

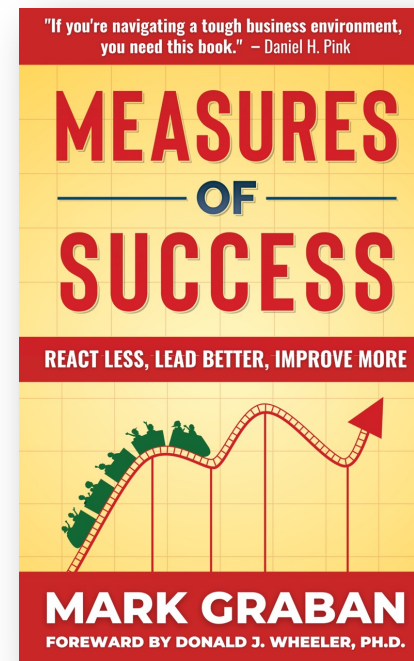
Psychological Safety

A Pre-Condition for Continuous Improvement

Slides & More: MarkGraban.com/PSMarch2023

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What is Psychological Safety?

- “Psychological safety is a social condition in which you feel:
 1. Included
 2. Safe to learn
 3. Safe to contribute
 4. Safe to challenge the status quo
- ... all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way.”



Why Psychological Safety?

“You will lose
top talent
without this.”

Timothy R. Clark
LeaderFactor

The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety



Google's Project Aristotle

- Q: What makes teams here most successful?

**The Level of
Psychological Safety**

Why Psychological Safety?

“The level of psychological safety on a team is the central measure of that team’s culture, health, and vitality.”

What is Psychological Safety?

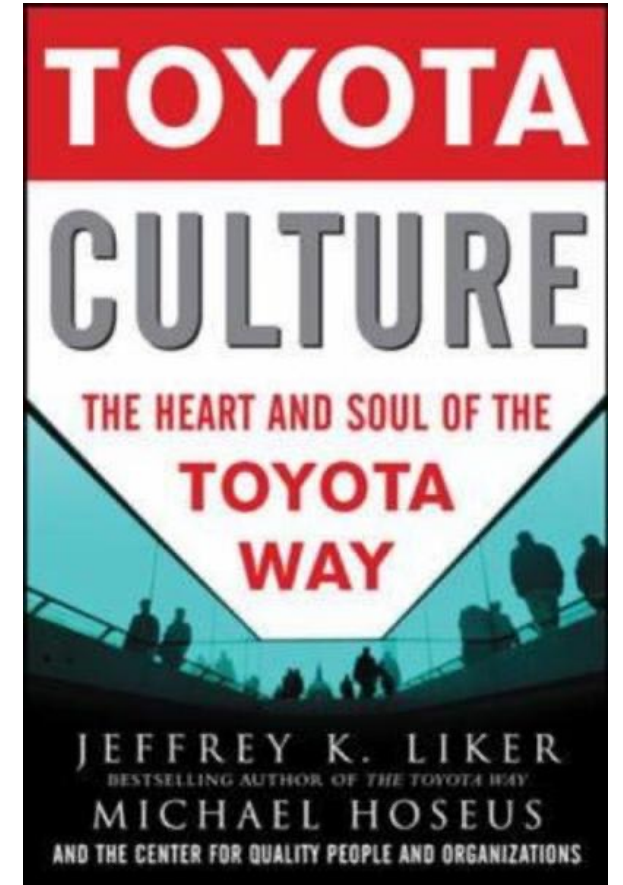
- “Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be
 - punished or humiliated
- for speaking up with
 - ideas
 - questions
 - concerns or
 - mistakes.”

