



Jess K. Lewis My Leadership Philosophy

My Philosophy on Leadership

A leader is someone who accepts responsibility for finding the potential in people and has the courage to create an environment in which that potential can emerge. A leader is willing to step up, act with courage, and recognize their privilege in ways that enable them to be in service to others.

Why I Share This Philosophy

This document outlines the values, principles, and commitments that guide how I evaluate information, make decisions, and respond to people and situations. It is also a public statement of the commitments to which I hold myself accountable. My intention in sharing this document is to help the people I lead, partner with, and serve understand my values, priorities, and approach to decision-making. It also communicates the ideas, standards, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors I will work to nurture in those I lead. *This is a living document. When I know better, I strive to do better. Always.*

My Values, Principles, and Commitments

I consider values and principles to be my fundamental truths. They define who I am and describe how I walk through the world. Values govern my behavior, and principles represent the standards by which I operationalize those values. Together, they should help you understand how I lead, interact, and respond to the opportunities, challenges, and changes within our work. My hope is that by clearly articulating my principles, values, and commitments, you will know with certainty who I am, who I am not, and what you can expect of me.

Values—Who I Am

- **Racial Equity and Social Justice:** I strive to use my privilege (both earned and unearned) to embody racial equity and social justice principles. This means recognizing, unlearning, and disrupting white-dominant cultural norms that reinforce inequity and constrain the full humanity and leadership of others.
- **Authenticity:** I bring my true self to this work. I believe it is my responsibility and privilege to embrace this opportunity fully. My words and actions should be aligned.
- **Integrity:** I will always choose to do what I believe to be right over what is easy. I strive to say what I mean, own my mistakes, treat every success and failure as a learning opportunity, and show up with greater honesty, responsibility, and care each day.
- **Humility:** I understand and embrace the fact that my ideas and opinions are not always right. I rely on those around me to share information, challenge my thinking, and contribute their expertise. This work is not about reinforcing my ego; it is about creating a better system than the one we have today.
- **Collaboration:** We cannot do this work alone. I regularly seek diverse perspectives to align practices and strategies across teams, partners, and systems in service to our intended impact. As a collaborative leader, I work to develop agile, innovative, and high-functioning teams to create a lasting impact in organizations and service sectors.
- **Transparency:** I believe in open and honest communication even (or perhaps especially) when it is uncomfortable. It is only when we can speak openly, share concerns, and solve problems together that we will be successful.
- **Bravery:** Courage is a prerequisite for truly great work. I create space for people to dissent, raise concerns, and share information that may strengthen the path we take or the quality of the outcomes we pursue. Being brave means that I am willing to learn, lead, fail, recover, persist, and persevere.

Principles—How I Lead

- **Hope:** I approach our work with the conviction that meaningful change is possible when we establish clear goals, create viable pathways forward, and strengthen the agency of people closest to the work. Hope is not passive optimism—it is a disciplined practice of identifying what matters, building routes forward, and acting with purpose.



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- **Innovation:** I am open to new ways of thinking about, designing, and improving our work in ways that increase effectiveness, remove unnecessary barriers, and create the conditions for progress. I appreciate change because change often brings opportunities for learning, growth, and creativity.
- **People-Centered:** I center the voices, wisdom, dignity, and lived experience of the people most affected by our decisions. I believe the people closest to a challenge must have meaningful influence over the solutions designed to address it.
- **Learning:** I consider learning to be an obligation and a privilege. As a life-long learner, I make every effort to increase my contribution to this work and the organization by embracing new ideas and growing—both personally and professionally.
- **Sustainable Well-Being:** I believe healthy workplaces are an organizational responsibility, not an individual coping strategy. I will work to create conditions that support sustainable workloads, clear expectations, meaningful agency, and the well-being of the people responsible for advancing our mission.

Commitments—What Others Can Expect of Me

- **Clarity:** I will be clear when communicating my vision, goals, ideas, feedback, skills, and limitations.
- **Opportunity:** I will create meaningful opportunities for you to grow as a person and professional, and I will support your short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
- **Reliability:** I will honor my commitments. When circumstances prevent me from doing so, I will communicate honestly, take responsibility, and respond in a timely manner.
- **Consistency:** I will be consistent in my values, principles, and behaviors.
- **Respect:** I will respect you. I will not always agree with you, but I will ask you what you think, solicit your input in decision-making, and seek alignment.
- **Honesty:** I will be honest. If there is information I cannot share, I will say so directly. I will not mislead you or invent an answer because it is easier or more convenient.
- **Credit:** I will give you credit for your work—even when you are not in the room.
- **Timely Feedback:** I will give you timely, constructive, and honest feedback, and I am willing to accept the same from you. Feedback is an important tool to help us learn and improve.
- **Initiative:** I believe every person has the capacity to influence, lead, and inspire others. I will support you as you take the initiative to do the work to implement strategies and practices that are people-centered, effective, equitable, and consistent with the goals and values of the organization.
- **Accountability:** I will take responsibility for my decisions, acknowledge when I cause harm or fall short, and work with others to repair trust. I will ask for feedback about the impact of my leadership—not only my intentions.

A Living Commitment

This is a living document, not a claim of perfection. I will make mistakes, receive feedback, and continue to learn. My commitment is to remain accountable for the impact of my leadership and to keep aligning my values, principles, and actions with the kind of world and institutions I believe we are capable of building.