



Be a Goldfish

Leadership Lessons from Ted Lasso


July 25, 2023



Overview

- There is no shortage of reading, workshops, courses and TED talks on leadership.
- Sometimes we can get ideas from unexpected sources
- The TV show Ted Lasso uses the humorous premise of an American football coach leading an English soccer team to dive into complex themes about leadership and life.
- We're going to focus on five strategies exemplified in the show and some additional thoughts on resilience.

What Can We Learn from Ted Lasso?

A photograph of a soccer ball and two blue cleats on a blue background. The soccer ball is white with black and grey panels. The cleats are bright blue with black laces. The scene is set against a solid blue background.

Leadership

Ted Lasso's Lessons

- "Ted Lasso" is a popular TV show that revolves around the character Ted Lasso, an American football coach who unexpectedly finds himself coaching a professional soccer team in England
- It's a classic "fish out of water" story that goes much deeper, imparting valuable lessons and inspirational messages about leadership, teamwork and resilience
- Leading a team in a municipal environment is not unlike leading a sports team – where the "fans" demand results

Leadership

Ted Lasso's Lessons

- Five important lessons to share today:
 - Be Curious
 - Tell the Truth
 - Embrace Change
 - Believe
 - Be a Goldfish





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Leadership

Be Curious



<https://youtu.be/5x0PzUoJS-U>



Leadership

Be Curious

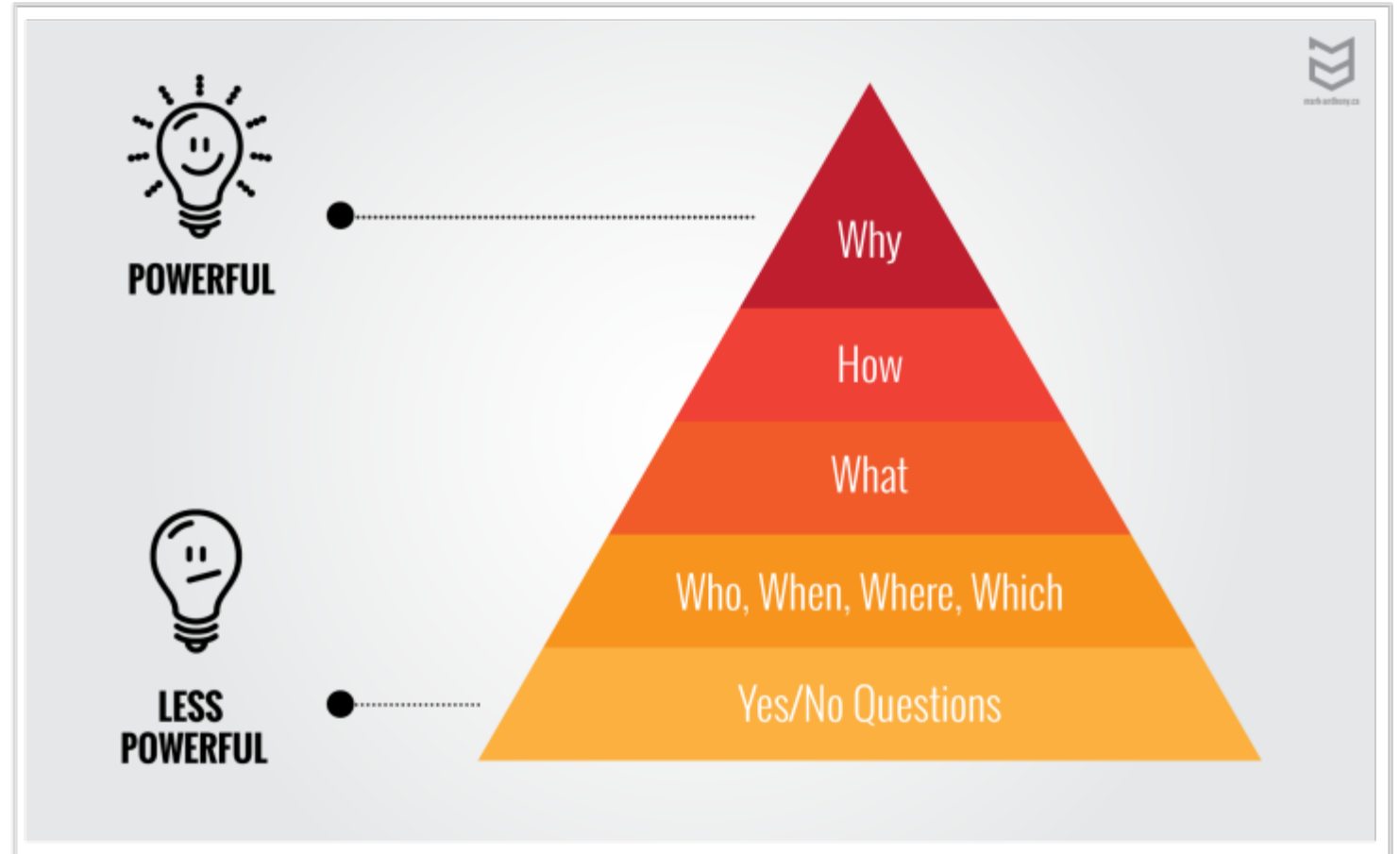
- Be Curious
 - Encourage a culture of curiosity – create an environment where people feel empowered and motivated to seek knowledge, ask questions, explore new ideas and continuously learn
 - Create a safe space where questions are welcome, and mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning
 - Encourage collaboration (breaking down silos) to support understanding between teams and encouraging the sharing of observations
 - Make sure feedback is constructive, rather than negative – encourage team members to think of feedback as a tool for growth and improvement

