

LEAN IN



1-2-3 Meeting Guide

Everything you need to run **one** meeting
for **two** hours per moth for **three** months

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Guide Overview

Congratulations!

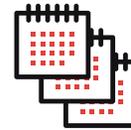
Congratulations on starting a Lean In Circle—and welcome to our global community! We've developed the Circles 1-2-3 Meeting Guide to introduce you and your members to the Circles experience and make it easy to get started—with *one* meeting for *two* hours every month for *three* months.



1 MEETING



2 HOURS



3 MONTHS

How Circle meetings work

Circle meetings bring small groups of women and men together to support one another and learn new skills. We recommend between eight and twelve members in a Circle to make sure everyone's voice is heard, and Circles can meet anywhere—over coffee at your home, in a lunch series at work, or even online. What you discuss is up to you and your members, but as you read through the guides, you'll see that Circle meetings typically start with members sharing a relevant update with the group and end with each member committing to a "One Action" they're going to take before the next meeting. There's no right or wrong way to run a Circle—you and your members should make the experience your own.

Running your first three meetings

We've selected one of our favorite activities and two of our most popular videos with discussion guides to kick-off your first three meetings:

- **MEETING #1:** The **Connection Cards** activity is an exercise that builds trust in your Circle as you dive deep quickly through a series of personal questions.
- **MEETING #2:** The **Centered Leadership** guide will teach you simple exercises to uncover your strengths, which you'll be able to draw upon to become a stronger, more purposeful leader.
- **MEETING #3:** The **Drop the Ball** guide encourages you to spend less time on certain tasks so you have more opportunities to do what truly matters.

If any of these topics don't resonate with you or your members, feel free to choose a different topic instead or move things around—do whatever works for you! For inspiration on meeting topics, browse our list of most popular meeting guides in the Next Steps section of this guide.

Selecting Circle moderators

We recommend that the Circle leader run the first meeting—it's a good warm-up and sets the tone and direction of future meetings. After that, you can either run the meetings or see if other members want to take a turn.

“I'm such an introvert, but being a Circle moderator has made things totally different for me. It has definitely helped build my confidence. Now I can actually say that I'm a leader. I wasn't convinced of that before.”



Julene Allen
Circle Leader, Women of Color

Connect with other leaders

As you start your Circle experience, we encourage you to also join our private Facebook group for Circle leaders at [facebook.com/groups/CircleLeaders](https://www.facebook.com/groups/CircleLeaders), where you can ask questions and get input from the community.

LEAN IN



1-2-3 GUIDE — MEETING #1

Connection Cards

Overview

For your first meeting, the Connection Card activity uses a deck of cards to facilitate the process getting to know one another better by answering questions and sharing a lot of information quickly.

MEETING GOALS

- Get to know yourself and your Circle on a deeper level
- Build trust within your Circle by opening up and sharing personal stories and experiences

PRE-MEETING PREP

- One member should **print or purchase a deck of Connection Cards** at leanin.org/connection-cards. For groups of twelve or more, we recommend using two decks.
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF



Brought to you in partnership with...

Carole Robin from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. This activity is based on a similar one originally developed by Stanford's Interpersonal Dynamics course faculty.

Meeting Agenda

🕒 Approx. 110 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

1 Check-In 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

Warm up, catch up, and get going

- Icebreaker
- Review Circle Fundamentals

2 Connection Activities 🕒 Approx. 55 minutes

Share, connect, and grow together

- **Activity 1: Connection Cards** 🕒 40 minutes
Deepen your understanding of yourself and your fellow Circle members
- **Activity 2: Connection Card Debrief** 🕒 15 minutes
Discuss what makes it easy or hard to share and the role of gender in sharing

3 One Action 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

The little push you need to go for it

4 Wrap-Up 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

What's next and a few final words

Optional Worksheets

One Action Update, Vocabulary of Feelings

Meeting Guide

1 Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

STEP 1: ICEBREAKER

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a great way to get people talking. Given that this is your first meeting, start by going around your Circle and introducing yourself as if you're meeting everyone for the first time (even if you're not). And remember, one minute or less per person—avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- My name is...
- I spend most of my time...
- I joined this Circle because...



