



LEAN IN

ALL-IN-ONE MEETING GUIDE

CENTERED LEADERSHIP PART 3: CONNECTING

Overview

The Centered Leadership model will help you lead with impact, resilience, and fulfillment at work and in your life. There are five parts to Centered Leadership: Meaning, Framing, Connecting, Engaging, and Energizing.

In Connecting, the focus of this meeting, we learn to build trust and form relationships that enable us to have greater impact. Feeling connected is the key to sustained fulfillment.

Meeting Goals

- Identify your relationship best practices and the mind-sets that limit you
- Develop a strategy for cultivating and/or deepening a relationship that is important to you
- Increase trust in your Circle

Pre-Meeting Prep

- Watch “Connecting” individually or as a group leanin.org/connecting
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF
- Remind everyone to bring her One Action update (if you’re doing this)



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Meeting Agenda

🕒 Approx. 140–150 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

(Please note: This is one of our longer meetings, and we love the way the activities build on one another. However, you can always skip an activity or spread the agenda over two meetings—whatever works for you!)

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- 1 Check-In** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes
Warm up, catch up, and get going **p.4**

 - 2 Education Activities** 🕒 Approx. 90–100 minutes for all activities
Learn from experts and one another **p.5**
 - **Activity 1: Key Takeaways** 🕒 Approx. 5 minutes
Take a few minutes to review the core concepts of the “Connecting” video **p.5**
 - **Activity 2: Self-Assessment** 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes
Rate how regularly you practice the elements used to build trust:
reliability, congruence, openness, and acceptance **p.8**
 - **Activity 3: Strategies for Trust Building** 🕒 Approx. 50–60 minutes
Reflect on your strengths and areas for improvement and develop
strategies for overcoming the mind-sets that hold you back **p.9**
 - **Activity 4: Increasing Trust in Your Circle** 🕒 Approx. 25 minutes
Identify an action you can take to create more trust in your relationship
with each member—and the mind-set shifts needed to make this happen **p.13**

 - 3 One Action** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes
The little push you need to go for it **p.16**

 - 4 Wrap-Up** 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes
What’s next and a few final words **p.19**
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Optional Member Materials

One Action Update **p.21**

Meeting Guide

Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

Step 1: Icebreaker

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with ourselves and one another. One by one, fill in the sentences below and share them with your Circle. Listen carefully as each member takes a turn and say thank you when she's finished. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- Today I am feeling ...
- The connection I most want to create or strengthen is ...
- This is hard for me to do because ...

Step 2: Member Updates

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less per member

Once you're warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting; the goal of a One Action is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

For example, a member update might go like this: *"Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I'm thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I've been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we're going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action update]."*

Education Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 90–100 minutes for all activities

Activity 1: Key Takeaways

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Before you jump into today's meeting, review the key takeaways of our "Connecting" video individually or as a group:

We need relationships built on trust to help achieve our visions

No one accomplishes much on her own; we all depend on others in some way. The basis of relationships is reciprocity, and the critical ingredient for meaningful relationships is trust. People trust you based on what they can see and hear: your behaviors, words, and actions. Think about someone you really trust and you will find reliability, congruence, openness, and acceptance.

Reliability means delivering what you promised

People want to know that you do what you promise you will do. Don't make commitments that you cannot deliver on, even if you want to help that person or feel pressured. Often we commit because the assignment is exciting, or the requester is a friend, or we want to please. But a commitment is a promise to be honored.

People spot lack of congruence in a flash

Congruence occurs when what you say aligns with what you believe—and what you do—and vice versa. People need to see that your words and actions are consistent with one another and with your belief system.

Share your intentions openly to build trust

Be a person who is honest and direct with people—a straight talker. If you speak openly with those close to you about how you feel, what you think, and your intentions, you will build trust.

Activity 1: Key Takeaways (cont.)

All people want to be accepted

It is easy to criticize or make people feel inadequate. We have a natural tendency to judge, but we need to make a deliberate effort to withhold that judgment. You do not have to tolerate unacceptable behaviors, but you do need to accept people as they are to build trust.

We are each different at work, at home, and to ourselves

When you assess your own practices when it comes to trust, you may find curious differences in your behavior in your different roles. Without judgment, explore these differences and choose what areas you want to strengthen.

