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THE
POWER
OF
EMOTIONS
AT
WORK

Accessing the Vital Intelligence
in Your Workplace

Organizing Your Communication Workflow Meetings

Do You Have Reliable Communication Workflows for Everyday Situations?

Many workplaces have manuals with step-by-step instructions for every task and workflow process, but very few include information on how to deal with everyday communication issues such as asking a busy person for attention, knowing whether an email or a phone call is appropriate, or admitting that you made a mistake, among many other workday dilemmas.

Most workplaces have written and agreed-upon processes for how work tasks should be done, but these processes usually overlook commonplace social and emotional difficulties and expect workers to figure them out on their own.

Most workplaces don't have clear-cut or reliable processes for these everyday situations because they are *unintentional communities*.

UNINTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

A group of people who are thrown together haphazardly without dependable communication processes, emotional skills, empathy skills, or clear models for relationships or conflict. Sadly, most workplaces are unintentional communities.

These unintentional workplaces usually don't create or openly share clear intentions and community norms; therefore, many important (even crucial) aspects of social and emotional learning will occur nonverbally – or through undertones and undercurrents. Established workers may use sighs, eye rolls, dirty looks, shaming, blaming, or shunning to teach newcomers essential yet unwritten social rules – as if these new people *should have known!*

When social and emotional processes are unwritten, unspoken, unintentional, and taught only in unconscious ways, the social environment will be unstable and emotionally draining. The HR department may need to get involved when things inevitably blow up, but you'll also see **Keystones** step into the fray because a crucial onboarding process (teaching and maintaining the social and emotional rules of the workplace) lives in a mostly unspoken and unaware area of workplace communication.

KEYSTONES

Workers who perform (usually unpaid) emotion work or empathy work to fill in the social and emotional gaps in an emotionally unregulated workplace.

These Keystones may have a big job on their hands, because there's no way to tell when the next unregulated conflict over emails, interruptions, refilling the copy machine, or someone's *tone* is going to make things boil over. **Anger** may arise to help people set boundaries; **envy** and **jealousy** may arise because inequality, disloyalty, and unfairness will go unacknowledged; **anxiety** may arise because no one knows what the rules are or when the next mini-conflict will erupt; **depression** and **apathy** may arise to help people create some sense of separation from the trouble; and **panic** may arise because people may dread the loss of their place in the social structure, their jobs, or their livelihoods. It's a draining and emotionally unregulated mess. It's no way to run a business and it's no way to live.

Luckily, it's a simple mess to clean up when you bring intentionality into your workplace community. Starting with the workflow needs assessment on page 3, your workplace community can identify everyday processes that reliably fall apart because there are no agreed-upon procedures for them.

For instance, one workplace sales team found that every question on the workflow needs list was left out of their procedures and onboarding processes; however, there were also near-daily conflicts about how people loaded the dishwasher in the staff kitchen, who should replace the heavy water bottle in the water dispenser, and whose responsibility it was to replenish the printer trays with the correct size and color of copy paper. These may seem like small and silly problems, but this very busy sales team was being drained and pulled away from their work by communication breakdowns over simple, everyday tasks. You and your colleagues may be experiencing the same thing.

The following needs assessment list highlights social and emotional workflows that regularly fail because people don't have processes or even language for them. Of course, each workplace has its own unique situations, but this assessment can help you begin to identify where everyday communication in your own workplace reliably breaks down. Building these communication workflows collectively (every person at your workplace will be involved) can smooth out each workday, and it can also relieve the heavy, unpaid labor of your Keystone workers as you all learn how to build an emotionally well-regulated and *intentional* community together.

The Communication Workflow Needs Assessment

Check off any situation for which your entire workplace community **needs** a known, shared, and reliable communication workflow process. You can also add any other workflow processes that break down regularly in your organization.

