## 9 1 5 NOT 9 TO 5

A Guidebook: Improving Workplace Mental Health in Hospitality

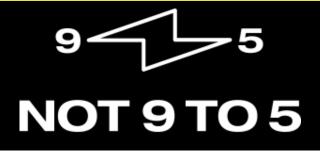
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## WHY A GUIDEBOOK?

Not 9 to 5 is a non-profit global leader in mental health advocacy for the foodservice & hospitality industry.

This guidebook is part of the Mind Your Health project produced by Not 9 to 5. The aim was to design and deliver a free educational resource and checklist on improving workplace mental health in hospitality.

Not 9 to 5 was founded on instinct and then cemented in data. We've shared data, and now we're sharing the practical side of change. This guidebook is a great first step to taking action!

The goal is to provide a list of tangible and concrete actions to provide employees with a psychologically safe workplace. Change starts with advocating but has to be followed with action.

None of this would have been possible without the federal funding support we received from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Mind Your Health is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.

Mind Your Health est financé par le Centre des Compétences futures du gouvernement du Canada.



Centre des **Compétences futures** 

Funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program



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Pre-pandemic, Not 9 to 5 created a mental health and addiction survey (2020) for the hospitality industry to gather data. And the results tell an alarming story.

When asked, "Do you live with mental health &/or addiction challenges?" 90% of hospitality workers answered yes.

Such significant results prove that the need to address the epidemic of mental health challenges within our industry is undeniable. Unfortunately, it is also clear that much of our industry is unprepared to tackle this long-standing issue, as it has often ignored the need for psychological safety in the workplace. There has also been problematic patterns repeated generation after generation. Such willful denial of mental health and substance use issues has become the bedrock of this industry, and we at Not 9 to 5 believe that we are all in need of a wake-up call.

The food and beverage service industry ranks in the top three *worst* workplaces for mental health, as stated by Mental Health America (2017). This is due to a combination of toxic work environments, and a lack of available support and resources from the top down (Cheang, 2017). According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, substance use, socio-economic insecurity and unemployment are high-risk factors for suicide and suicidal behaviour; factors that are endemic to our industry (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2020).

It's crucial that we all understand that the stakes of not addressing mental health in the workplace are high, with consequences of negligence proving to be fatal. Therefore, it is imperative that owners, managers and industry leaders invest equal attention to protecting the psychological safety of their workers as they do their physical safety by instituting practices focusing on harm reduction and crisis management.



### Mental health is health.

Just as how we might exercise or eat well to maintain good physical health, so too must we make decisions to support good mental health. We all know what to do in the case of a burn or cut, we have the first aid kit ready, but do we have a plan in place for when a coworker has a panic attack, or when a cook starts exhibiting signs of depression? Are we familiar with the signs of either of these? In the same way that managers and leaders train their staff for physical emergencies, it is important to have a plan for addressing a mental health crisis. However, a plan of action needs to be created with the voices of those most impacted in order for it to have the best effect. Our workers are the experts of their own needs, it is not our role as leaders to dictate what those needs are, or the solutions to meet such needs.

It is no surprise that following the COVID-19 crisis, our industries were flooded with protocols, webinars and workbooks telling us how we can safely open restaurants and foodservice establishments. They tell us to wear masks, maintain physical distance, and wash our hands frequently.

These guides, while helpful and should be heeded, also share a common failing: they focus on how to maintain physical safety while offering very little insight into maintaining mental safety. An oversight that we as industry leaders can no longer ignore, and exactly what we wish to address in this guidebook.



## 

The coronavirus pandemic is a global trauma, creating collective grief that is impacting our mental health. We are mourning the world we knew while simultaneously confronting outdated, harmful concepts of productivity. Everyone experiences grief, trauma, and mental health differently, but two things are certain—these factors are deeply interconnected, and the need to prioritize self-care as we tackle such factors is paramount. It is now our chance to establish *a new normal* for this industry which prioritizes support over profit, and accountability over blame. We must move towards normalizing mental health support in a work environment. The responsibility of such change lies in the hands of the leaders who determine their environments, not their employees. Workers of the food and beverage service and restaurant industry are already some of the most vulnerable workers in our society, and among those who have been most impacted by the pandemic (Burt, 2020).

