

Leaders in crisis: attending to the shadow side

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ERIK DE HAAN and ANTHONY KASOZI

In this chapter, we explore how we as coaches can help leaders become more aware of and address their shadow sides, which can manifest more strongly during times of crisis and transition, with potential high costs for individuals and those around them.

CASE STUDY Greg's story

The last nine months have 'been the most difficult of my life', Greg tells his coach. He's talking about his planned return to work after an enforced absence from his new role as Director and Chief Executive of a young offenders' rehabilitation charity. Although he talks now about being energetic and keen to get back to work, he's hesitant and uncharacteristically contemplative and apprehensive. His recent promotion to an executive leadership role has meant taking on a higher, more public profile, working harder and longer than ever and yet getting 'blamed for all my predecessors' errors, getting little thanks for my hard work, and destroying the confidence that many others had put in me'.

Much of what Greg was facing was unfortunate. The day he took over at the helm, the charity was confronted with the damning findings of a donor-instigated consultant's report. In the weeks that followed, Greg suspended and subsequently fired staff members, and two board members resigned. Greg was left working with a split acrimonious board and persisting accusations and counter-accusations between board and senior executives. Despite working longer, harder, and more

relationally than his predecessor, Greg 'failed' to resolve the situation. Worse still, Greg fell ill at a 'critical time' suffering from severe asthmatic episodes, body pains and panic attacks. Six months into the new role, he'd been forced to take extended sick leave, a development which 'further estranged him from his feuding board and increased the sense of siege and embattlement' experienced by his executive co-team members.

Talking to his coach, Greg now acknowledges that he cannot go back and do more of the same. He feels that the hard-working, hard-pushing, quick-stepping approach is no more likely to work now than it had done the time before. Time away from work has given him space to think how better to use his strengths this time round. He is more aware of his limitations and less confident that he can ignore their 'foreboding presence'. As he contemplates going back, he feels like a 'wounded gladiator returning to the very arena in which he had last fallen'.

Greg's experience of the challenges of recovery is sadly one that far too often confronts us as coaches working with people in challenging roles. Often our clients have to step into situations of tremendous responsibility, at short notice, and with minimal support or preparation. They deal with multiple challenges driven by events and circumstances beyond their control. They face change and recurring crises for which they feel (and are sometimes held) accountable. Under these circumstances their best attributes are often engaged. They drive hard to achieve and may even enjoy significant and rewarding accomplishments. However, amidst it all, they also come face-to-face with unhelpful and unproductive patterns of their own behaviour. They face aspects of themselves which they may have hitherto relegated to the background, but may now feel overwhelmed by and unable to push aside. They feel unable to live without these aspects as they offer potential solutions to their problems. Yet they also cannot continue to live with them as they too often lead to personally and socially costly consequences. Somehow they have to find ways to embrace and integrate their challenging selves into new and effective ways of working. If they are unable or unwilling to contend with these challenging 'shadow aspects' of themselves, individuals may go into overdrive and become gripped by these shadow sides and patterns of being, doing, thinking and relating.

Supporting leaders in crisis or transition

As coaches we notice and may even share personal and previous experience of the challenges that create the situations that leaders like Greg face. These are common scenarios. As coaches, we need to acknowledge that, and improve how we engage with and support leaders facing challenges and crises. We need to rise to the challenges presented by clients seeking to find ways of attending to and embracing the shadow sides of leadership exposed by the conditions they face.

As we've repeatedly witnessed in our practice, seeing, and embracing, something mostly hidden and elusive is by no means easy. Yet our experience working in this area has shown us that it's not only useful but essential. The costs of failing to do so are very high – financially, socially, and in relation to physical and mental health. We've found that as in other areas of health, awareness precedes prevention and prevention delivers useful outcomes for those indirectly as well as those directly involved. However, we also know that awareness on its own doesn't necessarily lead to the choices and changes required to escape and/or change difficult patterns of overdrive. Leaders at senior levels, in fact all those responsible for others in the workplace, should sooner or later be learning about, and from, their shadow aspects.

Of course, the shadow side of leadership is not the only area to consider, and other chapters in this book suggest how to address other aspects of developmental experience.

What we address

Given the focus of this book we explore the reality and challenges of overdrive and hubris often experienced during times of transition and crisis. Our goal is to offer input that may help us to be more effective at working with senior executive clients addressing such challenges. We consider:

- **Contexts and challenges that leaders face** and the need for us as coaches to pay attention to and notice leaders' work realities, and why these matter to those we work with.
- **Nature of the leadership role (its attending shadow) and the tendencies to derailment (overdrive and hubris):** what it is about leadership that triggers hubris, and what we should look out for when coaching high-performing and successful leaders.

- **When and how derailment typically expresses itself:** how we may recognize when leaders are facing difficulties, and how to work effectively with those facing the challenges of derailment.
- **Patterns and behaviours of leaders:** how we can use descriptive typology to gain greater insight into the behaviours and patterns of clients.
- **Coaching support leaders in overdrive may most need and benefit from:** how we can support leaders to attend to and to recover from overdrive.

The contexts that create the challenges leaders face

As coaches working with leaders in challenging fast-paced roles we're aware that they're often under tremendous pressure to be decisive. This is the case in organizational transformation or even crisis. Leaders tell us that major unavoidable changes in context and external events require them to be working through, living with, and leading and supporting others through recurrent episodes of crisis. The problems leaders have to deal with are constantly presented to them as needing deliberate, quick and intelligent action. In their decision making they're also asked to be cognizant of a multiplicity of factors such as the interests of a diverse set of stakeholders (internally and externally), regulatory requirements, standards of accountability, the scrutiny of critical media, and an informed, active and technologically connected public.

