

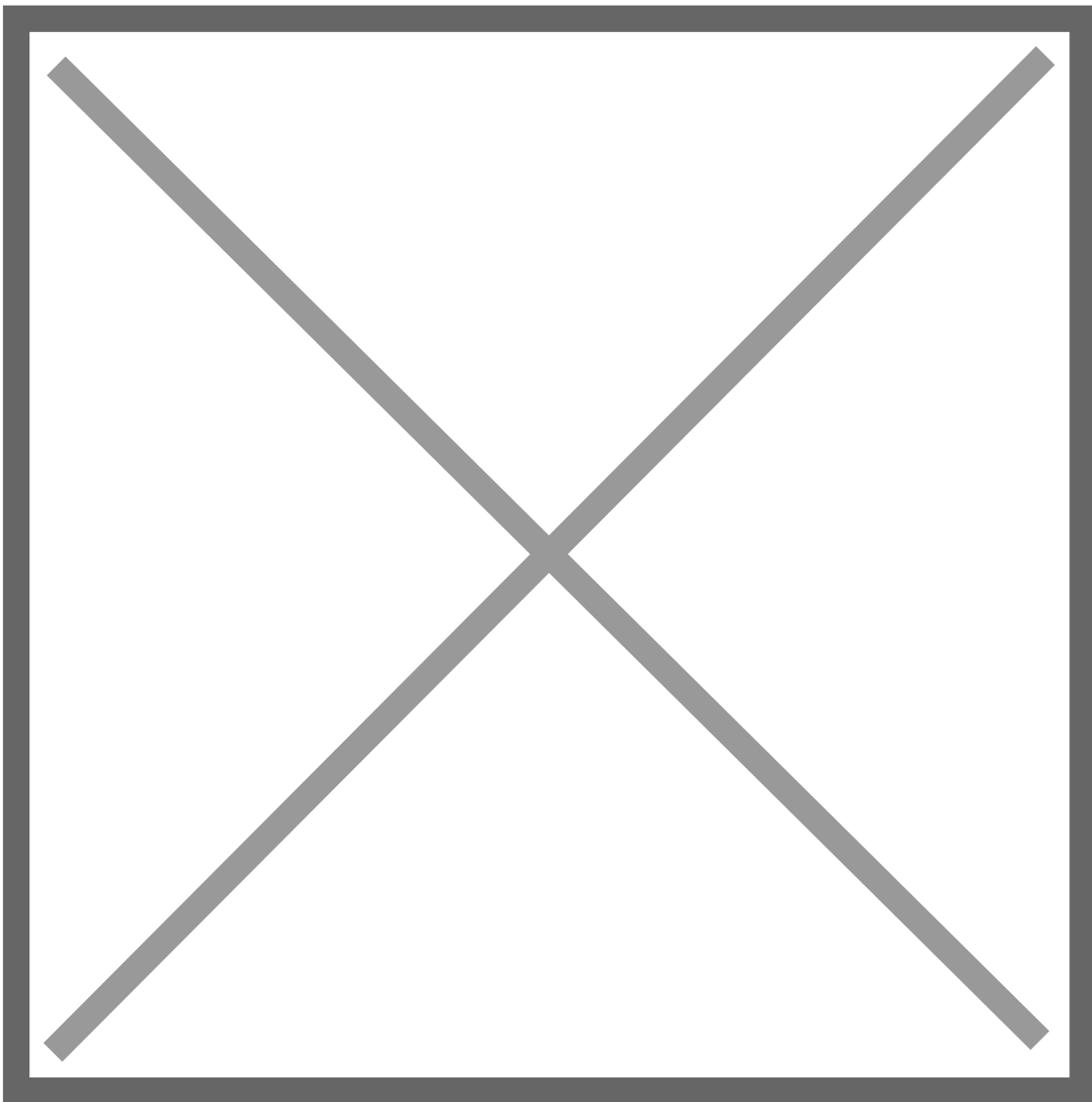
What's your pain tolerance?

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May 16, 2014

I meet monthly with a group of pastors to talk about ministry, leadership, family systems stuff and more. (We also catch an occasional Nats game.)

The other day our facilitator shared this handout, which inspired much discussion:



The most effective leaders strive to be in quadrant B: high “pain tolerance” in self and in others. Pain tolerance in this case means willingness to experience discomfort in order to move a system forward, fostering growth and needed change.

I’d argue that quadrant C and D *leaders* are rare—if you have a low pain tolerance for yourself, you’re not likely to want to attempt the work of leadership. But many of us probably cluster in quadrant A: willing to endure plenty of personal discomfort, but less willing to inflict it on others. We squirm when we have to hold people accountable and support them as they risk and grow.

Being a pastor undoubtedly compounds this quadrant A dynamic: we are tender-hearted types who want to comfort the afflicted. And news flash: **everyone’s afflicted**. (Philo reminds us to be kind, for everyone is fighting a great battle.) So quadrant A leaders can come up with every excuse in the book for letting people off the hook.

And yet, for us Christians anyway, transformation is the name of the game, and that means some pain. Flannery O’Connor writes, “All human nature resists grace, because grace changes us and change is painful.”

What do you think? And where do you see yourself in this diagram?

Source: *Leadership in Healthy Congregations*

Originally posted at [The Blue Room](#)