

Mature Leaders

Let's finally heed Einstein's advice.



by John Renesch

WE ARE CHALLENGED to get along with one another and with our environment. Our childlike indulgences, the gridlock and dysfunction that riddles our institutions, and our inability to govern ourselves with civility are evident. A cry for *adult conversations* is echoed by many pundits.

People in positions of power seem to be unable to function, while most of us are left to choose from *three responses*—resignation, helplessness, or cynicism. Standard & Poor's called Washington government "dysfunctional" as part of the downgrading of our national credit rating. Einstein warned us decades ago that *we cannot solve our problems with the same consciousness with which we created them*. Maintainers of the status quo ignore his advice.

As more people realize that their leaders are acting dysfunctionally, we see their behavior compared to teenagers *acting out*—engaging in *adolescent indulgences* that don't match with their responsibilities. An implied promise of leaders is they are *mature adults* acting responsibly for the good of the whole.

The consciousness Einstein talked about includes a more *mature approach* to managing complexity. We have created systems that have become more complex than our adolescent thinking can handle. Not unlike Frankenstein and his creature, we've created more complexity than we are able to control.

We need to make a *conscious choice* to *grow up* and *start thinking and acting like adults*. The Dalai Lama stated: "As people see their predicament clearly—that our fates are inextricably tied together, that life is a mutually interdependent web of relations—universal responsibility becomes the only sane choice for thinking people." *This universal responsibility requires a grown-up approach to our challenges and conflicts.*

We can choose whether to *evolve* toward a higher form. Those who take a stand for this new truth will be the leaders who create *the better future*.

These leaders may not initially be popular. After all, adults are often unpopular among adolescents who rebel against mature accountability. They may oppose many of the current trends and advocate new approaches. They transcend *left* and *right*, *conservative* and *liberal*. They stand for a new way to exist in a sustainable world *together*, not exaggerating our differences and warring with one another.

Many mature leaders are already *speaking out* and *stepping out* to create a future whereby people evolve and grow in a climate of dignity, respect and security that unites people.

Becoming Mature Leaders

When paradigms change, the agents or catalysts for change rarely come from within the core of the system. *Established leaders* are often so embroiled in the traditions, beliefs and priorities of the system they rarely even see the need for change, much less initiate it. Only the newcomers see the *naked truth*. In many cases, the leadership for this new consciousness is coming from smaller



countries, lesser-known personalities, individuals without rank or title—people who can see dysfunction and policies that border on the insane because they have some distance and objectivity. They are not mired down in the system.

Leaders for a *better future* possess a *powerful vision* for what is needed to be sustainable and the *spiritualchutzpah* to act on the vision. In contrast to *traditional leaders* who spend years building resumes, acquiring wealth and power, and playing politics to get the titles and ranks they achieve, these new leaders know that the way to this better future is simple. No widespread trainings, no large budgets, no expert consultants are needed. *All we have to do it change our thinking* by letting go of *outmoded beliefs* and *immature attitudes* that no longer serve us.

Our hope for a sustainable way of life and for a future that works for everyone lies in these more mature leaders. Through them we will transcend traditional means of resolving conflict. We will transcend perverse *nationalism*, *rankism* and *brandism*. This *better future* affirms and respects *all of life*; allows all humanity to meet their basic needs; and makes this planet a *hospitable home*. LE

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ACTION: Cultivate mature leadership.