

# PART ONE

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS of SUCCESSFUL LEADERS

### CHAPTER ONE

#### BI-VIRONMENT AND CONSCIOUSNESS:

#### Awareness of our Magnificent Brain and Environments

#### SUCCESSFUL LEADERS ARE FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THEIR BI-VIRONMENT

*If I have ever made any valuable discoveries, it has been owing more to patient attention than to any other talent.*

-- Isaac Newton – Scientist (1642 – 1727)

If a polar bear studied itself in a mirror, it would not notice the bloody wound across its face from yesterday's duel. They are not equipped to reflect upon their reflection. Yet man, owing to the consciousness of our developed prefrontal cortex, would spot a tiny scratch on our cheek. It is the combination of our advanced *conscious awareness*, excellent *memory* and advanced *communication* ability that place us above all other living species on Earth. One of the world's best-qualified authors on consciousness, Dr. Antonio Damasio, suggests we refer to the consciousness of the present moment as *core consciousness*. It is also known as our basic *access consciousness*, which is in essence just

thinking-about-thinking. However, Damasio highlights that we have the ability to enjoy a *phenomenally advanced consciousness* of our past, present and future, which he calls the *extended consciousness*. In his book, *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio states that ‘... the most revealing fact is that consciousness and emotions are *not* separable’.<sup>1</sup> Hence this chapter is designed to remind leaders of the importance and magnificence of our conscious brain and five senses. If we are not attuned to this; if we are not consciously aware of the amazing high level of activity around and inside us, we are merely existing rather than thriving. Let us learn why leaders’ *unconsciousness* and overinflated *egos* destroy them, and also go on to so negatively impact on the bottom-line of their organisations.

Besides being aware of self, the cornerstone of success is to consciously *work* our environment, both inside and out. In this book “environment” is defined as our *inner and outer milieu*. On the *inside*, we house our intuitive gut feelings, emotional and spiritual intelligence, intelligence, experiences, culture, thoughts, self-esteem, personality, knowledge, skills, and talents. The often ignored but immense external environment in which we operate is referred to as the *outside*.

Collectively this *inner* and *outer* environment can be referred to as our *bi-vironment*. An able bi-vvironmentalist consciously looks after and taps into *both* these environments – a synergistic, enmeshed “system” that is available to all of us. But it is our conscious and unconscious mind that allows us to perceive the “reality” of the inner- and outer-environment. Our senses are merely instruments to pass outside information on to our inner-environment. By the constant and conscious arousal through our own observations in our bi-vironment, we receive essential feedback that is vital to achieving our chosen purpose or calling (vocation).

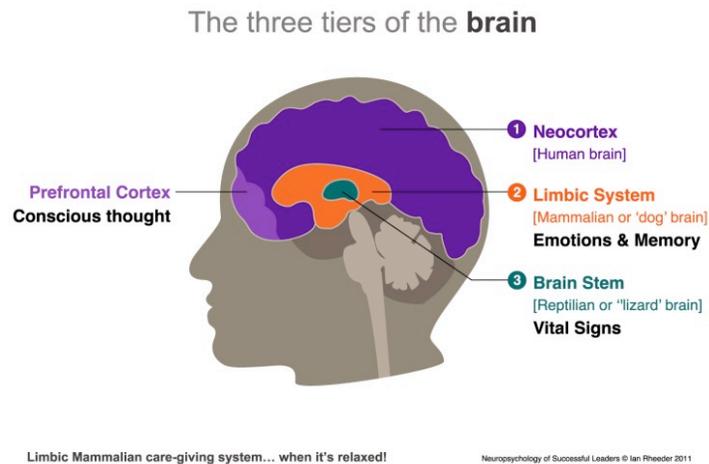
The law of gravity is not concerned with possible theories that gravity does not exist – the law of gravity exists regardless. You can attempt to fight the reality of gravity in your head but, in reality, gravity does exist, whatever you may think. Likewise, the *Law of Connectedness* states that our *inner-environment* is connected to our *outer-environment*. That is the law, and if you fight it, you are in danger of eventually destroying your connectedness to your bi-vironment. Living in a world of fantasy, or being “a legend in your own mind,” you can temporarily withdraw from the outside-environment to find the desired state inside you, but you will fail in the real world. The outside environment is immense. No one has ever managed to tackle their challenges alone – they lived and worked both their outer and inner environments hard. They had outside help and inner strength. So let us look closely at these two environments that form our bi-vironment.

Our *inner-environment*, a fragile emotional milieu housed inside the mind and body, can be described as our accumulated experiences; personality; knowledge; beliefs; the relationship between the id-ego (the primitive brain, our “shadow”) and the super-ego (the modern human brain); our relationship with the God of our choice; feelings; thoughts; and our collective, genetic instincts. These comprise both our internal strengths and weaknesses. Are we generally anxious or relaxed? If we are not comfortable living in our own skin – excited about our life vision and purpose – unwittingly our modern, more civil and consciously thinking brain (our prefrontal cortex) will be disabled, allowing our overly anxious primitive brain (our limbic system), to control us.

Owing to our ever expanding inner landscape, the older we are, the more developed our gut feelings should have become, the more mental DVDs in the recesses of our mind we should have recorded, and hence the more wisdom we would have acquired to draw upon in times of indecision. However, this does not always hold water: some people stop evolving because unaddressed fears cause them to shut out any new wisdom. They refuse to change because of the fear of adopting new, *albeit better*, beliefs. Sometimes we need to also *unlearn* our old beliefs to gain access to a new system of belief.

But let us look at the typical manager. In contrast with someone new to the job, a manager with vast industry experience and relevant lifelong learning, will more naturally and intuitively act upon his gut feelings. Someone who has been mugged previously, now with heightened alertness to his environment, will detect an unwanted situation *before* it unfolds. It is this inner-environment, which we trust, that gives us the endurance to overcome failure, and the sustained persistence required to achieve success.

A word of warning should be issued, though. If we react from a source based on fear, our primeval id-ego (‘little-head’), guided by our overly-aroused left and right primal amygdalae (and other bits of the limbic system), forces us to angrily overreact; whereas if we are responding from a secure inner source (by using our prefrontal cortex or ‘big-head’), we will be rational, logical, inductive, deductive, creative, calm, and proactive. This is why an anxious and deeply insecure leader would aggressively overreact to constructive feedback, whereas someone with a healthy sense of self-worth would be thankful to the one giving the constructive suggestions. It is imperative that we proactively *choose* to use our rational prefrontal cortex to override volatile and impulsive behaviour. The best way for this to take place is to be in a state of what Dr. Robert Thayer calls “calm energy”.<sup>2</sup>



**Fig 1.1: When in a relaxed state the limbic system is a care-giving system**

It is important to note that when we are in a relaxed state – a state consistent with a healthy sense of worth – our prefrontal cortex can modulate primitive emotional impulses generated by our ancient limbic system. It is our human prefrontal lobes that offer us the *executive* ability to think in an abstract fashion; to plan and regulate the impulses generated by the mammalian id-ego. So, to neutralise the aggressive “flight, fight and freeze” knee-jerk responses of our amygdalae, *we need to first feel comfortable in our own skin*. This neurological explanation is the difference between what I call the *Emotional Knee-Jerk Leader* and the *Rational Prefrontal Leader*. David Rock, author of *Our Brain at Work*, states that our prefrontal cortex is so hungry for energy and so inefficient, that ‘... everything has to be just right for it to work well’.<sup>3</sup> Again, if the amygdalae are always on red-alert, a state consistent with the many negative emotions associated with a low self-esteem, the prefrontal cortex is disabled to demonstrate high EQ.

At 5% of our total brain mass (0.01% of our body mass), our prefrontal cortex is the tip of the iceberg, yet it sits in the executive part of the brain that we use for decision-making and for taming the rest of the brain. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) spoke about the “jockey”, which attempts to control the all-powerful “stallion”. Owing to the development of technology and, specifically neuro-imaging by means of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans, we are able to prove Freud’s hypothesis as being correct, and call the “jockey” our rational *prefrontal cortex*, and the “stallion” our emotional *limbic system (the “id”)*. This is why an insecure person will have a lesser ability to rationally override impulsive emotions at the mainly unconscious level of the limbic system.

The deeply rooted unconscious mind communicates with us. The inner-environment has a constant inner dialogue between our un-conscious, sub-conscious, pre-conscious and conscious minds. *But it is being acutely aware of our conscious thoughts, visions and feelings that distinguish us from animals.* A baboon may observe us ride past on a bicycle, but it cannot consciously control its thoughts and think of building a bicycle. Animals, fed by their five *external* senses, are overly controlled by Nature's limbic system.

