# QUICK GUIDE TO CREATING PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACES

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Psychological safety, or the "shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk taking[1]" has been linked to many positive outcomes at work. For example, psychological safety increases job satisfaction and commitment to organizations. It also enhances engagement, increases helping behavior, and improves work performance. Overall, psychological safety is a really key mechanism that predicts a lot of positive outcomes for employees and organizations. So, what does psychological safety entail? Find out more below!

### MAKING MISTAKES WITHOUT FEAR

The first component of psychological safety is whether or not team members have the ability to make a mistake without fearing they will be harshly punished or terminated. On teams where employees feel they can make mistakes, they are more likely to come up with and try new ideas. Yet, when employees feel that being imperfect is a surefire way to lose their jobs, they stay silent and preserve the status quo. This doesn't mean that employees should be able to repeat the same mistakes without repercussions. But, they shouldn't fear that a small error will result in a big consequence.

### BEING ABLE TO RAISE TOUGH ISSUES

Another key component of psychological safety is being able to bring up a challenging issue without retribution. For example, if there is something going wrong in the team, or there is an error that was previously overlooked, team members need to be able to safely raise their concerns. If the team is full of "yes" people, problems will be overlooked and snowball down the line.

### VALUING UNIQUENESS

Psychologically safe teams are those in which people can be themselves and are valued for what makes them different from others on the team. Instead of making sure that everyone thinks and behaves the same way, psychologically safe teams emphasize the importance of bringing many different skill sets and personalities together.

### CULTIVATING COLLABORATION

Finally, psychologically safe work environments are those in which employees can freely ask one another for help. When employees know that they can turn to one another in times of need, they are much more likely to find ways to synergize their efforts and come to shared solutions. If everyone is siloed, or worse—in competition with one another—the team is no longer a "safe" place to share ideas or help others get ahead. Further, when organizations are psychologically safe, people don't undermine one another's efforts. They understand that everyone is working toward the same goal and that a "win" for one is a "win" for everyone. Instead, psychologically safe teams are characterized by supportive climates where employees boost each other up instead of tearing each other down.

How do you think your organization fares? If you're doing well in some areas and not in others, this might be a good time to take stock of your areas for improvement and to take action to make progress toward greater psychological safety. For the areas you're already doing well in, try sharing what you're doing to cultivate psychological safety with others! We hope you learned something new about psychological safety at work.

[1] *Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44, 350-383.*