

Willpower and Leadership

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Leadership is often underlined by the ability for someone to take charge. This isn't just meant by the ability to stand up and become a leader, but one's own will power and ability to push themselves physically and mentally. It is something that underpins history's greatest leaders and is a lesson for those aspiring leaders to look at. It is something that through my own personal experiences and some historical examples I wish to explore. Via looking back at my experiences, thoughts and aspirations I hope to understand the relationship between willpower and the ability to lead.

I firstly explore my past experiences to understand the relationship of leadership and willpower. Starting off with one I had with cycling. In my time in Scouting my troop would go on a 50 mile bike ride along the Rio Hondo Channel. Normally this would not be an issue ,with a normal bike, but at the time I was using an abnormal bike. I was using a BMX bike which had no gear shift, not allowing me to leverage the gears in order to minimize my work. Compounded with my adolescent and therefore weak body this led to what would otherwise be a simple bike ride to becoming a herculean task that brought me to my breaking point. I vividly remember suffering through the LA heat and nearly collapsing multiple times. While leadership in the traditional sense, where an individual guides a group, was not occurring here. What was happening was my willpower becoming a leader in my own body guiding it to success. It can be seen as if my brain became a leader to the rest of my body leading it to success preventing the rest from giving out.

Another experience was my time getting lost. This story also occurred while I was in Scouting but involves my time hiking in the Sierras. When hiking up in the Sierras it is expected that a restroom visit be done off the trail. When I was hiking up in these mountains I had to go through this process. This was on a new moon light so the only light was from the flashlight I

was carrying. This made navigating very disorienting as it was very easy to get disoriented with the repeating trees and only being able to see a few meters ahead. I went and found a spot to do what I needed and when I stood up I became dizzy. This is due to the altitude where it is very easy to get winded. After this I realized I was lost, while I wasn't far from the camp but because of all the factors compounded I became disoriented and lost. I was only able to find my way back through using my vague knowledge of the surrounding mountain range to orient myself, using the impression they left on the starlit sky allowing me to determine the presence of mountains.

One thing I decided to do recently was chart my diet. I have found that I tend to not eat enough and wanted to get a picture of just how bad this problem was becoming. What I found was that I was severely malnourished, sometimes going through a whole day with only a meal at dinner. When I decided to do some introspection to find the root of the problem I found that it was laziness. Normally people who suffer from malnutrition barring accessibility to food comes from body image. This is not the case for me, instead the problem arose from the work required to feed myself. I lacked the motivation and would skip meals in order to avoid the work of acquiring prepping and cleaning the work required for eating. This is a clear example of what can happen during a loss of motivation for anybody. For myself due to the motivation for food becoming so low that it could not trump the want to be lazy I found myself starving. Even basic human functions such as eating were failing because the motivation was not there. This goes to illustrate how important it is to have motivation when doing anything as nothing else can compel someone to do anything without the proper motivation.

Why I bring these personal examples up is due to what they show about the ability to lead your own self. If someone cannot lead and control their own body and have the willpower to push themselves beyond what they otherwise would do, how can they be expected to lead others.

It is often stated that a leader should be an example to others so it is important out of all people they have the most self control and the most ambition for the project. Otherwise if the leader is unmotivated the rest will follow suit. As stated with the comparison of the brain being a leader while i was suffering through the bike ride, the leader is the brain of an operation if they are gone the whole rest of the operation will at best be aimless and at worst completely dissolve. This makes the importance of understanding leadership critical as it plays a critical role in the success of any project or operation.

Going beyond just my own body's examples of leadership and what it has to show with it, I also see value in looking at the successful and even unsuccessful examples of leadership. By studying what worked and what didn't in the past, whether it be from our own personal stories or from those of history, it can give far greater insight than just the instinctual observations made in the moment. The greatest success stories were never done in a vacuum, they were done through the rigorous study of what worked and what didn't in the past and there has been no reason to change this methodology.

When I was young I went on a trip to Europe with my family. It mainly involved going across the Rhine river. On this trip we went to see the Cologne cathedral. One of the many medieval cathedrals dotting all of western and central europe. They were built in order to invoke the presence of God in the viewer, striking spires to dwarf the people below. When I visited it invoked these same feelings especially when all I was used to seeing at the time was one to two story suburban housing. These structures were built by generations of people in the case of the Cologne cathedral construction started in 1248 and finished in 1880 632 years to finally complete. This devotion of these people to their craft expresses a very strong willpower. Something that was able to give them strength in order to build a monumental structure to God

dedicating several generations to the task. An example of the power of willpower in making plans into reality. It demonstrates how given some form of motivation and leadership people can accomplish great tasks.

