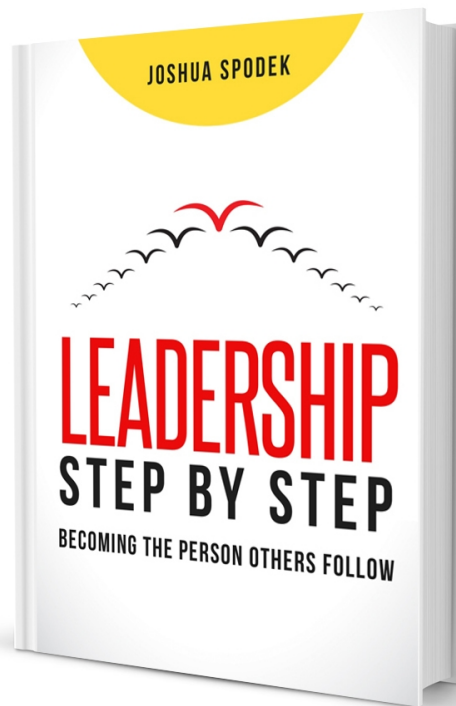


"A once-in-a-lifetime game-changing advance in our field everyone else will follow. It's better than business school courses." — **Marshall Goldsmith**

Leadership Step by Step:

JayK's Results



"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." — **Aristotle**

"What I have achieved by industry and practice, anyone else with tolerable natural gift and ability can also achieve." — **Bach**

"Champions keep playing until they get it right." — **Billie Jean King**

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Joshua's Preface

LeBron James, one week from the last post in this document, in one of the highest pressure situations anyone could face, did something almost superhuman. As his teammates—themselves among the best in the world—put it:

I can't imagine doing that.

You see it in the park and stuff so much growing up. You never really think about somebody doing it in a Finals game, Game 4 when you're down 3-0.

What did James do?

As he drove to the basket, he leaped to pass to any of three teammates. As he leaped, the defense covered all three. Landing with the ball would cause a turnover. With no one to pass to and out of position to shoot, he threw the ball to the backboard, landed, took two steps, jumped again, caught his rebound, and two-hand dunked the ball. The crowd roared. His team won.

A teammate later said, "There's a lot of things he does that we can't explain."

But James is not superhuman and we *can* explain it. Search the web for "[LeBron James 1 hour workout \(uncut\)](#)" and you will find a video with the explanation: James practicing for one hour, just him and a coach. He alternates between stretching, cardio, shooting drills, strength training, and more. It is not exciting, but it explains how mastery happens:

Practice, practice, practice.

Still, if you watched all of James's practices *ever*, you would still never see him practice that play under that pressure. Yet he executed it perfectly.

How?

By practicing *the basics*. *The fundamentals*. The drills beginners do. The only route to mastery and the success, joy, struggle, freedom, spontaneity, genuineness, and authenticity that come with it.

No master in any field says otherwise. Every master—Einstein, Mozart, Oprah, Eisenhower, Serena Williams, Hemingway, and so on—achieved mastery through practice.

Search for "[Steve Nash 20 Minutes Workout](#)" and you'll find a similarly unexciting but effective video by another MVP All-Star. You can find them for [other sports](#), [piano](#), [acting](#), and so on.

Every field has its basics. Only in leadership and business do we think people should just learn on the job and offer no basics to practice.

Until now.

My book, [Leadership Step by Step](#), and online courses, [Leadership Step by Step](#) and [Entrepreneurship Step by Step](#), offer you exercises that, if you practice them diligently and with discipline, you will improve your practice of business, relationships, and life. As far as I know, they are the only such series of exercises. They took years to create, assemble, and refine. Most of all, they work.

Below is a student's leadership equivalent of LeBron James's one-hour practice (uncut). JayK is a young man who began *Leadership Step by Step's* exercise with little prior leadership experience. Below are his reflections. While you only read his results, not the instructions from the book or online course, you see his progress.

Most people won't read them all, let alone do the exercises. Most people live lives of quiet desperation, unexamined lives some would call not worth living.

Actually, you don't have to read all his reflections—only until you decide to do them yourself, though I recommend reading his reflections in Unit 4, where he writes things like

This exercise's main benefit was providing a framework for how to think and act more consistently on others' interests while being authentic. These exercises are solidifying my belief that authenticity is the key behind all full-filling relationships and interactions. If the other person feels they do not know you or that you are pretending to be someone else, they won't trust you. Through practicing this exercise, as well as with the others, I think I have a better grasp of body language, listening, empathy and self-awareness.

You'll see that he practiced with diligence and discipline. I think you'll agree that he emerged with experience, skill, sensitivity, and empathy you normally expect from someone with decades more experience. I think you'll also agree that mastery will be a matter of time if he keeps practicing.

Since he's found success, joy, struggle, freedom, genuineness, and authenticity, he's reached a stage of enjoying practicing. Expectation of success *is* motivation.

If you want to succeed in business, relationships, and life, practicing the basics will get you there. For the first time, as far as I know, *Leadership Step by Step* gives you the basics to practice.

The [book](#) contains all the exercises, illustrated with stories, supported with questions to promote reflection and growth. You can [buy it here](#).

The [online course](#) augments the exercises with audio recordings of my explaining the exercises to another student and answering his questions, as well as an online forum where you can see everyone else's reflections and learn in a group context. You can [register for it here](#).

Enjoy!

Joshua Spodek

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joshua Spodek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Unit 1: Understand Yourself

Introduction and Personal Essay - February 11, 2016

I feel that mastering your own psychology is a prerequisite for leading a fulfilling life. I think leadership is the ability to communicate a vision and show others why: that vision is important, that vision aligns with their values, and they can help realize that vision. I think leadership works by having a vision accepted by a group of people who then act with respect to that vision. The “leader” of that group is just the person who makes sure everyone: knows the vision, believes in the vision, and supports the vision through their actions.

