



RealCareer™
Leadership Soft
Skills Program

LEADERSHIP
SOFT SKILLS
SCENARIO CARDS

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Suggested uses for Leadership Scenario Cards:

5-minute icebreaker activity

1. Begin your class with a quick 5-minute leadership scenario challenge
2. Pick one scenario and read it to the class (you could also show it on a document projector).
3. Get students into small groups to discuss the leadership scenario, key questions and various points of view.
4. Have the class come back together and share answers to the key questions.

Journaling activity

1. Teach the leadership skills lesson. At the conclusion, choose the Leadership Scenario Card that matches the skill taught in that lesson.
2. Use the leadership scenario as a journal-writing prompt and have students answer the key questions in writing.

Pre- and post-assessment

1. Choose the leadership skill you wish to teach. Find the Leadership Scenario Card that matches that skill. Have students answer the key questions in writing.
2. Teach the lesson on the leadership skill you have chosen.
3. After teaching the lesson, have students go back to the original Leadership Scenario Card and answer the key questions again using the new skills they have learned.

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Trust

Scenario: Tiffany was recently hired at a new engineering firm and arrived at her first day of employment, positive and ready for orientation. Within the first hour, however, she was very surprised. She found that she was not ready for the fast-paced, high level environment of her new position. By mid-afternoon, Tiffany thought perhaps she had made a mistake in taking the job at all. She felt like they made a mistake in hiring her, and perhaps won't be able to meet her department's needs.

On her way to the break room to get a cup of coffee, her coworker, Jack, asked Tiffany to sit down and take a quick break with him. Tiffany was glad Jack was friendly and let herself relax for the first time in the day. During their brief break, Jack mentioned the engineering director, Jay Johnson, and how Jay recently got a warning from the vice-president. Next, Jack mentioned Jane, the IT manager, and how Tiffany should be careful not to trust her. Lastly, Jack then talked about Vincent, the accountant. He said Vincent was in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and was still having a problem with his alcoholism.

Jack asked if Tiffany would like to go for a happy hour after work. He said, "You'll see. In a few days you'll figure out who is screwed up and who isn't; you'll get the feel of the place. It will be fine." Tiffany is hesitant to go to happy hour with Jack, as she is unsure if she can trust him not to gossip about her!

Points of view to consider

- Tiffany
 - Jack
 - Jay Johnson, engineering director
 - Jane, IT manager
 - Vincent, accountant
-

Key questions

- How can Tiffany figure out who she can trust in her new workplace?
- Should she go to happy hour with Jack? Why or why not?
- How would you advise Tiffany to proceed in the next few weeks and months at work?
- What can Tiffany do to make sure that she is someone her colleagues can trust?

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Professionalism

Scenario: Jill is working as a sales person at a high-level men's clothing store. Her customers are generally executive level professionals that expect excellent service and attention to detail. The owner of the store, Max, has hired a new tailor named Ethan. Jill has to interact with Ethan whenever her customers need to alter anything that they have purchased.

On Ethan's first day, he arrives in distressed jeans and a t-shirt. The tailor shop is located in the back of the store and Ethan didn't feel that he needed to 'dress up' because he is hardly seen. Max is only in the store sporadically and leaves most of the day-to-day tasks up to Jill. Jill is upset with Ethan's attire and tells him that he needs to dress more professionally because their clientele would expect that. Ethan rolls his eyes when Jill tells him this, but he doesn't say anything. Does it really matter what he wears? After all, it was his tailoring skill that got him the job.

Points of view to consider

- Jill, sales person
 - Ethan, tailor
 - Max, store owner
 - Customers
-

Key questions

- What should Ethan do to look more professional?
- What should Ethan do to act more professional?
- Does it really matter what Ethan wears? Why or why not?
- What could Max do as the owner to help his employees understand the professional standards that are expected at his store?

