

THIRD EDITION

JAMES  
KOUZES

BARRY  
POSNER

**THE**  
**STUDENT**  
**LEADERSHIP**  
**CHALLENGE**

FIVE PRACTICES FOR BECOMING AN  
**EXEMPLARY**  
**LEADER**

LIBERATE THE LEADER WITHIN



# PRAISE FOR THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE, THIRD EDITION

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“In the ten years that separated the first edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge* and this one, a lot has changed in our world. Numerous world leaders have also changed. Some for the better. What haven’t changed are the fundamentals of leadership. Neither has the dream of young leaders around the world to make a difference. In fact today more than ever, we need young leaders to step up. *The Student Leadership Challenge, Third Edition* draws on the inspirational stories of young leaders who have made an impact in their communities in recent times and lays out very practical leadership lessons and commitments that will help any youth in their own journey of leadership. If there is ever a guide that young people can have in their leadership journey of making this world a better place, this book would be it! Read it, Live it, and Lead.”

—**Martin Tan**, executive director, Institute for Societal Leadership,  
Singapore Management University

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“Reading this book will inspire students to be their best selves as leaders and empower students with the knowledge of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. For educators, *The Student Leadership Challenge* has superb resources for teaching leadership through assessments, case studies, experiential learning activities, and reflective assignments that are based upon research and tailored for a student audience.”

—**Lynn Perry Wooten**, PhD, dean, Dyson School of Applied Economics &  
Management, Cornell University

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“At HKUST we have been using *The Student Leadership Challenge* framework in our leadership development programs since 2011. With the personal-best narratives of students from all over the globe, our students easily grasp and apply The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in their individual contexts. The reflective exercises at the end of each chapter are exceptionally helpful guides for deeper learning, and the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (SLPI) allows students to get 360 feedbacks to plan their development path. *The Student Leadership Challenge* is a highly versatile resource for students to use in their leadership journeys and for practitioners to integrate into their educational programs.”

—**Helen HF Wong**, associate director of student affairs (Co-Curricular Programs),  
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

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“*The Student Leadership Challenge* is by far the book of choice for students and for teachers educating the next generation of leaders. In my leadership course at UC Berkeley I refer to Kouzes and Posner’s book as ‘our bible,’ as it lays out both a philosophy of leadership and the steps to implement it. Reading it while utilizing the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (the book weaves them together) will help you gauge how you lead and how you can take practical steps to improve your leadership.”

—**Dan Mulhern**, lecturer at the schools of Business, Law, and Public Policy,  
UC Berkeley, and author, *Everyday Leadership: Getting Results in Business, Politics, and Life*

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“At a time when young people are bombarded with inconsistent and confusing messages about what constitutes effective, committed leadership, along comes the third edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge*. As in their previous works, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner present young people with the crucial elements of exemplary leadership. Young people want to shape their world right now. What they need to move from commitment to action are proven methods to uncover the leader within and tools to put their leadership into practice. This book will offer an important first step in that journey.”

—**Cathy Tisdale**, president and CEO, Camp Fire

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“We utilize *The Student Leadership Challenge* as a foundation for our campus leadership platform, and it continues to provide guidance and support for leaders with all levels of experience. It is easy enough for new leaders to engage with, and yet sophisticated enough to take experienced leaders to the next level. The third edition has new examples for the practices and commitments. We find that all students can connect with The Five Practices, the Ten Commitments, and the new cases that provide real-life leadership examples. As we continue to implement our collaborative leadership model on our campus, this edition is a good refresher for those who are trained facilitators.”

—**Matt Baker** EdD, vice president of student affairs,  
Northwest Missouri State University

\* \* \*

“The third edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge* has it all. Leadership stories from students who’ve implemented the practices. Workbook elements that allow reflection of the material and action planning. The Student Leadership Practices Inventory that offers students a reliable assessment of how they are currently performing as leaders. Tried and true leadership practices backed by thirty years of research. This is the one book to have in your library to develop and sustain student leadership.”

—**Kevin W. Bailey**, PhD, vice chancellor for student affairs, UNC Charlotte

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“With a conversational tone and an interactive approach, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner convey The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to students in a way that is both relatable and inspiring. *The Student Leadership Challenge* retains all the sophistication and credibility of their original text and brings the material alive with examples of college-aged leaders from around the world. Even after more than ten years working with this material, I found this new edition to be full of new insights, examples, and applications.”