Amy Edmondson
Harvard Business School
The Fearless Organization



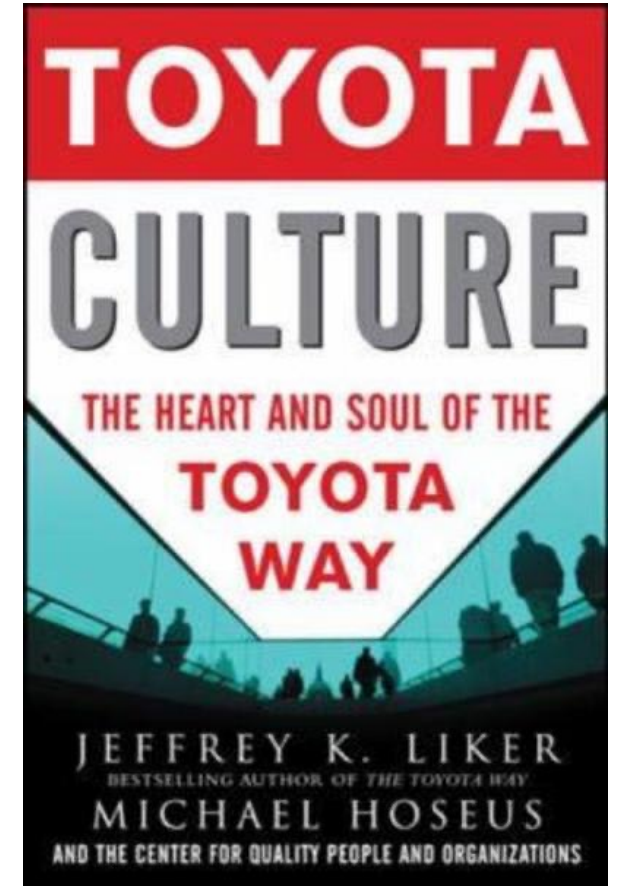
For a World-Class “Lean” Culture

“[Toyota believes] people must be treated fairly, they must feel psychologically and physically safe and secure in their jobs, they must believe that any concerns they have will be taken very seriously and given due process.”



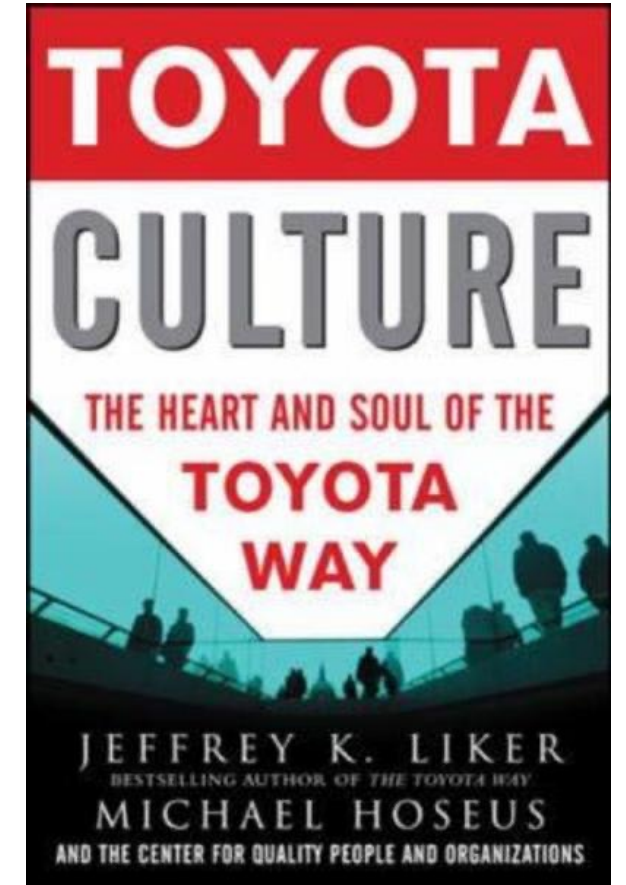
For a World-Class “Lean” Culture

“Without trust in their employers, employees are reluctant to admit to the existence of problems and learn that it is safest to hide them.”



For a World-Class “Lean” Culture

“Mistakes are OK, as long as people learn from them.”

