

PETER BREGMAN

LEADING
WITH
EMOTIONAL
COURAGE



HOW TO HAVE HARD CONVERSATIONS,
CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY, AND INSPIRE ACTION
ON YOUR MOST IMPORTANT WORK

CEOs and Business Leaders

Leading with Emotional Courage is a trailblazing idea, inspirational manifesto and eminently achievable manual. Peter Bregman's central idea, "if you can feel everything, you can do anything," instantly became my motto for forging more productive and rewarding relationships in every aspect of my life. It's ingenious, it's intuitive, and it works.

**Jeffrey Seller, Four time Tony Award
winning producer of *Hamilton*, *Rent*,
Avenue Q, *In the Heights*.**

Leading with Emotional Courage is a terrific guide that explains why and how we need to look inward before we can drive leadership forward. It will also help you connect on a deeper level with those around you—an absolute necessity if you want to get your most important work done.

James A. Forese, President, Citigroup

Peter is a master storyteller who offers compelling and important takeaways that really do make a difference. The principles in this book are the ones I believe in, and they are aligned with those that helped me and my tribe build a culture that resulted in a 93% employee engagement level at WD-40 Company.

**Garry Ridge – CEO WD-40 Company & coauthor
with Ken Blanchard – *Helping People Win at Work***

We must see ourselves 'life size,' as Peter Drucker instructed. *Leading with Emotional Courage* is a leader's blueprint to do so.

**Frances Hesselbein, Chairman, The Frances
Hesselbein Leadership Forum, Former CEO
of the Girl Scouts, and Presidential
Medal of Freedom recipient**

Becoming a Values-based leader requires you to first be capable of leading yourself. Peter does a fantastic job of demonstrating why emotional courage is absolutely key to your personal leadership journey. I learned a lot by reading Peter's book.

**Harry Kraemer, Jr, Professor, Northwestern
Kellogg School of Mgmt; Former Chairman and
CEO, BAXTER International**

After reading this book, you will want to share it with your colleagues, your kids, and others in your life. Peter is a master at drawing readers in with self-evaluation, compelling stories, and concrete take-aways. This book will stay on my bookshelf as a reference.

**Asheesh Advani, CEO, JA (Junior Achievement)
Worldwide**

Leading with Emotional Courage is good for business, good for people, and good for the planet. Bregman's book offers the communications tools environmentalists and other nonprofit leaders need to transform tough conversations into progress and action.

**Mark R. Tercek, President and CEO
of The Nature Conservancy**

Leading with Emotional Courage brilliantly identifies the often unnoticed emotional undercurrents of high-stakes business situations and the dynamics of everyday interactions. By making conscious the unconscious, this book offers us control over our own decisions and actions, asking us to open our minds and be curious when emotions are provoked. It has helped me personally to turn some of my most counter-productive reactions into questions. With practical, real-life examples and bite-sized nuggets of information, this book is relevant to everyone, not just ultra-senior leadership.

Michael Thatcher, CEO, Charity Navigator

At the end of the day, Peter gives useful tools for people to own their unique strength and power to be bold leaders in the board room and at the kitchen table

Randall Tucker, Mastercard Chief Inclusion Officer.

Emotional Courage is the foundation for inspirational and effective leadership. Peter Bregman's groundbreaking and timely book, *Leading with Emotional Courage*, does not merely inspire action, it cultivates it. Through concrete and actionable how-to's and compelling stories, this book will change the way you make decisions, how you speak in a boardroom, and actually how you feel at the end of each day. *Leading with Emotional Courage* is right on target and surprisingly different than anything out there. I feel like I've been waiting for this book for a long time!

**James M. Citrin, Leader, Spencer Stuart CEO
Practice, Author, *You're in Charge, Now What?***

Authors and Thought Leaders

This is a brave and generous book about being brave and generous. Emotional courage isn't about getting what we want, it's about serving others. Peter Bregman is sharing useful magic here.

Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin*

Emotional courage is the courage to *feel*. It's what stands between us and the difficult things we must do as leaders. Emotional courage grows stronger when you practice it—by taking a risk, making a decision, or otherwise following through when you may not be comfortable doing so. It's about getting out of your own way and having the emotional freedom to *act*. Want to know more? Then follow through and read this book!

Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager*® and *Servant Leadership in Action*

Peter's concept of Emotional Courage is a game-changer. It isn't just another theory about productivity or leadership—it's a truth you can feel. It affects every aspect of your leadership and every relationship in your life. The beauty of this book is that it helps you actually strengthen those critical mental-emotional muscles and will make even the most successful leaders better.

**Marshall Goldsmith – The author of the #1
New York Times bestseller *Triggers***

Leading with Emotional Courage tackles a tough subject that isn't much talked about in the business world: the hard emotions that we all experience. If you courageously adopt the advice in this breakthrough book, you can begin the tough conversations that lead to real change, build more trusting relationships, and perhaps even become an inspiration to others.

Daniel H. Pink, author of *WHEN* and *DRIVE*

Want to learn how to brave the fears associated with difficult interpersonal exchanges on the job and elsewhere? *Leading with Emotional Courage*, brimming with applicable insights and lessons, is definitely the book for you.

**Robert B. Cialdini, author of *Influence*
and *Pre-Suasion***

Change begins from within; so does leadership. Bregman's insights help leaders gain personal confidence so that they can approach others with a clear purpose and bold, courageous actions. This marvelous book lets me feel like Peter is sitting next to me, coaching me how to be more effective. The insights resonate, the assessments inform, and the stories inspire.

**Dave Ulrich, Rensis Likert Professor, Ross School
of Business, University of Michigan
Partner, The RBL Group**

It's incredibly refreshing to get this sort of wise and kind advice from someone who specializes in helping leaders get "massive traction". Most voices you'd hear today urging "massive traction" would speak fast, hard, unrelenting exhortations couched in inspirational illustrations of super-human performance. As human-centered-designers, we at the Life Design Lab at Stanford aren't too keen on those driven voices. We're looking to help people be more human – not super-human, which is a very different, and frankly in-human, thing. Peter Bregman has a different voice. What other "massive traction-getting" coaches will suggest that compassion is a critical foundation of self-confidence or that you need to master irrelevancy if you're going to succeed (and better do so well before retirement)? I've been assigning students to read Peter's contrary ideas for years and I recommend this book to you. I finally got to share coffee with him face-to-face and had one of the best first dates of all time. Pull up a chair with this book and share a coffee with Peter. You'll have a lovely time and be better for it.

**Dave Evans, Co-Founder, Stanford Life Design
Lab, Co-author, NYT #1 Bestseller, *Designing Your
Life*, early Apple, co-founder Electronic Arts**

Emotional courage is the superpower of the 21st Century! We live in a world where it is far easier to avoid our feelings than it is to feel them. As such, emotional courage is becoming rare at the same time that it is increasingly valuable. The people who cultivate emotional courage—who are confident, connected, and committed to their purpose—will thrive. *Leading with Emotional Courage* is an accessible action plan for breaking through the emotional barriers that prevent people from doing what they want to do.

**Christine Carter, PhD, Author of *The Sweet Spot:
How to Accomplish More by Doing Less and
Raising Happiness***

Engaging and relevant, Peter Bregman's *Leading with Emotional Courage* provides a clear and practical framework to follow when facing emotionally-charged situations. He challenges us to face our fears and stand strong by offering both principles and skills that teach us how to confidently act before being acted upon. A superb read!

**Stephen M. R. Covey, *The New York Times* and
1 *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *The Speed
of Trust* and coauthor of *Smart Trust***

Leading without courage is not really leading at all. Bregman presents a compelling argument for the power of embracing difficult emotions.

