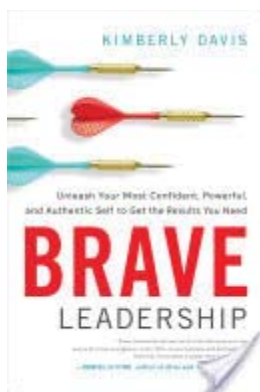


environment for learning. In RSOG where Integrity, Courage, Innovation and Change is our philosophy, we are trained to do things differently to be part of a memorable history in our future.

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Book Recommendation – Brave Leadership: Unleash Your Most Confident, Powerful, and Authentic Self to Get the Results You Need by *Kimberly Davis*



Ismail Johari Othman

Anecdotes where potential talent decline leadership roles because of their reluctance to lead people are becoming more pronounced of late. Some of the more common lines to rescind the offered roles are “...I think I can do the job but the people part, that is tough...” and “...I wish I can focus on the task, the people aspect is really taking a lot of my time...”. Based on these instances, what is it that makes leading people more difficult today compared to before? Leadership books have become a common sight in bookstores, serving as an opportunity to assist leaders and potential leaders, especially ones who seem averse to the idea of leading people and teams. Of late, books relating to social psychology to explain or give insights to these phenomena are flooding the market and one of them is *Brave Leadership* by Kimberly Davis.

Organised in four parts, the first focuses on the general idea about bravery and how it relates to the present world. Unlike before, when life was perhaps less sophisticated, today’s context requires commitment at the highest possible level. Such intensity can potentially cause anxiety, stress, vulnerability, scepticism, and insecurity, amongst others. These are generally referred to as emotions. Apart from emotions, coexisting in the system is logic. Having emotions and logic work together is crucial. Imagine what would happen if a three-ton elephant (emotions) disagrees with the elephant rider (logic) as far as directions are concerned?

A leader, to the author, is someone people “want” to follow, not “have” to follow. To “want” is gut instinct, it’s a desire, and it is the elephant as illustrated by the earlier metaphor. One cannot fake want – at least not in entirety nor in a prolonged duration. Want is the centre of commitment, loyalty, engagement, satisfaction, passion, and joy. Unfortunately, such want is observed to be missing in many workplaces. Even worse, many may have noticed it, but no one does anything about it and sadly, it has become an elephant in the room. How does one deal with such a situation? Is there a tried-and-tested formula that can be utilised? Are there any 10 magic steps to follow? Certainly, there are no short cuts or magic potion as far as brave leadership is concerned. Brave is being in one’s most confident, powerful and authentic self. Similar to being on-stage, the audience (the people who follow) make judgements on whether the actor (people who

lead) are brave or not. Apparently, the harder part of realising this ‘want’ is authenticity, where leaders are judged in terms of their ingenuity, trustworthiness, reliability, and believability.

The subsequent part of the book identifies common barriers to “brave”. On top of the list is one’s personal history and life experiences. Whilst the past may offer some wisdom, in order to be a brave leader, it is critical to recognise that history and experience do not determine what is possible for one self. There are still opportunities for self-improvement, provided one embraces self-awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses. The second barrier is self-perception, as one often sees what one wants to see to prove that one is right, termed as confirmation bias. A brave leader makes a difference in this by taking the initiative to understand why someone is doing what they are doing, even if it may not seem to make sense at all, initially. In pursuing such efforts to explore new possibilities and understanding others better, one could be exposed to vulnerability. Being in a state of vulnerability causes discomfort, thus it is natural that human beings avoid this state of discomfort. If one wants to be a brave leader, one must understand how vulnerability affects oneself and find ways to navigate this vulnerability constructively. The other barrier is lack of presence (being present). While it is rarely intentional, being absent at crucial occurrences somehow are identified as an unconscious survival mechanism. The downside to lack of being present as a leader is that, if one is not present with those they lead, their followers’ wants might stand at risk of being unnoticed.

While the second section outlined the barriers, the third outlines areas that leaders should enhance in becoming brave. This includes focusing attention to the people they lead, having clear goals, and taking up consistent actions to accomplish them. Ideally, brave leaders focus on things that are bigger than their job responsibilities. They look at the impact that they want the people they lead to feel and have. Brave leaders deal with what is real and not what they think it should be. To that effect, they can connect meaningfully, which then allows them to present their real selves to their audience – the essence of authenticity.

The book ends with a strong emphasis on the importance of self-awareness and sense of responsibility. It recommends getting acquainted with other brave leaders as one of the potential ways to help in cultivating brave leadership in oneself. The author also asserts that it is fine to take baby steps in embracing brave leadership, as the saying goes: Rome was not built in a day. Exercising regularly, eating healthily, ensuring a good nights sleep, and taking occasional breaks can also help – after all brave leaders are also human. As profoundly quoted by a prominent novelist many years back “*there are no new truths, but only truths that have not been recognised by those who have perceived them without noticing*”. Yes, this book is offering nothing new, except some truths that could have gone unnoticed all these while. Thus, the book is recommended to only those who truly “want” to be brave.

Brave Leadership: Unleash Your Most Confident, Powerful, and Authentic Self to Get the Results You Need is published by Greenleaf Book Group Press and can be purchased from leading bookstores at RM125.

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