

Leader Behaviors to Create Psychological Safety: Self-Assessment Questions

Frame the Work

Emphasize the Purpose

- Have I articulated clearly why our work matters, why it makes a difference, and for whom?
- Even if it seems obvious given the type of work or industry I'm in, how often do I talk about what's at stake?

Set the Stage

- Have I clarified the nature of the work?
- To what extent is the work complex and interdependent?
- How much uncertainty do we face?
- How often do I refer to these aspects of the work?
- How well do I assess shared understanding of these features?
- Have I spoken of failures in the right way, given the nature of the work?
- Do I point out that small failures are the currency of subsequent improvement?
- Do I emphasize that it is not possible to get something brand new "right the first time?"

Model Fallibility

Situational Humility

- Have I made sure that people know that I don't think I have all the answers?
- Have I emphasized that we can always learn more?
- Have I been clear that the situation we're in requires everyone to be humble and curious about what's going to happen next?

Set up Structures and Processes for Input, Inquiry, and Discussion

- How often do I ask good questions rather than rhetorical ones?
- How often do I ask questions of others, rather than just expressing my perspective?
- Do I demonstrate an appropriate mix of questions that go broad and go deep?
- Have I created structures or forums to systematically elicit ideas and concerns?
- Are these structures well designed to ensure a safe environment for open dialogue?

Embrace Messengers

Express Appreciation

- Have I listened thoughtfully, signaling that what I am hearing matters?
- Do I acknowledge or thank the speaker for bringing the idea or question to me?

Destigmatize Failure

- Have I done what I can to destigmatize failure?
- What more can I do to celebrate intelligent failures?
- When someone comes to me with bad news, how do I make sure it's a positive experience?
- Do I offer help or support to guide the next steps?

Sanction Clear Violations

- Have I clarified the boundaries?
- Do people know what constitutes a blameworthy act in our organization?
- Do I respond to clear violations in an appropriately tough manner so as to influence future behavior?