Our organization created this toolkit as a guide to help everyone navigate the return to work and day-to-day operations with a renewed focus on mental health. As evidenced by the current 'labour shortage', protests for worker's rights and equality in our workplaces, it is clear that our industry is in desperate need for deep systemic change across the board. The pandemic has offered us a rude awakening to the many failures of our industry, but it has also provided a second chance to fix those failures.





This means tackling policy changes from the top to the bottom, sitting in the discomfort which arises from confronting personal biases and prejudice towards those struggling with mental health, and centering community over individualism and capitalist notions of productivity. This is not easy work, but it is achievable, and we hope to provide those in our industry community with the first steps.

Please consider this as a resource that will help you develop a plan to introduce harm reduction and accessibility into your workplace. This toolkit is not the complete answer, merely a first step to illuminate the path forward. Remember that there are mental health professionals who can help if you or yours would like further support.

Lastly, if you or someone you know are experiencing a mental health crisis and are seeking to be connected to a trained crisis responder text "HOME" to 686868 in Canada or 741741 in the USA.

For suicide prevention and support, please call 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645 in Canada or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) in the USA.

It's OK to ASK for HELP



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Below you will find guiding principles important to working towards creating a more accessible space for all. We use the term "accessible" versus "safe" because it is not always realistic to create and achieve a 100% safe place for all bodies 100% of the time.

However, it is 100% achievable to create a space that is adaptable for all persons to thrive in and establish an environment for people to confidently report and discuss anything that is making the space feel unsafe to them; this is the foundation of psychological safety in the workplace and where our guidelines begin.





## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 1. Psychological Safety

#### What is it?

Psychological safety is the ability to be oneself without fear in a workplace.

"A team with high psychological safety is one where people feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other without fearing negative consequences" (reWork, n.d.)

This includes being seen as dramatic, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. For this to happen, everyone on the team needs to feel confident that no one will embarrass or punish them for admitting a mistake, sharing an emotional experience, asking a question, or offering a new idea (Leading Effectively, 2022). But most importantly, workers should feel assured that they can offer critique regarding the job, workplace, co-workers or boss. The concept of psychological safety in the workplace was first identified by organizational behavioural scientist Amy Edmondson in a 1999 study titled "Psychological safety and learning behaviour in work teams." Her research found that companies with a trusting, psychologically safe workplace performed better on average in nearly every category. In fact, modern research shows that psychological safety is the most important factor to measure the effectiveness of a team (reWork, n.d.).



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## Psychological Safety, Intersectionality & Marginalization:

As we begin to work towards achieving psychological safety in our workplaces, it is vital to reflect on and understand that this work is made fundamentally easier for some than others, particularly those existing with white privilege and better access to resources and support in society. It is a particularly high risk for workers who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color, and others whose identities are traditionally marginalized, to publicly share their lived experiences of discrimination and isolation. For those who have been marginalized, the fear that many people have felt at one time or another about negative career-related consequences resulting from speaking truth against an unjust and unequal experience is three-fold, and why it is deeply important to put workers who experience racism, discrimination, and harassment at the center of conversations regarding psychological safety, allowing their voices to be heard first.

"Not only does research show that women and minorities are punished when advocating for equity, but a quick view of the Twitter feeds of members of the BIPOC community who authentically share their stories also reveals the onslaught of intensely negative responses that range from name-calling to physical threats." (Hewlin, 2021)

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Psychological Safety has not been achieved until all workers confirm that they feel comfortable voicing any criticism and emotions to their coworkers or boss.

In addition to this understanding, it is imperative that all establishments acknowledge intersectionality, and why it matters. This is a term coined by Professor Kimberle Crenshaw to describe the complex ways that power and discrimination can interact; in her words, "intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (Columbia Law School, 2017).

Intersectionality recognizes that everyone has many facets that influence or determine how they exist in society, as well as in the workplace, such as gender, race, sexuality, class, disability, neuro-diversity, skin tone and many more. All of these are contributing factors to how well folks flourish or struggle in a workplace especially when confronting the institutional and personal biases that absolutely exist in our industry (UBC, 2021).

