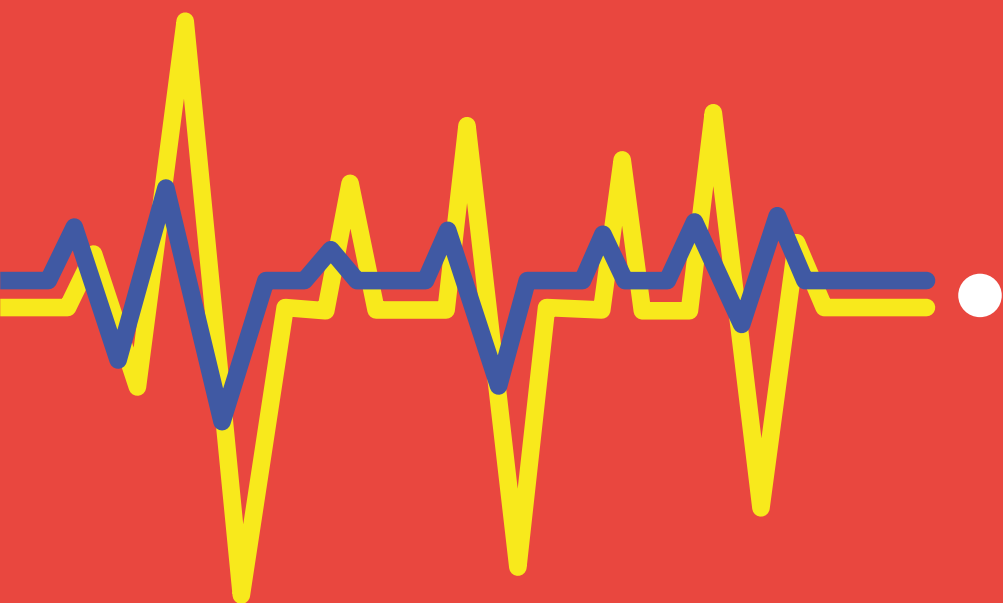


At the Breakpoint

Managing your Mind when the Stakes are High

Montse Rovira
Jorge Calvo



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At the **Breakpoint**

Montse Rovira and Jorge Calvo

What if leading didn't mean losing yourself?

In today's fast-paced, high-stakes world, even the most accomplished leaders can hit a wall—caught between relentless pressure, unspoken expectations, and the fear of falling short.

At the Breakpoint is a practical, eye-opening guide to leading with clarity and resilience—without sacrificing your well-being.

Rooted in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), this book delivers a powerful toolkit to help you silence your inner critic, manage emotional overload, and stay grounded—even when everything feels on the line.

Through real-life examples, actionable insights, and a deeply human approach, Montse Rovira and Jorge Calvo will help you:

- Break free from anxiety, perfectionism, and burnout
- Rewire the thought patterns that undermine your leadership
- Lead with calm, confidence, and authenticity—no matter the pressure

Whether you're a CEO, founder, or rising leader, this book will help you reconnect with your purpose—and lead from strength, not survival.

Because **true** leadership starts in the mind—not just the mission.

“A revealing and deeply transformative work. The authors have masterfully combined their knowledge and experience into an essential guide for anyone seeking to understand and manage their mind and emotions—whether in their personal life or in a leadership role.”

Dra. Leonor Lega | Professor of Psychology, Saint Peter's University (NJ, USA) | Official Biographer of Albert Ellis

“With AI becoming omnipresent in our lives, we're entering an age where intelligence for problem-solving is abundant. What's scarce—and increasingly vital—is the capacity of people (and especially leaders) to manage emotions with authenticity. Rovira and Calvo offer timely clarity on this emerging leadership imperative.”

Ivan Bofarull | CIO & Professor at ESADE Business School, Barcelona-Madrid

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Expert Reviews

"A revealing and deeply transformative work. The authors have masterfully combined their knowledge and experience into an essential guide for anyone seeking to understand and manage their mind and emotions—whether in their personal life or in a leadership role."

Dr. Leonor Lega | Professor of Psychology, Saint Peter's University (NJ, USA) | Official Biographer of Albert Ellis

"A work thoughtfully written and designed for business leaders who need new tools and skills to navigate decision-making in a time of profound uncertainty."

Marta Blanco | President, International Relations Commission, CEOE (Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations), Madrid

"A splendid work that will undoubtedly spark important conversations. It's essential reading for anyone looking to turn psychological strengths into dependable habits for managing emotions and behaviors under pressure, uncertainty, or conflict."

