

Session 2: Conceptualizing Leadership

Leadership is a combination of strengths (who you are) and abilities (skills you've learned) applied to specific circumstances and contexts (actual behaviors and interactions). Conceptualizing leadership as behavior also implies that leadership can be learned and taught. Your conceptualization of leadership is likely to affect the way you lead, so we're going to spend some time developing that understanding.

Discuss

Think of someone you know and have interacted with personally who exemplifies excellent leadership. Describe this person for your mentor/mentee. What specific strengths, abilities, or behaviors does this person exemplify? How has this person impacted you and/or your understanding of leadership? How do others respond to this person?

Discover

So the next question, then, is this: how do you conceptualize leadership?

Individually, please take the "Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire" and follow the instructions for scoring your own understanding of various aspects of leadership. This self-analysis may help you understand your own attitudes and beliefs regarding various facets of leadership as well as what elements you value. Share your results with your mentor/mentee. Do these results confirm or contradict your understanding of your personal values and proclivities? Do you see this influence your interactions with other people?

Develop

You've spent some time conceptualizing your understanding of leadership as well as the qualities of leaders that you admire. The next mentoring session will focus on leadership strengths and more specific behaviors and tendencies that demonstrate leadership activity. Between now and then, consider the following:

- In what areas or contexts do I influence other people's attitudes or behaviors?
- What would other people say that I value as a leader?
- What leadership strengths and qualities do I demonstrate?
- What words would others use to describe my leadership style?