



Notes

Jul 22, 2025

Agile Coaching Residency - Weekly Working Session

Invited an amber Dominic Bradley Kellie Truesdell Lisa Himelstieb
Morgan Denner Preeti Anubolu Salome Moshfegh-Shieh Abegail-UXD
Lori Buesking Diana Moore Hannah Mayer Baydoun Valtika Rhodes Diane Choih
julia mahoney Mohamed Yassin Michael bartolay Jonathan Reed Clinton Foster
Kathleen Gudas ~~neha0476~~ ~~Rachel Beyerlein~~

Attachments  Agile Coaching Residency - Weekly Working Session

Meeting records  Recording

Summary

Morgan Denner led a discussion on psychological safety, defining it as the absence of fear of judgment for speaking out or failing, emphasizing its importance in agile team maturity, performance, and innovation. They introduced a four-stage pyramid of psychological safety (inclusion, learner, contributor, and challenger safety) and discussed methods for measurement, including TechFlate's current approach focusing on "challenging safety" in sprint retrospectives. Participants, including Salome Moshfegh-Shieh, Hannah Mayer Baydoun, Diane Choih, and Abegail-UXD, shared their insights on the framework's value for assigning actions and understanding interconnected safety categories, while Jonathan Reed and Morgan Denner discussed the challenges of authoritarian leadership. The main talking points included the definition, impact, measurement, and four stages of psychological safety, as well as the roles of teammates and coaches in building it and the challenges of fostering psychological safety in authoritarian environments.

Details

- **Introduction to Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner initiated a discussion on psychological safety, emphasizing its importance in agile team maturity and empowerment. They highlighted that a psychologically safe team is not afraid to challenge the status quo, speak up, or contribute. Morgan Denner introduced the concept as originating from academic literature on "team science" and specifically from Amy Edmonson's work.
- **Definition and Impact of Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner defined psychological safety as the notion that individuals are not fearful of being judged, shamed, or punished for speaking out or failing, which applies to various situations like disagreeing, feeling a lack of belonging, or asking seemingly obvious questions. They explained that psychological safety is directly correlated with improved team performance, process improvements, creativity, innovation, financial returns, employee engagement, morale, and participation. Morgan Denner also noted that psychological safety is based on subjective belief and requires continuous maintenance on a team.
- **Measurement of Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner discussed methods for measuring psychological safety, including Edmonson's proposed scale which assesses an individual's belief in safety regarding mistakes, asking for help, taking risks, and being valued. They acknowledged that while academic measures exist, they can be overwhelming for regular use, leading to a modified approach in TechFlate's sprint retrospectives where teams rate their safety to speak out on a scale of 1 to 10. Morgan Denner recognized that this current method primarily focuses on "challenging safety," which is one of four key components.
- **Four Stages of Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner introduced a four-stage pyramid of psychological safety: inclusion safety, learner safety, contributor safety, and challenger safety. Inclusion safety is the foundational stage, focusing on belonging and feeling valued. Learner safety involves feeling safe to learn new things and fail. Contributor safety builds upon the first two, allowing individuals to feel safe contributing to work. Challenger safety, at the apex, signifies the ability to challenge the status quo or disagree with others, which Morgan Denner explained cannot exist without the preceding stages.
- **Roles and Accountability in Building Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner led a workshop segment on how both teammates and coaches contribute to building

each of the four components of psychological safety. Salome Moshfegh-Shieh inquired about the differentiation between teammates' and coaches' roles, to which Morgan Denner clarified that teammates are accountable for work, while coaches scaffold and help people explore answers without being directly accountable for the work.

- **Reflections on the Psychological Safety Framework** Participants shared their insights on the workshop and the psychological safety framework. Hannah Mayer Baydoun found the breakdown helpful for assigning specific actions to build psychological safety progressively. Diane Choih appreciated the explicit calling out of learning and contributing as intermediate steps, providing a roadmap for fostering engagement. an amber noted that the session clarified psychological safety's aspects, offering a method for coaches and guiding their own reactions as teammates in conflicts. Salome Moshfegh-Shieh emphasized the value of dissecting psychological safety and its subjectiveness, helping to understand diverse perspectives. Abegail-UXD found the framework insightful for understanding the interconnectedness of safety categories and how to contribute to each.
- **Coaches' Own Psychological Safety** Morgan Denner concluded by highlighting that coaches also need to build their own psychological safety within the team, emphasizing that they belong, can fail, contribute, and challenge. They stressed that the pyramid applies to everyone, regardless of their role, and that personal belief in one's ability to belong, learn, contribute, and challenge is crucial. Morgan Denner expressed that failure should be viewed as a natural progression and celebrated on agile teams, reflecting their personal takeaway from the session.
- **Addressing Authoritarian Leadership** Morgan Denner discussed the challenge of changing team beliefs that conflict with intended team structures, especially when facing ingrained authoritarian leadership norms. Denner emphasized that coaches inspire culture by demonstrating belief and reinforcing team principles, fostering a psychologically safe environment. Jonathan Reed added to this by highlighting the difficulty coaches face in encouraging individuals to change when they believe they are being authentic in an authoritarian manner. Morgan Denner concluded by emphasizing that coaches must be service leaders, show empathy for individuals acting out of ego or fear, and lead by example to inspire change and a sense of belonging within the team.
- **Continuous Practice and Self-Assessment** Morgan Denner highlighted that psychological safety is a continuous practice, emphasizing that individuals will

always face new challenges and continue to learn. Denner asked attendees to asynchronously develop a personal psychological safety plan based on the workshop's learnings, explaining that writing it down aids memory and initiates the journey of building psychological safety.

- **Developing Frameworks for Ownership and Practices** Hannah Mayer Baydoun suggested creating stages for building ownership, similar to the psychological safety framework. Morgan Denner agreed that such a framework might not yet exist but expressed enthusiasm for developing it, proposing the creation of content for "four stages" for various practices such as ownership, service leadership, and continuous improvement. Denner encouraged team members to contribute to defining the core components of these practices asynchronously to build a foundation for measuring skills and practices in the future.

Suggested next steps

- ☐ Morgan Denner will send a note and a recap about the asynchronous psychological safety plan and the workshop.
- ☐ Hannah Mayer Baydoun will contribute to the core components of single practices.
- ☐ Abegail-UXD will copy the plan for herself in the Fig Jam.
- ☐ The group will asynchronously work on a psychological safety plan for themselves this week.

You should review Gemini's notes to make sure they're accurate. [Get tips and learn how Gemini takes notes](#)

Please provide feedback about using Gemini to take notes in a [short survey](#).