

Creating Conditions for Innovation: 4 Stages of Psychological Safety

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Territory Acknowledgement



Setting the Tone

- Confidentiality
- Balanced engagement
- Open your hearts & your minds
(Whax hooks in shqwalowin)
- Be good medicine (Eyhh slaxin)

What we'll cover

- Get to know Timothy Clark's 4 stages of psychological safety
- Think about what the model looks like in everyday individual and team practices
- Identify a few practical ways you can build on your strengths to support creativity and innovation

Your Insights: Setting the Stage

- Think about a time when work felt at its best.
- What was one factor that made it feel that way?



Psychological Safety

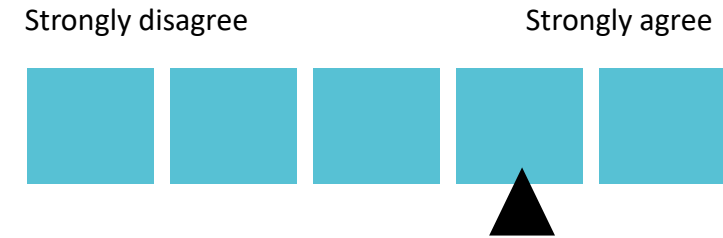
Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns and mistakes.

- Amy Edmondson



Poll: Current State of Psychological Safety – in your ‘team’

1. Making a mistake is seen as a learning opportunity.
2. People are comfortable bringing up problems and tough issues.
3. It is safe to take a risk.
4. It is easy to ask for help.
5. People are supportive and act in ways that uplift others.
6. People’s unique skills and talents are valued.



4 Stage Model of Psychological Health & Safety

Path to Inclusion and Innovation, Timothy Clark



Timothy Clark's Model

Path to Inclusion and Innovation based on Psychological Safety



Inclusion Safety

I belong here

Feeling accepted,
respected, and included



Learner Safety

I can ask, try, and make mistakes

Safety for questions, feedback,
and growth



Contributor Safety

My contribution is valued

Using skills, voice, and
judgement to add value



Challenger Safety

*I can challenge
how we do things*

Speaking up about risks,
improvement, and change

Inclusion Safety

- A basic human right and a moral imperative
- People feel accepted and valued *just as they are*, without needing to hide parts of their identity.
- Diverse perspectives strengthen decision-making
- Staff who feel included are more likely to engage, collaborate, and bring forward ideas or concerns.
- Inclusion reduces isolation and stress, especially during times of change.



Brené Brown

author, renowned speaker and research
professor at the University of Houston



Exclusion is Painful

- Pain from not being included lights up the brain in the same areas as physical pain
- Our 'threat' detectors identify a 'risk' of exclusion and the amygdala's 'fight or flight' response kicks in
- Higher order thinking becomes inhibited, logical analysis, creativity and innovation are all negatively impacted
- In the workplace repeated activation of the threat response can lead to disengagement and other 'threat' responses



“People feel more included on a team when we...”

- acknowledge everyone by name
- invite quieter voices
- explain acronyms
- avoid side conversations
- make it easier for people to participate

When you don't have inclusion safety

- There is exclusivity and clear cliques in your team/dept.
- People hide behind their title, position, or authority
- The workplace is too quiet
- People compare and compete instead of collaborate

When you have inclusion safety

- People know each others' names and how to pronounce them
- Your team/dept has consistent connecting rituals
- Role titles are not used to create a hierarchy of respect
- Differences are not just tolerated – they are celebrated



Reflection & Action

Inclusion Safety

- What is one thing I know I need to feel included on a team?
- What is one thing I personally do that helps people feel included?

In your role, what is one small action you will take to increase inclusion safety on your team?

Stage 2 - Learner Safety

- Mistakes are not the exception – they are expected
- Learners who feel safe will practice at the edge of their expertise
- Punishing instead of teaching results in defensiveness
- The emotional climate of team impacts intellectual engagement
- Expectations are high and achievable



Scenario

A team member is unsure about a process change but stays quiet because they do not want to look uninformed.

- What could help make learning safer?
 - Thank people for raising uncertainty
 - Respond to mistakes with curiosity
 - Make feedback respectful, specific and useful

When you don't have **learner safety**

- Mistakes are not shared
- Ongoing concerns about job security
- Learning is not prioritized
- People only interact inside their roles

When you have learner safety

- Mistakes are shared openly in a team
- Your Learning goals are supported
- Saying 'I don't know' is OK
- Your Leader is learning with you



Reflection & Action

Learner Safety



How do I respond when someone asks a basic question, makes an error, or says they are unsure?

How do I care for myself when I make a mistake?

What is one commitment I can make to increase Learner Safety on my team?

Stage 3 - Contributor Safety

People feel safe to use their skills, ideas, and judgement in meaningful ways.

- People are trusted to contribute, not just comply
- Input is invited and taken seriously
- Strengths and experiences are recognized
- People have appropriate autonomy and ownership
- Growth happens when people can participate, not just observe

Poll: Contributor Safety In Action

- What have you experienced?



When you don't have Contributor safety

- People are disengaged and feel overloaded
- You have tasks to do, not problems to solve
- Contribution is role-based, and some roles stay quiet
- People hesitate to take responsibility
- Can lead to moral distress

When you have Contributor safety

- People work with passion
- You ask more than you tell when solving problems
- People naturally work with autonomy
- People and teams have the space to do things their way



Reflection & Action

Contributor Safety

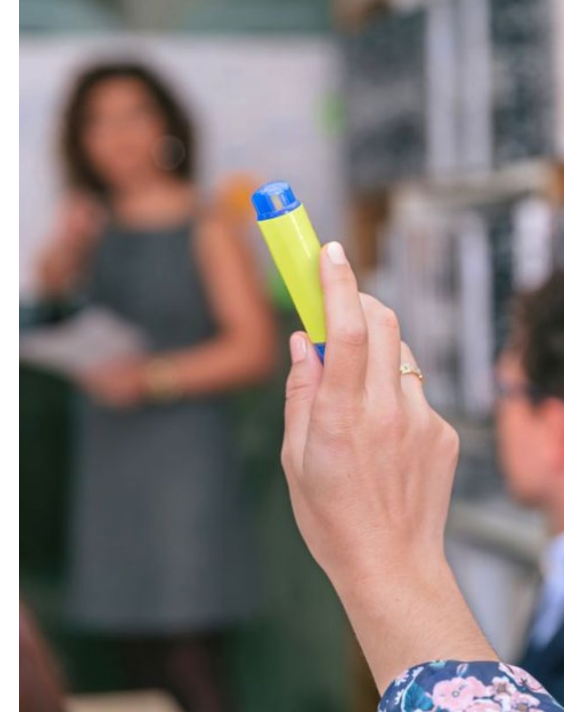
- What helps me feel confident and supported enough to share my ideas, skills, and perspective with the team?

Where could I take a more active role in welcoming ideas, feedback, and perspectives from others?

Stage 4 - Challenger Safety

People feel safe to question, challenge, & raise concerns in service of better outcomes.

- Speak up with a different view
- Raise concerns or risks
- Question how things are done
- Offer ideas that may disrupt the usual way



We strengthen Challenger Safety by...

- Invite different views
- Respond calmly to concern or bad news
- Separate disagreement from disrespect
- Thank people for surfacing risk

When you don't have challenger safety

- Fear of rejection or retaliation stifles innovation and feedback.
- People hesitate to question the status quo or propose new ideas.
- Autonomy is limited
- Teams struggle with trust, leading to rigid adherence to established processes.

When you have challenger safety

- Individuals feel empowered to question & challenge without fear of reprisal.
- Teams embrace rituals that encourage collaboration and shared purpose.
- Respect is based on contribution rather than role titles or hierarchy.
- Differences are valued and celebrated as strengths that enhance problem-solving.



Reflection & Action

Challenger Safety

- How do I react when someone challenges an idea, raises concern, or points out a problem?
- What most helps me raise a concern on my team?

What is one small shift I could make to help people speak up more freely on my team?

To help strengthen psychological safety
& innovation on my team, I will...



Psychological Health & Safety Experience Survey

