

Excerpt from new book by Leaders Press:

***Success Mindsets: How Top Entrepreneurs
Succeed in Business and Life***

Seven Facets of the NEW Success Mindset

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On December 22, 2011—the day before my world changed—I was considered to be a great success: I was often portrayed in Scandinavian media as a female role model, entrepreneur, visionary front runner, and cosmopolitan networker. I had already influenced thousands of people as a bestselling author, keynote speaker, columnist, and tribe leader. I had a huge following of people whom I had trained in a feminine model of leadership and a feminine way of creating business success. My books had been translated into several languages and I had just started an international leadership training with people from ten countries. I was a happily married mother of three living in my dream house—a rare gem with a garden in the middle of Copenhagen—enjoying a comfortable lifestyle with friends and family, hosting parties, and traveling for adventure. I thought *success* was something that came to those who wanted it and were willing to work for it—both on the inside and the outside.

On December 23, as I was preparing for Christmas with the family, I learned that my six-year-old, middle son was ill with a rare, highly aggressive, incurable terminal disease.

Less than six months later, on June 12, 2012, just as the beautiful sunny Nordic summer day dawned, I suddenly occurred like the complete opposite of a success. In fact, I felt like a disaster who had catastrophically failed my life's most vital task.

In the ambrosial hour, just before the sun started to shine, my beloved, charming child took his last breath and died in my arms, only seven years and four months old.

After receiving our son's cancer diagnosis, his father and I had spent six months running a race against all odds to save his life in a myriad of ways. Now we dragged ourselves home from the hospital,

lowered the flag in our garden halfway, and sat speechless on the sofa without a clue of how on Earth to survive this seemingly unsurvivable event.

We felt we had just missed succeeding at the three most important jobs for any parent:

1. protect your child against evil;
2. if something bad happens, save your child;
3. by all means, do NOT allow your child to die.

Now, as our oldest son of ten silently began to build the Lego his brother would no longer need, and our youngest son of two was brought back home by his grandparents—clueless about losing a sibling for good—we had to undertake the last task any parent wants: planning our own child's funeral.

I remember that the question of why this had happened was racing around my brain, and that I kept speculating about what I could have done to prevent this outcome while my heart was bleeding and my uterus was screaming. Do you recognize some of these symptoms from situations where you missed succeeding at what was most important to you?

I am far from being the only one who has gone through such excruciating pain and encountered such failure, the other end of the measuring stick from success. In fact, most people on the planet sooner or later face sad events: they lose something or someone who was very dear to them, or they suddenly find themselves facing new shocking realities of illness, divorce, bankruptcy, infertility, homelessness, or the likes. These events feel like the opposite of success—in fact, they feel rather like the most evil downgrade.

Those of you who have been in a similar situation know that on top of your own devastation when such things happen, you have to deal with society's perception of success. When you don't live up to the common ideals, you may experience that others pity you and make you feel like a victim instead of gently being with you through the many phases of grief.

On June 12, 2012, I could not imagine that it would be possible to ever be happy—or successful—again. I simply could not envision how. It was the first time in my life when I wasn't able to create an uplifting perspective on the situation, one that could redirect my somber feelings in a more pleasant direction.

The night my son died, I made the irrational decision to go up instead of down from the experience. I thought, "One son is in Heaven now—the two others deserve Heaven on Earth. Why go down when it's possible to go up?" But I had no clue how to make this upgrade happen, and a bright future seemed endlessly far away, not to say altogether utopian.

Today I can report that it IS possible to become happy again, even after great tragedy, trauma, breakdowns and setbacks. In my experience it's even possible to become happier and more grateful, peaceful, and loving than ever before.

Is this the NEW success mindset?

For sure, we are at a time in history when we all need to revise what we mean by "success."

