



Joy in Work Implementation Guide

July 2024



“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” — Confucius

JOY IN WORK

In “Making Joy a Priority at Work” in Harvard Business Review in 2019, Alex Liu discovered that while 90% of employees expect to feel joy, only 37% do. He argues that crafting workplace cultures that more actively cultivate experiences of harmony, impact and acknowledgement can have huge payoffs.

Local health department (LHD) managers across the nation play an important role in transforming the public health workforce to become more joy centered and therefore better positioned to meet the ongoing demands of keeping our communities safe and healthy.

LHD managers are uniquely positioned to shift workplace culture to prioritize joy. As the first line of support, you play a significant role in influencing staff satisfaction and professional fulfillment. As a manager, you are in the unique position of influencing team culture in ways that feel supportive, positive and safe. Building LHD managers’ capacity to prioritize and implement JOY IN WORK strategies have the potential to transform why people choose to work in local public health and their motivation to contribute at their highest abilities.

We challenge you to embrace the concept of “the power of one”—you as a single manager can have a profound influence on the culture of your team through your everyday interactions, supports you put in place, and the example that you set. You don’t necessarily need a lot of extra time, financial resources or official “buy-in” from senior levels of leadership to take some initial steps to (1) prioritize and express value for JOY IN WORK, (2) try some new things that have the potential to improve staff experiences, and (3) make mistakes, learn, reflect and refine as you go along.

As you embark on this journey, consider your own role in cultivating JOY IN WORK. We invite you to give yourself a lot of grace and encourage you to find opportunities to model your own experience with joy. Simply shifting the mindset that JOY IN WORK is a “nice to have” to a “must have” can have a profound positive impact. Shifting the assumption that JOY IN WORK happens organically to a conceptual ideal that JOY IN WORK can be intentionally created can be transformative. It only takes one person thinking about JOY IN WORK a little differently to make a difference, and that person can be **YOU!**



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We appreciate your willingness to embrace new ideas, share your experiences, and collaborate with us. Your insights laid the foundation for this guide, helping us better understand what joy in the workplace really looks like in action in daily work life. Your stories and contributions are sprinkled throughout the pages and will inspire others on their journey to create JOY IN WORK.

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is JOY IN WORK?

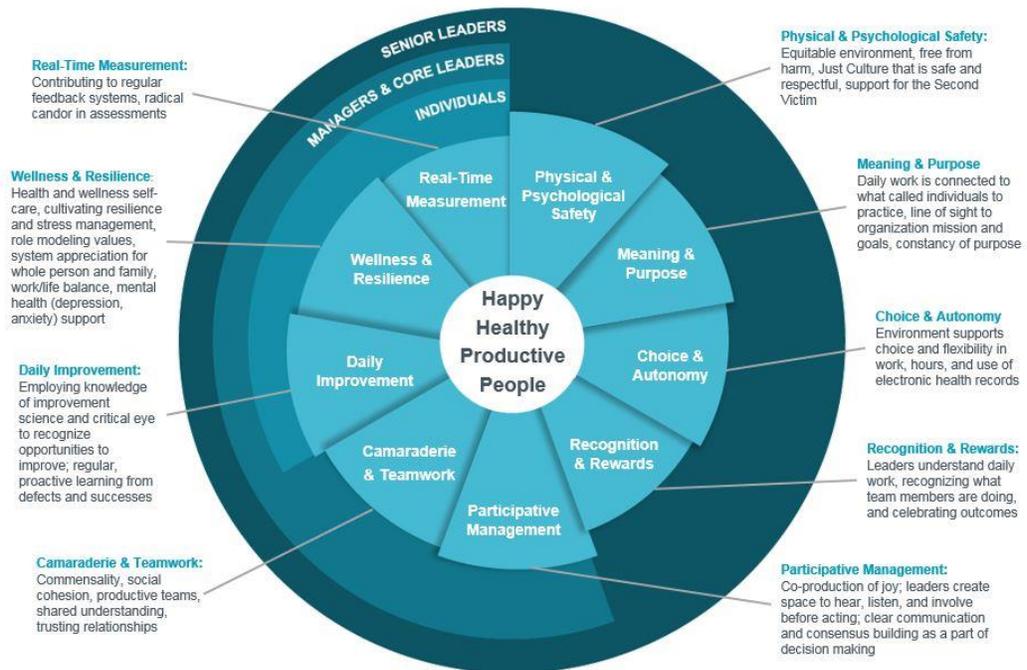
JOY IN WORK is more than a catch phrase, it's about creating a workplace where passion, purpose, and engagement converge. It's about finding fulfillment in what we do and in the connections around us. Everyday interactions, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and feeling connected to a collective purpose all contribute to how we feel



JOY IN WORK does NOT mean being happy all the time or pretending everything is okay. It's about feeling supported, especially when things are challenging. Whether things are difficult due to external pressures such as unfunded mandates, policy changes, partner relationships or personal challenges, true JOY IN WORK comes from knowing you have a space where you can be honest. Authentic joy is being able to say, 'I'm struggling; I'm not at my best today;' and still feel supported.

The **IHI Framework for Improving JOY IN WORK** below details nine key areas for ensuring a joyful, engaged workforce:

- Physical and **psychological safety**
- Meaning and purpose
- Choice and autonomy
- **Recognition and rewards**
- Participative management
- **Camaraderie and teamwork**
- Daily improvement
- Wellness and resilience
- Real-time measurement



We acknowledge that all nine are important to creating a culture that promotes JOY IN WORK. We intentionally focus on three for the purposes of this implementation guide as a starting place to lay the foundation for future work.

Psychological safety is foundational to any JOY IN WORK experience. The work of public health often requires bringing different perspectives together to address urgent or pervasive challenges that affect populations so the stakes can be high.

Camaraderie and teamwork is the backbone to healthy teams that want to do hard things together. Investments in strengthening the connections between individuals can greatly influence the quality of collective work.

Recognition and reward is the secret sauce to making shifts in interpersonal dynamics. When we find ways to lift one another up for positive contributions it fuels a positive cycle of affirmation.

Why Focus on JOY IN WORK?

Recent years have brought challenges that no one could have predicted. Within the context of leadership changes, higher attrition among staff, mass burnout, PTSD and workplace trauma, JOY IN WORK is critical for staff well-being, retention, and personal fulfillment. Now, more than ever, we crave moments of lightness, shared purpose, and a sense of fulfillment. We can quote recruitment and retention statistics by heart, and we know that JOY IN WORK isn't a luxury; it's a necessity that fuels our resilience and propels us forward. JOY IN WORK deserves focused attention and intentional design.



Why the Focus on Managers?

The IHI Framework for Improving JOY IN WORK (**Figure 1**) shows how senior leaders, managers and core leaders and individuals all have important roles that are sometimes distinct and other times overlapping to foster a culture of “Healthy, Happy, Productive People” in the workplace. JOY IN WORK is an active continuous process that is best achieved through collective commitment and intentional effort. At its most basic level, individuals within the workplace can identify and maximize their own joy experience within their work environment and managers are often able to promote, encourage and remove barriers to individual and collective JOY IN WORK experiences. Managers play a critical role in cultivating JOY IN WORK because (1) they can model positive, joy-oriented ways of being, (2) they can foster team cultures that are supportive and open for joy experiences to thrive, and (3) they can communicate to senior leadership both ideas to grow and barriers to address.



How Were Local Health Departments Engaged During the Design Phase?

Many of us have a concept of what JOY IN WORK means but what that looks like in daily work doesn't always align with the overall idea. Five local health departments came together to share successes and challenges, test new ideas and provide feedback and support to one another in shifting their workplace culture. This guide is informed by the local health department experiences, and the lessons learned along the way.

