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How To Connect With Your Center Of Wellbeing: A 10-Week Plan

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership



Nearly a decade ago, with global affairs in turmoil and the digital revolution disrupting every industry, I wrote these words in my book, “Winning from Within”:

“In turbulent times, when the pace of the change makes your head spin, business leaders and public servants alike want a system that helps them stay balanced as they face unprecedented complexity and uncertainty.”

That stomach-churning turbulence I recall from back then seems almost quaint as our 2020 world roils with COVID19, economic turmoil and natural disasters amid stark political polarization and a reckoning with systemic racism. Our world is on fire — in some places literally burning down in front of our eyes.

As leaders, we have honed our tools for interacting with the external world. We can break down complicated situations. We can problem solve. We can measure quarterly results. We can generate solutions. This is your tool box, and these tactics and techniques have probably served you well.

Yet when we fail, when we feel unable to cope, when scale and scope overwhelm us, we are often mystified. I’ve made it this far! What tool could I possibly be missing?

The tool isn’t in the tool box. It’s within you.

To master our external tools, we need to get to a mental and emotional place of perspective, calm and self-regulation. What makes the difference in

successful leadership is the inner lives and traits that power those tools.

The horrendous confluence of events in the world around us has taxed our capacity to cope as never before. It calls on us to draw now from the world inside of us — to identify and harness our inner strengths, our core, so we can bring that power to bear as leaders in our businesses, our communities and even our homes.

Over the next several weeks in this column, I will revisit this inner realm, this center of wellbeing, and tell you how we can integrate our external world of action with our internal world of reflection.

My goal is to help you map your inner world and develop a method for sorting yourself out, to help you understand yourself and the emotional and mental traps that undermine your decision-making and your leadership.

By identifying and exploring your inner resources you can build the power of your center of wellbeing to close the performance gap between your external skills and your internal capacity to execute them.

By respecting the power of our inner experience and how it influences every choice we make, you can lead with vision and foster the sustainable change our world desperately needs.

If you know yourself from the inside out, you can triumph over 2020.

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Close Your Inner “Performance Gap” To Tap Your Most Powerful Self: Week 2

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

My Twitter profile is 22 words. It is not who I am, but it is all that thousands of people will see.

Our public persona is increasingly defined by arbitrary character counts demanded by a social media-dominated world. Faced with that kind of external pressure, it's only natural to define ourselves with our strongest parts.

While our definitions are truthful, they are not whole.

I wrote last week about how, as leaders in business, in politics or in our homes, we've honed our skills for interacting with the external world. Yet sometimes when we fail to cope with the distress that surrounds us, whether it's business fallout from the COVID19 pandemic or the frustrations of home life under quarantine, we wonder which tool we lack.

The resource you need to tap may be a dormant inner quality that you tucked away in your haste to craft a public persona that elevates your perceived strengths and minimizes your perceived weaknesses.

What we amplify and what we diminish becomes our “profile.” The difference between that public profile and our most powerful self becomes our “Performance Gap.” When you connect with your center of well-being, all of your key qualities work in harmony.

By dismissing some of our inner qualities, by leaving those parts behind, we diminish ourselves. We actually don't come to life's challenges as our

most powerful and complete selves.

As leaders and managers, we're expected to look clear-eyed and holistically at our companies or our teams to identify underperforming divisions or people, devise clever performance improvement plans, and get them humming along to their full potential.

If we want to lead ourselves to our full potential, we need to apply that same clear-eyed, holistic scrutiny to ourselves to identify our own under- and over-performing qualities.

Let's start with who you are. If you had to choose one word to define yourself, what would it be?

For me, it might be self-reliant. Since childhood, I have seen myself as strong, confident and resourceful, and those are the qualities that I advertised to the world. That was my public persona.

When I upended my life a decade ago to move from the United States to the Netherlands to be with my husband and his young son, I couldn't understand a word of Dutch. Suddenly I ate dinner at 18:30 and set the living room thermostat to 21 degrees. Estimating driving distances in kilometres and converting cups of ingredients in recipes to millilitres flummoxed me. There was simply no way I could do everything for myself.

