

# Session 4: Personal Philosophy of Leadership & Leadership Style

A conceptualization of leadership and an understanding of your leadership strengths helps inform and develop leadership style – the activities and behaviors that characterize your leadership interactions that in turn affect how others respond to you, and also determines your effectiveness as a leader.

A leadership philosophy is essentially a guiding set of attitudes and beliefs about the nature of people and work. Your leadership philosophy guides your leadership style.

## Discuss

In this session we'll consider three broad styles of leadership (these are not exhaustive and there are a number of ways in which these approaches blend based on context and situation; these are broad categories). Consider all the leaders you've encountered and been influenced by over the years – teachers, coaches, bosses, managers, private instructors, religious instructors, etc. – and try to name one that corresponds to each of the following styles:

***Authoritarian:*** leadership characterized by exerting control over others and heavily influencing a variety of tasks and relationships according to their standards and guidelines, providing clear and precise directions as well as criticism and praise; often praised for efficiency and productivity and providing clear direction, but criticized for discouraging subordinates and creating a culture of submissiveness and fear.

***Democratic:*** leadership characterized by working alongside rather than above subordinates, empowering others to achieve and excel and reach personal goals, and cultivating a culture of openness and trust. Praised for creating a positive and encouraging environment and a supportive work structure, but criticized for being less efficient in terms of producing positive outcomes and requiring a tremendous commitment on the part of the leader.

***Laissez-faire:*** leadership defined not by control nor by guidance but rather through a hands-off approach in which subordinates set their own direction and operate with little guidance or structure. While a successful approach for highly motivated and effective subordinates, it produces generally poor outcomes because subordinates, absent guidance and direction of any kind, become unmotivated and unproductive.

- How did you and others react to each kind of leader?
- How did they differ with regards to praise, criticism, reward, and punishment?

- What were both the positive and negative ways these leaders influenced you and others?

### **Discover**

Take the “Leadership Styles Questionnaire” and score it based on the provided scale. Do you think that your co-workers, supervisors, subordinates, friends, and/or family members would agree that the results accurately describe you? How would you describe your style of leadership and what examples can you provide that illustrate your leadership style in action? How do you perceive others’ responses to your leadership style?

### **Develop**

Whether you are in a position of leadership or whether you are a subordinate in terms of professional hierarchies, you still influence those around you through every interpersonal exchange that occurs. How does your current leadership (i.e. influence) style benefit others? How would you like to be perceived? Is there a gap between how you are and how you wish to be perceived as an influencer? What steps can you take to become what you consider to be your ideal leader (i.e. influencer)?