

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: ARE YOU DISCONNECTED?

Even in today's mixed up, uncertain, and sometimes scary world, the ideal leader finds time to reconnect with people. Do you need to reconnect with anyone? "Reconnect" could imply that you have disconnected—maybe you have; maybe you have not.

Our point is that we want to encourage you to avoid making the assumption that you actually are connected with those to whom you should be, and to avoid assuming that you know how your people are doing. We are talking about establishing new connections and/or reaffirming old connections.

Leaders can pose pointed, but open, questions to help them reconnect and reaffirm that they are doing what is required now to create the environment where their direct reports, teams, and organization can be successful now and in the future. Here are five questions we suggest you ask—you may have others you would find more suitable—the point is to engage with your people:

1. What do you need from me that I am not currently providing?
2. What might you have wanted to tell me that you haven't felt comfortable telling me?
3. How are you feeling about your ability to deliver on what you are accountable for?
4. Is everything okay for you and your family?
5. What is keeping you up at night?

These may seem like very personal questions. You are right; they are. However, today's most effective leaders have come to realize the benefits of developing vulnerability-based trust and psychological safety in their work environment, and they are intensely focused on making that happen. A workplace based on vulnerability, trust, candor, and safety will be able to achieve agility, results, morale, retention, and innovation.

For some do's and don'ts about having these sensitive conversations, see this recent HBR article, [How Supportive Leaders Approach Emotional Conversations](#), which says in part:

Many leaders aren't aware when they're using emotionally dismissive and potentially harmful language with their employees. Most of the time, unintentionally dismissive language comes from a place of caring. Leaders want to support the person, to help them move through their issue, to minimize their pain. Sometimes in an attempt to minimize the pain, they minimize the person as well. On the other hand, some leaders believe that emotions don't belong in the workplace. The past two years of compounding emotional strain have made it increasingly clear that managers need to shift their focus to meeting and supporting employees' emotional well-being. It's no longer enough to simply provide the operational tools and resources for your team to function—you also need to create psychological safety for them to thrive. That means getting comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations. The author presents six ways for managers to be supportive when someone shares an emotional situation or challenge.

Leaders who have created the possibility for authenticity and dialogue will prevail—and their people and their organizations will succeed. This is not about therapy in the workplace or creating a country club or undisciplined environment. This is all about creating the space for people to be people—so that they are "freed up" and can focus on the mission, and are more able to collaborate to achieve it.

Does your team have the level of comfort with candor and vulnerability to build trusting relationships that will help them achieve the mission? What barriers are there to vulnerability-based trust and psychological safety at your workplace?

Further reading

[The Surprising Power of Simply Asking Coworkers How They're Doing \(hbr.org\)](#)

[4 Steps to Boost Psychological Safety at Your Workplace \(hbr.org\)](#)

[What It Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change \(hbr.org\)](#)