The Art of Accomplishment

Leading From Feeling and Curiosity

Art of Accomplishment is a coaching approach developed by Joe Hudson and Brett Kistler, who work with founders, executives and teams at some of the world's most demanding companies. Their premise is simple and radical: lasting change comes from alignment, more than from effort. When your thinking, your feelings and your nervous system pull in the same direction, decisions get clearer, conversations get braver, and work starts to feel like an expression of who you are.

Why This Matters for Leaders

Every decision a leader makes has a feeling underneath it. Fear of disappointing the board, dread of a hard conversation, the itch to prove yourself, the thrill of a new idea: these shape choices long before the spreadsheet does. Leaders who can feel what is moving in them, and meet the people around them with curiosity, tend to:

- Make decisions they don't have to keep second-guessing.
- Hear the truth sooner, because people feel safe telling it.
- Spend less energy managing themselves and more energy leading.
- Build teams where hard things get said early, while they are small enough to handle.

The Golden Algorithm

Joe Hudson's central observation is that the emotion you avoid finds its way back into your life, often in the very shape you were avoiding. A founder who dodges conflict ends up with resentment that erupts in a far bigger fight. A leader who fears disappointing people procrastinates until the disappointment is guaranteed. The way out runs through the feeling, never around it.

Digesting an Emotion

Feelings are meant to move through us, the way food moves through the body. When one gets stuck, this practice helps it finish:

1. **Plug in.** Bring the situation to mind and find the feeling. Name it as precisely as you can, irritation instead of anger, dread instead of stress, and sense where it lives in your body.
2. **Allow it.** Stay with the sensations without fixing, judging or explaining them. They may grow stronger for a while before they ease.
3. **Imagine the worst.** Let yourself picture the outcome you fear most, and meet the feeling that comes with it in the same way.
4. **Welcome it.** Let the emotion be fully felt, and accept yourself for having it.

The goal is room around the feeling, more than relief from it. With room, you can act from your values instead of your reactions.

Meeting Others in VIEW

VIEW is a state of mind for any conversation, from a one-on-one to a board meeting to a disagreement at home:

- **Vulnerability.** Let your feelings show. Guardedness reads as distance, or even hostility, and invites the very reactions you fear.
- **Impartiality.** Ask questions without steering toward the answer you want. Trust that the other person knows their own life best.
- **Empathy.** Treat it as a skill you strengthen with practice. The more you offer it to others, the easier it becomes to offer it to yourself.
- **Wonder.** See the other person as wonderfully complex, and get curious about how their mind works, without trying to change it.

Turned inward, VIEW is also how you meet your own feelings: letting them in, taking no sides, keeping yourself company and staying curious about what they have to tell you.

Head, Heart and Gut

Art of Accomplishment works with three kinds of capacity: the head, where we think and plan; the heart, where we feel; and the gut, the nervous system that tells us whether we are safe. Most leaders are well trained in the first. Growth often lives in the other two, where a racing pulse or a heavy chest is information worth listening to.

Self at the Center

Internal Family Systems offers a companion map. Beneath every protective part lives the Self, a calm, curious and compassionate presence that remains whole beneath every hurt, waiting to be uncovered. Many people experience it as the place where their own spirit touches something larger. VIEW reads like a portrait of Self in conversation, and when you lead from there, your parts can rest and the people around you can feel it.

Practices to Try

- In a team meeting, ask, “What are you scared to say?” and let the answers land without defending.
- Ask your team to rate each recurring meeting out of five, then get curious about the low scores. Meetings and decisions are where a company’s culture actually lives.
- Say it out loud: “I feel ___, and that’s okay.” If a colleague or partner repeats it back to you, even better.
- When a decision has you stuck, ask: What do I know? What don’t I know yet? What is the next obvious step?
- Listen for your shoulds. A should usually means two of your wants are pulling against each other; name both.
- Spend a few minutes a day trading gratitude back and forth with someone, feeling it rather than listing it.
- Bring the parts lens of Internal Family Systems to the moment. The part that avoids is usually protecting a younger part that carries the feeling. Thank the protector, and ask whether it would let you feel what it guards.

Calling on Support

We are built to face hard things in company. In one study, people at the foot of a hill judged it less steep when a friend stood beside them, and simply imagining a supportive friend had the same effect. Brain imaging shows that holding a trusted hand calms the brain’s threat response, and people who feel connected to their future selves make wiser long-term choices. Calling on something larger draws on that same wiring. Feelings move

the way weather does, and the earth has been teaching that lesson far longer than any boardroom. Stand on a porch and watch a summer thunderstorm roll in, crack open and clear. Picture a deer that has just outrun danger, trembling until the fear leaves its body, then lowering its head to graze again. Call on a grandmother who cried freely and laughed loudly, or on your future self, already leading with an open heart, and ask them to keep you company while the feeling finishes moving. The Great Mystery has room for every emotion you carry.

When We Work Together

Some of this you can practice on your own. The deepest shifts tend to happen in company, because the patterns that cost us most live in the Blind Area of Johari's Window, where we can't see them by ourselves. A coach who knows how to go beneath the surface can reflect what you can't see, stay steady while long-avoided feelings finally move, and help you turn insight into the way you actually lead. In my work with founders and executives, I bring Internal Family Systems, somatic awareness and the sacred into that process, so change takes root in the body as well as the mind.

A Final Word

Excellence and ease are closer companions than most of us were taught. Each feeling you let move through you leaves a little more of you available for the work you came here to do.

Free Resources

- *Art of Accomplishment free workshops: artofaccomplishment.com/workshop*
- *Free guided practices, including the Emotional Inquiry audio: artofaccomplishment.com/resources/experiments*
- *The Art of Accomplishment podcast: artofaccomplishment.com/podcast*
- *Related handouts: Johari's Window, Effective Communication Guidelines and Sensation Vocabulary.*

Influences and Credits

- *Art of Accomplishment, the golden algorithm, emotional inquiry, VIEW and the head, heart and gut framework were developed by Joe Hudson and Brett Kistler. The descriptions here are written fresh, drawing on their public talks and on participants' accounts of their courses; for the full teachings, go to the source.*
- *Self and the parts lens come from Internal Family Systems, developed by Dr. Richard Schwartz.*
- *Research on support: Simone Schnall and colleagues (2008) on social support and perception; James Coan, Hillary Schaefer and Richard Davidson (2006) on hand-holding and threat; Hal Hershfield on connection to the future self.*
- *Calling on the support of the living world and the unseen comes from Neoshamanic IFS (NIFS), the approach I practice and teach.*

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