

## The Values-Based Definition

*Leadership, simply put, is the ability to influence others. Values-based leadership takes it to the next level. By word, action, and example, values-based leaders seek to inspire and motivate, using their influence to pursue what matters most.*

—Harry Kraemer, Jr. (2011)

**A** HEALTH SYSTEM CEO led a discussion on leadership with second-year health administration graduate students. He posed the following questions: “Was Hitler an effective leader? Was Stalin an effective leader? And note that I did call them leaders. And before you answer, consider the fact that there’s a leadership book called *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* that’s been popular since the 1980s. So I will add another question: Was Attila the Hun an effective leader?”

He went on to say, “If the primary goal of leadership is to get results, didn’t Hitler and Stalin and Attila get results? Is it not evident that many, many people followed each of them?” He continued, “As leaders, are results all that matter? Is there something that makes us different from Hitler, Stalin, or Attila—or similar to them, for that matter? Does the concept of values come into play here? And can we even truly define values

effectively when talking about leadership? Do some leaders have a set of values that is different from Hitler's? Is that a key deciding factor? If the answer is yes, then it would seem important—no, it would be *absolutely critical*—that as we study leadership, we must learn the role that values play in leadership.”

AFTER LOOKING AT leadership from an academic perspective in chapter 2 and from a popular perspective in chapter 3, this chapter moves in a different direction. It provides the determinative foundation for the theme of this book—that is, internal values drive external behavior; effective leadership does, in fact, have a certain set of values; and those values drive the external behavior that helps make leaders effective. As stated in the preface, values come into play here.

But in establishing the definition of leadership for our purposes, we now add the requirement that effective leadership must have some beneficial good or purpose behind it. The vision must have a level of purity that benefits humankind.

For those of us who work in healthcare, serving in the field may be what many describe as the higher calling. The classic Robert Frost poem “The Road Not Taken” (see exhibit 4.1) underscores the conscious—and unusual—choice that exceptional leaders must make to live and lead according to their values. Their choices make all the difference, both in their lives and in the lives of those they serve.

External factors, such as changing regulations or pressure to meet financial goals, can threaten to move even the most ethical leaders on a perilous journey toward unethical decisions.

—Carson F. Dye and  
Brett D. Lee (2016)

## BORN OR MADE? A VALUES-BASED RESPONSE

Chapter 2 reviews some theories that scholars have developed in response to the question, Are leaders born or made? I contend that

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## Exhibit 4.1 “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

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Source: Frost (2016).

1. leadership is both inherent and learned, and
2. leadership values and skills are interrelated. One cannot exist without the other.

Numerous studies suggest that many leadership skills and traits are the result of heredity (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy 2015). In this vein, so-called born leaders tend to develop certain values and exhibit strong leadership characteristics and skills *early* in life. Many managers, executives, and consultants—including me—hold the belief that those who are not born leaders must cultivate these values

to enhance their leadership capabilities. Essentially, they have the possibility of learning behaviors or skills (read “competencies”) that make them effective leaders.

What definitive characteristics differentiate strong leaders from weak leaders? What traits drive the behavior of effective leaders? What qualities do successful leaders possess that average leaders do not have? The only answer is having the appropriate leadership values.

## WHAT ARE VALUES?

*Values* are ingrained principles that guide behaviors and thoughts. They are formed early in life and are likely correlated somewhat to heredity. They do develop more deeply with experiences and usually do not change much during a lifetime. As a moral framework, values help an individual analyze options, make decisions during times of stress, and rise above difficult or unexpected situations. Values are not necessarily all positive, however. Exhibit 4.2 provides an analogy for understanding how values are connected with and drive behaviors and thoughts.

Everyone has values, but those values differ from person to person. Some people have values that affect their leadership effectiveness. For example, Leader A highly regards being around other people, while Leader B highly regards being alone. Because Leader A spends time with others, she is more exposed to others’ ideas and practices. She can learn from this exposure and, in the process, develop an appreciation for and openness to different experiences. Leader B’s values, on the other hand, may not be as conducive to leadership improvement because he is isolated from the opinions and experiences of others. The real advantage of positive values depends on the degree to which a person allows these values to influence her development.

