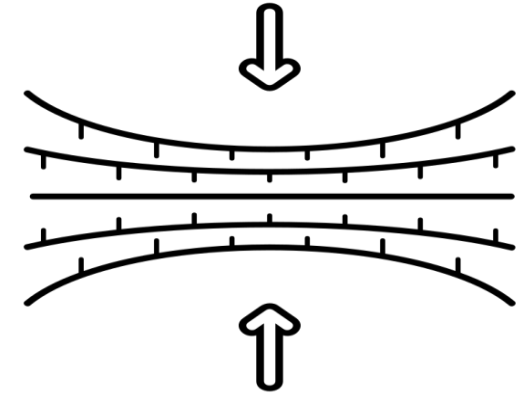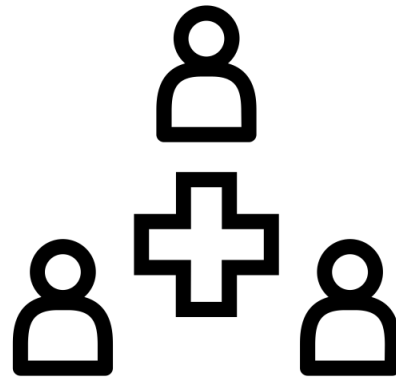# Nurturing Workforce Resilience in the NHS

Dr. Simon Moralee, The University of Manchester

Leadership in Action: Optimizing Patient Flow through Strategic Vision & Workforce Culture

AMAZING BREAKTHROUGH[1]

Scientists have discovered a revolutionary new treatment that makes **working life better**.

It enhances your health and makes your working life **more contented**. It makes you **more engaged**.

It keeps you **satisfied** with your work and **lowers burnout**.

It **protects you from trauma**. It **wards off loss**.

It **lowers your risk of psychological distress** and **absenteeism**, not to mention **boosts your productivity** and **innovation**.

You'll even feel happier, less stressed and quicker to bounce back.

Are you interested? This is what compassion can bring!

Adapted from work by Matthew Walker ("Why We Sleep") on the benefit of sleep for, amongst other things, resilience

COMPASSION AT WORK TOOLKIT
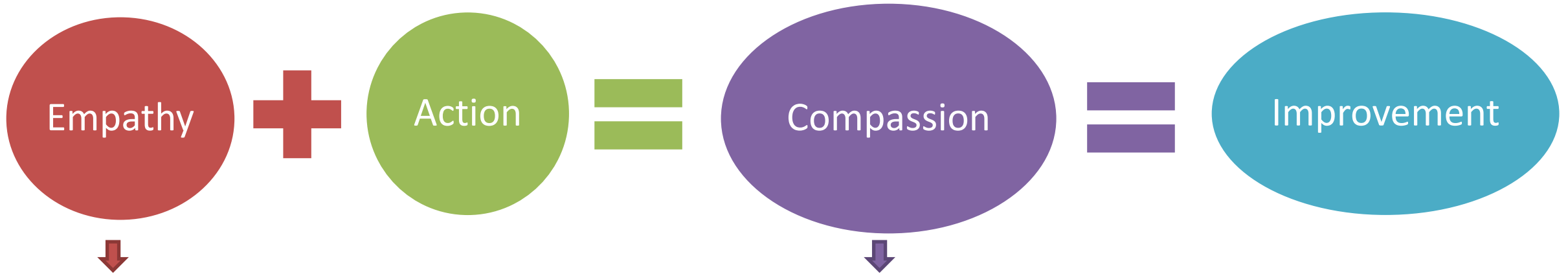
National Forum for Health and Wellbeing at Work

roffeypark

RESEARCH PAPER

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO ORGANISATIONS NEED MORE OF IT?

