

# Bringing Focus to the Unseen: Emotional Labor

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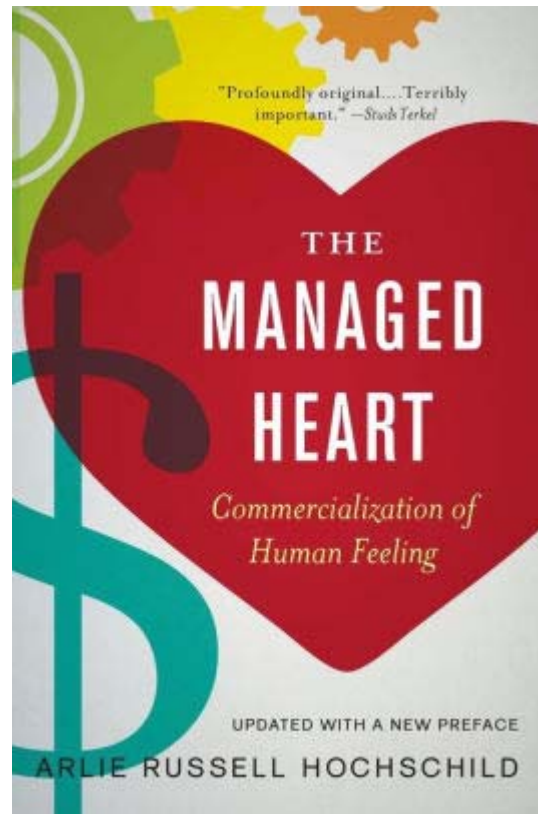
2019 Presentation for ACL



# Agenda

- I. Overview of EL
- II. EL as an occupational requirement in human services
- III. The Study: EL & HR Factors/Relationships (JS, Burnout, Turnover Int.)
- IV. EL Regulation Strategies
- V. Managerial Recommendations – 6 Hats of Critical Thinking
- VI. Closing remarks/thanks

# Overview of Emotional Labor



# Hochschild's Discovery

## Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild:

- 1983 – Delta Airline Stewardess Training Center  
*“Smile. Really smile. Lay it on. Smile like you mean it.”*
- Approximately 1/3 of all jobs require EL



# Exploring Emotional Labor: Occupational Requirement

## **Next Steps:**

- Defining EL as an Occupational Requirement
- Research Findings for Human Services Population



