



Psychological Safety



Psychological safety means feeling safe to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes and challenge ideas – without fear of embarrassment, being blamed or feeling humiliated.

Why it matters

- Teams with high psychological safety are **21x more likely** to contribute innovative ideas
- These teams report **12% higher productivity** and **27% better performance**
- **76%** of employees say they perform best when they feel safe to take risks and voice opinions
- It reduces stress, boosts engagement, and supports learning and innovation.

What it's not

- Being nice all the time
- A licence to slack off – it doesn't replace taking accountability
- Oversharing or dominating conversations
- Avoiding conflict.

What it looks like

- Leaders admit mistakes and show humility
- Everyone is encouraged to speak up
- Questions are welcomed
- Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.



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What to do



How to create a culture of psychological safety

Select the play button below to find out.



What happens when there's no psychological safety at work?

It can have serious negative consequences for both individuals, and the organisation as a whole. Here's what typically happens:

- Fear of speaking up
- Increased stress and anxiety
- Reduced engagement and motivation
- Stifled creativity and innovation
- Higher turnover.

Should someone feel their mental health is affected by their work environment, or any other factors of work, the [Stress Risk Assessment Tool](#) may be used to facilitate a structured conversation and consider what support can be provided.



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What to do



How to create a culture of psychological safety

Do

- ✓ **Be inclusive:** Talk to all colleagues, learn about them, and share about yourself
- ✓ **Seek others' views:** Ask others what they think – don't just defend your own view
- ✓ **Listen actively:** This means focusing, responding and valuing what others say
- ✓ **Acknowledge others:** Praise those who speak up or challenge constructively
- ✓ **Use mistakes positively:** Use mistakes as an opportunity to learn collectively.

Don't

- ✗ Don't avoid difficult conversations – conflict can be healthy
- ✗ Don't assume silence means agreement
- ✗ Don't dismiss ideas or concerns without listening
- ✗ Don't let toxic behaviour go unchallenged
- ✗ Don't expect others to speak up if you don't model it first.

Questions to consider

1

Do I ask colleagues for feedback on how I come across?

3

Have I ever challenged behaviour that undermines psychological safety?

2

Do I know my teammates beyond their job roles?

4

What happened when I did? Would I do anything differently next time?



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Resources



Managers – make a difference!

- **Be role models:** Be an example of openness, fairness and curiosity towards others
- **Frame the work:** Set context, acknowledge uncertainties, and build shared purpose
- **Invite engagement:** Ask meaningful questions and encourage contributions
- **Respond productively:** Embrace difficult feedback and promote a learning mindset
- **Address toxic behaviour:** Do it quickly and fairly, ensuring boundaries are maintained.

Questions for managers

- Do all team members feel included and heard?
- Do we have candid conversations, even when it's difficult?
- Are we helping each other feel appreciated and supported?

Resources and support

Stress Risk Assessment Tool – for structured wellbeing conversations

Network Rail SharePoint – for further reading and tools

Your line manager or HR partner – for confidential support and advice

HR Policies – including EDI, performance management and return-to-work guidance



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Video



Psychological Safety

In this video, Laurence Medina, Principal Safety and Security Culture Specialist, explains how Psychological Safety leads to better teamwork, safety and mental health, and how leaders play a key role in encouraging openness, speaking up and learning from mistakes.

Select the play button below for an overview.



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