



Co-Lead

ABOUT THIS MODULE



**DEVELOPING A POSITIVE
WORK ENVIRONMENT**



DEVELOPING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

What is the goal of this module?

This module will enable teams to discuss possible steps to create a more positive environment where members feel more engaged and valued. The goal is to agree on three key initiatives to implement, and concrete actions to make them happen, so that team members sense of meaning and fulfilment in work can be improved.

What is the collective leadership focus of this module?

- **Shared mental models and shared understanding**
- **Engagement of all team members**
- **Recognising and valuing contribution of others**

What areas of team behaviour does this module focus on?

- **Motivation towards goals**
- **Cooperation between team members**
- **Cohesion and coordination**

Who is this module for?

All team members. The creation of a positive work environment is something that every team member has the potential to contribute towards.

What is the patient safety impact of this module?

Burnout and reduced job satisfaction can arise in challenging work environments, undermining performance, safety, and teamwork^{1,2}. Fostering a positive work environment can improve individual staff experiences as well as having a positive impact on patient safety.

References

1. Maslach C, Leiter MP. Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*. 2016;15(2):103–111. doi:10.1002/wps.20311
2. Olds DM, Aiken LH, Cimiotti JP, Lake ET. Association of nurse work environment and safety climate on patient mortality: A cross-sectional study. *Int J Nurs Stud*. 2017;74:155–161. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2017.06.004





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SESSION OUTLINE



**DEVELOPING A POSITIVE
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SESSION OVERVIEW

- Purpose:** The aim of the session is for the team to discuss what the team can do to create a more positive work environment where team members feel engaged and valued in order to increase job satisfaction and reduce burnout.
- Timing:** 60 min.
- Setup:** Introduction > Group discussion > Group exercise > Feedback
- Outcomes:** At the end of the session the team will have generated three key initiatives to increase joy and meaning in the team, along with concrete actions to make them happen.
- Facilitators:** 1-2 team members to facilitate; 1 team member to act as flipchart scribe to record ideas, discussion points, and outputs.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Equipment:** Flipcharts, markers, pens, paper, post-it notes.
- Materials:** Printed cases handout and outcomes template.
- Room:** Configure for round table discussion or small groups for larger teams.
- Attendees:** If some team members cannot attend due to geographic location, they may participate remotely via teleconference. In this case the session materials should be shared in advance via email.





DEVELOPING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

START OF SESSION

1) Introduction (5 min.)

Introductions if new people attend, and brief explanation of Co-Lead (aim – to introduce Collective Leadership to healthcare teams to improve Safety Culture) and ‘ground rules’ – use first names, value all voices, encourage all to bring skills and talents to the table etc.

Give an update on what the project has achieved so far and what progress is being made.

Highlight the aim of today’s session – to discuss what the team can do to create a more positive work environment where team members feel engaged and valued in order to increase job satisfaction and reduce burnout.

2) Icebreaker and discussion (15 min.)

For this discussion exercise, facilitator should draw a line numbered 0-10 on a large piece of paper, whiteboard, blackboard or similar. Present the “work environment rating scale” to the team. 10 means that the work environment is extremely positive and could not possibly be any better. 0 means that the work environment is extremely negative and could not possibly be any worse.

Read out the two cases in the document “A Positive Work Environment CASES” and give team members a moment to consider where they would place these two cases on the rating scale.

Hand out post-its or pieces of paper to the team members. Ask each team member to anonymously rate the work environment in their own team (the team gathered) by writing down a number from 0-10. Nobody is required to share their number with others, but the facilitator can collect all post its to get an indication of the work environment in the team. (The exercise can also involve team members mentally rating the work environment if appropriate or if no paper is available).

Ask the team to split into small groups (2-4 people) to discuss the following questions:

- *Why did you not rate the work environment in the team any lower than you did?*
- *What currently prevents you from rating the work environment 0?*

This question will help participants to identify what the team is already



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DEVELOPING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

(contd.)

doing well in relation to ensuring a positive work environment. Allow a couple of minutes for the small group discussion, then have the small groups feed back to the whole team all their reasons for not rating any lower. A team member or co-facilitator should take notes on a whiteboard, into a power point or similar. All reasons mentioned should be noted. Notes should be visible to all, as the team will need them later in the session.

Ask the team to split into small groups again. This time have the team discuss the following questions:

- *What would have made you rate the work environment in the team higher than you did?*
- *What would it take for you to rate it 10?*

This will similarly help the team identify where there is room for improvement. Once again allow a couple of minutes for the small group discussion, then have the groups feed back all their reasons to the whole team. Once again all reasons should be noted down by a team member or co-facilitator.

