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Intentional Leadership in ECE

Your Role Cultivating Psychological Safety in ECE

MARCH 13, 2025 | 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM, CT | ECI Webinar
Jill M. Bella, Ed.D.

1

Intention
is the seed that
creates
the future.

Author Unknown

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Your Role in
Cultivating Psychological Safety

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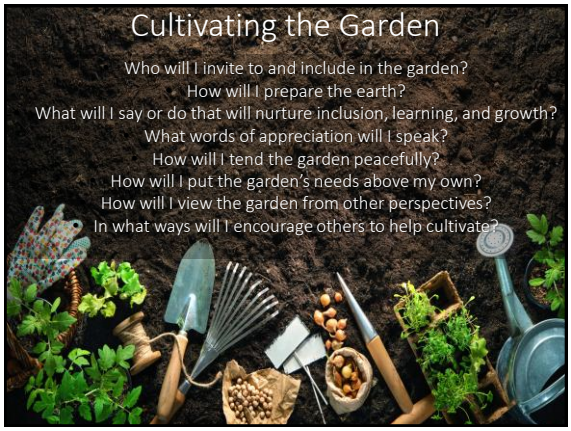
Cultivating the Garden
Who will I invite to and include in the garden?
How will I prepare the earth?
What will I say or do that will nurture inclusion, learning, and growth?
What words of appreciation will I speak?
How will I tend the garden peacefully?
How will I put the garden's needs above my own?
How will I view the garden from other perspectives?
In what ways will I encourage others to help cultivate?

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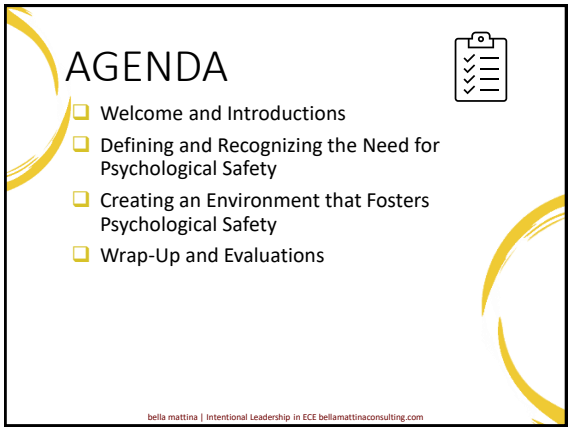
AGENDA
Welcome and Introductions
Defining and Recognizing the Need for Psychological Safety
Creating an Environment that Fosters Psychological Safety
Wrap-Up and Evaluations
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6

Authenticity Exposed

7

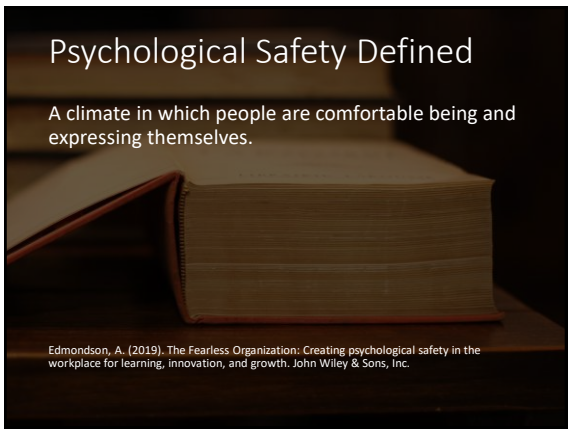
AGENDA

- ✓ Welcome and Introductions
- ❑ Defining and Recognizing the Need for Psychological Safety
- ❑ Creating an Environment that Fosters Psychological Safety
- ❑ Wrap-Up and Evaluations

8

Psychological Safety Defined

A climate in which people are comfortable being and expressing themselves.



Edmondson, A. (2019). The Fearless Organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

9

When People Have Psychological Safety at Work, They…

- feel comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution
- are confident that they can speak up and won't be humiliated, ignored, or blamed.
- know they can ask questions when they are unsure about something
- tend to trust and respect their colleagues
- report mistakes quickly so that prompt, corrective action can be taken
- coordinate across groups or departments seamlessly
- share potentially game-changing ideas for innovation

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10

QUIZ!

