

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

It's sad but true that if you focus your attention on housework and meal preparation and diapers, raising children does start to look like drudgery pretty quickly. On the other hand, if you see yourself as nothing less than your child's nurturer, role model, teacher, spiritual guide, and mentor, your days take on a very different cast.

-Joyce Maynard

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Leading by Example Key Concepts

Life is a lesson. We see lessons everywhere we look. We learn by watching, imitating, and repeating what we have seen others do. From the time we were a small child, we have always watched observed, and learned from others. Whether it was how to tie our shoes or how to play the piano.

But the true can be said of us. How many people are watching us, seeing what we do, hearing what we say? What kind of example are we for others? Are we the kind of example others can be proud of?

The focus of this lesson is to help students understand that they too can serve as a good example for others to follow. They can be a good example by helping others that need help. They can be a good example by taking time to listen. They can be a good example by giving of themselves for another person's benefit rather than their own. They can be a good example by doing what they know is right, even when everybody else doesn't.

Leading By Example Activity 1

Taking a Stand

Materials Needed: None

Time Needed: 60 minutes

Instructions:

Indicate a continuum in the room—one end is where the students should stand if they agree with the statement read, and the other is where they should stand if they disagree with the statement read. Try to avoid using the middle as a neutral zone—they should be challenged to think about their values and “take a stand”. After each statement and everyone has moved, ask one or two students to explain why they moved to the agree or disagree area. Try to intervene if classmates are being judgmental.

It's OK to:

1. like someone based on their hairstyle
2. tell someone you like their gift even if you don't
3. have your older sister answer some of your math homework problems
4. talk about someone behind their back
5. pretend you're sick to skip class
6. ignore a classmate you think might be in trouble because it's none of your business
7. pull a fire alarm as a prank
8. steal items on a scavenger hunt
9. tell someone the truth if they ask you if you like their new dress
10. egg houses if they don't give you treats on Halloween
11. call someone a nickname that everyone uses, even if you are asked to stop
12. use the internet for getting information for a school project
13. go to an R rated movie if your older brother buys your ticket

Debrief:

It is sometimes difficult to be a role model, especially if all of your friends are doing something you believe is wrong.

What can you do to make “taking a stand” easier for each other?

What was challenging about this exercise?

How did you feel when very few classmates were standing with you?

Did others influence you?

How will your behavior change as a result of this activity?

Leading By Example Activity 2

Leading the Blind

Materials Needed: Bandanas for blindfolds, enough for ½ the audience.

Total Time Required: 15 minutes

Group Size: Group the audience into pairs.

Instructions:

Provide a bandana or blind fold for each pair and have one person put it on. The other person will then lead them through a maze set up in the room. After leading the person through it, they will switch and the “leader” will don the blindfold and be led back through the maze by their partner.

DEBRIEF:

What was it like being led blind through the maze?

What was your level of trust?

Once you made it through safely (or unsafely) through the maze, what was your level of commitment to treat them the same?

Summarize by saying that an important concept with trust is learning that it has to be given in order to be received. If we are suspicious, unwilling to trust, or do un-trustful acts, others will feel the same way about us.