I had to acknowledge another character trait: vulnerability. And I had to ask for help — occasionally from a five-year-old child.

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Through that journey, I discovered I could be both powerful and vulnerable.

We don't like to advertise or sometimes even acknowledge our own vulnerabilities, but they are part of what makes us whole. In truth, those parts we delete for our profiles often have a lot to offer.

Acknowledging vulnerability, for example, may endow you with the power to ask for help, and asking for help may be the one missing piece that will allow you to accomplish a goal.

To close your performance gap, you need to look closely at your inner profile and adjust it so it can serve you in whatever circumstances you're living

now. Can what you once perceived as weakness actually be a valuable skill to tap under the right circumstance?

If we learn to appreciate the interplay of our internal experience and the world we see around us, if we expand the story of who we are, we can live and lead from our full power and our full potential.

We are more multifaceted than our 160-character bios reveal. If we reconnect all the parts of ourselves, we can engage them to build our center of wellbeing, the inner core that gives us the strength and capacity for skillful action.

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Leverage Your Inner C-Suite: How To Bring Your Big 4 To The Negotiating Table: Week 3

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

Effective leaders surround themselves with top talent. They assemble leadership teams that complement their skills and compensate for their weaknesses.

Exceptional leaders build the mindsets and skills they need within themselves.

Reaching that level requires developing four fundamental domains within ourselves.

The process begins by recognizing that we are multi-faceted, made of distinct parts with different functions. Just as our physical bodies have different elements that work together — organs, bones, muscles — the mind does, too.

Over time, we push the parts of ourselves that we like out front for all to see, and we do our best to hide the parts we dislike.

Last week I wrote that in minimizing those qualities in ourselves that we believe to be weaknesses, we create a “Performance Gap” between how we operate now and how our most powerful self would live and lead.

The challenges of 2020 demand that we close that “Performance Gap” by recruiting all our inner qualities and putting them to work.

It was important to develop these parts of yourself even before this global pandemic struck. Now COVID-19 challenges us as never before, upending

our lives, blowing up our business plans and taxing our emotional fortitude. It’s no longer optional.

We all have inner voices that help us negotiate the travails of daily life. Sometimes these voices debate one another inside our heads. One internal voice may beg us to keep our kids home to avoid COVID-19 at all costs while a competing internal voice pleads that the mental strain of isolation is so damaging that the kids must go to school.

This crowd of inner characters, with their constant commentary, inhabits every one of us.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell described the vast range of our inner parts by calling each of us a “hero with a thousand faces.” Poet Walt Whitman expressed the phenomenon in his Song of Myself, writing: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes.)”

Teaching leadership to professionals around the world, I realized that mastering a “thousand” faces would take an awfully long time. And it’s not necessary. Instead I identified a handful of nearly universal voices — internal characters — that are fundamental to success in leadership and to satisfaction in daily life.

I think of these inner characters as negotiating parties with their own interests and preferred outcomes. Their voices have a range of styles, motivations and rules of engagement. Call them voices, parts, faces, or characters: I call them the Big Four.

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The Big Four represent our capacity to dream about the future, to solve problems, to build relationships and to take action.

Think of them as your inner leadership team, your inner negotiators, your inner C-Suite. They are your internal Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief People Office (CPO) and Chief Operating Officer (COO):

- The CEO — **the dreamer** who creates possibilities, sets strategic vision and gives direction;
- The CFO — **the thinker** who analyzes data, manages risks and clarifies perspectives;
- The CPO — **the lover** who cares about people, feels emotions and manages relationships, and
- The COO — **the warrior** who takes actions, reaches goals and catalyzes performance.

These conflicting voices can lead to bad choices and ineffective action if they are uncontrolled, out of balance, and not working harmoniously.

My research shows that most of us don't regulate the Big Four well, if at all. We amplify one or two of our inner team members — the qualities within ourselves that we believe have the most to offer — and diminish the others.

Leaving behind the other members of our inner C-Suite also means leaving behind their skills, knowledge and unique strengths. Connecting to your core of well-being helps you achieve balance among the different sides of you. That

enables you to deliver on the wide range of urgently needed leadership capacities.

