

# Professionalism and Empathy



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**SOUTH CENTRAL**  
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DODGE FAMILY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
ANNE AND HENRY ZARROW  
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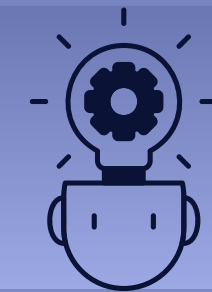
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# Core Values of Social Work Practice



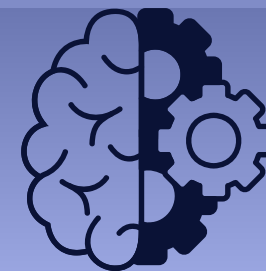
## **Service**

Assisting people in need and addressing social problems, prioritizing client needs over self-interest.



## **Social Justice**

Challenging social injustices, pursuing equity, and opposing oppression and discrimination.



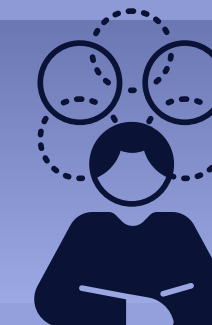
## **Dignity and Worth of the Person**

Respecting each individual's inherent value, treating them with care and respect, and fostering self-determination.



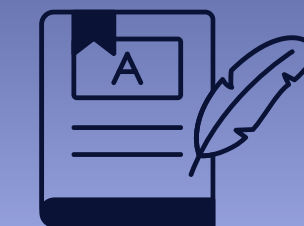
## **Importance of Human Relationships**

Recognizing the central role of relationships in bringing about change and enhancing well-being.



