



Adopt US Kids

Together we hold their future

PARENT GROUP LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM



MODULE 1: BECOMING A LEADER

Total time: 135 minutes, including break

Module agenda

Welcome and introduction—25 minutes

Leadership qualities—10 minutes

 Activity: Understanding your leadership style—45 minutes

[Handout 1: “Understanding Your Leadership Style”](#)

[Handout 2: “Understanding the Leadership Quadrants”](#)

[Handout 3: “Leadership—Motivation and Style”](#)

Break—10 minutes

Building relationships—10 minutes

Connecting with the community—10 minutes

Building your skills—15 minutes

Knowledge is power—10 minutes

[Handout 4: “Resource Connection Central”](#)

[Handout 5: “Building Knowledge, Individual”](#)

[Handout 6: “Building Knowledge, Group”](#)

Materials and preparation

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with the entire curriculum, including all handouts and activities, to ensure that you are fully prepared to deliver it.

- Review the activity and prepare any materials needed.
- Print the six handouts, making copies for yourself and all participants.
- Gather needed materials:
 - ✓ Name tents and markers for participants (once made, keep these for later sessions)
 - ✓ Flip chart and markers for facilitator
 - ✓ Computer with Module 1 PowerPoint slides loaded and ready to display
 - ✓ Method to display slides, such as projector and screen or large monitor visible to the participants
 - ✓ Fidgets, coloring materials, and snacks (optional)
- Set up the room. We recommend setting up the chairs and tables in a semi-circle or a U so participants can see you, each other, and the presentation. We also recommend having extra chairs and a space that accommodates free movement.

Welcome and introductions (25 minutes)



Do

As people enter the room, welcome them individually and ask them to create a name tent. It should have their first name and some representation of the people in their family, home, or circle.

Make your own name tent and introduce yourself.

Say

If there are enough participants (10 or so), you can pair people off and have them talk together, then have each person introduce the other. This can create connections that will support the parent group leaders as they continue their growth. Remember to instruct people to take no more than one minute in their introduction. Otherwise, this initial activity can consume your entire time as participants are excited to be here and share their stories!

Let's start by finding out who everyone is. Please introduce yourself by sharing:

- Your name
- Who is represented on your name tent
- What your favorite game was when you were a child



Say

This curriculum covers a number of key topics that leaders of support groups need:

- Becoming a leader—that’s what we’ll go over today.
- Then in our second session, we’ll go over developing your plan and getting your group off the ground.
- Next, we’ll go through the basics of facilitation, as well as how to handle complex situations, including common group challenges. Given how important facilitation is for the support group leaders, we’re going to spend two sessions talking about this one!
- In our last session together, we’ll talk about how to make sure our groups have lasting power so that they can continue to help families even when we’re no longer the leaders.

Before we dive into this session, let me model a necessary function of a leader, sharing housekeeping information.

Do

Ask members to silence cell phones and share the following information:

- Location of bathrooms
- Schedule for the day and for the other sessions
- That start and end times will be honored
- If and when a break will happen

Why support groups are a needed service

- Provide a safe space for children, youth, and families
- Offer normalcy and validation
- Share effective strategies and services/service providers
- Offer a space to hold hope and strength for those who are losing theirs
- Provide a brief respite
- Foster friendship and solidarity

AdaptUSKids

Say

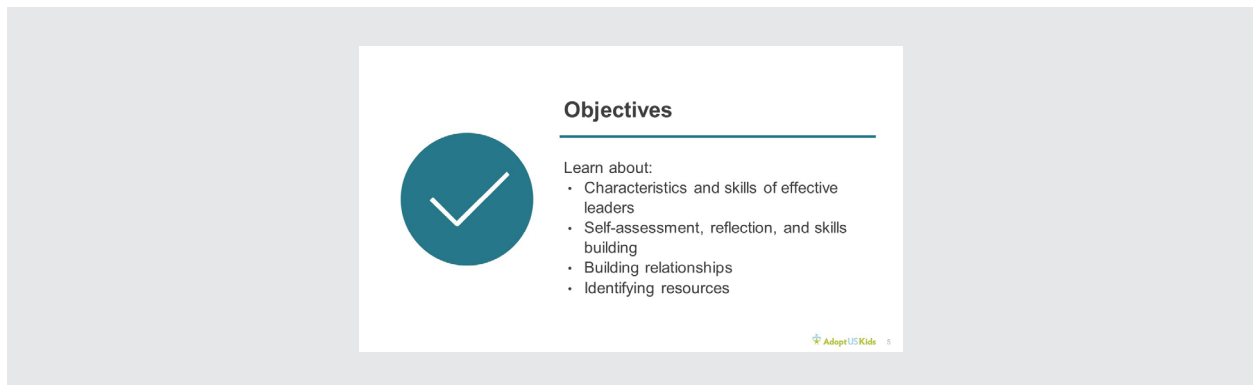
You're here today because you believe in the value of peer support. You are not alone!

Support groups provide many benefits to participants, including:

- Providing a safe place for families to seek advice, share challenges, and find validation and hope as they tackle the day-to-day struggles that can present as children heal from trauma
- Giving families the tools they need to remain unconditionally committed to their children, even in the toughest times
- Teaching attendees parenting strategies and helping them identify needed resources
- Creating a community among group members that can lead to future support and resources, such as respite exchanges and shared furniture and clothing banks

But there's also something in it for you as the leader. Many experienced parent leaders report that they receive as much help from the group members as they offer.

Now let's get to it!



