

Risk Taking: I Dare You To!

“I dare you to!” Ever since you were little, you’ve probably heard these words from friends or other kids. Maybe some grown-ups told you to ignore such challenges. In many cases, this is good advice. When you’re a leader, though, taking risks may be necessary.

Taking risks means being open to the unknown—positive or negative. Speaking in front of a group or sharing a new idea with a group is a risk. These risks aren’t physically dangerous, but if your speech doesn’t go well, you may feel as if you’re a failure; if people don’t like your idea, you may lose confidence in yourself. A risk is *positive* if the outcome is likely to be successful, and *negative* if it’s more likely to prevent success.

When you take positive risks, you show others your leadership attitude, as well as what you care about and your willingness to try new things. You also learn to set goals and face challenges. In the process, you’ll learn more about yourself and others on your team.



For some people, trying something without knowing for certain the outcome is very unsettling. For others, the excitement of doing something new or different outweighs everything else, even if you feel like a bundle of nerves. If you’re not comfortable taking risks, sticking with things as they are may be better. Yet, sometimes not taking a risk is the greater risk because you won’t ever know what could have been possible.

IS THE RISK WORTH TAKING?

To help decide if a risk is right for you or your team, here are some general questions to think about:

- Would trying something new help solve a problem or is it just something that might be fun to try?
- Will taking this risk help or hurt anyone or anything?
- Will taking this risk support or break any laws or program or school policies?
- Are there small steps you can take to try out the new idea before risking too much?
- Are you willing not to take the risk if others prove or convince you that it isn’t worth taking?