

# EMOTIONS IN CASEWORKERS

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS & PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, Child Welfare Education & Research Programs  
March 2022

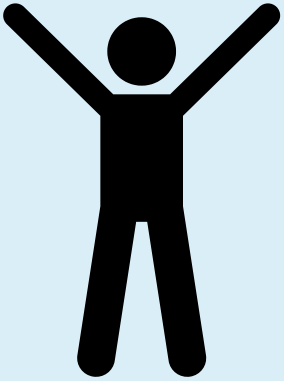


Supervisors and agency leaders are crucial components of having an emotionally healthy workforce. Research participants shared what has (and hasn't) worked for them in terms of supportive work environments. A few are highlighted on the following pages. Please utilize the accompanying resources and join us for this month's session for more discussion.

*Findings from Dr. Marlo A. Perry's research project,  
"Emotional awareness in child welfare professionals and its relationship with emotional variability, compassion satisfaction, and  
commitment to the field: A pilot study utilizing ecological momentary assessment"*  
*Funded by the Steven D. Manners Faculty Development Award, University of Pittsburgh Center for Urban and Social Research*

# Ways to help your workforce feel valued

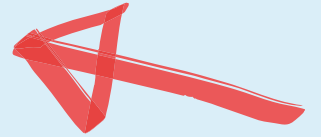
## AUTONOMY



Caseworkers talked about no longer having the ability to organize their own workflow and time and how that contributes to feelings of overwhelm and dissatisfaction. Constant messages of urgency and immediacy contribute to this as well. Giving staff some autonomy about how they organize their time at work can promote job satisfaction.

*Read about how mindfulness and autonomy support workforce well-being.*  
(goodnet.org)

<https://tinyurl.com/4fmz9nwm>



## INDIVIDUALIZED SUPERVISION

Happier caseworkers discussed how their supervisors tailored their supervision for their own unique strengths and needs. Further, they spoke of the importance of being able to express their emotions within the context of supervision.



**READ: Emotions, Social Work Practice, & Supervision: An Uneasy Alliance?**  
(ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

<https://tinyurl.com/yckhm8t8>

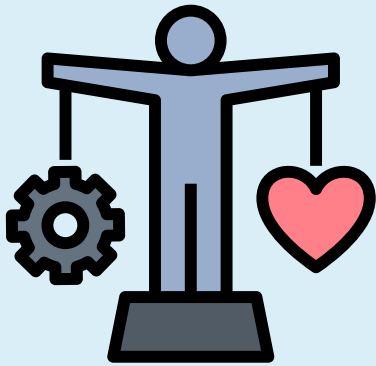
**LISTEN: How do I use “courageous conversations” to improve the quality of supervision?**

(Florida Institute for Child Welfare)

<https://tinyurl.com/yckp8tmp>



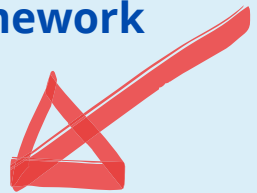
# REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS



Participants discussed feeling frustrated and demoralized by the expectations they felt leadership had of them -- to be available all the time, to have rigid boundaries between work and home life, and to not let the emotional nature of the work impact them. Agencies can support their workforce by promoting a healthy work-life balance, helping workers navigate difficult emotions, and encouraging and respecting time away from the job.

**READ: The Mindful Organization and a Well-At-Work Framework**  
(Child Welfare Innovation)

<https://tinyurl.com/bdh4tw8j>



**READ: Mindfulness, Work-Life Balance, & Boundaries**  
(workrbeeing.com)

<https://tinyurl.com/ya62b87e>

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## INTENTIONAL TIME FOR WELL-BEING



Multiple participants spoke about how helpful it is (or would be) to have protected time built into the workday to focus on emotional health and well-being. Activities included time for group or individual meditation, informal social time with colleagues, and an intentional focus on positive experiences or interactions at staff meetings.



**READ: Four Dangerous Self-Care Myths**  
(medium.com)

<https://tinyurl.com/43h32vmy>

**READ: Six Proven Benefits to Meditation in the Workplace**  
(forbes.com)

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8j4eff>