



ENGAGE  
& GROW®



# Compassionate Leadership

Balance  
the Head and Heart



When we are motivated  
by compassion and wisdom,  
the results of our actions  
benefit everyone, not just our  
individual selves or  
some immediate  
convenience.

Dalai Lama

## Introduction

Thirty years ago, it would have been strange for all of us to see the words compassion and leadership side by side. The meanings we attributed to leadership did not overlap with a concept as fragile as compassion.

Leadership is being able to see the big picture.

Leadership is being able to surviving the toughest times..

Leadership is being a role model.

The leader sees, hears, feels and even predicts better.

You smiled, didn't you? The ideal leadership described is very close to superhuman characteristics.



However, today, we talk about the need for the leaders who are more human, not superhuman.

Unless you are leading a military unit, of course! (By the way, as employee engagement experts, we may have opinions in that field, too; but for now, let's stay in the business world)

Compassionate, humane, helpful or caring.

For sure, your mother has superhuman abilities like these, but no, we are not talking about your mother.

We are just listing the key traits of "new ideal leader".

To understand these traits, it is crucial to realize the changing expectations of employees.

Creating employee engagement is possible by hearing and analysing employee expectations and initiating change on the solid foundation of corporate culture.

We hope our study "[Compassionate leadership: Balance the Head and Heart](#)" will give you the tips you need for change.

We wish you a good learning experience.

Engage and Grow

**NO MATTER THEIR  
GENERATION, GENDER,  
NATIONALITY, OR SEXUAL  
ORIENTATION, THERE ARE SOME  
THINGS EMPLOYEES WILL  
ALWAYS WANT FROM  
THEIR WORKPLACE.**



A salary that contributes  
to their financial  
wellness



A sense of safety  
and stability



Opportunities for  
learning, growth, and  
career development

## Basic requirements and changing employee expectations

The pandemic period has been a milestone. We all have to accept this.

Everything has changed for all of us. For the business world, leaders, consulting firms and employees...

The Korn Ferry survey “Future of Work Trends 2022” summarizes this as follows:

“Power has shifted.

From organizations to people.

From profit to mutual prosperity.

From ‘me’ to ‘we’”

The journey from “me” to “us” is one of the cornerstones of the Engage and Grow philosophy. Since the day we were founded, we have focused on people, hearts and emotions, and we are happy to see that the business world is actually aligned with our philosophy after the pandemic.

The following section of the Korn Ferry research is remarkable:

“Employee health and well-being were important long before COVID-19. But it’s now front and center of every organization’s plans. Companies face the economic burden of sickness and stress, both in medical expenses and lost productivity. And **remote working** has given employees a greater understanding and concern for their own well-being. They want companies to act **more human**. To have a **greater purpose** that speaks to connection and support. Meet their expectations for **flexible working, better healthcare**, but most importantly, help them keep the **personal energy** they need to survive and thrive when times get tough. Because the flipside of vitality is burnout.

It’s not just the human thing to do; it’s the right thing to do. For people and organizations.

Lip service just won’t cut it. It’s become even more important to care in 2022.”

## The flipside of vitality is burnout.

Korn Ferry Future of Work Trends 2022



## 4 key findings about Leaders

### Here are 4 findings from Egon Zehnder's work with CEOs:

- Complexity and rapid change are reshaping business—and the CEO's role. 90 percent of CEOs surveyed agreed that the CEO has moved into the center of louder, more diverse and diverging voices in recent years.
- It starts with you—CEOs recognize they must change themselves to change the world. Nearly 80 percent of CEOs strongly agree that they need to transform themselves as well as their organization. But change is hard: Your peers admit that they struggle to connect with their people and lift the collective ambition.
- CEOs sense their goal is prosperity for the many—but most are far from achieving it. Although our survey respondents agree social and environmental contributions are at the forefront of progress, it's still not a main priority: Traditional financial metrics remain the dominant decision-driver for most CEOs.
- CEOs are expanding their capacity to be adaptive, relational, and self-aware. CEOs are working to develop a new set of leadership, specifically in self-reflection, listening to diverse points of view, and seeking frequent, honest feedback from team members, Chairs, mentors, consultants, and other CEOs.

