



# Relationships

The Adlerian Team

## Building leadership for tomorrow

By Marion Balla

Do you remember as a child wanting to be the leader of games or of your class? Do you remember saying "I'm the leader, follow me," or "I know what to do, I'll show you." In a child's world, being a leader can appear easier than in later years. Today there seems to be a demand for leadership but confusion about whom to follow or listen to in living through these chaotic times. Articles are being written about the lack of leadership in the world and in our country. Who were the leaders you admired as a child? Did they have similar qualities to the leaders of today?

Our challenge at present is to model for our children and youth that adults are in charge and do know how to manoeuvre these changing times. What are the characteristics of effective leaders and how can we coach qualities to our young people-which lead to effective leadership? Does the world require different leadership in an Information age than an Industrial Age?

### Myths about leadership

- Leadership is a rare skill. In actual fact, thousands of people are in leadership roles on our community and are doing excellent jobs.
- Leaders are born not made. If you have a basic desire to learn how to be a leader, then you can develop and evolve to effective leadership. It requires time, energy, commitment and practice.
- Leaders are charismatic. This can be one quality of an effective leader but not a necessary one. This can be the result of good leadership rather than the cause.
- Active leadership is always necessary. Many times the best leaders stand back and encourage others to use their talents and proceed with direction and goals. Sharing leadership is highly effective to promote strength and teamwork in others.

### Characteristics and competencies of admired leaders

Much research has been done within business circles to assess the qualities of an effective leader. Studies completed on four continents, America, Asia, Europe and Australia in 1987 and 1995, concluded that there were four characteristics which rose to the top in research data: Honest, Forward Looking, Inspiring and Competent. According to Warren Bennis, an expert in business management, the best leaders can transform intention into reality and possess the following competencies:

**Vision:** they can create and communicate a desired state of affairs and get others to commit themselves to it.

**Communication and alignment:** they can communicate their vision and get support from others for it.

**Persistence, consistency, focus:** they can maintain effectiveness when the going gets rough.

**Empowerment:** they can create a dynamic working environment in which they can harness people's energies to bring about desired results.

Do you have people in your life that can create visions and involve others? Are you a person who possesses leadership abilities? Young people need to see and be close to adults who model leadership based on values and competency.

Teaching young people "how to think" rather than "what to think" allows them to be more open to develop vision, create goals, work with others and value their own competency and that of others.

### Skills for effective leadership

#### Skills of Personal Behaviour

- Sensitivity to others create belonging for self and others mutual respect
- Encouragement of self and others.

#### Skills of Communication

- Listening and sharing ideas
- Helping others understand what is needed and why
- Inclusion of everyone's input

#### Skills in Equality

- Valuing each person and encouraging their contribution
- Sharing the leadership tasks and direction

#### Skills of Organization

- Develop long and short range objectives
- Break big problems into small ones
- Plan, act and follow up

#### Skills in Self Examination

- Monitors self and others in the areas of strength and vulnerability
- Creates atmosphere for problem solving, self assessment and motivation
- Celebrates successes and re-frames failures

Effective leadership is bringing out the best in ourselves and others. As adults our work is to ensure that the world is a place where our young people can develop their abilities, competencies, qualities for leadership in an atmosphere of faith, hope and courage.

#### References:

Steven Covey *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *Principle Centred Leadership* James O'Toole *Leading Edge-The Argument for Values-Based Leadership*.

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