

Ten Steps to Compassionate Leadership Through Crisis

Exceptional times call for exceptional leadership. As NHS managers, we are used to dealing with pressure and complexity, routinely making difficult decisions and handling heightened emotions. But it's important to acknowledge that what our people are facing with the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, and that it will test the skills and resilience of leaders at all levels. This simple guide is intended as a prompt – to remind you of the things it will be critical to do to keep your team focussed, together and performing well when the pressure seems relentless. It distils into 10 key guidelines with current evidence about how leaders can protect wellbeing (their team's and their own) through crisis periods.

As a leader it falls to you to...

1

Be the example.

Don't underestimate the impact on your team of your actions and the way you come across. Your calm confidence will have a powerful influence.



2

Tell it like it is.

To be prepared for what is to come, people need your full and frank assessment of the situation.



3

Maintain routines.

Now of all times, your team will need some measure of stability. Robust routines for starting and finishing shifts can do a lot to ground and connect team members who may be feeling a range of emotions.



4

Create safe spaces.

Let your team know that it's okay to wobble, to experience doubt, grief or fear. They will need times and physical spaces to de-stress and take off the mask of detachment. They will need to feel safe to offer constructive challenge.



5

Encourage everyone to talk.

...and to keep talking. Crisis situations get worse and last longer without continuous, open and inclusive communication. And the hardest part can be attentive listening when the pressure is on.



6

Be vigilant.

Look out in particular for those "heroes" driving themselves beyond reasonable limits, those team members who withdraw and seem to reject offers of help, and for those who might feel excluded from the team.



7

Acknowledge the hurt.

Being a compassionate leader means emphasising with the pain your people will experience...and recognising that it may endure. We have a diverse workforce and inclusive leaders recognise the equally diverse spectrum of issues that colleagues face due to workload and current restrictions and offer support accordingly



8

Trust your team.

We all know that trust is the key ingredient for a high performing team. It's even more important in crisis. As a leader you set a powerful example here – the trust you show in others to do the right things will be amplified by your team.



9

Give yourself space to make the right call.

To make tough decisions in the heat of the moment you will need to be both rational and intuitive. Give yourself a moment to STOP-BREATHE- REFLECT-CHOOSE



10

Look after yourself.

You are not superhuman! Who's got your back? Where is your space to recharge and make sense of the chaos?

