



Toxic Positivity

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Learning Objectives:

- Examine what toxic positivity is and how it can affect an organization.
- Consider ways to deal with toxic positivity that does not negatively affect an organization.

What is Toxic Positivity?



- Dismissing negative emotions & responding to distress with false reassurances rather than empathy.
- Comes from feeling uncomfortable with negative emotions.
 - "Everything will work out."

Examples of Toxic Positivity

- When something bad happens, such as losing your job, people tell you to “just stay positive” or “look on the bright side.”
- After experiencing some type of loss, people tell you that “everything happens for a reason.”
- When you express disappointment or sadness, someone tells you that “happiness is a choice.”



Toxic Positivity

(noun)

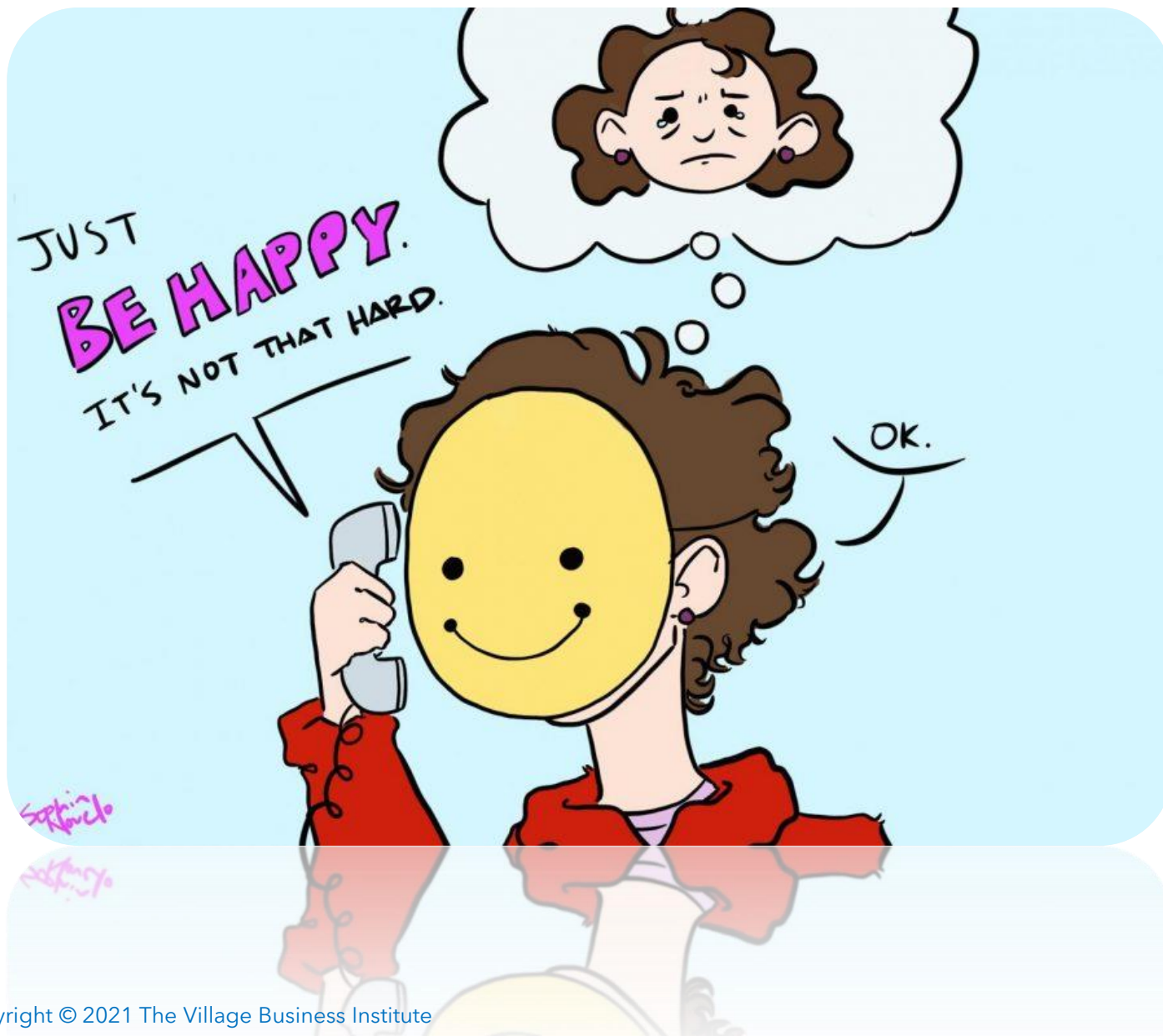
The overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state that results in the denial, minimization and invalidation of the authentic human emotional experience.





