

Session 4 Leadership Pillar Launch

Imagine this... You are a guide in an Acton studio. You have an amazing studio of heroes who have a cohesive tribe. They get along well with each other. The quest has been fun and engaging and everyone has been working pretty hard. They support each other in their work and are an all around great group to guide. You have noticed that even though it is Friday afternoon of the 5th week of the session they have done zero preparation for exhibition.

Do you....

1. Do nothing. Exhibition planning is the hero's responsibility; you are fairly certain they will eventually get to it. - even though that very well may mean that exhibition will be chaotic and unimpressive.
2. Ask to meet with the committee and have them report on what their plan is - even though this shows a lack of trust in the hero's

<p>If you chose to do nothing.</p> <p>Now it is Tuesday afternoon and there has still been no preparation for exhibition done. Do you still wait and see or ask to meet with committee?</p>	<p>If you chose to meet with the committee.</p> <p>The committee seems excited about exhibition however they have a short sloppy meeting where the "plan" is mostly to wing it. Do you ask more questions to gain greater clarity or let their plan run, expecting a great debrief afterward.</p>
<p>Now it is Exhibition day and the committee still has not met. Do you still wait and see, knowing that the learning will happen in the debrief or Ask to meet with the committee to help them avoid the embarrassment of a poor exhibition?</p>	<p>If you decided to ask them more questions, what questions would you ask that still honor their choices, have no right answers, and carry zero judgement with them?</p>
<p>Did I mention that in addition to the hero's parents there will also be community members there that are checking out the school? Meet with the committee or wait and see?</p>	<p>Did I mention that on your weekly ratings from the learners that they have been saying that you take over too much and don't trust them with enough?</p>

Reflection Questions:

- When does enabling others to act and trusting the learners just become foolhardy?
- When does stepping in and guiding become overbearing and unwelcome?
- Can true leadership growth happen without risk?
- What would it take for you to hand over leadership in a high-stakes moment?
- What kind of guide are you becoming through your choice?

Chat GPT ideas

<https://chatgpt.com/share/6940561a-8014-8002-bdcd-8665ec7e6d01>

4. The Mission Team That Depends on You Too Much

You're leading a group on a week-long wilderness survival experience. You're the most experienced one by far. The team keeps deferring to your decisions—navigation, food, shelter—rather than contributing their own ideas.

You know that if something happens to you, they'll be helpless.

But letting them lead will increase the risk of real mistakes: getting lost, wasting food, or encountering danger.

Dilemma:

Do you stay in command to keep everyone safe, or deliberately step back so the team develops the skills needed to survive—even knowing that errors now could have serious consequences?

Expanded Moral Dilemma: “The Mountain Mission”

You are leading a six-person team on a week-long wilderness expedition through the San Juan Mountains. The goal of the trip is not only to reach a remote summit—but to grow leadership, resilience, and teamwork.

You are the only one with advanced wilderness experience.

Your team:

- Casey — athletic and confident, but impatient. Always wants to “just get moving.”
- Lin — calm and thoughtful, but very risk-averse. Tends to wait for others to decide.
- Brooks — skilled at navigation on paper, but freezes when directions change.
- Jayden — enthusiastic, but constantly distracted and careless with gear.
- Mira — focused and determined, but struggles physically on steep climbs.
- You — the designated team leader and the one person everyone trusts completely.

By day three, a pattern has formed:

Whenever a decision needs to be made—route choices, camp setup, food rationing, timing—everyone turns to you.

You know this dependency is dangerous and undermines the entire purpose of the trek.

But the stakes are rising.

The Moment of Decision

A storm system is moving in earlier than expected. You planned to cross a narrow ridge today to reach the next campsite with fresh water. The ridge is passable in good weather, but risky in wind or rain.

You gather the team to discuss options:

Option 1: Cross the ridge now

You know the route, and you can lead them safely *if they follow instructions perfectly*.

This option gets you ahead of the storm and keeps you on schedule.

