

Tip SHEET

MAY 2018

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

All of your behaviour takes place in the context of your relationships; the success of nearly everything that you do in the workplace and in your personal life depends on the quality of your relationships.

But, what is a “relationship”?

“A relationship is a series of encounters with another (person) which are shaped by the experience of past encounters and the expectations of future encounters, and where the actions of each (individual) can affect the other within some shared context.”

- Jubilee Centre & Relational Thinking Network.

One element from the definition above is worth keeping in mind as you read the rest of this Tip Sheet:

- ... the actions of each (individual) can affect the other within some shared context

Factors impacting on the quality of our workplace and personal relationships

In its report, *Renewing Australian Workplaces*, Reventure, Converge International's research partner, identified the forces driving change in our workplaces and, therefore, impacting on our relationships:

- Open planned offices can impact on staff relationships. In open planned offices employees can feel as though their activities are being observed. This can lead to people spending less time building connections with others
- Productivity first cultures shift the emphasis to getting things done. A productivity first culture can detract from staff taking the time to get to know one another and making the effort to build stronger, more connected relationships
- Technology and remote work are changing the concept of a team. Technological advancement, using cloud-based work tools, working off laptops and mobile devices and the expansion of remote work means staff in the same

organisation may not physically meet members of their own team. This leads to changed team dynamics and a lack of personal connection, making it more difficult to build and maintain positive workplace relationships

- The emergence of “**Knowledge Workers**”. Organisations are employing more contract staff who bring specific knowledge and skill sets to contained projects. The growth in casual and contract-based work means that once a project is finished, workers move on to a new role, leaving little time or opportunity for people to forge meaningful workplace relationships

Time, economic and social pressures are also impacting on the quality of our relationships within our own family and personal lives:

- In the week leading up to the 2016 Australian Census, conducted during August of that year, full time workers spent an average of 44.4 hours at work
- According to the Census, workers aged between 45 - 54 years are more likely to work overtime
- Census data showed that men are twice as likely as women to work overtime

Longer working hours can have a significant impact on our relationships; the *Renewing Australian Workplaces* report stated: “For some, the drive to climb the corporate ladder to the top can lead to (people) neglecting other aspects of their lives, including their relationships”.

Tips on building positive relationships in life and at work

“By being more socially connected, your people are more likely to learn from each other... Stronger relationships at work help us to feel more at ease in sharing our concerns and ideas, seeking new information, and can give us more confidence to speak out if there’s something that can be done more efficiently and effectively,” BUPA.

TIME

To build healthy relationships, we need to be able to invest our time. Finding time to commit to building positive relationships means implementing strategies such as blocking time in our calendars to enable us to enjoy the company of our partners, close family and friends.

MORE INFORMATION

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TRUST

Trust is the foundation of every positive relationship. Mutual trust brings us closer together and cultivating trust means we can be open and honest in our thoughts and actions.

OPENNESS

Open and honest communication between partners, family members and friends enables us to better understand each other and what we need from each other in our relationships, and empowers us to address challenges before they lead to growing apart or damaged relationships.

MINDFULNESS

When we are mindful of our words and actions, we take responsibility for the ways we contribute to enriching and affecting our relationships. It's important to focus on each interaction we have with others; this effort ensures our experiences are not wasted and provides an opportunity to build deeper connections with other people in a shorter amount of time.

RESPECT

People who respect each other value each other's personalities, traits and opinions. This foundation for positive relationships can be vital when supporting each other through difficult situations.

COMMUNICATION

To build closer relationships, our interactions should focus on "rich" communication channels, including face-to-face or telephone conversations. When we communicate with each other in these ways, we build connection through the warmth in our voice, through gestures and touch and through varied facial expressions, including making eye contact; these cues help to provide context and clarity around our communication. When we use text messages, emails or social media apps to communicate, much of this context, and the connection it creates, is lost.

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives." - Tony Robbins, author and life coach

Supporting you to build positive relationships

There are many barriers in the way of building effective, positive relationships in our personal lives and at work, but there are also a range of strategies and ideas that you can use to focus on building enriching, supportive and effective relationships.

Find out how better relationships can support your wellbeing and success by visiting www.convergeinternational.com.au or calling **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)**.

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