

dear residents

A Season for Restoration

November 20, 2022

Dear Residents,

Everywhere I drive, I see that **Holiday Lights** are already up. We are all anticipating whatever break we will get, for a chance to reconnect with loved ones and with ourselves. Interview season will take a short pause for Thanksgiving week and then a longer pause for the Winter Holidays. Resident wellbeing generally rises over these breaks. In the past 2 years, our winter breaks have been sullied by COVID surges – perhaps it will be different this year and we can enter 2023 energized rather than depleted.

I have a lot to be optimistic about – we have a new program coordinator (Alyssa Martinez) and we are entering a phase of rebuilding the education office. Their work and support are essential to the functioning of the residency program. Without their efforts, we can't manage recruiting, the schedule, the website, your travel, conference meals, the ordering of supplies, the paying of invoices, the tracking of your progress, the processing of your moonlighting requests, our planned social functions and the everyday minutia of running a program. Some of this background work is invisible to you, but it remains vital. I am also optimistic that the lingering effects of the pandemic will be behind us and that we will reclaim the lost social connections that lubricate our connectedness and belonging.

I recently reviewed the US General Surgeon's [report](#) on **workplace wellbeing**. The three headlines are:

- Our workplaces play a significant role in our lives
- Work affects both our physical and mental well-being — in good ways and bad
- The COVID-19 pandemic brought the relationship between work and well-being into clearer focus

The **Five Essentials** are shown below:

Five Essentials for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being

Centered on the worker voice and equity, these five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each Essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles.



Components

Creating a plan with all workers to enact these components can help reimagine workplaces as engines of well-being.

Protection from Harm

- Prioritize workplace physical and psychological safety
- Enable adequate rest
- Normalize and support mental health
- Operationalize DEIA* norms, policies, and programs

Connection & Community

- Create cultures of inclusion and belonging
- Cultivate trusted relationships
- Foster collaboration and teamwork

Work-Life Harmony

- Provide more autonomy over how work is done
- Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible
- Increase access to paid leave
- Respect boundaries between work and non-work time

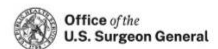
Mattering at Work

- Provide a living wage
- Engage workers in workplace decisions
- Build a culture of gratitude and recognition
- Connect individual work with organizational mission

Opportunity for Growth

- Offer quality training, education, and mentoring
- Foster clear, equitable pathways for career advancement
- Ensure relevant, reciprocal feedback

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility



It is salient to me that **Safety and Security** – two critical human needs, lead the list. Of these two needs, **psychological safety** is more directly under the control of the program and is a social exemplar I must relentlessly promote. As defined by [Amy Edmonson](#), psychological safety is “a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.”

[Shane Snow](#) has an interesting take on what **safe interpersonal risk taking** really means and makes 4 important points:

- Safety is not the same as comfort – we will grow if we are challenged and made a little uncomfortable as long as we are protected from harm.
- Disagreement is not the same as danger, and ideas are not the same as violence – protection from physical abuse and sexual harassment is a must but seeking absolute emotional safety by avoiding people and ideas you disagree with (discomfort) will prevent you from growing (cognitive friction is essential).

- Taking risks only makes sense when it helps the group – speaking up is a risk worth taking, while shouting someone down closes the conversation.
- Feeling safe enough to hurt people means that there is no safety – you should feel safe to say what you think and feel, but it's not a license to be malicious.

I want to acknowledge that much of your residency has been under the cloud of the pandemic. I also want to emphasize that we are well on our way to a restoration of spirit, of camaraderie, of mutual beneficence and a recommitment to making your time here a period of immense personal growth. Please enjoy the weeks you will be getting off and return energized and ready to take on what lies ahead of you. Your voice and dignity matter. Your ideas are welcome. Your opinions matter. Your safety is paramount. It remains an immense honor to be leading you.

Warm regards,

Dino Kazi