Say

The first step in establishing a solid parent support group is becoming a reliable and effective leader. In this session, we will be talking about:

- The qualities and skills that many great leaders share
- How you can reflect on—and strengthen—your leadership skills
- The importance of strong relationships and strategies for building them
- How to identify resources in your community and beyond

Leadership qualities (10 minutes)

Say

Many good leaders have characteristics and skills in common that lead to the success and sustainability of their group. Although your members will usually come to their first meeting because of a challenge or issue at home, they will only keep coming back if you have something to offer and can deliver it in an engaging way.

Ask

What qualities come to mind when you think about effective leaders?

Do

Record the answers on a flip chart, asking for more information about the responses as needed. Only share the following slide when the group is done providing responses.



Qualities of effective leaders

- Confident
- Assertive
- Hospitable
- Receptive
- Hopeful
- Goal-oriented
- Flexible
- Enthusiastic
- Non-judgmental

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Say

Those are great qualities, and you'll see that they are among the qualities that research shows are highly regarded in effective leaders. On this slide are some qualities identified by research.

Many of these are inherent personality traits, but all can be nurtured and developed if you are motivated and committed!

These leadership qualities also need to be matched with leadership skills to be most effective. This training can help you either develop or expand those skills, which include:

- Being organized and detail-oriented
- Building relationships
- Using positive reframing
- Conducting community outreach
- Prioritizing needs and goals
- Being self-aware



Activity: Understanding your leadership style (45 minutes)



Say

Let's take the first step in launching you as a leader with a fun activity that will help you identify the leadership style that is most comfortable for you. As we discuss the results, we'll point out ways to enhance certain aspects of your style; talk about how best to connect with and engage your group members; and share some thoughts about remaining self-aware.

Note

The instructions are also on Handout 1: "Understanding Your Leadership Style." Many participants have asked for this exercise after participating in it, so we included the instructions as a handout as well for sharing. It is used with permission from NOLS, a global wilderness school.



Do

This activity can be done physically, by using tape on the floor to create the continuum, or by drawing the lines on a flip chart. If on the floor, you will have people physically situate themselves. If on the flip chart, have everyone write their name on a sticky note and instruct them to move the notes as directed.

1. Outline a long continuum line with two ends defined. Explain that:

- a. The extreme left is “hesitate to state opinions.”

People on this end would say, “I don’t often voice strong opinions, particularly if I think it will cause hurt or be a waste of time. I’m very flexible. You probably don’t really know where I stand on issues, or what I think about you, unless you ask very directly. It’s hard for me to state my own needs.”

- b. The extreme right is “state opinions freely.”

People on this end would say, “I take stands easily. People know exactly what I think, feel, and want. I’m an open book and you don’t even have to read the words because I’ll tell them to you, especially if you cross one of my lines. Fight or flight? Let’s get real—I stay right here and tell it like it is. I don’t have a problem saying ‘my way or the highway’ if need be.”

2. Students and instructors place themselves anywhere on the continuum where they view themselves. Call the precise middle “out of bounds” so that participants have to make some decision about where they see themselves.

3. Now, without moving from their place in this left/right line, have people move themselves along a second, up and down continuum with the far ends defined so:

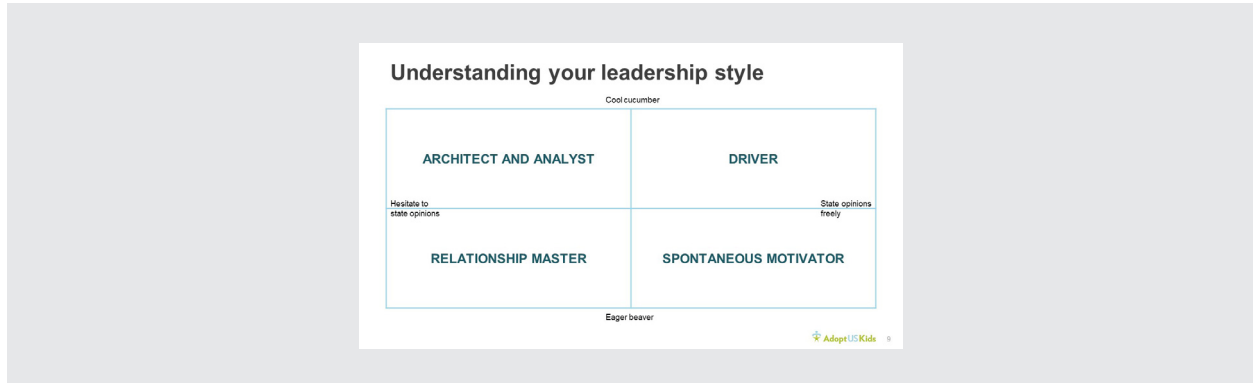
- a. The top is “cool cucumber/emotionally cool/Zen master.”

People here would say, “I am calm and rational, and I do not get flustered about anything. I even have difficulty getting excited about things that most people think are neat and exciting. My emotions are a glassy pond.”

- b. The bottom is “eager beaver/emotionally hot.”

People here would say, “I tell people how I feel about everything. I am angry about social injustice. I cry at sad movies. My emotions are extremely active.”

