



The A – Z of Personal Leadership Success

Turn your doubts and fears into courage
& breakthroughs





Welcome

Hi! I'm **Obi Abuchi**...

In case you haven't figured it out already, I'm incredibly passionate about Personal Leadership and the difference it makes to our energy, impact, and resilience as leaders.

After studying some of the greatest leaders and leadership experts over the last two decades, I've come to define Personal Leadership as this - understanding your own beautiful complexity and the ability to show up as your best self, in any situation.

Personal Leadership enables us to live vibrant, fulfilling, & productive lives; it enables us to achieve successful careers; it enables us to build businesses that have a positive impact in our world. Most importantly, it enables us to overcome the fears, doubts, limiting beliefs, and bad habits that get in the way of us living our best lives as leaders.

I'm looking forward to sharing 26 Personal Leadership principles with you in this resource. They will have an incredible impact on your life and leadership.

So what are you waiting for? Take this journey with me and enjoy the ride!

Sincerely yours!

Obi Abuchi

The Principle behind the Principles

Ultimately, there are only 3 things required for a breakthrough to happen – belief, action, & time.



All of the 26 principles that I'll be sharing with you are designed to equip you in one of these 3 areas so you can have a breakthrough in your Personal Leadership as you:

1. Develop mental & character fitness

Your ability to win hearts and minds and overcome the bad habits that keep so many leaders stuck in damaging and ineffective ways of leading ultimately comes down to your mental and character muscle strength.

2. Take the right action

It's no good just taking any action. So much of what people call leadership today is abysmal and damaging. It's critical that you learn to lead well & learn to take the right action.

3. Embrace the power & importance of time

You cannot rush personal leadership growth. You cannot rush maturity in leadership. You cannot rush mental fitness and character growth. You cannot rush habit formation. These things take time.



Apply the power of leverage

To buy new homes, we leverage financial resources from banks. When seeking new jobs and business opportunities, we leverage our networks. The same applies to achieving a breakthrough in your leadership effectiveness. You need to leverage new insights, new skills, and new strategies. You may even need to leverage coaching or mentoring from others in order to achieve a breakthrough. After all, “What has gotten you to where you are, won’t get you to where you need to be.”

What leverage do you need to apply to achieve a breakthrough in your leadership effectiveness?

Blame no one and nothing

George Bernard Shaw, the Irish Playwright, said, “People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can’t find them, make them.” Blame is toxic and a lot of leaders foster a blame culture instead of one of personal responsibility.

In what ways have you been blaming others for your circumstances instead of taking personal responsibility

Create an empowering story

Have you ever decided to buy a car and suddenly noticed that car everywhere? Well, it has everything to do with the Reticular Activating System (RAS) in the brain. The RAS is a bundle of nerves at our brainstem that filters out unnecessary information, so the important stuff gets through. It’s the reason why you can tune out a crowd full of talking people yet connect with someone calling your name. The RAS takes what you focus on and creates a filter for it. Here’s why this is relevant. We’re all telling ourselves stories all the time – those stories either empower us or cripple us. What story are you telling yourself?

If your life was going to be turned in to an inspiring movie, what’s the script – the empowering story - that you would like to send to the producers?

Develop a growth mindset

World-renowned Stanford University psychologist, Carol Dweck, in decades of research on achievement and success, has discovered that we can have one of two mindsets – Fixed or Growth. “In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort ... In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.”

In what areas of your life and leadership do you need to develop more of a growth mindset?

Embrace the struggle

Is struggle necessary for growth and development? The answer is a resounding, Yes!” If we are not struggling, we are not learning. In fact, neuroscientists have found that mistakes and challenges are helpful for brain growth. Not only is struggle good for our brains, but leaders who know about the value of struggle improve their learning potential. They know that the struggle is one of the best opportunities to grow in mental toughness, resilience and character. They don't see life as happening to them but for them and so they're able to hold on that optimistic worldview no matter the circumstances.

What challenges are you facing right now that are perfect training grounds for you to grow in mental toughness, resilience and character?

Feed your mind with the right nutrition

The late Earl Nightingale described our minds as this barren fertile field and said, “whatever you plant in it will grow.” If you plant seeds of doubt, worry, greed, scarcity, and fear in your mind then you will reap the fruit of anxiety, burnout, and distress in your life. But if you plant seeds of hope, courage, and excellence then you will reap the fruit of vibrance, productivity and empowerment in your life and those around you. Thanks to all of the advances in neuroscience, we know that our thoughts create neural pathways that are strengthened over time, which create habits that direct our destiny.

Carry out a mental diet inventory – what is the content of your mental diet and how does it need to change in order to maximise your purpose, authenticity and courage as a leader?

