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## The Eight Drivers of Your Best Life

By David M. Traversi



I recently wrote a book entitled *The Source of Leadership: Eight Drivers of the High-Impact Leader*. In the introduction, I wrote about the ultimate alignment of my own personal search for my best life with my professional search for the “holy grail” of leadership success.

I began to observe and analyze the high-impact leaders and ordinary leaders with whom I worked as well as study those I’d worked with previously. I found that success and failure always boil down to personal characteristics. The more I studied, I found that success and failure as a leader depend on the same personal choices and practices—ways of being, deep within—that I was learning in my own very personal search. It was a dovetailing of profound impact! The drivers, the personal energies, that were radically transforming my personal life were also critical to being a high-impact leader.

So what drivers radically transformed my life? What personal energies fueled what I consider my best life? They are *presence*, and I’m speaking about consciousness and mindfulness, *openness*, *clarity of thought, emotion, and behavior*, *intention*, *personal responsibility*, *intuition*, *creativity*, and *connected communication*.

The good news is that they exist within each of us and are waiting to be accessed, developed and used as powerful fuel for achieving optimal levels of productivity and efficiency, awareness and understanding, self-definition, integrity, health, and creativity. Fuel for developing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Fuel for courage and optimism. Fuel for achieving the outcomes we desire. Ultimately, fuel for contentment.

***Today’s Challenges***

Ultimately, the conditions we are experiencing as a society – things like wars, political stand-offs among nations, global warming, the subprime mess, backdating of corporate stock options and other corporate misdeeds from fraud and theft all the way down to just being unable to fulfill commitments to investors, religious scandal, violent crime, high divorce rates, substance and other addictions, all forms of abuse, youth gang activity – are just extensions or symptoms of conditions we are experiencing as individuals. Conditions like lack of awareness, stress, malaise, closed-mindedness, lack of creativity, inability to focus, lack of purpose, inefficiency, lapses in integrity, fear, anger, shame, blame, depression, strained personal relationships, and poor health.

What has caused these conditions? Why are we struggling to lead ourselves – and ultimately our society – effectively? In a word . . . technology. While not a bad thing – in fact, I happen to believe it is a very good thing, a meaningful part of the human potential – its dimensions must be recognized and addressed. And the reality is that technology has conspired to overwhelm us with increasing amounts of increasingly complex data, downloaded at faster and faster rates. As a collective practice, self-leadership has simply fallen behind the pace of everything else in the world that has been accelerated and complicated by technology. We are often unable to distinguish useful from useless data. Even if we can, we don't have time to understand what to do with the useful before it quickly becomes useless. We're trying to "drink out of a fire hose."

When you want to change conditions in a particular environment, you usually need new tools or you need to enhance the tools you already have. In the case of self-leadership, in the quest for your best life, you'll almost certainly need new or enhanced tools. As I mentioned, the good news is that you already have them inside you. You simply have to access and develop them.

### ***Using Your Eight Drivers to Overcome Today's Challenges***

**Presence** is really a baseline – or foundational - energy, one that drives all traits and functions necessary to live your best life. It also drives the other seven drivers. When you live in the present moment, you understand that everything is connected. Irrelevance is gone. Everything matters. You absorb every bit of life because you are highly focused. You think more clearly and efficiently. You act with more integrity and clarity. You are unburdened by unproductive thoughts of the past or future. You worry less. You fear less. You are infinitely more creative.

**As a means of enhancing my presence, I've been meditating for about ten years and have experienced first-hand the profound impact that a more conscious existence can have on one's quest for his or her best life. I know myself better and am more self-defined. I see more, I understand more, I can absorb more data, I am less stressed, I waste less time on**

**meaningless things, I prioritize better, I listen better, I am more empathic, I speak better, I inspire better, I am more focused and organized, I am more creative, I can plan better, I have healthier relationships, and I produce more and better results in all aspects of my life..**

**Openness** is the second key driver of your best life. Many, if not most of us, have learned through difficult life experiences to resist “what is.” If we once felt pain in response to something, we close ourselves to situations that might involve the same pain. In some cases, this may be a form of self-preservation or protection. However, we often close ourselves off from opportunities because of unrelated pain experienced long ago. And we often fix our beliefs because we fear the unknown. Fears and fixed beliefs, however, are incongruent with a dynamic, rapidly changing world. Resisting “what is” actually causes more pain and drains our energy. Opening to “what is” becomes liberating and energizing. When you’re open, you constantly seek to widen the net for possibilities, and resist nothing. In your best life, you are curious, you are a font of ideas and creativity, and you see possibilities everywhere.

**Clarity** is the third driver of your best life - clarity in thoughts, emotions, and behavior. We have all, at least on occasion, thought, emoted, or acted out of anger, rage, envy, insecurity, guilt, greed, or some other fear-based stimulus. The sad fact is that too many people do it too much of the time. They work hard to maintain a healthy, clear *persona*—the appearance they present to the world—and suppress the unhealthy characteristics of their *shadow*—the personality and behavior energies that have been repressed from consciousness, usually since childhood. But they allow their shadow traits, such as rage and envy, to undermine their best intentions and drain them of energy. When you choose clarity of thought, emotion, and behavior, you choose to honestly acknowledge your shadow traits and use the light of honesty and openness to manage them so they do not undermine your relationships and pursuit of happiness. When you are clear, you find it easy to define every element of who you are, both to yourself and to others. You are people oriented, open-hearted with a genuine love for people. You see the good and the potential in everyone, instead of a threat. You have healthy, empowering relationships with others.