My role models consist of people who, primarily were able to conduct themselves authentically and use that as a proxy to lead others. Bhagat Singh, Henry David Thoreau, and Atticus Finch. My anti-role models generally consist of anyone that tries to impose their beliefs on others without seeking to understand first, or who puts their self-interest above the collective interest, as opposed to aligning them. This includes Bernie Madoff, dictators, and people who try to shift the negative consequences of their actions onto others.

I want to apply my leadership skills to improving my relationships with friends, family and colleagues as I want empathy to be a part of my default state of thinking as are deduction and execution. I think experience will teach me the core tenets that I do need to learn, but I feel that leadership is something that deserves as much as time and attention as I would dedicate towards my health, knowledge, spiritual/emotional wellbeing, and communication skills.

I was motivated to take this course as Josh’s material was different from the majority of articles that I have previously read. The emphasis on experience and context-specific models appealed to my bias for action and analysis. I felt that I was constrained by my current models and beliefs, and could stand to benefit from learning new, vetted models that I could ultimately hone and make my own.

I feel that everyone is a leader – it’s just that some people have better developed their capacity for leadership than others. Some people never realize the opportunity they have to lead others or shrink from the responsibility because they never developed or acquired beliefs conducive to acting as a good leader should. I feel strongly about things I value and feel that, on principle, if I am dissatisfied with something, then it’s incumbent on me to actualize my vision of how that thing ought to be if I am not willing to accept that thing as it is.

When involved in team-based activities, I hate when leadership does not: set the vision, properly vet team members, or have not have a “friendly but familiar.” I feel that being friendly is always a plus, but allowing friendliness to transgress to chumminess that takes away from the focus is unproductive to achieving the vision. My best memories consist of having leadership that: had in the trenches experience, sought to understand the team members, and were honorable in that

they did not pander.

When leading, I feel that I am able to get people on the same page and draft a flexible plan for execution. However, I feel that I fall short in sustaining everyone's interest and ensuring that the people involved in a given project are as invested as they need to be for our project's realization. I think people often defer to me as the manager and leader – as if by assuming a leadership role I've dually become a manager. And quite honestly, I don't know how being a manager can be separate from being a leader. Though I understand that management is a component of leadership, I wonder how one be a leader without having to manage everything else. Viscerally, I feel that if people are vested enough and see enough value in what they're working on, management would be a non-issue, but I have yet to arrive at an even tentative view.

Three Raisins - February 15, 2016

I spent 10 minutes eating the 3 raisins. At first, I was a bit skeptical of the exercise. I've played around with my food a fair bit, but mostly out of boredom rather than conscious curiosity. The first raisin didn't feel too far from what I expected. I couldn't smell anything, touching it felt mundane, and tasting it reminded me of those Sun-Maid raisins I used to taste and then throw out in middle school (although these were a different variety).

When I went to pick up the second raisin, it felt different. I felt more attuned to the differences between this and the first. It was noticeably dryer, a bit smaller, and coarser. It had a faint smell and had a dry jelly-like texture. When I tasted it, I felt a burst of flavors. I tasted hints of fruit and spices. At one point, my body felt that this raisin tasted like something that could be made into mind. A bit surreal for something I, on first thought, felt was mundane.

On the third raisin, I felt way more attuned to the experience of eating, rather than just eating. Admittedly, this realization was made more vivid by the fact I had a chocolate chip cookie and some strawberry ice cream 10 minutes before. I was able to discern the texture in more detail and felt a greater range of flavors.

I felt the difference between just eating food, which I've done robotically and without savoring for all of my life so far. It was a definite visceral feeling. There was no intellectuality about it and I don't think I would have felt the profound effect that presence has on experience if I read a 100 books by a 100 "experts." I sort of feel robbed that I thought junk food tasted better, even though I only eat junk food once or twice a week and on special occasions (parties, birthdays, mom's cooking).

I think this experience has prompted me to be more aware of what I eat and do. I suspect that means seasoning my food a bit more to my liking, shutting off all electronics and books when eating, and more generally focusing on the thing I'm doing when I'm doing it.

Write Your Inner Monologue - February 22, 2016

Going into the exercise, I thought engaging in the oh-so lauded practices of meditation and daily journaling had me privy to my inner monologue. That feeling went away by the end of the first day.

I noticed that my inner monologue directly depended on my emotional state when I wasn't aware of it. If I felt annoyed or irritated, I would internally project it on to the person I was talking to or the activity that I was engaged in. Similarly, when I was happy or just feeling really good, my inner monologue would reciprocate that in it's tone. I don't consider myself a jealous, critical, or tantrum-prone. But, after monitoring and recording my inner monologue, I saw these emotions manifest a few times a day. These emotions came up only in situations when I was reminded of something I knew I should do, but didn't that either I ignored or someone else had done.

I think, the biggest thing I noticed was the invisible constraints I put on place through the stories I told myself. Stories of how doing certain things wouldn't allow me to do things I'm currently doing, or some other self-sabotage that's conveniently disguised by a narrative the makes sense. This really shocked me as my rational mind knew that the logic behind the stories didn't make sense -- I was acutely aware of the biases that I was suffering from and mental filters I had in place.

The shock I felt was more so from my initial beliefs that just journaling, meditation and heavy strength training would make me mentally resilient. While they have, this exercise demonstrated to me that I have to be hyper aware about the narratives that I tell myself. Even though I may journal something different than a thought I have later in the day, I need to weather through "empathy gaps" and make sure that I'm not avoiding the frogs so to speak.

In sum, I could be doing a better job of living my values and pushing myself past my limits.

Write Your Beliefs - March 02, 2016

I noticed a lot of my beliefs had to do with: the pursuit of something, achievement, and my general ideas about life (in that order). It seems that I tell myself things to reinforce my doing them, as if I would lose my edge or my desire to do if I didn't.

