



A DEPLOY YOURSELF REPORT

# INVISIBLE LIES

*The Five Blind Spots That  
Are Holding You Back*

by Sumit Gupta

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# Introduction

This report is about the 5 “Invisible Lies” we often tell ourselves. These lies hold us back from our leadership, and from taking action to produce results that matter to us. I am calling them Invisible Lies because that is what I have found them to be - “lies” and at the same time - “invisible”.

I call them invisible as they are often held as “truth” or “the way things are” by people. In my own life, I can see all five of these lies stopping me from my leadership at different times.

The dictionary defines a lie as “an untrue statement” that “creates a false impression”. They distort our reality and how we see the world. It is like looking through green glasses and then assuming the world is green. This false impression stops us from pursuing what we really care about.

Furthermore, these lies are invisible to us, which is defined as “inaccessible to view” or “not openly acknowledged”. That is also often called a “blind spot”.

We do not only hold these lies as truths or unquestioned assumptions. We also do not know that we are holding them. In essence, their presence is transparent to us. It is like not even knowing that we have the green glasses on.

In such a state, we do not see options to take action beyond our limited view. We are unaware of the power of our own choice. This is important because it determines what we see as a possibility or not.

These lies present a distorted view of the world and influence every action we take (or do not take). Once we become aware that these are “Invisible Lies”, we will have the power to drop or change them.

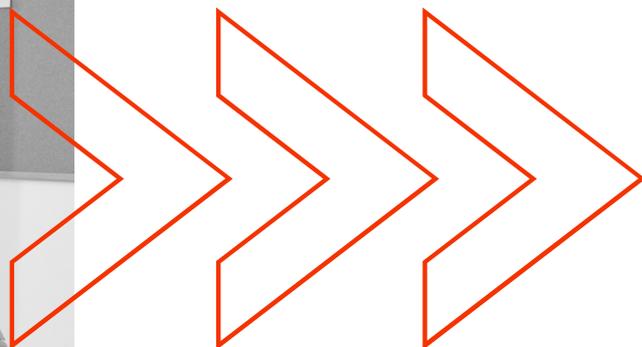
Why would anyone want to see the world in a way that doesn’t take them where they want to go? Who would wear green glasses all the time? You would not. You would only wear glasses that correct your vision, not distort it.

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# The Five Invisible Lies That Hold You And Your Leadership Back

“If we did all the  
things  
we are capable of  
doing,  
we would literally  
astonish ourselves.”

— Thomas A. Edison



# Lie 1

What I want is too far away. It is not possible right now.

*Me - "What do you really want?"*

*Coachee - "I am passionate about food and serving others. I want to open a restaurant when I retire."*

*Me - "Why do you have to wait until retirement?"*

*Coachee - "Because it is my retirement plan. Then I will have what I need to open the restaurant."*

*Me - "If it is so important to you, why wait until retirement? Why not do it now?"*

*Coachee - "I don't have the experience or money right now. This is something for the future. I can't run a restaurant right now."*

*Me - "What if you can actually do it right now? What if you could follow your passion and have a restaurant where people visit to experience your hospitality and love? How would that be?"*

*Coachee - "If possible, that would be amazing. That would be great. Only if I have the resources."*

(The above is a modified and anonymised version of a conversation I often have with my coachees when talking about their dreams)

**Most people do not go after what they want. They go after what they think they can get.**

They know deep down what they “really” want, but it has been “on hold” for some reason or the other. Maybe they are waiting to save money. Maybe they are waiting for their kids to grow up. Maybe they are waiting for inspiration.

What I have found is that **most people are far closer to everything they care about deeply than they imagine.** We all aim too small or spend our time doing something else because we have “good reasons”. We have good reasons to prove (to ourselves) why this is not the right time to do what we truly want.

This is a lie that we all tend to believe at some point in our lives. Our brain plays a trick on us by creating this lie to keep us safe and to avoid change. However, change is happening all the time whether we are aware of it or not.

This is the first invisible lie - **What I want is too far away. I can't achieve it right now. And I know exactly why.**

**If you are not going after what you really want, then what are you doing? Don't do NOTHING because what you want is too far away. It is NOT.**

We overestimate what we can achieve in a year, but we underestimate what we can achieve in 5 years. I want to leave you with a question - **Where all are you underestimating yourself?**



# Lie 2

## I am not ready/courageous/confident. I need to be ready before moving forward

If you were to ask me anytime from 2017 to 2020 about my weakness, I would have told you it was my lack of courage. Ever since 2017, I was in touch with my passion for helping people grow as leaders.

However, every time I thought of becoming a full-time coach, I felt extreme fear and anxiety. I decided I will make the jump when I am ready and brave. I was waiting for the fear to disappear. Ouch!

Let me tell you a secret. **You will never be ready.** You are as ready today as you will be at any time in the future. It was only in 2020 that I finally decided to take the plunge. One of the triggers was the birth of my son in 2019 and my wanting to set the right example for him.

By believing a "lie" as the truth, I felt miserable at work. I was not happy and experienced extreme stress and overwhelm. I got burned out and it took a big toll on my health and it felt like the light has gone out of my life. It was only through professional medical support that I was able to see the "lie" for what it was - an illusion.

What I discovered is that **we do not need clarity or confidence to move ahead.** We do not need to get rid of our fear before moving forward. I realised that **confidence is an outcome of moving forward and not a prerequisite.**

Nobody is confident doing anything for the first time. Confidence comes from doing something multiple times. It is not something you “need” to start. It is something you “produce” by intentional practice. The same goes for clarity.

Just like you can drive at night seeing only the part of the road which your car headlight illuminates, you can move forward towards your wildest dreams even if you do not see the entire way. You only need to see the next step to take and the next conversation to have. You can do an entire journey this way.

Coming to fear, I realised that courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is moving forward despite the fear. You do not need anything else to move toward your wildest dreams. You can start moving in that direction now. Yes, right now.

Courage is listening to our fears so that we do not do something stupid like jumping off a building. But courage is also acknowledging that I am new to this, and this is meaningful to me, so the fear is actually a sign that I am on the right track.

When I finally jumped into leadership coaching full-time, everyone called that a courageous decision. People were asking me how I overcame my fear. This was ironic and funny because I was still experiencing fear. I was just focusing on taking the next step. And the next one.

As I move ahead in this journey, I have grown in confidence and reduced my fear more in the last 18 months of taking action than in the previous 4 years of “waiting” to be ready.

This is the second invisible lie - I need to be ready before moving forward. I am not ready yet.

Ask yourself - Where are you waiting for confidence in your life? What if you “just do it”?

No one is confident on their first attempt. Not even Olympians.

# Lie 3

## I am not good enough. I will be exposed for being a fake

While coaching leaders, I have found that the more successful you get, the more likely you are to feel like a fraud. I have coached many high achievers who live in the constant lie of “I got lucky. I do not deserve this. I will be exposed soon.”

I am sure impostor syndrome - “the feeling of not deserving and the fear of getting exposed” is no stranger to most of us. Yet I have found that impostor syndrome is a lie. Yes - a LIE.

Impostor Syndrome is an ever-present story in our culture - of not being good enough. Most of us have grown up in families and cultures where we were chastised for speaking up and just being ourselves. No wonder we find it difficult to trust our own worth and success. These old voices are still running in our heads.

Famous personalities like Tina Fey, Howard Schultz, Serena Williams and Tom Hanks have openly acknowledged feeling like a fraud. While it is normal for anyone to question their abilities at times, impostor syndrome can be a very heavy burden.

