

Building Psychological Safety in Teams

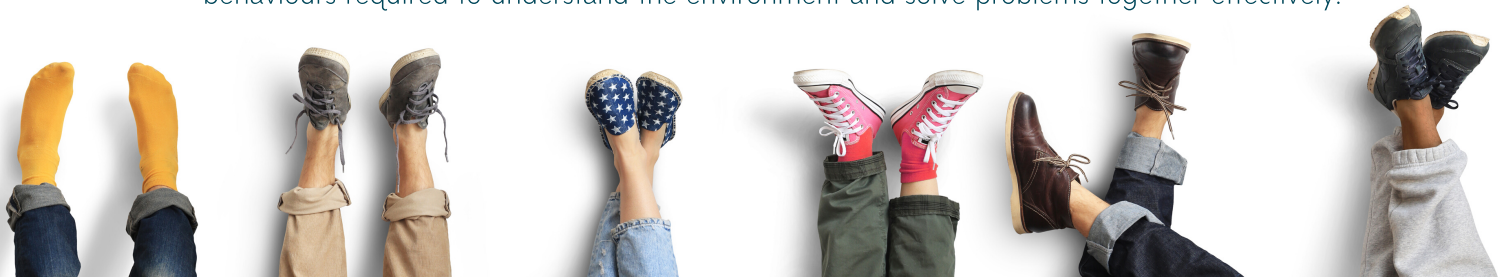


assureprograms.com.au
1800 808 374 (AU) | 0800 464 387 (NZ)

The Foundation of a High-Performing Team

A lot of research has been done to understand what makes certain teams successful and thrive under pressure. Interestingly, the research suggests that it's not 'who' is in the team that is the most important factor, but rather it's the climate of psychological safety that makes the biggest difference.

A psychologically safe climate is more than just being nice and trusting one another. It's about creating an atmosphere where open discussion and candid feedback can be given. Psychological safety allows team members to speak up, challenge each other's ideas with respect and engage in a productive dialogue that fosters the proactive learning behaviours required to understand the environment and solve problems together effectively.



Why is psychological safety so important?

When we perceive the environment as being psychologically safe, individuals experience lower levels of "flight or fight" response, even when the work itself is volatile and uncertain. Teams feel more connected to each other and experience more positive emotions, allowing them to focus on the work at hand.

Research suggests that teams with high psychological safety:

- Communicate better, demonstrating an improved sharing of knowledge
- Are more creative and innovative
- Are more open to learning, including learning from failure
- Engage positively
- Display greater commitment to the organisation



What contributions can you make?

Communicate *human-to-human*, instead of *role-to-role*, and spend time getting to know each other. Acknowledge each other as people, and not just cogs in a wheel. Do something positive to make another person feel valued and appreciated. Offer help and resources, even when it's outside of your job description.

Ask for *feedback*. Asking for feedback brings down the other person's guard. It illuminates blind spots in your work and improves communication which promotes a culture of learning and trust in the team.

Acknowledge *conflicts* with *curiosity*, rather than blame. Blame and criticism heighten fight or flight responses. They increase disengagement, not collaborative problem solving. Approach the conflict with curiosity, by stating the problem or issue as an observation and invite the person to engage in a problem exploration process. Ask, "What do you think we can do differently in future?"

Be there to celebrate *victories*, big or small. Equally, be there to support the team when failure or mistakes arise. Reinforce that failure is just one step towards success when things don't work out.