Meysam Poorkavoos

www.roffeypark.com

The Compassion Equation

Empathy **+** Action **=** Compassion **=** Improvement

To resonate with someone else's <u>feelings</u> – goes beyond "walking in someone else's shoes" – <u>feel</u> with someone in their given circumstances, <u>listen</u> to their story & <u>believe</u> them even when it doesn't match your own experience – leading to people feeling recognised and valued[2]

"The emotional response [action] to another's pain or suffering, involving an authentic desire to help [act]"

"Compassionomics"

Empathy: distress, bias & decline

Empathic Distress[5]

Empathy Bias[6,7]

Empathy Decline[8]
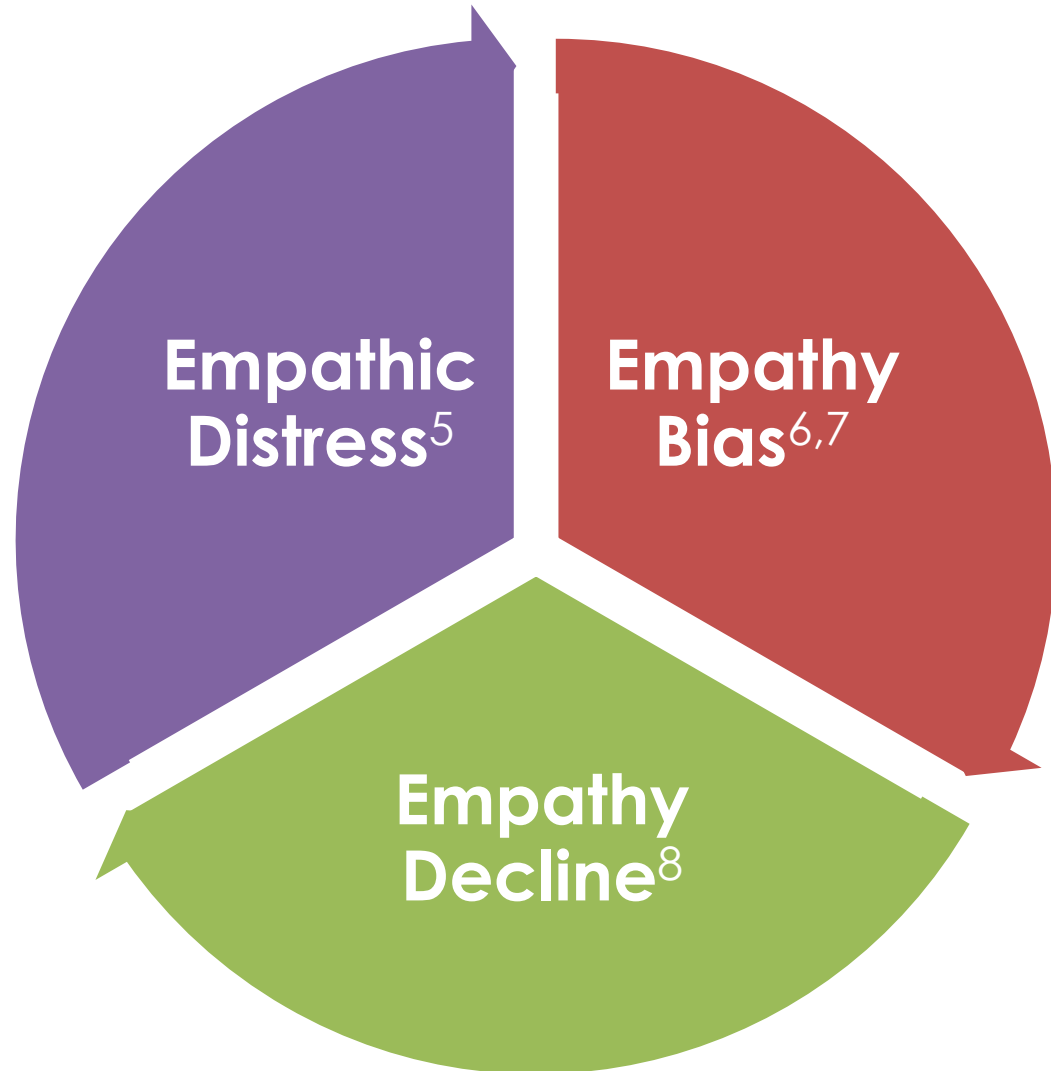
- **Empathic Distress:** In people facing and 'helping' jobs, a person can 'feel with' the other person, and absorb negative emotions to the point where they experience negative emotions, distress and potentially emotional burnout [5]

