

# Rituals and Habits

## Summary

- Rituals and habits are a vital part of the informal, relational side of work that is a central feature of successful collaboration and communication.
- **Introductions** are integral in setting a tone of communication and understanding. The RCoG has some great [resources](#) for this.
  - A brief check-in on how people feel (eg. 1-10) can be a useful means of normalising expression, as well as a barometer of who might need extra support over a shift.
- **Food** is a key ritual/social bonding tool, releasing endorphins and signalling social care.
  - Rituals like food can be markers of inclusion *and* exclusion - it is vital that any ritual is fully inclusive to avoid exacerbating differences.
- **Learning** rituals normalise challenge and speaking up. For example, hot debriefs, or consistently asking the simple question: 'How did we do?'

## Exercises

- 1) What rituals already exist in your work that create values, norms, inclusion, exclusion or bonding? Might they be changed to work in favour of a stronger escalation culture?
- 2) What new rituals might work for you and your team?
- 3) Test these rituals. Bear in mind that there is usually resistance to begin with - change is inherently uncomfortable. Whilst you need to listen to that resistance to see if adaptation is needed, persevering for habit formation is the real test of whether it works or not.

## Resources and links:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0260691720314209>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11025575/>

Two small-scale studies on the 'alienation' that occurs when senior medical staff fail to greet their teams.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749597821000637> Overview of the impact of social rituals at work

<https://www-preview.rcog.org.uk/about-us/quality-improvement-clinical-audit-and-research-projects/each-baby-counts-learn-support/escalation-toolkit/team-of-the-shift/>

Team of the Shift resource

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