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COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP



Compassionate Leadership

WRITTEN BY LORRAINE STAMP

REFERENCES TO PUBLISHED PAPERS THROUGHOUT

The average person will spend approximately 90,000 hours at work over their lifetime, or close to 10 years. When employees are spending such a long time in a place where we do not receive or get the chance to express compassion it can take a toll on our emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing. Employees suffering or experiencing anxiety, stress and distractions will ultimately lead the business to suffer.

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP CONSISTS OF TREATING THOSE YOU LEAD WITH COMPASSION IN ALL SITUATIONS AND CREATING A CULTURE OF COMPASSION THAT SUPPORTS THE FLOURISHING OF EVERYONE WITHIN THAT CULTURE.

Let us talk about compassionate leadership.

Many people are researching the phrase compassion at work as we continue to experience a time of uncertainty in the workplace. There are some employees that are working from home, and some are now returning to the office. We can see that this is causing distress for some.

Over the years there has been a lot of focus on emotional intelligence and one of the core elements is empathy, but is empathy enough?

Many people over the past 16 months have been reflecting on life in general and looking at what is important to them in their life. Some have invested thousands of pounds learning new skills to enhance their emotional mental and physical wellbeing, some deeper researching into self-compassion and compassion for others.

Whilst for some people they had an option to work from home and continue to do so, many realised that they saw and felt a decrease in their stress and anxiety levels. They also felt they had more autonomy and freedom in their work.



RINPOCHE [1992] SAYS:

“COMPASSION IS NOT SIMPLY A SENSE OF SYMPATHY OR CARING FOR THE PERSON SUFFERING, NOT SIMPLY A WARMTH OF HEART TOWARDS THE PERSON BEFORE YOU, OR A SHARP RECOGNITION OF THEIR NEEDS AND PAIN, IT IS ALSO A SUSTAINED AND PRACTICAL DETERMINATION TO DO WHATEVER IS POSSIBLE UNNECESSARY TO HELP ALLEVIATE THEIR SUFFERING”.

So, the question I have researched, is – Will employees expect wellbeing to be part of the organisations culture and values. With compassion being a key part of it.

Some people may say that there is no place for personal issues at work and others may think they have too much to do to be compassionate, or other things are far more important within their organisation to deal with than compassion.

I have observed over the years many employees including that at CEO and board level leave an organisation because of the culture and a lack of compassion towards others. This has encouraged me to start working on this and working with organisations to help shape their culture around compassion.

I have been looking at some of the common questions, fears and doubts about compassion at work, and thought I would share this in this brief article.

- What is compassion?
- What triggers compassion?
- Why is it that compassion is rare in organisations?
- What is compassionate leadership?
- Does there need to be a bigger focus on compassion in organisations?
- Is compassion on its own enough?



What is compassion?

If you were to look in the dictionary it would say that compassion is a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of others and a wish to help them.

But being compassionate is far more than a feeling of sympathetic and kind to someone. My take on this is that when you notice another person's pain and suffering you allow them the space to share and then together you support them looking at ways to move forward. This involves an authentic and genuine desire to help.

Put simply, compassion is taking action to alleviate the sufferer's pain.

The taking action is so important and one of the key differentiators of a compassionate person from the rest.

Compassion at work can take an individual to individual, or a collective form. I feel that when the organisation at large embodies compassionate leadership within their culture employees will feel they can be authentic and therefore more engaged. We all know that happy and engaged employees are more productive, resourceful, and innovative so this speaks for itself.

WHAT TRIGGERS COMPASSION?

To better understand compassion let us look at the triggers.

Compassion is triggered by noticing someone who is suffering. Suffering is a broad term, and it covers different types of unpleasant experiences that an individual goes through during a lifetime (e.g., divorce, physical illness, loss, or illness of a loved one, difficulties with the children). It can also be triggered due to an event at work or home.

In our work life we may experience bullying, harassment, unfair treatment, lack of job security, uncertainty, or conflicts of any sort.

