



# THE 10 HABITS OF INTENTIONAL LEADERS

WHO CREATE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

By 3x5 Leadership



# UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

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## THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

You can spend 25% of your adult life at work.

What if you hate your job? That's a lot of time spent somewhere doing things that you don't enjoy and that don't add value to your life.

Worse yet, what if the people you lead hate their job? What's your role in that? What's your responsibility?

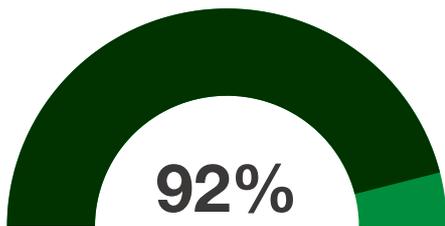
Think about the post-COVID trends of "the Great Resignation" and "Quiet Quitting." People are rethinking what work means to them and what they are willing to tolerate for it.

Here is a sample of the top 20 reasons people hate their jobs based on some recent (post-COVID) research:

- ▶ Under appreciation
- ▶ Not feeling valued or needed
- ▶ Lack of communication and lack of clarity of priorities
- ▶ Overworked
- ▶ No to low opportunity for development and advancement
- ▶ Bad boss
- ▶ Poor company culture
- ▶ Micromanagement
- ▶ Work is incongruent with personal values

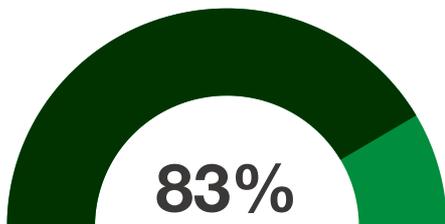
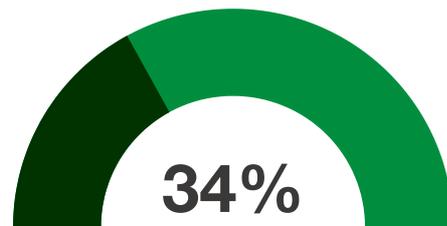
**WHAT STRIKES YOU WHEN YOU LOOK AT THIS LIST?  
WHAT MIGHT YOU ADD?**

We see clear indicators of a leadership problem. Every item above is a direct reflection of the quality of leadership in that business or organization. Now, possibly more than ever before, we need thoughtful, caring, invested, and committed leaders. We need leaders who are intentional.



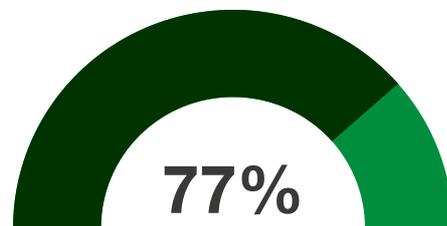
▶ 92% of employees who think having access to professional development is important for career progress and success.

▶ Employees with positive leadership and developmental opportunities are 15% more engaged and boast 34% higher retention.



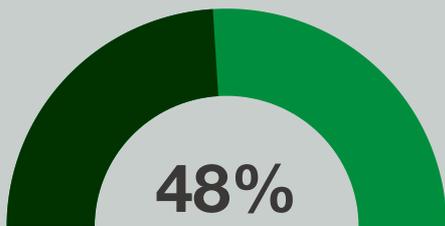
▶ 83% of businesses agree that leadership development is important at every level.

▶ However, 77% of businesses report that leadership is lacking among their ranks and that those leadership challenges are a significant contributor to their current challenges.

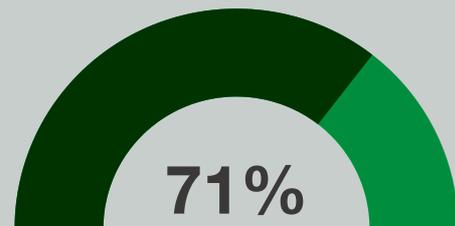


**CLEARLY THERE IS A NEED FOR INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP. IT MATTERS. YET A VOID STILL REMAINS.**

