

# Creating a culture of trust



**A challenge for today's leaders**





Antonio  
Damasio

**Founder and director of the USC Brain and Creativity Institute.  
Príncipe de Asturias Prize 2.005**



A photograph of two men in a car, with red annotations. A red box labeled 'Frontal Cortex' has a red dot on the forehead of the younger man. A red arrow points from this dot to another red dot on the side of the younger man's head. A red box labeled 'Limbic System' has a red line pointing to this second dot. The background shows a blurred green landscape through the car window.

Frontal Cortex

Limbic System

**We cannot know “the reality”! Only our “perception”...**



**Neurologist Antonio Damasio proposed that human beings are not rational beings. We rationalize over an emotional base that conditions how we'll think.**

**That is to say that first we feel, and then we think.**

**(Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 1994)**

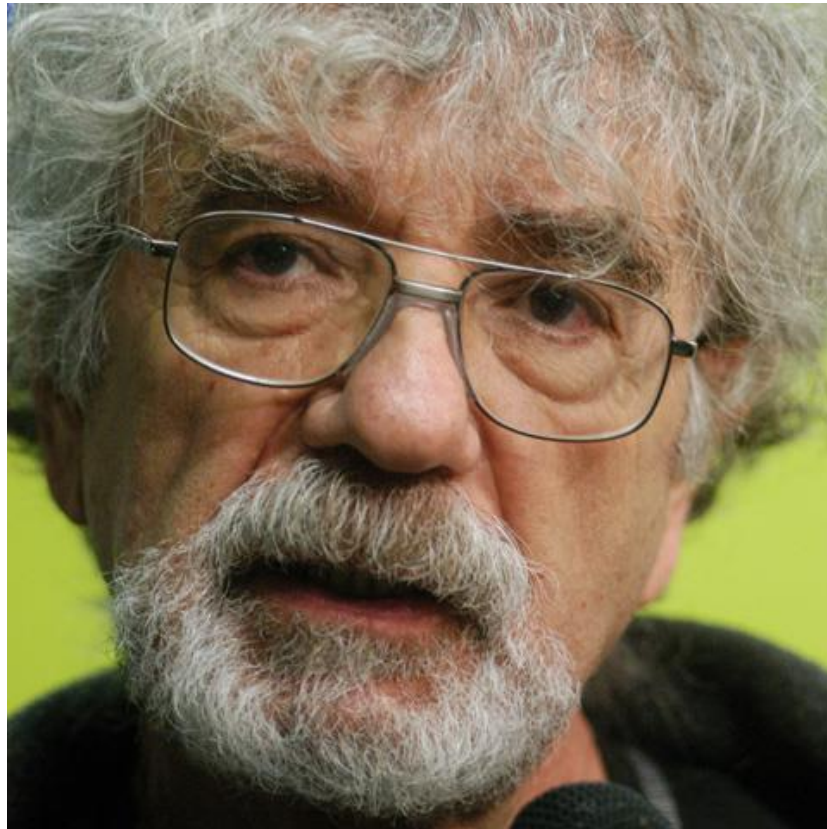


Arne Öhmann

**Researcher at Karolinska  
Institute, Stockholm**







“Uno no habla de lo que ve, sino que ve aquello de lo que puede hablar”

Humberto Maturana.



Richard J. Davidson

**Professor at Wisconsin University – Madison. Founder and Director of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds (Waisman Center)**

