A Journey Towards Leading with Empathy

Lisa J. Wilkes, Ph.D.
Vice President for Business Affairs
Life is a journey, not a destination.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson
A bit about my journey.....
A Journey Towards Leading with Empathy: Learning together

- Where are leaders?
- What is empathy?
- Why is empathy important in our work?
- How can we lead with empathy?
Where are leaders?
Where am I?

Am I or can I be a leader -
.....on my team?

.....in my unit?

.....in my department?
Where am I......

I will be a leader -
....on my team!

....in my unit!

....in my department!
Leadership

Transformational

Participatory

Charismatic

Empathetic

Democratic

Directive

Servant

Strategic

Visionary

Consultative

Delegative

Transactional

Coach

Autocratic
“Management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people do to things they never thought they could.”

Steve Jobs
Co-founder, Apple, Inc.
Focus today: Leading with empathy
Take a moment to reflect......

Is there a time when someone understood your situation and you knew it......

Is there a time when you were in a difficult situation and someone failed to understand......

Remember your reflection...

we will come back to it shortly.
“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou
What is empathy?

“the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner”

Merriam Webster Dictionary
Is empathy different than sympathy?

- **Empathy**
  - “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another”

- **Sympathy**
  - “feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune”

*Oxford Living Dictionaries*
Sympathy

Empathy
**EMPATHY**

I feel your pain.

**SYMPATHY**

I am sorry that you are in pain.
“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.”

Oprah Winfrey
Why is empathy important in our work?

- Leaders who are empathic are able to better understand and support their team and co-workers.
- Employees who are supported perform at higher standards.
- Teams who perform at higher standards move the organization forward are critical to the organization’s success.
- Leaders who practice empathy build trust across their team. Without trust, team members are cautious, limiting full commitment.
Does empathy really impact our work?

Empathy has a direct impact on employee productivity, loyalty, and engagement.

- 77% of workers would be willing to work more hours for a more empathetic workplace.
- 60% of workers would accept a reduced salary for the same.
- 92% of HR professionals note that a compassionate workplace is a major factor for employee retention.
- 80% of millennials noted that they would leave their current job if their office became less empathetic.
- 66% of Baby Boomers also shared this sentiment.

Businessolver's 2017 Workplace Empathy Monitor
5 WAYS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN ENCOURAGE

EMPATHY

1. Talk about empathy.
2. Teach listening skills.
3. Encourage genuine perspective taking.
4. Cultivate compassion.
5. Support global managers.

Center for Creative Leadership®
How can we enhance our listening skills?
Types of Listening

- Indifferent/inactive listening - mind is wondering; no communication.
- Selective listening - hear what you want to hear; actively working on response.
- Active listening
  - Gives speaker undivided attention
  - Listen closely to content
  - Block out distractions
  - Demonstrates interest, understanding, and empathy
- Reflective listening - active listening with clarifying questions to ensure you have mutual understanding.
“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

Stephen Covey
PEANUTS CLASSICS by Charles M. Schulz


I was just making conversation. When you make conversation, you have to listen, too.

You do?
How to practice active listening?

- Demonstrate respect, even if you do not share the same opinion.
- Do not interrupt or be judgmental.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Ask thoughtful questions. *(What can I do to help?)*
- Eliminate your own agenda.
- Demonstrate appreciation for speaker sharing concerns.
- Summarize/acknowledge the content.
- Walk in a team member’s shoes.
- Act on items raised.
- Prioritize problems. Not everything is first-come, first-served.
YOU'VE GIVEN ME SO MANY PROJECTS THAT I HAVE TWO WAYS TO FAIL.

I CAN EITHER MISS ALL OF MY DEADLINES OR I CAN REDUCE THE QUALITY OF MY WORK TO RUBBISH. WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

THE CLASS I TOOK IN ACTIVE NON-LISTENING IS REALLY PAYING OFF. I NEED THIS BY TUESDAY.
“If we were supposed to talk more than listen, we would have two tongues and one ear.”

Mark Twain
How can we lead with empathy?

- Treat team and co-workers with respect.
- Spend time developing relationships.
- Work to understand your team members and co-workers. Demonstrate you are genuinely interested in them.
- Listen to your team and co-workers - more than you talk.
- Be fully present - no electronic devices!
- Recognize and praise the work of team members - in large and small ways.
- Spend a few minutes each day thinking about your team and co-workers.
Take a moment to reflect......

Is there a time when someone understood your situation and you knew it......

Did the “someone” listen and show compassion?

What can you learn from how you were treated?

Is there a time when you were in a difficult situation and someone failed to understand......

Did the “someone” listen and show empathy?

What could they have done differently?
What can I do tomorrow?

- Connect with team member or co-worker.
- Look for ways to be kind and compassionate.
- Practice active listening.
- Continue your journey - listening, learning, serving - leading with empathy.
“You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Questions?
Additional Resources

- Five Ways to Listen Better - Julian Treasurer
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSohjYQJ2A

- *Empathetic Leadership: 47 Practical Tips for Leading with Kindness, Courage, and Confidence in an Age of Disruption* (Michael Brisciana)