THE FACE OF CORRUPT LEADERSHIP

5 THE LEADERSHIP DILEMMA

6 POWER TENDS TO CORRUPT

10 THE LUCIFER EFFECT
CHALLENGE #1: SELF-DEVELOPMENT DURING SEASONS OF SUCCESS

Talent’s halo makes you overestimate your abilities and underestimate your need for growth. I often ask audiences to raise their hands if they’re smarter than the person sitting beside them. We all laugh, but there’s a hint of truth behind the smiles. Leaders who do everything well are confused.

CHALLENGE #2: LIVING BY PRIORITIES RATHER THAN URGENCIES

Urgencies make you feel important, but sticking to priorities makes you a leader. Three things that obscure priorities:

- Pressure
- Problems
- Opportunity

The most dangerous urgency is opportunity. Priorities enable “no.”

CHALLENGE #3: POURING INTO YOURSELF AS YOU POUR OUT FOR OTHERS

You ran out of steam because you poured out but didn’t pour in. Warning phrases include:

- “I’ll take time off after...”
- “Just this time.”
- “I just need to finish this, before...”

Don’t justify poor decisions by suggesting you’ll do it right next time. An excuse is permission for failure to continue.

SUCCCEEDING WITH THE THREE CHALLENGES: Jim Parker, retired chief operating officer (CEO) of Southwest Airlines, gave me a surprising answer to winning at leadership’s challenges. He was CEO during the events of September 11. It’s been five years since we talked, but I still remember him saying, “Be yourself.” I keep rereading the wisdom behind those underwhelming words.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Frequently reflect on yourself and your journey. Define your values. Connect with mentors and coaches who help you find and express your best self. Avoid mentors who pressure you to be like them.

Define yourself by who you are, not who others expect you to be. Being yourself is never an excuse for laziness, indulgence, or flaunting weaknesses. Be yourself or someone else will define you.

What derailing challenges might you add to this list of three? How might leaders succeed with derailing challenges?

Dan Rockwell is a coach, speaker and is freakishly interested in leadership. He is an author of a world-renowned most socially shared leadership blog, Leadership Freak. Share with us some of the challenges you wish to add to this list. Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP?

WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP?

An underlying principle of effective leadership is that value is defined by the receiver more than the giver. This value-added principle applies in almost every relationship.

When I give my wife a gift, she defines the value of the gift. When I was a newlywed, I got her tickets to sporting events and she suggested I enjoy myself. I have learnt that the real gift is figuring out what will be meaningful to her, not me.

Likewise, effective leaders recognise the stakeholders who are impacted by their personal style and demonstrated competencies. They then work to deliver value to these stakeholders in ways that matter to the stakeholders.

The most traditional and common stakeholders for an effective leader are the leader’s followers. Leaders inspire, motivate, and help employees become more engaged. They give employees a sense of shared purpose and remove barriers for employees to reach their goals.

Additionally, leaders help their organisations have a clear purpose (strategy, mission, vision) and discipline to execute and deliver results against this purpose.

A LOOK AT THE INTANGIBLES

But I would propose that an additional stakeholder to determine leadership value is the shareholder, a debt or equity holder.

Investors care deeply about financial results to provide a positive return for their outlays. Investors who seek increased financial returns have traditionally examined the ability of a firm to have a positive cash flow.

Investors rely on assessments like the Moody’s Index or Standard and Poor’s index to assess a firm’s credit worthiness.

By assessing leadership through the eyes and expectations of investors, a leader’s strengths, authenticity, and emotional intelligence are successful when they increase investor confidence in intangibles and long-term financial results. A leadership capital index brings rigour, focus, and discipline to assessment of effective leadership.

LEADERSHIP CAPITAL INDEX

A leadership capital index clearly benefits investors who can reduce the risks of their investments, but it also helps board members know how to select and evaluate future leaders.

C-suite executives who manage succession and leadership teams will focus on successors who give investors confidence that increases market value.

Human resources professionals and others charged with building leadership will focus less on personal charm and more on investor confidence through specific personal and organisation leadership actions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is time to look beyond a leader’s personal charm and define how leaders build value from investors through a leadership capital index.

