

## Needed: Everyday Leaders. (Everyone is Eligible.)

**D**avid 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.

Sarah read about effects of television on children and turned off her family's TV. The children now play board games, make up skits, play music, cook, read and play much more outside.

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, Sarah 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.

Indeed, the challenges and opportunities 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, conductors, mayors, principals.

"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."

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.

**"A great leader's courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position."**

—John C. Maxwell, author, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*

In other words, leadership is a way of life, an expression of our fullest and best nature, our unique gifts.

### Qualities of Leadership

Because leadership is inextricably connected to who we are deep down, every leader has a different style. 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; more important is listening. As President Woodrow Wilson said, "The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people." Likewise, the ear of a parent must ring with the voices of their children.

**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.

So if you're looking for a leader—stand up! ■

## 10 Ways to Cope with Change

*All change carries with it the risk of the unknown and the unexpected. Some find this exciting and welcome the challenge. Others go down the path of change reluctantly, dragging their heels all the way. But, as many a poet or songwriter has written, the only thing that's permanent is change. Here are 10 ways to help you deal with it.*

- 1. Understand your response to change.** Do you tend to leap before you look or to imagine the worst?
- 2. Take responsibility for your reaction to change.** You may not be able to control the events, but you can control your reaction to them.
- 3. Keep other changes to a minimum.** Coming to terms with major changes is physically and emotionally taxing. Conserve your energy.
- 4. Look to others.** Those who have undergone similar changes can serve as models for how you might better cope.
- 5. Ask for help and support.** Talk to reliable friends and/or outside professionals. This isn't the time to "go it alone."
- 6. Let go of "the way things used to be."** Instead, move into "the way things are."
- 7. Choose your company carefully.** You may need to avoid or reassure those who are threatened by your change.
- 8. Be real.** Both positive and negative changes can bring mixed feelings. Don't deny them.
- 9. Take a break from the situation.** Rest, regroup and regain a sense of balance.
- 10. Create your own rite of passage.** Ceremony and ritual help with transitions. ■

# A Letter From Yvonne Blockie M.A. M77



Every day, people tell themselves stories about why others did what they did or said what they said. This internal storytelling can grow particularly loud when the main character is your mate, your child or a significant person in your life. The page 3 article on this issue looks at the clues these stories can give about the true main character of your stories—you.

While you're at it, what story are you telling yourself about your qualities as a leader? Do you reject the notion that you are or could be a leader? This issue's front-page article calls us to recognize ourselves as everyday leaders, working to create the world, the community, the family that we want.

The Top 10 lists ways to maneuver through the upheaval and disorientation that change often creates, while the Quiz helps you zero in on the role that fear plays in the way you live and the decisions you make. Awareness of fear is always the first step to overcoming it and living in trust.

Finally, the back-page story discusses healthy boundaries, those limits we set over our emotional and physical well-being that we expect others to respect in their relationship with us. Without healthy boundaries, we stand to lose our personal identity, uniqueness and autonomy, or to create impenetrable walls around us.

Here's to a fantastic summer, whether it's calm and peaceful, or adventurous and full of change.

## How Well Do You Handle Fear?



At its best, fear is an instinctive, natural ability to help us survive. At its worst, it's that nagging voice inside our heads that heralds doom and disaster even before we get started on something. Fear keeps us from taking risks that might enrich our life or holds us back from doing what we need to do. Do we experience new and exciting vistas? Accomplish something really great? Get involved with that person or group? Fear says, "Not on your life." To discover the role fear plays in your life, complete the following Thriving quiz.

### True False Set 1

- 1. My self-talk is filled with *can't's*, *shouldn't's* and *ought-tos*.
- 2. I never talk about my fears. If I do, people will think I'm stupid or weak.
- 3. I often think about bad things that might happen in the future.
- 4. I feel trapped in or avoid social situations where it might be difficult to escape if I want.
- 5. I tend to need approval from family or peers before going after dreams and goals.
- 6. Making mistakes publicly is horrendous; I just want to crawl away and hide.
- 7. I'd rather not get involved in a relationship because I'll have to surrender personal power and lose myself.
- 8. To avoid being rejected, I try to please people and take my own needs and desires out of the equation.
- 9. I often compromise in situations to avoid conflict.
- 10. A sure-fire way to end up disappointed is to want something too much.
- 11. When things seem to be going really well for me, I get uneasy that I'll do something to ruin it.
- 12. I find it difficult to express undesirable emotions such as anger.
- 13. When confronted by others, I feel "spacey" and disconnected from my body.
- 14. I'm so nervous about approaching my boss for a raise, I've never asked for one.
- 15. I'd rather stick to what I know, even if it's not great, than risk change.

