

100/0 Responsibility

The core of leadership is responsibility...

“A bias toward purposeful, constructive action—willingness to do what needs doing to achieve your goals.”

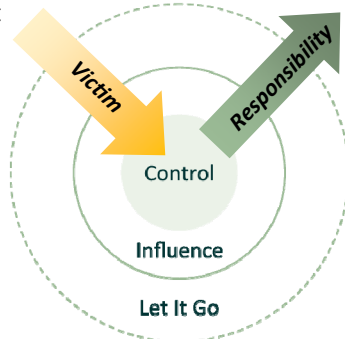
Anyone can change things for the better. Every day you will be confronted by opportunities to do so, given the chance to step up, influence others, and move yourself and others forward. You choose whether that potential to lead is realized.

You create change at work (and in life generally) first by the example you set. Sitting on the sidelines, watching what’s happening, won’t change a thing. Complaining and blaming do make a difference, just not a difference that will do anyone, including yourself, any good. While your energy is focused outward on how the world (e.g. circumstances, other people) has done you wrong and what others should do about it, your power to make a difference declines, while your situation spirals down.

What you do matters, not your intentions, what you plan to do, hope to do, or wish you had done. When things get difficult, there are always other, seemingly easier, ways to go than acting responsibly. Most people don’t choose not to be responsible. Instead, they choose not to get involved, to be a bystander, to stay comfortable. But taking action, often almost any action, moves things forward. There are risks, but ignoring problems is also risky. You will make mistakes, but you can learn from the experience. Others may resist your efforts, but if your intentions are constructive and considerate, you can win them over.

When you act responsibly, your credibility and influence go up. Others see your actions aligned with your words, or as a friend of mine puts it, “that your hips and lips are in sync”. And, responsibility has a ripple effect—when you move, you inspire others do so as well. You can sustain and extend your influence further by involving others appropriately, respecting their contributions, treating them fairly, and following through on your own promises to them.

Consider a 100/0 approach to responsibility, taking 100% responsibility for what’s happening and your own behaviour, while allowing yourself no, 0, excuses for not taking action.



Rather than remaining a bystander, justifying your inaction by pointing fingers at others or circumstances, ask yourself...

- “How am I contributing to this issue—what can I control in my own behavior to improve the situation?”;
- “How else can I make things better—what actions, requests or offers will influence others?”
- What will I do next, right now, to make a difference?”

Responsibility is seldom an easy path. To be honest, there is always some risk—every choice has consequences, and not always positive. Don’t let difficulty or distraction get in your way. Pick your battles wisely, then mitigate risk by taking these steps...

Assess the situation. You need to see what’s happening as it really is, seeing past blind spots that poor information or faulty perceptions can create. Look deeply and objectively to see what you and others don’t see, or don’t want to see.

Learn, before you lead. Learn about the situation, about others involved, even about yourself. Understanding why things are happening as they are reveals levers to bring about the future you and others want. You might identify patterns and trends in what’s happening that were not obvious at first, or uncover assumptions and beliefs that hold people back from doing what needs to be done. You should also explore how your own action or inaction is contributing to the situation.

Commit to a better future, envisioning what could be, the problem solved or opportunity realized. To get yourself and others prepared for a journey, first describe the destination. With a clear vision of the end you have in mind, a specific goal, people are more likely to get started with you, and more willing to stay the course if things get tough.

There are always options, some choices that are bad and others that get you what you want. Any time you feel you don’t have a choice, you’re more than likely wrong, and more victim to a situation than leader in it. Sometimes the right choice is to “let it go”, when the real risks of acting are just too high or you can’t see a way to have positive impact.

Take action. Commitment is a verb—it shows up in your behaviour. Make a plan to say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, safely, and respectful of others’ interests and style. Then go do it, one step at a time. Act where you have control; ask others to get involved where you need assistance, support, or resources they can provide.

100/0 Responsibility in Your Situation

ISSUE:

WHY?: DIAGNOSIS

- Why do you think this issue exists? Why else? (ask 5 times)
- Why hasn't anyone taken action to address it? Consequences?
- Why is it worth taking action to resolve it? Value?
- How have you contributed to what's happening?

WHAT?: DIRECTION

- What matters most in this situation, to you and others?
- What options do you see for addressing this issue?
- What is the best option in your opinion?
- What are you committed to achieving—what is your goal?

CHECK?: DATA

- What is happening now? ...Before?
- Who is involved directly? ...Has a stake or interest?
- What is the impact, on you or others? How do you know?
- Is your data complete? ...Consistent?

HOW?: DO NEXT

- What can you do, right now, to make a difference?
- What do you need from others? Who can you ask?
- What can you offer to do together? With whom?
- What are the risks? How can they be mitigated?