



Advanced Leadership Course

**A Practical Intensive in
Emotional Maturity,
Deeper Connection,
and Bold Decision-Making**

Session Ten

ALC Field Guide

Schedule

7:30-8:00	○ Arrival
8:00-8:30	○ Debrief Difficult Message Delivery
8:35-10:05	○ Capstone Presentations (Round #1): 1) Tim 2) Ben 3) Ashley 4) Chris
10:10-10:25	○ BREAK
10:30-12:00	○ Capstone Presentations (Round #2): 1) Krystle 2) Jack 3) Allyson 4) Scott
12:05-12:55	○ LUNCH
1:00-2:00	○ Closing Debrief
2:05-2:30	○ Wrap-up + Departure

Coaching Reference Card

Eighteen questions for the moments that pull you out of yourself. Find the one that fits where you are.

1. When you feel the pull to fix – The bait is the urge; the bite is acting on it.

- What would taking the bait look like here?
- Whose anxiety am I managing right now?
- Whose part am I carrying that isn't mine?

2. When you're about to step in and help

- How much of my pull to help is because they genuinely cannot?
Or because I can't tolerate what happens if they do it their way?
- What am I doing that belongs to them?
- What am I ignoring that belongs to me?

3. When you need to take a stand

- What do I want, and not want?
- What will I do, and won't do?
- Am I owning my own position or criticizing?

4. When you're caught between two people

- Whose side am I tempted to take?
- Can I stay connected to both without aligning against either?
- Am I carrying a message that two other people should be saying to each other?

5. When you're formally coaching (or being asked to)

- Is this question serving them or protecting me from saying the harder thing?
- When is my patience discernment, and when is it avoidance?
- What's in their control here? What's keeping them from addressing it directly?

6. When there's something you've been avoiding saying

- How can you tell when not delivering a message is avoidance or wisdom?
- Is the message precise, fully owned, and specific?
- What can I learn about me from the moment I most want to look away?

Session 1:

The Art of Feedback

Tools

- **Maturity Mindset.** A bias toward noticing and learning over defending, a desire to know the uncomfortable thing, clarity about one's own part without sliding into blame, and a register that stays calm, direct, and respectful.
- **The three purposes of seeking feedback:**
 - 1) To gather perception data on yourself
 - 2) To elevate candor in a key relationship
 - 3) To strengthen the "emotional immune system" — deliberately exposing yourself to what you avoid, noticing the anxiety flare, and harnessing it
- **Delivering feedback.** Frame it as generosity. Own your perceptions in "I" language. Shoot for accuracy over accusations or absolutes. Speak to concrete behavior, not personality. Drop the language of blame.

Distinction

Non-defensive receptivity is a *practiced skill*, not a personality trait, which means it can be rehearsed before the conversation and noticed during it.

Questions to Think About

1. Which feedback have I been most careful *not* to invite?
2. Whose candor in my key relationships am I currently suppressing by how I react?

Session 2: Staying Grounded Under Pressure

Tools

- **The bait, and the bite.** The bait is the reactive urge that fires under pressure: to blame, to correct, to avoid, and it shows up as trigger → physiological surge → impulse to strike, control, or withdraw. The operative point: the *bite* (acting on the urge) is the bigger problem, not the bait (feeling it).
- **Four grounding disciplines.** See these as disciplines, not moods:
 - **Awareness** — catch the physical, emotional, and mental signals early, before the bite.
 - **Responsibility** — own your part; act within your sphere of control; resist over-or-under-functioning, blaming, and diagnosing.
 - **Relationship Connection** — stay connected under pressure, because avoidance shrinks the field of vision.
 - **Discernment & Flexibility** — read the context, seek the backstory, and move between firm, soft, and playful without betraying principle.

Distinctions (less mature → more mature)

- Feels the surge and strikes vs. feels the surge and names it.
- Manages the other person vs. acts within own sphere of control.
- Withdraws to feel safe vs. stays connected to keep the field of vision wide.
- Acts automatically under pressure vs. moves between firm / soft / playful – reads the moment.

Questions to Think About

1. What is the bait here, and what would taking it (biting) cost?
2. Whose part am I taking responsibility for that isn't mine?

