PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

What it is.

What it isn't.

How to get it.

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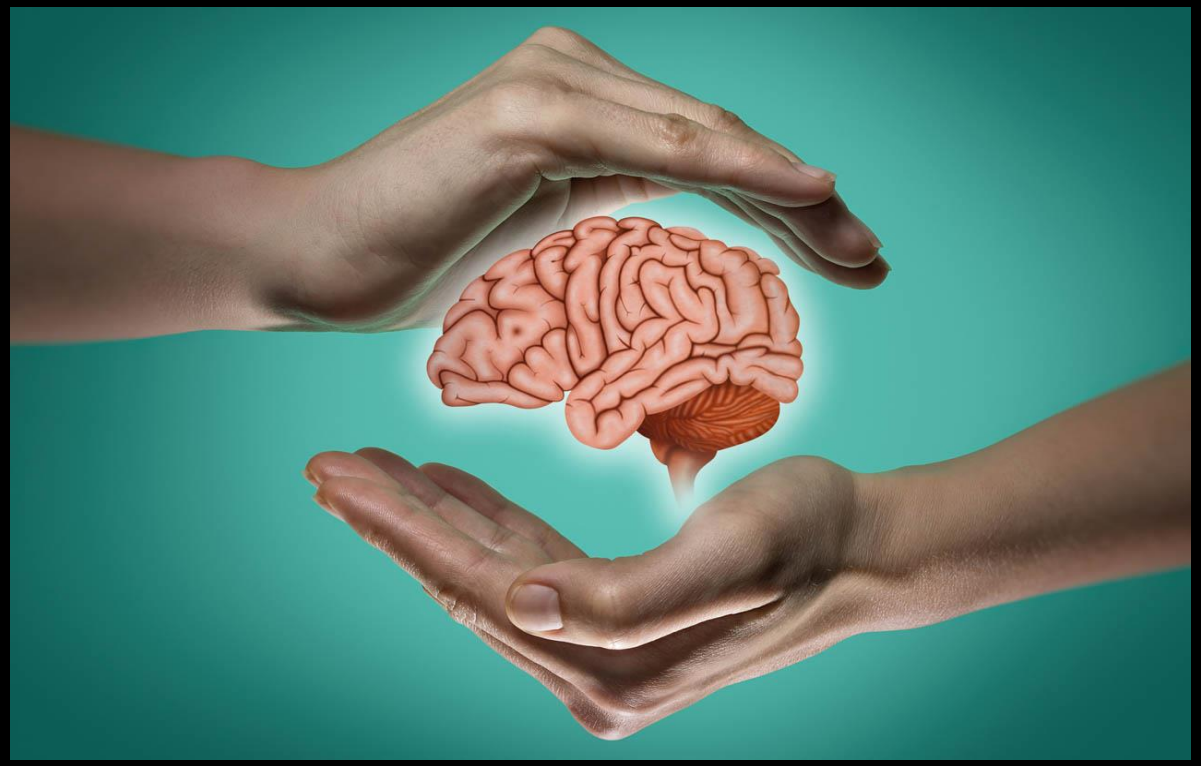


PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

What it is.

AN ENVIRONMENT OF REWARDED VULNERABILITY

If you're trying to create a culture of excellence, then start by creating a foundation with an environment that is psychologically safe.

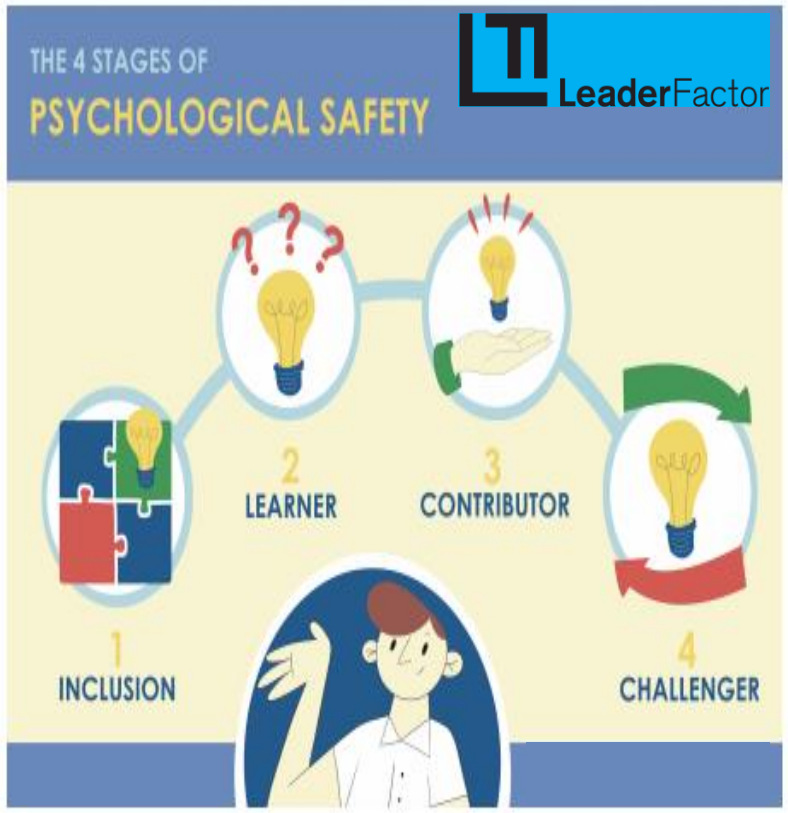
After years of research through "Project Aristotle," Google discovered that psychological safety is "**the #1 factor in creating high-performing, successful teams.**" It is the key ingredient for producing inclusive environments, and the heart of innovative teams."

It is where

Great Culture Begins!

- Allows for transparency – no hidden problems or toxicity. Builds trust.
- High levels of accountability drive success.
- Employees exceed expectations.
- Everyone has a voice, and everyone is listened to.

