

The background of the slide is a light blue color. It features several abstract, hand-drawn black scribbles. One scribble is in the top left corner, another is in the middle right, and a large, complex scribble is in the bottom left and bottom center. The text is centered in the upper half of the slide.

User Experiences in the Evolving Workspace

The first step to returning to work is creating a sense of safety, security and support for employees. If workers are going to return to sharing space with others, everyone must feel secure.

Organizations will need to open two-way communication channels and adopt flexible policies and procedures that are sensitive to the needs and concerns of workers. Workers will need to be trained on building and office circulation protocols and cleaning procedures. As we learn more and policies and procedures are modified, workers will need ongoing communication and training.

With an established culture of mutual safety and clear two-way communication, people will feel secure that their health and wellness come first. And they're more likely to do their best work because of it.

“In these trying times, there is also opportunity to reassess and improve. To strengthen our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and to reestablish psychological safety as a vital prerequisite to physical comfort, social cohesion and performance.”

Lauren Gant, PhD
Human Factors and Ergonomics Manager

Assess & Prioritize



Allsteel collaborates with organizations and subject matter experts to identify the goals and challenges associated with cultivating an atmosphere of safety and a sense of belonging. Together we analyze the unique needs of workers and prioritize ways to foster health and wellness today and into the future.

Critical Questions

How do we engage user concerns?

What will help users feel safe coming back to work?

What's needed to allow employees to feel safe, supported, motivated and engaged once they're back?

How do we continue over time to actively support the physical and psychological health of workers?

How can we strengthen diversity and inclusion, as well as the elements of social cohesion to further strengthen our employees' well-being?"

Key Action Items

Establish a cross-functional and representative task force together with key stakeholders to identify and validate needed updates to safety protocols and facility guidelines, i.e., visitors, entry screening, maximum occupancy, cleaning methods and frequency.

Develop a two-way, ongoing communication plan.

Anticipate and support workers' needs for schedule flexibility.

Think through expectations and accountability to teammates and leaders both in-office and when working remotely. Ensure that employees have access to tools that ensure psychological comfort and nurture a collective ability to give honest feedback and voice concerns on an on-going basis.

Work to understand where social cohesion may be lacking and understand drivers to strengthen it for both in-office and remote workers.

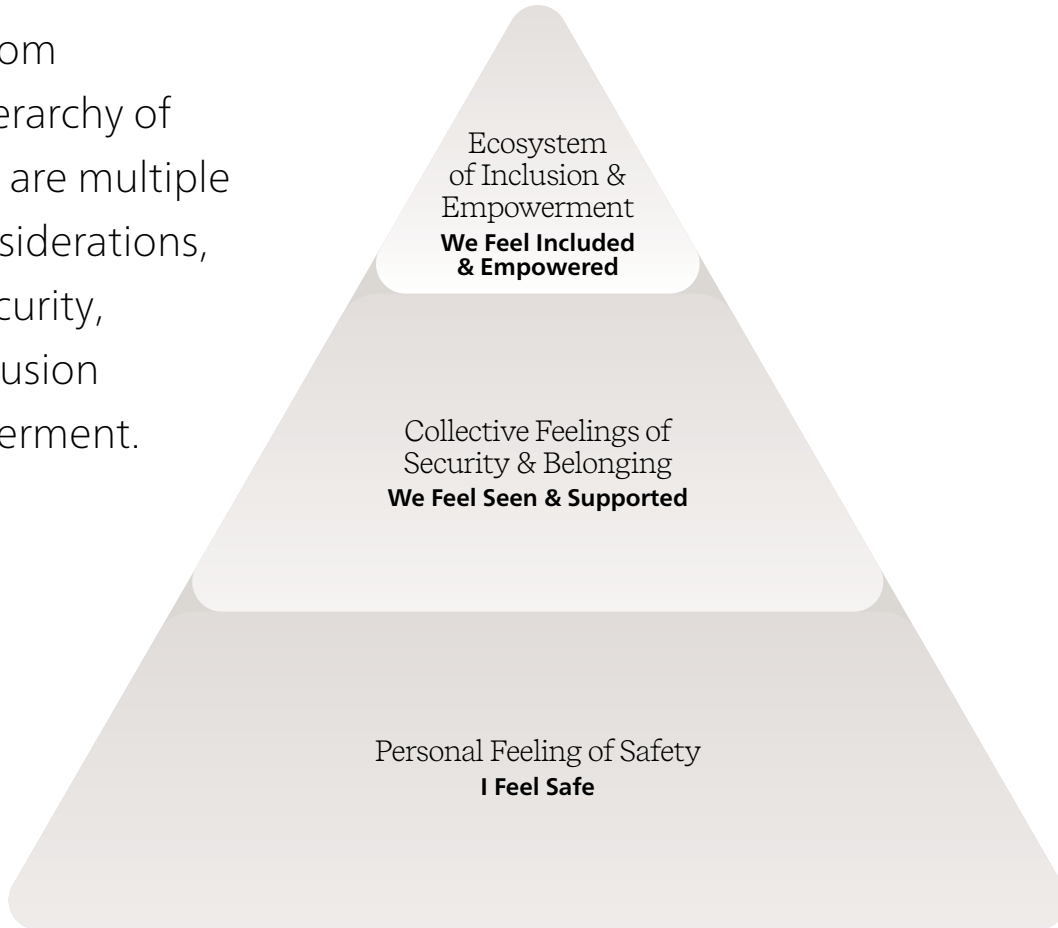
Review current wellness support to determine whether programs are inclusive and broad enough to include physical and mental health, and are relevant to the current climate.