Leaders need to ask themselves the hard questions of why perhaps Black or Disabled people are not actively applying to our establishments? Why is there more turn around with female or queer employees over cis-gendered males? Why have some people received raises over others time and time again? We would like to believe that meritocracy exists in our establishment and that how well someone does in their job is not determined by bias, but rather their performance on the job. But to believe so is to believe in a myth and to ignore the existence of white supremacy, patriarchy and sexism prevalent in our industry.

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#### **Achieving Psychological Safety:**

Lead by example. You have the ability to set the tone for everyone at your workplace, and set the example for others to follow. To achieve workplace accessibility and psychological safety, the first major step you can do is to be transparent and open about the fact that you don't have all the answers about how to move forward, but that you are committed to working together to find them, and that you will center the voices of those most affected. Try to share any self-reflections you have about your role in the matter, and also accept that in some situations your opinions or thoughts on the matter at hand need to be secondary to your worker's. Acknowledge your mistakes and shortcomings, the impact of your actions, and offer genuine apologies without excuses or falling into defensiveness.

An effective way to avoid defensiveness is to encourage the use of "I" statements from both yourself and the person speaking to you. "I" statements are about identifying what the person's words or actions have made you feel like with clarity and specifics in order to address the behaviour change that may need to occur.

For example,

"When you continued to interrupt me during our meeting, I felt angry and ignored in my opinion."

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Here the action is identified (interrupting during conversations), the behaviour pattern that will need to change is addressed (trying to not interrupt at all, or at the very least less interruption) and the person's feelings are clear for us to acknowledge and validate (angered and ignored).

Above all else, practice becoming comfortable with vulnerability. Vulnerability is inspiring, when those around you see that you're establishing a consistent pattern of vulnerability within your communication, they will naturally begin to feel that they can do the same. This is a difficult muscle to flex, and it is absolutely okay to take it slow for yourself, but remember that the effort you put into it will set the standard for others to match. If your team sees your genuine effort to sit in discomfort for a good cause, they will acknowledge that and try to do the same on their own.



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#### 2. Be Proactive, Not Reactive.

Every restaurant has a first aid kit. It's possible that nobody has ever used it, but that's not the point; you have that first aid kit because when someone needs it, they need it right away — not in twenty minutes after someone returns from the pharmacy.

For the same reason, it's just as important to have a mental health plan established for all to refer to with ease. Be prepared in advance so that when a crisis occurs, you have the tools to deal with it. You can't aid people in their time of need if you're unprepared, and while there is no shame in just beginning to take those steps now with this guidebook, the effort to follow through and arm yourself with the knowledge can't wait any longer. We as leaders of our workplaces need to take steps to become prepared to better address and cope with the tidal wave of mental health crisis already present and now exacerbated by the ongoing effects of the pandemic in our industry.

Negligence is no longer acceptable, and by using this guidebook you are taking the first steps to change our industry from within.

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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## Educate yourself and have resources ready.

Reading this guide is an excellent first step, but we encourage you to seek out sources and guides based on issues you or others observe in the workplace. Such resources need to be easily accessible and available to your team. Sometimes a person may want to look into resources on their own initially before approaching you for a discussion, and therefore should not have to divulge to you first in order to get the resources they require.

In order to achieve total accessibility of such resources, have multiple types available including digital and physical, as well as keeping resources in different languages on hand for those whose first language is not English. Above all else, keep all resources out in the open; illustrate to your team and to the community that frequents your establishment that you are being proactive around the reality of mental health and support those with mental health needs both as workers and customers.



If you are unsure of where to begin to research resources, review the Not 9 to 5 list of resources and take note that the resources you need for your workplace won't be one-size-fits-all. When it comes to trauma, grief, mental health or issues with racism, sexism or substances, every person and group will have different needs.

Ask your team what type of resources they'd like to be sourced while keeping these suggestions anonymous to not single any person(s) out to the team.

Also consider exploring the CNECTed certification or other courses that may increase education for your management team. As the topic of mental health in workplaces become ever more present, the access to all types of resources have grown, there is no shortage of expertise and it is up to us as individuals and leaders to make the choice and effort to seek such knowledge out and be ultimately be proactive.



