

Letting Go of Ego

SUBMITTED BY: WGYP Summer Instructor

SUBJECT(S): Communication, Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will act out different ways of letting go of ego and having more open communication with bosses/team leaders. They will read a Knowledge@Wharton article about this and role-play different situations where they have to ask for a new project, a raise, a higher position, etc.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Management, III. Business Organization
- Communication, III. Workplace Communication
- Management, VI. Human Resource Management

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- “Teamwork with a Marshmallow on Top”
- “Programming Robots in Zero Gravity”
- “Leadership Secrets from a School that Turned Out Some Top CEOs”
- “Is High School Killing Your Creativity? Rajat Bhageria Has a Remedy for That”
- “International Student Athletes Learn How to Compete at U.S. Colleges”
- “Educator Toolkit: Wall Street”
- “Educator Toolkit: The Chief Executive Officer”
- “American Express Embraces Privilege and Purpose”

Common Core Standard(s):

Reading Informational Text–RI.9-10.1.; RI.9-10.2.

Speaking and Listening–SL.9-10.1.

Purpose:

- In this lesson, students will discuss the importance of learning how to talk directly to their supervisors.
- They will also learn some strategies for how to let go of your ego and maintain open communication with bosses.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: “Secrets to Success on Wall Street: Teamwork, not Ego”

Follow-on Read: Why Leaders Must Balance Ego with Humility

Activity:

Introduction (5-8 min)

To begin, tell students that it is very common to feel intimidated when you are new or a young member of a group. Many people are hesitant to express dissatisfaction or what they need to team leaders to not come across as self-centered or working against the team. However, tell students that this kind of communication within teams is important for their own success and for the team’s success. Ask them to share instances when they wanted to ask for something, a higher grade, a different team position, but felt hesitant. Think about why. If some of them did ask their boss, teacher, etc., ask them to share the strategies they used.

Silent Reading (10 min)

Have them read the Knowledge@Wharton article on their own.

Small Group Work (10 min)

Ask them to answer the following questions about the article. They should write their answers down on one sheet.

- What does Sarah Nash mean when she says, “It’s not about me anymore”?

- What does she advise when you have an intimidating boss? What should you do?
- What does “real style versus hairstyle” mean?
- What was the most interesting part of this article?

Role Play (10 min)

Ask students to divide themselves into pairs, where one person is a boss/team leader and the other is an employee. They will have to play out different situations from below. Give them 1 minute to prepare some notes in how to make the specific request. They can make up the other details about the situation as they see fit. For each situation, the person making the request must explain why they are an important asset to the team. The “boss” must think about it from the same perspective and not cloud the conversation with other factors. In some instances, the “boss” can be the teacher.

Different scenarios:

- You have been working for two years on one project and want to try something different. How would you go about asking for this?
- You have been working with the same pay for over a year and haven’t received a raise. How would you ask for it?
- You would like to relocate to a new city within the same company because you recently got married? How would you make an argument about why the company should help you make a transition?

Closing (5 min)

Discuss what arguments presented by the students seem to be more effective and which were less effective. Talk about why some were better. What were some of the specific reasons why these worked and others didn’t?

Tying It All Together:

In this lesson, students will understand the importance of open communication with a supervisor or boss. They will also get a chance to practice this situation with another person. This concept of “letting go of ego” is fundamental to success in the workplace, both as an employee and a manager. It improves emotional intelligence, as well as fuels communication and effective leadership. To deepen the discussion around ego in the workplace, assign the 2017 K@W article

[Why Leaders Must Balance Ego with Humility](#). As an article from the parent Knowledge@Wharton publication (as opposed to Wharton Global Youth Program written especially for teenagers) it is long, but insightful. It is a deep dive into the journey of one business person.

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