

LEADING with EMPATHY

INTRODUCTION

by Daniel Goleman

Fundamentally, leadership hinges upon our relationships. Whether you're the leader of a small team or the CEO of a global corporation, you conduct work through your relationships with others. To be effective in those relationships, leaders must understand the perspectives of the people with whom they work. What leaders need is Empathy, one of the twelve Emotional and Social Intelligence Leadership Competencies.

Empathy is the ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives. You take an active interest in their concerns. You pick up on cues as to what's being felt and thought. With Empathy, you sense unspoken emotions. You listen attentively to understand the other person's point of view and the perspectives that resonate with them. Team leaders and team members with strengths in Empathy have greater potential to boost the morale and performance of their teams, and more easily retain talent.

In this collection, we explore the different applications and facets of Empathy that we encounter as leaders. This includes showing empathy to ourselves as well as toward others, employing empathy when giving feedback, and the power of vulnerability in soliciting empathy from others.

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Leading with Empathy by Daniel Goleman / Belinda Chiu / Brett Long / Tessa Menatian

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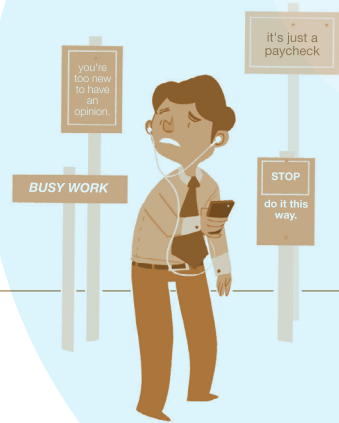
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THE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT WAY to ENGAGE EMPLOYEES

by Daniel Goleman, originally published on Korn Ferry



You hear it everywhere these days: Employee engagement makes a huge difference. Executives seek the productivity such engagement brings, while employees increasingly desire fulfilling (read, “engaging”) work. Employee engagement means more than mere job satisfaction. While satisfied employees might do just well enough, they’re unlikely to put in that extra, discretionary effort that comes when they’re really engaged in their work. Then there’s the bonus for emotional climate that comes with

true engagement; engaged employees are passionate about their work and committed to their organization’s purpose and business outcomes.

Gallup’s most recent [State of the American Workplace](#) report found that only 33% of the U.S. workforce is engaged. And only 21% of employees feel motivated to do outstanding work. These statistics are similar in other countries and, oddly, remain unchanged regardless of how the economy is doing.

High disengagement may be linked to evolving expectations for what work should and should not be. Millennials—[who now comprise the largest generation in the U.S. workforce](#)—more often than previous generations at the same point in their careers seek fulfilling and meaningful work. They want work-life balance, learning opportunities, and roles that align with their talents. Many organizations have yet to meet these expectations, though doing so would heighten engagement.

Moreover, organizations too often lack the performance management practices that have been proven to boost outcomes, such as giving employees the information and resources necessary to do their work well, offering recognition for good work, and valuing employee input.

One strategy for increasing engagement would have leaders use their emotional intelligence to manage and develop their employees. Leaders with competencies in [empathy](#), [teamwork](#), [coach and mentor](#), and [inspirational leadership](#) enhance the emotional climate in their organizations and more effectively engage employees.

All of these relationship management competencies require a foundation of empathy. Empathetic leaders can better read unspoken emotions, whether in a team or an individual, and listen attentively to understand where people are coming from. Employees who feel that their leaders care about them as people are more likely to in turn support their coworkers, use their creativity at work, and advocate for their employer.


Vanessa Druskat at the University of New Hampshire has done extensive research that shows the more collective emotional intelligence a team has, the better its business performance. On teams the best leaders cultivate an atmosphere of respect and cooperation and establish emotionally intelligent team norms, like collective self-awareness. Such teams have high levels of trust and openness.

At the individual level leaders can help team members develop further strengths in EI by applying the coach and mentor competency. [Effective coaches](#) establish a mutual foundation of trust and help their employees set clear goals. They offer positive, constructive feedback to guide performance growth and help the individual further develop the skills that will enhance career development.

Leaders who inspire articulate a shared mission and offer a sense of common purpose beyond day-to-day tasks. Inspirational leaders create a shared sense of pride and hope in the face of daunting challenges. This sense of a shared mission particularly helps in retaining younger employees.

