

Creating compassionate workplace cultures

Compassion is the strong emotion that moves us to take action to reduce suffering.¹ In recent years, the need to extend compassion to the workplace is rapidly increasing. In fact, a recent study² found that 71% of Canadian employees reported that their mental health impacted their ability to work. Plus, research found that compassion has been linked to higher job satisfaction, loyalty and trust in the organization, higher retention rates, and improvements in performance and motivation.³

In the workplace, we can offer compassion to ourselves and to our coworkers. When we do this, we increase connections and improve relationships, promote positive emotions, and reduce job-related stress and anxiety.⁴



HOW WE CAN BE COMPASSIONATE COWORKERS

Forming authentic relationships with our colleagues is an important aspect of creating compassionate workplace cultures. When we find or create deliberate opportunities for real connection at work, we increase the opportunity for trust and openness.⁵ We can practice compassion with our colleagues by expressing genuine interest and concern, actively listening without judgement, and validating their experiences and emotions.⁶ Doing so on a regular basis as well as when our colleagues need extra support is vital for forming meaningful support networks at work.



SHOWING COMPASSION FOR OURSELVES

It's important to show ourselves the same level of compassion, patience, and kindness we show our colleagues. For example, when we're having a tough day at home or at work, it can be difficult to perform at our best. Instead of wishing we got more work done, we can recognize that everyone has bad days sometimes. Setting reasonable expectations is one way to show ourselves compassion. We can also try not to define ourselves by these challenges. Rather than letting judgemental thinking determine how we feel about ourselves or our performance, we can reframe our perspective to be more gentle and positive.⁷

¹ Jazaieri, H., Rock, M. (2021). Putting Compassion to Work: Compassion as a Tool for Navigating Challenging Workplace Relationships. *Mindfulness*, 12, 2552–2558. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01695-5>

² <https://www.benefitscanada.com/benefits/health-wellness/71-of-canadian-employees-say-mental-health-impacted-their-ability-to-work-in-the-past-year-survey/>

³ <https://hbr.org/2023/02/leading-with-compassion-has-research-backed-benefits>

⁴ <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/ec7239bb-99a3-43b5-9000-77923979093f/content>

⁵ <https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/19262/1/FullText.pdf>

⁶ Tehan, M. (2007). The Compassionate Workplace: Leading with the Heart. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 15(3), 205-218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105413730701500303>

⁷ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-94328-9>

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