STEP 2: AGREE ON CIRCLE FUNDAMENTALS

 Group activity

 Approx. 10 minutes

In this and most meetings you'll be asked to be open and honest about your thoughts, skills, and experiences, even if that means pushing yourself outside your comfort zone. That's where our Circle Fundamentals come in. They are values that everyone in your Circle agrees to so you have a shared understanding of what you can expect from one another.

Read or discuss the Circle Fundamentals below. If they don't feel quite right for your Circle, take some time to adjust them together. Once everyone is ready, go around your Circle one by one and commit to them with a quick thumbs-up or "I'm in."

CONFIDENTIALITY

Trust is crucial. What happens in your Circle should stay in your Circle.

COMMUNICATION

Commit to share openly and honestly—and to listen with empathy.

COMMITMENT

Everyone should be invested in your Circle's success and fully present at meetings.

2 Connection Activities

Share, connect, and grow together

🕒 Approx. 55 minutes for both activities

Activity 1: Connection Cards

🕒 Approx. 40 minutes

STEP 1: SET THE STAGE

👥 Group activity

🕒 Approx. 5–10 minutes

Before you jump into today's meeting, take a moment to review the setup, rules, and recommendations as a group.

Setup

- For groups with more than twelve members, consider dividing into two smaller groups each with its own deck, to maximize sharing.
- Separate the deck into two piles: one pile with **question cards** and one pile with **check-in cards**.
- Shuffle the question cards and place questions facedown.
- Hand one check-in card to each player. Check-in cards are used to ask someone how she is feeling after she shared something personal. Using one demonstrates support and increases closeness within the group.

Rules

- Player 1 draws a question card, places it face up, and answers the question.
- Player 2 either answers the same question as player 1 or draws a new card and answers that question.
- The next player answers a question on any card that's already been played or draws a new card. And so on...
- At any point listeners can use a check-in card to ask a player how she's feeling. The responding player answers by completing the sentence "I am feeling..."

The objective is to get through the deck and get as many answers out as possible in the time allowed (minimum two per person). Try to avoid asking a lot of follow-up questions once someone answers. The goal is to move quickly through the deck and give everyone a chance to respond to multiple questions.

Recommendations

- Each player should use her check-in card no more than two times, depending on the length of the game.
- If all question cards have been drawn, shuffle the deck and start over.
- The Vocabulary of Feelings sheet (see page 15) has a great list of words you can reference if someone plays the check-in card to ask you how you're feeling.

STEP 2: TIME TO PLAY!

 Group activity

 Approx. 30–40 minutes

It's time to start! Begin the Connection Card activity, going through as many rounds as you can in the allotted time.

Activity 2: Connection Card Debrief

 Group activity

 Approx. 15 minutes

As a full group, discuss the following questions, allowing people to contribute as they are moved to share:

- What helped you talk/share/risk higher levels of disclosure?
- What (if anything) got in your way of sharing, risk-taking, or disclosing?
- Do you think there would have been a difference in the way you responded had this been a mixed-gender group? (Or, for groups with male and female members, would there have been a difference if the group was predominantly male?) Why or why not?
- How does this activity or discussion inform what you might do going forward?

3 One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

We recommend that you close every meeting by committing to “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ACTION YOU’RE GOING TO TAKE

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Option 1: Did any of the Connection Cards resonate with you today?

Identify an action you can take before the next meeting related to this card.

For example, you might say, “The card that read ‘Who’s had an impact on your life whom you haven’t thanked?’ made me think of my college research mentor. I plan to send her a card thanking her for her years of mentorship and sharing how it continues to impact me.”

Option 2: Alternatively, choose an action based on a thought or a feeling that came up for you during the activity.

For example, you might say, “I should open up more to my sister about what is really important to me to bring us closer together. I plan to call her this week and spend quality time catching up.”

Option 3: Feel free to use one of the following:

- Schedule time to catch up with a person you’ve been meaning to spend more time with before your next meeting.
- If there was one more hour in the day, what would you spend it on? Make time for this three times before your next meeting.

What action do you commit to taking before the next meeting?

STEP 2: SHARE YOUR ONE ACTION WITH YOUR CIRCLE

 Group activity

 1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and share the action you commit to taking before the next meeting. Move quickly from member to member and consider cheering one another on as you go.

Come prepared to give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 14 you'll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update.

