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My Philosophy of Leadership

What is leadership? Leadership is taking on the responsibilities and goals of the entire group. Leadership is taking the credit and blame all at once. “You draw on your personal characteristics, experiences, and the settings in which you might be involved for different leadership purposes.” (Komives, 2013). Anyone can be a leader if they have the right mind set but no one can be a leader without followers. That’s why I think that being both a leader and a follower at the same time lends to the most effective work in any situation. Leadership is important because it is what holds people together in times of stress, and it is what inspires people to reach their full potential. It requires being inclusive. “Being inclusive means understanding, valuing, and actively engaging diversity in views, approaches, styles, and aspects of individuality, such as gender or culture, that add multiple perspectives to a group’s activity.” (Komives, 2013). This is why we elect leaders to preside over our nations. And while yes, some influential leaders do more harm than good, when a good leader is running things the whole country benefits. This isn’t just true for nations. It is true for states, cities, schools, clubs, sports, committees, and even households. Not just one type of leadership is the “best”. Since leadership can be defined in so many ways, there are many different styles which all have the potential to function at the same capacity. Everyone has their own style that is molded according to their personal experiences and environment.

My ideas about leadership revolve mainly around the people in my life that I have found lead the most effectively. I gravitate towards kind and passionately charismatic people who can get the job done and have fun, while also quietly inspiring people to do their best and accomplish what they set out to do. I believe that leadership is an attitude that can be used as a tool to stimulate growth in a group. Of course there are negatives, the qualities of a leader need to be

extremely balanced due to their need to work with so many people. My style of leadership focuses on the servant leader aspect of things.

There are ten characteristics of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Northouse, 2013). To create my style of leadership, I use this model as a basis. I prefer to make the other people I am working with feel just as important as me, instead of taking charge and delegating tasks-like maybe some other people would do. I also like to utilize my follower skills to let other people take charge when they have a better idea of what should be done.

Some benefits of practicing my style are that the relationships within groups are very strong, and a positive attitude is encouraged. Things are accomplished while these bonds are made. Everyone participates, and the environment is welcoming to outsiders. Some drawbacks include other people not wanting to be followers, and fighting for power amongst the members. Due to my own personal characteristics, I find it hard to put others in their place, even when I know it would benefit the group as a whole. Using this approach, it would also be very hard to “say no” when you have reached your limit. Although saying no may put tension on the relationship for the time being, it is better than trying to help and dropping the ball (plus, there is always next time). I think by working on these weak spots I see in myself, I can effectively be a leader no matter the circumstances.

I would implement my philosophy around campus by using my style of leadership to influence my personal attitude towards things. I would “lead by example”. This means that I would utilize my leadership abilities in class during group or partner work, in any clubs or organizations that I am involved in. Both when I am with my roommates and friends, and when I

am representing my school in front of non-students. Because I am a biology major, I work in a lab setting and need to be able to function well in conjunction with other peers. My style of leadership and use of vulnerability will make them feel at ease, and decrease the amount of time spent in the awkward “I don’t know who you are” phase of meeting someone. I will also work *with* them instead of *at* them, facilitating friendship that could last even after the class has been completed.

If I attain a leadership position in a club (band, or Tau Beta Sigma), I will have to lead others. My attitude may catch onto others and inspire them to adopt qualities they admire in my specific style. My encouraging and gentle approach would allow me to get the things done my office requires, while also allowing others to contribute and shape the experience. Overall, using my methods could potentially change the atmosphere of campus leadership and mobilize to other places. Although everyone’s style is different, certain good characteristics might be cut and pasted into others ideas of what good leadership looks like. That kind of change is what I am referring to.

My style will be effective when meeting new people. If someone new needs help, and I help them without hesitation, they will want to at least thank me, and maybe start a discussion. Displaying positive traits and being confident in yourself is a sure way to catalyze healthy relationships (that may not have blossomed if those techniques hadn’t been utilized). I would also utilize my technique off campus. Helping people can occur at any location, and makes people feel great. On the other side, the people being helped feel great, and they want to give back. When the line between leader and follower is blurred, amazing things can happen and brand-new opportunities are created.

It also has something to do with allowing myself to be vulnerable with the other person; this ensures that they do not feel threatened, and encourages them to open up and be more at ease. “For leaders, vulnerability often looks and feels like discomfort” (Brown, 2012). This quote has some truth in it, it is extremely difficult to be vulnerable with someone (especially a stranger). Although I have found that once you have knock down those walls, communicating is so much easier because of it. I believe that positive vibes can be spread around, and is another thing I aim to do within my style of leadership. This can creates a domino effect, with good will and fortune spreading around until everyone gets some.

Of course, this isn’t plausible in real life. Though, the choice to be positive, independent, and gentle will greatly influence others around you into possibly doing the same. In politics, this tactic would be extremely useful. Instead of a candidate using things that he/she has dug up about the other person, they can figure out what their campaign is about and focus on building themselves up (while refusing to talk about most aspects of their personal life). They could also emulate the ten servant leadership qualities. Some influential political leaders that adopted the servant leadership model were Gandhi (Nair, 1997), and Nelson Mandela. If I ever run for president I would make sure to only build myself and others up, not tear them down.

My symbol for leadership is a black panther. This is because it can blend in with its surroundings, and not be easily noticed. People are said to only know that it had been somewhere by its tracks. This correlates both with simultaneously exuding leadership and follower qualities at the same time to blend in, and also with putting others first and fading into the background. This may cause the leader to be overlooked temporarily, but when the big picture is looked at it is clear who is influencing all the changes. Although the panther is not easily visible, it is still a force to be reckoned with in the jungle. Its rippling muscles and sleek pelt radiate power. This

correlates to the fact that my style works, and helps me to have deep and meaningful conversations both with individuals and large groups.

I think my style of leadership will influence my life in a positive way. In this paper, I talk about my style as if it is the best. And that is because it is, but only from my viewpoint. Everyone is different, which means everyone has a different style. Not everyone is going to appreciate and admire the things I do, and not everyone is going to want to be led. The world would be a boring place if everyone used the same leadership techniques. That's not how things work. What works for one may not work for another. I do believe that my style will best compliment my qualities and abilities, while also functioning and accomplishing its purpose. It may not work for everyone, but it works for me.

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