



We made a club, packed it with cool stuff, and you're on the VIP list.

Issue Five: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ISSUE

"I want people to TALK!"

"We need the team to BRING IDEAS to us!"

"I want people to be accountable and OWN their part!"

"We need to THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX and solve PROBLEMS!"

"We need COMMUNICATION to get better!"

**As a leader, have you ever said such things? Well, then, why is that stuff not happening?
Read on...**

If you've ever had a brilliant idea pop into your head: the kind that could save the day, solve a problem, or at least make the Monday meeting 12% less painful, and still thought, "Hmmm... yeah, no, absolutely not," then you already know exactly what we're talking about.

Maybe you've held back a question because you weren't sure if you'd get a real answer, or just The Look. You know the one: the "why did you interrupt my internal monologue for this?" stare. Or maybe you were afraid it would be labeled a "dumb question," which, apparently, is the workplace equivalent of a cardinal sin.

Maybe you've wondered, "Why do we do it **that way**?" but kept your curiosity undercover so you wouldn't come off as negative or difficult or the one who asks too many questions.

Or maybe, just maybe, you've tiptoed around the office like the floor is covered in bubble wrap and you're trying not to pop anything. If you're nodding along, congratulations! You're human. And also, this might be a sign that things don't feel very safe.

And it's not just you. This is happening in **all kinds** of organizations, not just one type: non-profits, banks, construction sites, schools, hospitals, family-run businesses, megacorps. You name it. If humans work there, there's a chance someone doesn't feel safe speaking up.

When people don't feel safe to speak up, the silence spreads. Fast. And people have a way of quietly quitting. (And some aren't so quiet about it!) But they don't quit and leave; they quit and stay! It's highly possible there is an absence of **Psychological Safety**!

Psychological safety is the freedom to share ideas, admit mistakes, ask questions, and take risks **without** fear of ridicule, embarrassment, shame, or the kind of "constructive feedback" that feels more like a surprise attack from a shark in the Pacific.

Trust me, I've been in organizations where asking a question earned you an eye roll along with some ridicule. Offering any ideas made me feel like a circus freak. And making mistakes earned me a full-volume 2-hour lecture with no ideas of how to make it better the next time mixed in with a little shaming.

So, what do we learn to do?

- We zip it and don't say anything.
- We hide mistakes or resort to subtle blame.
- We keep ideas to ourselves.
- We whisper questions only to the people we trust.
- We are **not** the best version of ourselves.

And honestly? It's exhausting. Like, "need-a-nap-by-10-AM" exhausting.

That's why this issue of **Stuff Club** is a big one. **Psychological safety** is a **HUGE** deal. And there is so much more out there for you to explore: incredible research, real stories, and practical tools, more than we could possibly fit in one issue (though we tried!).

There is a lot of content this issue. That is intentional. Take your time with it. Let it breathe. Talk about it with your team. Use it to reset the vibe, reboot the culture, and kick off the new year with a more open, more honest, more human way of working and leading.

Take advantage of this!

To help you get moving, we've added a **7-Week Conversation Challenge**: something simple you can actually do to start having conversations about the info. It is designed to help you and your team get deeper into the subject. And, to create a bigger awareness of psychological safety. *Click below to access.*

And we're not stopping there!

Here's a bonus round: On **January 15**, we're hosting a free Zoomcast: **THE NO DANGER ZONE**. We'll dig into what Psychological Safety is, what it isn't, why it matters, and what you can do about it. Bring your whole team or come solo. You'll leave with new insights, new tools, and maybe even a new way of seeing your workplace. *Click below to register.*

And just one more!

We have designed two **Leadership Labs** for 2026 that are going to deal specifically with psychological safety. If you want more answers or want to increase the safety on your team, please consider these Labs. Check them out at the bottom of this issue or click here to see more.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or need anything!

Steve

[Click here for a 7-Week Conversation Challenge and guide to use this stuff.](#)



Psychological safety is the key to creating a workplace where people can be confident enough to act without undue fear of being ridiculed, punished, or fired – and be humble enough to openly doubt what is believed and done.

Robert I. Sutton

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO READ

short stuff

Read these articles and think about the questions. Then, send the article links to the leaders around you. Once they have read it, create some discussion around the included questions.

4 Ways Leaders Can Build "Psychology Safety" in their Work Teams

SHRM Business

1. Do we treat mistakes or failed attempts as chances to learn and improve rather than something to hide or fear?
2. Do we regularly express appreciation, recognize people's ideas and efforts, and help everyone feel that their contributions matter?
3. When difficult issues come up, do we respond with support, curiosity, and respect rather than blame or judgment?
4. Are we giving people real opportunities to share ideas, even if those ideas are not fully developed, instead of only encouraging suggestions that are polished and safe?
5. When someone offers feedback or raises a concern, do we respond by asking helpful questions and exploring solutions rather than reacting defensively or dismissing them?
6. Do we take regular time as a group to reflect on how we work together, what is going well, and what could be improved, so our team culture grows through intention instead of chance?

