

Leading Through Transition

Psychological Safety

Making uncertainty, questions, mistakes, and disagreement safer to talk about.

REDEFINE + SMALLIFY

Employment Social Enterprise Community
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What gets harder to say?

Opening chat

When there is a lot of uncertainty or change, what becomes harder for people to say out loud?

Add one example in the chat.



When do people speak up?

Breakout groups of three | 9 minutes

Think of a team where you felt comfortable speaking candidly.

1

What did the leader or team do that made candor easier?

2

What tends to shut people down?

3

Bring back one behavior that opens people up.



Psychological safety

Amy Edmondson's frame (Amy C. Edmondson, The Fearless Organization, 2018)

A shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.



Speak up

with questions, concerns, and ideas



Ask for help

when you do not know or are struggling



Take interpersonal risks

in service of learning



Admit mistakes

without hiding or deflecting



Disagree

or challenge respectfully



Learn from failure

rather than conceal it

The leader's response to candor teaches the team whether speaking up is actually safe.

What psychological safety includes

Candor and accountability belong together

It does not require

- Being nice
- Avoiding conflict
- Agreement
- Lower standards

It makes room for

- CANDOR**
- LEARNING**
- ACCOUNTABILITY**

People can be direct about the work while remaining responsible for the work.

The learning zone

Psychological safety and standards



High standards and high psychological safety support learning and performance.

What might they not say to me?

Quiet reflection | 4 minutes

1 What might people be reluctant to say to me?

2 What might they think I do not want to hear?

3 How do I tend to respond when challenged, questioned, or disappointed?

**PAUSE
NOTICE**

**Our reactions
shape what gets
said next time.**

Four leadership moves

Psychological safety grows through repeated interactions

1

INVITE

Ask for questions, concerns, and different perspectives.

2

NOT KNOW

Make room for uncertainty. Leaders do not need every answer.

3

RESPOND

Reward the risk when someone speaks up.

4

FOLLOW THROUGH

Show that speaking matters by closing the loop.

CHAT: Which feels hardest for you right now? Which feels easiest?

Your small shift

Choose one behavior to try in an upcoming meeting, conversation, or check-in

1 What needs to become more sayable on my team?

2 What might people be holding back?

3 What could I do to make it safer? (Invite? Not Know? Respond? Follow Through? Other?)

4 What is one small behavior I will try?

**ONE
SMALL
MOVE**

Small enough to try
next week. Specific
enough to notice what
happens.

Four Domains of Psychological Safety

A practical lens for how psychological safety shows up in teams

Willingness to Help

People feel comfortable asking for help and believe colleagues will respond supportively.

Inclusion & Diversity

People feel they belong and that different experiences, perspectives, and expertise matter.

Attitude to Risk & Failure

People can take thoughtful risks, acknowledge mistakes, and learn from what happens.

Open Conversation

People feel able to ask questions, raise concerns, offer ideas, disagree, and speak candidly.

Psychological safety is strengthened by repeated behaviors, not slogans.

Taking This Back to Your Team

Reflecting on Psychological Safety on Your Team

Take a few minutes to reflect on your own team.

Amy Edmondson's 7-Item Psychological Safety Scale					
Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
2. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

1. Where might your team feel most psychologically safe?

2. Which of the four domains would be strongest?

3. Where might your team feel less steady?

4. What role do you play in creating both the strengths and the gaps?

5. What leadership behavior might you shift to strengthen psychological safety?

Building Psychological Safety Across an Organization

Practices that make candor, contribution, and learning more possible

- **Measure it regularly:** Use a consistent survey across teams and the organization.
- **Equip leaders to invite candor:** Ask for questions, concerns, dissent, and different perspectives.
- **Train leaders to receive feedback well:** Curiosity, appreciation, and follow-through shape future voice.
- **Build speaking-up practices into the work:** Make candor part of meetings, decisions, and retrospectives.
- **Make learning from mistakes visible:** Focus on what happened, what was learned, and what changes next.
- **Close the loop:** Let people know what happened after they spoke up.
- **Hold safety and accountability together:** Psychological safety is not the absence of standards or hard conversations.

Aspirational, not perfect

People bring different lived experiences and histories of inclusion or exclusion into the room.

The goal is not perfect safety, but conditions where more people can speak, contribute, learn, and recover when things do not land well.

Psychological safety is built less by what an organization says than by what repeatedly happens after someone speaks up.

Commit

My small shift:

Type it. Hold. Send together.

**Psychological safety
does not remove the
discomfort of transition.**

**It makes the discomfort
discussable.**

When people can talk about what is happening, they have a better chance of learning and moving through it together.