Psychological Safety and Patient Safety: Maximizing Performance While Minimizing Fear

Lara Ellinger Fetzer, PharmD, BCPS

Disclosure

- The presenter has nothing to disclose.

Learning Objectives

- Define psychological safety and how it relates to effective teamwork.
- Describe the relationship between psychological safety and patient safety.
- List strategies that increase psychological safety in the workplace setting.
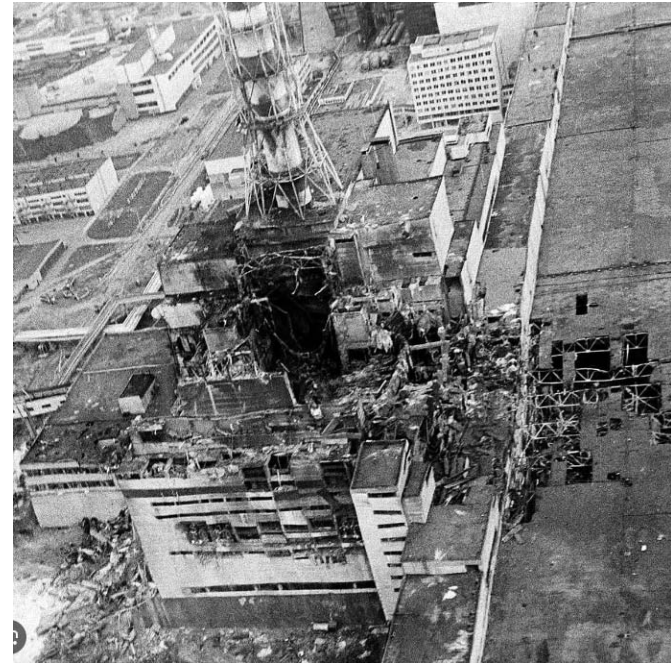
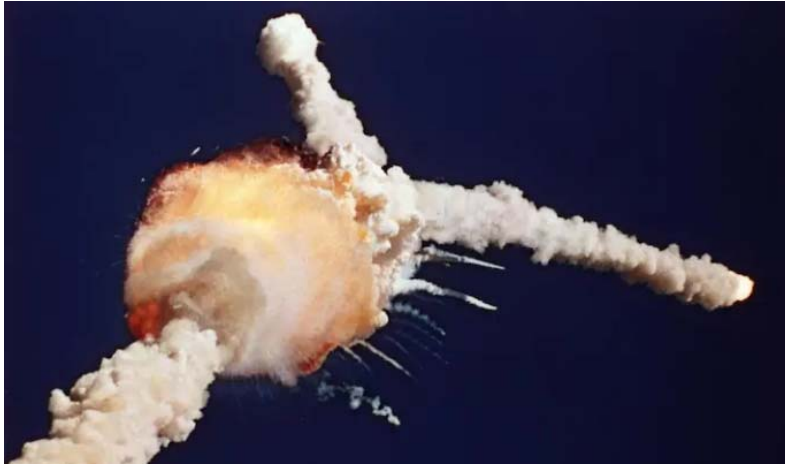# When Psychological Safety is Lacking

Examples

2/2023 Ohio Train Derailment

The NTSB is concerned that several organizational factors may be involved in the accidents, including safety culture. The NTSB will conduct an in-depth investigation into the safety practices and culture of the company.

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References hidden to not give it away!

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…And more

- 1986 *Challenger* shuttle explosion
- Nuclear power plant explosions
    - 1986 Chernobyl (in what is now Ukraine)
    - 2011 Fukushima (Japan)
- Volkswagen "Dieselgate"

"Lack of Psychological Safety at Boeing"

- Quality manager flagged defective metal parts
  - Berated on factory floor
  - Penalized in performance reviews

"It was intimidation," she said. "Every time I started finding stuff, I was harassed."

- High-level leadership pushed quality inspectors to stop recording defects

- Managers ignored problems to meet deadlines

- Whistleblowers retaliated against

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Examples in Healthcare

A night pharmacist received a phone call from a nurse asking for an EPINEPHrine infusion to be sent STAT to the unit for a critically ill neonate. Since the sterile compounding technician had left earlier in the evening, the pharmacist asked a newly hired pharmacy technician to quickly compound the infusion. The technician had no prior experience working in a compounding room on their own. The technician previously heard the pharmacist expressing that they preferred to work with experienced technicians. Not wanting to make a bad first impression by asking how to prepare the infusion, the technician attempted to compound the infusion even though they were not sure what to do.