- Requesting attention from a busy person?
- Asking for help?
- Asking a sensitive question without offending people?
- Asking someone to do a job or a task for you?
- Admitting that you made a mistake?
- Letting someone else know that they made a mistake?
- Knowing whether an email, a face-to-face conversation, or a meeting is appropriate?
- Knowing whether a text or a phone call is appropriate?
- Communicating about problems?
- Communicating problems upward without danger?
- Dealing with conflict and challenges?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Guidelines for Communication Workflow Meetings

Unspoken problems in emotionally unregulated workplaces can surface a lot of conflict, and that conflict needs to be approached in a way that doesn't cause more conflict! These guidelines can help people explore these problems and listen to the gifts and skills that their emotions are trying to contribute:

- Everyone in the workplace needs to be involved; let them know what you're working on and call a community-wide meeting to identify communication breakdowns and build reliable new communication workflows.
- Plan for a 1- to 2-hour meeting, and let people know that you'll continue the discussion in another meeting (or meetings) because you won't get to everything in the first one.
- **One week before the meeting:** Give people the workflow needs assessment from page 3, and have them add any other processes that regularly break down in your organization.
- **One day before the meeting:** Gather and organize these responses and send them out to everyone.
- **On the day of the meeting:** Print out the emotion tables (on pages 5-8) and the Emotional Vocabulary List (on pages 9-11) for every participant.
- Tape large pieces of paper on the wall or use a flip chart or whiteboard so that someone can write down the concerns and wisdom that the community shares.
- Choose a trusted person from the middle or lower areas of the hierarchy to be the scribe. In an emotionally unregulated workplace, there will be (valid) distrust of managers and executives, and workers may silence themselves if their superiors have control of the magic markers.
- As you go through each broken communication process, ask people to call out the emotions they feel in response to it (from their Emotional Vocabulary List) and write these emotions down on the paper or whiteboard for everyone to see.
- Focus the emotions on the broken *processes*, and not on each other. Yes, some people's behaviors will be more noticeable in communication breakdowns, but no one can be on their best behavior when there are no rules, no reliable processes, and no support.
- Look at the gifts and skills of the emotions the group has listed, and note *why* the emotions are present; which forms of intelligence are being called to the scene?
- Create a new process with everyone's input and continue to pay attention to the emotions that arise.
- Once the communication process feels right, post it where everyone has access to it.
- Know that you may need to revisit these new processes if they don't work as you thought they would. Realizing that something doesn't work is not a failure; it's a crucial part of the empathic design process and of the consciousness and competence model of learning (see page 73 in *The Power of Emotions at Work* for a reminder).

The Power of Emotions Tables

Emotion	Questions	Gifts and Skills
<p>ANGER arises when people’s self-image, behaviors, values, or interpersonal boundaries are challenged — or when they see them challenged in someone else.</p>	<p><i>What do I value?</i></p> <p><i>What must be protected and restored?</i></p>	<p>Honor, certainty, healthy self-esteem, proper boundaries, healthy detachment, and protection of ourselves and others.</p>
<p>APATHY is a protective mask for anger, and it arises in situations where people are not able or willing to work with their anger openly.</p>	<p><i>What is being avoided?</i></p> <p><i>What must be made conscious?</i></p>	<p>Detachment, boundary-setting, separation, taking a time-out, and protection of the self in an unhealthy or inappropriate environment.</p>
<p>GUILT AND SHAME arise to make sure that people don’t hurt, embarrass, or dehumanize themselves or others.</p>	<p><i>Who has been hurt?</i></p> <p><i>What must be made right?</i></p>	<p>Integrity, self-respect, making amends, behavioral rules and guidelines, behavioral change, and work quality.</p>
<p>HATRED arises in the presence of things people cannot accept in themselves (and despise in others).</p>	<p><i>What has fallen into my shadow?</i></p> <p><i>What must be reintegrated?</i></p>	<p>Hatred can be an emergency signal in the workplace that, if handled skillfully, can lead to deep interpersonal awareness, sudden evolution, and the ability to address prejudice and bias openly.*</p>

*HR and workplace safety note: If people are expressing hatred in the workplace and they have no emotional skills, they will likely devolve into abuse or bullying, both of which create an unacceptably hostile workplace environment. Abuse and bullying in the workplace are illegal and need to be addressed and resolved immediately. Emotional skills are always essential, but when powerful emotions like hatred arise, these skills are absolutely crucial. If people can’t manage their emotions and they’re hurting others at work, HR *must* step in.