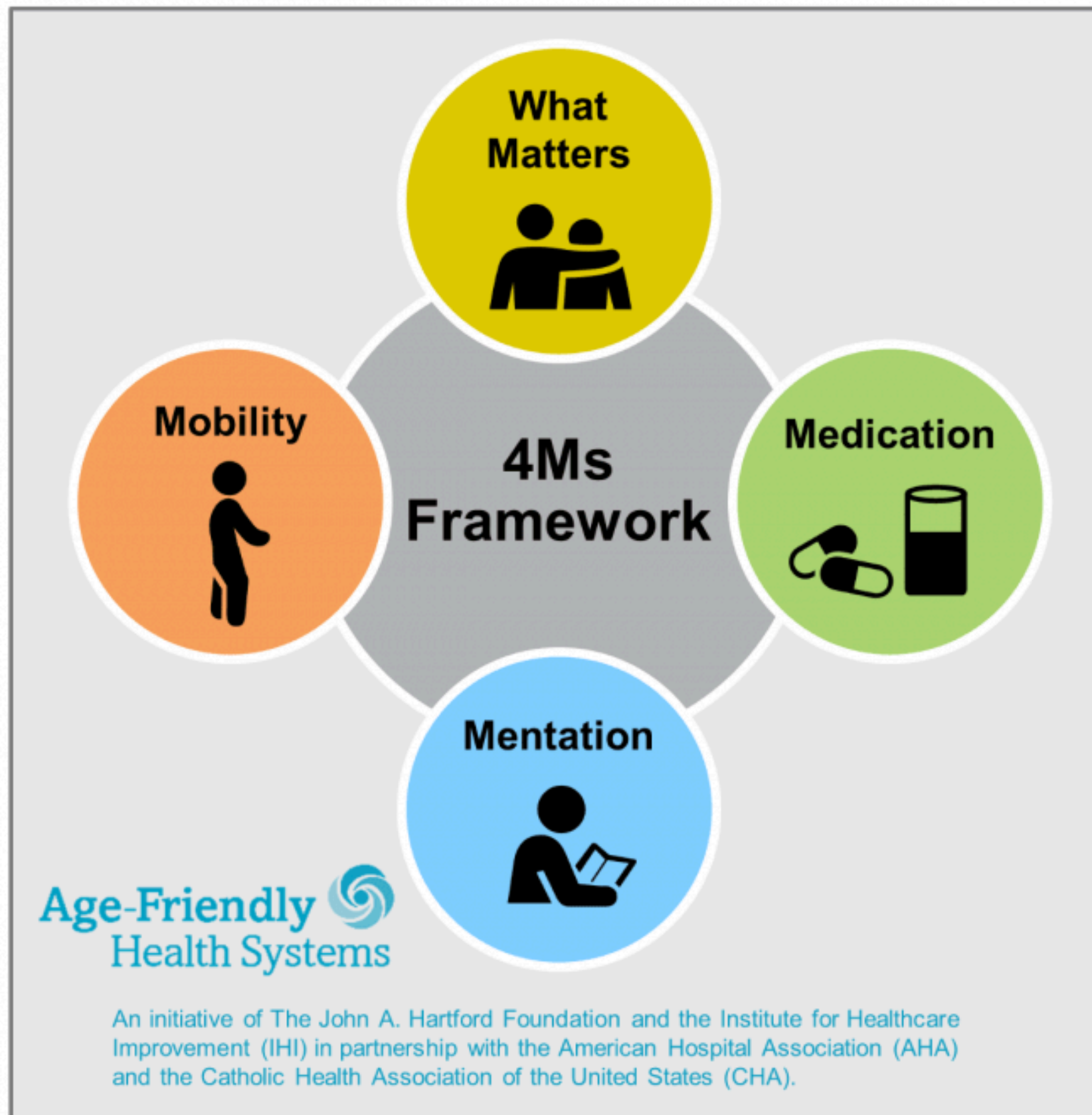
## **Integrity**

Acting in a trustworthy, honest, and responsible manner, upholding the profession's mission and ethical standards.



## **Competence**

Practicing within areas of expertise, developing professional skills, and contributing to the knowledge base.



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Graphic files and guidance at [ihi.org/AgeFriendly](http://ihi.org/AgeFriendly)

# What is Empathy?

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Sympathy means feeling pity or sorrow for someone else's situation. A person may acknowledge that someone is suffering but remain emotionally separate from their experience.

Empathy means trying to understand and connect with that experience.





