PART 8: TEAMWORK AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

CHAPTER 29: Emotional Intelligence in Team Settings

Why Team EQ Matters

In a drive-thru kiosk or café environment, **you're never truly working alone.** Even if you're the only one at the kiosk, you're part of a larger team:

- Other shift workers

- Supervisors and managers

- Support staff

- Delivery personnel

- Maintenance and cleaning crews

Team emotional intelligence means:

- Reading and responding to team emotions

- Contributing to positive team atmosphere

- Managing conflicts constructively

- Supporting collective goals

- Creating psychological safety

High-EQ teams perform better:

- 30% fewer errors during rush periods

- Faster problem-solving

- Better coverage during absences

- Higher job satisfaction

- Lower turnover

The Emotional Climate of Your Team

Every team has an emotional atmosphere—invisible but powerful.

Positive team climate:

- People help each other without being asked

- Mistakes are learning opportunities

- Everyone feels safe to speak up

- Stress is managed collectively

- Celebrations happen naturally

- New members feel welcome

Negative team climate:

- Blame and finger-pointing

- Gossip and backbiting

- Cliques and exclusion

- Fear of making mistakes

- Every person for themselves

- Cynicism and complaints

You contribute to the climate through:

- Your energy and attitude

- How you treat colleagues

- What you say about work and customers

- Whether you help or hinder

- How you handle stress

- Whether you gossip or support

Understanding Team Dynamics

Team Roles (Informal)

Every team naturally develops roles:

The Encourager:

- Lifts team spirit

- Notices when others are struggling

- Celebrates wins

- Positive attitude is contagious

The Problem-Solver:

- Stays calm during chaos

- Finds creative solutions

- Helps others think through challenges

- Keeps focus on solutions

The Connector:

- Brings people together

- Smooths conflicts

- Remembers personal details

- Creates social bonds

The Veteran:

- Institutional knowledge

- Trains new members

- Maintains standards

- Historical perspective

The Organizer:

- Keeps things running

- Notices what needs doing

- Coordinates efforts

- Manages details

Your role might change: You might be the newbie learning, then become the veteran teaching. Be flexible.

Recognizing Team Stress

Signs your team is under stress:

- Shorter tempers

- More conflicts

- Decreased communication

- Isolation (headphones, avoiding break room)

- Increased absences

- Decline in service quality

What to do:

1. **Acknowledge it:** "This has been a tough week"

2. **Support each other:** Extra help, kind words

3. **Communicate with management:** If stress is unsustainable

4. **Team debrief:** After difficult shifts

5. **Small morale boosters:** Bring treats, organize quick team activity

Communicating Effectively with Colleagues

During Rush Periods

Communication essentials:

Call out what you're doing:

- "I'm on espresso!"

- "Taking order at window!"

- "Running to storage!"

Alert to issues:

- "We're low on oat milk!"

- "Register three needs receipt paper!"

- "Grinder is making weird noise!"

Ask for help clearly:

- "Can someone help with these orders?"

- "I need backup at window!"

- "Could you grab milk from back?"

Acknowledge help:

- "Thanks for jumping in!"

- "Appreciate it!"

- Quick nod or thumbs up

Giving Feedback to Peers

When you notice something concerning:

Don't:

- Criticize publicly

- Be condescending

- Gossip to others

- Ignore and let it continue

- Take over without explanation

Do:

- Speak privately

- Be specific and kind

- Focus on behavior, not person

- Offer help

- Keep it between you unless serious

Example: "Hey, I noticed you seemed rushed with that last customer. Everything okay? Want me to take next one while you catch up?"

Not: "You're being rude to customers."

Receiving Feedback from Peers

When a colleague gives you feedback:

Defensive reaction: ❌ "That's not true!" ❌ "You do the same thing!" ❌ "Mind your own business!" ❌ Silent treatment afterward

Growth reaction: ✓ "Thanks for letting me know" ✓ "I didn't realize—I'll work on that" ✓ "What would you suggest?" ✓ "I appreciate you caring enough to tell me"

Even if delivered poorly: Try to find the useful information in it.

Managing Conflict with Colleagues

Conflict is normal. What matters is how you handle it.

Common Sources of Workplace Conflict

- Miscommunication

- Different work styles

- Perceived unfairness

- Personality clashes

- Stress and fatigue

- Competition for shifts/positions

- Gossip and rumors

Healthy Conflict Resolution

Step 1: Address directly Don't gossip to others. Talk to the person.

Step 2: Private conversation Not in front of customers or other staff.

Step 3: Use "I" statements "I felt frustrated when..." not "You always..."

Step 4: Listen to their perspective Truly listen. There are two sides.

Step 5: Find common ground "We both want the shift to run smoothly..."

Step 6: Problem-solve together "How can we make this work better?"

Step 7: Agree on solution Specific actions, not vague promises.

Example:

Situation: Colleague keeps leaving mess for next shift.

❌ Wrong: Complain to everyone except them, leave passive-aggressive notes

✓ Right: "Hey, can we talk privately? I've noticed the station isn't always cleaned at end of shift. It makes it hard to start the next day. I know it gets crazy at closing—is there something that would help? Maybe we could make a quick checklist?"

Building Team Trust

Trust is the foundation of effective teams.

How to build trust:

1. Reliability

- Show up on time

- Do what you say you'll do

- Be consistent

- Cover shifts you commit to

2. Competence

- Know your job well

- Keep improving skills

- Ask when unsure

- Don't fake knowledge

3. Honesty

- Admit mistakes

- Don't cover up problems

- Keep commitments

- Tell truth even when uncomfortable

4. Care

- Notice when teammates struggle

- Offer help

- Celebrate their wins

- Have their back

5. Openness

- Share information

- Communicate problems early

- Be approachable

- Welcome feedback

Trust is built slowly and destroyed quickly. Protect it carefully.

Team Emotional Contagion

Emotions spread in teams just like with customers.

Your mood affects the team:

- Walk in stressed → team becomes tense

- Walk in positive → team lifts

- Complain constantly → team morale drops

- Stay solution-focused → team follows

Take responsibility for your emotional contribution:

Before entering:

- Brief reset if you're in bad mood

- Don't bring personal problems to team

- Consciously choose your energy

During shift:

- Notice when you're spreading negativity

- Redirect to solutions

- Share positive moments

- Acknowledge stress without dwelling

This doesn't mean fake positivity: It means managing your emotions so you contribute to team wellbeing.

Welcoming New Team Members

Remember your first day? Be the person you needed.

Help new members by:

- Introducing yourself warmly

- Showing them where things are

- Answering questions patiently

- Including them in conversations

- Checking in: "How are you doing?"

- Sharing tips and tricks

- Being patient with mistakes

- Celebrating their first wins

What not to do:

- Ignore them

- Cliques that exclude

- Make them feel stupid for not knowing

- Haze or tease

- Complain about job to them

- Compare them to previous employee

Strong onboarding = strong team member who feels loyal to the team.

CHAPTER 30: Supporting Your Colleagues

The Power of Peer Support

Why colleague support matters:

- You understand the job in ways managers can't

- Peer support reduces stress and burnout

- Creates psychological safety

- Builds team cohesion

- Makes work more enjoyable

- Improves performance

Research shows: Strong peer support is the #1 predictor of job satisfaction in service work.

Practical Ways to Support Colleagues

During Shifts

Proactive help: ✓ Notice when someone's overwhelmed and jump in ✓ Offer to take difficult customer if colleague is stressed ✓ Grab supplies before they ask ✓ Cover bathroom breaks without being asked ✓ Stay a few minutes late if next shift is running late

Emotional support: ✓ "That customer was really difficult—you handled it well" ✓ "This rush is intense—we've got this" ✓ "Take a breath—I've got the next one" ✓ Quick smile or encouraging look across the workspace

Knowledge sharing: ✓ "Here's an easier way to do that..." ✓ "I learned this trick..." ✓ "When that happens, try..." ✓ Teach without condescension

After Difficult Interactions

When a colleague had a rough customer:

Immediate:

- "Are you okay?"

- "That was intense"

- "You handled that really well"

- Give them a moment to decompress

Don't:

- Ignore it happened

- Joke about it immediately

- Criticize how they handled it

- Tell everyone about it

Debrief if needed:

- "Want to talk about it?"

- "Anything you need?"

- Listen without judgment

- Validate their feelings

Recognizing When Someone's Struggling

Warning signs:

- Unusual quietness or withdrawal

- Increased irritability

- Mistakes they normally don't make

- Coming to work unwell

- Looking exhausted

- Emotional reactions (tearing up, etc.)

- Talking about quitting

How to help:

Private check-in: "Hey, I've noticed you seem a bit down lately. Everything okay?"

Listen: They may just need to be heard.

Don't:

- Force them to talk

- Gossip about it

- Try to fix their life

- Dismiss their feelings

Offer specific help:

- "Want me to take the difficult tasks today?"

- "Need to switch shifts?"

- "Want to grab coffee after work?"

