

THE CHARACTERISTICS, CAUSES, AND PREVENTION OF FACULTY BURNOUT



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CHARACTERISTICS OF BURNOUT



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Definitions of “Burnout”



“Burnout is the experience of being pulled between expectation and reality at work” (Jonathan Malesic, *The End of Burnout: Why Work Drains Us and How to Build Better Lives*, 2).



“Burnout is an ailment of the soul. We burn out in large part because we believe work is the sure path to social, moral, and spiritual flourishing. Work simply can’t deliver what we want from it, and the gap between our ideals and our on-the-job reality leads to exhaustion, cynicism, and despair” (Malesic, 3).



“Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” (World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases).

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COMPONENTS OF BURNOUT

#1. Exhaustion

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Aspects of Exhaustion

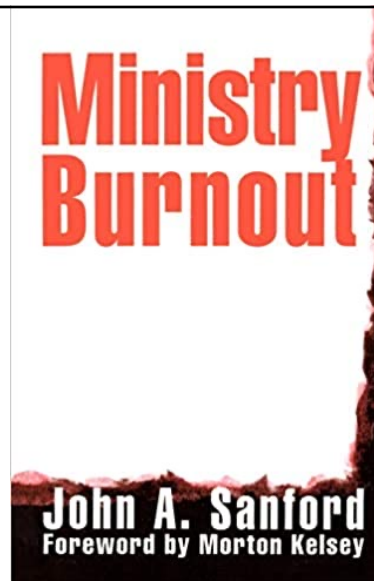
Overwhelmed by work demands and depleted of necessary resources to meet them successfully

Drained, used up, depleted, fatigued, worn out, debilitated



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“The word ‘burnout’ is drawn from the imagery of fire, and fire is a form and symbol for energy. So in its broadest scope, the problem of Burnout is a problem of energy. As both Freud and Jung have shown, each individual has a certain quantity of libido or psychic energy at her disposal, and it is this energy that enlivens consciousness and makes effective living possible. This energy can be used up, but more psychic energy can also be generated” (4).



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COMPONENTS OF BURNOUT

#2. Cynicism

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Aspects of Cynicism

Feelings of negativity toward one's job

Detachment from one's job
(depersonalization)

Loss of idealism, irritability, withdrawal

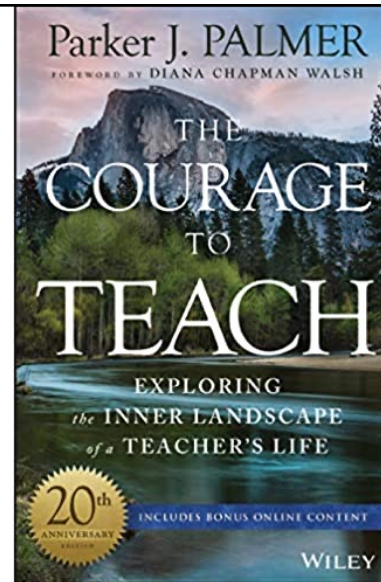
Criticism and complaining

“professorial melancholy” (David
Machell)



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“It is not unusual to see faculty in midcareer don the armor of cynicism against students, education, and any sign of hope. It is the cynicism that comes when high hopes one once had for teaching have been dashed by experience—or by the failure to interpret one’s experience accurately” (48).



