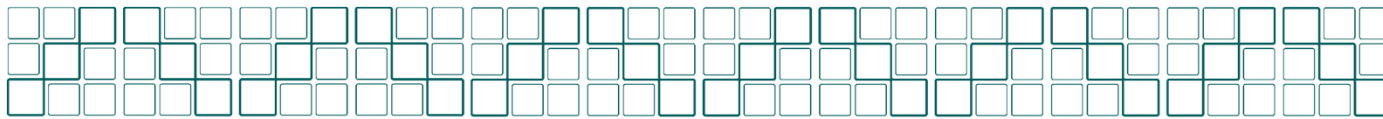

Supporting Mentoring and Positive Research Climates

Dr. Sharon L. Milgram, Director NIH OITE
Sharon.milgram@nih.gov // www.training.nih.gov
On Twitter [@SHARONMILGRAM](https://twitter.com/SHARONMILGRAM) // [@NIH_OITE](https://twitter.com/NIH_OITE)



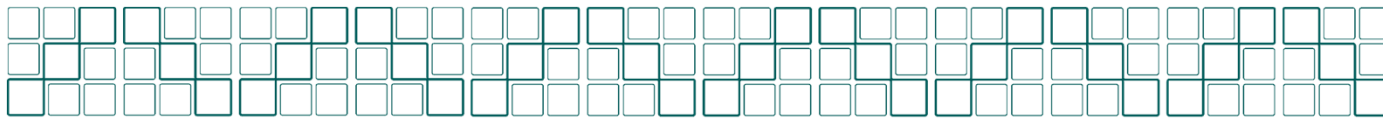


OITE Mission

To provide NIH trainees with the resources, support and encouragement to proactively shape their educational and career experiences while contributing to the biomedical research and/or healthcare enterprises.

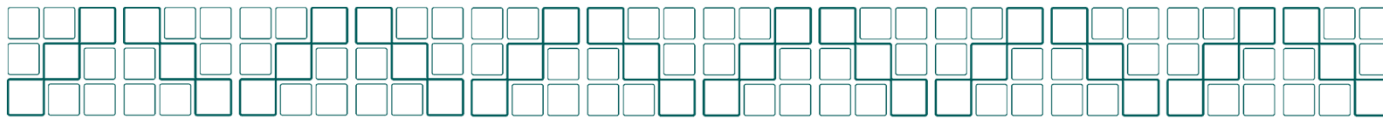
This requires a holistic approach including substantial **community building** and training focused on **career readiness, emotional intelligence, resilience, and wellness**. This information is required for:

- ☐ current educational/training success
- ☐ attainment of future career goals
- ☐ ongoing health and wellbeing
- ☐ engagement in the rest of life



Goal Of Research Training

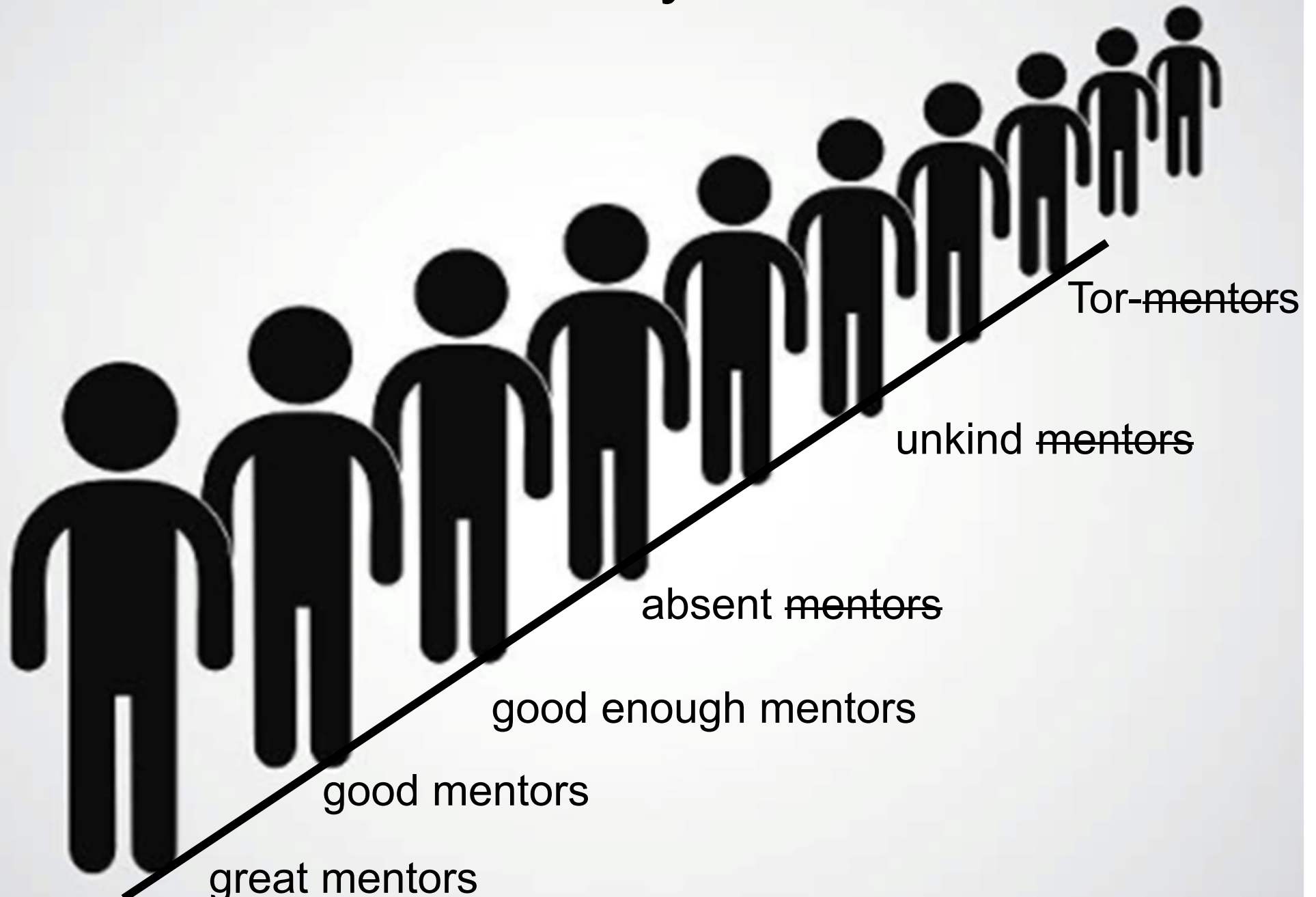
- To promote **LEARNING**.....so trainees can...
 - do good science, with us and for us
 - while sorting out their next career/educational steps
 - and doing what it takes to get there, in and out of the research group
- Which means we have to promote psychological safety and help our trainees become more resilient, so they can:
 - ask questions // ask for help
 - make mistakes (and tell us about them)
 - learn from mistakes, on their own and with our input
 - tell us what they are thinking, feeling and worrying about
 - take risks and put ideas on the table
 - develop a framework for ethical conduct of research



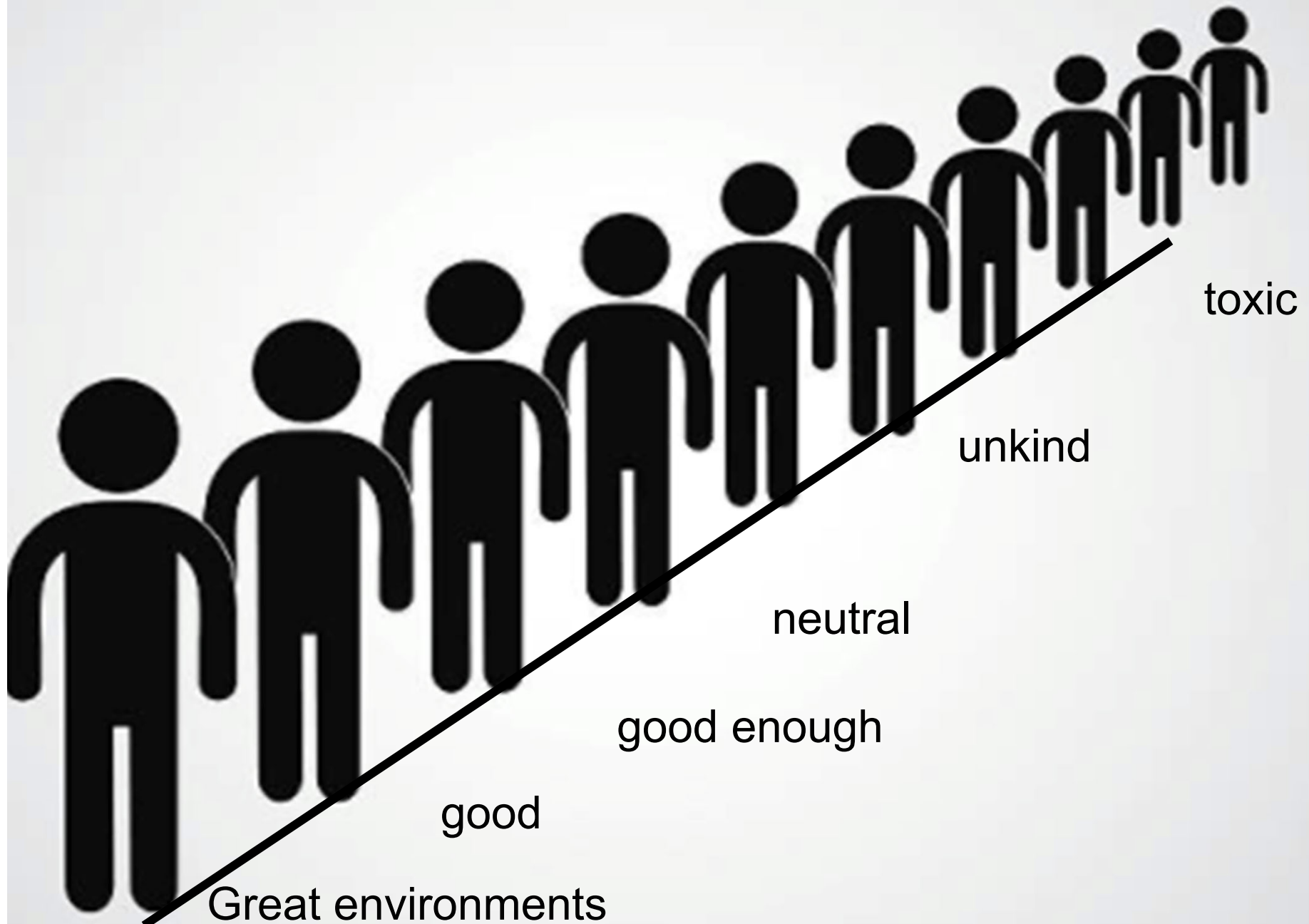
Cultures That Promote Psychological Safety

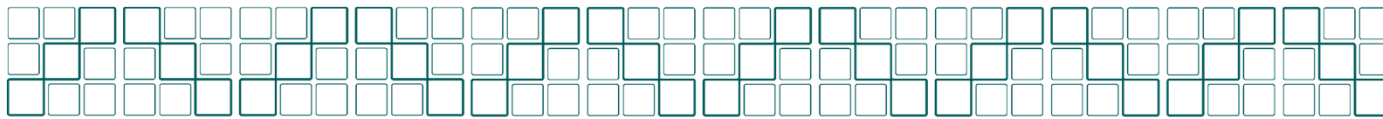
- Focus on fostering trust and relationship management
- Have a culture of life-long learning, not just in research but in many areas
- Have clear message (and many micro-messages) delivered by messengers who are readily accessible and who model the behaviors we want to see in the community
- Tackle hard topics with open discussion, iterative policy development, checks and balances, carrots and sticks
- Involve all stakeholders and a culture of shared-responsibility, while acknowledging power differentials and emphasizing the role of leadership

Mentors/Bosses Play a Role.....



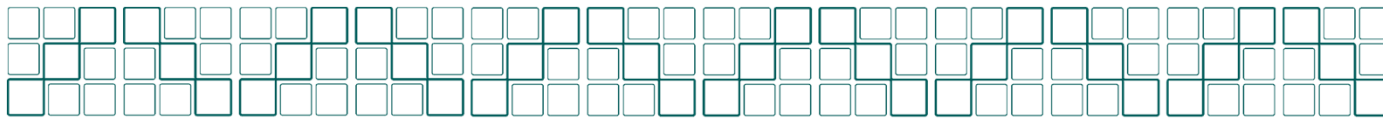
But Are Not the Sole Factor





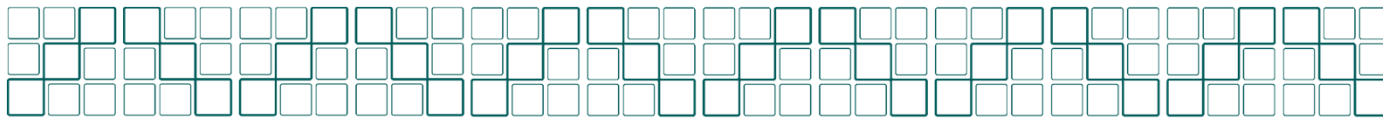
We Need Substantial Culture Change

- Lasting change in the way a group (or a linked set of groups) develops and acts upon a shared set of values, beliefs, and concerns
- At every level – individuals, groups, and systems
 - self-reflection // group reflection
 - change in attitude // change in behaviors
 - community agreements
- At NIH we started with defining our philosophies and refining our messages



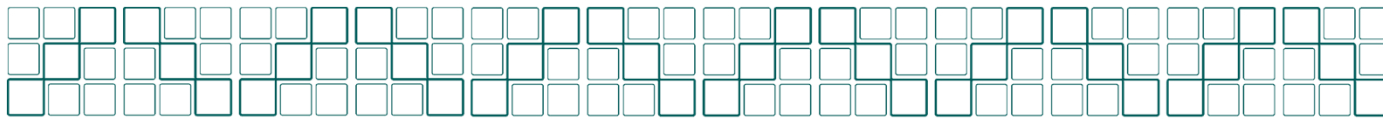
Our Overall Philosophy

- We are....
 - whole people, not hands with pipets/keyboards attached,
 - with unique strengths and vulnerabilities,
 - and the ability to deal creatively with many issues
- Especially, when we set ourselves up for success by
 - finding mentors and supportive environments
 - bringing our whole selves to work, and helping others do the same
 - accessing and using critical information and resources
 - taking better care of ourselves
- While knowing we will need additional support when derailed by
 - situational life/work stressors (personal and community)
 - illness, both physical and mental
 - unsupportive research and work environments
 - structural barriers to our success



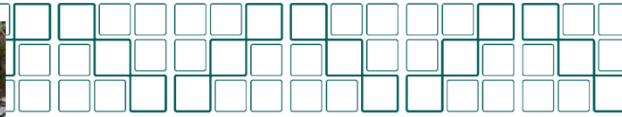
We Offer a Broad Array of Training Resources



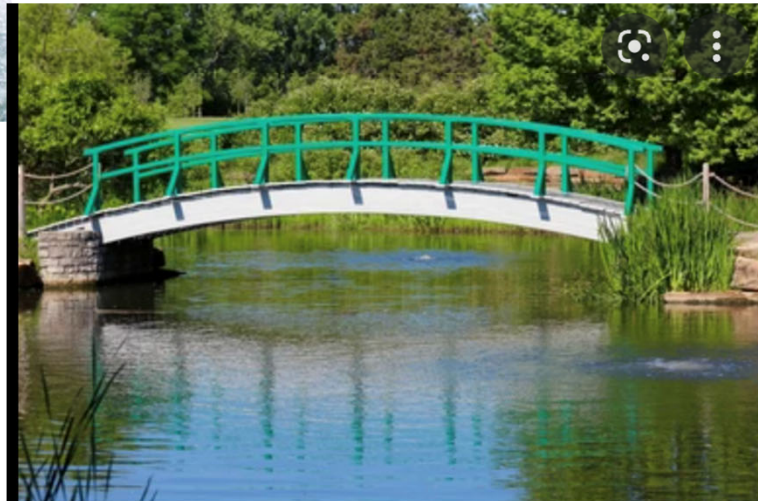


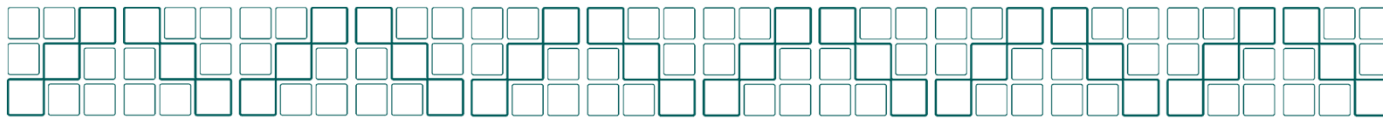
Some OITE Services To Promote Healthy Mentor-Mentee Relationships

- For trainees
 - Becoming a Resilient Scientist
 - Becoming a Responsible Scientist
 - Your Rights and Responsibilities as an NIH Trainee
- For PIs and other research supervisors
 - An introduction to mentoring in the NIH IRP
 - Raising a Resilient Scientist series (starts next week)
 - Toolkits for mentoring success
- A vigorous program of individual advising and support for resolving issues, both immediately and long-term