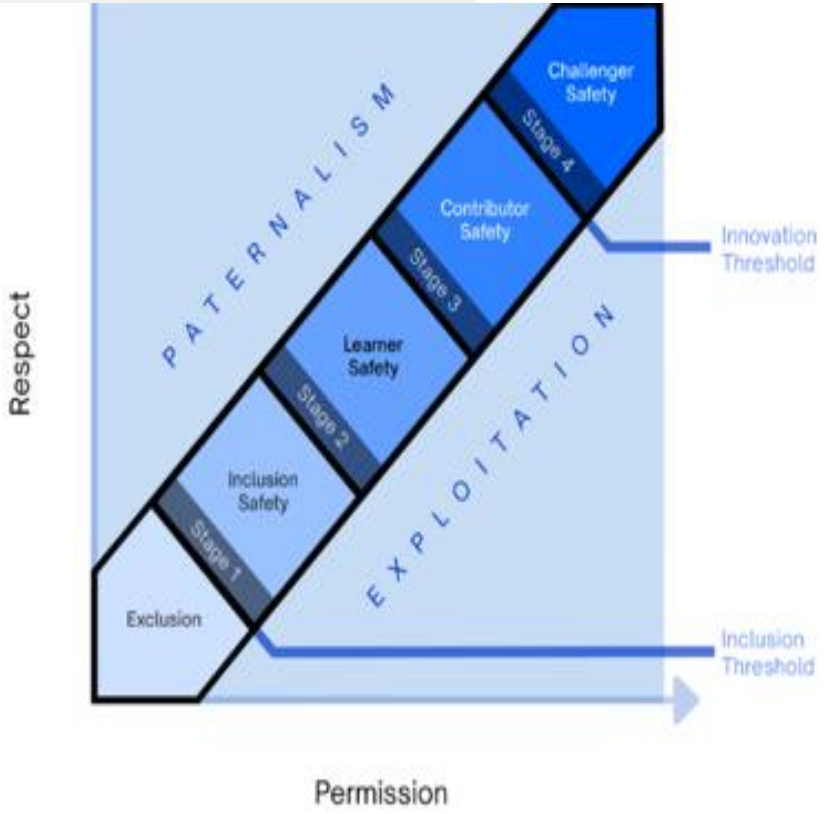
THE 4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY*



Universal Pattern of Human Needs in Social Settings

- Inclusion Safety
- Learner Safety
- Contributor Safety
- Challenger Safety

Teams progress through these stages as they intentionally create cultures of rewarded vulnerability and build trust.



LeaderFactor

*As defined by Dr. Timothy Clark with Leader Factor

#1 INCLUSION SAFETY

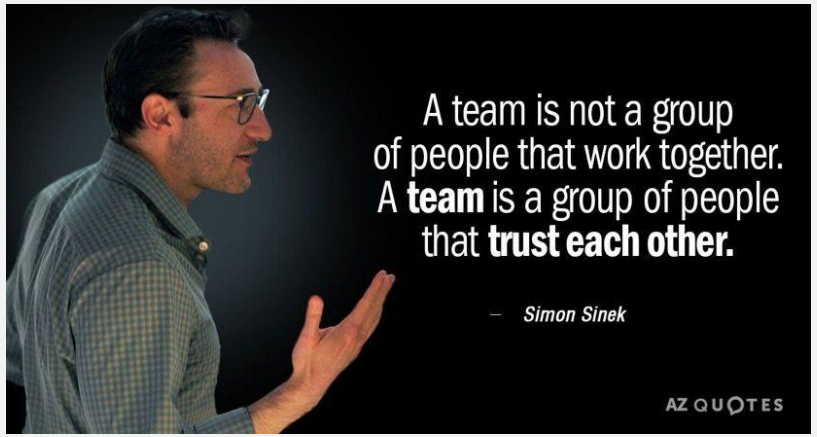
Can I be my authentic self?

When you have it:

- Inclusion safety allows for everyone to connect and **feel that they belong**. This is true in any social setting – home, school, work.
- The **need to be accepted** overrides the need to be heard.
  - You can bring your **whole authentic self** to work – what you see is what you get!
  - You **know your team**, and they know you.
  - Interact with teammates **without fear** of rejection, embarrassment, or punishment.
  - **Increases confidence**, resilience and independence.

When you don't:

- Excluding people from the team can become debilitating to performance and breaks trust among members.
  - Superiority and hierarchy dominate.
  - Barriers are maintained and reinforced.



EXCLUDED FROM MEETINGS
FELLOW

#2 LEARNER SAFETY

Can I grow?

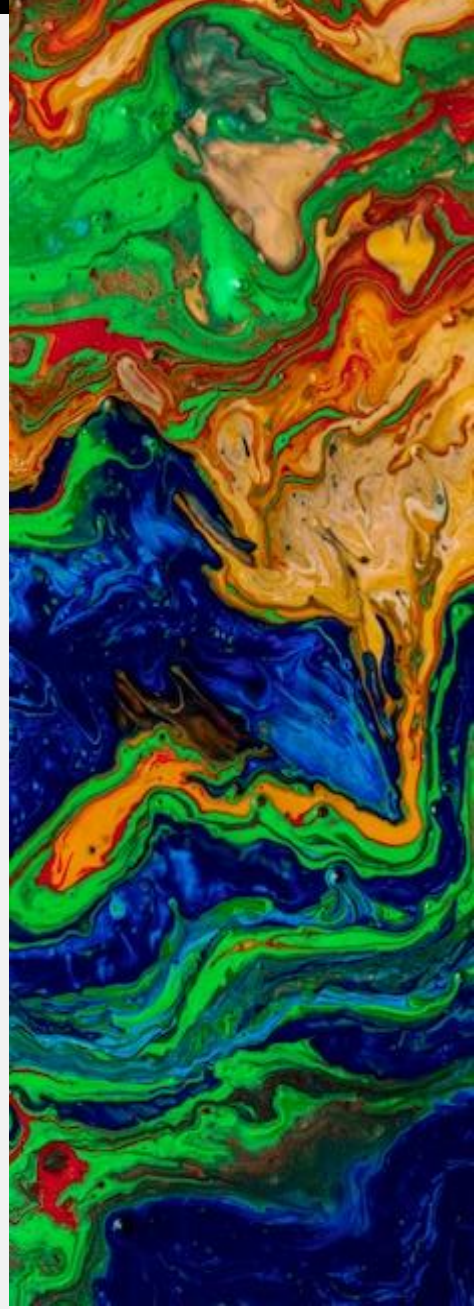
When you have it:

- Learner safety allows us to **feel safe during the learning process**. This is true when we're asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, and **even when we make mistakes**.
- Learning is both intellectual and emotional.
  - When we sense learner safety, we're more willing to be vulnerable,
  - Take more risks in innovation,
  - Increase participation within the team, and
  - Increase the development of resilience.
  - Learning is encouraged and celebrated.
  - Learners are protected.

Thinking Brain + Feeling Brain

When you don't:

- Learner safety cannot exist in an environment where mistakes are associated with fear!
- When a leader or team punishes failure, the organization will cease to grow or innovate.
  - Team shuts down, creativity decreases.
  - Team members execute more than they innovate.
  - Team members only worries about personal risks.



