



TYRANT vs. LEADER

**How to recognise if
you are being led
and not bullied**

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The Tyrant Vs. The Leader....How to recognise if you are being led and not bullied

To the untrained eye, a tyrant can look like a leader: After all, the tyrant's overbearing personality is often somehow magnetic in its sheer arrogance. Their grandiose promises fill us with a sense of safety, giving us easy answers. Their ability to appeal to our outrage and prejudice can make the embittered and disenfranchised among us feel "heard." Tyrants are masters at disguising their personal agendas as a light in dark times, creating the illusion of inspired leadership.

Both in politics and organisations, we're going through a period of intense change: The Internet is reshaping how we live, work, and communicate. Our society is becoming at once more global and more polarised and individualistic. Many people are feeling scared, confused, and lost. Under such conditions, both great leaders and terrible tyrants can easily emerge, forever altering the landscape of our civilisation. The choice is up to us: Which force will take precedence as we advance?

Before we can make this choice, however, we need to verse ourselves on how to recognise tyrants. While tyrants and leaders can appear superficially similar, it's possible to deconstruct their messages and identify one from the other. Some key characteristics that set leaders and tyrants apart are discussed below:

Tyrants build walls; Leaders build bridges.

Tyrants create an illusion of safety by building walls around existing power structures, no matter how flawed they are. Rather than encouraging people to analyse and fix internal problems, they tell them that nothing is wrong with "us"—it's always the fault of an external "them." To prosper, we have to wall "them" out.

Conversely, leaders build bridges and invite external groups in to help solve existing problems and enrich existing wisdom. Where tyrants amplify disharmony, leaders encourage a spirit of shared humanity.

Tyrants divide people; Leaders unite people.

Tyrants inevitably employ militaristic "divide and conquer" tactics. They see groups of people as things to be conquered (rather than nurtured), and they know this will be much easier to do if they break those groups down into smaller sub-groups. People are weaker as individuals than they are as a whole, after all. The more tyrants can isolate people from one another, the easier those people will be to control and convert to their "cause."

Leaders, on the other hand, seek to unite people in order to create a shared reality—and a stronger, more harmonious future. They're focused on the glory of the group rather than their own individual glory.

Tyrants use negative language to intimidate their followers; Leaders use positive language to inspire them.

If you deconstruct a tyrant's message, you will usually find the following elements: Populism, sensationalism, and blame. Tyrants persecute, ridicule, and demonise anyone who is opposed to their own agenda—and encourage their followers to do the same. Tyrants bring out the worst in humanity.

Leaders use persuasive but positive language. They invite the opposition to consider their points of view, highlighting why they see their stance as beneficial to the common good. They empathise with the positions of others, even when those others

appear hostile at first. Leaders want everyone; even people who don't agree with them, to prosper. Leaders, therefore bring out the best in humanity.

Tyrants speak of a glorious past and dim future; Leaders speak of an evolving future.

According to the tyrant, everything is going wrong. Society is in a state of deep decay and only by re-instituting past “glory days” can we hope to prevent the incoming catastrophe. This consequence rhetoric creates a sense of urgency—people are told they need to elect the tyrant *or else*.

Leaders, however, show up with a vision for a better future. They ask us to help them create it and propose solutions for pressing issues, such as climate change and political turmoil. They challenge us to change and evolve.

A tyrant's mission is to amplify fear—fear of not having enough, of not being enough—whereas leaders seek to inspire hope in a better tomorrow.

Tyrants are protectionists; Leaders are collaborators.

Tyrants tell us that our resources are limited—and fast running out. They espouse a manipulative agenda in which there is only one pie, and in order to enjoy a decent quality of life, we have to cut the largest slice for ourselves.

Leaders, on the other hand, believe that by sharing our resources and using them more wisely, we can build a bigger pie for everyone.

Tyrants sell themselves as saviours; Leaders act as mentors.

Tyrants tell us that there is only one person on Earth capable of rescuing us from the impending apocalypse of social and economic distress: Them.

Leaders, on the hand, believe that we all have the power to save ourselves. They offer to step in as mentors and nurture our innate capabilities to grow.

Tyrants tell us what we want to hear; Leaders tell us what we need to hear.

While many tyrants act like they are telling us the “hard truth,” when we examine their messages more closely, we see that they're packed with unrealistically easy solutions. If we just get rid of “threats” and maintain the status quo, we can prosper—it's that simple, they tell us.

Leaders don't gloss over how complicated our problems really are. They tell us there are no easy answers, even though they know we don't want to hear that. However, when given a chance, leaders show us that big problems can be broken down into smaller parts and eventually solved.

Tyrants are secretive; Leaders are transparent.

Everyone has flaws; everyone makes mistakes. Leaders know this and are willing to acknowledge and apologise for their own flaws and errors. They're also willing to stand up to honest feedback and reveal what, exactly, they plan to do.

Tyrants tend to shun these practices; after all, they're attempting to project an image of flawlessness, of Godliness rather than mere humanity. Likewise, if their "easy answers" are investigated too deeply, it will quickly become apparent that they won't actually work. Tyrants, therefore rely on secrecy and lies to succeed.

Ultimately, a leader is someone we want to follow, whereas a tyrant is someone we feel coerced to follow—If not by direct physical force, then by the powerfully manipulative force of fear. If an authority figure's core message leaves you feeling bullied, worried and threatened, you're probably looking at a tyrant in the making.

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