## LEFT PREFRONTAL CORTEX: CREATIVE MODE

- LEARNING
- CREATIVITY
- RISK ACCEPTANCE
- TRUST



### WE FEEL:

OPTIMIST  
HOPEFUL  
INNOVATIVE  
GENEROSITY  
CAPABLE  
GROWTH

## RIGHT PREFRONTAL CORTEX: REACTIVE MODE

- CONFUSION
- "PRIMITIVE" REACTIONS:
  - ✓ FIGHT
  - ✓ FLY
  - ✓ FREEZE UP



### WE FEEL:

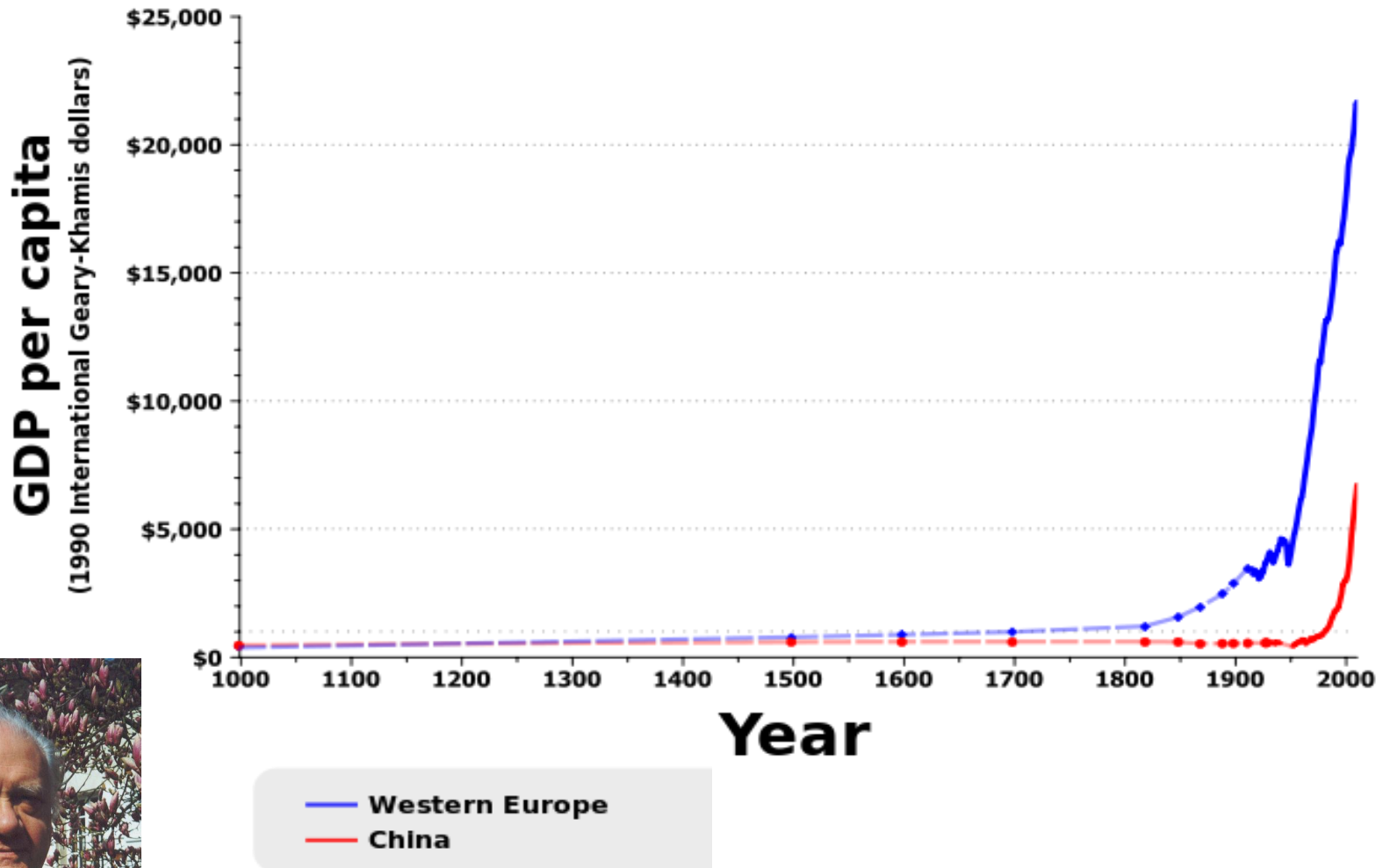
FEARFUL  
APATIC  
FRUSTRATED  
ANGRY  
EGOTIST  
SELFISH



*AND... SO WHAT?*

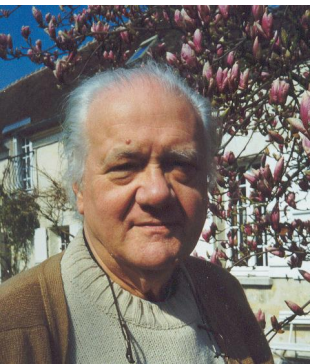


# China and Western Europe GPD per capita 1000 CE - 2003 CE



Source: Angus Maddison | Historical Statistics for the World Economy: 1-2003 AD

Angus Maddison. (1926-2010) Emeritus Professor University of Groningen



# **“AUTUMN RHYTHM”, FROM JACKSON POLLOCK, AN ORGANIGRAME?**



***Complexity***

***Acceleration***

***Risk***

***Insecurity***

***Uncertainty***



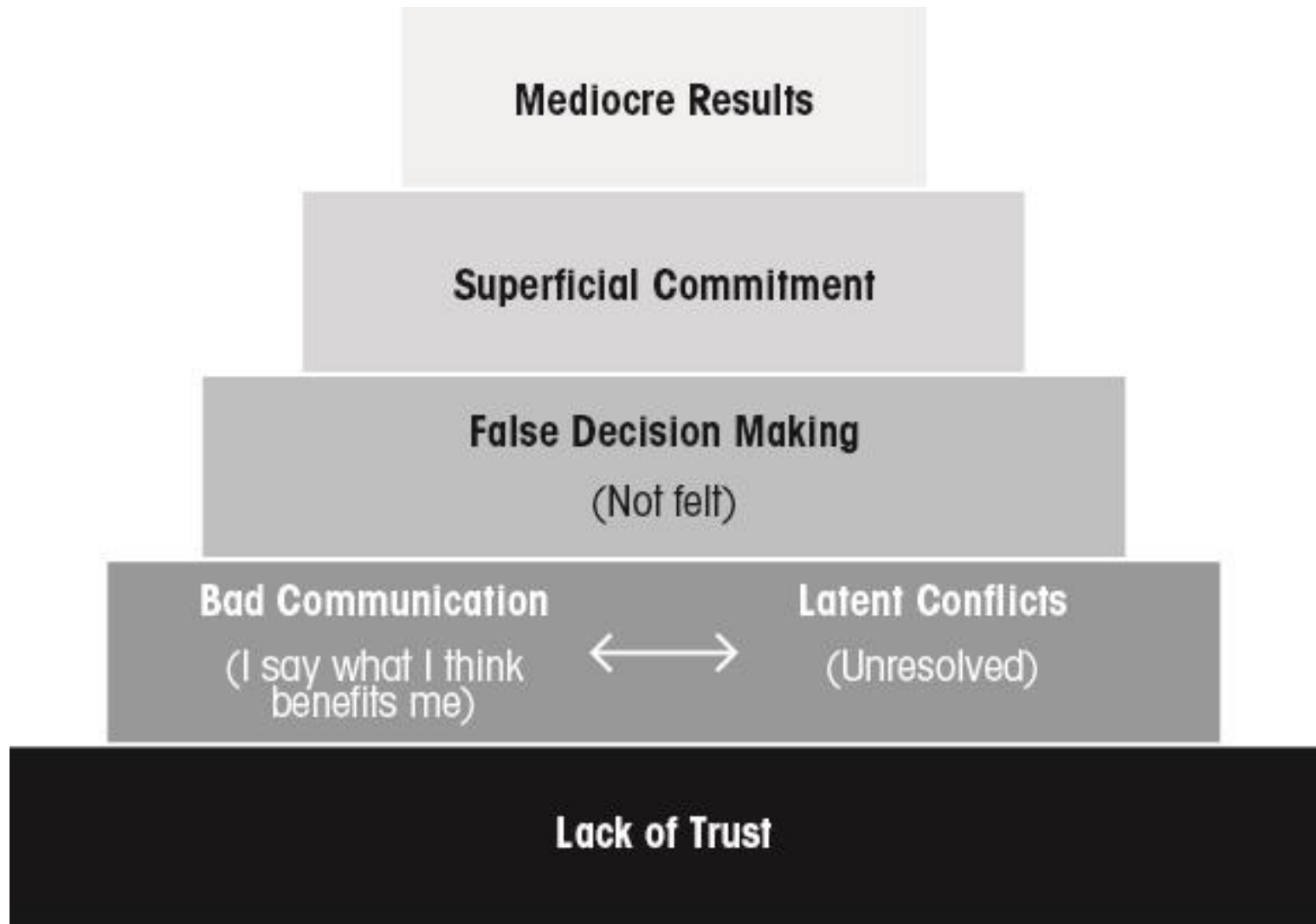


# THE CONSEQUENCE: EGO TAKES CONTROL





# THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISTRUST IN A TEAM







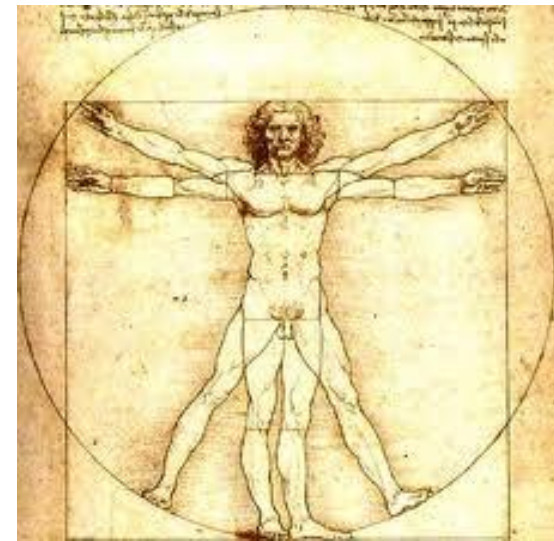
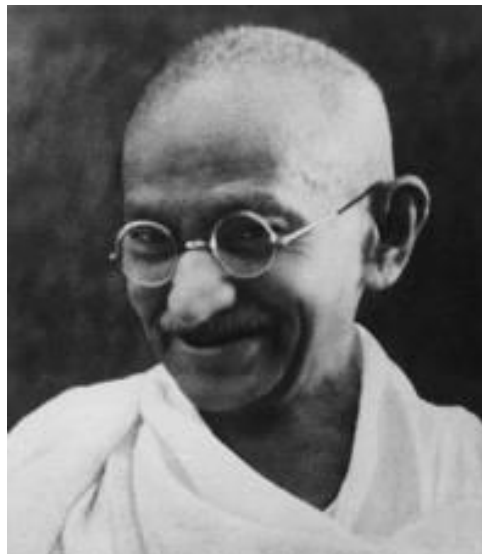