Session 3: Leading Without Flinching (I-Positions)

Tools

- **I-Position.** A clear, non-reactive decision rooted in your values that can be spoken or unspoken. The “I” Position states where you stand without requiring the other to agree. It risks disapproval, stays calm/clear/respectful, and always carries follow-through.
- **The core move.** What I want / what I don't want → what I will do / what I won't do.
- **Crafting framework.** Name where you stand → align it with a clear behavior → say it simply (short, no hedging) → engage critique (is it grounded or reactive? sharpen it).
- **Beliefs/values refinement.** Trace sources of influence, the legacy you want, what's inherited vs. examined, and your hard-won convictions. Assess your core beliefs against their lived evidence.

Distinction

I-Position vs. Pseudo I-Position. A pseudo I-position is disguised criticism, projection, a veiled critique, vagueness, or a feeling masquerading as a directive. The real one defines *you*; the pseudo one is aimed at *them*.

Questions to Think About

1. Where do I actually stand here, and what will I do or not do as a result?
2. Is this an I-position, or a criticism masking as one?

Session 4: Connecting Beneath the Surface

Tools

- **Wired to connect (Lieberman).** The working premises: social isolation or rejection registers as real pain; connection is a necessity, not a luxury; we constantly "mindread," and construct stories that support our biases.
- **The systems lens (family & leadership).** Every family is a multigenerational emotional system, and its patterns run outside awareness. A systems lens widens the view, replacing simplistic, single-cause explanations with contributing factors, and blame with responsibility (Heschel).
- **Connection stimulators.** Valuing connection, moving beyond blame and bias, curious listening, engaging the uncomfortable, self-disclosure, moving between seriousness and lightness, and respecting differences.

Distinctions

- Single cause vs. contributing factors.
- Blame vs. responsibility.

Questions to Think About

1. Whatever I'm afraid to hear: am I asking to hear it?
2. What's the cost of continuing to avoid this conversation?

Session 5: Hidden Scripts, Impactful Questions

Tools

- **Three self-deceptions:**
 - 1) **Overconfidence** — feeling confident is driven by the coherence of the story, not by the weight of the evidence (Kahneman).
 - 2) **Fallacy of the single cause** — distinguish a technical question (one cause, one fix) from a complex one (many contributing factors).
 - 3) **Blame** — a convenient story that protects you from an unsavory, and often more complicated truth. Consider the cost of unscrutinized blame.
- **Luck vs. skill (Mauboussin).** Skill is mostly within your control. Don't decide at high arousal. Leaders set the social context in which others make their decisions. Build humility through a checklist (Pronovost).
- **High-gain questions.** Built on principles: invite more than a sentence of reflection; aim at the avoided; replace judgment with investigation; and signal that you'll actually hear the real answer.
- **Telling → asking.** Translate closed → open, vague → specific, directive → curious. Build a bridge to the question, then deliver bridge + question without softening it.

Distinctions

- Confidence-as-evidence vs. confidence-as-feeling.
- Judgment vs. investigation.
- Telling vs. asking.

Questions to Think About

1. Is this a technical question or a complex one? Am I responding appropriately?
2. What does my blame story give me, and what is it costing me?
3. What's the question I'm avoiding asking because I don't want the real answer?

Session 6: Reciprocity in Relationships

Tools

- **Reciprocity.** A mostly unconscious process by which two people continuously shape each other's behavior, emotions, and roles, stimulating the very outcomes each wants to change. Each person's behavior reinforces the other's. Neither sees self as the problem; both feel victimized by a pattern that's bigger than either of them.
- **Five recognition templates.** Use these to spot your own loops. In each, one person's move is exactly what the other's move demands:
 - 1) An Anxious Leader & a Passive Team
 - 2) A Rescuer & a Dependent;
 - 3) A Pursuer & a Distancer
 - 4) An Over-Protective Parent & a Fearful Child
 - 5) A Distant Parent & a Pursuing Child.
- **Over-functioning / Under-functioning:**
 - **Over-functioning** — taking on the emotional, cognitive, or practical labor that rightfully belongs to another, out of anxiety rather than genuine helpfulness (telling others what to do, repeatedly reminding, chronic worry about another, making yourself needed, mediating unasked, speaking on others' behalf).
 - **Under-functioning** — withdrawing effort, deferring decisions, going passively dependent, often in response to someone else's over-functioning (waiting to be asked, avoiding decisions, not speaking up, withdrawing from conflict, failing to follow through).
- **The Helpfulness Question.** Genuine helpfulness is oriented toward the other person's growth. It tolerates struggle, because struggle is where capacity is built. Over-functioning skips the struggle to reduce *your* anxiety, and trains people into the very helplessness you find frustrating.

