

Mentorship Modules

Discussion Guide 2: Defining and Identifying Leadership

Adapted from Dr. Peter G. Northouse's [Introduction to Leadership Concepts and Practice: 3rd Ed.](#)

Leadership involves a combination of strengths (who you are) and abilities (skills you've learned) applied to influence specific circumstances and people (actual behaviors and interactions). Conceptualizing leadership as behavior implies that leadership can be learned and taught. Your conceptualization of leadership is likely to affect the way you lead, so we're going to spend some time developing that understanding.

Discuss

Think of someone you know and have interacted with personally who exemplifies excellent leadership. Describe this person for your mentor/mentee. What specific strengths, abilities, or behaviors does this person exemplify? How has this person impacted you and/or your understanding of leadership? How do others respond to this person?

Discover

So the next question, then, is this: how do you conceptualize leadership? Individually, please take the "[Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire](#)" and follow the instructions for scoring your own understanding of various aspects of leadership. This self-analysis may help you understand your own attitudes, values, and beliefs regarding various facets of leadership. Share your results with your mentor/mentee. In particular, which of the beliefs listed below about leadership do you lean toward? Do these results confirm or contradict your understanding of your personal values and proclivities? Do you see this influence your interactions with other people? What other definitions or elements of leadership feel important to you that have not been named?

- Trait emphasis: inherent qualities that make a person more fit for leadership. Born leader idea.
- Ability emphasis: leadership can be learned.
- Skill emphasis: leadership is a competency that can be gained by anyone.
- Behavior emphasis: focused on observable behaviors.
- Relationship emphasis: centered on the communication between leaders and followers.
- Influence process emphasis: highlights the process where leaders influence followers.

Develop

You've spent some time conceptualizing your understanding of leadership as well as the qualities of leaders that you admire. The next mentoring session will focus on personal leadership styles and strengths and their relationship with ethics. Between now and then, consider the following:

- What would other people say that I value as a leader?
- What leadership strengths and qualities do I demonstrate?
- What words would others use to describe my leadership style?
- In what areas or contexts do I influence other people's attitudes or behaviors?