

Robert E. Quinn

# Building The Bridge As You Walk On It

## A Brief Summary

### Three sections to the bridge:

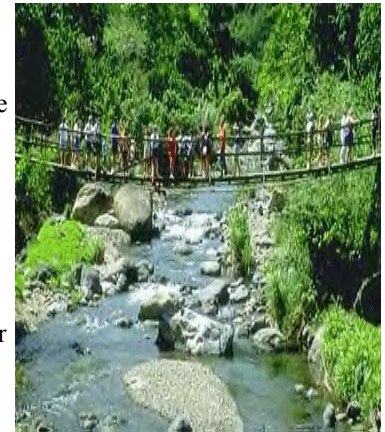
1. An Invitation to the Fundamental State of Leadership
2. Eight Practices For Entering the Fundamental States of Leadership
3. Developing Leaders

The book *Building The Bridge As You Walk On It - A Guide For Leading Change* talks about how “most of us, no matter how high or low our position, spend most of our time in the normal state. In this state, we tend to be comfort-centered, externally driven, self-focused, and internally closed” (preface ix). Quinn goes on to discuss moving away from this “normal state” into the “fundamental state of leadership”. Quinn breaks this book up into three section. Section one discusses how to start the process of becoming a funda-

mental leader. Section two focuses on the eight practices that one needs to enter into the fundamental state of leadership and finally section three examines the topic of developing leaders and how fundamental leaders should be in that fundamental state in order for others to lead in that way as well.

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



There are many people that you must consider in organizations when leading change.

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## Building The Bridge As You Walk On It

Change is often influenced by individuals rather than groups as groups tend to stay in the normal state. Change is often difficult for people as it means they have to give up control. Quinn talks about how you have to let go of control in order to go through a deep

change and enter yourself into a fundamental state of leadership. There are three objectives to this chapter and they are:

1. Helping people who are assigned to lead change.
2. Providing a new language

for people who are already engaged in transformation.

3. Helping others transform themselves and others.

## The Fundamental State of Leadership



*“To remain in the normal state, refusing to change while the universe changes around us, is ultimately to choose slow death” (pg. 21).*

It is normal to be comfort-centered, self-focused, internally closed and externally directed but if we continue down this path we will find ourselves moving towards a slow death.

If we choose to go against this normal state of leadership and give up control or take risks, there will be movement towards deep change. We must become other focused, externally open, purpose centered and internally directed.

### Normal State

1. Comfort Centered: Reactive not proactive.
2. Self-focused: there is always a natural tendency to be self-centered and self-conscious.
3. Internally Closed: Deny signals for change.
4. Externally Directed: How do others see me?

### Fundamental State

1. Purpose Centered: Clarify the results you want to create.
2. Other Focused: Put the common good and welfare of others first.
3. Externally Open: Outside comfort zone, experiment, adapting, seeking real feedback.
4. Internally Directed: Reach higher levels of personal confidence.

## Entering the Fundamental State of Leadership

*“In a moment of profound awareness, I had taken personal responsibility for my own sense of well-being, and I had changed in that instant on a deep, fundamental level. The shift in me completely change the way I regarded myself and profoundly changed the way he (my husband) interacted with me forever.”*

GAIL PARKER

### Gail's Story

Gail suffered from physical and verbal abuse from her then husband. One day her husband began to beat her and during the beating Gail discovered that she had transformed from a woman that was a victim to a woman that had choices. Her husband must have sensed this somehow and the beating stopped and never beat her after that.

### The Impact of Entering the Fundamental State of Leadership

People that resist change often take on the victim personality such as Gail did. These individuals have excuses and become trapped in a world without change. The moment Gail decided to change the man stopped beating her. “Her commitment to change also changed how other related to her” (pg. 31).

When we share our past, the past then becomes easier to open we enter a fundamental state of leadership in terms of being purpose and other focused. This new mind change will then “attract others to the fundamental state of leadership” (pg. 35).



Leaders exist within two separate entities a sort of Jekyll and Hyde effect.

## Personal Revitalization

### Getting Revitalized

Mark Silverberg was the president of a company in Cleveland. Mark was beginning to burn out and his family life was less than perfect. Mark stumbled upon the book *Deep Change* also by Robert E. Quinn and decided that he had to make significant changes to both his working style and per-

sonal life. As this change took effect he seemed to find purpose and meaning to all aspects of his life.

### The Myth of the Ruthless Hero

Many leaders have become comfort-centered and self focused and exist within the normal state. The idea that just

because leaders put in long hours and sit on many committees does not mean that they are productive. In order to move towards a fundamental state, leaders must give attention to parts of their lives that require a deep change. These signals may include work or their personal lives.

