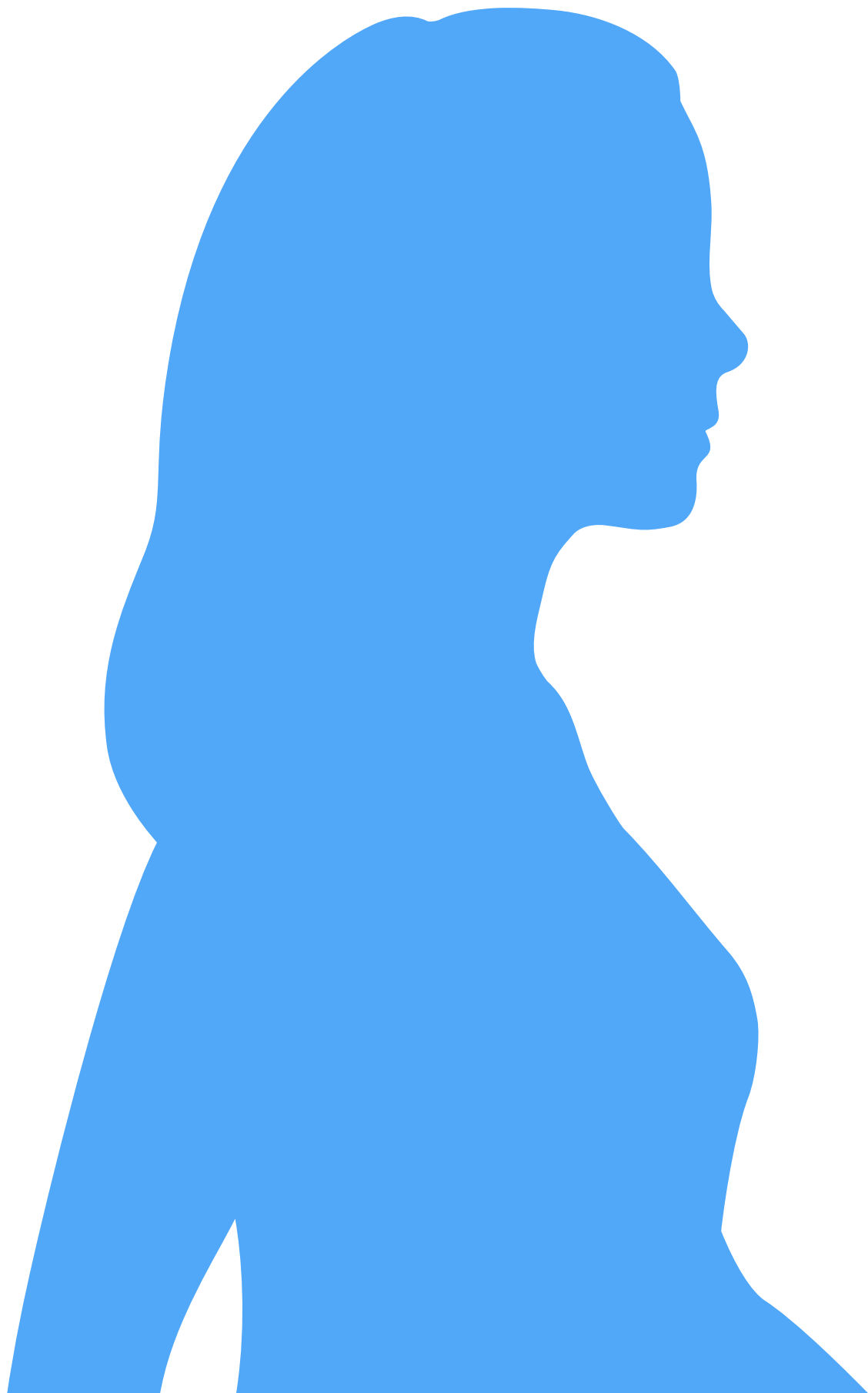


Feel, Don't Fix: Leading with Attunement to Foster Respect and Civility