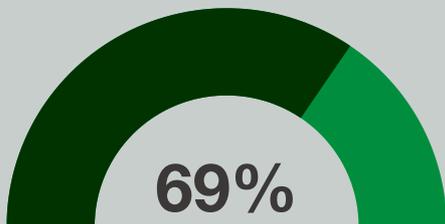
Let's explore just a few more, and very disappointing, numbers on the reality of leadership in the workplace:



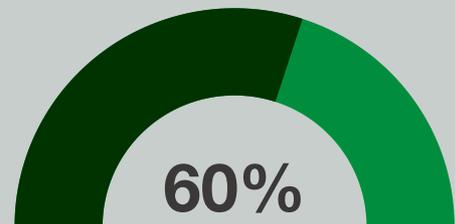
▶ Only 48% of employees view their company's leadership as "high quality."



▶ Moreover, 71% of employees cannot agree that their current leaders will lead their organization successfully.



▶ 69% of employees claim they would work harder if they felt their efforts were better recognized.



▶ 60% of employees report that their direct leader actually damages their self-esteem.

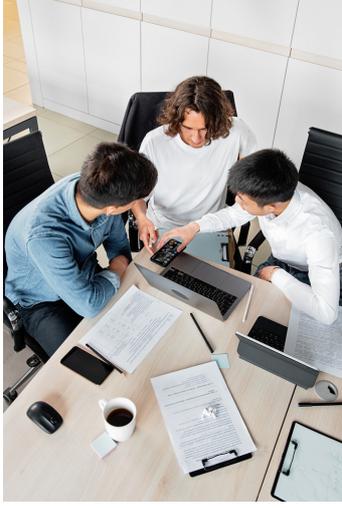
Now, when we look at those numbers, they seem big and clearly indicate a problem. But what does that really look like? Think about an 11-person soccer team. When applying those numbers to a team like that, it means:

- ▶ Only five of the 11 players think they have a good coach, and seven of them doubt that their coach will lead them to a successful season.
- ▶ Seven players say they would play harder if they received more encouragement or positive feedback from their coach.
- ▶ Over half of the players say their coach actually damages their confidence.
- ▶ And eight of the players do not think their team's training plan is sufficient to lead to a successful season.



When you consider those stats, that does not seem even remotely close to a functional team. Even Ted Lasso might not be able to turn that team around.

Clearly, there is a need for intentional leadership and that need still remains unmet in so many places of work. Even closer to home, it's safe to presume that you work in such a place.



Our team at 3x5 Leadership believes in the broad, enduring, and transformational power of leadership. We believe intentional leaders get results that improve lives, communities, and our world through their work.

**3x5 Leadership champions intentional leaders who create significant impacts.**

But what is intentional leadership? A simple online search can generate hundreds of different definitions of leadership, and most of them are pretty valid.

Who are intentional leaders? What do they do? At the end of the day, you are only as good as your sustained habits. Being an intentional leader is like brushing your teeth – just because you did it really well yesterday doesn't mean you don't have to do it again today.

**Sustained intentional leadership comes down to thoughtful, positive habits. It's who you are and what you do. All the time. No matter what. Regardless of circumstances or challenges. So, let's explore the 10 habits of intentional leaders.**



**10 WHOLE HABITS?**

**I CAN BARELY MANAGE THE  
FEW I MAINTAIN NOW.**

**WHAT'S THE QUICK ANSWER?**

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We recognize the anxiety that this idea might stir up. 10 new habits to become an intentional leader? Who can handle that let alone have time for that? Certainly not me! We get it. And we feel the same way. Trust us.

**01**

### **ONE BITE AT A TIME.**

First, we invite you to think of these as steps to follow over time, not merely things you need to be doing all right now simultaneously. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How do you run a marathon? One step at a time.

These habits are learned, practiced, and mastered over years. So, let's start with one habit first! Focus on that for a season before taking the next bite of the elephant or the next step of your marathon.

**02**

### **HABITS ARE NOT HACKS.**

Second, habits are not hacks. These are not quick cheats to leadership success. You can't hack your way to sustained intentional leadership. Habits are based on principles, dedication, discipline, and yes, hard work.

10 habits can be intimidating. They will be hard. But leadership is hard. It requires us to fill challenging spaces of problems, with people, and address shortcomings. Leadership is extremely hard work, just like habits.

**03**

### **WE ARE SO EXCITED TO JOIN YOU ON THIS JOURNEY.**

So, we encourage you to take up the mantle of this heavy burden of intentional leadership and begin carrying it forward one step at a time. We are so excited to join you on this journey.



# THE 10 HABITS OF INTENTIONAL LEADERS

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# NOTE

The habits are offered not in order of importance, but in order of scale, starting with yourself and expanding out towards others. Leadership primarily starts with you, internally. You cannot successfully lead others if you cannot lead yourself.

Now let's dive into the 10 habits.

## 1. LEAD YOURSELF FIRST

- ▶ Intentional leaders take responsibility for their own development and the impact they have on others. You can regulate your emotions and behaviors, employing them for what's best for the team and for others.
- ▶ You control your schedule; you recognize the difference between urgent and important and are purposeful in where you spend your time and attention.
- ▶ As an intentional leader, you take ownership of your own development, not waiting or expecting someone else to do it for you. Leaders are life-long learners; you continuously read, learn, seek feedback, reflect, set personal growth goals, and seek mentorship.
- ▶ You also recognize that you have biases and work to address them.

## 2. LEAD WITH HIGH PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTER

- ▶ Intentional leaders do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons, all the time no matter the situation or consequences.
- ▶ You are of high moral character – you have the awareness to see what the right thing to do is and have the integrity to take appropriate action.
- ▶ You have high civil character – the ability to demonstrate the empathy, loyalty, and compassion necessary to treat everyone with dignity and respect. And you have social character – the ability to act in the same professional, appropriate manner in all environments.
- ▶ Moreover, beyond personal character, intentional leaders scale character across the whole organization to create a shared character-based identity that is consistently mirrored, owned, and demonstrated.

### 3. LEAD AUTHENTICALLY

- ▶ You identify, own, and employ your unique leadership “superpowers” for good – to benefit the organization and people. Being intentional means you are not afraid to be yourself and to let others be themselves.
- ▶ You are willing to lead, behave, speak, and decide in ways that you know to be true, right, and necessary for the organization, regardless of external pressures or perceptions. But authenticity is not a license for bombastic or counterproductive ways of leading under the argument that, “this is just who I am and how I lead; you’ll have to deal with it.”
- ▶ Intentional, authentic leaders behave in ways that are congruent to the organization’s and society’s values.

### 4. CONNECT, ENGAGE AND BE PRESENT

- ▶ Leadership is a people business. Intentional leaders value people. As a result, you are curious – curious to learn about people, to learn from people, and to learn about problems that are hindering their ability to be successful.
- ▶ Intentional leaders listen, seeking to understand others first, then to be understood by them. You use purposeful team rituals to build team cohesion.
- ▶ Intentional leaders influence through trust and relationships, not relying on rules or policies to achieve compliance.

## 5. COMMUNICATE WELL

- ▶ You can't lead if you can't communicate. Intentional leaders are sense makers for others, helping them to see and understand perspective.
- ▶ You instill a sense of pride and ownership by enabling people to know who they are, what they do, and why they do it. Intentional leaders can make compelling arguments to lead change or issue clear, concise guidance in both written and oral communication.
- ▶ You generate organizational purpose, direction, and motivation through your messages.

## 6. CARE AND COMMIT

- ▶ Leaders who are intentional are committed to adding value to their organization and to others when, where, and how they can, even when they are not in charge.
- ▶ You don't require formal authority to lead, influence, and to make things better for people. You seek opportunities, see needs, and take action to take care of them. Intentional leaders don't need to wait to be told what to do.
- ▶ You have an enduring "why" for your service and for your leadership that is revealed through your attitude, work ethic, initiative, and responsibility.
- ▶ You care deeply for other people, both within and beyond your organization, and are committed to doing what you can to make their life and their work experience better.

