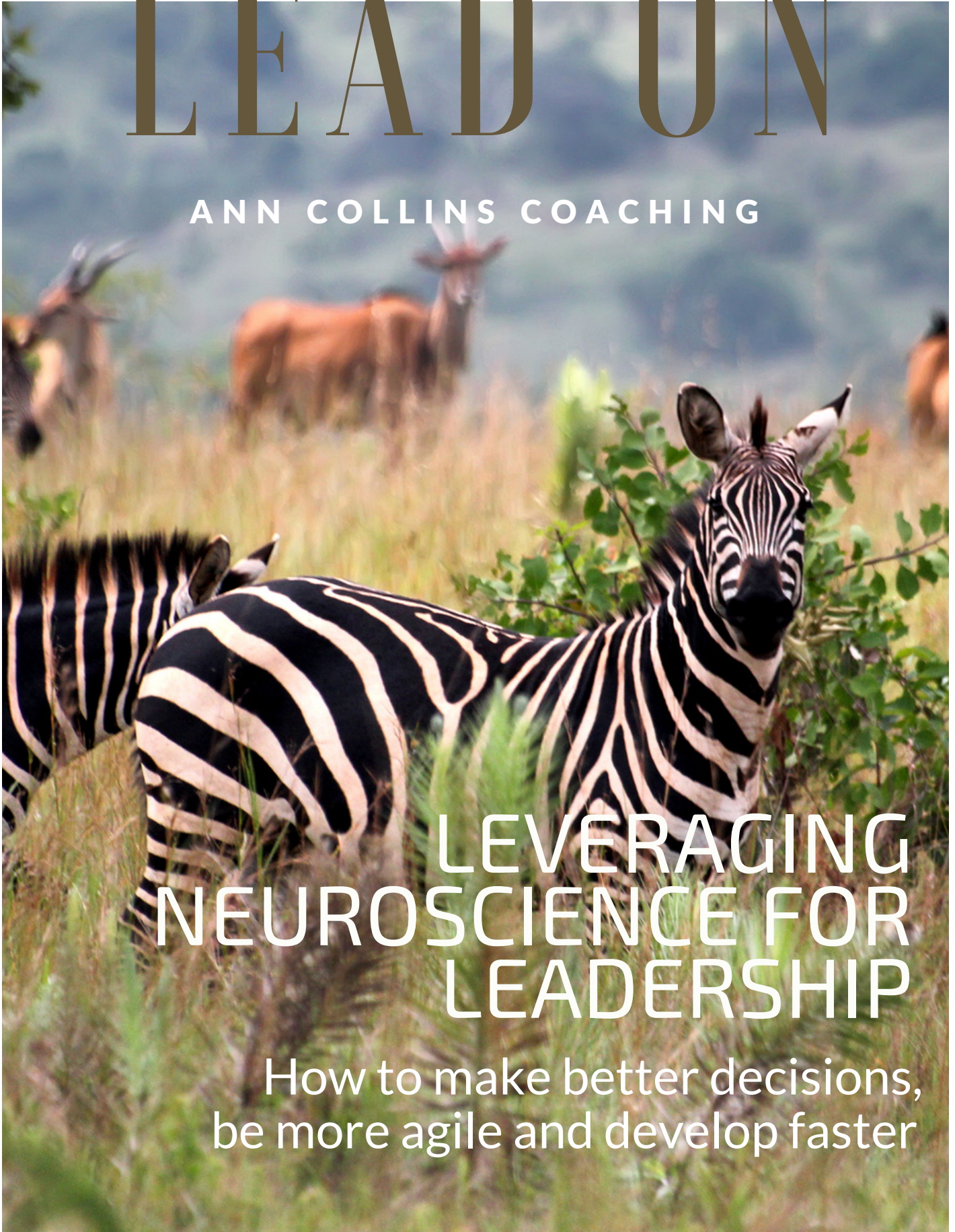


LEAD ON

ANN COLLINS COACHING

LEVERAGING
NEUROSCIENCE FOR
LEADERSHIP

How to make better decisions,
be more agile and develop faster



LEAD ON

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YOUR GREATEST RESOURCE

Welcome to the 2022 Autumn digital magazine from Ann Collins Coaching.

