SACHS Research Summary:
Eight Ways to Equip Supervisors to Create Learning Organizations in Human Services Agencies

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SACHS
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Executive Summary

At the request of the Southern Area Consortium of Human Services (SACHS) Directors, this research summary provides eight key recommendations on how Human Services Agencies (HSAs) can equip their supervisors to create a learning organization (learning from mistakes) in an environment where mistakes are not tolerated.

The eight recommendations described in this report include:

1. *Create an Environment Where Psychological Safety is Valued and Supported*
2. *Model Trust and Relationship-building in the Workplace*
3. *Establish a Learning Culture*
4. *Promote Supportive Supervision and Increase Employee Engagement*
5. *Invest in a Diverse Array of Supervisory Supports*
6. *Initiate Supervisor Learning Circles to Promote Peer Support and Collaboration*
7. *Provide Practice Settings that Allow for Responsible Risk-Taking*
8. *Introduce a Reflective Framework to Learn from Mistakes*

1. <u>Create an Environment Where Psychological Safety is Valued and Supported</u>
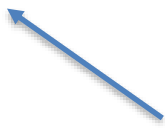
What is Psychological Safety?

- Although several definitions of psychological safety have been proposed, the majority of studies have followed [Amy Edmondson](#) (1999) by defining it as "a shared belief amongst individuals as to whether it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking in the workplace."[1]
- There is a connection between psychological safety and learning. Staff feeling comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution is foundational to building a learning organization.[2]
    - o The provision of a psychologically safe work environment (i.e., one in which employees feel safe to ask questions, voice ideas, willingly seek feedback, provide candid opinions, collaborate, take risks/experiment, and openly admit to and learn from mistakes) is a key cognitive state that allows individual and organizational learning processes to occur.
    - o Psychological safety can also contribute to other improved agency outcomes such as increased employee engagement, commitment, satisfaction and greater innovation and information-sharing.[3]
- Psychological safety is not about lowering performance standards. It is not an anything goes environment. As *Table 1* below shows, psychological safety and performance standards are two separate, equally important dimensions—both of which affect team and organizational performance in a complex interdependent environment.[4]

Table 1: Psychological Safety and Performance Standards

	Low Standards	High Standards
High Psychological Safety	Comfort Zone	Learning & High Performance Zone
Low Psychological Safety	Apathy Zone	Anxiety Zone

LEADERSHIP**NOW**   From: *The Fearless Organization*

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[1] Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, *27*(3), 521-535.

[2] LeadershipNow. (2019, January 25). *[The Fearless Organization](#)* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.leadershipnow.com/leadingblog/2019/01/the_fearless_organization.html;

[3] Frazier, M., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017). Psychological Safety: A Meta-Analytic Review and Extension. *Personnel Psychology*, *70*(1), 113-165.

[4] LeadershipNow. (2019, January 25). *[The Fearless Organization](#)* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.leadershipnow.com/leadingblog/2019/01/the_fearless_organization.html; Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Rather than a personality attribute, psychological safety is a feature of the workplace that leaders can and must help create.
  - Leaders who respond to all mistakes or failures in the same way will not create a healthy environment for learning. A mistake or failure that occurs because someone violated a rule or value that matters in the organization, is very different than when a thoughtful hypothesis turns out to be incorrect or a sound strategy fails.[5]
- A recent article by Gallup, Inc., *What to Do if You're Surrounded by Yes-People* (2019) discusses the value in creating an agency environment where people are not reluctant or afraid to speak up and can contribute to better decisions. Or, in some cases, help the agency avoid a catastrophic one. When leaders are surrounded by people who support their opinions and proposals without criticism, they are subject to confirmation bias[6] and unable to make the tougher, but more informed, decisions.[7] Behaviors by leaders, or other team members that squelch speaking up is detrimental to the success of the team/agency.
- In 2012, the notion of psychological safety received further popularity following a massive two-year study of hundreds of Google's teams to figure out why some stumbled while others soared. Based on the findings of *Project Aristotle*, Google developed a list of the five key dynamics that make great teams successful: psychological safety, dependability, structure and clarity, meaning, and impact. While all five were necessary to create a successful team, *psychological safety stood out as the most important factor.*
  - Google revealed that their highest performing teams were first and foremost based on team members' ability to feel safe, take risks, and be vulnerable in front of one another. This reflects a climate where people are comfortable expressing and bringing their best selves to work.[8]
- Psychological safety is especially important in work environments where employee and customer/client safety are paramount, such as in the healthcare, human services agencies (HSAs), law enforcement, fire, and aviation industries.[9]

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[5] Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

[6] Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or hypotheses. It is a type of cognitive bias and a systematic error of inductive reasoning. People display this bias when they gather or remember information selectively, or when they interpret it in a biased way. [Source: Plous, S. (1993). The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making. New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc. P. 233]

[7] Smith, J. (2019, March 15). *What to Do if You're Surrounded by Yes-People.* Gallup, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/workplace/247799/surrounded-yes-people.aspx

[8] Duhigg C. (2016, February 25). What Google Learned from Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team. *The New York Times Magazine.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html?smid=pl-share

[9] Leroy, H., Dierynck, B., Anseel, F., Simons, T., Halbesleben, J. R. B., & McCaughey, D. (2012). Behavioral integrity for safety, priority of safety, psychological safety, and patient safety: A team-level study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 97*, 1273–1281.;

- o The fear of speaking up can lead to accidents that are, in fact, avoidable. Remaining silent due to fear of interpersonal risk can make the difference between life and death. Airplanes have crashed, hospital patients have been misdiagnosed, and children in foster care have died unnecessarily because individuals were, for reasons having to do with the climate in which they worked, afraid to speak up.[10]
    - ▪ In the 1970s, investigators discovered that more than 70 percent of air crashes involved human error rather than failures of equipment or weather. A NASA workshop examining the role of human error in air crashes *found that the majority of crew errors consisted of failures in leadership, team coordination and decision-making.[11]*
- o Psychological safety has been shown to be critical in managing threat and error, thus enhancing safety. It has also been found to increase team and individual learning across multiple agency settings.
    - ▪ For one example, refer to *Appendix A: Safer Air Travel Through Crew Resource Management*[12] for a researched and tested method that emerged from the aviation industry to improve performance and decrease the number of mistakes made in high stress situations. The medical community has also responded to findings of human error and failures by adapting aviation's approach to crew coordination in healthcare and HSA settings to provide higher quality, safer patient/client care[13] (e.g. refer to About Team STEPPS®, Team STEPPS® Case Studies[14] and TeamSTEPPS®: Research/Evidence Base).The myriad of positive workplace outcomes associated with psychological safety underscores for leaders the importance of engaging in supportive leadership behaviors, fostering bonds between team members, and leveraging supportive organizational practices to build psychological safety at work.[15]

Nembhard, I. M., & Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Psychological safety: A foundation for speaking up, collaboration, and experimentation. In K. S. Cameron, & G. M. Spreitzer (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship. Oxford: Oxford University Press.;

Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

[10] Ibid.; American Psychological Association. (February 2014). *Safer Air Travel Through Crew Resource Management*. Retrieved from: https://www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/crew

[11] Cooper, G. E., White, M. D., & Lauber, J. K. (Eds). (1980). *Resource management on the flightdeck: Proceedings of a NASA/industry workshop (NASA CP-2120)*. Moffett Field, CA: NASA-Ames Research Center.

[12] American Psychological Association. (February 2014). *Safer Air Travel Through Crew Resource Management*. Retrieved from: https://www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/crew

[13] Helmreich, R.L. (2004). Managing threat and error to increase safety in medicine. In R. Dietrich & K. Jochum (Eds.), *Teaming Up. Components of Safety under High Risk.* Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

[14] Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). (2018). *TeamSTEPPS Case Studies*. Rockville, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps/case-studies/index.html

[15] Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review, 27*(3), 521-535.

Fostering an Environment of Psychological Safety

- In terms of improving psychological safety the role of leaders is crucial. In *The Fearless Organization* (2019), author Amy Edmondson argues that organizations should "frame strategy as a hypothesis rather than a plan. When strategy is seen as a hypothesis to be continually tested, encounters with customers provide valuable data of ongoing interest."
    - o Leaders who adopt a humble mindset when faced with the complex, dynamic, uncertain world in which we all work today are simply realistic. Humility is the simple recognition that one does not have all the answers. Research shows that when leaders express humility, teams engage in more learning behavior.[16]
- In a challenging setting within HSAs, leaders have two vital tasks.[17]
    - 1. They must build psychological safety to spur learning and avoid preventable failures. It is the responsibility of leaders to create and reinforce an environment where people are free to share their opinions and ideas. Psychological safety is about unleashing talent and innovation across the organization.
    - 2. They must set high standards and inspire and enable people to reach them. Setting high standards remains a crucial management task. As does sharing, sharpening, and continually emphasizing a worthy purpose. Clear, direct, candid communication is an important aspect of reducing accidents or errors. A compelling agency purpose combined with caring leadership motivates people to go the extra mile to do what is needed to ensure safe work practices and employee dignity.
- Reducing preventable failures starts with leaders encouraging and reinforcing employees' speaking up about hazards and other concerns.[18] Supervisors need to provide a safe place for their direct reports to process their work experiences.
- Creating an environment where people can speak up involves:
    - 1. *Demonstrating that everyone is on the same team.*
    - 2. *Making sure leaders can handle the truth when they ask for feedback (in other words, listening non-defensively).*
    - 3. *Letting people do the jobs they were hired for.*

    When leaders listen to their teams, find out the truth about people's daily work life, and empower people to do what they do best, the "yes-people" will start to dwindle. They will be replaced with people courageous enough to be candid with their leaders, which will positively impact the entire organization.[19]

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[16] Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Smith, J. (2019, March 15). *What to Do if You're Surrounded by Yes-People*. Gallup, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/workplace/247799/surrounded-yes-people.aspx

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- ● Asking the following four questions can provide a team or organization a safety net with which to trust and be open with each other. It can allow staff to be vulnerable enough to be engaged employees and initiate a team or organizational culture of psychological safety.
    1. *What can we count on each other for?*
    2. *What is our team's/organization's purpose?*
    3. *What is the reputation we aspire to have?*
    4. *What do we need to do differently to achieve that reputation and fulfill our purpose?[20]*
        - ▪ Please note that the order of is as important as the questions themselves. The first question speaks to strengths and is fundamental for establishing individual security before diving into the broader team or organizational psychological safety challenges.
        - ▪ Leaders and supervisors can use the above four questions to encourage participation, ideation and honesty. Ideally, every team in an organization would work through the four questions to get to its shared value, purpose and identity.
        - ▪ In the best-case scenario, for real culture change to transpire, this must include (and start with) the executive team. Leaders should answer the four questions from a team and organizational perspective. It is when leaders then share their organizational answers with the rest of the agency that the expected behavior is encouraged and alignment occurs. They can create an environment where people are safe to engage, safe to address the elephants in the room and safe to put their whole selves into their work.[21]
- ● *The Fearless Organization: The Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety*
    - ○ In her book *The Fearless Organization,* Amy Edmondson summarizes the process for leaders to build psychological safety into three main steps: *Setting the Stage, Inviting Participation,* and *Responding Productively.*
        - ▪ 1. *Setting the Stage*: Frame the work and emphasize purpose to accomplish shared expectations and meaning
        - ▪ 2. *Inviting Participation*: Demonstrate situational humility, practice inquiry and set-up structures/processes to accomplish confidence that voice is welcome
        - ▪ *3. Responding Productively*: Express appreciation, destigmatize failure, and discipline clear boundary violations to accomplish orientation toward continuous learning

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[20] Herway, J. (2017). *How to Create a Culture of Psychological Safety.* Gallup, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236198/create-culture-psychological-safety.aspx
[21] Ibid.