# Emotional Labor as an Occupational Requirement

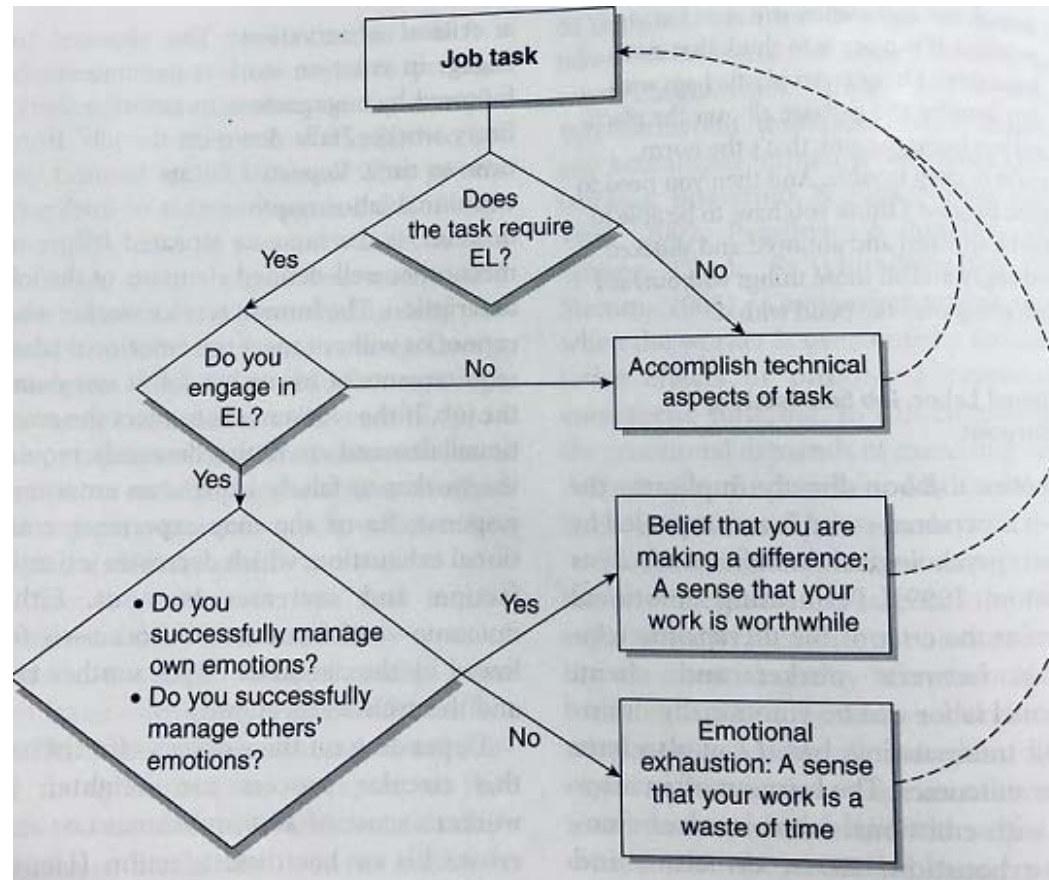
## Definition of Emotional Labor

- Depending on the discipline, EL can be defined within three focal lenses (occupational requirements, emotional displays, or intrapsychic processes (Grandey et. al, 2013)).

## As an occupational requirement:

- Emotional labor is the process of emotional regulation to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job.
- Emotional labor is a physical display and performance by the employee to meet the occupational demands prescribed by the employer for service delivery.
- EL is not in itself positive or negative.

# Hasenfeld's EL Occupational Requirement



# Emotional Labor vs. Mental Work

## Hochschild's guiding distinction:

- Over-extension when applied to non-emotional tasks or perfectionism
- EL occurs when there is a need to manage emotions as a result of the task, or to properly perform the task
- Anxiety-provoking, fear-evoking, or other type of stress (positive)/distress (negative)

## NO:

- Household chores
- No feeling or emotions involved in the task or experience
- No risk/reward

## YES:

- Providing a service to others (internal/external customers)
- Risk/reward for performance



# The Research Study



# Problem Statement

- Human services workers suffer high incidence of employee burnout & turnover intention due to the nature of the work they perform.
- To date, no study has been conducted to examine the relationships of EL to job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover intention for not-for-profit human services agencies that serve the disabled (I/DD, & psych.) in New York State.

## **Impact of this research:**

- Legitimize EL as an occupational requirement for this population
- Provide support for the argument of complexity of job duties
- Provide insight for training resources (development/financial)

# Purpose of This Kind of Study

Kurt Lewin published the equation...

$$B = f(P, E)$$

Behavior (B) is a function (f) of the person (P) in their environment (E).



# The Oreo Metaphor



# Key Literature Findings- HR Factors

**People who experience **positive** genuine emotions at work report:**

- less emotional exhaustion
- greater job satisfaction
- More affective commitment (positive emotional attachment to work organization)

**People who experience **negative** genuine emotions at work report:**

- emotional exhaustion
- decreased job satisfaction
- compassion fatigue
- decreased productivity

**Critical HR Factors impacted by EL requirements:**

- Job satisfaction
- Burnout
- Organizational commitment
- Turnover intention

# Human Services Literature

## Literature

### The Human Services Industry & EL



## Findings

Human service workers notoriously perform work that involves “caring” as an occupational requirement of the position. This occupational requirement has been correlated to burnout and turnover in the industry.

## Authors

Belanger & Edwards, 2013; Burger, 2017; Demerouti, Bakker, & Leiter 2014; Grandey, 2013; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Guy et al., 2008; Hewitt & Lakin, 2001; Hochschild, 2012; O’Brien, & O’Brien, 1999

# The Variables

## Emotional Labor Variables:

- Emotional Labor– Occupational Work/EL regulation
- Surface Acting – “False Face” strategy
- Deep Acting – “Authentic Display” strategy

## Employment Factors:

- Job Satisfaction – Contentment with employment experience
- Burnout – Occupationally related exhaustion/stress
- Turnover Intention – Intention to leave one’s employment

# RESEARCH QUESTION 1

**RQ1: What is the relationship between not-for-profit human services job category and the emotional labor occupational requirement?**

H1: Emotional labor will be experienced differently by employees in different human services job categories.



