

# Unwrapping the gift of open communication: Illuminating the path to psychological health and safety in healthcare

By Orana Bourgoin, Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner

Dear KHSC Staff,

'Tis the season of December, and the festive holiday spirit is in the air, with decorations carefully adorning spaces radiating warmth and joy.

As we delve into the crucial realm of Psychological Health and Safety (PHS), let's shine a light on the pivotal role of clear leadership and expectations, especially in healthcare. Picture these elements as the guiding stars that illuminate the path toward a KHSC where well-being thrives, akin to the glow of holiday lights.

*George Bernard Shaw once said,*

***“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”***

How true this is, and in the world of healthcare, clear leadership acts as a guiding star for dedicated staff.

## Staff's festive role in promoting psychological health and safety

Staff are the heart of KHSC and play an essential role in shaping a workplace brimming with the warmth of clear guidance and expectations.

### **1. Harmonizing Through Effective Communication:**

As we gather to share stories and laughter during the holidays, our staff actively contributes to an atmosphere of open communication. Voicing concerns and providing feedback creates an environment where every voice is heard, much like carolers singing in harmony. During this festive season, leaders play a crucial role in fostering a workplace where communication flows effortlessly, just like the exchange of festive greetings. Staff should feel at ease discussing concerns, cultivating an environment where challenges are met with unwavering support and understanding.

### **2. Lighting Up the Workplace:**

Taking ownership and embracing empowerment is akin to a personal holiday celebration. Staff engaging in decision-making processes and contributing to goals enhances not only their well-being but also contributes to a culture of resilience and self-efficacy, reminiscent of the strength found in unity during the holidays. Clear leadership, like the empowering essence of the holiday spirit,



serves as a gift that empowers teams to take ownership, make decisions, and contribute to organizational policies. This not only boosts morale but also provides a respite from stress and burnout, akin to the rejuvenating effect of the holiday season.

**3. Exchanging Gifts of Appreciation:**

Support and recognition are the ornaments that decorate the workplace tree. Staff supporting each other and acknowledging efforts create a positive work environment, fostering mutual respect and recognition, much like the camaraderie shared during the festive season. Leaders who actively support and acknowledge their staff sprinkle a touch of holiday magic throughout the workplace. Recognizing staff efforts goes beyond mere acknowledgment; it contributes to enhancing their psychological well-being, reminiscent of the joy experienced when receiving heartfelt recognition during the festive season.

**4. Tying Ribbons of Improvement:**

Feedback, like the exchange of gifts, is a two-way street. Actively seeking and providing constructive feedback contributes to the development of clear expectations. This culture helps align expectations with workplace realities, reducing stress and promoting psychological safety, just as thoughtful feedback fosters understanding.

**5. Spreading the Joy of Well-being:**

Psychological safety, like the warmth of holiday gatherings, is the foundation of a healthy work environment. Staff members championing psychological safety create a nurturing space where everyone can thrive, reminiscent of the support shared during the holidays.

**6. Sparkling Lights of Inspiration:**

Active engagement and innovative thinking, like the excitement of holiday celebrations, stem from a psychologically secure and motivated workplace. Staff members contributing unique perspectives create a vibrant workplace culture, much like the diversity of ideas that enrich our holiday gatherings.

## Unwrapping the Roadmap to Success

As we embark on the journey toward success for KHSC staff during this season of clarity and joy, let's envision clear expectations as beautifully wrapped gifts under the tree, leaving no room for ambiguity. It is vital that KHSC staff is fully aware of what is expected of them, creating a stress-free environment and minimizing misunderstandings—just as clear expectations eliminate confusion.

Setting achievable goals is likened to setting a joyous table during the holidays. Leaders collaborating with their teams to establish realistic goals not only provide motivation but also instill a sense of accomplishment, acting as a safeguard against burnout that may accompany unrealistic expectations.

Much like the comforting melody of a carol, constructive feedback is a continual gift that nurtures growth. KHSC staff requires regular, honest feedback to navigate their progress and identify areas for improvement—similar to the constructive feedback we offer during the season of growth and reflection.

As the Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, my focus is on collaborating with individuals, teams, and leaders to navigate the challenges affecting Psychological Health & Safety. Your thoughts and input are as cherished as holiday memories. Feel free to reach out and share your thoughts, as together, we embark on a journey to cultivate resilience, champion each other's mental well-being, and foster a workplace culture as warm and inviting as the holiday season.

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 here](#) or scan the QR Code below to join our collective effort:

1. How does having clear guidance and knowing exactly what's expected of you affect your everyday work and how you feel in your job right now?
2. Can you think about a time when talking openly and honestly with someone really changed things at work or in your personal life? How did it make you feel, and what can you learn from that to make your work life better or create a happier work environment?



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](#).

May your days be merry and bright, and may your workplace be filled with the joy of clear leadership, expectations, and psychological well-being!

References:

Canada, E. and S. D. (2023, June 27). *Government of Canada*. Canada.ca.  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/psychological-health.html>

*Mental health moment: Communicate for wellness*. MGH Foundation. (n.d.).  
<https://www.mghf.ca/your-impact/mental-health-moment-communicate-wellness>

Sussex Publishers. (n.d.). *The integral role of communication in workplace wellness*.  
Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/navigating-mental-health-through-a-communication-lens/202212/the-integral-role-of>