Give your absolute best

In 2006, the Kendrick brothers released a movie called "Facing the Giants". Grant Taylor, played by Alex Kendrick, was a football coach at Shiloh Christian Academy. His team hadn't won any of their games for seven years and mediocrity and apathy had made their home among the team. To help awaken them to a new attitude ahead of an upcoming game where even the captain, Bra, was resigned to another loss, he got Bra to do the death crawl. The death crawl meant crawling from one end of the football field to another with one of his team mates on his back, and he had to do this blindfolded. What! Why? The reason is that the coach didn't want him to see where he was on the field and so give into fears and doubts and old ways of thinking and believing and seeing.

In what ways do you need to give your best and push past the barriers of fear and doubt in your life as a leader?

Hone your leadership skills

Steve Martin, the American actor and comedian, who has been in business for more than 50 years, was being interviewed by Charlie Rose in 2007 for his memoir 'Born Standing Up'. When he was asked by Charlie what it takes to succeed, his answer was simply this, "Become so good they can't ignore you." Geoff Colvin validates this idea in his book, Talent is Overrated, by sharing about what separates world-class performers from average performers - deliberate practice. He dispels the age-old myth that leaders are born by providing compelling evidence that greatness doesn't come from DNA but from practice and perseverance honed over decades.

What leadership skills do you need to develop, hone, and deliberately practice in order to increase your impact and effectiveness?

Ignite the fire within

In the movie, Cinderella Man, inspired by the life story of James J. Braddock, Russell Crowe plays the role of Braddock, who is this incredible up-and-coming boxer terrorising everyone that comes in his way. Braddock ends up having a chronic hand problem and goes from being an incredible fighter to living off social assistance, literally living hand to mouth. Through a number of twists and turns, he ends up with an opportunity to have one last fight and earn some extra money to put food on the table. Motivated by a deep hunger to provide for his family, Braddock wins every fight all the way to the championships. To become the best leader that you can be, you've got to know what you're living for, what you're fighting for, and even what you're willing to die for.

What are you fighting for and what gets you out of bed in the morning that fuels you to make a difference as a leader?

Jump into the arena

Do you go through life more as a 'spectator' or as a 'player'? Many leaders act as 'spectators' when they blame, criticise, and take the safe route. They're afraid to take the risks required to grow out of their comfort zone, connect with their best selves, and lead with great purpose and courage. 'Players' on the other hand are fully invested. They're learning, making mistakes, and growing in the process. They recognise that leadership takes courage - courage to jump into the arena of purpose, the arena of authenticity, the arena of mental and moral character growth.

Are you a spectator or a player?

Know your WHY

I love the way Simon Sinek, author of Start With Why, defines this, "Your WHY is the cause, the belief, the purpose that inspires you." I think I discovered my WHY while watching a movie (yes, another movie) at the age of 7. It was the 3-part series, Return to Eden. To cut a long story short, there was a doctor in the movie who performed plastic surgery on the main female character after she had been thrown in a crocodile infested swamped and almost been mauled to death by a crocodile. I remember thinking that doctors bring out the best in people and I wanted to do something like that. It sowed within me a belief that you and I have so much potential within us to contribute something unique to the world that no one else ever could. When your WHY is fully aligned with your best self, you tap into an energy that enables you to growth the mental and moral character strength to excel in your leadership.

What's your WHY?

Learn from every challenge and failure

The legendary inventor, Thomas Edison, is considered to be the person who created the light bulb. It turns out that he didn't create the first one, but he certainly made it commercially available and cheap so that it would last 1000s of hours and be available in our homes. He and his associates worked on finding the right filament for a long time. The best sources suggest that it took them 6000 tests just to get the right filament. A reporter once asked him what it felt like to fail 1000s of times. His answer was, "I haven't failed 1000s of times. It's just taken me 1000s of goes to get it right." Thomas Edison was someone who understood this principle.

In what ways do you need to start seeing failures and challenges as feedback and as an opportunity to learn and grow?

Make progress a MUST

Sir Dave Brailsford used to be the performance director for the British Cycling Olympic Team and worked with them from 1997 to 2014. He helped the team break history by getting more medals than they'd achieved in 76 years. He achieved this by breaking down every single element that goes into performance cycling and improve every single element by 1%. Not 50%, not 25%, not 10%, not 5%. At both the 2008 and 2012 Olympics the British cycling team won 7 gold medals thanks to this focus on marginal gains. Too many leaders are stuck in damaging and ineffective ways of leading. That can change by making a little bit of progress every single day towards a more purposeful, authentic, and courageous way of leading and living.

What one habit can you practice every single day to improve your leadership effectiveness?