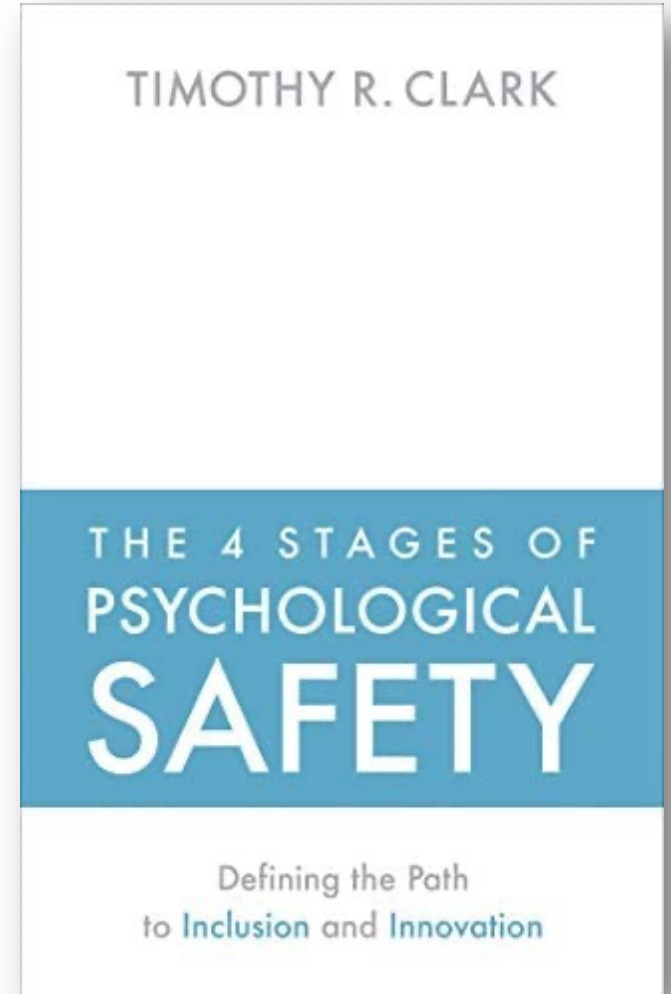


Clark's Shorter Definition

“An environment of rewarded vulnerability”

Vulnerability =

“exposure to the risk of harm or loss”



“Vulnerable” Acts

- ANY human interaction is a vulnerable act
 - Will it be punished or rewarded?
- Vulnerable acts are not “bad”
 - These are acts we hopefully feel safe doing
- Vulnerable does not imply “weakness”
- We can’t tell people to “be more vulnerable”
 - Choosing to speak up is not a matter of courage or character...
 - It’s a function of CULTURE

What Are Vulnerable Acts at Work?

- “exposure to the risk of harm or loss”
- Speaking up to answer that question is one!
- Is the survey less vulnerable?



A Partial List of Vulnerable Acts

- asking a question
- sharing an idea
- acknowledging we don't know something
- saying “I made a mistake”
- sharing an experience
- just showing up
- sharing something about yourself
- doing anything for the first time
- asking for help
- introducing yourself
- calling out a potential error
- disagreeing with somebody

The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety

Teams progress through these stages as they intentionally create cultures of rewarded vulnerability.