## 7. INSPIRE THROUGH OPTIMISM AND ENERGY

- ▶ Intentional leaders generate and lead through the commitment of their people, not merely relying on compliance based on authority. You build and maintain professional and meaningful relationships with your people.
- ▶ You build the commitment of others through your example and attitude. You create hope and possibility through perpetual optimism.
- ▶ As a leader, you bring energy to your people and everything your organization does.

## 8. BE PERSISTENT AND SEE THINGS THROUGH

- ▶ Leadership is a business of people...and of problems. Intentional leaders identify problems, challenges, and the need for change and successfully sees those efforts through, even amidst resistance or adversity.
- ▶ Intentional leaders have the necessary grit to endure and the resilience to rebound after failure, which will certainly present itself time and time again.
- ▶ You are willing to put in the hard work to get the needed answer, to solve the problem, and to right a wrong. Intentional leaders create a clear path through ambiguous environments to enable others to act.

## 9. LEAD A CLEAR, PURPOSEFUL, AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

- ▶ You lead an organization whose people are clear on, committed to, and personally aligned with an enduring vision or purpose; you all follow a bright North Star every day.
- ▶ As an intentional leader, you must set clear priorities for your people and teams as well as create predictability in schedules and expectations.
- ▶ You set conditions to ensure priorities are clear and the concept of “last-minute” is foreign to your team. Intentional leaders implement organizational processes to make peoples’ work both effective and efficient, so they are not struggling to simply keep their head above the water of everyday busyness.
- ▶ Through efficient processes, you create organizational capacity for important activities and priorities like investing in the development of your people.

## 10. DEVELOP CULTURE AND PEOPLE

- ▶ Intentional leaders cultivate an organizational culture that is aligned with stated, positive values where everyone feels valued, seen, heard, and appreciated. You don’t consume all the “leadership space” in your organization; you create space and allow others to fill it – you encourage them and give them opportunities to grow through those experiences.
- ▶ Intentional leaders use a developmental approach, always being thoughtful in your leadership approach to ensure it is the best fit for peoples’ developmental needs as well as for the needs of the situation. You invest personal time and resources to “go the extra mile” for peoples’ and groups’ development through activities like mentorship, goal setting, and coaching. You are comfortable giving and receiving feedback. You consistently seek and give quality, timely feedback for personal growth as well as role model it for others and are a champion who normalizes feedback within your organization.

**NOTES**



**SO WHAT NOW?**

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The 10 habits are a lot to consume, we know. Again, leadership is hard. But remember the steps to eating an elephant or to running a marathon. One at a time. There are a few important considerations that can help make your developmental efforts manageable and attainable.

# 01

## KEEP LEARNING

- ▶ First, keep learning more about these topics! Leaders are learners, and our growth in these habits requires both practice and education. So, seek these topics out in books, articles, blog posts, podcasts, and wherever else you consume insight.
- ▶ We can never learn enough about these important topics.
- ▶ The more we learn, the more we are able to connect ideas, creating deeper and broader insight to guide our behavior.

### NOTES

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- ▶ Second, find ways and places to practice these habits in any leadership role you have or can find. Leadership is influence, not authority.
- ▶ You don't need a certain position or title to put these habits into action. We believe in Clay Scroggins' perspective, author of the book, [\*How to Lead When You're Not in Charge\*](#), when he says, "I have some influence with people, I have a network of colleagues, and a sense of what needs to be done; I don't need to wait to be told what to do."
- ▶ Find opportunities to practice the habits in your current role(s) and volunteer for new ones when you can; create opportunities for yourself to get repetitions in the habits.

Don't wait for opportunities to be handed to you, just like any skill, these habits take practice.

I have some influence with people, I have a network of colleagues, and a sense of what needs to be done;  
I don't need to wait to be told what to do.

-Clay Scroggins

### NOTES

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**IT'S TIME TO LEAD WELL**

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Do the best you can until you know better.  
Then when you know better, do better.



Maya Angelou’s timeless quote points to many important behaviors in life – how you treat, love, and accept people. It also applies to your leadership. As an intentional leader, you must always do the best you can. But you must also always seek to learn more and do better. You will never arrive; intentional leadership is a life-long pursuit.