Sarros and Santora (2001, 7) state that “executives whose values are grounded in fundamental human virtues such as benevolence and honesty, but who also retain a need for personal gratification

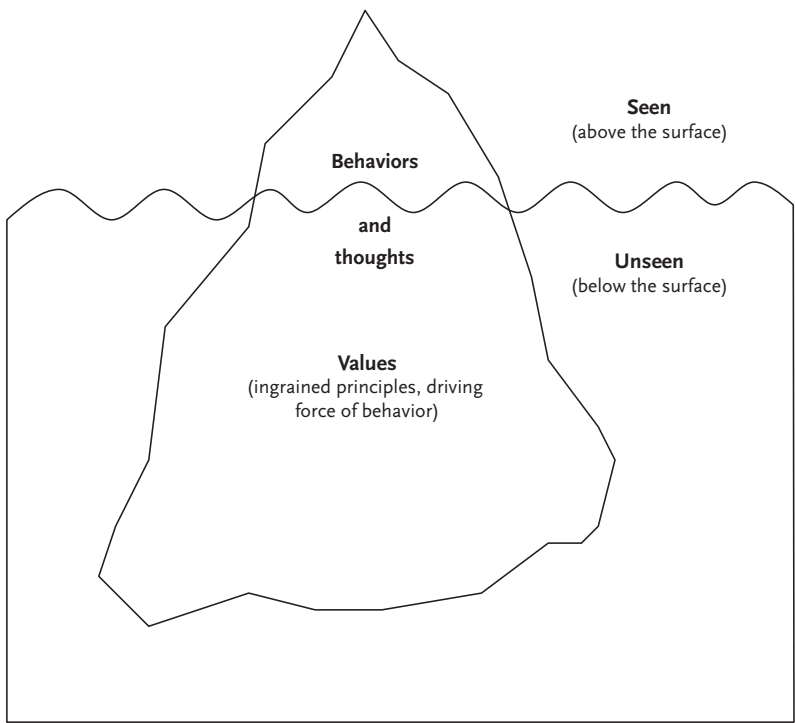
and success, are closely associated with transformational behaviors.” And Zydziunaite (2018, 44) writes that “in organizations where leaders lead, the leadership values must be communicated by actions, mostly in the ways in which activities/actions are conducted on a day-to-day basis, and not so much in words directly spoken or written.”

## Personal and Team Values

One of the foundational precepts of this book is that there are both personal and team values that drive appropriate and effective

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### Exhibit 4.2 The Iceberg Analogy of Leadership Values



leadership behavior. Learning these can make it easier to adopt effective leadership behavior.

*Personal values* affect how a leader perceives and is perceived by others. If leadership is a “social influence process,” as Kreitner and Kinicki (2012, 34) suggest, then values can make an impact—negatively or positively—on this process. A leader is most influential when his followers know what he stands for because followers are clear on whether they can relate to the leader’s ideals. This concept is illustrated whenever any new leader assumes a new leadership position. Practically all new leaders exert great effort to ensure that those in their new organizations know where they stand *personally*. One CEO remarks, “I spend much of my first 90 days helping people to learn—and understand—my personal history and style—this is who I am, why I am, and what I stand for. That way they will have a better understanding of the changes I will make.” The same can be said of CEOs when they seek buy-in from organizational stakeholders. Lee and I state it clearly: “Executives must develop an

understanding of leadership that includes a grasp of how their behavior influences the environment around them” (Dye and Lee 2016, 14).

In addition, personal values guide the interactions between a leader and her followers, serving as the “fluid” of the social interchange. Under the contingency theory, in which a leader considers all variables before making a decision and moving forward, an effective leader relies on her values to steer her toward the most appropriate action.