4. At this point everyone will be standing in (or have their sticky note) in one of four quadrants:

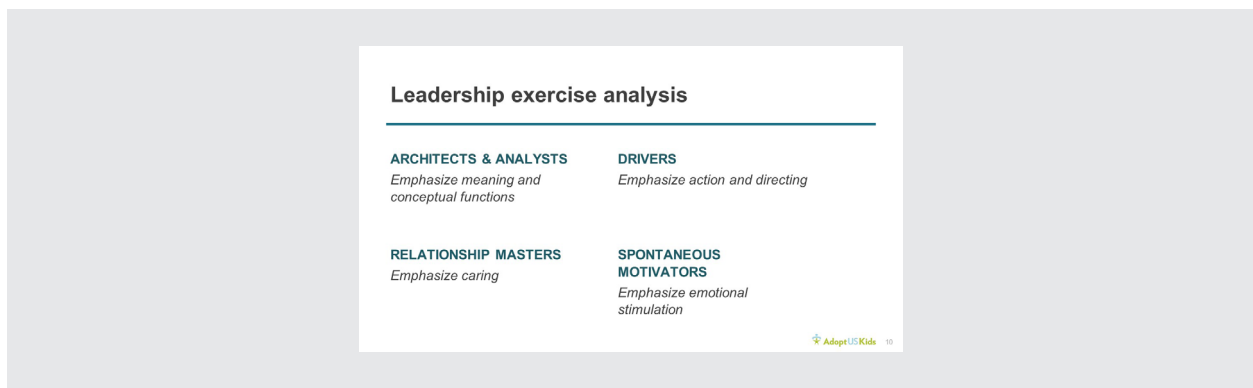


Put up this slide when everyone has been placed on both continuums.

5. Be sure to explain the continuums in a non-judgmental way, emphasizing the understanding that each of the styles has its purpose and is needed for a successful outcome!
6. (Refer to Handout 2: “Understanding the Leadership Quadrants.”) Facilitate a conversation with participants that identifies strengths and potential challenges with each style; ways to interact with differing styles; strategies to build on strengths and mitigate areas of need.
- a. If there are enough participants, divide into groups according to their style (Architect & Analyst, Driver, Spontaneous Motivator, and Relationship Master) and instruct them to have a small group discussion before reporting back to the full group.
 - b. If it is a small cohort, facilitate the discussion with everyone.
 - c. Address the following:
 - i. What is it like to lead from your leadership style?
 - ii. Which other leadership styles are easiest for you to follow, and which ones are hardest?
 - iii. How have you seen both your style and other styles play out in your experiences with others?
 - iv. Where and how do you see yourself employing your strengths?
 - v. How will you build in those areas where you do not have strengths?
 - vi. What could happen in your group if there is no one representing a style? Does a group need all four styles?

Do

- As facilitator, begin with yourself to demonstrate how to think about your style, maximizing strengths and addressing challenges.
- Some people have more than one style they are drawn to, often depending on the situation. Ask them to discuss why and when they change styles.
- Ask participants to consider the quadrant that is the least like them and talk about this.
- If someone is way out in the corner of a quadrant, it indicates, at least according to this exercise, they are heavily oriented to one style. What are the benefits and drawbacks to this?
- If the group you are training is missing one or more leadership styles, make sure to address that. Discuss what happens if you don't have all styles represented in a group.



Say

One goal of developing yourself as a leader is to be aware of the style you are most like, and those that are less like you. You must know your strengths and be aware of how your weaknesses can impact you and your group. People need to lead with a style that fits them, fits the situation, and fits the group.

It is important to remember that there are positives with all styles—the keys to success are to:

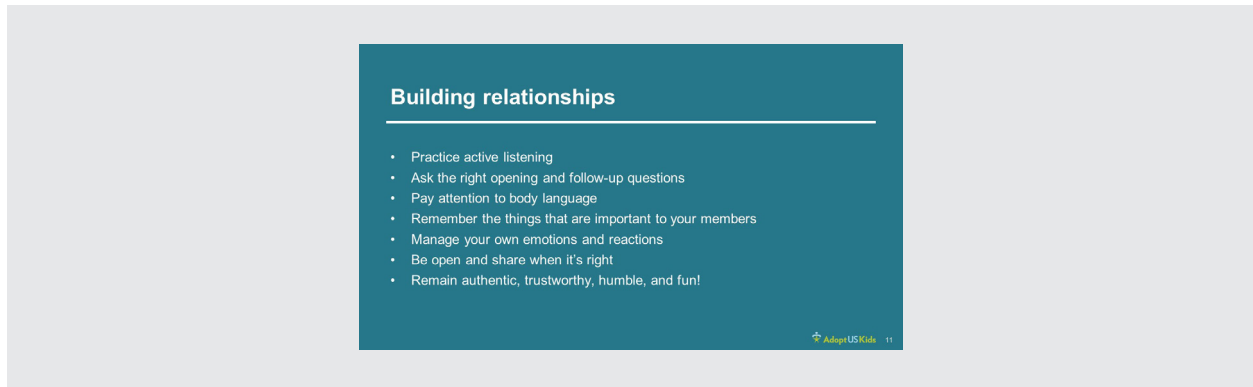
1. Understand yourself.
2. Understand how your style affects others in both positive and negative ways.
3. Think about how gaps in your style can be filled by other group members.
4. Be able to adapt your leadership style as needed if it's not working in your group.

Do

Share Handout 3: “Leadership—Motivation and Style” and encourage participants to read at home, thinking about how to build on their strengths, soften any rough edges that they identify, and plan for success.

Break (10 minutes)

Building relationships (10 minutes)



Say

What is the most important factor in successful support groups? Relationships! How well you and your members relate to one another is really what determines whether your support group will succeed. Let's talk through the qualities on this slide and come up with some ideas for how you can practice, demonstrate, and improve on each of the relationship-building skills.

Do

Ask participants to talk through each skill and come up with a definition and some examples. You can choose to have a full group discussion or break into groups, assigning one or more bullet points to each group to discuss. If breaking into groups, assign someone to take notes and report back.

