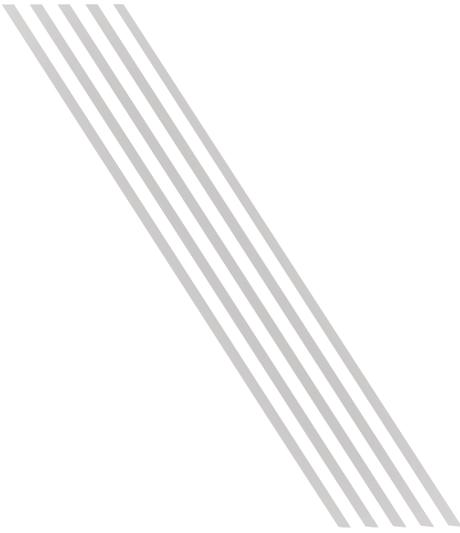


Essays of Hope, Healing, and Humanity

Tomorrow together

EXCERPTS

DAVID
DYE



Personal. Profound. Poignant. David tells a story like no one else; and these stories inspire reflection, hope and a genuine sense of connection.

Thank you, David. This book is what the world needs now.

— *Julie Winkle-Guiloni, International-Best Selling Author*



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DAVID DYE

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ALSO BY DAVID DYE

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*Courageous Cultures: How to Build Teams of Micro-Innovators,
Problem Solvers, and Customer Advocates*

*Winning Well: A Manager's Guide to Getting Results –
without Losing Your Soul*

The Seven Things Your Team Needs to Hear You Say

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DEDICATION

To our children – may we leave it better than we found it

PRELUDE

I sat on the couch with my wife, Karin, and our teenager, Sebastian. We watched Lin-Manuel Miranda discuss the US Constitution through hip-hop music and rap lyrics, and ... I felt unease. The pandemic-caused isolation made the television release of *Hamilton* a big deal for us. We hadn't seen it live and were excited that Disney had made it available. It was a highlight in a summer of sameness.

Even if you haven't seen it, you probably know from the title that it follows the life of Alexander Hamilton and the many ways he influenced the founding of the United States of America. A song called "Non-Stop" describes how Hamilton conceived of *The Federalist Papers* to explain and defend the fledgling US Constitution to its new citizens. The song also tells how, despite writing with John Jay and James Madison, Hamilton ultimately wrote 60 percent of the essays himself.

The song highlights this volume of writing by asking why Hamilton writes like he's running out of time? The question foreshadows Hamilton's death—a death everyone knows will arrive in a duel with Aaron Burr.

Why did he write like he was running out of time?

The lyrics hit me in the chest but differently than they were sung: Why wasn't I writing like I was running out of time?

If you knew me before picking up this book, that question might not make sense. Before this book, I've authored three books on leadership and management, a children's book, and hundreds of blog posts and articles. Books by Karin and me have been translated into

Chinese and Turkish. Then there are the dozens more unpublished short stories and novels. It's fair to say I've written quite a bit.

But as I listened to Hamilton try to convince Burr to join him in writing *The Federalist Papers*, the words dug into my psyche. I was writing. But not like I was running out of time.

And I might be.

If the pandemic did nothing else, it sensitized many of us to our mortality. As I finish writing this book, we're living through what economists have dubbed the "Great Resignation." Forty percent or more of employees have left, or are considering leaving, their current job—either for another role, a different industry, a fresh start, or to retire.

There are many causes.

Some people felt ill-treated by their employers. Others found new life in their time with family during their work from home. And many people, faced with a once-in-a-lifetime global staring contest with mortality, realized they weren't living life the way they wanted to live it.

For me, those song lyrics set off a fuse of discontent. I love my work and my life. But I wasn't writing like I was running out of time—because if I were to write that way ... well, I would write *this* book.

INTRODUCTION

“The explorer who will not come back or send back his ships to tell his tale is not an explorer, only an adventurer.”

—Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

A malaise, a frustration, a gloom hangs over our world. A feeling that we should be better than this. It is hard to imagine people not feeling this way during a (hopefully) once-in-a-century pandemic. But that question of why we can't prevent pandemic deaths—some-where between ten-to-sixteen million people globally at the time of this writing, with nearly one million of those from here in the United States—is only one of many.

