THE PATH TO GREATER TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

SEPLER & ASSOCIATES
Strategic and Respectful Approaches to Contemporary Workplace Issues

Belonging

Listening and Truth Telling

Contributing

Personal connection
Respectful treatment
Engaged participation
Supportive allyship

Asking probing questions
Seeking and rewarding divergent perspectives
Giving and getting feedback

Critical Conversations
Converting undiscussables to discussables
Dissent and productive disagreement
Calling out and in

Less Unproductive Silence

WHAT PEOPLE SAY AT EACH STAGE OF THE PATH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

SEPLER & ASSOCIATES
Strategic and Respectful Approaches
to Contemporary Workplace Issues

Belonging

- We know each other personally
- It is okay to ask for help
- We make efforts to welcome new members
- I feel like I matter to this team

Listening and Truth Telling

- We understand the unique strengths of our team members
- We can bring up problems and tough issues
- We can ask for what we need to succeed
- We deliberately seek out unique perspectives and voices

Contributing

- It is safe to take risks and experiment on this team
- It is okay to challenge the status quo on this team
- We openly share and learn from our mistakes
- We work to make it safe for people to disagree with each other

Questions to Help Your Discussions:

BELONGING:

What are we currently doing to ensure that everyone's voice is considered and honored?

What could we be doing to build cohesion and trust on this team?

What obstacles do we as individuals face to feeling that we matter as a member of this team?

What norms or practices do we observe as a team that reinforce hierarchy or create anxiety or fear for some?

If we could change one thing to increase the likelihood that our team felt safe for everyone it would be…

LISTENING AND TRUTH TELLING:

When people don't share their ideas or objections, what is getting in the way?

What mechanisms do we have to give and get peer feedback about how we are showing up and functioning as a team member?

How can we better ensure that concerns, objections, differing perspectives, and challenges are elicited and given air time?

What is our culture of asking questions and raising concerns? How could it be improved?

CONTRIBUTING:

- **Undiscussable: A problem or issue that someone hesitates to talk about with those who are essential to its resolution**

Thinking about an undiscussable on your team (you need not share it), why is it an undiscussable, and what could the team do to support it being an undiscussable?

What are the unwritten rules about disagreement on your team? What would you like them to be?

What fear gets in the way of authentic contributions? What could be done to mitigate those fears?

What team practices would support mutual accountability for respectful behavior?

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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY EVALUATION

(adapted from Amy Edmonson's work)

- ☐ If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
- ☐ Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- ☐ People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
- ☐ It is safe to take a risk on this team.
- ☐ It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
- ☐ No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- ☐ Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO INCREASE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Objective	Actions	Examples	
Create and maintain explicit norms, practices, and rituals	-Periodically facilitate a discussion about "what is working" including topics such as • Meeting structure and time • Swapping facilitation responsibilities • Timeliness • Mode and Frequency of Check-Ins -Have a cadence of recognition events or awards for contributions	Ask team to think of a practice or ground rule to increase fuller and wider participation in discussions Individuate 1:1 time to needs of each individual As appropriate, have a monthly "Ask me anything" with rotating facilitation so team members can be familiar with what others are doing	
Improve inclusive listening	-Use inquiry to actively seek ideas and opinions -Notice voices that are amplified or listened to by the team, and those ignored or muted -Actively seek out different perspectives	Expand your use of problems to include clarity that you are not always right, such as, "what might I be missing here?" and "What is most important to each of you to see we get this right?" When sharing anticipated changes or starting new initiatives, allow a three-minute	

Objective	Actions	Examples	
		brainstorm of "what could go wrong," followed by suggestions to mitigate or address the concerns Build reflection time into decision making processes	
Value process and voice	Seek input on small decisions that you have control over and explain how that input was applied. Commit to always consulting stakeholders prior to making a decision that will affect them, and listen carefully to their concerns Use post-mortem processes to elicit learning opportunities	When seeking input or opinions, take them seriously, or be candid about why you are seeking the input, how it will be applied, and whether you are just listening, open to changing course, or simply seeking to understand.	
Build a Feedback Rich Environment	Build feedback into team norms, defining preferred method and timing of feedback Reward those who provide feedback, even critical feedback Encourage and model affirmative feedback publicly	Ask for feedback and model gratitude During times of change or disruption, seek out and invite continuous feedback on the impact of changes, and respond proactively Use 1:1's for mutual feedback.	

Objective	Actions	Examples	
		Encourage and model feedback publicly and encourage the team to do so. Provide critical feedback in the spirit of assisting the individual to succeed. During intensive change, some changes in performance are to be expected.	
Invest and Spend Time Building Relationships	Examine team practices to reduce unintended inequities Provide opportunities for team members to connect on a personal level while maintaining boundaries	Consider things such as scheduling, pace, operating assumptions. Ask each team member what barriers they face to their success Use "task" time to structure personal connection via check-ins, icebreakers, and non-structured social time to demonstrate the value of such interactions	
Give permission for vulnerability	Model and reward asking for help Use after-action reviews to understand things that did not go well, and what the team learning can be	Encourage and structure opportunities for team members to share attempts, successes, and failures Share your own stories of efforts you made that did not fully succeed	

Facilitation Activities to Assess Psychological Safety
(Adapted from Liberating Structures)

Troika Consulting

Question: What would boost psychological safety on this team, but is difficult or challenging for you to do?

Steps

- **(1 min)** Give everyone one minute of individual thinking to identify a personal challenge
- **(1 min)** Participants form groups of three and arrange chairs so that they sit knee-to-knee.
- Explain that Troika Consulting takes three rounds. Everyone will be a "Client" once, with the other two acting as "Consultants"
- **(3 min)** Round one starts with the first client sharing their answer to the question in detail. Consultants can ask the client clarifying questions
- **(5 min)** Ask the client to turn around with their back facing the consultants. Talking only to each other, the consultants generate ideas, suggestions, and coaching advice. In the meantime, the client listens and takes notes
- **(2 min)** The client turns back around and shares what was most valuable about the experience
- Groups switch to the next person and repeat the steps.

Action Dialogues

Small groups answer the following questions:

1. How do you know when psychological safety in this team is low?
2. How do you contribute effectively to improving psychological safety in this team?
3. What prevents you from doing this or taking these actions all the time?
4. Do you know anybody who is able to frequently solve this problem and overcome barriers? What behaviors or practices made their success possible?
5. Do you have any ideas for steps to improve psychological safety?
6. What needs to be done to make it happen? (Any volunteers?)
7. Who else needs to be involved?

Each group should have a "pitcher" who reads the questions aloud, and a "catcher" who takes notes on an easel pad

Team Norms Discussion

After two minutes of personal reflection, in pairs, discuss the following:

What are the characteristics and behaviors of someone who you...

- Can be unguarded with and not weigh the pros and cons of whether to share something because of the likely response of that person.
- Feel comfortable bringing up difficult issues with, or giving feedback to, and don't have fear of being attacked or retaliated against later.
- Don't worry about the person responding with immediate judgment, criticism, unwanted advice, or lecturing.

After 10 minutes, have pairs progress to quads and share discussions and implications for the team for 10 min. Then have the full group share their discussion

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

PS Principle	Skills	Processes	Standards
Safe to Speak Up: Everyone	Giving and Getting Feedback Conflict Management Skills Allyship and Bystander Skills Team development	• Training for substance • Structured and informal opportunities to practice giving and receiving feedback • Establishment of conflict laboratories • Education and Tools: Interventions • Team PS Assessments • Team toolkits to build psych safety (how we do things…)	Build candor and transparent communication/cadence into performance expectations Enable productive disagreement in progressively complex matters Use multiple methods to assess current state Establish and test team norms (transparent) Increase comfort with and focus of facilitated discussions
Able to Listen Up: Supervisors and Team Leaders	Responding to employee concerns effectively Seeking and receiving feedback Inclusive listening/facilitation skills Solicitation of "undiscussables" Understanding and avoiding retaliation	• Training and structured opportunities for practice • Facilitation techniques • Implement and practice SAGA model (Sepler) • Psych Safety 360 tied to performance (not public, but shared with team) • Anti-retaliation education	SAFE Model (Sepler) implemented Adoption of organizational norms/behavioral expectations Leader vulnerability and humility reduces stigma and increases breadth of team learning Enhanced inquiry techniques are used in all conversations

PS Principle	Skills	Processes	Standards
			Leaders understand risks of soft and substantive retaliation
Visibly Follow Up: Senior Leadership	Messaging and Communication of Value of Psychologically Safe Organization Proactive Inquiry Systems and Process Analysis Recognition for those who speak up Situational humility Accountability	• Leadership Development • Psych Safety Individual Coaching • Evaluate and modify reward systems • Reduce urgency of significant decisions to increase process and voice	Leaders act on gaps in transparency, accountability and safety through direct and strategic approaches Leaders share stories of PS successes Individuals believe they have been heard in organizational decisions that affect them and understand why decisions are made