



Feeling like a Fraud: getting real again!

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In this last installment of a six-part Leadersynth series, we focus on how to move past your fraud feelings and get real again. These installments come directly from my new book, **The Fraud Factor**, now available on Amazon and through bookstores near you.

Earlier in this series, I introduced the idea that to be as effective as you can be as a leader, you must lead from the core of who you are. Your core is the essence of who you are as a person, your fundamental nucleus of unique characteristics that are consistent and enduring over time. Trying to be like someone else very different from you that you admire as a leader, or trying to minimize your key attributes because you think they are not acceptable, are recipes for leadership disaster. As hard as you might try to change your stripes and become someone very different than the person you are, it will be a very frustrating and ultimately fruitless exercise.

I first discovered this as a college freshman, walking down the street in Evanston, IL. As I walked to the library and considered my experience so far in college, it occurred to me that I did not need to be limited by my past from high school. Nobody from my graduating class had chosen Northwestern University; consequently, I had no baggage of previous impressions to limit me. Instead of being introverted and socially awkward, I could be outgoing and effervescent. Instead of being serious and studious, I could be fun-loving and unconcerned about grades. In short, I could choose to change my personality to become someone fundamentally different from the person I had been up to that point, and nobody would even know.

At the time, I smiled at the picture I had painted inside my head on the way to the library. Now, thinking back to that moment, I am not smiling so much as laughing at myself for being so naïve! The days and weeks after coming to my revelation in college showed me that, regardless of the circumstances around me and my desire for a fresh start, I remained the same at the center of my being. The characteristics, traits, and capacities that defined me did not change, for the most part. In that sense, I could not be anyone I wanted to be; I could not cut myself off from the past and create a new person from the ground up. Instead, I needed to embrace more fully the person I was at the core, and then I needed to more completely and confidently express myself as that person.

Since then, I have discovered a similar thought process in leaders I coach, especially those who are new to a position, taking on greater scope of responsibility, newly hired into an organization, or any combination of factors that makes them feel like they must be someone very different to be successful. With each of them, as with myself earlier in my life, I help them see that they are products of their past, and to get real again, they must reconnect with their: Personality, Ability, Spirit and Thinking.

As I have discovered since my musings on the way to the library, I function best in the present when I leverage my PAST. You are a product of your PAST, as well, and it is the key to your future. At your core is a combination of personality characteristics, feelings, intellectual and physical abilities, and a responsive spirit. At the center of who you are, there are also thoughts, beliefs, and opinions that you hold to be true, and that you have developed since early childhood.

Whether or not you are fully conscious of these factors at your core, they exist and they powerfully influence your behavior every day. Though it is possible in many ways to leave the past behind--through forgiving others, letting go of hurts, moving on in relationships, etc.--it is not feasible to leave your PAST behind. Wherever you go, your core personality traits, abilities, spirit, and thinking go with you. Let me describe each of these in greater detail, so that you can better understand and apply them to yourself.

Personality. Representing the first letter of the word PAST, personality (P) is a word that most people recognize. However, few agree on a definition. When people say, “she has a great personality,” or “his personality just doesn’t click with mine,” we have a vague concept of what they mean. We usually need to ask for clarification to make sure we have an unambiguous understanding of the meaning. That is due to the broad and sometimes confusing nature of the term “personality.”

The word personality comes originally from the Latin word “persona,” which refers to an individual’s identity. Personality is a dynamic and organized set of traits or characteristics that influence the way people think, feel, and behave. There is little theoretical agreement among psychologists, let alone the general population, on what personality actually is. For the purposes of your own self-analysis, think about the aspects of your personality that uniquely define you. This includes characteristics like your approach across various situations, your intensity of observable energy, your degree of self-discipline, and other “signature” qualities that are consistent and distinct in you.

Abilities. Included in this part of your PAST are your innate talents, gifts, natural physical capacity, motivated strengths, cognitive intelligence, and emotional intelligence. The primary distinction we will make here is that abilities are innate capacities, not learned ones. Certainly, people develop their abilities over time, and those that receive the most attention tend to be their strongest, most recognizable abilities. However, we draw a clear line to distinguish between knowledge and skills you develop, versus abilities, talents, or gifts you have possessed from an early age. Skills and knowledge can shift dramatically over your lifetime, but your fundamental abilities do not change much. What are your unique abilities?

Spirit. The word spirit perfectly captures the essence of what I want to convey here, yet it is an awkward and easily misunderstood term. It represents the “S” in your PAST. Most people can describe the feeling they get when their spirit is uplifted by an event or circumstance around them, just as they can describe the feeling they have when their spirit is downcast or pessimistic. Spirit is something you can feel when it is moved by events or circumstances around you, but it is difficult to put into words. Your spirit develops from a very early age—perhaps at birth or even in the womb—and grows to become an integral aspect of your core being. What events, people, activities, etc. affect your spirit?

Thinking. Unlike these first three, the thinking aspect of your core tends to change throughout life as you encounter new information and perspective that no longer can be explained or understood by your previous ways of thought. Of the four core components of a leader, thinking is the one you can consciously develop to the greatest degree. Thinking is the last letter of your PAST, and the aspect of

your core that is typically most apparent to people around you.

This component includes your beliefs, values, and opinions based on your learning and experience. It includes your attitudes toward things, the way you make sense of the world, and the primary basis upon which you make decisions. Thinking includes logic and intuition, creativity and originality, common sense, and the recognition and understanding of others' feelings and needs. In short, thinking includes any function within your core that involves thought processes.

In my coaching work with leaders at multiple levels across a wide variety of organizations, I have found that this area of thinking offers the most possibility for new growth. It is here that you can develop healthier beliefs and identify those self-limiting beliefs that undermine your effectiveness. Thinking is also the lever you can work to improve the problem solving of others. Helping people on your team think differently, consider other options, and question their own self-limiting talk can nurture their growth into more effective leaders.

Please weigh in with your thoughts on who you are at the core, and how you use this insight to stay genuine and authentic in your work and life:

<http://roselleadership.com/stay-informed/roselle-leadership-blog>

And please look for **The Fraud Factor** at Amazon, or order it through our website:

www.roselleadership.com .