Wellbeing English — Bring Your Whole Self to Work?

Canva Presentation: https://canva.link/tszxbxncwdozrbu
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Part 1. How different is the work you from the real you? Make a quick note for each, then talk through the biggest gaps. Which version is closer to who you really are?

	At work	*Outside work*
How chatty you are		
How you dress		
Your sense of humour		
How much you share about your weekend		
How you react when something goes wrong		
How you speak (vocabulary, swearing, slang)		

Part 2. Which of these would you happily put on the office wall, and which would make you roll your eyes? Is any of them only half true?

"We're like a family here."	*"Bring your whole self to work."*
"Leave your personal life at the door."	*"There's no 'I' in team."*
"Work hard, play hard."	*"Fake it till you make it."*

Part 3. Discuss the questions.

- Have you ever had a work persona? How different was it from the real you?
- Is it easier to be yourself in some jobs or industries than others? Why?
- Who decides what counts as "professional", and has that changed in your lifetime?
- Can colleagues ever really be close friends, or does it always get complicated?
- Have you ever let your guard down at work? Were you glad you did?

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Part 4. Where do you draw the line? Tick one column for each topic. Then explain any that depend on the workplace, the culture or who's asking.

	Fair game	*Depends who's asking*	*Too much information*
Your plans for the weekend			
A break-up			
Your political views			
Your salary			
A health problem			
Your side hustle			
Your religion or beliefs			
A job interview somewhere else			
Your dating life			

Part 5. What makes it hardest to be yourself at work? Number your top three, then explain your choices. Which ones are easiest to change?

Fear of being judged		A strict hierarchy	
Being new to the job		Office politics	
Cultural differences		Being the only one like you in the room	
Working mostly on video calls		A company culture that rewards fitting in	

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Part 6. What would you do? Choose an option or come up with a better one. Be honest about what you'd actually do.

Your new manager wants everyone to "be authentic" and share how they're really feeling at the start of every Monday meeting. You'd rather keep your cards close to your chest.

1. *Play along and share something safe.*
2. *Say you're fine and pass it on.*
3. *Have a quiet word with the manager afterwards.*
4. *Share honestly and see what happens.*

You're having a terrible week at home, and it's starting to show at work. A colleague you don't know well asks if you're OK.

1. *Put on a brave face: "All good, thanks."*
2. *Tell them a little, without going into detail.*
3. *Open up completely. They did ask.*
4. *Thank them and change the subject.*

At after-work drinks, a senior colleague starts sharing strong political opinions. Several people are clearly uncomfortable.

1. *Keep your head down and say nothing.*
2. *Steer the conversation somewhere safer.*
3. *Politely say you see it differently.*
4. *Make your excuses and leave.*

Part 7. How would you say each of these to a close friend, and how would you say it at work? Then decide which version sounds more like you.

"I'm absolutely shattered."	*"That meeting was a total waste of time."*
"My boss is driving me up the wall."	*"I couldn't care less about this project."*
"I've had it up to here with this client."	*"I haven't got a clue what I'm doing."*

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Part 8. Read the two views. Which is closer to your own? Which parts of the other view would you have to concede?

Viewpoint A	Viewpoint B
Hiding who you are all day is exhausting. When people can be themselves at work, they're happier, more creative and more loyal. Nobody does their best work while wearing a mask.	*Work isn't therapy. Not everyone wants to hear about your feelings, your weekend or your politics. A bit of professional distance protects everyone and keeps work about the work.*

Part 9. Tell the story of a time you saw a completely different side of a colleague or boss, or they saw a different side of you.

Think about:

- Where you were and what was going on
- What you saw, or what you let them see
- How people reacted
- Whether it changed the relationship

Part 10. Do you agree, disagree or partly agree? Explain why.

- "Bring your whole self to work" only works if you're already the kind of person the company wants.
- Being "professional" often just means toeing the line.
- The more senior you are, the more of yourself you can afford to show.
- Working from home has blurred the line between the work you and the real you.
- Colleagues aren't your friends, however well you get on.
- Oversharing at work is a bigger problem than undersharing.

Part 11. A friend starts a new job next week. What three pieces of advice would you give them about how much of themselves to show in the first month?

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Reflection

Complete the sentences in your own words.

1. At work, I'm usually more… than I am outside work.
2. Something I always keep to myself at work is…
3. A workplace where I could be completely myself would be…

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