

The background features a large, light-colored stylized ear shape. Inside the ear, there are several musical notes in various colors: a purple note on the left, a green note, a blue note, a pink note, a purple note, and a yellow note on the right. The notes are connected by thin, curved lines. The overall design is clean and modern.

A LEADERSHIP SERVANT-HEART, MUSIC TO THE EARS

NMHCA/NMCAL 2026 CONVENTION

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OBJECTIVES:

1. Define the concept of a “servant heart” and explain how this mindset can positively transform workplace environments and reduce turnover of staff
2. Identify the characteristics of employees (including non-supervisory staff) who demonstrate “servant hearts”
3. Describe practical ways to recognize and support them
4. Discuss current practices in your own facilities and share strategies for embracing servant hearts in professional and personal settings
5. Apply techniques for focusing on the potential in others and in leading teams with the servant-heart culture

What does the word “servant” mean?

- A person in the service of others
- A devoted and helpful follower or supporter
- A leadership philosophy in which an individual interacts with others, either in a management or fellow employee capacity, to achieve authority rather than power.
- Servant leadership involves the individual demonstrating characteristics of empathy, listening, stewardship, and commitment to personal growth towards others
- Empathy is the ability to validate the emotional experience of others without judgment





What does it mean to “have heart”?

The word encouragement has its roots in the Latin word “cor,” which literally means “heart”

Having “heart” means someone who is courageous, resilient, or deeply passionate

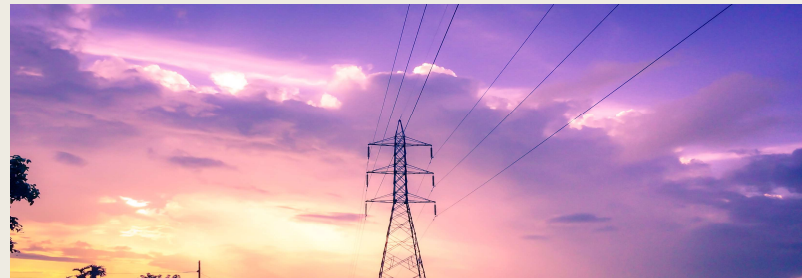
Having a heart can transform our lives, knowing that we are fighting for something we believe in and love and when one is asking for mercy, compassion from another

*******Heart is experiencing failure, and the willingness to accept it, grow from it, and try again

What Servant Heart Leadership Really Is

Unlike the usual top-down command structures, servant leadership:

- Shares power rather than hoarding it
- Focuses on personal and professional development of self and others
- Builds an environment where employees feel safe and respected



Having a Servant Heart leads to a “Servant Heart-Leader”

- Someone with a servant heart is willing to serve selflessly
- Giving of oneself without expecting something in return
 - Giving with one's heart requires no “me, myself, or I”
- Always lead by example; humble hearts are contagious to your employees. They are always watching your contribution to a safe, caring, less chaotic environment for them, as well as for the residents.
- **Longevity** of staff is absolutely correlated to servant-heart leadership

Having a Servant Heart leads to a “Servant Heart-Leader” cont’d

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- Servant heart leadership is a people-first philosophy where leaders prioritize serving others before exercising authority, fostering growth, trust, and sustainable performance
 - Leaders exist to serve first and lead second
 - These types of leaders focus on the well-being, growth, and success of others before their own. Find the potential in your employees that no one else can see!!! Grow your own within your organization



