

# GUYdelines

A few thoughts for outdoor lovers and leaders from

*WILD GUYde Adventures, LLC*

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## Self Mastery for Leadership: Imagination and Habit, Part 2

Last issue (**GUYdelines** Vol. 13, No. 1, Winter 2019), we talked about the critical role of the imagination in fashioning leadership vision, and then in providing motivation and forward movement toward bringing the vision to reality. How then do we translate an aspirational vision and the occasional correct actions into the sustained pattern of behavior to achieve the results we seek? Read the following:

*I am your constant companion. I am your greatest helper or heaviest burden.  
I will push you onward or drag you down to failure. I am completely at your command.  
Half the things you do, you might just as well turn over to me and I will be able to do them quickly and correctly.*

*I am easily managed. You must merely be firm with me.  
Show me exactly how you want something done and after a few lessons, I will do it automatically.  
I am the servant of all great individuals and, alas, of all failures as well. Those who are great, I have made great. Those who are failures, I have made failures.*

*I am not a machine, though I work with all the precision of a machine plus the intelligence of a human.  
You may run me for a profit or run me for ruin – it makes no difference to me.  
Take me, train me, be firm with me, and I will place the world at your feet. Be easy with me and I will destroy you.*

*Who am I?*

***I am habit*** (Sean Covey, 1998)

I can honestly say that for the last 20 years, I have not heard an alarm clock. I wake predictably at 5:30 AM, and my body is generally ready to go into the day. William Janes tells us that a little bit of enforced discipline early in the process, and not allowing any exceptions initially, will quickly yield a habit. Habits are neural shortcuts that the mind and body develop in the survival interest of economy of effort. The fewer things that the mind needs to focus on consciously, the more energy is spared for necessary-to-survival thinking. So, as the reading above suggests, we can turn that propensity for forming habits into productive behaviors in our lives, or we can allow negative life-stealing habits to take hold. The power to form habits is neutral – we can use it for good or ill. But the moral direction of life is not neutral. We are always either strengthening the positive habit or encouraging the negative one – never hovering between.

*“If more information was the answer, we would all be millionaires with perfect abs. It’s not what you know – it’s what you do consistently.” (Derek Sivers)*

The early enforced discipline is necessary, albeit temporary. I like to refer to this as *“making a promise to yourself.”* And once we have made a promise to ourselves, we must never break it. Breaking the promise confirms in our minds that we are losers – that we couldn’t be counted on anyway. But keeping the promise, even a little one, lights a spark of personal affirmation and optimism – *“Guess what I did today – I actually got out of bed when my alarm went off!”* And if I can do that, and do it repetitively, it will leverage into other things that I begin to discover that I am capable of. This is building power into our will – *will power* – and it serves as its own motivation! So start with very small promises (because the will muscle is wimpy), but **never break them**. (This is why, incidentally, several self-help gurus suggest the most empowering thing you can do at the start of each day is MAKE YOUR BED!)

This propensity to form habit patterns can be turned toward any worthwhile endeavor – from eating practices to daily exercise to devotional time every morning to interaction patterns with those we care about. Charles Duhigg’s classic book *The Power of Habit* (2012) unpacks more particulars in building positive habits and dismantling toxic ones. Suffice to say here that practice does not make perfect - practice only makes **permanent**. Only perfect practice makes perfect. Irv Mondshein US Olympic shot put coach once declared, *“Every time you do it wrong, you are carving your initials a little deeper in the dung heap.”* Tom Cecil, of Seneca Rocks Mountain Guides, calls this *“polishing the turd”* -- getting better and better at doing it wrong. Sir Walter Scott was a bit more poetic: *“He who indulges his sense in any excess renders himself obnoxious to his own reason; and to gratify the brute in him, displeases the man and sets his two natures at variance.”*

The reality for anyone that has worked to consciously develop a positive habit is that it gets much easier when habit takes over. There can still be a battle to fight, but we have stacked the odds in our favor. But there is one deeper dimension. I have had folks say to me after seeing me out running: *“Wow, you ran 10 miles – you must be really disciplined!”* The notion is that I am gritting my teeth every step and driving my will mercilessly. But anyone who can run 10 miles knows that this is far from the reality. I run 10 miles because I love it! I love the feeling of being healthy, and of doing something for my family – caring for my body so I stand a chance of being there for them as I age. The progression is: discipline → habit → joy. And this is true in many areas where we achieve mastery over our lower impulses. Philosophers make distinctions between two types of freedom – *freedom from* and *freedom to*. Freedom **from** is escape from drudgery, routine, and compulsion. But freedom **to** is freedom to pursue my goals, freedom to be able to run a marathon, freedom to create beauty on the piano keyboard. And this more mature freedom is only found on the far side of discipline and routine.

