



Why Psychological Safety Matters Now More Than Ever

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| Three Key Questions

1

What is psychological safety and why does it matter?

2

What forces are currently challenging our psychological safety?

3

What can you do to increase psychological safety?

| Content Caution

This session will describe events related to death, violence, and suicide. This content will be discussed during slides 10 and 11. **There will be no visual images.**

Some participants may wish to turn off their volume during this section of the presentation.

What is Psychological Safety?

A photograph of two women in a professional setting. The woman in the foreground is a Black woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and a necklace. She is looking down at a tablet held by the woman behind her. The woman in the background is a white woman with dark hair, also wearing a grey shirt and a necklace, looking at the tablet. The background is blurred, showing other people in a meeting.

Psychological safety is the **ability to reveal one's true self and opinions without fear** that doing so will lead to negative repercussions in terms of reputation, career or status

Poll Question #1

Poll Question #1

Which of these is **almost always true** for your workgroup?

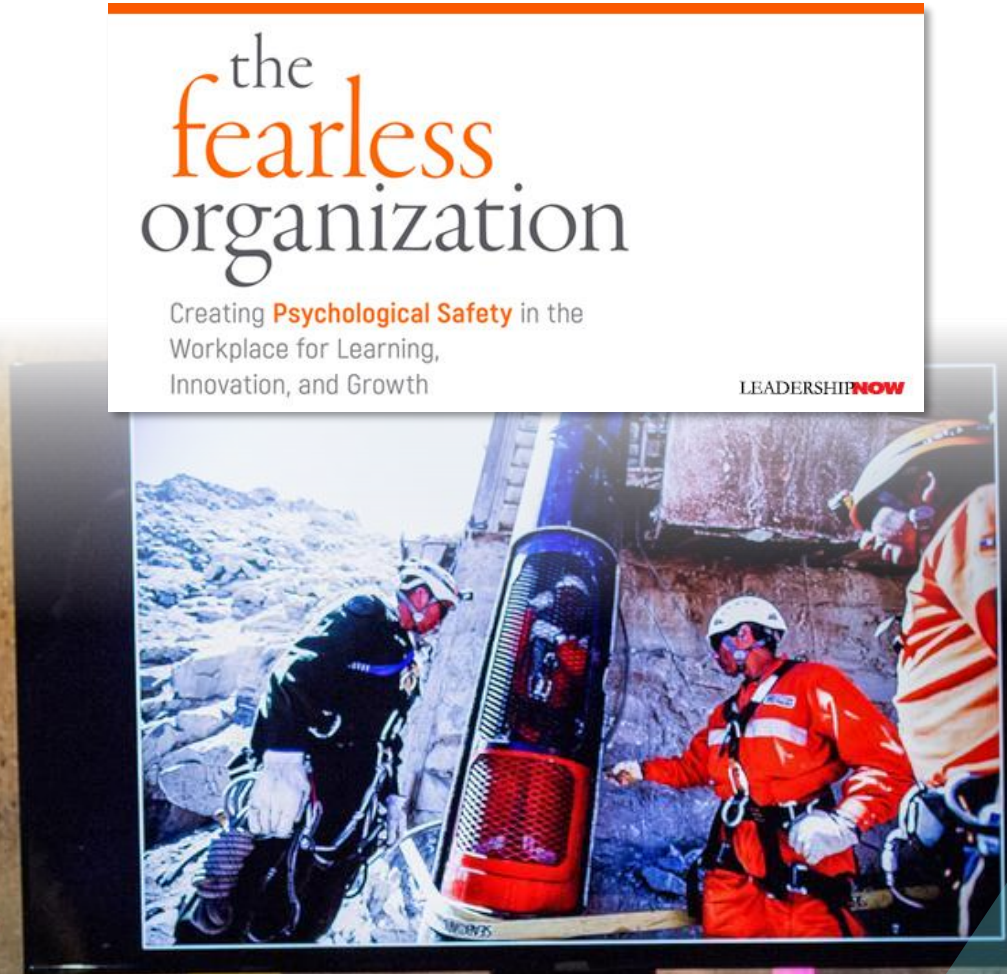
1. When someone **makes a mistake** in this team, it is not held against them
2. In this team, it is easy to discuss **difficult issues** and **problems**
3. In this team, people are never rejected for **being different**
4. It is completely safe to **take a risk** on this team
5. It is easy to ask other members of this team for **help**
6. Members of this team **value and respect** each other's contributions

Based on: Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44, 350-383.

What's Good for Google is Good for Us



Amy Edmondson



Better Teams Make More Mistakes



Wait — what?