Marc Hauser, professor of psychology at the Harvard Medical School, suggests that animals lack our "humaniqueness" as they cannot create the limitless variety of abstract concepts and mental symbols that we can.<sup>4</sup> It can easily be said then, that being exceptionally conscious will give us insights of which those who are not as conscious of their bi-vironment (and animals, who rely heavily on immediate sensory input to drive their limbic system) can only dream. We can choose to control perceptions of our past, present and future. We can choose to place our faith in an invented concept and then act upon that thought. Our mind controls us. Yet we can consciously choose to control the noise that our minds produce, so that the closed-loop system of "noise" is the music of our own orchestration.

*Extended* consciousness is great psychotherapy, too. Consciousness is key. As negative thoughts occur, we can choose to destroy the accompanying inharmonious or jarring emotions at their source. Once again, consciousness not only enables us to exploit our outer-environment, but it is the key to a healthier and more energetic inner landscape, too. One can lose one's material possessions, but make one's mind up now to never lose control of one's authentic inner-environment. Past, present or future – most of the thoughts we choose to feed our subconscious are of our making. Likewise, we can also rebuke a negative thought as it rises (before it erupts). It is this *choice* to consciously be aware of our past, present and future that that makes us human. We can choose to always be alert and witness the interaction within our inner and outer environments — our bi-vironment. We can discriminate between good and bad. However, with choice comes power, and with power comes responsibility to use it with good intent. Let us now look at our outer-environment.

Our ***outer-environment*** is our external environment — real and perceived opportunities and threats to our inner-environment. Opportunities would be social capital such as close friends and work associates; financial capital; a free economy to enjoy the fruits of one's labour; modern equipment; networks; communication technology; and even political capital. Threats would be anything or anyone challenging our bi-vironment.

However, let us take a look at some disadvantages of our modern outer-environment:

Our lives have become so fast-paced, noisy and stressed that we have forgotten the sanctity of our inner-environment. Only a hundred years ago we were more in touch with nature. We cultivated our crops; exercised; there was far less pollution in the atmosphere. It was fine to be bored and quiet. We ate fresh, wholesome food without preservatives, hormones, flavourings and colourants. Rivers and oceans were unpolluted. Today our water supply is polluted with estrogenic chemicals, causing girls to mature early and boys to become more effeminate. Antibiotics and hormones in milk and meat cause early puberty. Rather than climbing trees today, obese children lie around bombarded by television shows and playing electronic games whilst waiting to be whisked off to medical appointments where occupational therapists have to develop their motor skills and sensory perception. En route, advertisers will place emphasis on external issues such as fashion, power and fame, and as a result of not attaining the perceived “norm”, these children may further suffer from escalating insecurities, depression, and eating disorders. The cause of much of this is what the author of *Last Child in the Woods* — Richard Louv — calls “nature-deficit disorder”.

Natural scientists have proved that when a frog is placed in a pot of cold water on a stove, it will eventually be cooked alive as it becomes accustomed to the water heating up slowly and does not leap out of the pot as the water reaches boiling point. We too, like a frog in boiling water, become so used to the threats in our outer-environment that we are also slowly being cooked. Yet through stillness of the mind, we can slow down, breathe deeply, become aware of the heat, and get out — it is called the *wellbeing of life-balance*. We need to reconnect and ground ourselves in nature to remind us not to spin out of control in the pseudo self-gratification of superficial pursuits.

Back to the future: Technology; global airlines; instant global communication; Internet search engines; advanced online education and books translated in one’s home language; superior health care; law and order; a free-market economy; longevity; thousands of new organisations; seven billion interesting people; and 196 countries to choose to visit are only some of the opportunities that have made the 21<sup>st</sup> century the “Age of Possibility.” Illnesses being diagnosed by a computer over the Internet could quite easily replace the services of a medical doctor. It is clear that, if you do not consciously take advantage of these wonderful resources and “opportunity machines”, the world will leave you behind. For example, the technological “digitaldivide” has destroyed many professional photographers who refused to usefully exploit their outer-environment by switching to digital photography. Failing to

commercialise the digital camera technology that they themselves invented, in January 2012 Kodak filed for bankruptcy. E-mail, mobile phones, websites and the Internet are now a necessity, not a luxury, for running a successful business and social networks. Professor Michael Porter, Co-Chair of the 2007 Global Competitiveness Report, said: ‘Today, the only way to have an advantage is through innovation and upgrading’. This is why a command-and-control style of leadership, which disables the prefrontal cortex, is losing its vogue — coercion (and the accompanying fear) destroys creative thinking and therefore innovation.

But the real source of the tragedy is not forfeiting our outer-environment. It is our uneasy inner-environment that starts the unseen disintegration in the bi-vironment (inner and outer-environments). Owing to the distracting noise of their limbic systems, people with low self-worth are not conscious of their outer-environment, and being too wrapped up by the negative emotional noise in their heads, why should they be? They unconsciously focus on the constant stream of negative energy that is generated by their insecurities. They have an anxious mind controlled by their amygdalae (the amygdalae are larger and more active in men than woman). So, when the inner-environment is id-ego obsessed (I want it all and I want it now) and therefore self-centred, the outer-environment passes by unnoticed, and many happy experiences with it go unnoticed. These people are not “present”. This we can observe by seeing a strained expression on their faces, and the absence of a spontaneous twinkle in their eyes. And as leaders, we need to let go of living only inside our heads and learn to succeed through the work of our energetic followers.

The following case study demonstrates the power of *tapping into one’s bi-vironment*. The South African Sanlam Money Game was a televised reality show where competitors were pitted against one another to make the most money within a three-day period. In search of insights, I recently interviewed one of the winners, Mike Clare, who stated that ‘... *luck* has everything to do with the way you continually and proactively interact with people’. Mike prepared himself mentally and consciously, deliberately targeting people in numerous organisations. Driving a rented Avis car, he never stopped thinking, acting, phoning and meeting individuals. Interestingly, the losers in the money game put their loss down to bad luck. One participant just lay in his hotel room meditating and when, interviewed, expressed to the film crew that he was patiently waiting for an idea to come to mind. He never received one.

What we feel right now are the cumulative and successive moments of previous “nows”. But it is what we chose to think, feel and do in every past “now” that changed our perception of right now. This

moment-to-moment alertness of life's information, once processed, is vital for goal setting and a healthy inner-environment. However, being *unconscious* or unaware of life's moments, both inside and out, is unintentionally putting our primitive reptilian and mammalian defensive mechanisms at the helm, thereby producing basic primeval responses in a relatively sophisticated world. If we are not living consciously, then we are behaving unconsciously. *Unfortunately, the unconscious world is driven by the irrational id-ego (the limbic system), and the more prominent this id-ego, the deeper our state of unconsciousness.*

### **UNDERSTANDING THE ID-EGO, EGO AND SUPER-EGO**

We need to be conscious of how our personality, or psyche, is structured. As a leader it is important to understand the Freudian model of the human psyche. Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939; Austrian neurologist and neurological researcher who founded the discipline of Psychology) in 1923 focussed on the unconscious and the conscious, and described our inner landscape, or psyche, as comprising the *id*, *ego* and *super-ego*.<sup>5</sup> Although some of his theories are debatable to an extent, Freud is often not given the credit he deserves. Besides inventing the psychiatrist's chair, on which patients lay whilst exploring their psychological problems with Freud through free association of thoughts, Freud was the first physician to use psychotherapy humanely, at a time when mentally ill patients were treated by doctors during panel interviews; women underwent hysterectomies and clitorodectomies for their psychological “hysteria”, or were simply locked up in mental institutions with no recourse of getting better or being released.

Unaided by brain scanners, Freud was quite correct when he stated that humans are born with uncoordinated primeval instincts – the unconscious *id*. The *id* works closely with our ancient, “reptilian” and “mammalian” brain that had developed approximately 200 million years ago. The primeval nature of the ancient *id* craves excessive power, sex and material possessions – the *id* is thus perfectly suited to the material world. The *id*, which I will refer to hereafter as the *id-ego (or ido)*, if left to its own devices, needs to dominate who we are, and always wants to be right. The *id-ego* is so irrational, so oblivious of its preoccupation with its selfish desires, that as a last resort it will illogically sacrifice itself to be right. The *id-ego* is thus obsessed with the physical life.

