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Dear Reader,

Its battle stations all around as we enter the home stretch of the month of fasting. Globally and locally we are at war with our neighbors and with ourselves. Even as bombs go off and bullets fly much as the peaceniks in our midst may try, the vast majority seeks solace in abstinence and prayer as it battles temptation and engages in a cleansing of the soul. Within this somewhat chaotic scenario we sharpen our focus and stay on target, and here we are again with the 81st edition of our E-zine TCS-Octara.com, on time every time through hail and high water by the grace of Allah.

Our lead story this time comes from **Nova. Blog** and centers on "How to Run a Meeting" with a focus on "Meeting Facilitation Skills Training" that ensures meetings are purposeful, well organized, and promote teamwork. Clearly this is a priority issue across the board. In these VUCA times it's crucial to be on the same page and function as a well-oiled team that is agile and can pivot at very short notice.

Gretchen Rubin contributes the next piece and analyzes "The Reason You're Clashing with Your Co-Workers—and How to Fix It." On offer is the "Four Tendencies" personality framework that dissects the mental makeup of teammates to better understand what makes them tick, and classifies them into the categories of Upholder, Questioner, Obliger, and Rebel. The end objective, once again, is the creation of well-oiled teams that are agile and can pivot at very short notice in these VUCA times.

Our third story feeds into the earlier two and is by **Rebekah Brandes** who advocates "Rewiring Your Mind" and offers "5 Positive Thinking Techniques Backed by Science." Essential reading to counter the doom and gloom that threatens to upend our sanity.

Back of the book we review the havoc caused by runaway consumerism in our regularly scheduled column Nature Calling for Action Stations, and find reason for reassurance as mankind finally shows signs of pulling up its socks and rolling up its sleeves in its search for livability and resilience.

Stay safe, stay well, and may Allah keep us all in His protection, ameen 🙏

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*Articles curated from online content by JJ highlighting professional and expert knowledge on 'Managing People, Business and Yourself'

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How to Run a Meeting: Meeting Facilitation Skills Training

Learn how to organize and run effective and successful meetings.

Nova. Blog. | 14 min read

Ever had a meeting on your calendar with no agenda, leaving you clueless about its purpose or whether you need to prepare for it?

Successful organizations insist on having agendas for meetings, empowering teams to skip unprepared ones and ensuring everyone's time is well-spent.

While it's clear that agendas help organizers manage time, they might not be user-friendly for everyone else. They're like a personal tool for organizers, helping them plan and keep discussions on track.

So, if agendas are mainly for organizers, **how can they help the team or external**



members understand the meeting's purpose?

What information should be shared with the team or external stakeholders to help them understand the purpose of the meeting?

The trick is setting **clear meeting objectives**, sharing them with everyone in advance. This includes stating what you want to achieve, the purpose (like brainstorming or decision-making), and why their input matters. In a nutshell, sharing the meeting's objective beforehand ensures everyone knows their role, the meeting's purpose, and what's expected by the end.

Once this is clear, crafting an agenda becomes important to allocate enough time for each topic. This keeps everyone informed about how much time is allotted for each point and their time for sharing information. But as you see is not what everyone participating on the meeting needs to know.

Facilitators should also prepare questions that encourage collaboration and participation.

In conclusion, the **Top tips for effective meeting facilitation are:**

1. **Set Clear Objectives.**
2. **Plan and Manage Time Effectively with a Clear Agenda.**
3. **Encourage Collaboration by Asking Questions or Using a Facilitation Technique.**

Facilitation Tips

Here is the full list of all the key tips.

Tip 1: Establish Clear Objectives

The foundation of any successful meeting is a clear objective. Define what you want to achieve during the session. Are you brainstorming ideas, making decisions, or

solving a problem? Communicate this to your participants right from the start.

Tip 2: Create a Welcoming Atmosphere

A positive and inclusive environment sets the tone for productive discussions. Start with a warm welcome, encourage introductions, and establish ground rules that promote respect and active participation.

