

A portrait of Mike Staver, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark jacket, standing in a dimly lit room with vertical wooden slats in the background. The text "MIKE STAYER" is overlaid in large white letters, with "SPEAKER | AUTHOR | COACH" below it. An orange square is on the right.

# MIKE STAYER

SPEAKER | AUTHOR | COACH



# Mission

To create such compelling experiences that people are driven to achieve outstanding results.

# Values

- Authenticity
- Excitement
- Excellence
- Growth





# Are You Leading from a Place of Fear?

## 8 Signs That You May Lack the Courage to Lead

***You might be shocked to find just how much of a stranglehold the “F” word has on your employees, your organization, and your entire life. It’s time to unmask the many faces of fear and drag it into the daylight where you can vanquish it once and for all.***

It’s a tricky time to be a leader. With the economy so unforgiving right now, making smart business decisions is critical. That’s true not just in terms of strategy (whether to change your product mix or move into a new marketplace) but also relationships (whether to fire the toxic high performer or address a conflict head-on). All actions have consequences. So does lack of action. And with the margin for error so slim, you want to make sure you’re thinking as coolly and clearly as possible.

***“You don’t have to be an out-and-out coward to let fear impact your leadership.”***

My advice? Don’t let fear cloud your decision making.

Don’t get me wrong, we all feel fear. What separates the proverbial men from the boys, and women from the girls, is how we respond to that fear. Courageous leaders face what needs to be faced and do what needs to be done. Cowardly leaders make excuses, hide their heads in the sand, and generally take the easy way out.

In my book, *Leadership Isn’t For Cowards*, I explore the hidden fears that keep us from taking the quick, decisive actions courageous leadership requires, and offer a wealth of practical tips for conquering them. Besides harming your company and crippling your career potential, fear-centered leadership can hurt the very people you are supposed to be guiding and nurturing: *your employees*.

By definition, all leaders “mess with people’s lives.” That’s why it’s so important to make sure you’re leading from a place of clarity and awareness—courage—and not letting fear drive your decisions.

Whether you’re messing with others’ lives in a positive, growth-inspiring way or a negative, spirit-crushing way depends on the clarity with which you make decisions and execute. Fear obscures that clarity—especially fear that masquerades as something else.

Many people are unaware of how profoundly fear influences their decision making. You may be leading from a place of fear if the following apply to you:

### 1 You frequently take the easy way out.

In other words, you avoid taking bold, decisive action because it makes you uncomfortable. Then, you rationalize why you didn’t do what you really needed to do: *I wanted to go to the national trade show, but we just couldn’t get the prototype ready by the deadline... or I’ve always thought we should take part in the green initiative, but the CEO would just shoot down the suggestion, so there was no point in bringing it up.*

Generally, such rationalizations boil down to fear. What if you unveiled the prototype at the trade show and it flopped? What if you approached the CEO with your green initiative idea and he rejected you—or worse, what if he didn’t reject you and then you had to make it work? It’s easier to avoid taking action (at least in the short term), but it’s also a sure path to mediocrity and stagnation.

There is no doubt that action drives results. A plan doesn’t drive results, willpower doesn’t drive results, and not even goals drive results. Action drives results. *Period.*

### 2 You pretend you don’t know what you actually know.

Pretending is common in the workplace. You pretend you don’t know about opportunities in order to avoid risk. You pretend you don’t know that high performer is behaving badly and making other employees unhappy. You pretend that your biggest client isn’t crushing morale and needs to be fired. Maybe, you even pretend you don’t know it’s time for you to move on.

All of this pretending allows you to avoid pain and feel good in the short term, but it exacts a heavy price over time. There is always a price to be paid for needed actions not taken. Never doubt it. Your job as a leader is to look reality in the face and accept it so that you can make the tough decisions that need to be made.

## 3 You fall victim to “shiny ball” syndrome.

Can you relate to this scenario? You’re trying (well, sort of) to focus on a serious project when a “shiny ball” rolls by. It may be an email or a phone call or just a less urgent task. You break away and chase the shiny ball until—well, would you look at that! It’s time to go home already!

Most of us can’t say no to such distractions. In fact, we don’t want to say no because what we should be focusing on is usually difficult, unpleasant, or anxiety producing. *Anyone* can stay busy. It takes real courage to stay focused and on task.

I heard a shocking statistic recently: The average Sunday edition of the New York Times has more information in it than the average human being in the 1700s received during his entire lifetime. If we can’t achieve focus and manage the deluge of information that comes at us every day, we’ll drown in the chaos. We’ll fail to do the important things. We’ll fail as leaders.

