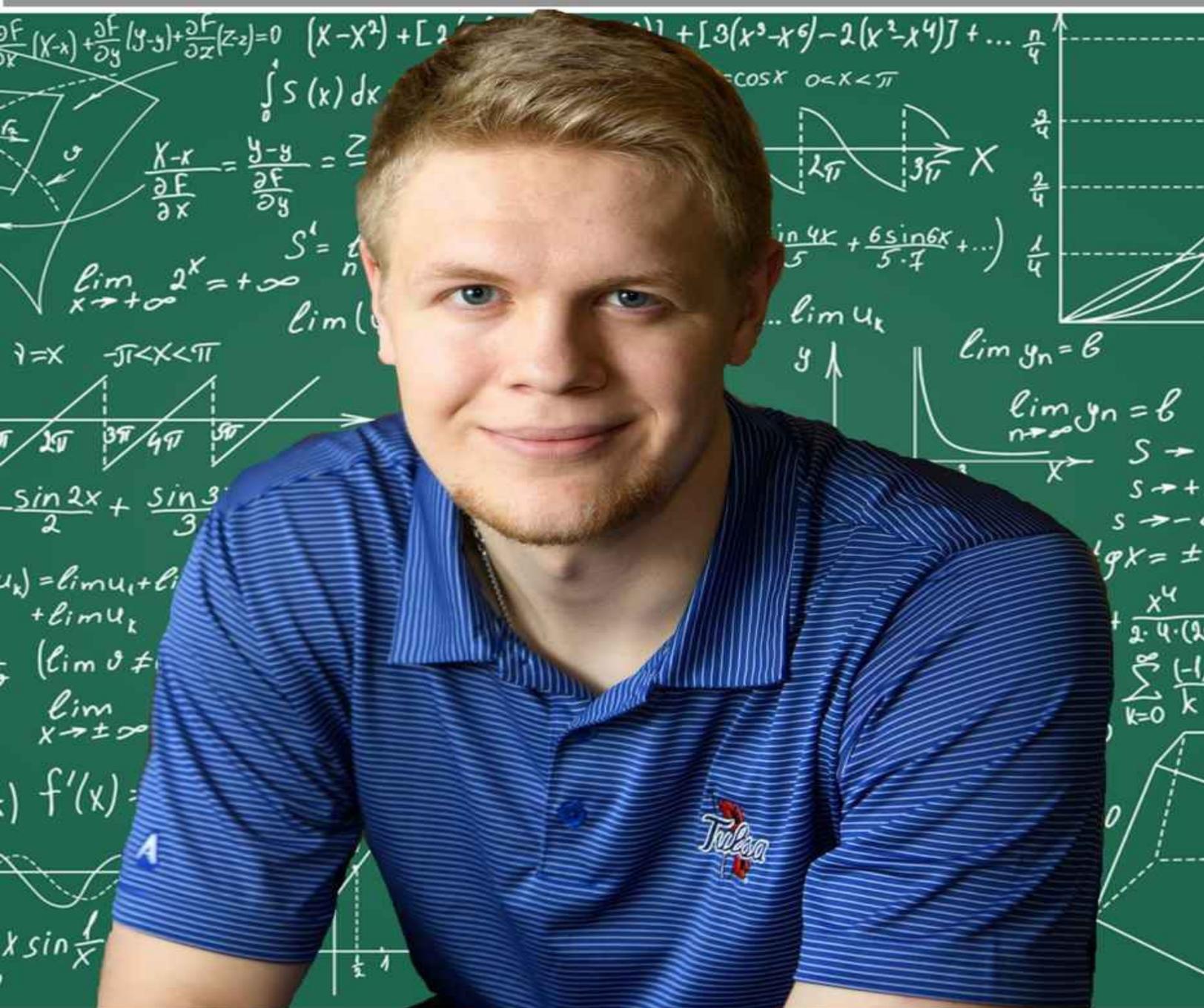


FORWARD BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OKLAHOMA'S ASSOCIATION
OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS, WILL PARKER

LEADERPHORS

SIX METAPHORS FOR THE LEADER IN THE DIGITAL AGE



JESSE HAYNES

NOVELIST, PODCASTOR, CREATOR, BUSINESSMAN,
SPEAKER, AND PROFESSIONAL NAPPER

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Leaderphors:

Six Metaphors for the Leader in the Digital Age

Jesse Haynes

"Leaderphor (noun) | lead·er·phor | Definition: a figure of speech in which a leadership trait is told through a story; a real-world example that can be learned from and promote leadership growth."

(www.jessehaynesauthor.com/leadership)

To Will Parker, who saw my potential in its rawest form and gave me the tools to build bridges that are taking me to places of which I used to only dream.

