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*Agility: Finding True Inner Peace Amid  
Chaos*

by  
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In a world that is changing faster than ever, many leaders cite agility as something they want their organization to strive toward. Managers and top executives will face volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity as part of their day-to-day reality, seeing agility as a solution. In fact, agile management is one of the fastest-climbing concepts in the [top 25 list](#) of Bain & Company's Management Tools and Trends, matched only by big data analytics. But agility, the capacity to be responsive and adaptive in turbulent and competitive environments, can only be attained if we connect with a sense of inner peace and become the eye of the storm that surrounds us.

Agility is not only about doing, it is also about being. Outward performances of agility like quick responsiveness, adaptable decision-making and flexibility are only half of the effort. You may be acting agile externally but feeling chaotic, stressed and overwhelmed internally. This can lead to the outcomes of your actions being less efficient, creative and innovative. However, when demonstrating a capacity for agility from a place of inner peace, the outcomes look entirely different. Psychologist Rick Hanson [touches on this](#) when speaking about the tension between self-acceptance and the desire to be a better person:

“We are innately wakeful, loving beings deep down in our core, but most people, me included, are not like that all the time. We're not continuously living from our innate goodness. We must make efforts over time to clear away the crud so we can come home to who we always were. [...] We need to engage willful effort [...] to have a profound serene acceptance underneath it all.”

Take John, for example. He is a C-suite leader who is in charge of a number of large, important projects. That means his day-to-day involves fast-moving targets, high complexity, dizzying ambiguity and a multitude of different stakeholders. When I began working with him, I realized that John was continuously focused on these external factors. As a result, he felt restless and chased by his own thoughts, which would race through his mind.

So I took John through a process that allowed him to integrate a peace and performance practice into his working life. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to finding inner peace, I find that rediscovering and reconnecting with different facets of your intelligence can be hugely beneficial. In my book *How to Develop the Authentic Leader in You*, I describe the seven dimensions of intelligence in more detail, but here is an overview:

**Physical intelligence:** integrating full-body awareness, taking responsibility for your well-being and health

**Emotional intelligence:** integrating self-awareness and awareness of others while simultaneously managing your own emotional state

**Pragmatic intelligence:** integrating both your IQ and experience

**Communicative intelligence:** integrating how you communicate skillfully with an awareness of the intended impact

**Heart intelligence:** integrating the wisdom and qualities of the heart such as compassion, gratitude, acceptance, forgiveness and vulnerability

**Neurological intelligence:** integrating an understanding of how your brain works and its neuroplasticity in order to learn, unlearn and relearn habits or behaviors

Consciousness intelligence: integrating the possibility that something bigger than ourselves exists beyond time and space and connecting to that

Bringing awareness to these parts of yourself and your capacity to think from different perspectives has a grounding impact. But no single dimension works in isolation; they are all connected. This means that transforming something for one type of intelligence will always have a knock-on effect for the others.

I recommend pondering the following questions to support you in choosing inner peace when everything around you feels chaotic:

Ask yourself, if you have done your best to...

- Regularly focus on your breath during the day?
- Recognize your emotions, allow them and name them?
- Cut down your tasks into manageable portions?
- Communicate with a heart at peace and your zone of OK-ness?
- Focus on what you can be grateful for?
- Focus on what you can influence and control?
- Take a moment to rest in the grace of the world and feel free?

There are no shortcuts to connecting with and integrating true inner peace in one's life, let alone in a demanding work environment as a CEO. In a [2013 article](#) by Susan David and Christina Congleton, the authors argue that successful leaders develop the essential skill of “emotional agility.”

“Effective leaders,” they write, “don’t buy into or try to suppress their inner experiences. Instead they approach them in a mindful, values-driven and productive way.” Outlining some practical advice later on in the text, they explain that as a leader you can connect with your inner peace by recognizing your patterns, labeling thoughts and emotions, accepting them and then acting on your values. Like with John, it is important to lead from a place of purpose and to separate the noisy thoughts from information in order to find stillness.

True agility, the remedy to a fast-paced and chaotic work environment, comes from within. Showing your capacity to be adaptable, creative, insightful and calm in the face of chaos requires a deep sense of inner peace.

Many leaders work themselves to the bone and then take time off to “disconnect.” What they are actually doing when they take this time is connecting with themselves again, not disconnecting. Whether it's a meditation retreat or something else they choose, they often experience a state of bliss and inner peace. However, once that moment is over, they disconnect and go back to work. What is essential in practicing inner peace is bringing this sense of bliss into the workplace, not only into our personal lives. Because in the end, inner peace has to be an integrated experience, not something to treat ourselves to once in a while on a holiday.