

**THE
HUMPHREY/
GROUP**

Taking the Stage®

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



VERSION 6.0

SPEAKING AS A LEADER®, TAKING THE STAGE®, LEADERSHIP CONVERSATIONS®, COMMUNICATION FOR
THE SENIOR LEADER®, PROUD TO LEAD®, THE LEADER'S SCRIPT®, AND THE LEADERSHIP MODEL®
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Welcome

Dear Participant,

Welcome to *Taking the Stage*®!

On behalf of The Humphrey Group, I'm delighted you are attending this program, which we have created for women like you who wish to take the stage. It will enable you to come across as a confident, authentic leader every time you speak.

Throughout this program you'll have the opportunity to discuss shared experiences, brainstorm solutions to a range of challenges, as well as mentor and network with other women. In doing so you will learn the skills to take the stage.

Women tell us over and over again that they have been enormously enriched by this experience, and have enjoyed the opportunity to lead sessions for women who aspire to be strong, confident leaders. In various incarnations, this program has reached over 500,000 women globally, from India to North America, the Middle East to Europe.

This guide will provide you with a set of key points from the sessions, and a place to take notes. As well, it has follow-up exercises that will keep you on track between the sessions.

I know you'll enjoy this program that will enable you to speak up with confidence and clarity every time you have the opportunity to do so!

Sincerely,

Judith Humphrey, Founder
The Humphrey Group Inc.

Program Overview

For over 25 years, The Humphrey Group has been focused on helping our clients lead every time they speak. We take pride in working with executives, managers, and specialists to help them influence and inspire through communication. We are proud to have been a long-standing champion of gender diversity. This commitment is rooted in the firm belief that gender equality is intrinsically valuable to society and, furthermore, that it serves the interests of business. This is supported by research that consistently shows that companies with more female executives in decision-making positions generate stronger market returns and superior profits.

Our firm was founded by Judith Humphrey, whose achievements have supported the advancement of women everywhere. In 2001, Judith created *Taking the Stage*®, a program to teach women how to position themselves as leaders every time they speak. This program is rooted in the belief “that confident self-expression is the key to success in business and life”.

To date, *Taking the Stage*®, in various incarnations, has reached women around the world – from Japan to India, the United States to Europe. This is the program you are about to experience.

While this program has remained focused on leadership communication, over the years it has been updated, evolving to reflect the realities women face in an increasingly globalized business community.

The material included in this program is based on current qualitative and quantitative research on women and leadership, in addition to content, stories, and interviews presented in Judith’s book, *Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed*.

Supported by four videos, this program will introduce you to The Humphrey Group’s *Taking the Stage*® Model – a methodology that gives women the practical, concrete steps to be seen and heard as leaders every time they communicate.

The four steps of the Model will show you how to:

1. Embrace Your Leadership Identity
2. Create a Leader’s Script
3. Achieve the Voice of a Leader
4. Adopt a Leader’s Presence

By learning these steps, you will develop the skill and confidence to communicate in an effective and inspirational manner.

This program is licensed from The Humphrey Group, a leadership communications firm based in Toronto, Canada. The Humphrey Group has developed the videos, facilitator guide and participant workbook for this program.

SESSION 1

Embrace Your Leadership Identity

Overview

To inspire and influence through communication, you need a strong leadership identity. At The Humphrey Group, we define leadership as “the ability to inspire action by shaping belief.”

The first step in this journey is deciding that you want to take the stage. Inspirational leadership begins with embracing yourself as a leader, and recognizing your leadership identity. Remember, you don’t need direct reports or formal authority to lead.

Strong leaders have a well-developed sense of who they are and what they stand for – and they stand for it! Your identity is composed of the characteristics that distinguish you as a leader. These are qualities embraced by you and confirmed by others in your organization through how you communicate.

In this session, we will explore the concept of embracing your leadership identity. You will reflect on the qualities that define your leadership and learn how to use them to influence and inspire others through your communication.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify the qualities that shape your leadership identity.
- Recognize how the 6 principles of mindset can help you embrace a leadership identity.
- Articulate your personal leadership beliefs and values.
- Understand the importance of authenticity in leadership communication.

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The Leader's Mindset

The Leader's Mindset can be distilled into 6 principles. These 6 principles apply to all aspects of leadership and in particular to how you approach communication. They are useful because they are "evergreen": these principles will always be relevant, no matter what your role, organization, or context might be.

When you understand these principles deeply, you can use them to shape your approach to any communication where you wish to inspire someone else with your thinking.

PRINCIPLE 1: VISION

Vision is an imagined future that you believe in, and that you want others to believe in, too. You can also think of your vision as a destination; a place that you're leading others to.

Vision might seem like too lofty an idea to be helpful when you're preparing for an everyday communication. It is an important (possibly the most important) criteria we associate with leaders. **Leaders provide direction.** Their vision, and their ability to communicate that vision, provides clarity and purpose, especially when the future is uncertain.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Where do you have an opportunity to provide vision, clarity, and purpose in your communication?
- What vision can you bring to your organization, your team, or your role?
- Who needs to hear your vision?
- What opportunities do you have to communicate it?

▷ For women, it is also critically important that we communicate our vision effectively and broadly. In a much-discussed article published in Harvard Business Review in 2009, Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obudaru argue that a perceived lack of vision (note the word perceived) is a key impediment to advancement for many women. While they proposed many possible reasons for this perception, the conclusion was simple: women must emphasize and communicate their ability to envision in order to succeed in leadership positions. Learn more in the full article: [Women and the Vision Thing](#).

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PRINCIPLE 2: CONVICTION

A conviction is a deeply held belief. When leaders speak with conviction, others listen. To inspire others, you must believe deeply in what you are saying and what you are asking them to do. Too often, we default to sharing information only or to repeating "party lines" that we don't really believe in. This will never inspire. To shape what others believe, you must share what you believe.

A simple way to bring greater conviction into your every day communication is to prepare a list of the top 5 beliefs you hold about your work. When you have these at hand, you will see opportunities to share your convictions everywhere. When you haven't given them much thought, you'll default to less inspiring messages that are information-based or that repeat standard lines or cliches.

These can be beliefs about yourself and your abilities, your team and the work they are doing, the industry you are a part of, or why your vision is exciting and necessary. Don't be discouraged if the list of 5 beliefs doesn't come easily at first. It can take some time to create a list that you'd be proud to share.

When you've got a few belief statements down, try one of these litmus tests:

- Would you be proud to share this list with someone you respect?
- What feedback would that person give you?
- If someone who knows you well found your list, would they know it was yours?

If you wouldn't be proud to share your list, or if it's too generic to be uniquely yours, then get back to the drawing board.

Developing a set of powerful convictions helps you in moments where you are uncertain. Your convictions are also a powerful way to communicate to others what kind of leader you are and what you stand for.

PRINCIPLE 3: INFORMATION TO INSPIRATION

Information is everywhere. It has never been more accessible or more abundant. No one looks to a leader for more information. We look to leaders for ideas. Subject matter experts provide information; leaders inspire people to act on information.

Many people are hesitant to move from information to inspiration because the facts feel safe. If you stick to the facts, no one can dispute what you are saying, right? Maybe. But it's also true that if you stick

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to the facts, you are leaving it to your audience to do the work of connecting the dots or making meaning out of that information. You're missing the crucial opportunity to shape how people see those facts, and what conclusions they draw from them.

Moving from information to inspiration doesn't mean that you leave out the facts. Your insights won't hold up or be convincing if you can't back them up with relevant data. Practicing this principle is all about deciding what information and how much of it is needed, and putting that information in the right place in your communication.

Later on in this program you will practice using The Leader's Script®. The Script is the **Information to Inspiration** principle in practice! You will learn that the way you organize your ideas can determine whether your audience leaves feeling informed or feeling inspired.

PRINCIPLE 4: COURAGE

Courage is our ability to act even when we feel uncertain or afraid. It is our willingness to face discomfort, opposition, and consequences for sharing our convictions. In English we sometimes use the phrase "the courage of our convictions." These two principles go hand in hand because our convictions can be a source of courage for us when times are tough. And at the same time, it takes great courage to share our convictions and show others who we are and what we believe.

Embracing a leadership identity requires incredible courage, no matter who you are or what your gender identity. Sharing your vision is risky. Communicating your convictions is vulnerable. And moving from information to information is difficult in a world where things are uncertain and even the facts are changing from day-to-day.

Ask yourself:

- Where can you be more courageous?
- What would it mean for you to be courageous in your communication?

For many women, there are additional challenges. Overt sexism happens. Systems still aren't designed to help women thrive. While things have improved in some areas, there is backlash in others. All of this can undermine our courage and make it easier to just play it safe.