# RESEARCH QUESTION 2

**RQ2: What is the relationship between job satisfaction, emotional labor, burnout, and turnover intention for employees at not-for-profit organizations that serve disabled populations in the field of human services?**

H2A: Emotional labor will have a positive relationship to job satisfaction.

H2B: Burnout will have an inverse relationship to job satisfaction.

H2C: Turnover intention will have an inverse relationship to job satisfaction.

# RESEARCH QUESTION 3

**RQ3: What is the relationship between emotional labor (emotional labor, surface acting, deep acting) and employee burnout for employees at not-for-profit organizations that serve disabled populations in the field of human services?**

H3A: There will be a positive relationship between emotional labor and burnout.

H3B: There will be a positive relationship between surface acting and burnout.

H3C: There will be a negative relationship between deep acting and burnout.

# RESEARCH QUESTION 4

**RQ4: What is the relationship between burnout and employee turnover intention for employees at not-for-profit organizations that serve disabled populations in the field of human services?**

H4: There will be a positive relationship between burnout and employee turnover intention.

# Instrumentation

**The GNM Emotional Labor Questionnaire:** The survey instrument is “a direct data type” which means it collects information directly from participants instead of from existing research (Parajon, 2011).

- 3 eligibility questions
- 5 demographic questions
- 49 Likert Scale questions
- 1 open-ended qualitative question

## **Likert Scale Values:**

- Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Often, Always

# Methodology

- Quantitative
- Cross-sectional design
- Replication

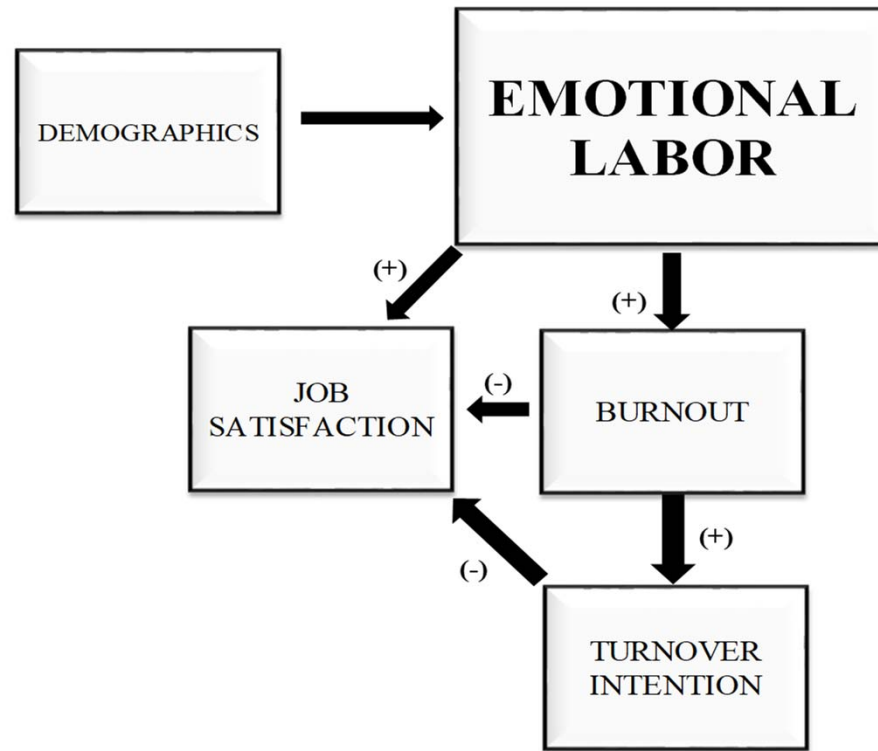
## **Recruiting Participants:**

- The population was recruited and established through a NYS Human Services Industry Membership Organization and executive referral.

## **Participating Agencies:**

- 8 OPWDD/OMH agencies

# Working Model



# Results

- The **level** of EL experienced by employees is related to **job category**.
- EL **increases** job satisfaction
- EL **increases** burnout
- Burnout, relating to EL, **decreases** JS
- Participants report being **simultaneously JS and experiencing burnout**
- Burnout **increases** turnover intention
- Older participants (40+) reported a **greater tolerance** for EL requirements

# Qualitative Comments

- No one has ever asked me about how this work affects me...
- I feel that the emotional work of DSPs is the hardest part of their job.
- I am ashamed that this work feels hard for me. As if I am selfish or something. This is not something I have ever talked about.
- As much as I feel that the work I am doing is necessary, and I know that I am helping, I come away from each contact feeling drained and stressed.