- **Empathy Bias:** people like people like themselves - nurses find it easier to be empathic with people who have well-developed communication skills, and are outgoing and friendly

- **Empathy Decline:** more difficult to show empathy if there is role overload & stress

The University of Manchester

Labour Force Survey
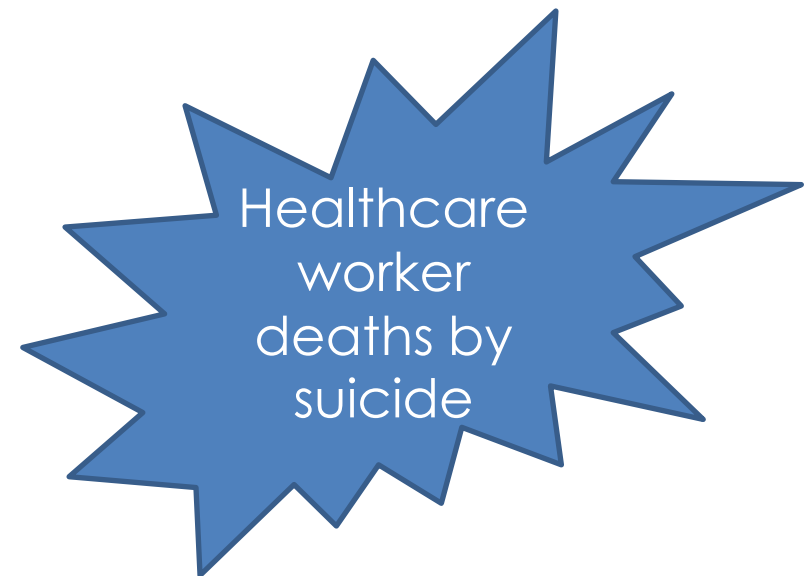
Working days lost to work-related stress, anxiety, depression

Days Lost (millions)
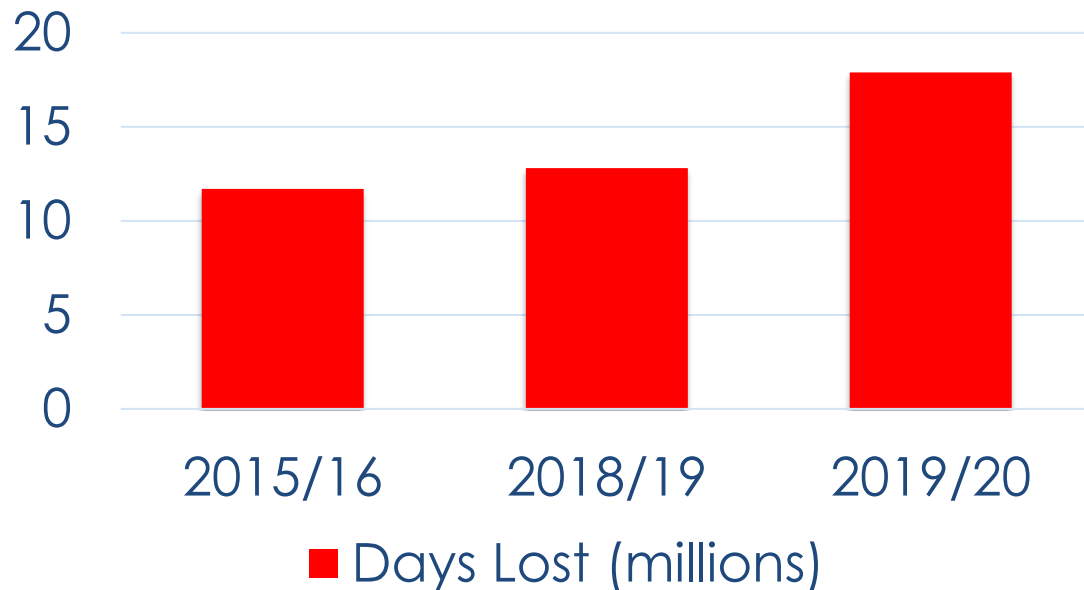
CAUSES:
- Workload
- Lack of support
- Violence, threats or bullying
- Changes at work

