

CREATING
CONNECTIONS
TO BUILD
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY

EPISODE FIVE

THE WELLBEING LAB PODCAST SERIES FOR XERO



THEWELLBEINGLAB

A MICHELLEMCQUAID PROGRAM

HOW ARE YOU DOING?

1. STEP ON THE CIVILITY SCALE

Think about your behavior at work over the last month and rate yourself on a scale of 1 for never and 7 for always for each of the following questions.

	<i>Never</i>						<i>Always</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How often have you used email when a face-to-face conversation was needed?							
How often have you texted or emailed during a meeting?							
How often have you shown up late or left a meeting early with no explanation for the organizer?							
How often have you spoken unkindly of others?							
How often have you failed to listen or shown little interest in other's opinions?							

For the full scale, please visit www.christineporath.com/assess-yourself

2. APPLY YOUR PERMAH 3 POINT CHECK

Looking at your score, answer the following questions:

- How** do I feel about my results (the comfortable and the uncomfortable scores)?
- Why** am I feeling this way?
- Who** do I want to be as I step forward with this new insight? What wellbeing action do I want to prioritize to help build stronger connections and psychological safety with my colleagues?

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- The one consistent finding to date when it comes to improving your wellbeing is that: '*other people matter*'. This isn't just because human survival depends on others, but because the primary goal of most of our behavior is to feel like we belong and that we matter in the eyes of others. In fact, William James, the father of modern psychology, suggested that the deepest principle in human nature is the need to be appreciated. And other researchers have found that people have a basic need to feel responded to, respected and important to others, and conversely to avoid rejection, insignificance, and disconnection, that shapes a great deal of our behavior. For example, many hygiene habits, social rituals, and preoccupations with image, status, and achievement are all driven by people's need for connection.
- The truth is we each have a biological and psychological need for social support and each time we joyfully connect with another person, the pleasure-inducing hormone oxytocin is released into our bloodstream, immediately reducing anxiety and improving concentration and focus. This is why when employees report that their immediate boss cares about them, employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity are higher and so is profitability.
- Furthermore, studies have found that having a sense of belonging correlates with a range of positive outcomes, including higher self-esteem, greater life satisfaction, faster recovery from disease, lower levels of stress, less mental illness and a longer life. For example, if you have a best friend at work, you're seven times more likely to be engaged in your job, produce higher quality work, have higher levels of wellbeing and are less likely to be injured on the job!
- But in an age where the reported rates of workplace loneliness are rising, and Associate Professor Christine Porath has found that 98% of us say we experience uncivil and rude behavior at work, with 56% of us saying that it's a weekly occurrence, we are often missing opportunities to treat each other with the respect, kindness, and appreciation we each want and deserve. And this not because we're necessarily working with bad people, but because in a busy, technologically focused and increasingly diverse world it can be hard to connect with each other.
- The good news is new research has found it takes just a micro moment to genuinely connect with another person. You can do this by:
 - Sharing one or more positive emotions between you and another person, such as interest, joy, amusement or pride,
 - Synchronizing your biochemistry and behaviors (by looking into their eyes, mirroring their body language, or matching their vocal tone);
 - Embracing the feelings of mutual care that arise.

Researchers describe this process of connection between people as 'positivity resonance' and have found it results in an upward spiral of warmth and trust.

- Unfortunately, Professor Nick Epley at Chicago Booth Business School has found that due to interpersonal misunderstanding about what would actually help to improve our relationships, we often forgo opportunities that would help us to thrive because we forecast that they will feel awkward, when in actual fact when we try them they feel good for us and good for others.
- Professor Adam Grant at Wharton Business School has found that our beliefs about the types of social interactions that are valued in our workplace not only influence how civil and generous we are towards each other but ultimately how successful we will be at work. He has found that:
 - If you believe that we live in a world where it all comes down to survival of the fittest as you compete for scarce resources at work then you're more likely to behave like a "taker" who tries to get as much as you can from others, or a "matcher" who constantly tries to ensure an even exchange of favors – a bit of quid pro quo – to ensure your own success.
 - If you believe that we live in a world where it all comes down to survival of the kindest – which coincidentally is what Darwin's research found because we are social creatures – then you're more likely to behave like a "giver" who willingly shares your time, energy, knowledge, skills, ideas and connections to benefit others.
- Adam's studies suggest however that we want to try and behave like self-protective givers – who don't just help others because we can't say no and are trying to please everybody and put ourselves at risk of burning out – but who can be generous because we know our limits and so look for high-impact, low-cost ways of giving that align to our strengths so that we can sustain our generosity and enjoy the work we're doing. By looking for win-win outcomes, we can grow the opportunities for the people we're helping, our team, and our organization.
- Adam has found that self-protective givers are generally more efficient at solving problems, getting things done, and balancing the demands of our work to ensure consistent performance. They're also more likely to build teams that are more cohesive and coordinated and create environments where other people feel that their needs are a top priority, which helps us to personally and professionally flourish. In fact, Adam's studies suggest that self-protective givers are the people who are most likely to succeed in workplaces.
- In contrast, Adam has found people who behave more like matchers – which is what many workplaces encourage us to be – tend to end up in the middle when it comes to succeeding at work because everybody is so busy exchanging favors no one really gets ahead. The takers, on the other hand, tend to do okay in the short-term, but once we discover these people are only in it for themselves none of us really want good things for this person and so long-term they generally wind up not doing so well as they usually run out of people they can keep taking from.