See *Table 2* below for more details in this process for leaders.[22]

Table 2: The Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety

	1 Setting the Stage	2 Inviting Participation	3 Responding Productively
Leadership Tasks:	**Frame the Work** • Set expectations about failure, uncertainty, and interdependence to clarify the need for voice • Framing is ongoing process **Emphasize Purpose** • Identify what's at stake, why it matters, and for whom it matters	**Demonstrate Situational Humility** • Acknowledge gaps • Be inclusive **Practice Inquiry** • Ask good questions • Model intense listening **Set Up Structures and Processes** • Create forums for input • Provide guidelines for discussion	**Express Appreciation** • Listen • Acknowledge and thank **Destigmatize Failure** • Look forward • Offer help • Discuss, consider, and brainstorm next steps **Punish Clear Boundary Violations**
To Accomplish:	Shared expectations and meaning	Confidence that voice is welcome	Orientation toward continuous learning

LEADERSHIP**NOW**   From: *The Fearless Organization*

- In conclusion, this is not an easy process. It is not a natural process. "Creating psychological safety is a constant process of smaller and larger corrections that add up to forward progress. Like tacking upwind, you must zig right and then zag left and then right again, never able to head exactly where you want to go and never quite knowing when the wind will change."[23]

2. Model Trust and Relationship-building in the Workplace

What is the Basis of Trust?

- At the foundation of all relationships is trust. Although trust and psychological safety have much in common, they are not interchangeable concepts. A key difference is that psychological safety is experienced at a group level. People working together tend to have similar perceptions of whether or not the climate is psychologically safe. Trust, on the other hand, refers to interactions between two individuals or

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[22] *Leadership Now*. (2019, January 25). *The Fearless Organization* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.leadershipnow.com/leadingblog/2019/01/the_fearless_organization.html; Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

[23] Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

parties; trust exists in the mind of an individual and pertains to a specific target individual or organization.[24]

● When high quality relationships between individuals exist in the workplace, people engage in more learning behaviors. Thus, trust is key in promoting learning and nurturing a growth mindset.[25]

● In work communities where trust is high, research confirms resulting advantages are numerous. As shown in *Figure 1*, data collected from a 2016 national United States sample of 1,095 working adults identified the following benefits for high-trust companies:[26]

Figure 1: Trust in the Workplace
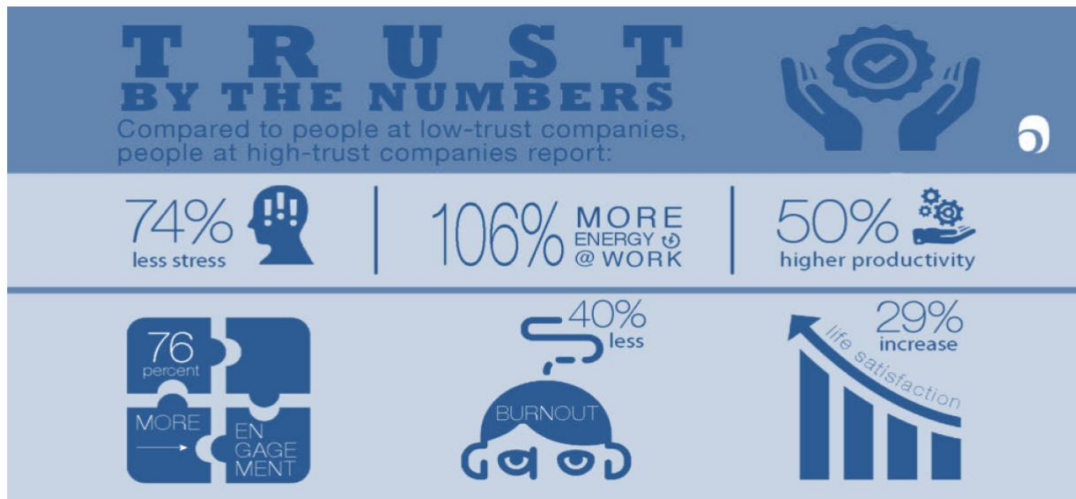
● Leaders build and maintain trusting relationships and a culture of trust in their workplace one step at a time through every action taken and every interaction with their coworkers and direct reports.
   o One way for leaders/supervisors to prove they are trustworthy is by sharing their own thoughts and feelings when they are tired, sad, or struggling with an issue. It helps show they are human.[27]

● As a leader, being trustworthy is about:[28]
   o Deserving confidence.
   o Doing what you say you will do (being dependable).
   o Being approachable and friendly (people trust leaders they like).
   o Showing support for your team members, even when they make mistakes.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons. P. 179.; Carmeli, A., Brueller, D., and Dutton, J.E. (2009) "Learning behaviors in the workplace: the role of high-quality interpersonal relationships and psychological safety." *Systems Research and Behavioral Science Systems Research, 26*: 81-98.

[26] Zak, P. (2017). *Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performing Companies.* New York, NY: Amacom.

[27] Brown, K. (2018, December 4). *To Retain Employees, Focus on Inclusion — Not Just Diversity.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2018/12/to-retain-employees-focus-on-inclusion-not-just-diversity

[28] Grossman, D. (2019, May 6). *Trust in the Workplace: 6 Steps to Building Trust with Employees* [Blog post]. The Grossman Group. Retrieved from https://www.yourthoughtpartner.com/blog/bid/59619/leaders-follow-these-6-steps-to-build-trust-with-employees-improve-how-you-re-perceived

- o Balancing the need for results with being considerate of others and their feelings.
- o Working hard to win over people by being respectful of their ideas and perspectives.
- o Ensuring that your words and actions match. Not just some of the time— all of the time.

The "Four Horsemen" in the Workplace[29]

- Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist at the University of Washington studied relationships between spouses for over two decades and discovered patterns of behavior between spouses that he could use with 91 percent accuracy to predict which relationships would not survive. *Criticism*, *contempt*, *defensiveness*, and *stonewalling* were among Gottman's indicators of what destroys relationships between spouses. He saw their presence as so malicious that he called them the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."
- While Gottman's research was on relationships between spouses, at work *how* we communicate is very important as well. Leaders should be aware of the following "Four Horsemen" behaviors to identify when they are occurring, help their staff better understand why they are problematic and how to effectively address them when they occur.
    1. *Criticism:* A complaint involving judgement about a person's character, not their behavior. For example: "You never remember anything. You can't be counted on." When criticism is used, safety is lost, because the target feels personally attacked.
    2. *Contempt:* Follows criticism and includes emotional disrespect for another through such things as sarcasm, belittling and disrespectful body language (e.g. eye rolling). The target of contempt is made to feel despised and worthless. The proponent usually feels valued, justified, vindicated or excused by being contemptuous. Gottman's research shows that people caught up in contempt actually experience physiological changes as a result of it. In other words, contempt is not only bad for the workplace, it is bad for people's health.
    3. *Defensiveness:* Once contempt shows up, the other party usually becomes defensive because they feel vulnerable or under attack. This can go along with denial, making excuses, meeting one complaint with another, or blaming someone else. The objective of defensiveness is to protect one's integrity, to be seen to be right and can shift the focus away from understanding the problem. When a person is defensive, he or she often

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[29] Adapted from Lisitsa, E. (2013). *The Four Horsemen: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-four-horsemen-recognizing-criticism-contempt-defensiveness-and-stonewalling/

experiences a great deal of tension and has difficulty tuning into what is being said.

4. *Stonewalling:* Occurs when someone feels they are not being successful at protecting themselves, their identity and/or their interests, and withdraws from the interaction or conflict and fails to participate in any attempts by the other party to resolve the dispute. The focus in on protecting one's self by disengaging (e.g. turning away, tuning out). There is an abandonment of hope and responsibility for fixing the workplace or the problems in it. An example of this in the workplace would be complaining to one's supervisor about a conflict with a coworker but ignoring the coworker's emails and phone calls to try to resolve them.

● Gottman's Recommendations for Agency Leaders/Supervisors:
   o For the sake of a team's cohesion and productivity when agency leaders/ supervisors notice the "Four Horsemen" toxic behaviors occurring they must recognize the need to respond and mitigate them. There are several options which may include calling out the behavior (most people will not be aware of what they are doing), training the individual on replacement behavior, and/or mediating between the parties.
   o Create a concrete plan within the team for how people will handle toxic communications when they occur.
   o Coach employees on desirable replacement behaviors and remind them to reflect on about what their team members/co-workers do well/ positive things they bring to the table and how they can adapt their workflow to make better use of their strengths.
   o Provide the team with other strengths-based ways of working through conflicts. Most people (nearly 70 percent, actually) often do not know another way to express themselves until they are provided with other proven alternative options that work. This calls for a degree of tolerance and compassion as people come to realize the impact this has had on their levels of trust and team relationships.
   o For more tips on how to drive away destructive communication patterns and replace them with healthy, productive ones refer to Gottman's *[The Sound Relationship Workplace](#)*.

The SCARF Model: A Brain-Based Model for Leading Change and Influencing Others[30]

● Recent advancements in the neurosciences allow for a better understanding of the human brain and how it functions in the workplace. The SCARF Model is a summary of important discoveries from cognitive, affective and social

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[30] Rock D. (2008). SCARF: A brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others. *NeuroLeadership Journal, 1*.; Rock, D., & Cox, C. (2012). SCARF in 2012: Updating the social neuroscience of collaborating with others. *NeuroLeadership Journal, 4*(4), 1-16.

neuroscience that apply to leadership practices which can improve trust, teamwork, motivation, and performance in social services organizations.

● The SCARF Model involves five domains of human social experience: *Status*, *Certainty*, *Autonomy*, *Relatedness*, *and Fairness* (see *Figure 2* below). These five domains have been shown in many studies to activate the same reward circuitry that physical rewards activate, like money, and the same threat circuitry that physical threats, like pain, activate. Understanding that these five domains as primary needs helps individuals and leaders more easily remember, recognize, and potentially modify the core social domains that drive human behavior in the workplace.[31]

Figure 2: The SCARF Model

These five domains activate either the 'primary reward' or 'primary threat' circuitry (and associated networks) of the brain.
  ○ For example, a perceived threat to one's status activates similar brain networks to a threat to one's life. In the same way, a perceived increase in fairness activates the same reward circuitry as receiving a monetary reward.
  ○ Much of our motivation driving social behavior is governed by an overarching organizing principle of minimizing threat and maximizing reward.

