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AM I ACTUALLY LEADERSHIP MATERIAL?

Welcome to The Highly Valued Leader podcast where I make it simple for leaders at all levels to amplify their value. My name is Mel Savage and I went from working in the mailroom at a small ad agency to making multiple six figures in senior management at McDonald's, to running my own multiple six-figure executive coaching business. I've had huge successes in my career and epic failures. All of it taught me the world-class leadership, mind and skill sets that I simplify for my clients and share with you on this podcast. I'll help you reset your leadership style, demystify the politics, and help you become the highly valued leader everyone wants on their team. Get ready for the most honest, direct and revolutionary leadership coaching you've ever heard. Let's simplify leadership together.

Hello, leaders. Welcome back to the podcast. This week, we're talking about how to assess if you're actually senior leadership material. Are you capable of doing the things that senior leadership does and how do you know? How can you make the decision? What are the clues that you can look for to make that decision? We're going to talk about that today. And my answer might not be the one that you expect.

The reason I want to talk about this is quite often when I'm coaching one-on-one, I see leaders—good, capable leaders—who themselves look up to senior leadership, and they just can't imagine themselves like that. And you might be that. You might be like, *"Oh my God, look at those people. They're so good at their job. I can't imagine myself handling situations that way, handling myself that way. They're so confident. The hours that they do are crazy. I don't want to work those hours. They have great ideas right on the spot, and they don't freak out. They just handle every situation so beautifully."*

And you look at yourself and you're like, *"I don't even know if I could do that. I don't know if I have that in me, because, because, because...,"* then you have all these reasons why. That's one version of clients that I get that questions their ability to be a senior leader. The other version of clients that I get that question themselves are the ones who can imagine themselves as senior leaders, but it's just not happening. They've tried all the things that they know how to try so now they're questioning, *"Maybe I'm not cut out for it. Maybe I'm deluding myself. Maybe this is never going to happen. Maybe I need to cut my losses and go somewhere else."* Blah, blah, blah...

There are variations of both of those, but I think those are the main types of people who question, *"Am I actually senior leadership material?"* That's who I'm speaking to today. If that's you, I am speaking to you, and my hope for you by the end of this podcast is that you don't have any confusion because really, you just need to make the decision one way or the other, and I'm going to tell you some things that you can look for to make that decision.

But what you don't want to do is be just stuck in confusion. Some days you think you can, some days you think you can't, and you never actually commit one way or the other. You just spin around in this confusion, wondering, reassessing, blah, blah, blah, and that is a massive waste of time. I don't want that for you because time is our most valuable asset. We don't have time to waste. We want to use our time effectively, particularly in our careers, which are the foundation for so many things in our lives: our sense of belonging, our sense of security, our sense

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of achievement, our purpose in some cases, or part of our purpose. We want to make a decision and we want to move forward in these areas.

The first thing I want to tell you is you don't have to be sure. That's the first thing that you need to tell yourself, you don't need to be sure if you're leadership material to actually just decide that you're going to go for it. In fact, you probably won't be sure. Most of the goals that people set for themselves, they're not 100% sure that they're going to make it; they just know that they want it. So I want you to first let go of the idea that you need to be sure. That's like a fallacy. It's like your brain going, *"I want to make sure that you're not going to fail."* But of course, you're going to fail. You're going to fail your way to senior management. And I don't mean that in a negative way.

I mean, whenever we set our sights on any goal, we're going to fail along the way. So just accept that. But how you fail, how you get back up again, how you deal with those failures, how you learn from those failures, those are the things that actually move you forward. You can do anything you set your mind to. Look at where you are in your career, you're already ahead of 50%, probably more of the people I wish I had a better stat. I bet you're already in the top 30 or 20 percentile of people if you're a leader. So there's a lot that you can do.

And by the way, you had a lot of failures to get here. You had to persevere. You figured it out. You didn't know exactly how you were going to get to where you are today, but you got here. I think that is one of the benefits of being young. We just worry less and we just think, *"This is where I'm going. I'm going to try to get there."* We take risks. We're a little less afraid. But as we get older and we have more at risk and we have more to lose, we start worrying and we start doubting ourselves, which, by the way, we did when we were young anyway. We just make it mean bigger things.

And we think that if we're going to achieve this goal of senior leadership or whatever goal, but let's just keep it in the context of senior leadership, then we shouldn't be worried, and we shouldn't have self-doubt. And that's crap because you are going to worry and have self-doubt. It's part of the journey of getting there. Even if you knew for sure that you could do it. Even if I said to you, *"Look, I've got a crystal ball and you'll get there for sure,"* you would still have self-doubt and worry along the way. You would still be like, *"I don't know. I don't believe her. She said I was going to get there, but things aren't working out today. It doesn't look good for me."*

The reason that's going to happen to you is because self-doubt and worry are just part of the human condition. You have a human brain that is actually wired to doubt yourself and worry. It's its way of avoiding danger. You can manage that brain. You just need to learn to manage it. That's where coaching comes in. If you have a really good coach who can help you learn to manage the self-doubt and worry, not resist it, not pretend it's not there, but learn to work through it, that's what coaching does. Because it's going to be there. Because you have a perfectly operating human brain, you are going to have self-doubt and worry. The bottom line is, you don't need to be sure that you can do it. You just need to want to do it.

I talk about it all the time now, I'm almost at 50 pounds in my weight loss journey. It's taken me a year and a half, which is a lot longer than a lot of people. I don't care. I'm going slow, slow and steady. And I wasn't sure I could do it, but I knew that I wanted it. And I knew that I was going to try. I knew that I was going to show up for it. And in fact, this weekend, I have signed up for a Duathlon. It's a mini Duathlon: running, biking, and running again because I can't swim. Don't get me started. I just don't know how to swim. I've never learned how to swim-fun fact about me. One day I will learn. It's on my to-do list, but I can't focus on everything at the same time.

Even as of last week, I was like, *"Oh, I don't know if I can do this Duathlon. I'm going to quit. I'm going to quit."* You know what I did? I reached out to my friends. I'm like, *"Ladies, I'm about to bail on this thing. I need some support."*

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And my girlfriends rallied around me, they helped me, and they took me through the transitions, the ones that had already done it, and I feel so much more confident. I just knew that I was about to bail. And so as I noticed that about myself, I asked for help. That's how you get to a goal. You don't have to be sure; you just have to want it. And when you are in a moment where things aren't working out, or you don't know how to handle something, or you're in a pattern, you ask for help. That's the first thing I want to tell you. You don't have to be sure.

The second thing is, you don't wait to be sure before you set the goal. I hear that all the time. My girlfriend, as I said, wants to—I think I said this in the last podcast—she's going to ride her horse in Trillium, which is a big event in Ontario for equestrian people. I don't know the right language. I'm not an equestrian, but she rides horses. And she was like, *"Oh, I don't know if I'm going to do it. I need to be sure. I need to feel better about it."* I'm like, *"No, you've got to set the goal first, and then you figure out how to achieve it."* It's not the other way around.

So you need to set the goal that you want to be in senior management. You might have a title. You might have a few different types of roles that you're looking for, or whatever it is. Maybe you just know you want to run your own company, I don't know. You set the goal and then you figure out how to achieve it, not the other way around.

I had no idea how I was going to lose 50 pounds. I had some ideas, but I didn't know how I was going to do it. I didn't know how I was going to deal with the failure either. I didn't know how I was going to build the business that I have right now. And believe me, building this business was tougher than losing 50 pounds. Building this business was tougher than a lot of things I faced in corporate. I had no idea. I knew what I wanted, and I'm not giving up. I'm just figuring it out as I go forward.

I always say this: the *'how'* you're going to do it is none of your business. You just have to know what you're trying to do, and have a few, like, *"What am I going to try this week?"* And you move forward. You just keep trying stuff. Because, of course, you don't have all the skills now. Of course, you don't know how to manage yourself in those tough situations, keep your cool, and manage your hours, or whatever it is.

In fact, when it comes to managing hours, I would say to you, one of the things I hear a lot from people is, *"I don't know if I want to be in the exec suite; they work crazy hours."* I'm like, *"You don't have to work crazy hours. You get to define the goal any way you want."* You might say, *"I want to be in the executive suite, and I want to be able to do it in 45 to 50 hours a week on average. That's my goal."*

Now that you have defined this goal, we're going to go about figuring out how to make that happen. You get to set the goal and the parameters for the goal any way you want. And I would suggest that you think about that beyond just the role. Maybe it's the size of the company, or how it fits into your lifestyle and the money, or the field. There are so many different ways to think about how to set a goal. Just define it as best as you can. It doesn't have to be detailed, just as best as you can define it right now, and then go about creating that for yourself. And the way you create it is you start somewhere.

One of the things that I do with my clients is that we build a plan. We map it out. And again, it's not like a detailed roadmap; it's like, *"Here are some of the skill sets that I need to develop if I want to be..."* They set the goal. We map out the skill sets. Here are the skill sets you need to develop if you want to achieve that goal. And we start with one skill set at a time. That's what you do. You don't try to be that person starting Monday. You're like, *"So let's just practice this skill set and get good at that, and then we practice the next skill set and get good at that."* That's how you do it. If you're someone who wants to be in the executive suite and work 45 hours a week, how can you

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actually be as great a leader as you are right now in your current job and do it in 45 hours a week, if that's not something that you're able to do right now?

By the way, if that's something that you want, you should come to my website and check out my *Time-Savvy Leaders* course. It's a low-cost program. You can sign up. It's a DIY program. It's going to be available starting July 22, 2024. I don't know how long I'm going to make it available. I don't know how long it's going to be at the price that I'm offering it for, which as of today is $97, but you should come check that out, because it's an amazing program, and it's going to be available as of next week.

So I digress, my friends. Like I said, you just need to take it one skill at a time. You're like, *"Here's a list of skills. Let's start with number one."* That's the plan. It doesn't have to be more complicated than that. And then the other thing I'll say to you, the last thing I'll say to you about this is self-trust. You don't have to be sure that you can do it. You just have to want it. You just have to set the goal and define what the goal looks like, and what the skills are that you want to develop to help you achieve that goal, and then you just need to trust yourself.

Every time I say you just need to trust yourself, I can see sometimes people's shoulders go down. They're like, *"Oh shit, I have to trust myself. That's going to suck because that's actually the hardest thing. That's the thing that I don't have, the thing that I can't control, the thing that is really, really hard for me to do, all the things."* And I want to say that that may not be true. I'm not going to outright call it BS because there are, of course, times when you don't trust yourself, but also there are times when you do trust yourself. So you do know how to trust yourself. We all sometimes do, and we all sometimes don't.

It's just that in order to say to ourselves, *"Oh yes, of course, I trust myself,"* we think that we need to trust ourselves 100% of the time, and that's not true. I trust myself. I feel like I can trust myself to do anything. That doesn't mean that I trust myself 100% of the time. That just means I'm someone who grounds myself in self-trust. I know that I will figure it out one way or the other. It may be painful. I may not get there all the time or as quickly as I want to get there, but if I keep showing up, as long as I don't quit, I'm going to figure it out. And that, I do trust myself, and you can too because look how far you've come in your career. You can trust yourself.

You've done so many things you probably never thought that you could do. We just have to focus on what we have achieved, not what we haven't achieved. There's a lot of both. You have achieved so many things, and you have not yet achieved a lot of things. Why focus on the things that you haven't yet achieved? Why don't you focus on the things that you have, and then set goals for the things that you still want to? Along the way, you will fall down and you will fail, and that's just part of the process.

But you are a problem solver, and everything that happens is just another problem to solve. It's just another puzzle to figure out. It's just another game to play. Whatever works for you. I like to kind of look at everything like it's a game. Like, *"That didn't work. That chess move didn't work. That thing didn't work. I'm going to try again."* That's all you have to do.

If you need help, get a coach and a mentor and surround yourself with people who are going to push you to do all the things that you need to do to get to your goal. You do not have to do it alone. That doesn't make you weak. It doesn't make you less smart. It just means that you are getting the support you need to get to where you want to go. And the bigger goals that you have, the more support you need sometimes to be able to get there, and that's okay.

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Let's just summarize. Of course, you can get to senior management. You can achieve anything you want to achieve. So if you want to answer the question, *"Am I senior leadership material?"* The answer already is yes, for sure you are. That's not really the right question. The question is, do you want to be senior leadership material? And you just get to decide what's going to fit into your life. Decide what you want and set the goal. You don't have to be sure if you can do it. You just need to want it. You set the goal, then you figure out the steps or the things that you need to achieve to be able to get there. Do it one skill at a time. Ground yourself in self-trust and get the support you need to get there. That's it. I mean, honestly, that is it.

Speaking of goals, it was my goal to record a podcast that was less than 20 minutes today. I've been talking about it every single week. As I'm recording this, I'm at like 17 minutes and 36 seconds. That's not including the intro, but I've got to say, I'm getting there. You just have to keep showing up for your goals.

Okay, my friends. That's all I have for you this week. See you next time. Bye for now.

Hey, if you want to simplify leadership while amplifying your value, then you need to get your hands on my free training. Head over to melsavage.com/simple for instant access to the training and get a taste of how I help my clients lead with ease and make more money in the process. I'll see you there.

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