



Who Am I?





Activity Brief

A Defining Trait of the Most Effective Leaders

The most effective leaders possess an extremely strong sense of self. They are grounded in an impregnable understanding of who they are at their very core.

This grounding is the antidote to the insecure, brutish leader, who needs to put others down to gain a place for self in the limelight. Consequently, this sense of self has a direct correlation to the quality of one's interpersonal relationships, at work and outside.

Self-aware and assured leaders, it has been noted, operate with a sense of ease and calm confidence that permeates everything they do. This enables for one's cognitive processes to function at their very best. It also imbues those who interact with them with a sense of confidence about the direction and prospects of the organisation.

An Exercise to Help You Hone Such a Sense of Self

The exercise that you are partaking of is intended to help you develop or hone, as might be the case, your self-awareness and assuredness.

This exercise, interestingly, was part of the selection criteria that NASA used to select the first astronauts who were to fly to space. In space, devoid of all earthly connections or 'badges', one has to possess an unshakable sense of self to survive the utter isolation and disconnectedness that one would experience. The absence of an impregnable self could leave one feeling disconcerted, and in a worst-case scenario, render one insane.

Now, you, as a leader, might never be cut off entirely from all your earthly ties and badges. However, many a situation – viz., large scale personal or professional setbacks, or situations that threaten one's sense of self - can leave one feeling maligned, disempowered, worthless, or low. These situations require a supreme amount of self-assuredness and grace to navigate.

This exercise is intended to help you achieve these ends.

Leaders who have undertaken this activity have reported to us that they find the exercise deeply empowering and uplifting. They have also shared with us that they find themselves turning to the notes that they had made as part of this activity, in moments of self-doubt and adversity.



Exercise Guidelines

Step 1: This activity – based on our experience – will take you between two and four hours to complete. Please prepare to earmark this time for self-reflection and note taking.

Step 2: Deposit all communication devices, including your mobile phone and any internet access devices, with the facilitator.

Step 3: Find a quiet place where you can work uninterrupted.

Step 4: Bear in mind the timelines indicated for the group to reconvene in the main hall.

How to Perform this Exercise

1. Describe yourself in ten sentences. However, your description cannot reference any of the following:

- Your family, caste, lineage, or social connections
- Educational/ professional qualifications or achievements
- Your designation in any organisation (professional/ social/ political/ etc.,)
- Your hobbies or interests
- Any personal achievements
- Any personal characteristics
- Anything else that can be construed to be extrinsic to you or is relative to others. In short, anything that can get outdated, taken away from you, superseded by someone else, or be lost in any way.

Why These Exclusions?

The points mentioned relate to things not intrinsic to you. These are extrinsic, fleeting, relative, sometimes shallow, and do not contribute to who you are ‘at your very core’. And, nothing transient and relative ever helped one develop a true sense of self.