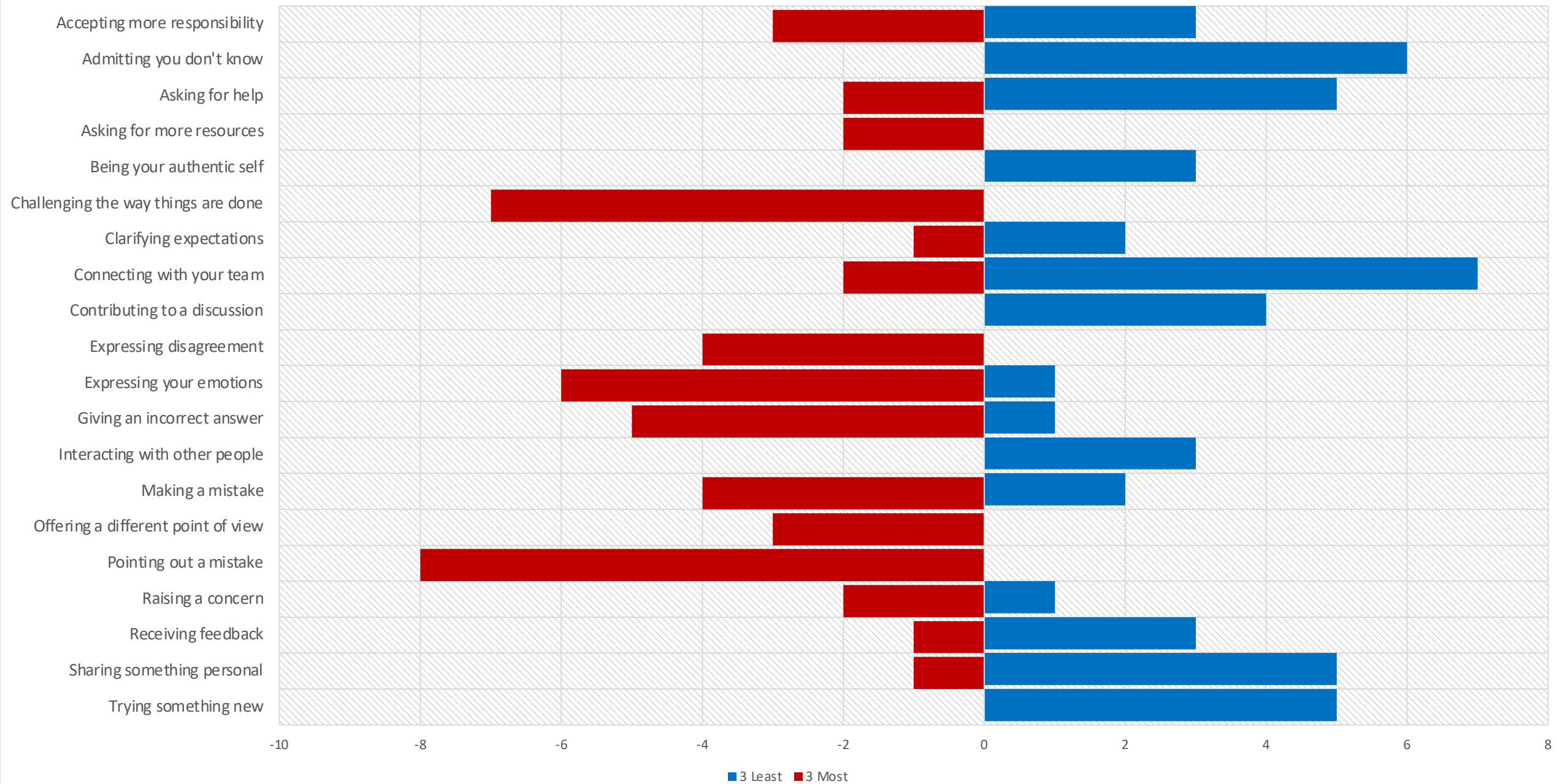
- 1. Inclusion Safety:** Can I be my authentic self?
- 2. Learner Safety:** Can I learn and grow?
- 3. Contributor Safety:** Can I contribute and create value?
- 4. Challenger Safety:** Can I be candid about change?

... all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way.”

How Psychologically Safe Do I Feel?

- It's not yes/no – it's a spectrum
 - To what degree?
 - It's a feeling or a perception
 - An individual decision to speak up or not
- Psychological Safety is an **outcome** of:
 - Our interactions with others, especially leaders

Vulnerable Acts - # of Times Appearing in "3 Most" and "3 Least"



You Can Measure the Feeling

Possible scoring range is -100 to +100



74

Stage 1
Inclusion Safety



76

Stage 2
Learner Safety



74

Stage 3
Contributor Safety



52

Stage 4
Challenger Safety

Percentile: **74th**

81st

76th

77th

KaiNexus CEO Greg Jacobson, M.D.

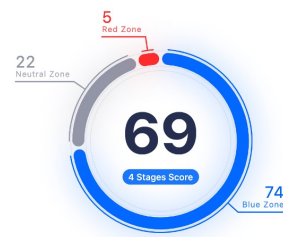
- “You can’t have a culture of continuous improvement without learning from mistakes.”