- Be Curious
 - Explore new perspectives – challenge conventional thinking
 - Sometimes we forget to be curious because we're too busy trying to seem like we're listening, while we are really contemplating what to say next.
 - How can we ask the right questions to probe further, be curious, before jumping in?

Leadership

Be Curious

- Be Curious
 - You will get much less information when you ask closed-ended questions like who, when or where
 - Open-ended questions start with what, how and, often most importantly, why.
 - Powerful questions come from a place of curiosity, not judgment. And when leaders lead with curiosity, remarkable things happen.



The linguistic architecture of powerful questions diagram [adapted]. The Art and architecture of powerful questions. Vogt, Brown, & Isaacs (2003, p. 3).



Leadership

Be Curious

- Be Curious
 - Less important: Are you satisfied with our approach?
 - More important: When have you been most satisfied with our approach?
 - More important: What is it about our approach that you find most satisfying?
 - Most important: Why might it be that that our approach has had its ups and downs?



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Tell the Truth



<https://youtu.be/5BA78pMFiDo>

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Tell the Truth

- Tell the truth:
 - Honesty is essential for building trust and credibility.
 - Be transparent with your team, even when it's difficult, and encourage them to do the same.
 - A culture of honesty fosters accountability and mutual respect, helping your team navigate challenges together

Leadership

Tell the Truth

- Tell the truth: Barriers?
 - Worries about upsetting people and dealing with their emotions
 - Interruptions and finding the time for important conversations
 - Struggling to say “No”
 - Wanting to be accepted and holding back information that people need to hear but may not want to
 - Watering down information to dull its impact has the effect of dulling its impact (people may not feel as bad, but they also may not get the importance of the message)

Leadership

Tell the Truth

- Tell the truth:
 - Set aside time for important conversations – think of this as an investment in building your “trust bank”
 - Be open and empathetic – watch your body language
 - Provide genuine feedback honestly and constructively with the underlying understanding that the intention is to help them achieve their goals and the team’s goals



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Embrace Change



<https://youtu.be/EklqjtJUW64>



Leadership

Embrace Change

- Embrace Change:
 - We all know change is constant – and can be a major source of stress and anxiety for people.
 - But - resisting change is also exhausting
 - Embracing change lets you deepen your understanding and broaden your skills as you learn a new way of seeing and doing.
 - As a leader, like Ted, you need to show empathy and understanding while focusing on the process.
 - Take small steps, rather than diving straight in, and celebrate those steps and achievements along the way.



Leadership

Embrace Change

- Embrace Change:
 - DISCARD: “That’s the way we’ve always done it” and “We tried that before and it didn’t work”
 - Remember our questions and consider: “what are we missing,” “why did that fail before?”
 - Focus on your team’s purpose, shared goals and values
 - Be authentic – change can be scary and it’s ok to acknowledge that
 - Respect perspectives of others – be open to new ideas and ways of thinking
 - Learn from failure – not everything will go smoothly. Be honest about failures and reflect and share what is learned

