

Application Guide

THE ROLE OF JOY IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP WITH KATE BOWLER



BOTTOM LINE:

Joy isn't optional for leaders, it's what keeps you connected to the story that makes your work matter.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. Identify What's Draining Your Joy

- A. Burnout isn't just physical, it's losing connection to the story behind your work.
- B. Are you tired... or have you lost your sense of why?
- C. Does leadership feel heavy instead of meaningful?

II. Separate Happiness from Joy

- A. Happiness = circumstantial, ease, things going your way
- B. Joy = deeper, surprising, shows up even in difficulty
- C. Ask yourself, "Am I chasing better circumstances or cultivating a deeper sense that it's good to be alive?"

III. Resist the Drift Toward Productivity as Identity

- A. Efficiency is helpful—but it's a poor foundation for meaning.
- B. Productivity can crowd out joy if it becomes your identity.
- C. You are more than what you produce.

IV. Practice the Three Catalysts of Joy

- A. Find something to do (serve others)
- B. Find someone to love (shift focus outward)
- C. Find something to hope for (push back against despair)

V. Reject Toxic Positivity—Choose Honest Joy

- A. Joy isn't pretending everything is fine when it's not.
- B. True joy requires honesty about what's hard and acknowledges what's still good.
 - a. It's saying: "This is difficult... and it's still good to be alive."

VI. Look Up, Not Just Ahead

- A. It's easy to focus on the immediate and stay buried in tasks, goals, and the pressure of leadership.
 - a. When life is all tasks, you lose connection to the story behind your work.
- B. Joy requires stepping back to see what's true.
 - a. Joy fuels your ability to handle pressure and avoid burnout.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Have you lost connection to the "why" behind your work?
2. What tends to crowd out joy in your daily rhythm?
3. Are you chasing happiness instead of cultivating joy?
4. Where might productivity be shaping your identity?
5. Which of the three—serve, love, hope—do you need most right now?
6. What is one practical way you can create space for joy this week?

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RESOURCES:

[Joyful, Anyway](#), Kate Bowler

[Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved](#), Kate Bowler