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W Faces of Workplace WELLNESS



Spreading Holiday Cheer

Dec 2024 Holiday Issue. Vol 1

**Wellness at Work
Holiday Strategies**

**Mindful Celebrations
for Teams**

**Wellness
Competencies:**

- Attending
- Compassion
- Hospitality
- Celebration
- Community

**Creating Team
Charters for 2025**



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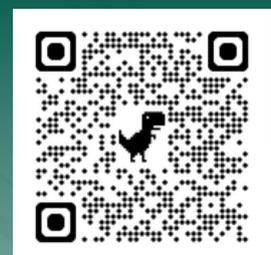


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Publisher's **CORNER**

*A Season of Reflection and
Renewal.*

As the year comes to a close and we prepare to embrace the holiday season, it's an opportune time to reflect on where we've been, what we've achieved, and what we carry forward into the coming year. This year has been one of recovery and resilience for many including my family after some periods of illnesses. While challenges such as economic uncertainties, social tensions, wars, and personal obstacles have impacted lives worldwide, it has also been a year marked by community, compassion, and growth.

This season, more than ever, I am reminded of the power of togetherness and the importance of well-being as a collective pursuit. It's not just about surviving but finding moments to celebrate, support each other, and nurture the relationships that holds us up. As we gather with colleagues, friends, and family, I encourage us all to remember that fostering cheer and extending

kindness in our professional and personal lives is essential to our well-being.

Spreading cheer in the workplace isn't just a feel-good gesture; it's an investment in creating an environment where people thrive. This holiday issue is dedicated to exploring ways we can all contribute to this culture of joy, compassion, and community. Whether through small acts of kindness, inclusive celebrations, or shared charitable efforts, we have the power to make our workplaces a source of strength and connection.

This year, we have continued our mission of expanding awareness of well-being competencies, such as attending, compassion, hospitality, and celebration, which are highlighted in this special issue. Each competency, when practiced mindfully, can transform the way we interact, collaborate, and grow together in our professional spaces.

As we set our sights on the coming year, the theme of renewal takes center stage. We will be embarking on expanding our workplace wellness initiatives to integrate well-being intelligence into workplaces around the world. From the launch of the updated Wellness Competency Academy, to building micro skills and well-being prompts that helps teams foster a supportive environment, our goal remains to empower more leaders to lead with well-being at the forefront.

I invite each of you to reflect on the moments that brought joy and learning into your life this holiday season and think about how you can carry those lessons forward. Let's embrace the holiday spirit not just as a fleeting season but as a reminder of the importance of compassion, community, and celebration in our daily lives.

My hope is that this issue inspires you to find ways to spread joy, create connections, and practice mindfulness as you celebrate. Let's continue to champion wellness in all its forms; whether through thoughtful celebrations, meaningful connections, or by fostering a sense of community wherever we are. Remember, our journey towards well-being is ongoing, and the steps we take today build the foundation for a more harmonious tomorrow.

From all of us at Faces of Workplace Wellness, we wish you a season filled with warmth, joy, and connection. May your holidays be bright and your new year full of promise.

To your continued wellbeing,

Joyce Odidison

Publisher

Editor's Corner

Reflections on Connection, Cheer, and Change.

Welcome to this holiday issue of Faces of Workplace Wellness magazine! As I reflect on the past year since my retirement, I am reminded of how important great relationships are in the workplace.

During my 27 years in law enforcement, the bonds I built with my supervisors and colleagues were more than professional; they were the foundation of my resilience and joy on the job.

This time of year brings back fond memories of the holiday cheer my team and I shared. From festive potlucks to heartfelt gestures of kindness, those moments of connection lifted my spirits and made even the most challenging days a little brighter. They remind me of the power of creating joy and camaraderie, not just during the holidays but year-round.

As we step into this issue, our goal is to help you rekindle that same sense of connection, cheer, and purpose in your workplace. You'll find inspiration and practical ideas to make your holiday season meaningful while also preparing for the year ahead.



Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, let's create spaces where well-being thrives, not just during the holidays but every day.

To your wellness and a joyful season ahead,

Misan Odidison

We believe 2025 will be a year of growth and change—an opportunity to elevate your well-being, relationships, and overall workplace culture. Whether it's building strong interpersonal connections, fostering inclusivity, or managing stress more effectively, the tools and insights in this issue are designed to guide you toward a more fulfilling and balanced work life.

Spreading Cheer to Foster Positivity and Build Well-being Competencies This Holiday Season

The holiday season presents a unique opportunity for companies and teams to spread cheer and create an environment that uplifts spirit and reinforces positive connections in the workplace.

We must remember that for many, the season can also bring added stress and pressure, so infusing workplaces with warmth and inclusivity is key. We outlined the wellness competencies we have been developing this quarter to help reinforce your efforts to foster a positive environment during the holidays and to boost morale, belonging, create a sense of community and mental well-being for all. Each of the following activities will reinforce one of the wellness competencies to enhance a whole person wellness mindset approach.

Acts of Kindness Campaigns - Competencies: Compassion and Community.



Acts of kindness foster compassion by encouraging employees to look out for one another and promote positive interactions. These small, daily gestures contribute to a sense of community, making each team member feel valued and part of a cohesive whole. It can also be collective acts of kindness such as volunteering together or other group projects of kindness.

Some suggestions of acts of kindness include:

Compliment Challenges: Promote a culture of compassion by encouraging team members to offer genuine compliments that uplift one another.

Secret Supporters: Enhance the sense of community by having employees anonymously perform small, thoughtful gestures for their colleagues.

Gratitude Boards: Establish a space where employees can post thank-you notes, to cultivate an atmosphere of appreciation and interconnectedness.



Holiday appreciation events promote the spirit of hospitality by creating welcoming and inclusive gatherings where everyone feels comfortable and respected. These events are also an opportunity for celebration, reinforcing a shared sense of joy and accomplishment.

Some suggestions of holiday appreciation include:

Potluck Lunches: Encourage hospitality by having employees share a dish that represents their culture or holiday tradition, fostering warmth and inclusivity.

Holiday Breakfasts or Coffee Hours:

These casual gatherings provide a chance to celebrate as a team while emphasizing a welcoming atmosphere.

Recognition Ceremonies: Celebrate the achievements of team members with small tokens or words of appreciation, highlighting everyone's contributions.

Personal Touches - Competencies: Compassion, Attending.

Personal touches such as handwritten holiday cards or individual check-ins demonstrate attending by showing employees that their well-being and contributions are noticed and valued. This practice also underscores compassion, as it conveys genuine care and empathy from leaders to team members. It also helps to improve work relationships and set the stage for the coming year to foster harmony and psychological safety.

Examples:

Handwritten Cards: Managers can express personalized words of appreciation that show they are truly attending to and valuing their employees' efforts.

Individual Check-Ins: Taking the time to speak with employees and listen to their holiday plans or concerns exemplifies compassion and builds trust.

Holiday Shout-Outs: Publicly acknowledging employees for their hard work highlights that their efforts have been attended to and appreciated.

