



Happy Tuesday, \${UD:FIRST_NAME}!

Have you ever said:

“But that’s not what I meant.”

I have.

Most of us have.

We know what we intended to communicate, so when someone tells us that what we said or did landed differently, our natural reaction is often to explain ourselves.

That’s not what I meant.

You misunderstood me.

I was only trying to help.

I was just being honest.

And sometimes all of that may be true.

But here’s the thing:

The people we lead don’t experience our intentions. They experience our behavior.

And sometimes there’s a gap between the two.

Leadership Lesson: Get Curious About Your Impact

You may have intended to be efficient.

- Someone experienced you as dismissive.

You may have intended to give someone autonomy.

- They experienced a lack of support.

You may have intended to challenge someone to grow.

- They experienced being embarrassed in front of the team.

You may have intended to be direct.

- They experienced disrespect.

Does that automatically mean you did something wrong?

No.

And I think that’s important.

Leadership doesn’t mean walking around afraid that someone might misunderstand everything you say.

But emotionally intelligent leadership does require us to be curious enough to ask:

How am I being experienced by the people I lead?

That’s a very different question from:

What did I mean?

Intent matters.

Impact gives us information.

Great leaders are willing to pay attention to both.

“But That’s Not What I Meant...”

Here’s where things get interesting.

When someone tells us how our behavior affected them, we often rush to defend our intent.

But what if we got curious first?

Instead of immediately saying:

“That’s not what I meant.”

What if we tried:

“That wasn’t my intention, but I can understand how it landed that way. Tell me more.”

Whew.

That requires something from us.

Self-awareness.

Humility.

Emotional regulation.

Listening.

And sometimes...an apology.

Because explaining your intent may provide context.

It doesn’t automatically erase your impact.

Put It Into Practice: The Intent → Impact Check

Think about one important interaction you’ve had recently—or one you’re preparing to have.

Ask yourself:

- What was I trying to communicate?
- What did I actually say or do?
- How might the other person have experienced it?
- What is their response telling me that I need to pay attention to?
- Do I need to clarify, listen, repair, apologize—or simply ask another question?

And here’s one more:

Am I listening to understand their experience, or am I listening for the opportunity to defend mine?

That one might sting a little. 😊

But that’s leadership.

Why Emotional Intelligence Matters

This is one of the reasons I believe so strongly that emotional intelligence isn't a soft skill. It's a leadership skill.

Self-awareness isn't simply knowing yourself.

It's also understanding how you are experienced by other people.

Social awareness helps you recognize what's happening around you.

Self-management helps you regulate your response when the feedback isn't what you wanted to hear.

Relationship management helps you decide what to do next.

That's where emotional intelligence becomes practical.

Not on an assessment.

In the conversation.

What's Happening at LFS

These are exactly the kinds of conversations I'm having with leadership teams in my work.

Communication.

Emotional intelligence.

Trust.

Feedback.

Difficult conversations.

How leaders show up—and how their behavior affects the people around them.

Because a team can have incredibly talented people and still struggle if they don't know how to communicate with one another.

And sometimes the issue isn't another process.

It's the conversations the team isn't having.

Visual Reminder



Leadership isn't only about what we say. It's also about understanding how what we say is received.

Want to Bring This Conversation to Your Leadership Team?

If you've been reading this and thinking about your own leadership team, perhaps there's a conversation we should have.

I work with organizations to help leaders strengthen communication, emotional intelligence, trust, and how they show up for the people they lead.

If you're planning a leadership retreat, staff development experience, keynote, or leadership program, let's talk about what's happening with your team and what they need next.

[Schedule a Leadership Conversation](#)

I'd Love to Hear From You

Here's my question for you this week:

When has someone helped you see a gap between what you intended and how you actually showed up?

What did you learn from it?

Hit reply and tell me.

Because sometimes our greatest leadership growth doesn't come from proving that we meant well.

It comes from being willing to understand the impact we had.

Until next Tuesday, remember:

Your intentions matter. Your impact does, too. Pay attention to both.

Show Up. Do You.

With appreciation,
Paula R Jenkins
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Founder, The Live By Example Speaker
"Everything Begins and Ends with Communication."

P.S. Know someone who would enjoy one honest leadership conversation every Tuesday? Forward this email and invite them to join our Leadership Unscripted community.

*If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, I'd love to invite you to join our community. Every Tuesday, Leadership Unscripted is one conversation designed to help leaders communicate with more confidence, authenticity, and emotional intelligence. **[Click here to subscribe](#)***

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