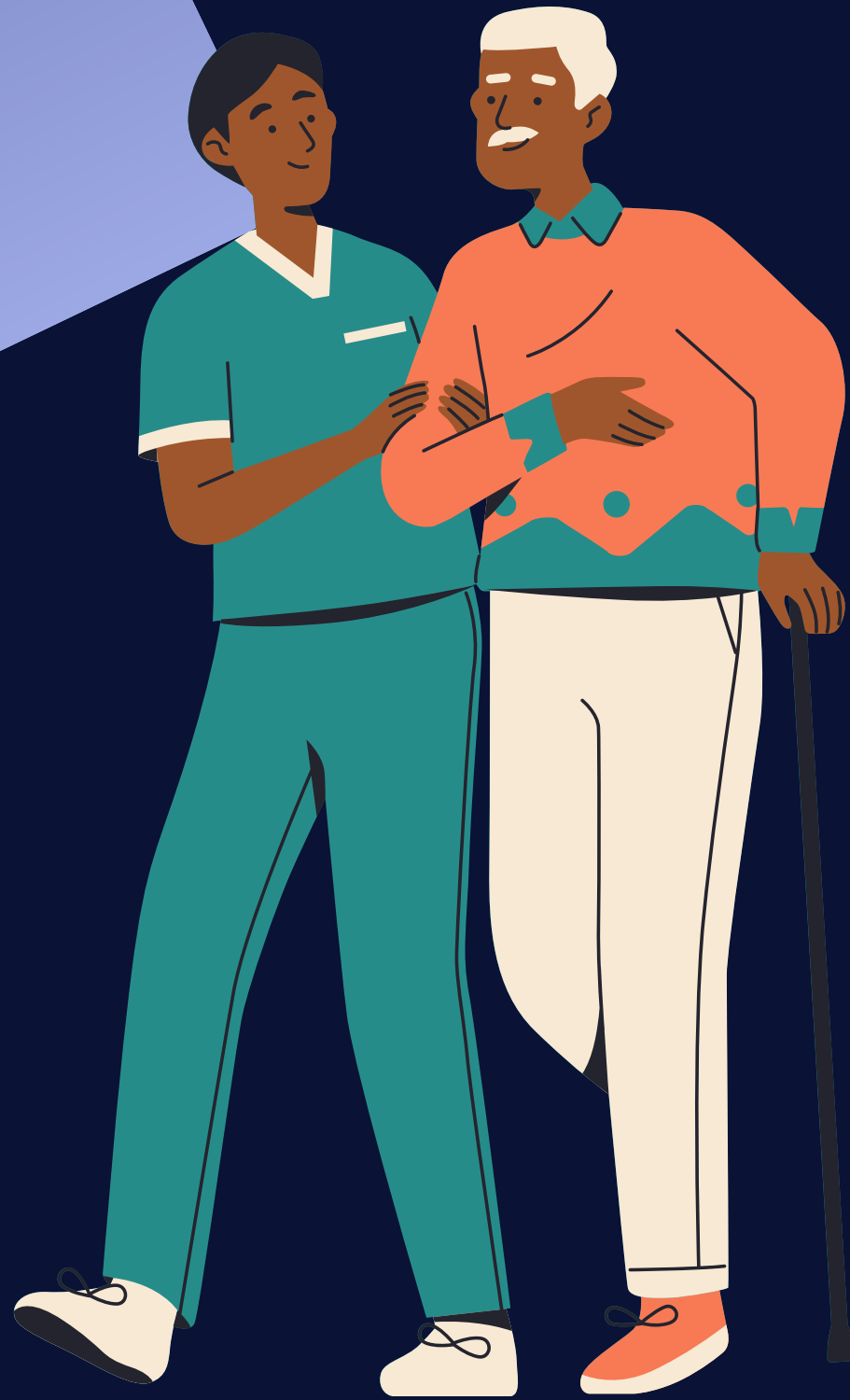
# Sympathy

**Scenerio:** A resident recently moved into a long-term care facility and tells a staff member: "I miss my home and my family. I feel really lonely here."

**Sympathetic Response:**

"I'm sorry you feel that way. Moving can be hard."

- Acknowledges the situation
- Shows concern
- But does not invite deeper conversation



# Empathy

**Scenerio:** A resident recently moved into a long-term care facility and tells a staff member: "I miss my home and my family. I feel really lonely here."

## **Empathetic Response**

"That sounds really difficult. Leaving home and adjusting to a new place can feel overwhelming. What do you miss most about being at home?"

- Validates the resident's feelings
- Encourages the resident to share more
- Builds connection and trust

# Why Empathy Matters in Long-Term Care



## Empathy helps:

- Strengthen resident trust
- Improve communication
- Support psychological safety
- Reduce feelings of isolation and distress

In contrast, sympathy alone may not provide the emotional support residents need.

# What Is Psychological Safety?



Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe expressing concerns, asking questions, admitting mistakes, and sharing ideas without fear of punishment, embarrassment, or retaliation.

**In long-term care settings, psychological safety applies to both:**

- **Residents:** Feeling respected, heard, and safe expressing needs or complaints
- **Staff:** Feeling comfortable reporting errors, concerns, or ethical issues