At home we all deal with grief in some form in our personal lives. These can all be sources of psychological distress.





WHY IS IT THAT COMPASSION IS RARE IN ORGANISATIONS?

In my research and in my experiences working within corporate organisations over the years, it is apparent that there simply is insufficient compassion.

When the question has been raised most said that they find it difficult to be compassionate at work.

The amount of pressure for performance, productivity and efficiency has resulted in a reduction of noticing other people's suffering or they are too busy to help.

When people generally feel overwhelmed or overloaded, they are less able to respond in a compassionate way.

I would add to this is it in important part of an organisations culture and vision. Is it seen as being embedded in the organisational values and for the wellbeing of their employees?

This leads to people getting the impression that compassionate behaviours are not acceptable or have no place at work. Some may say the fear of being seen as weak or of burden in others.

Therefore, they choose to hide how they feel and do not share what they are experiencing.

They may also fear being judged by others it may be some leaders fear that if they show compassion people may start taking them for granted and may even view them as a "soft touch" and take advantage of their compassion.

WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP?

Compassionate leadership is more than just being a compassionate individual and caring for a colleague who is in pain. A compassionate leader, as well as being a compassionate person, encourages compassion and caring in the wider organisation. And, therefore ultimately for the greater good.

They encourage employees to talk about their problems and you provide support for one another.

Lilius et al (2011) suggests that leaders should reinforce values that encourage employees to establish strong relationships with each other and to learn about each other's lives.

Leaders can act as role models and support the compassion process by expressing care and concern towards their team members. They can also encourage a culture of openness by sharing their own problems, showing that it is appropriate to talk about personal difficulties.

**“WHEN WE ARE MOTIVATED BY
COMPASSION AND WISDOM THE
RESULTS OF OUR ACTIONS BENEFIT
EVERYONE, NOT JUST OUR INDIVIDUAL
SELVES, OR SOME IMMEDIATE
INCONVENIENT CONVENIENCE’**

DALAI LAMA.

WHAT IS COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP?

	Yes	No	sometimes
• Do I actively promote a culture in which people trust each other and know that if they talk about their problems, other team members will not judge them, and they will listen and try to help?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do I actively encourage an empower others to respond to her colleague suffering?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do I show care and concern towards people in my team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do I understand the value of sharing problems with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do people in my team know that I will try to help them if they have a problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are people in my team in regular contact (e.g., through face to face or online daily, weekly department meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is there a strong connection between people in my team which makes them feel joined, seen, felt, known and not alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• When people in my team notice a change in the condition or a colleague, do they feel comfortable about inquiring further?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is it the norm in my team to know about each other's lives and pay attention to the pain and suffering of a colleague?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do people in my team feel safe in sharing their personal problems, issues, and challenges with each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do people in my team feel they can openly express their emotional pain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

These questions are designed to help leaders think about and then identify some activities they could consider adopting to foster compassion in their team and wider organisation. Questions by Khan (1998) Lilius et al (2011) and button et al (2006)



DOES THERE NEED TO BE A BIGGER FOCUS ON COMPASSION IN ORGANISATIONS?

Compassion can be thought of as 'fluffy' and not of relevance to business performance.

"When we are motivated by compassion and wisdom the results of our actions benefit everyone, not just our individual selves, or some immediate inconvenient convenience' Dalai Lama.

