

Creating the Conditions for Psychological Safety



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What do we mean by 'safety'?



- The word 'safety' entered the English language in the 14th century
- It is derived from the Latin word *salvus* which means uninjured, in good health, safe
- Secure, unharmed
- In a good or sound state, well



What do we mean by 'psychological'?



- Of, affecting, or arising in the mind; related to the mental and emotional state of a person
- Having an effect on or involving the mind
- Concerned with a person's mind and thoughts



What do we mean by ‘psychological safety’?



- The absence of interpersonal fear allowing people to perform their best at home, school, and work
- A workplace or social environment in which individuals feel comfortable, secure, and confident to express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and concerns without fear of negative consequences or judgment
- Psychological safety reduces *“a person’s anxiety about being basically accepted and worthwhile”* - Schein and Bennis

What do we mean by ‘psychological safety’?



“the sense of being able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career.”

Kahn

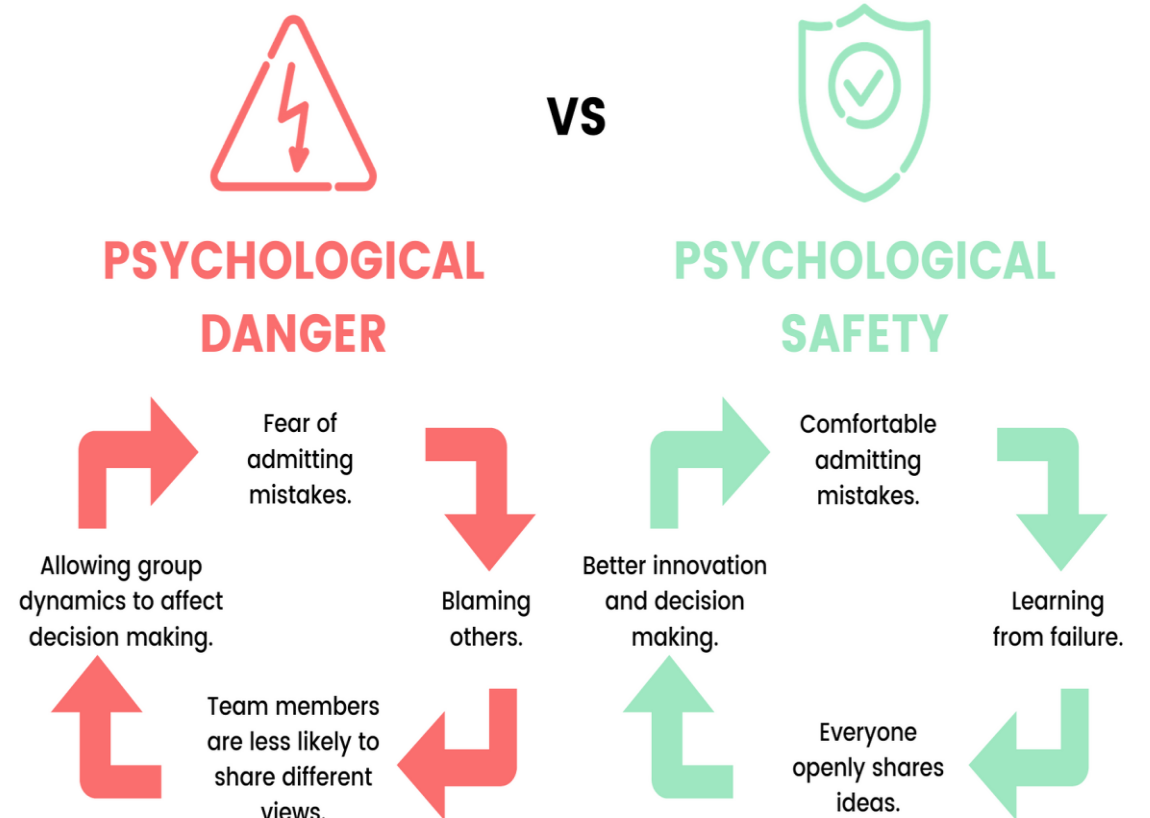
"The belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking."