When asked why they are interested in learning and sharing more about JOY IN WORK, local health departments responded:

- ***Need for continued positive energy that sustains us!***
- ***Need for connection to team members, to not feel alone.***
- ***My contact is with clients daily. They give me joy with their stories and their sharing of themselves.***



- *I believe JOY IN WORK will foster a sense of harmonious passion amongst our workforce – providing validation, meaning, and purpose.*
- *My goal is to create a gratitude list of the good things I've affected during the workday instead of concentrating on things that I did not accomplish!*
- *People will be uplifted and smiling in the hallways, which will ultimately lead to our clients having a better experience when they interact with us. Just happier people.*

When asked about what makes for a good day, local health departments responded:

- *When everything goes smoothly, and people are happy and bring joy to work.*
- *When I can get many things accomplished, but also see happy and smiling faces around.*
- *Sharing my self-care routine with my colleagues. I enjoy illuminating the positivity in our engagement efforts.*
- *Being in the office when it is full and having positive, supportive conversations with my team members. I love being able to bond and network with them!*
- *Sharing a high five for a job well done!*
- *A sense of peace and calmness as you stroll the building halls and pass by colleagues and/or community members.*





Why an Implementation Guide?

NACCHO published the JOY IN WORK Toolkit® in 2022 that was influenced by the IHI Framework for Improving JOY IN WORK® and IHI's Conversation and Action Guide to Support Staff Well-Being and JOY IN WORK: During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic®. This guide builds upon the foundational work to focus on tips and practices that support implementation.

This implementation guide is designed to be a practical tool for mid-level managers of local health departments across the United States. It is filled with helpful tips and strategies for managers to use in their everyday work supporting the workforce of local public health. Examples from the field are used wherever possible to illustrate how to put JOY IN WORK strategies into action. It is not exhaustive and doesn't offer step-by-step options. It's designed to be adapted to a variety of local health department settings and to different team environments including in-person office, remote office, clinic, community outreach, laboratory, field work and more.



A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. — Chinese Proverb

2. A JOY IN WORK QUICK-LAUNCH BLUEPRINT

Cultivating JOY IN WORK is a culture change journey that requires intentional action. The journey may at times feel overwhelming and ambiguous. This Quick Launch Blueprint provides a few actionable steps to help get you started. There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to implementing JOY IN WORK. Each Local Health Department is unique in its size, geographic location, structure, and culture and each individual manager and staff member have different preferences for how they personally like to experience JOY IN WORK. Think of this guide as a flexible overview of suggested actions, not a prescribed list of directions to follow exactly. Use the blueprint to spark your own ideas and create a path forward for joy in your work.

Here’s what you’ll find in this section:

- ♦ **A Quick Launch Blueprint Overview:** A brief visual overview of five key steps and action items to get you started.
- ♦ **A Deeper Dive into the Quick Launch Blueprint:** Detailed explanations and activities to help you complete each step.

Quick-Launch Blueprint

1 Get Ready

- Find champions.
- Gain buy-in.
- Set realistic expectations.
- Focus on building trust.

2 Ask “What Matters to You?”

- Ask and listen for what REALLY matters.
- Find bright spots, pebbles, and boulders.
- Take immediate action.

3 Identify “Pebbles” and “Boulders” in Your Local Context

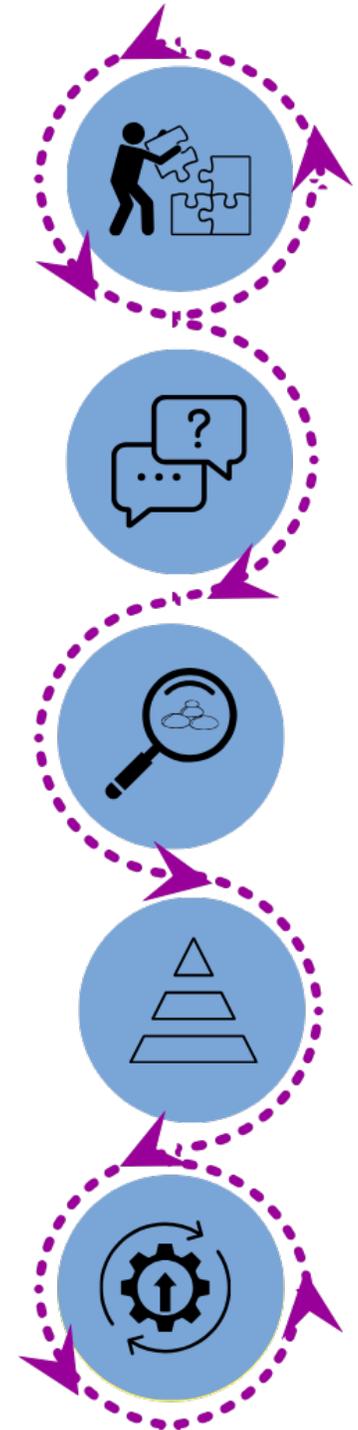
- Prioritize insights into “pebbles” and “boulders.”
- Identify and test ideas to address “pebbles.”
- Communicate “boulders” to leaders.

4 Use an Integrated Approach

- Commit to creating JOY IN WORK at all levels.
- Encourage shared responsibility.
- Manage up and seek alignment.
- Model the way.

5 Test, Learn, and Refine Your Approach

- Set a clear vision.
- Identify a metric.
- Start small with one team.
- Start small with one key component.
- Test, learn, and refine your strategies.



A Deeper Dive into the Quick-Launch Blueprint

1. GET READY to make change by gaining support and laying the foundation for a smooth and successful journey ahead.

Find champions. Identify one or two people who share your excitement about improving JOY IN WORK. Changing team culture is hard to do alone, so make sure you have an ally or two interested in making things better. Talk openly about your desire to generate more JOY IN WORK experiences for your team. Take notice of colleagues and your own team members who seem enthusiastic and are willing to share ideas.

Invite potential champions to join your efforts. They can help facilitate and coordinate JOY IN WORK efforts.



Quick Tip: Make the Case for JOY IN WORK

Clearly communicating the value of a joyful work environment helps gain buy-in from all levels of the organization. Try this elevator speech to get you started.

"We aim to increase JOY IN WORK because we think it can [insert benefit], which can positively affect [insert who or what] so we can [retain our best staff, encourage innovation, attract new opportunities]"

- ❑ **Gain buy-in.** Seek support from senior leadership, peer managers and key staff members who can positively influence others. While managers don't need permission to focus more on low-cost JOY IN WORK efforts, having key people within the larger organizational ecosystem interested and engaged in the efforts can maximize the impact.

Talk with those who support you as a manager. Explain why joy is important for your team and outline potential first steps. Practice explaining the value of focusing on JOY IN WORK.

- ❑ **Set realistic expectations.** Acknowledge that JOY IN WORK is both about change and shifting culture. Change is a process (think circle) not a straight line that takes time. Shifting culture is a change that

can deeply impact how your team works together. It affects how individuals think, how they interact and the overall tone and energy of how work gets done.

As you begin to talk about JOY IN WORK with your team(s) speak to why you think this is important and what you hope will come of it. Even if your plan for JOY IN WORK isn't fully developed, communicate your 3-month, 6-month, and 1-year goals. Be open that this effort is not a quick fix but a journey to help everyone experience more joy in their work experience over time. Emphasize that we don't know all the answers and the importance of trying out ideas and learning as the team goes along. Let your team know this journey will evolve as you all learn and grow together.

- ❑ **Focus on trust building** (and sometimes repairing). Most people have had a mix of positive and negative work experiences. Those who have had more negative experiences may be skeptical about trying JOY IN WORK approaches. It is natural for people to question the intentions behind the effort and wonder if you as a manager mean what you say. The best way you can demonstrate your commitment is to model JOY IN WORK principles, follow through on your commitments, listen and take action to create JOY IN WORK. Show your own vulnerability as you try new ideas and ask for feedback.

2. ASK “WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?” to show your staff you care about their thoughts and feelings and to help you understand what brings them joy.

- ❑ **Ask and listen for what REALLY matters.** Seek to listen and uncover places where you can make immediate changes to cultivate JOY IN WORK for your team. Engage staff in “What Matters to You?” conversations. These conversations tap into appreciative inquiry by identifying bright spots of current work and seeking to build on strengths. These conversations can help identify unique impediments to joy, known as the person’s “pebbles in their shoes.” The [JOY IN WORK Toolkit](#) provides a step by step guide for how to hold the conversations.

