



THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

21 Skills to Connect with People

JOHN C. MAXWELL


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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgment</i>	vii
Introduction: What Is Charisma?	ix

PART 1: BECOME INTERESTED IN PEOPLE

1. Put Your Focus on Others	3
2. Believe the Best of Others	9
3. Add Value to People	15
4. Encourage Others Every Time You Meet	21
5. Remember People's Names	29
6. Learn What Matters to People	37
7. Listen with an Open Heart	45

CONTENTS

8. Learn Everyone's Story	53
9. Express How Much You Value Someone	59

PART 2: BECOME INVESTED IN PEOPLE

10. Be Quick to Help Others	69
11. Invite People to Join Your Team	77
12. Encourage the Dreams of Others	85
13. Share the Credit with Others	91
14. Create Special Moments for Others	99
15. Share Information with Others	107
16. Speak into People's Lives	115
17. Build Bridges for Others	123

PART 3: BECOME INTERESTING TO PEOPLE

18. Do Everything with Excellence	133
19. Be a Generous Person	139
20. Become a Good Storyteller	147
21. Help People Win	155
Conclusion: Connect with Charisma	163
<i>Notes</i>	165
<i>About the Author</i>	175



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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CHARISMA?

What is charisma? And does every leader need it?

Let's start with the second question first. Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less. What's the significance of that truth? It means that leading *always* involves working with people. And it's a fact that everyone is more willing to *go* along with people they *get* along with. So if you want to lead people well, using influence instead of resorting to pressure or coercion, you must become a likeable person and make yourself approachable and attractive to others. Having charisma makes people *want* to spend time with you, work with you, and accomplish worthwhile objectives together with you.

Are some people born with natural charisma, who have an innate ability to attract others? The answer is yes—there's no denying it. The people at Gallop who developed StrengthFinder call it WOO: the ability to win over others. If you possess that ability, that's great. But if you don't, here's good news. Charisma is like leadership. It can be learned and developed. No matter how much or how little leadership talent

you naturally possess, you can develop it and become a better leader. Likewise, no matter how much or how little natural charisma you possess, you can learn to be more charismatic and develop the ability to become more likeable.

What's the secret to charisma? It's actually very simple: focusing on others. To be charismatic, you don't need to be physically attractive, tall, athletic, talented, or rich. You just need to care about people and make them feel important. Anyone who does that can connect with people and become a shining light in a dreary world.

Frederick L. Collins said, "Always remember there are two types of people in the world: those who come into a room and say, 'Here I am!' and those that come in and say, 'Ah, there you are!'"¹ The essence of charisma is the ability to think *There you are!* with everyone you meet and to take actions that let them know they're important. If you do that, you will be able to connect with them.

In this book, I will walk you through twenty-one simple ways to develop charisma by interacting positively with people. You'll learn skills in three phases:

"There are two types of people in the world: those who come into a room and say, 'Here I am!' and those that come in and say, 'Ah, there you are!'"

—FREDERICK L. COLLINS

INTRODUCTION

1. Becoming Interested in Others
2. Becoming Invested in Others
3. Becoming Interesting to Others

Charisma starts with becoming interested in others. When you care about people and learn about them, they will find *you* interesting. From there, you will learn simple ways to invest in others to add value to them. Finally, you will learn four ways to make yourself more interesting. This is where most people mistakenly try to begin developing charisma, but it is, in fact, the least important of the three. To become charismatic, make yourself about others.

If you will take the time to practice these simple skills with others every day, people will seek you out and want to engage with you. You will connect with them. And you will receive greater opportunities to add value to them, lead them, and create success for everyone.



PART 1

BECOME INTERESTED IN PEOPLE



PUT YOUR FOCUS ON OTHERS

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Truly charismatic people care about others and focus their attention on them, not on themselves. In my book *Winning with People*, I discuss the Big Picture Principle, which states: “The entire population of the world—with one minor exception—is composed of other people.”¹ We must get outside of ourselves, see the bigger picture, and start putting other people first if we want to live our best life and become better leaders. Everyone else in the world matters, not just us.

If you’ve never thought of life in those terms, then it’s time to give it a try. When individuals think of themselves as the center of the universe, not only are they in for a big disappoint-

“The entire population of the world—with one minor exception—is composed of other people.”

—THE BIG PICTURE PRINCIPLE

ment when they discover it’s not true, but they’ll also alienate themselves from everyone around them. That makes it difficult to lead people. I’ve never met a person who works well with people who has not mastered the ability to keep their eyes off the mirror and serve others with dignity.

HOW FOCUSING ON OTHERS HELPS *YOU*

Most people would readily admit that unselfishness is a positive quality, and even the most egocentric individual possesses the desire, deep down, to help others. The problem, sometimes, is changing our behavior so that we get in the habit of focusing on others instead of on ourselves. Here are three thoughts to help you remember to keep your focus on other people where it really belongs:

1. FOCUSING ON OTHERS WILL GIVE YOU A SENSE OF PURPOSE

If you like to stream old black-and-white TV shows, you may have come across Danny Thomas, the entertainer who starred in *Make Room for Daddy*. Thomas observed, “All of us are born for a reason, but all of us don’t discover why. Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It’s what you do for others.”²

Not only did Thomas believe that, but he also lived it. As a successful entertainer and television star, he could have done nothing but enjoy the benefits of his achievement. But he desired something more. He founded St. Jude’s Hospital, a research facility that focuses on treating children who suffer from catastrophic diseases. And Thomas dedicated much of his life to supporting it. It helped him enjoy a greater purpose.

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

Put your focus on others, and a greater purpose for your life and leadership may reveal itself.

2. FOCUSING ON OTHERS CAN GIVE YOU ENERGY

Continual focus on yourself will drain you of energy. In contrast, focusing on others usually has the opposite effect. My friend Bill McCartney knew this back when he was head football coach for the University of Colorado Buffaloes in the 1980s and early 1990s. Coach Mac had heard that most people spend 86 percent of their time thinking about themselves, but only 14 percent of their time thinking about others. Yet he knew instinctively that if his players focused their attention on people they cared about instead of just on themselves, a whole new source of energy would be available to them.

In 1991 Coach Mac decided to use this information when he was facing a great challenge. Colorado was scheduled to play its archrival, the Nebraska Cornhuskers, on Nebraska's home turf. The problem was that Colorado had not won a game there in twenty-three years. But Coach McCartney believed in his team and looked for a way to inspire them to achieve. In the end, he decided to appeal to their love of others. He did it by challenging each player to call an individual he loved and tell that person he was dedicating the game to him or her. Coach Mac also encouraged the players

to ask that person to watch every play, knowing that every hit, every tackle, every block, and every score was being dedicated to him or her.

Coach Mac took one more step. He arranged to distribute sixty footballs with the game's final score written on them, so that each player could send a ball to the individual he had chosen. The result? The Colorado Buffaloes won the game. The final score written on the footballs was "27 to 12."

3. FOCUSING ON OTHERS CAN GIVE YOU A SENSE OF CONTENTMENT

I'm told that psychological research shows that people are better adjusted and more likely to feel content if they serve others. Serving others cultivates health and brings about happiness. People have instinctively known that for centuries—even before the science of psychology was formally developed. For example, look at the wisdom (and humor) found in this time-honored proverb:

If you want happiness for an hour—take a nap.

If you want happiness for a day—go fishing.

If you want happiness for a month—get married.

If you want happiness for a year—inherit a fortune.

If you want happiness for a lifetime—help others.

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

It may seem counterintuitive, but by focusing on others, you not only help them, but you also *help yourself*. You feel better about who you are and what you do. You help the people you focus on to feel better about themselves and perform better. You increase your influence with them. And you make the world a better place. Who doesn't want all that?

**If you want
happiness for
a lifetime—
help others.**