Explain to the team that this exercise is meant to help them identify initiatives to create a more positive work environment, and that they will return to the exercise later in the session.



3) Group talk about burnout (5 min.)

Burnout is a serious occupational hazard for people working in healthcare jobs. Briefly share with the team the definition and key dimensions of burnout:

"Burnout is a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job. The three key dimensions of this response are an overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment." (Maslach and Leiter, 2016)

Allow each team member to reflect individually on burnout, focusing on how burnout affects people and their work, and how to identify signs of burnout in themselves or their colleagues. Let people share their thoughts in pairs or groups of three for a couple of minutes.

Explain to the group that some elements of a positive work environment, such as perceived strong support from co-workers and supervisors, can act as a protective factor against burnout.

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4) Group exercise (10 min.)

The notes from the initial discussion exercise should be visible to the team during this exercise, as they represent both what the team currently does well and what the team could do better.

Have the team split into smaller groups once more (4-6 people in each group). With the previously generated notes in mind, each group should come up with one or two initiatives that they believe would help generating a more positive work environment within the team.

The groups should bear in mind that this could be both new initiatives, strengthening of initiatives that are already happening, or getting rid of things that are currently negatively impacting the work environment. The initiatives need to be within the team's own influence – not at an overall organisational or political level (e.g. the organisation's sick leave policy, or a 30-hour work week).

5) Team discussion (20 min.)

Have each group feed back their initiatives to the whole team. Discuss the suggestions as a team, and identify three key initiatives you will work on to create or improve a positive work environment within the team. **This should take no more than 10 minutes.**

Once the 3 key initiatives have been identified, the team should find concrete actions to carry out each suggested initiative, as well as identify individuals who will take ownership for facilitating/carrying out the identified action items. A team member or co-facilitator should take notes/fill in the Co-Lead outcome template to record the decisions made by the team.

If any of the team's identified initiatives are related to stronger social support, consider following this session up with the Co-Lead session "Emotional Support in Teams".

6) Close of session (5 min.)

Give general feedback on the session. Notes can be collected and collated by one individual to maintain record of discussion.





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HANDOUTS



**DEVELOPING A POSITIVE
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**DEVELOPING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT****CASE 1 – ANXIETY AND LACK OF SUPPORT**

The worst thing about my work? I feel very on my own. If I am on call at night, even if something goes wrong and a patient gets unwell, I feel like I can not just call the consultant. I feel like people expect me to just get on with it on my own, that I should be independent, that I am not allowed to ask for help. But I am not in this field for long, and sometimes I feel anxious of making a mistake and could use an opportunity to spar with someone more senior. There are many things that bother me. I work insane hours, our internal communication is not very good, and I feel like if I bring up any of these issues, it might harm my career because I rely on these people for references or maybe a job down the line. So I want them to see me as competent and reliable. I have gone to work with the flu because I was afraid of calling in sick, even though I know that it is a big risk to my patients. I have talked to some of my peers about all of this. Most of them agree with me, but nobody is really sticking up for each other. There is this feeling that because the specialty is so popular, I should just be glad I got the chance and grin and bear it. But it wears me down, and I honestly do not know how long I can stay here. I always wanted to be a doctor, but some days I think about quitting the medical profession entirely.



**DEVELOPING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT****CASE 2 – CAMERADERIE AND FEELING VALUED**

I know it sounds like a cliché, but I love coming to work every day. I feel like I can influence my own work day, and I feel that my ideas and suggestions are being listened to. I feel I am valued by my colleagues, patients and management, and I take pride in the work we do and the service we deliver. We are occasionally a bit under-staffed, I think we all feel that sometimes, and we have to run really fast, but when things get busy, everyone shares the workload. There is a great feeling of camaraderie, that we are in it together, and I feel that if I ever have an off-day, my colleagues will have my back. If we make a mistake or if I have a bad experience with a patient, I feel comfortable talking to my colleagues and managers, because I know they will be supportive and constructive. There is also a good atmosphere in the team, and we do social events outside of work once or twice a year. It is good to see everyone out of their day-to-day roles, I think it brings us closer together.



OUTCOMES TEMPLATE



PRIORITY RANKING	KEY INITIATIVE TO IMPROVE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT	AGREED ACTION(S) TO ACHIEVE THIS IMPROVEMENT	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)	DATE TO REVIEW PROGRESS
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				