The Manager's Quick Guide to Psychological Safety
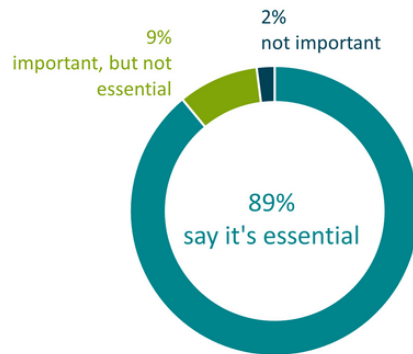
Americans say it's essential for business leaders to create a safe, respectful workplace

9%
important, but not essential

2%
not important

89%
say it's essential

Source: PEW Research Center, Survey of US adults conducted June 19-July 2, 2018.

Benefits of psychological safety

- Increased sense of belonging and retention.
- Better information sharing and collaboration.
- Increased representation, leading to products and services with broader appeal.
- Increased risk taking and experimentation, which leads to learning and innovation.
- Improved organizational brand, attracting diversity of talent.
- Normalized accommodations leading to success.

To create psychological safety, consider the following practices:

- Focus on the performance benefits of respectful candor and disagreements.
- Encourage and model a culture of vulnerability.
- Normalize asking for support to do work (success enablers) for all employees .

- Make expectations clear and roles clear.
- Insist on respectful candor and feedback and hold employees accountable.
- Ask for feedback and respond constructively.

- Model and expect collaboration to resolve conflict.
- Share vulnerability and struggles in constructive ways. Do not dump on your team.
- Connect with the team to get a sense of their state of mind.

- Have and encourage an open-door policy while also honoring the need for focused uninterrupted time, privacy, and boundaries.
- Surface differences in cognitive styles as a strength.
- Facilitate open dialogue about ways to create room for healthy debate and creative problem solving.
- Be intentional about developing mutual agreement for ways to interact, communicate, and honor a balanced way for meeting members' needs.

- Proactively provide information and resources to help members get the support .
- Protect employees' privacy related to their neurodivergence or accommodation.
- Set the environment for them to share their identity if and when they choose.
- Emphasize curiosity toward and seek understanding of differences.

- Model and encourage assumption of good intentions within the team.
- Allow multiple modes of collaboration and interaction and clarify expectations of what works for individuals.
- Pay attention to and address behaviors that are counterproductive to psychological safety. Balance a growth mindset between when individuals are learning such behaviors and when there is a need for no tolerance.