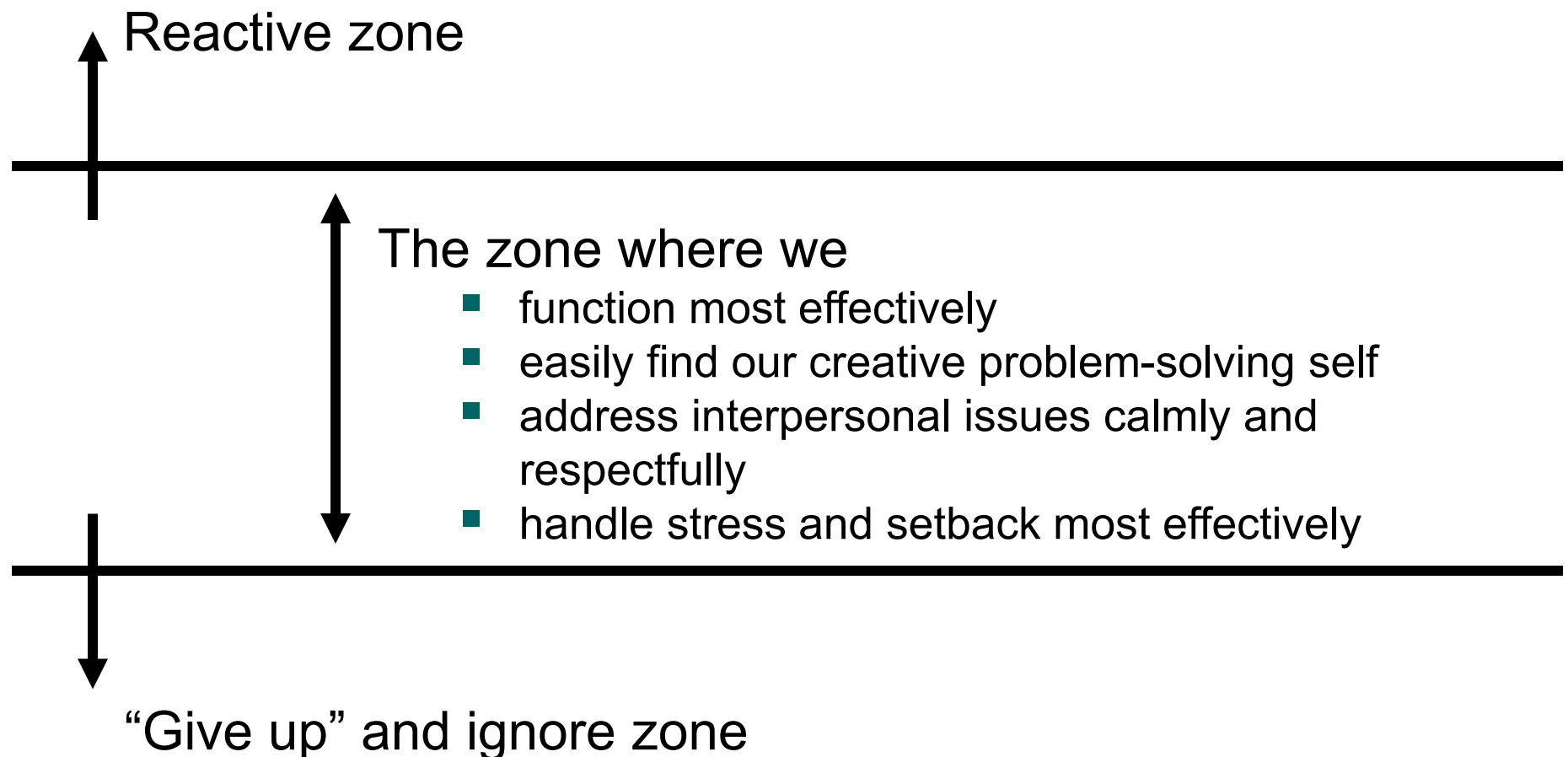


A Visual Metaphor

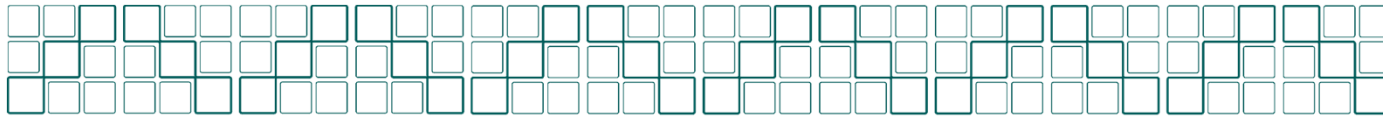




A Model: Window Of Tolerance



Dr. Dan Siegel

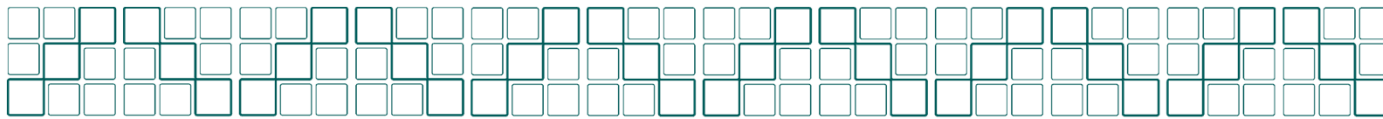


And Some Sound Bites

To Do Well, We Have To Be Well

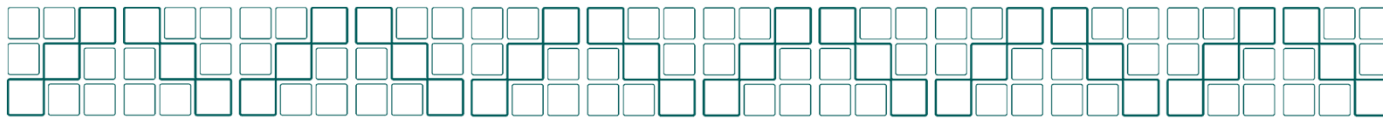
To Treat Others Well, We Have To Be Well Ourselves

The goal is to respond, not to react



Our Guiding Principles

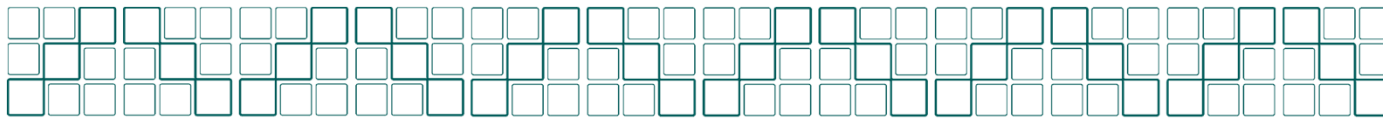
- Overlapping but different messaging to trainees and supervisors; important elements these messages are five pillars of thriving
 - an appreciation for the importance of self-awareness, self-reflection and a willingness to change; this requires **curiosity** and **kindness**
 - a willingness to learn about and use resources
 - a focus on relationship building and empathic communication
 - plans for when things get derailed
 - supporting trainees who are also mentors, both formal and informal



Example From PI Training

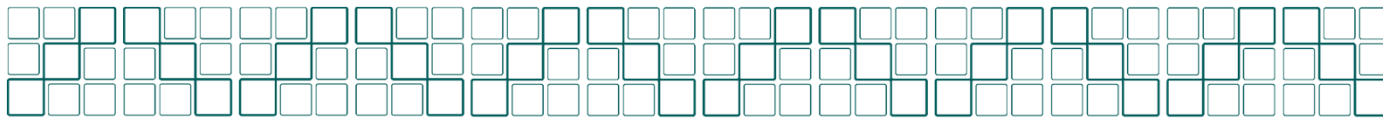
■ Reflect on

- ❑ the research groups and cultures you have spent time in (we soaked up the culture)
- ❑ how you view boundaries and the relationships you have with work colleagues, staff, and mentees
- ❑ your beliefs around teaching and learning
- ❑ your biases -- around various identities, and career/educational outcomes, etc.
- ❑ your strengths, developing strengths and gaps in mentoring, management, diversity, difficult conversations, conflict, etc
 - ❑ remember that well meaning does not mean well skilled
- ❑ your views on mentoring and how mentoring has changed over our career in science
 - ❑ an example of this is research supervisor as career coach... is this a good idea?



Example From Mentor Training

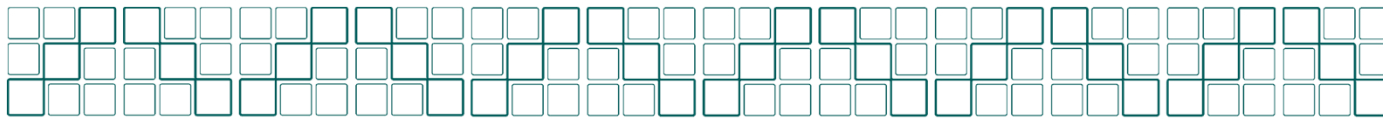
- Help your trainees succeed by
 - being thoughtful in all elements of the selection process
 - taking time to welcome your mentee, connecting with them, understanding settling them into your group
 - discussing expectations, goals and progress – early, often and bi-directional
 - knowing about, using, and referring to appropriate resources
 - developing skills in navigating high stakes conversations, including giving and receiving feedback
 - making sure your mentee connects with other mentors and important communities
 - appreciating the importance of time away (professional development, OITE well-being program, community, vacations, etc)



Well-Being and Mentoring Programs Must...