To lead in this moment means we need to tap into all four key parts of ourselves: We need our inner Dreamer to inspire people in virtual town halls; our inner Lover to empathize with frightened employees; our inner Thinker to weigh implications of our decisions amid uncertainty, and our inner Warrior to mobilize our teams from a Zoom conference room to take bold action.

Any business can get in trouble if it fails to envision possibilities, take a 360° perspective, care about its people, or deliver top-notch performance. As leaders, we are wired the same way.

To bring our most powerful, complete selves to virtual team meetings and town halls means leveraging the qualities we perceive as lesser into strengths. In this journey toward self-mastery, we must recruit those underutilized or absent members of our inner team and welcome them back to the inner table.

As you get to know your inner negotiators, you'll close some of your Performance Gaps and open the door to using the full range of your potential in a targeted, purposeful way.

Working together in balance, your inner C-Suite will put your most powerful self in the driver's seat.

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How To Draw On The Energy Of Your Big Four: Week 4

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

In times of extreme stress, even the most even-keeled among us can lose our balance. Our inner demons spring unbidden to the surface. We're short-tempered and impatient, frustrated and bereft. The relentless stress of 2020 is Kafka-esque.

As we wrestle with the human suffering and economic destruction of a worldwide pandemic amid a high-stakes political season, it's getting harder to tap our inner angels and deliver the mindful leadership to which we aspire.

Connecting to the qualities at our center of wellbeing can help.

Last week's column identified The Big Four — the members of our Inner C-Suite that enable our visioning, thinking, feeling and achieving: the Dreamer, the Thinker, the Lover and the Warrior. They make it possible for us to inspire our teams, analyze our business risks, engage our workforce and execute the day-to-day operations of our lives and businesses.

We are healthier, more effective and more helpful to ourselves, our families, our businesses and our communities when we can deploy all of the Big Four. This inner balance calms our overstimulated nervous systems.

Over two decades of research and advising executives, I found that few leaders, or people in general, harness the power of all of them on their own.

I also saw that in the majority of cases, people can reclaim these lost parts of themselves to great success. This is the path to closing your Performance Gaps.

You Can Start Right Now

To get the best from our inner C-suite, we need to draw out the unique strengths they bring to the table and identify the power from which they spring.

In your core, at your center of wellbeing, you have the potential to tap four fundamental human qualities: *creativity, clarity, compassion, and courage*. Each quality powers one of your Big Four.

Try this exercise to take the first step toward identifying and reclaiming your lost powers. Rate yourself on how actively these four inner forces exert themselves in your life today, with 1 being 'not so much' and 5 being 'a great deal.'

Inner Dreamers focus on Possibilities.

My level of **creativity** is 1 2 3 4 5

Inner Thinkers focus on Perspectives.

My level of **clarity** is 1 2 3 4 5

Inner Lovers focus on People.

My level of **compassion** is 1 2 3 4 5

Inner Warriors focus on Performance.

My level of **courage** is 1 2 3 4 5

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This self-scan hints at which parts of your Big Four are active or dormant today. Repeating this 30-second exercise for a little while – let's say daily for two weeks – will help you shape a picture of which inner strengths are easily available to you and which need your attention to revitalize them.

The Winning From Within methodology, rooted in the Big Four, is about reconnecting all the parts of ourselves and engaging with them skillfully as we navigate our interactions with the world around us. To do that, to become whole, we

need the diverse energies of creativity, clarity, compassion, and courage.

We all have the potential to draw on these strengths, even if we can't remember when they were last active. Sometimes it's easy to get moving again. At other times, the results are hard won. Both routes provide a way to fulfill the broadly felt wish – especially in times like these – to experience a world in which daily life at work and at home reflects the best of who we are.

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How To Tap Your Inner Superpowers In A World Gone Mad: Week 5

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

The drumbeat of bad news persists. I steel myself before looking at the morning news. Did something even more terrible happen while I slept?

We may feel hopeless, exhausted, distraught.

There is a way forward.

When the world around us leaves us unsettled, we can regain our balance by tapping our inner superpowers.

