



Choose Your Attitude
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



*The FISH! For Leaders Series is dedicated to John Gardner,
whose belief in human possibilities
inspired several generations to believe in themselves.*

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What is FISH! For Leaders?



Early in his career, Carl Rogers, the noted psychologist, thought his job was to fix people. He asked himself, “How can I cure or change this person?”

Despite his extensive training, it didn’t work. At times his tactics seemed to produce a change in people, but it was temporary at best.

So Rogers tried a different approach. Instead of trying to mold his patients into who he wanted *them* to be, he focused on how *he* “showed up” for them. The more people saw that he cared about and believed in them, they discovered within themselves the capacity to change, mature and develop.

Rogers’ experience speaks to the heart of leadership. Effective leaders don’t try to fix or control others. Instead, they ask themselves: “How can I develop relationships with the people I lead that help them grow in confidence, commitment, skill and purpose?”

We created The FISH! For Leaders Series—of which this program is a part—to help you develop more supportive relationships through The FISH! Philosophy. These relationships are the foundation that make you more effective in every other aspect of your leadership.

The FISH! Philosophy: Fundamentals For Leaders

The roots of The FISH! Philosophy go back to the day John Christensen first visited the Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle. Selling fish was cold and exhausting, yet the fishmongers brought so much energy, commitment, service, teamwork and fun to the job that people came from around the world just to watch them sell fish—a lot of fish.

John had always been fascinated by people who brought passion to their work, and saw the fish market as a metaphor to illustrate his belief that every workplace can be more alive and engaged. He made a film about the market to show everyone how to be more engaged in their work—and their lives. The film, FISH!, explores four simple practices that anyone, from frontline to CEO, can immediately apply:

Be There: Be physically and emotionally present for people, especially when they need you. It’s a powerful message of respect that strengthens relationships.

What is FISH! For Leaders?



Play: Play is a state of mind that you can apply to any task. It's the spirit that fuels creativity, as in "Let's Play with that idea!" You do your best work when you are having fun doing it.

Make Their Day: Find ways to make people feel special, letting them know how much you value and appreciate them. Celebrate others.

Choose Your Attitude: No matter what life throws in your path, you alone are responsible for how you respond to it.

We call these four practices The FISH! Philosophy. Just as a tree needs healthy roots to bear good fruit, these practices nourish the roots of trust, communication, commitment and accountability. Organizations around the world are using The FISH! Philosophy to improve business results and create a higher quality of life at work. We have learned that organizations are most likely to succeed when leaders don't simply expect their employees to live FISH!, but embrace these fundamental practices in their own lives first.

Using this program, you will take your team through conversations and activities through which they will explore their leadership beliefs and style, consider their impact and learn how to lead even more effectively. Thank you for guiding them on this important journey.

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Choose Your Attitude



A group of neonatal nurses was discussing Choose Your Attitude. A bit cynical and world-weary, they questioned whether their attitudes had much to do with the quality of their workplace. Then one nurse spoke up, “I’ve noticed when I come to work in a grumpy or negative mood, the preemies seem to be more fidgety. They cry more and are much harder to work with. On the other hand, when I’m happy and positive, they seem to be happy, too.” She thought for a moment. “Wow, if my attitude has that much of an effect on preemies, how much effect does it have on everyone around me?”

Leaders typically spend a lot of time thinking about the attitudes of others. When attitudes aren’t what leaders think they should be, they remind, counsel, lecture, even scold their employees. But how often do leaders think about the messages in their *own* attitudes?

We all tend to operate as if our attitudes depend on what happens around us. If everything is going great, we feel great; if not, we don’t. According to this line of thinking, since we can’t control what happens to us, how can we choose a different reaction—especially if our reaction has become a habit we don’t even think about anymore?

There are times when it’s tough to Choose Your Attitude. But no situation or person can put you in a bad mood without your permission. If you are not choosing your attitude, who is?

When you take responsibility for the attitudes you choose, without trying to blame someone or something else, you have discovered the essence of leadership with integrity.

