

IMPACT OF COVID-19

Showing empathy in a crisis

EMPATHIC behaviours in communities are the consequence of people being able to pay attention, comprehend and see themselves in the situation of others, as we have witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We must consider the issue from the perspective of individuals who are physically, emotionally, socially and economically impacted by Covid-19, including being separated from their families, being taken to the hospital and worrying who will look after their wife, husband, children and parents at home.

The community must understand the trauma and suffering caused by Covid-19. Stress caused by unemployment is connected to a reduction in family members' ability to care for one another. As a result, depression is a common side effect of losing a job.

It is heartening to see acts of kindness among the community and we should be inspired to do the same, for example, food banks such as Tempa-

tan Food Bank, Shell's community food box at 48 selected petrol stations, Yayasan Food Bank Malaysia and the white flag initiative.

Empathy is clearly shown as a cornerstone for human connection and action that benefit individuals and the community. In these circumstances, it is important for us to avoid provoking negative emotions.

Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on society is a community-wide responsibility. In the battle against Covid-19, leaders, employers, employees, businesses, frontline workers, neighbours, village committees and others have roles to play.

The simplest thing we can do as is to refrain from being uncompassionate or insensitive to those in need. Recent incidents have unfortunately gained headlines in the news and on social media, most particularly the spread of negative sentiments during the pandemic.

Now is the time for all leaders,

regardless of status or political affiliation, to lead with empathy. For example, employers' empathy is at the top of employees' wish lists. It is important to be resilient. Maintaining open lines of communication between employees and management is the most effective method for an organisation to show empathy.

One source of emotional support during these difficult times is ensuring that employees are appreciated and free to address professional and personal problems. The most important support that they require is trust and respect, considering their circumstances.

During this pandemic, there are ways to be a more empathetic community such as expressing compassion, staying connected, being disciplined by following standard operating procedures, sensing other people's difficulties and figuring out ways to help them and not be quick to judge others without understanding their situation.



We should be inspired to do acts of kindness, such as setting up food banks.
PIC BY IZZALI ISMAIL

Empathy-based community engagement is a worthy pursuit as we live in communities and rely on one another to survive. This is one way to foster community development by bringing people together, demonstrating and redefining how a community should be, and showing how it can function to improve people's lives.

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