

If I can focus on only one thing ...

... it's safety culture. Did you guess it? I'm not surprised, I mean, look at my titles (official and informal) - both have "safety culture" in them. But why? Good question.

Let's back up. Just what is safety culture anyway? Culture is often described as "group norms and behaviors" but a good heuristic is "how we do things here"¹, so, safety culture is "group *safety* norms and behaviors" or "how we do *safety* here."

Why focus only on safety culture anyway? Is it that important? Because we are horrible multi-taskers, have the attention span of a squirrel, and yeah, it is *that* important. Maybe even more so. Here's how.

How much of a rule follower are you? Likely not much if you're average. Know what? Me neither. Surprised? Don't be. When's the last time you (or I) sped, rode our bike through a stop sign, or didn't wear our safety glasses as required. Why? Risk. We know it when we see it – and when we don't. Don't get me wrong – I'm not advocating breaking rules.

Imagine instead that a group had a set of values that translated into behaviors and thus group norms. And imagine that the values were for everyone's safety. Imagine. Are you with me? Einstein said that imagination was more important than knowledge.² Picasso said that if we can imagine it, we can create it.³ Just as we do with our research. Imagine.

Any group (lab, team, office, program, or an entire college) can create these group norms and behaviors for our safety. Not because of a rule – because it's how we do safety here. Imagine.

Jon (the bald-headed safety *culture* guy)

Sources:

1. Elaine Cullen, PhD, CDC Researcher. ASSE conference presentation and discussions.
2. https://todayinsci.com/E/Einstein_Albert/EinsteinAlbert-ImaginationQuote800px.htm
3. <https://www.pablocicasso.org/quotes.jsp>

Coming next: *Safety culture – What descriptors would others use to describe yours?*