Team values are commonly referred to using the French phrase *esprit de corps*, or *spirit of the group*. They serve as a bond that connects and links team members. These values guide the behaviors, decisions, and actions of team members. They also set the standards for how members interact with each other and work together, given that each member holds differing personal values that could cause

The *influence* dimension of leadership requires the leader to have an impact on the lives of those being led. To make a change in other people carries with it an enormous ethical burden and responsibility. Because leaders usually have more power and control than [do their] followers, they also have more responsibility to be sensitive to how their leadership affects followers’ lives.

—Peter G. Northouse  
(2016)

conflicts in the group. In an organization, team values are often, if not always, tied to the mission of the enterprise. For example, if the mission is to serve those in need, regardless of their ability to pay, the team values will likely include community service, respect for diversity, accountability, and open communication—not pursuit of profits or one-upmanship.

Personal and team values contribute to leadership effectiveness. Exhibit 4.3 provides a distinction between these two types of values.

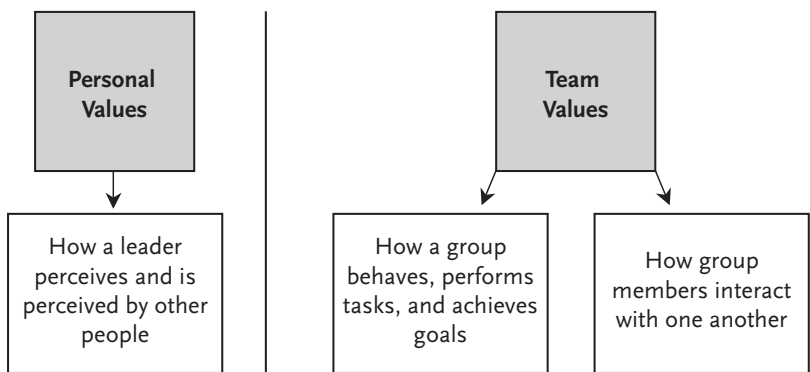
### Values That Drive Behaviors

At the time of this writing, a Google search for “list of values” provided more than 5 billion results. Refining that to “list of leadership values” yielded 468 million results. Maggie Wooll (2021) offers a frequently used list of leadership values. They include the following:

- Empowerment and development
- Vision
- Communication
- Reinforcement and influence

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#### Exhibit 4.3 Personal Values Versus Team Values



- Empathy
- Humility
- Passion and commitment
- Respect
- Patience
- Resilience
- Honesty and transparency
- Accountability
- Integrity

Reviewing this list or other similar lists from the Internet can be an illuminating exercise for leadership students and practitioners alike.

## Sample Personal Values Statement

This real-life example of a personal values statement is provided courtesy of a healthcare executive who wishes to remain anonymous. She shared this with me as we discussed values-based leadership.

I really do have a personal values statement, and I have actually written it out. I compare my leadership to an actual journey, and I see my values as the guiding essentials on that journey. Each element has a name and includes various thoughts about that value.

*Wind behind my back.* I always want to journey to see new things and to make improvements.

*Compass that points true north.* I want to let the deeper forces within me that developed through my early years continue to guide me. Therefore, I do a lot of reflection while I am on the trail.

*People on the trail with me.* I have teams. Even though they may report to me, I view them as peers on this journey. The fact is that others help make me look good.



*Sunshine ahead of me.* I walk toward the light. I don't mean this in a religious sense, but this speaks to my interest in transparency and doing the right things.

*Share lunch during the trip.* I am grateful to live in a wealthy nation and work in a well-paid career. I try to give back as much as I can—not only to charities but to the workers around me.

*My head is often down.* This speaks to both my humility as well as to my keen focus on detail. Do it right, and do it right the first time.

*Always carry a book.* I have always been a lifelong learner. Books are gifts that broaden your view of the trail.

*A song to sing.* This is the cheesy part. I grew up listening to the rock band Journey. Their song “Don't Stop Believin'” is the song I sing on the trail. To me it means being positive about change and the work we all do.

An excellent example of a corporate leadership values statement is provided in exhibit 4.4. This text from Bayer could easily be used as an exemplary model for an individual leadership values statement as well.

