



The Power of Vulnerability

How to Create a Team of Leaders by Shifting INward

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Work is often a source of dissatisfaction for people because in their desire to get ahead, they often lose touch with their values and internal sources of power. *The Power of Vulnerability* offers a new approach to transforming corporate culture so that you can thrive at work and in life.

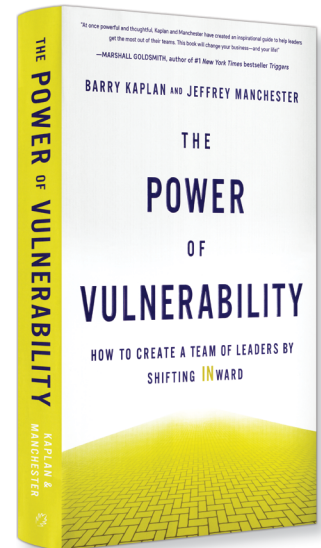
Authors Barry Kaplan and Jeffrey Manchester have leveraged their decades of experience and created a guide to finding success and fulfillment for teams and individuals. They teach readers how to create a sense of safety, encourage exploration, develop an INpowered team that transcends organizational hierarchy, foster communication and be authentic.

Manchester and Kaplan can help you find INpowerment so that you and your colleagues can create a fulfilling, supportive and open corporate culture. This fulfillment creates loyalty and long-term employee commitment to organizations.

The Power of Vulnerability includes everything you need to unlock the potential of yourself and your organization.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why authenticity and vulnerability are the keys to unleashing power.
- To INpower everyone to lead more effectively, whether they're the boss or not.
- To create rules of engagement for true authenticity in your organization.
- To find your purpose and create a life plan.



by Barry Kaplan and
Jeffrey Manchester

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

by Barry Kaplan and Jeffrey Manchester

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The Journey Begins: Isn't It Time?

Do you want more? Do you feel like you are going through the motions at work? Are you struggling to find meaning in what you do? Many business leaders and professionals say they have a sense of feeling alone.

Disconnection from purpose and authenticity is the root cause of this loneliness and lack of inspiration. Lack of connection gets us stuck. What keeps us stuck in the same place are our self-limiting beliefs. We create limits for ourselves, and we actually spend energy finding ways for these boundaries to be reinforced by others. Ultimately, they become embedded into our internal operating system of how we must show up in our roles and perform our jobs.

These limiting thoughts include beliefs about how much of ourselves we can reveal in meetings; beliefs about our roles in the leadership of a team, department or organization without being the hierarchical boss; beliefs about the appropriateness of more real, open, even vulnerable conversations; beliefs about our ability to take risks within the organization; beliefs about our own powers, authority and/or ability to change our circumstances; beliefs about the combined capabilities of the team; beliefs about our ability to feel a deep sense of fulfillment; and beliefs in our and the team's ability to handle chaos.

These self-limiting beliefs are self-fulfilling — unless we choose to change the belief.

“INpowerment” (not to be confused with empowerment) comes from our beliefs that each individual and team have more power than we realize; each of us has the capacity to access the power inside us; we can learn how

to do it; we can do it on our own but even better as a team; and we need to discover and unleash that power by shifting inward. The potential of INpowerment reaches beyond our imaginations, yet it requires the courage of vulnerability to join the journey.

For Return to Connection: INpowerment Is Worth It

Organizations can be the ones to create the changes needed to create an environment that fosters connection and engagement. Embracing authenticity is a new paradigm for corporate culture. Authenticity is the key to unleashing power.

When you get to see someone for who they really are as a human being, beyond the façade, underneath the armor — not what they want you to know about them but the true person — you can genuinely open yourself to their struggles on the job. You then develop empathy, compassion and a feeling of care for your colleagues that comes from a genuine desire to support them with their challenges. That's because you're emotionally engaged with them and with their cause, not just intellectually curious.

The notion of how to empower individuals and teams too often misses the critical element of authenticity. With INpowerment — we have to always look internally first before we can look externally. We have to be all IN and willing to be the beautifully imperfect beings we are. We have to be willing to share our diverse set of perspectives, to use our own unique voice.

