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**Good for You, Bad for Me?****The Daily Dynamics of Perspective Taking and Well-Being in Coworker Dyads**

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### **Abstract**

Perspective taking is encouraged by organizations as a form of supporting coworkers. Yet, its impact on employees' and coworkers' well-being is not well understood. We, therefore, take a dyadic approach to understand the daily dynamics of employees' perspective taking, its benefits for coworkers, and its costs for employees themselves. Specifically, we draw from self-regulation theory to examine the double-edged sword of perspective taking for one's own and one's coworker's well-being (reflected by subjective vitality). With regard to coworker well-being, we take an other-oriented resource lens and theorize that the focal employee's perspective taking increases the coworker's received support and well-being. With regard to the focal employee's well-being, we take a self-oriented resource lens and theorize that perspective taking increases the focal employee's self-regulatory resource depletion, which impairs their well-being. We examined our research model in a dyadic experience sampling study with three daily measurement occasions over two working weeks with a sample of 89 coworker dyads (178 individuals). Multi-level analyses showed that perspective taking had a positive indirect effect on coworker well-being via received coworker support, while it had a negative indirect effect on the focal employee's well-being via self-regulatory resource depletion.

**Keywords:** perspective taking; well-being; self-regulation; resource depletion; coworker support

## **Good for You, Bad for Me?**

### **The Daily Dynamics of Perspective Taking and Well-Being in Coworker Dyads**

“And those who were seen dancing, were thought to be insane, by those who could not hear the music.” — Friedrich Nietzsche (19th-century philosopher)

This introductory quote is indicative of Nietzsche’s “perspectivism”, suggesting that there is not only one objective truth to view the world but rather a multitude of different perspectives that are subject to individual and societal limitations. While staying with one’s own perspective requires little effort, taking the perspective of someone else is an active cognitive process of putting oneself in another person’s ‘shoes’ to imagine the world from their point of view (Ku et al., 2015). Perspective taking is relevant in many areas of life and can vary substantially between tasks and situations (Dale et al., 2018; Stietz et al., 2019). In the work context, perspective taking has been recognized to benefit self and others at work by facilitating employee gratitude (Sawyer et al., 2022), employee job satisfaction (Parmar et al., 2023), employee idea exploration, harmonization, and creativity (Ng et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023) as well as coworker support (Fasbender et al., 2020), joint work performance (Longmire & Harrison, 2018), problem-solving (Grant & Berry, 2011; Hoever et al., 2012), constructive voice (Ng et al., 2021), cooperation (Caruana et al., 2021; Galinsky et al., 2008), and knowledge exchange (Gerpott et al., 2020; Usman et al., 2022). Considering the economic impact of these beneficial outcomes (Cascio, 2006), it is not surprising that organizations have picked up on these research findings and encouraged perspective taking at work as a form of improving meaningfulness and social functioning (Ku et al., 2015; Zappalà, 2012).

While previous research has brought important insights (cf. Ku et al., 2015; Longmire & Harrison, 2018), what has been largely overlooked is that perspective taking is a dyadic phenomenon that takes two to tango, the perspective taker and the target of perspective taking (Park & Raile, 2010). As such, perspective taking may have differential implications for the focal individual who engages in perspective taking and their coworker whose perspective is taken (Park & Raile, 2010). While the core purpose of perspective taking is to provide benefits for the coworker (Fasbender et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023), perspective taking reflects an effortful cognitive process for the perspective taker (Alicke & Largo, 1995; Epley et al., 2004; Fenigstein & Abrams, 1993; Fennis, 2011). In the present research, we thus propose that perspective taking has different implications for the focal employees' and their coworkers' well-being as reflected in subjective vitality – a state of feeling good, energetic, and alive (Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Sonnentag, 2015). The wider psychology literature has demonstrated that perspective taking matters for well-being in romantic relationships (e.g., Cahill et al., 2020). In the work psychology and organizational behavior literature, research on perspective taking and well-being remains, however, comparatively sparse: Although scholars have begun to demonstrate the beneficial effects of perspective taking at work in terms of mediating or moderating effects for well-being (e.g., Duan et al., 2020; McCartney et al., 2023; van Erp et al., 2018; Walsh & Arnold, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022), we lack a more nuanced understanding of whether and how perspective taking as a dynamic phenomenon is related to the well-being of self and others. Thus, the present study aims to answer the research question of whether and how an employee's daily level of perspective taking has differential implications for both dyad partners' daily well-being.

To address this research question, we draw from self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) to understand the daily dynamics of perspective taking, its beneficial effects for the coworker, and costs for the focal employee. Such a dynamic lens aligns with

the episodic nature of perspective taking and the associated fluctuating resource-related benefits for others (Lee & Madera, 2021; Sabey et al., 2021; Sawyer et al., 2022) and costs for the focal employee (Gombert et al., 2020; Rivkin et al., 2018). Specifically, studying perspective taking through the lens of self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), we argue that on days when a focal employee engages in perspective taking, they provide temporarily more support to their coworker (i.e., help to solve task-focused issues; Tews et al., 2013), which reduces the required amount of energy that their coworker must invest in completing their work tasks. The received coworker support should thus benefit the coworker's subjective vitality in the evening as an indicator of daily well-being.

However, self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) also suggests that perspective taking can be harmful to the focal employee's well-being. On days when the focal employee engages in perspective taking, it requires investing cognitive effort to evaluate a situation from one's own and from another person's perspective, which can deplete self-regulatory resources (Fennis, 2011). Self-regulatory resource depletion is a mental state of low cognitive energy (Lanaj et al., 2014; Puranik et al., 2021; Rivkin et al., 2021), which over time impairs the focal employee's subjective vitality as an indicator of well-being (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018; Gombert et al., 2020; Rivkin et al., 2022). Figure 1 shows our conceptual model on the costs and benefits of daily perspective taking. As becomes evident, we focus on the indirect (rather than the direct) link between perspective taking and well-being to disentangle the processes through which perspective taking affects both parties and to acknowledge the time-sensitive processes involved (cf. Mitchell & James, 2001; Sonnentag, 2012) that reflect how employees' daily experiences unfold over the course of the day. Accordingly, we capture received coworker support (other) and self-regulatory resource depletion (self) as proximal outcomes of perspective taking, and well-being (subjective vitality of the other and self) as its distal outcomes (via its more proximal outcomes).

With our research, we aim to contribute to the literature on perspective taking and well-being in different ways. First, we adopt a dyadic approach to examine perspective taking that takes the joint effects of perspective taking for the focal employee's and the coworker's subjective vitality into account. This approach complements the predominantly positive view of perspective taking (Ku et al., 2015; Longmire & Harrison, 2018; Zappalà, 2012) by disentangling its beneficial effects for the coworker from the simultaneous costs for the perspective taker. Second, we draw on theoretical notions of self-regulation (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) to disentangle the daily dynamic mechanisms through which perspective taking impacts employee and coworker well-being. Specifically, we dissect the perspective taking well-being link into an other-oriented resource process to explain why perspective taking benefits coworker well-being, and a self-oriented resource process to explain why perspective taking impairs the focal employee's well-being. Focusing on the psychological processes underlying the link between daily fluctuations in perspective taking and well-being can contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the mechanisms that underly the costs and benefits of perspective taking. Empirically, we test this notion with a dyadic experience sampling approach. This not only enables us to capture perspective taking as a daily fluctuating phenomenon (Lee & Madera, 2021; Sabey et al., 2021; Sawyer et al., 2022) but also allows us to capture the well-being of both the focal employee and their coworker as a consequence of daily perspective taking. Finally, with regard to practice, we aim to provide germane implications that can be integrated with extant research on self-regulation theory.

### **Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development**

We draw on self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) to explain the links between perspective taking and the focal employee's as well as the coworker's well-being. Self-regulation refers to the cognitive process of controlling or altering one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to overcome desire-goal conflicts (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Self-

regulation is highly prevalent in work contexts, for example, when controlling one's impulses to choose one's words carefully during a speech to motivate team members, to overcome motivational barriers when engaging in unpleasant tasks such as administration, or when staying focused on a task at hand despite being distracted by incoming emails (Beal et al., 2005; Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Schmidt & Diestel, 2015). However, controlling one's thoughts, emotions and behaviors is effortful (Wang et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2023). Self-regulation theory suggests that there is a limited pool of resources that is depleted when individuals engage in self-control (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Accordingly, the availability of self-regulatory resources varies from day to day, depending on the requirements to engage in self-regulation on a focal day (Gerpott et al., 2022). Based on these notions, previous research has demonstrated that self-regulation plays a focal role in linking a variety of non-work and work variables to employees functioning in the home and work domain, including sleep (Diestel et al., 2015; Rivkin et al., 2021), commuting (Gerpott et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2017), smartphone use (Gombert et al., 2018; Lanaj et al., 2014), presenteeism (Rivkin et al., 2022), and justice (Matta et al., 2017) and work demands (Prem et al., 2016; for a recent review of self-regulation research see Lian et al., 2017).

Drawing on self-regulation theory, we dissect the perspective taking well-being link into an other- and a self-oriented resource process to explain why perspective taking can benefit the coworker's and the focal employees' well-being, respectively. The other-oriented resource processes underline perspective taking as a crucial element to being thoughtful of others, which manifests in coworker support (Fasbender et al., 2020). The received support frees up resources for the coworker, which should improve the coworker's subjective vitality. This mechanism can explain why the coworker benefits from the perspective taking of the focal employee. In contrast, the self-oriented resource process underlines that taking someone else's perspective is cognitively demanding (Alicke & Largo, 1995; Epley et al., 2004;

Fenigstein & Abrams, 1993; Fennis, 2011). Accordingly, we argue that situations in which an employee engages in perspective taking deplete the self-regulatory resources of the focal employee because the focal employee is required to regulate their attentional focus and thoughts toward others (Reina & Kudesia, 2020). The resulting depletion of self-regulatory resources thus reduces the focal employees' subjective vitality (Gombert et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2008).

### **Benefits for Coworkers**

We next delineate the other-oriented resource process explaining why we expect the focal employee's daily perspective taking at work to be linked to their coworker's subjective vitality at the end of the day (distal outcome) via the coworker's received support on that day (proximal outcome). First, perspective taking is a cognitive process that involves sequential considerations in which the focal employee anchors on their own perspective and gradually moves closer to what the target could be thinking (Epley et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2023). This entails that the focal employee's own identity increasingly merges with the one of the person the focal employee tries to understand (Cialdini et al., 1997; Goldstein et al., 2014; Maner et al., 2002). Therefore, offering support is opportune as a natural and salient behavioral option after taking the other's perspective (Van Doesum et al., 2018). Indeed, empirical research demonstrates that when employees take their coworkers' perspective, they are more likely to support them (Fasbender et al., 2020). Accordingly, we expect a positive relationship between the focal employee's perspective taking and the support received by the coworker.

