

BALANCING TASK AND PEOPLE: FLEXING YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH

How do you strike the balance between getting the job done and showing empathy to your people? This is a challenge for leaders at any time but becomes acute when one global crisis follows another. When team members are feeling fearful about the future, how can you respond in a way that still delivers the results expected of you?

If your natural style leans towards getting the task done - and then moving immediately to the next task -might you:

- ensure your communications acknowledge people's feelings
- share something of your own feelings or experiences
- signpost sources of emotional support, and ways of protecting resilience
- encourage confidence and grounded optimism about the future
- keep thanking people for what they are doing and remind them why it is worthwhile
- Invite a colleague to spot when you risk forgetting people's needs

If your natural style gives priority to harmony and to people's feelings, might you:

- remind yourself that empathetic leaders still need to provide direction and structure
- accept that others need you to make decisions and you can't always please everyone
- use your empathy to mobilise people round a shared sense of purpose
- recognise that people benefit in uncertain times from having something to focus on
- signpost sources of pastoral support rather than take it all on yourself
- invite a colleague to spot when you risk losing sight of your role.

It's worth remembering that your team members will have a mix of default styles between them. Some will find security in concise, logical communications. Others need evidence of compassionate leadership, and recognition of shared vulnerability. Leaders are always adapting their approach to the situation and to their audience, but we all have our default. It can help to run your ideas past someone with the opposite style to yours.

Our current series of Prompts explores how we might flex our leadership approach recognising our default style.