Emotion	Questions/Actions	Gifts and Skills
<p>FEAR arises to help people focus on the present moment, access their instincts and intuition, and tune into changes in their immediate environment.</p>	<p><i>What action should be taken?</i></p>	<p>Intuition, instincts, focus, clarity, awareness, attentiveness, and readiness.</p>
<p>ANXIETY is focused on the future — it arises to help people look ahead and identify the tasks they need to complete and the deadlines they need to meet.</p>	<p><i>What brought this feeling forward?</i> <i>What truly needs to get done?</i></p>	<p>Foresight, focus, task-completion, procrastination alert, planning, organization, and awareness of future problems and needs.</p>
<p>CONFUSION is a protective mask for fear and anxiety, and it arises when people have too much to process all at once. Confusion can give people a much-needed time-out.</p>	<p><i>What is my intention?</i> <i>What action should be taken?</i></p>	<p>Soft awareness, spaciness, flexibility, taking a time-out, and protection against overload.</p>
<p>JEALOUSY arises when people's connection to love, loyalty, or security in their relationships is challenged.</p>	<p><i>What has been betrayed?</i> <i>What must be healed and restored?</i></p>	<p>Commitment, security, love, connection, belonging, loyalty, and the ability to create and maintain healthy relationships.</p>
<p>ENVY arises when people's connection to material security, resources, or recognition is challenged.</p>	<p><i>What has been betrayed?</i> <i>What must be made right?</i></p>	<p>Fairness, security, access to resources, proper recognition, self-preservation, and the promotion of equality and justice.</p>
<p>PANIC arises when people face threats to their survival. Panic gives them three life-saving choices: fight, flee, or freeze.</p>	<p><i>Just listen to your body — don't think, just react.</i> <i>Your body is a survival expert, and it will keep you safe.</i></p>	<p>Sudden energy, intense attention, the ability to protect the self and others, absolute stillness, and survival in the face of shock and danger.*</p>

*HR and workplace safety note: Many of us try to talk people out of their feelings of panic and anxiety, but these emotions should not be ignored! If a worker is feeling panic about the workplace or its process, check to see if there are any hazards; there likely are. Many workplace disasters occur after workers' panicky concerns, fears, and anxieties are belittled or ignored.

Emotion	Questions	Gifts and Skills
<p>SADNESS arises to help people let go of things that aren't working. If they can let go, they'll be able to relax, recover, and revitalize themselves.</p>	<p><i>What must be released?</i></p> <p><i>What must be rejuvenated?</i></p>	<p>Relaxation, rejuvenation, the ability to identify waste, outdated ideas, and unworkable processes, and the ability to let go.</p>
<p>GRIEF arises when people have lost something — a person, an idea, a belief, a possession, or a situation — that has died or will never come back.</p>	<p><i>What must be mourned?</i></p> <p><i>What must be released completely?</i></p>	<p>Sorrow, the ability to identify and mourn losses, remembrance, acceptance of loss, deep release, and honoring of the lost idea, situation, person, or possession.</p>
<p>SITUATIONAL DEPRESSION arises when things are not working well, and people lose the energy to keep going in the ways they previously did. There's always an important reason for situational depression to arise.</p>	<p><i>Where has my energy gone?</i></p> <p><i>Why was it sent away?</i></p>	<p>Ingenious stagnation, stillness, awareness of dysfunction and difficulties, warning of future trouble, intelligent restriction of energy, and a reality check.</p>
<p>THE SUICIDAL URGE arises when something in people's lives needs to end — but it's not their actual, physical life! It's important to reach out for help and identify the situation or thing that needs to end so that people can get their lives back.</p>	<p><i>What idea or behavior must end now?</i></p> <p><i>What can I no longer tolerate?</i></p>	<p>The ability to identify abuse, futility, and completely unworkable situations; certainty, finality, freedom, transformation, and rebirth.*</p>

*In my Dynamic Emotional Integration work, I help people understand that suicidal urges have a place in the emotional realm, but that physical death is not required. Instead, we focus the intense laser-focus of the suicidal urge on the person's painful or unlivable *situation* and bring the powerful genius of this emotion to bear; it arises when things are very bad indeed, but it does not require the physical death of the person!

