

THE COMPASSION CURVE

FOR LEADERS

Saint A



COMPASSION CURVE FOR LEADERS

At SaintA, we are working hard to accelerate what we call the compassion curve. The idea plays off the now-common idea of flattening the curve, or slowing the spread of coronavirus, so our health system doesn't grind to a halt. Similarly, we can't let our client care come to a stop.

We are uniquely positioned to lead our staff and our community. Our knowledge and skills in the 7 Essential Ingredients (7ei) and the Neurosequential Model (NM™) provide a nice framework.



COMPASSIONATE SUPERVISION AND LEADERSHIP

How you treat people *during tough times* says more about you than how you treat them in good times.

Ben Eubanks

March 16, 2020

1. PREVALENCE

Each of our employees is facing their own set of stressors. Even if they don't share their specific concerns with us, it's safe to assume they're facing some adversity right now. Maybe they're afraid for their personal health, worried about medically vulnerable loved ones or feeling isolated. They may have financial concerns and many have the added pressure of supporting their child's education at home.



Take a moment to think about how you personally are feeling; there's a very good chance your employees are feeling something similar. Write a few notes here before you move on to the next ingredient:



2. IMPACT

The actions we take as leaders of SaintA, right now, will echo well into the future. The potential to build a strong and resilient workforce will come through our acts of compassion, flexibility, adaptability and understanding.

Take a moment to write down what would help you to mitigate the impact of the multiple stressors created by these uncertain times; These might be things that make the stress moderate and predictable. Write them in the “helpful” column. Then think about what would make the stress seem unpredictable and extreme and write this in the “not helpful” column.

(We’ve given you a couple of examples.)



HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL
Flexibility and understanding from my supervisor	Arbitrarily enforce rules
Regular, clear communication	Spreading rumors or making predictions about what might happen

Would the list you created also be useful in your interactions with staff right now?



Pattern of Stress

Unpredictable

Extreme

Prolonged

Sensitization
Vulnerability

Predictable

Moderate

Controllable

Tolerance
Resilience

3. PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

We are reminded that, as leaders, our perspective drives not only our own thoughts and actions but also those around us. We set the tone for the culture within our programs and the organization normally and even more so during times of crisis or uncertainty.

Consider the implications that bias, privilege and equity may have on the situation. Apply a compassionate perspective to your supervision and leadership.

TRADITIONAL VIEW	COMPASSIONATE VIEW
Employees are not working/ productive when at home	People can be trusted to do the best that they can. Work may look different than traditional schedule.
Employees are overreacting/ creating drama	People are scared and anxious
This has the potential to be devastating	This is an opportunity that will spur innovation and creative solutions

4. REGULATION

It is essential for us to make rational and well-informed decisions for the safety of our organization, clients, families and ourselves. A regulated team starts with you as a leader. Your regulation state will be mirrored and internalized by your staff in your interactions. If you're alarmed or fearful, your team will internalize this state. When we are in alarm, fear or terror, we are less able to access the parts of our brain where organizing, planning, cognitive flexibility and productive problem solving take place.

Here are some easy regulation activities
– and room for you to write your own:

- » Before your team meeting, take a 10-minute walk outside.
- » Start your virtual meetings with regulation activities or a series of deep breaths.
- » Encourage rhythm and repetition through regularly scheduled virtual meetings that create predictable patterns of connection with employees.



Hyperarousal Continuum	Rest ($M > F: A > C$)	Vigilance	Resistance	Defiance	Aggression
Dissociative Continuum	Rest ($F > M: C > A$)	Avoidance	Compliance	Dissociation	Fainting
Primary secondary Brain Areas	NEOCORTEX <i>Subcortex</i>	SUBCORTEX <i>Limbic</i>	LIMBIC <i>Midbrain</i>	MIDBRAIN <i>Brainstem</i>	BRAINSTEM <i>Autonomic</i>
Cognition	Abstract	Concrete	Emotional	Reactive	Reflexive
Mental State	CALM	ALERT	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR

5. RELATIONSHIP

During a virtual community meeting hosted by Dr. Bruce Perry recently, he encouraged people to practice physical distancing, not social distancing. This is a time to connect and build trust with your employees so that they know you truly care about them as human beings.

