COOL QUOTES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

“Safety is not mere emotional weather, but rather the foundation on which strong culture is built.”
Daniel Coyle

“When leaders become genuine learners, they set a good example and help to create a psychologically safe environment for others.”
Edgar Schein

“The reality of hierarchical social systems is that people hold deeply ingrained, taken-for-granted beliefs that it’s dangerous to speak up or disagree with those in power. It’s up to leaders to foster the climate of psychological safety required to overcome that reluctance.”
Amy Edmundson

“The first step in a dramatic organizational change plan is obvious; dramatic personal change.”
Tom Peters

“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

“We thrive in environments that respect us and allow us to (1) feel included, (2) feel safe to learn, (3) feel safe to contribute, and (4) feel safe to challenge the status quo. If we can’t do these things, if it’s emotionally expensive, fear shuts us down. We’re not happy and we’re not reaching our potential. But when the environment nurtures psychological safety, there’s an explosion of confidence, engagement, and performance. Ask yourself if you feel included, safe to learn, safe to contribute, and safe to challenge the status quo. Finally, ask yourself if you’re creating an environment where others can do these four things. In the process, look around and see others with respect and fresh amazement, find deeper communion in your relationships, and more happiness and satisfaction in your own life”
Timothy R. Clark

“A team is not a group of people who work together. A team is a group of people who trust each other.”
Simon Sinek

“Part of the vulnerability of not having all the answers is the humility to share your ideas with your team before they’re fully formulated.”
Richard Sheridan

A BIT ON PROJECT ARISTOTLE AT GOOGLE

Prior to Project Aristotle Google had a hire policy of hiring only the top people who had proven track records placing them at the top of the top. The thinking was that what made highly innovative and productive teams was smart people. All that was needed was to put a group of "smart" people in room and wait for the magic to happen. But the research didn't support this. The first findings showed no correlation between individual intelligence and team intelligence. Factors such as structured role and goal setting also did not predict the highest levels of success.

As they looked for a way to understand what the data was telling them, they sent the research team back to the teams for more observation. What became clear was that it was how the teams interacted with one another that was different in high-performance teams. It was how they related to one another and the way that they were able to read one another. Team members were more highly synced to their colleague's emotions (high social sensitivity) and able to read when they were not agreeing, out of sync with the thinking of others, or had more questions to ask or viewpoints to share.

Another striking difference was the distribution of communication among members. In high-performance organizations, communication was distributed more evenly among the members. High-performance teams had conversations that allowed for higher order share and discovery conversations where people felt safe to take risks, disagree, and push the learning envelope. They were in groups that had psychological safety.

Google's findings are ground breaking and important as the findings were borne out consistently despite variables such as a team goals, processes, or even the style of the leader.

DO WE BELIEVE IN PEOPLE AND ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT?

Edmondson built on the work of William Kahn (1990) who observed that psychological safety enables personal engagement at work. It facilitates a wiliness to employ or express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally rather than disengage or withdraw and defend their personal selves. Further, Kahn argued that people are more likely to believe they will be given the benefit of the doubt–a defining characteristic of psychological safety–when relationships within a given group are characterized by trust and respect.

FROM “THE FOUR STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY”

BY TIMOTHY CLARK

I was witnessing the opposite pattern, reflected in the absence of what we call psychological safety. I soon realized that **my stewardship meant protecting people not only physically but also psychologically**.

As learned firsthand, the absence of physical safety can bring injury or death, but the **absence of psychological safety can inflict devastating emotional wounds**, neutralize performance, paralyze potential, and crater an individual's sense of self-worth. The implication is that organizations that **lack psychological safety and compete in highly dynamic markets are galloping their way to extinction**.

One of the first things you learn about leadership is that the social and cultural context has a profound influence on the way people behave and that **you as the leader are, straight up, responsible for that context**. The other thing you learn is that **fear is the enemy**. It freezes initiative, ties up creativity, yields compliance instead of commitment, and represses what would otherwise be an explosion of innovation.