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## 3. Workplace Accommodation & Change Management

As mental health challenges arise in your workplace, an important responsibility to enact is the *Duty to Accommodate* workers. The Duty to Accommodate in the workplace is a legal requirement for employers to proactively eliminate employment standards, practices, policies, requirements, procedures or rules that have or may have a discriminatory impact on an individual or group of individuals on the basis of a prohibited ground or human attribute identified in the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Employment Equity Act (Correctional Service Canada, 2019). Accommodation is necessary to ensure that people have equal opportunities, access and benefits (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

The purpose of the Duty to Accommodate is to ensure that persons who are otherwise fit to work, are not unfairly excluded where working conditions can be adjusted without great difficulty. This requires arranging the employee's workplace or duties to enable the employee to do their work without outside undue hardship. Change during these times is frequent and ongoing, and part of accessibility and accommodation is addressing and actively challenging the way things were done before, because many processes we have relied on to this point are no longer relevant and do not apply in a post-pandemic workplace.

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Working together and communicating directly with certain individuals about a workplace accommodation or a sustainable solution is key. As a manager, owner or operator, you are obligated in certain circumstances to initiate action to determine if an accommodation is needed, even if the employee has not asked for it directly (Government of Canada, 2011). Part of the responsibility of creating accessible work environments is once again being proactive in observing your team's performance on a consistent basis and reflecting on areas that appear to be causing concern for them or yourself. Don't wait for your workers to come to you about every problem, even if your intention is to be ready when they do, as this is still an example of dissociation from the realities of your workplace and demonstrates to your workers that you are not committed to taking an active role in adapting the workplace to meet the needs of everyone present.

The following are some examples of signs that might require further investigation to assess whether accommodation is needed:

- Feedback from co-workers indicating that the employee is behaving erratically;
- A sudden drop in attendance and increase in sick leave use;
- An increase in lateness;
- Sudden changes in behaviour; or
- Unusually poor work performance.



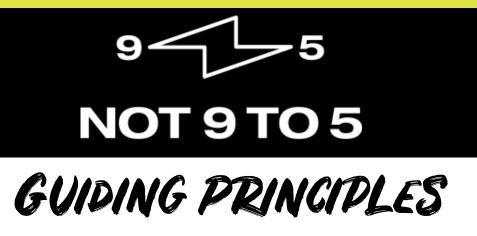
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Once an accommodation has been established, it is an agreement that both sides must adhere to and follow. When accommodations are done well, they will help keep an employee who is suffering from a mental health challenge remain productive and engaged.

Here are some examples of workplace accommodations which we will explore further in the Checklist of Accessibility near the end of the guidebook.

- · Revised work schedule
- Check in schedule
- Revised break schedule
- Change in role/ responsibilities
- Create a custom management approach
- Identify and change feedback methods
- Change in spatial environment for better accessibility (spatial awareness)





Of course it is valid to recognize that setting accommodations for an employee can seem overwhelming, therefore keep these next points in mind as you navigate workplace accommodation.

- Any accommodation should be made directly with the employee. They will know best what they need, so collaborate with them to make a plan.
- While developing this strategy, research it! Your employee is the first expert
  in what they need, but that doesn't mean you should stop there. Find
  guides for solving the same problem to see how other people have
  approached it. No mental health problem is wholly unique chances are
  other people have been in the same situation and are willing to share.
- Be prepared to rethink the current norms. These may include management style, start times, breaks, hours worked, and more. Don't assume something is "just the way it is" — be ready to address systemic problems in your workplace that are a problem for accommodation.
- Set specific and measurable goals. When making plans, goals should always be SMART — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound! In other words, set outcomes that can be measured, and have a timeline for achieving them!
- Have frequent check-ins. Making the plan isn't the end of the story.
   Continue to communicate with the employee to make sure that they have the tools they need to achieve these outcomes

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#### 4. Self-Care

It is important that anyone in a leadership position takes care of themselves in a healthy manner both in and outside of work. Just as you are taking an active role in your worker's mental health, it is just as crucial to do the same for yourself. Self-care has never been actively encouraged or supported within our industry, and in society has at times become synonymous with "selfishness". Putting your own needs first, perhaps above a friend or family member, or in our case the job, is discouraged or at best frowned upon. But in order to take part in establishing harm reduction and psychological safety in the workplace we as leaders need to become gentler to ourselves and prioritize our own selfcare so that we can effectively support those around us and give ourselves the same validation and attention we wish to give to others. Be honest with yourself about your capabilities, and where changes may need to happen in order for you to function at your best at work too.





