

LEAN IN

ALL-IN-ONE MEETING GUIDE

CENTERED LEADERSHIP PART 4: ENGAGING

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.

Engaging, the focus of this meeting, emphasizes how you can overcome your fears, move into action, and take risks.

Meeting Goals

- Develop strategies to make you more comfortable facing your fears and taking risks

Pre-Meeting Prep

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



Brought to you in partnership with...

Joanna Barsh, director emeritus McKinsey & Company and author of *Centered Leadership* and *How Remarkable Women Lead*, along with McKinsey & Company.

Meeting Agenda

🕒 Approx. 100 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!)

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

2 **Education Activities** 🕒 Approx. 50 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 our “Engaging” video **p.5**
- **Activity 2: Reflect on a Success** 🕒 Approx. 5 minutes
Recall a time when you achieved something against the odds **p.7**
- **Activity 3: Rethink Outcomes** 🕒 Approx. 25 minutes
Consider the outcomes of acting versus not acting **p.8**
- **Activity 4: Run a Pre-Mortem** 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes
Plan against your worst nightmare **p.12**

3 **One Action** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes
The little push you need to go for it **p.14**

4 **Wrap-Up** 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes
What’s next and a few final words **p.17**

Optional Member Materials

One Action Update **p.20**

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 ...
- My next big opportunity or challenge is ...
- What stands in my way of moving forward is ...

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. 50 minutes for all activities

Activity 1: Key Takeaways

👤 Individual activity

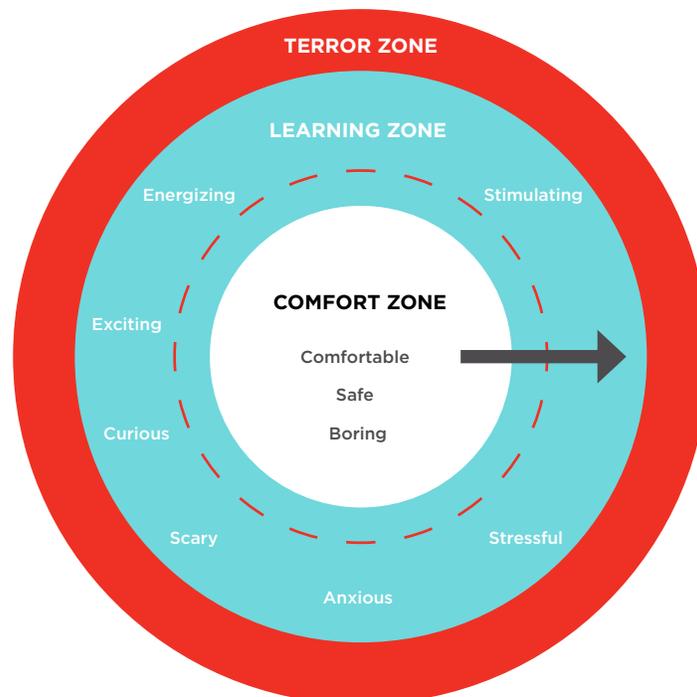
🕒 5 minutes

Before you jump into today’s meeting, review the key takeaways of our “Engaging” video individually or as a group:

We must step out of our comfort zone to learn

Our learning zone exists right outside our comfort zone. We feel safe and sometimes even bored in our comfort zone. In contrast, we feel exhilaration and a twinge of fear when we step into our learning zone. But when stretched too far, we enter our terror zone, where learning stops.

Sometimes we’re anxious or afraid when we’re faced with new situations and challenged to use new skills. A little fear is good. It gets our adrenaline flowing and pushes us to act. If you feel stress or discomfort when learning something new, that’s normal. And remember, life is clearly more rewarding when you are growing.



Activity 1: Key Takeaways (cont.)

Engage positive thinking to counter fears and build courage

By deliberately grounding ourselves in strengths that come from our past success, we gain the confidence to move into action and take risks. When you focus on what's possible, you can overcome your fear of failure. If you imagine learning and trying new things as an equation, try to get to two-thirds positive thinking and one-third self-doubt and fear.

Presence is an important part of engaging

Finding your voice and using it gets you engaged, acting, and taking risks. That's what it means to "sit at the table"—to know that you are good enough and that you deserve to be where you are. Sometimes it feels safer to sit on the sidelines, but push beyond the self-doubt. Pay attention to how you use your voice, stand and fill the room, and connect with others. Then practice being more present. Even one rehearsal will increase your presence by a significant amount.

It's freeing to own your future

Don't let naysayers influence you or dictate your future. Instead, listen to all the positive voices that could counsel you: the visionary who has big ideas for you, the wise woman who has the experience to help you, the coworker who sees your potential.

Then choose an "ownership mindset"—see yourself as playing an active role in your experience. When you own your actions, you cannot be a victim. No matter what happens, you have the freedom to choose your own attitude and your own mind-set, and often that leads to a much more positive outcome.

Focus on the upside; neutralize the downside

By looking at the upsides of your challenge or opportunity before the downsides, you focus on outcomes and what you most want to create. Most of us naturally do the opposite: we compare the downside of acting with the comfort of staying in place. Don't fall into this trap. Instead, start by thinking through all the benefits of acting and compare them to the downsides of doing nothing.

When you do consider the downsides, face your worst nightmares head on. Shining a light on them lessens their power. (And remember, research shows that in almost every case, we imagine situations far worse than they actually turn out to be.) When you complete this "pre-mortem," you'll likely realize that you can handle the worst-case scenario and will feel more confident moving into action.

Activity 2: Reflect on a Success

 Individual activity

 5 minutes

Engaging is about reframing our fears and drawing on our strengths to recognize and pursue opportunities that are meaningful to us. Recall a time when, against the odds, you took a stand for something you believed and/or achieved something no one thought you could.

Putting yourself back in the moment of your success, write down your story (ideally in the present tense). Use the following questions as a guide:

- What personal strengths have I tapped into?
- How do I feel in my moment of success?
- What is really important—what matters to me in this story?
- What result am I having? What does that teach me about myself?

Activity 3: Rethink Outcomes

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

Step 1: Consider the outcomes of acting

👤👤 Pair activity

🕒 5 minutes per partner, 10 minutes total

Our fears can be the catalyst for action, but they can also hold us back. In this exercise, you'll explore the possible downsides and upsides of an opportunity or challenge that you're facing.

Pair up with a partner and take turns asking each other the following questions. (Before you get started, switch meeting guides so you can take notes for each other.)

Think about your next big opportunity or challenge and summarize it in a sentence or two...

What worry or fear of risk may be holding you back from taking action?

What benefits are to be gained from this great opportunity? What would become possible for you, your team, and your organization?

Activity 3: Rethink Outcomes (cont.)

What else? (Dig deeper)

What else? (Dig deeper still)

What else? (Keep digging!)

Activity 3: Rethink Outcomes (cont.)

Step 2: Consider the outcomes of not acting

 Pair activity

 5 minutes per partner and 5 minutes for reflection, 15 minutes total

We often focus on the risks associated with a new opportunity without comparing it to what we have now. With the same partner, answer the following questions while she still takes notes for you. Then switch roles and repeat.

What does the status quo look like for you (assuming you do not take the challenge/opportunity)?

If you were to continue on this path, what would likely happen?

Over time, what would limit you if you were to continue what you're doing now?

Activity 3: Rethink Outcomes (cont.)

What else? (Dig deeper)

What else? (Dig deeper still)

What else? (Keep digging!)

When you're finished, return your meeting guides to each other and spend a few moments comparing the upsides of taking action versus the downsides of doing nothing.

Activity 4: Run a Pre-Mortem

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

Step 1: Plan against your worst nightmare

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Taking time to imagine the worst-case scenario is a wonderful way to allay fears that accompany risk taking. Reflect on your worst-nightmare outcome—even if it’s unlikely to happen. Write it down below and then jot down a few ideas for minimizing or dealing with the outcome if it ever happened.

For example, you might say: *“I am giving the keynote speech of my career. My worst nightmare is that I get on stage and freeze. If this happened, I would deal with the outcome by putting my hands together and smiling broadly to greet the audience with love. This would help me connect to everyone and in that way, overcome my fear. Still, I will also set intentions and have one opening line ready!”*

Activity 4: Run a Post-Mortem (cont.)

Step 2: Share your strategy

 Group activity

 1 minute or less per member

Once everyone has reflected independently, go around the Circle one by one and complete the following statement:

- My worst nightmare is ...
- If it ever happened, I would minimize (or deal with) the outcome by ...

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: Identify the opportunity or challenge you want to pursue

👤 Individual activity

🕒 10 minutes

Take a few minutes to answer the questions below to shape your One Action.

To pursue my opportunity or challenge of ...

The strengths I will build on are ...

One Action (cont.)

What I bring that is unique is ...

To pursue this opportunity/challenge, I commit to... (the smallest next step outside of your comfort zone with the biggest impact)

For example, you might say: *“To pursue this opportunity, I commit to set up a networking plan and meet the first 5 people this month for 20 minutes each, using each session to solicit their views on how my team can serve them better and to get their input on who else I should speak to (thereby growing the number of people in my networking plan).”*

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 opportunity/challenge I am pursuing is ...
- The One Action I commit to take this month toward this is ...

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 19 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

🕒 1 minute 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 opportunity/challenge I am pursuing is ...

- To do this, I ...

- To get in the right mindset to take these steps, I found it most helpful to ...

- I'm still working on ...