
LEADERSHIP IN HEALTHCARE

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OVERVIEW

- Leadership in healthcare
 - Soft skills
 - Trust
 - Teams
 - Psychological Safety
 - Change
 - An Argument for Compassionate Leadership – we lead people
 - Difficult conversations
 - Innovation
-

A BIT ABOUT ME

HEALTHCARE IS THE MOST COMPLEX LEADERSHIP ENVIRONMENT

The system is complex, non-linear

The emotional load is heavy – it is a very human industry

Ethical decisions are made constantly on a daily basis

The stakes are high - poor patient and staff experience, harm/death

Constant change is the norm and often imposed on systems

Workforce challenges are intense

Resources rarely match demand

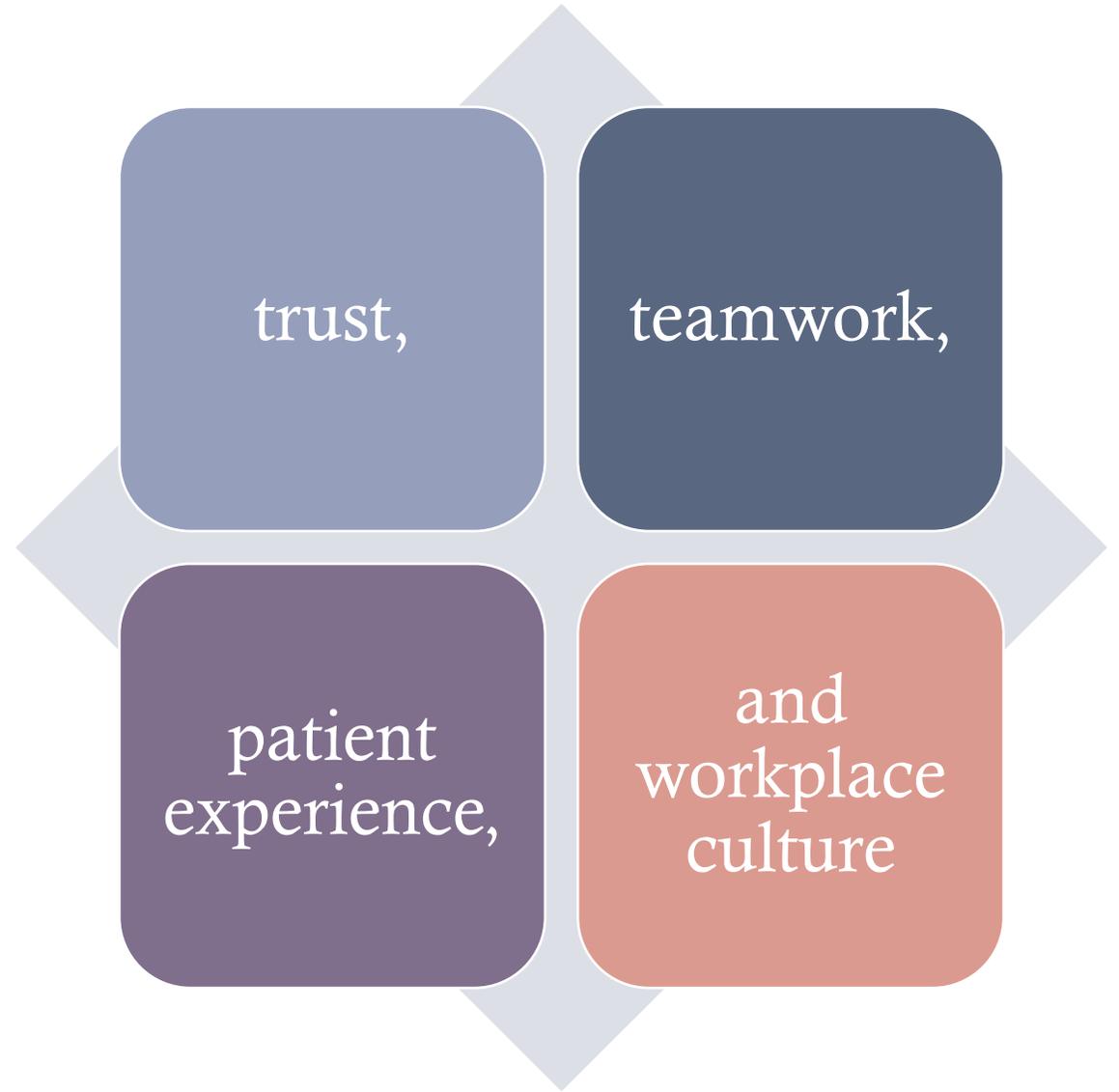
LEADERSHIP

We lead people

We need to know

- Ourselves
- How we are received by others
- Others
- The daily lived experience of others

