

A Gentle Approach to Power

Greater Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau

Power: What is exactly is it? One of its important components is the ability to influence others. Blaine Lee, author of *The Power of Principle* (Simon & Schuster, 1997), says that power does not come from coercion or compromise. True leaders – such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Dwight D. Eisenhower – inspire loyalty, trust, admiration, and honor, creating what Lee calls “principle-centered power.”

Here are Lee’s “10 principles of power,” aimed at helping people improve their personal and professional relationships.

1. **Persuasion.** When you’re attempting to influence others, share the reasons and rationale behind your decisions and requests. Make a strong case for your position while maintaining a genuine respect for others’ ideas and perspectives. Ironically, it is your willingness to listen to others first that gives you the power to persuade them to agree with you and accept your decisions.
2. **Patience.** Be patient, both with the process and the person. You probably became who you are today because somebody had patience with you at some critical points in your life. When you are patient with someone, you make a long-term investment in him.
3. **Gentleness.** Avoid being harsh or forceful, especially when dealing in areas that are particularly sensitive or where the other person is vulnerable. We all have such areas. People who powerfully influence us seem to sense these vulnerabilities and tread lightly.
4. **Teachability.** To be taught requires humility. If we operate with the assumption that we do not have all the answers or insights, we allow ourselves to value the different viewpoints, judgments, and experiences others may bring. When we approach others with open minds, and are willing to be taught, we learn that one of the keys to influence is to allow *ourselves* to be influenced.
5. **Acceptance.** The power of unconditional acceptance is great. In the presence of that acceptance, a little flicker of hope is generated, giving us a positive belief about ourselves and our potential. Unconditional acceptance comes when you desire the best for the other person, withholding judgment and giving the benefit of the doubt.
6. **Kindness.** To influence others, treat them with a genuine regard for your common needs and

desires. Kindness means being caring and thoughtful, and acting with consideration, civility, and genuine concern. Do you have enough emotional reserve and control to treat others with kindness when they “deserve” it the least? That is, perhaps, when they need it most.

7. **Knowledge.** Do you desire and acquire accurate information about the person you would like to influence? We can live in the same house or work in the same office year after year, and still not really know each other. To know people we must make an investment in the relationship. We can begin simply by making time to be together *without* an agenda. Whether it’s customers, family, friends, or co-workers, the more we know about who they are, the better we can serve them and help them reach their full potentials.
8. **Discipline.** Often, the effect of positive discipline hinges on the timing and method of its delivery. It should be done promptly, before patterns are ingrained. Admonish and caution

gently but earnestly; and be specific, precise, and clear. Do so in a context of genuine care and concern, so there is no misunderstanding your intentions.

9. **Consistency.** Consistency of thought and action comes from a set of beliefs and values that are at our core. Others will begin to honor us only if we are consistent in the way we treat them. Inconsistency suggests that our actions are manipulative techniques brought into play when we don’t get our way. Consistency does not mean you *do* the same thing to every person in every setting all the time. It does mean that you look to the same core principles each time you act.
10. **Integrity.** We need to be committed to matching words, feelings, thoughts, and actions so that we live with congruence and without duplicity. Don’t feign appearance or affectations in an attempt to deceive, take advantage of, manipulate, or control. The greater our integrity, the greater our power.