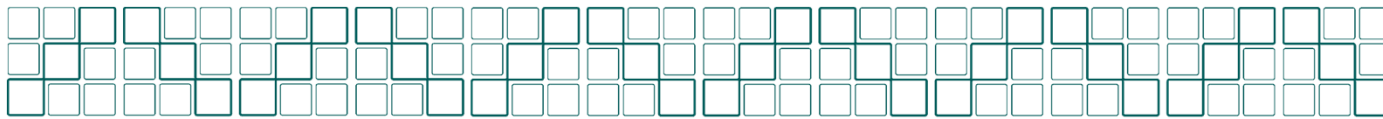
- Be designed specifically for the community and account for different lived experiences and views of well-being
- Appreciate barriers to participation and have multiple entry points to help people get started
- Provide regular and on-going opportunities for engagement
- Put well-being into the broader context of professional and career development

KEY POINT: anything that is not fully integrated into the life of the community is ignored



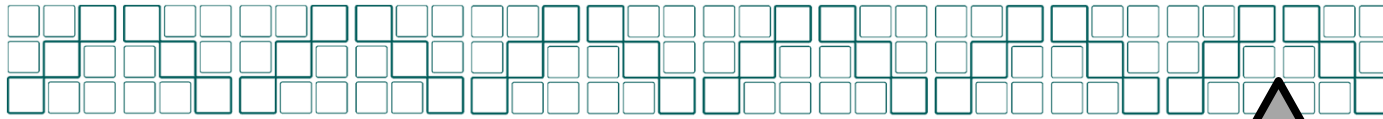
OITE Wellness and Resilience Program

- Workshops and series
 - the Resilient Scientist series
 - monthly mental health webinars with small group discussions
- Small group resilience/wellness activities
 - meditation and journaling skills groups (on-going)
 - resilience skills and support groups (new topics monthly)
 - Thriving Thursday or Wellness Wednesday brown bag lunches
 - monthly wellness events (laughter yoga, Zumba, Improv, etc.)
 - affinity group lunches and social activities
 - special events in response to current events
- Individual wellness advising; referrals outside NIH
- Consultations with faculty/research staff
- Campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of caring for ourselves and others
 - I am....; I Believe....., I Take Care of myself by....

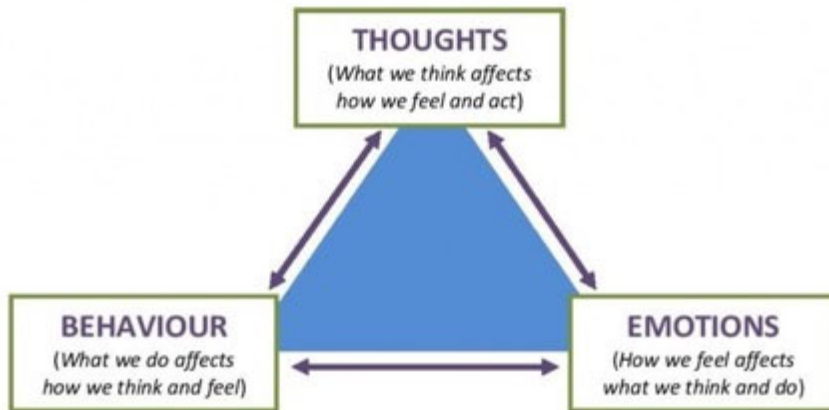


OITE Lessons Learned (~10 Years)

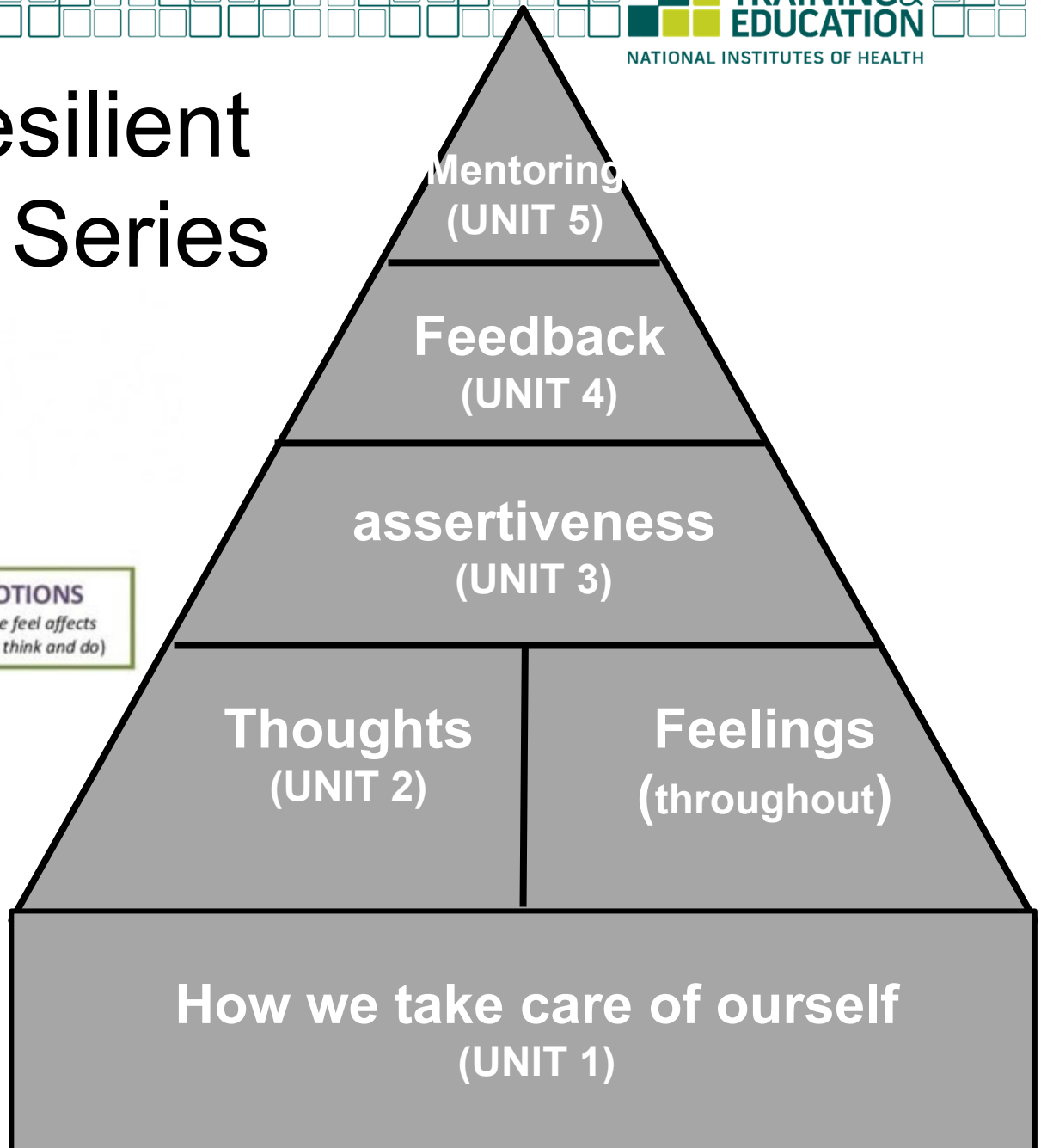
- It takes time (and frustration tolerance) to gain traction
- People will come when they come... we work to make it easier for them to come and harder for them to avoid us
- It takes constant messaging from people who matter; that messaging takes many forms
- Trainee groups do some of the work for you (with caveats)
- A vigorous program has three things:
 - primary interventions (individual, small group, group, community)
 - refreshers
 - extenders
- From the pandemic – virtual platforms can and do work, and should be used to expand access
- When viewed as a work in progress, exciting things happen

