

# Leadership Freak

Helping leaders reach higher in 300 words or less

## 16 Ways to Help Less

Help done poorly creates dependency. But, help withheld seems disconnected or cold.

Leaders who say, "How can I help," connect, change attitudes, and move agendas forward. But, help that weakens teams hurts organizations.

Over-helpful leaders frustrate teams.

Help done well strengthens.

Help done poorly weakens.

### **How to help less:**

1. Help team mates find mentors.
2. Get them started and step away. "Give me a call if you need something else."
3. Everything doesn't have to be a teaching moment. Click the dang mouse and be done with it. Move on.
4. Hold your hands behind your back and ask questions.
5. Take half a step back and listen.
6. Will you have to keep helping? Don't.
7. When deadlines are looming, help. Otherwise, offer a suggestion or two.
8. Don't be the go to guy. Needy leaders need to be needed. "Who on our team has done this before?"
9. Say, "What have we learned when mistakes are made."

[James daSilva \(http://smartblogs.com/author/jdasilva/\)](http://smartblogs.com/author/jdasilva/), senior editor at [SmartBrief \(http://smartblogs.com/\)](http://SmartBrief.com/), on how to help less:

1. Train thoroughly and energetically.
2. Find out what team members have already done and give them a crack at related problems.
3. Pause. Resist the urge to offer your solution, even if only for a minute.
4. ... if it's a problem that requires a personal touch, critical thinking? I may need to be a guide but I can't take over."
5. Buy time. Ask, "What are you thinking?" or "Where are we?" This gives you needed information and buys time to think about what advice you really want to offer.
6. When you see something they don't, get some feedback. Getting in the habit of asking the room (when applicable) will make it easier to do so when the problems come to you.
7. Stay available for backup or counsel, but not before they make an attempt at solving the problem.

(#3 on my list was inspired by James but he said it too nice for my liking.)

*When should leaders help less?*

*How can leaders help less without seeming disconnected or cold?*

Tags: [Culture \(http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/culture/\)](http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/culture/), [Growth \(http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/growth/\)](http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/growth/), [Leadership \(http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/leadership/\)](http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/leadership/), [Leadership Development \(http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/leadership-development/\)](http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/leadership-development/), [organizational success \(http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/organizational-success/\)](http://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/tag/organizational-success/)

This entry was posted on January 28, 2014 at 8:06 am and is filed under [Culture](#), [Encouragement](#), [Leading](#), [Listening](#), [Managing](#), [Mentoring](#), [Mistakes](#), [Success](#), [Taking others higher](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

## 40 Responses to "16 Ways to Help Less"

**[stevenrossyoung](#) Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:36 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

This one is huge for me Dan. I'm not a domineering leader and don't always need to be right. But, way too often, when someone asks for help, I too quickly jump to what I think. That is not very empowering and, while it may provide a quicker short-term result, it doesn't build the team or that person for the future. Truth be told, so often I take this "weaker" action/response because I don't really know how best to help in a given situation and I want to try to show-off confidence. The whole list, but particularly #4 & #5 on your list and #3 through #5 on James' list, will help me keep growing in this area. Thanks! Steve

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:32 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

Thanks for sharing your story Steven. You are like so many of us...eager to help...types. You nailed a real issue when you pointed out the need to look competent.

As I type this, I realize one leadership shift is shifting from looking competent at doing something to competent at helping others do something.

**stevenrossyoung Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:55 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

That is a true test of good leadership! The shift to which you're referring is a great goal. One must be intentional or better yet "directional" (as Andy Stanley says in his book 'The Principle of the Path') in being successful with this shift. Thanks for the challenge of becoming more "competent at helping others do something."

**daunaeasley.com Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:43 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Great and wise words.

Been there. Done that. Embarrassed to admit it.

My favorite today? "Click the dang mouse and be done with it."

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:33 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Yup, me too.

Glad you liked the "click the dang mouse option." From a writer's point of view it was my favorite too.

**Martina McGowan Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:47 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

When should leaders help less?

How can leaders help less without seeming disconnected or cold?

Helping less does not mean abandoning people or refusing to offer wise counsel when appropriate.

Helping less should occur when we feel reasonably confident that the person can actually learn to be successful with the gifts and talents that they bring to a situation along with the diminishing support we give as they grow.

Not seeming disconnected or cold assumes that we are working things out in relationship. Relationship does not require constant contact or chiding, but knowing that they have a dependable resource who will guide them or let them figure it out as appropriate. Relationship assumes connectedness in many levels and forms, some not so obvious to outsiders.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:36 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Martina. I love the compassion in stay available but avoid meddling.

Your point on, are they able to learn, is so powerful. Isn't it frustrating when we try to get people to do things that don't suit them. Useful stuff!

**Scott Powell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:48 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Well, if whys were connected to begin with trust will emerge.

If trust emerges then for me the thoughts, feelings, actions, conversation are all completely different. Think of a dear friend you really trust. Isn't that conversation different than someone you hardly know?

If, "yes" then the work was done prior to the present incident. If the prior work was done a person can feel the Leader dude or dudess has their back and a problem is something they know will be solved together.

If this is not done one is gonna need a lot more than 16 suggestions and none of them are gonna work that well.

More like everyone walking on eggshells saying what they think the other person wants to hear, face to face. Then in their heads a whole different conversation goes on.

For effective relationships there is NO substitute for trust. Do the work before hand, nurture the relationship or whistle in the dark imagining people really believe what they tell you. Duh!!!! Then they say to themselves what they really think of you as you waltz off elsewhere.

A choice, do the work to build trust or go waltzing with Matilda.

SP back to building trust and enjoying the gush of oxy that produces.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:37 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Scott. We can't minimize the underpinnings of trusted relationship when it comes to NOT helping.

**Scott Powell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 11:24 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

Dan I can't imagine minimizing the underpinnings of trust in any form or fashion. Only to the mouth breathing knuckle dragging rooting tooting idiots is the true value of trust misunderstood or minimized. Potential ah-ah moment!!!! What does every long term successful relationship have?? Personal and business? Trust, not 16 examples of what trust looks like with certain behaviors. Cut to the common denominator, saves everyone's time.

SP enjoying the oxy

**dauidallenspell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:54 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

I love #3!

Who knew that becoming a good coach would require good coaching?!? Thanks for the good advice. Keep it coming.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:38 am](#) | [Reply](#) [Rate This](#)

Thanks David...it just seems that we are all need to keep learning.

**Jerry Becker Says:**

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January 28, 2014 at 8:56 am | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

I'm seeing some great applications to parenting here as well!

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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January 28, 2014 at 9:39 am | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Jerry. So true. Parents who help too much create dependent children... ouch!

**wishart17 Says:**

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January 28, 2014 at 9:13 am | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

About to share this with my Management Team. They've been complaining about capacity issues, but I think if they can take heed to some of these suggestions we'll begin to move in the right direction. Thanks!

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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January 28, 2014 at 9:40 am | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks wishart17. Best wishes. I would love to hear the discussion and what you found most useful.

**James daSilva Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:05 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thank you! Best of luck with that conversation (and the conversations that will follow!).

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:42 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

oooo,,, “and the conversations that will follow” KaPow!

**Yan Balczewski Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:14 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

The advices are not only for leaders but also for parents. Thanks for sharing!

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:40 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Yan. Parents are leaders.

**Michael Lapointe (@mlapointedrd) Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:40 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

As a leader you have to teach your employees how to be self reliant in order to make your team stronger. These tips are good advice in achieving that. Thanks for the excellent post!

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 9:43 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Michael. The tension between doing things on your own and doing them with the team is constant. I'm with you, lean toward self-reliance. But, stay connected. Cheers

**James McKey (@jmckey) Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 10:05 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

To give it a nice visual, I would say 'I know where I'd like us to wind up, but I'll be excited to see how you get us there.'