Narrow your focus

What do Indra Nooyi, Bill Gates, Roger Federer, Serena Williams, Rihanna all have in common? You might be thinking – money, smarts, talents. Well, here's a different question, what if I told you that Roger Federer was going to make in the music business or Rihanna was determined to become a Tennis Champion? You'd probably say, "Guys, stick to what you know." The best of the best, know that you can't be great at everything. Lots of leaders pursue everything rather than pursuing activities that are very much aligned to their own sense of purpose and core values.

In your leadership role, what are the things that only you can do that will ensure you're focused on your highest area of contribution?

Own your emotions

In his book, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ, Daniel Goleman says, "People with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity; people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought." Developing our emotional skills begins with self-awareness – owning how we feel and what we're feeling. As a leader, your ability to own and examine your emotions will determine how effective you are at assessing the perspective or behaviour that may need to change in any given situation.

How aware are you of the emotions that you feel on a daily basis? To what degree are these emotions driving helpful or unhelpful behaviours in your leadership?

Prepare to win

Someone who I've admired for years as an incredible example of this principle is Michael Jordan. MJ is considered by many to be one of the greatest basketball players there have ever been. Before he retired, he was asked in an interview: "What sets you apart, Michael? Is it your God-given talent, ability, skill?" MJ's response was this, "I'll shoot you straight. I have a lot of talent. A lot of God-given talent, skill, and ability. I've worked really hard but, really, it's my standards. Every day I demand more from myself than anybody else could humanly expect. I'm not competing with somebody else. I'm competing with what I'm capable of." He was the sort of person that always trained as though it was the real thing, which always made the actual games a piece of cake, so-to-speak. As Paul "Bear" Bryant on the greatest American college football coaches of all time used to say, "It's not the will to win, but the will to prepare to win that counts."

How much effort are willing to put in to becoming the best leader you can possibly be?

Quell the doubts

Ever since clinical Psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes first coined the phrase Imposter Syndrome, it has been acknowledged as a persistent reality in the lives of so many leaders, including many high achievers, causing them to self-sabotage because they do not believe or feel they are as competent as others perceive them to be. This belief that they are inadequate, a fraud, or will soon be exposed for who they really are puts an incredible amount of pressure and stress on many leaders. Biologically, this leads to higher levels of cortisol in the body and, for many leaders, leads to higher levels of anxiety, depression and burnout. To overcome this as a leader, you need to take time to explore your doubts, uncover the beliefs behind them, separate what is real from what isn't with the help of trusted friends and advisors, and align yourself to a way of leading and serving others that makes it less about you and more about the contribution that your team, organisation or community is focused on making.

What doubts are plagued with? In what ways are they holding you back? What is the truth and what choices can you make to ensure that you're able to focus on contributing with confidence as you lead?

Read your fears

Have you ever felt fear to the point that it crippled you? Maybe you had to deliver a high-stakes presentation to very important stakeholders? Maybe it was taking on a new role that would demand more from you than you've ever had to give before. In her TED talk, *What fear can teach us*, Karen Thompson Walker says, "Read in the right way, our fears are an amazing gift of the imagination, a kind of everyday clairvoyance, a way of glimpsing what might be the future when there's still time to influence how that future will play out." Rather than be crippled by our fears, we can think of them like crystal balls that give us a 'potential' glimpse into the future. We shouldn't fear our fears, but read them, examine them, and use them as 'potential' signposts for ways we need to grow and action we need to take.

What are some of the fears that limit your effectiveness as a leader? What could they be telling you about the mental and moral character muscles that you need to develop? What could they be telling you about the action you need to take stop your fears becoming a reality?

Shake Off Toxic Criticism

In *The Courage to be Disliked*, Ichiro Kishimi, says, "If one really has a feeling of contribution, one will no longer have any need for recognition from others. Because one will already have the real awareness that "I am of use to someone," without needing to go out of one's way to be acknowledged by others. In other words, a person who is obsessed with the desire for recognition does not have any community feeling yet, and has not managed to engage in self-acceptance, confidence in others, or contribution to others." To shake off toxic criticism, you need to ABC:

- Accept that people will criticise you
- Be grateful for who you are and what you have
- Channel your focus on your empowering story

In what ways have you internalised toxic criticism from others? How can you apply the ABC approach to shake off the toxic criticism?

Take full responsibility

Taking full responsibility for our lives, our leadership, and the results that we're getting is not an easy one for many leaders. And yet the more responsibility you take for your life, attitude, mindset, and leadership the more you find the power to create the life and leadership legacy you actually long for. Someone who knew this principle intimately was the neurologist and psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, who survived the holocaust after spending three years in Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps. "We who lived in concentration camps can remember men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Responsibility can never be taken away from a person without their permission.

