Psychological Safety at Work: A Guide to Creating Psychological at Work

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A [2017 study conducted by Gallup](#) showed that psychological safety at work can lead to a 12% increase in productivity and a more engaged workforce. The benefits of psychological safety stem from increased employee confidence, creativity, and trust.

Psychological Safety

[Psychological safety](#) is the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for being candid or speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. To grow and develop psychological safety as a manager and employee, one needs to foster three main powerful interpersonal tools which will aid in the growth of their individual psychological safety. These would include being approachable, do people see you as someone they can approach anytime with almost anything, being open, and being able to take criticism and give feedback when required.

Psychological Safety at Work

However, psychological safety at work is more concerned with group dynamics at the workplace. The shared idealism took by members of an organization/ team that the other members in the organization will not reject, punish, or humiliate them for speaking up, suggesting new ideas, or being candid.

Workplace psychological safety has perhaps never been more vital. Not only has the global pandemic forced millions of people to work from home, but the present political and social climate has left many of us emotionally exhausted and unclear of what the "new normal" really looks like.

Leaders are collaborating in ways they have never done before, experimenting with new methods of communication, problem-solving, and team engagement from afar. As more individuals return to the office or commit to working from home indefinitely, it's critical to understand psychological safety in the workplace so that you can assess where you stand and begin actively cultivating a psychologically safe environment.

[YouTube link] - The importance of psychological safety: Amy Edmondson (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eP6guvRt0U0)

Why Is Psychological Safety In The Workplace Important?

Psychological safety is just as important to an effective team as physical safety and performance standards. Below are just a few reasons why psychological safety is important to the workplace.

1. Employee engagement is improved. It is easier for team members to engage when they feel protected at work. This could be in a team meeting, when they address problems, work on projects, or interact with customers and peers.

Furthermore, safe teams encourage employees to be completely present at work rather than dozing off or counting down the minutes till the end of the day.

2. Encourages a diverse working atmosphere. Making all team members feel included is more crucial than ever. Diverse teams are welcome in safe work environments. They enable everyone on the team to succeed, regardless of gender, race, background, or political preferences. As a result, everyone feels
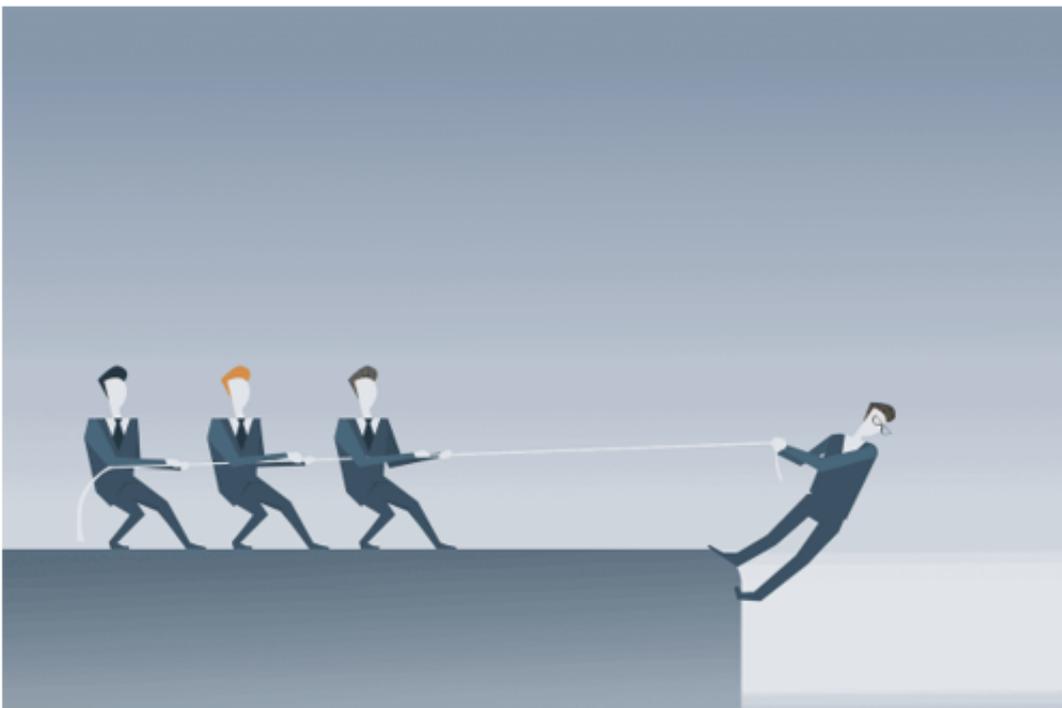
linked and part of a united front in a rich give-and-take experience.

3. Encourages innovation and inventiveness. Team members must feel comfortable expressing themselves for creativity and ideas to flow naturally. Consider how many brilliant ideas were never shared because a team member was afraid to do so.