Know your limits:

- You're a colleague, not a therapist

- Some problems need professional help

- If serious (mental health crisis, substance abuse, safety concern), encourage professional support or notify supervisor

Giving Recognition and Appreciation

Everyone needs to feel valued.

Effective recognition:

Be specific: ❌ "Good job" ✅ "The way you calmed that angry customer was impressive. Your tone was perfect."

Be timely:

- Recognize in the moment or soon after

- Don't wait weeks

Be genuine:

- Mean it

- Eye contact

- Specific details show you really noticed

Public vs. Private:

- Praise publicly (if person is comfortable)

- Appreciate privately (for shy colleagues)

Examples:

- "I really appreciate how you always help clean up even when it's not your section"

- "You're so good at remembering customer names—I'm trying to learn from you"

- "Thanks for covering my shift last week—you saved me"

- "Your latte art has gotten amazing!"

Written notes: Occasionally leave a kind note for a colleague. It's meaningful.

Handling Colleague Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes.

When you notice a colleague's error:

If minor and catchable:

- Fix it quietly without announcement

- "Hey, I adjusted that real quick"

- Move on

If it affects customer:

- Alert them privately

- Help fix it together

- Don't shame

If it's a pattern:

- Private conversation

- "I've noticed... Is everything okay?"

- Offer help or suggest talking to supervisor for training

If it's serious (safety, ethics, legal):

- Must report to supervisor

- "I know this is awkward, but I need to let management know about..."

What NOT to do:

- Publicly announce their mistake

- Gossip about it

- Cover up serious errors

- Use it against them later

- Make them feel terrible

Remember: You've made mistakes too. Handle others as you'd want to be handled.

Advocating for Your Team

Sometimes the team needs someone to speak up:

To management:

- "The team is feeling overwhelmed with the new system—could we have additional training?"

- "We're consistently understaffed on Sunday mornings—is there budget for another person?"

- "The AC isn't working and it's affecting morale and customer comfort"

For a colleague:

- "She's been doing an amazing job—is there opportunity for advancement?"

- "He's been covering extra shifts—can we recognize that somehow?"

- "They're struggling with [issue]—what resources are available?"

How to advocate effectively:

- Be factual, not emotional

- Offer solutions, not just problems

- Represent team interest, not just personal

- Choose appropriate time

- Follow chain of command

Setting Boundaries with Colleagues

Support doesn't mean no boundaries.

Healthy boundaries:

Personal life:

- You can be friendly without sharing everything

- "I prefer to keep that private"

- It's okay to not socialize outside work

Workload:

- Helping is good; being taken advantage of isn't

- "I can help today, but I can't always cover that"

- Fair distribution of work

Emotional labor:

- You can listen, but you're not their therapist

- "I care about you, but this might need professional support"

- Protect your own emotional energy

Gossip:

- "I'm not comfortable talking about them when they're not here"

- Redirect conversation

- Don't participate

Time:

- You can say no to shift swaps

- You can say no to after-work activities

- "I need to recharge" is valid

When Support Isn't Reciprocated

Sometimes you support someone who doesn't return it.

Assess:

- Is this temporary? (They're going through something)

- Is this their personality? (Some people are takers)

- Have I communicated my needs?

If one-sided:

- Reduce investment to sustainable level

- Don't expect reciprocation

- Find support elsewhere

- Maintain professional courtesy

- Focus on colleagues who are mutual

Don't:

- Become bitter

- Withdraw all support

- Make it personal drama

- Gossip about it

CHAPTER 31: Professional Boundaries

Understanding Professional Boundaries

Boundaries define where your professional role ends and personal life begins.

Why boundaries matter:

- Protect your wellbeing

- Maintain professionalism

- Prevent conflicts of interest

- Ensure fairness

- Preserve relationships

- Avoid ethical violations

Good boundaries benefit everyone:

- You feel less stressed

- Customers receive professional service

- Colleagues have clear expectations

- Managers can trust you

- Relationships stay healthy

Boundaries with Customers

Friendly vs. Friends

Appropriate: ✓ Warm, personable service ✓ Remembering names and preferences ✓ Pleasant conversation ✓ Genuine care for their experience ✓ Professional relationship

Inappropriate: ✖ Sharing personal problems with customers ✖ Asking customers for dates or personal contact ✖ Meeting customers outside work socially ✖ Accepting personal gifts beyond small tokens ✖ Becoming involved in their personal lives

Why it matters:

- Power imbalance (you're serving them)

- Can make customers uncomfortable

- Creates favoritism concerns

- Can lead to harassment situations

- Violates professional trust

If a customer crosses the line:

- "I appreciate that, but I keep work relationships professional"

- Be firm but polite

- Remove yourself from situation if needed

- Report if persistent or inappropriate

Personal Information

What to share: ✓ Your first name (if part of service) ✓ General interests if natural in conversation ("I like that band too!") ✓ Professional experience ✓ Surface-level pleasantries

What NOT to share: ✖ Full name/contact information ✖ Where you live ✖ Personal problems ✖ Intimate details ✖ Financial information ✖ Social media handles

If they ask personal questions:

- "I prefer to keep that private"

- "I don't discuss that at work"

- Deflect: "What brings you in today?"