4 Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

STEP 1: FINALIZE LOGISTICS FOR YOUR NEXT MEETING

👥 Group activity

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting: day and time, location, food and drink. Also decide if you will keep the same moderator for your next meeting or if someone else wishes to take on that role. Lastly, you may want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting and brainstorm improvements going forward.

STEP 2: CLOSE ON AN ENERGETIC AND INSPIRATIONAL NOTE

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less

To punctuate the end of this meeting, go around your Circle one by one and each share three words that describe how you're feeling right now. Try using some words from the Vocabulary of Feelings sheet (see page 15).

CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT MEETING.

DID YOU ENJOY THIS?

Check out our other connection activities at leanin.org/connection-activities.

One Action Update

Use the following prompts to prepare your One Action Update before your next meeting.

This month, I chose to...

Something I enjoyed about this was...

Vocabulary of Feelings (Abridged)

(Hammond Hepworth, & Smith, 1978, pp.86-87)

HAPPY	CARING	APPRECIATIVE	DEPRESSED	FEARFUL
<p>glad contented satisfied gratified pleased cheerful excited enthusiastic delighted great</p>	<p>warm toward friendly like positive toward caring fond of respectful concern for close affection for</p>	<p>appreciative admiration thankful grateful valuing look up to esteem in awe</p> <p>INADEQUATE lacking confidence weak inadequate defeated overwhelmed ineffective lacking small worthless powerless inferior like a failure</p>	<p>unhappy down bad disappointed sad distressed upset demoralized discouraged pessimistic awful terrible dejected hopeless alienated in despair</p>	<p>nervous unsure hesitant shy worried uneasy embarrassed ill at ease doubtful uncomfortable self-conscious afraid scared apprehensive threatened distrustful risky awkward defensive intimidated vulnerable</p>
CONFUSED	HURT	ANGRY	LONELY	GUILTY/ASHAMED
<p>uncertain uncomfortable undecided curious disorganized troubled disconnected ambivalent disturbed puzzled trapped confused</p>	<p>put down neglected overlooked minimized let down unappreciated belittled overlooked abused criticized censured discredited disparaged laughed at ridiculed devalued mocked exploited wounded disgraced humiliated rejected</p>	<p>disgusted bugged turned off put out irked ticked off cross dismayed impatient resentful irritated annoyed upset with mad offended exasperated vindictive furious pissed off indignant bitter hateful</p>	<p>left out excluded lonesome distant aloof alienated estranged remote alone apart from others isolated abandoned all alone forsaken cut off</p>	<p>regretful wrong embarrassed at fault in error responsible for ashamed guilty remorseful to blame lost face demeaned exposed unforgivable humiliated disgraced degraded horrible mortified</p>

LEAN IN



1-2-3 GUIDE — MEETING #2

Centered Leadership: Meaning

Overview

The Centered Leadership model will help you lead with impact, resilience, and fulfillment at work and in your life. There are five parts to Centered Leadership: Meaning, Framing, Connecting, Engaging, and Energizing.

Meaning, the focus of this meeting, is the anchor. It concentrates on strengths and purpose—drivers of long-lasting fulfillment.

MEETING GOALS

- Uncover your strengths
- Develop strategies for actively living into those strengths

PRE-MEETING PREP

- Watch “Meaning” individually or as a group: leanin.org/meaning
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF
- Remind everyone to bring her One Action update (if you’re doing this)



Brought to you in partnership with...

Joanna Barsh, director emeritus McKinsey & Company and author of Centered Leadership and How Remarkable Women Lead, along with McKinsey & Company.

Meeting Agenda

🕒 Approx. 115 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

1 Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

- Icebreaker
- Review Circle Fundamentals

2 Educational Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 60 minutes

- **Activity 1: Key Takeaways** 🕒 5 minutes
Take a few minutes to review the core concepts of the “Meaning” video
- **Activity 2: Strengths Awareness** 🕒 35 minutes
Reflect on activities that energized you as a child, teenager, and adult to gain more insight into your strengths
- **Activity 3: Future Possibilities** 🕒 20 minutes
Visualize yourself in ten years energized and fulfilled—and the steps you took to get there

3 One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

4 Wrap-Up

What’s next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

Optional Worksheets

One Action Update

1 Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

STEP 1: ICEBREAKER

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with ourselves and one another. One by one, fill in the sentences below and share them with your Circle. Listen carefully as each member takes a turn and say thank you when she's finished. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- Today I am feeling...
- What I most want to bring forth in my leadership is...
- That is truly important to me because...