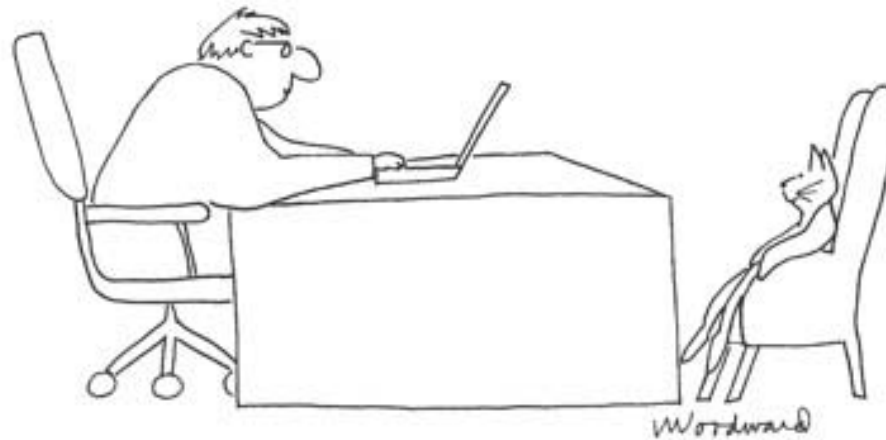


# Qualitative Comments

## Continued...

- Sometimes it can be frustrating putting on an "act" when my own mental health is not entirely stable
- There is nothing more powerful than helping other people. I get so much more than I give in this field.
- As emotionally exhausting as some days can be, at the end of the day it is all worth it.
- **Please help me. I don't know how to talk about the emotional impact of my work.**

# Superposition Theory



@ProfProfundity | My cat's name is Schrodinger. My cat exists. My cat does not exist. | #profoundinsights #adorableness #cuteness #physics



# Foundation of Theory 1

- A multiple linear regression (DV = job satisfaction and IVs = turnover intention, burnout, and emotional labor) was conducted to answer RQ2.

*Regression Model Summary Job Satisfaction*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.72	0.51	0.51	0.45

**51% of the variability in job satisfaction can be explained by the model.**

# Foundation of Theory 2

There was a statistically significantly **negative relationship between job satisfaction and burnout** ( $B = -0.17$ ,  $t(524) = -5.566$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For every one unit increase in burnout, job satisfaction was expected to decrease by 0.17 units. Simply put, **higher burnout would result in lower job satisfaction.**

There was a statistically significantly **positive relationship between job satisfaction and emotional labor** ( $B = 0.34$ ,  $t(524) = 11.115$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For every one-unit increase in emotional labor, job satisfaction was expected to increase by 0.34 units. **That is to say, more emotional labor would result in higher job satisfaction.**

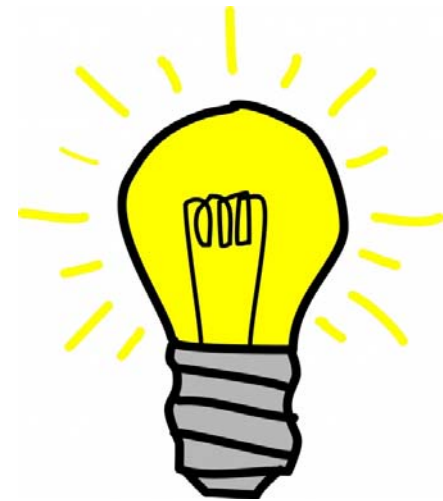
# Foundation of Theory 3

- A multiple linear regression (DV = burnout and IVs = emotional labor, surface acting, and deep acting) was conducted to answer RQ3.
- The regression model summary results showed that the R Square is 0.37 which means that **37% of the variability in burnout can be explained by the model.**