#### It's Okay to Not be Okay.

We all know that everyone has periods of not feeling well physically or mentally. It's helpful and important to honour this aloud with your team and encourage everyone to go easy on themselves. Leaders must make this message clear throughout the ranks of the entire business, and the best way to do that is to lead by example and role model self-care.

There is endless amounts of stigma around mental health, but it's important to remember that mental health is health. And if we are to destigmatize mental health, then we need to begin with ourselves. We fuel stigma by judgment, lack of understanding and lack of compassion, often directing these things at ourselves along with others. As leaders, we need to break the pattern of ignoring our own mental health as something that is a part of us, which in turn makes us ignore it in others. Change does begin within ourselves, and you deserve the same compassion and attention as anyone else. It is a falsity to tell ourselves that as leaders we need to be perfect and unshakeable- it is okay to not be okay.





## No one expects you to be a mental health professional:



When someone shares their mental health experiences with you, it may feel uncomfortable. They may say things that you don't agree with. That is natural. The most important thing you can do to support someone is to listen. You are not responsible for offering solutions or solving anyone else's problems — just be a person who is available to listen without judgement, and to be open to hearing critique. It's important to always ask for consent and, if received, it's okay to offer to help the person find resources that may be better equipped to help. It is important to not try to be saviours or advice givers. The goal is to be a support for the person to talk out and carve their own path forward while centering their needs in the workplace.

#### This is a starting point, not a step-by-step:

These are basic principles for creating a psychologically safe workplace that can be used concurrently. Use this resource as a set of prompts to begin creating new structures, policies and processes that work best for you and your team in an informed manner. Every business is unique, and every plan will be different. It's up to you to listen to your team and determine how best to support their needs.





#### Commit to confidentiality:

If someone comes to you in confidence, that must be honoured. This promise to your staff and co-workers creates trust, and is an essential first step towards mental safety in the workplace.

#### Don't assume:

Everyone processes trauma and stress differently. As we work to rebuild our workplaces and create new routines it is important to consistently check in with one another and remember that every feeling and experience is valid. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. Do not assume that your experience is similar to anyone else's or that what has worked for you will work for someone else. Remember to always treat others as they would like to be treated. We may all be in the same storm but are not all in the same boat.



#### Hold space for others & check-in:

Checking-in means frequently communicating with employees about how they are doing at work, and how you may help if possible. Holding space means creating an atmosphere that allows someone to discuss their issues comfortably, be it either personal or work related. When checking in, do it when it works best for the individual, not you. Asking about someone's mental health in the middle of their work shift may not be the best time, but setting aside time before or after the shift demonstrates respect for their schedule and needs for a comfortable setting. Holding space also means respecting any boundaries of the individual, including respecting what they wish to talk about, how much they divulge about the issue, and where they wish to have the conversation.

### Empathy & compassion go a long way:

Empathy and compassion are crucial to effective leadership and to establishing psychological safety with your team. It demonstrates that you are capable of understanding what someone is experiencing even without a similar lived experience. Empathy means actively engaging with another person's experiences, and striving to understand them from their perspective while also acknowledging how that experience is impacting them. Ultimately, divorce your emotional reaction to the situation from the conversation and then provide support as they request it.



#### Accountability is key:

As we begin to have more conversations with co-workers about workplace mental health and the ways in which each of us are impacted, it is vital for leaders to be prepared to hear feedback. That may include criticism, critique, as well as suggestions and ideas about what needs to change.

Remember, intention does not negate impact, and as much as we would all like to hold firm to the idea that our roads have always been laid with good intention, it does not mean that those roads have nevertheless led to accidents along the way. Sitting in discomfort is difficult but necessary and as leaders we need to show our teams that we are not above being held accountable for the mistakes we have made through our decisions and biases (subconscious or not). Taking proper accountability is key to nurturing trust within our workplaces; to show those we manage that we can do better for them, with their help and voice. If we as leaders cannot own up to our own mistakes, how can we expect our staff to do the same?



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Deep Accessibility is a concept pioneered by the Disability Justice community and emphasizes accessibility as going *beyond* addressing the physical needs of a person, but also the mental, emotional and spiritual (Starlys, 2013). It is deeply connected to the practice of Psychological Safety as both of these concepts are only achieved when they exist in the foundation of the policies and practices a space operates under. It is far too common for workplaces to optically present themselves as virtuous, safe or accessible when in fact, such presentation does not align with internal values and behaviours.