Not only do leaders' executive decisions often have to be made in an instant, soon after they are made, they are transmitted quickly across the globe, available for anyone to respond to or comment on. Executives today rarely have the time for long contemplation before deciding. They can no longer rely on having the luxury of isolated spheres of influence within which to test different strategies or study the consequences of a judgement or choice before making the next one.

Executives who we coach agree that they typically have to contend with a litany of challenges. They say that they have to be:

- Incredibly hard-working, decisive and intellectually, physically, and emotionally resilient, required to work across time zones, and to be on call at the ping of an e-mail, or the tinkle of a telephone even during evenings, weekends and holidays.

- Productive and seen to be productive with a strong strategic sense, but also able to switch mode and to quickly and effectively engage, deeply and constructively, with detail.
- Prepared to be visible and on display at all times, open to criticism and able to respond constructively to it. Flexible, comfortable with conflict, and adaptable to ever-increasing and complex demands *and* able to work well with ambiguity.
- Adaptable across cultures and across conversations within cultures. Highly self-aware, with a strong sense of self and preparedness to offer their values for inspection.
- A hard-working team player as well as a strongly independent individual. A motivator and a judge at the same time. Part of the organizational push, rush and tumble as well as a pace-setting runner, able to avoid the kerfuffle and venture out confidently ahead – to lead the way for others.
- Comfortable with knowledge working of all kinds; being on top of the facts about their organizational unit, allegiances, unwritten rules, present but changing ‘no-go areas’, and who needs to know what.
- Purposeful and knowing what their longer-term purpose is; which objectives they cannot compromise on but also those they are happy to be flexible about and to accommodate.
- Engaged and collaborative, as well as tough and uncompromising. Protecting the individual yet looking after the whole. Working at the core and yet felt as present at the periphery. Responsible for detail and at the same time staying out of the detail to imagine the future.
- Quick and available to troubleshoot; acutely aware of and prescient towards situations that could spiral out of control. Present and visible, and seen to address issues as they arise – wherever and whenever.

In summary, they have to be incredibly present to a great many people. They have to be erudite and action-oriented; reflective and initiating; flexible and warm in relationships yet decisive. Leaders of today have to embrace many paradoxes and transcend many contradictions. What is required of them appears superhuman, yet around the globe entire hierarchies of executives face exactly these challenges and demands daily. It is not surprising that so many leaders derail.

The nature of the leadership role (its attending shadow) and tendencies to derailment (overdrive and hubris)

Leadership at any level is a place of privilege, honour and distinction. Whatever the size of the organization, wherever in the hierarchy, to lead is to be elevated into responsibility for others and to be accountable for the activities and impact of those being led. The leadership role is therefore one of crucial importance for the team, organization and beyond as it seeks to achieve its aims.

At the same time, being honoured and set apart as a leader also always opens up a rift, between ‘you’, the ‘leader’, and ‘them’, the ‘team’. This breach is the essence of what we call the leadership shadow: leadership by nature creates a split between a gesture and a response, or between intention and the ability to follow through. Such a rift, distance, or setting apart offers the leader the unique opportunity to help others to make meaning and to reconsider meaning: the split symbolizes and thus maintains a relationship, in which learning and development can take place, and action prepared. Any bid for leadership creates a certain tension in relationship, which is perhaps best expressed by the image of light and darkness, figure and ground, foreground and shadow.

A pertinent feature of the ‘split’ that leadership creates is an equivalent split within the leader. This is because as an active leader they often have to push the ‘follower’ boldly to the background, an endeavour which in itself entails in some circumstances a strong-willed, single-minded and bold leadership decision. More broadly there is in our view a ‘shadow side’ that is triggered the moment the leader conceives of him/herself as a leader. This is a hidden shadow that over time can become less accessible and lead to severe consequences for leadership effectiveness.

Seen like this, we contend that stepping forward into any act of leadership creates a rift within the leader; a rift between their sunny, active, constructive, or aggressive side that has the ambition to contribute, create and prove something, and their doubting, pessimistic, needy, vulnerable, careful and concerned side, which craves connection with oneself and others. The shadow side is therefore part and parcel of leadership.

For most executives it is very tempting to identify simply with their more ‘sunny’ side, the ‘acceptable leadership’ side of their public interventions. They tend to ignore the other side, the shadow side of their leadership for as long as they can. This can carry on for a long time while they ‘grow’

leadership presence and ‘mature’ in their leadership role. What the outside world sees is a healthy, mature, straightforward process of stepping into ever more senior leadership positions.

All of this works very well as long as nothing happens to trigger leaders to overstep the mark, go beyond their authority or take expedient steps and adopt behaviours that push beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable for them and for others. Once leaders face a mishap, make a mistake or fall into misfortune they inevitably enter a transition and encounter questioning or criticism of how they lead. This makes it clear that it’s still very important for leaders to learn or to address the way they lead and relate/make meaning with others in the face of difficult circumstances. It is no longer sufficient simply to identify with their leadership strengths. They also have to contend with their leadership challenges and how these may manifest within their own lives and the organizations they’re leading. In today’s extremely fast-paced and demanding business environment these confrontational moments (when leadership strengths are insufficient) occur more frequently and are found more often within our privileged coaching conversations, as well as being exposed in the public arena via the media.

