**12 Top Tips for Creating a Psychologically Safe Workplace**

### 1. Create Rules of Engagement

Involve representatives from across the organisation to create and define the rules of engagement to clarify the expected behaviours and agree what is not acceptable. The rules of engagement should be for everyone, irrespective of their job status. Encourage open, honest dialogue between individuals to resolve any issues.

### 2. Take Action and Confront Unacceptable Behaviour

If there is a culprit who is threatening the psychological safety in the culture, immediate intervention needs to take place. There are subtle ways to undermine co-workers that can be threatening and cause distress. Addressing the unacceptable behaviour and trying to understand the root cause can often lead to solving the issue. A timely response also lets everyone know that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated

### 3. Educate Staff and Managers About Mental Health

Absence due to stress and workload pressure are becoming commonplace. Thankfully, it is more acceptable and actively encouraged in some workplaces to talk about the impact of stress with colleagues and managers. The key is developing a culture of mental wellbeing and prevention of mental illness through mental health awareness programmes and brain friendly working practices

### 4. Adopt a Learning Mindset

It is human nature to place blame when a mistake happens. But criticism leads to defensiveness, and no employee will feel safe to take risks if they're afraid they will be reprimanded by their manager if they fail. Instead, adopt a learning mindset, where you engage through coaching questions to problem-solve and learn after a mistake is made. By eliminating the fear of blame, you create a culture of safety

### 5. Bring Team Members Together

In a digitally connected work environment, make sure to create opportunities for team members to come together, face-to-face to collaborate and work together on projects. Enable experiences that allow team members to take risks, trust each other, make mistakes and realize it's OK.

**6.Develop Their Mental Toughness**

Mental toughness largely determines how people respond to challenge, stress and pressure, and is closely related to resilience and grit. By developing your team's mental toughness, you will help them respond more positively to challenge, deal with adversity and setbacks with greater confidence, see opportunity where others see problems and enjoy greater wellbeing.

**7. Encourage Compassion**

Organisations should start by encouraging managers to create an environment where compassion for others is a desired behaviour and valued. When you truly care for others, it is easier for them to feel safe, more creative and more engaged

**8. Focus on Being Trustworthy**

Trust is the foundation of a safe environment, where individuals and teams can perform at their best. Without trust, people will engage in political behaviour in an act of self-interest and self-preservation, which wastes energy, time and money. The key thing to remember is that trust has to be earned, so focus the management and leadership on what they are doing to demonstrate that they are trustworthy

**9. Promote and Cultivate Mindsets that Value Listening and Diversity**

Psychological safety@work is impossible as long as managers and leaders celebrate sameness and feel threatened by opposing voices or differences in points-of-view. The most effective way of eliminating this threat is to promote diversity and cultivate mindsets that truly value listening. When, people are given a voice, when they are genuinely heard, and do not feel judged then they will feel worthy and safe

**10. Practice Positive Feedback**

Practice positive feedback, not "as a pat on the back," but as providing specific data, including describing the value that an action had and celebrating the individual. Positive feedback is the opposite of "no news, good news" or the unspoken expectation that doing well at one's job is part of doing one's job. Psychological safety starts with confidence that "others appreciate what I bring, as well as value and respect me

## 11. Value People More Than Processes

Organisations are a collection of humans, with a basic need to belong, working for a common purpose. Use this truth as leverage by exercising trust, active listening, compassion and empathy. Engage in mindful communication. Acknowledge conflicts with curiosity instead of judgment. Choose people more than processes, connect through your shared purpose.

## 12. Develop Managers Awareness of SCARF

SCARF stands for Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness, the five social domains, which influence our behaviour in social situations. Dr David Rock's SCARF Model (2008).

The model captures five broad social domains that cause tension in the workplace and can be a useful tool to identify triggers that may cause team members to feel threatened. If managers have an understanding of the SCARF model, they can use it as a framework to help them think about the impact of their actions and words, and whether they are having a positive impact on their team members, helping to create psychological safety or whether they are creating a perceived feeling of threat, which can ultimately impact negatively on the mental wellbeing of the individual and their work performance

Here are some examples of triggers which could create a feeling of a psychological unsafe environment.

**Status.** People with tendencies to wield power and authority over others, or who treat others disrespectfully and undermine others publicly.

**Certainty.** People who use information as power. Holding back critical information undermines team effectiveness and an individual's credibility.

**Autonomy.** Reluctance to delegate, or tendencies to micromanage projects, which can lead to no personal agency or choice among the team.

**Relatedness.** Existence of cliques and ostracising behaviours, which can lead to team members feeling like they don't belong, or that they are replaceable.

**Fairness.** Decisions made by leaders opaquely or subjectively, without little input from team members and no transparency into the process or rationale.

Managers need to identify these, and others triggers that are present in the workplace and identify ways of reducing the perceived threats they cause and look for ways in which they can create perceived feelings of psychological safety@work

If you would like to discuss developing a culture of Psychological Safety, in your workplace contact Michelle at michelle.mcarthur@jigsawatwork.com