→ **When have you been afraid to speak up and ask for help? Why did you feel that way?**

→ **Can you think of a time you may have come across as unapproachable or unavailable to answer questions?**

→ **How may hierarchy or perceived hierarchy factor into this situation?**

ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Acute Care. 2023;28(8):1-4.

Examples in Healthcare

An emergency department (ED) physician asked a per diem nurse who was new to the organization to enter a verbal order for an insulin infusion in the electronic health record (EHR) for a patient experiencing diabetic ketoacidosis. The nurse had been taught how to document orders on the medication administration record (MAR), but not how to enter medication orders into the EHR. Being a team player was important, so the nurse attempted to show that by entering the verbal order into the EHR. Since it was a titratable insulin infusion, the nurse was prompted to enter required patient parameters to titrate the insulin infusion that were not relayed by the ED physician, so the nurse entered what was thought to be correct.

→ **When have you been afraid to speak up and ask for clarification? Why did you feel that way?**

→ **Can you think of a time you have been asked to do something outside your scope or you have asked someone to do something outside of their scope?**

→ **How may hierarchy or perceived hierarchy factor into this situation?**

What is psychological safety, exactly?

Definitions

Psychological Safety vs. Trust

Psychological Safety

- A culture/climate

- Felt by teams and organizations

- Relates to how an individual believes they are viewed

Will <u>others</u> give you the benefit of the doubt when you take a risk?

Trust

- A component of psychological safety

- Felt by an individual

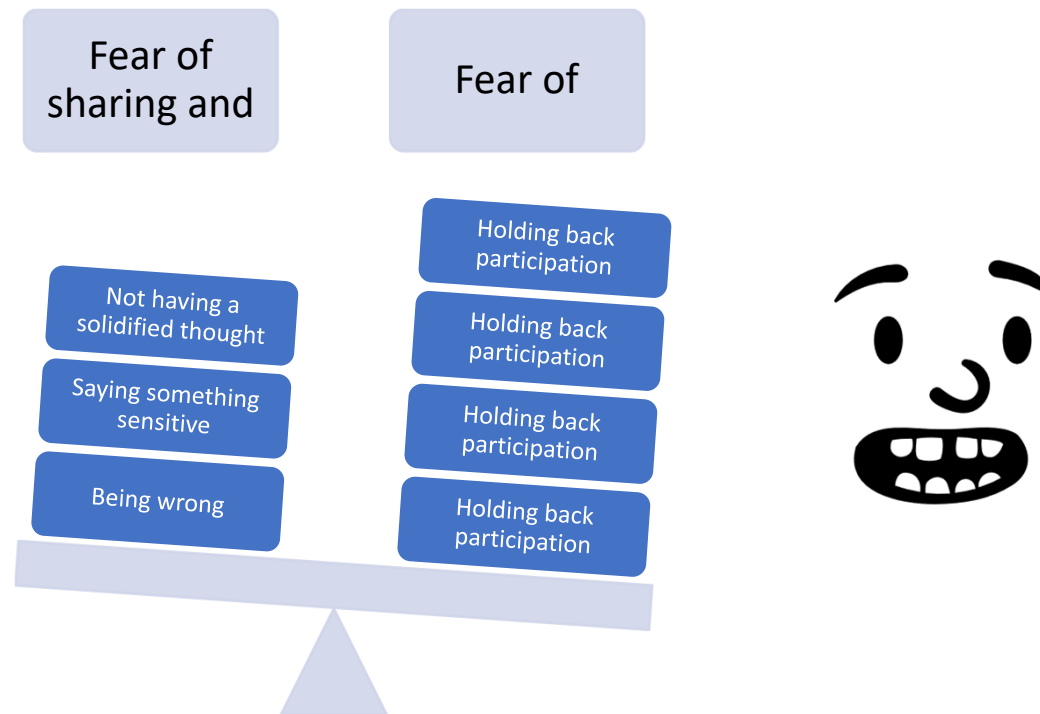- Relates to how an individual views another individual or team

Will you give others the benefit of the doubt when you take a risk?

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Not Psychologically Safe

Fear of sharing and

Fear of

Not having a solidified thought

Saying something sensitive

Being wrong

Holding back participation

Psychologically Safe

Fear of sharing and

Fear of

Holding back participation

Not having a solidified thought

Holding back participation

Saying something sensitive

Holding back participation

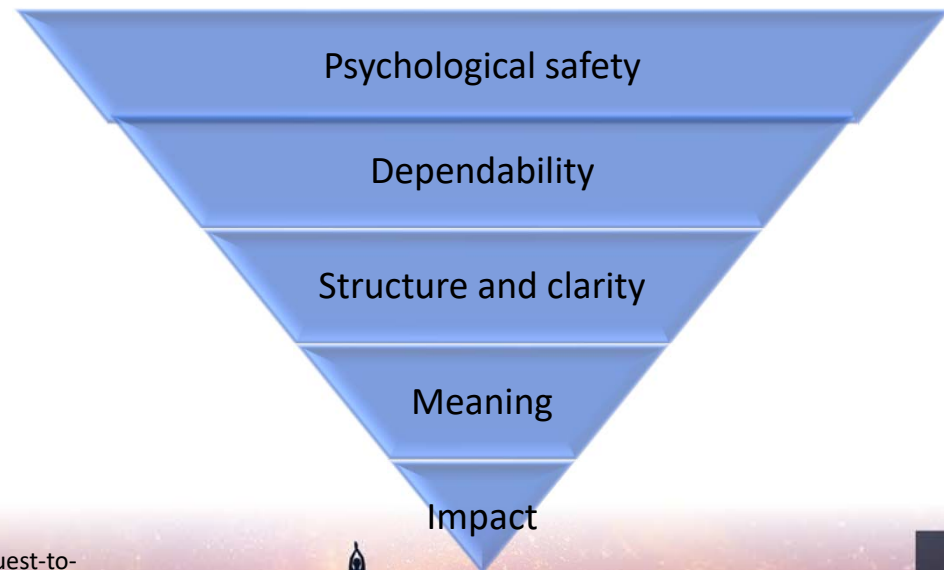Being wrong

Holding back participation

Teamwork

- Teams
  - Are highly interdependent: cannot get work done without each other
  - Plan work, solve problems, make decisions, assess progress in relation a project or goal
  - Achieve the above by interacting and collaborating with people of all backgrounds, skill and knowledge levels
  - "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" - Aristotle

Why is teamwork so important?

- Employees spend 50% more time collaborating today than 20 years ago
- Business schools and healthcare programs revised their curricula to incorporate more team-based learning
- In healthcare: work we do has a LOT of potential for error

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What makes teams high-performing?

- Google's Project Aristotle
  - Assessed effectiveness of 180 teams across the globe
  - Found that what impacted effectiveness was **not who** was on the team, **but how** the work was done

Psychological safety

Dependability

Structure and clarity

Meaning

Impact

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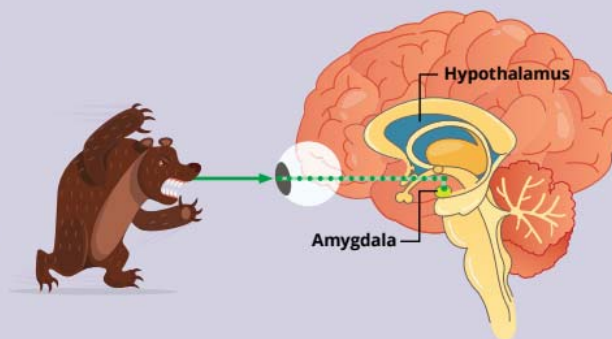# Why is fear so detrimental to teamwork?

- Not an effective motivator <u>for team</u>work
- Distracts from the team goal
- Inhibits learning and cooperation
- Narrowed attention
- Destroys confidence
- Inhibits communication

Psychological Safety

in Healthcare and Education

Psychological Safety and Primary Care Teams

High Psychological Safety

- Increased reporting of events
- Change-oriented leadership
- Ethical leaders
- Leader inclusiveness

Low Psychological Safety

- Greater turnover intent
- Higher perceived power distance
- Personal bullying

Remtulla, R., Hagana, A., Houbby, N.et al.Exploring the barriers and facilitators of psychological safety in primary care teams: a qualitative study.BMC Health Serv Res21, 269 (2021).

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Psychological Safety and Trainees

- 9-year qualitative study at Harvard and UNC medical schools
- Characterized psychological safety and accountability in graduates of longitudinal medical clerkships

Trainees' Thoughts

High Psychological Safety

I felt that my preceptors really got to know me as a person and a student and so were better able to set goals for me and push me to be successful. I think that was really important for me. I think I also felt more comfortable with them and felt more that it was safer to make mistakes. And I think that helped me kind of work or push myself beyond my comfort zone and...make a plan for a patient or...say what I thought was going on even if I wasn't sure I was right.

Trainees' Thoughts

High Psychological Safety

I would say there were some *preceptors with whom my relationship grew* *throughout the year, and that really* *allowed for some tremendous education*. *I think about my medicine preceptor who...treated me with a high degree of autonomy and intellectual respect* *that...allowed me to be challenged.*

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Trainees' Thoughts

Low Psychological Safety

I had a difficult time with...a significant personality clash with a preceptor, and I had difficulty navigating it. It was early in my third year... I had a difficult time learning from that person because the focus seemed to be on me and what I was good or not good at as opposed to the material and learning and growth. So it was...'you do this well and this not well', as opposed to teaching.
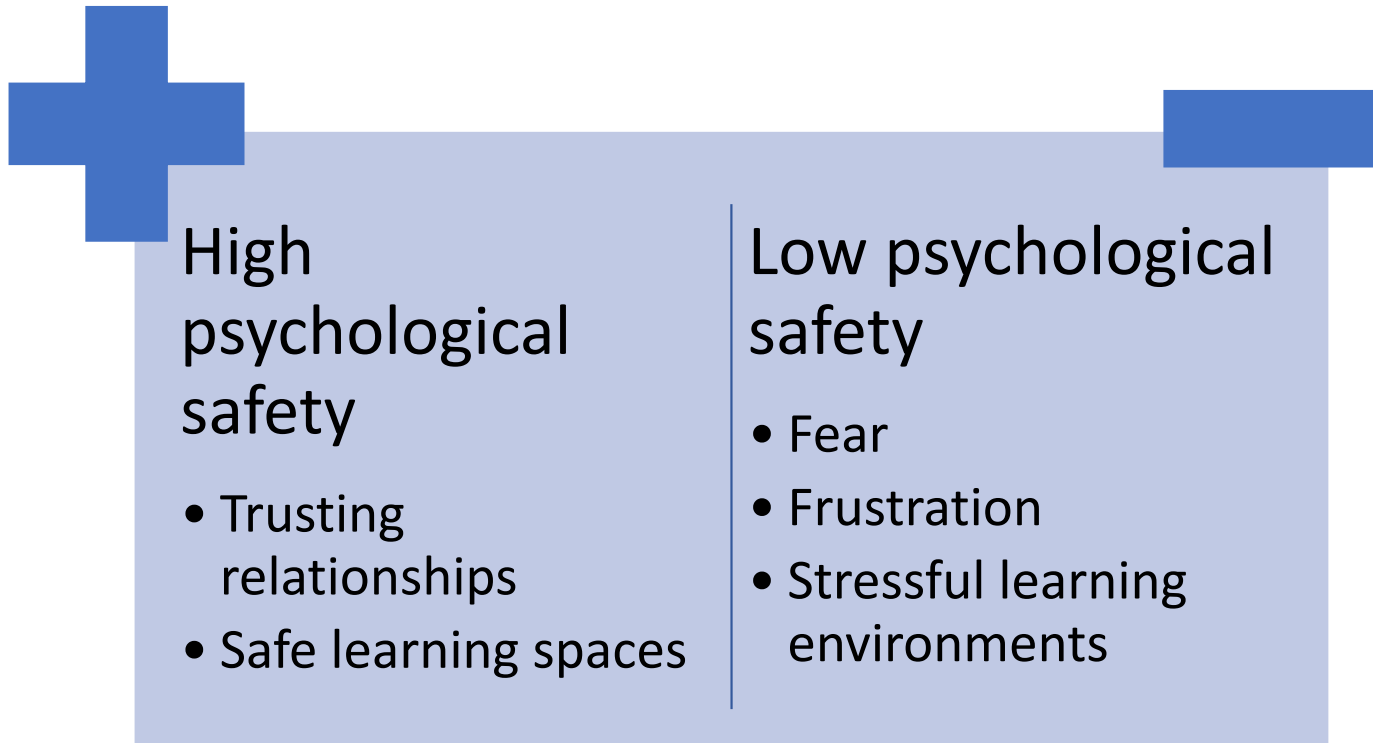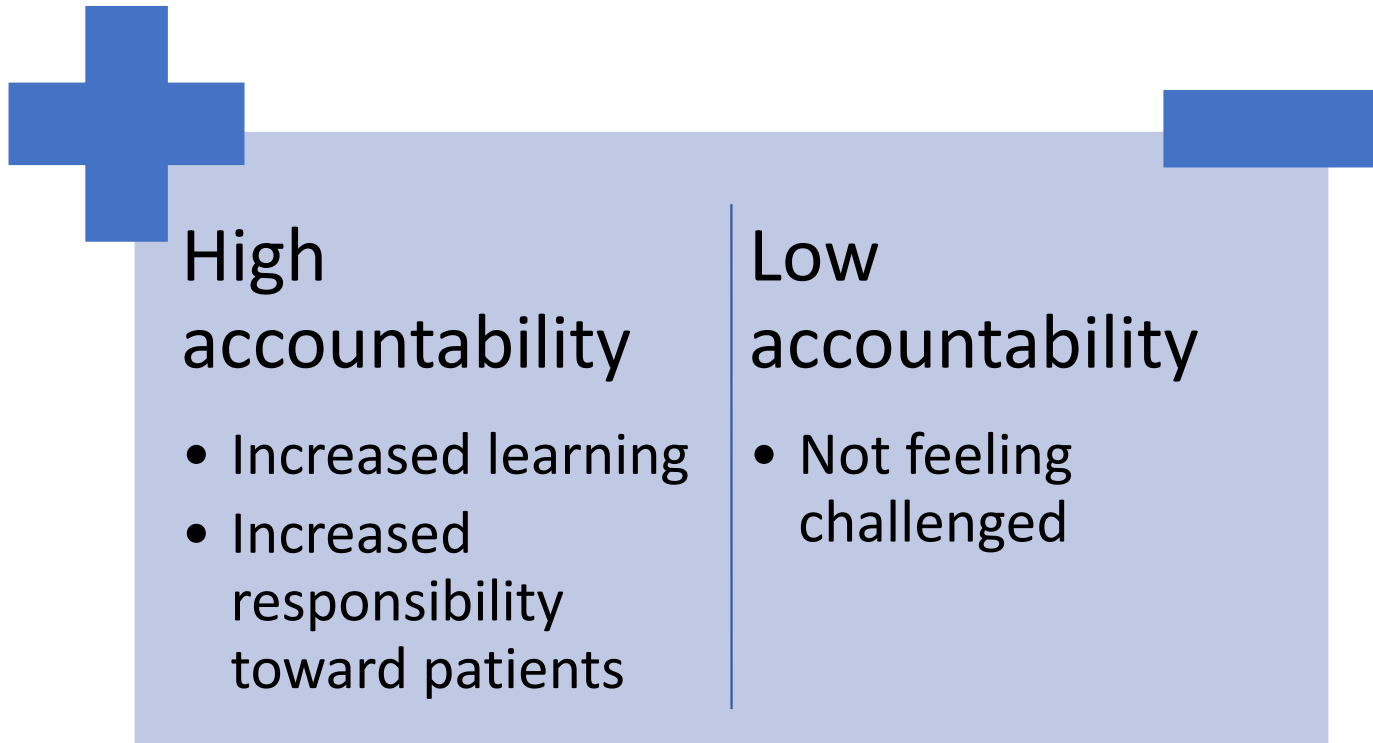
Trainees' Thoughts

Low Psychological Safety

And everything I did…was wrong…There was one time when the nurses were chatting with me…and she cut me off and said, "You are not good enough to talk while you are doing something!" And so that was challenging because it felt like I couldn't do anything right. There is a point that tough love makes you work harder to know the answers to the tough questions, and there is a point where it is pointless, and so no matter what you do you are going to be wrong and that is just discouraging. And I don't think I learned very much because you get so frustrated that it is hard to glean anything from the experience.

