

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR TEAMS

THE 15 COMMITMENTS OF CONSCIOUS

LEADERSHIP

Questions to explore the book together, get to know one another more deeply, and imagine what these commitments could mean for the way you work.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is the official authors' discussion guide for The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership.

This guide is for teams who want to read *The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership* together and talk about it the way any good book club does: honestly, with curiosity, and with room for disagreement.

Each set of questions has a similar format. It starts with the book itself, then turns to your own life, and ends with your workplace. You don't need to agree with everything in the book to have a great conversation. In fact, some of the best discussions begin with "I'm not sure I buy this."

This guide works equally well for any group that wants to explore this body of work together. If you're running a book club outside the organizational world, just change the work examples to personal examples.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Pace yourselves.** We recommend meeting every week and covering one commitment each session, or meeting every two weeks and covering two commitments each session. Either way, the book becomes a conversation that lasts around four months.
- **Choose a host.** One person can be the ongoing host, or rotate among all willing members.
- **Choose your questions.** Each commitment has more questions than any group will get to. The host will pick three or four that spark the most energy.

HOW TO RUN A SESSION

- **Bring the book.** Page numbers throughout this guide refer to the 10th anniversary hardcover edition. When someone makes a point, invite them to refer to the passage that sparked it.
- **Keep time and encourage engagement.** The host will track the time per question and make sure that everyone who wants to participate gets to. They'll use their discretion to balance a flowing conversation with moving on to the next question.
- **Leaders go first.** When a question asks people to share something personal, it helps when the most senior person in the room answers first. If there isn't seniority, the host ideally goes first.

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A FEW SIMPLE AGREEMENTS

Read these aloud at your first meeting and ask whether everyone can agree to them.

-
- 01** What is shared in the group stays in the group.
 - 02** Speak from your own experience.
 - 03** Anyone can pass on any question.
 - 04** Disagree with ideas freely, and with people from a place of curiosity.
 - 05** Listen to understand, not to fix. In other words, no advice.
-

FOR THE HOST

QUESTIONS TO KEEP A CONVERSATION GOING

When a discussion slows down or stays on the surface, the host can reach for one of these.

- *Can you say more about that?*
- *Does anyone see it differently?*
- *What would that look like here, in our work?*

When people are going off topic, try:

- *How does what you just said relate to the book?*
- *How does that connect to what was just said?*

PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

The book opens with two leaders, Tim and Sharon, who live and lead in very different ways. It then introduces its central model: at any moment, a leader is either above or below the line.

OPEN. CURIOUS. COMMITTED TO LEARNING.

CLOSED. DEFENSIVE. COMMITTED TO BEING RIGHT.

-
- 01** What were your first impressions of the book? What drew you in, and what made you skeptical?
-
- 02** Tim and Sharon live their days very differently. (PAGES 3 TO 11) Which parts of each of their days look most like yours?
-
- 03** The book says that at any moment we are either above the line (open, curious, committed to learning) or below the line (closed, defensive, committed to being right). What does this simple model capture well, and what might it leave out?
-
- 04** “Knowing when you are below the line is more important than being below the line.” (PAGE 17) Why do you think it is so hard for leaders to recognize when they are below the line, and so tempting to say they are above it when they are not? When has that been true for you?
-
- 05** Think of a time you faced a hard situation above the line, open and curious. What were the payoffs? Now think of a time you faced one below the line. What did it cost you, and what, if anything, did it give you?
-
- 06** Where does our workplace reward being right, and where does it reward learning?
-

1

COMMITMENT 1

TAKING RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Blame is one of the most common ways leaders motivate people, and it keeps teams stuck in the drama triangle. This chapter offers a radical alternative: taking full responsibility for your own experience.

I commit to taking full responsibility for the circumstances of my life and for my physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.

-
- 01** At the Common Corp executive meeting (PAGES 44 TO 47), every leader has a reason the quarter went badly. Which roles on the drama triangle (victim, villain, hero) do you see each person playing? Which one do you slip into most easily yourself?
-
- 02** “Heroing is a primary form of unconscious leadership.” (PAGE 46) Heroes are often praised and promoted. What do you make of the book’s claim that heroing is toxic?
-
- 03** How would you explain the difference between taking full responsibility and taking the blame?
-
- 04** Think of a recent frustration. In what ways did you or can you take ownership for your part in creating it? How does it look when you ask what your part was in creating it?
-
- 05** As a team, how do you think we’re doing around taking responsibility versus blaming, complaining, or heroing?
-

2

COMMITMENT 2

LEARNING THROUGH CURIOSITY

Everyone gets defensive. This chapter is about noticing when it happens and choosing curiosity over needing to be right.