Cal Newport, author of *Deep Work*

Leading with Emotional Courage is about putting your whole self into something. About embracing your fears, expressing your passions, showing your vulnerabilities, and engaging fully with others. It's a book that you do not simply read. Instead, you experience it. It's full of pathos and compassion, enlightenment and practicality. It's like conversing with your best friend. You come away feeling refreshed, entertained, and wiser. Peter Bregman is a master storyteller, and he enlivens his sage counsel with scores of personal tales, joyfully told, each containing simple wisdom and hard truths. There are lots of how-to-do books on the market. *Leading with Emotional Courage* isn't one of them. It's a how-to-be book, and I guarantee you that you'll want to be more like the person Peter describes once you've experienced this book. I highly recommend it.

**Jim Kouzes, coauthor of the bestselling
The Leadership Challenge and the Dean's Executive
Fellow of Leadership, Leavey School of Business,
Santa Clara University**

There's a line between the domineering, overbearing management style of decades past—less effective because it's tone deaf to people—and an increasingly self-aware and people-oriented leadership style that can be less effective if it's too wimpy to get the job done. Bregman offers a thoughtful guide to finding and walking that sometimes elusive line. *Leading with Emotional Courage* offers manageable, bite-sized insights into thought and behavior changes that can help any leader be empathetic enough to honor our shared humanity but still courageous enough to make the tough decisions and initiate the hard conversations essential to a thriving workplace.

**Whitney Johnson, Thinkers50 Leading
Management Thinker, Critically-acclaimed author
of *Disrupt Yourself***

Peter Bregman gives nuanced advice on how we can navigate the complex landscape of our emotional life—to become better leaders, (and better human beings), by being more connected to ourselves and others.

Tal Ben-Shahar, author of *The Joy of Leadership*

To be effective, leaders must move the heart, starting with their own. Bregman brilliantly highlights the often overlooked, but critical aspect of leadership – the courage to feel. Read this book to tap into the power of emotion and unleash your and your team's true potential.

**Sanyin Siang, author of *The Launch Book*;
Executive Director, Duke University
Fuqua/Coach K Center on Leadership & Ethics**

Emotional Courage is a wonderful reminder that if you are willing to feel everything you can do anything. The book, laced with Bregman's own courageous honesty and openness, will help you build your confidence, bring out the best in others, and summon the emotional courage you need to succeed as a leader.

**Liz Wiseman, *New York Times* bestselling author
of *Multipliers* and *Rookie Smarts***

In *Leading with Emotional Courage*, Peter Bregman provides us with a novel roadmap for how to embrace, rather than avoid, difficult emotions and, in so doing, live more fulfilling lives. The book is deeply insightful, a pleasure to read, and an indispensable guide for making discomfort and conflict a trusted ally and friend.

Andy Molinsky, Ph.D., author of *Reach and Global Dexterity*

Government and Military Leaders

Cowardice, as characterized by excessive self-interest, has become pervasive across our society. Peter Bregman has given us the tools to be emotionally courageous. As leaders we want to have tough conversations that benefit our organizations, and *Leading with Emotional Courage* shows us the way. Readers will emerge from *Leading with Emotional Courage* with renewed enthusiasm for the day to day challenges of leading. Peter Bregman's book promises to free a huge cohort of leaders from the anxieties that get in the way of doing what's right, instead of what's easy. Choosing the harder right over the easy wrong is one of the "Holy Grails" of leader development—and in *Leading with Emotional Courage*, Peter Bregman has captured that prize. Finally, a book to inspire those of us who lead through the conflict inherent to organizations.

Thomas A. Kolditz, PhD, Brigadier General, US Army (ret), Professor Emeritus, US Military Academy, West Point, Director, Ann & John Doerr Institute for New Leaders, Rice University

Leading with Emotional Courage is a great guide for practitioners who want to heighten their ability to influence others effectively. The book clearly identifies four elements associated with exhibiting emotional courage and provides tangible exercises in service of strengthening one's competence in a given area. I recommend this book to anyone who is committed to becoming a better leader!

