



EAP EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER

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BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE AT WORK

Positive attitudes are contagious at work, but so are negative ones. Moods, feelings of engagement or disengagement, and even health-related habits like healthy eating and exercise, can spread within a network of work colleagues in ways you're often not aware of. Be a person who lifts the moods of the people around you, encourages good work and effective collaboration, and inspires by example. By being a positive influence at work, you can make your work environment healthier, more productive, and more enjoyable while improving your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the people around you.

How to Be a Positive Influencer at Work

- **Manage your emotions.** Emotions are particularly contagious at work. If a colleague is anxious or unhappy, it's easy to be pulled into that anxiety or sadness. If a colleague is smiling and laughing, it's hard not to smile and laugh, too. You can't always control your emotions, but you can learn to manage them so they don't erupt in uncomfortable and unproductive ways. Learn to notice signs of tension in your body. Figure out what's making you tense, and consider what you can do about those causes. Learn stress management techniques to keep yourself calm. If you feel yourself growing upset or angry, step back from a situation and go for a walk or take some deep breaths. Take some time every day to think about what you're grateful for. That's a way to lift and steady your mood. Look for reasons to be happy at work and show that happiness with a smile.
- **Help others feel heard and understood.** Getting your way in the face of opposition isn't influence. It can be perceived as overbearing and make others feel ignored and unappreciated. Build a reputation as someone who listens and works to understand different viewpoints. Listen to build connection with colleagues and to get to know them as people so that you can work more effectively together.
- **Draw positive attention to colleagues.** Get behind other people's ideas, and be sure they get credit for them. Be generous with compliments. Publicly recognize colleagues' good work and progress.



- **Set a high standard with your work.** Be the best that you can be in your work. Show that you can be depended on to do your share and more, deliver quality work, and meet your commitments.
- **Be clear and honest in your communication.** Explain your ideas and suggestions in ways that people will understand, even when the issues are complex or technical. Don't overstate or exaggerate the points you're making. Be honest when things go wrong or you need more time to complete a task.
- **Build your expertise.** Expertise in a valued skill or area of knowledge will lead others to look to you for guidance and include you in planning discussions. You'll be able to contribute to your organization's work in more significant ways. Take classes, attend webinars or online training sessions, read books and articles, and work with people who can help build your expertise. If you can, find a mentor who can guide your learning.

- **Be a problem-solver.** Identify obstacles that are getting in the way of efficient, high-quality work, and suggest solutions for getting past them. When problems occur, don't just complain; look for ways to solve them, and participate in those efforts. Pay attention to changes outside your organization, and suggest ways the organization might adapt to or take advantage of them.
- **Be inclusive and welcoming.** Show that you recognize and value differences among your colleagues—differences in backgrounds and life experiences, training, expertise, and communication or work style. Seek out different viewpoints to help make better decisions. Accept and value people for who they are, so they feel welcome when working with you.
- **Help build connections.** Make an effort to meet people from other parts of the organization. Look for opportunities to work on projects that involve people from different locations or departments. Use those connections to link people in solving problems and coming up with innovations. Build connections outside your organization, too, with trade groups, academic researchers, and others who might help your organization improve and grow.
- **Be a positive voice.** While it's important to be realistic, to be aware of challenges your team and the organization may be facing, be the person who is looking for positive solutions and opportunities, not the one who complains and makes others scared and unhappy. Keep yourself above gossip and negative talk, especially negative talk about particular people behind their backs. When you hear this kind of talk or see these kinds of messages, ignore them. Don't contribute to their spread. If the negativity advances to the point of harassment or bullying, don't be a passive bystander. Stand up to it or report it in safe and appropriate ways.

The Special Role of Managers

- **Recognize your outsized influence.** One recent survey showed that managers have more impact on people's mental health than their therapist or doctor—an impact equal to that of a spouse.¹ Recognize the power of your influence to inspire or demoralize, to energize people or drain them of energy. Understand what an important model you are for demonstrating healthy stress management and work-life balance. Managers need to manage themselves—their moods, their behavior, and their words—to build high-performing teams in a work environment that enhances physical and mental health.



- **Deal promptly with negativity.** One negative influence can pull a team down, in both its mood and its performance. Pay attention to people who complain, engage in destructive gossip, or undermine colleagues to make themselves look better. These are performance issues, as important as—and perhaps more important than—an individual's own output. Include positive or negative influence on others as a key measure when setting goals and evaluating performance.

For More Information

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MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Having supportive people in your life, whether they are friends, family, a spouse, or a significant other, can be a lifeline during challenging times. Recognizing their value may leave some to wonder how to maintain those relationships. Below are a few tips that can aid in maintaining healthy relationships.

Benefits of Maintaining Healthy Relationships

First, identify the benefits of maintaining healthy relationships. Healthy, long-term relationships can help create the foundation for a solid emotional base. Often, people can be hard on themselves and forget to give themselves the grace they give others. Partners and loved ones can, a lot of times, have a more positive image of you than you have of yourself. This is known as the Michelangelo phenomenon, in which loved ones believe in your ability to be your ideal self, thus providing positive messages and encouragement to get you to that ideal self. Your loved ones can push you to be the best that you can be, because they see and believe you can achieve your goals.¹

Committed, healthy relationships allow you to bounce back from stress and trauma, be more enthusiastic about life, and be comfortable trying new things. Those with whom you have healthy, committed relationships can continue to push you to achieve your goals and ambitions, even when you stumble.