### Set 2

- 1. I expand my comfort zone by taking a small risk every day, such as making one phone call or asking for one thing I want.
- 2. When I feel fear, I keep my mind on the details, not the Big Picture. I complete the report word by word, pay the bills one by one, see the group individual by individual.
- 3. I look to others to model courage for me. Their courageous behavior inspires confidence.
- 4. When something scares me, I get information, replacing fear with knowledge.
- 5. I visualize myself doing what I'm afraid to do; I see myself as graceful, strong and capable.

If you answered true more than false in the first set of questions, fear may be playing a bigger role in your life than you'd like. In the second set, a true means you're successfully employing strategies to master fear. If your fears are pervasive or severe, you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder, in which case you should definitely seek help. If your fears are not debilitating, but still get in the way of doing what you need or want to do, asking for help can make all the difference.

## Oh, the Tales We Tell: Getting Beyond Our Stories

**E**very night, Joanne tucks herself in and tells herself her favorite bedtime story: *My husband is weak, irresponsible, overly interested in sex and a complete idiot about parenting.*

Her husband, Jerome, has his own favorite story: *My wife is a critical and demanding control freak, who shuts me out of family life and out of our bed, and nags so much my head pounds.*

Every day, we tell ourselves enough of these kinds of stories to fill a library: Why my spouse left this morning without saying goodbye. Why my friend hasn't called in a long time. What the tire salesman meant when he laughed at my question. Why my father is so judgmental. Why my daughter is being so difficult. How my boss has it in for me. How I'm such a failure.

And on, and on, and on.

We live our lives as if the stories are true. We act and react, often in pain, from our often mistaken understanding of another's words or actions, our assumptions about why they are saying or doing what they are, and our thoughts about how those people—and we, ourselves—*should be* different.

Yet, it is these stories, and the emotions that come from the stories, that are usually the source of pain in relationships. We want to blame another, but in reality, it's usually our thinking that is causing the discomfort, says Byron Katie, author of the best-selling book *Loving What Is*.

For example, Katie says, when you think the thought, "My father shouldn't be so judgmental," you might get angry, resent his criticisms, his advice, his belief that he knows best. You might avoid him or not listen to what he has to say about anything. You might be silent or rude when you're with him.

But while you believe your father to be judgmental, another might hear his judgments as good advice, or as one man's opinion, while someone else might find his words amusing. Your belief that your father shouldn't act the way he does or say the words he says are what cause you the anger, resentment and possibly even separation.

What we need to do to ease the pain and experience more freedom in our lives is learn to get beyond our stories, to get under our beliefs to what's really living there.

"The result of investigation is often a deeper appreciation of the people in our lives, and a realization that it was not their words or actions that really harmed us, but our uninvestigated thoughts about their words or actions," Katie says.

In her book, Katie outlines a simple path of inquiry into these horror stories we tell ourselves that revolves around four questions:

**1. Is it true?**

**2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?**

**3. How do you react when you think that thought?**

**4. Who would you be without the thought?**

First, state your belief about someone and ask yourself if it is true and whether you can know absolutely, without a doubt, that it is true. For example, you might say, "My children are uncooperative ingrates." Is it true they are ungrateful? Uncooperative? Have they ever expressed appreciation or done their

chores without complaining? Are they cooperative at school or at grandma's house? Do you know for sure that their unwillingness to help around the house is about wanting to make your life miserable?

The next question to ask yourself is: How do you react when you think these thoughts? Do you find yourself angry and resentful? Do you grumble all the while cleaning up after them? Do you yell at them, starting a fight and making chore day more like war day? Are you embarrassed when they forget to say "Thank you" for a gift?

Talk about lack of peace and harmony!

Imagine that you don't have this story any more. Who would you be?

