

S E S S I O N 2

How Am I a Leader in My Own Life ?

Session Objectives

- To explore the kinds of circumstances or events that inspire leadership.
- To examine the ethics of good leadership and the qualities that demonstrate a leader's integrity.
- To consider the significance of gender and sex in styles of leadership and objectives of leaders. For most people, sex is the biological distinction between female and male whereas gender refers to behavioral, cultural, or psychological characteristics that are socially constructed and attributed to women and men.
- To share when and how the workshop participants have exercised leadership themselves.

Suggestions for Facilitation

At the end of Session 1, you were asked to think about a woman you consider a leader. In this session, each participant should share her story about the leader she admires. The leaders may be conventional leaders such as political officials or women in your everyday life—family, friends, or colleagues. Focus on the challenges that this leader confronted as well as on the qualities and skills that she demonstrated in addressing problems. Keeping the stories short will allow enough time for the discussion questions that follow in the exercise “Role Models for Leadership.”

Dividing the group into smaller teams or even partners may be the best facilitation tactic for this session (see Appendix B for more information). While participants are recounting their leadership stories, a volunteer or volunteers can record on a chalk board or flip chart (1) the qualities and skills exhibited by the leaders, and (2) the types of support networks (e.g., family, friends, neighbors, colleagues) that may have influenced or assisted the leaders to carry out their objectives.

In the second exercise “Does Gender Make a Difference?” two nearly identical conversations take place, the first among four women and the second among four men. The purpose of this exercise is to compare participants’ responses to the conversations and to examine how gender influences their perceptions of power and leadership within families and communities.



<i>Qualities and Skills of Leaders</i>	<i>Support Networks that Assisted Leaders</i>

Exercise: Role Models for Leadership

Allow approximately one hour for this exercise.

After each participant has shared her story about a leader she admires, consider the following questions:

- Are there similar themes, conditions, or situations that re-occurred in many of the stories? What kinds of events led the women to take action?
- What leadership qualities or skills did many of the women have in common?
- Did the leadership characteristics manifest themselves because of the challenges the women faced? Or, did the women already have the leadership characteristics?
- What role did the support of networks, organizations, institutions and/or individuals play in assisting the women leaders to accomplish their objectives?
- Do you recall how you tackled a challenge in your life? What qualities and skills did you use to overcome that challenge? What role did support networks play in meeting your challenge? What steps did you take?
- Do all steps you take to solve a problem, personal or social, need to be justified? Should the steps a leader takes reflect a set of "higher values," or is the problem being addressed justification enough?
- Which leadership characteristics do you feel you have? Which additional leadership characteristics do you wish you had?
- Are there family restrictions or community expectations that inhibit you from fulfilling your leadership potential?
- What are some strategies you may use to circumvent these expectations?
- What steps might you take to encourage yourself or others (friends, colleagues, family members) to nurture leadership characteristics?
- Do you feel a personal responsibility for addressing any specific social problems?
- Would you identify yourself as a leader? Why or why not?
- Would others consider you a leader?

In the next week, keep in mind those leadership characteristics you hope to foster and try to apply them at least once.

Exercise: Does Gender Make A Difference?

Allow approximately forty-five minutes for this exercise.

Ask volunteers from the group to each read one of the five roles in the two scenes below. Discuss the significance of gender in the characters' conversations, and how it shapes your perceptions of the characters' social standing, integrity, and power. The questions that follow may help guide your discussion.

