

Relational, Healing-Centered Leadership Competency Framework



Introduction

This framework describes the core capacities of relational, healing-centered leadership. It focuses on the competencies leaders must develop to stay grounded, how they show up with others, and how they shape environments where people can do their best work.

Leadership is not limited to a title or position. It is practiced every day by educators, youth workers, social workers, caregivers, supervisors, organizers, and community members whose actions influence the conditions others experience. This framework recognizes leadership as something expressed across roles, settings, and levels of responsibility.

These capacities develop over time. They strengthen through practice, across a leader's career, and in response to real challenges. Growth is nonlinear and ongoing.

Each competency can be understood along a developmental spectrum, from latent, to emerging, to embodied. This gives leaders and organizations a shared way to understand progress and deepen practice.

Relational leadership in trauma-exposed environments is complex. This framework offers shared language leaders and organizations can use to reflect on and strengthen how they lead.

I. Self-Leadership

How a leader manages their inner world so they can lead others well

1. **Active Self-Awareness:** Recognizing own patterns, biases, motives, and impact in real time
2. **Emotional Regulation:** Attuning to one's nervous system and making adaptive shifts to stay steady enough to respond rather than react

3. **Discernment:** Knowing what truly matters in a moment and choosing accordingly
4. **Intuition:** Sensing patterns and relational cues that guide action beyond conscious reasoning.
5. **Decision Making Under Stress:** Maintaining inner clarity and direction when pressure is high
6. **Humility & Lightness:** Holding oneself with ease rather than ego or self-importance
7. **Energy Stewardship:** Managing internal resources to lead sustainably

II. Relational Presence

How a leader brings grounded, trustworthy energy into interactions

1. **Attunement:** Sensing the emotional and relational signals shaping the moment
2. **Empathy:** Understanding and emotionally connecting with another's inner experience
3. **Cultural Humility:** Staying open, curious, and self-aware across differences
4. **Perspective Taking:** Recognizing and considering viewpoints beyond your own to broaden understanding
5. **Relational Repair:** Rebuilding trust and connection when ruptures occur
6. **Boundary Intelligence:** Knowing when to step in, step back, and hold relationships with care

III. Ethical Influence

How a leader motivates and guides people, systems, and culture

1. **Empowered Action:** Leading from clarity and choice rather than scarcity or fear
2. **Inclusivity:** Creating relationships and hospitable environments where people feel welcomed and able to participate fully

3. **Advancing Equity and Justice:** Disrupting patterns of racism and oppression through intentional choices and the environments created
4. **Adaptability:** Adjusting one's approach in response to evolving needs and conditions
5. **Sensemaking:** Helping people interpret what's happening so they can move forward
6. **Situational Judgment:** Understanding context and choosing the right approach for the moment
7. **Holding Ambiguity:** Leading effectively when information is incomplete or tensions can't be resolved quickly
8. **Visioning:** Seeing a future others can't yet see and helping them believe in it
9. **Relational Accountability:** Naming issues directly while protecting dignity and connection
10. **Influence Separate from Authority:** Moving people toward shared purpose without reliance on positional power
11. **Moral Courage:** Acting with integrity when the right choice is costly or unclear

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