

LEADING SPS

THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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Operational Psychology Branch
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CONTENT

- 3 NAVIGATING THE HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19**
Foreword: Challenges & Opportunities for Leaders

- 4 BUILDING HEROES: WITHIN AND AROUND US**
Using Psychological Capital in Leadership During Times of Crisis

- 5 EVEN HEROES NEED SUPPORT**
Taking Care of Ourselves while Leading in Crisis

NAVIGATING THE HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

COVID-19 is creating unprecedented disruption to the workplace and the world. The scale of the outbreak, and the rapid changes to the situation, has resulted in a high degree of uncertainty that has impacted people and organizations alike.

As leaders of an organization, navigating through these times can be challenging. On top of being role models in the organization, there may also be concurrent pressures for you to take care of yourselves and fulfill other personal roles for your family. Steering through these multiple pressures can be demanding, tiring and cause stress.

However, this situation also presents with opportunities for leaders. During a crisis like COVID-19, people look to leaders for compassion, decisiveness and confidence in navigating the organization into the future. According to SPS's morale sensing survey findings in February 2020, SPS staff perceive that SPS leaders communicated well, and have been decisive while managing this situation.

Given that this situation is likely to be long-drawn, leaders face pressures and challenges of increasing intensity, which may have accumulative adverse effects. It is important that you, as leaders, handle yourselves effectively, so as to promote cumulative positive effects around you. The following segments offer some ideas of taking care of the organization as well as yourself during these times.

TOGETHER, WE CAN OVERCOME



BUILDING HEROES: WITHIN AND AROUND US

Psychological Capital, or PsyCap, refers to four psychological qualities within an individual- Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism (HERO). These qualities help people adapt in the face of change, address difficulties effectively, and enhance their well-being. PsyCap can be developed, thus is particularly useful for leaders to cultivate for themselves and among their teams.

How can you continue to be a HERO during this period?

Instill *Hope* within yourselves and the organization to persevere towards goals

- Set approach-oriented goals (moving towards something)
- Identify goals that are attainable during this period
- Simplify complex organizational goals into smaller, simpler targets
- Show appreciation and celebrate small achievements

Build *Efficacy* in everyone, to feel confident and put in the necessary effort to succeed

- Remember past successes/challenges that you have overcome
- Recognize existing success stories during this time and the factors that contribute to it
- Encourage everyone to be role models through sharing how they overcome challenges
- Create situations for success in the organization during this period (e.g. through creating smaller, achievable targets)

Develop personal and organizational *Resilience* to overcome adversity

- Acknowledge and accept the current situation
- Find or create meaning for yourself and the organization during this period
- Improvise and find new ways to reach personal and organizational roles

Increase *Optimism* so that everyone has a realistically positive view about succeeding

- Re-frame the current situation as a chance for opportunity and growth for individuals and the organization
- Be forward-looking and look for future opportunities and goals for yourself and the organization

*Leaders become great,
not because of their
power, but because of
their ability to
empower others*

-John Maxwell

EVEN HEROES NEED SUPPORT

Leadership demands long hours and great effort, even more so during crisis periods such as COVID-19. However, rest and relaxation are just as essential as hard work, and become more crucial during this period. With prolonged pressures and multiple uncertainties, stress is bound to build up, which affects both well-being and performance. Leaders must take time for themselves, and they should not apologize or feel guilty for doing so. While being HEROes, leaders are still human, and caring for themselves should not be neglected.

Design your own self-care plan

1 Re-think your approach to work

- What are the workplace habits that are effective for you?
- What are some workplace habits you want to change for yourself?

2 Ensure your daily functional needs are met

- Take care of your body: Get sufficient sleep, eat well-balanced meals and exercise regularly.
- Connect with others: Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

3 Decide what self-care means to you

- Think about the things that make you happy and give you rest: It could be a 5km run, practicing meditation, playing with your kids without distraction. Whatever it is, you do you.
- Schedule some non-negotiable "me" time on your calendar regularly.



If you want more, here are some quick activities to stay mindful and take care of yourself!

Start a journal. Some short things to write:

- Name 10 things you are grateful for.
- Make a list of short-term goals.
- Name some internal and external resources you have to help you through the pandemic.
- Share something that has made you proud or happy in the past two weeks.
- Make a list of everything you'd like to say "no" to.

Say a mantra that brings you comfort, such as "I am confident," "All will be well," or "May I be happy and healthy."

Relieve your worries in the moment by paying attention to your breathing and noticing if you are OK right now, with no thoughts of the past or future.

*On behalf of SPS, we
thank you for your
commitment and persistence
while leading the
organization during this
time.*

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