Nurturing a Positive Organizational Culture for Better Mental Wellness

By Orlana Bourgoin, Med., RSSW
Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner

Dear KHSC Staff,

In the demanding world of healthcare, where you work tirelessly to provide the best care for patients, it's easy to forget that your own mental wellness matters too. In fact, your mental well-being is not just a personal matter; it's deeply intertwined with the culture of our organization. Today, we're going to explore how the culture at Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC) impacts your psychological health and why fostering positivity is essential for staff well-being.

Understanding Organizational Culture:

Let's start by breaking down what organizational culture really means. It's the collective set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours shared by everyone in an organization At KHSC, it's all about how we work together, communicate, and support one another. This culture isn't just something abstract; it plays a significant role in your mental wellness. The organizational culture can be one of the strongest assets or biggest liabilities (Organizational Behaviour, 2017).

Positive Culture, Positive Mental Wellness:

Why is a positive organizational culture important for your mental wellness? The answer is simple: it sets the tone for your work environment. When an organization like KHSC promotes a culture of positivity, it directly benefits you, the staff, in several ways:

1. **Reduced Stress:** A positive culture helps reduce workplace stress. When you feel supported, appreciated, and part of a team, the day-to-day challenges become more manageable. These are key factors that enable us to manage our stress and help mitigate our dip into distress. The Yerkes-Dodson Human Performance and Stress Curve, developed by researchers Robert Yerkes and John Dillingham Dobson, discovered the relationship between stress and performance-that is, we require stress to perform well and feel energized, however when stress levels increase too much, our performance decreases, and when there is a lack of stress in general, we are unmotivated (Teigen, 1994).

2. **Increased Resilience**: Positivity helps foster resilience. Now let's be clear, resilience is a skill, it is about what we do before, during and after an experience that builds our capacity and resolve – it's essentially our ability to "bounce back". Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe's approach is termed "Everyday Resiliency™" because it highlights the significance of daily choices in preparing one for remarkable achievements. With continuous hard work, this idea turns into a useful tool that works well with our natural human instinct for safety and stability. Every person has the potential to be strong and resilient, and it's not something you're born with, but a skill you can learn and improve. Resilience resides within everyone; it merely requires acknowledgment and nurturing. In the process of enhancing one's resilience, certain fundamental factors play a vital role in enabling individuals to recover from challenges and thrive. In healthcare, you face many tough situations, and a positive culture can help you bounce back from them more effectively. It's easier to face difficult situations with a positive team atmosphere where we feel supported, are kind to one another, and meet challenges with a dash of humour (de la Fuente et al., 2021).

3. **Better Mental Health:** Numerous research studies highlight how positive emotions can serve as a protective shield, helping us cope with and mitigate negative emotions in times of stress or trauma. A culture that prioritizes mental health and wellness encourages staff to seek help when needed, making it easier to manage

any mental health concerns. To learn more about how happiness can impact mental health, check out this informative video series by LifeSpeak, click here.

4. **Improved Job Satisfaction**: When you're happy with your work environment, you're more likely to be satisfied with your job. This can boost your overall life satisfaction and mental wellness.
5. **Enhanced Teamwork**: Positivity promotes teamwork and collaboration. A supportive culture allows you to lean on your colleagues when you need help, and this, in turn, can reduce feelings of isolation and burnout.
6. **Better Patient Care**: Happy, motivated, and mentally healthy staff provide better care to patients. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

To learn more about the science of happiness and positivity, check out the Science of Happiness series by LifeSpeak.

"TRY TO BE A RAINBOW IN SOMEONE ELSE'S CLOUD." — MAYA ANGELOU

Our Role in Fostering Positivity:

As healthcare staff, you're not just the beneficiaries of a positive culture; you're also the creators of it. Your attitudes, behaviours, and interactions with your colleagues contribute to the overall culture at KHSC. Here are some practical ways we can all contribute to making our organizational culture a more positive one:

1. **Support One Another**: Be there for your colleagues, offer help, and be kind in your interactions. A supportive workplace starts with each one of us. Research shows that social support at work is linked to increased job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and improved overall mental health among healthcare professionals (Milliken et al. 2016). When staff offer help and kindness to their peers, it not only enhances the well-being of colleagues but also fosters a more cooperative and harmonious work environment.
2. **Open Communication**: Encourage open and honest communication. Sharing your thoughts and concerns helps foster an environment where everyone's voice is valued. Effective communication is at the core of patient safety and quality care. Research by Lee et al. (2020) demonstrates that transparent communication not only fosters trust but leads to better decision-making and problem-solving within healthcare teams. Creating an environment where staff feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns enhances patient safety and staff satisfaction.
3. **Celebrate Achievements**: Acknowledge the hard work and accomplishments of your colleagues. Small gestures of appreciation can go a long way in boosting morale. Employee recognition has been associated with increased job satisfaction and motivation. According to a study by Bakker et al. (2017), positive feedback and recognition of accomplishments contribute to higher engagement and well-being among healthcare professionals. By celebrating colleagues' accomplishments, staff contribute to a more positive atmosphere and motivated workforce.
4. **Mental Health Awareness**: Promote mental health awareness and destigmatize seeking help when needed. We're all in this together, and it's okay to ask for support. Mental health awareness and support are critical for healthcare professionals who often face high levels of stress and burnout. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a supportive work environment can significantly reduce stress and prevent mental health issues. Research by Moll et al. (2018) highlights the importance of addressing the mental well-being of healthcare workers to prevent burnout and improve patient care. Destigmatizing seeking help when needed and promoting self-care contributes to a culture that prioritizes staff well-being.
5. **Self-Care**: Don't forget to take care of yourself. Prioritize your mental wellness, and lead by example for your colleagues. A study by West et al. (2014) suggests that self-care practices, such as exercise, mindfulness, and work-life balance, can reduce burnout and improve job satisfaction among healthcare professionals, ultimately contributing to a more positive organizational culture. Prioritizing mental wellness, practicing self-care, and seeking support when necessary not only benefits individuals but also sets a positive example for colleagues. This can help reduce the stigma around seeking help and reinforce the message that it's okay to ask for support when facing challenges.

At KHSC, we believe that a positive organizational culture is not just a nice-to-have, it's a necessity. It directly impacts your psychological health and safety and, by extension, the quality of care we provide to our patients. Together, let's nurture a culture of positivity, kindness, and support because it really does make a difference. .

To continue to support a positive work environment, I would like to invite you to share your success stories, personal journeys, or give a shout out to someone or something positive at KHSC. Whether it's a co-worker's supportive gesture, a kind stranger at Tim Horton's, or an initiative that brightened the day for staff and patients, let's spread the good vibes. Share your stories by clicking here.

Get ready for daily boosts of mental wellness inspiration with Actions for Happiness, weekly shout outs to your fellow colleagues, uplifting quotes, and thought-provoking discussions to kick-start your day with positivity and energy! Let's celebrate every achievement, big or small, and remember, it's often the smallest things that make the biggest impact. Look for daily inspiration on the KHSC Now Staff Central and be sure to check out more content on Mindful Moments.

Now, I'm excited to share two important questions with you to spark your curiosity and encourage your active participation. I'm genuinely eager to hear your thoughts and insights. Please take a moment to respond to these questions by clicking on this link:

1. How does the organizational culture at KHSC influence our daily well-being and contribute to our overall mental wellness?
2. In what ways can fostering positivity within our organization positively impact our mental wellness and help create a more supportive and nurturing work environment at KHSC?

Stay well, stay positive, and continue making a difference in the lives of our colleagues and our patients.

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