

## Line manager support: behaviours to support health, wellbeing and engagement



### Exercise 1:

#### Taking a positive, respectful, open approach

This exercise forms part of the [support materials](#) designed to help you explore and develop your management capability, based on the [behaviours the CIPD have identified](#), and support the wellbeing, health and engagement of your team. It aims to provide ideas and inspiration relevant to **taking a positive, respectful, open approach**, which is part of being **open, fair and consistent**, the first area of management behaviour covered by the framework.

If you haven't already done so, you can get insight into your management capability by completing the [quiz](#). You can then use the [step-by-step guidance](#) to help you get feedback, identify strengths and areas to develop and plan the action you will take. There is also an [action plan sheet](#), which can be used to note down and track your actions.

Taking a positive, respectful, open approach is about giving positive feedback, avoiding blame and criticism, being clear about when people need to make improvements but not focusing on mistakes. It is also about being open to other ways of doing things and different perspectives, consulting people and respecting their views.



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Activity	What have I learnt from reflecting on this?	What will I do differently as a result?
<p><b>Reflect on your listening skills: are you truly listening?</b></p> <p>One of the key capabilities that underlies being positive, respectful and open is being able to give quality attention and fully listen to others. Most people think they listen well, but real quality listening is actually quite rare. It involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Listening with fascination’: getting really interested and curious about what the other person is saying</li> <li>• Giving full attention</li> <li>• Not interrupting</li> <li>• Letting go of any assumptions about what the person might say</li> <li>• Not spending the time when the other person is speaking preparing your own response.</li> <li>• Showing empathy and understanding</li> <li>• Being prepared for some silences and be patient.</li> </ul> <p>How is the quality of your listening and attention? What would help you slow down and listen fully to those who work for you?</p>		
<p><b>Explore how you respond to mistakes and challenges: are you sometimes critical, blaming or defensive?</b></p> <p>Becoming aware of when you might become critical, blaming or defensive is vital to help you choose more positive, respectful and open approaches.</p> <p>Observe how you feel and behave when someone in your team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes a mistake</li> <li>• Takes a decision you don’t agree with</li> <li>• Underperforms</li> <li>• Has a different way of seeing the task/project/world</li> <li>• Challenges your decisions</li> </ul> <p>What is your automatic pattern of responding to these situations? Are there other situations that you know lead to you becoming critical, blaming or defensive?</p> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		



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<p>Explore how this way of being affects people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If someone is critical or blaming towards you, how do you respond?</li><li>• If you are critical or blaming towards someone else, how do they respond?</li><li>• If you are critical and blaming towards someone else, how does that make you feel?</li></ul> <p>In most cases, being critical and blaming leads to a negative impact on both those who are criticised/blamed and those who do the criticising/blaming.</p> <p>Reflect on how you can reduce your tendency to criticise, blame or become defensive. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Becoming more aware of situations in which you are most at risk of being critical, blaming or defensive (for example, when you judge that someone is 'doing it on purpose' or when you feel judged, blamed or criticised yourself).</li><li>• Learning ways to slow down and notice in the moment that you are about to say something negative and slowing down your response (for example, taking a deep breath and pausing before saying anything).</li><li>• Choosing to ask a question about what has happened and how before making any comment.</li><li>• Becoming more aware of your emotional state, so that you are better able to keep calm (see exercise 2 for tips on remaining calm under pressure).</li></ul> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting a very clear intention to be kind and understanding that can serve as a reminder in moments where you might say something negative and help you ground yourself in being the manager you want to be.</li></ul> <p>This doesn't mean that you shouldn't give clear feedback when someone is not performing well or is behaving badly; in fact, it is vital that you do take action in these situations (see <a href="#">exercise 3</a> for tips on handling conflict and people management issues.) What it does mean is that it is important to be balanced and respectful in what you say and do.</p>		
<p><b>Explore your positive to negative ratio: could you take a more positive approach?</b></p> <p>Observe and note how often you make positive comments to those who work for you and how often you make negative comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive comments can include agreeing with someone, telling them you like their idea, giving people appreciation for particular pieces of work and so on.</li><li>• Negative comments can include disagreeing with someone, being negative about their suggestions, being sarcastic, critical and so on.</li></ul> <p>What is your ratio of positive to negative? Research has shown that the highest performing teams have a ratio of 5 or 6 positive comments for every 1 negative comment, so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some constructive, negative feedback can help people learn from the things they don't do so well and stop inappropriate or unhelpful behaviour.</li></ul> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, only positive feedback can help people feel appreciated and motivated to do well; and positive feedback is more important than negative feedback for helping people work to their strengths and improve their performance.</li> </ul> <p>Consider whether you need to shift your positive to negative ratio and how you might do that.</p>		
<p><b>Reflect on how you foster a culture of participation: are you involving and engaging with your team?</b></p> <p>In order to get the best input from team members, it is important to build good communication and trust. One way to do this is through effective team meetings. Consider whether you do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put time in the diary for team meetings and stick to those times.</li> <li>• Build adequate space and time in team meetings for discussion and sharing.</li> <li>• Ensure that all ideas are listened to openly and without prejudice.</li> <li>• Involve all team members regardless of experience or hierarchy.</li> <li>• Demonstrate that team members' views are not just listened to, but also acted upon.</li> </ul> <p>Another way to do this is to take time to seek feedback from your team at regular intervals on how the team can improve the way it works. Consider whether you do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you ask for feedback at team meetings and/or ask individuals in one-to-one meetings with them? Do you find other ways such as providing a feedback questionnaire or suggestions box or conducting end-of-project?</li> </ul> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The kind of questions you could use for seeking feedback are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o What is going well in how the team is working at the moment? How could we use this to improve things further?</li><li>o What is not going so well? What do we need to do about that/do differently?</li><li>o What ideas do you have about how we could improve the ways we work?</li></ul></li><li>• Whenever and however you receive this kind of feedback, do you take time to reflect on it and plan in actions to implement suggestions?</li><li>• Do you engage the team in implementing changes based on their suggestions?</li><li>• Do you look to achieve continuous improvement in how the team works?</li><li>• Do you let the team know the outcome of their feedback, whether or not you implement their suggestions?</li></ul>		
<p><b>Review your openness: could you broaden your perspective?</b></p> <p>In order to grow and develop, we need not only to learn new knowledge and skills, but also to broaden our mindsets and perspectives. The uncertain world in which we now live requires us to enhance our openness and thinking capability – particularly if we manage other people. We need to be able to think in more complex, systemic, strategic and interdependent ways.</p> <p>For example, you could consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where might you be missing out on better ways of doing things because you are only seeing it from your own perspective? For example, perhaps you used to do the team's job yourself, but things have changed since you were in that role and the new circumstances mean that there is a different way to do the work that is more effective.</li></ul> <p><i>Continued on next page</i></p>		



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<p>Perhaps you tend to see the work your team does through the lens of what senior managers expect, but asking the team about customer feedback could help generate ideas of how to improve what they do. Perhaps you have people from different cultures and backgrounds in your team who can provide a valuable insight into how another culture might view things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where might your decision-making be improved by asking for other people's perspectives?</li><li>• What aspects of your team's work might benefit from your consulting with them rather than telling them what to do?</li><li>• How could you and your team work in more collective, integrated ways?</li></ul>		

This exercise has hopefully helped you generate ideas on what you want to do differently in order to take a more positive, respectful, open approach. You can refer to the [exercises](#) page for more advice on developing your management approach.