SUPERVISOR SUPPORT FOR TEAM THRIVING:
CHEAT SHEET
Practical Strategies for Supervising Lawyers to Support Inclusion, Engagement, & Well-Being

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Psychological Flexibility Enables Effective Leadership

- Effective leadership requires *psychological flexibility*, which is the ability to be consciously aware of our internal experience and, based on situational demands, to flexibly choose, change, or persist in behaviors that align with our values and goals.

- Reacting to the world based on automatic pilot (rather than on conscious awareness and choice) will result in rigid, mindless responses based on mental habits that may not be the most effective (or align with our own values) in a particular situation.

Rigid Leaders	Flexible Leaders
- Assume that everyone is just like them. - Don't identify their team member's own values, interests, and preferences. - May reject others' values and preferences as not legitimate or wrong. - Treat everyone the same based on how they've always done things.	- Are mindful of the situation and adapt their approach to be most effective in that context. - Seek to know and understand each team member's values, preferences, and perspectives to be able to tailor an effective leadership style to each of them. - Accept and encourage others' individuality.

Effective Leaders Support Their Teams' Basic Psychological Needs

- The foundation of effective leadership is high-quality relationships with team members. Behaviors that fulfill team members' basic needs for connection, effectiveness, and autonomy are building blocks for high-quality relationships.

- According to self-determination theory (a well-supported theory of motivation, adaption, functioning, and flourishing), people's growth and optimal functioning are facilitated (or thwarted) by the extent to which their social context helps satisfy their basic human needs. Satisfaction of these needs, in turn, contributes to psychological processes that fuel high-quality motivation that enables optimal functioning—including well-being, performance, and positive job attitudes.

Defining The Three Needs

The three basic needs are defined as follows:

Autonomy	Competence	Connection
Encompasses both a need to act volitionally or feel that one's behaviors are self-endorsed and a need to act authentically or self-congruently. When our autonomy is supported at work, we feel willingly engaged and find interest or value in our work. We also feel able to be fully ourselves rather than to conform to certain ways of thinking, feeling, or being.	Refers to feeling effective and experiencing growth. It includes feeling able to master new skills, make a difference in the world, and function effectively in our social environments	Refers both to the need to feel cared for and valued in secure, interpersonal relationships and to the experience of belonging within groups. A sense of belonging is the experience of fit, congruence, and being an integral part of a group, which occurs when one feels valued, accepted, needed, and connected.

Developing Need-Supportive Leader Behaviors

- Leader behaviors that can help satisfy team members' basic needs are described below. (You'll probably notice that many of the behaviors may satisfy multiple needs, but they are listed under only one.)

- Note that, while the three basic needs are universal, they are not necessarily satisfied in the same way for everyone. The needs provide a general map, but leaders will need to tailor their specific approaches to need-satisfaction to the individual characteristics of each team member.

- Being attentive to psychological needs is important not only as lawyers carry out their work duties but also to support their work-life management efforts. Example leader supportive behaviors to do so are also provided below.

Need-Supportive Leader Behaviors Chart

Guideline	Behavior	Examples
Support For All Needs		
Listen; Be Present and Responsive	- Listen, listen, listen. - Encourage them to ask questions and then listen to them. - Use language and verbal and nonverbal behavior aimed at helping team members feel heard, understood, appreciated, and cared for. *Note the importance of non-verbal communication:* Message-meaning is derived mainly from non-verbal cues (55%) and tone of voice (38%) compared to words (7%).	- Active Listening - Eye Contact - Full Attention/Not Multi-Tasking - Mutual Sharing - Express Emotions - Appropriate Personal Disclosure - Meaningful Topics - Smile - Display Energy
Support For Autonomy		
Clearly Establish Expectations While Avoiding Controlling Language & Behaviors	- Invite participation and input. - Collectively agree on what needs to be done and when. - Avoid giving orders or pressuring with demanding language.	"What do you think we should do here?" "What seems like a reasonable deadline for you?" "Can you please ___?"

