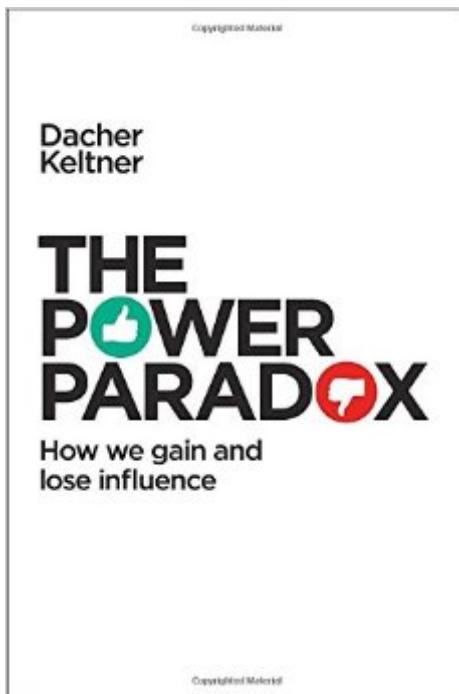


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The Power Paradox: How We Gain And Lose Influence



Synopsis

A revolutionary and timely reconsideration of everything we know about power. Celebrated UC Berkeley psychologist Dr. Dacher Keltner argues that compassion and selflessness enable us to have the most influence over others and the result is power as a force for good in the world. It is taken for granted that power corrupts. This is reinforced culturally by everything from Machiavelli to contemporary politics. But how do we get power? And how does it change our behavior? So often, in spite of our best intentions, we lose our hard-won power. Enduring power comes from empathy and giving. Above all, power is given to us by other people. This is what all-too-often we forget, and what Dr. Keltner sets straight. This is the crux of the power paradox: by fundamentally misunderstanding the behaviors that helped us to gain power in the first place we set ourselves up to fall from power. We can't retain power because we've never understood it correctly, until now. Power isn't the capacity to act in cruel and uncaring ways; it is the ability to do good for others, expressed in daily life, and itself a good a thing. Dr. Keltner lays out exactly--in twenty original "Power Principles"-- how to retain power, why power can be a demonstrably good thing, and the terrible consequences of letting those around us languish in powerlessness.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dacher Keltner begins the book with a reference to Machiavelli's "The Prince", which has shaped the way we assert power since the Renaissance (through assertion of force and control). What's remarkable about Keltner's book is not how he shows THAT being successful in

modern society will be different than what we're used to, but in detail, he outlines HOW. Dacher Keltner, psychology professor at the University of California Berkeley, was responsible for the interplay of emotions in the Pixar movie "Inside Out" and the happy/sad/love faces in the Facebook Like button. The book contains a series of principles for which to live by in the modern professional world. People gain power by improving the lives of others, by which made them money or got them status -- but when you think about it, Keltner says, our power is granted to us by others. Our power goes simply as far as what others are willing to let us have over them. With that insight, then, what are the principles for gaining power? As Keltner begins to describe how, he artfully outlines findings from laboratory research -- as he sees parallels between behaviors in research labs and modern world corporate America. Keltner's findings hold very real applications to business leaders and entrepreneurs today. Unlike some books that make vaguely interesting observations of the business world but don't do real research, Keltner refreshingly and creatively goes into the detail of HOW our emotions and interpersonal behaviors affect our ability to gain/lose power. If you read the newspaper headlines or listen to any political candidates, you're probably thinking that truly great leaders in most cities is a lost cause. But Keltner convincingly portrays a different story.

I couldn't get through this book. It was too disconnected from the reality I lived for 30 years, working in a variety of corporations. Keltner posits that power flows to nice people, and those people get corrupted by it. That's not what I saw. Within a small group of peers, I did observe the effect Keltner discusses of power shifting to those who build good personal relationships with their peers. But in the bigger context of the corporation as a whole, other factors come into play and often dominate. Factors beyond the obvious one of being good at your current job can include:- Ambition.- The ability to inspire others to work hard (anyone who has worked for Steve Jobs or Larry Ellison knows this does not always involve being nice)- Salesmanship skills: the ability to read another person and tell them what they want to hear.- Charisma.- Personal appearance.- Knowing the right people. Keltner asserts that power flows to nice people and the power they receive corrupts them. Nonsense. Steve Jobs was demonstrably a nicer person late in his career than early on. Do you think Richard Nixon was a man of integrity before he ran for President? (hint: watch the McCarthy hearings) Was Donald Trump kind and thoughtful before he got into politics? Obviously not. So, why would I trust my own anecdotal observations over Keltner's research? Keltner's experiments appear to be flawed in not recognizing the difference between the reasons people state for giving power to someone else and post hoc rationalizations for those decisions. They don't seem to account for the

bias that people will have in describing the character traits of someone whom they have chosen as worthy of receiving power.

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