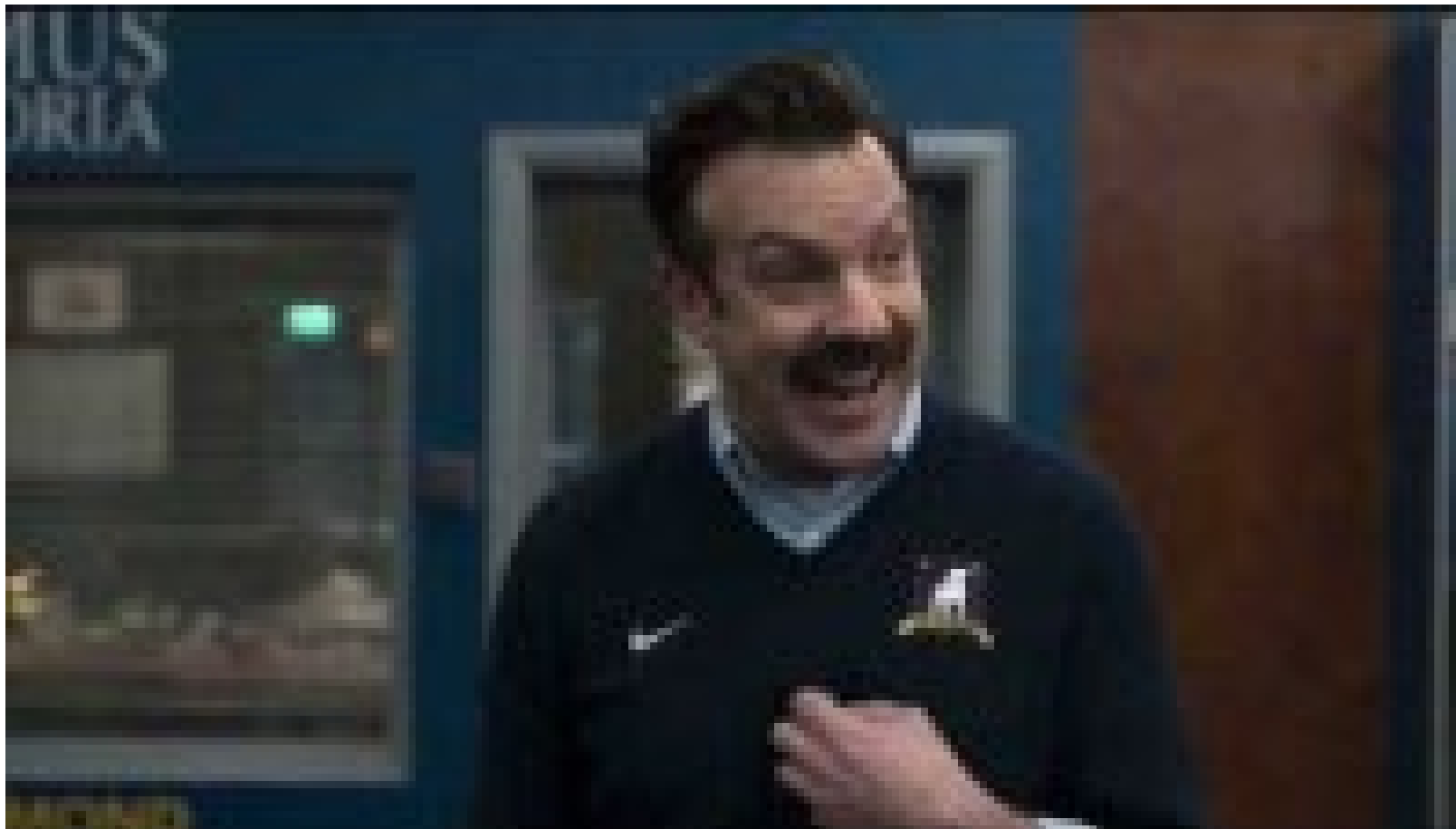


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Leadership

Believe

giffels
webster



<https://youtu.be/QVVoDjSr0I4>



Leadership

Believe

- **Believe in yourself!**
 - Self-confidence is at the heart of effective leadership.
 - To lead others, you have to believe in and trust your own skills and knowledge
 - Invest in your own development (demonstrate benefits of lifelong learning)
 - Demonstrate confidence without arrogance – like Ted – know your strengths but acknowledge your limitations
 - Trust your instincts – your knowledge and understanding, along with your gut, will help you make decisions that align with your values.



