

For your team's wellbeing.



The power  
of kind  
leadership.

# How kind leadership can boost your team's wellbeing.

In times like this, strong leadership is vital. And as we'll explore here, being a strong leader means being a kind one too – with research supporting that this boosts employee wellbeing.

## Leading with compassion

Now is clearly the time for strong leadership in business. But strong and kind aren't leadership qualities that are at odds with one another. Studies suggest that leading with warmth and compassion, rather than focusing on a more disciplinarian attitude, can help to foster better idea generation and more open communication within organisations. Unless a team trust and like their manager, research suggests team members may outwardly comply, but ultimately not buy-in to their manager's vision and values. In addition, we know that in general happy employees work harder. That feels intuitive, but it's also borne out of research. A supportive manager can make all the difference to how happy workers feel.

Being kind could mean providing more support to your team. YouGov research, commissioned by Business in the Community and Bupa, found that 58% of managers recognise that providing mental health support to their team is part of their job<sup>†</sup>. This support could take the form of regularly checking in with someone about how they're doing, particularly if they're working from home in the current climate and you can't get a face-to-face sense of how they are feeling. Many people are

reporting being extra busy or stressed at work right now, so helping employees to manage their workload or signposting them to support services you have available as a business could make a big difference too. If your staff still need to leave home and interact with people in person because of their role, bear in mind that this could be causing them anxiety about their health and the risk to their families.



## Kind words or actions from a colleague can sometimes make the difference between a good day and a bad day at work.

During a time like the present, when the coronavirus pandemic has changed daily life for all of us and so much is uncertain, this feels even more important.

# 69%

More than two-thirds of employees say their managers are considerate of their wellbeing†. Managers can make a big difference in how well people feel at work. Being kind is part of that.

†Mental Health at Work 2020. Bupa/Business In The Community. Published October 2020.



Be mindful that the current situation is causing many problems with people's health and their access to healthcare beyond coronavirus infection. For example, a member of your team or their loved one may be facing delayed cancer treatment, missed appointments for a chronic heart condition, or a loss of regular support with a back problem. Some members of your team might also be feeling lonely or isolated, particularly if they relied on going

to work as their main form of social interaction. These are just some examples of (potentially hidden) issues that people may be facing right now. Keeping that in mind can help to think about certain situations in a different light. Could a delayed email response be related to a personal worry someone is dealing with at home? And just in case that's so, might a quick phone call to check in be better than a firmly worded email asking for an update?

## Being kind as a manager

From weekly rounds of clapping for health and care workers, to an army of volunteers emerging to help vulnerable people, there are so many examples of kindness that have happened since the pandemic began. On the following pages, you'll find some ideas about being kind as a people manager and fostering a spirit of kindness in your team right now. One of these is helping your team to make the most of nature.



# 5

## Top tips

### Put the emphasis on wellbeing.

Reinforce that people looking after their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is more important than anything else right now. And that spending time in nature can be part of that.



### Be kind in your communication.

Think twice before piling the pressure on someone. Could they be dealing with something you don't know about? Check in on the phone or over video chat if you can.



### Provide or signpost staff to support.

That could mean reminding them about your employee assistance programme or promoting contact details for charities such as Samaritans or Citizens Advice.



### Give recognition.

Work done well in a trying time like the present deserves high praise. Recognition is something that 35% of respondents to our Workplace Wellbeing Census<sup>†</sup> felt would support their wellbeing.



### Lead by example and practise self-compassion.

The message that physical and mental health comes first will land best if your team can see you practising it. Take time out.





## Helping your team make the most of nature

An important way to be kind to your team and support their wellbeing can be to help them to access nature during their working hours.

There is an abundance of evidence showing that nature is crucial for our wellbeing. Time spent outdoors and surrounded by the natural world can:

- reduce feelings of stress, anxiety or anger
- improve confidence and self-esteem
- boost creativity and problem-solving
- improve health through increased physical activity

## Steps you can take

As a manager there are various ways you may be able to support your team to make the most of nature.

- Encourage staff to spend time outdoors during their lunch break, or before or after work. Reminding your team to take a full lunch, and to stick to scheduled working hours, can help them find the time they need to do this.
- Set up a message group for your team to share photos and videos of their discoveries on lunchtime walks. This may work particularly well if staff are working remotely from one another.

- Look at holding meetings outside or having a team-building day in the open air. And make sure any such initiatives are inclusive for members of staff who have a disability. That might mean finding a green space with accessible paths and entrances, for example.
- Make the interior of your workplace greener. Companies including Google have embraced the idea of bringing the outdoors in through office design. Simple steps like adding more plants to the workspace, and even artwork depicting nature, could boost your team's mood and even aid productivity.

## Using a kind attitude to nurture working relationships

You may well have times at work at the moment, with all the pressure that the current crisis is bringing, when you don't see eye-to-eye with a member of your team. You can't control how other people react, think and feel. But you can control how you react towards them. This can help improve your relationships both at work and at home.

Disagreeing with someone doesn't mean you have to change how you interact with them. Learn to forgive and move on – remember others have strengths and weaknesses too. There are several ways to be more accepting of the people around you.

Look for the positive in every member of your team and others you work with – focus on why they may have different views. Give recognition for what they do well – more recognition is something that 35% of employees surveyed in our Workplace Wellbeing Census<sup>†</sup> felt would boost their wellbeing.

Sometimes you may want to put less pressure on staff to do things the 'right' way, in cases when there might be several valid ways to approach a task. Think about whether you can learn anything from how they're approaching the scenario.



# Practising self-compassion

The more you look after your own mental health, the more able you'll feel to support others. Taking some time out away from work to relax, exercise, meditate or cook – whatever helps you unwind – is important. If things don't always go to plan or you make a mistake in this high-pressure time, it's important to be kind to yourself then too. It's normal to feel upset after something goes wrong at work, but it's important that you don't let those feelings take over and linger. If you're self-compassionate, you'll be kind rather than judgemental. Remind yourself that no one is perfect, and everyone has times when things don't turn out how they planned.

Being kind to yourself and others can make you feel good. When you connect with others through kindness, a hormone (a substance in your body that acts a bit like a messenger) called oxytocin is released. It travels around your body and makes you feel good, while your act of kindness does the same for the person you've helped.

So as part of being a supportive manager for your team right now, don't forget to keep kindness in mind. Remember to look after your own health and wellbeing and to ask for any support when you need it.

## Sources

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A man with a beard and glasses is talking on a mobile phone. He is wearing a blue denim shirt over a striped t-shirt. The background is a blurred office setting with a bookshelf.

## More information and support

**Bupa Workplace Wellbeing Hub**  
[bupa.co.uk/wellbeing](https://bupa.co.uk/wellbeing)

**Bupa Mental Health Hub**  
[bupa.co.uk/mental-health](https://bupa.co.uk/mental-health)

**Bupa coronavirus information hub**  
[bupa.co.uk/coronavirus](https://bupa.co.uk/coronavirus)

**Bupa Workplace Wellbeing Census**  
[bupa.co.uk/census](https://bupa.co.uk/census)

**BITC Health and Wellbeing at Work Summary Toolkit**  
[bitc.org.uk/toolkit/health-and-wellbeing-at-work-summary-toolkit](https://bitc.org.uk/toolkit/health-and-wellbeing-at-work-summary-toolkit)

**Mind**  
[mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

**Samaritans**  
[samaritans.org](https://samaritans.org)

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