Is success "having it all" in terms of status, money, and family—while feeling miserable, bored, restless, and negative? Not if you ask a growing number of "cultural creatives" who no longer feel drawn to mainstream ideals but choose to live in alignment with their own definition of success instead of striving for its conventional image. In fact, many especially from the younger generations find it absurd to adopt society's definition of success measured in terms of wealth and achievements, if it comes at the price they have witnessed in themselves or their parents in terms of stress, performance anxiety, low self-worth, depression, workaholism, dysfunction in relationships, meaninglessness, and loneliness. And it makes even less sense as long as the old definition of success seems to contribute to the destruction of the planet through an unsustainable lifestyle that exhausted overachievers don't have the energy to alter.

Could it be that the new success mindset is to boldly face every challenge life offers; to feel the pain no matter how hard; to dive into the darkness until it becomes Light; and to come out feeling richer, happier, healthier, more fulfilled, AND more compassionate, making us better able to serve the whole?

It's time to ask that question.

First, if our success depends on stable circumstances, we are very vulnerable, because we live in times of unprecedented change. Second, the rules of the game have changed. Long gone are the 1950s when everyone had the same success criterion and tried to live up to a norm that in reality suited very few. Even though most of us are still playing according to the rules of the twentieth century, when success was all about how our life looked from the OUTSIDE, no matter how full we were of self-sabotage, lovelessness, and insecurity, the twenty-first century is here.

Now and in the future, it might no longer be possible to be TRULY successful without FEELING genuinely joyful on the INSIDE. Now we live in a world whose future depends on people following their inner wisdom and acting in harmony with the laws of nature. This means breaking away from illusions and immature mindsets, lifestyles, conventions, and businesses.

If we keep on going as we have done so far, there might be no future for humanity. Scientists are telling us that we are adapting too slowly to the exponential growth of problems such as climate change,

the depletion of our natural resources, increasing poverty, human migrations, and so on. The only thing that can alter our common current course is if we make a radical shift of consciousness, since we will not be able to solve our problems with the same paradigm that created them.

In other words: Real, deep-felt success now and in the future requires us to change our “success mindset.” Redefining “success” is mandatory if we are to survive and thrive.

But how do we do that?

Any type of crisis—from COVID to a career change—is a catalyst. Because crisis forces our hearts open. And then Light – a higher understanding - can enter through the cracks. We can get an experience of our divinely creative essence. And if we cultivate this new level of awareness with new practises, we can access new keys that can dissolve old problems.

In my experience, the recipe for the new success mindset is to shift our focus away from the masculine definition of success to a more feminine one. And then put the feminine foot first and step-by-step let the masculine muscle support and help build a new world.

Here is how that looked in my own case:

After my son died, I spent a few months in what could be called “the fertile void,” a phase where I knew I had changed, but was not clear about my new identity and direction. Instead of planning with my mind, I was listening to impulses from within. I still had my business. I had been teaching twenty-first century leadership paradigms for years, but now I knew that I had to work at a deeper and a higher level to make room for all the insight and soul expansion that was occurring after my loss. Three months after my son’s death, I conceived the synopsis seeding my book *The Future is Feminine*. This in turn gave birth to my cutting edge Leadership Academy where I connect leaders and take them through a transformational program to become luminous pathfinders, and front-runners of a bright future—for All.

Indeed I found that the old matter-based concept of success was no longer an option—it had also lost all its appeal. When my son died, so did much of my old ego-identity. I was no longer so concerned with other people’s opinions. What was born instead was an intimate connection with my soul and a surrender to those higher realms, which I choose to trust is the new home of my son.

I asked to receive more clues about my new purpose in life, and one day I “downloaded” a new leadership navigation tool with seven facets of twenty-first century leadership. I describe these seven facets thoroughly in my book *Illuminary Leadership*. Because I trained as a scholar, I researched every single aspect of this leadership model thoroughly and found that, indeed, there is scientific evidence for all its facets. The world’s most shining people and companies are only truly successful because they live

these seven dimensions. I have since tested whether it's possible to apply these new facets to people with leadership DNA who are yearning for less stress, more meaning, a higher purpose, true love, genuine happiness, and more influence with pleasure. I have found that not only do these seven facets give access to a new way of being that feels so much healthier, happier, and better but also they provide people with the ability to turn a crisis into a quantum leap and emerge as illuminating people and businesses.