But what about our more humane and spiritual side? How do we become a more “noble savage”? How do we move from being obsessed with the outside, material world to seeking an inner life of peace, soulfulness, harmony and love and — perhaps even more maturely — wish the same harmonious feelings for our loved ones, friends, colleagues, and all mankind? The answer is quite simple, but rather difficult to implement. Once our basic animalistic needs have been met and we are *comfortable in our*

*own skin* — comfortable with our role in life — we no longer view other people as opponents. By our feelings of *gratitude and a healthy self-worth*, we diminish the wailing and “fight or flight” response of the “naked-ape’s” unconscious id-ego. We are relaxed and rational, and less impulsive. As leaders and followers we can now use our more rational prefrontal brain to control our primitive id-ego. *Our value system then expands to accommodate others; we become more “civilised” and conscious of others’ struggles in life, so our more altruistic super-ego is developed.* We then start using our rational *prefrontal cortex* and not only our primeval emotions to guide us — but only when we are comfortable in our own skin. We further begin to cope better under pressure when we trust our abilities.

For those of you who have been keen observers of children, you will notice the immediate temperament change when going on an outing *without* the rivalry of a sibling. They’re relaxed. Good as gold. Why? Because their id-ego is not stirred by sibling rivalry.

So then, what is the *ego*? *Our ego is the resultant mediating force between the inner civil war between our animalistic id-ego and humane super-ego.* If our insecure id-ego is stronger (the anxious mammalian or dog brain), our ego is then more unconsciously id. *An ego balanced between the id-ego and super-ego therefore gives us a more realistic and rational perspective of our bi-vironment and ourselves.* Every living human has an ego, but in a given situation the ego may be either too irrationally id-ego biased (animalistic) or too rationally super-ego biased (human / spiritual). The ego is forever responsibly engaged in a balancing act — mediating the id-ego and the altruistic super-ego. The greatest challenge and opportunity is to align your ego with your true identity — the *authentic* you; and if you align your ego to this true-life purpose or calling, life immediately takes on a more spiritual and soulful dimension of self-actualised bliss. This leads to a great-relaxed state from which to lead others. In this regard, it is worth following remembering that we control very little until we control ourselves.

The values of the selfish id-ego listed in the table below (left column) are consistent with the personality of a person who is conceited, closed-minded, defensive, and insecure — typical of an individual who has a low self-worth. When the heart is not at peace on the inside, we tend to look for fulfilment on the outside. But when a leader, manager or an individual is fulfilled on the inside, presumably he / she will lead with a more consciously balanced approach and benevolent intent. Self-acceptance versus self-rejection. This is the leader who is beginning to develop self-esteem and emotional intelligence. It is enlightening to note that psychologist and author of 17 books Dr. Nathaniel Branden says that, ‘I think of self-esteem as the immune system of consciousness.’ This is a powerful statement that can benefit all who want to consciously lead themselves and others.

**Table 1.1: The values of the id-ego and the super-ego**

Id-ego description (values)	Super-ego description (values)
Hubristic pride Ambition for material possessions Defensiveness or being right Dominance  Example: Despot autocrats	Authentic pride Ambition for inner peace and contentment Broadmindedness Benevolent intent, compassion, interdependence  Example: Nelson Mandela

**Table 2.2: The Ego Mediates the Id-ego and the Super-ego**

Id-ego ("It" ego)	 Ego ("I" ego) 	Super-ego (Over-"I" ego)
Part of the brain: Ancient limbic system.  The id-ego is full of personality and has no ethical character. The id is energised by our <i>unconscious</i> , natural, selfish, amoral, instinctive, mammalian and reptilian mind. The id or "it" seeks immediate pleasure. It is full of fear-based greed. The primeval mammalian mind in us needs and wants food, sex, and power. Ninety	Our <i>conscious</i> , perceptive ego, or common sense, is the jockey on the back of the "untamed-horse" — the id. The natural behaviour of the id is governed, and moderated by the super-ego. The resultant force of this civil war between the id and the super-ego is a more <i>conscious</i> , coordinated and structured ego. In other words, the id eventually gets what it wants <i>but</i> it is done in a controlled, conscious and "civilised" way. The ego is friends with both the id and the super-ego. The ego is who we consciously feel we are.	Part of the brain: Modern prefrontal cortex.  We begin to mirror our parents and role-models, and owing to these social restraints or norms, we develop a moral and social <i>conscience</i> . The super-ego is composed and grounded in a deep character. We become logical, moral and do not only use the id-ego's principle of "pleasure or pain" for decision-making. The super-ego is relatively untouched by basic needs. We start to become <i>conscious</i> and ask, 'Is my behaviour acceptable? Am I

per cent of the id iceberg is hidden below the surface in the unconscious mind. .		being reasonable? What can I contribute to others?'
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Self-discipline requires delaying instant gratification, something that our inborn id-ego will not accept. This is one of the reasons people who have an obsessed id-ego are always anxiously on the hunt for quick-fixes. Further, when we are intoxicated, we are more under the influence of the id-ego, and become unreasonable and irrational. It is this intentional targeting of the id-ego that makes us so vulnerable when advertisers cleverly make us feel just fine by *not* delaying gratification. We are being sent to perdition and id-iotically look forward to the journey.

However, we have a conscience when our super-ego mind is alert and not under the influence of the id; we have self-discipline when the constant noise of our id-ego is muffled so, in W. K. Hope's words, 'Self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you don't talk back' or, in this case, the id-ego does not backchat. Unfortunately, most consumers — running on their reactive and unconscious id-ego — are completely oblivious *why* they purchase their favourite products, or, as leaders, *why* they behave with such low emotional intelligence. Running on their unconscious, this is why it is actually dangerous to ask respondents what they want, because at a conscious level they often (and sometimes embarrassingly so) just do not know!

Our unconscious yet alert id-ego is the reason why subliminal advertising works so well. In 1957, James Vicary discovered that when the "Drink Coca-Cola" message was subliminally flashed at 1/3000 of a second, our reactive unconscious amygdalae absorbed it immediately; yet our more proactive conscious remained oblivious of it. Martin Lindstrom's research found subliminal messaging to be especially effective because our rational guard is down.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, in the absence of our reasonable, mindful ego (the prefrontal cortex) guiding us, the unconscious yet always active id-ego (our limbic system) takes centre stage and takes us shopping.

To illustrate how irrational the mammalian id-ego reacts to stimulus, take a dog for a walk through your neighbourhood and observe how other dogs react. When there are two or more dogs on the other side of the fence, desperately trying to attack your dog, the hounds foolishly attack one another. I have even seen a dog 'illogically' bite his master's leg in a similar situation and, to really prove the point, a video

was doing the rounds on e-mail in which a dog, protecting his juicy bone, repeatedly attacked his own encroaching back foot. *The irrational behaviour of insecure and anxious leaders now starts to become clear.* Think of idiotic human behaviour when people run on unconscious id-ego. Would you, for example, be prepared to put your life at risk to protect your cell phone? Well, this is what my neighbour did when he was targeted for his cell phone. His id-ego was prepared to die to have its basic needs met — the need of a specific material possession. Luckily my neighbour survived the gunshot. But the point is this: Not all thoughts that are driving our actions are wise ones, especially when we run on autopilot of the mindless id-ego. Now imagine the collective mess when the entire executive committee of an organisation is insecure — “The Clash of the Amygdalae and the Lizard Brains” — all desperate to be right, will force an array of irrational decisions to evolve out of the boardroom. Commonly known as the “Peter Principle”, when anxious managers are promoted into positions way beyond their ability, their insecurities often manifest as unintelligent, aggressive and defensive behaviour. We were born wild millions of years ago. We are still born wild today. It's just our pseudo "civilised" human veneer that tends to anesthetise our consciousness that we still share a wild midbrain limbic system with all our mammalian cousins.

The answer is to not remove the dysfunctional id-ego, but tempering it with our true-self, forces the id-ego to relinquish its irrational control. So, by neutralising the dysfunctional id-ego, we can then be guided by a higher and intelligent source — our unique purpose or calling. Yet whilst detaching from the id-ego may *sound* simple, this requires being very comfortable with who we are, and only then will the unconscious primeval id-ego (the mammalian brain or limbic system) relax its grip, enabling the conscious brain (the modern prefrontal brain) to emerge and sensibly connect our bi-vironments. Again, this would be a great premise from which to lead others.

### **AN EVEN-HANDED EGO IS THE GOAL**

There must be a reason we have an id-ego or a limbic system. Surely this should be seen as a valuable tool, a necessary part of ourselves, or why then would we have it? To answer this, imagine life before we were civilised, before all our mainstream religions, before our legal institutions, before e-mail etiquette — life was *very* physical then, just as it still is in a herd of elephants or a pack of wild dogs today. Our id-ego was key to our ancestors, a tool alerting them to valid threats from foreign tribes and dangerous animals. But now think of a modern, human capital manager turning away the perfect candidate because his ancient amygdala brain says, ‘Careful — he’s from a different tribe.’ What wasted opportunities when we are governed by our anxious amygdalae. However, if the manager is

aware of the predisposition of his id-ego to backfire on a great hire, he can consciously question his foundation for decision making — before and after the decision-making process. It is *self-awareness* that allows us to use the more rational left hemisphere of our prefrontal brain.

In the modern world, the id-ego is thus a *misfire* from our caveman days. Thousands of years ago we were obsessed with finding food, shelter, sex, defending our valley, and beating up any suspicious intruder who threatened our security. Without this evolutionary heritage — the id-ego — our gene pool would not have survived to read this book. Fast forward to today and meet our more civilised super-ego (the prefrontal cortex), battling it out with our primeval id-ego (the limbic system). It is literally like a war between the “little heads” and the “big head”. And when feeling insecure, it is this “flight, fight or freeze” maladapted misfire that still triggers us off in boardroom today. Running an organisation and living our lives today is a balancing act between nature’s survival kit — the physical id-ego brute in us — and the more sympathetic and altruistic prefrontal mind of the super-ego — our civilised survival kit. Giving new meaning to the term “human nature”: the human (pre-frontal cortex) and nature (ancient limbic system). The result of these two forces is an even-handed empathetic ego — a leader with a basic platform of emotional intelligence.

A healthy ego is necessary for attempting a new project. David Mayer and Herbert Greenberg’s featured article, *What Makes a Good Salesman*, reveals that a salesperson requires a dynamic balance of empathy and ego drive.<sup>7</sup> They state that:

The salesman’s empathy, coupled with his intense ego drive, enables him to home in on the target effectively and make the sale. He has the drive, the need to make the sale, and his empathy gives him the connecting tool with which to do it.

Empathy and ego synergistically reinforce each other. The authors go on to say:

Needing the sale, he is not likely to let his empathy spill over and become sympathy. His ego need for the conquest is not likely to allow him to side with the customer; instead, it spurs him on to use his knowledge of the customer fully to make the sale.

The result? Both the salesman and customer had their needs met. *In a controlled fashion, both the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex worked beautifully together.*

On the cover of their book, *Egonomics*, David Marcum and Steven Smith's payoff-line sums it up well: 'What makes ego our greatest asset (or most expensive liability)?' I believe that their exhaustive study reveals the balancing act of the id-ego and the super-ego:

If we manage ego wisely, we get the upside it delivers followed by strong returns. But when that intense, persistent force inside manages us, companies suffer real losses. Over half of all businesspeople estimated ego costs their company 6 to 15 percent of annual revenue; many believe that the estimate is far too conservative. But even if ego were only costing 6 percent of revenue, the annual cost of ego — as estimated by the people working to produce that revenue — would be nearly \$1.1 billion to the average Fortune 500 Company. That \$1.1 billion nearly equals the average annual profit of those same companies.<sup>8</sup>

*A healthy ego can therefore discriminate logically and proactively, and save economies billions of dollars, making this subject (the ego) not just worthwhile, but an imperative read for leaders.*

Writer and psychiatrist, Ian McCallum, agrees that the ego has an important role to play:

It is important, however, that we do not underestimate the significance of the human ego. It is mostly portrayed in a negative light, but without it we cannot make sense of our world. Like the conductor of an orchestra, it has an orientating function, co-ordinating skills such as memory, perception and intellect, as well as acting as a point of reference as to who we are and what we might become.

Without an ego, without that sense of "me", we lose our gift of insight and reflection. This is why analytical psychotherapy can be so meaningful. Ultimately it is geared to strengthening the ego, not by bolstering its defences but by making it *less* defensive. It is about making the patient less resistant to self-examination. To know thyself, then, is a lifelong process of learning to see ourselves in the other, of seeing the world as a mirror and of being accountable for our personal contributions towards our own suffering.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, a manager not running on his id-ego, but rather running on a *healthy ego*, will be aware of his own communication (verbal and non-verbal) and will be a far greater observer of his team's nuances too. A relaxed leader reads between the lines and sees the environment in context. Charles Caleb Cotton

stated that, 'He that knows himself, knows others; and he that is ignorant of himself, could not write a very profound lecture on other men's heads.'

## **CONSCIOUSNESS IS KEY**

How conscious are you of your innate ability to read approximately 250 000 facial expressions? When a watch is advertised, have you noticed that the time always sits at 10h10? This is because people are hardwired to like smiling faces, even if it is only the smiley symbol (☺) for a happy face. The watch appears to be smiling at us and, at an unconscious level we feel a snap-spin inside us — a deeper affinity towards the watch because of its symmetrical smile.

So imagine how much more effective salespeople, managers, or leaders would be if they were extraordinarily conscious of their environment in every interaction with another person, as opposed to living and working oblivious to their surroundings and other people? Yet the reality is that most people are very much “unconscious” or unaware of their environments and, although we may still pick up on some things unconsciously, a vast amount of information is lost in our *vast unconsciousness*.

Our unconscious mind is like a gorilla that needs spoon-feeding from the conscious mind, and when extremely conscious, we have more control over inputting, or “feeding,” a stream of nourishing thoughts, emotions and images into our mind. But if unconscious, a state similar to anxious low self-esteem, we unintentionally permit our “gorilla” to be fed a toxic diet by our reptilian and mammalian mind that creates an irrational silverback, who in turn rises up, beats his chest, and seizes power over our rational mind. When this happens, the id-ego seizes command, which further disconnects us from consciousness and the bi-vironment. Thus, guided mainly by our one-track-minded, self-satisfying, primeval, unconscious id-ego, we become insensitive and irrational. *Unfortunately, the id-ego driven leader does not have the capacity to see his own insensitivity*. The id-ego runs on autopilot and has an anaesthetising effect on his consciousness. This is the reason why poor leaders cannot see the mess that they have created. And why this book should be a kit-issue for the MBA student, the veteran leader, or the leader-to-be.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), a National Indian Movement leader stated, 'An evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence.' So how do we consciously feed ourselves this nourishing awareness? From a more composed state, we need to look and listen more often. A relaxed, focused and

self-aware therapist, for example, may detect more from a person's body language and tone of voice than anything the patient may say. Similarly, children unconsciously detect our fears by reading our body language. They can read the depth of a comment, the tilt of one's head, or spot the incongruence of a response.

Peter Drucker said, 'The most important thing in communication is to hear what *isn't* being said.' Top salespeople, negotiators and leaders are super-conscious of their bi-vironment, and can give a detailed report on the undercurrents after a meeting. Body language experts suggest that 60 to 80 per cent of the impact of our negotiations is from our body language.<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud concurs: 'We leak the truth from every pore.' So, as self-aware leaders, we further need to be conscious of our inner milieu and actions.

We think we have a broad sense of what is going on, but often we do not. If we are unconsciously incompetent, the only way to become competent is first to be aware of our incompetence. This deliberate state of observation — self-awareness — transcends the murky world of unconscious leadership.

Infants learn by mirroring their parents, but as we grow up, a more rational super-ego develops to restrain our mammalian id-ego. Similarly, Carl Jung observed that our unconscious "shadow" or dark side effortlessly seizes power and allows instinctive mechanisms to automatically intrude into our conscious mind, thereby governing us. Of course, today, with the assistance of brain scanners, we now know to which parts of our brain Jung was referring. As infants, Jung says we are *not* born with a *developed consciousness*, but our species is evolved enough to *build* one.<sup>10</sup> That is what this book will cover, as well. So, there is a solution to being governed by an irrational id-ego, and that is to become consciously conscious of our bi-vironment. We have free will to loosen the bondage of distracting, fractured and detrimental thoughts. Right now, deliberately slow your breathing and examine what you have been thinking about most. Are you feeling positive or negative? A great consciousness exercise is to think about these two questions: A 100 years before you were born, where was the salt in your veins? And, 100 years after your death, where will that salt be? Close your eyes and listen to your outer-environment. This ability to think and reflect is the difference between humans and more primitive mammals. It's easier said than done, but we *can* make envisaged changes to our lives. This life-long endeavour requires continual practice if one chooses to operate at a calm and conscious level. The more we do it, the easier it becomes. *Improving self-esteem dramatically improves consciousness, but it is not an event. It is an on-going process; a journey, if you wish, to get to know thy self.*

To serve and lead others, we must first competently lead ourselves. Yet Dr. John Maxwell points out that we seldom even know ourselves. He stated, ‘That’s why I say that the toughest person to lead is always yourself. People seldom see themselves realistically.’<sup>11</sup> To authentically lead ourselves we need to know our core values, our personality traits, our talents and skills, our strengths and weaknesses – our genetic makeup. Self-leadership is therefore the conscious nurturing of our inner landscape, before enmeshing it synergistically with the outer landscape. The key is consciousness. In his book, *The Feeling of What Happens*, Dr. Antonio Damasio states the following about consciousness:

Consciousness is the rite of passage which allows an organism armed with the ability to regulate its metabolism, with innate reflexes, and with the form of learning known as conditioning, to become a minded organism, the kind of organism in which responses are shaped by a mental *concern* over the organism’s own life. Spinoza said that the effort to preserve oneself is the first and unique foundation of virtue. Consciousness enables that effort.<sup>12</sup>

Seen in this light, consciousness enables us to soak up new knowledge, allowing us to change as we *choose* to change. *Extended consciousness* is therefore an empowering feeling for a leader, and because it allows us to tap into the bi-vironment, we accumulate more knowledge and wisdom than if we were unconscious.

