

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT STORIES OF 'MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE'

As published in 'Crinall, K and Crinall, W (2021), *Monash Women's Leading Kindness COVID-19 Toolkit Pilot Project Most Significant Change Technique Evaluation Report*, Crinall Consulting, Melbourne, Australia.'

Available at: <https://leadingkindnesscovid19toolkit.wordpress.com/>

Team cohesiveness*

With the introduction of the Wellbeing program there was a more organized sense of looking out for each other. I really liked the basic needs workshop, which highlighted the simple things everyone needs to attend to—that you can help other people attend to—which are not always our first priority, like eating, drinking water and getting enough sleep. After the workshop people were asking “Have you had water this morning? Have you had something to eat?” There was recognition that it was not weak or lazy to take a break to drink and eat, you have to do it to function. Everyone went to medical school, it's not like we don't know that.

The other thing that I liked about the program, and in the aftermath, was how it seemed to break down hierarchical barriers within the Monash Women's Health team. A highlight was senior clinicians telling their own stories. You can have grandiose ideas about others at work, especially the seniors you admire, how they know everything and do everything right.

Witnessing their fears and concerns, and their approaches to challenges makes you more impressed by their achievement, you feel like challenges are more approachable, the steps ahead are more attainable. Not that you're any closer clinically, in the skill level, but you feel like a kind of kinship has opened up in a different way.

The program was also an opportunity to address the things that make a cohesive team, that make us all better together. More than before, the whole team stepped up to help each other make it through the day together. For example, if someone on referrals was inundated, you might take their pager or their phone, and say “You deal with the ones you've got, and I'll deal with the next two that come in”. Or maybe three people arrive on the ward to be admitted, and someone says, “Okay, you're on admissions, you do two of them, but I'll do one, I've got 10 minutes, I can do that.” If someone helps you out, you end up doing the same for someone else. I saw this happening.

A program like this identifies that people want to do something practical to support each other, to build cohesiveness within the team. I think that was one of the best things about it.

*Most Significant Story

Recognising my agency

The most important change brought about by the wellbeing program for me was recognising my agency. I learned there were changes I could make in my workplace environment and my headspace that could improve my wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around me. I was already primed for this change. I had completed exams and was thinking about ways that I could be better at my job, and a better leader and how I could contribute to the unit.

Although these changes were dynamic, they happened slowly, like with anything.

Even though I knew it in theory, seeing other people, after the workshops discussing how to give feedback and how to do a good 'power pose' reminded me that we all feel inadequate to the task at hand, and we can all learn to take care of ourselves and others better.

Watching people learn to advocate for themselves around meal breaks, for example made me realise how much there is in these really simple skills. I started noticing people's efforts to communicate, beyond the words they were saying. I hope this means I can respond to people's intended message more explicitly.

Getting doctors to do these sorts of things is really hard. But this experience has taught me that there is a need to learn soft skills, so that we build a workforce which communicates effectively and cares for itself.

Until we sit down and spend time discussing basic things, like meeting our needs, such as taking breaks, we won't develop the necessary skills; people need training in these things.

Taking care of ourselves and supporting each other better

The Wellbeing workshops were a good way to interact online with my colleagues, and to have a chat and share. The wellbeing program helped people to connect. Other changes from the program included encouraging us to maintain our break time; reminding ourselves to drink water, and asking someone to take a break when they have a long shift. For example, we might tell each other that we have to take a break, that we have to go for a lunch break, or go for a water break. We take turns to remind each other: “You have to go, and you should go”.

A main difference for me, is that the program reminded us to take care of ourselves, and to support each other, even on long shifts when we are very stressed at work.

After the program I did look after myself better, and I know where I can get support if I need it. My relationship with colleagues changed because of the program – I had many more interactions. We got to know each other better, and now we support each other better. We have also learnt how to cope with all the things related to isolation.

Role modelling

One of the really positive things about the Wellbeing workshops was that they were led by some of our more senior colleagues. We had time set aside from clinical work where we could just be a group, as opposed to trying to find the time at the end of a long shift or at lunchtime when you still have a pager or a phone. The placing of the workshops into our protected teaching time was really important.

The biggest thing I took from the wellbeing program was the role modelling; senior junior doctors taking ownership and then creating this space where all their colleagues could contribute.

The wellbeing workshops didn't provide me with new knowledge as such, but they made it okay to apply the information that was delivered. They reinforced that my colleagues felt the same way I do when they are overwhelmed or vulnerable. After doing some of the workshops I felt I had more permission to be vulnerable, to ask for help and to say when it wasn't great.

More positive culture at work

When the Wellbeing program began people at work were starting to get tired. The workshops came at a really good time. Since the Wellbeing program there has been a noticeable difference at work. I have been more aware of reminding everyone, as well as myself, to drink water. Everyone has been more mindful of making sure people have time to go and get a drink, or some food and rest.