STEP 2: MEMBER UPDATES

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less per member

1. Personal update (optional)

Once you've warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

2. One Action update (optional)

If you have a One Action update, share it with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting; the goal of a One Action is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

For example, a member update might go like this: "Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I'm thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I've been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we're going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action Update]."

2 Educational Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 60 minutes for all activities

Activity 1: Key takeaways and strategies

🕒 Approx. 5 minutes

Before you jump into today's meeting, review the **key takeaways** from the "Meaning" video individually or as a group:

Strengths lie at the core of your happiness

It is counterintuitive, but pursuing happiness does not make us happy. So what does? Half of our happiness comes from our parents, or our genetic makeup. Another 10 percent comes from our conditions, or the comforts we have. That leaves 40 percent, which comes from choosing to engage in activities that create positive energy for us. Our choices do not always match our skills. You may be great at something that does not fill you with energy.

You find your strengths through energy

Many of us do not know our passions, and we grow anxious worrying about that. Lots of people advise "Do what you love to do," but what if you don't know what that is? Many of us were raised to get good grades, to excel and make our parents, teachers, and bosses proud. Love didn't have anything to do with it!

Instead, look for what gives you energy. Notice your heart racing as you think about those activities. Notice if your voice speeds up or gets louder as you talk about them to friends. These are signs of positive energy. We define strengths as what brings you positive energy. Strengths are characteristics that have always been true about you—and that you truly value.

Why we use reflection

Joanna's research shows that our strengths are already within us, but we don't always have access to them. By reflecting deeply, you can make new discoveries about yourself and remember what you already knew but may have forgotten. You may even find yourself feeling more inspired—and being more inspiring!

Self-awareness is the key

Once we slow down enough to reflect on our underlying mindsets—to build self-awareness—we gain the freedom to choose. We can choose to use our strengths more. We can choose to shift mindsets. We can allow new behaviors to emerge naturally. In this way, we can change from focusing on fixing weaknesses and striving for perfection to living into our strengths and doing what brings us positive energy.

Purpose comes from using our strengths

The more you use your strengths, the more you deepen them. You'll find yourself waking up with more energy for the day. Purpose is down this path: as you learn what is important to you, you get closer to it; then one day you'll suddenly realize you're doing what you were meant to do.

We start with ourselves

As you begin to deepen your strengths and bring them to your work, you will begin to see strengths in others. Noticing others' strengths helps you withhold judgment; your mind-set will shift from what's wrong to what's right. That's why Centered Leadership starts with leading yourself. We become better leaders when we are able to see ourselves more clearly and shift, out of choice, to be more open to learning. Then we can model the change we want to see.

Activity 2: Strength Awareness

 35 minutes

STEP 1: REFLECT ON THE ACTIVITIES THAT ENERGIZE YOU

 Individual activity

 10 minutes

Now we're ready to deepen our awareness of our strengths. Let's go back in time to recall three moments in your life where you felt high positive energy. As you reflect on the questions below, close your eyes and allow the images, words, and feelings to flow. When you're ready, open your eyes and jot down your answers in the present tense.

As a young child, what fantasy games do you love playing? What do you get to do and who do you get to be in these games?

As a young adult, what activities do you feel drawn to? When do you feel so absorbed in an activity that you lose track of time?

As your recent self (during the past eighteen months), what activities leave you feeling strong, energized, and alive?

STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR CORE STRENGTHS

 Pair activity

 5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

This activity lets you use your responses in step 1 to identify your top three strengths.

Break into pairs. One partner should be the interviewer, using the questions below to probe with curiosity and appreciation. The other partner should be the interviewee, responding to the questions openly and honestly. Each interview should take about five minutes, with one to two minutes for personal reflection at the end.

Interview questions:

1. What patterns do you see across the three moments in time? What do you most value about yourself in these moments?
2. What do you value about the activities that you describe? Why are they important to you?
3. What lies beneath the strengths that you see in yourself? Are there deeper strengths buried below?
4. What has always been true about you that you value?

Then switch roles and repeat the exercise.

