

# Mental Health and Psychological Safety in the Workplace

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# Today's presenter



Holly Griffin brings over 15 years of experience designing and delivering adult learning experiences. As a Senior Trainer and Technical Writer at Texas Mutual, she develops safety training programs and educational content that reach policyholders across Texas.

With a master's in educational psychology and a background spanning instructional design, curriculum development, and eLearning, Holly brings a learner-centered lens to every topic she teaches.

# Agenda

- Why mental health matters right now
- Psychological safety
- Practical steps to start today
- Thank you

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**There is no health  
without mental health**

”

— Dr. David Satcher,  
*former U.S. Surgeon General*

**Why this matters now**

# Mental health in the workplace

- 1 in 5 US adults experience a mental health condition every single year





Employee mental health and business health go hand in hand.

- Lost productivity
- Missed work
- Turnover

# Common challenges employees face



- Stress and burnout
- Anxiety and depression
- Imposter syndrome
- Work-life imbalance
- Isolation and loneliness

# Psychological safety

# Stages of psychological safety



Challenger safety

Contributor safety

Learner safety

Inclusion safety

# Signs your workplace **lacks** psychological safety

- Employees suffer in silence
- Fear of retaliation
- Mistakes are hidden
- High turnover
- Low engagement

# Signs your workplace **has** psychological safety

- Employees talk openly about challenges
- Leaders model vulnerability
- Growth mindset
- Employees feel seen and heard
- Mental health resources are encouraged and destigmatized

# Practical steps

# Practical steps: what you can do

## For Leaders

**Model vulnerability**

**Go beyond “How are you?”**

**Normalize the conversation**

**Respect boundaries**

## For Organizations

**Actively promote your EAP**

**Create real flexibility**

**Build peer support networks**

**Survey and act**

## For Individuals

**Know your limits**

**Use available resources**

**Check on your colleagues**

**Self-care is a professional skill**

# The language of psychological safety

✓ Say this

“Thank you for sharing that with me.”

“How can I support you?”

“It’s okay to not be okay.”

“What do you need right now?”

✗ Avoid this

“Everyone is stressed, you’ll be fine.”

“Leave personal issues at the door.”

“You just need to toughen up.”

# Psychological safety looks different by workplace

## Office / Services environment

## Construction / Trade environment

### What psychological safety looks like

- Employees speak up in meetings without fear of judgment
- Managers share mental health resources proactively
- 1-on-1 check-ins address workload and stress early

- Employees flag hazards without fear of backlash
- Foremen run brief wellness check-ins before shifts
- New crew member asking questions freely without ridicule

### Unique challenge

Stigma is subtle — “always on” culture, imposter syndrome, and virtual isolation make it hard to admit struggle

Masculine norms and machismo culture make vulnerability feel like weakness; speaking up carries real career stakes

### What leaders can do

Model vulnerability in team meetings; normalize EAP use openly; protect employees from after-hours contact pressure

Start toolbox talks with “how is everyone doing?”; visibly reward flagging hazards; share personal stories of struggle

# Practical steps by industry

## Construction

- Add “how is everyone doing?” to daily toolbox talks
- Visibly recognize employees who flag safety concerns
- Post EAP and crisis line info in crew trailers & job sites
- Train foremen to recognize mental distress, not just injury

## Services

- Build peer support networks for high-stress client-facing roles
- Create clear boundaries between work hours and personal time
- Debrief after difficult client situations as standard practice
- Actively address compassion fatigue in nonprofit and social services

## Manufacturing

- Address fear of job loss due to automation openly and honestly
- Prioritize sleep and rest for shift employees
- Establish anonymous reporting for safety and mental health concerns
- Provide multilingual EAP access

## Health care

- Normalize burnout conversations (45% of health care employees report feeling burned out)
- Protect rest periods — mandate breaks and honor time-off requests
- Designate a mental health champion on every shift or unit
- Create structured peer debrief after traumatic patient events

## Transportation

- Actively combat isolation — check in on solo drivers regularly
- Enforce rest regulations — sleep deprivation is both a safety and mental health risk
- Offer mobile-accessible EAP so employees can connect while on the road
- Recognize time away from family — schedule consistent home time

# Key takeaways

**01**

**Mental health challenges are common**

**02**

**Psychological safety is a business imperative**

**03**

**Small actions create big cultural shifts**

**04**

**This is a journey, not a destination**

# Resources

**SAMHSA National Helpline** 1-800-662-4357 Free, confidential, 24/7

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** Call or text 988 For anyone in emotional distress

**Your company's EAP** Look this up if you don't know what's available to you

**Recommended reading** *The Fearless Organization* by Amy Edmondson — the definitive book on psychological safety

Texas Mutual Safety Services: **844-WORKSAFE** | **safety@texasmutual.com**



Final poll

# Thank you!

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