I commit to growing in self awareness. I commit to regarding every interaction as an opportunity to learn.

-
- 01** The book argues that being right does not cause drama; wanting, proving, and fighting to be right does. How do you understand that distinction?
-
- 02** “The feedback they most react to has the most learning potential.” (PAGE 73) Share an example of feedback you received that you reacted to strongly, but eventually learned from.
-
- 03** Think about a situation in your life where you are reactive and below the line. What are you wanting to be right about? What would it take for you to become curious about it?
-
- 04** This chapter introduces the concept of “drifting and shifting.” What are one or two of the most common ways that you drift from presence?
-
- 05** “The issue is not whether we will drift but how long we stay in a drift before we shift.” (PAGE 77) What helps you come back when you have drifted?
-
- 06** Where is curiosity rewarded and not rewarded in our workplace?
-

3

COMMITMENT 3

FEELING ALL FEELINGS

Most organizations prioritize intellect and overlook emotions and instinct. This chapter defines feelings as physical sensations that carry useful wisdom for leaders.

I commit to feeling my feelings all the way through to completion.

-
- 01** The book names five core feelings: anger, fear, sadness, joy, and sexual feelings, which it describes as “the energy of creativity and creation” (PAGE 95). Which of these is easiest for you to feel, and which is hardest?
-
- 02** The book suggests each feeling carries wisdom: anger points to what needs to change, fear to what needs attention, sadness to what needs to be let go, joy to what needs celebrating, sexual/creative to what wants to be created. What’s an example from your life where you can see one of these connections?
-
- 03** When you were growing up, what did you learn about which feelings were acceptable to show and which were not?
-
- 04** “Leaders who can’t experience joy are dangerous.” (PAGE 94) Why would the book call a lack of joy dangerous rather than simply unfortunate?
-
- 05** What is missing when decisions are made only with I.Q. and not E.Q.?
-
- 06** Which feelings are welcome in our workplace, and which are quietly discouraged? How can you tell?
-

4

COMMITMENT 4

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

Candor is more than not lying. This chapter explores what we withhold, how to speak in ways no one can argue with, and how to listen so others can be candid with us.

I commit to saying what is true for me. I commit to being a person to whom others can express themselves with candor.

01 The book says lying is a problem in many organizations, “but not nearly as big of a problem as withholding” (PAGE 104). Why might withholding be the bigger problem?

02 How are you and those around you impacted when you withhold?

03 “When we choose revealing we’re choosing trust. When we choose concealing we’re choosing control.” (PAGE 125) What do you make of this link between concealing and control?

04 The book describes listening filters, such as listening to fix, to defend, or to avoid conflict. What keeps you from being a great listener?

05 “You spot it, you got it.” (PAGE 116) How have you seen this play out in your own life?

06 What would it take for people to feel fully free to speak candidly on this team?

5

COMMITMENT 5

ELIMINATING GOSSIP

Gossip is common in most workplaces, which is quietly corrosive. This chapter offers an alternative: separating facts from stories and speaking directly to the people involved.

I commit to ending gossip, talking directly to people with whom I have a concern, and encouraging others to do the same.

-
- 01** The book defines gossip as a statement you would be unwilling to share in exactly the same way if the person were in the room. How does that definition change what counts as gossip for you?
-
- 02** “Agreeing to listen to gossip is the same as speaking it.” (PAGE 130) Does that feel true to you? Why or why not?
-
- 03** What do people get from gossip? What does it cost them?
-
- 04** What separates a fact from a story?
-
- 05** “Facts don’t cause stress. Drama and stress are caused by stories.” (PAGE 137) Share a time you treated a story as a fact. What happened?
-
- 06** How would our workplace change if we talked to each other directly rather than gossiping about each other?
-

6

COMMITMENT 6

PRACTICING INTEGRITY

Integrity in this book is defined as wholeness, and is categorized into four pillars. This chapter pays special attention to agreements: how we make them, keep them, and clean them up.

I commit to the masterful practice of integrity, including acknowledging all authentic feelings, expressing the unarguable truth, keeping my agreements, and taking 100% responsibility.

-
- 01** The book defines integrity as wholeness rather than as a moral code. How does that shift the way you think about integrity?
-
- 02** The book describes the “corporate nod”: nodding yes when we mean no. Where have you seen it, or done it yourself?
-
- 03** “In the world of energetic integrity, explaining is a waste of time.” (PAGE 157) What makes it hard to simply own a broken agreement without explaining?
-
- 04** “Wanting to know the how and what before we commit is like asking to see the movie before we buy the ticket.” (PAGE 158) Where in your life are you waiting to see the movie?
-
- 05** How clear are the agreements we make with each other (who, will do what, by when) and what usually happens when one is broken?
-

7

COMMITMENT 7

GENERATING APPRECIATION

Appreciation grows value and connection. This chapter looks at both giving and receiving appreciation.

