



## EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP: IT'S AN INSIDE JOB

David sparked a fruitful conversation around waste when he gently asked the cafeteria manager at his workplace whether food might be served without unnecessary containers or wrapping, unless requested.

Susan worked a whole year to bring a group of high school students from New Zealand to the United States to train other students in an effective form of peer mediation.

William began a weekly meeting for men at his church to fill the need for fellowship and support beyond the annual men's retreat.

Nobody is likely to write a book about David, Susan or William. But these everyday leaders are creating just as much impact in their workplace, family and community as the captains of industry and politics described in the pages of *New York Times* bestsellers.

Indeed, the challenges and opportunities of today's marketplace—of today's world!—require that we all step forward and lead every day, become our own captains and find more of our own personal best to give to the world.

### LEADERSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

Too often, we believe that leadership is the domain of those with recognized authority, and the title to go with it: CEOs, association presidents, conductors, mayors.

"In a world that is changing as rapidly as this one, we need to think differently about leadership," says Susan Collins, author of *Our Children Are Watching: Ten Skills for Leading the Next Generation to Success*. "Leading is not done by those few in high places, but by parents and teachers and managers and those governing—all working together to create the world that we want."

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When we dare to stand up for our beliefs or to follow through on our big dreams and ideas, when we act as though what we say and do in the world matters—matters greatly—we are leading.

In other words, leadership is a way of life, an expression of our fullest and best nature, our unique gifts. And it starts on the inside.

“Everything rises and falls on leadership,” writes John C. Maxwell, in his book *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. “If you can become the leader you *ought* to be on the *inside*, you will be able to become the leader you *want* to be on the *outside*.”

## QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

Because leadership is inextricably connected to who we are deep down, every leader has a different style. Some lead with their eccentric, charismatic selves on full, charming display. Other leaders bear no banners and sound no trumpets.

But the inner qualities that make for effective leadership remain constant among all types of leaders:

**Positive attitude.** Leaders know they can alter their lives by altering their minds. Self-discipline, a sense of security and confidence blossom in the presence of a positive attitude.

**A drive for learning.** From others, from opportunities, from mistakes. Those who stop learning, stop growing.

**Unwavering commitment.** No great leader has ever lacked commitment. True commitment requires and inspires courage, passion, focus, initiative and responsibility.

**Communication.** Sharing knowledge is essential; even more important is listening. As President Woodrow Wilson said, “The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.”

**Interest in others.** The best leaders thrive on helping others achieve their personal best; they are motivated by a desire for the highest good for all rather than personal glory.

## TOP 10 HOW WELL DO YOU HANDLE ADVERSITY?

We’ve all experienced difficult times in our work or home lives, often through events and circumstances outside our control. But like great trees, leaders grow stronger when exposed to powerful winds. Here are 10 suggestions for dealing with the hard times when they happen.

- 1. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.** Assume an “I can do something” attitude rather than pointing fingers. If nothing else, you can control your own response to the situation.
- 2. LIMIT THE FOCUS.** Don’t let the problem become all encompassing. When you compartmentalize the difficulty, you can focus on a workable solution.
- 3. BE OPTIMISTIC.** The ultimate belief in life as positive, even with hard-times and troubles, will result in positive behaviors and positive actions.
- 4. THINK CREATIVELY.** Approach the problem from new and different directions. Trust your creativity.
- 5. HAVE COURAGE.** Having courage doesn’t mean you’re not afraid. It means that you don’t let the fear get in the way of doing what you need to do.
- 6. TAKE ACTION.** Handling the day-to-day details can keep you from getting bogged down in the mud of adversity. Determine what can be done, and do it.
- 7. TAKE THE LONG-RANGE VIEW.** Remember that “this too shall pass.” Recount other times when you have overcome challenges.
- 8. MAINTAIN A SENSE OF HUMOR.** Even in the darkest times, laughter can help ease the pain.
- 9. GET SUPPORT.** No need to do it alone. Ask for help.
- 10. DON’T QUIT.** Persistence may be the greatest of human qualities that help us overcome adversity. Consider how water smoothes stones and wind sculpts cliffsides.