The Anti-Boss Approach to Leadership

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01

I have to be in control

Control is a seductive concept...

- Gives the leader emotional relief
- The **appearance** of accountability
- Moves the problem down

Do you know what a good outcome looks like?



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Can they make good decisions?

Control asks	Clarity asks
Are they doing it my way?	Do they understand the outcome?
Have they updated me?	Do they know when to escalate?
Are they working hard enough?	Are the priorities clear?
Can I trust them?	Have I created the conditions for trust?

Before you delegate

Outcome - What does good look like?

Boundaries - What must not be compromised?

Decision rights - What can they decide without you?

Escalation points - When should they come back?

Support - Where might they need help?



02

Being nice is weak

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What do people actually need?



Autonomy

independence, choice, agency, purpose, dignity, honesty, self-determination, space...



Connection

Bonding, belonging, communication, empathy, community, mattering, care, support, play



Mastery

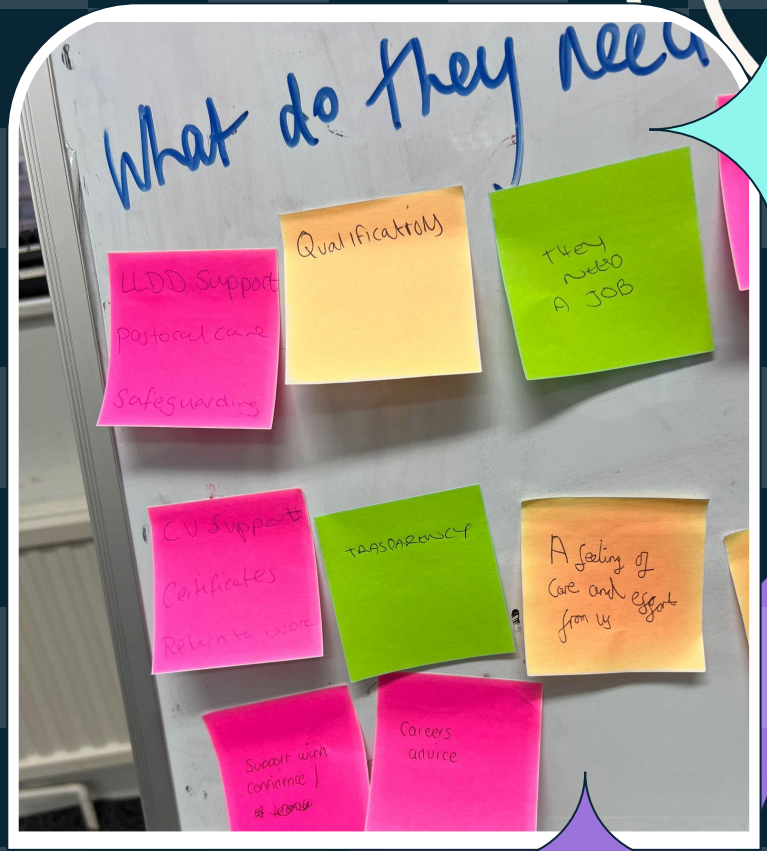
Learning, personal development, growth, understanding, clarity

“At the heart of every action is the desire to meet a precious need”



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Most behaviours that frustrate us as leaders are failed attempts to meet a need.



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Requests v.s. demands

Demand: “Do this, or there will be consequences.”

Request: “Here is what I need, here is why it matters, and here is the outcome I’m asking for.”

Do this:	Without:
Share an observation.....	Without judging or comparing
Express an actual feeling.....	Without resorting to a thought or opinion
State the unmet need.....	Without assigning blame
Offer a clear request for concrete action.....	Without making a demand

Instead of:

“You’re not taking enough ownership of this.”

We could:

“When I’m asked to review every small decision before the work moves forward, I become concerned that we’re slowing down and that you’re not getting the chance to build confidence.

I need us to move towards more independent decision-making.

Could you bring me your recommended option and the reasoning behind it before asking for a steer?”

Kindness is telling someone the truth early enough that they can do something about it.

Comfort is avoiding the conversation to protect yourself from their reaction.



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03

Good leaders always know what they're doing

Conventional advice

Be decisive

Be confident

Bring answers

Take risks

The answer trap:

- People bring you problems
- You solve them quickly
- Everyone feels reassured
- Nothing gets learned
- YOU become the bottleneck
- (**and get all the work as a bonus**)

Stop rescuing people:

- What do you think is happening?
- What options have you considered?
- What would you recommend?
- What trade-off are you making?
- What would make this fail?
- What do you need from me?

What does the situation call for?



Answer

When there is a clear knowledge gap



Coach

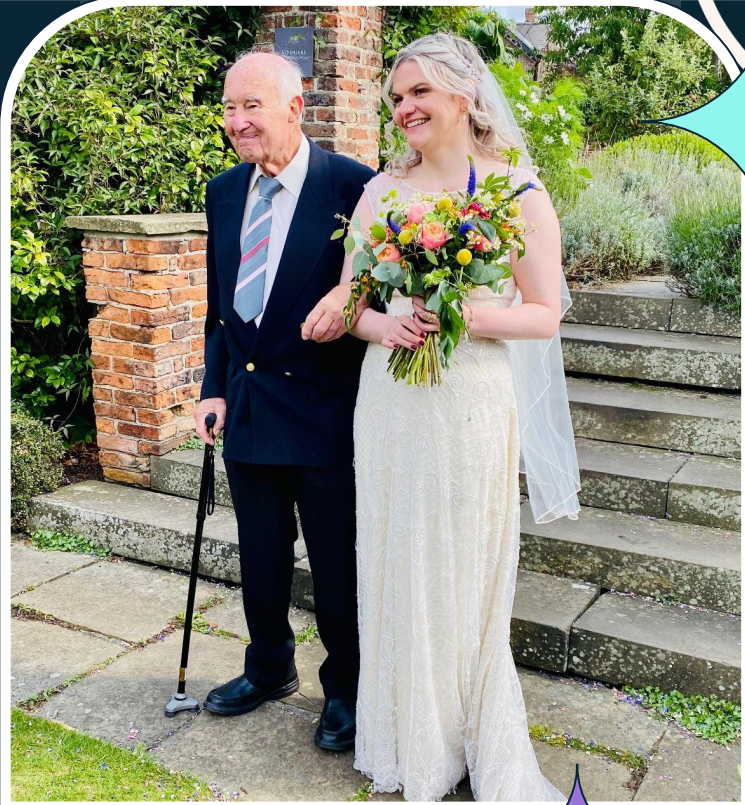
When the person needs to build judgement



Decide

When ambiguity, risk or accountability sits with you.

You will never be 100% ready



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