

A guidebook  
for teens

# Everyday

# LEADERSHIP

ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

FOR RESPECT AND SUCCESS

free spirit  
PUBLISHING®

MARIAM G. MACGREGOR, M.S.

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MARIAM G. MACGREGOR, M.S.

Edited by Ruth Taswell



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## FOREWORD

The title of this book alone, *Everyday Leadership*, highlights how every day there are opportunities for all of us to make a difference in others' lives—to provide leadership wherever we go or in whatever we do. Taking the lead isn't just for adults or a few teens who have special talents. Leadership is *everyone's* business. It's people bringing forth the best in themselves and others and acting with intention and a caring heart. It's expressing your beliefs in ways that uniquely represent you so others recognize you're the one speaking. It's seeing yourself as the answer to the question, "Why doesn't someone do something about this?"

Of course, for you to lead others, you must first believe in yourself. When working with teens, I'm constantly reminded of the power within each of us. We all have an ability to do more than what we're usually asked. This powerful book can help you discover what's within you. Written by an author who's passionate about helping *all* young people take the lead, it'll guide you in exploring who you are and what you care about. You'll gain more confidence in yourself and uncover an ability to do more than you may ever have thought possible.

Barry Z. Posner, Ph.D.

Coauthor, *The Leadership Challenge* and *A Leader's Legacy*

## INTRODUCTION

# A Leadership Attitude

Have you ever wished you felt more confident? Had more respect from your friends and classmates? Or that adults and others really heard what you had to say?

As a teen, you have many exciting paths to explore. You may feel overwhelmed by the possibilities or pressure to please a lot of people. When it seems unclear which path to take, it's human nature to wonder, "Who *am* I?" "What *do* I care about?" "How *can* I make a difference?"

Let this book inspire you to discover some of the answers to these questions, as you look at what it means to take the lead in everyday situations and in out-of-the-ordinary ones.

We all know about the importance of having a positive attitude, but what about a "leadership attitude"? Just as anyone can choose to have a positive attitude, anyone can learn to have a leadership attitude. With a leadership attitude, you take action while others may sit on the side. You learn about yourself while learning to lead.

The activities you'll participate in and write about using this book are activities that have helped other teens develop a leadership attitude. As a result, these teens said that they:

- Felt more confident speaking in front of others and figuring out conflicts
- Got better grades
- Did more extracurricular activities
- Liked having others see them as part of the solution, not part of the problem
- Cared more about doing positive things in their community
- Showed more interest in education after high school (for example, voluntarily took college entrance exams, went to college information sessions, or applied for financial aid before graduating from high school)

You don't need to be someone "special" to take the lead. Leadership isn't just for adults, politicians, authority figures, or the rich and famous. Still, finding personally meaningful ways to take the lead can be challenging. Perhaps you shy away from leadership because you're afraid of making a mistake or of "failing" in front of others. Maybe you think you don't have what it takes or have been told you're too young. Maybe others perceive you as a troublemaker and you don't believe they'll see you as a leader. Or possibly, you *do* find yourself drawn to being a leader and are trying to identify ways to act on your abilities.

Many times leadership opportunities, big and small, are right in front of you. Sometimes they are things you already are doing. With a leadership attitude, you recognize when you take the lead or when you can. Being a leader motivates you to try new things and find out more about what you believe in. Being a leader inspires you to discover how to successfully make a difference in the world around you—how to reach your own potential as a unique person.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE


This guide is divided into 21 sessions about different topics on leadership. The sessions are meetings you and other teens in your group or class will participate in with your group leader or teacher.



The quotes at the beginning of each session are triggers to jumpstart your thoughts about the leadership skills you're learning. Reflecting on what the quotes are saying or make you think about allows you to consider how closely they capture your own feelings about leadership. If possible, share your thoughts with others.

For each session, you'll also find two sections titled "Think and Write About It" and "Do Something About It." Some sessions may also have other sections titled "Try This" and "Find Out More About It." "Try This" pages coordinate with an activity you may do during a session, or which you could also do later if you miss a session. "Find Out More About It" pages provide background information or additional reading on the session topic, and also are good reference materials for other times in your life when you encounter a situation or want to know a little more as you practice your leadership skills.

For the “Think and Write About It” pages, your group leader or teacher will ask you to write responses to a few or all of the questions. The questions relate to the session activity. They also help you connect what you are learning with how leadership relates to everyday life.

This book is a place to write honestly and sincerely about your ideas on leadership. After completing group activities and discussions in a session, you may be thinking, “Yeah, I get it,”  so it may seem unnecessary to reflect and write about your experiences. But reflecting is important! Expressing your thoughts in writing gives you a way to commit to what you just “got” from the leadership session. When you have an idea in your head, it’s easy to just mull it over day after day. But when you put that thought onto paper, you take another step toward actually doing something. Use a notebook or folder to store pictures, session handouts, notes, mementos, or other things from your experiences as a leader that you want to remember.

To help build your confidence about sharing, write—or discuss during sessions—only what you’re comfortable knowing others may read or ask you about. Interacting with others in your group helps you gain insight into yourself. And sharing your writing and ideas promotes the everyday connections you’re making about leadership. It also helps you understand what other people are learning or going through and guides you to become the type of leader you would want to work with on a team.

