

The Leader in Each of Us

Unleashing The Power Of Emotional Intelligence

*THE ESSENCE OF
THE EVEREST LEADERSHIP ACADEMY*

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www.EverestLA.org



America must be the land of opportunity where every child has an equal opportunity to achieve their true ambitions and capabilities.

For those who might not start out with all the advantages, The Everest Leadership Academy intends to make a difference.

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FOREWORD

You must climb the mountain yourself – but you don't have to climb it alone.



When it comes to living a fulfilling, happy, productive life – a life with meaning and impact – what truly matters is the *journey*. Yes, the view from the top of the mountain may be breathtaking. But the real thrill is in the climb. And that's the focus of The Everest Leadership Academy: to help young people scale new heights as leaders and enjoy the climb.

Will there be obstacles on your journey up that mountain? Without question. Sooner or later, we all run into mudslides and avalanches – personal and professional. But with every setback, leaders *learn*, *regroup*, and *continue* the climb, fueled by a renewed confidence that so much is possible – *if* you're willing to work hard and learn along the way.

Of course, people in different circumstances face different obstacles and different choices. But we should not be constrained by our circumstances. The

condition of one's life should not determine the outcome of one's life. In America, we have opportunities that are the envy of the world. It's where we should all have an equal opportunity to achieve and succeed based on our ability and willingness to put in hard work. America must be the land of opportunity where every child has a fair shot. The Everest Leadership Academy is our humble effort to help build new bridges to the American Dream for more people to become leaders.

Writing this book has been an unexpectedly gratifying and inspirational experience. I hope to make a difference in the lives of so many children in underserved communities. I have always held very strong feelings about the need to level the playing field so that every young person has an equal opportunity to pursue and achieve their true ambitions to their fullest capabilities. I founded the Everest Leadership Academy in 2017, because I felt strongly about reaching out to give back to these children who may not have the opportunities and resources early in life as other children do.

My goal with the Academy is to build a leadership institution that leverages changing paradigms in education to provide underserved children with the soft skills, sometimes known as *EQ leadership skills*, they need to succeed in school and the confidence to pursue their passions. A social worker approached me one day and strongly urged me to write a book to tell

my story as a way to connect with and inspire these young children. This instilled in me a relentless passion to make a difference in children's lives in communities where despair and hopelessness can be too common.

Many of my experiences as I grew up shaped the guiding principles I learned (sometimes the hard way). They positioned me to work with so many great people and companies. I never could have predicted that one day I would be able to rise from a stickball-playing kid from the Bronx, the son of a first-generation immigrant father and a working-class mother, to become a leader.

We formulate our values and interests, learn from our environment, choose our mentors and role models, focus on academic (IQ) achievement, and develop our EQ (people) skills. Your life story provides the context for your experiences, and through it, you can find the inspiration to become a leader and make an impact in the world.

Finally, let me share a couple of metaphors with you as we start this book. As Rafael Nadal, the Spanish tennis great called "The King of Clay" once said, "Savor the moments of the fight." More simply: stop looking at the scoreboard, and enjoy the game. To use another metaphor: there is no elevator to success. You have to take the stairs. *In other words, you have to climb the mountain yourself – but you don't have to climb it alone.*

In the pages that follow, I'll talk about how The Everest Leadership Academy can help you harness *your* talent and effort and start *your* personal climb to your unique destination as a leader.

Founder's Message

I am living proof that the American Dream is still very much alive and well. As a first-generation American, born and raised in the Bronx, I had to make a choice early in life. Would I become a product of my environment or a product of my experiences? I selected experiences.

I felt strongly (as expressed by baseball player Wade Boggs) that our lives are not determined by what happens to us but by how we react to what happens. It's not what life brings us, but the attitude we bring to life. It's up to each of us to take what we're given and maximize the outcome.

Little did I understand at a young age that in addition to a good education (the IQ subject-matter skills), leadership EQ, the so-called "people skills," are equally important as you climb the mountain to a successful conclusion. At the Everest Leadership Academy, we define success as achieving your purpose in life – being all you can be.

Early in life, during the formative years, we must develop these EQ people skills to make a significant

positive difference in life. Typically, there are a few defining moments, or inflection points, in the school years that, for the most part, define your life's legacy.

The two components of EQ skills are:

- Personal – Self-awareness and self-management.
- Social – Social awareness and relationship management.

Based on my many years as a leader and mentor, I have concluded the following:

- Leadership is not a title.
- Leadership is not having power, but rather empowering others. Abe Lincoln once said, “If you want to test a person’s character, give that person power.”
- Leadership, for the most part, is a handshake and a smile. Not just any handshake, but a firm handshake. Not just any smile, but a sincere, caring smile.
- Leadership style embraces empathic toughness. You have to first care about people in order to demand their very best.
- Leadership is not necessarily what you do, but who you are.
- Leadership is not knowledge (IQ) by itself. But what may be more important is the wise use of knowledge and good judgement, which requires EQ skills.

For more information, please visit our website:
www.EverestLA.org

The website is real-time, interactive and very comprehensive. It will provide you with all the information you need to take advantage of many of its programs and services. The main highlights include the Founder's message, the extensive curriculum, and the events and testimonials.

An e-version of this book is also available on the website. Under the introduction of the curriculum section you also may download the e-version of the book entitled "The Leader in Each of Us" which is an essential component of the teachings of the Academy.

You can also contact the Academy and interact with staff members.

CHAPTER 1 – WHAT IS THE EVEREST LEADERSHIP ACADEMY?

Embracing Academic Excellence and Focusing on Developing Tough-Minded Leadership Skills

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I've been exceptionally fortunate in my life and in my career. At key inflection points, with the help of family and mentors (both personal and professional), I have been able to make a few key decisions that have unlocked important doors for me. But it wasn't all handed over on a silver platter. Opportunities are only options and possibilities. They don't turn into successes without hard work.

The Vision

I founded The Everest Leadership Academy because I feel strongly about the importance of reaching out to give back to people very much like me who may not have opportunities and resources early in life. For the most part, we are all products of our experiences, so

role models and mentors are vital in influencing the ultimate outcomes.

I also learned that the decisions you make early in life can determine who you are and what you become. My goal with the Academy is to facilitate that process and give young people the best advice I can to help them achieve their greatest ambitions.

Of course, in pursuing the true mission of The Everest Leadership Academy, we mustn't ignore the unfortunate reality that many young people don't always have the ability and freedom to make proper choices in their lives. We have a responsibility to help those who aren't in a position to help themselves and make their own choices. As we see all too often, life is not always fair. Young people do not typically find success or meaning in isolation; they need social support. That support can be found in the schools, family, relatives, and mentors. The Everest Leadership Academy is an institution that recognizes this reality and provides support to overcome many of the obstacles early on in life. With the Academy's teachings and support and an individual's self-determination and strong work effort anything is possible in achieving one's greatest ambitions. I believe it is important to have arms outstretched – one hand reaching up to the person who is giving you a lift, and one hand reaching lower to give someone a helping hand up.

Like many, I had to overcome numerous obstacles growing up: I worked multiple jobs simultaneously and left friends behind each day to commute long distances to a better high school. But, along the way, mentors and role models helped me develop leadership skills that supported me throughout my life. I made the most of what was available to me, and when there was a shortfall, I pushed forward with what I had: education, desire, and leadership. Our goal with The Everest Leadership Academy (www.everestla.org) is to replicate these fortunate interventions on a broader scale.

The Mission

The Everest Leadership Academy is all about your pursuit of excellence and your development as a leader – in school, at home, in the community, and in your future careers. Instead of dwelling on obstacles and “I can’t...,” we want you to envision what you *can* do and equip you with inspiration and strategies to make things happen – today and tomorrow. The words of John Ruskin, one of the 19th century’s great critics and thinkers, ring true: “What we think, or what we know, or what we believe are, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we *do*.”

And the first step to taking positive action is to create and maintain a positive outlook. I am a big believer in that old Henry Ford quote: “Whether you think you

can or you think you can't – you're right." Never let yourself focus on limitations. Focus on being your own personal best as a leader and a role model. As novelist and columnist Anna Quindlen said, "The thing that is really hard – and really amazing – is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself."

