



A More Human Workplace: *It's Time!*

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Renée Smith 

Keep WICSEC

*Weird!*





“Every night at sunset I eat a pickle, and it’s my sunset pickle.”

Image source: [moneyintheblank](https://www.moneyintheblank.com)



“We have a plastic duck. Her name is Martha. We move her around the house and then act like she got there on her own.”

Image source: [failing full circle](#)





“I bought my cat and me matching red silk robes.  
I put them on us on Sundays to watch true crime shows.”

Image source: [uhohmomfoundmyurl](https://www.uhohmomfoundmyurl.com)



“I put my Christmas tree up and I haven’t taken it down. It’s been up for almost a year, and I’ve changed the ornaments every few weeks.”

Image source: [jessica\\_dawn](#)

“I put my stuffed animals in chairs and give them mugs so it feels like I’m working in a coffee shop, when I’m actually desperately alone.”

Image source: [hannahgw17](#)



Thanks to deMilked.com!

89%





57%

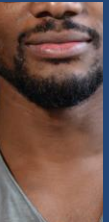
A man with dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is shown in profile, looking down with a distressed expression. He is standing in front of a glass window or door, and his reflection is visible in the glass. He has his right hand pressed against his forehead, suggesting a headache or deep thought. The background shows a light-colored brick wall and a wooden door frame. The overall mood is one of sadness or frustration.

1.2









# Dehumanization is costly.

Lower productivity.

Lower engagement.

Decreased creativity.

Increased turnover.

Poor customer service.

Lower job satisfaction.



100%



Today:  
Two essential steps to create  
a more *human* workplace

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Step 1:  
Decrease the fear  
on your team.

# Fear is...

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An instinctive response to  
a perceived threat to  
physical or psychological safety.

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Fear is a survival mechanism.







In Person: Talk at Your Table  
Online: Journal

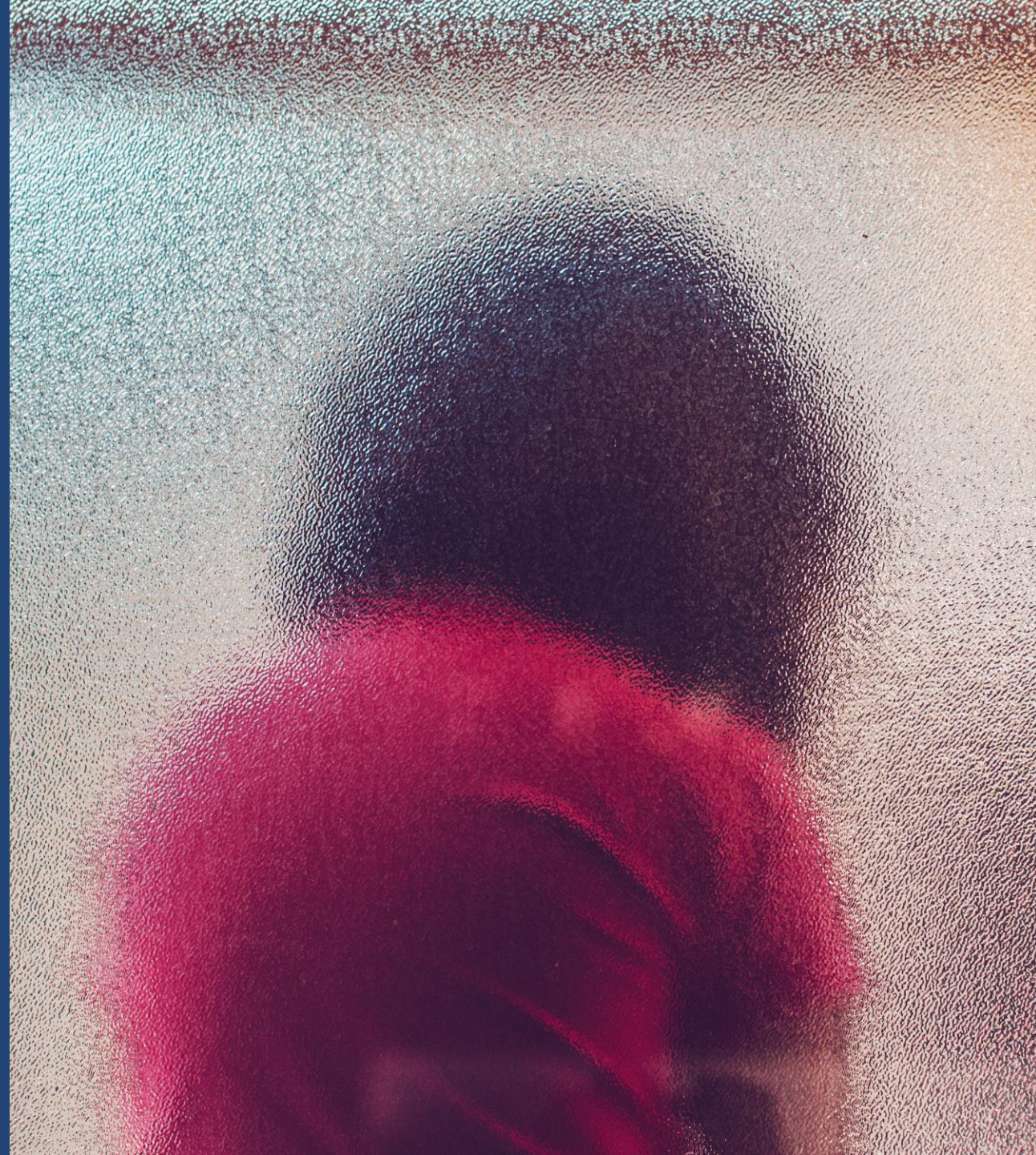
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What scares people at work?