INpowerment requires a shift to claim personal responsibility to do what you need to find alignment with something greater than yourself, show up with your voice and bring your personal power to the team. The only



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obstacle to accessing that power is our judgment about what we cannot be or do.

Breakthrough: Claim Responsibility to Shift Direction

Now that you've realized you want your voice back, the journey can begin. This is a journey back to YOU.

Classically, we look outside ourselves for answers and change, hoping to find a cure for the aching pit in our stomachs. But searching outside hasn't led you to a sense of passion and fulfillment in your life. It's only left you less than whole — a partial you. You must go inside and embrace that the change you must make begins with you. It's not the team that has to change. It's not your boss. It's not your commute. It's not your kids. It's you.

When you have lost your connection to yourself, you have lost touch with the many things that make you who you are — your values and beliefs, your wants and desires, and what you are most passionate about. This lack of connection to self is the chief culprit responsible for your loss of power.

Once you open yourself to the possibility that you are responsible for creating the “stuckness,” you have the opportunity to change. You got yourself here; now you need to get yourself out. Start now. Choose to begin the process of learning more about you. Choose to engage with yourself and others more fully and completely. Start looking inside to find your voice and learn where you can connect with something greater than yourself. ●

Who Goes First? Don't Look Outside Yourself for the Leader

The journey to INpowerment is for individuals and their teams. Ultimately, transformed individuals build powerful teams, and a powerful team inspires individuals. The two serve each other.

Most people assume that embracing a deeper level of authenticity, especially when you are changing the culture of an organization, must start with the head of the organization or team. Though hierarchal leaders need to buy into the benefits and be willing to become authentic in order for the shift in the organization to be sustainable, the catalyst for that change can actually come from anyone on the team.

It's important that we distinguish the difference between a boss and a leader. The boss is the person who owns the ultimate decision. They are accountable for a particular

decision. A leader can be anyone on the team — anyone, including the boss. That's because everyone has something to offer.

Leaders bring their power to the team — their voice that shares their ideas, opinions and concerns. Everyone who exercises his or her personal power in this way is a leader. While the boss may have the final decision, you owe it to yourself — and your team — to bring all that you have to discussions and meetings.

Vulnerability is the gateway to unleashing all of your power! This idea may be completely counterintuitive. But vulnerability is leadership within a team. When you are in a place where it feels safe to become more vulnerable, and you show up with your truth, you are bringing your power to the team. That gives others on the team permission to do the same thing. When you are willing to take the risk and make yourself vulnerable, the team will draw upon your example, and the entire team, through its vulnerability, will unleash the power that comes from authenticity.

Reclaim Your Power: Any and All Leaders IN

When the hierarchal boss understands and embraces this conceptual shift, that boss comes into the true power of their leadership. The boss is an individual, too. So, the development of the boss in their leadership calls for them to accept that the best way to get stuff done, to be the boss, to be a real leader, is to encourage others to step into their best version of personal leadership. That means you, as a boss, need to accept that you may not always be right, that you may not always know the answer, that you may not even know who does know.

You'll also need to accept that it is okay and even sensible (though risky) to move into the unknown, that it is okay to believe that the best outcome is when you can be both the boss and a leader without having to always lead. Embrace the reality that sometimes the highest form of leadership is when you lead from behind by creating the environment for others to claim their power and step in before you.

But the boss starts out like everyone else, needing to go inward and do their work to unlock their power, too! They may have hierarchical power or authority, but they still need to reclaim who they are.

This is a brave new world for the new boss as they continue to allow themselves to be a member of a team of leaders, not THE leader of a team. The weight of carrying the burden of having to be right or to be the person with all the ideas and answers is now gone! The boss can worry

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less about what they have to give to their teammates in direction and ideas and focus more on what they can take away from their teammates (through helping them remove barriers and blocks to their success). They are leading, and the boss is engaged in making them the best that they can be in their roles.

By INpowering each leader to lead, meetings will look and feel different. Previous meetings where the boss was required to bring the agenda and try to facilitate dialogue among the team will give way to each leader bringing content and/or agenda items to co-create the specifics of the agenda. ●

Time to Show Up: Start a Cultural Revolution in Your World

As members of the team embrace this new form of authenticity and it begins to flow into the rest of the organization, the culture of the organization will begin to change. This truly is a cultural revolution.

