



The Leadership Doctors Prescription (Rx) is an e-newsletter “script” that’s filled with “doses” of advice that will help you create great workplaces through leadership development.

Each “script” includes 2 parts: **The Diagnosis** (identifying a symptom(s) and then analyzing to figure out “the why”) and **The Prescription** (what actions can you take to remedy the situation).

THE DIAGNOSIS

Stress: How To Help Employees Navigate Social Distancing?

There’s no doubt that employees are anxious and stressed with the spread of the coronavirus. The pandemic is disrupting the personal and professional lives of employees in unprecedented ways. For instance, kids are out of school for several weeks, the stock market has plummeted and companies are laying off employees.

Given that Gallup reported that nearly 70% of employees were disengaged BEFORE the pandemic, it’s likely that the added stress of trying to navigate the uncertainty and disruptions caused by the coronavirus are adding to the disengagement debacle.

So, you may be wondering, what has caused the disengagement debacle?

Why is this happening?

Well, it’s happening in part because employees have lost their motivation. In our book, *The Demotivated Employee*, we like to use the basket analogy to explain how this works.

Imagine an employee who is just starting a new job, or just arriving to work for the day, who is carrying an invisible basket filled with their motivation for work. They’re excited about the chance to contribute, to play to their strengths, contribute and perform meaningful work. They may also be motivated to provide for their family, or to achieve some major accomplishments in their work.

However, over time, those full baskets begin to empty because holes are poked in them. For example, when employees are stressed and can’t get help from their manager, this pokes a hole in their basket.

Or when an employee has conflict with a co-worker and the issue goes unresolved, the basket gets another hole punched in it. This causes an employee to lose motivation or to become demotivated. Demotivated employees are less likely to be engaged.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT THE BASKET OF MOTIVATION?



- It’s NOT ok that nearly 70% of US workers are disengaged.
- Poking holes in an employee’s basket contributes to the employee losing motivation.
- Losing internal motivation can cause employees to become disengaged.

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So, take a look at the list of 10 behaviors listed below.

Write down the number associated with any of the items that people in your organization would say that you do on a regular basis. If you are not in a formal leadership position, think about the behaviors you use as a member of your work group or in another aspect of your life in which people look to you for leadership.

1. I take time to reach out to talk with each of the employees who report to me about general topics that helps me understand their various goals, values, and personalities.
2. I have a consistent style of leadership that is very predictable for employees across all types of situations that they face.
3. The culture of the group that I lead gives people a lot of freedom and autonomy to complete their work.
4. I regularly discuss my perceptions about specific employees with other managers and employees who are impacted by the work of various employees.
5. I make sure that employees know that their input and ideas are welcome, and create an environment where they can speak freely.
6. When I see two people who are struggling to work well together, I avoid getting involved in their drama, and expect that they will work out their differences.
7. When I can see that an employee is stressed out, I make time to talk through their issues and concerns and help them manage their stress.
8. I thrive on the excitement of changing processes and developing new procedures, even though I can see that it is taking a toll on others.
9. I make an effort to create cohesiveness among the people who work together in my department.
10. The culture of the group that I lead has a lot of structure, rules, and procedures, and I make sure to teach employees how to follow the hierarchy that is in place.

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Let's stop demotivating employees!



THE PRESCRIPTION



Now, tally the total of even-numbered behaviors you selected, as well as the total of odd-numbered behaviors. If you're doing the even numbered behaviors, then you're engaging in leadership actions that are likely to cause employees to be demotivated.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Most of us do some of those even-numbered behaviors, without recognizing the negative impact that it is having on employees. We don't imagine you are trying to demotivate them, but it is important to consider how these even-numbered behaviors are having such a negative impact.

Let's take a look at #2 as an example. If your leadership style is consistent, regardless of the situation, then it's likely that there's a mismatch between your style and what the situation requires in terms of how you should respond some of the time. Leaders need to be able to flex their style to match the situation they're facing, rather than making employees adjust to the fixed style of the leader.

Ken Blanchard calls this situational leadership, and it is specifically designed to address the different levels of commitment and competence that employees have on different tasks, which means that they need variation in how their leader interacts across these various situations in their jobs.

On the other hand, if you're engaged in the odd-numbered behaviors, then you're doing things that can help to keep an employee's basket full. Or, if there are holes already in their motivation baskets, these odd-numbered behaviors are likely to help repair the holes more quickly and assist the employee in regaining their motivation.

As you think about helping those you lead to navigate their coronavirus anxiety, what can you do to grow and get better? We recommend the following action steps:

The Script:

1. Pick an even numbered behavior you're going to work on changing.
2. Identify specific actions you can take to stop the behavior. For example, you might decide to read our book, *The Demotivated Employee*, to learn leadership behaviors you can use to help people navigate their anxiety and stress caused by the coronavirus.
3. Get an accountability partner This individual will give you feedback on how you're doing.
4. If you're doing the odd numbered behaviors, kudos to you! Work on strengthening with specific actions and get an accountability partner.

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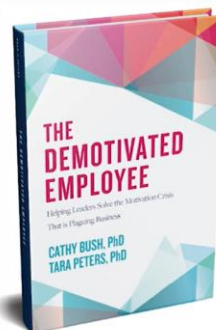
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