- "Life is not technical"
- "All in or not in"
- "No excuses"
- "Balance humanism w/ detachment"
- "To each their own"
- "Beware of what you don't know that you don't know"
- "Focus on a few things and do them well. Forget about everything else"
- "Balance theory with practice"
- "Adapt to circumstance"
- "Embrace optionality"

I see that my beliefs represent an internal conflict of visions. On one hand, I love the technical information (ie. physics and math) I'm learning in school as well as applying them to build things. On the other, I recognize that, for all practical matters, the thing that matters the most in the world is people skills. Technical skills help for thinking of ideas and building out those ideas. But, it's people skills that dictate whether you're another commodity "knowledge worker" or whether your work will have a tangible consequence on people. While I think they are complementary, my bias lately has been internally driving myself to take on opportunities that will build upon my technical skills, rather than taking equally important opportunities that would serve as a "training grounds" for me to improve my "soft skills."

I also see these beliefs as a tacit support for being self-absorbed-for being so focused on the things I'm doing, the people immediately around me, and the issues that I'm surrounded by. I feel that this self-absorption is due, foremostly, to setting multiple short-term goals (3 months to a year) and no long-term goals. It's analogous to have a street with a few stop signs, but no road.

I feel my beliefs indicate that I should re-evaluate what I'm doing, the projects I'm involved in, and the short-term goals I've told myself. I feel I need to revisit what outcome I want, why I'm doing everything that I'm currently doing, how what I'm doing now can map to that end, and what I should or should not do to help facilitate arriving at that end point. But, I would be in remiss by

not mentioning that I need to pay more attention to how I can also help others through my actions. My beliefs indicate self-absorption to what's immediately around me, and that's a pattern I need to break.

I suspect others may have a similar experience in that their beliefs indicate a conflict between their values and actions. Or, their beliefs are amplifying and reminding them of the narrative that they've told themselves or have led themselves to believe. Or, they could have an experience at the other end of the spectrum where their beliefs are generally in line with their values and actions.

Write Others' Beliefs - March 14, 2016

I noticed that I would pick up on people's beliefs immediately most acutely if their strategies differed from mine or impeded on something that I wanted to do. If the strategies were similar to mine, I often did not seek to understand the beliefs underlying them. I had to consciously remind myself that the other person has a different value system and set of beliefs that affect their behaviors.

Some beliefs I picked up about others from their strategies:

- My physics professor believes most people do not sufficiently understand the laws of physics and so making them do experiments on their own will help instill some intuition
- My friend believes the fact others may not accept her for who she is gives sufficient ground for her to avoid meeting new people
- My roommate believes that it doesn't matter when he plays games so long as he gets his homework done
- My TA believes that students should do as much of the work by themselves as they can, but, if he doesn't know a particular topic or solution, he's not obligated to find out on the student's behalf
- My friend believes that he can party as much as he wants to so long as he's getting good grades
- The gym attendant believes that he must enforce rules that he does not agree with as he would get fired if he did otherwise
- My friend believes that once he thinks he has figured out what someone else is trying to say, he can interrupt them

Some beliefs I picked up about mainstream society:

- My friend believes that prestige is one of the most important things to consider when selecting a university
- My father believes that if you have a goal, you should do everything in your power to achieve it
- My friend is working to build a start-up as he believes a university education isn't necessary for entrepreneurship
- My friend believes that a high GPA is the most important factor for his job prospects
- My friend believes that lifting weights will default turn him into some freakishly jacked

being

- This program believes that students should be global citizens
- My classmate is majoring in engineering as he believes a technical education will bring him the most security in his life

This exercise made me notice that I tended to regard things that didn't fit my own model or outwardly clash with them in a dichotomous fashion as invisible. I wouldn't pay much mind to them unless I was walking to some place or sitting on the subway. I found myself more patient and empathetic towards others' view when I was able to recognize them and get a sense of the place that they were coming from. Towards the end of the exercise, I found myself curious to know where their belief stemmed from and how that action associated with that belief came to materialize.

I should note the above was more towards individual beliefs. For beliefs I felt were passed down by society, I noticed my body language and disposition was a bit more callous towards the people. I felt myself being less patient, and to some degree, irritated with them for not demanding more of themselves as per my belief system. However, also towards the end of this exercise, I managed these sentiments better. I find now that there's probably an underlying reason, whether some belief or emotion, that has caused them to abide by mainstream society's values.

I wasn't as aware of recognizing society's beliefs outside of people's beliefs until yesterday. I think this maybe because consistent exposure to those values, and a myopic following of my own has left me indifferent to them. I find that I do need to take more of a step back and create a holistic vision of how someone's strategies map to their beliefs and how society's values influence the things around us in addition to our own values.

Unit 2: Leading Yourself

Write Your Unwanted Beliefs - March 24, 2016

It was hard for me to consciously break the grip of emotion and write down exactly what I felt in each moment. Sometimes, I'd see myself writing about my belief rather than writing my actual belief and confronting it.

I saw that many of the times I experienced emotions I didn't like, the beliefs underlying that emotion were similar to the beliefs I had written for the earlier exercise of recording my beliefs for a week. Whenever I felt that I wasn't living these beliefs to their fullest, I questioned whether I was actually living in respect, or felt a dissonance between my beliefs and the context of that particular situation, I noticed I experienced emotions I didn't like. These emotions largely boiled down to anxiety about what I was doing--they all stemmed from that central node.

If I don't think I'm satisfying my vision of the person I see myself as, or want to be, I noticed I experienced that anxiety. When viewing my beliefs against those emotions, I see that my beliefs act as a check against imposter syndrome - I don't want to be a fraud or a caricature of my values.

I also noticed that the beliefs that mapped to those undesired emotions were largely framed as imperatives; I expressed them as imperatives, implying they were forced on me rather than things that organically came from me.

Recognizing and writing about the beliefs I didn't like took more effort than just noticing my beliefs. I suspect this is because I have not been actively trying to understand the thoughts behind those emotions and have been focused on strategies rather than addressing the beliefs that gave cause to those emotions.

Feedforward May 19, 2016

I choose my communication skills as the focus of this exercise -- specifically my ability to communicate succinctly and without judgement. I asked friends who I worked with on projects, acquaintances that I'm currently working with, and my older brother. I felt very awkward doing this exercise the first couple of times. I took me four days to fight through the resistance I felt in my psyche and muster the courage to begin the exercise. I modified script on this first encounter by adding in why I felt improving this skill was important to me and why I was asking them specifically. I didn't mention that this was part of an exercise. I to be received as doing this because I wanted to do it, and not lead the other person to believe it was a formality or something I had to do.