Why are our politics so polarized? How are we, once again, confronting the potential of nuclear war? Why can't we resist the divisiveness of social media, the interference by foreign actors, and the manipulation of our dopamine systems to sell advertising? How do we still live in a world where fear festers and basic human rights continue to be a struggle? John Philip Newell writes that we confront “A planet struggling to breathe, religious fundamentalisms that are fueling hatred and violence, and refugee families throughout the world being denied sanctuary.”

That is a long, if partial, list of challenges for those who want to build a better world for themselves, their children, and their children's children.

These challenges can feel overwhelming. And hopeless.

But we're not without hope.

I've had occasional bouts of melancholy since I was a teenager. Melancholy is my word ... a non-medical diagnosis for what some might call occasional depression or anxiety. Despite that predisposition, I am optimistic. And perhaps I trust my optimism all the more because it is filtered through those times of cloying heavy gray.

I am hopeful.

But it is not naïve hope.

Pema Chodron writes that there “is wretchedness and gloriousness in being human, and they need each other. It is easy to get caught up in one and resist or yearn for the other.” So easy to get caught up in either direction, yes. That resisting or yearning for one or the other is a form of naïve hope. But wisdom grows as we understand that we live with both aspects—as individuals and collectively.

I am hopeful because we have the wisdom and experience to work through our challenges. The challenges aren't easy. They will require new ways of thinking and new skills. Seth Godin suggests that modern citizens need to know about statistics, germ theory, epidemiology, decision-making, propaganda, the mechanics of global weather, network effects, and artificial intelligence. I'm sure you could add a few more to that list. We'll also need the flexibility to address unintended consequences. Patience, persistence, and determination.

One thing is certain. To succeed, we will need one another.

The good news is that we have one another. At least, we are available. We are here.

But there is real work ahead in lifting our gaze, extending our hand. Recognizing the dignity, beauty, wretchedness, and glory in one another. This work starts inside each of us.

Moving forward requires loving it all. To dance with what is wonderful—and what is painful. To know joy and sorrow in ourselves so we can embrace one another. To acknowledge the truths that even now we struggle to comprehend. We have one another. Need one another. But living into this truth requires effort.

Newell compares this dawning awareness to birthing pains. “There

is no going back,” he says. “We now know too much about the interrelatedness of all life to pretend that well-being can be sought for one part alone and not for the whole, for only one religion, one nation, one species.” The work ahead is nothing less than to remember the sacred in one another.

And that is the goal of this book. To reconnect us to the beauty and pain of our humanity and the wisdom of the natural world that is our home. So that, together, we may build our better future.

If you’ve read our previous books, this one’s different, and I believe it is an excellent companion. This is a collection of reflections, personal essays, delights, challenges, questions, and meditations. Hope, wisdom, and joy that equip one for life. Unlike our leadership books (Karin and I are known for our practical, easy-to-implement leadership tools and techniques), this book won’t always provide clear answers. At times, a tough question is more important than an easy answer.

Each section focuses on a common theme. First up is Section I: A Together Future, where we look at the single planet we share and our opportunities to build the future, to face the challenges of communication, and to share the power of perspective. Section II: Connections focuses on what brings us together—from the connections of family traditions, good friends, and mentors to the kindness of strangers. In Section III: Embers and Hidden Treasures, I discuss the value of silence and sadness. Section IV: Follow the Music examines different approaches to wisdom, navigating life, and success. Section V: The Mountain Always Wins calls us back to humility and awe, the power of the world around us, and the importance of fundamentals. We end with Postlude: I Was Here, a celebration of our continued existence.

The sections are divided by interludes—I think of these as sorbets. Palate cleansers. At least, I would think of them that way if I’d ever eaten a fancy multicourse meal that featured sorbets between courses. I haven’t, but I can imagine. Each interlude is a kind of delight—a pause between themes. (And if you enjoy these interludes, I highly recom-

mend *Delight* by J.B. Priestley and *The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay.) You may enjoy a chapter each day, a section, or more.

