



# LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

AN EBOOK BY PRADEEPA  
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# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR



Thank you for reading **Leadership Insights**.

This book was born from real conversations, real coaching sessions, real reflections—and most importantly, from real transformation.

Every story shared here, whether my own or from a client (with permission and names changed), is meant to invite you into deeper awareness, choice, and alignment. I hope you felt seen in these words. I hope you paused to reflect, smiled with recognition, or even teared up at the truth of it all.

Because leadership isn't about titles or roles.

It's about who you choose to be—in the quiet moments, in the messy ones, and in the ones where you rise.

If this book sparked something in you, I would love to hear from you. Whether you want to share a breakthrough, explore working together, or simply say hello, my door is always open.

This isn't just a book.

**It's a living invitation to your next level of leadership.**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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01

Beware of Your Self-Labels

---

02

How to Rebuild Trust When It's Broken

---

03

Commitment in Leadership

---

04

How to Be a Compassionate Leader

---

05

How to Overcome Procrastination

---

06

Autopilot Leadership

---

07

Lizard on the Wall

---

08

Evolutionary Leadership

---

09

How Our Beliefs Interfere With Progress

---

10

Boasting vs. Acknowledgment

---

11

Trust vs. Test

---

12

Thinking and Acting on Your Feet

---

# 1 – BEWARE OF YOUR SELF-LABELS

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I was coaching a very seasoned leader (let's call them Min) a few weeks ago. One of Min's goals was to improve their listening skills, especially with their team members.

Min said they lose patience and interest when people launch into too many details and that they struggle to stay focused while listening. In our conversation, Min labeled themselves a "poor listener." They also added that they had received negative feedback in the past about their listening.

While I had the opportunity to work with Min on various areas apart from listening, the first thing that stood out to me was Min's belief about their listening ability. They repeatedly referred to themselves as a "poor listener."



Often, we don't realize how we see ourselves in different aspects of our lives. If we believe we are "poor listeners," we inevitably show up that way. And guess what? It becomes incredibly difficult to improve from that place. Not that it's impossible, but the energy and effort required become draining. You operate from a place of doubt, reluctance, and lack of confidence. And because of that mindset, you may never truly become a better listener — you may even give up trying.

One of the labels I became aware of a few years ago was related to my physical strength. I used to refer to myself as a "non-athlete" and used that as an excuse for my lack of physical fitness. Becoming aware of this self-label was the first step in recognizing how I was defining and limiting myself.

Since that awareness and my decision to change, I've made significant progress in my fitness journey. I now walk more, do strenuous hikes, train with weights, and even do pushups — which I once believed I couldn't do because my arms weren't "strong enough." I've also been practicing Krav Maga since February.

## Reflection Prompt:

Are there areas in your career where you're struggling to make progress?  
What self-labels might be at play here?

## 2- HOW TO REBUILD TRUST WHEN IT'S BROKEN

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I use Dr. Brené Brown's "Marble Jar" analogy often when I talk about trust. The idea is that some people enter a relationship with a full jar of marbles—meaning they extend complete trust right from the start. Others begin with an empty jar and slowly add marbles as trust builds. Some colleagues and clients I've spoken to say their "jar" depends on the situation—whether it's work, personal life, or specific people.

I was recently speaking with a client who said they've always started relationships with a full jar. But now, they're finding it harder to continue doing so. I asked what brought about that shift, and they said: "I've paid too high a price for trusting certain people at work. They've repeatedly shattered my jar."

As a leader, the first step in building trust is to be transparent about your trust dynamics. Share them with your team. Let them know whether you start with a full jar, a partial jar, an empty jar—or something in between. Let them know what earns your trust and what erodes it.

For example, I tell my team that one way to build trust with me is to follow through on their work commitments. If something is going to be delayed or not happen, I expect them to keep me in the loop. Another trust-building behavior I value is my #NoSurprises policy. Team members can schedule time with me to update me on anything critical so I can understand the situation, offer input or support, or advocate for them if needed.

