

A PERSON-CENTERED APPROACH TO LEADING DURING COVID-19

There are a great deal of stressors impacting how we lead through times of crisis, but as leaders, we can set the stage for healing and future success no matter how difficult the current season may appear. This person-centered approach is full of suggestions to help create a positive environment for your team through COVID-19 and beyond.

Make work a safe space for your team.

- Be aware of the impact of economic downturns on your organization and team; be honest and transparent about what you know or don't know yet.
- Check-in with your employees one on one; use empathetic listening skills, gently refer to workplace health and mental health programs as needed.
- Give folks a chance to share about something fun they're planning for the weekend or something new they learned in the past week—anything to get them connecting with one another.

Model vulnerability, compassion and transparency.

- Prioritize well-being over bottom line; your team will respect you for it and will grow stronger in the long run.
- Feeling down because you had to lay off 25% of your workforce? Is it hard for you to work at home with kids? Be open about your own struggles to alleviate any unrealistic performance pressure your staff is putting on themselves.
- Don't hide hard truths. If you're facing more furloughs or lay-offs, give advance warning and refer them to resources like [United Way's Furloughed Workers Toolkit](#).

Collaborate for problem solving.

- Afraid you might have to lay off more people? Worried that work won't get done in time because you have less people working? Involve your team in problem solving. They have ideas and if you put your heads together, it might help with creativity and nimbleness through this time.
- If your work is shifting or you seem to be taking on more responsibility as a department, ask for staff to collaborate on new ideas, concepts or shifts in direction on a volunteer basis.

Empower your team.

- Choose to create positive meaning out of this experience and find silver linings together.
- If staff has time on their hands, move a tabled idea into action together.
- Encourage staff to pursue learning and professional development.
- Be clear, be flexible and be a good and invested listener.
- Recognize a job well done.

Create space for your team's voice and choice.

- Avoid dictating roles and responsibilities. Many folks feel out of control right now, so the more choice they have, the more calm and capable they're likely to feel.
- Set up and keep regular check-in times to hear from your staff. Intentionally engage them in any processes you can.
- Provide schedule flexibility to workers sheltering at home, especially if they're juggling family schedules as well.