

# Stop Confusing Serious Work With Joyless Work.

*Rigour and joy are not competing ideas. Good leadership knows how to hold them together.*

## What would serious work look like here if it did not have to look joyless?

Use this conversation to examine the emotional conditions surrounding demanding work - and what leaders may be unintentionally rewarding.

### 1 WHERE HAS SERIOUSNESS BECOME HEAVINESS?

Where have pressure, restraint, urgency, or exhaustion become signals that people are committed and professional?

### 2 WHERE DOES JOY EMERGE NATURALLY?

When do people become curious, energized, playful, connected, proud, or deeply absorbed in difficult work? What conditions make that possible?

### 3 WHERE IS THE REAL RIGOUR?

Which parts of our work genuinely require challenge, precision, persistence, feedback, and high standards - and which parts are merely unnecessarily hard?

### 4 HOW IS GRATITUDE EXPERIENCED?

Is appreciation specific, relational, and genuine - or mostly ceremonial, generalized, or used to smooth over legitimate concerns?

### 5 CAN PEOPLE TELL THE TRUTH?

Can someone name frustration, grief, fatigue, disagreement, or a problem without being labelled negative or uncommitted?

### 6 IS PLAY INVITED OR MANAGED?

Where do humour, imagination, experimentation, and serious play have permission to emerge? Where have we turned fun into another requirement?

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

One condition for joy and rigour we want to protect

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One practice that may be making work unnecessarily heavy

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One thing we will do to make appreciation more genuine

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*Serious work can include serious fun.*