



Lean In When Others Dig In

Rehab LEAD 2 Workshop

Dr. Ali Atkison

VP of Learning & Development, HRD Leadership

TODAY'S THROUGHLINE

Create understanding when perspectives differ — then help people think forward without taking over the problem.

Connection Discussion

What one word would you want someone to use to describe your leadership?

My word:

Homework Check-In: Psychological Safety

Capture one win and one faceplant from your efforts to apply the psychological safety strategies.

ONE THING THAT WORKED	ONE THING THAT DIDN'T

WHEN WE FEEL CHALLENGED

A useful reminder

These are not personality types. They are exaggerated caricatures of behaviors humans sometimes use when we feel challenged.

Quick Reflection

Which reaction do you tend to slip into when you're at your worst in disagreement?

☐ Overwhelm with facts/data	☐ Strategize to corner the argument	☐ Broadcast the opinion loudly
☐ Argue until they concede	☐ Mock the perspective	☐ Tune out / wait it out
☐ Avoid the disagreement	☐ Dismiss the person	☐ Other: _____

What Happens Next?

When you show up that way, how do other people tend to respond? Does it move things forward or shut things down?

The Brain Pattern

CHALLENGE → THREAT → PROTECT → DIG IN

When beliefs feel personal, disagreement can feel threatening. Our thinking can shift from exploring to protecting: defending what we already believe, noticing confirming evidence, and becoming less receptive to information that challenges us.

OUR INSTINCT	POSSIBLE RESULT
• More facts • Stronger argument • More convincing	• More defense • More resistance • More digging in

LEAN IN: THREE MOVES

Your goal is not to win. Your goal is to understand.

Remember

Leaning in does not mean agreeing, backing down, or caring less about the outcome. It means creating enough understanding for the conversation to move somewhere productive.

1 ASK Understand what's underneath the position.	2 REFLECT Show them what you heard.	3 SHARE (CAREFULLY) Add your perspective without erasing theirs.
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Move 1: ASK

Ask to understand—not to steer.

QUESTIONS THAT STEER

- Don't you think...?
- Have you considered...?
- Why didn't you...?

QUESTIONS THAT UNCOVER

- What are you seeing that I'm not?
- What feels most important about this to you?
- Walk me through how you're thinking about it.
- What concern is driving your position?

Mini Application: Plan Your Ask

Think of a conversation you've had—or need to have—with someone whose perspective differs from yours.

What are you tempted to tell them?

What could you ask instead to understand what's underneath their position?

MOVE 2: REFLECT

Asking opens the door. Reflecting keeps it open.

Reflecting shows that you're listening, reduces defensiveness, and helps create alignment and understanding.

REFLECT THE MEANING	"So, your biggest concern is what this could do to retention."
REFLECT THE TENSION	"It sounds like you support the direction, but you're worried about the timeline."
CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING	"Am I understanding that correctly?"

ONE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Demonstrate that you understand their perspective before introducing yours.

Mini Application: Plan Your Reflection

Return to the same conversation you used for ASK.

What do you think the other person most needs you to understand?

How could you reflect that back in language that would sound natural coming from you?

Move 3: SHARE (CAREFULLY)

- **Signal the shift:** “Can I share what I’m seeing?”
- **Speak** from your experience/data/perspective rather than declaring theirs wrong.
- **Connect** where possible: “I think we’re trying to solve the same problem...”
- **Don’t** undo the understanding you just created by launching into a five-minute rebuttal.

KEEP IN MIND: This process takes time. Expect progress to be incremental.

PRACTICE: LEAN IN

Use the model without over-scripting the conversation.

How to Practice

PERSON A: LEAN IN

- Your goal: understand what’s underneath their position.
- Ask and Reflect — no sharing yet.
- Do not persuade, correct, or defend your position.

PERSON B: HOLD YOUR PERSPECTIVE

- Be genuine — you don’t need to be difficult.
- Answer as you actually would.
- Don’t make it easy by immediately agreeing.

Then switch roles. After both people have practiced Leaning In, continue the conversation and share your own perspective without losing the understanding you’ve created.

Choose a Practice Topic

1. Two strategic priorities are competing for limited resources. One leader prioritizes growth; the other believes operational infrastructure must come first.
2. A peer wants to move quickly on a change you believe will create significant downstream problems for your team.
3. A respected senior leader strongly disagrees with your recommendation and believes you’re being overly cautious.
4. One division wants greater autonomy; you believe consistency across the organization is critical.
5. A peer believes a struggling leader deserves more time and support; you believe the performance problem has gone on too long.
6. Use a real conversation you’re currently navigating in which the other person’s perspective is legitimate — but different from yours.

Practice Debrief

- What changed when your job was to understand rather than persuade?

- What helped you feel understood?
- What happened when you introduced your own perspective?

GROW COACHING

A thinking structure that helps you resist solving the problem for someone else.

G — GOAL	Where are we trying to go?
R — REALITY	What's happening now?
O — OPTIONS	What could you do?
W — WAY FORWARD	What will you do?

Lean In ... or GROW?

WHEN SOMEONE IS DUG IN: LEAN IN FIRST
You cannot coach someone productively while they're focused on defending their position. Create enough understanding first: Ask → Reflect → Share carefully.

WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS TO THINK FORWARD: GROW
Use Goal → Reality → Options → Way Forward to help the other person think through the challenge and keep ownership of the solution.

How the Three Ideas Fit Together

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY	creates the conditions
LEAN IN	creates understanding
GROW	creates movement

PUT GROW TO WORK

Use a real challenge: think of someone you lead who is facing a challenge you are tempted to solve for them.

GOAL — What do they need to accomplish?

REALITY — What do they need to understand more clearly about the situation?

OPTIONS — What could you ask that helps them generate possibilities?

WAY FORWARD — What question could move them toward ownership and action?

PRESSURE-TEST WITH A PARTNER
Where are you still solving rather than coaching?