Amy Edmondson, 1999



Psychological safety

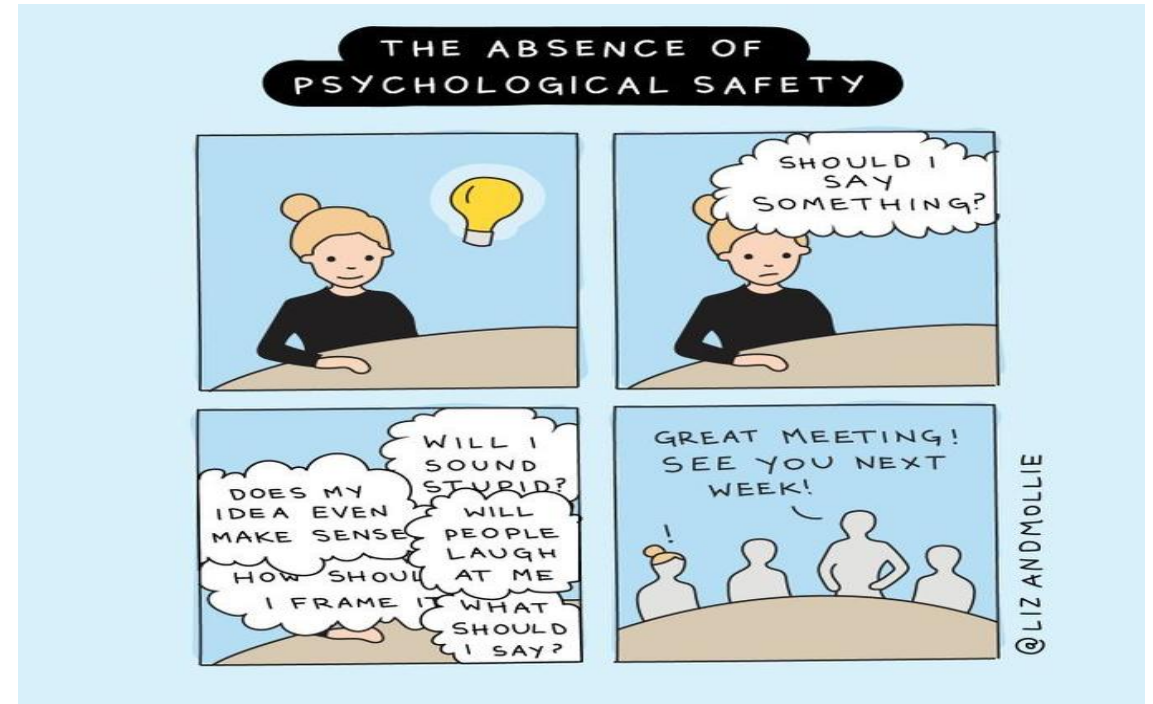
- A critical factor for high performing teams
- Teams feel empowered
- Individuals feel respected, valued and accepted for who they are
- Opinions are shared leading to innovative and effective solutions
- A key component of diversity, equity and inclusion



What 'psychological safety' is not



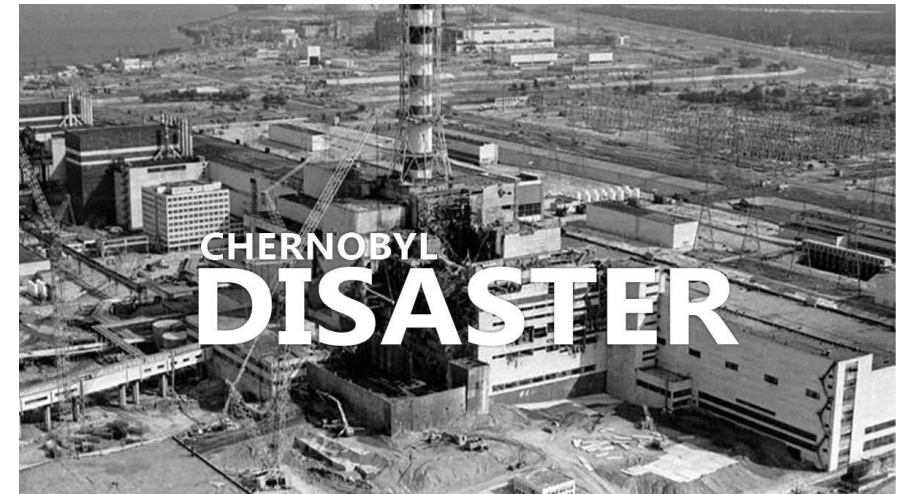
- Feeling psychologically unsafe is the belief that you will experience interpersonal or social threats when asking questions, asking for help, providing feedback, acknowledging mistakes or trying something new
- In this situation, a person may be labelled unfavourably or receive a punishment that impacts their identity, status and/or career
- When an atmosphere is psychologically unsafe, individuals share a sense of distrust, paranoia and fear



Joining the dots with Safety Culture



- Major accidents across all industries
- Recognition that engineered safeguards and formal management systems are essential to control risk, but it is equally important to win the commitment of the workforce
- To achieve high levels of safety, needs genuine corporate commitment
- INSAG-4 published in 1991 – first attempt to define what is meant by safety culture



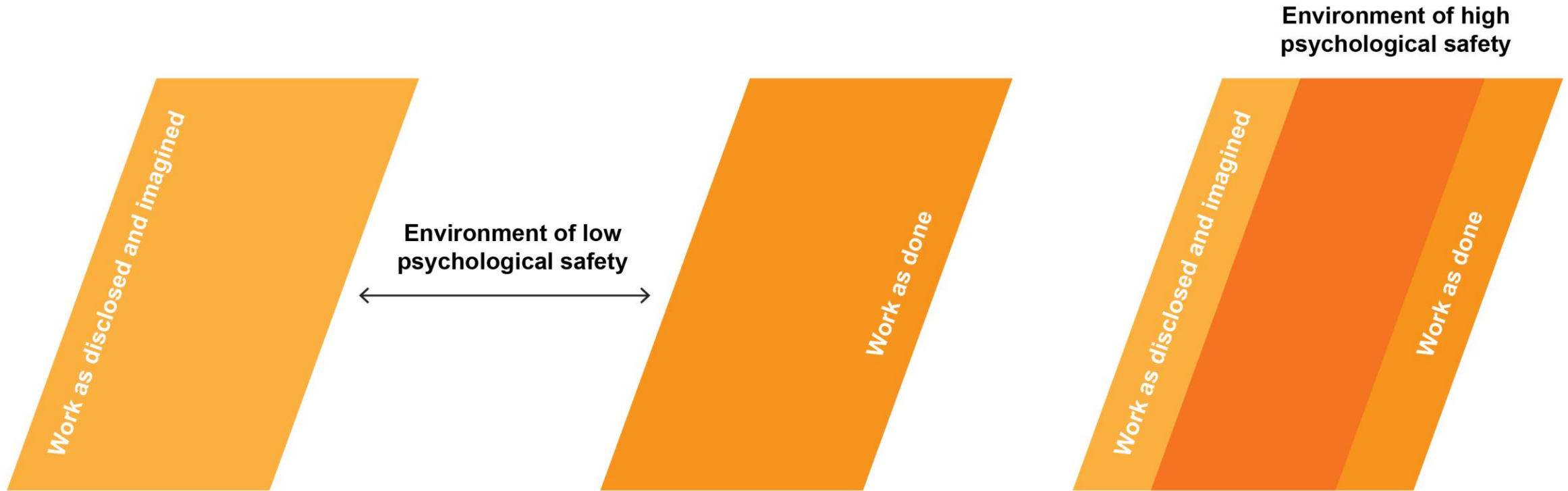
Definitions of safety culture



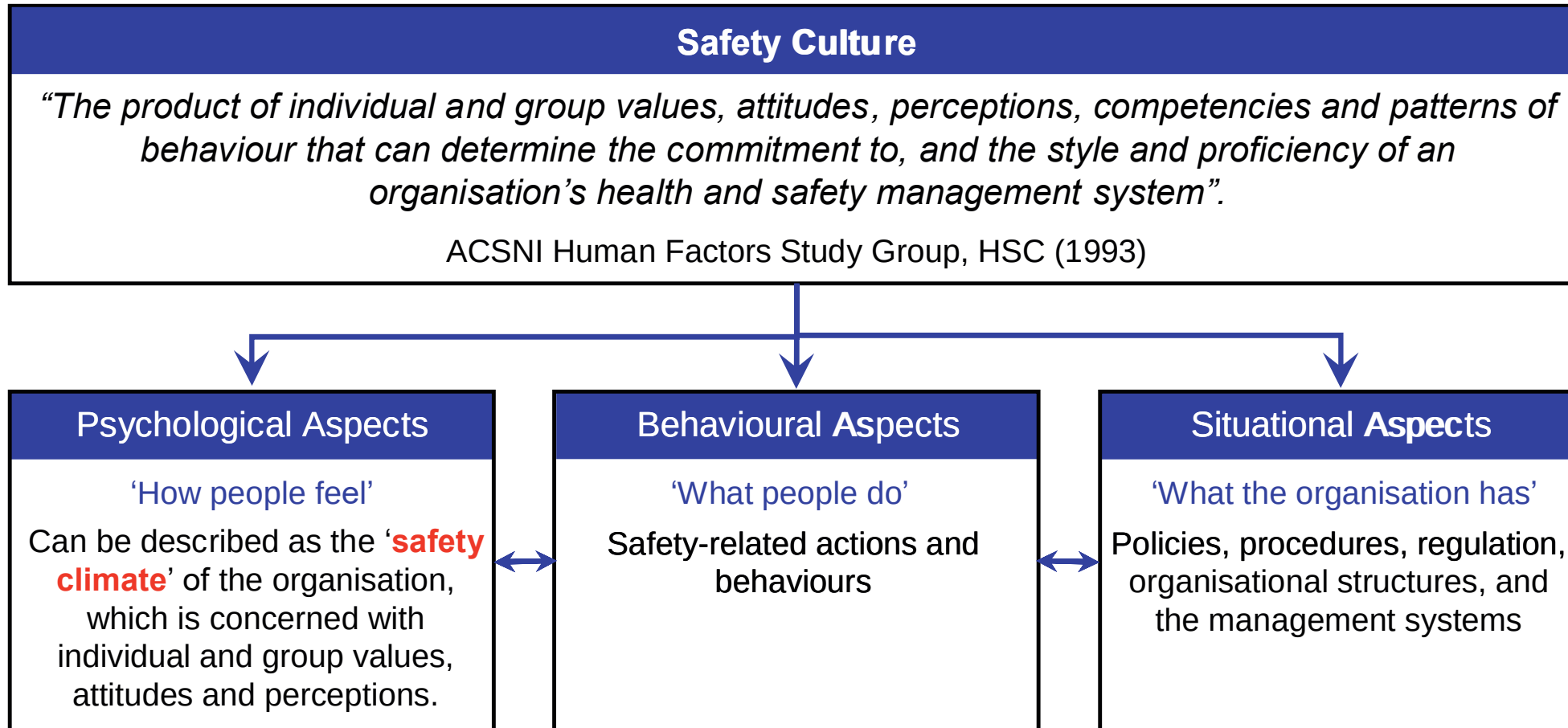
- That assembly of characteristics and attitudes in organisations and individuals which establishes that, as an overriding priority, nuclear plant safety issues receive the attention warranted by their significance (**INSAG, 1991**)
- The way we do things around here
- The shared values, actions and behaviours that demonstrate a commitment to safety over competing goals and demands
- How people feel (psychological aspects), what they do (behavioural aspects) and how the organisation operates (situational aspects) in relation to safety (**Cooper, 2000**)



Closing the gap between work imagined and work done



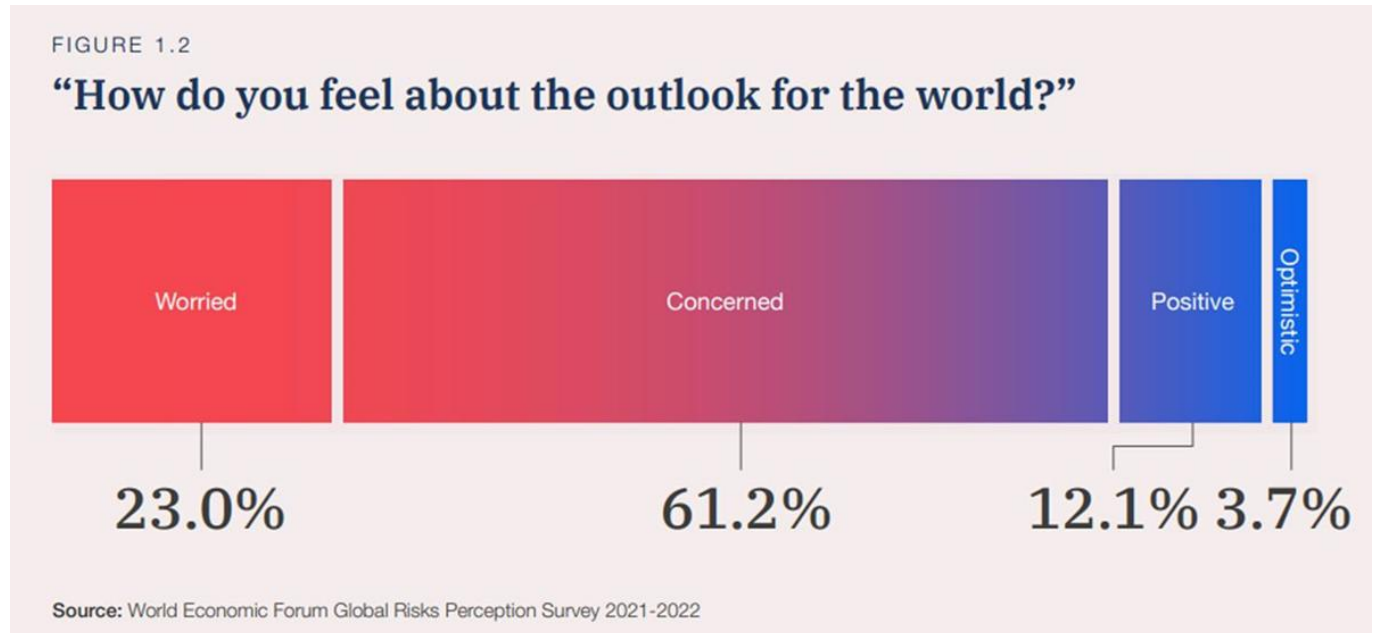
A three-aspect approach to safety culture



Global risk



- 84% of respondents felt 'worried' or 'concerned' about the future for the world
- This view is likely to have significant impacts, with mental health and wellbeing being cited as a significant concern



Emerging risks



- Globalisation
- Demographic change
- Change in work patterns
- Psychosocial
- Technologies and substances



Psychosocial risks



- A combination of the likelihood of occurrence of work-related hazard(s) of a psychosocial nature and severity of injury and ill-health that this could cause
- Affects physical or mental health
- Leads to stress
- Affects all workers and impacts all organisations
- May affect workers' psychological and social response to their work and workplace conditions
- Increases risk of some physical injuries
- Hidden risk of human failure (error) increasing risks across organisation
- Impacts well-being at work – fulfilment of the physical, mental and cognitive needs and expectations of a worker related to their work

Psychosocial risks



- New forms of employment contracts and job insecurity
- Ageing workforce
- Work intensification
- High emotional demands at work
- Poor work-life balance



Consequences of not managing psychosocial risks



- Negative impact on workforce's health, safety and well being
- Disruption to business operations caused by sickness absence and self-isolation
- Increase in presenteeism and leaveism
- Change fatigue – unprecedented upheaval and organisational change
- Staff turnover
- Reduction in quality and service