During review, make certain the group hits on the following points under each bullet:

- **Practice active listening.** Keep eyes on the speaker, nodding head, leaning in.
- **Ask the right opening and follow-up questions.** Some good opening questions include "Do you want to get advice or simply be heard?" or "How can we best help you?" Follow-up questions are generally used to clarify when there is a question about what the speaker needs; probe for underlying issues; and identify next steps and actions needed.
- **Pay attention to body language.** Watch for signs of conflict or discomfort—usually folded arms, rolled eyes, pulling back. Check in when you see these signs. Tears are not uncommon in support group meetings—don't be afraid of members expressing genuine emotion. This should be a safe place for that.

- **Remember what is important to your members.** Having a mission and vision statement will help you keep the focus. Also let the agreed-upon group norms guide how your meetings run. Remember that groups grow and change, and that the focus may as well. This is fine if there is consensus.
- **Manage your own emotions and reactions.** This includes remaining non-judgmental and working to reframe challenges that participants bring to the group with a positive or solutions-based approach. If you are parenting yourself, it can be very helpful to have a co-leader or backup when you are struggling with your own challenges.
- **Be open and share when it's right.** Your members should not look at you as the authority, but rather as an ally and a peer. You should be willing to share your own journey as it fits with the topic, letting members know that you have struggled as well and that it's through making mistakes that we best learn. At the same time, be cautious not to turn the group into your personal sounding board. The best groups are led by all the membership.
- **Remain authentic, trustworthy, humble, and fun!** Honesty and humbleness are marks of true leaders. Being your true self will ensure that your group believes in your leadership. Fun is an essential ingredient. Parents do not come to support groups to wallow in despair or self-pity. They come for a break, some resources and validation, and a respite from their work making a space for children's trauma to heal. Remember, you often hold hope for them when they have lost it for themselves.

Connecting with the community (10 minutes)



Connecting with the community

- Schools
- Daycare centers
- Pediatricians
- Local businesses
- Community centers
- Libraries
- Places of worship

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Say

In addition to building individual relationships, it is also essential that you have strong relationships in the community you are serving. Let's talk through why these relationships are important as well as how they will serve your group.

Ask

Why might it be important to build and maintain relationships in the community?

Do

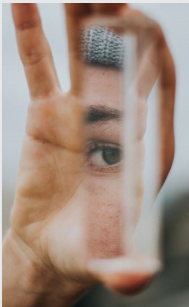
Mention these if no one else does:

- *Foster and adoptive families are in all the places mentioned, but they may not know about your group. By connecting, you can both grow your membership and offer a much-needed service.*
- *Many of these community groups will be open to supporting what you do by offering in-kind services, doing presentations, providing space or donations, etc.*

Say

Look to the partners listed on the slide for promoting your group and getting the word out, offering space for meetings, refreshments, and more. Many groups have found childcare providers at early education and social work schools. Local businesses often appreciate the good neighbor payback they get from providing goods, services, and more to your group. Never be afraid to ask—the worst they can do is say no. Consider doing mini-presentations or providing flyers about your group in all of these locations.

Building your skills (15 minutes)



Building your skills

Working on *self*:

- Accepts responsibility
- Demonstrates good time management
- Knows when to say “no”
- Displays self-control
- Provides guidance
- Makes action plans
- Protects group interests—not personal agenda
- Listens to suggestions and criticism

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Say

No matter where you start, it’s important to always be building your capacity as a leader by developing or improving certain skills. Some of these skills are all about you, while others depend on your ability to work effectively with others.

Ask

Let's look at the skills associated with your personal growth. Do you think they are on target? What are some ways that you can develop each of the skills?

Do

Bring up these responses if no one else does:

- Accepting responsibility refers to both responsibility to/for the group and for your own actions. It's okay to make a mistake or to mess up as long as you own it.
- Don't make promises you can't keep and don't overextend yourself.
- Be aware of and honor group and cultural norms in terms of strict start and end times. Some groups will prioritize starting and stopping on time, while others will prioritize finishing worthwhile conversations regardless of time. By discussing this with the group in advance, you will land on an approach that works for everyone.
- It's important to get comfortable saying "no" and to not overcommit yourself. This can include asking for help from others, which is also a great way to build potential and emerging leaders!
- Support groups can be very emotional and even triggering. When things get hard, know that you can always take a break, slow things down, or go back to your agreed-upon group norms.
- Most group leaders come to the role after they have some experience behind them, but no one can know everything. Provide guidance on those things you are skilled in and seek out other experts or experiences to fill in where you have gaps. It's fine to say, "I don't know. Let me see what I can find out and get back to the group (next time, by email, etc.)."
- While many leaders state that they started a group because they couldn't find one that met their needs, the best ones will grow with the group and beyond their personal agenda. It is fine to get your needs met too, just not at the expense of everyone else. Doing regular check-ins or periodic surveys of needs and interests will help you to keep focused on the bigger picture.
- You want your members to be engaged—this means that they will sometimes want change. Go with it, grow with it. Know that the best leaders have group members who know they can speak up and be heard.

Building your skills

Working with others:

- Shares successes
- Recognizes skills in others and delegates
- Concentrates on needs of group
- Supports members
- Evaluates group's work
- Focuses on future



Say

Now let's look at some of the skills you will deepen that relate to your connection with and commitment to the group members.

Ask

Do you think these skills are on target? What are some ways that you can develop each of the skills? Are there other skills in either category—for self or for others—that you'd like to add?

