



# Advanced Leadership Course

*A Practical Intensive for building  
Emotional Maturity, Deeper Connections,  
and Wise Decisions*

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# Session One

*No Coddling, No Cruelty:  
The Art of Feedback*

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## Schedule

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|-----------------|---|
| <b>7:30 AM</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Arrive / Settle In</li> <li>○ Light Breakfast</li> </ul>   |
| <b>8:00</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quiet Exercise: “Present and Accounted For”</li> <li>○ Review course outline and responsibilities</li> <li>○ Small groups: pre-course meeting debrief</li> </ul> |
| <b>10:00</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Break</li> </ul>   |
| <b>10:15</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A maturity mindset</li> <li>○ The non-anonymous feedback process</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Noon</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lunch</li> </ul>   |
| <b>12:45 PM</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unrehearsed skills demo: Receiving unflattering feedback</li> <li>○ Debrief</li> </ul>   |
| <b>1:45</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wrap up: <i>Thanks for the Feedback</i></li> </ul>   |

# Roles & Responsibilities

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## Participants:

- Uphold confidentiality standards
- Digest all session materials and reflection exercises
- Arrive on time and present for each session
- Manage electronics during sessions (excluding breaks)
- Own responsibility for your needs, wants, and requests
- Lean into your growth edges

## Facilitator:

- Demonstrate candor and respect
- Promote individual learning and growth
- Elevate the standard for reflections, questions, and clarifications
- Manage logistics, communication and timing
- Deliver clear assignments and accountabilities
- Engage the here and now