**Impostor Syndrome tries to take care of you by keeping you safe. It makes you play small and stops you from moving beyond your comfort zone.**

**There is a huge cost and burden of living this way. This lie kills your productivity, your well-being and your confidence.**

**This often leads to the feeling of being inadequate. It is also associated with the disempowering emotions of **guilt and shame.****

**Below are some variations of the invisible lie of impostor syndrome:-**

- I feel like a fake
- I'm totally not qualified
- I do not deserve this
- It's all because of luck
- I am not good enough
- I must not fail or I will let everyone down
- My success is no big deal
- I might get exposed any time soon

**What opportunities have you missed because of impostor syndrome?  
What future possibilities are not available to you right now because you are living some variation of this invisible lie?**

**How has it impacted your emotional and mental wellbeing over the years?  
This is the third invisible lie - I am not good enough. I will be exposed for being a fake.**



# Lie 4

## I need external approval or acknowledgement for my wellbeing

Last year I was coaching a very successful business professional who was leading a team of 400 and who is a millionaire many times over.

During one of our coaching sessions, he summarised his life as “constantly running at a high pace”, though he could not identify what he has been running after.

His resume lists down achievement after achievement, and yet he felt empty on the inside and had problems with anxiety, stress, and his emotional wellbeing.

He told me he could not stop running even if he wanted to. It was like his body knew no other way of operating.

The invisible lie he was living was (and so many of us are) “I need to please people to be happy, successful, and valuable. If I get into a conflict or offend someone, then something is wrong with me. Hence I must avoid disagreement or conflict at all costs, and I constantly have to prove myself to feel worthy.”

As a result, his relationships with his closest friends and family suffered massively as he could never devote time or keep his commitments. At work, he found it **very difficult to say NO** and ended up taking more than he wanted to.

When we are living in this invisible lie, it is easy to fall into a people-pleasing trap. **We want to please others because we know (subconsciously) that our happiness and well-being are dependent on others and their approval, which is a LIE.**

Do not allow anyone else this authority (to determine your well-being). As no one can. What others say or do to you is because of their internal stories. It is not a reflection on you.

**You can go after any result or outcome you want, but you do not need that result or outcome to feel worthy or valuable.**

**The outcomes you produce in life do not determine how good or bad you are. They do not determine your value or worth.**

**This is the fourth invisible lie - I need something else from somebody else to be ok. My well-being is dependent on others.**



# Lie 5

This is who I am. I know who I am.

*"I am an introvert"*

*"I am an artist at heart. I can't sell or promote myself."*

*"I am a slow learner"*

*"I am not good with men (or women)"*

*"I am not good with showing emotions."*

*"I am more creative than disciplined. I am not good at making goals."*

*"I always follow convention. I am not the one to go my own way."*

*"I work best alone. I am not good at working in teams."*

The above is how many high-performing leaders describe themselves and their capabilities. They describe what they think is a "fact" or "truth" about themselves.

Many even use the phrase *"I know I am wired (or built) this way"*.

This is the last of the invisible lies that prevent us from our leadership. This invisible lie, when held as a fact, limits our dreams, ambitions, and possibilities. It casts its shadow on every action we take and do not take.

**Your biggest strengths are holding you back if you believe that is the only way you can ever be. We are not born this way or that way. We are all born the same way - as blank slates.**

The above statements do not reveal our limits. **They only reveal what we have learned so far and what else is there to learn.** The glass ceiling between the two is entirely our own creation.

This is the fifth invisible lie - **I know who I am. I know what I am good and bad at. I am wired/built this way.**

Let me tell you what I have learned.

**You have no idea what you are capable of.**

I have seen people continuously surprise themselves by how big they can dream and accomplish.

I myself am a living testament that "I know who I am" is a lie - and a big fat one at that.



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# What Next?

## How To Move Beyond These 5 Invisible Lies?

The above 5 blind spots are most challenging because of the fact that they are blind spots, and we can not see them as such. However, there is a 3 step process to identify and go beyond your invisible lies.



### 01 Awareness

To be **aware** is to acknowledge that the world is not green but it appears green because we are wearing green coloured glasses.

The only problem is that we have forgotten that we have the glasses on.

One way to build awareness is to **slow down**, stop the spinning and constant running, and **reflect**.

The process of stopping can often unmask us and bring laughter, compassion, and a different **perspective** to our awareness.

