

Sheila Wherry

**THE**  
**PINNACLE**  
**OF**  
**PRESENCE**

How great leaders  
connect, instil trust  
& get the right results

Sheila is a coach and consultant with a 'secret weapon'  
– the ability to use emotional intelligence to get to the  
heart of people-performance.

Joshua Freedman, CEO of Six Seconds EQ Network

## CHAPTER 6

# TEAM PRESENCE

*The responsibility of leadership is not to come up with all the ideas but to create an environment in which great ideas can happen.*

SIMON SINEK

START WITH WHY

**I**nnner Presence and Leadership Presence are two legs of a three-legged stool. Without the third leg, Team Presence, you won't achieve effective results *collectively*.

And it is *with others* that you will be most effective, especially in these complex times – with others, in teams.

Your team members are involved in interdependent, knowledge-based work – which involves individuals working with others, in teams, and more than one team working together. (Do you remember the last time you completed an entire project on your own?) To be successful means having to ask questions, use cognition, and work with constant change, remaining in ongoing

communication, and sharing issues and concerns. To get the best from people, you will need to create an environment where people can do their best work. This is where Team Presence comes in.

Developing Team Presence requires you to be aware of your behaviours, actions and the voice you bring to team settings as well as the voice you allow in others, so they can do the same. You have done the groundwork for this in previous chapters. Now you are ready to bring your skills and awareness to this final, essential domain of presence.

I define Team Presence as: *Cultivating an environment that empowers teams to collaborate, learn and innovate.*

For the purpose of this book, I'm using the term 'team' to encompass your involvement in any group you work with to produce results. Whether it's a team of three or ten, a team of peers or a team you manage, the key focus is that you are achieving results *together*.

Team Presence encapsulates:

- fostering psychological safety
- using intentional communication
- understanding team dynamics.

## **Psychological safety**

Psychological safety, as defined by Amy Edmondson, the Novartis Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School, in her book *The Fearless Organization*, is ‘a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves’. Psychological safety is not the only element needed for teams to succeed, but it *is* the most important. It is the gateway to high performing teams.

If a workplace is low in psychological safety, people will be reluctant to share what they know. They’ll be fearful of being wrong, being shown as incompetent, negative or unhelpful, or that they might offend someone, especially you, their boss. Instead of just focusing on the job at hand, people tend to also focus on looking good, or not looking inadequate. In other words, they don’t play to win, they play to avoid losing.

By contrast, in a workplace that is high in psychological safety, people will feel safe and valued for openly sharing what they think or know, even if it’s only a concern, a half-formed idea, a question, or that they’ve made a mistake. By sharing, others can then build on their contributions and they can all learn together.

In organisations where people have worked to create psychological safety, they’ve explicitly declared they want to create a place where people want to come to work, a place where people are comfortable to jump right in and feel able to talk openly about the work they

are doing. The results are twofold: these workplaces are creating more productive, innovative teams and, thus, are finding a competitive edge.

This is supported by a two-year study conducted at Google, named Project Aristotle, designed to understand what makes a team effective within their organisation. The research, involving 15,000 employees, discovered the most important aspect was that team members felt safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other. Their research showed their gateway to team effectiveness was *psychological safety*.

Psychological safety is still not common practice and there is a simple reason for this. Fear. Fear of 'looking bad'. In the absence of a psychologically safe environment, we hold back. We wait. We seek more information. We walk past things. It is better not to upset someone, we tell ourselves, or look incapable, obstructive or uninformed.

The concept of psychological safety may sound simple. It is not. It takes intentional communication.

Teams that are low in psychological safety, are at higher risk of preventable business failures because workers are fearful of retribution.

Let's consider an example. By the end of the 1990s Korean Air had one of the world's worst safety records in the industry. In the previous 20 years the airline had a series of accidents that resulted in over 700 fatalities. Malcolm Gladwell, journalist and author, discusses

these events in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*.

Gladwell argued that the issue wasn't the quality of the planes or the training of the pilots, it was the entrenched cultural values of respecting authority. While safety depends on pilots and co-pilots working together as a team, co-pilots at Korean Air respected authority greatly. They didn't feel safe enough to go against their more senior pilots, even in dire circumstances.

Once Korean Air realised that their problem was cultural, they addressed it by creating a new training program for their pilots, encouraging them to speak up about potential danger, admit mistakes and not to be overly polite or vague in their language.

