2025

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEARNING ROADMAP

Learn with us!

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

JANUARY

Practice Positive Self-Belief

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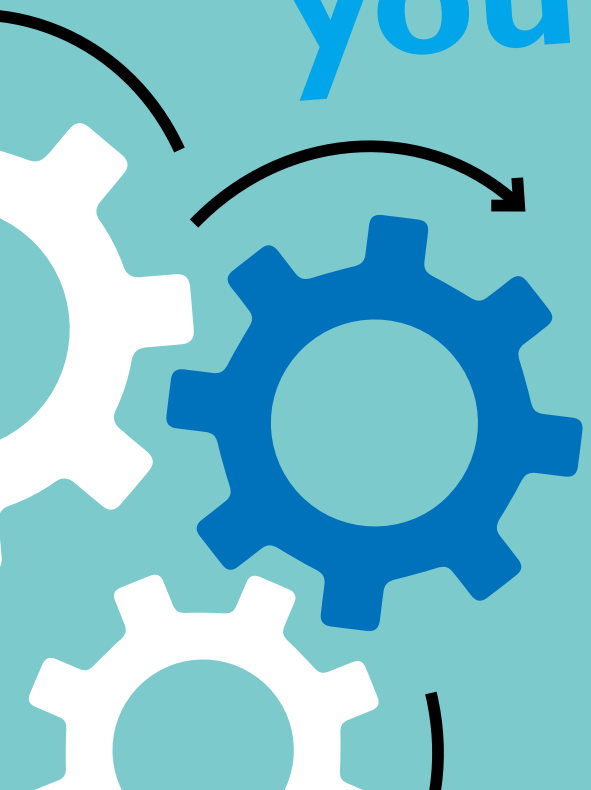
Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.

Henry Ford



JANUARY

Practice Positive Self-Belief

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What is Positive Self- Belief?

Positive self belief is unwavering trust in your abilities, worth, and capacity to grow, even when facing challenges. It forms the foundation for resilience and confidence, encouraging curiosity and optimism. Positive self belief acknowledges weaknesses but focuses on your potential to learn, and improve.

Practice Positive Self- Belief

Building self-belief is a process that involves cultivating positive habits, changing your mindset, and reinforcing your capabilities. Here are some practical ways to strengthen self-belief:

Set small, achievable goals: Start with tasks that are within your control and gradually increase their difficulty. Success in small steps builds confidence.
Focus on past successes: Reflect on moments when you've succeeded, even if they seem small. Recognizing your achievements reminds you of your abilities.
Embrace failure as learning: Reframe setbacks as opportunities for growth rather than signs of inadequacy. Learn from mistakes and keep moving forward.
Surround yourself with positive influences: Spend time with supportive people who encourage and uplift you. Their belief in you can help reinforce your own.
Practice self-compassion: Treat yourself with kindness, especially during difficult times. Being patient with yourself fosters a more positive self-image.
Visualize success: Regularly imagine yourself succeeding in your goals. Visualization can help program your mind for confidence.
Develop a growth mindset: Believe that your abilities can be developed with effort and perseverance. Focus on progress, not perfection.
Affirm your worth: Use positive affirmations to reinforce your self-belief. Remind yourself daily of your strengths and potential.

Read

You Coach You
Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis

Watch

TED Ed: 3 Tips to Boost Your Confidence
Amy Adkins

Do

Reframe a limiting belief to a limitless belief.

- "If I ask for help, it will seem like I'm not capable" becomes:

→ Asking for help strengthens collaboration and enhances outcomes.

- "I can't make a difference if I don't have all the answers" becomes:

→ My willingness to listen and guide is often more impactful than having all the answers.

FEBRUARY

Emotional Agility

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Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Viktor E. Frankl

FEBRUARY
Emotional Agility

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

What is Emotional Agility?

Emotional agility means adapting to your emotions with curiosity and compassion rather than being ruled by them. Instead of suppressing or over-identifying with difficult feelings, acknowledge them, ask, "What is this emotion telling me?" and choose a response aligned with your values.

In the workplace, emotional agility fosters better decision-making, open communication, and resilience, helping teams build stronger relationships, prevent burnout, and create a more positive, productive environment.