FROM “AN EVERYONE CULTURE”

BY BOB KEGAN AND LISA LAHEY

The opening paragraph…

In an ordinary organization, most people are doing a second job no one is paying them for. In businesses large and small; in government agencies, schools, and hospitals; in for-profits and nonprofits, and in any country in the world, most people are spending time and energy covering up their weaknesses, managing other people’s impressions of them, showing themselves to their best advantage, playing politics, hiding their inadequacies, hiding their uncertainties, hiding their limitations. Hiding.
We regard this as the single biggest loss of resources that organizations suffer every day. Is anything more valuable to a company than the way its people spend their energies? The total cost of this waste is simple to state and staggering to contemplate: it prevents organizations, and the people who work in them, from reaching their full potential.

Think about it...
Who in your organization could be hiding?

WHAT HELPS BUILD SAFETY?

Professional credibility is clearly important. In many cases, however- especially for the purpose of building trust, a strong team culture, and real psychological safety-personal credibility is much more important. Personal credibility has to do with people being able to relate to us, trust us, understand us, and find common ground with us-and with our ability to do these things with them in return. We build personal credibility with others by listening to them, opening up to them, sharing about ourselves, caring about them, apologizing when necessary, and being willing to lower the waterline on our iceberg. As we've discussed, self-righteousness damages our personal credibility and vulnerability enhances it. The best way for us to build personal credibility with others is to be authentic.

When we have personal credibility, there is more connection, loyalty, and understanding. We can give and receive feedback, work through challenges, and navigate ups and downs together.

Mike Robbins

FROM “THE FOUR STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY”
BY TIMOTHY CLARK

Think of a time when you were embarrassed, marginalized, or otherwise rejected in a social setting —a teacher ignored your ques. tion, a boss criticized your idea, a coworker mocked your English pro-nunciation, a casting director ridiculed your audition, a coach yelled at you for making an unforced error, your team ditched you and went to lunch. I'm referring to times when you were deprived of psychological safety. Do you remember those wounding experiences? They’re sticky because they sting.

Do those occasions influence your behavior? As the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild reminds us, "Feeling is a form of pre-action." When we were snubbed, ignored, silenced, brushed off, ostracized, or hu-miliated; when we're bullied, harassed, or shamed; when we were scorned, passed over, or neglected, those experiences are not neutral events.

They're demoralizing, lead to alienation, and activate the pain centers of the brain. They crush confidence and leave us in resentful, stupefied silence. In fact, sometimes the fear of these things can be more debilitating than the actual thing. Clearly, how we feel influences what we think and do.
Not given a voice and being mistreated can have a profound impact on our ability to perform, create value, and thrive. As humans, we instinctively sense the vibe, tone, and atmosphere around us and respond accordingly. But it's not a binary proposition- psychological safety is not something you either have or don't. From the nuclear family to the Navy SEALs, from the food truck to the president's cabinet-every social unit registers some level of psychological safety.

In organizations, it’s an uncontested finding that high psychological safety drives performance and innovation, while low psychological safety incurs the disabling costs of low productivity and high attrition. Google's Project Aristotle proved that IQ points and money don't necessarily produce results. After studying 180 of its teams, Google found that smarts and resources can't compensate for what a team may lack in psychological safety. In fact, the company landed on psychological safety as the single most important factor in explaining high performance.

Key concept: An organization that expects employees to bring their whole selves to work should engage the whole employee.

When psychological safety is high, people take more ownership and release more discretionary effort, resulting in higher-velocity learning and problem solving. When it's low, people don't muscle through the fear. Instead, they shut down, self-censor, and redirect their energy toward risk management, pain avoidance, and self-preservation.

As Celia Swanson, a former executive vice president at Walmart, said,
"Making the decision to speak up against a toxic culture is one of the most difficult decisions employees may face in their careers.",

Key concept: In the twenty-first century, high psychological safety will increasingly become a term of employment, and organizations that don't supply it will bleed out their top talent.

7 SAFETY QUESTIONS

Amy Edmundson uses a seven-question survey to assess psychological safety.

Organizational behavioral scientist Amy Edmondson of Harvard first introduced the construct of "ream psychological safety and defined it as…

A shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.

In a team with high psychological safety, teammates feel safe to take risks around their team members. They feel confident that no one on the team will embarrass or punish anyone else for admitting a mistake, asking a question, or offering a new idea.

To illustrate what psychological safety means in action, here is the list of questions Edmondson asked to measure a team's level of psychological safety. Team members were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with these statements:

1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.

2. Members of this team can bring up problems and tough issues.

3. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.

4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.

5. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.

6. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.