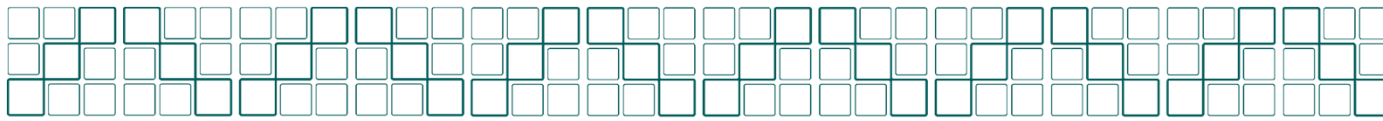


OITE Resilient Scientist Series



10 rounds since
Our first effort in
summer '20

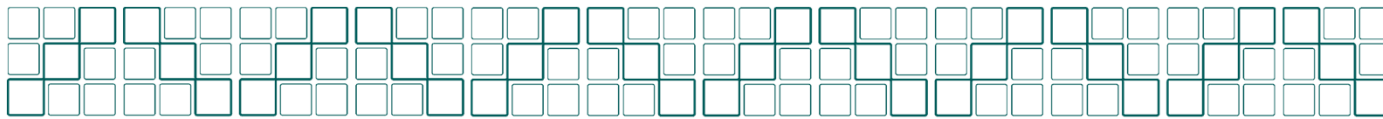




OITE Resilient Scientist Series

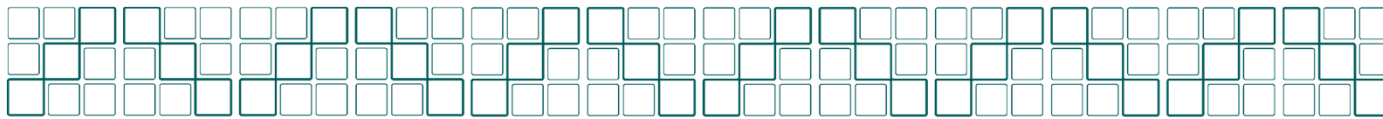
- Now a two-pronged approach
 - **Becoming** a Resilient Scientist (BRS)
 - **Raising** a Resilient Scientist (RRS)

- Five webinars and five facilitated small group discussions
 - Trained individuals at NIH and ~125+ institutions/programs how to run the groups using materials provided by NIH



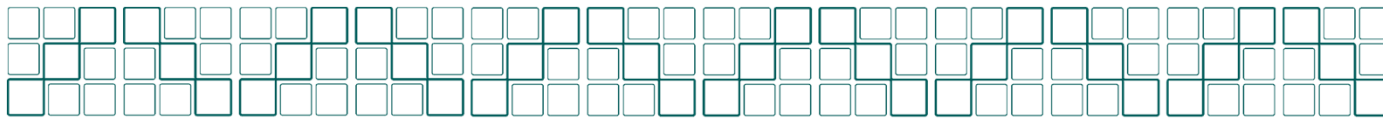
Balancing Some Key Take-Aways

- Even in supportive environments this work is hard
 - resilience and well-being practices are tools for success, however each of us defines success
- The culture of science must change – if it did, science would be less hard
 - trainees play a role in that, but leadership needs to do better
- We are all works in progress and each of us is capable of personal growth and development
 - this does not happen without curiosity (self-awareness) and kindness (self-compassion)
 - we are products of our families, cultures and experiences that shape the stories we tell, our default behaviors in most situations, and how we deal with the emotions that come along for the ride
 - Each of us is a mix of ‘come easys’ and ‘come hards’; we need to remind ourselves and others of that all of the time
 - Some of us face additional obstacles – illness and other life complications; structural barriers to success



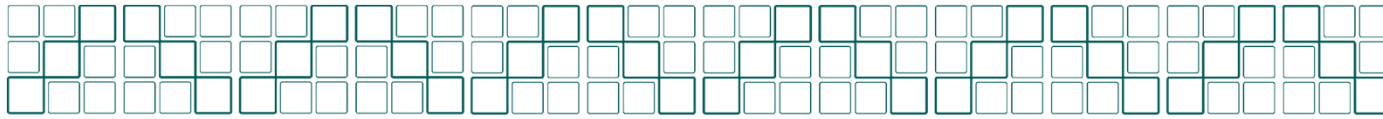
What Happened?

- Participation in the Resilient Scientist Series had a positive impact on participants over a (somewhat) sustained period of time
- Participation in the program increases:
 - overall resilience
 - self-efficacy
 - self-awareness
 - ability to shift and persist
- While decreasing:
 - anxiety (non-clinical)
 - depression (non-clinical)
 - perceived stress
 - presenteeism



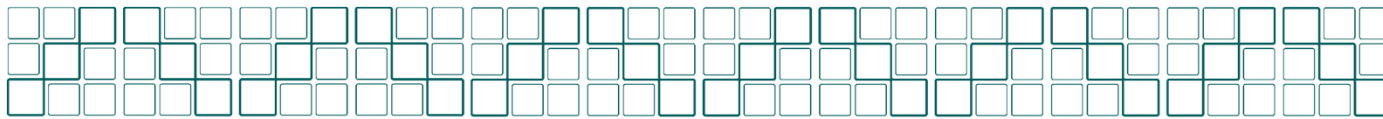
The Most Important Point

- Well-being programs and other trainings are not enough in the absence of broader culture change
- AND it is irresponsible // unethical // immoral to ask trainees to weather environments that we know are unwelcoming and unsupportive



