



Psychological Safety

(PS + ES² + EI = Success)

People ask why our Leadership, Management, and Organisational Culture programmes focus on Psychological Safety (PS), ES² thinking, and Emotional Intelligence (EI) and our Moccasin Approach®. This handout helps clarify our thoughts. But first, let's look at each in turn.

What is Psychological Safety?

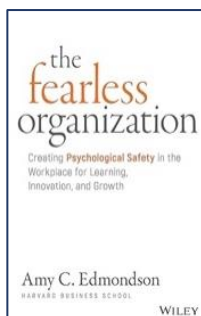
We believe Carl Rogers first used the term “Psychological Safety”. He created it in 1954 to establish the conditions necessary to foster an individual's creativity.

In her 1999 studies on “clinical teams and the number of mistakes that different teams made”, Dr Amy Edmondson brought this topic crashing into the public domain through her original paper, which can be [read here](#).

Based on her studies, Edmondson codified psychological safety as “the belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.” The next passage is quoted directly from Edmondson’s book *The Fearless Organization*.



“Psychological safety is broadly defined as a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves. More specifically, when people have psychological safety at work, they feel comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution.”



People **know** they can ask questions and challenge without risk or fear, and they tend to trust and respect their colleagues far more. Mistakes are reported quickly, corrective action is taken quickly, collaboration across teams is enabled, and ideas for innovation are shared. In short, psychological safety is a crucial source of value creation for organisations operating in a complex, changing environment.

What is our ES² thinking?

ES² is pretty much the same as Psychological Safety; it's just our take on it, and we want to explain why we stuck with it even after Amy Edmondson’s Psychological Safety arrived.

ES² represents “Emotional Security” and “Emotional Safety”. When LaPD Solutions first considered what to call the freedom to speak out in the workplace without fear of repercussion, we struggled and argued about it. Eventually, we decided we would call it Emotional Safety. But then we wondered where that safety would come from and decided some form of security had to be in place before that safety could grow. So, we gave it this rather odd title to emphasise both ingredients.



High-performing teams ([Handout](#)), will say, whatever they want without fear. They don't have to consider if it's okay to say something; they say it because they **know** it is safe; they have seen or heard the evidence with their own eyes or ears.

Security **must** be established first for safety to be felt. That's why we emphasise ES².

What is Emotional Intelligence (EI):

As mentioned, we underpin all our workshops and programmes using our Moccasin Approach.

Within it, we place the four ingredients of EI, which include:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to recognise how our follow-on behaviours, after experiencing various emotions, affect our thinking and behaviour towards others.
- **Self-management:** The ability to control our reactions to the emotional triggers we experience and the feelings and behaviours that usually follow from those triggers.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to pick up on and interpret people's emotional signals, identify their needs and concerns, and respond appropriately.
- **Relationship management:** The ability to develop and maintain good relationships by developing our approach based on what we have learned from the above.



EI brings many benefits, including enhanced relationships through better (cleaner) communication, effective conflict resolution, and improved and quicker adaptability. It enhances self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to navigate social situations, contributing to personal and professional success.

Remember that improving EI in the workplace means improving your own EI first. There are many ways to adjust your behaviour to help you become a more emotionally intelligent worker. So consider your options, work on developing it, and ask colleagues to help you.

Why do we connect PS + ES² + EI within our Moccasin Approach?

It is challenging to put this in words. Even the following words cannot convey the impact of our discussions during our sessions and programmes. When we take the time to discuss these ingredients, it is far easier to understand how they work and support each other. We use examples during our sessions that relate to the environments that your people work in.



In short, they not only complement each other; the ES² aspect helps to create PS, and the EI aspect ensures healthy communication, which is the starting point of all great relationships.

We see each of them as the legs of the three-legged stool of great organisational culture. With just one of the legs missing, the whole stool becomes unsteady and falls over.

But how do we create and maintain psychological safety?

I can answer this by simply saying the word "Evidence".

1. Get people to say what they want, and then get senior people to add comments and praise them for speaking out. Show the entire organisation that free speech is not just said to be safe but **proven** to be safe through publicly available evidence.



2. If anyone is found to have quietened, ignored, or worse yet penalised anyone for saying what they felt they should say, they must face some form of disciplinary action for going against organisational values.

Poor behaviour must NOT be tolerated in any way because as soon as it goes unchecked, safety is gone, and the promised security means nothing.

3. Constantly reinforce the messaging of security, showcase the evidence of safety at every opportunity, and ensure people are praised and recognised for their honesty, ideas, and innovation.

Whilst this is the duty of every person, your OCET ([Handout](#)) will become the mechanism by which you maintain and develop your culture. It will be the driving force, and the team will hold **ALL** colleagues to account to ensure your culture is protected and developed.

If your OCET becomes ineffective, your people lose faith in it, or, worse yet, disband, your organisation's organisational culture will quickly sink into toxicity due to doubt, suspicion, division, and lack of trust. And if any of that happens, **YOU** are the cause.

Amy Edmondson said, "If you change the nature and quality of the conversations in your team, your outcomes will improve exponentially. Psychological safety is the **core component** to unlock this."

Imagine that all the teams in your organisation do exactly all of this...

Imagine the impact that this could have...

Now... Over to **YOU**