Everyone reads differently, but early readers of this collection were unified in one request: an orientation to my major life events. This is the sort of thing I would otherwise avoid (too much talking about myself), but I understand the need. You will find that I refer to various stages of my life in the pages that follow. These references aren't sequential. But like the map in the front of a fantasy novel, hopefully, this gives you context to enjoy the journey. So here it is:

I am the oldest of six children. I grew up in Denver, Colorado, with the Rocky Mountains only an hour's drive away. My family's economic status was working-class poor. My parents were usually employed, but we still relied on government assistance. This was the result of my parents belonging to a Christian-themed cult led by a man who'd come to the United States from India. He preferred his parishioners hold lower-income jobs as it kept them from realizing their self-sufficiency (and hence kept them dependent on him). My father was emotionally abusive, and during my elementary school years, my parents divorced.

I attended an academically advanced high school and then went to the University of Colorado in Boulder, where I ultimately majored in political science. During my freshman year of university, my father came out (told us he was gay) and left the family. I ended up caring for the oldest of my sisters while I finished my undergraduate degree.

When I was nineteen years old, I got involved in local politics and was appointed to the city planning commission. At twenty-one, I ran for city council and was elected to office. During that time, I started a master's degree in education. Before I started the student-teaching portion of the degree, I was recruited to join an educational human service nonprofit that worked with urban students—many of whom came from challenging situations, including poverty, drugs, and family violence. I accepted the position and worked there for sixteen years—most of that time spent in middle management and executive

leadership roles. When I was twenty-four, I married for the first time. And while our marriage wouldn't last, one beautiful outcome was my relationship with my stepdaughter, Averie. She is one of the joys of my life.

During my years with the nonprofit, I re-engaged with my passion for leadership. I would eventually complete a master's degree in nonprofit management. I loved helping our leaders around the country be the best version of themselves. And so, I decided to do that exclusively. I retired from the organization I'd led and started my own leadership and management consultancy.

Soon after, I met Karin Hurt. In Karin, I found a kindred leadership spirit—we'd both written extensively, and our approach to leadership matched up so well that I thought I'd written an article I was reading ... until I saw her byline. Given our alignment, we decided to collaborate. We wrote *Winning Well: A Manager's Guide to Getting-Results without Losing Your Soul* and became good friends. We'd both been married before but were single at the time. After the book was published, we realized there could be more to our relationship than being friends and co-authors. We married, merged our businesses, and I became a stepparent for the second time (and I can say with confidence that I have the best children any stepparent could hope to have).

Together, Karin and I run an international leadership and management consultancy. It is amazing work to help leaders and organizations master the skills of human-centered leadership and achieve transformational results. This work has taken me around the world, and it inspires me. There is so much beautiful humanity in all of us—sometimes it's just knowing how to release it.

So, there's the context. If you'd like to learn more about our work, you'll find us at LetsGrowLeaders.com. I host the *Leadership without Losing Your Soul* podcast and would love to connect there, on LinkedIn, or you can email me at david.dye@letsgrowleaders.com.

Here's to the journey!



AN AGE OF MIRACLES

“There is no decency or sense in honoring one thing, or a few things and then closing the list. The pine tree, the leopard, the Platte River, and ourselves—we are at risk together, or we are on our way to a sustainable world together.

We are each other’s destiny.”

—Mary Oliver, *Upstream*

We live in an age of miracles.

One morning, sitting in a restaurant in a Denver suburb, I had a wonderful meal. Shredded beef short rib, seasoned perfectly, served under an egg and covered by an excellent green chili. Music played overhead—a soulful, bluesy piece by B.B. King. While I savored the meal, I read a novel that I’d downloaded to my phone, paused to arrange a Christmas purchase with my mom, and talked with my daughter in Guatemala, my sisters, and Karin in Maryland—all via text.

After breakfast, I popped into a drugstore and got an immunization to prevent influenza. I replenished my travel kit with a toothbrush and razor before taking a beautiful, blustery walk in one of my favorite Denver parks. Then I drove to the airport and boarded a plane that, as I wrote this, carried me to Minnesota and North Dakota, where I shared my expertise with people who need it. Then I visited a friend of many years.