***Hypothesis 1:** Perspective taking (of the focal employee) at work is positively related to coworker received support across the workday.*

Second, receiving support during the workday constitutes a resource that should benefit the coworker's subjective vitality at the end of the day as a reflection of the accumulated daily requirements to engage in self-regulation. Subjective vitality is a relevant



short-term indicator of well-being, which reflects the physical and psychological energy available to the self (Ryan & Frederick, 1997) and covaries with self-rated health (Emile et al., 2015) as well as objective well-being indicators (Maynard et al., 2015). Drawing on a self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), we argue that receiving support at work benefits the coworker's subjective vitality because support from others reduces the required amount of psychological and physiological energy that an employee must invest in completing their work tasks. For instance, if the perspective taker takes over some of the coworkers' high workload, the coworker has to invest comparably fewer regulatory resources to complete their daily tasks. As another example, the perspective taker may show their coworker a more efficient way to complete a task, which reduces the amount of energy that the coworker needs to invest to complete the task at hand. These aspects of work facilitation reduce the self-regulatory demands for the coworker who receives the support and, in turn, leave the coworker with more energy at the end of the day (Gombert et al., 2020).

Providing empirical support for this theoretical argument, scholars found beneficial effects of coworker support for individuals' vitality based on physiological measures, such that received coworker support has been linked to a high, stable parasympathetic and low, stable sympathetic activation level (as measured through heart rate variability) throughout the workday (Baethge et al., 2020). These physiological patterns indicate that receiving support is beneficial for coworkers' bodily adaptation to environmental challenges during the workday because greater physiological resilience is characterized by a lower general level of sympathetic activation and higher parasympathetic activation (Baethge et al., 2020). Furthermore, research using daily survey measures also found that daily fluctuations in perceived coworker support positively relate to employees' reported subjective vitality (Simbula, 2010).

***Hypothesis 2:** Coworker received support across the workday is positively related to coworker subjective vitality at the end of the day.*

Taken together, we expect that the focal employee's perspective taking at work has an indirect positive relation with coworker well-being at the end of the day (distal outcome) through coworker support (proximal outcome):

***Hypothesis 3:** Perspective taking (of the focal employee) at work is indirectly and positively related to coworker subjective vitality at the end of the day via coworker received support across the workday.*

### **Costs for Oneself**

Turning to the possible costs of perspective taking, we continue drawing on self-regulatory resource theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) to argue that on days with higher levels of perspective taking at work, the focal employee's subjective vitality at the end of the day (distal outcome) is impaired through self-regulatory resource depletion over the course of the workday (proximal outcome). First, on days when an employee engages in higher levels of perspective taking at work, we expect higher self-regulatory resource depletion because perspective taking is a cognitive process that requires the focal employee to regulate their attentional focus and thoughts toward the coworker (Reina & Kudesia, 2020). Stepping into others' shoes means investing cognitive effort to evaluate a situation from one's own and from another person's perspective (Fennis, 2011). This taking of another's perspective in addition to one's own perspective takes more, if not double the effort because the focal employee must not only control their thoughts to refrain from assessing the situation from one's own perspective, which for most people occurs automatically but also focus their cognitions to consider the situation from the perspective of one's colleague. Moreover, perspective taking may bring conflicting perspectives to light, which requires the focal employee to navigate between their own perspective and that of the other person (Alicke &

Largo, 1995; Epley et al., 2004; Fenigstein & Abrams, 1993). This cognitive process requires self-regulation because the focal employee may have to suppress selfish or egoistic impulses associated with their own perspective and upregulate other-oriented cognitions.

Evidently, such a process requires effortful self-regulation, which – according to self-regulation theory – draws on a common energy resource that, upon consumption, is temporarily diminished, thereby leading to a state termed self-regulatory resource depletion (Martínez-Íñigo et al., 2013). Providing empirical support for this notion, previous research suggests that inhibition control (Brown-Schmidt, 2009) and working memory (Lin et al., 2010; Wardlow, 2013) as two cognitive processes determine how often and how quickly people take other's perspective into account and that people's available self-regulatory resources are linked to perspective taking (Ackerman et al., 2009; Fennis, 2011; Walsh & Arnold, 2018), thus demonstrating the close connection between perspective taking and resource depletion.

***Hypothesis 4:** Perspective taking (of the focal employee) at work is positively related to self-regulatory resource depletion (of the focal employee) across the workday.*

Second, self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) suggests that self-regulatory resource depletion is detrimental to a person's well-being. On a daily level, this entails that we expect that self-regulatory resource depletion at work manifests in lower subjective vitality in the evening. This is because on those days when employees have extensively used their self-regulatory resources for work-related challenges (which includes taking the perspective of their coworker), they lack the necessary energy to engage in relaxing activities (e.g., socializing, relaxing, exercising) that would benefit their subjective vitality after work (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018; Gombert et al., 2020; Sonnentag, 2018). That is, self-regulatory resource depletion makes it difficult for an employee to shift from negative to positive affect and engage in behaviors in their leisure time that would enhance vitality at the

end of the day. Empirical support for this notion comes from daily diary studies that linked work demands and the accompanying self-regulatory resource depletion with lower subjective vitality (Gombert et al., 2020; Rivkin et al., 2018).

