

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

Supporting Autonomy – Policies and Procedures

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 way we communicate with others always either supports or thwarts autonomy through both verbal and non-verbal content. Leaders and team members cannot “opt out” of this process.

Perspective Taking, Seeking Input, Recognizing Emotion

- Periodically review program policies, procedures, protocols, and guidelines with the team. Seek input on how these impact the trainees (perspective). Ask for any ideas or input on how they might be improved.
- Review the way the block rotation schedule is laid out seeking input from the trainees as to whether there are areas where there could be improvement in the way the block rotation progresses.

Review the rotations and structural aspects of the program for threats to autonomy

- Are there rotations in which you feel you have too little autonomy (“micromanaged”)?
- Are there faculty that do not allow you enough decision making?
- Are there requirements of the program that ask you to do something but you don’t understand why?
- Where in the program do you feel you would like more input on how we do things or how your work gets done?

- Is there a way to allow residents/fellows to work on something they want to do? (“mini-fellowship”)
- Work related communications that sound coercive or demanding

Explanatory Rationale

- Whenever someone feels “forced” to do something an explanatory rationale helps to align the task and move it from being forced to being endorsed. So, if it is unclear why the team has to “waste time” in multi-disciplinary rounds, for example, providing the rationale that these activities improve care, allow people to go home to their families faster, and identify system problems that need resolution, may change the experience and support workplace well-being.