Dave Ulrich, Reesik Likert Professor of Business, Ross School of Business, is a partner at The RBL Group, a consulting firm focused on helping organisations and leaders deliver value. He studies how organisations build capabilities of leadership, learning, accountability, and talent through leveraging human resources.

LEADERS ARE EFFECTIVE NOT JUST BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY KNOW AND DO, BUT BY HOW THEIR LEADERSHIP AFFECTS OTHERS.
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ARE YOU BOGGED DOWN BY ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS?

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At Leaderonomics, we pride ourselves in helping organisations remove constraints — from your business model concerns to structural/process issues to culture and leadership challenges, that hinder high performance.

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Leadership is hard. Many mistake leadership for power. But to lead is to both inspire and to direct, to listen and to talk. Leadership is to be great at being strategic but also being great at execution.

Leadership requires humility but it also requires assertiveness at times. Leadership is a challenge as it requires us to not only have the competence and skills but also to know when to use each skill.

Allison Kirkland argues in her article that leaders wear many hats. But more than wearing hats, leaders need to be clear how to make the right decisions at the right time. Much is expected of leaders and much is made of leaders. Every fault is usually traced back to the leader and the leader faces numerous struggles with their time, priorities and obligations. Yet, we all know that “everything rises and falls with leadership.”

To truly lead, leaders must go back to the roots of why they took up the leadership challenge in the first place. Leaders grow weary from leading but if they take moments off to rest and reflect, they will recall the reasons they first aspired to be leaders—to make a difference!

Consistently remembering the purpose of your calling enables you to move from being a leader that leads through authority and getting things done, to a leader of love. Most leaders take on the leadership challenge because of their deep love to help, inspire and make a difference to the people around them.

Kirkland argues that the leadership dilemma is between being in control or leading. I would take it a step further to argue that it is between being in love with the community you serve (and leading) or being in love with yourself and thus serving your needs.

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WHY POWER CORRUPTS — AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

LEADERS ARE IN TERRIBLE DANGER OF DEPLETING THEIR MORAUX RESERVES. HERE’S WHY.

WHEN EXCESSIVE POWER FLOWS THROUGH THE CABLE THAT IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO HANDLE IT, THE POWER DESTROYS ITS OWN CONDUCT, PRODUCING A MELTDOWN. THE SAME THING HAPPENS TO HUMAN BEINGS WHO ARE EXPOSED TO POWER WITHOUT THE NECESSARY TRAINING AND STRENGTH OF CHARACTER THAT DESTROYS THEIR MORAL STRUCTURE AND IT BECOMES A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE IN ITS OWN RIGHT. THIS IS WHAT WE CALL CORRUPTION.

As human beings, power has a change-effect on us. It is a transforming, addictive force which is both life-enhancing and soul-destroying. Why is this? The answer is simple: we need power to live. And even more so, we need it to live well.

The power of money, fame, good looks, position or status, even where perhaps, or excelled, or perhaps determined to play it cool, which is a reaction in us.

We get the same feeling when stepping into a bar or a fashion store, or attending a gala event, or if we get to hold a key in cash. Whatever happens, you can’t ignore it. It’s not always positive though. We feel some instantly when someone looks at us, or if we feel we are in a position to make a decision.

The strength of character clearly has a role to play. Humility, honesty and determination to act with justice form effective safeguards in an individual against the corrosive effects of undue power.

To create and powers to destroy

When people in power, whether they be in high office, or those who hold them, they must be managed and controlled for it will become a useful tool rather than a destructive force.

When we encounter it, it impacts and changes us. This is the time when we are small children and going on face them.

Strength of character

In fact, we know that power has its own characteristics. anybody who works in power generator or electrical engineering will know that it has its very specific side effects which must be managed and controlled for it will become a useful tool rather than a destructive force.

When excessive power flows through the cable that is not strong enough to handle it, the power destroys its own conduct, producing a meltdown. The same thing happens to human beings who are exposed to power without the necessary training and strength of character that destroys their moral structure and it becomes a destructive force in its own right. This is what we call corruption.

Power and its effects

Power, we know, is a natural force; it is a force that defines our lives. It is a force that shapes our thinking, our actions, and our decisions.

Power has its own identity. However, power has an identity of its own.

The power of money, fame, good looks, position or status, even where perhaps, or excelled, or perhaps determined to play it cool, which is a reaction in us.

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To create and powers to destroy

When people in power, whether they be in high office, or those who hold them, they must be managed and controlled for it will become a useful tool rather than a destructive force.
WHEN someone else takes credit for your work, there are four steps you must take: seek clarification, request it to be fixed, get mad, then get over it.

We’ve all had that experience where we work really hard on something and instead of getting recognised for our contribution, we have to sit there and choke back bile when someone else takes credit for the work.

It’s infuriating to think about how hard you have worked and how much effort you put into a project only to see someone else take credit for your work.

When this happens, we feel helpless and frustrated. It’s maddening. There’s a feeling of helplessness that comes along with this situation.

So what can you do when you’re in this situation? What do you do when someone else passes your work off as their own? How do you handle it when someone else takes credit for the work you did?

Here are a few thoughts:

1. SEEK CLARIFICATION
   It could be an accident. You might have sung your praises before you walked into the room to find them presenting your deck. They may have written a nice e-mail giving you full credit but all you heard was “I received this presentation from (not you)” and it’s great.”

   Clarify first. Just ask. If you are wrong and the person gave you credit, thank them politely for promoting your work.

   If it’s clear they did pass off your work as theirs or they took credit for your idea, ask them (in private) if they could clarify to others that it was actually your work.

   You might say “I’m glad you liked my work but after your presentation, some people are under a mistaken impression that you did the work. I would appreciate it if you could clarify to them that the work was mine.”

   More often than not, they’ll heed that request.

   If it’s your content that has been stolen/plagiarised, send an e-mail or make a call asking the person to remove it and to never do it again. Give them a clear timeline for action and show them a reference back to your original work.

   They might be unaware that the work was stolen (maybe someone on their team did it—see the point above on clarification).

   If you’re okay with your work being republished with attribution, ask them to include the correct attribution with any links you desire back to your original article.

   Many times, they’ll comply with this request.

2. REQUEST (NICELY) A CORRECTION
   If it’s clear they did pass off your work as theirs or they took credit for your idea, ask them (in private) if they could clarify to others that it was actually your work.

   Here are a few thoughts:

   Seek clarification. Just ask. If you are wrong and the person gave you credit, thank them politely for promoting your work.

   If the person decides not to satisfy your request for a correction, demand one. You could petition the person’s supervisor to rectify things (the boss might be unaware that someone is taking credit for your work).

   Let the person know you’re upset that they took credit and that they’ve violated some pretty clear societal standards on giving and taking credit. In some cases (like plagiarism) you might even have your lawyer send a demand notice requesting redress.

3. DEMAND A CORRECTION
   If the person decides not to satisfy your request for a correction, demand one. You could petition the person’s supervisor to rectify things (the boss might be unaware that someone is taking credit for your work).

   Let the person know you’re upset that they took credit and that they’ve violated some pretty clear societal standards on giving and taking credit. In some cases (like plagiarism) you might even have your lawyer send a demand notice requesting redress.

4. GO NUKE YOU OR GET OVER IT
   If all the above strategies fail, you have two choices. You can go for the nuclear option and file a formal complaint at work (with your boss, human resources, etc.) or sue (e.g. for plagiarism) or carry out a public campaign to call out the fraud.

   Or you can vent about it, make your case, then shut up and move on with life. Events like this can be total energy drainers. You can choose instead to focus your efforts on being productive and moving forward knowing that the universe will take care of the fakers of the world.

Mike is the founder and managing director of ThoughtLeaders, LLC. He is also the author of “One Piece of Paper: The Simple Approach to Powerful, Personal Leadership.”
Motivating you.

It does not have to be rewards from external parties. You can reward your- self too. So, treat yourself to something whenever you successfully complete a task in your to-do-list.

