

Join 150K+ leaders in our weekly email.

[Subscribe](#)

## Contents

How to create psychological safety at work

Building psychological safety in the workplace pays off.



**Audience**



**Category**



**Topic**



All blog posts


[Home](#) » [Blog](#) » [Employee Engagement](#) » 8 ways to create psychological safety in the workplace

# 8 ways to create psychological safety in the workplace

🕒 7 min read



**Greg Barnett, PhD**



What's the secret behind high-performing teams? It's psychological safety, according to a Google study called [Project Aristotle](#).

In the workplace, **psychological safety is the shared belief that it's safe to take interpersonal risks as a group**. These risks include speaking up when there's a problem with the team dynamics and sharing creative ideas, among others.

The [2019 People Management Report](#) found that managers who create psychologically safe work environments are less likely to experience employee turnover on their teams. If you want to retain top performers, ensure psychological safety across the whole company. Like any major initiative, it needs to start at the top with executive buy-in.

Not sure if your employees feel psychologically safe? Start by [measuring psychological safety in the workplace](#). If you find that you need to create a more safe environment in the workplace, read on.

**Free Trial**

**Fix low engagement with [PI Diagnose](#) →**

## How to create psychological safety at work

As a leader, you have to hold people accountable for performance metrics—but the job doesn't end there. You must also maintain [employee engagement](#) by helping people feel comfortable and building the shared belief that the team is safe for risk-taking.

Here are eight tips to build psychological safety in the workplace:

**1. Show your team you're engaged.**

Join 150K+ leaders in our weekly email.

[Subscribe](#)

conduct and shutting your laptop, it's easy to get distracted by emails, text messages, or Slack during a meeting—but these small acts of disengagement can **negatively impact your team's** psychological safety.

Engagement also means listening to what others have to say. Practice active listening. Ask questions to make sure you understand the other person's ideas or opinions. By actively engaging, you create an environment where people feel it's only OK to speak up; in fact, it's encouraged and accepted.

***Talent optimization tip:*** *Psychological safety in the workplace is especially important if your company has a producing culture. If you seek to innovate or bring new products to market quickly, teams must feel safe to take interpersonal risks without fear of being punished or ridiculed.*

## 2. Let your team see you understand.

When your people know you care enough to understand and consider their point of view they experience psychological safety.

Demonstrate understanding by recapping what's been said. Use language like, "What I heard you say is \_\_\_\_\_. Is that correct?" This shows you want to understand their perspective. It also gives your team members an opportunity to clarify if you misunderstood something they said.

You can also show understanding with body language. Nod your head during discussions to acknowledge what an employee is saying. Lean forward to show engagement. Be aware of your facial expressions. If you look tired, bored, or unhappy, your employees will notice. While you might not mean anything by it, employees may internalize the message you're sending with your face: I don't like this idea.

## 3. Avoid blaming to build trust.

It's easy when **something goes awry** to look for someone to blame. But, to build and maintain psychological safety in the workplace, focus on solutions.

Instead of "What happened and why?" ask "How can we make sure this goes better next time? Notice the focus on the collaborative language: How can **we** make sure this goes smoothly next time? We statements turn the responsibility into a group effort, rather than singling out an individual for a mistake.

## 4. Be self-aware—and demand the same from your team.

People bring their whole self to work—their unique personalities, preferences, and work styles. Build self-awareness on your team by sharing how you work best, how you like to communicate, and how you like to be recognized. Encourage your team members to do the same.

High-performing companies administer **behavioral assessments** to help employees build self-awareness. Assessments can also be used to build psychological safety in the workplace. For example, at PI, we use the Relationship Guide tool in our software to make sure we respect the other person's preferences for working and communicating.

Join 150K+ leaders in our weekly email.

[Subscribe](#)

## 5. Nip negativity in the bud.

If you have a team member who speaks negatively about peers, talk to them about it. Be clear; let them know that you work together as a team and negativity will not be tolerated.

When leaders allow negativity to stand, it can become contagious and spread to others. Employees will think that either they're supposed to talk bad about others, or that others are probably talking about them. In, either case, it's a psychological safety killer.