Derailment, overdrive and hubris

In order to understand and help professionals work through the unhealthy effects of such intense experiences including hubris and humility, it is necessary to understand the undercurrents that inform them.

Our coaching work confronts us, sooner or later, with managers and professionals overstepping the mark and going into overdrive. Clients are pushed or push themselves into a balancing effort that overshoots and that they have difficulty recovering from. This experience may be seen as unhealthy because it has an immediate negative effect on the quality of their work and relationships. It may lead to increased stress and burnout. In the extreme, it may result in a marked decrease in physiological and psychological resilience, and even a negative spiral featuring physiological and psychological illness or collapse.

Central to these rather extreme experiences of overreaching is the idea of hubris. Hubris may be described as a sense of overbearing pride, defiance or presumption not justified by the circumstances or the perceptions of others. Hubris, while being implicated in the spirals of unhealthy experience described above, is itself associated with a cycle of experience. In this hubristic cycle, excessive pride and pig-headedness are generally associated with public displays of overconfidence, which hide associated private and deeply held

feelings of remorse and doubt. The oscillation between excessive pride, and deep shame and self-doubt, can become a repeating cycle spiralling out of control. This is evident when leader clients continue to be lauded and applauded in public while privately seeking help from us and others close to them to escape from and change what they're facing or feel trapped in.

What makes this process particularly challenging, assuming even that clients recognize the issues within themselves and subsequently address their causes and symptoms, is its association with other relatively healthy processes of noticing our own strengths and actively developing them. These are related and intermingled processes. One is a process of 'growing our talents' or 'growing our business', the other an intertwined process of 'growing our hubris'. The primary developmental task here is to grow one's talent without succumbing to the rupture, exhaustion, pride or stress that are the essential concomitants of the very process, leading to excessive and unfounded self-assertion. For growth and balancing to take place effectively we need to pay attention as objectively as possible to our progress and the influences of our changing roles and relationships. This requires the ability to face failure or the possibility of failure with deep self-awareness and fortitude whilst continuing to relate effectively with others. Learning to lead requires humility in the true and original sense of the word – being lowly and grounded including being in touch with what the base of the organization thinks and being open to personal experiences of incompetence (impotence) and 'over-competence' (omnipotence). Humility in this sense has little to do with a lack of self-confidence or with self-abasement and may be a quality that can support confidence as well as authenticity in leadership (Collins, 2001).

In the Greek myths a divine spirit of retribution, personified by the three Fates or by Nemesis, follows hubris. This haunting spirit metes out a divine punishment for the pride and presumption of the ordinary mortal. In our modern business world, this natural drive for balance or cleansing after hubris is often represented by some form of derailment, which can take the form of a very public 'outing' as well as ousting. In modern times it's as important as ever to restrain hubris and to bring back balance to the business of leadership.

When and how derailment typically expresses itself

We've found that senior executives may typically go into overdrive when faced with persisting stretch and challenge and when they perceive the stakes for them (and for those they lead) as being extremely high. Typically these

transitions are characterized by changes in role, relationships and contextual challenges, for example, when:

- An executive is promoted into a new role that has challenges that they haven't faced before. In this instance, the executive has to raise their game quickly and take on new ways of working and behaving that need to be seen (by them and by others) to be productive quickly.
- A role that an executive is comfortable in unexpectedly takes on a new character. In these circumstances internal or external changes may create new and unexpected demands on the executive, such as suddenly being expected to engage in a different way or to achieve more stretching and different outcomes, for which they are ill-prepared.
- An executive finds him/herself in a role that has not existed before. This is possibly the most demanding of the three scenarios. In this instance the executive has to create a new focus and purpose for the emerging and therefore ill-defined role and deal with many demands and pressures, without historical precedent or guidance from a predecessor.

In addition to these scenarios, executives may obviously find themselves in situations where their circumstances and support networks outside work become challenging. This may be due to relationship difficulties, illnesses or bereavement. Under such circumstances executives may experience disruptions originating from their lives away from work but affecting their sense of stability and effectiveness in work too.

All these factors can lead to episodes of relational overdrive and myopia. Our experience is that overdrive episodes are not limited to particular types of organizations or settings; they can emerge amongst executives from any kind of cultural background and across sectors.

We do observe however that the risks and impacts of overdrive, relational myopia or hubris are most significant in large, complex, fragmented and global organizations, and where talented individuals are elevated to positions which nourish, reward and exploit strengths and at the same time fuel particular hubristic processes that their personal makeup and biography expose them to.

We consider that a leader can typically overstep the mark in several directions; upwards, towards higher authority, but also downwards by imposing decisions which limit the team's effectiveness or individual team members'

contributions. The leader can also overstep the mark towards peers and wider society, violating ethical boundaries, and towards 'self', by forcing themselves to do things they're incapable of or can't sustain physically or otherwise.