By Stella Grizont and Lisa Zigarmi

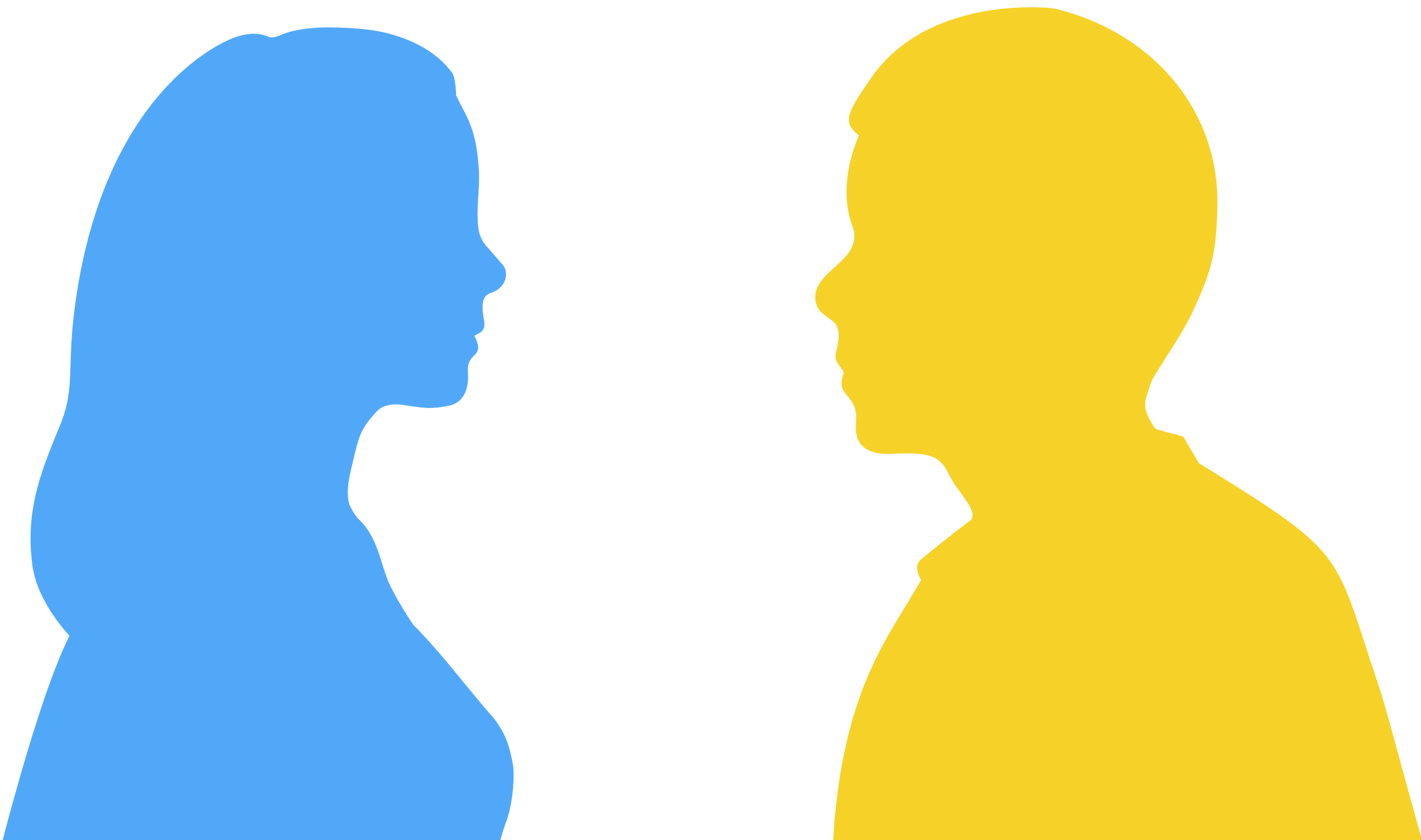


How often do we miss each other?



What is Attunement?