—**Miles Ashlock**, assistant dean and director, Office of Student Life,  
University of California, Santa Barbara

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“I use *The Student Leadership Challenge* as the foundation of the Blue Hen Leadership Program because it ties leadership directly to values-based action. This new edition reaffirms that The Five Exemplary Practices of Exemplary Leadership are hugely applicable to the student experience. Through new case studies and tools for practical application, students will see themselves in the stories shared, and easily understand that leadership is an option to anyone who uses these five practices to create positive change.”

—**Susan Luchey**, associate director for student leadership development, University of Delaware, and board of directors, Association of Leadership Educators

\* \* \*

"*The Student Leadership Challenge* is the best leadership guidebook for college students available today. The third edition is especially relevant and applicable to helping college students overcome leadership challenges they face in the ever-changing landscape of higher education. This book is a comprehensive manual for students on how to practice the leadership behaviors needed to get extraordinary things done with others and for others. Employers will want every college graduate they hire to have read *The Student Leadership Challenge*."

—**Shannon Cleverley-Thompson**, EdD, visiting assistant professor  
of executive leadership, St. John Fisher College

\* \* \*

"The evidence-based leadership practices empirically identified and expertly described by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner advance and elevate the field of leadership education towards deliberate practices. *The Student Leadership Challenge* gives emerging leaders a detailed roadmap for feedback, self-reflection, and application of leadership practices that contribute to human flourishing and performance. The five leadership practices are empirically supported, replicable, and integral to all academic disciplines preparing students for careers."

—**Adrian Popa**, PhD, chair, Department of Organizational Leadership,  
Gonzaga University

\* \* \*

"The University of Tennessee at Martin is striving to develop a student leadership development model that is integrated into the policies, practices, and culture of student life. *The Student Leadership Challenge* is a key component of this effort. The research behind The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership and their related behaviors sells the curriculum to students, administrators, and faculty. Most significantly the 360 Leadership Practices Inventory is the unique component that opens students' eyes to where they can improve the frequency of their leadership behaviors. Furthermore, the very thorough 360 LPI Feedback Report becomes their guide for developing a specific action plan to increase the frequency of those behaviors outside their comfort or awareness zone."

—**Phil Dane**, coordinator of student leadership development,  
The University of Tennessee at Martin

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"The third edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge* is replete with intense and action-oriented stories and examples of how young leaders around the world are making a difference. This book is about 'doing leadership,' not just learning about leadership. It is a call to action, and I guarantee if you apply The Five Practices described in this book, you will make a difference in your world on a daily basis."

—**Gary M. Morgan**, founder/CEO, Student Leadership Excellence Academy

\* \* \*

"If students were to ask me for the one book that clearly and inspiringly demonstrates how to maximize their leadership potential, *The Student Leadership Challenge* is the first book I would recommend. It is the 'Bible' of leadership for all aspiring leaders. Students reading this book will quickly understand that following The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership described in vivid detail in this book will help them maximize their leadership effectiveness. Most importantly, students reading this book will realize they already have the power to lead, and they have an obligation to lead. That's what makes *The Student Leadership Challenge* so powerful and definitely a book worthy of being the first leadership book in your library."

—**Jody Rogers**, PhD, FACHE, visiting professor, Department  
of Healthcare Administration, Trinity University

\* \* \*

“With so much going on in our world, this guide is ever-important in helping us to create the much-needed leaders that are required on campuses and in our communities. Practical, filled with rich examples, and an important call to action, Kouzes and Posner unlock the daily practices to liberate the exemplary leader within us all.”

—**Victor K. Wilson**, vice president for student affairs, The University of Georgia

\* \* \*

“In working over the years with first-generation students pursuing a career in medicine, I have come to rely on the leadership principles found in *The Student Leadership Challenge*. Based on solid research, this book is an essential guide to students in discovering the leader within. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner’s leadership insights truly inspire the hearts of those seeking to lead others in making a meaningful and positive change in their organizations, communities, and world. I highly recommend this book to all emerging leaders!”

—**Mark Gutierrez**, assistant director, Center of Excellence in Diversity  
in Medical Education, Stanford School of Medicine

\* \* \*

*“The Student Leadership Challenge* will enable you to make a difference in the world. On a daily basis, we all have opportunities to work within our circles of influence. The Five Practices make the prospect of leadership within these circles more concrete and tangible. The Ten Commitments equip you to direct your energy and take positive action. These are behaviors you can develop and practices you can foster in yourself and others. Regardless of your future career path, this book will show you how to build your leadership skills and fulfill your calling to contribute to the greater good.”