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[31] Rock, D. (2009) *Your brain at work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long.* New York, NY: HarperBusiness.

Figure 3: Implications of the SCARF Model in the Workplace
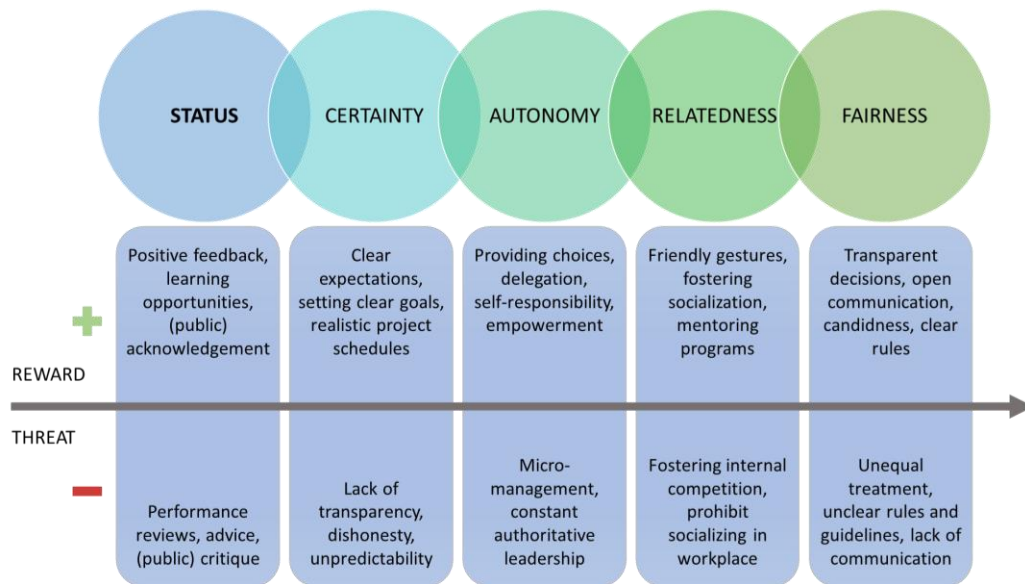
- For a more detailed look at the neuroscience behind the model, refer to the *SCARF Model - Influencing Others* (video) or *SCARF: A Brain Based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others*, both by David Rock.
- In addition, Beth A. Cohen, Ph.D., a licensed clinical and organizational psychologist at University of California, Davis trains managers and staff in private and public sectors on how concepts from the field of NeuroLeadership can be used as a coaching tool to build and support human services agencies. Understanding the "social" brain and implementing specific strategies can increase trust, team morale and effectiveness, employee learning, productivity and job satisfaction.
    o A recording of one of Dr. Cohen's recent presentations, *Brain-Based Coaching* is accessible online.

Question Thinking Tools: Marilee Adams Choice Map™

- Questions frame how people think, listen, behave, and relate both as individuals and organizations. Virtually everything people think and do is generated by questions, the questions people ask themselves and others.
    o If questions are asked from the viewpoint of open-mindedness, of trying to learn, then the resulting answers can help to produce a mindset that is optimistic and hopeful. These are known as "Learner" questions. Learner questions are flexible and adaptive, leading to questioning assumptions, win-win relating, and a view of plentiful possibilities.
    o If instead one asks questions that seek to assign blame and are based on negative reactions the resulting mindset will then lead to failure, inflexibility, stress and a sense of severe limitations. These are known as "Judger" questions. "Judger"

questions are reactive and automatic, leading to defensiveness, win-lose relating, and a view of limited possibilities.

● The concepts in Marilee Adams *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life: 12 Powerful Tools for Leadership, Coaching, and Life*[32] book are primarily derived from the principles of Question Thinking which demonstrate the power and value of asking questions.

● To support an agency-wide learning culture, Question Thinking tools like Marilee Adams *Choice Map*™[33] support the ability to recognize the kind of questions one is asking and offers guidance on how to shift mindsets from the "Judger" to the "Learner" path. This gives executives, managers, supervisors *and* direct reports a foundation for asking better questions which improve their agency's overall climate and culture. See *Table 3* for examples of "Judger" versus "Learner" questions.

Table 3: Examples of "Judger" versus "Learner" Questions

Judger	Learner
What's wrong?	What works?
Who's to blame?	What am I responsible for?
How can I prove I am right?	What are the facts?
How can I protect my turf?	What's the big picture?
How can I be in control?	What are my choices?
How could I lose?	What's useful about this?
How could I get hurt?	What can I learn?
Why is that person so clueless?	What is the other person feeling, needing, wanting?
Why bother?	What's possible?

o Mindsets are dynamic – which means that with intention and practice leaders/supervisors can get better and better at choosing their mindset moment-by-moment. With their direct reports, leaders/supervisors in "Learner" versus "Judger" mode can promote greater trust and consciously shift relationships to be more positive and effective.

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[32] Adams, M. (2015). *Change you Questions Change Your Life: 12 Powerful Tools for Leadership, Coaching, and Life* (3rd ed.). Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

[33] Marilee Adams, PhD is a founder and partner with The Center for Inquiring Leadership. As an executive coach and corporate consultant, she has spoken on the art of Question Thinking and Inquiring Leadership to such organizations as Lockheed Martin, NASA, the Society for Human Resource Managers, the American Society of Training and Development, and many others. Marilee's background includes being a psychotherapist with over 25 years in private practice.

3. <u>Establish a Learning Culture</u>
What is a Learning Culture?

- Culture exerts an important influence on organizations and the people who work in them, yet culture is often not included or not highlighted as part of many organizational initiatives.[34]
  - o Culture in simple term refers to how things are done in organizations. Culture is the organization personified. It tells the organization's story: who it is; how the actions of employees, managers and external partners overcame challenges to bring it to where it is today; and the qualities that will take it where it wants to go. An organization's culture expresses its unique personality, character and philosophy.[35]
- Healthy organizations are characterized by clear and consistent openness to experience, encouragement of responsible risk-taking, and willingness to acknowledge failures and learn from them.
- A learning culture translates to a culture in which learning, and development are valued, encouraged and seen as fundamental to the organization's successful operation.[36] Peter Senge (1990) first identified the features of a learning organization, with a crucial component being the mobilization of teams and individuals seeking to maximize their effectiveness as learners.[37]
- A learning organization can be defined as that which is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.[38]
- *Learning organizations:*[39]
  - o Value the knowledge and skills acquired and applied in the workplace, keeping in mind the principles of andragogy–or adult learning theory–throughout employee learning engagements.
  - o Motivate employees to seek out self-directed learning opportunities.
  - o Implement a variety of processes, tools and resources that encourage self-improvement through learning.
  - o Include leaders who support an organization's desire to improve, adapt, adjust and thrive in a today's quick-changing environment.

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[34] Kuenzi, M., and Schminke, M.A. (2009). Fragmented literature? A review, critique, and proposed research agenda of the work climate literature. *J Management, 35*: 634-717.

[35] Lowe, G. (2010). *Healthy Organizations: How vibrant workplaces inspire employees to achieve sustainable success.* Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

[36] Williams, S. (2010) Developing communities of practice: a strategy for effective leadership, management and supervision in social work. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 14*(2): 20-36.

[37] Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday Currency.; Senge, Peter. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York: Broadway Business.

[38] Austin, M. (2008). Strategies for transforming human service organizations into learning organizations: Knowledge management and the transfer of learning. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 5*(3-4), 569-596.

[39] Fulcrum Labs. (2017, September 11). *An Introduction to Learning Culture: What it Means and How the Industry is Poised to Support Them* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.fulcrumlabs.ai/blog/introduction-learning-culture/

- o   Involve people working interdependently with each other, in teams, projects, and other collaborative forms.[40]

Benefits of Learning Cultures within Human Services Agencies[41]

- ● Aligns with existing continuous quality improvement (CQI)[42] requirements for HSAs.
- ● Increases employee engagement, which has a direct impact on productivity, retention, and customer satisfaction. Learn more from Gallup's research report, *[The State of the Global Workplace.](#)*
- ● Builds a "growth mindset" within employees and across the organization. [Dr. Carol Dweck's research](#) shows that a "growth mindset" yields ever-higher levels of performance where people learn from their mistakes and actively seek out challenges.
- ● Enhances creativity and innovation within individuals and teams. Dr. Brené Brown's book *[Daring Greatly](#)* illustrates that when companies encourage risk-taking and invite the valuable lessons that come from failure, creativity and innovation soar. In other words, they allow learning to occur.
- ● High performing learning organizations are 92 percent more likely to innovate, have a 26 percent greater ability to deliver quality products and experience 37 percent greater employee productivity (according to [Bersin by Deloitte).](#)
- ● Improves motivation among employees. In his book *[Drive,](#)* Dan Pink synthesizes a wide range of research on motivation. Studies show that humans are most motivated by autonomy, mastery, and meaningful purpose. Learning naturally empowers employees to be self-directed and gives them opportunities to grow and improve.
- ● Employees from the younger generations expect a workplace that will continually feed their minds and build their skills. According to [Deloitte's report](#) (2016) on corporate learning trends, training and development opportunities are the most popular benefits an employer can offer to Millennials (born between 1981-1996). This means creating work cultures that are geared toward constant learning.

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[40] Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

[41] Gill, S. (2009). *[Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations](#)*. Sage Publications, Inc., 46-47. Retrieved from https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/29978_Chapter3.pdf

[42] Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is —the complete process of identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and problems and then testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions. It relies on an organizational culture that is proactive and supports continuous learning. CQI is firmly grounded in the overall mission, vision, and values of the agency. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of staff at all levels of the agency, children, youth, families, and stakeholders throughout the process.
Source: Casey Family Programs and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. (2005). *[Using Continuous Quality Improvement to Improve Child Welfare Practice – A Framework for Implementation](#)*. Author. Retrieved from http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/rcpdfs/CQIFramework.pdf (August 27, 2012); [(ACIN) No. I-84-16](#) (Nov. 22, 2016).