## Values Espoused in This Book

While the following values, which underlie the content of this book, may not precisely fit under a traditional definition of values, I contend that they are critical for effective leadership:

- Respect
- Ethical behavior
- Integrity
- Interpersonal connection
- Servant leadership
- Desire to make a change

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## Exhibit 4.4 Bayer Leadership and Integrity Values

### Leadership

- Be passionate for people and performance
- Show personal drive, inspire and motivate others
- Be accountable for actions and results, successes and failures
- Treat others fairly and with respect
- Give clear, candid and timely feedback
- Manage conflicts constructively
- Create value for all our stakeholders

### Integrity

- Be a role model
- Comply with laws, regulations and good business practices
- Trust others and build trustful relationships
- Be honest and reliable
- Listen attentively and communicate appropriately
- Ensure sustainability: balance short-term results with long-term requirements
- Care about people, safety, and the environment

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*Source:* Reprinted with permission from Bayer (2016).

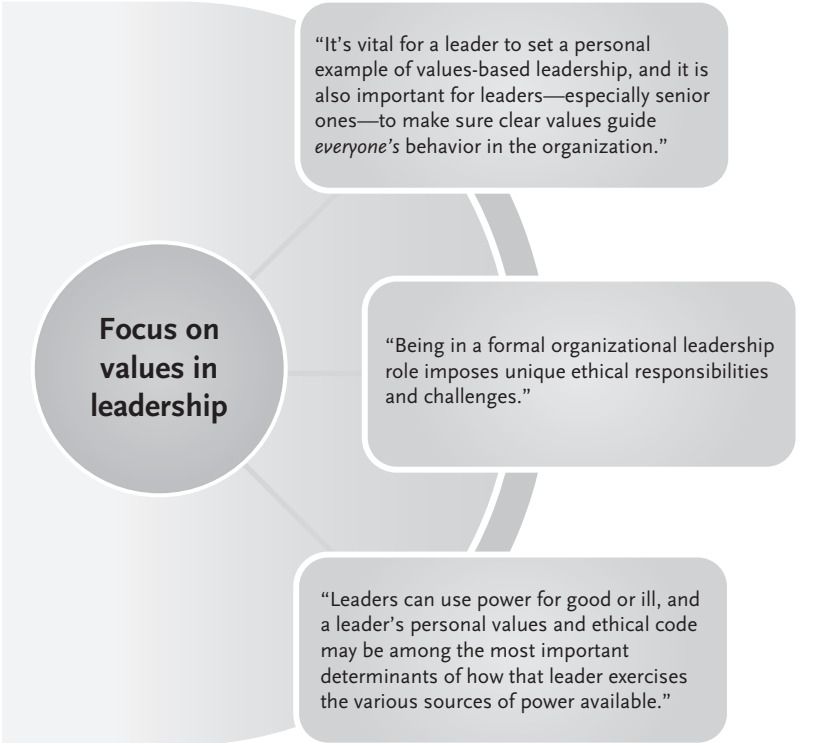
- Commitment
- Emotional intelligence
- Cooperation and sharing
- Cohesiveness and collaboration
- Trust
- Conflict management

The first three values must be strong in the complex world of healthcare. Respecting everyone, practicing ethical behavior, and possessing high integrity provide a firm foundation for those who lead in a field that cares for people in times of great need.

Interpersonal connection and servant leadership are logically tied to what is done in a service business such as healthcare. I am struck by how many leaders in healthcare list these as two of the more important considerations for effective leadership. Exhibit 4.5 explores some of the wisdom of Richard L. Hughes, Robert C. Ginnett, and Gordon J. Curphy, well-known authors in the leadership field, on the basic necessity of a good ethical foundation for those who exercise power.

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**Exhibit 4.5 Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy on Values-Based Leadership**



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Source: Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2015).

The desire to make a change is a value that has always fueled healthcare. The improvement of quality and patient safety, the development of new technology, discoveries in pharmacology, new approaches to the care model, and the eradication of diseases such as cancer all emanate from this value. If clinicians are drawn to the field in part because they want to make a change, certainly their leaders should share this same value.