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COMPONENTS OF BURNOUT

#3. Ineffectiveness

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Aspects of Ineffectiveness

Feelings of powerlessness and lack of achievement and productivity

Made a mistake in choice of career

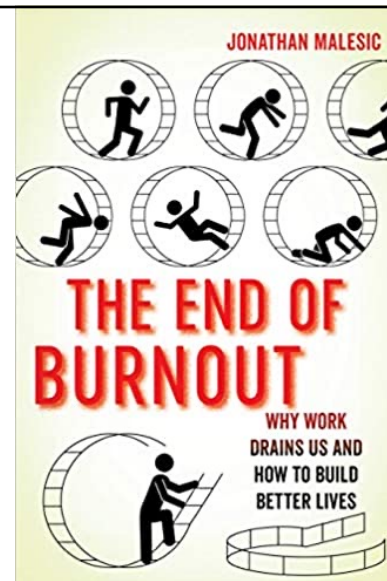
Turning into a person they dislike

Low morale, inability to cope, incapacity



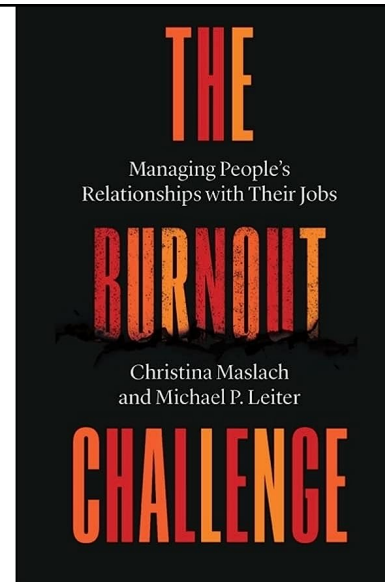
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“Frustrated workers feel that their effort on the job is in vain. They cannot see the good they accomplish. The fruit of their labor may be abstract or ephemeral. They may have too little real work to do. They may be passed over for promotions, or there may be no possibility for promotion, or their supervisors may barely notice their effort and achievement” (80).



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“The burnout syndrome occurs when people experience combined crises on all three of these dimensions, most of the time. They feel chronically exhausted; they have withdrawn mentally, socially, and emotionally from their work; and they have lost confidence in their capacity to have a constructive impact. Basically, this means that they are experiencing high stress, a hostile job environment, and a pessimistic evaluation of themselves” (3).



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Gallup Statistics

36% of U.S. workers are engaged in their work.

20% of employees strongly agree that they like what they do every day.

28% of U.S. employees experience burnout on the job very often or always.

Spending time with their manager is the worst part of the day for employees.

24% of U.S. employees feel strongly that their organization cares about their wellbeing.

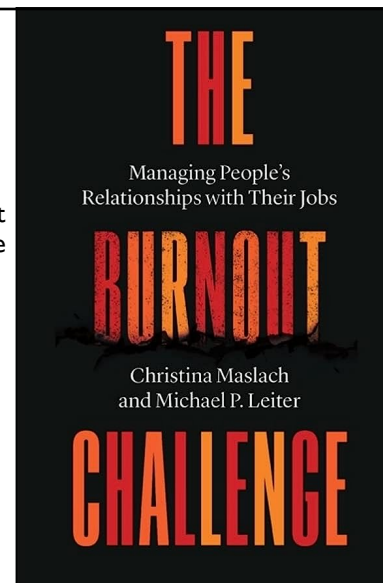
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CAUSES OF BURNOUT



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“Many coping strategies involve removal from the workplace (through leaves, vacations, or reduced hours) and improvement of well-being (through rest, relaxation, healthy habits, and exercise). But another response is to view burnout as an unusual inability of the individual to tolerate an atmosphere that others do not find toxic—in other words, as a sort of illness or ‘medical’ condition that needs to be diagnosed and treated or cured. Both of these responses—the coping strategies and the medical approach—assume that the problem lies within the worker, and that the solution is to ‘fix’ the worker in some way..... Based on extensive research, we strongly disagree that ‘fixing the person’ should be the focus in dealing with burnout. We argue that burnout results from mismatches between the person and the job, and that solutions must therefore address *both* the workers and the workplace” (39-40).



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Dimensions of a Person's Relationship with Their Job

