



## Authentic Leadership

*By Fran Berry  
Director  
Alive & Kicking Solutions.*

There has been a lot written about Authentic Leadership in the past few years, and a rather common understanding that every leader should “be” authentic. While I agree with the basic premise of this, and what I believe that educators in leadership are trying to get at, I’m not confident that the finer details of this concept are being translated brilliantly enough to make it an effective and viable method of leading. I say this because I’ve seen a lot of leaders losing their jobs, upsetting a whole lot of great people, and crushing others’ passions all under the banner of “being authentic”.

I see leaders making decisions to be mean, and even downright cruel, or sharing WAY too much of their inner thought process with team members (resulting in all sorts of negative responses) ~ all in the name of being authentic. This, too me, is evidence that they have misinterpreted what is really meant here. They have decided that being authentic means to unabashedly share every thought and feeling that is “real” for them in the moment, exposing their “real” selves in a “take me as you find me, because this is the real me” approach. Being “authentic”, in my book is not an excuse for leaders to behave badly, just because that is the way they were really feeling today.

So what IS Authentic Leadership supposed to be? What are the real principles and concepts here that define authentic leadership, and culminate in the creation of exceptional environments that have all the earmarks of brilliant leadership?

To answer this, we must begin with several definitions.

First, we have to define the term “authentic” as it applies to humans, and our ways of “being” in the world. We then must define “great leadership”. Not just leadership alone, but GREAT leadership ~ if we are to have a method or process that yields any type of progress over the past versions of “learning how to lead well”. Next, we must define HOW or WHAT we want our environment be like and WHY? Perhaps the most challenging of definitions that must be created is that of defining ourselves as leaders. In fact, it is that definition that should probably come first!

If you believe that any part of your life’s journey is about great leadership, then an exploration into the nature of authentic leadership will be of great value to you. It can unleash some parts of your thinking, your decision making, your behaviours, and your results, that represent the “missing pieces of your leadership puzzle.”

Get ready for a discussion that will leave you feeling inspired and energised!