This is a powerful example of the value of creating a culture of psychological safety. It also highlights that psychological safety goes hand in hand with high performance. Allowing the co-pilots to speak openly and admit mistakes in no way reduced their responsibility.

#### High performance in a psychologically safe workplace

Amy Edmondson, author of *The Fearless Organization*, makes the distinction between *psychological safety* and *performance standards*. Both are necessary when it comes to creating high performing teams.

A psychologically safe environment does not mean losing focus on performance or refraining from holding people to account. However, without psychological safety, no matter how hard you push or try to empower

your team to achieve results, they are always going to hold back. It's like trying to drive fast with the handbrake on.

Edmondson expands further by drawing out four potential zones a team may find themselves in, depending on the level of focus they give to each of these two dimensions – *psychological safety* and *performance standards*. The four zones are:

1. apathy zone
2. anxiety zone
3. comfort zone
4. high performance zone.

In a situation where the leader is pushing hard for results but has not created sufficient psychological safety, the team is likely to be in the anxiety zone. Conversely, an environment high in psychological safety but one in which the team is not being motivated to produce results is likely to be sitting in the comfort zone. A team that doesn't have a focus on either psychological safety or performance standards is likely to find themselves in the apathy zone.

The high performance zone is one in which the leader, and their team, has created the conditions for high psychological safety while also striving for high performance and results. This is a team that is likely to be performing to a high standard, while learning and innovating.

You may be concerned that if you allow your team to talk about 'unformed ideas', it could open a can of

worms. Perhaps people won't stop talking! Yet reducing fear and creating the right dialogue to generate new ideas and opportunities to learn should not be confused with getting the job done and holding people to account. This takes leadership.

Psychological safety is not about being nice or avoiding tough conversations. While I want you to liberate your team to speak up, I encourage you not to shy away from providing open, honest and constructive feedback. In fact, in a psychologically safe environment, it is much more likely that these types of conversations will occur.

I encourage you to set clear expectations for the team and to have the courage to provide necessary feedback, while demonstrating empathy. Brené Brown shares the phrase, 'Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind' in her book *Dare to Lead* and argues that, 'most of us avoid clarity because we tell ourselves that we're being kind, when what we're actually doing is being unkind and unfair'. Kim Scott, author of *Radical Candor*, offers a framework by the same name, in which she encourages leaders to 'care personally and challenge directly'.

What both Brown and Scott are talking about here is communication. Highly refined communication skills are key to fostering psychological safety and accountable teams.



## **Intentional communication**

Intentional communication is considered and purposeful. It requires you to be able to speak up and actively listen, to voice your perspective while also taking the time to hear others. It asks you to keep relationships at the core and to be clear you are promoting the conditions for a positive group dynamic. This type of communication supports enhanced collaboration and ensures you navigate together, in partnership, towards more impactful outcomes.

Recently, I ran a session for a leadership team designed as part of a larger program to enhance team effectiveness. I spoke with each member of the team prior to the program to hear their challenges, opportunities and expectations. I also asked for permission to set the room up differently during their team sessions, saying, ‘Can we avoid the use of desks and PowerPoint slides? Instead, can we sit in a circle, talk, share ideas and come up with solutions together?’ I wanted to set myself up as the facilitator of the team’s growth and learning, as opposed to the expert, and to support them in talking openly together, sharing ideas, gaining insight and awareness, and finding productive and implementable solutions.

We set up the room without desks, for the team session, to remove any barriers to communication. This is not commonplace in our corporate world. We are normally behind a desk, a laptop or a notepad. Initially,

there was reticence. I saw it in each team member's body language as they entered the room and took their seats. Their arms were crossed, and they appeared hesitant.

I started with the check-in process, inviting each person to share what was on their mind, as we begun. This process supported everyone to bring their voices into the room, to hear from one another, and allowed them to settle into the session. As the team went through the morning, sharing their challenges, struggles and insights with each other, as well as generating a plan and next steps, it was clear by their body language and how they communicated that they had visibly relaxed with each other. Their postures changed, they unfolded their arms and smiled more, used greater eye contact and lent towards each other.

As we checked out of the session (using the same process as the check-in), the team shared how they felt more connected and had seen each other in a new light. They committed to reaching out on a more regular basis. They had experienced each other on a human level, and this had a direct impact on their quality of communication and relationships.

This illustrates Amy Edmondson's argument in *The Fearless Organization* that team members are much more likely to openly share important information and insights and questions, 'where leaders have created conditions to make listening and speaking up the norm, not the exception'.

This is the heart of intentional communication.

### Advocacy vs inquiry

Communicating with intent means you are capturing collective intelligence and moving away from fixed positions and pushing your own agenda.

Often, leaders (and their teams) take a position, fight for their perspective. Rather than actively participating in the discussion, they wait for their turn to speak then offer their pre-formulated position or perspective. As the stakes increase, they become more fixed in their view. Open communication has ceased.

By contrast, speaking up with your views while demonstrating you remain open to others' input keeps conversations moving productively. This challenging balancing act is described as 'advocacy and inquiry' by Professors Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, authors of *Organizational Learning II: Theory, method and practice*.

*Advocacy* is about challenging others' views without offending or alienating people – speaking up in a non-combative way. Doing this successfully means others are comfortable to share their thoughts in response to your ideas. They feel psychologically safe to participate in the discussion.

*Inquiry* is the art of being able to let go of your certainty, suspending your judgement, and listening respectfully to the other.

The art of navigating the turning point between

advocacy and inquiry is to recognise what William Isaacs refers to as *choice point* in his book *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*. This is the point in the conversation where you choose to *defend* your argument rather than *suspend* your thinking. In Chapter 3, I talked about the importance of having the level of self-awareness needed to make a deliberate choice about how to respond versus how you react. This is one of those times. In conversation you can choose to defend your point of view (tighten your grip) or to suspend your perspective and try to understand another's point of view (loosen your grip).

As one of my coaching clients shared:

'I realised it is better for the team if I stopped trying to solve everyone's problems. It has made a change in the way I think. I'm pausing when I realise that I've started to tell others what I think rather than listening. I feel much more positive as a result. It is better for everyone'. He went on to explain, 'The other day, we had an incident at work. A team member suggested we sit together and debrief. I let them speak and we discussed what they had learned, and they came up with an improved way to manage a similar situation in the future. As the debrief drew to a conclusion, they noted I had talked a lot less than I usually do. I told them: I don't need to. Your suggestions are great'.

This is a great example of a leader suspending their thinking and allowing others in the team to speak up, share their views and be mutually accountable. This requires a shift in mindset for leaders who are more used to pushing their goals and ideas forward and, instead, asking what's your perspective here? What suggestions do you have? What are you thinking?

As always, context plays a role. Suspending your thinking is not *always* the answer. There are exceptions, such as if you are not looking to generate new ideas, or you need to make unilateral decisions and do not want rebuttal or inquiry. Or if you are unable to reveal your thinking in an emergency situation where you need people to move quickly, i.e. there's a fire in the building.

The key is to be clear that you have a choice to suspend or defend in every conversation.

Many of my coaching clients are fatigued with trying to push their solutions forward. The sense of relief is palpable when they shift their mindset to focus on their team, to work *with* them to find solutions.

### **SAIL framework**

The concepts I discuss here are based on the work of William Isaacs, author of *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*. Grounded in the work of Isaacs, I have created my SAIL framework to support you in balancing advocacy and inquiry and, more broadly, for having quality conversations with others.

The SAIL acronym:

**S**peaking is about speaking up and bringing your voice into the room.

**A**ppreciation is about respecting others and appreciating that they may have different perspectives to yours which are just as valid.

**I**ntermission is about pausing and suspending your beliefs – taking a brief intermission from your firmly held point of view.

**L**istening is about actively listening.



A yacht is propelled by its sail. By utilising the wind, a crew can propel themselves forward. Likewise, by

swinging the boom around, they can use the wind to bring the boat to a dead stop.

This is a useful metaphor to reflect on the quality of your conversations. By using the various elements in the SAIL framework as you communicate, you are able to navigate through a conversation productively.

Let's review this:

- To *advocate* is to use speaking and appreciation.
- To *inquire* is to use listening and intermission.

If you are challenging a point of view or have an idea of your own that you want to voice, *speak up* and put it forward while remembering to *appreciate* the others' perspective. At the same time, it may be appropriate to have an *intermission* from your own perspective as you speak up, so that you can *listen* with open curiosity.

Navigating through all four of these elements (SAIL) will enable you to have a productive conversation. Different contexts will call for a different focus.

Linking back to psychological safety, as a leader you are encouraging your people to *speak*. This may not be comfortable for some and you will need to use *listen* and *intermission* in order to give others the space to *speak* and *appreciate*. This applies to your team members too. Generating a psychologically safe environment is a collective endeavour.