Consider ways you can build conversations into existing meetings and communication structures. Local Health Department teams discovered different ways to engage in the conversations including 1:1 conversations, a bulletin board with What Matters to You Questions for staff to answer, polls during Zoom meetings, interviews and focus groups, discussing the questions during staff meetings, and surveys.

- ❑ **Find bright spots, pebbles, and boulders.** Take time to reflect on the insights gathered from your conversations. To further inform your insights consider observing what you see and hear around you. Being curious, tuning in, and taking a good look around can be eye-opening. Consider taking a walk around your office to observe pictures and office decorations (if you are in-person). Notice interactions among team members—are they supporting each other for success? Listen for what people get excited about. If your team is remote, listen for personal connection, what brings laughter and how people use the chat to support one another. Combine this information with insights gleaned from the What Matters to You Conversations. Reflect on what you hear and see. What are the bright spots that bring joy? What does your team most value? What makes for a good day?
- ❑ **Take immediate action.** As you gather insights commit to act and respond to the discoveries made, especially if they are low-cost and easy to change. Immediate response creates trust for the process. Consider making the insights visible on a bulletin board, via a shared document or online shared space. Plan for bringing the team together to discuss the insights and make plans to take intentional action to address the pebbles that impede joy.



3. IDENTIFY PEBBLES AND BOULDERS IN YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT to help prioritize and focus on issues you can address quickly and easily.

- ❑ **Prioritize insights into “pebbles and boulders.”** The goal is to take immediate action. Start with the smaller, everyday issues within your control that you can fix quickly, rather than focusing on larger organizational challenges. Addressing these “pebble”, the everyday annoying and frustrating problems. can make a big difference in how satisfied and happy a team feels at work. Work with your team to review the insights gathered from the What Matters to You Conversations. Sort them into two categories:

- **Pebbles:** important things we can change or do something about really soon, maybe even tomorrow, without needing help from leaders. Consider sorting the insights further by identifying the “quick wins”; these are things we can do that are easy and will have a high impact.
- **Boulders:** important things we can change that may need more time, planning and effort to happen. We most likely will need help from leaders or other people to make it happen.



Quick Tip: Prototype Before Committing

One team had a fun idea to track staff happiness using basketball hoops: one with a smiley face and one with a frown face. Each day, staff would toss a ball in the hoop to show how their day went.

Before spending time and money, they tested it with two cardboard boxes and crumpled paper balls. It was a quick and simple way to see if the idea worked.

- ❑ **Identify and test ideas to address “pebbles.”** Action starts with good ideas. As a team, brainstorm some simple fixes for the pebbles you identified. Decide as a team which ideas you will try first. Before rolling out an idea, consider testing it on a small scale first! Think of it like a mini experiment, -learning and adapting as you go.



Design a simple/low tech version of your idea (think paper clips, tape, and handwritten documents), try it out with a small group, and then gather feedback. This will help you invest limited resources (both time and money) while you learn what works well and what could be improved. After you try out an idea. Ask everyone to reflect and give feedback.

- What made everyone excited?
- What would make it even better?
- What new ideas came up?
- What new questions do you have?

Communicate “boulders” to leaders.

Some insights gleaned from your conversations may need to be addressed

at a higher organizational level. Share insights with senior leaders. It’s often helpful to share the challenge along with a few ideas the team feels will result in change. Here’s an example:

“A challenge brought forward by our staff is _____. They had some great ideas for how we can improve so that JOY IN WORK can be elevated including _____ and _____.”

4. USE AN INTEGRATED APPROACH: Go beyond the “pebbles” and begin creating an environment where joy thrives at all levels.

Commit to creating JOY IN WORK at all levels. Move from addressing “pebbles”—immediate, everyday challenges—to using a layered approach to change culture. A culture that prioritizes JOY IN WORK will typically use a layered approach continuously thinking through how JOY IN WORK looks for SELF (the manager), INDIVIDUAL STAFF, TEAM, and the overall ORGANIZATION. Think about how you might begin to change and link actions to the nine key areas of the JOY IN WORK Framework:

- What new individual mindsets and behaviors would help me enhance...[wellness and resilience, make daily improvements, etc.] ?

- What new ways of interacting or doing could make our team efforts feel more...[psychologically safe, build camaraderie & teamwork, recognition, etc.]
- What should be made available or encouraged at an agency-level to promote...[psychological safety, teamwork, recognition, etc.]?

❑ **Encourage shared responsibility.** JOY IN WORK isn't just one person's job, it is everyone's responsibility—individuals, managers, leaders, the entire organization working together. Encourage everyone to think about JOY IN WORK as a collective effort. Ask each person to think about what they can do to support JOY IN WORK for themselves, like maintaining work-life balance, managing stress, and seeking daily improvement opportunities to enhance their joy. Also encourage them to support others' joy by showing appreciation, building trust, and talking about ways to build JOY IN WORK. Provide feedback and recognition to those who contribute to JOY IN WORK.



**Quick Tip:
Shared
Responsibility**

- Rotate staff working on organization-level efforts to prevent burn-out.
- Normalize that staff with time dedicated to "JOY IN WORK" are not expected to model "joy" at all times.
- Adopt a shared leadership mentality to distribute the load, integrate best practices, and build others' capacities to design, adapt and implement strategies.

❑ **Manage up and seek alignment.** As a manager, you have communication channels that flow in all directions: up and from senior leadership, across teams with other managers, to and from your team members. Use these channels to promote JOY IN WORK at the organizational level and lay the groundwork for an expanded vision of JOY IN WORK for all staff. Culture shift can begin with a single team, and it can build momentum, expand and become sustainable as more people become interested, practiced and invested in the "why" behind the change efforts.

- ❑ **Model the way.** Take every opportunity to elevate the importance of JOY IN WORK by making choices for yourself that align with this goal.

Consider these:

- Take time off from work for vacation, rest and renewal.
- When you feel dysregulated at work step away, pause and do something that helps you feel more centered.
- Express verbally, in writing and through creative expression what JOY IN WORK means to you.
- Talk about JOY IN WORK as the normative expectation versus a big lofty, unreachable goal.
- Actively participate in camaraderie building activities.



Quick Tip: Creating a Collective Vision

You might try this:

- Share the JOY IN WORK definition from the introduction section of this guide.
- Ask your team to reflect and share their thoughts on the following:
 - * How do you envision JOY IN WORK positively affecting the daily experiences of our team?
 - * What will we SEE, HEAR, and EXPERIENCE if we are successful in creating JOY IN WORK?
- Discuss common ideas that emerge.

5. TEST, LEARN, AND REFINE YOUR APPROACH. Use a process, like improvement science, to test out ideas for layering JOY IN WORK across the organization. Try out and refine your ideas as you go along.

- ❑ **Set a clear vision.** Bring clarity and establish alignment around the “why” for JOY IN WORK by creating a collective vision. This will encourage a shared sense of purpose and enthusiasm. Start by working together to define the meaning of JOY IN WORK for your department. As you build the vision, help your team connect it to organizational priorities to show why this work matters.
- ❑ **Identify a metric.** Think of ways to illustrate that JOY IN WORK matters and your efforts are making a difference. This information can support a rationale for senior

leadership to dedicate staff time and resources. Learn to show that spending time and money on these efforts has a strong return on investment. Find at least one way to show how staff are and are not experiencing joy in their work. It does not have to be complicated or evaluation oriented.

How might you...

- *Use existing survey data* from staff satisfaction, DEI accreditation efforts? See if joy is mentioned or implied in any of the questions (e.g., I am valued and respected; my job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful, etc.)
- *Incorporate a question into existing structures* like events, one on one check-ins, etc. For example, at the end of a team meeting ask everyone to rate their level of joy in work on a scale of 1-10, write it on a sticky note, and leave it in a box on the way out.
- *Make it simple and fun?* For example, set up a basketball hoop with a happy face goal and a frown face goal. At the end of the week, ask team members to throw a ball into the goal that represents their level of joy.