Compassionate leadership is the key differentiator between a good manager and a great one



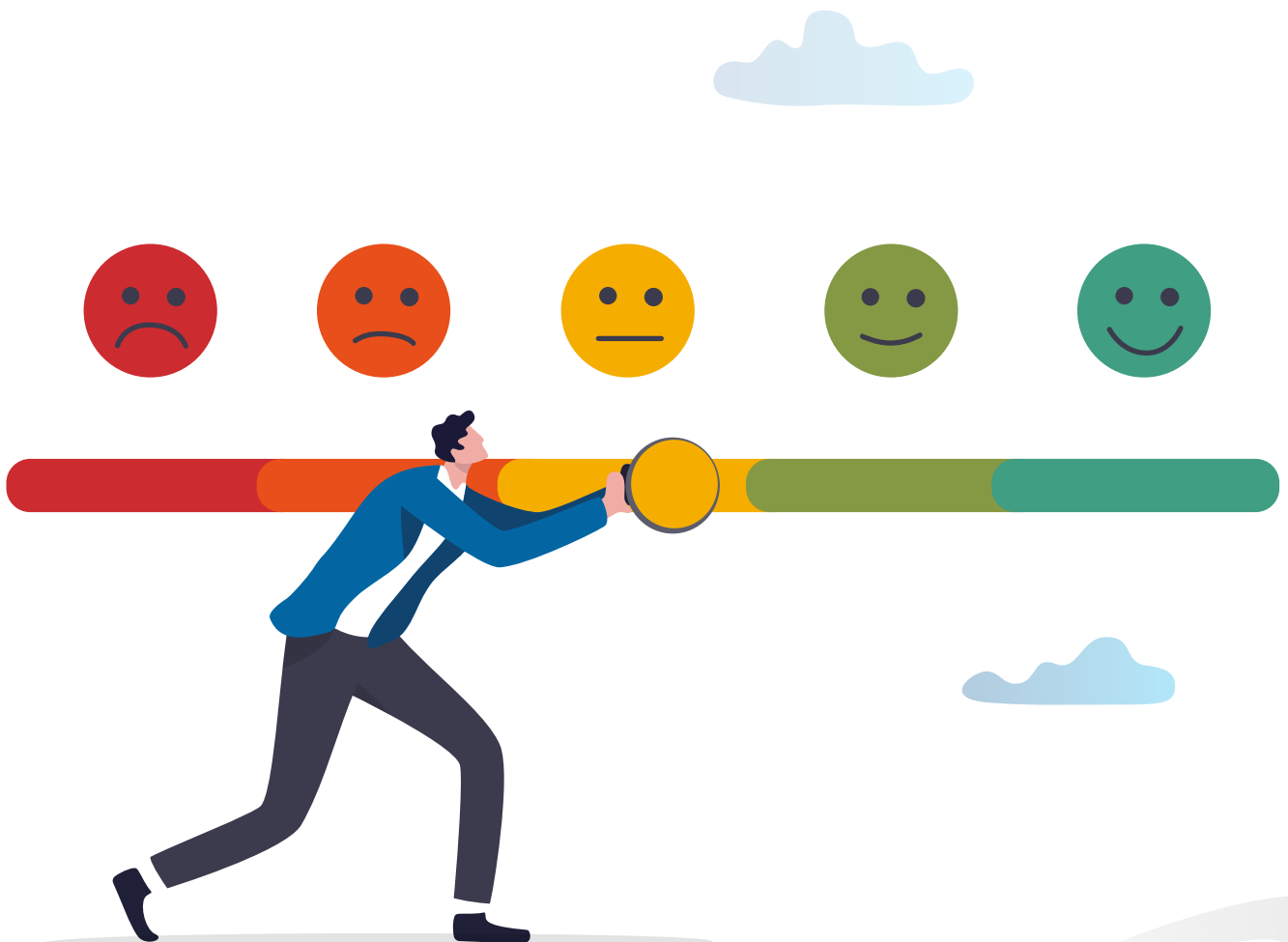
## Holistic leadership, holistic perspective

Compassion starts  
with seeing people  
for who they are.