Do

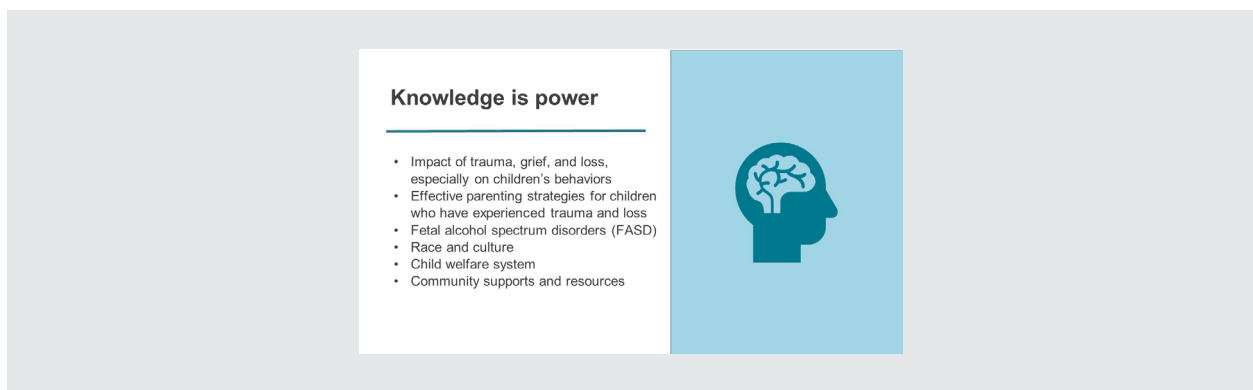
Bring up the following if no one else does:

- No one wants to follow a leader who is always saying “me” and “I.” Groups are a “we.” Recognize other members for what they bring to the group. Take time every meeting to identify who did something great. Then think about how you could value and encourage others. Is it a silly award or a thank you every meeting? As members feel valued and recognized, they will be more engaged and will go the extra mile.
- Asking for help or delegating is often uncomfortable territory. Remember that you are doing a service for your members when you ask them to contribute their time, talents, and energy. No successful, sustainable support group is a one-person show for long. To build the skill, at each meeting try to think of something you can ask another member to do.
- As a leader, you are focused on both the group as a whole and your individual members. One of the best ways to address both is to support group members in helping one another. Maybe you develop a buddy system to provide more one-on-one support for individuals who have specific needs. This helps the individual, creates an environment where the needs of one don't overwhelm the needs of the whole, and builds the capacity of those who sign on as buddies. Be intentional about it. As your meeting ends, think about any issues that arose that you can use to pair up group members for ongoing support.
- Regular evaluation of both the group as a whole and your capacity as a leader will lead to success and sustainability. You won't get there if you aren't open to learning, improving, and growing. A quick check in at the end of each meeting is a great way to ensure that you are meeting the needs of the group. Many leaders use the “roses and thorns” question, allowing each member to name a good thing (rose) that happened during the meeting as well as something they would change or drop (thorn). Once annually, you should also do a member survey, asking group members what they feel is going well, what they want more of (or different) in the coming year, and what they rate as positives or areas of improvement for the leader. If you're feeling tension or stress from the group, try an anonymous survey or check-in.

Say

Thanks for a great discussion! It seems that we have a good understanding of the skills and responsibilities of effective leaders. It can be hard to know whether or not you're doing any of these skills effectively. One way to build your own capacity as a leader is to keep a checklist for yourself and reflect on how well you exhibited these skills after each meeting. Did you keep the conversation focused and on track? Did you exhibit active listening? Did you delegate tasks and share successes with your members? Put a check next to the skills that you're consistently doing well. Debriefing the meeting in this way will help you learn which skills you need to focus on building.

Knowledge is power (10 minutes)



Say

Being a leader isn't just about skills. It's also about being knowledgeable. You need to know about the key issues facing adoptive, foster, and kinship families, including:

- The impact of trauma, grief, and loss, especially on children's behaviors
- Effective parenting strategies for children who have experienced trauma and loss
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders
- Race and culture
- The child welfare system
- Community supports and resources

As a leader, you have to have a plan to build your knowledge. Even if you're already an expert, you need to stay on top of the latest ideas and research.

People come to support groups looking for answers to the challenges they face and the questions they can't answer for and about their children. You won't have every answer—no one person does—but if you know where and how to find the resources your members need, and if you can engage experts in your community to share their expertise, you will have a super power!

Children in foster, adoptive, and kinship families have all experienced loss. Many, if not most, have also experienced traumas, both in utero and as children, that affect their ability to attach, to learn, and to thrive. Foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers need a toolbox of strategies and techniques that are different and more advanced than those needed by caregivers who are parenting birth children. The tools they learned in their families growing up or in parenting children birthed to them are not working the way they want. That's why they came to your group.

Do

Distribute Handout 4: "Resource Connection Central."

Say

Here is a handout to start you on the journey of building your knowledge and resource base. We have compiled a list of some of the best sources we know. As a bit of homework for the next time, we encourage you to do some research on these sites, paying special attention to those that reflect the needs of the group you plan to lead, if you have a special focus.

Remember that building your knowledge is not a one-time task. And it's something that you engage your group in as well! One approach to being a diverse, well-informed group is to delegate research to your members who have special interests in one or more topics. Again, this will serve to build the capacity of all your members and allow you to concentrate on building the network!

Do

Direct participants to Handouts 5 and 6: "Building Knowledge: Individual" and "Building Knowledge: Group." Explain that these are activities that they should take on—doing some of their own research and recording resources that they find. Then as their group forms, they can build on the resource together with your group, which is one more way to engage members. Ask participants to bring these handouts to subsequent sessions, so they can continue to add to their knowledge base as participants and leaders share.



