

# Three key Conditions to Create a Healthy Workplace

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Current research underscores the importance of creating workplace cultures that foster the psychological health and wellness of employees within their team and work environments. Healthy workplaces support employee wellbeing are psychologically safe, and provide the basis for effective team functioning.

Organizations can be proactive by taking targeted actions to safeguard the wellbeing of employees and ensuring the creation of positive and healthy workplace cultures, according to [research](#) by Emma Seppala, science director at the Stanford Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, and Kim Cameron, a professor with the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

Research in positive psychology has identified three key environmental conditions that are essential for building healthy and effective workplace environments that contribute to employee wellbeing, engagement and thriving, according to [to research](#) by Edward Deci, a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester and Richard Ryan, a professor at the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University and a professor at the University of Rochester.

The first condition involves the development a sense of “relatedness” or connectedness among employees. This workplace characteristic is created when employees feel welcome and included, and people practice greeting and acknowledging one another on a daily basis.

Interactions among employees include friendly exchanges that contribute to a sense of knowing others and being known. As people gain a sense of positive connectedness, they also become sensitive to each other when they experience stress. Connected employees practice checking in with one another, and provide mutual support when additional assistance may be needed to carry out or complete work-related tasks.

A second core condition is the development of a sense of “competency” among employees. The creation of this workplace characteristic involves recognizing and valuing the strengths, skills and potential of all members of the team.

Ideally, shared work goals provide opportunities for employees to be engaged in using their strengths and skills, and to recognize how their skills complement the strengths of other team members, maximizing the collective effectiveness and performance of the full team.

In contrast to workplace gossip or conversations that are destructive to team relationships, developing a sense of competency in the workplace is supported by expressions of appreciation and gratitude among employees and managers for the strengths and contributions that all members bring to the team.

A third condition that is critical to building healthy and effective workplaces is “autonomy support.” In contrast to over-controlling environments, this workplace characteristic is evident when people’s voice, perspectives and ideas are heard and valued in workplace routines and interactions. Practices that promote autonomy support include seeking others’ perspectives instead of just giving advice, finding opportunities to collaborate with colleagues or peers on work projects, and inviting team members to collectively build solutions or strategies for addressing emerging or existing challenges or goals.

Developing autonomy-supportive workplace environments counteracts behaviours that bully or marginalize others, and creates psychological-safe work spaces for all employees.

In summary, creating healthy and effective workplace cultures involves being intentional about creating environmental conditions that foster relatedness, competency and autonomy support within team relationships and routines. Targeted training for teams and managers on relationship practices that promote these conditions may be an important initial step in optimizing the workplace culture.

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