

## Ep #79: How to Build Your Leadership Tribe After Loss



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With Your Host

**Sandy Linda**

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with Sandy Linda

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When was the last time you felt truly seen and understood by someone who has walked a similar path? Take a moment to recall that feeling. That feeling is why finding your tribe isn't a luxury. It's a necessity for your leadership transformation. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy*. Hosted by Master Certified Life Coach and fellow trailblazer, Sandy Linda, this is your space to discover how life's biggest challenges can ignite profound transformation—where grief becomes growth, setbacks become stepping stones, and your unique story lights the way for others. If you're ready to turn life's challenges into opportunities for leadership, legacy, and forward momentum, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Hello creative humans and fellow trailblazers. If you are tuning in for the first time, this is a space where we explore how ambitious women can become fearless leaders, especially after navigating profound losses. Those losses don't define us, but they refine us in powerful ways.

At times, the path of leadership can feel lonely. After loss, many of us receive an outpouring of support. People bring casseroles, send cards, and check in for a while. But over time, those gestures fade. These approaches are heartwarming and helpful in the early days. They don't create the kind of deep connection and understanding we need to thrive as leaders.

Following my loss of my family members and friendships departure, I remember wondering if anyone could understand the intensity of what I was feeling. Plus, it was making it hard for me to lead. Why finding your tribe, those rare souls who understand your journey is both invaluable and transformative.

In today's episode, I will be unpacking the power of building a leadership tribe through shared experiences, something that's both warm and strategic. I will also share why sympathy networks, while important, differ from leadership tribes. We will also explore why these tribes are critical for leaders, especially for women who have navigate loss.

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By the end of our time together, you'll have actionable steps to start or deepen these connections in your own life. Earlier on the show, I inquired whether you felt seen and understood. That feeling of being understood and seen is what we are exploring today. Let's dive in.

Let's start with what happens in the brain when we connect through shared experience. Here's a fun bit of neuroscience for you. When we share our stories of loss, struggle, and eventually resilience with others who understand, our brains release oxytocin. It's what they call social bonding hormone.

This chemical reaction actually reduces our stress levels and creates a foundation of trust that's difficult to build any other way. Dr. Brené Brown calls this collective vulnerability and it's a game changer. Imagine a space where you've been seen not just as a leader, but as a human who's linked their experiences into their leadership.

You create a sanctuary where you can process your grief, refine your leadership, and rediscover your strength. I remember meeting Sophia at a leadership retreat four years after losing my family members, she had experienced a somewhat similar loss. And there was this moment when our eyes met across the room during a discussion about resilience. An instant connection formed between us. No words were needed. That connection eventually blossomed into one of my most valued mentoring relationships.

This is the connection I want for you. This mutual understanding that transcends words and strengthens your leadership journey. Tribal connections formed through shared experience aren't just supportive, they are strategically powerful. These relationships help us navigate the unique challenges that come with leading after loss.

The journey from receiving sympathy to building a true leadership tribe is filled with invisible barriers that few discuss. This transition isn't about time passing after a loss. It's a fundamental shift in how we relate to others and ourselves as leaders. One of those invisible barriers that I want to share with you is called the expectation gap.

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Sympathy networks expect healing to be linear. They celebrate when you seem like yourself again. It often misinterpreting professional composure as complete recovery. Leadership tribes understand that integrating loss is seasonal and ongoing. This might be unpleasant to hear, but it's essential information.

Let's further explain the difference between the sympathy network and a true leadership tribe. Sympathy is what you receive when your loss is fresh. Think of casseroles, heartfelt cards, and checking in. And while these gestures are so important, they don't come close to what a leadership tribe offers.

True leadership tribes are the people who don't expect you to go back to normal. They honor your transformation instead of dismissing it. Your leadership tribe understands that your loss isn't something you get over. It's something you link into your leadership identity. They don't expect you to return to normal. This transition isn't personal, it's strategic. Leaders who successfully bridge this gap develop unique strength. For example, emotional intelligence.

The sympathy from friends, family, and colleagues in the early days of grief is a beautiful form of support, but a leadership tribe built on shared experience goes much deeper. I experienced this difference clearly when returning to leadership after my loss.

