

Looking in the mirror

The “S” in the PRES model stands for “Self-knowing.” As a leader, if you focus only on the “P,” “R,” and “E,” without the “S,” you lose your ability to learn, grow, and change. Leaders who have presence have a strong sense of understanding and accepting who they are and knowing what they stand for. Developing deeper self-knowledge leads to a stronger understanding of your own values and how those values impact others.



The leader as teacher

When you listen to build relationships with your team, you encourage them to share their experiences and feelings and then reflect back to them what you have heard. This is an extremely valuable and unusual communication skill. The most effective leader is one who can accurately analyze and frame another person’s experience in language that is both empathetic and inspiring. Sometimes you can tell people things about themselves that they may not have actually realized. This is a true “Aha!” moment—the leader as teacher.

Make a personal connection

Leaders must find ways to connect on a personal level with their people. You can only do this by sharing and being vulnerable yourself. If the culture of your organization makes this difficult, you must learn to find acceptable approaches. But the information you can gain and the trust you can build are priceless.

You can start by sharing something about the non-work side of yourself or perhaps share personal challenges or weaknesses—this invites others to be vulnerable too. Get interested in them as people (e.g., if someone mentions their kids play soccer, ask about the soccer team). Find common ground (e.g., we all have had role models, important people in our lives, and we’ve all been children).

Aim to have conversations in which you really try to understand what makes the other people tick, what makes them unique, what they are proud of.

Giving feedback

Giving effective feedback approaches the level of an art form: you must get your point across while being sensitive to your coachee’s self-esteem.

Give positive feedback regularly without the need to always follow with constructive suggestions. When giving constructive feedback, start with the positive. When stating the positives, it is vital to be specific and authentic—nothing feels worse than an empty endorsement (“Nice job—but here’s what I really think...”).

Problem-solving

When confronted with an issue or problem, we tend to want to leap in and solve it. Instead, aim to use the situation as an opportunity to deepen relationships and build trust. You can also focus on providing service to the person with the problem: helping gather needed resources, or offering your network of contacts.

Prepare for obstacles and how you might overcome them. Do some thinking before an important communication about what might get in your way in this interaction. Reflect on whether there is potential conflict or other risks you will have to face. With these things in mind, you can think about how you can work best with yourself so as not to fall into old habits and patterns. Remember, you can’t need to be right and also have a good relationship.

Change the scene. Slow down and find a place and time without distractions to really connect. Try getting out of the work environment—take the other person to lunch or coffee so that you can relax and tune in.