



REFUTURE YOUR LIFE
INTERNATIONAL



Stretching to Embody More of YOU

Have you noticed that your participation in this group is growing you as a leader? You're becoming more of your essential self, becoming a leader of **you**. That naturally translates as being more and more of a leader in all areas of your life.

This month, our topic is expanding into ways of being and expressing yourself that have felt off-limits or undoable before. We'll do this by choosing one word – a stretch word – that identifies a specific characteristic that you'll practice embodying.

Extending the range of how you show up in the world is part of growing as a leader. Your creativity and authenticity will flow more easily. Your level of connection with yourself and others, and your dynamism, power and impact will increase.

The expansion of your ability to be and express yourself always makes a difference. Have you ever noticed how much energy you use in second-guessing yourself, holding yourself back, or wondering if you should say or do something about a situation that feels off? Are you aware of the amount of effort it takes to avoid situations that feel messy or uncomfortable because you don't know how to deal with them, or even how to **be** in them?

This month's topic will help you increase your ability to show up more as your authentic self, embrace parts of yourself that you've judged and negated, and redirect your energy into things that nurture and support you.

It may also really piss you off.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about. Reading it will help you understand why anger might come up. After the example, I'll guide you in choosing your word. (If you're in the Gimme More Love! group, you choose a new word, or stay with the one from our call and go even deeper with it.)

A couple of years ago at one of my Leadership retreats, we gave each other two stretch words to practice embodying during the long weekend. The words were specifically chosen to (1) *take us into areas that others could see as potential for us that we weren't yet owning*, and/or (2) *break us out of our typical ways of expressing ourselves* that, while useful, had become too engrained and overused.

At the retreat, reactions to the stretch words ranged from unhappy to annoyed to angry. The words I was given were *bold* and *awkward*. Bold was fine. Awkward made me really cranky.

I couldn't imagine what the benefit of being *awkward* was. Why the hell was it a *goal?!?* Who lists "awkward" as one of their strengths?

What I discovered was that the point of the exercise wasn't about trying to be awkward – it was to *give myself the freedom to be awkward*. When I can love myself in my awkwardness, I give myself permission to *risk being awkward*. I can try more things, including new dance moves that might not go well.

Being okay with being awkward means I can say something that might be off target, that might fall flat, and that might be what takes the conversation to a deeper level. It's the doorway into trying new things that bring joy, laughter and spontaneity. It can mean making a video for the group when I have messy hair, baggy eyes, and an idea I'm energized about.

It's also allowed me to go back and love the awkward teen I was. To forgive myself for the embarrassing things I've said and the clumsy things I've done, even for some of the seemingly ridiculous choices I've made. I've been able to embrace the young child who was so scared of making mistakes. In other words, I've reclaimed parts of myself that I had previously turned away. I have access to more of my true self.

The thing is, there's a reason we haven't embraced these stretch words. Somewhere along the way, we got the message that it wasn't okay or safe to be this way. Even thinking about it may bring up lots of strong emotions for you.

On last week's Content Call, several people had intense feelings and many tears. At least one person had trouble sleeping the night before. As always, if this happens, allow the emotions to be there. No judgment. No resistance. Just acceptance, with lots of breathing, hands-on-heart poses, and staying present.

Choosing Your Word

Here are some suggestions to help you settle on a word.

- **The word can be an adjective or a noun.** Some that have been chosen in this group and at the Leadership retreat are: stupid, fraud, weak, sensual, irritated, fearful, coward, blunt, gentle, accepting, bold, awkward.
- **Be open to inspiration.** If a word pops into your mind, seriously consider choosing it (or accepting that you already have), even if you have no idea what it means to embody it.
- **Think of a word that you hate being called.** It may even have been used as an insult toward you. What would it be like to be at peace with it?

- **Think of one of your go-to strengths, and choose the opposite.** It may seem crazy to you, like “awkward” did to me. Be open to the understanding coming from exploring the word and your relationship to it.
- **Choose a characteristic that you’ve wanted to embody but that feels out of reach or like too much.** Give yourself full permission for this week.

The biggest thing is, ***don’t try to find the “right” word.*** Don’t overthink it. This is an exercise you can do over and over, and you just need a place to start. The more uncomfortable you feel with it, the more you may gain from the experience.

What’s your word? _____

How do you feel about this word?

What negative connotations do you have associated with it?

What memories do you have linked to this word?

What do you feel in your body when you put your attention on this word?

What might be possible for you if you were at peace being this?