Minimize unnecessary physical changes—outside of safety protocols—to conserve familiarity and manage expectations: Returning to familiar spaces and ways of doing things can be soothing and reduce unnecessary stressors.



Psychological Safety in Workplace Re-Entry

To borrow from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are multiple levels of considerations, including security, support, inclusion and empowerment.



I Feel Safe

Communication is two-way, open, ongoing and in multiple formats—I can express my concerns, and I know what is being done to keep me safe. New cleaning standards and visual reminders, as well as protocols to address issues such as building entry and elevator use are in place. Limited occupancy is enforced to create social distance, and staggered work schedules are for essential and confirmed-healthy colleagues only. Employees are provided tools to support their physical ergonomics and their cognitive health.

We Feel Seen & Supported

Formal remote and flexible work policies are established, and a system of trust and accountability is promoted with a mutual understanding of expectations. Our physical health and mental wellbeing is considered and supported, and options are provided for health care and therapy programs, there is recognition that each of us has a unique experience and culture, and when possible, systems support us and our dependents holistically. Our teams are strengthened through shared ownership and spatial identity, thereby creating an environment of community and cooperation.

We Feel Included & Empowered

Communication is open, mutual, and free from fear of judgment or retribution when centered on the intent to improve, progress, or innovate. Our culture is diverse and inclusive and evolves when a disruption improves current policy. We are supported to express unique perspectives, communicate objectives, and to be our whole selves in the work environment, with the shared goal of promoting autonomy, mastery, and ultimately, purpose.

Consider & Solve



Allsteel works with organizations to find solutions that can be implemented to encourage healthy and inclusive workplaces. This is accomplished, in part, by keeping workers informed and educated on best practices and listening to employee needs and concerns.

Critical Questions

What behaviors or protocols will build resiliency?

What guidelines need to be put in place and communicated consistently?

How are wellness and cognitive function being supported?

Where can we improve our diversity and inclusivity?

How is social cohesion being explicitly strengthened for both in-office and remote workers?

Key Action Items

Enact and communicate new cleaning standards and protocols.

Explore changes to arrival and facilities that will encourage physical distancing, i.e., entries and exits, elevators and lobbies, and solo and shared spaces.

Create any needed training, orientation, communication, and feedback plans. Consider videos and signage to keep workers up to date on cleaning schedules and best practices.

Encourage autonomy and choice in the completion of expected work tasks, i.e., in-office workers can find privacy when needed.

Assess current levels of social cohesion and worker effectiveness, and talk through strategies to strengthen.

Knowledge & Resources

[Psychological Safety →](#)

[Knowledge Worker Performance →](#)

[Social Cohesion Series →](#)

[Wellness Program Considerations →](#)

[The Art of Clear Communication →](#)

[Promoting Movement in a Constrained Workplace →](#)

Implement & Feedback



As people return to 'reset' office spaces, or continue to work remotely, Allsteel is collecting feedback from our own members and from customers, dealers, and designers on perceptions of their physical safety, security and support. Insights are sought from a diverse spectrum of voices and weight is given to all inputs.

Critical Questions

How can we welcome users with transparency and trust?

How do we elicit honest feedback from employees?

Are we hearing from a representative sample of our population?

Is our communication format conducive to all that need to provide input?

Are all voices considered with equal weight?

How can we also take this opportunity to expand our understanding of our employees' experiences of inclusivity and how our space supports neurodiversity, gender expression, cultural differences and the like?

Key Action Items

Hold worker/workplace orientations.

Share plans for ongoing modifications as use, science, and feedback suggests.

Continue communicating what's being done to keep users safe.

Maintain a continuous feedback-gathering mechanism to foster an open, action-oriented environment.



Adapt & Reconfigure



Learn from the initial reset: What's working and what isn't? Is it safe to bring back more workers? What else can be done to promote safety, security and employee effectiveness? Utilize the latest findings from experts and researchers on the evolving health situation and the best science on worker effectiveness to develop new approaches and make further improvements as circumstances and organizational goals evolve.

Also consider how users feel about the changes. Do they feel safer? More productive? More connected?

Critical Questions

How can we continue to prepare for the future?

Are we considering the needs of all employees to the best of our ability?

How do we prepare employees for ongoing changes?

How can we intentionally support social cohesion and other knowledge worker factors?

How do we gauge employees' feelings of psychological safety?

Key Action Items

Consolidate feedback received and look for solutions that can be accomplished with simple reconfiguration and minimal churn.

Consider implementing aspects of a more agile office over time, including expanding worker agency to self-perform needed updates or new changes.

Continue to adapt and communicate protocol changes.

Explore opportunities to foster, improve, and promote inclusivity in spaces, culture, and conversation.

Knowledge & Resources

[Wellness Considerations for Working from Home →](#)

[Working from Home: Making it Work for Managers & Their Teams →](#)

[Practicing Resilience in Uncertain Times →](#)

[Psychological Safety: Safe, Supported, and Seen →](#)

[Listen to Allsteel's Virtual Learning Lab Series →](#)