No matter where you are now and where you have been before, we are excited for you to take your first steps on your journey to becoming a more intentional leader. We hope these habits serve as a light to your path.

Thank you for your commitment to intentional leadership. Thank you for serving, loving, and leading in challenging spaces. Everyone is entitled to outstanding leadership – you provide that leadership.  
Lead well, friends.

## REFERENCES

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**02** Survey: 50% Of People Hate Their Jobs – Here’s Why – Zippia

**03** 36 Powerful Leadership Statistics [2022]: Things All Aspiring Leaders Should Know – Zippia

**04** 94: Ryan Gottfredson — How to Elevate your Mind and Why Most Leader Development Programs Fail — Intentional Leader (calwalters.me)



**LEARN MORE ABOUT 3x5  
LEADERSHIP**

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# WHO WE ARE

The 3x5 index card is universally recognized. It is a simple, effective, and enduring tool for leaders to capture and share their voice. It is a metaphor for intentionality – always ready. It is a metaphor for clarity and simplicity. It is a metaphor for our commitment to continuous learning.

We are a team who believes in the power of leadership. We are passionate about making people and organizations better through leader development. We are military professionals, professors, and coaches who are called to make more intentional leaders in the world. You can learn more about our team on our About Page.

[VISIT OUR ABOUT PAGE](#)

## About Us

At 3x5 Leadership *we champion intentional leaders who create significant impacts by finding their unique, compelling, and enduring VOICE* – it's our reason for existence, and we're passionate about it.

To “champion intentional leaders” means to advocate and fight for you to step forward with a sharper focus on how you will engage – with yourself, your team, and your world! We all experience the constant tension of life – distractions abound, there's always *more* that needs to be done, and it will seem like *everyone* is clamoring for your attention. It's tempting to either become overwhelmed or want to step back from it all.

# WHAT WE DO

We champion intentional leaders who create significant impacts.

We do that by helping you find your unique, enduring, and compelling VOICE.

That means:

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- ▶ Describing the accomplishments of your team tomorrow in order to build them today.

## OBSTACLES YOU FACE

- ▶ Guiding you to realize your challenges do not have to be the end of the journey.

## INSIGHT TO INFORM ACTION

- ▶ Harnessing the power of questions and theory to generate momentum.

## CLARIFYING YOUR NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Finding the right direction for you and your team, and building a clear path forward

## ENGAGING ENDEAVORS

- ▶ Unlocking the integrating power of your passion, your purpose, and your people

# HOW WE DO IT

To achieve this, we equip and inspire others through two types of resources:

## LEADER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- ▶ Carefully crafted content across various channels to help you lead more intentionally and create more significant impacts.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Tailored services curated to support your team's specific leadership development needs.

Let us know how we can help you and your team! And always check out our website for new content every week. Finally, you can follow us on social media on any of the platforms below!

## LEAD WELL, FRIENDS.



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# BONUS

25 DAILY STRATEGIES WE  
USE TO BE INTENTIONAL  
LEADERS

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# AS A BONUS

We offer a little something extra in this guide with 25 ways our team at 3x5 Leadership lives out the 10 habits of intentional leaders.

These are simple but practical strategies that we use every day to live, lead, and learn more intentionally.

We hope by sharing these, we inspire and equip you with a few actionable ideas to start with!



**01**

Always have some form of “leader learning tool” on you. Whether it’s a notebook, tablet, or 3x5 cards, keep some tool on you to remain ready to capture ideas, reflections, or insights from other people worth keeping. Every moment is an opportunity to learn.

**02**

Always be reading a book and listening to an audiobook. Read at least 10 pages every day.

**03**

When you are done reading a book, transition your margin notes and highlights to some centrally maintained note platform. Review that consolidated document or portfolio every few months or every year. It prevents the great insight from the books you read from collecting dust on the bookshelf and enables them to come to life in your leadership.

**04**

Have a regular place, time, or activity to engage in both unstructured thinking (opportunity for unplanned thoughts and reflections to bubble to the surface) and structured thinking (planned topics to reflect on). This could be while exercising, grabbing a cup of coffee, or spending deliberate alone time on a “thought retreat” each year.

