

They All Thought I Was a Klutz Until I Picked Up 5 Balls and Began to Juggle

I just finished reading the book, *Juggling for the Complete Klutz*. The book has sold over 2 million copies, so apparently there are many aspiring jugglers.

I read this book as a metaphor about leadership.

The cover of the book promises, “If you can scramble an egg, tie your own shoelaces or stumble onto the light switch in the bathroom at night ... then you can learn how to juggle.”

I think I read that line in one of my leadership books a few years ago.

“Although the motions aren’t difficult, they should be absorbed in bite-sized chunks. Otherwise, you’ll run afoul of frustration.” The authors, Cassidy and Rimbeaux, seem to be masters of the understatement. John Maxwell couldn’t have said it better.

The book’s section concerning problems while juggling is particularly insightful. I must do my part for fellow leaders and share this wisdom:

1. The Panic Response: “Your first throw goes OK, but the second causes a total panic—impossible to catch. This is an obnoxious problem. The solution is ironclad mental control.”

I believe the authors are trying say, “whatever things are of a good report ... think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). Leaders hear bad news as a matter of routine. Sometimes the news can move us to panic. “I know I am supposed to be anxious for nothing, but this is something.”

Panic causes overreaction. Sometimes we scurry to fix something that didn't need fixing. Effective leaders have learned to sift and screen incoming missiles.

2. The Cheat Response. I never realized a juggler could cheat. Now, I know in full.

"When a juggler sees the first toss heading to a landing on top of the first bag, they don't panic, they cheat. They clear the landing area by handing the problem bag back to the first hand; it never goes into the air. They think they've done something clever."

Leaders probably don't think about a Band-Aid solution as cheating, but it is. Temporary fixes do not fix things at all. The organization languishes as balls drop to the ground.

In this example, the juggler and the leader are delusional. We try a simple response and find out quickly that such decision making is not sustainable.

3. The Klutz Response. It's often a deeply humbling experience to realize that our problems are neither very unusual, and not even very serious. "If you've been trying for 10 minutes or so and still dropping the ball a lot, you're probably doing quite well. You're only suffering from a mild shortage of practice." Keep at it.

Leaders often drop balls. The temptation to give up is ever present. But God wants us to learn from every drop and continue on our path of learning and growing. Anyone can hold onto balls. It's in the juggling and dropping and juggling again that character is formed.

The key to juggling and leading is to focus on one thing at a time. This sounds simplistic but simple things confound the wise.

Gravity is a steadfast teacher.

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1:27).