Our role and how we can help as coaches

As coaches working with hard-driving leaders we need to be aware of the fact that we are within and part of the system that influences and can be influenced by the leaders' successes. We are also by virtue of our role often uniquely placed to notice, to be effective 'mirrors', thinking partners and change enablers. This requires us to be aware of when these leadership strengths develop patterns that are unhelpful and instances when they may go into overdrive. We also need to be able to develop our own awareness of when we may be ourselves enthralled and captivated by leaders' shadow aspects, and what we need to do to attend to them and support our clients to do the same. In our view, we as coaches need to start with being able to notice and understand the typical ways in which leaders may overstep themselves. Let's look at the ways of overstepping the mark we've identified, with some examples:

- 1 Presumption towards authority or the larger organization.** Here the leader oversteps the mark with regard to the hierarchy or the institutional order. If done against oppression, then this kind of hubris could be very positive and in fact, heroic. For example, a new director of HR of a leading consultancy notices that interns and junior consultants work longer hours yet receive less acknowledgment. After repeatedly raising the issue with colleagues and being repeatedly ignored the leader cancels the intern and graduate recruitment interviews and refuses to sign any new intern contracts. He also awards all recently appointed junior consultants a 5 per cent pay rise.
- 2 Presumption towards designated role and own team.** Here a leader suppresses the creativity or contributions from their team, using discretion to limit rather than enhance the team's effectiveness. Or conversely, when a leader caters to demands of key members of the team that go beyond the reasonable expectations laid down by the role, including ethical considerations. Faced with the risk that a report that the audit team is preparing will expose the weaknesses in the contracting process that he's just implemented,

the long-standing finance director tables a proposal to suggest to the board that it is time to consider a new audit firm, as the existing firm has a number of consulting assignments that expose them to a conflict of interest.

- 3 Presumption towards own context.** This is when a leader oversteps the mark towards society as a whole, by engaging in non-ethical leadership practices such as abuse of office or fraud. Ahead of the upcoming social club management committee elections, the head of the existing management committee indicates to colleagues that he intends to defer the proposed increase in management committee compensation until after the elections. He further states that all members of the committee who were not putting forward their names for re-election may not be eligible for compensation, as compensation is unlikely to be backdated to any previous team members no longer serving.
- 4 Presumption towards the self.** Here a leader exhausts themselves so that they are unable to function or cope. Faced with a punishing schedule of global travel and meetings negotiating new contracts with suppliers, a buying director fails to take medication to control his blood pressure and is signed off at his next scheduled corporate medical by the alarmed company doctor.

We can present these four types of hubris diagrammatically in a single figure (Figure 8.1). In this figure the space opened up by managerial discretion and power wielded is represented by a square. However, if a leader truly uses up all the space that he has in terms of managerial discretion, and allows his or her decisions to stretch all the way to the edge of that field, then very real occasions of hubris with serious consequences are to be expected. A wise leader therefore stays well within the bounds of his or her discretion, within a self-imposed new square as drawn below, as the ‘impact zone’ (Figure 8.2).

This turns leadership into an art, the purpose of which is to stay inside the box voluntarily, restraining oneself whilst using one’s managerial discretion to help the team become more effective. This sounds straightforward but is, in practice, quite difficult. This is because the leader’s own desire to be successful, personal assumptions about what success looks like and is driven by, as well as the behaviour and reinforcing/challenging behaviour of others around him, are all forces that pull the leader into the ‘hubris zone’. All these forces make it much more difficult for leaders to recognize significant boundaries that they need to be observe. In positions of power and leadership it’s easy to overstep the mark.

FIGURE 8.1 Leadership power or managerial discretion encompasses four areas where a leader could transgress but needs to hold themselves back



FIGURE 8.2 Managerial discretion in a rectangle with different 'zones' of hubris enclosing the (self-imposed) freedom of the manager



Figures 8.1 and 8.2 from de Haan and Kasozi, 2014. Reprinted with permission from Kogan Page

In our experience, working at the edge and stretching to change and to challenge existing norms can be remarkably effective at creating new opportunities or turning around fossilized, tired and failing organizations. Yet we do also find that overstepping and going too far is a real risk. Many leaders succumb and fail; some recover and learn from experience(s) in order to

have another go. Indeed many successful entrepreneurs and leaders point to earlier failures as being significant in enabling their future successes. Post-crisis growth is a topic covered elsewhere in this book.

Some however may never learn and appear fated to repeat and to pay and make others pay for repeated errors. For example, Edward, a retail buyer known for his hard negotiation and tough dealing with retail suppliers, had a reputation that followed him from company to company. Despite being cautioned and even coming close to losing his job a number of times, he managed repeatedly to change roles before being disciplined. He often insisted on complete loyalty from those working with him and even expected that they demonstrate similar behaviour. In a number of his roles he was often accused of having a ‘bullying’ tendency towards junior staff. These accusations led one of his HR Directors to insist on offering him a coach as a precondition for his being considered for further career advancement. In the first conversation with his self-chosen coach he unrepentantly wanted to focus on how he could be more influential and persuasive of people who just didn’t have a sense of urgency, for example the HR Director.

Descriptive typology to gain greater insight into the behaviours and patterns of leaders

It is possible to elaborate a descriptive typology that we as coaches can use to gain greater insight into the behaviours and patterns of leaders, in their daily ‘effective’ work and also when they go into overdrive. Such a typology can serve us as an instrument for studying how non-problematic and ostensibly healthy relationships may be transformed into less helpful and problematic ones, often simply by increasing the pressure and challenges faced.

Below we present 11 personality adaptations which characterize patterns of behaviour (de Haan and Kasozi, 2014). We indicate how these personality adaptations when in overdrive border on known personality disturbances in medical diagnosis. We also indicate how some of their overdrives may be linked with known behavioural drivers (Kahler, 1975) going overboard.