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PRINCIPLE 5: EVERYDAY

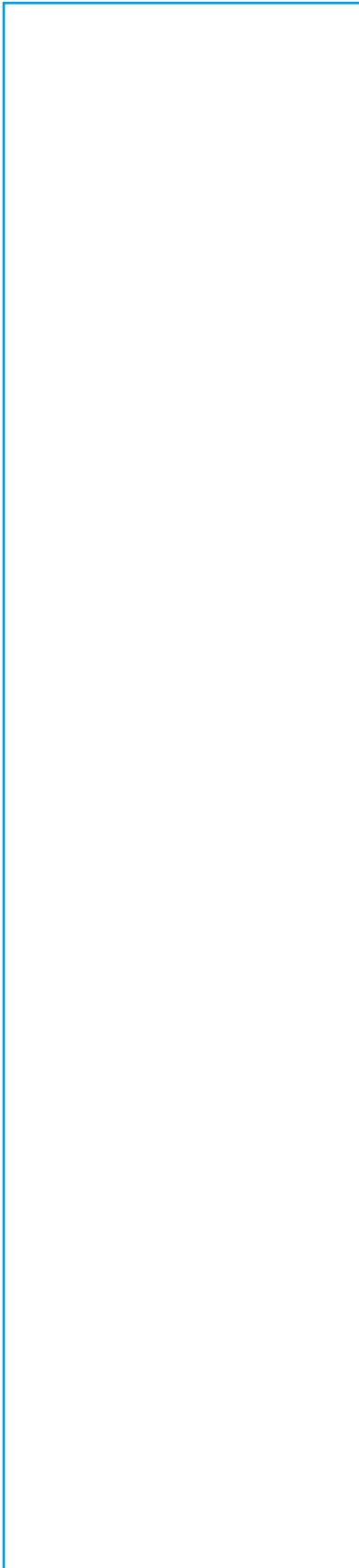
This principle is about consistency. There is no better opportunity to practice this principle than in your day-to-day forms of communication: emails, conversations, and other "low stakes" opportunities. The best leaders take great care to show up consistently in all of these interactions.

For many women, this principle can feel particularly exhausting. Women navigate a complex set of contradictions daily. Here are a few that might sound familiar to you:

- **The double bind.** In short, women can either be viewed as competent OR likeable. But never both. Since both are critical for effective leadership, women are stuck with an impossible choice. This Catalyst Report summarizes the research nicely: [The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership \(Infographic\)](#)
- **The stereotype that women are risk-averse.** Recent research suggests that this simply isn't true. What is true is that women think about risk and calculate risk differently, given the double bind and other perceptions they navigate at work. And when it comes to leading in the business world, this difference isn't a bad thing. Take a look at the evidence presented in this article for more details: [Women Are Risk-Takers, Too: Busting Gender Myths in the Start-up Space](#)
- **The persistent belief that women lack confidence.** For decades, women have been told that if they were only more confident, they would be able to get out of their own way and realize all the success that they deserve. As it turns out, confidence is not as important a leadership trait as many people once believed. In fact, many people are starting to realize that in our complex, uncertain world, there is such a thing as too much confidence. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic makes the case for more competent and less confident leaders in this article: [Is There A Case For Lowering Leaders' Confidence?](#)

Navigating these realities daily can be exhausting for women. It helps to be anchored in your convictions and to have a clear vision motivating you. But choosing to embrace a leadership identity every day despite the challenges above is a true act of courage.

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PRINCIPLE 6: AUDIENCE-CENTERED

The best leaders make others want to follow them. Whether your audience is one person or one hundred people, you must think about what they need from you and fulfill that need.

There is no shortcut to doing this successfully. It takes the hard work of cultivating humility and empathy so that you understand both the limits of your own perspective (humility) and what others care about and need from you (empathy).

Ask yourself:

- Why should my audience care about my message?
- What's in it for them?
- Why should they trust me?
- How can I build trust?

See the following page for a quick summary of the **6 Mindset Principles**.

ADOPT THE LEADER'S MINDSET

Take up the challenges to practice the Leader's Mindset.

VISION

- is your end goal or destination
- is clear and achievable
- guides your words and actions **EVERYDAY**

Challenge: Share your **VISION** with someone today. Complete this sentence: "In my role, I exist to..."

CONVICTION

- is based on your authentic beliefs
- grounds your **VISION**
- helps you practice **COURAGE**

Challenge: Write down 3 **CONVICTIONS** about yourself, your team, your role, or your goals. Complete this sentence: "I believe..."

INFORMATION TO INSPIRATION

- means putting the takeaway before the evidence
- helps you persuade and drive action
- is audience-centered

Challenge: Identify an opportunity to lead with **INSPIRATION** rather than **INFORMATION**. Identify a relevant **CONVICTION** that will inspire your audience.

COURAGE

- allows you to deliver difficult messages
- equips you to face change, discomfort, and challenges
- is based on your **CONVICTION**

Challenge: Identify an upcoming opportunity in which you will need to use **COURAGE**. Then, identify a **CONVICTION** that will help you practice **COURAGE** in the moment.

EVERYDAY

- consistency shows others what to expect from you
- develops your personal leadership brand
- gets you closer to your **VISION**

Challenge: Identify 1 behavior you need to **START**, 1 you need to **STOP**, and 1 you need to **CONTINUE** in order to be more consistent **EVERYDAY**.

AUDIENCE-CENTERED

- means putting your audience first
- means using **INFORMATION TO INSPIRATION**
- must be balanced with your authentic **CONVICTION**

Challenge: Talk to 3 key stakeholders to better understand their beliefs, concerns, and priorities. The information you gather will help you be more **AUDIENCE-CENTERED**.

Session 1: In-Class Activities

The following activities will take place during the live session. Use the spaces provided to fill in your answers. These exercises are meant to be interactive and reflective, so take your time and be thoughtful in your responses.

1. CONVICTION STATEMENT ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Prepare a list of 5 convictions starting with "I believe." Use the following questions to guide you:
 - What core beliefs drive your passion for work?
 - How do your values align with your professional goals?
 - What experiences shape your beliefs about your abilities and your role?

Be ready to share your favorite conviction with the group.

CONVICTION STATEMENT 1:

CONVICTION STATEMENT 2:

CONVICTION STATEMENT 3:

CONVICTION STATEMENT 4:

CONVICTION STATEMENT 5:

2. REFRAMING THE IMPOSTER ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write a negative framing statement you may hold about yourself in the space below.

- Reframe your negative statement into a positive conviction statement. Be prepared to share with the group.

Be ready to share with the group.

Example:

Frame - "I got this position because of luck."

Reframing statement - "I got this position because of hard work and determination."

3. BRAG ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write down what you admire most about yourself and your strong qualities. See how many you can come up with.

4. VISION ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Reflect on where you see yourself heading in your career and as a leader. Consider your goals within your organization, outside of it, and in your overall leadership journey.
- Write down your vision in the space provided below.

Questions to Guide Your Reflection:

- What are your long-term career aspirations?
- How do you envision your role evolving in this organization?
- What leadership qualities do you want to develop?
- How do you see yourself making an impact as a leader?

Exercises to Do at Home, at Work, and On the Go

IDENTIFY A ROLE MODEL

- Think of a female role model, inside or outside your company.
- Write down the qualities you admire in her.
- Reflect on how you can incorporate these qualities into your own identity and communication.

SELF-BRAGGING

- During quiet moments (e.g., on the subway, in traffic), list what you admire most about yourself and your strong qualities.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

- When you catch yourself in negative self-talk, reframe it into positive self-talk.

CRAFT YOUR INTRODUCTION

- Write an introduction that highlights your accomplishments.
- Practice and internalize this introduction for future opportunities.

TAKE THE STAGE

- Commit to speaking up within the first 30 minutes of your next meeting.
- Ask your boss for a chance to speak at the next corporate event.

Before the Next Session...

- List your commitments from this session in the space provided.
- Track your progress to share your successes and challenges in the next session.

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS:

SESSION 2

The Leader's Script and the Language of Leadership

Overview

Once you have embraced your leadership identity, the next step in taking the stage is to communicate your ideas clearly and confidently. Strong leaders prepare for leadership opportunities by organizing their thoughts around a clear structure and using language that inspires action.

In this session, you will learn the tools needed to consistently communicate with clarity and intention, turning every communication into an opportunity to demonstrate leadership. First, you will learn to organize your thoughts effectively by using the Leader's Script®, a template designed to help you prepare for formal, informal, or spontaneous interactions. Second, you will explore the language of leadership, where you will acquire language habits to ensure you are able to express your ideas in a way that inspires.

By applying the Leader's Script® and the language of leadership, you will be able to seize every leadership opportunity to communicate with clarity and intention.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Use the Leader's Script® as a tool to prepare for leadership opportunities by organizing your thinking around a clear structure.
- Apply language habits to express your ideas in a way that inspires.
- Communicate with clarity and intention in both formal and informal settings.
- Frame your message so that it is clear and resonates with your audience.

NOTES:

The Leader's Script®

The Leader's Script® is a powerful tool for organizing your thinking. Transitioning from expert to leader often involves focusing less on what you say, and more on how you say it.

Why Use the Leader's Script®?

The way you convey your ideas can significantly impact your success in persuading your audience, achieving buy-in, or managing a change. It's essential to create a single, clear message that resonates with your audience, frame that message appropriately, and support it with the right amount of information.

The Leader's Script® simplifies this process by providing a fill-in-the-blanks template for planning any persuasive communication.

Use the Leader's Script®:

1. TO COMMUNICATE IDEAS, NOT JUST INFORMATION

In an age of information overload, leaders need to provide insight, not just more data. The Leader's Script® helps focus on your core message, rooted in your beliefs, to inspire others effectively.

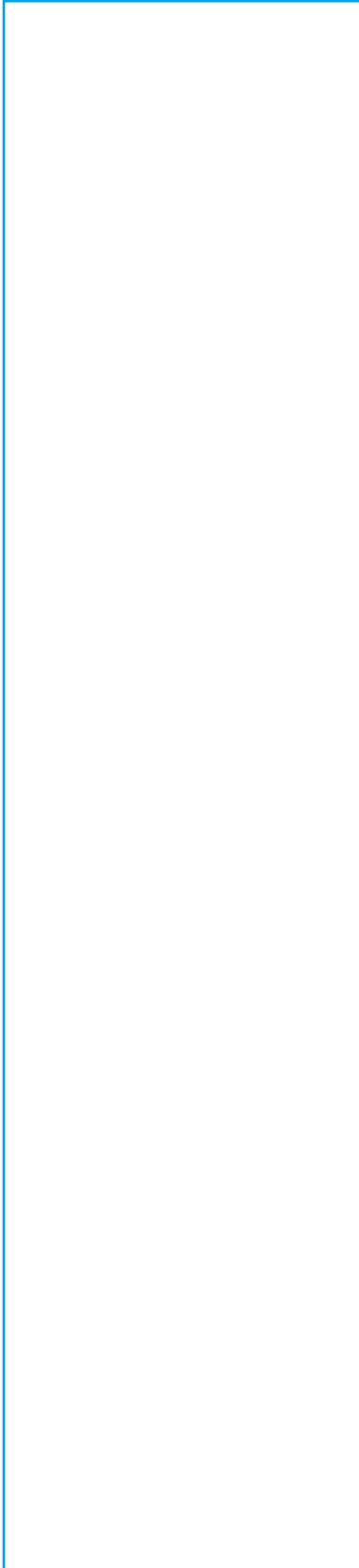
2. TO COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

Unstructured communication can overwhelm or confuse your audience. The Leader's Script® offers a framework to organize your thoughts, ensuring your message is clear and focused.

3. TO COMMUNICATE WITH IMPACT, EVERY TIME

Effective communication is repeatable. The Leader's Script® provides consistent process to influence and inspire, regardless of the setting. With practice, you'll always know how to organize your message for maximum impact.

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When to Use the Leader's Script®?

The Leader's Script® is perfect for situations where effective communication is key. Whether you're aiming to inspire, clarify complex information, or make a big impact quickly, your script will help you achieve your goals with confidence and clarity.

Use the Leader's Script®:

1. WHEN YOU WANT TO INSPIRE OTHERS TO SEE THINGS THE WAY YOU DO

The Leader's Script® is ideal for persuasive communication. Use it to influence others, inspire new thinking or actions, and share your vision. It's perfect for motivational conversations, introducing new ideas, and inspiring townhalls.

2. WHEN YOU WANT TO HELP PEOPLE SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

If you're presenting detailed information, The Leader's Script® ensures your key message stands out. It's great for structuring formal presentations and project updates, keeping your audience focused on the main points.

3. WHEN YOU NEED TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT IN A SMALL AMOUNT OF TIME

The Leader's Script® is scalable, helping you condense long presentations into concise, compelling summaries. It's an excellent prep tool for meetings, quick conversations, and impromptu messages.

The Leader's Script® is made up of several elements that build on each other and together form a cohesive structure. While it may seem like a lot, each component plays a crucial role in the overall framework.

First, take a look at the Leader's Script® example on the following page. Once you're familiar with all its components, proceed to the explanations provided for each section.

CREATE YOUR LEADER'S SCRIPT® (EXAMPLE)

Use this guide to structure your thinking.

BRIDGE

- **It builds a connection with your audience and leads into your Subject and Message.**
- **Example:** *I've never been a fan of chasing fads purely for the sake of chasing fads. When everyone started doing everything digitally in March 2020, I was pretty hesitant to make the transition. I thought to myself: "we've always done things this way, and it's always worked for us. So why change what isn't broken?" But then the lockdown happened. And customers became hesitant to accept paper copies of their invoices. They started asking us to scan their invoices instead, because of COVID-19 precautions. And that's when it became clear to me that this wasn't just a fad – that this wasn't just going to pass quickly. This is just the way things are now. So I started thinking seriously about how we could adapt – and I'm pleased to say that I have a solution that will actually make this whole digitization work to our advantage.*

SUBJECT

- **The topic. It is neutral and objective.**
- **Example:** *Let's talk about our invoicing process.*

MESSAGE

- **The key takeaway. This is your argument.**
- **Example:** *I'm confident that by digitizing our invoicing process, we can save money.*

STRUCTURAL STATEMENT

- **It provides a high-level overview of the evidence in the Body.**
- **Example:** *There are 3 reasons why this is the best strategy.*

BODY

- **It provides evidence that supports the Message.**
- **Example:** *First, it will allow us to cut down on printing costs. Second, it will save us time. Third, it will cut down on our workload.*

RESTATED MESSAGE

- **It reminds your audience of your Message.**
- **Example:** *As you can see, digital invoicing is the way to go as it will save us money.*

CALL TO ACTION

- **The next steps. It tells your audience how to turn your Message into a reality.**
- **Example:** *Please review the attached proposal for our new digital invoicing process by next week and write to me with any questions you have. I've scheduled a meeting next Friday to discuss implementation.*

NOTES:

How to Use the Leader's Script®?

We're going to address components of the Leader's Script® out of the order that they would be delivered to your audience. This is because it is easier to craft certain elements of your Leader's Script® first.

SUBJECT

The subject is the topic of your communication.

- It should be neutral.
- It should not advance an argument or take a position on an issue.
- It should simply define the topic of your communication.

Here are a few examples of neutral subjects:

- ▷ I'm here to talk to you about our invoicing process.
- ▷ Let's discuss planned retirements for the current fiscal year.
- ▷ This presentation covers how our teams will work together.

MESSAGE

Your message is your stance or position on the subject. It's what you want your audience to take away from your communication about the subject. It is the "argument" you are presenting. Whether you are preparing for a short informal conversation or a long and complicated call with a stakeholder, you must limit yourself to ONE message. A strong message is founded on belief.

- The best message are short (ideally 1 sentence).
- It should be positive and audience-centered.
- It should include both an action and an audience benefit.

A message should start with some variation of:

- I believe...
- I'm convinced...
- I'm confident that...

Here are a few examples of strong Messages to get you started:

- ▷ I believe that reducing our summer hours will have a net positive impact on the team.
- ▷ I'm convinced that working with Software Z will give us a competitive edge in the industry.
- ▷ I'm confident that by digitizing our invoicing process, we can save money.

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BODY

The body of evidence is where you organize the data or evidence that supports your message. Supporting evidence should be grouped into paragraphs that share a common theme.

- ▷ For example, if your communication proposes the establishment of a peer mentoring process in your organization, you could organize your evidence into "benefits to employees," "benefits to management," and "financial benefits."

STRUCTURAL STATEMENT

Once you have all your evidence in front of you, you can define your structural statement. Think of the structural statement as a high-level agenda for what you're going to cover. It tells your audience what type of evidence you have to support your message.

For example:

Let's say this was our body of evidence on the topic of digital invoicing:

- First, it will allow us to cut on printing costs. I've run the numbers and I've found that...
- Second, it will save us time. By doing things this way, we can...
- Third, it will cut down on our workload. Digitizing will allow us to...

The data outlines 3 reasons to transition to digital invoicing, so the structural statement could be:

- ▷ **There are 3 reasons to adopt digital invoicing: to cut costs, save time, and decrease our workload.**

The structural statement gives the audience a "preview" of the evidence to come later. This will help your audience prepare to absorb all the new information you're about to share with them.

5 Types of Structural Statements

The most common structural statements answer HOW? and WHY? questions. But a structural statement can also present a "before and after" comparison, or a chronological overview, or a situation and response.

1. Answers a why question

- ▷ There are 3 reasons we are making this change...

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2. Answers a how question

- ▷ Here is how we will make this transition: step 1, 2, and 3...

3. Before and After

- ▷ First, I'll tell you how we used to do this, then I'll tell you how we do it now...

4. Chronological

- ▷ Let me take you through how this process have evolved over the years...

5. Situation/Response

- ▷ I'll give you an overview of the client's pain points, and then I'll walk you through how we addressed them.

In order to know what type of structural statement you should use, ask yourself:

- What questions will my audience have for me after I present my message?
- Will they be wondering HOW we will accomplish this?
- Will they want to know WHY this transition is happening now?
- Will they want to understand how we've gotten here, or what we'll do differently from now on?

CALL TO ACTION

This is your "ask". It tells your audience what the next steps are, or what is expected of them. It answers the question "What now?"

A strong call to action is 3 things:

- **Concrete:** It lists a specific action you want the audience to take.
- **Time-stamped:** it has a specific deadline to ensure that action is taken.
- **Assigned:** it is assigned to a person, team, or department to ensure accountability, and follow-through on the action.

Here's an example of a call to action:

- ▷ Please review the attached proposal for our new digital invoicing process by next week and write to me with any questions you have. I've scheduled a meeting next Friday to discuss implementation.

NOTES:

Note that the call to action above is assigned to 2 parties: the speaker (who commits to scheduling a meeting to discuss implementation) and the audience (who are expected to review the proposal and write to the speaker with any questions they have).

RESTATED MESSAGE

A reminder about the key takeaway (message).

