

Leadership

Lesson Plan



What is a “natural leader”? In your own life, think of individuals who distinguish themselves from others and influence group perceptions or decisions. Even in unplanned circumstances (e.g., ice breakers at a party), there may be individuals who naturally draw others to them for guidance or direction.

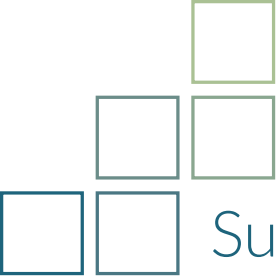
As shown in the videos in the introduction, anyone can be a natural leader. Nonetheless, as with any skill, developing natural leadership skills requires consistent practice and self-awareness that some behaviors may need to be modified. The exercises in this module focus on eight of the most researched qualities that have been shown to differentiate those who see themselves as leaders from those who do not:

- giving open, honest, but constructive feedback
- being open when receiving feedback
- instilling trust in others
- keeping one’s actions consistent with one’s beliefs
- finding ways to compliment others
- connecting otherwise unconnected individuals
- looking ahead and not being detracted by setbacks
- convincing others of the importance of an idea

Each quality is a unique predictor of natural leadership. For this reason, individuals can simply focus on one quality at a time if they wish.

Why is it important to see oneself as a natural leader? Research has shown that natural leaders are more self-confident in their abilities, are seen by others as a leader, and report more positive mental health than those who do not see themselves this way.

Should your Leadership indicator be in the At Risk or Moderate Concern range, this means that your perceived leadership qualities are lower than other adults. The good news is that you can improve your leadership qualities through simple yet effective strategies.



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

Targeting a Specific Leadership Attribute

The following guidelines and skills can be practiced to enhance each unique natural leadership attribute:

1. Giving open, honest, but constructive feedback

Key skill to practice: The “sandwich technique”. First, find something positive to say about the person or their work. Second, provide constructive feedback about a specific event (i.e., avoid generalized statements such as “you don’t listen to me”). Finally, end with a word of encouragement.

- **Example:** I really admire your focus. You have a great ability to stick to something and not get distracted. But yesterday you got angry with me when you assumed that I knew what you were talking about. Sometimes when you focus you stop communicating. I’d like to explain myself, either now or when you are not so angry with me. I know that we can work this out together.

2. Being open when receiving feedback

Key skill to practice: It is important to first recognize your emotional triggers. What do you feel when you become anxious or angry? Nonetheless, people are not always accurate with their perceptions. For this reason, ask trusted others (friends, significant others) this same question to understand how you may look to others when you become upset.

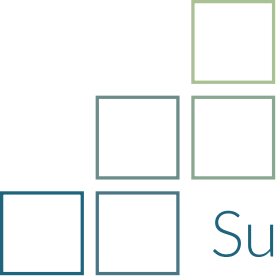
- If you become upset when receiving feedback, recognize these triggers and try self-calming strategies (such as taking deep breaths). If you are still upset, request to move the conversation to a later time. Try to maintain an open posture (no arms crossing or leaning into the speaker) and pay attention to your nonverbal reactions (e.g., eye rolling, gritting teeth) and your voice (maintain a steady tone).

3. Instilling trust in others

Key skill to practice: Research indicates that the following active listening skills are strongly related to establishing trust: (a) facing the peer and maintaining eye contact, (b) waiting one second between asking a question and receiving a response, (c) waiting at least one second after the peer has responded (to make sure the peer is not thinking of something else to add), (d) maintaining an open posture (don’t cross arms) and facial expression, (e) nodding or occasionally providing a short phrase to indicate that the peer is being heard, and (d) clarifying (e.g., “so what I hear you say is…”).

4. Keeping one’s actions consistent with one’s beliefs

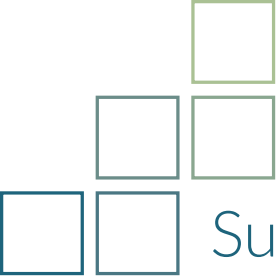
Key skill to practice: List 3-5 of your top values you hold most dear. Some examples of values include achievement, creativity, reliability, loyalty, a sense of justice, and many others. For each value listed, what is the line that you draw that you will not go below? That is, what will you not do that goes against this value? Finally, how will you know if you are getting close to that line? How will you address it if this occurs?



