

DO GOOD TO LEAD WELL

WITH CRAIG DOWDEN, PHD



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Episode: Seeing with New Eyes: Martin Dubin on Leadership, Self- Awareness, and Blindspotting

What You'll Learn

- ✔ Overused Strengths Become Blind Spots
- ✔ Six Types of Leadership Blind Spots
- ✔ Identity Blind Spots Are Common in Transition
- ✔ You Can't See Your Own Blind Spots Without Help
- ✔ Ask: 'What Can Only I Do?'

Overused Strengths Become Blind Spots

Listen at 06:28

Your greatest assets, when applied excessively or without awareness, can transform into liabilities. What makes you successful in one context might hinder you in another, or alienate others if not balanced. How to integrate this into your life right away:

Self-Reflection Journaling:

- **Identify Your Top 3 Strengths:** Think about what you're consistently praised for, what comes easily to you, or what you excel at. (e.g., being decisive, analytical, empathetic, charismatic).
- **Reflect on Overuse Scenarios:** For each strength, brainstorm situations where using it too much might have backfired or caused problems.
- **Observe Your Reactions:** Pay attention over the next week to moments when you feel a strong urge to lean solely on one of these strengths. Ask yourself, "Is this the most effective approach right now, or just the easiest one?"

Seek Feedback from Trusted Peers/Mentors:

- **Specific Questions:** Instead of just "What are my weaknesses?", ask targeted questions like: "Are there times when my [strength, e.g., decisiveness] comes across as [potential blind spot, e.g., impatient or dismissive]?" or "When I'm really focused on [strength, e.g., details], do I sometimes miss the [potential blind spot, e.g., big picture or human element]?"
- **Listen Actively:** Resist the urge to explain or defend. Simply listen and take notes. The goal is awareness, not immediate correction.

Intentional Application:

Once you identify a potential "overused strength" blind spot, consciously practice modulating that strength. If you tend to be overly decisive, practice pausing and asking for input. If you're overly analytical, practice trusting your intuition occasionally.



Six Types of Leadership Blind Spots

Listen at 12:43

Blind spots aren't monolithic; they fall into distinct categories. Understanding these categories can help you more precisely identify and address your own. Common categories often include: knowledge/skill gaps, emotional intelligence gaps, self-awareness gaps, identity/belief gaps, interpersonal communication gaps, and strategic/vision gaps.

Categorize Your Own Experiences:

- Recall 2-3 significant challenges or failures you've experienced in leadership.
- For each, ask: "What was I not seeing or misinterpreting?"
- Based on your answer, try to loosely categorize it. Was it a lack of information (knowledge), an inability to read the room (emotional intelligence), a misunderstanding of your own capabilities (self-awareness), or something else? Don't worry about perfect labels, just start sorting.



Proactive Self-Assessment Checklists:

- Create a simple personal checklist based on common blind spot categories. For example:
 - Knowledge/Information: Am I seeking diverse data points before making decisions? Am I aware of relevant trends?
 - Interpersonal/Communication: Am I actively listening? Am I ensuring my message is understood? Am I aware of how my non-verbals are perceived?
 - Self-Awareness: Am I aware of my own biases? Do I understand my emotional triggers?





Transition Planning

Identity Blind Spots Are Common in Transition

[Listen at 14:45](#)

When you undergo significant life or career changes (e.g., new job, promotion, becoming a parent, moving, a major personal loss), your self-perception often lags behind your new reality. The way you see yourself (your identity) might still be rooted in your old role or circumstances, creating a blind spot that prevents you from fully embracing or excelling in the new one.

Acknowledge and Name the Transition:

- If you're currently in a period of change, consciously name it. Simply acknowledging the shift helps you recognize that your identity might be in flux.

Reflect on "Who Was I?" vs. "Who Am I Now?": Journaling Exercise

- **Column 1:** Old Identity Traits: List adjectives, roles, and responsibilities that defined you before the transition. (e.g., "individual contributor," "always had answers," "flexible schedule").
- **Column 2:** New Identity Traits: List adjectives, roles, and responsibilities that define you now or need to define you in your new reality. (e.g., "team leader," "ask good questions," "structured schedule").
- **Column 3:** Discrepancies/Challenges: Where do you see friction between the old and new? Where are you still acting or thinking like your old self, even though it's no longer serving you? This friction is your identity blind spot.

Actively Practice the New Identity:

- Once you identify a discrepancy, consciously practice behaviors aligned with your new identity.
- "Fake it 'til you make it" applies here in a healthy way, by acting as your new self, your identity will gradually catch up.

You Can't See Your Own Blind Spots Without Help

Listen at 34:18

This is perhaps the most fundamental truth about blind spots: by definition, you can't see them yourself. They are outside your current frame of reference. Relying solely on self-reflection will only get you so far; external perspectives are crucial.

How to Integrate This Into Your Life Right Away:

Identify Your "Truth Tellers":