My colleague, Annie McKee, describes the impact of inspirational leadership on engagement in her book, [How to Be Happy at Work](#):

Seeing our work as an expression of cherished values and as a way to make a contribution is the foundation of well-being, happiness, and our ongoing success. Passion for a cause fuels energy, intelligence, and creativity.



When we can align our values with our work—and see the benefits for ourselves and others—we naturally become more motivated, even resilient. Meaningful engagement yields positive emotions that drive innovation and adaptability, making us excited about tackling new challenges.

Above all, engagement comes down to human connection, which is where EI really matters. When we do good work with people we trust and when together we align our work with our sense of meaning and passion, performance soars.

DISCOVER the IMPORTANCE of SELF EMPATHY

by Tessa Menatian, originally published on Key Step Media



The Empathy competency enables us to interpret unspoken emotions and to understand a range of perspectives. With [empathic concern](#), our understanding of others extends to caring deeply for them. But it is also important that we practice Empathy towards ourselves.

When we experience empathic concern or feel compassion toward others, we become the first to benefit. Empathizing with another person

activates our brain's salience network, enabling us to experience our compassion first-hand. In this way, compassion is beneficial for others as well as for our own well-being. It creates inner happiness independent of receiving compassion ourselves.

We can also practice Self-Empathy by treating ourselves with kindness. Many of us have been conditioned to be highly critical of our mistakes. We may be far tougher on ourselves than on our friends and coworkers.

Strengths in [Emotional Self-Awareness](#) can enhance our understanding of how we treat ourselves. We recommend you take a moment to reflect on these statements and also ask someone who knows you well whether they think these statements are true for you.

- When I make a mistake, I tend to be very critical of myself.
- When I look back, I tend to remember the mistakes I have made rather than the successes I have had.

- I can be really heartless toward myself when I feel down or am struggling.
- When it comes to achieving my goals, I can be really tough on myself.
- I am driven to achieve my goals and set very high standards for myself and those around me.

If you found yourself agreeing with most of these statements, and the significant people in your life also agreed, you are not alone. Many of us were raised to believe that being brutally self-critical was necessary in order to achieve the highest standards. Indeed, you may still believe that if you aren't hard on yourself you will become lazy, aimless, or complacent.

In some instances, practicing Self-Empathy can make it easier to expand our circle of caring and to extend compassion toward others. But if you identify as extremely self-critical, it can be helpful to begin with compassion for others. Caring for others makes it easier to love and forgive ourselves.

When we take responsibility for forgiving and caring for ourselves, the compassion we extend to others also becomes more genuine. Self-Empathy enhances our confidence and inner strength and opens us up to connection and shared purpose. This enables us [to inspire others with our vision](#) and articulate common goals.

Self-Empathy can also make it easier to forgive people in our lives. When we replace self-criticism with self-understanding and accept that as humans we will inevitably make mistakes, it becomes easier to extend this understanding to others.

Practicing empathic concern doesn't mean that we allow others to walk all over us. Rather, we can act strongly when necessary and remain open to helping everyone, including ourselves. By combining Empathy for ourselves with Empathy for others, we can find our inner strength and make meaningful connections with people from all walks of life.

DOES READING FICTION MAKE YOU MORE EMPATHIC?

by Daniel Goleman, originally published on LinkedIn



The opportunity to empathize with a person's story and share their inner life—even a fictional life—enhances our understanding of their world.

My father, Irving Goleman, was a philologist and professor born at the end of the nineteenth century. While I was only fifteen when he passed away, I have learned about his courses and legacy as a riveting lecturer from his former students and many of his papers.

Irving's signature course, "World Literature: Autobiography of Civilization," extended beyond the standard cannon to include myths, folk ballads, and oral works from ancient to modern times. The first paper he assigned was an autobiography, with the prompt "Who Am I?" Based on this assignment, he would design a personalized reading list for each student. He chose books that spoke to the issues they faced in life.

For instance, a student named Emilie was assigned the topic "A Study of Conflicts in the Soul of Womanhood." She was to read Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Racine's *Phaedra*, Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, and O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*.

This personalized syllabus offers a form of bibliotherapy, a wide-reaching term for the ancient practice of prescribing books as therapy. Books—particularly literature, poetry, and plays—can help us better handle

transitions and conflicts in our lives. Seeing how we share humanity, even with fictional characters, helps us put ourselves in other's shoes.

