



## Unit: Principles, Ethics and Values for Leadership

**Skill 4: Defining A “Principled” Leader****Activity B: Principle-Based Decisions****Activity Skills:**

Small group discussion and decision-making.

**Leadership Skills:**

Understanding how principles form the foundation of the decision-making process.

**Suggested Level:**

Beginning

**Time:**

30-35 minutes

**Supplies needed:**

- Flipchart.
- Markers.
- Pens or pencils.
- Paper for writing.

**Do Ahead:**

N/A

**Source:**

Developed by:  
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**Based On:**

*Principle-Centered Leadership*, by Stephen R. Covey

**BACKGROUND:**

As Stephen R. Covey writes in *Principle-Centered Leadership*, “Correct principles are like compasses: they are always pointing the way. And if we know how to read them, we won’t get lost, confused, or fooled by conflicting voices and values. Covey’s point is well-taken; values can change depending on the circumstances and the group, but the core principles don’t change or shift, and apply to all times and places. Values are more analogous to maps, while principles define our inner compass, telling us if we are on course.

Covey’s premise is that leaders who use these core principles to guide their decisions don’t get distracted, they are focused and bring a sense of stability. Covey outlines 8 characteristics of principle-centered leaders:

- 1) ***They are continually learning*** – they seek training, learn from their experiences and listen to others.
- 2) ***They are service-oriented*** – they see life as a mission to serve others.
- 3) ***They radiate positive energy*** – they have optimistic attitudes and are positive and upbeat.
- 4) ***They believe in other people*** – they do not over-react to criticism, negative behavior or human weaknesses, as they understand that behavior and potential are different things.
- 5) ***They lead balanced lives*** – they are active socially and intellectually, and have many life interests.
- 6) ***They see life as an adventure*** – they savor life and are not afraid of the unknown, as they know it will be exciting and educational.
- 7) ***They are synergistic*** – they are catalysts for change, improving any situations in which they become involved.
- 8) ***They exercise self-renewal*** – they regularly exercise the four dimensions of the human personality: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

As discussed in Activity 4A, the values and principles of a group or organization tend to take on the values and principles of its leadership. As a leader, you set the tone for how things work and how decisions are made. Leaders, therefore, must exhibit a strong system of personal principles, to guide their decisions and their organization.

## Skill 4: Defining A “Principled” Leader

### Activity B: Principle-Based Decisions

**Notes:**

#### **WHAT TO DO:**

Spend a few minutes brainstorming with the whole group as to what the core principles are. List them on a flipchart or whiteboard for reference while the groups are working. Have participants break into small groups of 3-6 people. Each group will review a current events article from a magazine or newspaper. Then groups will identify the principles that were used to guide the decision that was made in the story. Allow 10-15 minutes for this section, and then reconvene to discuss the results.

#### **TALK IT OVER:**

##### ***Reflect:***

- What core principles did your group identify from the story?
- Were the principles obvious?
- How did the leader’s or group’s principles direct the decision made?

##### ***Apply:***

- What core principles guide your decisions?
- How do we consider our principles on a daily basis?
- Do you convey your principles to others? How?
- As a leader, do you find yourself relying on your core principles to make decisions?
- Who are some leaders that have shown great commitment to their principles?

#### **BEYOND THE BOX:**

##### ***Optional Homework:***

Have participants write a paragraph or two about their personal “compass.” What are your core principles, and how do you determine your “true north” to guide you through difficult situations and decisions?

##### ***Resources and Web Links:***

Stephen R. Covey. 1992. *Principle-Based Leadership*. Simon & Schuster, New York.

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