

Fact sheet

Positive communication at work

Workplaces are more complex than ever in the face of new challenges, technology and increased diversity. More than ever, we need others' knowledge, skills and input to achieve our goals. Being able to clearly, effectively and respectfully communicate is more important now than ever before.

Positive communication – communication that is based on respect and builds trust and collaboration – is the cornerstone of creating a **psychologically safe workplace**.

A psychologically safe workplace is mana-enhancing, supports all people to feel good and function well and enables positive interactions and relationships.

Principles of building psychological safety in communication

- Based on respect
- Value honesty and build trust
- Make it safe to show vulnerability
- Open communication
- Information sharing

We're communicating constantly – not just through words (conversations, emails, texts) but also through our actions or inactions, body language and via procedures and policy. Sometimes the message we're sending is intentional. Other times it is unintentional – we may not be aware of how other people perceive it. Our communications reveal information about how we think and feel, our values, what we will or won't tolerate, and what's important to us.

What does positive communication look like



Positive communication is respectful and builds trust, creating positive relationships that support collaboration.



Expectations, goals and processes are clearly explained and people's understanding checked.



Feedback is encouraged and people feel safe expressing their ideas, concerns and feelings.



Conflict may still occur but it happens safely, recognising that disagreement or things going wrong are an opportunity to learn and improve.

Workplaces that value and are committed to positive communication:

- Build trust to support positive relationships with co-workers and supervisors.
- Clearly explain expectations, goals and processes and check people's understanding.
- Promote respect through courtesy, kindness and politeness.
- Encourage people to express their opinions and ideas.
- Promote civility (kindness) and reject prejudice, discrimination and bullying.
- Value and reward teamwork and collaborative ideas and practices.
- Value diversity, differences and similarities.

In a psychologically safe workplace with positive communication, staff:

- Bring, express and share their whole self because they feel valued and treated with dignity and respect.
- Speak up with relevant ideas, questions and concerns.
- Build relationships that are reciprocal and cooperative.
- Interact with honesty, offering frank and honest feedback without fearing negative responses.
- Share concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution.
- Explore ideas and possibilities, including differing views and cultural perspectives.
- Seek suggestions and opinions and consider all views.
- Learn and improve, even from mistakes or disappointments.
- Participate and bring their views to the table.

Building a positive communication culture

To achieve a culture of positive communication, leaders, managers and staff need to understand how their workplace communication culture works currently (what does communication at my work look like now and what impact does it have?) and where they want it to be.

To understand and create change, you need to:



Have clear intentions



Ask more than tell



Value relationships



Make it safe to speak up