	▪ Minimize use of implied threats, excessive check-ins, and deadlines imposed without consultation. ▪ Avoid pressuring them to adopt certain opinions or behaviors, micro-managing, and using guilt and threats to manipulate. ▪ Consult with them about decisions that affect them.	▪ "It would be really helpful if you could ___." ▪ "What do you think about ___?" ▪ "How shall we get this done?" ▪ "What are your ideas for this?" ▪ "What part of this would you like to take the lead on?"
Take Their Perspective and Acknowledge Their Emotions as Valid	▪ Inquire about, acknowledge, and accept their feelings and perspectives. ▪ Listen to complaints, disagreements, negative emotions without judging or rejecting them. ▪ Acknowledge feelings as potentially valid reactions. Their autonomy need won't be fulfilled if they don't feel listened to.	▪ "I'm sorry about this short turn-around time. I understand it's frustrating that you have to change personal plans again." ▪ "I know this stinks and I'm sorry about that."
Give Rationales	▪ Give context, big-picture perspective. ▪ Explain the reasons for work requests. ▪ Convey assignments' value even if boring, difficult, or unpleasant so that people have an opportunity to understand and agree. ▪ Explain how specific work assignments are connected to the broader goals of the project.	▪ "Here's how your piece fits into the overall strategy." ▪ "The client just asked for an update by tomorrow." ▪ "I know this work can seem tedious, but it's very important because _____." ▪ "I wish we didn't have to work over the weekend, but here's what's going on _____. ▪ "I know I told you I really needed that work product by today and I really appreciate you delivering on time. The reason I won't be able to review it right away after all is ___."
Personalize Your Leadership Style to Each Team Member's Individuality	▪ Get to know your team and tailor work interactions to account for each person's interests, preferences, work-related values. ▪ Allow and encourage people to be themselves at work. ▪ Use their values and preferences to motivate them rather than demands or bribes. ▪ Choose behaviors and messages consistent with project goals and suited to their values, preferences, and communication style. ▪ They may have a wide variety of values that may differ from your own: ▪ Inspiration: Excellence, positive impact ▪ Relationships: Connecting, belonging, understanding, feeling supported ▪ Task Support: Resources, challenge, learning ▪ Position: Recognition, visibility, reputation, contacts ▪ Personal: Gratitude, ownership, self-worth	▪ This project will give you more visibility with the client. ▪ Excellence is important to all of us. ▪ The client really appreciated your help; your work really made a difference. ▪ I know this is new for you, but I'll coach you through it. I know you can do it.

Encourage Proactivity	- Encourage self-initiation to support feelings of self-authorship, effectiveness, and trust. - Provide a desired amount of meaningful choice. - Ask for their ideas and encourage innovation.	"What part of this project would you like to lead?"
Support For Competence		
Enable Them to Feel Effective and Skillful—Individually and as a Team	- Provide "scaffolding" for continual growth—support and training necessary to take on new challenges confidently and effectively. - Provide clear expectations, structure, and context for work—do not expect that they "should just know" what you expect - Provide plenty of **sincere, positive** feedback about their performance. - Say and do things to boost confidence in their abilities to be effective and master new skills. - Create opportunities for optimal challenges in which they feel stretched but not outmatched. - Coach them through new things and express confidence in them. - Actively help them build their skills and solve problems. - Provide prompt feedback that is informational ("there were 20 typos") rather than embedded in value-laden judgments ("it looks like you don't care at all"). - Identify their strengths and help them use them in new ways. - Demonstrate a genuine interest in their development. - Avoid excessive criticism and communicating in ways that make people feel incompetent. - Uncertainty of one's status is corrosive—keep them posted on how they're doing. - Through meetings or other means, create opportunities to share and ensure that all are aware of other team members' knowledge, skills, and strengths that can be relied upon for team success.	- Coach them through their first deposition—before, during, and after. - Give them the lead on matters with an appropriate level of support. - Rotate who leads team meetings. - Recommend them for opportunities (e.g., high-potential program, to moderate a panel, etc.) "This was excellent work because ___. Good job!" "Your work product was helpful because ____." - Enable direct client interactions. - Invite them to a client dinner and tell the client how they have positively contributed to the matter. - Ask the client to talk about how the team's work has been helpful/had a positive impact. - Respond promptly in some way after they've submitted work product to you. - Conduct "after-action reviews" after project milestones to discuss what happened, what went well, and how to improve next time.
Support For Connection		
Continually Demonstrate That You Care About Them Personally and Build Trust	- Caring in our minds isn't enough. Leaders must outwardly demonstrate caring for team members to experience it. Create ways to continually build a sense of caring and connection through visible behaviors. - Demonstrate unconditional positive regard—caring for them as people irrespective of work performance or success. Convey that not meeting	- Start emails/calls with personal greetings. - Say thanks. - Do regular, friendly check-ins; ask what they're working on and how you can help. - Send emails that let them know you care and are thinking