Drawing Empathy from Stories

In his book, *The Moral Laboratory*, Frank Hakemulder found that people who read a fictional narrative of an Algerian woman better understood her perspective and the role of gender in Algeria than those who read a non-fiction account of that country's gender dynamics. In this way, the opportunity to [empathize with a person's story](#) and share their inner life—even a fictional life—enhances our understanding of their world.

Reading stories about people from different backgrounds and cultures has also been found to reduce [unconscious bias](#). A team of [researchers at Washington and Lee University](#) had participants read an excerpt from *Saffron Dreams*, a novel by Shalia Abdullah about a non-stereotypical Muslim woman living in New York City. The excerpt included her inner monologue and depictions of Muslim culture. Compared to control groups, who read either a short summary of the story or an unrelated essay about cars, those who read the version that included her views showed less bias

while looking at Arab and Caucasian faces.

Reading fiction and boosting empathy also converge on a neurological level. [Cognitive empathy](#)—the ability to understand another person's perspective and reflect on their situation—activates circuitry in the temporoparietal junction at the back of the brain. This region helps us reflect on another person's mental state, including the situations that shape that state. This brain circuitry is also active as we comprehend what we read. Brain studies find that while we read stories, [mirror neurons](#) in the parietal lobe fire, mimicking inside our own brain what's happening in the story. This makes it easier for us to interpret the characters' feelings and thoughts, suggesting that reading stories that share character's inner lives can help us cultivate more empathy.

Reading with Focus

Bonus: When we lose ourselves in a story we also strengthen our ability to focus. Reading books—as opposed to newspapers or online articles—promotes “deep reading” in which readers immerse themselves in a story and draw connections between the what they read and the

world around them. This may help explain why research finds [reading books increases lifespan among the elderly](#). Books had a significantly greater impact on lifespan than reading magazines or newspapers; even reading one chapter per day was found to provide an increase in lifespan of 23-months. The researchers noted: “books can promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, which are cognitive processes that can lead to greater survival.”

Our identities—including the events we experience and the people who have influenced us—exist in the stories we tell about our lives. And we understand others through their stories. Tales of origins, of war, and of love predate writing itself. When we read another person’s story—real or fictional—we expand our awareness of what it means to be human.

My father spent his life in the service of language and of others. He was a lifelong advocate for equality and lived by a motto from the Latin: “I am a human, and therefore nothing human is alien to me.” He was passionate about sharing the riches of intellect and saw the emerging community college movement as a means to do just that.

Here’s a comment he made on the paper of one of his students, urging her to do her share *“to counter-act the cynical materialism of our age—afraid to dream of peace and love and compassionate understanding. We who believe in mankind must keep our feet on the ground—i.e., learn all we can about the total human being, good and bad—but ever persist and act in our faith there are things of the spirit greater and more ennobling than cold reason, timid commonsense, safety first, and my and mine.”*

THE BRAIN'S BLIND SPOTS

by Belinda Chiu, originally published on Key Step Media



When we hear the words “Diversity & Inclusion,” some of us cringe or roll our eyes, not because we don’t care, but because we feel uncomfortable, guilty, or feel we don’t need any training in it because “we’re not racist.” Yet every day we read a news story where someone’s hidden biases trigger a potentially harmful action, from calling 911 on a congresswoman visiting her constituents to using racial slurs on political opponents. “Diversity &

Inclusion” is necessary but insufficient; as [Coaching Certification Faculty member Michelle Maldonado](#) notes, we need to move from “Diversity & Inclusion” to “Belonging & Unity.”

One first step we can take is to recognize our lack of awareness of what influences our decisions, actions, and perceptions of other people. According to [Leonard Mlodinow](#), scientists estimate that 95% of what happens in our brains is beyond our conscious awareness. In other words, we’re only 5% aware of why we think and act and feel the way we do. The majority of what dominates our mental activity is unconscious.

Our world is filled with differences. We are naturally drawn towards what is familiar and deemed “safe,” like family members who, for the most part, look and smell like us, and we move away from what is unfamiliar. Our brains use heuristics, or mental shortcuts, to help us navigate a complex world. We unconsciously build beliefs about different groups of people outside of “our tribe,” based on various socially constructed or identity markers, to help us organize our social world.

Similarity bias is our preference for others who are similar to us. Our brain’s natural inclination to categorize our world starts at a young age.

