

Transformational Leadership for Resilient Healthcare Teams: Building Psychological Safety, Belonging, and Burnout-Resistant Cultures



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Presenter Introduction

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Disclosure Statement

The following presenters of this continuing education have no real or perceived conflicts of interest that relate to this presentation

- Lauren Bergstrom
- Jessica Annable
- Chris Meder

Agenda

 Introductions and Organizational Overview

 Leadership Framework

 Three Pillars of Resilient Teams

 Psychological Safety and Belonging

 Burnout and Sustainability

 Our Leadership Interventions

 Measuring our interventions

 Insights: Reflections and Key Takeaways

Learning Objectives

After attending this continuing education unit, attendees will:

1. Identify and implement strategies to foster psychological safety and a sense of belonging within their teams.
2. Learn how transformational leadership contrasts with transactional and command-control styles in healthcare.
3. Learn what evidence-based leadership tools (e.g., listening rounds, after-action reviews, curiosity-based responses) reduce burnout and strengthen team performance in their own work environments.
4. Be able to identify one leadership behavior they will intentionally practice to model curiosity, trust, and sustainable performance under pressure.

About The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

We're central Ohio's only academic medical center

8

hospitals

1,404

staffed beds

17

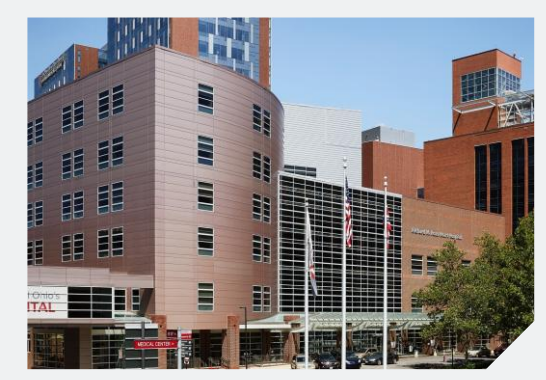
multispecialty
centers

24,500+

employees

100+

facilities

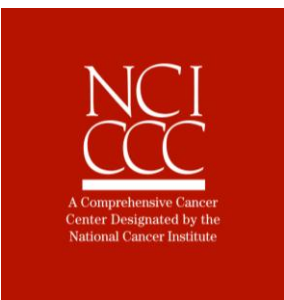


THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



Opened February 2026

- Largest single facilities project ever undertaken at Ohio State at 1.85 million square feet
- 820 large, private rooms
- 148 additional beds for patients of the OSUCCC – James
- 51 neonatal intensive care unit bassinets



Facts and figures



Nationally ranked academic medical center

On the campus of one of the nation's largest public universities



Ranked for **31 consecutive years** by *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Hospitals"



Magnet recognition from the American Nurses Credentialing Center



1,404
staffed beds



24,507
employees



60,713
patient admissions (FY23)



2,745
faculty researchers



3.4M
outpatient visits (FY23)



225,000
telehealth visits



20 research centers and institutes



How familiar are you with the topic?

I'm an expert and can teach you some tips!

0%

I have a solid background and understanding

0%

I have some basic knowledge

0%

What is burnout and why are we talking about this?

0%

Poll



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Why This Matters in Healthcare

High-Pressure Healthcare Environment

- Healthcare teams face high-risk conditions with constant cognitive load and emotional challenges affecting care quality.

Impact of Leadership Behavior

- Leadership profoundly influences team response to pressure, shaping culture and encouraging or discouraging transparency.

Culture and Psychological Safety

- Trust-based cultures promote psychological safety, enabling early risk identification and better team performance.

Consequences of Burnout and Disengagement

- Burnout and turnover threaten workforce stability, patient safety, and overall quality of care in healthcare settings.

Leadership Framework

“

**Leaders create culture.
Culture drives behavior.
Behavior produces
results.**

”

-Urban Meyer



Principles of Transformational Leadership

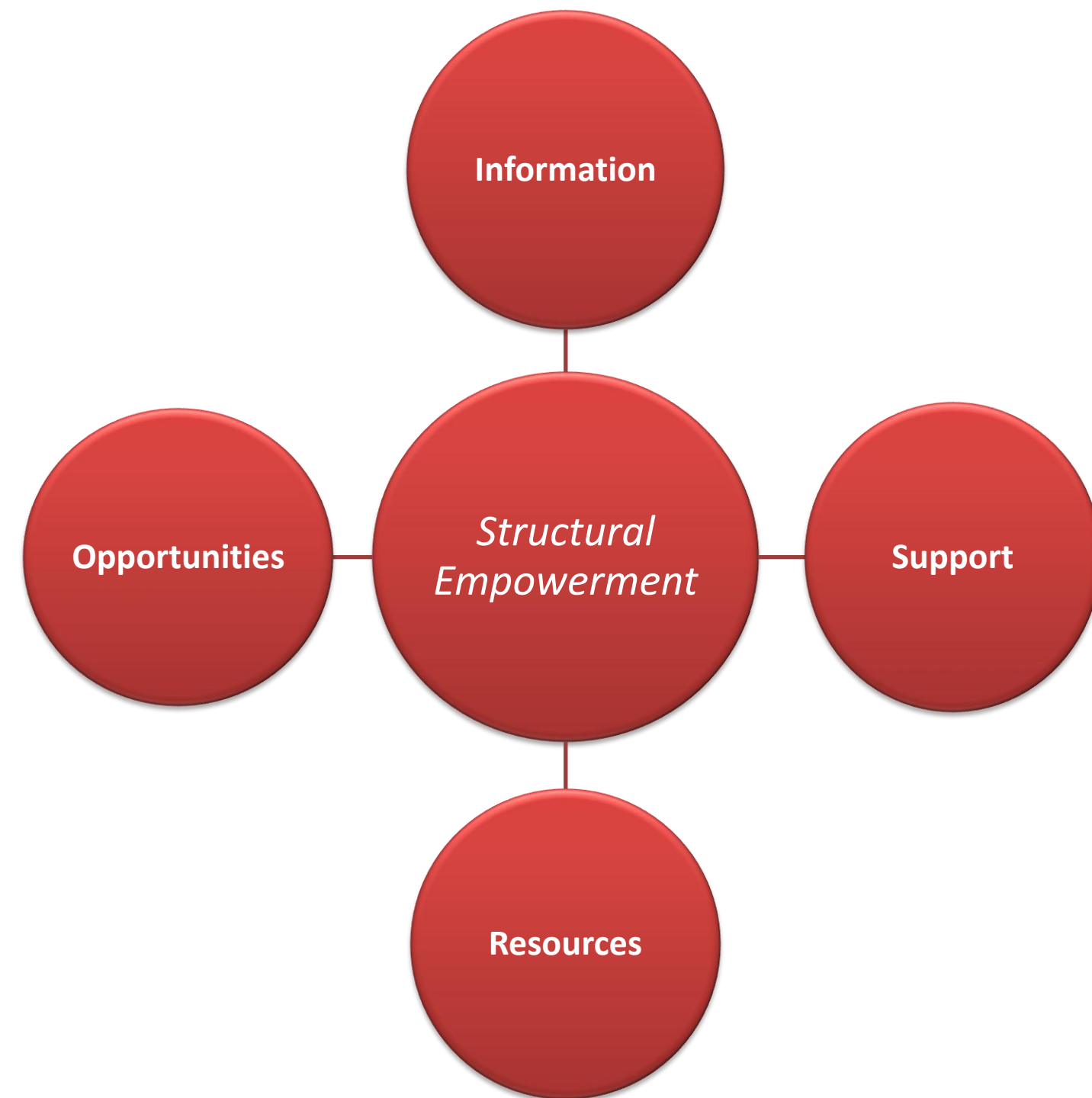
A behavior-based approach to obtain performance beyond basic expectations of employees and to strive for excellence.

Transformational leaders:

- Inspire and motivate their team by creating a clear vision, encouraging innovation and fostering personal growth.
- Transforms healthcare culture from fear-based compliance to ownership and engagement, improving morale and performance.
- Demonstrate humility, consistency, and accountability



Structural Empowerment Theory



Structural empowerment results in:

- Higher job satisfaction
- Work engagement
- Organization trust and commitment
reduced turnover
- Improved quality of care

Strong Positive Effect ($\beta = 0.76, p < 0.01$)

Kelly et al., 2022



“

Leadership is an act of service. Inspiration is an act of service. The other person is the receiving end

”

-Brian Elliott.



Three Pillars of Resilient Teams

The Three Pillars of Resilient Teams

Psychological Safety

- Psychological safety allows team members to speak up and report concerns without fear of punishment, fostering trust and open communication.

Sense of Belonging

- Belonging ensures individuals feel valued and respected, which enhances engagement and commitment within the team.

Sustainable Work Practices

- Sustainable work practices focus on balanced workload, clear roles, and recovery to support long-term team endurance and performance.



“

Enhancing the quality of the work environment may be the most important retention strategy.

”

-Boamah et al., 2018



Psychological Safety

The difference between feeling safe to speak up and being heard

- A shared belief that team members feel safe to take risks, make mistakes and speak up without fear of negative consequences
- The foundation of this is *inclusion safety*- the belief that all members are respected and valued for their contributions and unique perspectives.



Psychological Safety

High psychological safety leads to:

- Lower burnout
- A positive effect on process adaptation
- A significant and positive result on feeling heard
- A more resilient workforce
- Greater organizational commitment



Strong Psychological Safety in Teams

Builds trust,
connection, and
team belonging

Improves
engagement,
collaboration, and
performance

Strengthens
leadership
effectiveness

Prevents harm to
patients and staff

Supports a positive,
safe culture

Reduces friction and
creates a healthier
team environment





How do you feel you can establish psychological safety within your teams?

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Building Belonging

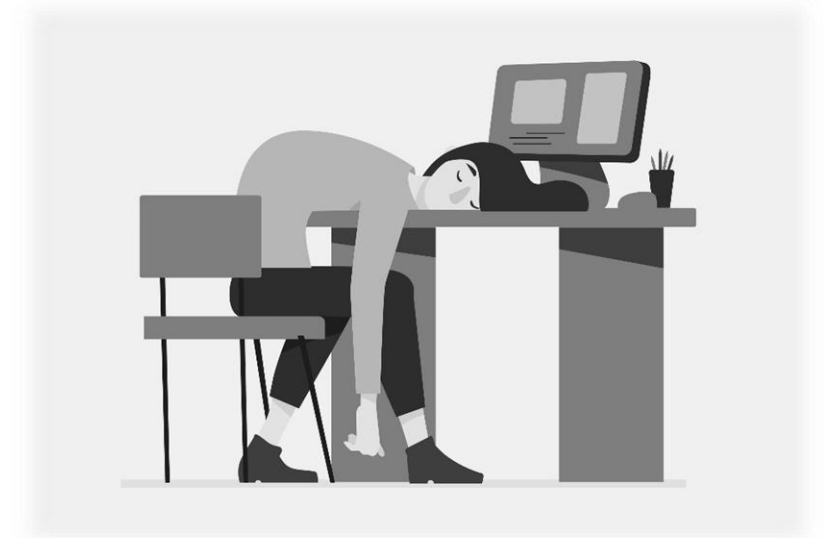
- Inclusive Communication
- Transparent Decision-Making
- Fair Treatment Under Pressure
- Meaningful Recognition



Definition of Burnout

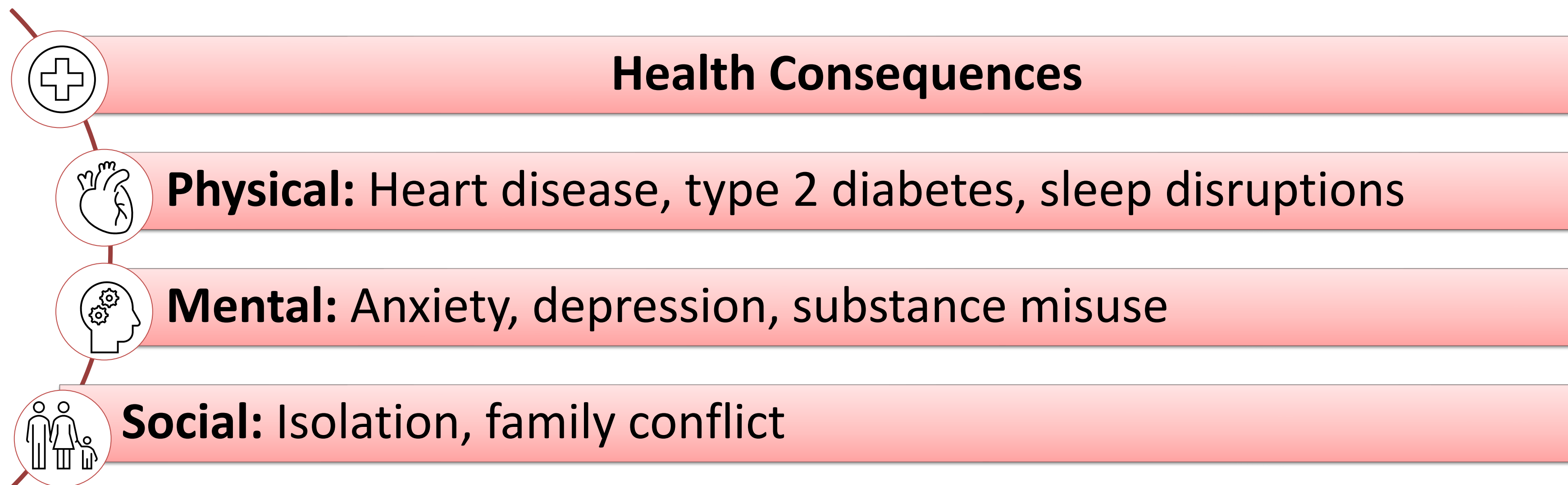
Burnout is an *occupational syndrome* characterized by a high degree of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (i.e., cynicism), and a low sense of personal accomplishment at work

- Characterized by:
 - Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
 - Cynicism related to one's job
 - Reduced professional efficacy
 - Emotional and cognitive distancing



Impacts to Health

Chronic work stress is associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for health workers



“

Burnout, can be defined “as an erosion of engagement with the job, whereby energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness.

”

-Maslach and Leiter



Patient Care & Safety Concerns with Burnout

Decreased time spent between provider and patient

Increased medical errors

Increased hospital-acquired infections

Staffing shortages

Incivility





Have you experienced burnout?

Yes
 0%

No
 0%

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Interventions and Practical Tools