## 4 You hide behind the “I’m not quite ready” excuse.

Leaders and organizations spend too much time getting ready to be ready to get ready to almost get ready to be ready to get ready. Then they form a committee or a task force (which is just a committee on steroids) to evaluate more and look into the situation more so that they can really be ready.

Getting overly ready is a result of fear. You don’t want to fail so instead you put off the moment of truth by perpetually getting ready. Should you prepare? Of course! Do your research? Yes. But stop hiding behind the “we aren’t quite ready” curtain. Say, “Enough is enough,” and just do it - even if conditions aren’t perfect.

If you are going to build a culture in which people take action and aren’t afraid to boldly step out, then you had better be courageous enough to endure a lack of perfection and a dab of chaos. Messy and quick is better than perfect and slow.

## 5 You’re constantly blaming others.

This is an energy-draining, counterproductive way of dealing with difficult circumstances. Blaming someone else puts you in the position of a victim, like something happened outside your control. Therefore, you won’t take action to change your circumstances because it’s someone else’s problem. (How convenient, huh?) Victim thinking affects not just individuals but entire organizations.

Blame-based leadership seeks to find a bad guy so that there is someone to absorb the problem, like a lightning rod absorbs a bolt of otherwise dangerous electricity. If a bad guy can be found, then everyone else can take a collective sigh of relief. For that particular problem, they are off the hook. If it’s marketing’s fault, then operations can’t possibly be responsible for the train wreck. If it’s operations’ fault, management can’t have done anything wrong.

Acknowledging that you are ultimately responsible for the results of your life, thoughts, and actions creates a level of freedom not experienced by those who choose to blame others. It empowers you to act. Courageous leaders are driven by, even obsessed with, the imperative to eliminate excuse making and blame from themselves and their organizations.

## 6 You’re too harsh.

Do you recognize the achievements of your employees? If you don’t—or if you don’t do it properly—you’ll be unable to motivate your team. If you find yourself withholding recognition until the goal is completely accomplished, guess what? You’re too harsh. If you say “good job” but then immediately shift your focus to the next goal, you’re too harsh. If you qualify your recognition or take a little back after you’ve given it, *you’re too harsh*.

The idea is to celebrate your employees’ accomplishments without compromising their momentum. That means acknowledging progress *with full and complete focus on the success of what is right here, right now*.

Sometimes leaders fear that pouring on the recognition before the job is done will demotivate followers. Other times, they're uncomfortable with the intimacy and vulnerability it takes to sincerely thank an employee. Sometimes courage looks like trusting your employees; sometimes it looks like getting out of your comfort zone long enough to provide face-to-face recognition that people crave.

## 7 You're an over-recognizer.

On the other end of the spectrum from the harsh leaders are those who are so ready to praise and encourage everybody for anything that their acknowledgment loses all effectiveness. This can take the form of gushing (recognizing so much and with such flair that it isn't trustworthy or meaningful) or fake recognition (recognizing in a way that seems inconsistent with the rest of your behavior). Both forms come across as inauthentic and actually erode trust.

If you're an over-recognizer, ironically, your problem might be the same as the harsh leader who never recognizes: You fear the intimacy involved in having a heartfelt, honest conversation. Or maybe at the root of the behavior is a fear of the "confrontation" involved in giving meaningful critical feedback. Regardless, you owe it to your followers to make your acknowledgments trustworthy.

## 8 Mental clutter is keeping you from noticing.

The more you fear, the more you try to do. The more you try to do, the more you have to think about. You have more meetings. More calls to make. More emails to read and send. More commitments to obsess over. Once you can let go of some of the fear, you can turn down some of the activities and commitments. This will free up the time and space to do the things that inspire and invigorate you—that allow you to be fully present and quiet in the moment.

