

## Sharing and responding to positive and negative emotions at work

Kristina M. Workman

Cornell University School of Hotel Administration

Managing Professional Relationships is a 14-week elective for upperclassman & masters students that explores 1) high-quality connections (HQCs) and why they matter at work, 2) pathways to developing and maintaining HQCs, 3) challenges to HQCs, 4) organizational contexts that enable HQCs, and 5) self-discovery as the starting point for HQCs. As complementary sessions across two weeks, the course provides a deep dive into topics related to sharing and responding to positive and negative emotions at work as pathways to HQCs. Specific topics & supporting content are as follows:

- **Sensitizing students to potentially upsetting or sensitive subject matter**
  - Cleveland Clinic's video "Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care" to sensitize students to upcoming content
- **Being Compassionate**
  - Empathy
  - Compassion
  - Self-compassion
- **Sharing positive emotions & thoughts**
  - Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Model of Positive Emotions
  - Humor
  - Gratitude
  - Sharing good news
  - Giving compliments
  - Employee recognition
- **Wrapping up**
  - Perceived responsiveness (Reis & Shaver, 1988): Whether responding to positive or negative news, seek to communicate understanding, validation, and care.

### Reflective writing assignment (Learning Log) topic options

Learning logs provide opportunities for students to reflect upon an experience from their past or a relational challenge posed by the class. The following prompts are accompanied by questions that guide reflection on students' thoughts and feelings as well as practical implications they can apply in the future both in and out of work.

- *Compassion in organizations*: Think about a time when you going through something difficult and focus on the response of someone senior to you at an organization you were part of at the time (e.g., supervisor, teacher, coach, team captain).
- *Gratitude letter* (Adapted from Chris Peterson): Write a letter to someone you appreciate - typically, a person who has made a difference in your life, and to whom you feel grateful. Brainstorm ways that he or she has contributed to you and had positive effects on your life, writing down both general and specific things this person has done for you and how his or her actions have made you feel. Compose a letter that is roughly one page in length, and read it to the recipient either in person or via Skype or FaceTime.
- *Compliment exchange* (adapted from Marigold et al., 2007) Pick someone in your life (e.g., fellow student, coworker, friend, family member) with whom you are close. Explain to this person that you would like to give him/her 3 compliments (or more if you wish!), and only after you are done, he or she should explain to you how the compliment made him/her feel and why the compliments are meaningful and significant. Do so, then reverse roles and repeat.