



psychological SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Sophie Wamre M.Ed., LPC | EAP Counselor

In 2012, a team from Google set out to study and identify exactly which elements contribute to successful, high-performing teams. They found that beyond factors like intelligence, similar personalities, background, leadership style, or organizational structure, the most significant factor was psychological safety.

So, what is psychological safety? A term popularized by author and Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson, psychological safety is a shared belief that team members can express ideas, raise concerns, and ask questions without fear of rejection, embarrassment, or punishment. It exists when individuals feel safe to admit and acknowledge mistakes without worrying about being shamed or facing negative consequences. Psychological safety describes an environment where team members feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks. This element is essential to the success of teams, organizations, and businesses.

Psychological safety promotes creativity and innovation because team members feel comfortable sharing their ideas. When individuals can acknowledge their mistakes, it increases efficiency and allows the team to learn and grow from their experiences. Team members who feel

psychologically safe are more engaged in their work and motivated to contribute, knowing their opinions will be valued. Companies that prioritize psychological safety in the workplace usually experience higher employee retention rates, as staff are more likely to remain in an environment where they feel valued and respected.

Recognizing the importance of psychological safety is an essential first step in creating this environment within a workplace. To build a culture of psychological safety, consider engaging team members on the topic and making it an active priority. This means intentionally modeling psychological safety by acknowledging one's imperfections and admitting to mistakes. Promoting productive conflict by discussing skills for giving and receiving feedback and creating space for raising and addressing conflicts are also key ways to establish psychological safety in the workplace.

Psychological safety is not a new concept, but for organizations that want to thrive in today's competitive landscape, it is a necessity. By fostering an environment of trust, respect, and open communication, organizations can empower their employees to reach their full potential. When team members feel safe to speak up, everyone benefits.