When your team knows what earns and breaks trust with you, they don't have to waste energy trying to "figure you out." And just as importantly, you should take the time to learn your team members' trust factors too. That way, the mutual relationship becomes intentional, understood, and nurtured.

My friend and colleague Roni Givati beautifully frames it: "Trust is built in smaller moments."

So in the case of my client, they didn't necessarily need to shift from a "full jar" to an "empty jar" model. Instead, they could communicate their trust framework to their team, understand each other's expectations, and co-create a high-trust environment that supports everyone.

### Reflection Prompt:

Is trust currently a challenge in your leadership journey?

Try having this conversation with your team—and see what opens up.



# 3- COMMITMENT IN LEADERSHIP

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As some of you may know, I run a Leadership Development School. One of the key topics I cover there is commitment. I've also been growing deeper in my personal and professional development in this area. Over the years, I've realized that commitment is at the core of anything we truly want in life.

I heard Coach JP once say that commitment is like “rock climbing without the ropes.” That powerful imagery stuck with me. It means going after something without having alternate options in mind. It means trusting yourself fully and deciding that you will do whatever it takes.

I used to think of commitment as something I make when I want to achieve a specific outcome. I needed to know how things would turn out before I'd fully commit. If I do this, will I get that result? If I commit, will it work the way I want it to? For example, I'll commit to a diet only when I know I can lose ten pounds in five months.



Of course, we all know that life doesn't work like that. We never get to know everything in advance. What I've learned is that this way of thinking is actually commitment backward. Often, we wait for certainty before we commit. But as JP beautifully puts it, it's like trying to plug a commitment cord into an outcome outlet—it just doesn't work.

What deeply resonated with me is this: Commitment is a creation. And when we commit fully, we create our own certainty.

When I decided to create and launch the Pradeepa Leadership Development School, I didn't have a guarantee of success. But I chose to commit to creating the best leadership development experience I could. I started speaking about it publicly, had dozens of conversations, posted updates online, and poured my time, energy, and heart into building it—often late into the evenings and weekends.

Rather than fixating on the outcome, I realized that I was in control of the outcome because I was creating it through my commitment.

Commitment is the unwavering decision to give 100% to what you're taking on and to stay in it—no matter what. It's rock climbing with no ropes. You don't look for a safety net. You just climb.

Commitment moves you forward.

“Commitment but...” keeps you in the past.

## Reflection Prompt:

Where in your life are you hesitating to commit fully because you're waiting for certainty?

## 4- HOW TO BE A COMPASSIONATE LEADER

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As a coach and a teacher, I often explore the topic of compassion. These days, “compassion” is a buzzword in leadership circles. But for me, it’s not a trendy concept — it’s a deeply human one.

Here’s a definition I love:

“Compassion means recognizing the suffering of others and then taking action to help. It’s a tangible expression of love for those who are suffering or in need.”

I once read a powerful story about a woman who was struggling mentally and emotionally. She confided in a friend, saying one of her biggest stressors was doing the dishes. Her dishwasher was broken, and she didn’t have the energy to pre-scrub the dishes before loading them. She felt overwhelmed, ashamed, and frustrated with herself.

Her friend gently asked, “Why not run the dishwasher twice?”

The woman looked at her, stunned. “You’re not supposed to do that,” she said.

Her friend replied, “Says who? These rules are made up. If it helps, run it twice. Or three times. Who cares?”

That moment shifted something for her. She went home and ran the dishwasher three times—and felt like she had conquered the world that day. The next day, she took a shower lying down. A few days later, she folded her laundry and just placed it wherever it felt easiest.



### **No arbitrary rules. Just self-kindness.**

Eventually, when she felt healthier, she returned to scrubbing the dishes. But she no longer carried the weight of shame with her.

Why am I sharing this story? Because as leaders, we must first learn to be compassionate toward ourselves. Only then can we truly extend compassion to others. What you don’t give yourself, you can’t authentically offer anyone else.

