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*Rediscovering Workplace Joy in 2024*

# Cultivating Work Enjoyment and Psychological Safety

Connectivity, Leadership,  
and Psychological Empowerment

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## Rediscovering Workplace Joy in 2024

Here are some tools and practical strategies

In today's dynamic work environment cultivating work enjoyment and psychological safety is paramount. It's not just about the office or work, it's about belonging.

To engage and retain employees, organisations could evolve their approach to building community, cohesion, and a sense of belonging at work. According to McKinsey's Great Attrition Survey, a compelling revelation surfaces—more than half of the employees who departed from their positions within a six-month period felt undervalued by their organisation (54 percent) or their managers (52 percent). Equally concerning was the fact that 51 percent cited a lack of belonging as a contributing factor to their departure. Furthermore, 46 percent expressed a strong desire to collaborate with individuals who prioritise trust, care, and camaraderie, highlighting the pivotal role of meaningful relationships in the workplace.

Often, the simplest solutions prove to be the most impactful. It begins with genuine connections among team members—a simple hello, a check-in, or a casual catch-up. By breaking away from the rigidly agenda-driven interactions that often lead to fatigue, we can establish authentic person-to-person connections that breathe life into our meetings and interactions.

### Definition of Psychological safety

“Psychological safety is the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking,” says Dr. Amy Edmondson. In short, psychological safety means that there are no perceived risks or penalties for someone's words or actions.

### Why is it important?

Psychological safety facilitates learning, improvement, and growth for businesses, establishing an environment where teams can uphold a robust, consistent, and inclusive culture. Individuals feel empowered to share ideas and voice concerns. For leaders seeking to promote psychological safety, three key strategies stand out. These strategies are pivotal in enhancing work satisfaction and overall well-being, contributing to a more fulfilling experience.

1

#### Cultivate a Supportive Environment:

Fostering inclusivity, respect, and open communication. Prioritise work-life balance by promoting reasonable hours and flexibility, supporting employees in managing responsibilities beyond work. Emphasise continuous learning and professional growth opportunities to boost confidence, job satisfaction, and engagement. Regularly acknowledge and appreciate contributions, celebrating milestones to reinforce a positive work environment. Recognitions, through praise or awards, validate efforts, encouraging sustained dedication. This approach, focused on a supportive culture, work-life balance, skill development, and recognition, creates an environment where employees feel valued, leading to increased trust, satisfaction, and commitment.

2

#### Acknowledging Your Own Fallibility:

Acknowledging your own fallibility. By admitting when you make a mistake or don't know the answer, you encourage and enable others to do the same.

3

#### Empowering Autonomy and Decision-Making: Model Curiosity and Asking Questions

Granting autonomy empowers employees to take ownership of their work. Allowing individuals to make decisions within their scope of responsibility fosters a sense of empowerment, accountability, and pride in their contributions, leading to increased satisfaction. Stay curious; ask other people what they think and encourage them to contribute. Create a space and a need for people to speak up.

# How to Build a Psychologically Safe Environment

## ...engage your team

If your team doesn't feel you pay attention when they speak or that you don't value their thoughts and opinions, they'll shut down. Pay attention and listen actively. Ask questions to make sure you understand their ideas, opinions, questions, and concerns. This will create an environment where your team feel safe to speak up.



## ...avoid blame & build trust

Instead of "What happened and why?" ask "How can we make sure this goes better next time?" Focus on collaborative language: "How can we make sure this goes smoothly next time?" We statements turn the responsibility into a group effort, rather than singling out an individual for a mistake.

## ...shut down negativity

If you have a team member who speaks negatively about peers, let them know that you work together as a team, and negativity will not be tolerated. Negativity can become contagious and spread to others.

## ...make inclusive decisions

When making decisions, consult your team. Ask for their input, thoughts, and feedback. Not only will this help them feel included in the decision-making process, but it will build psychological safety and lead to better outcomes. Once a decision is made, explain the reasoning behind your decision. Even if your team doesn't agree, they'll appreciate the honesty and transparency behind how the decision was made.

## ...encourage feedback

When employees feel psychologically safe, they feel empowered to give feedback. Invite your team to challenge your perspective. This leads to better decisions and greater accountability. You can talk about a time you took a risk, and it didn't work.

## ...show self-awareness

Build self-awareness by sharing how you work best, how you like to communicate, and how you like to be recognised. Encourage others to do the same.

## ...champion your team

Support your team and their personal and professional development. Be sure to share successes across the business and give credit where it's due.

## ...show understanding

When your team knows you care enough to understand and consider their opinion, they experience psychological safety. Be conscious of your body language and facial expressions - if you look tired, bored, or unhappy, employees notice.

## ...act curious

Balance curiosity against interrogation: curiosity builds knowledge, but interrogation builds barriers.

## Reconnecting in the Workplace: Psychological Safety Across Generations

Research underscores the critical role of psychological safety in employee well-being and engagement, advocating that organisations cultivate a culture of psychological safety for all generations. While the importance of psychological safety holds true across generations, nuances exist in what each generation values. Being mindful of generational differences and motivations can offer valuable insights for crafting effective leadership strategies.

**Key Findings:** Generational differences in workplace psychological safety reveal that Millennials and Gen Z employees express higher levels compared to Baby Boomers and Gen X. The younger generations, well-versed in open communication and collaboration, prioritise personal growth. For Millennials and Gen Z, feeling psychologically safe involves having their opinions heard, while Baby Boomers and Gen X seek clarity in their roles. Research underscores the positive impact of psychological safety on workplace well-being, especially prominent among Millennials. Additionally, relationships between psychological safety, perceived organisational support, and employee well-being differ in strength across generations.