Healthcare worker deaths by suicide

The University of Manchester

EDITORIAL

COVID-19 and experiences of moral injury in front-line key workers

The COVID-19 virus outbreak was declared a pandemic by the WHO on 12 March 2020. Whilst the infection mortality rate is not fully understood, it appears to be considerably higher than that of other recent pandemics (e.g. H1N1 pandemic, mortality rate 0.02%) [1]. Furthermore, several groups of people, such as the elderly and those with some pre-existing medical conditions, appear to be particularly vulnerable to the disease [1,2].

International evidence, and the public health messaging put forward by Public Health England, suggests that COVID-19 may place a substantial demand on an overstretched National Health Service (NHS). A lack

(PMIEs) can lead to negative thoughts about oneself or others (e.g. "I am a monster" or "my colleagues don't care about me") as well as deep feelings of shame, guilt or disgust. These, in turn, can contribute to the development of mental health problems, including depression, PTSD and anxiety [6].

Moral injury is not limited by context or profession. For example, a recent review found that exposure to moral injury was significantly associated with PTSD, depression and suicidal ideation across a range of professions (e.g. teacher, military personnel, journalists) across a variety of countries (e.g. USA, Australia, Israel) [6].

REPORT

Technical Advisory Group: moral injury in health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

Impacts of moral injury and recommendations by the Risk Communication and Behavioural Insights Sub-group.

First published: 3 August 2021

Last updated: 3 August 2021

Commentary

Moral injury and the COVID-19 pandemic: reframing what it is, who it affects and how care leaders can manage it

Suzanne Shale[1,2]

[1]Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, Dartford, UK
[2]Department of Security and Crime Science, University College London, London, UK

Correspondence to
Dr Suzanne Shale, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, Dartford, Kent, UK;
suzanne.shale@clearer-thinking.co.uk

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The term moral injury has achieved widespread circulation among care leaders during the pandemic, and has been influential in prompting care providers to give fresh consideration to the psychological support available to staff.[1,2] The notion of moral injury that has come to prominence is one that some label 'occupational moral injury'. This arises during work such as armed combat or emergency response when people carry out, fail to prevent, or become aware of, human actions that violate deep moral commitments. Occupational moral injury is often associated with psychological distress, and moral responses including guilt, anger and disgust.[3]

Here I draw attention to a broader notion of moral injury found in moral philosophy. In this version, a moral wound can be experienced by anyone. It arises from sources that include injustice, cruelty, status degradation and profound breaches of moral expectations. The moral-philosophical

'character wound' associated with annihilation of trust[6] that undermined their personal moral foundations. Shay appears to have been the first to use the term moral injury in a therapeutic context, defining it by reference to how it arose in combat situations: 'a betrayal of what's right by someone who holds legitimate authority in a high stakes situation'.[7] Litz et al subsequently proposed a wider definition of moral injury, 'perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations'.[8] This definition has been widely adopted in studies of public service professions.[9]

The heightened interest in a conception of moral injury derived from combat experience is consistent with some familiar rhetorical tropes of the pandemic: talk of fight, battle, front lines, winning the war and circumstances said to be unprecedented. Some of this is justified, and attentiveness

~~Survival Of The Fittest~~

- Despite popular mythology, **Charles Darwin (L)** never said this.

