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Midterm Paper: What Makes a Great Leader?

Throughout my life, I have come into contact with a variety of leaders. Some of these leaders were strong, inspirational role models, while others exhibited traits that I immediately sensed should never be shown by those who hold positions of leadership. Despite this, I have learned a lot from each of these leaders. My high school soccer coach, for example, was hostile, argumentative, and belittling. On the other hand, my grandfather has shown me that true leaders demonstrate integrity, humility, and compassion in everything they do.

Growing up, I was fortunate enough to live near all four of my grandparents. Because of this, I looked up to all of them. Specifically, my dad’s father has taught me an abundance of skills that I believe all good leaders should exhibit. For his entire life, he worked his way up, and eventually became very successful. He retired as a division president of a home construction company. Although I was too young to truly understand what got him to that point, I have seen him continue to demonstrate the acts and behaviors that a true leader should possess inherently.

First, my grandfather always shows integrity, and has instilled that value into our entire family. One important lesson that he has ingrained into my mind is the saying “if you have to ask if you should be doing something, you probably should not be doing it.” This saying has stuck with me throughout my life. In terms of leadership, it can be applied to ethical and moral behaviors. Leaders that show integrity rarely make poor ethical or moral decisions, because they know right from wrong, and when to admit that they have made a mistake.

Second, my grandfather never comes across as this insanely successful, prideful man. This is because of his humility. He never boasts about his achievements, and always acknowledges his upbringing, which took place on a farm in Missouri. In regards to leadership, showing humility is a valuable characteristic because it allows subordinates to view themselves as important to their leaders, rather than simply being pawns in a mission.

Third, my grandfather is one of the most compassionate people I have ever encountered in my life. Every time I have the chance to see him, it is obvious how much he cares about me. However, I can also see this whenever he comes into contact with anyone else. In regards to leadership, it is important for leaders to show compassion towards their subordinates, in order to make them feel valued and important to the mission.

In addition to these moral traits that I feel as though a leader should possess, my grandfather is also extremely intelligent and logical. In his career, this helped him to progress to the position he eventually attained. Also, this helped to efficiently complete tasks and solve problems. He also understands the importance of listening, and absorbing as much information as possible, which, in turn, widens one’s sense of the world around them. In a broader sense of leadership, leaders need to be intelligent and logical so that they can work efficiently and solve any problems that they encounter.

Overall, my grandfather has continued to exhibit traits throughout my entire life that demonstrate how he was both an effective and moral leader. I have learned that in order for a leader to truly be great, they need to exhibit all of these traits so that they can establish trust in their subordinates and efficiently accomplish tasks.