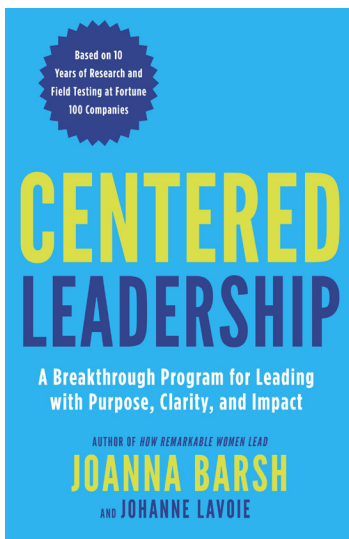


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Centered Leadership

THE NUTSHELL

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I developed Centered Leadership after interviewing successful women in a variety of different countries and fields. Most of the leaders I interviewed seemed to have a magic about them. They saw opportunity everywhere; exuded positive energy; understood their thoughts, feelings, and actions; and actually welcomed criticism and opposition. When they failed, they bounced back with even more energy. They were forces of nature.

My team and I found five key areas that set these centered leaders apart: *framing, connecting, meaning, engaging, and energizing*. Further research showed that leaders who practice four or five of these dimensions report very high levels of effectiveness, satisfaction, and competence.

Meaning is the anchor of Centered Leadership. When we know what really matters to us, we can discover our purpose, which gives us the courage and confidence we might not otherwise have.

One component of meaning is happiness. Make a list of activities that provide you with sensory and emotional pleasure. Then write down activities that *engage* and *energize* you, providing you with an extended feeling of happiness. Finally, list things that deal with the third level of happiness: activities that engage you, are deeply important to you, and also draw on your strengths. Activities on the last list are the most important to our sense of meaning, and to our long-term happiness.

If you're not sure what your strengths are, you can ask others what they see when you are at your best. What traits boost your energy when you use them?

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At what have you always been good?

Your life's unique history, experiences, strengths, values, and passions have prepared you to make a contribution in your professional context. What might that contribution be? Share these ideas with your family and friends.

Framing refers to what you see and experience in a specific situation and how your perceptions influence your behavior. When we recognize that we have the freedom to choose our attitudes and create a different experience, we can break free of our patterns.

Productively reframing has three steps:

- Becoming self-aware of what in us is getting triggered
- Learning to pause and access choice when we are upset
- Choosing to adopt a new mindset and create a new habit or behavior

Make a list of interactions or behaviors that seriously upset you. How do you feel when your buttons are pushed? How do you behave? What outcome do you create for yourself and others?

Once you have identified the effect your fears have on you, the next step is *learning to pause*, which lets you re-engage your executive brain in the heat of the moment. Pausing lets you observe, pose a question, or break through the logjam of two competing views.

Make a list of calming practices that you plan to use the next time you feel triggered. Then role-play a recent stressful situation. Practice using each technique at least once.

Connecting is about relationships. Whether you like it or not, your network of relationships plays a big role in the results you are able to get. Who is in your network? Take some time to identify the people who matter *in light of what you most want to create through your leadership*. Name the ones who count, whether your relationship is positive, negative, or nonexistent.

Consider these questions:

- Which existing relationships should I rekindle or focus on?
- Whom should I remove because they are not supportive or are not helping me carry out my vision?
- Which relationships can I transition from draining to energy boosting?
- How?

Plan your next steps. List the contacts on whom you want to focus, what requests you will make, what you can offer in return, and a deadline for doing so.

Engaging requires aligning your intention, attention, and emotions so that all are working toward the same goal. First, practice setting your intentions. What do you want your leadership to bring forth? Every morning, you can ask yourself: *What do I really want for—and from—myself today?*

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From moment to moment, you can also ask yourself: *Where am I choosing to place my attention? Does it match my intention?*

How often do you overcommit? The sad truth is that when we say yes to everything, we say no to our own intentions, and we can't follow through on what matters most to us. Instead, we must learn to say no to things that distract us from our intentions.

Energizing is the most-neglected tenet of Centered Leadership according to our research. The keys to energizing are *recovery* and *energy management*.

There are many things you can do to boost your energy levels. One great exercise is to spend sixty seconds making a quick list of as many things as you can that make you grateful. Or, you can take a moment to practice mindfulness by being present, centered, and aware in the moment.

Make a list of other tactics that you can use to recover. This can include things like taking a quick walk outside, drinking water, climbing a flight of stairs, chatting with a colleague, looking at pictures of someone you love, or looking out the window.

The Journey Continues

Now that you've completed the exercises in this book, you are well on your way to Centered Leadership and to following through on the commitments you have made. I invite you to make your commitments public, in front of others who matter to you, such as your team, supportive peers, caring mentors and sponsors, and your boss.

I know that you'll learn more on your leadership journey than I could ever teach you. I hope that you'll feel the force of leadership and that your light will shine brighter, no matter how many people with whom you share it. As you reach the age when you become the much older version of yourself that you imagined, and remember what you have learned in these days and weeks of Centered Leadership exercises, I hope that you'll reflect on a full life filled with love, and lived with purpose, clarity, and positive impact.