Prof. Dr. Manuel Sanchis | Professor of Applied Economics, University of Valencia |
Author of *The Poverty of Economics: The Philosophical Anatomy of an Empty Rationality*

"This book delivers a clear and practical perspective on managing pressure in high-stakes environments. Using REBT, it equips readers with tools to foster more resilient and effective leadership. A must-read for decision-makers under pressure."

Dr. Jaime Martín | Executive Director, Refining & Chemicals Division, Repsol, Madrid

"With AI becoming omnipresent in our lives, we're entering an age where intelligence for problem-solving is abundant. What's scarce—and increasingly vital—is the capacity of people (and especially leaders) to manage emotions with authenticity. Rovira and Calvo offer timely clarity on this emerging leadership imperative."

Ivan Bofarull | Speaker and expert in disruptive innovation | Chief Innovation Officer and Professor at ESADE Business School, Barcelona-Madrid | Author of *Moonshot Thinking: Turn Disruption into Opportunity*

"This book addresses the emotional challenges leaders face—loneliness, vulnerability, and resistance to change—offering practical tools to help overcome them. A must-read for leaders when they need it most."

José M. Fornós | Executive Vice President, Tenneco Inc., Detroit

"This book introduces an innovative perspective on leadership, highlighting the transformative potential of leaders who integrate emotional management with reflective thinking."

Dr. Luis Barrio Tato | Economist–Auditor

Dr. Sandra Barrio Carvajal | Auditor, Chamber of Auditors of Andalusia
Co-authors of *Emotional Auditing of Organizations: Risk Management and Control*

"Leadership isn't only about influence and strategy—it's also about awareness, balance, and self-knowledge. This book merges modern psychology with Zen and Stoic wisdom, providing a practical yet profound approach to leading with presence and clarity. You'll learn to listen to emotions without resistance, to guide without imposing, and to trust the process without clinging to the outcome. An essential read for purposeful leaders."

Matthieu Boeche | Serial Entrepreneur, Strategic Advisor, Venture Capitalist & Co-founder at *meditation collective*[™], Paris – Tokyo

"This book is a vital resource for those seeking to transform pressure into well-being. Grounded in REBT, it offers a clear path to reduce avoidable suffering and lead with greater serenity and effectiveness."

Eduardo Díez | Clinical Psychologist, Engineer, ESADE MBA, and Coach, Barcelona | Author of *From Helplessness to Freedom: Improve Your Life with NLP*

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This book is for anyone who has ever felt the weight of leadership—while grappling with doubt, pressure, or the quiet burden of personal expectations.

It's for those who strive to lead with clarity and purpose, even when stress, fear, or uncertainty cloud the way forward.

It's for those who, in difficult moments, choose not to give up—but instead to grow, reflect, and reconnect with the inner strength that fuels both effective leadership and personal well-being.

With heartfelt gratitude to Maria, Esther, and Clara—your presence, warmth, and steady support have been a source of calm and inspiration beyond what words can express.

Contents

Introduction	11
Section I: The Mind at the Core of Leadership	17
1. Beyond Success	19
2. Leadership and Irrational Beliefs	27
3. Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (Rebt) Applied to Leadership	37
Section II: Leaders at the Limit: Stories from the Front Line	59
4. Michael and the Legacy that Nearly Broke Him	61
5. Emily and the Overwhelming Worry	87
6. Alex and the Addiction to Social Networks	103
7. Valerie and Stage Fright	121
8. Anthony Altitude Sickness in Senior Management	139
9. Bing and the Speed of Entrepreneurial Success	159
10. Luca and Boundless Self-Indulgence	179
Section III: Leading with Purpose: Beyond Personal Limits	197
11. Leadership Material	199
12. A Conversation between Masters: Peter Drucker, Stephen Covey and Albert Ellis	211
13. The 360° Legacy: Leading Beyond Oneself	215
14. The 7 Cleaver Habits	219
Epilogue: Leadership That Transcends	225
Appendix	229
The M-Ribs Scale	231
References	237

INTRODUCTION

Leading with a Clear Mind When Pressure Hits

In the business world, success is often equated with being strong, confident, and always in control. But behind the glass walls of executive offices, many leaders silently face intense pressure, fear of failure, uncertainty, and the isolation that comes with being at the top. Common sense may suggest slowing down or disconnecting—but let's be honest, that's rarely an option. The business must keep moving, people rely on its success, and the team looks to the leader for direction. This adds another layer of pressure—one that's seldom discussed but deeply felt.

No one is immune. Whether you're a CEO, manager, entrepreneur, or seasoned professional, difficult moments will test your emotional resilience and mental clarity. Constant expectations, tough decisions, evolving team dynamics, and performance demands can weigh heavily. If not managed well, that stress can turn into anxiety, restlessness, or even burnout.

