



Feel the Love: 5 steps to a more loving workplace

All the evidence shows that in workplaces where people show that they genuinely care about each other, where they feel heard, understood, valued, trusted and loved, they are more loyal and committed to their colleagues and employers, care more about their work, and deliver better results. Here are 5 simple things we can do to create a more loving workplace with a culture of warmth, love and compassion so that everyone is happier, healthier, and more successful:



Don't be afraid of the "L" word!

Love isn't just for your partner/sweetheart/lover/spouse - love can be familial, spiritual, or friendly and we can also love our colleagues, bosses and the people we manage. Love is about seeing, understanding and genuinely caring about others. Stop being afraid of using the L word and make it OK to talk about love at work.

When someone pushes you to reach your potential, it's an act of love. When someone takes the time to listen to you, or helps you form insights about your life or your work, it's an act of love. See and appreciate the love all around you and you'll come to potential new relationships at work with a sense of wholeness which will be infectious and benefit everyone.



Make Emotions Count

Recent advances in neuroscience have proved that "social pain" (when people feel emotionally hurt by the actions of others) is just as painful and damaging as physical pain.

In times of uncertainty, change, and stress, people often feel unheard and vulnerable. Their social pain levels increase but they don't get the sympathy, recognition or support that they might receive for physical pain.

Taking time off for a broken leg or a migraine is generally accepted, whereas taking time off with the unhappiness experienced due to close colleagues being made redundant or your job role changing without you having any say in it, tends to be frowned on.

Now that we know how much social pain can impact on people, we need to rethink the way we work to make sure we don't cause unnecessary social pain to our colleagues or employees, and we need to give people the recognition and support due when they do experience social pain.



Increase Oxytocin levels

Oxytocin is the hormone released when mothers breastfeed their babies (known as the “cuddle hormone”). Its powerful effects include reducing blood pressure and cortisol (stress) levels, increasing pain thresholds, and promoting growth and healing.

When people's bodies release oxytocin they feel more safe and secure, they interact more with others, and they are more trusting. In workplaces this means that people are more open and more willing to learn new things, take risks, and try new challenges. Here are some proven ways to raise oxytocin levels at work:

- **Photos of loved ones**— encourage people to personalise their workspace with photos of friends and family in clear view.
- **Hugging** – showing physical affection has a powerful effect so give someone a hug, and encourage people to hug each other
- **Warm handshakes** – if hugging is *really* not appropriate and it has to be a handshake, create a warm physical contact by holding the other person's hand with both your hands, make eye contact and give a warm smile.
- **Singing** – when people sing together they instantly release oxytocin. Set up a lunchtime choir or hold regular singing workshops
- **Dance** – dancing with a partner also releases oxytocin. Find your nearest Ceroc, Salsa, or ballroom dancing class and organise a regular visit with colleagues.
- **Powerful emotions** - When people experience powerful emotions together their oxytocin levels rise. Watch a tearjerker movie together, organise a teambuilding event or just have a fun day/evening out together.
- **Walking** – walking while talking with others is a great way to be healthy, do business, increase creativity, and it also raises oxytocin levels. Combine your next meeting with a walk.



Be contagious!

Your own behaviour affects everyone else's, creating a ripple effect. Be aware of your own impact on the people around you and make sure you give out positive, loving vibes. The phenomenon of "emotional contagion" means that others will pick up on this positive energy and start giving it out too and before you know it, you'll have a whole new culture!

Put a loving energy into your workplace - attract and nurture compassion and caring by radiating love. Find positive things to say about other people. Tell them all the good things you see in them. Pay them compliments, be impressed and entertained by them, show interest in them. Give the type of love you want to receive. Give praise. Notice the little things. Offer help without it being asked of you. Giving more freely creates an environment of consideration and generosity and love.

Be aware of what messages, emotions and sensations you are giving out to others via your body language, your facial expressions, and tone of voice as well as what you actually say. Smile a lot (the amount of times you smile has a direct correlation to how friendly you're perceived to be and influences the level of friendliness others then exhibit).

Be yourself and don't take yourself too seriously: Being able to laugh at yourself and being willing to show your vulnerabilities makes you more likable and approachable, and people trust you more for showing who you really are – warts and all! It also gives other permission to also be themselves and to feel safe showing their own vulnerabilities.



Open your ears and your mind

Initiate meaningful conversations: The first step to creating more love is creating close relationships. Relationships start with meaningful, engaged conversations which are honest, authentic, and reciprocal. Initiate and encourage these conversations by asking about the other person, fully listening to what they have to say, and then finding common ground.

Make the conscious choice to be understanding and compassionate and take time to really listen. When we listen to other people we're often not fully listening - we're formulating our response in our heads and waiting for our turn to talk, or we're making assumptions about the situation, or we're judging what someone is saying according to our own experiences or values. Consciously close down these internal thoughts, take time to really hear what the other person is telling you, and accept their feelings, experiences and perceptions as their own truth.

We all want to be seen, heard and understood without judgment or condescension. Commit to understanding someone through their own experience of the world and not through your own and in doing so create the potential for more meaningful, mutually supportive relationships.

Find out more about how we can help you find, share and grow the love in your workplace:

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