

Life Maps

Effective leadership involves knowing the members of your team . . . and yourself.

Topic: Leadership, self-awareness

Summary: This activity is designed to help members of a group get to know one another better. When conducted at the beginning of a leadership training, it builds trust among team members and sets the stage for more indepth activities later.

Objectives: To give participants an opportunity to learn about one another and what they have in common

To provide participants an early opportunity to see themselves as a team

To set the stage for more indepth leadership activities

To begin to know people's names and something about each one

To give participants an opportunity to reflect on important elements in their lives and present them to others

Duration: 90 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the size of group(s)

Sample Agenda

TOPIC	TIME
Life Map Creation	15 min.
Life Map Presentations (five minutes per person)	1 hr.
Reflection	Remaining time

Materials: Sample life map
Paper, pens, and markers

Background: Life maps are a way for team members to get to know one another as individuals, each with his or her own story. Life maps are also an opportunity to reflect on your current situation and what you bring with you. Use the matrix below to articulate your current opportunities and challenges.

This activity comprises the first group activity of our curriculum. It is part of a series of activities that helps participants learn about their own leadership styles and preferences and prepares them to explore leadership more fully.

Here are a few items to consider before staging this activity:

1. This activity is designed for groups of 6–8 participants. If you have a larger group, break them into smaller ones, each group with its own facilitator.
2. Keep in mind that presenting life maps can take a long time. By encouraging participants to stay within their time limit, everyone will get a fair turn. You may want to appoint a timekeeper to let presenters know when they have 2 minutes left.
3. The group may want to ask follow-up questions. This is really helpful in getting the group more bonded, etc. However, be mindful of time. The first person usually gets more follow-up question time than the last person.
4. Warning! This exercise seems to bring out people’s artistic insecurities. Assure them that this is not a contest but an opportunity to create a visual of your life so that others can learn more about you.

Procedure: *Warm Up:*

1. Ask the group if they are familiar with life maps. Explain that life maps are just that: a drawing or visual representation (a map) that charts significant moments in your life that bring you to where you are now.
2. Draw upon your personal experience in using life maps as a technique for getting to know one another.

The Activity:

1. Explain that each person will draw on a piece of newsprint the important events that have marked their lives and have brought them to today. Some people will note marriage, school, birth of a child, a tragic circumstance, death of a parent, etc
2. Have your personal life map pre-produced on a large piece of paper to demonstrate.
3. Explain that each person will have 10–15 minutes to create a map and 5 minutes to present it to the group.

Wrap Up:

After the presentations, if time permits, you can use this reflection activity. Make sure each participant has a copy of Life Maps Handout 1: Reflection.

1. Ask the group to address the questions on the handout.
2. If there’s time, have participants share their reflection worksheets with one another.

LIFE MAPS HANDOUT 1 Reflection

The Challenges I Face...

The Support I Have...

The Opportunities I Have...

The Support I Need...