

## DID YOU TURN OUT THE LIGHTS?

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## ***Did You Turn Out The Lights?***

A Wisconsin-based leadership program for children has a few things to teach those of us who definitely aren't children anymore. (Manito - Wish Leadership Programs - [www.manito-wish.org](http://www.manito-wish.org)) They have, as one of their principles, the maxim that a leader 'Doesn't collaborate to turn out the lights.'

This got me to wondering how often we, who frequently know better than we do, are the ones who turn out the lights. I doubt any of us can honestly say we are never the guilty party. I suspect it happens more often than we would want to admit, even to ourselves. Let's think a bit about how that happens and, more importantly, about what we can do to reduce our contributions to the darkness.

Since the Manito maxim is intended for children but works well for all of us, perhaps we can also access another source intended for children we can use to discover the secrets for not turning off the lights. Even better, maybe we can learn to keep the lights on. Let's call people who succeed with this critical challenge Illuminating Leaders.

The Friend Factory (Koenisha Publications, 2001) is a little chapter book written with my granddaughter (Marissa Crow) that includes the seventeen secrets for becoming a champion friend picker. We can use those secrets to be champion leaders who don't turn out the lights with our co-workers, friends, and families. It's tempting to change the language from the original text but it likely works just as well mostly leaving it as written for the children.

### **Illuminating Leaders are consistent.**

They treat you the same way every time you see them. They always speak to you when they see you. They don't ignore people. ... they are always nice to people they know. They follow this rule. 'I always treat everyone the way I would like them to treat me.'

## **Illuminating Leaders are positive.**

Some people get upset over nothing. They pout and call people names. They yell at people and are angry a lot. They argue with everyone. Do you like the word 'sourpuss' to describe people like that? I'll use sourpuss. You can use a different word if you have one you like better.

Positive people are the opposite of sourpusses. It's easy to have fun when positive people are around.

Positive people get upset sometimes but they get over it quickly. They don't pout or call people names. They don't yell at people either. They get angry sometimes but don't stay angry very long. If they get into an argument, they say what they think and then stop arguing.

Positive people are fun to be around. They don't make fun of anyone. They follow this rule. 'If I don't have something nice to say about someone, I'll keep quiet. I'm a positive person. I'm not a sourpuss.'

## **Illuminating Leaders always do their best.**

I know you always do your best but some people don't. They haven't figured out the secret.

You'll keep the secret to yourself, won't you? We don't want everyone to know. It's just between us. Here it is. ...

Why do you always do your best? You do your best because you're special. You deserve the best. You try to be the best person you can be. That means you need to always do your best.

The next time you do something, ask yourself if you did your best. If you did your best, look in the mirror and smile at yourself. Say, 'Thank you. I'm happy I did my best for me.'

### **Illuminating Leaders make good choices.**

This is a little bit complicated. You can handle complicated stuff because you're soooo smart. What do you think? It's fun being smart, isn't it?

You need to know about values. Do you know what values are?

Values are what you think are important. You believe it's better to be right than to be wrong. That means you value being right. Being right is one of your values. What other kinds of things do you value?

Do you have time for a short quiz? If you're not too busy, here are ten questions you can answer. Read the question. After you read a question, decide what your answer is. You don't have to write anything. You can just think about your answer for each question.

- Do you value taking care of your stuff?
- 
- Do you value keeping clean and taking care of yourself?
- 
- Do you value doing your best?
- 
- Do you value being nice to other people?
- 
- Do you value being honest?
- 
- Do you value being someone people can trust?
-

- Do you value being cooperative?
- 
- Do you value being helpful?
- 
- Do you value being someone who people like to spend time with?
- 
- Do you value being the best person you can be?
- 

I know another little secret. You answered, 'Yes,' to each of the ten questions. How do I know that? I know it because I know something special about you. You're soooo smart. Smart people like you always answer, 'Yes,' to those questions.

### **Illuminating Leaders know what's really important.**

Taking care of your stuff is important. Doing well is important. Cooperating is important. Following your family's rules is important. (Yes, for parents as well as for children.) Being honest is important. Doing your best is important.

You have a lot of important stuff on your list. What else goes on your list? Your list is pretty long. It's not as long as a million miles of string but it's pretty long.