In our workplaces and in our teams, there is tension between advocacy and inquiry. The key is to be able

to identify when to adopt each. You may find yourself resorting to advocacy as you focus on finding a solution, and quickly. If you do not balance this with genuine inquiry, talk has failed you and you will no longer be in dialogue. If in doubt, refer to SAIL. This framework is designed to support you to navigate conversations effectively.

A client I worked with felt uncomfortable opposing an initiative put forward by her manager and peer group. She was performing an acting role and was particularly concerned about alienating her colleagues with her opposition, especially as they were in the process of deciding whether to make her role a permanent one.

By using the SAIL framework to strike a balance, she was able to constructively challenge the initiative and voice her concerns. As she addressed this issue with the group, she chose to let them speak first, seeking to understand their perspective, while also taking an intermission from her own position. At the same time, she remained committed to speaking up with her thoughts and misgivings. As a result, she was delighted she had been able to voice what was important to her, and that the team were able to hear her perspective without defensiveness or concern.



## THE PINNACLE OF PRESENCE

As she relayed this to me she said, 'I've learned to open up to adversity. I'm no longer fearful if my managers or peers don't agree with something I say or do'. She had given herself permission to speak up, knowing that she could do it in an appreciative way while demonstrating she had the best interests of her team and her organisation at heart.

She elaborated, 'I accept that in my career and personal life, things will get uncomfortable at times, but that is when I grow and learn. Good sailors aren't made by only sailing on calm seas'.

I'm constantly astounded by my clients. It was such a privilege to witness her growth. This metaphor formed the basis of my SAIL framework!

### **Team dynamics**

In today's working landscape you are likely to be a member of multiple teams. And the membership of these teams is likely to change regularly. As you move between teams, you will need to be able to adjust to each unique team dynamic.

A useful model for developing insight into your interpersonal communication patterns and those of your

team is the Four Player Model. You can use this in conjunction with the SAIL framework to 'read' and enable the quality of interactions in your team to work towards fostering psychological safety.

The Four Player Model was developed by David Kantor, an American psychologist, organisational consultant and clinical researcher. He has founded three research and training institutes, written numerous books and articles, and is the inventor of a series of psychometric instruments that provide insight into individual and group behaviours.

Kantor started out by studying families, recognising distinct patterns in the way they communicate, before applying his findings in the corporate world. He created the Four Player Model to provide a framework and language for leaders and their teams to understand and openly discuss their patterns of communication in a non-blaming and neutral way. According to Kantor, there isn't a good or a bad way of communicating. Instead, there are stuck patterns that emerge in teams, limiting conversational flow amongst its members.

If you and your colleagues are aware of these patterns and work to shift them, a new way of communicating opens up within the group. As Kantor argues, 'There is a direct correlation between the effectiveness of the team and the quality of their conversations'.

The Four Player Model looks at everything said by you and your teammates through four 'speech acts'.

These are:

1. *Move* – suggesting a way forward. This can be a direction, idea or task.
2. *Follow* – supporting someone else’s suggestion or moving it to completion. This gives oxygen to the move. For instance, a follow would keep an idea on the table for further discussion.
3. *Oppose* – coming up with a counter argument, challenging or voicing a correction.
4. *Bystand* – actively reflecting on what is happening with the team members around us. Giving perspective, remaining neutral. This is important to help the team notice what’s going on.

Kantor argues that at any point we are making one of these speech acts.

#### All speech acts are required

In every team, there needs to be someone willing to make a *move* to initiate an idea or a position. And for this idea to take effect, there needs to be another (or others) in the team willing to support this team member’s move, as well as take the necessary action to see this through to completion (*follow*).

Others need to be willing to bring a counter argument (*oppose*). This allows for ideas to be corrected and refined. And finally, there needs to be team members willing or able to bring a neutral perspective to observe what they’re seeing and share that openly (*bystand*).

It's important to keep in mind that, while this sounds straightforward, teams are often out of balance. People tend to take on specific roles and get stuck in them. For instance, they may always follow the leader, or they may always oppose a particular team member's perspective.

I witness leaders who are unintentionally stuck in patterns. Often, they are trying to drive a result and are focused on the outcome. With that goal in mind they are making consistent moves or opposing certain viewpoints or challenging the status quo, and they're advocating for a particular position with little inquiry. Lack of inquiry has the potential to create disengaged followers.

