

What Matters to You – The Framework for Improving Joy in Work

Leaders' guide

What is Joy in Work?

The IHI joy in work framework is an evidence-based guide for overcoming burnout and empowering teams to improve their job satisfaction. The framework proposes actions at the individual level to promote well-being and resilience, at the team level to promote camaraderie, teamwork, and inclusive leadership, and at the senior leader level to promote physical and psychological safety, reward and recognition, choice and autonomy, equity and inclusion, and connection to meaning and purpose.

It moves away from the model of the leader being the sole problem-solver, to the whole team being empowered to be involved in problem-solving as they know the work best while connecting all in shared meaning and purpose. For issues outside of the team's ability to change, they can escalate to someone who can help, keeping in mind that there are some things completely outside of anyone's control (e.g. the number of pets in the UK). In these cases, the team can decide how to respond (e.g. taking action to manage the caseload efficiently).

What is the What Matters to You framework?

This tested framework was shaped by a pilot in several CVS practices, with the framework being renamed, 'What Matters to You' (WMTY). Learnings from the pilot have been incorporated into the framework resources and have been made available to all veterinary teams via the RCVS Knowledge QI Boxset.

Please complete the learning available before embarking on your first team session.

Holding What Matters to You sessions.

The first step is to decide who will facilitate your What Matters to You sessions.

Facilitator features:

A session facilitator is a person of authority, who must be able to:

- Keep an open mind without promoting any pre-conceived or personal ideas about the session's outcomes.
- Help to create a psychologically safe environment, where people feel free to speak up and share ideas.
- Facilitate discussion, the development of ideas, and possible solutions to test; not providing solutions for the team.
- Sets the same expectations for other leaders in attendance.

A session facilitator:

- Has developed, or would like to develop, coaching and/or facilitation skills, either via formal or on-the-job training
- Expresses empathy, not sympathy
- Builds connections between people
- Works to empower the team

1. Preparing the practice leadership

Before the WMTY session, have a meeting with the leadership team to set expectations for the day and address any concerns they may have. Ensure that relevant people (e.g. practice management teams, regional directors, clinical leaders) are aware that the practice is having a session so that they can support as appropriate.

It is best if some or all members of the practice leadership team are present on the day. The key point to discuss is that this is a time for them to listen to their team, to discover what matters to them, and not to provide any solutions.

2. At the session

Ask the team 'What matters to you?'

Use the [RCVS Knowledge conversation guide for leaders](#) to help you engage in effective, meaningful conversations with colleagues. Ask questions and actively listen to the responses, neither interrupting nor making suggestions at this stage. The aim is not just to hear, but also to understand.

Record the team's answers on flipchart sheets, using separate sheets for each question. Hang the sheets on the wall as you progress, so everyone can see them.

- Why did you get into the veterinary profession?
- What matters to you at work?
- How do you know you make a difference?
- What does a good day look like?
- What gets in the way of a good day? (pebbles in our shoe)
- Ask the team if they see any potential solutions to the list of things that get in the way of a good day (pebbles), or if there are any problems they want to focus on first.
 - The team may have some ideas for quick-fixes – do these first as it will help build momentum. Other problems may take more time to solve – so ask who wants to help and plan for when the team can discuss. This is not necessarily a time where we need solutions, as many problems need time and collaboration to solve.
- Prioritise the list and choose a few problems to work on.
 - Keep the number of issues to an achievable limit to prevent people from feeling overwhelmed with doing too much at once.
- For each problem the team is going to address, discuss how they will know they are making an improvement.
 - Refer to the Model for Improvement at the end of this document. Ask the team to decide how they will capture feedback or measures.
- Ensure you have a way for people to contribute outside of the meeting (an idea box or in a check-in meeting) and that all ideas are followed up by practice leaders and people feel supported to try new things.
- You may want to leave the session sheets hanging up in the practice or summarise the comments to share with the team

Data gathering

To best learn from this experience, we need to gather some data.

- Take photos of the flipchart pages after the session and record the outcomes.
- Provide a summary of the session on how it went, how people felt, how many were in attendance, anything that could be improved, and anything else you think is important.
 - Did the team come up with any boulders that were outside of their control? Include this in your summary, so these can be highlighted to your senior leadership teams.

3. Sustaining the work

Help the team develop a strategy for keeping the process alive, as it won't happen on its own. This could be:

- Hanging a board to communicate progress, what's been actioned and what's in the pipeline
- Design a method to capture change ideas and pebbles/boulders that develop
- Team huddles – regular, brief discussions on current change ideas/pebbles. The more often you talk about how your idea testing is going, the quicker you will be able to respond if things aren't going to plan.
- Connection of work to meaning and purpose
 - Develop and display a values or mission statement with the team.
 - Connect to your team's values and mission on a regular basis, e.g. in meetings or when giving feedback
 - Talk about what's going well on a regular basis, e.g. at the start of meetings or learning from clinical cases that go well
- These questions can be used in one-to-one check-ins, with the added benefit of giving people another way to contribute if they don't feel they can speak up in the group
- Incorporate elements of what makes a good day – how can we build on those assets or do more of it?
- Celebrate achievements and progress!
- Apply for an [RCVS Knowledge Award](#)
- Repeat the joy in work sessions as needed

Measures for WMTY

How will you know you are making a difference? Some optional suggested measures:

- Number of ideas generated
- Number of ideas tested (refer to the Model for Improvement – PDSA cycles)
- Number of actions completed
- Improvements realised via testing ideas
- Good day measure
- Survey responses and improvements made
- VetSafe engagement and taking time to analyse and learn from mistakes as an indicator of good psychological safety.
 - Number of reports recorded, and reviews conducted. The better the psychological safety, the more likely that mistakes will be recorded, and learning/improvement will occur.