It doesn't matter how experienced you are—pressure and uncertainty are part of the leadership journey. What truly sets exceptional leaders apart is how they respond in those moments. That's where *rational leadership* comes in: it's about leading with a clear mind, staying composed under pressure, and managing emotions in a healthy, constructive way.

This book introduces a science-based, clinically tested model that proves vulnerability isn't a weakness—it's part of being human. Emotional regulation isn't just about feeling better; it's about performing better. When you learn to stay clear-headed, you foster stronger teams, a healthier work culture, and sustainable results.

REBT: A Smarter Way to Lead

Many people don't realize that a simple shift in mindset can transform how they lead—and how they live. It's called *rational thinking*, and it's a skill every leader can (and should) develop to grow both professionally and personally.

Developed by Dr. Albert Ellis through *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (REBT), this approach is grounded in a powerful idea: *it's not what happens to us that determines how we feel—it's how we interpret it*. Our thoughts shape our emotions more than the external world ever could. That's why rational thinking is a game-changer for leadership.

Clear, realistic thinking isn't just useful—it's essential. It enables leaders to navigate stress, setbacks, and pressure without being overwhelmed by emotion. Rather than suppressing feelings, rational leaders respond with calm and resilience. This leads to better decisions, stronger relationships, and protection from the pitfalls of perfectionism, burnout, and constant approval-seeking.

REBT equips leaders with tools to shift their mindset—to quiet the inner critic, challenge unrealistic expectations, and respond with grounded confidence. Even outside of crisis situations, this mindset helps leaders stay steady when challenges arise.

In this book, we've distilled the key principles of REBT and tailored them for leadership and high-pressure environments. Because when you lead yourself well, you lead others better—with purpose, composure, and genuine confidence.

Self-Confidence Starts in Your Head

Great leadership isn't just about achieving goals—it's about mastering your mindset. The way you think influences everything: how you feel, how you behave, and how you lead. That's what makes *cognitive self-management* so powerful. It's the ability to recognize and shift unproductive thought patterns—so you can lead with authentic confidence.

Introducción

Confidence isn't just an emotion—it's a force. It's that steady inner voice that says, *"I know I'm built for this."* But amid the chaos of daily leadership—conflict, pressure, and constant decisions—it's easy to lose touch with that voice. Doubt sneaks in. Burnout builds. And that inner spark? It starts to fade.

Here's the truth: your confidence never truly disappears—it just gets buried under stress and noise. The good news? You have the power to reconnect with it. True self-confidence doesn't come from knowing exactly what lies ahead—it comes from trusting yourself to handle whatever comes your way. You don't need all the answers right now—just the belief that you can figure things out as they unfold.

Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Science

We're not reinventing the wheel. The concept of self-awareness has deep roots—think Buddhism's *Chitta*, Judaism's *Emuna*, Taoism's *Wu Wei*, or Zen's *Satori*. For centuries, these traditions have emphasized the importance of knowing oneself. What's new is that modern cognitive psychology has taken these timeless insights and supported them with the principles of the scientific method—falsifiability, reproducibility, rigor, and verifiability—creating an evidence-based approach that's widely validated. We may not have every answer, but we bring the insight and expertise needed to help leaders develop unshakable mental strength—the kind that drives exceptional emotional resilience.

As we'll show in this book, your personality is shaped by a blend of genetics, upbringing, beliefs, and life experiences—all of which influence how you see the world, how you think, and how you lead. Understanding these patterns is essential to restoring your confidence.

Two Worlds, One Approach

This book brings together two powerful perspectives: one from a PhD clinical psychologist and researcher—trained at the Albert Ellis

Institute in New York and the Beck Institute in Philadelphia—with deep expertise in emotional crisis management; and the other from a PhD in economics and business—trained in strategy and general management at Harvard Business School and now Vice Dean at GLOBIS University in Tokyo—an executive and academic leader with decades of global experience guiding leaders through high-stakes decisions and disruptive change.

Together, we invite you on a transformative journey to discover how REBT can serve as a powerful tool for modern leadership. In today's fast-paced and demanding world, cultivating a resilient and adaptable mindset isn't optional—it's essential. By challenging rigid beliefs like *"I must be perfect"* or *"Failure isn't acceptable,"* leaders can unlock a more genuine, effective, and sustainable style of leadership—one that aligns both with career goals and personal well-being.

The chapters ahead feature compelling, real-life-inspired stories of leaders, managers, and entrepreneurs as they navigate a range of emotional and psychological challenges. These stories draw on the *Rashomon* effect—named after the iconic Japanese story adapted to film by Akira Kurosawa—where a single event is perceived differently by each individual, shaped by their beliefs and experiences. Through these narratives, you'll see how perception shapes reality—and how shifting perception can transform outcomes. Each case not only highlights a challenge but also shows how REBT tools can help leaders break through emotional blocks to regain clarity, confidence, and control.