## Becoming More Aware and Authentic

### Expanded Awareness and Greater Authenticity

*“I recognized that I could be a catalyst for change and could see how effective it was when I remained open to new experiences and opinions instead of questioning myself. These things helped me see that I could lead people through the changes we were making and helped me understand how to do that.”* (pg. 53)

### Seven Lessons in Expanded Awareness

1. Support
2. We have more experience than we think
3. High degree of authenticity
4. Learn that you are not in control
5. How to “walk through hell” effectively
6. Create enriched connections
7. Entering a fundamental state of leadership changes all aspects of life.



## Transforming Others By Transforming Self

### Strategies for Effective Change in Human Systems

1. **Telling:** The emphasis is based on facts and rational persuasion and is most effective when people are not very invested. i.e. Someone tells me my tire is going flat. I look at it and see that it is flat. I fix it or buy a new tire.
2. **Forcing:** The emphasis is placed on authority and leveraging.
3. **Participating:** The emphasis is on relationships, dialogue and collaboration. Less accessible if in the normal state.
4. **Transcending:** The emphasis is on the potential and is virtually impossible if one exists in the normal state.

**Normal State**    Telling→Forcing→Participating→Transcending    **Fundamental State**

*‘Were we daring enough to take the ‘hero’s journey’ and become agents for the future?  
Or were our individual identities so dependent on our existing competencies and skills— and so entwined with the established structure — that change, deep or otherwise, was simply not an option?’*

TOM JONES

## A New View Of Leadership

### Four Ways to See Leadership

1. **Static View:** Leadership is looked at through a *trait approach* such as bold, self-disciplined, responsible, etc.
2. **Polar View:** This view arranges the single traits from the static view into a set of polarities. i.e. self-disciplined and responsible.
3. **Competing Values View:** Quinn groups the polarities in alike groups but then emphasizes that if the positive traits are over emphasized then there may be negative repercussions.
4. **Integrated View:** The first three view results in a fourth view in which the groups of polarities are used to make the creative states for the success of any leader.

### Eight Creative Stages

1. **Responsible Freedom**
2. **Tough Love**
3. **Reflective Action**
4. **Authentic Engagement**
5. **Appreciative Inquiry**
6. **Guarded Vision**
7. **Adaptive Confidence**
8. **Detached Interdependence**

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## Reflective Action

Most leaders are too busy solving problems or participating in action that there is little or no time for reflection. While action is a necessary task for leaders, they must too take time to reflect on these actions before going implementing them. It is through deep reflection that a leader can see the pros and cons to the actions.

### The Discipline of Writing

When we create time to reflect on what has happened during our day we are able to see both what we have done right and what we may want to change. By asking ourselves questions about our day we are able to see based on our frame of mind, the actions that we made.

## Authentic Engagement

*“A person who is engaged is involved, connected, and committed. A person who is too involved however, may lose perspective and integrity” (pg 114).*

A creative state closely linked with reflective action is authentic engagement. “Authentic engagement means being engaged in the world of action with love for what we are doing” (pg 113). Authentic engagement allows us to see who we are and how we are able to associate with others.



## Appreciative Inquiry

### Normal State

“What is wrong, and how do we fix it?”

### Fundamental State

“What will it take to finish this project a week early?”

The normal state question is a common question that is

asked when there is a problem that requires action. The fundamental state question is asked to combine a positive vantage with careful inquiry.

When Kurt Wright was 18 months behind in a project that could cost him \$30 mil-

lion his first thought was that of the normal state and soon he realized that would not work and he began to ask the fundamental state leadership question. This type of questioning allowed them to finish on time with and \$15 million under



Normal State

## Grounded Vision

There must be true vision within companies in order for fundamental states of leadership to exist. The leaders themselves must have this vision and the employees must know the vision and direction that the organization wants to move towards. Many leaders create visions but very few of them actually succeed in accomplishing them. Grounded vision is “factual but also hopeful and visionary” (pg

140).  
When leaders open up and collaborate with the employees of an organization, new ideas materialize. New ideas from employees allow everyone to feel as though they are a part of the vision and in turn will remember the direction that the organization is moving towards.



Gandhi indicated that organizations must look at the peoples bread and salt in order to truly understand them.

## Adaptive Confidence

Adaptive Confidence is simply meaning that individuals are flexible enough to enter situations that may be outside their comfort zone, yet confident enough to take all the positives and negatives from a situation and learn from them. As stated earlier in this book summary, people who exist in the normal

state tend to rely on living within their comfort zone. This is very natural and everyone does this at certain times in their lives. To have adaptive confidence you must move outside your comfort zone in order to take the risks necessary to move into a fundamental state of leadership.

“Recognize that excellence requires you to go where you have not been before.”