The conversation didn't last more than two or three minutes, much to my surprise. I just got helpful, actionable information that focused on strategies, tactics, and principles rather than any sort of judgement or criticism. This last part was particularly surprising to me as most of the advice and feedback I have received felt like an attack on me rather than something intended to benefit me. I'm sure the other people did not feel this way. Their intentions just never came across in their speech. As I approached more people, this seemed easier to do. I felt my attitude towards soliciting feedback changing.

The people I talked to were genuinely interested in helping me. I didn't feel as if they were judging me. I think they felt that I was inviting them to help me on the process to better myself as they were earnest in their answers. A couple of the people I talked didn't feel I had a problem in that area and helped me find another aspect of my communication skills that could use work.

I accepted the advice presented as it was. Some felt more actionable than others. I did not feel obligated at any point to take any of the advice I received and thanked everybody. I asked for accountability from my older brother as we both are aggressive in improving ourselves and I felt more comfortable asking him.

I don't know anybody that likes to be evaluated. I like the feedforward exercise and am trying to think of ways now that I can integrate this exercise into my life as a practice, perhaps post-game routine after working on team-based projects. I'm still thinking of this system.

Adopt a New Belief April 07, 2016

When doing a homework assignment I don't like, some task I don't feel like doing, or anything that I dread in general that involves a computer, I use to default to watching Youtube videos for 20-30 minutes at a time. The belief characterizing this was typically along the lines of "I shouldn't have to do things when I don't feel like doing them." Over the course of these past few days, whenever I found myself doing this, or engaging in forms of more subtle forms of procrastination, I'd try to tell myself "I'm choosing to do this task. No one's forcing me to do it, besides myself." I found this to be more effective as, even if I'd land on the Youtube front page, I'd immediately leave or shut my computer off and get back to my work.

This belief elicited a feeling of self-control, pride, discipline, and composure that replaced the panic, anxiety, dread, and self-defeat that came with procrastination. I can't imagine myself going to back my own belief now as I feel more accomplished and self-actualized.

I noticed that, as I was trying to change this belief, I also rather effortlessly felt myself trying to replace other beliefs. Whether that was abstaining from buying a candy bar after a workout as a 'cheat meal', mentally coaxing myself to take it easier on my subsequent leg exercises after squatting, or stressing over my task list.

I find thinking of emotions that I want myself to experience and then changing my beliefs with one that brings that emotion more personally satisfying and effective than trying to change the behavior first in the hopes the belief change will follow. However I've found the latter does have its merits in certain contexts (developing heuristics for conduct like not buying any junk food when grocery shopping, keeping my workout clothes on top of my gym bag, any behavioral change that involves doing the smallest possible task required by the new behavior and gradually escalating it).

Adopt a Challenging Belief - April 15, 2016

The belief I chose for this exercise was "I can't be productive on days where I haven't woken up before 8." This belief stems from my association between getting ahead of the day by completing the tasks I feel are most crucial before the day's progression interferes with my plans. As a result of this belief, I'd always feel defeated and angry at myself for not doing what I told myself I'd do and missing out on massive productivity.

Whenever I felt this belief, twice this week, I questioned why I thought it was true -- namely, what was different about the particular moment I was feeling this emotion than me working at 7:30 in the morning or 8:30 at night. I arrived at the conclusion that I didn't have to rely on waking up before a certain time everyday to accomplish the tasks I'd set out for myself to do as there isn't anything inherently special to working in the morning. It's just more practical. I replaced this belief with "My intensity is internal. My focus does not depend as much on the people or things around as it does on my willingness to do what I have set out to do."

As a result of this change in belief, I feel more confident and comfortable with switching into action regardless of the time of day. I feel more in control of myself and comfortable coping with life's vicissitudes that may derail me from having my ideal conditions. This transition felt pretty smooth, as I found this belief to be firm in my mind after a 2-3 days. My old belief feels foreign.

This exercise brought to light the domain specificity of my behaviors. I would never use poor sleep, nutrition, cheesy music, or lack of some special item as an excuse to miss a workout. I would always try to do something, even if it's not my prescribed workout, to maintain consistency. And, from not listening to music for the past 8 months during my workouts, I've trained myself to "flip the switch" when the weights get heavy or I begin trying to talk myself out of doing a prescribed weight/exercise. The same holds for doing groceries, cooking my meals, reading, or meeting any deadline.

This exercise illustrated to me the gap between my behaviors in the gym and some of the more mundane aspects of my life with my approach towards doing my "to-do" list and modifying some of the self-sabotaging behaviors (such as having my laptop on at 11 because I didn't get to writing this earlier) that are leading me to hold self-defeating beliefs like the fore mentioned.

Your Authentic Voice - April 01, 2016

Doing this exercise felt more natural to me than the previous exercises. Voicing my thoughts as they are, rather than embellishing them or trying to pander them, is something I've been working on since last year. However, when I did this exercise, I set aside my initial thoughts on the authenticity of my speech and attempted it as if I'd never tried doing so.

I noticed that I tended to speak in a very stream-of-consciousness style. When speaking to my father about life or just casually conversing with him, I felt that this played well to how I normally talk to any of my family members. When conversing with my friends about homework, what they've been up to, or any of the seemingly random topics that emerge from sufficiently long conversations, I felt that I was very unguarded and spoke my mind freely. Although I can't recall the specific words (I tend to be very in the moment and feeling the energy of the person I'm conversing with when I speak authentically), I noticed that my cadence, inflections, and word choice (more casual, but at times I'd use words that qualify as SAT words) was different than if I had been paying attention to every word I say.

