

Why Seek Assessment, Challenge, and Support?

For most people, the capacity for leadership must be continuously developed over a lifetime of experience. Although people who have or expect to have leadership responsibilities often attend leadership development courses to acquire the needed skills and perspectives, most leadership development happens outside the classroom on job assignments, through relationships with others, or from community service or other experiences outside of work.

At the Center for Creative Leadership, we believe there are three key elements that drive leadership development: assessment, challenge, and support.

Assessment is information, presented formally or informally, that tells you where you are now; what are your current strengths, what development needs are important in your current situation, and what is your current level of effectiveness.

Challenge is elements of an experience that are new and that may call for skills and perspectives not currently available to you; or elements that create imbalance for you and provide an opportunity to question established ways of thinking and acting.

Support is elements of an experience that enhance self-confidence and provide reassurance about your strengths, current skills, and established ways of thinking and acting.

In the leadership development programs we teach and practice at the Center for Creative Leadership, all three elements are present at relatively high levels, creating an intense development experience in a short time. Assessments include personality inventories, 360-degree leadership assessments, feedback from management simulations, and both formal and informal feedback from

program staff and fellow participants. Such assessments help you understand how you are seen by others and how your behaviors impact them. These assessments also act as a challenge in that they can contain new and surprising information for you to accommodate. Further challenges arise within the classroom from staff and fellow participants. A formal classroom also provides support when information presented in the classroom or in class discussion confirms your beliefs, or when materials and exercises are provided that allow you to practice new skills.

These three elements also need to be imbedded in development experiences you have outside the classroom. Without that balance of assessment, challenge, and support, other developmental opportunities are not likely to help you grow as a leader. To drive your development, you must assess your situation and your skills, seek challenges that are developmentally appropriate, and create support for helping you meet those challenges.