Say

Thank you for coming to today's session on becoming a leader! We're looking forward to seeing you again on _____ for the next module and wish you a great week/weekend/etc. Please remember there are more resources available for you on the AdoptUSKids website at <https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/category/support-families/parent-groups/>.

Exercise: Understanding Your Leadership Style

Typical goals of a leadership styles class:

- Increase students' self-awareness of their default leadership styles
- Inform students that different leadership styles are valid and that each has strengths and weaknesses
- Help students appreciate leadership styles other than their own and understand how to lead people with different needs
- Develop the habit of students giving each other feedback.

This activity can be done physically, by using tape on the floor to create the continuum, or by drawing the lines on a flip chart. If on the floor, you will have people physically situate themselves. If on the flip chart, have everyone write their name on a sticky note and instruct them to move the sticky notes as directed.

1. Outline a long continuum line with two ends defined. Explain that:

a. The extreme left is "hesitate to state opinions."

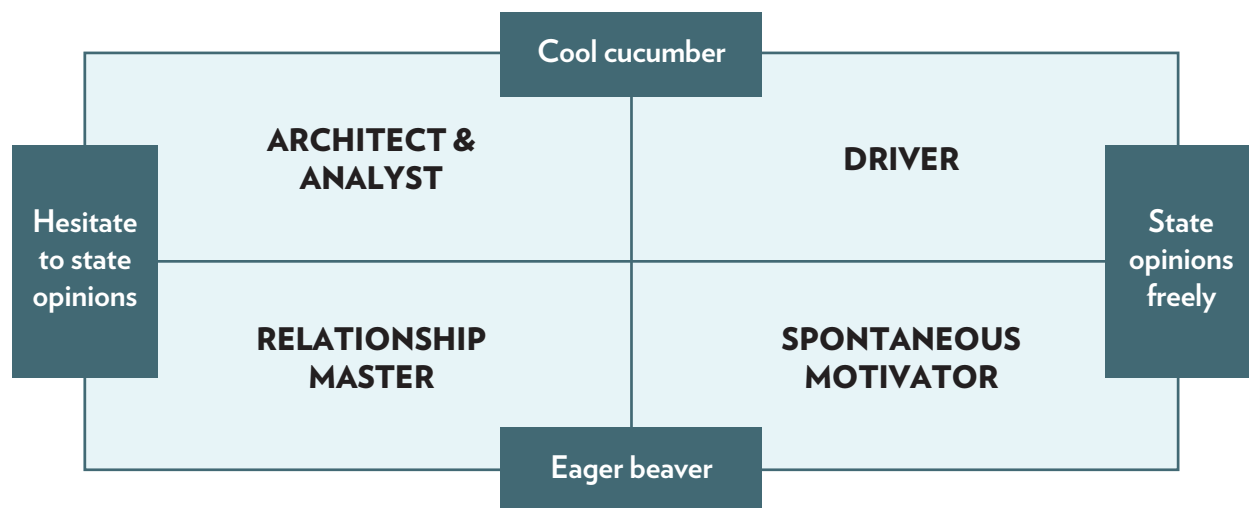
People on this end would say, "I don't often voice strong opinions, particularly if I think it will cause hurt or be a waste of time. I'm very flexible. You probably don't really know where I stand on issues, or what I think about you, unless you ask very directly. It's hard for me to state my own needs."

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People on this end would say, "I take stands easily. People know exactly what I think, feel, and want. I'm an open book and you don't even have to read the words because I'll tell them to you, especially if you cross one of my lines. Fight or flight? Let's get real—I stay right here and tell it like it is. I don't have a problem saying 'my way or the highway' if need be."

2. Students and instructors place themselves anywhere on the continuum where they view themselves. Remember to call the precise middle "out of bounds" so that participants have to make some decision about where they see themselves.

3. Now, without moving from their place in this left/right line, have people move themselves along a second, up and down continuum with the far ends defined so:
 - a. The top is "cool cucumber/emotionally cool/Zen master."
 People here would say, "I am calm and rational, and I do not get flustered about anything. I even have difficulty getting excited about things that most people think are neat and exciting. My emotions are a glassy pond."
 - b. The bottom is "eager beaver/emotionally hot."
 People here would say, "I tell people how I feel about everything. I am angry about social injustice. I cry at sad movies. My emotions are extremely active."
4. At this point everyone will be standing in (or have their sticky note) in one of four quadrants:



5. Be sure to explain the quadrants in a non-judgmental way, emphasizing the understanding that each of the styles has its purpose and is needed for a successful outcome!
6. Facilitate a conversation with participants, referring to Handout 2: "Understanding the Leadership Quadrants," which identifies strengths and potential challenges with each style; ways to interact with differing styles; and strategies to build on strengths and mitigate areas of need.
 - a. If there are enough participants, divide into groups according to their style (Architect & Analyst, Driver, Spontaneous Motivator, and Relationship Master) and instruct them to have a small group discussion before reporting back to the full group.
 - b. If it is a small cohort, facilitate the discussion with everyone.

c. Address the following:

- i.** What is it like to lead from your leadership style?
- ii.** Which other leadership styles are easiest for you to follow, and which ones are hardest?
- iii.** How have you seen both your style and the styles of others play out in your experience with others?
- iv.** Where and how do you see yourself employing your strengths?
- v.** How will you build in those areas where you do not have strengths?
- vi.** What could happen in your group if there is no one representing a style? Does a group need all four styles?

