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# The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, And The World

## The Emotionally Healthy Leader



How transforming your inner life will  
**deeply transform** your church, team, and the world



Peter Scazzero



## Synopsis

Do you feel too overwhelmed to enjoy life, unable to sort out the demands on your time? Are you doing your best work as a leader, yet not making an impact? Have you ever felt stuck, powerless to change your environment? In *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, bestselling author Peter Scazzero shows leaders how to develop a deep, inner life with Christ, examining its profound implications for surviving stress, planning and decision making, building teams, creating healthy culture, influencing others, and much more. Going beyond simply offering a quick fix or new technique, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* gets to the core, beneath-the-surface issues of uniquely Christian leadership. This book is more than a book you will read; it is a resource you will come back to over and over again.

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## Customer Reviews

In 1993, I quit my job as an associate pastor before my senior pastor could fire me. I hadn't

begun teaching heterodox doctrine or engaged in a sexual affair or some other moral failure. No, I had vociferously challenged the seeker-sensitive direction he was taking the church. As a 24-year-old seminary student, I felt I knew a lot more about ministry than my pastor did, and I wasn't hesitant to download my knowledge on him. Needless to say, this frustrated him personally and hampered the church's evangelistic ministry. At a tense lunch meeting, my pastor told me I needed to shape up or ship out, so I tendered my resignation and left. At the time, I thought my quitting was a matter of principle. I realized later, however, that it was really a manifestation of emotionally unhealthiness. I was young and immature but working in a missional environment that required a spiritual grownup. Several years of apprenticeship at a more traditional church, combined with two years' work in corporate America, wised me up and mellowed me out. In 1999, I'm happy to say, I returned to work for the pastor who had wanted to fire me, and I count those years as some of the best of my career.

The emotionally unhealthy leader, Peter Scazzero writes in his new book, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, is someone who operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a being with God sufficient to sustain their doing for God. That described me to a tee back then. I was thinking too much and feeling too little, reading too much and praying too little, reflecting on big ideas too much and relating to others too little. My life was out of balance, which meant my ministry was out of balance too. In *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Scazzero encourages pastors and other ministry leaders to take inventory of their inner and outer lives, to make sure they are operating in both areas out of a spiritual and emotional surplus. Jesus said, "the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Matt. 6:45), and that lesson is true for more than what we say. Our heart determines everything. What we do reflects who we are.

**The Inner Life**

The first half of Scazzero's book focuses on four practices that shape a person's ability to lead from a deep and transformed inner life:

- Face your shadow.
- Lead out of your marriage/singleness.
- Slow down for loving union.
- Practice Sabbath delight.

Scazzero concedes that there are more practices than these, but they are the ones that emerged as foundational, both in [his] own life and in two decades of mentoring other leaders.

• Your shadow is the accumulation of untamed emotions, less-than-pure motives and thoughts that, while largely unconscious, strongly influence and shape your behaviors. It is the damaged but mostly hidden version of who you are. Until your shadow is exposed to the light, it will undermine you, limit your service, and blind you to the shadow-side of others.

Ministry and marital status present a unique set of challenges for Christian leaders. Married leaders often prioritize ministry over their

spouses, sacrificing them on the altar of service. Single leaders do the same, though what gets sacrificed in their case is any sense of the value and importance of their personal lives and friendships. “Our whole life as a leader is to bear witness for God’s love for the world,” Scazzero writes. “But we do so in different ways as marrieds or singles.” “Slow down for loving union” means tending to our own spiritual wellbeing. Doing so reveals a dilemma faced by many Christian leaders. Scazzero writes: “Doing our part to cultivate a relationship of loving union with God requires time—time that, paradoxically, we don’t have because we are too busy serving him.” That brings us to “Sabbath delight.” “Biblical Sabbath is a twenty-four-hour block of time in which we stop work, take rest, practice delight, and contemplate God.” I know of many pastors who preach about Sabbath rest—myself included. I know fewer who actually practice it, scheduling a regular weekly time of rest their ministerial labors. Is it any wonder that unrested ministers experience so much burnout?

**The Outer Life**

The cultivation of our inner lives transforms the ways we do ministry. The second half of Scazzero’s book focuses on four tasks common to leaders: Planning and decision making Culture and team building Power and wise boundaries Endings and new beginnings For each task, Scazzero shows how the four practices described in the first half of the book change—sometimes radically—the way we do things as Christian leaders. “There is a disconnect,” he writes, “when we fail to apply our spirituality with Jesus to such leadership tasks as planning, team building, boundaries, endings, and new beginnings. Too often, we rely instead on unmodified business practices to navigate those tasks, grafting secular branches onto our spiritual root system. This tends to bear the wrong kind of fruit.”

The life from our root system with Jesus must flow upward and outward into every aspect of our outer leadership tasks if we are to bear good fruit.

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I benefited from reading *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* and recommend it to other Christian leaders, whether they serve as pastors, board members, or leading volunteers. It is well and winsomely written. It does not discuss everything that could be said about the topic, as Scazzero himself concedes, but it tries to address the most important things with advice shaped by biblical wisdom, personal and pastoral experience, and psychological insight.

As a twenty-year-old student and Peter Scazzero’s youngest daughter I will admit that this is the first of the *Emotionally Healthy* books that I have read front to back. It’s also the first I have recommended to my own friends and plan to gift to my employers and mentors. Here is why I care enough to share this book.

Emotional maturity is the

exception, not the rule. As a young person, studying this book has encouraged me to really think through my personal values. Is my discernment swayed when others disagree with me? Am I making decision X, Y, or Z out of pressure from others? It has the potential to make relationships (at school, at home, in dating) less painful and more fruitful. I learned that I can do more for the world by examining myself slowly than I can by "fixing" external problems quickly. This book will introduce you to the ugly yet critical parts of yourself. Humble yourself and study it. I especially recommend this book for young leaders. Using it to improve your self awareness in every season of life is an invaluable takeaway for both your personal and professional life. Thank you Dad!

Peter Scazzero takes you into the depths of what is fueling your outside actions. A great discussion on a difficult matter. Emotional Awareness has only benefitted my walk with Christ and deepened my relationship with my wife and others. A great book even if you've never done any work in this area. If you have done work with emotional health/awareness, this will only undergird what you're already doing.

interesting introspective look at one person's learning about leadership by making all the mistakes. This book is highly recommended for those who follow their vocation passionately, with little oversight. Makes the point that sometimes passion is not enough to accomplish the task at hand, AND that delegation with firm guidelines is the key to a multi person organization.

I am profoundly grateful for this book. I am profoundly grateful for the very personal journey that Pete Scazzero is brave enough to share and kind enough to invite others into. Our leadership and our churches would be more beautiful and more effective if we all lived and served as Emotionally Healthy Leaders. Thank you!

Love it - challenging, convicting, practical and hopeful! We all need to be more emotionally healthy as leaders.

Interesting book. Goes deep into the subject. Definitely challenges you and shows you how to be a better leader.

This book helped me on several levels. As a Campus Pastor on a six campus multi-site church it

helped me address my emotional health in leading my campus and globally. Being more balanced in taking a Sabbath rest and leading out of my marriage were especially helpful. This also helped me on a personal level in looking at my inner life and family of origin issues. I loved the specific examples and illustrations that brought these principles to life.

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