For those who may not start out with all the advantages, The Everest Leadership Academy intends to make a difference. The Academy proposition is that the early, formative years are most critical, because there will be defining moments (inflection points) that define who we become later on in life. At the Academy, we help young people scale new heights and enjoy the climb by embracing and recognizing those defining moments. We embrace academic education in the classroom (the hard IQ skills) and focus on developing the social character (the soft EQ leadership skills) that prepare people to succeed. We fully understand that knowledge by itself is not enough – it's the wise use of knowledge that matters.

Baseball star Wade Boggs best described the essence of the Academy's teachings. "Our lives are not determined by what happens to us, but how we react to what happens; not by what life brings us, but the attitude we bring to life. It's all up to each of us to take what we're given and maximize our success and happiness."

As I mentioned in the foreword, we should not be constrained by our circumstances. The condition of one's life should not determine the outcome of one's life. We should all have an equal opportunity to achieve and succeed based on our ability and willingness to put in hard work. The Everest Leadership Academy is our humble effort to start leveling the playing field and building new bridges to the American Dream for young people who may not start out with all the advantages.

My life story was framed by three defining moments:

- My sixth-grade math teacher gave me a pat on the back and let me know I had a gift for math.
- I attended Cardinal Hayes High School, where a disciplined education became a life-changing experience.
- My cousin, Raymond, became my mentor and role model. He was a first-generation American, Harvard graduate, and Fulbright Scholar who received a full scholarship to Columbia Law School. He later became deputy counsel for a Fortune 500 company.

These three inflection points occurred in my early teens. I'm convinced that, had none of these events occurred, I would not have gone onto college and become a serial CEO and leader.

The Everest Leadership Academy focuses less on academic curricula and more on developing the tough-minded leadership skills that shape our social character. Excelling in school is only part of the ultimate solution. We must reinforce education and, at the same time, teach less-advantaged children how to lead in their communities by developing their leadership skills. Education is not just about knowledge. It's also about developing the social character that prepares people to succeed.

I believe ambition is the lifeblood of human achievement – the catalyst that ignites daring achievers and converts the ordinary to the extraordinary. Of all the judgments we make in life, none are more important than the ones we make about ourselves: the values we choose, the goals we set, and how we confront our challenges.

The Three Founding Concepts of The Everest Leadership Academy

The Academy, at least in these early stages, is not yet a brick-and-mortar institution. Its role is to identify, facilitate, and collaborate with best-in-class resources, to focus on leadership education, and to rely on brick-and-mortar partner institutions to teach subject-matter skills. We have three founding concepts that shape our vision and mission:

1. **The Relentless Pursuit of Academic Excellence** – There is no more reliable and powerful predictor of future success than academics, and nothing is more vital to a successful future than a high-quality education. A strong classroom experience translates into a strong career experience, and thus, is a *must-have*. The Academy empowers families to take command of their children’s education and opens doors to the best learning options, work-study internships, scholarships, and more.
2. **The Enduring Qualities of Leadership** – The Academy helps students develop the *tough-minded* skills and attitudes that shape character and prepare them to face the many challenges they’ll encounter in life. We firmly believe that leadership can be developed and learned.
3. **The Crucial Importance of Mentoring and Role Models** – Role models can have an outsized influence on the journey. After all, even the greatest mountain climbers rely on Sherpas, the savvy guides who know the path and show the way to the goal. The Academy uses mentoring to guide and counsel students as they encounter key inflection points in their formative years.

But before we get too far in our discussion, let’s make sure we agree on one overarching principle. The

Academy is *not* some elite “factory” devoted to churning out world leaders and corporate titans. Success does *not* come from a job title. Success comes from within, and it’s shared through leadership. In each and every one of us, there is a leader, and *everyone* can lead, regardless of age, title, or tenure. Good, sound leadership is necessary not just in corporate environments but at home, in schools, and on playing fields.

The Tools We Need for a Successful Journey

The Everest Leadership Academy empowers families and students by promoting lifelong learning skills that are integral to leadership. We aim to teach children how to be leaders and role models in their communities by acquiring and mastering key traits:

- **Love of self** – Before we can ask others to love us, we must love ourselves. Before we can ask others to believe in us, we must believe in ourselves.
- **Education** – We must master the classroom lessons, but that’s not enough. We must develop a lifelong love of learning and never let our minds be idle. Be a voracious reader and learn from those who have succeeded.
- **Hard work** – Work hard *and* work smart. A work ethic that promotes passion and pride in all you do

sets you apart from the crowd and can take you very, very far.

- **Persistence** – It takes failure to succeed. We can't allow ourselves to be stopped by setbacks, because they are essential to success.
- **Respect for others** – We must honor the efforts and accomplishments of everyone we meet, because everyone has accomplished something. Every individual is worthy of respect.
- **Mentors** – Savvy, experienced people can help overcome many obstacles by reinforcing the right values, providing a sounding board on major decisions, and teaching their hard-earned lessons. We all need role models whose best aspects we can emulate and incorporate in our own lives.

The Academy is a nonprofit organization offering programs and services to less-advantaged children who are pursuing lives that are worthy of their untapped potential. These programs and services consist of:

Leadership Roundtable Workshops

Led by experienced people with more than 25 years in leadership roles. More importantly, usually these leaders were born and raised in underserved communities. These workshops are coordinated and

moderated by the respective local Academy leadership clubs.

Mentoring

This initiative will consist of one-on-one or group mentoring, where each student has a designated mentor from the time they enter the Academy until the time they leave (and possibly afterward). We will facilitate and encourage contributors and/or sponsors of our merit scholarship fund to be mentors.

Field Trips

The Academy staff and Advisory Board are well-connected with businesses and academic institutions and can arrange field trips.

Networking

Through its wide network of constituents, the Academy can help members applying for jobs or colleges.

Speaking Engagements

Academy leaders can engage in Leadership Roundtable Workshop forums accompanied by a moderator in front of large audiences.

Merit-Based Opportunity Scholarships

These scholarships will enable parents to choose alternative schools that provide a better education and to enroll their children in schools or gain access to programs that best fit their child's needs. They will

empower families to take individual action in the education of their children and allow them the freedom to decide the best learning options. The Academy will also help identify best-in-class education reform institutions.

In addition, The Academy will relentlessly advocate on behalf of children seeking paths to success. Ultimately, we'll give young people access to the best advice, skills, and opportunities to help them achieve their greatest ambitions and maximum potential.

The Everest Leadership Academy aims to be an institution like no other, focusing on the soft skills that are difficult to learn in a classroom. We reinforce traditional educational experiences by teaching teens how to develop leadership skills and how to lead in their communities. We hope to instill the habits of mind needed to successfully approach many of life's challenges.

I don't think you can fairly say that life is reducible to an equation. There are too many variables to account for. But the following formula (as advocated by Kazuo Inamori) summarizes the important factors you need to consider.

$$\begin{array}{r} \textit{Ability + Education} \\ \times \quad \textit{Effort} \\ \hline \times \quad \textit{Attitude + Integrity} \\ \hline = \quad \textit{Your Success and Happiness} \end{array}$$

Attitude and integrity are the most important factors that shape character – and that is the essence of leadership. As we have already discussed, our lives are not determined by what happens to us but by how we react to what happens, not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. Zig Ziglar, a famous motivational speaker, once said, “Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.”

CHAPTER 2 - WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)?

Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence



Daniel Goleman, a leader in the field, is known to be a significant proponent of emotional intelligence (EQ). Inasmuch as he claims situational leaders have different styles, he also acknowledges that the most effective leaders are alike in a crucial way – a high degree of emotional intelligence. The term EQ is shorthand for “emotional intelligence quotient.”

The capability of people to perform the work or job that they do falls into three areas:

- Technical skills – which includes technical expertise *e.g.*, accountancy skills.
- Intellectual capability – which is commonly known as IQ, or cognitive and analytical reasoning abilities.
- Emotional capability – often referred to as emotional intelligence or EQ.

So, what is emotional intelligence (EQ)?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand and manage emotions in ourselves and others. It is the ability to make emotions work for you, instead of against you.