Physical Boundaries

Maintain appropriate distance:

- Professional space (arm's length)

- No unnecessary touching

- Handshake only if customer initiates and appropriate

If customer violates:

- Step back

- "Please give me some space"

- Call supervisor if persists

- You have right to physical safety

Boundaries with Colleagues

Work vs. Personal Relationships

Finding the balance:

Healthy work friendships: ✓ Mutual support at work ✓ Optional social activities ✓ Respect for personal time ✓ Professional during work hours ✓ Healthy boundaries

Problematic situations: ✖ Dating someone you supervise (or who supervises you) ✖ Exclusive cliques that affect work ✖ Sharing everything personal at work ✖ Expecting friendship outside work ✖ Mixing romantic and work relationships

If work relationship becomes romantic:

- One of you should transfer (if direct reporting relationship)

- Disclose to management

- Maintain professionalism at work

- No PDA at work

- Keep personal conflicts personal

Time Boundaries

Your time off is yours:

✓ You can decline social invitations ✓ You don't have to respond to work texts on days off ✓ You can have life outside work colleagues ✓ You don't owe explanation for personal time

Communicating time boundaries:

- "I don't check work messages on my days off"

- "I have plans" (no need to elaborate)

- "I need my downtime to recharge"

Information Boundaries

What to share at work: ✓ General information (weekend plans, hobbies) ✓ As much as you're comfortable with ✓ Information that builds connection

What to protect: ❌ Medical details beyond needed accommodations ❌ Financial information ❌ Family problems/drama ❌ Intimate relationship details ❌ Legal issues ❌ Anything you'd regret if spread

Remember: Work information spreads. Share only what you're okay with everyone knowing.

Boundaries with Management

Professional Relationship

Your supervisor is not:

- Your friend (even if friendly)

- Your therapist

- Your parent

- Someone to vent personal problems to

Your supervisor is:

- Your professional guide

- Resource for work problems

- Evaluator of performance

- Representative of company

Maintain professionalism: ✓ Respect their role ✓ Communicate work concerns ✓ Accept feedback professionally ✓ Keep personal drama out of work

If supervisor crosses boundaries:

- Inappropriate personal questions

- Romantic advances

- Asking to lie or do unethical things

- Harassment or discrimination

Report to:

- HR department

- Higher management

- Ethics hotline

- Keep documentation

Financial Boundaries

Money and work relationships:

Don't: ❌ Lend/borrow money from coworkers ❌ Co-sign loans ❌ Mix finances with work relationships ❌ Discuss specific salary with customers ❌ Accept large monetary gifts from customers

Why:

- Creates awkwardness

- Can damage relationships

- May violate policy

- Creates conflicts of interest

If asked: "I have a personal policy about not lending money to coworkers—it helps keep relationships professional."

Social Media Boundaries

Your online presence affects work:

Best practices: ✓ Separate personal and professional accounts ✓ Privacy settings for personal accounts ✓ Think before posting about work ✓ Never badmouth customers online ✓ Never share customer information ✓ Be mindful company can see public posts

Don't: ❌ Friend customers on personal social media ❌ Post about specific customers ❌ Complain about work publicly ❌ Share company confidential information ❌ Post inappropriate content that could reflect on employer

If customers find you online:

- You can ignore friend requests

- You can have boundary: "I keep work and personal social media separate"

When Boundaries Are Violated

Someone crosses your boundary:

Step 1: Name it "That makes me uncomfortable" "I'm not okay with that" "Please don't do/say that"

Step 2: Remove yourself if possible Exit conversation Get supervisor Create physical distance

Step 3: Report if serious Harassment Threats Persistent boundary violations Anything illegal or unethical

Step 4: Document Write down what happened Date and time Witnesses Your response Keep records

Don't:

- Blame yourself

- Minimize it

- Keep silent if serious

- Retaliate inappropriately

You have the right to:

- Professional work environment

- Physical safety

- Respect

- Privacy

- Say no