

## **Self leadership.**

Remember some of the great leaders who have influenced and inspired you the most? What made them for who they are or what they did? How about those leaders who are known for destruction, division or selfish? And what made them of who they are? Leaders play a vital role in society. But biggest misconception people have about leadership is that they are born, chosen or trained to lead others, influence others and bring change in others and society forgetting that change begins from them. You can not give what you do not have. Socrates has said in 5<sup>th</sup> BC itself that, “No man can lead others who cannot lead himself” (Self-leadership, 2022). Leading self is the primary and the most important step before leading others. Self-leadership is therefore the most important skill you ever acquire.

### **What is Self-Leadership?**

The concept of Self Leadership was first used by an organizational lead Charles C Manz in 1983. According to Manz ‘Self-Leadership’ is defined as “a self-influencing process whereby self-control and one’s own motivations are reached to a level that is necessary to achieve respective performance.” (Manz, 1983) In simple terms, self-leadership is the practice of intentionally influencing your thinking, feeling and actions towards your goals and objectives. The most recent working definition on self-leadership is given by Bryant according to whom, “Self-leadership is having developed sense of who you are, what you can do, where you are going coupled with the ability to influence your communication, emotions and behaviour on the way to getting others” (Bryant & Kazal, 2012).

### **Why Self-Leadership is important?**

Self-leadership works whether you are an employee, teacher, manager and a parent because it is the foundation for being effective human being living in the contemporary world. (Bryant & Kazal, 2012) The dynamics of workplace and employment have drastically changed today. Gone are those days when one finishes a graduation and thinks that life is set because it can get you employment. Today organizations doesn’t need more of loyal employees but they need situational leaders who have control of their sense self and handle situations well and contribute immensely. The prerequisite to leading other person or a group or a team and an organization is leading self. When my focus on self, it leads to introspection, evaluate one’s

competencies and challenges which in turn help to build goals and objectives clearly. Self-leadership helps to build both intra and inter personal relationships, promotes healthy thinking and manage emotions better. Developing self-leadership is important for an effective leadership as it hones our emotional intelligence, self-awareness and self-management.

### **Strategies for Self-leadership**

Self-leadership is a skill that can be acquired by practice there are many ways and strategies that can help one in improving this skill which in return will give a great foundation to influence or lead others be it in the family, team or an organization. According to Manz, self-leadership includes three central strategic dimensions of self-influencing. First, the behaviour-focused strategies that correspond self-management that includes goal setting, self-observation, self-reward and punishment. Second, natural reward strategies which relate to promotion of intrinsic motivation and third, cognitive thought pattern strategies (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Combining these strategies, Andrew Bryant, founder of Self leadership international a coach and internationally acclaimed trainer on self-leadership has proposed 3 main strategies/ skills to develop self-leadership namely, Self-awareness, Self-reflection and Self-regulation (Bryant & Kazal, 2012).

#### **Self-awareness**

In leading self, it is important to have awareness of self which is the ability to discern how your own emotions or personal biases may affect your decision-making. The basic questions like 'who are you will invite a person into self-introspection and knowing who you are and what you believe in will reveal what is most important. When you accurately recognize your own competencies and challenges, you can create a better plan for reaching your desired outcome. Techniques like SWOT analysis and Johari window will help better in the process of self-awareness. Self-leadership enables managers to lead with more awareness and understanding, and it helps make great leaders who set an example for their teams.

#### **Self-reflection**

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Reflection is most important step in life that helps us to pause, look around, and evaluate the experiences in life. When we

don't examine our life, we may easily lose the perspective or direction in life and experience prolonged unhappiness. In self-leadership self-reflection plays a role of transformation and that which inspires growth. In self-reflection a person looks at his/her life and asks this basic question 'how am I doing' and evaluates the effects and influences of the tools applied to achieve their objectives and goals. Self-reflection helps leaders to recognise and appreciate their strengths, take responsibility for their weaknesses and work on the areas that needs improvement. Techniques like daily examination of conscience, journal writing, practice of gratitude and asking deep questions can help very well in the practice of self-reflection. Knowing who you are, leads to knowing what you do by evaluating your behaviours and your motivations.

### **Self-regulation**

Self-regulation is an integral component of emotional intelligence that is essential skill for self-leadership. It is also called as a self-management where by leaders having understood who they are and having worked on their behaviours through self-reflection, will focus on what they need to learn and how they need to use them in return to build successful habits and create a healthy environment for success. Intrinsic motivation, continuous evaluation and constructive criticism play a major role in working towards self-regulation. Self-regulation/management will help leaders to improve skills like time management, goal setting, setting boundaries and managing their emotions.

### **Checking cognitive thought patterns**

Although the above strategies are very important and core pillars for self-leadership, our thoughts and the approaches towards each of them is equally important. Our mind is like a magnet and it influences our thoughts which in turn can impact our behaviours. So it's important for leaders to consciously check on their cognitive thought patterns especially their assumptions which Ken and others would call as challenge assumed constraints. *Assumed constraint is a belief you have based on past experiences, that limits your current and future experiences* (Blanchard, Fowler, & Hawkins, 2005). The best example is elephant thinking who believes that it can't break loose the chain around its legs. Self-leader should break from this kind of

assumptions that constrain from open and positive thinking. Self-leader should also refrain from mind reading which is a cognitive constraint that might lead to failures.

According to Aristotle, “Greatest victory is to conquer yourself.” Self-leadership is one of the most important skill one should focus to achieve as it enables one to develop a sense of who they are, what their capacities are and make use of these strengths to be self-aware, reflect and regulate their behaviours, emotions and engage in positive thinking that leads to successful achievement of their goals and objectives. A self-leader can handle crisis easily by managing them without biases. He/she is goal oriented and can lead their life, family or team very well. They believe in their personal power more than positional power because, “empowerment is something someone gives you. Self-leadership is what you do to make it work (Blanchard, Fowler, & Hawkins, 2005).”

## References

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