Well-meaning colleagues would say things like, "It's so good to have the old you back," which felt dismissive of my journey. But my tribe, those who had experienced similar loss would ask, "How are you incorporating this experience into your leadership today?" They honored the transformation rather than expecting deletion of my experiences.

Now, let's get practical. How can shared experiences help you discover and cultivate your leadership team? I have identified three pathways that have worked for myself and many of our trailblazers.

First, look for structured spaces designed for leaders who have experienced loss. Organizations like Option B, founded by Sheryl Sandberg after the sudden

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loss of her husband, create intentional communities for professional women navigating grief while leading.

Industry special grief support groups can also be powerful places to form these connections. I have discovered adults who have experienced parental loss during those midlife crisis. What has been common in those sacred places are sibling losses where individuals can share how difficult it is to cope without receiving support. Find grief support groups that have faced devastating losses and foster honest conversations.

Second, create containers for authentic sharing in your existing professional networks. You can start a monthly breakfast for women leaders in your industries who have faced significant setbacks. Alternatively, start regular virtual coffees with two or three others who understand your journey.

And third, this one might surprise you. Consider becoming a mentor. When I started mentoring younger women who had experienced similar losses to mine, I discovered these relationships were deeply reciprocal. By creating space for their growth through loss, I found new dimensions of healing in my leadership journey.

Now, building a leadership tribe through shared experience isn't about creating an exclusive club based on suffering. It's about recognizing that certain experiences shape our leadership in different ways that benefit from contextual understanding. The people in your leadership group will have overcome a wide range of challenges and losses. The key is emotional connection and a shared dedication to turning challenges into leadership insights.

I have found that my leadership tribe includes women who have experienced very different losses from career setbacks to health crises, to relationship endings, to actual death itself. What unites us isn't the identical nature of our losses, but our shared commitment to dealing with these experiences into leadership strength. As Maya Angelou wisely said, we are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike. Isn't that beautiful?

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The core of this work is recognizing that while we all have unique losses, the journey to turn those into leadership strength creates a powerful common ground. As we near the end of today's segment, I want to touch on something transformative.

How shared experiences becomes shared purpose. A connection between women leader sharing experience of loss and resilience often creates something magical. Individual healing transforms into a collective mission. I have witnessed leadership tribes that form through shared grief experiences, go on to create foundations, change policies, start companies, and transform industries.

This is the ultimate power of building your leadership tribe through shared experience. It transforms isolated pain into collective purpose. Your loss becomes not just your legacy, but a legacy that extends far beyond what you could create alone.

Let's wrap up today's conversation with a simple practice you can begin right now, wherever you are. Take out your phone or a piece of paper and write down the names of three people in your professional orbit who you sense might understand some aspect of your journey through loss. These might be people you already know well, or they might be more distant connections who have dropped hints about their own experiences.

Next to each name, note one small, precise step you could take this week to deepen the authentic connection. The key is to make this outreach certain, authentic, and workable. Building your leadership tribe doesn't happen overnight. It happens one meaningful connection at a time.

As we close today's episode, I want to leave you with this thought. Your experience of loss, whether professional, personal, or both, isn't something to overcome before you can lead. It's the very foundation of your most authentic and impactful leadership. When you find others who understand this journey, who can witness both your vulnerability and your strength, you create a leadership ecosystem where transformation isn't just possible, it's necessary.



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Remember, you're not just building a network, you're not just finding friends, you're cultivating a leadership tribe that will help you transform your loss into a legacy that serves not only your highest purpose, but the growth of everyone you lead. Your greatest leadership strength often arise from your deepest challenges. Keep this in mind.

I appreciate you listening, but more so thank you for your leadership. Until then, keep building those authentic connections that will sustain your leadership journey. Have a wonderful week, everyone. Bye.

Thanks for joining us on *The Reinvention Lab*. If today's episode inspired you, don't forget to follow and share it with someone who's ready to turn their challenges into opportunities. Want to take your journey to the next level? Visit [sandy linda.com/program](https://sandy linda.com/program) and apply for coaching today. Together, we'll turn your story into a legacy. Until next time, keep moving forward with purpose, passion, and power.