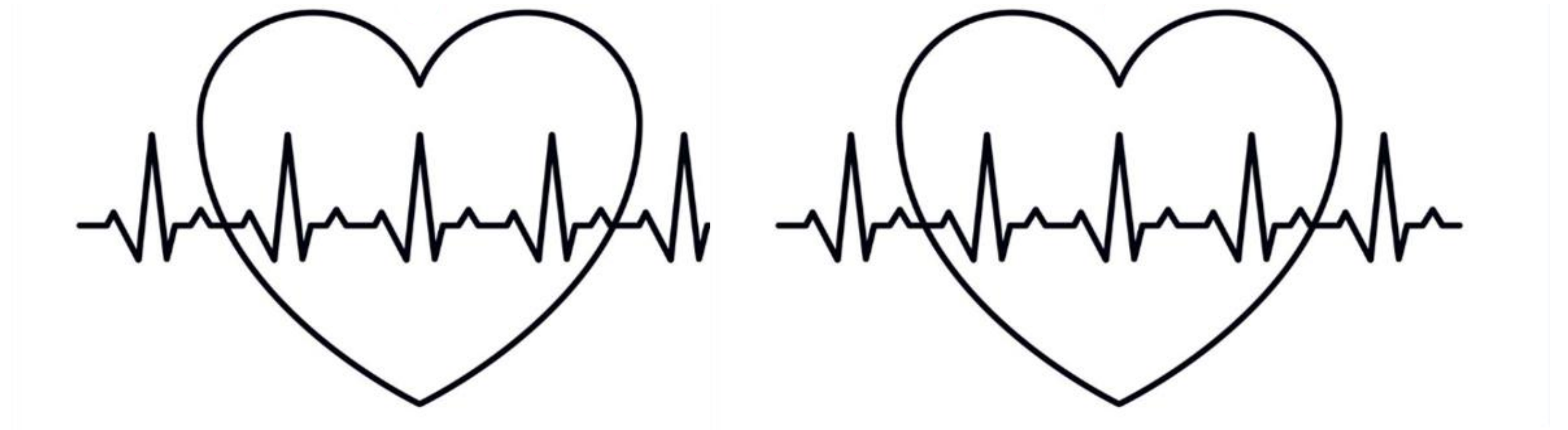
Attunement is the art of full-body, non-judgmental presence.
It's when a person deeply notices, actively listens, and signals to another person:
I see you. I understand you. You are safe here.



It is	It's not
Accepting emotion	Changing emotion
Presence	Problem solving
Listening	Advising
Trusting	Rescuing

When we attune, we sync our hearts. This cardiac coordination...

- Reduces stress hormones
- Lowers blood pressure
- Elevates positive emotions
- Improves ANS regulation
- Enhances decision making



"Emotion contagion and physiological synchrony: The more intimate relationships, the more contagion of positive emotions":
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0031938423003591>

Why now? People are stressed.

According to Gallup's workforce indicators on employee well-being from February 2025,

52% of workers report feeling a lot of stress

44% report feeling a lot of worry

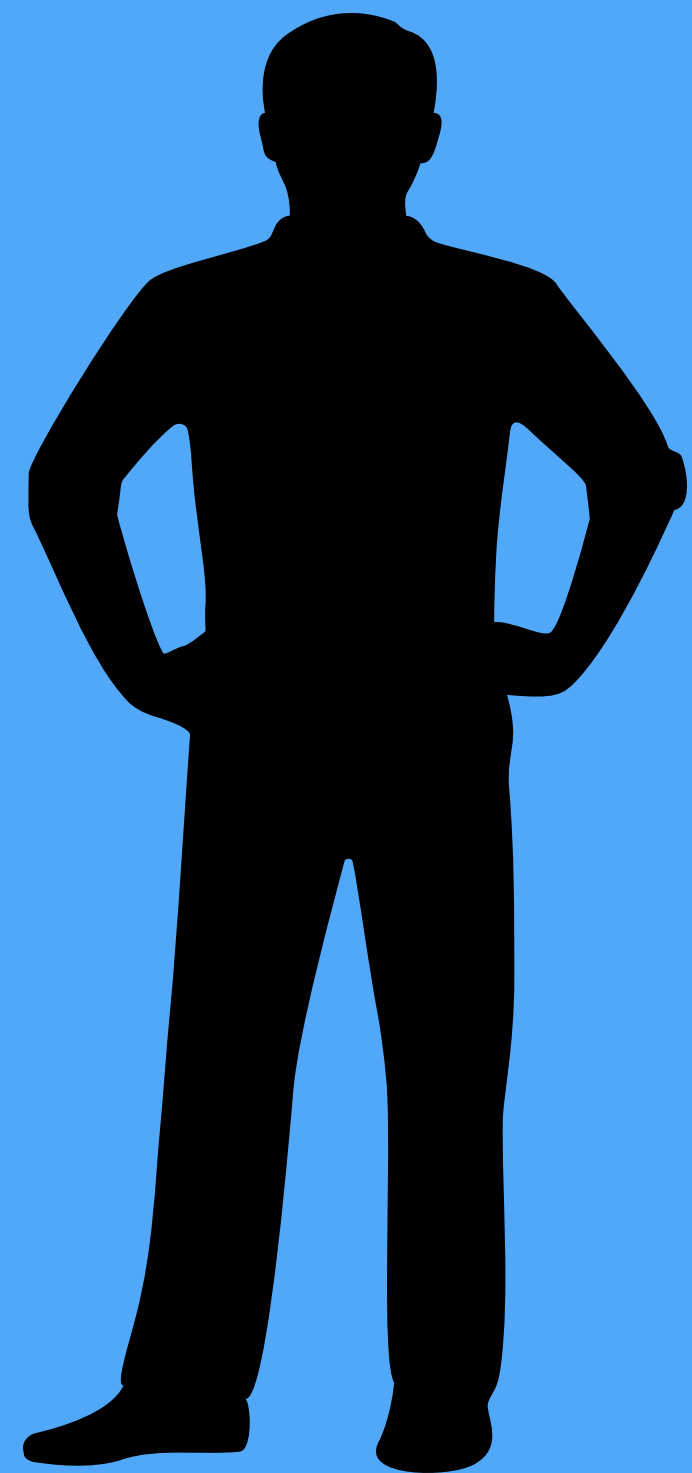
24% report feeling a lot of sadness

22% report feeling a lot of anger.