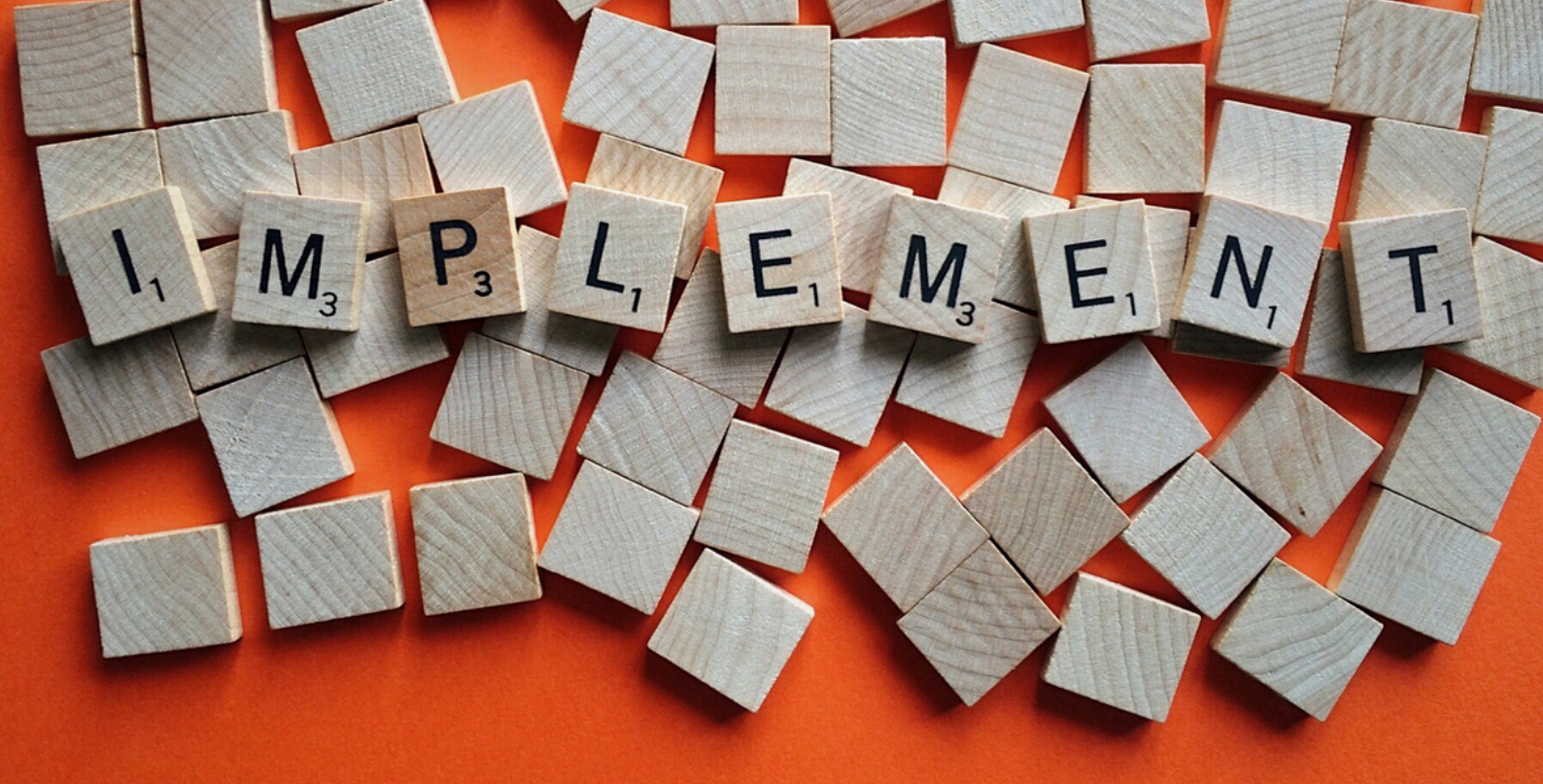
- Make a list of 2-3 people in your life who you trust implicitly, who care about you, and who you know will be honest with you, even if it's difficult to hear. This could be a close friend, a mentor, a colleague, a family member, or a therapist/coach.
- Crucially, these should not be people who only tell you what you want to hear.

Practice Soliciting Feedback Regularly (and Systematically):

- **Schedule Check-ins:** Instead of waiting for a crisis, make feedback a regular part of your interactions. "Can we grab 15 minutes next week? I'd love to get your perspective on X."
- **Ask Open-Ended, Non-Defensive Questions:**
 - "What's one thing you think I could improve upon in how I handle [specific situation/project]?"
 - "When you observe me doing [specific behavior], what impact do you think it has on others?"
 - "Is there anything I'm doing that might be holding me back, even if I'm not aware of it?"
- **Listen More, Talk Less:** When receiving feedback, your primary job is to listen, understand, and thank the person. Avoid immediate explanations, justifications, or defensiveness. You can say, "Thank you for sharing that. I need some time to think about it."

Create a "Feedback Log":

- Keep a simple note or document where you jot down key pieces of feedback you receive. Over time, you'll start to see patterns emerge, which are often indicators of your blind spots. This helps you track and acknowledge recurring themes.



Ask: 'What Can Only I Do?'

[Listen at 41:37](#)

This powerful question shifts your focus from being busy to being impactful. It encourages you to identify your unique contributions, leverage your core strengths, and delegate or eliminate tasks that others can do (or that don't need to be done at all). This is crucial for effectiveness, productivity, and avoiding burnout.

How to Integrate This Into Your Life Right Away:

Daily "Only I Can Do" Audit:

- At the start of your workday (or the end of the previous day), look at your to-do list.
- For each item, ask: "Can anyone else do this? Does it have to be me?"
- Action: If someone else can do it, delegate it (if possible) or eliminate it if it's not truly essential. If it must be you, mark it as high priority for your unique contribution.

Leverage Comparative Advantage:

- Think about your specific skills, experiences, and perspectives. What do you bring to the table that no one else around you does? This isn't about ego; it's about maximizing collective efficiency.
- Example: If you're a leader, only you can set the overarching vision and empower your team. If you're a specialist, only you might have the depth of knowledge in a particular niche. Focus your energy here.

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Ready to take Blindspotting to the next level?

Connect with Martin Dubin:

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- [LinkedIn](#)

For a deeper dive, listen to the full-length episode of the Do Good to Lead Well podcast featuring Martin Dubin on:

- [Spotify](#)
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And if you're looking to elevate your entire C-Suite leadership team, learn how Craig Dowden can help your leaders perform at their highest level.

- visit <https://www.craigdowden.com/executive-mastermind>