**“What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.”**

**“Your conscience is the measure of the honesty of your selfishness.”**

Richard Bach, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*



# THE ANTIDOTE: AWARENESS



**THERE IS NO POSSIBLE AWARENESS  
WITHOUT TRUST!...  
...THERE IS NO POSSIBLE TRUST  
WITHOUT AWARENESS!**



“The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I." And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I." They don't think "I." They think "we"; they think "team." They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" gets the credit. This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.”

Peter F. Drucker

# TRUST ALLOWS TO TRANSFORM ANY SITUATION IN A LEARNING OPORTUNITY

“We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.”

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*



# WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO BE AWARE? AWARENESS AND TRUST

When you lose trust in your teammates, you feel alone. The feeling of uncertainty will be more prevalent. Your brain will switch to its defensive mode.

Mistrust inspires toxic relationship behaviors, defined by John Gottman (psychologist at the University of Washington), who named them the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse for Relationships:

- **Stonewalling**
- **Defensiveness**
- **Criticism**
- **Contempt**

**These toxic behaviors are contagious.  
They create an atmosphere in which  
sincere debate and the search for  
solutions have no place.**

**This begins a vicious circle that could lead  
to the self-destruction of the team!**



# PLEASE PAY ATTENTION: THE RED FLAGS!

The following is a collection of very common phrases that will help you detect danger. When you catch yourself saying one of them, or if you hear them from your direct reports, look out!



If I didn't do everything around here. . .

The moment I turn away. . .

They're just stupid.

These people aren't motivated.

My people don't want to work.

I saw that coming.

I've warned her/him about this.

I wish I could trust them, but I can't.

This place is the Wild West.

