

COACHING

COMFORT VS. COURAGE

ADAPTED FROM EXCERPTS BY PATRICK LENCIONI⁴²

*“You can choose courage or you can choose comfort,
but you can't have both.”*

– Brené Brown

When you call yourself a leader, you are declaring that passivity is no longer an option. Leadership is not for the weak or the timid; it requires tremendous backbone, tremendous courage.⁴³ Courage isn't the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. As John Wayne says, “Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.”

Where this comes to a head for many leaders is holding the peers and team members they lead accountable. Many leaders struggle with accountability, but don't know it. Some will tell me that since they aren't afraid to fire people, they must not have an accountability problem. Of course, this is misguided. Firing someone is not necessarily a sign of accountability, but is *often the last act of cowardice* for a leader who doesn't know how or isn't willing to hold people accountable.

At its core, accountability is about having the courage to confront someone about their deficiencies and then to stand

⁴² (LENCIONI, P56) | ⁴³ (RAMSEY, P58)

in the moment and deal with their reaction, which may not be pleasant. It is a selfless act, rooted in a word that I don't use lightly in a business book: love. To hold someone accountable is to care about them enough to risk having them blame you for pointing out their deficiencies.

Unfortunately, it is far more natural and common for leaders to avoid holding people accountable. It is one of the biggest obstacles we find preventing teams, and the companies they lead, from reaching their full potential.

Many leaders who struggle with this will try to convince themselves that their reluctance is a product of their kindness; they just don't want to make their employees feel bad. But an honest reassessment of their motivation will allow them to admit that they are the ones who don't want to feel bad and that *failing to hold someone accountable is ultimately an act of selfishness.*

After all, there is nothing noble about withholding information that can help an employee improve. Eventually an employee's lack of improvement is going to come back to haunt them in a performance review or when they are let go. There is nothing kind about firing someone who has not been confronted about their performance.

“Courage, dear heart.”

— *C.S. Lewis*