***Hypothesis 5:** Self-regulatory resource depletion (of the focal employee) across the workday is negatively related to subjective vitality (of the focal employee) at the end of the day.*

Taken together, we expect that the focal employee's perspective taking at work has an indirect negative relation with their well-being at the end of the day (distal outcome) through self-regulatory resource depletion (proximal outcome):

***Hypothesis 6:** Perspective taking (of the focal employee) at work is indirectly and negatively related to subjective vitality (of the focal employee) at the end of the day via self-regulatory resource depletion (of the focal employee) across the workday.*

## **Method**

### **Sample and Procedure**

We conducted an experience sampling study with coworker dyads employed full-time in Germany to test the proposed dual pathway model. We instructed students as part of a comprehensive research project to collect the data (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). Each student recruited 10 to 20 employees who each nominated a coworker to participate in the dyadic experience sampling study (for a similar procedure, see Fasbender et al., 2021; Gerpott et al., 2022; Rivkin et al., 2021). After giving their informed consent, the focal employee received a pre-survey, which measured demographic characteristics. In this survey, the focal employee nominated a coworker by indicating the coworker's email address. The nominated coworker then also received the same pre-survey and was asked to give their consent.

Starting on the following Monday after the focal employee and their coworker

completed their respective pre-survey each, both members of the dyad received daily survey links during the following 10 workdays (i.e., Monday to Friday) via email. Each participant was asked to complete three surveys a day: The noon survey at 1.30 pm, the end-of-work survey at 4.30 pm, and the evening survey at 7.30 pm. If participants did not respond to a survey, they received a reminder after an hour. Each survey was active for 3 hours to be completed by participants. Although participants did not receive any direct compensation, they had the opportunity to take part in a raffle to receive a voucher of 50€ as an incentive for their participation.

The initial sample of participants who completed the pre-survey consisted of  $N = 128$  dyads composed of 256 individuals. We excluded participants who did not complete any daily experience surveys throughout the study period, which resulted in a sample of  $N = 89$  dyads with 178 individuals (dyadic-level response and individual-level response rate: 70%) who completed 1,048 out of 1,780 possible matched daily surveys (day-level response rate: 59%)<sup>1</sup>. Considering the complex design of the study – which required matched responses from both employees in a dyad across three daily occasions – these response rates are in line with recommendations for experience sampling studies (Gabriel et al., 2019) and correspond with response rates reported in previous research (Fisher & To, 2012). The average completion times were 2:16 pm for the noon survey, 5:15 pm for the afternoon survey, and 8:14 pm for the evening survey respectively. Participants were employed in different sectors (19% in teaching and education, 12% in IT and communication, 11% in finance and insurance, 9% in manufacturing, 8% in health, 6% in the public sector, and 35% in other

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<sup>1</sup> To assess whether any factors affected the response rates (cf. Goodman & Blum, 1996), we conducted t-tests to examine differences between participants who only completed the pre-survey but did not engage in the daily experience sampling study ( $N = 78$ ) and those who took part in the daily experience sampling study ( $N = 178$ ) in gender, age, general somatic complaints, weekly work time according to contract, and actual work time as a reflection of how demanding participants jobs were. These t-tests did not indicate any differences between respondents and non-respondents (gender: [ $t = -0.91$ ,  $df = 13.27$ ,  $p = .38$ ], age: [ $t = 0.19$ ,  $df = 12.78$ ,  $p = .85$ ], general somatic complaints: [ $t = 1.06$ ,  $df = 11.64$ ,  $p = .31$ ], weekly work time according to contract: [ $t = 1.55$ ,  $df = 17.59$ ,  $p = .14$ ], and actual work time: [ $t = -0.43$ ,  $df = 12.90$ ,  $p = .67$ ]), which suggests that the dropout was neither related to general demographics nor to health- or work-related factors.

sectors), their age ranged from 18 to 63 years ( $M = 41.44$ ;  $SD = 17.21$ ), the rate of female participants was 60%, and 17% held a leadership position.

### Measures

All measures were administered in German. Where pre-existing scales in German were not available, we used the translation-back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) to ensure that the administered scales were reliable and valid. If not stated otherwise, items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *A great deal*).

At noon, we measured the focal employees' *perspective taking* with four items from the German version (Koller & Lamm, 2015) of the brief version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Ingoglia et al., 2016). All items referred to the respective coworker, who also took part in the study as part of the dyad. An example is: "In the last few hours, I tried to take the perspective of my colleague."

At the end of the workday, we measured the following variables. First, *received coworker support* was measured by asking the respective coworker who also took part in the study to assess the support received from the focal employee with eight items from a scale developed by Tews et al. (2013). An example is: "I received help from my colleague in solving a work-related problem". Second, we measured the focal employees' *self-regulatory resource depletion* with a scale developed by Bertrams et al. (2011) with a 5-point rating format (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). The scale measures feelings of diminished regulatory resource availability. An example is: "Right now, I feel like my willpower is gone."