WORK UNIT	REPORTED ERRORS
MEMORIAL 1	23.68*
UNIVERSITY 1	17.23
UNIVERSITY 3	13.19
MEMORIAL 2	11.02
MEMORIAL 4	8.6
MEMORIAL 5	10.31
UNIVERSITY 2	9.37
MEMORIAL 3	2.34




* preventable and potential adverse drug events (ADEs) per 1000 patient-days





Poll Question #2

A person with long dark hair, wearing a blue dress, is sitting at a light-colored wooden table. Their right arm is resting on the table, and their hand is near their face in a contemplative pose. In front of them is a white ceramic cup of coffee on a matching saucer. The background is a window with a view of greenery outside, slightly blurred. The overall mood is calm and reflective.

What makes
us and people
in our work
groups
hesitant to
speak up?

What Makes Us Hesitant to Speak Up or Participate Fully?



Power
differentials



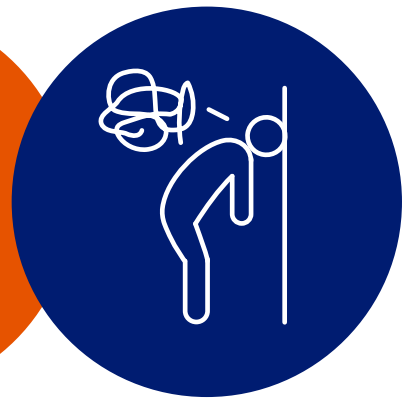
Fear of
being wrong
or sounding
stupid



Fear of
reprisal



Previous
bad
encounters

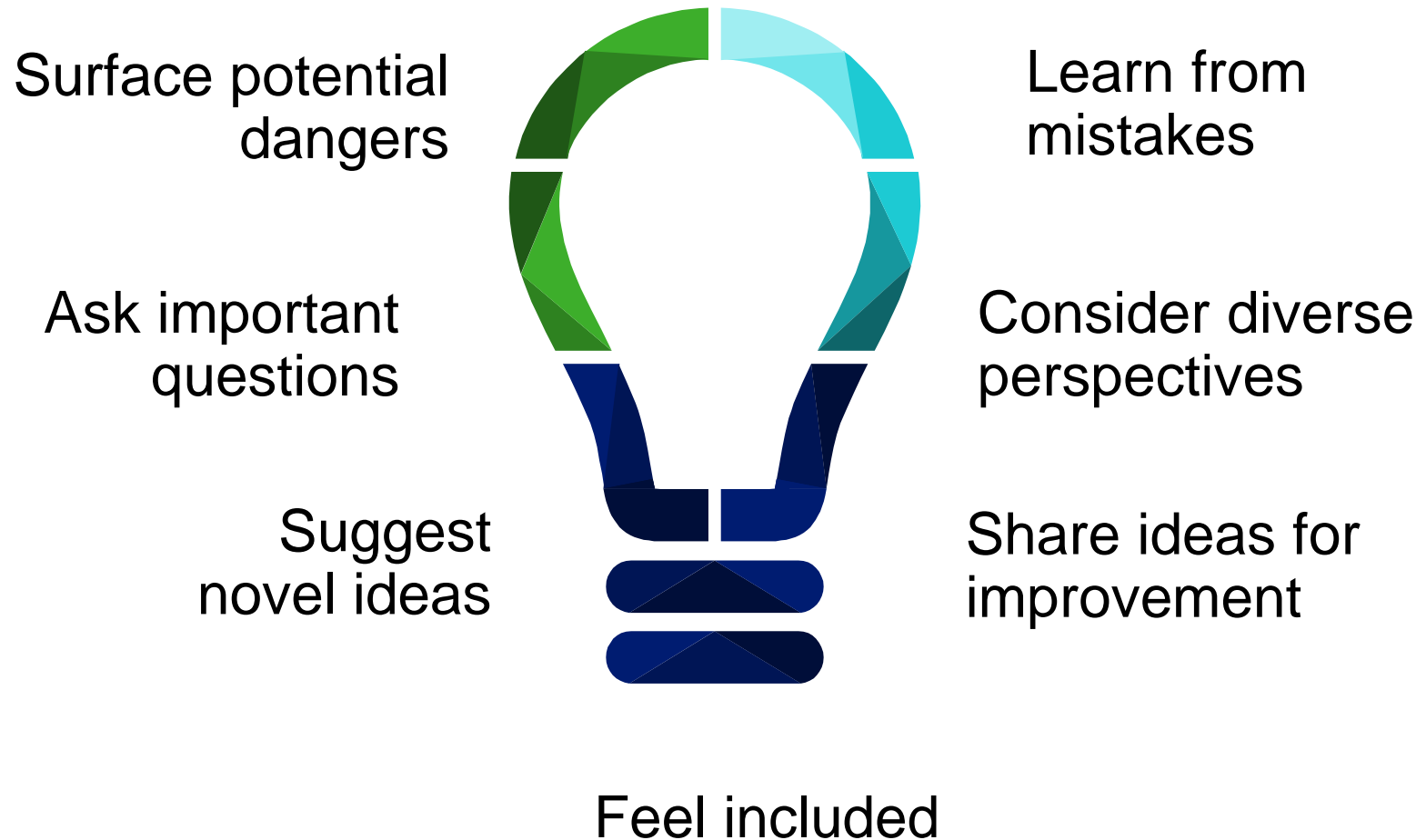


“Who am I to
engage on
this?”
thoughts



Psychological standing refers to whether a person feels they have a legitimate right to engage with respect to a cause or issue.

