

Three key conditions to create a healthy workplace



By Dr. Bill Morrison Lic. Psych.

Current research underscores the importance of creating workplace cultures that foster the psychological health and wellness of employees within their team and work environments. Healthy workplaces that support employee wellbeing are psychologically safe and provide the basis for effective team functioning.

Organizations can be proactive by taking targeted actions to safeguard the wellbeing of employees and ensuring the creation of positive and healthy workplace cultures, according to research by Emma Seppala, science director at the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, and Kim Cameron, a professor with the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

Research in positive psychology has identified three key environmental conditions that are essential for building healthy and effective workplace environments that contribute to employee wellbeing, engagement and thriving, according to research by Edward Deci, a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester and Richard Ryan, a professor at the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University and a professor at the University of Rochester.

Relatedness

The first condition involves the development a sense of “relatedness” or

connectedness among employees. This workplace characteristic is created when employees feel welcome and included, and people practice greeting and acknowledging one another on a daily basis.

Interactions among employees include friendly exchanges that contribute to a sense of knowing others and being known. As people gain a sense of positive connectedness, they also become sensitive to each other when they experience stress. Connected employees practice checking in with one another and provide mutual support when additional assistance may be needed to carry out or complete work-related tasks.

Competency

A second core condition is the development of a sense of “competency” among employees. The creation of this workplace characteristic involves recognizing and valuing the strengths, skills and potential of all members of the team.

Ideally, shared work goals provide opportunities for employees to be engaged in using their strengths and skills, and to recognize how their skills complement the strengths of other team members, maximizing the collective effectiveness and performance of the full team.

In contrast to workplace gossip or conversations that are destructive to

team relationships, developing a sense of competency in the workplace is supported by expressions of appreciation and gratitude among employees and managers for the strengths and contributions that all members bring to the team.

About the Author

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Autonomy Support

A third condition that is critical to building healthy and effective workplaces is “autonomy support.” In contrast to over-controlling environments, this workplace characteristic is evident when people’s voice, perspectives and ideas are heard and valued in workplace routines and interactions. Practices that promote autonomy support include seeking others’ perspectives instead of just giving advice, finding opportunities to collaborate with colleagues or peers on work projects, and inviting team members to collectively build solutions or strategies for addressing emerging or existing challenges or goals.

Developing autonomy-supportive workplace environments counteracts behaviours that bully or marginalize others, and creates psychological-safe workspaces for all employees.

Summary

In summary, creating healthy and effective workplace cultures involves being intentional about creating environmental conditions that foster relatedness, competency and autonomy support within team relationships and routines. Targeted training for teams and managers on relationship practices that promote these conditions may be an important initial step in optimizing the workplace culture. Originally published in the *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 2018

Creating Trust

Looking to make a good first impression? Want to be seen as trustworthy? Well, you only have one second! A study published recently in the *Journal of Neuroscience* found that the human brain decides whether a person is trustworthy or not almost instantly. To thwart this unfair biological response and be considered trustworthy, appear confident, relaxed, and knowledgeable; use a firm handshake; greet others with a smile; and make eye contact. Listen slightly more than you speak, and always practice the most important piece of advice to instill trustworthiness: Be genuine — be yourself. Source: www.Psych.nyu.edu

When Your Coworker Seems Depressed



You can’t play doctor, but something’s not right with your coworker. They are coming in late, not “caring” as much about the work, putting things off, and not dressing as nicely as they once did. They appear a little absent-minded, unsure of themselves, “scattered” or unorganized, and a little bit isolated or withdrawn

from the rest of the group. Sometimes they are snappy, too—not as pleasant to be around. Although you can’t diagnose, you can share your concerns. Listen and encourage him or her to get help. A whopping 23% of employees will suffer from depression and miss work because of it, according to one key study. Getting

over depression is not an exercise in will-power. It’s a neurological disease process often requiring medical intervention to overcome. As a peer, you could have tremendous influence—likely more than a family member with whom the employee possibly engages in conflict. This means it doesn’t take much effort to influence a coworker’s decision to take action and get help. Simply sharing your observations (in private) and encouraging a coworker to get help could be enough to motivate him or her to do so. Depression left untreated can lead down a chronic path of worsening symptoms. You may help your coworker avoid years of pain as the illness grows worse, and coming to work may be a lot more pleasant for you, too. Source: www.employershealthco.com

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