Scene I

Characters: Almaz, Insaf, Lena, Farah, and the narrator

Narrator: *It is a warm weekday afternoon in town. Four women sit together in the shade of a tree. Insaf is the eldest. Today is her sixtieth birthday and her niece, Lena, is visiting her. Farah works for Insaf in her grocery store and Almaz, who is involved in local politics and was elected to the town council, is Farah's best friend. The women are eating their mid-day meal and talking.*

Almaz: *Insaf, your niece is so smart and so attractive. Do you ever regret not having a family?*

Insaf: *Hurrumph. She is not **so** smart! And I am not so old that I cannot still have a family! Just ask Farah. Mothers and fathers come to my shop all the time to suggest that I meet their son... and so on and so forth. I choose not to be married and I like it that way!*

Lena: *Oh come on Aunt. You are too old to get married now. Anyone who would want you would be ugly and old anyway.*

Almaz: *That's not true Lena. Your aunt is a prosperous woman. I know several men who would be very happy to have her as their wife. You would be lucky to be so popular.*

Lena: *I am afraid I am too much like my aunt. I don't want to marry either. Men are too much work and they just eat and eat and spend and spend. They want too many children. I like my freedom. Besides, it would be impossible to continue my studies if I had to take care of a husband and children.*

Farah: *Lena, you are a smart girl indeed. Your education should come first. Look at me. I have to take care of my husband who is ill. I work hard every day in your aunt's shop and I think I do a good job.*

Insaf: *Of course you do.*

Farah: *But I have no way to advance myself with my small amount of education. Although I can read and write well enough to work in the shop, I must be content with where I am. And of course I am very grateful to Insaf for giving me the job, and for being so understanding when I must work short days or skip work to take care of my husband.*

Almaz: *Moan, moan, moan. That's all I hear from you women about men and work. I love my husband. I adore both of my daughters. Having a family and taking good care of them is what life should be about.*

Farah: *Ah Almaz, you say that now when your daughters are young. But wait until they are old enough to marry and leave your home. They won't be around to take care of you in your old age. They will be taking care of their husbands and their own children. My son? He is a gift.*

Almaz: *My daughters are gifts to me! They are so helpful around the house and are very gracious hosts when my husband is away visiting his parents and I must bring home local officials to discuss politics.*

Lena: *Ha ha! Are you training them to follow in your footsteps to run for political office?*

Almaz: *It would not be impossible. . . (Deep sigh.) But you know, politics can be very ugly. I am not sure I would want them subjected to the same treatment I have undergone in my political career. The town council is a very unfriendly place for women.*

Insaf: *Almaz you are dreaming anyway. Your daughters would never get the votes to serve in the town council. Who would vote for them? You only won the election because your father was a hero during the war. Men would not vote for them, and women will vote as their husbands demand.*

Almaz: *You are too old-fashioned, old woman. Times are changing. You'll see. There is a great deal that my daughters could contribute to politics. They are full of ideas about ways to improve the town, and particularly the business community!*

Farah: *Almaz my friend, now you are being disrespectful to a wise and wonderful woman. Enough of this conversation. Come on, let's wish Insaf a happy birthday, and much happiness and prosperity in the coming year.*

Lena, Farah, and Almaz: *Yes, yes, yes!!*

Scene II

Characters: Muhammed, Adnan, Amir, Faisal and the narrator

Narrator: *It is a warm weekday afternoon in town. Four men sit together in the shade of a tree. Adnan is the eldest. Today is his sixtieth birthday and his nephew, Amir, is visiting him. Faisal works for Adnan in his grocery store and Muhammed, who is involved in local politics and was elected to the town council, is Faisal's best friend. The men are eating their mid-day meal and talking.*

Muhammed: *Adnan, your nephew is so smart and so attractive. Do you ever regret not having a family?*

Adnan: *Hurrumph. He is not so smart! And I am not so old that I cannot still have a family! Just ask Faisal. Fathers and mothers come to my shop all the time to suggest that I meet their daughter . . . and so on and so forth. I choose not to be married and I like it that way!*

Amir: *Oh come on Uncle. You are too old to get married now. Anyone who would want you would be an ugly old maid anyway.*

Muhammed: *That's not true Amir. Your uncle is a prosperous man. I know several women who would be very happy to have him as their husband. You would be lucky to be so popular.*

