



Local Government
Workplaces Initiative



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Emotional Labor in Public Law

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Format

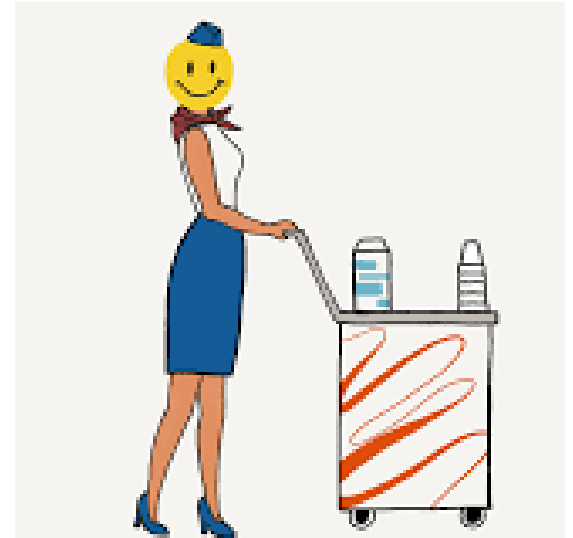
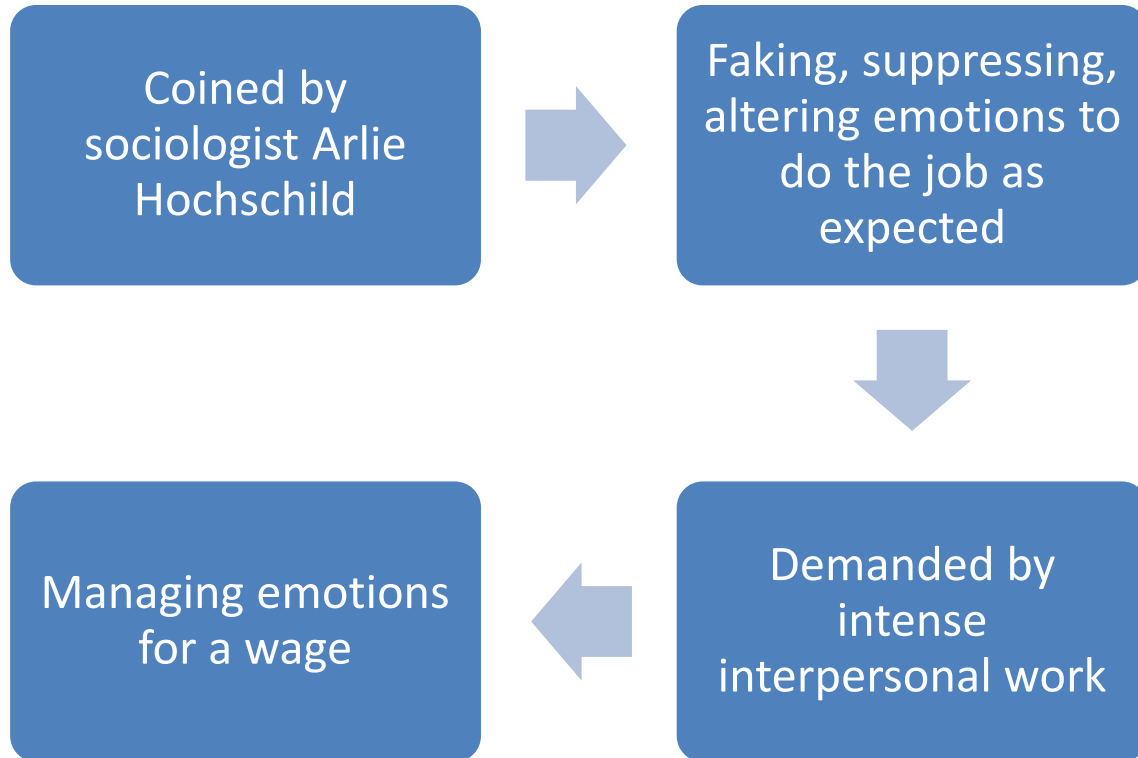
- Interactive, connecting dots, chats/polls
- Chat Tom Thornburg directly with comments and questions
- Break around 10 amish

Overview

- What is **emotional labor**?
- **Why does it matter** for public lawyers?
- **Managing** emotional labor



Emotional Labor



High Emotional Labor Occupations



- “Listening occupations”
 - Firefighters
 - Social workers
 - Police officers
 - Rape crisis counselors
 - EMS responders
 - Public health professionals
- Public law?