David Kelly found that babies as young as three months show a preference for those with a similar race to them. The chances are that these babies are not “racist,” but unconsciously, they realize that their main caregivers are their sources of comfort, food, safety, and diaper changes. More often than not, these caregivers are related and therefore, “look” like them. Such biases may persist in adulthood unconsciously in how we act. [University of Michigan researcher Jesse Chandler](#) found that people were 260% more likely to donate to hurricane relief efforts if the hurricane’s name began with the same letter as their first initial.

Our brains are also subject to **implicit egotism**, the notion that we think more favorably about others like ourselves. We are more likely to respond to a stranger’s email if they share our name, and we’re more likely to help someone out if they went to the same university. The opposite occurs unconsciously as well. Have you ever met someone new that you irrationally didn’t like or felt animosity towards them simply because they share a name with a childhood bully? That’s our unconscious brain at work.

Our hidden biases also are influenced by **visual bias**. Our optic nerves attach to our retinas in a way that means we have actual blind spots,

and so our brains fill in the visual gap we can’t see. Similarly, when it comes to how we view and evaluate other people, if we have missing data about another person, we tend to take the little bit we know about the social categorization of that person and fill in the rest of the information. For example, if you meet someone of Nepalese descent for the first time, and the only bit of information you have about Nepal is that it is a Buddhist nation, you might assume that they are Buddhist and hesitate to include them in your Passover Seder.

Even though we think we evaluate others based on their individual qualities in rational and deliberate ways, our brain’s automatic processing is influenced by cultural and social messages around stereotypes and the “Other.” **Groupthink** can lead to “**Othering**,” whereby we discourage individual disagreements or thoughts for the sake of wanting to belong to the “in-group.” Daniel Goleman offers important insights into [how groupthink may manifest](#) in the workplace and what to do about it. While we have seen historical incidences of how groupthink can cause irreparable harm, from the Holocaust to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, “Othering” in the workplace can lead

to lower performance, well-being, and engagement. [UCLA psychologist Naomi Eisenberger](#) found that the area of our brain associated with physical pain is also associated with feeling left out. When we overlook the administrative assistant during lunchtime as we sit with our cubemates daily to eat, we may be impacting their feeling of belonging, even though our intentions are not to exclude.

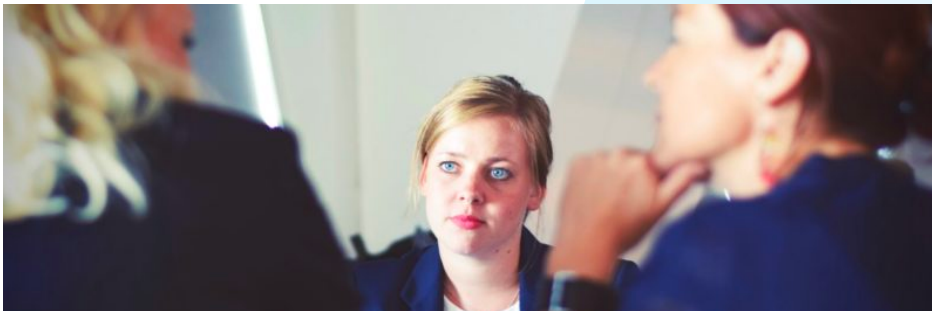
It is therefore important that we consider how to build **psychological safety** into our environments, whereby people feel safe to express their true and whole selves without judgment or reprisal. When we do, people feel confident to express opinions, have disagreements, and show up. In fact, [Google](#) researched hundreds of its own teams to find out why some thrived and others wilted and discovered that psychological safety was the

number one factor. In short, if we want high-performing teams that bring diversity of perspective and a sense of inclusion and belonging, we must build trust, raise our awareness, and reach out to others.

By using our brain's natural structural functions, we can hack our minds to bring greater curiosity of the "Other," [Self-Awareness](#) of our own unconscious thinking, and [Empathy](#) to find similarities with others who may appear different than us. [Emotional Balance](#) can help us raise our awareness and ability to move from unconscious to conscious. As Daniel Goleman notes, "when it comes to diversity, you're seeing people who have a range of backgrounds, of understandings, and of abilities. And the more diverse team is going to be the one with the largest array of talents, and so it will be the one with the potential best performance."

GIVE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK with EMPATHY

by Daniel Goleman, originally published on Key Step Media



Seth, the regional manager of an insurance agency, had a reputation for enforcing the rigid guidelines sent down from upper management, while doing the bare minimum himself. When one of his newest employees, Jason, failed to record customer information in accordance with guidelines, Seth arranged a meeting to set him straight. After talking Jason's ear off about the importance of playing by the book, Seth handed him a few examples of correct customer reports and told him to study up or find work somewhere else.

Jason, who had never received detailed training on the customer reports, became instantly and thoroughly discouraged. While he still

made an effort to get by, he felt increasingly apathetic about his job. He was not alone: Other members of the team felt the same disengagement. They avoided Seth and kept their heads down, trying to do their work without having to deal with him. No surprise that Seth's reputation for intractability also prevented people from sharing their ideas with him. Result: sales plummeted.

Last I heard, Seth had been replaced by a new regional manager, tasked with revitalizing a floundering business. It's no surprise – Seth was not just difficult to work with, but an ineffective leader as well. Looked at through the emotional intelligence lens, what Seth lacked was empathic concern.

Empathic concern is one of three types of [empathy](#). The first type, cognitive empathy, lets us understand others' perspectives. The second, emotional empathy, allows us to experience others' emotions in our own body, giving us an immediate sense of what they feel. And the third, empathic concern, moves us to action. We care about other people's well-being and feel motivated to help them. This is where empathy extends into compassion.

Consider results from a study of how empathic concern matters when we [give negative feedback](#). Researchers found that leaders who gave negative feedback with empathetic concern got better responses from their employees, who also rated them as more effective. And this caused higher-ups to view these leaders as more promotable.

People respond more positively to criticism and are more likely to take feedback to heart when they feel their leader cares about their well-being and wants them to improve. Empathic concern makes feedback more effective, kickstarting positive change in employees and rippling throughout organizations.

Instead of grilling a new hire like Jason over an understandable mistake, Seth could have empathized with Jason's need to learn how to perform his new job, and maybe also nodded to the tediousness of the task. Most important, he could have expressed his desire for Jason to succeed and offered to give him further guidance if needed. But by resorting to scripted lectures and unwarranted threats, Seth prevented a new employee from becoming engaged and motivated to do his best.

A leader's emotional intelligence (or lack thereof) can make or break an employee's performance for an organization. The benefits (or toll) can be seen in indicators like employee engagement, creativity, and turnover. EI – being intelligent about emotions – includes ways to manage our own emotions and help shape emotions in others. This includes the ability to give feedback effectively, to inspire and motivate, and to consider employees' feelings when making decisions.

So, a lack of empathy in a manager or executive creates dissonance. Leaders who don't consider their employees' perspectives when delivering feedback foster a tense environment in which trust and collaboration cannot flourish.

[EI training](#) can help leaders get better at the range of people skills they need, such as recognizing their employees' emotional reactions and communicating their understanding and concern. By attuning ourselves to others' emotions, performance feedback becomes an opportunity to create positive change and cultivate engagement. And when employees experience this positive resonance, leaders – and their organization – can gain a range of value-added benefits.

THE POWER of VULNERABILITY in LEADERSHIP

by Brett Long, originally published on Key Step Media



Sarah is a young, talented leader who rose quickly to an executive role. As a part of her professional development, she went through a 360 assessment and worked with a coach. In her feedback, she was surprised to discover that her colleagues and direct reports perceived her as distant and aloof. They struggled to connect with her, and consequently didn't trust her. This feedback was shocking and upsetting for Sarah. She resisted it as "just not true."

However, within her coaching relationship, Sarah uncovered a mindset which didn't serve her well, and had, until now, been a blind spot. The mindset: *being more authentic and vulnerable is bad*. It developed long ago in response to a string of childhood tragedies, including her Dad's death when she was in second grade and her Mom's breast cancer diagnosis around the same time. Since Sarah's mom was consumed by her husband's death and facing her own mortality, she was not emotionally available to Sarah and her siblings. Being the oldest, Sarah became the surrogate parent to her siblings. And as she believed she needed to hold it together for the family, she never shared the depth of her grief and loss with anyone. This set her on a course to become the stoic, high achieving leader she is today. Sadly though, by walling off a part of herself, she struggled to build trusting relationships and was reluctant to let others into her world. Indeed, this mindset and its impact surfaced when she was forced to consider how her self-perception vastly differed from how others perceived her.

While she believed being objective, unemotional, and aloof made her appear as a more competent leader, just the opposite was true. Her unwillingness to be real and connect with others held her back from

becoming the relatable, engaging leader others would be inspired to work with and for. And unsurprisingly, the teams she led all struggled with interpersonal trust.

