

PREFACE

John Heider's "The Tao of Leadership" reflect lifelong learning experiences and are not short-term fixes. The central themes are few, but yet are powerful if they are applied, modeled, and shared. These beliefs and practices help form and shape our vision. However, a vision that is not shared and applied could soon become a hallucination or a dream without accountability and buy-in.

There are tens of thousands of Taoist sayings and beliefs that extends to practically all areas of life itself. A short list includes the practice of moderation, yielding, following, reflection, facilitation, silence, non-intervention, organizing, simplicity, inclusion, awareness, integrity, encounters, opportunities, rigidity, helpfulness and "letting go". When applied in practice they are powerful systemic resources for expanding your leadership beliefs.

I believe that there is a need to slow down on some of our "go-go" professional and personal decisions by applying these principles from The Tao of Leadership. This may enable us to focus on long term changes in tandem with our effort to address the demands of short term needs..

With the above discourse in mind, I wrote a condensed abstract of Heider's work that I trust will be helpful in developing the full potential of your leadership qualities. Think "long-term," "systemic," and "sustainability" as the core for expanding your growth that ought to partner together both principles of theory and content. You should be pleased with yourself if you can apply and put into action two or three of these beliefs.....more and you are on a "roll!"

By the way, most of these sayings are attributed to Lao Tzu the venerable Sage (600 BC) who wrote many of them to guide the Emperors and their Royal Courts---and he was never beheaded!

May the Tao be with you.

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THE TAO OF LEADERSHIP

(An abstract of John Heider's translation)

ANSWERS Nobody has all the answers. Knowing that you do not know everything is far wiser than thinking that you know a lot when you really don't. A wise leader knows how painful it is to fake knowledge and does not indulge in pretending. "I don't know" is powerful.

ARGUMENT If you get into an argument with a staff member, and it does not come out the way you wish it would, do not pretend to compromise while withholding your true feelings. Yield your position and return to facilitating what is happening—win or lose.

AWARENESS The leader can do less yet achieve more by becoming aware of what is happening.

AWARENESS Lead by pushing less and open out and be aware. Listen quietly rather than listening hard and stay in the present rather than the memories of the past or fantasies of the future.

BALANCE See things backwards, inside out, and upside down: "Water wears away rock;" "Showing of strength suggests insecurity;" "The weak will undo the mighty."

BEING ONESELF Style is no substitute for substance. A down-to-earth person can do things more effectively than one who is merely busy.

DISCERNING To understand and lead requires intelligence and strength, but to know yourself takes wisdom. If goals are clear, they are achieved without fuss.

EFFICIENCY Power comes through cooperation, independence through service, and a greater self through selflessness.

EGO Any form of egocentricity, or selfishness, will blind a leader to how changes happen. Insecure leaders usually promote themselves by rushing matters that will get them nowhere.

ENCOUNTERS Have respect for every person and every issue directed at you and do not dismiss any encounter as insignificant, but respond to it while it is still manageable. If one have not bragged about their abilities or tried to make people be the way they think they ought to be, encounters will be rare and few.

EQUITY A leader does not pretend to be special, gossip, or waste time arguing about the merits of competing theories. Silence is golden and a great source of strength.

FIGHT Consider the strategy of the guerrilla commander if your staff wants to fight with you. Never seek a fight. Yield and step back and advance only where you encounter no resistance. If you make a point, do not cling to it. If you win, be gracious.

FLOW Allow group process to emerge naturally and resist temptation to instigate issues or elicit emotions which have not emerged on their own. All energies naturally arise, take form, grow strong come to a new resolution, and finally pass away.

FOLLOWING Leading without following is sterile. In order to lead, the leader learns how to follow.

HELPING Say it like it is as opposed to saying things that sound good. Act on behalf of everyone rather than to win arguments. A strong leader relishes in helping others find their own success. Sharing success with others is very successful and true benefit blesses everyone and diminishes no one. The reward for doing the work arises naturally out of the work.

INCLUSION Solid leadership is all inclusive and embraces all people and is not confined to winning.

INTEGRITY A leader's integrity is not idealistic, but rests on a pragmatic knowledge of how things work and happening. Therefore, the leader is a neutral observer who takes no sides.

INTERVENTIONS Making people do what you think they ought to do is often ineffective. While they may do what you tell them to do at the time, your perceived success is actually a failure.

LEADERSHIP Three leadership qualities: Compassion, Sharing, and Equality will sustain life.