Tip 3: Encourage Open Communication

Effective facilitation involves fostering open dialogue. Encourage participants to express their thoughts freely. Use techniques like round-robin or go-around to ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

Tip 4: Manage Time Effectively

Time management is crucial. Set a realistic agenda, allocate time for each agenda item, and stick to it. If discussions go off track, gently guide the group back to the main topic.

Tip 5: Use Visual Tools

Visual aids, like whiteboards or charts, are powerful tools for engagement. Use them to illustrate concepts, capture ideas, and create a visual summary of discussions. It helps everyone stay on the same page.

Tip 6: Foster Collaboration

Facilitation is about teamwork. Foster collaboration by acknowledging diverse perspectives, encouraging teamwork, and highlighting the value each participant brings to the table.

Facilitator summarizing.

Meeting facilitation is an art that evolves with practice. By incorporating these basic tips, you'll be on your way to creating more productive, engaging, and collaborative meetings. Remember, it's not just about

managing time; it's about making the most of it together.



Facilitation techniques

Facilitation techniques play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and open dialogue within a group. Here are seven effective facilitation techniques:

- **Technique:** Each participant has the opportunity to share their thoughts or ideas one by one.
- **Purpose:** Ensures that everyone in the group gets a chance to contribute without interruption, promoting equal participation.

How to Use:

- Begin with a prompt or question.
- Ask each participant, one by one, to share their thoughts or responses.
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute without interruption.

When to Use: Useful for introducing a topic, gathering initial thoughts, or ensuring equal participation.

#2. Brainstorming:

- **Technique:** Participants freely generate ideas without judgment, and all suggestions are noted.
- **Purpose:** Encourages creative thinking and the exploration of diverse perspectives, fostering a collaborative atmosphere.

How to Use:

- Present a clear question or problem.
- Encourage participants to generate as many ideas as possible, without criticism.
- Capture all suggestions on a visible medium.

When to Use: Effective for ideation sessions, problem-solving, or fostering a creative environment.

#3. Fishbowl Discussion:

- **Technique:** A small group discusses a topic while others observe. Observers can join the discussion or replace those in the center.
- **Purpose:** Facilitates focused and in-depth conversations, allowing for the exchange of ideas in a controlled manner.

How to Use:

- Select a small group to discuss a specific topic in the center (the fishbowl).
- Others observe the discussion.
- Rotate participants in and out of the fishbowl to ensure diverse perspectives.

When to Use: Useful for in-depth exploration of ideas or sensitive topics.

#4. Ladder of Inference:

- **Technique:** Participants discuss their thought processes and assumptions, starting from observed data.
- **Purpose:** Encourages open dialogue by exploring individual interpretations and preventing misunderstandings.

How to Use:

- Start with a piece of data or observation.
- Participants share their interpretations, assumptions, and conclusions based on the data.
- Discuss and compare the different perspectives.

When to Use: Ideal for addressing miscommunication or exploring varying viewpoints.

#5. Dot Voting:

- **Technique:** Participants vote on ideas or options using dots or markers, indicating their preferences.
- **Purpose:** Quickly gauges the group's collective opinion, helping to prioritize or make decisions collaboratively.

#6. World Café:

- **Technique:** Participants rotate through small discussion groups, contributing ideas on a central topic.
- **Purpose:** Facilitates diverse conversations, enabling participants to build on each other's ideas and perspectives.

How to Use:

- Set up small discussion groups with a facilitator at each table.
- Participants rotate among tables,

contributing to discussions.

- Summarize key insights and ideas in a plenary session.

When to Use: Suitable for exploring complex issues, gathering diverse perspectives, and fostering collaboration.

#7. Consensus Building:

- **Technique:** Encourages the group to find common ground and make decisions that everyone can support.
- **Purpose:** Promotes collaboration by ensuring that decisions are made collectively, considering the views of all participants.

How to Use:

- Present a decision or proposal.
- Facilitate a discussion to identify common ground.
- Adjust the proposal until all participants can support it.