**Intention** is the fourth driver of your best life. In every moment, each of us can choose intention or neglect, intention or disempowerment. While many of us constantly say or think “I hope” and “I want” and “I’d like,” few of us sincerely believe we can bring about a desired result. Thus, we often cast our fate to the four winds or to the intentions of others. Last century, Napoleon Hill (1960) found - and documented in *Think and Grow Rich*, originally published in 1937 - that the active practice of intention was the single-most important determinant of personal and professional success. Nevertheless, I have known very few people who actually practice their intention. Few have enough faith, it seems, in the power of intention. Practicing intention, which involves a discipline of expressing your desired

result in great detail, regularly visualizing it as a current reality, offering exchange for it, starting a “conspiracy” of people focused on helping you achieve your intention, and, ultimately, detaching from it, significantly helps you to achieve the results you want in your life.

**Personal responsibility** is the fifth driver of your best life. We live in an era where personal responsibility has been replaced by blame and litigation. These actions are fear-based denials of reality, and ultimately they poison interpersonal and work relationships. Personal responsibility is complete ownership of “what is,” as distinguished from openness, which is the unbounded willingness to consider every element of “what is.” Once you learn to own “what is” on every front, and create the energy that results when you can say, “I am completely responsible for every positive and negative element that exists in my life,” you will see a dramatic improvement in the integrity with which people view you, your courage, and your personal relationships. I mean, who wouldn’t want to associate with someone who never blamed, or neglected or disowned a responsibility?

**Intuition** is the sixth driver of your best life. Each of us was gifted with a powerful source of inspiration - a knowing, an intuition - that is embedded in this omniscient energy that binds everything that is. But fear often causes us to abandon too quickly in favor of a “safer” route supported by “facts” or the opinions of others. In doing this, we abdicate the crucial role that active intuition plays in life. The skilled and liberal use of intuition enables your ability to make good decisions in all areas of your life, adapt to uncertainty and changing conditions, and interact with others in a highly empathic, supportive way.

**Creativity** is the seventh driver of your best life. If you want your best life, once you truly appreciate that life is binary - there is only creation and destruction, growth and decay, life and death – it is pretty easy to decide that you want to be on the side of creation, growth, and life. Stagnation, which is just a stage of decay and death, is not a viable option. The key then, is stoking your creativity in every possible way so that you remain aligned, and not at odds, with life itself. Fortunately, every person has the potential to be a powerful creative force. When you tap into that creativity, you become highly energetic, you see possibilities instead of barriers, you see a better life for yourself and everyone around you and you see a path for achieving it.

**Connected communication** is the eighth driver of your best life. In the complex, adaptive system in which we live, where everyone is interconnected and relationships are paramount, communication is essential for survival. Once past mere survival, the better you communicate, the better your relationships will be. The better your relationships, the better your life will be. Better communication is a function of increasing the connection in your communication. “Connected communication” is an intensely powerful energy - a driver - deep within each of us. On a connected path, you are present,

mindful, and completely honest. You are clear and concise, acutely empathic, and in complete alignment with “what is.” Everyone around you senses the integrity, the wholeness, of who you are and how you communicate; others gather strength in your presence. The system of connected communication, from clear expression of a purposeful message by an empathic speaker to an empathic listener, fuels your ability to be supportive of and inspiring to others and have productive, empowering personal relationships.

## The Waterfall Effect

Many people ask me about other drivers – personal energies – and why they aren’t part of the “select” list of drivers. Of course, anyone can include anything they want in his or her list. But my answer is that I have found that most other energies flow from the eight described energies. They operate when the eight energies have been developed. For instance, love – in all its dimension, form, and glory – flourishes when you are present, conscious, and aware, clear in your thought, emotion, and behavior, taking personal responsibility for everything, and communicating with others in a highly connected way. Gratitude and humility also flow from presence. It is impossible to be present and conscious and not filled with gratitude for every element of your existence and humility in the face of it. Likewise, all elements of health – nutrition, movement, breath, positive thinking, healing – flow from presence and awareness. You don’t find a lot of present people regularly eating fast food hamburgers and opting for television over exercise. Forgiveness flows from presence as well as the empathy inherent in connected communication. Apology flows from personal responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

The solution to our worsening societal woes, and conversely our best societal life, is in leadership. Leadership at the societal level begins with leadership of the self. Each of us living our best individual life will flow into our best collective life. It is just a matter of accessing powers – drivers – with which we are already endowed.

## **About the author:**

**David M. Traversi**, a nationally known executive coach, is the author of **The Source of Leadership: Eight Drivers of the High-Impact Leader**, released in September 2007. You can find out more about David and his work at [www.thesourceofleadership.com](http://www.thesourceofleadership.com)

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