



## *the* AUTHORS

Kevin Kaiser and The Kaiser Institute  
Curt Nonomaque, Former CEO, Vizient

## *about the* EXECUDECK

The *ExecuDeck* grew out of a question Curt and Kevin were asking each other about how to develop leaders most effectively. *What matters most?*

From their first encounter over fifteen years ago, it was clear that the perspectives of a CEO and the perceptions of a corporate intuitive could merge to create something valuable—a way to get at the roots of what limits people most, and a way to tap more deeply into their intrinsic gifts.

Kevin and Curt are using the *ExecuDeck* with leaders across Vizient. The conversations, breakthroughs, and insights continue to be extraordinary.

They make this body of work available free to any interested person or organization. Some are using it personally. Some are using it for leadership retreats. And several organizations are now using the *ExecuDeck* as the foundation for their new leadership development initiative.

As you go through the *ExecuDeck*, take your time. The deeper levels of each question are best accessed when you really dig in.



## *the* QUESTION

When describing challenging situations to others, is your story more about how you *acted on the world* or how the world *acted on you*?

## *why it* MATTERS

Blaming others, being defensive, or shirking accountability shrinks our domain of influence—it hands our power over to circumstance and eventually puts us in quarantine. Owning and understanding our role and accountability in every situation expands our domain of influence and positions us at the center of action.





## *the* QUESTION

What annoying characteristic do you most frequently encounter in other people? Is it possible that your resistance to this quality is a projection of your resistance to this quality in your shadow?

## *why it* MATTERS

Each of us has a Sun and a Shadow. Illuminated aspects we are aware of. And shaded aspects presently out of our sight. Elements in our shadow project onto others. Because of this, it warps our perception of what is really going on. A person predictably experiencing an inherently uncooperative and hostile world is often experiencing their own shadow—not the world. Because of this, their circumstance may change frequently and dramatically, but they will continue to experience a world they overshadow.



## *the* QUESTION

What is the balance of the four primal elements in your leadership style?

## *why it* MATTERS

An ideal leadership style contains all four primal elements: fire, air, water, earth. Fire empowers, air structures, water nurtures, earth grounds. Too much fire and people are burned up—too little and they become fatigued and lose interest. Too much air and ideas are over-rationalized and paralyzed—too little and ideas are under-rationalized and unreachable. Too much water and emotion sweeps everything away—too little and there is not enough passion for things to flourish. Too much earth and organizations become rigid and bound—too little and innovations never take form.





*the* QUESTION

Do you have good boundaries?

*why it* MATTERS

In their more limited form, boundaries are for *keeping things in* and *keeping things out*. In their more expansive form, boundaries are the co-creative space connecting us and another. A well-designed boundary creates a space in between, where just the right amount of you meets just the right amount of the other. A poorly-designed boundary may keep too much out or let too much in.





*the* QUESTION

Is the truth more important to you  
than reconciliation?

*why it* MATTERS

Often when we are in disagreement with others, we focus more on moving them to *our truth* than we do on achieving reconciliation. Our need to be right and to have others acknowledge that we *are right* causes us to pursue something that provides little to no value. When we acknowledge and respect each other's truths and pursue reconciliation, we generate an opportunity to co-create and reach a new level of understanding and trust.



## *the* QUESTION

What is one of the most *disabling* and one of the most *enabling* limitations you've experienced? What is a disabling limitation imposed by your organization that could be redesigned right now?

## *why it* MATTERS

Limitation is the helpmate to freedom—creation cannot happen without both. Within every limitation rests many degrees of untapped freedom. And within every freedom rests a matrix of limitation. Our highest creative potential isn't realized when we seek to merely escape limitation or experience greater freedom. It is realized when we understand freedom and limitation as design elements. Ultimately, all limitation and all freedom should be enabling. If not, then greater balance is needed between the two.





*the* QUESTION

How does your need for control limit your interactions with others?

*why it* MATTERS

In response to fear, we often try to control our environment. Some of us respond by becoming more directive or assertive, while others simply withdraw or disconnect. Our need for control can cause us to miss opportunities to co-create, learn, inspire, or be inspired. By facing what makes us uncomfortable or fearful, we become more graceful, more appreciative, and increase the possibilities for something great to happen.





## *the* QUESTION

Do you incessantly beat yourself up after a lapse in judgment?

## *why it* MATTERS

Most of us have done something *we cannot believe we did*—unexpected and seemingly uncharacteristic. But it *was* of our character, if only a very small part of it—a part we have not fully acknowledged, and a part that is mostly out of our sight. When we gracefully accept this aspect of ourselves and understand the conditions that led to its expression, we are in the best position to bring it into a more proactive expression the next time we meet a similar circumstance.



## *the* QUESTION

What qualities are you radiating that shape every interaction?

## *why it* MATTERS

Any emotion you generate creates an in-kind response in everything around you—to some extent, you induce the world you experience. When we are non-judgmental, appreciative, and open-hearted, we connect with others quickly and cleanly. People *re-experience* appreciative moments in their history *by experiencing us*. But when we are judgmental and fearful, we induce an in-kind response connecting people to the most *difficult* moments in their history.





*the* QUESTION

What do I deny myself that I need the most?

*why it* MATTERS

Fear may cause us not to seek the time, resources, or help we need from others. By recognizing your needs and giving yourself permission to meet them, you expand your boundaries, capabilities, and sense of self-worth.



## *the* QUESTION

Without saying or doing anything, what's made more possible by you simply being in the room? What implicit value do you bring?

## *why it* MATTERS

We bring explicit value through skills and abilities that are easily identifiable and describable—our explicit value is about our doing. But our potentially greater value is our implicit value—what we bring to every space because of who we are. When we are only recognized and rewarded for our explicit value, it overemphasizes its importance. Over time we may lose the sense of *who we are* as we get better and better at *what we do*. We make our greatest contribution when opportunities are designed for, or are naturally resonant with, both our implicit and explicit value.



A man in a dark suit and red tie stands on a small, green and yellow globe. The globe is set against a dark blue night sky filled with stars and a crescent moon. The background is a vast field of soft, white and blue clouds. The overall scene is surreal and evocative, suggesting a global perspective or a journey of discovery.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you allow yourself open space during the day?

## *why it* MATTERS

We lead busy lives. At work, we run from one appointment to another and then rush home to an equally dense calendar of events and to-dos. All of this activity leaves us with little to no open space—important time we need to reflect, receive, listen, invite, or *just be*. By pursuing the intention to provide ourselves with more open space, we increase our vitality, receptivity, and creativity. We show up more consistently with others and are more present in everything thing we do.



*the* QUESTION

What fear most limits you? What is the origin of the fear?

*why it* MATTERS

Often our poorest behaviors are animated by a single core fear. And although we make our best good-faith attempt to change our behavior through an act of will and lots of effort, the animating fear usually peeks its ugly head up somewhere else. This can lead to a frustrating cycle of attempts at change and eventual letdown.





## *the* QUESTION

How is it possible to trust someone, *even more*, when there's been a breakdown in agreements—or even perceived betrayal?

## *why it* MATTERS

If we purposely step into the path of a hungry tiger, our heels may get nipped. That doesn't mean the tiger isn't trustworthy—it means we didn't understand enough about the nature of the tiger. When we insist that others *earn our trust*, we are often taking only our perspective into account and may feel blindsided when they do something surprising. It's possible to have *increasing trust* in all our relationships as we know more about their nature and context—even though in some, we might create more distinct boundaries.



*the* QUESTION

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned this past year?

*why it* MATTERS

Some lessons we learn stem from a single event or circumstance. Others can only be recognized if we look at recurring patterns arising from every encounter or issue over time. Often the most valuable lessons are the hardest to recognize because their origin is in behaviors or assumptions formed over a lifetime.





*the* QUESTION

Who's your kryptonite?

*why it* MATTERS

Most of us have experienced a person who's our *kryptonite*—whenever they are in the room, we are off our game. This happens when a person is very different than we are, but highly related. Suddenly all of our edges are illuminated. Things from our history we thought we had released are right back in our face. And we feel sucked back into a smaller version of ourselves we thought we had transcended. These individuals are some of our most important allies. They provide an opportunity for growth by immediately shifting the mix—driving us toward our brilliance in a new way.



