



LECTURE NOTES

By Dr. Olivia Oginska | SEVC 2025

Creating Psychological Safety in Your Team

Let's begin with a truth: **people don't leave jobs - they leave emotionally unsafe environments**. And in our high-pressure veterinary world, psychological safety isn't just a luxury. It's survival.

What Is Psychological Safety?

Amy Edmondson defined it as a *shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking* - meaning people feel free to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, and show up fully without fear of ridicule or punishment.

Ask yourself and your team:

- Can I express concerns openly?
 - Is failure seen as a moment for learning?
 - Are all voices treated equally, regardless of title?
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Diagnose Before You Prescribe

Before we build psychological safety, we must *assess it*. Use self-rating tools. Start with 10 simple workplace reflection questions. For example:

- "I feel safe to express my true opinions."
- "My unique skills are valued."
- "My leaders make me feel appreciated daily."



Where you or your team score below 7 - those are your focus areas. That's your roadmap.

And don't assume you know what your team thinks. **Survey them.** Blind spots are real - and dangerous. Without data, we lead on guesswork.

Whose Job Is It?

Short answer: **everyone's.**

Longer answer: *especially yours*, if you lead.

Even team members can build safety - but leaders set the tone.

The Four Horsemen of a Toxic Culture

Let's name the key destroyers of psychological safety. I call them the *Four Horsemen*:

1. **Reactivity** – Low emotional self-control. Drama. Doom-forecasting.
 2. **Incivility** – Sarcasm, gossip, eye-rolls, microaggressions. These erode trust silently.
 3. **Blame** – Playing the victim, critic, or rescuer in the drama triangle. Blame thrives in low-safety cultures.
 4. **Silence** – Withholding opinions. Avoiding hard conversations. Emotional disengagement.
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The Four Unicorns of a Healthy Culture

Thankfully, we have antidotes, the "Four Unicorns of Healthy Culture". Two of them are:

1. **Emotional Contagion Awareness** – Emotions are contagious. Choose your energy wisely. "Am I leaving breadcrumbs of connection... or traces of emotional damage?"



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2. **Generous Interpretation** – Assume positive intent. “They probably didn’t mean harm” can save relationships.

Please use the QR code in the presentation to learn about the rest.

Closing

Creating psychological safety takes effort, courage, and consistency. But the payoff is massive: trust, resilience, innovation, and yes—retention.

This isn’t about being perfect. It’s about being *present*, *open*, and *accountable*. You don’t have to do this alone.

Let’s build teams where people don’t just survive—but *thrive*.