## 6. Include your team in decision making.

When making decisions, consult your team. Ask for their input, thoughts, and feedback. Not only will this help them feel included in the decision-making process, but it will build psychological safety and lead to [better outcomes](#).

Once a decision is made, explain the reasoning behind your decision. How did their feedback factor into the decision? What other considerations were made? Even if your employees don't agree, they'll appreciate the honesty and transparency behind how the decision was made.

If you're a senior leader in the company, being inclusive and transparent is even more critical. The 2019 [Employee Engagement Report](#) found that a lack of trust in senior leadership is the number two driver of disengagement.

Top engagement drivers

When communicating decisions, be sure to highlight contributions from team members. If a certain idea or piece of feedback led to the decision or a successful outcome, acknowledge and celebrate that employee's contribution.

## 7. Be open to feedback.

As a leader, it's your responsibility to make the final judgment call on a number of decisions. Your team needs to know that you are confident in this responsibility, but also that you're

Join 150K+ leaders in our weekly email.

[Subscribe](#)

articles and/or information to share.

Invite your team to challenge your perspective and push back. While this may be uncomfortable at first, [healthy conflict](#) leads to better decisions and greater accountability—making it a win all around. You might also lead by example by taking interpersonal risks and sharing failures. Try getting up at the next all-company meeting and presenting on a failure—and what you learned.

## 8. Champion your team.

Finally, it's important to support and represent your team. Let them know you're on their side by supporting their personal and professional development. Be sure to share the team's work with senior leadership to increase visibility into what your team is doing—and give credit to teammates when due.

## Building psychological safety in the workplace pays off.

At the end of the day, employee performance will improve as a result of creating a psychologically safe workplace. And employees who feel safe and engaged at work are less likely to quit. Try one—or all—of these eight strategies for building psychological safety at work and see how it impacts *your* team.

## Want to stop employees from quitting?

Identify the signs by reading our latest report.

[READ REPORT](#) →

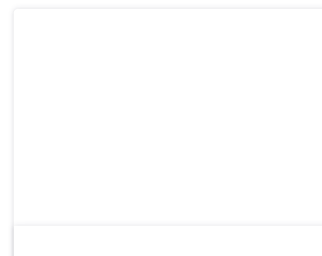
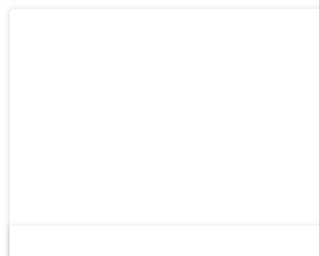
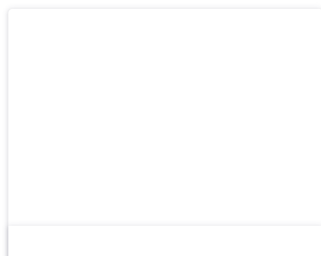


### Greg Barnett, PhD

Greg is the SVP of science at PI.

[View all articles](#) →

## Related Posts



Join 150K+ leaders in our weekly email.

[Subscribe](#)

[Read More](#)

[Read More](#)

[Read More](#)

#### TALENT OPTIMIZATION

##### PLATFORM

Align business strategy and people strategy



**Hire**  
 Hire with certainty.



**Inspire**  
 Lead with purpose.



**Design**  
 Build cohesive teams.



**Diagnose**  
 Keep your people engaged.

#### SCIENCE

People data to power your strategy

Behavioral Assessment

Cognitive Assessment

Job Assessment

Employee Experience Survey

#### LEARN

Explore our resources and learning library

Talent Optimization

Certification

The State of Talent  
 Optimization Report

Hybrid Work Toolkit

Support

Blog

#### COMPANY

Design and execute a winning talent strategy with PI.

Careers

Culture

Change@Work

Customer Stories

Contact Us

Experience the power of the world's leading talent optimization platform

[Product Plans](#)

Call Support: 877-235-1541

Call Sales: 877-421-3717

Experience the power of people data—free

[Try the PI Behavioral Assessment](#) →