Why

One of the problems with contemporary organizations is that people only bring a part of them into the workplace. Often they put on a mask to comply with all kinds of rules and expectations in a setting that is not really safe and where they cannot be themselves. In that sense you lose a lot of creativity and energy. So, there is a lot to gain by inviting and encouraging people to bring their whole self to the workplace (i.e. be genuine).

What

Invite people to show more of who they really are instead of wearing a mask.

How

- Let people bring their dogs to work.
- Let people bring their children to work or organize childcare within the company.
- Invite people to bring personal objects from home to decorate their office space. Or, find other ways to decorate offices in a more inspiring and personal way, e.g. during teambuilding exercises facilitated by an artist allow people to make their own paintings and put these up around the office.
- Organize an art salon once in a while where people bring items and art they have made or use another theme.
- Set up a small podium once in a while where people can perform (perhaps at the same time as the art salon).
- Allow people to wear casual clothes.
- During team sessions ask people to bring pictures of family, friends or hobbies; let them tell their stories.
- Don't avoid feelings and personal stories when they come up during meetings and conversations, do the opposite: encourage discussion and ask questions.

When

When you feel that people don't show their true selves and have been molded by company culture into a certain shape.

Possible workshop exercise

Experiment with sharing personal information: what is the story of my life, where am I coming from and where do I want to go in my life? Talk about hobbies, family, pets etc., i.e. present yourself using the full canvas of your life.

Critical success factors

It must feel real and fresh. These activities can feel artificial and often become meaningless rituals themselves. Watch out for that and change things up when the genuineness or freshness disappears.