



On Your Feet

Acknowledge Now

Why and how the first step toward doing great work in the changing world is listening to and acknowledging your employees' feelings and needs.

*A Slide Book by On Your Feet
November 2021*



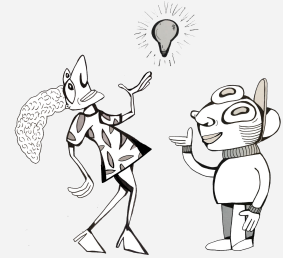
Open Letter

Right now, your goal is to round the corner to a new year (this is definitely happening) and into the next phase of work (maybe, we think so, that's the plan). And in this transition, no matter what happens, **acknowledgement of your people's realities is fundamental.**

Why? Because when things change, people's feelings, habits, and personal realities change. This is always true, but it's even more true right now as we continue to navigate the **biggest change** to our lives since World War II.

Leaders need to acknowledge their people, and teammates need to deliberately get curious about how things are going with each other.

Spoiler alert: not everyone is feeling the same, and the science is complicated. Luckily, there are things you can do about it. Read on.



**More Joy,
OYF**

Slidebook Summary

What Your Employees Are Feeling Now

- Different Things
- Mixed Things
- Comfortable in their New Habits

Why Acknowledgement Matters Now

- Invisible Elephants
- Ignoring is the Same As Hating
- The Problem of Empty Acknowledgement

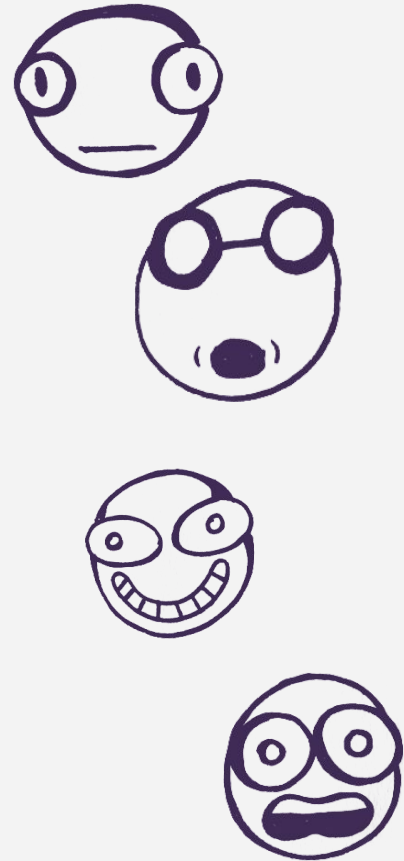
How to Acknowledge Now

- Tool: Feeling Word
- Tool: Listen for What They Care About
- Session: ACE



What your employees are feeling right now . . .

Featuring real quotes taken from our 2021 acknowledgement sessions at the biggest and most innovative companies in world.



1. Different Employees Feel Differently About Things



“I am feeling isolated, and I really, really, really miss being in the room with people.”



“I actually love working from home. It’s better than the office for me.”



“I have never enjoyed work more.”



“I am feeling a bit lost and hybrid scares me.”

2. Most individual employees have *mixed* emotions

- ① “I **love** flexibility but **dislike** that people close to work have such an advantage over me.”
- ② “I’m an **introvert**, and Covid/WFH has taught me that being around other people is **good** for me! I miss it.”
- ③ “I **love** the peace and quiet. I live alone, however, and I do **miss** the interaction with others.”

3. People have adjusted to a new reality, and it will be very hard to switch “back”



“I **don’t want to go back to** the Sao Paulo commute.”



“I feel like I have a lot **more control** over my life.”





“I love my **new habits.**”




“I am a **different person** now, and I like it.”

And, we haven't even mentioned the dogs . . .

 “My dog is the **happiest.**”

 “I am worried about separation **anxiety** for the dogs!”

 “I think my cats aren't happy about WFH, but the dog **loves** it.”

Why it matters so much *now*

The logic, science, and nuance of
deeply acknowledging during these
changing times.

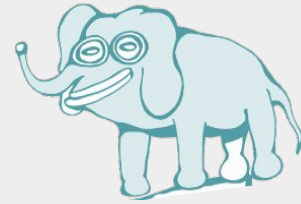


1. Invisible Elephants

As the previous slides indicate, people have strong feelings about different issues (e.g., their commute, dogs, habits) that may be *invisible to you*. These issues are their elephants.

If you don't find and address their elephants, most everything else you say about work will *not* get through.

As behavioral scientists find: in times of stress, people experience cognitive fixations, where their minds are overloaded by a few dominating concerns.



2. “Ignoring is the same as hating.”

Ignoring others makes it feel like you don’t care about their needs or welfare.

In a provocative series of [studies](#), Duke University professor Mark Leary and his colleagues found that being ignored by others feels similar to feeling hated by others.

Right now, people are feeling many things, and it is easy to ignore people when they most need to be seen.



3. Empty Acknowledgement

Acknowledging in an inauthentic way.

Acknowledgement is empty when the leader has **not proven** they have actually understood the true needs, realities, and work of their employees.

Empty acknowledgements can come off as inauthentic, uncaring, or hypocritical. **Without additional, deeper** acknowledgement and proof of listening, these common phrases may actually appear *empty*.

- “We know you are scared, but don’t worry, it will work out.”
- “These are unprecedented times; we know things are hard.”
- “I want to acknowledge the great work you’ve all done, and just know it matters to us.”



How to acknowledge always and *now*

Two immediately usable tools and the
ultimate tool: a big experience.



TOOL

Feeling Word

Invite people to create a new word to describe how they are feeling about work and then define it.

Then, as group, use the feeling words to start a discussion and catalogue different feelings.

The words will reveal nuances, mixed emotions, and real differences in feelings across team members.



Flowcouching - the feeling I do my best work in the relaxed vibe of my home.

Dogless - the feeling of work without my good boy.

Awknormal - how awkward it feels to do things that used to be normal.

Dekutastic - excited to get back to a physical space with everyone.

Uhhhhhmaybe - my feelings about every plan for the future.



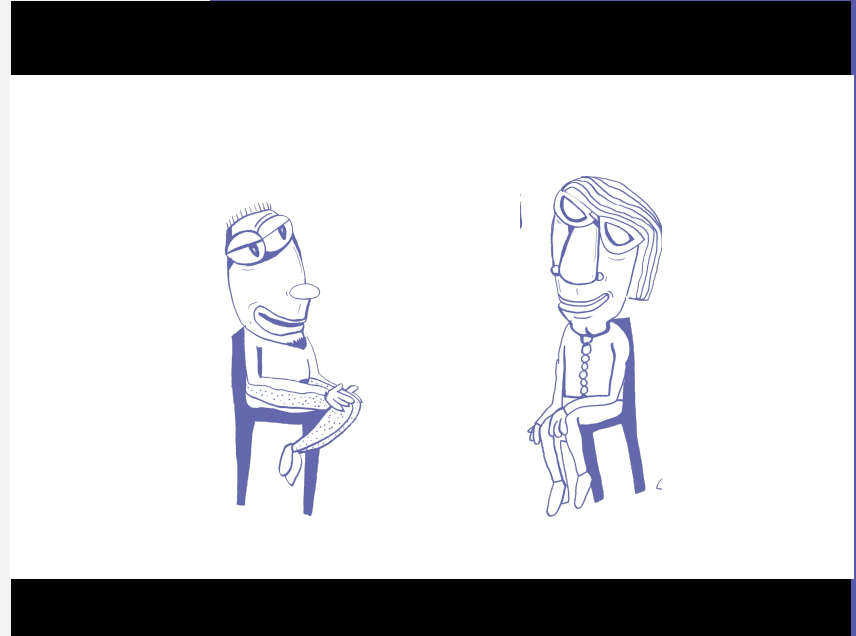
TOOL

Listen For What They Care About

People listen and acknowledge others' feelings without trying to give solutions, relate, or sound smart; they just *listen for what another cares about*.

How It Works

1. The first person vents about something for sixty seconds.
2. The listener then uses the phrase, "What I think you care about is," and acknowledges the speaker's feeling and needs.
3. Then, they switch roles.



Tool

ACE Session

ACE is a model based on the idea that the best teams take the time to intentionally **acknowledge**, **connect**, and **explore** together.

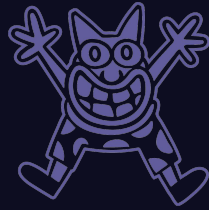
This model and the highly interactive ACE Team Sessions have become especially relevant for bringing more joy, less fear, and better results to teams working in this evolving world.

Take the time for a full virtual or in-person ACE session [facilitated by OYE](#), or design your own ACE sessions with our [toolkits](#).



click play on this one





More Joy. Less Fear. Better Results.

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