

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

## Compassionate leadership

After a year of professional stress, disruption, and continued anxiety around the future, compassionate leadership is now more urgently needed than ever. A strategy that has raised eyebrows in the past is now proving to be far more widespread, with more and more companies adopting this approach to retain a comfortable and loyal workforce.

As employees become more focused on meaning and personal fulfilment in their work, employers are now in the perfect position to act as the supportive force their company needs - one that aligns with the values of its employees.

*“Amidst upheaval, leaders must share what they know and admit what they don’t know. That honesty creates more psychological safety for people, not less.”*

**Amy C. Edmonson,**  
Novartis Professor of Leadership,  
Harvard Business School

Compassionate leadership begins with seeing how others see and feeling as others feel. It’s an empathetic means of leading, rooted in mindfulness and pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn as a means of reducing stress. By cultivating mindfulness in employees, you can help them fulfil their personal potential.

Research from Dr. Ellen Langer (Professor of Psychology at Harvard University) found that mindfulness increases charisma, productivity, memory, attention, and health, while decreasing the potential for burnout and accidents. In her words, it’s true for both the ‘leader and the led’.

Compassionate leadership in business then intends to boost mindfulness across the workforce and requires commitment from those leading to be their best. The biggest example of compassionate leadership in practice is the NHS. By adopting these techniques, employees were able to look out for themselves, emphasising and caring for their wellbeing, while delivering quality care to those who needed it most. This then extended to staff being trusted to make decisions with greater autonomy, increasing belonging within the organisation (boosting collective efforts and awareness of others), and managing overload of work to ensure all care is sustainable for staff efforts.



*“The only way to respond to the challenges that face us in the NHS is through radical innovation – transformational change. That can only come through releasing staff from the rigidities of bureaucracies, command and control hierarchies, and relentless top-down scrutiny and control. And the evidence from research is clear that compassionate leadership is the vital cultural element for innovation in organisations”*

- **Michael West, Suzie Bailey**, The Kings Fund  
*Five Myths of Compassionate Leadership*