

Compassionate Leadership: What It Is and 9 Ways to Practice It

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Great managers not only know how to lead a team to success but also understand and care about their employees' lives and well-being. They offer their team help when needed, encourage personal growth and are open and approachable. If you want to become a better manager or supervisor, you might consider practicing compassionate leadership—a style that can help improve employee morale and productivity.

In this article, we explain what compassionate leadership is and what it means to be a compassionate leader, plus we go over nine ways to practice this type of leadership at work.

What is compassionate leadership?

Compassionate leadership combines leadership skills with empathy. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "To handle yourself, use your head. To handle others, use your heart." Compassionate leaders lead and manage with both their head and their heart. The characteristics of a compassionate leader include being: .

- Thoughtful and kind
- Supportive
- Open-minded
- Focused on what is best for their employees
- Committed to improving their team's happiness
- Encouraging of people's differences

3 pillars of compassionate leadership

The three pillars of compassionate leadership are:

1. Cognitive understanding
2. Affective (or emotional) understanding
3. Motivational connection

Related: [What is an Empathetic Leader? \(Definition, Benefits and Tips To Become One\)](#)

Why is compassionate leadership important?

Compassionate leadership is important for employee morale and an effective management approach in the modern workplace. Being a compassionate leader presents several benefits, including:

- Gaining employees' trust
- Improving employee engagement and collaboration 
- Increasing employee retention and loyalty
- Encouraging personal and professional growth
- Creating a work environment where employees feel safe and valued

When you create a culture of compassion and respect, you can better understand each employee's unique qualities and how they can benefit the team and the company.

Related: [Why Is Empathy Important in the Workplace? !\[\]\(cead67df4d82d6c83effe4f8699a7d8f_img.jpg\)](#)

9 ways to be a compassionate leader

Here are nine ways you can be a more compassionate leader:

1. Get to know your team

Take the time to learn about your employees. Engage them in conversation to learn about their passions and what motivates them. Use each team member's personal motivators to help them reach individual and organizational goals. If you understand what drives your employees, you can also give them responsibilities that realize their strengths and inspire them to do their best work.

Related: [How To Become a Successful Team Leader !\[\]\(a03a7eb2f4046e1d3c76772003e549ea_img.jpg\)](#)

2. Listen and learn

You can learn about your employees and how they think and function by practicing active listening—understanding and paying close attention to what people are saying rather than just hearing them. Employees also feel more valued when they believe their supervisors listen to and care about what they say.

To learn about your team and their needs, encourage them to give feedback and share opinions. Ask for their input on projects they care about. Give your team opportunities to express themselves in meetings and conversations. Give them the time they need to talk, and acknowledge their contributions. Watch for body language and nonverbal cues that indicate someone has an idea or opinion they want to share.

Related: [How To Be a Good Listener !\[\]\(5361750c22c4e047a52f4eac1ec2d4cc_img.jpg\)](#)

3. Establish values

Create team values that support your compassionate leadership strategy. These might include:

- Collaboration
- Acceptance
- Open-mindedness
- Innovation
- Respect
- Teamwork

Establish this set of values and communicate them clearly to your employees. Unite your team as a community around these shared values and common focus.

Related: [Values-Based Leadership: Traits and Benefits !\[\]\(7d1d6890825e83a6a4a51febe2dcc7f3_img.jpg\)](#)

4. Show gratitude

Employees want to be appreciated and feel like you value their work. Demonstrate kindness by showing gratitude for everyone on your team—not just the top performers. Show that you view them as more than employees; you see them as humans with individual needs.

You can show appreciation through verbal recognition, approval, support or whatever method is most meaningful to each individual. Through kindness and recognition, you can earn your employees' loyalty and respect.

5. Be encouraging

Compassionate leaders encourage, influence and guide their employees rather than give orders or demands. Even when you are working on a tight deadline or a challenging project, approach tasks with optimism and encouragement. Let your team know you support them during stressful work periods.

If you want to encourage your employees to be more productive or take ownership of a project, acknowledge their individual skills and insights. Inspire them to use those talents, and reward creativity and innovation.

Related: [10 Tips For Encouraging Employees To Take Ownership in the Workplace](#) 

6. Remove barriers

Remove barriers or boundaries between you and your employees so you can collaborate and work as a team. The more involved you are with your employees' daily tasks and team dynamics, the better you can understand their passions and needs. You can empathize with their challenges and solve problems alongside them.

Be approachable by having an open-door policy where you welcome employees to talk to you anytime they need advice or want to share information. Make sure they know they can come to you to discuss the things happening in either their professional or personal lives. The more you understand about your employees, the more compassion you can show them.

Read more: [Advantages of Open-Door Policies \(Plus How To Implement One\)](#) 

7. Stay positive

Maintain an optimistic outlook at work. Be the type of leader who always has something positive to say. This kind of attitude can make your employees feel more comfortable confiding in you about their concerns or ideas. Your positivity and kindness can also be empowering and create an environment people want to work in.

Related: [Positive Working Environment: Definition and Characteristics](#) 

8. Be transparent

Practice transparency in your communication and actions. If you have concerns about an employee's performance, be honest about it, and tell them what they can do to improve. Be direct and clear with your criticism rather than trying to soften your comments. You are showing compassion through your desire to help them progress and develop professionally.

Additionally, be transparent about the company's performance. The state of the business directly affects its employees, and you should be understanding of that. Your honesty can help gain your team's trust and loyalty.

Related: [Advantages of Open-Door Policies \(Plus How To Implement One\)](#) 

9. Support employee well-being

Your compassion should extend beyond the office. Make sure your employees have the resources they need to be healthy, productive and financially stable. Promote work-life balance and flexibility by being understanding when a team member needs to take time to care for a child, family member or themselves. When you support and improve your employees' well-being, you might have a more motivated and productive team that can focus on their goals and duties.