Creating a Learning Culture

- Leaders must model the behavior they want to see in their supervisors, provide training on how a learning organization works, share their philosophy around learning, and create a climate where supervisors appreciate and understand that:[43]
  - o Learning underlies constant improvement, operational excellence and innovation.
  - o Learning is key to the organization's long-term future. It keeps workers' skills up to date, if not ahead of the curve.
  - o Learning improves safety - reducing the potential for errors/mistakes.
  - o Learning prepares employees for growth opportunities, which is linked to increased employee retention.
  - o If employees take time to develop skills, they are less prone to making mistakes on-the-job and are stronger contributors and team members.
- Adopt continuous quality improvement (CQI) in its most non-judgmental mindset, including really listening to supervisors and staff about why they are getting the outcomes they are. In addition, following through to make changes as appropriate promotes an effective learning culture.
- Since culture is an organization-wide issue, leaders/supervisors must ensure that each worker recognizes the value learning offers to him/her as an individual as well as to the organization as a whole. This can be done via:[44]
  - o Integrating a culture of learning into the hiring and onboarding process.
  - o Including learning among organization and employees' values.
  - o Ensuring that core values demonstrated in everyday actions are consistent with the values of learning. Talk about this alignment of values with direct reports.
  - o Promoting curiosity and inquiry skills. Ask questions that test assumptions, stimulate new ways of thinking and open new avenues to explore.[45]
  - o Helping direct reports learn what they need to know to do their job effectively-and encourage them to apply learning after training/practice new skills.
  - o Praising individuals and teams that use learning as one of their indicators of success and create ceremonies that give recognition to significant learning efforts or "aha" moments.
  - o Empowering employees and teams to discover and develop their own strengths using *Clifton Strengths assessment*.
  - o Actively promoting training and development opportunities for staff.

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[43] Feffer, M. (2017, July 20). *8 Tips for Creating a Learning Culture* [Blog post]. Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Retrieved from: https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0817/pages/8-tips-for-creating-a-learning-culture.aspx

[44] Ibid.; Gill, S. (2009). *Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations.* Sage Publications, Inc. P. 46-47. Retrieved from https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/29978_Chapter3.pdf;

[45] Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons. P. 151.

- o Allowing employees (including leaders/supervisors) to dedicate time to formal and informal learning that will enhance their capacity to do their work more effectively. including,
- o Facilitating "psychological hardiness" among direct reports. "Psychological hardiness" is a distinctive attitude of individuals who experience a high degree of stress and yet can cope with it in a positive manner. This approach can be learned and supervisors can help support direct reports with the following three key factors: [46]
    1. *Commitment*-commit to what is happening, become involved, engaged, curious.
    2. *Control*-make an effort to influence what is going on.
    3. *Challenge*-view the challenge as an opportunity to learn from both the positive and negative experiences.
- o Evaluating employee performances based on learning as well. New models for performance management demonstrate that measuring learning, along with performance, ultimately increases both.
- o Developing larger scale learning events that are explicitly linked to the strategic goals of the organization.
- *Systemic approaches*: [47]
    - o Developing a philosophy and shared values around learning and implementing a learning culture.
    - o Conducting employee surveys to establish benchmarks in areas such as knowledge and performance. Over time, measuring against those variables to gauge learning's impact on retention, internal mobility, organizational results, agency errors and other factors.
    - o Assessing and comparing the perceived current culture with the desired learning culture (e.g. via staff feedback surveys, focus groups).
    - o Developing a shared plan with other leaders/supervisors for what the organization must do to move from the current culture to the desired learning culture.
    - o Monitoring and supporting the implementation of the shared plan.
    - o Making the artifacts of learning visible to employees in the agency, such as a library, spaces for formal and informal conversations among employees, benefits that support education, and online access to just-in-time information/trainings.

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[46] Ibid. P. 175-76.
[47] Gill, S. (2009). *Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations*. Sage Publications, Inc. P. 46-47. Retrieved from https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/29978_Chapter3.pdf; Feffer, M. (2017, July 20). *8 Tips for Creating a Learning Culture* [Blog post]. Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Retrieved from: https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0817/pages/8-tips-for-creating-a-learning-culture.aspx

o   Always assessing the results of agency-wide learning culture efforts. Measure the usage and effectiveness of different learning channels.

4. <u>Promote Supportive Supervision and Increase Employee Engagement</u>
What is Supportive Supervision?

- Supportive supervision is a facilitative approach to supervision that promotes mentorship, joint problem-solving and communication between supervisors and their direct reports.[48]
  - o   Foundational to supportive supervision is the establishment of psychological safety and trust within the HSA and within the dyad (as discussed in *1. Create an Environment Where Psychological Safety is Valued* and *Supported;* and *2. Model Trust and Relationship-building in the Workplace*).
  - o   Supportive supervision is carried out in a respectful and non-authoritarian way with a focus on using supervision as an opportunity to improve the knowledge and skills of staff. It includes regular follow-up with direct reports and checking in frequently for understanding.
  - o   Supportive supervision focuses on helping to make things work, rather than checking to see what is wrong. It includes creating a safe space for direct reports to process their experiences and even share mistakes-while supervisors model mindfulness, compassion, empathy, and emotional regulation.[49]

    - Offering employees a secure base for processing and exploring together can reduce anxieties, promote resilience and may also prevent agency errors, especially at times when their jobs are particularly stressful.

    - The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) states that supportive supervision provides the "management of work-related stress and assistance to staff in coping with work related issues."

  - o   Commonly used in HSAs, strengths-based supervision consists of administrative, educational *and* supportive supervision roles. Approaching supervision with this balance allows for supervisors to increase collaboration with their direct reports without undermining their own authority. See *Figure 4* on the following page.[50]

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[48] Marquez, L, & Kean, L. (2002). *Making Supervision Supportive and Sustainable: New Approaches to Old Problems, Maximizing Access and Quality Initiative [MAQ Paper No. 4]*. Washington, DC:
U.S. Agency for International Development; University of California, Davis. (2019, May 9). *Supportive Supervision Series 1: Supporting Your Team*. Retrieved from https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACS924.pdf

[49] Biggart, L., Ward, E., Cook, L., & Schofield, G. (2017). The team as a secure base: Promoting resilience and competence in child and family social work. *Children and Youth Services Review, 83*, 119-130.

[50] Lietz, C. A., & Rounds, T. (2009). Strength-based supervision: A child welfare supervision training project. *The Clinical Supervisor, 28*(2), 124-140.

Figure 4: Three Key Roles Supervision Plays in Practice

Evidence-base for Supportive Supervision

- People require a supportive environment to be the best they can be.[51]
- Research shows that a supportive supervision approach, where supervisors and their staff work collaboratively to solve problems and improve performance, delivers improved results for the clients/community served, the overall agency and employee retention.[52]
- Considerable research has been done on the topic of child welfare caseworker retention with findings consistently showing two interrelated factors as having the biggest impact on caseworkers staying in their roles: 1) organizational culture and climate, and 2) supervisory support. Supervisory support is the extent to which caseworkers believe their supervisors offer them instrumental (knowledge/skill) and affective (emotional) support. Supervisor support appears to have an impact on caseworker retention *across* their career.[53]
- Beyond HSAs, supportive supervision is also positively regarded in other high-risk, high-stress occupations.
  - In police supervision, modern approaches emphasize not just direction and control but also fair and supportive relationships with subordinates. Research within law enforcement agencies found a high correlation between police officers who viewed their supervisors as fair, supportive, and

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[51] Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons. P. 186.

[52] Velazquez, J., Robertson, Clinton D., Patrick, Amy, & Young, William. (2016). *The Impact of Perceived Supportive Supervision on Staff Retention in a Human Service Nonprofit*, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Bethell, J., Chu, C., Wodchis, W., Walker, K., Stewart, S., & McGilton, K. (2018). Supportive Supervision and Staff Intent to Turn Over in Long-Term Care Homes. *The Gerontologist*, *58*(5), 953-959.

[53] Williams, N. & Glisson, C. (2013). Reducing turnover is not enough: The need for proficient organizational cultures to support positive youth outcomes in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review. 35*(10).

engaged in practices that set expectations and overall job satisfaction; while other variables, such as age, race and gender demonstrated weak relationships to overall satisfaction and perceptions of fairness, support and direction.[54]

o Among police officers, findings also indicate that from a supportive supervision approach, supervisors are in a unique position to shape how police officers view stressful events and challenges in their careers. The supervisor who—through example and discussion—communicates a positive construction or reconstruction of shared stressful experience may exert an influence on the direct report in the direction of his/her interpretation of the experience.[55]

• In a time of crisis, a supervisor's support and personal connection can mean the difference between finding an event manageable or having the crisis turn problematic and pathological. Supportive supervision also draws attention away from the negative, engaging direct reports in positive and active problem-solving. This permits the worker to derive meaning from the situation and enhance their ability to exercise more control in the process and when in a future crisis.

Using Supportive Supervision Methods to Increase Employee Engagement

• According to 2018 Gallup research, only 34 percent of United States employees are currently "engaged" (enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace) and 13 percent are "actively disengaged." The remaining 53 percent of workers are in the "not engaged" category. They may be generally satisfied but are not cognitively and emotionally connected to their work and workplace; they will usually show up to work and do the minimum required.[56]

o Disengaged workers had 37 percent higher absenteeism, 49 percent more accidents, and 60 percent more errors and defects, contributing to a 450-500 billion dollar a year in losses in productivity.[57]

• Aligned with supportive supervision, there are three main ways agency leaders/ supervisors can contribute to improved engagement of their employees. These include:[58]

[54] Cronin, S., McDevitt, J., & Cordner, G. (2017). Police supervision: Perspectives of subordinates. *Policing, 40*, 26-41.

[55] Paton, D., & Violanti, J.M. (2008). Law enforcement response to terrorism: The role of the resilient police organization. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health, 10-2*, 125-136. Paton, D. & Stephens, C. (1996). Training and support for emergency responders. In Paton, D. & Violanti, J. (Eds.), *Traumatic stress in critical occupations: Recognition, consequences and treatment.* Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

[56] Figures from Gallup's *State of the American Workplace Report (2018)* are based on a random employee engagement survey sample of 30,628 full- and part-time U.S. employees working for an employer from January to June 2018.

[57] Cameron, E. & Seppala, K. (2017, May 8). Proof That Positive Work Cultures Are More Productive. *Harvard Business Review.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2015/12/proof-that-positive-work-cultures-are-more-productive

[58] Gallup, D. (2018). *New Rules of Engagement for Social Work Leaders [PowerPoint slides].* Retrieved from: https://drive.google.com/file/d/18KejWrhBFq4MG7m8h3dQYlpnRcyunD9d/view

1. *Autonomy:* Create a workplace that cares about the health and wellness of the person-not just the employee.
2. *Mastery:* Ensure everyone in the organization can grow and be challenged (small successes lead to accomplishment of more difficult/challenging issues).
3. *Purpose:* Help everyone to be a part of the mission and allowing creativity and autonomy to drive passion and motivation.