What unfolds next is a greater capacity for creativity and innovation and, ultimately, productivity. The boss no longer has to push their agenda; rather, the other leaders on the team will learn to co-create buy-in to align with the agenda.

Buy-in is more compelling and important than agreement. You can disagree with a final decision and still give your buy-in, because you have expressed your beliefs, opinions and feelings. It's better than just feigning agreement because of the inevitable decision or vote. Rather than forcing the vote, the ultimate decision is organic, a product of everyone speaking his or her truth until it is clear where the buy-in resides.

The growing power inside each individual radiates to create greater power for the team. No longer concerned about hiding something or being shamed, team members can show up in their power as leaders. This is the core of the cultural revolution.

Now your team is feeling the power that authenticity provides. This new connection creates resolutions to core issues that will propel the company into new levels of performance. The individuals on the teams are even more fulfilled in their contribution.

Hang On: Disruptive Processes Ahead

A cultural revolution calls for a dramatic change, or disruption, in our way of being. To get to our infinite store of hidden power inside, it's helpful to use disruptive processes to unlock it. Although this may sound a bit scary,

don't be afraid to be afraid! This is the gateway that we need to go through to get to the power on the other side.

In the context of a team, a disruptive process is, by definition, doing something that the team wouldn't normally do. It disrupts our normal "business as usual" protocol. This requires getting comfortable being uncomfortable.

Think of your normal meeting experience. Typically the agenda has been predistributed to the attendees. As soon as everyone arrives, you might greet each other. "Hi, how are you?" elicits the rote response of "Great, how are you?" which then elicits yet another superficial response of "Fine." Then, most everyone continues to look at their phones, knocking off emails and texts, even after the meeting has opened and typically several times during the meeting.

Instead of this "business as usual" approach, you could start your meetings by having everyone turn off all electronics (or, in some cases, collect cell phones in a basket when everyone comes in the door). This simple step immediately pushes everyone outside of his or her comfort zone. The eye twitches and technology withdrawals begin! Excuses and rationalizations about why they have to have their phones are endless. But to bring your power and engagement to the meeting, you have to be present, not distracted by other matters, and this is all about accessing your own and the team's latent power.

Operating with disruptive processes is at the core of the revolution. Once you embrace these tools for a period of time, they will no longer be considered disruptive — they are the new normal.

Warm Up: Access Power Through Vulnerability — Ask, Don't Tell

It's time for a meeting or offsite, and the team wants to prepare for the big event. There's a lot to cover, and you have your ideas about what you'd like to say. Yet at the same time, you're reserved and unsure whether it's worth the risk to speak up. You'd like the interactions to be authentic and therefore productive. So, how do you get ready? The process calls for taking risks and vulnerability.

Begin the journey to authentic connection by deeply listening to what is needed to help make the team thrive. Work to understand what cultural shifts and changes in management meetings and rhythm need to happen, what "elephants" may be in the room and what sensitive conversations need to be facilitated. Only then can you begin to craft an agenda that will take the group to where it needs to go. As you begin your journey of INpowerment, start with that deep inquiry into a vulnerable place.

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The INpowerment principle that applies here is, your depth of connection with the team will mirror the depth of your connection with yourself. Before you can connect with the team, first connect with yourself.

First, ask yourself about “you.” Do you have limiting beliefs you’re holding toward the team or any individuals? What issues do you have with other teammates that are preventing you from engaging more fully? What is the range of emotions that get triggered when you reflect on your role in relation to the team? This will inform you about how to navigate frustration or anxiety around certain individuals.

Next, how do you feel about team or organizational challenges or blind spots? Invite yourself to diagnose these flaws that might be getting in the way of the team becoming more powerful. What are the organizational challenges that emerge from those blind spots or other stumbling blocks? Do you see blocks to achieving the results you’re committed to? You are getting clarity on what is most important for you and the team to tackle.

When you have connected to yourself first and then fully and transparently connected with your group, you have opened the gateway to make direct requests about what you want. Start by looking inward to get clarity up front about what is important to you. Explore what you want to have happen at the meeting or what a successful outcome looks like if you get what you want. Although you may not get it, if you don’t start by asking yourself what you want, you’ll never know.

