



Role-modelling integrity in leadership

from 10.30am until 4.30pm
on Tuesday, June 4th 2019

Background Note and Agenda for our 33rd Leadership Conversation

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

“ *Without integrity, who are you? What are you for?*

Integrity is actually all you have.

So don't trade it, don't sell it cheap, don't push down your conscience when it's telling you an inconvenient truth.

Act from your integrity.

Because if you lose your integrity, you lose yourself. ”

Steve Drummond, Leadership Fellow

Gathering for Fellows in St George's Chapel, 9.11.18

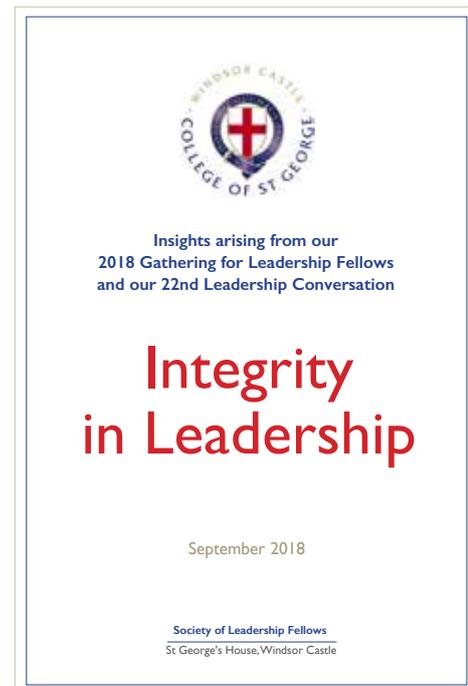
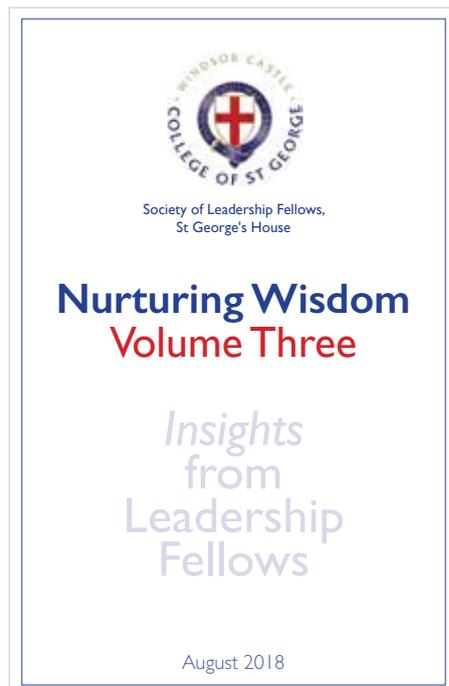
Drawing on two previous Conversations

This Conversation follows on from two previous Conversations as well as September's Gathering for Leadership Fellows:

- Our first Conversation on Leading with Integrity, written up as **Chapter One in Volume Three of Nurturing Wisdom**
- Our September 2018 Gathering for Fellows followed by a one-day Conversation on Integrity in Leadership, written up in **Integrity in Leadership**.

Between them, we hope they will offer us a wide range of insights that we can draw on throughout this Conversation.

([Hyperlinks to these Chapters are on the final page.](#))



Integrity and your organisational culture

At this Conversation, we will ask what steps Leadership Fellows are taking to reinforce the importance of integrity as a core dimension of your workplace culture, so that individuals expect to see it as a value that truly drives behaviours.

We will ask:

- What are the **key practices** that we all need to foster in our workplace cultures to set the “integrity bar” ever higher?
- Will they require still higher levels of **transparency** and **trust** – and if so, how might we achieve this?
- How much **vulnerability** will this require of us, too – as well as **humility** in situations where we get something wrong and need to acknowledge it straight away as a matter of integrity?

We will also explore:

- How we should respond as leaders in those situations where we see others compromising their integrity in some way – or indeed where we experience **ourselves** compromising our own integrity.

In the process of asking these questions, we are bound to remind ourselves of what Steve described at September's Gathering as those “inconvenient truths” that we would rather ignore if it weren't for our sense of integrity.

“inconvenient truths” we would rather ignore

It is in these moments, when it stops us from “pushing down our conscience” and expects us to “be our best self”, that our integrity can make us feel distinctly uncomfortable.