**SOFT SKILLS
MATTER
BECAUSE THEY
INFLUENCE**



WHAT ARE THE CORE SOFT SKILLS

Communication (listening, tone of voice, what you say)

Teamwork and collaboration

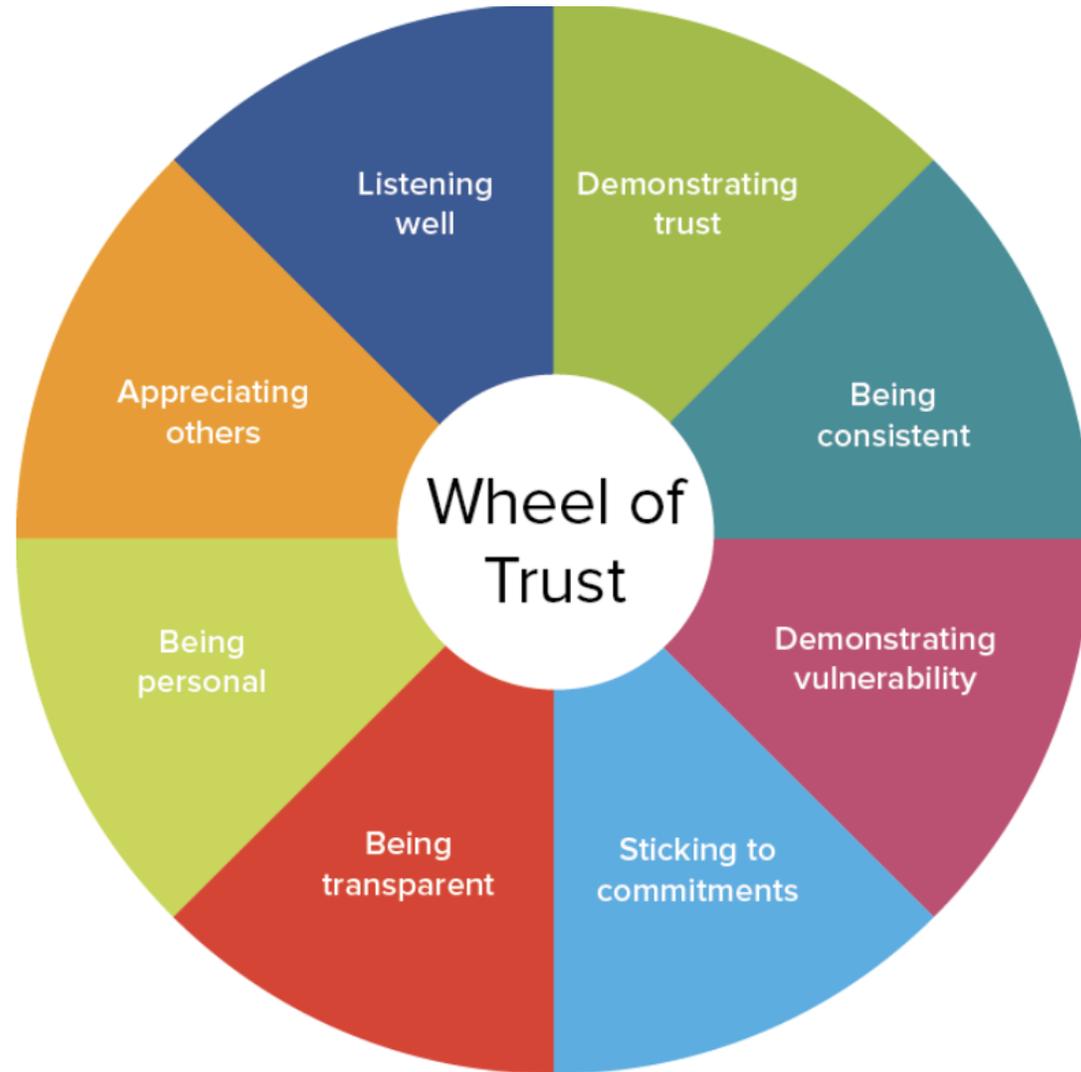
Critical thinking and problem solving

Adaptability

Emotional intelligence

Leadership

Time management



TRUST AND INFLUENCE

HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS



Four Quadrants of Psychological Safety

Learner Safety

It's safe to:

- Discover
- Ask questions
- Experiment
- Learn from mistakes
- Look for new opportunities

Challenger Safety

It's safe to:

- Challenge the status quo
- Speak up
- Express ideas
- Identify changes
- Expose problems



Collaborator Safety

It's safe to:

- Engage in an unconstrained way
- Interact with colleagues
- Have mutual access
- Maintain open dialogue
- Foster constructive debate

Inclusion Safety

It's safe to:

- Know that you are valued
- Treat all people fairly
- Feel your experience, and ideas matter
- Include others regardless of title/position
- Openly contribute

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

5 WAYS TO HELP CREATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



1. MAKE
it an explicit
priority.



2. FACILITATE
everyone
speaking up.



3. ESTABLISH
norms for how
failure is handled.



4. CREATE
space for new ideas
(even wild ones).



5. EMBRACE
productive
conflict.



Center for Creative Leadership

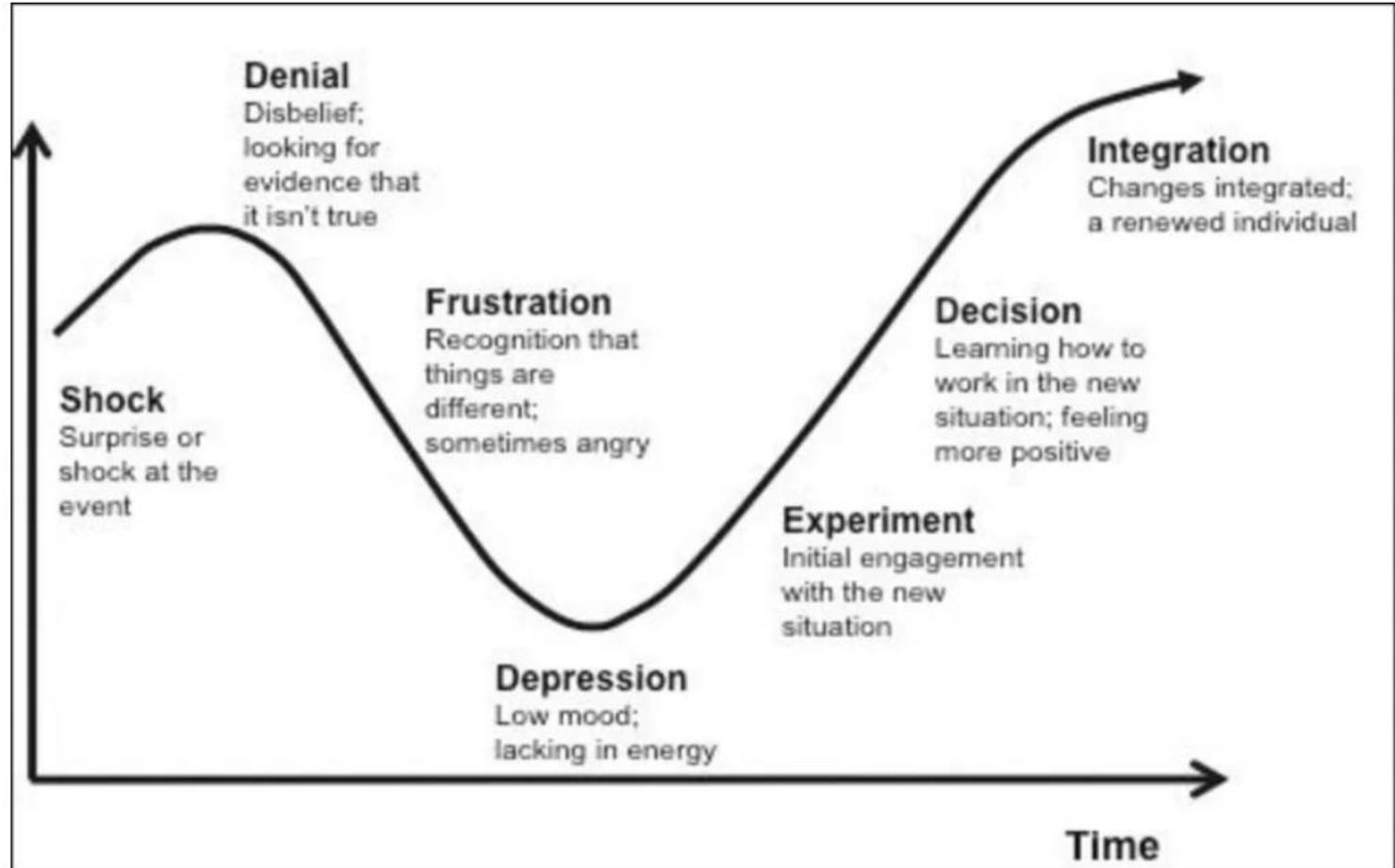
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Chatham House rules
- Everyone has a voice
- Listening with fascination – be open to others points of view
- No interrupting
- No elephants in the room
- Supportive challenge (“I wonder if”)
- Don’t walk away in silent disagreement
- Yes and...
- Burn after reading!

