



Healthy, respectful collegial relationships that support educator wellbeing

Relationships in every working environment shape the emotional climate, driving the flow and progress of important tasks and outcomes.

In early childhood education and care services those relationships are especially important as they influence not only the wellbeing outcomes of the adults in the space, but the children as well.

For researcher, Consultant, educator and professional Jennifer Ribarovski, the cornerstone of creating environments where healthy, collegial relationships exist centres on four key principles:

- psychological safety
- respectful communication
- trust
- inclusion

Psychological safety

When educators feel psychologically safe, they know that they can take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, raising concerns or admitting mistakes, without the fear of being embarrassed, shamed or facing other consequences.

Psychologically safe learning communities serve as a protective factor for educator wellbeing.

Respectful communication

Language choices impact the way in which messages are received, and respectful communication centres on curiosity.

Being curious moves communication from a place of judgement to a place of sharing, gathering new insights and understanding multiple perspectives.

Trust

Language choices impact the way in which messages are received, and respectful communication centres on curiosity.

Trust is built through consistency. When educators and leaders feel psychologically safe trust builds, through being listened to and through confidentiality being consistently respected.

Inclusion

Belonging matters – for children, for families and for educators.

When educators are working in teams and feel like their contributions matter and that their perspectives are included, they experience a stronger sense of wellbeing.

Reflective questions

1. What friction points exist in your team?
 - How are these differences named and discussed?
 - Which voices are included and excluded?
 - Do the dominant, more powerful voices take precedence?
2. What do you think healthy collegial relationships would look and sound and feel like in the context of your service?
3. Whose voice is heard the most often in team meetings?
 - Whose voice is rarely heard?
 - What steps do you need to take to ensure a more even distribution?

To progress this thinking a [Be You Consultant](#) can help your learning community to critically reflect on current practices and plan improvements. This can support your service to identify opportunities for change and explore ways to build educator wellbeing through healthy and respectful collegial relationships.

Guest speaker

Jennifer Ribarovski is an accomplished early childhood education leader, consultant, author and presenter with more than 40 years' experience across the education and care sector. As Managing Director of JR Education Consulting Services Pty Ltd, she provides professional learning, mentoring and consultancy nationally and internationally. Her career spans teaching, leadership, regulatory and policy roles, including executive positions with NSW Regulatory Authority and ACECQA.

References

Fenech, M., & Ribarovski, J.(2020). Professional communication for early childhood educators: Interpersonal and workplace communication in everyday practice. Oxford University Press.

Additional information and references

E book: [Professional Communication for Early Educators](#)

Be You Resources

- Event recordings: [Empowered boundaries for educators](#)
- Micro Learning: [The importance of educator boundaries](#)
- Resources / Educator wellbeing: [Beyond Self-care: An Educator Wellbeing Guide](#)