When to Use: Effective for decision-making when collaboration and agreement are essential.

These facilitation techniques can be tailored to fit the specific needs and dynamics of your group, fostering a collaborative environment and encouraging open dialogue among participants.

Following these steps and these techniques ensures meetings are purposeful, well-organized, and promote teamwork ■

Source:

<https://medium.com/novatools/how-to-run-a-meeting-meeting-facilitation-skills-training-72cc3d7b78ed>

The Reason You're Clashing with Your Co-Workers

WORK
HAPPIER
by Gretchen Rubin

RADICAL
CANDOR
by Kim Scott



The Reason You're Clashing with Your Co-Workers—and How to Fix It

By **Gretchen Rubin** | 8 min read

Have you ever wondered why your co-workers respond differently to the same situation?

Here's an example: There's a mandatory meeting every Monday at 10 am; sometimes the boss comes, sometimes she doesn't. Some people attend, some people skip. When you ask why they go or don't go, you get four answers.

- “The meeting is mandatory. Of course I go.”
- “I go to the meeting if there's some information I need, but usually it's a waste of my time, so I skip it.”
- “I go to the meeting when the boss is around. When she's out of town, I don't bother.”
- “I hate seeing a standing meeting show up on my calendar. I never go unless I have something specific I want.”

No matter what category you fit in yourself,

you may be baffled by your co-workers' behavior. When you understand the “Four Tendencies” personality framework, their decisions make sense.

This personality framework sorts people into four categories based on how they respond to expectations.

We all meet or resist two kinds of expectations—outer expectations and inner expectations.

Whether you meet or resist outer and inner expectations determines your “Tendency”—whether you're an Upholder, Questioner, Obliger, or Rebel. In the last newsletter, I focused on self-awareness and gave an in-depth description of each Tendency. This newsletter will help you understand how to use the knowledge of others' Tendencies.

Here are some examples of how you might encounter the Four Tendencies at work:

The co-worker who won't budge from the schedule:

Your co-worker is great except that she's so inflexible. Every week, your team comes up with a calendar, but inevitably, certain things have to shift around when people fall behind. She gets very unsettled by these changes and wants to hold people to the original plan.

When you realize your co-worker is an Upholder, you'll know that she thrives on schedules, to-do lists, and clear expectations. Build flexibility into the calendar from the beginning. For instance, instead of saying, "Pat will give us the data on Monday," say "Pat will give us the data between Monday and Wednesday."

The co-worker who asks too many questions:

Your co-worker is great except that he drains everyone's energy with his constant questioning. You're in a meeting, and everyone else has heard enough, but his hand is still in the air. His need for information is making him a bottleneck.

When you realize your co-worker is a Questioner, you'll know that he needs to have his questions answered before he can move forward. Suggest ways to make the questioning more limited and constructive, such as: present questions in writing; pose questions in advance, so the presenter comes prepared; point out when a delay to get more information won't lead to a better outcome.

The co-worker who can't say no:

Your co-worker is great, but because he's always willing to pitch in and help others, he's over-extended. He hasn't taken a vacation in two years. He works late every night. You can tell he feels resentful and overwhelmed, but when you say, "Is everything okay?" he says, "Everything is fine." When you say, "You need to learn to draw better boundaries," he gets angry. When you say, "If you didn't want to work on those

projects, why did you agree to do it?" he gets even angrier.

When you realize that your co-worker is an Obliger, you'll know that he needs outer accountability to meet inner expectations. Deadlines, check-ins, deliverables are all helpful—and remember, your co-worker also needs accountability for vacation, stepping away, and setting limits on co-workers' demands.

The co-worker who plays by their own rules:

Your co-worker is great, but she acts like the rules don't apply to her. She formats things in her own way, she doesn't attend meetings, she blows through internal deadlines. In the end, her work is outstanding, and she prides herself on always being on-time and on-budget, but along the way, she creates a lot of turmoil.