This approach allows us to explore each scenario through both psychological and strategic lenses—revealing the deep connections between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. You'll see how REBT can turn internal struggle into meaningful breakthroughs—converting emotional turbulence into long-term personal growth. As the book progresses, we'll gradually deepen your understanding of REBT. That's why we recommend reading the cases in sequence—so each new insight builds naturally on the last, without redundancy or overwhelm. The chapter order is intentionally designed to help

you master REBT principles step by step, while reflecting on diverse challenges and practical solutions.

We hope this book becomes more than just a resource—it becomes a trusted companion on your leadership journey. A source of insight and reflection as you learn to lead with greater balance, authenticity, and intention. Because ultimately, great leadership doesn't come from projecting strength—it comes from cultivating it within. From a mind that can pause, reset, and respond with wisdom and purpose.

The Book Overview

This book is divided into three parts, designed to take you on a transformative journey: understanding the psychology behind leadership, navigating real-world challenges, and applying practical tools to push beyond your personal limits. Each section supports your growth—not just as a leader, but as a whole person.

Section I: The Mind at the Core of Leadership: We begin by exploring how effective leadership starts with mastering your mindset. You'll discover the difference between *rational* and *irrational* beliefs and how these shape both your professional and personal life.

Section II: Leaders Confronting Real Challenges: This section features powerful, anonymized stories from real leaders, illustrating how irrational beliefs can influence—and often hinder—leadership. Topics include impostor syndrome, high stress, burn-out, and the ongoing struggle to maintain work-life balance. You'll learn practical strategies for overcoming these common obstacles.

Section III: Leading with Purpose—Beyond Personal Limits: Here, we explore how rational, purpose-driven leadership can impact not just your team, but your entire organization and community. Drawing from the insights of Albert Ellis, Peter Drucker, and Stephen Covey, this section demonstrates how true leader-

ship inspires lasting change beyond personal achievement.

You'll also find practical tools, including the **7 CLEAVER Habits**, to help you apply REBT in your everyday leadership. These strategies will support better decision-making and emotional resilience, especially in high-pressure environments.

The book concludes with an epilogue on transcendent leadership and includes an appendix featuring the **M-RIBS Scale**, which helps assess how your thinking patterns influence both performance and mental well-being.

We hope this book encourages you to embrace a new model of leadership—one that empowers you to manage your mindset and realize your full potential. Thank you for allowing us to be part of your leadership journey. If you ever wish to connect or need support, we're here for you. Leadership is a lifelong process, and we're honored to support your continued growth.



The Authors

Montse Rovira

PhD in Clinical Psychology (University of Deusto) and graduate in Economics and Business Studies (Open University of Catalonia). Specialized in Cognitive Psychology at the Beck Institute (PHL, USA) and at the Albert Ellis Institute (NY, USA), of which she is an Associate Fellow and International Supervisor in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy.

She works in private clinical intervention, research, professional training, and dissemination through conferences and scientific and informative publications.

Other published works: *Creencias de género de la mujer* (2022); *Desde la azotea. Cosas que pasan en nuestra cabeza* (2021); *Bienvenidos al presente. Mindfulness para principiantes* (2019); and *Sin ti yo sí* (2018).

<https://www.trecseo.info>



The Authors



Jorge Calvo

Professor and advisor on corporate strategy and digital transformation based in Tokyo and Barcelona. He holds a PhD in Economics and Business Studies from the Abat Oliba CEU University and has trained at Harvard Business School (HBS), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and ESADE Business School.

After four decades of experience in business leadership on a global scale, his areas of specialization include digital transformation and innovation with disruptive technologies, and the development of responsible and ethical AI.

He is currently vice-dean and professor of Strategy and Digital Innovation at GLOBIS University Graduate School of Management in Tokyo, where he also advises on the institution's digital transformation. He is also the academic director of the Artificial Intelligence Program at ESADE Business School in Barcelona, where he also contributes to the development of MBA and executive education programs.

He is a member of the steering committee of the Japan Operations Management and Strategy Association and a member of the Japan Society for Artificial Intelligence. Previously, he was global SCM president at Roland DG's headquarters in Japan and president and CEO in EMEA.

He is also the author of several books, including *Journey of the Future Enterprise*, published in Spanish, English and Japanese, and recommended by the Japanese Minister for Digitalization, Taro Kono. He is also the co-author of *Wa: Keys to Japanese Corporate Culture*, a work recommended by the organizing committee of the 400th Anniversary of Japan-Spain Relations.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jcalvog>





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