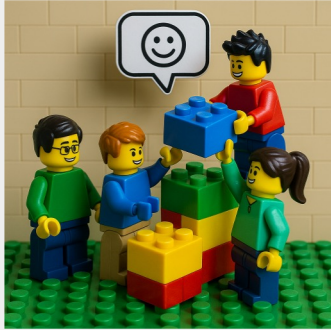



Psychological Safety & Teaming

Library Supervisors Workshop
September 30, 2025

Presented by Eric Kaufman, PhD
Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and
Community Education

1

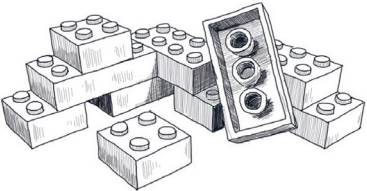
LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®




2

LEGO® Tower Challenge

Using the LEGO pieces provided, build a tower-like structure on the table in front of you. The purpose is to build the highest tower possible, making sure it can stand on its own. You have four minutes.



3

Session Objectives

1. Recognize the conditions that allow teams to thrive.
2. Examine factors that contribute to psychological safety in teams.
3. Explore strategies for effective team building.
4. Identify opportunities for personal contributions to teaming.




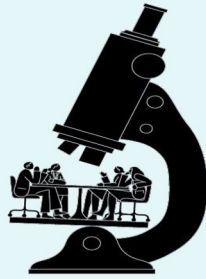
Photo by [A.J. Sandhu](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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What Google Learned from Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team (Duhigg, 2016)

nyt mag

'If a company wants to outstrip its competitors, it needs to influence not only how people work but also how they work *together*.'



More at: nytimes.com/magazine
Illustration by James Graham

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7

The five keys to a successful Google team (Rozovsky, 2015)

Who is on a team matters less than how the team members interact, structure their work, and view their contributions.

- 1 Psychological Safety**
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.
- 2 Dependability**
Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.
- 3 Structure & Clarity**
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.
- 4 Meaning**
Work is personally important to team members.
- 5 Impact**
Team members think their work matters and creates change.

re:Work

8

HOW psychological safety RELATES TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
AMY EDMONDSON

<p>COMFORT ZONE</p> <p>People are open and collegial but not challenged. On teams, they fail to make major strides.</p>	<p>LEARNING ZONE</p> <p>People collaborate and learn in the service of high performance, getting complex and innovative work done.</p>
<p>APATHY ZONE</p> <p>People show up at work with their hearts and minds elsewhere; choosing self-protection over exertion.</p>	<p>ANXIETY ZONE</p> <p>People are reluctant to offer ideas, try new things, or ask for help, putting the work at risk.</p>

Psychological Safety: LOW to HIGH
Performance Standards: LOW to HIGH

Sketchnote: Tanmay Vora, QAspire.com
www.amycedmondson.com

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7-Piece Metaphors for Psychological Safety



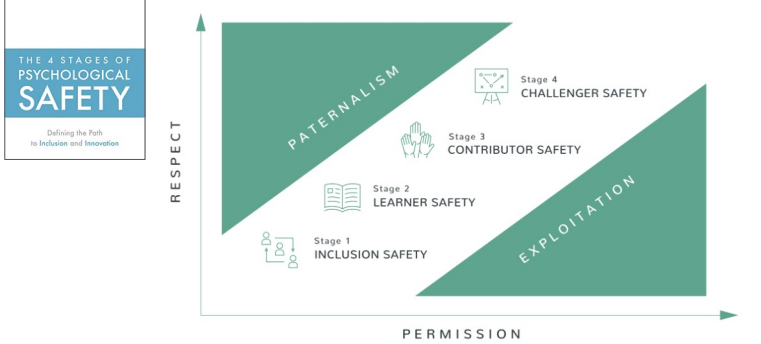
Think of a time when you or your team felt safe to take a risk or speak up. Using the bricks, build a model that represents the conditions that made this possible.

Be creative!

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TIMOTHY R. CLARK

Stages (or Pillars) of Psychological Safety



THE 4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation

RESPECT

PERMISSION

Stage 1 INCLUSION SAFETY


Stage 2 LEARNER SAFETY

Stage 3 CONTRIBUTOR SAFETY

Stage 4 CHALLENGER SAFETY

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Team-Level Psychological Safety Over Time (Marlow et al., 2024)







1. "Team-level psychological safety climate emerges through consensus of individual perceptions of psychological safety over time."
2. "The greater the degree of early information sharing, the quicker individuals reach consensus on psychological safety climate."
3. "The average level of psychological safety is not stable once consensus has been reached: it begins at a relatively high level and declines over time."

Marlow, S. L., Lacerenza, C. N., & Salas, E. (2024). Examining How Psychological Safety Consensus Emerges Over Time. *Small Group Research*, 10464964241288221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10464964241288221>

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Steps to Boost Psychological Safety (Edmondson & Hugander, 2021)

- STEP 01 Focus on Performance 
- STEP 02 Train Both Individuals and Team 
- STEP 03 Incorporate Visualization 
- STEP 04 Normalize Work-Related Vulnerability 

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Super-Models: Construct a Scene

Build a LEGO model that organizes the existing metaphors into a scene or scenario that conveys psychological safety in teaming.

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Leader Behaviors that Promote Psychological Safety

- **Frame the Work:** Reframe challenges as learning opportunities, not tests of competence. For example, “We’ve never done this before, and we’ll need everyone’s input to get it right.”
- **Invite Participation:** Ask good questions—like “Who has a different perspective?”—to signal that dissent is not only welcomed but needed.
- **Respond Productively:** React with appreciation and forward-thinking, even when the news is hard. Instead of “How did this happen?,” say, “Thanks for that insight. How can we help?”

[“Psychological Safety: The Essential Underpinning of Successful Transformation,” Amy Edmondson]

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Questions?

Image from Faysal Ghauri on [LinkedIn](#).

Ideas for Application?

Photo by [Patrick Tomasso](#) on [Unsplash](#).

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