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Believe

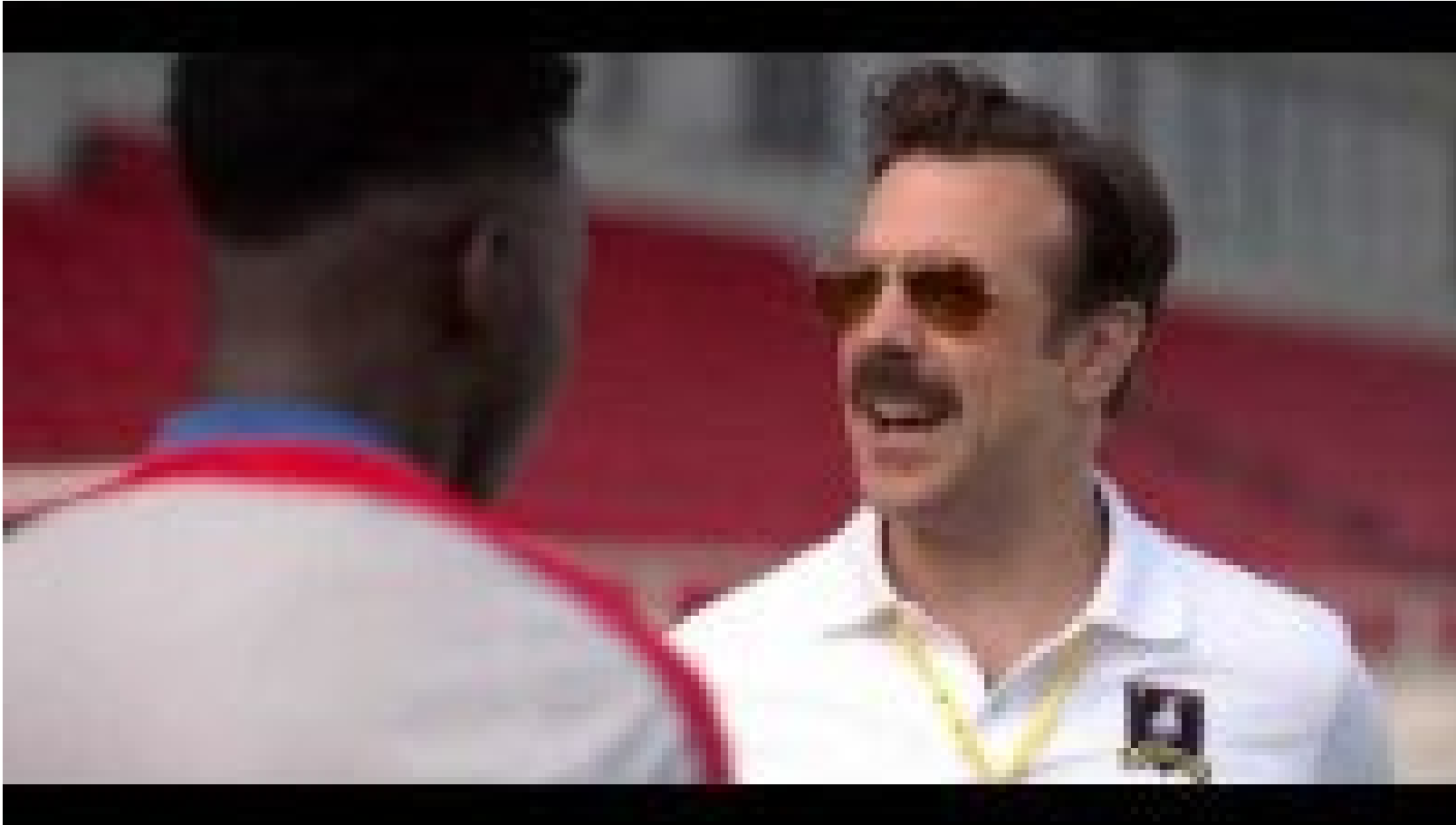
- Believe in others!
 - Start with a foundation that everyone has potential
 - See the best in your team and help them along their professional journeys
 - Invest in the development of your team – offer training opportunities and resources that help them enhance their skills and knowledge
 - Delegate responsibilities – trust your team to handle tasks independently, which shows that you have confidence in their capabilities
 - Encourage creativity and innovation – encourage team members to share ideas and experiment with new approaches
 - Support work-life balance (more on this later!)