Capability Dimension

Workload

Control

Social Dimension

Rewards

Community

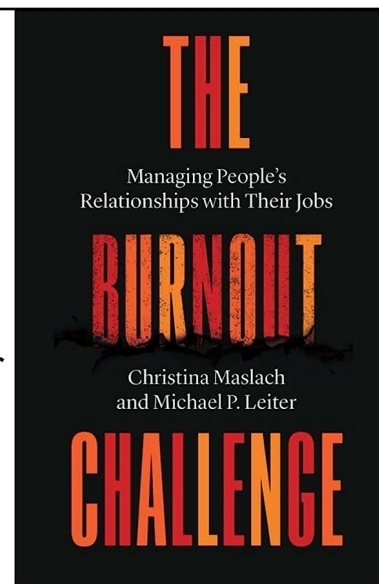
Moral Dimension

Fairness

Values

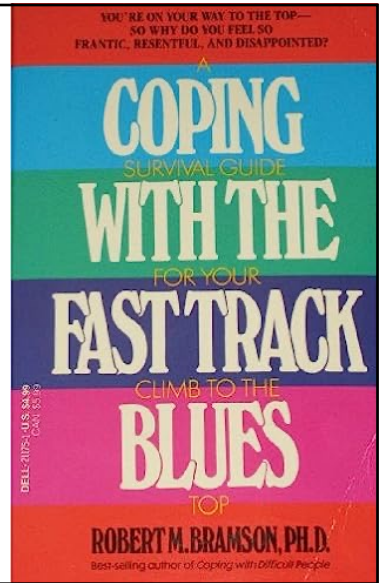
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“We’ve found that these bad mismatches often have their roots in erroneous assumptions about what makes people tick—what motivates them, what rewards them, and what discourages them. In other words, there is often a misunderstanding of basic psychology. The more that any or all of these six conditions depart from employees’ aspirations or preferred ways of working, the more employees are vulnerable to burnout” (7).



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“I’ve concluded that most of us, even with all our wonderful human adaptability, have limits, and our bodies and unconscious minds know them even if we don’t. We may accomplish more in twelve hours than we do in six, but the increment of additional accomplishments is likely to be much smaller than the simple arithmetic would lead us to expect. Two human characteristics vitiate the assumption that twelve hours are twice as good as six: the tendency of workers to unconsciously pace themselves and the demonstrated effects of overload on effectiveness” (24).



#2. Lack of Control

Micromanagement, incompetent leadership, and ineffective teams

Lack of autonomy in specific job tasks

Excluded from decisions, ignored, limited, manipulated, distrusted, and undermined



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#3. Insufficient Rewards

Not reaping sufficient rewards—financially, socially, or emotionally—for the hard and high-quality work they are doing

Pay is too low, benefits are too few, and promotions are too infrequent

Positive feedback is rare, while negative feedback is plentiful.



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#3. Insufficient Rewards

A study of 200,000 global employees by the Boston Consulting Group found that the top reason they reported enjoying their work was “feeling appreciated.”

79% of Americans who leave their jobs voluntarily cite lack of appreciation as a key reason for their leaving.



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#4. Breakdown of Community

Intensity and exhaustion of work can lead to antisocial behaviors.

Name-calling, incivility, sarcastic remarks, talking behind a colleague's back, trying to belittle or intimidate one's colleagues, hostility, social isolation

Toxic encounters undermine the sense of psychological safety, deny people a sense of belonging, and undermine core values.



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#5. Absence of Fairness

Decisions are viewed as unjust, people are not treated with respect, and various processes and outcomes are biased and discriminatory.

Leaders show favoritism to those who pander to the boss's ego in illegitimate ways.

Systemic biases, implicit biases



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#6. Values Conflicts

Job requirements clash with moral principles, causing moral injury or compassion fatigue.

Organizations can have conflicting values, preaching one thing while practicing another.

Employer's objectives clash with their integrity, dignity, spirit, and will.



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Symptoms of Burnout: Physical

- ◆ Frequent headaches
- ◆ Getting sick often
- ◆ Prolonged fatigue
- ◆ Stomach and digestive issues
- ◆ Restlessness
- ◆ Insomnia
- ◆ Heart palpitations
- ◆ Chest pain
- ◆ Cardiovascular disease
- ◆ Changes in pain experiences

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Symptoms of Burnout: Psychological

- ◆ Panic attacks
- ◆ Increasing feelings of anger
- ◆ Frustration
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Feeling hopeless
- ◆ Feeling helpless
- ◆ Feeling pessimistic
- ◆ Loss of enjoyment for activities once loved
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Anxiety

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Symptoms of Burnout: Behavioral

- ◆ Drop in productivity
- ◆ Increased absenteeism
- ◆ Isolation
- ◆ Coming into work later than usual
- ◆ Poor team player
- ◆ Mood changes
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Job dissatisfaction
- ◆ Increased alcohol/drug use

