



The UNM HSC
Learning Environment Office Presents

A Toolkit for Creating and Maintaining Respectful, Supportive, and Inclusive Learning Environments

Introduction

This toolkit provides faculty, learners, staff, and administrators with guidelines and strategies to foster supportive, respectful, and inclusive learning environments. It outlines key principles and actionable steps to ensure that everyone can thrive while upholding high standards in education, research, and patient care.

Support, respect, and inclusion for all lead to **healthy environments** for all: students, trainees, faculty, staff, and patients.

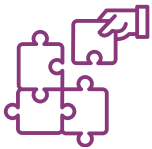
It is paramount for you to **lead by example** by implementing the strategies detailed in this toolkit.



Why Does This Matter?



A healthy learning environment enhances academic and professional growth, promotes well-being, and fosters a culture of trust, respect, support, and inclusion.



When individuals feel valued and supported, they are more likely to engage effectively, contribute to problem solving, and succeed. This in turn ensures ethical and effective patient care, and reinforces trust in healthcare systems.



A healthy learning environment will challenge learners to perform to their best ability, developing them into effective and talented providers and researchers.



An unhealthy learning/working environment is likely to be less efficient, effective, or safe for patients or learners. Providers and researchers are more likely to experience burnout in these settings, and may not perform to their highest capabilities.



Most educational program accrediting bodies have specific requirements for what constitutes an acceptable learning environment, which typically prohibit things like retaliation, discrimination, and bullying.



Qualities of a Healthy Learning Environment (LE)

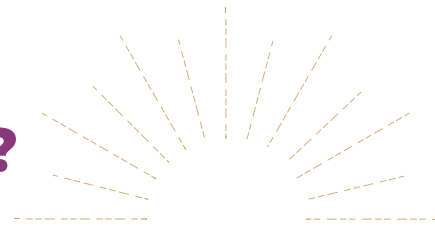
Quality	Actions to Take to Achieve a Healthy LE
Interactive & Challenging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage inquiry, engagement, curiosity, and lifelong learning• Provide learners with relevant and effective lessons, procedures, and information at an appropriately challenging level• Create an environment in which learners can ask questions without fear of judgement or ridicule• Ensure questions are met with constructive and supportive responses
High Quality Education, Research, & Patient Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide early, clear, and consistent learning objectives and expectations• Deliver the highest quality patient care• Provide high quality education to all students and trainees• Conduct research in a safe and challenging manner that benefits learning and innovation
Respect, Support, & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat everyone with respect and ensure everyone is included and supported in their role• Encourage collaboration and provide space for everyone to contribute• Provide resources and support systems (such as mentors, coaches, and/or training) for learners and teachers facing challenges• Foster a culture of mutual respect by actively listening and valuing diverse perspectives

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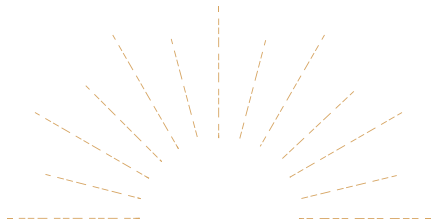


Quality	Actions to Take to Achieve a Healthy LE
Evaluations are Fair, Consistent, and Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide consistent and constructive feedback • Be comfortable and confident providing corrective or constructive feedback to learners • Evaluate each learner in a timely manner, and ensure evaluation metrics are clear and consistent for each evaluator • All evaluations—of teachers and of learners—are completed without bias, retaliation, or malice
Mistreatment & Discrimination Are Not Tolerated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain zero tolerance for mistreatment, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or bullying of or by anyone in the learning and working environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Contact LEO when you become aware of any such behaviors • Ensure everyone is aware of reporting mechanisms • Address concerns promptly and consistently through appropriate institutional channels, such as LEO and the UNM Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Equal Opportunity (CEEEO)

What is challenging about this?



- ➡ These environments must be intentionally maintained, upheld, & evaluated. They are not self-perpetuating and take ongoing work.
- ➡ Many of us did not train or study in these types of healthy learning environments, so they can be hard to picture or implement without additional training or effort.
- ➡ Admitting a failure to create a healthy learning environment, or a need for help in doing so, can be difficult. Some have been taught to view asking for help as a sign of weakness.
- ➡ Some elements of healthy environments can take longer to implement than the alternatives in the short-term, such as providing consistent feedback to each learner. However, those challenges will pay off by saving time and energy in the long run when learners are thriving and things are working well.



Things to keep in mind

- ➡ Respect and inclusion require ongoing commitment and self-reflection
- ➡ Open and honest communication can be challenging but foster trust and understanding
- ➡ Providing clear expectations (early and often) helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts
- ➡ Identity and psychological safety are key to fostering a culture of inquiry and growth
- ➡ Continuous improvement and adaptability are necessary for long-term success

Do's and Don'ts for Creating Healthy Learning Environments



Do

- ✓ Lead by example in fostering a respectful, supportive, and inclusive team dynamic/culture.
- ✓ Provide clear expectations early and often.
- ✓ Be consistent.
- ✓ Be kind.
- ✓ Be challenging.
- ✓ Provide clear, timely, and constructive feedback.
- ✓ Address concerns promptly - always reach out to LEO if you're unsure of what to do. Remember LEO can have confidential discussions with you.
- ✓ Provide accommodations for disabilities as directed by ARC, CEEQ, or HR. Ask questions as you have them.
- ✓ Assume everyone wants to learn and work to their highest potential.

Don't

- ✗ Assume that a healthy environment happens without intentional effort.
- ✗ Humiliate, bully, discriminate, or retaliate.
- ✗ Minimize or dismiss concerns raised by learners or colleagues.
- ✗ Strive to re-create your training environment if it was not healthy — even if you learned a lot and became a good provider or researcher.
- ✗ Provide vague, inconsistent, or cruel feedback. This can damage the environment and doesn't benefit learning.
- ✗ Be afraid to ask for guidance or help from LEO, a mentor, or your supervisor
- ✗ Avoid having tough conversations or providing critical feedback. No one benefits when learners are not challenged or held to high standards.
- ✗ Retaliate (either implicitly or explicitly) if someone has raised a concern you disagree with.