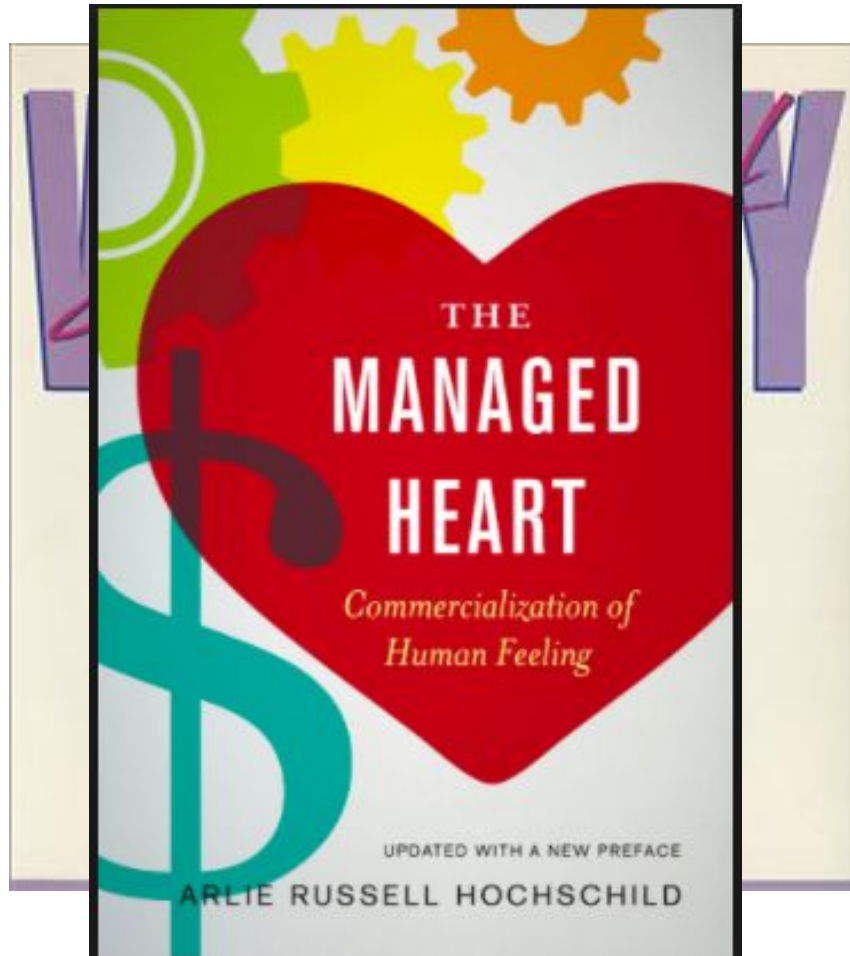


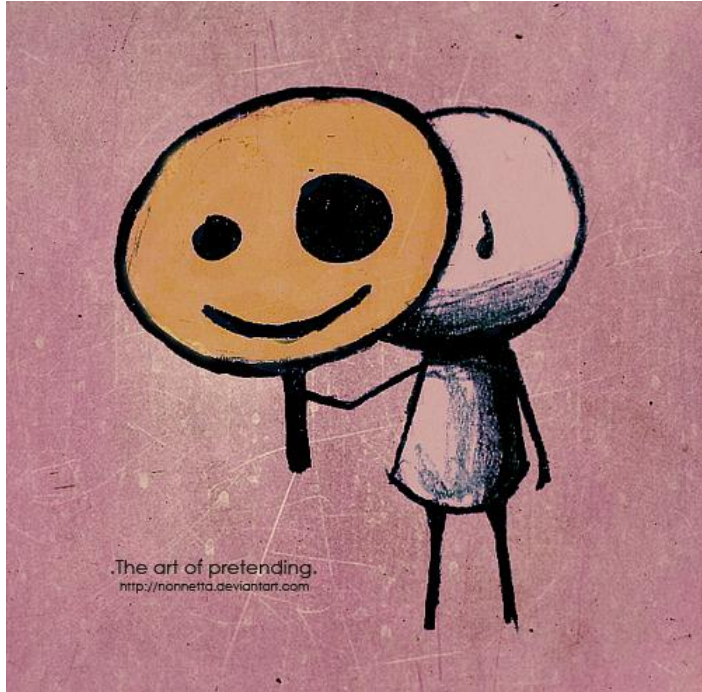
LIBRARY

So Emotional

The Emotional Labor and Mental Load of Librarianship



What even is Emotional Labor?



Emotional Labor is....simply the management of feelings (your own or someone else's) to accomplish some goal—to leave a customer satisfied or to get someone to do something they might not otherwise want to, or to keep your household functioning. Note that there are many other kinds of labor that can produce these outcomes too (simply providing information to someone, for instance), but emotional labor concerns the work of emotion management—say, delivering bad news about a flight cancellation in a comforting way, so that disgruntled passengers hardly notice the news is bad.-Slate.com

Emotional Labor is not...Everything else. It isn't activism, it isn't clerical labor even if it is done by a woman, it isn't mental load, educational labor, or maternal gatekeeping, or just general frustration with The Patriarchy.

What about Mental Load?



Mental Load is...“Being the person who notices”...not just work-related tasks, but also social tasks such as birthdays, retirements, grief cards, and staff area cleaning duties. Having to always be the person who is asking for help (in some specific ways)

Being the person who always has to remind everyone about DEI (and often is the person everyone turns to with any sort of DEI question or question about the marginalized group to which they belong)

Mental Load is Not...Being afraid of voicing dissent or disagreement. Just being stressed out or feeling pressure or being overwhelmed at the duties of your job.

Okay, but why do I care?



Kayla Chadwick, Contributor
Video Editor

Huffington Post Op-ed

I Don't Know How To Explain To You That You Should Care About Other People

Negative effects from emotional labor make people less effective at their jobs:

“Reduced well-being and job satisfaction among frontline service employees will invariably lead to reduced job performance in their role of serving customers.” (Cote, Van Cleef, & Sy, p.135)

Supporting staff and acknowledging emotional labor improves retention and both employee and customer satisfaction. (Cote, Van Cleef, & Sy)

We are

MADE OF



So, what do we do about it?

Management:

Recognize this is something to address and put policies and procedures in place as needed for the added stresses of emotional labor. Ensure that desk shifts aren't too long and staff have time away from the public.

But also be clear about what your expectations are with feelings rules and emotional display.

Recognize that you are performing emotional labor as well.

Hire with personal traits of integrative emotional labor in mind. Hire people who WANT to do this work. Not people who ONLY want to work with books.

Clearly articulate the library's mission and make sure staff support that mission and understand how policies are in support of it.

Make sure your policies DO support your mission!

Surface acting vs. Deep Acting

What do we do about it?

For your colleagues:

Back each other up. Give each other breaks. Recognize the work you are doing as work. Be a calming influence, not someone who piles on.

Yourself:

Take advantage of any assistance offered by your employer.

Mindfulness.

Firm boundaries.

Bunnies!