My larger point in this article is to urge us toward continual self mastery. For leaders, we must first learn to master ourselves before we should be trusted with leading others. Leadership then is not mastering others. Leadership is the permission others give us to influence them, and that permission is earned when we inspire them with our mastery of ourselves, and then invite them to share our vision of the future. **LRZ**

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Are you coming to Virginia for a family vacation, church group trip, troop event, or escape weekend? Why not experience Virginia adventure with **WILD GUYde Adventures!** **WGA** offers guided beginner level outdoor adventures and competent instruction in activity fundamentals. We can take you **hiking, rock climbing and rappelling, caving, or canoeing**. We use various activity areas in the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, along Virginia's Blue Ridge, and in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia. Check out the 2019 trip options below, or call to talk about your own creative adventure idea!  
(540-433-1637 or [lester@wildguyde.com](mailto:lester@wildguyde.com) )  
You may also visit [www.wildguyde.com](http://www.wildguyde.com)

## CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE: 2019 Daytrips with WILD GUYde Adventures, Harrisonburg, VA

**Top-Roping at Hidden Rocks, Virginia:** This is the rock climbing trip for the adventurous beginner – you don't have much experience, but you want a great outdoor day with your family or special friends. Thirty minutes west of Harrisonburg, we'll park just inside George Washington National Forest, gear up, and hike a scenic 20 minutes through rhododendron and hemlocks and across some mountain streams to a secluded sandstone cliff. There will be pink and white mountain laurel in June, and wild huckleberries in August. You'll be introduced to harnesses, knots, helmets, and the *belay system*; then we'll try some easy warm-up climbs to remind you that the kid inside you still likes to clamber on things. We can go on to some harder climbing that invites you to try new skills and movements. And we'll finish the day with a rappel – backing over the edge, with nothing between you and the ground below but 60 feet of air and a great view! Closer to Luray or Northern Virginia? We'll visit **Waterfall Mountain** in the Massanutten Range, or **Little Stony Man** on the Blue Ridge for TALL climbing and spectacular Shenandoah Valley panoramas! Closer to Lexington or Roanoke? We'll visit **Goshen Pass** and climb above the gorgeous Maury River!

(Full day \$225 for 1-3 people; \$50 for each additional. ½-day \$150 for 1-3, and \$35 for each additional)

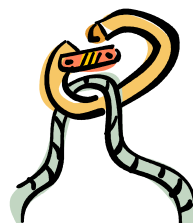


**Beginner Climbing at Seneca Rocks, WV:** After 90 minutes of curving mountain highway (okay, *country two-lane*), you'll gasp to see a spectacular blade of Tuscarora Sandstone, whose summit sits almost 1000 feet above its North Fork Valley floor. Seneca Rocks is a scenic place for the beginner or family to learn the rock climbing basics, top-roping and rappelling to an awesome West Virginia backdrop. Easy routes guarantee early success, but more challenging climbs also wait to test your skills. Seneca Rocks is an awesome place to climb, just beyond the sign: "*Here ends the realm of the hiker!*"  
(Full day \$250 for 1-3 people; \$60 for each additional. ½ day \$200 for 1-3; \$50 each additional)

**Multi-Pitch at Seneca Rocks:** A little more experienced in climbing? Maybe you tried it at camp or the local rock gym? Ready for the next step? Join me for the multi-pitch experience, seconding the route as we lead-climb to the top of the fabled South Summit! This is the only technical summit in the U.S. east of the Mississippi. Seneca has routes at all ranges of difficulty, from starters like *Old Ladies Route* (5.2) to mid-range classics (*West Pole* 5.7) to old school hardman routes like *Crack of Dawn* and *Madmen Only* (5.10). Every one of them will give you a new appreciation for the expression "*high and vertical.*" Register your accomplishment and ruminations in the summit journal, wave to tourists way down in the valley, and then head down to *terra firma* via the three-pitch rappel. Finish the day with a splash in the North Fork River swimming hole at "Gravel Beach"; then pick up a cold drink and a West Virginia memento at Harpers General Store before sleeping the ride back to Virginia and "the Burg."