Forward:

Jesse Haynes is one of those rare people you meet in life who has dared to make his dreams come true. He has reached audacious personal goals, published multiple books, and created podcasts with millions of downloads - just while in high school and college. His "Leaderphors" publication is a generous gift of lessons birthed from the many successes (as well as failures) he has already experienced along the way. This book is an excellent resource for any growing leader (or leader of leaders). Jesse provides the essentials for a mindset of leadership. In addition, he shares practical group exercises and questions so that you can immediately explore, discuss and apply the lessons learned. I highly recommend his resources and encourage you to connect with him online or in-person for even more inspiration!

--William D. Parker, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Principals, Oklahoma Middle Level Education Association, and Founder of Principal Matters, LLC

Intro: The Importance of the Leaderphor

Members of Generation Z catch a lot of heat. I would know. Depending on who you ask, I am one of them (although I admittedly don't put a great deal of weight in generational arguments).

Some of the heat is very much deserved. Teenagers of 2016-2020 are the first group to grow up with most of them having a smart phone in hand for as long as they remember. This is not the case for *all* (I didn't get my first phone until 8th grade, which was 2011), but many of this generation has been selfie-ing for a greater portion of their lives than not.

This has to have some sort of psychological effect. This is far from my area of study, but I can't help but notice how we "flex" on social media, meaning we only pick and choose specific times of our lives to show and then decide how to show it. People don't post candid "eating spaghetti on my couch in pajamas" pictures. It's more of: "Look at me in the Caribbean," "look at me with my brand new hoodie and fresh haircut," or "look at me with this celebrity I bumped into." And once we *finally* find the picture we like, we add filters, or even whiten our teeth. The long term effect of this, I fear, is that many people who have grown up in the digital age do not remember a time when their life was not a "performance" fueled by competition.

But perhaps I'm being too negative here. There are many, many ways that this could have positive benefits. One of these reasons is, in fact, the very reason I'm writing this book: the leaders of this group of Gen-Z students have figured out how to wade through the slush, have bettered the relentless competition to get as many views as possible, and have been molded into highly creative, highly competitive, outside-the-box thinkers.

Growing up in the 2010's has different challenges than growing up in the 1960's, but there are still challenges, and these challenges are creating a new breed of young leader.

This book is for them.

So I ask you, reader and leader, join me on this short journey through six Leaderphors, and if all goes well, we will both come out better on the other side.

Bio: Who Am I to Talk?

I wouldn't take free throw advice from Tiger Woods. I wouldn't take a world history class from Gordon Ramsay. Everybody has an area of expertise they are qualified to teach in, and everybody also has a lot *more* areas to learn in.

Thankfully, I'm a professional that can teach you quite a bit. I'm a professional messer-upper. I've made a lot of mistakes and missteps. I've taken a lot of shots in the dark and missed so badly that I can't even find the bullet hole. I've fallen and scraped my knee on many occasions.

But fortunately, I've learned lessons along the way from lots of incredible mentors and with lots of experience.

So that's why I want to share some ideas about leadership with you. Don't be fooled for a second and think I've somehow come up with this all of this on my own. I've just boiled it down to a digestible mixture of some original thoughts and incredible advice I've learned along the way.

But, for the sake of credentials, here's my bio:

I'm Jesse Haynes. I'm a novelist and podcaster who signed a four-book contract in early 2019 and created three podcasts that each formed a sizeable audience. In 2015, I graduated as the president and valedictorian of my high school class, received a nearly full-ride academic scholarship to a prestigious liberal arts school, and then had the same school offer me a paid position and full tuition while I pursue my master's degree in business administration until 2021.

None of this was my own doing, though. I believe God gave me the abilities, and a lot of great teachers and mentors have been put in my life all along the way. I'm not afraid of hard work, but I'm not a brilliant scholar who gets everything naturally. Not at all.

The best thing I have going for me, in my opinion, is leadership skills. My whole life I've heard that I'm a "natural leader," and the lessons I've learned along the way have helped me create this very book.

And keep in mind who this is coming from. I'm not a trained child psychologist. I'm not a teacher. I have no on-paper credentials that make me even remotely qualified to talk about this, much less an expert sharing this

wisdom with the young leaders of today.

But I've served in the trenches. I recently walked the very same steps and have gone through the very same battle that a lot of other young leaders are facing right now, and I'm a better leader because of it, so I truly think I can help others from this real-life experience. I've weaved my way through the chaos of young adulthood, and if there was no path to take, I made my own.

So this is my goal: For everybody who has taught me to lead, I hope this book helps teach somebody else.

Leaderphor One:

Leaders Build Bridges

In the digital age, technology has made anything possible. At least, *almost* anything (Example: *Do* start a successful dropship business on your phone. *Do not* jump out of a plane without a parachute and expect your Apple device to save you). Technology, even within the last decade, has opened so many doors that were previously shut and bolted with three padlocks.

Opportunities are ripe for the picking.

And when it comes to opportunities, there are a lot of different ways people handle them.