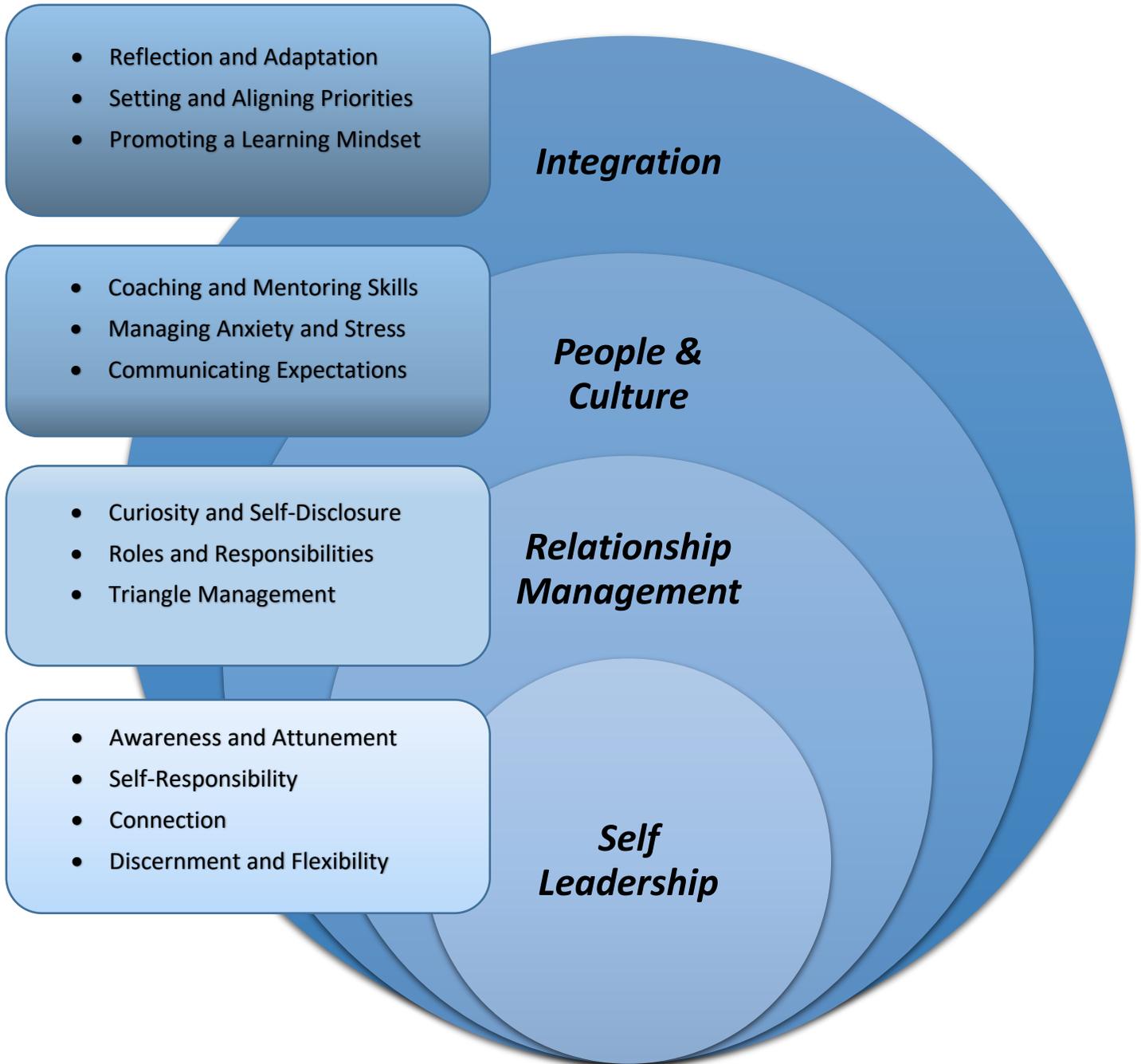
# Operating Assumptions

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1. Confidentiality
2. Intelligence | Status | Wealth ≠ Relationship Success
3. “Stripes off”
4. “All in”
5. “Being seen, being known” - transparency and openness
6. This is a person to person process
7. We’re all learners and illuminators
8. Deep dive ahead

# Course Roadmap

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# Maturity Mindset

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- A bias toward observing and “intentional noticing”
- A bias toward learning
- “Wanting to know” the unwanted, the uncomfortable, and the messy
- Receptive to genuine connection efforts from others
- Clear and objective about one’s own part; aware of others’ part without blame
- Seeking an understanding of the broader, deeper context behind behavior
- Reflective and calm
- Direct and respectful
- Pursuing and welcoming feedback; identifying barriers to being one’s best self
- Focus on systems awareness vs rigid goals

# **Non-Anonymous Feedback: Advancing Connection and Relationship Maturity**

# Purposes of Requesting and Receiving Feedback

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## 1. To provide “perception data” that stimulates deliberate thinking about self:

- How do I show up to people?
- What do those around me most appreciate about my leadership?
- What behaviors of mine make it difficult for others to function well?
- What are people up against when trying to connect with me?
- What perceptions and questions from others might be useful to me?

## 2. To raise the level of openness and candor in important relationships:

- By selecting respondents with whom stronger connection is desired
- By seeking a sincere, open and meaningful exchange
- By executing a genuinely curious and non-defensive presence
- By believing that skillful effort can improve and strengthen relationships
- By exercising courage

## 3. To strengthen the “emotional immune system”:

- By intentionally exposing oneself to what has been avoided
- By noticing when and how anxiety flares up within oneself
- By practicing anxiety-lowering or anxiety-harnessing strategies

## Description of the Process

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1. Each participant will initiate a self-focused, comprehensive leadership feedback process.
2. Select 12 – 16 respondents from whom to solicit candid feedback including:
  - Peers/colleagues
  - Boss
  - Direct reports
  - Spouse/partner and/or ex-partner
  - Parents
  - Siblings
  - Young adult or adult children
3. Email the appropriate Feedback Request Form to all respondents, with your request for written feedback. In that same email, set up a 60-minute follow-up meeting.
4. After receiving written feedback, meet with each respondent individually (in person preferred) to solicit elaboration on their written feedback. Take thorough notes.
5. When all one-on-one sessions are completed, prepare a summary of the main patterns – those points that show up repeatedly. Use the Feedback Summary Worksheet to help identify themes of importance.
6. Complete your summary and email to Nick Engels by December 10, 2025 (12 weeks).
7. Prepare to present your summary to your colleagues at Session 4 (Dec. 10).

