



Connecting for Success: How Bonding Drives Employee Health and Happiness



Is bonding at the workplace necessary or is it just one of those fluffy concepts that can be safely ignored?

In the workplace, bonding refers to the development of strong connections and relationships among co-workers.

While bonding undoubtedly has organizational benefits and a role in major achievements, my interest lies in the individual experience. Let's explore what bonding offers on a personal level.

Let me start at the start then. From an evolutionary standpoint, the mammalian brain evolved to exist and thrive in groups, herds, prides and tribes. The very essence of this evolution was the ability to co-exist with others of the same species. Existence itself depended on the ability to form relationships and perform the duties and tasks assigned to an individual within a group.

We as humans still carry this blueprint. Our brain chemistry being the case in point.

Bonding with another individual releases a neurochemical called Oxytocin. Oxytocin is also called the 'love hormone' and is copiously present in the brains of people in love. Oxytocin is what bonds the mother to her newborn as well.

So what does workplace bonding do to an individual?

Workplace bonding involves the establishment of [emotional connections](#), mutual trust, and camaraderie among individuals. It can manifest in various forms, including friendships, mentorships, and teamwork. Humans are social beings wired for connection. Bonding fulfils our innate need for belongingness and affiliation.

In the workplace, bonding fosters intrinsic motivation, [enhances collaboration](#), and creates a sense of psychological safety. People who feel connected to their colleagues are more engaged, satisfied, and productive.

A very interesting finding on bonding and meaningful social connections relates to the Blue Zones.

These are regions with exceptionally long-living populations. Research indicates that strong social bonds positively influence mental and physical well-being, reduce stress, and enhance overall health. Workplace bonding, therefore, not only improves job satisfaction but also contributes to employees' long-term health. Bonding, therefore, is the X factor that is responsible for well-being, health and longevity.

Why has bonding at the workplace suffered lately?

Remote work has become increasingly prevalent, posing unique challenges to workplace bonding. Reduced face-to-face interactions can hinder the development of personal connections and trust among team members. Informal communication, impromptu brainstorming sessions, and shared experiences are limited in remote settings, which can further weaken bonding. Several factors contribute to the decline in workplace bonding. Technological dependency and isolation can lead to a lack of authentic human interactions. High workloads and time constraints may leave employees with limited opportunities to connect on a personal level. Additionally, the absence of shared experiences and team-

building activities can hinder the formation of strong bonds.

The question therefore is – should you bother about those team bonding events or those offsites or the team lunches and dinners?

...and the answer is no! Don't bother.

- Don't bother if a sense of trust, belongingness, affiliation and well-being are not important to you.
- Don't bother if you are not serious about sticking around in the organisation for a while.
- Don't bother if this is just another 'job' and not a serious step in career building for you.
- Don't bother if you are not aspiring for leadership roles in the future.
- Don't get me wrong! I am not saying bonding only happens at these events but truth be told these are platforms that bring people together. These events create opportunities that may not get created in the natural course of work given the remote/hybrid working environment.

The next time, therefore, whenever you get an invite for one of these events, think Oxytocin!