

Feeling safe at work

In addition to being physically safe at work, it is vital to feel safe as well. We must be able to do the following without fear of discrimination, consequences or retaliation:

- Report a workplace hazard
- Make an error
- Report unsafe behaviors
- Share we are experiencing mental distress
- Report unresolved conflict, bullying, harassment or illegal discrimination
- Share a point of view that dissents from the “norm” or is considered controversial

If we can't do these things at work, we may feel unsafe. Feeling unsafe at work is stressful, and can impact your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Recognize Signs of Stress

It is important to know and recognize the signs of stress in yourself and in others. Though everyone experiences stress differently, common signs include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics
- Becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis
- Arguing more with coworkers
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

It is also important to try and support colleagues who are experiencing a difficult time, though it is not your responsibility to diagnose or put yourself in a situation where you feel unsafe. Take some time to learn about relevant workplace policies and programs and how to access them, such as an Employee Assistance Program.



Understand Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

One imperative component of psychological safety is related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

- Diversity is the presence of differences within a given setting. At work, this can mean differences in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and socioeconomic class.
- Equity is the process of ensuring processes and programs are impartial, fair and provide equal possible outcomes for every individual. It is about deconstructing the systems that do not treat people the way they should and would want to be treated.
- Inclusion is the practice of ensuring people feel a sense of belonging in the workplace. This means every employee feels comfortable and supported by the organization when it comes to being their authentic selves.

You can support DEI in the workplace by:

- Recognizing, understanding and combating microaggressions – indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. “Micro,” as referred here, involves personal interactions.
- Learning and understanding your workplace policies, programs and processes related to discrimination and harassment, including racial discrimination.
- Understanding how to help colleagues access these services if needed, and offer support if possible.
- Familiarizing yourself with both individuals and systems (inside and outside the organization) that can support you or others who may be facing challenges relative to their differences.

When we follow these types of tips, we can foster a safety culture that makes it more enjoyable to work together each day.