**Practical Steps for Organisations:** Cultivate a culture of trust, respect, and inclusivity. Encourage open communication, valuing diversity of thought. Provide opportunities for continuous learning and growth.

**Thought Leadership:** Timothy Clark's "The Four Stages of Psychological Safety" outlines stages crucial for a psychologically safe environment:

1. **Inclusion Safety:** Everyone feels valued and appreciated.
2. **Learner Safety:** It is safe to ask questions and make mistakes.
3. **Contributor Safety:** Safe to share ideas and take risks.
4. **Challenger Safety:** Safe to challenge the status quo.

In 2022, the Centre for Creative Leadership surveyed 1,800 employees across industries and generations. Fostering psychological safety benefits all generations, but tailoring approaches to preferences enhances effectiveness. Embracing a culture valuing diverse perspectives and encouraging growth creates an environment where employees feel psychologically safe, fostering improved well-being and engagement.



## Leadership's Role in Cultivating Psychological Safety

Leadership sets the tone for the organisational culture. It starts with actively promoting an atmosphere where diverse perspectives are not just acknowledged but also encouraged. Leaders who champion inclusivity and authenticity create an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their ideas, concerns, and opinions without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Here are some facilitation tips to help you evaluate the psychological safety of your team.

Ask yourself and your team as individuals and/or in teams to rank your team's application of psychological safety. To what extent do you and your team think your team would agree with the following statements?

Rank on a scale of 1-5:

**1** Strongly agree

**2** Agree

**3** Neutral

**4** Disagree

**5** Strongly disagree

1. I am empowered to explore innovative solutions, even if it means failing.
2. Constructive challenge is valued, and does not harm loyal relationships.
3. I can speak up about something difficult or challenging without fear of negative outcome.
4. If I made a mistake, it's not held against me.
5. I can work well with teammates across generations, and we can learn from each other.
6. My views are genuinely listened to when I share my opinions or concerns.

Follow on by asking the team members and pairs for some best practices and actions.

## Psychological Safety: Fostering Inclusion, Learning, Contribution, and Challenge

Use this behavioural check list to help create an environment where people do not feel embarrassed, marginalised or punished

These behaviours should be applied by everyone and not just those in leadership roles.

(The behavioural guide is based on a Dr Timothy R. Clark book: The 4 stages of psychological safety: Defining the path to inclusion and innovation)

### Inclusion safety

Team members feel safe to belong to the team

1. Ask twice as much as you tell.
2. Express gratitude and appreciation.
3. Share your story and learn about your team members' stories.
4. Forbid personal attacks.
5. Use appropriate humour, respecting diversity of backgrounds.

### Learner safety

Team members can learn through asking questions

1. Admit your own knowledge gaps and say "I don't know".
2. Identify and share what you learn.
3. Learn about your teams' individual learning styles and preferences
4. Make learning collaborative, not evaluative.
5. Role-model asking for help.

### Contributor safety

Team members feel safe to contribute their own ideas

1. Ask people what they think.
2. Recognise contributions and accomplishments.
3. Reward contribution; don't correct with anger, blame or shame.
4. Shift from tell to ask and let team members do it their way.
5. Know your teams' passions and values.

### Challenger safety

Team members feel safe to challenge authority

1. Respond constructively to disruptive ideas and bad news.
2. Model and reward vulnerability.
3. Weigh in last.
4. Reward challenges, even if not preferred.
5. Create diverse teams and welcome diversity of thought.

## Continuous learning, implementation and reflection

Use this feedback loop to facilitate discussions

1

**Maintain** - Give yourself, your leaders and your teams the space and time to embed the practices and behaviours that foster and maintain psychological safety.

2

**Reflect** - Through personal reflection and team retrospective, examine what went well, what did not and what improvements could be in the next cycle.

3

**Measure** - Discover the existing state of psychological safety in your team by using existing survey results.

4

**Understand** - Learn and embed knowledge of what psychological safety is and the dynamic, benefits and principles.

5

**Build** - Empower your team and your leaders to define the beliefs, behaviours and practices that build psychological safety. Target intervention at those areas highlighted through your workshops and meetings.



Are you on the lookout for ways to enrich your company's work environment, cultivating joy, psychological safety, and employee engagement? Uncover the indispensable interpersonal and professional skills vital for thriving in the contemporary workplace. By mastering the principles of personal and interpersonal effectiveness, individuals can:

- Realise their potential to make a unique and valuable contribution to your organisation's mission.
- Embrace the creative possibilities of collaborating with others in innovative ways.
- Take personal responsibility for their work and the results they achieve.
- Prioritise their energy, mental health, and overall well-being.

The result? They can authentically and enduringly transform culture.

To navigate the challenges of today's workplace and foster joy, psychological safety, and employee engagement, connect with the TPC Leadership team.

For further details, email us at [info@tpcleadership.co.uk](mailto:info@tpcleadership.co.uk) or visit <https://tpcleadership.com/uk-en>. Alternatively, you can reach us at 020 3637 0970.



## Contact Us

020 3637 0970

[info@tpcleadership.com](mailto:info@tpcleadership.com)

[www.tpcleadership.com](http://www.tpcleadership.com)

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