Sarah's story illustrates a commonly held mindset not discussed enough in leadership circles (and in life)—that we should avoid being vulnerable. Like Sarah, many of us think we need to maintain the veneer of “having it all together.” If you share this mindset, consider these two points.

First, a willingness to open up about our humanity and imperfections with colleagues, direct reports, and even our bosses, humanizes us and attracts respect. And this learnable skill often [correlates with exceptional teamwork and results](#). If jumping into this seems way too daunting, consider sharing with a trusted colleague first. Pushing through the initial anxiety of having the first few conversations pays off for most. By letting others in on both your imperfections and your discomfort with sharing them, you will experience a decompressing effect whereby you feel lighter and more confident.

Second, by sharing your real self with someone, you can connect more easily with others. Brené Brown, noted researcher in social connection, has increased understanding of the role of vulnerability in relationship-building. Vulnerability doesn't mean being weak. The best leaders have learned it [indicates the courage](#) to be your real self. It means replacing “professional aloofness and an air of having it all together” with the ability to experience ambiguity and model [Emotional Self-Awareness](#). Opportunities for vulnerability present themselves to leaders all the time. For example, admitting you don't know the answer to a question, asking for help, and offering stories of times you made mistakes. Openness builds trust and deepens relationships, which makes for great performance, both individually and organizationally. Research shows that when people intentionally build social ties at work, [their performance improves](#).

After Sarah recognized her fear of vulnerability, and acted to challenge this mindset, her progress and motivation to become a better leader exploded. As she discovered first-hand, there's power in expressing our struggles and accepting that we all have blind spots. Sarah's new behavior was contagious. She observed her colleagues on the executive

team starting to openly acknowledge others' good ideas and perspectives in meetings rather than staying entrenched in their original positions. Sarah had, in fact, started her own movement!

Try this:

Teams need to connect and collaborate to become high-performing and successful. However, when your team includes a diverse mix of cultures and generations, achieving this level of cohesion can be challenging.

How can you bring people together? Try this exercise to help your team build deeper relationships.

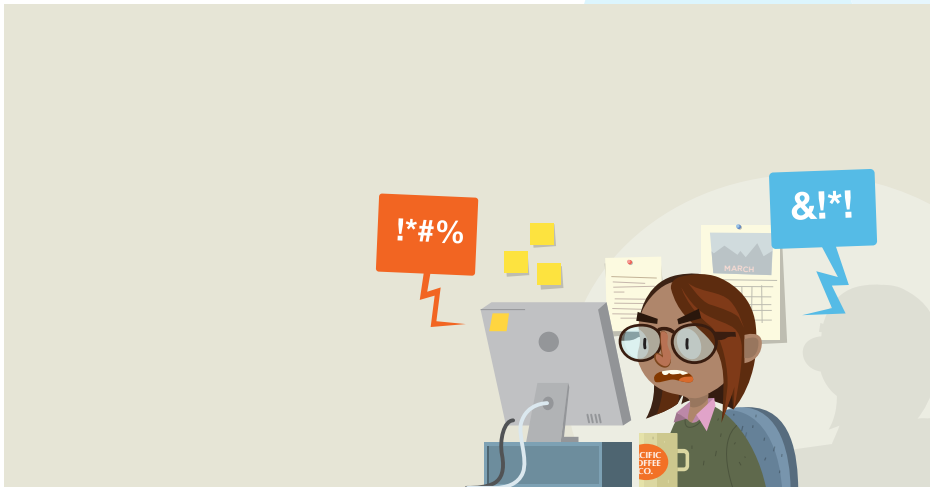
1. At your next team meeting, ask everyone to find one partner and answer the following three questions in just 60 seconds each.
 - Where did you grow up?
 - How many kids are in your family and where do you fall in the order?
 - What current challenge are you facing?

2. Have people share with the larger group what the experience was like for them—both as the listener and speaker.
3. If you want to take it a step further, you can exemplify openness and vulnerability by sharing your responses to the questions with the entire team.

The takeaway: Openness builds trust and deepens relationships, which makes for great performance, both individually and organizationally. Research shows that when people intentionally build social ties at work, their performance improves.

EMPATHY in the DIGITAL AGE

by Daniel Goleman, originally published by Korn Ferry



In 2014, a phishing scheme enabled four hackers to gain access to about 240 Apple iCloud accounts and users' personal information. Among these were the accounts of celebrities, including Jennifer Lawrence, Kate Upton, and Kristen Dunst, whose private photos were leaked online.

