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

A letter to myself as a previous CEO of an acute hospital trust

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You have seen some extraordinary feats of leadership over the past 3 months. These have included outstanding clinical leadership, decision making and implementation of changes with previously unimaginable speed, and this has been done with kindness, compassion and thoughtfulness. The NHS has shown what an outstanding organisation it can be, however it has not always operated in this way.

So, let me pick out three lessons from this. Firstly, leadership has been described by **Henry Harris M.D.** as the *'measure and degree of an individual's ability to influence – and be influenced by - a group in the implementation of a common task'*. Over the past three months how have you influenced and, most importantly, how have you been influenced by others in the common task? Your ability to address the different needs of the individuals, the team and the task will make you a more effective leader. What lessons have you learnt that you can apply to the next phase of Covid -19?

Secondly, **Peter Drucker** wrote an article titled *Managing Oneself*. One quote stood out *'Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong. More often people know what they are not good at – and even more people are wrong than right. And yet a person can only perform from strength.'* How well do you know yourself? Make sure that, as a leader you know yourself and that you are self-aware. Take time to build and develop that skill based on 'straight talking' feedback. In doing so you can perform from strength, by knowing yourself better.

Thirdly, **Rahm Emanuel** President Obama's Chief of Staff said *'Never let a serious crisis go to waste'* he went on to say *'and I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.'* One of the paradoxes of being resilient is that by moving towards uncertainty we can diminish the ability of that anxiety to disturb us. Part of the response to today's current uncertainties has been the way the health system has responded to a very unique and precarious set of circumstances. Think about why you moved towards uncertainty and how this approach has worked. What can you do now to be a better leader in the future?

Leadership is a contact sport - it requires training, practise, experimentation and it needs developing. Create time and space to do so.

Yours

Gordon

- i. Henry Harris *The Group Approach to Leadership - Testing* 1949 Routledge & Kegan Paul
- ii. Peter Drucker *Managing Oneself The Best of HBR* 1999, Harvard Business Review
- iii. Rahm Emanuel *President Obama Chief of Staff* 2008