When Team Members Feel Safe, They Are More Likely to:



Why Does Psychological Safety Matter Now More than Ever?

A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue sweater, is seated at a wooden desk, looking down at a silver laptop. The background is a blurred office environment with a treadmill and other furniture.

New challenges without obvious solutions

Old problems that require new thinking

VUCA World



Volatility



Uncertainty

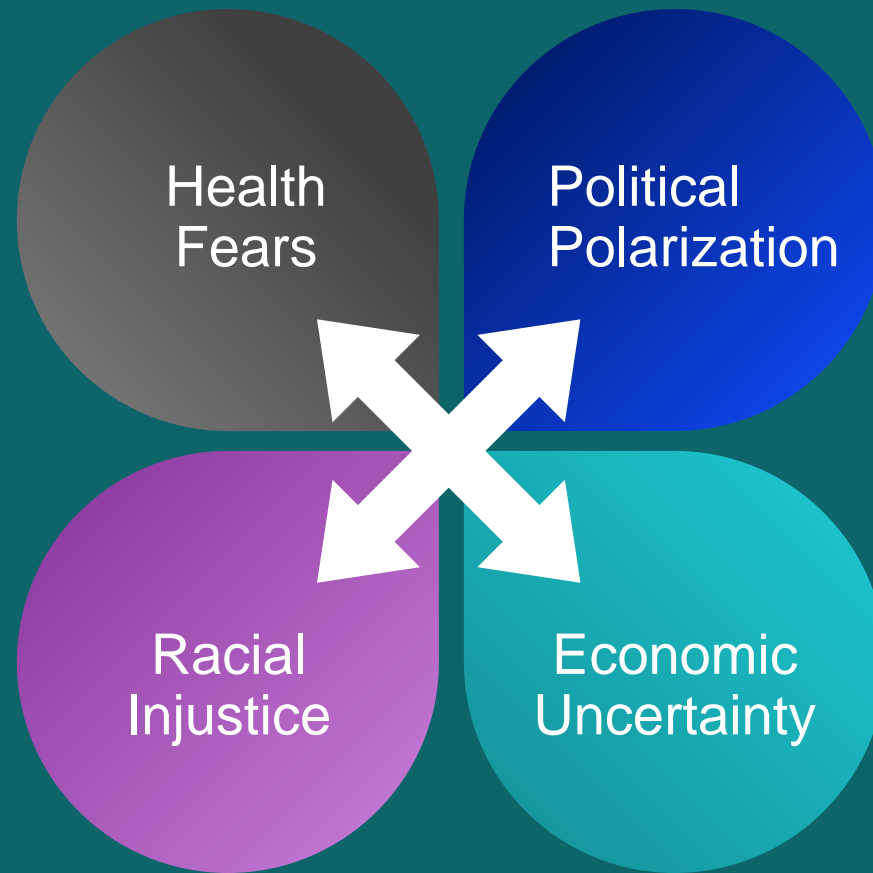


Complexity



Ambiguity

Hard Problems with No Obvious Answers



Health Fears

The New York Times



DAVE SANDERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Coronavirus May Kill 100,000 to 240,000 in U.S. Despite Actions, Officials Say

Actually,
we are
at
850,000
deaths
so far

Yes to Masks? No to Masks? Yes to Vax? No to Vax?



Systemic Racism



Evolving Vocabulary

White Exceptionalism
White Silence
White Fragility
Intersectionality
Heteronormative
Tone Policing
BIPOC
Structural Racism
White Privilege
Cisgender
Assimilation
Cultural Appropriation
Optical Allyship

Chat

How have conversations about racism affected psychological safety in your workplace?

Political Divisiveness



Economic and Labor Uncertainty



**WE'RE HIRING
NOW.
AS IN RIGHT
NOW.**

Poll Question #3

Poll Question #3

How have events that have occurred since March of 2020 affected your level of psychological safety? (Multiple Choice: Choose all that apply)

1. I have felt pressure to carry out decisions that made me uneasy
2. I have had to make decisions without adequate information
3. Worrying about my personal security has made me less likely to “rock the boat” at work
4. I have sensed that my values and my colleagues’ values lack alignment
5. High levels of uncertainty have made it challenging to focus at work

SCARF Model



Rock, David. "SCARF: A brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others." NeuroLeadership journal 1, no. 1 (2008): 44-52.