LESS = MORE Solid leadership consists of doing less and being more. Facilitate and focus on what is happening. Interference creates a dependency on the leader. The fewer rules the better for they reduce spontaneity and responsibility.

LETTING GO Good leadership lets go in order to achieve and the best work is often done with no points of views thus allowing the leader to make less of themselves.

LISTENING A leader who knows when to listen, when to act, and when to withdraw can work effectively with nearly anyone.

MODELING Lead by examples rather than by lecturing others on how they ought to be.

NON-INTERVENTION Facilitate what is happening rather than what you think ought to be happening. Lead by intervening less and do not intrude or control by forcing your needs and insights into the foreground. Trust your staff's process and they will trust you.

OPEN-ENDED The wise Principal does not impose a personal agenda or value system on the staff. He or she judges no one and openness is simply more potent than any system of judgments ever devised. Being open and attentive is more effective than being judgmental.

OPPORTUNITIES Good leadership consists of motivating people through opportunities not obligations. Effective Principals motivates their staff by offering opportunities, not obligations. Life is an opportunity and not an obligation.

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ORGANIZATION An able leader does little, but much gets done. Where there is order, there is little to do.

PAUSE Allow people time to reflect and they will see more clearly what is essential in themselves and others.

PROCESS Group process evolves naturally and regulates itself. Facilitating what is happening is more potent than pushing for what you wish was happening. Radiance encourages people, but outshining everyone would inhibit them.

PROCESS The staff will challenge ego-centered leader so understand process, use little force and lead without pressuring people.

PUSH Too much force will backfire and leaders who push may feel that they are facilitating progress, when in fact they are blocking process. Avoid egocentricity and emphasize being rather than doing.

RESISTANCE Solid leadership consists mainly of knowing how to follow. The leader stays in the background and facilitates and the best works of the leader go largely unnoticed. Because the leader does not push, pull, or manipulate there is no resentment or resistance.

RIGIDITY A rigid leader may be able to lead repetitious and structured exercises, but can't cope with lively group process. Whatever is flexible and flowing will tend to grow. Whatever is rigid and blocked will atrophy and die.

RIPPLE EFFECT Our behavior influences others through a ripple effect that begins with ourselves and ripples outward (107) . All growth spreads outward from a nucleus and we are a nucleus.

ROLE-MODEL By giving up selfishness leaders could enhance others and rather than trying to be enlightened, he was enlightened.

SELFLESSNESS Leadership is service, not selfishness. The well being of all is primary to the well being of the self.

SIMPLICITY "Keep it simple." A superficial leader cannot see how things happen even though the evidence is everywhere, but the leader who simplifies process has a deep sense of how things happen.

SLOW DOWN Leaders who lose touch with what is happening cannot lead spontaneously, but by losing the sense of immediacy, a sense of clarity and consciousness returns.

"SOFT" Water is fluid, soft, and yielding. but water will wear away rock. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. A leader must endure abuse and if the leader were not like water, the leader would break. The ability to be soft makes the leader a leader. What is soft is strong. "Nice guys finish first."

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SOLID STAFF A good staff is better than a spectacular staff. When a leader becomes a superstar, he tends to outshine the message. A moderate ego demonstrates wisdom.

SUCCESS There's leadership and fame and if you make too much of yourself, egocentricity will injure both self and work, so do all you can do to foster success in others.

THEORY & PRACTICE People who see the world in terms of theories often have difficulties of what is happening. Complex explanation will confuse people and their thoughts will be filled with opinions. The ability to distinguish between theory and practice is priceless.

"THIRD STRING" A staff will not flourish if the leader grabs the headlines of the credit for the good work that has been done. The wise leader is not greedy, selfish, defensive, or demanding.

UNBIAS Lead without being possessive; lead without taking the credit; Lead without coercion. This is doable if the leadership style is unbiased, clear, and down-to-earth.

UNDERSTANDING Knowing how things work gives the leader more ability than all the degrees or titles the world can offer and that is why every culture acknowledges and honors those who know how things happen.

UNITY Too much theory distracts from what is happening and from the process itself. Talking about process is one way to block process so concentrate on what is happening.

WATER A good leader yields and bends like water and does not push; likewise the staff does not resent or resist.

WIN-WIN Inefficiency, confusion, and often quarrels surfaces when the leader loses sight of how things happens. This is a matter of attitude and making a point and wanting to be "right" blinds people.

YIELDING Gentle interventions, if they are clear, overcome rigid resistances. When the leader yields, resistances relax and few leaders realize how much how little will do.