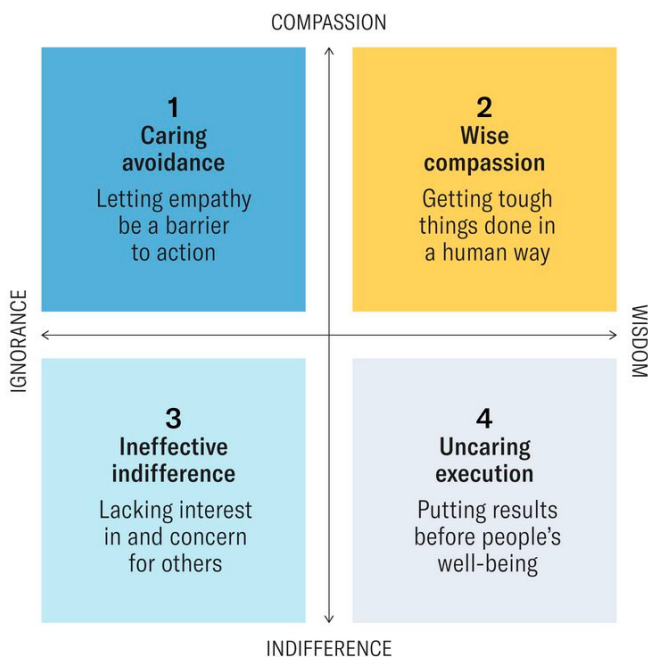
Compassionate leadership has a clear influence on clients, employees who witnessed the compassion act and those who were involved in the actual act of compassion.

Compassion helps the sufferers to manage and move forward from their difficulties.

Compassionate leadership enables the sufferer to openly express their loss and to share their painful experience. Emotional support, working flexibly and other forms of support can feature strongly as part of a compassionate response. Helping individuals to get through the grieving process and enabling them to recover from their painful circumstances faster (Lilius et al 2011)

IS COMPASSION ON ITS OWN ENOUGH?

The wise compassionate leadership matrix By Rasmus Hougaard



Source: Rasmus Hougaard

HBR

COMPASSION ON ITS OWN IS NOT ENOUGH HOWEVER IT MUST BE COMBINED WITH WISDOM.

BY WISDOM WE MEAN LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE, A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM TO DELIVER ON AGREED PRIORITIES

Let's look at the quadrants briefly:

1. In this quadrant leaders care for people, which is great, but they tend to avoid the tough parts of leadership like giving hard feedback
2. In this quadrant leaders deliver the best results. There is a balance of concern for their people with the need to move the organisation forward in an efficient productive manner. When tough action is needed, they get it done with genuine caring for people's feelings and wellbeing.
3. In this quadrant leaders are ineffective and indifferent, operating in this mode is the opposite of being mindful lacking compassion and wisdom seen as followers, uncaring and unprofessional
4. In this quadrant leaders are effectively executing on their business objectives with little compassion



Actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion.

It has been proven that having regular mindfulness routines leads to increased wise compassion.

This allows people to become more self-aware and more cognizant of their behaviours and emotions of others they have greater awareness and presence, and the leaders are more intentional in bringing wisdom and compassion to an issue.

Having more compassion

Being able to adopt genuine compassion for others starts with having compassion for yourself therefore the journey starts with self-compassion.

Having a mindset of wise compassion is the most effective, and humane way to support people through these trying and difficult times we are all experiencing across the globe.

Hougaard teamed up with Harvard Business Review and embarked on a 2-year study aimed at understanding what kind of mind leaders need to be successful in the 21st century.

The team assessed 35,000 leaders and interviewed around 250 executives from companies as diverse as Microsoft, Google, and Accenture.

The three qualities for a leader that stood out really, strongly who got says these qualities were mindfulness, selflessness, and compassion.

Benefits to employees, the organisation, and its clients

Studies on positive workplace suggest that compassion and kindness evoke positive emotions. Empathy and affection help employees dealing with a painful life event find meaning in their suffering and use it as a steppingstone to success.