Two key insights from our September Conversation

Whenever we start a Leadership Conversation, we always make a point of diving into one of the most difficult aspects of the subject before us.

This helps to ensure that from the beginning we are on the lookout for key insights to take away at the end.

Avoiding the word integrity

One of our breakthrough insights was that if and when we wish to challenge someone about the integrity of an action at work, the word integrity is just about the last word that we should use!

It is so emotionally laden and potentially toxic that we need to avoid any challenge to someone else using this word.

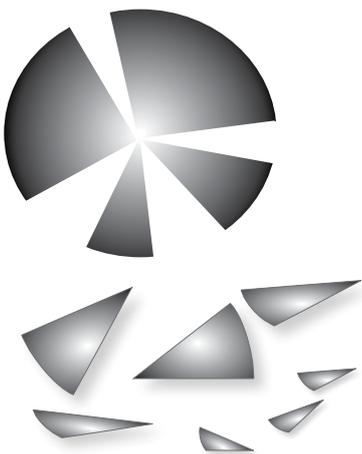
Hence our thought that we should make a point of asking “pokey questions” that expose what we regard as (potentially) questionable practices without using the word integrity.

Each compromise can cost us a “small bit” of integrity

Our second key insight was that for most of us, it is the relatively modest compromises to our integrity that progressively erode our capacity to say “no” to some of the big things that we know we really should say no to.

It is because of this that we felt that more of us need to take a stand more often in relation to the relatively small things that could well cost us small bits and “crumbs” of our integrity.

If we say nothing and subsequently find ourselves confronted by some big decision that we regard as fundamentally wrong, we might well be unable to challenge from a position of principle because of those previous moments when we **chose to ignore an inconvenient truth.**



Part I Building Trust

TRUST

Once we have agreed our guiding principles for the day, we will break into small (standing) groups of 3 or 4 for 15 minutes, in which we ask you to consider our opening challenge that draws on these two insights.

The challenge for our first round of small groups

- ❓ Can you think of a time when you asked a “pokey question” that was successful in enabling your team or organisation to “do the right thing”?
- ❓ If so, is there something about the way you asked the question or subsequently challenged others that gave you more confidence about your ability to say “no” if you find yourself facing a difficult challenge on a key issue of personal integrity?

Through these questions, we hope that a number of you will feel able to share some personal stories that help us understand how we can open up discussions about integrity and “doing the right thing”, whilst being careful with the language that we use to avoid colleagues at work becoming too defensive too quickly.

Following through with a “pokey question”

We want to understand better what approaches some of you have developed to enable you to follow through with a “pokey question” that helps to sustain a challenge to questionable practices without backing off the moment someone shows signs of looking uncomfortable.

In developing this ability to sustain a challenge on a relatively minor aspect of doing the right thing, we have a good chance of **building the courage** that we know we will need to say “no” if we find ourselves pressed to go along with something that would compromise our personal integrity.

Part 2 **ACHIEVING STRONGER CONNECTIONS**

Once we have had 45 minutes or so to hear some of your stories and open up the discussion, we want to progress to the second part of the Conversation under the banner of our guiding principle about achieving a greater connection across the group.

We will agree the precise question that we take into new small groups at the time.

Integrity and courage

At this moment, our thinking is that we want to draw out some aspect of the critical relationship between integrity and personal courage.

In so many ways, this is the number one challenge that came through from our two previous Conversations on integrity and leadership, as well as September's Gathering for Fellows in the Chapel.

We all need to find ways of drawing on our inner courage without having to make ourselves really angry first – and letting this sense of courage drive some of our pokey questions about a tricky issue, whilst reassuring others that our real intention is not to “nail them” for apparently wanting to do the wrong thing!

NOT forcing others into a defensive position

There is a core challenge here about how we really engage with others on this issue without forcing them into a defensive position.

Achieving this is one of those challenges that requires some time and serious consideration in its own right!

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STRETCH
STRETCH

Part 2 **ACHIEVING STRONGER CONNECTIONS**

continued

Please don't spend too long in the "safe zone"!

When we have an overnight Conversation, we have enough time to let ourselves move forward cautiously, if that's what we need to do. In a one-day Conversation, we don't have this luxury if we are to come up with some significant outcomes that could be of lasting use to you.

