

Grant Mills

Jared Tippetts & Angel Lee

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Emerging Leader Institute

Upon entering his freshman year at the University of Kentucky, Jared Tippetts Jr. knew it was important that he get involved on campus. He knew that taking on leadership roles would enhance his college experience and further his ambition to become successful after graduating from college. Jared Tippetts Sr., ever the wise, guiding father told his son that “leadership is a process,” but if you really want to know what it means to be a leader then you have to find out for yourself. After receiving this challenge from his father, Jared Jr. purchased a “success guaranteed” leadership book as well as a New York Times best seller, “Raising the Bar for Others,” authored by University of Kentucky graduate Dr. Grant Mills, an expert in the field of leadership and Kentucky History. The book was published in the year 2015, and still proves successful for leaders in the present year of 2030. The book describes Dr. Mills’ experience in the Emerging Leader Institute as an undergraduate, highlights his personal definition of leadership, features five chapters that outline exemplary leadership traits, and shares how he grew as a leader after incorporating these core principles into his own life.

The introduction of the book discusses the high rate of student apathy in colleges around the nation, focusing on the University of Kentucky’s abysmal apathy rate. Since Dr. Mills’ book was published, student apathy has plummeted, especially at UK with more students applying for leadership roles in clubs and organizations.

Dr. Mills describes leadership as the ability to motivate others to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others, in both small and big ways, but most importantly in meaningful ways. In his book he says that it is important to collaborate as a team to reach the group's ideal goal. He says it is very important that the leader hold his members accountable in order to successfully accomplish their task. To truly be a great leader, Dr. Mills feels it is critical to lead others in an effort to develop the members leadership skills as well. The effective leader grooms others in the organization to step up and assume his responsibilities, for if the leader does not prepare his members to lead then the group will eventually crumble.

The first chapter of Dr. Mills' book is titled Vision. This is a leader's term for focusing on a goal. Vision gives the leader a sense of direction when leading the group toward accomplishment. Without a clear vision the followers can not stay as fully committed or motivated to the task, because uncertainty will create chaos. Looking to the future to create change also requires looking to the past according to Dr. Mills. It is important to learn where we have come from and how we have grown from past experience in leadership positions. If you can look at someone else's mistake then you may be able to prevent yourself from making the same one.

The next chapter in the book is Passion. It is extremely important to become passionate about what you are trying to achieve. If you are not passionate about the goal you are working toward then you may fail or the end product will not turn out as well as planned. Dr. Mills describes passion as the drive that pushes people to do bigger and better things. Passion is a hard emotion to evoke in your team members if they do not

feel strongly about the task ahead, but motivating them with a simple thank you or other small rewards may help to encourage them to accomplish great things.

The third chapter of the book is titled Communication. The ability to communicate successfully with each other is key in any situation. One of the ways to tell if someone is a great leader, Mills says, is by the way they listen. It is very important for a leader to listen to what their team has to say instead of trying to only command directions with no alternative. Communication can lead to new ideas, better ways to achieve a goal, help in order to find beneficial resources, and of course to accomplish the goal successfully. Great communication helps the process and makes for a much easier task in trying to reach the goal.

The fourth chapter is titled Integrity. It is important for a leader to be honest and to have good character. Dr. Mills states that in order to be a great leader you have to always try to do the right things even when no one is looking. It is important to try to surround yourself with people who share the same values and beliefs as you. Even though members of the group may have different temperaments, talents, and convictions it is important that they share the same set of principles.

The final chapter is titled Balance. Dr. Mills discusses when incorporating all the other chapters in a leadership style it is important to keep them all balanced: vision, passion, communication, and integrity. He believes that if you can keep these qualities balanced then you can truly become a successful leader. He also says that it is crucial to try to live by an equation that was set up by an influential speaker, Dr. Gordon Holbein, a business professor at UK during Dr. Mills' undergraduate experience. Holbein said, "There are three types of leaders, a good leader, a successful leader, and an effective

leader.” A good leader is one who is humane, has integrity, is uplifting and is empowering. A successful leader is one who gets the task done. In order to be an effective leader you must have an equal balance between being a good and successful leader.

Dr. Mills gained much of his experience as a leader in an undergraduate course he took his freshman year in the spring of 2006, called the Emerging Leader Institute. He says he took the course in order to develop his skills as an effective leader and to discover his own leadership style in order to work to become a better leader. An area he needed to improve on was stepping out of his comfort zone to take on different roles and to carry out tasks. Before taking the course he shied away from this because he feared that he may fail when trying to lead a group. E.L.I. helped give him the confidence he needed in order to go out on campus and in the Lexington community to make a difference in the lives of others.

Dr. Mills also feels that before leading it is very important to discover who you are. During his E.L.I. experience he took a DISC personal profile behavioral test that helped him to better understand himself and his strengths and weaknesses pertaining to leadership. The results reiterated many traits he already knew about himself, but it also revealed many characteristics he had not known. He discovered that he was a true S which meant that he was steady, loyal, a team player, and good listener, but he also found that he tried to reduce or avoid conflict or tolerate ideas of others even though he may disagree. Dr. Mills established a goal to make others aware when he disagreed with them and to let them know how he felt the situation or project should be handled in order to help the group reach its full potential. He also said he had to learn to adapt to change,

because he was very traditional and, he had to learn to confront conflict in a way to advance the group's mission. He felt that the course text, The Leadership Challenge by Kouzes and Posner, other readings, the behavioral test, intelligent and influential class speakers, critical thinking group work, and self reflection all guided him into becoming a more effective leader. This course was an experience that he will never forget. His E.L.I. class shaped his skills in order to have a fun and successful undergraduate experience and his career to become a very successful professor and head of the history department at the University of Kentucky.

After finishing the book Jared Tippets Jr. felt he had gained some new knowledge on becoming a better leader, but before setting the book down his finger got stuck in one of the front pages. He opened it to the dedication page. "Raising the Bar for Others" was dedicated to Dr. Mills' Emerging Leader Institute instructors Jared Tippets, Jared Jr.'s father, and Angel Lee, Jared Jr.'s god mother. Little did Jared Tippets Jr. know that all he had learned from the New York Times best seller was all taught to Dr. Mills by his own father, Jared Tippets Sr. Jared Tippets Sr.'s lesson to his son is very important though. You can not just be taught everything about being a leader from listening to lectures or reading books: you have to actually go out there and lead! To become an effective leader it takes experience and life lessons that can only be learned through actually taking on leadership roles or following other leaders who will help cultivate and enhance your own leadership skills. There is one quote that Dr. Mills finishes the book with and one that all leaders should always keep in the back of their mind when leading. The quote, actually a question, was given to Dr. Mills by the influential speaker Dr.

Gordon Holbein. Dr. Mills advises leaders to always ask themselves, as he asks himself,
“Am I becoming the kind of person who others want to follow?”