

Application Guide

MANAGING LEADERSHIP ANXIETY: YOURS AND THEIRS WITH STEVE CUSS



BOTTOM LINE:

Leadership anxiety shows up as *reactivity*. The best leaders learn to name their false needs, manage their emotional field, and interrupt stuck patterns before they spread.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. **Reactivity is contagious.** It's a form of anxiety that spreads through teams.

II. **Most leaders don't feel "anxious"; they feel reactive.**

- A. Reactivity can make you go bigger—power up, fix, defend, dominate.
- B. Reactivity can make you go smaller—shrink back, withdraw, avoid, go quiet.

III. **Reactivity is fueled by false needs** (needs that feel urgent, but aren't true threats).

- A. Control
- B. Perfectionism
- C. Having the answer
- D. Being there for others
- E. Approval

IV. **Reframe the moment**

- A. Anxiety exaggerates ("always/never" statements).
- B. Reframing shrinks it back to reality (e.g., aim for **improvement**, not perfection).

V. **Watch for "attempted solutions" when you're stuck**

- A. Two clues: **more of the same** and **try harder**
- B. If nothing changes, your solution may be part of the problem.

VI. **Solve with process, not just content**

- A. Stuck problems often require changing the dynamic, not more talking/explaining.

VII. **Differentiation is leadership under pressure**

- A. Stay fully yourself while staying connected.
- B. Spend more energy **defining** (values, direction) than **convincing/pleasing**.

VIII. **Curiosity beats assumptions**

- A. Ask: "What can I do to help?"
- B. Curiosity keeps you connected without enmeshment or detachment.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. When you get reactive, do you tend to go bigger or smaller? What does that look like in real life?
2. Which false need is most likely to drive you under pressure (control, perfection, having the answer, being there for others, approval)?
3. Where are you stuck in an "attempted solution" loop?

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4. What pattern in your team might need a process change (interrupting the dynamic) instead of another “content” conversation?
5. What’s one way you can manage your emotional field this week so your team feels safer, clearer, and less reactive around you?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

- For Steve’s newsletter and free courses, visit: learn.capablelife.com/register
- [Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs](#) by Steve Cuss

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