From
Mistakes

success
Failure

FEAR

4 COMPONENTS TO CULTIVATING A
LEARNING CULTURE
1. ATTRACT
& develop agile
learners.
2. CREATE
a psychologically
safe environment.
3. ENCOURAGE
better conversations
& feedback.
4. PRIORITIZE
learning throughout
the organization.
Center for Creative Leadership

#3 CONTRIBUTOR SAFETY

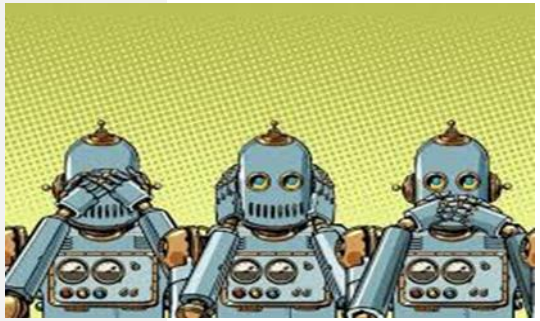
Am I making a difference?

When you have it:

- Contributor safety helps us to **make a difference** and **provide meaningful contributions**. It allows us to use our full skills and abilities to **add value** to the team.
- When we create contributor safety for others, **we empower them with autonomy**, guidance, and encouragement in exchange for team effort and results.
  - Your team thrives under outcome accountability.
  - Roles are clear.
  - Small wins are celebrated.

When you don't:

- Without contributor safety, the team's desires to add value diminish significantly!
- Team members become task masters and work without passion or energy.
  - Leaders micromanage and don't allow team to reach full potential.
  - Autonomy is given with little to no guidance.
  - Team members feel like "benchwarmers" compared to the leaders.



- Select the right team members and leadership approach
- Establish project team mental models
- Establish a psychologically safe project environment
- Foster team cohesion and moderate conflicts constructively
- Conduct team performance feedback sessions

I hire professional staff, then micro manage them until they walk out the door.

#4 CHALLENGER SAFETY

Can I be candid about change?

When you have it:

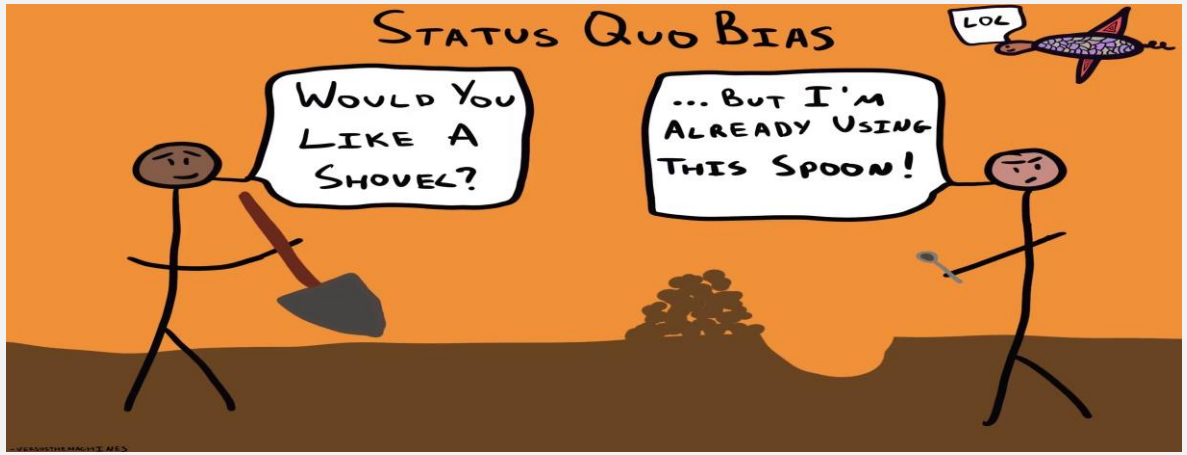
- Challenger safety allows us to **question and challenge the status quo without retaliation**.
- It helps us to make things better.
- When we create an environment where there is **permission for respectful disagreement** and dissent, it **opens up opportunities** for process improvement, advancement and ingenuity.
  - Your team can speak up when there is an opportunity to make improvements.
  - People disagree productively.
  - Challenge the status quo.
  - No pressure to conform for fear of damaging reputation.
  - Truth is a source of competitive advantage.

When you don't:

- If challenger safety is not present, the **organization will remain in the same failure patterns** and won't be able to keep up with the competition!
  - Challengers are punished for their bravery and candor.
  - Questions are not allowed. "I don't pay you to think! I pay you to do!"
  - Teams fall silent.

Put another way, there are four good ways we can try to disagree better:

1. Improve communication.
2. Question the mental models that inform our thinking, and avoid cognitive traps.
3. Hone our ability to stay calm and mentally agile during tension.
4. Organize the conversation differently.



WHAT IS THE #1 FACTOR IN CREATING HIGH-PERFORMING SUCCESSFUL TEAMS?

A Emotional Safety

B Empathy

C Psychological Safety

✓ Psychological Safety

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY HAS HOW MANY STAGES?

A 2

B 4

C 6

4

IN SUMMARY:
THE 4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage One: Inclusion Safety

Can I be my authentic self? Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. In this stage worth precedes worthiness. All you have to do to qualify for inclusion safety is be human and harmless.

Stage Two: Learner Safety

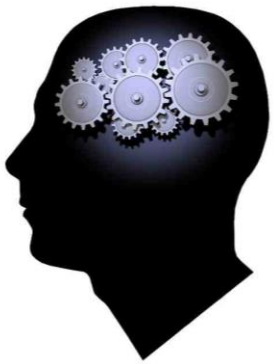
Can I grow? Learner safety satisfies the basic human need to learn and grow. In this stage, fear is detached from mistakes, and mistakes are rewarded as part of the learning process. To qualify for learner safety you must engage in the learning process.

Stage Three: Contributor Safety

Can I create value? Contributor safety satisfies the basic human need to make a difference and offer meaningful contributions. When we create contributor safety for others, we empower them with autonomy, guidance, and encouragement in exchange for effort and results.

Stage Four: Challenger Safety

Can I be candid about change? Challenger safety satisfies the basic human need to make things better. When we create challenger safety, we give air cover (protection) in exchange for candor.

