



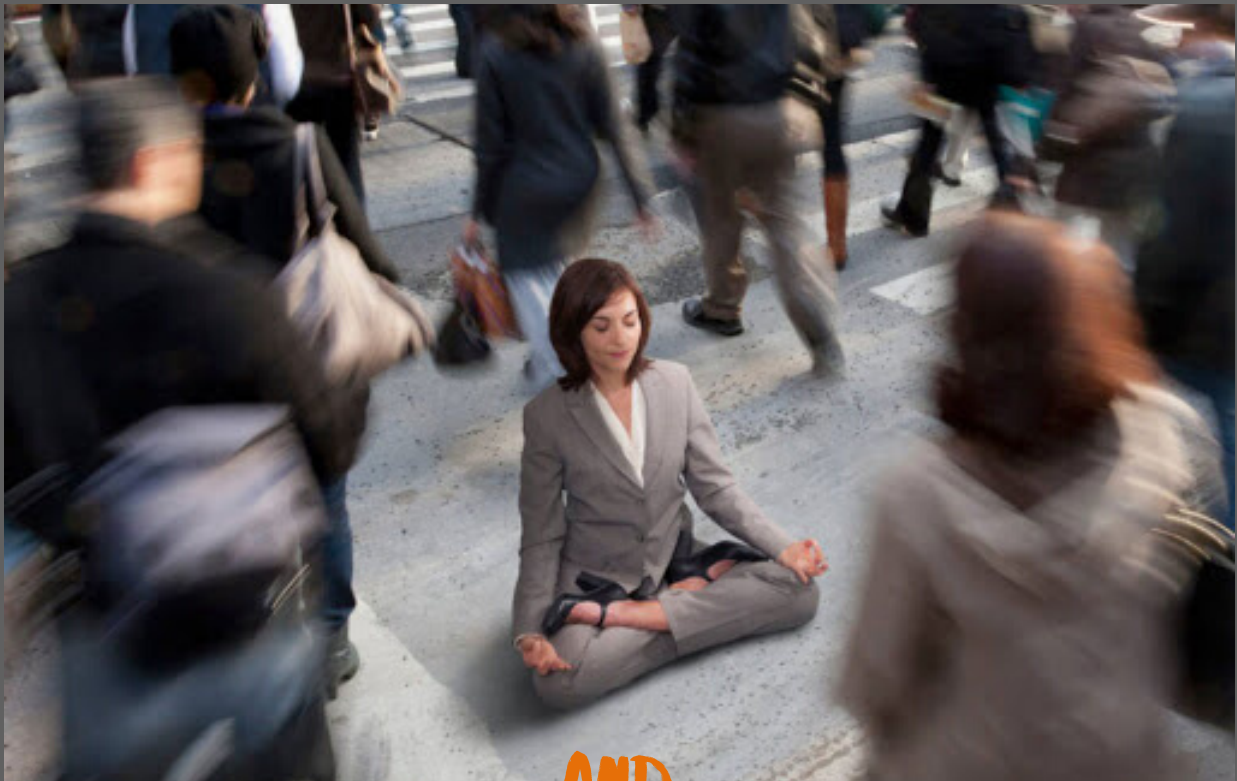
CREATIVE SPIRITS UNLEASHED  
INSPIRING LEADERS TO SEE THE WORLD WITH NEW EYES

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# FIVE REASONS YOU DON'T WANT TO BE CEO

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LYNN CARNES



AND

## HOW TO LEARN TO LOVE THE JOB YOU'RE IN

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As an executive coach, I've worked with hundreds of ambitious, successful leaders who wanted more. Typically, they hire me to help them get to the next level. When they finally get there, they are surprised at how quickly the satisfaction is gone. They are lucky if the exhilaration lasts for a week.

Six months after a very effective leader I had worked with won the CEO role in his company, I asked him what it was like. We had spent the previous year planning, first for the new CEO search and then in the transition. He reached over and drew an "X" on the paper. Then he pointed to the top half of that X. He didn't have to say anymore; I knew exactly what he was talking about.

Over the next hour, he recounted the same themes I've heard from every CEO I've worked with; be careful what you wish for. You just might get it.



# WE CHASE THE GOAL AND MISS THE GOLD

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Too often, we strive for that promotion, operate from “destination brain” and climb the ladder to success, thinking that everything will be better if only ... and while you are thinking “if only”, your life is passing you by.

It's time we learn to love our jobs. It's time we learn to love each day – even the challenging ones. We have limited time on this Earth. If you are working in misery today so that you can have something better tomorrow, stop it! You already have the gold you are chasing at the end of the rainbow.

I'm going to say that again. You have the gold. It's inside of you, waiting to be unleashed.

Becoming CEO doesn't solve any of your current problems. In fact, it magnifies your weaknesses, throws whatever work-life balance you have out the window, and puts a bullseye on your forehead.

# YOU ALREADY HAVE THE GOLD WAITING TO BE UNLEASHED

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The alternative to “destination brain” is learning and growth. Ironically, focusing on the small moments is the only thing that leads to lasting satisfaction and peace of mind in all the moments.

Still wondering what it's like to be CEO? Here are some of the lessons I've learned guiding many clients in the transition to CEO. Believe it or not, these lessons can help make your current career extremely rewarding.

