

Lighten the Burden of Leadership

Every success holds hidden risks. This book will help you overcome the challenges and find new opportunities.

Reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

The Pit of Success: How Leaders Adapt, Succeed, & Repeat.

By Dave Jennings & Amy Leishman. Softcover. 203 pages. Morgan James Publishing, morganjamespublishing.com.

The intriguing title of this book highlights a paradox: We tend to think of success as always good, but it can sometimes be a “pit” – a crater you fall into when you aren’t ready for the perils inherent in every success.

The world is changing quickly, and every change brings not only opportunity but also danger.

This book is for people facing such risks. It doesn’t directly teach you to lead but does help you get through challenges that could sink you – or, if handled well, result in better leadership.

The authors use neuroscientific studies to explain how people can change when stretching beyond their comfort zones. The human instinct is to fight, flee, or freeze when facing hard, unfamiliar, scary problems, but Jennings and Leishman show how you can learn new ways to adapt in such situations. Doing so begins with accepting ambiguity and trusting in your own abilities.

You can’t be an effective leader – at least not for long – without taking care of yourself. Much of the book explains how to coach yourself to meet new challenges – whether you accepted the challenges voluntarily or not.

The authors suggest a variety of ways to take care of personal needs while working through difficulties. Doing so increases outcomes as well as energy, health, confidence, and faith in yourself. Continual learning and flexibility can help you overcome feelings of fear, blame, and inertia when facing obstacles. Rather than fighting, fleeing, or freezing, *embracing* a challenge sets the stage for improving leadership abilities. The next step is to expand on using the tools in this book to lead your team.


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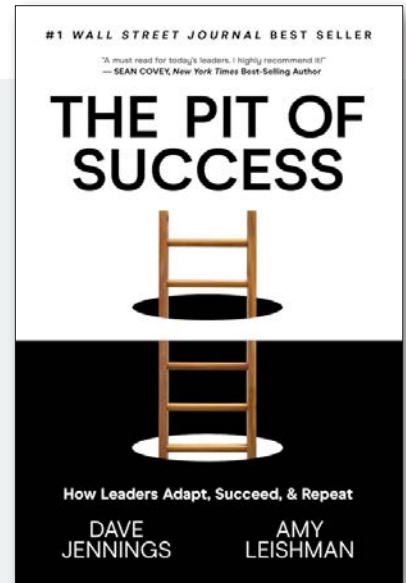
Slow Down to Speed Up

It’s easy to find yourself rushing from place to place, ignoring your brain’s urging for rest and renewal. Taking time for breaks, nourishment, and vacations increases your productivity and satisfaction. To keep from burning out, you need to “master each moment,” explain the authors of *The Pit of Success*. To do so, stop and ask yourself three questions:

What am I feeling? New challenges bring up a wide array of feelings: exhaustion, helplessness, excitement, confusion, fear, and many more. Naming your feelings helps you take control. Even if you can’t label your emotions, just thinking, “I don’t know what I feel” is a way to empower yourself to find what will help.

What do I need? Asking this question creates space to find new options. Do you need to take a nap, eat a healthy snack, have a drink of water, get moving, explore the beauty around you, or any of the other unlimited ways to take care of yourself?

What do I want to do about it? When you intentionally choose to act, you tell your brain that you’re in charge. You may not have time for a bike ride, but you can close your eyes for a moment and take a few deep breaths. There’s always some little thing you can do that’s better than doing nothing. Taking one small step is often the best path to a better place. 



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