

Learning and Actions

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Introduction

The learning and actions that are discussed will explain the principles of living as a mensch. These include leadership, moral reasoning, gratitude and resilience, compassion and relationships, and callings. Each concept will summarize and provide a plan of action to incorporate the concepts into a leader's life.

Definition of Leadership

Ethical Foundations Summary: Leadership is a multidimensional practice derived from authenticity, ethics, and integrity. Ethics and integrity are at the foundation of leadership and are not optional. A leader influences organizational culture more than policies, training programs, and standard practices (McCombs School of Business, 2019). A strong leader will consistently demonstrate acts of honesty, high ethical standards, and maintain a clear vision of the future to their teammates.

Ethical Foundations Action plan: As a leader there are a few actions I can take to strengthen my ethical foundation. Starting by creating a personal leadership code of ethics and reviewing it quarterly to serve as a frequent reminder of my goals as a leader (McCombs School of Business, 2019). As a leader I regularly communicate organizational values during team meetings, and model transparency by admitting mistakes and explaining my actions.

Relational and Communication Summary: Leadership should be relational and not positional to effectively connect and motivate their teammates. A strong leader will be grounded in empathy, respect, and have a genuine concern for their teammate's well-being. Relationships are gained by communicating effectively to others. Active listening can be defined by "making a conscious effort to hear and understand someone else" (Younger, 2023).

Relational and Communication Action Plan: Active listening is one of the most effective ways to improve communication amongst a team. I will begin to improve my active listening by listening to team members' points and summarizing before responding. I will also regularly offer support during meetings rather than using meetings to focus on task updates. Finally, as a leader I will continue to ask open-ended questions and encourage an honest dialogue.

Accountability Summary: Strong leaders can demonstrate accountability by taking responsibility when necessary, while also holding their teammates to similar standards.

"Leaders who embody accountability create a culture of trust, integrity and reliability which are essential for fostering a productive and positive work environment" (Aurora).

Accountability Action Plan: As a leader I will begin to implement clear expectations for my teammates and myself. After meetings I plan to convey action items with a plan to ensure that my teammates and I are aligned. It will also be important to follow up after major projects to evaluate what worked best in completing tasks and what did not. I would like to encourage my team to hold each other accountable on group efforts through periodic check-ins.

Moral Reasoning

Summary: Leaders often face conflicting stakeholder interests, pressures for short-term results, situations without clear rules, as well as managing high-stakes consequences for others. Strong moral reasoning helps leaders build trust and credibility, foster ethical cultures, avoid misconduct and reputational damage, and make decisions that hold up to scrutiny.

Action Plan: One such illustration of these conflicting interests and pressures is the need to model and promote work-life balance. To effectively manage a team of people with empathy and accountability, leaders must model those values, otherwise they risk being seen as insincere. This action plan is based on the belief that individuals have a moral and ethical right to take care of themselves and their families while also being accountable for doing their best for their team and employer. This concept and plan is excellently illustrated in the article “Work Life Balance” from the website, Mental Health America: (Work Life Balance, 2025.)

What is a Mensch

Summary: A mensch is a person of integrity, honor, and decency who consistently acts with kindness, empathy, and respect while being relied upon to do the right thing even if no one is watching. A mensch often shows characteristics of integrity and honor through a strong moral compass, humility by not seeking glory, responsibility and dependability through keeping promises and reliability, respect by recognizing the inherent worth of every person, generosity through their willingness to help others with no form of compensation and doing the right thing through mindfulness of their impact on the world. The concepts of gratitude and resilience, compassion and relationships, and callings are all elements of living life as a mensch.

Action Plan: As a leader, I will cultivate character and integrity by being transparent, acting with dignity, and holding myself accountable; and foster empathy and understanding by actively listening, embracing vulnerability, and promoting inclusiveness. I will define my goals by completing a self-assessment, gathering resources and start implementing one or

two actions to consistently practice; I will implement changes, seek feedback, adjust and repeat as needed.

Gratitude and Resilience

Summary: Gratitude enhances mental and physical well-being, strengthens relationships, and builds resilience, making it especially important to a mensch. This can be accomplished through methods like journaling, mindful reflection, and expression of appreciation to others. Living a life of gratitude can help mediate anxiety and depression while also holding space for joy and pain (The Gratitude Effect, 2025). One thing that resonates strongly is that living in gratitude does not mean that nothing goes wrong, it means that through it all, we are grateful for the opportunity.

Resilience is another aspect that resonates strongly. Resilience, or grit, is a way of living that has been instrumental in the pathway of my life. It has allowed me to try, try again in the face of adversity.

Action Plan: While resilience is a way of living that resonates strongly with me, I also feel I do this well. What I feel I can work on is living in gratitude. Gratitude for the people in my life, gratitude for the strengths I have, gratitude that I have challenges to meet and opportunities to show my value and worth at work, gratitude that I can be successful in life.

Compassion and Relationships

Summary: A mensch leads through demonstrating professional integrity, kindness and consistency. A strong leader will incorporate mensch values within their role to ensure they are supporting their team as effectively as possible. Human connection is built through humility, understanding and empathy.

Action Plan: As a leader, I will begin practicing compassion daily, by offering support to those who may need it and proactively offering help. I can engage in anonymous acts of kindness and not expect recognition. I will build trust with my team members by communicating consistently to others and actively listening to other people's perspectives before responding. I will seek feedback from my teammates on how I can better show up for others.

Callings

Summary: What is a calling? A calling is something that you feel led to do, that is greater than oneself. Work can be a calling, especially when well-developed skillsets intersect with a desire to teach, lead, and serve others. As discussed in the article "A Leader as a Mensch," a leader knows the right thing to do, and acts on it, whether it's a difficult conversation with an employee, acting on unethical decisions of leadership, or simply

modeling well-balanced work/life so that their employees see leadership walking the walk. Many people mistakenly think that only doctors, nurses, pastors, and the like can feel “called” to work; however, there are so many fields and vocations that people can be called to.

Action Plan: My action plan is to bloom where I’m planted. No job is going to be perfect, and no life is going to be perfect, but I can always use the values of a Mensch to practice gratitude, resilience, compassion, and relationship - and somewhere in there, I may just find my calling. (Nadler, Dr. R, 2018)

Conclusion:

Effective leaders embody the Mensch-like characteristics and qualities. They care about the people they work with and work for, they demonstrate compassion, relationship, gratitude, and resilience. They understand their calling and their place in the world and effectively communicate vision and goals to those around them, whether that is in a personal or professional capacity. One of the most effective characteristics of a strong Mensch-like leader is the ability to actively listen and respond with solutions that are inclusive of the needs and perspectives of stakeholders. Support of other people's goals, dreams, strengths, and contributions is a signature aspect of this type of leadership. By effectively integrating the above action plans, leaders can develop themselves as better people and leaders, and within the day-to-day work, they often find that the leadership responsibilities that started out as just another part of their role became their calling.

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