*the* QUESTION

How can an agreement break down between two people who hold nothing but good intentions for each other?

*why it* MATTERS

Good agreements are almost impossible to break. Agreements are created at points along the spectrum of fear and love. Many agreements contain aspects of both. Good agreements are creative agreements—they are based on love and nurture our relationships. Poor agreements are often based on fear and may stem from the perception that we are at risk of loss or are not safe.





## *the* QUESTION

How are you creating the best conditions in your organization for giving and receiving feedback? How could *you* be better at giving and receiving feedback?

## *why it* MATTERS

It is important to both give and receive feedback neutrally—without the emotional coloring of anger, blame, suspicion, or shame. This enables feedback to travel quickly and easily. If we are not open to feedback, or if we feel vulnerable when receiving critique, others are less likely to address issues with us early on and may only react to an especially upsetting behavior well down the road. It is also important to step into the energy when there is a rub with another person rather than pulling away. This keeps relationship pathways open and clear.



*the* QUESTION

What surprising and unpredictable future  
can you envision for yourself?

*why it* MATTERS

The most interesting alternative futures cannot be envisioned by extending or expanding what we know in the present—they are not bounded by our history or our present circumstance.



## THE QUESTION

Where are you investing more time, or less time, than is ideal given your highest-level personal and organizational vision?



## *why it* MATTERS

It is easier to succumb to the immediate demands of the *urgent* than to be disciplined about investing in the *important*. The best leaders practice the art of *maximum downward delegation* and don't let the nearly omnipresent "small organizational fires" distract them from what matters most.



*the* QUESTION

What throws you?

*why it* MATTERS

We often encounter situations or people that consistently trigger a negative or fear response in us. To change how we feel and react, we must understand the patterns and how they are connected.



The background of the entire page is a painting of a man in a dark suit and red tie, standing on the back of a large, vibrant butterfly. The butterfly has yellow wings with green and blue patterns and red spots. The scene is set against a blue sky with soft, glowing clouds. At the bottom of the image, there are rolling green hills.

## *the* QUESTION

Describe a purpose that could flow through you into any situation, job, or organization.

## *why it* MATTERS

Purpose is not something we must go out and find in the world—like the one right job or the one right cause. Our purpose is a quality intrinsic to *who we really are* that influences everyone and everything around us. But often what's most influential are expressions of our ego, not our purpose.

A woman in a red shirt and green pants stands on the back of a large white dove. The dove is flying in a sky with a large sun and clouds. The woman has her hands on her head, looking up. The dove is facing right, with its wings spread. The background is a bright, sunny sky with a large sun on the right side. The overall scene is bright and hopeful.

## *the* QUESTION

What are three intentions you have for the next year?

## *why it* MATTERS

Strong, coherent intentions have a resonance. They induce a response in the world from everything that shares a similar quality—much like striking one tuning fork induces a response in another. It is this vibrational relationship that creates synchronicity. People, resources, and events seemingly appear from nowhere to respond to, and connect with, our intentions. It is this flood of connections that allows highly intentional people and highly intentional organizations to create in big ways.





## *the* QUESTION

What is your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual vitality?

## *why it* MATTERS

There are four dimensions of vitality. Physical vitality—having a healthy body and energy to act in the world. Emotional vitality—the ability to experience emotions powerfully and release them quickly and fluidly. Intellectual vitality—the capacity to visualize, synthesize complex ideas, and see big patterns. Spiritual vitality—the capacity to connect and be in relationship with everything. It's important to understand whether or not you have both the amount and type of energy to do big things.

A man in a dark suit and red tie stands inside a large, transparent glass dome. The dome is situated on a green, grassy hill. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds. The man is holding a brown suitcase in his left hand and is looking towards the right. The overall scene suggests a sense of isolation or being trapped in a controlled environment.

*the* QUESTION

How are you isolated?

*why it* MATTERS

As our leadership domain increases, we face new risks of isolation. People are less willing to tell us what's really going on, conversations are often less authentic, and many are more afraid to tell us the truth. We may end up living in an artificial reality created for us by the people we lead.





*the* QUESTION

How could you create greater balance in your life?

*why it* MATTERS

Creating balance isn't as much about how much time we have, but how intentional we are about our time. It's possible to incorporate a small strand of everything that's most important into every day—even if some of those strands occupy only a few seconds. Balance is more about quality of design than availability of resource.



## *the* QUESTION

When navigating difficult relationships, what's the difference between *neutrality* and *numbness*?

## *why it* MATTERS

It's easy to confuse *neutrality* with *non-variability*. Non-variability is often achieved by developing a thick skin—becoming less reactive by keeping more out. And we may become increasingly numb in our quest never to let anything that anyone says get to us. But a higher expression of neutrality connects us *more*, not *less*, with the difficult situation. And we may experience intense emotions, or even abrupt and wild swings. But we always *return fully to the moment*, releasing any hooks to our recent experience. From this position of neutrality, we are able to write the best next chapter. We are fully alive! Fully feeling. And able to fully experience what's happening *right now*.





*the* QUESTION

Where are you spending too much time, energy, and effort maintaining the status quo?

*why it* MATTERS

Expending excess energy to maintain something in its current form is often a sign of misalignment with the environment. It's important to either shift the thing or shift the environment. Otherwise, increasing resources will be exhausted on something that will ultimately decline.



*the* QUESTION

What has occurred  
in your professional  
life for no apparent  
reason?

*why it* MATTERS

Everything has a cause and consequence. If something appears *just to happen*, it is because you don't understand how it relates to other things—how it got to be that way.



