

## INSPIRATIONS

# Life and Leadership Lessons from 'Ted Lasso'

## The TV coach shares strategy to up your training game

■ By Kim M. Catania & Callie Bradford

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**Y**ou never know who or what is going to inspire you. When it comes to life lessons and leadership, the title character from the Apple TV+ series "Ted Lasso" has been a breath of fresh air and inspiration.



Whether you have watched the series "Ted Lasso" or not, it's virtually impossible not to have seen or read about the positive impact the show has had on so many people. Over the three seasons (too short!) the show aired, Ted continually demonstrates his remarkable yet contemporary approach to life, relationships and leadership.

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### Leadership Resources

Looking for more inspiration? Here are some resources if you would like to read more on leadership:

- *The Leadership Challenge* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner
  - *Trust and Inspire* by Stephen R. Covey
  - *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek
  - *True North* by Bill George
  - And an oldie but goodie - *On Becoming a Leader* by Warren Bennis
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We'd like to share a few of Ted's quotes, with lessons that ring true for trainers.

## 1. "I believe in hope. I believe in 'Believe.'"

Believe you and your team are full of ideas for doing more, doing better and succeeding. To create a culture of continuous improvement, start with a common goal, vision and mission.

Great coaches and leaders generate a safe environment for people to share ideas, guide their team and make it worthwhile for them to speak up. Support them, encourage them, keep the lines of communication open and safe, and allow them to unleash their potential.

Believe in them. This philosophy creates a team environment aligned with continuous improvement and embraces the concept of psychological safety on a team.

Your self-confidence is your foundation for effective leadership – this only works when you first believe in yourself. Have self-confidence in your abilities, from achieving goals to overcoming obstacles to continually working to get better and improve.

As a leader, when you believe in the message, idea or mission and incorporate this as your mantra and into your approach, you will inspire others to believe as well. And it fosters a climate of trust and respect.

## 2. "Be curious, not judgmental."

A world of possibility awaits you if you replace judgment with curiosity. Approach any situation with a positive outlook; peel back the onion by asking questions to uncover what's really going on. You may be surprised at how much more you learn by being curious and asking "why" or "how" or "help me understand." This approach is invaluable in relationship building as a coach, leader and friend. Then, listen.

And did you know curious people are happier? Research has shown curiosity to be associated with higher positive emotions, lower anxiety levels, more satisfaction with life and greater psychological well-being.

### **3. “You say impossible. But all I hear is I’m possible.”**

You can do it. So can they – if you guide them and empower them. Be positive, have an open mind and work to find a solution to challenges that arise. It’s the key to your success and that of your team.

How you approach a situation defines you. Remember, your team is watching how you react and handle and address events – your facial expressions, live or on Zoom, your texts (yes, there is no authentic tone in texts) and your email.

### **4. “Taking on a challenge is much like riding a horse, right? If you’re comfortable while you’re doing it, you’re probably doing it wrong.”**

Challenges should feel uncomfortable, and it is OK to fail! Becoming a leader of people for the first time is a challenge and most definitely uncomfortable. Think about when you first became a leader. Think about your mistakes and what you never knew until you took the role. And what you learned from them. And how you grew.

### **5. “You know what the happiest animal on earth is? It’s a goldfish. Do you know why? It’s got a 10-second memory. Be a goldfish.”**

Truth be told – this quote is our favorite of all. Ted imparted this pearl of wisdom early in Season 1 when he encouraged a player not to dwell on past disappointments and move on. It’s always so important to learn from your mistakes and move on. It’s what you do next that is key. People, especially leaders, are defined by how they react to mistakes, not the mistakes themselves.

Suppose you are a leader, and a direct report approaches you in tears and informs you that they made a terrible mistake:

1. Listen, ask questions and work with the direct report to solve the problem.

2. Once the problem is solved, encourage your direct report to learn from the mistake but not dwell on it ... to be a goldfish.
3. Since you handled it by focusing on the problem without freaking out and letting your emotions drive your actions, you just emulated a goldfish in your own way.

If you are so focused on your weaknesses and what you can do better, you probably are not focused on what makes you unique, special and fabulous.

## Conclusion

There are countless quotes and life lessons from the “Ted Lasso” series that are relatable for coaches, leaders and anyone.

We selected a few that hit home for us. We welcome your input on others that resonated with you. And we encourage you to share them!



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