- Increasing opportunities for supervisors to meet face-to-face with their direct reports can also be beneficial for increasing employee engagement.
    - o Studies have shown that the use of voice is preferred over written communications. Written communications lack paralinguistic cues that provide critical information to the listener. Overall, individuals are more likeable, intelligent, and positively received through verbal communication.[59]
- Keeping engaged employees on the radar is also important, as one in five *engaged* employees are at risk of burnout according to a recent Yale study.[60]
    - o The key to burnout prevention rests with the executive leadership and those in supervisory positions. Practices and policies need to be incorporated into agency guidelines that promote wellness, staff recognition, as well as support in performing their day-to-day tasks.[61]
    - o Engaged employees need the opportunity to recover from high demand work experiences and disengage when off work.
    - o Establish realistic goals as stretch goals can often be demotivating. Employees need to feel successful and good about their work.
    - o Practice the social work skills of empathy and compassion.
    - o When risk and complexity of the job increases, staff need more direction and guidance from supervisors.[62]
    - o Tap into employee's intrinsic motivators (derived from intangible factors). When employees are intrinsically motivated, they are 32 percent more committed to (and 46 percent more satisfied with) their jobs, suffer significantly less burnout than other employees do, and perform 16 percent better.[63]
        - Human beings are all driven by basic needs for meaning, happiness, human connectedness, and a desire to contribute positively to

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[59] Schroeder, J., & Epley, N. (2015). The Sound of Intellect: Speech Reveals a Thoughtful Mind, Increasing a Job Candidate's Appeal. *Psychological Science, 26*(6), 877-891.

[60] Seppala, E., & Moeller, J. (2018). 1 in 5 Highly Engaged Employees is at Risk of Burnout. *Harvard Business Review, 96*(1).

[61] He, A. S., Phillips, J. D., Lizano, E. L., Rienks, S., & Leake, R. (2018). Examining internal and external job resources in child welfare: Protecting against caseworker burnout. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 81*, 48–59.

[62] Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.

[63] McKinsey & Company & The Conference Board. (2012). *The State of Human Capital 2012: False Summit. Why the Human Capital Function Still has Far to Go.* Retrieved from https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/organization/pdfs/state_of_human_capital_2012.ashx

others. leaders/supervisors that truly understand these needs, and lead in a way that enables these intrinsic motivations, have the keys to enable strong loyalty, engagement and performance among their employees.[64]

o Promote "positive psychology," which focuses on broadened thinking, enhanced flexibility of thought, creativity and problem-solving. Positive psychology focuses on the positive events and influences in life, including:[65]

- *Positive experiences (like happiness, joy, inspiration, and love).*
- *Positive states and traits (like gratitude, resilience, and compassion).*
- *Positive social relationships (family, friends, coworkers, mentors).*
- *Positive institutions (such as work settings that enhance individuals by promoting positive emotions and positive character traits. These institutions provide goals and values that guide individuals to make choices and develop the best aspects of themselves).*

Positive psychology is particularly helpful during times of psychological distress at work as such positive emotions promote psychological resilience. In fact, the experience of positive emotions after significant stressors are found to predict reduced depressive symptoms and increased posttraumatic growth. Positive psychology research further indicates that using building and working with an individual's strengths may be more beneficial that working on weaknesses. Using and building character strengths is not as emotionally or mentally taxing as addressing a weakness.[66]

o Tune into the factors that can get in the way of knowing what is important to direct reports, both individually and collectively.

- Tools such as segmented employee engagement surveys, focus groups, and personal conversations can guide supervisors in taking the actions that will help keep their employees engaged and committed to the organization.[67]

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[64] Hougaard, R., Carter, J., Brewerton, V. (2018, January 28). Why Do So Many Managers Forget They're Human Beings? *Harvard Business Review.* Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2018/01/why-do-so-many-managers-forget-theyre-human-beings

[65] Schueller, S. (2012). *Positive Psychology.* 140-147. Positive Psychology Program. (2018, April 20). *What is Positive Psychology & Why is it Important? Definition + Examples.* Retrieved from https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-positive-psychology-definition/

[66] Ibid.

[67] Brown, K. (2018, December 4). To Retain Employees, Focus on Inclusion — Not Just Diversity. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2018/12/to-retain-employees-focus-on-inclusion-not-just-diversity

5. Invest in a Diverse Array of Supervisory Supports

- Investing in strengthening the quality and capacity of HSAs supervisors is one of the most important strategic steps agency Leaders can take.[68]
  - o Within the field of Child Welfare Services, research shows that supporting supervisors in their critical role within an agency is as important as maintaining best practice standards for supervisor-supervisee ratios.[69]
  - o Supervisors affect not only the quality and effectiveness of work staff perform with vulnerable populations, but they influence staff retention and organizational climate and culture as well.[70]

Define What is Expected of Supervisors and Train Them to Meet Those Expectations[71]

- Workgroups or committees may be gathered to review, and revamp policies and procedures related to performance expectations of supervisors. As part of the revamping, the HSA needs to define and document supervisory role expectations (e.g. purpose of supervision, style of supervision, frequency of supervision, and activities that should occur during supervision).
- In addition, the HSA needs to prepare supervisors to meet these expectations by training them on and providing written guidance about agency supervision policies and procedures and the activities that should occur during supervision.

Utilize Leadership Feedback Tools (e.g. 360 Reviews)

- Professional development for Leaders is not just for technology and "hard" skills. Key "human" or interpersonal skills like self-control, empathy, humility, communication, vulnerability, balance, openness, conflict resolution and inclusiveness can also be learned. And developing these skills drive measurable benefits throughout the agency.
- To help hone leadership skills, utilize professional feedback tools such as 360 reviews/evaluations *for every level of agency leadership* (from supervisors to Directors).
  - o Routine annual or semi-annual employee performance reviews rarely provide feedback that leads to the professional development of the employee. Typically, a standard job review focuses on the employee's level of success (or failure) in performing their current job duties and not much more. In addition, these reviews only involve the employee receiving feedback from a single perspective: their manager's. While a standard review

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[68] Salus, M. (2004). *Supervising child protective services caseworkers*. Washington DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015061858919.

[69] Casey Family Programs. (Updated January 2018). *Issue Brief: Healthy Organizations*. Retrieved from https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/

[70] National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2017). *Organizational support & turnover intention*. Retrieved from http://www.chadwickcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Kim__Mor_Barak_2015.pdf

[71] Casey Family Programs. (Updated January 2018). *Issue Brief: Healthy Organizations*. Retrieved from https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/

is about the job an employee is doing, a 360 Review is about the employee themselves which makes it more personal and powerful.[72]

o In a 360 review, the combined perspective of a manager, several peers, and direct reports about the teamwork, communication, leadership potential, and management skills of an employee helps to create balance among the different perspectives and to create a clear picture for the employee about their own behavior, impact, and skills.[73]

o 360 reviews focus on three key pieces of feedback:[74]

▪ *Identifying a starting point for development of new skills*

▪ *Measuring progress as the subject works on skills over time.*

▪ *Identifying the personal blind spots of behavior that everyone has, and the impact of that behavior on others.*

Train Supervisors to Use Data When Meeting with Direct Reports

- In addition to providing training to meet supervisory expectations, training supervisors to use data as part of their discussions during one-on-one supervision meetings with direct reports can prove beneficial.[75] Data may come from multiple sources, such as: case-level data from an information system, performance data for an individual worker, agency case reviews, and federal/state reports on outcomes. This also supports Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts required within HSAs. Agencies may also provide supplementary support to supervisors through the availability of coaches, mentors, or quality improvement staff.[76]

Provide Tools and Resources to Supervisors for Reference When Meeting with Workers

- Toolkits or other written resources that supervisors can use to guide their one-on-one or group supervision with direct reports can not only be useful but also promote consistency across the organization. These toolkits may include items such as detailed guidance on how to prepare for supervision sessions, reflective questions to lead difficult conversations, decision-trees and/or detailed checklists to ensure that all cases are reviewed, and action steps are clear and tracked.[77]

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[72] SurveyGizmo. (2016, August 29). *Employee Assessments: The Complete Guide to Running 360 Reviews* [Blog post] Retrieved from https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/guide-to-360-reviews-what-is-a-360-how-do-you-administer-360-feedback/

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] For example, in the field of child welfare, several jurisdictions including: Alaska Office of Children's Services, Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division and New Jersey Department of Children and Families have trained their Supervisors to use data as part of their discussions during one-on-one supervision with caseworkers

[76] Casey Family Programs. (Updated January 2018). *Issue Brief: Healthy Organizations*. Retrieved from https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/

[77] Ibid.

- o Encourage supervisors to be reflective and ask themselves questions such as:
  - ▪ *"What can I learn from my supervisee?"*
  - ▪ *"What are my blind spots? How might they influence my supervision?*
  - ▪ *"How might my supervisee perceive supervision differently than I intend?"*
  - ▪ *"What is a mistake I might be making with my supervisee? Drawing upon my strengths, how might I attain a better outcome?"*[78]

  (Note: Also refer to *5. Introduce a Reflective Framework to Learn from Mistakes* of this report for additional recommendations and questions to ask.)

- o Encourage supervisors to ask questions with an open-mind. Questions that focus on learning and understanding rather than pre-assigning motive and blame. (Refer to *2. Model Trust and Relationship-building in the Workplace* for *Question Thinking Tools: Marilee Adams Choice Map*™ and the discussion of "Learner" versus "Judger" questions.)

Provide Supervision to Supervisors

- • Supervision has a long tradition in social work practice and in other professions within the health and human services field. While there is strong evidence of its importance, it is also clear that in some HSAs the practice of supervision has been eroding, both in terms of the consistency with which it is provided and its overall quality, with supervision often restricted to a focus on administrative issues. There is a compelling need to implement robust supervisory structures in order to foster positive client outcomes and to maintain a healthy and effective workforce.[79]
  - o To address this within Child Welfare Services, several states[80] have undertaken specific efforts to ensure that supervisors receive regular supervision from their managers. These agencies have specified the purpose, frequency, and length of time for this supervision; provided detailed guidance and topics for these interactions (e.g. caseloads, staff

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[78] Newman, D. S., Guiney, M., & Silva, A. E. (2017). Strengths-based supervision in school psychology: Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative. *NASP Communiqué*, *46*(1).

[79] Hoge, M., Migdole, A., Cannata, S., & Powell, E. (2014). Strengthening Supervision in Systems of Care: Exemplary Practices in Empirically Supported Treatments. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 42*(2), 171-181.

[80] Alaska Office of Children's Services. (2011). *Supervisors' Strategic Plan: 2010-201*; Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division. (2012). *Improving Supervision by Collaboration, Transparency & Accountability: The Impact of Missouri's Supervision Advisory Committee* (as part of a NCWWI Webinar). Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/39008098; Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division. (2015, February 26). *Clinical supervision process and guide (Memorandum).* Retrieved from https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/wp-content/themes/mogovwp_dssmanuals/public/cd/memos/2015/cd15-012.pdf

performance issues, agency policy updates); and noted whether and when these interactions should be one-on-one or group based.[81]

o Hoge, et al. (2014) recommends a comprehensive, implementation science-based approach for restoring the consistency and quality of supervision within service agencies and organized systems of care.

