

Consider the following characteristics of leadership:

- **Leadership is influence.** Your followers don't need your leadership if they're going to do what needs done without your influence. That doesn't mean you have to hover over them to direct their every move. It means creating the culture, values, and clarity of vision and strategy so that competent people know and are inspired to do the right thing without your micromanagement.
- **The goal of influence is to change behavior.** If nothing needs to change, there's no need for influence or leadership.
- **Changing behavior requires getting someone to do what they wouldn't naturally do or don't want to do.** Someone has said that there are only two ways to change behavior: *Manipulation* and *inspiration*. We can manipulate by threatening loss of pay, position, promotion, or status. Or we can inspire by casting a vision and helping followers be energized to see their role in bringing that vision to reality. Do you do your best work when led by manipulation or inspiration? I'm guessing inspiration. The same is true of your followers.



With those thoughts in mind, consider what it means to lead yourself.

In *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change*, author Robert E. Quinn talks about leadership as being a state that we go in and out of. He describes our *Normal State* (non-leadership) as being comfort-centered, externally driven, self-focused, and internally closed. What he calls the *Fundamental State of Leadership* is described as being results centered, internally directed, other-focused, and externally open.

Read his book to understand those characteristics more fully, but for now let's just summarize by saying that leadership of ourselves and others requires us to 1) get out of our comfort zone, 2) behave consistently with our stated values, 3) be focused on others, not ourselves, and 4) be open to ideas beyond our own.

Here's where the rubber meets the road: ***Self-leadership means influencing yourself to change your behavior to do the things that don't come naturally or that you don't want to do.***

- If you're not willing to do what you don't want to do for the good of the cause, why would your followers?
- Don't tell others something is important unless you're demonstrating that importance with your own actions. Welcome your followers to hold you accountable to your stated values. If they perceive inconsistency, you should want to know about it rather than let them discuss it behind your back. Respond with appreciation for the feedback, not defensiveness.
- If you lead by example, what behavior will your self-centeredness generate in others? Self-centeredness and other-centeredness are both contagious.
- Shaping your vision with input from others increases their inspiration to see it succeed.

Would you follow your own leadership? There is no way to become a better leader if you're not personally willing to change.

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