### **Extended consciousness soaks up the environment**

To demonstrate the amazing benefits of being relaxed, confident and phenomenally conscious of our bi-vironment, let us look at the experienced dive master leading ten newly qualified scuba divers on their first dive. My dive master, in spite of being overweight and of below average fitness, used 50 per cent less air and observed far more underwater than all the nervous new divers. He was fully present. Whilst also towing a distracting safety buoy he – astonishingly – was the only person to hear dolphins in the distance and to observe a shadow of a large fish above us. He had a calming, observable, high self-confidence whilst diving, which we all noticed and admired, and certainly wanted ourselves. He focused on the beauty of the environment whilst all of us anxiously focused on ourselves and our own expectations, thereby missing much of what was right under our noses. He was deliberately using his prefrontal cortex, whilst we were being controlled by our overly-aroused limbic systems.

Daniel Goleman, who pioneered the construct of emotional intelligence (EI),<sup>14</sup> says that self-awareness is key for tracking our emotions and their impact on others, *as they happen*. The consequence of consciously or deliberately being self-aware, whether scuba diving with sharks or leading an organisation, is that we are on our way to becoming first-class *mood managers*. This contributes to our overall contentment and peace of mind, as well as our ability to successfully lead and manage others. Without a doubt the best bosses are those with high EI. And the best part of EI and leadership, like a high positive self-esteem, is that it can be learnt.

### **Be conscious of your belief and value system**

One of the finest ways to gain new insights or experiences is through action. You must go out and research, explore and experience before you discover what you love. How else can you discover your talents and calling? German writer, Johann Wolfgang Goethe said, 'Self-knowledge is best learned, not by contemplation but by action. Strive to do your duty and you will soon discover of what stuff you are made.' An interesting new insight gained from doing many dives is that diving changes one's perspective on sharks. We become aware that these underwater predators seldom attack scuba divers, unless they are provoked. Armed with this learned insight, this *new belief*, many divers deliberately go on shark dives, and once they consciously decide to place sharks in the frame of their dive masks, they suddenly notice many sharks.

The point is this: The virtual frame through which we view life will be filled with our perspective, and it is our belief and value system that governs our frame of perspective. *If we want to change our perspective (attitude), we must change our belief and value system and, as we expand our beliefs, so our view of the world expands with it.* If we change our choices, we change our lives. Alternatively, by not widening our belief and values system, we imprison ourselves spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. We get stuck in a narrow paradigm, which distorts everything. We really are controlled by our beliefs. The Wright brothers believed they could fly, and so they did. What do you want your group to believe in? What harmful beliefs do you already have?

The answer is that, over time, we are able to *re-frame* our perspective and tailor our attitudes. We can alter, modify and improve our belief and value systems. Previous notions can retreat to make way for a greater and a more thorough understanding of reality.

It is the same reason we may see a flowering weed as ugly. It's because our tribal belief has judged it that way. Because of this, female circumcision will still be rife in 2012. Unfortunately every year,

hundreds, if not thousands of witches are still burnt, buried alive and tortured to death in Africa. This witch burning rage is strikingly similar to what swept through Europe between 1450 and 1792, where of course, those witches did not actually exist either. Epileptics in Africa are still persecuted because some ignorant villages believe they are demon possessed.

Nevertheless, we must believe in something or we would never confidently venture into anything. We must choose our beliefs and attitudes responsibly because, whatever they are, they will affect the rest of our lives and those of everyone else around us, as well.

Your job as a leader and manager is to understand your colleagues' subjective beliefs before you judge and attempt to mould them. The more relaxed you are about yourself and your abilities, the more self-aware and conscious of others you will be. *The higher your self-esteem, the higher your emotional and spiritual intelligence will be.*

### **Understanding personality styles to assist self-awareness, leadership and relationship management**

It is crucial for a manager to be aware of his own as well as his team members' personality styles; mindful of the weaknesses and strengths of each style. Armed with this knowledge, he can then maximise his team members' strengths, appreciate their abilities, and all the while encourage their development, stretching them in ways that are perhaps a bit uncomfortable, but necessary for growth.

Around 400 BCE the Greek medical doctor, Hippocrates, observed what he termed four basic personality types: *Choleric* (Meteorites), *Sanguine* (Flood Lights), *Phlegmatic* (Guiding Lights), and *Melancholic* (Reading Lights). By understanding these four archetypes or temperaments, we can better understand ourselves, as well as predict behavior, and know how to approach (and accept) people who are different from us.

**Table 1.3: Characteristics of the four personality types as posited by Hippocrates**

<b>METEORITES (red, pit-bull)</b>	<b>FLOOD LIGHTS (yellow, poodle)</b>
Bluntly direct, pragmatic, practical, bold, forceful, decisive, inflexible, and driven.	Entertaining, lively, busy, impulsive, expressive, stimulating, and extroverted.
<b>READING LIGHTS (blue, sniffer dog)</b>	<b>GUIDING LIGHTS (green, golden retriever)</b>

High standards, accurate, precise, rational, factual, and cautious.	Accommodating, agreeable, dependable, flexible, kind, generous, and supportive.
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## BEING AWARE OF THE POWER OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

The view of Albert Einstein on reality is, ‘Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.’ Because we conceptualise the world according to our beliefs, the narrower our belief system, the less informed we will be when taking decisions, and the more misguided our understanding of the Universe will be. If suicide bombers, for instance, had broader belief systems, perhaps they would not blow themselves up together with innocent victims. The way we view life is partly by nature and partly by nurture — we draw upon pre-programmed mental DVDs in our unconscious and subconscious world before we take a decision. It is even estimated that 50 per cent of our visual, sensory impressions are made up of what we *expect* to “see”.<sup>15</sup> Dr R Beau Lotto, founder of Lottolabs and a member of the Institute of Ophthalmology, UCL, says that only 10 per cent of what we see comes from the eyes. In other words, we distort reality in line with our beliefs. Similarly, Mark Twain said, ‘You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.’

This is the reason why thousands of people have “seen” the Loch Ness Monster, which we now know is based on a hoax photograph published in 1934. Nature has prearranged our unconscious instincts, but by nurturing we are continually developing our “memories”, perspectives, and opinions — all of which form our belief and value systems. As a child, your mother or an aunt could have had a fear of mice, for example, which programmed your unconscious at an impressionable age to fear mice. So, if you want to change your attitude toward life, change your unconscious and subconscious inner world. If you believe in UFOs, you may start seeing them.

‘Ghosts are the mind's way of interpreting how the body reacts to certain surroundings’, says Dr Richard Wiseman of the University of Hertfordshire. A “presence” is felt in a room — but that is all it is, a feeling.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, if you have an ingrained belief in ghosts, you will probably start seeing, hearing and eerily sensing them. Reading Eric Rosenthal’s collection on “true” ghost stories, *They Walk*

in *The Night* (1949), it would seem that every second building in South Africa was haunted by an evil-doing ghost. Stories of ghosts where an ‘Indian family at Springfield was troubled in 1937 by having half-bricks thrown at them and having all the fanlights in their home smashed...throwing of stones at a velocity so great that holes are neatly drilled through window panes as though they were made by a bullet.’<sup>17</sup> But think about this: if ghosts really did exist and tossed objects around at lightning speed, how many criminals have been wrongfully accused? Should all criminals not have alibis then? My father, now 90, concurs that when he was a boy, ghosts were rampant in South Africa. But, as our belief in ghosts has waned culturally, ghosts have nearly completely disappeared. Thus, to a certain degree we do not only believe what we see; we see what we *believe*. In communication, your belief will also cause you to have selective hearing — so as leaders and followers, we sometimes “hear what we believe”, too.

