

Psychological safety

Build a team climate where people raise concerns and mistakes early, while problems are small.



Our own loop, after Edmondson (2018). Thanks and help make the next speak-up likelier; blame makes silence likelier.

WHAT IT IS

Amy Edmondson (2018) describes **psychological safety** as a shared belief in a team that people can ask, disagree or admit a mistake without being embarrassed or punished. It belongs to the group, unlike trust between two people, and it does **not** lower standards: a strong team needs both. Our loop shows why: every response to a speak-up teaches the team.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Set the stage: say that you need every view.
- 02 Invite input: real questions, the quiet people first.
- 03 Respond well: thank, help, fix the cause in the process.
- 04 Keep standards: deliberate breaches get a firm response.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team is moving resident parking permits online in eight months. A tester finds a flaw in the migrated data that the team had missed for 2 weeks.

The project manager thanks her in the weekly meeting. The team traces the flaw to a missing check, not a person, and adds it. Weekly meetings now open with: what worries you this week?

In the exam: Describe a moment when someone raised a problem, how you responded, and what changed. Link it to learning from mistakes, not to being nice.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, with 2 suppliers, 9 system owners and a board; a council election in month 20 adds pressure.

The project manager agrees with the board that early warnings are welcome from every party; the sponsor thanks the first ones in public. After incidents, her team leads run reviews without blame.

In the exam: Show how you built safety across organisations and levels, through the sponsor, reviews and other leaders, while keeping standards high.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.4.6.5, pp. 82–83: tolerate mistakes and learn from them; 4.4.6.2: ask for concerns. The term is not used	Guide: open and safe communication, p. 86; a safe, respectful setting, p. 89. Exam outline: People, task 3	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §4.4.1 (teams challenge one another), §4.5.2 (everyone welcome). PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objectives 13b and 14b

Sources: Edmondson, The Fearless Organization; IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

Key: IPMA = International Project Management Association; ICB4 = IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline (4.4.6 etc.: its competence elements); PMI = Project Management Institute; PMBOK® Guide = PMI's body-of-knowledge guide; PMP® = PMI's Project Management Professional; APM = Association for Project Management. Unofficial study material for IPMA®, PMI® and APM exams. Not affiliated with, endorsed by or approved by IPMA, PMI or APM, and not an accredited or endorsed training provider. IPMA® and IPMA ICB® are registered trademarks of IPMA in Switzerland and other countries. PMI, PMP, CAPM and PMBOK are registered marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. APM is a trade mark of the Association for Project Management. Other marks belong to their owners. PMP® exam facts are from PMI's public PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); check the current version on pmi.org. APM's qualifications are its own; this series is not an APM Accredited Provider or APM Endorsed. Examples use a fictional city and its projects. Levels (this series' labels): Mid-level = moderately complex projects (IPMA Level C, PMI's PMP®); Senior = complex projects and people (IPMA Level B, APM's Chartered Project Professional).

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