Inclusive Holiday Celebrations

Competencies: Community and Hospitality.

Creating celebrations that respect and include diverse traditions strengthens community bonds and fosters a sense of unity. Hospitality is reflected in making sure everyone feels welcomed and comfortable participating in these celebrations.

Examples:

Multicultural Holiday Displays:

Decorate the office with symbols from various cultures to make all employees feel included, strengthening community ties.

Storytelling and Sharing Sessions:

Invite employees to share their holiday traditions, enhancing the sense of community and belonging.

Flexible Participation: Show hospitality by making celebrations optional and creating a welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of their holiday preferences.

Charitable Giving

Competencies: *Compassion, Community and Celebration.*

Charitable activities demonstrate compassion by focusing on giving back to those in need.

They also enhance the sense of community within the team and can be celebrated as acts of collective goodwill.

Examples:

Team Volunteering: Engage in community service to build a sense of togetherness and collective purpose.

Donation Drives: Support a local charity with a group donation effort, which can be celebrated as a team achievement.

Holiday Fundraisers: Host a small event where proceeds go to a good cause, reinforcing the values of compassion and community.

The Benefits of Spreading Cheer

Infusing the workplace with holiday cheer does more than just create a festive atmosphere. It has the potential to transform team dynamics by nurturing compassion, attending to employees' needs, demonstrating hospitality, and reinforcing the sense of community and celebration.

Boost Morale: Employees who feel recognized and included are more motivated and engaged.

Stronger Community Bonds: Acts of kindness, inclusive celebrations, and charitable efforts build trust and reinforce team unity.

Reduced Stress: A culture rooted in compassion and attending to employees' needs helps alleviate stress and promotes overall well-being.

By integrating these competencies into holiday practices, companies can create an atmosphere that not only spreads cheer but also fosters stronger, more cohesive teams that thrive well beyond the holiday season.

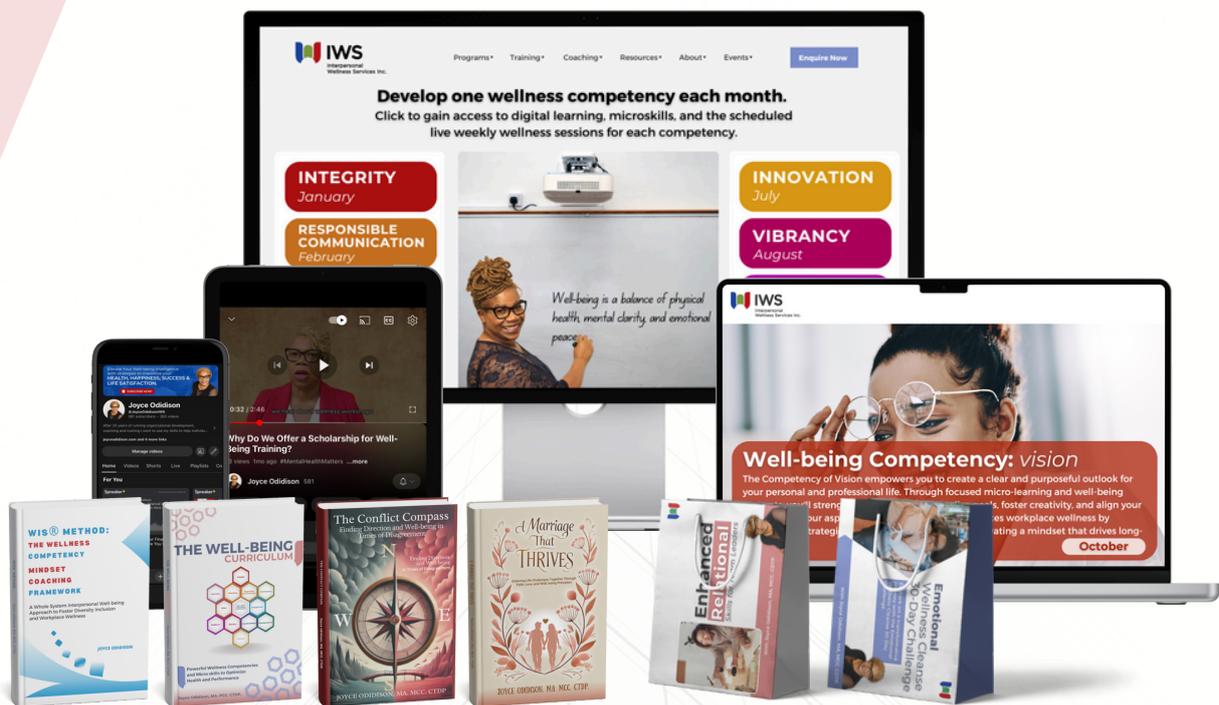
Remember, these can be done even if you work with a small or large team.

Cheers from the IWS Team



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When Woes Outweigh The Ho-Ho-Ho's – Help For Holiday Depression

by Jean Brannon, L. Ac., Dipl. OM (NCCAOM)

Tis the season to be jolly for many of us. The holidays can certainly be a time for reflecting on our blessings and for giving gifts to surprise and delight those we love. It's also an opportunity to stream carols and binge-watch Hallmark movies while gorging on goodies and decking the halls. Yet sometimes, we can feel overwhelmed by all the Santas and social commitments and sugar cookies. Undoubtedly, we'll keep hearing Andy Williams singing it's the most wonderful time of the year.

But is it really?

Why Anyone Could Have A Blue Christmas

According to Workhuman's 2024 research, one in three workers worldwide feels more stressed than usual during the holidays.



The American Psychological Association reported similar findings in 2023; their poll revealed not only that 38 percent of office workers around the world suffers from higher holiday stress levels, but 89 percent of U.S. adults admitted that holiday stress is stressing them out. And a 2024 CPA Canada and BDO Debt Solutions survey found that a startling 94 percent of Canadians expects the holidays to cause financial angst.

Statistics like these illustrate just how many of us have a hard time getting to the season's supposed tidings of comfort and joy. If we're open to admitting it, we likely feel burdened at this time of year with unrealistic "it's all got to be perfect" expectations, sunless days, money worries, excessive social commitments, and forced time with family members we find difficult.

All while our work pressures continue; projects and daily duties and deadlines keep on coming. We find we barely have a moment to pause by the office tree or peruse the Christmas treats so graciously baked by co-workers. It all really seems like it should be festive and fun, but somehow stress makes us feel more like Scrooge than Santa. And so, how can we maintain a merry attitude at work instead of feeling miserable?

How To Have A Holly Jolly Christmas – Naturally

Acupuncturists like myself tend to recommend helpful healing tips based upon Mother Nature's wisdom. Every year on the winter solstice, we officially move from fall to winter. Outside, there is a natural descending motion occurring, as leaves have fallen, temperatures have dropped, and sap inside tree trunks has sunk deeper into the earth. That descending energy all around us tends to bring down our moods as well, making us more prone to depression this time of year. Yet, there are some simple but powerful natural tools we can use to keep the Grinch from stealing Christmas – techniques we can call upon to calm us during our busiest workdays.