Taking the Leap: Safety Belts, Please!

Imagine that you are considering a bungee jump off of a bridge that’s several hundred feet above the canyon floor. The first thing you’re going to do is look at the company’s safety record. Then you’ll check the maintenance procedures for the safety harness and bungee rope that is supposed to hold you. If you deem it to be safe and therefore that you TRUST it, then you’ll take the leap.

Taking a risk in a relationship with a colleague requires the same thing — safety. If you don’t believe it’s safe enough for you to share your opinions, you are not going to. Yet, because you have clarity about what you want, you can now navigate the relational and team dynamics to ensure that you express yourself more fully. Because you have clarity about your need to create safety, it’s already safer.

Creating safety in the team is the prerequisite for taking risks. There are five steps to the process of creating a safe space.

- 1. Getting present.** First, getting present in the moment invites you to set aside distractions that will inhibit your power. Your presence leads to your power.
- 2. Understanding and committing to guidelines and a protocol for how we are going to connect.** Introduce guidelines for everyone to embrace as a framework for interacting with and connecting to each other. As examples, everyone commits to speaking their truth, owning their judgments and feelings, actively listening and speaking respectfully without blaming or shaming.
- 3. Using the Clearing and Resolution model.** Instead of ignoring the elephants in the room, clear them out so everyone can be aligned with themselves and the people they work with. The construct for clearing issues uses the following elements: facts, judgments, emotions, role or responsibility and specific wants.
- 4. Completing exercises to take steps toward authenticity.** Sometimes this may be a simple prompt that calls for self-reflection and vulnerability. For example, ask everyone to share an experience from the past month that inspired his or her passion.
- 5. Anchoring and integrating the process.** Take time to debrief the outputs and next steps to assure that the decisions, insights and learning can be brought to life in a meaningful way. That makes it safe for the team the next time it comes together.

Where Are You Right Now? Eyes on the Road

The only place you have any power is in this moment, right here, right now. If you are still thinking about this morning’s breakfast meeting, you have no power. If, in this moment, you distract yourself with the electronic buzzes and beeps from electronic devices, you have no power.

The key to being in your power is to be acutely present in this very moment. This takes slowing down at the beginning of the meeting to accept and honor that it takes a few minutes for everyone to get present. Being present will allow for greater clarity in conversations and the ability to move through the agenda more effectively than you would having everyone mentally somewhere other than where they’re sitting.

A useful check-in tool follows the acronym MEPS, which stands for Mentally, Emotionally, Physically and Spiritually. The question that goes with MEPS is, where are you right now (not this morning or next week)

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through four energy centers: the head, the heart, the body and the soul?

- **Mentally** (in your head) — are you clear or distracted? Focused or in a stream of consciousness?
- **Emotionally** (in your heart) — what is the range of your feelings: glad, mad, sad, scared, ashamed, guilty or tender? Are you feeling more than one?
- **Physically** (in your body) — as you scan your body right now, do you feel achy, tight, fit, hungry or tired?
- **Spiritually** (in your soul) — are you connecting (or not) to something bigger than yourself? That could be nature, purpose or calling, higher power, connection to people, or perhaps right now there is lack of connection.

As you all become present in the moment, you will sense a different energy in the room. It is palpable. The same bodies are around the table, but the communal spirit is heightened. Each of you is bringing more of yourselves by connecting with your presence. ●

Rules of Engagement

Assuming everyone is present, connected and engaged — now what? Even if you are starting to buy into the premise that vulnerability and transparency are critical, there is still a need to understand HOW to actually show up in a safe way.

A cultural communication revolution requires the establishment of guidelines that everyone can embrace and honor. These guidelines lay out specifically how we are going to connect with one another to honor confidential conversations, encourage open and honest dialogue, commit to speaking individual truths, and include emotional context for where the team is so they know how to process interactions.

Here is a set of guidelines for working with groups of various sizes, from one person to small and large groups:

- I will respect confidentiality.
- I will be present in the moment.
- I will stay when times get tough.
- I will speak my truth.
- I will ask for what I want.
- I will take care of myself.
- I will express and own my feelings.