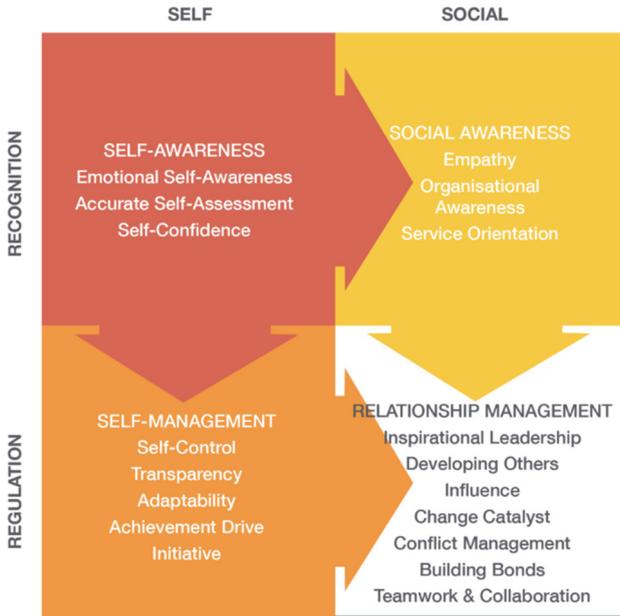
The components of EQ consist of two primary competencies:

- Personal competence:
 - Self-awareness – knowing one’s strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and impact on others and recognized by self-confidence, where you have a positive and strong sense of one’s self-worth and the ability to be critically self-reflective.
 - Self-management – controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods particularly anger, anxiety, and sadness. Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity, managing yourself and responsibilities; adaptability, which is the flexibility in adapting to changing situations and overcoming obstacles; achievement oriented, which is the guiding drive to meet an internal standard of excellence; initiative, which is the readiness to seize opportunities and act.

□ Social competence:

- Social Awareness – interacting with others, active listening, verbal communication skills, persuasiveness, leadership, extensive networking, effectiveness in leading change. An empathetic understanding of others and taking an active interest in their concerns; organizational awareness, which is the ability to read the currents of organizational life, build decision networks and navigate politics.
- Relationship Management – ability to understand how others are feeling, the power dynamics that often influence social relationships, ability to use your awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully; inspiring and guiding groups and individuals; developing others, which is the propensity to strengthen and support the abilities of others through feedback and guidance; a change catalyst, which is the proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in new directions; teamwork and collaboration, which is the promotion of cooperation and building teams.

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model:



Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model (2002)

Measuring emotional intelligence:

1. Take the Emotional Intelligence test (GEIT) at Global Leadership Foundation ei test website:
 - Google – “Emotional Intelligence Test – Global Leadership Foundation.”
 - Click on Emotional Intelligence Test.
 - Take test – 40 questions.

- Click score test and get results.
- For more information – interpreting GEIT scores – click [*here*](#).

2. The EQ Action Plan

	<u>Score</u>
Overall EQ	_____
Self-awareness	_____
Self-management	_____
Social-awareness	_____
Relationship management	_____

Self-awareness strategies:

Know yourself as you really are – critically self-reflective; the true essence of you; aware of your feelings, both positive and negative; getting in touch with your emotions and tendencies takes honesty and courage; observe the ripple effect from your emotions; lean into your discomfort; get to know yourself under stress; stop and ask yourself why you do the things you do.

Self-management strategies:

Breathe right; count to ten; sleep on it; smile and laugh more; visualize yourself succeeding; focus on your freedoms, rather than your limitations; learn a lesson from everyone you encounter.

Social awareness strategies:

Ability to recognize and understand the emotions of others; greet people by name; watch body contact – firm handshake and a sincere smile; develop a back-pocket question; clear away the clutter; live in the moment; practice the art of listening; understand the rules of the culture game; seek the whole picture; catch the mood of the room.

Relationship management strategies:

Be open and curious; enhance your natural communications style; avoid giving mixed signals; remember the little things that pack a punch; take feedback well; don't avoid the inevitable; when you care, show it; explain your decisions; make your feedback direct and constructive; tackle a tough conversation

IQ versus EQ

IQ, or book smarts, is the basis of the *hard skills* that are essential and that we can learn. These are things that are often objectively right and wrong.

By contrast, EQ relates to the *soft skills* that can be learned at any age but does not necessarily increase with age as you might expect. Some people may learn from life's experiences, but many do not. For this reason, the formative years are very critical. Growing

your competency in EQ at an early age is not easy or quick, as it takes perseverance in the process of critical self-evaluation, commitment to improvement and of course behavioral practice.

So, what's more important in maximizing one's potential or self-actualization – book smarts (IQ) or street smarts (EQ)? The answer is both. There are actually multiple intelligences – people may have strengths in a number of areas. However, the ability to understand and express emotions, or EQ, can play an equal role in how people fare in life. IQ is a number derived from a standardized intelligence (IQ) and represents abilities such as quantitative reasoning; visual and spatial processing; knowledge of the world; fluid reasoning. EQ is a measure of a person's level of emotional intelligence such as abilities to perceive how others feel; controlling one's own emotions; using emotions to facilitate social communication.

In summary, a high IQ is a great asset to have, but seasoned judgement (something you can't necessarily get in any classroom) is equally important. This doesn't mean that higher education isn't highly desirable and beneficial, but it does mean that the wise use of knowledge is as important if not more important than knowledge by itself. It's a scientific fact that emotions precede thought. When emotions run high, they change the way our brains function... diminishing our cognitive abilities, decision making powers, and even interpersonal skills. Understanding

and managing our emotions (and the emotions of others) helps us to be more successful in both our personal and professional lives. A distinguished psychologist Howard Gardner theorized that rather than intelligence consisting of a single general ability, there are several types of “intelligences” at which an individual may excel – including the ability to understand one’s own feelings and the role those feelings play in behavior (intrapersonal intelligence), as well as the ability to understand emotional behavior in others (interpersonal intelligence).

When you take time to develop your emotional intelligence, you get in touch with your authentic self. Instead of feeling stuck in a constant struggle against your own emotions, you leverage emotions as valuable resources that clarify what matters and energize you to achieve your goals. It’s a transformational investment in your mental and emotional wellbeing.

There are many phases of EQ leadership growth but there are four phases, in particular, that are very relevant:

1. I Don’t Know What I Don’t Know - as long as a person doesn’t know what he or she doesn’t know, he or she doesn’t grow.
2. I Know What I Don’t Know – to be conscious that you are ignorant of the facts is a great step to knowledge.

3. I Grow and I Know and it Starts to Show – read books, listen to tapes regularly, attend seminars.
4. I Simply Go Because Of What I Know – your ability to lead becomes more automatic.

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 3 — MY CLIMB

The early decisions you make have a significant influence in who you are and what you become.



Before you hear more about The Everest Leadership Academy, its principles, and how they might improve your life, it's only natural to ask, "Says who?"

In the following chapters, let me share a bit of my own background and experiences as well as examples of how embracing the principles of leadership has dramatically impacted my own life.

In 1926, at the ripe age of 18, my father traveled with his father from Italy to America, where they would be free to pursue their dreams. Arriving at Ellis Island, they didn't speak English, but that didn't stop them. They worked at odd jobs until my grandfather became a chef at the Commodore Hotel. Neither of them shied away from hard work, and they soon saved enough money to enable my father's five siblings and their mother to also make the crossing and become U.S. citizens.

My mother was born in New York City, and, like my father, she was also unafraid of working hard – in her case, as a cleaning lady and at other jobs. She also spent a fair amount of time doing charity work at a local nursing home. (Later in her career, she was actually older than most of the residents she served.) She was also a very accomplished amateur opera singer, performing for many charitable causes.

Financially speaking, we didn't have much, but that doesn't change the many fond memories I have of growing up in the Bronx. I had to walk about a mile to PS 89 for first grade, but I had a wonderful time in school and always looked forward to going. It didn't hurt that across the street was Stevie's, a wooden shack of a store where you could buy your own bag of handpicked candy for less than 10 cents.

I was a little guy growing up, and all my friends on the block called me Pee-Wee, which might have made me a little salty at times. But, in retrospect, that might have been one contributing factor that turned me into a "Type A" competitor. Yes, I was smaller than most of my friends – so my only response to this was to throw myself into athletics, including, softball, handball, and weightlifting. I loved competition, and I loved being the underdog who had more than his fair share of triumphs.