___ in 10 employees strongly agree with the statement that their opinions count at work.

A. 1
B. 3
C. 6
D. 9

11

QUIZ!

Only ___ in 10 employees strongly agree with the statement that their opinions count at work.

If you can increase that number from ___ to ___…

A. 1
B. 3
C. 6
D. 9

___% reduction in turnover
___% reduction in safety incidents
12% increase in productivity

12

Raising Concerns Poll 2

13

__%

Survey respondents reported at least one occasion when they felt unable to raise a concern with their bosses, even though they believed the issue was important.

14

Hiring for talent is not enough anymore. People have to be in workplaces where they are able and willing to use their talent.

~ Amy Edmondson

15

The Comfort Zone
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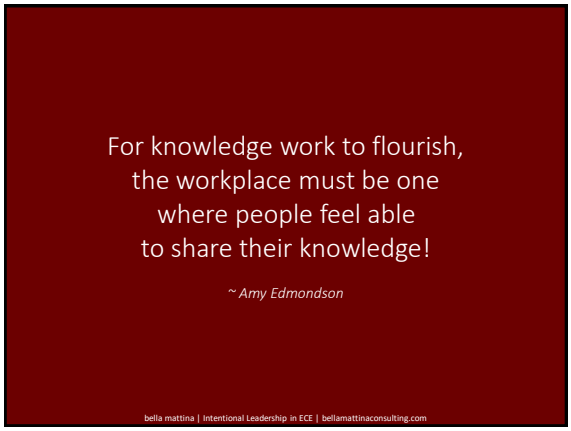
For knowledge work to flourish, the workplace must be one where people feel able to share their knowledge!
~ Amy Edmondson
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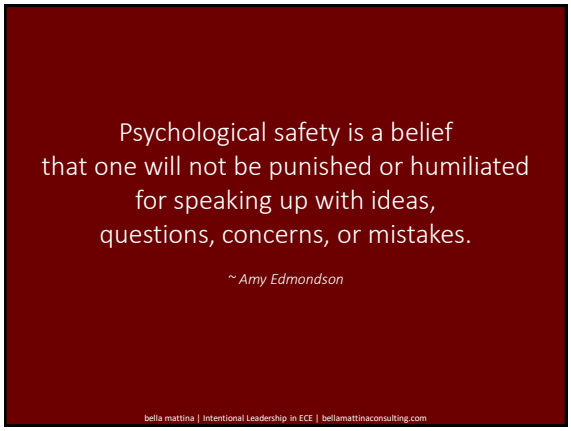
Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.
~ Amy Edmondson
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18

It is not about lowering performance standards or avoiding accountability but rather about fostering an atmosphere where people feel safe taking interpersonal risks.

~ Hatwell Group

19

Psychological safety at work does not mean that everybody is nice to each other all the time. It means that people feel free to "brainstorm outloud," voice half-finished thoughts, openly challenge the status quo, share feedback, and work through disagreements together."

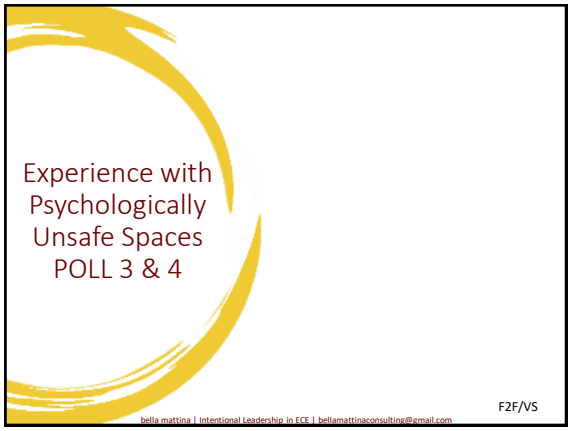
~ Center for Creative Leadership

20

Psychological safety is a culture of rewarded vulnerability.