(Full-day: \$225 1<sup>st</sup> person; \$150 each addl.)

**Instructional Climbing:** This is a tutorial for those who have a little exposure to climbing, and want to gain eventual autonomy. Lots of instruction in current best-practice and hands-on trying it for you in rigging top anchors, belaying skills and equipment alternatives, movement coaching, and rappel setup



and protection. There will be individualized attention and repetitive practice, as well as some exploration of the historical evolution of climbing equipment and protocol. You will finish the day with a lot more confidence in your basic skills. Bring a partner so you'll have someone to climb with later.

(\$175 1<sup>st</sup> person; \$125 each for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**WILD GUYde Adventures** offers two other rock climbing options: a **Boy Scout Rock Climbing Merit Badge** tutorial for troops and leaders. We send a booklet to get troops started on their knots and First Aid requirements ahead of time, and then spend two days going through all the climbing, gear spec., and rappelling activity requirements (\$90 each). We also offer the **PCIA (Professional Climbing Instructor Association) Top Rope Climbing Instructor Certification** course and exam. This 3-day course (\$450) and 1 day exam (\$150) is for recreational climbers who want to add an instructor certification on their resume. It's also very useful for individuals guiding with club, camp, or university outing programs.

**Peaceful Paddling:** Canoe a ½ day stretch of the **South Fork River**. This Class I and II water is ideal for families with elementary school children – just long enough to be engaging without getting boring. As we wind through pastures in the Shenandoah Valley, you'll learn basic canoe strokes and maneuvering. Dangle your feet or plunk your head to cool off. And keep watching for blue herons, turtles on logs, and cows in the water!

(\$140 1-3 people; \$35 each additional)



**Pick-up-the-Pace Paddling:** A fuller day of canoeing awaits further down the **South Fork**. This provides a little more excitement for teenagers, adventurous parents, & other paddle pilgrims! A casual start allows a review of canoe strokes and partner teamwork.

An amazing rope-swing breaks the quiet – you won't believe what comes out of your mouth when you let go ("Geronimo!"). More paddling through runs and pools, always under the shadow of Massanutten Mountain. Lunch on the bank and then back into the boats. Finally, at Milepost 17, *Compton's Rapid* – a great shoot-through with some higher standing waves! Paddlers call it a "Fat II," but stay wide of Pillow Rock! Below, there's a jumping rock for another cool-off before paddling the final mile to the take-out. Load the boats and start the drive home – happy, tired, and maybe a little sun-tanned! West Virginia travelers may want to visit the gorgeous "Trough" on the **South Branch of the Potomac**. High and remote mountain walls on each side of the river, and keep your eyes open for bald eagles!

(\$175 1-3 people; \$45 each additional)

**Half-Day Caving:** The underground sidewalk and the tourist cave light show are not for you. You want to see it the way it was before the electrician got there! Primitive caves have all the features of the subterranean world – *speleothems* (stalactites, flowstone, soda straws, and columns), *lots of real mud*, and sometimes even *bats* (but most of them are asleep, and all of them are harmless). Pull on your coveralls, clip on your helmet, adjust your headlamp, and down we go. There are squeezes if you want them, and belly crawls for the adventurous --- but there are also corridor ceilings higher than your house, and large cavern rooms for the claustrophobic. Learn cave travel safety, underground navigation, and some "total body movement." Find out what the year-round underground temperature is, and then finally emerge back into sunlight with a new appreciation for what happens underneath Virginia when limestone and groundwater meet. The gleam of your smile might be the only thing shining through the mud on your face! Caving trips can be **Beginner Caving** (mostly horizontal movement – walking, stooping, or crawling) or **Intermediate Caving** (for folks fit enough to handle strenuous vertical moves, and more sustained physical effort). Various locations are available in both Virginia (20 minutes from Harrisonburg), and West Virginia (between Franklin and Elkins). *Caving trips are not advised for individuals who might be unfit, excessively overweight, or who live an extremely sedentary lifestyle, or for very young children.*



(\$125 for 1-3 people; \$25 for each additional)



**Design Your Own Adventure:** Numerous other options exist, including hiking and climbing guiding along **Virginia's Blue Ridge** or at the **Nelson Rock Outdoor Center** (WV), group orienteering challenges in the National Forest, a climbing self-rescue clinic, outdoor fitness training, and flatwater paddling instruction for beginners and children. We can customize to meet the interests of your family, scout troop, or youth group. Call to talk about your needs.

