

# How We Lead

Practical Wisdom for Leaders and Coaches

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By Amiel Handelsman

## WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER

My favorite slogan for much of the 2000s was *We're in this together*. In difficult times--after 9/11, during major life transitions, and amidst family tragedy--I used it to remind myself that I was not alone and that others were looking out for me. I offered this phrase to others as encouragement to create networks of support for the challenging personal changes they were making. Or to remind them that nobody achieves success, happiness, or life by themselves.

*We're in this together* is a phrase whose power derives not from its accuracy (because it's not a factual assertion that can be proven true or false) but from its ability to shift our mood and orientation toward life. When we say these words, we become less resigned and resentful and more open to taking positive action.

Try it yourself now: Make sure your feet are flat on the ground. Sit upright. Lower your shoulders if they're creeping up to your ears. Take three deep breaths, preferably from the belly. Now repeat the phrase *We're in this together* three times.

How did that go? If you felt yourself open up (even a bit), great. You have experienced evidence that words don't just describe reality; they also bring it into being. If, on the other hand, this exercise didn't do much for you, or even evoked cynicism, that signals one of two things. Either (a) you haven't practiced it enough ([remember the Rule of 300/3000](#)) or (b) it's not the exact language you need now to move forward powerfully in life.

These days I'm in category (b). Seriously.

In the fall of 2008, when the stock market tanked and supposedly robust institutions started crumbling all around, I realized that *We're in this together* was missing a key ingredient: faith or (to use a word more popular in business) confidence.

Why does this matter? Because in a political and social climate of fear, what many of us deeply need is access to an inner sense that things might actually turn out OK. Life might work out. We may get bruised and wounded, but we'll still be alive--and together. And if we die sooner than expected, at least it might be a peaceful death with our hearts open and loved ones by our sides.

In short, we'll get through this together.

*We'll get through this together*. Now this is a slogan that gets me fired up. By saying it, I declare two things:

1. Things will turn out OK
2. We will have each other to lean on

The words inspire me. Perhaps they inspire you. Or perhaps they would if you made them a mantra (phrase that transforms you by repeating it) and let them gradually seep into your mind, heart, and everyday communication.

How do we apply this to our lives? The boldest application goes like this: take a dire scenario of the future that ranges in probability from plausible to likely. Then add two parts togetherness and one part faith/confidence. Voila: *We'll get through this together*.

Here are four examples to show you what I mean:

- The collapse of several European economies will trigger a global economic depression lasting years. People will lose jobs. The social fabric will fray. Resource wars will break out. Things will look bleak. Yes--and we'll get through this together.
- The world is running out of cheap oil. As it does, major infrastructures we take for granted-like the supply chains that bring food to grocery stores and the transportation grid-will break down. This will shock 99% of the population and disrupt the way all of us live. Yes--and we will find ways to adapt. We'll get through this together.
- The world is getting hotter and the climate more tumultuous. Fluctuating weather patterns will put cities and towns underwater, threaten farming, and dislocate millions of people. Everyone will suffer in some way. Yes--and we'll get through this together.
- Loose nukes will find their way to major western cities. Tragedies will happen. Yes--and we'll get through this together.

Now, don't get me wrong. A declaration by itself, however powerful, cannot build resilience. We also need scenario plans, street smarts, practical skills, effective self-care, and reliable friends. But a phrase like *We'll get through this together* can place us in a mood that triples the probability of all these others things actually happening.

You might still be thinking: "Fine, but this still won't work for me, because I'm not the kind of person who would say this. It's not me."

You're right. This may not be you...today. But if the only thing we ever talked about was some dimension of who we already are, how would we ever become the person we intend to be?

Let me close by inverting Hamlet:

*Thus conscience does make lions of us all  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is strengthened by the bright cast of trust  
And enterprise of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents flow profusely  
And earn the name of action.*

Send your comments and questions to the usual place.

Cheers,

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