Saving the Starfish: Safety, Belonging, and Mattering

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Objectives

- Summarize the components of safety, belonging, and mattering and how they relate to self and psychological needs
- Discuss how to make others feel like they matter including a discussion of transitional theory
- Outline coaching strategies and the role of coaching in mattering
Safety

• creating an environment where faculty/ staff/ students/ residents/ others can take risks, ask questions, try things, and grow in a way that doesn’t harm others (especially patients)

Belonging

• creating an environment where we all feel like a tight-knit team and we’re rowing in the same direction to reach our goals.

Mattering

• each of us contributes individually in a unique way
Definition of mattering

- Mattering consists of:
  - Attention: the feeling that one is noticed.
  - Importance: the belief that one is cared about.
  - Dependence: the sense of feeling needed.
  - Appreciation: the feeling that one's efforts are appreciated by others.

Other basics about mattering

- When you matter: resilient, engaged
- When you don't matter: prone to stress and distress
- Mattering is distinguishable from other constructs such as belongingness and marginality
- Mattering can and will fluctuate according to life experiences
- Mattering is contextual (mattering to mother/father/school/work)

Moving to other contexts

- Interpersonal mattering
  - Valued by another person
- Organizational mattering
  - Valued within an organization
- Societal mattering
  - Valued/contribute to a larger community

Mattering, Belonging, and Marginality

- Mattering - belief that others depend on and are interested in you
- Belonging - belief that you are an essential part of the group/organization/institution within which you are involved
- Marginality – state where a person feels ignored, shunned, separated, or on the “fringe”. Opposite of feeling important, appreciated, valued
  - This concept is important when working to create a climate that honors diversity because there are so many opportunities and instances where honoring diversity can make individuals feel marginalized by others and by society.
In other words...
You want others to feel they matter!

Feeling You Matter

Similarities to top psychological needs
Three top psychological needs

Autonomy
Dependence
Uniqueness

Competence
Attention
Importance
Invested in
Noted absence
Appreciation

Relatedness
Self-Determination Theory

Similarities to top psychological needs


Transition Theory: The 4 Ss (Schlossberg)

The four factors that affect one’s ability to cope with transition are: situation, self, support and strategies.

- **Situation**
  - Trigger, Timing, Control, Role change, Duration, Previous experience with a similar transition, Concurrent stress, Assessment

- **Self**
  - Two kinds: personal & demographic characteristics (socioeconomic status, gender, age, health, ethnicity, culture, etc.) and psychological resources (ego development, outlook, commitment, resilience, spirituality, self-efficacy, values, etc.)

- **Support**
  - Types (intimate, family, friends, institutional), functions (affirmation, aid, honest feedback) & measurements (stable and changing supports)

- **Strategies**
  - Three categories: Modify the situation, control the meaning of the problem, or aid in the managing of stress afterwards
  - Four coping models: information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, intrapsychic behavior

Highlights from COVID

- Exceptionally stressful
- Unknown degree of risk to health
- Risk to well-being for individual and those close to them
- Sense of uncertainty and feelings of uncontrollability
- Disruption to daily routines
- Economic consequences

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in Pre and Post Covid 19 State.

[Diagram showing Maslow's hierarchy of needs with changes in pre and post COVID-19 contexts]

What do we do in times of uncertainty?

• Seek comfort and reassurance
• Find tangible forms of aid and assistance
• Look for supportive interactions and contacts
• Adapt and survive

• How is this done with social distancing, quarantining, etc.

COVID and Mattering

• Mattering is particularly important during transitions and stressful, uncertain times
  • Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989

• Lessons from SARS outbreak: Mattering to others is based, in part, on the sense that other people are listening attentively to what someone has to say.
• Are there times now, during COVID, that we feel that people are not listening? How do you think it affects faculty, staff, students, residents, others?

Think About

• How did you feel in the situation in which you felt you mattered?
• Have you ever felt marginalized? How did you feel?
• A person to whom you mattered or were marginal to:
  • An environment in which you mattered or were marginal:

• How did you behave in each of the above situations?
• How did you know you mattered or if you were marginalized?

Source: Nancy Schlossberg
When you don’t matter

**Decreases in:**
- Well being
- Belongingness
- Self-esteem
- Motivation
- Self-acceptance, self-compassion, self-efficacy

**Increases in:**
- Stress
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Loneliness
- Self-criticism

Making others feel they don’t matter

- Not asking what they think/want
- Investing little time in their well-being
- Expressing cynicism in ways that highlight limitations
- Directing attention only at oneself
- Failing to acknowledge contributions
- Interrupting or talking over someone
- Minimizing, ignoring or denying feelings
- Making them feel like a number
- Not remembering someone when you should

Do you know if faculty/staff/students/residents/others feel that they matter or are marginal? How?
Feeling that you matter depends on interactions

• What you say
• What you do
• What you don’t do

Revisit Mattering (5 Aspects)

• Attention - the feeling that one is noticed.
• Importance - the belief that one is cared about.
• Dependence - the feeling of feeling needed.
• Appreciation - the feeling that one’s efforts are appreciated by others.
• Ego Extension - the feeling that someone else will be proud of what one does or will sympathize with one’s failure.
• Note absence - Others miss you
• Individuation - Others recognize your unique strengths


Setting up a coaching environment

Ensuring psychological safety is key

Making others feel they matter helps to build psychological safety

How do you make your faculty/staff/students/residents/others feel they matter?

Increases learning/growth

Decreases frustration and burnout
What is the role of a Coach in mattering?

• Developing a mattering relationship
• What have you done/should you do to help others feel:
  • That they are important to you?
  • That you are paying attention?
  • That you depend on them?
  • That you are interested in what they offer?
  • That they are missed when absent?
  • That they are appreciated?
  • That they are unique/special?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Organizational</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
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Tips for Helping Others Feel that they Matter & Fostering Professional Identity

• Orient others, give them a role or make sure they are clear of their role
• Outline a general job description or be familiar with their job description to foster the next item.
• Focus on an educational or individual plan.
• Make them feel SAFE - e.g. asking for help.
• Set aside dedicated time for feedback
• Call them by their name
• Start the day with a smile
• Make work fun
• Develop a genius hour or allow them to work on a passion project that is then shared with others
• Focus on the person first

Table 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 Ways to Build an Individual’s Sense of Community Mattering</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiring often about what someone needs, wants or thinks</td>
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<td>Telling someone you know how much they are needed and relied upon</td>
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<td>Checking in on people, finding unique ways to stay connected with them</td>
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<td>Going out of one’s way and taking the time to enhance someone’s well-being</td>
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<td>Sharing narrative accounts of people helping people to build a shared sense of connection</td>
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<td>Asking directly about someone’s fears, hopes, and interests and sharing your own</td>
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<td>Acknowledging selfless efforts on behalf of others</td>
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<td>Expressing gratitude as a form of appreciation for people helping and protecting others</td>
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<td>Sharing your own resources in a selfless, generous manner</td>
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<td>Reminding people who are isolated and alone that other people are still with them</td>
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Note: Adapted from Table 3.2, page 35 in Flett (2018).
Summary

- Safety, Belonging, and Mattering relate to self and psychological needs
- We experience constant transitions that can make the feeling of mattering tough
- There are differences in safety, mattering, belonging, and feeling marginalized.
- Coaching and coaching strategies can help
- Conscientiously incorporating activities in the workplace to help foster professional identity & make others feel like they matter helps