## Things you oughta know:



- **Lester R. Zook** is the **WILD GUYde**. He is a *Wilderness First Responder*, and is a certified member of the *American Mountain Guides Association (Single Pitch Instructor)*. He has been leading wilderness adventures and training camping leaders for 25 years, and loves to take people outdoors! **Ethan Zook** has been a camp counselor and adventure leader at numerous camps. He is a *Red Cross Lifeguard* and a *Virginia Paramedic*. **Aaron Zook** is a climber, caver, and paddler, a *Red Cross Lifeguard*, and has been through *Wilderness First Aid*. **Mary Zook** is a *WFR*, and a *Leave No Trace Master Educator*. Together, we are a small family business that strives to provide exceptional service, and create value in the lives of our guests.
- More detail on activity possibilities is available by visiting [www.wildguyde.com](http://www.wildguyde.com). Call or e-mail to ask questions and to arrange dates, rates, and meeting points:

**(540) 433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com**

- **WGA**'s guiding season is 7 days a week May through August, and weekends in the spring and fall. Call early to reserve; weekends in particular can fill quickly.
- **WILD GUYde** will provide all technical equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, etc.). A personal *things-to-bring list* (clothing, water, lunch, etc.) will be provided.
- We can also help with **lodging ideas**. We can recommend from *primitive* to *posh* – National Forest campgrounds, drive-up motels, and some delightful Bed and Breakfast inns!
- For groups of 10 or larger, we disregard the starter fee and simply bill the per-person rate.
- Payment is by cash or check, payable to **WGA**; unfortunately credit cards cannot be accepted at this time. Gratuities are never expected, and always appreciated!
- Some activities have inherent risks – that's the meaning of the word *adventure*. Participants will be asked to fill out a *Medical Form*, and sign a *Participant Agreement* acknowledging certain dangers. Some activities are physically strenuous, emotionally demanding, or require sustained cognitive attention to task and detail. We make every effort to create a great day, but **WGA** guides do reserve the prerogative to deny access/participation if, in our judgment, the client is not likely to be successful. Clients also may not be "under the influence" or "feeling the effects" of alcohol or recreational drugs at the time of the event.
- **WILD GUYde Adventures** incorporated in Virginia in 2004, and is fully insured. **WGA** is a permittee with the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, and along Virginia's Blue Ridge. **WGA** is an equal opportunity provider and employer. **WGA** practices environmental stewardship, and is a member of the *Access Fund*, the *National Speleological Society*, the *Virginia Tourism Corp.*, the *Christian Adventure Association*, the *Shenandoah Valley Travel Assoc.*, and the *Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce*.

## How was your trip with the **WILD GUYde**?!

Thanks again for guiding us – the trip was awesome! I'm a little sore and bruised today but it makes me happy because it reminds me of everything we did. The info was clear and the location appropriate. I also really enjoyed how you incorporated learning and team building elements into our trip. (Sarah, 2012)

We arrived back in Florida late Thursday night. We had a wonderful time on our adventure with you and we have all been raving to everyone about how great the trip was! Your professionalism and encouragement allowed us to continue on even when some of us were reluctant to try (me, of course)! The boys raved about the caving and the fact that it looked scary, but once you got through it, it wasn't as difficult or scary as you thought it would be. Todd and I were both thrilled with the learning experience for the kids and feel that we have all grown as a result of facing our fears. Everyone talked about what a great

guide you were for us! Overall, our adventure was a wonderful experience and the highlight of our trip to VA! (Christine, 2012)

We had a blast, everything was perfect, and you did an amazing job! The pictures are AWESOME! We would recommend you to any outdoor lover! We agreed that we learned so much from you. (Nina, 2012)

Thank you so very much for a wonderful adventure rock climbing last week. It was wonderful to share the time with my daughter. We both really appreciated your teaching style and the knowledge you imparted. I found a whole bucket-full of sermon illustrations. The location was excellent. We appreciated the fact that we were alone on the climb (except for the beautiful hawk). The photos you took came out well, and we showed them to my wife who appreciated our joy, but was thankful that she chose a more Hobbitish way to spend the day (reading). (Pastor Chris, 2012)

Your customer service was outstanding. Despite my late contact, you found a way to get us in on an adventure. The experience was excellent. The kids had a blast but you were appropriately serious in your approach. Safety was a clear priority as it must be. The experience was well structured and presented a number of great challenges. (Mark, 2012)