# HOW RESULTS ARE BUILT IN A TEAM





Although traditional incentives such as bonuses or recognition can prod people to better performance, no external motivators can get people to perform at their absolute best.  
—Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2003)



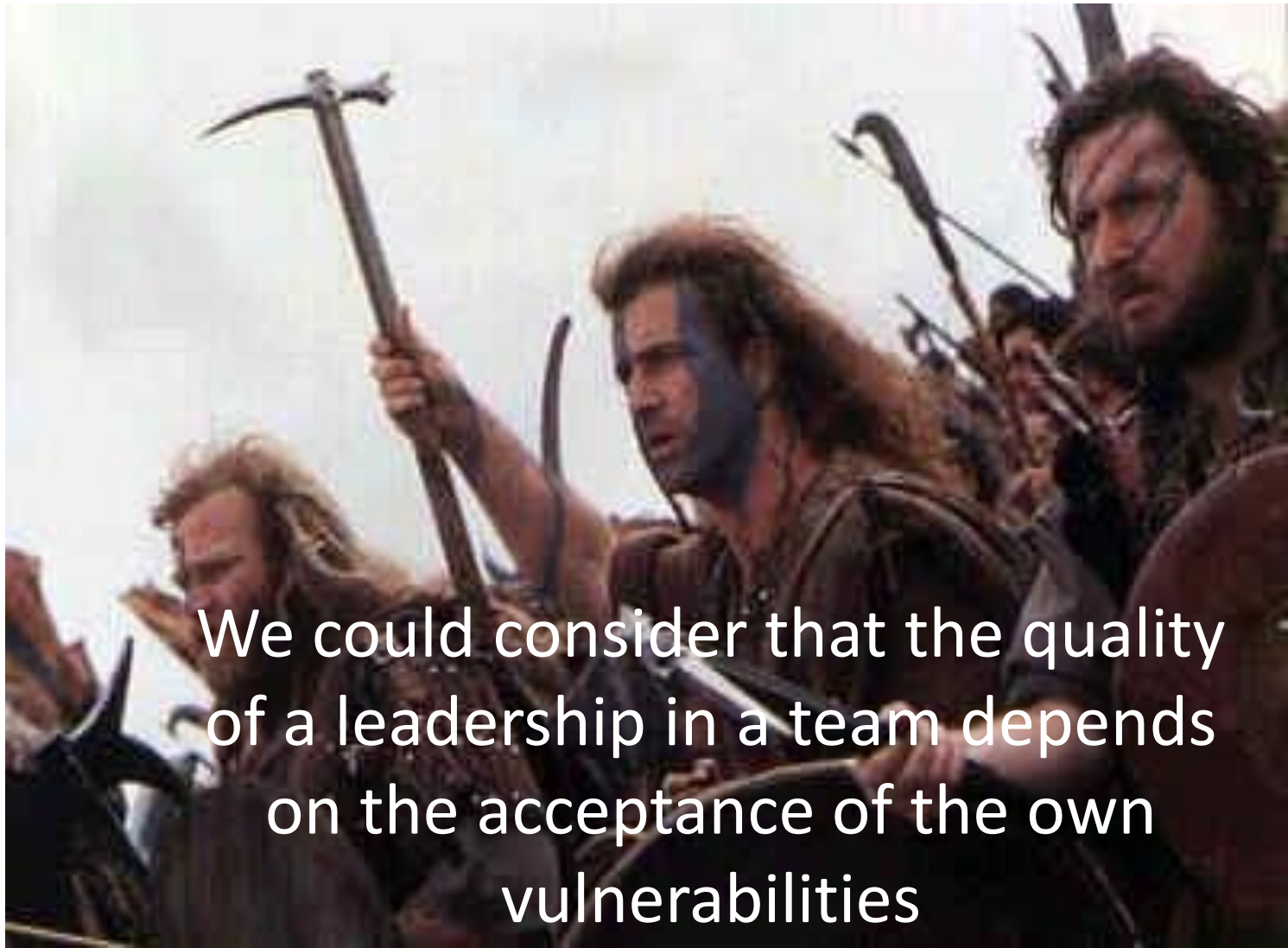
# AND... WHAT IS REALLY “GENUINE TRUST”?

Real trust only exists when people are able to show their own vulnerabilities.