**05**

Read one article, blog post, or listen to one podcast every day.



**06**

Cultivate an internal locus of control. You have agency in your life and work; you make things happen. You are not a victim of your circumstances and life does not happen to you.

**07**

Always have an active SMART developmental goal targeting one of your core identities to be continuously growing.

**08**

Capture and clarify (by actually writing them out) your primary life's roles and values. Use these to guide your goals, priorities, areas for development, and how you spend your time.

**09**

Seek feedback. Do so in consistent and small ways, focused on a specific event or behavior. "What feedback do you have for me?" rarely sparks thoughtful and insightful feedback.

**10**

And give feedback. Do this in consistent and small ways, too. This helps to normalize a culture of feedback among your team; rather than seeing feedback as uncomfortable and novel, teammates recognize that giving and receiving feedback is a normal part of doing business.

**11**

Have an ethical decision-making model that you can apply in the “everyday” decisions in life, and practice using it. We’re fans of the “3 C’s” – when facing a challenging decision, ask yourself 3 questions – What do my CORE VALUES say about this? Who are my CONSTITUENTS/COMMITMENTS in this decision? What are the CONSEQUENCES of my decision, and who has to bear them?

**12**

Establish priorities for the week and follow-through on them. This doesn’t mean that you have a rigid schedule; rather, set intentions for where you want to focus your efforts and that of your team, and follow through with that in a manner that demonstrates consistency and care.

**13**

Make the time (and subsequently take it) to “unplug” from your work – and share that with your team! You can preach a “work/life balance” all you want, but if you don’t role model it for your team and yourself, you will set a culture on your team that communicates that nothing is as important as work. Put personal and family events on your work calendar; commit to those engagements.

**14**

Have a processing partner, peer coach, or peer mentor – whatever you prefer to call it. But have and meet regularly with a person who loves you, is invested in your growth, and is willing to tell you the truth. Process your ideas, goals, setbacks, and challenges with them.

**15**

When you are in person with someone (whether in the office, in a meeting, at a meal, at home), put your cell phone out of sight. This is a small but significant way to show someone that they are important enough to deserve your undivided attention.

**16**

Write and deliver one to three handwritten gratitude cards per week to anyone in your life that matters – spouse or significant other, family member, colleague, boss, mentor, mentee, customer, etc. Extra points if those notes are on some personalized stationary.

**17**

Understand the power of “third party praise” and use it. Instead of gossiping at work and tearing other people down, choose to build people up to others when that person is not around. Your comments often make their way to that person and can become the greatest compliment they receive.

**18**

Spend at least 10 minutes of every workday outside your office engaging in Leadership by Wandering Around (LBWA) – talking with people on your team in their space at work.

**19**

To connect with those on your small team, know about their family, important dates (birthday, anniversary, etc.), their career goal(s), and about a hobby they enjoy. These few bits of personal information about your people can demonstrate a lot of care for them as a person and help you generate quality conversation with them on a regular basis.

**20**

Aim to listen and ask questions twice as much as you offer advice/guidance or talk about yourself during any conversation.



**21**

Conduct weekly scheduled 30-minute one-on-one meetings with your direct reports; reserve the last 10 minutes for coaching toward a developmental goal, to share feedback, or to have a conversation about your direct report's career development.

**22**

Default to a developmental approach as a leader. Always be doing one of five activities when interacting with people on your team: issuing guidance, offering feedback, teaching, coaching, or mentoring.

**23**

Find a creative way each week to delegate authority to a member on your team – empower them to take ownership (of both the process and the outcome), while you retain the responsibility for providing them cover, guidance, resources, and the opportunity to grow – regardless of the outcome.

**24**

Deliberately, publicly, and regularly celebrate teammates who live out your organization's values to create stories of champions and to instill a culture of shared character.

**25**

Create opportunities to deliberately discuss failures – in achieving personal goals, professional goals, performance objectives for the team – and make that discussion a place to not only safely share about failure, but more importantly, to draw lessons learned from those failures. In this way you can frame failure as a starting point from which new learning and insights are gained, and not an end state.