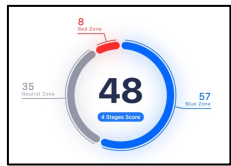
Black box = only direct reports

No box = rolls up to them

ALL COMPANY



TEAM 1



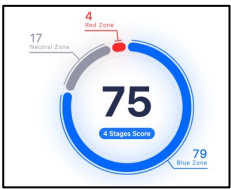
TEAM 2



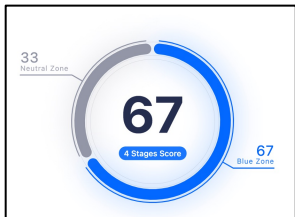
TEAM 3



SUB 1

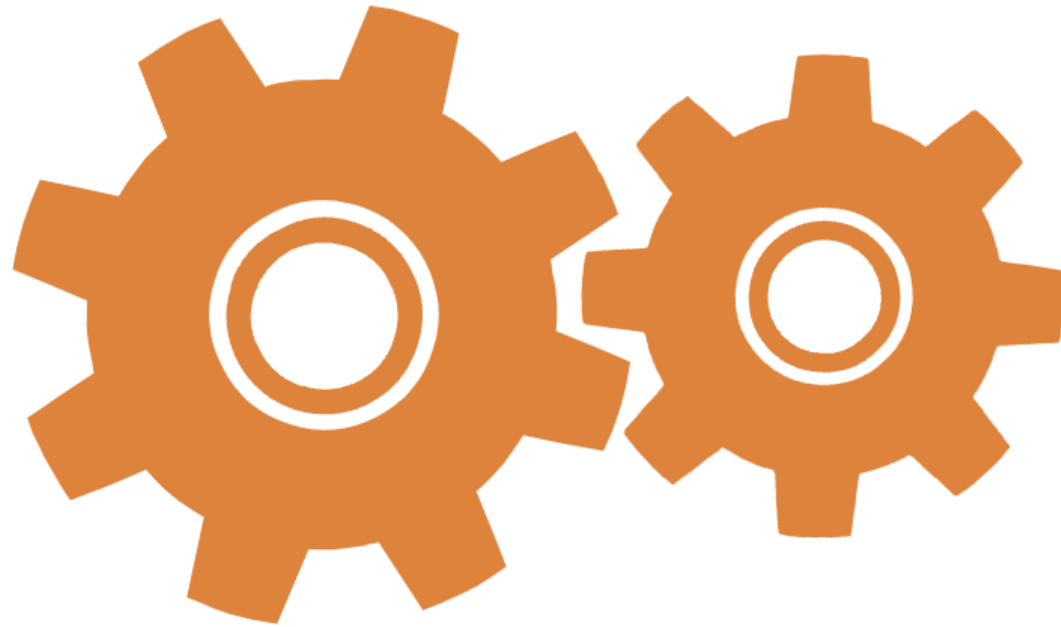


SUB 2



You Can Improve Psychological Safety

**Modeling
Vulnerable
Acts**



**Rewarding
Vulnerable
Acts**

How Does a Leader React to Bad News?



“I want to hear the bad news. I want to hear it fast.”



How Does a Leader React to Bad News?

