

Power and abuse: Video 5

Transcript

- "What kinds of power do you wield--"
- "In your management role?"
- Wow, that's a really, powerful question. And I wonder, how often we think about that. Because I think, we do have a lot of power.
- Yeah, I would not see myself as wielding power, but rather, hopefully being an inspiring leader, that builds good teams, that have trust in confidence in me, and that carries over to their work.
- When you talk about the type of power, it's communication.
- I think we can wield enormous power, 'cause we can wield power around policy development, employment of people, there's a whole range of things that we wield power over. And it's the culture. That I think, we wield most power about, so, it's really setting the culture.
- I've been going through a bit of a phase, with regards to different sort of carers, where by default, they always sat down, have meals with us. My wife and I spoke about this, and sorta said, "You guys, you earn money, you're there for an hourly rate." "It's not default that you have a meal with us."
- [Carer] Not at all, no.
- So it's about, me and my wife, adjusting the way we do things--
- [Carer] Right.
- As over years we've been doing it. So, if there's a day shift, I invite people to bring their own lunch. It's about me being very clear about, what expectation's gonna happen during the day, so they can make their own adjustments.
- Sometimes I feel a little bit like a choreographer. You know, saying "No, it's here, it's there, "and this is the design of what we're doing here."
- And that's why it's so different, 'cause each person will bring their own, values to it.

- So how do I sum up the power, in my role--

- Over your staff, and the people they supported?

- Power. It's a dangerous word. Because I'm really focus on, equality, and power balance, whilst also having that mix of respect. So yes, there needs to be a bit of power imbalance, because they're in my home, and I need to be respected, and I have a wife and family, and this is a job, so that's the black and white sorta stuff.

- I think the power over the staff is the employment, and your expectations of staff. So, I say to my staff, "You are advocates."

- I think that's really important, you are there to support that person and to get the best possible situation for that person. So they're feeling empowered, listened to, and they're going away saying, "I can't have everything, but I'm having this, "I'm having really good supports." That's really important.

- But then it's about creating some nicety. Is that a word? It is now.

- What does that mean?

- Nicety, be nice about it. Don't be aggro, don't be... Don't be overbearing, with regards to, how things should work in the house.

- You know, I think it's really important that, we plan, and that we ask all our staff to do really good plans, with the people that are receiving supports. And that they're consulted at all times. So it's reporting, back.

- Okay.

- So how do my staff report back to me, that's a really important component of I think, a manager's role. Taking the reports. Going through them and seeing, what does that mean, in the bigger picture, but also for that individual person. CIM's reports are a requirement from DHHS, our funding body, on Critical Incident Management. So, if there's an incident, it's reporting it. But it's responding to the report from the staff, is the main issue I think, and not saying, "Ah, that's nothing." It's actually responding and doing the investigation. And the investigation will often show, that it could be a systemic thing, it could be just something that's happening within that sector, that setting that you're in. And it could highlight that the staff don't have the skills. It could be that there's not enough funding for the person. So it's a range of things, but it's really important to look at those incident reports. And really break them down, and see what is the situation that's caused this.

- Very happy to have suggestions, about, "How about tackling it this way?" Or "How about we do it

later?" Just give me a good reason. But at the end of the day, it probably will be my final say. 'Cause it's all about me!

- Yep. I totally agree.

- Thank you

- The organization I'm working with, we have a lot of supervision. And so we have group supervision, and also our team leaders have one-on-one supervision.

- Yeah I know.

- And I love how, when I go out into the field, I can ring and call my team leader any time. Because when you first go out, there's times where you doubt your skills, or you doubt yourself, a lot of doubts. And even though you've been taught, but, this is, out, and you're by yourself. You know the work, but you're not confident, so you just need that reassurance from someone. Also, they formed little support groups within the organization, so, for example, people who went and did the disability course together, would catch up, and then, we'll discuss, "Oh okay, we have this case." It's a case study.

- Right.

- And then, you know, we looked and brainstormed strategies, and then after that, myself, or whoever did the case study, will go out and implement it.

- Oh fantastic.

- And then report back, and we're like "Ah, how did that go?" And then it's like, the support, from the groups or from the team as well, and they give you a lot of encouragement.

- Yeah, that's true. So you're really involved in it.

- Yeah, yeah.

- Which is really important. And I think, from managers, because you can be very busy, it's really important to make sure these things are happening, so having that overview. It is really important.

- "You have the power to do good and the power to do harm."

- "How does this play out, in your day-to-day work?"

— We certainly have the power to do both. Good and harm, and harm is by ignoring things, making —

it easy, taking short cuts. And often, when you're really busy, there is the temptation, sometimes, to take those short cuts, and I think it's really important that we're constantly cognisant of the fact that we have, it's really important that we want the best for our people, that we're supporting, and we want the staff to be operating at the best possible level. So we've got to put all the supports into the staff.

- It's very much empowering your staff, making them feel valued. Coming from a strengths-based approach--

- Yep.

- And a person-centered approach, both with staff and clients.

- Yep.

- I'll tell you what I do get really strict, if I'm seeing this poor worker's not looking after themselves. If they forget to bend their knees, if they forget to wash their hands, I'm saying "Guys, girls, hello. "Love yourself first." When have I said that to you? All the time?

- Not now.

- Not now, 'cause you got it?

- I got it now.

- But one thing, sometimes, I think management fails to see, is the fact that we are the ones, you know, actually on the ground doin' the job. And most of the time, you'd realize that the carers know so much, that management doesn't know. So if you create that environment where there is tension, then you're not really gettin' all that information you need--

- Absolutely.

- To create improvement.

- I think that's why I think it's good to have that open door policy--

- Yep.

- Where, you've gotta value all your workers, and those that are on the ground, working face-to-face with the clients, are the important workers.

-- I mean I walk through the floor, quite often, and just see how staff are operating too, and I think it's ____

getting to know staff, being able to hear the stories. Really working well with your coordinators, and listening to the stories, and asking for the right stories for them.

- And then responding accordingly.

- Team building is very important, and fostering that sense of value amongst your staff, and, again, sometimes you're pushed for time, you don't have the resources to cover shifts, and you can't get all the staff in together, but, it's something that, I think, you need to look at, as making sure all your staff feel valued. And making sure you take the time to establish relationships with your staff, in a way that they feel that you're approachable, so, you can come in, do a shift, and, maybe have something on your mind, but you know, you can go and just... In there. And you can talk to that manager, and they're ready to listen to you, and if they're not, they'll give you a time when they are ready to listen to you, so, that you know you're not just being fobbed off and--

- Yeah.

- Dismissed as being unimportant. Really, an organization is only as strong as their weakest link.

- Yep.

- And if you don't have good strong staff, and they don't have trust in you and confidence in you, that's gonna be passed on to the clients that they're dealing with.

- What are we doing, then, to change things in the sector? So, if we're seeing harm we need to be talking to the sector about that. We certainly need to look at the training of staff, make sure that you've got staff that are qualified to do it, have the skills to do it. So our partnerships with training organizations are absolutely critical. And our partnerships with other people too, like Allied Health people, the universities, et cetera. Because that will then influence, the people coming into the sector.