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[Introduction to] 7 Lenses: Learning the Principles and Practices of Ethical Leadership

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LENSES

LEARNING THE PRINCIPLES
AND PRACTICES OF
ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

LINDA FISHER THORNTON

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN M. R. COVEY



LEADING IN CONTEXT LLC
RICHMOND, VA

Preface

In writing this book, I seek to clarify what it means to think beyond ourselves. There is an urgent need for clarity about this in the world today, because decisions based only on profit and convenience do not lead us to a better world. It's time for us to talk openly about our responsibilities to current and future generations and how we will fulfill them. In *7 Lenses*, I advocate leadership grounded in respect and care and present a framework for thinking about ethical leadership in seven dimensions of responsibility.

This book is designed to be a guide for learning how to lead ethically for the long term. It offers a common framework for talking about ethical responsibility and is written for leaders who want to build ethical companies and cultures, for leaders who want to create great places to work, and for those who want to learn how to build a better world.

The Origins of This Book

I had been developing leaders for more than twenty-five years and teaching leadership for nine years when I attended an ethics symposium at the University of Richmond. I listened as global experts from a variety of disciplines shared their perspectives on leading for the greater good. They all advocated the highest level of ethical leadership, and their perspectives were compelling, but I was left with some deep questions:

- *Why do intelligent people define ethical responsibility in leadership in so many different ways?*
- *How can we expect people to lead ethically if we can't even agree on what that means?*
- *How can we make sense of all the different perspectives to get a clear picture of the whole?*

Following my curiosity, I looked for a practical framework that pulled all of the perspectives together. Not finding one, I began writing this book. My formal training in linguistics, communications, and adult education and human development led me to use a learning perspective and to explore my questions in the context of human development. I began to sketch a list of practical ethical principles that could guide leaders, and with the support of my mother and mentor Mary Alice Fisher, an expert on ethics in psychology, I began to create a practical framework that represented ethical leadership in a global society.

It became clear to me early in the process of writing this book that the answers to my questions would only come from a viewpoint that looked across traditional schools of thought. While researching across disciplines, I stayed grounded in the timeless wisdom of the ethicists and philosophers whose quotes appear in this book.

In the first two years, I struggled with which principles to include and how to group them. After the principles were finalized, it took many tries to create clear and actionable graphics and a framework for pulling all of the perspectives together into a meaningful whole. Creating the 7 Lenses™ and the four-quadrant matrix of principles that honor them took four years.

How 7 Lenses Is Organized

This book is organized in three parts, each with an introduction. Part One answers the question “What is ethical leadership” from varying perspectives to get a clear picture of its breadth and depth. Ethical leadership is approached from a learning perspective, as a business advantage, and from seven very different perspectives on ethical responsibility that together form a multidimensional model.

Part Two explores how to honor all 7 Lenses in daily leadership. It introduces a four-quadrant model and 14 Guiding Principles that honor all 7 Lenses. Each chapter includes vivid detail and examples that help guide daily leadership choices.

Part Three explores how ethical expectations are changing. It examines how our understanding of the purpose of leadership is evolving and describes six connected trends shaping the future. Thought-provoking questions in this section help leaders plan for and adapt to changes that are happening now.

People I Would Like to Thank

This book could not have happened without the support and guidance of some wonderful people whom I would like to thank. I extend my gratitude to Mary Alice Fisher, Ph.D., my mentor, mother, and friend, who shared her writing and ethics wisdom with me, struggled through important questions with me, shared research sources and wrote with me, edited the book with me, and gave unending moral support; my husband Joe, who believed in this project and who patiently helped me make this book better through editing and advice; and my children, for providing moral support during the writing of this book and for sharing my enthusiasm for learning and leadership.

I would like to thank Stephen M. R. Covey, Co-founder and Global Practice Leader of the FranklinCovey Speed of Trust Practice, for graciously agreeing to write the Foreword for this book. It is a particular honor for me, since I have learned so much from his writing and speaking about building trust in leadership.

In addition, I would like to thank Peter Winick, my strategy coach, for pushing me to be better and bolder and for helping me clarify my message; the University of Richmond Donchian Symposium on Ethics that stimulated the questions that resulted in this book; Jim Narduzzi, dean of the University of Richmond School of Professional and Continuing Studies, for inviting me to join the adjunct faculty to teach leadership; my leadership students for asking hard questions and taking the intentional journey to better leadership; Dr. Fred Antczak, my dean and advisor at the University of Virginia, who encouraged me to stretch and supported

me in developing good thinking and clear communication; and many authors whose work helped shape my thinking about leadership including Dr. Stephen Covey, Howard Gardner, Mark Gerzon, Marshall Goldsmith, Jim Kouzes, Patrick Lencioni, John Maxwell, Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatley, and others who are mentioned in this book.

I am grateful for the support of friends and neighbors who encouraged me to keep writing; people across disciplines who gave positive feedback on social media channels; Jerry Jenkins, Leah Nicholson, Yvonne Roehler, and the rest of the team at the Jenkins Group, who worked their magic and turned a manuscript into a book; and reviewers who suggested improvements, including Kevin Bruny, Karen Conrad, Dr. Chris Lee, Steve Lux, Kathleen McSweeney, Dr. Jim Noland, and Dr. Jake Noland.