MODULE OVERVIEW

When a colleague is struggling: Help, don't rescue

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Colleagues and managers often see distress at work first, without knowing how to respond: helping too much wears out the helper and creates dependence, while looking away isolates the colleague. Neither rescuing nor avoiding, this module draws a precise line: spot the signs, avoid the rescuer trap, and hold a six-step support conversation, without taking on what isn't ours to carry.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Spot signs of distress in a colleague (behavior, habits, performance, relationships, physical signs) without making a diagnosis.

02 Recognize the rescuer trap (Karpman triangle) to help without creating dependence or burning out.

03 Hold a six-step support conversation, from a shared observation to follow-up, with a peer or a manager.

04 Set a kind boundary and point the person to the right resources when the situation goes beyond help between colleagues.

WHO IT'S FOR

Any colleague or manager who sees a teammate struggling and wants to help without taking over.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1. **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
2. **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
3. **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
4. **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
5. **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Marco and Anouk, booksellers, run the children's section together. For two weeks, Marco has been letting his orders slide; yesterday, he told Anouk he couldn't cope anymore. Without telling Marco, Anouk has already placed two of his orders. The next ones have to go out before Thursday. What does Anouk do?

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Drama triangle – Stephen Karpman (1968): rescuer, persecutor, victim
- 6-step support conversation – Afthonios method
- Adult-to-adult relationship and shared responsibility – Francis Boyer, inspired by Eric Berne's transactional analysis
- Afthonios grid of the 5 types of signs of distress at work

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Stephen Karpman (1968): the drama triangle
- Eric Berne – transactional analysis (Parent–Adult–Child)
- Francis Boyer, L'innovation managériale en action (Eyrolles) – Innovation Managériale blog
- Carl Rogers – active listening

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