When you realize that your co-worker is a Rebel, you'll know that she needs freedom and choice, with as little supervision and accountability as possible. Tell her, "You've got the chops to get this done! Let me know if you run into any roadblocks; otherwise, I can't wait to see how you choose to solve this challenge."

Understanding the different Tendencies means more effective collaboration and fewer conflicts, because when we understand other people's perspectives, we can work with them more effectively and compassionately.

Whether we're dealing with a boss, colleague, employee, client, or customer, the Four Tendencies helps us understand other people's perspective and why they act the way they do ■

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/reason-youre-clashing-your-co-workersand-how-fix-gretchen-rubin/?trackingId=EsRMw%2FqWRX2wP10zgWz30w%3D%3D>

Rewire Your Mind: 5 Positive Thinking Techniques Backed by Science



By **REBEKAH BRANDES** | 8 min read

It goes without saying that cultivating and promoting optimism are core values at Nice News: Beyond brightening up your inbox, positivity plays a significant role in well-being. The benefits of positive thinking range from improved cardiovascular health to better coping skills and more.

And in additional uplifting news, it's 100% possible to foster an optimistic outlook, even for those who tend toward a "glass half-empty" way of thinking. By consistently practicing science-backed exercises and techniques, anyone can make positive thinking a habit and shift their perspective for the better.

Read on for five methods.

Challenge Negative Self-Talk

Most of us have at some point been plagued by negative self-talk. Unfortunately, for many people, that critical inner monologue actually interferes with happiness on a daily basis. Per the Mayo Clinic, examples of negative self-talk include catastrophizing minor incidents, filtering out the good and focusing on the bad, and ruminating on things you should have done.

Thankfully, there are several practical ways to combat our inner critics. One of them is by imagining that the person saying or experiencing those negative thoughts is your best friend or family member, and responding to yourself the way you would to them.

"We're talking about using the same kind and gentle language and approaches that we do with the other people we love in our lives with ourselves," clinical

psychologist Joy Harden Bradford explained to NPR. “Because we’re also people that we hopefully love, right?”

For example, if your oldest friend came to you and said “I’m never going to amount to anything,” or “I’m not worthy of being happy,” you’d likely use kind, soothing words to assure them that those beliefs aren’t true. Get four more tips for challenging negative self-talk.

Look for the Humor

You likely don’t need any convincing that laughter is good for you, but regardless, there is scientific evidence to back up its benefits. Aside from merely making us feel better, it stands to reason that learning to look for levity in difficult or frustrating situations can help promote a more optimistic perspective overall.

Next time you find yourself growing annoyed at a long checkout line or feeling awkward over an interaction at work, consciously choose to find the humor in the situation. Research has shown that even forced laughter can improve moods.

Implement a Growth Mindset

You may already be familiar with the term “growth mindset.” Developed by American psychologist and researcher Carol Dweck, it was popularized in her 2006 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.

Simply put, a growth mindset is a way of thinking about life’s challenges and obstacles as opportunities for personal growth. And while that may seem like a challenge in and of itself, the beauty of this practice is that it’s actually quite easy to begin implementing — it begins with changing the words you use to describe situations or yourself.

“A simple example of a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset is ‘I’m not good at yoga,’ versus ‘I’m not good at yoga yet,’” licensed clinical social worker Ashley Peña explained to Verywell Mind. The former statement implies you are in a fixed position, whereas the latter allows for a future in which you can and do improve. Learn more here.

Affirmations

Personal affirmations are short, positive statements about the self that are repeated on a regular basis. Per a 2014 study published in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, “timely affirmations have been shown to improve education, health, and relationship outcomes, with benefits that sometimes persist for months and years.” Other research suggests the practice can decrease stress.

There are some things to consider when starting out, however. You’ll want to avoid using overly broad or generic statements like “I really like myself.” David Creswell, a psychology professor at Carnegie Mellon University, told *The Washington Post* in 2022. Instead, try to make them specific and aligned with your core values about yourself.

