

Balanced Living

August 2023



Developing Empathy and Compassion to Avoid Division in the Workplace

The increased diversity and division in our culture these days makes empathy and compassion in the workplace an even more critical skill for employees and employers to develop. Without empathy and compassion, the workplace would be an emotional battlefield where no one would feel safe to share their ideas or concerns, ask for what they need to improve their work, or have a healthy work-life balance for fear of being fired. Empathy and compassion are the cornerstones to creating a work environment that promotes healthy interaction, positive morale, and a sense of feeling valued in the workplace. In fact, according to research conducted by McKee, David, Chaskalson, and Chussil in 2017, increased empathy impacts our work effectiveness, thereby improving our skills as workers and managers.

The general consensus among researchers is that empathy is the ability to sense another person's emotions, while also being able to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling. Empathy is the foundation of compassion, which is defined as the concern for the suffering or misfortune of others and a desire to alleviate that suffering. In other words, empathy is identifying and sympathizing with what the other person may be experiencing and feeling, while compassion is the act of helping that hurting person either physically and/or emotionally.

Many corporations have been utilizing employee trainings with a focus on developing the five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Emotional intelligence is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as: "The capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically." Although empathy is not an attribute that all people are born with, it is a skill that can be learned by using self-awareness and mindfulness to notice how our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors affect those around us. Empathy is also gained through the process of reading non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.

According to PositivePsychology.com, there are eight strategies to developing empathy:

1. **Cultivate curiosity** about the people you interact with who may come from different religious, ethnic, or political backgrounds.
2. **Step outside your comfort zone** and learn something new, which can foster feelings of humility and lead to empathy.
3. **Ask for feedback from others** regarding your active listening and relationship skills, and identify areas that you can improve.
4. **Examine how your biases** impact your capacity to empathize when you make judgments about others who are different than you.
5. Spend time with others who you usually don't connect with and practice active listening to help you **"walk in their shoes."**
6. Practice having **difficult but respectful conversations** with those who have different points of view by listening without interruption and being open to new ideas.
7. **Work on a shared cause** with people different than you. Research has shown this can help to heal differences and **remove biases**.
8. **Expand your reading** and expose yourself to different points of view through a variety of articles, books, and newspapers.

As we become more mindful of the way we treat others, we can take responsibility for doing our part to create a more accepting and validating environment in the workplace. Developing the skill of empathy, which is a necessary step to compassion, is crucial to promoting the evolution of a supportive and thriving workplace atmosphere.

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How a Supervisor Can Lead an Effective Team

By focusing on these four key areas, a supervisor works as a team leader to build a strong, productive group:

Support

A supervisor supports the team by recognizing individual and group performance, bringing in additional support from upper management when needed. Questions about other teams can help highlight and invite healthy discussion about individual team members' strengths.

Interaction

Promoting social interaction among team members can help create valuable relationships and better communication within the group. Through connecting, members can see the value of one another, which leads to a better ability to work as a team. Scheduling after-work outings and team building events are good ways to generate member interaction.

Goals

Goals help keep the team on task. When a team leader encourages team-wide focus on a goal, the team's productivity is enhanced. Team members should be present when goals are made, and encouraged to ask questions about goals.

Accomplishment

By providing proper tools, work environments, scheduling, task allotment, and other methods geared to goal achievement, a supervisor can make sure that a group accomplishes what they set out to do. Good relationships with other groups can also support accomplishment; therefore, it is essential for groups to have effective communication with one another.

When a team leader demonstrates a commitment to these four values, team members follow suit. A team then accomplishes greater goals than individuals could alone.

Written by Life Advantages - Author Dr. Delvina Miremadi ©2023



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Time Management for Balance

So much of your life may revolve around staying connected and plugged into the online world. It can be difficult to find a happy medium and ensure you aren't spending too much time logged on.

Here are some strategies to help manage your online and offline time effectively and find balance:

Track Your Screen Time

Most smartphones have a feature you can turn on to track your daily screen time. You might be surprised just how much time you're spending on your phone each day.

Set New Habits

Consider what online habits you could cut out in order to achieve more balance in your life. Try replacing these habits with new ones, such as taking your time to enjoy a cup of tea before you get your day started or reading a book before bed. Challenge yourself to spend less time online and go outside more or explore new hobbies.

Schedule Time Offline

Purposefully schedule some offline time. Go for a walk outside or schedule a coffee date with a friend. When you are out and about in the world doing something offline, try to be wholly present. Avoid looking at your phone, which can be a distraction that takes away from our enjoyment of the moment.