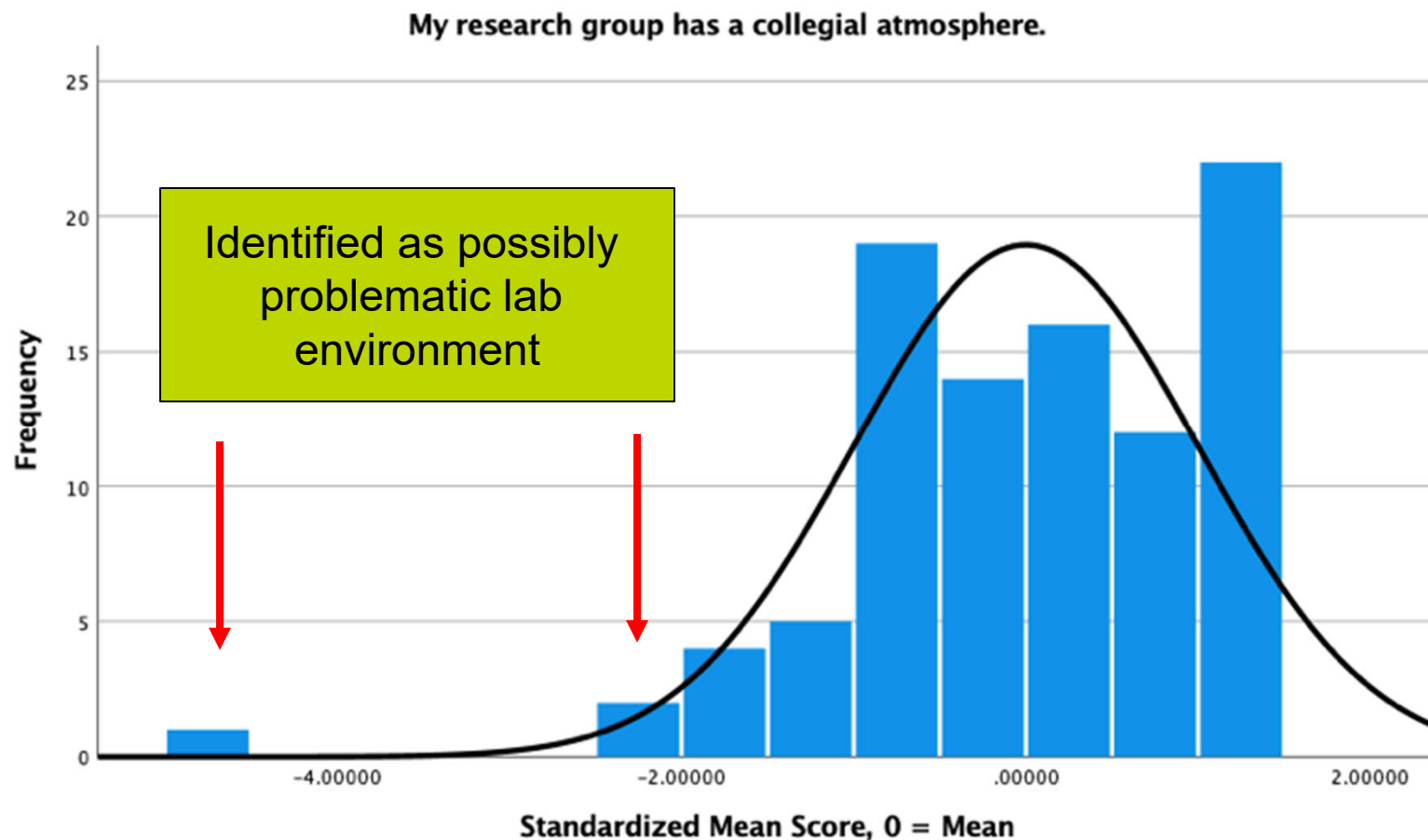
The Buck Stops With Leadership

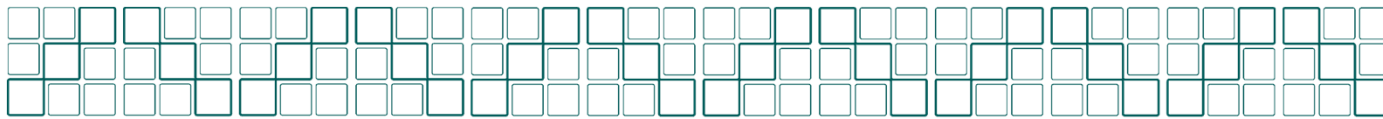
- Regular climate assessments from outside the unit



Data Can Reveal Toxic Labs

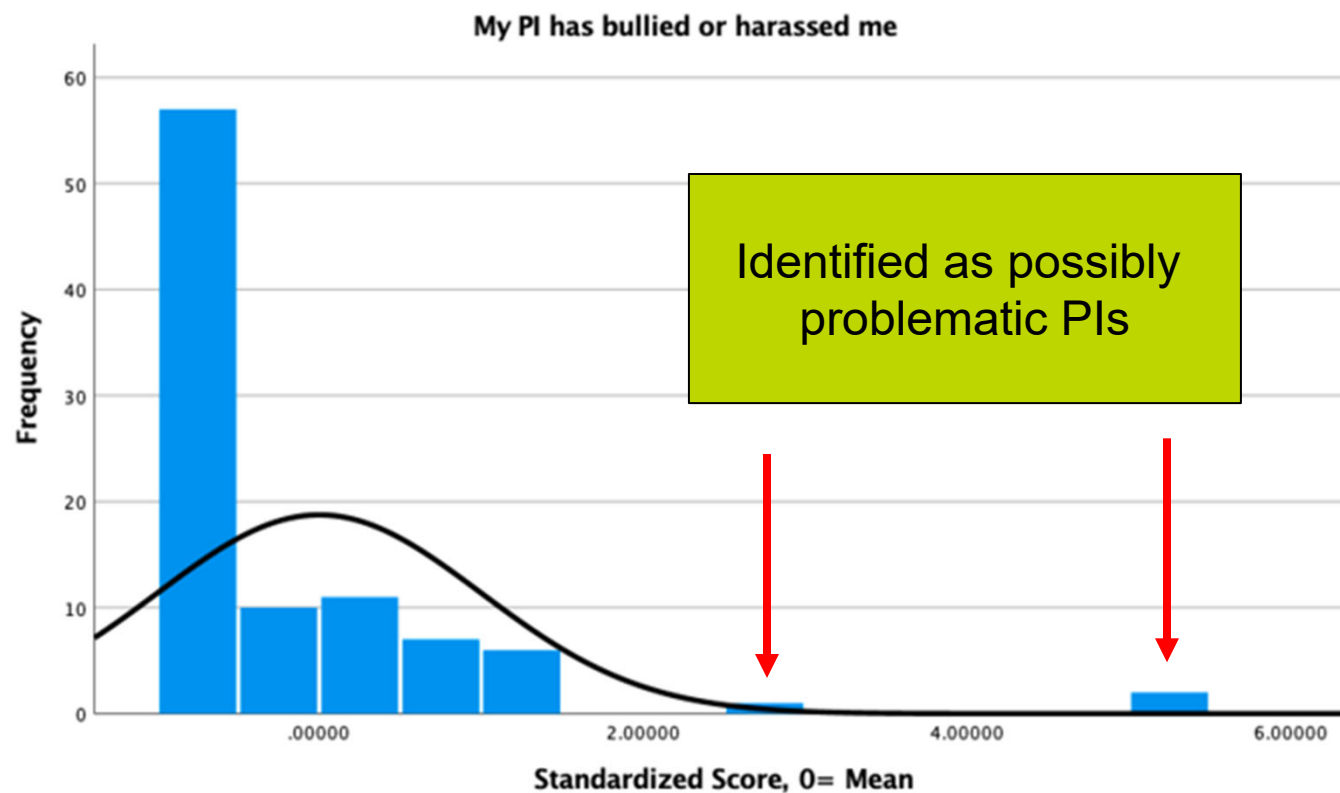
- Example : My research group has a collegial atmosphere.