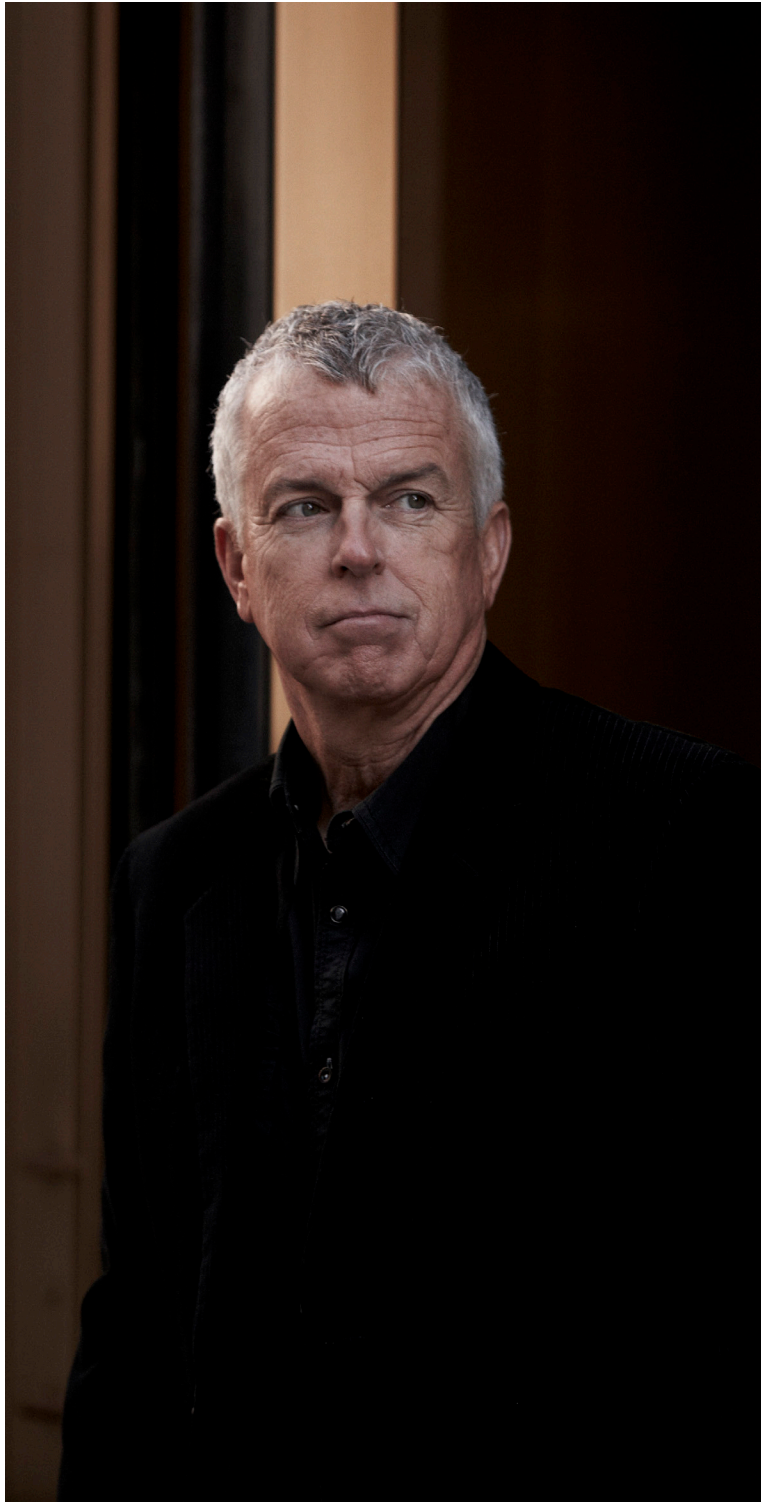
Without those moments of peace and clarity, you will keep on rushing until you burn out, never realizing that you could have stopped, adjusted, and continued with less stress and greater success. These moments will be the times when you notice that your veteran sales rep needs you to back off a bit, or that your morning grumpiness is affecting everyone's enthusiasm. These will be the moments that show you how to kindle your followers and inspire them to greater success. These moments will refresh your ability to notice the rest of your life.



Ah yes...the rest of your life. When you think selfishly for a moment, you'll realize this may be the best reason of all to confront your hidden fears and, ultimately, vanquish your inner coward.

Fear-centered leadership wreaks havoc with your entire life. The anxiety that comes from not doing what you know deep down needs to be done - and from managing the fallout from your poor decisions - drains the energy you could be spending on friends, family, and the outside interests that make life worth living.

# MIKE STAVER



## Speaker.

Mike cuts through the superfluous and gets to the heart of what needs to be done. Through his keynote speaking and executive coaching, he reaches tens of thousands of people each year and challenges them to courageously rethink business as usual.

An advocate of counterintuitive thinking, Mike resists conventional wisdom and instead presents the cold, hard truth with challenging honesty. Mike is unafraid of confronting what needs to be confronted; you will be inspired to take courageous action where needed after experiencing his influence. His high energy, love of humor, and uncanny ability to simplify complex issues and make them actionable and memorable make him one of the most inspiring speakers you will ever hear.

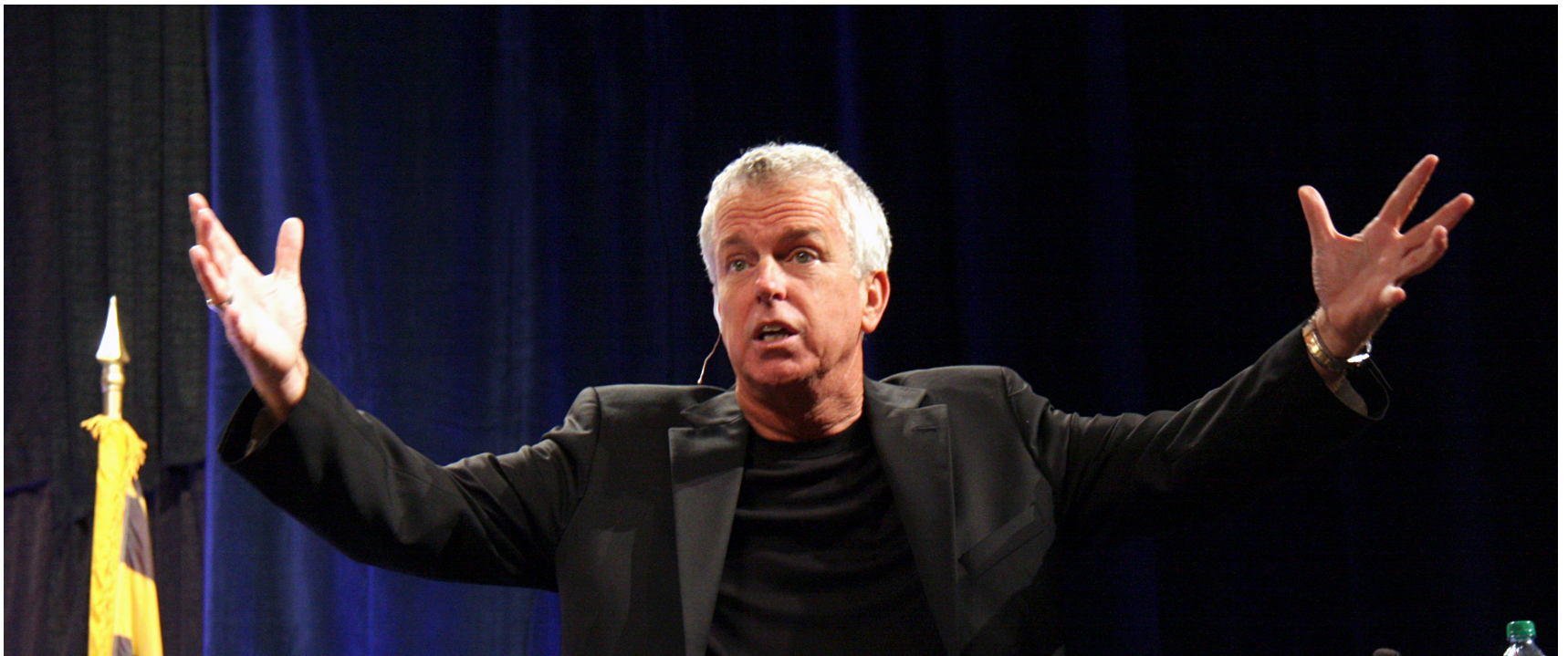


“ *If you want your audience to leave the room inspired, with a smile on their face, a tear in their eye, and actionable insight to their life, job, and relationships—Mike Staver is your guy. ”*

- Rosey Koberlein, CEO, Long Companies

## Topics

- Leadership Isn't For Cowards: How to Lead Courageously in a Turbulent Age
- How to Create an Exceptional Customer Experience: How It Was Is Not How It Is
- Winning Is No Accident
- How to Build a High-Performance Culture: Getting the Heart of the Leader Beating in the Chest of the Follower
- Talent For Keeps: How To Attract, Retain, and Engage Top Performers
- Deal With It! How to Stay Calm Under Pressure



MIKESTAVER

# MIKE STAVER



## Coach.

Do you set out to achieve your goals, but lose your focus along the way? If you're honest, you'll admit that you don't always do what you wish you were doing. There is a gap between your intentions and your reality. You are not alone. In fact, most people experience the same struggles. Our coaching programs will help you bridge that gap. You will move from where you are to where you want to be.

