



**LEAP BEFORE  
YOU LOOK**  
**72 Shortcuts for Getting  
Out of Your Mind and  
Into the Moment**

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## LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK

### Family Practice: Rotate the Boss in Your Family

Level of Difficulty \*

Every now and then,  
Once a week or so,  
When something needs to be done,  
Such as cleaning the house, working in the garden,  
Or making a meal,  
Get the whole family together.  
Make a list of what needs to be done, and how long it will take.  
Divide the time among everyone present:  
Two hours cleaning for four people means half an hour each.  
Everyone gets a turn to be the boss,  
From the youngest to the oldest.  
When it is your turn to rule,  
Be a benevolent and loving dictator.  
Your word is law.  
When it is not your turn,  
Surrender completely.  
Discover a new world.

We started this game in our family many years ago, when Shuba, my youngest son, was only seven. The designated cleaning day was Saturday, and every time it came around, Shuba would move into resistance, the adults in the family would become dictatorial and easily frustrated, and Abhi, my oldest son, would try to avoid the situation altogether. Then we had the idea of rotating the role of the boss. We resented having all the responsibility, and Shuba resented being told what to do all the time, so the best thing seemed to be a switch. We agreed that everyone would get to be the boss for half an hour, starting out with Shuba. For the first half hour, he would be the king, would allocate the jobs, supervise that they were getting done correctly, and tell the rest of us when to move on to a new one.

You might anticipate, as we did, that this would be chaos—that Shuba might give crazy commands, or not know what to do and fall apart. But it was not like that at all. He turned out to be the most caring and careful supervisor in the whole family. He was attentive to detail, but equally as attentive to the needs of the person cleaning. “Do you have everything you need? Are you clear about what to do? Let me know if you need a break.” I was amazed; this was a complete personality transformation. As soon as his half hour was up, of course, he resorted to his usual personality, complaining bitterly of all the work he had to do. Of course we cannot do this every day. Kids need to be kids, and to have fun and freedom from responsibility. And generally adults need to make the decisions about what to eat and when to sleep and when to leave for school. But every now and then, shaking up our family roles and responsibilities loosens up our encrusted habits, and gives everyone an opportunity to find greater space and freedom within themselves.

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