Drawing on our inner powers isn't a magic trick. Nor will it eliminate COVID19 or climate emergencies or broken politics.

It will give us the inner strength and stability to engage in positive solutions rather than collapse in despair or look away in defeat. It will reconnect us with our center of wellbeing.

In previous columns, I explained the Big Four inner negotiators — The Dreamer, The Thinker, The Lover and The Warrior — and their four fundamental qualities — creativity, clarity, compassion and courage.

Even in this insanity, we can call on these inner superpowers.

The traditional classroom has crumbled in our state of quarantine. We can fret over the lost year, or we can learn from educators who tap into their *creativity* to innovate ways to reach students.

In a dangerously polarized election season, it's hard to separate truth from spin. Officials leave out or distort key information for political gain. Yet experts, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci, call on their commitment to *clarity* in service of scientific evidence.

In a world pained by systemic racism, Americans this week officially recognized Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of the land while at the same time drawing on *compassion* to mark it also as Indigenous People's Day.

As a second wave of COVID19 unfolds into flu season, we can feel powerless. Yet tens of thousands of healthy people call on their *courage* to participate in vaccine trials.

The Big Four characters of our inner world possess all of these qualities but we often overlook one or two of them in favor of our default habits. Here is a way to draw some of our underused superpowers to the fore.

Try the Superpower Primer

1. When you find yourself in a challenge or conflict, tap into your Dreamer's creativity by asking yourself, "If anything were possible, what can I **imagine** could resolve this?"
2. When you find yourself highly confident that you're right, tap into your Thinker's clarity to delve into an opposing view and **evaluate** what you're missing.

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3. When you find yourself wishing someone would just calm down or get over it, tap into your Lover's compassion to **listen** more closely to what upsets them.
4. When you find yourself paralyzed into inaction, draw on your Warrior's courage to **act** on a small thing that makes a difference to one person.

This exercise helps us identify our internal resources — the superpowers at our core — and deploy them, even in a world gone mad. We have a powerful center of wellbeing at the heart of our inner world that can help us push past resignation and paralysis to hope and action.

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Don't Overthink It: How To Allow Your Full Inner Genius To Speak: Week 6

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

In decades of work with business leaders I've learned that the majority of professional people wildly overvalue their cognitive capabilities — rational thought, logic, fact-gathering and analysis — over their other innate talents.

Cognitive skill is invaluable, but it is simply one form of human intelligence. It has its limits: It is not well-suited to innovating new products, engaging employees or implementing a business plan. You need your intuition, emotion and willpower, too.

Over the past few weeks in these columns I've introduced our inner players, what I call The Big Four — The Dreamer, The Thinker, The Lover and The Warrior — that reside in all of us.

Each member of this inner C-Suite delivers a different skill set to enable four approaches to leading and living: inspirational, analytical, relational and practical. Each one is animated by its own intelligence.

The best leaders draw on every intelligence available to them. Not always. Not all at the same time. But recognizing each one, exercising them and learning how and when to apply them enables you to access the strength of every member of your inner team at the right time for the right purpose.

Tap More of Your Inner Intelligence

The Dreamer draws its strength from **intuition**. It's

the voice that imagines the future unconstrained by rules or expectations. It's our gut instinct that tells us to take a chance on an opportunity before we have data to prove it. Intuition gives us the sinking sensation that something isn't right although we cannot pinpoint why.

The Thinker powers up through **reason**. That's the voice that gathers the facts, does the math and looks for the right answer. It rejects theories when a reasoned argument can't explain them. The Thinker analyzes our budgets to show us how to reduce cost. It monitors regulations to ensure we operate within the law. It objectively assesses projects based on accepted benchmarks.

The Lover energizes with **emotion** and empathy. It's the voice that connects us with the people around us, builds our relationships and repairs them when things go wrong. It takes emotional intelligence to recruit, hire and develop people to their highest potential. The Lover's emotional radar fosters trust on a team, recognizes happiness or dissatisfaction of our customers, and builds a company culture where employees thrive.

