

# Losing Power and Becoming Sane

Jonathan Stone

The process is gradual -  
as power slips away,  
people who once listened  
over who you once held sway  
move away  
and no-one hears  
what you say  
as it disappears  
your thoughts become silent rants in a wilderness  
you know what to do but do nothing  
you keep your mouth shut  
learning to listen,  
you accept your limitations,  
you observe how others who have taken on the burden of power  
wield it  
are they kind and generous? thoughtless or mean?  
from underneath it is easier to see their ambition, their intentions,  
their actions

## FROM DELUSION TO REALITY

If you are in a powerful position high in a hierarchy, everybody wants to like you and be liked by you, but finding real trust is hard - trust gained through position money or hope is not real trust.

If your self belief and trust is based on reaction to others, or delusion then it is wafer thin.

But a trust based on people knowing you long term is sturdier; of your good judgement, your bad judgement, your humour, your ability to bounce back from mistakes.

If you voluntarily give up a position of power, of responsibility often you are seen as clueless and mad.

Those that have been powerless, less achieving, less talented or less lucky than you want control and power. For them, sanity is tied up with gaining position, power and control.

They cannot understand anyone voluntarily giving up power or position. 'Shirking responsibilities!' they cry when blokes who have risen in the hierarchy step away from power. But it can be part of knowing oneself and being able to see clearly whether it is the power structure or your self that influences others.

## MY JOURNEY TO LOSING POWER – STEPS FROM KNOWING TO CLUELESS

### 1. I BEGAN TO LOSE AN INTUITIVE GRASP OF THE ZEITGEIST.

I used to feel I was in step with the Zeitgeist but then I felt at the times of greatest success, that everything I did or thought was good and in the stream of current thinking/action/fashion. I could do no wrong.

### 2. THE PRODUCERS BEGAN TO QUESTION ME . The Zeitgeist moves on and I am no longer in it. My unique journey had coincided

with the zeitgeist for a time, and then moved on. I didn't realise how dependant on the producers I was, the producers who stay in touch with the Zeitgeist and know that is their audience, their lifeline. I didn't realise they were putting themselves on the line. Do they have faith in me? They ask themselves. But (they think) "artists are allowed to fail", so free rehearsals, residencies ensue.

**3. I START TO GET REJECTIONS.** No longer believing in me, the producers begin to pull the plug on my 'development' and their attention moves on to other people and projects. Our work no longer comes from different places it was a torrent it has become a trickle, the British Council sees Ralf Ralf as a good touring option -one purchaser interested in one product but not interested in me developing new things.

**4. I BEGIN TO GET ISOLATED - I DON'T CARE** Not realising that I cannot take my support for granted, and the need to explain to producers and audience where I'm going, I cease to care, and think I'm immune because I've had a run of success

**5. I FEAR I AM NO LONGER SEEN AS A CUTTING EDGE ARTIST, BUT HAVE SOME SUCCESS AS A TEACHER.** I feel undermined by lack of support- I didn't realise at the time how dependant I was on others for my motivation to act, so ignore the positives.

**6. I BEGIN TO SEE MY SITUATION AS HOPELESS AND FEEL CUT ADRIFT AND IMAGINE MYSELF AS A BOOKSELLER** But doggedly carry on with daily early morning in the park, still strong in my convictions, but drifting further from flowing currents, and more concerned with being a parent.

**7. I FOCUS ON BEING A DADDY AND DON'T MIND BEING CUT ADRIFT. I CARE LESS ABOUT MY WORK.** I am reliable in terms of arrangements, but unemployed, and not producing economically, so not a 'provider' but that's OK- Katy's work is doing well. Wanting to

break from the egotism and self centredness of self promotion in an arty fashion driven world, I don't realise how dependant on my role of caring daddy 'I have become

**8. BUT I STILL CAN SEE NO OTHER WAY THAN RESTARTING MY FLAGGING CAREER WITH RENEWED CONFIDENCE AND ENERGY.**  
But is that the only way to use my abilities? I feel like a bad role model.. My self confidence dips further.

**9. I TRY TO CONCEIVE OF WHAT I CAN DO OR BE**

I cannot prescribe rules - My situation is unique to me I cannot preach, I do not want to tell others what to do any more than I want to listen to old knowing voices from the past undermining me. We are both ignorant as each other, but pretending we are worldly wise. I am a fool for having let them undermine me in the past. They wouldn't listen to me any way- I do not have the clout to say anything and it be heard. Anger fear hurt and regret have become the dominant tone in my voice. But If I can articulate simply and clearly without any tinge of hurt or anger clouding my voice, then some will hear.

All I can say is

Be flexible, adaptable, keep working, keep having ideas, admit faults then shrug them off.

Listen to others, be humble but not weak - don't let others undermine you and take away your will .

Be happy with what you have  
don't try to gain position  
don't proselytise

Be kind

Be fun

There is a difference between eliminating ego and channelling it.  
Don't be fooled into thinking ego is wrong.  
Rampant ego is wrong.

Channelled ego can work (particularly if you have to deal with other egos in everyday life! It helps you navigate round them)

But do not let it rule you,

Your centre is elsewhere, it is a tool, channel it towards positive goals; 'I need my ego to create the space and place where I can forget ego.' What else tells me I am worth the egoless space, where I can just create and make?

my ego tells me I deserve that and need it.'

I try to find a space for my centre

Losing Power - Gender- Christmas deciding not to hold position because now is a bad time to be a male in a position of control- the position as enabler of carrying out ones plans gets swamped by being seen as a male authority figure that must be dethroned, that women are inevitably angry with men by default and want to undermine all males and replace them with whatever the issue or idea they may have.

