

A Leader's Survival Kit

Maintaining the motivation of personhood

To say we are in a time of unprecedented change and stress doesn't do it justice. The stress related to times of pandemic and fear of leading and supporting frontline teams who are serving our communities and vulnerable people is exponential. Many leaders experience sleepless nights at times. But wrestling with uncertainty, trying to maintain a sense of normal in an anything but normal situation and planning for a future that changes every day as well as maintaining operations of a health or social care service, is causing a significant impact on leaders.

We are all dealing with circumstances that none of us could have imagined a few months ago, so it is no wonder we have feelings of inadequacy, fear, uncertainty and exhaustion. Now more than ever is a time we desire reassurance; our resilience is being tested to the limit. The leadership label can feel like just another miserable weight on your shoulders.

Remember, you are not in this alone. Leadership is about relationships, not being a superhero. You are in the right place for such a time as this. Here are five simple statements of encouragement to keep hold of:

- Remember we are all just human and you are doing your best.
- Your imperfections make you valuable as a leader – people can relate to you and trust you with their own uncertainties if they know you have some too. We are all perfectly imperfect.
- In moments of stress, draw a breath, keep in touch with your humanity, emotions and intuition and carry on.
- Ask others for their views – they will have ideas you haven't thought of.
- There is no need to constantly be the superhero. Keep hold of your courage for those moments when you do need to speak up or out.

So how do we continue to provide a motivation for personhood and person centredness in a time when we are running on empty ourselves? The answer itself lies within the question. It begins with self.... The practice of restorative self-care among leaders is hugely important for sustaining energy and building resilience. When leaders can make time for self-care, they also model it as a legitimate and important priority for others around them.

Physical energy

Good nutrition, exercise, sleep, and rest are the foundation of physical energy, but they are also vital for managing emotions and focusing attention. Is your body getting what it needs to properly restore itself each day?

Intellectual energy

This is about the mental ability for sustained concentration and attention, for data, for memory, and for speed, flexibility and creativity of thought. What do you do to relax that gives your mind the time and opportunity to recover throughout the day?

Emotional energy

Emotional energy is central to how effectively you understand and regulate your emotions, as well as how you connect with others. What coping mechanisms do you use to process your emotions and develop your self-awareness? Who or what in your life helps you experience positive emotions?

Spiritual energy

We all have and feel a connection to something bigger than ourselves. What that is will be deeply personal but could include things like values, connection to culture and community, the natural world, and/or to faith and our beliefs. Spiritual energy is ultimately about motivation; it ensures congruence between who we are and what we do (authenticity). What really matters to you?

Even if you are feeling exhausted now, by recognising what personhood in leadership looks, sounds and feels like you will begin to have the tools and thoughts to support taking steps towards breaking a cycle and creating a leadership culture which resonates with person centeredness.

At MCM we believe the five key leadership components grounded in personhood are:

Inspire – As leaders we need to inspire people with purpose, passion and set the desired culture by walking the walk and talking the talk. Inspiration comes from genuineness, authenticity and role modelling. From a personhood perspective, this involves making a conscious decision to be real and embrace vulnerability. Inspiration, at its core, is about finding ways to enhance the potential of others empowering people to believe and reach potential beyond what the limitations often set by their lived experience. The methods by which this is done will vary from person to person, however, the outcome is always the same – increased capability, capacity and resilience.

Be in it! – commitment, commitment, commitment. In order to be inspirational, you need to be committed to your team, yourself and the purpose of your organisation. You will never be able to be truly in it without all three of these criteria being met. In times of crisis this is the foundation stone you continually refer to. It is the reason for why you do what you do.

Commitment to Your Team

Leadership isn't about you; it is about the people that you are leading. Person centred leadership is about being committed to your team members and creating an empowered way for them to achieve success. You must love your team and be prepared to support them in the good times and not so good.

Commitment to Yourself

Whilst leadership isn't about you the fact is in order to be a person centred leader you must love yourself and be committed to your wellbeing and development as an equal priority. Make the time to refuel and recharge your tank. When you lead through a filter of vulnerability and emotions you need to balance this with time to recharge. Ask the fundamental question – Are you being kind to self and if not why not – your survival as a leader depends on it. Be willing to invest time and energy in you – You're worth it.

Commitment to Purpose

Purposeful Leadership is an intentional process of becoming a whole person in relationship with others. Purpose is the stabilising, presenting force creating the ability to focus on what matters and engage to innovate and lead.

