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I have often used Confucius four levels of leadership as the cornerstone of teaching team building to students and teams:

1. Lead yourself
2. Give energy to the group
3. Know when to follow
4. Lead others

In doing a leadership facilitation with the NEDA boys team an interesting discussion ensued. One of the players asked the question; “**What if don’t want to lead other?**” This was a valid question. Some players don’t like to talk; they don’t feel comfortable in this role. I always ask if players do not feel comfortable running because it was not something they like to do, would we as coaches allow it.? If players are not comfortable dribbling with their left hand do we allow them to continue to use their right? Part of our role as a coach is to push players out of comfort zones. As I have often heard Allison McNeill say, “We need to get comfortable being uncomfortable”. This does not just apply to the physical part of the game. Will all players be the same calibre of leader? No, but every one can be a better leader. At some time every player must lead:

- If your player is setting pick you must lead with a vocal call
- If you are in the best position to help you must lead
- If the clock is winding down and you have the ball, you must lead
- In motion offense the low player away from the ball must lead on setting or using the screen

Some players don’t want the responsibility that they see goes with leadership. But worst than that they do not want to follow. These players can be very dangerous to a team. , NS Canada Games coach Scott James shared a talk he recently had with potential provincial team players. He asked the players if they observed him picking up loose balls that were lying around the gym. The players responded that yes they did. He asked the players if he was the one who was shooting them. No he was not the players answered. He wanted to assure the players that no job was too small for him to do, even if he was the head coach. If he saw something that would help he just did it. He was looking for players with the same attitude. We have all encountered players who when asked to pick up something respond it wasn’t mine, or I didn’t it so why should I have to pick it up. This can drain energy from a team.

I heard Dave Smart comment at a clinic one time that if you do not want to lead do you know who and when to follow. You are either a leader or a follower. You can not exist in an independent state that is neutral to everyone else on the team. When instructions are given, especially by teammates, very often it is the same players who are late in responding. They are hesitant to follow. What are you doing to improve the leadership skills of every player on your team? I always start by suggesting the players use a leadership voice every time they talk in front of their teammates.