This is why we want to ask you to make a point of engaging with some risky options for developing your leadership role at this relatively early stage in the process.

It is also why we always emphasise the importance of achieving a strong connection among us as a group of Leadership Fellows during this second round of Working Groups.

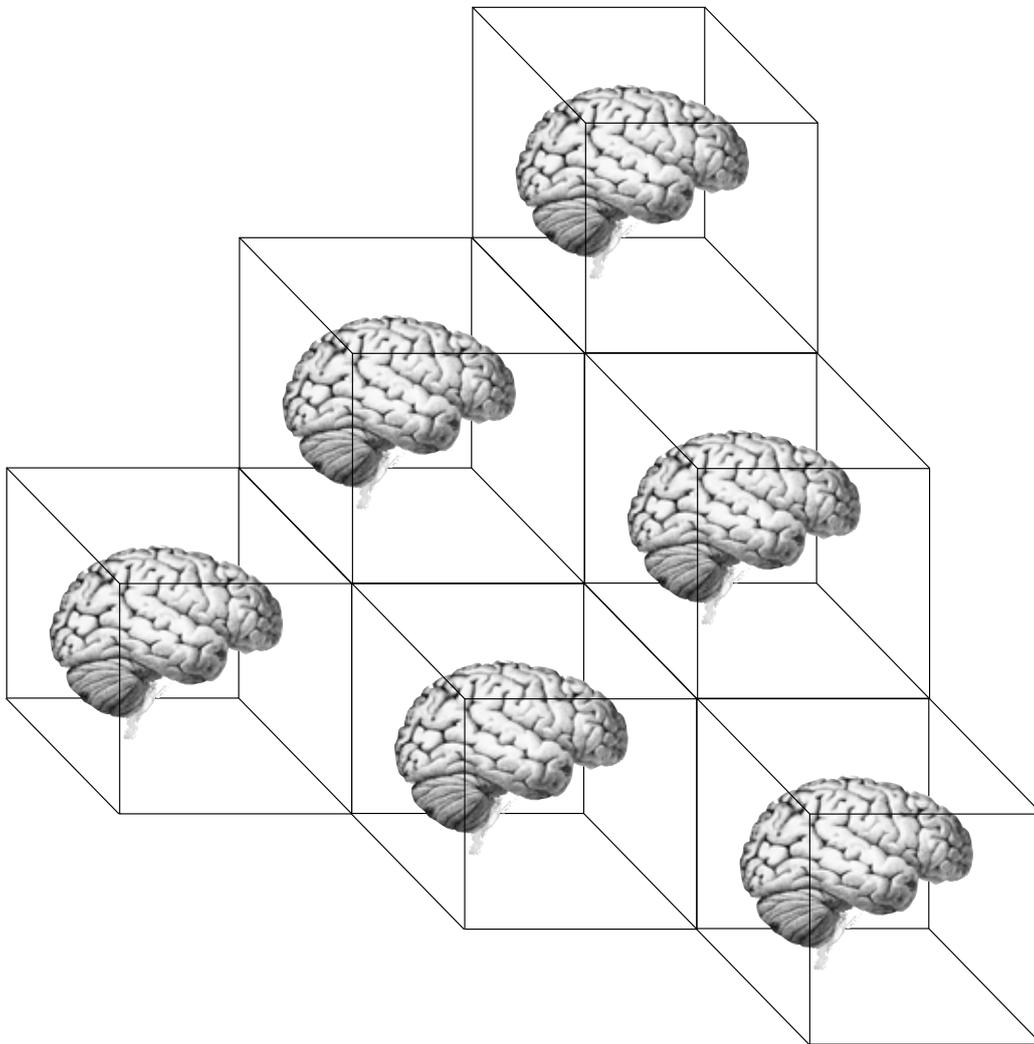
Being vulnerable with each other

We want to build on the trust that we should have established from the very beginning to enable us to engage with some pretty tricky issues that are all about **what we stand for as leaders**, and those issues where we are prepared to "draw a line in the sand" and say "so far and no further"!

Having this sort of discussion requires us all to feel that we really can let ourselves be vulnerable with each other.

