

PERSONAL LEARNING GUIDE

Discovering Your Leadership Style

Relationships Are *Everything*

What Youth Workers Teach
Us About Leadership

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Introduction

Your leadership journey is unique. It comes from your life story, your personal experiences, and the moments that shaped how you see yourself and others. This learning guide is a companion to *Relationships Are Everything*, and it is designed to help you look inward as you explore the ideas in the book.

You can use this guide while you are reading, or you can wait until you finish the book and return to the activities with a clear mind and an open heart. There is no single right way to move through it. It is helpful to complete this guide in order, but you are welcome to move around the sections in whatever way best supports your learning best.

This guide is divided into three sections that mirror the three sections of the book. Each section includes activities that invite you to reflect, write, and grow in ways that deepen your understanding of your own leadership. These activities give you space to make sense of the choices you make, the lessons you have learned, and the values that guide you.

Leadership is an ongoing practice. It takes courage to examine your story and intention to notice your habits, strengths, and areas where you want to grow. The fact that you are here shows that you are committed to becoming the best leader you can be.

Take your time. Type your answers directly into this document. Pause when something feels important. Come back to sections whenever you need to. Your story matters, and the work you do will shape the lives of the people you lead. Your inner work will become part of your legacy.

Let's begin your leadership journey from within.

SECTION ONE: Cultivate Your Leadership Potential From Within

Your leadership does not start with a title or a job description. It starts with you. It grows out of your life story, your values, your beliefs, and the way you make sense of the world around you. The more you understand what shaped you, the more clearly you can choose how to lead today.

Youth work gives you a front row seat to the power of self-discovery. You invite young people to learn about who they are, what they care about, and how they want to show up in their lives. This section turns that same invitation toward you. It asks you to look inward with honesty and curiosity, not judgment.

These activities will help you explore the origins of your leadership, clarify your core values, notice your patterns, and name your purpose. As you move through this section, you are building a stronger foundation for every decision you make as a leader. Leadership begins within you, and this is your chance to cultivate that potential with care and intention.

This inner work reflects one of the central messages in *Relationships Are Everything*, which invites you to understand yourself more deeply so you can build stronger, more meaningful connections with others.

Activity 1. Your Leadership Origins

In the book, you explore how leadership begins with your personal story. This activity helps you look back at the people and moments that shaped you so you can understand the roots of your leadership today.

Purpose

To explore the people, moments, and experiences that shaped your ideas about leadership. This helps you understand the starting point of your leadership journey.

Instructions

Take your time as you think through each question. Write freely. Let your memories guide you.

Prompts

1. Think back to your younger years. Who made you feel capable, supported, or seen? Describe what they did and how it shaped you.
2. Recall a moment when you stepped up even though no one asked you to. What happened, and what did you learn about yourself?
3. Think of a time you noticed someone lead in a way that inspired you. What did they do that stayed with you?
4. What early experiences taught you about courage, empathy, or responsibility?

Your Origins Map

Draw a simple diagram with your name in the center. Add lines to the people, experiences, and memories that shaped your early ideas about leadership. Write a few words next to each branch about what it taught you.

Activity 2. Understanding Your Values

Relationships Are Everything reminds you that your values guide how you show up for others. This activity helps you name the values that matter most so your leadership stays grounded in what you believe.

Purpose

To identify the values that guide your decisions and shape how you show up as a leader.

Instructions

Look at the list of values. Circle the ones that matter most. Add more if needed.