How to Practice Emotional Agility

Recognize and Accept Your Emotions: acknowledge emotions with curiosity rather than judgment. Ask yourself: "What am I feeling?" and "What is this emotion telling me?" Instead of thinking, "I shouldn't feel this way," reframe it as, "I feel this way, and that's okay. Now, how do I want to respond?"

Reframe Challenges: shift from "Why is this happening to me?" to "What can I learn from this?" Use self-talk to reframe obstacles. Instead of: "This project is overwhelming."

Try: "This is a chance to improve my project management skills."

Pause Before Reacting: before responding to an email or tough conversation, ask: "How do I want to show up?" and "Will my response reflect my values?" If emotions run high, take a short break—walk, breathe, or step away before replying.

Stay Flexible: replace rigid thinking ("This must go exactly as planned") with a growth mindset ("I can adjust and still move forward"). View feedback as a tool for growth, not criticism.

Align Actions with Your Values: in stressful moments, ask: "What kind of colleague/leader do I want to be?" If frustrated, identify which value (e.g., fairness, respect, teamwork) is being challenged and respond in a way that honors it.

Read

Emotional Agility: Giving You The Power To Choose

Watch

TED Ed: The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage
Susan David

Do

- Practice **name it to tame it**- Label your emotions to process them more effectively
- Pause before responding- Count to 10 when feeling reactive
- Use "I feel..." statements in challenging conversations

MARCH

Cultivating Curiosity

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The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.

Albert Einstein

MARCH

Cultivating Curiosity

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Strengthen Curiosity with Daily Practice

Strengthening curiosity is like strengthening muscles- it needs daily practice. Using the four-phase "DIVE" model, developed by aughtor Scott Shigeoka can help keep you in a curious headspace:

- **Detach**: Let go of your ABCs (assumptions, biases, certainty)
- **Intend**: Prepare your mindset and setting
- **Value**: See the dignity of every person, including yourself
- **Embrace**: Welcome the hard times in your life

Source: Greater Good Magazine

How Curiosity Fuels Growth

Enhances Problem-Solving - Curiosity encourages deeper thinking and exploration of alternative solutions. Instead of asking, "What's the answer?" try "What's another way to approach this?"

Encourages Continuous Learning - Staying open to new ideas and seeking knowledge fosters adaptability and growth.

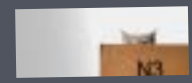
Strengthens Relationships - Genuine curiosity fosters better listening and meaningful conversations.

Drives Career Success - A curious mindset leads to professional development opportunities.

Boosts Workplace Innovation - Teams that embrace curiosity challenge norms and drive creativity.

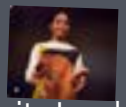
Source: Forbes

Read



The Business Case for Curiosity
By Francesca Gino for Harvard Business Review

Watch



TED Ed: Let Curiosity Lead
Yara Shahidi

Do

- Keep a "Why?" journal – Write down questions that arise during the day and research one each week.
- Ask "What if...?" in meetings to spark new ideas.
- Schedule learning blocks in your calendar for exploring new topics or skills.

APRIL

The Art of Decision Making

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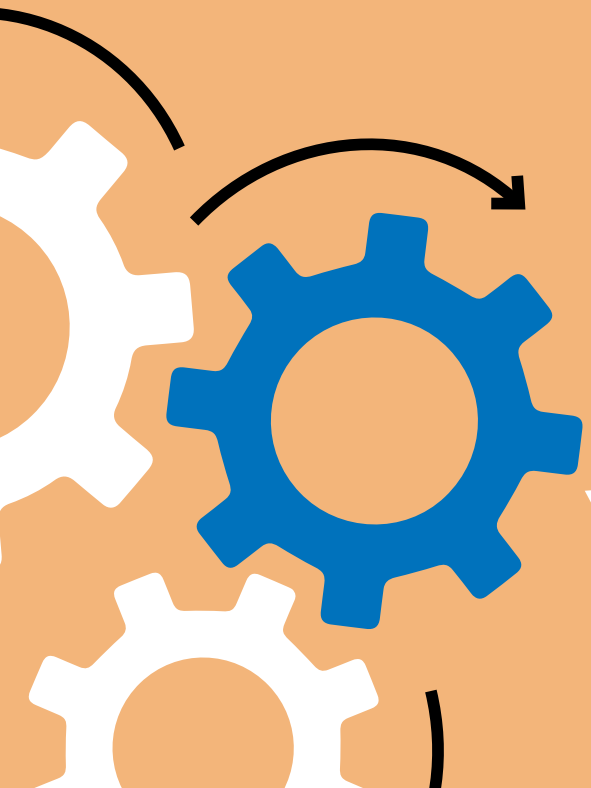
More is lost by indecision, than by wrong decision.