Our Leader Call to Action



Balance

Saying **no** to some things so you can say **yes** to something else

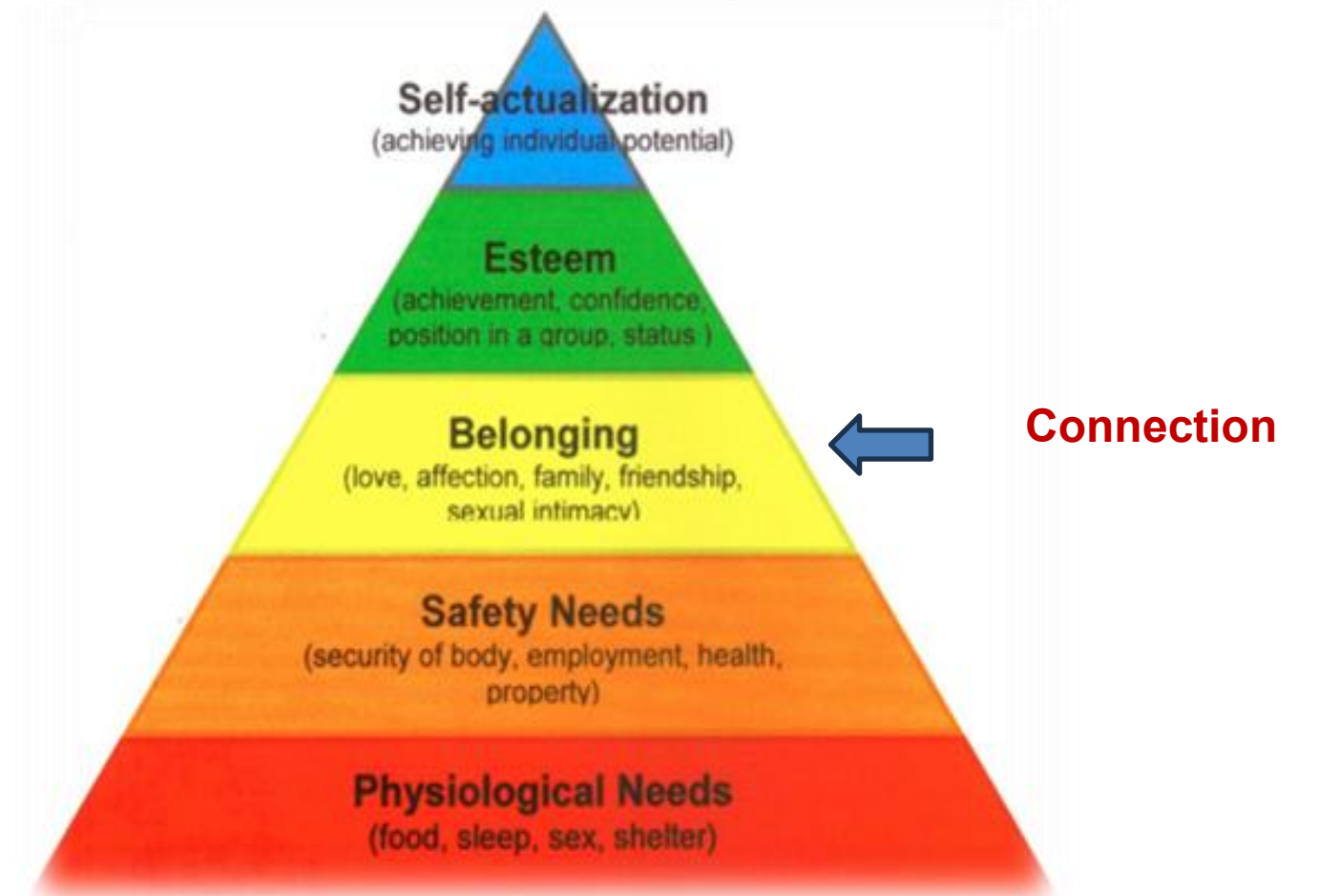
We desire to be available always, but it is not possible



Connection

What gives us endurance to keep going? How do we stay connected?

Can be different with others



“ **Great leaders encourage leadership development by openly developing themselves.** ”

-Marshall Goldsmith



How we improved

- **Start** with development of the leaders
- Promote and **model** work/life balance
- Implement wellness programs
- Provide educational resources
- Communicate transparently
- Assess staffing mix and staff levels
- Develop psychological safety
- Foster connection within teams
- Foster a strong safety culture



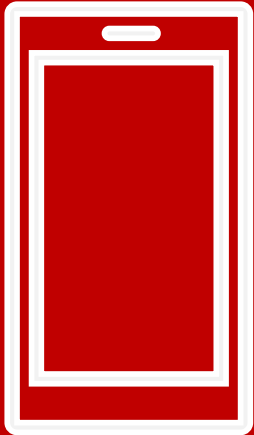


On a scale of 1-5, rate how well you set the example and prioritize work/life balance (5 stars is the best)