Take Breaks

If you take online classes, work from home, or spend most of your day at a keyboard, it's important to take breaks. You could incorporate counter stretches to help offset a forward posture, such as gentle backbends, and stretch your wrists and hands too. Also, make sure to look away from your screen every so often to give your eyes a break.

Limit Online Time at Night

Try to minimize the time you spend online at night, especially two to three hours before bed, or wear blue-light blocking glasses. Exposure to blue light is known to suppress melatonin and affect our circadian rhythm, which can affect our sleep quality.

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Webinar Now Available:

Engaging Empathy in the Workplace

Often a sad employee is perceived to be a bad employee, yet everyone will suffer a setback at some point in their career due to a change in personal or family health, the death of a loved one, a financial loss, or a change in family caregiving. In order to show empathy and support, coworkers must try to understand the feelings of the person who is experiencing a setback. This can be accomplished through training, listening, connecting, and providing kindness to one another. This webinar will provide a greater understanding of best practices in providing empathy to coworkers and managers while maintaining a professional relationship.

Log-in any time this month to watch the webinar!

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The Wellness News

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Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

Promoting healthy eyes and clear vision in children is crucial for their well-being and development. One of children's most common eye health issues is myopia or nearsightedness, which often manifests during their school-age years. This condition can significantly impact their academic activities, including reading and writing. However, parents and caregivers have the power to reduce the risk of myopia and other vision problems by taking proactive steps.

Regular eye exams are essential for maintaining children's eye health. These exams enable early detection and timely treatment of myopia and other vision problems. By identifying these issues early on, parents can ensure their children receive the necessary care and support to optimize their visual abilities.

Did you know that excessive screen time, whether from television, computers, or mobile devices, has been linked to an increased prevalence of myopia in children? Encouraging children to engage in outdoor activities, such as sports and nature exploration, not only helps to reduce screen time but also exposes them to natural light, which is beneficial for their eye health.

In addition to regular check-ups and managing screen time, there are other measures parents can take to enhance their children's eye health and safety. Protecting their eyes from injuries is paramount, especially during high-risk activities like sports and biking. Children should wear appropriate protective eyewear, such as goggles or helmets with face shields, to safeguard their eyes from potential harm.

Teaching children about eye safety is equally important. They should be aware of the dangers of looking directly at bright lights or the sun, which can lead to eye damage. Additionally, they should be advised against rubbing their eyes excessively, as it can increase the risk of infections.

By taking proactive steps to protect and nurture their children's eyes, parents and caregivers contribute to their immediate well-being and set them up for long-term success and development. By implementing these measures, parents and caregivers can ensure their children enjoy good eye health and vision for years.



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The Benefits of Shopping Your Local Farmers Market

The local farmer's market offers a refreshing alternative in a world dominated by large supermarkets and online shopping. It's more than just a place to purchase fresh produce—it's an experience that brings numerous benefits. From supporting local economies to fostering community connections and promoting healthier lifestyles, shopping at your local farmer's market has many advantages.

Supporting Local Farmers and Economy

When you shop at a local farmer's market, you directly support your community's hardworking farmers and producers. Unlike supermarkets that often prioritize mass-produced goods, farmer's markets allow small-scale farmers to showcase their unique products. You contribute to their livelihoods and the local economy by purchasing from them. This support helps maintain agricultural diversity, preserve farmland, and ensure that money stays within the community, fostering economic resilience.

Access to Fresh, Seasonal Produce

Farmer's markets offer a bounty of fresh, seasonal produce that is often harvested just hours before it reaches your hands. The fruits, vegetables, and other goods are typically grown using sustainable farming practices, resulting in higher nutritional value and superior flavor than mass-produced alternatives. Moreover, buying seasonal produce reduces the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation, supporting a more sustainable food system.

Community Connections and Personal Relationships

Shopping at your local farmer's market allows you to connect with your community. You can meet the farmers, artisans, and other vendors face-to-face, fostering personal relationships and a sense of belonging. Conversations about farming techniques, recipes, and local traditions are common occurrences. The market becomes a gathering place where people share their passion for food and forge meaningful connections, strengthening the community's social fabric.

Promoting Healthier Lifestyles

A trip to the farmer's market can inspire healthier eating habits. The abundance of fresh, whole foods encourages a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Additionally, farmer's markets often offer a variety of organic and locally sourced products free from synthetic pesticides and additives. This emphasis on wholesome, nutritious options supports overall health and well-being.

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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How to Safely Workout in the Summer

Summer brings sunshine and warm weather but also presents unique challenges for maintaining an effective workout routine. The soaring temperatures and high humidity levels can increase the risk of heat-related illnesses and dehydration. However, with proper precautions, you can continue exercising safely and achieve your fitness goals during the summer. Here are some essential tips to ensure a safe and enjoyable workout experience in the heat.

Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate. Staying hydrated is crucial when exercising in the summer. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after your workouts. Aim to consume at least 8-10 glasses of water each day. If your workout lasts longer than an hour, consider a sports drink that replenishes electrolytes lost through sweat.

Time Your Workouts Wisely. Plan your workouts during the cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening, to avoid peak heat hours. Exercising when the sun is less intense helps prevent heat exhaustion and sunburn. If you must exercise during the day, seek shade or opt for indoor workouts in air-conditioned spaces.

Dress Appropriately. Wear lightweight, breathable, and moisture-wicking clothing that evaporates sweat, keeping you cool. Opt for light-colored outfits that reflect sunlight rather than absorb it. Remember a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen with a high SPF to protect your skin from harmful UV rays.

Warm-Up and Cool Down. Start each workout with a proper warm-up to prepare your body for exercise. Gradually increase your intensity rather than diving into high-intensity exercises immediately. Similarly, conclude your workout with a cool-down session to lower your heart rate progressively and prevent dizziness or fainting.

Modify Your Workout. Adjust your workout routine to accommodate the summer heat. Consider shorter, more frequent workouts instead of prolonged sessions. Engage in less strenuous activities on extremely hot days, such as swimming, water aerobics, or indoor exercises like yoga or Pilates.

Listen to Your Body. Pay attention to your body's signals. If you experience dizziness, nausea, headache, or excessive fatigue, immediately stop exercising and find a cool, shaded area to rest. Pushing yourself too hard in the heat can lead to heatstroke or heat exhaustion.

Don't let the summer heat deter you from achieving your fitness goals. By following these safety tips, you can continue working out effectively while minimizing the risk of heat-related illnesses. Stay hydrated, choose appropriate workout times and clothing, modify your routine, and always listen to your body. Embrace the summer season, stay fit, and enjoy your workouts while beating the heat!



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Ricotta-Tomato Toast

Ingredients

- ¾ cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup chopped fresh chives, plus more for garnish
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus 1 ½ teaspoons, divided.
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 (¾ -inch-thick) slices of crusty whole-grain bread, toasted
- 2 small multicolored heirloom tomatoes, sliced
¼ -inch thick

Directions

1. Combine ricotta, basil, chives, 2 tablespoons oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a food processor.
2. Process until smooth, about 1 minute.
3. Spread the mixture evenly over toast slices.
4. Top with tomatoes; drizzle with the remaining 1 ½ teaspoons oil.
5. Garnish with additional basil and chives before serving, if desired.

Nutrition

Egg-Free, Sesame Free, Vegetarian

4 Servings

Per Serving:

Calories: **259** | Protein: **10g** | Carbohydrates: **19g** | Dietary Fiber: **4g** | Fat: **16g** | Saturated Fat: **5g** | Sodium: **444mg** | Calcium **151mg** | Potassium: **414mg** | Magnesium: **45mg**

Source: [Ricotta-Tomato Toast \(eatingwell.com\)](https://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/ricotta-tomato-toast-recipe/)

Should You Get a Sleep Study?

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)—characterized by one's breathing starting and stopping while asleep, often with loud snoring—is one of the most common undiagnosed medical conditions. Thirty million people in the USA have OSA, and 80% of them don't know it! Only 3% of adults in Canada say they have OSA, but the government estimates 20% have the condition. High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, dementia, type 2 diabetes, and depression may all have links to OSA. If you frequently wake up tired and/or with a dry mouth, experience morning headaches, have excessive daytime sleepiness, suffer from night sweats, or find it difficult to maintain attention while awake, it is essential to discuss these symptoms with a doctor for proper evaluation and potential medical advice. That might start with a sleep study. Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Humor in the Workplace

Can humor be taught? The answer is yes, but it's unlikely you will have humor classes at work. Short of this, cultivating and encouraging a more lighthearted and positive work environment is the goal, as it can increase morale, improve teamwork, and reduce stress, anxiety, and fear. When this happens, the natural playfulness of employees will demonstrate itself. When one or two employees respond with genuineness and spontaneity, other employees naturally follow suit. So, the idea is not to create humor but to create a workplace where humor *will find you*. Learn more: www.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/press_releases/laughter_really_is

