

Words of Inspiration

LETTERS FROM LEADERS

The road to success: What inspiration would you offer to young people aspiring to become our future leaders? The following words are some of those we have collected for publication in a book to be distributed to aspiring leaders at schools throughout the world. The proceeds will be donated to charity to fund scholarships for tomorrow's leaders in need of financial support as they prepare to begin their journey.

We are certain that you will enjoy the following thoughts and look forward to hearing yours.

I've always been an optimist, and still am. Yes, I suffered disappointments and defeats, but I tried to forget them and keep a positive attitude. When I was in sports and lost a game by error, or in the political arena, and lost by a narrow margin, no groaning would help. So I don't dwell on the past. I learned to move on and look ahead.

I can't stress enough how important this period of time is in your life. By forming good morals and learning the meaning of right and wrong now, you are setting a pattern that will follow you throughout life.

I encourage you to set goals and strive for excellence in all you do. The experience, knowledge, and discipline you acquire during your youth will be of immeasurable benefit in your adult life and how you affect your nation and its people.

I have had the privilege of working closely with Mrs. Ford, raising funds for the Betty Ford Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse. I have seen first hand how alcohol and drugs can affect one's life. It is so easy to slip into dependence. Therefore, I ask you not to give into peer pressure. It's okay to say no! Celebrate your life by being true to yourself.

Life is a gamble in anything you do, but challenges shouldn't dissuade you. I happen to believe if you prepare yourself and work hard toward a goal, you can achieve a certain degree of excellence and success.

Among the principles that a leader can never compromise is respect for others whose principles differ from their own. During my time in Congress and the White House, I often disagreed with people. I questioned their ideas – not their motives, and never their patriotism. I had opponents, but not enemies.

Good leaders are pragmatists. They want to make things work. They want to do the decent thing for others. When it comes to choosing leaders, we should value authenticity as much as ideology. Instead of following some demagogic person that distorts the truth, you should be informed on all sides of an issue and then be energized to be involved and to know all of the facts and ramifications. I am still convinced that truth is the glue that holds not only our government together, but also civilization.

The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
38th President of the United States of America