Reaching from Within for Guidance


Where do we find the courage to continue to do what we do? How do we remain true to what is best for us and continue to lead others effectively?

In The Spiritual Dimension of Leadership, Houston and Sokolow provide eight principles that they have found in their long careers to be most indispensable for effective leadership. They believe that the “best way to think about the spiritual dimension of leadership is that it is based on wisdom,” and that wisdom “comes from within you. It is the divine spark that guides you as you live your own life and lead others toward a brighter future.”

Houston and Sokolow have identified 42 principles that have guided their own work. Included are some we all would immediately see as essential—intention, attention, trust, and openness—as well as those that don’t come so readily to mind—such as unique gifts and talents, unique life lessons, a holistic perspective, and gratitude.

Every aspect of these principles is discussed thoroughly and most are followed by “What Might This Look Like in Practice,” which are warm, intimate reminiscences of the authors’ experiences that embrace the principle being discussed.

Each chapter also includes several guides to help readers quickly refocus on what they have learned, and the summaries at the end of the chapters are great for reviewing the principles and the energy they can lend to leadership.

The dissonance created in my life by the difference between who I think I am and the day-to-day tasks I face in the career I love often make me forget that who I am ought to be irretrievably linked to what I do. I’ll put this book within arm’s reach so that I can remind myself that my spirit ought to be intimately involved in all my thoughts, actions, and words.

Katherine Ralston, Principal
North River Elementary School
Mt. Solon, Virginia
kralston@augusta.k12.va.us

Leadership: 15 Minutes at a Time


Fifteen minutes; one-quarter of an hour; 900 seconds. If you have just 15 minutes a day to dedicate to your own professional development, Leading Every Day: 124 Actions for Effective Leadership is a must-have. It will inspire you to think about your current leadership practices and plan for improvement.

According to John Dewey, “Education is reflection on experience.” The authors of Leading Every Day subscribe to this theory. This book is a compilation of 124 reflective topics divided into four categories: Leadership Every Day; Leading Change; Leading Learning Communities; and Leading Effective Groups.

When faced with the prospect of reading and experiencing a book over the course of four months, I was less than enthusiastic. Committing to fully engage in one book for that long seemed daunting. Thankfully, the commitment was one well worth the effort. Engaging in Leading Every Day for about 15 minutes placed reflection on my “to do” list every day. For me, it was a small investment with a big payoff.

On day 28 of my experience, I opened the book to find the topic of “Individuals as Agents of Change.” The question “What can a single person do?” jumped off the page. It was followed by nine practical actions a single person could do to be a catalyst for change. The three actions that I found most helpful were: dedicate yourself to being a continual learner; acknowledge your failures and what you have learned; and actively support change efforts you believe in. That one day made a significant impact on my leadership abilities.

If you’re willing to put yourself and your professional growth at the top of your “to do” list, this book is the tool that can make change happen for you. And it only takes 15 minutes a day!

Teresa Tulipana, Principal
Hawthorn Elementary School
Kansas City, Missouri
tulipanat@parkhill.k12.mo.us