

# The Top 10 Leadership Blind Spots, and 5 Ways to Turn Them Into Strengths

Too critical? Impatient? Conflict-averse? Easily offended? You're not alone. Master your blind spots and take your leadership to your next level.

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[Self-awareness is a crucial key to happiness and success.](#) Without self-awareness, we move through relationships and experiences disconnected, unaware of how others receive and perceive us, and unable to take full responsibility for our outcomes.

Conventional wisdom would lead us to believe that leaders with the most experience and the most seniority would have the highest levels of self-awareness. Surprisingly, the opposite is true.

[As leaders ascend through the organization, self-awareness and emotional intelligence decline.](#) Travis Bradberry, author of [Emotional Intelligence 2.0](#), reported that "EQ scores climb with titles from the bottom of the corporate ladder upward toward middle management. Middle managers stand out with the highest EQ scores in the workplace because companies tend to promote people into these positions who are levelheaded and good with people."

However, for positions beyond middle management, the results are quite different. "For the titles of director and above, scores descend faster than a snowboarder on a black diamond. CEOs, on average, have the lowest EQ scores in the workplace," he shared.

What leads to this decline?

Blind spots can be the Achilles heel of leadership. Weaknesses are aspects that we can intentionally strengthen with practice, time, or desire. Blind spots, however, are personal traits or aspects we don't even know about that may limit the way we act, react, behave or believe, and therefore limit our effectiveness.

# The Top 10

Extensive research points to dozens of leadership blind spots. [There are, however, 10 core blind spots that present most frequently](#). These are:

1. Going it alone (being afraid to ask for help)
2. Being insensitive of your behavior on others (being unaware of how you show up)
3. Having an "I know" attitude (valuing being right above everything else)
4. Avoiding the difficult conversations (conflict avoidance)
5. Blaming others or circumstances (playing the victim; refusing responsibility)
6. Treating commitments casually (not honoring the other person's time, energy, resources)
7. Conspiring against others (driven by a personal agenda)
8. Withholding emotional commitment (emotional blackmail)
9. Not taking a stand (lack of commitment to a position)
10. Tolerating "good enough" (low standards for performance)

In addition to personal blind spots, [blind spots also arise in teams, organizations, and in market awareness/understanding](#).

## Curing Your Blind Spots

Follow these steps to gain clarity around your blind spots, which will open the door for growth, learning, and performance improvement.

1. **Solicit feedback in the right way.**  
Ask for 1 piece of feedback at a time. Communications expert [Carole Stizza](#) suggests these 2 options:  
"What is the one blind spot you think I have that I should be more aware of?" OR  
"An assessment identified some unique blind spots. Do you feel there is **one** area this particular blind spot of \_\_\_\_\_ shows up in how I approach things?"
2. **Surround yourself with diverse thinkers with the intention of learning from them.**  
Your communities of learning should reflect a variety of perspectives, experiences, and approaches to problem solving that you can adapt.
3. **Examine your past to identify patterns.**  
How have you succeeded as a leader? How have you struggled? What situations have led to both desirable and undesirable outcomes? What feedback have you received from mentors, coaches or advisors regarding decisions you've made that indicates a pattern of questionable choices?
4. **Identify triggers.**  
We all have triggers - situations that cause us to impulsively or instinctively react without thinking. In his bestselling book, "[Triggers](#)," leadership expert [Marshall Goldsmith](#) explains that every waking moment is filled with either people, events, or circumstances that have the power to shape how we act or react. When we master our triggers, we master our responses and make them work for us, rather than against us.
5. **Seek out a blind-spot buddy.**  
Once you've received feedback on your blind spot, enlist someone you trust to hold you accountable to behavioral change.

The flip side of every blind spot is a strength, and always presents an opportunity for growth.

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