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# Leadership From Spiraling to Steady

A 15-Minute Guide to Clearer Decisions

YOUR STRATEGIC EDGE SERIES

# A Quick Orientation

You know the feeling... A decision lands and your mind starts spinning. You're running scenarios, second-guessing, and wondering what you're missing.

Most leadership content tells you what to do, which can be helpful in certain scenarios. But honestly, you already know what good leadership looks like. The problem is that when you're actually in it, knowing what to do and being able to think clearly are two completely different things.

**This guide is designed to support clear thinking.**

This isn't generic "tell you what to do" content. I'm going to walk you through the EASE framework I use with leaders when they're navigating uncertainty. Try it. Make it yours. Use it on a real decision you are facing.

By the time you finish, you'll have:

- Clarity on a specific decision you're navigating right now
- A way of thinking you can use again and again
- A reminder that you don't have to carry this alone

You don't need more information. You need clearer thinking.



## Before Continuing

Choose one real decision to address.

It doesn't need to be your biggest one. Just one that's taking up more mental space than it should.



# How It Works

## **The Process:**

You'll work through four focused sections, each designed to cut through the noise and get you to clarity. You'll answer strategic questions about a real decision you're facing. And you'll walk away with a clear next step.

## **What you'll need:**

- One real decision to address
- 15-20 uninterrupted minutes
- Willingness to actually write down your thinking (typing counts)

## **What to Expect:**

Throughout this guide, you'll follow Sarah, a leader facing a team restructuring decision. You will see how the EASE framework moves her from spiraling on a decision to steadier, clearer leadership.

# 1. Establish Clarity

*What's actually happening here?*

When you're uncertain about a decision, the first instinct is usually to gather more information. More input. More perspectives. More data. More, more, more.

I've watched leaders delay decisions for weeks while they gather more information. They hope it will create the clarity they need. But most of the time, it just adds noise.

Clarity is created by knowing what question you're actually trying to answer. And most leaders spiral because they're trying to solve five different problems at once (without realizing it).

See how this shows up in our example.

# Sarah's Team Decision

Meet Sarah, a director I worked with who had been in tech for 18 years. She was intelligent, experienced, well-respected. And she was completely undone by her first 60 days in her new role. Not because anything had changed about her but because no one had told her the rules had changed.

Here's a decision we worked on together...

Sarah had inherited a struggling team of eight. But two team members weren't performing. She watched as deadlines slipped by, and now her boss was watching the team's results closely.

The initial question she came with was: *"Should I restructure the team?"*

But when we slowed down, we discovered she was actually trying to answer five questions simultaneously:

- *Should I restructure?*
- *Is the team structure actually the problem, or is it something else?*
- *What will my boss think if I make big changes in my first 60 days?*
- *Am I being too harsh or not decisive enough?*
- *How will the high performers react?*

It's no wonder she felt stuck. She wasn't making "a" decision. She was trying to make five decisions at once. And at the same time, she was second-guessing her judgment as she tried to find her footing.

**How I helped her establish clarity:**

We started with: *"What's the actual problem you're trying to solve?"*

Not *"Should I restructure?"* but *"What outcome would tell you this team is working again?"*

# Sarah's Team Decision

She pushed back at first and kept saying “the structure is the problem”. It took about 20 minutes of going in circles before she landed on the actual problem: *“I need the team to hit deadlines consistently and produce quality work. Right now, we're doing neither.”*

Then I asked: *“Is restructuring the fastest path to that outcome?”*

After considering that outcome, clarity hit her. She realized the real problem wasn't structure. The real issue was that two people couldn't do the work, and the rest of the team was compensating. If she restructured, it would just rearrange the same problem.

Here's the real question she needed to address: *“How do I address performance quickly and fairly without destabilizing the team, or damaging my credibility?”*

That was a question she could answer. Restructuring wasn't the solution. Performance conversations were.

## **Here's what just happened:**

As we went through this, Sarah realized that her real issue was a performance problem, not a restructuring problem. We cut through the noise and identified the real problem she needed to address. Once she had clarity on that, the next step became clearer.

This is the first shift: Establish Clarity.

**Now It's Your Turn.**

# Your Clarity Work

One Real Decision to Address

## STEP 1: Name the decision

In one sentence, what decision are you trying to make?

## STEP 2: Name what's adding weight to this decision

Check all that apply (be honest):

- I don't have enough information
- I'm worried about how others will react
- I'm not sure what "good" looks like here
- I'm second-guessing my own judgment
- There are competing priorities I can't reconcile
- I'm trying to answer multiple questions at once

## STEP 3: Get to the real question

Complete these sentences.

The real outcome I need is:

# Your Clarity Work

One Real Decision to Address

## **STEP 3: Get to the real question (con't)**

And the one question I need to answer to get there is:

### **Notice what just happened:**

You didn't find new information. You just stopped answering the wrong question. That's the whole game.

## 2. Align Decisions

*What choice aligns with my values & this situation?*

Now that you're clear on what question you're answering, the next step isn't to make the perfect decision. You want to make an aligned decision. Perfect decisions require certainty. And honestly, we rarely have that. So we work with what we know right now.

I notice a pattern when working with leaders: They spend most of their energy trying to predict outcomes and very little time grounding in what matters. Then they wonder why their decisions feel shaky.

Aligned decisions flip that. You ground yourself in what matters. Then you choose based on that anchor, even when outcomes are uncertain.

# Sarah Aligns Her Decision

## Where We Left Off:

Sarah had clarity: She needed to address performance issues, not restructure. But now she was stuck on the “how” and had more questions:

- *Should I give them another 30 days to improve?*
- *Should I have the tough conversation now?*
- *What if I'm being too harsh?*

She was trying to predict what choice will work out best.

## How I helped her align the decision:

I asked: *“What kind of leader do you want to be in this exact moment?”*

She gave it some thought and said: *“Someone who addresses problems early instead of letting them fester. Someone the high performers can trust to protect the team's standards.”*

So I asked: *“Does waiting another 30 days align with that?”*



# Sarah Aligns Her Decision

Immediately, she knew. No. Waiting felt like avoidance, not fairness. The high performers were already frustrated. Every week she waited, she lost credibility.

## **Her aligned decision:**

Have the performance conversations this week. Set clear expectations and timelines. She provided support that's clear, not vague.

Sarah couldn't predict how they'd react. She couldn't guarantee it would go well. But she knew it aligned with the leader she wanted to be.

## **Here's what just happened:**

Sarah stopped trying to predict outcomes. Instead, she grounded her decision in her values and how she wanted to show up as a leader.

This is what changes the game: Align Decisions.

Now It's Your Turn.

# Your Alignment Work

Ground Your Decision In What Matters To You

## **STEP 1: Identify your leadership values**

When you imagine yourself leading well in this situation, what 3 words describe how you want to show up? Aim for verbs or qualities you can act on.

Examples: Clear. Decisive. Thoughtful. Bold. Fair. Strategic.

Value 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Value 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Value 3: \_\_\_\_\_

## **STEP 2: Test your options against your values**

What are your top 2-3 options for this decision?

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Which option best aligns with the 3 values you identified?

# Your Alignment Work

Ground Your Decision In What Matters To You

## **STEP 3: Reality-check the alignment**

If I choose this option and it doesn't work out perfectly, will I still feel good about how I approached it?

Answer honestly:

- No, I'd second-guess myself
- Yes, because it aligns with who I want to be

If you checked “No”, that's important information. It means you're choosing based on predicted outcomes, not alignment. Go back to Step 2 and ask: “What am I trying to protect here?” (usually it's reputation, relationships, or being seen as decisive and that's the real driver of your decision).

If you checked “Yes”, you've found your aligned decision.

### **Notice what just happened:**

You stopped trying to predict the future and grounded your decision in your values. This is how you stop second-guessing yourself.

# 3. Show Up With Steadiness

*How do I stay grounded while navigating this?*

So now you have established clarity and aligned your decision. Now comes the part most leaders underestimate the importance of: How do you show up while executing that decision?

Here's the reality... Your team isn't watching just what you decide. They're watching how you hold yourself while you do it, which can often be more important than the decision itself.

Steadiness doesn't mean you have all the answers. Steadiness means that you stay grounded in your leadership, so doubt doesn't leak into every interaction.

# Sarah Shows Up with Steadiness

## Where We Left Off:

Sarah was clear on her next step: Have the performance conversations this week. Her decision was aligned but now she had to actually have the difficult conversations. And she felt the pressure.

And again, she had more questions (which anyone would have):

- *What if they get defensive?*
- *What if they quit on the spot?*
- *What if I handle it badly and word gets out?*
- *What if the rest of the team thinks I'm too harsh?*

## How I helped her show up with steadiness:

We didn't practice scripted responses to every possible scenario. Instead, we anchored her in three grounding points to use when doubt kicked in:

- Having these conversations is being fair to everyone (both the individuals and the team).
- The team needs clear expectations to be effective.
- I don't need all the answers. I need to be clear, direct, and human.

## Then we practiced what steady actually sounds like:

Instead of starting out with: *"I know this might be hard to hear, but I've been noticing some concerns about your work, and I wanted to talk to you about it."*

We practiced: *"I need to talk with you about performance expectations. I've noticed three specific areas where the work isn't meeting standards. Let me walk you through them."*

Not mean. Not apologetic. Direct. Clear. And steady.

# Sarah Shows Up with Steadiness

## **The outcome:**

Sarah had both conversations. One person got defensive. The other was surprised but receptive. But neither quit on the spot.

And here's what mattered: Sarah stayed grounded. When the defensive person pushed back, she didn't backpedal or over-explain. She listened and then clearly restated the expectations.

Following these conversations, one of her high performers said: *"I'm glad you're addressing this. It's been affecting all of us."*

The conversations weren't comfortable. But Sarah's steadiness made her leadership land.

## **Here's what just happened:**

Sarah didn't eliminate her anxiety, but more importantly, she didn't let it drive the conversation. She showed up as a leader she was proud to be.

And this is the part most leaders skip: Show Up with Steadiness.

Now It's Your Turn.

# Your Steadiness Work

Prepare to execute Your Decision With Steadiness

## **STEP 1: Anticipate the pressure points**

When you move forward with this decision, what will be the hardest moment?

Example: "The conversation with my boss" or "The moment someone questions my judgment"

## **STEP 2: Ground yourself before that moment**

Write down 3 truths you can return to when doubt creeps in

Truth 1: I made this decision because...

Truth 2: Even if this doesn't work out perfectly, I know...

Truth 3: The version of me I want to be in this moment is...

# Your Steadiness Work

Prepare to execute Your Decision With Steadiness

## **STEP 3: Practice your steady response (con't)**

Now practice a grounded response.

Not defensive. Not over-explaining. Just clear.

I hear your concern. Here's why I made this choice:

### **Notice what just happened:**

You prepared to stay grounded under pressure. This is the difference between leaders who second-guess mid-conversation and leaders who stay steady. Well done!

# 4. Embed What Works

*How do I make this repeatable?*

Here is what most leaders miss: One good decision doesn't create steadiness. What is needed is consistency.

Lasting change is created when you have a repeatable way of thinking and showing up that you can return to again and again, especially when the next curveball hits.

This is how you stop rebuilding your thinking from scratch every time you face uncertainty. Instead, you build a way of thinking that becomes easier to access under pressure.



# Sarah Embeds Her Work

## **Where We Left Off:**

Sarah had the difficult conversations and they went as well as performance conversations can go. One person improved their performance and is doing well on the team. Unfortunately, the other didn't improve and eventually left the team.

But the real win wasn't just that decision. It was **what happened next...**

Two weeks after our work on the "restructuring" decision, Sarah's boss asked her to take on a struggling team member from a different group. At first, all she could think was: *"Can I do this? I just dealt with two performance issues. What if this person doesn't work out?"*

Then she caught herself. She recognized the spiral. And instead of spinning, she used the decision process:

**Establish Clarity:** Sarah realized the question wasn't *"Should I take this person?"* but rather, *"Can my team support another member right now, and will this help or hurt our current momentum?"*

**Align Decisions:** Sarah wanted to be strategic and realistic. She felt that taking on someone new now would overload the team. An aligned choice for her was either to say no or to negotiate a later start date.

**Show Up with Steadiness:** Sarah told her boss: *"I want to help, but my team is still stabilizing. I can take this person on in 30 days. That gives us time to build capacity first."*

# Sarah Embeds Her Work

Her boss understood and they developed a plan for Sarah to take the new team member on.

And the best part? Sarah didn't spiral. She used the decision process.

**Here's what just happened:**

Sarah turned one decision into a repeatable way of thinking. Now when uncertainty shows up, she knows how to navigate it.

Consistency is created here: Embed What Works.

Now It's Your Turn.

# Your Embedding Work

Make This Decision Process Yours

## STEP 1: Capture what worked

Looking back at the work you just did, what was most helpful?

- Getting clear on the real question I was trying to answer
- Grounding my decision in values, not predicted outcomes
- Preparing to stay steady under pressure
- All of it

## STEP 2: Name your pattern

What do you notice about how you typically approach decisions?

- I gather too much information and still feel uncertain
- I make the decision but second-guess it afterward
- I avoid deciding until external pressure forces it
- I know what to do but worry about how others will react

## STEP 3: Create your next-time reminder

The next time you start spiraling over a decision, what will you do?

### What just happened:

You turned a single decision into a repeatable process.  
This is how capable leaders become steadier leaders.

# From Here

*Leadership doesn't suddenly get lighter.  
But it can become clearer.*

In the middle of all of that decision making, you made space to think. Most leaders don't. You now have clarity on the real question, a grounded decision, and a way of thinking you can return to.

This is what operating from Your Strategic Edge feels like.

And while one clear decision matters, what changes leadership is the ability to return to this steadiness again and again, especially during a transition.

That is exactly what the **EASE Leadership Transition Intensive** is designed to support.

# EASE Intensive

Inside EASE, we apply this same way of thinking to the real situations unfolding in your leadership:

- The conversation you're preparing for
- The decision you keep revisiting
- The team dynamic that feels more complex than expected
- The moments you begin questioning your judgment

Not once. Repeatedly. Until this way of thinking becomes your default.

Over six weeks, you build:

- Deeper trust in your judgment
- Leadership that lands more clearly with your team
- A repeatable way of thinking in uncertainty

Most transitions drag on longer than they should. Not because you're incapable, but because you are trying to figure it out alone, quietly. But you don't have to.

Let's build Your Strategic Edge, together.

~ Naomi Jones



## Schedule a 60-minute Clarity Call

Let's discuss your transition, what you're navigating, and whether the EASE Intensive is right for you.