From this exercise, I noticed two interesting things that, before, would enter my brain at some random time only to dissipate as soon as they had arrived. Chiefly, I found that my body language was more animated, my words were more compelling, and my presence was more charged as the people I was talking to paid greater attention and reacted to me in an open way. I found, though, when I talked to professors or others I associated with having more formal positions, I spoke more guardedly. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's the fear I will say the wrong thing or a pernicious and antiquated belief that life in formal matters are governed by power dynamics, so the other person shouldn't be able to "read" you. I have hunch it might be a combination of the two, and possibly some other elements that I need to be explore.

If anything, it's an indicator that I need more focused practice on speaking authentically, which would necessitate that I actively permit myself to say what I think in all interactions, beyond where I feel comfortable, until it becomes second nature.

No, But, However - April 23, 2016

I found this exercise to be the most difficult one to hold myself accountable to. When I woke up each day this week, I told myself I would not negate people as a first response. However, in the middle of the conversation, I'd lose sense of whether I actually negated the person I was speaking to or whether 'negation words' are not a significant part of my lexicon.

I took a couple of more days to do this exercise than I initially allocated because I couldn't honestly determine whether I used any negation words or not. The second time around, I found that I used "Well" and "So" in place of "But" and "However" whenever I found myself in a place in the conversation where using negation words would be warranted. With this, I also found myself asking more questions, whether for clarification or to escalate the conversation, and making quips to transition to another topic or just lighten the mood.

I didn't notice others using negation words as well. I don't know whether this is because negation words are used so commonly that I consciously don't pick up on them, or my limited use of them reduced other's tendency to use them in conversations with me. I've noticed that, generally, when people raise their voices in conversation, their usage of negation words tends to increase. But, if people are grounded, their word choice is measured. Negation words are used purposefully -- not as fillers or as a means to impose their beliefs on others.

I will do this exercise again because I found it forced me to think about how my diction reflected the thoughts I wanted to communicate and impacted others' responses to my words.

Avoid Imposing Values - April 30, 2016

Consciously practicing this exercise, like the previous exercise, was challenging. However, I found that after a few days, the exercise felt more intuitive and I would mentally check whether the words I was about to say imposed my values or invited dialogue about the values underlying my statement as pertaining to whatever was being discussed.

I became more aware of my word choice, even in matters where one couldn't impose a value, which I saw as a tangential benefit of practicing this level of awareness. Similar to the negation exercise, I found myself being focused more on asking probing questions and listening. Others did not seem uncomfortable in talking in these situations. I think replacing words that denoted me imposing my value on a conversation made the conversation seem more of a dialogue than a sermon. I can say this with full confidence as, whenever I slipped-up over the course of the week, without fail I could feel people close themselves to as, as if they felt I was judging them by proxy in making a statement in the manner that I did. I would then be left to move the conversation in a different direction to rekindle it under a different context.

I also felt this feeling of vindication when I felt others imposing their values on me. Instead of feeling any type of solidarity or bond with that person, I immediately felt affronted. This made me want to shift topics or just not listen to that person as I felt that they were not trying to understand my position. In these situations, I would generally leave the conversation feeling the other person: lacked empathy, was trying to make themselves look better by measuring me to their values without considering mine, or just unsociable (for lack of a better term).

For this exercise, feeling others impose their values made me recognize the importance of not imposing my values on others -- on the value of seeking to understand before seeking to be understood, if the latter is even pertinent. On reflecting, I find this holds true when people negate me, as I get this sense that its easy to negate people when trying to express disagreement with their ideas. Looking at it now, the lesson I can extrapolate from both is, in communicating with people, you're both responding to their actual words and their projected sense of self. I can't really think of a clean way to describe the latter, but see that it's akin to the image people have of themselves and want to get across through their social interactions.

Unit 3: Understanding Others

Your Models For Emotions and Leadership - May 28, 2016

1. Leadership is the ability to guide people to actualize a vision that aligns with their values. This doesn't start with people per se — it starts from the self. Prior to starting this course, I separated leadership that occurs in group environments with leadership that occurs in personal conduct. Now, I feel the latter to be a prerequisite to the former. Without knowing my values, how my beliefs are shaping my conduct, and the discrepancies between my conduct and beliefs, I wouldn't be able effectively lead anyone. All the dysfunctional behaviors associated with this would inevitably spill into my conduct with other people. And it has. I've begun to view leadership as an artistic expression in the same vein as writing, painting, and acting. With leadership, we create the version of ourselves that we feel most authentically represents who we believe ourselves to be. We use our understanding and presentation of ourselves to effectively work with others and live with ourselves.

More so now than before, I see leadership as the ultimate pursuit for self-mastery. Being aware of the interplay between one's values and beliefs, and how that dynamic plays out in others, requires constant vigilance. At this point, I don't see anyway one could "coast" with cultivating their leadership skills. I've been increasingly recognizing I must calibrate how I present myself as well as how I engage with others based on their values as well, not just solely mine, with the caveat I must remain true to my values without being callous towards theirs'. It's a constant endeavor that requires active engagement.

2. Motivation is a transient impulse to pursue a particular goal or vision in the present moment. Motivation incites us to pursue some course of action, but comes in spurts. Emotions are states of being that we feel as a reaction to certain thoughts, situations, or actions. Self-awareness is the ability to detach from one self and discern, at a distance, the emotions in that moment that are causing our state of being.

Motivation can allow us to overcome the resistance that we'd typically associate with doing some activity that we know we should do and aren't, or to pursue a goal/vision with more vigor than we have been doing. While transient by nature, by understanding our beliefs, values, and the triggers for both, we can systematically create our own motivation for doing the things that we want to do. By extension, we can then motivate others. Emotions are more persistent than motivation. Unlike motivations, emotions are not an impetus; they're typically a reaction. By recognizing this, it becomes easier to navigate many conflicting emotions at a particular instant, or to intuit whether or not our values, beliefs and actions are all in accordance with each other.

This ties in with self-awareness, which necessitates that we recognize why we're feeling these emotions at a particular moment as well as how we arrived at that point. Self-awareness allows

us to calibrate our motivation with our emotions to get ourselves to engage in the necessary action. It allows us to get internal feedback of how we feel and external feedback of how others perceive us. Without self-awareness, it's impossible to understand the relation between how one's motivations, emotions, and their perception by the outside world. It thereby becomes impossible to know what one truly wants and what actions will bring about those things.