I truly believe that every person on the face of this earth has some sort of dream and some personal goals, and every person has the opportunity to make them a reality. Some goals are huge (“I want to be Super Bowl MVP!”) and some are a little more modest (“I want to graduate college and have a family with two kids”), but all of them are important and unique to the individual.

And that’s when three types of people come into play, regarding the way they deal with these ambitions:

- Some people have dreams and goals but have no idea how to make them come true.
- Other people have goals, and they know what they should do to help themselves reach their goal, but they do nothing to make it happen.
- A few people not only know how to reach their dreams and goals, but they also *take action* to make it happen.

And with that in mind, I present my original bridge metaphor.

We are all stranded on a modest island. From this modest island, we can look out across the ocean and see the island of our dreams, where everything is perfect.

But there’s a catch! Rough, shark-infested waters separate us from reaching the island of our dreams. While it might be tempting to swim toward the paradise of which we dream, we all know that if we get out too deep, the

sharks will strike or the rough waters will cause us to sink.

And for most people, this fear of the water is going to keep them firmly planted on the modest island for their whole life. These people are content to sit with their feet in the sand and wish they were in a better place. I call these people *lookers*, because they look and long for more, but don't act.

But fortunately, we aren't all lookers. There are other people on the island, too, and if you are interested enough to pick up this book and read these words, it's a safe bet that you are this second type of person.

These people are the *bridge builders*, and they are a rare breed capable of doing tremendous things.

Bridge builders are the type of people that not only see the island of their dreams, but they take the steps to reach the island, no matter what it takes. They aren't afraid of taking chances, even when the waters might be rough, and will do whatever it takes with the materials they have in their life to build a bridge that will help get them from the modest island to the island of their dreams.

Building a bridge is no easy chore. It might be hard work. It will almost certainly be uncomfortable. But a little hard work has never stopped a bridge builder from traversing rough water.

So, when it's boiled down, the only true difference between a looker and a bridge builder is motivation. Both groups want a better life. Only one of them, however, makes it happen.

And for all you bridge builders reading this, I'd like to offer a word of encouragement. While the key ingredient is motivation, there is a good deal of discipline going into that motivation.

Sometimes it's going to be really hard to build these bridges, and part of that is because the way they are built is going to vary from person to person. Building bridges to reach your goals might be studying for the ACT when your friends are going to a movie. It might be working really hard to earn an internship that will help you land your dream job. It might be taking two-hundred extra free throws after practice when the rest of the team has left.

Building bridges isn't glamorous, but the work put in early will always pay off big time down the road. Successful people have been onto this secret for a long, long time: work hard while you're young so you don't have to work as hard when you're not.

That's what I strive to do, and I hope you do too. Whether you're

reading these words at age fourteen or forty, know that building bridges now will help you reach the island of your dreams in the years to come, and there's never a time to start like today!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What obstacles stand in your way of being where you want to be? (Age? Qualifications? Something else?)
- How can you build bridges to get over these obstacles?
- What are some steps you've taken to start building your bridge?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Building to the Sky

- Split up in multiple groups, and provide each group with a full water bottle and a pack of 100 index cards. Give each group 20 minutes (or a different length of predetermined time), and challenge the groups to see which group can get their water bottle the *highest* off the ground using nothing but the index cards. They can do *anything* to the cards: bend, fold, tear, etc.. After time expires, the highest bottle wins!
- Just like when building bridges in life, this activity will force groups to be creative, collaborative, and solve problems that might not have an apparent answer.

Leaderphor Two:

Leaders Sow Seeds

As somebody who grew up in the rural Midwest, I have some experience growing crops. We're not talking Ol' McDonald level, not by a long shot, but I do have a fair amount of experience in gardening veggies. And beyond that, I know a lot of people who could probably give Mr. McDonald a run for his money (E-I-E-I-O).

I suppose what I'm saying is that I know about as much about farming as the next guy, maybe a little bit more depending on where that next guy is from, and while I don't necessarily find as much pleasure in planting (and let's face it, *relentlessly tending to*) the plants as my parents, I have learned a bit from the sweet rhythmic cycle of growing plants.

Farmers, in many ways, are the ultimate example of people who plan for their future. Ask anybody who farms for a living, and I'm guessing that they don't blindly reach into a bag of mystery seeds, bring out a handful, and haphazardly heave said handful around a patch of upturned ground before declaring, "Wow, I can't wait for my lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and peppers to ripen."

That's not how farming works. Not even close.

The meticulous planning that goes into it can be frustrating, boring, and will-breaking to some people who are considering the profession. Farmers take every precaution possible to make sure their crops grow: from working the dirt, to planning the irrigation, to deciding what, how much, and where to plant everything, just to name a few steps.

And that's before they ever plant a single seed.

Like I said, it's frustrating to some.

And yet, I've learned a good deal from people fully committed to this lifestyle, and that is from where my next leaderphor sprouts (boom, plant pun.)

Leaderphor two is this: leaders sow seeds.

