

# ***Seeing Blind Spots: Leadership Lessons from Real Life***

**Amy Barg | On Stage 7**

Hi!

Congratulations for taking a step toward removing your blinders. I say that because we all wear them every day (whether we acknowledge it or not) and those blinders do impact our results in more ways than we'd like to believe. Simply put...those blinders? They are blind spots. And we all have them!

What you now have in your possession are three stories written with the intention of nudging those who are willing to experience a paradigm shift in their thinking. To see.... where they once were blind.

Each of these stories are experiences that actually happened to me and, that caused me to pause and rethink what I was seeing.

You can use these stories in one of two ways.

1. Read the stories with the team you are leading. Then, as a team, spend some time discussing the two leadership development questions that follow the stories.

**Note:** Some team members may balk and perhaps even consider an activity of this type to be:

- Something they don't have time for
- Not a productive use of time

Unfortunately, that is a misguided belief that will keep a team moving backward into safety rather than forward into growth.

2. Read the stories and then reflect on the personal growth questions that accompany each one. Spend some time really thinking through and writing out your responses to the questions.

**Note:** MOST people won't take the time to really think through their own answers to the questions under the misguided belief that:

- They don't have time
- It's a waste of time

Unfortunately, *that* misguided belief will prevent them from discovering the wisdom in their own minds.

You are already ahead of the masses simply by the fact that you were bold enough (brave enough) to go to my website so I could, in fact, put this resource in your hand.

I would be so interested to hear what new "ah-ha moments" stirred in you or your team as you read, reflected on and discussed these stories. Please feel free to email me at [amybarg@onstage7.com](mailto:amybarg@onstage7.com).

*"Most people are anxious to improve their circumstances but unwilling to improve themselves; they therefore remain bound."* -James Allen

Clearly...you are not "most" people.

*Grow inside. Excel outside.*

Amy

## **STORY ONE**

### ***Changing Perspective***

“Are there any men here?”

The question was posed by a woman concerned with carrying a gift from her car to the house.

There weren’t.

Another woman and I offered to help retrieve the oversized gift and I’ll admit...I had a moment of doubt about my abilities when I saw the size.

As we performed a trial lift, we were pleasantly surprised. The box really wasn’t heavy...just large. Too large for one person to get their arms around.

And as we headed for the house the word that sparked in my brain was...*perspective*.

A couple of days later, Sam relayed a conversation he’d exchanged with his friend, Mark about a recent race.

Sam: “How did you do on your race?”

Mark: “Not well. Stomach went south around mile 45 and the course went REALLY south after 13 continuous hours of steady rain. Without being able to take in any calories, I simply didn’t have enough energy to finish. I gutted out another 27 miles, finally pulled the plug at mile 72. Disappointing but it happens.”

### **Are you tracking with me here??**

This guy was running a 100 mile race...not feeling well, running in rain for 13 hours and STILL “gutted out” another 27 miles.

And there came that word again...*perspective*.

It has a lot of power.

It can paralyze us or....it can propel us.

I know because I’ve lived it.

Perhaps you can relate?

There are times when my self-talk can run rampant in ways that undermine my belief in my ability to lift my own “box” be it the:

- quality of a video I’m filming
- viability of a service I’m offering
- probability of the success of a workshop I’m developing

And the REAL learning for me (thanks to my coach who raised my level of awareness about it) is:

**Most limitations are not based on lack of ability but lack of belief.**

Ummm...and only I can control what I choose to believe about myself.

I can also accept that asking for help when it's needed is a sign of strength in knowing one's own strength.

And that brings me back to Mark, the runner.

Now here's a man who CLEARLY knows his own strength. So well, in fact, that he is able to push himself far beyond what most mere mortals would or...could.

Let me just say that my hat's off to anyone who has trained their body (and mind) to the degree that moving non-stop in excess of 13 hours is considered a fun way to spend a weekend.

But seriously...think about it.

In the face of astronomical odds that included internal and external challenges he persevered. **And...he also had the self-awareness to know when "enough was enough."**

Exhibiting wisdom from both ends of the spectrum.

My "ah-ha" moment?

How to discern the difference between when to bare down and when to stop beating myself down.

Yes, it is good at times to take on the "head down, nose to the grindstone" mentality in order to push for completion of a particular task.

However...I also need to acknowledge when to pull the plug and say, "Let this one go." And be ok with that.

I have to tell you...it was Mark's final comment about the failed race that really brought it home.

Sam: "Sorry to hear how it turned out."

Mark: "Thx buddy. In a sick, twisted way, it's that very failure that I find appealing about the sport. **Success is FAR from guaranteed... and I dig that.**"

Wow.

I'd say he nailed it when it comes to changing perspective.

I want to live like that!

### **Leadership Questions**

What are some examples of situations where we have let perspective paralyze or propel us as a team?

Where do we need to change our perspective and possibly “let something go?”

### **Personal Growth Questions**

When have you done something you initially didn’t think you could accomplish by persevering?

How has failure taught you a lesson you couldn’t have learned in any other way?

## **STORY TWO**

### ***The Implication of Good Intentions***

We were standing in a hallway when she said it (still remember it to this day).

“Now I can start to live.”

Her impending retirement from teaching was only a few weeks away.

That was in 2001.

Then in 2016...

A man was tiling a friend’s bathroom floor and she asked what he liked about his job.

He replied, “Oh, I hate tiling but I’ve been doing it for 31 years.”

Her counter... “What would you like to do?”

His reply?

“I don’t know. I never thought about it.”

Ummm....