After all, in the Bronx, the street was your playground, and your neighbors were your teammates. That's where we played stickball using a

mop handle for a bat. And the stairs leading to our house – that’s where we played stoop ball with a Spaulding pink-rubber ball.

In the winters, we loved to ride our sleds down the sloped streets while throwing snowballs at one another.

In the summers, we practically lived at the schoolyard three blocks from our house, arriving in mid-morning and staying until dinner playing table hockey, handball, and softball. I literally went nonstop all day and never felt tired. After dinner, I liked to work out with weights. In hindsight, I wish I had set aside more time for reading and learning. However, my parents were not school-focused and didn’t emphasize learning or provide much of an academic environment. Nonetheless, my father did appreciate the value of a college education.

As I said, we never had much in the way of money – but the important thing I’ve learned is that *it didn’t matter*. My father set a tremendous example for us, working six days a week as a chef at two different jobs. My mother earned very little in her work, but somehow we always managed to survive. That also meant my parents relied on me and my brother for many home-improvement projects – like installing a patio, building an outdoor fireplace, finishing the basement, and even plumbing and electrical work. Even at age 10, I was mowing lawns and washing cars. Life was simple, yet very fulfilling.

The neighbors were mostly immigrants or first-generation Americans. None of them had college degrees, but they had so many things to teach the first-generation Americans. We learned toughness, perseverance, the value of hard work and, especially, love of family.

My parents were not well-educated. My mother didn't complete high school (though I believe my father did). From the time I was born until about age 13, I had no formal guidance or encouragement about school. My life revolved around sports and physical activities – not reading or problem-solving.

Somehow, however, probably thanks to the encouragement of a few of my teachers – and the unconditional support of my parents – I took control of my education. It was certainly a struggle, but I made it work, constantly seeking out mentors to help me throughout my school years – and, for that matter, well into my career, too.

I was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug quite early – mostly to help out my family with household expenses and school tuitions. At age 10, I started a car-washing business on my block. For 25 cents a car, I would wash and rinse the exterior. I also started mowing lawns – 15 cents for an hour's work. Back in the '50s, we weren't using power mowers, only the push-reel kind. It was physically exhausting work. At age 11, I stocked shelves at a local grocery store and delivered groceries to local homes.

In my teenage years, I was always busy. At one point, in fact, I held as many as five different jobs simultaneously. One job was playing in my brother's band at age 16 – something I kept doing professionally for another 12 years. Another job was decidedly less glamorous and fun – it was at the local gas station, where I pumped gas and fixed flat tires. At the same time, I started a car-detailing business on the side.

When I turned 16, I started working at Bronx Trailers, a U-Haul business. I also sold Christmas trees for my neighbor. I did that for a few years and actually started a competing tree-selling business a few years later when I was in college.

I didn't have role models except for my father's cousin, Raymond, who was well-coached by his parents as a young boy. He went on to become the first member of his family to go to college – Harvard, in fact, on a full scholarship. He went on to Columbia Law School and became the M&A general counsel for a Fortune 500 company.

I don't think I fully appreciated – at an early age – how important the formative years are with respect to learning. I was too focused on sports instead of my mind. Later on, I had to play catch-up, working twice as hard as some of my peers.

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 4 – PRINCIPLE NO. 1: THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

*Education is the great divide – it’s time to bridge
that gap.*

■

Just as good, loving parents create a tremendous advantage in life, so does a solid education – that was certainly true for me. My early primary-school years were unexceptional and not terribly memorable.

I was no more than an average student during these early years – except for math, which I enjoyed and which came a little more easily to me. My sixth-grade math teacher said, “You have a gift for math.” It took me aback, but I was very flattered. I’m certain that teacher’s encouragement was pivotal in awakening in me a desire to pursue a better education. It reinforces the truth that there is nothing that makes more of a difference in a child’s school experience than a

teacher. As Rusty Berkus once said, “There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, igniting the circuits of our highest potential.”

In seventh grade, it was off to junior high school at PS 135. I’d like to tell you it was a great period, but junior high was not always that pleasant for me. The student body at PS 135 was a pretty rough crowd. Students constantly fought, and, by the time I reached eighth grade, I was pretty disillusioned. There was no classroom discipline. I felt that I was being robbed of educational opportunities. I truly believe that schools must be calm, disciplined, and organized for students to learn, grow, and freely express themselves. That was certainly the case for me.

And I knew it wasn’t going to get better at the local high school, which didn’t have a reputation for student discipline. I’d heard about Cardinal Hayes High School, a boys’ high school on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. It enjoyed a reputation for excellence in both academics and discipline – and that’s what I set my sights on. I completed the application and sat for the entrance exam... and kept that activity from my parents, because I didn’t want to be embarrassed if I didn’t meet the admission requirements.

Of course, there was also the small matter of tuition, which I knew my parents could not afford. I knew I’d have to earn those tuition dollars myself – and I did,

by mowing lawns, working at the gas station, playing drums in a band, waxing cars, and working at a trailer business.

I passed that entrance exam and shared the news with my parents who were very supportive. However, they did acknowledge that the tuition was beyond their means – a non-starter. I proudly told them that I'd already set up a work schedule to earn enough for tuition, books, and even a little walking-around money.

Would I have preferred a more balanced lifestyle? Sure. But I was driven to pursue an education, which meant leaving friends behind and enduring a much longer commute to school.

Welcome to Cardinal Hayes High School

In September 1957, I started my freshman year at Cardinal Hayes High School, on 145th Street and Grand Concourse. In my freshman year, I was assigned to the annex at St. Helena's at the foot of the Whitestone Bridge – and it wasn't exactly an easy commute. I took a train and then a bus to get to the annex building. On a good day, it was about an hour each way. And the warmer school months were particularly cruel. I'd get home at about 4 p.m. on a weekday, passing all my friends who had been home since 3 p.m. as they played ball in the street. And of course, when I got home, I had to tackle a much more rigorous volume of homework before I could even

contemplate playing. I also worked a couple of hours each day and then full-time on the weekends.

The most difficult part of all of this was leaving my comfort zone and my core group of friends, enrolling in a new school far away and so different than what I was accustomed to, and fitting in with a new culture that had different expectations and rules.

But education is worth it. Cardinal Hayes was a game-changer for me. After I started high school, it dawned on me pretty quickly that I had a lot of catching up to do just to keep pace academically. However, overall, I did reasonably well at Cardinal Hayes, especially in math. English was not my strong suit, however. My English teacher was appalled to learn that I was 15 years old and still hadn't read one novel in my life (which, in retrospect, is hard for me to believe). However, I did manage to sneak onto the dean's list a couple of times.

I am convinced that my decision to go to Cardinal Hayes High School was a pivotal moment in my life. It probably made the difference in my career, quality of life, and ultimate success. While that was my decision, and I worked hard to make it financially feasible, I could never have achieved it without my parents' support. To this day, I am grateful that they always encouraged and supported my initiative. It was perhaps their ultimate gift to me.

Stepping up to College

Applying to college was quite simple – if a little humbling. I applied to three colleges, all within driving distance and with very affordable tuition: two engineering schools and one liberal arts school. Only Iona College – which accepted a steady stream of Cardinal Hayes students – agreed to admit me, and I majored in finance, which I enjoyed immensely. I graduated with a BBA degree.

Iona College was in New Rochelle, N.Y., so that meant I needed a reliable car to make the 30-minute commute. The tuition was pretty affordable for a college education. As I mentioned, by this point, I was working five different jobs that collectively added up to about 25 hours a week. I went from classes that typically ended around 3 p.m. each day to work at a trailer camp. On Saturdays, I was at the trailer camp, and on Sundays, I was at the gas station pumping gas and waxing cars. In December, I also sold Christmas trees, of course. And I spent more than a few weekend nights playing in the band. I was earning enough to pay for my tuition, a car, and my spending money – and I even had a little left over to save. Somehow, I managed to squeeze in some studying time.

However, by working so many hours, I didn't have the time to participate more fully in college life. It's a regret I still have, but that was the reality of the situation. But the hard work paid off.

I graduated from Iona College in the top 10 percent of my class and was a member of the Accounting Honor Society and president of the Pre-Legal Guild. Four years after grabbing my sheepskin from Iona, I applied to graduate school at Pace University for an evening program to earn an MBA, a great degree to have in the business world. Night school has its own unique rhythm – largely a slow and grinding one that tests your patience. Finally, after five years of evening classes, I graduated from Pace University with honors in 1975.