Sugar And Spice Ain't Always So Nice

Perhaps more than at any other time of the year, we tend to give ourselves a pass during the holidays to overindulge in the seemingly endless supply of sweet treats. Of course, there's nothing wrong with nibbling on a Christmas cookie or sipping some egg nog. But if you find yourself feeling down, you may want to look at limiting your sugar intake.

When William Dufty's "Sugar Blues" was first published in 1975, he claimed sugar fed depression and was as addictive as nicotine. Current research still supports sugar's connection to depression and also says sugar is eight times more addictive than cocaine. Let that sink in for a moment. Sugar is eight times more addictive than cocaine. And yet, it's perfectly legal and socially acceptable. Often, our peers pressure us to indulge, too.

Admittedly, you may find it hard to resist all the candy canes and gingerbread treats and those sugarplums dancing in your head. Just be aware, however, that sugar is a depressant – and it can make the holiday blues feel even more oppressive.

If all-out avoidance seems impossible, then doing your best to limit consumption while not feeling deprived is a noble goal this time of year.

One tip for curbing a holiday sweet tooth is adopting an office noshing strategy. Consider reaching for a hot cup of tea or a handful of almonds instead of a sugary snack. Or bypass the cookie tin and head for the hummus and vegetable platter whenever possible. Look for the healthiest available options and choose accordingly – your mood (and your waistline) will thank you.

Hark The Herald Angels Sing. Or Hum. Or Chant.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to get into the spirit of the season is to use the voice. Whether we choose to sing, hum, or chant makes no difference, as all forms of vocalizing literally lift our mood.

Research shows that singing releases endorphins and the hypothalamus's "trust and bonding hormone" called oxytocin, all of which can help relieve feelings of loneliness and depression. Yet, this boost to our spirits also occurs because vocalizing is an act of vibration.

When we sing, we move energy powerfully throughout the body.

From a Chinese medicine perspective, as breath fills the lungs, it reaches to the first chakra and the kidneys, making a connection that helps ground our energy. Once rooted, our energy expands via singing to vibrate the second and third chakras, fueling our centers of creativity and personal power as that energy then ascends to the fourth (heart) and fifth (throat) chakras. As our hearts and communication centers join in, the vibration resonates the sinus cavities, which fills the head and brain with motion and sound, activating the brow's third eye and clearing the crown chakra. Thus, we are opened and cleansed energetically throughout all the chakras, which can lead to a cathartic feeling.



Even if we're in an office setting and can't spontaneously break into song out of respect for maintaining a quiet work environment, we can still use sound strategically to soothe ourselves. Try singing during the morning commute – or hum quietly whenever washing up in the restroom. By utilizing singing and toning on a daily basis, we engage in healing activities that help bring the body into balance; this harmony ultimately becomes a habit that will help quell holiday stress naturally.

Peace On Earth Via Earthing

Earthing is a technique by which we can connect to Mother Earth via placing our bare feet on the ground or by hugging a tree, gardening without gloves, or lying on a sheet on the grass. Prior to the inventions of modern homes built over basements and crawl spaces and shoes with fancy cushioning, we humans were always grounded as we wore simple leather shoes (if any at all), and we slept directly upon the earth. Maintaining that connection allowed our physical bodies to be recharged continually from the free-flow of electrons being given off by the earth's surface. Is it any wonder that we tend to be stressed and exhausted by today's typically disconnected and ungrounded way of life?



There's a reason why 100 percent of people feel better by the ocean. Walking barefoot on damp sand exposes us to the best natural conductors of electrons on the planet. Couple that connection with the "feel good" negative ions coming off the sea's breeze, and it's easy to understand how a stroll by the water is the perfect prescription for feeling relaxed and happy.

These days, there are many modern "gadgets" that have been devised to make earthing more convenient (like earthing sheets and mats paired with grounding rods). And so, if anyone feels hesitant during the colder months to place bare feet on the ground for the 20-30 minutes per day needed to replenish the body's energies, looking into earthing tools can be helpful. Adding an earthing mat to an office chair can help reduce tension and improve focus at work as well.

These restorative benefits can usually be felt right away, and this increased sense of well-being will likely make holiday office stress much easier to handle.

Deep Breathing Deeply Calms

To understand how simply changing the way we breathe can effectively reduce stress, it's important to know how stress affects us physically. When we're under duress, we tend to breathe more shallowly, allowing carbon dioxide to build up in the bloodstream. Such increases in blood levels of carbon dioxide can then make us feel jittery and irritable.

Using a conscious breathing technique relaxes us by inflating the sacks in our lungs fully; this expansion releases excess carbon dioxide rapidly, resulting in an immediate sense of calmness. As heart rate subsequently declines and oxygen levels rise, we experience a greatly enhanced sense of well-being. By practicing conscious breathing techniques, anyone can have a readily available stress-relief tool to use when and where it's most needed.

One such breathing technique long recognized as a stress reducer is known as abdominal breathing. Research shows how this type of deep belly breathing reduces stress by engaging the diaphragm (the muscle separating the chest from the abdomen).

When the abdomen moves more than the chest during breathing, the diaphragm is aroused, activating the vagus nerve running through it. The vagus nerve then prompts the body into a "rest and digest" state via its control over the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the nerve network responsible for relaxation. Once the body's "brake" is thus applied, heart rate slows, blood pressure lowers, and levels of the "stress hormone" cortisol decrease naturally.

Yet, in order to benefit from abdominal breathing, it's important to make sure you're actually taking a true belly breath. To check and see, try this simple test next time you need a bathroom break at work. Inhale deeply while looking into the lavatory mirror, and place one hand beneath your navel. If you see your shoulders rise first as you breathe in, you're breathing shallowly; actual deep breathing expands the abdomen before the chest. And so, you can practice expanding your abdomen first as you inhale to develop a habit of deep breathing that can help lower stress on a daily basis.

Sigh Away Your Stress

Aside from deep belly breathing, there's another breathing strategy that's easy and effective to do at the office. According to the University of Wisconsin's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences 2023 report, an intentional breathing technique called "the physiological sigh" can effectively lower stress. This technique will come in handy for someone needing to reduce stress at work or any place and there's no opportunity to retreat to a quiet place and meditate (which is perhaps the best-known natural stress-relieving technique).

Intentional sighs consist of a breathing pattern using two inhales through the nose followed by an extended exhale out of the mouth. The first breath through the nose is almost to capacity, then adds one more quick nasal inhale to open the lungs even more deeply. This two-part inhalation is followed by an extended exhalation.

Just one to three cycles of this breathing technique can noticeably reduce stress levels. It's easy to do and takes only a few seconds, and since it can be done discreetly at a desk or during restroom visits, it's an invaluable technique for office stress management.

By using these simple tools of sugar reduction, soles to the earth, singing, and sighing, you may soon find you've beaten those holiday blues and bah hum bugs for good.