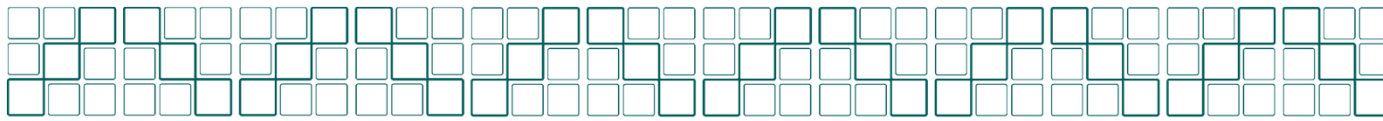




Data Can Highlight PI Behavior

- Example : My PI has bullied or harassed me.



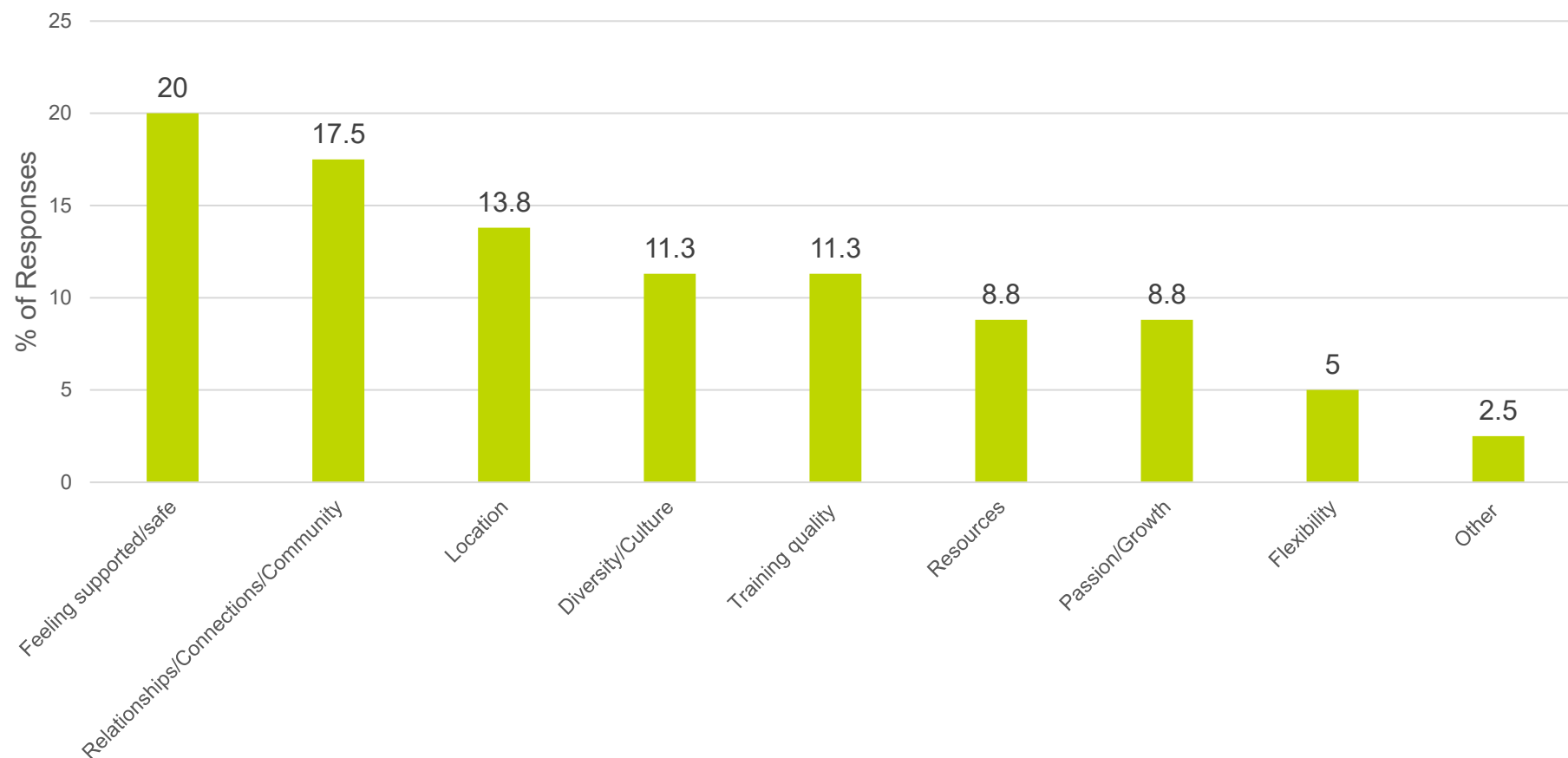


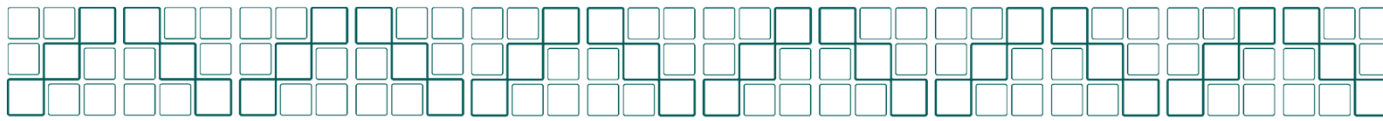
The Buck Stops With Leadership

- Regular climate assessments from outside the unit
- Support for trainee transitions – financial and otherwise
- Identify and stop groups with ‘rotating doors’
- Move from a model of mediating conflicts to a model of promoting healthy interactions where relationship repair can happen
- This is a broader discussion for another time....

What Really Matters to Trainees When Thinking about Their Next Educational Step

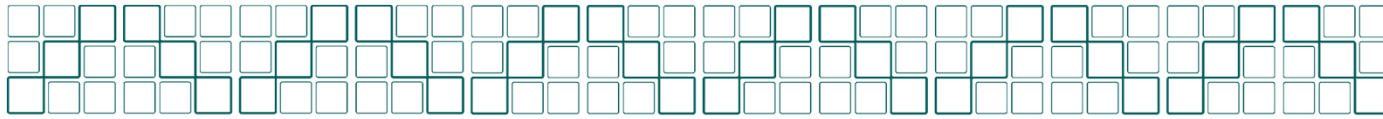
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With Gratitude To...

- Trainees (at NIH and beyond) who have put a lot of trust in me
- NIH OITE staff, and especially our well-being staff and well-being champions
- The ORWH, SGMRO, OAR, OBSSR, OD IMOD for sustained funding to support OITE well-being initiatives and the NIGMS for initial funding to support the BRS model



OITE Resources For All

- Raising a Resilient Scientist starts November 9
https://www.training.nih.gov/workshops_and_trainings_for_extramural_principal_investigators
- Mental Health series starts November 7
https://www.training.nih.gov/new_seminar_series_mental_health_and_well-being
- Join the NIH OITE info listserve: https://www.training.nih.gov/sas/_20/426/
- OITE YOU TUBE <https://www.youtube.com/c/NIHOITE>