On the basis of our previous Leadership Conversations, we know that the more you can open up with each other at this stage, and think out loud about how you might role model high integrity leadership more effectively, the more we will all gain as we move into the third Part of this Conversation over lunch and **go for the stretch**.

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“A Mastermind group could become a powerful catalyst for culture change, asking... what behaviours we need to adopt towards each other to achieve higher levels of truthfulness and transparency... and become a high integrity, high performing organisation.”

Leadership Insights Report, September 2018

Part 3 GOING FOR THE STRETCH

At around 12.45 we will change gear and shift from focusing on your role-modelling as an individual leader to your ability to create more effective role-modelling on the part of **your wider top team**.

If any of you have taken forward the idea of the Mastermind group that came out of the September Conversation, we hope you will share with colleagues in your lunchtime group whatever progress you have made.

If you have any other ideas that you think could be more effective still, we really hope you will feel you have every encouragement possible from us to build them up into a proposition that “blows us away”.

Our challenge for lunchtime groups at 1.00pm

- ❓ **If you have any experience of working in some sort of Mastermind group, as a non-bureaucratic and creative group designed to help your organisation achieve a high integrity, high performance culture, what have you learnt and achieved so far?**
- ❓ **If you have any other experience of working with colleagues to embed integrity more deeply as one of the core values of your organisation, please tell us what this has achieved so far. How might you yet achieve a still greater impact as a collective leadership team?**
- ❓ **If you and your top team don't yet have any shared track record in forging a higher integrity culture, don't let this hold you back! Without feeling bound to support – or oppose – any idea that we have come up with so far, what do you envisage your team doing to build a culture more focused on “doing the right thing”?**

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Part 3 GOING FOR THE STRETCH

continued

For this to work and help us generate fresh insights to move us on in our shared thinking, we need to ask you to **take some risks** with the ideas that you explore over lunch.

If we all play it safe at this stage, our offer to each other will be relatively modest. If, however, we let ourselves follow through our own ambitions to drive lasting culture change through working more closely with colleagues to role model high integrity leadership, we should find that a number of us are able to “paint some powerful pictures” that inspire the rest of us.

One volunteer from each group

Towards the end of your lunchtime group, we will ask you to identify the Fellow in your group (only one, please!) who seems to have the clearest image in their mind of how they can be **most effective in collaborating with colleagues to create a higher integrity culture.**

Whilst the rest of us have a 5-minute break, we will ask these Fellows to capture on a whiteboard:

- **Your own big idea (that you own as *yours*, please) for inspirational leadership from the top to drive the creation of a higher integrity culture**
- **The one or two leadership strengths of yours that you intend to draw on to enable you to play this role and sustain the commitment of key staff across your organisation in a way that enables them to co-own your idea and make it theirs.**

(No false modesty here, please! It is really important for what we can take away from this Conversation that you **define your key strengths as tightly as you can.**)

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Part 3 GOING FOR THE STRETCH

continued

Just after 1.50 we will all go round the whiteboards and hear the pitches from Fellows who have "volunteered" for this role.

If you find yourself in this position, please take it for granted that we know you will be describing how one aspect of your leadership role **might** evolve.

We undertake not regard your story as a prediction or promise on your part!

Preparing for our final stretch

We will be especially interested to hear which particular leadership strengths of yours you see as making it possible for you to achieve a significant shift in your role in forging more effective joint action among your wider top team.

We are keen to focus on key leadership strengths at this stage, because we know how much they can enable leaders to achieve a real surge in their own development when they manage to deploy their strengths for the benefit of a higher purpose.

Taking us to the edge of our "comfort zones"

We are also keen to focus on our strengths now because we want to ask ourselves a different sort of question in our next and final round of small groups, that will enable us to ramp up the challenge to ourselves and take us right to the edge of our comfort zones.

COMFORT ZONE



Part 3 GOING FOR THE STRETCH

continued

By around 2.20 we want to be sharpening up the precise challenge for our final groups, in light of our discussions by this stage.

We want to start off with a clear focus on asking what it is about ourselves that can so easily hold us back from achieving our ambitions as leaders in role-modelling high integrity leadership.

For so many of us, there is one internal “voice” that we need to silence first if we are to raise our game significantly in modelling high integrity leadership behaviours:

- This is the voice telling us **not to say anything “difficult”** because we really don’t want to upset anyone or create any sort of drama.