4. Enhances employee happiness. Mental health has a significant impact on overall well-being. Employees who are psychologically well can perform at their best and avoid stressors that prevent them from doing so.

5. Reduces employee turnover. Team members who feel psychologically safe at work are less likely to turn away from their current employment. In the end, there will be no reason to leave a company that treats you with respect and allows honesty and safety across the whole organization. The costs that come with the recruitment of new group members are considerably high, and thus, high employee turnover 'isn't sustainable for any successful business.

6. Organization reputation improved. This is the result of high-performing and happy teams that promote the organization through word of mouth. Boosting the organization's appeal to recruits. Which in turn results in the ability of the company to obtain the best talents out available.

Imagesource[https://www.fearlessculture.design/blog-posts/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety]

How to Measure Psychological Safety

A common, cost-effective way to measure psychological safety in the organization is through employee questionnaires/surveys. The questionnaires should obtain the perceptions of " psychological safety at work by asking the right questions such as whether group dynamics foster the environment in which members feel they can make mistakes, share their opinions, and take risks without the concern of embarrassment or unconstructive criticism. While reviewing results, consideration should be taken on group/department levels and not individually, as implications of actions from results will be applied to departments/teams.

How to Improve Psychological Safety at Work?

Knowing what psychological safety is at work and why it is so important to know leads us to the next question experts usually ask: How does an organization improve its psychological safety at work?

To successfully succeed in the improvement of psychological safety at work, management and other positions of power must create a domain that encourages employees to be open. This includes being free to share what is on their mind with their peers and with management within work guidelines and policies. Management's responsibility is to foster an environment where work-life issues are safe to raise. Today, psychological safety is needed to enable productive conversations in the new, challenging, and ever-changing business world.

Strategies for Managers

Although the aim is to foster a business environment that encourages the sharing of more information between employees, it is crucial not to be over-aggressive in the implementation of these views. Sharing personal information carries real and significant risks, given legal restrictions related to asking personal questions, the potential for bias, and a desire to respect employee privacy. Instead, managers should seek to create a balanced environment that encourages employees to share aspects of their situations relevant to work. Managers must trust employees to make the correct judgments for themselves as to what is oversharing out of the bounds of workplace policies and statutory requirements.

The following is a four-step series to further guide management into improving psychological

safety at work:

Step 1: Set the scene. The first step is discussing with your team to inform the employees of the changes ahead. Employees must understand that work focus and achievements stay the same, however, they must come to recognize that the group must be transparent about the needs for their work and should be more candid with each other for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

Step 2: Lead the way. For an environment that develops psychological safety to be created at the workplace, the leader has to lead the way and show employees the positives of being open and candid. Words alone will not encourage employees to pursue the goal of psychological safety as it is a sensitive area of discussion. Because of the potential of oversharing, this action must be led by management, which will show employees the levels of honesty and group responsibility that each employee has.

Exposing your vulnerabilities by exposing your work, personal issues, and restrictions is the finest method to show you're sincere. Be candid about how you're thinking about dealing with your difficulties and be sensitive and humble about not having a clear plan. Why should you expect your employees to be frank with you if you aren't willing to be candid with them?

Step 3: Take baby steps. Leadership should not expect employees to share their most personal challenges or their shortcomings at work straight away. This process takes time. Also, on the other hand, management should not be too candid with employees straight away, as some truths will do more harm than good if told prematurely.

Step 4: Share positive examples. Management should not assume that employees will immediately have access to or support all the information supporting that employees won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

Create a plan of action and market (sell the idea of) psychological safety to the team by sharing your belief that increased transparency will assist the team in new arrangements that serve both individual needs and organizational goals. The goal here is to provide employees with the evidence they require to voluntarily buy into the idealism of psychological safety at work.

Psychological Danger

- Fear of admitting mistakes
- Blaming others
- Less likely to share different views
- «Common Knowledge Effect»

Psychological Safety

- Comfort admitting mistakes
- Learning from failure
- Everyone openly shares ideas
- Better innovation & decision-making

Image source [https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/04/team-psychological-danger-work-performance/]

How Team Members Can Help Create More Psychological Safety at Work

While leaders play an important role in defining their company's culture, each team member can and should hopefully contribute to a psychologically healthy work environment.

To encourage good dialogue and debate, team members should do the following:

- Ask open-ended questions and then listen actively to learn the sentiments and ideals, as well as the facts.
- Recognize that mistakes are an opportunity to learn and improve, and agree to share failures for the group's growth.
- Whether expressing gratitude or dissatisfaction, team members should be open and honest.
- When requested for assistance, receive it and readily provide it if able to.
- Encouragement and gratitude among team members will help team members feel more self-assured.

Most importantly, trust is the foundation of pleasant relationships. Management should improve the quality of communication throughout the organization and between the various departments. Healthier conversations will lead to a better culture.

Organizational culture becomes more resilient, dynamic, and innovative when the work environment becomes safe for interpersonal risk-taking.

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