The Warrior gets its energy from **willpower**. It's the voice that emboldens us to push forward to achieve our goals, that seals the deal and delivers on promises. It harbors the competitive spirit that seeks the win and works to beat our best record. The Warrior fuels our determination to hit targets and our resolve to find new clients. Its force of >>

will gives us firmness to stand for our values or speak up for employees.

As you read through these descriptions and examples, you may find one that sounds like you most of the time, but brain science tells us that relying only on one source of intelligence can undermine our performance.

Your True Genius Combines Intuition, Reason, Emotion and Willpower

Thinker intelligence is powerful, but it doesn't tap the breadth of deeper wisdom at our center of well-being where our 'still, small voice' resides.

Non-doing, which includes non-thinking, can help us tap more of our inner genius. Staring out your window – “spacing out” – gives your mind time to slow its calculations and ease into a more relaxed brain state. As our Thinker quiets, answers and ideas bubble up from beneath the surface as if coming out of nowhere.

Indeed, they come from somewhere. They come from your center of well-being, where your deeper capacity for knowing exists.

Our well-honed Thinker may distrust these solutions. We hesitate to follow them because they strike us as “irrational.” And they are. That's the point. In moments like these, you're tapping an intelligence source other than reasoning. An inner genius comes to the fore, drawing its power from our emotional intelligence or our creative intuitive core.

Whatever your default is — Dreamer, Thinker, Lover or Warrior — to grow as a leader, you have to recognize the other intelligences and allow them to have their say. We need The Dreamer to imagine possibilities, The Lover to communicate effectively and The Warrior to take action. The Thinker can guide our decision-making best by tapping the wisdom of our full inner team.

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Spend Quality Time Inside Your Mind To Turbocharge Your Leadership: Week 7

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

Even in normal times, dozens of tasks and distractions compete for our attention. Catch up on the news? Edit a work document? Conquer the email inbox? Cook dinner?

The outbreak of Covid-19 escalated the pressure to monitor the world around us. News yells for our attention as does sliding business revenue, communication with employees and the battle over screen time. We're hyper vigilant as we scan for mask wearing, kids coughing and social distancing.

For all this watchfulness, we're often blind to scenes that merit our attention: the action inside our own minds.

Meet Your Inner Board of Directors

Over the past few weeks, these columns have acquainted you with The Big Four — the inspirational Dreamer, the logical Thinker, the relational Lover and the practical Warrior — that reside inside of us.

The Big Four are the leadership team inside our heads. Like a member of any business team, each speaks in its own style and advocates for its particular advantage. Sometimes they collaborate. Sometimes they argue.

In the professional world, a Board of Directors oversees leadership, ever watchful for smart strategy, regulatory compliance and of course results. In our inner world, our Big Four team delivers its highest performance when it, too, is supervised by a board.

I call these inner board members “The Transformers” — The Lookout, The Captain and The Voyager. The Transformers act as oversight for your Big Four. They stand apart from them, observing and guiding how they operate.

Learning to use this inner board turbocharges your leadership, whether you're running a household or a Fortune 500 company.

The Transformers take us off autopilot and jolt us from our routine. Without them, we see what we expect to see, think what we expect to think, feel what we expect to feel, and do what we always do.

Tapping into our Transformers is a direct route to our center of wellbeing and our deeper wisdom.

To understand how we process information, think and react, we turn first to The Lookout. This Transformer observes our internal experience in real time. The Lookout alerts you to trouble like a lighthouse on a rocky shoal, giving you the time you need to adjust course before catastrophe. The Lookout is a master at introspection.

Deploy Your Lookout

The Lookout's voice is a different kind of inner speech from the Big Four. It doesn't have its own agenda. It practices mindfulness, watching our thoughts and emotions without acting on them.

Internationally renowned psychiatrist and researcher Dr. Daniel Siegel coined the term “mindsight” to describe the perspective of what >>

I call the Lookout. Mindsight, he explains in his book, is “a focused attention that allows us to see the internal workings of our own minds.” From his extensive brain research, he identified this ability as a key variable in skillful behavior, as well as for our wellbeing.

In times of stress, we are most likely to default into harmful habits and least likely to notice it. After a bad day we might yell at our kids or snap at a colleague for no good reason. When our stress dissipates, we wish we could take it back.

We react to things big and small because we’re human. Reacting isn’t the problem. *It’s not noticing the reactions when we’re having them.*

We call on our Lookout to pull us back to our center.

An executive I work with — I’ll call him Paul — is a down-to-earth leader at a top-notch company. He consistently gets results while maintaining high trust relationships. He’s a model of inner balance.

Then Covid-19 struck. He is working tirelessly with his stakeholders to respond to the crisis, yet the virus marches on unabated. His business took a hit. Some employees got sick. Paul feels overwhelmed.

His colleagues and family see he is emotionally and physically exhausted, that his unflappable spirit has contracted. He is irritable, defensive, sad.

Paul doesn’t see it. He doesn’t recognize that dramatic changes to his internal world have left him off-kilter and disconnected from a powerful center of wellbeing that had served him so well in the past. He can’t hear the voice of his Lookout telling him he’s melting down.

Like Paul, most of us fail to notice what’s going on inside of ourselves. This is a costly oversight. There’s a straight line from the inner life of a leader to the actions they take, the relationships they build, and the impact they create.

We all have thoughts and fears, hopes and regrets, ambitions and doubts. Most days, we don’t notice them, yet they influence everything we say and do.

Drawing on our Lookout changes all that. We can avoid destructive behavior if we develop our Lookout to shine its searchlight on our reactive impulses before we act on them.

I’m working with Paul to develop his Lookout before he damages his reputation or even his business. Paying attention to the inner workings of his mind is a new experience. As he gains this insight, he’ll stop burning things down even if he’s boiling inside. And that will be transformational.

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How To Follow Your Inner GPS To Your Center Of Wellbeing: Week 8

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

Life is a series of circumstances and choices.

We make some choices with other people, such as who to hire and who to lay off at work or how to invest our hard-earned money for retirement. We benefit from the input of colleagues, family members and professional advisors, but they can also confuse us when they disagree or bombard us with too much information.

We make other choices by ourselves. For these decisions, we call on our inner team of experts — inner players who bring experience, knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence to our deliberations. Just as your external team delivers helpful perspective, this inner team can also be in conflict.

Whether we gather intel from voices around us or from voices within us, at some point we need an answer. This is where the inner Captain enters.

The Captain is Our Inner GPS and Our Moral Compass

Throughout these columns I've written about The Big Four - The Dreamer, The Thinker, The Lover and the Warrior. They're the core characters on our inner team.

What do you do when all your inner players advocate for their own agenda? Which one do you heed?

Our Captain acts as our internal guidance system. It hears the mental chatter and contradictory advice inside our heads and charts the best course for us to take. The Captain also points us in a deeper,

more fundamental direction: It calls us back to our center of wellbeing.

Following our Captain is like turning to Waze when the car is full of passengers who each think they know the right way to go. As any mapping app does, Waze gathers and processes data - the roads, the distance, the time. Waze is special because it crowd-sources the real-time traffic situation before it cranks out the best available route.

The Captain is our inner Waze.

The Captain Makes the Call

Imagine you're giving a virtual presentation. You're not entirely comfortable speaking to groups on Zoom and you slept poorly the night before. As you draw a blank on examples you prepared, your hands shake a little and the mental chatter grows louder:

"Skip to the end and wrap this up!"

"Take a deep breath and you'll be fine."

"You're such an idiot. Stop talking and take questions."

"Stay cool. You're brilliant. They love you!"

The audience hears nothing of your inner turmoil. Our Captain hears it all: the commands, the encouragement, the critiques and the cheerleading — all of the inner speech that we create and then throw at ourselves.

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Each of our inner advisors is certain it's correct, but we can't abide them all. Our Captain doesn't add another opinion. It consolidates the most helpful bits across the board and incorporates the collective wisdom into a resolution.

The Captain Points Us Back to Our Center

The Captain is transformational because it takes our fragmentation — our hopes, our thoughts, our emotions and our actions — and shifts us into wholeness. Our lives are richer because at the center of all that is our essence, our basic goodness, the humanity that makes us who we are.