Starting right from high school through graduate school, I can tell you that education isn't easy. It takes a lot of effort and patience. And it also isn't cheap. I worked very hard to earn enough money to pay for my schooling. However, I always remembered the famous expression from Derek Bok, the former president of Harvard University: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

He's right. Education is the best investment that a family can make in their child. Without education, a child's options are dramatically fewer and smaller. Don't let anyone dissuade you in your pursuit of knowledge and education.

Education, however, doesn't necessarily have to be a four-year college degree. It may be a two-year community college, a trade school or nursing school, etc.

Generally, we spend the first 20-25 years of our lives either preparing ourselves... or not preparing ourselves. If you prepare well, you will have 60 years to reap the benefits. If you prepare poorly, you will have 60 years to suffer the consequences. When you look at it that way, a little investment in hard work for a relatively short period of time pays huge dividends. Young children must understand that they are the ones who get to make the choice about the lifestyle they will lead. My life is a testament to this.

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 5 – PRINCIPLE NO. 2: THE ENDURING QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

Your handshake and caring smile are two of the greatest attributes of leadership.

The saying goes that leaders are born, not made. That's a debate that's been going on forever, it seems. I believe leadership is a combination of both. Leadership can be a skill – just like skateboarding or playing the violin or speaking French. Everyone has different levels of talent, but we *all* can learn to lead. After all, at The Everest Leadership Academy, it's our middle name! It is central to our vision and mission. We want to teach young people something they don't often learn in the classroom: *how to lead*.

It has been proven that role models have a very significant influence on the ultimate leaders in society and that, more often than not, that influence comes from a family member, teacher, or coach. The best

leaders make an effort to relate to people with respect and treat them fairly.

So, what, exactly, is leadership? Does it mean always having the right answer to every question at every moment? Not hardly. In my mind, leadership combines emotional intelligence with the courage to raise the tough questions, challenge people's assumptions – and risk losing their goodwill. It demands a commitment to serving others; some skill at diagnostic, strategic, and tactical reasoning; the guts to get beneath the surface of tough realities; and the heart to take heat and grief.

I relished the opportunity to lead and inspire and I've always been a strong advocate of "empathetic toughness." It blends the best attributes of the Peace Corps and the Marine Corps and it can be summed up this way: *You have to be caring enough about people to demand their very best!* In addition to caring, trust motivates people to go beyond mere compliance with authority. The more people trust and the more they are trusted, the more they'll risk.

I also feel strongly that an optimistic view of the world is a key driver of success. As Sir Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." I always tried to do what I said and practice what I preached.

Early in my career, I concluded that soft skills are probably more important than hard skills in a leadership position. That's what we emphasize at The Everest Leadership Academy. More often than not, the people who succeed in life have exceptional soft skills.

Being a leader is kind of a juggling act. You must learn to associate with excellent people, communicate clearly, set good examples, and trust others. Ultimately, you have to create the conditions that help others make the right choices and excel. In other words, the leader should model how others should act.

It's also important to recognize that no one has an inherent "right" to lead. Loyalty and respect are earned. A leader easily loses the team if his or her vision is unconvincing, if their actions are inconsistent with the values they preach, or if their self-interest appears to trump the welfare of the organization. They must realize that success ultimately depends on the ability to enlist voluntary commitment instead of forced obedience of others.

Finally, the leader must not get totally absorbed in the role or go on a "power-trip." As strange as it may seem, I strived to be the *dumbest* person in the room. I wanted to be surrounded by people who were smarter than me. My job was all about having the right questions like, "What if...?" and "Why not...?" and "How come...?" In leadership, IQ is important, but what is more important is *judgment*. To separate the

trees from the forest, to assimilate information, and to develop common-sense solutions.

I never – ever – felt I was superior to or above anyone in the companies I led. In my view, we just had different titles and responsibilities. We all played important roles. I have always viewed leadership as a relationship between the leader and the led. There were no unimportant people in my companies. Every person, regardless of race or ethnic background or socioeconomic level, was worthy of deep respect. I have always strived to make others feel important and be gracious in showing my appreciation.

I have always been interested in developing positive relationships with people, helping them live better lives, and coaching them to reach their full potential. I have always been willing to give away leadership, delegate authority, and empower others. It's a form of humility. As the author C.S. Lewis wrote, you don't have to think less of yourself, but maybe just think of yourself less.

For people to care about me, it's important that they understand I care about them. The same is true of trust. I really love coaching people – showing people in business how to improve and how to become more human. In bad times, I always take full responsibility for anything that goes wrong. In good times, it's better to pass around the praise. The old saying is true: It's amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets credit.

Having a title does *not* make you a leader. Hierarchy alone is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the exercise of leadership. Leadership is a social or relational contract with your followers.

There are no one-size-fits-all leadership books. There are no universal leadership characteristics. What works for one leader may not work for another. However, after reading more than my share of books about management, leadership, and on-the-job training, I determined that effective management or leadership has two very common traits. First, offer a handshake when interacting with people – and not just any handshake but a firm handshake. Second, have a smile – and not just any smile but a caring, sincere smile. Your smile and handshake are two of the greatest attributes and assets you can possess... and they're free.

Throughout my career, I've always been intrigued by the so-called "IQ vs. EQ" debate. In other words, which is more important and relevant: intelligence or empathy/emotion (the so-called people skills)? There are certain skills you can learn in a classroom, laboratory, or textbook. But they're not enough. Leadership skills and life experiences are equally important. IQ – "being book smart" – is the basis of the hard skills that are essential and that we can *learn*. These are things that are often objectively right and wrong.

By contrast, EQ related to the soft skills that can only be *developed* through a gradual process. When I've had the chance to work with MBA students (interns or, perhaps new graduates), I've explained that we can learn statistics, accounting, economics, and marketing principles in the classroom, reading textbooks, and doing our homework. A high IQ is a great asset to have – but, in my opinion, seasoned judgment (something you may not get in any classroom) is equally important.

People skills are needed for everyday life as much as they're needed for work. They center on how people relate to one another, communicate, listen, engage in dialogue, give feedback, cooperate as team members, solve problems, contribute in meetings, encourage and motivate others, and resolve conflict.

Leadership Principles for Academy Members

I've been blessed with a 50-year career that started in the trenches and has led me to numerous leadership roles. Let me share with you a few examples of leadership and some leadership lessons I've learned along the way:

Know Who You Are and Be Who You Are

It was my senior year at Iona College, and it was getting close to graduation time. I was majoring in

finance and accounting, so I naturally applied to many accounting firms for an entry-level position. Oh, and, as an afterthought, I applied at a company called IBM, which, at the time (and for many years later), was the world's most successful computer company. They were the Google or Apple of their era. Little did I know how significant IBM would be to my career. IBM gave me an accounting test, and then I interviewed with numerous people. I was offered a job (and so was my best friend from college).

It was a big decision, and, before I made my choice, I wanted to visit IBM's headquarters in Armonk, New York. The HR person I met was very helpful as we toured their facilities. We started on the first floor where I saw row after row of desks, seemingly to the horizon. I had to ask. "How long do you work on this floor?"

"Well," the HR rep replied, "if you're an A-level performer, you'd likely work here six months. But the average tenure is closer to 12 months." We went to the second floor, where another team worked. I asked the same question. I got the same answer. The third floor? Same question, same answer.

As the day unfolded, I was forced to be honest with myself. I knew in my bones that IBM was not for me. It was too big, too bureaucratic, too impersonal. To the near shock of my parents who were certain I was crazy, I decided not to accept the offer from what was the world's most prestigious corporation.

I didn't know it at the time, of course, but my experience visiting IBM matched the perspective of a more famous first-time visitor to Armonk. In his 2003 memoir, "Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?" Louis Gerstner, IBM's CEO from 1993-2002, described his first exposure to IBM in a remarkably similar way. "I will never forget my first impression," he wrote. "IBM corporate headquarters in Armonk, New York, reminded me of a government office – long, quiet corridor after long, quiet corridor of closed offices. All the men were wearing white shirts except for Louis Gerstner."

I knew myself, and I knew IBM was not a fit for me, my personality, or my ambitions. After rejecting the company they called "Big Blue," I joined the exact opposite: a small accounting firm. I quickly earned some recognition for my work and was clearly on track to become a partner (a part-owner) in the business at a very early age. But I also knew that public accounting was not a long-term career for me. My entrepreneurial side kept spurring me to think of different opportunities to spread my wings. As Confucius once said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Spending your life pretending you are something other than who and what you are is unsustainable. You have to know who you are, and you have to be who you are.

Be Honest

I had just joined a sizable computer-graphics company as its division CEO and was about to meet all of the employees at a big company meeting. The CEO of the parent company cautioned me not to disclose the true condition of the company during the Q&A period. He worried it would be too demoralizing. My philosophy is a little different: People are not dumb and know more than we think they know – and that honesty is the best policy. Plus, if I started off with these people as an untrustworthy person, how could I lead the organization? This was a big opportunity to gain their support.

I was introduced and then opened the meeting for Q&A. The first question was, “Is the company experiencing difficulties?” As I was about to answer the employee, the CEO signaled me to be discreet with my answer. But trustworthiness is more important. I responded candidly:

“I’m afraid that, yes, the company is indeed, having difficulties.” The next question was from a middle-aged man.

“Is a RIF (a layoff) possible?”

“Yes,” I answered. Next, an older woman in the back of the room stood up and said she was one of the company’s original employees – she was an old-timer.

“Thanks for being honest,” she said. “I’ve seen many presidents come and go over the years, but you’re the

first one to be honest with us.” She sat down and everyone stood up and applauded.

As a leader – in any situation, really – you need to be conscious of the essential importance of fairness, honesty, and integrity, which are the guiding principles of The Everest Leadership Academy.

Honor Your Commitments

I was working at a company where it was customary to pay year-end bonuses to some employees. Barbara, who reported to me, was a woman who not only met but exceeded her goals, so her bonus would be very large.

I submitted the paperwork for payment, only to learn that it was rejected. I immediately approached my boss, the founder, who acknowledged that she deserved the bonus, but he decided he wasn't going to pay it.

I told Barbara there would be a slight delay in getting her bonus and assured her that the delay would not be long. The following day, I told my boss that if Barbara's bonus wasn't paid immediately, I would resign. Shortly thereafter, Barbara got her bonus. This was an easy call: As a leader, you must honor your commitments.

Be Empathetic

A leader has to be empathetic, too. I was a CEO at a company that was acquired by a larger firm. On the day the transaction closed, we summoned all employees to a local hotel to watch a videoconference announcing the acquisition. In astonishingly poor language, the executive from the company that was buying us grouped our employees into three categories “stay,” “terminated,” and “to be terminated in six months with retention bonuses.” It was an extremely upsetting presentation, to say the least.

I asked for the microphone and proceeded to clarify the message – there and then. I felt it was essential to express this message in more human terms. In our careers, we are all in the same bucket.

Sensitivity to others’ needs is a truly precious human ability. But it is not a complex act. It simply means spending time with people on the factory floor or in the showroom or warehouse or back room. It means being acutely aware of others’ attitudes and feelings and the nuances of their communication.

Don’t Fail for the Wrong Reasons

The best way to avoid any regrets in a leadership role is to make the best decision you can at that time, knowing you will make some bad decisions. Go with your gut. Regrets come when you look back and say, “I could have... I should have... and yet I was

persuaded by someone or something else.” Although failure is a prerequisite for success, don’t fail for the wrong reasons. Do not take on responsibility and accountability without authority. Be confident and strong enough to make the tough decisions, and be prepared to accept the consequences – good and bad.

Be Responsible

One of the most formative experiences of my life was when I had the chance to serve our country in the military. Now, not everyone is cut out for the military life, but for some people, it can provide excellent opportunities to develop leadership skills. Like perhaps no other organization, the military demands the utmost in accountability – to your superiors and to your fellow soldiers and sailors.

I had just completed our basic training, and normally I would have been assigned to advanced artillery training at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. Instead, my military occupation status was changed to communications, and I was transferred directly to Ft. Ord, California, a staging area for troops prior to deployment to Vietnam.

I was the first to arrive at Ft. Ord for communications training, about a week before it was to start. I met with a first army sergeant who had served three tours of duty in Vietnam. He looked through my file and suggested I consider an acting sergeant role, heading

up a platoon of about 40 soldiers. The Vietnam War had stretched out the U.S. officer's corps, and there was a significant shortage of officers and staff sergeants. I thought this would be a great opportunity, and it came with many fringe benefits such as no KP duty and a private room in the barracks. It looked great – on paper.

It was only when the troops began to arrive that I recognized the magnitude of the responsibilities and challenges I faced. While most troops were about my age, in reality, we were all still young kids. Most of them – and possibly me – were going to a war in Southeast Asia, and some of us weren't coming back. I didn't yet understand how to lead a group of young kids, but I was very willing to accept the challenge.

As you might guess, our circumstances made my job more complicated. I had a responsibility to ensure these troops received an education in advanced training to improve their survival rate in combat. I conducted my classes in the barracks every night to help them prepare for exams – a practice that was unheard of in the military, since these classes were typically only held during the day.

One night, the base colonel paid an unannounced visit to our barracks. In shock at seeing soldiers studying, he quietly approached me. "How on earth are you able to get this many young men to sit quietly and study army combat practices?" he asked.

“Sir, it’s actually quite straightforward,” I replied. “I simply got the group together and explained the statistics of life expectancy in battle. The forward observer’s life expectancy is often measured in minutes. I just told them that knowing what to do might save their lives, and I guess that was a compelling reason.” I was very fortunate not to be deployed to Vietnam.

I truly believe every citizen should serve the country in some meaningful and responsible way. It needn’t be in a combat unit crawling through a jungle. But everyone should serve in some capacity for at least one year when they are in their late teens or early twenties. The one-year commitment could be anything from military service to helping the needy, mentoring disadvantaged children, serving in the Peace Corps, or working in a government agency.

CHAPTER 6 – PRINCIPLE NO. 3: THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING AND ROLE MODELS

*Advantages in engaging with people who
have been there and done that.*

When you're scaling a world-class mountain, it helps to have a guide, someone who's traveled that route, who knows the pitfalls, and who understands the challenges. We learn from their mistakes, and we learn from their triumphs.

Or, if you want to think of it this way, mentoring is a lot like coaching athletes. Almost all sports coaches are former athletes. They've played the game for a long time and know lots of tricks, techniques, and strategies. The key is this: A mentor should help you get the most out of your abilities and your situation. After all, no basketball coach can turn you into Michael Jordan, but a great coach *can* make you a better player and a better teammate. And that's what a mentor should do.

Mentoring is a cornerstone of The Everest Leadership Academy, and we relentlessly search for great mentors who can offer two very important requirements:

- **Trustworthiness** – Trust is critical. It is the currency of a mentoring relationship. A young person needs the ability to disclose and discuss highly sensitive topics, secure in the knowledge that the conversation will go nowhere else. Both mentor and “mentee” must have high degrees of personal integrity. Trust is also defined by the level of chemistry that exists between the mentor and the student.
- **Experience** – It’s essential for a mentor to have a track record of success. The hard-won lessons and experience create a great deal of confidence and unmatched credibility.

The right mentor plays an invaluable role in your life, helping you develop self-confidence, expand your network of friends and coworkers, improve leadership skills, and avoid the common pitfalls experienced by people who’ve blazed the trail ahead of you.

Role models and mentors – especially in the early years – are very critical to a successful journey. In my teenage years, I was fortunate to meet and listen to many mentors who provided me with so much valuable advice, such as my sixth-grade math teacher who encouraged me to develop my math aptitude.

These mentors let me use them as “sounding boards” to talk about school options, classes to take, subjects to study – and just so many decisions that require good common sense.

As I noted earlier, my earliest role model was my father’s cousin, Raymond, who was well-coached by his parents as a young boy. He became the first member of his family to go to college – Harvard, in fact. After Harvard, he spend a year in Rome studying economics on a Fulbright Scholarship before attending Columbia Law School. He later became a very successful attorney for a Fortune 500 company and retired from the former Primerica Corporation as vice president and deputy general counsel. I firmly believe to this very day Raymond’s stellar example was a significant factor in the pursuit of my dreams.

