

If you only have a minute: Rooted and Unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. Augusto Muench, President of Boehringer Ingelheim Mexico, Central America and Caribbean reminds us that, as leaders, it's important to keep our egos in check and create space for our ourselves and our teams to connect to something bigger.

It Is Bigger Than Me And We Are Bigger Than It

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

In the jam-packed corporate world of deadlines, interpersonal complexity, and nonstop expectations, Augusto Muench still finds ways to invite team connectedness by creating intentional spaces for deep listening. He encourages connection by pausing before meetings to invite open conversation, doing what we call a 'check-in.' Each team member is invited to share about how they are and what is on their minds. Once team members have connected in this meaningful way, he found, they find it easier to focus on the agenda of the day.

At the same time, Augusto stays vigilant for an inner intruder: the separating, connection-disrupting ego. To tame ego, he finds it helpful to connect himself and others to something bigger than themselves – sometimes by reminding them that they are all part of a bigger history, a continuum that started with Boehringer Ingelheim's founding 150 years ago and that will endure when they pass the baton to the next generation. "There is always something bigger than me...that gives me a part, a place in the space, and humility," he says.

On a personal level, Augusto has done lots of reflecting to find out what connectedness really means for him. During a business trip to Germany he had a sudden health crisis – what felt like a heart attack. In that moment, he had to be vulnerable and ask his team for help, even though his ego suggested that to do so would show weakness, especially as he was the leader. Fortunately, he recognized that to be in ego is to be in fear and that he needed true connection more than ever. He asked his team to take him to the hospital. He learned from the doctor that his "heart attack" was actually an inflamed nerve brought on by stress. Augusto realized that the stress was driven by a fear of not being accepted by superiors. As a result, he had begun to develop ego-traits, like over-functioning, that were not natural to him and caused him stress. Today, he wears a leather bracelet as a reminder to stay humble, continue reflecting, and have the courage to align with his values and purpose.

Augusto points out, "If you start expanding the level of your awareness and expanding beyond yourself, you start being conscious of your biggest self with a capital "S," - this level of connectedness that you have with everything. And then if you're able to observe yourself, not only with a small "s," but with a capital "S," you see that the issue you're facing on Earth might be bigger than you, but that you are also bigger than whatever issue you're facing."

As a leader, how do you create space for connection? Are you comfortable being vulnerable? What things are bigger than you and your ego? What happens when you allow yourself to truly feel part of something bigger? How can that inform your choices today?

"Stepping out of our fears, we discover a space that is peaceful, vast and kind." Augusto Muench