

McNally & Associates

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

Leadership Habits

In this *Leadership Reflection*, I'll summarize the key points from the excellent book *The Inner Work of Leaders: Leadership as a Habit of Mind* and offer an exercise to further your learning.

The Inner Work of Leaders: Leadership as a Habit of Mind

Barbara Mackoff and Gary Wenet
American Management Association 2002

Psychologists Barbara Mackoff and Gary Wenet interviewed sixty-five exceptional leaders from diverse backgrounds to discover how their relationships and past events created their leadership point of view. The authors assert the leaders used their life experiences to leverage five powerful habits of mind or ways of thinking. These habits shaped the way the leaders responded to challenges and were central to their success.

The authors state, "Leadership is not a role or set of strategies. Instead, it is a point of view that begins with the inner work of integrating and translating past relationships into powerful habits of mind." The habits of mind are:

- **Framework:** the strategy of interpreting negative events with a resilient response
- **Reflection:** the capacity to observe and analyze his or her own behavior
- **Attunement:** the practice of learning from every person in the organization
- **Conviction:** the ability to draw upon inner authority and purpose
- **Replenishment:** the craft of restoring perspective and renewing resources

The authors describe how a leader's legacy is shaped through family and other role model influences as well as defining moments. The stories are inspiring. The message is compelling - as leaders we must take on the inner work to understand the influence of our formative experiences so we may develop the habits of mind that allow us to lead others successfully. It's about our way of "being" a leader as opposed to "doing" leadership.

Coaching Exercise:

1. Think about how the people and experiences in your life created the leader you are today. Take some notes in a journal.

Identify an experience in your family that influenced the way you:

- think about valuing and respecting others
- respond to failure or disappointment

- manage work/life balance
- reflect and learn from experiences
- adopt a positive focus when faced with an obstacle
- recognize others' contributions
- perceive your sense of purpose
- know when to take charge

What patterns do you see?

2. Review some recent leadership challenges and how you responded. Think about how the family experiences shaped your way of leading and developing others. What habits of mind did you employ?
3. What habit of mind do you want to develop further for yourself? How will you do that?

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