In the evening, at the end of the day, both the focal employee and their respective coworker assessed *subjective vitality* as an indicator of well-being with four items of a shortened version (Rivkin et al., 2018) of the subjective vitality scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). An example is: "Right now, I feel alive and vital."

### **Analytic Strategy**

We used multilevel structural equation modeling to examine our hypotheses. Although there are other ways to analyze dyadic data (see Kenny et al., 2006), using multilevel modeling is appropriate here because coworker dyads are indistinguishable (i.e., the proposed relations are expected to manifest for both the focal employee and their coworker; Kenny et al., 2006; Kenny & Kashy, 2011). To account for the hierarchical dependence of our data, we modeled the relationship in a three-level model where Level 1 represents the day-, Level 2 the person- and Level 3 the dyadic level. As our model focuses on indistinguishable coworker dyads specifying our model as a three-level model accounted for the potential interdependence of the dyadic coworker relationship.

All models were specified with the software Mplus 8.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1997-2017) using Maximum Likelihood estimation with robust standard errors and Monte Carlo integration (J. Wang & Wang, 2019). Before testing the hypotheses, we conducted multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (MCFAs) to assess the psychometric distinctiveness of our day-level measures. The goodness of fit was assessed based on recommended cut-offs by Hu and Bentler (1999) of the following fit indices: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < .08, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > .90, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < .06. We examined the difference in model fit with the Satorra-Bentler (S-B) scaled  $\chi^2$  difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2001).

We tested the proposed hypotheses by specifying a dual pathway mediation model with fixed slopes as our theoretical model did not consider any cross-level moderators across all (three) levels of analysis as recommended by Preacher et al (2010). When the same relationship in a multilevel model is specified across multiple levels of analysis Mplus applies latent mean centering at higher levels of analysis, which compared to manifest group mean centering uses the respective latent mean for centering the variable and thereby

removing higher-level variance (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2019). Asparouhov and Muthén (2019) suggest that in cases with lower cluster sizes and missing data latent mean centering yields more accurate effect estimates as compared to manifest group mean centering.

Accordingly, while our sample size is sufficiently large to permit the use of both manifest and latent mean centering taking the missing data into account as our response rate was 59% at the day level, we decided to use the latent mean centering approach by specifying all relationships across all levels of analysis.

To examine the proposed beneficial effects of perspective taking for the focal employee's coworker, we first specified direct paths linking the focal employee's perspective taking to coworker received support in the afternoon. Moreover, we specified paths that link perspective taking and received support assessed by the coworker to predict the coworkers' subjective vitality. To examine the costs of perspective taking for the focal employee, we specified the focal employee's perspective taking to predict self-regulatory resource depletion. Furthermore, perspective taking, and self-regulatory resource depletion were linked to the focal employee's subjective vitality in the evening after work.

In our analyses, we controlled for previous day effects for all endogenous variables such as coworker received support, coworker subjective vitality, focal employee self-regulatory resource depletion, and focal employee subjective vitality (Gabriel et al., 2019)<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, we controlled for self-regulatory resource depletion when predicting coworker subjective vitality and for coworker received support when predicting subjective vitality of the focal employee. We applied manifest group-mean centering to all control variables, which allowed us to focus on within-person relations for these variables while simultaneously reducing the complexity of our specified model (Enders & Tofighi, 2007; Ohly et al., 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> Controlling for previous-day levels of each endogenous variable as well as for cyclical trends in the data by adding the study day its sine and cosine did not affect the results.



Because the conventional bootstrapping method of re-sampling cannot be applied to multilevel modeling (Leeden et al., 2008; Preacher & Selig, 2012), we utilized a Monte Carlo approach of re-sampling to estimate the confidence intervals for the 1-1-1-1 mediation model (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Specifically, we computed bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects based on 20,000 re-samples using the software provided by Selig and Preacher (2008). The presence of an indirect effect is indicated if the confidence interval of the indirect effect does not include zero (Preacher et al., 2007).

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

To assess the factor structure of our study variables we conducted MCFAs and examined a 5-factor model in which each variable is represented by one factor (i.e., perspective taking, received coworker support, self-regulatory resource depletion, focal employees' subjective vitality, and coworker's subjective vitality). This model yielded a satisfactory fit ( $\chi^2 [265] = 2,013.20$ ; RMSEA = .03; CFI = .90; SRMR<sub>within</sub> = .04). Furthermore, to support the distinction of self-regulatory resource depletion and subjective vitality reported by the focal employee, we specified these variables as a single factor (4-factor model:  $\chi^2 [269] = 5,301.71$ ; RMSEA = .09; CFI = .71; SRMR<sub>within</sub> = .09), which also resulted in a reduced fit compared to our original model (S-B scaled  $\chi^2 \Delta (4) = (1,439.74)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, we specified an alternative model to examine the distinctiveness of subjective vitality reported by the focal employee and subjective vitality reported by their coworker (4-factor model:  $\chi^2 [269] = 5,475.14$ ; RMSEA = .10; CFI = .70; SRMR<sub>within</sub> = .10), which performed worse than our hypothesized model (S-B scaled  $\chi^2 \Delta (6) = (1,490.89)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Together these results underpin the distinctiveness of the five core measures used to test our hypotheses.

