

Love in the Workplace

*Extracts from remarks by **Anna Simojoki**, Radio One, Finland, at the IofC Nordic Gathering in Helsinki on 6 August 2022*

What can you do on difficult occasions at work? Personally I have tried many different approaches. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I fail, but on many occasions I have come up with solutions.

I have found it very helpful to focus on love. That is to say I try to meet other people with a loving approach. It is not always easy, but it is worthwhile.

I am head of the channel Yle Radio 1 at the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yleisradio. I am responsible for what kind of programmes Yle Radio 1 sends and I also do the scheduling. And last but not least, I am responsible for the professional wellbeing of 16 people working in my team. These 16 people are radio announcers and radio presenters, producers, journalists and social media experts.

In addition to my team I work with about 80 other people when needed. And this is why: Yle Radio 1 sends a lot of ready-made programmes and talk shows that are made somewhere else, either in Yleisradio or in other companies.

So, altogether I stay in touch with about a hundred people and my job is very much about networks. In order to be effective, I have to negotiate. I need to know my spreadsheets and I have to meet the channel's budget, but often I also have to be a conciliator and sometimes even some kind of a mother. A kind of mothering has been needed during the covid years and because of the war in Ukraine. People have often been stressed, concerned or even scared.

Let me explain how I define love in my own working environment. In my opinion you can express love at work with respectful and compassionate behavior.

Love at work is not romantic. Love at work is kindness, trust and connection. Love at work means treating others with humanity.

It is something you do everyday. Colleagues do not need to hug each other or spend their free time together, but they do have to share smiles and have lunch together from time to time. They need to support each other.

Negotiations are only one part of my job. Where love is most important is when I am dealing with my team.

There are studies about love in a professional environment, and I have read some of those.

They show for instance that people who experience and show affection and kindness at work are more satisfied, perform better and are more committed to their jobs.

I do not like to go into those studies now but rather I want to speak from my own personal experience. And I shall focus mainly on my team at Radio 1.

As I said earlier, for me love at work is respect and compassion - but not so much a feeling but rather a way of behaving.

So, love is respectful and compassionate behavior. In Radio 1 that means acceptance and empathy. It means being nice. It means a shared love of radio.

In my team we have talked a lot about how to understand each other better and how to treat each other. About two years ago we spent an entire day pondering our house rules. The team created an agreement with house rules like these:

We are proud of our work.
We show compassion to each other.
We praise and help each other.
We behave kindly.
We show interest in each other's lives.
We remember to have fun together.

None of these house rules mention strategy or for example ways to reach younger audiences. There are no rules about who is responsible for this or that. Those kind of important things belong elsewhere.

Our house rules are all about how to conduct ourselves, how to maintain motivation or how to support others. I was truly impressed by this attitude when we were discussing our rules together. I remember thinking that I have certainly been lucky to be a part of a wonderful team like this. I still feel the same.

Well, after agreeing on our house rules we had them printed. Now we've got a copy of them in every workroom.

It goes without saying that sometimes everyone finds it difficult to stick to a loving approach. So of course there are still conflicts. Not everybody is always nice, motivated or cheerful. Sometimes people think very differently.

However, it is crucial especially in serious conflict that the team or it's leader is able to restore a peaceful and trusting working environment. We can always still agree and have agreed to behave kindly towards each other.

The team members have created the rules together and they are committed to them. In difficult moments it is easy to remind of those rules. They actually do make a difference.

On the whole I believe that you should not judge people's mistakes or personality traits. You can and should condemn bad behavior, but not the person. Everybody makes mistakes. We all are annoying every once in a while, but everyone is also entitled to love.

I have now shared some thoughts on love at work with you. Essentially it is more or less about polite and caring behavior. And I believe that it is best to start with yourself and make certain that your own conduct is respectful and compassionate.