

# LEADING WITH EMPATHY

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Does your team suffer from...

- + Communication issues?
- + Poor estimates/predictability?
- + Anxiety/morale issues?
- + Complaints about overly complicated or inefficient processes?
- + Interpersonal behavior issues/conflicts?
- + Trust issues (or team members withholding the *whole* truth)?

How would you know?

What are the signs?

How do you find out?

How do you fix it?

# em·pa·thy

/ˈempəTHē/

*noun*

1. the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

- + Empathy is the ability to accurately put yourself "in someone else's shoes"—to understand the other's situation, perceptions and feelings from their point of view – and to be able to communicate that understanding back to the other person.
- + Empathy is, at its simplest, awareness of the feelings and emotions of other people. It is a key element of Emotional Intelligence, the link between self and others, because it is how we as individuals understand what others are experiencing as if we were feeling it ourselves

# Many reasons to lead with empathy

- + Build Trust
  - + Create a safe environment for exchange of ideas, data, and concerns
    - + Withhold judgement / assessment
    - + Express your own feelings with authenticity
    - + Be respectful of info that is shared
- + Learn more about what's going on with the project and your team members
  - + Result: People come *to you* with issues and potential issues (proactive communication)
    - + So that you can help solve them sooner - everyone wins!
  - + i.e. Empathy lowers communication barriers and gives you better information
- + Lower tension and anxiety within the team
  - + Team health and morale
- + The above are “soft” data that leads you to better “hard” data (estimates, velocity, etc.)
- + It's reciprocal!

## Tools for getting out of your own way (in order to let others in)

- + Always be learning (as a mentee, peer, and mentor/coach)
- + Make both your time and space available and approachable
  - + Physically and digitally let people know how and when to contact you
  - + Practice good self-care (mentally and physically) for confidence and warmth
- + Exercise the Platinum Rule (Golden Rule is not good enough)
  - + “Treat others as *they* want to be treated”
- + You are there for them - “servant leadership” - how can you help make *them* successful?
  - + Tip: Champion a big goal that will make their life better, like prioritizing a tool that they need or helping them reduce their meeting schedule
- + Let go of complicated tools and processes (based on feedback from the team)

## Tools for Active Listening

- + Connect with the team as a group on a frequent cadence (every day is not unreasonable)
- + Schedule 1:1 time
- + Keep your ears open (easier in a physical space)
  - + Take breaks, have “hallway conversations”, go for walks with teammates, social time is important
- + Stop talking! W.A.I.T. - “Why Am I Talking?”
  - + Have patience – Remember that the ROI of patience is efficiency
- + Diffuse anxiety, which is rooted in fear
  - + Listening, asking clarifying questions, and repeating what you heard demonstrate your active engagement and desire to understand
  - + Strive to relieve fear of blame, judgement, criticism, etc.

## Let your natural curiosity be your guide

- + Benefit of ignorance...to a point
  - + For you to learn – seek to understand, not to solve
  - + For the person being questioned to really think/talk through their own understanding
  - + Create a safe space for vulnerability
- + A humble approach
  - + Don't assume you have an answer or that you understand
  - + Ask questions that draw out problem solving
  - + If an answer from you is needed, ask for confirmation of your understanding of the problem before suggesting a solution

The relationship between the giver and receiver is the lens through which we give and receive feedback

- + Different purposes of feedback
  - + Advisement, education, problem solving
  - + Appreciation, coaching, evaluation
  - + What are you trying to accomplish?
  - + Is that what the receiver wants?
- + Contrasting approaches
  - + Reprimand = “You’re wrong”
  - + Empathy = “Tell me more”
    - + Reduce anxiety by telling people clearly where they stand
  - + What do we do most vs. what’s more effective?



Why is it that when we give feedback we feel so right, yet when we receive feedback it often feels so wrong?

- + Seek clarification
  - + Where is the feedback coming from and where is it going? (i.e. context and what are we trying to accomplish?)
  - + Why do we see this differently?
  - + What data does the giver have?
  - + Do you understand the situation/behavior that is being referred to?
- + Don't confuse "explaining to help clarify" with "making excuses/blaming"
- + Concrete steps to improvement and defining end goals
  - + Ask how the feedback giver would implement the advice/request
- + What's right about the feedback so that you can learn?

- + *15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership* by Jim Dethmer, Diana Chapman, & Kaley Warner Klemp
- + *HBR's 10 Must Reads: Emotional Intelligence*
- + *Ego is the Enemy* by Ryan Holiday
- + *Trillion Dollar Coach: The Leadership Handbook of Silicon Valley's Bill Campbell* by Alan Eagle, Eric Schmidt, and Jonathan Rosenberg
- + *Leaders Eat Last* by Simon Sinek
- + *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* by Jim Collins (chapters regarding "Level 5 Leadership")
- + *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall B. Rosenberg
- + *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* by Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen
- + *Trustology* by Richard Fagerlin
- + *Compelling People: The Hidden Qualities That Make Us Influential* by John Neffinger and Matthew Kohut
- + *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

# THANK YOU

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