

How to grow emotionally intelligent engineering teams



Danielle Leong

@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



@tsunamino



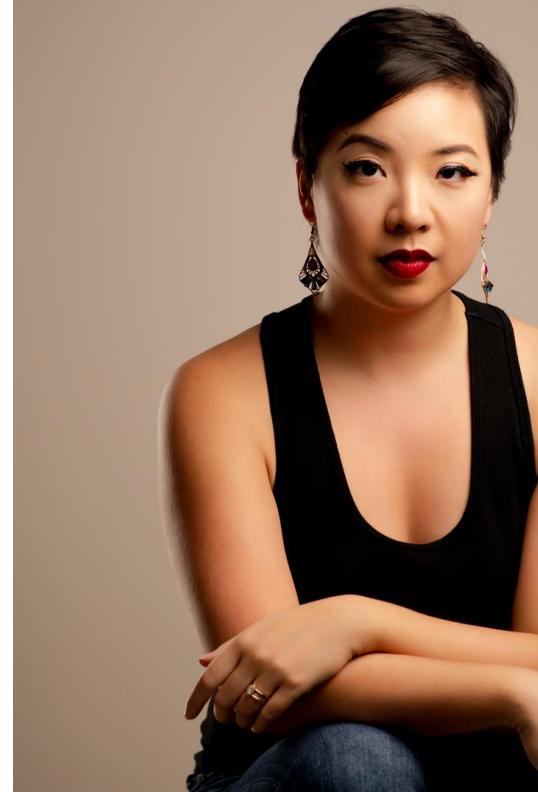
@tsunamino



@tsunamino

About me

- Engineering manager for GitHub's Community & Safety team
- Consensual Software
- Fearless app
- @tsunamino
- @royalscoutness



Google study on psychological safety

1

Psychological Safety

Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

2

Dependability

Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.

3

Structure & Clarity

Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

4

Meaning

Work is personally important to team members.

5

Impact

Team members think their work matters and creates change.

You can't have psychological safety without both
emotional intelligence and empathy

**Empathy is deciding
someone's feelings are as
important as yours**

**Emotional intelligence is
realizing other people have
emotions in the first place**

What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you.

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

Interpersonal skills are vital in any industry to advance
one's career

Software is a team sport

It starts with you

Go to therapy

@tsunamino

therapy is great

Educate yourself on marginalized peoples' experiences

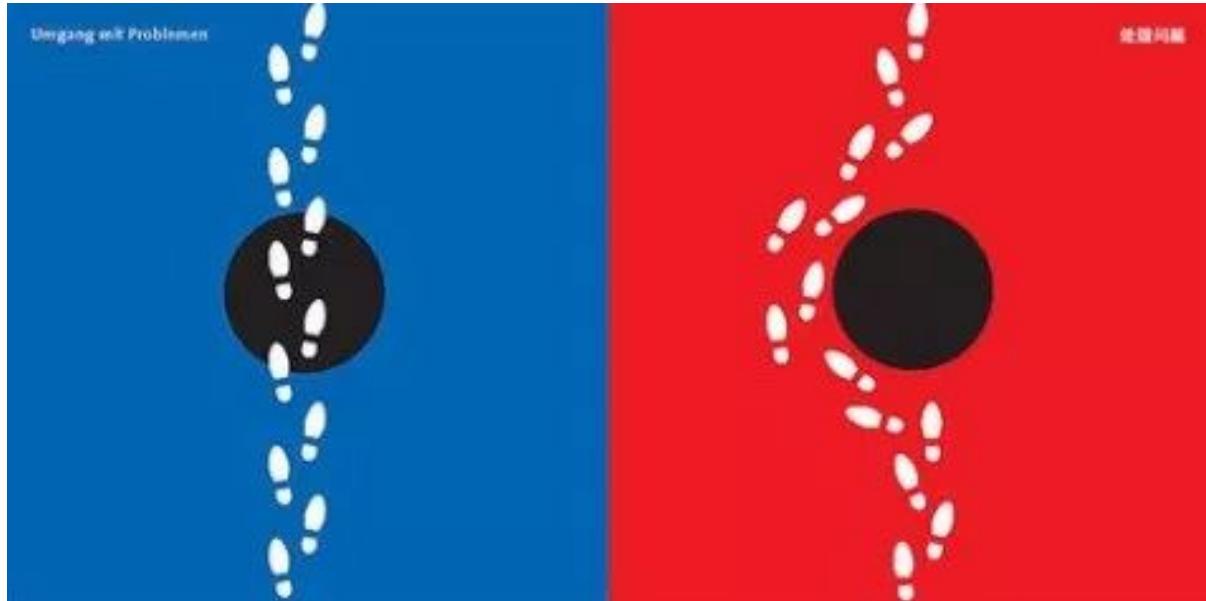
Short list of things I try to learn about

- Reproductive rights
- Trans rights
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Black Lives Matter
- Religious holidays
- Microaggressions in the workforce
- Recovering from trauma
- Mental health in the workforce
- Unconscious biases and how to combat them
- Natural hair care
- Early parenting
- Ageism in tech
- #MeToo

Cultivate a culture of learning

@tsunamino

Create a space for ask and
guess culture



Ask culture

Guess culture



dmleong commented on Apr 19 • edited

+ ...

Working

- Communicating about concerns with FGP and working through them together
- [REDACTED] picking up customer questions for me since I don't have the spoons to do so
- [REDACTED] notes from LocoMocoSec
- Data about our team's PTO time! Happy to see we average a good number of PTO days (19.14, close to the Netherlands legal limit ❤️)
- 2x the amount of people at our office hours in response to [REDACTED]
- Feeling confident that the team will be fine while I'm on vacation
- [REDACTED] making sure our batching is sound for FGP
- Opening up two job recs for new engineers

Could be better

- Handoff process for PRs when people go on vacation
- Twitter
- Working weekends to reach out to [REDACTED] women in STEM who are facing harassment

Make it easy for multiple types of people to provide feedback about team processes, projects, and culture and thank people for speaking up. Then follow through.

Decide what is and is not
acceptable behavior

Take public action against unacceptable behavior if it's
harming others

Follow up privately and add it to their goals

- Make interpersonal improvement part of goals
- Come up with rules to explain behavior patterns and how to problem solve with them
- Google Emotional Intelligence 101 course
- Emotional Intelligence 2.0
- Keep discussions about behaviors, not identities

Be intentional about hiring
people who can collaborate

Sample interview questions

- Ask questions about how they've learned from others or when they had to admit they were wrong
- Ask about collaborating with people of different backgrounds
- Ask about disagreements and how they were resolved
- Be very specific in your rubric about what is and is not acceptable behavior
- Have marginalized people on your interview panel and listen to their feedback

Wrap it up

Summary

- It starts with you
- Make it friendly for ask and guess culture
- Decide what is and isn't acceptable behavior
- Make interpersonal improvement part of goals
- Be intentional about hiring collaborative people



Thanks!

@tsunamino