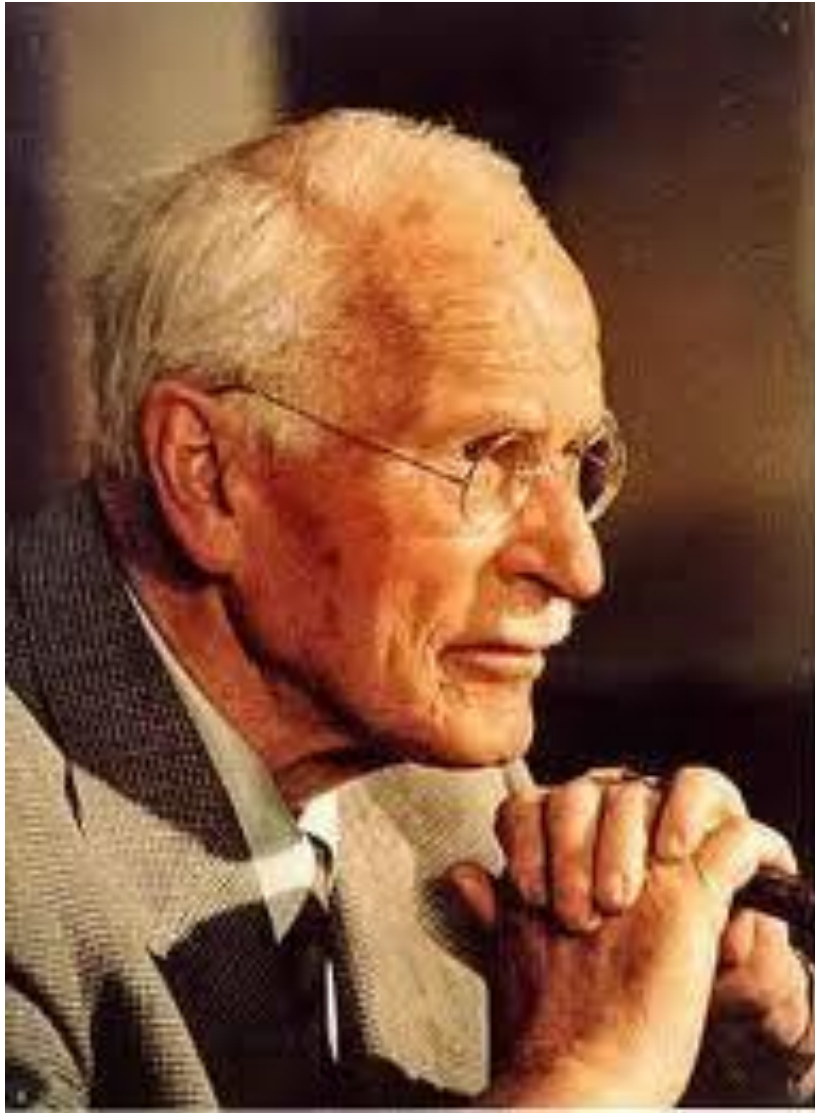
You will have found it when, without fear of the consequences, you can tell your teammates things like “that’s all I know,” “I’m afraid,” or “what you did hurt me.”



**SO THE “MAGIC KEY” FOR TRUST IS...  
...ACCEPTANCE OF YOUR OWN  
VULNERABILITY!**



We could consider that the quality of a leadership in a team depends on the acceptance of the own vulnerabilities



**“What you  
resist, persists  
and what you  
accept,  
changes”**

**Carl Gustav Jung,  
psychiatrist,  
psychologist and  
writer.  
(1875-1961)**

# **WHEN YOU ACCEPT YOUR OWN VULNERABILITY, YOUR EGO LOSES POWER OVER YOUR MIND... THEN YOU CAN TRUST AND PROMOTE TRUST**

“The myth of the omniscient, omnipotent leader is causing more harm than good because it ultimately erodes peoples’ confidence. Those who try to do everything themselves will be defeated by a world that is increasingly complex and unpredictable. In truth, we are all incomplete leaders who must rely on others. The challenge is to develop the mechanisms that allow us to pull on the ideas and motivations of the creative minds throughout the organization to leverage the strengths of the group and to think about networks of leaders working together to move the organization ahead”.