—**Kristin Kari Janke**, PhD, professor, University of Minnesota College  
of Pharmacy, and director, Wulling Center for Innovation & Scholarship  
in Pharmacy Education

\* \* \*

“The third edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge* provides a practical, tangible, real-life leadership development read for young leaders. This new work is inspiring and real. The stories included in this edition will enable the reader to see themselves as leaders who have utilized The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in their everyday lives. The ‘Reflect and Act’ component added to every chapter is excellent and provides specific action steps for student leaders to enhance their leadership practice. Acknowledging the role of reflection throughout enables self-awareness and meaning making, which are critical to the leadership development process.”

—**Katie G. Burke**, assistant dean, Weppner Center for LEAD  
& Service-Learning, Florida Atlantic University

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“Practical, inspiring, down to earth. The stories of everyday student leaders make the concept of leadership accessible to everyone, especially those who think they are not leaders. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner’s research on the impact of leadership behaviors gives profound yet practical insight on how students can become better leaders. *The Student Leadership Challenge* will cause young readers to deeply reflect about what they want their student life to count for and how they will do something about issues that matter to them. This book is a must-read for every student or adult who works with students.”

—**Sean Kong**, chief training officer, Halogen Foundation, Singapore

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POSNER

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## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY® SELF ONLINE

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If you purchased a *new* electronic copy of this book, you are eligible to receive one single-use access code for the Student Leadership Practices Inventory Self Online assessment. Follow these instructions to retrieve your code:

- Go to [www.studentlpi.com/ebook](http://www.studentlpi.com/ebook)
- Fill out the required information to verify your purchase.
- Your code will be automatically e-mailed to you.
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- If you are using a free-sample, used, rented, or borrowed copy of this e-book, you are not eligible to receive a free code, but may purchase one at [www.studentlpi.com/assess](http://www.studentlpi.com/assess)

The Student Leadership Practices Inventory (Student LPI®) is the cornerstone of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model. Created by leadership educators James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, this powerful leadership development model approaches leadership as a measurable, learnable, and teachable set of behaviors, because everyone can be a leader—whether in a designated leadership role or not. The Student LPI offers you a method for accurately assessing your leadership skills based on The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, by measuring the frequency with which you engage in 30 behaviors that research shows lead to the best leadership outcomes.



# Preface: Making Extraordinary Things Happen with Others

*The Student Leadership Challenge* is about how young leaders—people just like you—mobilize others to make extraordinary things happen anywhere, from a classroom, residence hall, Greek chapter, club, community service project, and student government, to the entire campus, neighboring community, and even the state and nation. It's about the practices student leaders use every day to get people moving toward a better future. They use these practices to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. Leadership is what turns challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.

This third edition of *The Student Leadership Challenge* comes out ten years after the publication of the first. Since then, we have continued to research, consult, teach, and learn about what young leaders do and how anyone, regardless of age, can become a better leader. We're honored by the reception we've received in the education marketplace

and by hearing that students, educators, and practitioners continue to find that *The Student Leadership Challenge* is conceptually and practically useful.

The foundation for *The Student Leadership Challenge* has stood the test of time. We continue to ask the same question that started our inquiry into exemplary leadership: *What did you do when you were at your personal best as a leader?*

One of the most common yet profound realizations from the answers to this question is that leadership is an identifiable set of skills and abilities that are available to anyone, no matter their age or position. As one student explained: “Growing up, I assumed leaders had certain traits and qualities that I didn’t seem to have. I thought there were ‘natural’ leaders who were born to lead. I thought leadership was the description of what these people did. When you asked me to describe my personal-best leadership experience, I found to my surprise that I had those leadership abilities myself.” Another student said that she learned “that anybody can be a leader. I had never considered myself a leader, but when I was needed to step up and deal with a difficult situation, I was able to find the leader within me and do so.”

We’ve talked to thousands of young men and women, representing many educational institutions and youth organizations around the world. Their stories, and the behaviors and actions they’ve described, combined with examples from thousands of other leaders, validate The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership framework. When students do their best as a leader, they Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. These are the practices that you can use to become a more effective leader and that we describe in detail in this book.

