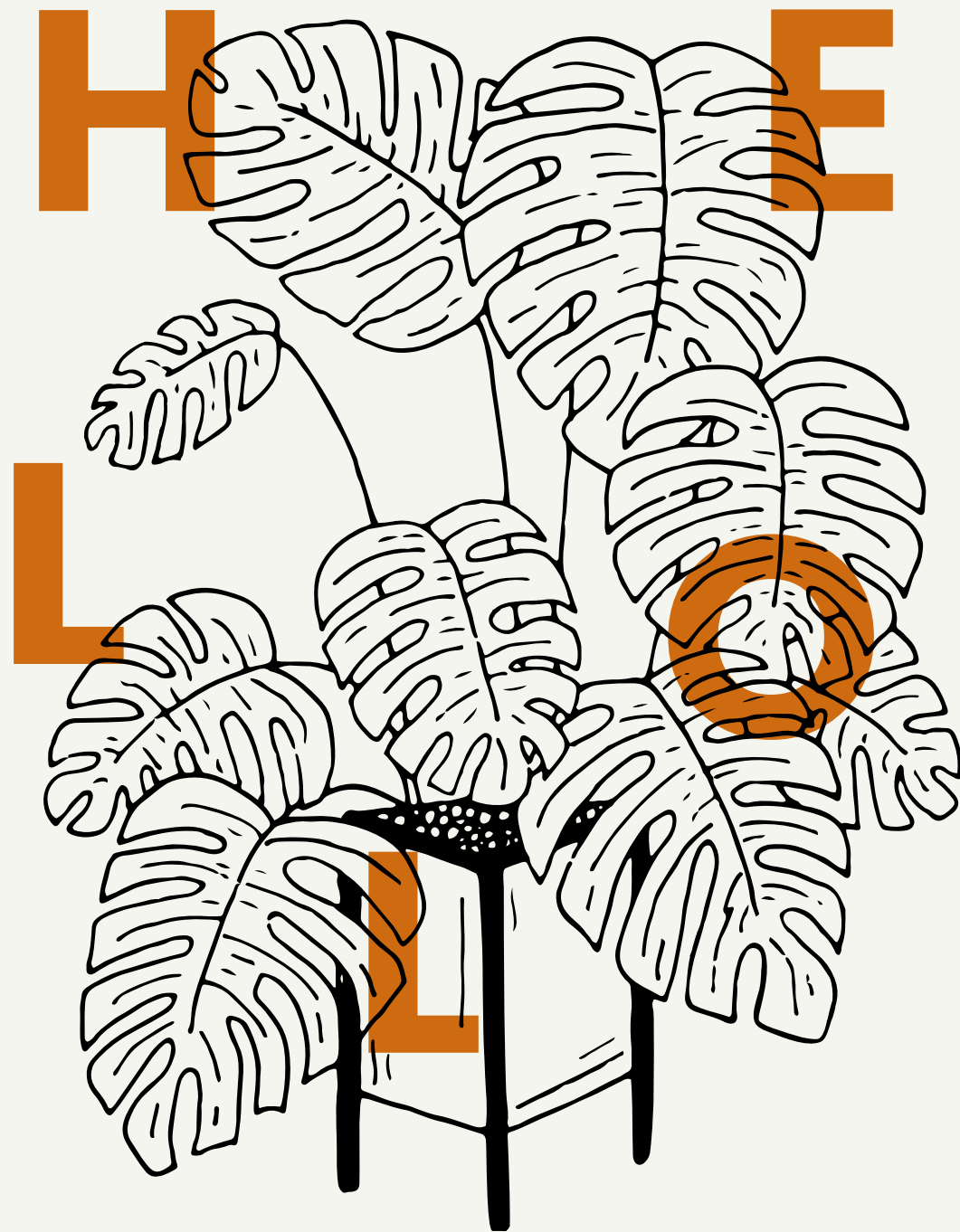


R A D I C A L E M P A T H Y
A P E R S O N - C E N T E R E D
A P P R O A C H T O
L I B R A R Y M A N A G E M E N T

S A R A H E D M O N D S
P R O V I D E N C E C O L L E G E

M A Y 2 6 , 2 0 2 1



HI! NICE TO MEET YOU!