The Captain quiets the inner cacophony into a state of coherence. Our Captain isn't the sum total of our Big Four. It's the meeting place where our inner parts synchronize and integrate.

Philosophical and spiritual traditions speak of different states of mind — what we might call small-mindedness and big-mindedness.

The Big Four have narrow interests and a limited outlook: small-minded.

The Captain is transformative because it moves us to an expansive outlook and a benevolent and generous perspective: big-minded.

From this view, life is about more than our individual satisfaction or success. We're part of the larger human story. We care about the common good.

We get caught up in a mental tug-of-war when one side of us says "go left" and another says "go right." That's when we need our Captain, our inner guidance system that transcends our distinct parts and navigates us to the wisdom of our center of well-being.

In the "Winning From Within" system, the Transformers shift the ground we stand on: our sources of meaning, our inherent connection with each other, and the purpose of our lives.

Next week we'll turn to the last Transformer, the Voyager.

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'To Thine Own Self Be True': What Does That Even Mean?: Week 9

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

Legend has it that in days long gone a rabbi named Zusya died. He feared that in the world to come God would ask him, "Why were you not Moses? Why were you not Solomon or David?" But God appeared and asked him simply: "Why were you not Zusya?"

It's not easy to be who we really are.

Meet The Voyager

In earlier columns, I've introduced The Big Four, inner characters who guide us like an internal C-suite: The Dreamer that gives us vision and aspiration; The Thinker that applies analytical skill; The Lover that attunes us emotionally to people around us; and The Warrior that gets things done.

All of us possess these inner negotiators. They debate each other in our minds, each voicing its own worldview and pointing us in the direction of its particular priorities. These four inner forces are universal and central to the human experience, but there's more to us than our Big Four.

At the hub of our dreaming, thinking, feeling and doing, lies our being: our essence, our core, our center of well-being. Our Transformers reside here.

I've introduced The Transformers as an internal Board of Directors, overseeing our Big Four: The Lookout that observes them and The Captain that orchestrates them.

There is one more Transformer that operates in our inner world: The Voyager.

The Voyager's Path is Lifelong Evolution

In *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare delivers a timeless challenge through the character Polonius: "This above all: to thine own self be true."

Pulling that off can take a lifetime. We need to figure out what living truly to ourselves even means and then find out how to manifest it in our lives.

That task has an outer expression — fine-tuning what we like and enjoy, such as our career path or where we live.

Civilizations across centuries agree that our lives also demand cultivation of an inner dimension that learns and evolves over time.

The innate drive to grow in both of these ways — our outer life and our inner world — is carried by our Voyager.

Expanding Our Sense of Who We Are

Our Voyager helps us adapt to what life throws at us. We stretch to meet to new circumstances and opportunities as well as to cope with transitions and loss. We grow to close our Performance Gaps — the distance between what we do now and what we can do with our full potential.

Voyagers also seek new experiences and challenges because they know we're not built to stand still. >>

On another level, our Voyager enables us to transcend our focus on the ups and downs of our existence. Like the other Transformers, it binds us to a deeper dimension of who we are beyond the frenzy of daily life.

Philosopher and psychologist William James talked about expanding into our “wider selves.” Saints and sages teach about accessing our innate wisdom. Contemplative traditions talk about resting in “awareness.” These are states of being that our Voyager explores as we mature, both personally and as leaders.

If we listen for its call, our Voyager shifts us to this more expansive state, the experience of connection to our center of well-being. It teaches us how to find our center more quickly, more consistently, and more easily.

The Voyager Embodies Your Inner Quest

Our three Transformers link us back to our essence as human beings, something true about us that’s deeper than our visions, thoughts, emotions, and impulses to act. They enable us to access essential virtues like beauty, awe, integrity, humility, grace. They ground us in our basic goodness and prioritize fulfilling our life purpose.

Our Voyager pursues the quest of lifelong learning and lives in a state of well-being. It pulls us ever closer to the truth of who we are. It answers Shakespeare’s command with a resounding yes.

Next week we’ll explore what it means to “win from within.”

