

REAL POWER IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19



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These are extraordinary times. Remarkable times. Transformative times. Rarely in history has the world carried such a heavy load of collective loss, grief and fear. We feel like we have little or no control over this virus or our future. And rarely have we ever had to stop long enough to face into the uncertainty--together. Our emotions range from panic, anger, denial, fear, depression, or anxiety for most of us, to resolve, equanimity, acceptance and contentment for a few.

So we are facing many paradoxes; we are not in control and yet there is a lot that we can do to alleviate our stress; we are utterly confused and at the same time we are more alert for facts and for hope; we are afraid of the future and yet we are asked to consider decisions now about how we want to live into that future.

Recently I was asked how my power model might reflect what is happening presently in this pandemic. What does power look like when everything we counted on seems up for grabs and we feel so utterly powerless to respond?

I would like to offer a perspective of the pandemic using my model of personal power including the six stages of power, plus the Wall. I wrote about these in my book, *Real Power (3rd Edition)*. I am especially interested in the ways that times like this, that try our souls, also invite deeper levels of personal power both individually and in leadership. We have an extraordinary opportunity to tip the scales toward a new perspective of power. I will make it concise and, hopefully, instructive. My desire is to offer a larger viewpoint in the midst of chaos but not to be exhaustive. And my perspective is as a Caucasian woman living in the USA.

Lack of Real Power: the first several weeks of the pandemic

First let's consider how these stages of power were reflected in the first few remarkable and chaotic weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic. The stages of power I wrote about are these: Stage 1: Powerlessness, Stage 2: Power by Association, Stage 3: Power by Achievement, Stage 4: Power by Reflection, The Wall, Stage 5: Power by Purpose, Stage 6: Power by Wisdom. If you first want to familiarize yourself with the stages of power that I am describing, follow these links for a fuller description of the six stages of power and a free power profile to measure where you are in the stages presently.

Real Power Stages and descriptions

<http://www.janethagberg.com/power-stage-descriptions.html>

Real Power Profile

http://www.janethagberg.com/uploads/3/9/3/4/39346357/personal_power_profile_112710.pdf

It is clear to me that this pandemic caused world-wide TRAUMA, GRIEF and LOSS, and most people, millions and millions of people naturally reverted to stages 1 and 2 of my model (Powerlessness and Power by Association), no matter what stage they were living in before the outbreak. Not only did we revert but most of us reverted to the shadow or most negative aspects of those two stages. Behaviors included victimizing self and other, spreading false information, fear mongering, panic, hoarding, minimizing the illness or mocking those who took it seriously, blaming others, taking political advantage. Then restrictions increased, most things shut down, people lost jobs, and the numbers of afflicted and dead began to rise exponentially. First responders were deluged. First responders, themselves in jeopardy, became instant heroes! Needless to say, though, fear increased. It seemed that these shadow behaviors were driving the train, so to speak, and it was out of control, roaring toward a crash.

To be fair, the leaders were not yet clear on how to act or what would be the most effective way to ward off the pandemic. Far Eastern countries just weeks ahead of the rest of the world, had tried a variety of ways to cope, some working and some not. The void was filled with rumor, fear, and false information. A total chaos seemed imminent while saner voices and facts were hard to find.

Real Power in the aftermath of the outbreak

Now let's consider how behavior at each stage started to sort itself out, what people at each stage settled into as we all approached the first phase of a new normal. And at two of the key leadership stages (Stages 3 and 4) I will suggest the type of leadership I think is necessary during these times of trauma that we are experiencing.

Stage 1: Powerlessness.

The question for this stage is **"How will I survive?"** People at this stage are the actual victims of the pandemic, people who are ill or die of this virus, hourly wage workers who have no jobs, people who are unsafe at home. Some will be stuck at this stage, many will die of the disease, and others will move out of it. And let us pause to remember the many countries without resources or a medical infrastructure to deal with this pandemic. Yet it seems even in the midst of this chaos, survivors are still finding ways to genuinely reconnect with family, with the land, with community. Let it be so. Finally, here and elsewhere in the world, people are gradually receiving essentials, supplies, curbside food, emergency shelter from churches, neighbors, friends and government. Help is pouring out from individuals and new and creative sources of hope, from online funding organizations like Kiva or crowd sourcing.

Stage 2: Power by Association.

The question for this stage is **"How will I help myself and my neighbor?"** People all over the country who found themselves fearful or angry and without the facts, have come to learn more about the facts, to make themselves as safe as possible and to weather this incredible time together. Even though we are dependent on others to provide the larger leadership, millions have found ways to serve and help. *We have reclaimed the Human Spirit.* It means that we wake up and start doing what we can to face this and make a difference. This includes first responders, grocery store employees and other essential service workers--but also the rest of us. We call friends, we sing, we dance, we sew, we exchange games and resources with neighbors, we assist our children with home schooling, we bring food and sanitizing resources to seniors, we have meetings on zoom, we offer our creativity in service to others, we reclaim community, we pray, we give. The idea of thousands of homemade facemasks made by socially distanced seamstresses is invigorating.

Stage 3: Power by Achievement.

The question for this stage is **"How will I achieve something that makes a difference?"** The people who are finding the human spirit are also finding that, on a broader and more personal scale, achieving something that makes a *lasting and meaningful difference* is more deeply satisfying than they may have realized. This

behavior may be starting a gentle revolution with the idea of using our power for others and harnessing our creativity and fortitude as a culture. An example is using 3D imaging to produce facemasks and using new technologies to produce faster virus testing protocols. Another example is school buses in rural areas being used as WiFi hot spots for kids who don't have computers and as food delivery opportunities. Of course, not everyone is leaning in this direction. The shadow of this stage can give license to more greed, fear and violence. But that is another essay!