Further expanding on the need for willpower of the people to be directed via leadership I look into the Environmentalists and their movement for a greener world. Climate change is a current and ever present crisis that is or soon will affect everyone on earth. Due to a series of pollutants being carelessly dumped or exhausted onto the earth the environment and ecosystems on earth have become wildly unstable. This has led to an increasingly uninhabitable planet where temperatures swing rapidly and places become more trashy and unhealthy. This has necessitated the need for immediate action. It is an area that is in dire need of a leader who can step up and wrangle the whole of the passion that many have to resolve this issue and direct it to focused causes. This the environmentalists have done a very remarkable job at. Starting from before world war two this movement has driven out the careless mentality that painted the early industrial world and introduced a far more sustainable and safer alternative. This would have not occurred if it weren't for the willpower of those who wished to make a change. This willpower had to be directed through, many movements despite having strong willpower of the collective group, falter and ultimately fail because they lack clear leadership. Without someone to discern the noise of the group and guide it to success the movement will fray and split into subfactions of wildly different beliefs. This is where environmentalism as a movement while having many faults has been relatively successful in producing change.

One of the bigger trips I went on in scouting was my trip to the World Scout Jamboree. This was a two week long camp where scouts from around the world would attend and intermingle with other scouts from different parts of the world. While I wasn't writing home I

would phone home to state the happenings at the camp. I would explain the failure of leadership that I was experiencing at the camp. The scouts designated as our leaders became absent, they wouldn't be there for the rest of the troop leading to the rest of the troop becoming mismanaged. This mismanagement came mainly due to the loss of interest that the leaders had with leadership. They had no will to lead, leading to a crisis of leadership.

Leadership is often not something delegated; it often arises naturally among a crisis. This was something I realized when the worst case scenario occurred while I was working at a summer camp. My job at the camp involved mountain biking, it involved taking the scouts on rides through the mountainous region of the camp. This inevitably resulted in injury, the worst of which would be broken wrists or scrapes. None of these were severe enough to warrant any great concern, even a broken wrist was something manageable as it did not pose a direct risk to the scouts life. This was the norm all through my tenure until the last day where a scout accidentally lost control of his bike and fell approximately 20 feet below. The Kid ended up sustaining severe injury but ultimately ended up fine. The aspect that I wish to focus on in this incident was the ability for people to naturally rise up and become a leader. Despite the panic of the catastrophe there were people who clearly became leaders, demonstrating that this dynamic in groups is something primal that will always naturally occur no matter the situation.

In order for a scout to achieve the rank of Eagle one must complete an Eagle project. As I have achieved this rank I had to do an Eagle project. For my project I had to demolish and then reconstruct an accessibility ramp. This wasn't done as a solo project as I had to enlist the help of scouts in my troop as well as their parents. Because of this I had to be a project leader for not just young scouts but also their parents. Surprisingly during the project the adults who I thought would give me a tough time as I assumed they would ignore my instruction instead insisting on

their own methodology. Instead the main difficulty was motivating young scouts who tended to have little to do to continue to work. I found that with little to do there willpower to continue to work would diminish making effectively leading them more difficult. This experience showed me the importance of having motivation for groups that I lead. When people are motivated they become easier to lead. They become more willing to do the work that is needed making the entire process much more simple. Willpower of those being led plays a large role as their willpower plays directly to the ability of the project to be successfully completed.

Beyond just examples from the past it is also important to look forward. Seeing how the lessons of the past apply to the future can ensure that what is learned is not forgotten. Especially with leadership where the lessons learned can be the difference between life and death it becomes far more critical to understand them and apply them correctly. This is why I want to explore some of my own aspirations and study how might leadership and willpower play into them and how they may make them a much more attainable reality,

Life goals are something everyone has but very few reach. They are often not achieved through sitting around as they often involve intense amounts of effort such as climbing the tallest mountain or dedication like becoming a world class musician. In my own case my goal is to make enough money to live comfortably. This is not a grand dream like many have but it is one that I believe is realistically achievable, and ensures a comfortable future free from any of the drawbacks that may come with more eccentric aspirations. It's obvious why I would want this as it is pretty simple, everyone wants to live comfortably. The aspect about this though that I wish to focus on is reaching this goal. People don't get paid for nothing necessitating the need to work. While it is possible to do the minimum and still make money and in theory survive. In the current day with the current economy this is not the case. To live even adequately requires work

to live comfortably where money is not an immediate concern requires much more. With the necessary luck and the willpower to succeed it is achievable but not easy. Yet it is still important to keep motivation and willpower as it is the driving force to success.

Expanding on my own dreams is exploring places I would dream to travel to. There are many but a place I would like to sail to would be Hawaii. While I've been to Hawaii, this has been done on a plane where the journey consists of boarding a metal tube and falling asleep or watching a movie. Going by sea I would think would enhance the value of the destination. Suffering sweatens leisure. A journey of this scale approximately 2500 nautical miles going 5 knots would take about 20 days, a little less than a month. It would require the stockpiling of food, studying of equipment and the fortification of my mental space. Assuming I would go this alone, making sure I am mentally stable would be one of the most important aspects. No matter how well I'm prepared with food supplies on the ship or the course, it doesn't matter, if mentally I give up and lose the will power to continue.

Motivation and willpower play far greater roles in the success of anything done than is often stated. The willpower someone has can push them to achieve and succeed in tasks far beyond what is often thought possible, but it can also drag down what otherwise would have been successful missions. It plays a key role in the success in leadership, the motivation of the leader often deciding their quality as a leader and the willpower of the group deciding how smoothly the whole of the project will go. Understanding this becomes key in becoming a successful leader and becoming successful at life as it is this simple feeling that can dictate life and death.