

Re-Framing Well-Being: Optimizing the Work and Learning Environment

Supporting Autonomy – Built Environment (Brick-and-Mortar)

Basics

Autonomy is a basic psychological need and supporting it results in flourishing while ignoring or thwarting it results in distress. Autonomy is NOT the lack of supervision, is NOT independence or freedom, or lack of structure. Autonomy is the sense that we self-determine our actions versus feeling forced, coerced or compelled to do them. One has autonomy if they feel they have true decision latitude or if they willingly endorse an activity because they see the value in that activity. The built environment can thwart autonomy if there are issues in the environment that create barriers to our goal-oriented activities. If a computer is exceptionally slow for example we do not endorse sitting waiting for it to open when we are busy. If an otoscope is broken in an exam room when we need it we feel forced to search around other areas to find one. We do not endorse dealing with a broken otoscope. In this way the built environment can thwart autonomy if issues are not resolved.

Audit for Autonomy Threats: Perspective Taking, Seeking Input, Recognizing emotion

- Develop a cadence to ask for input and ideas related to the physical environment:
 - Layout of the clinical space
 - Layout of the call rooms and resident/fellow lounge space
 - Layout of educational space
 - Furniture
 - Carpets/flooring
 - Computer access
 - Air conditioning / heating / ventilation
 - Hand sanitizers
 - Bathrooms
 - Cleanliness and sanitation (garbage removal)
 - Parking availability and safety
 - Physical safety

- Safety of one's possessions (lockers, bike locks, etc)
- Food and drink availability
- Hospital badges and badge access
- Exterior lighting around facility and parking
- Art and posters on the walls
- Light availability (both natural and artificial light)
- Sleep quality issues – mattress, bedding, white noise machines, fan, pillows
- Environmental noise issues (overhead pagers too loud or too soft), noise around sleep rooms, ear plugs in call rooms.