For example, a person who is undergoing marital separation and is suffering from significant emotional distress can very quickly lose focus while working in an uncompassionate environment. But on the flip side, if that person receives attention, help, and support from colleagues during such difficult times, it may work wonders in rebuilding self-esteem and keeping productivity untouched (Folkman 1997, 1999; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000)

COMPASSION AFFECTS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUFFERER AND THE PERSON WHO IS PROVIDING THE SUPPORT IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

EXPERIENCING COMPASSION OF WORK CONNECTS CO-WORKERS PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND RESULTS IN A STRONGER BOND BETWEEN THEM (FROST ET AL 2000)

THOSE WHO EXPERIENCED COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP AT WORK ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT EFFECTIVE COMMITMENT TO THEIR ORGANISATION AND TO TALK ABOUT IT IN A POSITIVE TERM [LILIUS ET AL 2008]

SUPERVISORS WHO PERCEIVE THAT THEIR ORGANISATION VALUES THEIR WELLBEING ARE MORE LIKELY TO SHOW SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE PEOPLE THEY MANAGE (EISENBERGER 2006)

COMPASSION BREEDS COMPASSION. INDIVIDUALS WHO PROVIDE COMPASSION OR THOSE WHO ON THE RECEIVING END OF IT ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES THAT BENEFIT. THOSE WHO RECEIVE COMPASSION ARE SUBSEQUENTLY BETTER ABLE TO DIRECT THEIR SUPPORT AND CARE GIVING TO OTHERS (GOETZ ET AL 2010) THIS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT IN CAREGIVING ORGANISATIONS.

STUDIES (FREDRICKSON ET AL 2000, GROSS 1996) SHOW THAT EXPERIENCING POSITIVE EMOTIONS LOWERS THE HEART RATE AND BLOOD PRESSURE. IT ALSO DECREASES EMPLOYEE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS. THEREFORE, COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP CAN BE SEEN AS A WAY OF NOT ONLY IMPROVING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IT CAN ALSO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE LOWERING OF THE LOWERING OF SICK LEAVE AND ABSENTEEISM IN ORGANISATIONS, BUT IT ALSO BOOSTS PRODUCTIVITY (LILIUS ET AL 2011) AND ALSO RESULTS IN POSITIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE (FIGLEY 1995, GOATS ET AL 2010)

Summary

Compassion in leadership creates stronger connections between people. It improves collaboration, raises level of trust, and enhances loyalty. In addition, studies find that compassionate leaders are perceived as stronger and more competent.

Compassion is an important part of our lives, and we need more compassion to help reduce pain and suffering in the world.

There are very few organisations building compassion in the workplace where for some we spend a lot of our time there.

We live in a time when science is validating what humans have known throughout the ages that compassion is not a luxury, it is a necessity for our wellbeing, resilience, and survival (Joan Halifax 2012b)

Compassion is the quality of having positive intentions and real concern for others.

Compassion also is related to employee retention; whether employees have meaningful relationships with their managers or co-workers plays a critical role in the decision to stay rather than move on to another job. As the adage goes, "People don't leave jobs, they leave bosses."

Companies are being awakened to the greater value in caring about people's wellbeing.

Meet Lorraine - The Managing Director of You'll Know When You Get There Consultancy



ABOUT ME

I HAVE BEEN IN THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT WORLD FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

I HAVE WORKED WITH A NUMBER OF RETAILERS SUCH AS THE ARCADIA GROUP, MONSOON ACCESSORIZE, DEBENHAMS AND SCREWFIX, IN ADDITION TO MANUFACTURING, SALES AND FINANCIAL SERVICES BUSINESSES.

MY AIM IS TO EMPOWER YOU TO DESIGN YOUR ORGANISATIONS WISE COMPASSION CULTURE

To get in touch to discuss how compassionate leadership can improve your business results

Telephone - 07734463206

Email - lorraine@youllknowwhenyougetthere.co.uk

As the Founder of You'll Know When You Get There, all things personal development Lorraine Stamp stands passionately for YOU, and your business. Enabling you to achieve your life and business aspirations.

As an award winning TEDx speaker, Certified Life, Happiness and Mindfulness Coach, Master Coach, NLP Practitioner, MBTi Practitioner, Strengths Practitioner, EQ2 practitioner, Advanced Hypnotist, Reiki Master, Mindfulness and Meditation Practitioner Lorraine is ready to help you start the journey of transformation to take you on a new path to success.

