

# WE WILL BEGIN WITH AN EXERCISE

Please take a minute now and identify a specific area of your research or another area of your life where you would like to be more effective as a leader

IN THE BEING A LEADER COURSE  
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS DEFINED AS:

CREATING AND REALISING A FUTURE  
THAT WASN'T GOING TO HAPPEN ANYWAY

## How to engage with these slides

Please treat anything we say that is counter-intuitive for you the same way you would treat the first line of a joke.

In other words, please take what is stated exactly as it is stated. That is, take what we are saying as possible, like you do with the first line of a joke.

If someone says to you,

“A duck walks into a bar and asks, ‘Have you got any bread?’” you probably won’t say, “Ducks don’t talk”.

You would say to yourself, “OK, this is a joke, so I’m going to listen as if what this person is saying is possible, so that I get the joke”.

## The Predictable Future

Firstly, there are many different kinds of futures. For example, there is future **as a** “goal”, that is, a future toward which one is working or striving. There is also future as “hoped-for”, future as “feared” or “worried-about”, and future as “to be avoided”.

But one kind of future that does not exist is future as “certain”. The future is never certain; the future always exists only as a possibility, as something that has many possibilities.

Of all the possible futures, the one that exerts the most force on the present is the future as “**given by the past**”. That is, a future that is extrapolated or projected from the past.

## The Predictable Future

While people do have various kinds of possible futures they think about, or worry about, or hope for, or work towards or strive for, the one that impacts their way of being and their actions in the present is the **“future into which they are actually living”**.

And the most forceful future into which they are actually living is the future given by the past.

The reason the “future given by the past” usually has the most force in people’s lives, rather than the other possible futures, (like ‘hoped for’ or ‘worried about’) is because the future given by the past is the one they are **most likely** to be actually **living into**.

## The Predictable Future

While people may consciously have hopes and dreams, and worries and doubts, and goals and strivings regarding the future, our brains, below the level of consciousness, only have patterns from the past from which to predict the future.

**And, based on those patterns from the past, the brain shapes a person's way of being and acting in the present to fit that predicted future.**

Neuroscientists consider that the evolutionary survival value of the brain's storing memories of the past is purely their value in predicting the future. And, the brain initiates those ways of being and acting in the present that are most likely to ensure success, **which for the brain is the realization of that past-derived predicted future.** This is the way our brains evolved to best ensure survival.

Consistent with this, fMRI studies show that virtually the same regions of the brain are active both when we think about the past and when we think about the future. Szpunar, et al. (2007 pp. 642-647) Proceedings of the National Academy of Science

## The Future: The Illusion of Choice

Most people think that they have lots of choices about their lives, that is, what they can do in the present to realize the future they want. Some even think they have a virtually unlimited opportunity set of these choices.

This, however, is a delusion.

The more we learn about how the brain evolved and the way it functions, the clearer it becomes that our opportunity set of choices for being, thinking, planning, and action in the present is limited to the choices that are consistent with realizing the **past-derived future** that we live into.

# The Predictable Future

While life is sometimes better than the past, and sometimes worse than the past, it is virtually always connected to the past. When people talk about having “changed”, they have in mind some past from which they have changed.

In fact, to “change”, you have to have something from which you changed, and the something from which you changed is the past. So even when you “change” that is still connected to the past.

This explains why, for the most part, life for most people is just more of the past.

They may attempt to do what they have done in the past, but better. However, “better than the past” is still more of the past; “better than the past” is only a reshaping of what they have done in the past.

## The Predictable Future

From time to time, people even do something different from what they have done in the past. When people talk about doing something “different”, they have to have in mind something from which it is different, and that something from which it is different is the past. So even “different from the past” is an extension of the past, that is, different is some variation of the past, and therefore still connected to the past.

What we have established so far about the nature of future, and more importantly, its impact on your and others’ emotions, thinking, planning, and action in the present, for many people is **pretty dismal**.

You can probably see why we say leadership is about creating and realizing a future **that wasn’t going to happen anyway**.

## NOW WE ARE GOING TO DO ANOTHER EXERCISE

Please take a minute to write down what you see the predictable future might be for your chosen area (based on your past).

As you write, consider how you might be being, and what might happen.

# CREATING A CREATED FUTURE

## What is a “Created Future”?

The future is not like some object that exists out there to be represented more or less accurately. Remember, there is no certain future.

All futures exist only as a possibility, and as such are constituted in language. This is what gives us access to leadership.

In fact there is no real future as such in the brain:

The brain is composed of neurons that are connected together in patterns. In the brain, there is a pattern of prediction derived from past patterns of perception and action. This could loosely be called a predicted future. But as a consequence of the pattern derived from past patterns, the brain generates new patterns of ways of being and acting in the present. In the brain that's really all there is, just patterns, no future as such.

## Now we **really are** going to tell you a joke!

This joke reflects a universal truth about human nature. It's a "joke" because like any joke, in order to get the punchline (the truth about human nature), you can't reject the first few lines because they don't fit your reality. As with any joke, in order to get the punch line, you have to accept what is said in the first few lines as though they were possible.

The first line of the joke: **The past has nothing to do with who you are or the way you act in the present!** This first line says that the present is not shaped or even influenced by the past. (Remember, this is a joke!)