Miracles.

Every one of my experiences on this day was once the exclusive experience of royalty or would have been viewed as devilish wizardry not so long ago. A meal assembled from spices gathered from around the world? World-class music played by one of the best? Near-instant communication with loved ones? A quick shot to prevent an illness that killed millions before we learned the power of vaccinations (something that seems even more miraculous these days)? Two hours of travel to make a trip that would have taken a week or two, weather permitting?

It's not just that these things exist. It's the people who make them happen.

How many people were involved in creating this single day? The number must be in the hundreds of thousands.

The people who grew the food I ate. Who cooked it. Who built the restaurant. Who engineered and built the electrical and natural gas systems that powered the restaurant. Who worked with King and recorded and distributed the music. Who researched immunizations. Who made the dose I received. Who brought it to that drugstore. Who built the roads, the airplanes, the airport. Who assembled my phone. Who built and maintain the network that transmits my texts. Who drew the oil from the ground that became the toothbrush and razor. Who manufactured them. Who built and run the system that allows me to insert a bank card and transfer value from my account to theirs. Who ... who ... who ...

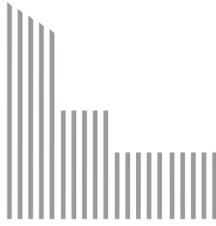
The web of people responsible for one ... single ... day is nearly unfathomable.

Even more amazing ... nearly every one of those people responsible for my day had a choice. They didn't have to do what they did. They could have chosen to do something else or nothing at all. No one had to invent the thousands of inventions that made today what it is. They chose to.

It's astounding, isn't it? Your life is the product of millions of decisions made by millions of people you will never meet. The monk Thich

Nhat Hanh contended that “Without interdependence, nothing could exist.” It’s never been truer.

Your future is our future. We will build it together, imperfectly, in fits and starts, threatened always by our fears, insecurities, and the question of whether we can truly grasp our universal condition. We’re all in the same boat—a boat called Earth.



DOWNTOWN

“If you’re not careful / you’ll up believing this is the world.”
—Antonio Cisneros, *The Spider Hangs Too Far from the Ground*

I grew up in southwest Denver.

Late in the day, as the sun settled toward the mountains west of the city, I loved to see downtown Denver highlighted in the evening light. My favorite version of this view happened after a summer thunderstorm. The crenellated, steely-gray and white skyline glowed with hope against the dark-purple clouds that had taken their wrath out to the plains.

When I was twelve years old, my friend’s mother invited us to volunteer with her at her job. We drove there on a cold December morning. We rode in the back of a pickup truck, lying down as flat as we could to stay out of the bitter wind. When we arrived, I sat up.

And the world shifted.

My skyline, the familiar arrangement of glass and steel, had been put into a cloth bag, shaken, and poured out. This was not my downtown. We were northeast of the city center, directly opposite of where I’d grown up. The buildings were foreign, strange, and discomfiting. Not at all the view I knew and trusted.

But then another thought hit me. There were children who grew up in *this* neighborhood. These alien buildings that discomfited me were their familiar anchors.

Recently, I shared this experience with one of my childhood

friends, who told me, “By the time I was twelve, I’d lived with four different orientations of downtown Denver. I never had the same notion that it could have been a fixed point. That’s a new perspective for me!”

There’s always another perspective. The constellation Orion, with his starry belt and sword raised in the night sky for thousands of years, is a random smattering of stars to our neighbors at the other end of the galaxy. I’ve relived that moment of shifted perspective hundreds of times as my known world expands. There’s always another perspective.

And as strange, unsettling, and foreign as it may seem—how important it is to remember that this is the only normal another person has ever known.



A CRAB PROVIDES LITTLE FOOD

“A crab provides little food, so he is not easy to eat.
But the little he does offer is the best food under the sky.
To eat crab you must work, which makes you appreciate
him more. He is the blessing, the remembrance.
And no man or woman ever ate enough.”

