Vulnerability, Empathy, and Compassion and Your Team during a Time of Change

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Objectives for this Lesson

• To establish a foundation of what empathy, compassion, and vulnerability are.
• To learn the benefits of infusing these 3 qualities into your team.
• To develop a toolkit for how to build a team culture based in empathy, compassion, and vulnerability.
Vulnerability

- Normalizing weaknesses and limitations
- Asking for help is expected and welcomed
- Permission to admit insecurities in order to face them and build trust


"...and that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength."

— Audre Lorde

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The Vulnerability Loop at Work

• Person A sends a signal of vulnerability.
• Person B detects this signal.
• Person B responds by signaling their own vulnerability.
• Person A detects this signal.
• A norm is established; closeness and trust increase.

Benefits of Vulnerability

- Increased trust
- Problem-solving environment
- Cooperation a well developed muscle

What is Empathy?

Empathy occurs when one person vicariously experiences the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of another.


"If we’re going to find our way back to each other, we have to understand and know empathy." - Brené Brown
What Empathy gets confused with...

Sympathy

• Feeling sorry for someone; not feeling with someone

Redirection to avoid discomfort

• “Look on the bright side…”
• “At least you don’t…”

The reflex to “fix it”

• Rarely does a response make things better. Connection does.

Practicing Empathy

Recognize triggers that may prevent you from being empathetic

• Be honest with yourself
• Put your own feelings away and center yourself so you can be about and for the other person
• Put aside your own viewpoint

Practicing Empathy

Ask questions; avoid making assumptions

- What’s hard about this?
- Help me understand what you’re going through.
- What else is going on?
- How has that been affecting you?
- What am I missing?

Practicing Empathy

Use active listening

• Validate through listening
  • Nodding
  • Minimal interruptions
  • Eye contact
• Restate/rephrase what is said
• Pay attention to the way things are said
• Consider/establish the emotion expressed behind the words

Skills Strengthened by Empathy

- Creativity
- Feeling safe
- Emotional Connection
- Identifying Needs
- Collaboration
- Negotiation
What is compassion?

If empathy is feeling emotion with someone, compassion is the next step: **asking how to support the person.**

- State of mind and emotion that drives us to act with kindness towards others
- A universal language
- Demonstrates care
What Is Compassionate Management?

• Servant leadership
• Desire to aid development of team.
• Clear job expectations
• Assistance offered
• Employee fears addressed.

• Honesty about where compassion is difficult for you.
  • Ask yourself, where do you revert to fear or anger?

Some Distinctions

● Being compassionate ≠ doormat
  ○ Instead, accountability with compassion

● Move away from fear based management
  ○ Responding with fear, anger, or irritation when employees underperform
    ■ Used to “motivate” people
  ○ Very effective
    ■ Short term, churn and burn
    ■ Not sustainable

Benefits of Compassionate Management

- Increased motivation
- Increased loyalty and commitment
- Employees stay on the job
- Employee development is collaborative
- Creation of a thriving culture
- Employees become their best self