Leading with Kindness

A healthcare leadership program

In collaboration with
Dr. Stephen Swensen

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The "Leading with Kindness" program is a healthcare leadership initiative designed to enhance staff wellbeing and reduce burnout among healthcare professionals in Arizona. Developed in collaboration with Dr. Stephen J. Swensen, this program focuses on cultivating effective wellbeing-centered leadership behaviors and participative management skills.

Goals & Objectives:

- **Develop** a network of wellbeing-centered Arizona healthcare leaders.
- **Enhance** staff wellbeing in participating work units.
- **Foster** leadership and organizational development.
- **Strengthen** leader skills in participative management and collaborative action planning.
- **Promote** leader behaviors that improve staff wellbeing and reduce professional burnout.

Key Components:

- **Collaborative Learning Model:** LISTEN--SORT--EMPOWER.
- **Action Learning Design:** Practical learning through essential work.
- **Five Leader Kindness Behaviors:** Include, Inform, Inquire, Develop, Recognize

Key Articles to Review

The articles below will provide helpful background for the Leading with Kindness content:

- **LEADER KINDNESS BEHAVIORS**
- **LISTEN SORT EMPOWER**

Key References:

- Swensen, S. and Shanafelt, T. (2020) 'Mayo Clinic. Strategies to Reduce Burnout: 12 Actions to Create the Ideal Workplace', Oxford University Press
- Swensen, S. J. (2020) 'Listen–Sort–Empower: Find and Act on Local Opportunities for Improvement to Create Your Ideal Practice', American Medical Association, available at **https://edhub.ama-assn.org/steps-forward/module/2767765** (accessed 7th June,2023)
- Swensen, S., Kabcenell, A. and Shanafelt, T. (2016) 'Physician-Organization Collaboration Reduces Physician Burnout and Promotes Engagement: The Mayo Clinic Experience', Journal of Healthcare Management, Vol. 61, No. 2, pp. 105–27
- Swensen, Stephen J. (2024, December 1). Leading with kindness: A systems approach to subjective well-being and healthspan. In the Management in Healthcare: A Peer-Reviewed Journal, Volume 9, Issue 2. https://doi.org/10.69554/KGRN2037.

> **No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.**
>
> -Aesop

Listen-Sort-Empower

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WHY LISTEN-SORT-EMPOWER (LSE)?

The LSE Advantage: Transforming Workplace Dynamics

The LISTEN-SORT-EMPOWER (LSE) model is an evidence-based approach designed to promote professional fulfillment, enhance team engagement, and streamline organizational efficiency. Adapted from the Mayo Clinic's Listen-Act-Develop method, LSE emphasizes participative management to address systemic challenges, fostering a culture of collaboration and empowerment.

Core Benefits

- **Enhanced Team Dynamics:** Builds camaraderie and psychological safety, ensuring staff feel connected and supported.
- **Empowered Change:** Frontline staff gain a sense of control over their environment, reducing burnout by addressing frustrations directly.
- **Meaningful Impact:** Drives purpose by enabling teams to identify inefficiencies and implement tailored solutions collaboratively.

Key Features

- **Participative Management**: Encourages collaboration over command-and-control methods.
- **Scalable and Sustainable:** Embeds improvement into regular team processes, creating a continuous cycle of refinement.
- **Proven Framework:** Integrates seamlessly with models like the Stanford Model of Fulfillment and High Reliability Organizations (HRO).

Why LSE Works

Targets Root Causes:
- Focuses on systems and behaviors, not individuals, as sources of inefficiency.
- Tackles "pebbles in the shoe" (small but significant frustrations) to improve daily workflows.

Evidence of Success:
- At Mayo Clinic, LSE led to:
  - +12 points in teamwork.
  - -21 points in burnout.
  - +17 points in employee satisfaction.

Alignment with High Reliability Principles:
- Promotes just culture, accountability, and psychological safety.
- Encourages transparency and mutual respect.

Empowers Leaders and Teams:
- Shifts the problem-solving architecture from top-down mandates to team-led innovations with leader support.
- Facilitates local improvements (LOFIs) for tailored, impactful changes.

Results You Can Expect

- Reduced burnout and increased job satisfaction.

- Stronger leader-staff relationships built on trust and respect.

- Improved practice efficiency and workplace morale.

Leading with Kindness

AMA STEPS*forward*

5 KINDNESS BEHAVIORS

01 SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

Solicit input with humility while really listening.

02 APPRECIATE

Recognize acolleagues with authentic gratitude.

03 MENTOR

Nurture & support the aspirations of colleagues.

04 FOSTER BELONGING

Welcome everyone with respect, and compassion.

05 BE TRANSPARENT

Communicate with openness for best decisions.

Swensen. Leading with kindness: A systems approach to subjective well-being and healthspan. Henry Stewart Publications 2397-1053 (2024) Vol. 9, 1 1–13 Management in Healthcare

Listen-Sort-Empower
Facilitator Tips and Tricks

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE A LISTEN SESSION

The following are example questions that you or a facilitator could use to guide a LISTEN session.

