

## - Diversity in the workplace

# Psychological well-being in the workplace

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Let's first define what psychological safety is. It is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up about their ideas, voicing out their questions and concerns or admitting their mistakes. Psychological safety is also the key to ensuring you have a healthy company culture where people feel able to contribute their ideas and be themselves.

How can your work teams be more high-performing when there is psychological safety in the workplace? We asked our resource persons on psychological safety in the workplace, Jill Santos and Alyssa Dar Juan, for some of their thoughts on this matter:

Psychological safety encourages and develops four essential values that contribute to high performance in the workplace.

### Trust

There is no team without trust. Psychological safety promotes and builds a trusting relationship between employers, employees and team members. Trust is at the heart of a psychologically safe workplace. It is a key requirement for the perfect team. But it's not enough to acknowledge that trust is critical—you need to build it, keep it and be an example for others. For example, a leader who practices psychological safety would trust their employees more by giving them challenging tasks, listening to their ideas and taking in their valuable feedback. A leader who does not practice psychological safety, shuns away from the idea that his/her employees are capable; thus, they tend to micromanage, get frustrated and shut down ideas from others.

### Communication

Open and honest communication is another aspect that psychological safety aims to develop. Psychological safety allows for connectedness and communication between colleagues. Because trust is built within the workplace, everyone is more willing to voice out opinions, feedback and ideas. When someone makes a mistake, members are more likely to own up to it.

When there is conflict, they are more comfortable with talking it out with each other. When there is something to be done, they feel encouraged to chime in. Feeling psychologically safe encourages an open communication line that makes teams, colleagues, as well as leaders, to be more connected with each other.

### Autonomy

Psychological safety makes team members feel included, and feel safe to learn, contribute and to challenge the status quo, which means they are more willing to collaborate with each other and be accountable for their work. Every individual employee contributes to the success (or failure) of a company.

Of course, the goal is to continuously improve the quality and efficiency of your workforce. But without a clear understanding of which factors influence employee performance, it will be difficult to sustain success. When they feel included and safe, they are empowered to work and contribute as much as they can.

For example, if you get mocked or ignored during a team meeting, you might feel discouraged to contribute in future meetings and this can equally affect how you view your competence in your work.

In contrast, when you voice out an idea in a meeting, and the members and leaders acknowledge the idea, build on it, or give feedback, you feel more autonomous and confident with your work. It is important for team members to feel that they are being heard and that they are contributing because that empowers them to perform better.

### Engagement

Psychological safety welcomes curiosity and even encourages employee growth, which leads to better-performing workers and more interesting and open meetings and discussions. A key difference that psychologically safe workplaces have is high level of engagement from their members.

Because employees feel safe working individually and as a group, they are more engaged and willing to accept more challenging tasks. This is because they have a sense of security, stability and reliance on their work and with their workmates. When blame is replaced with curiosity and feedback, team members become more accountable for their work, which makes all the difference.

Santos and Dar Juan will conduct a virtual workshop on “Psychological Wellbeing in the Workplace: Building Stronger Teams through Safety and Wellness” on July 6, 2022.

For more information, you may write to [ask@inquireracademy.com](mailto:ask@inquireracademy.com), or send an SMS to these numbers: 0919.3428667 and 0998.9641731. There are other mental health-related workshops that can be customized for your organization.

For your other learning needs, Inquirer Academy could assist you in designing and facilitating a virtual or face-to-face workshop, a webinar, or a selfpaced online course for your team or organization.

The author is the executive director of the Inquirer Academy.