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Blend Sacred With Worldly To Find Your Center And Win From Within: Week 10

by Erica Ariel Fox, Co-Founder and Chief Thought Leader of Mobius Executive Leadership

We feel it. We know it. We're participating in a transformational unfolding of human history.

Some days we feel up to the task. Other days – well no, we don't. Whatever we feel on any given day, we see, as this changed world comes into focus, that we need new ways to operate within it.

What Is It?

We began this journey 10 weeks ago with the promise of a way to help you navigate during a time of peril, uncertainty and disruption. It was the promise of a path to help you connect to your center of wellbeing – a way of leading and living that I call “winning from within.”

The approach of “winning from within” encapsulates a fundamental shift of our times from the Information Age to the Integration Age. The call of this moment is to break down the separation between the spiritual and the worldly, to bring the sacred into everyday life.

In this Integration Age, we join our inner world of reflection with our outer world of action. We weave one fabric out of two realities: the tangible world of objects and companies and world affairs, and the intangible world of purpose, truth, beauty, values, and ease. It is within this intangible world that we find our core, our essence, our center of wellbeing.

Stepping Back to Think About Thinking

In scenes from the past, a young scholar, driven by a craving for knowledge, bids farewell to his family to board a train toward a new life at the grand university.

Civilization embraced this pursuit in the Scientific Revolution, voraciously chasing understanding through rational thought. French philosopher Rene Descartes wrote, “Je pense, donc je suis,” codified in Latin as “Cogito, ergo sum,” – I think therefore I am.

Fast forward several centuries to the Industrial Revolution when machine labor replaced manual labor as the bedrock of the economy.

In our own lifetimes, we've experienced a shift from a “bricks and mortar” workplace to the unbounded, amorphous cloud of the Digital Age. Now “knowledge workers,” paid to think and solve complex conceptual puzzles, reign supreme.

Our Information Age delivered technological and communications advances that gave us instant access to knowledge that might have eluded the young scholar on the train for a lifetime. We have benefitted immeasurably from the range of discoveries, innovations and breakthrough solutions.

Yet here we stand, on the precipice of another radical reordering of the way we live and work, unprepared.

As the dreadful year of 2020 slogs to an end, many of us ache. We are mentally exhausted and emotionally drained. Our jobs or businesses are forever changed, or perhaps gone. We've lost 1.34 million souls to a global pandemic that didn't even have a name when the year began.

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The prospect of a Covid-19 vaccine renews our hope, but it's not enough to soothe our wounds.

This year of crisis laid bare the limits of the Information Age. We are Google clicks away from anything we want to know at any moment, but in our collective moment of need, knowledge alone failed us.

We need to usher in a new age within ourselves.

The Integration Age

Over these 10 weeks, we've looked at the inner team I call The Big Four: The Dreamer that drives us to innovate products; The Thinker that analyzes problems; The Lover that connects with other people; and The Warrior that produces results.

We've met three other inner players, The Transformers: The Lookout, The Captain, and The Voyager. They are our internal advisors that orchestrate the Big Four in real time and push us to evolve over time.

The approach of Winning From Within stands for the idea that both outer and inner experience constitute who we really are. The Big Four aren't more or less important than the Transformers. The Transformers aren't the only aspect of human nature that really counts. Winning From Within is one system with seven elements, each with its role to play.

We can get through this perilous time of upheaval by integrating the various parts of who we are, and by grounding ourselves in our center of wellbeing. When we engage our deeper, inner selves in alignment with our outer, worldly selves, we lead and live from a full expression of who we are. When we combine the depth of our experience with the breadth of what we contribute, we lead and live from a full expression of who we can become.

Then we are "winning from within."

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ERICA ARIEL FOX teaches business leaders the art and science of leading yourself. She is Mobius Executive Leadership's Chief Thought Leader and the author of The New York Times bestselling book, *Winning from Within*, which is published in ten languages. As a LinkedIn Influencer, Erica has over 150,000 followers. For the past twenty years she has taught negotiation at Harvard Law School and, together with her partners at Mobius Executive Leadership, she advises CEOs, top teams and other leaders from around the world.