Signs of Toxic Positivity

- Hiding/Masking your true feelings
- Trying to "just get on with it" by stuffing/dismissing an emotion(s)
- Feeling guilty for feeling what you feel
- Minimizing other people's experiences with "feel good" quotes or statements



Signs of Toxic Positivity

- Trying to give someone perspective (e.g., "it could be worse") instead of validating their emotional experience
- Shaming or chastising others for expressing frustration or anything other than positivity
- Brushing off things that are bothering you with an "It is what it is"

Toxic Positivity in the Workplace


- Invalidated
- Unseen
- Unheard
- Disregards true, legitimate emotions
- Suppression of negative emotions can significantly harm an individual's physical and mental health
 - Increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and the development of low self-esteem
- Diminish trust



Toxic Positivity and Our Health

- Shame
- Guilt
- Suppressed emotions
- Isolation and relational problems
- Prevents growth





We need to talk about shame

by David Shields





Combating Toxic Positivity

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable

Avoid common toxically positive phrases

Accept change will not happen overnight



Combating Toxic Positivity

Manage your negative emotions, but don't deny them.

Be realistic about what you should feel.

It's okay to feel more than one thing.

Focus on listening to others and showing support.

Notice how you feel.



Setting Healthy Boundaries

- Don't make assumptions about how others are feeling or—worse—how they “should” feel. Do the same for yourself.
- Avoid offering unsolicited advice to friends and family, especially if your words run counter to how you really feel inside.
- Be realistic when setting timelines for when you will do a task or show up for a visit with someone. If you do not feel up to doing or helping, remember that “no” is a complete sentence.



How to respond when others are providing positive platitudes and it's not helpful...

- Nothing and decide not to go to them in the future
- Nothing and just ignore it
- "I really appreciate that you're trying to help, and I just need someone to listen right now."
- "I totally understand that might be helpful for you, but it's really not helpful for me right now."
- It's not really helpful when you say _____. Can you say _____ instead?"

How to respond when others are providing positive platitudes and it's not helpful...

- "I appreciate you trying to help. It would be really helpful if you could say _____ instead."
- "It really hurts/upsets me when you say that when I'm struggling."
- "I'm not really in a place where I can hear that and believe that right now."



ITK.

Authenticity

Authenticity means you're true to your own personality, values, and spirit, regardless of the pressure that you're under to act otherwise.

You're honest with yourself and with others, and you take responsibility for your mistakes.