If you’re constantly pushing, judging, or shaming yourself, you’ll have little capacity to recognize when others are struggling. You’ll expect them to “just deal with it” because that’s how you treat yourself.

So, start by finding your own “**dishwasher** story.” Give yourself permission to be human.

Run the dishwasher twice. Or three times. Who cares?

### **Reflection Prompt:**

What is one “rule” you’ve been forcing yourself to follow that no longer serves you?

# 5- HOW TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION

Have you ever said, “One day I’ll start...” and then never did?

I have. Many times. Some of those ideas never even saw the daylight.

I’ve often heard people say — and I’ve said it myself — “I just don’t have enough time.” It becomes a go-to excuse. I’ve even heard people refer to themselves as “chronic procrastinators.” It’s a struggle so many of us face.

One of the biggest shifts I’ve made in my life to move away from a procrastinating mindset is this:

Stop thinking of commitment as something long-term and permanent.

Why? Because that idea can feel overwhelming. It’s the fear of starting something we’re not sure we can sustain.

## We think:



**What if I drop off halfway?**



**What will people think if I quit?**



**Will that make me a failure?**

These thoughts kill momentum before it even begins.

What has helped me is embracing a “Just for today” mindset.

## It sounds like this:

**Just for today, I’ll write two lines.**



**Just for today, I’ll stretch for 10 minutes.**



**Just for today, I’ll eat a cup of greens.**



## Reflection Prompt:

**What is one thing you’ve been putting off? What’s one small action you can take today — just for today — to get started?**

You’re not committing forever. You’re just saying yes for today.

I love the story of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. Even during practice games, he told his players: “Make each day your masterpiece.” He coached them to bring their full focus and energy — just for that day, that moment. And that’s what won them so many national titles.

Eliminate the fear of the future.  
Let go of the pressure of “forever.”  
Just show up today.



# 6- AUTOPILOT LEADERSHIP

Can you recall a time when some turn of events abruptly disrupted your well-oiled routine?

Let me share a recent example. My family and I have lived in our community for the past eight years. There's a specific road we've always taken to get to our regular grocery stores and nearby shops. It's part of our routine.



Then, one day, due to new construction, the road was closed for several weeks.

Here's the interesting part: I was the one who discovered the closure. I was the one who told my husband about it. I even saw the closure notices on social media.

And yet—I caught myself multiple times driving toward the same closed road.

Not once. Several times.

Even though I knew it was closed, I continued heading that way. Why? Because that route had become ingrained. I was in autopilot mode. I wasn't consciously thinking—I was just following habit.

And that's when it hit me: this is exactly what happens in leadership.

Many leaders operate in autopilot mode, repeating behaviors or approaches that once worked, without reflecting on whether those approaches are still effective today.

Has something worked well for you in the past? Great. But have you challenged yourself lately to see if it's still working? If not, you might be leading on autopilot.

What happens when the path you've always taken suddenly doesn't lead where it used to? Like my road closure—it may not be catastrophic, but it can delay you, frustrate you, or keep you stuck.

In my case, it cost me just 10 minutes. But in leadership? The cost can be much higher—missed opportunities, disengaged teams, or outdated decisions.

So what's the antidote?

## Be self-aware.

Regularly reflect on your habits, especially the successful ones.

## Experiment

Take a different route—try a different approach—even if the old one still seems to “work.”

## Know your defaults.

Understand your “go-to” behaviors, especially under stress. Awareness is your best tool for switching off autopilot.

## Reflection Prompt:

What behavior or strategy could you challenge or re-examine today?

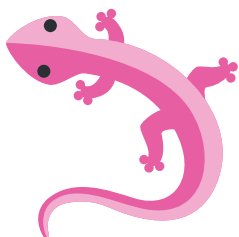
## 7 – LIZARD ON THE WALL

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Several years ago, we took our son Kartik to India. He was about six years old, and this was his first visit since we had moved to the States.

