THE COMPLETE LEADER

COACHING GUIDE

AUTHENTICITY

The ability to be the best possible version of you by remaining true to your own personality, spirit, or character.

LEADERS ARE AUTHENTIC

One of the 25 leadership competencies

SECTION 01

WHY AUTHENTICITY MATTERS

Authenticity is one of the 25 core competencies that define a complete leader. As you grow this capability, you'll notice real shifts in how you lead yourself and influence others.

This guide is built for a 90-day journey. You'll explore the foundations, assess where you stand today, practice new behaviors, sidestep common traps, and track your progress, at your own pace or alongside a coach.

WHAT STRONG AUTHENTICITY LOOKS LIKE

- Greater trust and respect from those you lead
- More resilient and sustainable leadership
- A deeper sense of purpose and personal fulfillment

> **REFLECT**
>
> *Why does Authenticity matter to you personally? How might developing it change your effectiveness as a leader?*

SECTION 02

FOUNDATIONS OF AUTHENTICITY

THE DEFINITION

The ability to be the best possible version of you by remaining true to your own personality, spirit, or character.

Like any skill worth mastering, Authenticity rests on a few core building blocks. Understanding them gives you a vocabulary for your own growth.

THE CORE ELEMENTS

1 **Self-awareness**

Understanding your values, strengths, and what matters most to you. Without this foundation, authenticity is hard to practice consistently.

2 **Honesty and openness**

The willingness to be known: to share both your capabilities and your limitations. This is what creates psychological safety on a team.

3 **Intentional alignment**

Regularly checking whether your actions reflect your values. This ongoing practice keeps you grounded in what truly matters.

REFLECT

Which element feels most familiar? Which one feels like a stretch right now?

SECTION 03

YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you move forward, take an honest look at where you are today. Read each statement and mark how often it's true of your leadership.

I make career choices based on a clear understanding of my natural talents, developed strengths, and weaknesses.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I am courageous when taking on new assignments or making significant career decisions, knowing that change ignites growth.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I have a clear mental picture of the "best me," and I follow it in the way I think, act, and relate.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I am authentic outside of work, in the way I think, act, and relate, just as I am at work.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I share my limitations as readily as my strengths with the people I lead.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I regularly check whether my actions this week matched the values I say I hold.

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

REFLECT

Looking at your answers, where is your greatest opportunity for growth? What patterns do you notice?

SECTION 04

AUTHENTICITY IN PRACTICE

Competencies grow through deliberate practice. Work through the activities below in order, or choose the ones most relevant to your context.

ACTIVITY 01 45 min

Values Clarity Exercise

Identify the 3–5 values most important to you as a leader. This forms the foundation of authentic leadership.

TRY IT

1. Recall moments when you felt most alive and energized as a leader. What values were at play?
2. List 5–7 values that resonate, then narrow to your top three.
3. For each, write one sentence on how it shows up in your leadership.

ACTIVITY 02 20 min

The Honest Conversation

Choose a trusted colleague and share something real: a challenge, a growth area, a lesson you're learning.

TRY IT

1. Identify one person you trust on your team or among your peers.
2. Share something genuine about a challenge you're working through.
3. Notice the impact. How did they respond? How did it feel to be open?

ACTIVITY 03 30 min

Choose Your Battles Wisely

Authenticity sometimes means taking an unpopular stand. Knowing your non-negotiables tells you which battles are worth fighting.

TRY IT

1. List five to ten things you value most and would stand up for, then mark which you will never compromise.
2. Name three current issues at work, and for each ask: what happens if I don't resolve it, and does it touch my core values?
3. Decide which are truly worth taking a stand on, and commit to one.

ACTIVITY 04 45 min

The Feedback Loop

Ask trusted colleagues where you show up as your authentic self, and where you seem to wear a mask.

TRY IT

1. Reach out to 2–3 trusted colleagues or team members.
2. Ask for specific, honest feedback: when have they seen you most genuine?
3. Listen without defending. Notice patterns in what you hear.

ACTIVITY 05 10 min

Daily Authenticity Check-In

Build a simple daily habit of reflecting on how genuine you were today.

TRY IT

1. Each evening, ask: "When did I show up as myself today? When did I hold back?"

2. Note one moment of authenticity and one you'd handle differently.
3. Over a week, watch for patterns in your behavior.

ACTIVITY 06 30 min

Lead a Hard Conversation: Authentically

Choose a conversation you've been avoiding. Show up honest about your concerns and genuine in your care.

TRY IT

1. Identify a difficult conversation you need to have.
2. Clarify your intention: what do you genuinely want for this relationship?
3. Have the conversation with honesty and care. Notice how it shifts the dynamic.

SECTION 05

COMMON AUTHENTICITY TRAPS

As you practice, watch for these common pitfalls. Naming them now makes them easier to catch in the moment.

01 **Using "authenticity" as an excuse for unfiltered behavior**

Being authentic doesn't mean saying everything you think. True authenticity includes discretion and care for others. Distinguish "being yourself" from "oversharing."

02 **Confusing rigidity with authenticity**

Authentic leaders change their minds, grow, and evolve. If you're rigid about past positions, that's defensiveness, not authenticity. Let yourself learn.

03 **Performing authenticity**

It's possible to turn authenticity into just another mask: a curated "quirky" self. Real authenticity is less about being noticed and more about being known.

04 **Hiding unkindness behind "I'm just being honest"**

Authenticity paired with empathy builds trust; without care it can feel like cruelty. Always ask: is it true, is it kind, is it necessary?

REFLECT

Which trap feels most familiar? How will you stay aware of it as you practice?

SECTION 06

YOUR 90-DAY PRACTICE

Lasting change comes from a few focused habits, practiced consistently and tracked honestly. Build your plan below, on your own or with your coach.

CHOOSE YOUR THREE HABITS

Based on everything above, which three habits will make the biggest difference in growing your Authenticity over the next 90 days?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

BUILD IN WEEKLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Write questions you can answer each week to measure progress and surface obstacles. The best ones are answered with “yes,” “no,” or a number.

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

Q3 _____

Accountability partner: who will you share these with?

_____

Completion date: when will you evaluate & celebrate?

_____

Measurements of success

How will you celebrate?

SECTION 07

GO DEEPER

Keep building your Authenticity with these resources. Explore them, then capture what stands out to you.

BOOK	**The Complete Leader, Ch. 4.1: Authenticity**	The full framework, stories, and research behind authentic leadership.
PODCAST	**The Complete Leader Podcast**	Episodes 100, 101, 102, 109, 110 & 111 explore authentic leadership.
ONLINE	**Authenticity competency library**	Videos, articles, and podcasts at TheCompleteLeader.org.

CAPTURE YOUR INSIGHTS

As you work through these resources, which ideas most apply to your own growth in Authenticity?

KEEP GOING

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Developing Authenticity is an investment in yourself and everyone you lead. Return to this guide often: revisit the activities, reread the traps, and celebrate small wins along the way.

Every complete leader started exactly where you are now.