▪ This framework involves the use of evidence-based teaching principles to educate employees at all levels of the agency about optimal practices in supervision. Staff training is complemented by the development of organizational standards that create uniform expectations and supports. When combined, these workforce and organizational interventions create a culture of supervision within an agency and its capacity to deliver supervision effectively. One example of this is the Yale Program on Supervision.[82]

Providing Coaching to Supervisors

- Supplemental to the supervision supervisors receive from their own managers, leaders should also consider adopting or developing a coaching model for HSA supervisors. Coaching can support supervisors as they address areas of improvement from their 360 review and/or as they lead their unit in the implementation of new initiatives.
- Supervisors who receive coaching have a model they can learn from and use to coach their direct reports or other agency staff.
- Coaching employees by asking questions naturally builds their competence and confidence. Appreciative inquiry helps employees learn what made a peak performance different from the others. This information can help them to achieve that peak level more consistently.[83]

Provide Materials, Tools and Activities for Supervisors to Support On-The-Job Training of Direct Reports[84]

- Develop tools and activities that supervisors can use with new staff, who are still in an on-the-job training period. These tools can provide supervisors with information about the training new staff receive, as well as, suggest transfer-of-learning (TOL) activities that supervisors can assign to direct reports that align with each training.

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[81] Casey Family Programs. (Updated January 2018). *Issue Brief: Healthy Organizations*. Retrieved from https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/

[82] Hoge, M., Migdole, A., Cannata, S., & Powell, E. (2014). Strengthening Supervision in Systems of Care: Exemplary Practices in Empirically Supported Treatments. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 42*(2), 171-181.

[83] Andreatta, B. (2015, Oct. 12). *6 Steps to Creating a Learning Culture — and Why You Should* [Blog post]. LinkedIn. Retrieved from https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/learning-thought-leadership/6-steps-to-creating-a-learning-culture--and-why-you-should

[84]Casey Family Programs. (Updated January 2018). *Issue Brief: Healthy Organizations*. Retrieved from https://www.casey.org/what-are-preliminary-building-blocks-to-strengthen-quality-supervision/

o In Child Welfare and Adult Protective Services some jurisdictions have taken steps to ensure supervisors receive the same or shortened supervisory versions of the training provided to caseworkers to ensure supervisors can support and promote the transfer of skills taught in training to application in the field.

o Other approaches have included jointly reviewing handouts provided during training and discussing the information and its implications for casework practice or shadowing the direct report/service providers working with an individual or family (e.g. when discussing service treatment goals or tracking a client or family's progress) or performing a new job function.

o Brief on-demand online learning tools (e.g., eLearnings or microlearnings) targeted to supervisors to support the training and development of their direct reports are a convenient option as well.

6. Initiate Supervisor Learning Circles to Promote Peer Support and Collaboration

Communities of Practice [85]

- A crucial component of a learning organization includes mobilizing teams and individuals seeking to maximize their effectiveness as learners.[86] This can be achieved by the establishment of internal organizational mechanisms such as regular work group reflections on issues, practices or topics of concern.[87]

- By working cooperatively and meaningfully together in a community of practice, acknowledging the uncertainty of practice, as well as their own learning and development concerns, a meaningful learning culture is more likely to emerge.

- Developing communities of practice focuses on the micro-level activity on which organizational learning processes depend. It places team and group activity (people engaging together who are not necessarily from the same agency/organization but who share common interests, concerns and responsibilities) at the heart of service and practice development and it relies on team or group leadership to be effective. An opportunity that can prove truly productive in enhancing service quality, improving performance and building a bridge between managerialism and professional values, practices and experiences.

- One approach, a Supervisor Learning Circle model, builds on what makes an effective learning organization,[88] as it allows members to receive feedback from

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[85] Williams, S. (2010) Developing communities of practice: a strategy for effective leadership, management and supervision in social work. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 14*(2): 20-36.

[86] Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday Currency.

[87] Austin, M. (2008). Strategies for transforming human service organizations into learning organizations: Knowledge management and the transfer of learning. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work, 5*(3-4), p. 569-596.

[88] Ibid; Garvin, D. (1998). Building a learning organization. In Harvard Business Review (Ed.), *Knowledge Management* (pp. 47-80). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

peers about what they are learning and trying out on the job and lets them observe new processes, approaches and skills modeled by others.

Supervisor Learning Circles

- *Peer support:*
  - o One of the multiple factors that influences workers' sense of commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay is feeling supported by peers.[89] Supervisor Learning Circles can offer a venue for supervisors to support each other and dialogue in a proactive manner.
  - o A lack of peer support is linked to higher levels of burnout. Supervisors may seek support from peers in order to vent or cope with stress.[90] Supervisor Learning Circles provides this venue and allows supervisors to share both their experiences and solutions to common problems.
- Research shows that adults learn best when they are building incrementally on what they already know in an environment that allows for problem definition and action. Supervisor Learning Circles provide a setting for such processing among peers which can lead to practical knowledge acquisition and skill-building.
- Mechanisms used in Learning Circles teach and model behaviors, facilitation skills and tools that Learning Circle members can adapt to a range of team-building and learning activities in their organization.[91]
- Potentially, the connections a Learning Circle generates among supervisors can build relationships, even across agencies, which are necessary for effective teaming and future collaboration among its members.
- Within Learning Circles, when supervisors feel psychologically safe enough to contribute insight, opinion, or suggestion, the knowledge in the room thereby increases exponentially. This is because individual observations and suggestions build on each other, taking new shape and creating new value, especially compared to what happens when individual feedback is collected separately. It helps enormously if people respect each other's expertise and trust each other's opinions. Having people around who make us "think smarter" gets to the heart of why psychological safety is essential to innovation and progress. People can think smarter if others in the room speak their minds.[92]

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[89] Lawrence, C. K., Zeitlin, W., Auerbach, C., Chakravarty, S., & Rienks, S. (2018). Measuring the impact of public perceptions on child welfare workers. *Journal of Public Child Welfare.*

[90] He, A. S., Phillips, J. D., Lizano, E. L., Rienks, S., & Leake, R. (2018). Examining internal and external job resources in child welfare: Protecting against caseworker burnout. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 81*, 48–59.

[91] Siegal, W., Kappaz, C., & Dowell P. (2006). *Learning Circles: An Effective Model for Professional Development and Organizational Capacity Building.* Millennia Consulting, LLC. Retrieved from https://www.issuelab.org/resource/learning-circles-an-effective-model-for-professional-development-and-organizational-capacity-building.html

[92] Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Supervisor Learning Circles can also be an effective vehicle for Leaders to introduce complex agency changes or new initiatives because they:
  - o *Create a sense of ownership and motivates the team.*
  - o *Support the personal development necessary to respond to the change.*
  - o *Build flexible teams that can adjust to the change.*
  - o *Mobilize the team to problem-solve, drawing on the team's resources and facilitating creativity and innovation.*[93]

7. Provide Practice Settings that Allow for Responsible Risk-Taking

- Within HSAs it is important to encourage responsible risk-taking and the willingness to acknowledge and learn from errors made. As stated prior, HSAs that value learning as a path to mastery make it safe to take risks—and even mistakes.[94]
- In the past decade, there has been an increase in learning environments for HSA staff that go beyond role-playing with peers in classroom-based settings when looking to hone skills, practice and be vulnerable without "real world" impacts.
- Simulation models are commonly used for creating realistic learning environments. This approach is established on the assumption that classroom and field training activities should be made to be as similar and as authentic as possible to real-life scenarios. Examples include simulation labs, virtual reality, and gamification in eLearning, which are described in more detail below.

Simulation Labs

- Simulation labs are a technique for education and training that were first used successfully in other disciplines—including aviation, the military, and medicine.[95]
- Simulation labs are a strategy, not a technology, to replace or amplify real experiences with guided experiences, often immersive in nature, that evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in a fully interactive fashion.[96]
- This is a method of instruction whereby an artificial or hypothetical experience engages the learner in an activity reflecting real-life conditions, but without the risk-taking consequences of an actual situation.[97]
- In HSAs, simulation labs are mockup exercises that promote, develop, and reinforce key skills needed in the human services field (e.g. client engagement, critical thinking, assessment, interviewing techniques, safety, decision-making, analysis, and

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[93] Williams, S. (2010) Developing communities of practice: a strategy for effective leadership, management and supervision in social work. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 14*(2): 20-36.

[94] Andreatta, B. (2015, October 12). *6 Steps to Creating a Learning Culture-and Why You Should* [Blog post]. LinkedIn. Retrieved from https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/learning-thought-leadership/6-steps-to-creating-a-learning-culture--and-why-you-should

[95] Hayhurst, C. (2018). Reality augmented: modeling and simulation bring new vision to healthcare. *Biomedical Instrumentation & Technology, 52*(5), 340-348.

[96]Gaba, D. (2007). The future vision of simulation in healthcare. *Quality & Safety in Healthcare, 13*(1),i2-i10.

[97] Bastable, S.B. (2008). *Nurses Educator (3rd edition).* Sudbery, MA: Jones and Bartlett.

problem-solving). A training simulation activity aims to mimic the conditions and content of a task that an HSA worker will encounter while on-the-job.

- o Like health professionals many HSA workers need to develop competence in interviewing and to deal with the tension of balancing workers' authority and offers of support, providing empathy while responding to resistance and anger, and setting limits in the face of provocation.[98] Simulation labs can offer a setting to practice this.

- Recent studies in the use of simulation-based training in social work have demonstrated its usefulness.[99] According to such research, HSA staff may benefit from simulation training because it:
  - o *Allows people to practice their skills and receive feedback from trainers and peers without real-world consequences.*
  - o *Encourages trainers to break down a set of skills into manageable subsets.*
  - o *Increases the likelihood that newly acquired skills will transfer to real-life situations because the simulation looks and feels like an actual job experience.*[100]

- For more information on simulation labs in Child Welfare Services refer to Capacity Building Center for States' *[Simulations in Child Welfare Training: Moving Beyond Role Play](#)*. In addition, a few simulation lab training model examples include:
  - o *[Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services: DCFS University](#)*
  - o *[California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) Residential Simulation Lab](#)*
  - o *[The Academy for Professional Excellence-Child Welfare Development Services (CWDS) Simulation Site](#)*
  - o *[University of Illinois Springfield, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Residential Simulation Lab](#)*

Virtual Reality

- Virtual reality (VR) is a realistic three-dimensional image or artificial computer-generated environment which use interactive hardware (headsets) and software. The user of VR interacts with an environment in a seemingly real or physical way. Virtual reality experiences (VRE) are intended to give the viewer a realistic experience inside a virtual world, using technology to influence the human brain into believing that what the user is experiencing is real.
  - o Benefits to using VR as a training modality is it can allow the user to access environments that may not be accessible to create and practice experiences trainees are likely to encounter while on the job.

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[98] Bogo, M., Shlonsky, A., Lee, B., & Serbinski, S. (2014). Acting like it matters: A scoping review of simulation in child welfare training. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, *8*(1), p. 89.