- **What works well in your workday?**

- **What is most meaningful to you at work?**

- **How could we make more days work well and be filled with meaning?**

- **What frustrates you in this work area?**

- **What are the inefficiencies in your day-to-day work?**

- **What else could be improved?**

- **If you could work on one thing under your control to make your life better in three months, what would it be?**

- **What saps meaning from your work?**

- **What should we stop doing?**

Listen-Sort-Empower
Facilitator Tips and Tricks

STEP BY STEP GUIDE: LISTEN SORT EMPOWER (LSE)

1 STEP 1: LISTEN

Prepare the Team:
- Gather 6-8 participants, a scribe, and a facilitator.
- Create a safe, comfortable space for open discussion.
- Set ground rules: confidentiality, positivity, and no backlash for ideas.

Facilitate the Discussion:
- Start with questions about what's working well.
- Ask about frustrations or inefficiencies in the workplace.
- Record all responses without judgment.

Key Tools:
- Use a whiteboard, sticky notes, or shared document to record ideas.
- Distribute meeting notes to the team afterward.

- What works well in your workday?
- What is most meaningful to you at work?
- How could we make more days work well and be filled with meaning?
- What frustrates you in this work area?
- What are the inefficiencies in your day-to-day work?
- What else could be improved?
- If you could work on one thing under your control to make your life better in three months, what would it be?
- What saps meaning from your work?
- What should we stop doing?

2 STEP 2: SORT

2A - Categorize LOFIs:
- **Determine who has control over each emerging pebble (issue) or opportunity:**
  - <u>YOURS:</u> Local control which means these are team-level fixes.
  - <u>SHARED:</u> This is mix of "yours" and "theirs" control meaning the team has some control but require external support.
  - <u>THEIRS:</u> No local control meaning that others outside of the team have control over these challenges and thus solutions.
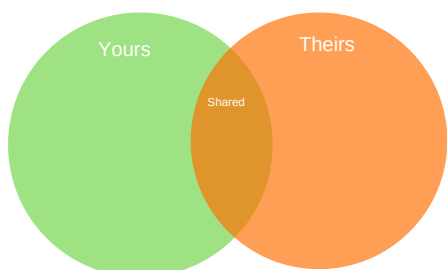
2B - Prioritize LOFIs:
- **Rank the emerging challenges/opportunities based on:**
  - Impact (how big a difference it will make).
  - Feasibility (ease of implementation)
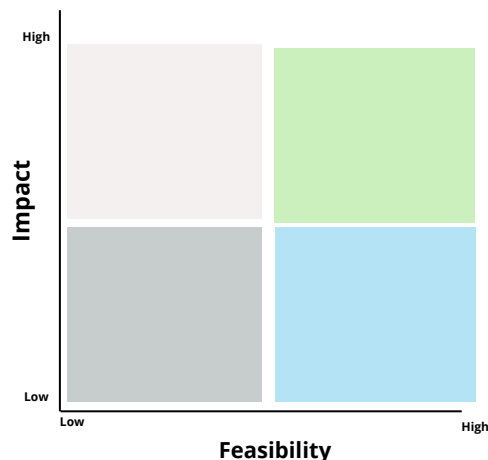
**Move forward the items from "YOURS" and "SHARED"

**Move forward the items from "Green" and "Blue" quadrants.

3 STEP 3: Empower

Brainstorm Solutions:
- Ask team members to brainstorm solutions to tackle/solve the challenges/opportunities that emerged from the SORT session.

Create an Action Plan:
- Create an Action Plan template/grid and ask team members to complete the grid for the emerging ideas.

Idea	Who is Taking Responsibility	Next Steps	Due Date	Measure of Success

Questions to ask:

- *Who wants to take responsibility for this idea?*

- *What are the natural next steps?*

- *What due date might you give yourself to accomplish this (taking into account your regular workload as well)?*

- *What does success look like? How will you know you have accomplished it?*
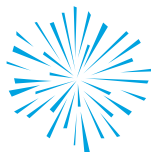

⭐ **Beyond....**

Test and Try:
- Pilot new approaches and refine as needed.
- Create a task force for complex issues.

Evaluate and Celebrate:
- Assess outcomes and refine solutions.
- Share results and recognize team achievements.

Foster Continuous Improvement
- Revisit your LOFI list regularly.
- Embed LSE discussions into team meetings.
- Build a culture of participative problem-solving and team empowerment.

Listen-Sort-Empower
Facilitator Tips and Tricks

BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Facilitation Tips

- Outline the meeting's purpose and what you can do / plan to do with the information you learn today.
  - Build trust with transparency and empathy
  - If you know of restrictions or constraints - budget constraints, resources, etc. - openly share those with the team. ***Constraints inspire creativity.***

- Discuss group agreements to work together effectively and respectfully.