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

HERE IS A TABLE TO HELP GUIDE YOU

WHAT I VALUE	WHAT I WON'T DO THAT IS AGAINST MY VALUE	HOW I KNOW I AM GETTING CLOSE TO THE LINE	HOW I WILL ADDRESS IT
<i>Respect for myself and others</i>	<i>Intentionally make fun of someone to make me look good</i>	<i>My friends are making fun of someone and I think of a good line to contribute</i>	<i>Stop and think about why I am doing this. How would that person feel if they found out what I said? Is this a mark of a good leader?</i>



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

5. Finding ways to compliment others

Key skill to practice: Each day, find three opportunities to compliment someone on a positive action they have done. Do not just focus on the same peers; your leadership skills become stronger as you compliment a person who is not in your friendship group or even someone you don't know well (or at all). Start the compliment with "I really like..."and specifically let them know what they did that earned a compliment. Important: the key to this exercise is quantity, not quality. You do not need to spend a lot of time providing the compliment. Further, make sure that the phrasing, tone, and style of communication is something that you normally use (to avoid sounding artificial or seeming like you have an ulterior motive).

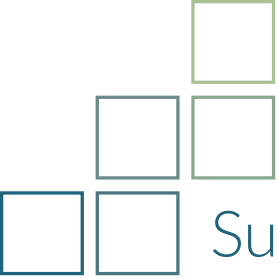
6. Connecting otherwise unconnected individuals

Key skill to practice: At least twice per month, invite a peer who you don't know well to do something, The activity could be work-related (inviting them for coffee during break) or something outside of the work day. The important part of this skill is to "learn their story"; understanding their world through their perspective and to find common interests. Equally important, once the connection is made it is important to maintain it (e.g., inviting them for other activities if both are interested, or at least periodically checking in with them through email or text, etc.).

7. Looking ahead and not being frustrated by setbacks

Key skill to practice: List 1-2 shorter-term goals (what you will pursue over the next 2-3 months). After you list these goals, think of possible barriers that you may face, and steps you will take to work around these barriers. Once you have completed your goal, cross it off and add a new goal.

MY SHORTER-TERM GOAL	POSSIBLE BARRIER I WILL FACE	STEPS I WILL TAKE SHOULD I ACTUALLY FACE THAT BARRIER
To take art lessons	My work may get in the way of practice time	Create a set schedule: 30 minutes after I get off work, I will practice on my art lessons: if permitted, I will practice my lessons during breaks/downtime



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

8. Convincing others of the importance of an idea

Key skill to practice: Leaders communicate the importance of their ideas by using logic, not their emotions. When selling an idea to others, think of three reasons why this would be beneficial. Phrase it this way: “I have an idea [be specific what the idea is]. I think we should do this because [reason #1], [reason #2], and [reason #3]. We don’t have to do this, but here is what may happen if we don’t [list one reason why]

I OWN IT

Most people demonstrate positive leadership skills throughout the day, but these instances often escape their attention. On the other hand, they may not be aware when a strategy meant to influence others proves ineffective (or even backfires).

One of the overarching qualities of a natural leader is frequent self-critical assessment. Thus, you can strengthen your leadership skills by periodically assessing how your behaviors and decisions impact others. Based on your ongoing self-assessment, you will be more aware of which approaches were most successful for you, and which may need to be refined or discarded. Here’s how:

1. At the end of each day for the next two weeks, complete the “I Own It” worksheet. Think about all instances over the past 24 hours when you communicated with others. These instances do not have to be major interactions (even a passing “hello” to a colleague can be considered) and you should consider all interactions, not just those in one area of your life (e.g., work, family).
2. First list positive instances under the “Times I did well” column. As you record the event, consider all aspects of the situation and person(s) you communicated with. What was it about your approach that was effective? What particular leadership attributes did you display? Finally, what specific behaviors could you replicate in future instances that could lead to similar positive outcomes?
3. After focusing on positive instances, think of any instance were less than positive. Consider all background factors that led to the negative experience, not simply the words that were spoken. Was there information that you may not have been aware of? Was there information that, in hindsight, you did have access to but neglected to consider? Were there any leadership attributes that you did not show? What are some strategies you may want to consider in future interactions to improve the outcome?



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

PERSONAL/SOCIAL GROWTH PROJECT

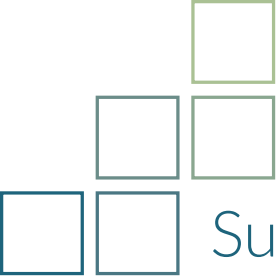
Natural leadership skills are best developed through new opportunities. In this project, you will select one activity that you have always wanted to explore and learn but have not had a chance to do so. The activity may involve a new skill (such as learning to play a musical instrument, a new language, or a sport) or experience (traveling to a region or immersing yourself in a new culture) but must comply with the following requirements.