Mind-sets limit us in building relationships

Once again, mind-sets drive how we develop trust-based relationships. Gaining self-awareness of your mind-sets can help you see your behaviors in a different light. For example:

- “Striving for perfection” can make us judgmental of others
- “Protecting people’s feelings” can stop us from telling the whole truth
- “Not wanting to let others down” can lead to over commitment
- “Wanting to please others over ourselves” can lead us to appear incongruent

Flip the question to “How can I inspire greater trust?”

We often see how the other person in a relationship falls short without reflecting on what we can do better. And in reality, we can’t change other people; we can only change ourselves. So focus on what you can do to inspire more trust in your relationships. You’ll often be surprised by the changes it inspires in others.

Activity 1: Key Takeaways (cont.)

Sponsorship relationships are no different

Many people are confused by the difference between mentors and sponsors. Think of mentors as wise and experienced individuals who share their insights and knowledge with you. Sponsors go further: they believe in you and are willing to take a risk on your behalf. Sponsors find or create opportunities for your development—and give you the encouragement and push to take them.

Building a relationship with a sponsor takes years, so start early and take small steps. Of course, you must do good work and build trust at every step, but first you need to get noticed. Sponsors need to get to know you and see your performance. You might volunteer for a project that's important to a potential sponsor or share your best ideas for improving a project he's working on.


Once you have a relationship, you can begin to ask for help. When you get it, always report back on the outcomes and find ways to reciprocate. Like all relationships, you need a healthy give and take with your sponsor.


People you know are a network but could become a community

For many, networking means connecting on LinkedIn and glad-handing at industry events. There's value in growing the network of people you know, but it's far more valuable when you build a community.

When you reach out to people in service of what you want to create or achieve, you start to create a sense of community. Reaching out with a purpose makes it easier to network, and when you thoughtfully ask people for help, it builds a stronger connection between you. Think of a community as a network that shares a common aspiration or goal. Communities are so much more powerful because of this one important difference.

Activity 2: Self-Assessment

 Individual activity

 10 minutes


We judge people by their observable behaviors, words, and actions. Rate how regularly you practice each of the four elements used to build trust (listed below) at work, at home, and toward yourself. Be as honest with yourself as you can, thinking back over the past six months.

Reliability	Congruence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify promises and expectations when making commitments• Keep promises and deliver on them• Meet deadlines; be on time• Have good follow-up and follow-through <p>Rating (1–7 where 7 is high)</p> <p>Work:</p> <p>Home:</p> <p>Self:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't play games• Say and do what I think, feel, and value• Consistently model the behaviors I value and want to see in others <p>Rating (1–7 where 7 is high)</p> <p>Work:</p> <p>Home:</p> <p>Self:</p>
Openness	Acceptance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set clear expectations• Be honest about limitations and concerns• Share my intentions, beliefs, and feelings• Tell the truth without sugarcoating <p>Rating (1–7 where 7 is high)</p> <p>Work:</p> <p>Home:</p> <p>Self:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suspend judging, criticizing, or “putting down”• Separate the person from her performance• Don't compare and contrast in an effort to make myself feel better• Value diversity in perspectives <p>Rating (1–7 where 7 is high)</p> <p>Work:</p> <p>Home:</p> <p>Self:</p>

Activity 3: Strategies for Trust Building

🕒 Approx. 50–60 minutes

Step 1: Identify your best practices

 Pair activity

🕒 5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

Working in pairs, each choose the quadrant of trust where you feel strongest. Together, brainstorm and fill in your best practices for maintaining this quality.

Best practices for maintaining elements of trust

Activity 3: Strategies for Trust Building (cont.)

Step 2: Uncover the mind-sets that limit you

 Pair activity

🕒 10 minutes per partner, 20 minutes total

Still in pairs, each choose the trust quadrant where you would most like to improve. Discuss the mind-sets that get in your way of regularly implementing the best practices of that quadrant.

Mind-sets that limit me

Activity 3: Strategies for Trust Building (cont.)

Step 3: Develop strategies to overcome your mind-sets



Pair activity



5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

With your partner, brainstorm ways that you could overcome the mind-sets that hold you back. What is at the root of these mind-sets? How do you begin to shift them? Think about tactical things you could do that would make a difference. See if your partner has any strategies she has found helpful.

