



Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Empathy

10 messages

Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>
To: All Staff <allstaff@dglibrary.org>

Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 2:55 PM

Dear staff,

I want to address the elephant in the library. It is no secret that there has been COVID weariness, compassion fatigue, and a lot of stress throughout the last few weeks, not to mention the last year. This has been an extremely difficult time for all of us as a team and as individuals, as staff members and community members. You may need support for compassion fatigue, COVID weariness, or stress. We are here for you, not only to provide backup, but to listen, support, and empathize. Good self-care is imperative. The pandemic has created a world in which many of our tasks seem impossible. Many of us are doing work that is very different from our work before the pandemic. Many of us no longer are able to enjoy some of our favorite aspects of library work. We have been challenged in ways that were never imaginable a year ago. Yet, we have found creative solutions and grown closer as a library. You are the heart of this library and we would not be able to serve the public without you. For all of this, thank you.

Now that the state is beginning to reopen, as is the library, we are heading into a phase that will be bumpy. As you know, reopening the library is not going to be like a light switch that we can simply turn on. During this time, I ask for your patience and understanding. We are all doing the best we can. Sometimes we will not see eye-to-eye on things, but the important thing to remember is that we are on the same team with the same goal.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we agreed that the health and safety of our staff and patrons would come first in our decision making. This was a huge mental shift for all of us; our customer service was not the primary driving force, which felt unnatural. Health and safety is still at the forefront of our minds. There is still a pandemic and we are still working towards making things safe before reopening fully. However, as we all are transitioning to being more open, we need to begin transitioning back to customer service as a driving force. Compassion and pandemic fatigue are very much a real problem, and I fear that we are allowing it to come before our empathy.

The library has always been a place for *everyone* to discover, grow, play, and learn. To do that, to be that place for everyone, we must lead with empathy, creating a welcoming atmosphere that is inclusive and patron-focused.

In this time of COVID weariness, compassion fatigue, and stress, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture of all our patrons. When we experience negative interactions, it can be easy to slip into a lens of impatience and judgement, forgetting about our patrons who are so happy that we are back open to serve them. Our happy patrons are the vast majority of our visitors. It is unfortunate that unhappy patrons shout the loudest and that negative feedback stays with us longer. We have to remember the good over the bad and embody our purpose statement.

Since reopening to the public, we have received numerous complaints from patrons that feel unwelcome, watched, and judged. They've expressed the feeling that staff are waiting to catch them breaking the rules or doing something wrong. Each of these complaints is disheartening to receive. I am concerned that we

have begun to adopt an us-vs-them mentality, leading with fear and distrust, and falling into the traps that escalate situations.

I know that it is tiresome to be constantly asking patrons to respect our rules and keep our community safe. **I know it is a hard job that I am asking each of you to uphold right now, but I ask that you continue to make your decisions with *both* our rules and customer service in mind.** We need to lead with empathy, even when it feels like the millionth time we are asking patrons to pull up masks. Please remember that we are not alone in our struggle to get through this hard time in history- the community is also struggling.

To help us bring empathy back into focus, we're exploring options for additional training and resources to help each of you. In-charge training is an ongoing process. The management team is currently working on sample scripts and talking points that we will share with you as soon as they are ready. For the time being, I encourage you to revisit the resources we have at hand, such as Ryan Dowd's Homeless Library Training, when you have time.

The flight attendant always reminds us to put on our own oxygen mask first. The best way to prepare for using your empathy lens at work is to practice good self-care. When you need a moment after a tough interaction, ask for the help of a coworker or supervisor or fellow Person In Charge to allow you that time to process and refocus. Help your coworker or supervisor take that time when they need it after a tough interaction. We're in this together.

Again, thank you for your dedication to making the library a place for everyone.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and be well.

Julie M. Milavec | Library Director

Pronouns: she, her, hers
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Sharon Hrycewicz <shrycewicz@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 3:13 PM

thanks, Julie, would mentioning the village EAP be helpful in this situation?

Sharon

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Andrew Pawlak <apawlak@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 3:41 PM

Hi Julie,

If I can, I'd like to make an observation, from the perspective of a desk worker. As you said, it's a bumpy transition with every phase and people need time to readjust. Part of that readjustment is getting used to new rules, so occasionally In Charge staff are needed to have a difficult conversation with patrons. I've noticed that the times I have needed to get a PIC, it's never usually the same person twice. As an employee, I know this is because of a rotational schedule; but for patrons who need mask reminders, or a fuller conversation, all they are seeing is multiple staff members disciplining

them. They do not see a schedule and don't get to build a rapport with an individual. Respectfully, I feel we have too many people enforcing rules that should be enforced by a few.

With multiple staff members enforcing mask rules, patrons do not get to compartmentalize the discipliner from the helper. Back in November, I was involved in a situation detailed in PITS 397 in which I had to enforce the mask rules and it escalated to calling In Charge and even the DGPD. When she finally left, she stopped in front of me, pointed her finger at me and said "You're the reason I'm getting kicked out!" That patron is a regular of the computers and I have helped her many times, and we got along great. But by taking on the role of enforcing mask rules, I have lost all credibility with that patron. I was the only recognizable face she saw on November 12, and she knows my name, so I take all the blame.

I know there's a lot for everyone to process as of late, and I'm staying vigilant on my own behavior, but I just wanted to put my two cents in as part of the frontline.

Thanks,

~Andrew

On Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 2:55 PM Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org> wrote:

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Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>
To: Sharon Hrycewicz <shrycewicz@dglibrary.org>

Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 5:19 PM

Only those who qualify for insurance can use it 😊

Julie M. Milavec | Library Director

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John Martin <jmartin@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 10:57 AM

Thank you Julie. That needed to be said by you.

I hope it's heard. Have a peaceful weekend.

On Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 2:55 PM Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org> wrote:

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Kelly Pocci <kpocci@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 2:35 PM

Self preservation is not selfish. I told a patron the other day how nice it is to have a Director such as yourself, I've worked for 3 of them, gotten along just fine with all, but never has there been a person at the top that continually reminded us to take care of ourselves as well. DGPL truly is a dream team to work with and for. Thank YOU, Kelly

On Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 2:55 PM Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org> wrote:

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Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>
To: Kelly Pocci <kpocci@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 2:47 PM

Thanks, Kelly. I needed that today.

Julie M. Milavec | Library Director

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Regina Hartnett <rhartnett@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 2:52 PM

Well said Julie thanks. We are going to be alright. I'm excited for any new thing we can start to offer back to our patrons.

I love to see the smiling eyes lol, they are happy just to be here. I had a man come up to me and say, "oh wow the umbrellas are back'. I was so excited with him. 😁 I can't wait to open up and be back to quote unquote normal. And how are you and your family doing?

On Thu, Mar 18, 2021 at 2:55 PM Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org> wrote:

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Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>
To: Regina Hartnett <rhartnett@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 2:53 PM

Thanks, Regina. We're hanging in there. Now if we can just get everyone vaccinated...

Julie M. Milavec | Library Director

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Regina Hartnett <rhartnett@dglibrary.org>
To: Julie Milavec <jmilavec@dglibrary.org>

Fri, Mar 19, 2021 at 2:54 PM

Your welcome.

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