The last of the hackers, George Garofano, was recently sentenced to eight months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. Garofano's lawyer said he was apologetic: "When he gets behind a computer, he forgets what he does impacts other people."

That sums up what technically is called "cyber-disinhibition," where how we treat others online doesn't align how we would treat them in person. Here's why: Our brain's social systems depend on immediate feedback, which text online lacks.

Our brain was designed for face-to-face interactions, during which our emotional centers operate quickly and unconsciously in the subcortex to take in a huge range of information from the other person and to send out impulses for how to respond—what to say and do. Meanwhile, circuits in the prefrontal cortex help guide those interactions, in part by inhibiting emotional impulses that would drive the interaction in a bad direction.

But online interactions lack this real-time feedback loop. Online we receive none of the cues necessary for emotional empathy. Instead, we have to [rely on cognitive empathy](#). This means we pick up little or none of what

the other person feels, and react mainly to what they write (or text). From the emotional perspective, we are flying blind—or numb.

In brain terms, we get no inhibition of impulse from the prefrontal circuitry—thus “cyber-disinhibition.” And when we don’t make the effort online to understand the other person’s perspective, or how a given response might make them feel, the social distance of the internet can quickly turn our worst impulses into words and deeds we would never think of in person, like leaking intimate photos and other forms virtual harassment.

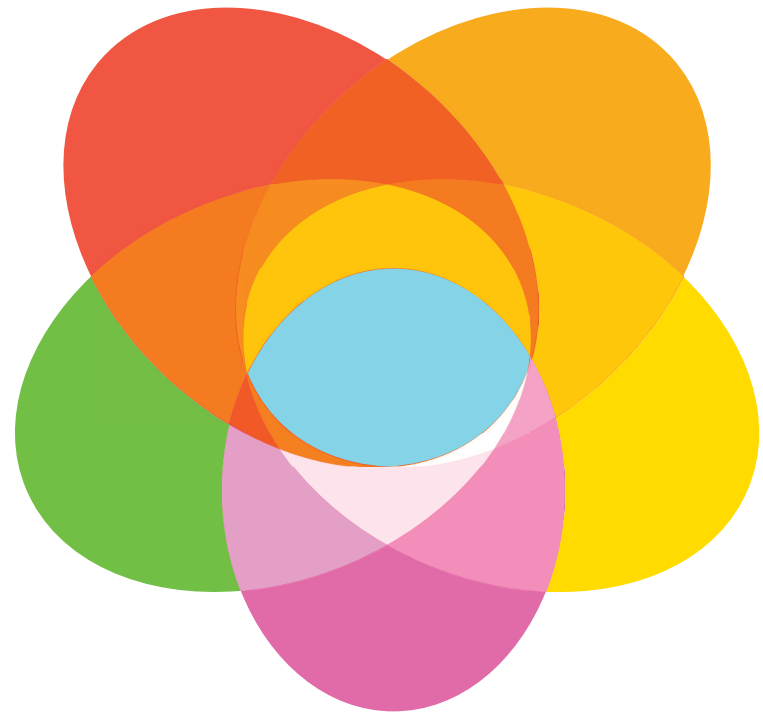
As a short-term solution to the inability to meet in person, I recommend video conferencing and phone calls when you want to achieve a complex goal or create emotional connection with teammates or clients. Even if teams do implement regular video or phone conferences to connect with remote teammates, it’s important that these meetings incorporate productive team norms. Several companies in Silicon Valley prohibit phones and laptops in meetings to minimize distractedness while promoting focus and collaboration. And agreeing on norms regarding

feedback and preferred communication styles helps especially when working in global or remote teams.

Another point: While emails and text messages are sufficient for transferring information, they have an innate negativity bias. Emails that senders identify as positive typically read as neutral to their recipients. And emails that senders describe as neutral often read as hostile. My wife encourages me to make emails more personal, which can minimize the negativity bias effect.

In the long term, though, I’m optimistic about the possibilities of innovative technologies to overcome current drawbacks online. For example, holographic messages could add an opportunity for emotional empathy in digital communications. Still, we need to value personal connections and the emotional information they give us. By intentionally connecting with people—in person, over the phone, or on a video call—for discussions where emotion is at play (and that’s most anything important), we can minimize miscommunication and foster productive and meaningful relationships.

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