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2 minutes

What scares  
people at  
work?



# Fight, Flight, Freeze, Appease at Work



# Fear Stories

A black and white photograph of a person's hands covering their face, with tears visible on the fingers, set against a dark background. The hands are positioned with fingers spread, covering the eyes and forehead. The skin on the hands appears wet, with several large, glistening tears running down the fingers. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hands and the emotional state of the person.

from  
my Research

“I was uncomfortable during a performance challenge.”

*This isn't a bad fear!*

“I was abandoned after  
a change.”

“I was betrayed.”

“I was humiliated.”

“I was isolated during  
a personal crisis.”

“I experienced harassment  
and discrimination.”



Fear is NOT a good way to work or lead.



Step 1 is minimize fear  
on your team.

What is Step 2?

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Love. 

What is *Love*?

# Love is...

- A feeling and an action
- Unconditional positive regard
- Interpersonal affection
- Human kindness
- Self-sacrifice



“*Love* is energy that  
uplifts and connects.”

-Moshe Engelberg, The Amare Wave

# Love is...

a limbic connection that attunes us to each other,  
creating steadiness, positive regard, and care.

If fear helps us survive,  
love helps us survive and thrive.



# Where does *love* belong?

*At Home:  
Love for my  
Friends, Family,  
Children, Partner,  
Spouse*

*At Work:  
Love for my  
Work,  
Clients,  
Colleagues*

*In my  
Neighborhood:  
Love for my Cause,  
Community,  
Country*

*In Public:  
Momentary  
Love for a  
Stranger*







Your Love Stories

In Person: Turn to your neighbor  
Online: Journal your reflections

Take turns sharing a story about a time  
when you felt loved at work.

3 minutes.

Generous listening. Uninterrupted sharing.  
Listen for the forms love takes.



What do you  
notice about your  
love stories?



# *Love's different forms at work.*

*Respect*

*Trust*

*Kindness*

*Compassion*

*Empathy*

*Equity*

*Belonging*

*Courage*

*Challenge*

*Appreciation*





## 3 Love Stories from my Research

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“My leader cares about  
me as a person.”



“My team is like a family.”

*Use caution with this metaphor.*



“My team cares about me.  
I know I belong.”



“I received care and support  
during a personal crisis.”



*Love is  
humanizing.*



*Love is an  
excellent way to  
work together!*



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt and a black belt, is shrugging his shoulders with his hands held out. He has a questioning or skeptical expression on his face.

Wrong question!

“Can we really get our work done  
AND love people?”

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A diverse group of approximately 12 people of various ages and ethnicities are gathered in a bright, modern office space. They are all smiling and clapping their hands, suggesting a celebratory or supportive atmosphere. The group is arranged in a loose cluster, with some individuals in the foreground and others slightly behind. The background shows large windows and office furniture, creating a professional yet warm environment.

Better Question

“How will we work effectively  
if we don't *love people*?”

“Won’t love be  
too soft?”



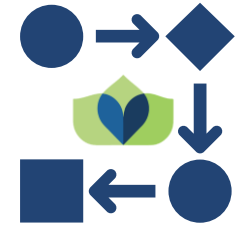
“What can I DO?”



# Leaders: Embed Love in Formal Structures

- ✓ Policies: Recruitment, hiring, leave, holidays
- ✓ Processes: Burden, time, complexity
- ✓ Planning: Open, collaborative
- ✓ Practices: Stories, celebrations, recognition
- ✓ Communication: Ample, all-ways

Where is there pain? Start there.





