How to foster Psychological Safety on your teams

Demonstrate engagement

- Be present and focus on the conversation (e.g., close your laptop during meetings)
- Ask questions with the intention of learning from your teammates
- Offer input, be interactive, and show you're listening
- Respond verbally to show engagement ("That makes sense. Tell us more.")
- Be aware of your body language; make sure to lean towards or face the person speaking
- Make eye contact to show connection and active listening

Show understanding

- Recap what's been said to confirm mutual understanding/alignment (e.g., "What I heard you say is…"); then acknowledge areas of agreement, disagreement, and be open to questions within the group
- Validate comments verbally ("I understand." "I see what you're saying.")
- Avoid placing blame ("Why did you do this?") and focus on solutions ("How can we work toward making sure this goes more smoothly next time?", "What can we do together to make a game plan for next time?")
- Think about your facial expressions- - are they unintentionally negative (a scowl or grimace)?
- Nod your head to demonstrate understanding during conversations/meetings

Be inclusive in interpersonal settings

- Share information about your personal work style and preferences, encourage teammates to do the same
- Be available and approachable to teammates (e.g., make time for ad hoc 1:1 conversations, feedback sessions, career coaching)
- Clearly communicate the purpose of ad hoc meetings scheduled outside normal 1:1s/team meetings
- Express gratitude for contributions from the team
- Step in if team members talk negatively about another team member
- Have open body posture (e.g., face all team members, don't turn your back to part of the group)
- Build rapport (e.g., talk with your teammates about their lives outside of work)

Be inclusive in decision-making

- Solicit input, opinions, and feedback from your teammates
- Don't interrupt or allow interruptions (e.g., step in when someone is interrupted and ensure his/her idea is heard)
- Explain the reasoning behind your decisions (live or via email, walk team through how you arrived at a decision)
- Acknowledge input from others (e.g., highlight when team members were contributors to a success or decision)

Show confidence and conviction without appearing inflexible

- Manage team discussions (e.g., don't allow side conversations in team meetings, make sure conflict isn't personal)
- Use a voice that is clear and audible in a team setting
- Support and represent the team (e.g., share team's work with senior leadership, give credit to teammates)
- Invite the team to challenge your perspective and push back
- Model vulnerability; share your personal perspective on work and failures with your teammates
- Encourage teammates to take risks, and demonstrate risk-taking in your own work

Sources

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