- **Herbert Spencer (R)**, British biologist & anthropologist is the culprit behind this justification for aggressive, gladiator-like behaviour

- Darwin, in fact, said that the communities with the greatest compassion for others "…would flourish the best and rear the greatest number of offspring"

- **Compassion actually supports the species**
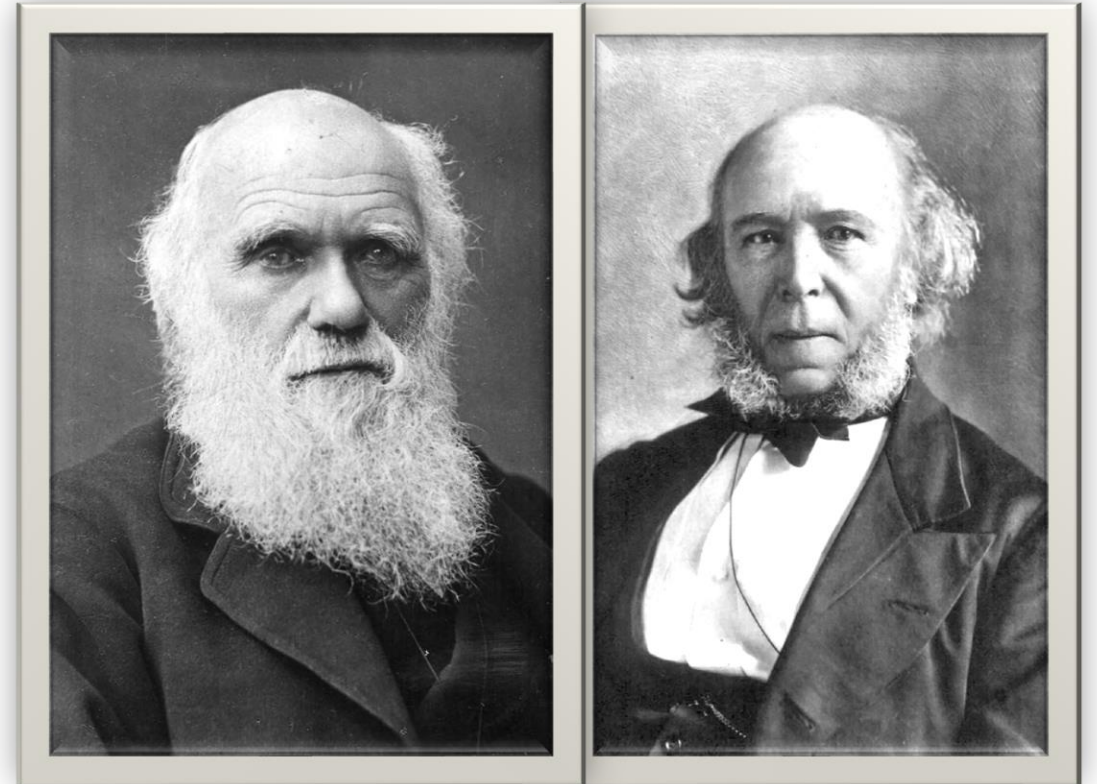
Charles Darwin

Herbert Spencer

Compassion is infectious & easy-to-do

- Leads to affective commitment & positive talk about your organisation

- Breeds compassion – experiencing it means you're more likely to demonstrate it towards others

- Supervisors who perceive that their organisation values their well-being are more likely to show supportive behaviour towards the people they manage

- By demonstrating compassion you also personally benefit, as do colleagues who witness compassionate acts

- Compassion can be demonstrated through relatively small acts of altruism, kindness and care

Compassionate Leadership
Poorkavoos (2016)

