

# Lead the Way

By Diane Sevening, EdD, LAC, MAC, NAADAC President

First of all, I want to thank you all for the wonderful works you do in meeting the needs of those with substance use disorders and express my sincerest gratitude for your knowledge, experience, compassion, genuine caring, and selfless efforts. These are difficult times and you are all heroes right alongside the physical healthcare providers and first responders.

Since the coronavirus pandemic entered our lives, we are all experiencing new transitions in all facets of our lives. Along with these transitions come new challenges and opportunities for self-evaluation and self-actualization. Most of us are doing our best to learn new technology skills, be resilient with policy changes, adapt to physical distancing, maintain healthy boundaries, reach out to loved ones, and offer our services where needed.

In times of crisis, there are two directions human nature can take us: fear, helplessness and victimization or self-actualization and engagement. During these times, we look to leaders for a clear plan to move forward.

What do we want from a leader during a crisis? We can look to history for examples of great leaders during a crisis, such as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr. to name a few. One commonality among these leaders is decisiveness. They saw a situation that needed a solution for the betterment of the people, proposed a plan that would be inclusive, and executed that plan. People were informed along the way of the decisions and how the solution was going to be of the greater good for all. They instilled trust, sense of duty, and availability, which is what many are seeking today from leaders.

Gallup has studied global citizens' worries, fears and confidence during nearly every major crisis of the past eight decades and one thing is clear: global citizens look to leadership to provide direction and to provide confidence that there is a way forward to which they can contribute. Gallup meta-analytics have found four universal needs that followers have of leaders: trust, compassion, stability, and hope.

Leaders need to be the trusted source and available to answer questions and address concerns. The communication lines need to be open and the communication plan needs to be understood. Communicating well includes not being a victim of panic or hype and laying out clear actions for what to do and when. The 10x10x10 rule applies here: say something 10 times in 10 different ways for people to retain 10%. Be clear in laying out the priorities and communicate these priorities often. It takes repetition to make sure everyone understands the plan and can relay the message as things change and acceptance occurs.

People want reassurance that everything is operating smoothly and that programs are managing change with everyone's interest in mind. Being realistic with sincere, calm, and transparent communication is key, especially during these turbulent times. Times of crisis test us and define us and we do not have to have all the answers or pretend that we do. We simply need to be willing to stay connected, to tell the truth, and to convey hope. We owe it to ourselves and to the people we care about to be this kind of leader.

I encourage each of you to lead with kindness to reduce the worry and increase employees' confidence that your association, agency, corporation, and/or program is looking out for their best interest. As the COVID-19



situation evolves, it is important to maintain a clear, honest, empathetic and straightforward approach to communication. Leaders need to be well informed by staying connected to their elected officials on the local, state, and federal levels for the most accurate and current information. There seems to be a rapid dissemination of information from multiple sources that may be questionable, and it is imperative to provide only factual information that has scientific evidence. Since COVID-19 is a new virus, medical researchers are working to collect data and looking for solutions on a daily basis. Progress may not be happening as quickly as we would like but being patient and following the guidelines of physical distancing, working from home when possible, covering our faces, and washing our hands is making a difference.

During this difficult time, self-care is vital. Leaders, along with everyone, need to practice self-care daily. Stressful times, like the present, can create anxiety and depression. We need to take time to keep a sense of humor, laugh with friends and family, read a book, dance in our kitchens, sing in the bathroom, exercise, meditate, eat healthy foods, get plenty of rest, pray, and stay connected. Somedays we can get discouraged with the news we hear but maintaining a positive attitude with positive energy keeps us moving forward.

I want to reassure you that NAADAC's leadership and staff are here for you. On the NAADAC website there is the COVID-19 webpage located at [www.naadac.org/covid-19-resources](http://www.naadac.org/covid-19-resources) that provides you with a wealth of information. The page is updated daily with information and provides you with many valuable resources in dealing with these times. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'" Together, we will get through this and be stronger as a result.



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