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters
compared to what lies within us.”*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON



The resources in this guide were designed to lead a session from one to two hours, but you can easily adapt them to create a session of any length.

1. Video

Choose Your Attitude is 8 minutes in length. Key themes include:

- Why attitude is always a choice.
- The attitude you choose impacts the people you lead.
- The importance of self-awareness.
- How a shift in the leader's attitude can shift the attitudes of a team working for a goal.

2. Conversation Starters

Targeted questions, prompted by the video, help your group to begin exploring your beliefs about leadership. These questions help you to honestly assess whether the impact you are having is the impact you want to have.

3. Activities

Choose from several activities to help participants become engaged in their learning and take ownership of it. If you have purchased FISH! For Leaders Participant Workbooks for individual participants, we've provided page references so you can help them follow along during the session.

Example: *(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 6.)*

4. Action Plan

John Keats said, "Nothing becomes real until it is experienced." Here your participants come up with their own plan to act on what they have learned. The actions may be simple: If you feel you haven't been connecting with your colleagues, you might decide "the first thing I'll do when I arrive in the morning is to greet every person in my area by name."

5. Tips

If participants are not sure what to try or need more ideas, we've provided some suggestions.

6. Follow-Up

After you put your ideas into action, it helps to reflect on what you learned. What worked? What didn't? What impact did it have on others? What impact did it have on you?

Introducing the Video



Before your team watches *Choose Your Attitude*, it's helpful to give some context. Here's one way to introduce the film:

As leaders, there are going to be days when your attitude is not what you'd like it to be. That's understandable—you're human. But it's important to remember that as leaders, your attitude has a huge impact on the people you lead. Their attitude will reflect the attitude you are giving off.

So what can you do to show up with attitudes that will pick your team up, not bring them down? The first step is accepting that your attitude is your choice. Of course it's tough sometimes to choose the attitude you want. But no situation or person can put you in a bad mood without your permission.

Once you've accepted that the only person responsible for your attitude is you, the key is to stay aware of what your attitude is at the moment. As you watch the video, ask yourself, "Does my attitude reflect who I want to be as a person? Is my attitude working for me? Is it working for the people around me?"

We included lots of questions to prompt discussion, but don't feel you have to get through every question in one session. You may want to choose two to three questions and if you have time for more, go for it. If a particular question really ignites discussion, don't feel you have to move on immediately to the next question. Go with the energy of the group. Keep the conversation going with statements such as, "Tell me more about that."

1. Is it possible to "choose" your attitude, even when something or someone upsets you? Why or why not?
2. What are some situations that cause you to have an attitude you don't want? How does that feel?
3. How does the attitude you choose—especially as a leader—affect others? How can you tell?
4. How often, after a situation that upset you is over, do you wish you had chosen a different response?
5. Once you have an attitude you don't want, how do you turn it around? Any strategies you typically use?
6. How often do you "choose" an attitude *before* you get into a potentially tense or difficult situation? How does that help?
7. What are you most grateful for in your life and in your work? How do these things influence your attitudes?
8. What, in your experience, are the most effective attitudes for a leader to have?

Activity #1: The Power of Awareness



Bob Kohut’s third grade class has an attitude board. When students enter the classroom, they choose one of four different colored fish, each representing a feeling: happy, confident, sad or angry. They put the fish on the board by their names so they are aware of their attitudes at that moment. Students may change to a different colored fish anytime they want. “When you are clear that you are making a choice,” Bob explains, “you tend not to want to stay in that negative frame of mind too long.”

Awareness is a powerful tool at any age. To be aware takes effort; its synonyms are vigilant, awake, alert and watchful. Often our attitudes are rooted in anger about the past or mired in worry about the future. Awareness lives in the present: What is happening inside me now? Is it working for me? Is it working for others?

When Pete Cicero struggles with his attitude, he rouses his awareness by thinking: “Am I being who I want to be right now?” When you are clear who you want to “be,” you spend less time reacting and more time actually choosing. The lens of who you want to “be” focuses you on choices that are in line with your intentions.