Like domesticated animals, the narrower our experience and accompanying insights are, the narrower we condition others and ourselves in the same way. So, like an obedient pet, preoccupied with its narrow repertoire of tricks and instructions, the domesticated animal “cannot see the wood for the trees,” and thus misses opportunities. A narrow band of understanding is blinding. Give a dog a new instruction and the dog is stumped. Introduce it to a brand new situation and this could endanger its life. In the documentary, *What the Bleep*, the Native American islanders could not see Columbus’ ships sailing on the sea, because no one on the island had ever seen the ‘pattern’ of a ship before, and thus did not believe in them. So they created their own ‘reality’. But as soon as a respected elder told his tribe to believe, then ships became part of their frame of reference and they started to see them on the horizon. Again, seeing is not always believing; believing is often seeing. A great *transformational leader* understands this and has the ability to influence and work with their followers’ *existing* beliefs.

Communist politician Vladimir Lenin understood the vulnerability of youth — the critical period of social learning — when he said, ‘Give me a child for the first five years of his life and he will be mine forever.’ The Jesuits had a similar motto: ‘Give me a child until the age of seven and I will give you the man.’ *So it is evident that once our deeply rooted core beliefs have been formed, they are the most immovable dimensions inside of us.* Which is why, unless you are mature and relaxed about your discussion, it is dangerous to discuss religion or politics at a dinner party or in the boardroom. And as a leader we need to understand that we can only shift someone’s deeply seated beliefs and values if they *want* them to be changed.

Like many of her friends and family, my deeply superstitious domestic helper who resides on my property, Caroline, lives in continual fear of being cursed by a hairy, evil, little midget called the Tokoloshe. To prevent an invasion whilst asleep, even on a sweltering hot African summer's night, all windows are closed. And to offer additional protection if the Tokoloshe broke in, her bed is raised on four tall paint tins to be out of the malevolent dwarf's reach. So her mind, together with her culture, has created the Tokoloshe. Her belief controls her. Her inner-reality creates her outer-reality. But like many beliefs, they are simply virtual reality — not actual reality. Many Africans have fallen victim to this belief or self-fulfilling prophesy of cursing, and when they *are* struck by ill health or bad luck, this further self-reinforces their belief, reinforcing that they are in fact 'correct' about the Tokoloshe's existence. Every sleepless night due to rustling sounds and outside tapping further ingrains their belief. Unconsciously people are out to prove that their beliefs are correct, so the mind will even invent 'reality' to reinforce their faith. Luckily with the intervention of another belief, the witchdoctor, the spell of the Tokoloshe can be reversed. So the Tokoloshe causes a continual flow of clientele to the witchdoctor. I've interviewed many adults, who as children actually saw cute Easter bunnies hiding Easter eggs. The power of believing in something — feeling — is immense. *When you change your beliefs you will not only see the world differently, you will also immediately think, feel and act differently too.* Never underestimate the power of vision, values and beliefs. Over time they become emblazoned into deep parts of your limbic system — the heart and soul of you — unconsciously controlling you.

But to assist the leader in understanding his followers, how do people initially develop beliefs? It was due to individual and environmental differences. Their accumulated knowledge, attitudes (thoughts, beliefs and feelings), motivation, personality, values, culture, social class and family all play a role. Growing up, they observed their parents' faith in these beliefs and, what was once a conscious awareness, over time became an ingrained, unconsciously imprinted belief. Habits over time becomes our moral fibre, our character. We become a slave to our beliefs, most of which we never chose in the first place. Because they determine the outcome, as a leader, choose your beliefs carefully.

Frank B. Gilberth says this about time and habits:

We're worn into grooves by Time — by our habits. In the end, these grooves are going to show whether we've been second rate or champions, each in his way in dispatching the affairs of every day. By choosing our habits, we determine the grooves into which Time will wear us; and these are grooves that enrich our lives and make for ease of mind, peace, happiness — achievement.

Some phobias are passed on evolutionary experiences of our species: we biologically inherit a collective unconscious — like the fear of snakes. But other deeply seated irrational fears of such things as wolves, UFOs, black cats, witches, and ghosts, are most often transmitted culturally by our communities. The problem with these beliefs is they are completely unnecessary negative placebos (nocebos), sapping away valuable mental, emotional and physical energy. Supposing my domestic wanted to change this debilitating belief, how would Caroline get a better night's sleep by feeling better about the Tokoloshe? She needs to rouse and consciously re-programme her brain cells (neurons), not merely open her eyes, but actually open her mind and reassess her norms and values. Neuroscientists call this cortical remapping, *neuroplasticity*. Yes, the brain is not hardwired, but it can be *moulded and remoulded again*. She would need to change her behaviour by first changing her deeply rooted beliefs, norms, values and feelings towards witchcraft and the Tokoloshe. Change your core beliefs and you change your future. But you first must *want* to change; and then you must *believe* that you can change.

The above example may sound like an extreme 'reality' to an Anglo-Saxon living in Johannesburg, but consider how odd overly ambitious white people have appeared to other ethnic groups. This is how a respectable Native American (Indian) friend of Carl Jung expressed himself concerning white people:

We do not understand the whites; they are always wanting something — always restless — always looking for something. What is it? We do not know. We cannot understand them. They have such sharp noses, and such thin, cruel lips, such lines in their faces. We think they are all crazy.<sup>21</sup>

*A habit cannot be tossed out the window; it must be coaxed down the stairs a step at a time.* -- Mark Twain

If you still think this is nonsense, ask yourself these questions: Why did the white man exterminate the wolf in Europe, yet in North America the Indians revered and protected the wolf? Was it not the seemingly harmless fourteenth century folk tale about Little Red Riding Hood that irrationally impregnated the fear of wolves into white hearts? Why is a white dove a symbol for peace? Why do we wear black to funerals and why are wedding dresses white? Why do we give flowers to a woman we're romantically involved with? Why does a woman believe a man loves her if he gives her an expensive diamond? The root of this behaviour is our subconscious belief system, which very few of us have considered acknowledging at a conscious level, and so we keep perpetuating myths.

*A narrow belief system is a narrow person with a narrow field of action. And thus opportunities are missed. But fortunately with conscious thought we can influence the trillions of connections between our brain cells, and thus use the neuroplasticity of our neural system to change our beliefs, feelings and resultant attitudes. The more we read, study, travel, experience other cultures and mix with other tribes, the more we expand our understanding and resultant actions. Although other belief systems may not be in accord with our own, the wider our exposure to other belief systems, the more tolerant and empathetic we become of others, the less threatened we will feel, and the more alert we become to emerging opportunities. When we believe in sailing ships we can see them coming and hitch a ride. So the one belief that we must develop is the belief that we can control and certainly can modify our own perspective.*

Continuing this journey, now let us see how unconscious we really are.

### **Lie Detectors: Proof of our conscious triggering our subconscious**

Research suggests that as a species we have only been speaking for 50,000 years, so our body language has always been a primary form of communication. A lie detector is a wonderful tool to demonstrate how the body and mind are tightly intertwined in communication. When we hold a thought (mind image), we produce a physiological feeling (body image), and it is the body image or feeling (i.e. guilt) that a polygraph detects. So as our body mirrors our mind, the polygraph is extremely accurate at simultaneously reading our unconscious and subconscious physiological reactions to lying. Reading our inner state (mind via our body), the polygraph is of course most accurate when we *believe* that lying is wrong. Body language experts, Allan and Barbara Pease say, ‘The difficulty with lying is that the subconscious mind acts automatically and independently of our verbal lie, so our body language gives us away’.<sup>19</sup> When feeling deceitful, our sympathetic nervous system changes our breathing, pulse, blood pressure, skin conductivity and body temperature.

But those physiological changes are less obvious. Let us look at more obvious clusters of body language when someone lies to us, or when we ourselves lie. Voice tone changes (quiver), we swallow, blush, twitch, blink more, sweat and our pupils contract and dilate. Even more obvious gestures are touching of our nose, mouth, ear, eye or neck. Body language experts suggest that when there is incongruence between a person’s spoken language and their body language; rather trust the real message — the body language. For instance, if someone says they love you, or in negotiations if they

say they are *not* angry, but their tone of voice and body language says something else, be careful. Fortunately, although you may not even be aware of it, you are biologically designed to pick up these tacit signals. *So as a leader, how much more empowered will you feel when you consciously know what to look for?*

### **The Ideomotor Effect: More proof of our unconscious mind at work**

Ignorance creates fear. Until man invented radar, it was commonly believed that bats navigated in darkness because they were assisted by evil, supernatural powers. How else could they steer themselves around in the dead of night? But when the Doppler radar was invented, finally bats were given the respect they deserved. And so it is with so many other phenomena: leaders and followers jump to ridiculous conclusions when they do not understand. For example, when people did not understand that corrugated iron sheeting expanded and contracted during the night, they put the creaking sounds in the roof down to ghostly activity. The *ideomotor effect* is no different; people still regard it as dangerous because they do not understand how it works.