Personal Character	Relationship & Community	Work & Leadership	Personal Growth	Team & Culture
Accountability	Belonging	Collaboration	Awareness	Teamwork
Authenticity	Care	Commitment	Balance	Support
Bravery	Compassion	Competence	Clarity	Unity
Calmness	Empathy	Confidence	Curiosity	Reliability
Change	Encouragement	Consistency	Endurance	Respect
Contentment	Fairness	Creativity	Flexibility	Safety
Courage	Friendship	Curiosity	Forgiveness	Trust
Endurance	Generosity	Decisiveness	Growth	Understanding
Flexibility	Gratitude	Dependability	Humility	Well-being
Forgiveness	Helpfulness	Determination	Joy	Belonging
Hope	Honesty	Excellence	Mindfulness	Inclusiveness
Humility	Inclusiveness	Focus	Motivation	Collaboration
Joy	Kindness	Innovation	Optimism	Communication
Mindfulness	Listening	Integrity	Ownership	Openness
Optimism	Openness	Leadership	Patience	Stewardship
Patience	Respect	Learning	Purpose	Supportiveness
Peace	Support	Motivation	Resilience	Accountability
Presence	Thoughtfulness	Ownership	Self-awareness	Stability
Resilience	Trust	Purpose	Self-care	Equity
Self-awareness	Understanding	Quality	Self-discipline	Fairness
Self-care	Unity	Reliability	Self-expression	Encouragement
Self-discipline	Safety	Responsibility	Strength	Empowerment
Self-expression	Sharing	Service	Vision	Inclusivity
Strength	Sincerity	Stewardship	Wisdom	Compassion

Prompts

- What personal values guide your actions at work?
- When have your values been tested? What did you learn?
- Which values help you connect with others?
- Which values do you want to show more often?

Worksheet

List your top three values and then answer the questions for each value.

Value 1:

1. Why this value matters to me:
2. How I live this value now:
3. One way I want to practice this value more often:

Value 2:

1. Why this value matters to me:
2. How I live this value now:
3. One way I want to practice this value more often:

Value 3:

1. Why this value matters to me:
2. How I live this value now:
3. One way I want to practice this value more often:

Activity 3. Your Leadership Mindset

The book teaches that leadership is a mindset shaped by your beliefs about people and relationships. This activity helps you examine those beliefs so you can lead with more intention and confidence.

Purpose

To explore the beliefs that shape how you think about leadership and influence others.

Instructions

Answer the prompts below. Be honest. Your mindset influences everything you do as a leader.

Prompts

1. When you think about leadership, what comes to mind first?
2. What do you believe your responsibility is to the people you lead?
3. When have you led without a title? What did that teach you?
4. What beliefs help you lead with confidence?
5. What beliefs hold you back or create doubt?

Mindset Snapshot

Write three sentences that describe your current leadership mindset. Then write one sentence about the mindset you want to grow into.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 4. Building Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a core theme in the book because it strengthens your ability to build meaningful relationships. This activity helps you notice your patterns, reactions, and strengths so you can lead with more clarity.

Purpose

To understand your patterns, reactions, strengths, and areas where you want to grow.

Instructions

Reflect on recent moments in your work or personal life. Look for patterns in how you respond.

Prompts

1. Think of a recent moment when you were proud of how you handled a situation. What choices did you make?
2. Think of a moment when you felt frustrated, overwhelmed, or unsure. What caused it?
3. What physical or emotional signs tell you that you are stressed?
4. What helps you stay grounded during hard moments?
5. What do people often come to you for? What does that say about your strengths?

Self-Awareness Log

Add reflections about how you show up.

What I notice about myself	What this means for my leadership

Activity 5. Discovering Your Purpose

In the book, purpose is at the heart of leadership. This activity helps you connect with why you lead, allowing your purpose to guide your decisions and inspire your work with others.

Purpose

To identify why you lead and what gives your work meaning. Purpose guides your decisions and keeps you grounded.

Instructions

Read the prompts and write what comes to mind. Purpose grows with experience, so do not worry about finding the perfect words.

Prompts

1. Why did you decide to accept a leadership role?
2. What part of your work feels meaningful or important?
3. When do you feel most alive, proud, or aligned with who you want to be?
4. What impact do you hope your leadership will have on others?
5. How do you want people to feel because of you?

Purpose Statement

Write one or two paragraphs that describe your purpose in leadership. Keep it simple and personal. You can refine it over time.

SECTION TWO: Create Cohesive Connections

Relationships are at the heart of leadership. They shape how people feel, how they grow, and how they show up. When you think about the best moments in your leadership journey, there is a good chance they involve people you connected with in meaningful ways. When you think about the hardest moments, they probably involve relationships that were strained or misunderstood.

Youth work teaches us that relationships take time, care, and presence. Leadership is no different. People do not follow you because of your authority. They follow you because they trust you. They follow you because they feel seen, heard, and valued by you.

This section helps you explore how you build trust, communicate with care, understand the people around you, and contribute to a work culture where others feel like they belong. These skills do not develop by accident. They grow through awareness and intention.

The strength of your leadership will always reflect the strength of your relationships. This section invites you to deepen those connections. As you work through these activities, you will recognize many of the same relationship skills and ideas that shape the stories and lessons throughout *Relationships Are Everything*.

Activity 6. The Power of Presence

The book shows that relationships grow when people feel seen and valued. This activity helps you reflect on the kind of presence you bring so others experience safety, connection, and care when they are with you.

Purpose

To recognize how your presence affects the people you interact with and to reflect on what helps you be fully present as a leader.

Instructions

Think about moments when you have been fully tuned in and moments when you have been distracted. Notice what each experience felt like for you and for others.

Prompts

1. Recall a recent conversation when you were fully present. What were you doing that helped you stay focused?
2. Think of a time when you were physically there but your mind was somewhere else. What caused that, and how did it affect the interaction?
3. What signals do you send when you are present?
4. What signals do you send when you are distracted?
5. What helps you slow down and give your full attention to someone?
6. What changes would help you be more present with your team?

Reflection

Write a few sentences about how you want people to feel when they talk with you.

Activity 7. Building Trust

Trust is central to every relationship described in the book. This activity helps you identify the habits that build or weaken trust so you can create stronger, more dependable relationships in your leadership.

Purpose

To understand what trust looks like in your leadership and to identify the habits that strengthen or weaken trust with others.

Instructions

Trust grows through small, everyday actions. Think about your habits and how they shape the way others experience you.

Prompts

1. When do you feel most comfortable trusting others?
2. What behaviors from a leader help you feel safe and supported?
3. What do you do that helps people trust you?
4. What habits or reactions might unintentionally weaken trust?
5. What commitments do you want to make to build stronger trust in your relationships?

Trust Commitments

List three simple actions you can take this month to build trust with your team.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 8. Understanding Others

The book emphasizes that strong leadership begins with understanding people as whole human beings. This activity helps you deepen your awareness of the people you work with, so your leadership becomes more empathetic and supportive.

Purpose

To see the people you work with as whole human beings, not only as co-workers. Understanding their stories, strengths, and needs builds empathy and creates stronger relationships.

Instructions

Pick one person from your team to focus on as you complete the prompts. Then think about how the same questions apply to your entire team.

Prompts

1. What do you know about this person's life outside of work?
2. What strengths do they bring to the team?
3. How do they like to receive support or encouragement?
4. What stresses or challenges might they face that you do not always see?
5. What could you do to understand this person better?

Know Your People Profile

Write a short description of what this person needs from you to do their best work. Keep it simple and practical.

Activity 9. Communication That Supports Growth

Communication is a key relational skill in the book because it shapes how people feel around you. This activity helps you reflect on your communication habits so you can speak and listen in ways that encourage confidence and growth.

Purpose

To reflect on how you communicate with your team and how your style affects their motivation and confidence.

Instructions

Think about recent conversations, both positive and difficult. Consider how your words and actions influenced the outcome.

Prompts

1. When do you communicate most clearly?
2. What situations make it harder for you to stay calm and clear?
3. How do people usually respond to your communication?
4. What communication habits do you want to strengthen?
5. What communication habits do you want to change?

Communication Growth Plan

Choose one communication habit you want to practice this week. Describe how you will do it and how you will know it made a difference.

Examples of communication habits

Active listening: I give my full attention, avoid interrupting, and show that I understand before responding.

Clear expectations: I communicate what I need, why it matters, and when it is needed so there is less confusion.

Speaking with kindness: I choose words that are respectful and supportive, even when conversations are difficult.

Checking for understanding: I pause to make sure everyone is on the same page before moving forward.

Staying solution focused: I address challenges by talking about what I can do rather than dwelling on what went wrong.

Timely communication: I share important updates and information in a reasonable amount of time so others can take action.

Using “I” statements: I express my own thoughts and feelings clearly instead of assigning blame or assuming intent.

Asking clarifying questions: I slow down and ask questions when something is unclear instead of making assumptions.

Providing constructive feedback: I offer feedback that is honest, specific, and supportive, with the goal of helping others grow.

Giving appreciation: I acknowledge the efforts of others regularly and name the positive things I see in their work.

Activity 10. Contributing to a Healthy Culture

Culture grows from the relationships you build and the choices you make every day. This activity helps you understand your influence on your team's culture so you can contribute to a healthier, more supportive environment.

Purpose

To understand how your daily habits influence the environment your team experiences. Culture is not created by one person, but leadership has a powerful role in shaping it.

Instructions

Reflect on your team's culture today and where you want it to grow. Notice what's missing that you'd like to build in. Focus on aspects that are working that you'd like to strengthen.

Prompts

1. What helps your team feel safe and supported?
2. What behaviors create stress or tension?
3. What do people appreciate most about working with you?
4. What habits do you want to model more often?
5. What small actions could help improve the culture at your agency?

Culture Action Steps

Write three actions you will take over the next month to contribute to a healthier, more supportive work culture.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SECTION THREE: Leave a Legacy

The book ends with the reminder that your daily actions create a ripple effect in the lives of others. This section helps you explore those ripples and name the legacy you hope to leave.

Your leadership legacy is built every day. It grows from your choices, your relationships, and how you support the people around you. It is not about recognition. It is about the way people feel because of you and the opportunities that your leadership makes possible.

In youth work, your legacy reaches far beyond your immediate team. When you help someone grow, it changes how they show up for young people. When you support a colleague through a difficult moment, they carry that stability into their own relationships with young people. When you choose courage, honesty, and care, it influences the next leader who watches you and learns from you.

Leaving a legacy is not about being perfect. It is about being purposeful. This section helps you reflect on the impact you want to have and the leader you are becoming over time.

Activity 11. Your Leadership Impact

The book reminds you that leadership is measured by how people experience you. This activity helps you reflect on the impact you want to make and the legacy you hope others will feel because of your leadership.

Purpose

To reflect on the difference you want to make as a leader and how your daily actions shape the experiences of others.

Instructions

Think about times when you made a positive difference. Then think about the impact you hope to create in the future.

Prompts

1. Describe a moment when you helped someone grow or succeed. What did that experience teach you?
2. How do you want people to feel when they work with you?
3. What do you hope people remember about you as a leader?
4. What impact do you want to have on the young people your team serves?
5. What does a meaningful leadership legacy look like to you?

Impact Map

Write a list of the people whose lives and work you touch. Next to each name, write one way you hope your leadership influences them.

Activity 12. Coaching Through Care

Care is a powerful theme in the book because it fuels growth and trust. This activity helps you think about how your leadership supports learning, confidence, and development through coaching.

Purpose

To deepen your commitment to helping others grow through consistent, thoughtful coaching.

Instructions

Think about the ways you support people and the moments where you could be more intentional with your coaching.

Prompts

1. Describe a time when you coached someone well. What did you do that made it effective?
2. Think of a moment you wish you could redo. What would you change?
3. What helps you coach with patience and clarity?
4. What coaching habits do you want to practice more often?
5. Who is someone you want to invest in right now?

Coaching Plan

Pick one person you want to support more intentionally. Write three simple steps you will take over the next month to help them grow.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 13. Leading Through Challenge

The book teaches that leadership requires courage and steadiness, especially in difficult moments. This activity helps you reflect on how you respond to challenges so you can strengthen your resilience.

Purpose

To explore how you respond to stress, difficulty, and uncertainty, and to develop personal practices that strengthen your resilience.