Score: ★ 0.0

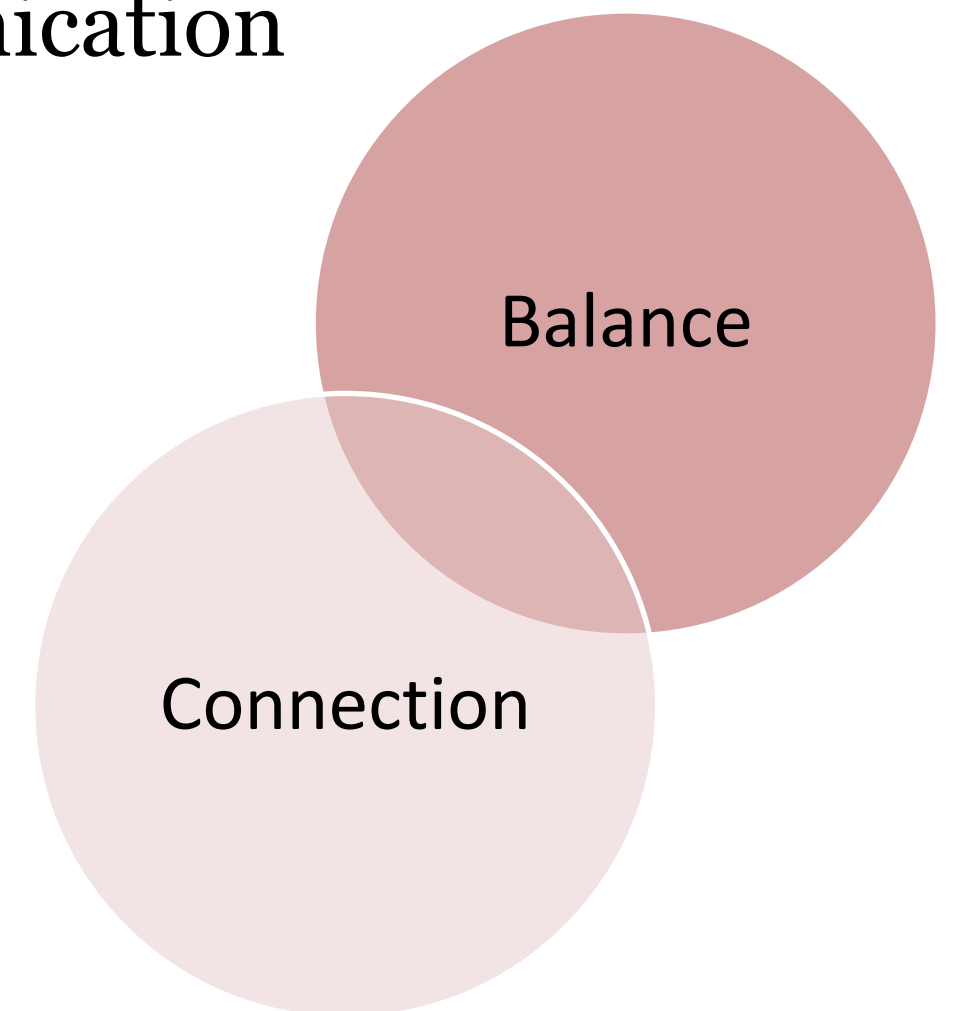
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Investment in Leadership

- Peer to peer accountability
- Leadership book clubs
- Initiated Leadership Learning Meetings
- Provided additional resources for leadership development
- Intentional positive verbiage
- Flexible work schedules
- Journaling
- Wellness Walks
- Leader Standard Work
- Calendar alignment
- Project standardization
- Schedule deep focus time
- Boundaries for communication
- Scheduled lunch breaks



Investment in Our Teams

- Staff professional development
- Implemented Town Halls
- Intentional Leadership rounding
- Relationship Based Care (RBC) Committee
- Department wide seasonal activities
- Fundraising Events
 - Peletonia, AHA Heart walk, Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure
- Clinical Ladder Pathway
- Celebrated/ Shared successes
- Utilized Just Culture algorithm for accountability
- Massage chair wellness visits
- *Take a break* VR sessions
- Assessed staffing
 - Supervisor
 - Implant Specialist
 - PCAs
 - Nurses
 - Educators
 - Quality Specialists
 - Increased staffing ratios



Practical Tools

Practical Tools Leaders Can Use

Provide opportunities for Feedback

- Listening rounds
- Anonymous feedback QR codes
- Townhalls
- *Pebble in the shoe* initiatives

After-Action Reviews

- After-action reviews focus on learning from experiences
- Avoid assigning blame to foster improvement
- Debrief and support the team

Consistency

- Build trust and shows leadership commitment
- Maintain visibility beside your teams



Focus on a Reinforcing Cycle of Support



Leader Self-Reflection

Importance of Self-Reflection

- Self-reflection enables leaders to understand changes in their tone and behavior under pressure.

Inclusion and Psychological Safety

- Reflecting on missing or marginalized voices helps enhance team psychological safety and belonging.

Modeling Consistent Behavior

- Choosing one behavior to model consistently translates reflection into positive leadership actions.

Continuous Leadership Growth

- Regular self-reflection supports ongoing growth and alignment between a leader's values and actions.

Measuring Interventions

Hospital Wide Engagement Survey

Imaging Services overall



	2025 Results	Average Score	2024 Results	2023 Results	Ohio State Wexner Medical Center
Well-Being		3.72	62% (+6)	60% (+2)	71% (-3)
Resources and Support		3.90	N/A	53% (+6)	74% (+1)
This organization cares about my health and well-being. Well-Being		3.66	57% (+8)	54% (+3)	66% (-1)
The stress levels at work are manageable. Well-Being		3.70	64% (+3)	61% (+3)	71% (-4)

● Favorable ● Neutral ● Unfavorable

Green indicates positive difference; Red indicates negative difference.

In 1 year:
Well-being
 Improved from 62%
 to 68%

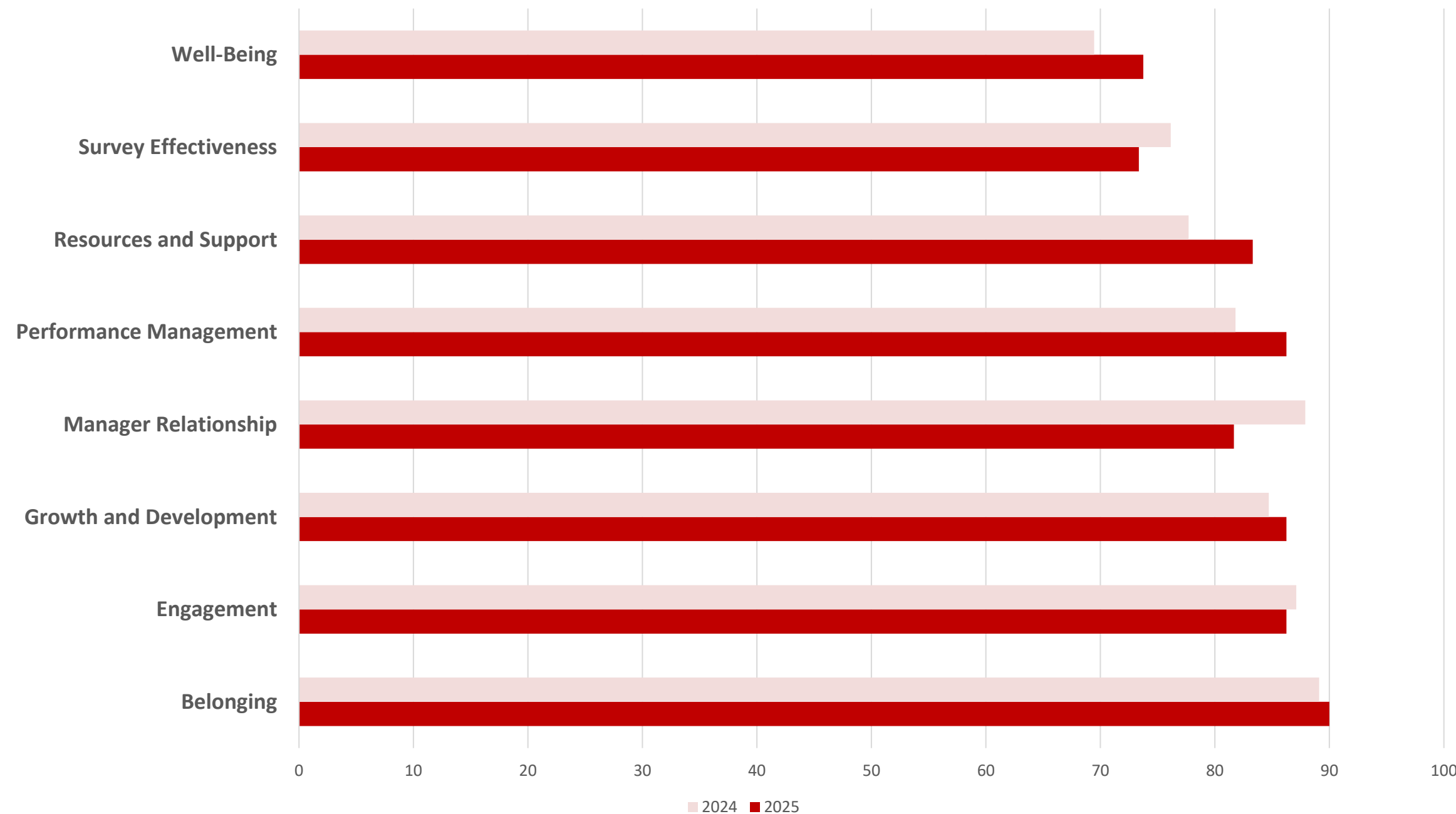
In 2 years:
Resources and Support
 improved
 from 53% to 75%

Hospital Wide Engagement Survey

Imaging Managers



Buckeye Experience Results



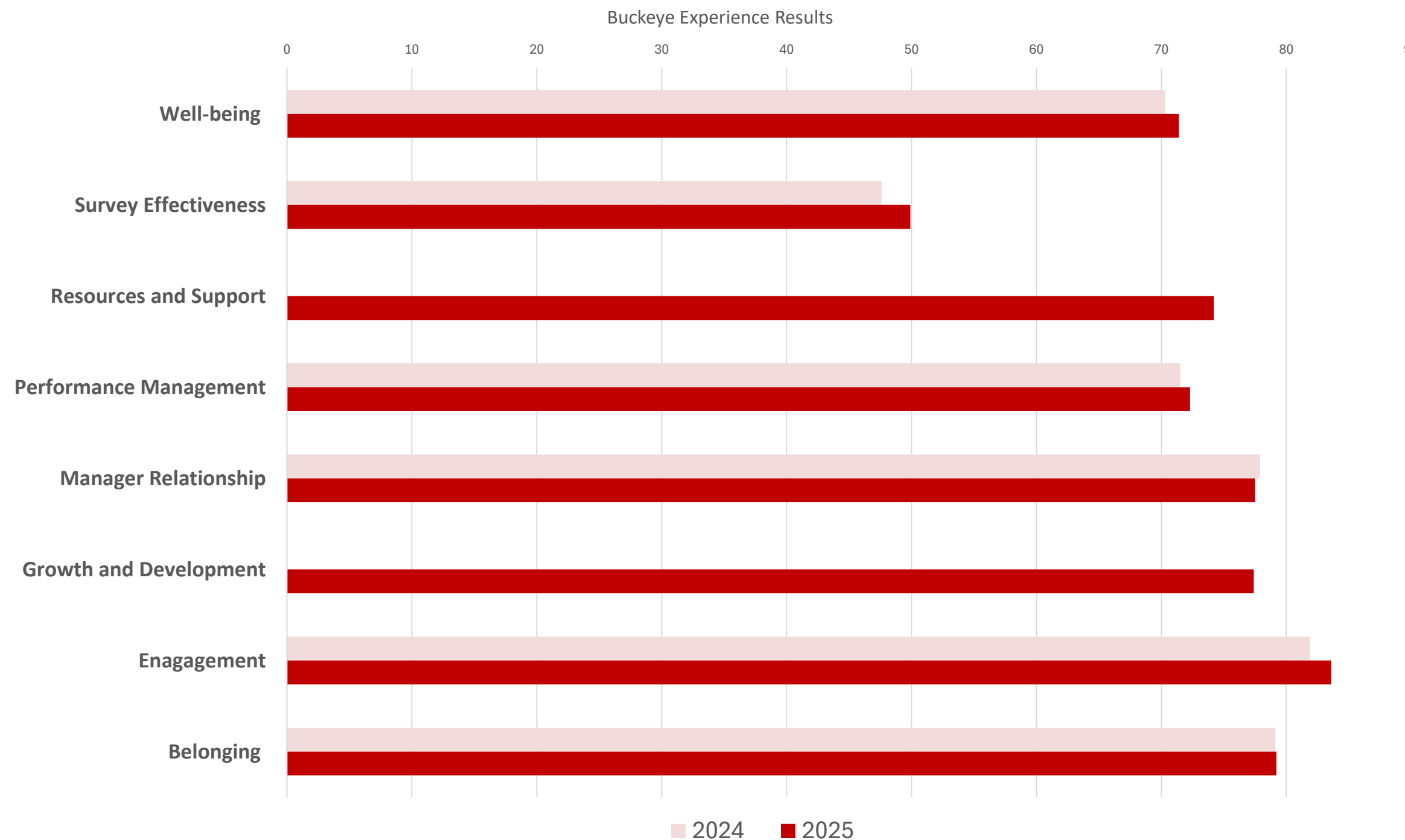
In 1 year:

Well-being improved from 69% to 74%

Resources and Support improved from 77% to 83%

Hospital Wide Engagement Survey

Overall Imaging Dept

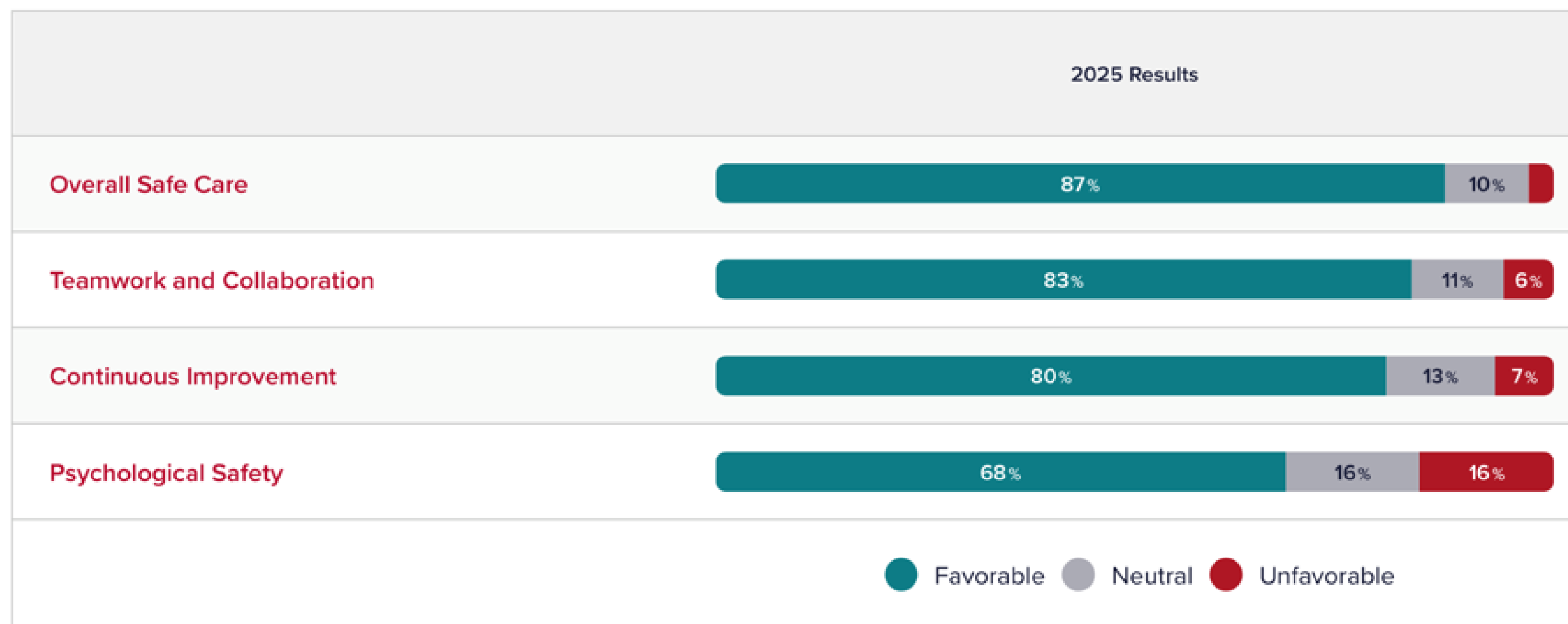


In 1 year:

Engagement and Survey Effectiveness improved

Hospital Wide Engagement Survey

Psychological Safety- Imaging Services overall

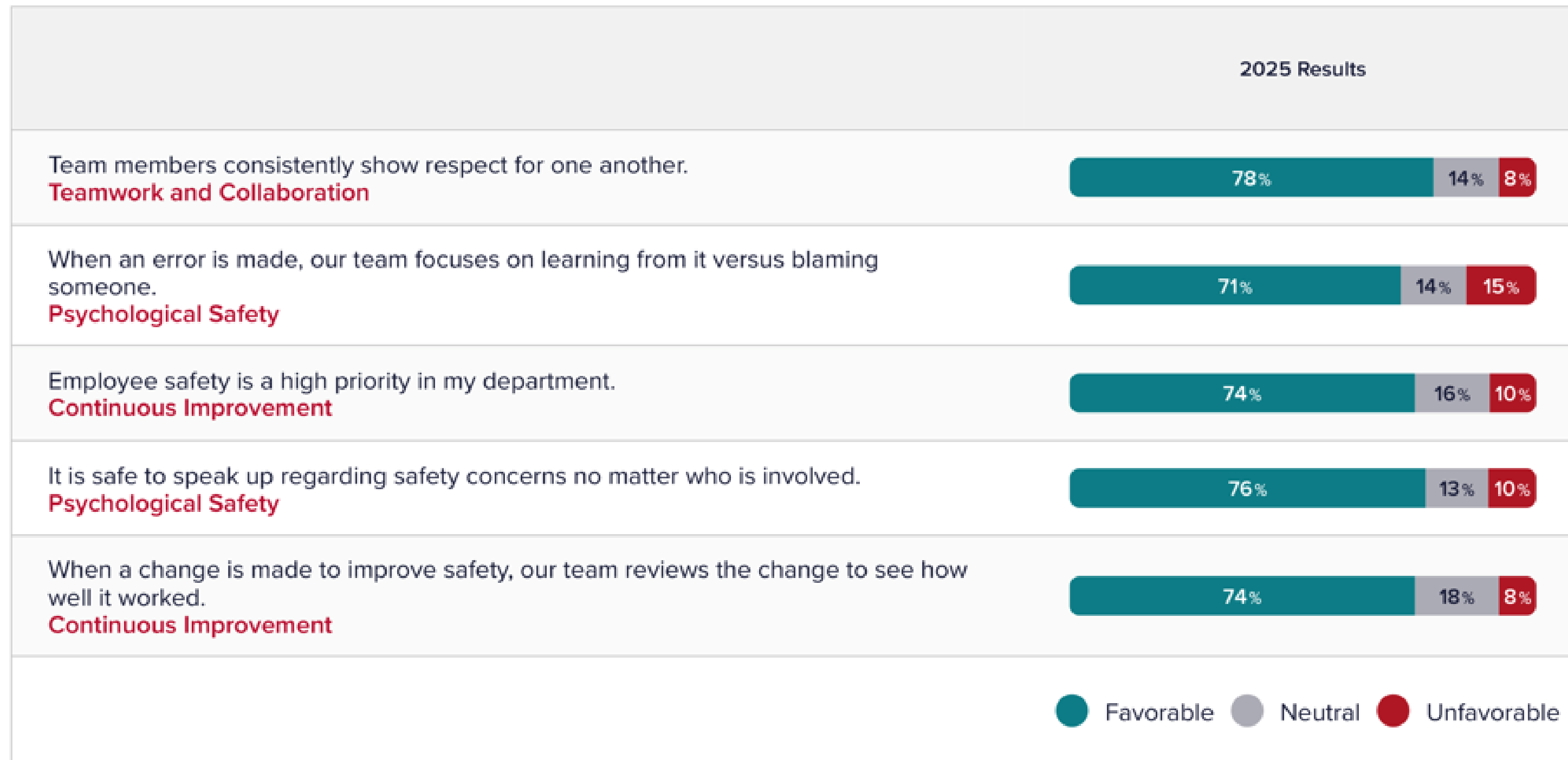


New for 2025
Evaluate our Safety
Culture



Hospital Wide Engagement Survey

Drivers of Psychological Safety





Insight: Reflections and Takeaway

Actionable Takeaways

Model Curiosity Over Blame

- Encouraging curiosity rather than blame fosters learning and increases transparency within teams.

Invite Diverse Perspectives

- Inviting dissent helps identify risks and embraces diverse viewpoints for better decision-making.

Clarify Priorities and Authority

- Clear priorities and defined decision authority reduce confusion and stress among team members.

Consistent Recognition

- Regular recognition reinforces employee engagement, belonging, and motivation within the organization.

Lessons Learned

Pause and de-normalize

Pay attention to your emotions

Reprioritize

Consider your alternatives

Implement changes proactively

Learn to triage importance



If you had an extra 60 minutes in your day to dedicate solely to creating stronger relationships with your staff...

What would you do with it?

How do you think your staff would react?

What do you think you would learn about your staff?



Our Next Steps

Return to baseline and find balance

Reassess with Hospital wide engagement survey

Evaluate current initiatives

Sustain initiatives with a positive impact

Abandon well-being initiatives that are not value adding

Adopt new initiatives as identified

Continually reassess and prioritize well being





What is your key takeaway from this session?

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*This work would not be possible
(or sustainable) without our
front-line teams, our managers
and supervisors, and the
continual support from our
executive leaders.*

For additional follow up, please contact:
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Questions?

