

Leadership Is...

Taking Responsibility



Language of Responsibility

Self-Reflection: Reply to these short-answer questions as honestly as possible. They are meant for you to dissect your behaviors in regard to “taking responsibility.” In order to be an effective leader, we need to understand why we behave the way we do.

1. How do you define responsibility? Explain what it means to you.
2. Is it hard for you to take responsibility for your words or actions when they have hurt or offended someone else? Why or why not?
3. Responsibility and blame are often used interchangeably, however, they mean two different things. How do you think taking responsibility is different from taking the blame?

1. When do you think you most often avoid taking responsibility? With certain people? In particular situations?

2. What steps will you need to take in order to implement the “language of responsibility” in your life?

Apply the Concepts

Directions:

Change the following statements into more positive, assertive messages. Use the following format to guide you in building sentences that take more responsibility.

- 1. Identify your feeling (emotion).**
 - Make sure it's a feeling and not a thought!
- 2. Describe the behavior you observed.**
 - Remember to use descriptive language, not language that evaluates and judges.
- 3. Share the way you have interpreted the person's behavior.**
 - By sharing this, they have an opportunity to understand your perception
- 4. Share the possible consequences the person's behavior has for you.**
 - This is how the behavior is affecting you
- 5. Ask for clarification (bonus step).**
 - Offer them a chance to explain how they are feeling, giving them the benefit of the doubt.

Example Scenario:

Your best friend tells your group of friends about the bad quiz scores you received in two of your classes this week. You reply using “You” language:

- “You’re such a jerk. It’s like you don’t know how to keep things to yourself!”

“I” Language:

I get embarrassed (your feeling) when I hear you talk about my bad scores in front of our friends (observed behavior). It makes me think that you don’t care about me (interpretation of behavior), and I worry that our friends will think I am dumb (consequence).

Writing Your Own Statements

"I" Language:

Scenario #1: You have a team member who keeps showing up late to the meetings you run after school. They know the rules, yet they keep breaking them. They haven't even apologized to you for showing up late. How can you approach them using "I" language?

"We" Language:

Scenario #2: The team room has been a disaster this week. Paint, markers, and construction paper have been left out even though you have asked for them to be put away at the end of each day. How can you approach your team using "I/We" language?

"It" Statement:

Scenario #3: You're having a meeting with your team about your upcoming fundraiser. Someone offers an idea you don't really like.

- You say: "It's a bad idea."

Rewrite this statement without using "it":

"But" Statement:

Scenario #4: There are too many posters made for the event and not enough places to put them. You have been instructed by your faculty director to choose only four posters out of the seven that were made.

- You say: "It's a bad idea."

Rewrite this statement without using "but":

Writing Your Own Statements: Answer Key

[Possible Answer to Scenario #1]

"Hi Dani, when I noticed that you have been late to multiple meetings this week (**observed behavior**), I was starting to feel hurt and upset (**your feeling**) because I thought maybe you didn't respect me (**interpretation of behavior**). This has made it hard for me to focus (**consequence**) and I wanted to check in with you to see if everything is okay (**clarification**)."

[Possible Answer to Scenario #2]

"This week when I have been closing up our room, I noticed that there have been many supplies left out (**observed behavior**). This stresses me out (**your feeling**) because I know Ms. Smith could come by at any time and reprimand our team for not keeping our space tidy (**consequence**). I don't know if everyone has been feeling overwhelmed (**interpretation of behavior**) or if we just needed a reminder (**interpretation of behavior**) of the importance of keeping a clean team room. I want us all to be on the same page, does anyone have suggestions on how we could help each other keep the place more organized (**clarification**)?"

[Possible Answer to Scenario #3]

"I think we may run into some problems with that idea."

[Possible Answer to Scenario #4]

"I really appreciate the excellent posters you all made for our event, I understand you put a lot of time and effort into making them. Unfortunately, we are being asked to only use four of them for the event. Here are a few ideas I have about how we can choose which ones to use and what to do with the extra posters."