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Coaching and Mentoring

Scenario: Laura is a warehouse supervisor at a local manufacturing plant. She is a polite person and gets along with her employees pretty well. One thing she seems to lack is intellectual curiosity. When her employees share good ideas with her, she smiles and nods, but the ideas never make it anywhere beyond that. Laura didn't even realize she was doing that. After hearing from a few of the warehouse employees, Laura's manager Marcus hires a mentor named Denise to help coach Laura.

Denise wants to give Laura feedback, so she has collected anonymous examples from several people who report to Laura, including descriptions, as well as how it made them feel. Denise sets up a meeting dedicated to working through this feedback with Laura, and compassionately shares the examples she has collected. Denise advises that when others share an idea with Laura and she doesn't engage with it, people feel discouraged. Denise coaches further, saying that when ideas are put forth, Laura should take the time to consider them. Denise shares that if Laura doesn't like an idea, she should at least explain her reasoning.

The mentoring session worked. Laura had been blind to this pattern and hearing how her behavior affected others.

Points of view to consider

- Laura, warehouse supervisor
 - Laura's employees
 - Marcus, Laura's manager
 - Denise, Laura's coach
-

Key questions

- Does the success of coaching or mentoring depend on the willingness of the person being coached to listen? Why or why not?
- How did Denise mentor or coach Laura specifically?
- What else could Denise do to further coach or mentor Laura?
- Have you ever been coached? How receptive were you? Have you ever coached anyone else? What was that experience like?

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Conflict Resolution

Scenario: Mrs. Gonzales has a history of falls and is now hospitalized for a fractured hip. Olivia is Mrs. Gonzales's nurse and believes that Mrs. Gonzales may no longer be able to care for herself safely at home. Mrs. Gonzales would like to stay at home and have home healthcare visits, but her family would like her to be placed in an assisted living facility. Her son, Scott, is especially vocal in his insistence on having his mother placed at the Dove Healthcare Center Assisted Living Facility. Scott works full time and says he does not have time to always run over and check on his mother. Mrs. Gonzales' daughter, Maria, just wants to keep everyone happy and not upset anyone.

Today, the family is meeting to discuss her future living arrangements. Olivia will be the moderator in hopes of coming up with a solution that everyone agrees on.

Points of view to consider

- Mrs. Gonzales, patient
 - Scott, Mrs. Gonzales' son
 - Maria, Mrs. Gonzales' daughter
 - Olivia, Mrs. Gonzales' nurse
-

Key questions

- How would you recommend that Olivia start the meeting?
- What should Olivia do to help reach a workable solution?
- How should Olivia handle any roadblocks that come up?
- Whose interests are the most important here and why?

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Decision-Making and Goal Setting

Scenario: After two years on the job, Emma is called into her supervisor's office. Anxious, Emma thinks back over the last few months to see if she has made any mistakes at work. She can't think of anything that she had recently done wrong.

Emma is relieved when Mr. Jameson, her supervisor, asks if she would like to take a higher paying position in one of two restaurants. As it turns out, both restaurants have openings and have heard about Emma's excellent managerial skills and work ethic. Emma can have her choice between the two restaurants to manage.

BBQ Heaven is managed by Mr. Kirby, a long-term employee. BBQ Heaven has a reputation for promoting its employees faster than any other restaurant. On the other hand, Mr. Kirby is known to be highly authoritarian and has a quick temper if things don't go according to plan. In fact, his employee turnover rate is twice that of any other restaurant.

Sunset Seafood is supervised by Ms. Wee, a young manager who recently earned a master's degree. Under Ms. Wee's supervision, employees seem to be very motivated and have a good time in the process. Many workers envy the people who work in Ms. Wee's restaurant. On the other hand, no one has been promoted from Ms. Wee's restaurant in the four years since she's been manager.

