10 Things Authentic Leaders Do

Pause and think for a moment:

What would your life look like if you had absolutely no fear? What kinds of things would you do if you lived from a frame of reference that your thoughts literally could form your world? How brightly would your light shine if you stepped out of the limitations that are keeping you small and stretched yourself well past your comfort zone into the place that you know, deep within, you are meant to be?

Authentic leadership is all about being the person you know in your heart you have always been destined to be. Authentic leadership does not come from your title or from the amount of money in your wallet. Instead, this form of leadership comes from your being and the person that you are.

Here are 10 things that authentic leaders do on a regular basis:

1. **They speak their truth.** In life today, we frequently 'swallow our truth'. We say things to please others and to look good in front of The Crowd. Authentic leaders are different. They consistently talk truth. They would never betray themselves by using words that are not aligned with who they are. This does not

give anyone a license to say things that are hurtful to people. Speaking truth is simply about being clear, being honest and being authentic.

2. **They lead from the heart. Leading is about people.** Leadership is about people. The best leaders wear their hearts on their sleeves and are not afraid to show their vulnerability. They genuinely care about other people and spend their days developing the people around them. They are like the sun: the sun gives away all it has to the plants and the trees. But in return, the plants and the trees always grow toward the sun.

3. **They have rich moral fiber.** Who you are speaks far more loudly than anything you could ever say. Strength of character is true power - and people can feel it a mile away. Authentic leaders work on their character. They walk their talk and are aligned with their core values. They are noble and good. And in doing so, people trust, respect and listen to them.

4. **They are courageous.** It takes a lot of courage to go against the crowd. It takes a lot of courage to be a visionary. It takes a lot of inner strength to do what you think is right even though it may not be easy. We live in a world where so many people walk the path of least resistance. Authentic leadership is all about taking the road less traveled and doing, not what is easy, but what is right.

5. **They build teams and create communities.** One of the primary things that people are looking for in their school/work experience is a sense of community. In the old days, we got our community from where we lived. We would have block parties and street picnics. In the new age of school and work, students seek their sense of community from school and employees seek their sense of community and connection from the workplace. Authentic leaders create environments that foster human linkages and lasting friendships.

6. **They deepen themselves.** The job of the leader is to go deep. Authentic leaders know themselves intimately. They nurture a strong self-relationship. They know their weaknesses and play to their strengths. And they always spend a lot of time transcending their fears.

7. **They are dreamers.** Einstein said that, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” It is from our imaginations that great things are born. Authentic leaders dare to dream impossible dreams. They see what everyone else sees and then dream up new possibilities. They spend a lot of time with their eyes

closed creating blueprints and fantasies that lead to better relationships, better teamwork, better school environments and deeper value. How often do you close your eyes and dream?

8. **They care for themselves.** Taking care of your physical dimension is a sign of self-respect. You can’t do great things at work if you don’t feel good. Authentic leaders eat well, exercise and care for the temples that are their bodies. They spend time in nature, drink plenty of water so that they are operating at planet-class levels of performance.

9. **They commit to excellence rather than perfection.** No human being is perfect. Every single one of us is a work in progress. Authentic leaders commit themselves to excellence in everything that they do. They are constantly pushing the envelope and raising their standards. They do not seek perfection and have the wisdom to know the difference. What would your life look like if you raised your standards well beyond what anyone could ever imagine of you?

10. **They leave a legacy.** To live in the hearts of the people around you is to never die. Success is wonderful but significance is even better. You were made to contribute and to leave a mark on the people around you. In failing to live from this frame of reference, you betray yourself. Authentic leaders are constantly building their legacies by adding deep value to everyone that they deal with and leaving the world a better place in the process.

**Task:**

You will pick **two** of the above statements- one that you believe you can aspire to and one that would challenge you.

* Explain where you are in terms of your personal development of these qualities and why.
* What experiences and characteristics do you have that have led you to pick these two?
* Reflect about what it means to you and what this leadership actually looks like in practice.
* Briefly, tell me in your own words what authentic/real leaders do.
* What will you have to do to reach this state of leadership? What would it look like in your life? Explain why you chose it.

You may reflect in a number of ways, be creative! You can create a graphic doodle to accompany your written answers, write a poem/spoken word, etc. Do not write a couple of sentences for each, create a thoughtful response that fully explores your ideas of leadership and what kind of leader you are. Each statement will be marked out of /5 using our reflective rubric.