



Picking Up The Baton

By Lyn Carman

Leadership Series – Part 1 of 5

Leadership is a topic which comes up in many conversations and can have many definitions. As I write this, it is the day after the Federal Election 2022, when we exercise our democratic right to elect the leaders of our country. A good time to pause to reflect on what leadership means for all of us. Quite often leadership is discussed in the context of politics or business, though we can all be leaders. Leadership is how we as individuals choose to lead our life, in fact, we often take on leadership roles that we are not even aware of at the time. Personal leadership is the ability to take responsibility for all aspects of your life and take it in the direction that is best for you. Not all of us aspire to lead, though I am sure there are times in your life when you can recall leading.

Over the next 4 articles I will unpack 4 core elements of leadership, the core skills we need to lead.

There is no exact definition of what a leader does. The definition of leadership I like though, is to influence, inspire and help others become their best selves, building their skills and achieving goals along the way. Consider this definition in any area of life, whether it be at home with family, at work, socially, with patients, when you are out in public, shopping, dropping kids off, being with your pet, in fact every moment of every day – how you lead yourself.

A common myth is that great leaders are born, that leadership is something you are born with, some magical quality – but that simply is not true. Leadership skills are something you can build – like a muscle at the gym, it's a creative muscle you can strengthen and develop over time.

Being a good leader isn't all sunshine and rainbows. You may have to make difficult or unpopular decisions or maintain your positivity even when you don't really believe it. This is where your leadership mindset will be the difference between good or great leadership. This is where our character or personality can come into play and learning to work with our strengths.

Each person's style of leadership is influenced by their personality and the challenges they are faced with. Having a personal leadership philosophy will help you understand your character, which is vital, as our character affects how we interact with others and our response to various situations. Becoming more aware of what personal leadership is and how to develop core skills with intent, will make you an outstanding role model for those around you and demonstrates skills others can incorporate into their lives.

Different characters or personalities will bring different qualities to their leadership philosophy. Mastering your own leadership style will enable you to come closer to your purpose and encourage those around you to step into their strengths also.

Finding out what your natural leadership style is can be a place to start. A Leadership Style Inventory (LSI) is a psychometric test that measures how you act, think and feel in the context of a position. Perhaps it's about understanding your natural preferences by getting to know your personality traits with test such as DISC or the Big Five personality tests.

Understanding your natural preferences helps in many ways to understand why you do what you do and to understand why others do what they do.

Perhaps you relate to a leader being an extrovert who is out there surrounded by people and often the centre of attention – though I invite you to think about the introvert, a person who quietly and purposefully goes about achieving their goals with unwavering certainty, never doubting their intent and bringing others along with them.

The difference between extroverts and introverts is how we feel when we are around people. Introverts might feel drained after putting effort into interactions with others and extroverts are likely to feel energised. As a leader it is important to be aware of areas you may not be as strong in and proactively work on strengthening them.

Leadership is about understanding yourself and giving your best to those around you. Leaders look like all of us, as in these examples:

- When a child in the playground says 'Let's play hide-and-seek' these words are enough—provided the other children agree—to give that child a leadership role, even for just that moment, and it may even be that child is given the task to say who will be the seeker in the first game.
- A book club member suggests a particular title to read and perhaps suggests when the discussion should move on.
- When a team member in a practice who, when the practice manager is off sick, suggests how the team will coordinate lunch so there is coverage where it needs to be.
- Someone who is being mature and calm when difficult changes are suggested in a practice models the behaviours of leadership that others may follow.
- The person who steps up in an emergency and coordinates the help required, by maybe asking others to perform a role, until appropriately qualified leaders can take control.

Leadership does not need to be a formal position, there is much evidence to suggest we can all lead even if only briefly.

Over the next 4 editions I will unpack 4 core leadership skills fundamental for building your leadership muscle

- Self – awareness
- Communication
- Influence
- Learning agility

Leadership is about understanding yourself and giving your best.

“Leadership is an inside job before it is about others” – Remi Pearson

“He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk”. – Anonymous

The saying ‘We rise by lifting others’ is about leadership, it is a metaphor – we develop ourselves and become a better human being by helping others. Ultimately leadership is about empowering others to become effective leaders as well.

Next time we will dive into Self-awareness

Self-Awareness	Communication	Influence	Learning Agility
			
Understand your strengths and weaknesses, identify gaps in your skills.	Write clearly, speak with clarity, and always use active listening behaviors.	Communicate your vision, align the efforts of others, and build commitment at all levels.	Be in a learning mode, value and seek out the lessons of experience when needed.