	expectations is a work failure, not a failure as a person. ▪ Interact with them with a warm, empathetic, and non-judgmental style. ▪ Communicate genuine care, interest, focus, and non-contingent support. ▪ Be available and responsive. ▪ Be respectful of time. ▪ Be interested in them and take time to know them as people. ▪ Refrain from behaviors that seem distant, cold, disinterested, or ostracizing. ▪ Avoid being snarky or condescending. ▪ Lead through influence and respect, not fear.	of them, e.g., helpful articles or podcasts, making sure they're ok during an illness, etc. ▪ Give professional advice (e.g., training, association memberships) or personal recommendations (books, restaurants). ▪ Share information and be transparent.
Cultivate A Sense of Belonging	▪ Organize regular team meetings. ▪ Collectively set team goals. ▪ Engage in team training. ▪ Talk about the strengths and overall vision/mission of the team. ▪ Build team norms to collectively manage time and provide support for managing work and nonwork priorities. ▪ Enable all to contribute in meaningful ways. ▪ Be fair and avoid playing favorites. ▪ Proactively invite everyone to speak in meetings and discourage domination by a few members. ▪ Create regular rituals that build positive emotion, connection, and team spirit among team members.	
Need Support to Facilitate Work-Life Management*		
Use Creativity to Support WLM	▪ Creatively problem solve how to simultaneously meet firm needs and reduce team members' work-life conflicts. ▪ Ask for their input about how work can be carried out in a manner that doesn't conflict with their personal needs. ▪ Implement their suggestions for WLM. ▪ Ask for input on areas where work can be carried out differently—e.g., more remotely, flexibly, etc.	
Give Emotional Support For WLM	▪ Show them that they're cared for. ▪ Consider their feelings. ▪ Help them feel comfortable communicating with you about WLM issues. ▪ Express support for their success. ▪ Talk with them about their personal needs. ▪ Follow up with them on important personal events. ▪ Show concern and interest for them.	

Support Job & Personal Problem-Solving	▪ Respond to their work-life needs daily. ▪ Adjust work to accommodate their personal needs to the extent possible. ▪ Ask what you can do to help with challenges. ▪ Be receptive to their suggestions of how to arrange work around their personal needs.	
Model Healthy Work-Life Behaviors	▪ Demonstrate good ways to cope with work-life conflicts. ▪ Share a story about how you juggled a work-life conflict. ▪ Share your own experiences with ways of organizing work tasks and priorities around family or personal needs.	

*The example of leader supportive behaviors for work-life management are derived from the *Supportive Supervisor Behaviors: Quick Reference Guide* created by Dr. Leslie Hammer and colleagues of the Oregon Healthy Workforce Center.

Team Time Management Practices

▪ Establish norms for that limit emails and calls after-hours, on weekends, and during vacations to actual emergencies—especially for associates who have less work-related autonomy and, thus, are at a higher risk for fatigue and burnout. McDonalds and Volkswagen—along with one in four U.S. companies—have agreed to stop sending emails to employees after hours (Fritz et al., 2013).