Character – Know what shapes your character as a leader– What are the values which define who and what you are? What is the legacy of leadership you wish to impart? How do you model this to others? Character is defined and developed over a lifetime, it is a part of your story and when you are leading through times of challenge, this is when your true character (and potentially some cracks which need some further development) will shine through. It is through your leadership character and the attachments, interactions and the way you live life that will provide you with the survival tools to weather the storms that come. What are you doing to develop integrity, genuineness and being real – that's the character that will survive the tests of leadership?

Leeway to Learn – If life is a highway which is travelled through moments of good, bad and ugly then we must take the leeway to learn a little along the way. From a health and social care perspective do we create a culture where people are free to take risks and try things out? How do we support learning, is it regulatory based or people first based? Ultimately people are going to make mistakes especially in times of heightened stress – do you have the defined parameters to allow the mistakes to happen? They will, it's all about how we support the ability to adapt and redirect and learn from these along the way.

Appreciation – Taking the time to show appreciation is essential to survival and staying true to personhood in leadership. To acknowledge success stories and achievement costs little time and no money, but it goes a long way, it just needs to be acknowledged in a way that is meaningful to the individual or team. Strong leaders which excel at motivation are adept at knowing and connecting with people and true appreciation comes from a heart of integrity and genuineness.

We know it is difficult to motivate and inspire when as a leader you are exhausted. These keys are designed to be able to help you remain true to a person centred leadership approach and to allow you some time to replenish your own wellness.

NAME IT | Seeing and saying things for what they are.

Leadership in times of stress acknowledges life on the front end of reality. Leaders recognise events and their significance and do not shy away from what they see and how to turn what can be seen as crisis into something which maintains meaning. Decipher the need of the moment, name it and then influence an outcome without disempowering the team you lead that is true to your purpose, mission, vision and values.

STRATEGISE | Collaborate with flexibility.

A key to survival for leaders is to keep those around them focused. It's much better to keep those around you focused on the primary objective and invite their input as this is then a shared journey. In crisis, changing goal posts are inevitable so maintain momentum by being flexible. Despite the changing goal posts there are four common elements that will not change:

1. The Outcome - See the big picture and keep this as your focus point.
2. Acknowledge the moving parts but do not get caught up in them.
3. The rule of cause and effect. Be aware that your response will make more moving parts – be aware of the cause and effect.
4. Be realistic.

OPTIONS | Many roads lead to Rome.

Be willing to consider multiple approaches to how you achieve the way forward. Engage others in your team by empowering. Adopt a solution without judgment approach. A resourceful leader will use imagination and collaboration in developing the plan ultimately enhance your culture as 'We are all in this together'.

DECISIVENESS | Own it.

Taking ownership of the solution means being decisive. Strong leaders will use a combination of real-time data along with their "gut"; the wisdom built on years of leadership experience combined with the solutions suggested by their team. When they

make that decision, they know they need to "sell" it to key stakeholders and this is a much more palatable approach when all people are on the journey together. You do not have to do it alone, but you do need to own it.

EMBRACE THE CRAZY | Listen to unpopular advice.

Unsuccessful leaders listen only to those who agree with them and often encourage one-dimensional thinking. The successful crisis leader seeks out individuals who have a different perspective on an issue. They include individuals with whom they may not agree and whose advice may be contrary to that of their closest advisers.

COURAGE, CALM and CALAMITY | Accentuate the positive.

Maintain a sense of urgency with calm assuredness. In crisis things move quickly and there needs to be a sense of urgency – be sure of the key messages and deliver them in a way that avoids panic and provides a realistic level of hope. Be courageous. It's not a popularity contest and ultimately when you lead with assurity and courage your integrity and genuineness shines through.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT | Embrace the risk.

Crises often brings the leader face-to-face with a set of situations they have not previously seen. There are questions to which they do not know the answers. Gathering diverse viewpoints from individuals with whom they might not agree, but respect, likely means they may create solutions not previously tried, and outcomes of which may be unknown. The strong leader is prepared to take the calculated risk and embrace it.

Dare to be different.

BE KIND TO SELF.

This is a moment for you to reinforce the character you have instilled in your culture. You've got this. You also need to take time to recharge your batteries. Trust your team, empower them and do not feel the need to control the uncontrollable. The volume of decisions required in multi-faceted crises can almost guarantee that not every decision will be 100% correct. Strong leaders are prepared to admit their mistakes, after all, this is how we continue to refine the characteristics of personhood and leadership.