



BUILDING STRENGTH BY COMBATING SHAME

JASON TONELLI, CEO, ZENITH
JESSICA HOWSE, HEAD OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE,
PUBLICIS GROUPE



KEY TAKEAWAYS AND FURTHER READING

Individual LIFT: Listen to yourself. Identify it. Face It. Take Space.

1. Listen to yourself

Notice what you're feeling – embarrassment, frustration, anxiety, or shame. Pay attention to how it shows up physically. Is it the heat rising when your idea gets shot down in the media review? The stomach drop when you realise you've misunderstood the brief? The jaw clench during difficult client feedback?

2. Identify it

When the emotions surface, call them out directly. "I feel inadequate because I was overlooked for promotion." Naming them immediately reduces their power over you.

3. Face it (through connection)

Find a trusted colleague — your team member, your manager, your work bestie. Say it out loud: 'I'm embarrassed that I completely missed the mark on that presentation.' Vulnerability shared is vulnerability diminished.

4. Take Space.

Don't rush to fix it. Ask for space to be held for you, not solutions. 'I don't need you to fix this campaign right now, I just need to know that one mistake doesn't make me bad at my job'

Leadership LIFT: Lean In. Inquire. Find a connection. Time.

Lean In: Notice what is off. "I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately". Don't look away.

Inquire: Be curious – what else is going on both at work and at home? Have we really done everything we can to set them up for success? Is the team resourced properly? Have they had the right training?

Find a connection: Remember: "I know what it's like down here – you're not alone".

Time: Hold space generously without judgement, allowing for recovery and resilience. Leaders who give time – instead of rushing to fix – build trust with their teams.

The link to the empathy story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

And finally the link to the MFA Psychosocial work and resources:

<https://www.mediafederation.org.au/talent-and-diversity/psychosocial-safety-hub>