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Latessa et al

High psychological safety

- Trusting relationships
- Safe learning spaces

Low psychological safety

- Fear
- Frustration
- Stressful learning environments

Latessa et al

High accountability	Low accountability
• Increased learning • Increased responsibility toward patients	• Not feeling challenged

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Psychological safety and performance standards

	High Standards/Accountability	Low Standards/Accountability
High Psychological Safety	Learning & High Performance Zone	Comfort Zone
Low Psychological Safety	Anxiety Zone	Apathy Zone

- Does not mean "anything goes"
- Does not mean work is "comfortable"
- Does not mean staff are not held accountable

Edmondson, Amy C. *The Fearless Organization*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Culture of Safety in Healthcare

Commitment to a culture of safety by leadership and frontline staff leads to better working environments for staff and better outcomes for patients

Staff

Decreased workplace injuries

Greater job satisfaction

Greater safety event reporting

Reduced burnout

Patients

Decreased patient falls

Decreased medication errors

Decreased readmissions

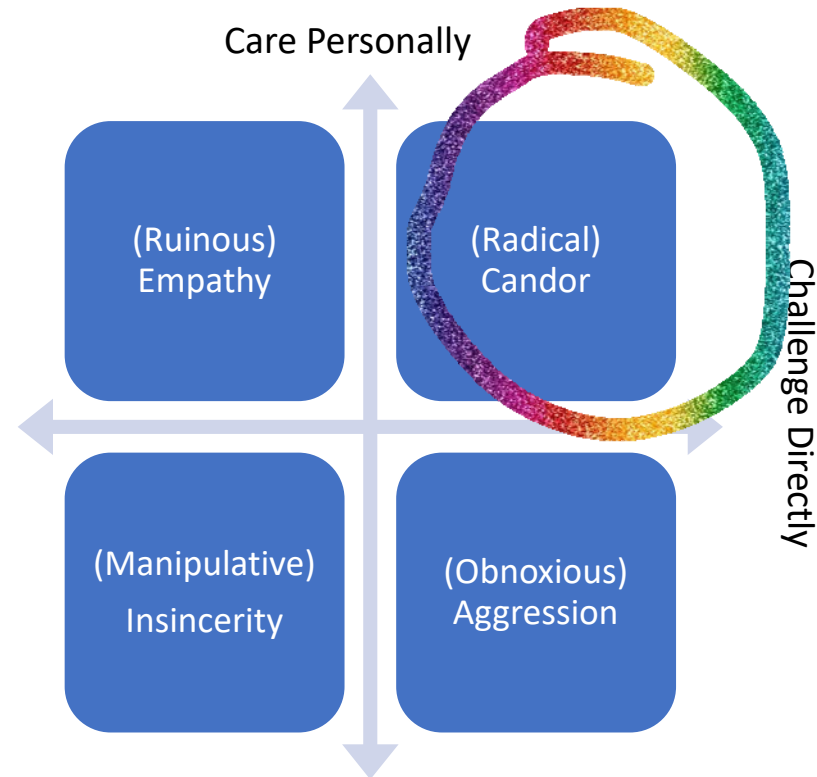Improved quality of care

Improved satisfaction

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High Reliability Organizations

- Organizations that experience fewer safety events and catastrophes despite that their operations are complex and high-risk

- Require constant vigilance
    - Preoccupation with failure
    - Reluctance to simplify explanations for operations, successes, and failures
    - Sensitivity to operations (situation awareness)
    - Deference to frontline expertise
    - Commitment to resilience

- *Everyone is expected to share concerns with others and the organizational climate is such that all staff members are comfortable speaking up about potential safety problems.*

Strategies to Increase Psychological Safety

Fostering Psychological Safety

- **Think of candor and conflict as tools for collaboration**
  - Conflict is not a contest; keep mutual goals in mind
  - Criticism is not a "loss"; serves to improve
  - Suggestions can build on each other

Radical Candor

Care Personally

Challenge Directly

(Ruinous) Empathy

(Radical) Candor

(Manipulative) Insincerity

(Obnoxious) Aggression

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Fostering Psychological Safety

- **Be empathetic and compassionate**
  - "Just like me" reflection:
    This person has beliefs, perspectives, and opinions, just like me
    This person has hopes, anxieties, and vulnerabilities, just like me
    This person wants to feel respected, appreciated, and competent, just like me
    This person wishes for peace, joy, and happiness, just like me.
    Etc, … just like me

- **Be humble**
  - Lead with humility
  - Share your mistakes

BTW…

"Humility" – the state of being humble, and "humble" are derived from the Latin word "humilis," which means "low"

- "For many, the lowness in both humility and humble is something worth cultivating."