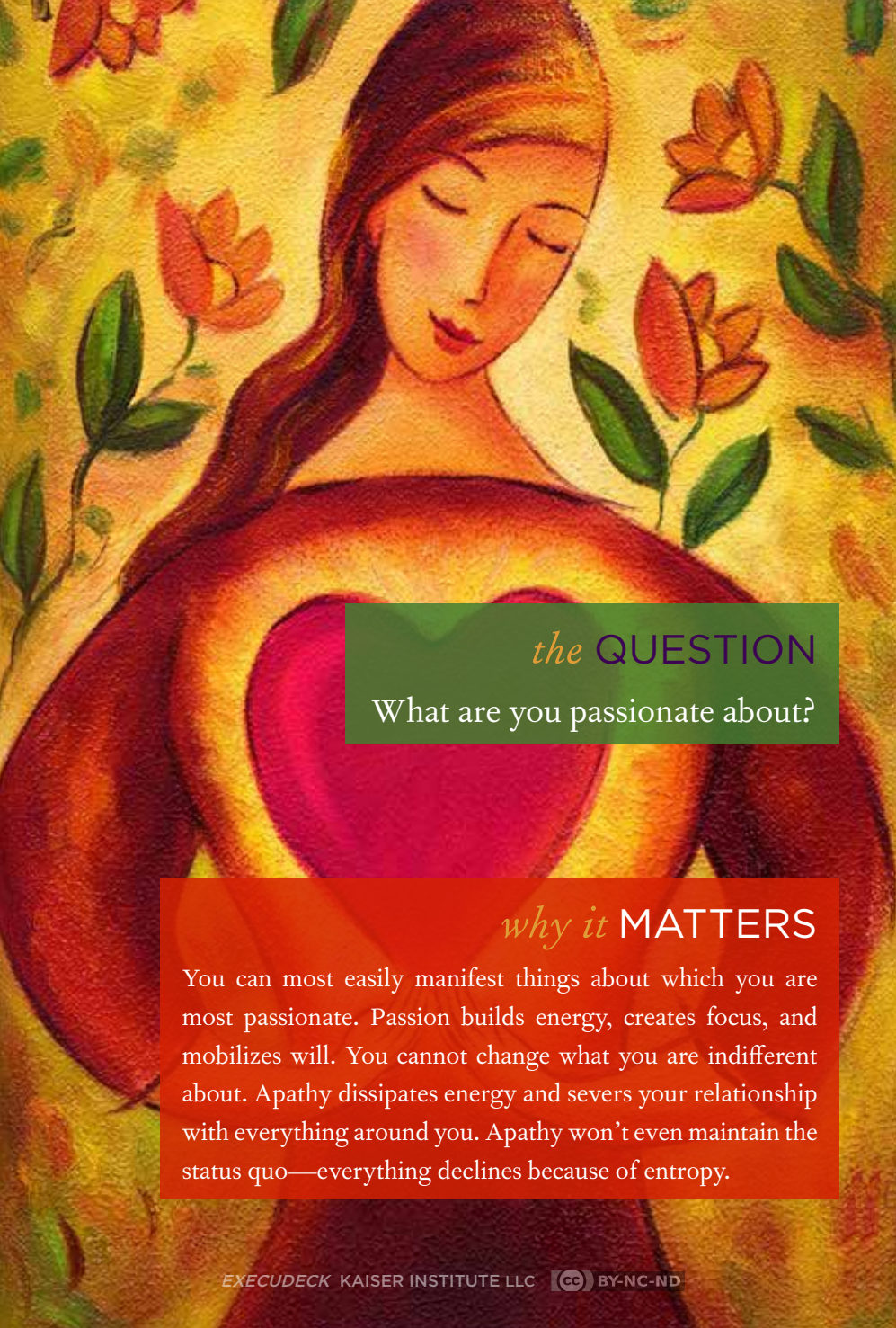


## *the* QUESTION

Describe a situation where you either waited too long, or acted too soon. Describe a situation where your timing was perfect. What made the difference?

## *why it* MATTERS

There are three primary aspects of timing. *Coalescence*—coming to ripeness over time. *Cycles*—moving through rhythms of withdrawal and expression. *Instantaneous manifestation*—coming into quick and unexpected relationship because of high resonance. Without a sense of all three aspects, leaders may act at the wrong time or miss unforeseen opportunities.



## *the* QUESTION

What are you passionate about?

## *why it* MATTERS

You can most easily manifest things about which you are most passionate. Passion builds energy, creates focus, and mobilizes will. You cannot change what you are indifferent about. Apathy dissipates energy and severs your relationship with everything around you. Apathy won't even maintain the status quo—everything declines because of entropy.



## *the* QUESTION

What part of your life would you most like to re-create?

## *why it* MATTERS

You can exert power over the past, the present, and the future. Changing the past requires re-interpreting. Changing the present requires re-aligning. Changing the future requires re-visioning.



## *the* QUESTION

In what ways are the people working for you experiencing inertia or stuckness?

### *why it* MATTERS

Stuckness is a sign that a person is no longer matched to their environment. To get unstuck, either the person must change, or their environment must change. Left alone, a person who is stuck will gradually atrophy as their life is isolated from the ebb and flow of creation. It may be difficult to recognize stuckness when it appears that everything is continuing along just fine—no big troubles or acutely uncomfortable situations. But nothing ever changes because the conditions for growth are no longer present.





## *the* QUESTION

When have you offered advice too soon, or too late, in facilitating the best organic learning process for people working for you?

## *why it* MATTERS

Offering advice too soon makes it more likely a person will repeat the mistake. If there is not adequate freedom to make small mistakes, people don't figure out how things work. Offering advice too late makes it more likely a person will either learn unnecessarily slowly, or possibly make a critical and costly mistake.



*the* QUESTION

What is one of the most important mistakes you've ever made? What role did it play in your eventual success?

*why it* MATTERS

We are often inclined to hide or deny our errors—and to feel guilt and shame. But failures pave the way to eventual success. And they are usually connected to the most important lessons we learn on our life path.





## QUESTION

What are my genetic strengths and weaknesses?

### *why it* MATTERS

Some of the things we are best at, we did not earn—they were developed over time by our ancestors. And some of our most significant weaknesses have little to do with how we've lived our life—they were also passed to us by those who came before. It's important to understand what was already in place when we were born so we can leverage our inherent strengths and mitigate our inherent weaknesses.



## *the* QUESTION

Describe your risk tolerance. How would you lead differently with an ideal tolerance for risk?

## *why it* MATTERS

Certain types of risk are essential to innovation and rapid leaps in performance. Often we discourage risk in ways we don't fully appreciate—like celebrating successes while neglecting bold attempts, or funding only those things that are proven. One way to assess risk tolerance is to look at our number of failures. If there are few, it indicates an overly-conservative approach.





## *the* QUESTION

Are you able to see patterns in what others see as unrelated or random?  
Give an example of something you noticed and something you missed.

## *why it* MATTERS

Often seemingly unrelated events or ideas are actually highly relational and connected. Sensing, understanding, and navigating complex environments or situations is vital to successful executive leadership.



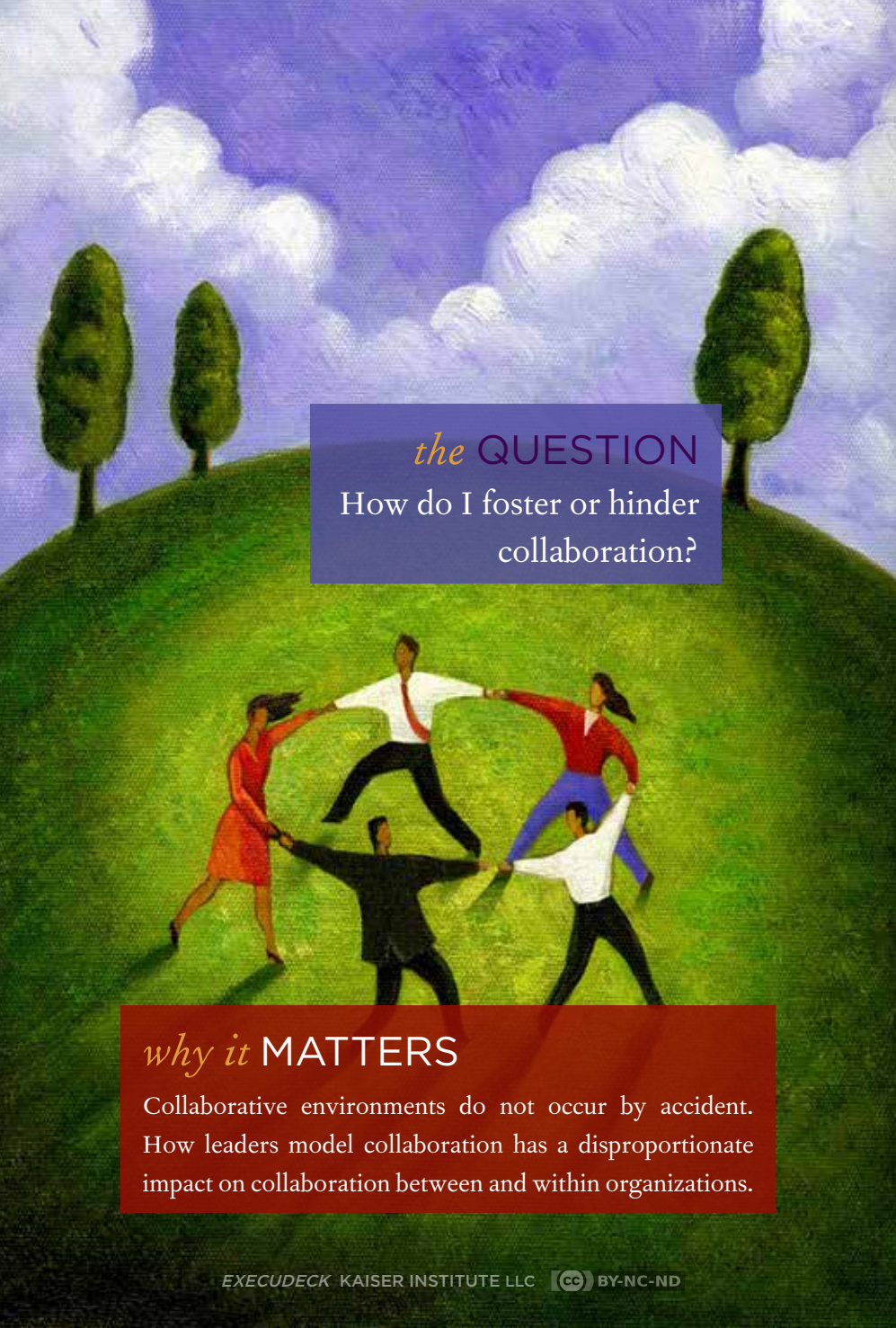
*the* QUESTION

Describe the last time you  
felt free or reborn?