LACK OF AUTONOMY
All individuals want to be given a cer- tain level of autonomy when it comes to getting things done. Let’s admit it, we thrive on it.

All human beings have a decision-mak- ing centre that needs to be put to use. Studies have shown that this decision-making centre in the brain is underdevel- oped in people who have depression and that if you practise using this part of the brain with making decisions, depression often clears.

In his book Drive, author Daniel Pink writes about a research that says having the autonomy to decide on what we do, with whom, when we do it and how we do it, while attempt- ing creative work is core to igniting and sustaining motivation, creativity, and productivity.

Align the amount of autonomy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- sue. Are there times when you feel restricted? Try to think of ways for you to slowly introduce more auton- omy in your work. If you have a superior to report to, then discuss with him/her auton- omy you have with regards to the goals you have been trying to pur- 

Lack of autonomy

FEELING UNDERVALUED
You have put your best foot forward and have done a good job, but when you feel that your efforts and dedication are not acknowledged or appreciated, then you may soon slow down on the energy bit and your commitment towards your role will deteriorate.

Now when this happens, you need to step up. There could be a communication breakdown between your superior and you. Address this by speaking with your supervisor and raising your concern about feeling unappreciated. If the situa- tion persists and you feel that you are genuinely undervalued, then perhaps the time has come for you to move on.

SURROUNDINGS
If you are surrounded by passive, pes- simistic people who always run you down on your ideas and ambitions, then you are definitely bound to get demotivated. You may have a great opportunity ahead, but the messages from these people may just make you lose confidence and trust within your- self.

You may let go of valuable opportunities in life, due to the lack of motivation cre- ated by this unhealthy surrounding.

So, surround yourself with optimistic and positive people who are always there to motivate you. Being around such people is an instant boost that will empower you to take on any challenges or roles given to you. Ensure that your surroundings consist of realistic people as well who can be tact- ful in explaining things to you if your goals start to get too fluffy or just impossible with your current circumstances.

PARTING THOUGHTS
You are the best motivator for yourself, hence, step up and start today. Do not procrastinate any longer. Self-motivation is the essence to ensure sustainable success.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Without realising it, you will be spend- ing each day accomplishing something, and by just being aware of that, you will be prepared to tackle larger things the next day. Isn’t that motivation already?

To find out more about Digital Learning offered by Leaderonomics, email us at learn@leaderonomics.com.
**THE LUCIFER EFFECT**

**THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT: ARE WE BAD APPLES OR JUST IN BAD BARRELS?**

By Louisa Devadason, Editor@leaderonomics.com

On Aug 14, 1971, psychologist Philip Zimbardo began his now infamous Stanford Prison Experiment. Twenty-four mostly middle-class and white males—who were deemed mentally fit—were selected for the study. They were randomly assigned the role of prisoner or guard while Zimbardo assumed the role of superintendent. The guards attended an orientation session for their position. They were advised as to what was appropriate behaviour for a guard then provided with uniform and wooden baton to establish their status. They were also instructed to refer to prisoners by their assigned number and not their name.

The prisoners were "arrested" at their homes and "charged" with armed robbery by the Palo Alto police department and went through the full standard prison booking procedure. Each of them was given a cell with two other "innmates." The prisoners were to stay in their cells or at the yard all day and night until the end of the study. The guards worked in teams of three for eight-hour shifts. The guards did not have to stay on site after their shift.

**RESULTS**

"The landmark Stanford study provides a cautionary tale for all military detention operations… Psychologists have attempted to understand how and why individuals and groups who usually act humanely can sometimes act otherwise in certain circumstances," —Schleisinger Independent Commission Report.

Guards began to use psychological tactics to control the prisoners. They set up a "privilege cell" in which prisoners who were not involved in the riot were treated with special rewards, such as higher quality meals. The "privileged" inmates chose not to eat the meal in commissariat with their fellow prisoners.

The experiment continued to unravel with one prisoner having bouts of rage and other prisoners becoming more and more unpredictable. The guards began to become physically, emotionally and mentally abusive—dehumanising their wards. In fact, one-third of the guards were observed by research assistants to have sadistic tendencies.

