

Moments of greatness

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Leaders are at their best when they do not copy anyone but instead draw from their own fundamental values and capabilities. The author draws a distinction between two states in which people operate: Normal and Fundamental.

In the **normal state**, people stay within their comfort zones and allow external forces to direct their behaviours and decisions. They lose their moral influence and often rely on their formal authority to bring about change.

In the **fundamental state**, leaders do not focus on meeting the expectations of others but on what they instinctively think is the right thing to do. They move away from being comfort oriented to result centred, from problem solving to purpose finding, and from being externally directed to internally directed.

When we operate in our fundamental state, we clarify our core values and act with integrity, confidence and authenticity. In this mode, some will appreciate what we are doing while others will be critical. But we are prepared to tolerate such conflicts.

When we are in the fundamental state, we also move away from being self-focused to being focused on others. We put the needs of the organization above ours. We become more open to outside signals or stimuli, including those that require us to do things we are not comfortable doing. In the fundamental state, we become far more adaptive and are prepared to change dramatically.

While the fundamental state is not our default mode of operating, it is not completely new to us either. All of us, at some point of time or the other would have faced a great personal or professional challenge and inevitably entered the fundamental state of leadership. Comparing our normal performance with what we did when we were at our very best, can motivate us to elevate ourselves.

Clarifying the result we want helps us to reorganize our lives. Instead of moving away from a problem, we move towards a possibility that does not yet exist. We become more optimized and energized.

When we comply with social pressures, we are trying to avoid conflict and trying to remain connected with our co-workers. But we may end up feeling less

connected because conflict avoidance leads to political compromise. We lose our uniqueness and sense of integrity.

When the pursuit of our own interests controls our relationships, we erode the trust of others. People may comply with our wishes but they no longer derive energy from their relationships with us.

Being closed to external stimuli can help us to stay focused on what we are doing but it may also make us ignore signals that suggest a need for change. When we become externally open, we keep improvising and also actively and genuinely seek honest feedback.

While the fundamental state proves useful in times of crises, it can also be handy while coping with more mundane challenges. Whether it is an important client conversation or a team meeting we can try to achieve our fundamental state of leadership.

The fundamental state does not last forever. But each time, we reach the state, we learn more about people and our environment and increase the chances of returning to the fundamental state. And when we operate in the fundamental state, we also inspire others to do so.