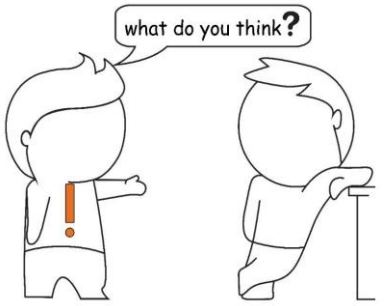


PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

What it isn't.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS NOT…

- Doing and saying whatever you want without having consequences.
  - Since fear and intimidation are no longer used when there is psychological safety in place, it does not mean teams can stop performing.
  - Someone will still have to pick up the slack, which creates resentment.
- Does not give you a new level of autonomy you didn't have before.
  - Autonomy is still earned through competence and delivering results.
- Not consensus-decision making.
  - Reality is that not everyone gets a vote or seat at the table. There are still topics and decisions that come to one final person's say to represent all. The key is that the leader is trusted and respected to think of the whole team.
  - Can't create group-think… Can lead to poor decision-making.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS NOT…

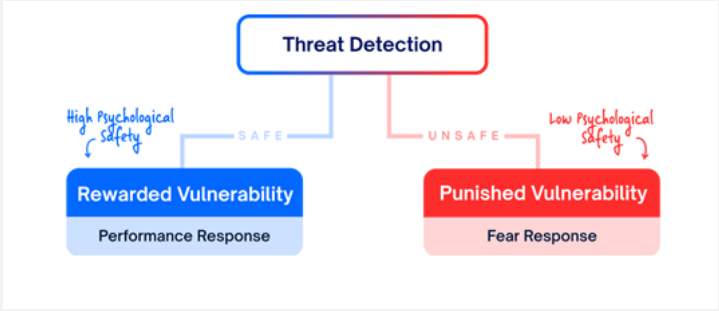
- It is not about tattling.
- It is not simply about being nice.
  - When niceness goes too far, it can become fake and invokes "coddling."
  - Coddling does not allow for growth – growth happens outside comfort zone.
- It is not about perfect harmony and agreement within the team.
  - *We're not all going to join hands and start singing "Kumbaya!"*
- It is not an automatic subscription to political correctness.
  - Implies respect and sensitivity for personal views, feelings, demographics, and human attributes but NOT a political agenda.
  - Not attached to any one person, affiliation, policy, or organization.

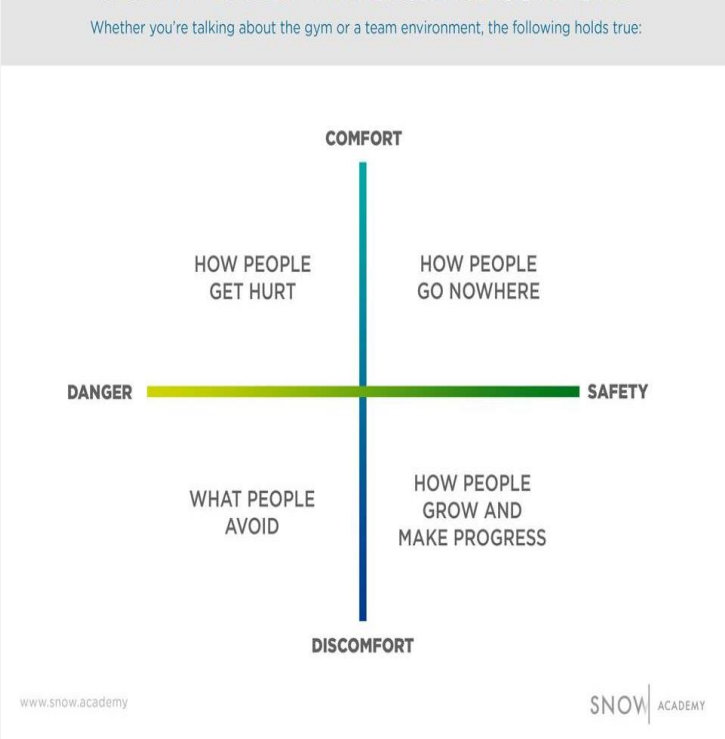
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS NOT…

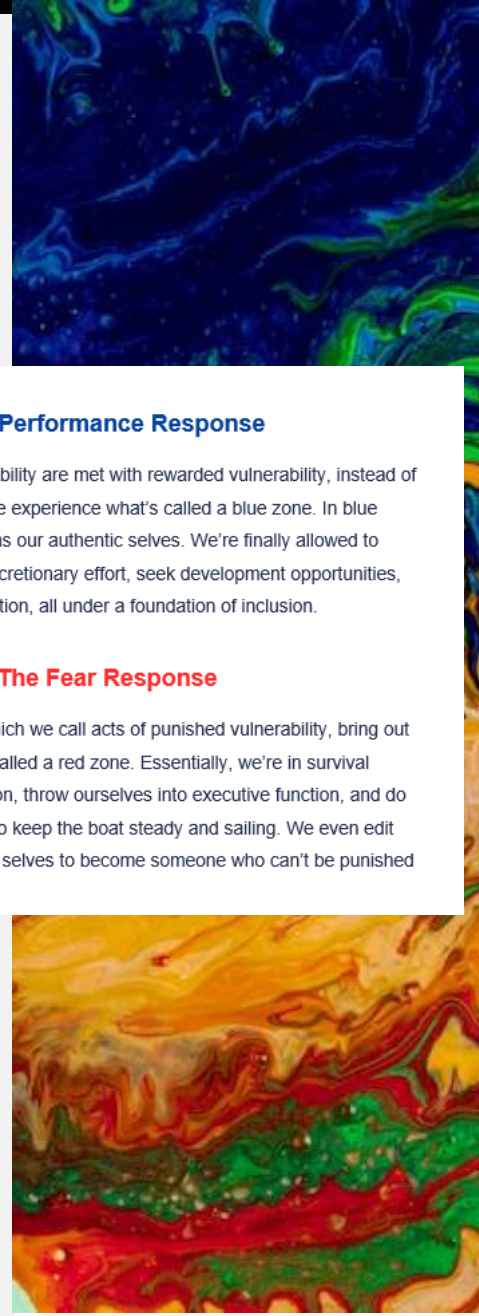
1. **Safety is not the same as comfort.**
   - The job of a leader is not to protect their team from discomfort. It's to protect them from harm—and to help motivate them to push through the discomfort and harness it for growth.
2. **Disagreement is not the same as danger, and ideas are not the same as violence.**
   - The most reliable way to overcome psychological pain and discomfort is not to avoid it; it's to gradually diminish the effects of discomfort by systematic exposure.

3. **Risky business…taking risks only makes sense when it helps the team.**
   - Providing new ideas is uncomfortable but helps the team become more innovative and inclusive. Commit to treating each other "charitably."

