



Self-Confidence, Presence and Leadership

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You know the old expression – “They’re a born leader!”? Is there any such thing – or can we all be leaders? Is there any secret that can be learned – that we can all learn? Or are some “leaders” and most of us “followers”?

Well, first of all, let’s get a few facts straight. Most people who find themselves in leadership positions, wouldn’t be able to lead themselves out of a paper bag! They might have built up a veneer of self-confidence to get them to where they are – but that’s all self-confidence is, a veneer.

Self-confidence is a cloak that builds and protects your personality, or your ego. Your personality is not who you really are, it’s who you think you are – warts and all – based on the self-perceptions that you learned during your formative years. Self-confidence merely bolsters the ego and, in fact, removes you even further from your true capabilities and inner potential.

There’s a world of difference between the self-confident personality and someone with presence or charisma. People with presence are true leaders – whether they even have thought about it in those terms or not. So, what’s the difference between the “normal” person and the person who exudes presence?

Very simple really – and we can all exude presence. You see decades of research prove that “normal” people use only a small percentage of their mental capability to focus on the present moment – the here and now. Generally speaking, your subconscious mind is looking at the old programs that create your self-perception, which were installed during your childhood. In other words, your subconscious mind is living in the past. All the while, your conscious mind is being distracted by random thoughts – approximately, fifty thousand of them every day. No wonder your mind wanders! Generally speaking, these random thoughts are worries or distractions about the outturn of events, or looking forward (to the weekend, the holidays, meeting up with your friends tonight). In other words, your conscious mind is living in the future. What all this amounts to is that only about 1% or 2% of you is actually present, in the present.

People with presence are simply a little (or, in some cases, a lot) more present than all the “normal” people who are not all here at all. They are more focused in the present moment and are, therefore, more present. Surely, that’s what the word “presence” actually means! Being more

present, “normal” people notice them as being different – people with presence stand out from the crowd. And, as a result, they make more of an impression – they are more impressive.

Some “leaders” do it naturally. Others have learned it. We can all learn it. In fact, it comes naturally to every one of us too – we’ve just forgotten how to do it. You see, having presence is simply a question of being more focused in the present moment – more than the pathetic 1-2% that is the “norm”. And we all were experts at paying attention to the present moment when we were young children. (If you have children, just look at the way they get engrossed in their play, watching television, etc.)

Re-train your mind to be present – by paying attention to your five senses. Come to your senses. Appreciate the present moment by seeing, feeling, hearing smelling and tasting what’s going on. If you go through these simple steps, your mind will get used to being more here – and it will wander less. If you’re with friends, really listen to what they’re saying, rather than thinking about what you’ll say next. If you’re playing sports, really feel the strain in your legs and arms, rather than thinking about something that happened beforehand or thinking that your opponent is better than you (that’s actually a self-fulfilling prophecy!). If you’re in a meeting with someone you don’t like, stop thinking that useless thought, listen to what they’re really saying (not what you think they’re saying) and get involved – really involved. If you’re playing with your children, don’t try to wash the dishes and do the laundry at the same time – really play with them, rather than going through the motions.

But, most of all, give yourself the space and time to re-train your mind to pay attention – simply to notice and observe the present moment, using your five senses. You could go for a walk – just to do that. Not to “clear your head” or “think things through” – just to appreciate the here and now. You could allocate time to sit in the park – just experiencing the here and now. If you workout, you could turn off your iPod and really focus on the muscles you’re using.

The key point is this. If you want to get mentally fit and have presence, a little time set aside for mental training goes a very long way. And we can all do it.