- I will own my perspectives.
- I will actively listen.
- I will speak respectfully, without blaming, shaming or fixing.
- I will ask permission before offering feedback or advice.
- I am willing to make mistakes.
- I am willing to laugh at myself.
- I will be on time and stay until the end.
- I will turn off all electronics.

These guidelines are a framework to keep things safe so you can work. They are a path to the safety of mutual respect and honor the breadth and depth of truth with compassion for others and ourselves.

Wow, Honesty! Navigating Rocky Roads

When a team member is holding back a concern or issue with another team member or with the team, that issue needs to be cleared.

How do you know when you have an issue that needs to be cleared? You will likely be emotionally stirred up as you attempt to reconnect with the individuals on your team. You may notice that your internal dialogue wants you to shut down or withhold how much you share. Sometimes you may feel an emotional trigger somewhere in your body — perhaps your belly, neck, head or shoulders. Triggers are blocks to the openness you are looking for. The only way to create the trust necessary to get back into a deeper conversation is to clear the trigger.

When you get hit on an issue, here is a five-step clearing process to identify and separate the clutter:

1. **What are the facts?** A small part of your issue is grounded in facts, so it helps to parse those bits of provable, objective data first.
2. **What are your perspectives?** These are your opinions and beliefs that come from your point of view. In the clearing process, as with the guidelines, you own your perspectives. This keeps the person or team you're clearing with safe from any projections.
3. **What are you feeling?** Do you remember any physical sensation you have experienced about the issue? That physical feeling was associated with an emotion. By identifying and speaking about the identified emotion, you are liberating or clearing yourself from them.

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4. What was your role in attracting the issue to you? Stuff doesn't just happen to people. Rather, they have a role or responsibility in why they attracted whatever situation they were a part of. In this critical step, you share what your part may have been in creating the issue.

5. What do you want specifically? Now you have the opportunity to ask for what you want. You may not necessarily get it. Though if you don't ask, you'll never know. This request is also the platform for what resolution may follow the discussion.

A clearing helps people break free from emotional triggers that get in the way of presence, and one of its benefits is getting opportunities for resolving real problems and issues that come from the specific wants articulated in the clearing. ●

Embracing Our Fellow Travelers

The gift you are bringing to this company and this management team is YOU. And what makes you different from every other person that is sitting in the conference room with you is your story.

For us to truly know one another, we have to understand each other's stories — not what's in your resume or your company bio but the life-shaping experiences that have made you who you are. These experiences have formed your belief systems and how you operate.

The sharing of personal stories is crucial for creating an authentic team. It starts the conscious choice of building relationships and investing in the lives of the people you work with.

When you share your story, connect to the narrative through emotion — express your feelings with both words and nonverbal energy. Share how your story impacts you, your family and vocation. Your goal is to win over the listener as an invested cheerleader for you, because they are now connected to the real “you” through your story.

After connecting with everyone's life-shaping experiences, the team will have formed a bond that will forever change how you see each other. You will now begin to understand your colleagues' decision-making processes and the motivations behind their ideas and positions.

This doesn't mean that you won't have differences of opinion. On the contrary, you will have taken the level of trust to a much higher level, allowing for even more expressions of dissenting opinions.

Making Our Way: Use It or Lose It

To assure that change stays with your organization instead of becoming a fleeting flirtation, you need to anchor and integrate new processes and systems. Here are some specific actions that you can take to anchor and integrate this experience.

Use processes more rather than less. There are many times during the day that doing a MEPS at your desk can help you get present before a call or other work you're trying to accomplish.

Integrate processes in every meeting and interaction for three weeks. Yes, in every interaction. If you drop in on a colleague for an impromptu meeting, check in first. When your colleague asks you, “How are you doing?” reply with depth, saying something like, “Well, I'm pretty scattered right now. I'm anxious about my kid's upcoming surgery, fatigued from lack of sleep but pretty connected to my belief of hope.” You'll energetically invite your colleague to also check in, and you'll find the dialogue that follows will reward both of you.

Model authenticity and clear often. Anyone on the team can step up to go first and model authenticity. So, practice it every day in all interactions. Before the first month is out, everyone on the team will be able to lead and model the new rhythm. For the first six months, also have everyone bring at least one item to clear at the beginning of the meeting. These clearings will give the group confidence that they can successfully use the model.