Quick Tip: Selecting a Team

Consider the following questions as you select a team. This team:

- ✓ Is interested in creating JOY IN WORK?
- ✓ Often volunteers to try new things?
- ✓ Is respected by their peers?
- ✓ Is known for earning high levels of trust?
- ✓ Inspires and encourages others to try new things?
- ✓ Can commit time and effort to create space to try new things?

- **Start small with one team.** One team can build momentum to shift an entire culture AND starting with one team helps you try out ideas and learn as you go. After your team has a vision, select a unit or team that is excited about creating JOY IN WORK (they may already be working on it). Select team members who will support the team as you infuse JOY IN WORK strategies into the innerworkings of your team. The team doesn't have to do it all, rather they are keeping things organized, tracking progress, and closing the loop on communication. As the team begins to take form discuss:

How will the team....

- Carve out time to focus attention on JOY IN WORK?
 - Connect with others to gather their feedback on what works well?
 - Communicate back what they are learning to the larger group?
-
- ❑ **Start small with one key component.** You don't have to focus on all nine components of the JOY IN WORK Framework at once. Start small in one area, build momentum, and continue moving forward from there. As you make improvements in one area they often link and build into other key areas. Use information collected from you What Matters to You Conversations to prioritize your efforts for your JOY IN WORK. Focusing on a few will make the work more manageable and lay a good foundation for future actions. To start, consider focusing on [Psychological Safety, Camaraderie and Recognition and Reward](#).
 - ❑ **Test, learn, and refine key strategies.** As a team, select strategies that address your key component of the JOY IN WORK framework (see [Section 3](#) for some ideas). Use the same action learning approach you used to test and refine your ideas for addressing "pebbles." Think small, quick and simple. For example, if your team wants to start every meeting with a trust-building icebreaker to build psychological safety, ask one project leader to try it at their next meeting. After the meeting, have the project lead share how it went and what they learned. This models a learning mindset and might even spark new ideas.



What is one thing you can do this week to move you ahead in your JOY IN WORK journey?

If I want to: _____, then I will do: _____.



3. PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO LAUNCH YOUR JOY IN WORK INTEGRATED APPROACH

Here's What You'll Find in this Section:

Brief overviews, activities, and stories from the field to inspire you and help you get started in these three areas of the JOY IN WORK framework:

- ◆ *Psychological Safety*
- ◆ *Camaraderie and Teamwork*
- ◆ *Recognition and Rewards*

The JOY IN WORK toolkit has nine key components for integrating JOY IN WORK throughout your work environment. The collaborative design phase for this guide with five local health departments focused on these three critical areas as these are fundamental human needs and often contribute to a strong foundation for which you can build and add in more of the components as you go.

You may choose to start with these three components, or you may find from your What Matters to You Conversations that your team is eager about other components. Start where there is synergy.

Use the strategies from these three areas as inspiration to jump start your efforts in other components, such as physical safety, personal purpose, and autonomy. Over time, integrate the remaining components into your ongoing efforts to expand and sustain a joyful work environment. For components of the framework that feel outside your skill set, seek support from your team, peers, leadership, and other partners.

Psychological Safety

Feeling secure and capable of changing; free to focus on collective goals and problem prevention rather than on self-protection; believing that no one will be humiliated or punished for speaking up. Knowing you won't be punished for human errors in unsafe systems, consistent with a just culture. (Adapted from Amy Edmondson)

When trust is high, the dividend you receive is like a performance multiplier, elevating and improving every dimension of your organization and your life. When trust is low, it places a hidden 'tax' on every transaction, every communication, every interaction, every strategy, every decision. Everything.—Stephen Covey

To create change, you first must have trust. Psychological safety hinges on trust within the team. Psychological safety can be considered a team characteristic rather than an attribute of individuals. It is a climate in which people feel free to express relevant thoughts and feelings or speak up without retribution. Building psychological safety isn't a one-time task; it's an ongoing journey of nurturing and growth so that the work environment remains supportive and conducive to collaboration and growth.



Why does this matter when creating JOY IN WORK? When team members feel secure and respected, they're more likely to share their thoughts openly, take risks, and collaborate effectively. Meaning people will tell you what they need and will be more open to helping create JOY IN WORK.

Things your team will see and experience when psychological safety is in place:

- Respectful interactions by everyone; disrespectful behavior is rapidly addressed and not ignored.
- People are valued above their work.
- Confidence in receiving a positive response when they ask a question, seek feedback, admit a mistake, or propose an idea.
- Raising dissenting views and reporting errors is welcomed, expected and respected.
- Willingness to offer ideas, questions, and concerns.
- Focus on mutual goals and problem solving; not personal agendas.
- Promises and commitments are kept. Follow through and keeping one's word is valued.
- Taking risks and making mistakes is normalized.
- Valuing others' feelings and encouragement to openly share how what they really think and feel.

ASSESS YOUR CURRENT STATE

Do others feel psychologically safe? Sometimes if we feel safe, we assume others do too. But everyone has their own views and experiences. It is good to check in and see how others feel. Here are a couple quick and easy ways to get a pulse check:

- ❑ **Observe** some meetings, activities, and interactions to get a feel for psychological safety on your team. Here is a quick list of things to look for during interactions.

How often do I see and hear the following:

- ✓ Peer support and collaboration
- ✓ Issues and problems raised during team meetings
- ✓ Idea sharing
- ✓ Active listening and asking follow-up questions to try to understand what others are saying
- ✓ Frequency of commitments and promises kept and honored
- ✓ Candid sharing even when it's difficult

Ask Your Team How psychologically safe do they feel. Here are a few questions to get you started:

What insights do you gather from asking:

- ✓ Are members of this team able to bring up problems and tough issues?
- ✓ Is it safe to take a risk on this team?
- ✓ Can you be yourself at work?
- ✓ Do you feel supported by your team members and leaders?
- ✓ On a scale... people on this team accept each other's differences.

Questions based on Edmonston, A. "[Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams](#)."



IDEAS TO TRY OUT

Understand What Others Value

— For everyone to feel psychologically safe, invest some time and effort into understanding what's important to each team member. And this is said louder by actions than words. Try this question prompt a discussion:

- Think of a leader you have worked with that made you feel that

you are valued for being yourself. What were the things this leader said or did to make you feel this way? Give team members a chance to think quietly before asking for volunteers to share. You can also ask them to write words or brief ideas on a piece of sticky paper and put them on the wall. This should help you understand what's valuable to your team members.

- Respect the Pause** — Create a ground rule with your teams to encourage them to take time after someone speaks to just pause and think about your response or allow for extra time.
- Conduct “Stay Interviews”** — Ask curious questions to better understand why staff stay working on this team at this local health department. This gives new information, shows care, concern and appreciation and provides an opportunity to validate a staff member's experience. This creates trust and can help you understand what's working well and how to enhance and bolster the things that support retention.

❑ **Pair Share Trust Building** — Psychological safety takes time to establish and is earned through a combination of trust building mindsets and behaviors and involves positive modeling, being vulnerable, and swiftly addressing issues that arise that might harm established foundations. To foster this, try:

- Pair up with a team member. One person speaks for 3-5 minutes on a given topic, while the other listens without speaking, using only non-verbal cues to show engagement.
- Switch roles and repeat the process.
- After a few rounds, find new partners and continue.
- Conclude with a group discussion about how the activity felt, what was easy or hard, and if trust increased through the experience.

Consider topics such as personal experiences, well-being, team dynamics, communication, and inclusion/belonging. Start with low-risk questions like, “Who in the team has been particularly helpful to you, and how?” and gradually move to more personal ones, such as, “Is there anything about our team dynamics that makes you uncomfortable?”

❑ **Failure Celebration Sessions** — Hold sessions where team members share their failures and what they learned from them. Encourage managers to share their own stories first. These sessions help normalize mistakes, reduce fear, and create learning culture.

❑ **Personal Journey Maps** — Divide the team into small groups. Invite each member to create a timeline that outlines key experiences in their professional lives that have shaped who they are. Ask each person to share a highlight from their map. Sharing stories will create appreciation for different perspectives and experiences and foster inclusion.

❑ **Empathy Mapping** helps develop a deeper understanding of other team member’s experiences and viewpoints. Divide the team into groups. Distribute an [empathy map](#) to each group. Assign a role to each group (e.g. Group 1: You are empathizing with our child health nurses; Group 2:



You are empathizing with our finance/administrator). Map out what each role experiences based on a chosen workplace scenario (e.g., preparing for accreditation, or preparing for a new fiscal year, etc.). Each group maps out what their assigned role experiences in that scenario by asking what the person sees, hears, thinks, feels, says, and does. By seeing things from someone else's perspective, team members began to build trust and understanding.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Superhero Roles

Trust and psychological safety are the foundation for JOY IN WORK. As a manager, if your team has high trust in you and each other they are more likely to be cohesive, collaborative and creative. If your team does not have high trust in you or each other they must spend more time and energy self-protecting, second guessing and weighing the benefits versus risks of bringing their full selves to the work.

Managers have a unique point of view that can influence the level of trust within the team. Take time to reflect on which "superhero" role you might play in cultivating team trust. Here's a fun list to get you started. Consider sharing these with your team and ask them to reflect on what role they might play.



JOY IN WORK Superhero Roles

- Which role resonates with you?
- How might you use your superpower to create psychological safety?



Joy Illuminator: Model being vulnerable and sharing your own challenges that have impeded feeling psychologically safe at work. Inspire others to prioritize psychological safety by inquiring about staff experiences feeling safe or not safe.



Coach Extraordinaire: Show staff that you care about them as people first and foremost. Making effort to understand what matters most to each staff member so that they can bring their best selves forward in their work. Asking curious questions from a place of positive intent to help staff see where they have opportunities to both create and degrade trust helps reinforce that we all contribute to the psychological safety of our team.



Resilient Navigator: Challenges will arise. Providing opportunities for staff to debrief and receive support and validation for hard circumstances creates the conditions for joy to grow. When trust has been broken it's better to have an open discussion versus ignore and always end on a hopeful, positive note related to next steps based on group feedback. Framing challenges as collective learning builds team resiliency over time.



Peer Uplifter: Demonstrating appreciation for staff saying hard things, reaching out to support teammates and other courageous acts shifts the culture towards joy and trust.



Trust Dynamo: Finding ways for every voice to be heard fosters psychological safety. This may involve finding ways for staff to reflect individually by writing responses before being asked to share with others. Trust must be earned and continuously maintained.



Joy Cultivator: Finding those “shimmers of joy” opportunities to bolster and highlight creates trust too. When team members can see and feel managers supporting ways to have fun it creates trust so that others on the team may feel comfortable to offer ideas, take the lead and inspire more ways to experience JOY IN WORK.



Connector: As you assess the level of psychological safety on your team you will find ways to repair where trust has been broken which will bolster the team's confidence that you truly care about every team member's capacity to experience JOY IN WORK.



What is one thing you can try this week to create a safer and more trusting environment?

Camaraderie and Teamwork

Social cohesion generated through productive teams, shared understanding, and trusting relationships.

When a team finds joy in their work together, it has the potential to unlock boundless possibilities making even the toughest challenges feel like exhilarating adventures. — Author Unknown

Camaraderie and teamwork are essential ingredients for fostering JOY IN WORK because they create a sense of belonging, collaboration, and shared purpose among team members. Camaraderie can't be forced; it's created over time after multiple interactions and experiences.

Things your team will see and experience when camaraderie and teamwork is in place:

- **Frequent positive interactions:** Giving compliments to one another, expressions of gratitude, positive upbeat energy.
- **Humor and fun:** A light and easygoing atmosphere with occasional laughter and smiles.
- **Constructive ways of resolving conflict:** Friendly and kind ways of giving one another feedback that feels supportive.
- **Willingness to help one another and support one another in challenging situations:** Willingness to step in and help a co-worker, offering emotional support when needed.
- **Investment in each other as whole people:** Caring for one another's success both at work and in personal lives; appreciation for each other's differences.
- **Lower turnover:** Visibly commitment to the work and to each other, less people leaving the work environment due to frustration.

ASSESS YOUR CURRENT STATE

Do others feel a sense of camaraderie and teamwork? Here are a couple quick and easy ways to get a pulse check.

- Observe** some meetings, activities, and interactions to get a feel.

How often do I see and hear the following:

- ✓ Interactions outside of work setting, such as lunch breaks and team outings.
- ✓ Discussions about team goals and how individual tasks contribute to these goals.
- ✓ Collaborative efforts in projects and/or problem-solving sessions.
- ✓ Team members helping each other with tasks.
- ✓ Laughter and fun being had by the team.

- Ask your Team**

What insights do you gather from asking:

- ✓ How are you? How are you REALLY?
- ✓ What aspects of being on this team feel like they are working well for you personally?
- ✓ What's been feeling hard on the team lately?
- ✓ Do you feel like you belong? Why or why not?
- ✓ How does being part of this team feel?
- ✓ What lights you up about this team? How can we find opportunities for more of that?
- ✓ What's easy/hard about investing in your teammates' JOY IN WORK experience?

IDEAS TO TRY OUT

- Work stories of origin:** A powerful way to jumpstart a bonding experience. During a one-on-one conversation or during a team meeting invite a couple people to share their response to: *How did you get started working in public health?*
- 
- Volunteering in community as a team:** Take photos and make memories together.
 - Wellness activities:** Walking groups, self-care at your workstation (vision breaks, breath work, etc.).
 - Learning experiences:** Book clubs, watching documentaries, speaker series, travel and attending conferences.
 - Office challenges:** Improv sessions, desk decorating contest, guess who baby pictures board, pizza wars, photo challenges with different themes.
 - Food experiences:** Lunch groups, nacho bar, potato bar, hot chocolate day, cookie exchange, chili cook off, popcorn and seasonings.
 - Celebrating office wins and milestones:** End of a project, retirement/work anniversaries, photo selfie station with props.
 - Posting chalkboards** in the lunchroom with writing prompts that change often, and staff fill in comments, stories, and shout-outs.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Superhero Roles

Camaraderie and teamwork are the glue that keeps positive teamwork thriving. We often assume it happens organically which is true to some extent but there are also many small and big ways that it can be fostered as well. The manager's point of view provides opportunities every day to maximize the goodwill among the team that already exists and build from there. The role of manager also provides opportunities to bolster positivity and a spirit of appreciation, and good things are to come both through one-to-one interactions with team members and together in groups. Keep in mind that efforts should always align with the group's preferences and not necessarily your own and small efforts over time are often more meaningful than grander, occasional opportunities to "have fun." Take time to reflect on what role you as a manager might play in creating camaraderie and teamwork. Here's a fun list to get you started. Consider sharing these with your team and ask them to reflect on what role they might play.



JOY IN WORK Superhero Roles

- Which role resonates with you?
- How might you use your superpower to create a culture of appreciation?



Joy Illuminator: Within team meetings, model how to position and frame recognition in such a way that it feels well received by the recipient. Modeling how to customize means thinking through the preferences of each team member.



Coach Extraordinaire: Coach and support team members in their efforts to recognize each other's unique contributions by calling a little attention to positive efforts and in 1:1 conversations asking questions such as "Can you tell me a time recently when you recognized a team member for something they did? How was it received? What did you learn about that colleague through that interaction?"



Resilient Navigator: Recognition and reward is a bit of a trial and error process. Ask team members regularly, "When did you last feel truly appreciated here? What was it about that effort that felt meaningful to you?"



Peer Uplifter: Recognition is about taking positive narratives that are typically running in our heads silently and developing a certain level of comfort expressing them out loud or through actions. Managers can work through awkward feelings and with just a little practice, can gain some confidence in expression.



Trust Dynamo: Honesty and vulnerability can pay off here. Telling team members, "Hey, I didn't adequately say out loud and recognize the hard work and sacrifice you made. I regret that, and I'm going to do a better job of expressing my thanks."



Joy Cultivator: Find creative ways for staff to recognize each other's good work, resiliency and MAKING active efforts to take time off. Use lunch and breaks for restorative activities, etc. What we reward subconsciously translates to the culture of your team and ultimately your organization.



Connector: Reward staff for positive efforts with opportunities to learn, grow and develop further.



What is one thing you can try
this week to create camaraderie?

Recognition and Rewards

Effective leaders understand daily work, regularly provide meaningful recognition of colleagues' contribution to purpose, and celebrate outcomes.

Recognition is about what people do; appreciation is about who they are. — Mike Robbins

Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary. — Margaret Cousins

We all want to know we have inherent value. Recognizing team members for both their performance (what they do) AND the value they bring (who they are) to the team goes a long way in creating JOY IN WORK. It's about seeing, acknowledging, and verbalizing appreciation for **the person first**, not the job position. Performance recognition may be things such as spotlighting staff/project team in a newsletter, giving "Employee of the Year/Month" awards. Recognition for the way they are being and adding value to the team might be more one-on-one and emphasizes their character traits like being patient with a difficult client, their ability to connect with others and build relationships, or being persistent in bring a new project to life despite many challenges.

Things your team will see and experience when recognition and reward is in place:

- Personalized appreciation: Staff are invested in understanding how others like to be invested and incorporate it into efforts to appreciate each other. Chapman & White's [The 5 Love Languages in the Workplace](#) may be a great place to start learning. They provide four preference types: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, and Tangible Gifts.
- Support and encouragement: Appreciation is a natural part of daily activities and is included as part of meetings and new employee orientation. Staff have access to tools to make it easy to appreciate others such as scripts for giving appreciation and access to thank you cards.
- Everyone keeps at it even when it isn't perfect: Everyone feels comfortable practicing appreciation, even if it feels awkward. Everyone assume positive intent and keeps learnig and getting better as they go.



ASSESS YOUR CURRENT STATE

Do others feel recognized and appreciated? Here are a couple quick and easy ways to get a pulse check.

- Observe** some meetings, activities, and interactions to get a feel.

How often do I see and hear the following:

- ✓ Team celebrations and kudos shared during team meetings.
- ✓ Public acknowledgement for one another's contributions to the success of a project.
- ✓ Instances of appreciating individual character traits (e.g. creativity, perseverance, etc.).
- ✓ Number of team celebrations.
- ✓ Availability of thank-you notes, emails, and other written communication sent to appreciate hard work and contributions

- Ask your Team**

What insights do you gather from asking:

- ✓ Tell me about a time when you felt really appreciated here?
- ✓ What was it about that experience that felt supportive?
- ✓ How does this team best enjoy celebrating small and big wins? How has that changed over time?
- ✓ How can we better create a culture of appreciation here?

IDEAS TO TRY OUT

- ❑ **Group Reflection:** Think about what it means to be appreciated. Divide the team into pairs or small groups and ask them to respond to this question. Think of a time when you felt appreciated at work:
 - What were the circumstances?
 - Who was the “Appreciator”?
 - How did their appreciation actions connect with you?
 - What did you learn about your own appreciation style preferences through this experience?

- ❑ **Individual Reflection:** Ask your team members to spend time thinking about ways they can appreciate others. Ask them to reflect and share their thoughts on the following questions:
 - How can I take actions to recognize and appreciate team members?
 - How can I encourage team members to recognize and appreciate one another?
 - How can I gather information about each team member so that my efforts to recognize and appreciate are well received?

- ❑ Get to know the preferences of your team members; one easy way is to ask. Simply create a form or Google Doc and ask everyone to share their individual preferences including questions such as: what is your favorite color? What is your favorite snack? How do you like to be appreciated? Use the information to inform how you celebrate and recognize others. For example, if you recognize work anniversaries, try to buy someone their favorite snack. To sustain this effort, ask each new employee to complete the form during onboarding, ensuring the list of preferences continues to be updated over time.

- ❑ Keep a list of your appreciation efforts each month; simply jot down when and how you show appreciation to a teammate. It can be as simple as writing it down on a sticky note or creating a list. You’ll be

surprised at the number of appreciations you've given out by the end of the month. There's something about writing things down that makes us move to action.

- ❑ **Create a Wordle** (text and words arranged to make art) by involving the entire team in recognizing others on each team member's work anniversary. Prior to the anniversary, ask everyone to jot down specific things they appreciated about this team member. Create a wordle, print it out, and present it to the team members as part of their work anniversary celebration.
- ❑ **Show spontaneous appreciation.** Create cards or use blank thank you notes. When you see someone doing something that adds value to your team (both what they are doing and how they are being) write it down and share it. Give recognition and appreciation as close to when you saw it take place as possible, preferably the day of, and be as specific as possible. For example, *"Yesterday, I observed you as you were interacting with that difficult client on the phone. Your ability to connect with them and build trust is invaluable to our mission. Thank you!"*
- ❑ **Handing out "affirmation cards"** that can fit inside ID badges that have a note of appreciation for something specific that the staff member is being recognized for. This shows others in a visible way what they have been recognized for.
- ❑ **Formal awards:** Each local health department and partners such as Health and Human Services can create awards to recognize outstanding contributions to public health, leadership, innovation and community. Depending on the division or department some staff may find formal recognition opportunities through annual conferences with peers from other agencies such as health education, school nurses, public health nursing, environmental health, epidemiology, infectious disease, health equity and more. Nomination opportunities for national awards exist as well through APHA, NACCHO, CDC and other national partners.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Superhero Roles

One of the most satisfying parts of being a manager is being able to recognize and reward team members for their contributions. Often, we think about these efforts as being occasionally instead of consistently occurring so that they feel special. Consider using a “both and” approach where some methods of recognition and rewards are reserved for special occasions such as awards, bonuses and



other formal incentives AND you are also finding ways to embed appreciation into the way you manage your team every day. Managers who understand this as being part of who they are in their roles versus something to do often receive a lot of positive feedback from their teams.

Recognition efforts always have to be balanced with saying hard things and addressing challenges with swift attention so that trust is maintained. It's also important to have an awareness of your own preferences around recognition so that they don't bias the way you provide recognition to team members who may have a different set of preferences. For example, some staff may prefer a handwritten note versus public recognition. Managers who cultivate team dynamics where staff appreciate one another are taking great strides towards a JOY IN WORK team experience. Take time to reflect on what role you as a manager might play in creating recognition and rewards for your team. Here's a fun list to get you started. Consider sharing these with your team and ask them to reflect on what role they might play.

JOY IN WORK Superhero Roles

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Connector: Reward staff for positive efforts with opportunities to learn, grow and develop further.

What is one thing you can try this week
to create a culture of appreciation?

4. JOY IN WORK IN ACTION: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Finding Joy in Challenges

“Our challenge is that a new administrator, at the request of the Board of Health, was writing new policies to reduce liability for PTO. Human Resources related policies are always tough and things we don’t typically like to deal with. But we did manage to weave aspects of joy into the process. We were able to sit and talk about what we valued about the benefits and then take that back to the board. As the policy was being written we continued to talk about it as a group, although it wasn’t easy. What came out of it was the fact that we had (psychological) safety/trust and we were able to share and support each other. Even if we didn’t agree we were supporting each other and valuing each other. Change is constant, but we can infuse sparks of joy even as we do difficult things.”