Cicero

APRIL

The Art of Decision Making

Santa Monica College

The Cost of Too Many Choices

Individuals make approximately 38,000 decisions each day!

Decision fatigue weakens willpower, leading to impulsivity, procrastination, or avoidance. Combat it by creating routines, simplifying choices, planning ahead, prioritizing key decisions early, and automating small tasks.

Make Hard Decisions Easier

Gain Perspective. Imagine having made a decision in one direction:

- What would be true that isn't today?
- How would you describe what has happened to a friend?
- What's the worst case scenario & how does it feel?

Separate Facts From Feelings: set a 5 minute timer:

- Write down only facts about your decision.
- Then take 5 minutes to write down feelings.
- Do a 5 minute review of everything you've written down.

Leverage Others' Experiences:

Write down 3 specific experiences that would be useful for you to learn from. Do you know anyone how has been in a similar experience before?

Clarify Your 'Whys': Write down your top 3 'whys' for making your decision. This gives you grit and keeps you focused on your motivators. Write or store it somewhere accessible!

Source: Squiggly Career

Read

The Elements of Good Judgment
By Sir Andrew Likierman for HBR

Watch

TEDx Talk: How to Overcome Indecision
Nuala Walsh

Do

When trying to make a decision, use the 10/ 10/ 10 rule:

Ask yourself: "How will I feel about this in 10 minutes, 10 months, 10 years? This helps gain long-term perspective.

MAY

Purposeful Progress

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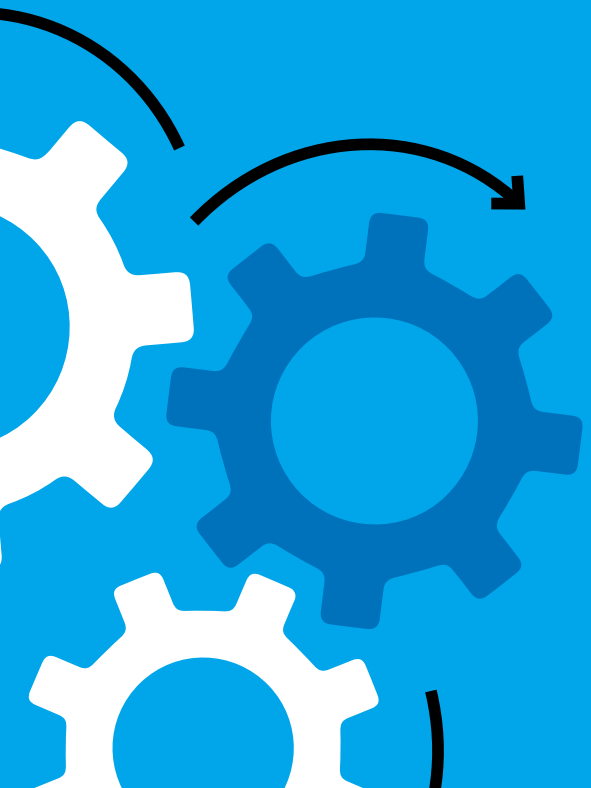
You can do anything,

but not everything.



David Allen

MAY
Purposeful Progress

Santa Monica College

The 2-Step Process for Exceptional Results

1. Spend a little time each day thinking about the highest leverage activity available to you.
2. Spend a little time each day working on it.

Source: James Clear

Create better systems with the FAST model

F = Friction
Identify recurring points of stress or inefficiency at work.
Example:You dread prepping for your weekly team meeting and always feel rushed.

A = Assess
Examine your current approach and determine why it's not working.
Example:You wait until the last minute, dig through emails, and rely on memory.