Come up with unique ways to maintain connection with your group. One way you can do this is to have each person offer up their own icebreaker to use at the beginning of your meetings to help others get present. You could rotate responsibility around the group for a connective icebreaker. This helps everyone embrace the “responsibility” portion of ensuring that integration happens.

Real Journeys

Thomas was a founder and CEO of a growing retail chain of beauty salons. His biggest challenge was recruiting and retaining talent. Thomas referred to the problem as “putting bodies behind chairs.” He had a whiteboard in his office that had a running tally of bodies — he called it the “Body Count.” His formula for success got him to 100 stores, but now his rate of growth was stalled. The team was running in place, and he was even having challenges retaining some of his top executives.

On a three-day retreat, his team worked on building safety, to (re)introduce themselves as the real people they were rather than as workers in the particular roles they played.

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Joe was from Cincinnati. Sid grew up in Brooklyn. Cathy was the fourth generation in her family from New Jersey. Frank was originally from Toronto. Sarah was born in Israel and grew up in Miami, and Greg was from Salt Lake City. They shared their stories, owned and expressed their regrets, their triumphs and defeats, and even their aspirations and dreams. They bonded. They connected. Moreover, Thomas started to appreciate his team as people instead of as employees. He recognized the possibility that his office had lots of people with unique stories.

On the retreat's final night, Thomas revealed, "You guys taught me that there is more to our business than numbers or my Body Count. I have sold most of you short. I'm pretty sure I've underestimated the store managers and stylists back in our stores. They are far more than numbers. They are real people with heart in each of their stories. We need to shift the way we're going after growth. First, I want to stop the bleeding of attrition by recognizing our staff as people; and second, I want to change the way we go after new people."

This new sentiment spread once everyone returned to the office. Thomas continued to be relentless about the organization's growth possibilities, but his aspirations for those lofty goals were no longer just about him and his success — they now included his teammates and incorporated their stories. Throughout the head office and into the field, word spread about a new kind of energy. ●

Wide Road Ahead: It's Your Brave New World

How many of you have created a business plan? These plans are often how we continue to think about our business, which constantly challenges us to find that elusive ideal "work-life balance."

Unfortunately, trying to manage life balance with only a business plan starts with a win/lose scenario (either work wins and family loses or vice versa) and a zero-sum game where we must be involved seven days a week and 24 hours a day. This approach doesn't work. A life plan, on the other hand, changes the nature of how we approach our lives. It's designed to help us be intentional with those key areas of our life that bring us joy and fulfillment.

The key ingredient for a life plan is changing the win/lose scenario of a plan that only looks at our vocational life as multiple wins across all domains. Let's say you want to focus on your marriage, kids, health, leadership and deepening your faith over the next year. Your life plan will

allow you to create an intentional rhythm to connect to each of these five domains, inviting you to feel connected to the totality of your life in a real and meaningful way.

This means that even if you choose not to work over the weekend, the connection and fulfillment that you've experienced by being fully engaged in your life will translate into more creativity, energy and enthusiasm when you are back at work. Because the energy from all areas of your life is connected, your "work" in your personal life helps you to be more effective at work, even though you are technically spending fewer hours.

Now that you are choosing to be all IN for your life, you also need to know your purpose, what drives you at your core. Your purpose provides you with the overarching guide for every choice you make. Aligning with your purpose is key to maximizing fulfillment in your life. It's what brings meaning to you.

Think about it this way: Just as every business has a mission statement designed to guide the company's focus, your purpose acts to give you focus for your life.

Knowing your purpose helps you be in alignment with your true power. It is an indescribable feeling that evokes the sweet spot where mental clarity, positive emotion, physical gratitude and spiritual connectivity merge. And, as you authentically connect inside yourself, you immediately have the success formula for becoming the best leader, parent, sibling, child and friend you can be.

With presence and power, you are right where you need to be right now — so, be INpowered.

Once you are, you will feel an ever-growing realization that you are aligned with yourself. This is a result of being in sync with your deepest truth. As you show up and realize you are where you are meant to be, that alignment will create an even deeper sense of purposefulness in how you show up.

It's not in the future or in the past. It's right here, with you, in this moment. ●

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