

WORKSHOP LESSON PLAN

CHARACTER OF LEADERSHIP

Description

This session introduces high school students to character ethics.

Learning Objectives

After completing this session, the student should know:

- Basic character ethics principles
- The role of ethical decisions in leadership
- Various successful character ethics techniques

Materials Required

- Overhead projector, screen, extension cord, and spare bulb
- Two overhead transparencies reproduced from Handouts/Overheads at the end of this lesson plan
- Copies of two handouts reproduced from Handouts/Overheads at the end of this lesson plan (one copy for each student)

Session Time Required

Approximately 50 minutes

What Is Character?

Ask the students to define character. Write their answers on a flip chart pad or chalkboard and display them in the front of the room.

(Display the “Definition of Character” overhead from Handouts/Overheads at the end of this lesson plan.)

Character of Leaders

Ask students to name some character traits of good leaders. Write their answers on a flip chart or chalkboard for all to see.

You don’t inherit good character or the ability to lead. Nor can anyone give you the character traits to be a good leader. You acquire leadership potential by taking an honest look at yourself. What are your strengths of character? Which of the traits that we listed for leaders do you possess? Which do you lack?

Organizations seek good leaders regardless of whether the organization in question is the student council, a Learning for Life group, or a business. If you work at acquiring those skills needed to be a good leader, you will find that you (1) accomplish your goals as a leader and (2) have the willing obedience, confidence, loyalty, and respect of your team. In fact, you will have lived up to the definition of a leader.

(Display the “14 Leadership Character Traits” overhead and distribute the “14 Character Leadership Traits” handout from Handouts/Overheads at the end of this lesson plan.)

14 Character Traits

The military services have a list of 14 character traits they say define good leaders. Compare this list with our earlier list you suggested. How many of the traits are the same?

Let’s look closely at each trait. As we consider each of these traits, ask yourself whether it applies only to military leaders or to other types of leaders, as well. Then rate yourself on this character trait.

Integrity. One synonym is honesty. Do you want a leader known to lie? Do others? Of course not. If you want to win people’s trust, make sure you always speak the truth. When you give your word,

keep it. People will come to believe you are a person who can be believed.

Knowledge. Leaders know their jobs. They know how to use any equipment needed on the job and have the ability to train others. People can spot people who fake it. If you don’t know something, admit it. Then find out. Good leaders also know the people under them—whose performance is high and whose needs closer supervision.

Courage. This trait comes in two kinds: physical and moral. If you are in a tight place and feel fear, learn to make it work for you. Remember that fear stimulates the body processes while preparing you for a fight. Fix your mind on your goal, and then take some action. Courage grows with action, even if it turns out not to have been the very best decision. At least you will not have let your fear overwhelm you as a leader.

As for moral courage, know what’s right and stand up for it. People who don’t will never command the loyalty and respect of others. A leader must also be a moral leader. When you’re wrong, say so. Don’t try to weasel out of your mistake. Accept full responsibility. Everybody makes a mistake now and then. The trick is not to make the same one twice.

Decisiveness. Get all the facts before you make a decision. Being decisive doesn’t mean making quick judgments without facts. After you’ve weighed all the facts, give your decision in clear, confident terms. Don’t confuse people by debating with yourself out loud. If you don’t have the authority or responsibility to make a particular decision, take the problem to the person who does.

Dependability. If only one word could be used to describe good leaders, that word would have to be “dependable.” Dependable leaders are always on time, never make excuses, and stay on the job until it’s done, regardless of obstacles. They often make personal sacrifices. During decision making, they state their ideas clearly and tactfully if they disagree with others above them. But once a decision is made, they put their disagreement aside and work to complete whatever assignment they receive.

Initiative. Think ahead. Stay mentally alert and physically awake. Look around. If you see a job that needs to be done, don't wait to be told. Your situation and the lot of others can always be improved. Do what you can. Use the means at hand. Think ahead, and you'll stay ahead!

Tact. Tactful leaders are fair, firm, and friendly. They respect others by showing them courtesy—whether they are people above them or below them in authority. If a person needs to be corrected, tactful leaders do so in private. If a person deserves praise, it is given in public. Tactful leaders follow the Golden Rule, treating others as they would wish to be treated.

Justice. People like a leader who plays fair. Don't play favorites. Spread the rewards and the work around equally. Keep anger and emotions out of your decisions. Get rid of any narrow-mindedness or biases that get in the way of true leadership. Judge people by what they do. Help those who fall short of your standards, but keep your standards high.

Enthusiasm. People will follow leaders who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their jobs. Show knowledge and enthusiasm about a subject, and your team will want that same knowledge. Show your dislikes and gripe about what's going on and you'll still be leading—but in the wrong direction. The choice is yours. Make the right one.

Bearing. Conduct yourself so you look and act like a leader. Dress the part and learn to control your looks and gestures. A calm voice and a steady hand are confidence builders when it gets rough. Speak plainly and simply. Remember that your goal is to be understood rather than to impress. Don't lose your temper or control of your tongue. If you do, you'll lose the respect of those under you.

Endurance. A five-foot team leader once led his men through 10 days of field training. He topped it off with a two-day hike 36 miles back to camp. When asked how a man of his size developed such endurance, he said: "It was easy. I had 12 guys pushing me all the way." What he meant, of course, was that 12 others were dependent on his endurance to pull them through. He couldn't think about quitting. All leaders must have endurance beyond that of their subordinates. Team leaders must check everyone's work in addition to doing their own.

Unselfishness. Good leaders are not selfish. They put the interest and needs of those under them ahead of their own private interests. They give credit where credit is due, and they don't grab the glory for themselves. They make certain that recognition for hard work and good ideas goes to team members.

