

## SELF CARE IS A FUNDAMENTAL LEADERSHIP SKILL

I read an article in a magazine last week about the importance of being kind to ourselves and taking time to appreciate our personal talents and accomplishments. While I was delighted to see this in a magazine whose audience would probably be predominantly women, we need to ensure this message is heard consistently in leadership training.

Leaders must take care of themselves first so that they have the physical and emotional strength to inspire others, to lead through challenging times and to keep the focus on the purpose of the service.

In working with senior managers across the country, a common finding is how hard they are on themselves and how often their own needs come last. This is particularly true as uncertainty about managing the pandemic continues to impact negatively on service delivery, and particularly on team building, sustaining staff morale, and of course on family life. I see lots of examples of managers doing things themselves rather than delegating and working later and later to cope with what is now consistently branded as the 'relentless' flow of demands on their time.

Reviewing the impact of a recent leadership programme in a busy inner city service, the feedback that struck me most was that senior managers were happier and more confident in their role and their acknowledgement that when they have the headspace to keep focused on priorities and are clear in their expectations of others, things flow more smoothly.

So let's start a conversation about how we, as leaders, can take care of ourselves.

1. Create some Me-Time every day – go for a walk, read a book, meditate, phone a friend, sip a hot drink, have a quiet time away from everyone else
2. Find things to congratulate yourself for every day – what went well? What was my part in that? How did I add value?
3. Be kind to yourself as well as others. Create appropriate boundaries. Identify 2-3 things you need to stop doing so that you can stay tuned to your priorities at work and at home.
4. Role model how self-care mitigates susceptibility to stress.



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