# Guidelines for Selecting Respondents

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1. A relationship you want to grow or improve
2. A person who has seen your worst
3. A relationship that needs repair or deeper understanding
4. A person who sees you as arrogant, avoidant, fragile, or disinterested in a relationship
5. A person who sees you as unrealistically gifted or talented
6. A person with whom you want to shift the interaction dynamic

## Feedback from Work Colleagues: *Boss, Peers, Direct Reports*

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Confidential Leadership Feedback requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by (name): \_\_\_\_\_

1. In your candid view, what adjectives – for better and worse – most accurately describe my leadership style?
2. Which specific leadership talents/skills of mine contribute the most value to our organization?
3. What qualities/tendencies of mine make it difficult for you to connect with me, or work effectively with me?
4. What are people around here up against when dealing with me?
5. What is one thing you see me doing or saying that you think I don't see in myself?
6. What is one thing you see me doing that you find yourself appreciating?
7. What is one thing I could change that would make a difference for you?

# Feedback from Spouse/Partner

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Confidential Leadership Feedback requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by (name): \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you rate our relationship connection on a scale of 1–10, with 10 being “ideal?”
2. If our relationship were functioning at level 10, what would I be doing differently? What is the one thing I could change that would make the most difference for you?
3. What behaviors of mine make it easy for you to connect with me and know who I am? What behaviors make connection with me more difficult?
4. What do you see as my greatest source of strength or best personal attribute?
5. What resentment do you hold onto that is not discussed?
6. On a scale of 1–10 (with 10 being perfect), how would you rate my functioning in the following areas (please explain each rating):
  - Taking care of myself physically (movement, eating, sleeping)?
  - The strength of my personal support system?
  - Asking for help when I need it?
  - The strength of my connection with each of our children?
  - Holding our children accountable for being responsible?
  - Spending quality time with you?
  - My willingness and ability to connect with my own family members?
  - My ability to skillfully take a stand with members of my family?
7. What questions do you have that might be helpful for me to think about?

# Feedback from Young Adult/Adult Children

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Confidential Leadership Feedback requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by (name): \_\_\_\_\_

1. What behaviors of mine make it easy for you to connect with me and know who I am?
  
2. What behaviors of mine make it difficult for you to connect with me and know who I am?
  
3. What is one thing I could do that would make me a better parent/stepparent?
  
4. On a scale of 1–10 (with 10 being perfect), how would you rate my functioning in the following areas (please explain each rating):
  - Taking care of myself physically (movement, eating, sleeping)?
  - The strength of my personal support system?
  - Asking for help when I need it?
  - Spending quality time with you?
  - Holding you accountable for being responsible?
  - My willingness and ability to connect with other family members?
  - My ability to take a clear stand with family members?
  
5. What questions do you have that might be helpful for me to think about?

## Feedback from Siblings/Parents

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Confidential Leadership Feedback requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by (name): \_\_\_\_\_

1. What words would best describe me as a child growing up?
2. How would you describe my role in our family growing up?
3. If you had to name one talent I've had, from as far back as you can remember, what would it be?
4. One weakness?
5. What is one thing you see me doing or saying that you think I don't see in myself?
6. Who would you say I was closest to growing up? Most distant from?
7. What decisions of mine have most surprised you?
8. What behaviors of mine make it easy for you to connect with me?
9. What behaviors of mine make it difficult for you to connect with me?
10. What's been the most difficult issue for you to discuss openly with me?
11. What questions do you have that might be helpful for me to think about?

## Preparing for Feedback Presentations

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Below are guidelines for completing the Feedback Summary Form (next page):

1. Assemble all notes and carefully review respondents' feedback.
2. Identify recurring comments or themes (patterns) for each of the questions. Capture these patterns on the Feedback Summary Form. Use extra sheets if needed.
3. Email a copy of your completed Feedback Summary Worksheet (next page) to Nick Engels, **no later than December 8, 2025**.

# Feedback Summary Worksheet

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1. What 3 words best summarize how people described your leadership strengths?

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2. What 3 words best summarize how people described your leadership weaknesses?

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3. What do work colleagues see as your most important contributions to the organization?

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4. Based on the feedback, what qualities/tendencies of yours appear to decrease your effectiveness as a leader?

