



LEAN IN

How to become a transformational leader

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide

The
Women
at Work
Collection

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Meeting agenda

approx 90 mins

Member updates

15 mins

Watch video

8 mins

Icebreaker

10 mins

Activities

- Activity 1: Handling mistakes
- Activity 2: Articulating a vision
- Activity 3: Responding to bias

15 mins

15 mins

15 mins

One Action

3 mins

For Circles with only 60 mins, here are suggestions to shorten this agenda:

- Encourage members to watch video in advance
- Spend 10 mins on member updates
- Skip activity 1

Getting started

Member updates

2 mins or less per member

15–20 mins depending on group size

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!) If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle.

Watch video

8 mins

Note that you don't need to be in a leadership role to practice transformational leadership. You can use the techniques in the video to influence colleagues and bring out the best in fellow team members.

Icebreaker

10 mins

Take a few minutes to think about the following questions. Then, go around the room and share your answers (1 minute each).

- What does an **empathetic** leader look like to you?
- How is an **empathetic** leader different from a **nice** leader?
- What does your **ideal** leader look like?

Activity 1: Handling mistakes

15 mins

Employees perform best when they're not afraid to mess up and when they view mistakes as growth opportunities. Sharing your own mistakes and coaching your team members on how to learn and improve from their own is essential to transformational leadership.

- Break into groups of two or three.
- Each person should share a mistake they made at work (up to 2 minutes each).
- Then, discuss ways that a transformational leader would respond to this mistake.
 - They might ask, what is the lesson that could come out of this mistake? What could the individual who made the mistake do from here to learn and improve?



“I always remember that all great inventors and innovators made mistakes. The flip side of a mistake is innovation and creativity. It's so important that we work to create environments where people can speak out and there are no negative repercussions. When you don't have that type of environment, people shut down and feel they're going to be ridiculed or they fear there will be ramifications to a mistake or an unpopular idea.”

Kathryn Edwards, Ph.D., retired director, city government and tech industry, California, USA (she/her)

Activity 2: Articulating a vision

15 mins

As we heard in today's video, research shows that transformational leaders often have a unique ability to inspire their teams by articulating a strong mission and vision. This often starts with showing your own enthusiasm for the company's mission.

In pairs, connect your personal story and passions with that of your company and role, and share that vision with your partner. Once you have a chance to switch roles, have a conversation with the following questions in mind:

- Did your partner feel inspired by your vision?
- What was the most challenging part of articulating your vision? Why?
- How would you potentially change the vision you articulate based on who you are speaking to?

"I worked with an incredible leader who gave me not only great advice, but also real opportunity. She created a space for me to be in front of big efforts, to be positioned in our organization to have authority and to design entire programs. She not only gave me the space to grow into leadership by leading programs, but she also gave me a sense of safety to talk about setbacks and difficult moments in one-on-one coaching sessions."

Yesenia Reyes, managing director, consulting firm, Texas, USA (she/her)



Activity 3: Responding to bias

15 mins

Working women are ambitious for leadership, but we face stronger headwinds than men.¹ For example, we're far more likely than men to have colleagues question our judgment or imply that we aren't qualified for our jobs.²

- As a group, form a circle. Go around the circle and have each person share one strategy they've found effective in responding to biased assumptions that women are less capable of leadership and advancement than men.
- After everyone has shared, discuss as a group what strategies you find the most effective and easiest to implement.



“One of my best managers showed me that he truly believed I had potential by throwing me into the fire. The confidence that he displayed in me gave me confidence to take additional steps of independence. He understood that sometimes I may need more time or other accommodations, but he saw my intelligence and my skill, and looked beyond my disability.”

Nadia Mossburg, senior manager, public sector, Florida, USA
(she/her)

One Action

3 mins

- An important part of transformational leadership is to motivate team members with sincere, specific positive feedback.
- This week, take 2 minutes to identify one person at work to whom you'd like to give positive feedback. Think about something they did recently at work that you admired, and tell them in detail what they did well.
- Share the experience with your Circle the next time you meet.

Congratulations on a great meeting!

Endnotes

¹ LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022* (Oct 2022).

² LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, *Women in the Workplace 2022* (Oct 2022).

Notes

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