[Click here to read](#)

Why Psychological Safety is the Hidden Engine Behind Innovation and Transformation

Harvard Business

1. Do we ask for different opinions so everyone feels welcome to share their thoughts?
2. When someone brings up bad news or a hard issue, do leaders respond with calm support instead of blame?
3. Do people feel comfortable asking questions when something does not make sense, or do they stay quiet because they are worried about being wrong?
4. When someone shares a new idea or points out a problem, do we listen with curiosity first instead of shutting it down?
5. When someone shares bad news or admits a mistake, how good are we (on a scale of 1 to 5) at reacting in a helpful, calm, and positive way? What is one simple thing we can all agree to say or do when we hear bad news to show we appreciate the honesty, not blame the messenger?
6. We need to be both comfortable enough to speak up and committed to high-quality work. Right now, do we focus too much on being comfortable (even if the work quality suffers),

or do we focus so much on being perfect that people are afraid to speak up? What's one thing we can do to keep our excellent standards while making it easier to quickly own up to mistakes?

[Click here to read](#)

Building Psychological Safety in Teams

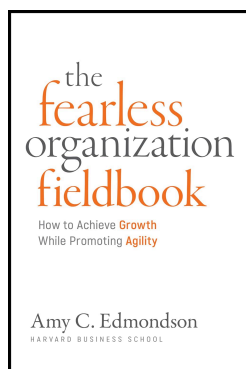
Leader Factor

1. Which of the four stages of psychological safety is the most developed on our team right now, and which stage presents the biggest opportunity for improvement? Based on the article's advice, what is one practical team ritual or practice we can implement this week to advance in that weakest stage?
2. As a leader, what is one non-obvious personal learning or mistake from this quarter that you can share with the team to genuinely model vulnerability?
3. Think of a recent project setback or mistake the team experienced. In the moment, how did the team react to the failure? What single change in our standard operating procedures can we implement to ensure that future mistakes are shared quickly, discussed constructively, and genuinely documented and celebrated as a valuable learning opportunity?

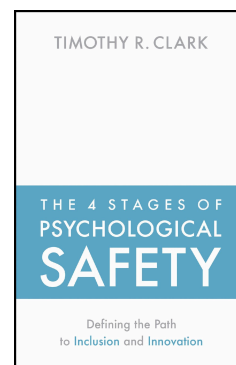
[Click here to read](#)

long stuff

Book Recommendations



The Fearless Organization Fieldbook
Amy Edmondson



The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety
Timothy R. Clark

In general, the route to establishing psychological safety begins with the team's leader. So if you are leading a team—be it a group of coworkers or a sports team, a church gathering, or your family dinner table—think about what message your choices send. Are you encouraging equality in speaking, or rewarding the loudest people? Are you modeling listening?

Charles Duhigg

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO WATCH

Watch these by yourself or with your team. Take time to time to journal thoughts or create conversations.



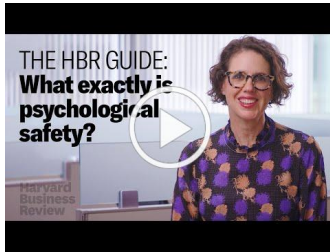
Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace

Amy Edmondson - TedXHGSE (Watch time: 11:25)



The Four Stages of Psychological Safety

Timothy R. Clark - Bregman Leadership Podcast
(Watch time: 33:03)



What Is Psychological Safety?

Harvard Business Review (Watch time: 7:28)



Google's Project Aristotle | Building High

Performance Dare to Be Different (Watch time: 7:33)

STUFF TO LISTEN TO

Budge

Budge is Stuff Club's very own podcast – get ready to hear plain talk and everyday thoughts about leadership!

BUDGE PODCAST

Psychological safety does not mean that you feel comfortable all the time. Psychological safety means you feel comfortable talking about what makes you uncomfortable.

Esther Derby

[Click here](#) for a cool looking graphic of this quote!

STUFF TO GO TO

Check out these Scooch Leadership Labs: a two-day power-up for your leadership *and* personal development! Think of it as a creative workshop meets team huddle — where bold ideas, real talk, and hands-on challenges collide. You'll leave energized and ready to lead with purpose (and maybe have a little fun, too)."

Upcoming Events:

March 24-25 | Seattle, WA

April 27-28 | Irvine, CA

May 14-15 | Washington, DC

October 6-7 | Wichita, KS

MORE INFO

THESCOOCHPROJECT.COM

We would love to hear your questions or comments. Please let us know [here](#).

The Scooch Project | Golf Road | Springfield, IL 62704 US

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