

WELL Leadership Education

Developing Women Who Lead with Compassion and Create Change

Women's E-Learning in Leadership (WELL)

Compassionate Leadership 10-Session Leadership Program

Instructor: Dr. Fariba Parsa

WELL Leadership Education

At Women's E-Learning in Leadership (WELL), we believe sustainable leadership begins from within.

Effective leaders understand themselves, recognize the dignity of others, build trusting relationships, and have the courage to turn their values into action.

WELL Leadership Education offers two complementary leadership programs:

1. Compassionate Leadership — Lead Yourself and Others

2. Leadership, Organizing & Community Building — Lead Communities and Create Change

Together, these programs help women develop the inner and interpersonal capacities of leadership and the practical skills necessary to mobilize communities and create meaningful social change.

1. Compassionate Leadership

Lead Yourself. Lead Others. Lead with Humanity.

10-Session Leadership Program

Instructor: Dr. Fariba Parsa

Leadership is not simply about managing people or achieving results.

It begins with knowing yourself and learning how to relate to other human beings with awareness, courage, empathy, dignity, and compassion.

WELL's 10-session Compassionate Leadership program helps emerging and established women leaders develop the inner capacities and practical leadership skills necessary to lead people and organizations effectively while preserving human dignity.

Intellectual Foundations

The program draws on several complementary approaches to leadership and human development.

Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter

Authors of *The Mind of the Leader: How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results*, published by Harvard Business Review Press. Their work identifies three important qualities for human-centered leadership:

Mindfulness — Selflessness — Compassion

Scott Jeffrey | Founder of CEO sage

Scott Jeffrey's work on self-leadership emphasizes that effective leadership begins with inner development. His approach integrates self-awareness, personal values, emotional intelligence, psychological development, mindful practices, communication, and living with greater integrity and purpose.

WELL integrates these ideas with research and practice in compassionate leadership, women's leadership, human dignity, and organizational change.

The 10 Sessions

Session 1 — Leadership Begins Within

From Self-Awareness to Self-Leadership

Before we can lead others effectively, we need to understand ourselves.

Participants examine:

- What kind of leader am I?
- What experiences have shaped me?
- What are my strengths?
- What triggers my reactions?
- How do my emotions influence my leadership?

Participants begin developing a personal leadership profile and identify one area of leadership they want to strengthen during the program.

Core idea: Know yourself before trying to lead others.

Session 2 — Values, Purpose & Authentic Leadership

What Do I Stand For?

Leadership becomes more consistent when our actions reflect clearly understood values.

Drawing partly on Scott Jeffrey's values-based self-leadership approach, participants identify their core values and examine whether their everyday leadership behaviors reflect those values.

Participants explore:

- Personal values
- Leadership purpose
- Authenticity
- Integrity
- The relationship between values and decisions
- Turning values into observable behaviors

Exercise: Develop your Personal Leadership Values Statement.

Core idea: Leadership is not only what you believe. It is how you behave.

Session 3 — Mindful Leadership

Creating Space Between Stimulus and Response

Leaders frequently operate under pressure.

Mindfulness helps leaders become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, assumptions, and reactions before acting.

Participants practice:

- Presence
- Attention
- Emotional awareness

- Recognizing automatic reactions
- Pausing before responding
- Remaining centered during uncertainty

Core idea: Awareness creates choice.

Session 4 — Listening as Leadership

Listen to Understand

Compassionate leadership begins with attention.

Participants learn the difference between hearing, listening to respond, and listening to understand.

The session develops:

- Active listening
- Asking meaningful questions
- Recognizing nonverbal communication
- Listening without immediately judging
- Creating space for other voices
- Understanding what may not be explicitly said

Participants practice listening through paired leadership conversations.

Core idea: People are more willing to follow leaders who make them feel heard.

Session 5 — Empathy, Compassion & Human Dignity

See the Person, Not Only the Problem

Empathy helps leaders understand another person's experience.

