# You're Complicated Too

September 10, 2026

Rather than _____ the complicated person, good leaders learn to _____ with complicated people to accomplish great things.

The first complicated person you have to learn to lead is yourself.

## 3 Simple Truths for Complicated People

**1.** _____ friction can make for better outcomes.

- Strong teams need healthy disagreement.
- **Ask yourself:** Is this person making execution harder or making the decision better?

**2.** _____ the distinction between different, difficult, and destructive people.

- Different (i.e., style, pace, generation, preference, risk) usually requires adaptation.
- Difficult (i.e., produces drag, distraction, inefficiency) usually requires accountability.
- Destructive (i.e., dishonesty, sabotage, chronic disrespect) usually requires action.

**3.** Complicated _____ problems become complicated _____ problems.

- Relational friction rarely stays relational. Sooner or later it becomes operational or cultural.
- **Ask yourself:** What is the full relational cost the team is paying for this dysfunctional team member's performance?

Self-awareness demands that you _____ the complexity _____ _____ _____ brings to the team.

**Ask yourself:** Can you identify the _____ that your leadership leaves in the organization?

## 4 Practical Steps for Complicated People

**1.** Challenge your _____ _____.

- Once you decide someone is difficult, you start collecting evidence.
- Once you believe someone has potential, you start looking for opportunity.

**2.** Change _____ before you try to change _____.

- **The Leadership Dials:**

  Push ↔ Pull
  Wait ↔ Go
  Empathy ↔ Challenge
  Tell ↔ Ask
  Structure ↔ Freedom

- Individualize the leadership. Don't individualize the standard.

**3.** _____ before you _____.

- **The Decision Line:**

  Difference → Adaptation
  Deficiency → Development
  Defiance → Decision

- **The Response Ladder:**

  Release
  ↑
  Boundary
  ↑
  Confront
  ↑
  Coach
  ↑
  Clarify
  ↑
  Adapt

**4.** Give _____ and expect _____.

- A complicated, coachable person may be worth enormous investment. A talented, unteachable person can become enormously expensive.

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# You're Complicated Too

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Rather than ***removing*** the complicated person, good leaders learn to ***collaborate*** with complicated people to accomplish great things.

The first complicated person you have to learn to lead is yourself.

## 3 Simple Truths for Complicated People

**1.** ***Productive*** friction can make for better outcomes.

- Strong teams need healthy disagreement.
- **Ask yourself:** Is this person making execution harder or making the decision better?

**2.** ***Clarify*** the distinction between different, difficult, and destructive people.

- Different (i.e., style, pace, generation, preference, risk) usually requires adaptation.
- Difficult (i.e., produces drag, distraction, inefficiency) usually requires accountability.
- Destructive (i.e., dishonesty, sabotage, chronic disrespect) usually requires action.

**3.** Complicated ***people*** problems become complicated ***organizational*** problems.

- Relational friction rarely stays relational. Sooner or later it becomes operational or cultural.
- **Ask yourself:** What is the full relational cost the team is paying for this dysfunctional team member's performance?

Self-awareness demands that you ***appreciate*** the complexity ***your*** ***own*** ***leadership*** brings to the team.

**Ask yourself:** Can you identify the ***wake*** that your leadership leaves in the organization?

## 4 Practical Steps for Complicated People

**1.** Challenge your ***first*** ***read***.

- Once you decide someone is difficult, you start collecting evidence.
- Once you believe someone has potential, you start looking for opportunity.

**2.** Change ***yourself*** before you try to change ***them***.

- **The Leadership Dials:**

  Push ↔ Pull
  Wait ↔ Go
  Empathy ↔ Challenge
  Tell ↔ Ask
  Structure ↔ Freedom

- Individualize the leadership. Don't individualize the standard.

**3.** ***Diagnose*** before you ***respond***.

- **The Decision Line:**

  Difference → Adaptation
  Deficiency → Development
  Defiance → Decision

- **The Response Ladder:**

  Release
  ↑
  Boundary
  ↑
  Confront
  ↑
  Coach
  ↑
  Clarify
  ↑
  Adapt

**4.** Give ***grace*** and expect ***growth***.

- A complicated, coachable person may be worth enormous investment. A talented, unteachable person can become enormously expensive.

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