I commit to living in appreciation, fully opening to both receiving and giving appreciation.

-
- 01** The book observes that most people find it harder to receive appreciation than to give it. Why do you think that is?
-
- 02** “Entitlement arises when we believe there’s a way the world should be and shouldn’t be, and we get attached to it being the way we want it to be.” Where do you notice entitlement in our organization and in yourself?
-
- 03** Masterful appreciation, the book says, is sincere, unarguable, specific, and succinct. Which of these do you think is most often missing?
-
- 04** What is the most meaningful appreciation you have ever received at work? What about how it was delivered made it land?
-
- 05** How does appreciation flow on this team? How could it be better?
-

8

COMMITMENT 8

EXCELLING IN YOUR ZONE OF GENIUS

Many capable people spend their careers doing work they're good at, but that doesn't light them up. This chapter describes four zones we operate from and what keeps us from our genius.

I commit to expressing my full magnificence and to supporting and inspiring others to fully express their creativity and live in their zone of genius.

-
- 01** The book describes four zones: incompetence, competence, excellence, and genius. Why might excellence be the hardest zone to leave?
-
- 02** “It is not our failure that we are most afraid of but rather our magnificence.” (PAGE 191) What is your reaction to this statement?
-
- 03** “Genius equals juice.” (PAGE 191) What kind of work gives you that juice, the kind where you lose track of time?
-
- 04** Finish this sentence: “I wish I could live more in my genius, but...” What does your answer reveal?
-
- 05** What do you see as the genius of each of the people in this room?
-

9

COMMITMENT 9

LIVING A LIFE OF PLAY AND REST

Many work cultures prize a nonstop work ethic. This chapter suggests that play, rest, and natural rhythms allow people to be more creative and effective.

I commit to creating a life of play, improvisation, and laughter. I commit to maximizing my energy by honoring rest, renewal, and rhythm.

-
- 01** What is your reaction to finding a commitment about play in a book on leadership?
-
- 02** “Workaholism is just like any other addiction...The definition we use for addiction is ‘any behavior we do compulsively in order to avoid experiencing our experience in the moment.’” (PAGE 209) Do you see workaholic tendencies in yourself? What do you think you’re trying to avoid by overworking?
-
- 03** The book says even “good” behaviors can become addictive when we use them to avoid being present. Which good behaviors might you use this way? For example, running, cleaning, reading, meditating.
-
- 04** What are some of your favorite ways to rest?
-
- 05** The chapter describes eight play personalities, such as the Joker and the Kinesthete. (PAGES 202–203) Which one sounds most like you, and how did it show up when you were a child?
-
- 06** Where could more lightness make our work better, not just more pleasant?
-

10

COMMITMENT 10

EXPLORING THE OPPOSITE

This chapter opens with a founder convinced that leaving his company would harm it. It explores how our stories shape our experience, and what happens when we question them.

I commit to seeing that the opposite of my story is as true as or truer than my original story.

-
- 01** “It is not the issue itself that causes pain, but your interpretation of it.” (PAGE 225) How do you experience this perspective as true?
-
- 02** This chapter draws on Byron Katie’s question, “Is it true?” (PAGE 219) What happens when you ask “is it true?” about a belief you hold strongly?
-
- 03** “Would you rather be right or free?” (PAGE 220) How would you honestly answer this question today?
-
- 04** Share a belief about yourself or your work that you have changed your mind about. What changed it?
-
- 05** What’s a story our team or organization tells about itself that might be worth questioning?
-

11

COMMITMENT 11

SOURCING APPROVAL, CONTROL, AND SECURITY

Approval, control, and security are the three core wants. This chapter asks what changes when we stop looking for them outside ourselves.

I commit to being the source of my approval, control, and security.

-
- 01** The book says there is nothing wrong with approval, control, and security; the issue is wanting them from the outside while not being willing to source them from within. What is the difference between having something and wanting it?
-
- 02** Which of the three core wants drives you most, and how does it show up?
-
- 03** Finish this sentence: “If only ___ would ___, then I would feel ___.” (PAGE 232) What does your answer reveal?
-
- 04** “Pain in life is not optional, but suffering is.” (PAGE 237) How do you understand the difference between pain and suffering?
-
- 05** How do the wants for approval, control, and security show up in our meetings?
-

12

COMMITMENT 12

HAVING ENOUGH OF EVERYTHING

A belief in not enough can become the lens through which we see everything. This chapter explores the shift from scarcity to sufficiency.

