

Breakthrough Happens When You Trust Your Current Beneath the Surface

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Breakthroughs don't come from rearranging your calendar or working harder on the surface. It happens when you stop fighting the waves and start trusting the current flowing beneath them.



In a recent coaching conversation with Renee, a seasoned finance leader, she described herself as "successful but restless."

"On paper, things look good," she said. "I'm hitting the goals, we're exceeding performance expectations, and making a profit. But inside, I'm feeling like there's this disconnect. It almost feels like I've lost something."

As I listened, I could hear the tension between surface success and deeper uncertainty. So I shared a metaphor that's helped many of the leaders I coach.

"Imagine a lake," I said. "On the surface, you see the waves from the wind and the reflections of what's visible. That's like your daily work: meetings, deadlines, and metrics. Beneath that surface is a current. The current actually shapes the deeper movement of the water. I see this current as your longings, values, and even wounds. The current is always flowing, whether you are conscious of it or not."

"So you're saying I've been living on the surface," Renee said quietly.

"I think a lot of us do," I replied. "We try to fix things by controlling the surface elements, like calendar tweaks or productivity tools. Real transformation can happen when we pay attention to our current."

We started exploring. Renee described what filled her days: status meetings, budget reviews—all back-to-back meetings. Then I asked, "Which of those gives you energy? Which drain you?"

She paused. "I think the only part of my week that feels good is when I'm coaching and developing leaders to achieve results. I don't even think about it as work, it's just something I do."

That was the clue.

We traced it back further. She'd been drawn to developing others since her first job. That was her current, the thread of purpose running beneath the surface.

Once Renee named what drives her current, she began making little changes: carving out more time for coaching and developing her leaders, proposing a leadership development initiative, and even sketching out ideas for a book.

A few months later, she told me, "I didn't do a 180 on my life, but I feel more like myself than I have in years. I'm aligning with what's always been there."

That's the power of the current beneath the surface.

If you're feeling adrift or off course, here are a few ways to start exploring:

- **Surface Awareness:** What fills your calendar? What goals are you chasing? Which of these energize you? Which drain you?
- **Current Discovery:** What themes or longings have shown up across your life? What makes you forget time? What pain or injustice do you find hard to ignore?
- **Complete this sentence:** "The current beneath the surface of my life is..."
- **Then ask:** What would shift if I trusted that current more fully?

Clarity usually doesn't come from doing more. It comes from listening to what's been flowing beneath the surface all along.