Being yourself in a professional environment



In a professional environment, people are expected to behave in a certain way. For example:

Meeting responsibilities and commitments.
Treating people in a respectful manner.
Being punctual.
Accepting responsibility for one's actions.
Showing initiative.
Maintaining a professional demeanor.
Acting with integrity and honesty.

However, being a professional also means being authentic by:

- Not pretending to be someone you're not.
- Not offering more than you can or something different than you feel comfortable with.
- Not pretending to know more (or less) than you know.
- Not hiding your age, culture, sexual orientation or circumstances.

The importance of authenticity

Allowing people to see the real you is essential to professional success. Here are just a few reasons why:

- Building relationships is part of doing business. That means letting people get to know you.
- When you're hiding aspects of your life or personality, people may perceive you as secretive or aloof.
- Struggling to be someone you're not can be stressful and take a toll on your physical and mental health.

Maintaining boundaries

Being yourself at work doesn't mean acting the same way you do when you're with your family or out with friends. The secret is to maintain boundaries. For example, don't overshare. It's one thing to reveal that you play hockey, but maybe not appropriate to give detailed accounts of your antics after the game. Here are some additional areas in which you should consider maintaining boundaries in a professional environment:

- Proclaiming your support of a particular political party or leader.
- Arguing or expressing your views on contentious or controversial issues unrelated to work.
- Displaying religious symbols at your desk or discussing religion.
- Talking about your personal problems or boasting about your accomplishments.
- Telling inappropriate stories or jokes.
- Swearing or bad language.
- Gossiping. If you need to vent or feel the need to share certain information, talk to someone outside the workplace – a friend or family member.

Being yourself in a professional environment means balancing expressing your individuality and conforming to corporate expectations.

Contact us for more information on workplace issues and career development.