



# The Strength of Presence

by Ilana Ridge

There's a quiet power in presence, not the kind that demands attention, but the kind that **listens so deeply it changes the room.**

When we stop bracing against the moment and simply arrive in it, something shifts. We begin to lead from being, not reaction.

Let's be clear:

► **Presence is the courage to stay.**

To witness what is real, without numbing, fixing, or fleeing.

It's a full-body yes to reality, even when it's messy, uncertain, or uncomfortable.

► **Pretence can look a lot like presence, calm, composed, even kind.**

It's more about appearing in control than being in connection.

It's a mask, not a meeting.

It's built to protect, not to connect.

► **Avoidance is absence in disguise.**

It wears many masks; busyness, humour, distraction, helpfulness, but at its root, it's a fear of being fully here, in case what we find is uncomfortable.

► **Hyper-control pulls us out of presence.**

The body tenses for the future.

The mind loops through "what if."

**True presence is not passive.**

It's anchored. Awake. Grounded, aware, and fully alive.

It doesn't push, it listens.

It doesn't need to prove, it already knows.

It doesn't rush, defend, or explain.

It feels what's real, and stays anyway.

It doesn't need to impress.

It simply shows up, sees clearly, and holds steady.

**It doesn't control, it trusts.**



## Presence Empowers

When we're present with someone, truly present, they feel it.

Not because we say the right thing.

But because we're not half-listening, half-planning, or half-hiding.

In leadership, presence is more powerful than strategy.

It builds safety.

It disarms defences.

It invites truth.

**It builds trust.**

Because people don't respond to pressure, they respond to presence, every time.

## An example

A senior executive breaks down mid-coaching session. They've held it all, the company, the targets, the team, the family, the mask. For years, they've kept it together. Until now.

Emotions come unexpectedly. They apologise:  
"Sorry. I'm usually stronger than this."

But presence chooses something else.

The coach doesn't rush to soothe or reframe. They don't fill the space. They stay. Still. Grounded. Unshaken.

And they say:  
"You don't need to be strong here. You just need to be real."

That moment lands like a homecoming. Because presence doesn't fix breakdowns, **it witnesses them until they become breakthroughs.**



## A Moment of Reflection

Here are 9 spiral-aligned questions to explore presence in your life and leadership:

1. Where in my life do I appear present, but I'm actually performing?
2. What am I afraid I'll feel if I slow down enough to be fully here?
3. Where does my presence deepen connection...and where does my absence protect me?
4. How often am I half-here, already solving the next problem in my mind?
5. What does my body feel like when I'm genuinely present?
6. Who in my life receives my full attention, and who gets the leftovers?
7. When do I use helping, humour, or advice as a way to avoid feeling?
8. What happens when I stop rehearsing and just arrive?
9. What does it look like to lead without armouring up?



## Why This Matters

Presence isn't soft. It's strong.

It's the **discipline of staying**, in a world that keeps trying to pull us out of ourselves.

For those leading, parenting, partnering, healing, or transforming - presence is the root of all of it.

And it starts not by doing more, but by **coming back to here.**