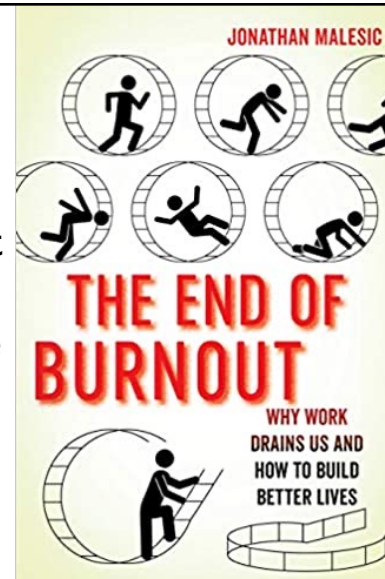
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PREVENTION OF BURNOUT



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“Many authors tell people who already feel worn out and ineffectual that they can change their situation if they just try hard enough. What’s more, by making it individuals’ responsibility to deal with their own burnout, the advice leaves untouched the inhumane ethical and economic system that causes burnout in the first place” (11).



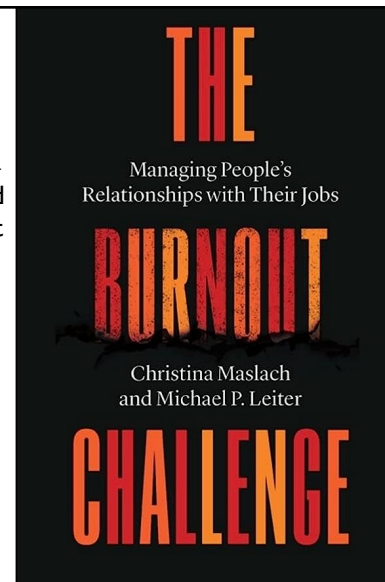
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Common Personal Coping Strategies

1. Stay healthy
2. Get enough sleep
3. Relax
4. Understand oneself
5. Develop new skills
6. Get away from the job
7. Get social support

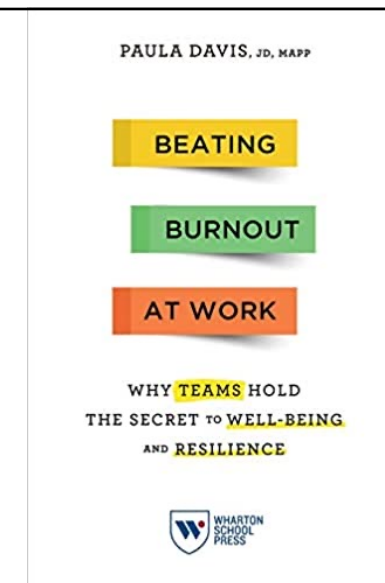
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“There is nothing wrong with someone’s taking personal steps to cope with chronic job stressors—indeed, it is something to be encouraged. What is wrong is assuming that such personal actions are sufficient to ‘fix’ burnout and keep it from becoming a problem again. As we have seen, there are many good strategies that promote coping with job stressors, but that is different from *preventing* the stressors from occurring in the first place. Helping people to cope effectively with job stressors is certainly a positive thing to do—but it does not change the stressors themselves.... Coping strategies are good, but they are not enough; we also need to focus on prevention strategies if we want to truly lower the risk of burnout. And that means changing the way we think about people in the workplace” (59).



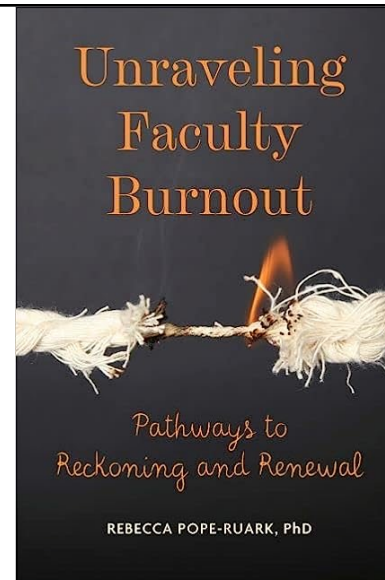
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“Preventing burnout requires a shift from a symptoms-only approach to a causes-only approach. Burnout is complex. The self-help world tends to oversimplify burnout by focusing on the main symptom of it—exhaustion—and suggesting individual-based fixes such as yoga and meditation. You can do yoga and meditation to get a handle on certain types of stress, but you can’t yoga or meditate your way out of burnout. Why? Because burnout is caused by factors that yoga and meditation can’t fix, and most programs address the symptoms only, not the causes of burnout” (xiii).



