

Psychological Safety - ensuring a safe environment for learning in the Danish healthcare system (Evidence & activities)

Psychological Safety - some evidence...

In healthcare organisations, employees are increasingly required to contribute to the continuous improvement of organizational processes and practices through behaviors that enable learning to occur, for example, voicing new ideas, collaborating with other members of the organization, and experimenting with new ways of doing things (Edmondson, 1999; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011) with the aim of improving patient pathways, safety and outcomes.

While such activities may potentially benefit the patients and the organization, they carry certain risks for the individual. For example, the voicing of new ideas might challenge the established way of doing things and go against the vested interests of other professional groups (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001). In addition, the use of improvement methodology to test new approaches in the workplace might ultimately be unsuccessful, viewed as a failure, and lead the individuals involved to be seen in a negative light (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). As a result, there is growing evidence to indicate that such risks may lead employees

not to contribute to learning processes, and thereby inhibit both individual and organizational learning (Detert & Burris, 2007).

The establishment of a psychologically safe work environment (i.e., one in which employees feel safe to voice ideas, willingly seek or provide honest feedback, collaborate, take risks and experiment), is one way to overcome such threats to individual and organizational learning (Edmondson, 1999). For example, in recent longitudinal work by Google's People Analytics Unit, psychological safety was identified as the number one characteristic of successful high-performing teams (Bergmann & Schaeppi, 2016). Psychological safety is especially important in work environments where employee and customer safety are paramount, such as healthcare, as it has been shown to be critical in reducing employee errors and enhancing safety (Leroy et al., 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011), as well as increase team and individual learning across multiple organizations (e.g., Liu, Hu, Li, Wang, & Lin, 2014).

PS! – How we work...

We apply Edmondson's model of team learning to help us understand the role psychological safety plays in achieving organisational goals (performance). As such, we can view our work as focusing on the four elements set out below.

*“Organisational factors influence team **psychological safety**, which in turn impacts on team **learning** and team **performance**”*



Using information gathered from questionnaires, interviews, and/or observations, we work collaboratively with the host organisation to develop solutions relevant to the factors identified as requiring improvement.

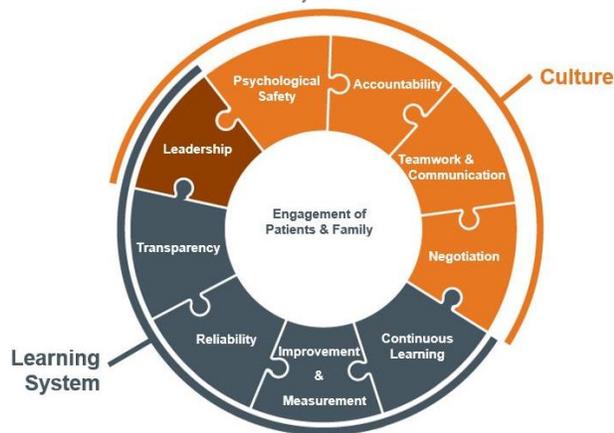
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PS! – our work to date...

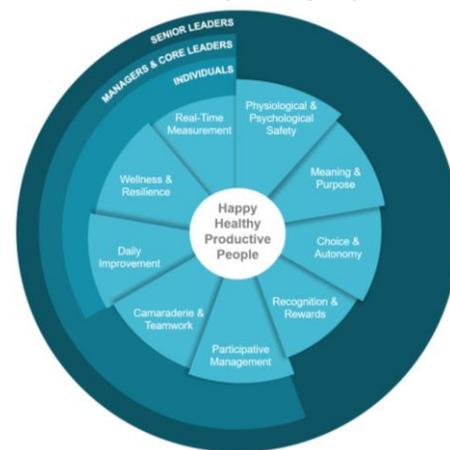
Over the last few years, a number of incidents and documents have highlighted the need for healthcare providers to understand the significant role that the work culture has on outcomes for patients using healthcare services as well as on staff working in healthcare services.

Two recent white papers from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) also identify psychological safety as foundational for the provision of 'Safe, Reliable and Efficient' care, as well as delivering 'Joy in Work'.

A Framework for Safe, Reliable and Effective Care



Framework for Improving Joy in Work



In partnership with organisations such as Copenhagen Academy of Medical Education and Simulation (CAMES) we aim to raise awareness, inspire interest and engage in meaningful activities which lead to positive changes to work environments. As such, PS! has delivered numerous workshops and presentations to thousands of people from different professional groups, (e.g. Lægeforeningen, Dansk Sygeplejeråd), clinical teams, (e.g. Herlev & Gentoft Urology Dept, Amager Psykiatri Centre, Bisbjerg Hospital - Radiology Dept) or nations, (e.g. IHI & BMJ International Forum on Quality & Safety, Swedish Primary Care Annual Quality Conference).

Our project work has included the development and delivery of educational material (Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen University), leadership programs (Dansk Sygeplejeråd), and quality improvement projects (KOPA and Herlev Akutmodetagelse).

Each project is developed in collaboration with the host organisation to ensure the interventions are based on evidence or best practice as well as specific to their needs.

Your next step...

If you are interested in this subject and would like to know more, please contact us directly so we can discuss how we can support you best to ensure your organisation has a work environment which is focused on learning.

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