

# Leadership Presence

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The concept of presence could be described as knowing consciousness. Presence refers to the mental, emotional and spiritual resources which are required to witness ourselves in interaction with others. Mark Gerzon, *Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences into Opportunities*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006. Presence is vital when we are involved, directly or indirectly in conflict situations. Conflict, whether between two companies, co-workers or spouses stops us in our tracks. Our natural inclination when faced with conflict is to be defensive.

Presence relates to the critical self-management task that leaders encounter in the face of the challenges presented by a dispute. It means being in the moment right now. It is a tool of the heart, the mind and the soul. Leaders who want to be thoughtfully responsive to challenging and complex problems need to master the dimensions of presence, its threats and its signs. Without a consciousness of presence a leader will be reactive and defensive, especially in conflict scenarios. He or she won't respond from their core compass of values when the element of presence is not activated.

It is interesting to note that having the quality of presence is even more challenging in today's technology enabled world to connect with the notion of presence. The devices on which we depend and run our lives stand as a barrier to the core concept of presence.

## Dimensions of Presence

*The Mind:* The mental part of consciousness refers to being awake or aware. Linear thinking often creates more conflict and rarely transforms it. "Presence requires access to more than the ordinary, linear mind". Mark Gerzon, *Leading Through Conflict: How Successful Leaders Transform Differences into Opportunities*, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2006.

*The Heart:* This means developing the capacity to use the tools leaders have in the right context and for the right reason. Id. This form of presence is captured in the books of Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* and *Emotional Intelligence at Work*. Most leaders make a lot of mistakes in this department. Without the emotional compass of the presence factor leaders react inappropriately out of fear or fail to identify an actual threat.

*The Soul:* This refers to spiritual qualities of stillness, detachment, and visioning. From these periods of recharge one gains insight into the third component of presence and a vital perspective.

*Signs of presence:* agility, flexibility, responsiveness, openness, inventiveness, selflessness, adaptability

*Threats to presence:* arrogance, defensiveness, self-centeredness, disregard

**TIPS for Being Present**

- Practice being aware
- Focus with 100% of your being
- Be alert to warning signs
- Take periodic recharge breaks
- Take technology breaks
- Find obstacles to being present and release them
- Practice presence