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My Three Chapter Book On Leadership:
ELI: *Every Leader's (an) Individual*

Chapter One:
Here's the deal, leadership is NOT telling people what to do.

Before my experience in the Emerging leadership institute this fall here's what I thought I had to do to be a leader. I was supposed to tell people what they had to do, I was supposed to assign tasks, give advice even when not asked and put people in their places. I wasn't there to listen to others thoughts, I was right and don't you dare say differently. Every time something didn't work out like I had planned it wasn't my fault it was whoever I'd told to do that job. The thing I never realized was their failure was recognition of my failure as a leader to assess whether or not they'd even want that position because in order to do something you have to have some sort of passion or liking for it. Through ELI I've learned that being a leader is not all about what you want and telling people to do it. It's about encouraging people, not telling people. To be a leader you need to be perceptive, you need to talk to those following you and figure out what they would be good at before assigning a task to them. For example say you're trying to figure out how to divide people up into tasks for a group project. You could just tell the members of your group what they're doing and get results that are less than passionate or you could just simply ask them what do they think they would be best at? Say you assign Adam to make the poster he will most likely do it to get the grade and complete his end of the deal but he won't put his best work into it because he's not really comfortable with his artistic skills, he's more of a writer. On the other hand you have Erin who unknown

to you is an amazing artist, but instead you assign her to write the summary without asking what she even wants to do. The jobs will get done, but they won't be the best they could be and in turn that will reflect on your ability as a group leader to communicate your group what they'd be best at. If you just ask Erin what she would like to do she would feel more comfortable telling you she has a strong art background and then in turn Adam would feel more comfortable volunteering his writing skills because he sees you listening to Erin's passions, not just bossing people around. Listening is a powerful thing, in this case it's going to get you a more finished project that might even have a bit of passion put into it. The more evident completeness and passion in the project is in turn going to reflect better on you as a leader. So this fall I learned that maybe just telling people what I want done isn't the best way to get the highest quality of results, that if I just listen to people I will get a more complete and passion infused final project.

Chapter 2:
You Aren't Perfect and the title Leader Doesn't Mean It's Your Job To Make Everything Perfect

Here's the deal I have an insane need to fix everything. If something falls through I feel responsible as a leader and want to do it all myself and fix it because I feel it's going to reflect badly on me. I could never take failure; it wasn't something I could accept. In middle school I was that kid, the perfect kid. Didn't do anything bad, made straight A's, graduated 2nd from the top of her 8th grade class. In high school I loosened up a little bit and realized I wasn't perfect but I still strove for perfection. I graduated Magna Cum Laude, was the president of BETA club, treasurer of Spanish club, and Vice president of Art Club. I was always the person who had it together so people seemed to gravitate to me to fix their problems. In turn I would drive myself nuts attempting to do

so. Senior year BETA club was in charge of the Angel tree, I assigned a group to do the task since I already had winter banquet planning on my hands. Three days before the angel tree (which was an actual tree) was supposed to go up the group came to me and told me they hadn't even gotten the tree, they hadn't made the list of kids and they hadn't gotten a place to store the gifts as they came in! This sent me into a serious panic. I viewed that if this didn't happen it would all be put on me. I would have failed. So in turn I drove myself insane for three days straight. I was driving all over town, I was on my cell phone 24/7, I was skipping class to meet with people to get donations, and I was going by myself to hand write 500 kids wish lists. At the end of three days I'd gotten it done but I'd literally drove myself into being not only run down, but literally sick. I made a promise that if I ever was met with that situation again I wouldn't drive myself crazy trying to reach that level of perfection I had in mind. Jump forward two years to ELI Individual Project. I had these insanely perfect goals I wanted to accomplish with my individual project. I wanted to make all these big changes on campus that would help benefit campus safety. Problem was my plans were too big and too inflexible to meet my perfect standards. Taking 18 hours and working two jobs wasn't fitting in well with my perfect project deadlines I'd created for myself. I was calling people and they weren't returning my calls. I couldn't get the times I had available to meet with people, so I was skipping classes to make times work. I was trying to make a cute little flier for my cell phone drive and I was trying to collect it all myself. I was reaching craziness once again, except this time I recognized it. I had to pull myself down to reality. I had to talk myself down literally, I had to realize I am human and everything can't go the way I planned, I can't fix it and its ok if it doesn't turn out as perfect as I had it pictured in my mind. So

by admitting this to myself I was able to obtain more realistic goals, I was able to accept the flaws in my initial plans and I took an insane amount of strain off myself. I couldn't stand that half of my plan had fallen through but I had to realize that I'd made a positive change with the rest of my plan that was successful and there for the fact that I'd made that positive change should be perfect enough for me.

