

Leaders mean well when they try to be positive. But they often simply don't have the vocabulary to say the right thing at the right time, and resort to feel good aphorisms that prevent them from truly comforting those who need it. Whitney Goodman, a licensed therapist and author of *Toxic Positivity*, offers some suggestions to help understand the difference between toxic positivity and offering validation and support.

Toxic Positivity	Validation and Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “You’ll get over it!”</li><li>• “Just be positive!”</li><li>• “Good vibes only!”</li><li>• “Stop being so negative!”</li><li>• “Think happy thoughts!”</li><li>• “Never give up!”</li><li>• “Just be happy!”</li><li>• “It could be worse!”</li><li>• “Everything happens for a reason!”</li><li>• “Be grateful it isn’t worse!”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “This is hard. We’ll get through it together.”</li><li>• “Do you want to talk about it?”</li><li>• “It’s pretty normal to have some negative thoughts in this situation.”</li><li>• “It’s probably hard to be positive right now.”</li><li>• “Do you want to talk about your options?”</li><li>• “It sucks to feel like this. Do you want to do something together today?”</li><li>• “It’s probably really hard to see any good in this situation.”</li><li>• “I know this doesn’t make a lot of sense right now.”</li><li>• “I’m here for you.”</li><li>• “I’m not going anywhere.”</li><li>• “This isn’t easy, and you don’t have to pretend like it is.”</li></ul>

If you're serious about retaining the people on your team (as you should be), consider conducting “stay” interviews. These are discussions where you ask loyal employees key questions to understand how engaged they are. The information you gather can help you tackle common retention issues. Here are four questions to try:

### What’s your frame of mind today?

No matter what the response is — positive or negative — don't negate their experience or move too quickly to solving a problem. Just listen, thank them for being honest, and ask for more information before moving toward a solution.

### Who do you feel connected to at work?

Based on their response, explore what you can do to help them deepen those connections. Perhaps people from different departments can work on a company-wide event, a cross-division initiative, or take part in virtual discussion groups.

### What do you want to learn that will excite you and help you grow?

This question signals that you care about their development and want to help them achieve their aspirations.

### What barriers can I remove for you to help you do your job better?

Then brainstorm with your colleague how you can be most helpful. Ensuring people can do their jobs well is just as important as praise and rewards.

This resource is adapted from "[What Stops People on Your Team from Leaving?](#)" by Sabina Nawaz