Ethics Matters – Part 1
An Ethical Leadership (EL) Activity

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Activity Goal:**
Practice communicating directly that ethics is important

**Time:**
8 -10 minutes

**Activity Format:**
- Read script
- Ask questions
- Discuss/practice
- Read homework script

**Leader Note:**
Strive to gain participation from everyone in the group. Ask as many probing questions as needed to encourage a comprehensive discussion.

**EL Compass Point Link:**
Point 1:
Demonstrate that ethics is a priority

- Talk about Ethics
- Prove that ethics matters to you
- Encourage discussion of ethical concerns

**Script:**
“Today I would like to spend a few minutes discussing ethical leadership. We have all come in contact with a lot of different leaders over the years. Think about how you would rate each one of these people on a scale ranging from 0 (meaning they really don’t seem to care about ethics) to 10 (meaning you think of them as a role model for ethical leadership). Our staff could rate each of us on a similar scale – their rating would reflect how each of us is perceived as an ethical leader.

I assume everyone here is ethical and also wants to be perceived that way. However, research shows that just because you are ethical doesn’t mean you are perceived that way. As leaders, there are several ways we can increase our ethical leadership credibility by demonstrating to others that we think ethics is important. You need to talk the talk and walk the walk. Today, I’d like to take a couple of minutes, as a group, to come up with some words and phrases we might say which communicate that ethics matters to us. For some people using this language comes naturally, but for many of us it’s difficult. Our goal today is to listen to each other using these phrases and to practice communicating directly that ethics is important. We’re going to focus on general things you may say about ethics, not specific behaviors you think may or may not be ethical.”

**Questions/Discussion:**

1. **What could you say to communicate ethics is important?**
   *Leader note: If no one is eager to share examples, you may prompt the group by throwing out a couple of examples of your own for discussion. Some examples might include:
   - “If it’s the right thing to do, we’ll just have to figure out a way to do it.”
   - “Now that we understand what we can do, i.e., what’s legal, let’s talk about what we should do.”
   - “Ethics is not optional.”

2. **Are there times when you would be more or less likely to use a particular phrase?**

*Leader note: turn page for homework script*
Alternative Homework Assignment:
If there is no follow-up meeting scheduled to discuss homework, you may choose to have the group post their discussion on a SharePoint site or discuss via email.

Homework Script:
“I hope you’ll agree that we all now have a better idea of some language we can use to communicate directly that ethics is important. Between now and our next meeting, I would like everyone to commit to practicing this kind of language, using some of the phrases we’ve talked about today. At our next meeting please be prepared to discuss: what phrase or phrases you used, the context in which you used it, whether you found it difficult or easy to use, and how staff members reacted.”