

Psychological Safety Check

Can your team speak up under pressure?

Psychological safety, a term popularised by Amy Edmondson of Harvard Business School, is the shared belief that it is safe to take interpersonal risks in a team: to ask a question, admit a mistake or challenge a decision without being embarrassed or punished.

It is not about comfort, or about everyone being nice. It is about being able to think clearly and speak honestly under pressure. When it is low, people self-censor and problems surface late. When it is high, concerns are raised early, pressure is named rather than carried alone, and teams recover from setbacks faster. It is built through everyday behaviour, not through people having to share personal feelings.

IF SOMEONE NEEDS HELP NOW

If there is an immediate risk to life, call **999**. Samaritans are available free, 24 hours a day, on **116 123**. In England, NHS 111 (option 2) connects to an urgent mental health service.

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How safe is it to speak up?

Ask each team member to rate these, ideally anonymously.

1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
If I make a mistake on this team, it is not held against me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can raise problems and difficult issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can ask for help without it reflecting badly on me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can disagree with my manager or a senior colleague	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People here say when they are under too much pressure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ideas are judged on their merits, not on who suggested them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What the manager can do

BEHAVIOUR	IN PRACTICE
Frame the work as uncertain	"We haven't done this before, so I'm relying on you to flag what I'm missing."
Admit your own mistakes	Say when you got something wrong, and what you learned.
Ask, then listen	End meetings with "What are we not talking about?" and wait.
Respond well to bad news	Thank people for raising problems, even unwelcome ones.
Name the pressure	Talk openly about workload, so no one has to carry it silently.

EXERCISE

For managers

1. The lowest-scoring statement, and what might be behind it:

2. One behaviour I will practise for the next month:
