Start Within

The courage to look inward.
The humility to take ownership.
The commitment to live differently.

A free introduction to Recovery-Informed Leadership

12 pages · Around 20–30 minutes · Your own pace

A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

You do not have to have it all figured out

I've spent a lot of my life being the person who gets things done. The organiser, the problem solver, the one who takes responsibility, holds things together and keeps everything moving.

For a long time, I thought that was what being strong looked like. Being the person everyone could rely on, having the answers and getting on with whatever life threw at me.

But somewhere along the way, I realised that being good at looking after everything and everyone else doesn't necessarily mean you're good at looking after yourself.

Some of the most important lessons I've learned have come from moments when I've had to admit I didn't have it all figured out. When I've had to look at parts of myself I wasn't proud of, have conversations I would rather have avoided and accept that some things simply couldn't be changed.

None of that has been easy. But it's taught me something I wish I'd understood much earlier.

There is an incredible freedom in being honest with yourself, and a kind of strength in vulnerability that I never knew existed.

I'm still learning. I still get things wrong, and there are days when old habits and ways of thinking creep back in. But growth isn't about never making mistakes. It's about recognising them, taking responsibility and choosing what happens next.

WHERE WE BEGIN

You already influence more than you think

I'm the oldest of five and a single mother of two. I've been the organiser in my friendship group, a team leader and someone who helps make change happen at work. These roles are different, but they have something in common: how I show up affects other people.

You might never have called yourself a leader. Yet every time you comfort someone, speak up, apologise, set a boundary or change a habit, you influence the world around you.

This isn't about being in charge. It's about noticing your impact — including the impact you have on yourself.

Where in your life do other people experience the way you show up?

When do you feel most like the person you want to be?

THE COURAGE TO LOOK INWARD

Notice without turning on yourself

Looking inward can feel uncomfortable. It means being curious about what sits beneath our reactions, not gathering evidence that we're somehow failing.

Think of a moment that stayed with you. Maybe you snapped at someone, said yes when you meant no, or kept quiet when something mattered. What was happening underneath?

You can be honest without being cruel to yourself.

What happened, and what did you feel in that moment?

What might you have needed but not said?

What part am I playing?

One question has changed how I approach difficult moments: What part am I playing?

It doesn't mean everything is my fault. It means I can stop spending all my energy on what other people should do and look at what is mine to own.

Sometimes that's an apology. Sometimes it's listening without defending myself. Sometimes it's admitting that I keep repeating the same pattern.

Taking ownership should never mean accepting responsibility for someone else's harmful behaviour or placing yourself in danger.

What is yours to own in a situation you're facing?

What could you acknowledge without making excuses or blaming yourself for everything?

THE STRENGTH IN BEING SEEN

Vulnerability is a kind of courage

For a long time, being capable looked like holding everything together. Recovery has shown me another kind of strength: being willing to say what is really going on.

My trusted circle had to become smaller before it could grow again. That taught me that being vulnerable doesn't mean telling everybody everything. I can choose who has earned my trust and who can meet my honesty with care.

Sometimes the most courageous thing is simply saying, 'I'm finding this hard.'

Who helps you feel safe enough to be yourself?

Is there something you would like to say to someone you trust — when you're ready?

MAKING ROOM FOR YOURSELF

Protecting your energy

I've learned that protecting my energy doesn't always mean having a nap!

Sometimes it means unburdening myself of a thought or feeling I've carried for too long. Sometimes it's having the conversation I've been avoiding. Sometimes it's saying no to something that doesn't tick my boxes.

A boundary doesn't have to be a rejection of someone else. It can be an honest choice about what matters to you.

What are you carrying that you may be ready to put down?

What might a kind, clear 'no' sound like in your life?

THE COMMITMENT TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

When sorry becomes change

Making amends has been one of the most powerful parts of my recovery. It meant looking at actions I wasn't proud of and taking responsibility where I could.

Some people I would dearly love to make amends to are no longer here. At first, I struggled to make peace with that. Over time I found meaning in living amends: making choices today that I hope would make them proud.

I've also found that when I honestly own my part, people can be more gracious than I expect. But no one owes us forgiveness, and not every relationship can or should be repaired.

An apology is a moment. Change is something people can see in how we live.

What is one change you would like others to experience in how you show up?

What small action would make that change visible?

FIVE GENTLE REMINDERS

Things worth practising

Self-awareness: Notice what you're feeling and the habits you fall into.

Accountability: Own your part, without carrying what belongs to others.

Humility: Be willing to learn, apologise and change your mind.

Service: Be useful and kind without forgetting your own needs.

Continuous growth: Keep practising. Progress matters more than perfection.

These aren't boxes to tick. They're things to return to, especially on the difficult days.

Which reminder feels easiest to live by at the moment?

Which one might help you most right now?

A SIMPLE WAY FORWARD

Reflect. Own. Grow.

REFLECT: What happened? What did I feel? What was underneath my reaction?

OWN: What part of this is mine? What is not mine to carry?

GROW: What one thing can I choose to do differently next time?

Pick something ordinary — a conversation, a decision, a moment you wish had gone differently. You don't need a life-changing revelation. Small honest choices count.

Reflect — what happened?

Own — what part is yours?

Grow — what will you try next time?

THE NEXT SEVEN DAYS

One small promise to yourself

You don't need to change your whole life this week. Choose one action that feels honest, manageable and meaningful.

If you forget, react badly or fall into an old habit, you haven't failed the exercise. Notice it, be kind to yourself and begin again.

This week I want to practise…

When it feels difficult, I'll remind myself…

A person or practice that could support me is…

KEEP BEGINNING

The next step is yours

If something in these pages felt familiar, I hope you know you're not alone. We all have moments when we hide, react, hold on too tightly or forget to look after ourselves.

Recovery-Informed Leadership is a way of approaching those moments with honesty, ownership and a willingness to do something differently. You don't need to be in recovery. You don't need a job title. You only need to be willing to start where you are.

Thank you for giving yourself this time. You don't need all the answers. Just a little space to listen to yourself.

Start within. Let the change show up in how you live.

A personal reflection resource, not therapy, treatment or an official publication of any 12-step fellowship. Skip anything that feels too difficult, and seek trusted support if you need it.