



DOUG SILSBEE, PCC

## Week One: Stop!

This is the first of six short messages. Each offers a brief and simple move that you can use to enhance your leadership presence. With practice, each move can become part of a developmental leap into deeper self-awareness and presence as a leader, and a greater ability to be resourceful and resilient under pressure.

Presence is an inner state, often described in terms like alignment, connectedness, flow, resourcefulness, and creativity. Others may experience our presence as authenticity, integrity, or attractiveness.

This series of six brief messages will provide a sampling of moves for developing presence. I considered calling them tools; however, the word “tool” generally connotes something that we use to act on others or on the world.

Here, each move provides a subtle internal means of directing your attention and focus. They are about self-mastery, not about doing something to somebody else. Practicing these moves will enable you to be more present and connected to others, to yourself, and to the range of possibilities that exist in the present moment.

These moves draw from content in my book on presence as a primary means for coaching authentic leaders. While not coaching moves *per se*, they are central for the self-mastery required to effectively coach, to lead others, and to participate fully in human relationships.

\*\*\*\*\*

The first move is “Stop!” Anytime, we can stop the incessant flow of activity and thought in our lives to recognize, in the present moment, the possibility of choice.

Even though it is intellectually obvious that we can choose, most of the time we go through our daily activities without really considering the range of choices available to us. We are, most of us, far more habitual and automatic than we would like to think. We’re pre-occupied, going down the tracks of our current activity, thinking about the future or the past.

Stopping, in mid-stream, is the first step towards re-organizing ourselves around what’s important. It’s claiming a moment to make a conscious, unhurried choice about what we want to do or say. Deceptively simple, a “Stop!” is a move into greater self-awareness and pro-activity. It’s akin to your mother telling you to count to 10 before saying anything in anger!

In a moment, when I say, “Stop!” I want you to do just that. Stop reading. Look up from the page. Notice, and realize, that you are completely at choice about when to return to reading. In the moment of stillness that arises in this pause, the future is not yet written. There is no decision already made. Time



stops... there is just the potential to read or not read. When you stop, experience this moment free of momentum.

Now, Stop! Wait. See what happens next.... Wait....

What happened? How did you decide to return to reading? Did you get a quick sense of the freedom of that moment?

That moment of timelessness, when the die is not cast for your next word, your next move, your next act... that is presence.

Practice this often during the coming week. You are not trying to replace your activity with a different activity; rather, you're simply realizing, in the moment, your ability to choose.

Doug Silsbee is a leadership coach, author and master teacher in Asheville, NC. His most recent book is *Presence-Based Coaching*. More information on Doug's work is at <http://dougsilsbee.com>.  
Inquire at [ds@dougsilsbee.com](mailto:ds@dougsilsbee.com) or 828-254-2021 for a free consultation.