### **Illuminating Leaders are assertive.**

Assertive means you stick up for yourself. You don't let people talk you into doing things you shouldn't do. You don't let people boss you around. You say what you think. If you think something is wrong, you say so. You're in charge of what you think and what you do. You're assertive.

### **Illuminating Leaders don't try to boss people around.**

This is a tricky idea. That's no problem. You can handle tricky ideas, because you're soooo smart.

You already know friends are assertive. They don't let people boss them around. Here's the tricky part. They also do not try to boss people around. They stick up for themselves. They say what they think but they aren't bossy.

### **Illuminating Leaders are someone other people want in their commercials.**

Pretend you have your own commercial. Your commercial is about you.

People watch your commercial and learn stuff about you. What would you want in a commercial about you?

Pretend people are watching your commercial. They learn about who you are. They are deciding if you're a nice person or not.

People are learning stuff about you. They learn if you're someone they want to hang around with. They are learning about what's important to you.

Here's the secret. They think you're just like the people in your commercial. Your friends are in your commercial, so people think you're just like them.

When people watch your commercial, they see everyone you hang around with. Do you want people to think you're just like them? Do you hang around with anyone you don't want in your

commercial? If so, get them out of your commercial. Stop hanging around with them.

Your commercial is about you. People watch your commercial and decide who you are. Only hang around with people who you want to be in your commercial.

This is the point for Illuminating Leaders. You have your personal commercial other people are watching. That's an important way they decide about you and whether they want you in their commercials. For people you want in your commercial, be sure you are someone they also want to be in their commercials.

### **Illuminating Leaders don't make demands.**

What on Earth does that mean? Do you think we can figure it out? I believe we can, because you're....

People who make demands say stuff like this.

- 'If you don't do what I want you to do, I won't be your friend.'
- 
- 'If you talk with that person, I won't like you anymore.'
- 
- 'If you hang around with those people, you can't hang around with me.'
- 

What do you think? Do you know someone who goes around making demands?

Here's a little secret. They don't really want to be friends. They don't care about you. They just want to control you. They only care about themselves.

People who make demands only care about themselves. You can do better. Spend your time with people who don't make demands.

The point: Also be sure not to be someone who makes demands.

### **Illuminating Leaders are dependable.**

If they make a promise, they try to keep it. They treat you the way you like to be treated. You can depend on them to tell the truth and to be honest. If you have a problem, they will try to help. They care about what you think and how you feel. They will stick up for you.

### **Illuminating Leaders are interested in people.**

Isn't everyone interested in people? - Here's a little secret. Some people are only interested in themselves.

They are only interested in what they want to talk about. They are only interested in what they are doing. They are only interested in their ideas. They are only interested in doing what they want to do.

They aren't interested in what other people have to say. They aren't interested in what other people are doing. They aren't interested in other people's ideas. They aren't interested in what other people want to do.

Do you know people like that? They aren't interested in you. They don't care what you think. They don't care what you want to do. They don't care how you feel. They are only interested in

themselves.

The point: Be someone who is truly interested in other people.

### **Illuminating Leaders are a good influence.**

Imagine you see someone eating popcorn. What would you want to do? You might want some popcorn too. Why would you want some popcorn?

You can say this. 'I was influenced by the person who was eating popcorn. That made me want some popcorn.'

Do you see how it works? People can influence you to do things. You see them doing something. You want to do it too. They don't make you do it. They influenced you.

What happens if you hang around with people who do well? You want to do well too. Those people are a good influence.

What happens if you hang around with people who are nice? You want to be nice too. People who are nice are a good influence.

What would happen if you hang around people who don't care how well they do? It would be harder for you to do well. Those people are a bad influence.

What would happen if you hang around with people who are always getting into trouble? It

would be harder for you to stay out of trouble. Those people are a bad influence.

You have a choice. You can pick your friends from people who are a good influence. You can pick your friends from people who are a bad influence. It's your choice.

Here's an important secret. Sometimes it's hard to decide. How can you tell? Who is a good influence? Who is a bad influence?

Ask yourself this question. 'Do I want that person in my commercial? Do I want people to think I'm just like that person?' If so, they are a good influence. If not, they are a bad influence.

### **Illuminating Leaders are good listeners.**

I don't need to ask you if you're a good listener. I already know you are. You listen when others are talking. You don't interrupt people. You wait for your turn to talk.

Here's a little secret. Most people think being quiet is enough. 'If I stay quiet, I'm listening.' That's what they think but you know better.

You need to do more than stay quiet. You need to think too. You need to stay quiet so you can hear what the person says. You need to think about what they say so you can understand. Trying to understand is the secret part of listening.

You're a good listener. You stay quiet and pay attention. You also think. You try to understand.

...

Get ready. Take a gigantic breath. Blow it out really fast. This is extra-complicated stuff. Listening has four parts. Get ready to count them.

- To listen, you have to stay quiet.
- 
- To listen, you have to pay attention.
- 
- To listen, you have to try to understand.
- 
- To listen, you have to remember.
- 

Did you get all four parts? What is the new part? Sure, it's remembering. Good listeners remember what people say.

### **Illuminating Leaders are considerate.**

Considerate isn't an easy word. It's not just being polite. It's not just having good manners. You know those are important. That's why you're polite and watch your manners. ...

Being considerate includes being polite and good manners. It also includes some other stuff we need to think about. ...

Being considerate means you care about how people feel. You care about what people need.

Think about how people feel. You don't want them to feel sad. You try not to hurt their feelings. You also try to do things to help them feel better when they are sad.

Here's another secret. Think about what people need. Do they need special help? Do they need extra time? Can you make things easier for them?

What if a friend couldn't run fast? What if a friend had trouble talking? What if a friend couldn't see or hear very well? What if a friend had trouble reading? What if a friend had a special problem?

You would try to help. You would do stuff they can do. You would include them in your activities. You would still be their friend because you're considerate.

### **Illuminating Leaders are patient.**

Being patient is really hard sometimes. You don't want to wait. You don't want to slow down. You don't want to take turns. You don't want to listen. You don't want things to take so long. You don't want to do what you have to do right now. ...

If you don't want to be patient, you can get upset. You can be unhappy. You can get frustrated. You can yell or pout. You have a lot of choices. It's your choice.

Sometimes you can't make things happen any faster than they happen. You might as well be patient. It will happen when it happens. You don't have to like it but you might as well be patient.

Sometimes being patient is a good way to be considerate. Did you know that? One way to be considerate is to be patient.

When someone needs a little extra time to do something, you're patient. When something doesn't happen when you expect it to happen, you're patient. When you need to do something for someone that's boring, you're patient. You're also being considerate. That's very clever. You know how to be patient and considerate at the same time.

## **Illuminating Leaders are gentle.**

I hear you. So far, you get it. You get it about being a good listener. You get it about being considerate. You even get it about being patient. So what's this being gentle stuff?

It's pretty easy. You don't push and shove. You don't hit or kick. You don't do things that hurt people. You're gentle.

There's a little more to it. You don't yell and scream at people. You're nice to pets and other animals. You're careful with things that might break. You're a gentle person.

## **Illuminating Leaders hang in there with people.**

This is not very complicated. A Illuminating Leader is someone who will stick with you. If you have an argument, they'll get over it. If you don't want to do what they want to do, doing something else is okay. They are your friend.

If you're upset, they'll talk with you about it. If you need help, they'll try to help. If you're busy today, they'll see you tomorrow. They are your friend.

Do you know people who don't hang in there with people? If you have an argument, they stop talking to you. If you have a problem, they don't care. If you're busy, they get upset with you. They won't try to help.

This is a little secret just for you. Some people are fair weather friends. That means they are only friends when they want to be friends. If someone else comes along, they'll hang around with

them. They'll be nice to you if there's no one else to hang around with. If you have a problem, they don't care. They are friends when it is easy or they don't have something more fun to do. They are just fair weather friends. (And they certainly aren't Illuminating Leaders either.)

Now you know and there you go. You have the seventeen secrets to being an Illuminating Leader. Can you be a leader and not follow the directives imbedded in the secrets? Yes, many leaders ignore the advice or, even worse, they don't even know about these valuable secrets. You can lead without them but the critical question is, 'Why would you want to lead without being an Illuminating Leader?' It's possible but very risky. You can easily find yourself leading in the dark.