Dose of Exercise Fends Off Depression

Significant research for decades has focused on how exercise can help prevent and relieve depression. The latest research demonstrates that exercise is dose-related—the more exercise, the greater the preventive effect. For example, 20 minutes daily of brisk walking for five days weekly was associated with a 16% lower rate of depressive symptoms and 43% lower odds of major depression. Talk to your doctor about exercise, and read the study below to see more dose or impact ratios and what exercise will do for you. Learn more: <https://studyfinds.org/few-minutes-exercise-depression/>

Provision of Alcohol in Home Increases Harms

Parents serving alcohol to minors at home has always been controversial. Presumably, the idea is to demystify alcohol and socialization practices to reduce alcohol-related problems later. It doesn't work, says a recent longitudinal study that started in 2010, with findings that were just released. On the contrary, the study demonstrates a causal link: Parents giving alcohol to minors at home increases the likelihood of alcohol-related problems like binge drinking and other negative consequences. Over 20 similar studies have shown similar findings. So, what is the most consistent parenting technique to prevent alcohol-related problems? Answer: Strong parental disapproval of underage drinking. Sources: pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24988258 and www.findlaw.com/legalblogs/law-and-life/legal-for-kids-to-drink-alcohol-with-parents/

Helping a Coworker Make a Change

Many coworker relationship issues are best resolved with a peer approach. Unfortunately, many colleagues avoid assertiveness, become resentful, or even think about resigning over annoyances that might be easily corrected with the right approach. Peer influence is powerful because peers naturally have more empathy for their positions. When a peer encourages specific actions, they may be more readily accepted. Peers typically build trust with each other, so suggestions on how to correct a problem are better received. Issues such as consistent lateness, lack of communication, negative attitude, gossiping, or refusing accountability are well suited for peer-to-peer correction. Sound familiar? Here's how to proceed: 1) Get clear on the problem with dates, times, and instances where an undesirable behavior happened. 2) Have a meeting where you're sure you'll not be interrupted. 3) Use a positive, concerned, constructive mindset. 4) Use "I" statements, such as "John, I notice...when you arrive late, it puts extra pressure on the rest of us to cover your tasks." Avoid "You always..." or similar statements. 5) Build urgency with a focus on the impact of the behavior on others. (Don't forget about the company's EAP if something personal emerges in your conversation.) 6) Be supportive. (e.g., "Can I do anything to help you make this change?") 7) Collaborate and brainstorm together to discover a solution. 8) Follow up and recognize positive changes. Note that supervisors have a crucial role in addressing issues among employees; however, a more harmonious and positive workplace emerges when there is a balance between peer support and leadership.

Avoid Back-to-School Mistakes

Avoid these four big mistakes parents make before their children go back to school. You will reduce stress and feel less overwhelmed. 1) Last-minute preparations. Go early to grab school supplies and uniforms and complete paperwork. 2) Dismissing your child's anxieties about going back to school. Hint: Take a trip to the school, peek through the window, walk around a bit, talk about expectations and fears, and offer reassurance. 3) Not practicing the school routine before school begins. Children staying up too late now will make it tougher to settle into a new routine the week school begins. 4) Skipping school orientations and open houses. These events provide valuable information you will be chasing down for weeks and months if you don't attend.

Stop the Midnight Eating

Sure, those cheese and crackers at midnight might sound tempting if you're up late and the munchies hit, but could you be putting yourself at risk for contracting type 2 diabetes as a night owl? Researchers found that shift workers are more at risk for type 2 diabetes, and family history and socioeconomic status don't fully account for it. Instead, the culprit, according to research, appears to be "mistimed food intake" that impairs glucose tolerance. A simple experiment with shift workers who changed their food intake to daytime instead of nighttime solved the glucose tolerance problem. You may not be a shift worker, but poor sleep and eating habits can place you at comparable risk. Circadian rhythms are biological mechanisms that regulate sleep-wake cycles and other metabolic functions. Talk to your doctor about your diet, including late-night eating, especially as you age, because risk increases in senior years. Learn more:

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abg9910>

Get Emotional Release from Your EAP

Don't hesitate to use your company's EAP as an outlet to vent your frustrations. Venting your emotions to a professional can be helpful and allow the release of pent-up feelings that may have been building up over time. Expressing your emotions can be cathartic and provide a sense of relief. The EAP is confidential and offers a safe, nonjudgmental space for you to express yourself. Being heard and understood validates your feelings and experiences, and if you request, the EAP will help with the next step: identifying the problem and the solution. Avoid a crisis call to the EAP. Discuss what's on your mind now.

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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