

Hats Off!



I love hats.

I once held a dinner where many hats were on show. My guests were in awe of my collection.

I had to confess that only some of them were mine – a couple of friends had brought their own to round out my display – but I am fond of hats, so I'd like to use this metaphor to remind you of a few things that will help make your time on this wonderful planet live up to your expectations.

You, who are reading this, are in a unique position. I would guess that you are in a leadership position, such as teacher, consultant, director, professor, manager, supervisor, parent, etc. Therefore, you have the opportunity to be a change maker – of the lives of individuals you meet.

I believe there are 3 significant attributes essential for leadership. They are:

- 1) **Credibility:** Can others trust you? The best way to demonstrate credibility is by being consistent in your intentions and actions.
- 2) **Emotional intelligence:** Dan Goleman in his book says that 95% of the difference between an average leader and a superior leader is emotional intelligence.
- 3) **Modeling:** Psychological and educational research shows that adults and children will do only 30% of what we say – but 70% of what we do.

If you are taking on the role of leader, you have multiple roles to perform. I would like to “wear” a few of those hats for you and remind you of both your opportunities and your responsibilities as you make your way through a variety of activities and events. The purpose is to be an exemplary leader, inspiring all who come across your path.

So – put on:

A Sports Team Hat



This implies partnership. You are a part of several teams : your work, your family, your community, and the world. Push cooperative activities and good sportsmanship. Establish goals together, supporting each other as work is accomplished and miracles can occur.

A Warrior's Hat

Be the advocate for the person someone has forgotten or overlooked. Battle for the person who has been written off by the rest of the world. Use your voice to defend your values to your friends and neighbors in a gentle, loving manner.



A Safari Hat

As a leader you must be an adventurer into the unknown; remember to take with you a spirit of willingness and risk-taking. Be enthusiastic and optimistic – being a pessimist isn't worth it. For example, did you know that the pessimist gets sick twice as often as the optimist?

And remember everyone fails or makes mistakes regularly. Michael Jordan, in one professional game during a five minute segment, shot no baskets, missed the ball, and fell down. In fact, he didn't make his high school basketball team on his first try. Mistakes are part of life, so embrace failure in order to court success.



A Fireman's Hat



Be concerned not only about creating physical safety, but emotional and psychological safety. Be thoughtful of others occupying your space. For example, share resources; pass the plate of forgiveness whenever participating in a verbal feast; and listen first, second, and last. Don't use killer statements, put-downs, or be sarcastic. Be as willing as the fireman to step out of your safety zone for the sake of someone else.

Dr. Seuss Hat

Retain your sense of humor. Be in love with life. Bring some zaniness and inventiveness to every teaching and learning situation, homemaking activity, or service project. Remember, children laugh 300-500 times a day; adults only 15 times a day. At the beginning of a meeting, ask who has a joke that will make us all laugh.



A Hard Hat



A hard hat is worn by architects and builders. Put on your hard hat and ask the tough questions:

- What is the flaw in thinking that? Or doing that?
- What is your backup plan?
- What would my favorite leader do if they were here?

It is essential to learn to see the value of disagreeing. Also, do not assume that silence means agreement.

A Propeller Hat

Be flexible; there will always be necessary last minute adjustments. Be willing to go with the flow. Be creative and inventive. It doesn't have to be done your way to be done right. I am convinced that there are multiple solutions to most problems, issues, and dilemmas so always be on the hunt for new ideas.





A Multicultural Hat

This is to remind you that your heritage, culture, background, etc., is a valued one. Keep in mind, however, that you will be exposed to multiple opinions and points of view as a result of the diversity that exists in this world. These differences are fortunate and will enrich your activities, your relationships, and your journey.

An Invisible Hat Created Just for You

This may be the most important hat of all. Each person's experience is unique to him or her. Comparisons are not beneficial and may be harmful; each person is distinct, special, and in essence a prototype not available for duplication. Please remember that.



If you want to improve your leadership skills, I would suggest that beginning tomorrow you select a hat that you are going to wear for the week. Each day practice the precepts and skills suggested by that particular headwear.

And, in closing, I suggest you might think of:



Sam's Hat

Remember that old "I Want YOU!" poster? I want you to join me in the above daily practice, because with all of us working together, we can create much more than we can create separately.

Have fun!

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