

Mentorship Modules

Discussion Guide 4: Choose Your Own Adventure!

For this session, discuss with your mentor/mentee which of the following modules you would like to focus on. Choose a topic that aligns with your development and conversation goals. **(Note that each topic has a separate discussion guide on subsequent pages.)**

If you have an alternative activity or discussion guide that you think would be beneficial, you are welcome to use it. You can also use this time to dive into dialogue about things the student has been learning during CLA Self-Reflections or other CLA events, or to have more career-focused conversations.

- **Handling Conflict**
- **Discussing Leadership Theories**
- **Leadership and Trust**
- **Finding Common Ground**

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Discussion Guide 4A: Handling Conflict

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

Conflict is virtually inevitable in professional (and certainly personal) settings, and handling conflict is a rather universal leadership challenge. Conflicts can arise due to stress, communication styles, competing interests, problem solving approaches, and a host of other major and minor issues. In general terms, conflict can be divided into two camps: content (related to policies and procedures) and relational (over values, beliefs, control, goals).

Discuss

Share a conflict (that you're comfortable sharing) that you've recently experienced or witnessed. Was it personal or professional? Was it a content or relational issue? How did it develop and who did it involve? Did it escalate and how? Did it affect others? Was it resolved, and how? How did you feel during the conflict? Are you satisfied with the resolution? Are there lingering effects from the conflict?

Discover

Take the "[Conflict Style Questionnaire](#)", using a personal example for "Person A" and a professional example for "Person B." Score your answers from the scale to see what your dominant styles for handling conflict were in those situations.

- Are they similar?
- Do they confirm or contradict how you believe you act when confronted with conflict? If they contradict your self-understanding, what do you think accounts for the discrepancy?
- What are the benefits of your dominant style of handling conflict, and what are the drawbacks? How does the way you handle conflict benefit or hurt you or others? Why?

Develop

Handling conflict often involves not just communication skills but emotional intelligence and regulation as well. In examining and considering the way you approach and handle conflict, can you identify any steps you can take to more effectively manage conflict that arises? Can you identify any actionable steps or goals that you can put into practice so that you're better able to avoid, manage, and resolve conflict? Write those down and practice them throughout the next few weeks.

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Discussion Guide 4B: Discussing Leadership Theories

Adapted from W. Wagner et al.'s [*Exploring Leadership For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference*](#)

Conceptions about the nature of leadership and who is engaged in the leadership process have changed over time. Review the list below to better understand the evolving approaches of leadership.

Approach	Major Assumptions
Great Man	Leadership development is based on Darwinist principles. Leaders are born, not made. Leaders have natural abilities of power and influence.
Trait	A leader has superior or endowed qualities. Certain individuals possess a natural ability to lead. Leaders have traits that differentiate them from followers.
Behavioral	There is one best way to lead. Leaders who express high concern for both people and production will be the most effective.
Situational/ Contingency	Leaders act differently, depending on the situation. The situation determines who will emerge as a leader. Different leadership behaviors are required for different situations.
Influence	Leadership is an influence or social exchange process. Leadership is the process of influencing others, regardless of position.

Discuss

What would be your critique of each approach? Is there an approach that is more appealing to you? Why? Is there one that you do not like? What do you think could be some of the historical and cultural reasons for the shift in approaches and theories over time?

Discover

Together, provide specific examples of leaders who leadership can be described based on each approach (Great Man, Trait, and so on). What is it about these leaders that reflect each approach? Now, consider one of your own “personal best” leadership experience – an experience in which you were most effective. What theory or approach best describes how you led in that situation?

Develop

The above approaches are ways that others have defined leadership. Reflect on the people in both your personal and professional worlds life that you would call “leaders.” As you interact with them, consider which of the above approaches align with your views of them.

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Discussion Guide 4C: Leadership and Trust

Adapted from Kouzes and Posner's "The Student Leadership Challenge Facilitation and Activity Guide"

In this session you will have the opportunity to consider how trust impacts leadership and the perceptions of leaders.

Discuss

Trust can be defined as "a belief in the abilities, integrity, and character of another person." What kinds of actions and traits come to mind when you think about trust? Do your ideas of trust differ when you think about individuals versus organizations?

Discover

Consider two leaders in your life (does not have to be current): one you trust and one you don't trust. Individually, mark two sides of a sheet of paper with "Trust" and "Lack of Trust". Under the "Trust" column, list the traits/behaviors that led you to trust that person. Under the "Lack of Trust" column, list traits/behaviors that prevented you from trusting that person. Finally, list the impact each person's behavior had on you, your work, your team, your organization, the world. Once completed, discuss with each other, and make note of common themes.

Some questions to discuss:

- What does this tell us about the importance of trust in effective leadership?
- What is the impact of trust in a relationship? Lack of trust?
- What other skills and competencies are important when building and maintaining trust?

Develop

Trust is often built in micro-moments. Consider the ways that you are building and breaking trust in your interactions with others. Throughout the next few weeks, spend time intentionally reflecting on the following questions:

- Where am I building trust?
- Where am I breaking trust?

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Discussion Guide 4D: Finding Common Ground

Adapted from the Washington State Bar Association "Mentorship Program Toolkit"

Common ground can be defined as the space two or more individuals are able to occupy through a shared experience. This is where we build on our similarities. Each time similarities are discovered, the common ground shared expands its space to include both participants. As this space expands, the relationship organically strengthens, and the connection deepens. This provides fertile ground for continued mutual learning and a more sustainable relationship. It also leads to more respect for one another's differences. This module will offer an opportunity to practice seeking common ground with your mentor/mentee, as well as honoring your differences.

Discuss: Try to find a commonality with each other (this could be the state or town you grew up in, your family makeup, a hobby or a shared identity such as being a parent). Spend some time discussing that similarity, sharing the joys, challenges, memories and how it has impacted you.

Discover: The other side of common ground is overcoming the fear or judgment of differences. Sometimes individuals are afraid of cross-cultural or cross-generational conversations because they worry about making a social faux pas. Other times individuals lack humility, curiosity, or an open mind when it comes to differences. Consider some of the following words or phrases and allow each other to share what they mean to you, and where (if at all) you learned about them. Challenge yourself to actively listen to your partner, and ask questions to learn more:

- Implicit or unconscious bias
- Conflict resolution
- Systemic oppression
- Civil discourse
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Cultural humility/cultural competence

Develop: Reflect upon and discuss the ways that your own experiences and identities are different from those around you, and how those differences could impact how you experience the world. Throughout the next few weeks, as you notice the natural differences between yourself and others, consider ways to be curious, humble, and nonjudgmental about those differences AND also seek out ways to identify commonalities. Some natural differences that could pop up include (but aren't limited to):

- Professional experience
- Cultural background
- Generation
- Racial stereotypes
- Gender perceptions
- Disability/impairment
- Economic status