Strategies for shifting my mind-set

Reliability	Congruence
Openness	Acceptance

Activity 3: Strategies for Trust Building (cont.)

Step 4: Share your insights with your Circle



Group activity



1-2 minutes per member, 10-20 minutes total

Going around your Circle one by one, share what you have learned about yourself by completing the following statements:

- My strongest area for cultivating trust is...
- The best practices I use for this area are...
- My biggest area for improvement is...
- The mind-set that holds me back is...
- To overcome this mind-set, I am going to...

For example, you might say: *“My strongest area for cultivating trust is my ability to follow through on commitments, and the best practice I use for this area is being honest with how much I can realistically take on.*

My biggest area for improvement is in my openness, particularly when giving feedback—I tend to sugarcoat things. The mind-set that holds me back is my desire to make sure people know I care about them. To overcome this mind-set, I’m going to remind myself that giving honest feedback helps other people grow.”

As other members share, listen for strategies they’re using to overcome mind-sets that might help you.

Activity 4: Increasing Trust in Your Circle

⌚ Approx. 25 minutes

Step 1: Identify the actions you can take to create more trust in each relationship



Group activity



Approx. 20 minutes

In this activity, you will exchange feedback to all members of your Circle. This feedback will help you deepen your trust-based relationships with them—and offer more insight into your areas of strength and growth.

Go around the room and have two-minute conversations with every member in which you ask each other the following questions:

- What do I do that inspires your trust?
- What can I do to help you trust me even more?

As they answer, add brief notes to the template below.

Reliability	Congruence
Things I do to instill trust:	Things I do to instill trust:
Things I could do to instill more trust:	Things I could do to instill more trust:



Activity 4: Increasing Trust in Your Circle (cont.)

Openness	Acceptance
Things I do to instill trust:	Things I do to instill trust:
Things I could do to instill more trust:	Things I could do to instill more trust:

Activity 4: Increasing Trust in Your Circle (cont.)

Step 2: Reflect on how you can shift your mind-sets to change your actions



Individual activity



5 minutes

As you think through the feedback you received from your Circle members, what did you hear that you do especially well?

What are the dominant areas on which you could focus to instill more trust?

What mind-set shift could you choose that would help you take these actions?

For example, you might say: *"I want to stop overcommitting myself due to fear of disappointing others. Instead, I want to be more honest with myself and others about what I can realistically accomplish."*

One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

Step 1: Document the relationship you want to build

👤 Individual activity

🕒 10 minutes

What actions will you take to further develop one or more relationships? What is new, different, and out of your comfort zone? Spend some time reflecting and writing your answers.

What relationship do you want to cultivate/strengthen? Who is it with, and what is his or her connection to you?

What you will offer to do to strengthen the relationship?

One Action (cont.)

What request will you make of this person in the spirit of strengthening your relationship?
(Try to be specific.)

When will you discuss your plan with him or her? (Try to be specific—over lunch, in an e-mail, during a regular Monday meeting.)

One Action (cont.)

Step 2: Share your One Action with your Circle



Group activity



1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statements:

- The relationship I am going to cultivate/strengthen is with...
- To do this, I will...
- I am going to discuss this with her/him at...

For example, you might say: *“The relationship I am going to strengthen is with a woman who is more senior at my company. To do this, I will share information about a service project I’ve been leading at the company that I think could offer a lot of value to our team. I’m going to discuss this with her at our weekly team lunch.”*

Move quickly from member to member, and consider cheering on one another as you go.

Housekeeping Note: We recommend you give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 20 of this PDF, you’ll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update. Individually or as a group, you can decide to bring the worksheet to your next Circle meeting.

Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

Step 1: Finalize logistics of your next meeting

👥 Group activity

🕒 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting: day and time, location, food and drink. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who's going to send out ideas. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting and brainstorm improvements going forward.

Step 2: Close on an energetic and inspirational note

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less

To punctuate the end of this meeting, go around your Circle one by one and complete the sentence: "As we finish today's session, I am feeling ..."

Congratulations on a great meeting.

See the following page for an optional member activity.

One Action Update

Use the following prompts to give your One Action update during your next meeting. You can even prepare your answers ahead to maximize your time with your Circle.

- The relationship I am cultivating/strengthening is...

- To cultivate/strengthen this relationship, I have....

- What has worked well:

- What I'm still working on: