

BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY:

Identifying & Addressing Common Barriers

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What is psychological safety?

Psychological Safety is a belief that we will not be punished, put down, or rejected for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

Team members sharing this belief is critical for high performance. Psychological safety **DOES NOT** mean team members are not accountable for what they say, how they say it, or are guaranteed to get their way. It means people believe their voice will be heard, and they will be taken seriously.

What can you do to improve psychological safety?

A framework for thinking about interventions.

There are many strategies for promoting a culture of psychological safety.

These can be described in terms of the **focus (the what)**, the **mode of engagement (the how)**, the **level of the intervention (the where)**, and the **depth and duration (the when)** of the intervention.

When deciding on an intervention (or set of interventions) for your team, think about each:

1 FIND YOUR FOCUS.

What is the core reason you and your team need to work on psychological safety?

What are your current and desired states?

2 LEVEL UP.

Will you focus on building individual or leader competencies that promote psychological safety?

Team level training or coaching?

Organizational level policy or leadership interventions?

3 MIND THE TIME.

Psychological safety is not a quick fix and requires a 'deep dive' and long time horizon to see real change.

4 ENGAGE IN THE PROCESS.

Intervention options range from facilitation (e.g., team norms workshops), training (e.g., instructor- or self-directed), coaching for individuals or teams, reflective practice, and just culture policies and organizational value setting.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE?

There are many tools available.
For a recent comprehensive review, see:

Understanding Psychological Safety in Healthcare: A Qualitative Investigation and Practical Guidance.

Zajac SA, Williams KN, Patel SM, Lazzara EH,
Keebler JR, Clemens MW, Holladay CL.

[The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety.](#)



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