

The Ideal Leader

The enlightened leader gets more out of his people than any other type of leader could ever hope to.

*With the greatest leader above them,
People barely know one exists.
Next comes one whom they fear.
Next comes one whom they despise and defy.*

*When a leader trusts no one,
No one trusts him.*

*The great leader speaks little.
He never speaks carelessly.
He works without self interest and leaves no trace.
When all is finished, the people say,
“We did it all ourselves.”*

These words suggest that if we change the way we see authority, which means viewing great or enlightened leaders as those who don't actually lead anyone! Such individuals create an environment where everyone feels they have a personal responsibility to, and are a part of, the process. By adopting this model of an enlightened leader, you'll be more than likely to alter the ways you criticize and admire captains of industry, government, or religion, as well as the way you guide others.

The truly effective leader makes a difference in the lives of others. To be an effective leader, first, you must stay in the background, making yourself as invisible as possible, and become an astute observer of what's taking place; then ask yourself how, without interfering, you can create an environment that will help everyone act responsibly. A knowing smile or gesture that conveys to the group that you trust in its ability to figure things out and deal with issues according to accepted policy and procedure.

Truly inspiring leaders get results by their own example: They encourage others to be responsible and do the right thing, but not by proclaiming and bragging about their unimpeachable management. They create space for others to be inspired and to achieve their own greatness. When the time comes for receiving accolades, they dissolve in the background, wanting everyone else to feel that their accomplishments arose from their own leadership qualities. The view of a self-styled authoritarian is not the way the effective leader sees himself; rather they raise the energy of an environment through a viewpoint that elevates lower inclinations.

Consider some thoughts on being a more effective and enlightened leader.

1. Make a difference in the lives of others, resolving conflicts through quiet and positive resolution. By being positive and making an effort to praise others, this leader stays in harmony with his people. Those who are praised are inclined to act in ways that are cooperative rather than confrontational. The drawback is that using the approval and affection of a leader for motivation means turning control of one's life over to the leader.

2. The ineffectiveness of fear as a leadership style is obvious: If I can get you to do as I desire by using that weapon, then you'll only behave in these ways as long as I have the power to threaten you. When I leave, my influence over you departs as well.
4. The least effective means for managing others is to use tactics that will encourage them to despise you, for the moment they leave your sight, they'll defy all that you say and stand for.

The effective or enlightened leader trusts those whom he or she is in a position to govern. This view results in trust, as he or she who has faith in the people, will be trusted by them in turn. Consequently, they'll be able to say, "we did it ourselves."

Instead of believing that you know what's best for others, trust that they know what's best for themselves. Allow people to share their thoughts about the path they see for themselves. Let your position be known, but also convey that you trust them to make the right choice. The step back and peacefully believe that the way you look at this situation will change. Offer praise when those in your charge are making their own decisions, even when their behaviour may conflict with yours. Trust yourself to give the best response by not seeing yourself as knowing what's right. The surest way to gain the faith of those you govern or supervise is allow them to make as many decisions as possible.

Take pride in refusing to take credit for the achievements of others. Let praise go to those who are the beneficiaries of your leadership. Speak less frequently and suspend your self-interest – instead allow everyone in your care to speak for themselves. Change how you see their performance from being a credit to your skill to the thrill they exhibit over their accomplishment. Simply be there to serve, never demanding anything in return.

While at first glance it may seem that people would take advantage of a leader like described above, the truth is that those workers who are unable to adapt to that kind of environment would not remain with the company. Over time, you would attract workers who respond positively to such a workplace. Offer people a work space where they are respected and rewarded for their successes, and those people will become incredibly loyal and go far above and beyond the call of duty for their leader and company. No one is saying to throw rules away. People are still held accountable and subject to performance reviews. The unique feature with this type of leadership style is that it is about creating an environment where the leader "checks" his ego, sets the standards for performance which will support his people with the opportunity to win – and allow the people to be recognized as creating the win.

Excerpts from Change Your Thoughts – Change Your Life by Wayne Dyer

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