An Exercise to Develop and Practice Self-Reflection

Abstract

The most important person to lead is ourself. This interactive session describes and demonstrates an exercise used to develop and practice self-reflection in order to lead oneself. It is based on collecting feedback from a variety of perspectives in order to write a self-portrait. The exercise requires one to "look in the mirror" for an honest reflection. Based on feedback, students learn who they are and can choose what they become. This has proven to be a powerful exercise with both undergraduate and graduate students.

Key words: self-leadership, self-awareness, feedback

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Introduction. Self-reflection and self-awareness are critical practices and tools for self-leadership. This Personal Development Exercise (PDA) has been used effectively with both undergraduate and graduate students in leadership courses or in courses such as OB that include a module on leadership.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications. The relevant background literature for this exercise is based upon self-leadership, managing oneself, self-awareness, and feedback. This session contributes to effective teaching and learning by describing how to develop and practice self-reflection. Participants will have opportunities to ask questions so they can leave with the knowledge and skills to immediately integrate the exercise into course curricula.

References

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Learning Objectives. The purpose of this exercise is to enhance self-reflection and self-
awareness through the collection of feedback from a variety of perspectives. The
exercise helps think more deeply about strengths as a leader as well as the areas for
development. Teaching topics include: leadership, feedback, blindspots, reflection, and
continuous improvement.

After collecting feedback, expected student outcomes:

- Acknowledging and recognizing blindspots in order to design strategies to
  minimize.

- Learning to ask for objective feedback and recognizing the value in doing so.

- Using the feedback to reflect and make changes and improvements.

- Developing the practice of collecting feedback and using it to enhance self-
  leadership.

- Learning that we choose what and who we become.

Exercise Overview. This interactive exercise is a combination of collecting feedback,
analyzing qualitative data for themes, and writing a self-portrait paper based on what was
learned. This exercise informs the Leadership Learning Plan that is completed as the
final and major evaluative component in the course. There is no size limit to this session
and 60 minutes would be preferred to allow time for engagement and for participants to

provide their input in customizing the exercise. While it can be described in 30 minutes, 60 minutes would allow for interaction and discussion that would enhance the value for everyone—including me—in the session.

Session Description.

- Introduction to exercise and how it has been used in both undergraduate and graduate courses

  10 minutes

- Description of the various aspects to the exercise

  10 minutes

- Explanation of how this exercise informs the final component in the course

  10 minutes

- Open discussion: answer questions, discuss how to utilize and/or customize

  20 minutes

- Collect feedback from participants using a feedback tool

  10 minutes