S = Structure
Design a supportive system using reminders, batching, or templates.
Example: Start a daily "meeting notes" doc and add one bullet each day. Block 15 minutes on Fridays to prep.

T = Test & Train
Implement the system, adjust as needed, and build consistency.
Example: Realize you need more prep time- move the Friday block earlier. Encourage team members to add their own notes too.

Simple systems reduce stress and free up energy for deeper work and confidence building.
Start small, and improve as you go.

Source: Inspired by Amanda Goetz's FAST System

Read

7 Habits to Stay Focused in a world Full of Distractions
By Rebecca Knight

Watch

TED Talk: Why the secret to success is setting the right goals
John Doerr

Do

Try habit stacking — link a new system to something you already do daily.
Example: After you finish your morning coffee, jot down one bullet point for your meeting notes.
This makes the new habit easier to remember and stick with.

JUNE

Embracing Change

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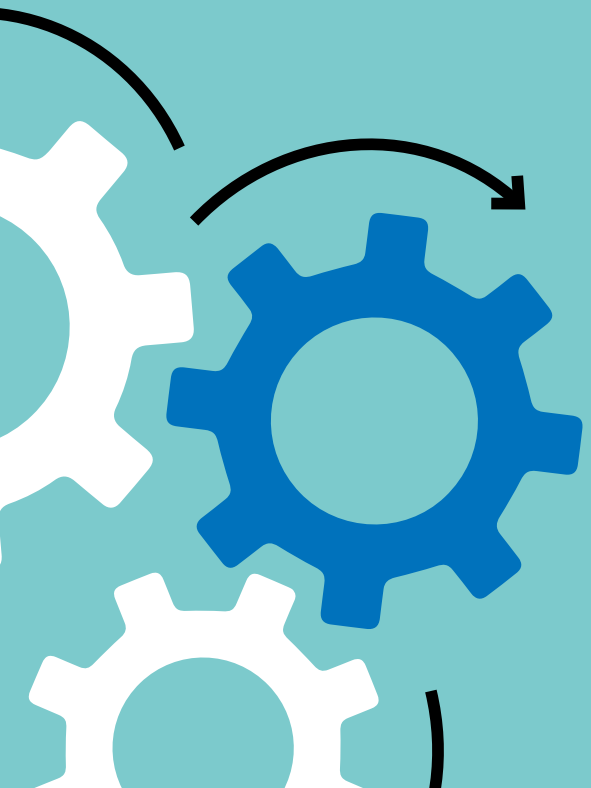
The only constant in life is change.



Heraclitus

JUNE

Embracing Change

Consider your Circle of influence

Embracing change becomes easier when you realize what is and isn't in your control.
Your circle of concern: is everything you worry about, often things beyond your control.
Your circle of influence: is often smaller and contains the things that you can control.

When you act on your Circle of Influence you are able to reduce stress because you can initiate and influence change.

Source: Amazing If

Navigating Change with the Seven C's

Meaningful change doesn't happen all at once—it unfolds through a series of stages that help individuals and organizations move from uncertainty to transformation. Harvard Business Review outlines a helpful framework that captures this journey:

- **Complexity**—considering all the issues at play in a change effort
- **Clarity**—understanding and prioritizing those issues
- **Confidence**—believing that the change can be made successfully
- **Creativity**—brainstorming innovative solutions to problems that arise
- **Commitment**—taking the first steps to implement the change
- **Consolidation**—leaving the previous identity to adopt the new one
- **Change**—living into the change and its consequences

Source: How to Embrace Complex Change by Harvard Business Review

Read

Your Entire Life Will Change the Moment You...
By Sahil Bloom

Watch

The Truth About Change
By Simon Sinek

Do

Make a change timeline. Draw a timeline of the last 5 years and mark significant changes- career, personal, or otherwise. For each one, jot down:

- What changed?
- What did I fear?
- What did i learn?
- How did I grow?

JULY

The Art of Recharging

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Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes... including you.

Ann Lamott

JULY
The Art of Recharging

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

Rest is part of the work

You don't need to prove how hard you've been working to earn a break. **Rest isn't a reward—it is part of the work.**

Active rest is is a form of recharging that engages your body or mind in low-intensity, restorative activity— rather than complete stillness or passive recovery. It's about gently shifting your energy instead of shutting down.

