

# A Safety Net for Mental Health

Edit and Issue

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※We will reply to you within two business days  
after receiving your message.

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through the LINE app.

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## Do you share your honest thoughts with your colleagues at work?

During the counseling sessions, our clients frequently tell us, such as "I don't talk about private matters at workplace"; "I talk only about work-related issues with my superiors"; or "I can talk honestly with my peers." Such phenomenon is supported by "Quantitative Survey on Workplace Dialogue" conducted by Persol Research & Consulting (published on March 29, 2024).

The survey revealed that more than 50% of employees rarely express their genuine thoughts and feelings during their interviews and meetings with their superiors. Given that one-on-one meetings have become widely used, how many opportunities do you get to speak out what you really think at your workplace? And I wonder how many members at your workplace actually feel safe to speak out their opinions frankly?

Here I would like to mention about the distinction between "dialogues" and "conversations". A dialogue has a purpose to comprehend viewpoints and opinions of participating members, as well as to reconcile differences that exist among them. On the other hand, a conversation can be had without specific objectives or goals. Furthermore, the survey result indicates that dialogues at workplace are perceived very differently depending on the position in the workplace. According to the research result, while general employees do not feel quite comfortable to express their thoughts honestly at their workplace, senior members such as division managers and executive officers tend to believe that both their team members and themselves speak what they are really thinking. Furthermore, when it comes to honest communication among general employees, the most prevalent topics are complaints on their superiors and management of the company.

The research shows that the more honest dialogues take place at workplace, the higher level of job crafting, work engagement, personal performance, and overall work satisfaction they tend to see, with fewer employees feeling unhappy at work. Does this suggest that only those in higher positions such as division managers and executive officers experience greater happiness at work?

As to the reasons why employees would hesitate to express their opinions honestly, they fear the following six types of risks:

(1) traitor risk: employees fear that they may be considered disloyal to the organization; (2) proliferation risk: they fear that their opinion maybe spread beyond their intention; (3) risk of low performance evaluation: they fear that speaking their thoughts honestly may result in lower performance evaluation; (4) risk of overstepping one's boundary: they fear that they may be thought inappropriate in view of their position in the organization; (5) indifference risk: they fear that their opinions may not be taken seriously; and (6) risk of undermining the relationship with the person they are talking to.

As to the characteristics of those to whom they feel safe to talk honestly, the survey participants cited the following as important factors: a listening attitude, an empathetic attitude, fairness, objectivity, a supportive attitude, a constructive attitude, soft manners, a sense of humor, smile, and flexible ways of thinking. Interestingly, environmental factors such as frequency of talking were found to be less important.

Why don't you take a moment to reflect – are you speaking your feelings honestly with your colleagues? If you think you do not have anybody to speak to, please visit the Human Frontier Counseling Room. A counselor will be happy to listen to you.

## Counselor's Oasis

The rainy season has come, and you may feel depressed when you reflect at the end of a day "it rained all day, again" almost every day. We also hear about the people suffering from physical changes due to the atmospheric pressure, known as "weather sickness." How are you spending your time this season? When I go out on a rainy day, I always wear my favorite rain shoes. If it rains on my day off, I like going out with my favorite brightly-colored umbrella, which makes me feel a little excited. I also enjoy listening to the new song "Zoo in the Rain" that was recently released in 0655, a TV program on NHK-E. I believe in living a heartfelt way of life and cherishing the little excitements in everyday life.