- The activity must be something completely new for you; you have not tried it before
- The activity must be ongoing (at least for 6 weeks)
- The activity must be in group format so that you can practice leadership qualities within a social context.
- The activity should preferably be new for everyone in the group (i.e., everyone is participating for the first time, at the same time)
- Your first activity should be under the guidance of a coach, instructor, or mentor, so that you can compare/contrast your natural leadership qualities with a model.

Either in a personal diary or using the “I Own It” worksheets, describe your experiences- especially as they pertain to your natural leadership qualities. What worked well for you and what did you learn about yourself as a leader? How did your approach with others differ from the model? What were some of the frustrations experienced and what can you do differently next time to improve the interaction(s)?

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

1. On a sheet of paper, list up to three leaders who demonstrate many-if not all-of the attributes described above. The leaders you choose must consist of the following:
 - They are not currently in a formal leadership position that has power over you (i.e., they are not someone you directly or indirectly answer to).
 - They must now have or have had a significant impact in your life (e.g., teachers, family members, community members).
 - They must be accessible to you (even if, for those who are now out of your life, it takes some research to determine where they can be contacted).
 - They are highly trusted and can provide you with a candid assessment of your natural leadership qualities



Suggestions to Increase Natural Leadership Skills

2. Using the Leadership Interview Sheet as a guide, contact at least one of the listed leaders and conduct an in-person interview either live or via on-line video (try not to do this over the phone). The purpose of this interview is to understand their personal view of natural leadership, and to seek constructive feedback about your own qualities from a trusted source,
3. You are free to choose anyone you wish. Please note that while family members (parents, partner) can be used with great effect, they may not provide you with a balanced perspective. Should you use a family member for an interview, it is recommended that you interview a non-family member as well.
4. Based on information from the interview, list up to three measurable leadership goals to work on for the next 6-12 months. Goals can range from relatively straightforward (e.g., "to learn how better express myself when I disagree with someone") to more complex strategies that develop over time ("to connect two peers who don't hang around with each others"). Whatever goal you list, they must be personally meaningful for you. In other words, do not base a leadership goal solely on what your interviewee would like to see. Rather use their feedback as a guideline.
5. List the goal on the "My Leadership Goals" worksheet. At the end of each week, review the progress to your goal. If you feel that there is no steady progress, list possible barriers but also reflect on information you gathered from your interview.

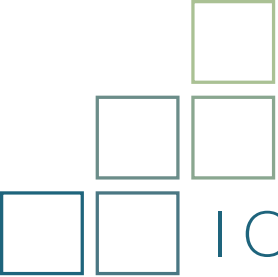
RESOURCES

Links



Books

<p>The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business</p> <p>-Charles Duhigg (2012)</p>	<p>Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World</p> <p>-William McRaven (2017).</p>
<p>I Have What It Takes: Stories and Principles That Will Ignite Your Natural Leadership Today</p> <p>-Ovidilio Vasquez et al. (2019)</p>	<p>Why make eagles swim?</p> <p>-Bill Munn and Libby Cortez (2016)</p>



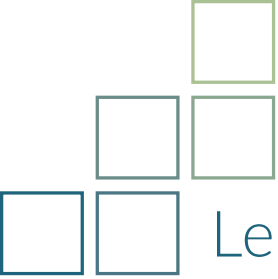
I Own It

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Think about how the past 24 hours have been for you. There were likely times when you did or said something that helped you or someone else. There may also have been times when you did or said something that did not really help you or someone else. This worksheet will help you by focusing on things you can keep doing (if you did something good). The worksheet can also help you consider different strategies (when things didn't turn out well).

Date:

TIMES THAT I DID WELL!	WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE REASONS? (THINK ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES YOU USED)	WHAT I CAN DO TO KEEP THIS GOING
TIMES THAT I DID NOT DO SO WELL	WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE REASONS? (THINK ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES YOU MAY NOT HAVE CONSIDERED)	WHAT I CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE NEXT TIME



Leadership Interview

10

1. What kind of qualities do you think a leader has to have to be effective?

2. Can you give me some examples of leaders who influenced you?

3. What has been your greatest achievement?

4. What has been your biggest disappointment? What did you learn from the experience?

5. What are some leadership qualities that you see in me?

6. If there was one thing I could work on as a leader, what would that be?



My Leadership Goals

Leadership Goal :

How I Know I Will Have Achieved it:

Date	Progress to goal (circle one) <i>No progress at all</i> <i>Very slow progress</i> <i>Steady progress</i> <i>Goal attained</i>	If no steady progress, what is the barrier?	A) what are some of the leadership qualities my interviewee saw in me?	B) what was the one quality that my person said that defined leadership?	Considering a) and b), what can I do to overcome the barrier?