Fostering Psychological Safety

- **Anticipate reactions and plan your response**
  - What holes can you poke in your own message?
  - What counterpoints can be made to anticipated objections?
  - Think through all the ways your message can be received and structure it so your goal is clear

- **Avoid blame; adopt a learning mindset**
  - You don't know the whole story
  - Be naturally curious, open-minded
 - "humble inquiry"

Fostering Psychological Safety

- **Encourage and model use of safety tools**
  - Speak up/ARCC - Ask a question; Request; Concern; Chain of command
  - Ask clarifying questions
  - Question and confirm
  - Be mindful/STAR – Stop, Think, Act, Review
  - Pull the Andon Cord
    - Empowers employees to have control over correcting problems

Shifting to a Learning Focus and Reporting without Fear

	Suggestions	Examples
	Explore what went wrong in a respectful, trusting way	• 5:1 feedback • High impact conversations
	Educate staff on benefits of reporting and talk about what fair & just culture means	• Build into orientation/competencies
	Celebrate and recognize those who report	• Staff meetings, huddles, newsletters, emails • Personal: in-person, thank you • Ask for their ideas • Reporting goals for dept → reward • Further ideas from Patient Safety Authority
	Share stories about improvements based on reports	• Emphasize improvement may not have been made without the report • Track and share with staff: visible progress toward a goal
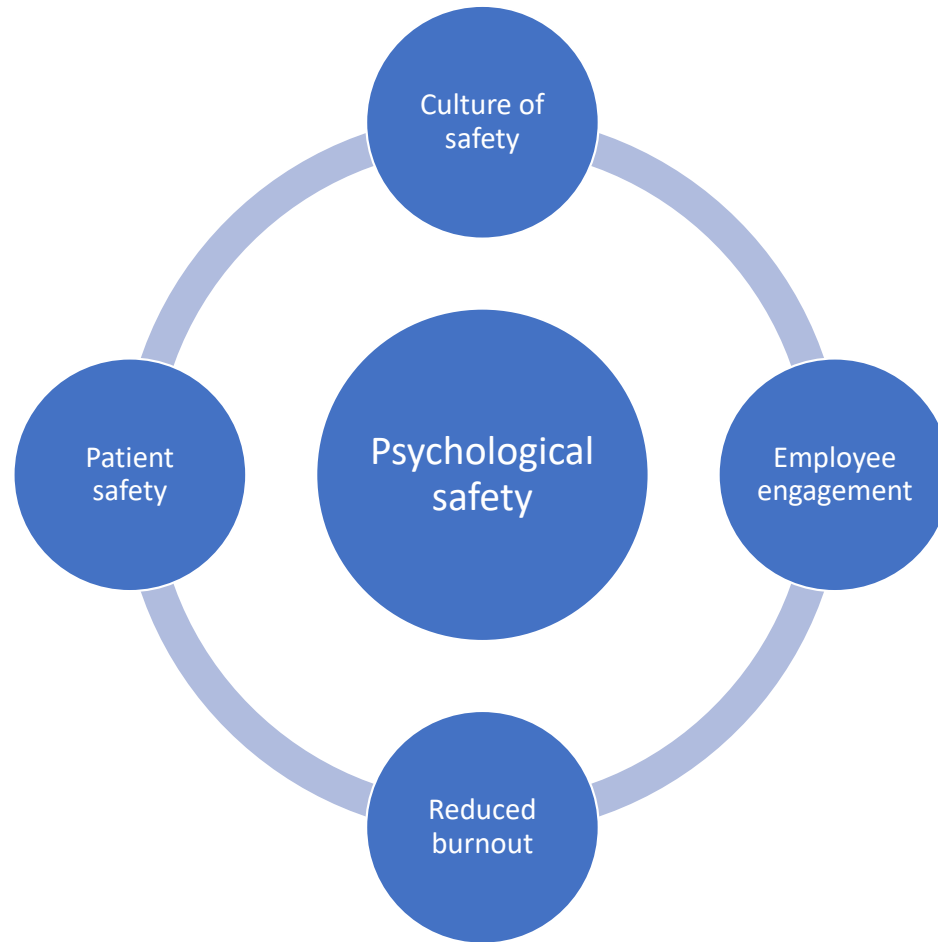
Thank you!
Questions? Comments?

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