Leading in Time of Uncertainty
Resources, Tips and Tools for Effectiveness

April 15, 2020

Note: Resources have been curated from both internal and external sources and will be updated periodically.

Caring for ourselves, so we can care for others

As a leader, the emotional and physical toll of managing your workforce and meeting patient needs can be overwhelming. It is vital to recognize and prioritize your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, as you continue to provide for others. Additionally, supporting the wellbeing of others can compound feelings of stress and anxiety. As you support others, you can utilize tools to protect your own wellbeing.

1. Identify a senior, executive, or parallel leader who can help support you. Talking with an identified individual to check in on your emotional wellbeing can support effective stress monitoring, resilience building, and coping.
2. Be aware of burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and moral distress; acknowledge the toll the crisis can take on you personally, in addition to your staff.
3. Access this resource on how leaders can support the physical, emotional, social, financial, and spiritual well-being of their staff and themselves. We will continue to update it.

Role Model Self-care

Leaders must not only stay in charge of their well-being, they have the power to create positive impact through role modeling their well-being behaviors. During these extraordinary times, self-care may look different than our normal routines. While it may not be possible to do everything you desire, reinvent your self-care routine by focusing on items that work for you.

Support and Share

During times of crisis, leaders tend to turn inward, internalizing worry and anxiety and working to solve problems. Who supports you?

- Use a layered approach to receive support and express your wellbeing concerns, while still maintaining consistency and calm for your workforce and staff. Executive leaders can support senior leaders, senior leaders can support managers, and managers can support individuals.
- Use a Buddy System for peer support. Another healthcare leader understands and can acknowledge the tough situations. Listen to each other with compassion. Know that not every problem requires a solution. Take a moment to recognize accomplishments, even small ones.

Guide for supporting colleague well-being

Promote resilience

Every level of leadership can find ways to promote resilience and wellbeing during the COVID19 crisis. Examples for leaders include:

- Role model resilience activities
- Pause to acknowledge resilience and wellbeing in yourself and colleagues
- Implement resilience/well-being knowledge and activities to support colleagues
- Offer feedback loops and create listening opportunities for colleagues
- Practice compassionate listening and meaningful recognition
- Double check internal communications for emotional tone and impact

**Listen compassionately**
Be a present, compassionate listener. At times, listening has more value than solving. Recognize that providing information can be helpful; it is also helpful to hear the emotional toll your team’s experience.

**Respond with leadership**
During a crisis, the demand for leader’s attention is magnified. Leaders must handle the high volume of information, make increased number of decisions and continue to care for employees and patients. Keeping focus is a challenge and yet a key to leader well-being. The “Three T’s” from the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI), provides a framework to approach handling complex situations through streamlining thoughts and keeping perspective on priorities.

- **Transparency**: Employees need transparency from leaders, presenting the facts without sugarcoating or pretending. While being transparent, focus on how do we use the data and present the data in transparent and compelling ways. *Consistently tell the truth, be available for questions, let individuals know when you do not have an answer (and go seek one if able), and listen compassionately.*
- **Team**: Leaders can easily retreat into solitary thinking, overwhelmed by the daily pressures of the work and forgetting to connect with peers and colleagues. Every single leader dealing with this crisis needs a support system. We need to do this together, during this difficult time. *Build up your team by offering a brave space for your leaders to decompress.*
- **Trusting calm**: Leaders need to be reassuring and measured – communicating trust that the team will find their way together through the present situation. Balance being the voice of calm with personal honesty about heightened feelings in this extraordinary time. Reassure yourself in the reality of the situation by finding and maintaining your own wellbeing and a support system. *Help stay calm by using a buddy system who you can connect with. Support your calm with a breathing or mindfulness practice that works for you.*

**Try simple, actionable behaviors**

**Safe/Brave Space Check-Ins**: Create a small (10 max) virtual meeting (Zoom), or a text thread, for a safe/brave space connection with other leaders to be able to share one another’s emotional burdens. Keep it simple: brief emotional check-in, give everyone a chance to talk or pass, let go of fixing/solving problems.

**One Word Check-Ins**: In a huddle or at the end of a meeting, have everyone go around and say a word or phrase that describes how they are feeling. Staff may find comfort, even hope, in putting words to their emotions.

**Resources**

The resources below include websites, guides, articles, podcasts, videos, webinars and more. *Please note some options may require registration.*

**MercyOne’s COVID-19 Website**: [Click Here](#)
This website is managed by MercyOne and contains critical information for all colleagues across the system regarding COVID-19.
**Weekly Rosary:** Join as One in the power of prayer each Thursday at Noon (12 p.m.). Join via [Zoom](#) or call 855-880-1246; Meeting ID: 197 989 654.

