



Office of Faculty Development

Pathology & Immunology

Leadership in the Time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed extraordinary demands on our faculty and staff in an environment that is unfamiliar and uncertain. We offer some thoughts and suggestions below based on literature and experience across business and the military on leading change and managing remotely.

Alter leadership behaviors to match situational demands

Leadership requirements are contextual. Some, dealing with this crisis, are operating in a very chaotic environment; others in situations that are less chaotic but still very complex. As the environment shifts back and forth---from simple to complicated to complex to chaotic---different leadership behaviors are needed. (For an additional resource: Snowden, D. and Boone, M. (2007). A leader's framework for decision-making. Harvard Business Review, November, 69-76.)

Promote a sense of community and instill a caring culture.

Touch base frequently with team members:

- Check to see how everyone is doing (emotionally, personal health, family, etc.).
- Provide encouraging words; acknowledge and validate challenges they are having.
- Focus on how you can help.
- Problem-solve and lend support to one another, including back-up support for childcare, eldercare, etc.
- Remember that for individuals working off-site, they are not just “working from home”, they are “at home working in a crisis”.

Based on the above, strategize about any changes to work priorities.

Stay in a routine of working norms as much as possible (or develop a new routine that better fits the situation):

If you had regular meetings, hold them for as many as can attend. If you had one-on-one meetings, continue them. This provides team members with a sense of continuity.

Communicate frequently using the most appropriate technology

Communication approach	Works well for
1:1 Call or Video Conference	Individual catch-up; Building relationships; Discussing sensitive/difficult topics
Video Conference (“Zoom”)	Problem-solving and co-creation; Planning & review; Decision meetings; Workshops & trainings
Text/Instant Messenger	Urgent questions & guidance; Keeping up-to-date in real time; Social talk
Video Captures & Voice Notes	Explaining work; Showcasing; Guidance when managers have limited time; Debriefs after meetings some team members missed
Email	Updates & status reports to large numbers; Formal internal & external communication

Source: McKinsey & Company

Be alert to anyone who is having an extreme response and may need help

When everyone is stressed, it is easy to overlook someone who may need help. Consider also that uncharacteristic responses can be a signal of stress; it is not always a negative response and even subtle changes in an individual’s characteristics can signal stress.

Share your own story and encourage others to share theirs

This helps provide social connectivity and builds community in a time of physical distancing.

Model self-care

This sends the message that if you are going to help others you must care for yourself too.

Expect that individuals may respond to the changes in different ways, and people may react to changes differently than their past responses. Some of these changes may be:

- Emotional: From anger to excitement.
- Cognitive: From focusing on the disaster to focusing on the opportunities.
- Intentional: From opposition to anything changing to support for change.

Spectrum of responses in the time of COVID-19	Fear Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spread emotions related to fear and anger.• Grab food, toilet paper, medications, and supplies that are in excess of need.• Frequently complain.• Quick to anger.
	Learning Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start to give up what cannot be controlled.• Identify emotions.• Situational awareness: think how to act.• Stop and evaluate information before spreading something false.• Recognize we are all trying to do our best.
	Growth Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think of others and see how to help them.• Make talents available to those who need them.• Live in the present and focus on the future.• Empathetic with self and others.• Thank and appreciate others.• Keep a happy emotional state and spread hope.• Look for ways to adapt to changes.• Focus on patience, relationships, and creativity.