The end of August is well known for being a great time to go to the game reserves in southern Africa. I was lucky enough to live and work in Zimbabwe back in the 90's where I visited Etosha Game Reserve in Namibia. Watching lions lie in the sun and seeing the long eyelashes of the giraffes close up were amazing but what intrigued me more were the bucks, the zebras and the other more vulnerable animals. They were walking a tightrope between thriving and surviving, relying on their decision-making and their survival instinct. The stakes were high!

I'm fascinated by how we make decisions. The more I work with clients, the more I see that when they understand their own decision-making processes, they feel more focussed and life feels easier. Why is this?

When we harness the power of working in flow with the brain (and being able to use either rational or intuitive thinking when we wish) we're able to anticipate decisions that might be difficult and put processes in place to ensure that we are balancing an intuitive response with a rational one. Recruitment is an obvious example when we're thinking about diversity, but it extends well beyond that.

In today's world, the extraordinary ability of the human brain remains your greatest resource to grow your organisation. In this edition, I'm diving into some of the neuroscience around leadership and decision-making in particular. It is a fascinating area and in this article, I barely scratch the surface, but there will be more to follow on this!

If you would like to know more about how leadership development or team coaching could help you or your organisation, do get in touch. I continue to coach one to one senior leaders on a private basis too. If you are looking to get clarity on your future career or hit the ground running in a new more senior role or simply find enjoyment in your work, do get in touch to see if we could be a fit.

With warm wishes

Ann

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Ann Collins
Executive and Leadership Coach

MAKING BETTER DECISIONS: WHAT LEADERS CAN LEARN FROM NEUROSCIENCE

ANN COLLINS

Having just moved back to the UK after 11 years in France, I'm asking myself on a daily basis if the decision has been a good one! As a senior leader, you are constantly making big and small decisions; should I sign off this project? Should I have a coffee break? What should be our strategy for the next 5 years?

The incredible power of our brains in managing the complexity of decision-making is worth exploring to enable us to make better decisions and help those around us to approach decision-making more confidently and effectively.

We often like to think that we make decisions based on cold hard data and that we're capable of rational thought and ignoring an emotional response! Neuroscience tells us this is rarely the case! Our emotions provide much of the data and strong emotions such as fear or desire can actually narrow the options that our brain will consider, giving us that common brain fog that we can experience when under a lot of stress.

Furthermore, our experiences or subconscious mind will also influence our decisions. Herein lies the power of habit! If our brains know that something worked last time, why not repeat it? By reflecting on our daily habits we discover how so many decisions are not conscious or barely so.

This is often hugely helpful and saves us energy! Imagine if we had to ponder every morning on what to decide have for breakfast! Our decision to check emails on waking is maybe another example, but arguably less helpful!

However, as leaders we are often looking to transform organisations and introduce changes in some way. Thinking consciously and including checks along the way will help us to avoid repeating subconscious decisions that are no longer useful or desirable.

A common example of this is when an organisation is undergoing rapid growth and leaders' teams expand, their leadership roles change rapidly, but their old habits remain. Leaders can start to feel overwhelmed as their habits haven't caught up with the new reality! One example is being able to delegate more. Coaching helps to identify these subconscious habits and set new ones that are more helpful.

As a history undergraduate, I had the luxury of spending many hours debating the point of learning medieval history! The favourite reply of many historians is that we learn from our mistakes. A quick tour of history would suggest that as a human race, we're not that successful! But studying our version of our history gives us an insight into our identity.

On an individual level, we can learn to become more self-aware, even challenging that narrative as to its usefulness. In doing so, as by studying history, we learn more about who we are and what is important to us and this is where we can make more thoughtful and effective decisions.

We can start to recognise some of our emotional responses. For example, we might recognise a recurring fear of accepting new challenges because of a bad experience in the past - and then be able to move past it.

We might recognise a narrative we tell ourselves that has kept us from progressing; for example, a previous boss or employer who told us we weren't good with numbers or that we weren't "leadership material".

What can you do to enhance your own self-awareness around your decision-making?

