

Henry the Fish: An Analogy

Setting: A dirty fish tank

Character Name: Henry (*they/them*)

Henry is a healthy fish. Henry uses they/them pronouns.

They take good care of themselves, manage stress, and help other fish when they need support.

As an individual, Henry is doing everything right.

But something's still wrong.
Henry can't grow and be well without safety.

Let's look at Henry's tank. The water's murky. Too much food and waste.

The filter keeps clogging. It isn't cleaned often enough, and sometimes the chemical mix isn't right.

When one challenge is resolved, others are not fixed.

Safety is the foundation for health.
No matter what Henry does as an individual, they can't thrive in an unsafe tank.

And Henry can't clean the tank by themselves.
This is a system problem.

In healthcare, some workers and their departments may have all the right psychological health and safety tools:

- Strong resilience.
- Good stress management.
- A strong peer support group.

That's individual psychological health and safety.

However, those tools can't succeed without a psychologically healthy and safe environment.

The system of psychological health and safety is often more complex and, for many reasons, harder to see and harder to change.

That's where Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees come in.

They are the health, safety, and wellbeing eyes and ears of an organization, with both worker and employer representatives.

JOHSC members work with employers to spot problems, resolve issues together, or make recommendations to tackle larger challenges.

Employers and leaders can act on those system recommendations to make the environment safe.

Or in the case of Henry the Fish, fix the tank first, so all the fish can be healthy and safe again.

[Henry's story is shared and adapted with permission from Opening Minds.]