**Leader Guide: Specifically designed for MercyOne leaders**
- **We Breathe, We Pray, We Stick Together:** A leader’s guide to help teams cope, stay connected, focused and engaged during uncertain times.

**Employee Assistance Programs**
- 24/7 access to Employee Assistance Programs is available to provide confidential resource providing no-cost counseling, information and referral services to help address personal, family or work-related concerns.
  - CommonSpirit colleagues can access Vital Work Life through the [Inside CHI website](#) or 877-679-3819
  - Trinity Health colleagues, please contact Carebridge through the [MyBenefits website](#) or 800-437-0911.

**Videos: Short videos on key topics**
- **If You Lead People Today, Do These 5 Things** – Marcus Buckingham

**Articles, Books, Websites:**
- **Avoiding Decision Paralysis in the Face of Uncertainty** – Harvard Business Review; [Article](#)
- **Crisis Leadership: Lessen the Impact of Chaos on the People You Lead** – Center For Creative Leadership; [Digital/eBook](#)
- **Four Things Leaders Must Do When Times Are Tough** – Forbes; [Article/Website](#)
- **How to Lead Through A Crisis** – Center For Creative Leadership; [Article/Website](#)
- **How to Reassure Your Team When the News Is Scary** – Harvard Business Review; [Article](#)
- **It’s Getting Personal – Some Guidance For Managers** – Sally Williamson & Associates; [Article/Website](#)
- **Leading in this unprecedented moment: 8 wellbeing leadership strategies for responding to COVID-19** – Global Wellness Institute; [Article/Website](#)
- **Leadership in Uncertain Times: Become an Ambiguity Absorber** – The RBL Group; [Article/Website](#)
- **Leading In Uncertain Times** – Root; [Article](#)
- **Leading Your People In Times of Crisis** – Root; [Article/Website](#)
- **Managing When The Future Is Unclear** - Harvard Business Review; [Article](#)
- **The Heart of Resilient Leadership: Responding to COVID-19** – Deloitte Insights; [Article/Website](#)
- **What Your Coworkers Need Right Now Is Compassion** – Harvard Business Review; [Article](#)

**Tip Sheets, Templates, and Quick Reference Guides:**
- **22 Leadership Strategies That Build Trust in Times of Uncertainty** – Quantum Workplace: [PDF Guide](#)
  - 4 Tips for Asking Productive Questions
  - 5 Strategies for Coping with Sustained Stress
  - Build & Maintain Trust with the Entire Care Team
  - Communication Tips for Stressful Times
- **Managing Employee Emotions During the COVID-19 Pandemic** – Quantum Workplace; [PDF Guide](#)
- **Strategies for Leading in Stressful Times: Huddle Notes** – Catalyst Learning; [PDF Tip Sheets/Reference](#)
Podcasts and Blogs:
- **Acknowledge Reality – Leader Clarity in the Covid-19 Crisis** from The Leading Edge Podcast – Leadership Exelleration; **Podcast/Blog (23 minutes)**
- **Being The Leader People Will Follow During Crisis** from The Leading Edge Podcast – Leadership Exelleration; **Podcast/Blog (20 minutes)**
- **How to Communicate in a Crisis** – Harvard Business Publishing; **Blog**
- **How to Lead in A Crisis** – Development Dimensions International (DDI); **Podcast (35 minutes)**
- **Leading Through Uncertainty** – Harvard Business Publishing; **Blog**

### Webinars

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<td><strong>Crucial Skills For Crucial Times – A 5 Part Webinar Series:</strong></td>
<td>Offered by VitalSmarts; <a href="#">Register here</a> for one, or all of the live Webinars and/or to obtain recordings.</td>
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| • *How to Influence the Vital Behaviors You'll Need in the Post-COVID World* *(Recording Now Available)*  
March 31 at 10 am MT - With Joseph Grenny | *Recordings and slides from past sessions will be available to you upon registration.* |
| • *Crucial Conversations in a Crisis: Keys to Reduce the Lag Time Between Disaster and Response*  
April 7 at 10 am MT - With Joseph Grenny | |
| • *200% Accountability: How to Succeed In an Ongoing Pandemic*  
April 14 at 10 am MT - With Joseph Grenny | |
| • *Stress-free Productivity During Times of Stress: Skills To Regain Control*  
April 21 at 10 am MT - With Justin Hale | |
| • *Habits for Working from Home: How to Adapt Your Workplace Routines for At-Home Success*  
April 28 at 10 am MT - With Emily Gregory | |