1. Ask for more information and consult others (not only those who agree!).
2. Beware of stories from your past: this has always worked before; this has never worked before, for example.
3. Analyse your own emotional response to a decision: is it serving you? Where has it come from? Be curious about your own responses.
4. Balance an intuitive and rational response
5. Learn from mistakes.

To achieve this, you need to be in a certain emotional and mental state. You need to be alert, yet relaxed and able to focus and regulate your emotions effectively.

There are competing demands on our brain. Our unconscious mind wants CLARITY and DIRECTION, so it will bring up unfinished tasks and goals. This reinforces the importance of setting goals, using visualisation or identifying your values.

Furthermore, the brain wants us to be very efficient and will look for shortcuts. It will rely on habits! This is why small changes in habits can lead to big changes in our lives. Want to go running every morning? Make it a habit to leave your kit within sight when you wake up. Want to stop checking your email at 6am? Make it a new habit to leave your phone in your bag at night.

The brain also relies on emotions to give the data it requires. This is why we will often ignore advice from others and why first impressions, that are emotionally driven, are so powerful.

The implications for leadership are important: we need to be hyper vigilant to be aware of our own versions of history, to be aware of our emotions, to challenge our own assumptions and accept that we are not rational!

In developing leadership skills, we frequently return to the need for positive energy and decision-making is no exception.

You will have noticed that it becomes very difficult to make decisions when you are tired or anxious or stressed in some way or bored and understimulated. Both reduce the ability of our brains to function well. Some leaders in new or very demanding roles will recognise the brain fog associated with extreme fatigue and at the other end of the spectrum, those who are not stimulated, experience a similar inability to function well feeling lethargic, demotivated and stuck.

How to help you and your team make better decisions

- Have clear and coherent goals (direction)
- Provide opportunities for feedback and discuss ideas openly (challenge the stories of the past)
- Encourage self-awareness of emotional responses
- Help and encourage team members to recognise problems from various perspectives (reframe and challenge assumptions)
- Create useful team habits (that require less brain work)
- Encourage good quality relationships at the heart of the working environment with
- Work together to ensure that work is stimulating, enjoyable and balanced

It's also interesting to note what is absent from the list:

- Long working hours
- Doing it all on your own
- Multitasking and "busyness"!!!!

Being mindful of looking after ourselves as leaders, providing the conditions we need to be alert, relaxed and focussed must be a priority, because only then can you provide for others.

If you would like further support for yourself or your team to develop ways of creating the right conditions for effective decision-making, get in touch!

HOW TO PUT YOUR WORRIES ASIDE, FREE UP YOUR ENERGY AND REGAIN YOUR FOCUS

ANN COLLINS



"I worry a lot about everything: work, my teams, home, my own health..." It's not unusual for clients to tell me that they're not sleeping properly, they feel emotionally drained and things feel tough.

It's something I hear often from highly successful senior leaders who are juggling huge responsibilities both at work and often at home. They are succeeding brilliantly, achieving or surpassing targets, they are leading their teams and organisations successfully and taking on new and exciting projects with enthusiasm and great skill.

But, the constant worry is tiring. Stepping out of that state of worry not only feels difficult, but there are some underlying beliefs that are often getting in the way.

Worrying is not the same as caring

Worrying and caring are quite different: worrying comes from a place of fear and does not translate easily into action. Caring, however, brings with it the possibility of taking positive action.

If I worry and think about about climate change, I am fearful and I may consider scenarios. If I care about climate change, the gap between caring and taking action feels much smaller.

With this in mind, the saying: "there's no point in worrying" becomes easier to believe. Not only is worrying limited in its usefulness, caring could be a great replacement.

Here are two techniques to try:

1. Reframe worrying as caring. Try this little exercise. Think about something you are worried about. Do you care about it? If so, can you change the worrying to caring? What would that look like in practice?
2. Using scheduled "worry time". Scheduling a specific period of time every day where you allow yourself to worry can be helpful for some. "Worry time" is a very interesting technique for those who want to reduce worrying and anxiety that is very generalised and is used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. You set aside perhaps 10 minutes, where you allow yourself to worry. It's very important that this time is restricted! Outside of this time, you don't allow yourself to worry and instead make a note of the worries that come up for this block of time.