Zimbardo himself became absorbed into the study and was advised by his research assistant (now wife) Christina Maslach to abort the experiment early as the conditions were appalling. After only six days of a planned two weeks, the Stanford Prison Experiment was discontinued.

The results of this study suggest that there are situational factors that significantly influence our personality. This experiment was brought to light when one guard, with the torture of inmates by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib in 2004. Zimbardo concluded that official military and government representatives shifted the blame on to a few "bad apples" instead of addressing systemic concerns of established military incarceration system.

**THE LUCIFER EFFECT**

The title of Zimbardo's book, The Lucifer Effect, is derived from the metamorphosis of Lucifer into Satan. Lucifer was once God's most beloved angel but eventually was banished to Hell for challenging God's authority. Zimbardo's main theory suggests that people often shift from good to evil due to situational influences and power disparity.

It is valid question though. How much of a role are our organisational structures and policies playing in the disintegration of their subordinate's values, morals and ethics? The book has led Zimbardo to focus on the Banalities of Heroism. He writes that heroes come in two types: the ones with legacies, like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and heroes of the moment such as whistle-blowers, the brave ones fighting in war or the ones who are courageous. People who did the right thing, at the right time. People who live ordinary lives who behaved extraordinarily in an unobserved instance. But, how do we develop this mindset?

**A TEN-STEP PROGRAMME TO BUILD RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE**

**STEP NO. 1 – ‘I MADE A MISTAKE!’**

Encouraging oneself and others to admit a mistake and to accept it that merely makes us human is the first step to being open and aware.

**STEP NO. 2 – ‘I AM MINDFUL!’**

Stop. Take a minute to assess what is going on. Reflect on the week. Companies should give employees the time and space to do this from time to time.

**STEP NO. 3 – ‘I AM RESPONSIBLE!’**

Diffusion of responsibility is a dangerous thing as it forces others to compromise their own accountability. This diffusion is akin to saying, “All five of us were driving the car when it crashed.” It does not make sense and no one steps up to do the right thing because no one person comes forward and says I made the decision to speed up. I need to make what I did right.

**STEP NO. 4 – ‘I AM ME, THE BEST I CAN BE.’**

Create an environment that allows each person's strengths—not fixating on a person's weaknesses. That's why it's important to ask questions to get a thesis and an antithesis to every important argument.

**STEP NO. 5 – ‘I RESPECT JUST AUTHORITY, BUT REBEL AGAINST UNJUST AUTHORITY!’**

Learn and teach the critical difference between those in authority who—because of their expertise, wisdom, seniority, or special status—deserve respect and those unjust authority figures who demand our obedience without having any substance. Authority, commanded through self-promotion (think Donald Trump) need to be resisted and critically evaluated.

**STEP NO. 6 – ‘I WANT GROUP ACCEPTANCE, BUT VALUE MY INDEPENDENCE.’**

It's hard when companies demand a “team player” all the time. While we are, by nature, social creatures, conformity to be part of a group can sometimes be at the expense of social good. It's the bad side of strength in numbers as we have seen people be part of certain political parties who watch sly as wrong things are being done around them. Take a step back, form diverse groups that support different thinking and promote independence and your values.

**STEP NO. 7 – ‘I WILL BE MORE FRAME VIGILANT!’**

The manner in which issues are framed is more influential than the facts. Effective framing takes the form of scintillating sound bites, ads, slogans and logos. They influence us on an unconscious level and orientate our ideas towards issues. That's why it's important to ask questions to get a thesis and an antithesis to every important argument.

**STEP NO. 8 – ‘I WILL BALANCE MY TIME PERSPECTIVE!’**

It's great to live in the moment but sometimes we stretch the present. We make "just this once" decisions that compromise our values and inadvertently, this present moment expands and it creates a trickle-down effect leading to more and more compromises. So really assess and hold to your values when you see mistreatment at the workplace. See something, say something.

**STEP NO. 9 – ‘I WILL NOT SACRIFICe PERSONAL OR CIVIC FREEDOMS FOR THE ILLUSION OF SECURITY!’**

Security is a great human driver and authority figures often capitalise on it. They promise you certain securities because of their expertise, wisdom, seniority, or special status—deserves respect and those unjust authority figures who demand our obedience without having any substance. Authority, commanded through self-promotion (think Donald Trump) need to be resisted and critically evaluated.

**STEP NO. 10 – ‘I CAN OPPOSE UNJUST SYSTEMS.’**

Believe in your vision and values. Seek like-minded people and share your ideas with others. Even in voting, one person can change everything.

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Louisa likes to rage against the machine. She'd love to hear about a time you stood up for what's right. Contact her at louisa.devadason@leaderonomics.com to "Share your story."
By KEVIN KRUUSE

ould you like a powerful and lasting way to create fierce loyalty in any group setting? Do you want a master key to the hearts and minds of your next audience?

In his book, Conversation Tactics: Strategies to Confront, Challenge, and Resolve, Patrick King teaches you how to prepare for difficult conversations in a manner that results in a positive outcome for both parties. When handled correctly, King shows that confrontation can be positive, passive aggressive behaviour will be nullified, and relationships will flourish as trust and respect grows.

King covers a lot of ground from separating impact from intent, speaking so ‘flourish as trust and respect grows. will be nullified, and relationships will converses, and was raised in a family will be nullified, and relationships will resolve, it’s not going to be the end of the world. If you handle it the right way, it will benefit everyone involved.

TIP 3: CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

You shouldn’t just leave your ego at the door, you need to leave your assumptions there, too. We are often quick to assume that malice is behind someone’s actions. We can’t read minds and are generally bad at reading emotions, too. Often, situations can be explained just by simple lack of awareness. Focusing on the facts and a mutually acceptable solution are the best ways to resolve conflict.

TIP 4: THE MORE YOU RUN, THE BIGGER THE PROBLEM BECOMES

I used to be a horrible boss. My sin wasn’t that I was mean, or too tough, or uncaring. My sin was that I was non-confrontational. I was never trained on how to have tough conversations, and was raised in a family that never screamed, fought or even had emotionally charged debates. So even routine coaching conversations were difficult for me. It’s one of the reasons I dislike annual performance appraisals—they facilitate bad managers. A typical example of what goes through my mind: I know I should talk to Owen about all those mistakes he’s been making, but hey, his performance review is only 10 months away so I’ll bring it up then!

King rightly points out that undressed problems will only grow in size and make the eventual conversation even tougher! Deal with problems as close to the time that they appear as possible.

TIP 5: REALISE THAT CONFRONTATION IS HEALTHY

In addition to the organisational benefits of confrontation, difficult conversations can actually be good for your physical health. King points to several studies that show unresolved anger releases cortisol which increases stress and fatigue. Many people who complain of migraines and high blood pressure trace these physical problems back to relationship problems. Despite the short-term feeling of awkwardness (see Tip #2), you will likely benefit from long-term health gains.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Too many people suffer from a lack of professional courage, which can exacerbate workplace problems, and can also lead to a life of stress, resentment and aggressive behaviour. In Conversation Tactics, King provides a framework, sample dialogue and advice to make us all more fluent and comfortable with confrontation.
When we talk about corruption, it's usually associated with people in high positions of power—politicians, leaders, law enforcers, etc. Over the years, society has taken a very disconnected stance to the injustice of corruption. We look at corruption as a well-oiled machine, operated by a few select powerful individuals with the world standing by watching, enduring the consequences of such machine's work. The topic has always been spoken about as a negative behaviour that we should not associate ourselves with at all costs. Perhaps this is the main fault in humankind's battle against corruption. There is no forward movement to the stance. In fact, it probably even contributes further into the issue itself. But what are the changes that we can make that are constantly preached about? What steps can we take that would even affect the industry of corruption? As a lone individual in an overwhelming fast-paced society full of corruption, here are a few important things to consider:

1. RECOGNISE THAT YOU, AS AN INDIVIDUAL, CAN HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE PROBLEM, BECAUSE YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM.

An ever-prevailing trait of man is the constant avoidance of being caught on the wrong side. We always want to believe that what we are doing is right, or not associate ourselves with whatever is deemed as "wrong" by society. Even those who have done wrong, have their own twisted logic of how the ends justify the means.

The truth is that all our hands are dirty. Corruption is not linear; it's a cycle. Corruptive leadership can only flourish in an equally corrupt community made of equally corrupt individuals. The "corruption machine" is well-oiled because people oil it by quietly tucking their heads down and moving on with their lives. If there is one mantra that has single-handedly halted the progression of greater good in humankind, it would be "don't see an evil, do evil to evil".

By merely accepting that there is nothing we can possibly do, or that that's the way things are, we have already oiled the machine of corruption well enough for it to operate on its own. We, as a community, are responsible for the corruption that happens within it, whether or not we believe that we directly partake in it. Realise that by being a small part of the problem, you have the insider advantage of solving it. But what can you do?

2. BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS.

This is a hard one because the biggest selling point of corruption is convenience, and who doesn’t love convenience? Remember that because everything is a cycle, any changes made will eventually influence the circle as a whole. Conforming to the convenience of corruption even on the smallest levels, its effect is multiplied within the bigger picture. Once we have already recognised that we are part of the problem, then the next logical step is to face the consequences of our actions.

Pay your traffic fines in the stated amount. Don’t cut queue. Don’t expect more than you have actually signed to receive in a business deal. Question yourself as an individual, on your effect on the cycle, because in a bucket of water you’re a droplet. And every droplet counts (literally). How do you make yourself count?

3. GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY (THE RIGHT WAY).

A bucket of water, a bundle of straw on the camel’s back—everything is made up of individuals joining together to become something bigger. The first traffic bribe made probably came from the partnering of a compassionate police officer and some very sorry and broke looking individual. The reason police officers around the world subtly ask for bribes is because traffic offenders opt to bear that cost instead of the actual cost of the fine. What if everyone just stops paying the micro-bribes (in monetary or in kind value) that they pay, would those expecting to be bribed still ask for it?

What if we take it a step further and open our eyes up to the corruption happening every day? What if we say something about it to the people committing the act in front of us? To be honest, it probably won’t be received very well, but speaking up is important because we are forcing others to acknowledge the issue (see Step 1).

Whether or not they react to it, it doesn’t matter. When a person has been called out for something he has done by another individual, it creates a lasting effect. It reminds the person that he exists in a society where such behaviour is not tolerated. It shows that we care, as a community, for the well-being of others. We care enough about each other to stop each other from getting on the wrong side of the system. Inherently, this will only bring a more positive effect on the community. Which brings us to the last point.

4. ACKNOWLEDGE AND UTILISE YOUR INFLUENCE.

There are several million easy ways to ruin a complete stranger’s day—drive like a maniac, cut queue, be rude, don’t wear deodorant or step into an already crowded elevator. One of the most underestimated skills humans have is their influence on each other. Never doubt the power you have to change someone’s day, anyone’s day. Making someone’s day is just as easy as ruining it. Everyone has influence. For some, the circles are large, and for others the circles are small.

We like to think of ourselves and those who govern over us as a separate entity. Hence, demanding for those who govern over us to clean up their act has come naturally. But as mentioned before, a government is only as corrupt as the society it serves. Before asking what those in higher power can do to make a change, think about what you can do from where you are in your work, in your school, and in your family.

We’ve been duped into thinking that our work is insignificant—clock in and clock out—but it’s not just that. We influence the people around us whether we want to or not, so we might as well just utilise the influence we already have. In our everyday life, if we were to start living with the acknowledgement that what we do actually counts, our behaviour will surely change as well, ultimately influencing those around us.

Edmund Burke said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Corruption is just that, a by-product of good individuals doing nothing. But as a product, its supply will always be subject to its demand.

For a corrupted community to thrive, all three levels of individuals, institutions, and leaders must be able to tolerate it. If one of those levels were to disconnect themselves from the vicious cycle, the chain of supply and demand will break. It was never really a question about what we can do about corruption. The real question is will we actually do it?

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Zoë Lim has too many shower thoughts and too little time to write all of it down. In her free time, she reads five different books at once (because variety).