**Bernie Banks, Brigadier General, US Army (ret),
Associate Dean of Leadership Development,
Northwestern University's Kellogg
School of Management**

Peter has spoken with such candor of the interior conversations we use to magnify or sabotage our leadership moments. It's like having a workable path, where you are taught to watch yourself and learn to lead. Take this path; you'll be larger for it.

**Charlotte Beers, Former CEO Ogilvy, Former
Undersecretary of State**

What a lovely mix of personal and professional anecdotes and straight talk about the importance of taking emotions – yours and your colleagues – into account in the task of leading an organization. As Bregman's book so eloquently explains, as long as organizations are composed of humans and not robots, the fundamental challenge of corporate leadership is to get a diverse group of highly emotional creatures to work together effectively – which requires that leaders confront, head on, the need of everyone in the organization to have a sense of common purpose and connectedness. As leaders, we need the emotional courage to engage with our colleagues where they live, where the desire for affirmation and the fear of failure are constantly in play. I am grateful to Peter for writing this book.

**Jim Millstein, Founder, Chairman, and Chief
Executive Officer of Millstein & Co., Former Chief
Restructuring Officer at the U.S. Department of
the Treasury**

Emotional courage is critical to getting anything important done. And Bregman's book is the essential primer to developing it. If you lead – or aspire to lead – read this book. The world needs more people with emotional courage.

Mark Sanford, Unites States Congressman

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WILEY

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*To Ann Bradney and Jessica Gelson
You are remarkable women, leaders, teachers
You inspire me to feel everything
The world is a better place because of you
Thank you*

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WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

Think of a hard conversation you know you should have with someone that you haven't initiated. Do you have one in mind?

Now, consider why you haven't had the conversation.

Is it because you don't know what you want to say? I'm betting you know exactly what you want to say. Is it because you haven't had the opportunity to say it? I'm guessing you've already missed a few ripe opportunities to raise this uncomfortable issue. Is it because you don't know *how* to say it? I'm sure you're struggling with finding the perfect words. But why do you need perfect words? Adequate words should be enough.

So, why haven't you had the conversation?

Because it's scary.

As you think about it, your heart rate quickens, your adrenaline flows, your sweat rises to the surface. What if they lash back or get defensive or blame you? What if they simply stare at you and go all passive-aggressive? What if they get meaner afterwards? What if they gossip about you to others? Or maybe you're afraid of your own response. What if *you* lose control and fly into a rage and do things you will regret later?

That would be uncomfortable (to say the least). You would have to feel things that you don't want to feel.

And *that*, it turns out, is what holds you back.

What's hard – what actually derails us from acting powerfully in our lives, in our relationships, at work, in the world – is discomfort. The *discomfort* of follow-through.

On the surface, it seems like the key to follow-through is the courage to act. And it is. But what underlies the courage to act?

The courage to feel. Emotional courage. And that is what this book will help you develop.

If You Are Willing to Feel Everything, You Can Do Anything.

Any gap you have in emotional courage limits your freedom to act. When you avoid feeling, it's a huge drain on your productivity and your organizational outcomes.

I know this because my company, Bregman Partners, helps leaders and teams work more effectively together to get massive traction on their most important work. Our focus is on strategy execution – getting difficult things done – and our coaches help people move through the blocks and obstacles that prevent them from contributing their maximum potential.

Over time, we have seen just about every obstacle imaginable – people coming up against silos, politics, culture, clients, the marketplace, and more.

But, far and away the biggest block to contributing their maximum potential is invariably self-imposed – underdeveloped emotional courage – their resistance to following through on uncomfortable actions. If they don't follow through – if they don't have that hard conversation – then they won't have to feel the hard feelings. So they don't follow through.

Take Brad,¹ for example, CEO of a financial services firm. He was managing a difficult turnaround of his sales organization and had decided that he needed to fire his head of sales, who was a nice guy but who wasn't performing. Three months later, he still hadn't fired him. I asked him why. His answer? "I'm a wimp!"

¹Throughout the book, company and individual's names and some details may have been changed.