An illustration on a light blue background. On the left, there are several interlocking gears in white, teal, and orange. Below the gears are three stylized human profiles in shades of orange and brown, facing right. On the right side, a hand in a teal suit sleeve points towards the word 'CHANGE'. The word 'CHANGE' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Behind the word are several concentric circles, suggesting a target or focus.

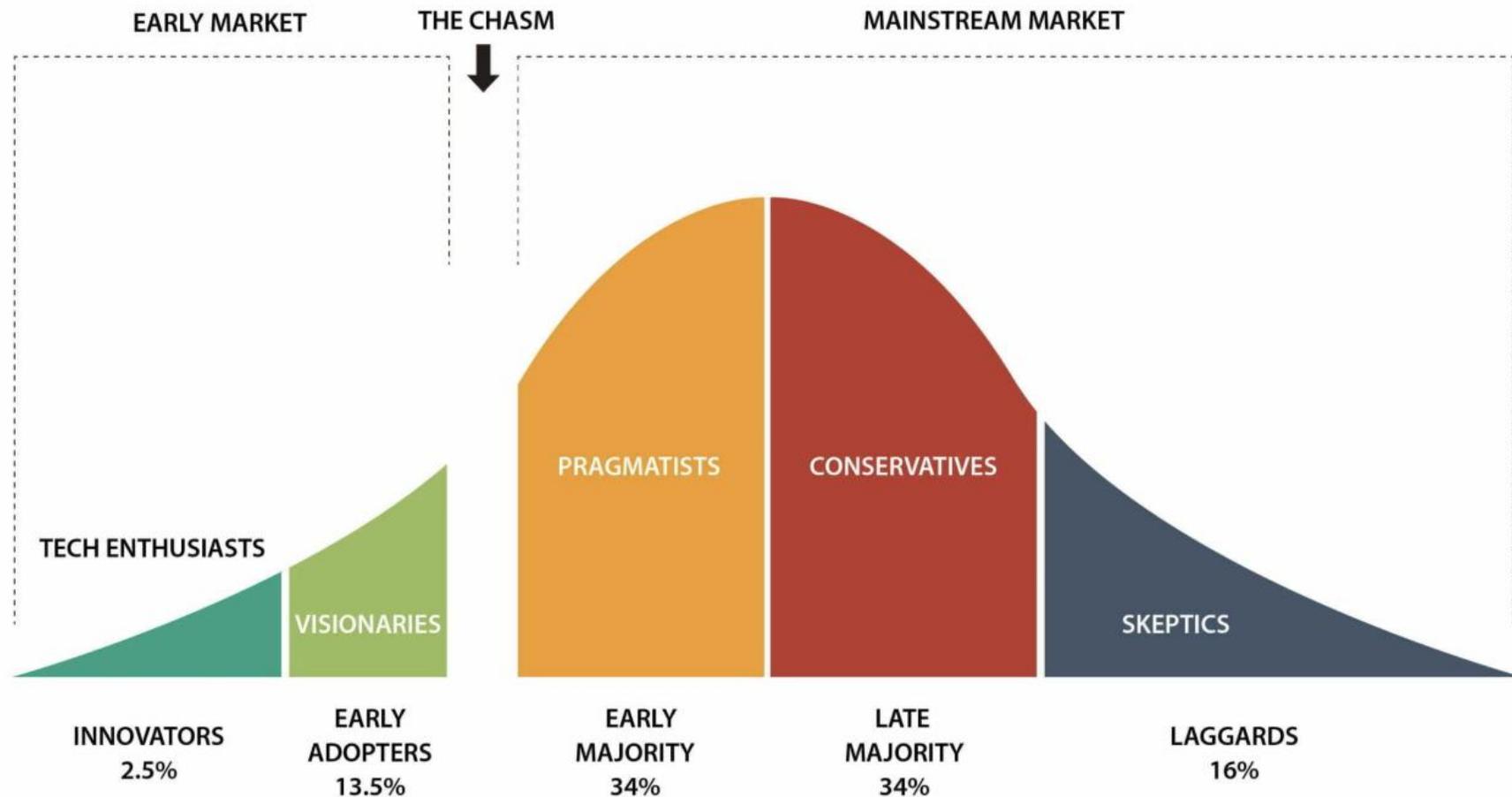
CHANGE

CHANGE



According to Rogers, the five adopter categories are distributed as follows:

- 5% are Innovators
- 5% are Early Adopters
- 34% are Early Majorities
- 34% are Late Majorities
- 16% are Laggards



SO WHERE DOES COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP SIT IN ALL THIS?

Leadership style is key

Complexity and fast pace change require a different approach

A leaders' role is to remove pressure, clear roadblocks, understand and resolve barriers to improvement

The leadership style recognised as most enabling in our current state is a compassionate leadership style.



AS DESCRIBED BY AMANDA PRITCHARD

- It has been an enormous privilege to help lead the NHS in England since 2019, through the most difficult period in its history, first as Chief Operating Officer and latterly as Chief Executive.
- The NHS has struggled – is struggling – to deliver the timeliness and quality of care that we want to, and patients want from us
- Amanda Pritchard February 2025

