



## What Is a Leader?

### Introduction to Module

Almost two centuries ago, the French emperor Napoleon defined a “leader” as a “dealer in hope.” Before proceeding with this module, go to your TRY-IT! Personal Journal, enter today’s date, and jot down your thoughts about Napoleon’s quotation. What do you think Napoleon was talking about? How do leaders deal in “hope”? Do you agree or disagree with Napoleon? Why?

Leaders are all around us and within us as well! The president of the United States; the governor of our state; the priest, rabbi, or minister of a local place of worship; the captain of a school sports team; a teacher or adult mentor we respect; our parents and guardians; and we ourselves are all **leader** in one form or another.

But, just what is a **leader**, and how does a leader use **leadership**?

### By the End of this Module, You Will

- (1) Explore your own ideas about what a leader is.
- (2) Develop a personal definition of a **leader** based on these ideas.
- (3) Learn about the five challenges of **leadership** and how they relate to a leader you admire as well as to yourself.
- (4) Apply these ideas of “leader” and “leadership” to school, 4-H, community, and national situations.

### Life Skills Addressed

Leadership

### Resources/Materials Needed

Crayons, or colored pens/markers/pencils  
 A colored highlighter  
 A recent local newspaper (including national, local, and sports sections, as well as sample advertisements)  
 Old magazines (which may be cut up)  
 Colored construction paper  
 Glue and tape  
 Scissors  
 Drinking straws  
 String (kite string works well)  
 Your Individual TRY-IT! Personal Journal



# What Is a Leader?



## Prior Life Experiences

Take the time to work through at least three of the following four “What Is a Leader?” exercises. Although they are all similar, each has a special and unique twist to it. When possible, you may want to do your work on-line and then print it off. Or, you may choose to print off each worksheet and then complete it by hand. Whatever your choice, once you’ve finished each exercise, remember to print a copy of your work (or at least save it to a file so that you may print it in the future) for your 4-H Leadership Portfolio. Have fun!

### Exercise 1

#### What Is a Leader? (descriptive words and phrases)

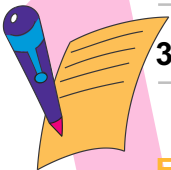
Stop for a moment and think about the word “leader.” Get comfortable, close your eyes and relax. Now, without opening your eyes, picture a typical **leader** in your mind. What does this typical **leader** look like? How would you describe this typical **leader** that you see?

In the space below, jot down three words or short phrases that describe a typical **leader**.

1.

2.

3.

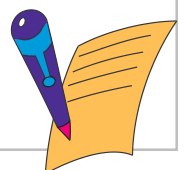


### Exercise 2

#### What Is a Leader? (20-word definition)

News bulletin! Martians have just landed on Earth! They are very friendly, and for more than 50 years, they have been monitoring radio and television signals from our planet that often talk about an earth species called “leader.” They are very curious about this species, and before they ask you to take them to a “leader,” they ask you to define the word for them. However, they have very small vocabularies and ask you to use no more than 20 Earth words in your definition.

In 20 words or less, define a leader.