BRIDGE

The bridge is the "hook" that captures the audience's attention. It's the first thing you say to your audience, so it's also your opportunity to build rapport and connect with them as people before you move on to the task of persuading them of your argument.

Bridges can take many different forms, from personal stories to anecdotes, facts, and statistics. Bridges can also be used to provide context or key background information that the audience needs to understand the message that comes next.

Here's an example bridge from a presentation on digitizing invoicing:

"I've never been a fan of chasing fads purely for the sake of chasing fads. When everyone started doing everything digitally in March 2020, I was pretty hesitant to make the transition. I thought to myself: "we've always done things this way, and it's always worked for us. So why change what isn't broken?" But then the lockdown happened. And customers became hesitant to accept paper copies of their invoices. They started asking us to scan their invoices instead, because of COVID-19 precautions. And that's when it became clear to me that this wasn't just a fad – that this wasn't just going to pass quickly. This is just the way things are now. So I started thinking seriously about how we could adapt – and I'm pleased to say that I have a solution that will actually make digitization work to our advantage."

Your bridge can be as long or as short as you need it to be – but it must be proportional to the length of your presentation. If you will be speaking for 30 minutes, a 5-minute bridge could be appropriate. If, however, you need to get through an elevator pitch in 2 minutes, shorten your bridge accordingly.

Your audience needs, concerns, and priorities will determine what kind of bridge you need to create. Will your audience be excited about the new product launch you're there to talk about? Lean into that excitement and craft a bridge about how exciting the new product is. Will your audience be concerned about the potential negative impacts of a new policy change? Use your bridge to acknowledge their concerns and let them know that you are aware of their thinking on the issue.

NOTES:

Language of Leadership

Effective leadership through communication requires conscious and careful use of language. The words you choose can significantly impact how your ideas are received and acted upon. Compelling language can make your ideas memorable and inspire action, while poor language can confuse and disengage your audience.

We will explore common language habits that undermine leadership and learn how to use language intentionally to inspire others.

Common Language Habits that Undermine Leadership

1. LACK OF AUDIENCE-CENTERED LANGUAGE

Leaders often assume their audience understands all aspects of their work, which can be problematic, especially in technical fields. Using overly complex language to appear intelligent or authoritative can backfire, alienating your audience.

Take for example the sentence: "We on the ISLT are always looking for ways to push the techserve envelope, but we're hamstrung by the 3.1.1. build of gamma."

This example is filled with acronyms and technical terms that may make sense to those with a computer science background; however, for someone not on a technical services team, this communication could cause them to tune out, disengage, or even form a negative impression of the speaker.

It's important to use audience-centered language and clarify terms when necessary.

2. OVERUSE OF JARGON

Language fails to inspire when jargon is used as a substitute for clear thinking. It's easy to fall back on vague or clichéd language when we aren't sure what we want to say. We grab onto buzzwords and management speak that seems to convey powerful ideas, rather than doing the hard work of figuring out what we actually are trying to say.

For example, consider the sentence: "This merger will create synergies we can leverage to optimize our portfolio."

This sentence uses vague terms like "synergies" and "optimize" without clear explanation. While you might infer that "synergies" refers to some kind of mutual benefit, the specific nature of that benefit is unclear.

NOTES:

Similarly, "leverage" and "optimize" sound positive but lack concrete meaning in this context. Does "optimize our portfolio" mean higher returns, lower risk, or something else entirely?

To make this sentence clear and meaningful, replace jargon with specific terms that convey your ideas effectively. For instance, the version, "This merger will combine our resources to reduce costs and increase our investment returns," is specific and provides a clear understanding of the intended benefits.

The key is to replace jargon with precise, clear terms that effectively communicate your ideas.

3. OBFUSCATING DIFFICULT MESSAGES

Leaders may use euphemisms to soften the delivery of bad news, which can disconnect them from their audience. Though it may achieve this objective, obfuscating in this way will disconnect and alienate you from your audience, and almost always leads to a failed leadership moment. Think of all the corporate euphemisms that exist for firing someone. People are now "outplaced", "right-sized", "transitioned", part of a "workforce optimization", or even "decruited". Sure, these terms will allow you to avoid the messy reality of what is being discussed, namely, ending someone's employment, but ultimately, using language that obscures your true meaning won't do you any favors. All you'll be doing is passing up the opportunity to deliver your message with integrity.

Additional Examples of Weak Language:

- Asking permission to speak: "Would it be okay if I added something here..?" "Do you mind if I ask a question?"
- Apologizing too much: "I'm sorry, but..." "Forgive me, but I disagree...."
- Posing questions when the answers are known: "Don't you think we should explore..."
- Using modifiers that weaken the tone: "I have a bit of an idea...I'm just wondering if maybe. "
- Favouring softer verbs: "I think..." "I'm wondering..." "I'm hoping that...."
- Using prefatory qualifiers that undercut credibility: "I know I only have one year of experience. "
- "This might be a bad idea, but...."
- Adopting caveats after making a strong statement or a request: "... but I could be missing something...."
- Using emotional words: "I feel ... "I'm afraid that. "" I'm concerned that..."
- Sounding overly grateful: "WOW...That's incredible! Thank you so much!..."

NOTES:

Using Language Intentionally to Inspire

To lead effectively through language, use the following four intentions every time you communicate:

1. BE VISIONARY

When we ask leaders for their point of view, we are rarely seeking information. What we crave is their vision—their unique way of seeing the world. The words you choose to share your thinking are crucial for communicating your vision in a way that inspires others to act.

Visionary language is effective because it is aspirational, precise, and emotionally invested. Aspirational language is bold and descriptive, painting a picture of a future not yet realized. Your words must be evocative, allowing your audience to see themselves in that future state.

Consider the difference between these two corporate vision statements from an IT company:

- ▷ "Our vision is to be an industry leader in cloud computing."
- ▷ "Our vision is to make each client feel like we are their in-house chief information officers, helping them thrive in the cloud so they can focus on running their business."

The first statement is generic and uninspiring. The second statement is much more evocative, helping the audience imagine the benefits of having an in-house CIO. It provides a clear, detailed picture of what being an industry leader means and how it supports clients. This precision and emotional investment make the vision more relatable and inspiring.

2. EMBRACE SIMPLICITY

Inspirational leaders strive to make their language simple so that all audiences can grasp their ideas. This simplicity makes their way of thinking accessible and memorable. Regardless of how technical your job may be, you can embrace simplicity by deflating your words and replacing jargon with substance.

To deflate your words, think of language the way we think of math. We simplify mathematical equations until we have the clearest possible expression of the idea. We should do the same with language.

Replace jargon with clear, specific terms. This practice helps clarify your thinking and makes your language more accessible.

Remember, simplifying your language does not mean sacrificing precision. If an idea is good and well-understood, it should be easy to state simply.

NOTES:

3. BE CONCISE

Concise language reflects clarity of thought. To be concise, think carefully about the points you want to make and use as few words as possible.

Eliminate Unnecessary Add-ins and Add-ons

- Add-ins are redundant words like adverbs and adjectives (e.g., really, very, mostly).
- Add-ons are phrases that don't add meaning (e.g., on a go-forward basis, at this moment in time).

▷ For example, "We really do have an opportunity here to totally challenge the way we're working" can be simplified to "We can change the way we work."

Practicing concision in writing will improve your speech over time.

4. BE CONFIDENT

Even when we do have this intention, our language can betray us. Minimizing language seeps into our communication and undermines our ideas and our leadership, especially when we are feeling insecure or challenged. The first step to eliminating language that undermines us is to become aware of our habits. Some of the most common minimizing language habits are mincing modifiers, qualifiers, and weak verbs.

Mincing Modifiers

- Words like "just," "kind of," and "a little bit" minimize the impact of your ideas.
- Example: Instead of saying, "Could I just interrupt real quick to ask a little bit of a question?" say, "I have a question."

Qualifiers

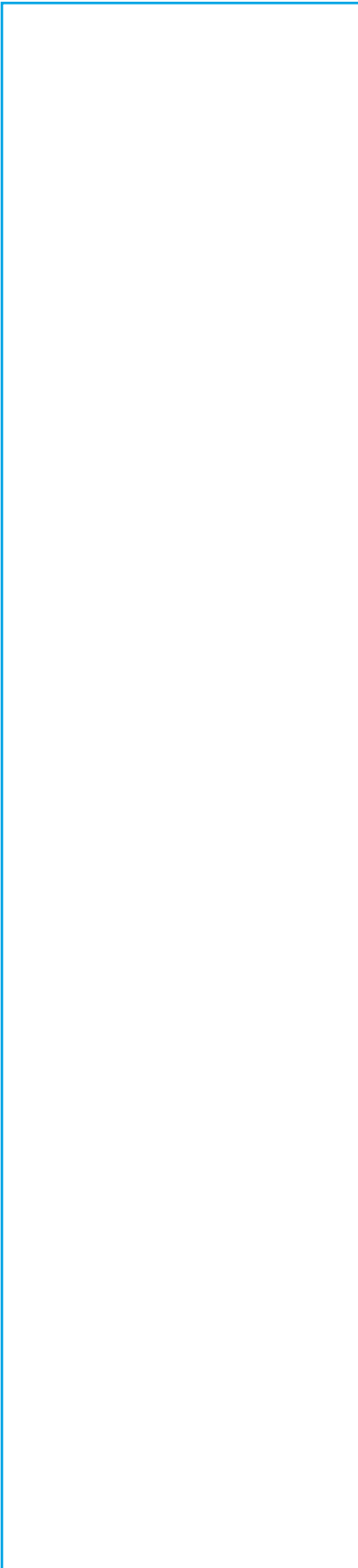
- Phrases like "This is just my opinion" or "I could be wrong, but" hedge your ideas.
- Example: Instead of saying, "I'm not sure this is the direction we want to go," say, "I believe we should try."