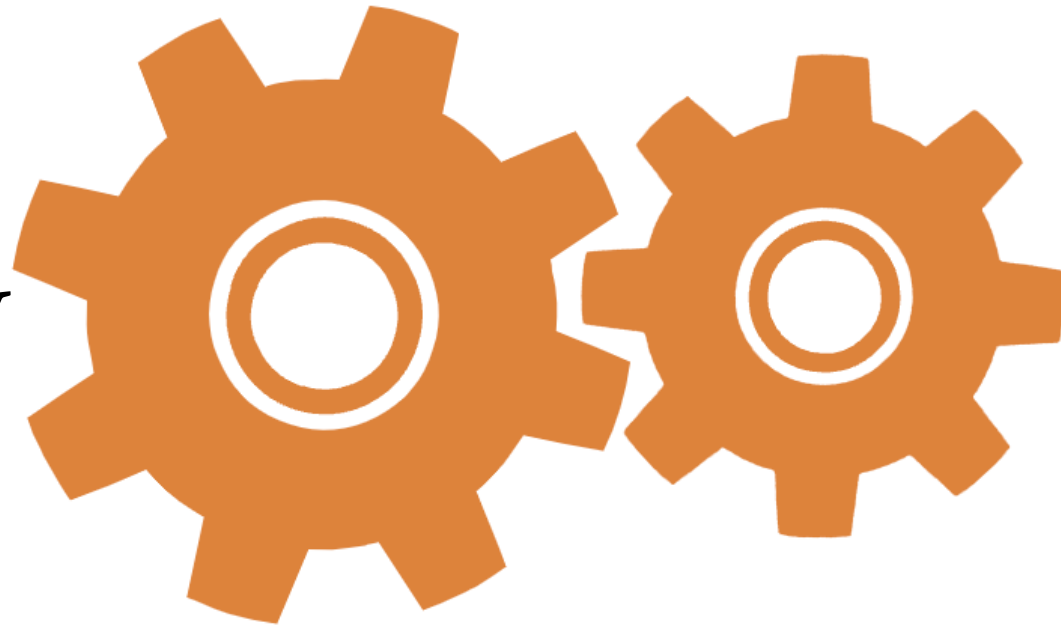


“The moment of truth:
Do you shoot the
messenger, or do you listen
even if you are unhappy?”



Leaders Can Destroy It

**Not
Leading by
Example**



**Punishing
Vulnerable
Acts**

What Psychological Safety is NOT (1)

- **Niceness** – false harmony, shying away from intellectual debate
- **Coddling** – overprotecting people from anxiety, fear, stress, adversity, and trauma
- **A Shield** – from accountability when you don't perform

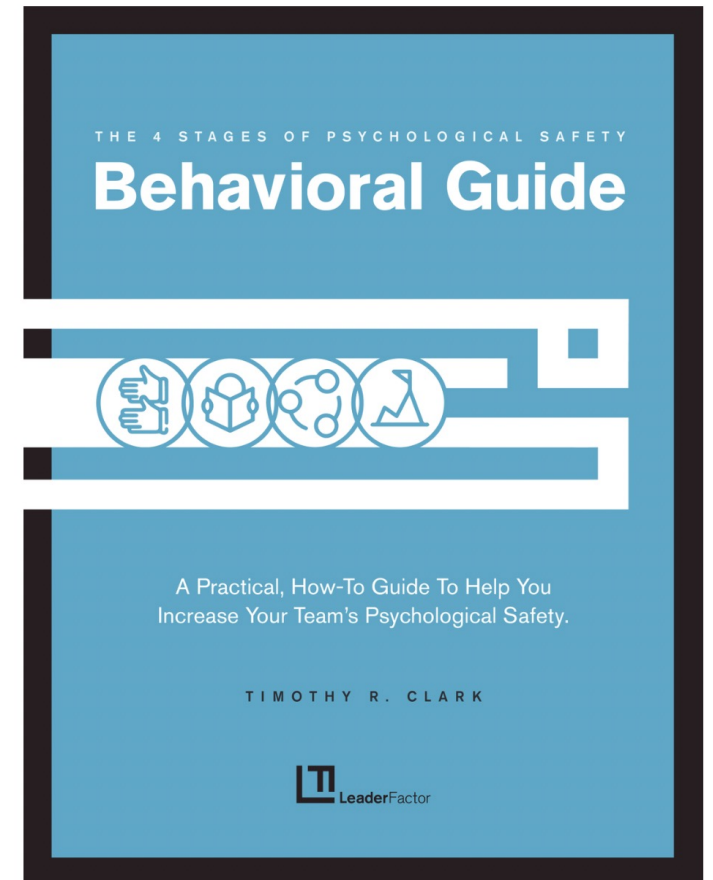
What Psychological Safety is NOT (2)

- **Consensus Decision Making** – but it DOES reduce power differentials based on title, etc.
- **Unearned Autonomy** – autonomy is earned through competence, not entitlement
- **Rhetorical Reassurances** – saying you should feel safe

33 Starting Point Behaviors

- <https://www.leaderfactor.com/resources/the-4-stages-behavioral-guide>
- Free PDF from LeaderFactor

- I've linked to it here:
 - <http://www.markgraban.com/MGMC2022>



Thank You!



- **Slides & More:**

<http://www.markgraban.com/PSMarch2023>

- **Email:** Mark@MarkGraban.com

- **Podcasts:** MyFavoriteMistakePodcast.com

