

Leading in the Face of Crisis

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Crisis: (n) a turning point, decisive event, or crucial situation whose outcome decides whether bad consequences will follow.

Crisis is change on steroids. The magnitude and speed at which expectations are disrupted totally alters one's frame of reference and has the potential to paralyze us from moving forward. Here are five actions you can take to lead your community and organization through tough times:

1. **Be visible and vocal.** Expectations increase exponentially during a crisis. Be visible and vocal. Individuals need to feel that their leaders are in control. They want to trust their leader's character, competence, and courage.
2. **Make it safe.** A crisis heightens worries about safety and security. Drive out fear. Make the situation safe both physically and emotionally. Only then will individuals return to higher level activities that differentiate those driven by fear from those who act out of a sense of purpose and strength.
3. **Connect with people where they are.** Recognize and acknowledge the emotions of others. Take steps to connect with others at a human level. Your most important resource is the trust and commitment of the others.
4. **Focus on success.** Dwelling on failure creates a self-fulfilling distraction. Acknowledge the hard work to be done, but don't allow despair to creep into your language or actions.
5. **Give people control.** Provide as much accurate information as possible, and do so in a timely manner. Remove barriers to success. Be creative and persistent to help others succeed. Every sincere effort to help people feel more in control of their future will be rewarded with trust, loyalty, and commitment.

Leaders are defined by their response in the face of crisis. The choice is to step out toward a positive future or allow the times to define us as less than our potential.

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