



KEEPING
“WHAT’S RIGHT,”
IN FRONT

Although the world is full of suffering,
it is also full of the overcoming of it.

—Helen Keller

The challenge of getting to “what’s right,” which I’ve shared throughout this book, can be large. But I believe it’s worth it. There’s value in it, and I want to remind you about some steps to make it happen and to keep it in the forefront of your thinking and behaving.

First, let’s remember the whole notion of “what’s right, not who’s right” is by definition countercultural. It’s not something that we’re used to doing, because when things get hard, or somebody disagrees with us, or we get pushback or outright conflict about something, most of us want to retreat. We either get very quiet and do nothing because we don’t like conflict and we just want it to go away, or we become passive-aggressive and start conducting corrosive conversations by email or in a hallway after a meeting. We either start picking on one another, or we just crumble. We fall back. We feel we have no platform anymore.

Therefore, keeping “what’s right” in front is something that’s necessary to keep the energy moving, to keep us and the organizations we’re part of going in the right direction. To keep it in front, let’s

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bring back some of the big themes I shared with you earlier.

First, you need to check what energy you're bringing. Often, the leader is the source of the problem, not the source of the benefit. We have a client right now, and one of the leaders just keeps bringing up this negative incident from about a year ago. No matter how many times we invite this person to stop doing that, the person keeps mentioning it as an example of why the organization isn't changing. It may sound obvious to you as I write this, but every time this person brings up the incident, it just gives it more life. The incident continues to live on; in fact, it's become somewhat of a fish story! The incident was a problem, yes, but it wasn't the *huge* issue it had become in this person's mind.

My simple advice? *Stop it.* Don't give it more life. Don't bring that energy. Bring the energy of looking forward instead.

Next, be humble and vulnerable. This is something that's really challenging when you're looking at what's right. It took me a long time—until I was in my midthirties—before I recognized that asking

for help is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness. In fact, it's ultimately just really practical to ask for help. Why would you wander around just doing the wrong thing for a long period of time? Get some help. That requires a little bit of humility. It's the need to look at yourself and say maybe you don't have all the answers. Then when you find yourself in new situations, don't pretend like you know the answers. Act like a beginner. Be curious. Have all the information flow to you. Know-it-alls (And you know who you are!) are like balloons that are full of air. A full balloon can take on no more air. It'll pop. You've got to leave some room in your balloon to get some air in there, and that's a great metaphor for being open to learning, to discovering that maybe you don't know everything.

Then get your accountability equation right. Too often—in fact, *way* too often—I hear people say, “We need to hold them accountable.” You've probably said it yourself more than once, maybe even today. To me, this statement is backward. Accountability isn't a demand or an external force I can force on someone else. It's an intrinsic, internal,

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personal choice. In other words, I can *be* accountable or not, but no one can *make me* be accountable. Does that make sense? When we're keeping "what's right" in front, we're acting from a place of personal accountability, and we're inviting others to do the same. Stop trying to hold someone accountable (by the way, this really should translate into "I want to punish you if you don't deliver") and, instead, invite that person to be accountable. This causes a major shift in the energy between people.

The last thing I want to bring up here is a really simple thing when it comes to keeping "what's right" in front. Eliminate your distractions. Quit checking your email, texting, Facebooking, Snapchatting, Instagramming, or whatever it might be that distracts you when you're with other people. Quit it! Give the people you're with the purity of your attention. There's no greater gift that we can give to another person than the purity of our attention. When that person knows that you're paying complete attention to him or her, that everything being said is being absorbed by you, everything changes.

While it's not easy keeping "what's right" in front, keeping this checklist in front of you can help:

- Check your energy.
- Be humble.
- Be vulnerable.
- Ask for help.
- Retain a beginner's mind.
- Be accountable, and invite others to do the same.
- Give the purity of your attention to others.

Questions, Insights, Implications

1. When you're in the midst of a challenging situation, what might happen if you were able to check the energy you're bringing and shift your energy to a more productive place?
2. What's your reaction when you think of the words "humble" and "vulnerable"?
3. Are you able to regularly give of the purity of your attention to others, or are you more frequently distracted by something (such as emails, texts, Facebook postings, eavesdropping)?

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Again, reflect on these questions, and allow yourself to be wrong and to be open to new perspectives. By doing so, you'll likely find new insights in the most unexpected places.