

SEASON 1 · EPISODE 9 · FROM PEER TO LEADER

The Loneliness of Leadership

Around half of CEOs report loneliness in the role, and 61% say it hurts their performance. The fix isn't closing the distance — it's building support on your own side of it. Every isolating move starts as two conversations: inside you, then across.

SEE IT · SAY IT · LEAD

1 THE THING YOU CAN'T TELL THEM

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "If I hold this back, they'll stop trusting me." It protects you from their face changing — or from carrying it alone another day.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"Holding it isn't hiding it."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

They're testing whether what you say is true, not whether you say everything. Deflection is a small lie; the leak hands your discomfort to someone who can't act.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I understand why you're asking. I can't discuss that right now, and I won't speculate or mislead you. The moment I can share more, I will — as clearly and fast as I can."

2 THE DECISION YOU'RE REPLAYING AT NINE AT NIGHT

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "If I need to run this by somebody, I wasn't ready for the chair." It protects the picture of you as needing nothing.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"A sounding board isn't a rescue."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

The eight-second peer check is gone. Forty percent of stressed leaders have considered leaving leadership altogether — carrying it alone isn't sustainable. A peer knows the chair.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"Do you have ten minutes for me to think through a management decision? I don't need you to solve it; I need a sounding board from someone who understands the role. I'll leave out names and confidential details."

3 THE PERSON AT HOME WHO ASKS HOW WORK WAS

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "They can't help with this, so why put it on them." It protects your energy, not their capacity.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"They don't need the story. They need me."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Loneliness at the top doesn't stay at the office. They're asking whether you're reachable, not for the story. "It was good" works until it's your only sentence.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I can't share the confidential details, but today was heavy and I'm still carrying it. I need about twenty minutes to reset, and then I want to be present with you. Can we reconnect then?"

TRY ONE THIS WEEK

1. Catch the sentence before you answer — "they'll stop trusting me" — then name the boundary instead of inventing reassurance.
2. Ask one peer who has sat in the chair for ten minutes as a sounding board — names and details left out.
3. Swap "it was good" for the headline and twenty minutes — then actually take only twenty.

Pick just one — small reps beat big plans. Want the five-day version? Grab a Challenge Sheet at theworkingleader.com/challenge-sheets.

LEAD

Some distance comes with the chair. Build support on your own side of it: one peer to call, one honest sentence at home, one standing rule. See the sentence first, then say the hard one. **The first person you lead is you.**

You can do this!
— Matt

REMEMBER THIS

"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it."

— HALFORD LUCCOCK

Usually quoted at leaders as advice about teams. Read it the other direction — it applies to you, too.

GO DEEPER

Grab the free starter toolkit — checklists, scripts, and this week's challenge — at theworkingleader.com.

YOUR NOTES · THE SENTENCE YOU CAUGHT · THE ONE THING YOU'LL DO DIFFERENTLY