I commit to experiencing that I have enough of everything, including time, money, love, energy, space, and resources.

-
- 01** The book names three myths of scarcity: there is never enough, more is better, and it will always be this way. Which one is loudest for you?
-
- 02** “When there is just now, there is always enough.” (PAGE 251) What do you make of the idea that scarcity lives in the past and the future?
-
- 03** Some readers find this commitment inspiring, and others find it unrealistic. Where do you land, and why?
-
- 04** Where did you first learn that there was not enough?
-
- 05** Where does scarcity show up in our workplace: time, budget, recognition, attention?
-

13

COMMITMENT 13

EXPERIENCING THE WORLD AS AN ALLY

The chapter opens with Suzanne, who saw everyone in her search for a CEO role as standing in her way. It invites a different view: every person and circumstance can be an ally in our growth.

I commit to seeing all people and circumstances as allies that are perfectly suited to help me learn the most important things for my growth.

-
- 01** The book says what makes someone an ally is “neither their behavior nor their words; it is your choice of how you want to see them.” (PAGE 263) What is freeing about this idea, and what is challenging about it?
-
- 02** Suzanne was convinced the headhunter, the interviewer, the board, and the other candidate were all against her (PAGES 258–259). How might her search have been different if she had seen each of them as an ally?
-
- 03** How would you describe the difference between seeing someone as an ally and being naive about them?
-
- 04** Who was someone who was difficult in your life and turned out to be one of your greatest teachers?
-
- 05** How might we talk differently about competitors, other departments, or difficult customers if we saw them as allies?
-

14

COMMITMENT 14

CREATING WIN FOR ALL SOLUTIONS

Most conflicts get settled by competing or compromising. This chapter describes a third way: solutions in which everyone wins.

I commit to creating win for all solutions for whatever issues, problems, concerns, or opportunities life gives me.

-
- 01** “From the To Me mindset, the only options available are competing and compromising.”
(PAGE 271) Why would compromise belong with competing rather than with collaboration?
-
- 02** The chapter explains how the partnership behind The Conscious Leadership Group changed, and the solution that emerged (PAGES 270 TO 274). What stood out to you in that story?
-
- 03** Which do you default to in conflict: the zero-sum game of competing or compromising, or collaborating? Where did you learn your style from?
-
- 04** Share a challenging situation when you came up with a solution that truly worked for everyone involved. What made it possible?
-
- 05** What are some of our biggest challenges in creating win for all solutions?
-

15

COMMITMENT 15

BEING THE RESOLUTION

It's easy to meet what's missing or lacking in the world with blame or apathy. This chapter frames what is missing as an invitation, and asks who we might become in response.

I commit to being the resolution or solution that is needed: seeing what is missing in the world as an invitation to become that which is required.

-
- 01** What is the difference between an invitation and an obligation? Which do you tend to hear, and how do you therefore respond?
-
- 02** The book asks, “If the world is whole, perfect, and complete, why would anyone ever want to do anything?” and answers, “because we can!” (PAGE 286). What might change if more of your work came from “because I can” instead of “because I should”?
-
- 03** This chapter tells the story of an employee noticing trash on a corporate campus (PAGES 286 TO 287). What does this simple story reveal about the difference between To Me and By Me?
-
- 04** What is missing in the world that keeps calling to you?
-
- 05** What is missing on our team, and how could you show up to be the resolution?
-

THE CHANGE FORMULA AND NEXT STEPS

The final chapters look at why change is hard, what makes it possible, and what it takes to keep practicing.

-
- 01** “Many, many people want to change, but most are not willing to change.” (PAGE 304) How do you understand the difference between wanting and willing?
-
- 02** “Life tickles us first, pushes us second, and then hits us over the head with a brick.” (PAGE 303) Where in your life are you being tickled right now?
-
- 03** “Trying is wanting credit for something you never intend to do.” (PAGE 305) Where do you hear yourself saying “I’ll try”?
-
- 04** Which commitment challenged you the most and why?
-
- 05** Which commitment has benefited you the most and why?
-
- 06** What has shifted in you, and/or between us, over the course of reading this book together?
-

"This book changed my life and has ignited transformation in leaders, teams, and organizations around the world. Meet these pages with an open heart and an open mind, and the possibilities for how you live and lead with clarity and courage are truly limitless."
—**BRENÉ BROWN**, PhD, author of *Dare to Lead* and *Strong Ground*

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A New Paradigm for **Sustainable Success**

**DIANA CHAPMAN, JIM DETHMER,
AND KALEY KLEMP**

WANT MORE SUPPORT?

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