



LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

How to Deal with Dissent and Disobedience

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Unless you're a low-key despot, chances are that you probably don't enjoy telling others what to do or reprimanding them. You probably don't like being called out yourself and you might even question your right to tell anyone else what they're doing wrong.

Kudos to you if you feel that way! You have what it takes to be a good leader! It's the power-mad despots that make for terrible leaders and who eventually tend to come unglued.

But while it's not a good thing to take pleasure in enforcing your will, it's also not useful to bury your head and pretend that everyone can just get along nicely. That's not how the world works, unfortunately.

The truth of the matter is that **power invites challenge**. When you place yourself in a position of authority, others will be naturally encouraged to challenge that authority.

And that means that:

- Sometimes, you're going to have to make difficult decisions.
- Sometimes, you'll have to have difficult conversations.
- Sometimes, you'll need to discipline your team.

How NOT to Handle Discipline

The worst thing you can do when it comes to disciplining your team members is to shout or to lose your cool.

This is a bad move for several reasons:

- It makes you look like you've lost control.



- It invites further challenge.
- It makes you seem easily manipulated by others.

The other key to remember is that **being a boss or a leader does not mean that you have a right to shout or to reprimand.** The more effective way to think about your relationship with your team is as a partnership. You are a part of that team and you have entered into an agreement.

They've agreed to follow your instruction as far as is reasonable and you've agreed to pay them.

You aren't in charge of them, you don't own them, and it's not your place to try and punish them or make them feel small. You simply express that they are violating the terms of your agreement and that they should expect the due results.

Your job, then, is to remove emotion and any bias. Instead, create a simple procedure for dealing with failure or purposeful disruption. Express this at the start of your deal with your team members and then simply follow through as you have outlined.

Transformismo

The biggest reason not to shout at or embarrass your team is also the reason you can't simply ignore the disruptive issues and hope they go away: both these actions can cause the situation to fester and become worse.

In other words, if someone is unhappy with your leadership, they may make their dissatisfaction known to others, and this can cause more of your team to become vocally unhappy.

Over time, this unhappiness can end up spreading through your whole team and being incredibly destructive.

Isolating the individual, meanwhile, only causes them to become more set in their opinions and more disruptive when they return.

So, what do you do with someone who is vocally critical and undermining your leadership?



One option is to use Mussolini's (*yeah...I know*) technique, known as **Transformismo**. Transformismo is a method for turning a political opponent into an ally – and it works in work and parenting settings too.

Simply, it involves taking the dissenter or critic and then placing them in a position of power.

For example, is someone unhappy with how you're managing the finances? Fine: give them a project to try and fix that side of your business.

By sharing responsibility, you can help to demonstrate the complexity of the situation and thereby silence a lot of their criticisms.

At the same time, this will mean working together closely (*keep your enemies close!*), and it will often help them to gain a new respect for what you do and a greater propensity for working together and being a team player.

Try it and see how it works for your team!



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