So as a leader, CLEARLY define the desired outcome as you see it so there's no uncertainty of your vision, and then offer to be the occasional navigator if their GPS ever hiccups.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:43 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks James. "GPS" lots of leadership applications there.

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[January 28, 2014 at 10:07 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

The comment about stepping back and asking questions, really resonated for me. We're quick to jump in with solutions and may not know the whole story or understand the others' perspective. This is more about being "selfless" and "humble" as a leader as opposed to pushing your own agenda

Questions increase our understanding and help build capacity. Solutions keep people dependent; and at worse. resentful

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:44 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Sue. I really believe in the power of body movements to communicate. Glad it found resonance with you. I wonder how many over-help issues are solves with a half-step back?

**fjmoricca Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 10:53 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

At times I too will quickly jump to what I think – this is typically when I am feeling harried or otherwise frustrated and want to get back to what I was doing. That's a BIG watch out for me and maybe for others as well because it sends the wrong message. It is exactly at those times when I need to slow down and allow them to come to a solution with guidance from me where/when needed. That will strengthen the relationship as Dan notes at the top of the post.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:47 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks fjmoricca. I like the idea here. It not unusual for leadership to include acting in counter-intuitive ideas.

**alexbtulane Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 12:23 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Adding on to “what have we learned when mistakes are made;” and what can be done to prevent reoccurrences. Leadership is not functioning if mistakes are repeating continually.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 11:50 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Alex. Wonderful observation.

I added the “what have we learned...” statement because it reflects our attitude toward mistakes. People who believe that honest mistakes won’t be punished don’t need as much help. Punishing mistake-makers means people come to us more frequently BEFORE they move forward.

**Charlee Hanna Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 1:30 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

There is a cartoon of a bear in a food stamp line. The lady behind the desk says “We can’t feed the bears because it creates dependency”

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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**i**[January 29, 2014 at 11:51 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Charlee...

**Rick Martinez Says:**

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**i**[January 28, 2014 at 1:41 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

I, too, believe this is an excellent post. Staff help is not what “we” believe it to be: It’s what our staff say it is, and ultimately what their performance show it as. Edward Deming might even go one step further. He might say leadership “help” will show up in the bottomline and repeat customers—customers that boast about our products or service, and tell others or bring friends back with them.

Leaders really do need “inner” ground rules for dialogue that allow them to be present to another person’s issues in a quiet, receptive way encouraging the soul to come forth— in a way that does not presume to know what is right for the other but allows the other person to find one’s own answers at one’s own level and pace.

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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**i**[January 29, 2014 at 11:53 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Rick. That little word “present” is getting a lot or mileage these days, and rightly so.

I see insight and compassion in your comment.

**Liz Moon Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 3:50 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Well this hit a nerve! I'm not a go-getter I'm an enabler. This was very helpful. I'm afraid to pass this along though because I know my team will be pointing at me

**docdisc Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 4:20 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Regarding your #5 Dan, Take a half step back and listen...and then take another half step back and be quiet. Take a full step back and ask what others think...keep stepping back...at some point you will actually see folks doing for themselves what you had been doing all along...and probably get waaay better results than just you doing it, over and over and over...

**Dan Rockwell Says:**

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[January 28, 2014 at 8:30 pm](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Thanks Doc. New leadership strategy. Keep stepping back.

It's interesting to think of the proactive leadership behaviors that enable leaders to keep stepping back.

**docdisc Says:**

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[January 29, 2014 at 10:46 am](#) | [Reply](#) **Rate This**

Hmm, could even be a metric that leaders would want to be monitoring, both in themselves and in those they mentor...whoa, getting too pro-active, sorry!

**Nomzi Kumalo Says:**

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January 29, 2014 at 5:50 am | Reply **Rate This**

The whole world would be in a whole lot less of a mess if leaders understood that smothering soothes the ego but feeds resentment. I am slowly understanding that it is too hard to be understood and way easier to try to understand.

**Nomzi Kumalo Says:**

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January 29, 2014 at 5:53 am | Reply **Rate This**

Thank you for the reminder Dan

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