

## Influential Leadership: Building Relationships

Influential leaders have a natural and insightful way of being in relationship. They are not always perfect at relating to people - but they have a keen interest in establishing, developing and sustaining the way they are in relationships. This relational focus and interest is not limited to people. It extends to all relationships: an innate understanding that all Life is connected - and that there is a dynamic relational flow that cannot be isolated or compartmentalised. Hence, the manner in which they relate to themselves, colleagues, friends and family, is also the manner in which they relate to nature, the animal kingdom and Life itself...

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Before we move on, I want to clarify what is meant by influential leadership. In this context, influence is about the leader's ability to bring about change - within a group or organisation; or within an individual. Natural and insightful (or otherwise),

the quality of the influence is a result of the relational dynamic. Thus, the manner in which we relate and influence can be both positive and negative.

There is another aspect to relationships - state of mind. Our state of mind is the mental state, temporary psychological condition, well-being, state of thinking and subsequent momentary feeling. The point is, when we understand the powerful influence that state of mind has on our experience of life, leadership becomes a natural way of being. And when we are conscious of the influence of our state of mind, the consequence is positive influence - we are influential and at the same time, conscious and self-aware. That is not to say that we then become perfect human beings who never lose it. However, it does say much about a presence that positively influences the building of sustainable relationships. This presence is a consequence of the leader's state of mind - the self-awareness of the power of his or her thinking, and the consequent personal experience of life. Self-awareness is really about an appreciation that human beings create their personal experience of life from the inside out.

Here's an example: we are driving along the road and suddenly, someone cuts in front of us, causing us to break hard. We narrowly avoid an accident. The offending car speeds off, zigzagging between other motorists. That is a life circumstance - or as some would say 'shit happening'. Now, how we experience this life circumstance is all about our state of mind in that moment. It will be our state of mind that determines whether we speed off, chasing 'that idiot' - or quickly recover from the intrusion, thank our lucky stars and carry on. Of course, there are myriad reactions to such events. But self-awareness (CONSCIOUSNESS) is our natural ability to understand that we think, and that our momentary thinking manifests our experience of life.

Conscious leaders have a deep appreciation of how insecurity and security work, in themselves and others. They understand that when our minds are unsettled, judgmental, opinionated, critical, obstinate and/or blaming 'life out there' -

**Conscious Leaders have a deep appreciation of the ways in which security and insecurity work - understanding that to blame circumstances, 'life out there', is personal insecurity at play.**

personal insecurity is at play. And although the experience may be disturbing, conscious leaders are able to allow the insecure moment to exist without self-condemnation or wanting it to be other than it is. In leaders who are more open to being humble to their own vulnerability, their fleeting insecurity and state of mind; this level of consciousness grows. Don't mistake humility for humiliation, timidity or avoidance. In this context we are talking about a non-resistant and non-reactive mind. What is, is. From this deeper perspective, we are in harmony with our vulnerability, SEEING (via humility), that our state of mind, and the insecure feelings we experience, are temporary.

For leaders who frequently face difficult relationships or challenging times, that contextual setting is just as true and relevant. Self-understanding provides a foundation for a quality of engagement with others regardless of how insecure either party may be at the time. Moreover, as a leader matures in consciousness, all forms of relationship, and the connectivity to **LIFE** expands. ■ ■