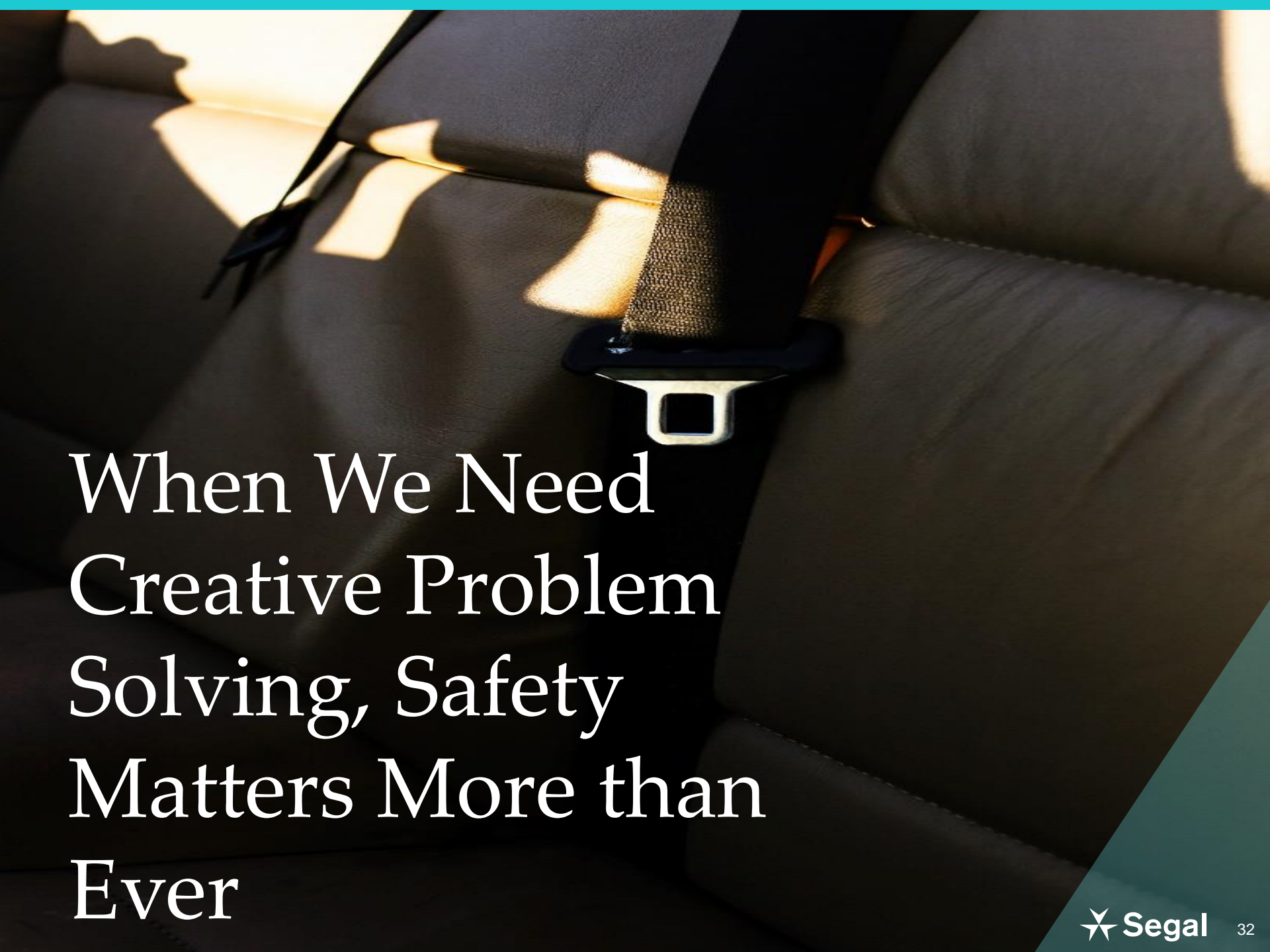
Poll Question #4

Poll Question #4

Which element of the SCARF model is most important to you

(Choose one)