Three Parts to Emotional Labor



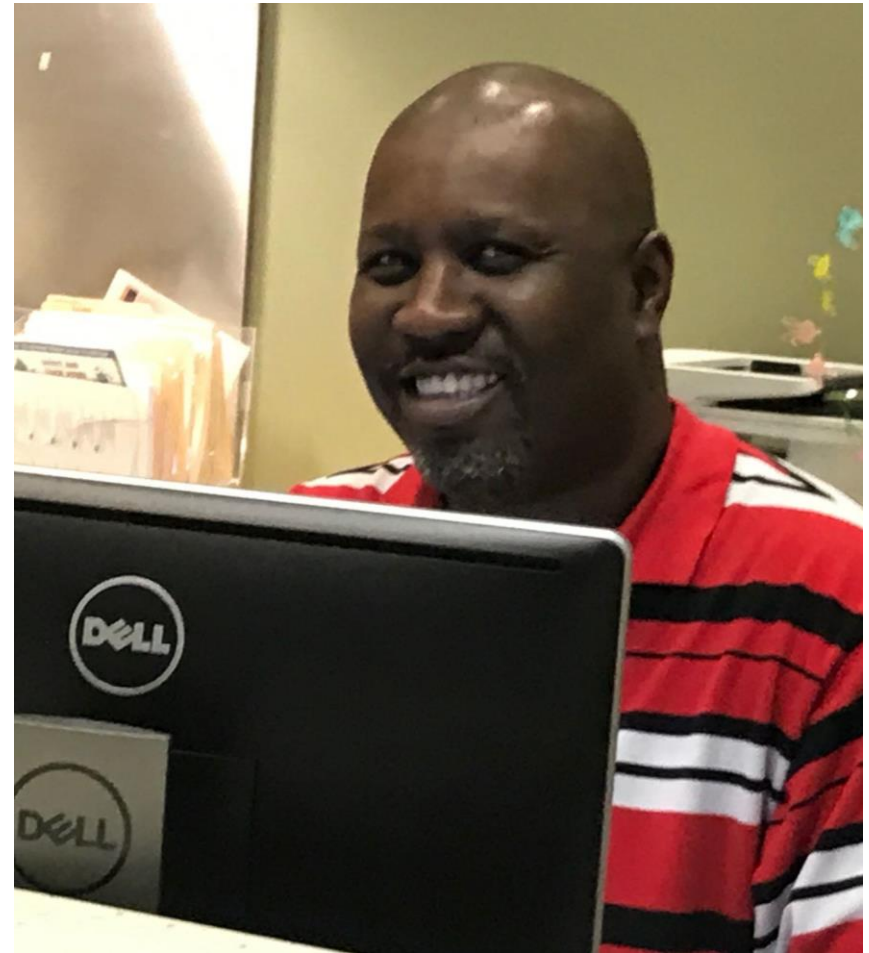
Display rules

Internal feelings

Reconciliation

Display Rules

- The outward demeanor expected by organization or profession
 - Social work: Compassionate
 - Utility billing: Friendly
- What are display rules for public lawyers?



Internal Feelings



- What you feel inside
- Examples of feelings that contradict your display rules?
- What situations trigger feelings that contradict display rules?

Reconciliation

- Your **mental process** for reconciling internal emotions with external expectations
 - Creating mental “compartments and closets”
 - Becoming “crazy calm”
 - Using humor and common sense
- Do these resonate with you?
Are there others missing?



Types of Emotional Labor



Surface acting:
pretending or
faking



Deep acting:
changing your
emotion



Which do you
think is harder on
you emotionally?

Why Care?