~ The LeaderFactor

21


Experience with Psychologically Unsafe Spaces POLL 3 & 4
F2F/VS
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22

Speaking Up
F2F/VS
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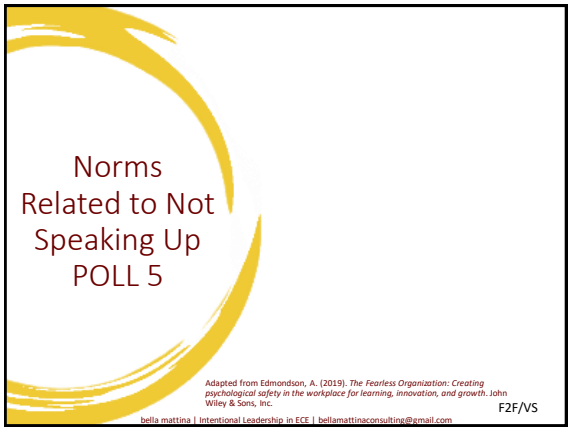
23


Norms Related to Not Speaking Up POLL 5
Adapted from Edmondson, A. (2019). The Fearless Organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
F2F/VS
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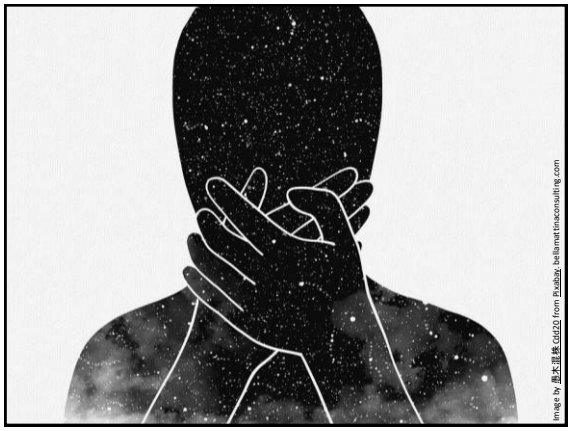

25

Acting in Ways that Punish Vulnerability

F2F/VS

26

When we do not feel safe
we hold back.
When we feel safe,
we can ask naïve questions,
propose wild ideas,
and share our emotions.

~ Author Unknown

27

Rating
Vulnerability
F2F/VS
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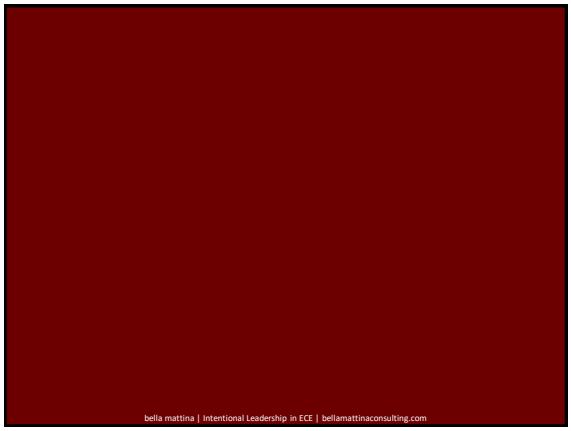
28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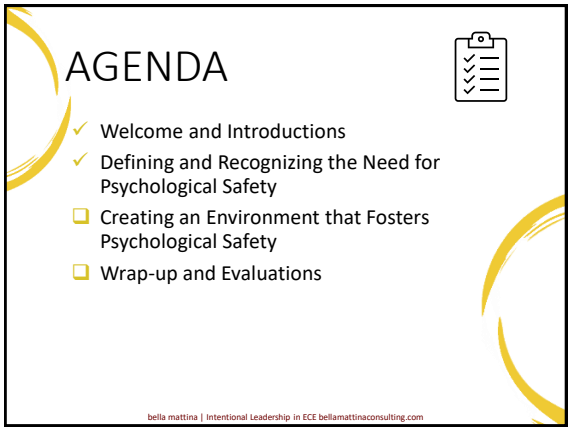
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30

31

32

Establishing the Conditions

- Identifying a shared purpose

33

Establishing the Conditions

- Identifying a shared purpose
- Shifting mindsets

34

Mistakes and Failures

- Encourages honest discussion
- Provides learning opportunities
- Eliminates blame (and hiding mistakes)
- Experimentation, and thus failure, is normalized

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35

Establishing the Conditions

- Identifying a shared purpose
- Shifting mindsets

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36

The primary result
of responding to failures in a negative way
is that you do not hear about them.

