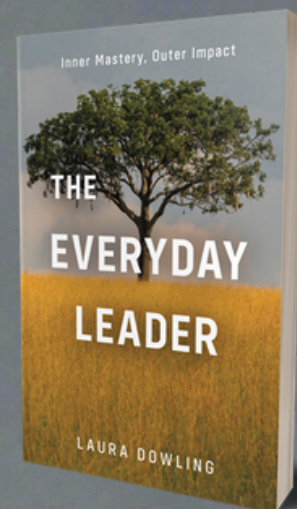


Inner Mastery, Outer Impact

Changes are inevitable, no matter where you live or who you are. As people and as leaders, we are in the business of transitions and managing change. Going from "me" to "we" to "us," leadership is not just for the person next to you; it's also within and applicable to the different ecosystems you belong to. Leadership is a practice that we all participate in. Through storytelling that spans local to global experiences—from the playing fields of sport and living in the heart of Southern Africa to the corporate world—and with original works and practical concepts developed through consulting to solve real-life organizational challenges, *The Everyday Leader* encapsulates lessons in life and leadership. Leadership Coach and Workplace Performance Consultant, Laura Dowling inspires and demonstrates that personal and professional growth and thriving in the face of change are possible for individuals and teams, leading with intentionality for sustained performance and well-being.



Laura Dowling is a globally recognized transformational leadership coach who brings energy and passion to her work assisting Olympians, business leaders, students, and others who have heard the siren call of a greater future. She brings a strategic grace to igniting individual and team success in clients' lives, drawing on an international sporting career as well as academic studies. Her expertise has contributed to almost all areas of work: corporate, public, higher education, tech, healthcare, sport, non-profits. Laura is a coach, facilitator, mentor, and a yoga enthusiast. Each adventure, from the valleys of heartache to the joy and achievement of summiting mountain tops and visiting awe-inspiring wonders of the world, have contained unexpected treasures that have shaped her perspective of the world around her.

THE EVERYDAY LEADER

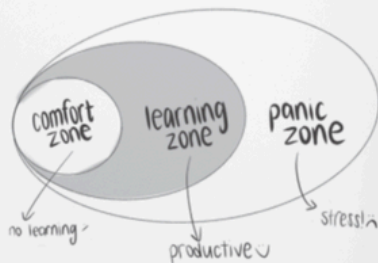
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CHAPTER 12

Learning Zone

A goal of leadership is to keep people in the learning zone.



Learning Zone

Capturing learning moments is a sure way to create psychologically safe work environments because it keeps an active, reflective practice embedded in a culture of performance²⁹. If we are not learning, we are not growing. The learning zone is defined in many ways. It's a place where you're challenged and engaged rather than bored. It is a space when you are encouraged and inspired rather than fearful of making

mistakes. You may feel a healthy level of stress, but you can enjoy it. The learning zone is the sweet spot of performance nestled between the comfort zone and the panic zone. If we are in the comfort zone or panic zone, there is no learning. The learning zone is the productive or performance zone.

The key here is to induce the right amount of challenge stress, meaning that the pressure is high but not so high that people disengage. Every company, team, and person will have their own level of challenge or performance stress that they can sustain during different times which is why creating space for learning moments in the culture of high performance is paramount. When people are not stretched outside of what they already know, their energy will plateau, or, alternatively, if they are overstretched, there may be significant costs to well-being and performance.

I led a workshop focusing on company culture and how to help team members stay in their learning zones several years ago for a group of respected managers. I was thrilled that the managers found new ways to intentionally reflect on and capture moments of learning: after a successful or challenging client engagement, for example, or at the start of a meeting, or the end of a consulting project. As a result, participants knew when to accelerate and raise the performance challenge by setting bigger goals, or when it was necessary to pause and work through the current realities of the challenges at hand. When capturing the learning moments of new hires, for example, it's important to know how much more to add to their plate. We all learn at different speeds, so to keep up with change, we must take a moment to pause, ask, listen, reflect and then build on the takeaways.

Staying in the learning zone means we can give space to failures or setbacks and learn from mistakes. Sure, learning can happen through many modalities like reading or reflecting; however, true learning happens through experience and even

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"..Laura Dowling weaves vivid stories and practical tools to illuminate the way for each of us to tap into our human potential, make a positive impact, and practice self-care.."
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