Later in my career, I finally had the chance to be a mentor to the up-and-comers who were following in my footsteps. In 1999, I joined a well-known growth private-equity and venture-capital firm as an “executive-in-residence.” Essentially, I had the chance to be a mentor to executives at the firm’s portfolio companies. My job was to help these senior executives avoid trouble spots, make smarter decisions, suggest new ideas, and grow in their careers and in life.

I mentored dozens of CEOs, mostly company founders or first-time CEOs – even many of my colleagues. I have always tried to coach the people around me at every stage of my career. But as I have gotten a little

older (and hopefully, a little wiser), I get even greater satisfaction from extending a hand to the people who will take the reins – people like you.

Pay It Forward: What Makes Mentoring Worthwhile

The joy of being mentored comes from sharing the perspective of someone who has been down similar roads. You get smarter faster than if you tried to do it all yourself (and inevitably fail where others before you have failed).

Mentors, by contrast, are role models who have “been there and done that.” They offer timely counsel drawn from experience, wisdom, and networks of people who are highly relevant to the challenges you’ll face in life.

You might reasonably wonder, “What’s in it for the mentor?” In other words, why does an Everest Leadership Academy mentor work so hard to develop the next generation of leaders? I know from my own experience that I really love mentoring. I really love people – I love talking to young students, interacting with them, and unleashing their talents, because I know what’s possible from my own experiences. I really love showing them the purpose of life, how we can be more human. This is what I love to do in my life, and that’s why it’s a core principle of The Academy.

For me, and I suspect many of The Academy’s mentors, these relationships are inherently gratifying

and give us an opportunity to “pay it forward” and contribute to the next generation’s success.

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 7 – LESSONS LEARNED

Wisdom comes from experience and experience comes from failures and lessons learned



In addition to leadership principles as highlighted in Chapter 4, there are other lessons that arise from experiences, lessons that I would argue are prerequisites to ultimately succeeding.

Doing your best may be more important than the final score

Whether coaching a team or leading a group as its CEO, I impressed upon the people around me to give their best effort at all times. As a CEO, I was usually less interested in the outcome and more interested in people doing their best. I enjoyed winning, but also knew how to lose. For example, as a soccer coach I emphasized to the team to go out and do their best not only for themselves but, more importantly, for one

another. If we lost but gave it our best, I was satisfied. If we won and did not give it our best, I was unhappy.

I applied this same management philosophy as a leader. However, always doing your best but not getting results did not necessarily mean you kept your job. What it meant was that the job was not a good fit. I always gave people enough space and responsibility to either fail or succeed, so that I could hold them accountable. Even if you fail by doing your best, you become a better person.

Lead by influence, not by directives

There are various leadership styles that are appropriate based on the circumstances. For example, if the company is experiencing a cash crisis, a dictatorial style might be appropriate. However, under more normal circumstances, an influential style may be more effective. You influence others by making suggestions to your management team and then observe their actions. It's a more *laissez-faire* style of leadership.

I was a mentoring leader, managing mostly through influence and by example.

Develop a situational leadership style

As much as I always adjusted my style to be consistent with the circumstances, I never compromised my style

of empathetic toughness. Regardless of the circumstances, I always felt my basic style was appropriate. First, you must care about your people so that you may be demanding of their best performance and results.

Conduct meetings around a circular table

I was never one to take position power in a meeting. To prevent a position advantage, the circular table puts every meeting member on an equal footing. It also provides a more productive dialogue when everyone is a peer.

Know that one size does not fit all

What works for one leader may not work for another. Therein lies the mystery of being an effective CEO. I have met all kinds of leaders who are successful: smart and not so smart; tall and short; introverted and extroverted; charismatic and not charismatic; selfish and unselfish; hated and loved.

Know what you don't know

Know when what you know is no longer so. However, if you don't know what you don't know, you won't grow. This is critical because what you think you know (but don't) can lead to serious miscalculations. I

managed by coaching, by knowing what I didn't know and hiring "A players" who did.

People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care

First you need to care about your employees in order to demand their best. I cared very much about my people. There were no unimportant people in my companies. We just had different titles but we all served a vital role in the ultimate success of the company.

If you don't have the trust of your people, you'll never be a great leader

Say what you mean and mean what you say. The most important aspect of a relationship is trust – which means loyalty and honesty. I was always less interested in the other person's IQ and more focused on the EQ, which is a much better metric for trust in a relationship.

No leader has the inherent right to lead

Loyalty and respect are earned. It is important that the leader enlist voluntary commitment instead of forced obedience of the team.

Understand what is being said, but be sure to hear to what's not being said

Consciously or subconsciously, people will, at times, tell you what you want to hear. They may promote a certain agenda and say whatever is appropriate to foster that agenda. The leader can counter this with “what-if” questions. More often than not, this Q&A can lead to the heart of the issue.

What is being said is very important, but it's just as important to observe how you say it

Eye contact and body language can be very revealing. I rarely discussed major business issues by phone or through email. I preferred a more casual conversation around a table in a conference room instead of sitting behind my desk. For me that was easy because I never had a corner office. The conference room was my office.

Don't let strengths become weaknesses

A culture of inflexibility develops if people put too much faith in their strengths. So be prepared to abandon your best moves. Show respect for what works. If you're doing the right things, you don't have to do them perfectly to get great results. There is no permanent solution.

Effective mentoring is a two-way proposition

Honesty and humility on the part of the mentee are absolutely crucial. To establish a productive relationship, both the mentor and mentee must be prepared to be vulnerable. The mentee must be willing to recognize his or her strengths and weaknesses and the mentor's job is to encourage this form of self-awareness in order to maximize the benefits of the relationship.

CHAPTER 8 – PRINCIPLES TO EMBRACE AND WORDS TO LIVE BY

The decisions you make early on determine who you are and what you become.



Many of the experiences in this book describe what happened as I grew up. Others talk about the guiding principles we've incorporated into The Everest Leadership Academy – principles I learned (sometimes the hard way) as someone with the good fortune to work with so many great people and companies. As I mentioned in the foreword, I never could have predicted that someday I would be able to rise from a stickball-playing kid in the Bronx, the son of a first-generation immigrant father and a working-class mother, to become a leader at many different high-tech companies. My journey was shaped by the American dream, and I was *very blessed* to have had great family and friends who have shared that dream. I hope this book and The Everest Leadership Academy will help you on your journey as well.

There is no doubt you will face challenges. The key to meeting these challenges and feeling worthy of happiness is self-esteem. Here's what I mean: Self-efficacy is our ability to think, learn, choose, and make appropriate decisions. Self-respect is the confidence in our right to be happy and confidence that achievement, success, friendship, love, and fulfillment are appropriate for us. Self-esteem is a basic human need. It is essential to normal, healthy development. If you lack self-esteem, your psychological growth will be stunted. Positive self-esteem is "the immune system" of consciousness, providing resistance, strength, and a capacity for regeneration. When our self-esteem is low, our resilience when facing life's problems is diminished. I like Nathaniel Branden's recipe for building and maintaining self-esteem:

- **Live consciously** – Be aware of what you are doing.
- **Be self-accepting** – Be respectful and compassionate toward yourself.
- **Be self-responsible** – Author your own choices and actions.
- **Be self-assertive** – Stand up for your convictions, values, and feelings.
- **Live purposely** – Take responsibility for your goals.

- **Live with integrity** – Keep your promises and honor your commitments.

I've also come to believe that the measure of true character is not necessarily how we deal with the happy moments in life, but how we cope with the inevitable hardships and setbacks. Even the best relationships – with those we love and those we work with – are tested during these trials. Too many people live under the illusion that a happy life – one that they pursue but likely never achieve – is nothing more than an endless stream of happy moments. To me, true and enduring relationships are strengthened by challenges, difficulties, and unhappy moments – including health, finances, and other truly difficult obstacles. I paraphrase Michael Josephson: “What matters most in life is not your competence, but your character; not what you got, but what you gave; not what you bought, but what you built. It is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.”

Over the years, I've read countless autobiographies of business and political leaders, entrepreneurs, and other thought-leaders around the globe. I've often found myself writing down key phrases and quotes that best describe the philosophies and principles by which I've tried to live my life. Let me leave you with a

number of them that I hope you'll find as inspirational as I have.

