**How to Be a Leader**

**by Martin Bjergegaard and Cosmina Popa**

**Book Summary**

This book is an insightful guide that delves into the essential aspects of leadership. The book emphasizes that leadership is not merely a position but a choice that individuals make in their everyday lives. The authors argue that leadership starts with personal development, self-awareness, and aligning one's actions with their purpose. The book is divided into three main sections: "You," "You + Others," and "Shadow," which explore the various facets of leadership.

**Section I: You**

The first section of the book focuses on the importance of self-awareness and personal development in leadership. The authors emphasize that leadership begins with understanding oneself and connecting with one's purpose. They argue that when leaders align their actions with their purpose, they become a beacon for those around them.

The authors also stress the importance of cultivating awareness of the body and its wisdom. They suggest that by caring for and inhabiting our bodies, we open ourselves to a new level of insight beyond our conscious mind. The book introduces the concept of "ecosophy," which represents a sense of wisdom required to live in harmony with the earth. The authors argue that leaders must hold the awareness that humans are a subsystem that depends on a higher-level system: Mother Nature.

**Quotes:**

*"Leadership starts with you, there's no way around it."*

*"If you connect your leadership with your purpose -- that thing which ignites you and makes you come alive -- you will become a beacon for those around you."*

*"…curiosity is a powerful leadership tool. Add it to your toolbox and get ready to be amazed."*

**Section II: You + Others**

The second section of the book focuses on the importance of interpersonal relationships in leadership. The authors argue that leadership is no longer a lonely post but requires joint decision-making and true co-creation. They emphasize the importance of mastering the art of communication, which includes inspiring, storytelling, understanding others, resolving conflicts, being open and transparent, and creating a safe space for others to tell the truth.

The authors also stress the importance of defining the "riverbanks" or the culture of an organization. They argue that culture is a shared system of values, beliefs, norms, and accepted behavior, and leaders must define it, or the group will define it with the values and behaviors they are willing to tolerate from each other. The book also highlights the importance of altruism and compassion in leadership, arguing that science shows that practicing these qualities brings about structural changes in the brain and can even change the expression of genes.

**Quotes:**

*"Trust is immediately eradicated when people sense we are not being honest with them. They might not know exactly where the fire is, but they will notice the smoke."*

*"Culture is a shared system of values, beliefs, norms and accepted behavior. The sharing part is the most critical element. When leaders don't define a culture, the group will define it with the values, beliefs and behaviors they are willing to tolerate from each other."*

*"…science now shows that practicing altruism and compassion brings about structural changes in our brain and can even change the expression of our genes."*

**Section III: Shadow**

The third section of the book explores the challenges and uncertainties that leaders face and how to navigate them. The authors argue that leaders must learn to welcome uncertainty as a creative ground from which they can bring their leadership to life. They emphasize the importance of leaning into the unknown and tolerating ambiguity to come up with better solutions, ideas, and creations.

The book also discusses the role of failure in leadership, arguing that failure and success are relative, inseparable, and failure is a necessary teacher for growth and fulfillment. The authors suggest that leaders should view their genius as something external to them and focus on showing up and doing their best every day.

The book also explores the concept of ego and its impact on leadership. The authors argue that the ego can hinder leadership by promoting self-centeredness, fear, and attachment to ideas and opinions. They suggest that leaders must evolve their understanding and awareness to overcome their preoccupation with self-centered needs and shift their focus towards benefiting others and all of life.

**Quotes:**

*"The more you're able to tolerate ambiguity and lean into the unknown, the more likely you'll be to dance with it long enough to come up with better solutions, ideas and creations."*

*"Failure comes for all of us; because it is relative rather than absolute, and completely inseparable from success; because it is the greatest teacher around, we don't need to torment ourselves, and run away in fear, when we stare it in the eye."*

*"Rather than declaring war on our ego -- as Jung suggests -- 'by hook or by crook achieve a higher level of consciousness'. We must evolve our understanding, our awareness, in order to overcome our preoccupation with self-centered needs and self-serving ideas, and shift our focus towards being more concerned with benefiting others and benefiting all of life."*

**Top Ten Takeaways:**

1. Leadership begins with self-awareness, aligning actions with purpose, and cultivating wisdom.

The book emphasizes that leadership starts with understanding oneself and connecting with one's purpose. The authors argue that when leaders align their actions with their purpose, they become a beacon for those around them. They also stress the importance of cultivating awareness of the body and its wisdom, suggesting that by caring for and inhabiting our bodies, we open ourselves to a new level of insight beyond our conscious mind.

