

Monthly

# ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP

October 2013

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# WHAT COUNTS?

BY ANESE CAVANAUGH

What counts?

On the road for the last three weeks: working with groups in NYC and SF; staying in venues from lovely hotels to campy retreat centers; indulging in food ranging from organic gluten-free meals to decadent cheese, wine, and chocolate spreads; doing work that has meaning and heart for me and the people I care about; delighting



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in evening calls with my hubby and kids; and spending a beautiful birthday on the road with my tribe--I've had a lot of time to explore and be in touch with what "counts".

Despite a whirlwind three weeks running, I've felt completely energized and on purpose.

Despite being away from my family, I've felt completely connected and in love.

Despite my schedule being completely kiddywampus – from time zones to workouts – I've felt physically strong and present.

Despite feeling strong and present, I've also felt incredibly tender and sometimes unsettled.

I'm not Superwoman. I don't have magic powers. I'm not running on energy drinks. (Though my coffee, vitamin supplements, and blue-green algae are all quite fantastic--and there was that one day on the couch, cuddling with my kids, immersed in books and movies, that felt like magic, and that I do attribute a major reboot to.) I'm a mom, a wife, a teacher, a biz leader, a writer, and many other things that make for a lot of tempting, and sometimes obligatory, "yes"es. And when the "yes"es and "no"s broach whirlwind status, I find a pause helps; a pause, a breath, and a reflection.

In these pauses, I find myself becoming more and more discerning and clear about what counts, and where to focus my energy and attention. I find great freedom in this. Even if it means I'm saying "no" to things that are hard to say "no" to. I'm learning, yet again on yet another level this year, that a good "no" opens up more space for a meaningful powerful fully engaged "yes".

I attribute the energy and clarity I'm experiencing to one core thing right now: I'm connected to what counts. For me. For what I'm up to. For the impact I want to create. For what needs to be created. In this moment. And in the next. And I'm taking care of myself in the process.

In this moment, I'm typing up this quick post – hiding in my bathroom – while I'm supposed to be packing for yet another trip. It's a different kind of trip this time; while I was originally slated for another business event this weekend that would have been great to have attended, I opted for family time. Today, my daughter and I head for the hills for some QT and a girl's weekend of quick R&R. The shift in the plan – from biz to family, the choosing process that went with it, and the tender pull of both, is what has me thinking and noticing my feelings about all of it. And in between packing my toiletries and my tennis shoes, I hear a voice in my head that says "Remember what counts".

So what counts? For me, here's what's been counting lately:

*Family counts.*

*Health and vitality counts.*

*Kindness counts.*

*Having a phenomenal team counts.*

*Contributing positively to others counts.*

*Leaving things better than I found them counts.*

*Leading work that has meaning and purpose counts.*

*Building a business that honors core values and serves others counts.*

*"Time outs" count.*

*Girlfriends count.*

*Saying "no" so I can say a full "yes" counts.  
(Even when it's hard.)*

*Good food counts.*

*Modeling vs. preaching to my kids counts.*

*Giving back to parents – and tremendous gratitude for them – counts.*

*Saying please and thank you counts.*

*Being aware of the magic between the lines counts.*

*Presence counts.*

*Surrounding myself with a supportive, caring, loving, championing, and challenging community counts.*

*Healthy partnerships – of every kind – count.*



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*Nurturing those relationships counts.*

*Beauty counts; setting ourselves up with an environment that brings joy and beauty... counts.*

*Future planning counts.*

*Financial health counts.*

*Making a positive "dent" counts.*

*Self-care counts.*

*Kindness counts.*

*Presence counts. If even for short quality bits of time.*

*Fun counts.*

*Being conscious of what counts, counts.*

For me, in particular this weekend, taking a pause to BE in nature, with family, and with me...it counts. I know that the ROI on this will be 100-fold in what I'm able to do with it next week. It all counts.

You'll notice some of these things will compete. If you look closely at these things, you might even unpack some of my core values. Yes, what counts will compete from time to time. Values will compete. It's okay, let them. And listen to your internal knowing when it comes time to choose. Only you truly know in your heart of hearts what needs to count right now.

And with that, I hand it back to you: What counts for you? And how do you keep it top of mind? How do you choose when "what counts" competes? Feel free to share below if you wish. At a minimum, give yourself the gift today of truly leaning into what counts for you. I promise it will give you unexpected joy and clarity and who knows what else...

Make it count.



## By: Anese Cavanaugh

Anese Cavanaugh is the creator of the IEP Method as well as a leadership & collaboration advisor, strategist, and thinking partner for business leaders in the design, service and innovation spaces. Through her speaking, writing, and creative leadership coaching & training programs, teams rediscover and build cultures of collaboration, authenticity and healthy leadership. The result? Energized collaboration, engaged workplaces and positive impact. Learn more at [anese-cavanaugh.com](http://anese-cavanaugh.com).