In 1983, psychologist Benjamin Libet of the University of California discovered that we are not as free willing or in control of our conscious as we think we are.<sup>20</sup> In a ground-breaking experiment using an EEG brain scanner, Libet studied the electrical activity in our brains *before* we act physically, which demystified the *ideomotor effect*, a psychological phenomenon where a person actually makes the physical movement himself, but because he does it unconsciously, he believes it is not of his doing. And like the poor bat was demonized, so today many ignorant people still think that the ideomotor effect is spooky.

A simple ideomotor experiment you can do to witness how your unconscious mind reflexively controls your body, is as follows: Take a piece of paper and draw a circle the size of a tennis ball on it. In this simple ideomotor lie detector test, draw a clockwise direction arrow on the circle, which is the direction that will be a “yes.” Tie a paperclip to a ten-inch piece of string to form a pendulum, which you lift and allow to swing freely across the circle. Ask yourself a simple question like “Do I own a motorbike?” If you do not, the pendulum swings anticlockwise. Start the process again, but now ask yourself a question that will have a “yes” answer, and the pendulum swings clockwise.

This may seem spooky to the ill-informed or ignorant, but it is just the marvel of our unconscious making our bodies react in the way we expect the pendulum to swing, although consciously you think you are not moving your hand. Thus in anticipation of assisting you achieve your goals, your unconscious mind fires up circuits that initiate subtle muscle movements that are amplified by the pendulum you are holding. This is your unconscious mind assisting you — as programmed by you. This is your mental unconscious inner-world; it analyses, plans and looks for patterns or relationships between things, thus generally navigating you safely through life.

Enter centre stage the archetypical hoax, the new-age snake oil peddler. This is exactly how those completely inert rubber ‘power bracelets’ work — blind studies have proven that they are all in the mind — both the placebo and ideomotor effects are powerfully at play. Although the ‘power’ bracelet, touching your wrist day and night, is a complete scam, it holds a powerful leadership lesson in how our minds work. This is modern-day proof of how intelligent humans still rely heavily on the placebo effect, and why the pseudo-scientific snake oil salesman, selling an alternative remedy, will never go away.

When we repetitively think with strong emotional involvement, we rewire the normally impenetrable neural pathways of our primitive emotional brain — that part of the brain that is responsible for establishing new motor patterns; the limbic system and basal ganglia.<sup>21</sup> This is the secret to kick bad habits and create new neural top-down reflexes to create health and success. Which is why this otherwise seemingly odd leadership subject — the placebo effect — must be covered in Chapter 4.

Science has uncovered how our unconscious mind tricks our conscious mind, leading us to much better understand how our whole-brain works. It seems we are not as in command of our conscious mind as we believe. *And much of what we think and believe is inadvertently transmitted and indoctrinated, without our permission, by our role models.* To illustrate, let us see how studies have dispelled myths about how dowsing sticks find underground water. Using a forked dowsing stick to find water has been scientifically proven to be the power of the unconscious driving your arms towards the ground where you ‘think’ the water is. A significant experiment in Munich exposed the poor skills of 500 dowsers and their dowsing sticks. Only six of the dowsers had better than chance skills, where the dowsing stick only improved their chances of finding buried water by 0.0004 percent.<sup>22</sup> But perhaps when water is very close to the surface, unknowingly you imperceptibly feel and smell the dampness and change in humidity at an unconscious level, which ‘forces’ the stick in your hands to pull your arms downward (ideomotor effect). Just because we cannot smell does not mean we do not unconsciously sense.

This unconscious intuition is also evident amongst experienced gamblers, who at an unconscious level count cards and just ‘sense’ what to play next. Both men and women at an unconscious level pick up on each others’ secreted pheromones which radically affect their behaviour or physiology. But because they are so oblivious of what is really going on, as with a dowser, they’ll swear that there’s a bigger ‘power’ at play. The power is in your own body and mind. Intuitively, sometimes the hair on your neck stands up, and you only find out why you reacted that way after the fact. If we were more in touch with the bi-vironment, like our forefathers, we would have noticed the trigger.

*We are essentially unconscious scanners, taking in information that is not censored by the ego and which, from time to time, is perceived on a subjective level as a “hunch”, a “resonance” or a sense that something is happening “out there”.* Ian McCallum (psychiatrist, 2005)

### **More unconscious messages in body language: Awareness of Non-Verbal Communication**

*We know that non-verbal communication is the most important facet of communication, yet as leaders we still unfortunately overlook its importance.* Have we forgotten the blatant pulse-racing power that red lipstick with an enticing layer of cherry flavoured lip-gloss has on a man? Nathan Pipitone and Gordon Gallup of the State University of New York have discovered that a woman’s voice sounds most attractive at the peak of ovulation. Women therefore unconsciously, but discretely and cleverly, send hints to men when they’re at their fertility peak. We are biologically designed to detect these social signals. The study also cited that “Other women also pick up on the changes, perhaps to keep an eye on the competition,”<sup>23</sup>

Research by J. Richard Udry at the University of North Carolina found that women have an altered response to the male musk odour at different times of the month. Because women are so much more receptive to the male musk odour, he noticed, they engage in sexual intercourse roughly six times more often at about the time of ovulation. Yet women are of course oblivious to this too. Thus women have a pheromonal response to men’s airborne odours (and vice versa). We therefore use chemical communication far more than we think we do. But how many women would admit this? It is not a conscious reaction, so it actually cannot be admitted to. And how many men are even aware that they have a musky allure on women? These is a lot of neurobiological ‘stuff’ going on.

Dr. Michael Russell has also linked these olfactory signals to why women living or working in close proximity eventually synchronise their monthly cycles. Thus an airborne chemical, fed to our ancient evolutionary brain structures, can biologically regulate us. This seemingly bizarre behaviour to the unconscious person might sound like voodoo, intuition, or a sixth sense at play, but we need to give our marvellous five senses and brain the due neurobiological credit. From insects to humans, this silent form of communiqué is of prime importance to our existence and interaction in the workplace. By releasing the right chemicals and fragrances a queen termite or bee can simultaneously control thousands of workers, forcing them to mindlessly conform to her royal wishes; yet to the uninformed observer this phenomenon would fantastically appear as telepathy.

Furthermore, recent studies of the brain show that we unconsciously read people's body language *before* they speak. We ourselves, in fact, unconsciously send out a non-verbal message before *we* speak — our brains are evidently structured this way. This finding is in line with Professor Albert Merhabian's 1960 research which suggests only 7 percent of the *interpreted feelings* in our message are the words we utter, 38 percent is the tone and tempo of our voice, and 55 percent is our body gestures. This is why Italian opera can be so moving yet you cannot understand a word of it. So, it is not so much *what* we say, but the *way* we say it (93 percent body language). This is also why, when a politician or leader reads a speech, they often sound scripted and phoney.

Listen to Nick Morgan's advice and observations on how our body reacts just before we consciously decide to act.<sup>24</sup>

We're learning that in human beings the second, nonverbal conversation actually comes first. You might say that the words are after-the-fact explanations of why we just gestured as we did.

We nod, shake our heads, roll our eyes, all of which express reaction more immediately – and more powerfully — than words can. Gestures precede conscious thought and thought precedes words. Although audiences are not consciously aware of this unnatural sequence, their innate ability to read body language leads them to feel that something's wrong – that the speaker is inauthentic.

So, if a speaker or leader consciously throws in body language *after* the spoken word, the audience detect that something is wrong. Which is why, as a speaker or leader, you have to *believe* in your message, believe in your cause, allowing nature to deliver the authentic sequence of gestures. This

again explains how and why the ideomotor effect physically swings the pendulum even though you consciously resist it. You cannot trick the audience; it is too difficult — too against nature's ideomotor effect — to plan and execute your body language sequence.

Managers also need to be aware that there are thinking traps that incline us to be un-aware: denial, rationalization, resentment, and self-pity.

### **Denial and Rationalization smother Awareness**

*Only the shallow know themselves.* -- Oscar Wilde

In order to be a successful leader, we need to be conscious of how irrationally we operate in a given situation. A midlife crisis, for instance, could completely consume and control us without us realizing this is destroying our marriage. A couple may be completely oblivious of the fact that the grass on *their* side is in fact greener, but choose to turn their backs on a potentially great relationship. Closely linked to this unconsciousness is *denial* and *rationalization*.

