



GUIDE

The Coach Approach: 5 Skills Every Manager Needs for Parental Leave Success

Strategies to help managers master parental leave conversations and transform the policy into practice.







Parento x LUMO

LUMO and Parento have joined forces to create the definitive resource for managing parental leave announcements and transitions. By combining LUMO's expertise in manager development and coaching with Parento's deep understanding of parental leave management best practices, this guide offers a unique, holistic approach to parental leave.

Together, we're helping organizations transform what could be a challenging transition into an opportunity for growth, development, and stronger team dynamics.

Our partnership ensures that managers have access to both the strategic frameworks and practical tools needed to support their employees through every stage of the parental leave journey.



DON'T GIVE YOUR MANAGERS THE SHORT END OF THE STICK...

There are three groups impacted by the announcement of a parental leave: the employee, the manager and the team left behind.

The announcement of parental leave is a love 'em or leave 'em moment that relies solely on the ability of the manager to lead with empathy and understanding during this exciting (and fraught) time for your employee.

We get it...leading and managing people through a parental leave is difficult. There is often so much emphasis on the employee taking leave themselves - managers need love too.



75%
75% of parents
reported that they
could have used more
emotional support at
work than they
received (APA)





5 Essential Coaching Skills for Managers

So managers, this one is for you. A sneak peek into LUMO's training for managers supported by the experts in parental leave, Parento!

Let's talk about five game-changing coaching skills that will transform parental leave conversations from awkward to awesome. Think of these skills as your secret weapons for being the supportive manager you want to be.

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR PARENTAL LEAVE CONVERSATIONS

Being/Relationship

Fancy words for creating that safe space where your team member can actually tell you what's on their mind without breaking into a cold sweat. Because let's face it, nobody should feel like they're confessing a crime when sharing their baby news!

Powerful Questioning

Forget those basic "when are you due?" conversations. We're talking about questions that get to the heart of what your employee needs and helps you both create a leave plan that actually works.

Filters & Stories

For so many managers the announcement of a parental leave means more work for you, the manager and the team left behind. We'll help you push past the "but what about the project deadlines?" panic and truly see what your employee is experiencing.

Empathy & Perspective Taking

These skills bring it all together. It's about finding that sweet spot where you can be both their biggest supporter and keep the team running smoothly. Because yes, you can absolutely do both!

Active Listening

We mean really listening, not just nodding while mentally reorganizing your calendar. This is about being all-in when your team member is sharing their hopes (and fears) about their upcoming leave. 0

Developing coaching skills as a manager is the equivalent to developing super powers to deal with our fellow humans.





Skill #1: Being/Relationship

At LUMO, we believe magic happens in the space between "doing" and "being." Sure, you can tick all the boxes on your parental leave checklist, but what truly matters is how you show up for your team member during this transformative time. Maya Angelou captured it perfectly: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

When we train managers, we often ask them about their job. Like clockwork, they list their functional responsibilities: sales targets, financial planning, marketing strategies. But here's the truth that transforms teams: your first job as a manager is to BE there – truly, authentically there. Especially during parental leave transitions, when your team members are navigating one of life's biggest changes.

Think of relationships as the foundation that everything else is built upon. Want better performance? Start with stronger connections. Need smoother leave transitions? Invest time in people. It's simple math: the quality of your relationship directly impacts the quality of your leadership.

MANAGER PRACTICES



Practice Presence: Before each conversation about parental leave, take a breath and check in with yourself. Are you rushing? Distracted? Your team member will feel it. Set aside your phone, close your laptop, and be fully there.



Create Trust Through Consistency: Show up as the same supportive leader whether discussing a major project or their leave plans. Your consistent presence builds the trust needed for honest conversations about concerns and hopes.



Lead with Curiosity: Replace assumptions with genuine questions. Instead of thinking "This leave will disrupt everything," ask "What support would help you feel confident about this transition?"



Honor the Whole Person: Remember you're not just managing a team member - you're supporting someone entering a new chapter of life. Celebrate their news, acknowledge their concerns, and relate to them as a whole person.



Build Relationship Daily: Don't wait for big moments. Build trust in small ways every day: remember details they've shared, follow through on commitments, and demonstrate that you have their back.



Skill #2: Filters & Stories

As human beings, we are meaning-making machines. It's just what our brains do, all day, every day. And as managers, we're not immune – especially when it comes to parental leave announcements. In that moment when an employee shares their news, our story-making machinery kicks into high gear.

Maybe you hear "I'm pregnant" and your brain immediately jumps to "There goes our Q4 targets." Or perhaps an employee mentions adoption plans and you start spinning tales about team disruption and project delays. These stories – these interpretations – can shape how you show up as a manager during this crucial time.

Some stories serve us well: "This is an opportunity to develop other team members" or "We can use this transition to improve our processes." But then there are those limiting beliefs that can hijack your effectiveness as a manager: "Working parents are less committed" or "The team can't succeed without this person" or "I'm not equipped to handle this transition."



only 33% of employees describe their work culture as "family-friendly" (Care.com)



The tricky part? We gather evidence to support whatever story we're telling ourselves.

If you believe parental leave always damages team productivity, you'll notice every small hiccup during the transition while missing the opportunities for growth and adaptation.

If you're convinced returning parents will be less engaged, you might unconsciously create that very reality through your own reduced expectations and support. Where we get into trouble is when these stories - these filters through which we view parental leave - begin driving our decisions and behaviors.





Skill #2: Filters & Stories

A manager convinced that "part-time parents can't handle important projects" might unknowingly sideline valuable team members. Another who believes "asking about leave plans is intrusive" might avoid crucial conversations altogether.

The key is recognizing that these are stories, not facts. When an employee shares their parental leave plans, you get to choose which lens you'll look through. Will you see it as a crisis to manage or an opportunity to demonstrate great leadership? Will you focus on what might go wrong or envision what could go right?

MANAGER PRACTICES



Run the Courtroom Test: Before reacting to parental leave news, pause and separate facts from interpretation. What could you actually prove in court? FACT: "Sarah is taking 12 weeks of leave starting July 1st" STORY: "This will derail our entire Q3 strategy" Make this distinction before any major decisions or conversations.



Play Reporter: When you catch yourself worrying about a leave situation, write it down as a news reporter would. Just the facts: Who, What, When, Where. Then circle every assumption, judgment, or prediction you've added. You might be surprised how much of your stress lives in those additions.



Check Your History Filter: Notice what past experiences are coloring your current response:

- Had a difficult leave transition before? That's informing your view.
- Working parent yourself? Those experiences shape your perspective. Acknowledge these filters without letting them dictate your response to this unique situation.



Challenge Your "Always/Never" Stories: When you hear yourself thinking: "Working parents always..." or "Part-time employees never..." Or "The team won't be able to..." Stop and ask: "Is this absolutely true? What evidence might prove this wrong?"



Flip the Story: Practice actively generating alternative interpretations:.

- Instead of: "This leave will create chaos" Try: This is an opportunity to strengthen our team's adaptability"
- Instead of: "We'll fall behind" Try: "We can use this transition to innovate our processes."

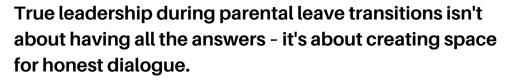






Skill #3: Active Listening

Let's be honest - when an employee shares their parental leave plans, our manager brains often sprint ahead to logistics, deadlines, and coverage plans. We might find ourselves halfway through explaining the leave policy before realizing we haven't actually heard what our team member is trying to tell us.





When we jump straight into solution mode or policy explanations, we miss the subtle concerns, hopes, and fears our team members are trying to express. That's not just a missed connection – it's a missed opportunity to build trust during a crucial life transition.

What would change if we truly listened?

If instead of immediately launching into "here's how we'll handle your projects," the opportunity is to create space for "tell me how you're feeling about this transition"?



450 Hours

Parents spend up to 450 hours, almost 3 straight months of full-time work, preparing for leave. (BetterUp)



46%

of employees believe underrepresented voices are not actively listened to. (AON)



60%

of employees believe their views and opinions are ignored in the workplace. (AON)



83%

of employees feel they are not heard 'fairly or equally.' (AON)





Skill #3: Active Listening Practices

The quality of your listening during initial leave conversations sets the tone for the entire transition. Your team members will remember how heard they felt long after they've forgotten what you said.

MANAGER PRACTICES



Listen for the Unsaid: Tune into what lies beneath the words. When your team member says "I can keep managing this project until my leave," are they expressing dedication or anxiety? Notice tone, body language, and what they might be hesitant to express directly.



Mirror Their Language: When discussing leave plans, use their words. If they say "when I become a parent" rather than "when the baby comes," mirror that choice. This subtle alignment shows respect for their personal experience of this transition.



Practice the power of silence. After your team member shares something, count to three before responding. This gives them space to add thoughts they might be hesitant to voice and shows you're truly absorbing what they're saying.



Practice the Echo Effect: Regularly reflect back what you're hearing: "What I'm hearing is you're excited about this next chapter but concerned about your team's projects. Is that right?" This isn't just repetition – it's validation and invitation for clarity.



When your thoughts drift to coverage plans or policy details, gently bring yourself back to the present conversation. There will be time for logistics later. Right now, your presence matters more than your plans.

FREE RESOURCES AND GUIDES











Skill #4: Powerful Questioning

Powerful questioning is the name - CURIOSITY is the game.

See what we did there?

When it comes to parental leave conversations, it's tempting to slip into autopilot. After all, you've handled leaves before, right? You "know" what needs to happen.

But here's the thing - the moment we think we know everything about someone's leave transition is the moment we stop learning what they actually need.

Think about it: every parent's journey is unique, every team's dynamics are different, and every leave transition brings its own challenges and opportunities.

This is where powerful questioning becomes your best friend – not just asking questions, but asking the right questions that open doors to deeper understanding and better solutions.



Looking for more parental leave guides and resources?