Although you and your friends may discover similar expectations about leaders, each person has his or her own leadership style. Even though everyone in your group is learning the same leadership skills, you’ll probably interpret them differently. Being an effective leader is knowing how to work as part of a team, appreciating others for their contributions, and learning how to take appropriate risks. Being an effective leader also is about recognizing when you don’t have all the answers and knowing how to still carry on. So talk about the skills, practice them together, and look for ways you can learn more about leadership and inspire others around you.

At the end of each session, you will be asked to select a goal or two from the “Do Something About It” pages to put your leadership attitude, knowledge, and skills into action. The goals echo themes of the session activities. These acts can be simple to undertake or require greater personal stretching to accomplish. You may get nervous taking the first steps, but



remember those steps don't always have to be hard. No matter what, the greatest step is committing to take action. The more actions you choose, the more you learn. Each "Do Something About It" page includes blank lines for you to add your own, maybe more personal, ideas.

Put a check next to the goals you select that will demonstrate your leadership abilities and write the specific date by which you will complete them; then record when you actually reach a goal and describe what you did. Although you may achieve some goals quickly, others take time, preparation, and teamwork. Some goals are ongoing and, even if you set a date by which to "complete" them, they can soon become new habits or regular behaviors (for example, daily, once a week, twice a month).

You may already know what it's like to set goals such as those in the "Do Something About It" pages, or this may be a first. Either way, challenge yourself to select actions that are reasonable and help you take being a leader to the next level.

To open yourself up to what the world has to offer and make a difference, developing a leadership attitude and committing to taking action are essential. What choices can you make today that will expand your personal leadership attitude? What other opportunities can you find to expand your commitment as a leader and change maker? Let this book and what you learn in all your leadership experiences guide you to discover what's truly possible within and because of you. If you have a leadership experience you'd like to share, write to me in care of Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 217 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55409, or at [help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com).



In closing, a note of thanks to all my past students, especially the ones who never believed they had the "right stuff" to be leaders, and who often proved everyone, including themselves, wrong.

Thanks also to the teens on my virtual advisory board, who provide insight and honest feedback about issues important to teen leaders and whether the things I write are actually interesting to teens. If you would like to become part of my virtual board in the future, email me at [mariam@youthleadership.com](mailto:mariam@youthleadership.com).

*Mariam G. MacGregor, M.S.*

# INTRODUCING LEADERSHIP



*Each one of you has something no one else has, or has ever had: your fingerprints, your brain, your heart. Be an individual. Be unique. Stand out. Make noise. Make someone notice. That's the power of individuals.*

—**Jon Bon Jovi**, musician and singer

*A great tennis career is something that a 15-year-old normally doesn't have. I hope my example helps other teens believe they can accomplish things they never thought possible!*

—**Maria Sharapova**, world-class professional Russian tennis player

When you find yourself facing a situation or problem you wish you could change, what do you do? When you discover something new or exciting you'd like to achieve, do you act on your ideas or hesitate? What makes you unsure? Sometimes, people hold back on trying to fulfill their hopes or dreams because they want to fit in with peers or please friends. Sometimes, they don't act because they're scared to try. But often, they simply don't know what steps to take. Committing to learning how to take the lead can help you figure out what the most effective steps are. The question then becomes: What *will* you do?



## Think and Write About It

In this session's activity, you imagined yourself some years from now as an accomplished leader on the cover of a fictitious magazine. Now think about ways you already are a leader. Consider what you do every day and what you care about: how you help your family, groups at school or where you live, a part-time job, your attitudes. Reflect on ways you have changed because of your involvement. If you aren't sure of your own leadership skills, think about what you want to do. Write your responses to one or more of the following statements or questions.

I consider myself a leader at \_\_\_\_\_ because

---

---

I don't consider myself a leader at \_\_\_\_\_ because

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People at \_\_\_\_\_ consider me to be a leader because

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People at \_\_\_\_\_ don't consider me to be a leader because

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When you think of yourself as a leader, what expectations do you have of yourself?

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What expectations do you feel others have of you as a leader?



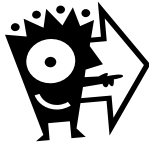

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### Do Something About It

To commit to learning about leadership, it's important to put your thoughts into action. Choosing to act can help you take being a leader to the next level, assist you in finding out more about yourself, or inspire you to do something that before now you couldn't imagine doing.

Check the goal(s) you will set to demonstrate your leadership abilities. If you have ideas of your own that you prefer, add them on the lines provided. Then write a date by which you plan to put your goal(s) into action on the "To Do By" lines and the date you completed them on the "Did By" lines. Be sure to fill in "What I Did to Achieve My Goal(s)."

	To Do By	Did By
<input type="radio"/> I will do what I can to help a new teen in my neighborhood, school, or youth group feel welcome.	_____	_____
<input type="radio"/> I will sit next to someone other than one of my friends in one of my classes or other activities and offer my help.	_____	_____

To Do By

Did By

I will find out what teen leadership positions are available at school or with a community group or program.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will talk with my friends or family about the ways they think I am already a leader.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other "Do Something About It" Ideas

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What I Did to Achieve My Goal(s)



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