When a farmer sows a seed, he is not simply throwing an unsprouted plant into the dirt--he is investing time and effort along with the planning and patience, burying a small investment that carries a promise of something

greater to come in the future.

And let's take a tomato seed, for example. They're nothing exciting: probably smaller than one quarter of the fingernail on your pinky, and they look small and lifeless. But, given the proper sowing, nurturing, and planning, one tiny seed can turn into a strong, leafy plant that yields dozens of tomatoes, each of which contain hundreds of seeds.

See where I'm going with this?

Leadership in many ways, is like sowing seeds. Leaders are far-sighted, meaning they have the ability to look to the future and at least guess at the potential repercussions of everything they do. Because of this, leaders can "sow seeds" by the choices they make and the actions they take, and every one of those seeds has potential to sprout into something much larger and more exciting than the original investment.

Throughout my writing career, I've been amazed to see how one thing can lead to another. The "seeds" I've sown have resulted in better opportunities as I've grown, and I've learned that the best leaders sow as many seeds as possible, because you never know when more opportunities will sprout.

Perhaps even easier than harping on how one investment can produce fruit in the future, I think I can illustrate it even better. Using publishing my first novel as the "seed," I've made a growth chart, (another *boom*) to show how the book led to a lot of other opportunities down the road. And while some seeds aren't as significant (or perhaps "crazy") as publishing a book, this sort of chart can work with anything, from studying for a test to taking piano lessons.

Here's the chart, inserted as an image.:

1. Seed: I published my first book
 - a. Because of the book, I was interviewed by the Skiatook Journal Newspaper (a small newspaper in my hometown).
 - i. Because of interview, I landed a job writing for the Journal
 1. Because of that job, I began to write for the Tulsa World (a much larger newspaper) when it bought the Journal
 - a. Because of my writing for the World and Journal, I also landed a job writing for yet another newspaper (the Oologah Lake Leader).
 - b. Because of the book, I received a generous scholarship from TU.
 - i. Because of the offer, I attended college for nearly nothing.
 1. Because of this, I had the opportunity to graduate at the top of my class and receive a graduate assistantship offer from TU.
 - a. Because of this offer, TU essentially agreed to *pay me* for agreeing to go to school for another 18 months as I get another degree.
 - c. Because of the book, I grew close with my HS principal, Will Parker, who also writes and creates (williamdparker.com)
 - i. Because of that relationship, I got into podcasting
 1. Because of my podcasting, I got a job with Radish Fiction when they discovered my most successful show.
 2. Because of my podcasting, I was invited to the LA Book Festival.
 - d. Because of the book, I gained a small following with conferences and school visits
 - i. Because of the conferences, I met Roadrunner Press
 1. Because I met Roadrunner Press, they offered a four-book deal and are a much larger, forward-thinking publisher.

I doubt everybody reading this will go out and write a fiction novel and copy this chart exactly as presented (if you do, that's borderline stalker-worthy), but everybody reading this certainly has their own "books" to write, if you will.

It doesn't take a tremendous accomplishment or a lot of talent to make your dreams a reality. It just takes a lot of work up front--sowing at many seeds as possible--and that work will pay dividends down the road when the seeds begin to sprout.

On that note, let me leave you with something my dad always tells me: "You can do anything just like you could eat an elephant--one bite at a time."

Now get out there and sow some seeds!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What seeds have you sown in your life thus far?
- Think of two more potential seeds to sow, and write down how you can make it happen.
- What might they sprout into?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Looking up to a “Farmer”

- In this activity, pairs of two will work together. Each pair will pick one occupation they both know a good deal about that is unique to the other teams, and each person has two minutes to *INDIVIDUALLY* list out as many “seeds” as possible that somebody in that occupation might have sown to reach that career.
 - An example list for a DOCTOR might look something like this:
 - Learn study habits early in life
 - Attend a college
 - Talk to a doctor about the potential career field
 - Take advanced science classes in college
 - Med school
 - Study under a practicing surgeon
 - Etc...
 - Then, after both teammates have individually made a list, they should compare lists. For each thing *in common* on both lists, they get a point.
- Team with the most points wins.
- This activity is great because it forces students to think about how many steps go into occupations they might consider as their future. Nobody is just born a doctor; he/she has to study and work hard for it to happen. Games like this make students truly consider all the “seeds” that are sown to make big dreams come true.

Leaderphor Three:

Leaders Score Points

Regardless what sport we're talking about, most of the players that are considered "the best" are known for scoring points: from touchdowns, to home runs, to hitting deep threes like Steph Curry. That's not to discount the great NFL legends who played on defense or the MLB pitchers known for their ability to ice a game, but for the most part the most popular players are the ones who score points.

I think there's something to be said for that. I suppose I could weave a hero-worship argument depositing that us "common people" self-identify with the flashy stars of the NFL or NBA because we latch on to their human traits and picture ourselves in their shoes (or in this case with a lot of NBA players, perhaps we find ourselves literally *wearing* their line of shoes).