“Never separate the word accountability from responsibility.” – Buck Rogers

“If you risk nothing, then you risk everything.” – Geena Davis

“There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit.” – President Ronald Reagan

“We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes.” – President John F. Kennedy

“The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.”
– Vince Lombardi

“Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.” – John Wooden

“A life isn’t significant except for its impact on other lives.” – Jackie Robinson

“Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.” – Aristotle

“A good leader is a person who takes a little more than his share of the blame, and a little less than his share of the credit.” – John C. Maxwell

“Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment.” – Walter Wriston (Citicorp)

“The greatest sadness in life is not to fail, but failure to try. Trying – it takes failure to succeed – if you risk nothing, then you risk everything.” – President Richard M. Nixon

“In life you’re either a passenger or a pilot. It’s your choice.” – Kamari aka Lyrikai

“Others can stop you temporarily; only you can do it permanently.” – Don Ward

“True success is overcoming the fear of being unsuccessful.” – Paul Sweeney

“Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.” – Albert Einstein

“If you strive for excellence, you may not always succeed at leading, but you will certainly succeed at living.” – Michael Eisner

“As long as a person doesn’t know what he doesn’t know, he doesn’t grow.” – John C. Maxwell

“When you are faced with a decision, the best thing is to do the right thing; the next best thing is to do the wrong thing; and the worst thing is to do nothing.” – Roger Enrico (Pepsico)

“If you don’t know how to lose, you’ll never know how to win.” – Jack Welch, (GE)

*“There are four kinds of people:
Those who make things happen
Those to whom things happen
Those who watch things happen*

Those who don't even know things are happening." – Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. (IBM)

"Some succeed because they are destined to; most succeed because they are determined to." – Anatole France

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." – Mike McNight

"Leadership is action, not position." – Donald McGannon

"To be conscious that you are ignorant of the facts is a great step to knowledge." – Benjamin Disraeli

"Leaders who win the respect of others are the ones who deliver more than they promise, not the ones who promise more than they can deliver" – Mark Clement

"Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses." – George Washington Carver

"Prefer a loss to a dishonest gain; the one brings pain at the moment, the other for all time." – Chilon

“Love to win, and at the same time, accept the risks involved in losing.” – Buck Rogers (IBM)

“Pay no attention to what the critics say; no statue has ever been erected to a critic.” – Jean Sibelius

“Don’t just leave money, leave a legacy. Leave things and acts that helped or inspired others and you will live forever in the minds of those you have served.” – Jeffrey Gitomer

“A parent, if he or she has the means to do so, should give their children enough to do anything, but not enough to do nothing.” – Warren Buffet

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” – Warren Buffet

“Some say failure should be avoided at all costs. That cost is too high. I see failure more as a fertilizer for success.” – Warren Buffet

“Like Jack Welch, I never wanted to be the smartest person in the room. I just wanted to be surrounded by the smartest people in the room. I always felt that my role centered around having an inspirational temperament.” – Raymond Sozzi, Sr.

“When a lot of people are in charge, nobody is in charge.” – Raymond Sozzi, Sr.

“I never thought about failing, I always focused on winning.” – Raymond Sozzi, Sr.

“It is important what you say, but just as important is how you say it.” – Raymond Sozzi, Sr.

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.” – C.S. Lewis

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 9 – THE EVEREST LEADERSHIP ACADEMY’S TEN PROCLAMATIONS

Guiding Principles in Becoming a Great Leader

I. Leadership is not a title

It is not what or how you do it, but rather “Who You Are.” It is all about the character of the individual. True leadership cannot be awarded, appointed, or assigned. It comes only from influence. We can all learn to be leaders.

II. Leadership style, for the most part, is a handshake and a smile

Not just any handshake, but a firm handshake. Not just any smile, but a sincere, caring smile.

The firm handshake conveys self-confidence whereas the sincere smile and direct eye contact indicates that you are interested in the other person.

III. Leadership skills embrace empathetic toughness

You first have to be caring enough about people to demand their very best. Empathy is an attempt to better understand the other person by getting to know their perspective. There are three distinct kinds of empathy:

1. Cognitive empathy – the ability to understand another person’s perspective.
2. Emotional empathy – the ability to feel what someone else feels.
3. Empathic concern – the ability to sense what another person needs from you.

Being tough must embrace trust which motivates people to go beyond mere compliance with authority. The more people trust and the more they are trusted, the more they will risk.

IV. There is no elevator to success

You have to take one step at a time, but you don’t have to climb it alone. Mountain climbers always climb with a guide who shows them the way.

Role models and mentors can help you avoid making mistakes early on in life. These role

models may be a family member, a teacher, an athletic coach, or a trusted friend.

V. Success is defined as knowing your purpose in life

Define the end game and plan to achieve it. Success is defined as being all you can be by achieving your purpose in life. It is a qualitative quality and not a quantitative yardstick

VI. Leadership is being proactive and action oriented

Stop focusing on what you can't do and, instead, think about new ways of getting it done. What we think or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do.

VII. Leadership is not knowledge (IQ) by itself but rather the wise use of knowledge (EQ)

What may be more important is the wise use of knowledge and good judgement, which requires EQ leadership skills. IQ is a number derived from a standardized intelligence test (the hard skills) whereas EQ is a measure of a person's level of emotional intelligence (the soft skills). IQ represents abilities such as quantitative reasoning; visual and spatial processing, and fluid reasoning. EQ, on the other hand, represents abilities to perceive how others feel;

controlling one's own emotions; relating to others; using emotions to facilitate social communications; identifying emotions.

Both IQ and EQ play important roles in influencing your overall success. Rather than focusing on which factors might have a more dominant influence, the greatest benefit may lie in learning to improve skills in multiple areas. In addition to strengthening certain cognitive abilities, you can also acquire new EQ skills that will serve you well in many different areas in your life.

VIII. We don't choose the circumstances and environments of our early childhood years, but that's where our personal principles are formed

As expressed by a renowned psychoanalyst Carl Jung, "I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become." It's all up to each of us to take what we're given and maximize our success and happiness.

IX. What we do with our life is a choice

We create a happy journey by choosing to be connected to others and to engage in meaningful work. You can write the script of your own life.

X. Attitude is critical to success and great leadership

Ability (education) x effort x attitude = success.
The right attitude is the most important component.

Six axioms about attitude and the impact on a person's life:

1. Our attitude determines our approach to life.
2. Our attitude determines our people relationships.
3. Our attitude is the difference between success and failure.
4. Our attitude affects the outcome more than anything else.
5. Our attitude can turn our problems into blessings.
6. Our attitude can give us a positive perspective.

Eliminate these
words completely

Make these words part
of your vocabulary

I can't

I can

If

I will

I don't think

I know

I don't have the time

I will make the time

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Maybe

Positively

I'm afraid of

I am confident

CHAPTER 10 – CONCLUSION

My final thoughts



I hope this book has given you principles that make you a better leader. As you can tell by my journey and experiences, there is no secret formula for effectiveness and success as a leader. Passion is key to any job, but it's especially vital for effective leadership. The style of empathy and toughness, I believe, is most effective and produces the greatest results. This style reduces the risk of failure and enhances the chances of success.

As a leader I was known as the “shock absorber” by absorbing the organizational pain, anxiety, and stress in very competitive markets.

As I mentioned earlier in this book, I think there are several important prerequisites that we must have in place to become a successful leader as we climb the mountain:

- **Love of Self** – If you don't love yourself, you will

undermine everything and everyone around you. If you don't believe in yourself, the universe is a frightening place.

- **Education** – Read, read, and then read some more. Keep learning and never let your brain be idle. Learn from those who have succeeded.
- **Persistence** – It takes failure to succeed. Don't be stopped by setbacks – because they are an essential ingredient of success.
- **Respect for Others** – We need to honor the efforts and accomplishments of everyone we meet, because *everyone* has accomplished something. Every individual we meet is worthy of respect.
- **Mentors** – Savvy, experienced people can help us overcome many obstacles by reinforcing the right values and providing a sounding board on career and life decisions.
- **A Role Model** – It's crucial to have at least one individual whose best aspects you try to emulate and incorporate in your own life.