HR and workplace safety note: If a worker expresses suicidal ideation, get help from an employee assistance counselor or your local crisis center or lifeline immediately. When the suicidal urge is present, emotional skills and social support can literally save people's lives.

Emotion	Statements	Gifts and Skills
<p>HAPPINESS arises to help people look around themselves and toward the future with hope, delight, and enjoyment.</p>	<p><i>Thank you for this lively celebration!</i></p>	<p>Amusement, hope, delight, playfulness, and belief in a bright future.</p>
<p>CONTENTMENT arises after people have accomplished something, and it helps them look at themselves with pride and satisfaction.</p>	<p><i>Thank you for renewing my faith in myself!</i></p>	<p>Satisfaction, self-esteem, confidence, healthy pride, and a healthy work ethic.</p>
<p>JOY arises to help people feel a blissful sense of open-hearted connection to others, to ideas, or to experiences.</p>	<p><i>Thank you for this wonderful moment!</i></p>	<p>Expansion, inspiration, brilliance, bliss, and a new vision for the future.</p>

Your Emotional Vocabulary List

ANGER, APATHY, and HATRED

Soft Anger and Apathy

Annoyed ~ Apathetic ~ Bored ~ Certain ~ Cold ~ Crabby ~ Cranky ~ Critical ~ Cross ~ Detached ~
Displeased ~ Frustrated ~ Impatient ~ Indifferent ~ Irritated ~ Peeved ~ Rankled

Medium Anger

Affronted ~ Aggravated ~ Angry ~ Antagonized ~ Arrogant ~ Bristling ~ Exasperated ~ Incensed ~ Indignant ~
Inflamed ~ Mad ~ Offended ~ Resentful ~ Riled Up ~ Sarcastic

Intense Anger and Hatred

Aggressive ~ Appalled ~ Belligerent ~ Bitter ~ Contemptuous ~ Disgusted ~ Furious ~ Hateful ~ Hostile ~
Irate ~ Livid ~ Menacing ~ Outraged ~ Ranting ~ Raving ~ Seething ~ Spiteful ~ Vengeful ~ Vicious ~
Vindictive ~ Violent

SHAME and GUILT

Soft Shame and Guilt

Abashed ~ Awkward ~ Discomfited ~ Flushed ~ Flustered ~ Hesitant ~ Humble ~ Reticent ~ Self-conscious ~
Speechless ~ Withdrawn

Medium Shame and Guilt

Ashamed ~ Chagrined ~ Contrite ~ Culpable ~ Embarrassed ~ Guilty ~ Humbled ~ Intimidated ~ Penitent ~
Regretful ~ Remorseful ~ Reproachful ~ Rueful ~ Sheepish

Intense Shame and Guilt

Belittled ~ Degraded ~ Demeaned ~ Disgraced ~ Guilt-ridden ~ Guilt-stricken ~ Humiliated ~ Mortified ~
Ostracized ~ Self-condemning ~ Self-flagellating ~ Shamefaced ~ Stigmatized

FEAR, ANXIETY, and PANIC

Soft Fear and Anxiety

Alert ~ Apprehensive ~ Cautious ~ Concerned ~ Confused ~ Curious ~ Disconcerted ~ Disoriented ~
Disquieted ~ Doubtful ~ Edgy ~ Fidgety ~ Hesitant ~ Indecisive ~ Insecure ~ Instinctive ~ Intuitive ~ Leery ~
Pensive ~ Shy ~ Timid ~ Uneasy ~ Watchful

Medium Fear and Anxiety

Afraid ~ Alarmed ~ Anxious ~ Aversive ~ Distrustful ~ Fearful ~ Jumpy ~ Nervous ~ Perturbed ~ Rattled ~
Shaky ~ Startled ~ Suspicious ~ Unnerved ~ Unsettled ~ Wary ~ Worried

Intense Fear and Panic

Filled with Dread ~ Horrified ~ Panicked ~ Paralyzed ~ Petrified ~ Phobic ~ Shocked ~ Terrorized