Tips on Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Whether you are looking at healthy relationships with family members or friends, the following tips can help lead to committed, long-term, healthy relationships with those in your life:

- Be realistic about expectations in the relationship.
- Improve trust by showing that you can be a reliable friend, family member, and so forth.
- Find time to be present (without distraction), and spend time with those you want to foster and maintain healthy relationships with.²
- According to John Gottman, a relationship researcher, happy couples have 5:1 ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions. It helps to find moments to encourage your partner by affirming the relationships and your partner's efforts.³
- Find ways to be interdependent of one another. Relationships in which the individuals solely rely on one another can become overwhelming and unhealthy, as it is unrealistic that one person can meet all your needs. It is important to have shared interests but also engage in enjoyed activities outside of that relationship.²

- Be aware of how your partner or loved one feels loved or supported. People can give and feel love and support differently, and it can be helpful to know how that important person in your life likes to receive love or support. For romantic relationships, knowing your partner's love language can help you figure this out. You can find out your love language here: <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes.4>
- Apply effective communication techniques to increase understanding:
 - Use active listening skills, such as listening to understand instead of listening to reply. Try reflecting back what you believe the other person was trying to convey.
 - Ask questions instead of making assumptions about the other person's intentions or if you're unsure of what someone is saying.
 - Use I-statements to express your thoughts and concerns in a way that decreases blame or defensiveness in the other individual. For more information on I-statements, click here: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/i-message.5>
- Learn and use conflict resolution techniques during disagreements. Here are a few:
 - Make sure you're in the headspace to have a calm, respectful discussion. If not, come back to the topic when you can be calm and respectful.
 - Be clear and specific about your needs and concerns. "Attack the problem, not the person."
 - Stick to the topic at hand. Avoid "always" and "never" statements. These statements are rarely factual.
 - Hold yourself accountable for your mistakes.
 - Identify if you can agree to disagree. Because you will not agree on everything, it can be more helpful to identify if you can accept that you disagree on the topic. If not, can the relationship still be a healthy one?

While it can feel amazing when you have relationships that seem effortless, in reality, it often requires time and effort to foster helpful and supportive relationships that stand the test of time. Please see the references below for more information on maintaining helpful relationships.



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IMPROVING YOUR MEMORY: AN OVERVIEW

So many ways to forget! You forget names and faces; appointments and anniversaries; where you left the car keys; what you read; what you said; what you were doing before you were interrupted. Not to mention all the numbers you have to memorize nowadays: telephone and cell numbers, new area codes, PINs, password and user IDs, Social Security numbers, which five of those 500 cable channels you actually use.

How does your memory handle it all? And how can you get it to be more reliable?

Your memory's like a computer. Material has to be inputted properly, saved in storage, and retrieved efficiently. How effectively your brain performs each of these steps depends on three things:

- How recently the remembered event took place
- How vivid, spectacular, or striking an impression it made
- How frequently the event recurs

In addition to these factors, attention, concentration, imagery, organization and mood all play key roles in what could be called the chain of memory: Need or interest motivates the brain to remember; motivation generates attention; attention demands concentration; concentration permits organization; and organization allows for the efficient processing of information.

There are ways you can strengthen the process. One is rote memorization, which involves going over a list of items over and over again until you can remember the whole thing.

Another, more efficient way, is to use mnemonic devices. These techniques strengthen the connections between various pieces of information by using the most under-exercised portion of the brain—the imagination. Using a mnemonic device is as simple as exaggerating the features of what you want to remember until it's as silly as a cartoon. The ridiculous image you construct, and your participation in its creation, combine to make mnemonics surprisingly effective.

Source: Schinhofen, L., Trier, N., & Searleman, A. (Reviewed 2023). Improving your memory: An overview. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

Key Tips

Key Tip 1

Mnemonic devices are systems that use images and associations to aid your memory. Your mind grasps the new image and association easily, and then remembers the information that it represents. You probably learned a few mnemonic devices in grade school—the rhyme of I before E except after C.

Key Tip 2

The key to every mnemonic system is association. You create an image that connects you to the information you want to remember. The more vivid, involved and outlandish the image, the better. If you wanted to remember to pay your credit card bill first thing tomorrow morning, you might imagine yourself opening your eyes at dawn to find a duck-billed workman standing in the middle of your bedroom, cutting up your credit cards. The patch on his worksuit would read "Bill" (of course).

Key Tip 3

The essential first step in improving your memory is analyzing how you learn. There are three types of learners:

- *Visual learners* do best by mentally picturing what they want to remember. A visual learner would picture Bill, the duck-billed workman in specific detail, down to the buttons on his clothes.
- *Auditory learners* are most comfortable hearing information. He might imagine the sound of scissors slicing through credit cards while Bill sings a song about paying bills.
- *Kinesthetic learners remember by doing.* The kinesthetic learner might imagine himself or herself getting out of bed in the morning and following Bill as he dances him or her over to his or her checkbook.

Key Tip 4

When you forget, it's usually not your brain's fault. It's more likely due to outside factors that prevent you from recalling the information as quickly or with as much detail as you'd like. These distractions usually come from three sources:

- Your environment (distractions or being rushed)
- Your body (fatigue or anxiety)
- Medications or other conditions that interfere with your normal functions