By changing your pace and focus, active rest helps you reset and return more present and clear. Ask yourself:

- What is active rest for me?
- How can I fit more of it into my week?

Source: Squiggly Career

Recharge Menu

Pick one (or more!) per day to give yourself a moment of restoration—right where you are.

- Do 3 rounds of box breathing (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4)
- Walk a lap around your office or campus without your phone
- Find a window, take 10 deep breaths, and notice what's happening outside
- Play a favorite upbeat song or calming instrumental for 3 minutes
- Check in with a colleague—ask how they're doing, not just what they're doing
- Doodle or color for a few minutes (keep a doodle pad handy!)
- Try a new workspace or move your chair to face a new direction for an hour

Read

How to take better breaks at work, According to Research

By Shanna Byubykh and Duygu Gulseren

Watch

TEDx: The Real Reason why we are tired and what to do about it

By Saundra Dalton-Smith

Do

Try the 20-20-20 rule:

- Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds

AUGUST

Mindful Transitions

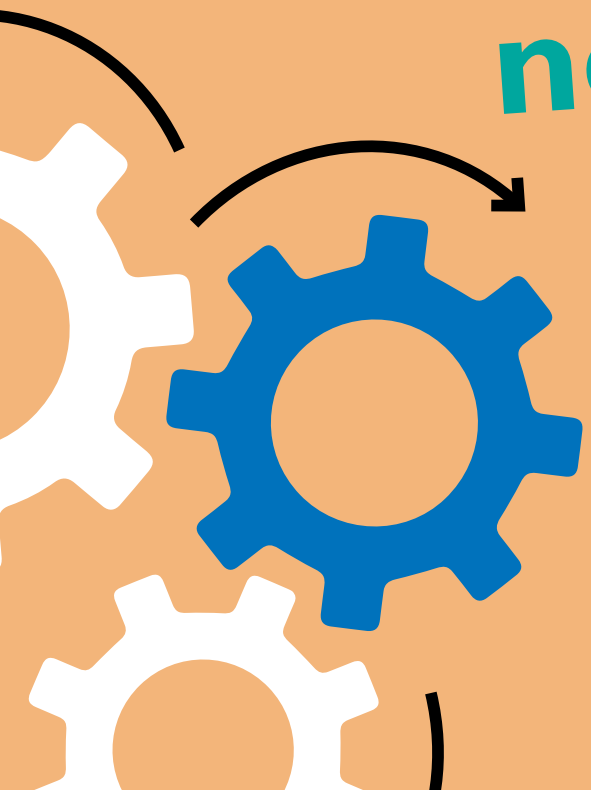
Santa Monica College

Honor the space between

no longer

and

not yet.



Nancy Levin

AUGUST

Mindful Transitions

Santa Monica College

Transitions Take Energy

Transitions—big or small—drain more energy than we realize. Whether it's shifting from summer to fall, project to project, or a meeting to focused work, every "mental gear switch" uses up attention and focus.
To move through transitions with intention (instead of reactivity), try these practices:

- Name the transition you're in: Saying "I'm shifting into planning mode" helps your brain recalibrate.
- Build buffer zones: Give yourself 5–10 minutes between tasks or meetings when possible.
- Use a transition ritual: Stand, stretch, get a drink of water, or take three deep breaths. Small actions signal your system to reset.
- Watch your self-talk: Replace "I should be able to handle this" with "It's okay to need a moment to shift."

Reflective Prompts

Use these journal or team conversation starters:

- What transition am I currently in, or avoiding?
- How do I usually react to change? What helps me respond with calm?
- What's one ritual or habit I can use to mark the end of one phase and the start of another?
- What part of this transition is teaching me something new about myself?
- Where am I holding on too tightly to what was?

Source: Lizzie Moult

Read

What Type of Gold Star Works for You?
By Gretchen Rubin

Watch

TEDx Talk: 3 steps to turn everyday get-togethers into transformative gatherings
By Priya Parker

Do

Try the "Name → Pause → Choose" method:

1. Name the transition ("I'm shifting from home mode to work mode")
2. Pause for one breath or one minute
3. Choose your next step intentionally

SEPTEMBER

Building Influence

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Doubt kills more dreams

than failure ever will.