WHAT CAN I TRY?

- **PUT YOUR STRENGTHS GOGGLES ON** – Looking for strengths in others can be a wonderful way to create these micro moments of connection with others. So, next time you attend a meeting, put your ‘Strengths Goggles’ on and try looking for the moments where your colleagues are at their best. After you spot their strength, if the timing is right, tell the person what you saw and why you value their use of this strength.
- **ASK APPRECIATIVE QUESTIONS** – By asking questions that help to draw out the true, the good, and the possible in others you can help them to feel seen and appreciated. Try asking: “What’s working well at the moment?”, “What’s been the highlight of your week?”, or “What are you looking forward to in the coming months?”
- **GET GRATEFUL** – Studies have found that gratitude is a kind of mega strategy to improve your wellbeing and your relationships because it opens your heart and urges you to give back – to do something good in return – helping to nurture new relationships and improve existing ones. Try to take the time to genuinely thank one person each day and be specific about what they did you valued and the difference it made for you.
- **ALIGN YOUR GIVING TO YOUR STRENGTHS** – Give in ways that play to your interests and strengths to preserve your energy and provide greater value. So rather than being known as a nice person who can help everyone with everything, choose one or two ways of offering unique value to others – things you do well and enjoy.
- **INVEST IN 5-MINUTE FAVORS** – Set aside dedicated time each week to help someone else in your network. For example, experts often share knowledge, coaches teach skills, mentors give advice and guidance, connectors make introductions, extra-milers show up early, stay late, and volunteer for extra work and helpers provide hands-on task support and emotional support.
- **DO MORE OF WHAT MATTERS** – Prioritize the help requests that come your way – say yes when it matters most and no when you need to, i.e. refer some requests to others when you don’t have the time or skills to help. One of the ways you can protect yourself from over extending yourself as a giver is to focus on helping others who are making requests that are relevant to your team’s objectives or your organization’s goals. Learn to spot takers, and steer clear of them. They’re a drain on your energy, not to mention a performance hazard.
- **HAVE KIND CONVERSATIONS** – When you’re struggling with someone it’s a sure sign that it’s time for a kind conversation. Be clear about the intention of the conversation and that you’re reaching out because you respect and value them, and even though it may feel a little uncomfortable as you navigate your way through the conversation, you’re genuinely committed to finding a better way forward together. Be sure to stay out of judgment and sit in curiosity (i.e., what are the questions you need to ask to understand what’s happening for the other person), remembering that we are each usually doing the best we can, with what we have, in any given moment. Look for ways you can each draw on your strengths and be sure to keep checking in as you find better ways of working together.

YOUR INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

1. START THE DAY WITH A 5-MINUTE FAVOR

For the next five working days try to start your mornings with a 5-Minute Favor. Remember this doesn't have to be a big favor, just one person, one favor, for five minutes each day for five days. You could share information, teach someone a skill, give some advice or guidance to someone, make an introduction for someone, provide some hands-on task support or emotional support, or go the extra-mile for someone and volunteer to help them with something. If people offer to repay you in some way, ask them to pay it forward instead, by helping or supporting someone else.

2. COMPLETE YOUR TEAM SDT GUIDE FOR SUCCESS

To ensure you have the motivation to follow through on your chosen actions, complete the SDT Guide for Success steps below for each of the priorities you've chosen:



**What's your
WANT-TO CHOICE?**



**How will you
TRACK YOUR PROGRESS?**



**Who will you
BUDDY UP WITH?**

For example, if you've made a WANT-TO CHOICE about trying to connect people across your network. Find a way to TRACK YOUR PROGRESS by noting who you've helped, what you did for them and how it has impacted your relationships and sense of psychological safety. And BUDDY UP by checking in on how you're all doing at the next team meeting.

YOUR TEAM CHALLENGE

1. MAKING TIME FOR CONNECTION

To help improve psychological safety in your team, make some time to connect with each other at a more human level in the next week to improve your levels of psychological safety. It might just be a team morning coffee, actually stopping for a bite of lunch together, or trying a strengths conversation during your next meeting.

Or if you're ready to take things to the next level, talk about what you can do to improve the levels of psychological safety in your team, so people are staying out of judgment, showing compassion and quickly having kind conversations.

2. COMPLETE YOUR TEAM SDT GUIDE FOR SUCCESS

To ensure you have the motivation to follow through on your chosen actions, complete the SDT Guide for Success steps below for each of the priorities you've chosen:

 <p>What's your WANT-TO CHOICE?</p>	 <p>How will you TRACK YOUR PROGRESS?</p>	 <p>Who will you BUDDY UP WITH?</p>
--	--	--

For example, if you've made a WANT-TO CHOICE about having more kind conversations in your team note this down. Find a way to TRACK YOUR PROGRESS by noting down who you've spoken with, what you agreed, and how this is shaping your relationship. And BUDDY UP by checking in on how you're all doing at the next team meeting.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Take Christine Porath's detailed Civility Survey at www.christineporath.com/assess-yourself/
- **Listen to this podcast** with Christine Porath and be sure to **grab her cheat sheet**.
- **Listen to this podcast** with Adam Grant on how to be an effective giver and be sure to **grab his cheat sheet**.
- **Watch this TedTalk** by Adam Grant on why givers are more likely to succeed in workplaces.
- **Take Adam's Give and Take survey**.
- **Grab these Wellbeing Cards** for small, practical ways you can improve each of the PERMAH pillars.