

## Our Role as Leaders

Inclusive, collaborative workplaces require leaders to create the environment in which each person feels safe and inspired to share their contributions. A more inclusive environment requires not just a policy change, but a change in our daily behavior.

This Caring Conversation Guide equips you to have inclusive conversations with peers, team members, customers and clients.

A leaders responsibility is to go first, to model the behavior we want to see in others. Listening, empathizing, collaborating and building trust are foundational elements that harness the power of diversity to create truly inclusive cultures.



Listen first to gain understanding, not to respond.  
"Tell me more about how you are feeling."



Empathize rather than debate or discuss.  
"I can see how upset you are and I'm glad you told me."



Collaborate with others and encourage inclusivity.  
"I could really use your perspective."



Build trust by extending compassion.  
"I recognize that recent events are very troubling and many of us are challenged with how to respond."

## Essential Actions

### What to do now:

Check in on team members: "How are you doing? Is there anything I can do to support you?"

Acknowledge circumstances: "I recognize that recent events have caused many of us to pause and wrestle with our own emotions."

Set the example: "I ask each of you to be there for each other and make no assumption as to how somebody else is feeling right now."

Be aware: Pay close attention to the non-verbals of others, discern their emotion and seek to understand, not to solve.

Take care: Be mindful of your own non-verbals: facial expression, posture and gestures.

### Core Skill: Empathetic Listening

When listening to your team members, the goal is to accept where the other person is coming from, listen and discern the best way to serve them.

1. Be fully present (attending behavior) – stop, pause, encourage face to face if possible
2. Stay tuned in (acknowledgements) – signal to the other you are focused and following
3. Encourage the other (door openers) – open ended questions or statements invite the other to share more
4. Quiet your mind and voice (silence) – pause the need to solve, don't interrupt
5. Convey you understand (empathetic response) – express back the facts and feelings, let them know they are not alone

A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.  
- Jackie Robinson

## Empathetic Responses

Empathy is the ability to share the perspective of another, to stay out of judgement, to understand another person's feelings, and to communicate the understanding of that person's feelings.

An empathetic response conveys understanding, recognition and acceptance. Avoid non-empathetic responses that are often received as dominating, avoidant or judgmental.

Empathetic	Non-Empathetic
<b>Understanding:</b> - What has this this been like for you? - It sounds like you are saying... - I want to understand, can you share more about...?	<b>Dominating:</b> - Go be a part of the solution, not the problem - This is what you need to do - It doesn't help to get upset
<b>Recognizing:</b> - You must feel very frustrated - How are you handling this? - This must be hard to talk about. Thank you for sharing.	<b>Avoiding:</b> - This will all blow over - You will be fine - Something good will come of this
<b>Accepting:</b> - I hear you - I can see where you are coming from - I appreciate your perspective	<b>Judging:</b> - I can't believe you said that - I would not have acted that way - That's not how I would respond

## Build Trust

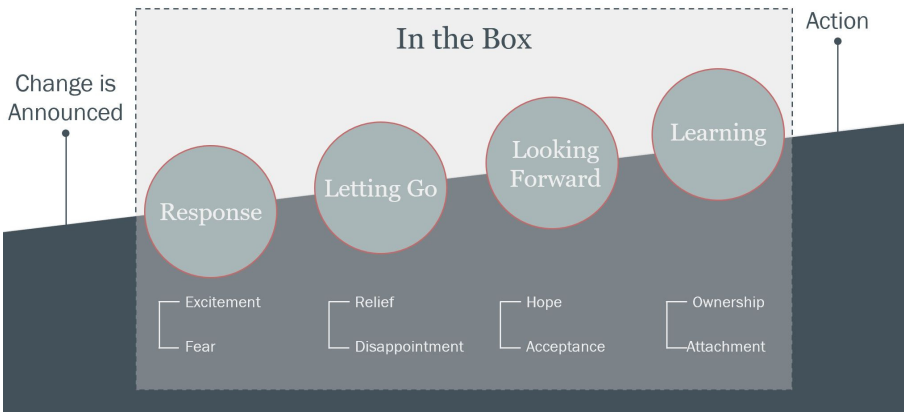
As we navigate so much uncertainty, one thing is clear: how we react, what we decide and the communications we send will either build or erode trust. It won't be neutral. Trust (or the belief of trust) is created by the choices we make (our behaviors). These fall into four main areas – Competence, Consistency, Character and Compassion.

**Competence - Doing something right.**  
 Identify resources for your team  
 Communicate procedures to help people stay safe  
 Address conflict immediately

**Consistency - Doing things right over time.**  
 Show up in positive and predictable ways  
 Increase the frequency of your communication,  
 Consider short team huddles to stay connected

**Character: Doing the right thing.**  
 Treat all team members with respect  
 Acknowledge when you're wrong  
 Hold others accountable for non-inclusive behaviors

**Compassion: Doing the right thing for people.**  
 Recognize and celebrate team members  
 Be curious about the stories of others  
 Be open to different perspectives



As you engage with people, keep in mind that people may be "in the box" processing in their own time difficult news or changing circumstances. When "in the box" our emotions tend to rise and our behavior might look different. The most helpful thing a person can do when someone else is in the box is to listen.