

# INTEGRITY

Leadership in Action - A look at fostering effective leadership traits

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PME 803 Organizational Leadership

**“Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”**

-C.S. Lewis

## Integrity Defined as Part of Leadership



Integrity “is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness” (Northouse, 2019, p. 25). It is at the heart of one’s motives and plays a role in one’s successes and failures as a leader. “An honest leader succeeds when they stick to their word, live by their core values, leads by example, and follows-through” (Enfroy, 2020). A leader’s ability to uphold their integrity through even the most difficult times creates an environment for their followers that is dependable, honest, and ethical. As such, when a leader leads with integrity, followers notice. When a leader is trusted by their followers, a healthier relationship develops. Being right or wrong is one thing, owning up to both shows integrity.

## How to Build Your Integrity?

The following are suggested activities that can build one’s integrity:

- **“Fulfill your promises”:** Making a promise and following through demonstrates dependability. If you fail to satisfy your promise, apologize and demonstrate accountability. This shows humility and makes you approachable as a leader (Amster, 2017).
- **“Get comfortable saying no”:** It is wise to take a moment and consider carefully if you can fully commit to a request, plan, or goal before accepting it because once you have accepted a challenge, it is far better to attack it wholeheartedly than back away midway through. As such, saying no is not necessarily a bad thing; it models being self-aware of one’s capabilities and demonstrates that in order to fulfill one’s promises, one has to be able to honestly judge what one can accomplish (Amster, 2017).
- **Strengthen skills that foster integrity:** Be introspective and critical of how you present yourself and interact with others (Amster, 2017). For example, communication skills are highly important to successful leadership and can be both verbal and nonverbal. Adjust and strengthen your communication skills through listening, being mindful and efficient in your speaking and your nonverbal cues (Flavin, 2018).
- **Surround yourself with like-minded people:** Being in the presence of and working with others that share integrity as a core value facilitates and enhances one’s ability to embrace this leadership trait (Amster, 2017; Martin, 2014). Through interactions with like-minded people, one is capable of replicating and modeling behaviors that are in line with integrity. In the end, it begins to become engrained in one’s identity and core beliefs.
- **Look for evidence of acts of integrity:** People who are genuinely apologetic for their actions or inactions, who point out and motivate others’ efforts while downplaying their own, who are appreciative of others’ time and contributions, and who give “the benefit of the doubt when circumstances are unclear” are embodying what it means to act with integrity (Enfroy, 2020). Aspire to model such behaviors.

## Integrity Checklist

Use this checklist to help monitor your progress as you continue to work on building your integrity. The more boxes you check off, the more progress you are making. This list was taken **directly** from Robin Amster’s article entitled *9 Tips to Help You Strengthen Your Integrity* (2017).

### CHECKLIST

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- ◇ Am I willing to say what I’m thinking?
- ◇ Am I willing to risk being wrong?
- ◇ Do I want my child or someone else I love to do that? If not, then why am I doing it?
- ◇ Am I leading by example?
- ◇ Am I taking 100 percent responsibility?

## References:

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