

# Give at the Office: How to make 9 to 5 come alive

It behooves us all to create a friendlier workplace, says business psychologist **Melanie A. Katzman, Ph.D.**, author of *Connect First: 52 Simple Ways to Ignite Success, Meaning, and Joy at Work*.

She reminds us that everyone, from the intern to the big boss, has an inner eighth grader who craves acceptance.

“We all seek security, cherish praise, and fear shame. Everybody just wants a seat at the lunchroom table.”

Katzman shares a few ideas for how we can be more inclusive.



## **Remember the little things.**

Say please and thank you. Show the temps where the coffee is. Learn the names of the security staff. These things sound so basic, but they're often forgotten. Some companies plan elaborate team-building events, like paintball, when what an employee might find more meaningful is a genuine conversation about what she's working on.

## **Open your eyes and ears.**

Though cubicles were meant to encourage interaction, in an effort to reclaim privacy, we tend to ignore one another, putting on headphones and avoiding eye contact. We may assume a new person's too busy for lunch; maybe she'd love to be included, but pretends to be absorbed in work. Personal photos and other items are great conversation starters. Ask questions and listen to the answers, instead of just waiting to give your prepared response.

## **Shine a light.**

Never pass up a chance to offer sincere praise—no one can ever get enough. Do a favor for a colleague. Share interesting research. Meaning is made one connection at a time. Even if morale is low, the best way to fight loneliness and negativity is not to bury yourself in a hole but to open up. That's true not just at the office, but in life.