### Hypotheses testing

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations of the measures used in this

study, including the within-person reliabilities. First, as indicated by the intra class correlation coefficients (see Table 1), the variance of all variables across levels of analysis was sufficiently high to justify the application of multilevel modeling across three levels. Table 2 shows the results of our multilevel structure equation model.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the perspective taking of the focal employee is positively related to coworker received support across the workday. This hypothesis is supported as there is a positive relationship between the focal employees' perspective taking and received coworker support ( $\gamma = .11, p < .001$ ). Furthermore, our data also lend support for Hypothesis 2, which suggests that coworker received support is positively related to the coworker's subjective vitality at the end of the day ( $\gamma = .06, p = .029$ ). Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 proposes that coworker received support mediates the relationship between the focal employees' perspective taking at work and the coworkers' subjective vitality at the end of the day. This hypothesis is also supported as the indirect effect of perspective taking on coworker subjective vitality via received coworker support did not include zero ( $\gamma = .01, p = .028$ ; 95% CI [.0006, .0143]).

Hypothesis 4 proposes that perspective taking is positively related to the focal employees' self-regulatory resources depletion across the workday. This hypothesis is supported by the positive relationship between these two variables ( $\gamma = .03, p = .039$ ). In addition, Hypothesis 5, which suggests a negative relationship between the focal employees' self-regulatory resource depletion and their subjective vitality at the end of the day was supported ( $\gamma = -.22, p < .001$ ). Finally, Hypothesis 6 suggests an indirect effect of perspective taking at work on the focal employees' subjective vitality at the end of the day via the focal employees' self-regulatory resources depletion. This hypothesis was supported as the corresponding indirect effect did not include zero ( $\gamma = -.007, p = .039$ ; 95% CI [-.0155, -.0004]).

## Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the consequences of perspective taking for oneself and for the coworker. Based on self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), we examined whether and through which mechanisms perspective taking at work is linked to coworker and employee well-being at the end of the day. The results of our dyadic experience sampling study support our propositions that perspective taking is beneficial for the well-being of the coworker and detrimental for the well-being of the perspective taker. Specifically, perspective taking was indirectly and positively linked to coworker well-being through the mechanism of higher received support from the focal employee. However, perspective taking was also indirectly and negatively linked to the focal employee's well-being through the focal employee's self-regulatory resource depletion. The findings thus indicate a beneficial other-oriented resource process and a costly self-oriented resource process of self-regulation.

### Theoretical Implications

Our research offers novel insights contributing to the perspective taking and well-being literatures. First, we extend the nomological net of perspective taking by disentangling the effects of perspective taking on the well-being of the focal employee and their coworker using a dyadic perspective. Specifically, by showing the benefits of perspective taking for coworker well-being, we add to previous research on the positive outcomes of perspective taking, including coworker support (Fasbender et al., 2020), cooperation (Caruana et al., 2021; Galinsky et al., 2008), knowledge exchange (Gerpott et al., 2020) and problem-solving (Grant & Berry, 2011). In fact, we not only add to this literature but also challenge the mainly positive view on perspective taking by demonstrating its costs for the focal employee. In this regard, our findings connect to previous research from Lin et al. (2021), who found that emphatic concern (i.e., the affective component of trying to understand the experiences of

others; Longmire & Harrison, 2018) drains personal resources, which is also in line with previous research showing negative consequences for oneself when helping others (Gabriel et al., 2018; Koopman et al., 2016; Lanaj et al., 2014). Knowing the costs for oneself that come with the benefits of perspective taking for others helps to put perspective taking into perspective. That is, although perspective taking constitutes a useful strategy for navigating social interactions, the costs for the self should not be neglected.

Accordingly, it must be ensured that the focal employee has enough time to recover replenished self-regulatory resources during or after the workday. This is especially important as research has shown that low self-regulatory resource availability at the end of the day can spill over to impaired next-day work engagement, even when sleep quality is controlled for (Rivkin et al., 2022). More broadly, the findings could sensitize scholars to include the potential costs of prosocial behaviors toward others in their conceptual models and explore potential protecting factors. For example, the leadership literature often asks leaders to be respectful, servant, or considerate toward their employees, but this may also come with well-being-related costs for the leaders if they are not used to the daily effort of taking their employee's perspective (Liao et al., 2021).

Second, by examining the daily fluctuations of perspective taking at work and uncovering the mechanisms through which it is linked to both coworker and employee well-being at the end of the day, we provide a more fine-grained understanding of its consequences. On the one hand, by taking an other-oriented resource process, we showed that daily perspective taking is linked to coworker well-being through the coworker's received support. In this regard, we connect research on other-oriented processes linked to perspective taking (Cialdini et al., 1997; Goldstein et al., 2014; Maner et al., 2002) with research on other-oriented processes related to prosocial attitudes and behavior, such as motivation to cooperate (Fasbender & Drury, 2022) and helping (Farmer et al., 2015), and research on

prosocial behavior and well-being (Baethge et al., 2020; Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Simbula, 2010).