- Start with the positives:
  - Ask each team member to first reflect on what brings meaning to their work. Have each person share.
    - "When you think about your work, what is it you find most meaningful? What brings you joy and lights you up when you get to do it?"

- Explain that as a group, you're looking for **pebbles** - that you may identify big boulders, and will document and recognize them, but as a team you're seeking those everyday things that make things uncomfortable, inefficient, or downright miserable.

- Remain objective while being empathetic; empathizing does not necessarily mean agreement or endorsement.
  - "I can hear how frustrating that is for you."

- Have "dig deeper" questions on hand to clarify concerns:
  - "Tell me more about that."
  - "What do others think about that?"

- Use **sticky notes!** Sticky notes allow people to express themselves, but in a concise manner. They also grant a degree of anonymity and bring sometimes intangible/hard to discuss things into a material form that can be moved around, grouped with other similar things, etc.
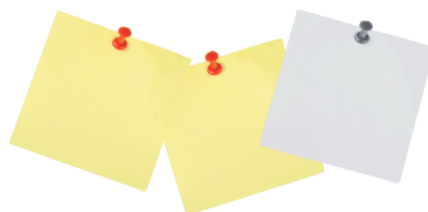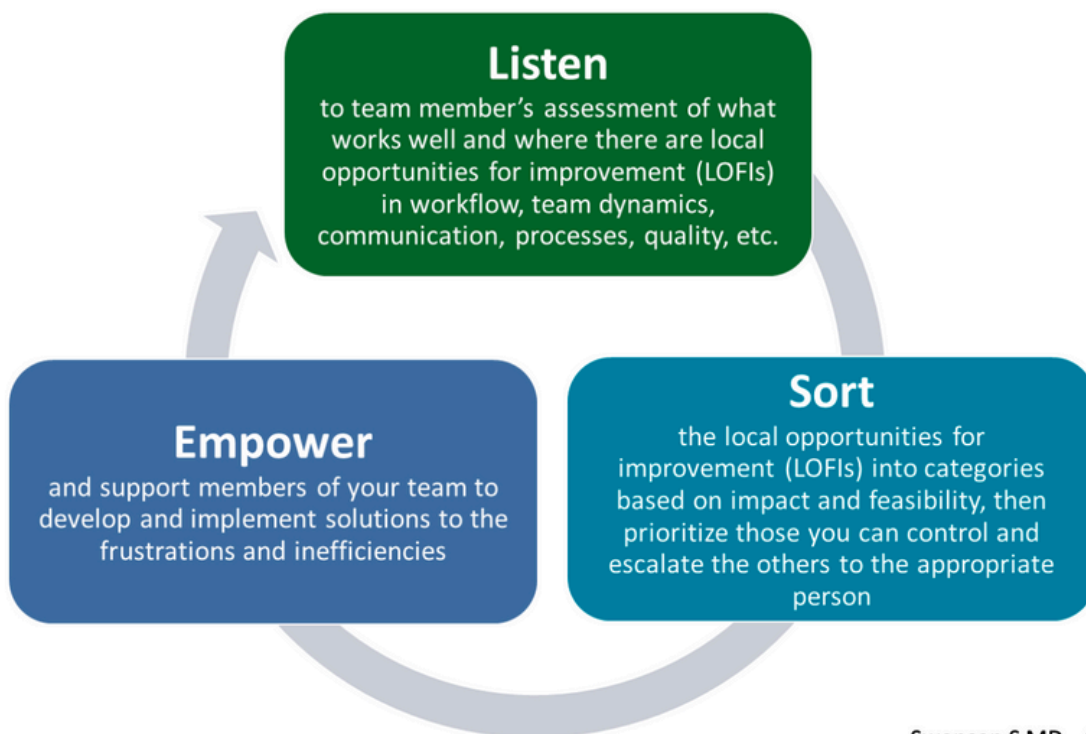
NAVIGATING CONFLICT

Facilitation Tips

- De-escalation phrases can encourage participants to care for themselves if tension rises.
  - "That sounds like a truly challenging/frustrating/hurtful situation. I'm so sorry you experienced that. What might have been supportive for you then?"

- If it begins to feel like the session is turning towards being less productive or a venting session:
  - First, recognize that **venting** is not all bad. People can feel a sense of connection with one another when they hear others are struggling with similar things. Acknowledge that similarity!
    - "Wow, it sounds like this is something many of you have struggled with."
  - Acknowledge the emotions and experiences.
  - Pivot to bring meaning to the stories:
    - "I appreciate and value all of this information you've shared. It would be great to hear what comes to mind from others, as well."
    - "I appreciate your courage in sharing openly.

Listen
to team member's assessment of what works well and where there are local opportunities for improvement (LOFIs) in workflow, team dynamics, communication, processes, quality, etc.

Sort
the local opportunities for improvement (LOFIs) into categories based on impact and feasibility, then prioritize those you can control and escalate the others to the appropriate person

Empower
and support members of your team to develop and implement solutions to the frustrations and inefficiencies

Swensen S MD. *AMA Steps Forward* 2020