

Part **II**

# Winning the Emotional Mind

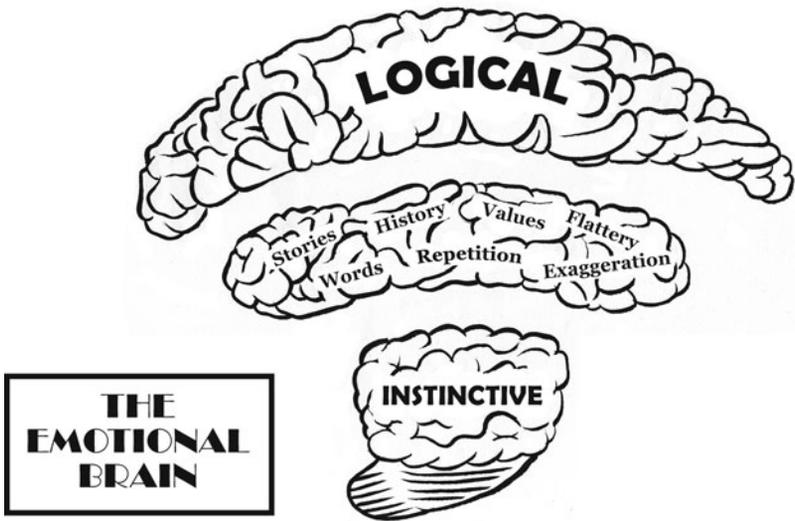


FIGURE PT II.1 / The emotional brain

'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is fear, may we bring hope.'

Francis of Assisi

## Leadership is based on emotion

When Mike Tyson was a young boy, he was totally out of control. He was so bad that his own mother gave up on him and threw him out. At the tender age of 12, he was living on the streets and already involved in organised crime. But into this crazy picture stepped a white middle-aged man who rescued him. Cus D'Amato took Tyson under his wing, led him away from crime and into boxing. How did he tame him? He did it very simply. He told Tyson he was great. As Mike Tyson wrote in his autobiography:

I had never heard anyone say nice things about me before. I wanted to stay around this old guy because I liked the way he made me feel. You give a weak man some strength and he becomes addicted.

No one could better explain what it means to find a leader in life. Leadership is an emotional contract. The leader meets people's emotional needs. In return for that, the leader gains their support. Cus D'Amato met Tyson's emotional needs so Tyson made Cus D'Amato his leader.

Leadership is an emotional contract

This is how leaders grow such strong emotional bonds with their followers. Look at Steve Jobs's online condolence book: people who had never met him were completely distraught. See how people around the world wept with joy when Barack Obama was elected. I have friends who travelled from the UK to watch his inauguration: some were so moved that they had the date tattooed on their arms. Now that is a connection. How many leaders could claim that kind of support?

But, of course, different people have different emotional needs. Great leaders know this and respond accordingly. This explains how leaders can prove a bit 'Marmite': some people love them; others hate them. Russell Brand is winning a following for successfully articulating the anger that some feel, but others regard him as a jumped-up joker. On the other side of the coin, people like Obama are offering hope to millions, but he makes some nauseous. Different political parties offer emotional appeals

to meet the needs of their natural bases: Labour plays to anger, the Liberal Democrats appeal to pity, the Conservatives stir up pride. We all have different needs.

Once people find the leader who meets their emotional needs, they will go the extra mile for them. They will make sacrifices for them on the promise of emotional fulfilment. They are chasing the drugs: the serotonin, the oxytocin and the dopamine. They are looking to the leader to make them feel confident, to make them feel understood, to make them feel connected. Whatever they need, the leader provides. That is the deal.

But the relationship between the leader and their followers is not permanent and is not unconditional: it is constantly being tested and renewed, and it can be withdrawn at a moment's notice by either side. And when the contract is withdrawn, it can prove traumatic for both sides. At that point, emotions can be plunged into reverse. Hope can turn to anger, pride to shame, passion to hate: look how fierce the criticism of Blair was after the Iraq War. He had started by offering hope and ended by offering fear. The reason he lost his grip as leader was because he stopped meeting people's emotional needs. The force behind that connection was lost. People felt deceived.

Some leaders are wary of connecting emotionally. They are afraid of the risks; they hope they can succeed with logic alone. That is fear. That is their own emotion talking.

The truth is that emotion just can't be ignored – it is a fundamental part of the human condition. Human beings simply are emotional creatures. There is no way around this. Understanding the power of emotion will give you an enormous advantage. In politics, the party that makes the strongest emotional connections wins.<sup>1</sup> In business, the company that makes the strongest emotional connections – with their employees and their customers – wins.<sup>2</sup>

So in this part of the book we take a look around the emotional brain. We look at the chemical reactions that put the fire in the belly and goose pimples on the arms. And one of the simplest ways we can do so is through *story*.