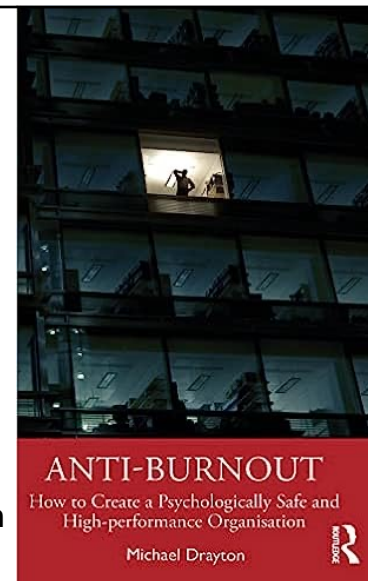
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“A major step toward eliminating burnout from the culture of higher education is acknowledging that only systemic cultural changes will make a significant difference. Most of the reporting on burnout offers suggestions targeting individuals rather than the culture that led to the problem. Because burnout is endemic in higher education... individual interventions will not make a dent in the academic culture, especially for women and faculty of color” (16).



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“Employers and workplaces are necessary conditions for burnout. In other words, burnout is not just an individual phenomenon existing within an individual person. Burnout is the consequence of a dysfunctional system. The mistake that many employers make is to locate burnout firmly within the individual and fail to see the circumstances surrounding that individual that have led to them suffering burnout.... Burnout is a symptom that something is going wrong in the organization” (10).



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Motivation-Hygiene Theory (F. Herzberg)

Hygiene Factors: prevent employee dissatisfaction

Salary

Work conditions

Company policy and administration

Supervision

Working relationships

Status and security

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Motivation-Hygiene Theory (F. Herzberg)

Motivation Factors: encourage higher performance

Challenging work

Recognition for one's achievements

Responsibility

Opportunity to do something meaningful

Involvement in decision-making

Sense of importance to the organization

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Ideal Job-Person Matches

1. Sustainable workload
2. Ample choice and control
3. Gratifying recognition and rewards
4. Supportive work community
5. Norms of fairness, respect, and social justice
6. Well-aligned values and meaningful work

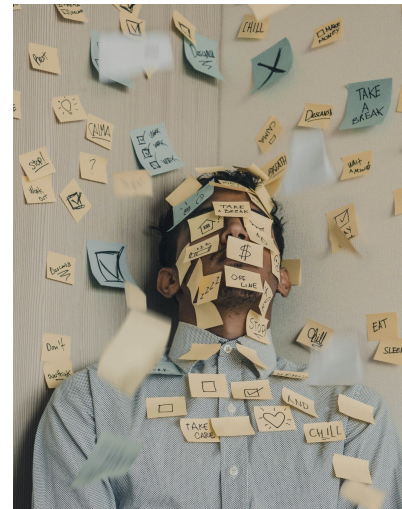
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#1. Sustainable Workload

Focus on *recovery* from working long and hard

Achieve better *balance* between resources and demands

Set clear *boundaries* between work and nonwork



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#2. Ample Choice and Control

CONTROL: Give individuals latitude to accomplish objectives in the way they think best.

AUTONOMY: Allow workers to operate with an amount of discretion and responsibility that recognizes their capability.

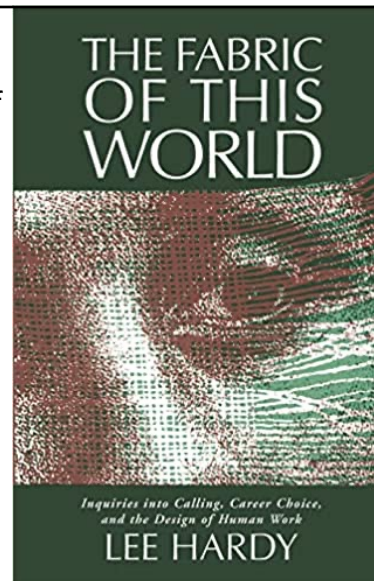
FLEXIBILITY: Encourage workers to modify, vary, shift, or reorganize how they handle their workday.