Another way to identify our blind spots is to welcome and ask for **feedback** from those around us.

There could be no easier way to identify your invisible lies if you make it safe for those around you to share what they see.

It is the job of a leader to create a **safe space** to share what will benefit their entire team - irrespective of whether it is comfortable to hear or not.



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## 02 Acceptance

Once you become aware of your invisible lie and how it has been driving your life, the next step is to **acknowledge** and **accept** it for being there, which can be extremely difficult, threatening, and painful.

To suddenly realise that the world is not green but you have been perceiving it as green can feel like a failure, or worse, a crisis of identity.

As Gloria Steinem says, **the truth will set you free, but first, it will piss you off.**

To accept an invisible lie is to stop resisting the truth and to lean into **complete vulnerability** - which is often required to acknowledge it for what it is - a lie - without going into self-pity or blame.

To accept is to acknowledge that you have lived the lie as the truth so far - and **it has brought you where you are today** - with all your successes and failures.

When we accept these lies as the creation of our brain and nervous system to make us feel loved and safe, we can go beyond them.

We can use the same cognitive potential of our brains to reframe the lie, and the courage in our hearts to let a worldview go which is not serving us anymore.

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## 03 Responsibility

After complete **acceptance**, which is not to be confused with approving or condoning something, the next step is to claim (or reclaim) the only power you have - **the power to choose your response in this moment**, or in other words, your responsibility.

Your responsibility is nothing but your **ability to respond** - in each moment - in a way that takes you towards the results that matter.

To choose **responsibility** is to choose to leave the green glasses behind which can be very difficult because after wearing them for so long, they are almost a part of you.

**Your ability to respond is all that you have.**

If you lose your ability to respond, then you are just replaying the same old tape over and over again expecting to watch a new movie each time.

Taking responsibility is as simple as deciding who you want to be and then being that.

However, there is often a vast leap of faith required to cross over from awareness (of your invisible lies) to choosing responsibility.



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Taking responsibility is acknowledging that every crisis is a moment of **opportunity** - to see what was invisible so far - and to choose to see differently (or not).

It is completely a matter of choice. **Change is available to you at any moment.**

That does not make it easy. It just makes it there for you to choose whenever you are ready.

**The truth is always your friend even if it pisses you off.** As a leader, responsibility means breaking the spell of deception and taking unknown steps toward an unpredictable future.

Choosing responsibility requires us to embrace not-knowing and letting go of falling back to our old patterns.

If you are asking **"how do I do that?"**, I would leave you with a quote from the poet Rumi, who says, **"As you start to walk on the way, the way appears."**



# About the Author

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**Sumit Gupta** coaches some of the most **successful and inspirational leaders and changemakers** in the world. He coaches startup entrepreneurs and CXOs, senior executives in tech unicorns, non-profit founders, and a leader at the UN, among others.

**What most people know about Sumit** is that he has spent 20 years doing computer programming and 9 years doing photography.

**What most people do not know about Sumit** is that he has spent a lifetime staying invisible. He had used his computer and his camera as tools to hide behind.

Today he is gifted at helping people see their power because he has spent so much of his life hiding his own. He sees where you are powerful even when you cannot. Sumit helps people see their own light.

**Many people do not realise how powerful they are.** They often can not see themselves as powerful, even when others do. That is where Sumit comes in.

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He helps people face their often “imaginary” fears and reveal their blind spots so that they can follow their “hidden but ever-present” dreams.

Sumit doesn’t pay attention to your story or the reasons you might believe as truth. He pays attention to who you truly are. And that is why people call Sumit.

Sumit combines his experiences as a techie, engineer, 3x entrepreneur, leader in companies like Yahoo and Booking.com, and a poet and photographer – to help leaders merge the science of doing business with the art of leadership.

He lives in Amsterdam with his wife and son. He has taken on a lifelong commitment to helping everyone show up as a leader - to create results that matter while having fun and building strong relationships.

Thank you for reading like it matters.

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