It won't work to oppose, or use any of the four speech acts, without considering the quality of that interaction. To support you with this, I encourage you to integrate the SAIL framework. This will enhance your ability to advocate and inquire effectively. As the captain of your ship, in order to sail your boat with clarity, it is important to **speak** up, actively **listen** and **appreciate** the other person's perspective while ensuring you take an **intermission** from your own view as necessary. This framework will ensure you approach the Four Player Model speech acts with the right mindset.

Have you worked in a team:

- with all movers and no followers?
- that didn't challenge or oppose in any way?

- that said they would follow but then didn't take action?
- in which opposers weren't accepted by the group?
- where two team members were stuck in a particular pattern, i.e., move-oppose-move-oppose?

These are examples of ineffective teams. The Four Player Model is another tool to add to your leadership toolkit. A way to get 'unstuck' and reflect on unhelpful communication patterns and navigate uncharted waters.

Understanding the Four Player Model and using the SAIL framework will help you create an environment where people can talk and think together, where you can galvanise teams and the connections between them, where you can interact with the team dynamics. This is your Team Presence in action.

### Releasing the potential of teams

The world of work today is more geographically dispersed than ever before. There is no doubt that teams play a significant role in producing results in our complex world. Our engagement levels, our productivity, our creativity and our future organisational competitiveness and success are all intrinsically linked with how effectively we are able to produce outcomes, with others, within teams. Your people are part of the solution.

In the introduction of this book I asked you to imagine working with a team that is open, curious and safe enough to talk and think through problems together.

This is what you've been working towards.

By bringing your best self to your role of leader, refining your communication skills and fostering a positive team dynamic, you build trust and create connections between team members and across teams, allowing collaboration and collective intelligence to emerge. You have released the potential of your team.

### **Team Presence at a glance**

As the leader, if you are displaying signals that you have all the answers and most valuable ideas, you will stop others from sharing theirs.

The SAIL framework combined with the Four Player Model provides you with a toolkit for intentional communication, equipping you to foster a psychologically safe environment. You're now equipped to speak up and move conversations forward productively; supporting others to do the same, whilst not losing sight of high performance. These go hand in hand.

The goal of Team Presence is to cultivate collaborative, innovative and accountable teams by supporting others to talk, think, learn and create together.

Go ahead and create the new benchmark. This is Team Presence.

## **Team Presence learning and development plan**

Each client I work with has a different set of skills to work on to develop and refine their Team Presence. There isn't a standard solution that fits for everyone. Instead, I will walk you through a series of reflective exercises so you can get clear on the areas you would like to develop. I have provided you with an Action Plan template to complete so you can become your own coach. Completing the plan will hold you to account. Be intentional. If you are not accountable to yourself, how can you ask others to be accountable to you.

There are three steps:

1. Encapsulate learnings from previous chapters.
2. Reflect on your intentional communication skills.
3. Create your action plan and develop key skills.

### **Step 1. Encapsulate learnings from previous chapters**

*Chapter 3 – Emotional self-awareness and regulation and connecting to self*

Continue to develop this capacity. Keep in mind, inconsistent behaviour can have an adverse effect.

*Chapter 4 – Inner Presence*

Ensure you are empowering yourself to be your best

self and remain authentic. This will support your team in feeling comfortable to do the same, to let their own masks down and be authentic. When people feel seen and accepted, they feel more connected.

*Chapter 5 – Leadership Presence*

- Use empathy and active listening skills. This will support others in feeling comfortable to speak up and will build the necessary connection for others to know you have their backs.
- Adopt a humble mindset as needed to support others in feeling comfortable to admit errors, challenge the status quo and ask more questions. This starts with you admitting your own mistakes. Normalise this for others.
- Use assertive communication to ensure you and others create a group norm that it is ok to give candid feedback. This ensures clear accountability. It will also support you in offering and inviting constructive feedback. Remember, psychological safety is not about being ‘nice’. Set clear goals and engage in respectful dialogue to achieve them.
- Encourage others to adopt the 360-degree feedback process covered in Chapter 5. This will support the team to manage how they are being perceived by others and will help them view work as a learning



opportunity. Offer stretch and development opportunities to team members, demonstrating you trust them and are invested in them learning and growing.

**Step 2. Reflect on your intentional communication skills**

As you reflect on the tools and techniques covered in this chapter to generate intentional communication, consider the following:

- As the leader of your team, are you taking an active part in the communication?
- Are you being intentional about *how* you speak up? Consider this in other teams you're a part of.

*Advocacy vs Inquiry*

Do you feel confident you can move between *advocacy and inquiry* with ease?

- Are there particular settings or people that you tend to use one over the other with?
- Which, generally, feels more comfortable for you: to ask questions and try to understand others' perspectives or to put forward an idea and move towards an outcome?
- What would it take for you to use your least preferred approach at times?

- How could you bring more balance to your conversations?

Consider a recent situation in which you found yourself wanting to challenge but were unclear about the best approach or, conversely, in a situation where you realised you advocated too strongly without hearing the perspective of others.

- Would the conversation have moved to a more productive outcome if you were able to balance between advocacy and inquiry?
- If you were to use the elements of the SAIL framework, how would you approach this conversation now?

As you review your responses to the above questions, what do you notice? Capture your reflections. Use the Team Presence Action Plan at the end of this chapter as a guide.

### *SAIL Framework*

Consider a recent occasion where you have been in disagreement with a co-worker.

- As you reflect on your input into the conversation, break it down into the four elements of SAIL.

## THE PINNACLE OF PRESENCE

- Ask yourself: how well did I demonstrate each component?
- Now reflect on the input of others and reflect on the same question.
- What could you do differently next time?

As you review your responses to the above questions, what do you notice? Capture your reflections and add them to your Team Presence Action Plan.

### *Four Player Model*

Review the Four Player Model and reflect on the following questions while considering a team you're a member of: (adapted from *Reading the Room* by David Kantor):

- How regularly do you initiate an action or suggest an option? (*move*)
- How regularly do you follow someone else's suggestion? (*follow*)
- How regularly do you oppose or challenge someone else's suggestion? (*oppose*)
- How regularly do you offer feedback and reflection on your observations of others' input? (*bystand*)

If you had to give a percentage equalling 100% for each of the above, how do you split your time across each of those speech acts – *move, follow, oppose, bystand* – when with your team? Do you tend to overuse or underuse any of the speech acts? If so, what is the impact? Do you see any ‘stuck patterns’ play out? Effective communication is about enabling all of the four speech acts as needed.

Do you recognise overuse or underuse in others? If so, how would you invite this speech act from them?

As you review the above questions and reflect on your use of the Four Player Model, what do you notice? Capture your reflections and add these to your Team Presence Action Plan.

### **Step 3. Create an action plan and develop your skills**

Reflect on your responses in the above exercises and consider the steps you will take to refine your Team Presence. Use the following Team Presence Action plan to guide you.

## **TEAM PRESENCE ACTION PLAN: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

**Incorporate all that you have learnt in the previous chapters**

- Keep in mind connecting to self is an ongoing self-reflective habit. Continue to practice this.
- Review your action plans from Chapters 4 and 5 for Inner Presence and Leadership Presence.

**Practice intentional communication**

- Advocacy vs inquiry
- SAIL framework
- The Four Player Model

Identify key focus areas to address, e.g I could bring more balance to conversations by:

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**Develop your Team Presence**

What does success look like? Key action steps

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# OVER TO YOU

**A**t the beginning of this book I gave you a vision.

I asked you to imagine yourself:

- working with a connected and collaborative team where you don't have to come up with all the answers
- not feeling like you have to keep pedalling faster and harder to succeed
- starting each day with energy and confidence.

I don't expect you to have attained that vision by the end of the book, but I have laid out a path to help you get there.

And you're already on the way.

You started with connecting to self – building a reflective habit and honing your self-regulation skills – which is the foundation work for each of the domains of presence.

You dug deep to look at your vision for the future and what really matters to you, and learnt how to draw upon

this to remain calm and confident when the going gets tough (Inner Presence).

You've looked at the type of leader you want to be and explored how to get there through adopting leadership behaviours that build trust and connection (Leadership Presence).

And finally, you've learnt how bringing this together can cultivate an environment in which you and others can have respectful, open and robust conversations that generate productive outcomes while learning and innovating together (Team Presence).

You've got a complete 'presence toolkit' and an action plan.

Now, imagine that I waved a magic wand and you could implement everything on your action plan tomorrow. How would life look for you? You would come into work radiating energy and enthusiasm. You would feel grounded and confident as you navigated complexity and ambiguity. Your team would be motivated and engaged and feel interpersonally safe to take risks and be accountable for results: a high performing team. And they would be working collaboratively across teams.

Imagine if every company was like that. There would be no place for organisations full of tension and toxic interactions. Imagine that world.

What's the difference, really, between you and this goal? It's whether or not you take action. I want you to thrive in our complex and fast-paced world, so here's my



## OVER TO YOU

recommendation: set aside some time every day or every week, work with a mentor, a coach or a peer and do the work. You will get results. I know because I've seen it happen again and again.

I wish you well.

# RELATED READING

Throughout this book, I've mentioned many articles, journals, books and URLs where I've been inspired and informed by others. I've included the titles below as a further reading list and I hope these experts in their field will enlighten you as they have me.

## Books

Amy Edmondson (2019) *The Fearless Organization*

Brené Brown (2018) *Dare To Lead*

Chris Argyris & Donald A. Schön (1996)  
*Organizational learning II: Theory, method and practice*

Daniel Pink (2006) *A Whole New Mind*

Daniel Goleman (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

David Kantor (2012) *Reading the Room*

Frederic Laloux (2016) *Reinventing Organizations*

Jim Clifton & Jim Harter (2019) *It's the Manager*

Joshua Freedman (2012) *At the Heart of Leadership*

Joshua Freedman & Massimiliano Ghini (2010) *Inside Change*

Kim Scott (2017) *Radical Candor*

Lynda Gratton (2011) *The Shift*

Malcolm Gladwell (2008) *Outliers*

Martin Seligman, (2011) *Flourish*

Simon Sinek (2013) *Start with Why*

Sylvia Ann Hewlett (2014) *Executive Presence*

William Isaacs (1999) *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*

#### Articles and journals

Amy Cuddy, Matthew Kohut & John Neffinger  
(August 2013) 'Connect then Lead'  
*Harvard Business Review*

Christopher S Reina et al (May 2017)  
'Quitting the Boss? The Role of Manager Influence

Tactics and Employee Emotional Engagement in  
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# WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH AND WORK TOGETHER

If you would like to talk about how you can build psychological safety, connection and engagement – to generate effective outcomes - within your team(s) or more broadly across your organisation, please get in touch.

Like any good project, input from others provides opportunities to discuss, reflect and refine. I welcome your feedback, observations and reflections about this book.

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# AUTHOR BIO

Sheila Wherry is an executive coach and consultant based in Sydney, Australia. Her career has spanned 30 years across international sales-management, coaching and consulting in Asia-Pacific, US and Europe.

She is a PCC credentialed coach of the International Coaching Federation and holds accreditations in various psychometric, evidence-based tools. With a masters in management and postgraduate qualifications in psychotherapy and executive coaching, she has taught a wide range of university classes, including strategic leadership (MBA level), organisational behaviour and conflict management.

Sheila works with leaders from a wide range of industry sectors and government departments, as well as owners of small to medium enterprises. Working with such a diverse range of people has cemented her belief that no matter what level of leadership or role you hold, the fundamental aspect of success and happiness is human connection. This is the foundation of her work.

# GRATITUDE

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in the final stages of this project.

To my clients, thank you for trusting me enough to be willing to drop your masks, look within and take yourself on. This takes courage and I never take this lightly. It is a privilege to work with you and it is a joy to see your results. While you may recognise your situation in the client stories in this book, I can assure you these are drawn from a composite of common themes gathered from multiple clients over many years.

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Do you feel you have to keep working harder and pedalling faster to succeed as a leader?

Are you frustrated by fragmented teams that are pulling in different directions?

Is it always you coming up with the solutions?



KYLIE ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPHER

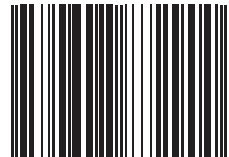
This is a common scenario for leaders in today's fast-paced, hyper-connected world. But it doesn't have to be this way. You have the silver bullet. YOU!

You may not be able to change the relentless demands of leadership, but you can change what you bring to them and how you deal with them. The secret? Presence. Your ability to bring your best self to the role of leadership.

Sheila Wherry specialises in coaching executives to build trust, connectedness and direction within themselves, their teams and across organisations. By sharing her framework, *The Pinnacle of Presence*, she shows you how to be your own coach.

**THE PRESENCE YOU BRING TO YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAMS CAN BE THE GREATEST GIFT TO YOURSELF AND THOSE YOU LEAD.**

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