Suzy Kassem

SEPTEMBER

Building Influence

Santa Monica College

Being proactive builds influence

Influence grows when you take initiative. Anticipate challenges, reach out to collaborate early, and share ideas to move projects forward or improve processes. Being proactive can help build your career, contribute to your success, and foster positive relationships.

Source: The Power of Being Proactive, Forbes

Ways to build influence at work

1. **Build your connections across campus**- Volunteer to staff one of the tables at SMC Start Up Sept 16th.
2. **Listen attentively before speaking**- In a committee or staff meeting, summarize what others have shared before adding your own thoughts.
3. **Check your body language and tone**- When meeting with a student or colleague, keep an open posture, nod to show understanding, and use a calm, approachable tone.
4. **Be consistent and reliable**- If you sign up to staff an information table or to help at an event, show up prepared and on time.
5. **Be assertive and share your opinions**- Share your perspective with confidence and suggest constructive solutions to any barriers.
6. **Be honest, transparent, and open**- if you can't meet a deadline, communicate early and offer realistic adjustments.
7. **Be flexible and willing to compromise**- Modify presentations to accomodate both in person and online attendees.
8. **Follow through on your commitments**- If you offer to connect a colleague with a resource in another department, make the introduction promptly.
9. **Help others out**- Offer to teach a colleague how to improve their Canvas page, access Zoom attendee reports, or share your syllabus template.

Source: Content inspired by the list from Betterup

Read

How to increase your influence at work

By Rebecca Knight, for Harvard Business Review

Watch

You are contagious

TEDx Talk by Vanessa Van Edwards

Do

Foster the connections you already have:

- Write a thank you note for a colleague
- Pro-actively write a coworker LinkedIn recommendation

OCTOBER

Intentional Communication

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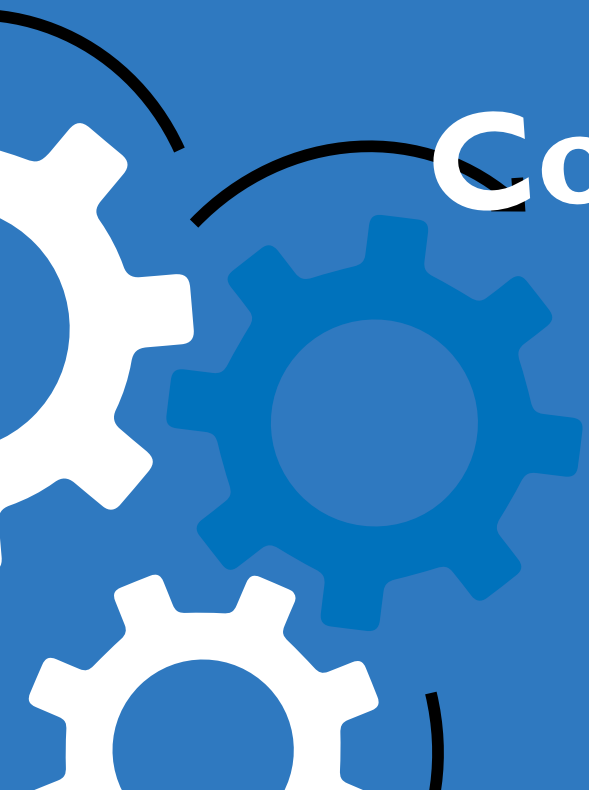
Communication is not about saying what we think. Communication is about ensuring others hear what we mean.

Simon Sinek



OCTOBER

Intentional Communication

Santa Monica College

Communicating Intentionally helps everyone

Do a Clarity Check: After writing an email, ask: Would a busy colleague understand this on the first read? Cut or rewrite until the answer is yes.
Make Connection First: When delivering a tough message, start with what is possible, supportive, or encouraging before outlining the challenge.

