

Book review

Braver Leadership in Action: Personal and Professional Development for Principled Leadership (by McLaughlin, M. & Cox, E., 2022, Emerald Publishing)

Liz Wright (The Leadership Cafe)

Article history

Accepted for publication: 14 July 2022

Published online: 01 August 2022



© the Author(s)

Published by Oxford Brookes University

Bravery in leadership is a popular yet challenging concept, one which elicits different responses according to personality type and cognitive style. My first thought on 'Braver Leaders in Action' was that this book might help leaders to confront their organisations more, to challenge and provoke in a dramatic way: maybe skills in communicating more forcefully, or creating mini-rebellions in the tearoom. However, McLaughlin and Cox focus more sensibly on how leaders can be brave in a myriad number of other ways on an everyday basis, creating 'small, inconspicuous but consistent efforts that subsequently build up to make the world a better place'. Their concept of 'braver leadership' provides a sound and modern approach to leadership, coaching, followership and mentoring in today's difficult environment.

This useful book builds on the success of the authors' 2015 book, *Leadership Coaching: Developing Braver Leaders*. It seeks to broaden and extend the initial focus of the brave coaching of other leaders to one that can include a self-help, development guide to support personal leadership change, as well as provide a means to guide other leaders in the skills, attributes and attitudes needed for braver leadership today. Described in the introduction as a 'go-to reference for management of how to make changes in personal style, thinking and actions', the book cites the latest serious global challenges for leaders, making a compelling case for leaders to 'step-up' to face, meet and actively solve them, transforming themselves in the process.

This is the essence of braver leadership here. Each leader faces a choice to do the right thing or the easy thing, and 'over time, those small acts, those braver responses to the events and priorities thrust upon us tip the scales to wisdom, decency, prudence and good stewardship.' It is about taking an intentional stance to tackle and solve the everyday challenges that leaders face: 'It can take a lots of courage to solve problems by making small, inconspicuous but consistent efforts that subsequently build up to make the world a better place'. Braver leadership, therefore, must become a skill, an attitude, a determination, that is accessible to, and practiced by, all leaders in these hugely challenging times.

In order to help us develop these attributes, the authors lead us through eight specific 'action areas': becoming aware; generating desire, motivation, and commitment; challenging mindsets; practicing emotional intelligence; generating personal capacity; exploring values; regulating the ego; and doing the right thing. Each of the eight areas provides us with four detailed 'cornerstones' to help develop the right skills, with useful exercises and focused questions. The last chapter integrates the previous eight, and brings readers back to the point of braver leadership and humanity's 'existential imperatives.' Finally, the authors make a call to action regarding the need to use braver leadership now, stressing urgent 'legacy' challenges of climate and the environment, and wellbeing and mental health.

This book provides a thoughtful yet practical handbook of leadership for today's leaders. Filled with academic references, as well as real-life examples, it represents an excellent and comprehensive leadership textbook for aspiring leaders, as well as providing much food for thought and insight for more experienced leaders seeking to update and refresh their approach. Definitely, this book is worth absorbing and assimilating for us all.

Dr Liz Wright
Director, The Leadership Cafe