Introducing The Model - June 04, 2016

After reading through the entire series on Models, I finally picked up on what I felt I lacked - a robust framework that I could use to understand my emotions and behaviors as well as those of others. From reading books and articles as well as going through a leadership development program, I only learned tactics and strategies for changing my behaviors. The implicit assumption seemed to be, if you change your behavior, your beliefs will follow. I've found this to be helpful when trying to implement recurrent behaviors (cooking meals, dry cleaning, reading), but of limited use when trying to change my attitude and approach about things that are not in and of themselves routine practices (ex. annoyed when people are shouting across the subway).

Going in, I had bits and pieces of knowledge I'd picked up from the above as well as experientially, but no real connection between the knowledge. Figuring out my own beliefs as well as those of others was more of a 'spur of the moment' type thing rather than something that followed a structure and had more cohesion about it. Now I'm trying to see how the model relates to what I know and have experienced.

For the situation exercise, I chose 2 behaviors that I wanted to replace: laying back down after shutting off my alarm clock on days where I could afford to sleep-in (invariably weekends and holidays with no pre-scheduled commitments) and avoiding tasks I didn't want to do by doing other tasks in their stead. I feel like giving physical form to these situations both increased my understanding of the Model by seeing how different facets of a situation can perpetuate certain behaviors and emotions as well as my understanding of those situations by separating the emotion that begets the behavior from the reward that perpetuates it.

Introducing The Method - June 20, 2016

I chose my decisions to sleep-in after waking up to change. I imagined the emotions I wanted to feel (a sense of accomplishment, pride, and self-mastery) on waking up. I kept the environment the same, but changed my belief to "Sleeping in will not make me more rested as I will not re-enter the deep stages of sleep and my behavior to "getting out of bed." I've been 10 for 15 so far. Not my ideal scenario, but an improvement over my previous behavior which I will take as a win.

I felt like I started the day with momentum on days that I got out of bed immediately. I felt more aware of my rationalizations to sleep-in and better equipped to handle them. I still experience empathy gaps, and am now experimenting with ways to overcome them (visualizing how I want to start the next day before sleeping). Perhaps it's a matter of refining the emotional reward I want, or being consistent the Method for another 2 weeks. When I look at the activities that I habitually engage in, I can ascertain the emotional reward instantaneously. I can also feel that reward instantaneously. But I've also spent a month minimum on each of them before I arrived at that point.

While doing this exercise, I found that when I talked to friends and family or observed people interact in social settings, I've been able to recognize the environments, beliefs, and behaviors others exhibited when they felt an emotion or would engage in to feel an emotion. It's been incredibly helpful for seeing the subtext behind different interactions.

The Method, More Challenging - July 05, 2016

The behavior I chose to change was starting conversations with strangers. My beliefs, emotions, and behaviors prior to this exercise were:

Beliefs: I'm probably never going to see this person again, or if we did happen to meet, it'll be because our goals are in line with each other

Emotions: Apprehension, Defensive, Self-righteous, Validated

Behaviors: Choosing to either not to initiate or escalate a conversation

This changed to:

Beliefs: Talking to people is enjoyable independent of the outcome or context

Emotions: Openness, Excitement, Grounded

Behaviors: Choosing to drive everyday small-talk conversations or initiate conversations with strangers doing something that interested me

The first day of trying this, I set myself the goal of approaching 5 strangers and initiating small-talk with them to get myself in the habit of approaching people. I felt more internal resistance than I thought I would have (I thought it would be simply just approaching someone and talking to them). I was shocked by the degree of resistance that I faced as, prior to entering freshmen year, I made it a point to approach and talk to people - to initiate social contact. This showed me that I was coasting as I didn't make improving my social skills, for a year and half, a priority of mine. Somewhere along the lines, I began neglecting that area of my life for others, despite realizing that it wasn't in my best interests. I didn't become fully aware of this until I felt that resistance.

As I approached more people, the feelings of resistance gradually diminished, becoming a lingering sentiment by the end of the day. Throughout the week, I approached and escalated conversations with people as the situations presented themselves in my daily life (someone lost on the streets, going past a perfunctory "hi" to doormen, shoppers in grocery stores).

This felt more natural across the first week and then the second. This week, this exercise proved helpful during a few cold calls I made for a project to get information. I felt my interactions as a whole drew on the prior "speaking in your authentic voice" exercise as I spoke the way I normally speak to my friends and family.

The feelings of fakeness gradually passed as I realized that most of it was just me pressuring myself to say something cool or over-the-top engaging to attract the other person's attention. As I put this behavior in practice more, I'm seeing that intention plays a bigger role than the specific

words I say. I feel better, and a sense of relief, as a result of implementing this change.

Personal Leadership Project

Your Leadership Project - December 29, 2016

My goal is to have an idea for a medical technology company that improves epilepsy OR/surgical outcomes by February 28th vetted by a neurosurgeon. I care about this goal and it is something I've wanted to do for the last 6 months, but have not thrown my 110% effort behind. I am excited to take on this challenge as it is in line with my values and interests, but am also experiencing some anxiety of being a fraud as I am not an expert in biomedical engineering and will likely make mistakes that I may not be able to mitigate in advance. I am just acknowledging the anxiety, and replacing it with the belief that it is better to pursue something I will commit to, do the best I can to educate myself and reach out to mentors, and trust that mistakes are just bumps along the rode in this process - that a mistake doesn't mean failure.

I like being held accountable for a goal by other people provided I am complicit in making the goal and its aligned with my values. This satisfies both criteria. Accountability gives me more reason to push through the rough patches as, not only do I to build and rely on my resilience, I also have to build and rely on my integrity. My actions have to match my self-image. I know a neurosurgeon who is willing to help me and who I have met with several times as well as entrepreneurs both inside and outside of the NYU network willing to help me, so resources are not the issue.