In what areas of your life and leadership do you need to take full responsibility?

Upgrade your know-how

I remember playing a game of snakes and ladders with one of my boys. He was about 3 years old, and he wasn't having a great time. He loved going up the ladders but really didn't like going down the snakes. At one point, he exclaimed, "I hate these snakes!" I could empathise, one minute you're going up and the next minute you're going down. Of course, life is like snakes and ladders. One minute, we're experiencing incredible opportunities and the next minute we're facing unprecedented challenges and difficulties. John Maxwell says, "It's only in the process of accepting and solving problems that our ability to think creatively is enhanced, our persistence is strengthened, and our self-confidence is deepened." We all need the 'snakes' of life to help us grow and develop greater levels of resilience and competence.

When you're facing challenges and difficulties, ask yourself: "What is it I need to figure out (gain a new insight or develop a new capability) that will help me overcome this challenge and difficulty?"

Value your pain

Do you like pain? I'm hoping your instinctive answer is "No". If not, you might want to see someone about your masochistic tendencies. That said, I'm a big fan of working out at the gym and I've come to appreciate the phrase, "No pain, no gain." To me that means hurting muscles aren't a sign that something is wrong, but a sign that I'm on the right path to growth and fitness. The same can be said of life. Many situations we face are incredibly painful – failed ventures, failed product launches, loved ones going through health challenges, etc. Painful situations are never easy but present incredible opportunities for growth. It's been said that most people don't become who they want because they're too attached to who they've been. And that's because most people want the convenience of transformation without the inconvenience of pain.

When you're going through a painful situation, how could you use the pain to make a greater contribution as a leader instead of waste the pain?

Welcome and seek feedback

Leadership expert, Ken Blanchard coined this phrase many years ago, "Feedback is the breakfast of champions." In the world of sports this is an absolute no-brainer and yet in so many other arenas, I see so many leaders who do not welcome feedback or encourage an environment of regular feedback. The reason is so that so many of us take feedback too personally. If you're going to be an effective and transformational leader then you need to be someone who not only welcomes feedback – motivational and developmental – but actively seeks it.

To what degree do you welcome and actively seek feedback from others?

X-ray your mind for the toxic weeds

Gay Hendricks, in his book, *The Big Leap*, describes how we all have an upper limit problem – that invisible ceiling beyond which we don't believe that we can grow or change or perform at our peak. These are like weeds in our mind. Worry, criticism, blame, deflection and arguments can all be signs that we are 'upper-limiting'. If you're not intentional about x-raying your mind for the limiting beliefs that are holding you back, then you will find that you're subconsciously sabotaging your life and leadership. To overcome this, we need to be intentional about surfacing our limiting beliefs by asking questions like:

- Where in my life do I feel like I've been holding back?
- Where in my life do I not feel like I'm acting as my best self?

Make time to answer the questions above and then consider – What does this reveal about my beliefs? Is this belief helpful or unhelpful? What belief would be more empowering?

Yield to your humanity

Have you ever asked yourself this question, "What does it mean to be human?" For some leaders that question is way too deep and esoteric. They'd rather stay on the surface. They'd rather focus on tasks, results, activities, achievements, and action. I'm all about results. I'm all for achievements. I'm definitely for action. But I'm interested in these things in a way that stays true to the beauty of our humanity and doesn't strip us of it. A lot of leaders aren't really in touch with their humanity and so they're not in touch with the hearts and minds of those they lead. If you really want to thrive as leader, if you really want to win hearts and minds, if you really want to make a difference in this world, you need to be willing to go deep and connect with what it means to be truly human and truly alive!

What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be in touch with your humanity as you lead others? What changes do you need to make to the way you lead as you connect more with your incredible human potential and that of others?

Zero in on compelling goals

When I first started dabbling with personal leadership concepts, I heard one of my virtual mentors, Jim Rohn, say this about goals, “the main purpose in setting a goal is what it makes of you to achieve it.” Do you realise the power in that insight? Goals have very little to do with the actual achievement and so much to do with the person you become as you achieve that goal. So, how do you actually zero in on compelling goals? By setting CALM goals, which involves asking yourself 4 key questions:

- What can I do that will require Courage?
- What can I do that will make me come Alive?
- What can I do that will allow me to Learn in the process?
- What can I do that is Meaningful?

Review some of the goals that you’re currently working on. Are they compelling goals? What changes would you need to make in order to ensure they’re CALM?

If you enjoyed this resource and want to continue to experience the power of leading from the inside out, contact us at **CORE Leaders International** to find out how we can help.

We offer group and 1:1 coaching, a Personal Mastery Academy, keynote speeches, or we can tailor leadership solutions and deliver in-person at your organisation.

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or

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