Amir: *I am afraid I am too much like my uncle. I don't want to marry either. Women are too much work and they just eat and eat and spend and spend. They want too many children. I like my freedom. Besides, it would be impossible to continue my studies if I had to take care of a wife and children.*

Faisal: *Amir, you are a smart boy indeed. Your education should come first. Look at me. I have to take care of my wife who is ill. I work hard every day in your uncle's shop and I think I do a good job.*

Adnan: *Of course you do.*

Faisal: *But I have no way to advance myself with my small amount of education. Although I can read and write well enough to work in the shop, I must be content with where I am. And of course I am very grateful to Adnan for giving me the job, and for being so understanding when I must work short days or skip work to take care of my wife.*

Muhammed: *Moan, moan, moan. That's all I hear from you men about women and work. I love my wife. I adore both of my daughters. Having a family and taking good care of them is what life should be about.*

Faisal: *Ah Muhammed, you say that now when your daughters are young. But wait until they are old enough to marry and leave your home. They won't be around to take care of you in your old age. They will be taking care of their husbands and their own children. My son? He is a gift.*

Muhammed: *My daughters are gifts to me! They are so helpful around the house and are very gracious hosts when my wife is away visiting her parents and I must bring home local officials to discuss politics.*

Amir: *Ha ha! Are you training them to follow in your footsteps to run for political office?*

Muhammed: *It would not be impossible . . . (Deep sigh.) But you know, politics can be very ugly. I am not sure I would want them subjected to the same treatment I have undergone in my political career. The town council is a very unfriendly place for women.*

Adnan: *Muhammed you are dreaming anyway. Your daughters would never get the votes to serve in the town council. Who would vote for them? You only won the election because your father was a hero during the war. Men would not vote for them, and women will vote as their husbands demand.*

Muhammed: *You are too old-fashioned, old man. Times are changing. You'll see. There is a great deal that my daughters could contribute to politics. They are full of ideas about ways to improve the town, and particularly the business community!*

Faisal: *Muhammed my friend, now you are being disrespectful to a wise and wonderful man. Enough of this conversation. Come on, let's wish Adnan a happy birthday, and much happiness and prosperity in the coming year.*

Amir, Faisal, and Muhammed: *Yes, yes, yes!!*

Questions for Discussion

- Were the conversations in Scenes I and II believable? What aspects of each were not and why?
- Do you think the older woman, Insaf, could still get married? Why or why not? Do you think the older man, Adnan, could still get married? Why or why not? Are their age, their financial status, and/or gender factors? Is it significant that Insaf is past childbearing age?
- What advice would you give Lena, Insaf's niece, and Amir, Adnan's nephew, about balancing marriage/family and education/professional life? Would your advice be different for each of them? Why or why not?
- If you were Almaz, the local woman politician, in what ways would you seek to be a role model for your daughters? How would you counsel them about being both effective leaders and principled women?
- If you were Mohammed, the local man politician, in what ways would you seek to be a role model for your daughters? Are there different lessons and examples that should be passed on to daughters versus sons?
- Do women and men demonstrate different models or styles of leadership? What are the strengths and drawbacks of each? Are there ways in which women make better leaders than men? Are there ways in which men make better leaders than women?
- How might the life experiences of women influence the values and objectives they bring to their leadership? How might the life experiences of men influence the values and objectives they bring to their leadership?
- Do you prefer working under men or women? Does it make a difference? Do you think women managers/bosses are more likely to address women's needs and concerns? Why or why not?
- Would you support a woman political candidate in your community? Why or why not? Do you think women politicians are more likely to address women's needs and concerns? Why or why not?
- Does the number of women in a governing body, for example on a school board, or among business leaders, or in a local council, impact its governance? How many women does it take for them to make a difference? Would 2% make a difference? 10%, 33%, 50% . . . or another percentage? Why or why not?

A vision is more than just setting a goal.

It involves a picture of the good, an ideal, an idea of what the work

we do would look like if we did it well.

“The Building Blocks of Leadership”