Points of view to consider

- Emma
 - Mr. Jameson, Emma's supervisor
 - Mr. Kirby, manager of BBQ Heaven
 - Ms. Wee, manager of Sunset Seafood
-

Key questions

- What should Emma do? Why?
- What could Emma do to help make her make an objective decision?
- What long term professional goals could help drive Emma's decision?
- Which restaurant would you rather work in? Why?

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Delegation

Scenario: Just before Jacob can end his job as a sous chef on Saturday night, the restaurant manager, Megan, informs him that she will be taking the next two weeks off due to a medical procedure, and that she is appointing Jacob to take her place starting Monday.

Although Jacob has quite a bit more seniority than the other employees and is an excellent sous chef, he doesn't feel confident in being able to handle Megan's management job. Jacob feels anxious when he thinks of all of the things he has to manage simultaneously. Multitasking is not his strength! He doesn't feel comfortable dealing with the customers, directing the cashiers, or using the cash register, or handling conflicts that may arise between the front of the house serving staff and the kitchen workers. He feels that he will fail to fill her shoes.

Points of view to consider

- Jacob, sous chef
 - Megan, restaurant manager
 - Serving staff
 - Kitchen workers
-

Key questions

- How can Jacob improve his chances of being successful?
- What tasks can Jacob delegate to others?
- Is it fair of Megan to delegate the management responsibilities to Jacob? Why or why not?
- Do you think Jacob can say no to Megan? Do you think he should say no?

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Honesty and Integrity

Scenario: You work for a welding company that doesn't require you to clock out for lunch as long as you do not leave the facility. Your lunch break is 30 minutes long and you choose to bring your own lunch every day. Your coworker Asher, however, leaves daily for lunch. You notice that he does not clock out when he leaves and often returns from lunch five minutes late. After walking in late yet again, Asher comments, "What the boss doesn't know doesn't hurt him. Do five minutes really matter? I mean, it isn't like they pay me enough anyways!"

Points of view to consider

- You
 - Asher, coworker
 - Boss
-

Key questions

- Is Asher an honest person and showing integrity? Why or why not?
- If you know about this situation and don't tell your boss, are you being honest?
- Have you heard the saying 'time is money'? What does this mean?
- What should Asher do differently to act with integrity?

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Diplomacy and Tact

Scenario: You are the manager of a sporting goods store. Today is the annual performance review with your employee, Finn. Here is what you think of Finn:

- He is addicted to his cellphone! He thinks you don't see him using it at work, but you do.
- He often comes to work without his name tag and looking like he just got out of bed. His pants are always wrinkled and his hair looks wild.
- He is socially awkward and appears cold, distracted, and abrupt when speaking to customers.
- He seeks your approval and goes out of his way to try to get compliments from you. He has even offered to do personal errands for you. This makes you uncomfortable.
- He calls coworkers names like 'coach', 'sport', and 'dude'. A few of them have complained about this.

Your store has a well-established employee improvement process. You'll need to address a few of these things in today's review. You feel bad about it because his daughter was recently diagnosed with cancer. He has been struggling with personal issues and has needed time off to deal with things. Your job is to give a tactful review, including necessary information for the improvement plan.

Points of view to consider

- Finn, employee
 - You, manager
 - Coworkers
-

Key questions

- What can you say in the review that would be tactful?
- How do you think your words could impact how Finn receives the message?
- How do the personal issues Finn is facing influence your message? Should Finn's personal issues influence your message?
- How can you ensure that the conversation is handled in a diplomatic way?

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Determination

Scenario: Harper feels really good about her new job. Her supervisor seems happy with her performance. She's learned everything she needed to learn and is proving herself to be a good employee. Her supervisor recently asked her to put together a diversity task force and develop a new policy and, while it was difficult to find volunteers, she managed to do so and create the policy.

Most people at the factory are close to one another and seem like a family. Harper hasn't spent any time getting to know any of them, since she has been spending her time learning how to do her new job. Now she can perform her job as well as any of the other workers or better.

