



# Keep Employees Psychologically Safe

Prepared by:  
Karla Brandau, CEO  
*Workplace Power Institute*

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## Keep Employees Psychologically Safe ...

... Accept Them As Is

**“People will forget what you said, forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” – Maya Angelou**

Your employees may be physically safe from harm, but are they psychologically safe? Do your conversations allow for diversity of opinions? Are employees free to raise reservations about ‘how things are done here’ or admitting mistakes? As a leader, can you move employees from divergent thinking to convergent thinking through inclusion and negotiation?

Answered in the affirmative, these questions are positive and mean you have a psychologically safe workplace. A psychologically safe environment is important when wanting to move ahead of your competition in 2021 and beyond.

Psychological safety brings openness in discussions and provides valuable insights and added dimensions of thinking leading to improved products and services.

The concept of **psychological safety** was first introduced by Harvard organizational behavioral scientist, **Amy Edmondson**, who coined the phrase and defined it as “a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is **safe** for interpersonal risk-taking.”

On a psychologically safe team, team members feel accepted as individuals and respected because of their value as a human being. They are accepted *as is*.

## **Accept the Entire Package – As Is**

The employee is an entire package: strengths and limitations. Social acceptance means each individual is accepted *as is*. Similar to shopping in the scratch and dent section of an appliance store and choosing a washer with a dent in the side, you accept the washer *as is*. You know the washer will be placed with the dent against the wall, no one will ever see it, and you will get great value for your money.

As you accept employees for their strengths and what they can contribute, you get great value for your hire. Along with accepting their incredible strengths, you must also accept that every employee comes with a few blind spots and limitations that create gaps in performance. For instance, some individuals excel at creating ideas but are not good at laying out a plan for implementation. Some employees shine at seeing the future but do not have the ability to learn from past mistakes. Other employees are good at picking things apart and analyzing problems but have no clue how to build consensus.

Leaders who accept *as is* get to know their employees so well that they understand their strengths and can intuitively give them stewardship over projects and tasks where they can surpass expectations. They pair employees with complementary strengths for the best project teams.

## **As Is and Psychological Safety**

By paying attention to psychological safety factors in their culture and by accepting employees *as is* when hired, then helping them grow and add a variety of competencies to their quiver of abilities, organizations can strengthen their levels of profitability and become more economically stable. As their abilities increase, so will their self-esteem and confidence. Courageously they will speak up and give their insights and opinions.

Employees will reach their full potential and the organization will benefit from employees who can have psychologically safe discussions that lead to a convergence of ideas rather than the chaos caused by unresolved divergent views.

Maya Angelou's words are true. Your employees will never forget that you made them feel like a valued human being

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