This small shift can be life changing. Let me know if this helps you! If it's something you would like more support around, [book a call with me](#).



**"SHIFTING OUR FOCUS
FROM WORRYING TO
CARING FREES UP OUR
ENERGY, BRINGING A
GREATER POSSIBILITY OF
POSITIVE ACTION."**

ANN COLLINS

A COACH'S BEDTIME READING...

ANN COLLINS



Ever wondered what your coach's favourite book is?

Outside of work, I really enjoy historical fiction but the book I recommend the most to clients is Susan David's Emotional Agility. It's life-changing, yet accessible! I've had clients tell me that they have gifted it to their friends, colleagues and team members!

Managing, understanding and working with our emotions is critical for us in our daily lives as well as when we're leading others. It definitely is a case of putting on our own oxygen mask first.

Susan David talks about not only understanding our emotions, but welcoming them "as data". Seeing emotions as "data" is one of the key concepts in her work. By providing us with language that is not emotional, she gives us the possibility to step back from uncomfortable emotions to see them, welcome them, accept them and deal with them as we wish.

Fundamentally this is not about squashing or denying emotions - it is about being curious, discovering what the "data" means for us and moving on from there. This encourages to see emotions as neither "good" nor "bad", but as helpful information that is there to help us.

An aspect that many of my clients find helpful is that Susan David stresses the importance of attaching words precisely to our emotions: stressed isn't the same as angry; joyful isn't the same as feeling at ease. Forcing ourselves to be more precise and move beyond our often engrained, habitual responses; "I'm so busy/stressed/fine" helps us to have greater self-awareness of the data we are receiving and hence what we can do to help ourselves. It also enables us to take a step back from the situation, which can give us the clarity we need.

To give you an example, in moving countries a few weeks ago, I'm not particularly surprised that I have felt "stressed"! Yet when I delve more deeply into that, I know that feeling "disconnected" to my new environment is the key emotion. Identifying this and going beyond feeling "stressed" is helping me to work out what steps might be helpful to prioritise.

In essence, Susan David takes out the drama to allow us to see more clearly our experiences of everyday life that are so varied and rich, allowing us to feel it all: the highs, the lows and the in-betweens, which is what makes life so rich.

[Susan David, Emotional Agility, 2016](#)
Available in multiple languages.

OUR COACHING PROGRAMMES

Executive Coaching for successful senior leaders

Ann helps successful senior leaders to clarify their career journey, set expansive goals and develop a mindset that enables them to achieve goals they previously believed to be "impossible".

She provides packages of unlimited individual coaching over a 3 or 6 month period, providing personalised support throughout.

If you're wanting to get clarity over a future career move, wanting to hit the ground running in a new role or simply want to enjoy your role more, do get in touch.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

CLARIFY your **VISION** and **GOALS**, inside and outside of work

Address and overcome WORK/LIFE balance issues that are causing you stress

Uncover your true STRENGTHS, CAPACITIES and **POTENTIAL**.

REALIGN your career with your **VALUES, PURPOSE** and **MISSION**.

Create LONG TERM PLANS for your personal and professional life that **EXCITE** you

UP-LEVEL your **LEADERSHIP SKILLS** in a new or for an upcoming role

CHANGE the way you think about yourself and place in the world **FOREVER**





OUR COACHING PROGRAMMES

Leadership Development for Organisations

Ann is passionate and skilled in helping to bring out the best in leaders, of all ages, to empower them to embrace their roles with courage, authenticity and energy so they can achieve their professional goals.

She provides bespoke coaching and specialises in supporting global businesses experiencing rapid growth and transformation.

She is currently developing a longterm bespoke leadership develop programme with a client, which will take leaders from "aspiring" to experienced, impactful and transformational.

She has recently worked with Zenith Watches, Sutton Valence School (Sixth Form Self-leadership and Leadership Programme) and provided workshops for the GE Global Talent Acquisition Team.

Themes include: Conflict Management, Building Effective Teams, Future Team Development, Leader As Coach, Harnessing the potential of the c-suite, Developing a High Performance Mindset.