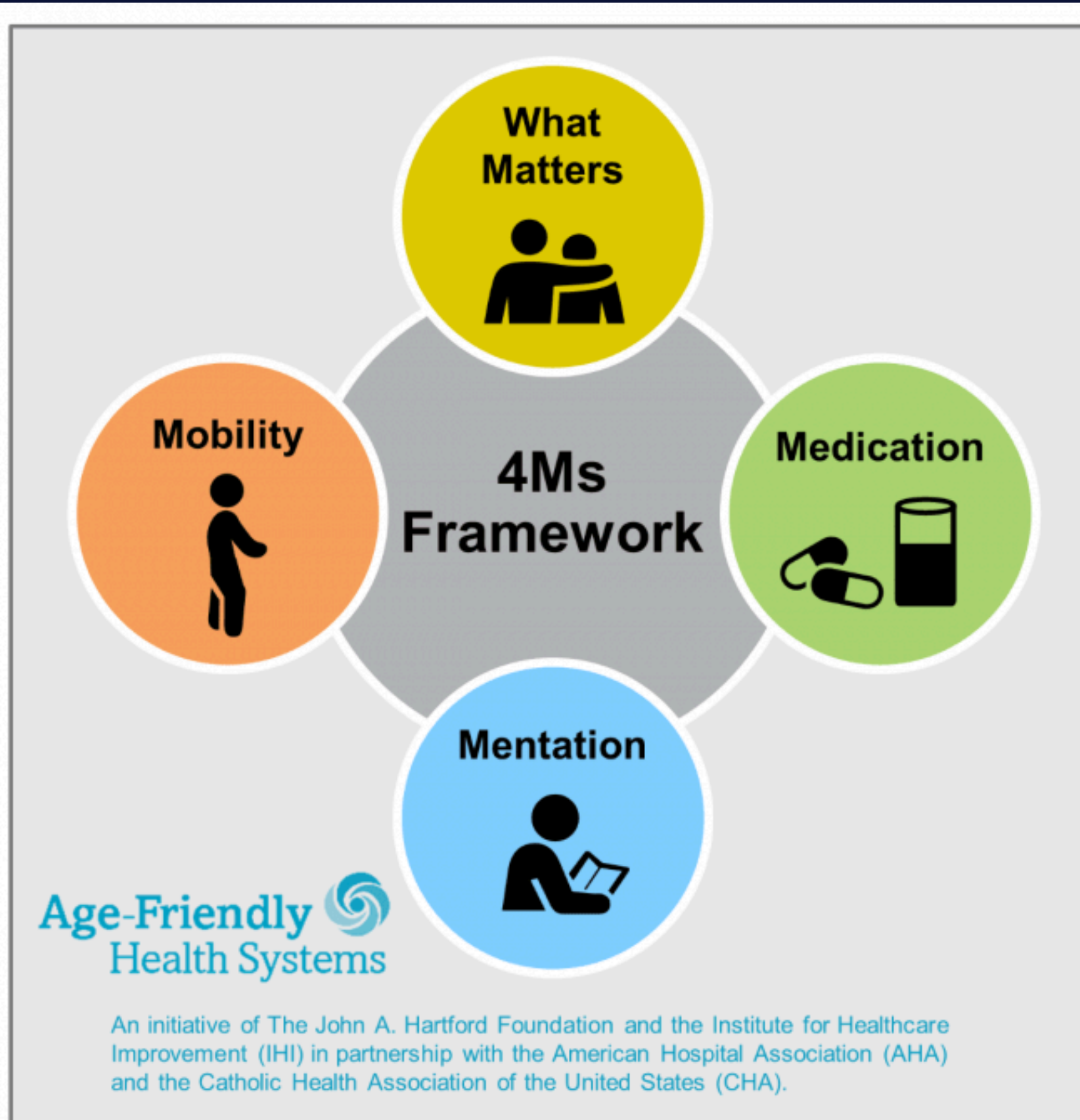
When psychological safety exists, communication improves, empathy increases, and mistakes are addressed quickly.

# How Lack of Psychological Safety Contributes to a Toxic Environment



Research shows that poor workplace culture in healthcare settings can lead to:

- Increased medical errors
- Lower patient satisfaction
- Higher staff turnover
- Reduced quality of care



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## What Matters

Know and align care with each older adult's specific health outcome goals and care preferences including, but not limited to, end-of-life care, and across settings of care.

## Medication

If medication is necessary, use Age-Friendly medication that does not interfere with What Matters to the older adult, Mobility, or Mentation across settings of care.

## Mentation

Prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia, depression, and delirium across settings of care.

## Mobility

Ensure that older adults move safely every day in order to maintain function and do What Matters.