4. **Feeling safe enough to hurt people means there is no safety.**
   - In a team environment, psychological safety actually means that you know that things you say and do won't be used against you… *as long as you're not being malicious*.







TRUE OR FALSE? PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ALLOWS A PERSON TO DO AND SAY WHATEVER THEY WANT.

A True

B False

False – there are still consequences for doing/saying negative things. Teams can't just stop performing and people don't automatically become self-autonomous.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS:

A Risky business

B The same as comfort

C Not necessary

Risky business - taking risks only makes sense when it helps the team.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

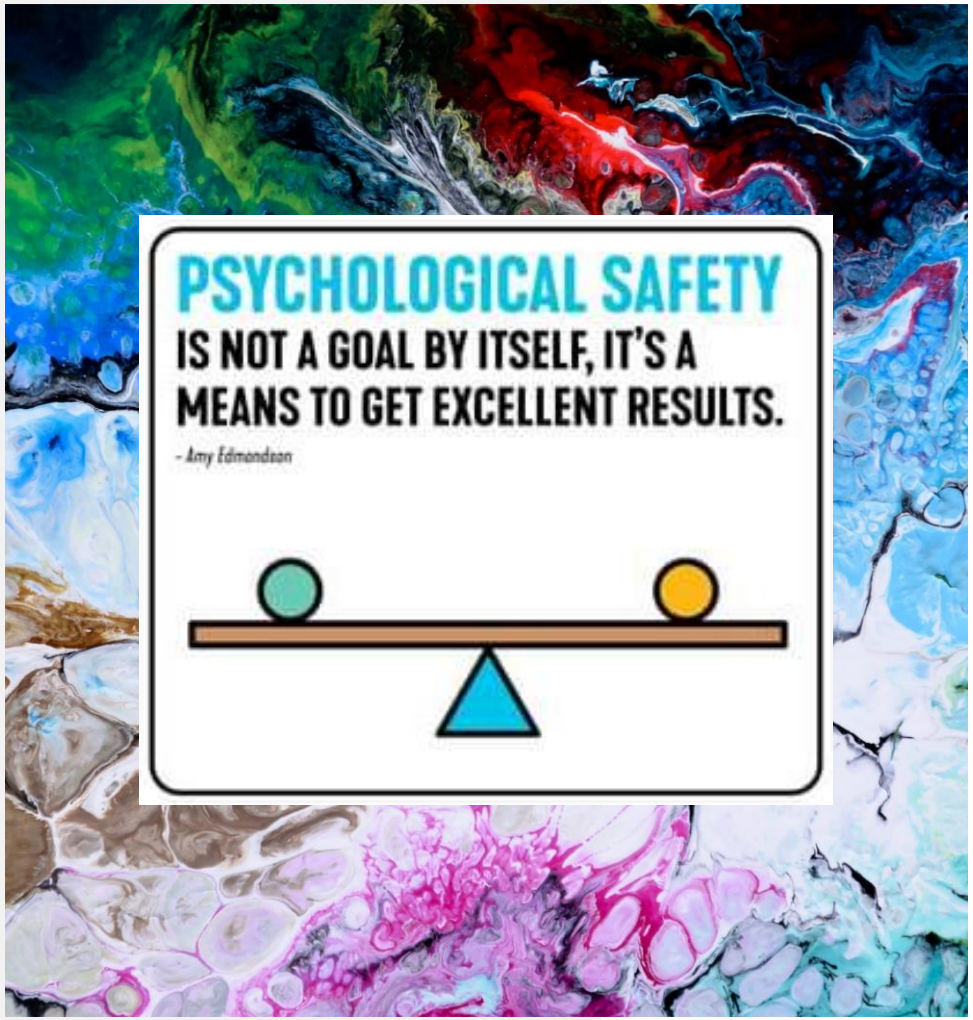
How to get it.

HOW DO I BUILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK?

1. **Approach your culture by design, not by default.**
   - Psychological safety doesn't just happen—but culture does! It's either the default culture, or the one you're actively trying to create.
   - Default cultures are not inclusive or innovative and have a myriad of hidden problems.

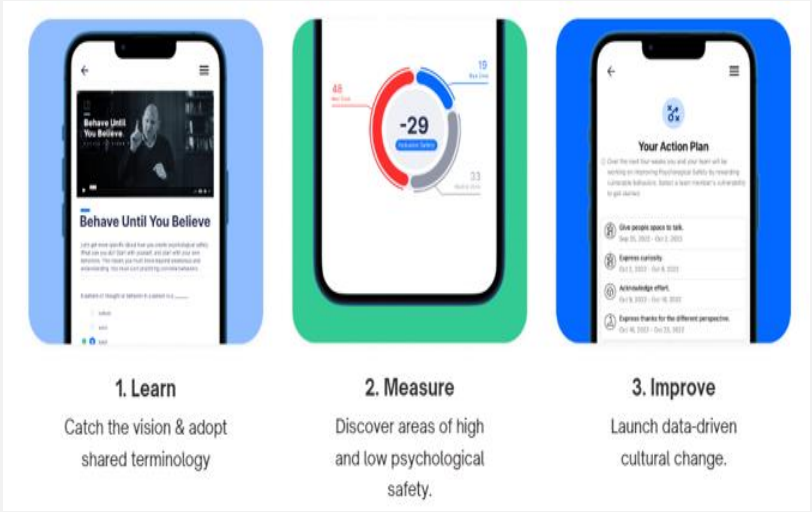
2. **Accept your role as a "Cultural architect."**
   - You must approach your culture with intentionality and build it, no matter your position, your title, or your authority.

3. **Practice modeling and rewarding vulnerability.**
   - You must model and reward acts of vulnerability if you want to improve psychological safety in your organization.



HOW DO I BUILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT WORK?

Three steps to put Psychological Safety into Action



1. **Learn**
   - Get resources, such as "The Complete Guide to Psychological Safety" found on the Leader Factor website.
   - Complete a self-assessment and truly ask yourself if you provide a psychologically safe environment for your team…are folks afraid of you? Do you have an "open door policy" but never really invite people in?

2. **Measure**
   - Look for areas where there are high levels of psychological safety and discover what is working well. Copy it!
   - Conversely, where are levels low? What needs to be implemented to increase those levels?

3. **Improve**
   - Use the data to create a strategic plan, goals, objectives…then put it into action!
     - ***Walk the walk!***

TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION…

How a CEO Creates Psychological Safety in the Room

1. Assign someone else to conduct the meeting.
Visibly redistribute power by leveling yourself down to be more of a player-coach.