But I'm a cultural optimist, and I really don't think that this is a story of hero-worship. I think it's a story of inspiration.

I argue this: we look up to the talented athletes because we realize that what they are doing is *hard*. Incredibly hard, even. We understand that not just anybody can run a 4.3 forty, or have a 40 inch vertical, or shoot better than 90 percent at the free throw line (looking at you, Malcolm Brogdon).

While we realize that these professional athletes are born with an incredible amount of God-given talent, I think we admire the work they put into their craft, and I'd argue that it is this understanding and appreciation of their hard work that causes us to celebrate their successes and mourn their defeats.

This, afterall, is fandom in its purest form.

But I don't think we need to only celebrate these athletes that score points. I truly believe that a leader is a person can score points too.

So that brings me to Leaderphor three: leaders score points. While professional athletes are incredibly impressive, the point of this Leaderphor is establishing that *we* leaders can do just as impressive thing, too. We're just playing by a different rulebook.

Scoring points in the world of leadership is different than in sports. Sports has a standard: a runner crossing home plate is worth one, a dunk is

worth two, a touchdown is worth six and a PAT is worth one. Every sport clearly outlines what counts as a score and what does not.

Leadership is different. Scoring leadership points is about setting a goal for yourself and others, and then working to make it happen.

That's why I encourage you to set goals for yourself and then go after them voraciously. I have always done this. Some of my goals have been graduating as valedictorian, going to the University of Tulsa, and publishing a book before I graduated high school. I've been very blessed and accomplished all of those things listed (yet that's certainly not to say I've accomplished all my goals), but one of the reasons that I did so is because I not only knew what my goals were, but I also took all the provisions I could to make sure I had the best chance of reaching them (callback to the bridge Leaderphore, amiright?).

To be a goal setter, you can't be afraid of a little work. It will pay off in the long run, I promise. Whether your goals are to become a NASA engineer or go for a week without back-talking your mother (looking at you here, high school boys and girls), establish them and work for them, and don't forget to reward yourself on a job well done.

I had a professor who, when he was in college, said that he had the tendency to care more about spending time with his girlfriend than actually working on his assignments, so he began to buy himself a carton of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream every time he finished an assignment as a way to reward himself for staying focused on his work. After two months he was doing such a good job that he had gained some weight and had to cut back... but that is a funny illustration as to how rewarding yourself can improve motivation.

So all that being said, here is where I ask you to join me in this pursuit to score points. This is coming from a basketball enthusiast, so that's where we'll take the metaphor, but I'll keep it simple.

As most of you probably know, basketball is composed of one, two, and three-point shots. Bearing that in mind, ask yourself this: in daily life, what does a "two-pointer" look like to you? Is it getting your chores done for the week? Making an A on a chemistry test? Perhaps it is something that requires doing *nothing*, such as saving money for a week instead of buying bargain burritos at Bell.

When you have an answer in mind, ask yourself this: what about a three-pointer? What does a three-pointer look like in your life? Is it a semester of all A's? Is it helping your co-workers have the best quarter of the

year? Perhaps it is earning a scholarship to attend the college of your dreams.

The challenge here is to figure out the criteria for your scores, and then try to put up as many points as possible on the scoreboard of your life.

If all leaders would constantly bear this in mind, it would change the way we act. The people who are scoring the most points are the people everybody looks to for guidance. They talk differently, act differently, and even carry themselves differently. No, I'm not suggesting that everywhere you go you're constantly thinking, "How do I score points like that dorky novelist guy said?" I'm asking that you consider the concept enough that it eventually gets embedded in you so that, just like breathing, you do it without giving it any thought.

I'm not in the NBA, but I'd argue scoring leadership points has to feel as good as any highlight reel dunk or clutch three. When leaders score, they are not only helping themselves reach goals, but often times helping every single person around them by taking them to new heights and showing them how to win.

So what are you waiting for? Go score some points!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Thinking back to the previous twenty-four hours, what are some examples of points you have scored?
 - What about within the last week?
- What are three ways that you can score points tomorrow?
- While a three-pointer is great, occasionally people make miraculous half-court shots. In the world of leadership, what would one of these shots look like to you?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Taking a shot

- For this activity, you will need four different-sized containers (think small styrofoam coffee cup, drinking glass, coffee can, trash can), and a golf putter and golf ball.
- Lay all the containers on their side against the wall and give them a point value based on size. For example, the largest is worth one point while the smallest is worth four.
- Students get to putt from about thirty feet away, trying to make it inside. Each student gets five shots.

- Tally the points as shots are made.
- After the activity, consider this: Aiming at the smallest object is like trying to do something with no help, while the largest object is like having a lot of help. Whether you're asking for a job or working on starting your very own business, carrying all the weight is a difficult chore and you're likely to miss. *Occasionally* you might get lucky and "make the putt," but that's rare. It's easier to "score big" by trying to do things with the help of others. With more people helping you, the "target" gets bigger and bigger until you're scoring with almost every putt, if you choose to allow others to help.
- Optional: Instead of golf equipment, this same activity can be done bouncing a ping pong ball off a table at different sized vessels. Be creative with it!
- Note: The point this lesson tries to make assumes that most students who shoot at the smaller targets will miss while the highest scores will come from the people trying to hit the big targets. If you happen to do this activity with an all-state golfer, then he/she might be an exception.

Leaderphor Four:

Leaders Stay Connected

During my senior year of college, I took a class at the very last minute because it sounded interesting, relevant, and (dare I say it?) fun.

It was a marketing class, with maybe eighteen students max, and the man who was teaching it was a mystery to me (I later learned that he'd been roped into teaching it basically last-minute, enough so that he never actually prepared a syllabus).

The first-day-of class jitters were amplified by the lack of knowledge any of us had of the professor. Before class, we nervously contemplated: who was this man? He was a big-shot on campus, apparently. At least that's what we'd heard. Where had he come from? Word on the street was that he was tough, or at least could be.

And that's when Bill Handy arrived, wearing both a suit and expression ready for business. He was one of those people that you could look at and immediately know that he probably ran approximately half of the world.

Handy was the newly-appointed head of marketing at the University of Tulsa, but he also didn't like talking about himself (it took several weeks and lots of digging to figure out that this enigma of a man was a rockstar). On that first day of class, he was intimidating at first sight, but then he sat down, propped his feet up on a desk as casually as possible, and asked, "What class is this?"

We told him the class was "media and concept strategy."

"What the hell does that mean?" Handy asked with a smirk.

We collaboratively told him that we were highly unsure.

He laughed. "Me either." Then he turned the question back on us. "So what would you guys want to learn?"

Never had I had a professor asked this of me (although Handy would probably insist that he's not as much as a professor as "just a guy who knows a little about marketing"), and it was a strange experience.

It was even stranger, though, when he told us that he didn't have a

syllabus for the class. I still remember him asking, “So do you guys want to take tests?”

“No,” we adamantly objected. “If we have a choice, we don’t want to take any tests.”

Handy countered, “I’ve got a deal for you. We’ll take one test at the very end of the year, and it will be an easy one.”

And that’s when Bill Handy explained the importance of connections: The “test,” according to him, would be going around the room, one at a time, and naming everybody else by pointing at them.

His argument and justification for the test is that if we were to only learn one thing from the marketing class, it would be learning just how important it is to be connected. He explained that the people in that room would be hiring and firing one another in twenty years, and that the ones that were doing the hiring would be the ones that were the most connected.

Marketing 101, according to a man who has spent a lifetime actually *doing* it at the highest level, is all about knowing people, because the more people you know, the more doors will be opened for you.

And this is the line of thinking that stems the third Leaderphor: Leaders stay connected.

The first three Leaderphors could sound like a lot of work. Building bridges takes a lot of discipline, sowing seeds takes a lot of patience, and if scoring points was easy, everybody would be doing it, right?

This one is different. It truly is easy, at least for some people. It’s just about getting out there and not being afraid to say hello or meet new people.

Being connected simply means being plugged in. Handy’s test was incredibly easy to some people, and incredibly difficult to others. The ones who found it easy were the people who weren’t afraid to speak up--social people, if you will, who would greet one another and get to know them.

Passing Handy’s test was as simple as saying, “Hey, there. I’m Jesse. What’s your name? Tell me a little more about you,” and repeating that about fifteen times throughout the semester.

Obviously, there are people who weren’t as comfortable doing this. In the digital age, perhaps even worse than ever before, a lot of us are content to find refuge behind a pixelated screen in our own personal bubble.

Ironically, in marketing class it’s learned that said pixelated screen can be a very useful tool if used correctly, and yet the *most successful* people

can toggle between the screen and reality with no lag.

I've once heard it said that we are all three people away from the President. That means, in theory, we all know somebody, who knows somebody, who knows somebody, who knows the President. Obviously it's hard to prove this is true, but the message rings clear: the world is smaller than it seems, and getting places might often involve leveraging connections that have been made along the way.

While I'm not writing all this to tell you to put down this book and go start a LinkedIn profile (although that's never a bad idea), I want you all to think about this: the best leaders are not only good at working *with* a group, but they are also good at working *outside* of a group. To get places, sometimes the best route is to call upon somebody you know, or even somebody with a mutual connection.

Making connections doesn't always work. Sending a cold email, or reaching out with no prior contact, is always like taking a shot in the dark. Quite often you miss, but occasionally you hit a homerun (I think I switched my sports there--whoops).

Some people are very weighty connections, meaning they know a lot of people or have a lot of influence. Other people, perhaps your grandma with twelve cats, might not have as large of a social circle, but the people she knows very well could help open doors for you down the road, so never count out *any* connection as you network and grow as a person and leader.

