



AI Analysis

Work Is Broken...Play Can Fix It!

Jeff Harry

Positive Psych Play Speaker, Rediscover Your Play

Summary

Jeff Harry's session, 'Work Is Broken...Play Can Fix It!', explores the idea that the conventional work environment is fundamentally flawed and how embracing play can be a solution. The session begins with an interactive exercise where participants describe their jobs poorly to emphasize the disconnection many feel towards their work. Harry argues that the pursuit of perfectionism, rooted in ego and shame, is a major cause of burnout and dissatisfaction. In contrast, play fosters curiosity, wonder, and a sense of awe, which can break through the facade and bring genuine connections and happiness to the workplace. He urges participants to recognize their own and their colleagues' inherent value and contributions, advocating for a shift in mindset from perfection to play to revitalize work environments.

Harry presents a detailed view of why work feels broken, backed by historical context and current statistics. He highlights the increasing productivity demands on workers without corresponding increases in pay, leading to feelings of being undervalued and exploited. He references specific examples, such as the laying off of employees via deactivated fob keys and the disproportionate compensation of CEOs versus regular employees. The session identifies systemic issues in corporate practices, including the historical shift towards profit maximization as the sole goal postulated by economist Milton Friedman and implemented by business leaders like Jack Welch. Harry emphasizes the need to challenge these ingrained practices and advocate for fair compensation and treatment, recognizing that the current approach to work is unsustainable and detrimental to employee morale.

To address these issues, Harry proposes three levels of playful mischief: Play as recovery, play as resistance, and play to reimagine. He advises participants to identify their play values and find ways to incorporate them into their work to foster engagement and satisfaction. Examples include implementing a four-day workweek, recognizing employees creatively, and challenging inefficient systems and toxic management practices. He encourages participants to brainstorm actionable ideas to improve their workplace and connect with colleagues for support. Harry concludes by stressing the importance of good mischief and compassionate leadership, advocating for workplaces that prioritize employee well-being and creativity over rigid productivity metrics.





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Thursday, September 4, 2025

Takeaways

Perfectionism Causes Burnout

Jeff Harry argues that the pursuit of perfectionism rooted in ego and shame is a major cause of burnout and dissatisfaction in the workplace. He contrasts this with play, which fosters curiosity and wonder, allowing employees to break through facades and connect genuinely. By shifting from perfectionism to play, workplaces can revitalize and bring genuine happiness to employees.

Systemic Issues Exploit Workers

Harry presents the historical and systemic reasons why work feels broken, highlighting the increasing productivity demands without corresponding pay increases. He references specific examples of corporate practices that exploit workers, such as disproportionate CEO compensation and unfair layoff methods. He calls for fair compensation and treatment, emphasizing the need to challenge ingrained practices for a more sustainable approach to work.

Playful Mischief Can Improve Workplaces

To address workplace issues, Harry proposes three levels of playful mischief: Play as recovery, play as resistance, and play to reimagine. He encourages participants to identify their play values and incorporate them into actionable ideas to foster engagement and satisfaction. Examples include implementing a four-day workweek, recognizing employees creatively, and challenging inefficient systems and management practices.

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