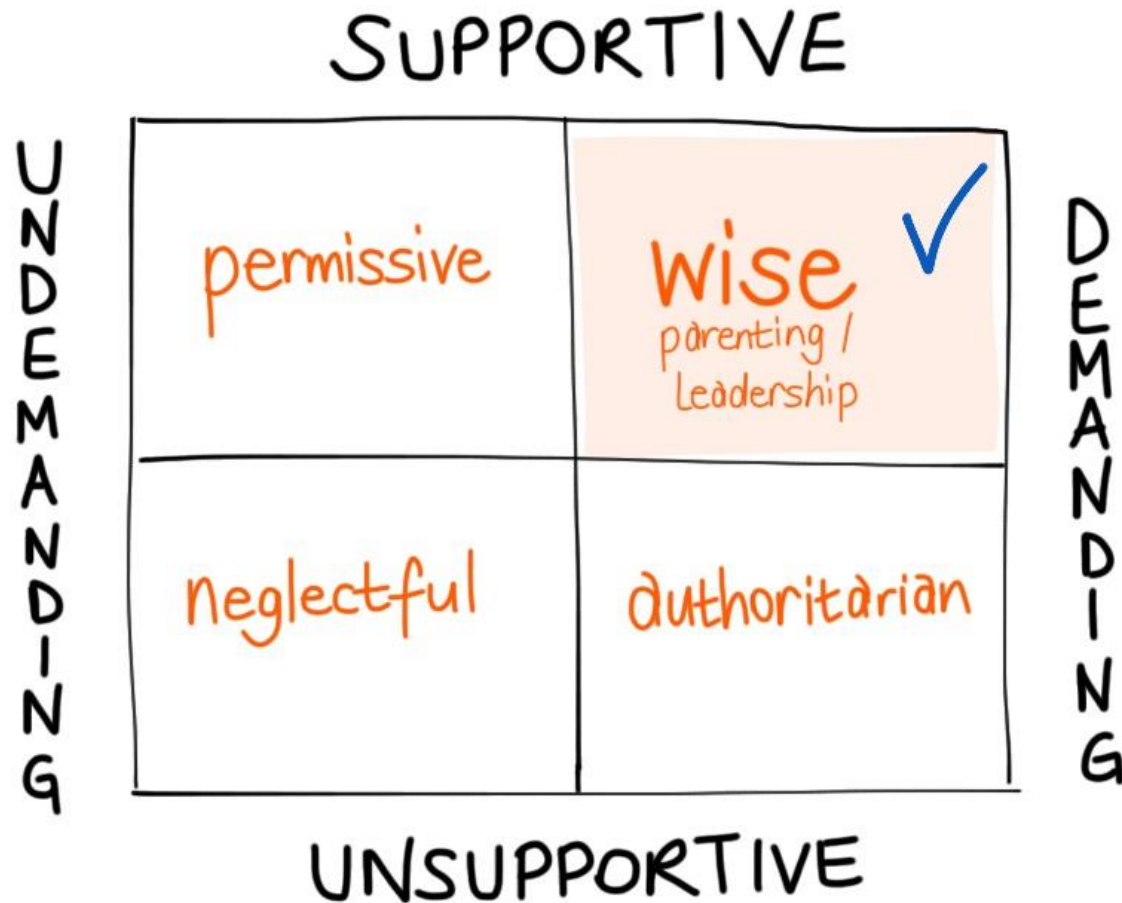


Supportive and demanding leadership



Angela Duckworth

Supportive and demanding leadership

The concept

This relatively simple yet powerful concept has been popularised through Angela Duckworth in her book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. It was originally presented as a parenting model but is just as applicable to leading people. It's core tenet is that effective leadership (or parenting) requires both being incredibly supportive and very demanding. It suggests a consistent equal focus on people and task will optimise team climate and performance.

Supportive = demonstrating care, active listening, showing appreciation, tuning in to how people are feeling, addressing workload issues, recognising achievements.

Demanding = setting high standards, holding people to account, providing challenges and opportunities, giving developmental feedback, clarifying performance expectations.

The absence of one or both of these behaviours over time will be experienced negatively by those we lead or parent – permissive, neglectful or authoritarian. The consistent demonstration of **both** behaviours results in 'wise' leadership.

Why it's useful

Many leaders (or parents) have a natural style preference in one of these dimensions – task focused or people focused. Recognising the critical importance of demonstrating both, at a consistently high level, provides a point of reflection as to where you may need to strengthen your leadership practice.

How/when to apply it

When as a team leader you have a sense, either through observation or data (such as a staff survey), that an individual or the team is struggling in some way – morale or performance – it is worthwhile reflecting how you may be impacting the situation through your leadership practice. Have you got the right mix of both supportive and demanding behaviours? Too much of one, too little of another? This simple reflection may provide insight as to where you could make some tweaks to your leadership practice and then subsequently observe and reflect upon the impacts.

