**Leadership Lessons**

**Leadership Goals:** Youth will be better equipped to make educated, ethical decisions while in a leadership position.

**Learner Objectives:**

Youth will:

• Strengthen their understanding of the importance of applying ethical decision-making skills in leadership situations.

• Recognize the characteristics of principled leaders.

**Lesson Plan:**

1. Ask young people, and then explain further: What guides you in life as you make your decisions? Do you have a roadmap? A compass? In fact, you do! The roadmap that you turn to when you need direction is your system of values. The compass that tells you whether things are right or wrong is your principles. What does this mean? To illustrate this idea, let’s think of some examples. If you have to choose between watching a big game on TV or helping a good friend move, the roadmap that helps get you to your end decision is the value you have for friendship. The compass inside you that tells you if you are doing the right thing is your core principle of treating others as you want to be treated.

Sounds a little corny maybe, but it works. If you are lost and you have a map and a compass, you can always find your way. It is the same for our decision making process; if you feel confused, what do you fall back on to help you make the choice? “Okay”, you say, “I see where this is going”. But where do you get your values and principles? Like most things, they are learned; from your family, your school, your community, your friends and so on. We come to value and believe things through our experiences. What do values and principles have to do with leadership? The values and principles of a group or organization tend to take on the values and principles of its leadership. As a leader, you set the tone for how things work and how decisions are made. Leaders must ask not only what they have as their personal system of values and principles, but what they want as the system to guide decision making and behavior within their organization.

2. Provide young people with the following characteristics of principled leaders from Stephen R. Covey in *Principle-Centered Leadership:*

1) ***They are continually learning*** – they seek training, learn from their experiences and listen to others.

2) ***They are service-oriented*** – they see life as a mission to serve others.

3) ***They radiate positive energy*** – they have optimistic attitudes and are positive and upbeat.

4) ***They believe in other people*** – they do not over-react to criticism, negative behavior or human weaknesses, as they understand that behavior and potential are different things.

5) ***They lead balanced lives*** – they are active socially and intellectually, and have many life interests.

6) ***They see life as an adventure*** – they savor life and are not afraid of the unknown, as they know it will be exciting and educational.

7) ***They are synergistic*** – they are catalysts for change, improving any situations in which they become involved.

8) ***They exercise self-renewal*** – they regularly exercise the four dimensions of the human personality: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

3. Have participants break into small groups of 3-6 people. Assign each group one scenario from the list on the next page. Each group must have one recommended response to the situation – even if individuals feel differently. Then groups will name the values and principle that guided their choices. Allow 10-15 minutes for this activity, and then reconvene to discuss the results.

4. Provide young people with the Five Ethical Principles Handout and have them re-evaluate their situations. How did their decisions change or stay the same?

**Reflection Questions:**

• Were people generally in agreement about how to react? If so, why? If not, how did you resolve various approaches to come up with only one group response?

• What values and principles did you identify that helped guide you?

• Is it hard to distinguish between principles and values?

• Did going through the identification of the values and principles change your thoughts about how to respond?

• Have you had a decision to make in life that was difficult? What guided you?

• How do we tend to make simple decisions more difficult?

• As a leader, do you find yourself relying on your core principles to make decisions?

• How did the leader’s or group’s principles direct the decision made?

• What core principles guide your decisions?

• How do we consider our principles on a daily basis?

• Do you convey your principles to others? How?

Adapted by Annie Hobson, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator; Buffalo County, WI; February 2008 from *Recipes for Leadership* by Rory Klick, UW-Extension.

**Principled Leadership Situations**

***Situation #1***

You are running late and have to prepare for a big meeting that morning. You made it to the

parking lot and see the train is just pulling into the station. You can just make it if you hurry. As

you are waiting to put your parking money into the slot, an older woman stumbles and drops her

money on the ground. Pausing even a couple minutes to help her might cause you to miss your

train, and the next train will get you to work only minutes before your meeting and you’ll have no

time to prepare.

· ***What do you do? What are the risks/costs to you?***

***Situation #2***

You are watching your daughter play soccer and standing at the edge of the field. Since the

children are only 3-4 years old, there is a lot of chaotic activity as each child has a ball to

practice moving down the field. One of your child’s teammates is behaving badly and taking the

practice balls away from other players. The coach intervenes as the teammate takes the ball

from your daughter. The teammate runs away with the ball down the field, so the coach simply

engages your daughter with another ball and lets the other child calm down. A few minutes

later, you notice the teammate’s father go and grab the child and take him behind the hedge

along the parking lot. Since you are standing at the edge of the field, you can see the father

take the child, pick him up and shake him hard while yelling directly at the child’s face. They do

not return to the field.

· ***What do you do? What are the risks/costs to you?***

***Situation #3***

You are working as a volunteer for a charity, and you are helping run the big annual fundraiser,

a benefit walk. Hundreds of people have shown up to walk, and you are really busy taking

registrations all morning. Once things calm down and the walkers are out on the course, you

notice one of the organizers taking money out of the cash boxes. When the organizer sees you

looking, she politely says that she is just taking some money out of the boxes so there isn’t so

much cash sitting around. However you notice that she isn’t counting the money she removes

from each cash box. Later you hear from other event organizers that they were disappointed in

the revenue generated from registration; it wasn’t as much as they had thought they would bring

in, given all the people.

· ***What do you do? What are the risks/costs to you?***

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**FIVE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

**Respect Autonomy**

It is assumed that individuals have the right to decide how they live their lives, as long as their actions do not interfere with the welfare of others. One, therefore, has the right to act as a free agent and the freedom of thought and choice.

**Do No Harm**

The obligation to avoid inflicting either physical or psychological harm on other may be a primary ethical principle.

**Benefit Others**

There is an obligation to improve and enhance the welfare of others, even where such enhancements may inconvenience or limit the freedom of the person offering the assistance.

**Be Just**

To be just in dealing with others assumes equal treatment of all, to afford each individual their due portion, and in general, to observe the Golden Rule.

**Be Faithful**

One should keep promises, tell the truth, be loyal, and maintain respect and civility in human discourse. Only as we sustain faithfulness can we expect to be seen as being trustworthy.

Ethical principles are sometimes in conflict with each other as we apply them to real-life ethical dilemmas. No one principle is absolute and there are times when a higher standard of ethical conduct requires the violation of one or more principles. This places a strong burden on the individual to provide rationale for rejecting the principle.

Kitchener, K.S. (1985). Ethical Principles and decision in student affairs. In H. J. Canon

and R. D. (Eds.), *Applied Ethics in Student Services.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey

Bass, Inc.