Harper has been thinking about the possibility of becoming a supervisor at the factory. She knows that managers or supervisors at this place are required to complete a management certificate program. She figures she needs a new challenge. She will really need to manage her time well, because in addition to working full time, she has two young children who are in many activities. She cannot stop working to complete the certificate program. She plans to schedule a meeting with her supervisor Manuel next week to discuss the steps she would need to take in order to move up to a supervisory position. Manuel is known for being difficult to speak with.

Points of view to consider

- Harper
 - Manuel, Harper's supervisor
 - Harper's children
-

Key questions

- Do you consider Harper to be someone who exhibits determination? Why or why not?
- Do you think Harper should move ahead with her desire to become a supervisor? Why or why not?
- What can she do to show Manuel that she is ready and willing to do the work that it will take?
- Do you think Harper's lack of getting to know her coworkers will hurt her chances of becoming a supervisor? Why or why not?

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Empathy

Scenario: Joe is a recent hire working as a patrol officer on the night shift and he has to deal with a lot of difficult situations. Archie is acting as a mentor to Joe and is spending the first six months patrolling together. Archie has 20 years of experience and is greatly respected by his peers on the police force.

Last night Joe and Archie responded to a call regarding a car and bicycle accident. An elderly 85 year-old man was driving his car home from the grocery store and he struck a 21 year-old female who was riding a bicycle. When they arrived, Joe found that the female was unresponsive, had no pulse, and had died at the scene. The driver of the vehicle was shaken but had no serious injuries. The driver asked Joe how the biker was doing. Joe had to tell the driver that she had died. The driver became very emotional and wouldn't stop crying.

Later, Archie and Joe went to the bicyclist's home to tell her fiancé what had happened. This is one of the hardest things that Joe has had to do yet. Archie gently tells the news to the fiancé. Joe watches and learns.

Points of view to consider

- Archie, mentor to Joe
 - Joe, patrol officer
 - Drive
 - Cyclist
 - Fiancé
-

Key questions

- What could Joe have done to show the driver empathy?
- How does Archie exhibit empathy when delivering the sad news?
- Are empathy and sympathy the same thing? Why or why not?
- Are there some occupations that require more empathy than others? If so, what occupations need empathetic workers to be successful?

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Servant Leadership

Scenario: Charlotte has just been hired to do a project for a non-profit organization that helps teach new farming techniques in developing countries. The director of the Grow for Life Foundation is Mara Jackson. Mara grew up in a remote part of Africa and moved to the United States as a young adult to attend college. She received a special scholarship from Cornell University and was able to get a degree in Agronomy. It is Mara's greatest desire to take the knowledge she has learned back to her native village to help teach others how to be more productive farmers.

Charlotte has been hired as a summer intern to travel to Africa and teach the villagers several new farming techniques. Mara will stay in the United States to continue fundraising efforts. Charlotte is a junior at Cornell University and looks forward to working with the people in Africa to share what she has learned, but she doesn't want to appear too bossy. She knows that some of the elders are set in their ways, and she worries whether anyone will listen to her or not. The villagers know Mara and her family very well, but no one knows Charlotte. She is anxious to help spread the foundation's vision and pay it forward.

Points of view to consider

- Charlotte, summer intern
 - Mara Jackson, Director of the Grow for Life Foundation
 - Villagers
-

Key questions

- What can Charlotte do to show she is sincere in her efforts to help the villagers learn new techniques?
- What can Mara do to pave the way for Charlotte to be successful?
- What characteristics of servant leadership do Mara and Charlotte exhibit?
- What could Charlotte do to persuade the villagers to listen to her?

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Team Building

Scenario: Milo and Theodore are two new interns in the marketing department of an educational publishing company. The marketing department currently has 8 employees in it and their manager is Sierra. Every Monday, the marketing department has a team meeting where projects are discussed and new tasks are assigned. Everyone in the department has a unique role and works very well together. The new interns are considered an integral part of the team.