*The Student Leadership Challenge* is evidence based. We derived The Five Practices from research, and we illustrate them with examples from actual student leaders doing real things. In this third edition, we



provide new stories, cases, examples, and illustrations of exactly what young people like you do when they are at their leadership best. The concepts are presented in a way that allows you to focus on applying what works. Also, with this latest edition, you have the opportunity to more closely link how you see yourself behaving as a leader, through completing the *Student Leadership Practices Inventory*, and reflecting on practical ideas for how you can take action. Our intention is to help you discover new ways to be the best leader you can be.

The more we research and write about leadership, the more confident we become that leadership is within the grasp of everyone and that opportunities for leadership are everywhere. No matter what your experience is as a leader, we know that you have the capacity to lead if you choose to. Leadership is not about a position or title, as many young people presume. It is about the choices you make throughout your life—with the goal of making the situations and places you find better because you were there. Great leadership is not about making the leader look good but about how individuals use leadership in service to others to make the people and groups around them better.

In reading this book, you will get a deep understanding of The Five Practices and what they look like in action. By using The Five Practices in your life, you will continue to grow, develop yourself as an exemplary leader, and make a positive difference. You are in a stage of life where the opportunities to make a difference are all around you: in your classes, youth groups, clubs, organizations, athletics, schools, and community. As you take advantage of these opportunities to learn and lead, others will begin to take note and look to you to help them figure out how they can develop their own leadership skills.

You don't just owe it to yourself to become the best leader you can be. You have a responsibility to others as well. You may not yet know it, but people all around you need you to do your best and be your best.

## A GUIDE FOR YOUNG LEADERS

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How do you get other people to want to follow you? How do you get other people, by free will and free choice, to move forward together in a common purpose? How do you get people energized to work hard together to get something done that everyone can feel proud of? These are the important questions we address in *The Student Leadership Challenge*. Think of this book as a guide to take along on your leadership journey. Think of it as a manual you can consult when you want advice and guidance on how to get extraordinary things done with others. Think of it as a place to go when you're not sure what to do as a leader.

In the Introduction we describe our leadership framework by sharing a personal-best leadership experience case study about how one leader acted on her values and pursued a path of commitment and action to make a difference in gender equality education. We provide an overview of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership, summarizing the findings about what student leaders do when they are at their best, and show how these actions make a difference. A major benefit of accepting and adopting this framework of leadership is that it isn't difficult to understand, and it doesn't cost any money or require anybody else's permission. It just requires a commitment from you and ongoing practice to make these leadership behaviors habits in your life.

The ten chapters that follow describe the Ten Commitments of Leadership—the essential behaviors—that leaders use to get extraordinary things done. Here we explain the fundamental principles that support each of The Five Practices and offer interactive worksheets for you to reflect on the state of your skills and behaviors in each leadership practice and identify abilities that you can strengthen and improve. Each of these chapters ends with an invitation to reflect on

what you learned from reading it and to decide how you will put your learning into action.

In the final chapter, we offer a call to action to accept personal responsibility for being a role model for exemplary leadership and making these leadership practices part of your daily routines, in all aspects of your life. The first place to look for leadership is within you. Accepting the leadership challenge requires practice, reflection, humility, and making the most of every opportunity to make a difference. We'll assert that leadership is not an affair of the head. Leadership is an affair of the heart. In this Afterword you'll see what we mean by this claim and how it applies to you.

We recommend that you first read Chapter 1, but after that there is no prescribed order to proceeding through the rest of this book. Go wherever your interests are. We wrote *The Student Leadership Challenge* to support you in your leadership development. Just remember that each practice is essential. Although you might bounce around in the book, you can't skip understanding and practicing any of these fundamentals of leadership.

This book will contribute to the success you have working with others, to the creation of new ideas and enterprises, to the renewal of healthy schools and prosperous communities, and to greater respect and understanding in the world. We also fervently hope that it enriches your life.

Meeting the leadership challenge is a personal—and daily—challenge for everyone. We know that if you have the will and the way to lead, you can. You must supply the will. We'll do our best to keep supplying the way.

James Kouzes  
*Orinda, California*

Barry Posner  
*Berkeley, California*

**Leadership is the  
art of mobilizing  
others to want to  
struggle for shared  
aspirations.**

Leadership as defined  
by Jim Kouzes  
and Barry Posner

# When People Are at Their Best as Leaders

**M**adeline Price grew up on a beef cattle farm in rural Queensland, Australia. After high school graduation, she joined fifteen other recent graduates on a trip to see the world and do volunteer work along the way in Cambodia and Thailand. While visiting a school in Cambodia, Madeline noticed that all twenty-three students in the first-grade classroom were male. When she asked the teacher where the girls were, she was shocked by his answer: “Boys are more valuable to educate,” he told Madeline.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as she got back to Australia, it clicked that the teacher’s answer represented a problem that occurred everywhere. “I just hadn’t perceived it yet,” Madeline said. “But those simple words, ‘Boys are more valuable,’ opened my eyes to the gender disparities faced both abroad and in Australia.” Madeline’s growing sensitivity to the gender inequality she saw back home in Australia clarified for her the need to speak out about it. However, she didn’t find a receptive audience among her friend groups—at least, not at first.

“I talked about it with my friends, and very few people felt what I was feeling,” she told us. “My friends all truly believed that women

were as equal as we could get. It wasn't that my friends didn't care; it was just that they didn't know." To Madeline, however, it was obvious that just because not everyone agreed with her, gender inequality was still a global issue. She didn't put it out of her mind, and she didn't stop trying to speak to others about it.

A few years later, while at university, Madeline enrolled in a community development and leadership seminar. "I knew, going into the class, that I had to do something related to gender inequality," Madeline said. She came up with the idea of conducting educational seminars for high school students and community organizations to open their eyes to the ways that gender inequality still played a role in their lives and how they might combat it.

"I couldn't stop talking and thinking about it, even when other people I knew didn't seem to think it was as big a problem in Australia as I did," Madeline said. She created an organization called the One Woman Project (OWP) and began recruiting volunteers to help her develop and lead the seminars. "The name comes from the idea that if we educated just one woman to empower herself, the world is already a better place," Madeline said.

OWP works with schools and community organizations through invitation. Schools call OWP in to conduct an educational seminar when an incident of gender bias has occurred on campus or just because they believe in the importance of gender inequality education.

Framing the information in ways that students could identify with was an early challenge for OWP. "It's not enough to say, 'Gender inequality is a problem,' especially for the girls in the high schools. They think it's a 'me thing' and not a culture thing." One of the best ways of engaging students, Madeline found, was to enable them to find their voices. She explained:

They're students, and they're not given very many platforms to say, "This is what I think about sexuality or gender."

Student voices aren't often listened to when it comes to curriculum or educational issues. We want to hear what their answer is regarding those questions, and I think it's really important to let them know you want to hear them. That seems to make such a difference in getting them to share their opinions and feelings.

OWP also works to show that gender inequality is not an issue that affects women alone. The curriculum covers all the ways a patriarchal culture reinforces beliefs and behaviors that are harmful to men as well as women. For example, in cultures where masculinity is measured by "toughness" and the expectation that men not show emotion, men have higher rates of suicide and accidental death, as well as an increased chance of mental health concerns during their lifetime. Madeline also recruited male volunteers to OWP, which helps give male students a visual connection to the idea that gender inequality is not an issue that affects only women. "I wanted to find ways to make sure that students see that both men and women are affected by these issues. Making certain that we have men going into schools to give these seminars along with our female volunteers is extremely helpful in that respect," Madeline told us.

Starting the first gender inequality education program in the country was not without its challenges. "There was no one else in Australia running an educational program like this," Madeline said. "That meant there was both a huge vacancy in the space and that there was no template for us to work from." As a young woman in the midst of her collegiate career tackling a sensitive issue head-on in local schools and communities, Madeline enabled others in her community to believe that their ideas for making the world a better place can be achieved. Within OWP itself, Madeline supports that principle by cultivating an atmosphere of sharing ideas and developing leadership skills with her volunteers.

Today, the One Woman Project works in an average of forty-five schools each year. Outposts in China, Tanzania, and India grew organically from volunteers who were so engaged in Australia that they wanted to stay connected and spread the message in their home countries. By 2020, OWP aims to be in every state in Australia and to be registered with the National Curriculum of Australia so that students or community members can earn academic credit for taking the seminars. OWP also aims to be fully funded so that its volunteers can become full-time employees.

There is no set formula for creating change and making it happen. Anyone can do it! You just have to make a decision to do something, to make a difference, and then do it. If you want to make the pledge for achieving gender equality, all you really need is passion and the drive to take the first step.

Madeline's story speaks to a fundamental question: When does leadership begin? The answer is that leaders seize the moment. Madeline saw an opportunity and took it, first when she returned from Cambodia and started talking with her friends about gender issues, and then at university where she hatched her plan to launch the One Woman Project. Those fairly small opportunities transformed into something much greater. Madeline didn't wait for someone to appoint her as "the" leader. She recognized an issue, had a passion for it, found others with a similar vision, and just got started. Then she kept going. Leadership, just like any other skill in life, can be learned and strengthened through coaching and practice, but you don't have to wait until that support and preparation are lined up before you start to lead. In fact, no amount of coaching or practice can make much of a difference if you don't care about making something better than it currently is.



Everyone can lead, whether or not they are in a formal position of authority or even part of an organized group.<sup>2</sup> That's what we mean when we say *leadership is everyone's business*. It is not about being a student government officer; team, chapter, or club captain; program director; editor; supervisor; president; CEO; military officer; or government official. Nor is leadership about fame, wealth, or even age. It's not about your family status, the neighborhood you come from, or your gender, ethnic, or racial background. It's about knowing your values and those of the people around you and taking the steps, however small, to make what you do every day demonstrate that you live by those values.

Also, as Madeline's experience illustrates, leadership is about transforming values and goals into action. When members of her community and students at her university heard of OWP, enthusiastic volunteers showed up looking to become a part of her project because they shared the vision of eradicating gender inequality through education. "People wanted to get on board almost immediately because it was a cause they believed in," Madeline said. "Like me, they'd experienced friends telling them things they knew were false: that misogyny was no longer an issue, that things were okay as they were. The One Woman Project gave them a place to say, 'That's not true; let's change things.'"

From that outpouring of support from volunteers, Madeline learned a valuable lesson in leadership. "I'm here to facilitate the passion of other people as well as my own, and from that, OWP has grown into monthly events, conferences, International Women's Day events—all because of the passion of the people I work with," Madeline said. Within the OWP, Madeline has cultivated an atmosphere that encourages people to share their ideas and aspirations. During weekly meetings, for example, volunteers pitch ideas for potential projects for the OWP to implement. In one case, a volunteer proposed the idea of a monthly calendar, with art from local

artists, to be sold to help fund some of the OWP initiatives, and it turned out to be a huge success.

Madeline makes it a point to provide encouragement to everybody involved in OWP and its various projects, because she realizes how important it is in helping everyone keep going as they work toward making their hopes and dreams come true. What's more, she told us, how much she appreciates that there isn't a single leader in their organization; rather everyone takes the lead in different ways, and this makes leadership development of its volunteers an integral part of OWP's growth plan. "These are exactly the kind of team members I want, people who are willing to take an idea and grow it and find new opportunities for us," Madeline said. "I want them to take an idea or existing endeavor and ask, 'How can I make this better?'"

Because OWP's success depends on the support of volunteers, Madeline works hard to ensure an atmosphere of fun for everyone involved, and emphasizes the importance of mental health and taking care of yourself. To that end, she arranges seminars for the volunteers to learn to recognize the symptoms of burnout in themselves and other team members. "Everyone who works with us comes to us in their spare time," she explained.

Most of them are students, but some have full-time jobs. In other words, it's easy to get burned out, just from the sheer volume of work. We have a no-fault policy where anyone can back away from their work at any time, no questions asked—maybe it's the middle of finals, maybe it's a problem at home, maybe someone just needs a break. The only way to keep passion and commitment high is to let people know they need to take care of themselves first, and I try very hard to encourage that.

For example, Madeline makes sure that at every meeting, every volunteer team member completes a self-care survey on which they rank their well-being on a scale from 1 to 10. Anyone who self-reports being under heavy stress receives ideas on how to relieve it from Madeline and other team members. “Self-care has to be a priority,” Madeline said.

Madeline also makes sure to host social events for her community of volunteers, such as dinners or events out in the town where the focus is on having fun and promoting teamwork. These celebrations foster a sense of community and friendship, and they also help keep the passion high among the OWP team. “I have a lot of people say, ‘I’ve never had feminist friends before, and now I get to go out and do fun projects with them.’ Everyone is so excited to see each other and work with each other,” Madeline said.

Madeline knows that it’s important to acknowledge the contributions of everyone on the team, because her volunteers are taking on responsibility outside of their daily student lives. At their social events, Madeline takes the time to recognize volunteers who have put together proposals outside of their usual work or who have done an exceptional job in recent projects. By attending these dinners and social gatherings, Madeline reinforces the idea that she’s still one of them and just as much a part of the team as the volunteers.

Madeline’s experience shows something we have seen over and over: leadership begins when you find something you care about. It doesn’t necessarily require an organization, a budget, a hierarchy, a position, or a title. Of course there are challenges, but leaders like Madeline face them one at a time and make progress in their unique manner. Leadership potential is lost when people are convinced that there is just one straight path and one certain type of person who is destined for success. You don’t need to be perfect to start anything; you simply need passion, initiative, and the desire to make a difference.

## THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

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In undertaking her leadership challenge, Madeline seized an opportunity to make a difference. And although her story is unique, it is not unlike countless others. We've been conducting original global research for more than thirty years, and when we ask young leaders to tell us about their personal-best leadership experiences—experiences that they believe are their individual standards of excellence—there are countless stories just like Madeline's.<sup>3</sup> We've found them everywhere, and it proves that leadership knows no ethnic, cultural, or geographical borders; no racial or religious bounds; no differences between young and old. Leaders reside in every city and every country, in every function and every organization. We find exemplary leadership everywhere we look.

After analyzing these leadership experiences, we discovered, and continue to find, that regardless of the times or settings, individuals who guide others along pioneering journeys follow surprisingly similar paths. Although each experience was distinctive in its individual expression, there were clearly identifiable behaviors and actions that made a difference. When getting extraordinary things done with others, leaders engage in what we call The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

These practices are not restricted to the people we studied. Nor do they belong to a few select shining stars. Leadership is not about personality, power, or privilege; it's about behavior. The Five Practices are

available to anyone who accepts the leadership challenge—the challenge of taking people and organizations to places they have never been before. It is the challenge of moving beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary.

The Five Practices framework is not an accident of a special moment in history. It has passed the test of time. Although the *context* of leadership has changed dramatically over the years, the *content* of leadership has not changed much at all; and this is similarly true as we peer into the future. The fundamental behaviors and actions of leaders have remained essentially the same, and they are as relevant today as they were when we began our study of exemplary leadership. The truth of each individual personal-best leadership experience, multiplied thousands of times, and substantiated empirically by hundreds of thousands of students and scores of scholars, establishes The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership as an “operating system” for leaders everywhere.

Let’s begin in this chapter with a brief overview of each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. When you explore The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership in depth in Chapters 1 through 10, you’ll find many examples from the real-life experiences of students like Madeline who have accepted the leadership challenge and, because of their leadership, enabled others and their teams and organizations to achieve the extraordinary.

## Model the Way

Titles are granted, but it’s your behavior that earns you respect. This sentiment reverberated across all the cases we collected. Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others. To effectively Model the Way, you must first be clear about your guiding principles. You must *clarify values by finding your voice*. When you

understand who you are and what your values are, then you can give voice to those values. Finding your voice encourages others to do the same, paving the way for mutual understanding. But *your* values aren't the only values that matter. In every team, organization, and community, there are others who also feel strongly about matters of principle. As a leader, you also must help identify and *affirm the shared values* of the group. Leaders' actions are far more important than their words when others want to determine how serious leaders are about what they say. Words and actions must be consistent. Exemplary leaders *set the example by aligning actions with shared values*. Through their daily actions, they demonstrate their deep commitment to their beliefs and to the groups they are part of. One of the best ways to prove that something is important is by doing it yourself and setting an example, by "walking the talk."

## Inspire a Shared Vision

Students describe their personal-best leadership experiences as times when they imagined an exciting, highly attractive future for themselves and others. They had visions and dreams of what *could* be. They had absolute and total personal faith in those dreams, and they were confident in their abilities to make those extraordinary things happen. Every organization, every social movement, every big event begins with a vision. It is the force that propels the creation of the future.

Leaders *envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities*. Before starting any project, you need to have an appreciation of the past and a clear vision of what the results should look like, much as an architect draws a blueprint or an engineer builds a model. But you can't command commitment to a new future; you have to inspire it. You have to *enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations*. You do this by talking to others and, even more important, listening to them to understand what motivates them. You enlist others by helping them feel they are part of something that matters, something