Sarah Edmonds, MA MLIS

Interim Associate Library Director at Providence College

Person-centered & positive leadership

Library / Institutional Effectiveness

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Coaching & Mentoring for Library/Archives Managers



TOPICS FOR TODAY

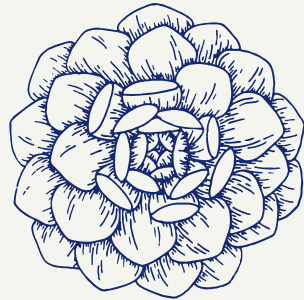
- Empathy & its applications in the workplace
- Person-centered leadership in a library setting
- Reflective Practice for Self-Understanding



HOW THIS WILL WORK

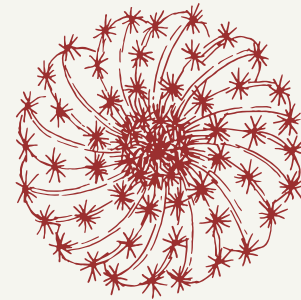
- These topics are better in person - but I think we can make it work!
- Would love to hear your answers to the reflection questions, but this is a no pressure situation!

KEY CONCEPTS FOR SUCCESSFUL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT



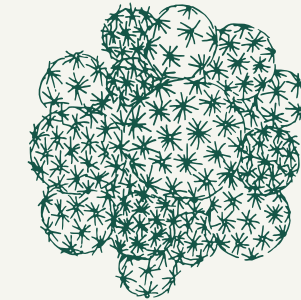
EMPATHY

Empathy paves the way for connecting with others. Understanding where someone else is coming from and the ability to identify and appropriately respond to varied experiences is critical to a high functioning library.



BOUNDARIES & BALANCE

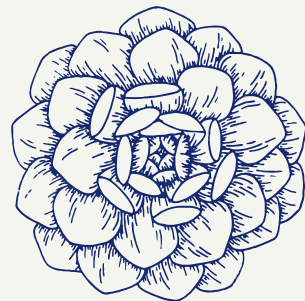
Setting clear boundaries and expectations for yourself and your staff provides the necessary structure for change and growth. It is equally important to find the right balance between expectations and reality.



SELF-AWARENESS & CHANGING BEHAVIORS

Knowing yourself and how others perceive you is the most important skill you can cultivate as a leader. You must also be open to behavioral changes within yourself for this to be effective.

(This is the hill I will die on)

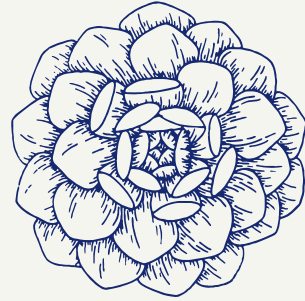


LET'S TALK ABOUT EMPATHY

A LITTLE OF THIS:

Emotional Empathy

- The ability to feel another person's emotions along with them.
- Feeling compassion for another person and their struggles or experiences
- Potential for emotional overload and difficulty making sound judgements and decisions.

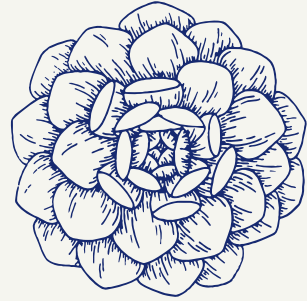


LET'S TALK ABOUT EMPATHY

A LOT OF THIS:

Cognitive Empathy

- The ability to perceive and understand the emotions of another person.
- Empathic Accuracy - Reading the Room
- A logical approach for understanding the motivations and intentions of others.
- If applied in isolation, it can be used to manipulate or control situations and people

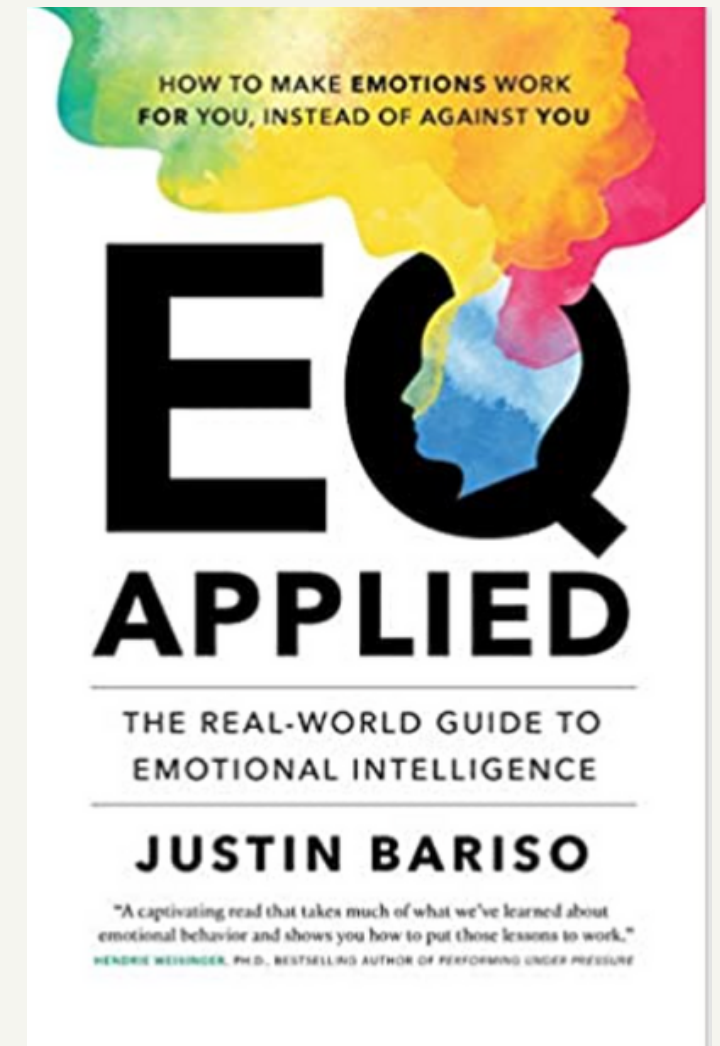


LET'S TALK ABOUT EMPATHY

IT'S ABOUT BALANCE:

Cognitive + Emotional Empathy

- The observation and awareness of emotions is a critical life skill.
- In the work place, it is essential to find the appropriate balance in different situations
  - Recognize emotions in yourself and others
  - Know when to feel with your staff & when to hold back
  - Acknowledging your own humanity and that you're not always going to get it right





WHY RADICAL EMPATHY?

STAFF NEED ADVOCATES

If you are not advocating for yourself and your staff, who is?

- What shared governance? Staff are often left out of important conversations or are an afterthought.
  - Staff bore the weight of COVID-19 related work.
  - Staff are infantilized around work schedules and nickel & dimed for their time in a way that rarely, if ever, happens to faculty.
  - Staff in academia are often highly-trained, multiple-degree holding, active members of their disciplines and still treated as though their work and expertise are not as important or valuable.
-

Several good and recent articles on this topic: <https://www.chronicle.com/author/lee-skallerup-bessette>

RADICAL EMPATHY IN ACTION

Take care of yourselves today. Your children are in good hands.

Take care,

Nomi



Tweet



Kel Mitchell ✓
@iamkelmitchell



Your empathy helps others to feel less alone. Be the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard valued, loved and supported today. listen with your heart.

