girls can lead the way
Do You Have What it Takes to be a Leader?

Leadership may come naturally to you. Do friends seek you out because you’re good at helping them find solutions to problems? Do teammates rely on your judgment during a crucial part of the game? If you’re already the go-to girl, you may have leadership skills, but have never given them much thought. Now is the time to hone those skills and put them to work to help secure your future.

Maybe you’re a wannabe leader. Do you dream of one day leading a corporation, or heading up a team of scientists that will make a groundbreaking discovery? You can move beyond the dream, into the “I’m-determined-to-make-this-happen” phase.

In its simplest form, leadership means having the capability to guide others to achieve a common goal. To lead, whether it’s a PTA group or a team of NASCAR mechanics, you must have characteristics that followers find admirable. To be an effective leader, you must:

- **Be determined** - Staying focused and working toward accomplishing a goal, even when progress seems slow, shows commitment.

- **Have tolerance** - People who come from different ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds than your own add valuable perspectives to your mission.

- **Be decisive** - Those who stay on the fence and hesitate to make a decision for fear they will offend someone don’t stay leaders for long.

- **Be self-confident** - The ability to accept and love yourself, even your imperfections, affects everything you do and helps determine whether you make the most of your life. (see Give Your Self-Confidence a Boost on page 3)

- **Exercise self-discipline** - This covers a wide range of your life, from not losing your temper when someone says something insensitive, to scheduling time to do your homework and chores.

- **Be able to communicate a “vision”** - People are more willing to assist you if you show them the value in what they are doing.

- **Be sensitive to the needs of others** - When friends and others you meet feel you recognize their strengths and contributions, they will be more willing to take note of yours.

- **Be willing to admit when you’ve made a mistake** - If you did something wrong, it’s best to admit it to the people you are working with as soon as possible.

- **Treat friends and followers the way you would want to be treated** - Good leaders recognize the value of people around them and don’t try to act superior.

Being a leader isn’t easy, but it has some pretty good perks – namely the satisfaction that comes when that long-sought goal is accomplished.

Are you **up** to the **task**?
Give Your Self-Confidence a Boost

Brianna is 16. She dislikes her body shape. She frequently doubts herself. She worries about what others think of her, and she tends to not take credit for her accomplishments.

Sheryl is also 16, but, unlike Brianna, Sheryl is comfortable with her body. She tries new things. She doesn’t beat herself up when she makes a mistake and she doesn’t constantly compare herself to others.

Who do you identify with more? If it’s Brianna, you’re typical. Compared to boys, girls grow up less confident. Girls’ self-confidence peaks at about age 9, then nosedives at adolescence when discomfort rises with their bodies and anything else that makes them stand out in a crowd. It’s also when some girls avoid appearing smart because some boys are threatened by intelligent girls.

If you could use a good dose of Sheryl’s thinking, it’s time for a self-confidence makeover. Being self-confident is necessary for a leader, but even more important, it’s essential for leading a happy, satisfying life. Learning to love yourself is not about being conceited or egotistical; it’s about accepting yourself.

Self-Confidence Makeover

Here are some basics to start you on the road to being self-confident:

• **Start today.** The sooner you begin to honor, respect and admire yourself, the sooner your life will head in interesting and challenging directions. Don’t think “I’ll love myself when I lose 5 pounds” or “I would be a better person if I had a boyfriend.” Start today by declaring, “I love myself the way I am, imperfections and all!”

• **Try to avoid ending sentences with the phrase, “you know?”** This seems as if you need someone to approve of what you said. You will appear more confident if you just finish the sentence and wait for a response.

• **Stop comparing yourself with others.** There is always going to be someone who is smarter, skinnier, richer, better looking, funnier, better dressed or more talented. So what?

• **Pick something you’ve always wanted to try and do it.** Regardless of whether you fail or succeed, doing what you’ve always wanted to do will prove that you can take risks and do what’s in your heart.

• **Discover your talents.** You may not be the star of your soccer team or have the highest GPA in your class. Don’t think of your talents in traditional terms. You may have a knack for organizing. You may feel comfortable speaking in front of a group. It doesn’t matter where your talents lie, whether it’s in chess, scrapbooking or building things. When you do something you like and have a talent for, it’s exhilarating.

“**No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.**”
Eleanor Roosevelt
Get Smart About Money

Learn how money can work for you so you can depend on yourself for financial security. This knowledge can also help you if you’re in a leadership position that requires you to handle an organization’s finances. Follow these simple rules, and you’ll have the keys to financial independence:

Pay cash. You can get in debt with credit cards before you’re even aware of it. If you use a credit card, pay your balance off every month.

Stick to a budget. Write out a budget plan and stick to it. You can make your money go where you want by putting it down in black and white.

Ask questions. Don’t be timid about asking family and friends about financial planning, investing, stocks, insurance, savings and other wealth-related topics.

Keep good records. Store your budget plan, banking and investment records, receipts for tax deductions, income statements and account numbers in one place so they will be easy to locate at tax time.

Don’t loan money to friends. If you do, and they don’t pay you back, you may lose a friend. If there’s really a need and you have money to spare, give it as a gift and don’t expect it back.

Save and invest. Save for a rainy day, which can be easily translated into when your washing machine breaks. Better yet, invest some of your earnings for the long haul and watch your retirement fund grow.

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Sources:
Be True to Yourself: A Daily Guide for Teenage Girls, Amanda Ford
7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, Sean Covey
The Girls’ Guide to Life:
How to Take Charge of the Issues That Affect You, Catherine Dee
EducatingJane.com (www.educatingjane.com)

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