“We did some group work with all staff using the JOY IN WORK toolkit. We used mentimeter [online polling tool] to ask staff where they were in JOY IN WORK understanding and journeys. We surveyed all staff and did quick brainstorms breaking everyone into small groups and using post its to write job-specific pebbles and boulders. Overall, this is what we want, where we



are at, and what our values are. We then took our challenges and had discussions about public interactions, argumentative clients, (workplace) trauma, and outdated policies. We asked staff for solutions and ideas, and we asked everyone to listen from a non-judgmental place. We discussed the internal work we need to do as well as how we will hold each other accountable. We had good feedback from the first session. It's easy to see the negatives but 80% of staff saw positives."

Connecting Joy and Learning

"In an effort to break the cycle of difficult transitions taking my two-year old and one year old daughters to daycare, I bought a used cargo bike. My hope was to enjoy my morning routine and bring more health and happiness to my home, but what I learned was that it also made a positive impact to my community. We have the highest unemployment rate in our state and some of the worst health statistics in the country. My job is to distribute information to the public, and I do this by dropping off flyers to local businesses, libraries, healthcare clinics with community boards. Seeing me frequently builds relationships and trust. In the next phase of this adventure, I am extending across my entire county by hitching my bike to the bus to distribute flyers rather than take a county car. The biggest improvement I experience with a new morning routine is increased approachability that has resulted in new friends and connections! Parents at my children's daycare who have never talked to me now walk up to me and ask me about my bike, and people in the community can now recognize me as someone who is here to listen and to help improve health."

"So, one of the things we have started doing is these old trivia contests. This one is about fire safety. We try to link the game content to things we do, things we have to know (to enhance learning). It's always a great way to kind of get together and do the trivia with people throughout the department."

Understanding “Our Why”

“To truly understand the values and what matters to our staff, we launched a Photo Voice project with a simple ask: ‘Take pictures of what public health looks like to you and send them to us.’ The results have been astounding. The submissions beautifully capture the essence of public health through the eyes of our dedicated team. Photos are of clients smiling and engaging in activities and enjoying what is being shown and taught to them. The pictures show our staff’s love for their job and how important it is to them.”

Serving Together

“Make It Shine Day is a statewide event by the Department of Environmental Protection with the goal of making our state the cleanest state in the country. Every April, volunteer groups, business, communities, and local government all across the state come together for the cleanup. This year our entire health joined in. We took our Mobile Unit and went around the county picking up trash. Having our public health van allowed our community to see us in action. We got to see some amazing parts of our community that many of us (even though we’ve lived here all our lives) have never seen, like the beautiful parks, rivers, and trails. Doing the pickup gave us a greater appreciation for our community. And we gained insights about things like food access, nutritional education, etc. by the trash that we picked up. The cleanup day happened on the day of the solar eclipse, so we took a pause and enjoyed the eclipse. Fun was had by all. Laughter and togetherness really are the best medicine!”

Humanizing Those in Management

“During college, my roommate introduced me and our four other roommates to a weekly ‘game’ called ‘Pit and Cherry.’ The idea is simple: each person shares the high (cherry) and low (pit) points of their week. When we first started, we were six strangers sharing an apartment. Over time, without any prompting, we became more open. This ten-minute, judgment-free activity allowed us to be honest with each other, building the strongest sense of camaraderie and psychological safety I’ve ever experienced. I have introduced this activity to teams throughout our department because it requires minimal effort and can be done in person or even over a group chat. It can have a huge impact. From a management perspective, it’s not just about hearing their pits and cherries but also about them hearing ours, seeing us as human, and understanding our range of emotions.”



When you learn, teach. When you get, give.—Maya Angelou

5. SPREADING JOY

Joy deserves to be spread to others. You can create a ripple effect that starts with your team and then spreads to others. Be intentional and plan for how you will spread and scale your efforts. A workplace culture that prioritizes JOY IN WORK will typically use a layered approach continuously thinking through how the implementation steps look differently for SELF (the manager), INDIVIDUAL STAFF, TEAM, and the overall ORGANIZATION. If you've been successful with your SELF, STAFF, and TEAM what do you do next to spread it to others and throughout the ORGANIZATION.

✓ **The What:**

- Based on what we know works, what can we encourage others to do consistently on the individual, team, and organizational levels? Consider the mindsets, behaviors, activities, and policies that you implemented that have worked well for your team.
- Stories captivate the heart and help others understand your experience. The [JOY IN WORK Template Plan](#) is a great way to communicate your story. Everyone has their own preferences for how they receive and respond to information. Consider communicating often and use many different formats. Here are a few things to consider as you communicate:

- Share why JOY IN WORK was important to your team and how it aligns with the overall mission and purpose of your organization. Ask your team to discuss their experience with others.
- Make your work visible. Sometimes we have to see to believe. Share stories, show graphs, post pictures and videos to show others how they might incorporate ideas into their work
- Make it feel simple and easy to do. Consider providing scripts, agendas, templates, etc. so they can pick it up and run with it. Describe what you did, how you did it, and any lessons you learned.
- Make yourself available to answer questions and mentor them as others begin their JOY IN WORK journey.



Quick Tip

A few pointers as you scale up your efforts to reach more staff:

- JOY IN WORK is a space to slow down and BE versus typical action-oriented tasks- do, do, do.
- Joy can't be done to you; it has to be done with you.
- Begin each interaction with connection emphasizing that people and relationships are a priority.
- The shift to becoming invested in each other's joy experience is where you can begin to really spread the JOY IN WORK culture.

✓ The How:

- How might we start small and scale up as we gain more success? Find teams excited to invest time into creating JOY IN WORK. It's okay if everyone isn't ready. Start where there is energy for the work Consider inviting them to join meetings as your team discusses your success. Engage leaders to encourage other teams to incorporate JOY IN WORK.



6. TROUBLESHOOTING

All great endeavors face challenges and bumps along the way. Here is a Q-Question and A-Answer summary to support you as you navigate your journey toward JOY IN WORK.

Q: How can I help others create JOY IN WORK if I've lost my joy?

A: Please refer to “JOY IN WORK Reflection Guide for Local Health Department Managers” for guided questions and activities to support managers in their personal journeys with their own JOY IN WORK. Tapping into your source of personal joy both in and outside of work can be helpful. Restoring your sense of joy can take time and effort. The reflection guide provides ideas for how to “fill your own (joy) cup” and “boost” joy.

Q: It feels like a heavy load to bear. Am I solely responsible to guide the JOY IN WORK initiative?

A: Everyone is responsible for JOY IN WORK. JOY IN WORK is a collective effort. It's not solely the responsibility of one group or one person; it takes everyone – top leaders, managers, and individual staff. It isn't about checking off tasks to say we have JOY IN WORK, rather it's about creating a culture where joy becomes an integral part of the



work. Often, we look to others for our JOY IN WORK or maybe others look to us. How might we first change our assumptions and help others realize:

- ✓ I am responsible for **MY OWN** JOY IN WORK (I can have awareness of my needs and seek it out).
- ✓ I am responsible for **BEING INVESTED** in the JOY IN WORK of my co-workers. (I can be a joy cultivator for others. In each interaction, I can build psychological safety, camaraderie, and appreciate others.

Q: How do we connect JOY IN WORK to our strategic plan?

A: Here are a few tips to integrate and align JOY IN WORK efforts with strategic planning:

- ✓ Be explicit that fostering a JOY IN WORK experience for all staff is a priority in collective purpose, mission/vision and goals and objectives language.
- ✓ Include intentions and aspirations for JOY IN WORK in overall action plans. For example, *“We strive to cultivate a supportive work environment whereby managers have dedicated time together to brainstorm ideas and share successes and challenges related to fostering JOY IN WORK among teams.”*
- ✓ Include strategic questions related to JOY IN WORK in critical discussions that inform planning outputs. For example, *“How can we integrate a JOY IN WORK focus into our workforce development supports?”*

Q: How do I gain support from senior leaders?

A: Sharing stories and insights from staff is a great place to start. Consider using insights you gain from your observations and “What Matters to

You?” conversations to make the case for why this is important, how it aligns with organizational goals, and the overall mission. Consider adapting these sample rationales:

JOY IN WORK activities are designed to improve overall staff morale which can affect individual job fulfillment. When staff feel more positive about their connections with each other and to purpose their contributions will often match that same level of positivity.

JOY IN WORK efforts and the overall conscious shift to creating workplace teams and environments that actively promote feelings of belonging, support and collaboration impact retention rates and they can also improve the quality of contribution.

While JOY IN WORK efforts may include some activities that require extra time and resources there are many efforts that can be integrated into everyday patterns of interacting and the structures of how we do our work (for example, how we open and close meetings).

Q: What if the ideas we want to try out require support from others outside my team?

A: We categorize things as Pebbles and Boulders. As you encounter boulders consider asking for the help or resources that you need while also ensuring that you are maintaining a high level of trust with your team.

Q: What if I uncover things that I don't feel comfortable addressing? What if I open Pandora's box?

A: As a manager, you are not required to know everything. Whew! That's a relief. From our experience, some things like mental health issues do come to light. Most of us are not confident nor qualified to address these issues. In these instances, seek out help from your Human Resources department to help you identify ways to support staff. Some local health departments and partner agencies are establishing peer liaisons who have gone through mental health support training and can help staff navigate resources while also offering some workplace appropriate support.

Q: What if I am a new manager? Can I still begin to infuse JOY IN WORK?

A: Yes, new managers can ask curious questions which can help deepen their understanding of workplace dynamics, historical challenges and individual preferences for experiencing joy and being appreciated. New managers should first focus on building trust with each team member and psychological safety across the whole team before diving too deeply into What Matters to You Conversations. Simply letting staff know that you care about them, their perspectives and experience at work matters to you is a good starting point.

Q: How do we incorporate JOY IN WORK even during challenging times?

A: In public health we experience the push and pull of expectations and challenges from within and outside of our agency. JOY IN WORK is a misnomer that makes us feel like things have to be sunny all the time. The truth is, JOY IN WORK comes into play when we can have an off day and can still feel supported by those around us. Joy is having difficult conversations about hard topics but still finding a way to show that everyone's opinion is valuable.

Even in times of uncertainty, you can apply a JOY IN WORK lens to help you navigate in such a way that you are still putting your people first. Consider pausing to think about how you might incorporate principles of JOY IN WORK. Examples include:

- How might we...
 - Create an environment where team members rely on and support each other during difficult situations?
 - Providing access to a virtual calming room to support staff through stressful situations with sensory designed images, video clips, sounds and reflection prompts.
 - Facilitate a brainstorming session to gather concerns employees might have about a challenge (e.g., funding issues, policy changes, vacancies)

- Offer and appreciate the collective efforts of the team during a difficult time?
 - Offering a prayer of appreciation across multiple clans for nurses or other professionals working in extreme conditions as demonstrated in a tribal health department.
 - Designing, crafting and showcasing a recovery quilt made by staff with each square created by a different staff member to aid in the emotional processing of serving on the front lines of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Q: How do we incorporate JOY IN WORK in different work environments (clinic, field, office, remote, etc.)?

A: The JOY IN WORK principles apply to all work environments. It does, however, require understanding of the unique needs of each setting and tailoring the approach for your different groups. For remote staff it may be identifying ways to leverage technology and for field staff it may be finding ways to connect over a group (text) chat, or arrange a lunch meet up. Engage staff to gather their insights about what would work best and then adapt and learn as you go. There is no perfect way to approach it except to be open to adapting to changing circumstances.

Q: How do I honor and support everyone's preferences for JOY IN WORK when we are all so different?

A: We all come to work for different reasons and different things bring us joy at work. Part of creating JOY IN WORK is being willing to step outside our own comfort zone and allow others to experience things that give them joy. Some of us are driven by the mission and the impact of our collective work while for others, their professional work is a sliver or a small piece of the larger puzzle that brings them joy. Their motivations may center more around making a steady income to support their family. Both are okay. Honoring each other's motivations and preferences around joy is part of creating a supportive environment. Supportive actions include openly discuss that it is okay to have different preferences and encourage everyone to stretch and learn about each other's preferences.

7. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present. — Jim Rohn



In public health, nothing matters more than our ability to work cooperatively with one another to protect and provide for our communities. Working to create a culture of joy within our local health departments, across our teams is truly a necessity so that we can serve our communities effectively. Managers have a unique point of view and are positioned well to help staff feel seen, understood and appreciated. Thinking about JOY IN WORK from an intentional mindset is the key to creating a team and workplace where all staff can thrive.

- ✓ Please refer to “**Tip Sheet JOY IN WORK for Local Health Department Managers**” for a summary of key concepts, lessons learned, and action ideas.”
- ✓ Please refer to “**JOY IN WORK Reflection Guide for Local Health Department Managers**” for guided questions and activities to support managers in their personal journeys with their own JOY IN WORK.

Additional Resources

Peer Support Guidance for Mental Health and Well-being in the Workplace

- Give An Hour: <https://giveanhour.org/>
- CDC workplace wellness: [home | Workplace Health Promotion | CDC](#)

Tools, Methods and Practices to Support Trauma-Informed Workplaces

- [Office of the Surgeon General - Framework for Workplace Mental Health & WellBeing \(hhs.gov\)](#)
- [TOOLKIT: Trauma-Informed Workplaces \(ctipp.org\)](#)
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions- A Trauma-Informed Approach to Workforce- An Introductory Guide for Employers and Workforce Development Organizations: [A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf \(nationalfund.org\)](#)
- National Council for Mental Wellbeing: [Workforce Development \(thenationalcouncil.org\)](#)
- SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach: [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach | SAMHSA Publications and Digital Products](#)
- Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center: [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center - Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center \(chcs.org\)](#)

Books

- [A Little Book About Trauma-Informed Workplaces](#) by Nathan Gerbrant and Randy Grieser; A project of the Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute
- [The Compassion Fatigued Organization: Restoring Compassion to Helping Professionals](#) by Michelle Graff
- [The Empathetic Workplace](#) by Katherine Manning

Articles

- We Need Trauma-Informed Workplaces” by Katherine Manning, Harvard Business Review: [We Need Trauma-Informed Workplaces \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2014/03/we-need-trauma-informed-workplaces/)
- What is Trauma-Informed Leadership and Why It Matters: [What Is Trauma-Informed Leadership? | Workplace Peace Institute](https://www.workplacepeaceinstitute.com/trauma-informed-leadership/)

JOY IN WORK Integrate Approach Template Plan

This template provides a simple, two-page guide to help you reflect and document your journey of integrating JOY IN WORK across all levels. It is a great summary document you can use to both track progress and share with others outside your team.

Our Vision

What does JOY IN WORK look like for our team/department/organization?

- *What will we SEE, HEAR, and EXPERIENCE in our workplace if we are successful at creating JOY IN WORK?*

How will we know we have Joy in our work?

- Identify one measure that will show that what we are doing is working.

What key component(s) will we focus on first?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical and psychological safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Camaraderie and teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning and purpose | <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choice and autonomy | <input type="checkbox"/> Wellness and resilience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition and rewards | <input type="checkbox"/> Real-time measurement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participative management | |

By when will we accomplish our vision?

Our Current State of JOY IN WORK (Where are we Now?)

What is our current state of joy as it relates to the [insert key component]?

- *What have we learned from the What Matters to You Conversations?*
- *What attitudes, behaviors, mindsets do we see on our team?*
- *Where are the bright spots?*
- *Where are the opportunities to improve?*

Our Ideas We are Trying Out

What strategies will we try out?

Describe the idea	How will we prototype and test it on a small scale?	What did we learn? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What excited everyone about the idea?</i> • <i>What would make it even better?</i> 	What's our next steps? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How will we adapt our idea?</i>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Our Plan for Success

Our Team includes:

How will we work together?

- *How will we carve out the space and time to do the work? How often?*
- *What leader will support us and help champion our efforts?*

Short Term Next Steps: In the Next 30 Days We Will:

Next Steps	Who's Responsible?	By When?	Notes/Things to Communicate to Larger Team
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Long Term Next Steps: In the Next Three Months We Will:



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