

# Dreading that team-building exercise?

August 23 2017

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Credit: University of East Anglia

A new study led by the University of East Anglia for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing reveals that shared activities in our workplaces can improve wellbeing and performance by improving the 'social atmosphere'.

After starting an international review of nearly 1,400 scientific papers and reports, researchers from UEA and the Universities of Essex, Reading and Sheffield whittled the studies down to the most relevant and found evidence that team activities are effective at improving [wellbeing](#).

All the successful examples they found:

- Involved everyone - including people who might be reluctant to interact in shared activities.
- Had more than a one-off activity and carried on over time – examples ranged from as few as three one-hour workshops to a more extensive programme delivered over several years.

The findings might cause a sinking feeling for employees who wince at the thought joining their colleagues in an icebreaker or building a bridge out of rolled-up newspaper in the name of team bonding. But the study found that it doesn't have to be a big or complex activity to bring benefits. Simply spending time on a shared project, like mentoring programmes, action planning groups, [social events](#) or workshops, all were shown to have positive effects.

Professor Kevin Daniels, who led the research team, says "Good social relations between workers and between workers and management are amongst the most important factors for well-being at work, resilience and engagement. The research shows that, with the right intent, it can be quite straightforward to improve social relations at work".

Nancy Hey, Director of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, says: "This research backs up our other evidence: people stay in, and go back to, jobs they like with people they like. We are recommending that organisations carry out activities that boost social relations at work, and evaluate their impact."

The study 'Well-Being and the Social Environment of Work: A Systematic Review of Intervention Studies' is published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

**More information:** Kevin Daniels et al. Well-Being and the Social

Environment of Work: A Systematic Review of Intervention Studies,  
*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*  
(2017). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph14080918](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080918)

Provided by University of East Anglia

Citation: Dreading that team-building exercise? (2017, August 23) retrieved 9 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2017-08-dreading-team-building.html>

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