—James Michener, *Chesapeake*

Growing up in the Rocky Mountain West, I was ignorant of crabs. I'd never eaten one, and it was hard to imagine why you'd want to. I first became aware that crabs are a “big deal” when I went to grad school.

In a social marketing class, we studied how to positively affect human behavior on a large scale. It was a fascinating look at humanity. For instance, an anti-littering effort in Texas didn't take off until they figured out two key elements: the right slogan and the right faces. The prime littering population was young men aged sixteen to twenty-four ... in a state known for its swagger and independence. So, a call to public responsibility was unlikely to work.

A marketing agency came up with the right slogan: “Don't mess with Texas.” Yes, “Don't mess with Texas” got its start as an anti-littering campaign (the Texas Department of Transportation owns the trademark). Then they put it in the mouths of Texas celebrities: rocker Stevie Ray Vaughan and Dallas Cowboys football players

Randy White and Ed “Too Tall” Jones. The combination of slogan and celebrities worked: in four years, roadway litter declined 74 percent.

Back to the crabs and the Chesapeake Bay where, by the early 2000s, years of public education had reduced pollution from agriculture and sewage treatment. But there was still too much nitrogen and phosphorous flowing into the Bay. These nutrients spiked algae growth, which blocked out the sun for plants lower in the water. Then the algae died and decomposed, sucking oxygen out of the water. None of this is good for the marine life (or seafood, if you prefer).

Studies identified fertilizer runoff from residential lawn care as a major source of this pollution. It was time for another social marketing campaign. But the past forty years had featured hundreds of “Save the Bay” efforts, and the folks working to reduce pollution knew people would be tired of those messages.

Enter the blue crab.

Rather than focus on another environmental cause, the marketers appealed to regional pride and love of the crab with messages like “Save the crabs—then eat them” and my personal favorite: a photo of a house with lush green grass beneath which is printed “No appetizers were injured in the making of this lawn.”

I remember studying this campaign and being struck by how an appeal to eating crabs could change behavior at scale. In my mind (and at the risk of rejection by my East Coast family and friends), that would have been like trying to persuade Westerners to drive less so they could eat more Rocky Mountain oysters.

Like I said, I was ignorant.

How could an ugly crustacean inspire that level of loyalty? It would be years before I understood.

Karin was born and raised in Maryland between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. When she introduced me to her extended family, it was at a crab feast. When her nephew brought his girlfriend to meet us, it was at a crab feast. If I was clueless about crabs in general, I knew even less

about a crab feast. Apparently, they are a sort of gauntlet where you test romantic partners to see if they are worthy.

The first thing you need to know is that you hold your crab feast outdoors if at all possible. Set up folding tables end-to-end, roll out brown butcher paper or newspapers across the surface, tear it off, and use masking tape to hold it to the table for an inexpensive and disposable tablecloth. Place rolls of paper towels on the table every few feet, such that everyone has a roll within arm's reach.

Family and friends arrive with an abundance of side dishes—of which salads, boiled corn, and mac and cheese seem to be particularly important, though I imagine this varies by family tradition. Distribute wooden mallets and knives around the tables (two or three households often pool their mallets so there are enough for everyone). Add a generous supply of soft drinks and beer (nothing too fancy—the consensus seems to be that craft beer is wasted at a crab feast) in a cooler, bucket, or tub of ice.

Everyone takes their seat, and now it's time: bushels of bright red steamed crabs are dumped in the center of each table (the crabs come out of the water with blue markings on their legs and claws—hence the name—but once steamed, like lobster, they turn a bright red).

The crabs are even more red due to the speckles and clumps of Old Bay seasoning—a remarkably spicy, salty, not-quite-sweet flavor combination of salt, celery seed, dry mustard powder, red pepper, black pepper, bay leaves, paprika, cloves, allspice, ginger, cardamom, and cinnamon that you don't want to get in your eyes. But seasoning is a misnomer. Seasoning implies restraint—a little spice to draw out the flavor. Not so with crabs. You pour it in by the bucketful. If you can see the crabs beneath the layer of seasoning, you almost have enough.