# REASON #5: X MARKS THE SPOT-OR SHIT RUNS DOWNHILL

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While climbing, the CEO role looks like it's the pinnacle. However, just like when you are mountain climbing, once there, you realize it's a false stop, as the client in my opening story had discovered. In fact, the CEO role is more at the bottom than the top. The CEO's I work with spend well over 50% of their time managing external forces like shareholders, the Board of Directors (that's right, now you get 20 bosses), the public facing messages of the company, and much more. Where alignment is somewhat achievable inside the company, the CEO must balance multiple interests with competing priorities. To complicate things, most of the forces the CEO has to balance are outside of her or his authority. Managing all these interests is a complicated dance.

## How you can use this now

We tend to think of power as following authority. If you tend to follow the hierarchy, you get caught in a "power over (the boss), power under (the subordinate)" game. Instead, you can learn to use "power with." Power With simply means you are operating from a place of confidence with a mutual goal. There are two incredible tools to get started. First, learn to assume positive intent. Watch my TEDx talk to learn more. Second, train yourself to be curious about where other people are coming from. Understanding what matters to them helps you dance the complicated dance of managing competing interests.





## REASON #4: LOSS OF CONTROL, PRIVACY-OR EVEN MORE

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For people who crave the power of authority, the CEO role looks like the ultimate win. The truth is, while you are managing all the external forces, you will have to turn your career over to others to manage the operations of the company. If you have ever had a problem learning to delegate, it's about to get even worse. What's more, you will be doing everything in the public view. Trust me, once you become CEO, people are watching what you wear, what car you drive, and how you take your coffee. Perhaps one of the most difficult losses is personal. Your world of confidantes shrinks – or should shrink – to near zero, especially inside your company. You simply can't share your private thoughts with the people who stand to be impacted by your difficult decisions, even the co-workers you consider friends.

### **How you can use this now**

First, if you have not exercised your delegation skills at a very deep level, it's time to begin. Learn to make clear requests and more importantly, learn to elicit true promises. Strengthen your ability to trust and deal with broken trust. Second, develop a set of non-work friends who care for you regardless of your status or size of your pocketbook. And make sure they are the type of people who will tell you when you are full of it.

# REASON #3: IF YOU HATE CHANGE NOW, JUST WAIT

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The top job of any CEO is leading change. While everyone else in the company is handling the daily, monthly, quarterly, yearly operations of the firm, your job is making those 5-, 10-, and 20-year bets that keep the company alive and growing. These are the big decisions that impact lives and livelihoods. You might have noticed that people resist change – even those that purport to love it. Your job now is to get people to do things they don't want to do and have them be at their best while doing it. I promise you they will be mad, and you are going to get the brunt of that anger.

## **How you can use this now**

Learn to make resistance, complaint, and conflict your friend. You can download my article [“From Drag to Lift: Using Resistance, Complaint, and Conflict to Accelerate Change”](#) for some practical ideas on how to lead change without creating a revolt.

# REASON #2: PRESSURE HAS A WAY OF TAKING YOU BACK TO GRADE SCHOOL

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You already know that the CEO role is filled with pressure – and if you are reading this, you have probably learned to handle a lot of pressure. We all have a pressure threshold, which is how much pressure you can handle before you forget everything you thought you knew. For example, I'm betting you can walk in a straight path on a twelve-inch board on the ground. But can you do it on a 12-inch beam several hundred feet in the air? The gap between your skills and your ability to apply them under pressure is your pressure gap. The CEO role will test your pressure threshold in ways you can't predict. You say something that offends half the planet and all of the sudden you are back in grade school, feeling like the teacher has just called you out in front of the class. No one is immune to finding themselves operating in their pressure gap. You just hope it doesn't happen in front of the whole world.

## How you can use this now

Elite athletes work on their inner game all the time. You can do the same. With awareness and practice, you can significantly elevate your pressure threshold and you will be glad you did. For more on how to do this, download my article "[Leading Under Pressure](#)".



# REASON #1: YOU WON'T FIND HAPPINESS. OR YOURSELF IN THE CORNER OFFICE

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I have found this saying to be incredibly true: "Ego says, I will find peace when everything falls into place; Spirit says, find peace and everything will fall into place." Ego tends to chase titles, money and status. Our society fuels our egos and tells us we are not enough unless we play that game. Chasing the goal creates an empty life. I know, because I've lived it. I became an executive coach to help stop the madness. Every day, you can work on your inner spirit through whatever work you are doing in your job. Whatever hole you are seeking to fill by chasing your career goals will still be there when you get there.

## **How you can use this now**

Learn to turn into, instead of away from, your discomfort. Start journaling as a way to move your pain out of you and onto a page. One that you can burn if you need the catharsis. Allow the daily moments to feed your spirit rather than only recognizing achievement that is gone in an instant. For more on how to do this, go back and read my blogs and listen to my podcast. Here's a blog on the [seeds you are planting](#) to get you started. These themes permeate every podcast conversation I have and piece I write.

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In case you are wondering if I have this mastered – the answer is no! I'm on the journey just like you are. Sharing this stuff keeps me accountable – otherwise, I would probably forget everything I've learned.

Just remember, everything you need is within you. Unleashing your true spirit might feel daunting and uncomfortable – and it is. So is staying as you are, especially if you believe you will only be satisfied when you achieve a goal fed to you by your ego. So what will it be? The choice is yours.

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Lynn Carnes accelerates change and unleashes leadership performance in organizations, especially in the context of challenges without easy answers. She has over thirty years experience in leading people, managing change projects, developing leaders and client management. With a background in banking and finance, she quickly grasps the essence of a business and what drives its success. Lynn approaches change management, leadership development and coaching with a practical focus that connects effective concepts and principles to real work.



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