(pg. 157)

“You must surrender your sense of control and begin to learn in real time.”

(pg. 157)

*“The purpose of adaptive confidence means that we are willing to enter uncertain situations because we have a higher purpose and we are confident that we can learn and adapt as we move forward.”*

(pg. 148)

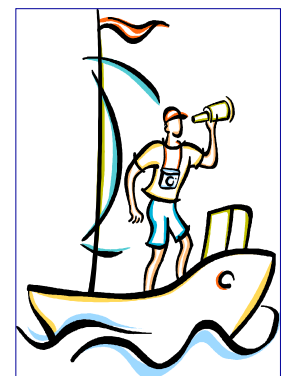
## Detached Interdependence

As indicated in Building The Bridge As you Walk on It, a person with detached interdependence “combines independence and strength with humility and openness” (pg. 163).

Leaders who are caught up

in the normal state tend to be very reactive instead of active. Quinn asks the question, “Are you problem solving or purpose finding?” to understand whether one is reacting to a problem or finding a purpose. We tend to be concerned about react-

ing and solving the problem right away but if we are purpose-centered we tend to regain focus.



When we focus we tend to have clear direction.



Being too spontaneous and expressive leads to irresponsibility.

## Responsible Freedom

The idea of responsible freedom is one that is often confusing. Many people see freedom as something that they have and no one can take it away regardless of the consequences. This is called “foolish freedom” (pg. 174). Responsible freedom is when a person is “spontaneous and expressive while also self disciplined and responsible” (pg. 175).

Someone who is too spontaneous and too expressive is not being responsible and therefore is not in the creative state of responsible freedom.

Individuals who use responsible freedom within organizations are free to initiate and lead change as long as they perform within set principles. The freedom we have to “live on the edge” will in

turn allow us to experience success. This is a step towards the fundamental state of leadership.

## Tough love

*“When others practice tough love toward me, they support me, and I can feel their genuine love and concern. Yet they do not baby me. They want to call forth my greatness.”*  
(pg. 187)

Tough love has been shown in the sporting world for decades. The coach is seen asking more from his or her players and will not be happy until that athlete shows what they are capable of doing. The notion of tough love indicates that people have high expectations of ones abilities and

those people should not settle for mediocrity. When we look outside the sporting world and into the business world, there is a place for tough love as well. Tough love should not only be for the top managers or CEO’s of companies but also of the everyday employee. Coaches, CEO’s, managers, etc. can all portray

tough love and this is an indicator of a shift to the fundamental state of leadership.



## Tough Love

Alumni remember the professors who loved them enough to demand their best work.

## The Stages of Self Change

### Six Stages of Self Change

**Stage 1: Precontemplation:** In this stage there is a problem but we do not see the problem. We are oblivious to the problem and therefore it rests on the shoulders of others.

**Stage 2: Contemplation:** We realize that there is a problem but contemplate for extended periods of time on what to do, if anything at all. We gather information to confirm that a problem exists.

**Stage 3: Preparation:** We are now planning to take action but are not quite ready for the change.

**Stage 4: Action:** People are trying to stop a bad habit and in order to stop there are four processes that become relevant, they are: rewards, countering (replace a negative with a positive), environmental control, and helping relationships.

**Stage 5: Maintenance:** When the change has finally occurred there must be input into guarding against relapses.

**Stage 6: Termination:** Change has terminated when the purpose has been achieved.

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## Inviting Others Into the Fundamental State of Leadership

In order to invite others into a fundamental state of leadership, we must first truly understand its meaning and be in that state ourselves. Leaders need to open up, to be transparent so that people around them know the direction they are headed and intentions that they have.

Leaders need to realize that to exist in a fundamental state of leadership 100% of the time is unrealistic. When the purpose is reached then a leader is able to step back out of this state of leadership until a new situation occurs in which this fundamental state of leadership is needed again.

*“Leadership is not authority, and it is not merely a set of learnable skills. It is, at the most basic level, a state—a way of being.”*  
(pg. 216)

## Critical Evaluation

*Building The Bridge As You Walk On It* is a fantastic book to show how leaders and people in general become complacent and content over time. It is this complacency that leads us to what Quinn calls a “slow death”. Quinn indicates that it is normal to exist within the normal state and be content with your comfort zone, but that state will never bring about great leadership.

The stories that have been told within this book are a true testament to the thought and detail that Quinn has put into this book. So often leaders think they are doing the best job by reacting to a situation instead of taking the time to reflect on the pros and cons of situations and then act on the situation and determine its purpose. Quinn shows us that by existing with the eight creative states that one can move from a contented style of leadership or a normal state of leadership into a fundamental state of leadership in which there are risks taken in order to become better.