Compassion positively improves performance & outcomes

- Creates stronger working bonds & relationships

- Reduces employee turnover

- More likely to provide the emotional resource needed for caring and less likely to experience burnout

- Generate improvements in the health outcomes of their patients and has been linked to improved innovation

- When compassion is core to organisational values, there is a measurable increase in productivity and financial performance

Compassionate Leadership
Poorkavoos (2016)

Compassionate workplaces keep people healthy (& retain them)

- Employees who believe that their leaders care about their well-being are more satisfied with their jobs and show higher organisational commitment

- Improves employee engagement and retention

- Enables people to experience positive emotions, which lower heart rate and blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, and decrease employees' psychological distress, contributing to lower absenteeism

- Experiencing compassion connects co-workers psychologically

- Experiencing positive emotions also boosts productivity

Compassionate Leadership

Poorkavoos (2016)

Compassionate leadership helps people recover quicker & better after trauma

- Where someone has experienced loss or trauma, compassionate leadership sustains the sufferer through the grieving process and facilitates faster recovery

- Compassionate leadership is more likely to generate resilience in stressful times amongst staff and leaders who develop others experience lower stress and greater resilience[40,41]

Barriers to Compassion At Work

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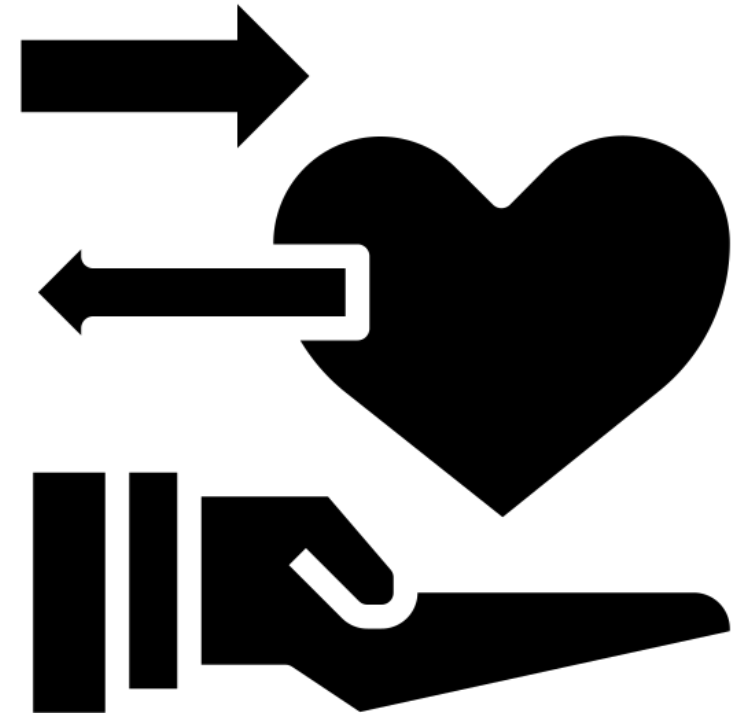
I don't see it, I don't have time / "too busy", I don't care, I don't know how, I don't believe it really matters AND low EI, "JFDI", fear of being seen as inconsistent

