



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 4
Cottey College

Episode Transcript: Ally Potts on “The Leadership Process Begins with Knowing Yourself”

Welcome to Season 4 and another Episode of the ‘This I Believe’ Podcast. My name is Ally Potts. I am a freshman at Cottey College. Today I will be diving into the 2nd Foundational Principle of Leadership, which states that leadership begins with knowing yourself. With that being said, sit back, relax, and enjoy today's episode of ‘This I Believe.’

transition music

I believe that the leadership process begins with knowing yourself. While such a huge aspect of leadership has to do with guiding other people, it is impossible to do so when one does not have a strong sense of self.

At some point, all of us will need to be a leader at one moment or another. For me, I have always loved to lead. It has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember, and it has even helped guide my plans for the future. However, there is a big difference between a leader and an effective leader. I have always been a leader, but I have not always been an effective leader, and that is largely due to my personal growth.

My sophomore year of high school was one filled with so much turmoil and uncertainty. Coming back from the COVID-19 Pandemic was extremely challenging. It felt as if the whole world was different, because it was. This was a time that, more than ever, we needed a leader. This was also, coincidentally, the year that I was introduced to the YMCA Youth and Government program in my state. This program is a form of mock government, which at the time, sounded like the last thing I would be excited about. However, after some convincing, and the promise of a day off from school, I decided to sign the papers to go.

When I got to my first ever state conference, saying I was terrified is an understatement. I was in an environment so uncomfortable and unfamiliar to me that I was already counting down the days until I could leave. That was, however, until I was approached by a girl named Aishwarya. She was running for the Youth Governor position at the time, and her positive presence and personality drew me to her immediately. Her amazing leadership and sense of self gave me the confidence to give that week a fair chance, and I ended up leaving that conference with an award for the Best First Year Delegate, as well as an invitation to go to nationals. From then on, my self confidence not only in YAG, but also in life, grew exponentially. I continued with the

program for the next 3 years, and my leadership roles throughout my time there also began to grow.

Now the biggest difference between sophomore Ally and senior Ally was my personal growth. Sophomore Ally was scared, uncertain, and unconfident in her abilities. She seeked validation from others before seeking it from herself. After getting involved in Youth and Government and finding my voice, I was able to discover just how smart I really was, and that what I had to say really mattered. By the time my senior year ended, I was a 3-time nationals attendee, and I had received several awards for my work in the Legislative branch of the program. I left with not only lifelong friendships, but lifelong lessons on the importance of knowing yourself and having confidence in your abilities in order to lead others.

Now I know that sounded like a story filled with hopeful promises and only good times, but I hate to break it to you. It is not always like that. Sometimes, self-confidence is the hardest part of being a leader. In fact, I believe that it **always** is. Trust me, I completely understand the feeling of self-doubt. It is hard to trust yourself 100% of the time. This is the beauty that I find in leadership. You don't have to do it alone. Leadership is being okay with asking for help. In fact, I see asking for help as one of the most self-confident things that one can do. Admitting that you don't know the answers, but that you are willing to learn, is not only extremely brave, but very indicative of a strong leader. This is why it is so important to recognize not only your strengths, but also your weaknesses and fears. Knowing what you can handle, and what you may need a bit of help with, will help to create a self-confident, positive leader.

My journey to becoming an effective leader was not easy, and I am still far from perfect. I still get it wrong. I make mistakes. I get nervous. I stumble on my words. I fail, and fail, and fail again. But that is what makes me so strong. I want to leave you with a quote that Aishwarya would say to us anytime she was talking about leadership. And hey, who better to get an inspirational quote from than Michael Scott? It goes like this. "Sometimes I'll start a sentence and I don't even know where it's going. I just hope I find it somewhere along the way." Please don't be afraid to start your sentence. Trust yourself, know yourself, and soon others will trust you to help them start their sentence as well.

Thank you so much for tuning in. Until next time, this has been 'This I Believe.'