*“Excellence is  
no accident.”*

- Leadership Isn't For Cowards, Chapter 24



# How It Works

## Purpose

- **To Engage.** We forge a relationship that is authentic, clear, and results-oriented.
- **To Illuminate.** We shine a big, bright light on the obvious and not-so-obvious.
- **To Challenge.** We ask tough questions.

## Process

- **Assessment.** Before we do anything, we diagnose what needs to be done.
- **Intervention.** We take action.
- **Follow-Up.** We evaluate our success with every intervention.

## Practice

- **Surgical.** Sessions are short—about 45 to 50 minutes.
- **Socratic.** We engage in curiosity with a purpose.
- **Soulful.** We focus on your heart and soul as well as your circumstances.

## Procedure

Call us, we talk, we agree, we get to work.

“If you’re serious about growth and significant development, hire Mike Staver. If you aren’t ready to do the work, I mean really do the work, then don’t hire Mike Staver.”

-Leo R. Ardine, President/CEO of United Teletech Financial, a Federal Credit Union



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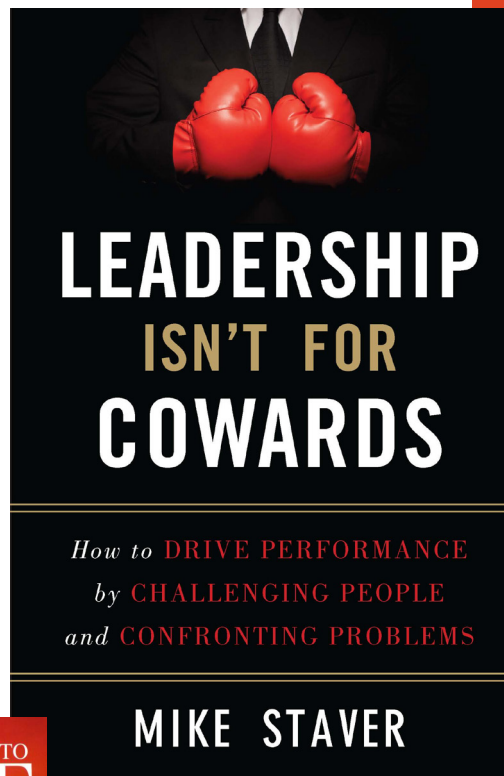
## Author.

Mike's published works include the books *Leadership Isn't For Cowards* and *Do You Know How To Shut Up?*, as well as a chapter in *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul*. He has also created the audio series "Tips in Twenty" and "Tips in Ten," which provide logical advice in bite-sized pieces, and the training series "21 Ways to Defuse Anger and Calm People Down." His work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Fast Company*, *The New York Times*, and *T+D Magazine*.

“Staver delivers practical and useful leadership advice that is profoundly helpful and thoroughly entertaining...”

-Bruce Klein, Senior VP, U.S. Public Sector Theater, Cisco Systems



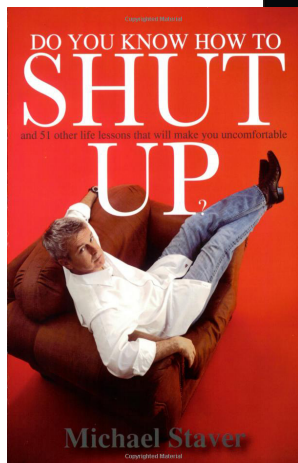


“Courage, for the purposes of this book, has to do with the willingness to face what needs to be faced and to do what needs to be done.”

-Leadership Isn't For Cowards, Chapter 3

*Leadership Isn't For Cowards*, offers straightforward, practical advice for leading courageously and driving performance—while also creating a great place to work. Courageous leadership means toughening your approach by being rigorous in the application of your values through the company culture. It means confronting and challenging people, and not letting them get away with being less than you know they can be.

Visit [www.mikestaver.com](http://www.mikestaver.com) for information on all products.



*Do You Know How To Shut Up? and 51 other life lessons that will make you uncomfortable*  
Available in print or audio





# MIKESTAVES

SPEAKER | AUTHOR | COACH

28 SOUTH 10TH STREET  
FERNANDINA BEACH, FL 32034

904-321-0877

INFO@MIKESTAVES.COM

WWW.MIKESTAVES.COM