So, to conclude, don't be afraid to ask for help, and try to learn from and connect with as many people as possible along the way. The brightest leaders have connections that help them as they journey through life, so don't be afraid to venture outside of your bubble and meet new friends. You never know where these people might help you go!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How large is your social circle right now?
- What are some ways to increase it?
- Write down three important contacts you'd like to make over the next three months, and then make it happen!

GROUP ACTIVITY: Hold the Applause

- This activity requires no extra equipment, but groups of 10 plus make for the most success.

- To begin, one student leaves the room. The rest of the students in the room decide on an object in the room to be the target: a lamp, a book, a poster, etc.
- After the selection, the student returns to the room.
- The student's job is to guess which object is target. As he/she walks around the room, the rest of the students clap at a tempo that is determined by how close the first student is to the target: the closer he/she is, the faster they clap.
- After the student locates the object, another student is picked to do the activity again.
- Just like the best leaders know, a lot of things are impossible to do without help. This activity shows just that, and the applause represents the help connections can provide in accomplishing a goal.

Leaderphor Five:

Leaders Quilt

My best friend's grandma is wildly talented. She's a quilter, and makes quilts for all of her grandchildren, along with other relatives, and she's always working through a cycling list of "who gets the next quilt." Every time she finishes the list, she starts over.

These quilts of hers are no joke. They're not just "hope this helps you stay warm on cold nights" quilts. They're art. Beautiful, intricate art sewn together with lots of time, an eye for design, and a heart full of love.

And the most impressive thing about these quilts, to me at least, is that they are often put together with odds-and-ends. From pieces that are miscut or to pieces that were leftover from previous quilting adventures, a lot of "undesirable" scraps go into the quilts.

The most beautiful thing about the assembly of these quilts is that these undesirable leftovers are fit together and transformed into something beautiful, something so creative and perfect that it looks like it was always meant to be.

The last time I was looking at her quilts, I was struck with an epiphany: leaders, in many ways, are like quilters.

Leaders work with people (this is kind of a "duh" statement, I realize: who would leaders lead if there were no followers?), and some of these people might not be the most desirable characters. Maybe they are lazy, perhaps they aren't good at listening, or maybe they complain a lot. But like quilters, the best leaders have the ability to look around at the team of people surrounding them, including the "undesirable scraps," and then make something grand out of them.

I'll let you in on a secret I've learned through my twenty-two years on earth. *Every* single person has *something* that makes them tick. Something that motivates. Something that they are good at. I've met people who, at first, seem completely worthless. I don't say that to be harsh, but you know the type: people who are content to sit around and do nothing. People who want everybody else to take care of them. People who probably voted for... actually, never mind.

The truth of the matter here is that even these people have a passion about *something*. Whether it is racing or stamp collecting or telling stories of military service from the past, there is going to be something they truly enjoy, and the best leaders will relentlessly work to find that point of connection and use it to grow bonds to encourage that person to follow.

It gets even better. Every person has a talent, and many of these talents are hidden. That said, not only does a good leader *connect* with his/her followers, but he/she also puts the followers in the best position to succeed. Connecting with people and finding their talents gives the entire group its best chance to do great things, just like how a quilter can evaluate all the odds-and-ends in the material basket and figure out how all the pieces will best fit together to make a beautiful quilt.

Like him or not, there is no denying that LeBron James is a phenomenal basketball player. He's my favorite player, so I'm probably biased, but I would argue with anybody that he is the best player ever.

The reason I think this is that LeBron, more so than any of the "greats," is known for not only being dominant, but also for something else: he makes everybody around him better. Their shooting percentages and efficiency go up, even if their points per game take a slight dip (from playing with a gifted scorer).

LeBron, unlike anybody I've ever seen play, can take a bunch of unlikely talent much further than should be expected, and the only explanation for this is his leadership. He's undeniably a physical specimen, but he uses that gift to create open shots for his teammates through great vision and passing abilities.

For you non-basketball fans, basically what I'm saying is that LeBron wins because he can figure out what his teammates do best and then put them in position to do so. LeBron is a great example of a leader.

So this is my challenge to all of you: go be a quilter. Look at the people around you and lead by making everybody else better. True leaders do not find success only for themselves, but they carry the "odds-and-ends" around them to better places as well. Quilters can make beauty out of rags, and in the same way I challenge you to find success with the people around you, no matter how talented they may or may not be.