Attributes like emotional intelligence (EQ), self-awareness and mindfulness are essential to excellent, holistic leadership, and so is compassion.

Compassionate leadership recognizes that every team member is not only an important individual, but also an essential thread in the fabric of an entire organization. Compassionate leaders strive to enhance the happiness and wellbeing of their people by supporting them and giving them what they need to excel.

Compassionate leadership is not focused on the short term or instant gratification but rather on what's best for the individual, the team, the organization and considers other factors that may influence or impact the situation at hand.



# What are Compassionate Behaviours?



## UNDERSTANDING

is dependent on listening deeply. It requires that we take the time to listen in order to understand the challenges that those we lead face in their work.



## HELPING

to ensure there's a good path for those we lead to achieve their goals by removing the obstacles or providing the resources and support to help them deliver high quality care.



## ATTENDING

to those we lead means being present with them. It requires that we 'listen with fascination' to those we lead.



## EMPATHISING

Is feeling the strains, pains, anxieties and frustrations of those we lead without being overwhelmed by those feelings. This then gives leaders the motivation to help or serve those we lead.



## Mid-level managers' nightmare: Which one first? Performance or Compassion?

Employees need their managers to show compassion. At the same time, executives expect their managers and their teams to deliver results. Middle managers are often the ones feeling that tension most acutely.

“Performance demands from above and calls for compassion from below!”

### What should they do?

An article published in HBR proposed a dual set of solutions.

“Focus on two sets of actions. First, work to increase the organization’s “compassion capacity” — that is, help equip both senior executives and employees to shoulder more of the burden in delivering compassion so that it doesn’t fall entirely on you. Second, work with both executives and employees to lower the perceived pressure of performance demands.’

### Work with executives to increase compassion and change the performance dialogue

It is possible for middle managers to reduce the pressure of blind performance targets by clearly communicating the situation with upper management.

The first method is “Tell”. “Tell” is about fixing the information flow by making top leaders aware of the extent of the problem, what frontline employees are experiencing, and how it affects middle managers. The second method is to enable leaders to personally see and hear the compassion needs of their employees, i.e. to “show” them. “Show” recognizes that there is no substitute for firsthand experiences, and we’ve found that leaders are better able to empathize if they personally see and hear about employees’ needs for compassion

### Pay attention to these points!

- Upper management teams may take this information from middle management as “whining”.
- If not shared in the right context, it can also be seen as an excuse.
- At this point, it is critical for mid-level managers make it clear that they are not seeking to lower performance targets.
- Therefore, communication - whether to “tell” or “show” - must be established before the results are revealed.

## Get to know your team members, understand them, stay in touch and support their empowerment.

- **Don't expect to see everything. Try to see the invisible.**

As recent research has found, sometimes the challenges requiring compassion are in fact “invisible enemies,” where employees don't even recognize what's going on.

- **Employees don't advertise their loneliness.** Objective markers like team membership, network structures, or someone's degree of extroversion don't reveal it either. Loneliness at work is an entirely subjective internal belief: Few people truly know me or would support me in my time of need. The lonely feel only superficially connected to others, perhaps cordial but not truly collegial.

- **Support the environment of psychological safety, catch insecurities.**

You need to ensure psychological safety exists in your organization. Psychological safety is the perception that a given environment is conducive to interpersonal risk-taking. Do employees really have the opportunities to ask questions, express their concerns, admit their mistakes and find a new chance to fix them, as well as freely present their ideas? Perceptions about cultural norms and prohibitions exemplify how essential psychological safety is to facilitating those first vulnerable moves toward bonding with someone else in the workplace.

