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Four Oscars.® A Golden Globe. BAFTA and SAG awards. Millions of captivated moviegoers around the world

Those are some ways to gauge the success of *The King's Speech*, the silver screen version of how England's King George VI overcame his debilitating stammer in order to lead a nation at the brink of war.

We see the movie as a hugely successful parable about healing from broken trust. His Majesty had to heal from childhood betrayals before he could find his voice and become the leader his country needed. Yet it was extremely hard for him to ask for and accept the support he needed.

Sound familiar? In our experience, most leaders have a hard time asking for support. And even more leaders struggle to engage with support that can sometimes come in the form of a challenge. If you resist asking for support because you think leaders need to have all of the answers and "go it alone," you may be missing out on the key that can unlock the door to your leadership potential.

Support isn't a sign of weakness. In fact, it takes enormous strength and courage to ask for and truly engage with support. Only a very competent leader can size up a situation and realistically know what he or she can or cannot fully face alone. That courageous humility helps transform an average manager into a great leader by opening up doors to profound learning and connection.

Support encourages you to face not only the reality of your situation, whatever it may be, but also your very human-ness. And it is only when you are in touch with your own human-ness and your own needs that you can truly engage with the needs, the minds, the hearts, and the potential of your peers and followers.

Let's take as an example England's King George VI, who was known informally as "Bertie." As the Academy Award-winning movie *The King's Speech* portrays, Bertie struggled with a debilitating stammer that kept his leadership potential locked away from the world. When his brother abdicated the throne just as England was on the brink of World War II, Bertie became King. His country desperately needed their leader to find his voice—to unlock the potential that had remained latent for years.

It was only by asking for and genuinely receiving support—really engaging with the challenges that support presented—that Bertie was able to transform into King George VI. Had he previously seen support as a crutch that was unbecoming to his royal stature? Or, had he resisted the pain that erupted with each of the supportive speech therapist's questions? Probably both. But, when his country really needed him, he was able to overcome both barriers in order to heal the childhood wounds of betrayal that had scared his heart and turned his voice into a stammer.

And if you're like Bertie or many other confident, busy, independent leaders, you may have little practice asking for support, or patience to receive it fully. With support, you'll delve deeper into the situation and into yourself, and you may not like what you have to face. You may find that what's holding you back from being the leader you want to be is something that happened a long time ago. Yet, support—the third of the Reina Seven Steps for Healing® — will remind you that betrayal can be a gift and a teacher. Support truly is the lynch pin that will help you move from the pain of awareness to the gain of reframing, taking responsibility, forgiving and letting go. These tips will help you get started on the path towards that learning and healing.

Asking for Support

The role of support is to provide a perspective that you may not be able to see. It comes in many forms, and the degree of support needed varies depending on the circumstances: the more hurtful the situation, the greater the need for strong support. The most common way to garner support is to reach out to friends, family, colleagues, or professionals such as coaches, consultants, facilitators, and Human Resources specialists.

Once you've identified the "who," how do you ask for support so that you get what you need? Try to be very clear in your request by using some of the following phrases:

- "I need to get clarity on an issue I am struggling with. Do you have a few minutes to listen while I just think out loud?"
- "I would like to talk through an issue that I have been wrestling with. Can you be a sounding board for me as I sort my thoughts and feelings?"
- "I am feeling really hurt and am having trouble thinking clearly about what happened at work today. Would you be willing to be my coach as I verbally brainstorm solutions?"
- "I need feedback on how I came across in our team meeting today. Can you share your observations with me?"

Receiving Support

Next, prepare yourself for the support to do its job. A good support person will challenge you to reframe the experience.

You'll be asked to look beyond yourself and your pain, and you'll probably be asked some probing questions. Here's how to handle some of the instinctive reactions you may have to these challenges:

- Your reaction: "It's not my fault. I'm the victim here."

You're right: you may have had no control over the situation that hurt you. But you do have control over how you respond.

When you choose to remain a victim, you stay stuck in blaming someone else. Take back your power by taking responsibility even if it's only for your own reaction.

- Your reaction: "I'm looking for support to become a better leader at work. This has nothing to do with my personal life."

Unlikely. You're a whole person: your success comes from the personal passion and experience you bring to work. And your ability to build or rebuild trust as a leader has a lot to do with how you've dealt with (or haven't dealt with) trust situations in your personal life. If you just can't "go there" with a support person in your organization, look for someone on the outside. That person may be the ticket to your inside track.

- Your reaction: "I'm the boss. I can't let on that I need help."

Yes, you can. People expect you to lead, and if support will help you be a better leader, it's the right thing to do. Plus, when you role model asking for and receiving support, you let others know that it's not only okay, but also great, for them to tap into the kind of support that will challenge them to take responsibility, let go, and move on. You'll be sending the message that you are all human, that you accept yourself as human, and you accept them as human, too. That awareness will open great doors of connection, commitment, trust, and, ultimately, performance. Ask for and receive support. You may find that your well of untapped leadership potential is right behind the door it will open.



This article adapted from *Rebuilding Trust in the Workplace: Seven Steps to Renew Confidence, Commitment and Energy*.

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