- Emotional labor can
 - Increase or decrease **job satisfaction and engagement**¹
 - Can lead to **burnout**² and **self-estrangement**³ if not managed
 - **Adverse health effects** for some⁴
 - Exhaustion, stress and depression, loss of memory, hypertension, heart disease

*1. Lam and Chen 2012; 2. Hsieh, Jin, & Guy, 2011;
3. Sloan 2012; 4. Schaubroeck and Jones 2000*

Burnout

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Reduced self-efficacy



Emotional Exhaustion



Feeling of being overextended, depleted, used up



Incapacity to disconnect from job, even during sleep

- I feel used up at the end of each day.
- I feel emotionally drained from my work.
- I feel fatigued when I have to get up in the morning and face another day on the job

Poll Question 1

- In thinking about your work over the last 30 days, how often have you felt emotionally drained from your work?
 - Not at All
 - Very Little
 - Moderately
 - A Lot
 - Extremely

Depersonalization

- Negative, callous, excessively detached from others
- I have become more calloused towards people since I took this job.
- I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally



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Poll Question 2

- In thinking about your work over the last 30 days, how often have you felt less empathetic with others at work?
 - Not at All
 - Very Little
 - Moderately
 - A Lot
 - Extremely

Reduced Self-Efficacy

- Feelings of incompetence/diminished achievement
- Perceived inefficiency, poor professional self-esteem, sense of inadequacy
 - My work doesn't make much difference in the world
 - Some days I feel helpless at work



Poll Question 3

- In thinking about your work over the last 30 days, how often have you felt helpless at work?
 - Not at All
 - Very Little
 - Moderately
 - A Lot
 - Extremely

Engagement

- Opposite of burnout
 - Energy
 - Involvement
 - Self-Efficacy



Poll Question 4

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following questions:
- At work, I feel bursting with energy
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Let's Take a Break!

- Stretch
- Meditate for three minutes
- Have some tea
- Take a quick walk



Managing Emotional Labor

- “If you can’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of the victim.”— Cathy Phelps, executive director of the Center for Trauma and Resilience in Denver
- If you can’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of _____

The Center For
Trauma &
Resilience
Formerly known as The Denver Center for Crime Victims

Mental Health Among Attorneys

- 2016 survey of 12,825 attorneys found
 - 21% with alcohol problems
 - 28% reporting depression systems
 - 19% anxiety
 - 23% stress



- *Krill, P. R., Johnson, R., & Albert, L. (2016). The prevalence of substance use and other mental health concerns among American attorneys. Journal of Addiction Medicine, 10(1), 46.*

What are the sources of stress on public lawyers?



Managing Emotional Labor



- Recognize when you are experiencing emotional labor
- Breathe
- Remind yourself
 - That the stress will pass, typically in a few minutes
 - Of the big picture of the work

Taking Care of Yourself

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Relaxation/Meditation
- Prayer/Spirituality



Exercise



- Mental health benefits (Mikkelsen et al 2017)
 - improves anxiety, stress, depression
 - decreases inflammation
 - Improves psychological, physiological and immunological functions.
- Optimal
 - 30 - 60 minutes
 - 3 to 5 times a week (Chekroud et al 2018)

Poll Question 5: How often do you get 30 minutes of exercise?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Weekly
- Rarely
- Never

Nutrition



- More anxiety/depression with Western style diet, less with Mediterranean style diet (Owen and Corfe 2017)
 - Mediterranean diet: vegetables, fruits, unprocessed grains
 - Western diet: processed foods and refined sugar

Poll Question 6: How healthy do you eat?

- Healthy
- Somewhat healthy
- Somewhat unhealthy
- Very unhealthy

Relaxation/Meditation

- Preserves aging brain (Luders et al 2015)
- Minimizes “me” center in brain (Brewer et al 2011)
- Reduces anxiety (Zeidan 2013)
- Minimum duration for benefits: 7-8 minutes a day (Reb et al 2020)



Prayer/Spirituality

- Young adults who prayed daily tended to have fewer depressive symptoms, and higher levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem, and positive affect, in comparison to those who never prayed (Chen and VanderWeele 2018)



Poll Question 7: How often do you engage in intentional relaxation/meditation/spiritual practice?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Weekly
- Rarely
- Never

Conclusion



- Emotional labor is a public law phenomenon
- Manage it *in the moment* and *through self-care*
- Taking care of yourself can help mitigate the negative effects of both