*why it* MATTERS

Competition is intensifying, and the pace of change is accelerating. Leaders shoulder the responsibility of successfully navigating an increasingly demanding environment. It is essential that we find ways to rejuvenate our body, mind, and spirit.





## *the* QUESTION

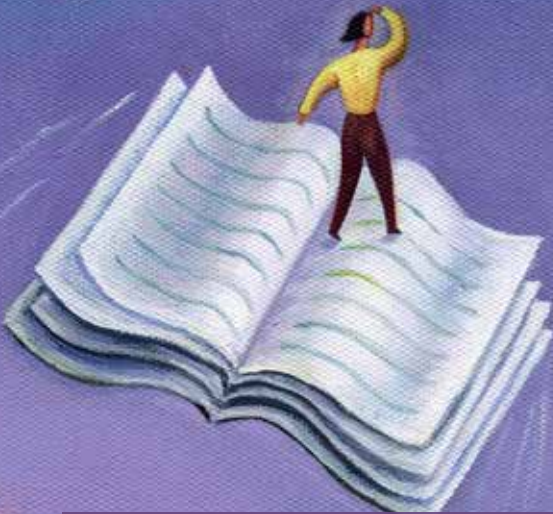
How do I foster or hinder collaboration?

## *why it* MATTERS

Collaborative environments do not occur by accident. How leaders model collaboration has a disproportionate impact on collaboration between and within organizations.

## *the* QUESTION

How do you receive intuitive information? Describe one of your most accurate, and least accurate, intuitive hits. What made the difference?



## *why it* MATTERS

Much of what exists in organizations lies beyond the ability of leaders to perceive it. Expanded perception gives you the ability to more fully understand what is really happening in a situation—which may not be as it appears on the surface. As you perceive more, you have more alternative actions available.





*the* QUESTION

How do you encourage  
when discouraged?

*why it* MATTERS

Leaders must lead in times of uncertainty and disappointment. They must maintain integrity in how they encourage others without providing false hope or underplaying the gravity of the situation.





## *the* QUESTION

What behaviors, attitudes, habits, or beliefs are holding you back?

## *why it* MATTERS

Un-learning is often more difficult than learning. And it frequently isn't what leaders *do not know* that prevents forward progression, but what they think they know and refuse to release.





A painting of a man in a white shirt and red tie walking across a narrow bridge over a river, carrying a briefcase. The background shows rolling hills and a blue sky with clouds.

## *the* QUESTION

What causes me to disconnect from others?

## *why it* MATTERS

There are times when we require space to plan, to recharge, or to create. However, there are also times when we push away those *we need* and those *in need*.

A surreal painting of a man on a wooden ladder reaching for a large, golden, textured egg in a landscape with stylized trees and a cloudy sky. The scene is rendered in a painterly, textured style with vibrant colors.

## *the* QUESTION

How do you create space for ideas to develop successfully?

## *why it* MATTERS

Highly collaborative organizations often squelch new ideas before they have time to develop. In the early stages of innovation, organizations can more easily recognize the risk than the reward of a new idea. Fear of failure often fuels protecting the status quo.



An illustration of a man in a blue suit and a woman in a pink shirt and dark pants standing on opposite sides of a deep, golden-yellow chasm. They are both pulling on a thick, brown rope that stretches across the gap between them. The background is a vibrant teal sky with soft, white clouds. The overall style is painterly and symbolic.

## *the* QUESTION

Think of a person who is your nemesis. How could you close distance between the two of you?

## *why it* MATTERS

Every image has a figure and ground. The ground helps define the figure. Your nemeses help you understand who you are—they are a ground that helps define you. A nemesis illuminates all your edges—the places your consciousness meets theirs. Once you understand your edges, you can expand the field between you and the other and create a bridge.

A conceptual illustration on a dark blue textured background. A hand in a black sleeve holds a large, white, rectangular block over a light switch. The light switch is a white, rectangular toggle switch set within a red square frame on a yellowish-tan wall. The hand is positioned as if about to flip the switch, but the large block is being held in front of it, symbolizing the CEO's role in enabling or blocking organizational progress.

## *the* QUESTION

How do you build an organization that doesn't overly depend on the CEO?

## *why it* MATTERS

Great leaders ensure the organization is not limited to what the CEO can conceive and execute. This requires a blend of *stepping in* strongly and decisively at times and patiently *stepping back* at other times to enable others.





## *the* QUESTION

What have you not forgiven that is still holding you in bondage? What are you finally ready to accept and release?

## *why it* MATTERS

What we have not forgiven holds a piece of us in bondage. We are not only stuck in our history, but what is not forgiven siphons resources from the present and exhausts them in our past. If remembering an event still produces a negative emotional response, we are held hostage.



*the* QUESTION

Do others see you as having an essential role in creating the future for the organization?

*why it* MATTERS

Successful leaders don't predict the future. They help create a preferred future by envisioning scenarios and developing strategies that make the organization more nimble and responsive to change.



A man in a dark suit and red tie stands on a large, weathered wooden arrow that points to the left. The arrow is mounted on a wooden post. The background is a vast green field under a blue sky with white clouds. The man has his right hand raised to his forehead, looking thoughtful or uncertain.

## *the* QUESTION

Are you a consistent source of clarity to your organization or do you find yourself relying on others?

## *why it* MATTERS

Leaders are constantly required to triage and then address urgent and important issues. This can drain our energy, distract our focus, and distort our perspective. Successful leaders effectively deal with the pressing issues of the day without losing their sense of direction and how things fit together. They take time to ensure that their team members feel confident and supported. They are thoughtful teachers and communicators even in frenetic and uncertain times.

A woman in a red suit stands on a dark rock, pointing her right arm towards a bright, multi-pointed star in a blue and purple sky. The scene is set against a background of dark, swirling clouds. The overall mood is one of aspiration and hope.

## *the* QUESTION

If you could immediately stop or start doing something that would make you a better person at home and at work, what would it be?

## *why it* MATTERS

Our work and home lives are deeply connected. Our families and co-workers uniquely, and sometimes intensely, experience our gifts and liabilities. The depth of interaction with those closest to us reveals some of our most interesting edges.



A painting of a man in a white shirt and tie holding up a large red rose against a cloudy sky. The man is standing on a small patch of ground, and the rose is the central focus of the image. The background is a soft, textured sky with shades of blue and purple.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you strive to be *important* or *relevant*?

## *why it* MATTERS

Ego or insecurity increases our need to feel important. We become more self-focused and protective—often exerting our will in an attempt to control the outcome or rejecting suggestions and offers of help because it feels like criticism or loss of authority. When you focus on being relevant, you become more authentic and create the context for co-creation, empowerment, and transparency to emerge—both for yourself and others around you.



## *the* QUESTION

Do you hold space for others to join?

## *why it* MATTERS

We can become impatient with others who are outliers or who are resisting change. Often we have explicit ideas about what constitutes support or showing support. We rely on verbal and visual cues that can lead us to misunderstand whether someone is open or closed to change. We create timetables to *get on board* that may force premature choice based on lack of apparent buy-in. By holding greater space for people to engage, we create the conditions for growth, co-creation, and support.



A large, stylized pencil is the central focus, pointing upwards. The pencil is orange with a black eraser at the top and a black band near the bottom. The background is a blue sky with soft, white, painterly clouds. The pencil is positioned vertically, with its tip pointing towards the top of the frame.

## *the* QUESTION

How can something you believe become more important than something you know?

## *why it* MATTERS

Beliefs help us reach toward something we cannot yet know—something that is beyond our current experience. They are a bridge. But they can also become a barrier when we deny our experience for the sake of our belief. This sometimes happens in religious fundamentalism when *keeping the truth* becomes more important than *caring for the people*. Healthy beliefs are enabling—they open up more of the universe to us and bring us into greater relationship. Unhealthy beliefs are disabling—they cut us off from our truth and increasingly isolate us from the things that matter most.

A man in a brown suit and white shirt is balancing two large, dark, spherical weights on a horizontal bar. He is standing on a green hill with a red and orange striped tent-like structure in the foreground. The background is a bright blue sky with soft white clouds. The overall scene is surreal and metaphorical, representing the balance between performance and values.

## *the* QUESTION

Do your actions support the importance of both performance and values to your organization?

## *why it* MATTERS

Leaders often communicate the importance of performance and values, yet their behavior and choices send a message that performance trumps values. This influences the decision-making, leadership selection and reward criteria that negatively impact the performance and culture of the organization.



## *the* QUESTION

What omens can you recognize now that are preceding events likely to occur in your future?

## *why it* MATTERS

Material events are often preceded by symbolic events—by omens. So, a simple occurrence is sometimes predictive of corresponding events to follow. Dropping something for the third time in an hour may point to something more than just being clumsy. By reading omens, we can act early—much as animals move out of the path of a tsunami.



## *the* QUESTION

Are you able to smoothly transition relationships?

## *why it* MATTERS

Relationships evolve and change. They begin, end, and sometimes renew. Ideally, we smoothly manage our relationships from one phase to another. However, too often we experience a painful or awkward shift. We cope by avoiding relationships that have changed, or need to change, which prevents us from experiencing a new beginning or an appropriate ending.



The background of the entire page is a textured, painterly style with warm, golden-yellow and orange tones. In the center, five stylized human figures in business attire are arranged in a pyramid shape, standing on their feet. The top figure is a man in a dark suit and red tie. Below him are two men, one in a red sweater and one in a green sweater. At the base are three men in light-colored shirts and ties. The overall composition is balanced and centered.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you allow your relative power to overly influence the context for your interactions and the lens through which you see?

## *why it* MATTERS

When you are too sensitive to the balance of power in your relationships, you can dominate or subordinate yourself to others. Too much sensitivity to power blocks your intuitive capabilities or distorts how you analyze information.



## *the* QUESTION

Do you assume others have only the best intentions?

## *why it* MATTERS

There are very few poorly intentioned people, but many people do poor things when they don't take enough into account. It's easy to assume others are *out to get us* when they behave in unhelpful ways. But most often, it's not personal. They aren't trying to hurt us—they simply haven't drawn the circle big enough. When we become defensive or reactive and don't seek to understand why their behavior makes sense to them, we close the possibility of coming into healthier relationship.





## *the* QUESTION

Are you driven by a sense of purpose  
or a sense of urgency?

## *why it* MATTERS

We live busy lives, which often causes us to experience a strong sense of urgency. The clock ticking inside our head may distract us from being fully present. This can cause us to disconnect or exert our will on others. By being more purposeful, we increase the chances of being fully present and connected with what's happening around us. We become more intuitive, supportive, creative, and most of all—happy.



*the* QUESTION

What life lessons are you the most resistant to learning?

*why it* MATTERS

Serial errors, recurring crises, and difficult situations that manifest over and over are indications of lessons not learned. You can identify lessons not learned by looking at recurring situations or situations where you proclaim, “I didn’t learn anything.” Denying your accountability in a situation robs you of the power to learn from it. When we fully engage and open to the possibility of not only changing the situation, but being changed by the situation, we learn the easy way and a tougher rub is unnecessary.





*the* QUESTION

Describe how more than one thing may be true even if both truths appear to be mutually exclusive.

*why it* MATTERS

Things that are highly ambiguous from our current point of view may be easily reconcilable in a larger context. Because of this, it's important to entertain an idea even if it directly contradicts what we already know.

A man in a dark suit stands in a surreal, painterly landscape with a green field and a blue sky. He is pointing with a pen at a large whiteboard that is tilted and floating in the air. The whiteboard has some faint, illegible markings on it. The overall style is artistic and conceptual.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you typically provide more *retrospective* or *prospective* coaching?

## *why it* MATTERS

Early in their careers, leaders are recognized for being strong individual contributors or effective managers of small teams. The majority of the feedback they provide to their staff is retrospective in nature, primarily to encourage positive behaviors or to address areas for improvement. This type of coaching helps team members improve their ability to perform in their current job, but doesn't typically accelerate their readiness for future roles. As leaders broaden their responsibility and influence, they must identify and develop others to leverage the skills and capabilities of multiple and diverse teams. This requires leaders to identify desired characteristics and attributes for future roles and to provide prospective coaching and development opportunities for emerging leaders.





## *the* QUESTION

Describe one of your favorite fantasies.

## *why it* MATTERS

Fantasy is an indicator of a natural resonance. It bridges the gap between how your life is and how it could be. A fantasy may reveal a natural desire, unfulfilled need, or quality denied expression in your current life. Recognizing the fundamental qualities of a fantasy helps them more easily express through your current life story.



## *the* QUESTION

How can showing up *really differently* in certain places or with certain people be even more authentic than always showing up the same way?

## *why it* MATTERS

How well your contribution translates across varying contexts depends on your ability to build an interface between worlds. If your brilliance is insensitive to your context, what is true one place may not be relevant or appropriate in another. The highest expression of authenticity is the ability to morph your interface so *who you are* is not held captive by *where you've been*. This means you may look very different in very different worlds.





## *the* QUESTION

Are you sensitive to context?

## *why it* MATTERS

Effective leaders are in tune with their environment—constantly scanning to see and feel what is happening around them. They see connections between things that are seemingly unrelated and hear the question behind the question. They pay attention to staging to create the conditions for something positive to happen.

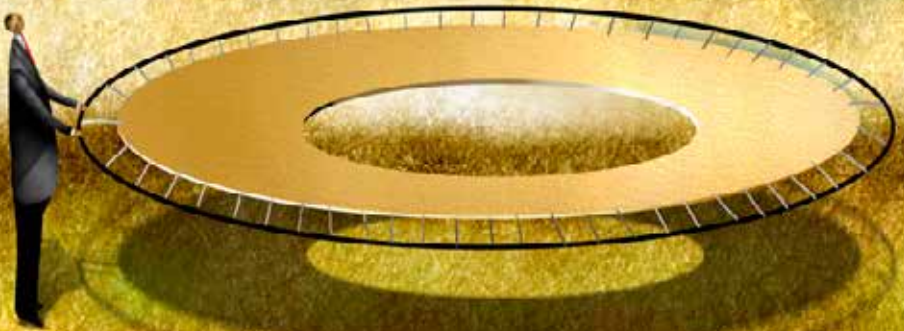
A man in a black shirt and blue pants is balancing a large, two-story house on a tightrope. The house is yellow with a red roof and red shutters. The background is a textured, golden-brown wall.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you design a space  
for good failure?

## *why it* MATTERS

Being intentional about designing the conditions for *good failure* is as important as designing the conditions for *good success*. Most of our learning comes from our failures. And the best failures create maximal learning with minimal negative consequence—taking just the right amount of risk. We should celebrate good failure as much as good success.





A person with a red hat and a white shirt stands on a grassy hill, looking up at a starry night sky. A bright shooting star streaks across the sky from the left. The background is a deep blue and purple night sky with many stars.

## *the* QUESTION

How close is your authentic self to the one you present to others?

## *why it* MATTERS

Many of us go through our day being something we're not. We present the person we believe others prefer and our fear of rejection causes us to hide some or all of our authentic self. When we disconnect from our authentic self, we create an imbalance that limits our happiness and our ability to truly connect with others.

The background of the entire page is a surreal, dreamlike landscape. At the bottom, a person stands on a large, rounded hill covered in golden, textured material, possibly corn or a similar grain. Above the hill, the sky is a deep blue with scattered white stars. In the middle ground, a person is seen from behind, standing on the peak of the golden hill, looking out towards the sky. In the upper portion of the image, several people are riding on glowing, cylindrical tubes that appear to be flying through the air. One tube is yellow and orange, another is red, and a third is blue. The overall atmosphere is one of wonder and exploration.