In coaching, the descriptions are best used as a stimulus for reflection, a possible route to greater insight in conversations with executives, between coaches, or between coaches and groups of executives working together to make sense of a challenging context. As coaches it is essential to invite our clients as individuals or in teams to step outside the fray and to reflect, away from the task and the work, on what they are doing when they are at their

best and what that ‘best’ looks like or becomes when overcooked or pushed too far. In these conversations, leaders may themselves describe or identify some of the patterns we outline here. As coaches we can help them avoid the simple stigma of classifying and unhelpfully pigeonholing themselves, whilst naming and recognizing patterns prevalent in their behaviour and the implications this may have for them, those they lead and their organizations. The patterns we offer are listed below and characterized as follows:

Personality adaptations

Leadership as doing – where assertiveness comes to the fore, doubt and vulnerability go into the ‘shadow’:

- *Charming Manipulators*, whose actions may brush up against the rules and mould them to their own design. In this style, strict accountability may go out of the window, because their accountability may be relegated to the ‘shadow’.
- *Playful Encouragers*, whose influence is felt mainly indirectly. Full responsibility taking for their actions may be difficult, as their responsibility may be relegated to the ‘shadow’.
- *Glowing Gatsbies*, who influence from the front and bask in their successes. In this style it may be easier to criticize others but harder to look at themselves in a similar way, as their humility may have been relegated to the ‘shadow’.
- *Detached Diplomats*, whose actions remain largely in their own world, disengaged and disconnected from those around them. It may be hard to keep the organization’s issues and people in focus, as their ability to reach out may be relegated to the ‘shadow’. In fact, when this pattern is highly developed, leadership interventions themselves may go under and the leader seems very absent.

Leadership as thinking – where knowledge comes to the fore, trust goes into the ‘shadow’:

- *Responsible Workaholics*, whose stamina is admirable and who can take up a vast array of leadership agendas. However, they may find it difficult to see the forest for the trees, because their ability to prioritize and make a firm stance on a controversial issue may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.
- *Impulsive Loyalists*, who are very involved but may be subject to mood swings. They may find it very hard to hear bad news about

how the business is going, because some of their tolerance and self-confidence may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.

- *Brilliant Sceptics*, who are scrupulous and alert but may focus more on the negatives. They may think that people are for or against them, and in particular suspect that they are against them, because their trust and safety may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.
- *Creative Daydreamers*, who always have fresh thinking to offer but they may try to be different just for the sake of it, or their thinking bears no relationship to issues at stake. Consequently, some of the creative thinking may be not very applicable or plain wrong for the future, because dry realism and utility may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.

Leadership as feeling – where empathy comes to the fore, assertiveness goes into the ‘shadow’:

- *Virtuous Supporters*, who try to look after their people and are liked by everyone. They may find it hard to look after their own interests or assert themselves when they have something to offer, because their own personal power may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.
- *Accomplished Thespians*, who generously offer their own feelings and ideas but may over-occupy the centre of attention. They may enjoy the limelight a little too much and become obsessed with their public image, because their natural self-affirmation may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.
- *Simmering Stalwarts*, who are reliable and ambitious yet afraid to make decisions that might involve risk. They may be concerned or hesitant because of what other people might think or do, because their self-confidence may be relegated to their ‘shadow’.

We introduce and work with these patterns through reflective conversations that start with an appreciation of executives’ challenges and strengths. As we’ve argued before, leaders’ shadow and bright sides are intimately connected but drift apart upon taking up a leadership role, so coaching needs to consider both systematically. In the next section we give some ideas for exploring and even making use of what is going on in the client’s (and our own) shadow.

We emphasize that the summary representation we make here holds the idea of a personality ‘type’, ‘character’ or ‘caricature’ lightly. We could after all argue that there are as many ‘types’ as there are people in this world. We could also argue that all the so-called ‘types’ can be found within a single

person, even within every single person. In addition it may be noted that the relational matrix around us may bring out the ‘type’ we become. So organizational manifestations of ‘types’ may very easily change when people change jobs, or when there is a merger or a different composition of working teams. And conversely, hiring a fresh leader into a stable workforce may bring out traits that are primed in that workplace, such as traits of the previous person holding that job. We have chosen these particular patterns instead, because they have a long history in psychiatric literature and because they each have been well-researched. Over the past two decades they have even been operationalized as a psychometric instrument for leaders in organizations, in the form of the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) (Hogan and Hogan, 1997), so that any executive or coach can undertake a personal positioning exercise on the same 11 patterns. The 11 patterns that we have chosen to elaborate on are from the fourth edition of the *American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* [DSM-IV] (American Psychological Association 1994). Table 8.1 sets out the patterns in detail.

It is very rare to see the personality ‘disorder’ in extreme textbook form and highly unusual to see one of the ‘caricatures’ played out exactly as described above. Yet we regularly encounter aspects of various overdrive patterns in stressful situations and in demanding careers.

The personality patterns usually play out at work in a ‘neurotic’ way, not completely outside socially acceptable norms, and just strike us as rather intense or unusual. Privately, during ‘down time’ with the family or at late solitary nights in the office, the patterns may become distinctly beyond the socially acceptable. Similarly, in the privacy of the coaching room, where the spotlight and empathy is entirely on the executive and their ‘patterns’, the presentation may also be more extreme – with more direct recognizable behaviour and pronounced open expressions of emotions associated with the overdrive behaviour characterized and described above.

