

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY *in the Classroom*

Psychological safety in the classroom occurs when the environment fosters a sense of comfort for students and groups. The culture encourages open communication. And students feel they can express themselves freely without fear of judgment, failure, or retaliation.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY MATTERS

- It leads to mentally healthier, more productive, and more inclusive classrooms.
- There's a sense of dependability in one another, role clarity, and an intrinsic incentive to work hard.
- Educators and students benefit from higher levels of engagement, increased motivation to tackle difficult problems, more learning and development opportunities, and better performance.
- Individuals are free to lean into their best, most creative selves.

4 STAGES OF CLASSROOM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

1

Inclusion Safety:

Fosters inclusivity and has plans in place to combat all forms of prejudice so that students can show up as themselves without fearing retribution for who they are.

2

Learner Safety:

Ensures individuals feel secure in being active learners. This means asking questions, making mistakes from time to time, brainstorming, and giving and receiving constructive criticism or feedback.

3

Contributor Safety:

Encourages people to fully share their expertise and showcase their skills without the culture becoming competitive. People need to believe that their skills and qualities can make an impact.

4

Challenger Safety:

A safe space for people to air grievances, push back, or be the outlier when it comes to popular opinion.

5
TIPS

to Build Psychological Safety in the Classroom



Take the lead

TIP Discuss openly the importance of psychological safety.

Consider:

- inclusive communication
- collaborative thinking
- opening opportunities for contribution
- honoring diverse viewpoints
- feeling safe to verbalize potential flaws

► **Educator's action:** Share personal examples with your students of when something you did went well, and when it could have gone better.

TIP Acknowledge setbacks to psychological safety.

Recognize:

- worries about rejection or retaliation
- discomfort in challenging something that's not working
- hesitance about being wrong

► **Educator's action:** Discuss the barriers that inhibit psychological safety, and what can be done.

TIP Identify strategies to uphold and prioritize psychological safety.

Enable:

- open constructive avenues for honest feedback
- recognize how each student shares in the effort to make school a better place
- reconsider how "failure" is handled
- find ways to reframe disappointments and what can be learned from them

► **Educator's action:** Incorporate this brief practice into quarterly classroom meetings: "Start, Stop, Continue"

Have each student submit their thoughts on the following:

- What is something we should **start** to do?
- What are some things we need to **stop** or **change**?
- What has been working that we should **continue**?

Show integrity by making appropriate changes.

HOW TO GET SUPPORT AND HELP

SOMEONE IN DISTRESS?

Understand how to provide initial support for individuals experiencing mental health concerns.

The Core Components of Psychological First Aid

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Know how to approach those in distress with confidence and compassion
 - For tips, view the [Responding to Others in Distress Guide](#)
- Build active listening skills
- Encourage hope and provide appropriate professional resources for support

If you or someone you know needs emotional support and help, contact your Perspectives EAP, MAP or SAP.

 **Counselors are available 24/7 at 800.456.6327.**

Sources:

Natasha Burton, Goalcast article, Oct 26, 2021, *What You Should Know About Psychological Safety in the Workplace*

HBR, Amy C. Edmondson and Mark Mortensen, April 19, 2021, *What Psychological Safety Looks Like in a Hybrid Workplace*

CCL, Leading Effectively Staff, January 15, 2022, *What Is Psychological Safety at Work?*

