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PERSPECTIVES

You Take You With You.

On the nervous system, meaningful work, and why the way we serve one another matters more than we think.

WORK & THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE · NOVEMBER 2026

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By Micaela Redmond, LMT, CMP, PMP · November 2026

You take you with you.

To work. To the grocery store. Into your relationships. Into the meeting you didn't want to attend. Into the conversation with your child after a particularly long day.

Everywhere you go, there you are.

We've become quite good at dividing our lives into categories. Professional life. Personal life. Family life. Spiritual life. As though we can place one neatly on a shelf while we attend to another.

But the human experience doesn't work quite like that.

The woman sitting in the conference room may also be grieving her mother. The person facilitating your retreat may have spent the morning navigating a difficult conversation at home. The parent preparing dinner may still be carrying the frustration of a meeting that ended six hours earlier.

We don't become different people every time we enter a different room.

We bring our whole selves into each one.

And what happens in those rooms comes with us when we leave.

The Science of What We Carry

Psychologists have spent decades studying what happens when our experiences in one part of life influence another.

One concept is called *spillover*.

Stress at work can follow us home. Confidence developed through work can influence how we approach personal challenges. A sense of accomplishment can affect our mood long after we've finished the task.

And it works in both directions. Our relationships, responsibilities, joys, and difficulties outside work influence how we participate in it.

Researchers Jeffrey Greenhaus and Gary Powell described *work-family enrichment* as a process through which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another.[1]

Think about that for a moment.

Something positive that happens in your work may become a resource you carry into your family life.

In a 2014 study involving 174 mothers and their children, researchers examined daily experiences at work and their relationship to family well-being. Mothers' positive moods after work were associated with their children's more positive emotional states and better sleep.[2]

Now, this doesn't mean an enjoyable workday guarantees a peaceful home. Human beings and family relationships are far more complicated than that.

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But it does challenge the idea that what happens at work stays at work.

And there is another layer.

Researchers also study *crossover*, the process through which one person's experiences and emotional state may influence another person's well-being.[3]

It's one thing for my difficult day to affect my mood.

It's another for that mood to shape my interaction with someone who had absolutely nothing to do with the difficult day.

A child. A partner. A coworker. A customer.

That person then carries their own experience into the next interaction.

And the next.

This is where the conversation becomes especially interesting.

The Nervous System Doesn't Read Job Descriptions

Our nervous systems respond to the conditions we experience, not simply the roles we're supposed to be performing.

Stress, uncertainty, interpersonal tension, sensory overload, and the demands placed on our attention can all influence how we feel and respond.

So can predictability, supportive relationships, opportunities to rest, and environments where we feel sufficiently safe to participate.

This is part of why the physical and emotional conditions of our work matter.

Imagine someone attending a retreat intended to support reflection and personal growth.

The facilitator is excellent. The material is meaningful. Everyone has arrived with good intentions.

But the schedule is relentless. The room is uncomfortable. Participants have nowhere quiet to go between emotionally demanding sessions. They haven't been given enough information about what to expect.

The program may be wonderful.

The experience may still be exhausting.

We cannot assume that meaningful content automatically creates a supportive environment.

The body is participating in the experience, too.

And when an experience asks people to engage deeply, learn something unfamiliar, or be emotionally vulnerable, the conditions surrounding that experience deserve careful attention.

This applies to more than retreats.

It applies to corporate meetings, classrooms, healthcare settings, conferences, customer service interactions, and the ordinary systems people navigate every day.

We often underestimate the importance of the things that make participation easier.

Clear instructions. A predictable process. A comfortable place to sit. A reasonable pace. The ability to ask for help without feeling foolish.

These may seem like small details.

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But small details can influence whether a person has the capacity to engage with what we're asking of them.

Your Work Is Part of Someone Else's Experience

Let's talk about business.

We tend to evaluate organizations through what can be measured: revenue, growth, engagement, customer retention, attendance, conversion rates.

Those numbers matter.

A business needs to function. People need to be compensated. Resources need to be managed responsibly. Profitability creates the capacity to continue providing something useful.

But a business is also a series of human encounters.

Someone visits your website. They receive your email. They speak to your team. They register for your program. They walk into your event. They ask a question. They need help.

At each point, they're having an experience.

Maybe they feel welcomed and informed.

Maybe they feel confused, rushed, or like an inconvenience.

Maybe they encounter someone who listens carefully and helps them find exactly what they need.

What happens in that interaction may influence more than whether they make a purchase.

Consider the person who attends a workshop and leaves with the confidence to pursue something they had been postponing.