Perspective is another awareness-raising tool. Depending on your perspective, a problem may appear much larger than it really is. Mark Lenz says when a situation upsets him, he gives himself “a little self-talk” about all the good things in his life. A perspective driven by gratitude helps you to pull back and see that in the big picture, the situation that upsets you is tiny compared to all the good that surrounds you.

Instructions

This exercise helps people consider the role of choice and awareness. It starts the minute participants arrive at your meeting. As they come in, give each person a nametag. Ask them to identify the attitude they have at that moment and write it on the tag. Tell them to be honest. Whether it’s *grouchy*, *tired* or *excited*—whatever it is, write it. The point of the exercise is not to choose a particular attitude, but to be more *conscious* of the attitude you *have* chosen.

After everyone has arrived, tell the group: “You all got a nametag and wrote your attitude on it. A little later, we’re going to come back and talk about what you wrote.”

Activity #1: The Power of Awareness *(continued)*



After the group watches the video and discusses the conversation starters, say, “Take a look again at what you wrote on your name tag. Why did you choose that attitude? What impact has it had on you today? What impact has it had on others?” Ask a few volunteers to share.

Ask the group to discuss, “Is there any situation where you *can’t* change your attitude—even if the situation hasn’t changed?”

Then ask the group, “Is anyone feeling different than when they first filled out their name tags? Why?” Ask for a few volunteers to share.

Invite anyone who wants to fill out a new nametag to do so. Remind them that it’s great to write it down, but it’s more important to live it.

(If using Participant Workbook, have participants write their observations on Workbook page 6.)

Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do next week to stay more aware of your attitude from moment to moment? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”

(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 7.)

Tips

- Hang a white board or piece of paper by your door and post the attitude you’re feeling right now for everyone who passes by to see. If people comment on your attitude board, ask them what the impact of your choice is on them; you may get some interesting responses if your choice is crabby. See if being more aware of your attitude helps you move to a mental place that is more satisfying.
- Start a gratitude journal. This week, at the end of each day, write three good things that happened to you during the day. Think about what you’ve written, then answer these questions:
 - In what new places did you find happiness or satisfaction?
 - What people or situations do you perceive differently than before?

Activity #2: Same Goal, Different Attitude



Sometimes leaders deliver a message in a way that people are not ready to hear. There was a time at Tile Tech Roofing when, if the employees didn't follow safety procedures, team leaders would yell and swear at them. It wasn't effective. The roofers grudgingly complied—but only when they were being watched and only after they were reprimanded.

So owner Doug Vieselmeyer tried a different approach. He talked with the roofers about how he wanted them to go home safe to their families. Instead of yelling at roofers who weren't following safety procedures, team leaders helped them with their safety gear. Instead of watching roofers to catch them ignoring safety procedures, they watched out *for* them, calling out the potential hazards they noticed. The leaders themselves demonstrated safe work habits.

Eventually, the roofers made safety a part of their lives. “We showed enough passion and concern for the lives and safety of our workers,” Doug explains, “that they were willing to make the change themselves.”

Doug learned the way to build employee commitment to a goal is to show them what you care about, to live it yourself and to show that you care about them. Doug's goal—a safe workplace—never changed, but the attitude he used to build commitment for it did.

Instructions

In this exercise, participants see how the attitude they bring to a situation can make all the difference in how it works out.

1. Ask the group to come up with a scenario that might test a leader's attitude. Or choose one of the following:
 - An employee tried a new way to help a customer, but made a mistake that cost the company time and money.
 - An employee must tell the leader they fell short of their sales goal.
 - An employee's job performance has suffered, he/she says, because of personal issues at home.
 - Morale is down in the office. The leader wants to know why and the employee thinks the leader is part of the cause.

