



COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

ERC

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

April 2020

Due to COVID-19, the employees on my team are now working remotely. What advice can you give to a leader who hasn't managed a remote team before?

While leading a remote team is in many ways very similar to what you have been doing, there are a few things you should know. Communication is important for all leaders no matter where your team works. However, communicating with remote workers may require a little different approach and more intentional conversations, given that it isn't as easy as walking to their desk or seeing them around the office. Schedule regular check-ins by video chat or phone and other communications to ensure that you're staying on the same page and letting your employees know that you are still there to support them.¹ Establish work-from-home guidelines and performance expectations to help employees understand what is needed of them under these new circumstances. Keeping connected to your team with clear and regular communication and expectations will help make working from home a success for all. For more information on the topic, read [*A Guide to Managing Your \(Newly\) Remote Workers*](#).

1. Larson, B.Z., Vroman, S.R., & Makarius, E.E. (2020, March 18). *A guide to managing your (newly) remote workers*. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2020/03/a-guide-to-managing-your-newly-remote-workers>.

I'm hearing from employees and other leaders at my company that they are worried and fearful about the COVID-19 situation. I want to help, but I'm also experiencing a lot of anxiety and concerns myself, and I'm not sure what I can do to help them.

In times of uncertainty, it's common to experience increased levels of stress and anxiety, as well as fear for the future. As a leader, you aren't immune to the emotional burdens that tough situations like COVID-19 can create, and you may even experience it more acutely due to the added responsibility you feel to your employees and company.

Being present as a leader during uncertain times means your priority starts with self-preparation. This will ensure that you are in the best position to respond to the needs of your team. We know that knowledge is power in times of uncertainty. Arm yourself with accurate information about how to respond to the coronavirus to stay healthy and safe (being educated allows you to feel more in control and prepare as best you can). In addition, practice self-care to manage your stress and anxiety (directing your energies towards activities that create emotional balance allows you to better cope with the situation). This may include exercising, doing forms of meditation, connecting with your support system, and focusing on things that you are grateful for. Modeling healthy behaviors around challenges to mental health can encourage others to do the same. ERC's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you develop a self-care plan through free and confidential counseling sessions.

While we don't recommend that you act as a therapist for your employees, we do suggest that you actively listen to their concerns as a meaningful way of showing them you care. Often, that is enough to help them move forward. However, it's important to be familiar with your company's EAP benefit to inform employees of resources that can help further. Your EAP through ERC provides support resources on the website (<http://ercincorp.com/covid-19-response-resources/>) as well as free and confidential counseling sessions for employees, their dependents, and immediate household members. When talking with coworkers that seem to be having a tough time with COVID-19, let them know about the resources available to them through the EAP, and make sure to indicate that these are confidential services. Lastly, as a leader, you can also consult with ERC counselors on difficult employee matters or concerns. All you need to do to be connected with ERC's leader support line is call 1-800-222-8590.

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For info, visit our website ERCincorp.com or call 1-800-222-8590. Our professional staff is available to customers for consultations on employee matters and EAP referrals. Call the Leaders Hotline at 1-800-222-8590. Information contained in the *Frontline Supervisor* is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern.