is needed the most.**

While very few of us will ever be responsible to lead in the aftermath of a large-scale catastrophe, we all encounter times of intense difficulty within our organizations. By nature, a crisis urgently demands attention, and yet it can be difficult to know how to respond to sudden adversity. **My hope is that this lesson equips you to lead others with poise and confidence through the storms of life.**



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7 PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING CRISIS

1) Discover and define the real problem

Again as Max De Pree noted, “*the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.*” Leaders must wade into the mire in order to learn precisely what has happened and to make sense of current conditions.

2) Act quickly

3) Provide reassurance

The place to handle a crisis is not from behind a desk but in front of the people. A leader’s visible presence during times of crisis inspires confidence and gives others a sense of security. Certainly, the ability of leaders to control their own emotions is paramount during crisis. In addition, preparation is key. Obviously, some crises are completely unforeseeable. Still, organizations can draw up strategy plans in anticipation of an emergency. Companies with an emergency plan in place are far better positioned to handle a sudden crisis than those in which the leaders must operate on the fly.

4) Simplify the situation

In times of crisis emotions run high and circumstances appear overwhelming. To make clear-headed decisions, a leader has to step back from events to determine the aspects of a situation that are beyond repair and to identify the main issues at stake moving forward. During a crisis, I make a point to withdraw from everything momentarily to list out my top concerns. I then assemble my core leadership team, gather their input, and amend the list accordingly. Putting the main issues on paper helps me to wrap my mind around the crisis and to stay focused amid chaos.

5) Enlist support of influencers

In every organization, a small group of people holds the majority of influence. During a crisis, devote extra attention to making sure key influencers are on board with your plan to handle the crisis.

6) Decide to take action one step at a time

In crisis, conditions are in a state of flux. For this reason, plans extending too far into the future are doomed to failure. When confronting a rapidly changing situation, it’s wise to concentrate on the near-term. Focus on making the next step, let the dust settle, and then reevaluate the situation.



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7) Do what is right and not what is easiest

Difficult problems seldom have simple solutions. Refuse to cut corners or to lower your ethical standards to make the situation easier. Instead, hold to your convictions and put the needs of your people ahead of your personal comfort and convenience.