1. Status
2. Certainty
3. Autonomy
4. Relatedness
5. Fairness

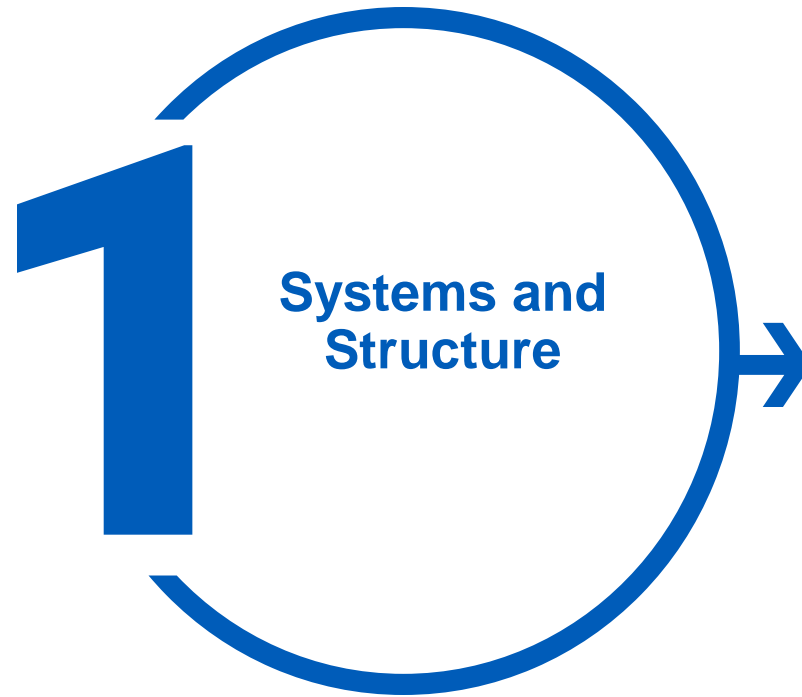


When We Need
Creative Problem
Solving, Safety
Matters More than
Ever

What Supports Psychological Safety

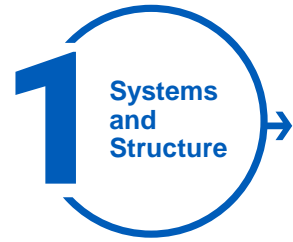


What Supports Psychological Safety





Systems & Structure

Multiple Reporting Options



If It's Not Safe, Say So!

National Aeronautics and Space Administration 



**You can make a difference.
You *can* be anonymous.**


The NASA Safety Reporting System (NSRS)
supplements your local hazard reporting channels and provides you with an anonymous, voluntary, and responsive reporting channel to notify NASA's upper management of your concerns about hazards. Your report is guaranteed to receive prompt attention.

Use NSRS if

- You have reported a hazard locally and have seen no action taken;
- You are not satisfied with the response to a reported hazard; or
- You fear reprisal if you were to report the hazard locally.

The NASA Safety Reporting System
Download the reporting form at sma.nasa.gov/nsrs

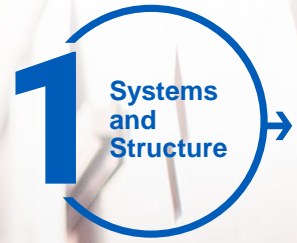
**Send completed form or a letter
to the following address:**
NASA Safety Reporting System
P.O. Box 5826
Bethesda, MD 20824-9913



www.nasa.gov

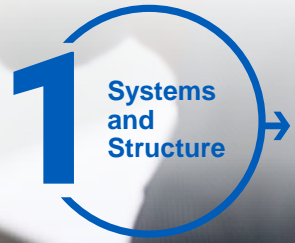
Systems & Structure

Checklists and Rubrics



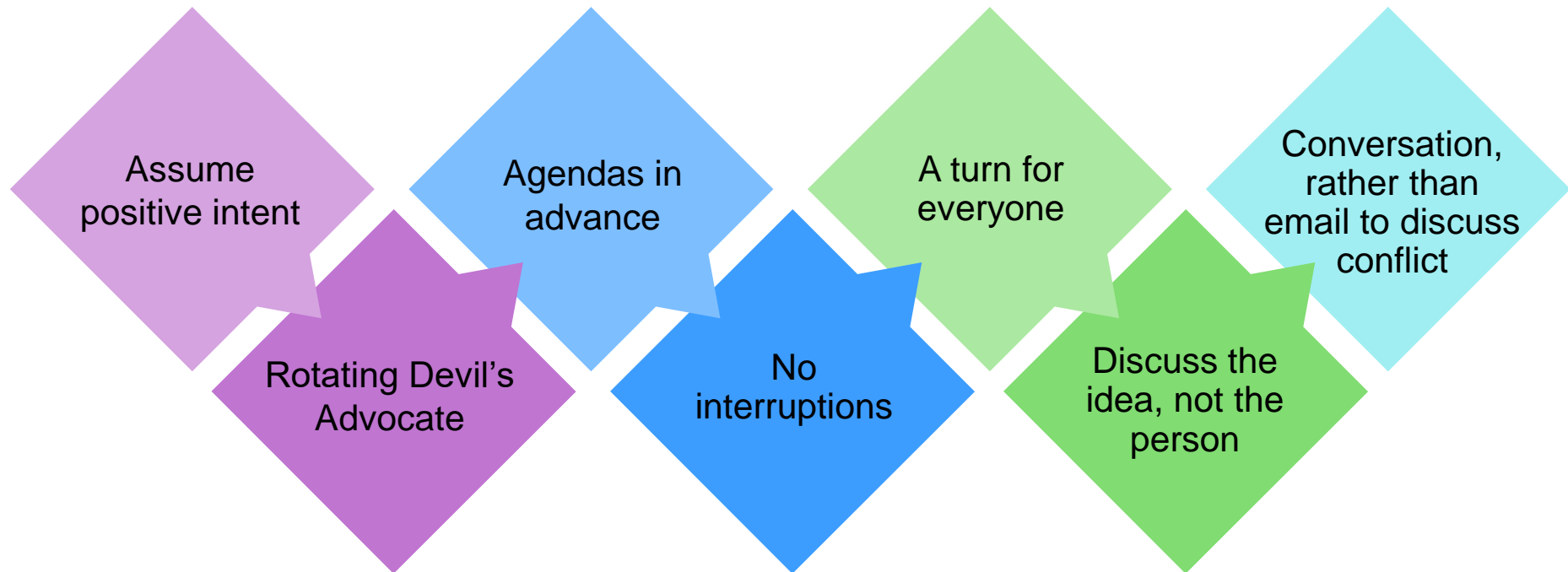
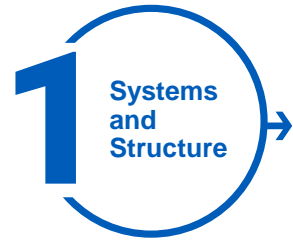
Systems & Structure