There are energies in the workplace environment that you are not aware of. Good management and good leadership rely on the ability to sense these energies. A few suggestions:

- **Keep your empathy channels open. This is what you need, too!**

Empathy is the most important characteristic of companies led by compassionate leaders and with compassionate managers at all levels. At this point, it should be noted that empathy is also a concept that needs to be managed. We may not be able to empathise fully with everyone or on every issue. But what makes us distinct is our effort to empathize. We don't have to understand or carry every emotion, but we have to acknowledge their presence. We work with people! The empathy that middle managers have for their teams has to be in balance with their performance targets. This is one of the most important challenges on the road to leadership.

- **More flexible. More autonomous. More efficient. Is it possible?**

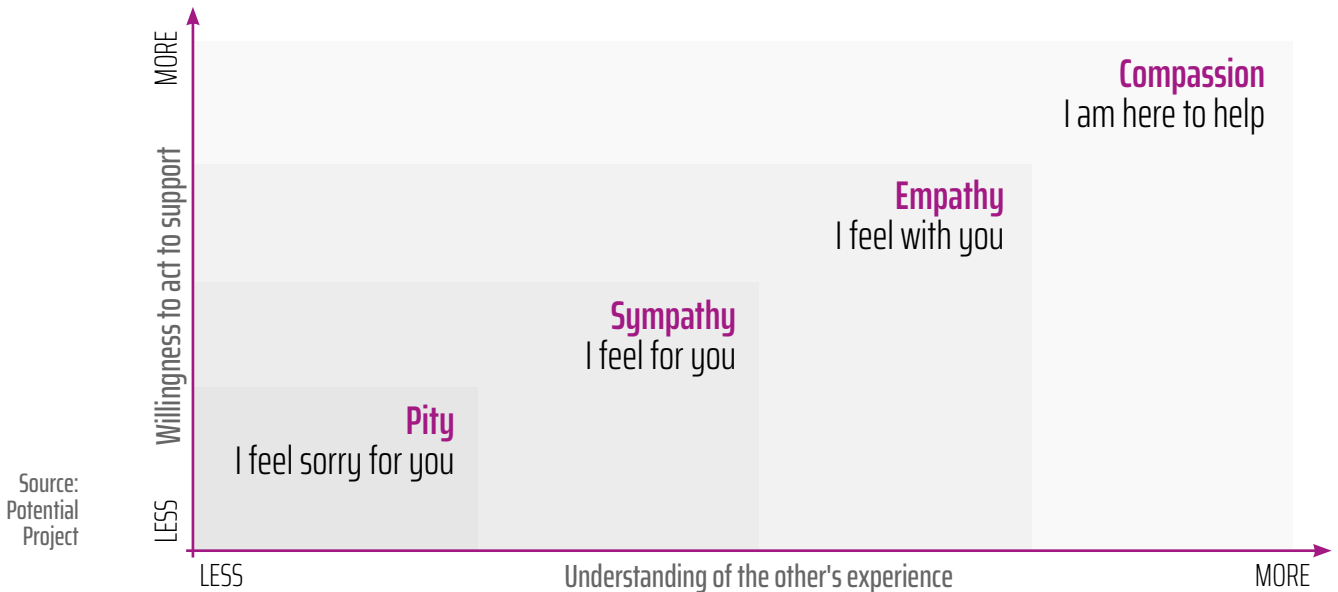
“They think we've been sleeping at home since we started working from home and they're freaking out! We do not sleep, we are always in meetings. Calm down, we only work remotely”

It is a message from an employee who has switched to remote work expresses their feelings. However, flexible working is likely to be permanent and you have to convince yourself that no one is sleeping and everyone is at work. The new generation of employees has already made their stance on flexibility.

Younger people are also more in favour, with three-quarters of millennials wanting more control over their work schedule.

You have to manage the work by building solid project steps and meaningful communication ties. This is where compassion comes in handy. You may foresee that while working from home some people can also have care responsibilities. You may realise that some people work beyond working hours but have responsibilities- or even needs – such as taking children to school or spending a few extra hours with them during the day. Yes, sometimes meetings may not fit the agenda you predict. Nevertheless, you have to look at the results, analyse the impact on the big picture, trust, trust, trust, and show that trust.