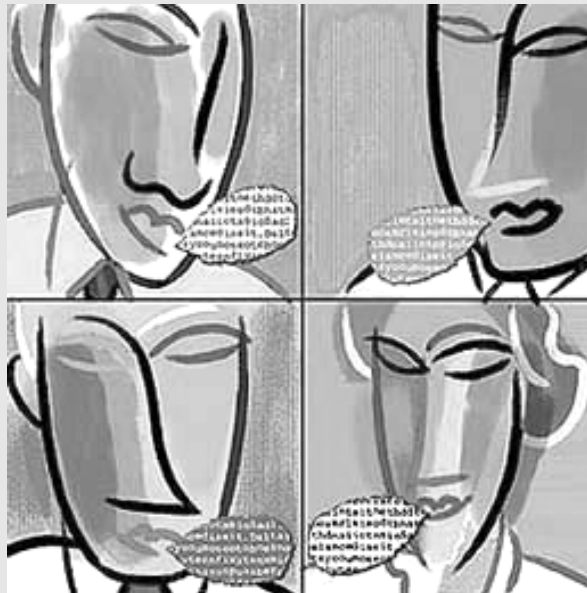
Perhaps you would be a happy parent who merrily modeled the joy of having a clean house or work space. Perhaps you would be less concerned about what others thought of your parenting. Perhaps you would be a parent who expressed love rather than resentment to your children, and whose children then expressed it back to you. Perhaps you would be calmer and more peaceful.

The final step in this investigation is to turn around the statements you've been making. Try them on. See if they fit. Do you express your gratitude enough? Do you thank your children, express appreciation to your mate, your parents, your co-workers? How about to yourself?

And how cooperative are you? Do you work together with your children on *their* wishes and desires? Would your boss say you are a team player? Do you cooperate with your different inner "parts" to make sure you get enough rest and good food, new things to learn and fun time off, mixed in with all of your work?

With an inquiry like this, there is no right answer. The goal is not perfection, but truth.

"Who would you be without your story?" Katie says. "You never know until you inquire. There is no story that is you or that leads to you. Every story leads away from you." ■





# Tending the Fences: Setting Healthy Boundaries

"Good fences make good neighbors." So goes the old proverb from the well-loved Robert Frost poem.

Likewise, good personal boundaries make for good relationships. Boundaries are those invisible lines of protection you draw around yourself. They let people know your limits on what they can say or do around you. Healthy boundaries give you freedom in relating to others. Make them too solid and you build walls, too weak and you allow other's actions to harm you.

It's not always clear where our boundaries are or need to be. Recognizing and studying the signs of ignored or ineffective boundaries is a good place to start, as these "symptoms" give clues to the needed boundary. See if any of the following ring true for you.

**Alloofness and distance.** When you are unwilling or fearful of opening your space to others, or when you build walls to insure that others don't invade your emotional or physical space, this may be a defense against cruel behavior, abuse or neglect that you allowed to happen. A person with healthy boundaries draws a line over which they will not allow anyone to cross because of the negative impact of its being crossed. They recognize their right to say, "No!"

**Chip on the shoulder.** This kind of

attitude declares, "I dare you to come too close!" and is often the result of anger over a past violation of or ignoring of your physical or emotional space by others. Healthy boundaries mean you are able to speak up when your space has been violated, leaving you free to trust that you can assertively protect yourself to ensure you are not hurt.

**Over-enmeshment.** In this game, the rule is that everyone must do everything together, and everyone must think, feel and act in the same way, without deviation from group norms. Healthy boundaries acknowledge that you have the right to explore your own interests, hobbies and outlets.

**Invisibility.** The goal here is not to be seen or heard so that your boundaries are not violated. Healthy boundaries are in effect when you stand up for yourself—be visible, be heard—so that others can learn to respect your rights, needs and personal space.

**Disassociation.** If you "blank out" or "go away" during stressful emotional events, it results in you being out of touch with your feelings and unable to assert your limits. Healthy boundaries allow you to assertively protect yourself from further violation or hurt and to choose to end relationships with those who will not respect them. With healthy boundaries,

you can begin to feel your feelings again.

**Smothering and lack of privacy.** When another is overly concerned about your needs and interests, or when nothing you think, feel or do is your own business, it can be intrusive into your emotional and physical space, leaving you feeling overwhelmed or like you are being strangled. Healthy boundaries ask that others respect your uniqueness, your choices, your autonomy.

## Applying Boundaries

Once we see where our limits need to be clarified or put in place, we can begin to install fence posts or patch holes, to keep unwanted critters out. Here are some strategies for applying limits when your boundaries are intruded upon:

- Calm yourself and take deep breaths.
- Remind yourself of your right to set limits.
- In a firm and composed manner, tell the other person how you feel.
- Communicate clearly what your limits are, especially when you are extending a new boundary.
- Ask the other person to respect your boundaries.
- Make decisions about the relationship according to how the other person responds to your request. ■

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