Leading others is one of the toughest things I've done. I enjoy the nuances involved in leadership, so see that as a benefit of choosing this goal. I see leading and influencing other people as the most fundamental life skill as it is at the core of social interaction. I see it as a tool that will allow me to design the life I want, relationships I want, and outcomes I want in my life.

(add forum comments)

Unit 4: Leading Others

Meaningful Connection - July 17, 2016

I noticed when I did the first step of this exercise - asking people what their passion is, or what they do when they are not working/studying - I got one of two reactions: an automatic general response much like the one described in step 2, or a startled look followed by vocalized self-thoughts of what the person's passion is followed by a general response much like the one described in step 2. Once I followed the script outlined in step 3, people rather curiously became much more open and transparent in disclosing what their passion is and why they liked it. Everyone lingered on a few key words and paused mid-speech, which cued me to the aspects of their passion that most resonated with them. I followed up as described in Step 4 and found that, if they hadn't already, people described how their passion related to their values and outlook on life. If they had already done so, their response to my clarification question typically was either a caveat to what they already mentioned or elaboration on how that passion expresses who they are as a person.

The first three times I did this exercise, I made the mistake of asking the person I was talking to elaborate so I didn't count those instances. I became more comfortable after the 5th time and began modifying the way I phrased the way I asked what their passion was my, my delivery on Step 3, and adding a slight pause before asking a clarification question.

I think real intimacy wasn't created until after Step 3. When initially asking people about their passions, I noticed most people, unless they were good friends or family, weren't comfortable with being open about such a revealing part of themselves. Only after I showed that I was interested in who they are as a person and had not intention of judging them at any point in the process, did they feel open and comfortable. After my first few tries at this exercise, the conversations flowed pretty well and I felt that since there was already an intimate subtext, it was easier to have intimate/meaningful conversations. This was more important for people that weren't my good friends or family as, in those situations, we can talk about anything as that connection is already there and strong.

Beginning Empathy - February 02, 2017

This script felt natural at this point. I noticed that when doing this, I found myself being more engaged and feeling like I was more invested as the conversation proceeded. It was as if saying words that conveyed compassion and care made me feel those emotions more strongly, which was amplified as I progressed through this exercise. Each time I noticed their 'Universal Emotions,' I felt like I was actually understanding who that person was at their core - their values and elements of their personality that make them who they are. I never really felt this before quite profoundly, and this realization made me realize how seldom I felt this talking to others, created that feeling in others, and saw others striving to create this feeling. I noticed others were more invested in the conversation and that they became more interested in me the more I expressed interest in them. As I did the exercise, I noticed myself focusing more on the other person and interjecting less with my anecdotes and experiences. I think this was because of a genuine interest in learning more about the other person. I've also begun noticing more unspoken cues in conversations such as when someone tries talking over someone else, their inflection and tone as well as their posture. I'm amazed at the little things I noticed each time I did this exercise. I thought I understood this exercise deeply after doing the prior exercise, but now realize that true understanding to the level that I can make this exercise mine will only come about through repetition. This reminds me of strength training as everytime I perform a movement, I notice different areas in the movement and throughout each repetition where my technique starts to breakdown. Each repetition gives me information about what I did well and what I have to do to improve.

Lead With Empathy - February 14, 2017

This exercise felt natural. I felt that I was helping the other person I was connecting them to tasks that they wanted to do, that I incidentally also wanted done. As with the previous exercises, people were very receptive and more open when talking about their passions. It was a bit awkward the first couple of times to make the transition from their passions to the task I wanted done, but I was largely able to correct it after the first few times I did the exercise. I felt more confident in initiating this exercise and connecting to the other person's passion as I progressed through this exercise and tried playing around with the way I connected their passion to see how it affected the other person's perception of the interaction.

When connecting the other person's passion to an Universal Emotion, I noticed their eye's would go bigger and their general demeanor conveyed both surprise that someone was trying to understand them on a deep level and enjoyment. People enjoyed talking about themselves and feeling that someone truly cared about getting to know them and what they do.

Whereas the previous exercise was understanding others' values and perspective, I saw the focus of this exercise as leading people to do tasks they would want to know but don't quite know. Not in a manipulative way, but in an authentic way that is based on their values. People were more receptive to doing the tasks once I connected it to their passions/values.

Inspire - March 28, 2017

Each time I did this exercise, the progression from trying to understand the other person's emotion and connecting it to the task I wanted done felt entirely natural. I felt the other person become more engaged and open as we continued talking, and by the time I made my ask, they were at their peak engagement. Initially, I found myself primarily thinking about the task I wanted done rather than listening. Consequently, when I transitioned to talking about . As I practiced it more, I was able to focus on listening and start thinking of how to connect the task I wanted done to related to their motivations and interests. Also, with practice, I noticed how this was similar and different to how I and people I interact with ask others for help. It's made me more aware of people's intentions and whether they appreciate people for who they are or view them solely in terms of what they can do for them.

For me, this exercise's main benefit was providing a framework for how to think and act more consistently on others' interests while being authentic. These exercises are solidifying my belief that authenticity is the key behind all full-filling relationships and interactions. If the other person feels they do not know you or that you are pretending to be someone else, they won't trust you. Through practicing this exercise, as well as with the others, I think I have a better grasp of body language, listening, empathy and self-awareness.

Support and Project Management - April 07, 2017

I like this model of leadership. I found my interactions to be more collaborative and inclusive of the needs of the other person involved. I've had problems navigating between getting someone to do something they want to do that also needs to be done with getting something done that someone may not want to but that also needs to be done. I think the main benefit this exercise provided me was structure so as to manage the latter case better and try working with that person to determine a solution or compromise.

Approaching the person with their needs in mind first made the conversation flow and allowed me to hear the things I needed to hear. Brainstorming potential ways I could help them just showed I valued and respected them. My teammates disclosed the resources they needed and what elements they felt they weren't up for. They were more open about what they felt they could do. I had given them support and both I and they were happy with the way the tasks are progressing as well as how we're interacting with each other. Both were happy that I communicated openly with them and I that I valued them as a person first - not as a means to an end.