Individual Circumstances

Organisational Culture

"Developing People, Improving Care"[47] - Condition 5

Policies & Procedures
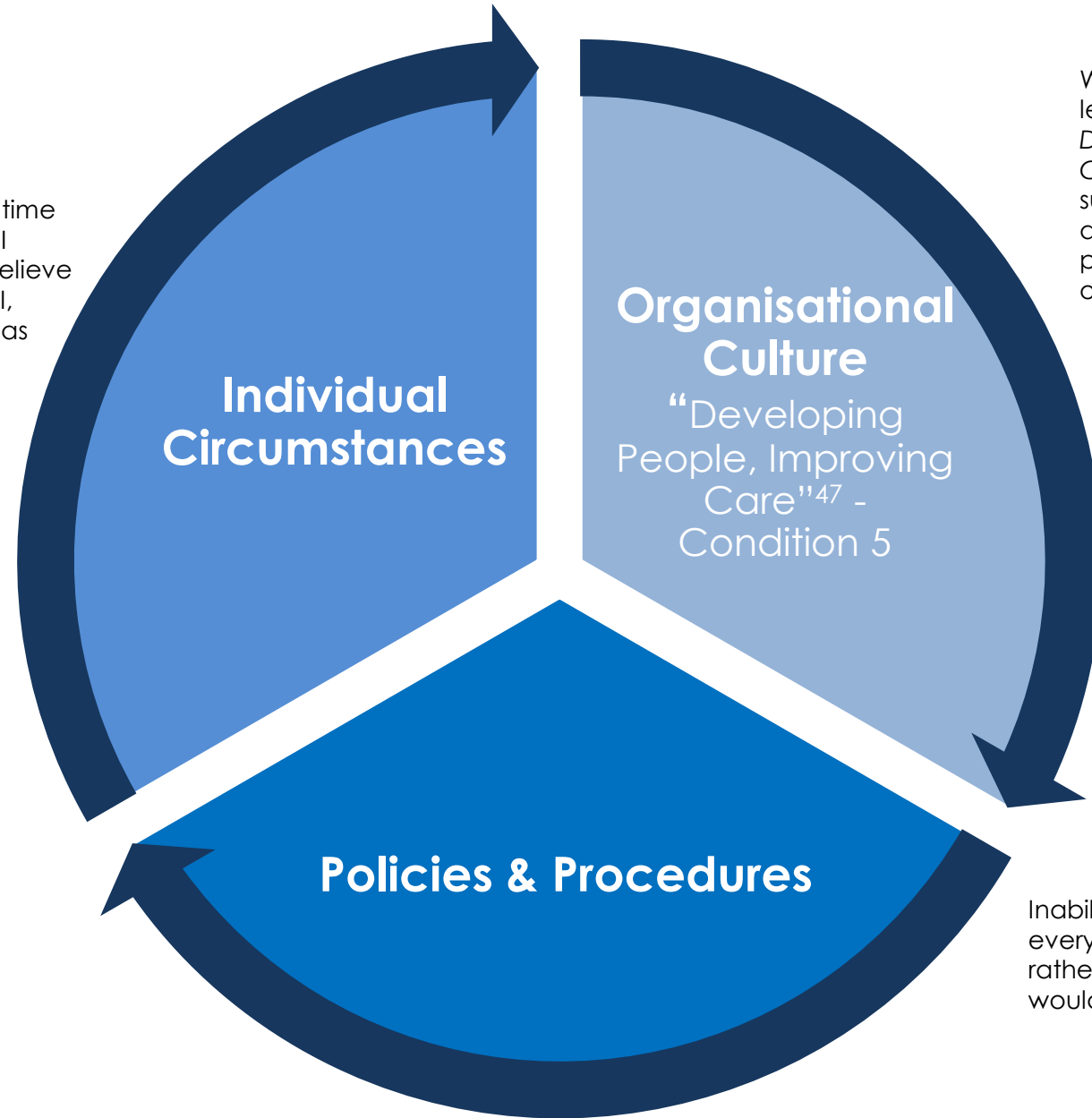
Who sets this? Organisational leaders and/or above them? *Developing People Improving Care*[45] condition 5 – "Enabling, supportive & aligned regulation and oversight" recognised the potential for regulatory overreach

Inability to adapt; treat everyone as if they are equal, rather than on the basis of what would be equitable

Do you know what to 'do' in terms of leading people compassionately?⁴⁹

Is your practice intentional, coordinated and inclusive and do you actively facilitate this at work?

Meechan (2022)

Can you do hard things in a human way?