STEP 3: WRITE DOWN OR RECORD YOUR CORE STRENGTHS

 Individual activity

 5 minutes

Before wrapping up, the interviewee should take a moment and answer one final question: Based on your answers, what do you see as your top three strengths?

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR CORE STRENGTHS

 Group activity

 1 minute or less per member

One by one, share your strengths with the Circle. Simply state your strength without elaborating on it, offering each other encouragement as you go.

Activity 3: Future Possibilities

 Pair activity

 10 minutes per partner, 20 minutes total

Now that we have started to identify our strengths, how will we use them to live into our purpose? In this next exercise, we visualize ourselves in the future.

Break into the same pairs. One partner should be the interviewer, using the questions below. The other partner should be the interviewee, imagining herself ten years from now giving the best of herself to work and life—and feeling energized and fulfilled. As you answer, close your eyes and allow yourself to think and dream boldly.

Interview questions:

- Complete the sentence “I am most proud of the contribution I have made to the lives of others and who I have become because I have... [fill in the blank] and because I am...[fill in the blank].”
- If you assume for a moment that everything is possible—without constraints and knowing that you cannot fail—what do you want to experience?
- Standing in this ideal future and looking back, what do you need to start doing differently today to make your unique contributions and achieve a deep sense of fulfillment in the future?

Spend ten minutes on each interview, then switch roles and repeat the exercise.

3 One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

We recommend you close every activity by choosing a “One Action—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ACTION YOU’RE GOING TO TAKE

👤 Individual activity

🕒 10 minutes

Using the grid below as a framework, identify the actions you will take (or intensify) to live into your strengths at work, home, or school. Then decide how you will free up time to make these actions a reality.

For example, you might say: *“To live into my strengths of curiosity and love of learning, I am going to reserve thirty minutes twice a week to grab lunch with a colleague to learn what she or he is doing. I can accomplish this by scheduling the lunches, since I have to eat anyway.”*

	Personally	Profesionally
I commit to start doing or intensify...		
I commit to do differently or reduce time on...		

Reflect for a moment and select the One Action that you're committed to take before your next meeting. Or for extra credit, commit to do both.

Housekeeping Note: We recommend you give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 29 of this PDF, you'll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update. Individually, or as a group, you can decide to bring the worksheet to your next Circle meeting.

STEP 2: SHARE YOUR ONE ACTION WITH YOUR CIRCLE

 Group activity

 1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statements:

- One action I commit to take this month to live more into meaning is...

Move quickly from member to member, and consider offering each other encouragement.

4 Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

STEP 1: FINALIZE LOGISTICS OF YOUR NEXT MEETING

👥 Group activity

🕒 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting: day and time, location, food and drink. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who's going to send out ideas. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting and brainstorm improvements going forward.

STEP 2: CLOSE ON AN ENERGETIC AND INSPIRATIONAL NOTE

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less

To punctuate the end of this meeting, go around your Circle one by one and complete the sentence: I am feeling...

CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT MEETING.

One Action Update

Use the following prompts to give your One Action update during your next meeting. You can even prepare your answers ahead to maximize your time with your Circle.

The strength I am using more regularly is...(feel free to list more than one)

The one change I am noticing about myself is...

LEAN IN



1-2-3 GUIDE — MEETING #3

Drop the Ball: Doing More of What Matters

Overview

No one has unlimited resources, and it's difficult to advance your leadership at work while you're swamped at home—especially if you're doing more than your fair share. In this meeting, we'll discuss how you can learn to let things go so you can do more of what matters most to you.

MEETING GOALS

- Learn how to achieve more by doing less
- Identify tasks that you can “drop the ball” on

PRE-MEETING PREP

- Watch “Drop the Ball: Doing More of What Matters” individually or as a group at leanin.org/drop-the-ball
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF and a highlighter (get extras)
- Remind everyone to bring their One Action Updates from Meeting #2



Brought to you in partnership with ...

