

# Top 9 Tips for Living and Leading

By Aaron Boe

Circle the one tip that you feel will help you the most and keep this posted in a spot where you will see it often.

## *1. Become a Skilled Follower*

This is possibly the most powerful skill anyone could learn. Great leaders are great followers. They simply model the strengths in others and leave the shortcomings behind. Learn to “follow parts” of people. Whether it is habits, attitudes, people skills, or unique traits and talents, you can learn to follow what works for other people. Just as it is wise to seek advice from all types of people, it is also wise to look for what you can learn from everyone around you. Be smart enough to identify a strong quality in everyone (whether they are popular and admired by others or not) and both your success and happiness will increase. Caution: A skilled follower only emulates the *strengths* in others.

## *2. Practice the Essential Skill of Asking for Help*

A wise person is willing to learn from others. A very wise person is eager to learn from others whether they are older, the same age, or younger. You will not lose respect by asking for input or advice. Often you will gain respect. You *will* lose respect, however, by pretending to know what you do not.

## *3. Build a Reputation of Being Trustworthy by Doing What You Say You Are Going to Do*

Make your commitments mean something to people. Work to become known as someone who will show up on time, have work completed that you said you would do, and only make promises on what you know you can deliver. It only takes a short time or a couple instances of irresponsibility to become known as someone who is unreliable. What people in all organizations and businesses are looking for is someone they can rely on.

## *4. Be Smart Enough to See the Strengths in Others*

Anyone can pick out another’s weaknesses or personality traits that may be considered flaws. What people need is someone to give them opportunities to feel important and appreciated. All of us will have plenty of people pointing out our shortcomings. Often, people do not even see their own strengths until

someone else points them out. Practice noticing strengths and strong character traits in others and commenting on them with sincerity.

### *5. Do What Needs to Be Done Whether You Feel Like it or Not*

Sometimes you'll need to do what you don't feel like doing. Leadership conferences can be inspiring. Being told you are a leader may be flattering. And envisioning great success can be exciting. *All* people, however, who reach their goals and influence others in positive ways make sacrifices. They work when they don't feel like working. They refrain from speaking when they want to criticize. They apologize when they don't want to admit they were wrong. Practice feeling good about the fact that you do what needs to be done, whether you feel like it or not.

### *6. Know the Principle of Influence*

Avoid the most common leadership mistake of not believing that your actions influence others. You have heard about being a good role model and being a good example. Often we hear things so much they don't have meaning anymore. What you must understand is that your example includes many things. The way you talk with others, the way you respond to problems and challenges, and the way you talk about others who are not present are just a few of the ways people will be influenced by your actions. Our actions influence others whether we want them to or not. When you treat others with respect, people see a strong example to follow and they respect you more. When you treat *anyone* disrespectfully, people see a weak example to follow and although you may retain popularity, their respect for you will decrease.

### *7. Appreciate the Value of Those Who are Different Than You*

If everyone were just like you (or me) the world would fall apart. Appreciating diversity is not just about looking beyond skin color; it is about understanding that a strong organization or team is composed of people who think differently and bring different skills and personalities to the group. You may possess great strengths that others would benefit from developing, but your way of thinking and approaching tasks is only one way.

### *8. Aspire to Be That Which is Beyond "Cool" – Be Respectable*

The concept of respect is the most powerful one I have found because of its ability to direct your actions. Acting in ways you *respect* not only keeps you on track toward your goals, it also increases your self-confidence. It is easy to be influenced by the attitudes and wishes of others. If you ask yourself which option you would most respect you will know the right action to take. Both your success and your happiness can be increased in virtually every area of your life by directing your actions toward the choice that is more respectable.

## 9. Say What is On Your Mind

Some people are better at this than others, but nearly everyone struggles to do it effectively. The second most common leadership mistake is *not* speaking up and saying what is on your mind. Your instincts are often correct. Whether you feel you should point out a potential problem in a plan, or you feel you should speak up when someone is being overly critical of another person, you must form the habit of respectfully saying what is on your mind.

Aaron Boe is a professional speaker and the author of, *Letters to Kegan: 30 Truths for Life's Journey*. Whether your school is a major university or a small middle school, Aaron's programs are relevant and delivered with passion and authenticity.

Popular programs include:

*Love, Sex, and Other Stuff* – Safe Dating, Respect, and Sexual Assault Awareness

*The Four Freedom Factors* – Dating, Alcohol, Self-Image, and Diversity

*Creating the Same Team School* – Bullying, Mentoring, and Leadership Development

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