The workshop about giving feedback; asking for feedback and how to give feedback in a constructive, rather than critical way, I took that on. I will definitely be remembering that in the future. The workshop normalised open conversation, now it isn't something out of the blue that one individual has decided to do, it is something we are all aware of.

There's also a noticeable physical difference. An example is the revamp of our doctor's office, there is new furniture, and plants in there now, it is fresh and more open. We feel welcome; now I've somewhere that I belong at work, somewhere to put my things. And I feel less stressed when I go in that room because it isn't cluttered anymore.

Overall, the general culture at work has changed in a positive way, everyone is more mindful of each other's wellbeing. We feel more comfortable to check in with each other. Previously I'd thought about checking in with someone, but I wasn't sure if it was appropriate, but doing the workshops made me feel it is okay to reach out. Someone checked in on me when they felt I was overwhelmed. They sent a message saying "You sounded a bit down on the phone, is everything okay? You can call me anytime."

I think the positive culture change is the most important.

Courage to be part of the solution

A number of things changed for me as a result of my involvement in the Wellbeing program, my health needs are now a priority, my connection with peers has strengthened, and my courage. I never thought of myself as a brave person: I was the kid who went to theme parks and didn't go on any rides. I thought confidence meant lack of fear; but I have learnt that courage is not the absence of fear—it is the ability to act in the presence of fear. I know now that I am courageous! I also realised if I want the system to change, I need to be part of the solution, and that I can listen, support and help my colleagues.

Being a peer-leader has been a wonderful and valuable experience. I feel I have gained relevant skills and knowledge, while considering the needs of my junior colleagues— whose position I was in only a few years ago. Being involved in a co-designed, peer-led program meant it was not just about attending a two-hour session and then leaving. I have engaged with the resources and followed many threads that I wouldn't have otherwise. At times the responsibility felt a little much, but the support of the team and the overarching belief of senior medical staff in the program was imperative.

Feeling more connected and less alone

The most meaningful aspects of the wellbeing program for me were: the open admission that people were struggling in their own way, acknowledgement that we were all burnt out, tired and angry in some way about some little thing at work, and being able to talk about it. The space created to talk allowed us to hear each other talk about the challenges we were facing; it was okay to admit you were not feeling okay. Some of the people I most look up to, who I thought were perfectly resilient and not phased, shared their struggles and that helped me to feel okay about myself. Also, when I spoke about what I was going through, others then asked me for a coffee, or a meal and shared their version of not being okay. For me the biggest changes, and the greatest outcomes of the wellbeing program were hearing others talk about their experiences and feelings of not being okay, and sharing my experience and feelings. That made me feel more connected and less alone.

Taking breaks, debriefing and being closer to colleagues

The wellbeing program began in the depth of the COVID-19 lockdown.

I used to be quite sceptical about wellbeing programs, but I was at a stage where I thought, 'anything will help'. So, I went to the sessions and tried to take on the advice. The first thing that was really helpful was feeling there was a bit more community; getting to know the people I work with a little more, knowing that they are there, and everyone is in a similar situation, and that my colleagues understand.

There were drinks sent to our staff room, which was amazing. When I forgot my lunch, or it was a busy day and there wasn't time to eat, I was able to drink these 'relatively' nutritious drinks. It was really good.

I made most use of the advice that it's okay to take breaks, that if I take a break my colleagues wouldn't think I was slacking off. Just allowing myself that rest. Colleagues would take my pager, that was really helpful because then I could actually rest, rather than worrying about the pager going off.

I also liked the session on debriefing; learning how and feeling comfortable to debrief with colleagues was very useful. The program provided creative ways to debrief and encouraged people to do it, even when you can't meet face-to-face.

One of the most important things to come out of the program during the pandemic was being closer to colleagues that I don't work with every day, knowing that they are there, and when the pandemic is over we can be together as a group.

I think the combination of all of those things together resulted in the most change for me.

More open lines of communication and learning from each other

A key aspect of the design of the Wellbeing program was that it was peer-led and delivered, this meant the workshop content was relevant for participants, because we were all going through the same event and we could relate to each others' experience. We could share strategies. The program opened up lines of communication across different levels. People felt more comfortable asking for help. It felt like they could come to you and you could go to them. Support networks improved immensely.

The program allowed me, and hopefully my colleagues to make sure we focussed on ourselves as well as other people, so that we could do our job better.

The program also provided me with extra skills in giving and receiving feedback. I made a conscious effort to make sure the members of the team I was working with all left at the same time. It is a long walk to the carpark, and I made use of that time for informal chats and feedback with my colleagues. I would ask them about their shift, and how they felt they went, and I would ask them for feedback on how they thought I had gone. I learnt a lot from my juniors during that time.