Now for the drama.

Opening a crab and removing the meat is known as “picking.” And apparently, there is a right way to pick a crab.

But I couldn't tell you what it is. Nor, I'm guessing, could three different Marylanders. Legs first or body first? Legs connected to the body or not? Everyone seems to have their preference.

But there does seem to be universal agreement on this point: thou shalt not waste crab meat.

The kindest of grandmothers can summon wrath to cower a Navy SEAL when a grandchild discards an errant leg with useable meat attached. As she picks the leg, Nana ruefully shakes her head at her adult child whose parenting produced such waste. "I raised you better than that."

Children born in states that don't directly border the Chesapeake are granted a little more grace. A little more.

Before meeting the crabs and Karin's extended family, I watched several crab-picking instructional videos. After which, Karin told me that they would have shown me the ropes and that I was overthinking it. I'm not so sure—the stakes felt high.

Fortunately, I did not completely embarrass her—though there is a family photo of her father holding up a large piece of crab meat for my examination with an expression that requires no interpretation: "Now that's how you pick a crab!"

And with the picking of the crabs and the pounding of the mallets and the licking of the fingers rubbed raw with crab shells and the sting of seasoning comes the conversation. The relaxed catching up of careers, holidays, celebrations, illnesses, children who are older than they ought to be, laughter, plans, and thoughts for those who cannot be there.

And I get it. Michener was right: "A crab provides little food, so he is not easy to eat. But the little he does offer is the best food under the sky."

The crab isn't the best food because it is delicious (though it is), nor does it tick every culinary box. It is the best precisely because it is not easy to eat. You cannot rush through picking crabs. You cannot scroll social media while picking crabs.

Crabs are time. With family. With friends. For connection. The crab is the blessing, the remembrance—and certainly worth changing your lawn fertilizing routine.

So you can save them, then eat them.



GETTING SMALL

“I cannot do
All the good
That the world Needs
But the world
Needs all the good
That I can do.”
–Jana Stanfield

What weighs, on average, just over a hundred million tons?

Hint: it floats.

Another hint: it can fuel a daydream, cause joy, or bring death, destruction, and despair.

In 1845, you could not find a single suspension bridge used for trains anywhere in the world. In fact, US engineers dismissed suspension bridges as unsafe in general, much less for a railroad. By 1855, however, the world’s first functional railway suspension bridge had been built—spanning the Niagara River and allowing train travel between the United States and Canada.

The bridge started with a picnic and a letter. A Canadian entrepreneur named William Merritt was enjoying a picnic with his wife on the banks of the Niagara River. They’d received a letter from their children, who were visiting Europe. In the letter, the children described an amazing suspension bridge they’d seen in Switzerland. The letter sparked a vision in Merritt to see a similar bridge across the Niagara

River, but one capable of rail travel, to connect Canadian trade with the rapidly expanding US rail network and the American West. So he did what visionary entrepreneurs do—got permission from the government, formed a company, and looked for someone with the technical know-how to make it happen.

That someone was an engineer named Charles Ellet, Jr. In addition to his engineering skills, Ellet had a flair for the dramatic. His ability for self-promotion helped him win the contract, and in 1848, he got started, in typical Ellet fashion, with a contest.

Ellet and his team's first problem was how to suspend a line across the gap. It was the narrowest point of the gorge but still 800 feet across and 230 feet deep. The team considered tying a line to cannonballs or a rocket and firing them across the gorge, but they settled on a different strategy. A strategy Leonardo da Vinci suggested four hundred years earlier: use a kite.

For Ellet, this was an opportunity to promote the project (and, I imagine, to prevent newspaper stories of grown men flying kites while they're supposed to be building a bridge). He publicized the event and held a competition with a prize of \$5.00 to the boy who first flew a kite across the Niagara Gorge. Many boys from towns on the US side of the river tried and failed. But one boy, Homan Walsh, took a ferry across the river to the Canadian side of the gorge, returned downriver to the gorge, and flew his kite from there. He succeeded on his second attempt and tied his kite string to a tree.