Not getting in our own way as leaders

We know that the moment this voice sets off in our head, we are creating the excuse for ourselves that will enable us to “cop out” of asking pokey questions and saying the difficult things that we know need to be said.

So often, the barriers that stand in the way of our own development as leaders are actually **in our head**. This is why it is so important that we reflect on our mindsets as leaders, and our definitions of what we can – and can’t – do if we are to maximise our impact in our various leadership roles.

Therefore, as part of the challenge that we set ourselves in the final round of small groups, we want to ask:

- ❓ **What can we each do to ensure that we don’t let ourselves get in our own way as leaders by ignoring any inconvenient truths that we know we need to face?**

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Part 3 GOING FOR THE STRETCH

continued

The challenge of **not getting in our own way** as leaders is one that we will have asked ourselves at our March 2019 Conversation on “Becoming more effective as a thought leader”.

We will feed in the insights from that Conversation as we address this challenge now.

Converting your resolves into a practical strategy

However many challenges you might have put to yourself since we started this Conversation together, it is your answer to **this one** that will have a huge impact on your ability to take forward some clear resolves and convert them into a practical strategy for becoming more effective as a high integrity leader.

Aiming for breakthroughs in our thinking

After our final round of small groups, we will join the circle again as one single group at 2.50pm.

As we share the ideas that we have each come up with, we hope that we will be ready to respond to other Leadership Fellows by building on their ideas and suggesting any possible variations that come to mind in the moment.

This is the stage in previous Conversations when some Fellows have achieved real breakthroughs in their thinking as a result of others diving in with their ideas and advice.

It is remarkable how much we can all gain from this final lap, not least because our “**no recycling**” ground rule means that it’s not an option for anyone to repeat anything that has already been said!

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Agenda

Tuesday, June 4th 2019

10.15am+	Coffee and light refreshments served in the Vicars' Hall
10.45am <i>Prompt, please</i>	We welcome you to the Conversation and invite you to agree on the Society's Guiding Principles as providing the framework for today's Conversation. We then break into small groups of 3 or 4 for 15 minutes to consider our first question, as set out on page 6. (Refreshments available)
11.15am	We hear your stories and insights arising from your small group discussions. After a while we agree on our key challenge for our second round of small groups (discussed on pages 7 and 8)
11.40am	2nd round of small groups considers agreed question
12.00 noon	(Refreshments available)
12.05pm	Back in the circle in new seats, we capture the key messages coming forward from this second round of groups, drawing out the most challenging issues that we might want to return to later. From 12.45 we change gear and begin to think our way into the challenge that we want to consider over lunch
1.00pm	Lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall. Over lunch, working groups engage with the questions on page 10. At the end of lunch, each group nominates one of their number to share with us their own "big idea" – ideally on a whiteboard - for driving the creation of a higher integrity culture as well as their key personal leadership strengths that should enable them to play this role (page 11)
1.50pm	We work our way round the whiteboards and draw inspiration from them as we gear into our final round of small groups (please see page 13)
2.30pm	In groups we ask what we can each do to ensure that we don't get in our own way, so that we really can step forward as more confident and effective leaders modelling high integrity leadership (Refreshments available)
2.50pm	Back together again as a single group, we explore how we each see ourselves developing our ability to lead with integrity ever more effectively, drawing on our core leadership strengths whilst doing all in our power to avoid getting in our own way. We have a ground rule of "no recycling", so that we all need to find fresh language if we wish to go back to an earlier idea
3.25pm	We have a 5-minute comfort break, and light refreshments are available to bring back into the circle (to different chairs, please). We ensure that everyone has an opportunity to benefit from quality feedback from others in the group before we finish on the dot of 4.30pm .



Key background references (hyperlinked) for this Conversation

Our first Conversation on Leading with Integrity, written up as:
[Chapter One in Volume Three of Nurturing Wisdom](#)

Our September 2018 Gathering for Fellows followed by a one-day
Conversation on Integrity in Leadership, written up in
[Integrity in Leadership](#).

“ With integrity,
you have nothing to fear
since you have nothing to hide.

With integrity,
you will do the right thing
so you will have no guilt. ”

Zig Ziglar



*"Might be a bit strong but
I love the ambition!"*