▪ Ritualize the practice of consulting with affected persons before setting/agreeing to deadlines.

▪ Specify deadlines and expressly state when projects are not urgent. When nothing is communicated, the risk is that achievement-oriented lawyers will believe that they must respond immediately and that every project is due as soon as possible.

▪ Clearly communicate response-time needs in emails. On non-urgent emails, include a message like this: "I am sending you this email at a time that works for me. I don't expect you to respond to it until normal business hours or when it suits your own work-life balance. I encourage you to make guiltless work-life choices and support flexible working."

▪ Encourage lawyers to set work aside and go home/stop working for the day.

▪ Adopt internal practices recommended by the Mindful Business Charter (already signed by multiple European-based law firms and corporate legal departments), which invites lawyers to more mindfully engage in business practices to, for example, be respectful of time and enable people to disconnect.

▪ Identify common work practices that may be at the root of significant work-life conflict and ways to improve. Examples may include "over-selling" (continually taking on too much work and agreeing to too short of deadlines without consulting lawyers doing the work) and "over-delivery" (e.g., demanding production of a 100-page slide deck in a short timeframe that the client could not possibly use just to look impressive).

▪ To take a more comprehensive approach to identifying causes and potential solutions to work-life conflict, launch a *Work-Life Satisfaction Innovation Lab.* Partners and associates who work frequently together meet to candidly put work-life concerns on the table as legitimate issues for discussion. This should be a collaborative process aimed at surfacing how prevailing work practices impact team members' work effectiveness and personal lives and developing innovations that seek to satisfy both work and personal priorities. People often hold assumptions (often implicitly) about how work must be done which, when explicitly explored, can be adjusted in ways that sometimes improve not only team

members' personal lives but also their work effectiveness. The goal would be to develop multiple ideas for experimentation. Such an interactive process during which people share their goals and challenges can help supervising lawyers and their teams better understand and empathize with each other's perspectives, which can lead to a greater openness and creative ways of thinking.

Enable Lawyers to Unhook During Vacation/Holiday

- *Articulate Clear Expectations.* Create a policy or protocol to convey expectations about holiday/vacation time. The stated policy should be to avoid contacting lawyers who are away on holiday/vacation except in emergencies.

- *Convey Supportive Messages.* Firm management and senior lawyers can communicate to associates that it is ok and encouraged to disconnect and that responses to emails are not expected. They can reinforce the value of taking time by saying, e.g., "your time off is well-deserved," "you really should take the time off and disconnect from work."

- *Designate Substitutes.* The protocol should include a practice to ensure that substitutes are designated to cover for lawyers who are away on vacation. Senior lawyers should be discouraged from contacting lawyers who are on vacation unless it's an emergency—and not simply because it's more convenient than waiting for their return or relying on lawyers who are designated to cover.

- *Carry Over Vacation Time.* Consider allowing carry-over of accrued but unused vacation time into the following year to acknowledge constraints on taking time off.

Author Bio

After practicing law for 18 years, Anne left her job as an equity partner in employment litigation at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP to study with world-class experts in individual and workplace thriving. Her aim is to help the legal profession build engaging workplaces where people and businesses can grow and succeed together.

In 2014, Anne founded Aspire (www.aspire.legal), an education and consulting firm for the legal profession. Anne is the Vice President of the Institute for Well-Being in Law (IWIL, formerly known as the National Task Force on Well-Being), the Vice President of Programming, and the Chair and founder of IWIL's Well-Being Week in Law. She was the Editor-in-Chief and co-author of the 2017 report of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change.* She also authored the freely-available *ABA Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers* and an ABA-published book titled *Positive Professionals,* which provides science-based guidance to law firm leaders for boosting work engagement for lawyers. For more about Anne and links to her other workplace well-being publications, see her full bio here.