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***Thoughts from Staff College.....the first in our new series of Faculty blogs***

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The US Navy SEALs – the elite Special Forces, not the ones who will balance anything on their nose for a couple of mackerel – have a saying that ‘The Only Easy Day was Yesterday’. The idea behind this adage is to ensure they are ready for the challenges ahead and never fall into the trap of complacency by thinking the worst is behind them. It is not a pessimistic outlook but rather a ‘brutally realistic’ one as [Jim Stockdale](#) might have put it.

The same phrase also applies to the NHS because it’s going to need its best leaders even more after the Covid-pandemic has subsided for three reasons:

**First**, during a crisis people get used to a direct command and control approach. There’s no time to debate, it’s a [time to focus on the task](#). Of course, good leaders won’t forget to think about team cohesion and will also look out for individuals who are struggling. But that’s the good leaders. Many managers will become used to giving orders and will continue to do so after the crisis. Similarly, some followers will have become accustomed to being told exactly what to do, rather being expected or encouraged to use their initiative. Someone needs to provide an example of good leadership by asking questions rather than barking orders.

**Second**, after a crisis everything becomes much more difficult. There is a tendency for all the old bureaucratic procedures to be re-imposed, expenditure is more tightly controlled and petty rivalries surface once more. Someone needs to help people shape the ‘new normal’.

**Third**, because everything is more difficult than it was, people will have a great sense of anti-climax. Not only because they no longer get the adrenalin rush that comes from being in the middle of a crisis but also because they will feel let down. They will have been given a glimpse of how effective healthcare can be when everyone is pulling in the same direction. They will want their hard work and sacrifice to have made a difference. Someone needs to show them that their feelings are valid and understood but that, in time, things can be better.

That’s why leading after a crisis is much harder than leading during a crisis. Fortunately, you know what you need to do to be an effective leader - and if you’re not sure, hopefully you know who to ask.