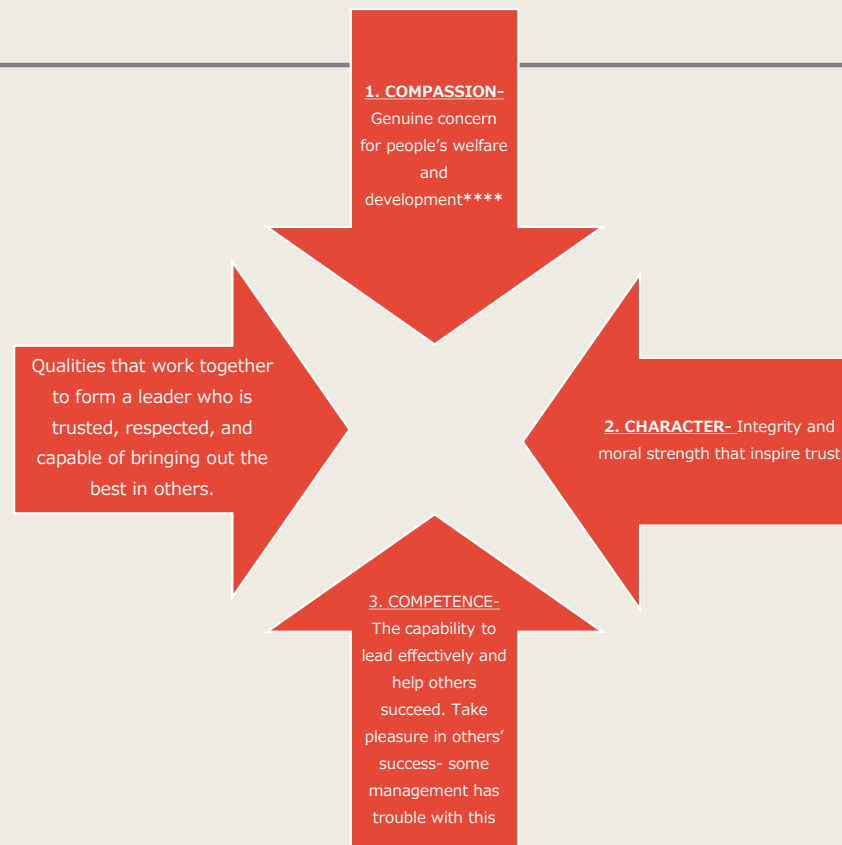
Servant Heart Leadership emphasizes:

1. Empathy and listening: understanding and valuing others' perspectives before making decisions
2. Humility and Integrity: Leading by example, admitting mistakes, building trust and prioritizing service over status
3. Empowerment and shared responsibility: Encouraging staff to take ownership and develop their potential
4. Commitment to growth: Supporting personal and professional development for every team member

Benefits of Servant Heart Leadership

- Higher engagement and retention: Employees feel valued, reducing burnout and turnover
- Improved team dynamics: Trust and collaboration increase, enhancing creativity and problem-solving
- Sustainable organizational growth: Encouraging ownership and innovation leads to long-term performance improvements
- Positive workplace culture: a focus on service and respect fosters loyalty and a sense of purpose

The 3 C's of Servant Leadership



Leading with a “Servant Heart”



Do you have any “servant heart” employees in your facility? What position do they hold? What makes you think they have a servant heart?



On an initial job interview, do you talk to employees about having a heart for the residents and how would they accomplish that? Employee-resident engagement should be assessed yearly.



Do you let the interviewee know facility expectations? Where do you raise the bar?



Always Remember: YOU GET WHAT YOU TOLERATE

Attributes of Serving with “Heart”

1. Real Leaders with a servant “heart” make themselves available

to their co-workers and staff. It’s okay to schedule a time for a meeting

- Don’t serve when it’s only convenient for you
- Always being sensitive to others’ cries without making them cry, not easy to do
- Put yourselves in someone else’s shoes- empathy
 - Should you wear your heart on your sleeve? Yes or No?
- What do you do as a leader when an employee is showing emotional distress?
- Servant-hearts are always empathetic to the needs of their employees. Employee needs and wants are two different things. Look at basic needs such as hunger, fatigue, anxiety, finances, children’s issues, and offer resources when possible. Teach your staff to be empathetic, how would you do that?



Attributes of Serving with “Heart” cont’d

2. Real Leaders with a servant "heart" pay attention to needs

- You can miss many “heart” occasions for serving for lack of sensitivity and spontaneity
- Great opportunities to serve never last long, pass quickly
- May only get one chance to **serve** that employee and ask yourself if there were times you missed that chance

Servant-hearts are always empathetic to their employees' needs. Employee needs and wants are two different things. Look at basic needs such as hunger, fatigue, anxiety, finances, children's issues, spousal issues and offer resources when possible



Attributes of Serving with “Heart” cont’d



3. Real Leader “Heart” servants do their best with what they have

- They don’t make excuses, procrastinate, or wait for better conditions/circumstances
- Never say “one of these days” or “when the time is right”, or “we’ll see” when there is never a “we’ll see” intention
- Heart servants have that “just do it” mentality. Delegate to Your employees, empower them