Emotional well-being isn't a side conversation. It's a performance lever.

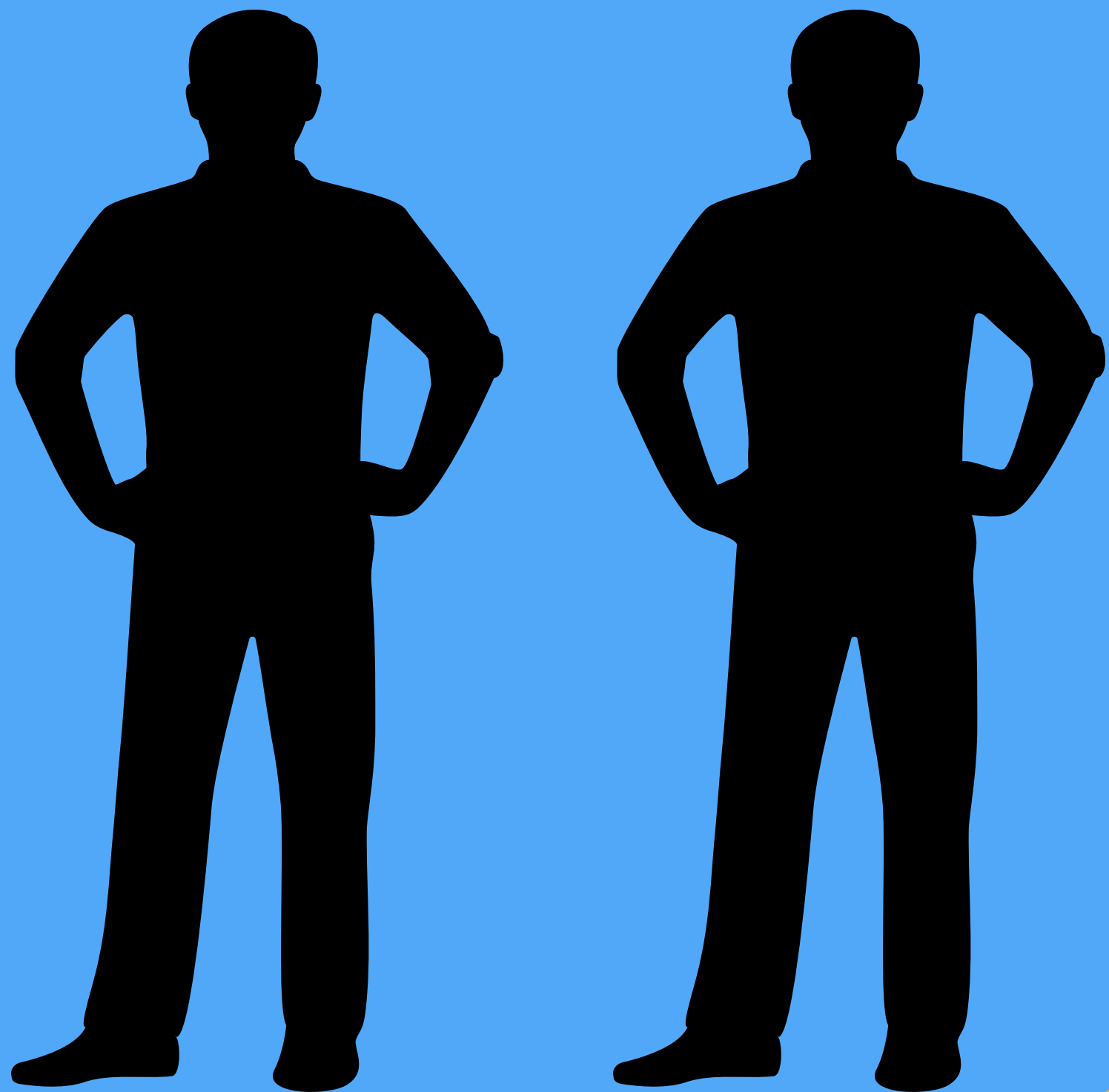
When people feel emotionally cared for at work they're more likely to:

- Be engaged and happy
- Endorse the organization
- Give their discretionary energy
- Stay with the organization
- And contribute to a positive team climate



Social Support and the Perception of Geographical Slant. J Exp Soc Psychol. 2008 Sep 1;44(5):1246-1251. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2008.04.011. PMID: 22389520; PMCID: PMC3291107.