Or the person who encounters genuine kindness during a difficult period of life.

Or the business owner who finally has enough operational support to stop carrying every responsibility alone.

We cannot know everything these experiences will mean to the people having them.

But we can recognize that they are more than transactions.

And we can design accordingly.

What Happens When Someone Is Fully Engaged in Their Contribution?

There's a particular quality to being around someone who cares about what they're doing.

You notice it in the teacher who makes room for one more explanation. The event producer who anticipates what participants might need. The business owner who remembers that the customer is a person rather than a conversion.

It doesn't necessarily mean they're cheerful all the time.

It means there's a relationship between what they value and what they're doing.

Psychological research on meaningful work, job design, and employee engagement suggests that how people experience their work is associated with well-being, motivation, and other important outcomes.

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That doesn't mean everyone must discover a grand calling through employment. Meaningful contributions happen in families, friendships, communities, creative pursuits, and countless forms of unpaid service.

And nobody should have to feel perpetually inspired to deserve dignity at work.

But when people have opportunities to contribute in ways that matter to them, with adequate resources and support, those opportunities can enrich more than their professional performance.

They may return home with a different level of energy, patience, or satisfaction.

They may bring new skills into their relationships.

They may have more capacity to show up for someone else.

And that person may benefit from an experience whose origins they'll never know.

We Are Always Affecting One Another

In a 2002 experiment, organizational researcher Sigal Barsade studied emotional contagion in small groups.

The study found that moods could spread within groups and influence cooperation, conflict, and perceived performance.[4]

There's something worth paying attention to in that finding.

Our internal experiences don't necessarily remain private, even when we believe we're keeping them to ourselves.

Of course, we don't all respond to one another in the same way. Emotional influence depends on context, relationships, individual differences, and many other factors.

But the larger principle is difficult to ignore.

We participate in one another's experiences.

The tone we bring into a conversation matters.

The conditions we create for others matter.

The way we organize work matters.

And the care we put into our offerings matters.

From a spiritual perspective, I understand this through the principle of oneness: the recognition that we are not separate from the whole of life.

From a psychological perspective, we can examine some of the ways our experiences, relationships, behaviors, and environments influence one another.

These are different ways of understanding the human experience, and they don't have to be collapsed into the same claim.

One is a spiritual philosophy. The other is an evolving body of scientific inquiry.

Both invite us to take the way we participate in the world seriously.

So What Does This Mean for the Way We Do Business?

I think it asks us to expand our definition of success.

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Of course, we should build profitable businesses. Of course, we should understand our numbers, establish effective systems, and create sustainable operations.

But what if we also considered the human experience we're creating?

What if we paid as much attention to how someone moves through our business as we do to whether they complete the transaction?

What if we recognized that a well-designed process can reduce frustration, that a thoughtfully produced event can make room for genuine participation, and that the way we treat our teams becomes part of the experience those teams carry elsewhere?

What if the question wasn't only whether the program was delivered successfully, but also what the experience made possible for the people involved?

That's a different way of understanding business.

And it doesn't require us to abandon financial responsibility, professional standards, or ambitious goals.

It asks us to remember what those things are in service of.

There is room for both operational excellence and genuine care.

In fact, I would argue that they belong together.

This Is Our Service

I've come to believe that service is much broader than a profession or a particular kind of work.

It's how we participate.

The way we teach. The way we lead. The way we create. The way we build systems that make someone's life easier. The way we give another person our attention.

Every one of us contributes to the shared experience of being human, whether we're conscious of it or not.

And that means the way we do ordinary things deserves consideration.

We may never know what becomes of the person who leaves our classroom, receives our kindness, attends our event, or encounters our business at exactly the right moment.

We don't need to know.

We can simply take seriously the privilege of being part of their experience.

Because there is no separate work self who exists independently of the rest of our lives.

You take you with you.

And so does everybody else.

Everything matters because we're all here experiencing one another.

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A Few Things Worth Considering

If you lead a business, team, program, or organization, consider these questions:

- What does someone experience from their very first interaction with your organization, and how might that experience influence the rest of their day?
- Where do your systems make life easier for people, and where do they create unnecessary stress?
- Are the people delivering your services supported well enough to offer others the experience you promise?
- Does your work allow the people involved to contribute meaningfully, with room to remain human?

The answers may tell you as much about your organization as the numbers do.

And perhaps that's a good place to begin.

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Micaela writes about consciousness, presence, somatic experience, and the ways we influence one another through our work and everyday lives. Her interdisciplinary perspective brings together decades of professional leadership, spiritual study, and doctoral study in Somatic Psychology.

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