The Governance Institute

Points to Consider for Dynamic Discussion: Is Your Board Creating an Environment to Foster Caring Leadership?

These 10 practices of empathic leadership can be built into the board's daily routines, changing the course from crisis to renewal for the workforce and the organization as a whole:

1. **Be fully present**. Be approachable for those coming to share their issues or concerns. Give them undivided attention by scheduling time for open discussion and omitting distractions.
2. **Actively listen**. One of the hardest things for many people is to actively listen to what others are saying, particularly when their views differ from your own. Seek out a range of perspectives and act on their ideas.
3. **Think safety first**. Show concern for people's safety and well-being. In these times of great upheaval and heightened personal risk, do all that can be done to make the workplace as safe as possible. Active communication and adherence to workplace protocols are critical.
4. **Take action**. See something, do something. Take immediate action to support others when they report feelings of unfair treatment. Difficult moments provide opportunity to demonstrate ethical leadership in action, giving workers deeper confidence and hope.
5. **Show vulnerability**. Admit to mistakes and create an environment in which others feel comfortable doing so. Humility and humanity allow people to engage in learning and positive change.
6. **Be authentic**. Act with courage and stand up for what the board believes with full transparency. Authenticity builds trust.
7. **Stay calm**. Maintain a calm presence in the face of adversity. People need stability in times of change, and the ability to demonstrate emotional stability provides the security needed for most to carry on and stay focused on the work.
8. **Be adaptive**. In this time of increased desire to balance work life and personal life, good leaders are finding novel ways to incorporate flexibility so people can be more productive in work and happier outside of work.
9. **Show curiosity**. Actively seek new information and make the effort to be continuously learning new things. Seek education on top issues, attend professional conferences and network, and bring those new insights back to the workplace.
10. **Be socially responsible**. Make decisions that are socially responsible rather than politically expedient. Think about serving the greater good rather than operating with self-interest. Make decisions that have a positive impact on global environmental and social issues.

Source: "Ensuring Workforce Health: The Criticality of Empathic Leadership in Healthcare" by Steve Sullivan, Managing Director, Pearl Meyer, and Celeste Coruzzi, Ph.D., Managing Director and Practice Leader, Veritas Partners, System Focus article, September 2021.