

# LEADERSHIP

## Why is this relevant?

The next weeks and months are going to be challenging and require a lot from frontline workers. There will be good days and bad days. Leaders will need to utilise all of the resources available to maintain morale and inspire workers to overcome the challenges faced.

## Core constructs/concepts

Leaders, both formal and informal, can influence the performance and emotional experience of their teams.

A key element of effective leadership in the context of the covid-19 response is ensuring positive emotional contagion. Emotional contagion is the transfer back and forth of emotions and moods between individuals. Emotional contagion is important because evidence suggests that the spread of emotion and mood between individuals can influence team cohesion, impact upon communication, cooperation and coordination, and determine overall team effectiveness.

Leaders' emotions and moods are particularly likely to be transferred to others. Leaders, therefore, play a crucial role in galvanising positive emotion and morale, which can then be channelled towards tackling the outbreak.

Although there are a range of leadership frameworks, transformational leadership styles have been directly linked to positive emotional contagion and increases in morale and performance.

Transformational leaders encourage and motivate team members to achieve shared goals (like combatting the coronavirus) by instilling positive emotions in teams (e.g., pride, determination, and optimism) and helping members cope with negative emotions (e.g., nervousness, frustration, and pessimism). This is achieved through transformational behaviours.

Transformational leaders exhibit the following behaviours:

- Inspirational motivation: leaders formulate a clear and attractive vision that others can buy into
- Idealised influence: leaders represent an attractive symbol of their vision to team members and their behaviour can be modelled
- Individual consideration: leaders pay attention to the development needs of their team members and try to facilitate such development
- Intellectual stimulation: leaders help team members to be creative and innovative in their work

These behaviours align nicely with what we know about in extremis leadership. Leaders who perform well in extremely challenging situations:

- Possess an inherent motivation for the task



- Embrace continuous learning
- Share risk with their followers
- Adopt an approach to work that is in common with their followers
- Are highly competent, and inspire trust and loyalty in others

Embedding transformational and in extremis leadership behaviours into ways of working should help spread positive emotions through the healthcare teams tackling the covid-19 pandemic and enable workers to effectively tackle the outbreak.

## Practical recommendations

- Leaders should be aware of their impact upon others' emotions. When interacting with others, it is important that leaders attend to their own emotions, the emotions of others, and think about the reciprocal impact that both parties can have.
- Leaders should try and be mindful about whether the emotions and moods they are experiencing will be beneficial for the team, and if not, try to regulate those feelings.
- Ensuring the emotional climate created allows for and encourages the expression of positive emotions (e.g., pride, determination, and optimism), even in difficult circumstances, can be helpful.
- Being empathetic to team members and acknowledging team members' feelings is important as empathy can have a positive impact upon the team, such as by reducing tension and encouraging cooperation, and is also linked to other factors like minimising risks related to moral injury.
- Applying transformational leader behaviours, such as idealised influence, can help maintain morale and galvanise followers towards achieving overarching goals.
- Complementary in extremis leadership behaviours might be modelled to lead followers through this extreme situation.
- As important as what a leader does is that they are true to their values and unique aspects of their identity. This is what gives authenticity – a quality that is vital to influencing, inspiring and leading a team. Drawing on those unique strengths will contribute to a more transformational approach.

### Relevant literature

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