The seven facets are these:

1. Complementarity—Energizing Leadership. Focus as much on cultivating inner growth such as an increased feeling of peace and joy as on tangible actions and visible achievements.
2. Polarity—Synergizing Leadership. Honor the creative power of the dance between the mature masculine and feminine energies both inside and outside yourself.
3. Proactivity—Empowering Leadership. Take responsibility for healing areas of low self-esteem, so you can take initiatives that lift others instead of reacting, suffering, and passing on your traumas.
4. Authenticity—True Leadership. Stop numbing your genuine feelings and start following your heart so you can be that unique piece that is otherwise missing in the bigger puzzle.
5. Integrity—Reliable Leadership. Align your words and actions with your values so you can respect yourself and enjoy the trust of others.
6. Synchronicity—Inspiring Leadership. Be fully present and co-create the future by listening to evolutionary impulses rather than allowing your mind to repeat the past on autopilot.
7. Totality—Wholistic Leadership. Use all of yourself to serve the Whole. It is scientifically proven that you get so much happier by contributing positively to others.

One day I met a holy woman, Outi Kuma, one of the few westerners who has been initiated into the wisdom of the Mayan culture. She showed me how these seven facets could be combined into a leadership model shaped like a diamond, with the top symbolizing our inner masculine and the bottom symbolizing our inner feminine (to see this model, check illuminaryleadership.com). After participating in one of my leadership trainings, Outi Kuma mirrored to me that what I am actually doing in my programs is helping people polish their “inner diamond” so they can act like beacons of Light and inspire those looking for new and better ways of doing things now that the old world is crumbling.

I have since noticed that the new way of bringing about success is indeed radically different from the old. I used to work very hard to *achieve* success. Now, I focus on my inner work and I seem to

receive success. I experience it as a sense of being in flow. Whatever I need in terms of people and possibilities seems to come to me in perfect time without having to work hard for it. In fact, it happens that if I use the paradigm which I subscribed to before, the magic and miracles are blocked.

I could never have come so far so fast on my own. It only became possible because I surrounded myself with a network of loving people with whom I have processed both pain and gain along the way. This has given room to more genuine joy in my heart and life.

As we enter what looks like the most crucial decade of this century, in which exponential changes will happen at the speed of technological advances, I would like to point to the power of community. It is scientifically proven that supportive relationships can get us through most challenges.

And therefore one of the most important elements of the NEW success mindset is to surround ourselves with inspiring people who have a compassionate heart and a solution-oriented attitude. This is why networks are a vital element of my programs. Here like-hearted people can join forces for a higher Good and help each other make the seemingly impossible possible.

The new success mindset also includes a willingness—even an unstoppable commitment—to conscious evolution. We must strive to not only learn but also to unlearn, because what we used to believe about success and everything else must be turned upside down.

For example, many of our decisions used to be based on fear and separation.

Now and in the future we must recognize what quantum physicists have been telling us for years and what the recent pandemic showed us: we are all connected. Thus none of us can afford to be successful at the expense of others—we are all only truly successful if we create solutions that are a good deal for everybody.

In my experience, these radical shifts are easier to make when we don't walk all the steps on the new path to soulful success alone, but when we help each other. Today I can testify there is an operating system in the world that heals even the deepest pain. It is called Love and I know because it never stopped being present in the form of angels on Earth—family, friends, and new connections who showed me that the Light never disappears, even in the darkest moments. May this new operating system spread like wildfire.

The Dalai Lama has said that the world does not need more successful people; it needs artists, poets, and lovers of all kinds.

This new success mindset is what I am dedicated to help foster through my luminary leadership trainings and networks. Since part of this new mindset is a shift from ME to WE, I freely share a lot of the resources that have helped me on my website, www.kirstenstendevad.com.

My young son's death shifted my success paradigm. Success for me today is the opportunity to use all that I have received and all that I continue to receive in service of a similar profound, paradigm-shifting effect on the world. This way, the loss of my beautiful child can contribute to a common gain and his early death will not have been in vain.