Loyalty. This is a two-way street. It goes all the way up and down the line. You should live by it. Back your team when they're right. Correct them when they're wrong. You're being loyal either way. Keep your personal problems and the private lives of others to yourself. But help your people in their difficulties when it is proper to do so. Never criticize your team or your boss in the presence of subordinates. Make sure they don't do it either. If your people get into trouble, go to bat for them if they deserve for you to do so. They'll work harder when it's all over.

Judgment. This comes with experience. It is simply weighing all the facts in any situation, applying the other 13 traits you have just read about, then making the best move. Until you acquire experience, you may not know the best move. What should you do in the meantime? Well, there are hundreds of years of experience out there. Ask someone with experience for advice. You will be surprised how often others will be glad to help.

Closing

This is all well and good for the military, but how does it apply to business in general?

(Distribute the "Lockheed Martin: Our Value Statements" handout from Handouts/Overheads at the end of this lesson plan.)

Take a look at the mission statement of the large aerospace firm Lockheed Martin. Ask the students, "Can you find where it mentions any of the same leadership traits?"

Wait for the students to suggest where the traits appear in the mission statement.

It should be apparent that character is important to the leadership and membership of every organization, whether it be a student club, a business, a military unit, or a government bureau. If you want to be a good leader, you need to continue to develop the traits that all good leaders share.

DEFINITION OF CHARACTER

char·ac·ter n.

1. The combination of qualities or features that distinguishes one person, group, or thing from another.
2. A distinguishing feature or attribute, as of an individual, a group, or a category.
3. Moral or ethical strength.
4. A description of a person's attributes, traits, or abilities.
5. Public estimation of someone; reputation: personal attacks that damaged his or her character.
6. Law. Of or relating to a person who gives testimony as to the moral and ethical reputation or behavior of one engaged in a lawsuit: a character witness.

American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition

14 LEADERSHIP CHARACTER TRAITS

1. Integrity
2. Knowledge
3. Courage
4. Decisiveness
5. Dependability
6. Initiative
7. Tact
8. Justice
9. Enthusiasm
10. Bearing
11. Endurance
12. Unselfishness
13. Loyalty
14. Judgment

14 LEADERSHIP CHARACTER TRAITS

1. **Integrity.** One synonym is honesty. Do you want a leader known to lie? Do others? Of course not. If you want to win people's trust, make sure you always speak the truth. When you give your word, keep it. People will come to believe you are a person who can be believed.
2. **Knowledge.** Leaders know their jobs. They know how to use any equipment needed on the job and have the ability to train others. People can spot people who fake it. If you don't know something, admit it. Then find out. Good leaders also know the people under them—whose performance is high and whose needs closer supervision.
3. **Courage.** This trait comes in two kinds: physical and moral. If you are in a tight place and feel fear, learn to make it work for you. Remember that fear stimulates the body processes while preparing you for a fight. Fix your mind on your goal, and then take some action. Courage grows with action, even if it turns out not to have been the very best decision. At least you will not have let your fear overwhelm you as a leader.

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4. **Decisiveness.** Get all the facts before you make a decision. Being decisive doesn't mean making quick judgments without facts. After you've weighed all the facts, give your decision in clear, confident terms. Don't confuse people by debating with yourself out loud. If you don't have the authority or responsibility to make a particular decision, take the problem to the person who does.
5. **Dependability.** If only one word could be used to describe good leaders, that word would have to be "dependable." Dependable leaders are always on time, never make excuses, and stay on the job until it's done, regardless of obstacles. They often make personal sacrifices. During decision making, they state their ideas clearly and tactfully if they disagree with others above them. But once a decision is made, they put their disagreement aside and work to complete whatever assignment they receive.
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14 LEADERSHIP CHARACTER TRAITS (CONTINUED)

8. **Justice.** People like a leader who plays fair. Don't play favorites. Spread the rewards and the work around equally. Keep anger and emotions out of your decisions. Get rid of any narrow-mindedness or biases that get in the way of true leadership. Judge people by what they do. Help those who fall short of your standards, but keep your standards high.
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LOCKHEED MARTIN: OUR VALUE STATEMENTS

Ethics

We will be well-informed in the regulations, rules, and compliance issues that apply to our businesses around the world. We will apply this knowledge to our conduct as responsible employees of Lockheed Martin, and will adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct in all that we do.

Excellence

The pursuit of superior performance infuses every Lockheed Martin activity. We excel at meeting challenging commitments even as we achieve total customer satisfaction. We demonstrate leadership by advancing new technologies, innovative manufacturing techniques, enhanced customer service, inspired management, and the application of best practices throughout our organization. Each of us leads through our individual contributions to Lockheed Martin's core purpose.

"Can-Do"

We demonstrate individual leadership through a positive approach to every task, a "can-do" spirit, and a restless determination to continually improve upon our personal bests. We aggressively pursue new business, determined to add value for our customers with ingenuity, determination and a positive attitude. We utilize our ability to combine strength with speed in responding enthusiastically to every new opportunity and every new challenge.

Integrity

Each of us brings to the workplace personal values that guide us to meet our commitments to customers, suppliers, colleagues, and others with whom we interact. We embrace truthfulness and trust, and we treat everyone with dignity and respect—as we wish to be treated ourselves.

People

Outstanding people make Lockheed Martin unique. Success in rapidly changing markets requires that we continuously learn and grow as individuals and as an organization. We embrace lifelong learning through individual initiative, combined with company-sponsored education and development programs, as well as challenging work and growth opportunities.

LOCKHEED MARTIN: OUR VALUE STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

Teamwork

We multiply the creativity, talents, and contributions of both individuals and businesses by focusing on team goals. Our teams assume collective accountability for their actions, share trust and leadership, embrace diversity, and accept responsibility for prudent risk-taking. Each of us succeeds individually . . . when we as a team achieve success.