Weak Verbs

- Verbs like "think," "feel," and "hope" can seem collegial but lack confidence.
- Example: Replace "I think we should" with "I believe we should."

Using strong, confident language shows that you value your ideas and the input of others without sounding arrogant.

NOTES:



By choosing your words intentionally, you can inspire your audiences. When your language is conversational, jargon-free, concise, and confident, you will sound like a leader. Remember these principles the next time you write an email or prepare to speak in a meeting.

USE THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP

Use this guide to modify your communication habits to better reflect your leadership.

DO LESS:



- **USE WEAK VERBS**

"I think that"

"I feel"

"I wonder if"

- **BE NEGATIVE**

"This won't work because of X"

- **APOLOGIZE UNNECESSARILY**

"Sorry, I have a question"

"I'm sorry, can you repeat that"

- **BE OVERLY CASUAL**

"You guys"

"Like"

"You know"

- **MINIMIZE YOURSELF**

"Just"

"Only"

"Really quickly"

- **RELY ON FILLER WORDS**

"Umm"

"Uh"

"So"

- **FALL INTO THE JARGON TRAP**

Avoid overly technical or specialized language.

Avoid inflating, obfuscating, or being unclear.

DO MORE:



- **USE CONFIDENT VERBS**

"I believe"

"I know I can"

"I'm confident that"

- **BE POSITIVE**

"We could make this work by changing X"

- **USE ACTIVE VOICE**

"I am taking action" instead of *"action is being taken"*

- **BE CONVERSATIONAL**

Simple words (*"use"* instead of *"utilize"*)

Short sentences

Personal pronouns (*"I", "we", "you"*)

- **BE CONCISE AND PRECISE**

"We need this by Friday" instead of *"It would be great if we could have this by Friday because we will need it then"*

- **USE FIGURES OF SPEECH**

Create comparisons to change the way people think.

Use rhetorical questions to engage others.

Session 2: In-Class Activities

The following activity will take place during the live session. Use the spaces provided. These exercises are meant to be interactive and reflective, so take your time.

1. THE LEADER'S SCRIPT ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- During this session, you will be working on your Leader’s Script. Please use the template provided.

HAVING TROUBLE WITH YOUR SCRIPT? CHECK OUT THIS SAMPLE LEADER'S SCRIPT (3-MINUTE PRESENTATION)

Tanya is a senior analyst in credit at a large bank’s head office in Toronto. She was asked to prepare a 3-minute overview of the new approach the bank is taking to student lending for the marketing team at their upcoming planning meeting. Tanya knew that this audience was looking for a better understanding of how to target their upcoming student lending campaigns and presented the following script:

Bridge:	In preparation for this meeting I sat down with my nephew who is in his first year at the University of Toronto. Within minutes, he painted a picture for me of the students. Students these days expect things to happen for them at the speed of light. They are used to finding information within two clicks, getting stuff done in the time it takes to download and interact with an app, and don’t need or want face-to-face connections with every institution they deal with. In fact, they don’t have time for it.
Subject:	Today I want to talk to you about marketing to students.
Message:	Our marketing efforts must convey to students that using our products will be an easy, quick, and faceless process.
Structural Statement:	There are three benefits to this:
Body:	<div>1. Easy – demonstrate how students will find info and apply for products.</div> <div>2. Quick – share target time of 24-hour approval for student lending products.</div> <div>3. Faceless – show interactive app designed to move students through application, signing and ongoing access to products without ever entering a branch or speaking to a representative.</div>
Call to Action:	You are the team that will translate our new approach into marketing efforts that will attract this unique audience. For next week’s town hall, please come prepared to share how you can make this part of your marketing plan starting this January.

CREATE YOUR LEADER'S SCRIPT® (TEMPLATE)

Use this guide to structure your thinking.

BRIDGE: It builds a connection with the audience and leads into your Subject and Message.

SUBJECT: The topic. It is neutral and objective.

MESSAGE: The key takeaway. This is your argument.

STRUCTURAL STATEMENT: It provides a high-level overview of the evidence in the Body.

BODY: It provides evidence that supports the Message.

RESTATED MESSAGE: It reminds your audience of your Message.

CALL TO ACTION: The next steps. It tells your audience how to turn your Message into a reality.

Exercises to Do at Home, at Work, and On the Go

ANALYZE YOUR EMAILS AND THE VOICEMAIL MESSAGES YOU LEAVE.

- Identify the words that weaken your message, and edit them out.

SELF-BRAGGING

- During quiet moments (e.g., on the subway, in traffic), list what you admire most about yourself and your strong qualities.

LISTEN TO YOUR OWN RECORDED VOICEMAIL.

- Does it have negatives and apologies in it? (I am sorry I am not here... I am sorry I missed your call...) Delete them.

KEEP A JOURNAL

- Keep a journal in which you perform an audit of your language patterns.
- List when and where in your daily life you have opportunities to create a strong script.
- Consciously edit weak words out of your daily scripts.

THINK OF USING A STRONG SCRIPT EVERY TIME YOU SPEAK

- Focus on speaking with a message. Ask yourself every time you're about to speak, "what's my point?"

MASTER THE LEADER'S SCRIPT®

- It is an excellent template for speaking in all situations.

Before the Next Session...

- List your commitments from this session in the space provided.
- Track your progress to share your successes and challenges in the next session.

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS:

Additional Resources and Thoughts to Remember

The following is from a speech given by Mary Robinson, on the occasion of her inauguration as President of Ireland, on December 3, 1990. She served for seven years as the head of Ireland, and later as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her inaugural speech provides a strong sense of her leadership. She describes herself in assertive, confident terms. She has a clear vision and message. And she uses powerful language that is never qualified ("I will..."). Note, too, she acknowledges that all don't agree with her views, but this does not undo her. Rather she turns it into a positive. This is a great example of how to craft a positive message using strong language in an authentic way.

"The Ireland I will be representing is a new Ireland, open, tolerant, inclusive. Many of you who voted for me did so without sharing all of my views. This, I believe, is a significant signal of change, a sign, however modest, that we have already passed the threshold to a new pluralist Ireland.

The recent revival of an old concept of the fifth province expresses this emerging Ireland of tolerance and empathy. The old Irish term for province is 'coicead', meaning a 'fifth'; and yet as everyone knows, there are only four geographical provinces on this island. So where is the fifth? The fifth province is not anywhere here or there, north or south, east or west. It is a place within each one of us – that place that is open to the other, that swinging door which allows us to venture out and others to venture in... If I am a symbol of anything I would like to be a symbol of this reconciling and healing fifth province...

My primary role as President will be to represent this state. But the state is not the only model of community with which Irish people can and do identify... There is yet another level of community which I will represent. Not just the national, not just the global, but the local community...

As President I will seek to the best of my abilities to promote this growing sense of local participatory democracy, this energizing movement of self-development and self-expression which is surfacing more and more at grassroots level. This is the face of modern Ireland."

Inaugural Speech, Given by Her Excellency Mary Robinson, President of Ireland, in Dublin Castle on Monday, December 3, 1990

SESSION 3

Power of Voice and Presence

Overview

Inspiring leadership requires the ability to captivate and inspire an audience. This session focuses on two critical aspects: vocal power and leadership presence. Together, these elements enable leaders to communicate with authority and authenticity.

Vocal power involves using your voice to convey energy and command attention, ensuring your message resonates. Leadership presence, on the other hand, is the magnetic quality that draws people in, making them eager to listen and engage. It goes beyond charisma, encompassing confidence, authenticity, and the ability to connect deeply with others.

By mastering both your voice and presence, you will enhance your ability to lead with impact and influence.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Use body language, eye contact, pace, and expression to engage audiences, both virtually and in-person.
- Use volume, pitch, emphasis, and tone to make your voice powerful and engaging in both in-person and virtual environments.

NOTES:

Achieve the Voice of a Leader

When leaders take the stage, they give energy to their audience through their voice. This power captivates their audience and compels them to listen. This is called vocal presence. To be heard as a leader, you must unlock the power of your voice.

Six Strategies to Unlock the Power of Your Voice

1. SPEAK UP

To create a strong vocal presence, you must first have the courage to assume your rightful position at center stage. Speaking up more often will build your courage muscle, and over time you will find it easier to speak up.

2. BREATHE FREELY

The voice is a wind instrument that is powered by breath. Commit to taking in full breaths to fuel your voice.

3. TURN UP THE VOLUME

We know that women have the ability to project strong vocal power! You can develop the habit of turning up your volume by getting comfortable with the sound of your voice. Once you are accustomed to the sound of your own voice, you will become more comfortable with the idea of hearing yourself at the appropriate volume.