*Whatever games are played with us, we must play no games with ourselves.*

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) American writer, activist

We have to understand the powerful trickery of *denial*. To protect itself, the overly-aroused id-ego (an overly-aroused limbic system, causes the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis — HPA — to release stress hormones) has a powerful defence or coping system called *denial*. This defence system, this denial, is the reason the death penalty does not curb crime. Humans (especially whilst committing the crime) *think* they will never get caught. Every human being is born with the ability to deny and repress certain experiences, circumstances and events that we have been exposed to. This denial is the deepest flaw in the human race and is responsible for destroying lives, companies and countries. Denial is so powerful, in fact, that an intelligent anorectic can stand unclothed before a mirror, essentially stare death in the face, and yet believe that she is overweight and still in control of her life. For instance, in 1983, always convinced that she was healthy, world famous singer Karen Carpenter collapsed on stage singing, ironically, “Top of the world.” She was just 32 when she sadly died from anorexia nervosa.

*“The ego shuns the present moment, where it may be revealed for what it really is -- a sham; so the ego is chiefly concerned with the future, where 'more' will lead to happiness, or with the past and the previous successes or failures that established its identity.” -- From Living in The Now, by Jill Jacques. p.48*

*Rationalization, the stepsister of denial, is equally as dangerous. An anorectic or bulimic will rationalize: “if super models are so thin, then looking this thin is okay.” An alcoholic can awaken in vomit, lose his job, shatter his marriage and believe that he drinks alcohol to be a pleasant, sociable person. Denial and rationalization, especially inherent in people with low self-esteem, where the id-ego, rather than the more balanced ego, is in charge, are short-term defence mechanisms allowing people to avoid the harsh realities of life, especially the hard task of facing up to shortcomings. So the leader can rationalize and justify many painful areas of their organisation until the actual problems becomes so ignored and irrelevant that they fail to distinguish reality from fantasy. *Over the long haul, being truthful with ourselves will set us free, but in the interim, reality may make us feel intensely irritable, uncomfortable and even angry. Yet great leaders have no problem looking at reality.**

*Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you. -- Dr. Carl Jung*

### **Over-optimism. Denying the real world.**

Some people, typically with an *external locus of control (ELOC)*, believe that focusing on reality is negative thinking. They believe, for example, that they have supernatural powers that supersede statistical reality. For instance, wearing a seat belt is planning an accident — negative thinking. But statistically, they are actually just playing with fire. Why not remove the delete button from the keyboard so we do not make mistakes, one might rationalize. But the harsh reality is that we all make mistakes. No one is *that* special.

Life, like climbing into a car, carries risk. With so few lifeboats, the captain of the ‘unsinkable’ Titanic found that out the hard way. He drowned in a cold sea of over-optimism. How can intelligent people be so naive and believe in something that is in contradiction to empirical evidence? With the dangers of icebergs floating all around us, in the sea as well as in life, how do we get such a skewed sense of reality? Why unnecessarily and carelessly travel full steam ahead into icebergs and lion’s dens? Individuals and businesses need to choose their strategies watchfully and plans should be realistic. After

watching a popular self-help DVD, I recently witnessed a friend of mine Chris destroy his family financially and emotionally by losing his entire estate in a high-risk business venture. In hindsight, Chris blames the DVD for making starting a new business sound so easy — all you had to do was “believe”, the DVD said.

In their article, “Delusions of Success,” Professor of Psychology and 2002 Nobel Prize winner, Daniel Kahneman, and co-author Dan Lovallo, sight *over-optimism* for undermining success.<sup>25</sup>

Research into human cognition has traced this over-optimism to many sources. One of the most powerful is the tendency of individuals to exaggerate their own talents — to believe they are above average in their endowment of positive traits and abilities. Consider a survey of one million students conducted by the American College Board in the 1970s. When asked to rate themselves in comparison to their peers, 70% of the students said they were above average in leadership ability, while only 2% rated themselves below average. For athletic prowess, 60% saw themselves above median, just 6% below. The inclination to exaggerate our talents is amplified by our tendency to misperceive the causes of certain events. The typical pattern of such *attribution errors*, as psychologists call them, is for people to take credit for positive outcomes and to attribute negative outcomes to external factors, no matter what their true cause.

A good thing about denial is it buys you time inside your head, but in reality time keeps moving along. A second benefit of denial is that when life finally disintegrates, disintegration arrives as a revelation, but without a disturbing stage of angst before it. So wallowing in denial is usually short-lived; eventually it exposes you to the harsh reality of the situation that you could not previously see. *We know that by continuously ignoring reality and responsibilities, countries, organisations and individuals become irrelevant.*

In his third book, *How The Mighty Fall* (2009), Jim Collins cites three initial stages that lead to an organisation’s capitulation: 1) an over-inflated sense of worth (hubristic pride), 2) undisciplined pursuit of more, and 3) denial of risk. Then when it becomes undeniable that the organisation is in fact falling, in their insecurity the leaders start grasping out for stage four, a quick-fix miracle cure or as Collins puts it “grasping for salvation,” which leads to stage five, “capitulation to irrelevance or death.” The lesson? *There is no “saviour” that can replace disciplined effort over time — not for the organisation or the individual.* Collins wisely notes, ‘Most overnight success stories are about twenty years in the making.’<sup>26</sup> In Collin’s fourth book, *Great By Choice* (2012, co-authored with

Morten Hansen), he again emphasises that “fanatical discipline” is the central theme of great companies.

Denial and rationalization are as deadly for entrepreneur, politician and leader as they are to the anorectic and smoker. How do we make changes? First, take *responsibility*. Look at *reality*, *plan* accordingly and only then get *cautiously optimistic*. American pastor William Ward put it perfectly: ‘The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.’ Secondly, after persisting, know when to throw in the towel, as it is of course futile attempting to launch a ship with a huge hole in its hull. As Thomas L. Friedman has said, ‘The first rule of holes is that when you are in one, stop digging.’

### **Resentment and Self-Pity**

*One of the most time-consuming things is to have an enemy.* -- E. B. White

*Resentment* is a psychological umbilical-cord, feeding our irrational id-ego and, along with *self-pity*, is just another great excuse to justify our present and future failures. But in their unconsciousness, most people will not see themselves this way. Typical causes of resentment are numerous: bosses, spouses, exes, parents, anybody fairly close to us, and certainly bad and unfair circumstances. *Resentment, the energy-sapping preoccupation with the past, is the number one cause of unconsciousness, low self-esteem, inflated ego, distress, anger, and a myriad of physical and spiritual diseases.* We perceive the world as we are on the inside, not as the world actually really is. If life is a framed canvas, it is our perspective that completes the brushstrokes.

But as long as we hold onto the scars of our past, we will not be spontaneously present in our bi-vironment. Resentment is a cancerous infection, a mechanism that pushes away future opportunities. *It is clear that self-pity, low self-esteem and resentment go together — these comprise and direct our attitude negatively.* This is where psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger’s advice is valuable: ‘Attitudes are more important than facts.’<sup>27</sup> But changing our attitude requires addressing the root cause of our beliefs about our past, present and future. It requires changing our belief in ourselves — and that requires diligent homework.

*Nothing has changed, except my attitude — so everything has changed.* -- Unknown

With a better understanding of consciousness and its critical role in leadership and all relationships, let us now get deeper into the exciting cognitive neuroscience of leadership.

#### Key Takeouts: Bi-vironment and Consciousness

*The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up.* -- Paul Valery

- Be a bi-vironmentalist. Enmesh your inner and outer-environments.
- Consciousness is key. Do not get self-indulgently caught up in your head and ignore the world around you, but be aware of your thinking *and* your outer-environment.
- Successful strategies must include your inner and outer-environment. In other words, organizations and families cannot be autocratically led from the top only; there must be an inclusive top-down and bottom-up approach. Plans are worth very little if management and staff do not *collectively* 'buy-in'. A manager can write the best plan, but may fail dismally if the plan was not also co-written by colleagues. Why? Because the plan needs to be well implemented, not just written.
- A balanced ego is healthy. Your pleasure and power seeking id-ego is selfish, unconscious and irrational.
- A narrow belief system is a narrow person with a limited field of view and action. Because of this narrowness, opportunities are missed.
- To change your behaviour practically (normally caused by mental blocks or limiting habits), you need to change your beliefs, values and attitudes. As the world and society keeps changing, you may want to reject a few limiting beliefs and values. For instance, the world is round, not flat. Leaders lead by first consulting their followers.
- Another way to change your belief is to act and discover new insights first-hand. Not all changes start with thinking. Often, through repeated action — through test driving, so to speak — you will feel differently, which will change your thinking and thus belief.
- Denial and rationalization are forms of unconsciousness. We unconsciously bury important private and business evidence, thus keep skating on dangerously thin ice.
- Resentment and self-pity lock us into the past, keep us unconscious, and are the root causes of

detachment from our bi-vironment.

- Success is not an overnight event. It is undeniably a long process of understanding, recognition, hard work, and change.

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