About Jean Brannon, L.Ac., Dipl. OM (NCCAOM) *Licensed Acupuncturist and Author*

Jean Brannon was only eleven when her cautious and careful mother died, but Jean's loving dad stepped up in ways he never dreamed in order to raise two daughters on his own.

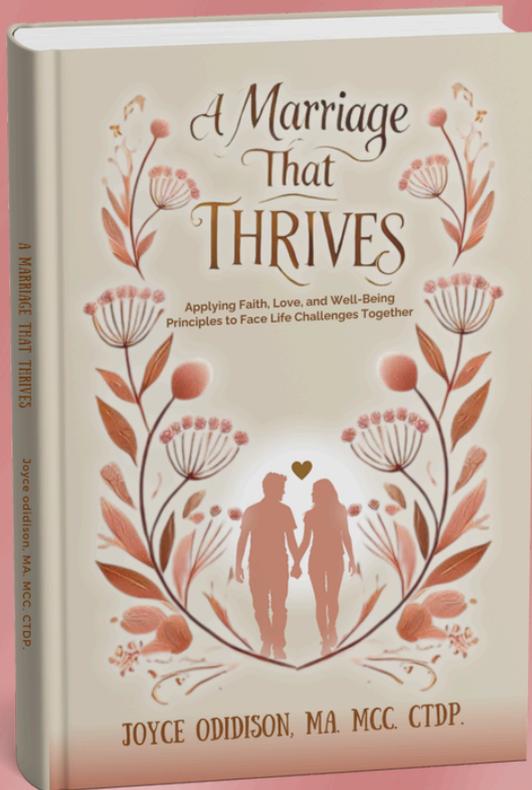
Jean learned from her father that being willing to try new things – and being willing to laugh if it all went sideways – was a lot more fun than moving safely toward death.

The “give it a whirl” attitude she developed toward life led her from a West Virginia country home to a New York corporate career, where mastering Belt Parkway lane changes taught her she really could do anything. That spirit of adventure, along with a love of ancient ways, has inspired her to study acupuncture, rehab old homes, and collect vintage typewriters.

She's writing the first draft of her third Atlantis fantasy novel on her grandmother's 1930 Smith Corona while also typing up an acupressure book on a 1959 Olivetti Lettera 22.



Jean Brannon



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Less is More This Holiday Season: 5 Mindful Tips for Holiday Stress

by Gurpreet Kaur



Holidays bring as much stress as they do joy. Unfortunately, you are not the only one who feels stressed and overwhelmed during this jolly time. This article shares a mindful mindset to survive the holidays without breaking down.

Let's go through the definition of mindfulness first. According to the master of mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality." Being a little more mindful can help you cope with the parts of this season that bring you stress.

So I want to invite you to adopt the **Less Is More** mindset this holiday season and see how it eases things up for you.

Less is More mindset will help you stay calm and at peace throughout the holiday season if you can take a slight pause and whisper to yourself, "less is more" whenever you start to feel overwhelmed. Less is More goes for everything during this season:

1. Less But Mindful Gifts: Being mindful when buying gifts can save you money and a lot of anxiety. You won't believe how many people report feeling anxious and overwhelmed about gift-giving. Instead of falling into the commercialization-of-Christmas trap for gift giving, consider giving less but more thought-out gifts. The intention of providing a specific present holds a lot of positive energy that comes with the gifts you give.

2. Less But Healthy Food: Food can be a big trigger for many people around the holidays. Usually, tables are full of unhealthy and mindless food. Taking a little time to be conscious of the nutritious foods for your body can save you a ton of shame and guilt a couple of hours after dinner.

3. Less But Who Really Matter People on The Dining Table: Most of the time, we like to keep the family traditions and how things have been for years or even generations. You may be filling your grandmother or mother's role this year, so you do things the way they would have done. I encourage you to put people on your guest list mindfully. If you are afraid of offending people, it is not your job to save people from emotional suffering. So, be aware of who you share the space with you. I know making tough decisions is not easy, but they save you from your emotional turmoil.

4. Less Talk and Listen More: I think we all can practice this at times. So try it this holiday season! Deep listening prompts you to ask more meaningful questions that connect you with others at a much deeper level, satisfying your soul instead of staying at the surface.

A deeper and conscious connection with your loved ones equals meaningful and satisfying relationships.

5. Less Unnecessary Activity and Relax More: I invite you to purposely and consciously slow down and feel the peace and calmness around you. Walk slowly and mindfully. Drive slowly and mindfully to the events. Eat slowly and mindfully at the parties. This slow-down and added mindfulness give depth to your experience that you will remember for years to come—versus doing everything in a rush and anxiously that leave you tired and in a haze.



About Gurpreet Kaur

Dr. Gurpreet Kaur is a licensed professional counselor, certified clinical mental health counselor, executive coach, and professional speaker dedicated to leadership development and fostering empathy in the workplace. With a robust well-being and mental health background, Dr. Kaur's diverse experiences have uniquely shaped her approach to crafting training programs for organizations that focus on teaching leaders empathy, a skill that helps them build strong, resilient, productive teams and organizations. Dr. Kaur's passion for mental and emotional development extends to her extensive experience as a counselor, executive coach, and speaker. She delivers dynamic keynotes and corporate workshops. She has been trusted to speak at prestigious organizations and stages like the Department of Health & Human Services USA, Division of Employee Assistance and Work/Life Programs, Global Workplace Wellness Summit, She Leads LIVE, American Counseling Association (ACA), Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted (SENG), New Jersey Counseling Association (NJCA), and Rowan University. Dr. Kaur's expertise in emotional intelligence and teaching empathy equips her to provide innovative solutions to challenges in cultivating effective leadership, empathetic workplaces, and fostering workplace diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI). Her insights have been featured in reputable publications such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), Entrepreneur, and Brainz magazines, further solidifying her reputation as an expert in empathy cultivation as a core leadership competency.



Gurpreet Kaur

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- ✓ **The Intersection of Diversity and Well-being**
Understanding How DEI Impacts Employees' Health and Wellness.
- ✓ **Words That Wound**
Protecting your relationship from harmful words.
- ✓ **Shedding the Baggage**
Knowing what to leave behind.



A Transformative Relational Leadership Model for a VUCA World.

by Joyce Odidison

Leadership in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) workplace is no easy feat. As organizations grapple with constant change, leaders must go beyond managing tasks and processes—they need the relational agility to connect, communicate, and foster trust in their teams. This need has fueled the rise of relational leadership as a critical model for success across all sectors, including faith-based organizations.

Recent research underscores this shift. Studies from the 2024 Global Leadership Development Report reveal that modern leaders must cultivate adaptability, resilience, and psychological safety to navigate today's challenges effectively. Relational leadership stands out as a transformative approach, equipping leaders with the tools to meet these demands while fostering well-being and collaboration.



At Interpersonal Wellness Services Inc. (IWS), we've spent decades empowering leaders with the Relational Leadership Framework, a coaching-based model designed to prioritize connection and well-being. Over the years, we've trained thousands of leaders, helping them embrace this approach to improve workplace mental health, recovery, and psychological safety.