“This is about accurately and authentically encouraging yourself or using words of encouragement or acknowledgment that are consistent with your truth,” clinical psychologist Natalie Dattilo added.

Go here for a list of affirmations that might work for you, and then check out this interesting thought experiment that illustrates their effectiveness.

The “Three Good Things” Exercise

We’ve all heard how practicing gratitude can improve our lives — studies have borne out its physical and mental health benefits. So why does it sometimes seem so difficult to actually implement thankfulness into our day to day?

If you’re in the midst of an unpleasant feeling or experience, reminding yourself of all you have going for you is easier said than done (though it can be an effective means of boosting your mood in the moment!).

That’s what makes the “Three Good Things” exercise a great option. It calls for setting aside 10 minutes a day for a week to focus on what you’re grateful for.

Source:

<https://nicenews.com/health-and-wellness/positive-thinking-techniques-rewire-your-mind/>

Nature Calling for Action Stations (NCfAS#25)

SCOURGE OF E-WASTE



The world threw away a record amount of smartphones, televisions and other electrical devices in 2022, causing an avalanche of dumped gadgets that is polluting the planet. Far from worthless junk, the UN estimates the value of metals in all these discarded gadgets at \$91 billion. But less than one-third is recovered, with the rest lost when e-waste is burnt, thrown in landfills or improperly recycled (Dawn, March 21st, 2024).

“By 2050 Pakistan could experience more than 30 days of extreme heat per year, compared to less than 10 days in the past”

– Abhas K Jha, Practice Manager Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management for South Asia, World Bank

Global South under siege

Less than one quarter of the 62 million tons of e-waste produced in 2022 was recycled, resulting in heavy metals, plastics and toxic chemicals leaking from junked devices. It poses health risks, particularly in poorer countries where a lot of e-waste is sent from wealthier parts of the globe. Kees Balde, lead author of the latest Global E-waste Monitor, says the scourge is only going to worsen as demand for new technologies, including solar panels and electric vehicles, outpaces the ability to recycle.

On average, every person on earth generates roughly 7.8 kilograms of e-waste each year, said the report from the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), another UN agency. But that varies considerably across the globe, with someone in Europe producing roughly seven times the e-waste of someone in Africa.

Around 18 million tons of e-waste is processed in the developing world, often in informal settings without proper equipment where workers are exposed to dangerous substances. Every year, unmanaged e-waste leads to 45,000 tons of harmful plastics and 58 tons of mercury entering the environment, according to the UN. A lot of this electronic garbage is generated in wealthy countries but shipped to poorer ones disguised as second-hand goods that in reality no longer work.

Bane of consumerism

“It’s very easy to buy something. It’s just a few clicks... It’s far more difficult to dispose of them,” said Kees Balde. “Consumers can do only so much if government and business does not make these products easier to recycle. This is a big catastrophe for the environment.” The e-waste includes small everyday items like e-cigarettes and tablets, household appliances like electric toothbrushes and toasters, and larger items like television screens and electric bikes and scooters. The shift away from fossil fuels to cleaner forms of energy will also present challenges for the disposal of a growing number of batteries, heat pumps and solar panels.

“Around 18 million tons of e-waste is processed in the developing world, often in informal settings without proper equipment where workers are exposed to dangerous substances”

– UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

The Heat is on

Back home the temperature in Turbat district of Baluchistan hit 54 degrees Celsius on 28th May

“Less than one quarter of the 62 million tons of e-waste produced in 2022 was recycled”

– Kees Balde, lead author, Global E-waste Monitor

2023 (Express Tribune March 21, 2024). This was the highest temperature ever recorded not just in Pakistan, but on the continent of Asia, and the fourth highest ever recorded on Earth. In an op-ed piece by Abhas K Jha, who serves as Practice Manager Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management for South Asia at the World Bank, he says that such heat spikes cause heat stress, dehydration, heat stroke and death along with reducing crop yields, increasing energy demand, worsening air quality and causing water scarcity. He projects that by 2050 Pakistan could experience more than 30 days of extreme heat per year, compared to less than 10 days in the past. This will exacerbate poverty and inequality, with the poor and marginalized more exposed and vulnerable to heat risk and having less access to coping mechanisms such as cooling, health care and social protection.

Moving from reactive to proactive

Abhas K Jha says that Pakistan urgently needs to

shift from a reactive disaster response approach to a proactive and strategic approach, and cites the example of Miami which became the first city to appoint a Chief Heat Officer in 2020. Australia has invested in research and innovation to develop passive cooling solutions such as low cost evaporative coolers, phase change materials and solar reflective coatings that can reduce indoor temperature and energy consumption without relying on electricity or refrigerants.

“By improving its urban planning and design, such as increasing green cover, creating green spaces and restoring water bodies, Pakistan can lower its urban temperature, improve its air quality and water security, and increase its livability and resilience.”

Top Gun for tough task

The good news, for Sindh in particular, is that Syed Asif Hyder Shah, a grade-22 civil servant who



was earlier serving in the federal government as secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, has been posted as the new Sindh chief secretary by the Centre (TNI Wednesday, March 13, 2024). Several quarters have praised the earlier work of the new Sindh CS while he had served as the commissioner of Karachi and as the commissioner of Hyderabad. He has an MBA from the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, and master's from the Harvard University, USA. He completed

“A ‘whole of society’ approach which invites public and expert participation in climate planning and decision making must be adopted”

– Transparency International Pakistan

his fellowships at the Harvard University and the Stanford University. These are heavy-duty credentials that should theoretically equip Syed Asif Hyder Shah for the daunting task in hand combating the ravages of heat. His replacement at the Climate Change division is Aizaz Dar who was previously OSD in the Establishment division. Meanwhile our erstwhile federal minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman, has urged quick action to counter pollution hazards (TNI Thursday, March 21, 2024) and called for action over Pakistan's water woes on World Water Day (TNI Saturday, March 23, 2023).

Integrating climate in governance

Pakistan annually loses \$4 billion due to climate change-induced events, says a report released by Transparency International Pakistan (TIP) titled “Financing Climate Action: Enhancing Effectiveness and Transparency in Pakistan's Climate Governance Frameworks” (TNI Ansar Abbasi Friday, Mar 22, 2024).

Pakistan has made its NDC (nationally determined contributions) commitments contingent upon receiving adequate finance. The report, however, admitted that since the climate finance inflows are very low, these commitments cannot be implemented without effective access to international climate finance.

“By improving its urban planning and design Pakistan can increase its livability and resilience”

– Abhas K Jha

The report underlined that the climate change institutions as set under the Climate Change Act 2017 need to be operationalized and empowered and be the primary drivers of integrating climate in governance, both horizontally and vertically, across the federal and provincial governments.

Way forward

Transparency International Pakistan has provided 10 recommendations to strengthen climate governance in the country, including 1) Climate Change institutions as set under the Climate Change Act need to be operationalized and empowered 2) A ‘whole of society’ approach which invites public and expert participation in climate planning and decision making must be adopted 3) Integrate Transparency & Climate perspective in project designs including at planning and budgeting level 4) Capacity Building of key auditing and reporting institutions, including corruption watchdogs 5) Policy lag between national and provincial climate policies and lack of institutional capacity 6) Enhance climate budgetary allocations in proportionate to the scale of climate change crisis 7) Ensuring compliance with Public Procuring Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules to enhance transparency of climate projects 8) Establish open database on Climate Finance 9) Enhance climate governance integrity using global best practices 10) Ensuring appropriate mechanisms and capacity to capture complaints and enforce anti-corruption measures is of vital importance.

While all the 10 recommendations bear adopting both in letter and in spirit, number 2 stands out for special consideration – “A ‘whole of society’ approach which invites public and expert participation in climate planning and decision making must be adopted.”

Column by Adil Ahmad, Correspondent, TCS Octara.Com