*Trust can be created or  
broken in a moment.*

# Everyone: Bring *Love* to Moments that Matter

- ✓ Greet
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Ask
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Notice
- ✓ Amplify
- ✓ Value
- ✓ Thank
- ✓ Apologize
- ✓ Forgive
- ✓ Challenge
- ✓ Celebrate
- ✓ Listen & Believe
- ✓ Accompany

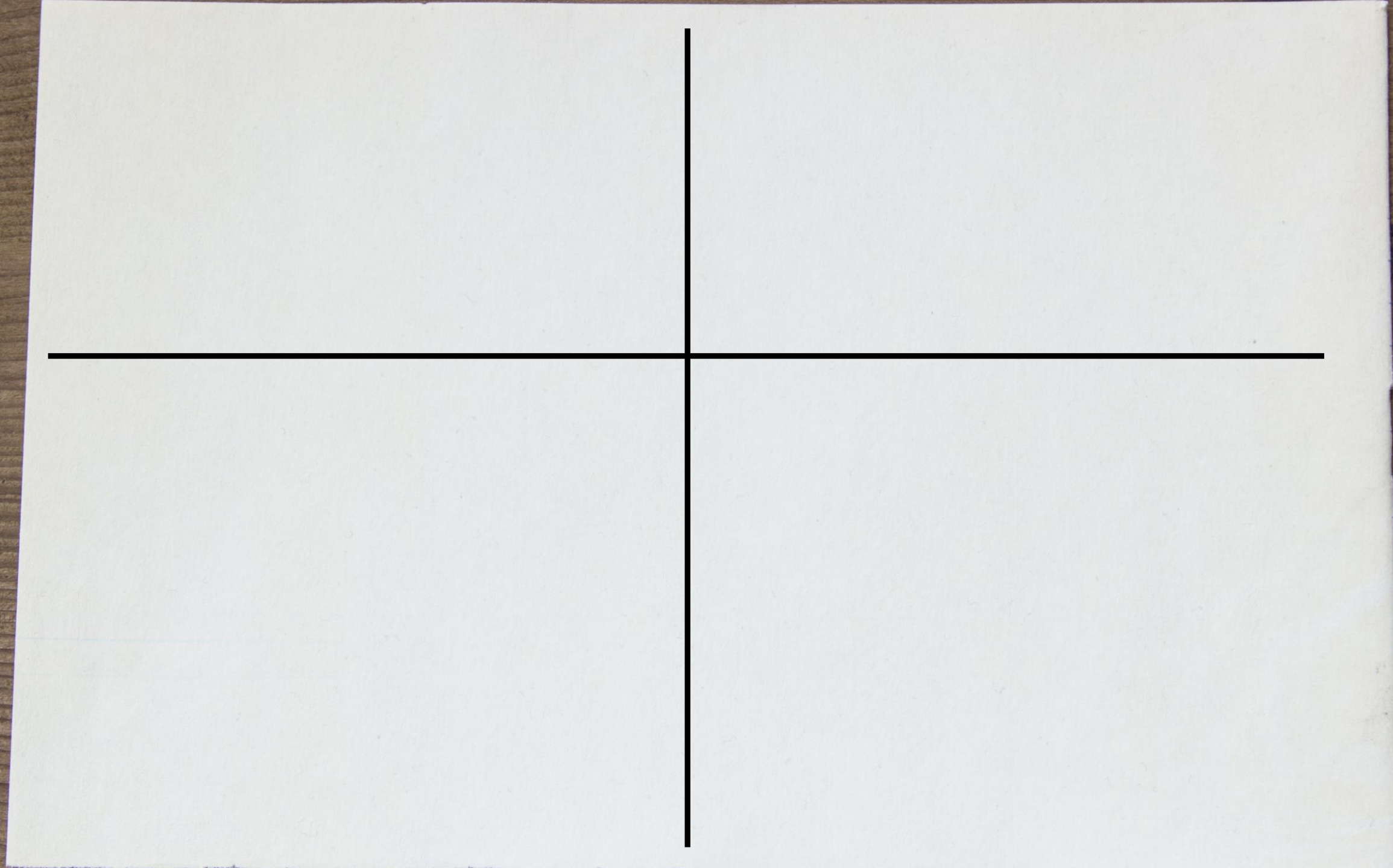


*Love: Accompanying each other.*

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Make a Plan for *Love*





My Challenge

Who's Impacted

My Challenge

Who's Impacted

How I can create fear

How I can create love



“What if the future of well-being is about tipping the scales in the world away from fear and *toward love*?”

-Krista Tippett, On Being

# For more love...

*Listen to my NEW series*

To Work: With Love  
on the Gut + Science Podcast

*Ready to talk? Want to connect?*

Reach out to me on LinkedIn  
[@reneesmith-ahumanworkplace/](#)



**A Human Workplace**