

Can People Tell the Truth Here?

A psychological safety check for teams and leaders. Score the environment people actually experience, not the culture you intend to have.

Psychological safety is not comfort, agreement, or lowered expectations.

It is the degree to which people can speak honestly, ask for help, disagree, acknowledge uncertainty, and raise concerns without having to calculate the interpersonal cost first.

RATE EACH STATEMENT

0 rarely true

1 sometimes true

2 usually true

3 consistently true

1. People can ask for help before a problem becomes a crisis. 0 1 2 3
2. Employees can admit mistakes without expecting humiliation or retaliation. 0 1 2 3
3. People can disagree with someone who has more authority. 0 1 2 3
4. Bad news travels upward instead of getting softened or hidden. 0 1 2 3
5. Questions are treated as part of learning, not as evidence of incompetence. 0 1 2 3
6. Employees can name workload or capacity concerns without being labeled negative. 0 1 2 3
7. Leaders respond to feedback with curiosity before defensiveness. 0 1 2 3
8. People know what will happen when they raise a concern. 0 1 2 3
9. Expectations and accountability are clear enough that people do not have to guess. 0 1 2 3
10. Team members can say "I don't know" or "I need support" without losing credibility. 0 1 2 3
11. People who raise problems are included in solving them rather than treated as the problem. 0 1 2 3
12. After conflict or mistakes, the team repairs and learns rather than quietly avoiding the issue. 0 1 2 3

LOOK FOR THE PATTERN, NOT JUST THE TOTAL

Circle the three lowest-rated items. Those are the places where silence is most likely costing your team information, trust, learning, or safety.

Turn the Score Into a Leadership Conversation

Use one low-scoring item. The goal is not to prove the team is psychologically safe. The goal is to understand what makes speaking honestly easier or harder here.

1. WHERE DOES SILENCE SHOW UP?

What do people hesitate to say, ask, challenge, or admit? Who is most likely to stay quiet?

2. WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK WILL HAPPEN IF THEY SPEAK?

Name the anticipated cost: embarrassment, conflict, being ignored, being labeled difficult, losing opportunity, or something else.

3. WHAT HAS THE TEAM LEARNED FROM LEADERS' REACTIONS?

Think about what happens after bad news, disagreement, mistakes, requests for help, and feedback.

4. WHAT NEEDS MORE CLARITY?

Psychological safety does not replace standards. Where would clearer roles, expectations, decisions, or accountability reduce uncertainty?

5. WHAT IS ONE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR WE CAN CHANGE NOW?

Choose something observable and repeatable: ask before explaining, close the loop on concerns, invite dissent, name mistakes openly, or explain decisions.

A useful question for leaders

What truth would help us lead better if people felt safer saying it?