It is not enough to implement new policies or practices temporarily, or on a case by case basis when it comes to psychological safety and accessibility. What results with temporary accommodations is a negative spotlight on those requiring change, while also communicating the message that such needs are an inconvenience and not a priority to the functionality of the workplace (Mingus, 2011) If a space is to be considered accessible, a person must be able to enter it and exist in it without feeling the potential for mental or physical harm. If a space has already been designed to avoid such potentials from the ground up, there is then no need to scramble to accommodate upon the sudden rise of an issue.

It is with this in mind that we have created a Psychological Safety
Checklist. This will help you explore your work environment as it stands
now, and help you identify where change can begin to take place. Connect
with staff or use an anonymous survey to see if they agree with your
findings as their experience may differ from yours and reveal a truth you
were not aware of. The checklist and guidebook are created to work in
conjunction with one another. After completing the checklist, it is best to
review the relevant section(s) pertaining to each item checked as "no" for
tips on how to improve these areas.



Communication within the workplace	Yes	No
All literature pertaining to the business and staff (including website, social media, employee handbook, training materials, and any other work documents) use respectful and inclusive language.		
Location of training manuals, policies & procedures, guidebooks etc. is known by all staff and easily accessible and out in the open.		
All literature mentioned above can be made accessible in alternative formats, if requested. (i.e digital, print, braille, different languages etc.)		
Policies and Practices	Yes	No
Hiring ads for recruitment emphasize that people from disabled, BIPOC & LGBTQ2S+ communities are welcomed.		
The business has a workplace accommodation policy and process, and all staff are aware and knowledgeable of it.		
The business offers flexibility in shifts to accommodate employee schedules.		
The business has anti-discrimination and anti- harassment policies that protect all employees, known and read by all staff, easily accessible and out in the open.		
Ongoing review and training of policies are available and include the participation of every worker.		
Orientation includes the overview and access to all policies and literature pertaining to business practices.		

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Policies and Practices	Yes	No
Monthly staff meetings are held to update staff on policies and practices and involve time for employees to voice ideas, concerns etc. Allow for anonymous feedback to be shared pre and postmeetings.		
Employees are compensated for attending staff meetings that go longer than 1 hour occurring outside designated work shifts.		
Staff meetings accommodate the schedules of the employees or information can be provided to absent staff in an in-person manner.		
Location of the staff meeting is easily accessible and comfortable for every employee attending.		
"Exit interviews" are practiced by owner(s)/manager(s) for staff leaving the job and are documented.		
There are consistent and regular (be it monthly, bi- monthly, yearly) performance reviews established.		
Performance reviews include adequate time for the worker to discuss any concerns, criticisms or ideas.		
All employees are aware and knowledgeable on the timeline and increase of wages. This also includes access to information on benefits (including staff discounts, R&D allowance, family meals, etc.), paid time off, paid sick days, tip out distribution (at least by percentages), if in a tip pool - need to know sales per day and tips made per day.		

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## CLOSING NOTE FROM NOT 9 TO 5:

This guidebook was created in response to the call echoing across this industry for our workplaces, teams, and policies to evolve and embrace psychological safety, harm reduction practices and above all, compassion and empathy to the reality of mental health in all bodies.

We do not regard ourselves as experts, knowing that there is always room to learn and grow as we take more and more steps towards changing this industry for the better. This resource is just one solution. It reflects both our own lived experiences, as well as the copious amount of data we have collected from workers/ex-workers of the industry who bravely shared their perspectives with us. With their support, we can say with resounding certainty: we all deserve and need better.

We welcome any and all feedback from those who have read through or utilized this resource on how we can do better. We welcome suggestions on ideas for more future literature from Not 9 to 5. Our voice is your voice, and we never want anyone to feel silenced. If you wish to reach out to us you can contact us at <a href="mailto:info@not9to5.org">info@not9to5.org</a> anytime.

Lastly, if you're looking to expand your knowledge and understanding of mental health and substance use challenges in hospitality, make sure to join our CNECTing community and get CNECTed certified. To learn more, visit

https://not9to5.org/cnecting to register!

Cheers!





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