## *the* QUESTION

Does your sensitivity to power make it easier or harder for others to be authentic?

## *why it* MATTERS

When you are overly sensitive to your relative power, influence, or status, you can trigger others to move out of integrity. Whether you feel *inferior* or *superior*, others reflect and respond to the dynamic you create rather than being their authentic self.





*the* QUESTION

Does your past disrupt your present?

*why it* MATTERS

Your past can overly influence your sense of self—shaping how *you see you* and believe others see you. When you move into fear, you often overanalyze and overcompensate, limiting your ability to be authentic and fully present. By recognizing and reconciling the minefields in your memory, you increase your sense of well-being and the possibility of achieving intimacy with others.



## *the* QUESTION

When others fall short, do you punish or withdraw rather than support?

## *why it* MATTERS

When disappointed by the poor choices, behaviors, or results of others, our response is often guided by the lessons we learned from others—we punish or distance ourselves from the offending person. Providing support is an act of intimacy and courage. Listening, coaching, and taking corrective measures are all examples of support. Each time you give it, you share a portion of yourself and create the conditions for growth, healing, and positive learning.



A large gorilla is the central figure, sitting and reading a newspaper. The newspaper has the word "Amsterville" visible on it. Two small people, a woman in a red shirt and blue pants, and a man in a light blue shirt and dark pants, are standing on the gorilla's feet. The background is a textured, golden-brown color.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you sacrifice reconciliation for resolution?

## *why it* MATTERS

When dealing with an uncomfortable situation, we may experience a strong urge to fix the problem quickly and make things right. This often causes us to resolve the issue without actually achieving reconciliation—and the relationship suffers. Other times we can't find a way to resolve an issue, and our discomfort causes us to miss opportunities to achieve reconciliation. *Reconciliation* doesn't require *resolution*.



## *the* QUESTION

What is the difference between  
*wildness* and *recklessness*?

## *why it* MATTERS

*Wildness* propels us past our fears, challenges social mores, and transcends perceived limitation—it takes the best risks. *Recklessness* is immature wildness. It doesn't take others into account, is indifferent to consequence, and arises within a very small context—it takes the worst risks. Wildness creates new pathways of relationship, new opportunities, and epiphany. It's *world expanding*. Recklessness jeopardizes what we value most and is often *world collapsing*.





## *the* QUESTION

How is it possible to be both *more autonomous*  
and *more collaborative*?

## *why it* MATTERS

We often think of autonomy and collaboration in an inverse relationship—with *more of the one* comes *less of the other*. But collaboration without autonomy often creates cultures where nobody directs or assumes personal accountability. And autonomy without collaboration is stripped of the power of relationship and is starved of resource. Autonomy without collaboration ultimately ends in utter isolation—in starvation. Collaboration without autonomy ultimately ends in a watered-down amorphous soup—in diffusion. In the healthiest cultures, everyone becomes more collaborative as they become more autonomous.

## *the* QUESTION

Have you ever felt trapped by a question?



## *why it* MATTERS

Questions can be manipulative and box the other person into divulging something they do not *want to*—or in some cases *should not*. Even a question as seemingly innocuous as “Did you get my email?” can feel accusatory and starkly narrow the possibilities for response. The best questions increase—not limit—degrees of freedom for the other person.





## *the* QUESTION

Describe a difficult decision that was easy to make.

## *why it* MATTERS

Difficult decisions that are *easy to make* combine high consequence with either sufficient information or a clear intuitive sense. Difficult decisions that are *difficult to make* combine high consequence with either high complexity or incomplete information. Easy decisions that are *easy to make* combine low consequence with either sufficient information or a clear intuitive sense. And easy decisions that are *difficult to make* combine low consequence with low decision-making ability.

A person in a blue shirt and black pants is climbing a large, golden-brown mountain peak. The person is holding a rope that loops around the peak and extends upwards. The background is a soft, painterly sky with warm colors like yellow, orange, and blue. The overall style is artistic and motivational.

## *the* QUESTION

What is the difference between  
a *goal* and an *intention*?

## *why it* MATTERS

Goals are about *doing*, and most often involve a sequence, timeline, and future point of completion. Intentions are about *being*, and involve a continuous aspect of consciousness that is always happening *in the now*. Goals are easier to set than intentions, but we often fail in the end. Intentions are harder to set than goals, but it's impossible to fail—although the clarity and intensity of the intention are infinitely extensible.





## *the* QUESTION

How do you respond to set-backs?

## *why it* MATTERS

Despite our best plans and intentions, we don't always accomplish our objectives. Although it's understandable to feel frustrated or disappointed, these emotions can prevent our teams or us from seeing a new future or solution. Set-backs help us expand our sensitivities, connect what's disconnected, and clarify what's important. When we see setbacks as *gifts* that help us to consider new possibilities and pathways, our positive response begins to create the conditions that lead to even better outcomes than those we initially envisioned.



## *the* QUESTION

Describe a situation where *drawing the line* made things worse.

## *why it* MATTERS

*Drawing the line* is effective when no other alternatives are available, but often we unnecessarily draw lines when we feel like our authority is being challenged or we sense a loss of control. This reduces degrees of freedom for both parties involved, forces a narrow choice point, and creates a path of no return if the line is crossed. It also focuses the energies of everyone involved on differences instead of commonalities.





*the* QUESTION

Is one of your strengths holding you back?

*why it* MATTERS

You have attributes or capabilities that have served you well. However, new roles or responsibilities can challenge strong leaders—what worked for you in the past doesn't work as well now. When your identity is too closely linked to a strength, you overly rely on it. This limits how you and others see you, which reduces your confidence, adaptability, and impact.

## *the* QUESTION

Do your goals get in the way of your intentions?



## *why it* MATTERS

Goals are great for providing you with the focus and direction to accomplish what's important. Goals also help you determine the metrics that define success or failure. If you find yourself accomplishing your goals but still feeling dissatisfied, you may be spending more time on your goals than your intentions. Because we live in such a goal-oriented culture, we often overlook the power of intentions. Intentions are a wonderful way for you to create space for greater possibilities. Your intentions provide the context that guides the development of your goals. By shifting more of your focus to intentions, you define and redefine the meaning of success and empower yourself to shape and be shaped by the future.





## *the* QUESTION

Are you nimble?

### *why it* MATTERS

It's not uncommon to miss the signs that change is necessary or on the horizon. But even if we notice, we may stay with what's comfortable or familiar to avoid what's new or unknown. We default to patterns and approaches that have worked for us in the past, thereby reassuring ourselves that stability and safety trumps change and risk. Nimble leaders are fully present—consistently combining awareness and sensitivity with the courage and openness to create new possibilities.

A hand holding a yellow pencil against a starry night sky. A glowing orb is visible on the left, and concentric circles emanate from it. The background is a dark blue space filled with stars.

## *the* QUESTION

Are you as *spontaneous* as you are *planful* about the things that matter most?

## *why it* MATTERS

Some things are best accomplished with a *good plan*. We know what we have to work with, the desired outcome, and the right steps to get from here to there. But some of our biggest breakthroughs can't be anticipated or planned for—they await only on the complete surrender of our agenda and then *one wild leap*. A leap that opens a new realm. With new possibilities. And a course of action unknowable—even *unimaginable*—only a few moments before.





*the* QUESTION

Do people around you gossip?

*why it* MATTERS

If we randomly selected the people who interface with you most—and they witnessed all the conversations you’ve had about them in the last year—would they feel *enabled* or *disabled*? How we talk about people when they are *not around* should align with how we would talk about them *were they in the room*. With rare exceptions—what’s best said in their presence is *what’s best said*.

## *the* QUESTION

What shifts could you make right now to more fully live the life you most desire?

## *why it* MATTERS

The complexities and demands of life may distract us from continuously investing in the things that matter most as time passes by. So it's important to seize the possibilities we have *right now* before conditions change and some of the best windows of opportunity close.







## *the* QUESTION

How self-aware are you as a leader?