1. Effective communication, transparency, and creating a safe environment for honest dialogue are crucial for leaders.

The authors emphasize the importance of mastering the art of communication, which includes inspiring, storytelling, understanding others, resolving conflicts, being open and transparent, and creating a safe space for others to tell the truth. They argue that trust is immediately eradicated when people sense that leaders are not being honest with them, and leaders must create an environment that invites colleagues to speak their truth.

1. Company culture is shaped by shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that leaders must define and foster.

The book highlights the importance of defining the "riverbanks" or the culture of an organization. The authors argue that culture is a shared system of values, beliefs, norms, and accepted behavior, and leaders must define it, or the group will define it with the values and behaviors they are willing to tolerate from each other.

1. Altruism and compassion are essential qualities for leaders to develop.

The book stresses the importance of altruism and compassion in leadership, arguing that science shows that practicing these qualities brings about structural changes in the brain and can even change the expression of genes. The authors suggest that leaders must grow their appetite for altruism and approach situations as human beings, not just as corporate CEOs.

1. Leaders must learn to navigate crises, uncertainty, and failure, viewing them as opportunities for growth and learning.

The authors argue that leaders must learn to welcome uncertainty as a creative ground from which they can bring their leadership to life. They emphasize the importance of leaning into the unknown and tolerating ambiguity to come up with better solutions, ideas, and creations. The book also discusses the role of failure in leadership, arguing that failure and success are relative, inseparable, and failure is a necessary teacher for growth and fulfillment.

1. The ego can hinder leadership by promoting self-centeredness, fear, and attachment to ideas and opinions.

The book explores the concept of ego and its impact on leadership. The authors argue that the ego can hinder leadership by promoting self-centeredness, fear, and attachment to ideas and opinions. They suggest that leaders must evolve their understanding and awareness to overcome their preoccupation with self-centered needs and shift their focus towards benefiting others and all of life.

1. Curiosity is a powerful leadership tool that should be focused and used wisely.

The authors suggest that curiosity is a powerful leadership tool that should be added to one's toolbox. However, they also warn that curiosity has a shadow side, which is the risk of being distracted. They suggest that leaders should use their curiosity wisely and focus it on their goals and vision.

1. Leaders must create a culture that encourages intrinsic motivation through autonomy, mastery, and purpose.

The book highlights the importance of creating a culture that encourages intrinsic motivation. The authors cite Daniel Pink's three intrinsic motivators: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. They suggest that leaders must ensure that employees have all the skills training they need to master their work and have a strong sense of purpose.

1. Embracing uncertainty and leaning into the unknown can lead to better solutions, ideas, and creations.

The authors argue that leaders must learn to embrace uncertainty and lean into the unknown. They suggest that the more leaders are able to tolerate ambiguity and lean into the unknown, the more likely they will be to come up with better solutions, ideas, and creations.

1. Failure and success are relative, inseparable, and failure is a necessary teacher for growth and fulfillment.

The book discusses the role of failure in leadership, arguing that failure and success are relative, inseparable, and failure is a necessary teacher for growth and fulfillment. The authors suggest that leaders should view their genius as something external to them and focus on showing up and doing their best every day. They argue that as long as leaders show up and put their best effort into doing what they've been put on this planet to do, then that's success in itself.

**Conclusion:**

"How to Be a Leader" by Martin Bjergegaard and Cosmina Popa is a comprehensive guide to leadership that explores various aspects of personal development, interpersonal relationships, and navigating challenges. The book emphasizes that leadership starts with self-awareness, aligning actions with purpose, and cultivating wisdom. The authors stress the importance of effective communication, transparency, and creating a safe environment for honest dialogue.

The book also highlights the importance of defining the culture of an organization and fostering altruism and compassion in leadership. The authors argue that leaders must learn to navigate crises, uncertainty, and failure, viewing them as opportunities for growth and learning. They also explore the concept of ego and its impact on leadership, suggesting that leaders must evolve their understanding and awareness to overcome their preoccupation with self-centered needs and shift their focus towards benefiting others and all of life.

Overall, "How to Be a Leader" offers valuable insights and practical advice for anyone looking to develop their leadership skills and create thriving organizations. The book's emphasis on personal growth, strong relationships, and navigating challenges with wisdom and compassion makes it a must-read for aspiring and experienced leaders alike.