Now is the time to vacate places of position and prestige so that women can occupy those positions of authority and responsibility, and now is the time to experience powerlessness but be cognisant of how one is- its not irresponsible or feckless. Not a lot of blokes know this. Often blinded by their assumptions of power and old structures. Or an instinct to defend what they feel is their right

How to be rooted yet flexible.

Talking to 2 women friends about the route they have taken into leading both of whom have stopped performing to further their work

One became a voice coach in an established theater in order to be taken seriously) and one transited from being(a successful) performer to director in order to be taken seriously. For me the

journey is in the opposite direction- losing power but acting at the same time more consciously, more thoughtfully  
But its difficult to lose power if you are self centred and ambitious..

Yes but you can choose whether to explore and implement those ideas more as a director, where you need to head a hierarchy or as a writer or as a performer, where you have less overt power but potentially more as a creator

### Myth of Male Responsibility

On one side of the scale is the emotionally detached male who goes out to work and earns loads- his material provision makes up for lack of emotional giving.

On the other is the penniless worrier whose lack of money renders them powerless, indecisive and inflexible.

The ideal is in between - the emotionally involved bloke who makes money and can be flexible with their time and money and kind and generous to their loved ones. But still the ideal is the Big Benign Benefactor.

(Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook) said: ""I believe everyone has inside them the ability to lead and we should let people choose that not based on their gender but on who they are and who they want to be."

There is a gender difference and a different trajectory when talking about leadership. For women its about becoming empowered, rising up, for men its either carry on unconscious or examine how you hold power.

### Losing Power - Examples from Politics

## 1. Hitler in Downfall:

Army Officer: the Russians are advancing on Berlin

Hitler then defeat them with the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer

Army Officer: Herr Hitler the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzers no longer exist

Hitler, refusing to accept reality, flips out in anger

or...

2. UK's losing of Empire- UK has no empire any more, it has given it up, sometimes voluntarily sometimes not but it has had to learn to listen to its former colonies- its diplomacy still has clout on the world stage.

or...

3. An individual's journey from control to no control, from grand illusion, to delusion to dementia. I saw Thatcher being interviewed after she had lost power, acting as if she still had it: without power, what she said became deluded nonsense. She imagined being in command of structures which are no longer there anymore. With power what she said had been scary to many. What had been power became illusion and illusion became delusion and she completely lost her bearings, it became dementia

or..

4. South Africa- the transition from Apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

-----  
moving from power to no power; Someone I know a kind fragile sensitive soul who comes from a line of powerful male politicos. He observed that without the power and clout, political position, servants, that his father & grandfather had, he is just ADHD - highly

intelligent, full of ideas and solutions that will never happen. With a short attention span and delusions of grandeur, achieving nothing, unable to judge the importance of anything.

Better to be a small fish in a big pool than a big fish in small pool.  
Big fish in small pool leads to delusions of grandeur,  
Small fish in a big pool leads to humility and sanity,

Be happy with what you have  
don't try to gain position  
don't proselytise  
listen to others,  
find solid ground  
Strive to be kind  
Trust in fun

Usually, as you go through life, as your competency, knowledge and experience increases, you will increase your power position, prestige,  
but what happens if as you increase your competency, you shed power position and prestige?  
Is it possible to avoid becoming misanthropic, bitter and cynical and maintain self respect and be respected by others?  
I find myself having less respect for people eagerly chasing power and wealth, although they often have admirable focus and self discipline, why are they taming themselves over seriously in order to fit into some structure, some hierarchy? I don't buy it.

Whether high achieving or shedding power, a head held high is something to maintain.

Before Christmas 2007 I became Santa Claus for Debenhams in West London. At that time I was sometimes going to see a soon-to-retire therapist, Dr T at the Tavistock clinic who accused me of choosing to humiliate myself. I think he misunderstood but I didn't question his judgement.

From my Diary 26/2/08:

... choosing to humiliate yourself can be sane if you gain knowledge or insight through the experience ... But why did I choose to humiliate myself by being Santa Claus? Partially ...

I did feel comfortable with and approach the role of Santa Claus. I decided to do a professional actor's job to save my dignity whereas I'd be too embarrassed to wear a bear costume or green tights. It was the degree of disguise. I felt able to bring some gravitas to the role.'

Or maybe the doctor couldn't understand the psychic fluidity that all good performers have, that enables them to act others, whether of high or low status. So he couldn't understand my quest to be Santa, and how that quest took me to a disempowering grovelling point.

Is it a choice I have made to not ascend pyramids?

To be suspicious and avoid working with big companies and institutions?

Yes its a choice but the consequences are harsh and I have not learnt to deal with them well

Its a choice to shed protection- to go out naked in a storm, and that may be brave but its foolish.

Maybe to speak quietly and at the risk of it not being heard and no longer do you speak at the centre of things,  
maybe others come to you to listen,  
you become a shape shifter, a ducker and diver,  
abandoning accumulation,  
back to word of mouth and rumour

Numerous examples from Elizabethan drama of Outward Position being unimportant in powerplays- many examples of servants being the real power over their masters- Iago over Othello, or, (also from Shakespeare) wives behind husbands, Gertrude over Claudius, carers looking after the disabled.

It is often easier to hold objectivity in a subservient role, but near the seat of power, because one does not have to be mindful of keeping tabs on your position as head of household, company or country- 'I must cross my crotchetts and conundrums' (Volpone trying to keep a handle on his world when Mosca's mischief sows the seed of chaos all around him, in Ben Jonson's play Volpone)

So, shedding power may help you get insight but with insight come the ability to make good decisions and to make good decisions effective one needs to have power, to have responsibility and not shirk it.

To have insight and not be able to exercise that insight is not sane, because your insight is not shared and sanity exists in sharing, in making connection, in understanding, in reassurance not aloneness.