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT aligned with your **VALUES, PURPOSE** and **MISSION**

Develop your staff's **STRENGTHS, CAPACITIES**
RESILIENCE AND POTENTIAL

SUPPORT and **RETAIN** your best **LEADERS** in their development at all levels of the organisation,





OUR COACHING PROGRAMMES

Team Coaching for Organisations

Helping teams to perform better, unleash the potential in one another and achieve goals whilst enjoying their work is at the heart of Ann's approach to team development. Teams report that relationships are better with improved conflict management and more productive meetings.

She provides bespoke coaching that is designed with HR and/or individual leaders or the teams themselves. Coaching often includes self-assessment, 360 degree assessments, interactive sessions, reflection and personal/group targets.

She specialises in helping teams to transform. She has over 25 years' experience of helping groups to learn whilst being mindful of individual needs. She is currently working with Zenith Watches, part of the Louis Vuitton Group and provided workshops for the GE Global Talent Acquisition Team.

Themes include: Creating a highly performing team; Conflict Management, Developing a Team Growth Mindset.



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

REALIGNMENT with your **VALUES**, **PURPOSE** and **MISSION**

Teams have greater **CLARITY** around their **GOALS** and what a high performing version will look like.

Team members understand their own **WORKING STYLES** better and are able to communicate their communication preferences clearly and respond to others'.

EMPOWERING LEADERS TO THRIVE

A COACHING ROUND UP

"Time to truly question and reflect"

I am so pleased that I had an opportunity to be coached by Ann. As an experienced Head Teacher with a good number of years in my current role it was an opportune time through my sessions to truly question and reflect upon some of the conventions of how I was leading, the prioritisation of my time as well as thinking how I could manage some potentially complex relationships within the organisation.

Ann was able to seek out some of the core issues while having the ability to challenge me and make really think about various aspects of my role. Now a new term has started I have been able to implement many of the priorities that emerged from my sessions with Ann.

"Invaluable support"

Luke Ellmers, Head of Sixth Form, Sutton Valence School

"It has been a real privilege to work with Ann over the last eighteen months. She has been an invaluable support as we have sought to develop our leadership and coaching platforms for our Sixth Form students.

The impact of Ann's coaching at key pinch-points during the academic year has been measurable: our recent leavers have displayed signs of increased resilience, whilst our existing students have shown greater awareness of their own leadership potential and capacity. Thanks to Ann, there is a burgeoning sense of self-leadership among our eldest students; they are maturing into self-motivated agents who are now equipped and determined to lead local projects in the best interests of all those in our community."



TOP RECOMMENDED EPISODES



THRIVING ON THE INSIDE WITH ANNA ANDERSON

A fascinating conversation with Anna Anderson where we dived deep into what it means to thrive in the modern workplace. We also talked about finding balance by working on mindset and "building a deep relationship with ourselves."

SUCCESSFULLY HARNESSING CREATIVITY AND DISRUPTION IN TEAMS WITH HELEN JEWELL

Helen talks about how she works with creative teams with diverse and sometimes competing ideas to work together towards defining a strategy that enables them to move forward. She shares what she loves about her work and how she nurtures that enthusiasm and finally gives a top tip to leaders..



PUTTING WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF THE LEADERSHIP WITH TOM HADCROFT

In this episode he shares how he approaches facing "unknown unknowns" in relation to managing his own leadership transitions and how he uses that to empower and support others. His down to earth style is refreshing and empowering.

THE POWER OF EMBEDDING VALUES AT THE HEART OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP WITH CHRIS GODWIN

Chris is passionate about education and leadership and in this episode we explore in particular the way he embeds values into all aspects of his leadership and how this has helped to transform certain aspects of the school. .



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ENGLISH FOR NepALL Project



We continue to make a donations to this unique project when we welcome new client at Ann Collins Coaching.

We are so privileged to be able to provide this support and be part of Susan's mission.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Leaders Who Love What They Do Podcast

A **brand new solo podcast** series that are coming on Neuroscience and Leadership; Growth Mindset; Transformation



Ann Collins Coaching blog

Did you know there is a blog?

Catch up with our blog posts [here!](#)

*Ann
Collins*
COACHING

**EMPOWERING
LEADERS
TO THRIVE**