What makes the Relational Leadership Framework so powerful? It's rooted in self-awareness, conversational intelligence, and actionable strategies that reshape leadership into a relational, trust-building process. Participants walk away equipped to create environments where employees feel valued, supported, and inspired to perform at their best.

10 Key Elements of the Relational Leadership Framework

Leaders who've experienced this program consistently highlight ten transformative elements they find most valuable:

1. Self-awareness

Leaders learn to recognize their own feelings, assumptions, judgments, and biases. For example, one participant shared how understanding their bias about younger team members being less committed helped them foster better relationships and unlock hidden talents within their team.

2. Curiosity

By embracing curiosity, leaders explore others' perspectives. One leader described asking their team member, "What's something you see in our process that I might not be noticing?" This simple question led to an innovative idea that boosted efficiency.



3. Communication

Clear, impactful expression of thoughts, needs, and interests is emphasized. One faith-based leader shared how practicing clear communication helped them better articulate the organization's mission during a critical funding meeting, securing a much-needed grant.

4. Negotiation

Leaders master collaborative techniques to balance diverse perspectives. For example, a department manager used negotiation skills to align two opposing teams on a project timeline, resulting in a win-win compromise.





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5. Listening

Beyond words, leaders learn to hear unspoken cues. One participant reflected on how listening for hidden meanings during a tense conversation revealed an employee's deeper concerns about burnout, leading to timely support.

6. Understanding

Appreciating others' perspectives without bias reduces conflict. One leader shared how understanding a colleague's cultural background helped resolve a recurring miscommunication that was straining their relationship.

7. Conversation

Engaging in egoless dialogue enables solutions-focused discussions. One participant recalled a transformative moment when they resisted the urge to judge during a heated debate, leading to a breakthrough idea for the team.

8. Feedback

Providing relevant, constructive feedback is a core skill. For instance, a team leader shared how learning to frame feedback positively helped an underperforming team member regain confidence and excel in their role.

9. Goal-Setting

Setting clear, attainable goals becomes foundational for success. One leader used this skill to help their team break a complex project into manageable milestones, keeping morale high throughout.

10. Patience

Cultivating patience allows others to express their needs. One manager described how waiting for an employee to articulate their concerns, rather than rushing to solutions, led to a more meaningful and lasting resolution.

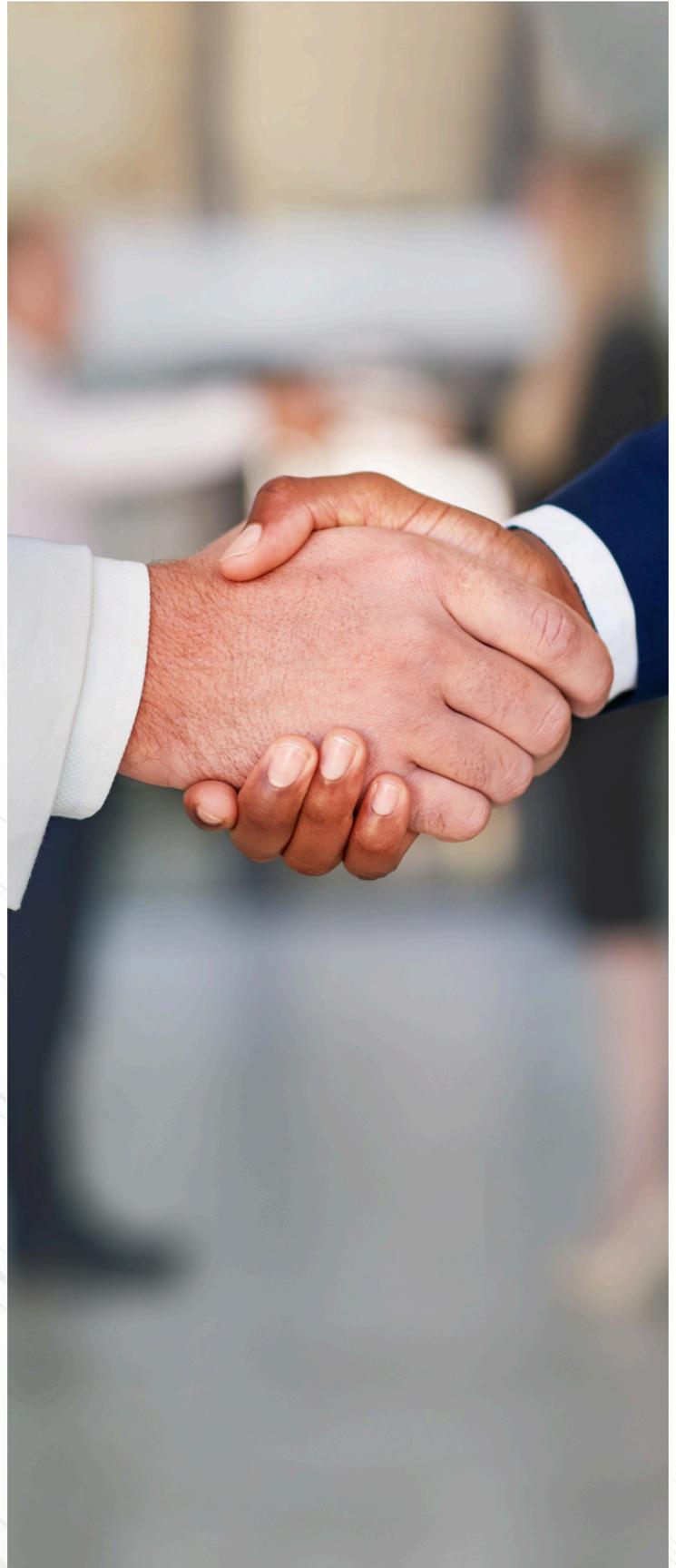


Why Relational Leadership is Essential

The Relational Leadership Framework goes beyond traditional leadership training. It's a transformational journey that equips leaders with the self-awareness, tools, and conversational skills needed to inspire and connect with their teams. The program's foundation in coaching and well-being makes it uniquely suited to foster psychological safety, improve mental health, and drive workplace recovery. Faith-based organizations, where values of community and service are paramount, have also embraced this framework. It aligns seamlessly with their missions, enabling leaders to navigate modern complexities while staying true to their core principles.

At IWS, we are immensely proud of the impact this program has had across industries. Leaders report greater confidence in navigating interpersonal challenges, building resilient teams, and fostering collaborative, stress-free environments.

If you're ready to transform your leadership style into one that prioritizes trust, well-being, and sustainable success, the Relational Leadership Framework is your next step. Let's create workplaces where people thrive together, one relationship at a time.



About Joyce Odidison

Joyce Odidison is a pioneer and Thought Leader of the groundbreaking Wellness Improvement System® and Well-being Intelligence Curriculum™. With a career spanning over two decades as a Conflict Analyst, Professional Trainer, University Lecturer, and Master Certified Coach, Joyce remains dedicated to learning and development.

As President and CEO of Interpersonal Wellness Services Inc., she has designed and created many life changing programs such as the first ICF Approved Wellness Coach Training program, the Global Workplace Wellness Summit, and the Wellness Competency Academy that provides well-being training and coaching for professionals and their families.

She continues to provide well-being training solutions and support for EAP plans, HR, Benefit Plans, Health care professionals, Coaches, Consultants and individuals looking to identify and mitigate their well-being risks.



Joyce Odidison

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Navigating Team Holiday Gatherings with Grace

Submitted by IWS Team



The holiday season is a time for joy, togetherness, and celebration. Workplace holiday gatherings offer an opportunity to strengthen bonds with colleagues and share in the festive spirit. However, these events can also present challenges if mindful behaviours aren't practiced. From office politics to personal boundaries, it's important to celebrate in ways that leave a positive impression and avoid career-limiting actions.

Here are some mindful celebration tips to help you enjoy the season while maintaining professionalism and respect.

- **Avoid Office Politics and Gossip**

Holiday gatherings are meant to foster camaraderie, not divisions.

Refrain from engaging in office gossip or political debates, as these can lead to discomfort or even conflict. Focus on light, positive conversations that bring people together.

Tip: Stick to topics like favorite holiday traditions, travel plans, or new hobbies.

- **Respect Personal Boundaries**

Physical boundaries are essential in any setting, and this includes workplace events. Avoid unwelcome physical contact, such as hugs or touches, unless you're sure it's comfortable for the other person. A friendly handshake or warm smile is often the best approach.

Remember: Respect is key to ensuring everyone feels included and safe.

- **Use Inclusive Language**

The holiday season means different things to different people. Be mindful of using inclusive language that respects diverse cultures, traditions, and beliefs. Phrases like “Happy Holidays” or “Season’s Greetings” are simple ways to include everyone in the celebration. Celebrate diversity by asking colleagues about their unique holiday customs.

- **Keep Flirting Out of the Festivities**

Workplace gatherings are not the time or place for romantic advances—especially with colleagues or their family members. Flirting with your boss’s spouse or making inappropriate comments can damage relationships and reputations.



Pro Tip: Treat the gathering like a professional networking event with a festive twist.

- **Practice Alcohol Moderation**

Alcohol is often part of holiday celebrations, but overindulgence can lead to regrettable behaviour. Know your limits and pace yourself. If you’re unsure, stick to non-alcoholic options or set a limit before the event.

Tip: Sip water or soda between drinks to stay in control and hydrated.

- **Show Respect and Gratitude**

Holiday events are an opportunity to thank your colleagues, leaders, and team for their support throughout the year. Be gracious, polite, and considerate in your interactions. This creates a positive atmosphere and leaves a lasting impression.

A kind word or note of appreciation can go a long way.



HAPPY
HOLIDAYS

- **Avoid Career-Limiting Actions**

Remember that holiday celebrations are still professional events. Inappropriate jokes, disrespectful comments, or unprofessional behaviour can have long-term consequences. Think before you act or speak to ensure your actions reflect your best self. Don't use the holiday event to settle scores or release pent up frustrations you feel towards your boss, company, or co-workers.

Tip: If you wouldn't say or do something in a meeting, don't do it at the party.

Celebrate Mindfully and Enjoy the Season

Holiday gatherings should be fun and uplifting, but a mindful approach is key to ensuring everyone has a positive experience. By avoiding pitfalls like politics, settling scores, disrespect, or overindulgence, you can celebrate the season while strengthening your professional relationships.

Make this holiday season a time of inclusion, respect, and genuine joy the leaves you and your team with fond memories and stronger connections for the year ahead.

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Start 2025 Right By Building Trust and Psychological Safety in the Workplace

Submitted by Hilda Gan

2025 is fast approaching—a perfect time to reflect on the environments we create for our teams.

Have you built a workplace where employees feel valued, heard, and empowered to thrive? A workplace that fosters psychological safety and trust enhances well-being and drives innovation, retention, and profitability. Imagine what that workplace would look like, “a place where people love what they do and love where they work.”

Why Employees Leave

Jan Tegze’s decade-long study of 8,509 professionals revealed three major reasons people quit their jobs:

1. Lack of opportunities to use skills and abilities (31%).



2. Bad management (22%).

3. Toxic workplace/company culture (21%).

These factors account for 74% of the reasons people change jobs. Addressing these issues presents an opportunity for organizations to reduce turnover and build thriving, engaged teams.

Understanding the Impact:

1. Lack of Opportunity for Career Growth

Employees who feel stagnant in their roles often lose motivation. The lack of pathways to develop skills or advance their careers can lead to disengagement, lower productivity, and eventual resignation.

- A LinkedIn report found that 94% of employees would stay at a company longer if it invested in their development.

2. Bad Managers

Promotions often prioritize technical expertise and project management skills over people leadership capabilities. Inexperienced managers may micromanage, be controlling, appear unapproachable and fail to support their teams effectively.

- **Survey:** A 2023 The Harris Poll on Toxic Bosses revealed that over 2/3 of American workers have experienced toxic bosses, and 31% currently work under one. The survey cites that 73% experience anxiety about returning to work on Mondays, and 41% seek therapy to cope.

3. Toxic Workplaces/Company Culture

Toxicity undermines collaboration and creativity. This can create fear in people for their psychological safety. The term introduced by Dr. Amy Edmondson is the ability to take interpersonal risks, speak up, disagree openly and raise concerns without fear of negative consequences—creates an environment of fear, stress, and low morale.

- **Stat:** According to McKinsey & Company survey, 89% believe that psychological safety in the workplace is essential. Its impact will contribute to team effectiveness, learning, employee retention, better decisions and better performance.

The Case for People-Centric Workplaces.

Adopting a people-centric workplace that fosters healthy work cultures makes good business sense.

Organizations that prioritize people alongside profits consistently outperform those that don't. Research by Great Place to Work shows that companies with strong workplace cultures achieve:

- **50% higher retention rates,**
- **6% better stock performance,**
- **and**
- **15x more job seeker interest.**

Satisfied employees are also 12% more productive (Team Stage), while those in toxic environments contribute to higher turnover costs and reduced team morale.



People-Centric Strategies to Transform Your Workplace

Creating a people-centric workplace can help create a psychologically safe place to work, one where people want to stay for the right reasons.

Addressing the key reasons Tegze identified for people leaving can have a significant impact on the shift to a People-Centric Workplace.

1. Foster Growth Opportunities

Providing employees with avenues for development is key to engagement.

- Offer continuous learning through online platforms, gamification, and lunch-and-learns.
- Structure performance reviews to emphasize personal and professional growth.
- Establish mentorship programs that nurture talent and strengthen workplace relationships.
- Use employee surveys to identify specific growth opportunities employees value, such as certifications or cross-departmental projects.



2. Invest in People Leadership Development

Effective leaders are essential to a healthy work culture. They are the key to creating psychologically safe workplaces, fostering growth opportunities and impacting work culture. Investing in their growth makes good business sense.

- Hire and promote managers with strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Provide leadership training early, avoiding the costly trial-and-error approach. The average manager receives training four years after starting in their role (Development Dimensions International).
- Assign stretch projects to promising employees to build their managerial capabilities.



Real-World Example: Google's leadership programs focus on training managers to foster open communication and support team growth, resulting in higher employee satisfaction.

3. Create a Healthy Work Culture **Culture shapes how employees interact, make decisions, and contribute to organizational success.**

- Review and revise your mission, vision, and values to reflect trust and inclusivity.
- Ensure open communication, where employees feel safe to share ideas and feedback.
- Recruit staff who value and foster a people-centric work culture
- Celebrate achievements—68% of employees say recognition motivates them to work harder (Team Stage 2024).

Hybrid Work Considerations: With remote and hybrid work becoming the norm, ensure that virtual spaces are inclusive and encourage collaboration. Being flexible with employee scheduling, and when feasible, can make people feel valued. Consider using tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams to facilitate engagement while respecting diverse communication styles.

Real-Life Success: Building a People-Centric Company

When my husband and I founded our engineering company, we wanted to create a workplace “where people loved what they did and loved where they worked.” We succeeded by prioritizing people and fostering a culture of trust, communication, and growth.

Our company was recognized by the Great Place to Work as one of the Best Workplaces in Canada® twice, ranking in the top 10. This experience demonstrates that with intentional effort, building a thriving workplace is achievable.

Conclusion

Addressing the top reasons employees leave; limited growth opportunities, poor management, and toxic cultures can transform your workplace into one where people thrive. By investing in people-centric practices, organizations can enjoy stronger retention, higher productivity, and long-term profitability.

Start 2025 with a commitment to building a workplace where employees love what they do and want to stay and be part of the organization's growth and success. Together, we can create environments where people and businesses flourish.



About Hilda Gan RN, MHSc, CHRL, Fascination Certified Advisor

Hilda Gan is the Founder and Chief People Officer of People Bright Consulting, a strategic HR Consulting firm that fosters a healthy work culture by creating people-centric work cultures and leaders who can connect, motivate and uplift their staff.

Hilda is an international best-selling author, motivational speaker, and creator of the highly successful, fun, and interactive REVUP Your People Leadership Skills™. She also hosts the REVUP Your Business podcast to help build successful people-centric workplaces.

With a diverse background in nursing, IT, Engineering, HR and learning and development, Hilda combines 25+ years of HR with a serial entrepreneur's pragmatic eye for business strategy. In the late 90s, she and her husband built iTRANS Consulting, an award-winning national Engineering firm that grew from 2 to 125 people in 7 offices across Canada. Wanting to create “a place where people love what they do and love where they work,” they did just that! iTRANS was recognized as a Best Workplaces in Canada® – top ten twice. The REVUP principles and People Bright Consulting are the result of Hilda’s experience and her passion for helping people.



Hilda Gan

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Six Reasons to Create a Team Charter in 2025

By Joyce Odidison

Are there pesky problems that affected your team's effectiveness in 2024 that you would like to address in 2025? Are you searching for ways to elevate your team process next year?

As we enter another year full of opportunities and challenges, it's a great time to set your team on a path for success.

Whether it's misaligned goals, unproductive conflict, or unclear responsibilities, these obstacles can prevent your team from achieving its full potential.

If your team faced persistent issues that hindered collaboration and productivity, start the year off with a roadmap for success. A solution? A Team Charter is a powerful tool to align your team's purpose, set clear expectations, and foster accountability.



As a Conflict Analyst, I have been creating team charters for organizations for over two decades. These charters have saved countless agreements and acted as crucial tools to hold team members accountable and realign the team when differing ideals or challenges arise. Through this work, I've witnessed firsthand how a well-crafted team charter can serve as a stabilizing force during times of uncertainty, fostering unity, focus, and resilience.

Here are six compelling reasons why every team should create or refresh their Team Charter in 2025:



- **Align Team Goals with Organizational Objectives**

A Team Charter serves as a roadmap for success and ensures that everyone understands the team's goals and how they contribute to the organization's broader mission. By creating a clear connection between individual roles and overarching objectives, your team stays focused, motivated, and aligned.

Pro Tip: Make your charter a living document that evolves as goals shift throughout the year.

- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities**

Role ambiguity is a leading cause of workplace stress and inefficiency. A Team Charter eliminates confusion by defining who is responsible for what. This clarity reduces overlap, prevents misunderstandings, and ensures that every team member knows how to contribute effectively.

Ask your team: "Who owns each process, and how do we ensure accountability?"

- **Set Clear Communication Guidelines**

Miscommunication can derail even the most skilled teams. A Team Charter establishes how your team will communicate, from preferred tools to meeting etiquette. In a hybrid or remote work environment, this clarity is even more critical for maintaining connection and collaboration.

Example: Agree on response times for emails or online project management tool messages to ensure seamless communication.

- **Resolve Conflicts Proactively**

Conflict is inevitable, but unresolved conflict can be destructive. A Team Charter provides a framework for handling disputes constructively, focusing on solutions rather than blame. This reduces tension, fosters trust, and keeps your team moving forward.

Pro Tip: Include a conflict resolution process in your charter that encourages open dialogue and fairness.



Key Reasons to Create a Team Charter in 2025

- **Support Well-Being and Mental Health:** A team charter fosters a supportive work environment by outlining strategies to manage workload, stress and promotes mental health.
- **Define Clear Goals and Alignment:** In a dynamic workplace, a team charter reduces ambiguity and stress, enabling team members to focus on meaningful, goal-oriented tasks.
- **Enhance Accountability and Reduce Tension:** With hybrid and remote work trends continuing to grow, a team charter sets clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations, offering a proactive approach to accountability, harmony and mental wellness.
- **Streamline Communication for Better Collaboration:** Poor communication is a significant stressor in teams. A team charter outlines communication norms, ensuring openness, transparency, and trust.
- **Proactively Address and Mitigate Conflicts:** Teams that lack conflict management strategies often struggle with toxic dynamics. A team charter includes clear protocols for resolving disagreements, creating a psychologically safe environment.

Invest in a team charter in 2025 to build stronger, healthier, and more resilient teams!

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- **Build a Culture of Accountability**

When everyone understands their commitments and expectations, accountability becomes a shared value. A Team Charter reinforces this culture by documenting agreed-upon behaviours and standards, making it easier to hold each other accountable without micromanaging.

Try this: Add an accountability check-in during team meetings to keep progress on track.

- **Future-Proof Your Team For Change**

Whether it's adapting to new technologies, navigating market shifts, or facing unforeseen challenges, a Team Charter helps teams stay resilient. It provides a solid foundation that can be revisited and updated as the team's needs evolve.

Think of your Team Charter as a flexible framework, not a rigid set of rules.

Ready to Transform Your Team in 2025?