Tiffany Dufu, Chief Leadership Officer at Levo and author of *Drop the Ball: Achieving More by Doing Less*

Meeting Agenda

🕒 Approx. 100 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

1 Check-In 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes
Warm up, catch up, and get going

2 Educational Activities 🕒 Approx. 60 minutes
Learn from experts and one another

- Key Takeaways and Strategies
- Discussion Questions
- Prioritize Your To-Do List

3 One Action 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes
The little push you need to go for it

4 Wrap-Up 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes
What's next and a few final words

Optional Worksheets
One Action Update, Vocabulary of Feelings

1 Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

STEP 1: ICEBREAKER

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

Go through the following statements one by one and ask members to raise their hand if they relate to the experience. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- Raise your hand if you currently have a to-do list that is too long or impossible to accomplish in the time you have available.
- Raise your hand if you currently have items on your to-do list that are not a priority for you (or don't deeply matter to you)
- Raise your hand if you've taken on items from other people's to-do lists (like your partner, manager, or colleague)

STEP 2: MEMBER UPDATES

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less per member

1. Personal update (optional)

Once you've warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

2. One Action update (optional)

If you have a One Action update, share it with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting; the goal of a One Action is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

For example, a member update might go like this: "Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I'm thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I've been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we're going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action Update]."

2 Educational Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 60 minutes for all activities

Activity 1: Key takeaways and strategies

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

Before you jump into today's meeting, review the key **takeaways** from the "Drop the Ball" video individually or as a group:

Let go and achieve more by doing less

No one has unlimited resources. It's difficult to advance your leadership at work while you're overloaded with responsibility at home. Learn to let some things go so you can do what matters most to you.

Set yourself up for success

Many women pack their daily to-do lists with tasks that add up to more than twenty-four hours. This habit can make you feel overwhelmed and unproductive as you constantly reshuffle tasks.

Focus on your priorities

Life is busy, so we tend to focus on getting things off of our to-do list instead of being selective about what goes on the list—and where. We often neglect to prioritize our to-do's in any meaningful way or make the distinction between what we should be doing and what others could be doing instead.

Use these **strategies** to start doing what matters to you most today:

Admit that your current to-do list is unrealistic

Think about everything you need to achieve in an ideal day, then estimate how long it would take to complete the list. When you add it up, it usually becomes clear that there is not enough time to accomplish it all. Do an honest time assessment of your list so you can see this for yourself.

Focus on your highest and best use

Just because you can do something better and faster than other people doesn't mean it's the most efficient use of **your** time. First, think about what you really want to achieve—not just get done. Then get clear about the difference between the things only you can do and the things that you do very well with little effort. This helps you prioritize what you should be working on and what you should delegate.

Practice patience judo

We quickly grow impatient when things on our to-do list aren't done the way we think they should be. Dropping the ball requires letting go of some control to allow other people to assume responsibility.

Activity 2: Discussion questions

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

1. Think about what matters most to you, at home and work. Write these down in the space below. (We've provided some examples to get you started.)

Home

Developing personal relationships

Work

Getting the CEO to notice my project

Are you doing things on a daily basis that ladder up to these goals? Go around your Circle and share one goal and what you're doing to achieve it.

2. Think about your village. Who can you recruit to take on secondary tasks so you can focus on what matters most? Use the space below to list family members, coworkers, neighbors, friends, babysitters. How can they lend their expertise or talent to help you get everything done?

Name and relationship to you

Cara, coworker

Expertise or talent

Can help with next week's data pull

Share this list with your Circle.

3. What are the to-dos in your life you wish would just go away? The ones you do because you think you have to but that feel like such a chore (making homemade bake sale treats, sending meeting recap emails).

To-Do's I want to go away

Share with your Circle three things you want permission to drop the ball on.

Activity 3: Prioritize your to-do list

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

1. Use the space below to write down your to-do list for this week (or as much as you can fit in the box!). Include everything that is swirling around in your head.

2. Put a circle around all the things you do very well with very little effort.
3. Put a check mark next to all the things that only you can do—that no one else has the skill, the network, or the political savvy to accomplish.
4. Put a star next to anything that ladders up to one of your primary work or home goals.
5. Highlight the things that need to be done but could probably be done just as well by someone else.
6. Highlight the things that would be an incredible learning opportunity for the people on your team.
7. Anything that has a circle and a check mark stays on your list. Items with a star do, too. These represent your highest and best use of time.
8. All the remaining items either need to be delegated or dropped.
9. Write your new list on the next page.

My new to-do list:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing a to-do list. It occupies most of the page's vertical space below the text.

