



WHY 'TOUGH LOVE' LEADERS ARE EFFECTIVE



'Tough Love' leaders use a combination of strong goal and people orientation to create an accountable and high performance environment. It's not about bullying behaviours or a toxic culture, it's about being adult and giving other people the chance to be adult too. By giving them the facts and allowing them to make decisions for themselves.

Not treating people as adults and holding them accountable creates a culture of tolerance and non-performance. People who are seen as aggressive, who ask questions or could pose a threat are not seen as 'team players' Mediocrity is celebrated and non-performers thrive. Rewards are for 'loyalty' and 'good behaviour' rather than results or performance. Conflict and difference are not dealt with and difficult issues are not discussed or resolved conclusively.

In a 'Tough Love' culture, leaders push people but provide support when it's needed. They speak their mind but ask questions and take on board the response. They raise the bar, deliver creative solutions and drive collaboration but recognise differences and deal with conflict fairly and effectively. Above all they give their team the ability to be adults themselves and to be accountable.

25 Ways To Be A 'Tough Love' Leader

1. **Communicate effectively** – 'tough love' leaders possess strong communication skills so they can always make sure others understand changes, expectations or new directions.
2. **Keep learning** - nobody is perfect and 'tough love' leaders realise this and ask for feedback so they can keep improving their skills.
3. **Build positive relationships** – developing clean and honest relationships which build trust is an essential element of 'tough love' leadership.
4. **Make your team accountable** – 'tough love' leaders treat their team as 'adults' and make them accountable.
5. **Take risks** - being open to new ideas and taking risks keeps an organisation moving forward even during times of difficult change. 'Tough Love' leaders are aware of risk but see it as a series of manageable tasks.
6. **Understand who you are** - leaders who have a clear sense of self, are aware of how they and others 'tick' and possess an enduring set of values that decisions can be made on.
7. **Be decisive** - decisions need to be made in order for projects to move forward. 'Tough love' leaders can make decisions even under pressure.
8. **Develop others** - giving behavioural performance and productive feedback to employees allows them to grow and move past their mistakes which will help the organisation overall.
9. **Innovate and evolve** - leaders need to be aware of new innovations and be confident of putting new ideas into place, balancing innovation and imagination with a desire to execute.
10. **Champion change** - embracing change requires a positive vision of where the organisation wants to go. 'Tough love' leaders are willing to change themselves, encourage others to embrace change and provide the strong leadership required to help the organisation change.
11. **Encourage useful and stimulating conflict and challenge** – 'tough love' leaders understand the benefit of conflict and deal with problems fairly and effectively.
12. **Take care of yourself** - paying attention to your own needs and feelings helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations as they arise.
13. **Focus on potential** – 'tough love' leaders can recognise people's potential and look at what they will be able to achieve in the future rather than what they've done today.
14. **Stay focused** - focusing on priorities and having a clear vision means concentration is on the future, not the past.
15. **Are aware of stress** – 'tough love' leaders recognise stress and pressure in themselves and in others and build resilience for when it's needed.
16. **Be transparent** - transparency helps leaders get past what happened and focus on moving forward.
17. **Invest** – 'tough love' leaders see their team as an asset that needs to be invested in through high-calibre training and development.

- 18. Have a strong sense of purpose** - leaders who can encourage people to join them on their journey find their team becomes stronger.
- 19. Care** – ‘tough love’ leaders care about their team members and see them as a ‘whole person’ not as a cog in a machine.
- 20. Understand process** - being clear about the part they should play releases the potential and capacity in team members and helps them to build solutions
- 21. Take one step at a time** - problems can be solved and opportunities developed more effectively by taking a step-by-step approach.
- 22. Keep going** – ‘tough love’ leaders have the stamina to keep going when things get difficult and still reliably deliver.
- 23. Use time wisely** – everyone’s time is important ‘tough love’ leaders recognise that sitting in unproductive and unnecessary meetings should be a thing of the past.
- 24. Listen** – ‘tough love’ leaders know that it’s as important to listen to an answer as it is to ask the question.
- 25. Finally** - leadership can be tough. However, having confidence and competence in equal measure is the key to being successful.

Our [ROPES](#) toolkit shapes our resilience training and can be used to developing resilience in leadership, people or culture.

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