Points to remember:

- As facilitator, begin with yourself to demonstrate how to think about your style, maximizing strengths and addressing challenges.
- Some people have more than one style they are drawn to, often depending on the situation. Ask them to discuss why and when they change styles.
- Ask participants to consider the quadrant that is least like them and talk about this.
- If someone is way out in the corner of a quadrant, it indicates, at least according to this exercise, they are heavily oriented to one style. What are the benefits and drawbacks to this?
- If the group you are training is missing one or more leadership styles, make sure to address that. Discuss what happens if you don't have all styles represented in a group.

Understanding the Leadership Quadrants

ARCHITECTS & ANALYSTS

Emphasize meaning and conceptual functions.

- + Information and opinion seekers
- + Good at analysis and process observation
- + Prefer as much information as possible before deciding
- + Can come out with totally off-the-wall solutions that work
- + Translate feelings and experiences into ideas
- Can be slow in making decisions or dogged in the facts
- Can happily leave most decisions to others and focus on only one decision
- Have to watch out for non-involvement or unrealistic ideas if they get into their world

Possible effects on the group

Architects and analysts are often in the minority but their function is essential. If a group doesn't pay attention to this area, it will miss out on significant learning that comes from observation and analysis. The group may also be missing important process steps or other ways to view a situation. Too much of this style in a group may stall movement because the discussion, laissez-faire attitude, and analysis allows opportunities to pass.

DRIVERS

Emphasize action and directing.

- + Information and opinion givers
- + Decision-making is easy for them
- + Often the keepers of the vision in a group
- + Great at taking a stand, being direct, and making things happen
- + Usually not too shaken by critical feedback
- Will sometimes decide without input from others and step on toes
- Can come across as too impersonal and lose connection with their group
- Have to be careful not to “over-lead”

Possible effects on the group

If a group does not have drivers, they must pick up driver functions or they can fail to meet far-reaching goals. Mature drivers are non-reactionary individuals with much ability in the other quadrants, and they help ground a group. When this style is not mature, there may be too much individuality or structure. Turf battles or a lack of member autonomy and collaboration ensue.

RELATIONSHIP MASTERS

Emphasize caring.

- + Excellent at building and sustaining community
- + Work well on a team
- + Great at building rapport, consensus, and commitment and seeking feedback
- + Support, praise, and feel concern
- + Display high regard for others' wishes, viewpoints, and actions
- May not take an unpopular stance if it puts a relationship at risk
- Can put so much emphasis on relationship that tasks and decision-making fall behind
- Can forget or downplay their own needs, to their detriment

Possible effects on the group

Caring and respect are essential qualities that allow a group to function. As a leader, it is powerful when combined with other quadrant functions in the group. If it's the only style a group has, the group may not take enough risks or make enough decisions to move forward significantly. The group may also avoid conflict to the extent that there is a lack of depth in genuine connection and innovation.

SPONTANEOUS MOTIVATORS

Emphasize emotional stimulation.

- + Able to voice their ideas
- + Possess a sense of mission or vision
- + Good at energetic dialogues with other group members
- + Supply passion to follow their ideas; energizers
- + Great at motivating people
- Can be emotionally bound to their ideas; objectivity can be their biggest challenge
- Can be reactionary, not always planning carefully for their next steps.
- Can create a highly emotionally-charged climate if they put too much emphasis on challenging others and confronting assumptions

Possible effects on the group

Spontaneous motivators are often lightbulbs. Groups need this function to sparkle, create, prod, stir the pot, and impassion others. A group without this style may be functional, but somewhat lackluster. When mature people with this style choose to be detached and monitor their emotional involvement, this is highly effective. If too much of this style is present in a leader, or if they are not mature, a group can be overly reactive or so impassioned about their ideals that they lose touch with other realities.

Leadership: Motivation and Style

You've had an opportunity to participate in the leadership exercise and think about who you are as a leader and how that will affect your group. This handout will lead you to further understanding of yourself and where you want to go with your leadership and your group.

The Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas has a Community Tool Box¹ that dives deep into leadership and effective community building.

In their work, they encourage emerging leaders to honestly assess their motivations and skill sets by using a series of five questions:

1. **How great is my need to be in control?** When you're in a car, are you uncomfortable if you're not driving, assuming the driver is competent? Would you let someone else order for you in a restaurant? If you were teaching a class, would it be a lecture? Would you follow tangents that were interesting to class members? Is there a right way to do almost everything?
2. **How willing am I to trust others to do their jobs?** Are you so uncomfortable delegating work that you just do it yourself? Do you tell people exactly how to do things, even when they have experience doing them? Do you think supervisors should spend a lot of their time checking the work of those they supervise?
3. **How patient am I?** If someone is having trouble doing something, do you just do it for them? Do you interrupt with your comments before others are finished speaking? Do you want the discussion to end because you want to start doing something?
4. **How organized am I?** Can you almost always find whatever you need without having to search for it? Is your desk clean? Are your files alphabetized and orderly? Are your books alphabetized? Do you have a place for nearly everything? Are you always on time, and do you hardly ever miss appointments?
5. **How good are my people skills?** Are you comfortable with other people? Do people seem comfortable with you? When you're with others, do you spend most of your time talking? Listening? About even? Do people seek you out for help or advice? Do you consider yourself a good judge of people, and has that been borne out by your experience? Do you try to consider others' needs and feelings in any decision?

Your motivations and skillset are what brought you to the decision to start a group or take over leadership of an existing group. How will they drive your leadership style?

1 The Community Tool Box is a service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>

Think about the needs of the group

Support groups come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and usually go through developmental stages.

