



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 5
Cottey College

Episode Transcript: Lindsay Abegg on “Leadership Qualities and Skills are Learned and Developed”

Welcome back to another episode of the This I Believe podcast, Season 5. My name is Lindsay Abegg, I am a first-year here at Cottey and my focus will be on the Third Principal of Leadership. The Third Principal states that leadership qualities and skills are learned and developed, not necessarily something that is within us at birth. Before I begin, I will say that this podcast will contain some brief descriptions of my personal account of a traumatic experience I have faced.

Throughout my childhood and teen years, I was always the “quiet” kid. I would only speak in classes I enjoyed and would remain shy in front of groups, fearing that I would do or say the wrong thing and they’d deem me strange. Boys in my class would pull my hair or snap my bra strap and tease me for being quiet. Other kids were scared of me because I wore all black. It sounds so cringe now, but I was definitely putting up walls because I was afraid of getting hurt. That changed in high school when I joined theater, and eased out of my shell. I went from being a shy freshman to a chatty senior. I would show up early to rehearsals and stay late because I wanted to help everyone. I became the biggest theater kid in my high school, and I was fine with that.

However, the end of senior year was by far the worst year of my entire life. Three very terrible events occurred, but the final event made me realize nothing in life was certain.

It was the day after my 18th birthday, it was a sunny Father’s day, June 18th, 2023. My Dad called me, and we talked for 30 minutes. He was so excited to go for a bicycle ride. He was an outdoorsy guy, and complained that he had been holed up for the week since it had been raining. I wished him a good ride, told him to be safe, and then hung up the phone. I got a call a few hours later, and this time it was not my father. It was a police officer, informing me my dad had been in an accident. All he could tell me of my father’s condition was, “I’m so sorry, ma’am, it’s pretty bad. I’ll have a nurse call you back in a little while.”

The next week was a blur. I drove out to Colorado in a day, I barely ate over the course of the entire week. We visited the hospital every day, waiting for something to change.

It never did.

My father had broken his neck. If he lived through the surgery, he would be paralyzed from the neck down. The doctors weren’t sure how much brain damage he had sustained from lack of oxygen to the brain. And being 18, I was the one to decide what happened to him. Of course,

his siblings were there and so was my mom but every legal matter was my own. I would have to sign the papers, I would have to tell the doctors what I wanted. I still have nightmares about that week, and my father. I never wanted to be a leader, but suddenly it was me everyone was looking to. I cried a lot that week, but I seemed to be a shoulder everyone cried on too. It was strange how my brain shifted, I did not want this but I had to get through it. I believed I could come out the other end. That stuff they say about the indomitable human spirit? I believe in it. I believe in leaders finding themselves, and unfortunately, sometimes in the darkest of moments.

I believe it's okay to not want to be a leader, but I do believe that everyone *must* be a leader at one point or another, so you must be ready to make hard choices. Whether that be in your personal life, or elsewhere. Leadership is such an extremely integral part to forging your path in this life. Because of the foundation I had, and the bond I had with my father, I was able to make it through. But this was not something that I was born with at all, I had to grow into this person who is able to make hard decisions. Some lessons are learned the hard way, but as every dorky motivational poster in a middle-school hallway says, the important part is that you get back up and keep going if you fall. The situation that happened to me was completely out of control, but I had to adapt. I'm still working through the loss of my father, but I know I've learned a lot since that terrible week.

I like to believe I am a very positive person. Many people perceive me differently than my past, and that is not a bad thing. It is a testament to how you truly never know what someone is going through. I don't know if I'm leader material just yet, but I do know I am learning to be a leader *again*. That is why I came to Cottey. There is so much opportunity in this big, beautiful world to learn new things. Everyday, there is something to learn. I want to learn all that I can in my little lifetime.

My father was a leader. When something needed done, he knew how to do it. He was an avid reader who loved to learn and adored nature with all of his soul. In moments when I need to be a leader, I think of him. Yes, he was quiet and reserved at times. But he knew how to lead, and was brilliant. Through his own trials, he grew into that strong person. I want to be just like that, not only for myself but for my friends and family. And for my Dad. This I believe.

Sound Attributions

All music used is through Podcastle.
Music used: "Aurora", "Don't Leave Too Soon"