Instructions

Think about tough moments you have experienced as a leader. Notice what helped you stay steady and what made things harder.

Prompts

1. Describe a leadership challenge that stretched you. What helped you through it?
2. What thoughts or fears show up when you feel pressure?
3. How do you take care of yourself during tough moments?
4. What habits help you stay grounded?
5. When have you surprised yourself with your own strength?

Resilience Practices

List three habits you want to use more often when you face a challenge. Keep them simple and doable.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples of resilience habits

Pause and breathe: I take a moment to slow down, steady myself, and reduce stress before responding.

Break it down: I divide the challenge into smaller steps so it feels manageable instead of overwhelming.

Seek perspective: I talk with someone I trust or take a moment to look at the situation from another angle.

Stay present: I focus on what I can do right now instead of worrying about everything that might happen.

Name what I feel: I identify my emotions so I can respond thoughtfully rather than react out of stress.

Ask for help: I reach out when I need support instead of trying to handle everything on my own.

Look for the lesson: I reflect on what I can learn from the challenge, even if the situation is difficult.

Center my purpose: I remind myself why the work matters and how my actions affect others.

Check my self-talk: I replace negative or fearful thoughts with steadier, more encouraging messages.

Reaffirm boundaries: I protect my time, energy, and well-being when stress increases.

Activity 14. Creating Bold Change

Throughout the book, you are encouraged to lead with purpose and create meaningful change. This activity helps you identify improvements you want to influence, and the courageous steps needed to move them forward.

Purpose

To identify meaningful changes you want to influence in your agency and to explore the courageous actions required to pursue them.

Instructions

Think about what you believe could work better in your agency or in the field of youth work. This is not about criticizing people. It is about identifying opportunities for improvement and innovation.

Prompts

1. What is one change you wish you could make in your agency?
2. Why does this change matter to you?
3. What is one small step you could take to move this idea forward?
4. Who could you partner with to explore this idea?
5. What does courage look like in pursuing this change?

Change Blueprint

Write a short description of the improvement you want to influence. Include the reason it matters, one small step you can take soon, and one person you can talk to about it.

Activity 15. Your Leadership Legacy Statement

The final lesson of the book is that your legacy grows from everyday actions rooted in relationships. This activity brings your reflections together so you can define who you want to be and the legacy you hope to leave.

Purpose

To bring your learning together and define the leader you want to be in a clear, personal statement.

Instructions

Read through your reflections from all three sections. Notice the themes that appear again and again. Think about the leader you hope to become and the impact you want to create.

Prompts

1. What did you learn about yourself while completing this guide?
2. What values and habits matter most to you as a leader?
3. What do you hope to bring into your team each day?
4. What kind of influence do you want to have over time?
5. What do you want your leadership to stand for?

Leadership Legacy Statement

Write one or two paragraphs that describe the leader you choose to be. Include the values you will stand on, the impact you want to make, and the way you want others to experience your leadership. This is your guiding compass as you continue your journey.

What I Hope You Take With You

Your leadership journey will never be finished, and that is a beautiful thing. Each experience, each conversation, and each decision adds another layer to who you are becoming. By taking the time to reflect on your story, your relationships, and your legacy, you are choosing to lead with more awareness and purpose.

The young people you serve, and the people you lead, may never know all the inner work you are doing. They will simply feel the impact of a leader who listens deeply, genuinely cares, and acts with courage. Keep learning, keep growing, and keep showing up as your true self. Your leadership matters, and the world is better because you are willing to do this work.

Connect with Me

Thank you for taking the time to invest in your leadership journey. If you ever have questions, want to go deeper into an activity, or simply want to share what you are learning, I would love to hear from you. Your growth matters, and I am honored to support you in any way I can.

If you or your team would benefit from more direct guidance, I am available to:

- Deliver keynote presentations,
- Provide leadership trainings, and
- Work with teams to strengthen their culture and connection.

Please reach out anytime. I am grateful for the work you do, and I look forward to walking alongside you as you continue to grow as a leader.

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