# What Is a Leader?

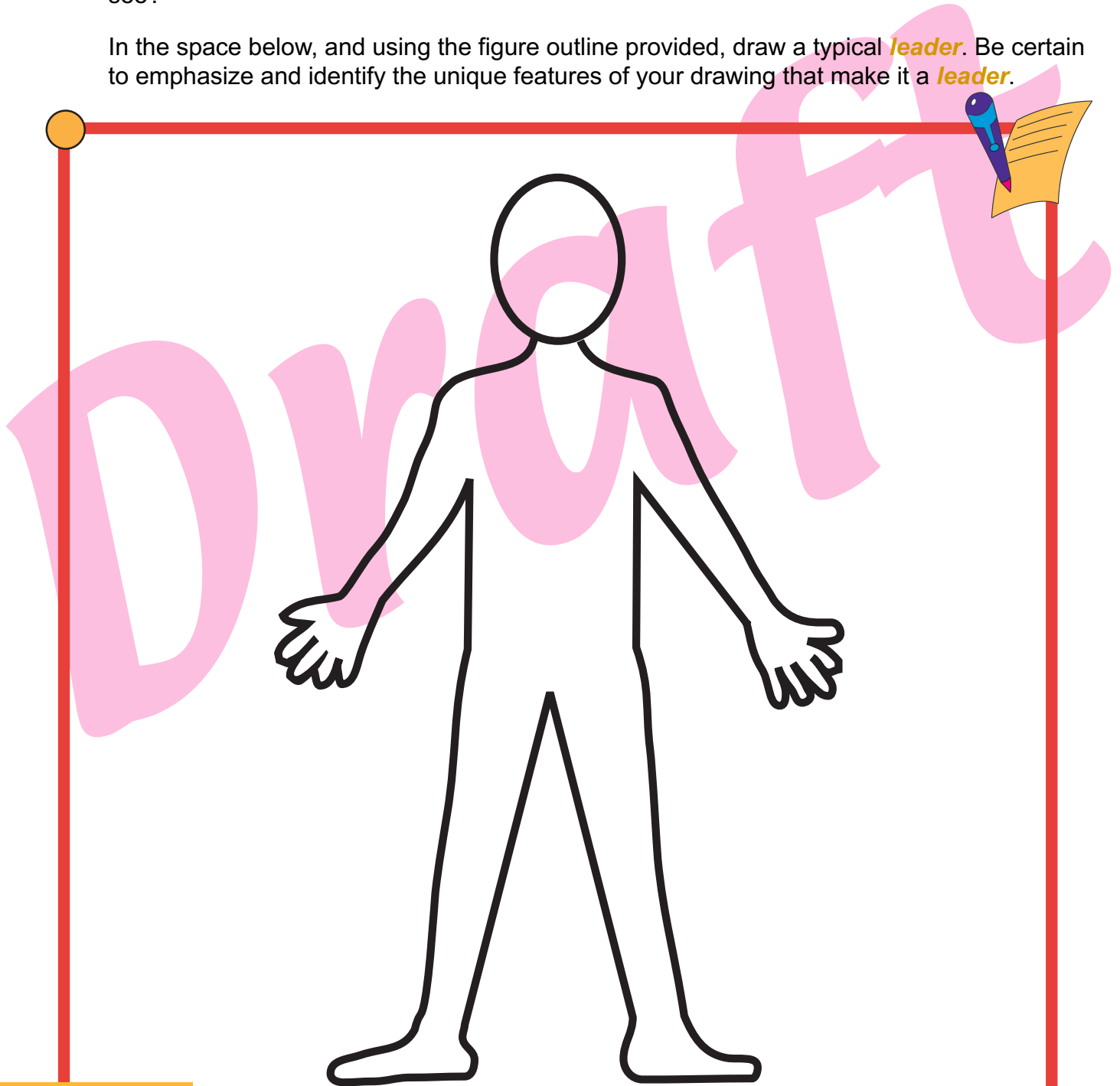


## Exercise 3

### What Is a Leader? (drawing a picture)

Stop for a moment and think about the word “leader.” Get comfortable, close your eyes and relax. Now, without opening your eyes, picture a typical **leader** in your mind. What does this typical **leader** look like? How would you describe this typical **leader** that you see?

In the space below, and using the figure outline provided, draw a typical **leader**. Be certain to emphasize and identify the unique features of your drawing that make it a **leader**.



# What Is a Leader?

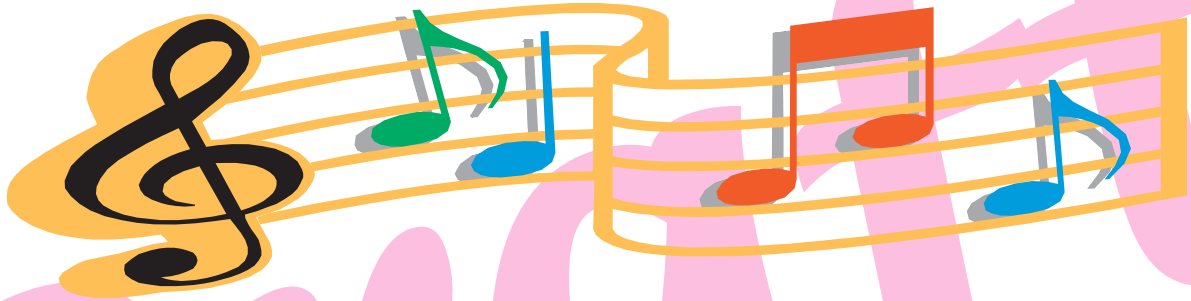


## Exercise 4

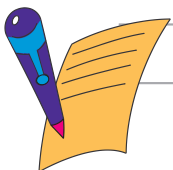
### What Is a Leader? (writing a song and singing it as well!)

Stop for a moment and think about the word “leader.” Get comfortable, close your eyes and relax. Now, without opening your eyes, picture a typical **leader** in your mind. What does this typical **leader** look like? How would you describe this typical **leader** that you see?

In the space below, write new lyrics to a familiar or favorite song (rap, country, hip hop, or advertising jingle) that describe a typical **leader**.



Handwriting lines for writing lyrics.



# What Is a Leader?



## Processing Prior Life Experiences

OK, now that you've completed at least three of the previous worksheets, stop and carefully review all of your separate works laid side-by-side. Each asked you to think about what you considered a typical **leader**, to visualize that image in your mind, and to describe, define, draw, or sing about what you saw.

Looking at all of your completed worksheets, identify the three or four key aspects of a typical **leader** that were common among most or all of your ideas. Think carefully about this. What are the three or four most important aspects of someone you respect as a **leader**? After you've had time to read and review your separate worksheets, use the three or four aspects of a **leader** that you have identified to complete the following sentence:

"To me, [insert your name here], a leader is someone who....."

Before you continue in this module, go to your TRY-IT! Personal Journal, enter today's date and record both the three or four most important aspects of a **leader** that you have identified, and also record the sentence that you've just completed, remembering to include your name in the sentence.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry

### New Points to Consider

While each of us probably has some unique and individual ideas about what makes up a **typical leader**, many people would argue that a leader's characteristics are not as important as his/her actions. In module 3, you'll explore different types of leaders, and in module 5, you'll consider different leadership styles.

Basically, many people would say that a **leader** is simply someone who demonstrates **leadership**.

In 1990, two gentlemen first wrote a book about leaders and leadership titled, **The Leadership Challenge**. The book has been very popular for more than a decade now and has been republished several times in both hard cover and paperback versions. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner identified five basic aspects of being a **typical leader**, five things that all leaders should do in some form or another. They based their ideas on data collected from more than 10,000 leaders and more than 50,000 people who worked with the leaders. Their ideas apply to the business world as well as to non-profit organizations and community organizations, like 4-H and Cooperative Extension.



# What Is a Leader?



Kouzes and Posner identified five fundamental practices (or challenges) of successful leaders in today's society are:

## (1) Challenging the process.

Leaders do not sit back and wait for something to do. They work with others around them to identify challenges within which they can work with others to make a difference. They seek out situations that could and should be better; they tackle problems and issues facing themselves, their families, their communities, and their society. We call the routine, the usual, the current situation the **status quo**. The status quo is what is and always will be unless someone, a leader, tries to change it or make it better. In challenging the process, Kouzes and Posner state that leaders challenge the status quo; they seek out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate and improve themselves and their surrounding [You will explore the idea of change in another module.] They experiment with new ideas and often take well-thought-out risks to achieve high goals. After all, as former United States President John F. Kennedy once said, “Only those who dare to risk greatly, achieve greatly.”

## (2) Inspiring a shared vision.

A vision is a positive, inspiring and ideal mental image or “picture” of the future (again, you will explore the concept of a vision in another module). According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders must be forward looking and focused on a positive future for the people they work with. This positive vision for the future should be uplifting and noble. But it cannot and should not be only the leader's vision for the future. Leaders must work hard to attract other people who want to work together for a common purpose. Leaders are successful in attracting others who want to work with them by appealing to people's values, interests, hopes and dreams. Leaders listen to others' ideas first, then share their own ideas second. Remember: the goal of this second leadership challenge is to inspire a shared vision, not just to get others to go along with the leader's individual vision!

## (3) Enabling others to act.

No person is an island. We live, study, work and play in a society and culture in which we are constantly interacting with others. Likewise, no leader functions in a vacuum. Leadership is, by definition, a social function in which one person works with another (or others) to achieve a common goal (sound like a vision to you?) to improve people's lives (remember challenging the status quo?). Kouzes and Posner describe how leaders promote partnerships and collaborations by promoting cooperative goals and mutual trust among people. Leaders share information and resources with others in order to get things done. Leaders build teams and teamwork in which individual team members are strengthened and provided with opportunities to utilize their own individual leadership skills. A leader's cheer should be “T! E! A! M! – Together, Each Accomplishes More!” You will learn a lot more about teamwork in other modules.

# What Is a Leader?



## (4) Encouraging the heart.

There are times when, even with our best efforts, things just do not go right, and the future does not look very positive. We all face deadlines set by other people, situations in which we do not have the money or materials to do what we would like to do, relationship challenges with our friends and family members – these and other challenges are just part of everyday life. But leaders help us move beyond these challenges and look to the bright side of issues and problems. They encourage us to keep on trying, no matter what the obstacles are we face. Leaders value, appreciate and take the time to recognize the contributions that individuals around them make towards the team's goals, and they make the time to help all team members celebrate those contributions. As Kouzes and Posner state, leaders make everyone feel like a hero.

## (5) Modeling the way.

An old cliché goes something like this: “It’s easy to talk the talk, but much harder to walk the walk!” Leaders must do both. They must believe in and be able to communicate the shared vision of and cheer on a group working together towards that vision. And, as leaders, they must set examples for others to follow and serve as role models for the group. Leaders must behave in ways that are consistent with the group’s shared values and promote consistent progress towards the group’s goals and vision. According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders’ actions speak very much louder than their words! Leaders do not always lead from a position of power. Some of the most effective leaders lead by example.

You may want to refer to the “Five Leadership Challenges and a Leader’s Commitments to Them - Supplemental Information Sheet” (found at the end of this module) to review the ideas of Kouzes and Posner. Or, you may want to seek out their book in your local library or book store.

Before you move on in this module, go to your TRY-IT! Personal Journal, enter today’s date, and jot down your immediate thoughts about each of these five leadership challenges that were identified by Kouzes and Posner.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry

# What Is a Leader?



## Practice Exercises

Now, take a few minutes to put all of these ideas into perspective for yourself. As you work through each practice exercise, remember to save a copy of your work for your 4-H Leadership Portfolio. Have fun!

### Practice Exercise 1 Moving from Ideas to Real Life!

Identify a leader whom you admire and respect. It may be a public figure in the national or state news, a person at your school or in your community or a member of your family. Using the outline below, think about how the leader you have identified meets your definition of a leader, as well as the five leadership challenges.

The leader I identify is:

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I consider her/him a leader because:

---

When compared to my personal definition of a leader, he/she:

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I believe that, as a leader, he/she deals with each of the five leadership challenges as follows:

1. Challenging the process.

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2. Inspiring a shared vision.

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3. Enabling others to act.

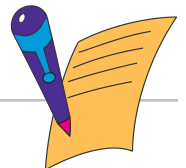
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4. Encouraging the heart.

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5. Modeling the way.

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# What Is a Leader?

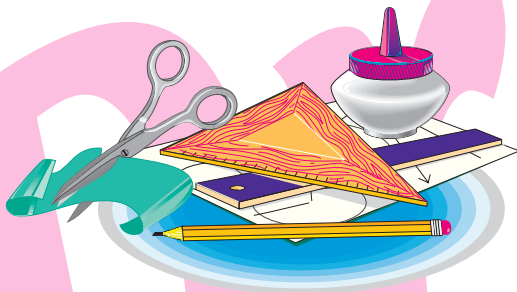


## Practice Exercise 2

### Moving from Ideas, to Real Life, to Me! Building My Personal Leadership Mobile.

Now, stop and think about yourself as a leader. Remember: we are all leaders, we just have different current strengths and weaknesses that we can work on to improve as leaders. Think about how you compare to your definition of a leader, and think about yourself in terms of the five leadership challenges we've discussed.

After thinking about these ideas as they relate to you currently, use old magazines to cut out words and pictures or images that communicate the strengths and weaknesses you've identified in yourself. Using glue or tape, attach your cut out leadership words, pictures, and images to stiff construction paper cut into various shapes and sizes. Attach a 12-inch piece of string to each individual shape. Finally, using drinking straws as cross beams to support them, arrange your leadership words, pictures, and images in a three dimensional mobile that can hang in your room. The biggest challenge will be to arrange the individual words, pictures, and images so they are balanced and your mobile hangs freely, swaying in the breeze.