But it reinforces that you are the only one who can make hard calls.

Option 2: Stay put and let the team decide

You can guide the discussion but refuse to choose for them.

This forces them to weigh risks, debate options, and step into leadership.

But there's a real cost:

If they stay too long or choose poorly, you could lose daylight, use extra resources, and fall dangerously behind schedule.

Option 3: Assign leadership

You give the group a challenge:

“Casey and Lin, you're co-leaders for the next 24 hours. I won't override your decisions unless there's a life-threatening emergency.”

This could empower them—but they're inexperienced, and the storm adds pressure.

A leadership mistake here could cause injury or isolation.

The Moral Dilemma

Do you prioritize safety by taking charge during a critical moment—even though it deepens the team's dependence on you?

Or do you step back and push others to act—even when you know their choices may put the group at real risk?

You must choose:

- *Safety in the short-term*
vs.
- *Leadership growth in the long-term*

The consequences are real, not theoretical.

Deepening Questions for Reflection

About responsibility

- As the most experienced person, what do you owe the group?
- Is it irresponsible to let others make a dangerous choice?

About enabling others to act

- When does empowering others become reckless?
- Can true leadership growth happen without risk?

About trust

- Do you trust your teammates more than they trust themselves?
- What would it take for you to hand over leadership in a high-stakes moment?

About the Hero's Journey

- Who learns more from this expedition if you always take the lead?
 - What kind of leader are you becoming through your choice?
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If you want, I can also:

- ◆ Build out a “third-option” creative solution
- ◆ Create role cards for each character (what they want, what they fear, how they grow)
- ◆ Turn this into a circle discussion plan for Acton-style hero meetings
- ◆ Write dialogue and scenes to make it feel like a story

Just tell me what you’d like next!

You said:

what is the third option creative solution?

ChatGPT said:

Here is a creative third-option solution—one that preserves safety *and* empowers the team. It blends structured risk with intentional leadership development so you’re not choosing between “do everything myself” and “let them lead blindly.”

★ **Third Option: “Guided Autonomy Under Constraints”**

Instead of choosing between doing it *for* them or leaving them *on their own*, you create a structured decision-making challenge that:

1. Gives them real leadership responsibility,
2. Keeps the risk controlled, and
3. Builds the exact skills the expedition is meant to teach.

This option transforms the moment into a *leadership lab*.

What It Looks Like in Practice

Step 1: You lay out only the critical boundaries.

You tell the team:

“You will decide our plan.

Here are the three nonnegotiables for safety:

- We must reach water before nightfall.
- We cannot cross the ridge if wind speeds rise above X.
- We need a backup plan in case the storm arrives early.”

You provide constraints, not answers.

Step 2: You break the team into small leader groups.

- Casey + Mira analyze timing and physical readiness.
- Brooks + Jayden evaluate the route and gear readiness.
- Lin moderates and listens for concerns.

Each group must report back with:

- A recommended plan
- The risks
- A mitigation strategy

This creates *distributed leadership* instead of dependence on you.

Step 3: You require a team consensus—without voting for them.

You say:

“I will not choose, but I will check your plan for safety once you choose.”

This forces the team to weigh options, debate tradeoffs, and listen to each other.

They now own the decision.

Step 4: You shift from decision-maker to “safety officer.”

Once they choose, your role becomes:

- Watching the weather
- Checking gear
- Monitoring the ridge conditions
- Calling an emergency stop only if necessary

You are no longer the leader—

you are the *guardian* of the boundaries they agreed on.

Step 5: Debrief after the moment

That evening, you lead a reflection:

- What leadership skills did you use today?
- What did you learn about risk?
- Who stepped up?
- What would you do differently next time?

This cements the growth.

Why This Third Option Works

✓ It protects safety

You still manage the hazards and nonnegotiables.

✓ It forces the team to act

They make the choice, not you.