2. Don't sit at the head of the table.
In many physical settings, seating reflects the hierarchy, but you can disrupt those rituals.

3. Create warmth and informality.
Create an atmosphere of psychological safety to convey warmth and encourage collaboration.

4. Model acts of vulnerability.
You have a first-mover obligation to model acts of vulnerability to give others permission to do the same.

5. Stimulate inquiry before advocacy.
If you move from asking questions to advocating your position too soon, it softly censors your team and signals the end of the discussion.

6. Reward challenges to the status quo.
If you encourage it, your team can help you see your blind spots and tell you when you're missing.

7. Push back with humor and enthusiasm.
Humor and enthusiasm inject excitement into the process and encourage rigorous debate.

8. Buffer strong personalities.
Your job is to create a shame- and embarrassment-free environment.

9. Listen and pause.
When you do this in the presence of other members of your organization, you send a clear message that the individual matters.

10. Give highly targeted praise and recognition.
Don't withhold or be stingy with praise or recognition. Just give it in the moment with an explanation and genuine encouragement.

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Learn more from our book: *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™*

7 Questions to Assess Your Personal Impact on Psychological Safety.

To assess your personal impact on the psychological safety of your team, ask yourself the following seven questions:

1. Presence: Your presence has an impact on the tone and tenor of a meeting. When you enter a room, does your influence warm or chill the air?

2. Collaboration: When you collaborate with your peers, does your influence accelerate or decelerate the speed of discovery and innovation?

3. Feedback: Fear breaks the feedback loop. If there's pervasive fear, people filter or withhold feedback. Does your influence increase or restrict the flow of feedback?

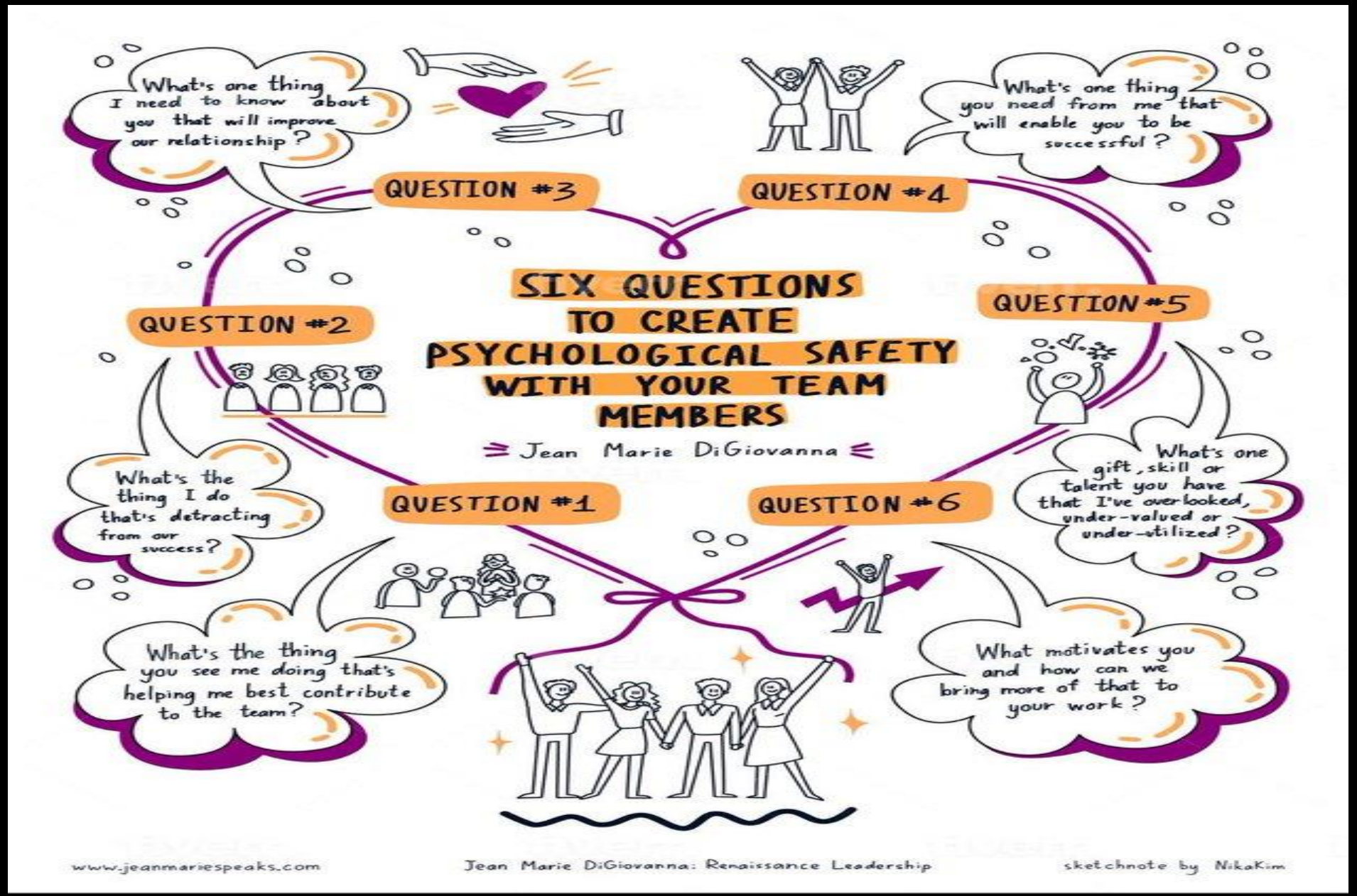
4. Inquiry: Telling has a tendency to shut people down, while asking has tendency to draw people out. Does your influence draw people out or shut them down?

5. Dissent: Dissent is critical to making good decisions by thinking carefully about different potential courses of action. Do you encourage and reward dissent or discourage and punish dissent?

6. Mistakes: Mistakes are clinical material for learning and progress. Do you celebrate mistakes and the lessons learned or overreact and marginalize those who make them?

7.Unvarnished Truth: No one likes to hear the unvarnished truth when it's unflattering. And yet we need to hear it or suffer the consequences of willful blindness. Can people tell you what you don't want to hear when you don't want to hear it?

Now go find a trusted advisor who can tell you the truth and reveal any blindspots related to these questions.


SIX QUESTIONS TO CREATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY WITH YOUR TEAM MEMBERS
Jean Marie DiGiovanna
QUESTION #1
What's the thing I do that's detracting from our success?
QUESTION #2
What's the thing you see me doing that's helping me best contribute to the team?
QUESTION #3
What's one thing I need to know about you that will improve our relationship?
QUESTION #4
What's one thing you need from me that will enable you to be successful?
QUESTION #5
What's one gift, skill or talent you have that I've overlooked, under-valued or under-utilized?
QUESTION #6
What motivates you and how can we bring more of that to your work?
www.jeanmariespeaks.com
Jean Marie DiGiovanna: Renaissance Leadership
sketchnote by NikaKim

WHAT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY LOOKS LIKE

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY CAN BE BUILT IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

A. Intentionally creating a culture of inclusivity

B. Role modeling and rewarding acts of vulnerability

C. Assessing your personal impact on Psychological Safety

✓ **All of the above!**

RESOURCES

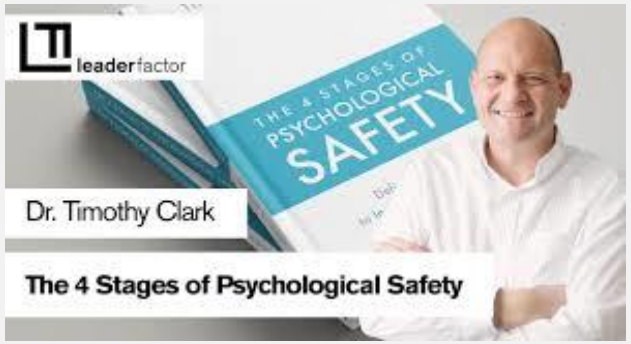
https://www.forbes.com/sites/shanesnow/2020/05/04/how-psychological-safety-actually-works/?sh=4d6d7494f864

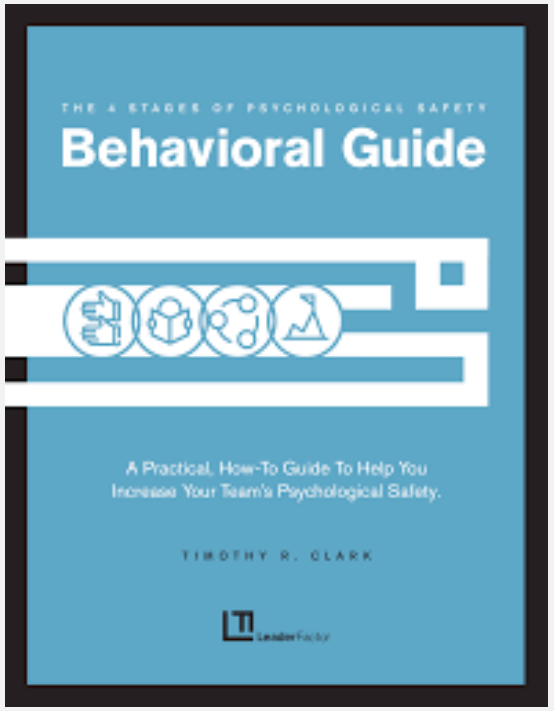
https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01581/full

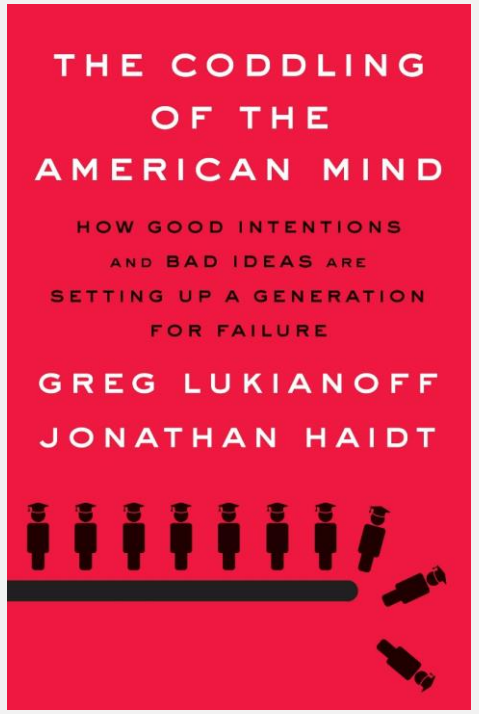
Shane Snow: Author, Explorer, Teamwork & Storytelling Keynote Speaker

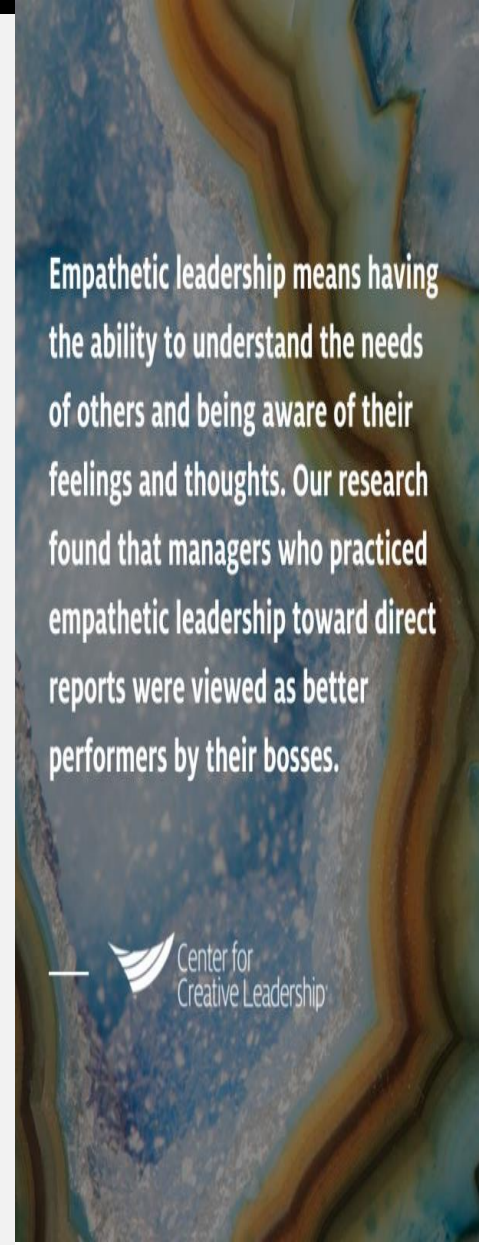
https://www.leaderfactor.com/psychological-safety

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUePfXsuHLE









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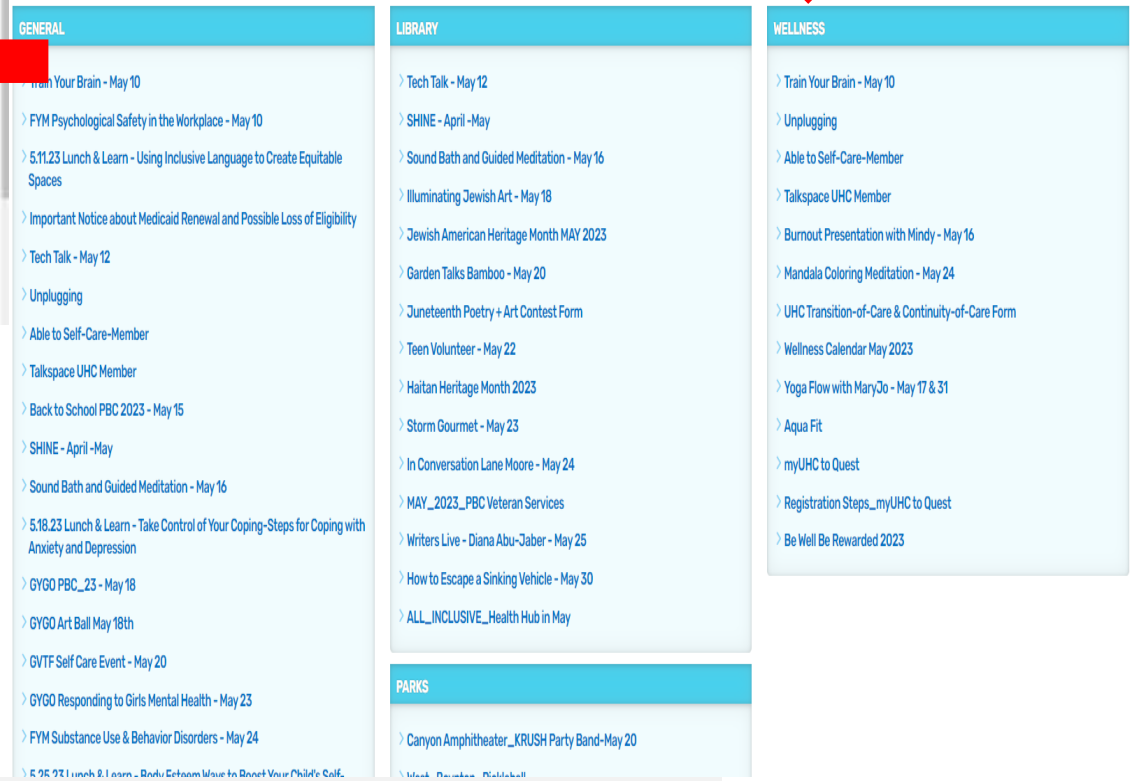
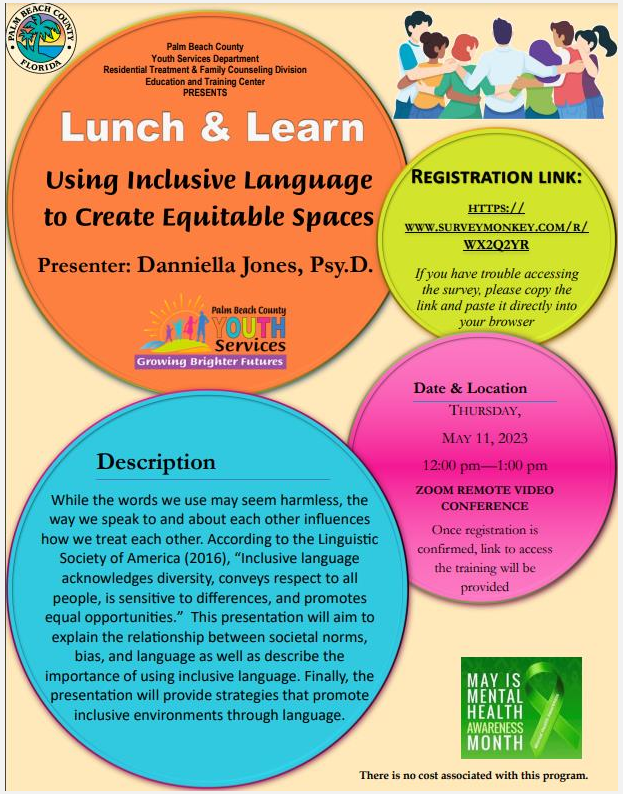
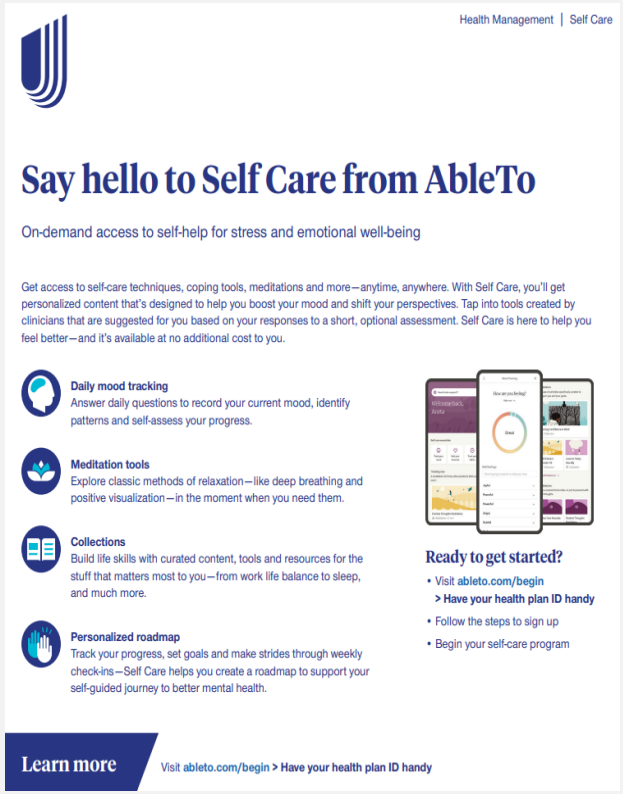


Resources for County employees found on the intranet (Home Page). Click on "Wellness" and then select resources that show up on the next page.

Enjoy!





linktree.com/pbcmentalhealth

PALM BEACH COUNTY FLORIDA

Quick Reference Resource Guide
Substance Use & Mental Health Services

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Our Mission: To drive a continuous improvement culture of excellence that achieves a measurably high level of public satisfaction.

Information provided by Strategic Planning and Performance Management's Substance Use and Behavior Disorders Cross-Departmental Team

THANK YOU!

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https://discover.pbcgov.org/ofmb/Pages/Performance-Management.aspx

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