

# Psychological Safety

Psychological safety describes people's perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as a workplace. Psychological Safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.



**Sources:**  
 Google - <https://rework.withgoogle.com>  
 Image - <https://pngtree.com>  
 Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct (Amy C. Edmondson and Zhike Lei) 2014

*"For people to feel comfortable speaking up with ideas or questions—an essential aspect of organisational learning—without fear of ridicule or punishment, managers must work to create a climate of psychological safety." ~ Amy C. Edmondson and Zhike Lei 2014*

## Google's Project Aristotle

Code-named [Project Aristotle](#), Google researchers set out to answer the question: "What makes a team effective at Google?". They found that what really mattered was less about who is on the team, and more about **how the team worked together**. In order of importance:



## Psychological safety vs. accountability

Holding people accountable is essential for getting the best from people, but without psychological safety it can create an environment characterised by stress and anxiety. Where our psychological safety and performance balance, we achieve 'the learning zone'.

## Consistent Relationships Across Studies

**Amy C. Edmondson and Zhike Lei 2014**

Evidence supports the idea that Psychological Safety matters greatly for workplace effectiveness. Psychological Safety has a consistent role in three key areas.



## How Does It Feel?

### LIKE THIS:

- ✓ People are encouraged to share ideas or try new things
- ✓ Team members offer constructive feedback on ideas
- ✓ Energising or motivating
- ✓ Benefit of the doubt is default

### NOT LIKE THIS:

- ✗ People feel the need to make things perfect before sharing
- ✗ Team members criticise people and capability instead of ideas or actions
- ✗ Exhausting or draining
- ✗ Assumptions prevent conversation



## Fostering psychological safety

- Have I spoken of failures in the right way, given the nature of the work?
- Do I point out that small failures are the currency of subsequent improvement?
- Have I articulated clearly why our work matters.
- Have I made sure that people know that I don't think I have all the answers?
- How often do I ask questions of others, rather than just expressing my perspective?
- Have I created structures to systematically elicit ideas and concerns?
- Do I acknowledge or thank the speaker for bringing an idea or question to me?
- When someone comes to me with bad news, how do I make sure it's a positive experience?
- Have I clarified the boundaries? Do people know what constitute blameworthy acts in our organisation?"

Taken from 'The Fearless Organization', by Amy Edmondson