

Leadership Skill Builders

Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership

You can follow the Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership on-demand lesson and Infographic with a discussion at your next team meeting. Or better yet, schedule a brown bag session over lunch. This will help to reinforce the concepts and provide an opportunity to discuss how your team can embrace the five principles.

This lesson plan provides discussion questions you can use to review and apply the concepts. You can spend 15 minutes quickly reviewing the concepts. Or take more time and review the material in more depth and then brainstorming how your team can embrace the five principles.

Timing: 30-45 minutes

Objective: Describe how to apply the five principles of Adaptive Leadership.

- List the five principles of adaptive leadership.
- Provide examples of people who have used the five principles to orchestrate change.
- Reflect on how the team can embrace the five principles.

Preparation:

- Send out the link to the on-demand lesson on the Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership.
- Attach the Adaptive Leadership Infographic to the email.
- Instruct your team to complete the short 15-minute lesson and be prepared to discuss its concepts at your next meeting.

The Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership

SAY: Adaptive Leadership is a practical leadership framework that helps individuals and organizations adapt and thrive in challenging environments. It is being able, both individually and collectively, to take on the gradual but meaningful process of change.

ASK: What are the Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership?

DO: Write down and display the Five Principles.

Principle 1: Leadership is an activity, not a position.

SAY: Think of exercising leadership in terms of being a verb or actions that are taken, rather than a noun or a person.

ASK: What are some of the actions that John Muir, Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rachel Carson took?

Principle 2: Anyone can lead, anytime, anywhere.

SAY: Nelson Mandela said, "Our struggle for freedom and justice was a collective effort...it is in your hands to create a better world for all who live in it." We should all treat every opportunity as something worthy of leadership regardless of our role, responsibility or position.

ASK: What are some examples of people in our organization or in the field of conservation leading from an unusual place?

Principle 3: It starts with you and must engage others.

ASK: How did the historical figures in the videos motivate and engage others?

Principle 4: Your purpose must be clear.

ASK: Why is having a clear purpose so important?

Solicit: A clear purpose is needed for motivating others. A clear purpose helps sustain one through the risks and difficulties associated with tackling complex challenges.

Principle 5: It's risky.

ASK: What are some of the risks the historical figures in the videos faced?

Solicit: Imprisonment, character assassination, threats, etc.

People Who Practiced the Five Principles

SAY: The videos showcased five people who used the five principles to make progress on difficult challenges. They were: John Muir, Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rachel Carson.

ASK: What are some other people whose work incorporated one or more of the Five Principles of Adaptive Leadership? **NOTE:** Use some of the following questions to help lead a discussion:

- What actions did this person take to make progress on the challenge?
- Did this person act from a position of formal authority or power in the organization?
- How did this person engage and motivate others?
- Did this person articulate a clear purpose? What was that purpose?
- What risks did this person face?

Putting the Five Principles into Practice

ASK: How can we as a team better embrace these five principles? **NOTE:** Use some of the following questions to help lead a discussion:

- Do all members of the team feel they can speak candidly about tough issues?
- How good are we at engaging and motivating other stakeholders?
- Do we have a clear purpose? Is everyone on the team committed to that purpose?
- Are team members taking risks and experimenting with new approaches to addressing challenges?