Explaining the “Why” of Decisions and How They Will be Made



Systems & Structures

Group Agreements/Operating Principles



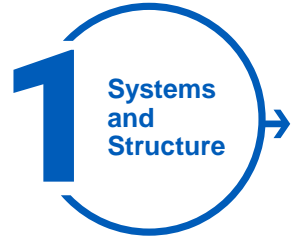
Chat

How would you respond?

When Camilla made a suggestion in your meeting, Anthony replied, “Can we all agree that from here forward, we will propose only *intelligent* ideas?” (You are a colleague of both)

Systems & Structure

Creating Options for Intervention



Direct

Take action

Distract

Create a diversion

Delegate

Enlist help

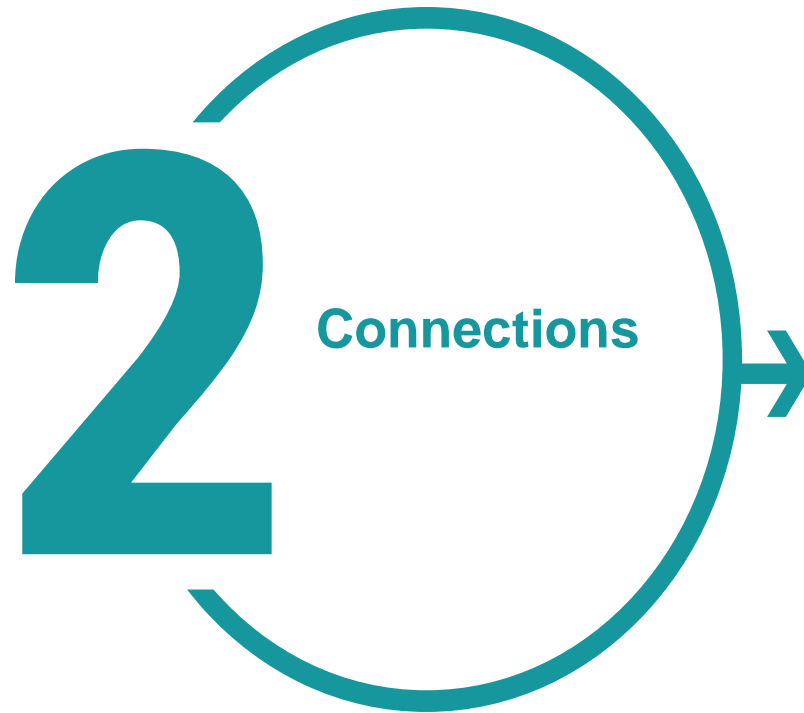
Document

Use notes, video, formal reporting

Delay

Check in later

What Supports Psychological Safety



Connections

Mix Up Your Project Teams

2 Connections →



Connections

Employee Resource Groups



Connections

Communities of Practice



Connections

Strategic Onboarding



What Supports Psychological Safety





Tanitoluwa Adewumi, pictured in 2019, just became the newest national chess master in the U.S. at age 10.

Dia Dipasupil/Getty Images



What happens when you are wrong?

Ego-driven science

- My hypothesis can't be wrong
- Just do it again and be more careful
- This project is over
- I can't let anyone know that I am a failure
 - Fear
 - Cover it up
 - Paralysis

Science-driven science (CHOOSE THIS ONE!)