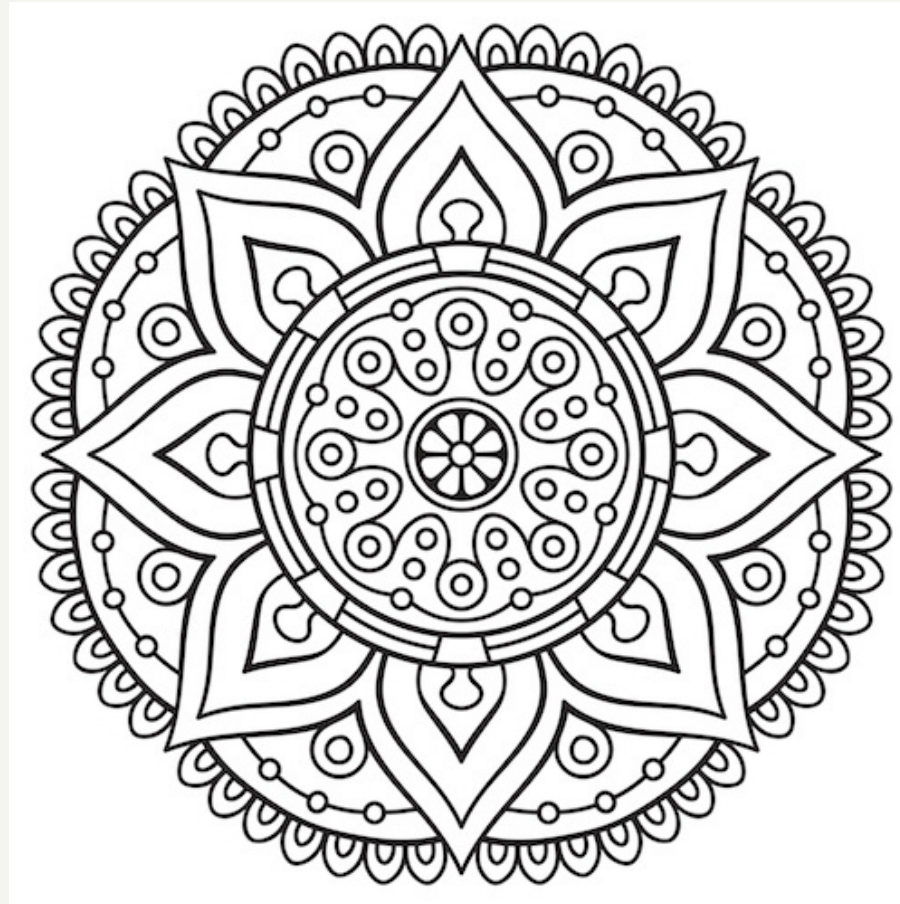
9:01 AM · 8/4/20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

- November 4, 2020 - Day after the Election
- Who do I need to take care of? Who am I responsible for?
- Created wellness/appreciation gifts for everyone in the library and delivered them to their desks to find when they came in. Mailed to remote staff.
- Contents:
  - personalized note
  - tea & candy
  - affirmation cards
  - coloring book & colored pencils

RADICAL EMPATHY IN ACTION



Affirmation Cards



Coloring for Stress Relief



Ready to be delivered

RADICAL EMPATHY IN ACTION

Just wanted to let you know that I've brought the colored pencils out and am coloring while waiting for dinner to cook. Instead of doom scrolling through Twitter!!

"You are the sweetest and I am so lucky to know you!"

"You are an insanely wonderful colleague!!!"