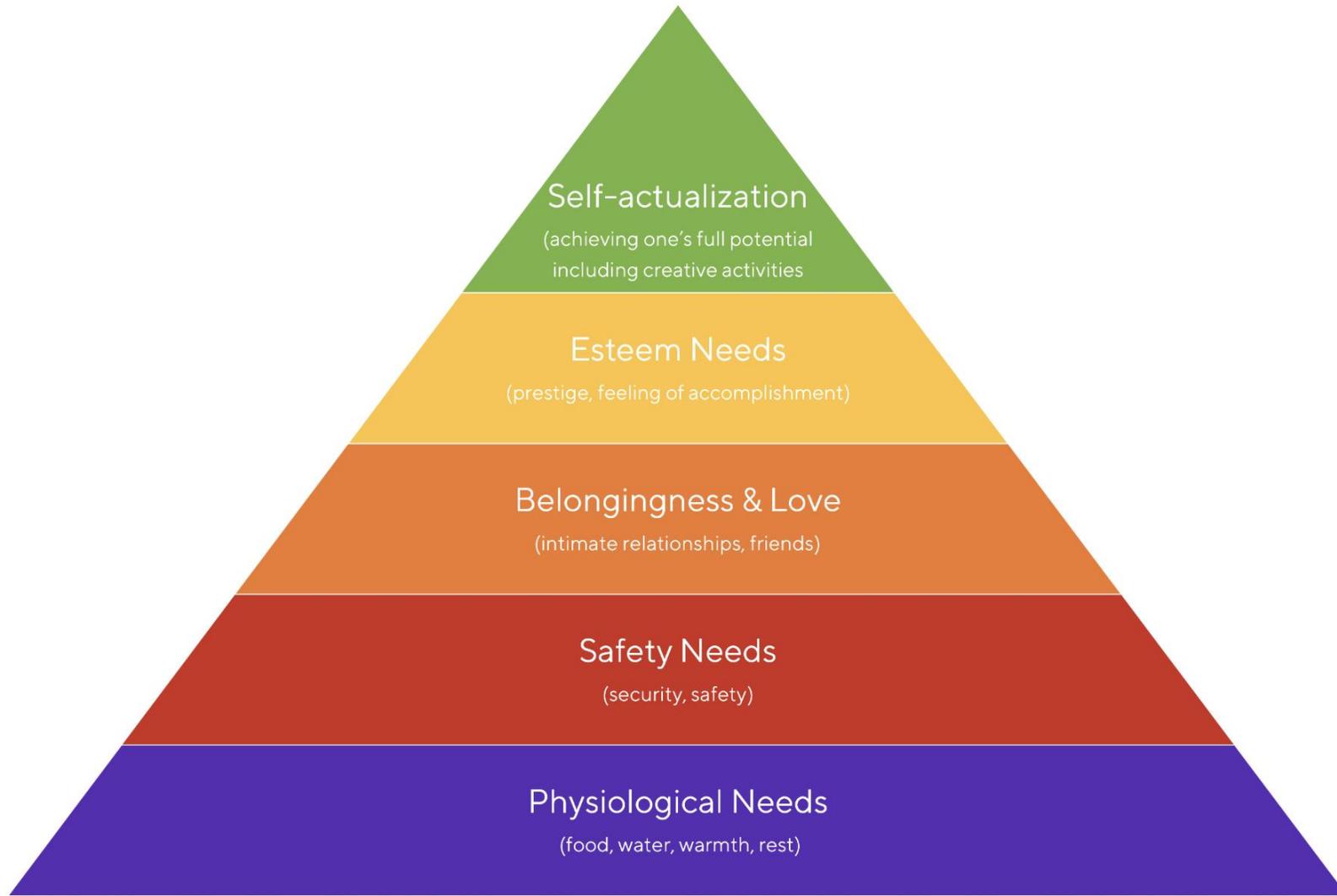
LEADERSHIP
IS THE ART
OF LEADING
PEOPLE

Pressure

Constraint

Moral injury

Change



WHERE ARE YOUR PEOPLE IN THIS HIERARCHY?

COMPASSION

Compassion is the ability to notice someone's suffering and feel moved to help.



Comprised of:
Awareness
Emotional resonance
Motivation to help
Non-judgement



A compassionate leader is simply someone who cares enough to try to understand the situation and to do something about it without being judgemental

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP - WHAT IS IT?

'A LEADERS' ROLE IS TO
REMOVE PRESSURE,
CLEAR ROADBLOCKS,
UNDERSTAND AND
RESOLVE BARRIERS TO
IMPROVEMENT'

Compassionate leadership involves a focus on relationships through:

- careful listening,
- understanding,
- empathising with
- and supporting people,
- enabling those we lead to feel valued, respected and cared for, so they can reach their potential and do their best work.
- There is clear evidence that compassionate leadership results in more engaged and motivated staff with high levels of wellbeing, which in turn results in high-quality care

Michael West, Suzy Bell, The King's Fund 2022

HOW DO COMPASSIONATE LEADERS BEHAVE?



They empathise with their colleagues



They seek to understand the challenges they face;



They are committed to supporting others to cope with and respond successfully to work challenges;



They are focused on enabling those they lead to be effective and thrive in their work.



Compassionate leaders don't have all the answers and don't simply tell people what to do, instead they engage with the people they work with to find shared solutions to problems.



Michael West, Suzy Bell, The King's Fund 2022

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS



Listening – ‘being fully present with’



Understanding – properly explore the issues without judgement



Empathising – sensing peoples emotions without being overwhelmed



Helping – the compassionate act – for leaders this means unblocking, removing obstacles, helping people understand their triggers and the impact of their reactions, supporting the removal of things that are getting in the way of people doing their best work