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5. In short, what are people up against when dealing with you?

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6. What was your most impactful interview? Why?

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7. What 3 questions from respondents are you finding most helpful to think about?

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8. With whom are you most motivated to build a stronger relationship?

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9. What specific leadership capacities do you most want to focus on?

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# Guidelines for Getting the Real Story

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1. Pick the Spot and Timing:
  - Consider their turf, or neutral turf
  - Private
  - Aware of energy levels, schedule, etc.
  - No distractions
  
2. Set the Table: Explain the process you are engaged in
  - I'm looking for help in better understanding myself. This is about me.
  - This is confidential. I won't tell others what you share with me.
  - Set the timeframe: "I'd like to meet for\_\_\_\_\_."
  
3. Set an Open Tone
  - Open and relaxed mindset
  - Grateful for the opportunity
  - Aware that I have work to do on myself
  - Minimize:
    - Explaining: ("I know myself quite well")
    - Defending: ("I don't want to hear this.")
    - Wandering: ("I don't like focusing on myself")
  
4. Researching: probe with follow-up questions
  - Ask for details
  - Ask for examples
    - "What would I look like if I were doing this differently?"
  
5. Bring a receptive posture:
  - Respectful: "This is what I was hoping for." Take notes!
  - Non-anxious: "I'm able to calmly receive every word"
  - Grateful: "Thanks, this is helpful."
  
6. Take it all in, no matter how "inaccurate." Save the sifter for later.



# Non-Defensiveness: A Rehearsed and Practiced Skill

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## *Communicating receptivity to unflattering feedback*

1. Poised and eager
2. Curious to genuinely understand
3. Asking for more of the “tough stuff”
4. Tolerating discomfort
5. Getting interested instead of running away
6. Demonstrating gratitude
7. Taking notes: “I regard this as important”

# Worksheet: Preparing for Feedback

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1. Please list individuals from whom you will solicit feedback:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_

2. On the above list, put an \* next to those individuals who are most likely to trigger your defensiveness.

3. What are you most afraid of hearing, from whom?

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# Delivering Meaningful Feedback

## On Delivering Feedback

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*“I see giving feedback as an act of generosity;  
I am choosing to lean into my own discomfort  
in the interest of growing the relationship.”*

*“I believe respectful candor  
strengthens my credibility and  
deepens my connection  
with others.”*

*“No single person possesses the absolute truth.  
The feedback I give represents how I see it.  
Nothing more, nothing less.”*

*“A perfect delivery is not my aim.  
Delivering imperfectly or inelegantly in the absence of perfection  
is better than not delivering at all.”*

## *Personal Reflections*

# Preparing to Give Feedback

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How does my mindset and emotional state impact how the feedback is received?

How focused am I on changing the other person?

What is my own level of eagerness for *receiving* feedback?

# Owning Your Perceptions

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## 1. When offering feedback, the recommended first word is “I.”

- “I’ve noticed...”
- “I’ve observed...”
- “I’m asking myself...”
- “I have the impression that...”
- “I’m telling myself the story that...”

## 2. Instead of “always,” “never,” or other absolutes, aim for accuracy:

- “Often...”
- “Many times...”
- “Recently...”
- “At leadership meetings...”

## 3. A focus on concrete behavior (not personality):

- “When I saw you arrive ten minutes late...”
- “I noticed that you interrupted three women in that meeting...”
- “Sometimes I hear more lecturing than questions from you...”

# The Language of Blame

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- “You don’t listen.”
- “You create so much drama around here.”
- “You’re dragging this team down.”
- “You are always late to meetings.”
- “You ruined Thanksgiving for everyone.”
- “It’s entirely my fault, 100%.”
- “You don’t appear interested in feedback.”

## Actions for Session 2

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1. Read *Thanks for the Feedback*. Bring 1-2 personal insights or real-life observations that connect meaningfully to the book's content to discuss in Session 2.
2. Complete items #2 and #3 from Page 9: Description of the Process. Be ready in Session 2 to share how you selected your respondents, what it was like to initiate that process, and any questions or uncertainties you are encountering as you move forward.

