

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHANGE | The Human Factor

Creating Psychological Safety (PS)

In the work context, PS defines the employees **perceptions of the consequences** in them taking **interpersonal risks** to a particular issue. To gain an understanding to the nature and phenomena of PS, responses within the individual, the team and the organisation, behavioural constructs were researched and analysed to guide leaders and managers how to create Psychological Safety.

Given the pandemic, employees finding themselves in a multidisciplinary and complex health system, research studies identified PS as a necessary factor, on how employees will collaborate to achieve a **shared outcome**. This factor, is reflected and confirmed in the WCGH Vaccine Rapid Poll, as well as observations and interviews conducted with frontline staff on their perceptions to taking the vaccine. Their personal risk and consequences to them taking the vaccine versus not taking the vaccine.

Furthermore, sharing of information and knowledge increase PS, it encourages and enables employees to learn more and deploy they own initiatives and suggestions for organisational improvements and inevitably protecting the Health system. Increased PS reduces perceived interpersonal risk, anxiety, feelings of being unsafe and uncertainty about change. PS is best supported by data that would contradict the misconstrued anxieties and increase expectations of hope of an improved outcome and prevention to loss of lives.

This ambivalence to the Vaccine is compounded with the overwhelming number of persons that have succumbed to the virus.

Managers need to have an understanding the Human responses to Loss and Living...what a Loss means to a physician, what a Loss means to a family and allow for **intentional Healing** as a collective in our health system.

The notion of change and loss is an integral part of human existence and it affects everyone differently **psychologically, behaviourally and socially**. Our current reality is not permanent, neither is our ownership of material things. Everything is temporary and trying to find permanence is impossible and the attempt to prevent Loss becomes equally impossible.



“ Amidst a Humanitarian Crises and finding HCW at a loss for words as the numbers increase, we find the dire need to combine the teaching of scientific achievement, medicines and equal empahsis on interpersonal human relationships...in facing our reality” EKR.

Strategies to address Intentional Healing and increase Psychological Safety:



Fear

Fear on a primal level serves humanity well and serves as a warning and initiates defense mechanisms. Where there is no imminent danger, it serves no purpose and weakens the spirit.

FEAR: False, Evidence, Appearing, Real (EKR and DK). Fears based on past trauma triggers fear of the future and provides us a unique opportunity to **choose differently**, one of Growth and Healing.



Psychological Safety

- Allowing employees to voice their concerns, manage their perceived threats;
- Leaders to create **safe spaces** and a climate of PS without fear of reprisal, ridicule and help those displaying emotional distress;
- Managers need to be mindful of different styles of leadership, be flexible in adapting their behaviours and conveying key messages that are congruent and the risks associated with it.

Unity and Healing



Loss is one of the most painful and difficult lessons in life, and everyone's experiences of the stages of healing is different. In our search for wholeness and dealing with loss, it serves to Unite us. Deepen our understanding and **care for one another**. Every loss seldom occurs in a vacuum, it touches many lives, family and colleagues. **Denial** is a touch of **grace**, that holds us when we are ready to heal, with the full knowledge that there are new beginnings and the **cycle of life is all around us**.

- Managers to **value employees** who challenge the status quo, as opposed to those who prefer to remain silent, as silence is not an indication of an agreement to the status quo, rather the fear of reprisal.
- The status of employee's PS impacts the individual's behavioural constructs, and this is manifested in the physical, emotional and cognitive responses which is characterised with trust and respect in a team and organisational setting.

Champion the Change

UniteToVaccinateWC

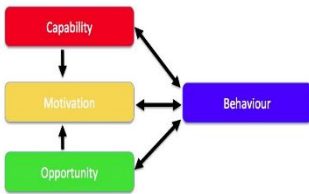
"I welcome the vaccine and I am pro-vaccine. It will be better than working with this fear of contracting the virus every day."

Thouwybah Phillips, Operational Manager for Respiratory ICU, Groote Schuur Hospital.

"Our government cannot fight the COVID-19 alone. We have the responsibility to support government efforts to stop the spread of this virus" Patrick Tom, Food Services Manager, Tygerberg Hospital.



▶ To encourage the uptake in Vaccinations the WHO recommends the use of the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW) Model to address the multifaceted and complex behaviours at an interpersonal, individual, community, institutional and policy level. In doing so, other determinants for low uptake and barriers are explored in depth.



▶ The COM-B Model, Capability, Opportunity and Motivation – Behaviour, provides a logical framework for planning, research and analysing how messages affect perceptions.

COM- B Factor:

Capability	HCW providing face to face, clear balanced information about vaccination risks and benefits and childhood vaccination schedule. Training to build skills and to support with appropriate information.
Opportunity	Managers to provide supportive supervision; Structure well functioning call and reminder systems.
Motivation	Evidence- based info on development of Vaccines, will aid & support informed decision making about vaccination. Provide restspaces and enforce mandatory reconnect and regrouping sessions for workers

Resources: Elisabeth Kübler- Ross (EKR) and David Kessler, *Life Lessons* 2001.

Habersaat, K.B & Jackson, C. 2020. *Understanding Vaccine acceptance and demand – and ways to increase them.*

Amy C Edmonson and Zhike Lei, *The Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and organizational Behaviour*, 2014.1:23 - 43.