Creating a Team Charter isn't just about solving past problems; it's about setting your team up for long-term success. When everyone understands the "why," "what," and "how" of their work, teams become more engaged, innovative, and effective.

Start the new year strong by gathering your team and drafting a charter that aligns with your vision for 2025. Need help getting started? If you're ready to create or refresh your Team Charter for 2025, I'd be honored to guide your team through the process to ensure it's tailored to your unique needs and goals. Let's work together to set your team up for success this year. Reach out for expert guidance to ensure your charter works for your unique team dynamics.

Let 2025 be the year your team thrives together.

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Workplace Wellness During the Holidays and New Year

By Dr Neesha Patel

The holiday season is a time for joy and reflection, but what I find from working with my clients is that it can also bring added pressure especially when trying to manage personal and professional commitments. To create a healthier and more supportive environment during this period, workplaces can adopt simple yet effective wellness strategies while encouraging employees to prioritise their self-care and psychological wellbeing. Giving employees permission to focus on their health and wellbeing during this busy time can be extremely empowering.

Here are some suggestions based on scientific evidence about what works well.



1. Offering flexible working

The holidays bring a flurry of personal responsibilities. Offering flexible hours or remote work options helps employees juggle work and festive events, leading to better productivity, less stress, improved work-life balance, and greater satisfaction.

2. Mindfulness and Stress Management

Year-end deadlines can heighten stress levels and lead to burnout even before the holiday seasons begins. Employers can support mental health and wellbeing by hosting mindfulness workshops, promoting meditation apps, or encouraging short breaks to recharge during the day. This can result in employees feeling more calm which leads to better focus and collaboration.

3. Fostering Team Connection

Strengthen team morale with opportunities to connect by hosting events like potlucks or team parties can help to celebrate the festive seasons, and create a sense of belonging.

4. Supporting Physical Health

Encourage employees to stay active and maintain healthy habits despite the festive indulgences. Simple initiatives, like offering nutritious snacks, or sharing easy fitness tips, can make a big difference in energy and focus.

5. Supporting Mental Health

The holiday season isn't joyous for everyone. Share resources for counselling or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs UK only) and encourage open conversations about mental health. Creating a supportive environment helps employees navigate challenges with confidence.

Reflecting on 2024 and goal-Setting for the New Year

As we come to the end of another year, it's natural to reflect achievements and set goals for the New Year. Help employees to recognise accomplishments, offer tools for goal-setting, and provide opportunities for development to inspire motivation for the year ahead.

The start of a new year is the perfect opportunity to reflect on past achievements and set meaningful intentions for the future. Employers can help employees create impactful goals by providing resources like workshops, goal-setting templates, or mentorship programs.



Recognising and celebrating accomplishments through recognition initiatives fosters pride and motivation. To ease the transition back into routine in January, consider planning engaging team-building activities, establishing realistic early-year objectives, and sharing encouraging messages. These strategies can create a positive and energised start to the year, help to enjoy the holiday season whilst setting the tone for growth and success.

Self-Care Tips for the Holiday Season

Amid the festive rush, it's easy to forget about self-care. However, prioritising your well-being is essential to maintain good health and a positive mindset. Self-compassion—being kind to yourself and acknowledging your feelings without judgment—is also essential for maintaining balance during this time. Here are top 10 tips on self-care and self-compassion tips for employees and employers for the holiday season:

1. Stay Active: Incorporate light exercise such as walking, yoga, or stretching to reduce stress and boost energy. Physical activity can be as simple as a quick stroll during your lunch break.

2. Eat Mindfully: Enjoy festive treats in moderation while balancing them with nourishing meals. This helps you maintain energy and prevents the post-indulgence slump.

3. Prioritise Rest: Sleep is critical for recharging both your body and mind. Aim for consistent, high-quality rest, even with late-night festivities.

4. Carve Out “Me Time”: Whether it's reading, journaling, having a warm bath, or simply relaxing with a cup of tea, schedule moments of solitude to decompress and recharge.





5. Set Boundaries: Avoid overcommitting to social or work obligations. Learn to say no when needed to protect your energy.

6. Practice Gratitude: Reflect on the positives in your life and express gratitude daily, which can improve emotional well-being and reduce stress.

7. Digital Detox: Reduce screen time before bed to improve sleep quality, especially during the busy holiday season.

8. Acknowledge Your Limits: Understand that it's okay to not do everything perfectly. Let go of the pressure to meet every expectation, and give yourself permission to say no.

9. Be Gentle with Yourself: Instead of criticizing yourself for feeling overwhelmed, treat yourself with the same kindness you'd offer a friend. This mindset can prevent burnout and encourage resilience.

10. Reframe Setbacks: If something doesn't go as planned—at work or in personal life—view it as an opportunity to learn rather than a failure. By practicing self-compassion, employees can navigate the holidays with less stress and more emotional balance.

To conclude, the holiday season and New Year provide an opportunity to prioritise wellness and growth, both individually and within the workplace. By fostering connection, promoting healthy habits, and encouraging self-compassion, employees can feel empowered to navigate this time with greater balance and positivity. As we look forward to the new year ahead, let's embrace this festive season as a time to cultivate gratitude, well-being, and personal growth—together.

**Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday and New Year.
Seasons Greetings**

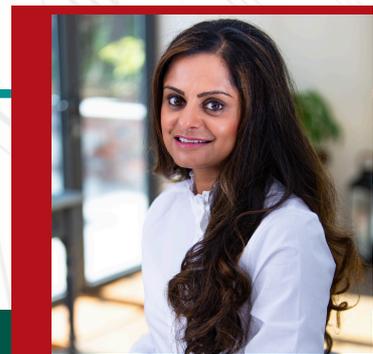
About Dr Neesha Patel

Dr. Neesha Patel, Founder and Director of Evoking Health Ltd, is a Chartered Health Psychologist* in the UK with a deep passion for positively transforming lives. She specialises in delivering bespoke, high-quality holistic psychological care that integrates both mind and body. With extensive expertise in coaching individuals, Dr. Patel empowers people to achieve sustainable lifestyle changes that promote positive health and well-being. She leverages cutting-edge scientific research and psychological strategies to guide lasting behaviour change and enhance overall quality of life.

With over a decade of clinical experience in clinical health psychology, Dr. Patel has designed and led diabetes and obesity psychological services across NHS settings and private practice. She deeply understands the importance of tailoring psychological interventions to diverse needs, providing high-quality therapies that inspire lasting change. Her work extends to corporate organisations, pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions, schools, and faith communities, where she delivers impactful health and well-being education and training.

Beyond individual care, Dr. Patel has worked globally to train healthcare professionals, particularly in chronic health management. Her innovative approach to behaviour change techniques helps improve clinical consultations and optimise patient outcomes. Dr. Patel's expertise has been recognised through multiple peer-reviewed publications and features in national and international media, including TV and radio, showcasing her groundbreaking doctoral research on diabetes, health inequalities, post-doctoral experience in clinical obesity.

*N.B In the UK, the title "Health Psychologist" is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).



Dr Neesha Patel



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