## *why it* MATTERS

All leaders have strengths and weaknesses, but the best ones have extraordinary self-awareness. They learn to leverage and fine-tune their strengths and welcome opportunities to address their weaknesses. Although they actively pursue personal development, they possess the insights and courage to develop teams with complementary gifts and gaps, which increase the likelihood that high-performance is sustained and just not a moment in time.

A person with large, dark wings is shown in flight, positioned just above the edge of a dark, rocky cliff. The background is a vast, turbulent sky with swirling clouds in shades of teal, green, and blue, suggesting a storm or a dramatic atmosphere. The overall scene conveys a sense of risk, freedom, and the precariousness of the situation.

## *the* QUESTION

How is your relationship with risk?

## *why it* MATTERS

Because risk is present in almost everything you do, it's important to understand your tolerance for it. If you have an aversion to risk, you may find yourself on the sidelines wishing you had stepped into a situation sooner. If you routinely overlook or discount risk, you may find yourself blindsided or correcting your direction and actions. Extraordinary leaders pay attention to and make adjustments for risk, but don't become paralyzed by the potential for failure.





## *the* QUESTION

When different worlds in your life collide, why do you sometimes feel acutely uncomfortable?

## *why it* MATTERS

Most of us have experienced a moment when people who know us in very different ways meet—and that coming together creates awkwardness. Sometimes this is because the limits of other people define how we relate to them. Sometimes it's because of our own limits and how much of ourselves we've been able to express in each relationship. And sometimes it's simply because the contexts in which we know other people are foreign to each other.



*the* QUESTION

Does your attention to detail actually increase your chances of making a big mistake?

*why it* MATTERS

Attention to detail and avoiding mistakes are often reinforced and rewarded by our mentors. Ironically, high attention to detail can increase your risk of making a major mistake as you gain broader and higher levels of responsibility. When you treat every detail or issue as important, you reduce your ability to manage risk—you're leaving it up to chance that when a mistake occurs, it's one that matters a lot.





*the* QUESTION

In your current life, are you doing more things that you *like* or *dislike*?

*why it* MATTERS

Sometimes it makes sense to do things in the short term you dislike in order to get to a place where you can do more of the things you like. However, it's not sustainable over the long term, and you must be intentional about how you shift from the *dislike* to the *like*.

## *the* QUESTION

Are you too quick to call people out?



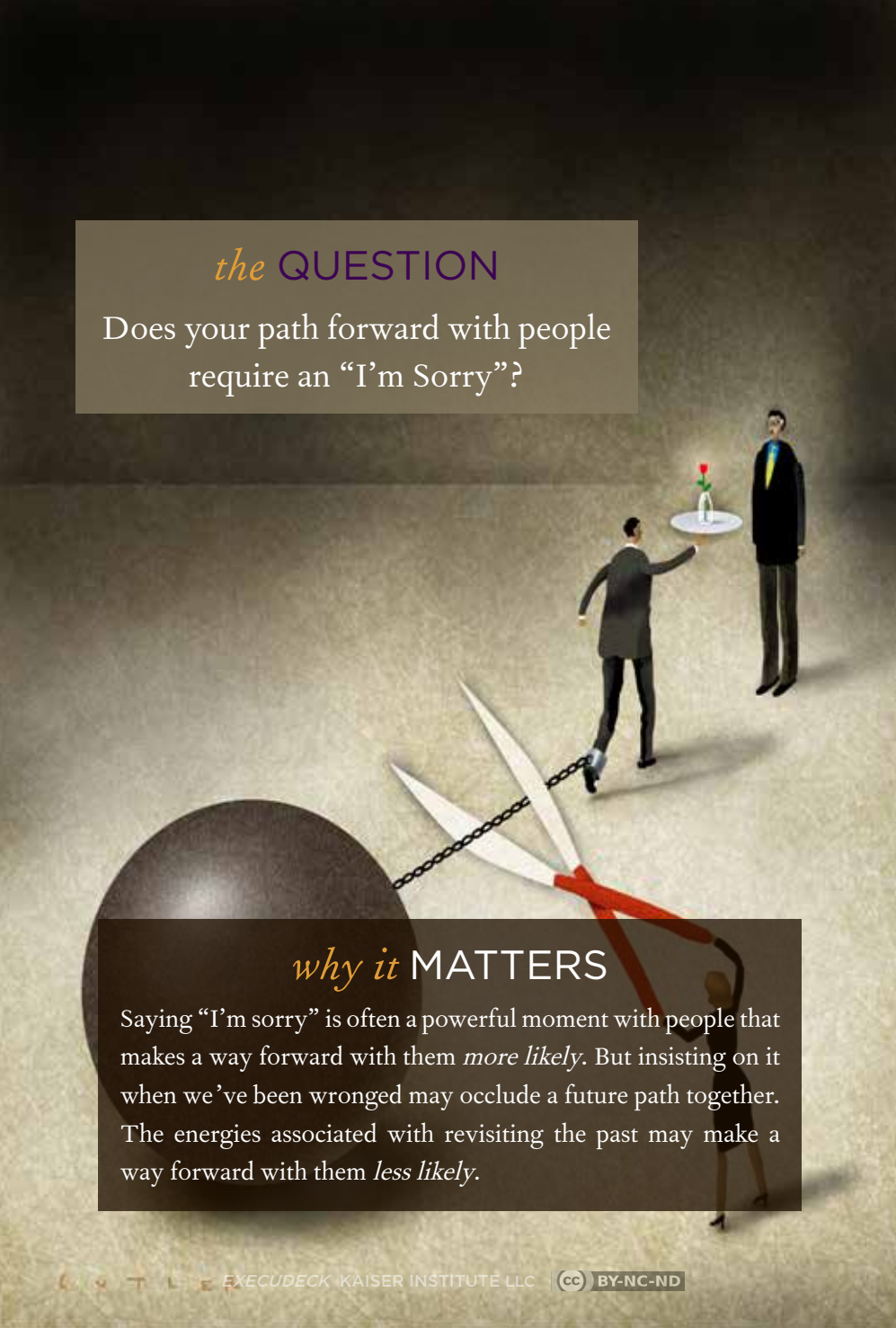
## *why it* MATTERS

Calling out other people when something has gone *off the rails* may feel good in the heat of the moment, but sometimes creates unintended consequences. Embarrassing another person may shut them down or further entrench them in the original lapse as they go on the defense. Whenever possible, we want to create the conditions where the other person gains maximum insight from the situation and also feels *more enabled*—not less.



## *the* QUESTION

Does your path forward with people  
require an “I’m Sorry”?



## *why it* MATTERS

Saying “I’m sorry” is often a powerful moment with people that makes a way forward with them *more likely*. But insisting on it when we’ve been wronged may occlude a future path together. The energies associated with revisiting the past may make a way forward with them *less likely*.

## *the* QUESTION

What causes you to *step back* when you should *step in*—and *step in* when you should *step back*?



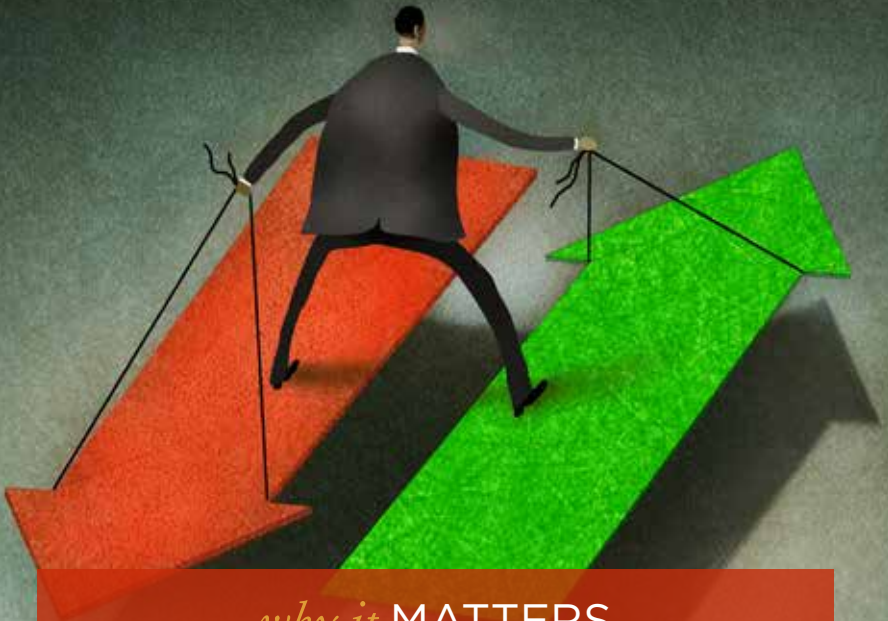
## *why it* MATTERS

Stepping in is sometimes uncomfortable. We may think it's not our place. Or be afraid of getting enmeshed. Or simply dread the intensity that comes with getting involved. But choosing to *step back* may be equally uncomfortable. We may be impatient. Lack trust in others to get it done the right way. Or feel like it's our right to stay involved. It's essential to understand your patterns and tendencies around stepping in and stepping back.