More Freebies





Skill #4: Powerful Questioning

The magic happens when we replace "I know what you need" with "Help me understand what would work best for you." It's about moving from assumption to exploration, from protocol to possibility.

MANAGER PRACTICES



Open the Door:

- Instead of: "You'll want to start transitioning your projects soon, right?" Try: "How are you thinking about managing your work transition?"
- This invites them to share their thoughts rather than confirming your assumptions.



Future-Focus Questions:

- Instead of: "Are you worried about being away?" Try: "What would make you feel confident about your time away?"
- This shifts from potential anxiety to constructive planning.



Explore the Whole Picture: Layer your questions thoughtfully:

- "What's most energizing about this transition?"
- "What feels challenging?"
- "What possibilities do you see that we haven't discussed?" Each question builds on the last, creating a fuller understanding.



Ask for Their Input: Instead of assuming you know best, tap into their insights:

- "What have you seen work well in other leave transitions?"
- "What ideas do you have for keeping connected during leave?"
- "How would you design your ideal return-to-work plan?"



Create Space for the Unexpected Use: questions that invite new thinking:

- "What if we approached this differently?"
- "What other options might we not have considered?"
- "How could this transition actually strengthen our team?"







Skill #5: Empathy & Perspective Taking

As managers, we each view parental leave through our own unique lens – colored by our experiences, biases, and organizational pressures. But here's the thing: your perspective is just one piece of a much larger picture.

True leadership requires the ability to step outside your own view and truly understand your team member's experience.

"In order to empathize with someone's experience you must be willing to believe them as they see it and not how you imagine their experience to be." Brené Brown's words hit differently when we think about parental leave transitions, don't they?

Here's the truth: you might not know what it feels like to be expecting a child, navigating adoption paperwork, or planning to become a primary caregiver. But you do know what it feels like to face a life-changing transition.

You know what it's like to feel excited and scared at the same time. You know what it's like to wonder how a major change will impact your career.

That's where empathy comes in - not as a mysterious talent that some managers have and others don't, but as a skill we can all develop and strengthen.

It's your ability to connect with the emotions underlying your team member's experience, even if their situation is different from anything you've faced.







Skill #5: Empathy & Perspective Taking

Think of it this way: when an employee shares their parental leave plans, they're not just announcing a temporary absence. They're sharing a transformative life moment, often carrying a mix of joy, anxiety, hope, and uncertainty.

- Your job isn't to fix these emotions or even fully understand their specific situation.
- Your job is to create space for their experience and reflect back your understanding.

The beauty of empathy in leave management? It lets you support your team member without taking on their emotional load. It helps you navigate the practical aspects of leave planning while acknowledging the human experience at its core.

Most importantly, it allows you to meet your team members where they are - whether they're bursting with excitement or wrestling with concerns about their career trajectory.

Remember: You don't need to have walked their exact path to show empathy. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is listen without judgment, ask questions with genuine curiosity, and show that you care about their experience – whatever that experience may be.



Take what works and leave what doesn't!









Skill #5: Empathy & Perspective Taking

MANAGER PRACTICES



Take the Balcony View: Before making any leave-related decisions, mentally step up to the "balcony":

- How does this look from your team member's perspective?
- How might it impact their colleagues?
- What organizational factors are at play?
 This wider view often reveals solutions invisible from ground level.



Many Things Can Be True At Once:

Remember that these can all be true simultaneously:

- This is a joyful time for your employee
- This creates real challenges for the team
- This is an opportunity for growth
- This requires careful navigation,





Bridge the Experience Gap: Even if you've never been in their shoes:

- Acknowledge their unique experience
- Connect to similar feelings you've had during big life transitions
- Focus on understanding rather than comparing



Practice Non Judgment: When thoughts like "They could have timed this better" or "This will disrupt everything" arise:

- Notice these judgments
- · Set them aside
- Ask yourself: "What might I not understand about their situation?" Remember: judgment blocks understanding.



Emotion Watch: Practice recognizing emotions – both theirs and yours:

- What's beneath their words?
- What feelings might be driving their requests?
- How are your own emotions influencing your response? Name them without getting tangled in them.





Managers need love, too!

These coaching skills aren't just "nice-to-haves" - they're game-changers for handling parental leave transitions.

Parental leave can be one of the most significant transitions in a working parent's career. While the opportunity to bond with a new child is exciting, the journey also presents unique challenges for both employees and their managers - you!

By mastering the art of being present, recognizing your own stories, truly listening, asking powerful questions, and practicing genuine empathy, managers become the secret ingredient to successful leave experiences.

Remember, how you show up during these pivotal moments doesn't just impact your team's productivity - it shapes their entire experience of parenthood and work.

LUMO and Parento are committed to empowering managers with both the mindset and toolbox needed to navigate these transitions with confidence and care.

Because when managers lead with these coaching superpowers, parental leave becomes more than just a temporary absence – it becomes a true opportunity for growth, connection, and organizational strength.



Managers, we're rooting for you!





Transform the parental leave experience

Contact Parento sales@parentoleave.com

Schedule a Meeting

Contact LUMO sarah@lumoleadership.com

Learn More