ISO 45003:2021



- First global guidance on managing psychosocial risks at work
- Key for organisations in addressing psychosocial risk
- Normative reference is ISO 45001:2018
- How is the organisation governed and managed
- Level of commitment and direction
- Management systems
- Size and nature of the workforce
- Characteristics of the workforce
- Competence of workforce to recognise psychosocial risks
- Locations of work
- Workers terms and conditions
- Adequacy and availability of resources

Psychosocial hazards



Three categories of hazard:

- Work organisation
- Social factors
- Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks



Aspects of how work is organised



- Roles and expectations
- Job control or autonomy
- Job demands
- Organisational change management
- Remote and isolated work
- Workload and work pace
- Working hours and schedule
- Job security and precarious work



Social factors at work



- Interpersonal relationships
- Leadership
- Culture
- Recognition and reward
- Career development
- Support
- Supervision
- Civility and respect
- Work/life balance
- Violence
- Harassment
- Bullying



Work environment, equipment and hazardous task



- Inadequate equipment availability, suitability or maintenance
- Poor workplace conditions such a lack of space, poor lighting, excessive noise
- Lack of tools, equipment, or other resources
- Working in extreme conditions or situations, such as very high or low temperatures, or at height
- Working in unstable environments such as conflict zones

Eliminating hazards and reducing risks



Controls

- **Primary** – organisation level – policies and procedures
- **Secondary** – increasing resources that assist workers to deal with psychosocial risks
- **Tertiary** – reducing harmful effects – rehabilitation/support mechanisms



Consultation and participation of workers



- Demonstrate leadership and commitment
- Identify, monitor and be aware of roles and responsibilities
- Determine resources needed and make them available
- Reinforce with strategic and operational plans
- Protect workers from reprisals when reporting incidents, risks and opportunities
- Obtain and provide feedback on effectiveness of measures
- Empower workers and ensure competence
- Provide opportunities for feedback by workers to help determine effectiveness of measures

Why 'psychological safety' is important at work



- Basic human need
- Increased reporting of concerns and issues resulting in fewer incidents
- Improved worker engagement
- Smaller impact of mistakes and incidents
- More ideas and increased innovation
- Freedom to explore and improve ideas
- Enhanced productivity and profitability
- Reduction in burnout
- Increased inclusion and diversity



Why 'psychological safety' is important at work



- Improved ability for individuals to learn from mistakes
- Greater sharing of learning across group members
- Improved ability to carry out experiments and risk “intelligent failures”
- Fewer security, safety and non-compliance issues
- Lower employee turnover
- Improved reputation
- Improved ability to attract and recruit the best people
- Greater resilience of people and teams
- Improved organisational sustainability

Psychological Safety, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



- We all have psychological luggage
- A team is only as psychologically safe as the least safe person on the team
- We have work to do to create a level playing field
- Diversity improves team performance

Personal resilience model



Reference: Skills-based model of personal resilience. The British Psychological Society

Organisational resilience



Capacity to absorb stress, recover critical functionality, and thrive in altered circumstances after a crisis



Reference: *The international Consortium of Organizational Resilience*

Creating psychological safety



- Take time to build trust
- Show appreciation
- Recognise and learn from mistakes
- Explain change
- Create opportunities for feedback
- Follow up

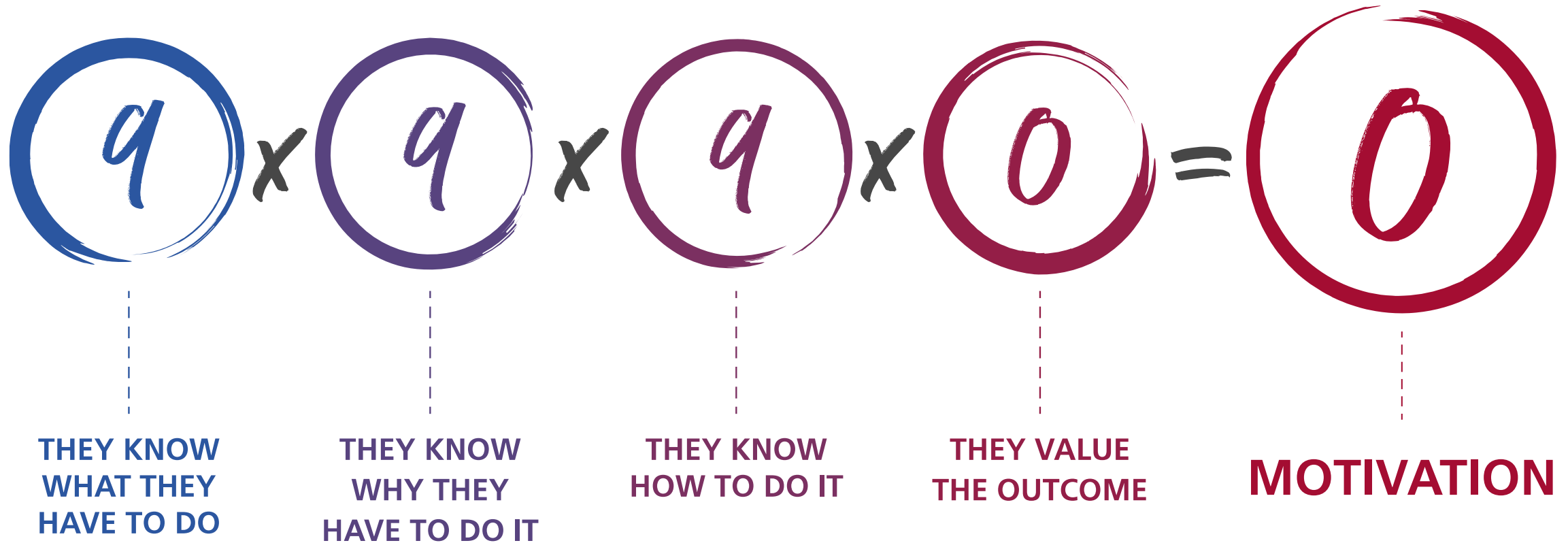


Creating psychological safety



- Promote self awareness
- Demonstrate concern for team members as people
- Actively solicit questions
- Provide multiple ways for employees to share their thoughts
- Show value and appreciation for ideas
- Promote positive dialogue and discussion
- Be precise with information, expectations and commitments
- Explain reasons for change
- Own up to mistakes

Vroom's model of motivation



Visible felt safety leadership



- Provide support and recognition
- Promote fairness and trust
- Encourage improvement, innovation and learning
- Be considerate and responsive
- Understand and demonstrate the difference between leadership and management

The difference between leadership and management

A photograph of a rugged mountain landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow light from the setting sun, with some clouds catching the light. The mountain slopes are covered in dry, yellowish-brown vegetation. The overall mood is serene and inspiring.

You manage things;
you lead people.

Grace Murray Hopper

 quoteagency

The Four Stages of Psychological Safety



- **Inclusion Safety** - Members feel safe to belong to the team
- **Learner Safety** - Members are able to learn through asking questions
- **Contributor Safety** - Members feel safe to contribute their own ideas
- **Challenger Safety** - Members can question the ideas of others or suggest significant changes

Reference: Timothy R Clarke

The Three Fundamentals of Psychological Safety



1. Frame work as a learning problem
2. Acknowledge your own fallibility
3. Model curiosity and asking questions

Reference: Amy Edmondson

How do people behave in a psychologically safe workplace?



- Unafraid to ask questions and do not feel they must act as though they understand everything
- Feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback
- Openly share constructive criticism, concerns and reservations
- Have no trouble asking for assistance
- Feel safe reporting discrimination
- Bring their authentic selves to work
- Engage with colleagues outside of work
- Feel comfortable knowing they can fail and view these moments as opportunities for growth
- Feel valued and encouraged to contribute.
- Have mutual respect for colleagues and leaders

Measuring Psychological Safety

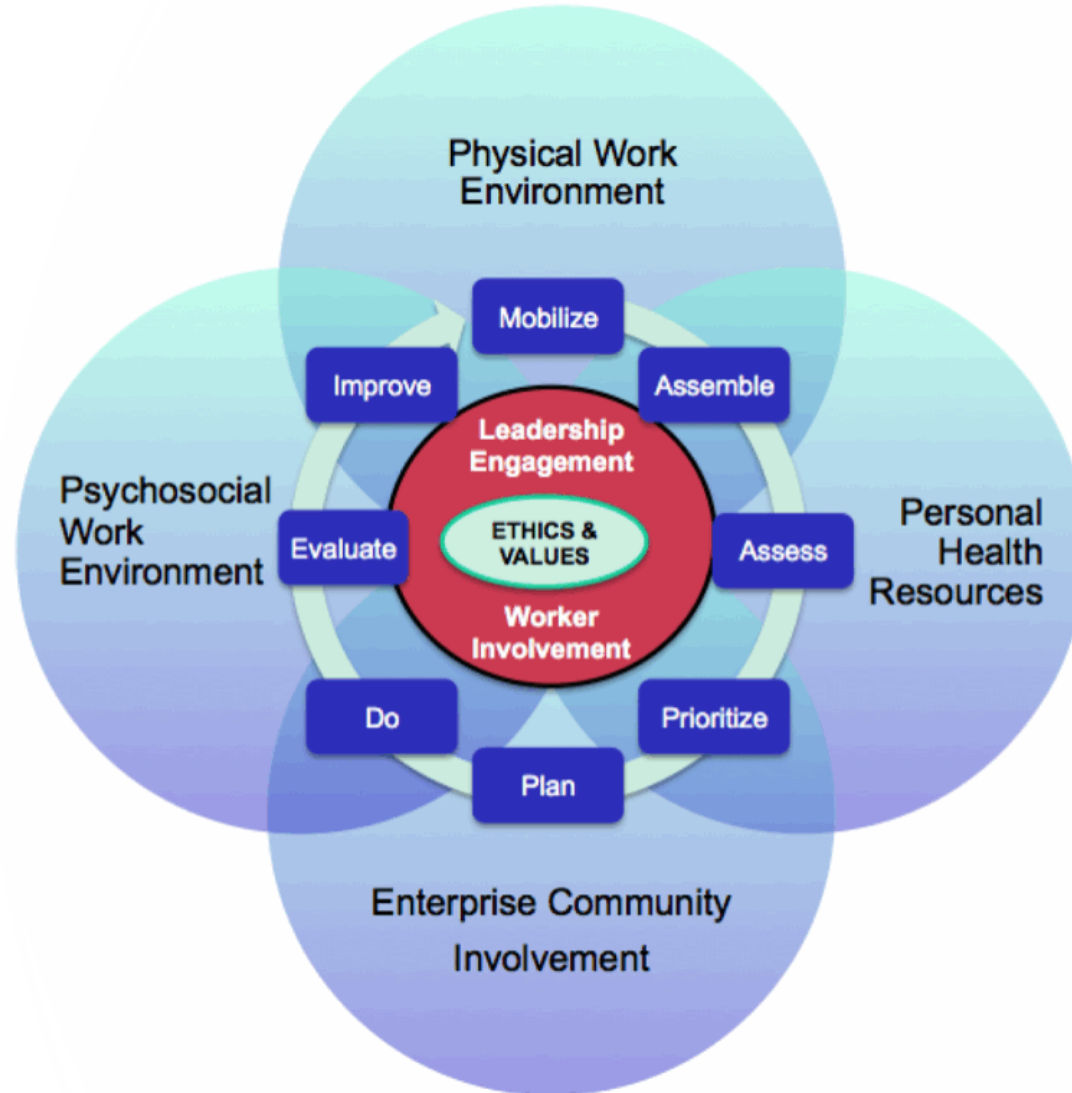


- **Team or organisation survey**
Ask for agreement with multiple statements
- **Discursive methods**
Use of a matrix to encourage people to describe how they feel

WHO Healthy Workplace Model



“A healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace”



Any Questions?