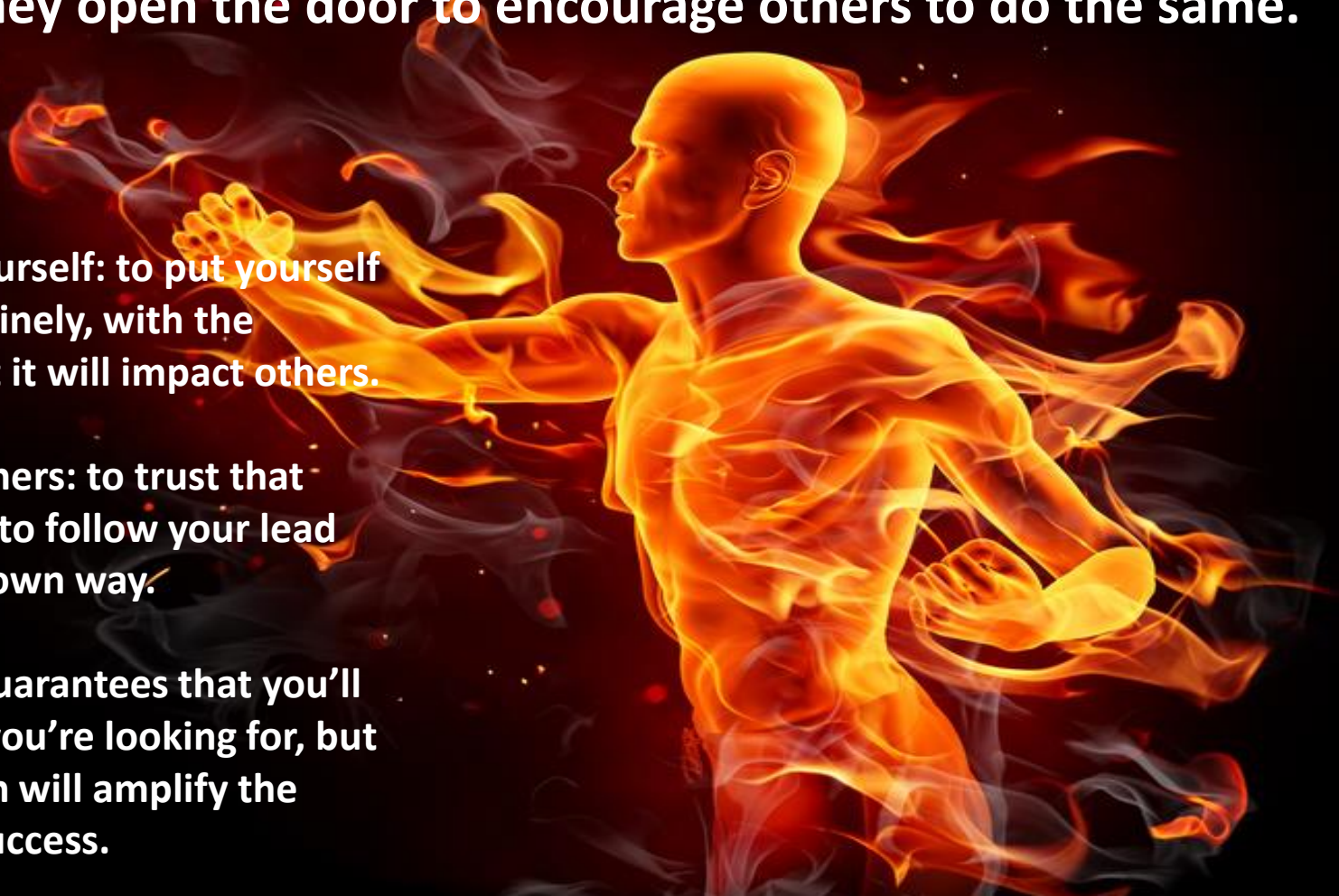
(Deborah Ancona, Director of MIT Leadership Center. MIT Sloan School of Management).



# **PROMOTE REAL TRUST: REMEMBER, LEADING IS BELIEVING!**

**When leaders demonstrate vulnerability to others in a difficult situation, they open the door to encourage others to do the same.**

- **Believing in yourself: to put yourself out there genuinely, with the conviction that it will impact others.**
- **Believing in others: to trust that they'll be able to follow your lead and find their own way.**
- **There are no guarantees that you'll get the result you're looking for, but your conviction will amplify the likelihood of success.**



# PROMOTE REAL TRUST: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, BELIEVE WHAT YOU PROPOSE!

- If you expect other people to feel what you are proposing, you must feel it first. If you believe in what you're saying, you can communicate it effectively. The rest is just technique.
- **If you don't feel it, no measure of technique will make a difference. Your message will not make it into people's hearts. Humans are good at detecting inconsistencies.**



# PROMOTE REAL TRUST: BUILDING TRUST!



1. The trust you achieve will come from your credibility.
2. Your credibility will depend on your authenticity.
3. Authenticity will come from the sense that you are someone who says what he does and does what he says.
4. This perception will be marked by your nonverbal communication, controlled by the subconscious. Involuntary gestures transmit your real attitude.
5. If you don't believe, people will notice. They'll become distrustful and go on the defensive. They probably won't know exactly why, but that won't matter!