# What does this mean?

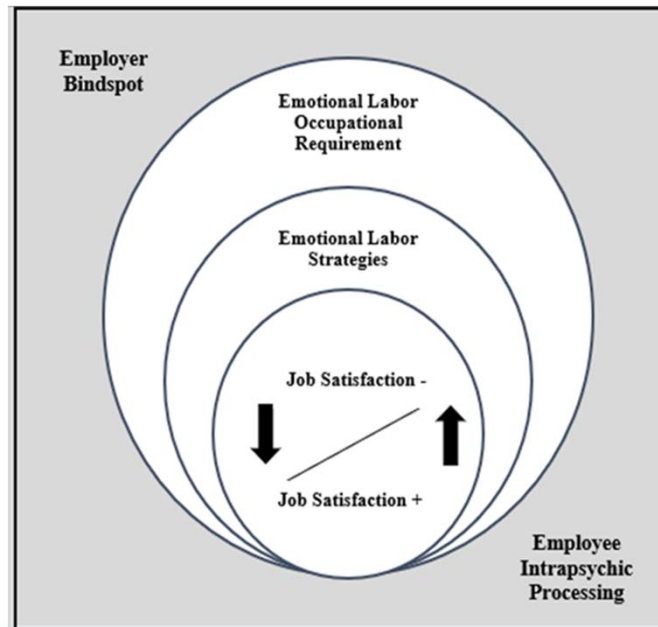
## What we know:

- Emotional labor burns out H.S workers
- Emotional labor improves job satisfaction of H.S Workers



# Superposition Theory

- Human Service Workers are BOTH simultaneously burnt out and job satisfied relating to emotional labor.



# Antecedent Strategies JS/Burnout

- Do not look to remedy JS & Burnout AFTER the experience.
- Address adverse impacts of EL environment **before** JS loss or burnout is experienced.



# Potential Adverse Impact on Workers

To address issues, you must explore the possible intrapsychic consequences of EL.



# Compassion: Kaufman & Schipper

## Defining Compassion:

- Kindness, caring, concern, and willingness to help others
- Very basic part of human nature
- No single way to be compassionate, it is variable

## Compassion Fatigue – How does this happen?!

- If we invest too much in others, we deplete our own resources
- Caring burnout is a global phenomenon
- Many interpersonal and institutional reasons for it
- Lack of emotional regulation may result in adverse results, variable to the intrapsychic makeup of the individual employee

# Emotional Dissonance

**ED** = conflict between actual/authentic emotions and faked emotions

## Consequences:

- Poor mental and physical health if long term dissonance occurs
- Critical impact on HR factors (JS, burnout, turnover intention)



# Emotional Labor Regulation Tools

How do we work on this?



# Emotional Regulation Strategies as Restorative and Alleviating tools

## Surface Acting:

Suppression of authentic feelings (i.e. Fake smiling)

## Deep Acting:

Attempt to actually change your emotions using empathy (understand) and compassion (help)

# Antecedent Focused Strategies

**Used BEFORE emotional response is triggered**

- **Situation selection** – choose or avoid
- **Situation modification** – consciously changing something for emotional impact (leaning in to show interest in someone)
- **Attention deployment** – Refocus your attention on something more positive
- **Cognitive Change** – Stay focused on big picture to avoid triggers (i.e. someone is late, re-purpose your time)

# Consequential Response

## Re-focus after an emotional response

1. **Reappraisal** – Objectively re-evaluate

- Nervous to give the EL talk, re-focus that energy into thinking about how this talk may help others.

2. **Suppression** – Consciously mask inward emotional responses until a more appropriate means of expression is available. Key – Find the right way to express feelings.

# Emotional Regulation Strategies:

## Self- Efficacy

### 4 ways to develop self-efficacy beliefs

- 1. Performance accomplishments:** Successful experiences lead to greater feelings of self-efficacy.
- 2. Vicarious experience:** Observing someone else perform a task or handle a situation can help you to perform the same task by imitation. Observing people who are similar to yourself succeed will increase your beliefs that you can master a similar activity
- 3. Verbal persuasion:** Constructive feedback is important in maintaining a sense of efficacy as it may help overcome self-doubt
- 4. Physiological/Psych. states:** Moods, emotions, physical reactions, and stress levels may influence how you feel about your personal abilities. It is the way people interpret and evaluate emotional states that is important for how they develop self-efficacy beliefs

you can do it!



motivational penguin



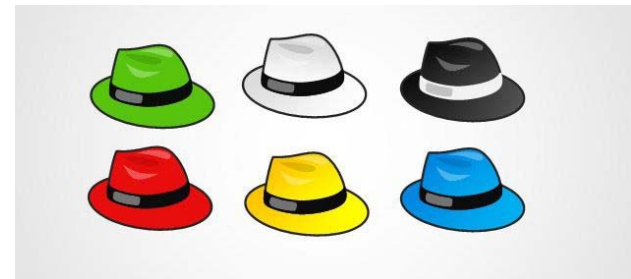
# Managerial Recommendations

## 6 Thinking Hats



# De Bono's Six Thinking Hats

- Critical thinking/decision making tool
- Emotion and doubt become tools instead of hindrances.
- Decisions made using the Six Thinking Hats technique are more critically sound and fully vetted.