On the other hand, by taking a self-oriented resource process, we demonstrate that perspective taking is linked to the focal employee's well-being through self-regulatory resource depletion. In this regard, we acknowledge the demanding and effortful nature of perspective taking on a day-to-day basis (Alicke & Largo, 1995; Epley et al., 2004; Fenigstein & Abrams, 1993; Fennis, 2011) and link it to research on self-regulatory resource depletion and employee well-being (Gombert et al., 2020; Rivkin et al., 2021). By studying perspective taking as a daily fluctuating phenomenon, we extend previous research that has studied perspective taking in more static ways and with larger time lags (e.g., Fasbender et al., 2020; Gerpott et al., 2020; Huo et al., 2019) and contribute to the time-sensitive micro-processes following perspective taking as a momentary state of mind (Lee & Madera, 2021; Sabey et al., 2021; Sawyer et al., 2022; see also Mitchell & James, 2001; Sonnentag, 2012).

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Notwithstanding the contributions of our study, some limitations must be discussed and could inform future research on the link between perspective taking and the well-being of the focal employee and their coworker. First, the correlational nature of our study does not permit causal conclusions. Even though we separated the measurement of study variables in time and collected assessments from the focal employee and their respective coworker across the workday, and last but not least controlled for previous day endogenous variables when examining the proposed relations (Gabriel et al., 2019), we cannot rule out that the proposed relations may have been affected by third variables or reverse causality (Antonakis et al., 2010). Accordingly, future studies could conduct laboratory or field experiments to establish the causal nature of the proposed relationships (see for example Song et al., 2018 for a within-person field experiment).

Second, even though our study integrates data from the focal employee and their dedicated coworker, our assessment of self-regulatory resources and well-being as reflected by subjective vitality relies on self-reports. Thus, our results may partly be subject to common-method variance. However, this issue is further alleviated by the separation of measures in our data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nevertheless, future studies could obtain objective measures of self-regulatory resources using cognitive (i.e., Stroop-Test; Gino et al., 2011) or physiological (i.e., heart rate variability; Zahn et al., 2016) assessments. Furthermore, considering the prevalence of increasing activity trackers (Nelson et al., 2016), it is also relevant to explore objective indicators of well-being such as individuals' heart rate or skin conductance (de Looff et al., 2019).

Third, the relations proposed in our study may be subject to heterogeneity, that is, a considerable variability depending on between-person characteristics. Accordingly, our micro-level study on daily perspective taking in coworker dyads paves the way for future studies to explore between-person characteristics (e.g., prosocial motivation; Škerlavaj et al., 2018) and potentially dyadic aspects (e.g., contact quality or friendship; Fasbender et al., 2023) that shape the detected relations between perspective taking and the focal employee's and coworker's well-being. Such research would further expand our understanding of the boundary conditions that can alleviate the costs and extend the benefits of perspective taking.

Fourth, our study has mainly focused on hedonic aspects of well-being (i.e., subjective vitality). However, investigating eudemonic aspects of well-being, such as the experienced meaningfulness may be another focus of interest (cf. Sonnentag et al., 2023). Meta-analytical evidence shows that meaningful work has been linked to many positive outcomes, such as work engagement, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction (Allan et al., 2019). What constitutes meaning in one's work is an individual process and helping others can be experienced as inherently meaningful (Allan et al., 2019). Meaningful work may well be

a moderator to the perspective taking and hedonic well-being link, as previous research has demonstrated its buffering role on the negative effects of work stress (Allan et al., 2016).

Taking this forward, finding meaning in one's work by taking one's coworker's perspective could help to overcome the detrimental consequences on one's subjective vitality due to potentially buffered self-regulatory resource depletion.

Moreover, it is relevant to discuss an unexpected finding: Besides our hypothesized relationships one interesting result of our analyses is that perspective taking was negatively related to coworker subjective vitality after accounting for the benefits of perspective taking for the coworker through received support. An explanation for this relationship may be that perspective taking is more likely to occur at work when one's coworker encounters increased work demands or challenging situational requirements, to which taking the perspective of the focal employee refers (Song et al., 2018). Accordingly, these additional demands may explain the negative effects of perspective taking on the coworker's subjective vitality. Thus, future research may further delve into the question of whether the negative relationship between perspective taking and coworker well-being reflects omitted variable bias (i.e., the results of an excluded variable such as work demands being attributed to perspective taking as the included variable in our model; Wilms et al., 2021) or whether there are other mechanisms that can explain the focal relationship.

Finally, future research could explore whether the costs of perspective taking not only occur within a workday but may also spill over to the next workday, and what could be done to prevent this. Specifically, research has demonstrated that self-regulatory resource depletion impairs recovery experiences such as psychological detachment from work (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018; Gombert et al., 2020) and that low self-regulatory resources at the end of the day negatively impact next-day work engagement even when controlling for sleep quality (Rivkin et al., 2022). Individual traits, such as high self-control capacity, may protect employees against

such adverse effects (Diestel et al., 2015). Still, considering that such dispositional variables are difficult to change, it may instead be worth exploring some more malleable protecting factors (e.g., willpower beliefs, Konze et al., 2019; Rivkin et al., 2023; and positive emotions, Schweitzer et al., 2022).

