



## **Assessing Your Confidence as a Leader in Cultivating Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety is a crucial aspect of team dynamics, referring to the shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. It allows team members to feel accepted and respected, fostering an environment where they can express themselves without fear of negative consequences.

Research by Amy Edmondson has shown that psychological safety is linked to higher levels of learning, collaboration, and performance within teams. In his book, *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*, Timothy R. Clark discusses each stage in detail: Inclusion Safety (feeling included), Learner Safety (feeling safe to learn, ask questions, take risks, and make mistakes), Contributor Safety (feeling safe to contribute one's strengths to benefit the team), and Challenger Safety (feeling safe to challenge the status quo, suggest new ideas, and innovate).

Findings from McKinsey (2021) highlight several critical challenges in leader confidence regarding psychological safety. Firstly, only 26% of leaders are reported to create psychological safety for their teams, indicating a significant gap in both ability and willingness to foster such an environment. Additionally, the same percentage of leaders develop the necessary skills to cultivate psychological safety, suggesting a widespread lack of competencies in this area. Furthermore, leaders often face difficulties in balancing the need for harmony with the necessity of open communication and constructive feedback, sometimes resulting in a "performative" rather than genuine approach to psychological safety (Edmondson, 2023). These challenges underscore the need for targeted skill development and support for leaders to effectively foster psychological safety within their teams.

## **Author**

This tool was developed by Michelle Watson-Grant.

## **Goal**

This tool aims to gauge leaders' confidence in cultivating psychological safety within teams. Based on this reflection, leaders can establish growth goals for themselves in different areas of psychological safety.

## **Advice**

For leaders assessing their own psychological safety, it's important to approach the process with honesty and self-reflection. Recognize that this assessment is a tool for personal growth and improvement, not a judgment of your abilities. Be open to feedback from your team and use the insights gained to identify specific areas for development. Set clear, actionable goals to enhance your confidence in fostering a psychologically safe environment. Remember, creating psychological safety is an ongoing journey that requires continuous effort and commitment. By modeling the behaviors you wish to see in your team, you can build a more inclusive and supportive work culture.

## **References**

Edmondson, A. C. (2023, December 5). How Leaders Fake Psychological Safety. Harvard Business Review.

Edmondson, A. C. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383.

Clark, T. R. (2020). *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

McKinsey & Company. (2021). Psychological safety and the critical role of leadership development

## **Introduction**

This assessment is designed to help leaders evaluate their confidence in fostering psychological safety within their teams. It includes statements related to the four key components of psychological safety: Inclusion Safety, Learner Safety, Contributor Safety, and Challenger Safety. Leaders will rate their confidence using a Likert Scale.

## **How to Use This Tool**

### **Step 1: Preparation**

Ensure a quiet and comfortable environment for reflection. Gather any necessary materials, such as a pen and paper or a digital device for recording responses.

### **Step 2: Understand the Components**

Familiarize yourself with the four key components of psychological safety: Inclusion Safety, Learner Safety, Contributor Safety, and Challenger Safety. Review the statements under each component to understand what each one assesses.

### **Step 3: Conduct the Assessment**

Rate your level of confidence for each statement using the provided Likert Scale (1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree). Be honest and reflective in your responses to gain accurate insights.

### **Step 4: Calculate Scores**

Add up the scores for each component (Inclusion Safety, Learner Safety, Contributor Safety, and Challenger Safety). Calculate the total score to determine your overall confidence level in cultivating psychological safety.

### **Step 5: Interpret the Results**

Use the scoring guide to interpret your scores for each component and the total score. Identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement based on your scores.

### **Step 6: Develop an Action Plan**

Reflect on your scores and set specific, measurable goals to enhance psychological safety within your team. Seek feedback from your team and peers to gain additional insights. Regularly review and adjust your action plan to ensure continuous improvement.

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Category	Question	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Inclusion Safety</b>	1. I create an environment where team members feel comfortable being themselves.					
	2. I actively seek and value diverse perspectives within the team.					
	3. I use inclusive language and encourage others to do the same.					
	4. I ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and contribute.					
	5. I show respect for each team member's background and identity.					

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Category	Question	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Learner Safety</b>	6. I encourage team members to ask questions and seek help without hesitation.					
	7. I treat mistakes as learning opportunities and encourage the same mindset.					
	8. I provide constructive feedback in a positive and supportive manner.					
	9. I create an environment where new ideas and approaches are welcomed.					
	10. I share knowledge and resources willingly with my team.					

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Category	Question	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Contributor Safety</b>	11. I actively encourage team members to participate and contribute ideas.					
	12. I acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of team members.					
	13. I foster a collaborative environment where ideas are built upon.					
	14. I recognize and utilize the strengths and skills of team members.					
	15. I encourage team members to take initiative and ownership of tasks.					

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Category	Question	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Challenger Safety</b>	16. I create a safe space for team members to challenge the status quo.					
	17. I welcome and discuss new and innovative ideas.					
	18. I handle constructive criticism respectfully and encourage it.					
	19. I facilitate healthy debates and discussions within the team.					
	20. I respect and explore differences of opinion.					



## Scoring Guide

Inclusion Safety	Learner Safety	Contributor Safety	Challenger Safety	Total:
S1-5: 1-5	S6-10: 1-5	S11-15: 1-5	S16-20: 1-5	
Your Score	Your Score	Your Score	Your Score	

### Total Score Calculation:

- Add up the scores for each component.
- The maximum possible score for each component is 25.
- The maximum total score is 100.

### Interpretation of Scores

- **81-100: High Confidence** - The leader feels very confident in cultivating psychological safety.
- **61-80: Moderate Confidence** - The leader feels generally confident but may have areas for improvement.
- **41-60: Low Confidence** - The leader has significant concerns about their ability to cultivate psychological safety.
- **0-40: Very Low Confidence** - The leader feels unsure and may need substantial support in fostering psychological safety.