- What aspect of the hypothesis is wrong?
- What new variables can we test?
- What can we learn from this new finding?
- I am not defined by data that didn't fit my hypothesis
 - I will learn how to deal with science when it doesn't go my way
 - I will take pride in my work and persevere

Learning Orientation

After-Action Reviews



**What was
supposed to
happen?**

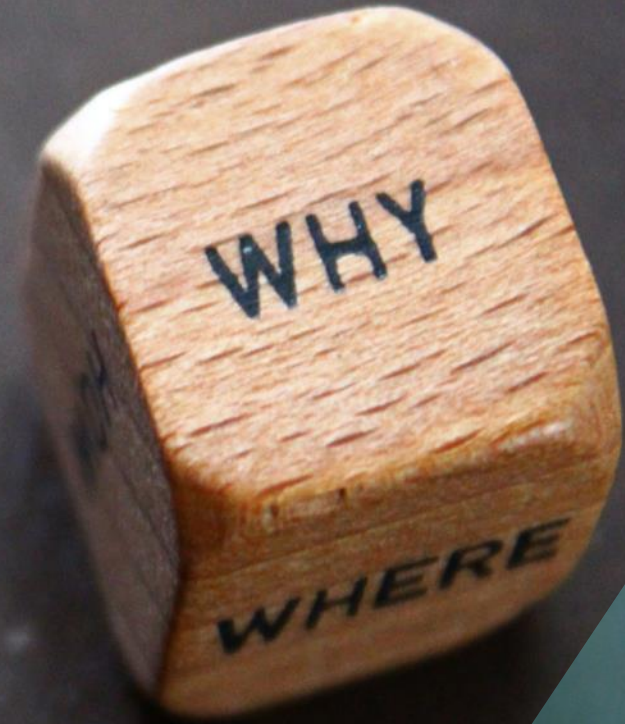
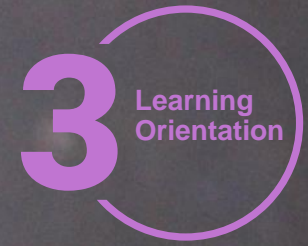
**What actually
happened?**

**Why was
there a
difference?**

**What can
we learn
from this?**

Learning Orientation

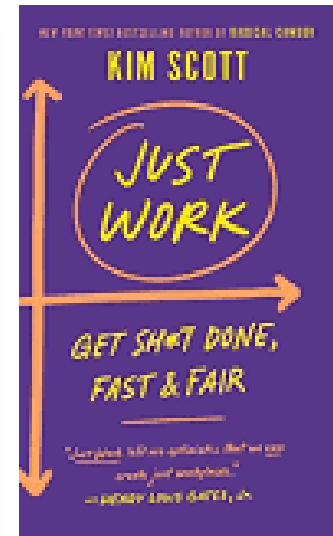
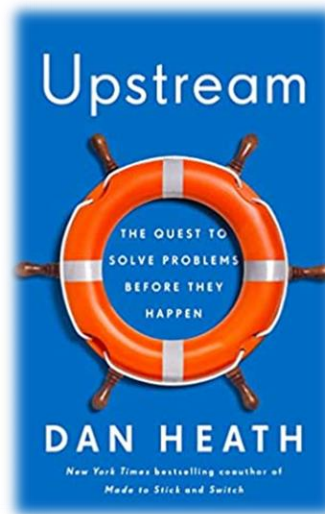
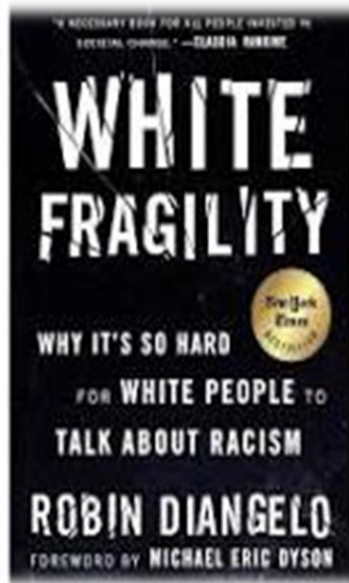
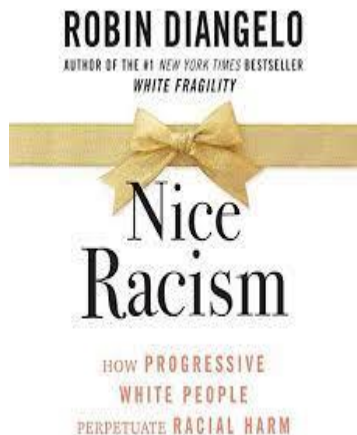
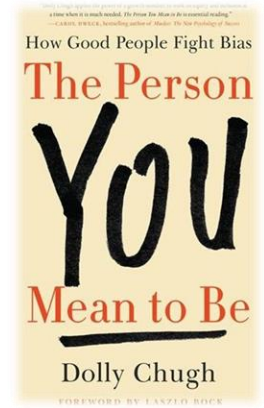
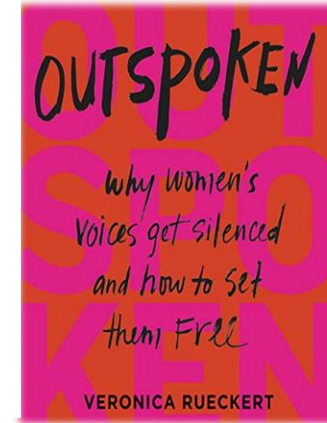
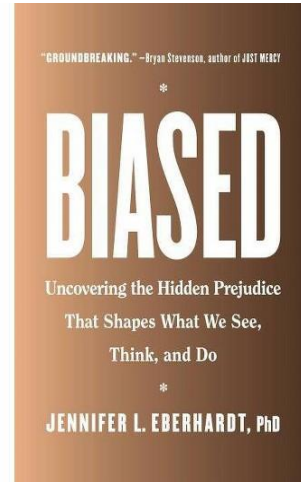
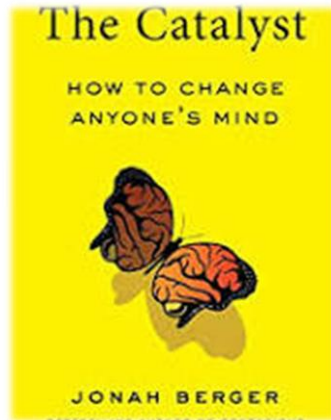
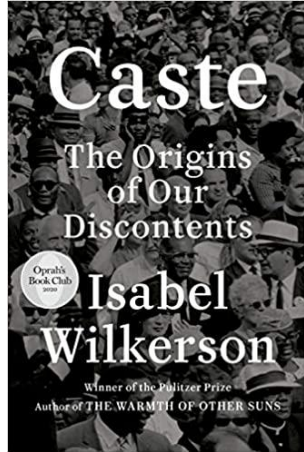
Ask a Question that Others Might Have