## Construct Your Personal Leadership Mobile

Here are photos of two Personal Leadership Mobiles constructed by members of the North Carolina State University State 4-H Staff. Notice how the straws support the individual images mounted on construction paper using glue and tape.



# What Is a Leader?



Before you move on in this module, go to your TRY-IT! Personal Journal, enter today's date and jot down your immediate thoughts about how your Personal Leadership Mobile is like real life in "balancing" different aspects of being a leader.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry

### Practice Exercise 3

#### Moving from Ideas to Real Life to Me to My Future!

Look at various business and commercial advertisements in your local newspaper. Notice how they promote positive aspects of the products they endorse and how they point out the ways the product can help people or make their lives better, nicer, or easier.

Now, using the advertising space on the next page in *The Leadership Times*, design and create your own newspaper advertisement that "sells" the leadership strengths you have to offer others. Be certain to connect your advertisement to your definition of leadership, as well as tell how you can help meet the five challenges of leadership we have discussed. Have fun!





# What Is a Leader?



## Application and Expansion

### Exercise 1

#### Leadership at the Sports, Community, and National Levels

Take a moment to find a colored highlighter, plus a copy of today's or yesterday's local newspaper.

Now, turn to the front page of Section 1 or to wherever the national and world news is reported. Scanning that page and using the marker, highlight every place you find the words "leader" or "leadership." How many did you find?

Now, turn to the local news section or to wherever local and city/town news is reported. Scanning that page and again using your marker, once again highlight every place you find the words "leader" or "leadership." How many did you find this time?

OK – one last time. Turn to the sports section or wherever national, state, and local sports are reported. And once again.... Well, you know the story. Scan for and highlight every place you find the words "leader" or "leadership." How many did you find on this third and final try?

Go back and re-read each instance where you found the word "leader" or "leadership." Think about the definition of leadership you have developed, as well as the five challenges of leadership.



## Identify Leaders and Leadership in the News

Now, go to your Personal Leadership Journal, enter the date, and write a letter to yourself about how the ideas of **leader** and **leadership** as used in the national, local and sports sections of the newspaper relate to your ideas as well as the five challenges.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry



# What Is a Leader?



## Exercise 2 Interview a Leader

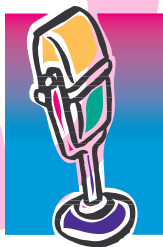
Identify a leader in your community or a business that you admire but do not know personally. Working with the help of your parents or TRY-IT! Team coach, contact the leader by telephone or by writing her/him a letter. Introduce yourself and explain why you are studying leadership, then ask if you may schedule a 30- to 60-minute interview to share your ideas about leadership and learn this person's ideas in return.



## Schedule an Interview with a Leader



During the interview, thank the leader for her/his time. Begin by briefly sharing your various completed leadership worksheets from your Personal Leadership Portfolio, as well as your Personal Leadership Mobile. Explain to the leader how you have come to view a leader. Then, ask the leader you are interviewing how he/she defines a **leader**, and how this person believes he/she demonstrates the five leadership challenges. Take good notes during the interview, and you may even want to jot down exact quotes from the leader that are important to you. Remember to thank the leader for her/his time when the interview is completed.



## Interview with a Leader



When you return home, go to your Personal Leadership Journal, enter the date, and write a brief summary about what you learned about leaders and leadership from the leader you just interviewed. Start your Journal entry by identifying the leader you interviewed and why you respect that person as a leader. Be certain to include quotes from the leader that were especially important to you.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry



# What Is a Leader?



## Exercise 3:

### Developing a Local Leadership Case Study

Talk to your friends, parents and neighbors. Ask them about specific problems or issues in your local neighborhood or community that involve leadership and that are important to them right now. Based upon all of the problems or issues people share with you, select one for which to develop a Local Leadership Case Study.