Chapter 3: **You're Not Always Perceived as You Imagine You Are**

Just because you view yourself as one way or have this vision of what you are doesn't mean that's how people actually see you. When you're presenting yourself as a leader and put in the public eye people are always examining you. You may not want to accept that they're doing this but they are. In my mind I always had this idea of what people saw me as, the impressions I gave off and how people viewed me not just as a person but as a leader. I always thought that because of my take charge manners and vocal opinions people would see me as comfortable with my leadership positions, willing to make changes happen, and a willingness to stand up for what I believed in. Then came along the assessment of my leadership style. After painstakingly answering eighty something questions to the "best of my ability" I eagerly scratched off the answers I thought would reflect that how I viewed myself was how others viewed my leadership styles. Instead I was informed of several disheartening things. The list of words was disappointing to say the least, each more discouraging then the next. Included among those were: Egotistical, Over Confident, Tactless, Narcissistic, Controlling, and my absolute favorite Cocky. Those were definitely NOT the words I wanted to read. As I continued to read my leadership style profile I learned that I was more a less a bossy

leader, a bitch. One who took charge and didn't care if they stepped on other toes. I had no problem being insensitive and correcting others, I wasn't good at taking suggestions and I tended to want things my way. That wasn't a leader, no in my opinion that was the description of a Hitler wannabe. At first I'm not going to lie the blow to my ego was hard to take, then I realized does that mean I am egotistical? I started pondering the other things the profile had said. Maybe me being so outspoken and my willingness to stand up for what I believed in did come off as over confident and cocky to others. Maybe it wasn't always the best thing to tell people exactly what I thought, that could be a little tactless. My constant need for perfection and my want to be in charge could definitely be perceived as controlling. The hardest to accept was narcissism, since I knew that I am entirely insecure with everything about me and I pick myself apart piece by piece I couldn't see myself as being self centered and obsessed with me. Then behold my BIGGEST realization of ELI was about to hit me. This insecurity and focus on everything that was wrong with me had made me obsessed with me, not in a good way, but in a self destructive find everything that's wrong with me and fix it kind of way. These words, these views were definitely not how I wanted to be perceived by others. So instead of picking apart all these things that were bad about me I just set out to maybe adjust them slightly, a little at a time. I can't help being outspoken, that's who I am. What I can help is how I say things, I need to be more empathetic and keep others feelings in mind. I need to address my willingness in a more positive way, by sitting back and listening to others then combining their ideas with mine before expressing my views perhaps I can show people that I can see things from their way of doing it to. The most beneficial of these self help tips for me was that I need to stop focusing on what's

wrong with me and focus instead on positive things not necessarily about me but around me. By focusing on all that's positive around me I've stopped focusing on me as a person. It's helped me to value the little things more. These realizations are definitely an ongoing process but one that in time I feel will benefit me greatly and that I can definitely change these negatives into a positive over time. It's this willingness to wait for change and think more about how my actions are being interpreted by others before I just impulsively do stuff that has been the greatest lesson I could have learned in ELI.

Prologue:
This Is Me, This is My Future, I Make It What It Is

Emerging leadership institute wasn't exactly what I thought it would be. Instead of being told how to be a leader, I was able to learn to interpret how being a leader applied to me. I was able to see that every leader is an individual with individual leadership philosophies. The previous three chapters have covered what realizations ELI brought to me that have most impacted my leadership philosophy. If anything the Emerging Leadership Institute has taught me that people aren't always going to just tell me what to do. I have to be an individual and think things through for myself. The way one person interprets leadership is different from another and there's not really a wrong answer. The only wrong answer you could ever have is saying that you can't be a leader.