

Reconnect and Support with Psychological Safety

Now that we have fully returned to our campuses, the routine and stability of working from home for the past 15 months has been disrupted, and our ability to adapt is being tested again.

We need strategies that help us maintain resilience, manage change, and adapt to new dynamics that arise as we reconnect in our workplaces.

A critical element of our ability to adapt and maintain resilience as we reconnect with our colleagues, is the state of 'psychological safety' that exists at work. Psychological safety is dependent on our sense and feelings of security, trust, autonomy, fairness, and esteem. If psychological safety exists, our power and resilience to manage change increases.

The following strategies and ideas help positively influence and create an environment of psychological safety and support individuals, teams, and groups successfully reconnect.

1. Provide space for connection – identify formal and informal opportunities to reconnect people at the workplace. If you are a manager, create a plan; if you are a leader, use your network, creativity, or influence to make this happen.
2. Provide ample time for (re)introductions – in many of our return situations, people will not have seen each other for almost two years, and some are brand new to the organization. Physical interaction beyond home and daily routines will be wildly different between us. As we have many new employees at the college who have never met each other in person, 'first introduction' traditions for your group may be needed to get things feeling normal.
3. Make sense of jobs and get excited together! Explore the vision and mission of the college with each other. With a return to office and normalcy, it is important to reflect on our past successes with the needs of the future. Assumptions about MC's mission and vision need to be checked and our jobs and efforts aligned.
4. Consider how you might create vision boards (virtual and in-office) or road maps to where we are going on an individual, team, and departmental basis. A vision board helps restore and clarify a lot of the 'what' and 'why' behind things we are doing.
5. Revisit strengths – when we moved to virtual-only work, many felt that we lost important elements of what made us strong before the lock-down. The same feeling may be experienced by some concerned about losing what we have learned and gained in the past 18 months. The ability to leverage strengths through conversations that ask us to reflect on traditional and new work practices is vital to making our workspaces viable and everyone engaged.

Our return to work is still new, and our ability to restore a sense of shared purpose and move forward with new challenges is aided by strategies that aid our well-being and help us reconnect and support each other.