## Develop a Local Leadership Case Study

Now, go to your Personal Leadership Journal, enter the date and describe in writing the specific problem or issue in as great of detail as possible. You may want to interview people who are involved in the issue or go on-line to research the situation. Keep adding to your written Journal entry whenever you have additional information, ideas or insight to include. This is how you are developing your Local Leadership Case Study - it's an in-depth, detailed description of a local situation important to you involving aspects of leadership.



## TRY-IT! Personal Journal Entry

Once you've completed your detailed Case Study, apply your definition of a leader as well as your ideas about the five leadership challenges to the situation. If you were making important decisions about the Case Study, what would you do as the leader? How do the five leadership challenges help you think about the whole situation? What advice would you give the real leaders involved? In fact, you may want to share your written Case Study and the insights and advice you would give with the real leaders by writing them a letter offering your insights and advice.



# What Is a Leader?



## Five Leadership Challenges and a Leader's Commitments to Them\*

### Challenge the Process

Commitment Number 1: Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate and improve.

Commitment Number 2: Experiment, take risks and learn from the resulting mistakes.

### Inspire a Shared Vision

Commitment Number 3: Envision an uplifting and ennobling future.

Commitment Number 4: Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.

### Enable Others to Act

Commitment Number 5: Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust.

Commitment Number 6: Strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.

### Model the Way

Commitment Number 7: Set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values.

Commitment Number 8: Achieve small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

### Encourage the Heart

Commitment Number 9: Recognize individual contributions to the success of every project.

Commitment Number 10: Celebrate team accomplishments regularly.

\* Taken directly from James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. 1995. *The Leadership Challenge: Third Edition*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA (ISBN 0-7879-5678-3)



# What Is a Leader?



## Key Terms and Concepts

### Encourage

to inspire and lend support; to help others move beyond problems and challenges, and to look to the bright side of them

### Leader

someone who influences others; someone who gets others excited about working together toward common goals

### Leadership

“The art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p. 30)

### Model

a prototype; an example for others to follow and follow as a role model

### Status quo

what is, always has been and always will be unless someone (a leader) tries to bring about change

### Team

a group of diverse individuals working together toward a common goal

### Vision

a positive, inspiring and ideal mental image or “picture” of the future



# What Is a Leader?

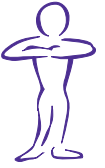


## Selected References Cited

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1995). *The Leadership Challenge (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*.  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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# What Is a Leader?



## Additional Resources

If you want to learn more about basic ideas of leaders and leadership, we suggest the following resources which are especially appropriate for teens and other young adults.

The Forbes Leadership Library. (1995). *Thoughts on Leadership*. Chicago: Triumph Books. (ISBN 1-572-243-058-3 paperback)

This small yet powerful book is a collection of quotes and sayings about leadership that have been published through the years by *Forbes Magazine*. These reflections by both ancient and modern sages and leaders address alphabetically arranged topics from “Ability” and “Ambition” to “Humility” and “Persistence” to “Virtue” and “Vision.” This is a great inspirational book to help the reader reflect upon the many dimensions of leadership.

Robert Holkeboer and Thomas Hoeksema. (1998). *A Casebook for Student Leaders*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (ISBN 0-395-85704-X paperback)

The authors present 24 case studies of leadership involving students. Individual case studies are grouped under four headings: “Values,” “Individual Rights,” “Diversity” and “Group Dynamics.” Each case study is accompanied by six activities using diverse learning strategies. This is a great resource for both individual and groups of young adults to use their leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes to work through real-life challenges that leaders face.

Sean Covey. (1998). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens: The Ultimate Teenage Success Guide*. New York: Simon & Schuster. (ISBN 0-684-85609-3)

Focusing upon his father’s (Stephen Covey) highly successful 1989 book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, the author explores teens as effective people (and thus leaders). From teens’ perspectives, this book addresses how effective teens may be proactive; begin with the end in mind; put first things first; think “win/win” seek first to understand, then to be understood; synergize; and “sharpen the saw.”

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. (1995). *The Leadership Challenge: Third Edition*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA. (ISBN 0-7879-5678-3)



# What Is a Leader?



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## Exploring Leadership as an Individual and as a Team

TRY-IT has been developed with support from a National 4-H Council grant award -  
***Developing Web-Enhanced Resources to Strengthen  
Community Teen Volunteerism and Service Through Effective Teen-Adult Partnerships***



Produced by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service  
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