

If you only have a minute: Rooted and Unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. See how one leader creates an environment where people can be their best selves, by practicing grace.

Grace: Being Present to What Is Needed to Thrive

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

“The purpose of my work life is creating an environment where people thrive.” Amit Basak

Amit Basak’s life may seem like a paradox. Through school and his early career, he hit all the success marks – top of his class, champion wrestler, elected to student council and more. Then off to Yale for a BA summa cum laude in ethics, politics and economics, followed by a Harvard MBA. From there, he landed a job as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley, the first rung on a steep career ladder, and now leads several companies.

Not that his many achievements brought happiness, he admits. On the contrary, while striving for what was next, he sensed something was missing. And he might have continued in that vein. Then life tackled him in a way that made it clear - he was going to have to course-correct to find deeper meaning.

The wake-up call came when his sons turned two and he and his wife discovered they were both profoundly autistic and non-verbal. Until that point, he had been on the straight path of achievement, “collecting one medal at a time.” He and his wife started encountering a set of challenges they could never have imagined – they no longer had control over the outcomes of their lives. “It took years,” he says, “it took a lot of fighting, a lot of frustration, a lot of drinking, and a lot of eating too much.”

Over time something in Amit began to shift. He began to appreciate beauty in the smallest accomplishments, like taking a walk around the block with one of his sons, recognizing that his other son will not leave the house. Or seeing them work out with a personal trainer, having a dance party or enjoying a plate of spaghetti together. Amit began to open his heart to what was possible and needed now rather than what *he* wanted. What was needed, he understood, was his deep presence, not his will.

This insight fed into the core values Amit’s companies, Full Potential Solutions and Perch Insights, live by: **excellence, accountability, integrity, and grace**. “Grace,” Amit notes, “means putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, having empathy, truly listening to where they are so you have a shot at connecting with them.” It means creating an environment where team members aren’t afraid to push back, to take risks and be themselves.

At the same time, leaders must hold people **accountable** by offering clear and candid feedback, while anticipating how a message will be received, and offering support. You must integrate **grace** with **accountability** and be willing to have difficult conversations to achieve **excellence** and “peak flow.”

“We have a privilege and an opportunity, and also an obligation to put the people who have entrusted us as leaders in a situation where they can thrive. That’s the north star.” Amit Basak