

# Psychological Safety in Mental Health Organisations

## Actions for leaders and organisations



### What is psychological safety?

Psychological safety is the shared understanding that it's okay to speak up and take interpersonal risks, such as questioning decisions, suggesting new ideas, or expressing concerns, without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.

It is the absence of harm or threat to a person's mental health and wellbeing.

### Why is psychological safety important?

Feeling unsafe to question decisions or speak up can result in mistakes that could have been prevented, lost opportunities, and a barrier to implement innovative ideas.

Psychological safety is essential to ensuring a workplace culture that is healthy, productive

and innovative, and where staff feel valued, empowered and supported, ultimately leading to better service delivery outcomes and overall organisational success.

### How should psychological safety be considered in mental health settings?

In mental health organisations, psychological safety is crucial for **effective service delivery** underpinned by **recovery-oriented, trauma informed principles and practice approaches**, which fosters a collaborative and supportive environment where both staff and people accessing services can thrive.

“ If you don't feel safe and empowered at work, how can people accessing your services feel safe and empowered? ”

## Creating a safe environment to foster open communication —○

### Actions for leaders

- 1 Encourage discussion about tough issues, acknowledging mistakes, seeking support, and trusting each team member's value.
- 2 Lead by example in raising problems and addressing issues constructively, use timely "lessons learned" sessions following challenging incidents.
- 3 Implement anonymous feedback channels.
- 4 Recognise and celebrate thoughtful risk-taking and unique skills and talents of each team member.
- 5 Ensure realistic workloads and updated position descriptions.
- 6 Conduct regular practice supervision and wellbeing check-ins.
- 7 Involve staff in decision-making.
- 8 Support professional development aspirations and provide skills-building opportunities.

### Actions for organisations

- 1 Educate leaders about fostering psychological safety.
- 2 Examine and reduce unnecessary hierarchies or barriers to open communication.
- 3 Provide organisation-wide recognition of unique skills and talents.
- 4 Emphasise a zero-tolerance policy for undermining or intimidating behaviours.
- 5 Encourage breaks and leave entitlements.

- 6 Ensure policies, procedures, and resources are available to support staff working in potentially dangerous or traumatic environments.
- 7 Support staff to participate in programs or initiatives that enhance coping strategies, stress management, self-awareness, effective communication skills and resilience.
- 8 Ensure all staff are aware of external mental health support services to support their wellbeing.

### Considerations for workers with lived experience

The actions listed are even more pertinent for workers with lived experience.

Additional considerations may be:

- Discussions with the worker on their preferences and needs if they become unwell in the workplace
- Reasonable adjustments to reduce mental health impacts on their work capacity
- Understanding workers may have sensory experiences that may or may not impact their work capacity

It is also important to be aware of both spoken and **unspoken** lived experience within the work environment.

## Additional resources

**MindSpot** [mindspot.org.au](http://mindspot.org.au)

### Mental Health at Work - Legal Obligations and Rights

[nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/  
legal-obligations-and-rights](http://nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/legal-obligations-and-rights)

### Safe Work NSW | Safety complaints

[safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/  
consultation-at-work/safety-complaints2](http://safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/consultation-at-work/safety-complaints2)

### Rural or remote mental health

[healthdirect.gov.au/rural-remote-mental-health](http://healthdirect.gov.au/rural-remote-mental-health)

## Support services

**Lifeline** 13 11 14

**Beyond Blue** 1300 22 4636

**MensLine Australia** 1300 78 99 78

**QLife** 1800 184 527

**Suicide Call Back Service** 1300 659 467

**NSW Mental Health Line** 1800 011 511

Your workplace may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for free and confidential counselling



See our guide on actions for all workers