

True leaders: mini guide for leaders or senior managers

Leadership can be challenging. Often what makes it even harder is the stress that results from the pressure to perform and multiple layers of complexity. This guide sets out – in three simple steps – a simple approach to make it easier, helping people to relax into their roles, be themselves, and find their own most natural and confident leadership styles. It also gives a taste of our 'Wisdom at Work' Leadership Mastery programmes.

Step 1: Letting go of ideals and limiting beliefs (see True Leaders matrix on page 2)

1. In the 'True Leaders Matrix' on page 2, list in the 'Roles and tasks' column the main aspects of your job.
2. Take each in turn and reflect honestly on how capable you feel in it – give yourself a mark out of 10. Next, in the 'But I can't' column list any ways in which you feel ill-equipped or lacking confidence to fulfil it effectively.
3. Read over what you've written so far. Notice how you feel in your mind and body.
4. Now put the matrix to one side and out of sight. You'll come back to complete it later.
5. You're now invited to do a very simple exercise. Familiarise yourself with the simple instructions below so you can put them to one side and take yourself through the stages of the exercise. Or listen to the online audio.

- Sit somewhere quiet with both feet on the floor. Rest your hands on your lap. Gently close your eyes.
- Start to bring your awareness into your body. Notice where it's in contact with the floor and the chair.
- Take your awareness through your body – from your feet, all the way up to your head.
- Now take your awareness to your breathing – noticing each in-breath and each out-breath, wherever you notice this most in your body. See if you can allow your awareness to get absorbed in these sensations.
- As you bring your awareness to your breathing, your mind will probably wander off repeatedly. This is due to the mind's 'autopilot' function, which looks out for problems and tries to come up with instant fixes.
- Each time this happens, notice what you've got distracted by. This will almost certainly include some difficult thoughts and emotions generated by what you've written so far in the True Leaders Matrix.
- Imagine these thoughts and emotions are like clouds that pass into the sky and then move on by.
- As you allow each cloud to move on by, come back to your breathing until the next cloud appears, and so on.
- Keep doing this for a few minutes. Then, become aware of your whole body and, opening your eyes, gently bring this exercise to a close.

Step 2: Finding your True Leader qualities (see 'True Leaders Qualities Finder' on page 2)

1. **Choose three significant life experiences** where you achieved something valuable and enjoyed yourself doing so.
2. **Reconnect with the experiences:** first allow your mind to settle, using the techniques from the exercise above. Now, with your eyes closed, bring each life experience to mind. To make each as vivid as possible, spend a while really dwelling on it – allow any related thoughts, emotions, images, or words to come into your awareness. When you've done this for all three experiences, gently bring yourself out of the reflection.
3. **Drawing out the essence:** in the 'True leaders qualities finder' table on page 2 write a brief description of each life experience. Then, taking each one in turn, fill out the other 4 columns (Values, Passions, Impact, Strong suits). There's an explanation for each of these in the blank template, and a complete example.
4. **Write your manifesto:** take in fully what you've written. Look for common themes, skills, qualities and strengths. Write a short summary of these in the space at the bottom of page 2. This is your 'True Leaders 'manifesto'

Step 3: Applying your True Leader qualities to your role

- Having completed your 'True Leaders' Manifesto, come back to your half-completed 'True Leaders matrix'
- For each role/task, write in the 'True leader response' column a new statement about your relevant capabilities, fully taking on board insights generated in step 2. Give yourself a new 0-10 rating.
- Write in the final 'Next steps' column any practical next steps for cultivating and refining your leadership skills.

Found this guide helpful? Contact us to find out more about our 'Wisdom at Work' Leadership Mastery programmes: info@risingminds.org.uk or call 07866 566496

True Leaders Matrix

Leadership role or task	0 - 10	But I can't!	P A U S E + D O S T E P 2 N E X T	True leader response	0 - 10	Next steps
E.g. Delegating tasks to direct reports	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People don't take me seriously. • I don't like being demanding. 		When I'm calm and prepare myself, I'm good making requests which others follow.	7	Prepare for meetings with direct reports by rehearsing in my mind the key things I am requesting and why.

True Leader's Qualities Finder

Experience of achievement	Values <i>Things that really matter to you</i>	Passions <i>What gives you pure pleasure</i>	Impact <i>How you positively contributed</i>	Strong suits <i>What skills come easily to you</i>
E.g. Organising Dad's 60 th birthday party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship • Celebration • Creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting people • Aesthetics • Playfulness 	I created a meaningful experience for Dad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation • Delegation • Motivating others
1.				
2.				
3.				

My True Leader's Manifesto

The key qualities and skills I bring to my leadership role are ...