[99] Logie, C., Bogo, M., Regehr, C., & Regehr, G. (2013). The use of standardized clients in social work education: A critical synthetic review. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *49*(1), 66–80.

[100] Ibid.

- Research studies evaluating the effectiveness of VR as a training modality, have found it can transfer learning in education settings more effectively than traditional methods.[101] Studies show that using VR to train users to adapt skills and knowledge can be even more effective than classroom training.[102]

- VR has been emerging as a training and development tool for health and human services, especially as developments in technology have made VR tools more accessible and affordable. HSAs are using VR to immerse individuals in VR experiences to teach skills that have shown to have a successful impact on their transfer of learning on-the-job.

  o Deloitte has developed the *GoCase Virtual Reality Application* that allows social workers to assess the safety and risk factors inside of a family's home. The social worker uses a headset to experience the simulation, while their supervisor guides the worker using a checklist to ensure the worker accurately assesses the items inside the house. The headset being used for this application is cost-effective, priced at 13-20 dollars. This application was in the pilot stage in a Louisiana child welfare agency in 2017, with plans for it to be available for purchase by other jurisdictions soon.[103]

  o The *Academy for Professional Excellence* has been researching and exploring VR as a training modality for child welfare workers. They are looking to use VR as an enhancement to current training and simulation experiences. For more information visit the [Academy's Virtual Reality website](#).

Using Gamification in eLearning

- Gamification in eLearning has become increasingly popular since it offers a wide range of advantages for learners and can help make the overall eLearning experience not only more enjoyable, but more effective. Gamification in eLearning is the use of game theory and game mechanics in non-game contexts to interactively engage users in solving problems.[104] For more information on this approach, refer to [The Science and The Benefits of Gamification in eLearning](#).

- Gamification in eLearning helps create an effective training tool for HSA employees that enables learners to rehearse real-life scenarios and challenges in a safe

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[101] Payne, C. (2017, November). *Research Summary: Virtual Reality* (Unpublished). Academy for Professional Excellence, San Diego, CA. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/123S4OP4mS7xW6FOs6AJ_3QrgU4i9EY6I_YzdAc80Ohl/edit?usp=sharing
[102] Washburn, M., Bordnick, P., & Rizzo, AS. (2016). A pilot feasibility study of virtual patient simulation to enhance social work students' brief mental health assessment skills. *Social Work Health Care. 55*(9), 675-693.; Botezatu, M., Hult, H., Tessma, M. K., & Fors, U. (2010). Virtual patient simulation for learning and assessment: Superior results in comparison with regular course exams. *Medical Teacher, 32*, 845–850.; Botezatu, M., Hult, H., Tessma, M. K., & Fors, U. (2010). Virtual patient simulation: Knowledge gain or knowledge loss? *Medical Teacher, 32*(7), 562-568.; Cook D.A., Hatala, R., Brydges, R., Zendejas, B., Szostek, J.H., Wang A.T., Erwin P.J., & Hamstra, S.J. (2011). Technology-Enhanced Simulation for Health Professions Education: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA, 306*(9), 978-988.
[103] Payne, C. (2017, November). *Research Summary: Virtual Reality* [Unpublished]. Academy for Professional Excellence, San Diego, CA. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/123S4OP4mS7xW6FOs6AJ_3QrgU4i9EY6I_YzdAc80Ohl/edit?usp=sharing
[104] Hughes, A. (2018). Benefits of Using Gamification in Your Corporate eLearning Strategy. *Training and Development Excellence Essentials, 2018*(8).

environment. This easily accessible and on-demand option empowers employees to seek and find their own answers, as well as, to quickly incorporate learning into their daily routines. The design also allows for spaced learning, so a learner can repeat the game and improve their score after more practice out in the field.

- Two current examples in the human services field include:
  - o The *University of Kent's Centre for Child Protection* computer game simulations which put workers in various child welfare scenarios to serve as training tools for social workers. There are currently eLearning simulation games that cover topics such as interviewing and engagement, courtroom skills, spotting the signs of neglect, commercial sexual exploitation of children, social media, and working with sex offenders. Each simulation can be purchased by an individual or an agency by contacting the department directly.[105]
  - o The *Academy for Professional Excellence* is using gamification to help social workers build their skills by integrating this approach into their innovative workforce development services. Their eLearning course design strives to connect the learner to the content in a way that mimics a real-world style experience. A few example courses with this inclusion:
    - Adult Protective Services Workforce Innovations (APSWI) program's *Financial Exploitation-An Introduction*
    - Child Welfare Development Services (CWDS) program's *Using Safety Organized Practice (SOP) Strategies to Demonstrate Engagement* (which uses a scenario focused on best practices for speaking with clients).[106]

8. Introduce a Reflective Framework to Learn from Mistakes[107]

Professional Errors in Social Work

- The culture of blame and punishment is one of the main obstacles to effective work in HSAs, a field animated by the genuine culture of responsibility and ethically driven by the needs of its clients. Moreover, an adverse event never has only one cause but is always the result of an intricate chain of events.[108] In complex systems providing services, like HSAs, the benefits of a learning organization where people can speak up to prevent and explore mistakes can be powerful.

[105] The Centre for Child Protection. (2018). *Child Protection Simulations*. Kent, United Kingdom: University of Kent. Retrieved from https://www.kent.ac.uk/sspssr/ccp/simulationsindex.html
[106] To learn more about the *Using Safety Organized Practice (SOP) Strategies to Demonstrate Engagement* eLearning it was recently featured on *The Gamification Quest Podcast* in January 2019. The *Gamification Quest Podcast* is hosted by Monica Cornetti. Additional gamification examples used as a learning modality are provided on The Gamification Quest Podcast website.
[107] Sicora, A. (2018). Learning from mistakes in social work. *European Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 684-696.
[108] Reason, J. (1990). *Human error*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reflective Practice: Understanding its Value and Applying it[109]

- Since human beings will always err, reflection on mistakes (with the consequent drop in the harm produced) and not the reduction of their number is the most significant factor to improve the quality of HSAs. It is imperative to ask what leaders/staff can learn when things do not go as planned.[110]

- Sicora (2018) examined mistakes in social work and looked at how their negative impacts might be reduced through the lens and framework of reflective practice.[111]

  o Learning occurs when human services workers conduct in-depth reflection. Reflective practice includes honest and brave reflection-stopping, thinking, learning and acting anytime something negative happens during one's activities.

  o Reflective practitioners work in contexts with a high degree of uncertainty and instability. Their professional activity is a continuous challenge to fulfil functions and tasks effectively using knowledge and skills constantly improved by structured reflection.

  o The circular sequence of *Experience, Reflection, Action* (ERA), describes reflective practice as a never-ending cycle where different perspectives arising from in-depth understanding of past events give new direction to further and more effective actions.[112]

- Being wrong is often an unpleasant emotional experience, but it may lead to a productive tension to maximize learning and minimize harm.

  o *Figure 5* on the following page illustrates this process graphically. It combines learning and harm as outcomes of mistakes and shows different settings of consequences of reflection on mistakes. The horizontal line describes the intensity of harm produced and the vertical one the extent of learning. The four quadrants created by the intersection of the two lines highlight four categories. Mistakes with:

    1. *Maximum learning and harm*
    2. *Maximum harm and minimum learning - the least desirable situation*
    3. *Minimum learning and harm*
    4. *Minimum harm and maximum learning - the most desirable form of error, the one where continuous reflection on professional experience should move past the great majority of mistakes.*

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[109] Sicora, A. (2018). Learning from mistakes in social work. *European Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 684-696.

[110] Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons. P. 179.

[111] Sicora, A. (2018). Learning from mistakes in social work. *European Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 684-696.

[112] Jasper, M. (2003). *Beginning reflective practice.* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Figure 5: Effects of Reflecting on a Mistake
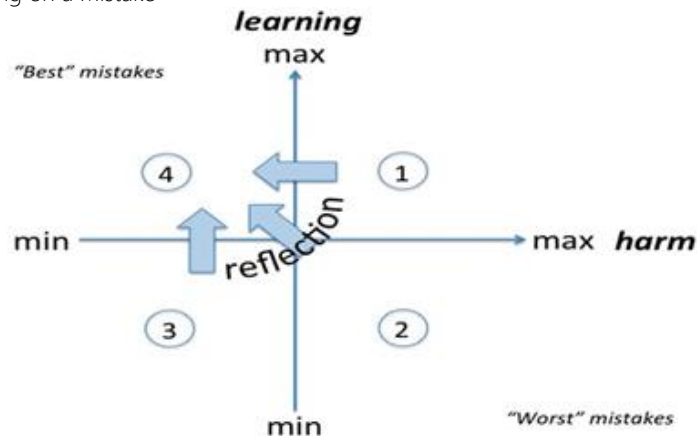
- *Figure 5* also highlights the significant connection between reflection, discovery and learning in reducing the risk of harm to service users/clients. It is essential 360-degree exploration occurs because although simplistic and one-dimensional answers to the challenges of the perceived reality may be reassuring in the short-term, they soon clash with the complexity of the lived reality of work in HSAs and become useless, if not counterproductive. Scapegoats are invariably sought, but this is a dangerous pursuit because it diverts attention and tends to disempower prevention measures and risk management systems.[113]
- "I made a mistake" is often a difficult sentence to articulate. But responsibility is much more effective than guilt as a concept to encourage an honest search for reflection-led learning to prevent harm caused by mistakes.
- The main reason to choose professional mistakes as a focus for reflection and learning is that when something goes wrong there is inevitably strong pressure to find a satisfactory explanation for what happened in order to avoid the risk of the same thing happening in the future.
  - o The advantages include: the need to innovate and explore new paths, the pressures to reduce the high cost of safety, and the opportunity to discover latent errors.
  - o Mitigating factors include: shame and guilt, as well as the fear, felt by practitioners and their managers, of being blamed and made a scapegoat when something bad happens.
- When HSA workers reflect in depth they can turn their mistakes into opportunities for new discoveries and more effective interventions. Reflective writing helps to order and record events, identify connections between information and to develop critical thinking skills.

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[113] Reason, J. (1990). *Human error*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- o With particularly challenging cases or projects, encouraging workers to set aside scheduled time for regular, concise reflective writing can also be an effective strategy to produce rich materials that gives a more global view of what happened should an error occur, and is not influenced as much by the latest episodes and the moment when the final reflection is carried out.
- Reflection may be considered at three levels: personal, dyadic (one-on-one), and with a multiplicity of people in groups or even in organizations. In the case of dyadic reflections, Taylor (2010) talks of 'critical friends' who do not criticize but offer external perspectives to extend reflective capacity in their reflection partners.[114]
- "Smart questions" are always the core of effective reflection because these probing and examining questions lead a search and encourage thinking in new directions and areas.
    - o The quality of the questions determines the value and depth of reflection.
    - o Practitioners may formulate "smart questions" or use predefined sets of questions, like Gibbs reflective cycle[115] and other reflective frameworks created for an in-depth understanding of experience.[116]
- Refer to *Appendix B* for a reflective framework focused on errors and failures in social work built by combining some of the concepts described in Sicora (2018) with some of the key questions in the above-mentioned frameworks.[117]

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[114] Taylor, B. J. (2010). *Reflective practice for healthcare professionals (3rd ed.)*. Berkshire: McGraw Hill.