A meta-analysis across 63 countries found that freedom of choice—autonomy—was a stronger predictor of wellbeing than sheer wealth.



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“If employees are to achieve autonomy and self-control on the job, they must be involved to some degree in the formation of policy and the setting of goals which directly affect their work. Employee participation in decision-making, however, can never be a matter of total self-determination, with no direction given by management. For the organization does not exist for the sake of fulfilling the employee’s needs alone. The needs of the organization must be fulfilled as well. Management then has the delicate task of simultaneously maximizing the fulfillment of both the employees and the organization’s needs—needs which will always to some degree stand in tension with each other” (150).



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#3. Gratifying Recognition and Rewards

Maintain a culture of *authentic appreciation* where people use explicit words and actions that convey messages to others that their contributions are noted.

Tailor *extrinsic rewards* (salary, benefits, bonuses) to promote more and better effort.

Promote *intrinsic rewards* of autonomy, a sense of belonging, and feelings of competence.

Above an annual income of \$90,000 (in 2021 dollars), on average, daily emotions do not improve with increases in income.



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“People will change jobs for increases in income, but their desire to move on isn’t entirely driven by money. Gallup found that the amount of money someone will change jobs for depends on their engagement and career wellbeing. Actively disengaged workers will change jobs for almost any raise, while the majority of engaged workers would require more than a 20% raise to leave their current company” (58).

FROM GALLUP
Based on Over 100 Million Global Interviews

WELLBEING
at **WORK**

How to Build Resilient
and Thriving Teams

Jim Clifton | Jim Harter

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#4. Supportive Work Community

Promote active civility among all employees and their colleagues, in words and deeds.

Actively provide social support and promote a sense of belonging (peer support groups, positive feedback, community-based activities, counseling services, etc.)

Mutual respect, responsiveness, and trust are essential.

Gallup: Employees are much more productive and deliver far better results if they have a best friend at work, but only 30% do.



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#5. Norms of Fairness, Respect, and Social Justice

Show respect by actions and nonverbal behavior.

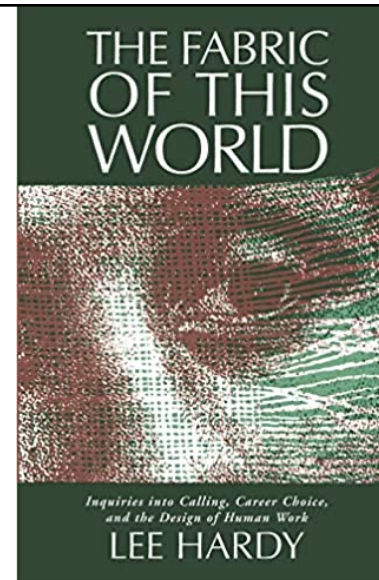
Encourage mutual reciprocity.

Treat everyone without bias or favoritism.



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“Employees at good workplaces constantly speak about how they ‘believe,’ ‘have confidence in,’ or simply ‘trust’ their employers. Similarly, managers at the same companies talked about how they ‘trust,’ ‘can rely on,’ and ‘can depend on’ their employees. There’s an atmosphere of mutual trust that permeates good workplaces” (170).



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#6. Well-Aligned Values and Meaningful Work

Help employees appreciate the value of doing good work that makes a difference for others.

Build a foundation of integrity and honesty to encourage mutual trust.

Everyone can count on each other to do what they have said they will do.



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Workplace Assessment

Motivation By Appreciation Inventory

Areas of Worklife Survey

Best Christian Workplaces Employee Engagement Survey

Gallup's Q¹² Survey

YMCA WorkWell's Employee Insights Assessment

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Reflection Questions

1. How do you maintain a sustainable workload for the faculty?
2. How do you provide the faculty with ample choice and control?
3. How do you offer gratifying recognition and rewards?
4. How do you foster a supportive work community?
5. How do you establish norms of fairness, respect, and social justice?
6. How do you ensure the values of the faculty are aligned with the institution and that they find their work meaningful?

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