

The Wise Leader (Part 4)

By Paul Houston | Categories: Classroom Community

Lead effectively by staying open.

For the last few months I have been sharing some ideas from my newest book (*The Wise Leader: Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons*, co-authored with Stephen Sokolow and available from iUniverse, Amazon, or Barnes and Noble). Our basic premise is that we are all leaders whether we have an official position or merely play that role as a classroom teacher or with our friends and family. Anyone who leads needs to be connected to the underlying operational system of core principles that lead us to act in a wiser way. Further, we are very aware that in today's world, wise leadership is needed more than ever.

In this last installment I want to mention something that is often ignored in leadership literature and discussion, and that is the need for using intuition as a guide in our decision-making and actions. It has long been a standing joke that "intuition" is something that women have and use but somehow got left out of the male chromosome. In reality, we all are gifted with a sense of intuition if we would just listen for it and to it. Another way of looking at intuition is that it is merely the accumulated wisdom of your life. In his best-selling book *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell described the ability of experts to "know" things without knowing how they know. That knowing is what he describes as a "blink." I would call it intuition. We are all experts on our own lives and we can "blink," or know things without knowing how we know. You don't have to know why to know something. Sometimes the why may actually get in your way of deeper knowing. Wise leaders learn to trust this sense of internal expertise we all have access to.

I talked before about our power to visualize a new way of being or doing, and by doing so, creating a new reality. Well, our intuition gives us a leg up on creating a better vision of what is possible because we know what the issues and stumbling blocks may be and how we may overcome them. I play golf (or least I try to!) and before each shot, I try to line it up physically so that I can hit it in the direction that I desire, but I also try to line it up mentally by visualizing what that shot will look like once I hit it. Given my limitations as a golfer, this doesn't always work for me, but when I have a strong sense of vision I do tend to hit it better than I do if I just step up and take a whack at the ball. In the movie *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, Bagger—a mystical caddy—suggests that to be able to play golf you have to "see the field." You have to see what you want to happen before you make it happen. When you can use your ability to visualize along with your intuition, it becomes a powerful tool for the wise leader.

One of the key elements of using your intuition is that you must be open and non-judgmental. You must accept what is and not reject it because it is not what you hoped it would be. Sometimes what *it* is is exactly what is supposed to be, and we don't always control what is supposed to be. That is the deeper wisdom of the universe at work. You have to be open to the possibilities, whatever they might be. If you close your mind or judge what is happening, you actually stop it from happening. Wise leaders are open to the non-rational parts of themselves where they might find more guidance and allow the universe to work its magic.

There is a level in each of us that is not available through the rational process. We have to access it through our feelings. That allows us to get closer to our higher self. That gives us the wisdom of knowing without knowing how we know. It helps us find the moral compass we all carry around inside that helps us be better than we could ever dream.

The key to wise leadership is staying open—open to our intuition, open to empowering others, open to manifesting our vision—and that only comes when we stay open to all our possibilities. You have to be ready for what might happen and accept it as a part of the process of your growth. There is a belief in Eastern philosophy that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. When we are ready by being open, the lessons and opportunities we need will appear. This requires the most difficult action any of us as humans can produce—we have to let go of our ego. You cannot be a servant-leader by serving yourself. You can never access the success you hope for without being ready for it. Wise leaders create and give way to possibility, and in doing so they make the world and those around them better.