- **Venting or frustration.** This is where most groups start. Parents and prospective parents are struggling with the system and need support to stay in the process. These groups need strong managers to keep the group from becoming more frustrating than the issues that brought people to it in the first place. Without your direction, the venting can go in never-ending circles, and families will simply give up.
- **Mutual support.** Many of these groups serve families that are parenting children who have had trauma experiences that make their behaviors difficult to manage. The group is a source of validation, new ideas, encouragement, and self-care. Leadership is very *democratic*, with leaders consulting with membership to determine what the needs are.
- **Service and advocacy groups.** These groups are generally more experienced and have a history of effectively offering excellent support to their members. The group has matured to a place where the goals have advanced beyond offering support to making an impact. Whether offering a service for families and systems (food pantry and clothing closet; educational advocacy; parent training; recruitment; etc.) or advocating on legislative, policy, or practice fixes, the leadership style is *collaborative*. None of the efforts can succeed without true partnerships and shared leadership.

Observe and learn from other leaders

Think about how leaders you've worked for or with exercised leadership. What were their styles, and were they effective? How did they handle different kinds of situations? How did their actions make you and others feel? Observe other leaders in action. What do you like about how they operate? What don't you like? What can you incorporate into your own style?

Find a mentor. If there's a leader whom you particularly admire, and that person is accessible, talk with them about leadership issues—about how they perceive what they are doing, how they'd handle particular situations and why, etc. Most people, especially if they are good leaders and conscious of what they do and why, will welcome the opportunity to help others develop their own leadership skills.

Believe in what you're doing

If you've thought it through carefully, and you believe in the way you practice leadership, that will be projected to others. If you believe in yourself, they'll believe in you too.

Be prepared to change

Although this may seem at odds with some of the above, it is probably the most important element of good leadership. No matter how well you're doing, it's not perfect—it never is, and it never will be. Be prepared to realize or hear from others the negative as well as the positive, to consider this feedback carefully and objectively, and to make corrections if necessary. That way, you not only become a good leader, you continue to be one.

Resource Connection Central

A good start to building your knowledge base

Adoption assistance by state

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance>

Adoption tax credit

<https://www.nacac.org/help/adoption-tax-credit>

<https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607>

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders

“Proof Alliance Resources for Parents”

<https://www.proofalliance.org/support-and-resources/>

Discussion Guide: Understanding Lying, Confabulation, and Distorted Thinking

<https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-confabulation-a-discussion-guide-for-parent-support-group-leaders/>

“Advocacy Advice from the Experts”

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/fasd-advocacy-advice-from-the-experts/>

“The ABC’s of Back-to-School with FASDs”

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/the-abcs-of-back-to-school/>

Impact of trauma

“Resources to Help Children Cope with Grief and Loss”

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/helping/>

“After Adoption from Foster Care”

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/foster>

“Child Discipline Techniques for Foster or Adopted Children”

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/child-discipline-foster-or-adopted-children-27010>

“Families and Caregivers”: Resources for parents to respond to trauma

<https://www.nctsn.org/audiences/families-and-caregivers>

Discussion Guide: Understanding Childhood Grief and Loss

<https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-childhood-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/>

Discussion Guide: Understanding Parental Grief and Loss

<https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-parental-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/>

“Grief and Loss”: A list of articles on the the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) website

<https://www.nacac.org/help/parenting/grief-and-loss>

Parenting strategies

<https://www.nacac.org/help/parenting/parenting-strategies>

Respite care

“Resources for Families”

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/prevention-programs/resp/resp-care-for-resource-families/>

School

“School and Adoption: Navigating IEPs, IDEA, and Special Education”

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/school-adoption/>

“Adoption and the Schools”

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/adoption-and-the-schools>

State-specific information about foster care and adoption

<https://adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/how-to-adopt-and-foster/state-information>

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad>

Supporting positive identity development

“Transracial Parenting”: A list of articles on the NACAC site

<https://www.nacac.org/help/parenting/transracial-parenting>

“Transracial Resources”: Blogs, videos, books, and websites by transracial adoptees

<https://www.nacac.org/resource/transracial-resources>

Building Knowledge: Individual

Individual name: _____ **Topic:** _____

Some of the most valuable things a support group offers to its members are knowledge, resources, and guidance. Often families will be overwhelmed when trying to find the best, most up-to-date information to help them parent their children.

As you build your own library, keep track of what you discover in an organized way so that you have resources and strategies at your fingertips to share with others.

| Websites | Books | Articles | Online training | Effective strategies | Experts in the field |
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Building Knowledge: Group

Involving your membership in researching topics of interest is a great way to develop shared ownership of the group, support members in their growth and development as informed parents, and inspire others to take on leadership roles.

This template will help you keep track of what topics the group wants more information about, who is responsible for finding the information, and the timeline agreed upon. Individuals will use the **Building Knowledge: Individual** template to record and report back.

With this template leaders can keep track of:

- **Topic:** What is being researched?
- **Person(s) responsible:** Who will do the research and compile results?
- **Date due:** When do you want to receive the results of their initial search?
- **Updates:** Determine how often research for new information should happen and document new materials.

Each topic should have a “Building Knowledge: Individual” form that identifies resources, including links. We have started a list of some common topics discussed, and left room for you to add others that are important to your group.

| Topic | Assigned to | Date due | Date received | Updates |
|---|-------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Trauma-informed parenting strategies | | | | |
| Impact of FASD and other in-utero traumas | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Loss and grief in children | | | | |
| Local child welfare rules, policies, practices | | | | |
| Transracial and transcultural placements and positive identity development | | | | |
| Supporting birth family connections | | | | |
| Search and reunion | | | | |
| Foster care and adoption in the schools | | | | |
| Supporting LGBTQ+ children in foster care and adoption | | | | |

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