

# Dorothy of Oz and Leadership

## Lessons for Today from *The Way of Oz*

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The 21<sup>st</sup> century could be the “Century of the Woman.” And I hope that *The Way of Oz: A Guide to Wisdom, Heart & Courage* may be part of the inspiration—among women and men—for leadership and career development, all guided by the “Dorothy figure” and her *focus on the future*.

Dorothy in *The Way of Oz* is emblematic of a *focus on the future* because she is the person who guides the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion in their quest for wisdom, heart, and courage.

*The Way of Oz* emanates from the life and works of L. Frank Baum (1856-1919) whose 1900 book (*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*), its thirteen sequels, and the derivative 1939 film (*The Wizard of Oz*) offer a model for personal and professional development. The model is built in part on the examples of the Scarecrow (learning and wisdom), the Tin Woodman (love and heart), and the Cowardly Lion (service and courage).

Dorothy in *The Way of Oz* is the leadership person—the character with a *focus on the future*—who brings out the best in others through understanding, heart, and her own courage—all cast in a spirit of kindness and service. And with Dorothy’s savvy about personal and institutional planning, diversity, sustainability, scientific and political understanding, and personal responsibility, she is a character who makes significant differences in the lives of others—men, women, and creatures (including ToTo) alike! Dorothy in *The Way of Oz* also knows how to detect and deter life’s wicked witches (and warlocks), both of the internal (*e.g.*, self-doubt, imposter syndrome) and external (*e.g.*, co-workers, friends or family members displaying aggressive, manipulative, or envious behaviors) varieties.

Through *The Way of Oz*, we learn about Dorothy’s approach to personal planning, involving integrated learning and scholarship, personal environmental scanning, and selective volunteerism—all while drawing on the wisdom of teachers and mentors, and connecting learning and wisdom through caring and service.

Our 21<sup>st</sup> century Dorothy also understands institution planning and its components: vision, mission, environmental context, goals and objectives (directed through implementation strategies and articulated challenges), group oversight and shared understanding, and benchmarking integrated with periodic reporting and results-driven revisions of plans.

In *The Way of Oz*, Dorothy brings out the best in colleagues and institutions through her understanding of the mosaic model of diversity and the power of science to help develop policy and actions related to sustainability. She is also wise in her understanding of secular democracies and their power to serve our worldwide community.

On the “personal responsibility front,” Dorothy of *The Way of Oz* is empowered by determination, persistence, priority consciousness, critical thinking, and complex reasoning. She is also able to manage life’s time—systematically and sensibly.

Our modern Dorothy’s *focus on the future* is powerful because it is cast through an archetypal story written by a man who, despite his foibles and frailties, knew how to relate to others in unique ways. In other words, Frank Baum made a difference, and *The Way of Oz* can make a difference in many peoples’ lives.

One final set of thoughts: In Greek, the name “Dorothy” (Δωροθέα or *Dōrothea*) means “gift of God.” For Frank Baum, “Dorothy” was a “gift to the characters in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*” and twelve of the Oz sequels. The “Dorothy” in *The Way of Oz* is my gift to all who come to enjoy our collective journey down the yellow brick road of lifelong learning, loving, and serving!

To learn more about *The Way of Oz*, go to [thewayofoz.com](http://thewayofoz.com) or consider reading *The Way of Oz: A Guide to Wisdom, Heart, and Courage*, which will be published in September 2012 by TTU Press ([ttupress.org](http://ttupress.org)).