Hougaard and Carter (2022)

How to develop a compassionate leadership approach

Compassionate leadership is a **process**

1. **Notice others**, through creating channels for dialogue & psychological safety, being visible & approachable and avoiding blame cultures

2. **Empathise** through actively seeking feedback, & actively listening with a view to understanding

3. **Take ethical, values-based approaches to actions**, supporting staff to develop, rewarding good work and relentlessly challenging poor behaviour, favouritism & discrimination.

Nurturing self-compassion (Kristin Neff)

Take a minute right now to prioritise one thing you need to do for yourself

- All of our experiences are a normal part of being human, rather than something any of us 'deserve', good or bad – there is a **common humanity** to this

- Be aware of how you think about and frame feelings, actions and events- take a balanced approach to them and don't be absorbed by them – encourage curiosity and acknowledgement of them and don't over-identify with the negative

- Demonstrate non-judgmental understanding towards yourself, and ultimately – show some **self-kindness**, not self-judgment

REMEMBER

self-compassion is not about self-pity, self-indulgence, nor self-esteem

The 3 secrets of resilient people (Lucy Hone)

Resilient people know that shit happens

Suffering is part of every human existence & knowing this stops you from feeling discriminated against – rather than 'why me?' it's 'why not me?'

Resilient people are really good at choosing carefully where they select their attention

realistically appraising situations and managing to focus on the things they can change; accept the things that they can't. Resilient people don't diminish the negative but have a way of tuning into the good – "don't lose what you have for what you have lost" (benefit finding) – accept the good.

Resilient people ask themselves: is what I'm doing helping or harming me?

It gives you some control over your decision-making.

The House of Organisational Wellbeing (Mark Solomons)

"Resilience" often starts here, transferred to the individual

"Resilience" is largely forgotten here at the organisational / system level

ORGANISATIONAL WELLBEING

3 — Where organisations often start

ADDED VALUE SUPPORT

Examples:
Free Fruit and Healthy Foods
Free or Subsidised Gym Membership
Health Insurance
Child Care Support
Break Out and Relaxation Areas
Yoga or Massage Sessions
Health Checks, Screening and MOTs
Occupational Health Services
Social Gatherings and/or Family Events
Reward and Recognition Systems

2 — Followed by or in parallel with providing personal training and support

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Examples:
Resilience Training and Workshops
Managing Stress and Mindfulness
Time and Conflict Management
Mental Health First Aid
Physical and Emotional Health
Nutrition and Posture
Diversity and Work/Life
Seminars and Support

1 — Where organisations should start (culture)

STRATEGIC NECESSITY

Examples:
Vision and Values (Why)
Leadership Behaviours / Coaching skills
Collaborative Teams
Clarity of Role, Responsibilities and Expectations
Agile and Flexible Working / Trust
Workload and Change Management
Psychological Safety
Recruitment, On-boarding and Development
Effective Performance Management

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MANCHESTER 1824
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The benefits of being more resilient

- **Adaptability to adversity** – not about "sucking it up" but about knowing when to seek support from others even if they can't practically help with solutions

- **Improved mental health** – reduced stress, likelihood of depression, anxiety

- **Improved productivity & reduced presenteeism** – ability to hold onto passion, desire, motivation & mission and reduce absent-mindedness and 'going through the motions'

- **Improved teamwork & wellbeing** – reduces conflict, improves cautious positivity about work

Tips for Supporting Workforce Resilience

1. **Check-in** regularly & agenda-less, with your teams

2. Express awareness of **Challenges (& Constraints)** as well as **Confidence** in employees' **Capabilities**;

3. Set high performance expectations while providing resources to accomplish them (or acknowledge what can & can't be delivered – requires **Courage**);

4. Offer opportunities for employees to **Contribute** to & participate in decision making;

5. Remove **Constraints** that stifle autonomy, compassion and awareness of linkages between jobs and positions;

6. Be **Clear** about objectives & how to work effectively in teams

7. Adopt a **Coaching & Curious** approach to those you work with