Healthcare is a demanding career—for leaders as well as for all who serve. Thus, commitment is a required value for leaders.

Emotional intelligence, cooperation and sharing, and cohesiveness and collaboration are values that matter in a team setting, which is where most leadership takes place.

Trust surfaces on practically all lists of leader values.

Finally, the ability to manage conflict in a stressful field is a value that all effective leaders must have.

## VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Putting the concept of values-based leadership into context is useful. Harry Kraemer, former CEO of Baxter and current Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management Clinical Professor of Strategy, presents four principles of values-based leadership: self-reflection, balance, true self-confidence, and genuine humility. Essentially, Kraemer Jr (2011, 2) believes that the values-based leader is able to understand the self, can see situations from various perspectives, has a proper balance of self-confidence, and is truly humble. He states, “The way we treat customers, interact with colleagues, report to supervisors, deal with vendors, and so forth reflects our values. If we are not aware of those values, these interactions will not be effective.”

Successful leaders share values with those they lead.

—Bernard M. Bass (2008)

Another way to better understand how values-based leadership works is to view it through three As: awareness, action, and achievement. A strong personal awareness of one’s values and the values

that drive highly effective leadership is a given for values-based leaders. One of the principles of this book is that internal values drive external behavior. If the values are the right ones, the resulting external behavior can serve to influence the actions needed to ultimately attain achievements that serve others. Exhibit 4.6 graphically portrays the three As.

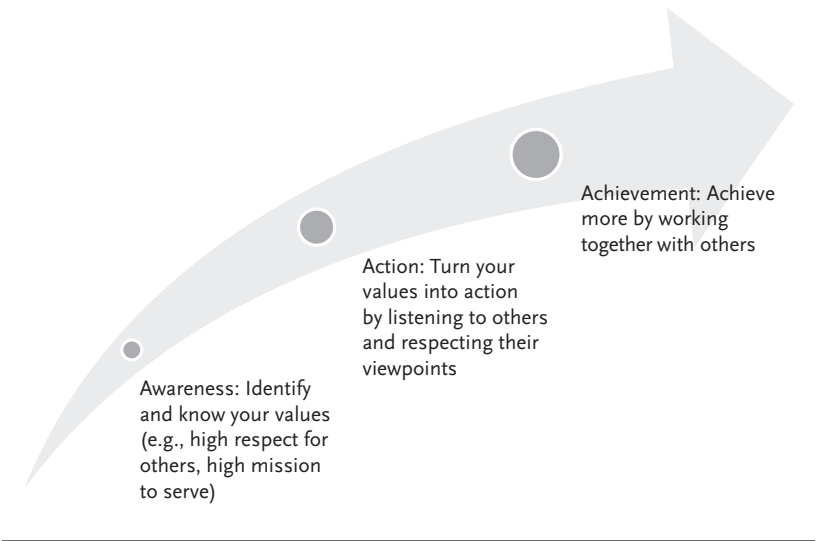
Many executives who have read the earlier editions of this book have mentioned the uniqueness of viewing leadership from the lens of values. Yes, many aspects of leadership are soft; many do not easily lend themselves to quantitative proof. Yet this softer side often makes the difference. Using a values-based approach to studying leadership is an excellent way to maximize understanding.

## FOUR STAGES OF LEARNING AND MASTERY

Highly effective leaders are always interested in learning and enhancing their leadership competencies. Values enable them to go through

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**Exhibit 4.6 Three As of Values-Based Leadership**