Ellet tied a thicker string to the kite string and pulled it across the gorge. He and his team repeated that operation, tying thicker ropes, pulling them across the gorge, until finally they could pull a cable across. The bridge was underway. (It would require seven more years and a different engineer to finish the job.)

I often think about that bridge. Strong enough to carry loaded trains, but it started with a picnic, a letter, and a kite string. Whenever I'm starting a project that feels overwhelming, I look for the kite string. What's the smallest activity I can do to get started? Towers

will need to be built and thick cables secured, but it starts with that string.

Small is powerful.

A kite string is almost beneath notice, but the rail bridge was the first of its kind. A snowflake is inconsequential but an avalanche unstoppable. Back to our opening question: What weighs more than a hundred tons, floats, and causes both daydreams and ruin? The answer is a cloud. (Despite their weight, they are slightly less dense than the surrounding air and so a hundred-ton cloud can hang in the air.)

Vincent van Gogh said, “Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.” He probably wasn’t thinking about clouds, avalanches, or rail bridges, but the principle holds true. The power of small—a small habit, repeated daily—will transform your life. A small act of defiance against injustice, replicated across a people, can change a nation. A little bit saved every day becomes a fortune over time.

But it can be hard to show up every day and write, or run, or eat well, or be kind, or stand up for what’s right. There are days I don’t feel like doing any of those things. And the challenge is, of course, what does one day matter? What if I don’t run today? What if I don’t write?

And one day may not be a problem ... resting may even be a benefit if I recharge. Refresh; clear the cache. But it is also easy for one day skipped to turn into two. And soon, a habit of absence exists, and the habit of activity must be rebuilt. It’s easier to take a step if you’ve taken a step before. Inertia matters.

Of course, we struggle to see the effect of one run. One ten-minute writing exercise. One word spoken in kindness, a phone call made to a friend or loved one, or another voice raised. The effect of that one moment or action in isolation might not be much at all.

But that small action is not isolated.

You cannot pull the middle thread out of a towel without ruining

the whole. So it is with relationships, health, and many areas of life. A series of small, incremental moments that connect and build one upon another to create greatness.

Where can you get small?



THE MOUNTAIN ALWAYS WINS

“What are men to rocks and mountains?”
—Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

At Let’s Grow Leaders, we talk a lot about confidence and humility. The most effective leaders combine these characteristics. They have the confidence to say, “Together, we can have a better future. Together, we can do something bigger than ourselves.” They also have the humility to acknowledge their limitations, admit when they’re wrong, ask for help, and invite opinions that differ from their own.

For me, there is no better teacher of confidence and humility than nature. When I speak of nature, I mean the mountains. Specifically, the Colorado Rocky Mountains. We are all from somewhere or, for some of us, somewheres. I embrace bioregionalism—the notion that we are citizens, not just of a body politic, but of a place. An ecosystem. For you, the great teacher might be the desert, the ocean, the prairie, or the streets of a large metropolis. For me, no matter where I might call home, the ecology and places that shaped me are the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains of Colorado. Growing up in the shadow of these peaks, exploring their mysteries, challenging myself on their trails, I became me. There is nowhere I am more at home.

It takes confidence to set foot on their slopes. Without confidence, you cannot hope to explore and experience their beauty, awe,

and wonder. But if you do not approach the mountains with humility, they can kill you. In this section, you will find reflections on the power of humility, ways to build your confidence, the role of nature in our lives, and what it means to be alive.

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David Dye helps human-centered leaders find clarity in uncertainty, drive innovation, and achieve breakthrough results. He's the President of Let's Grow Leaders, an international leadership development and training firm known for practical tools and leadership development programs that stick.

He's the award-winning author of several books including *Courageous Cultures: How to Build Teams of Micro-Innovators, Problem Solvers, and Customer Advocates* and *Winning Well: A Manager's Guide to Getting Results-Without Losing Your Soul* and hosts the popular *Leadership without Losing Your Soul* podcast.

David is a former executive and elected official. David and his wife and business partner, Karin Hurt, are committed to their philanthropic initiative, Winning Wells – building clean water wells for the people of Cambodia.

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