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Leadership

Be a Goldfish



https://youtu.be/8PmX7zEUg_w



Leadership

Be a Goldfish

- **Be a Goldfish**

- **Let go of the past:** Dwelling on the past can be counterproductive and demotivating.
- **Stay present and focused:** Live in the moment – don't dwell on past events or worry about the future – concentrate on the task at hand
- **Maintain a positive attitude:** Approach each new situation with enthusiasm
- **Bounce back quickly:** While goldfish have short attention spans, it does let them quickly adapt to changes in their surroundings – be agile, resilient and present-focused





Leadership

Resilience

- Let's talk “burnout”
 - According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout is characterized by three dimensions: **low energy, exhaustion**, increasingly **negative feelings about work**, and **reduced professional effectiveness**. In general, burnout can be associated with physical, emotional and/or mental exhaustion.
- We know that we are at risk for burnout...and so are team members.



Leadership

Resilience

- Leading others is no easy task
- Leading in today's political and social media climate is even harder
- Many of the tips today are aimed at building you up as a resilient leader – and creating resilient teams

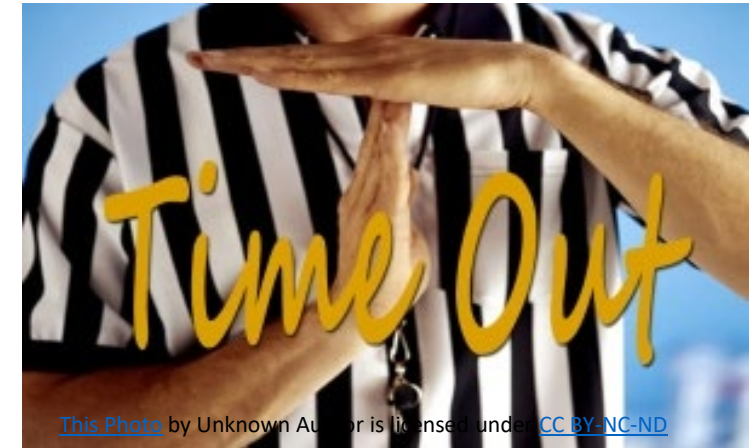




Leadership

Resilience

- Understand the value of self-care – for ourselves and in our support of others
- Set boundaries – we couldn't play any game without sidelines, goal areas and penalty areas – figure out your boundaries and say no when necessary
- Take breaks – just like a team needs a timeout or halftime to catch their breath, leaders need breaks too.
- Prioritize sleep – stick to a regular schedule to the extent possible





Leadership

Resilience

- Exercise regularly – physical activity helps reduce stress and promotes overall well-being
- Eat well – take time to plan, shop for and prepare good meals throughout most days
- Practice mindfulness - Mindfulness can help reduce stress, increase self-awareness, and improve decision-making.
- Maintain a support system - Cultivate a strong support system of friends, family, or mentors with whom you can share your thoughts, concerns, and successes.
- Delegate and trust your team - As a leader, delegate tasks to your team members, trusting their abilities to handle them effectively. Delegating allows you to focus on high-level responsibilities and reduces the burden on your shoulders.



Leadership

Resilience

- Engage in hobbies and interests: Make time for activities that bring you joy and relaxation outside of work. Engaging in hobbies can be an excellent way to unwind and recharge.
- Continuous learning: Engage in learning opportunities that interest you. Attend workshops, read books, or take courses related to leadership, personal growth, or any other subject you are passionate about.
- Take vacations and time off: Don't hesitate to take vacations or time off to disconnect and recharge. Stepping away from work for a while can help you return with renewed energy and focus.

BE CURIOUS

By creating an environment that supports and celebrates curiosity, leaders can foster continuous learning, creativity, and adaptability, all of which contribute to long-term success and growth.

TELL THE TRUTH

Telling the truth, even when it's difficult, helps build trust and fosters a positive work culture, contributing to the success of the team and the organization as a whole.

EMBRACE CHANGE

Embracing change with a positive attitude, empathy and a willingness to adapt can lead to personal growth, stronger relationships and success in many areas.

BELIEVE

Genuine leadership is built on believing in yourself while also empowering and believing in the potential of those around you. Lead with authenticity, a positive mindset, willingness to learn, and desire to bring out the best in others.

BE A GOLDFISH

Stay mentally agile, resilient, and present-focused; encourage your team to learn from past experiences but not be held back by them, allowing them to perform at their best in every new moment.

SELF-CARE

Remember that self-care is not a luxury but a necessity for leaders to maintain their well-being and lead effectively. Model healthy behaviors for your team and create a positive and productive work environment.



COMMENTS & QUESTIONS