

# High Performance via Psychological Safety

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MODERN AGILE



## Psychological Safety Is...

"Broadly defined as a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves."

--Amy C. Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization*

"A condition in which you feel (1) included, (2) safe to learn, (3) safe to contribute, and (4) safe to challenge the status quo -- all without the fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way."

-- Timothy R. Clark, *4 Stages of Psychological Safety*

"A state in which you're not afraid to be yourself, take risks, make mistakes, raise problems, ask questions and disagree with others."

-- Joshua Kerievsky & Heidi Helfand

## Drive Out Fear

No one can put in their best performance unless they feel secure. Se in Latin means "without" and cure means "fear or care." Drive Out Fear! We must be unafraid to express ideas and ask questions. -- W. Edwards Deming, *Out Of The Crisis*

## Establish Meeting Safety

Begin a meeting by agreeing to be CLEAR:

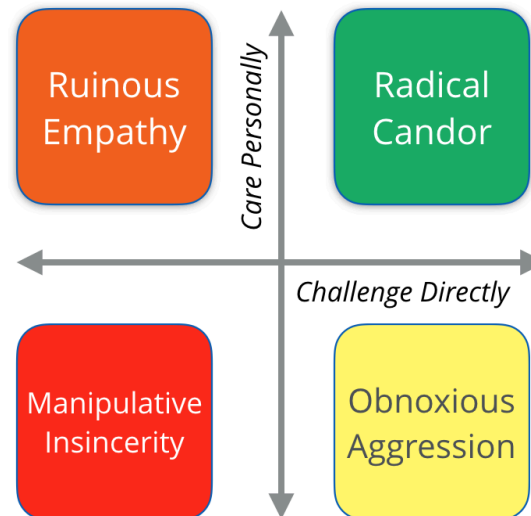
- **C**urious, **C**aring & **O**pen-Minded
- **L**isten To One Another
- **E**ncourage Everyone To Contribute
- **A**void Dominating or Interrupting.
- **R**epet & **R**evue People's Points.

Adapted from Charles Duhigg's book, *Smarter, Better, Faster*

## Time To Conflict Resolution

"The health of an organization is measured by the lag time between when you feel it and discuss it." -- Joseph Grenny, co-author, *Crucial Conversations*

## Invite Radical Candor



--Kim Scott, *Radical Candor*

## Leaders can Help Foster Team Safety by:

- Framing the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem.
- Acknowledging their own fallibility and modeling vulnerability in front of the team.
- Being curious and asking lots of questions.
- Encouraging diverse points of view.

Adapted from Amy Edmondson and Patrick Lencioni.

## Safety Poll

Before a meeting, consider taking an anonymous poll to determine how safe people feel to speak, disagree or challenge ideas. Ask them to use a rating scale of 1 to 5:

5. "Hey, no problem, I'll say anything."
4. "I'll say most anything, but a few things might be hard to say."
3. "I'll share some things, but keep a few things to myself."
2. "I'm not going to say much. Mostly, I'll let other people bring up issues."
1. "I'll smile, claim everything is great and agree with whatever the managers say."

Once collected, tally the votes on a flip chart to visualize whether it's safe to speak up.

-- Norm Kerth, *Project Retrospectives*

## Why Do People Stay Silent?

It's safer and the benefit is immediate and certain. Speaking up may benefit the organization and/or customers, but only if listeners agree and act. Is it worth the risk of being perceived poorly or penalized?

--Amy C. Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization*

## Respond with Curiosity

Whether someone criticizes your idea or you disagree with another's idea, respond with curiosity rather than judgement. Ask, "I'm curious. What makes you think that?"

## Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team

1. Absence of Trust - The fear of being vulnerable with team members prevents the building of trust within the team.
2. Fear of Conflict - The desire to preserve artificial harmony stifles the occurrence of productive ideological conflict.
3. Lack of Commitment - The lack of clarity of buy-in prevents team members from making decisions they will stick to.
4. Avoidance of Accountability - The need to avoid interpersonal discomfort prevents team members from holding one another accountable.
5. Inattention to Results - The pursuit of individual goals and personal status erodes the focus on collective success.

## Feedback Preferences

Make your feedback preferences known:

- "Give me brutal honesty please!"
- "Please say what you like first, then what you don't like."
- "This is an early draft, so please focus on general ideas, not typos or grammar."

**Feed-Forward** - Means sharing what you appreciate in each other and what you would like to see more of. Feed-forward, as opposed to feedback, helps people give constructive input in a way that accelerates and improves people's performance and development.

*Anne Rød and Marita Fridjhon, Creating Intelligent Teams*

**Check-In** - Attending a meeting when you're not 100% present (family situation, pain, exhaustion, etc.) happens. It's helpful to share your context so others may have empathy and not misunderstand your mood or body language.

Prior to starting the meeting, invite people to share (in a few words) how they're doing.

*-- Jim and Michele McCarthy - The Core Protocols*

## Levels of Listening

1. In your own head - not really listening
2. Listening to respond
3. Listening to understand

## Paul O'Neill's Three Questions

Can everyone in your organization say yes, every day, to the following three questions:

1. I am treated everyday with dignity and respect by everyone I encounter without respect to my gender, my nationality, my race, my educational attainment, my rank or any other discriminating qualifiers.
2. I'm given the things that I need - training, education, tools, encouragement - so that I can make a contribution that gives meaning to my life.
3. Everyday I can say someone I care about and respect provides regular, meaningful, sincere recognition?

## Edmondson's Psychological Safety Survey

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

**Raise Respect** - Everything is easier if you know and care about each other

1. Share hobbies, interests and skills in a group setting.
2. Share what you want to learn & what you can teach each other.
3. Create opportunities for finding common ground.

*Inspired by Lyssa Adkins, Coaching Agile Teams*

## C.O.I.N.

Structure for Difficult Conversations:

C - Context - Where/when did the event occur?

Ask your colleague what they remember.

O - Observation - Use neutral language to describe actions or behaviors that were witnessed, without evaluation or judgment. Ask the other to describe what they observed.

I - Impact - Describe in a neutral way the impact the event had on you, other people, the work, the organization. Speak from "I" and be vulnerable rather than critical.

N - Next time - a request for change. Establish agreements and understandings about what will be different in the future.

*--From CRR Global*

## Updates to this Document

Find the latest updates and follow the embedded links by downloading the pdf at

<http://modernagile.org/safety>



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