Distinctions

Genuine helpfulness vs. over-functioning that increases helplessness

They genuinely cannot vs. I cannot tolerate what happens if they do it their way.

Questions to Think About

1. Am I doing this because they genuinely cannot or because I cannot tolerate what happens if they do it their way?
2. Whose anxiety am I managing right now?
3. What need of mine does this pattern serve even if it exhausts me?
4. Where did I first learn to play this role, and who else in my life plays the reciprocal part?

Session 7:

The Coaching Process

Tools

- **Fundamentals of Triangles.** Every coaching conversation about a real-life dilemma is, by default, a triangle: One talks about another, to a coach who becomes the third point. The operating principles:
 - 1) Intensity is set by two factors: the *anxiety* of the participants and their *emotional maturity*.
 - 2) Structure: two insiders, one outsider. This is stabilizing, but never static.
 - 3) The pull toward togetherness: the outsider feels the discomfort of exclusion and moves to get back inside, often displacing an insider.
 - 4) Insider feels supported and connected; outsider feels rejected (even when it isn't personal).
 - 5) Position shifts are automatic and mostly unconscious.
 - 6) Approval-seeking in the form of rejection avoidance is the engine that keeps the triangle spinning.
 - 7) The goal is *resilience* to rejection, not *avoidance* of it: stay thoughtful and keep influence inside the triangle without being governed by the fear of being out.
 - 8) Self-regulation makes everything else possible: pause before acting; choose a response rather than be hijacked by one.
- **The Common Relationship Triangle.** B–C tension exceeds B's tolerance → B recruits A as an ally → B frames C as the problem → the pull toward closeness pressures A to align with B → if A aligns, the triangle solidifies and C is marginalized as "the problem." (Roles: A = Receiver, B = Messenger, C = Presenting Problem.)
- **Getting "caught."** The behaviors that keep you in the triangle: taking responsibility for resolving a problem between two others; carrying messages as a go-between; protecting others from discomfort; lacking confidence in others' ability to navigate their own relationships; forcing harmony; "teaching" about triangles to manage your own anxiety; letting your intolerance of discomfort undermine others' maturity.

- **Modifying the pressure (emotional maturity).** Maintain neutrality and resist taking sides; observe the dynamics broadly without scapegoating; stay in an outside position without feeling threatened; normalize rejection; view yourself and others with realistic compassion; build direct one-on-one relationships not governed by a third party while staying connected to both sides.
- **Coachability.** Coach only the coachable; don't convince the unconvinced or drag anyone toward their own development. Markers of coachability:
 - 1) Interest in growth
 - 2) Willingness to look at one's own contribution before assigning blame
 - 3) Seeking challenge, not just tolerating it
 - 4) Favoring accuracy over comfort
 - 5) Owning the logistics
 - 6) Bringing real substance
- **Coaching: core purposes & practice.** The primary purpose is promoting self-responsibility and emotional maturity in the coachee, building the capacity to gain clarity, take responsibility, build courage despite discomfort, and stay accountable. In practice: establish connection, require coachability, listen in advance of problem-solving, ask high-impact questions, use strategic self-disclosure, manage triangles, and engage the Reverse Role Play and the Invested Observer (developed in S8).

Distinctions

- Resilience to rejection vs. avoidance of rejection.
- “Why” questions (provoke defensiveness) vs. “how” and “what” questions (open clarity and ownership).
- High coachability (responsibility before blame; seeks challenge) vs. low coachability (already has it figured out; the case is about someone not in the room).

Questions to Think About

1. What part of the coaching triangle is within your control?
2. What patterns do you notice in your response to problems brought to you?
3. What is keeping you from addressing this directly?
4. How do you plan to move forward and navigate this skillfully?