Delete these words to improve your writing

Strengthen your emails and messages by cutting these common words:

- "Fine" Sounds passive or unenthusiastic → Use: "Sounds good" or "That works for me."
- "However" feels overly formal or negative → Use: "But" for smoother, less formal transitions. "The application is open to all students, but priority is given to those in STEM majors."
- "Unfortunately" adds unnecessary negativity. → Say what is available: "We're happy to add you to the waitlist."
- Double negatives are confusing → Be direct: "I'm proud of our students" instead of "I couldn't be more proud."
- "Can't until" → Focus on availability: "I'm available after 2pm." instead of "I can't meet until 2pm."
- "Honestly" implies you weren't being honest before → Just say what you mean: "I don't think that's feasible."
- "Just" softens the message unncessarily → Drop it: "I wanted to follow up." instead of "I just wanted to follow up."
- "Really/very/truly" are used as filler → choose stronger words instead. Example: "I'm honored to be part of this team."
- "No problem" downplays your effort → Instead, say something like: "Happy to help."

Source: Wes Kao

Read

15 Principles for Managing Up
By: Wes Kao

Watch

TEDx Talk: Forget big change, start with a tiny habit
By: BJ Fogg

Do

Email Edit Challenge:
Before sending your next message, swap one "softening" phrase (like just, unfortunately, or honestly) for a clearer alternative. Notice how it changes tone.

NOVEMBER

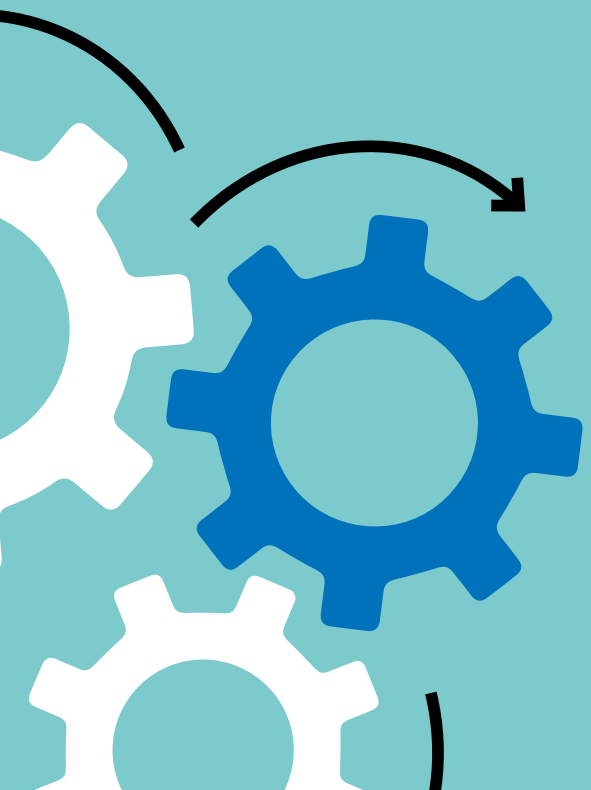
Joyful Collaboration

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

Alone we can do so little;

together we can

do so much.



Helen Keller

NOVEMBER

Joyful Collaboration

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

Learn about each other's strengths

Take the VIA Strengthsfinder and encourage your colleagues to do so too!

Track your team's strengths and ask yourselves:

- Do people agree with their strengths?
- Do yours make sense?
- How could you use your strengths more at work?

Build awareness for smoother collaboration

Self-awareness - being curious and becoming more aware of the impact you are having and how you might get in your own way. Reflect regularly:

- "I'm at my best/ worst when..."
- "What am I missing?"
- "What's motivating me to improve?"

Situational awareness - reading the room and sensing shifts. Ask:

- "What's different today?"
- "How can I be useful now?"
- "Where do you want to start?"

Relational awareness - understanding your impact on others. Checking in sounds like:

- "This is how I like to work- if that ever feels challenging, please tell me."
- "Do you need a sounding board, problem solver, or suggestions to get started?"

Systems awareness - realizing the bigger systems shaping actions. Ask:

- "Who else might be impacted by this decision?"
- "What is in our control and out of our control"

Source: Squiggly Career

Read

Should You Delegate That Decision? Ask These 4 Questions

By: Cheryl Strauss Einhorn for Harvard Business Review

Watch

TED Talk: Remember to Say Thank You

By: Laura Trice

Do

Create Clarity at the beginning, middle, end of your meetings

- At the start of your meeting state what the desired outcomes are.
- In the middle, check in on progress.
- At the end, summarise conclusions and next steps.