



Exploring Leadership

PLANNING & ORGANIZATION: INITIATIVE

Initiative is about acting without waiting to be asked. Those who show initiative don't wait for the perfect moment—they see what needs to be done and just do it. Sometimes, they finish before others even notice the problem. While many young people hesitate, unsure of judgment, initiative is key to becoming a true leader. In this lesson, we'll explore examples and discuss how we can each start showing more initiative.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

Set up the environment explained in Facilitation Tips ask: "When you walked in, did you notice something that needed attention? It's interesting that we all saw it, but no one took action. Why do you think that is?" Taking care of something without being asked is initiative.

Initiative means stepping up and doing what's needed without being told. It's about recognizing an opportunity and acting on it. Leaders don't wait—they take action and inspire others to do the same. As Victor Hugo said, "Initiative is doing the right thing without being told." So, when you see something that needs to be done, don't wait for permission—just do it.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand what initiative is and how it shows up in different situations.
- Share examples of people taking initiative and discuss how it made a difference.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A few quotations cut out ahead of time (see Appendix)
- Time before the lesson to arrange the environment as described in the "Facilitation Tips" section

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Let's dive into the concept of initiative by reading and discussing quotes that highlight its importance and how we can embody it.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Before participants arrive, set up the environment to subtly encourage action. For examples: place an item in the doorway that requires them to move it to enter, leave littler in a noticeable spot, rearrange desks or chairs, scatter supplies into an unusable mess, etc.
- These intentional disruptions create opportunities to observe how participants respond and can serve as a practical demonstration of initiative in action.

- Distribute a pre-selected quote about initiative to each participant.
- Invite participants to read their quote aloud to the group.
- Facilitate a group discussion using the following questions:
 - How does initiative manifest in this group?
 - Who demonstrates the most initiative here, and why?
 - Is initiative an inherent trait or a skill that can be developed?
- Encourage participants to share personal experiences where they or others have taken initiative.
- Conclude by summarizing key insights and discussing ways to cultivate initiative.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- When you think about initiative, what actions or behaviors come to mind?
- What are specific examples of initiative? What does initiative look, sound, or feel like?
- What fears do we have to overcome in order to demonstrate initiative?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What are some real life situations in which you might show initiative?
- What fears might hold you back from taking initiative?
- How do we overcome the fears?
- How does Mark Twain's quote apply to taking initiative?
 - He said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and starting on the first one."



CONCLUSION:

At the end of the day, initiative is what sets leaders apart from followers. It's not enough to just have a plan or wait for someone to take charge—real change happens when you take the first step, no matter how small. Whether you're the first to speak up, clean up, or step in, your actions show leadership. Remember, taking initiative doesn't mean waiting for everything to be perfect. It means doing what's right now and leading the way for others to follow.

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REFERENCES

- Good Reads Initiative Quotes - <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/initiative>
- How to Teach Initiative to High School Students - <https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/how-to-teach-initiative-high-school>



APPENDIX:

"I would rather regret the things that I have done than the things that I have not." — Lucille Ball

"Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit." — Conrad Hilton

"A good plan implemented today is better than a perfect plan implemented tomorrow." — George Patton

"What we think or what we know or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence, the only consequence is what we do." — John Ruskin

"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." — Will Rogers

"It will never rain roses: when we want to have more roses, we must plant more roses."
— George Eliot

"Never interrupt someone doing something you said couldn't be done." — Amelia Earhart

"I would not sit waiting for some vague tomorrow, nor for something to happen. One could wait a lifetime, and find nothing at the end of the waiting. I would begin here, I would make something happen." — Louis L'Amour

"It is better to beg forgiveness, than ask permission." — Grace Murray Hopper

"Don't wait for your ship to come in, swim out to it." — Cathy Hopkins

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." — Abraham Lincoln

"The only way I'm going to make any friends is if I take the first step." — Alexandra Robbins



APPENDIX (CONTINUED):

"Today, not starting is far, far worse than being wrong. If you start, you've got a shot at evolving and adjusting to turn your wrong into a right. But if you don't start, you never get a chance." — Seth Godin

"Many lose through never starting. A job well begun is half done." — Orrin Woodward

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a moment before starting to improve the world."

— Anne Frank

"None will improve your lot / If you yourselves do not." — Berthold Brecht

"Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must be overcome."

— Samuel Johnson

"If you don't crack the shell, you can't eat the nut." — Russian Proverb

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do."

— Leonardo da Vinci

"The secret to getting ahead is getting started." — Mark Twain