THERE IS A COST TO
COMPASSION

PERSISTENCE
STAMINA
PASSION
RESILIENCE
COURAGE

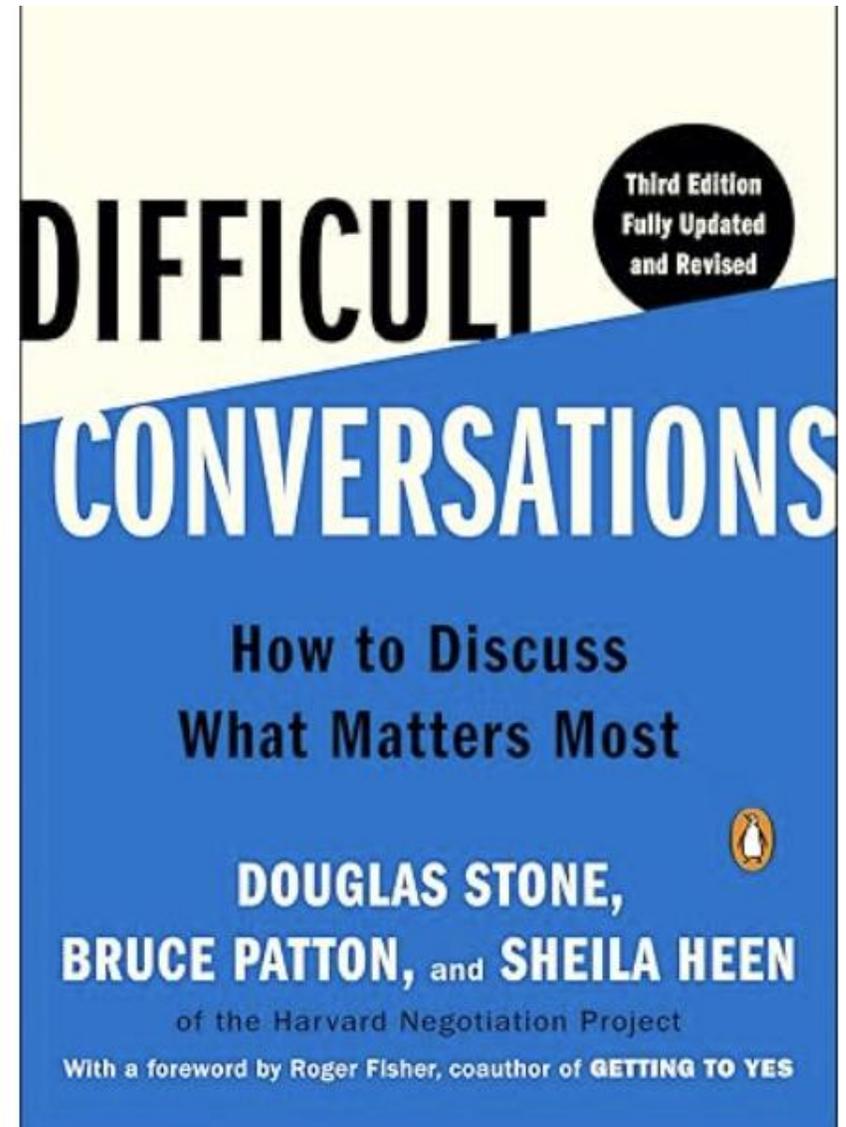
Tips for Coping with Compassion Fatigue

- Utilize healthy self-care strategies
- Set realistic goals for your work
- Make your surrounding environment more positive
- Seek professional support
- Focus on gratitude
- Take a break if you can
- Set boundaries around work
- Know when to separate yourself from a situation
- Lean on your loved ones

A WORD ON DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

AS A COMPASSIONATE LEADER – YOU MUST
HAVE THEM

THE FRAME – VERY FEW PEOPLE COME TO
WORK TO DO A BAD JOB – SO WHAT IS
GETTING IN THE WAY



DIFFICULT CONVERSATION – TIPS AND TRICKS

Timing

Planning

Rehearsal

Cup of coffee vs
disciplinary

Factual

Specific

Document document
document

Confirm content in
writing for all
conversations (coffee
and disciplinary in
nature)



AND FINALLY...

Inspiring vision and strategy

- Unwavering focus on high-quality, continually improving compassionate care
- Inspiring and meaningful vision
- Shared understanding
- Clear, aligned, manageable challenges and tasks
- Alignment between workload and resources

Positive inclusion and participation

- Ensure all voices heard
- Create psychological safety & encouraging teams to be compassionate to one another
- Valuing diversity including patient groups, positive attitude to differences
- Fair resolution of conflict

Enthusiastic team and cross-boundary working

- Working compassionately with other teams (inter-team compassion)
- Being supportive and collaborative
- Having a 'how can we help' attitude

Support and autonomy

- Creation of a positive climate - high levels of engagement, positivity and creativity
- Freedom to be autonomous, but with support
- Treating staff with compassion

FOSTERING INNOVATION IN THE NHS