Activity #2: Same Goal, Different Attitude *(continued)*



- Leader and employee are trying to solve a problem. The leader is convinced his/her solution is best, but just to be sure, has asked for input from the employee, who strongly favors another solution.
2. Pair up participants to role-play one of these scenarios. Partner A plays the leader. Partner B plays the employee.
 3. Assign one of these attitudes to A (the leader): irritated, impatient, busy, distracted. B may choose an attitude they feel is appropriate for the situation.
 4. Role play for one minute. Afterwards, ask the group:
 5. How did the leader's attitude affect the situation?
 - Has anyone been in a similar situation recently or adopted a similar attitude in that situation? How did it work out?
 - Ask the person playing Part A: How helpful was the attitude you were assigned in resolving the situation?
 - Ask the person playing Part B: How challenging was it to maintain your attitude in the face of A's attitude?
- (If using Participant Workbook, have participants write their observations on Workbook page 8.)*
6. Now have the each set of partners role-play the same scenario again, but this time A has an attitude of openness (though they are still concerned about the issue they are discussing). B plays the same role as before.
 7. Again, role play for one minute.
 8. Afterwards ask the group: Has anyone experienced a similar situation recently?
 - Ask B: How did A's attitude affect your attitude this time?
 - Ask A: How did your change in "attitude" affect how you approached the situation?

(If using Participant Workbook, have participants write their observations on Workbook page 8.)

Activity #2: Same Goal, Different Attitude *(continued)*



9. Summarize by asking: “Dealing with situations in real life isn’t always as easy as shifting attitudes when we are role-playing scenarios. Any final thoughts about what we can take away from this exercise?”

Option A: Set up the same exercise as above, but this time, have B, the employee, choose a combative attitude both times. Employees are not always placid and accepting. See how taking a different approach as the leader makes an impact on the situation.

Option B: Use the attitudes already written on their nametags in the exercise.

Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do in the next week to choose attitudes with your team that build commitment and cooperation, rather than conflict? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”
(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 9.)

Tips

- Ask yourself, “What kinds of attitudes from others make me happy and committed to work with them? What attitudes make me not want to cooperate?” Choose an attitude in each category and write it down. For the next week, when you ask others for help, try to adopt the first set of attitudes and avoid the second. Do you find that team members respond differently than they did before?

Bonus Discussion: “Forever” Relationships



If you have time for additional discussion, read this story to the group or ask a volunteer to read it:

One day Greg and his seven-year-old son, David, stopped by his in-law’s house to see their brand-new car. It was a green two-door with new car smell and a temporary license taped to the back window.

It was the first new car that Larry, Greg’s father-in-law, had ever bought. They admired it for a few minutes, then Larry took down an old bike from the rafters in the garage that had belonged to David’s mother when she was a girl. David peddled down the sidewalk as Larry and Greg went inside the house.

A few minutes later David walked in, wide-eyed and pale. He said to Larry, “Grandpa, I have to show you something outside.”

David guided Larry to the new car. A long, deep scratch ran down the entire length of the driver’s door. Tears welling in his eyes, David explained that he had ridden too close to the car. The old plastic handgrips had worn through, exposing the unfinished metal.

Larry got down on one knee, put his arm around his grandson’s shoulder, looked him in the eye and said gently, “David, I’m glad you told me about this. I hope you always feel you can talk to me about anything.”

“I’m sorry, Grandpa,” David said.

“I know you are, David. Don’t worry about it.” David gave Larry a hug and ran off.

As David’s father, Greg felt responsible for the scratch and apologized. “If I’d been in your shoes,” he said, “I probably would have gone ballistic.”

Larry spoke to his son-in-law as gently as he had spoken to David. “Cars are just metal, and they come and go,” he said. “But my relationship with my grandson is forever.”

Larry valued his relationship with his grandson. Because he didn’t want to do anything to damage that relationship, he put great care into the way he treated it.



Leaders face the same choice. As Mark Lenz says, “I could have a flat tire on the way to work and rain on everybody’s parade. Why? I got a lot to be happy about. Tire’s replaceable. But a relationship—that’s a valuable thing. You can’t buy relationships.”