We visited my hometown of Madurai, a beautiful temple city in South Tamil Nadu. In my childhood home, it's common to see small lizards crawling on the walls—usually chasing mosquitoes or other insects. We grew up with it. It was so normal that we never gave them a second thought.

But Kartik? He was horrified.



The sight of those lizards upset him deeply. He started crying and couldn't sleep. We tried to reassure him that they were harmless, that they wouldn't chase or hurt him. But his mind was fixated. He couldn't ignore them. That's all he talked about for the rest of the trip.

Fast forward to a recent coaching session I had with a client—let's call them Remi.

Remi was struggling after receiving difficult feedback from their manager. It wasn't favorable, and as someone who had always been a high performer, Remi took it hard. And like Kartik with the lizard, Remi couldn't stop thinking about that one conversation. It consumed them.

The more they focused on it, the bigger it became. It occupied space in their mind, drained their energy, and blocked all clarity. Remi asked, "So how do I get rid of the lizard?" And I told them, "You don't."

In fact, the more you try to "get rid of it," the more power you give it. The solution isn't in forcefully removing it. It's in choosing to shift your focus.

We all have our own "lizards." And the truth is, some of them aren't going away anytime soon. But we can stop letting them take center stage.

### Reflection Prompt:

What's the "lizard on the wall" in your life right now? What would happen if you simply shifted your attention away from it?

## 8- EVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

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I started practicing Krav Maga—a self-defense system—in February, and I've been genuinely enjoying it.

One recent class completely blew my mind. We were learning a fight sequence, but what fascinated me was how we were also learning how to adapt when the sequence failed.

Yes—you heard that right.

We were preparing for failure.

What if you forget a step?

What if your move doesn't land the way you intended?

What if something unexpected happens?

Our instructor, John, said something powerful:

“Never assume you're done just because you nailed a sequence. You keep fighting until it's truly over. You either run away safely or finish the fight.”

That lesson hit me hard. Because in leadership, just like in self-defense, there's no such thing as a perfect performance.

There's no “I've arrived.”

No “I've mastered this forever.”

I tried to execute a “failure response” and... I completely messed it up. We all laughed. But here's the thing—I'll never forget that lesson now. It's deeply embedded in my body and mind.



On my drive home, I reflected on how relevant that experience is to leadership. Leadership is not a finite game. It's not about executing one perfect strategy and then resting on your laurels. Leadership is evolutionary. It's learning and adapting over time. It's falling flat, getting up, adjusting, and staying in the game.

The best leaders are the ones who embrace the long game—with all its failures, course corrections, and learnings.

And here's the truth:

The failures are not flaws.

They are feedback.

They are fuel.

They are part of your evolution.

### Reflection Prompt:

Where in your leadership journey are you holding yourself to the unrealistic standard of perfection?



# 9- HOW DO OUR BELIEFS INTERFERE WITH PROGRESS?

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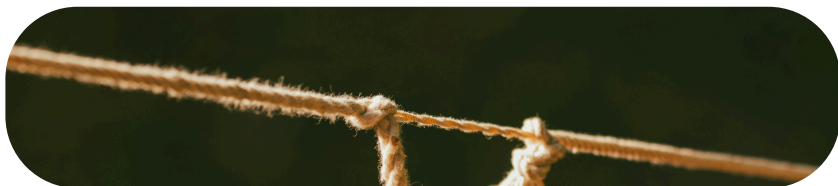
I heard a story recently that stopped me in my tracks.

A group of big elephants were tied to thin ropes in an open area. They just stood there, completely still. A curious passerby asked the trainer, “Why don’t they break free? These ropes are so thin.”

The trainer replied,

“When they were babies, these same ropes were enough to hold them. As they grew, they continued to believe they couldn’t break free. So they never try.” That story hit home.

So many of us are tied to “thin ropes” from our past—moments when someone said we weren’t good enough, or smart enough, or capable enough. Those early criticisms—sometimes just casual comments—become our reality.



So many of us are tied to “thin ropes” from our past—moments when someone said we weren’t good enough, or smart enough, or capable enough. Those early criticisms—sometimes just casual comments—become our reality.

Earlier in my professional career, someone critiqued my writing. It hit me hard.

I tied myself to that rope and didn’t write publicly for years.

Years.

It wasn’t until I worked with some phenomenal coaches that I began to untie that rope.

Today, I’ve written two published books—including an Amazon bestseller—and my third is on the way.

As a leader, I now actively look for the “ropes” my clients and team members may be tied to.

It started with recognizing the belief, gently challenging it, and offering consistent support.

Your job isn’t to rip the rope.  
Just start by noticing where the knots are.

I wrote two books by starting with a blog.  
The blog started with a paragraph.  
The paragraph started with a sentence.  
The sentence started with a word.  
One word.

## Reflection Prompt:

What belief is keeping you tied down from your next level?

# 10- BOASTING VS. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I recently had a powerful conversation with a colleague about the difference between boasting and acknowledgment.

Growing up in India, I was raised to be humble. Humility was deeply ingrained in me.

I remember an acquaintance who used to frequently praise someone my age. It made me uncomfortable. Deep down, I was also jealous.

I started labeling that behavior as boasting.

Without realizing it, I internalized that judgment.

Here's what happened over time:

I stopped acknowledging others.

I couldn't receive praise without deflecting it.

And when I did appreciate someone, it was rare—because they had to “earn” it.

I feared I would seem arrogant if I accepted compliments. And I didn't want others to think I was “not humble.”

But then came a breakthrough.

Through coaching, I began to learn about the power of acknowledgment—both in giving and receiving it with grace.

I saw how my discomfort around praise was showing up in my leadership. I couldn't fully celebrate others or myself. I withheld. I minimized. The shift didn't happen overnight, but I started practicing.

I began acknowledging others more intentionally—and more generously. Not performatively. But from the heart.

I also began receiving praise more openly. I remember tearing up during a training when I finally allowed myself to receive acknowledgment fully for the first time. It was such a beautiful release.

Looking back, that acquaintance wasn't boasting.

They were simply seeing—and speaking—the truth about someone's brilliance.

There is deep power in acknowledgment. Especially in leadership. And it starts with yourself.



## Reflection Prompt:

How comfortable are you with receiving genuine praise?

Who can you acknowledge today—from your heart?

# 11- TRUST VS. TEST

Growing up in South India, I was always fascinated by swimming. Maybe because everyone in my family knew how to swim—except me.

As a child, I never had access to a pool or coach. But after moving to the U.S. post-marriage, I spotted an ad in a local recreation magazine: “Adult Swim Class.” My heart leapt. I signed up immediately. A childhood dream was finally within reach.

On the first day, I noticed something odd. I was the only adult in the pool. The rest were kids, their parents watching from the bleachers. A few moments later, the instructor came over and said, “You’re the only one who signed up. Looks like it’s just us!”



So, I began. Week after week, I showed up. I swallowed more pool water than I care to admit. I struggled to keep my core engaged and not let my feet touch the floor. It was awkward. Messy. Vulnerable. But my instructor was patient. And I stayed committed.

I signed up for round two. Again, I was the only one. But I could feel it—I was improving. Less water gulping. Better form. A hint of confidence.

By round three, two women joined the class. They said they’d seen me in earlier sessions and were inspired to try. “You’re so brave to learn as an adult,” one said.

By the end of that session, I could float. Swim short laps. Even dive from the deck.

But the real victory? I stopped testing and started trusting.



At first, I was constantly asking: Can I do this? Am I good enough?

That mindset kept me cautious—half-in, half-out. It protected me from failure but also from growth. When I stopped needing proof and started being the proof, everything shifted.

No, I didn’t become an Olympic swimmer. But I no longer panic in water—and that’s a huge win.

As leaders, we often think we must trust ourselves first. But maybe it starts with simply being willing to test—and then choosing to keep going.