Good Day Measure (GDM)

Ask the team, 'Did you have a good day today?' with response options: mostly yes' or 'mostly no'.

This will help practice leadership learn more about what makes a good day and what gets in the way of it, with the goal of helping the team to have more good days. When we identify the elements of a good day, we can do more of it. When we know what makes a bad day, we can act accordingly.

Help the team develop a method for capturing the good day measure. For example, use red and green post-it notes (with the option of writing something on the note) to signal what kind of day they had. These notes are counted daily and acted upon if needed.

Allow the team to decide how often they want to ask people to undertake the GDM, i.e., every day for 2 weeks and then twice a week for 2 weeks. When you have enough information then stop, as people will get survey fatigue. The GDM can be undertaken any time you want to know how the team is doing and will help them gain awareness of what contributes to a good or bad day, so that improvements can be made where possible.

Practice team survey

The survey is designed to gather more information about how the team is feeling about their work and to expand the team's thinking about what makes a good workplace. Conduct the survey either just before the session or soon thereafter to gain a benchmark for future results. The practice leadership then repeats the survey at three months and six months post session (or anytime it is needed – but beware survey fatigue). You may also choose one or two questions from the survey to ask the team for brevity.

The results can help leaders to focus their efforts where it is needed. Ask the team "why do we have the results that we do?' When more information is gained, solutions can be developed together with the team.

Survey questions:

All responses are: - *Strongly Agree* - *Agree* - *Neither agree nor disagree* - *Disagree* - *Strong Disagree*

1. I would recommend *name of practice* as a place to work
2. I would recommend *name of practice* as a place for an animal to receive care
3. I feel that my voice is heard as an employee
4. I feel that I can raise ideas for improvement easily
5. I feel that my raised ideas for improvement are considered and actioned where possible

6. I feel my wellbeing is considered
7. I feel part of a team of likeminded individuals
8. I feel the work I do has meaning
9. I feel I have control over my workload

FAQs

How often do we do What Matters to You sessions?

The sessions are not something we have to do all the time. It is a tool for leaders to empower their team to solve the problems they face and build connections with shared meaning and purpose. Gain the information you need from the team and continue until you feel that you are no longer getting any new information. But undoubtedly there will be elements of the framework that you will incorporate into your regular routine. The sessions may evolve into a less formal meeting style. However, remember to keep connecting to meaning and purpose in work, as this helps to develop a positive bias that is helpful when problem-solving.

The framework can be used when it is felt is needed, such as during times of change (i.e. new team members), high pressure on services, and low team morale. But the time to learn to swim is not when we're drowning. All teams can benefit, any time, and we should not wait until we are sinking. This framework acts to strengthen teams.

Is there a time when I wouldn't want to do a WMTY session with my team?

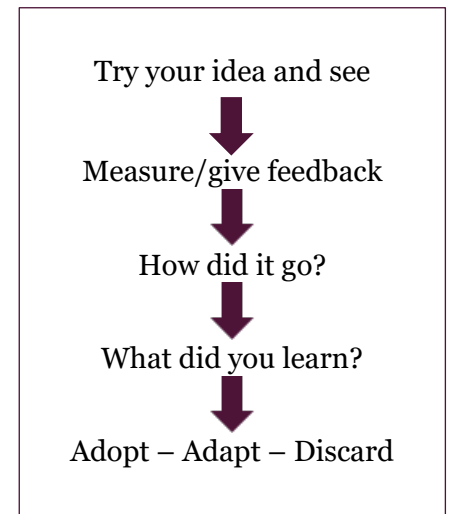
You might be concerned about the timing of running a session with your team, for example the team is short-staffed and under pressure with workload or priority issues. In the experience of CVS, it is always a good time to listen to what matters to your teams and make improvements that can make their day better. However, when bigger things are outside of their control and will remain issues long after the session, this will make it more challenging as the boulders make it difficult to see the smaller problems (pebbles) that can be easily solved.

In these cases, it is important to acknowledge the bigger issues and manage expectations around them, but if there is work that can be done by leaders and management to resolve or make progress on these issues prior to holding a session, then it can be worthwhile doing this first to demonstrate a shared commitment to change.

Appendix

The Model for Improvement (adapted)

1. Define the problem you've identified.
2. What is your aim? What do you want to accomplish?
 - How good do you want to be and by when?
2. How will you know change is an improvement?
 - What will you measure?
 - How will you get feedback from the team?
 - Benchmark first
3. What changes can we make that will help achieve our aim?
 - Test your idea
 - Who will help?



The following resources provide further information:

- Access the [webinar on the Model for Improvement](#) available in the QI Boxset Series 2, Episode 4
- Access the IHI resources on the Model for Improvement available at <https://www.ihi.org/resources/how-improve-model-improvement>

References

This guide was produced by CVS Ltd based on the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) white paper on the framework for improving joy in work. This guide and the white paper from the IHI are intended to serve as a guide for the steps leaders can take to improve joy in work and workplace wellbeing.

Available from: <https://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/Framework-Improving-Joy-in-Work.aspx> (register for free to access).



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