4. USE ALL YOUR NOTES

The human voice has a range of notes, yet few people use even a fraction of their full range at work. Similarly to how you develop your ear for speaking at an appropriate level of volume, you must practice in order to ensure you are using all of your notes.

5. ENUNCIATE

A powerful voice is a clear voice – particularly if you have an accent. For your audience to be inspired by your voice, they must understand what you are saying. Make certain that the last word to cross your lips is as clear as the first.

6. USE YOUR AUTHENTIC VOICE

Don't confuse authenticity with habit. Habits are patterns of behavior that we are comfortable with, and often substitute for authenticity. To inspire others with your vocal power, your voice must be authentic.

NOTES:

Adopt a Leader's Presence

Presence is a quality that draws people in and makes them pay attention. It is not the same as charisma. We usually think of charisma as something innate, that you either have or you don't. It's a powerful quality but it's different than presence. A powerful leadership presence, in particular, is much more than just charisma.

Presence can seem abstract, but the strategies for achieving it are simple and concrete.

4 Tools for Achieving a Leader's Presence

BODY LANGUAGE

We communicate more through our non-verbals than we do through language. Leaders must learn to be aware of what their body language is communicating and to align their non-verbals with the intention of their communication.

In person, you want to use your body language to present yourself as open and engaging. Gestures can emphasize certain words. Open arms and hands show that you're receptive. And a rooted stillness (no pacing or swiveling in your chair!) shows that you are grounded and focused.

In virtual contexts, stillness takes on more importance. Even small movements on camera can be distracting to your audience.

EYE CONTACT

Eye contact is the primary way we create a feeling of connection with others. For some people this is intuitive and natural. For others, and for ALL of us when we're nervous, it can feel uncomfortable and even intimidating.

In person, it's important to sustain your eye contact for the length of an entire idea. Don't scan the room as you speak or dart from person to person before you've finished your thought. No matter how many people are in the room, when you make a real connection with one individual, everyone feels your presence.

In virtual contexts, keep in mind that to create the feeling of eye contact you must look into your camera, not at the faces on your screen.

PRO TIP: most platforms will give you the option of hiding your own video from yourself (while still allowing others to see you).

NOTES:

PACE

Speaking slowly and purposefully, with well-placed pauses is one of the hallmarks of all great speakers. But these skills are crucial in meetings and phone calls as well. Remember that almost everyone will speed up when nervous and that your audience needs time to absorb your ideas. Nothing is more powerful than a '2-Mississippi pause', with eye contact.

In person, remember that speaking quickly will translate as a frenetic energy that can make people feel emotions ranging from confusion to anxiety. Slowing down projects a calmer presence, which we associate with control and even power in some contexts. Pausing is also essential so that you can read others' visual cues: are they reaching for a pen to take notes? reaching for their phone? trying to get a word in?

In virtual contexts, all of the above apply to an even greater degree. Slowing down and articulating your words is even more important, simply so you can be understood. And slightly exaggerated pauses are necessary to allow others to unmute themselves and jump in. They can also be a great attention-grabber-- "dead air" will reengage disengaged listeners!

EXPRESSION

Expression refers to your use of vocal tools like tone, emphasis, and volume, as well as the way you convey emotion through your face. Your voice and your face are the two best tools you have for conveying emotion non-verbally, so it's worthwhile to pay attention to what they are conveying.

In-person, remember that you must modulate your expression based on the size of the room you are in and the amount of people who are present. You have to turn up the dial much higher than you think when you're speaking to a large group.

In virtual contexts, turning up the dial is always necessary. Our expression simply doesn't translate virtually to the same degree that it does when we are in person. It might feel like you're hamming it up, but to your audience, it's just enough for you to be engaging. Remember, too, that if you're not on video, your voice is the only presence tool you have. You need to be slower, more articulate, more emphatic, and more intentional about your tone than you are when people can see your face. If you are on video, make sure your face is conveying the feeling you want your audience to feel.

REVIEW YOUR PRESENCE

Use the following checklist to make sure that you are projecting a confident presence. Note the differences between **IN-PERSON** presence and **VIRTUAL** presence.

BODY LANGUAGE

- ☐ maintain an upright posture, keep arms and chest open to the audience (avoid crossing arms)
- ☐ use your gestures to emphasize your message
- ☐ keep your feet rooted and your body still (no pacing, swiveling in your chair, leaning over, or swaying side to side)

IN-PERSON:

- ☐ use dynamic gestures (maintain space between your elbows and waist, keep hands apart)
- ☐ minimize fidgeting (keep hands still, if possible)
- ☐ hold your notes to the side, not in front of you

VIRTUAL (ON CAMERA):

- ☐ use controlled gestures (avoid extraneous movement)
 - ☐ ensure your background is free of visual distractions
 - ☐ ensure lighting makes your face and eyes clearly visible
 - ☐ minimize fidgeting (if you have to fidget, do it out of shot)
-

EYE CONTACT

- ☐ connect with your audience (no looking at your feet, no "sweeping" the audience with your gaze)
- ☐ "land" key points by maintaining eye contact with the audience
- ☐ pause to consult your notes rather than "reading through"

IN-PERSON:

- ☐ sustain eye contact for the length of an idea

VIRTUAL (ON CAMERA):

- ☐ look into the camera, not at the screen
-

PACE

- ☐ clearly articulate each word
- ☐ speak more slowly than you think you need to (maximum 150 words per minute)
- ☐ take 2-Mississippi pauses to check in with your audience, allow for interjections, and control your pace
- ☐ avoid filler words (*umm, uhh, so, just, sorry...*)

IN-PERSON:

- ☐ control your pace by taking regular pauses

VIRTUAL (ON & OFF CAMERA):

- ☐ slow down more, articulate more, and take longer pauses (especially if voice only)
-

EXPRESSION

- ☐ use emphasis to highlight key words and ideas
- ☐ use a varied pitch and avoid monotone
- ☐ match your tone and facial expression to the message you are delivering

IN-PERSON:

- ☐ modulate your expression based on size of room, number of people, etc.

VIRTUAL (ON & OFF CAMERA):

- ☐ minimize background noise
- ☐ be more emphatic and expressive (especially if voice only)

Session 3: In-Class Activities

The following activities will take place during the live session. These exercises are meant to be interactive and reflective.

1. BOX BREATHING ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Close your mouth and breathe in slowly through your nose.
- Count to four as you inhale. Hold your breath for four seconds.
- Open your mouth slightly and slowly exhale to a count of four.
- Hold after the exhale to another count of four.

The goal of boxed breathing is to bring the respiratory system back into alignment and end the shallow breathing that results from the fight or flight response mode the body enters when feeling stressed.

2. USE ALL OF YOUR NOTES ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- This exercise is a volume exercise – focusing on pitch variation. Your task is to reach as low and as high as you comfortably can.

The goal is to explore the range and tone of your voice as tools to engage your audience.

3. ENUNCIATE TO INSPIRE ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Refer to your own Leader Script example. This Script should contain the Subject and Message you want to practice.
- Place a pen horizontally in your mouth, holding it gently between your teeth.
- While keeping the pen in place, read aloud the Subject and Message from your Leader's Script.
- Focus on clearly pronouncing each word despite the pen in your mouth.

This exercise helps improve your enunciation by making you more aware of how you form words.

4. INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Present your Leader's Script.
- Consider your personal challenges when it comes to vocal and physical. Is getting your voice heard in meetings challenging for you? Do you struggle with jumping in on conference calls? Is eye contact uncomfortable for you? Are you a fast talker or do you fall into a monotone?
- Deliver it again. What improvements did you make? Did delivering your message a second time feel different or more effective?

TIP: Watch yourself. Use a mirror or a cell phone camera to observe yourself delivering your communication. Reflect on what went well during the presentation and what was challenging. Make the observed adjustments to your communication and your presence.

Exercises to Do at Home, at Work, and On the Go

OBSERVE YOURSELF AT MEETINGS, ON THE PHONE, OR WHEN PRESENTING

- Take notes and put these observations in your journal.
- List when or where in your daily life you have opportunities to “use your voice as a powerful tool.”

DO A POSTURE CHECK

- At frequent times throughout the day, do a posture check.
- Relax your belly, breathe deeply, and keep your shoulders back, yet relaxed.

CONSCIOUSLY DECIDE WHICH ASPECT OF PRESENCE YOU WANT TO WORK ON.

- Over the next month, determine to eliminate a habit – it could be nervous hands, a defensive posture, over-smiling, or not being in the moment.
- Mentally prepare yourself before meetings to address this issue.

PRACTICE A MESSAGE

- Think of a message and practice emphasizing it to an audience using strong gestures.

THINK OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE YOUR PRESENCE

- List when or where in your daily life you have opportunities to “Achieve a Leader’s Presence” to engage your audience.

CONSCIOUSLY THINK OF USING YOUR WHOLE VOICE EVERY TIME YOU SPEAK

- Use your voice as a leadership tool.

LISTEN TO YOUR VOICE

- Find a room with good acoustics. Deliver talks and impromptu arguments that you might use in the workplace.
- Analyze your voice.

GIVE YOUR VOCAL ORGANS A WORKOUT

- Sing along with a tape of your favorite music.
- Read stories to children and listen to the range of your voice – play all the characters with energy.