Disagreements, problems and crises come and go; they are transitory, much like Larry’s car or Mark’s tire. But your relationships with your team—the people with whom you spend 65 percent of your waking hours, the people you depend on every day—are not so easily replaced.

Your work relationships may not be “forever,” but what if you treated them as if they were?

Questions

- If I approached my work relationships as if they were forever:
 - What kind of attention would I give people? How available would I be for them?
 - How would I react to problems and crises? How would I treat people when they make mistakes?
 - What effect might this have on employee turnover?
 - What impact would this have on our customers?
 - How would it affect the level of trust between me and my team?

(If using Participant Workbook, have participants record their thoughts on Workbook page 12.)

Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do to handle mistakes in a way that strengthens your relationship rather than damage it? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”

(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 13.)

Tips

- Before you deal with a disagreement or crisis, ask yourself: Is this problem more important than the relationships that will be affected by my reaction to it?
- When you are about to speak with a person you are upset with, ask yourself: How would I speak to this person if we were going to dinner together later tonight?



The language you use to describe people and situations actually influences how you perceive them. Change your words and you change your perceptions. Johnny Yokoyama, owner of Pike Place Fish, reframed his perception of an employee with whom he was upset by reminding himself, “This guy is great and I love him.” The issue that upset him didn’t change, but Johnny’s reality did. With a new lens, he was prepared to deal with the employee in “a positive manner versus a negative one.”

Here are a couple of ways to become more aware of the language you use and how it may affect your perceptions:

1. Before a meeting, tell a colleague you’re trying to pay closer attention to the words you use. Ask your colleague to jot down words you use during the meeting to describe people or situations—especially words that don’t inspire or that shut others down. Later, write three of the words your colleague noticed, then choose alternatives for the same situation. With this new awareness, try out the new words for a week. Does it alter your perception when you use them? How do others respond?
2. To practice your awareness of the words you use (out loud or in your head), for the next few days write a word or two that describes how you are feeling today about:
 - Getting ready for work
 - Driving to work
 - Meetings
 - Team members
 - Tasks and deadlines
 - Family responsibilities
 - Friends
 - Finances and bills
 - Plans for the evening

Do you see any patterns? What did you notice as you wrote your feelings on paper? How did it affect your perspective or choice of words? If you are noticing negative patterns, what are some other words you might use that point you in a more positive direction?



1. If your team has a regularly scheduled meeting, check in with participants next time you get together. Review what they wrote in their action plans/commitments. Ask:
 - What new things did you do?
 - What happened?
 - What was the impact on others?
 - What was the impact on you?
2. To remind participants of your *Choose Your Attitude* conversations and their action plans, send them occasional emails of the Tips from the end of each section.



The FISH! For Leaders Series consists of six programs, each of which helps leaders to be more effective by applying one aspect of The FISH! Philosophy. Use any combination of these six thought-provoking programs to create the leadership training that fits your team's needs.

FISH! For Leaders programs include:

It Starts with Me

The secret to outstanding leadership is not in what you command others to do for you, but what you inspire them to do through your example.

Be There

People may admire your talent, charisma and business skill, but they will not really trust you until you make the effort to be present for them, emotionally as well as physically.

Play

You can't just order creativity like a lunch special or install happiness like a program. To enjoy the many business and human benefits of Play, leaders must first nurture an environment that is full of trust and respect, and free of fear.

Make Their Day

One of the best ways for a leader to make someone's day—or month, or year, or life—is to value them. Simple gestures, such as appreciation and giving people a voice, fulfill emotional needs that are too often ignored on the job.

Choose Your Attitude

Your attitude has a powerful effect on the people you lead. What impact do you want to have on others? You alone are responsible for choosing the attitude that will achieve that impact.

Who Are You Being?

Great leaders are guided by what they stand for, not by the temporary ups and downs happening around them. To lead more intentionally, you must define your purpose, recommit to it every day and ask others to help you be the person you say you want to be.