

THE DOWNSIDE OF LEADERSHIP

*The role of leadership certainly has many rewards – generally earned through hard work, the support of followers and tenacity. The role also has, inevitably, some serious downsides. The intensity of these downsides very often prompts persons **not** to accept the mantle of leadership. Below are listed some of the more common downsides. Following these are some techniques that can help ameliorate these downsides and keep leaders focused and balanced.*

DOWNSIDES OF LEADERSHIP

1. The commitment it takes in time and effort.
2. Its relentlessness – when you are leading, you can't duck it and walk away, no matter what comes down the pike.
3. When leading, you are often expecting people to change. Change is threatening, so people are often deeply upset by the journey you are leading them on and take it out on you.
4. Leading is lonely, for often you are on point and therefore in the sights of every arrow that is launched. Also, followers have each other. You often have no fellow companions.
5. Since leadership stems from deep within, it is **you** on the line. Hence, when you are criticized, it is **you** and **your** values that are attacked – and that hurts.
6. There are times when you will profoundly fail when leading. This failure is generally very public and absorbing the criticism and forging ahead takes deep-seated confidence. If that isn't there, depression is just around the corner.
7. Leadership most often means taking the heat for screw-ups and sharing the glory when things work. That can often seem rather unfair and can cause one to feel unappreciated.
8. Since you are leading into the extraordinary, you often do not have a clear picture of where that will lead. As such, it takes moxy and great courage to move into the untried. Hence, leadership can be very scary.
9. Often when leading you must make hard, strategic decisions that often result in hurting others – their positions no longer

exist, they must learn new skills or resign, old “fiefdoms” are broken up, or there are changes in the business hierarchy that “demote” some folks. You must “feel” their pain and get ready to be severely challenged.

10. Your need to lead with integrity forces you to constantly engage in profound discernment. Discernment is hard work, for you need to go deep down and listen – oftentimes hearing things you really don’t want to hear.
11. You have to listen – big time – and listening is hard work.

TECHNIQUES TO AMELIORATE THE DOWNSIDES

1. Develop a cadre of regular support **outside** of your workplace.
2. Find folks within your organization who speak the truth to you and will give you sound feedback.
3. Take time for yourself – put you in your day minder.
4. Develop a regular spiritual practice – yoga, meditation, prayer, walking, reading, journaling, etc. The operant word is **regular**.
5. Expect that you will at times fail, and accept that failure comes with the territory.
6. Read bios of other leaders and learn how they coped with failure.
7. Join a group that meets regularly wherein you are **not** the leader.
8. Laugh as much as you can, and try and travel with a lightness of being -- keep a sense of humor.
9. Play – cards, chess, video games, Frisbee, softball, run/jog, swim – do things that are fun.
10. Surround yourself with folks who are positive, uplifting, add to your spirit rather than those who seem to always depress you.
11. Accept your limits – you are human, not saintly.
12. Be genuinely yourself – with all of your warts – and in that way you never have to think of what “role” you need to play
13. Say “no” when your load is too heavy.
14. Count your blessings – often.