

## The Path of Integral Leadership

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How important is integration to effective leadership? What are the characteristics of an integral leader? To answer these questions let's investigate the whole self - body, mind, heart and soul - as it appears in leadership.

### Body

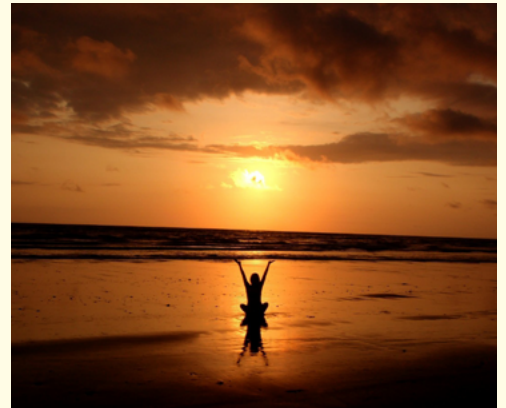
Our bodies are amazing vehicles that most often carry us through our lives in good style if we listen to them. Our bodies tell us what we need to do to care for them, and they don't lie. When we don't pay attention, pain happens. An integral leader accepts the importance of his/her body and models habits that encourage good health: eating well, exercising and resting.

When we exercise we break down muscle fiber. Then we rest the muscle to allow it to repair. As the muscle heals it becomes stronger. Both stress and relaxation are necessary for its development. An integral leader understands that this concept applies to individual bodies and to the body in its larger sense, the body politic. Whether we're speaking of a family, a company, or a country, a group goes through periods of stress as growth and change occurs. This stress is good, provided it's followed by relaxation. An effective leader knows when to push and when to ease up.

An integral leader doesn't put the bottom line above the well being of workers or others who live in the community. He or she values the health of the natural world more than the health of the profit margin and believes it's possible to make wise decisions resulting in profit, but providing sustainability for the future.

### Mind

Most of us in the developed world today have a tendency to overwork our minds. People walk on the street staring into their phones, completely unaware of what's happening around them, focusing on a fantasy of past and future, ignoring the energy flow in the present. Energy flow is inclusive the way two rivers flow together, becoming one larger river that creates a new bed. An integral leader can combine the energies of others, producing creative solutions that perhaps don't follow a linear-thinking path. In order to do this, the leader must be present and open to the world as it is. A leader who is too invested in his or her mind sees others who have differing views as enemies whom must be dominated, whether by weapons or by words. This desire to dominate produces dangerous situations detrimental to healthy life.



## **Heart**

Emotions continually flow through us if we allow them a path. If we stop the flow, bury them, repress them, they don't go away. They stay inside us, and it takes more and more of our energy to keep their voices quiet. Eventually they come out, sometimes at inopportune times and they scream more loudly than we would like. How do we allow them to flow without letting them take center stage and overwhelm us?

An integral leader will have enough balance to allow emotional flow, to temper messages with mindfulness and to express strength through the body. The Greeks called this capacity "antakalouthia," the dove-tailing of the virtues. Empathy, the ability to feel for self and others, mixes with mindful presence so that an integral leader can name and feel an emotion without being "swept away." He can express the emotion through the body by exercising, simultaneously gaining strength and aerobic capacity. Because an integral leader can feel emotions, she can empathize with others and make wise decisions that increase balance in others. A leader that "flies off the handle" creates emotional chaos, that can affect the whole society.

## **Soul**

Every day each individual makes multiple decisions, some small and some large. Shall I get Starbucks or Bad Ass Coffee? Shall I order the Army drones to bomb Iraq? Shall I even get out of bed at all? It's possible that we may not realize the consequences of our actions, especially the small ones, or that we may not care about them. Everyone follows a path through life, and, at death, the sum and quality of that life become apparent. A question to ask before death is, "Are my daily decisions lining up to who I truly am?" My soul's path is the path that's an expression of that inner essence that is most perfectly me.

An integral leader listens to the guiding voice of her soul in making decisions. These decisions originate from the unique mix of values and experiences that define her, that separate her from all others.

The integration of body, mind, heart and soul produce a cohesion that emerges with every breath and provides the support for action. This leader is continually forging himself, continually questioning assumptions, continually finding ways to improve his leadership to increase harmony, beauty and ease for all.