Video conferencing may allow you to see employees outside of the office in a new way. If a child joins your virtual meeting, a dog barks or a partner passes by in the background, embrace it as a privilege, not an inconvenience! Between meetings, check-in with staff individually and ask how they are doing and what they need.

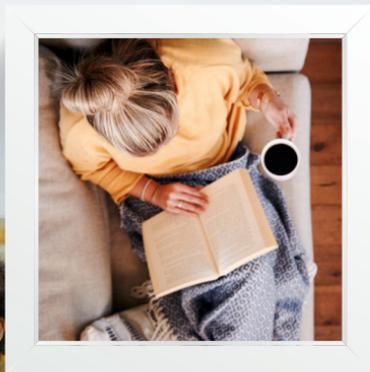
Lead by example and demonstrate your willingness to say *"I don't know"* when you don't have an answer, but do your best to assure people that we will get through this together.



Vulnerability is not winning or losing; It's having the courage to show up and be seen when you have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it is our greatest measure of courage.

Brené Brown





6. REASON TO BE

As leaders, it may be difficult to know how to balance relationship, connection and compassion with your employees. We are in the midst of quickly changing work expectations and concerns about service delivery.

Work is going to look different as staff manage a variety of responsibilities. It's probably best to acknowledge sooner than later that when staff work from home, it's unlikely they will be solidly focused from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We shouldn't expect employees to respond at all times – and truthfully, we as leaders should be willing and able to hit pause from time to time.

This grid reminds us that when we put high expectations on our staff, without compassion, they will feel anxious and stressed. But lowering all expectations and accountability is not optimal either. This is our time to hone our leadership skills and strike the right balance of expectations and compassion to allow employees to be successful and engaged in our mission and our work.

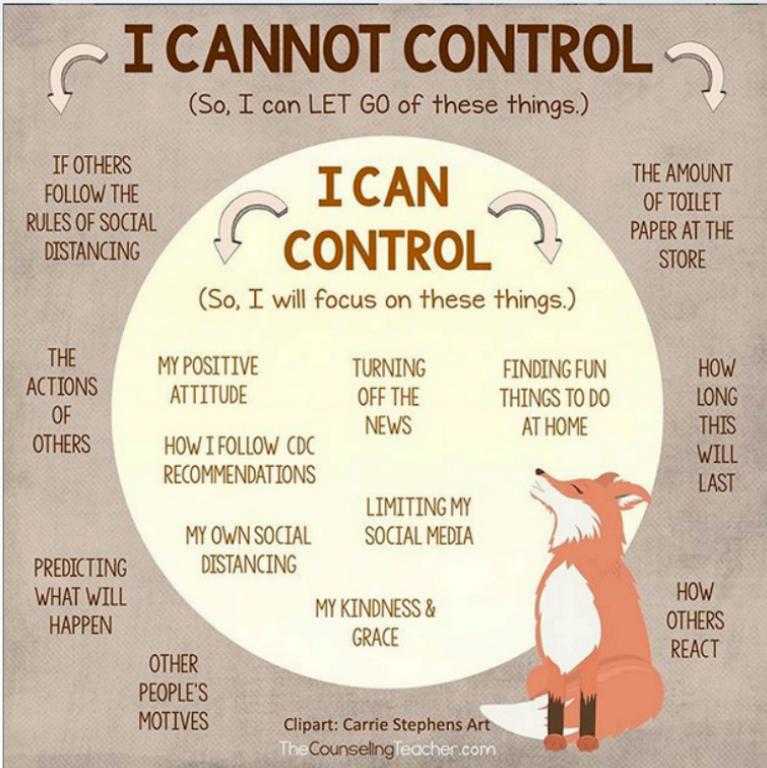


7. CAREGIVER CAPACITY

Last but not least, as leaders, we need to prioritize caregiver capacity for ourselves and our employees. Remind yourself that there are many things happening right now that are out of our control. Embrace what you can control and let go of what you cannot.

Take a moment and write down your caregiver capacity goals for this week – do you want to read that book sitting on your end table? Finally make time to “visit” a family member each day? Whatever it is, big or small, please make it a priority so you can continue to be the best leader possible. If you can do it in times of crisis, how much easier will it be day to day?

This week, I will do the following, just for me:



Saint 

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