**You can either be a great actor, or you had better work on truly feeling what you say.**



# **ARTICULATING AND NORMALIZING**

**The former defines the situation and the latter helps to take us from being victims to heroes.**

**We can only manage what we're aware of, and what we're unaware of manages us**



# WHAT IS ARTICULATING?

Articulating is creating a picture of the situation in the minds of the team that will allow them to understand and accept it.

This reduces the feeling of uncertainty—the smaller it is, the more trust grows and fear shrinks—and opens their minds to acceptance.

Only when we accept something are we able to consider how to change it.



# ARTICULATING: HOW IT'S DONE?

- **Manage your own emotions.** Make everyone feel included. Create an atmosphere of mutual trust. Communicate honestly and confidently.
- **Please don't fear giving information** (“this is sensitive information that others shouldn't have,” or “I must protect them from things that could affect their morale.”)
- **Make them feel you count on them.** Make them feel capable.
- **Create tangible structures:** use diagrams, summaries, and mental maps and do it on a whiteboard when possible. Use computers sparingly. Limit PowerPoint presentations.
- Remember, your role is not just to communicate but to **ensure that information flows among the team.**
- **Above all, ask and listen!** And then, listen again. Convene your team and face the blank page together. Include them in designing plans.



# ARTICULATING A NEGATIVE VISION

**Very useful when people are very far from accepting the need or importance of what you are trying to tell them.**

1. You will create a vision of the worst future imaginable, one that is inevitable if they continue doing things in the same way.
2. Articulate a negative vision capable of stirring a “therapeutic fear”(as Italian psychologist Giorgio Nardone would put it) that opens their eyes to the danger.
3. Two critical conditions:
  - Must be logical and plausible based on the situation. If it doesn't seem like a coherent and probable evolution of the situation, you could be seen as a manipulator.
  - In your nonverbal communication, you should demonstrate absolute conviction that what you are describing will happen if nothing is done.

**Always remember that this negative vision only serves to uncover the team's perception of things, but will not motivate people.**



# WHAT IS NORMALIZING?

- Evolve from a feeling of uncertainty, confusion, or blockage to a new normalcy—“is it normal for this to affect me this way?”
- Necessary to go from “why is this happening to us?” to “what can we do about it?”
- One more step from looking outward—what events are taking place—to looking inward: “How is what’s happening affecting me?” “How do I feel?”
- It’s not possible to accept a situation without first accepting our own emotions. Accepting that it is normal for certain events to produce fear, anxiety, and distress.
- Awareness of how we react to certain events is the launch pad for deciding how we want to live them.



# NORMALIZE TO ACHIEVE ACCEPTANCE

1. Being afraid is normal! Together with our team, let's be aware of fear and insecurity.
2. When we have properly aired them out, we will have a reaction: "I've had enough! So now what?"
3. This reaction always shows up. Generally, it comes from the more combative members of the team. Once again, trust the team!
4. If it didn't happen spontaneously, it should be the leader's mission to provoke it. Don't be afraid to create a situation where people can open up! Articulating process will offer many opportunities.

**We will have achieved emotional acceptance! That will provide a clear view and an open, creative attitude.**

**We will have turned a limit, a roadblock, into a learning opportunity.**



**This is incredibly powerful: what felt like an end becomes the starting point of a new game!**



“If I have one  
option, I’m a  
robot.

If I have two, I  
have a  
dilemma.

If I have three,  
I am free.”

John Grinder, one of the  
pioneers of neuro-  
linguistic programming

*THANK YOU  
VERY MUCH!!*

[jorge.cuervo@versorconsulting.com](mailto:jorge.cuervo@versorconsulting.com)

[Twitter: @jorgecuervoc](https://twitter.com/jorgecuervoc)