In order to complement and take the typology presented further we also present in Table 8.2 all 11 personality patterns, making use of Ware’s (1983) terminology. Specifically we include here Ware’s terms of:

- 1 ‘open door’ (the channel through which the particular person can be reached best);
- 2 ‘target door’ (the channel through which the particular person can find new ways of working, insight or personal change and growth); and
- 3 ‘trap door’ (the channel which is usually closed to the person as it is kept hidden behind the other two channels).

TABLE 8.1 A Descriptive Typology of Patterns of Leadership Overdrive

<p>Movers and Shakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four 'overdrive' patterns in leaders related to patterns that focus on action or paradoxically and actively withdrawing from (productive). • These four leadership patterns give primacy to 'behaving' above 'thinking' and 'feeling'. • They can be approached and worked with most straightforwardly through thinking about behaviours and actions, employing to-do lists, specific goals, and practising new forms of action. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Charming Manipulator 2. The Playful Encourager 3. The Glowing Gatsby 4. The Detached Diplomat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have linked this 'type' to 'anti-social' characteristics – moves to charm and dazzle you and to engineer a very impressive performance. • Linked to 'passive-aggressive' characteristics – moves to encourage others and find encouragement, being both sensitive to motivation and reluctant to act when not motivated. • Linked to 'narcissistic' characteristics – moves to propel themselves forward into a glorious future, impressing everyone around them. • Linked to 'schizoid' characteristics – distinguishes themselves by not being moved in those occasions where other people would be: their main characteristic is a stoic, tough or detached form of 'non movement'.
<p>Rigorous Thinkers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four 'overdrive' patterns in leaders, which are related to the leader's cognitive style or way of thinking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The Responsible Workaholic 6. The Impulsive Loyalist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to 'obsessive-compulsive' characteristics – ruminates about his every action and doggedly carries it out with rich detail and self-monitoring. • Linked to 'borderline' characteristics – ruminates in a more excited way, vacillating between optimism and pessimism.

TABLE 8.1 *continued*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These four leadership patterns give primacy to 'thinking' above 'behaving' and 'feeling'. • They can be approached and worked with most straightforwardly through thought, cognitions, deliberations, considerations, insights and the like. 	<p>7. The Brilliant Sceptic</p> <p>8. The Creative Daydreamer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to 'paranoid' characteristics – is a critical thinker, full of suspicions about other people's motives. • Linked to 'schizotypal' characteristics – is a creative thinker with endless supplies of great ideas that, however, rarely get executed.
<p>Sensitive Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three 'overdrive' patterns in leaders, which are related to the leader's care and attention to emotion and feeling. • These three leadership patterns give primacy to 'feeling' above 'behaving' and 'thinking'. • They can be approached and worked with most straightforwardly through empathy, understanding, and personal support. 	<p>9. The Virtuous Supporter</p> <p>10. The Accomplished Thespian</p> <p>11. The Simmering Stalwart</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to 'dependent' characteristics – feels for other people and wants to be a good team player for them. • Linked to 'histrionic' characteristics – overflows with feeling, particularly their own private feelings. • Linked to 'avoidant' characteristics – also overflows with feeling, but more in a concerned and troubled sort of way.

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TABLE 8.2 Personality patterns

Personality pattern	Personality 'overdrive'	'Open door'	'Target door'	'Trap door'	Working style and drivers	Antidote / permission
The Charming Manipulator	'Antisocial'	Behaviour	Thinking	Feeling	Leader believes the rules are made to be broken Be strong and please others	Respect others more: your rule-breaking strategy is one day going to catch up with you It's OK to be vulnerable
The Playful Encourager	'Passive-aggressive'	Behaviour	Feeling	Thinking	What leader says is not what they really believe Try hard and be strong	Just do it, or else be upfront about your resistance
The Glowing Gatsby	'Narcissistic'	Behaviour	Feeling	Thinking	Leader thinks that they're right, and everyone else is wrong Be perfect and be strong	You look pathetic a lot of the time, being the only one not seeing that you cannot and will not be able to know or do it all Be less dependent on others' praise

TABLE 8.2 *continued*

Personality pattern	Personality 'overdrive'	'Open door'	'Target door'	'Trap door'	Working style and drivers	Antidote / permission
The Detached Diplomat	'Schizoid'	Behaviour	Thinking	Feeling	Leader is disengaged and disconnected Be strong	Try to engage more with others Feelings are helpful and human
The Responsible Workaholic	'Obsessive-compulsive'	Thinking	Feeling	Behaviour	Leader gets the little things right and the big things wrong Be perfect, be strong and try hard	Think big picture as well. It's okay to make mistakes, and it is important for learning too
The Impulsive Loyalist	'Borderline'	Thinking	Behaviour	Feeling	Leader is subject to mood swings Be perfect and hurry up	Try to count to ten and relax
The Brilliant Sceptic	'Paranoid'	Thinking	Feeling	Behaviour	Leader focuses on the negatives Be perfect and be strong	Relax: there will always be a more charitable explanation

TABLE 8.2 *continued*

Personality pattern	Personality 'overdrive'	'Open door'	'Target door'	'Trap door'	Working style and drivers	Antidote / permission
The Creative Daydreamer	'Schizotypal'	Thinking	Behaviour	Feeling	Leader tries to be different just for the sake of it Be strong and try hard	Try to listen and connect with other stakeholders
The Virtuous Supporter	'Dependent'	Feeling	Behaviour	Thinking	Leader tries to win the popularity contest Please others and be strong	Try instead to look after yourself more It's OK to want something for yourself and it is OK to disagree
The Accomplished Thespian	'Histrionic'	Feeling	Thinking	Behaviour	Leader needs to be the centre of attention Please others	Relax about how other people see you
The Simmering Stalwart	'Avoidant'	Feeling	Behaviour	Thinking	Leaders is afraid to make decisions Try hard	Worry less about what people will think

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This table can be used by coaches for their own reflection and preparation as they work with a client. For informed and self-aware clients who may have already noted the role of drivers in their behaviour and interaction with others the coach may find it helpful to share edited versions of the table – focusing on working styles and permissions.