Amy Edmondson

37

Establishing the Conditions

- Identifying a shared purpose
- Shifting mindsets
- Setting the tone

38

First Impressions

39

An Example of Setting the Tone

40

Cultivating the Garden of Psychological Safety

Establishing the Conditions

Encouraging Growth

Responding Constructively

41

Encouraging Growth

- Reflecting
- Actively listening
- Inviting concerns and disagreement (i.e., questions, focus groups) and responding in a way that encourages them to continue

42

"I see that everyone agrees with what I have said so far, _____ _____."

"Sounds like you all agree with me, _____?"

43

Encouraging Growth

- Reflecting
- Actively listening
- Inviting concerns and disagreement (i.e., questions, focus groups) and responding in a way that encourages them to **continue**
- Encouraging brainstorming and out-of-the-box thinking
- Modeling
- Creating processes (i.e., turn-taking, modes of communication, now let's break it, debriefing)

44

Cultivating the Garden of Psychological Safety

Establishing the Conditions
Encouraging Growth
Responding Constructively

45

Responding Constructively

- Debrief regularly
- Appreciate acts of vulnerability
- Redefining mistakes and failures as "lessons learned"
- Accept feedback with grace and act when appropriate
- Model respect

46

When a work environment has reasonably high psychological safety, good things happen:

mistakes are reported quickly
so that prompt corrective action can be taken;
seamless coordination across groups or departments is enabled,
and potentially game-changing ideas for innovation are shared.
In short, psychological safety is a crucial source of value creation
in organizations operating in a complex, changing environment.

~ Amy Edmondson

47

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THANK **you!**

bellamattinaconsulting.com Free Resources!

Intentional Leadership in Early Care and Education

- Leadership training for directors
  - Director's Toolbox Series training
  - Program Administration Scale training
  - Whole Leadership training
  - Additional leadership and coaching topics
- Leadership academies for directors
- Coaching for Change training for coaches
- Consultation on assessment tools (ARPS, ECWES, PAS)

48

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Comfort Level Demonstrating Vulnerability

YOUR ROLE CULTIVATING THE SPACE TO THRIVE: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN ECE

Reflect on a team you are member of and consider your comfort level regarding the following during meetings and/or working with other members on a team project.

Please rate your comfort level by circling the number that best represents your rating.	Extremely uncomfortable	A bit uncomfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Extremely comfortable
Initiating and/or building relationships with team members	1	2	3	4	5
Asking for more information and/or context	1	2	3	4	5
Experimenting, trying something new (e.g., project, responsibility, role)	1	2	3	4	5
Sharing your honest opinion	1	2	3	4	5
Voicing a thought or opinion that goes against the majority	1	2	3	4	5
Voicing a thought or opinion that goes against the team “leader(s)”	1	2	3	4	5
Requesting resources	1	2	3	4	5
Requesting support	1	2	3	4	5
Asking for more time or to extend a deadline	1	2	3	4	5
Stating concerns	1	2	3	4	5
Conveying emotions	1	2	3	4	5
Being true to your beliefs and values	1	2	3	4	5
Revealing personal information	1	2	3	4	5
Exercising the “right to pass”	1	2	3	4	5
Guessing at something, giving an answer that may be “wrong”	1	2	3	4	5
Acknowledging you do not have an answer	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving unsolicited feedback about how to improve	1	2	3	4	5
Seeking feedback about yourself or your work	1	2	3	4	5
Providing constructive feedback to others	1	2	3	4	5
Admitting “mistakes, errors, or failures”	1	2	3	4	5
Being held accountable	1	2	3	4	5

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