“

Don't Trade Your
Authenticity For
Approval

THE SOULFUL NIB

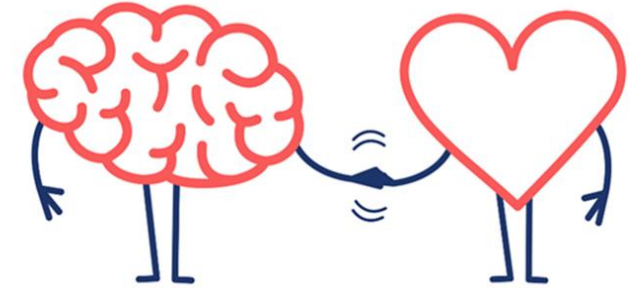


Toxic Positivity	Non-Toxic Acceptance & Validation
"Don't think about it, stay positive!"	"Describe what you're feeling, I'm listening."
"Don't worry, be happy!"	"I see that you're really stressed, anything I can do?"
"Failure is not an option."	"Failure is a part of growth and success."
"Everything will work out in the end."	"This is really hard, I'm thinking of you."
"Positive vibes only!"	"I'm here for you both good and bad."
"If I can do it, so can you!"	"Everyone's story, abilities, limitations are different, and that's okay
"Delete Negativity"	"Suffering is a part of life, you are not alone.
"It could be worse."	"That sucks. I'm so sorry you're going through this."

Toxic Positivity	Non-Toxic Acceptance & Validation
"You'll get over it."	"This is hard. You've done hard things before, and I believe in you."
"Stop being so negative."	"It's pretty normal to have some negativity in this situation."
"Never give up."	"Sometimes giving up is ok. What is your ideal outcome?"
"Everything will work out in the end."	"This is really hard; I'm thinking of you."
"See the good in everything."	"It's probably really hard to see any good in the situation. We'll make sense of it all later."
"Just be happy."	"It's never fun to feel like that. Is there something we can do today that you'd enjoy?"
"It's not that bad."	"I'm here for you."



Benefits of Empathy in the workplace



Rapport and Trust Building

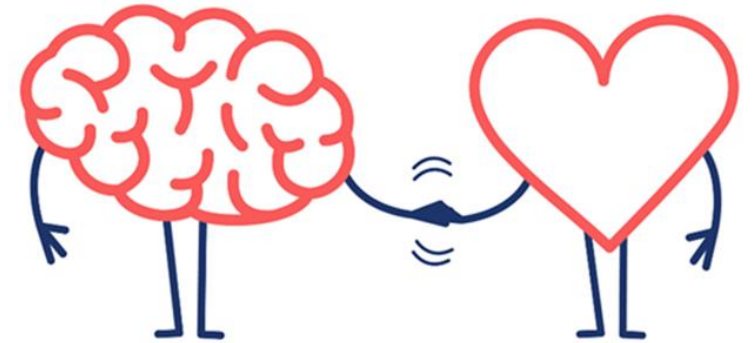
"a relationship characterized by agreement, mutual understanding, or empathy that makes communication possible or easy."

- Building rapport is the process of developing the connection in a relationship
- Often that happens through what we share that is the same—the same shared interests, experiences, sense of humor, values."

Benefits of Empathy in the workplace

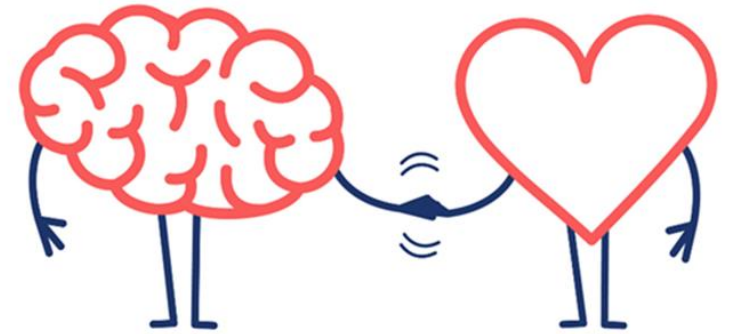
Rapport and Trust Building

- Rapport can establish trustworthiness
- Finding common ground with employee- shared interest, value or perspective
- Observe interactions, and reactions

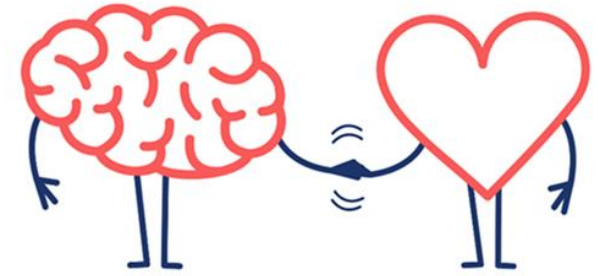


Benefits of Empathy in the workplace

- Connection
- Effective communication
 - Understanding non-verbal cues
- Improved emotional wellbeing
- Support
- Stress reduction