Coaching

While many self-aware people may recognize the challenges they face in transition, addressing these challenges and balancing them effectively is difficult. Leaders need support to find the help they need and to develop meaningful insights they can work with and adopt. Coaching helps them to find out what to do and be to maintain balance and to avoid becoming unbalanced.

In this section we offer four ways to identify the degree of risk and thus balance hubristic patterns with counter-measures.

The ancient Greeks called the antidote to hubris *sophrosyne*, which means healthy-mindedness. *Sophrosyne* also stands for humility, restraint, self-control and temperance; in short, anything that brings us back from the abyss of hubris and that placates the nemesis of retribution, so that we remain capable of offering the very best of our leadership.

In our view these are the starting points for *sophrosyne*:

- A Owning, realizing and reflecting on our weaknesses or vulnerabilities.
- B Building up our strengths and resilience.
- C Balancing our strengths with our weaknesses by finding the strengths or challenges in our weaknesses.
- D Truly focusing on our team and other stakeholders, in a generous and even self-effacing way.

These four are complementary and can therefore be practised coherently, mindfully and simultaneously.

A. Know thyself: own your vulnerabilities

‘Know thyself’ is an ancient motto in the temples of Luxor and Delphi, and seems to have had a connotation of knowing our boundaries, ie knowing where we might overstep the mark and invoke the wrath of the gods. Knowing ourselves is a balancing act; by understanding our vulnerabilities we can acknowledge and own them, and in true *sophrosyne* sense, begin to apply moderation and restraint, cultivating ego strength. We actively try to stay away from acting out our vulnerabilities, by not giving in to temptation and restraining managerial discretion.

As a coach we can guide executives towards a more effective and in-depth way of doing this with the help of a more personalized programme, using psychometrics, feedback instruments, executive coaching and other

forms of leadership development. As described above, this may best be done as part of a reflective and developmental as well as appreciative conversation away from frenetic and pressurized leadership work – for example as part of a retreat, end of year review and/or contracting or re-contracting discussion.

Part of knowing yourself honestly is taking on board your real and true resistance to doing something about your limitations. Schein (1993) says that for any learning to happen we have to find a balance between two countervailing anxieties:

- The ‘fear of learning’, which testifies to the acute pain and frustration which can accompany learning, where we know what we need to give up and change but do not know what we will get in its place. As a result of this fear, most of us will try to suppress any information and avoid any action that confronts us with the fact that we have not yet learned something.
- The ‘fear of survival’ or the fear of not learning, which is often associated with feelings of despondency and powerlessness. If this fear gets the upper hand, we will be forced to make an effort to learn.

Executives are not immune to these fears and can face significant internal defences to overcome to know themselves better, defences that protect and often mask their vulnerabilities, shame and frailties. To balance those defences it is very helpful to cultivate an ongoing interest in learning about themselves and others. This means being open to new experiences and views, in particular upward feedback in terms of their performance as leader. And it means taking every opportunity they can to expand their repertoire of understanding and insight as well as action. Leaders who are good at learning relate positively to the possibility of finding out something new that helps them to engage better with their reality and with their team. They learn from immediate experience and are also able to take a step back and reflect on wider experience that might inform and change their assumptions and frames of reference.

B. Work on your resilience: build up your strengths

As work environments become increasingly challenging and uncertain, resilience is receiving a great deal of interest among those responsible for performance and wellbeing in organizations. In the main, however, resilience-focused selection and development interventions are still quite limited, and there is so much more that the scientific study of resilience, wellbeing and

performance has to offer the organizational practitioner (Flint-Taylor and Robertson, 2013). Resilience has been defined by psychologists in a variety of ways across a number of settings, including ‘the ability to bounce back or recover from stress, to adapt to stressful circumstances, to not become ill despite significant adversity and to function above the norm in spite of stress or adversity’ (Carver, 1998; Tusaie and Dyer, 1994). Resilience involves three vertices (de Haan and Kasozi, 2014); an internal, an external and an ‘in-between’ vertex:

- key individual characteristics (such as ability, personality, attitude, mood);
- the experience of pressured situations or challenges;
- the productive coping that occurs as a result of that experience (bouncing back, keeping going, learning, driving forward etc).

It is important when helping leaders develop resilience that attention be paid to individual factors, but equally so to understand how these individual factors interact with the situations they’re encountering and finally how we can capture the outcome at individual, team and organizational levels. In his work at Ashridge Business School, our colleague Alex Davda has identified six key areas of resilience, which he describes as ‘resilient attitudes’ which have been shown to affect how an individual thinks about, feels and then responds to pressured or stressful situations (Davda, 2011).

These six attitudes are:

- *Emotional control*: Controlling emotions and taking personal responsibility for thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- *Self-belief*: Belief and confidence in the self and personal capabilities.
- *Purpose*: Setting and organizing goals and identifying a broader meaning from these.
- *Adaptability/adapting to change*: Adapting readily to change and responding to uncertainty in a positive and developmental manner.
- *Awareness of others*: Demonstrating self-awareness and an understanding of other people’s situations and perspectives.
- *Balancing alternatives*: Generating and managing alternative options, opinion and choices.

Whilst these resilient attitudes are generally found to be helpful for those under pressure, each can become counterproductive if it is ‘overused’ or used in the wrong situation.

Developing resilience takes work and time, but there is now growing evidence of how resilience training (and in our view, with additional and sustained follow-on coaching) can boost individual and organizational success (Proudfoot *et al*, 2009). The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness programme (Seligman and Fowler, 2011) also gives a clear example of a large-scale resilience-development intervention that is beginning to show benefits for individuals and whole organizations.

From our point of view, developing resilience involves:

- An awareness of the characteristics already possessed and whether they help or hinder under pressure. (For example, is the leader extremely organized, finding adapting to uncertainty and ambiguity difficult, as may be the case for an obsessive-compulsive pattern?)
- An intention or motivation to develop a resilient attitude towards pressure that can either help someone overcome certain individual predispositions or build on their strengths. (For example, can a naturally pessimistic person develop a more optimistic approach by focusing on what can be learnt from situations when they reflect on them?)
- An understanding of what is difficult about certain situations and which resources are needed to manage them.
- An ability to consider a number of outcomes that may be experienced as a result of certain situations.

C. Find value in your own ‘dark side’: balance strengths and weaknesses

Self-knowledge and understanding of one’s vulnerabilities is one thing. Strengthening resilience is quite another. It is very clear that both together do not alone make a ‘character’, a well-balanced, mature and mindful leader. Well-developed toughness and resilience can make for a great champion, and profound self-knowledge can make for an eminent sage. However, if the two are not balanced then the champion will suffer from dark areas that are out of consciousness or out of grasp, such as momentary pride, arrogance, addictions, or weakness. Or conversely the sage will recoil into introspection, experiencing moments of being unable to face the world or act in the marketplace. What makes for a truly mature leader is a certain balance in strengths and weaknesses, a sense that the greatest strengths are allowed to look silly and weak, and the greatest weaknesses bear some hidden treasure.

One aspect of balancing strengths and weaknesses is the process of taking back projections to counteract a process that happens very frequently under stress, and in particular for leaders. It is the process of splitting one's own strengths and weaknesses and, in order to build up a positive identity (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012) or to feel safer and less anxious, attributing strengths to oneself and weaknesses to others. Leaders can be supported to develop their own (perceived) weaker sides so that they balance their strengths, and so work against the ubiquitous pattern of splitting and projecting in response to pressure.

Consequently strengths become more marked and moderated by substantial challenges, so that hubris or excessive pride are much less likely.

D. Lead without the self: truly focus on the team

As we have been focusing on the leader and what they can do to face up to hubris, derailment and overdrive, we have forgotten slightly the task and definition of leaders. If we take the core task of leadership as being about growing the effectiveness of the team then it is essential that the leader 'leads' themselves specifically for the purpose of enabling and supporting the team in its quest for success. A grounded, selfless leader will focus on the very ordinary aspects of their team (Binney, Williams and Wilke, 2005); the everyday challenges of strategy formation, operations and people. Such a leader, who is perhaps less self-conscious and less central to his or her own leadership, will run a smaller risk of overdrive and hubris. The well-intentioned, focused and active busy bee has less time and fewer opportunities for overstepping the mark than the redolent and self-referencing queen bee.

We believe it is possible to grow compassion in equal amounts to energy, drive, focus and toughness. For many executives this is however almost like a Copernican revolution, in which they move away from placing themselves and their ambitions at the centre of the universe, and start paying full attention to others' ambitions and growth. Coaching can help open their minds to the interests and drives of others, and to discover that the world does not actually revolve around them but around other people and their interests and needs. Like the task of an executive coach, a leader's task is fundamentally altruistic and selfless. It is to intervene so that others can perform.

Regaining balance: you do not have to do it alone

The one thing that all leaders in overdrive seem to struggle with is a certain lack of compassion, sometimes a lack of compassion for themselves and perhaps more often a lack of compassion for others. The four ways of balancing that we have introduced here all endeavour to grow compassion and acceptance, for oneself, for others, and for the consequences of difficulties, disappointments, and loss.

The best place for a leader to grow compassion and to address the excesses of hubris and relational overdrive is in a tailor-made, confidential and personal relationship, such as can be established in the privacy of executive coaching. By working in such a personal one-to-one helping relationship other relationships can be brought under scrutiny, and overdrive and derailment patterns can be observed and explored in depth. The coaching relationship can be used as a preventive intervention but also as a remedial intervention, provided the executive can feel safe enough to talk freely about very sensitive areas, which are possibly burdened by shame or frustration.

Leaders in transition often face challenges that are difficult to deal with unsupported. This is because the challenges arise out of complicated interplays of events, personal predispositions, patterns and splits, inherent in leading in change and uncertainty. As leaders push to deal with what they face they may go into overdrive(s) that are difficult to recover from. As coaches we can be of most help when we support clients to develop the awareness, relationships and practices needed to deal with overdrive episodes as they arise.

Over time it is also important to help clients develop their resilience. This requires coaches to help them develop resilient attitudes. Resilient attitudes, well-cultivated and practised, equip clients to be more emotionally balanced, self-aware and purposeful, whilst relating well with others and with the realities faced effectively. This enables leaders and those they work with to face transitions with realism and creativity, adopting behaviours that are most helpful for themselves and their organizations.

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