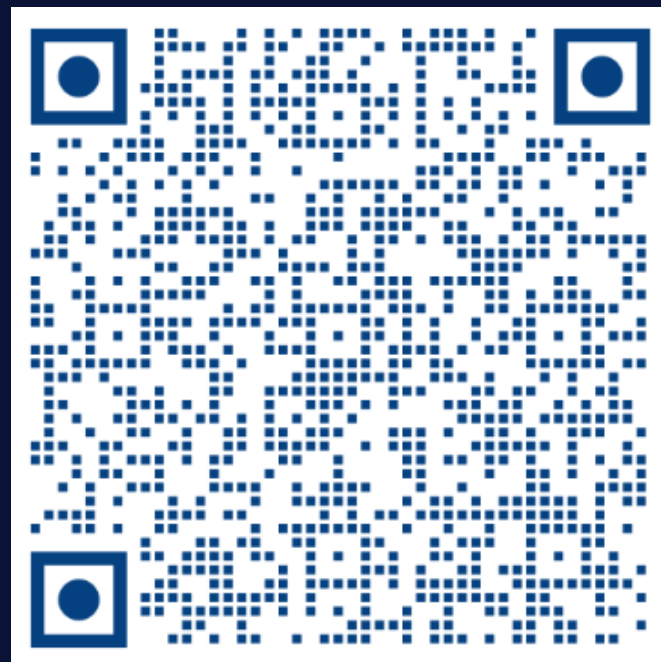
# What are your **VALUES**?

What are the values that are important to:

- the employees?
- the residents?
- the collective residential community?

HOW are we learning about this information and HOW does it inform the work that we do each day?

# QR Code to access Brene Brown's List of Values:



## List of VALUES

- |                |                     |                      |                        |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Accountability | Ethics              | Kindness             | Self-respect           |
| Achievement    | Excellence          | Knowledge            | Serenity               |
| Adaptability   | Fairness            | Leadership           | Service                |
| Adventure      | Faith               | Learning             | Simplicity             |
| Altruism       | Family              | Legacy               | Spirituality           |
| Ambition       | Financial stability | Leisure              | Sportsmanship          |
| Authenticity   | Forgiveness         | Love                 | Stewardship            |
| Balance        | Freedom             | Loyalty              | Success                |
| Beauty         | Friendship          | Making a difference  | Teamwork               |
| Being the best | Fun                 | Nature               | Thrift                 |
| Belonging      | Future generations  | Openness             | Time                   |
| Career         | Generosity          | Optimism             | Tradition              |
| Caring         | Giving back         | Order                | Travel                 |
| Collaboration  | Grace               | Parenting            | Trust                  |
| Commitment     | Gratitude           | Patience             | Truth                  |
| Community      | Growth              | Patriotism           | Understanding          |
| Compassion     | Harmony             | Peace                | Uniqueness             |
| Competence     | Health              | Perseverance         | Usefulness             |
| Confidence     | Home                | Personal fulfillment | Vision                 |
| Connection     | Honesty             | Power                | Vulnerability          |
| Contentment    | Hope                | Pride                | Wealth                 |
| Contribution   | Humility            | Recognition          | Well-being             |
| Cooperation    | Humor               | Reliability          | Wholeheartedness       |
| Courage        | Inclusion           | Resourcefulness      | Wisdom                 |
| Creativity     | Independence        | Respect              |                        |
| Curiosity      | Initiative          | Responsibility       | <i>Write your own:</i> |
| Dignity        | Integrity           | Risk-taking          | _____                  |
| Diversity      | Intuition           | Safety               | _____                  |
| Environment    | Job security        | Security             | _____                  |
| Efficiency     | Joy                 | Self-discipline      | _____                  |
| Equality       | Justice             | Self-expression      | _____                  |



# Taking the Value Assessment: Micro > Mezzo > Macro Systems

How do individual values influence our work ethic and workplace persona? And impact community?

How can we honor individual values-- examine alongside the 4ms and psychological safety to create a positive work and living space?

What could be the macro-level outcome?



# Summary

When empathy, professionalism, values awareness, and psychological safety are prioritized, care becomes truly person-centered.

Questions for reflection > action:

1. How can I use new knowledge of values to honor and build professionalism in my workplace?
2. What are ways that I can strengthen psychological safety in my workplace?
3. How can I recognize and support professional behaviors in my workplace through empathy, values and psychological safety?



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