Attributes of Serving with Heart cont'd

4. Real Leaders with a “servant heart” do every task with equal dedication

- The size of the task is irrelevant, as small tasks often show the biggest hearts.
- Whatever is done, “they do it with all their heart”
- The only issue is “does it need to be done”?
- Servant hearts are revealed in the little acts that your other employees don’t think of doing



Attributes of Serving with Heart con'td

5. Real “heart” servant Leaders finish their tasks, fulfill responsibilities, keep their promises and complete their commitments

- don't leave a job half undone
- Don't quit when discouraged
- Trustworthy and dependable
- Don't draw attention to themselves, less of you and more of your employees and residents



Why Servant Leadership Matters Today

1. It is empowering for employees and teams

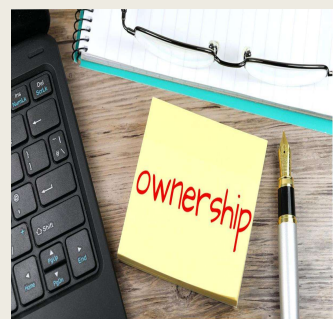
- ability to build stronger teams by increasing trust and psychological safety. When your employees feel heard, engagement and productivity rise. Do your employees feel heard? How do you know?

2. Increases well-being and retention

- Servant leadership combats burnout and fosters a positive workplace culture

3. Supports organizational growth

-benefit is not only in morale but with innovation, resilience, because servant leaders encourage ownership and collaboration



WALKING BLUEPRINT FOR A SERVANT HEART

1.

PAUSE BEFORE YOU PROMOTE

- before speaking or acting upon something, ask:

Is this about others- or is this about me?



WALKING BLUEPRINT CONT'D



2.

PRACTICE SECRET SERVICE

- Do one thing this week to serve someone privately—
no spotlight, no credit or recognition for yourself

This is harder to do than you may think! What is something you can do for someone without being in the spotlight?

WALKING BLUEPRINTS CONT'D

3.

START MEETINGS WITH PEOPLE,

NOT TASKS

-begin by asking your team how they

are really doing. People follow those

who genuinely care.



WALKING BLUEPRINTS CONT'D

4. AFFIRM PUBLICLY, AND OWN
PRIVATELY

- PRAISE EMPLOYEES AND
SUPERVISORY TEAM IN OF OTHERS.
TAKE RESPONSIBIITY FOR
MISTAKES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

WALKING BLUEPRINTS CON'T

5.

PERFORM DAILY REFLECTIONS, MEDITATIONS OR PRAYERS BEFORE YOU START YOUR DAY.

-On the way to work, reflect listening to music, motivational talks, uplifting discussions of others, speak with a positive person or loved ones.

- can include journaling, silent walking, creative expression or reviewing daily goals. Helps to clear your mind for the day
- deep breathing 10x in the morning, lunch and before bed

(encourage team to deep breathe before meetings)



Companies with Servant Heart Leadership



1. Chick fil-A, Truett Cathy, founder of the company, built a thriving legacy of love and humility. From paying for scholarships to treating every team member with dignity, Cathy modeled leadership that served people, not just profits
2. Herb Kelleher, Co-founder of Southwest Airlines, was famous for putting employees first
3. Howard Schultz built strong employee benefits and community focus at Starbucks
4. Fred Smith created the "People-Service-Profit" model at FedEx
5. Alan Mulally turned around Ford and Boeing through cooperative, people-centric management