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of our research provide germane implications for practice and can be well integrated with extant findings in occupational health psychology. While perspective taking comes with benefits for coworkers, it is relevant to raise awareness of the potential costs of perspective taking for the focal employee. Importantly, this is not to say that individuals should engage in less perspective taking at work. Instead, our findings offer an important implication by highlighting the self-regulatory resources that need to be invested for the perspective taker, which entails a risk for their well-being. Specifically, we suggest employees to refill and therewith counteract the negative effects of self-regulatory resource depletion by engaging in active recovery (Sonnentag et al., 2022). To support employees' recovery, organizations can for example encourage employees to incorporate micro-breaks into their workday (Bennett et al., 2020; Trougakos et al., 2008) or support employees in detaching from work (Gombert et al., 2018) by asking them to engage in boundary management activities that allow them to actively draw a line between their workday and their leisure time activities.



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**Table 1***Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistencies (Omega within), and Intercorrelations*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perspective taking - Noon (Self)	.94	0.05	<b>0.13</b>	0.03	<b>-0.06</b>		
2. Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self)	-0.01	.90	0.04	<b>-0.21</b>	-0.00		
3. Received support - Afternoon (Coworker)	<b>0.23</b>	0.11	.86	-0.01	0.05		
4. Subjective vitality - Evening (Self)	0.06	<b>-0.57</b>	-0.02	.90	<b>0.06</b>		
5. Subjective vitality - Evening (Coworker)	-0.06	-0.14	0.02	-0.04	.90		
6 Age	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.17</b>	<b>-0.21</b>	0.10	0.10	-	
7 Gender	-0.11	<b>-0.16</b>	<b>-0.19</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.25</b>	0.07	-
<i>M</i>	2.55	2.23	2.63	3.26	3.26	41.44	1.40
<i>SD</i>	0.89	0.78	0.98	0.75	0.75	17.21	0.49
<i>ICC - Individual level</i>	0.30	0.37	0.34	0.46	0.46		
<i>ICC - Dyad level</i>	0.12	0.16	0.25	0.03	0.03		

*Note.* Omega within values ( $\omega^w$ ) for within-person reliability were computed in line with recommendations from Lai and Lai (2020) and are presented in the diagonal. Correlations below the diagonal are person-level correlations ( $N = 178 - 254$ ). Correlations above the diagonal are day-level correlations ( $N = 1,048 - 1,725$ ). Numbers in bold are significant ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 2**  
*Unstandardized Coefficients from the Multilevel Structure Equation Modelling and Indirect Effects.*

	Received support - Afternoon (Coworker)			Subjective vitality - Evening (Coworker)			Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self)			Subjective vitality - Evening (Self)						
	Estimate	SE	z	Estimate	SE	z	Estimate	SE	z	Estimate	SE	z				
<b>Dyad-level</b>																
Intercept	-0.390	0.358	-1.087	5.384	0.246	21.924	**	1.897	0.347	5.467	**	5.396	0.213	25.302	**	
Perspective taking - Noon (Self)	1.189	0.135	8.775	**	0.081	0.172	0.468	0.133	0.138	0.969		0.122	0.151	0.809		
Received support - Afternoon (Coworker)				0.044	0.052	0.845										
Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self)												-1.099	0.106	-10.409	**	
Residual variance	0.004	0.152	0.029	0.050	0.305	0.165		0.196	0.068	2.890	**	0.050	0.181	0.277		
<b>Person-level</b>																
Perspective taking - Noon (Self)	-0.548	0.117	-4.661	**	-0.074	0.077	-0.968	-0.157	0.100	-1.575		0.068	0.080	0.851		
Received support - Afternoon (Coworker)				-0.006	0.024	-0.267										
Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self)												-0.334	0.078	-4.266	**	
Residual variance	0.272	0.069	3.925	**	0.181	0.019	9.543	**	0.312	0.062	5.036	**	0.181	0.020	9.052	**
<b>Day-level</b>																
Received support - Afternoon (Coworker) - t-1	0.041	0.048	0.855													
Subjective vitality - Evening (Coworker) - t-1				-0.142	0.042	-3.418	**									
Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self) - t-1								-0.002	0.049	-0.032						
Subjective vitality - Evening (Self) - t-1												-0.151	0.041	-3.693	**	
Perspective taking - Noon (Self)	0.113	0.028	4.035	**	-0.053	0.023	-2.354	*	0.034	0.016	2.061	*	0.030	0.025	1.234	
Received support - Afternoon (Coworker)				0.058	0.026	2.177	*					-0.017	0.022	-0.748		
Regulatory resource depletion - Afternoon (Self)				0.001	0.031	0.027						-0.218	0.035	-6.160	**	
Residual variance	0.559	0.042	13.430	**	0.490	0.028	17.652	**	0.456	0.033	13.855	**	0.471	0.028	16.539	**
<b>Indirect effects</b>																
<b>Outcome:</b>				<b>Estimate (SE)</b>			<b>p</b>	<b>95% CI indirect effect:</b>								
								<b>LL 95% CI</b>		<b>UL 95% CI</b>						
Subjective vitality - Evening (Coworker)				.007 (.004)			.028	<b>0.0006</b>		<b>0.0143</b>						
Subjective vitality - Evening (Self)				-.007 (.004)			.039	<b>-0.0155</b>		<b>-0.0004</b>						

*Note.* Estimates are unstandardized, resulting from one overall analysis including the prediction of all outcomes in one model. 95% CIs that do not include zero in bold. Controlling for previous-day levels of each endogenous variable as well as for cyclical trends in the data by adding the study day its sine and cosine did not affect the results.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual model of the dynamics of perspective taking on self and other well-being*