Previous leaders I've served under have ranged from either: not taking into account my needs and abilities, making me figure out the things I needed for myself and doing them, to not providing support to me after I finished the task we talked for myself or a project I asked them to lead and completed. I think this model of leadership is more productive, engaging, and more vitalizing. While I didn't mind having to figure things out for myself and doing them, after a while I felt as if I were putting forth a great deal of effort that didn't translate into achieving all the tasks I was assigned. I still respected the leader and recognized it was just his way of doing things and I had leeway to navigate around some of these issues and influence him to get more of the resources I needed. Though, I was disappointed and lost a good deal of respect for the leader who did provide support to me or uphold our agreement on the tasks after I had completed my part. I could easily see people enjoying what they do and spending more time in the role we've mutually selected for themselves in this project.

I don't think I've micromanaged in the past as I've been very cautious of trying not to micromanage others. This could be confirmation bias as there may be some instances that I am not recalling.

The biggest takeaway I've gotten from this exercise, coupled with past exercises, is that leadership is a skill. To me, leadership is the ability to organize a group of people to realize a mutually-shared goal/vision. And, as with any skill, you have to have a conceptual framework and process for when you exercise any aspect of that skill.

Course Review - June 02, 2017

Prior to starting those course, I hadn't considered leading people based on their interests and cultivating relationships based on them. I generally considered people to be motivated by their self-interest and attracted to people like them. I hadn't paid attention to what my inner monologues and beliefs were or how they influenced my behavior without my awareness. Through taking this course, I see leadership as a meta-skill – an amalgamation of proficiency in communication skills, relationship skills, emotional control and self-mastery. Without understanding how to influence myself through changing my beliefs and behaviors, I can't lead myself, and by extension understand or lead others. Leadership isn't a static process – it requires constant attention and action.

Leadership works by learning about other people's needs and interests and connecting them to the task they want to do, but might not know why they are doing or want to do in that moment. A leader is a facilitator who gets people together to achieve a mutual goal and provides them clarity and direction throughout that process. The purpose binds the group. Through this process, the leader must maintain the standard and provide people with the resources they need to succeed. As the person mobilizing others, the leader is fundamentally responsible for the mistakes and outcome of their team. But leadership only works when people are invested in the end goal, are acting in congruence with their interests, and have similar values.

When thinking of my previous leadership experiences, I immediately begin thinking of the moments I didn't use to build better relationships, the ways I should have approached situations with more effective techniques, and the ways I could use the knowledge I have now to act differently. I look at situations where I felt I should have: realigned the team with our common purpose, provided more guidance for people working with or above me, and dealt with people with inflexible work and communication styles that affected the team's productivity and morale. The things I did right or should have done more of usually follow. Reflecting back on these experiences reinforces how leadership is a process that requires constant diligence and effort. The team, not just the leader, must be fully committed to the common purpose, and the leader must always put the team before themselves. It's also made realize that there is no other way to learn about leadership besides being in leadership positions. Books and talks serve as a supplementary tool. It's also important to have mentors, people, or activities that can act as a sounding board to provide some measure of objectivity. It's not easy, but it's satisfying.

I've noticed that asking people that I'm working with about what they are interested in or getting a pulse of if they still like doing what they are doing helps to provide some of that objectivity. Asking others about their passions and values upfront helps keeping everyone aligned and avoids built-up resentment that can occur when people feel misunderstood or are not allowed to

express their views. It also serves as a tool to correct course once the team has been working together for some time. In initial interactions, I've found having a feeling out process or mechanisms in place in to see what style of speech people best respond to best helps me understand how I should approach each person in general conversation, feedback, or to get their opinion. Constant reflection as well as talking to people and engaging in activities that demand detachment give me a deeper and more expansive perspective of the efficacy of my actions and whether there are blind spots I haven't addressed.

The biggest realization I've experienced is that leadership is a skill I can practice. Building relationships is a skill I can practice. Changing my beliefs is something I can choose to do at any time. Through changing my actions or environment, I can change the emotion I'm feeling or the way I'm responding to that emotion. I am in control. To that end, the most important thing I've learned is a system to consciously change my current behaviors to the ones I want. I see leadership as starting with understanding your own emotions, interests and beliefs first so that you can understand the way you currently interact with the world. Without understanding the way you currently approach situations and people in your daily life, it's difficult to change your beliefs and habits to match those of your ideal self. Or that version of yourself best equipped to act on your interests.

I was motivated to pursue this course by my desire to equip myself to understand myself and others better to lead more effectively. I see the collection of skills that fall under the purview of leadership as universals present in any activities I engage in throughout my life, whether it's an organization I start or relationships that I'm trying to grow. I think developing the skills for self-understanding is a prerequisite to building leading a fulfilling life.

Motivation is good for getting things done in the short-term and taking the first few steps along any new endeavor. However, I think motivation by itself is ineffective for producing long-term change. Motivation is built on an unbridled enthusiasm for an optimistic outcome whose imminence feels ever-approaching with the passing minutes, but fades with the passage of a few days. Motivation is fake discipline. It does not endure. Enduring motivation is a byproduct of discipline. It's more important to be consistent than motivated. With consistency, the motivation will come as eventually the habit will be so ingrained it would be unnatural not engaging in it. It's not necessary to be motivated in the moment, it's necessary to be committed in the long run so you do the thing despite how you feel. The environment can be shaped to make motivation less spontaneous by making things that take away from the target task harder to do, or making the target task easier to habitually do.

This course is one of the best investments I've made in myself. The mindset shifts and techniques I've gotten well exceed the price. This course has provided me with a path and system to improve my leadership skills that I can follow past the time I complete this course. In a time where

seemingly every article is tailored towards “The 10 Things You Need to Know to Lead Like (insert canonical leadership figure of today/history)”, it’s refreshing to have an option that encourages self-ownership and action. There’s no magic trick or 7-step program. It’s just work and time. And that means any one of us can be the leaders we want to be.