Second line: **The present is given by the future into which you are living!** ("Given" means "determined by" so your view of yourself and life, your thoughts and feelings, and your actions are shaped by the future into which you are living).

## The Joke

**First Line: The past has nothing to do with who you are or the way you act in the present!**

**Second Line: The present is given by the future into which you are living!**

The third line of the joke is a question: **If it is true that the past does not impact the present, rather that the present is given by the future into which you are living, how come it seems so clear, and everyone including the experts believe, that the present is shaped by the past?**

**Punch line: If it happens to be true that 1) the present is given by the future, and 2) we put the past into the future, it will seem to us that the past is shaping the present!** (It is as though your brain is a filing cabinet, with one drawer labeled “past” and one drawer labeled “future”, and you are unwittingly filing the past into the future drawer! All the evidence will leave you and others believing that the present is unquestionably given by the past.)

## The Joke

For you and the people you are leading to be able to create a “created future”, and certainly for you and them to come to live into that created future rather than the past-derived predicted future, you and they will need to make some space in the “future drawer”.

For you and the people you are leading to be able to create a “future that wasn’t going to happen anyway”, you and they will need to make some space in the “future drawer”.

If you take all the files out of the future drawer and put them in the past drawer where they belong, what will be left in the future drawer? An empty space!

Conclusion: If you leave the past in the past, you can **create** a future to live into (you can still be informed by the past but not be restricted by it). Remember, the way you see life in the present, what you think and feel, and the way you act, are given by the future into which you are living.

## A FINAL EXERCISE: CREATING A CREATED FUTURE

Imagine you have taken all your past files out of your future drawer, and you have put them back in the past drawer where they belong.

In the space that opens up, create a future that inspires you, that 'calls to you', in your chosen area and write it down.

# BREAK-OUT ROOM

Share with your partner:

1. your predictable (past-based) future, and,
2. your created future

# HOW THE COURSE WORKS

## HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Using a carefully crafted, specialised and rigorous use of language, you first discover for yourself and master the Foundation for Being a Leader:

1. Integrity – fundamentally, who you are as a leader is your word,
  2. Authenticity – what it takes is being authentic about your inauthenticities.
  3. Being given being by something bigger than yourself, and,
  4. Being cause in the matter – rather than being at the effect of circumstances.
- (Without mastering this Foundation you can forget about being a leader).

You then discover your default, past-based context for being a leader, and invent a new Created Context for being a leader which, when mastered, leaves you exercising leadership effectively and as your natural self-expression.

Finally, we give you an opportunity to free yourself from any constraints you may have that get in the way of you Being a Leader.

The Course takes place over 45 hours with weekly assignments.

## WHAT OUR RECENT PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID

“I have done lots of leadership courses before, but this was the first time I was asked to really look at myself.”

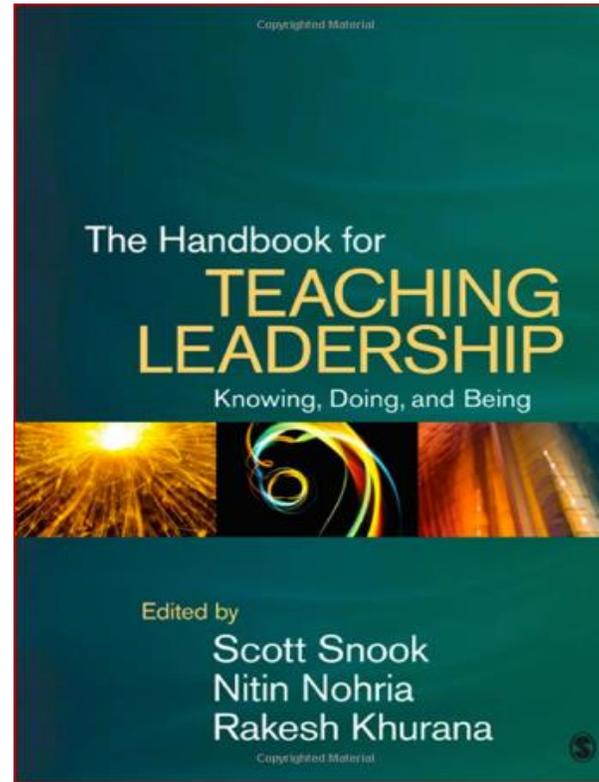
“The course opened up so many ideas to me that I didn't even know I was missing and has made such an impact on my life.”

“... it doesn't feel like more stuff to cram into an already crowded week ... it's more like a space where you can step back and re-assess how you are engaging with everything else. That's a big difference from most leadership training.”

“I can not recommend this course enough. I have been telling everyone I know about it.”

“I didn't want this course to end.”

We recommend the following chapter:



“Creating Leaders: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model” in The Handbook for Teaching Leadership (2012):

<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1681682>

## TO CONCLUDE

The Leadership Course: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model has been in development for 18 years and is still being developed.

Since 2004, **150 academics** have been trained to lead this **45-hour course** from various universities in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, south-east Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and in North, Central and South America.

Right now **44 academics** are leading the course in various countries around the world including us.

For more information about the Course please see: <https://beingaleader.org/>

Thank you for participating with us!