✓ It builds real leadership muscles

Decision-making under uncertainty

Risk analysis

Collaboration

Listening

Courage

Accountability

✓ It models a mature leadership lesson:

The leader's job is not to decide everything—it's to create the conditions where others can lead safely.

If you'd like, I can also create:

- ✨ A version of this scenario that heroes can roleplay
- ✨ A worksheet or decision map for your discussion
- ✨ A "what actually happens next" narrative to show consequences
- ✨ A simplified version for younger learners

Just let me know what direction you want!

You said:

Can you turn this into a circle style discussion using these third option solutions?

ChatGPT said:

Absolutely! Here's a Circle Discussion Plan built around the *Mountain Mission* dilemma, using the third-option "Guided Autonomy Under Constraints" solution. This plan encourages reflection, dialogue, and leadership skill-building in an Acton-style studio or hero discussion.

Circle Discussion Plan: "The Mountain Mission"

Objective:

Help learners explore the balance between leadership, safety, and enabling others to act. Encourage them to think critically about guiding teams without taking over.

Time: 30–45 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard or paper for note-taking
 - Optional: Role cards for each character (Casey, Lin, Brooks, Jayden, Mira, You)
 - Timer
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Step 1: Set the Scene (5 min)

1. Present the scenario verbally or on a board:
"You are leading a six-person expedition in the mountains. The team depends on you for every decision. A storm is approaching, and you must decide whether to take charge or let them lead. There is a third option—guided autonomy under constraints."
 2. Emphasize the stakes:
 - Safety (storm, ridge, limited water)
 - Team growth (leadership skills, confidence)
 - Mission goal (reaching the summit)
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Step 2: Individual Reflection (5 min)

Ask each participant to silently answer:

1. If you were the leader, what would your first instinct be?
2. How does it feel to have the team rely entirely on you?
3. How might you balance safety and growth?

Optional: Have them jot down 1–2 ideas.

Step 3: Small Group Discussion (10 min)

Divide participants into three mini-teams to roleplay the small leadership groups from the third-option solution:

1. Casey + Mira: Physical readiness & timing
2. Brooks + Jayden: Route & gear evaluation
3. Lin: Moderates, listens, and synthesizes concerns

Prompt each group to:

- Discuss the options given the storm and constraints
- Decide on a plan and identify the risks
- Prepare to report back to the full circle

Facilitator Note: Encourage debate and let disagreements emerge—don't resolve them for the group.

Step 4: Full Circle Decision (10 min)

- Each mini-team presents its plan to the full circle.
 - The group discusses and reaches a consensus decision, with the facilitator acting as the safety officer only:
“I won't choose for you, but I will flag if the plan violates safety limits.”
 - Ask the circle to reflect on the process:
 - Who stepped up?
 - How did the group handle conflict or uncertainty?
 - Did anyone try to rely on the facilitator for the answer?
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Step 5: Debrief and Reflection (10–15 min)

Ask open-ended reflection questions:

Leadership & Growth

- What did it feel like to have the team make the decision?
- How did it feel *not* to control everything?
- What skills did the team members use or learn?

Enabling Others to Act

- How did the facilitator create conditions for others to lead?
- Did anyone feel empowered or hesitant? Why?
- What does this teach about leadership in real life?

Risk & Responsibility

- How did you balance safety and autonomy?
- What would you do differently next time?

Optional Closing Question:

“In a real-life situation, when is it better to step back, and when is it better to step in? How do you know?”

Facilitator Tips

- Encourage participants to speak from their perspective, not as an omniscient narrator.
 - Let the discussion pause naturally if disagreements arise—this mirrors real-world leadership tension.
 - Emphasize reflection over “right answers.” The goal is critical thinking and empathy, not a single solution.
 - Capture key ideas on a whiteboard or shared notes so the circle can revisit them later.
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If you want, I can also create a ready-to-use handout with:

- Scenario summary
- Character roles
- Safety constraints
- Reflection prompts

It would be formatted so the circle could pick it up and run the activity with minimal prep.

Do you want me to make that handout?



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