Source: Sugar Curls Printables on Etsy

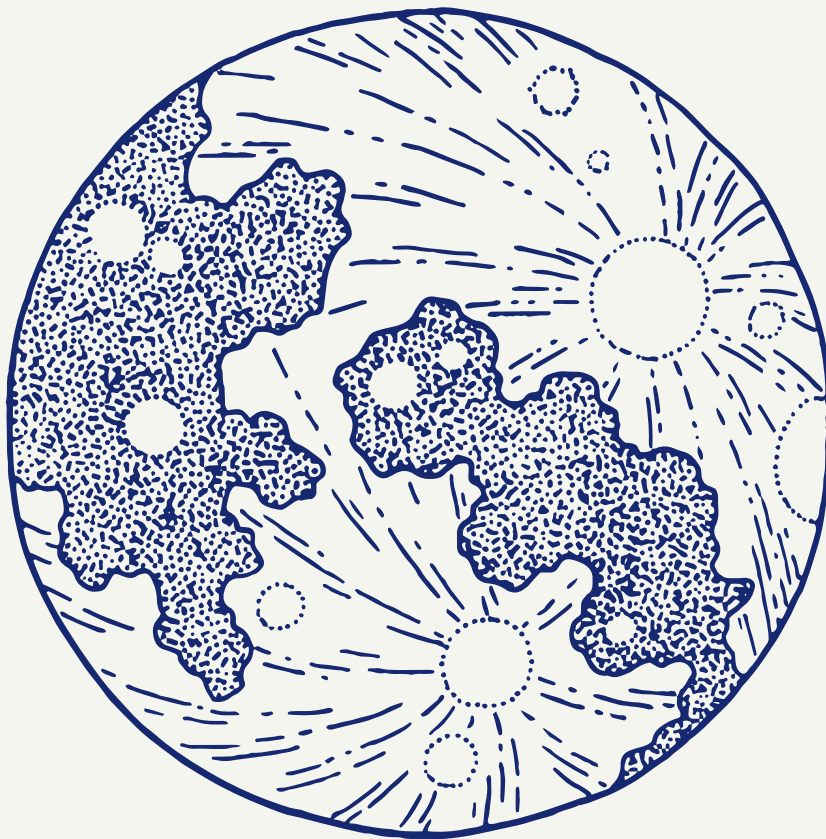
"Having such thoughtful and supportive leaders makes all the difference, especially during such difficult times, and I (and my family!) very much feel and appreciate it!"

"Such a nice thing on such a stressful day!"

"It made me tear up."

RADICAL EMPATHY IN ACTION

WHY THIS WORKED & WHY IT IS IMPORTANT



- Authenticity
  - Spontaneous - not part of a "wellness" initiative or sponsored event
  - Personal - a genuine reflection of who I am and how I wanted staff to feel
- Modeling behaviors you want to see
  - Negativity and cynicism are easy. It is far more difficult to find the good in a bad situation than it is to complain about how terrible everything is.
- Not just gifts - it's showing care for people you have a responsibility to look after.

PERSON-CENTERED LEADERSHIP - (IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT BEING NICE)



Source: Sugar Curls Printables on Etsy

What does person-centered mean?

- Leadership that looks at both goals of individuals and goals of institution
- Different people have different motivators
- Recognizes strengths & weaknesses in self and others and builds teams accordingly
- Awareness of interpersonal dynamics
- Builds a solid foundation of trust and connection

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - DEI

- Differences - cultural, social, ability, health-status, etc.
- Equity not equality

PERSON-CENTERED LEADERSHIP



Source: Sugar Curls Printables on Etsy

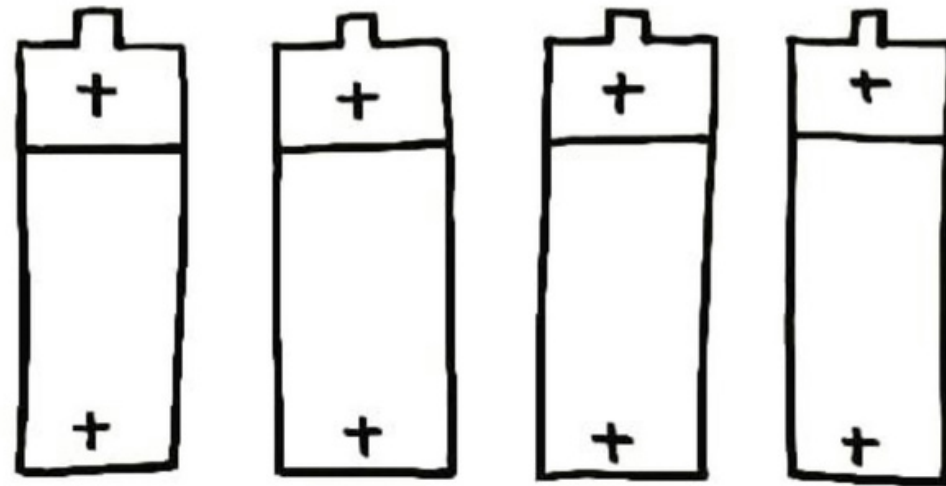
What does person-centered leadership look like?

- Not one-size-fits all
  - "Fairness" is a myth
  - Example: COVID-19 - who gets to work remotely?
- Not shying away from difficult conversations
- Recognizing that sometimes a person needs to work elsewhere in order to be happy and that's OK.
- You should care whether people want to work with and for you.

PERSON-CENTERED LEADERSHIP



constantbageltherapy • Follow



POSITIVE ONLY
BATTERIES DO
NOT WORK

source: @constantbageltherapy on Instagram

What person-centered leadership isn't.

- It is not toxic positivity.
- It is not pretending that everything is perfect.
- It is not conflict-averse.
- It is not about being friends with everyone you work with and singing songs around a camp fire.

It is building connection and trust with staff so that when things are hard or imperfect or disappointing, it doesn't cause unnecessary harm.



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

SELF REFLECTION FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT

- Reflective practice is a learning tool used to strengthen knowledge of both skills and topics as well as the self.
- When we engage in reflection as a manager or a leader, we challenge our assumptions; we accept that we are not always right; and we create space for growth.
- Self awareness is a skill that can be developed. It takes work and a willingness to admit our weaknesses and that we don't always have all the answers.

<https://engaged-learning.providence.edu/engaged-learning/reflective-practice/>

SARAH EDMONDS, MAY 26, 2021

SELF REFLECTION QUESTIONS

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOURSELF?
(HONEST ANSWERS ONLY!)



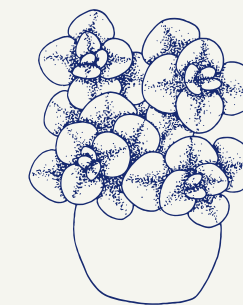
Question 01
**WHAT ARE YOU MOST AFRAID
OF AT WORK?**

- *Does it impact your decision making?
- *Does it impact the way that you engage with colleagues and your staff?



Question 02
**WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH FAILURE?**

- *Do you create an environment where people feel safe experimenting and making their own decisions/mistakes?
- *How do you react when something doesn't go the way you planned?



Question 03
**HOW DO YOU RESPOND WHEN
YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER
TO SOMETHING?**

- *Are you comfortable not being seen as the smartest person in the room?
- *Do you feel you have to prove yourself?

SELF REFLECTION QUESTIONS

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOURSELF?
(HONEST ANSWERS ONLY!)



Question 04

HOW DO YOU HANDLE ROADBLOCKS?

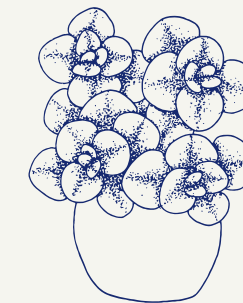
- *Are you able to see challenges as opportunities?
- *How do you approach disappointment and rejection?
- *Can you accept well-meaning criticism?



Question 05

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU WHEN SOMEONE DISAGREES WITH YOU?

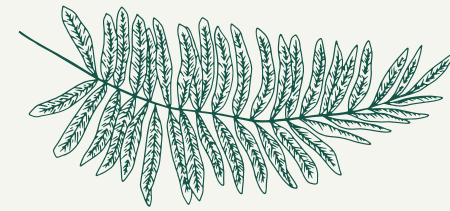
- *Do you feel personally attacked when someone doesn't think the way you do?
- *Are you able to admit you were wrong or you changed your mind?
- *Are you able to assert your opinion or a decision without unnecessary harm?



Question 06

WHAT ARE YOUR HARD BOUNDARIES?

- *What is non-negotiable for you?
- *Do the people you work with know those boundaries?
Are you clear in your expectations for others?
- *Do you communicate your needs and requirements to your staff or do you expect everyone to know what you're thinking?



QUESTIONS FOR ME?

THANK YOU FOR A LOVELY SESSION.

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@sarahedmondswrites - instagram

Questions or want to talk? Email me!