## *the* QUESTION

What is the difference between *middle of the road* and *mediocrity*?



## *why it* MATTERS

Sometimes seeking the middle of the road reduces the risks of extremes—of running on the edges. Other times it simply waters things down and results in diminished potency. The ability to at times be *balanced*, and at other times be *strikingly accentuated*, is key to experiencing the full field of possibility.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you tend to be more *inclusive*  
or *exclusive*?



## *why it* MATTERS

Inclusive people tend to welcome the unfamiliar, assume common ground, expect cooperation, and identify with the whole more than any part. Exclusive people tend to be suspicious of the unfamiliar, experience more difference than commonality, expect dissent, and overidentify with groups.





## *the* QUESTION

Do you always feel the need to set the record straight?

## *why it* MATTERS

Sometimes setting the record straight is essential because it helps both parties move ahead in ways they couldn't without clarification of the facts of the matter. Other times *setting things straight* is not helpful because it disrupts the flow of conversation, embarrasses the other person, or unnecessarily calls them out.



*the* QUESTION

If you could immediately embody any quality you admire in someone else, what would it be?

*why it* MATTERS

The qualities and emanations you are most drawn to in others already exist in you—in some way, to some extent. You are drawn to them because you are resonant with them. Something *in them* activates something similar *in you*. Because of this, it's possible to begin expressing any of these qualities in your own life—in your own way. Right now.



A person is climbing a steep, rocky mountain peak. The person is silhouetted against a bright, glowing light source, possibly a torch or a flare, which illuminates the scene. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The mountain is dark and rugged, with some green patches at the base. The overall mood is one of challenge and achievement.

## *the* QUESTION

How can *your values* limit your ability *to experience value?*

## *why it* MATTERS

Values are guiding principles that illuminate how we can be in best relationship with everything around us. But they can also devolve into rigid structures that increasingly isolate us from the full range of possibility. Values in their most elevated form help us *belong* to more and more things. Values in their most limited form slowly and persistently *cut us off* from the world around.



*the* QUESTION

*When giving feedback, are you  
context intelligent?*

*why it* MATTERS

The best feedback is more about designing conditions for a successful exchange than it is about transmitting information. It's more about the *person at hand* than it is about the *issue at hand*. When the people who work for us don't follow our directives, it may be as much *about us* as it is *about them*.





## *the* QUESTION

When building your organization,  
what are you most likely to emphasize  
*too much or too little?*



## *why it* MATTERS

Designing and implementing a high-performing organization is critical for success. It requires leaders to balance their optimal structure with the talent that exists or can be reasonably acquired. It also requires leaders to balance individual performance and values with team dynamics. The optimal structure may not be the right structure for the team, and the best individuals for the roles may not be the right individuals for the team.

An illustration of a man in a dark suit and red tie standing on a light-colored path that curves through a green landscape. A white fence runs along the path. The background features stylized trees and a soft, hazy atmosphere. The scene is viewed from an elevated perspective.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you draw bright lines that are not so bright?

## *why it* MATTERS

In the moment, taking a strong stand feels good—you may feel more in control, more powerful, or just less frustrated. However, rarely does the line you drew remain in the place you drew it. You realize there are other perspectives and better options for you and others. But by initially drawing your line so bright, you weaken—not strengthen—your opportunity to shape a more positive and shared future with others.



A man in a grey suit and white shirt is walking away from the viewer, carrying a black briefcase. He is looking back over his right shoulder towards the camera. The background is a textured, warm-toned wall.

*the* QUESTION

Do you make it hard for  
others to rejoin?

*why it* MATTERS

Sometimes another person leaves or indicates they're leaving a relationship with you—only to change their mind and wish to rejoin. If concerns about their commitment and intentions preoccupy your thoughts, you may overlook the potential in renewing the relationship. When this happens, you decrease the likelihood the other person will rejoin or be effective when they do.

A man in a dark suit stands on a thin black vertical line, holding a large, bright red megaphone with both hands. The background is a vibrant, textured gradient of colors including blue, purple, yellow, and orange, with a fine, cross-hatched pattern. The overall composition is centered and balanced.

## *the* QUESTION

Do you bolster your case?

## *why it* MATTERS

When involved in an uncomfortable situation with others, you may exaggerate certain points or add "I'm not the only one who feels this way." This is a sign that you lack confidence in yourself, your position, or your ability to be heard. It reduces your credibility and capability to influence or co-create a better outcome.





## *the* QUESTION

Is your experience in any given moment more about you, or more about what's around you?

## *why it* MATTERS

In any moment, there is a range of characteristics we can come into resonance with—so what we experience has as much to do *with us* as it does with what's *around us*. We may connect with a dark and difficult aspect of a space but miss the lighter and more ascended aspects that are present as well. It's important to understand the range in any situation and resonate with its higher potentials.



## *the* QUESTION

How are you markedly different than a year ago?

## *why it* MATTERS

As we experience rapid growth, we can simultaneously become *more solid* and *more malleable*. Our solidness comes from a deeper connection to our core qualities. Our malleability comes from the capacity to have radically new experiences and express in radically new ways. Because of this, our growth may be unsettling to those who count on us to be the way we've always been.





*the* QUESTION

What is the difference between  
transparency and disclosure?

*why it* MATTERS

The best transparency brings what is most helpful into view whether it serves our self-interest or not. The worst disclosure shares everything about everything whether it's appropriate or not. Healthy transparency is context sensitive—unconditional disclosure is context numb.

## the QUESTION

Do you seek certainty or clarity  
when making a decision?

## why it MATTERS

When facing a big decision, we often seek certainty before acting. When we desire *certainty*, we limit ourselves by over-analyzing details leading to indecision or missing what's important. When we seek *clarity*, we recognize that our "big decision" is actually a series of choices that combine the best of *what we know* and *what we sense*. Seeking clarity enables us to move in a directionally correct way and makes us bolder, more nimble, and appropriate in our decision making.





## *the* QUESTION

Is your career going where you  
want it to go?

## *why it* MATTERS

Life is not a straight line, and neither is your career. By taking more into account and becoming more comfortable with being uncomfortable, you see and take advantage of opportunities that you might have overlooked or been too afraid to act upon. Many people are at the right place and the right time, what do you do when that person is you?





*the* QUESTION

What are your orthodoxies?

*why it* MATTERS

Orthodoxies are rooted in our personal history and experience. They are our *givens*—our most strongly-held beliefs that we rarely challenge or want to have challenged. Often orthodoxies provide the context, framework, and filters that bias or narrow our decision-making. When you recognize and explore your orthodoxies, you open yourself to new possibilities that broaden and deepen your thinking.





## *the* QUESTION

Are you a good team member?

## *why it* MATTERS

Most leaders belong to at least two teams—the team they lead and the team they are a member of. The most effective team members balance the demands and tension that come from being part of both. They are willing to express their functional expertise and perspective, but are also willing to challenge their self-interest with what’s best for the organization. They understand that the team they lead must execute on functional responsibilities, but not at the expense of the team they are a member of or the enterprise as a whole. Their holistic approach considers the needs of the team they lead, the needs of the team they are a member of, their personal needs, and the enterprise as a whole.

*my* INSIGHTS

*my* ACTION