

Transformational Leadership

Unleash new possibilities for leadership in your organization.

By Terrence Fernsler

The Transforming Leader: New Approaches to Leadership for the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Carol S. Pearson. Softcover. 296 pages. Berrett-Koehler Publishers (bkconnection.com).

If we want to make significant and long-lasting change, we must look within before we look outside ourselves. This book sets the stage for transformational change by considering what we can do to analyze situations, deepen our own consciousness, learn to be fully present, build relationships, and improve communications in order to influence human systems.

First, we learn to shift our attention from our problems to our strengths by claiming responsibility for fostering structural and relational solutions. To the extent that our communications reflects this shift of perspective, we reinforce it in ourselves and others.

Next, we acknowledge that we are more than just human capital pursuing careers for material gain and status. We recognize that we are also spiritual, responding to a calling that has meaning. By connecting with our inner selves, we can increase our power to make a difference.

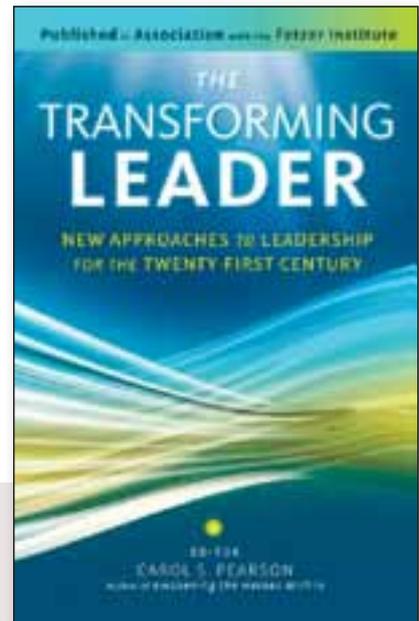
Greater self-awareness—as leaders and groups—promotes dialogue, creates strategies that connect with inner wisdom, and helps us discover larger relationships. When examining ourselves, we must be careful not to adopt a pathology-based approach to leadership. What we pay attention to creates ripple effects that project how we want the world to be. If we have a positive outlook, we create an environment of hope.

The essays in *The Transforming Leader*, written by a diverse group of contributors, describe this journey of inner discovery. They weave together insights to reveal the interplay between inner life and outer actions. They provide empowering ways of thinking, being, and relating.

Taken together, these essays consider the whole person. That's what today's challenges require—nonprofit leaders who can bring their heads, hearts, and souls to the role of leadership. **S**

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Trust the Transcendent within You

Leading change requires trusting all of yourself—head, heart, soul, and collective spirit. Apply these exercises to your leadership practice:

- **Help people understand that we're always projecting our own mental frameworks onto others.** Have people respond to an inkblot, and notice how differently each person sees the same thing.
- **Practice deep listening, which means suspending what you want to say** and hearing the emotions and experiences behind people's words. Remember that your goal is to harvest group wisdom, not sell your ideas.
- **When you wake up, write down the images and situations in your dreams.** Share your dreams with others, and ask them to explore their dreams with you. Bringing the unconscious into your awareness in this way will help you and your colleagues gain insight into previously “hidden” factors that shape your personal and collective experiences. It's a way to avoid repeating seemingly intractable patterns and to balance your waking analysis of a situation with the group's inner knowledge.
- **Think of a relationship that's difficult for you.** Consider this relationship not as a tug-of-war between two people but as a third space where possibilities lie for transforming what happens between you. Show others how to find this generative space where change can happen.