As for leadership at this stage during the pandemic, the main question is **“How will I lead with competence and courage?”** Our leaders in all walks of life are called upon to use their insights, competence and courage to stand up and give direction and hope. So scientists, medical personnel, journalists, researchers, spiritual leaders, social service providers, thought leaders, and politicians are speaking and acting on our behalf. Sometimes the messages are contradictory. Who to believe? It is messy but necessary. Yet saner minds and voices prevail and we begin to see our way to a possible future free of fear. Social distancing behaviors and necessary sacrifices have emerged. Assistance packages and social services have surfaced to help individuals and small businesses. We realize once again that we were all in this together and together we will move through it.

Stage 4: Power by Reflection.

The question for this stage is **“What are the deeper questions I need to be asking?”** Troubled times call for deeper reflection. People at this stage are not living primarily in fear themselves because as individuals and leaders at this stage they *choose to go inward and ask what the deeper meaning is of this pandemic*. What are the changes that may be asked of us? This goes beyond physical healing and social distancing to emotional, mental and spiritual well being. What needs to shift or heal in my life, in my family, in my community, in my country, in the world in order to live more effectively together and to thrive? Where does forgiveness and reconciliation need to happen between individuals, cultures or nations? How can we deepen our experience of being with one another? What is my role in helping these changes come to fruition? How do I gently counter the false and fearful messages coming so forcefully? What creative ideas will help form this new future? Where is my hope and how do I maintain it? Look to the outpouring of stories, writing and photos of people who are transforming their lives as a result of this remarkable time. One example is a man who is feeding people from his neighborhood in front of his restaurant even though he hasn't the funds himself. He just feels it is the right thing to do now. And donated food amazingly appears from sources that are inspired to help.

As for the leadership perspective, this is the place that calls for a different kind of leadership. I call it *True Leadership*. The question for leaders is **“How do I exercise true leadership in a remarkable time like this?”** It is the place where leaders look beyond themselves consistently to the greater good, to the whole and to the fact that we truly are all interconnected. They are collaborative and reflective. Another word for true leadership is *soul leadership*. And what does that leadership look like in action?

*True leaders follow a calling, a purpose, an ideal. They live with integrity as their hallmark. They allow for win-win not just win-lose. They embrace their shadows. They empower others, not themselves. They have balance in life and work. They can be vulnerable and reflective. They treat women, men and people of color as equals. They ask why, not just how? They have a spiritual connection to a power within and beyond themselves. They see the bottom line as a means to a larger organizational purpose, not an end in itself.**

The Wall.

The question for the Wall is **“How do I actually mend myself and the world around me?”** Our world is hitting the Wall. This is where we come to terms with truths well hidden but now revealed. It is where we let go of ego and control. It is where the healing happens and intentional change begins. It is very difficult because none of us wants to lose anything or to consider how our lives may have been out of control. We fear what the future beyond this might look like. Yet this is a truth-telling place and ultimately a place of internal mending, interior freedom and lasting renewal. It is a place where we meet our holy and higher power most intimately. It is the place where forgiveness, compassion and reconciliation matter most. It takes courage. And at times like this we can actually watch this transformation happening. Hearts are opening wide enough to heal. It is the phoenix rising out of the ashes. It is resurrection.

Stage 5: Power by Purpose.

The question for this stage is **“How do I live from my soul and view my life differently, in solidarity with others?”** As individuals and/or as leaders, we live from a place of inner peace and plenty. We are active in whatever ways we are called upon to act and we take great care to do it with intention, with purpose. We are non-anxious presences in the world. We give out of our essence, our being. We are life-giving, in whatever large or small role we are called upon to play. We are connected to a higher source and draw sustenance and strength there. We *know* that all will be well, no matter what. And we pass that word along. Consider the heart-wrenching experience of families who have not been able to be physically present to loved ones in their dying processes in a care facility, and now have come to pick up their belongings. In the case of Covid-19 cases, they are not able to touch or see the bodies. The chaplain of the facility meets them in the parking lot and holds an intimate outdoor memorial time for them.

Stage 6: Power by Wisdom.

The question for this stage is **“How and where is my presence most needed?”** And that is the frame from which we live out our being in the world, offering our presence, solace, insights and observations. We live life self-sacrificially but not in jeopardy. We are the solid grounded presence that people can count on in the times of stress and uncertainty. We are not afraid for ourselves because we know truly who we are. We may not be as present on the front lines or in active service yet present in poignant ways. We exemplify acceptance and contentment. Pillars of the community. Power by Wisdom. So it is no wonder that leaders would come to us in order to gain perspective and to regain hope and calm in times of crisis.

A few reflective questions as we close

Our world is still in peril. We are somewhere in the recovery process. How will we continue to move forward? We may all have different ideas about this. Yet we are all making choices about how we live out our lives during this remarkable time. My questions to you are these; **“What is this pandemic inviting or asking of you that you might not have otherwise considered? What is it allowing you to stop doing or discard that you did not have the courage to do before? What stage of power do you identify with at this point in the pandemic recovery? What will be your most important personal story concerning this time?”**

Epilogue: My personal philosophy for this pandemic

Remarkable times like this bring remarkable loss, as well as remarkable people, opportunity, ideas, community, programs, and personal changes. May we, in the wise words of an anonymous 88-year-old Jungian analyst consider these actions: **“Grieve the losses, deal with what is, and work on wonder.”** And as a result of doing this, I believe we will experience a surprising result. I believe...

Joy emerges from pain well attended.



* For more on Stage 4, True Leadership, and how to develop it within ourselves, I recommend reading chapter 8, Leadership and Power and chapter 12 Leading from your Soul in my book *Real Power (3rd Edition)*.

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