Attunement conveys social support,
which changes (almost) everything.



**Attunement doesn't take that long and it's
not that hard...**

Barriers to Attunement

Time scarcity.

Problem solving instinct.

Burnout.

Lack of modeling.

Digital communication.

In your breakout, reflect together on these questions:

1. Which one of these barriers is your biggest impediment to attuning and why?
2. How might you overcome the barrier?

When to Attune?

One-on-one

When someone is emotionally flooded or flat

In person or via phone, zoom, or FaceTime



How to Attune

1.

Set the intention.

Tell yourself: "I will create a space where they feel safe."

Say: "I'm here with you. You're not alone in this. I want to listen and understand. Tell me what's going on..."

Release yourself from the pressure to have answers. Your presence is enough.

How to Attune

Shift into calm.

Breathe on purpose.

2.

Remove distractions—put away your phone and close your computer.

Opt for a walking meeting which activates both hemispheres of the brain, helping to process stressful emotions.

Consider delaying the meeting if you're too distracted or dysregulated.

How to Attune

Stay curious.

3

|

Ask yourself: “What might I learn? How might I be surprised?”

Say: “I wonder what’s been hardest for you?” Or, “Tell me more about what that was like.”

How to Attune

Listen with your body.

Nod, maintain soft eye contact, and mirror their emotion subtly.

4.

Reflect back key phrases: “It sounds like you’re feeling frustrated because...” or, “Tell me more.”

Avoid phrases like: “I know exactly how you feel (you don’t)” or, “Look on the bright side (minimizing).”

Allow for silence.

How to Attune

Invite reflection.

5 |

Say: "It seems like your energy shifted."

Ask: "How do you feel now? Is anything clearer to you now?" or "What do you think you need most right now?"

Offer a closing statement: "Thank you for sharing this with me" or "It's important to me that I learned about your feelings."

For a summary of this session, please reference our article in Harvard Business Review.

Interpersonal Communication

When the Best Leadership Skill Is Just Being Present

by Lisa Zigarmi and Stella Grizont

May 19, 2025



Pick one question to discuss with a partner

What most excites you about what you heard today?

What is the one relationship in your life that could benefit the most from attunement?

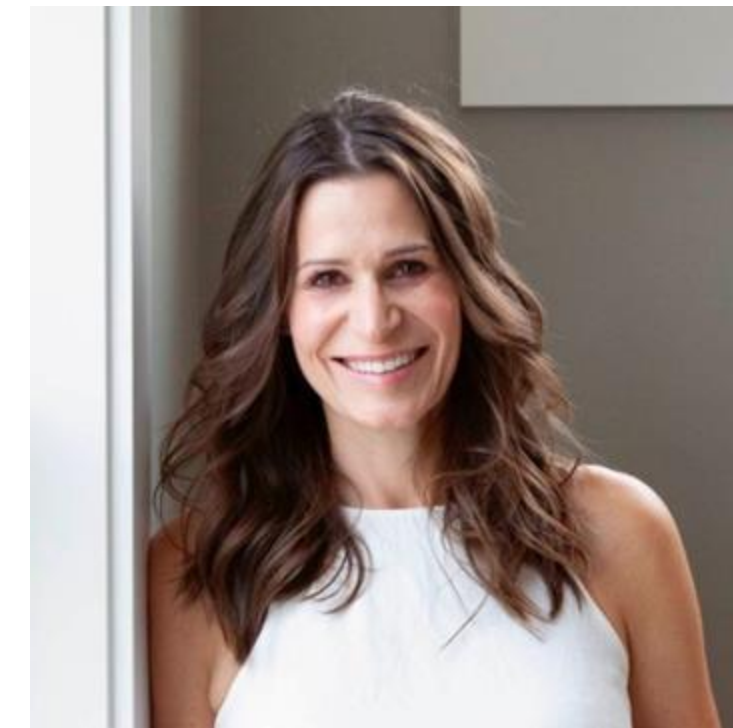
If leaders in your organization were to adopt attunement, what is the first thing they would need?

Complimentary Attunement Coaching

Limited Spots Available



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