Compassion asks the next question:

What can I do that will help?

Participants explore the relationship among:

Empathy → Compassion → Constructive Action

The session also introduces human dignity as a leadership principle.

Every person deserves to be treated as someone with inherent worth, voice, agency, and potential.

Participants examine how leadership practices can either strengthen or undermine people's dignity.

Core idea: Compassionate leadership recognizes both the humanity and the potential of others.

Session 6 — Compassionate Communication

Communicating Across Differences

Compassion does not mean avoiding disagreement.

Strong leaders must sometimes communicate difficult information, challenge assumptions, establish boundaries, or say no.

Participants learn how to:

- Communicate clearly
- Ask rather than assume
- Recognize different perspectives
- Manage emotional reactions
- Disagree respectfully
- Communicate across differences
- Remain curious during conflict

Exercise: Transform a difficult conversation into a compassionate leadership conversation.

Core idea: Compassion and courage belong together.

Session 7 — Trust, Psychological Safety & Belonging

Creating Environments Where People Can Contribute

Leadership is not only about the leader.

It is also about the environment the leader creates.

Participants examine behaviors that increase or decrease:

- Trust
- Respect
- Inclusion
- Belonging
- Psychological safety
- Participation

They consider an important leadership question:

What happens to people when I enter the room?

Do they become more willing to contribute—or more cautious about speaking?

Core idea: Compassionate leaders create conditions in which people can contribute their best thinking.

Session 8 — Compassion with Accountability

Kindness Is Not the Absence of Standards

Compassionate leadership is sometimes misunderstood as being “nice.”

But leaders are responsible for results as well as relationships.

Participants learn how to combine:

Care + Clarity + Accountability

Topics include:

- Setting expectations
- Giving constructive feedback
- Receiving feedback
- Addressing poor performance
- Establishing boundaries
- Making difficult decisions
- Holding people accountable without humiliation

Core idea: We can respect people's dignity while still expecting responsibility.

Session 9 — Leading People Through Change

Compassion During Uncertainty

Change creates uncertainty.

People may experience fear, resistance, confusion, loss of identity, or concern about their future.

This session helps leaders understand resistance rather than immediately fighting it.

Participants learn to:

- Listen to concerns
- Understand resistance
- Communicate the purpose of change
- Build trust
- Involve people in solutions
- Recognize uncertainty and loss
- Create shared ownership

Core idea: Sustainable change is not simply imposed on people. It is built with them.

Session 10 — Becoming the Leader You Want to Be

Compassion in Action

The final session moves participants from learning to practice.

Participants revisit the leadership questions they explored during Session 1.

They ask:

Who am I as a leader?

What kind of leader do I want to become?

How do people experience my leadership?

What will I do differently?

Each participant develops a:

30-Day Compassionate Leadership Action Plan

The plan identifies:

- One leadership behavior to strengthen
- One relationship to improve
- One difficult conversation to initiate
- One daily self-leadership practice
- One action that strengthens dignity within their organization or community

Participants leave with a personal commitment:

**Lead yourself with awareness.
Lead others with compassion.
Lead change with courage.**

Who Should Participate?

The WELL Compassionate Leadership program is designed for:

- Emerging women leaders
- Managers and team leaders
- Nonprofit leaders
- Civil society leaders
- Community organizers
- Educators
- Entrepreneurs
- Human rights advocates
- Women preparing for greater leadership responsibilities

No formal leadership title is required.

Leadership begins wherever a person takes responsibility for helping others move toward a better future.

What Participants Will Gain

By completing the 10 sessions, participants will strengthen their ability to:

Know themselves through self-awareness and values.

Manage themselves through mindfulness and emotional awareness.

Understand others through listening and empathy.

Lead others through compassion, dignity, trust, and communication.

Address challenges through courageous conversations and accountability.

Lead change by engaging rather than imposing.

Put leadership into practice through a personal 30-day action plan.