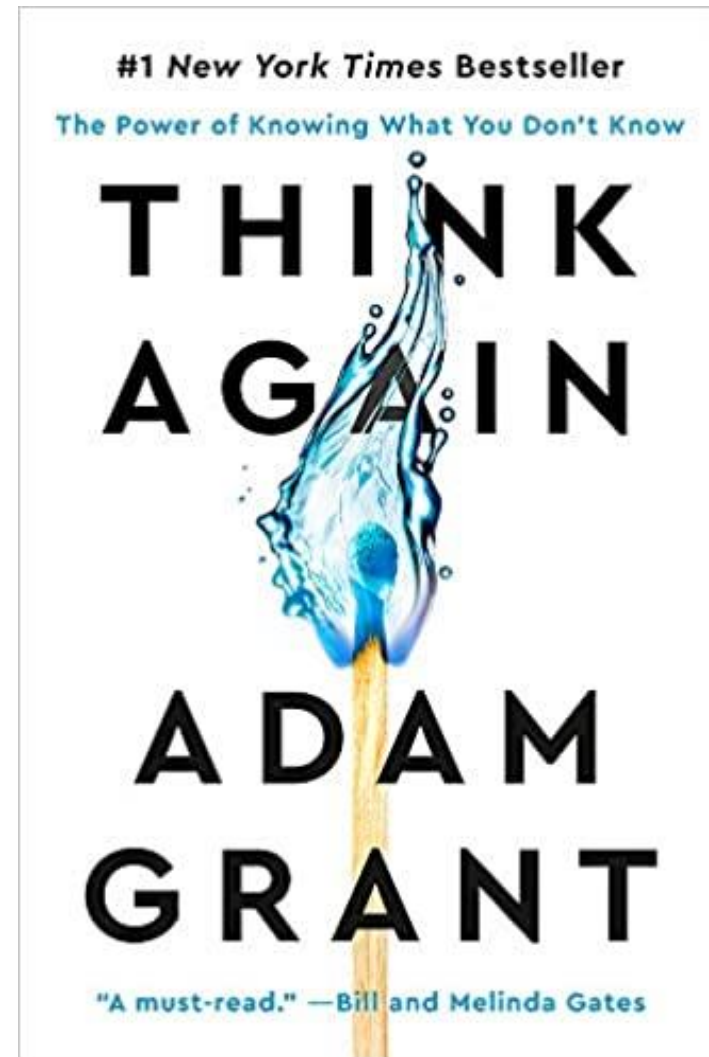


Learning Orientation

Talk About What You Are Reading

3 Learning Orientation





Learning Orientation

Admit What You Didn't Know/Got Wrong



We built this city.
We built this city
on...

Learning Orientation

Admit What You Didn't Know/Got Wrong



We built this
city on
sausage rolls



Learning Orientation

Ask for Help



Learning Orientation

Use Pilot Projects and Trials



Learning Orientation

Experiment

1 | Tests

2 | Pilots

3 | Trial Periods

4 | Phased Approaches

SCARF Model

Status Feedback, advice, recognition, after-action reviews, “We are all learning”

Certainty Clear expectations, consistent behavior, share what you DO know

Autonomy Flexible schedules, no micromanagement

Relatedness Effective onboarding, encourage connections

Fairness Equitable policies, co-created ground rules, explain “why” of decisions

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Chat

What are some next steps for you?

Let's Continue the Conversation



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