Milo has been assigned a new catalog layout to work on. Theodore has been given some tasks related to social media to coordinate. Part of the information Theodore needs for his social media work has to come from the catalog that Milo is working on. Theodore also needs photos from Jen. Theodore has a deadline of Friday to get information out about new products being launched on the company's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter sites. Milo still hasn't finished the catalog text that Theodore needs. Milo doesn't seem to care that it could make Theodore miss his deadline. Jen is also dragging her feet on getting the photos taken. There is tension felt in the marketing department when everyone gets into the office on Thursday morning.

Points of view to consider

- Milo, intern
 - Theodore, intern
 - Jen, marketing team member
 - Sierra, marketing manager
 - Marketing team members
-

Key questions

- What should Theodore do to meet his deadline?
- What could the team do to help avoid missing the deadline?
- What is Sierra's role in managing the workload so that deadlines are not missed by the team?
- What can the team learn from this situation so it doesn't happen again?

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Visionary Leadership

Scenario: Ada Fremont has been working at a family-owned business for the past 20 years. It is not her family that owns the business, but the Toro family. Julio Toro, the family patriarch, invented a medical lifting device 42 years ago that he patented, and then he started a business manufacturing it. Toro Lifting Solutions has since become a recognized leader in the medical market. The Toro family has one daughter, Sienna, who has decided she is interested in pursuing a career in interior design. Julio has decided that since no one in the family is interested in taking over the family business, he is willing to step aside from day-to-day operations and give Ada the title of CEO.

Ada is thrilled that the Toro family has made her this offer. For years she has had ideas for other new products and markets to take Toro Lifting Solutions into. She has never spoken up because she had wanted to honor the vision that Julio had for the business. Ada is certain that with her new ideas, she could set a new wave of growth for the next decade and beyond for the business. Julio will still remain active as the President of the company's Board of Directors. Ada wants to make sure she approaches the Board with her ideas in the best way possible so that they buy into her vision.

Points of view to consider

- Ada Fremont, employee
 - Julio Toro, family patriarch
 - Sienna Toro, daughter of Julio
 - Board of Directors
-

Key questions

- What should Ada do to show she is a visionary leader?
- As President of the Board of Directors, what should Julio do to encourage visionary leadership from Ada?
- What could Ada do to help ease the transition from Julio's leadership to her own?
- How should Ada handle it if Sienna decides she wants to get back into the family business in some way?

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Optimism

Scenario: Lee is the local agriculture teacher at a local high school. The school is small, but their program is robust. It is a rural high school and many students come from backgrounds in agriculture. Lee has a special interest in horticulture and has recently won a grant to purchase several new hydroponics units to use in his classroom.

Lee has four students (Megan, Paula, Seth, and Joel) that want to attend the FFA national convention this year. In order to go, they must raise the funds to pay for the trip. Lee has a plan to use the new hydroponics units to grow flowers that they could sell in their school greenhouse to the public. Mother's Day is coming up soon and Lee has plans to grow many plants for that occasion. There are only 4 days until Mother's Day, and the four students are all committed to helping harvest and sell the flowers after school.

Last night, a really bad storm damaged the school greenhouse and the hydroponics units were tipped over and smashed. When Lee arrived at school, his heart sunk when he saw the mess. A few minutes after he arrived, Megan, Paula, Seth and Joel also arrived in the classroom. What a mess! If the flowering plants cannot be saved, they will not have the funds they need to go to the FFA convention. Lee is staying positive putting on a brave front for the students. They quickly brainstorm a plan of action.

Points of view to consider

- Lee, agriculture teacher
 - Megan, student
 - Paula, student
 - Seth, student
 - Joel, student
-

Key questions

- If you were Lee, what would you identify as positive given the situation?
- How can you convey a sense of hope to the students?
- Do you think having a plan of action will help the group be more optimistic? Why or why not?
- If you were Lee, what would you do in this situation?