3 One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ACTION YOU’RE GOING TO TAKE

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Looking at your new to-do list, choose one high-priority task. Frame it as a “highest and best use” and decide when you will make time to do it.

One of my highest and best uses is _____ (insert task/action).

I will do it _____ (insert time).

STEP 2: SHARE YOUR ONE ACTION WITH YOUR CIRCLE

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and share your statement from step 1. Move quickly from member to member.

Come prepared to give an update on your One Action during your next meeting.

4 Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

STEP 1: FINALIZE LOGISTICS OF YOUR NEXT MEETING

👥 Group activity

🕒 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting, including day and time, location, and food and drink responsibilities. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who is going to send out ideas. See the 'Next Steps' section of this guide for possible meeting topics.

STEP 2: CLOSE ON AN ENERGETIC AND INSPIRATIONAL NOTE

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less

Go around the Circle, with each person sharing one key takeaway or reflection from this meeting. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting so you can brainstorm improvements going forward.

CONGRATULATIONS ON A GREAT MEETING.

LIKED THIS?

Check out our other videos and meeting guides that discuss work/life balance at leanin.org/work-life-balance.

LEAN IN



1-2-3 GUIDE

Next Steps

Next Steps

We hope that your first three meetings were successful and you've had the chance to see—and feel—how impactful Circles can be. If you choose to keep meeting as a Circle, the best is still to come: Circle members who meet for more than six months report getting the most out of their experience.

With a few meetings under your belt, we recommend you set goals for your Circle and decide how you wish to run your meetings moving forward.

1. Set goals for your Circle

Now that you understand how Circles work, you will benefit even more by setting shared goals as a group. Goals will help you choose relevant topics for discussion, gauge the success of your meetings, and generally stay on track. Get started with this goal-setting exercise:

- **STEP 1: Identify personal goals**

Ask each member to write down their three biggest personal goals before the next meeting (such as taking more professional risks, creating better work/life balance, or building a network of supporters).

- **STEP 2: Identify the top goals of your Circle**

During your next Circle meeting have everyone share their top three personal goals out loud. Have someone write them down on a whiteboard or large piece of paper so everyone can see them. When you're finished, spend some time identifying up to three goals that are common across your Circle, grouping similar goals together wherever possible. If you end up with more than three, use a show of hands to vote on a final list. And remember, it will be easier for your Circle to stay on track with very specific and focused goals. When you're done, make sure you type up and distribute your final list of goals so everyone can refer to it going forward.

“We started off by inviting our own friends and friends of friends to our meetings. Slowly, once people saw what we were doing with our Circle, they wanted to be part of it.”



Abir Abdul Rahim and Sarah Chen
Circle Leaders, Lean In Malaysia

2. Explore additional guides for your upcoming Circle meetings

Choose from dozens of meeting guides—on everything from negotiating to building confidence—to plan out the rest of your meetings. There are more than fifty discussion guides and other materials at leanin.org/education.

Building new skills together

- **Centered Leadership:** An expert video series that offers a practical road map to taking on the challenges of leadership.
- **What Works for Women at Work:** Our expert video series will help you spot the four patterns of gender bias at work and discover strategies that successful women use to navigate subtle bias.
- **Negotiation:** This expert video series teaches you how to negotiate effectively for what you want—and get what you deserve.
- **Power & Influence:** An expert video about the body language of power and how to use it to increase your influence.
- **The Confidence Gap:** An article that explores why confidence matters as much as competence—and how women can become more self-assured in every area of their lives.

Discussion guides for Ted Talks

These Ted Talks—paired with meeting discussion guides—introduce valuable ideas and skills, and the transcripts and subtitles can be translated into multiple languages:

- **Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders:** In the TED Talk that inspired *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg explores why a smaller percentage of women than men reach the top of their professions—and offers three key pieces of advice to women in leadership.
- **The Power of Introverts:** Many people think you have to be an extrovert to be a leader. Susan Cain busts this myth and makes a case for quiet leadership.
- **How to Make Stress Your Friend:** Stanford psychologist Kelly McGonigal explains why stress isn't the enemy. Learn how to reframe the stress you feel and build personal resilience.
- **My Year of Saying Yes to Everything:** Award-winning screenwriter, director, and producer Shonda Rhimes shares the power of saying yes—and how it helped her to rediscover joy in her life.