Do not be discouraged by failures, only find excitement in success, and let that excitement serve as motivation as you climb mountains, build empires, and pursue dreams.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What is the best way to find the skillsets of your peers?
- If leadership occasionally means carrying other people along for the ride, what are ways you can be a motivation to teammates and peers who are struggling emotionally or physically?
- What are qualities you look for when sewing together a “quilt” made up of these odds-and-ends?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Through the Maze

- This fun activity requires groups of three people, desks/chairs/tables, and a blindfold.
- First, start by making a maze out of the desks with a designated start point and end point.
- One person will walk the maze, and that person is blindfolded. This person should try to navigate the maze without bumping into any desks.
- The second person is turned away from the maze, unable to see it.
- The third person can see the maze, but *cannot* speak. This person can only use body gestures, and this person has to pass on navigational instructions to the second person, who in turn relays them to the first person.
- After navigating the maze, switch positions two more times so every member does every position. Switching up the maze doesn't hurt either!
- Just as leaders must work with teams full of various talents and abilities, this activity makes teams work together to complete the goal of navigating the blindfolded person through the maze. It's a fun activity and can really highlight a lot of core leadership skills, but also be safe! Take it slow--it's not a race.

Leaderphor Six:

Leaders Scrape Knees

This is it. We've come to the end of our roughly 8,000 word journey, and I thank you all for sticking with me to this point.

I hope you know that I'm not trying to sell you any snake-oil. I fear that some (certainly not *all*, but a considerable amount) of the leadership guides I've seen do just that: offer heaps of broad, unhelpful information that sounds really great as it comes off the page, but doesn't have enough real-world practicality to yield any practical use. Snake oil. Smoke and mirrors. Fluff. That kind of thing.

Here's some advice for dealing with that sort of thing: In a world full of nonsense, keep your language plain and keep your doubts up. Look for the nuggets of gold you can latch onto and pull out of the mud, and let those nuggets enrich you more than the hunt exhausts you.

But most importantly, I want to go on to share the realest piece of advice that I can--something that will be always be true and comes with 0% fluff added.

Leaders fall down. A lot.

Don't get hypnotized by all the positivity and inspiration from the previous five Leaderphors to the point you forget that leading has occasional downs for all the emotional highs.

History remembers all kinds of leaders: presidents, war generals, inventors, thinkers, athletes, performers, and many others. Despite the vastly different professions and lives that these people lived, do you know what they all have in common? The amount of times they messed up.

Thomas Edison is well known for his failures before finally getting the lightbulb right, but thank goodness he didn't get discouraged in his pursuit. Babe Ruth struck out more than 1,300 times in his career, but what do we remember him for? The hits. Have you ever sung along to the song "My Happiness?" No? Me either, but just because Elvis's first recording didn't shoot up the charts doesn't mean he stopped singing.

The point from this is that even the best leaders and most successful people don't live lives that are full of nothing but success. They mess up all

the time. The thing that truly makes them special and distinguishable from everybody else with an idea is that they *don't* ever get too down on themselves that they give up.

I've made lots of mistakes. Honestly, it seems like I've made 10 mistakes for every success in my life. But that's okay, and that doesn't mean you have to do the same. In fact, the point of this book is to share what I have learned from both life experience and from mentors along the way, so that hopefully you will make half the mistakes and celebrate twice the success.

I've heard it said that learning from your own mistakes is great, but it costs you a setback. Learning from the mistakes of others is *free*. That's why I have put what I've learned thus far in life on these pages, so that you can learn from me without making the same mistakes.

Of course, the path will be bumpy nonetheless, but if we make different mistakes, then progress has been made.

Maybe this is a harsh way to end a book about leadership, but it seems an appropriate one. Realizing that you will inevitably mess up is a tough pill to swallow, and it's even harsher when you consider that being a leader means that your mistakes will not only hurt you, but also the people around you.

But there's also joy to be found, and the joy is so great that it should wash away all the concern: while a leader has to occasionally mourn failure, a leader also gets to celebrate success along with a team of people that played their part in it. There is no better feeling in the world than collectively celebrating a victory with the people you helped inspire along the way (save possibly getting married or having a child, but I have done neither of these so I cannot attest yet. Maybe get back to me on that in a decade).

As you put this book down, or turn off your device on which you are reading, or go to facebook to share this incredible advice with your friends, let me leave you with this: scraped knees heal, but the satisfaction of changing lives last forever. Don't be afraid to fall if it means you're trying to fly. Stay true to yourself, keep an eye fixed to the future, and lead on.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Have you ever let a fear of mistakes/judgement prevent you from doing something you want to do?
- Personally, what are steps you can take to prevent this?

- What advice would you give a friend who is struggling with this same problem?

GROUP ACTIVITY: Chain of command.

- This activity requires no extra equipment, but groups of 10 plus make for the most success.
- To begin, one student leaves the room. This student is the detective. The rest form a circle, and one student in the circle is picked to be the commander.
- After the selection, the detective returns and goes into the middle of the circle.
- The commander leads the students in a simple gesture: stomping, clapping, tapping a finger on the one's nose, etc. The rest of the students copy.
- It is up to the detective to figure out which student is the commander and identify him/her as such.
- After correctly solving the puzzle, a new detective and commander are selected.
- This game reinforces the idea that sometimes you might not always succeed on your first try, but the people who do not get discouraged are the people doing big things.