# White Hat



- **Analyze** existing info., including past trends, and see what you can learn from it.
- Look for gaps in your knowledge, and try to either fill them or take account of them.

# EL & White Hat



- Job satisfaction surveys
- Program/dept. turnover
- Exit interviews
- Crises debriefing notes
- Average job performance ratings
- Job posting information accurate?
- Job descriptions accurate?
- Reasons for poor employee conduct?

# Red Hat



- Explore problems using your intuition, gut reaction, and emotion.
- Imagine how others could react emotionally.
- Try to understand the responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

# EL & Red Hat



## **Problems:**

- Job postings/descriptions do not accurately describe the demands of the job.
- There are no realistic job previews (RJPs)
- There is no formal debriefing mechanism for difficult situations.
- There is no training for emotional regulation strategies.
- There is no peer mentor experience.

## **Employee Feelings (Potential):**

- Lack of support, comfort
- Lack of self efficacy
- Lack of understanding expectations
- Confusion about feelings

# Black Hat



- Objectively analyze a decision's potentially negative outcomes.
- Look at it cautiously and defensively. Try to see why it might **not** work (this highlights the weak points in a plan).
- Exploring weaknesses allows you to eliminate them, alter them, or prepare contingency plans to counter them.

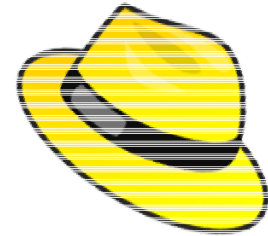
# EL & Black Hat



- Training programs cost money
- We already have extensive trainings per regulations, no time for more
- Mentoring programs may be administratively burdensome
- It is hard to accurately capture soft-skills like EL on JDs.
- No mechanisms in place for RJPs

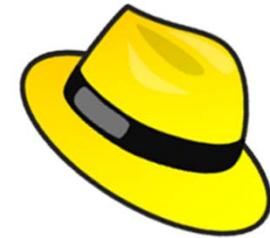


# Yellow Hat



- Use a positive thinking approach.
- This is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits and value of the decision.
- This frame of thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

# EL & Yellow Hat



- Training programs do have costs/cash outlay...BUT turnover and recruiting costs may be offset.
- It may be possible to work new training into existing programs with small changes/additions.
- Mentoring programs create greater job engagement.
- It may benefit our organization to team with HR for formal job analyses.

# Green Hat



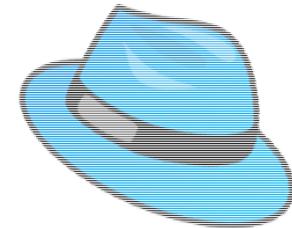
- This frame of thinking represents creativity.
- This is where you develop creative solutions to a problem.
- It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas.
- Put every idea on the paper!

# EL & Green Hat



- Pool resources with neighboring organizations
- Work EL into staff meetings as important topics
- Explore wellness programming to prevent burnout and increase JS
- Ask employees about their EL experiences and what they think would help

# Blue Hat



- This frame of thinking represents process control.
- Blue thinking allows you to go back to other ways of thinking as needed.
- *Example: When facing difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking.*

# EL & Blue Hat



- Decide on the ways in which you want to begin addressing EL
- Who are key decision stakeholders?
- How can you test the impact of ameliorative resources?
- If you hit a wall, go green hat, creatively think of new ideas. Explore what frame of thinking you need to use in order to influence change.

# Collaborative Discussion

1. In what ways do you experience emotional labor in your position?
2. How does emotional labor relate to your job satisfaction, burnout, or other factors (self-efficacy etc.)?
3. What emotional regulation strategies or coping mechanisms do you use when engaging in EL? How helpful are these actions?



# Closing remarks

- Importance of topic overall
- Implications for Human Resources
- Gaps in literature & call for future research

*“To learn something, but not to do, is really not to learn. To know something, but not to do, is really not to know.” – Stephen Covey*





# Questions?

Thank you for attending my presentation.

*Thank  
You*

# References

Full reference list available in a separate document upon request.

Contact me if you wish to have a copy of the reference list:  
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