

Psychological Safety in Teams

Building teams where people speak up, learn and perform

Your personal workbook for the ten-lesson programme. Use it to capture your thinking, complete each week's workplace task and build a team where people feel safe to speak up.

Name

Organisation

WELCOME

How to use this workbook

This programme has ten short video lessons of about two to three minutes each. For every lesson, watch the video, read the key ideas on the matching page of this workbook, answer the reflection questions and complete the workplace task during the following week. Each lesson has a practical tool in the Psychological Safety in Teams Toolkit.

Allow around 35 minutes per lesson, including your workplace task. The programme represents an estimated 6 learning hours in total. Complete the knowledge check at the end of each lesson in the Academy to receive your certificate of completion.

By the end of the programme you will be able to:

- Explain what psychological safety is, what it is not, and why it matters for performance, learning and wellbeing.
- Assess the level of psychological safety in your own team using observation and a simple team pulse check.
- Recognise how your own behaviour as a leader shapes what people feel safe to say.
- Use three leadership practices to build safety: setting the stage, inviting participation and responding productively.
- Lead blame-free learning from mistakes and setbacks, while keeping standards high.
- Build routines that keep psychological safety alive over the long term.

Programme map

01	What psychological safety really is	06	Inviting participation
02	Why it matters	07	Responding productively
03	Reading your team	08	Learning from failure
04	Your impact as a leader	09	Safety and high standards
05	Setting the stage	10	Making it last

What psychological safety really is

Key ideas

- Psychological safety is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking (Edmondson, 1999).
- People make quick, everyday decisions about whether to speak. When the risk feels high, silence feels safest.
- It is not about being nice, lowering standards or avoiding difficult feedback.
- High safety plus high standards puts a team in the learning zone.
- Leaders have the greatest influence, and safety can be built deliberately.

Reflect

Think of a team where you felt safe to speak up. What did the leader do that made the difference?

Think of a time you stayed silent at work. What did you weigh up, and what was the cost?

Your workplace task this week

Notice the moments people stay silent. In meetings and conversations, note who contributes freely, who rarely does, and two or three moments when you sensed people held back.

Use Tool 1: Speaking-up observation log in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Why it matters

Key ideas

- Google's Project Aristotle found psychological safety was the most important of five dynamics of effective teams.
- In safe teams, problems surface early, when they are small and cheap to fix.
- Learning and innovation depend on people sharing half-formed ideas and discussing errors.
- Safety frees energy for the work, supporting engagement and wellbeing.
- Silence is a hidden risk: what you do not hear can hurt you.

Reflect

Where might silence be costing your team right now: quality, customers, safety, ideas or wellbeing?

What is one recent problem that reached you later than it should have? Why?

Your workplace task this week

Ask your team what makes speaking up easier and what makes it harder. Listen without defending, and record what you hear.

Use Tool 2: Speaking-up team conversation guide in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Reading your team

Key ideas

- Leaders often overestimate safety, because people edit what they say to those with power.
- Signs of low safety: the same few voices, quick agreement, late bad news, hidden mistakes, the meeting after the meeting.
- Signs of high safety: questions, challenge, early admission of mistakes, quieter voices heard.
- A short anonymous pulse check gives a more honest picture than impression alone.
- How you respond to the results is itself a test of safety.

Reflect

Which signs of low or high safety do you see in your team? Give examples.

If your team scored lower than you expect, how would you want to respond?

Your workplace task this week

Run the team pulse check anonymously. Pick one or two themes and share them with your team as a starting point for discussion.

Use Tool 3: Team pulse check in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Your impact as a leader

Key ideas

- Power changes the room: small reactions from a leader can be read as a verdict.
- Modelling fallibility (I might be missing something) gives others permission to be honest.
- Curiosity first: ask before you tell.
- Pause before you respond, especially under pressure; thank people first.
- Ask for feedback on how you make it easier, or harder, to speak up.

Reflect

What signals might you send, without meaning to, when people raise problems or disagree?

When did you last say, I was wrong, or, I do not know, in front of your team?

Your workplace task this week

Ask two team members for feedback on how you respond when people raise concerns or disagree. Choose one behaviour to change.

Use Tool 4: Leader signals self-check in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Setting the stage

Key ideas

- Frame the work honestly: name the uncertainty and make speaking up part of the job.
- Connect voice to purpose: customers, safety, quality and colleagues.
- Agree a few team norms together, write them down and revisit them.
- Clarity about goals, roles and decisions reduces fear.
- New starters learn quickly what is safe; start them well.

Reflect

How could you frame your team's current work so that speaking up is expected?

What would new team members learn about speaking up in their first month with you?

Your workplace task this week

Run a short session with your team to agree three norms for how you will work together and speak up. Put a review date in the diary.

Use Tool 5: Team norms builder in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Inviting participation

Key ideas

- Ask open, specific questions: What are we missing? What worries you about this plan?
- Widen participation: rounds, thinking time, write first then discuss.
- Structures such as retrospectives and pre-mortems make speaking up routine rather than brave.
- Bring hybrid and remote colleagues in first and check in one to one.
- Seek out and thank different views, even when you do not act on them.

Reflect

Whose voice do you hear least in your team, and why might that be?

Which meeting would benefit most from a new participation technique?

Your workplace task this week

Use one new technique in a team meeting, such as a round, silent brainstorming or a pre-mortem. Notice who contributes and what you learn.

Use Tool 6: Participation techniques menu in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Responding productively

Key ideas

- Thank the messenger, even when the news is unwelcome.
- Explore ideas with a follow-up question before judging them; explain a no.
- Respond to bad news by looking forward, not for blame.
- Close the loop: tell people what happened as a result of speaking up.
- When you get it wrong, repair quickly and sincerely.

Reflect

How did you respond the last time someone brought you bad news? What did others learn from that?

Who has raised something recently that you have not yet closed the loop on?

Your workplace task this week

Go back to three people who recently raised an idea or concern, tell them what happened as a result and thank them for speaking up.

Use Tool 7: Productive response guide in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Learning from failure

Key ideas

- Edmondson distinguishes basic, complex and intelligent failures; each needs a different response.
- Separate honest mistakes from reckless or deliberate misconduct.
- Blame-free reviews ask what happened and why, not who.
- Recognise the learning from well-designed experiments that do not work.
- Go first: share your own mistakes and what you learned.

Reflect

Think of a recent setback. Was it a basic, complex or intelligent failure? How was it handled?

What would help your team talk about mistakes earlier and more openly?

Your workplace task this week

Run a short blame-free review of a recent setback or project using the four review questions. Agree one change.

Use Tool 8: Blame-free review template in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Safety and high standards

Key ideas

- Psychological safety makes accountability work better; it does not replace it.
- Candid feedback is a sign of respect: prompt, private, specific and future-focused.
- Healthy conflict focuses on ideas, not people, and ends in commitment.
- Address behaviour that undermines safety, such as belittling or ridicule, promptly and privately.
- Explore performance issues with curiosity, then agree clear actions.

Reflect

Where is your team in the learning zone model today: apathy, comfort, anxiety or learning?

Which honest conversation have you been putting off, and what is it costing?

Your workplace task this week

Hold one honest feedback conversation you have been putting off. Plan it with the feedback planner and reflect on it afterwards.

Use Tool 9: Candid feedback planner in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

Making it last

Key ideas

- Safety is built slowly and can be lost quickly, especially during change.
- Build openness into routines: check-ins, concerns on every agenda, regular reviews.
- Repeat the pulse check every few months and look for trends.
- Grow these skills in others so the climate does not depend on you alone.
- Leaders need safety too: find peers, a mentor or a coach.

Reflect

What are the biggest threats to psychological safety in your team over the next year?

What support do you need to keep this going?

Your workplace task this week

Complete your 90-day plan, setting out the routines and behaviours you will keep up, and share it with your team and your own manager.

Use Tool 10: 90-day psychological safety plan in the Toolkit.

What I did, what I noticed and what I learned

My one action from this lesson

My 90-day psychological safety plan

Bring together what you have learned. Choose a small number of routines and behaviours you will keep up, and decide how you will know they are working.

Area	What I will do	When / how often
Team routines e.g. check-ins, concerns on every agenda, retrospectives		
My leadership behaviours e.g. ask first, thank the messenger, share mistakes		
Learning from setbacks e.g. blame-free reviews after incidents		
Standards and feedback e.g. regular candid feedback, addressing unhelpful behaviour		
Measuring progress e.g. repeat the pulse check every three months		
Growing it in others e.g. rotate who facilitates, coach future leaders		
My own support e.g. peer, mentor or coach conversations		

I will share this plan with

Review dates: 30 days _____ 60 days _____ 90 days _____

FURTHER LEARNING

Keep going

Psychological safety grows through consistent everyday practice. Return to this workbook every few months, repeat your team pulse check and review your 90-day plan.

Further reading

- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.
- Edmondson, A. (2018). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Wiley.
- Edmondson, A. (2023). *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well*. Atria Books.
- Google re:Work. *Guide: Understand team effectiveness (Project Aristotle)*.

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