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Public Speaking

Scenario: Aiden has been working for a textile company for about 10 years. He has been working in project management. This week, he met with his supervisor Mia Harris for his annual performance review. During the meeting, he heard many positive things and discovered that Mia is generally pleased with his work. One area of focus and growth for the next year is to become more involved in national textile organizations and associations. Aiden is to work on his leadership skills as well.

Aiden has the opportunity to join the National Textile Coalition. He has been asked to do a one-hour presentation at the national conference regarding a unique textile development tool that he helped create at their company. Aiden has little experience speaking in front of large groups; just the thought of it makes him sweat. He has worked hard on the presentation to try to include good information. He is worried that a poor delivery will impact the information that he wants to share.

Points of view to consider

- Aiden, employee
 - Mia Harris, Aiden's supervisor
 - National Textile Coalition members
-

Key questions

- What should Aiden do to prepare for giving his presentation?
- What strategies can Aiden use during the presentation to keep calm and on point?
- How can Mia help mentor Aiden to develop his public speaking skills?
- Where can Aiden get help learning to be a better presenter?

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Observation

Scenario: Stella McCoy is the guidance counselor at a local high school. A local family, the Winstons, recently created a \$500 scholarship to be given to a student that demonstrates good citizenship and community service. Students that are interested have been asked to complete an application. Stella has received 10 applications. Based on the answers to the questions, she has narrowed her choice to her final two. The students that are being considered are Kayla and Joseph.

In order to objectively make her decision, Stella is observing Kayla and Joseph in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and in extra curricular activities. She is watching for a positive attitude and school spirit. Kayla is involved as a volunteer in the Special Olympics and Joseph is a volunteer at a local food bank. Stella has also made an appointment with each student to evaluate their volunteer efforts. Both students are very deserving of this scholarship. Stella has a difficult choice to make.

Points of view to consider

- Stella, guidance counselor
 - Kayla, student
 - Joseph, student
 - The Winston family
-

Key questions

- What can Stella do to improve her observation skills at school?
- What should Stella focus on during the volunteer observations?
- What do you think are the most important things Stella should be looking for?
- Who else could Stella involve to help make the final decision?

Leadership Soft Skills Program

Creativity

Scenario: Jeremiah works for an interior design company. He was recently hired by a local employer, Biochem, to help redesign their office space and help improve communication between their employees in order to increase new product idea generation. Jeremiah loves the challenge and thrives on meeting the needs of the customer while trying to think 'outside of the box.'

Jeremiah decided to completely redesign the interior office space to resemble a calm, small village. The idea was to break down communication barriers. The redesigned office has its own village square and café, which was designed to encourage trust and a feeling of community among employees. The relaxed workplace has increased the effectiveness of employee communication, resulting in the successful launch of new products because of the increased collaboration and communication levels. Jeremiah is thrilled with the results the client has had.

Points of view to consider

- Jeremiah, employee
 - Local employer, Biochem
 - Biochem employees
-

Key questions

- How was Jeremiah creative in his approach?
- What problem was Jeremiah trying to solve in a creative way?
Did it work?
- What could Jeremiah have done if Biochem employees did not like the new space?
- It is easier to be creative when working independently or as a team?
Why or why not?

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People Skills

Scenario: You work for a small cat daycare and grooming company. You have held the same position of evening cat sitter, for over three years. Your boss, Nila, tells you that you will now be working the front desk, meeting with customers and answering the phone. This is not in your current job description. You know that being flexible in your position will help you become a more valuable employee, but you are hesitant to take on this task. You are very shy and like working only with the cats. Just the thought of making small talk with strangers makes you want to quit your job.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
 - Nila, your boss
 - Customers
 - The cats
-

Key questions

- How will you handle the request to work the front desk?
- What questions would you have for Nila?
- Which people skills should you work on to be able to accomplish this new task?
- What could Nila do to help ease you into this new part of the job?

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