**Low Morale in Libraries: Impacts and Countermeasures**

<https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/low-morale-in-libraries.html>

Low morale is detrimental to the health and well-being of employees, library organizations, and the communities they serve. Kaetrena Davis Kendrick has conducted extensive research on low-morale experiences in libraries, identifying the various workplace factors and events that can lead to or trigger low morale, and revealing the systems and structures that enable and perpetuate low morale. Join us to learn more about this important research and leave with actionable ideas for promoting a healthy work environment for all staff and cultivating empathetic leadership in libraries. The webinar will highlight established and emerging countermeasures for library workers, including promoting work-life balance, encouraging candid communication, and cultivating a supportive workplace culture that allows all employees to thrive.

Presented by: Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, Researcher, Leader, Consultant, and Coach; and Sunnie Scarpa, Library Director, E.C. Scranton Memorial Library (CT)

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **A Review of Low Morale** |
| Low morale is the result of repeated, protracted exposure to workplace abuse and neglect (Kendrick 2017). Abuse types that present consistently include: emotional abuse, written/verbal abuse, system abuse, and negligence. Public librarians are more likely to also report physical abuse. Which, if any, of these have you experienced or observed happening to co-workers at work? (review slides for definitions)Emotional abuse: You\_\_\_ Co-worker(s) \_\_\_\_ Written/verbal abuse: You\_\_\_ Co-worker(s) \_\_\_\_ System abuse: You\_\_\_ Co-worker(s) \_\_\_\_ Physical abuse: You\_\_\_ Co-worker(s) \_\_\_\_ Negligence: You\_\_\_ Co-worker(s) \_\_\_\_ Consider or discuss with others how these various manifestations of abuse have perhaps become normalized in your workplace. Have you experienced abuse as a victim? Do you yourself perpetuate workplace abuse?  |

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| **Impact Factors and Systems** |
| If you are a **formal leader**, which of these leadership-specific **Low Morale Experience Impact Factors** most resonate with you? * Misaligned Values (recognizing gaps between personal, professional, and/or organizational stated values)
* Potemkin Power (realizing gaps between real and perceived power)
* Positional Isolation (feeling alone in experience while in a formal leadership role)
* Crossfire (being caught between supervisors’ and employees’ expectations)
* Accountability
* Legacy Toxicity (inheriting a toxic department, division, or workplace. Review [qualitative data from research on Legacy Toxicity](https://renewalslis.com/2023/03/13/report-legacy-toxicity-in-formal-leader-low-morale-experiences-part-2-march-2023/))

If you are a **staff member**, which of these general **Low Morale Experience Enabling Systems** most resonate with you? * Human Resources Limitations (realizing reporting or other low-morale experience mitigation barriers with HR)
* Library/LIS Perceptions (stereotypes and/or assumptions about libraries or library workers)
* Staffing & Employment (employee attrition, recruitment, or retention issues being unaddressed or weaponized)
* Promotion & Tenure (the process of promotion and/or tenure being used for emotional or system intimidation)
* Leadership (being exposed to leadership styles that cause or perpetuate low morale)

Consider, or ideally discuss with others, those factors and systems that most impact staff morale in your organization. Identify the most impactful factors/systems and prioritize the top two for further investigation, learning, and possible countermeasures.  |
| **On Leadership Styles** |
| Low-morale experiences can impact how leadership styles are perceived. Consider the leadership styles you’ve observed in your current and past workplaces. What worked well and what didn’t? Consider your own leadership style (even if you’re not in a formal leadership position) and write down three adjectives describing it. 1.2.3.How might your stated leadership style be perceived by employees or colleagues who may be currently dealing with low morale, or who have come to your organization after leaving a low-morale experience? |
| **Trauma-informed and Empathetic Leadership** |
| Prioritize learning about and/or implementing empathetic or trauma-informed leadership styles which can help promote community-building and improved interpersonal communication dynamics. Here are some resources to learn more about trauma-informed care and leadership:* WorldCat.org list of [12 books on Empathetic Leadership](https://www.worldcat.org/lists/fb6c07ee-5512-427a-bf52-ce15971392f6) compiled by the webinar presenters.
* [Working Toward Wellness: Exploring Trauma-Informed Librarianship](https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/Working-Toward-Wellness-Exploring-Trauma-Informed-Librarianship), Leah Dudak, Library Journal, February 2023
* [Mental Health First Aid and Trauma-Informed Approaches for Libraries](https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/mhfa-and-trauma-informed-approaches.html), WebJunction webinar

How could you incorporate aspects of positive leadership styles into the work you’re doing now and/or your future career roles? |
| **Prioritize Meaningful Communication** |
| Making the time in our busy schedules can be a challenge. But the benefits of prioritizing meaningful conversation, whether in one-on-one meetings or team meetings, can create space for empathy and greater understanding.If you do not have regular check-ins scheduled, consider these strategies:**Institutional Leaders:** Schedule a one-on-one with each direct report and ask them for one thing you could change that would make their job easier. Stay open, take notes and don’t respond right away! Schedule a follow up meeting to talk through what your response will be—why you can/can’t address their need, what you will do instead, etc.**Staff Members:** Ask your manager if you can schedule a 30 or 60-minute standing meeting once a month (or an interval that makes sense for both of you). Use the standing meeting as an opportunity to talk through non-urgent work topics and to have meaningful discussion. Keep a notebook at your desk to jot down topics for discussion as they come up. |

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| **Policies for a Healthy Workplace** |
| Much of the stress that can arise in the interactions we have with patrons is the result of complex or confusing library policies. Consider whether your policies could be updated to better support staff and contribute to a healthy and safe workplace environment.* Learn how one library created a process to identify the barriers patrons and staff encountered due to policies in [Today I Bent a Rule: Barrier Identification Staff Survey at Halifax Public Libraries](https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/today-i-bent-a-rule-barrier-identification-at-hpl.html)
* Review the WebJunction webinar [Library Policies for Today’s Communities](https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/library-policies-for-todays-communities.html), and consider an audit of your polices to understand those that might be impacting staff and their ability to provide compassionate service.
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| **Action Plan: (include next steps, when, who, etc.)** |

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