

What is Leadership?



I tried to teach a group of Boy Scouts leadership. This was a group of Patrol Leaders and their Senior Patrol Leader. Without telling them why, I told the senior patrol leader to organize the group and get some firewood for our campsite. He immediately told the others to bring in two armloads of wood each. As they went grumbling away, he sat down and waited for them. When they got back with their second armload of wood, I asked what their Senior Patrol Leader had done right. They said, “Nothing.” When I asked what he had done wrong, they said, “He sat on his butt and made us do the work.” Then I told them we were going to play a leadership game. I lined them up in a single file and got in front of the line myself. I told them to follow me and I walked across the campsite. When I stopped I said, “That is leadership.” Then I told them to turn and face the opposite direction. Now all of the boys were in a line with me at the back. As I gently pushed the boy in front of me and watched the whole line go down like dominos, I said, “And that’s pushing.”

Jesse Hulse

When they were back on their feet, I explained that I wanted them to remember that you can only lead from the front. Leadership is the process of getting people to follow you, and they can not follow unless you are moving in front. You can not lead someone further than you are able and willing to go yourself. If you're the boss, you may order someone to go further, but that's not leadership; it's pushing. You are not a leader unless you are in front.