Creating a Psychologically Safe Work Environment

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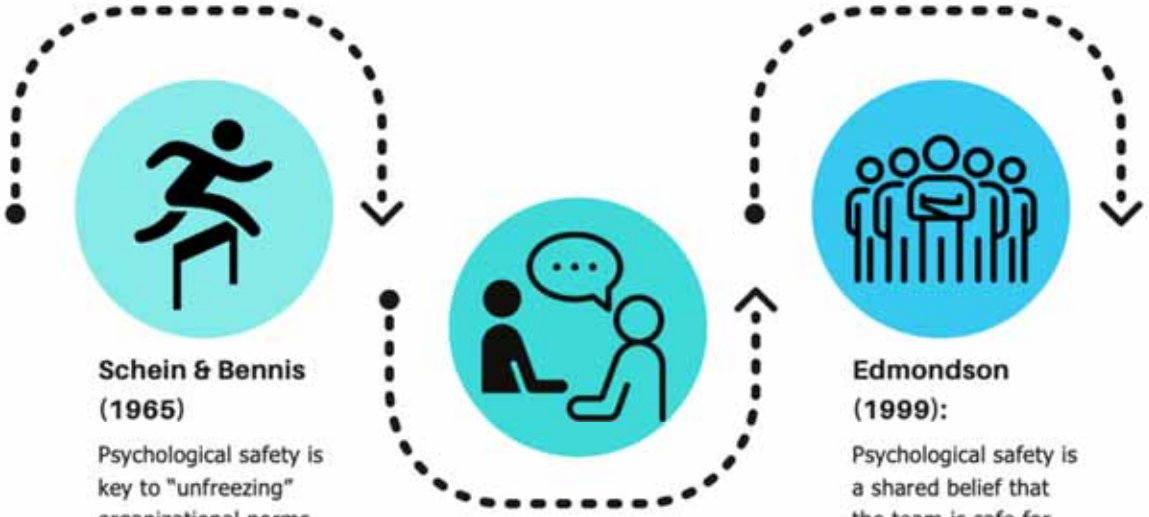
The Evolution of Psychological Safety



Schein & Bennis (1965)

Psychological safety is key to "unfreezing" organizational norms, reducing perceived threats, and removing barriers to change. It encourages experimentation and tolerates failure without punishment or guilt.

Kahn (1990)

Psychological safety is essential for people to fully engage in their work roles, allowing them to express and apply themselves without fear of harm to their self-image, status, or career.

Edmondson (1999):

Psychological safety is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. It enables the open contribution of ideas and actions, fostering growth, learning, and performance in a rapidly changing environment.

Motivational States at Work

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is an intrinsic motivational state where employees feel a sense of control over their work, driven by the four key cognitions of meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact. This sense of empowerment fosters greater engagement and commitment to their roles.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is a cognitive state where individuals invest their personal energy and resources into their roles and tasks, resulting in higher focus, enthusiasm, and commitment. It reflects how deeply employees are involved in and passionate about their work.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to an employee's perception that the work environment is supportive, allowing them to take risks, voice concerns, and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences. It fosters open communication and innovation by creating a sense of trust and security within the team.

10 Reasons Why Psychological Safety Matters

1. Enhanced innovation and creativity
2. Increased employee engagement
3. Improved team collaboration
4. Better problem-solving and decision making
5. Higher resilience to change
6. Reduced risk of burnout and stress
7. Contributes to culture of well-being
8. Higher performance and productivity
9. Increased accountability and learning
10. Stronger leadership

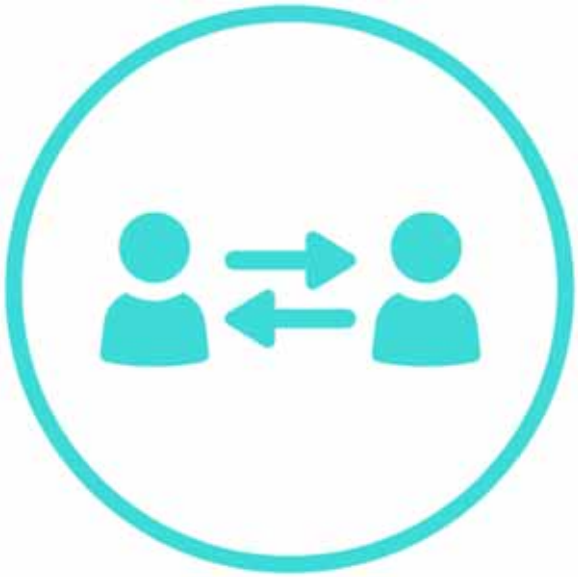
The Many Layers of Psychological Safety

Personal Influences on Psychological Safety

- Life experiences
- Past traumas
- Cultural background
- Personality and temperament
- Learning orientation
- Previous work or team environments
- Mental health
- Social belonging and inclusion
- Trust in leadership and peers

Peer Influences on Psychological Safety

- Trust and support
- Social inclusion
- Group norms and behaviors
- Peer accountability
- Emotional support



Manager Influences on Psychological Safety

- Open communication and approachability
- Constructive feedback
- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Modeling vulnerability
- Inclusive decision-making
- Fairness and equity
- Support in conflict and stress

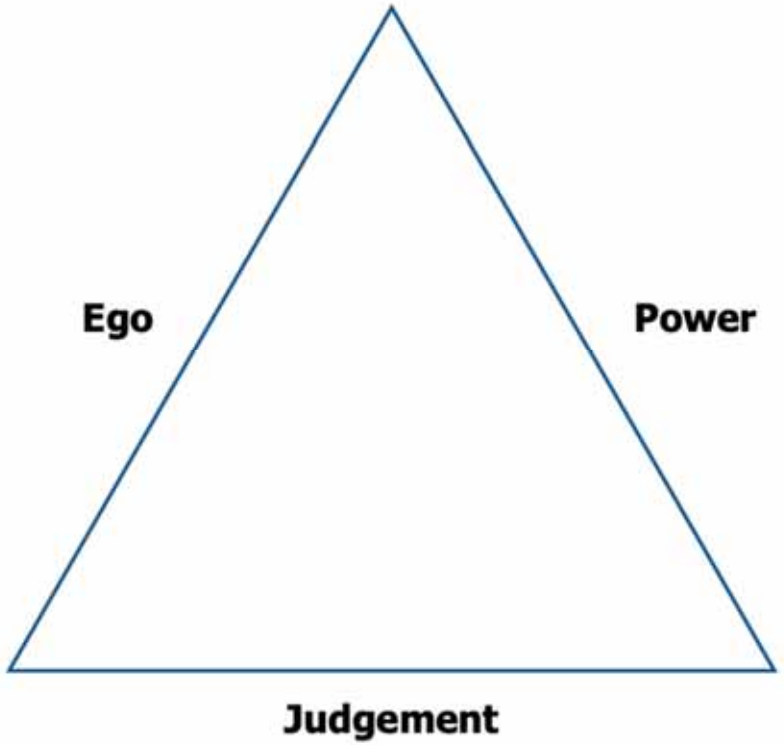
Leaders Influences on Psychological Safety

- Setting the tone and culture
- Modeling vulnerability and authenticity
- Encourage open dialogue and feedback
- Supporting risk-taking and innovation
- Building a climate of trust and inclusivity
- Recognizing and rewarding contributions
- Managing conflict with fairness and empathy
- Leading by example

Organizational Influences on Psychological Safety

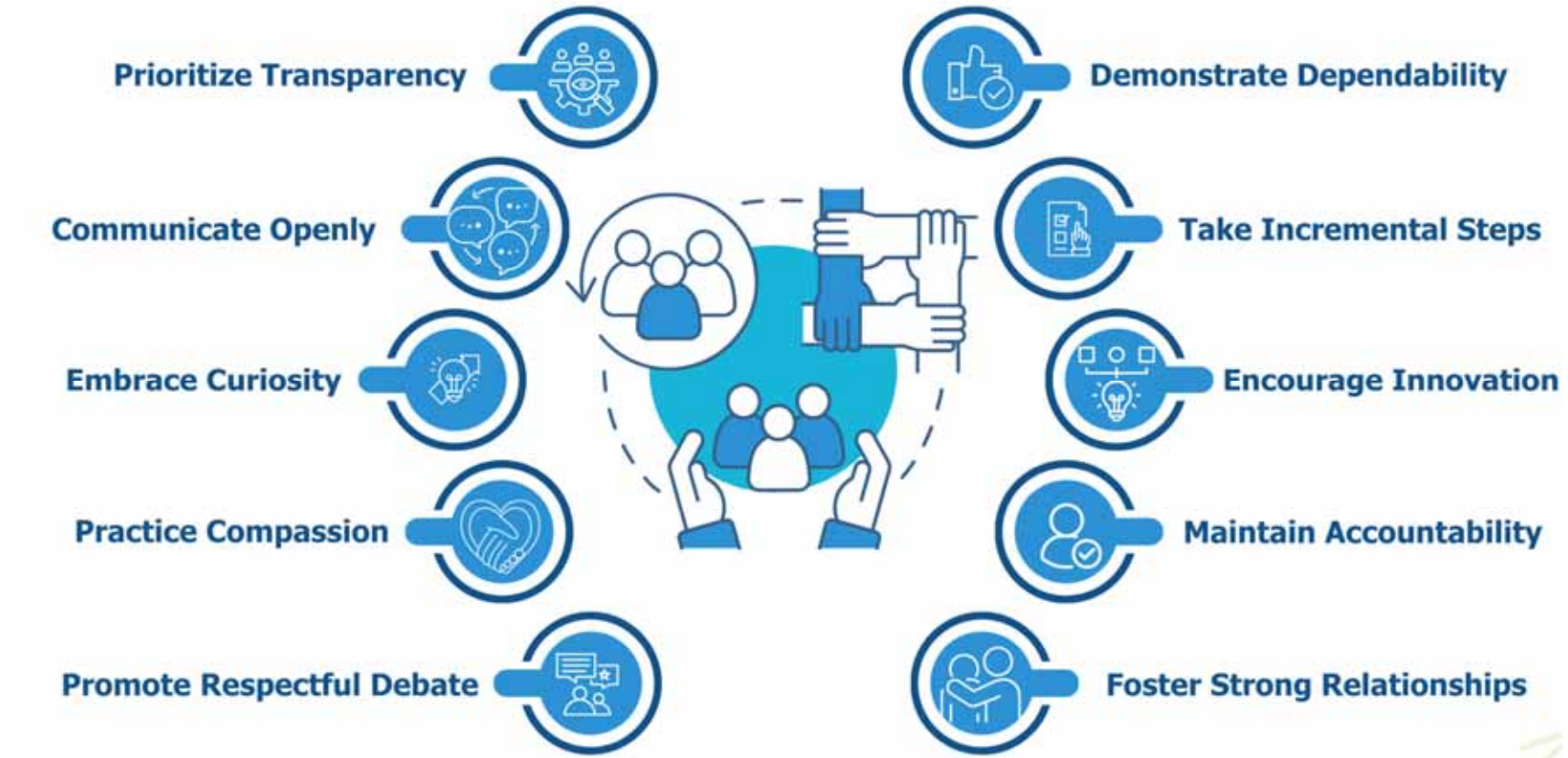
- Organizational culture
- Policies and procedures
- Leadership commitment
- Training and development programs
- Feedback mechanisms and accountability
- Rewarding psychological safety
- Inclusive and diverse environment
- Workplace design and flexibility
- Handling of mistakes and failures
- Workload and expectations

Barriers to Psychological Safety



Top Errors in Building Psychological Safety

Best Practices for Fostering Psychological Safety



Intentional Actions to Create Psychological Safety

- ✓ Actively seek input on decisions and initiatives, demonstrating that employee voices matter.
- ✓ Invest in training programs that focus on emotional intelligence, active listening, and conflict resolution for leaders and managers.
- ✓ Create a culture that celebrates experimentation and acknowledges both successes and failures as learning opportunities.
- ✓ Provide resources for mental health support, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and wellness programs.
- ✓ Encourage work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements and promoting self-care practices.
- ✓ Review organizational policies and practices to ensure they support psychological safety and do not inadvertently create barriers.

Key Takeaways

- Mistakes are learning opportunities
- Peer support strengthens safety
- Encourage non-judgmental feedback
- Model vulnerability
- Lead with empathy and openness
- Institutionalize trust and support

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Session Evaluation