### Compassion goes beyond sympathy and empathy



Are women more  
compassionate?

Or is this a  
reflection  
of gender  
inequality?

We all have to accept this sentence: "Women leaders are a requirement of the twenty-first century. Organizations must empower women with leadership roles to be more productive and show their latent potential, increasing workplace diversity because it is a challenging undertaking that will require the support and participation of everyone in the Company"

Is compassion a characteristic of women? Or do women's soft skills make them compassionate?

Diverse experiences and viewpoints play a significant role in fostering innovation since varied perspectives lead to better decision-making. As a result, companies with higher degrees of diversity tend to outgrow those with lower diversity percentages.

Women are more empathic.  
Women are better communicators.  
Women lead more effectively.  
Women handle crises better.  
And...  
Women are more compassionate.

As IBM found in their study conducted around women in leadership, there are a few key reasons disparities like those above occur:

- Organizations want to change. But most are moving too slowly.
- Times have changed. But approaches haven't.
- Most organizations pursue incremental change. But leaders aim for breakthroughs.



## How does women's compassion make a difference?

### Their instinct to protect is unique.

If you only see them as mothers, you miss a lot. Women leaders are focused on protecting not only their homes and children, but also their organizations, brands, employees, reputations and earnings.

### Sustainability is also about compassion

The instinct of protection in the first item above is integrated with sustainability in this second item. Let's remember the definition of sustainability: Sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is clear that women have achieved this at both the global and institutional level.

The research, which analyses the world's 1000 largest companies, shows that companies led by women are closer to the "1.5 degree" target.

(Source: EuroNews, Arabesque research)

Study of 65,000 employees, women managers were scored higher by their employees as taking the people-centered actions that helped them through the pandemic: providing emotional support (12% more), checking in on overall well-being (7% more), taking action to help manage burnout (5% more).

Source: MwcKinsey / Women in the Workplace



## Kindness is the new SUPERPOWER

Definitely! And one of the reasons why we need more female leaders in this new era of leadership we are entering. It's also a new and powerful form of currency: one that we can trade for loyalty, trust, and high performance.

### Employee Engagement and Compassion

Research suggests that compassion improves employee well-being, performance, and interaction.

### Mistakes happen. Compassion heals.

We can all make irreversible mistakes in working life. Instead of trying not to make mistakes, isn't it more meaningful to improve how we handle mistakes and recover as soon as possible? Mistakes can knock our confidence, and this can have a negative impact on engagement and interaction and nullify creativity and innovation.

### Stress is always there. Compassion decreases it.

Research shows that stress exacerbates fear and anxiety and it also suppresses confidence and innovation. When we feel like we're safe, stress levels decrease, and this is such an important relationship to consider in the workplace.



Research shows that employees who work for compassionate managers are 25% more engaged in their jobs, 20% more committed to the organization, and 11% less likely to burn out.

Source: Harvard Business Review

## How To Be A More Compassionate Leader

We can learn anything. We can also learn to be compassionate.

However, in order to be more compassionate, we need to acknowledge the existence, vulnerability, and humanness of other people or community around us.

- Be self-aware and practice self-compassion
- Put yourself in the shoes of others, and understand their world
- See yourself as a conductor of an orchestra
- Make your people feel personally accountable for the work they do
- Provide constructive and valuable feedback to your team



## Our core notes:

Being a compassionate leader isn't about being 'soft'.  
"Compassion very often requires great courage and strength."

Never has a compassionate approach to leadership been more important. As leaders, we must do everything we can to ensure every person on our team has everything they need to thrive, both now and in the future.

Your people are human beings, not robots – so treat them like the former, not the latter. Show your employees that you 'have their back' and can (and will) step in to provide any assistance or support they might need.

Always attempt to envisage yourself in the shoes of your team members in every challenging scenario you face. Doing this will help you build a more inclusive team culture, one where everyone's thoughts and ideas are heard, which can only ever be a good thing for both your team members and the wider business.

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