JEALOUSY and ENVY

Soft Jealousy and Envy

Disbelieving ~ Distrustful ~ Insecure ~ Protective ~ Suspicious ~ Vulnerable

Medium Jealousy and Envy

Covetous ~ Demanding ~ Desirous ~ Envious ~ Jealous ~ Threatened

Intense Jealousy and Envy

Avaricious ~ Gluttonous ~ Grasping ~ Greedy ~ Green with Envy ~ Persistently Jealous ~ Possessive ~ Resentful

HAPPINESS, CONTENTMENT, and JOY

Soft Happiness

Amused ~ Calm ~ Encouraged ~ Friendly ~ Hopeful ~ Inspired ~ Jovial ~ Open ~ Peaceful ~ Smiling ~ Upbeat

Medium Happiness and Contentment

Cheerful ~ Contented ~ Delighted ~ Excited ~ Fulfilled ~ Glad ~ Gleeeful ~ Gratified ~ Happy ~ Healthy Self-Esteem ~ Joyful ~ Lively ~ Merry ~ Optimistic ~ Playful ~ Pleased ~ Proud ~ Rejuvenated ~ Satisfied

Intense Happiness, Contentment, and Joy

Awe-filled ~ Blissful ~ Ecstatic ~ Egocentric ~ Elated ~ Enthralled ~ Euphoric ~ Exhilarated ~ Giddy ~ Jubilant ~ Manic ~ Overconfident ~ Overjoyed ~ Radiant ~ Rapturous ~ Self-Aggrandized ~ Thrilled

SADNESS, GRIEF, and DEPRESSION

Soft Sadness

Contemplative ~ Disappointed ~ Disconnected ~ Distracted ~ Grounded ~ Listless ~ Low ~ Steady ~ Regretful ~ Wistful

Medium Sadness, Grief, and Depression

Dejected ~ Discouraged ~ Dispirited ~ Down ~ Downtrodden ~ Drained ~ Forlorn ~ Gloomy ~ Grieving ~ Heavy-hearted ~ Melancholy ~ Mournful ~ Sad ~ Sorrowful ~ Weepy ~ World-Weary

Intense Sadness, Grief, and Depression

Anguished ~ Bereaved ~ Bleak ~ Depressed ~ Despairing ~ Despondent ~ Grief-Stricken ~ Heartbroken ~ Hopeless ~ Inconsoable ~ Morose

DEPRESSION and SUICIDAL URGES

Soft Depression and Suicidal Urges

Apathetic ~ Constantly Irritated, Angry, or Enraged (*see the **Anger** list above*) ~ Depressed ~ Discouraged ~ Disinterested ~ Dispirited ~ Feeling Worthless ~ Flat ~ Helpless ~ Humorless ~ Impulsive ~ Indifferent ~ Isolated ~ Lethargic ~ Listless ~ Melancholy ~ Pessimistic ~ Purposeless ~ Withdrawn ~ World-Weary

Medium Depression and Suicidal Urges

Bereft ~ Crushed ~ Desolate ~ Despairing ~ Desperate ~ Drained ~ Empty ~ Fatalistic ~ Hopeless ~ Joyless ~ Miserable ~ Morbid ~ Overwhelmed ~ Passionless ~ Pleasureless ~ Sullen

Intense Suicidal Urges

Agonized ~ Anguished ~ Bleak ~ Death-Seeking ~ Devastated ~ Doomed ~ Gutted ~ Nihilistic ~ Numbed ~ Reckless ~ Self-Destructive ~ Suicidal ~ Tormented ~ Tortured

A note about suicidal urges: If you're having any thoughts of suicide, don't feel as if you have to wait until you're in the throes of torment to reach out for help. If you can learn to catch your suicidal urges when they're in the soft stage, you can often stop yourself from falling into the pit of anguish. In the territory of the suicidal urge, your capacity for emotional awareness and sensitivity can literally save your life!

If you or anyone you know is feeling suicidal, free and confidential help is available. In the US, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). For people living in other countries, the International Association for Suicide Prevention has a list of crisis and suicide prevention centers throughout the world. In Canada, see the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention.