

# CONNECTIONS

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## EAP Facilitator Network

Did you know that your department has an EAP Facilitator?

### What is an EAP Facilitator?

The EAP Office mission statement is to provide 24-hour personalized counseling, management consultation, resource referral, education, and trauma response for both work and personal problems. The services are free and always voluntary for staff, their family members and significant others, as well as retirees. Our organization's most important assets are its employees and their health and overall well-being. We are committed to providing confidential services designed to help city employees prevent or resolve personal, family and workplace problems.

With that mission in mind, it is difficult for our small office to get the word out so we have the Facilitator Network that has been in place for several years. We try to have a facilitator in each department and you can find the list of facilitators [HERE](#). The Facilitator's role is to listen and to help you get connected to EAP resources if you would want that. All the facilitators are vetted and required to participate in EAP training. Any contact you choose to have with the EAP or any facilitators is confidential.

We are currently looking for a few new facilitators in many departments. If you are interested and see that your department does not already have a facilitator, please reach out. We recently welcomed two new facilitators- Kristin Beebe for the Library and Jackie Goltz for IT. All the facilitators play a very important role in connecting employees to resources and we appreciate them all. Please reach out if you have any questions regarding joining the team or accessing our resources.



Welcome Spring!

Lots of times we can see alignment between our mood and the passing of the seasons. Traditionally spring has become a time for releasing things that no longer serve us which may also correlate with growth, change and transformation! In this newsletter, once again we welcome you into our EAP world with some news about our program, as well as some new articles on interesting mental health topics.

Included in this newsletter:

- What is an EAP Facilitator?
- The Next Generation Workplace: How Vitality Can Help Gen Z Thrive at Work
- Madison Fire Peer Support award ceremony
- How to be a boss that people can speak up to.
- Raising Confident Independent Children

The EAP office is once again in transition. We are sad to announce that Mary Eldridge has left the City of Madison. She and her family are relocating out of state. Mary has been with the EAP office as a Specialist for just over 2 years. We want to thank her for her time and dedication to the City of Madison employees. We wish them the best. We are in the process of hiring a new Specialist and hope to have that position filled in the next few months.



~ The EAP Team



CITY OF MADISON EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
2300 S. Park St., Suite 111  
Madison, WI 53703

Arlyn Gonzalez, EAP Manager: (608) 266-6561  
*Provides bilingual EAP services in English and Spanish*  
Tineisha Scott, EAP Specialist: (608) 266-6561  
Tara Armstrong, Confidential Program Support: (608) 266-6561

# The Next Generation Workplace: How Vitality Can Help Gen Z Thrive at Work

*Findings from the 2023 Vitality in America report*

This **blog** was originally published by **ICMA**, the world's leading association of professional city and county managers and other employees who serve local governments.

Number 4 on the ICMA's Top 10 PM Magazine Articles of 2023 offers tips on how to recruit and retain members of Generation Z. It's a valid question, given that 2024 marks the year that there will be as many Generation Z adults in the workforce as baby boomers, and that number will continue to grow as the cohort ages.

Known for their ambition to do well financially, their digital and social media savvy, and their drive to help others, many Gen Zers—people born between 1997 and 2005—have struggled with mental health issues, loneliness, and lack of resilience. All of this holds true in a study of 4,000 U.S. Gen Z adults, conducted by Morning Consult and commissioned by The Cigna Group in June 2023.

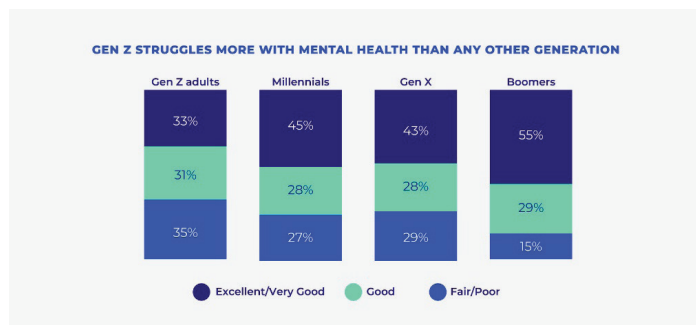
The study findings, released in the 2023 Vitality in America report, show that Gen Z reports feelings of loneliness, low levels of resilience, and the lowest levels of vitality of all age groups. They also feel disconnected from their family and friends.

The good news is that Gen Z adults are gaining ground in several dimensions of health and well-being while other generations show stagnation or decline. The data suggests that Gen Z would be well served by opportunities to make meaningful contributions and strengthen social connections at work and in their communities. In fact, Gen Z adults who experience higher levels of vitality are significantly more likely to volunteer, to feel a sense of purpose, and to connect strongly with others.

Additional data included in the 2023 Vitality in America report offer insights for employers on how to help this generation thrive at work.

## 1. Mental health challenges play a considerable role in the lower vitality Gen Z experiences

Gen Z adults are significantly less likely to feel positive about their own mental health than older generations. They also report lower personal confidence and self-esteem, dissatisfaction with their personal and professional lives, and lower overall quality of life than all other generations.



## 2. Financial stress negatively affects Gen Z vitality levels

Financial stress is higher for Gen Z adults than stress related to relationships, work or school, housing, or their health. They also report feeling more stressed about these areas than other generations do. Many feel they don't earn enough and express concern over the high cost of living, inflation, living wages, and other factors that contribute to their financial insecurity.

## 3. Gen Z feels more optimistic about their personal direction than the direction of society

Gen Z adults feel the opportunities available to them are promising (44%), which is higher than the 26% of Gen Z adults who are optimistic about the direction of society in general. In addition, 40% reported feeling in control of their future.

There are gaps in optimism between Gen Z of different races and ethnicities, with white Gen Z adults feeling the least optimistic about the direction of society at large, followed by Hispanics and Blacks, respectively.

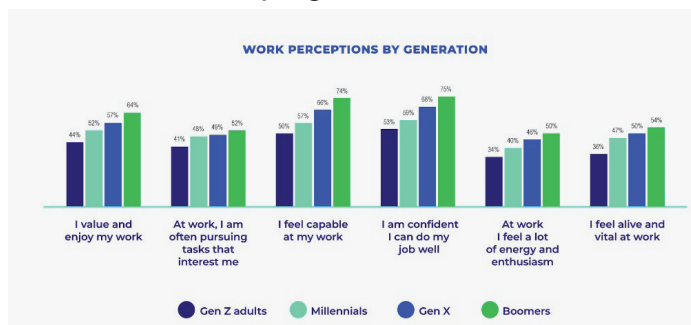
## 4. Gen Z's social media utilization is higher than any other demographic – which they don't see as all bad

As expected, the study shows nearly all Gen Z adults use some form of social media daily (96%) and are significantly more likely to use multiple social media platforms throughout the day compared to other generations.

Gen Z are more likely than older generations to feel social media has helped them to discover new ideas, learn new skills, find new hobbies, and find communities with similar interests. Simultaneously, they are also more likely to admit that social media use has resulted in issues with their self-esteem, difficulty focusing on reality, being bullied, and experiencing negative comparisons to peers. About one in five (21%) say they have lost or damaged personal relationships with friends, family, or loved ones because of social media.

## 5. Gen Z is generally underwhelmed by their workplace experience

As the newest members of the workforce, Gen Z adults struggle to find enthusiasm for work. While many are satisfied with their current jobs, they are less satisfied with their salaries, benefits, and chances for advancement. They are also less likely than older generations to find a sense of purpose in the work they do. As a result, many feel less capable and less confident in their ability to get their work done.



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Significantly fewer Gen Z workers report feeling understood by their managers, and fewer feel their managers are as confident in their abilities as they are with workers in older generations. Compared with older workers, Gen Z employees also feel less close to people at work and are less likely to say they have a lot in common with the people around them on the job. They are also less likely to feel they have autonomy at work, that their work has meaning, and that their job or organization is making a positive difference. Nearly half feel burned out, and the majority have plans to look for a new job.

Interestingly, Gen Z places a higher priority than older generations on developing their skills and gaining expertise, learning new skills, and earning professional certifications and degrees, although they are not looking to their current employer for help in achieving their professional goals, except for earning more money. For example, nearly half say they want to develop their current skills and learn new skills, but only about a third want help doing so from their current employer.

## How to help build Gen Z's vitality at work

The vitality research suggests that many in Gen Z view their current employer as a steppingstone and not where they'll find themselves in five years. However, employers who take note of this disconnect between Gen Z's career expectations and the realities of their jobs can help boost vitality at work. Here are four ways to start:

1. Help Gen Z employees find ways to do meaningful work and make sure they understand how everyday tasks tie back to the organization's purpose.
2. Offer development and training programs to build career mobility and see value from their employer.
3. Celebrate achievements to motivate employees to make time for development.
4. Train managers to connect with Gen Z employees frequently and informally, offer stretch assignments to build competence, and create opportunities for reverse mentoring to build relationships and confidence.

## FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

Congratulations to our Fire Department Peer Support Team! Both of our Peer Support Teams offer exceptional care to their respective departments. These are a selfless group of highly committed folks who are passionate about mental health and supporting their peers during challenging times. Anytime they are needed, they volunteer their time and energy to this cause and are welcoming of EAP feedback and collaboration.

In 2023, in collaboration with our Fire Department and our Local 311 Union, we hosted our inaugural Peer Support Awards Ceremony. During this event we recognized the contributions of members of our team.

Here are the award categories and the respective recipients. Thank you to our teams for all they do!

### **Laura Prom - Peer Support Champion Award**

Given to the everyday hero. This person who has gone above and beyond in their advocacy efforts for their organization's peer support program and/or has provided exceptional support to their organization and its members.

### **James Ahn - Cruising and Crushing It Award**

A Peer Support Member who has provided excellent care during check ins, is seen as a trusted and respected resource amongst their department, and advocates and collaborates during the coordination of debriefings.

### **Mark Miller- EAP & Mental Health Award**

Highly skilled at facilitating connections between EAP and individuals needing some additional support as well as negotiating systemic changes that would increase access to mental health resources by individuals in their department.

### **Lamar White - Rockstar Rookie Award**

Given to newly recruited members of the team that have provided exceptional work and brought in strong energy and commitment to their role within their Peer Support Team.

### **Linnea Anderson - Leaving a Legacy Award**

As outstanding members of the teams depart, this award was designed to honor those whose work, leadership, and dedication positively influenced the direction in which the team has transitioned over the years.

### **Bernadette Galvez - Consider It Done Award**

A Peer Support Member who can be relied upon for getting work done and is not afraid of facing the challenges of multiple simultaneous demands.



Local 311 Union Representatives, MFD peer support and EAP team



MFD and EAP team members



# LEADERSHIP *Matters*

## How to Be a Boss That People Can Speak Up To

**People aren't speaking up nearly as much as they'd like to at work.**

By Khalil Smith, Chris Weller & David Rock, *Psychology Today*

People aren't speaking up nearly as much as they'd like to at work. One 2017 study finds that just 1 percent of employees feel "extremely confident" to air their concerns, and roughly 33 percent believe their organizations don't support speaking up broadly as a habit.

Over the past few years, psychologists have tacked on a name for this behavior: employee voice. This is upward communication that is constructive in its intent but challenging in its content. And it's about as high-stakes as behaviors get. Field experiments among hospital workers have shown that increasing people's capacity for voice can reduce errors and save patients' lives. (In the U.S. alone, approximately 400,000 people die each year as a result of medical errors involving miscommunication.)

While our research team initially started studying voice as a way of addressing harassment and other high-stakes breaches of ethics, we discovered that speaking up doesn't just discourage problematic behaviors; it encourages positive ones like creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. That means when leaders create the conditions for voice, they can make smarter, more creative decisions and root out questionable behaviors before they fester into something larger.

### Understanding the Science

People don't lead in a vacuum. A wide body of research has found that the experience of being in power actually changes the brain. High-status people can largely lose their ability to take others' perspectives; they start focusing more on goals rather than people, and they take more risks in pursuit of executing on their vision. The result: Leaders tend to be less likely to seek out alternative opinions from others.

Additional research has found that people run into some predictable obstacles to voice when they witness questionable behavior. For example, groups often fall victim to the "diffusion of responsibility," in which each member of the group assumes another person will speak up, so no one actually does. People have also been found to rationalize their silence because of fears of retribution or punishment, both to themselves and others.

Taken together, the data paint a clear picture that it's not so easy to say something just because you saw something.

### Putting the Science to Work

With that science in mind, we've concluded that people speak up mostly according to the risks and benefits they've assigned to voice—a finding that obliges leaders to create the right conditions in their culture. Specifically, they should be making it feel safer to call things out, and less threatening to get called out.



They can do this through specific habits. For example, at the top of every meeting, the most high-status person in the room can let everyone know they welcome input from the group. They might even go so far as to highlight research showing that people who speak up more are, in turn, viewed as higher-status by their peers. (Even if the person who spoke up was wrong, the fact they spoke up likely bodes well for their reputation.)

Similarly, when leaders withhold their own opinion until the end of a group discussion about how to approach a problem, team members are likely to suggest a wider array of alternative solutions than if the leader had chimed in first.

Scripts can be useful when developing a habit that involves minimizing threat. Phrases like "I don't mean to challenge your status, but..." and "For the sake of this project, ..." explicitly try to defuse any possible threat and highlight the larger goal. From there, both sides can feel more comfortable knowing their status won't be threatened just because of a difficult conversation.

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## What a Voice-Rich Culture Looks Like

When leaders make an active effort to solicit others' views, they hold the power to radically shift how their organization functions. Without false expertise plaguing meetings and silence reigning in moments of questionable behavior, teams will feel empowered to freely debate new ideas, approach colleagues with confidence, and develop greater individual senses of agency. In addition, voice-rich cultures tend to be ones of consequence, since people know they'll be held accountable for their ideas and actions.

Getting to such a state may be harder than it seems, since most managers probably think they already know where (or who) their good ideas come from. That's why, along with deep insights from science, voice also requires a dose of humility. It requires an understanding from leaders that people can surprise them in extraordinary ways—and maybe all they need is the encouragement to speak up.



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

### Raising Confident, Independent Children

#### How the scaffold parenting method empowers growth

**This is an excerpt from *The Scaffold Effect*, a new book by Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, the president of the Child Mind Institute.**

When our kids are young, our job is to be fixers, protectors, and social secretaries. We childproof the house so they can't get under the sink and block the stairs so they don't fall down. We set up playdates and throw their parties. We call their teachers when there's a problem. But at some point along the way, the parents' job changes, without warning or indication, and we become consultants. Our job then is to help them find solutions for themselves.

Shifting from "fixer" to consultant is a major change, and you might have a hard time with that. As parents, we're socialized for the fixer/protector role, to step in and take care of the problem. If your kid falls down and scrapes his knee, your instinct is to put a Band-Aid on it, and say, "It's okay, sweetie. I'll make it better." Then they go back to playing and you feel good about having done your job as a fixer well.

However, you can't put a Band-Aid on a social rejection or a failure experience. There is no instant fix when a twelve-year-old girl is suddenly cast out of her friend group, or when an eight-year-old boy struggles to memorize math tables and starts to believe he's stupid. You can't protect a child from the trials of life. But you can give your kid armor by teaching him to advocate for himself, and thereby develop the grit he needs to survive and succeed.

If your child gets a poor grade on a test, for example, a fix-it parent would say, "You should call the teacher to talk about what happened. You should meet with your friend who's great at math and get some tutoring. You should study harder." You should, you should, you should. Listen to how you talk to your child. When you hear that phrase, be aware that you are in fix-it mode, essentially choosing and handing him tools.

To scaffold, parents support and encourage the child to learn how to select the right tool for the particular task all by himself. He might choose wrong, and then you can guide him to evaluate why that particular tool wasn't the best choice. Next time, he'll try something new.

It's not that you are letting him hang out there on his own. You are standing by and collaborating with him to come up with his own solutions. Instead of his depending on you for answers, you will guide him to come up with ideas about how he can do it for himself.



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## The Growth Zone

A psychological state is often called “a zone.” In the active construction site that is your child’s development, it helps to be aware of her various zones, as well as which are the safe and unsafe areas.

**The Comfort Zone.** This is a no-anxiety, no-stress figurative place where a person feels safe and secure, believes he’s in control, and can do any social, emotional, behavioral, or academic task easily, without help from parents or teachers. In the Comfort Zone, a child can build confidence and self-esteem. He is secure doing the activity; he enjoys it because he’s proficient. It might feel good to hang out here; it might be a bit boring, too. Since growth comes from learning new things, and learning requires you to be vulnerable in your ignorance and inexperience, the child will have to leave the Comfort Zone in order to grow.

**The Growth Zone.** Maximal learning and growth happen in the area just outside the Comfort Zone, when the child is reaching and stretching to acquire new skills. Russian educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that educating children in the “zone of proximal development”—just beyond their current capacity, not too far from where they already are—inspires kids to become independent problem solvers and self-motivated learners. The theory holds up in the context of scaffolding a child’s emotional, social, and behavior learning as well. Learning, aka growth, an ongoing process of reaching for more, is always empowered by parent-child collaboration. You’re in it together, but once your child learns what he needs to learn, he can move on, and up, to the next level, while you cheer him on from the near distance of the scaffold.

## Failure Is an Option

For your kids, you scaffold their current and future growth by teaching them to take risks, despite the very real possibility of going splat.

Labeled praise plays a major part here. If you want your kids to be more proactive and prosocial, you have to praise them when they try. Be careful about what you praise, though. If you praise success, your kids learn to think that failure is bad. But failure isn’t good or bad. It’s just one possible outcome.

Emily, a fourteen-year-old girl with severe anxiety disorder, always became extremely worried in the days leading up to her midterm and final exams. Her mother Diana’s reaction to her daughter’s stress was to tell Emily to study harder, but that wasn’t helpful. Obsessive studying was a symptom of Emily’s anxiety, not a coping, calming strategy. It was like giving a drug addict permission to smoke more crack.

We coached Diana to scaffold Emily with nonjudgmental validation and by presenting failure as just a thing that sometimes happens, to say to her daughter, “I hear you. You’re worried that you’re going to fail. Maybe you will, and that’s okay.”

With the “death threat” of failure off the table, Emily could turn her deficit (anxiety) into an asset (productivity). She still prepared twice as much as her peers and always met with teachers for reassurance. But by telling herself failure was fine, by releasing that valve, the destructive “I can’t do this!” anxiety was gone. Diana had to send the same message many times. But eventually, the message sunk in, and Emily, now a young woman, flings herself into intimidating job opportunities. “Failure isn’t fatal,” she said. “I’ll just try again.”

A parent’s fear of failure and rejection on the child’s behalf leads to the parent riding to the rescue to save the day, by doing his homework, calling teachers and coaches, taking care of every tiny thing for their kids.

The irony of swooping in is that parents believe they’re helping their kids by preventing pain. But what they’re actually preventing is growth.



## Upcoming EAP Trainings



### Suicide Prevention

Wednesday, March 13, 2024  
10:00 - 11:30 AM

### Setting Boundaries

Wednesday, April 10, 2024  
9:00- 10:30 AM

### Alcohol and Drug-free Workplace

Wednesday, May 15, 2024  
9:00 - 10:30 AM

### Sparkling Growth

Thursday, June 13, 2024  
10:00 - 11:30 AM

*Thanks for reading,  
we hope you found the information useful!*

**You can reach any of us by calling the  
EAP Office at (608) 266-6561**

**External Available 24/7:  
FEI Workforce Resilience (800) 236-7905**

Arlyn Gonzalez, [agonzalez@cityofmadison.com](mailto:agonzalez@cityofmadison.com)  
Provides bilingual EAP services in English and Spanish

Tineisha Scott, [trscott@cityofmadison.com](mailto:trscott@cityofmadison.com)

Tara Armstrong, [tarmstrong@cityofmadison.com](mailto:tarmstrong@cityofmadison.com)

To learn more about your external EAP services, please contact FEI at 1-800-236-7905 or sign in to **FEI/AllOneHealth member portal** (for instructions on how to create your account, please visit the **EAP website**).