

IT'S NOT THEM — IT MIGHT BE YOUR EGO

Welcome to the Guide

A practical guide to leading with more presence, less performance, and stronger relationships. (Inspired by Transactional Analysis)



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WHY THIS MATTERS

We've all been there: A conversation spirals, a colleague challenges us, and suddenly, we feel the need to assert, defend, or control. It feels like leadership, but it's often ego in disguise. When ego takes over, we move into reactivity: protecting image, seeking control, or avoiding discomfort.

However, leadership built on ego can erode trust, limit connection, and block collaboration. There's another way: Leading with presence from your grounded, clear-minded self, even under pressure.

THE IMPACT OF LEADING WITH EGO

On yourself;

- You react rather than respond
- You focus on defending rather than understanding
- You may feel drained, misaligned, or stuck in self-protection mode

On others;

- Trust breaks down
- People shut down or become guarded
- True collaboration gives way to silent resistance or surface-level agreement

THE OPPOSITE OF EGO? PRESENCE

Leading with presence means:

- Clarity instead of control
- Curiosity instead of certainty
- Self-trust instead of self-protection

It's not about being passive. It's about leading from a centred place — especially when it's hard.



A Practical Framework: Transactional Analysis (TA)

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE EGO STATES

We can all operate from three main states:

Parent

Learned behaviours

- Critical Parent: controlling, blaming
- Nurturing Parent: rescuing, over-helping

Adult

Present, rational, balanced

- Calm, curious, grounded

Child

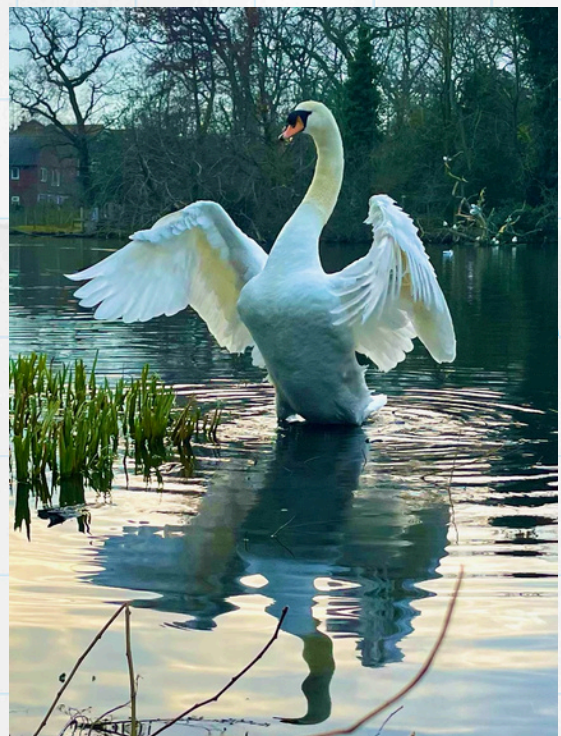
Emotionally reactive

- Adapted Child: anxious, people-pleasing
- Rebellious Child: defensive, resistant
- Free Child: creative, spontaneous

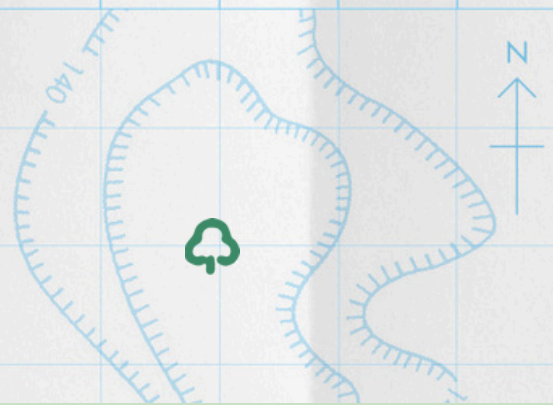
ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I trying to control or be right? (Critical Parent)
- Am I shrinking, people-pleasing, or resisting? (Child)
- Or am I calmly assessing and responding? (Adult)

Awareness of your ego state is the first step toward change.



Cobb Swan, taken at Higham Lake, Epping Forest



STEP 2: RETURN TO THE ADULT STATE

The **Adult** ego state is where presence lives. Here you can:

- Regulate emotion
- Respond wisely
- See clearly

To shift into Adult:

- Pause and breathe
- Ask: "What's really going on here?"
- Name your state "This feels like my Inner Critic"
- Choose to respond, not react

STEP 3: SUPPORT OTHERS TO DO THE SAME

If someone else is being driven by ego, you can invite them into their Adult state — without confrontation:

Model the Adult

- Stay calm and objective
- "Let's pause and look at this together."

Ask grounding questions

- "What are we both trying to achieve here?"
- "What would help move us forward?"

Reframe without undermining

- "I hear this matters to you — can we explore the options together?"

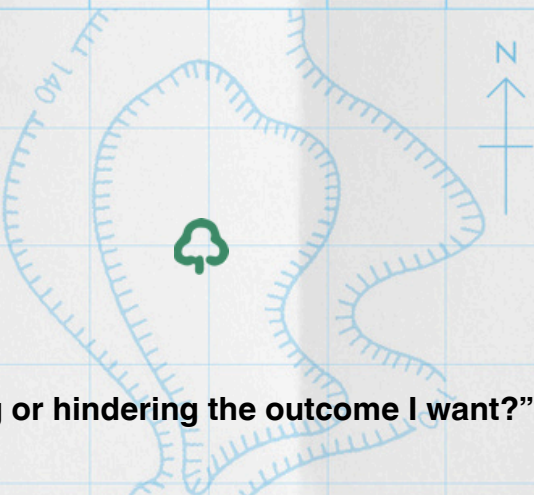
Slow the tempo

- Lower your voice
- Allow silence to soften the moment

Allow silence to soften the moment

- "How can we move through this in a way that works for both of us?"

You can't force someone into their Adult — but you can hold the door open






TRY THIS: REFLECTIVE PROMPT

“What state am I in right now — and is it helping or hindering the outcome I want?”
Two tools you can use right now

1. POST-CONVERSATION REFLECTION

- Take 5 minutes after any difficult conversation:
- What happened?
- How did I respond?
- Which ego state was I in?
- What would an Adult-to-Adult version of that moment have looked like?

2. THE EGO-STATE TRAFFIC LIGHT

| Light | What to Notice | How to shift |
|--|--------------------------|---|
|  Red | Strong emotion, judgment | Pause. Breathe. Ask: “What am I feeling?” |
|  Yellow | Hesitation, self-doubt | Check in. Ask: “Which voice is speaking — Parent or Child?” |
|  Green | Calm, curious, present | Proceed. Speak and act from your Adult. |

FINAL THOUGHT

If you take one thing from this guide, let it be this:
You always have a choice — to pause, notice where you're coming from, and lead from your Adult.
That single shift can change the tone of a conversation, the strength of a relationship, and the outcome of a moment.



Ego reacts. Presence leads. Start there.