

# CREATING SPACE AND ACCEPTANCE FOR AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE

## AUTHORS

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The new workplace paradigm will require many behavioral changes from employees. While everyone has worked from home for months during the peak of the pandemic, it will not be as easy to ‘flip the switch’ and show up to work as if nothing happened. This time has been traumatic and life-altering for many. It is important to realize that this time of transition will carry with it unique anxieties, and leaders will need to assume that people are acting with positive intent until there is a reason not to.

Businesses and all levels of leadership within should encourage people to bring their whole self to work, and be understanding and empathetic when it comes to allowing for authentic conversation, ideas and ways of working.

## ENCOURAGE AUTHENTICITY

It is up to leadership to first be authentic themselves, and then to encourage employees to show up as a whole person, in a manner authentic to them. The lines are now blurred between work and personal life, and people should not have to keep them separate any longer. It is a reality that people have concerns, stressors, joys, etc. and that those do not disappear when they arrive at work. All people have a range of activities, responsibilities, familial matters that are essential parts of who they are. It's time for this to be accepted and heard rather than require employees to ‘leave it at home’. The more people feel accepted and heard, the more they will be fulfilled with their role and the more loyal and productive they are likely to be. Leadership should encourage people to show up whole to work each day, and let them know by not only telling them, but showing them that they will be accepted for who they are.

## MUTUAL RESPECT

With many varying opinions and actions, it may be hard for some not to judge or compare themselves and others. Within your workforce you will likely have some employees that are terrified and will not go anywhere outside of their home and the office, while others may be less concerned and are going to restaurants, shops and seeing friends. There will be a new element of judgment amongst employees as these varying opinions and actions come together. Leaders will need to clearly communicate, and be transparent early on, that negative attitudes/behaviors and judgments are not acceptable. It will be key to establish an environment of mutual respect to prevent additional stress or conflict within your workforce.

## FLEXIBILITY

Many people will have varying degrees of change in their lives due to the pandemic. Some will have childcare concerns while others have elderly parents or high risk family members they worry about. Some will be more fearful than others about contracting the virus, etc. Leaders will need to stress to their people that they want them to be authentic (from the heart) in how they show up and lead themselves at work each day. Communicate clearly that if something is not working it needs to be and is acceptable and encouraged to be voiced. Then listen and make appropriate changes to help employees re-engage in the workplace.