That’s where real trust is born.

## Reflection Prompt:

Where are you waiting to trust yourself before you take action?

# 12- THINKING AND ACTING ON YOUR FEET

Toward the end of our Southeast Asia trip, my family and I were flying domestically from Chiang Mai to Phuket.



As we were taxiing on the runway, one of the overhead cabin bins wouldn't close properly. The flight attendant standing nearby tried everything she could—but it wouldn't budge. She called over another crew member. Still no luck. Now both of them seemed a little flustered.

I started wondering what would happen next. Would we return to the terminal? Would the flight get delayed? This was, after all, a safety issue.

Then, something beautiful happened.

Another crew member—who clearly seemed like the lead—stepped in. She tried closing the bin once or twice, then quickly shifted her approach. She began removing the luggage and redistributing it into other bins. She rearranged some bags, created space, and managed the situation with ease.

What struck me was her ability to assess the situation and think on her feet. While the other two were stuck in the same repeated attempts, she brought in a fresh perspective and decisive energy. Within minutes, the bin was secure, and we were ready for takeoff—with no delay.

This reminded me of the kind of leadership we don't talk about enough: Not the visionary speech. Not the five-year strategy. But the in-the-moment awareness. The calm under pressure. The confidence to act quickly when others are frozen.

As leaders, there will be moments when you need to step in—not with ego, but with clarity.



**When your team is stuck in a loop**



**When urgency meets uncertainty.**



**When others are hesitating—and someone needs to lead.**

That day, on that airplane, I witnessed not just good customer service—I witnessed leadership in action.

## Reflection Prompt:

How do you prepare yourself to lead in moments of uncertainty?

# A WORD FROM PRADEEPA

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I truly have the best job in the world.

I consider my work sacred because I get to work with incredible, beautiful human beings every single day.

What do I do?

I mine for diamonds.

Sometimes people don't see their own brilliance. Sometimes it's hidden under years of dust — self-doubt, conditioning, trauma, failure, or comparison. I help them uncover it.

My work is to gently remove the dirt and help people reconnect to their highest, most authentic selves.

When someone begins to see themselves that way — when they truly own their light — they start showing up differently in the world.

And something magical happens:

Their presence elevates the people around them.

Their confidence becomes contagious.

Their part of the world begins to shine.

And when that light touches someone else, they begin to uncover their own diamonds.

It's the most beautiful ripple effect.

That is the heart of my mission:

To create a butterfly effect in leadership, in humanity, in the world.

To raise consciousness, compassion, and courage.

To help more people remember who they truly are.

Some call me a coach.

Some say teacher.

Some say mirror.

Whatever name I'm given, at my core, I'm simply a woman committed to transforming the leadership landscape with the time I have left.

And I'm just getting started.

If something in this book resonated with you, or if you'd like to explore how I can support your growth, please reach out.

We're all in this beautiful human journey together.



# PRADEEPA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

A SIX-MONTH ONLINE WEEKEND SCHOOL TO HELP  
YOU BECOME A THRIVING LEADER.

Amidst the sea of leadership books, courses, videos, and TED Talks, why do so many still struggle to lead effectively?

Because learning tactics, behaviors, and skills alone isn't enough. And copying what others have done will never unlock your true leadership potential.

At Pradeepa Leadership Development School, we go beyond tactics. I don't just teach leadership skills — I teach you how to be a great leader.

Without clarity about your own being, no amount of tactics will work. That's why this isn't just a school. It's a movement — a movement to create leaders who influence not only their organizations, but their families, communities, and the world around them.

The results speak for themselves: promotions, new jobs, powerful performance reviews, stronger relationships, amazing recognition, unshakable confidence, and a renewed sense of purpose.



As one student put it best:  
"Pradeepa Leadership Development School teaches what business schools don't."

If you're looking for a certification or a fancy degree from an elite institution, this school is not it. But if you are serious — truly serious — about becoming the leader you were meant to be, let's talk.



# Let's Stay Connected



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