



COVID-19: Four Timeless Leadership Principles to Connect With People in Crisis

As COVID-19 continues to evolve, people are listening more attentively than ever to what leaders have to say. Yet, that pales in comparison to how they are observing leaders' actions.

With the turbulence of today and the uncertainty of tomorrow, leaders have a unique role to play in alleviating fears and demonstrating care while maintaining a connection to purpose. In times of crisis and beyond, leaders can lean on four timeless leadership principles linked to one overarching skill: the ability to connect with both hearts and minds.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back. No one — and no business — goes through life unscathed. Rather than feeling down when faced with inevitable setbacks, focus instead on how to effectively recover. Particularly in times of uncertainty, rely on teams and departments to problem-solve and inspire ways to overcome challenges together.

Ask yourself:

- Am I allowing this setback to hinder progress, or am I acknowledging it and taking steps to bounce back quickly?

- Am I lifting my team's and my family's spirits through calm, focused and positive energy? Or am I contributing to their fear and anxiety?
- Am I inspiring people to contribute to mission-driven work and to be the best versions of themselves?

Agility

Agility is the ability to act and pivot quickly and decisively. It's also about being flexible and adaptable. Change-ready cultures accept that change is constant and are always looking ahead to what's next instead of looking forward with a sense of completion.

Part of agility is knowing how to connect the dots for people. It is the responsibility of leaders to communicate with others in a way that creates a clear understanding of what needs to be done in the short and long term to move toward a goal. In healthcare, especially right now, processes and procedures are changing daily; change fatigue can set in fast. Therefore, it's important to focus on the "why" of decisions. Rumors and misinformation can be toxic, particularly in times of uncertainty, and it's up to organizations to connect people back to the positive difference they make each day.

Ask yourself:

- Are people seeing me take action? Am I encouraging them to do the same, to press forward with innovation even when the path is unclear?
- In the weeks and months ahead, it will be difficult to know when to push and when to hold back. Given all of the uncertainty, am I waiting too long to take action, carefully calculating every move, or am I balancing my caution while also taking intelligent risks?
- Do people know why I'm taking this action? Am I helping them understand the worth behind the work? Don't allow rumors and misinformation to fill an information vacuum; tell people the "why" or they'll make one up.
- Do I reflect on my day feeling that I made meaningful progress on the important items? Or, did I just put out fires all day?

Listening

Staying visible and connected with individuals, departments and teams will improve your judgment on how to provide support and encouragement that alleviates burnout while also still encouraging the new ideas and innovation that we need to make healthcare better. As leaders, it's also essential that we stay in touch with our people — employees and consumers — to better understand where they are today and what they will need in the future. [Rounding](#) on our employees, providers and patients is a timeless tactic that drives meaningful outcomes for you and them.

- Did I spend time listening to my colleagues' concerns and anxieties today?
- Did my body language and eye contact demonstrate that I am fully present with this person, truly listening to understand rather than just to respond?
- Am I trying to solve a problem when all the person is truly requesting is the opportunity to be heard?

Compassion

Compassion is different than sympathy or empathy. Empathy is feeling or understanding another's pain. Compassion is acting or doing something about it. Through their work in the field of "compassionomics," Dr. Stephen Trzeciak and Dr. Anthony Mazzaelli have found that, along with clinical competency, the extent to which a patient experiences compassion from caregivers, especially physicians, has tremendous effect on patient safety, patient outcomes, healthcare costs and provider resilience.

One of the most important things leaders can do for physicians, employees and patients during this time is role model compassion. As we continue to navigate this turbulent, uncertain and challenging time, as leaders and healthcare workers, let compassion be more powerful than this pandemic.

Ask yourself:

- Today, did I simply observe the problem, or did I do something to help?
- Am I modelling the guidance I'm giving others, for example, to be physically distant yet socially connected?
- Was I kind? Did I demonstrate gratitude?

As the world continues to look on at the bravery, compassion and dedication of healthcare professionals on the frontlines of COVID-19, it's valuable to see What's Right in Health Care®.

For more information, [contact us](#) or visit our [COVID-19 resources page](#).



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