

# Becoming a Leader

Today all levels of science and technology are dependent on good leaders and good leadership skills. Leadership does not just happen, and leaders do not just stumble upon leadership opportunities. Leadership is the result of confidence, resilience, knowledge, wisdom, and the guts to step up to the opportunity. True leaders hold a deep love and respect for people, team collaborations, and teaching. In business, leadership skill is useful in uniting people and helping them move toward a common goal. In the greater society, leaders are the driving force toward manifesting justice. In the world of science and technology, leadership skills often determine the success or failure of research by determining its direction and its outcome. Simply put, leadership skills matter.

For young women, leadership skills begin at home. In your home you encounter your first exposure to justice and injustice. How you choose to react and respond to family dynamics can greatly impact your confidence and ability to trust yourself and others. Are you going to just get mad and walk away from problems, or are you going to try to help fix problems and not let a bad situation get you down? Family dynamics often cannot be predicted or controlled, but it is up to you to ask for help from your parents, teachers, and friends, and to continually seek out ways to develop your confidence. Confident young women always excel.

Beyond confidence, three specific things in your life can give you a strong foundation for nurturing leadership skills in the future: creativity, the independent pursuit of interests, and financial independence.

## Be Creative, Even If It's Crazy

Creativity is a key component of successful leadership, self-awareness, and drive. Leaders often need to think outside the box to solve problems and go in new directions. All creativity begins with curiosity, and curiosity starts in the very early years of life. Einstein once said, "I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious." Curiosity and creativity go hand in hand. When you have an interest in a subject and begin to see questions, you should do all you can to find answers. Girls, especially, love to role-play, and you should take curiosity into your games. Allow yourself to go wherever you like with your imagination. Go ahead and pretend you are the Queen of Sheba or Captain of the Starship Enterprise! Let your artistic creations be as crazy as you like. Creativity is about thinking outside of the box and dreaming as big as you can!



## Pursue Your Interests

It is important for girls, especially by the age of 12, to pursue several interests seriously and in depth. If you have interests in things like fashion, makeup, or dance, take lessons on how to sew or how to dance, and then show off your work. Learning to design clothing is a serious skill and can be a basis for good engineering and for understanding the mechanical side of projects. If your interest is ballet, you should perform, learn the proper French ballet terms, and understand the reasons behind moves, the mechanics. The key is to approach your interests with commitment, hard work, and keeping in mind the pursuit of excellence.

## Work Now Toward Financial Independence

One of the most difficult transitions all women make is the one from the home of their nuclear family to independence. Most women in this world never make this transition and instead continue dependence with a husband. Financial independence is the single most important reason Western women have reached (relatively)

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equal status in society. With financial independence comes true confidence, the ability to make choices based on inherent desire and drive, and the freedom to define one's own values and quality of life. The most important thing you can do to prepare yourself for a dignified and happy life is to establish a healthy relationship with money. It is not about becoming rich, but rather about pursuing your true passion and serving society with this passion while making a decent, dignified living. You should never secretly hold a desire to be rescued or obtain money that you did not earn. The Cinderella story, a princess waiting to be rescued, has created great unhappiness for women. It is unlikely that you will be rescued by a man, so think about the steps you can take today to become as independent as possible. Some steps you can take to foster financial independence:

- Start a bank account, even if you have no need or interest. Deposit all gift money in your account and withdraw your money with your own debit card or checks. Balance your own account, and ask about ways to help it grow. Being comfortable managing your money is an important first step to adulthood and leadership.
- Start earning money through small jobs like babysitting or additional chores around the home. If babysitting and paper routes are out of the question, consider selling unwanted items on eBay. An occasional job (especially when school is not in session) is important while growing up, even if you have to create it.
- Take risks with money and time by learning to invest in a project, or a stock, or even your own little company. Sell your crafts, or compete in a science competition. It is all about learning to take resources and time to create a positive result.
- Volunteering can help you become exposed to many different work environments, learn the importance of service, and define your interests.

The world needs as many female leaders as we can nurture and create. Let it be you!

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