Empathetic Listening



Provide the speaker with your undivided attention



Be non-judgmental



Read the speaker

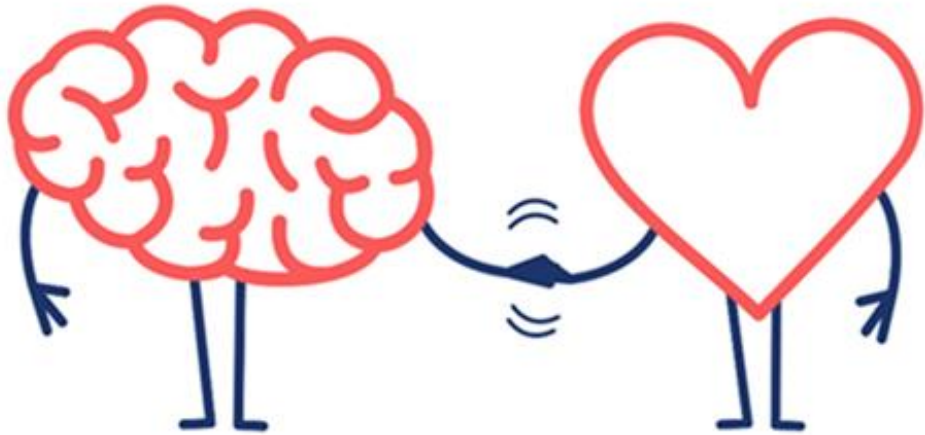


Be Quiet



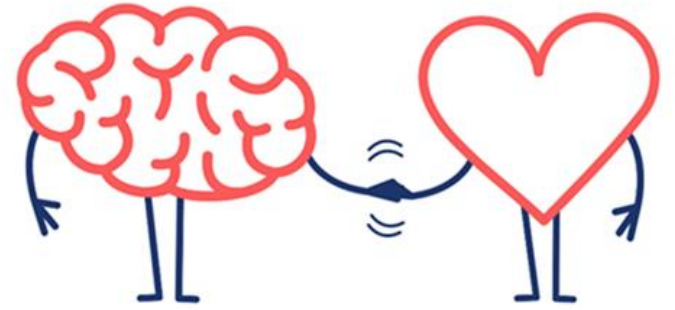
Assure your understanding

Developing Empathy



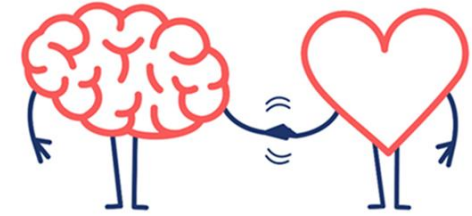
- ✓ **Observe how you react to people:**
 - ✓ look honestly at how you think and interact with others. Try to be more open to their perspectives and needs.
- ✓ **Don't be judgmental**

Developing Empathy



- ✓ **Be humble:** humility doesn't mean that you're shy or lack self-confidence. When you practice humility, you can still know what you did, and be quietly confident about it.
- ✓ **Keep employees informed:** Transparency assists in making employees feel safe

Psychological Safety



- Ask powerful, open-ended questions, and then listen actively and intently to understand feelings and values, as well as facts.
- Agree to share failures, recognizing that mistakes are an opportunity to learn and grow.
- Use candor, whether expressing gratitude or disappointment.
- Ask for help, and freely give help when asked.
- Embrace expertise among many, versus a “hero” mentality.

They can "get things"
in the morning.



Questions & Feedback



SHRM CEU: Activity 21-PDYCV



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MFJFVGP>



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