

Crossing Thresholds: Redefining Leadership From the Inside Out

For much of my life, I believed leadership meant strength in its most visible form. It meant holding everything together, being reliable, and pushing forward even when I was exhausted. I measured myself by what I could produce and how others saw me. If I could keep going, no matter what, then I considered myself successful.

That worked — until it didn't.

The return of chronic and debilitating illness dismantled the scaffolding of identity I had built around myself. My body could no longer sustain the pace I had lived by. My work shifted. The image of being the woman who could handle everything slipped from my hands. For the first time, I could not lead in the way I always had.

At first, I felt like I had failed. What kind of leader collapses? Over time, I began to understand that collapse was not failure — it was a threshold that carried me to the edge of something much deeper than strategy or willpower.

When I entered a sacred Shamanic ceremony that November, I knew I would not come out the same. Ceremony did not ask me to become stronger. It forced me to loosen my grip — on identity, on performance, on control. The “fire” did not destroy me; it revealed what no longer belonged to me, especially the belief that my worth as a leader depended on how capable or composed I appeared.

On the other side, leadership began to look different.

It no longer looked like control or relentless effort. It began to look like presence: the ability to stay grounded when things are uncertain, to listen before acting, and to respond from an embodied sense of truth rather than habit or pressure. I came to understand leadership as a steady inner stance rather than an outward performance.

In this new understanding, leadership is less about directing others and more about holding a field in which change can occur — including within myself. It is about being willing to walk through discomfort without abandoning my body, and allowing my own transformation to deepen my capacity to meet others with clarity and compassion.

For women in midlife, thresholds are everywhere. Children leave home, relationships shift, careers evolve, and bodies ask to be heard in new ways. These moments can feel like failure or derailment. Yet I have come to see them as invitations into a fuller, more grounded expression of leadership.

Crossing a threshold is rarely neat or linear. It asks us to release familiar roles and the image of who we once were. But on the other side, there is a different kind of strength — not measured by how much we can carry, but by how deeply we can remain present, truthful, and embodied.

This is the kind of leadership I believe the world needs now: leaders who have walked through fire and learned to listen; leaders who can hold endings and beginnings with steadiness; leaders who understand that success is not defined by titles or appearances, but by presence, integrity, and the courage to stay with what is real.

If you find yourself standing in the ashes of what you once knew, you are not broken. You may be in the midst of your own threshold, or in the quiet after the burning. Either way, something in you is reorganizing — and that process itself is a form of leadership.

The question is not whether you will rise again. The deeper question is this: what would it mean to lead from your body, your breath, and your truth — right where you are now?

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