Why would two, capable, reliable adults be willing to work diligently for decades doing something viewed as “less than optimal?”

- Financial security?
- Identity deprivation?
- Fear of the unknown?

The hypothetical list could be lengthy. You probably have your own ideas.

But let’s dissect those comments a bit.

What is “really living?”

Is it doing only what you want when you want?

Or traveling? Or sleeping in?

Or just not having to deal with the trials and travails of students, parents and administrators?

What does “never thought about it” really mean?

Is that putting his mind in a groove like a needle on a record and never lifting the arm? Every day...same record?

His/Her polar opposite positions produced the same results.

She...continually thought about NOT doing what she had done her whole career and he...NEVER thought about not doing what he had done for his whole career.

Both simply marking time.

Now maybe you're thinking, "Hey, why make such a big deal out of this? People say things all the time, off-handed and don't really mean anything by it."

And I would submit.... therein lies at least part of the problem.

Most people probably do that. But consider the real ramifications of: saying without thinking or worse...living without thinking.

*"People don't like to think, if one thinks, one must reach conclusions. Conclusions are not always pleasant." — Helen Keller*

If either the teacher or the tiler **really thought** about what they said (or how they lived) they would have been forced to face at least one sober conclusion.

**Their willingness to endure distasteful toil resulted in unexplored and unrealized potential.**

Sort of like being given a field of one hundred acres... but only sowing seeds in ten.

It's probably safe to say neither of them *intended* to do something for decades that they disliked but...they unfortunately they failed to realize "I intend to" and "I intentionally do" are at opposite ends of the get'er done spectrum.

In his book, ***Intentional Living***, John Maxwell compares the intentional lifestyle and the unintentional lifestyle in this manner:

***Intentional living always has an idea.***

***Unintentional living always has an excuse.***

***Intentional living fixes the situation.***

***Unintentional living fixes the blame.***

***Intentional living makes it happen.***

***Unintentional living wonders what happened. 1***

And my own "tiler/teacher" take on it...

***Intentional living says, "I will do work that fulfills me and adds value to others."***

***Unintentional living says, "I won't think about why I'm doing what I don't like and I'll start living when I retire."***

Little Mermaid's Ursula doesn't mince words, "Life's full of tough choices, isn't it?"

Fortunately, we all do get to make those choices for ourselves.

Unfortunately, *"We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."*  
— **Albert Einstein**

I think we all have our work cut out for us and good intentions simply won't cut it.

### **Leadership Questions**

In what ways is our team working intentionally? Unintentionally?

What unexplored or unrealized potential are we missing?

### **Personal Growth Questions**

How often do you sense you are “living without thinking?”

How intentional are you in doing work that fulfills you and adds value to others?

## **STORY THREE**

### ***What's On Your Operating Table?***

He died on the table.

Pretty sobering words and quite frankly...not what I expected to hear as I pedaled the Cross Fit at LA Fit.

Short story.

My friend's dad **survived** a heart procedure the week of Thanksgiving. His dad's cousin had the same procedure this week... and **didn't**.

So tragic any time, but particularly around the Christmas season when he shared this story. And, especially heartbreaking...because it might have been prevented.

He relayed these details:

- Surgeon ruptured an artery trying to place a stent
- Small hospital didn't have an open-heart team on site
- Trying to assemble them...the man died

Lessons abound.

I'll let you draw your own conclusions from a medical standpoint.

Here's what it brought up in me.

We ALL have "things" on the operating table...every day:

Relationships | Teams | Business deals | Personal growth

It is **so** easy to think we:

- have more time
- have no time
- don't know what to say
- know exactly what to say... but don't
- have our bases covered
- don't need the assistance of anyone else

Raising my hand on all of these is convicting and oddly enough...encouraging.

Here's why.

***It is in the moment where we become "aware" ...that things can really change for us.***

At a totally superficial level: I became "aware" that pale yellow makes me look like I'm green around the gills. I've not donned a buttery frock since!



But let's get serious.

I know there are some pretty significant relationships in my life that are currently...shall we say "operating at less than optimal."

Just acknowledging that gives *me* the opportunity to do what *I* can to improve them.

And the whole "teamwork makes the dream work" mentality?

Ah... I am seriously deficient in that domain.

I tend to justify my demeanor by playing the "first-born in the family" card...I'm just wired that way.

Reality?

It has much more to do with some ill-advised notion that my corner on the market of rightness is.... well, right.

But throw me a bone here...I'm aware I do this and working on turning that very big boat of belief around.

I'll refrain from putting any more of my self-awareness cards on the table.

You're relieved, no doubt.

But... I do want to nudge you to noodle on this a bit for yourself.

A few minutes spent reflecting might serve you well.

You know...that "easy to push aside but oh so necessary" task of thinking through what has worked and... what hasn't worked.

Even one small shift in action or attitude could prove to be a game-changer in a new week, month or year.

Things might have played out differently for man under the knife of that surgical team... if their protocol during those types of procedures had included an open-heart team on standby.

Wonder if they'll reflect on that?

One thing I do know for sure...

***Things have to change IN you for things to change FOR you.***

And...that won't happen accidentally. It takes intention.

Here's to a thorough examination of what's on your operating table.

Maybe it should be you.

### **Leadership Questions**

What do we need to put on our company operating table and really examine?

How would our clients rate us in the area of being aware of their needs/struggles?

### **Personal Growth Questions**

Which of the things mentioned (Relationships | Teams | Business deals | Personal growth) are languishing on your operating table and need attention?

What needs to change IN you so that something can change FOR you?