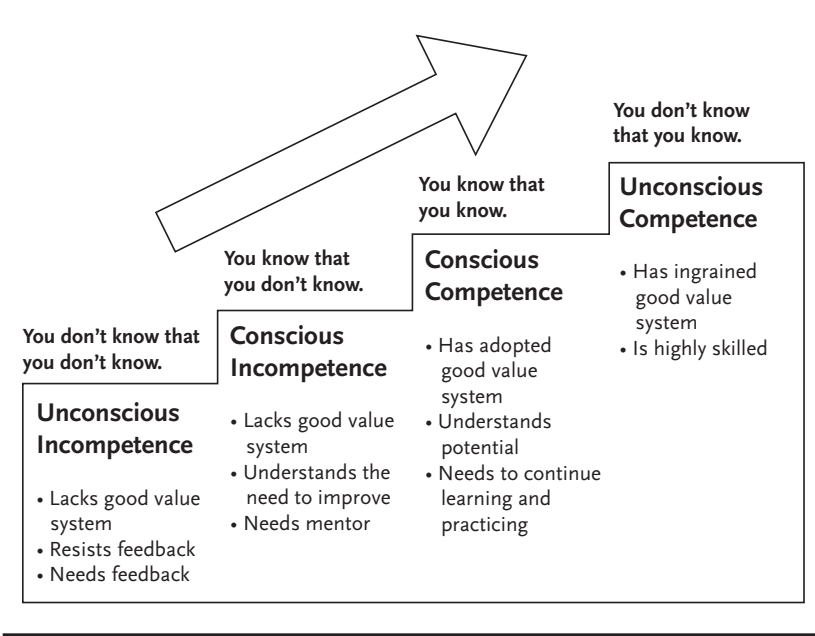


the stages of leadership growth. Following is a description of each stage (also see exhibit 4.7).

### Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence

*You don't know that you don't know.* This stage is the most difficult for many leaders because they are unaware of their own mistakes and flaws. Often, they work in successful organizations and do not even consider whether problems with their leadership skills might exist. Leaders most likely to be at this level are those who have not started to develop appropriate leadership values or may be highly resistant to the input and feedback of others. As a result, they need training and awareness to enhance their self-understanding.

**Exhibit 4.7 Learning and Mastery Process**



## Stage 2: Conscious Incompetence

*You know that you don't know.* Although this stage is the most important step toward learning, it can be the most challenging because sometimes you have to lose your job before you realize that your performance needs work. For others, this realization is a gradual process and may come as the result of the influence of a strong mentor or coach and a sincere desire to grow and improve.

Moral leadership requires professional leaders to understand that it does matter that they like what they see in the mirror. It requires leaders to do, not just think of, what is right.

—Elizabeth J. Forrester and  
Leigh W. Cellucci (2016)

## Stage 3: Conscious Competence

*You know that you know.* Some leaders are neither born nor strong, but at this stage, they start developing and honing their potential. Such leaders work hard to put into practice appropriate skills, but they sometimes fail because the skills are not part of their natural thinking habits yet.

## Stage 4: Unconscious Competence

*You don't know that you know.* This stage is the ultimate level of leadership development because the activities here flow smoothly with neither great force nor hesitation. Leaders at this level seem to be naturals at their trade. Unconscious competence is truly descriptive of a born leader.

## VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP THEORY

One solid theory of leadership is that it is values-based. Cope-land (2014, 130), in her excellent literature review of values-based

leadership theory, states that “history has demonstrated repeatedly that leaders [who] lack ethical and value-based dimensions can have serious adverse consequences on their followers, their organizations, our nation and the world.” James and colleagues (2021) also write that “nurse managers should recognize the potential benefits of a values-based leadership approach for staff well-being, enhanced professional collaboration and the nurse’s voice, improved insight into clinical leadership attributes, and improvements in quality patient care.”

Effective leadership is based on three factors: heredity, values, and competencies. As explained earlier, heredity in this context is the view that all persons are born with inherent characteristics (some have more than others) that enable them to practice leadership at some level of proficiency. Thus, the precept that leaders are born does carry logical support. The *values-based theory* of leadership posits that individuals develop certain (positive) values and behavioral skills or competencies that facilitate their practice of leadership—that is, leaders can also learn leadership.

But an individual must *desire* to be in a leadership position. Not everyone wants to be a leader. Many professionals in healthcare—particularly clinicians (e.g., physicians, nurses, pharmacists, therapists)—prefer to remain in clinical roles. As a result, they may not seek formal leadership positions. Certainly, they may act or serve as leaders within their clinical positions, but not consistently as full-time leaders do. Thus, motivation must be present for humans to engage in a particular behavior.

No matter the person’s hereditary tendencies, values, and competencies, if the need or want (in other words, motivation) is absent, the person will not be a leader. Exhibit 4.8 presents this conceptually.

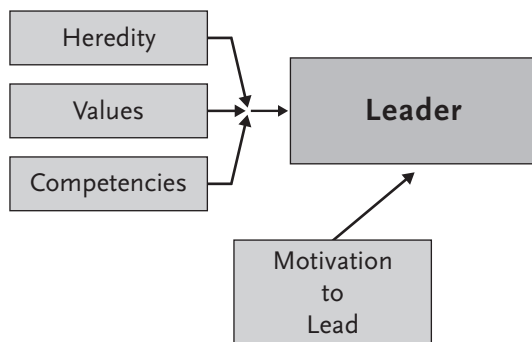
## CONCLUSION

In summary, the concept of values is difficult to define. They are intensely personal, affecting individuals in profound ways. Despite



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## Exhibit 4.8 Components of Effective Leadership



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some contributions to the literature over the past 20 years, values are not an area that many academics study. Perhaps it is because of the inspirational nature of values, which runs counter to the drily factual nature of academic inquiry. Perhaps it is because they are too deeply related to gestalt psychology, which is often considered a “soft” science. The origin of values is deeply personal, and each person’s development of values is achieved through different experience and heredity. As much as we would like to define the concept absolutely, it will always remain abstract. Yet it is a critical component of effective leadership. Therefore, it is incumbent upon leaders to reflect on values and include them as part of our leadership studies.

Allowing positive values to be a primary influencer may be the most fundamental way that leaders can judge their own styles. Parts II and III of this book identify the values that guide leaders and team members. See appendix A for a professional and personal values assessment tool.

## Self-Evaluation Questions

- ☐ What do I value? Do these values assist or hinder my leadership activities?
- ☐ Are my behaviors guided by personal values?
- ☐ What personal values of mine may conflict with my role and responsibilities as a leader?
- ☐ If I have written a narrative describing my leadership style, does it make reference to my personal values? Did I write this narrative to impress a search consultant or a potential employer, or did I do it to evaluate my strengths and weaknesses?
- ☐ Does my definition of leadership include some reference to values?
- ☐ What is my definition of leadership?
- ☐ List several successful healthcare leaders. What traits do they have in common? What values do they share?
- ☐ One Self-Evaluation Question in chapter 1 asks, “Do I view leadership as an act, a process, or a skill?” After reading chapter 4, how does my answer to this question differ?

## Case and Exercises

### **Case 4.1**

Three health system vice presidents (VPs) are discussing leadership over lunch. The first VP says, “Leadership is completely about relationships. It’s about how you work with people and how you get to know them as individuals.” The second VP replies, “I agree that people are important, but

you can have a lot of happy people and not achieve any goals. That's not leadership in my book." The third VP comments, "You both have good points, but you're really missing the key of leadership—vision. A lot of what you're talking about is management. Leadership is developing a vision and getting the organization moving toward that vision."

You join these three VPs at the table, and they ask for your thoughts on this issue.

#### **Case 4.1 Questions**

1. Describe in detail how each VP's argument is right and wrong.
2. How might their differing viewpoints be melded together to provide a comprehensive and accurate definition of leadership?

#### **Exercise 4.1**

Find a list of values on the Internet. List the positive leadership actions that typically would emanate from these values.

#### **Exercise 4.2**

Review the following article on values-based leadership and discuss the portion of the article that states, "The study identifies literature that supports that when these VBL behaviors are found in leaders, the leaders are evaluated as more effective by subordinates" (p. 105).

Copeland, M. K. 2014. "The Emerging Significance of Values Based Leadership: A Literature Review." *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 8 (2): 105–35. [www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol8iss2/6-Copeland.pdf](http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol8iss2/6-Copeland.pdf).

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