Getting Down to the “Heart” of It

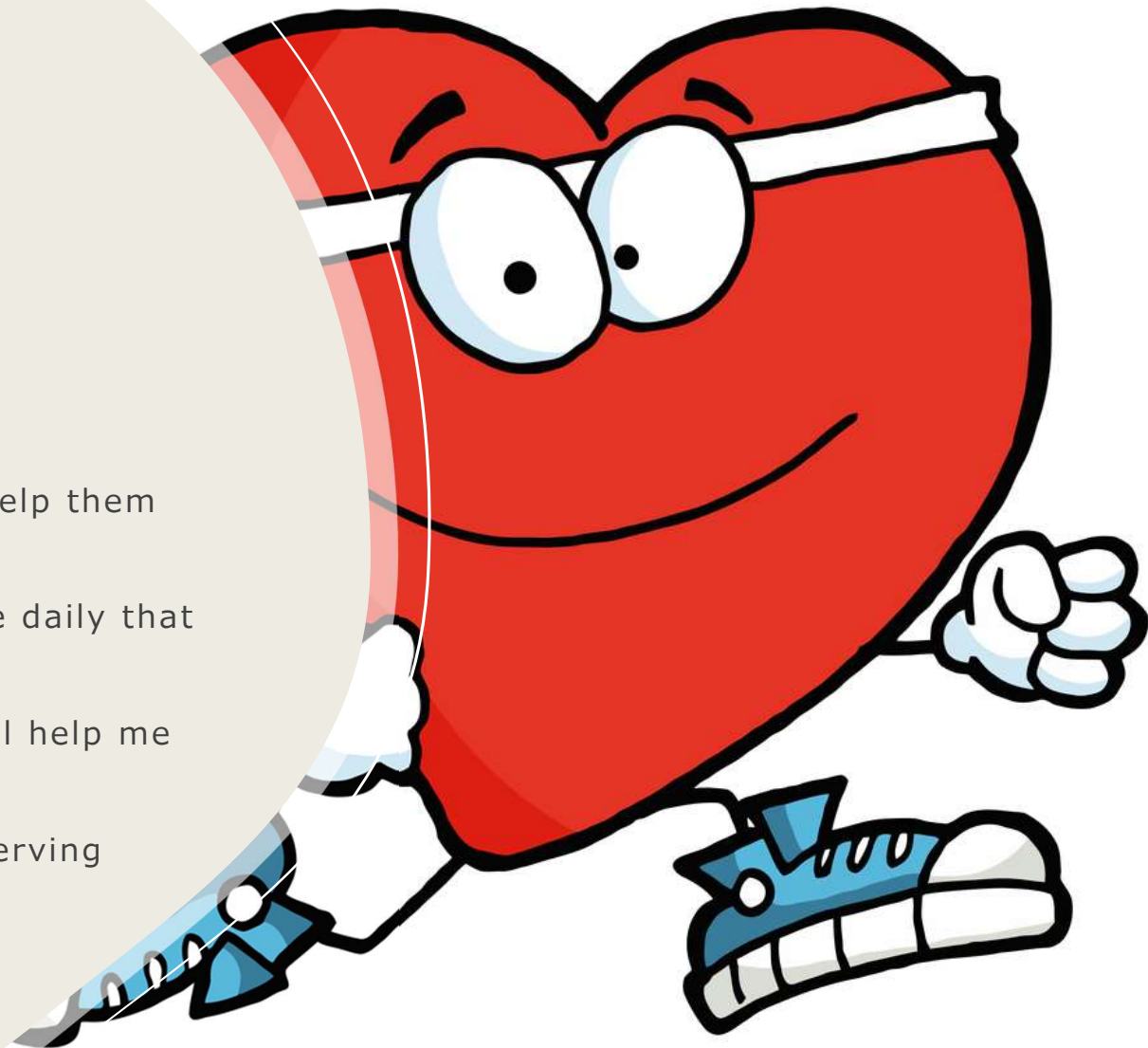
So how do we get to the “heart” of leadership?

One: What can I do for people to help them succeed?

Two: What do people need from me daily that they may not want to ask for?

Three: What can I work on that will help me serve people better?

Four: How will I know that I am serving people well?





Getting down to the “heart” of it cont’d

Five: What is it like for the people who work with me?

Six: How can I gain value while adding value to others by serving?

Seven: What do I do best that allows me to serve people better?

Eight: How can I serve people in a way that will inspire them to serve others?

IN Summary:

---Servant heart leadership trickles down through all areas of the workplace and can be adopted by any employee or leader.

It's a process of identifying what you can offer your team, one day at a time, and, most of all, trying again when things don't work out at first. Those failures can make your leadership stronger and make you more creative and energetic.



LASTLY:

IF A LEADER HAS A “SERVANT HEART,” THEY CAN DIRECT THEIR FACILITY’S CULTURE (LOOK AT CULTURE CHANGE!) IN CREATING A WONDERFUL PLACE TO WORK, A PLACE TO FEEL CARED ABOUT, TO BE SAFE, AND TO PROVIDE CREATIVITY AND ENJOYMENT FOR ALL THEIR EMPLOYEES. WE ALL WANT
THAT FOR OUR FACILITIES
HAVE A HEART, MAKE A START- today!!!!!!

REMEMBER:

“A change of heart is like gratitude. If it’s unexpressed, it has little value.”

-John Maxwell, bestselling author, coach and speaker



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