WHILE KEEPING YOUR TONGUE FIRMLY OUTSIDE YOUR MOUTH, PRACTICE A PIECE OF TEXT.

- With your tongue back in your mouth, repeat the text. Notice how open your sound is and how easily you articulate.

Before the Next Session...

- List your commitments from this session in the space provided.
- Track your progress to share your successes and challenges in the next session.

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS:

Additional Resources and Thoughts to Remember

"There was the matter of my voice. In the House of Commons, one has to speak over the din to get a hearing. This is more difficult the higher the pitch of one's voice, because in increasing its volume, one automatically goes up the register. This poses an obvious problem for most women. Somehow one has to learn to project the voice without shrieking. Even outside the House, when addressing an audience my voice was naturally high-pitched, which can easily become grating. I had been told about this in earlier years and had deliberately tried to lower its tone. The result, unfortunately, whatever improvement there may have been for the audience, was to give me a sore throat – an even greater problem for a regular public speaker.

Gordon found me an expert who knew that the first thing to do was to get your breathing right, and then to speak not from the back of the throat but from the front of the mouth. She was a genius. Her sympathetic understanding for my difficulties, which was a great help, was only matched by that for her ailing cat. Unfortunately, the cat would sometimes fall sick just before my lesson and force its cancellation. Fortunately, I too like cats. And so we finished the course.

On one occasion, Gordon took me to meet Sir Laurence Olivier to see whether he had any tips which might be useful. He was quite complimentary, telling me that I had a good gaze out to the audience, which was important, and that my voice was perfectly all right, which – no thanks to the cat – it probably was. ... Getting all these things right took me several months. But all in all the general system never let me down."

– Excerpt from *The Path to Power*, by Margaret Thatcher, London: Harper Collins, 1995.

"...Our voice is developed from very real life experiences – and the sound we acquire from these experiences becomes part of our identity. But we need to assess how we sound as we move into leadership roles. We need to ask, "Do I sound like a leader? Do I have a voice that people would want to listen to and follow?" If your answer is "no" or you are not sure, you will likely want to make a change."

– Excerpt from *Humphrey, Judith. Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out, and Succeed.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

"... you can avoid coming across as too aggressive if you are mindful of your tone. The same words said with two different tones can have completely different effects on your listeners. The tone of aggressive leaders tends to be sharp and cutting – like a jackhammer breaking through concrete. The tone of strong leaders, on the other hand, tends to be smooth and even – like a plane soaring into the sunset. The content may be the same, but the delivery is incredibly important. Your tone can win over your listeners, or lose them.

While having a reputation for being too aggressive is bad, having a reputation for being weak is even worse. So, you must remember that you can still be strong without being too aggressive. By understanding the differences between strength and aggression, you will be able to strike the right balance and lead your team with confidence, influence, and unity."

– Excerpt from Grant, Anett. (2015). *The Difference between Strong Leaders and Aggressive Leaders.* Fast Company. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3048494/the-difference-between-strong-leaders-and-aggressive-leaders>

“A confident person – knowing and believing in her identity – carries tools, not weapons.”

– Amy Cuddy, Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges.

“Presence emerges when we feel personally powerful, which allows us to be acutely attuned to our most sincere selves.”

– Amy Cuddy, Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges.

Presence

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves – who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be? ...

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory... that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

– Excerpt from, Williamson Marianne. (2012). A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles. New York: HarperOne.

Also Check Out:

Treasure, Julian. (2013). How to Speak so that people want to listen TedGlobal. https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=tedsread

Humphrey Judith. (2015). How to own a room. Fast Company. <<https://www.fastcompany.com/3047496/how-to-own-a-room>>

Stephens Will. (2015). How to Sound Smart. TEDx TALK. <<https://youtu.be/8S0FDjFBj8o>>

Cuddy Amy. (2012). Your body language may shape who you are. TED TALK. <https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are>

SESSION 4

Inspiring Conversations

Overview

What makes a conversation inspiring?

By embracing conversations as leadership opportunities, you will foster deeper connections, inspire confidence, and showcase your communication skills.

Your everyday interactions, whether they're brief chats with coworkers or formal presentations, rely on your conversational skills. Like other communication skills, developing your conversation skills will bolster your effectiveness as a leader.

But what does it take to become a better conversationalist, and how can you develop this as a skill? Let's first define this word: conversation. According to Merriam-Webster, a conversation is: "An oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions or ideas."

But inspiring conversations require more than a transactional exchange. So how do you move away from having transactional conversations to ones that build relationships, trust and engagement at work? The key: practice active listening.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Apply active listening techniques to develop your conversation skills.
- Apply the DESP technique to transform challenging conversations into leadership opportunities.

NOTES:

Active Listening

Your Leader's Script is only your side of a conversation. The other side is created in the moment, by the other person. To access it, you must learn to listen.

We always tell people they must "learn to listen" because it is a skill. It's not always intuitive or easy. It takes practice. And we all need feedback on how we're doing if we want to get better.

To improve your conversations, try to practice listening on 3 levels:

1. PHYSICAL LISTENING

Physical listening is about a) being aware of what you are doing with your body and b) observing what others are telling you through their body language. Being aware of your own body language allows you to intentionally demonstrate your listening physically.

Nodding, being still, sustaining eye contact, and facing the person you're listening to are all examples of how you can use your body language to listen physically. You should look for the same cues in others when you're "listening" to their body language.

2. MENTAL LISTENING

Mental listening is about making an effort to understand someone else's way of thinking, and demonstrating that understanding to them. Good mental listeners suspend their judgement and even their own thought process while they are listening. They focus on helping the speaker express their ideas.

Paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions, and mirroring language that the speaker uses (even if it's not how you would say it) are examples of mental listening.

3. EMOTIONAL LISTENING

Emotional listening is about noticing and acknowledging the emotions that are either explicit or implicit in a conversation. Not everyone will have the self-awareness or the comfort to say to you "what you're saying makes me anxious" or "I'm really frustrated with you right now." Emotional listening requires that you "listen" to cues like tone, word choice, and body language to gauge how the person you're talking to is feeling.

Expressions of empathy ("I can see how difficult this is") and gentle questions ("how does what I'm saying sit with you?") are ways you can demonstrate emotional listening.

PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

Use the following techniques to practice active listening in the moment.

PHYSICAL LISTENING

Demonstrate that you are listening through body language.

- Nod
- Try to be still. If you can't, channel that energy into action that isn't disruptive to others (i.e. avoid noisy pen clicking)
- Face the person you're listening to

MENTAL LISTENING

Demonstrate that you understand someone else's way of thinking.

- Suspend your judgement and your own thought process
- Paraphrase what the speaker is saying
- Ask clarifying questions
- Mirror language that the speaker uses (even if it's not how you would say it)
- Take notes or doodle if it's helpful to you (make sure to mention why you are doing this to the other person so they don't feel ignored)

EMOTIONAL LISTENING

Demonstrate that you acknowledge the emotions that are either explicit or implicit in a conversation.

- "Listen" to cues like tone, word choice, and body language to gauge how the person you're talking to is feeling
- Use expressions of empathy ("I can see X. Tell me how you're feeling.")
- Ask gentle questions ("how does what I'm saying sit with you?") to probe further

NOTES:

Preparing for Challenging Conversations

If you bring your conviction to a conversation, conflict will arise eventually. It's normal and beneficial for smart people to disagree. The best communicators know how to approach conflict as a great opportunity to get an honest look into someone else's thoughts and feelings. With that information, you can find the common ground you need to move forward.

When you think of conflict in this way, it changes from something to be avoided into something to be explored. When you know how to push through a conflict instead of trying to maneuver around it, you can turn difficult conversations into relationship-building opportunities.

The DESP Technique

There's a simple technique you can practice in times of conflict that will help you "push through" rather than tip-toe around a difficult situation. It's called the DESP: Disarm, Empathize, Support, and Probe. This is a 4-sentence technique that you should use BEFORE you attempt to persuade someone when you disagree.

DISARM

When conflict arises, begin by disarming. The best way to disarm is to find common ground. Instead of disagreeing right off the bat, find something to agree with. This not only calms the person you're talking to, it also helps you with your mental listening.

Disarming statements begin with phrases like "You're right," "I agree that," or "It's true."

- ▷ For example: let's assume one of your direct reports came into your office and said "I can't work with Alex any longer, he's intolerable!" You recognize the opportunity to use defuse tension but how can you disarm? You can't say "you're right! Alex is intolerable." But you might say "I agree; you and Alex are always butting heads. I've noticed it, too."

EMPATHIZE

Next, express empathy. Genuine empathy is more than just saying "I understand how you feel." It is specific. Even if you're not sure exactly what emotion someone is feeling, you can still express empathy for the specific situation they are in.

NOTES:

Empathy statements must always be put in context, but they might sound something like "I understand the difficult position this has put you in" or "I can see how frustrated you are."

- ▷ Let's continue with our example. If you begin by saying, "I agree; you and Alex are always butting heads. I've noticed it, too," then what would genuine empathy sound like? Perhaps, "I understand why you'd be frustrated, given how frequently you two need to collaborate."

SUPPORT

Support is about showing your willingness to work through the conflict. Here you are expressing your genuine belief in the other person or offering to help if you can.

Support statements usually take the form of help ("I'd be happy to sit down with you and go through it in detail") or praise ("You always ask great questions").

- ▷ How can you add a support statement to our example? "I agree; you and Alex are always butting heads. I've noticed it, too. I understand why you'd be frustrated, given how frequently you two need to collaborate. I've worked with you for 5 years and you've always been able to work through conflict when it arises. It's one of your best leadership qualities."

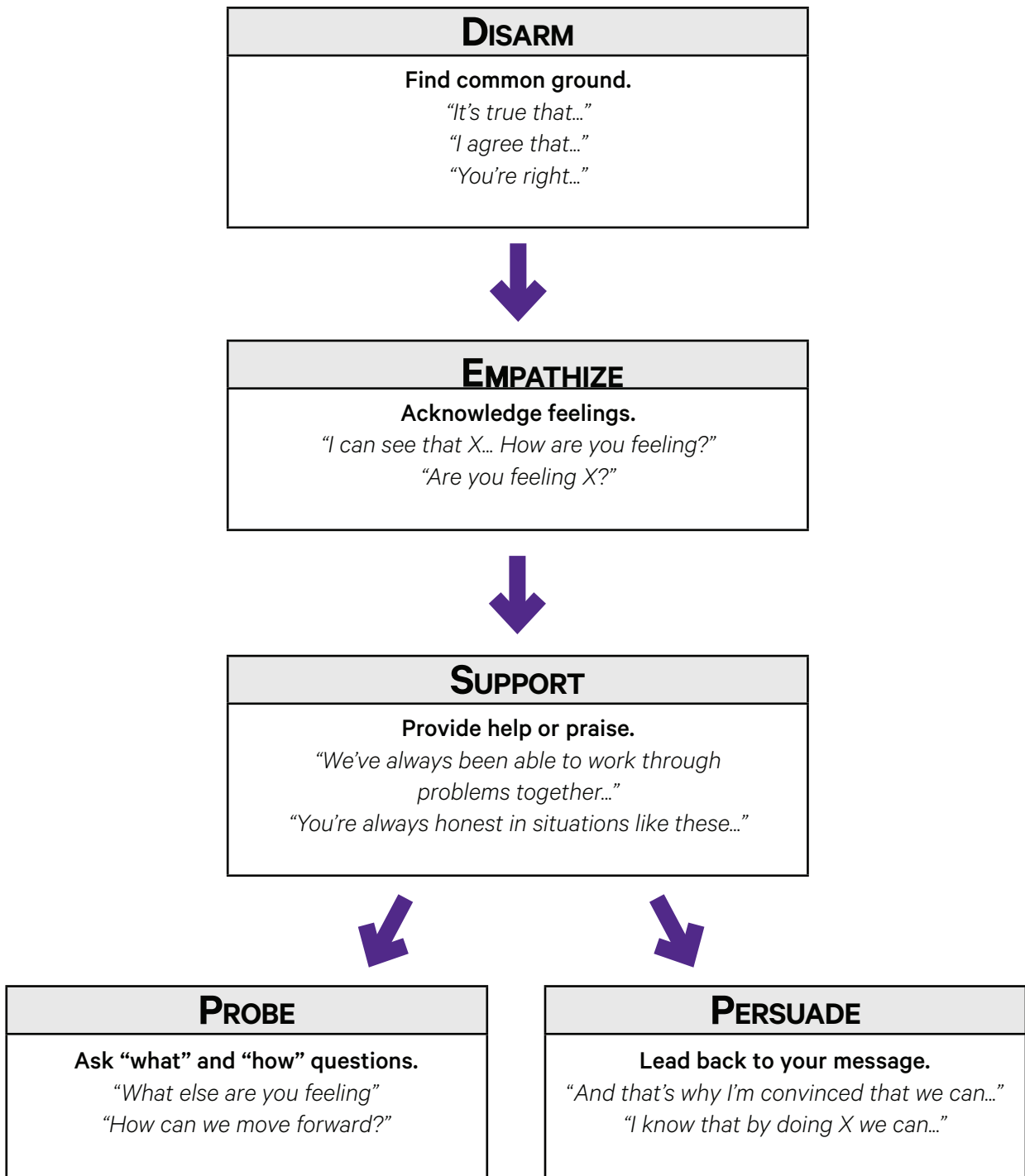
PROBE

Once you have disarmed, empathized, and supported, you can ask a question if you still feel like your audience isn't ready to be persuaded.

- ▷ To complete our example: "I agree; you and Alex are always butting heads. I've noticed it, too. I understand why you'd be frustrated, given how frequently you two need to collaborate. I've worked with you for 5 years and you've always been able to work through conflict when it arises. It's one of your best leadership qualities. Do you think Alex would be willing to sit down and talk it through?"

PRACTICE D.E.S.P.

Follow this guide to defuse and de-escalate conflict.



Back to **DISARM**. Repeat steps if needed.

Session 4: In-Class Activities

The following activities will take place during the live session. Use the spaces provided to fill in your answers. These exercises are meant to be interactive and reflective, so take your time and be thoughtful in your responses.

1. ACTIVE LISTENING ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

In class, you will have be asked to alternate between a **"Speaker Role"** (where you will be asked to talk about something that interests you), and an **"Active Listener Role"** (where your task will be to demonstrate crucial behaviours associated with active listening during the speaker's talk).

- Think about strategies you can implement to display active listening.
- Catalogue them below.

ACTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES:

2. DISENGAGED LISTENING ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

In class, you will have be asked to alternate between a **"Speaker Role"** (where you will be asked to talk about a memorable experience from your professional life), and a **"Disengaged Listener Role"** (where your task will be to demonstrate disengaged listening during the speaker's talk and indicate that you are not fully paying attention).

- Think about what behaviours exhibit that you are not paying attention to a speaker.
- Catalogue them below.

DISENGAGED LISTENING BEHAVIOURS:

3. DRAFT A CHALLENGING CONVERSATION ACTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Identify three upcoming challenging conversations you anticipate having.
- For each conversation, write down the message you want to deliver. Note the action you want to drive from the conversation.

If you're stuck, refer back to your Leader's Script example and imagine possible conversations that could follow.

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 1:

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 1: MESSAGE

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 2:

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 2: MESSAGE

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 3:

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION 3: MESSAGE

Exercises to Do at Home, at Work, and On the Go

KEEP A JOURNAL

- In your journal, document any challenging conversations you encounter, detailing the following:
 - The context of the conversation.
 - How/if you applied each step of the DESP technique.
 - The outcome of the conversation.
 - Your reflections on what worked well and what could be improved.
- At the end of the week, review your journal entries and identify common themes and areas for growth.

IDENTIFY PRACTICAL REAL-WORLD APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR DESP

- Identify at least three real-life situations where you can apply the DESP technique over the next month. These situations can be at work, home, or in social settings where challenging conversations are likely to occur.
- Before each conversation, plan how you will use the DESP technique. Write down key points for each step.
- During the conversation, try to consciously apply the technique.
- Immediately after the conversation, document the experience in a log, including the other person's reactions, the outcome of the conversation and your reflections on what went well and what could be improved.
- After the three conversations, review your logs to identify patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement.

Reflections on Taking the Stage®

To be seen and heard as a leader you need to take the stage! The topics in this program will help you do so – to recap:

- Embrace your Leadership Identity has shown you how to take the stage mentally by accepting yourself a leader.
- The Leader's Script® and the Language of Leadership examined how to take the stage verbally, by bringing forward your ideas clearly and confidently.
- Power of Voice and Presence showed you how to unlock the power of your voice and how to adopt an authentic and powerful presence.
- Inspiring Conversations demonstrated how to transform challenging conversations into moments for you to display your leadership.

In learning the skills included in this program, you have the tools you need to show leadership on any stage.

Next Steps

Suggestions for continued learning and development in program topics:

REFLECT ON LEARNINGS

- Set aside dedicated time to reflect on what you have learned throughout the program.
- Consider the following questions:
 - How have your learnings impacted your understanding of leadership?
 - In what areas do you feel most confident?
 - Where do you see room for improvement?

IDENTIFY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Prioritize the areas that will have the most significant impact on your leadership effectiveness.
- Seek feedback from peers, mentors, or colleagues to gain additional insights into your strengths and areas for growth.
- Ask specific questions related to the course topics, such as your language habits, vocal presence, and ability to handle challenging conversations.

DEVELOP A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Set specific goals based on your reflections and feedback.
- Create a detailed action plan outlining the steps you will take to achieve each goal, including specific activities, such as practicing new skills or seeking out public speaking opportunities.
- Set a realistic timeline for achieving your goals, breaking down each goal into smaller, manageable milestones.
- Identify the resources you will need to support your development, such as books, online courses or coaching.
- Regularly monitor your progress towards your goals, using self-assessment tools and feedback from others.

Additional Resources and Thoughts to Remember

"I just love bossy women. I could be around them all day. To me, bossy is not a pejorative term at all. It means somebody's passionate and engaged and ambitious and doesn't mind leading." – Amy Poehler, Actress

"One's philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes... and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility." – Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady

"I learned to always take on things I'd never done before. Growth and comfort do not coexist." – Ginni Rometty, IBM

"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be." – Rosalynn Carter, former First Lady

"My best successes came on the heels of failures." – Barbara Corcoran, Businesswoman

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