[115] Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. London: Further Education Unit.

[116] Borton, T. (1970). *Reach, touch and teach*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.; Gould, N., & Baldwin, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Social work, critical reflection and the learning organization*. Aldershot: Ashgate.; Green Lister, P. (2012). *Integrating social work theory and practice: A practical skills guide*. London: Routledge.; Ingram, R., Fenton, J., Hodson, A., & Jindal-Snape, D. (2014). *Reflective social work practice*. Basingstone: Palgrave.; Jasper, M. (2003). *Beginning reflective practice*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.; Thompson, S., & Thompson, N. (2008). *The critically reflective practitioner*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

[117] Sicora, A. (2017). *Reflective practice and learning from mistakes in social work*. Bristol: Policy Press.; Taylor, B. J. (2010). *Reflective practice for healthcare professionals (3rd ed.)*. Berkshire: McGraw Hill.

Key References

Adams, M. (2015). *Change you Questions Change Your Life: 12 Powerful Tools for Leadership, Coaching, and Life (3rd ed.).* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. (Also see *Question Thinking Tools: Marilee Adams Choice Map*™)

Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Gottman, J. (2011). *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton Company.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.

Lowe, G. (2010). *Healthy Organizations: How Vibrant Workplaces Inspire Employees to Achieve Sustainable Success.* Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Zak, P. (2017). *Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performing Companies.* New York, NY: Amacom.

Additional Resources

- The Academy for Professional Excellence [Academy] developed a *Transfer of Learning Guide* (2016). The Academy has a deep commitment to developing, implementing and evaluating quality training and workforce development services and strive to provide training experiences that elicit the highest degree of Transfer of Learning (TOL) to HSA work settings and professionals. This guide highlights tips and strategies to further TOL in the workplace.
- The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) created a *Workforce Development Microlearning: Creating a Learning Culture* (2017) which is a free online module (5.5 minutes) that includes a self-assessment and strategies to promote a learning culture within a child welfare agency.
- NCWWI's *Workforce Development Microlearning: Creating a Supportive Culture* includes a free online module (4.5 minutes) with strategies that leaders at all levels can implement to create a more supportive environment to increase satisfaction and retention of employees.
- Professor Amy Edmondson's *TEDTalk: Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace.*
- Bob Kelleher and his team from *The Employee Engagement Group*™ created a brief YouTube video: *Employee Engagement - Why Is Your Boat Still Sinking?* (2016) which includes research data and recommendations related to employee engagement.
- Mental Health of America's *Mind the Workplace* report explores the psychological impact that workplaces can have on their employees. The Workplace Stress Survey measured the attitudes and perceptions of over 17,000 employees across 19 industries in the United States. Survey findings explored the relationship between workplace health and employee engagement which can be indicative of workplace stress levels, errors in the workplace and overall mental health.
- The *Manager Actions for Psychological Safety* guide can help managers think about how they model and reinforce psychological safety on their teams. Based on research, this guide offers actionable tips for managers and team members to help create team environments where everyone can contribute.
- David Rock's video *SCARF Model - Influencing Others* is a brain-based model for leading change and influencing others. A free, online *SCARF Self-Assessment* provides individuals insight into the five domains of the SCARF Model, and indicates the importance each domain currently has in one's own life. Knowing more about one's own reactions leads to better self-regulation and more options when working with other people.

<u>Appendix A: Safer Air Travel Through Crew Resource Management[118]</u>

In the 1970s, investigators discovered that more than 70 percent of air crashes involved human error rather than failures of equipment or weather. A NASA workshop examining the role of human error in air crashes *found that the majority of crew errors consisted of failures in leadership, team coordination and decision-making.[119]*

The aviation community responded by turning to psychologists such as John K. Lauber, PhD, and Robert Helmreich, PhD, to develop new kinds of psychological training for flight crews. That training focuses on group dynamics, leadership, interpersonal communications and decision-making. The training is known as crew resource management (CRM).

- CRM is the process used by crew members to identify existing and potential threats and to develop, communicate and implement plans and actions to avoid or mitigate perceived threats. Using CRM methods, airplane crews can avoid, manage and mitigate human errors. And as secondary benefits, CRM programs improve morale and enhance efficiency of operations.
- CRM alerted the aviation industry to the human interactions that are an integral part of any team performance.[120]
- The impact of CRM has been significant in terms of saving lives and money, as well as preventing accidents and lawsuits.[121]

Practical Application:
- Based on the evidence that CRM is effective, the International Civil Aviation Organization, a regulatory component of the United Nations, began requiring CRM programs for member countries. CRM also informed the development of maintenance resource management, an effort to improve teamwork among aircraft maintenance workers. The U.S. Air Force, among others, now uses MRM training programs to boost communication, effectiveness and safety among the crews that maintain and repair aircraft.

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[118] American Psychological Association. (February 2014). *Safer Air Travel Through Crew Resource Management*. Retrieved from: https://www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/crew
[119] Cooper, G. E., White, M. D., & Lauber, J. K. (Eds). (1980). *Resource management on the flightdeck: Proceedings of a NASA/industry workshop (NASA CP-2120)*. Moffett Field, CA: NASA-Ames Research Center.
[120] Sexton, J.B., & Helmreich, R.L. (2003). Using language in the cockpit: Relationships with workload and performance. In R. Dietrich (Ed.), *Communication in High Risk Environments*, 57-74. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag GmbH.
[121] Helmreich, R. L., & Foushee, H. C. (1993). Why crew resource management? Empirical and theoretical bases of human factors training in aviation. In E. Weiner, B. Kanki, & R. Helmreich (Eds.), *Cockpit Resource Management*, 3-45. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

- The medical community is also responding to findings of human error and failures by adapting aviation's approach to crew coordination in healthcare and HSA settings.[122]
    - o One example, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed an evidence-based program, called TeamSTEPPS, to improve communication and teamwork skills among health care professionals, with the goal of improving patient health and safety. The program has been implemented nationwide in medical schools that serve as regional training centers. Conceptually, TeamSTEPPS® parallels CRM and crisis management.[123]
        - TeamSTEPPS® provides higher quality, safer patient care by:
            - Producing highly effective medical teams that optimize the use of information, people, and resources to achieve the best clinical outcomes for patients.
            - Increasing team awareness and clarifying team roles and responsibilities.
            - Resolving conflicts and improving information sharing.
            - Eliminating barriers to quality and safety.
        - TeamSTEPPS® has a three-phased process aimed at creating and sustaining a culture of safety with:
            - A pretraining assessment for site readiness.
            - Training for onsite trainers and health care staff.
            - Implementation and sustainment.
        - For more information refer to About Team STEPPS®, TeamSTEPPS®: Research/Evidence Base and Team STEPPS® Case Studies.[124]
- CRM training is also being used in air traffic control, firefighting and industrial settings, including offshore oil operations and nuclear power plants. The training helps workers in control rooms and emergency command centers avoid making operational errors that may lead to accidents.

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[122] Helmreich, R.L. (2004). Managing threat and error to increase safety in medicine. In R. Dietrich & K. Jochum (Eds.), *Teaming Up. Components of Safety under High Risk.* Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

[123] Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: *TeamSTEPPS (2014).* Retrieved from http://teamstepps.ahrq.gov/

[124] Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). (2018). *TeamSTEPPS Case Studies*. Rockville, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps/case-studies/index.html

Appendix B: A Reflective Framework for Errors[125]

Description

1. What happened, where and when? Who was involved? Where were you? Who else was with you? Why were you there?
2. What was the context of the event (e.g. routine or normal)?
3. What were you doing? What were the other people doing?
4. Which part in what happened did you play? Which part did the others play?
5. What was the purpose of the intervention/challenge?
6. What was the result?

Feelings

1. What were your emotions (positive and negative) and thoughts before the event started? During? After? Now?
2. Were there physical reactions and symptoms associated with emotions?
3. At what point of the experience did you specifically start to feel each of these emotions, or were they present at the outset?
4. Were there feelings or emotions that were present at the outset of the event or during the event that may have contributed and how?
5. What did the words, the interventions, the challenges and the actions of other participants make you think? How did they make you feel?
6. What did the other people involved in the event do, think and feel? How do you know this?

Assessment

1. What would you describe as positive and what might be described as negative in the experience?
2. Which specific parts of this event are most important for you?
3. What do you think specifically went wrong and what right? For whom? According to which technical ideas or ethical principles?
4. Why did you interpret the situation in the way you interpreted it?
5. What other interpretations could there be?

Analysis

1. Why did you behave like you did?
2. What were the consequences of your actions for yourself and for others involved?
3. What were your assumptions about this error/failure, held by yourself and others involved? What has shaped these assumptions?
4. In a very few words, how would you label this mistake? What more general failure is this error/ failure a specific and concrete example of?

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[125] Sicora, A. (2018). Learning from mistakes in social work. *European Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 684-696.

5. Had you made a similar error/failure in the past? When? How often? How is this different from the previous ones? What prevented you from putting a stop to the repetition of this kind of error/ failure?
6. What chain of events led to the error/failure? What was the role of each of the following stages/ levels?

    - top level decision makers (social policies, direction, resource allocation);
    - line management (i.e. implementation by the executive level of the strategies defined at the above level);
    - preconditions (motivations, physical and psychological conditions, etc.) of the subjects and factors directly involved in the implementation of social work services such as users, practitioners, material resources, etc.;
    - productive activities (when the event occurred)
    - defense systems (experienced colleagues, control procedures, etc.).

Conclusion

1. What factors caused the error/failure to happen? What are the three most important factors?
2. How would this change if X (that is a change in one or more factors mentioned in the previous answer) happened? How would things be different if X had not happened or happened to a greater (or lesser) intensity?
3. What needed to stop in order to fix the problem or for behavior to change? What evidence do you have to consider these factors as relevant? How much can you eliminate or to what extent can you reduce the strength of these causal factors?
4. If you could go back in time, what would you do differently? What would the result have been?

Action Plan

1. What can you do differently next time you deal with a similar case? What actions can be taken to prevent this error/failure in the future? When can you do this? What can you do right now? How will you know you have fixed the problem and the same mistake will not happen again?
2. What is the goal of improvement that you can choose? What steps should you take to reach your goal? Which resources do you need to achieve your goal? How long does it take for each of these stages? What will be the result of each of these stages? How could you put aside the things that prevent you from improving?
3. What have you learned from this experience? How has your understanding developed?
4. How will you apply this new understanding in the future on another occasion? What more do you need to know and how do you plan to learn more?

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REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY PEOPLE WORK TO ENSURE THE WORLD IS A HEALTHIER PLACE.

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