Session 8: Advanced Coaching Skills

Tools

- **When the Coaching Stalls.** How a coach handles a stuck moment is itself modeling. When a conversation stalls, pause before moving on: What is the stuckness is telling you? Then choose from three families of moves:
 - 1) **Name it directly** — “I’m noticing I feel a bit stuck; are you?” / “I’m not sure I’m adding much value right now; where do you want to take this?”
 - 2) **Examine your own role** — “I think I might be working harder than you are to understand your challenge.” / “I’m hesitating to say something that might sting. Shall I name it?”
 - 3) **Return the focus to the coachee** — “I hear a lot about others, and they have a role. What’s *your* role in this pattern?” / “I haven’t heard a clear position from you yet. What do you want here?”
- **Reverse Role Play.** When a coachee is locked in a fixed view of someone else, a Reverse Role Play can shift it by putting the coach in the coachee’s shoes and asking the coachee to represent the identified problem or challenge.
 - Structure: **A becomes B** (coach models a higher-maturity version of the coachee). **B becomes C** (coachee voices the problem person’s likely response). **A never becomes C** — the coach focuses only on the coachee, not on the coachee’s problem.
 - Set it up without naming it: “I’ll step into your shoes and respond as my version of you; you get into [C’s] shoes and represent him as you actually experience him.”
 - End it clearly, then let the coachee reflect *first*.
- **The Invested Observer™.** A coach works with two people who are avoiding a difficult conversation (Rob and Patricia), creating conditions where candor and safety coexist: Countering avoidance with directness, accountability and a strategic triangle.
 - How it works: coach holds a 1:1 with Rob about his relationship with Patricia while Patricia observes in real time (present, listening, not yet speaking) → coach turns to Patricia: what did you hear, what arose, what landed, what didn’t → Patricia becomes coachee, Rob becomes the observer → coach steps back; the two speak directly and build a specific accountability agreement (what to revisit, by when, where).

Distinctions

- Push anxiously past the stall vs. pause and read what the stall is telling you.
- Focus on the problem (C) vs. model growth by focusing on B
- Collapse into advice vs. hold space in the debrief

Questions to Think About

1. **(Stall recovery)** Where do you want to take this? / What's *your* role in this pattern? / What do you want here?
2. **(RRP debrief)** What did you notice? / What did you think of my version of you — what fit, what didn't? / Is there anything here you'd take into the actual conversation?

Session 9: Avoidance and Risk

Tools

- **Self-Coaching.** Preparation begins by applying to yourself the disciplines you'd apply to a coachee: ask the question that gets beneath the story; sit with a question instead of solving through it; refuse to rescue, soothe, or distract yourself from something unflattering you've seen; and hold a stance for yourself that you'd hold for someone else.
- **Avoidance in Coaching.** Avoidance is slippery. Six places it hides, each with its surfacing question:
 - 1) ***Asking another question when it's time to make an observation:*** When does the next question stop serving the coachee and start protecting the coach?
 - 2) ***Softening the observation past the point of usefulness:*** When does reframing detract from the sharpness the message requires?
 - 3) ***Letting them "get there themselves" when the evidence says they won't:*** When is patience disguising cowardice?
 - 4) ***Hiding inside the coaching role:*** When does the role become a shelter for the coach instead of a service to the coachee?
 - 5) ***Protecting the relationship instead of serving the person:*** When does fear of losing long-built trust become the reason for not taking a calculated risk?
 - 6) ***Filling the silence when you don't know what to say:*** When does the next move become a filler to avoid acknowledging that you don't know where to go from here?
- **Discernment: Holding Opposites.** A practiced ability to read reality accurately, interpret it wisely, and choose the next right action for the long run — more a mindset than a behavior set, and at its core the capacity to hold two seemingly opposite variables at once: warmth *and* strength, conviction *and* openness, holding the line *and* holding the person, standing firm *and* staying open.

- **Sticky Messages.** The apparatus for a message you've been postponing:
 - *Craft it against seven dimensions:*
 - 1) **Precise** (says exactly what I mean)
 - 2) **Owned** (about my experience and impact, not *their* behavior)
 - 3) **Honest** (keeps the weight the message requires)
 - 4) **Direct** (no waffling)
 - 5) **Specific** (a real moment, not an abstraction)
 - 6) **Observational** (names what I saw rather than tells them what to do)
 - 7) **Respectful/Caring** (designed to honor the relationship, not to punish)
 - *Deliver it:* name who it's for; deliver the prepared message; the recipient receives it only, no verbal response; the room observes and then gives feedback on message and delivery. Observers track: Body, Eyes, Voice, Pacing, Stance, Contact, Witness response, Landing.

Distinctions

- A question that serves the coachee vs. a question that protects the coach.
- Patience as discernment vs. patience as avoidance.
- Honesty that serves the person vs. honesty discharged for the speaker's emotional relief.
- Strategic withholding vs. discomfort-driven avoidance

Questions to Think About

1. **(On the role)** Which of the six does my avoidance most resemble, and why?
2. **(On discernment)** Is this a repairable conflict or a destructive pattern? In this moment, do I need to be generous, direct, patient, or done? What's mine to own, and what's theirs? Where is the urgency coming from?
3. **(On delivery)** In the moment I most want to look away, what is that telling me about *me*?

Notes

