



What Is Psychological Safety at Work?

By Carola Mittag

Psychological safety is the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

“When you have psychological safety in the workplace, people feel comfortable being themselves. They bring their full selves to work and feel okay laying all of themselves on the line.” David Altman, Chief Research and Innovation Officer,

Centre for Creative Leadership

Organizations benefit from people's range of thoughts; groups of people with different life experiences can better recognize problems and offer productive solutions. But what if team members aren't comfortable speaking up? What if they're afraid to share their concerns or avoid asking tough questions? What if they avoid suggesting innovative ideas because they're worried about rejection? Studies have shown that 30% of employees felt strongly that their opinions didn't matter at work and that remote work settings, now more common as a result of the pandemic, have made the problem worse.

The result? Diminished psychological safety at work which affects facility/property managers, their employees and, quite likely, their tenants.

Psychological safety at work doesn't mean that everybody is nice all the time. It means that you accept the conflict and

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you speak up, knowing that you and your team will be mutually supportive. Employees must feel accepted before they're able to contribute fully in ways that improve their organizations.

According to Dr. Timothy Clark, author of *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*, employees have to progress through the following 4 stages before they feel free to make valuable contributions and challenge the status quo.

- **Stage 1 — Inclusion Safety:** Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. In this stage, you feel safe to be yourself and are accepted for who you are, including your unique attributes and defining characteristics.
- **Stage 2 — Learner Safety:** Learner safety satisfies the need to learn and grow. In this stage, you feel safe to ex-

change in the learning process by asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and making mistakes.

- **Stage 3 — Contributor Safety:** Contributor safety satisfies the need to make a difference. You feel safe to use your skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution.
- **Stage 4 — Challenger Safety:** Challenger safety satisfies the need to make things better. You feel safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when you think there's an opportunity to change or improve.

To help employees understand and move through the 4 stages and ultimately reach a place where they feel comfortable with interpersonal risk-taking and speaking up, leaders should nurture and promote their team's sense of psychological safety in the workplace.

Psychological safety and mental health are fundamental to safe workplaces. When leaders and their workers don't feel safe in their work environment there are far-reaching repercussions. In housing settings this may be in the form of poor or miscommunication between management and tenants; inattention to proper facility maintenance; and simply, a general lack of concern for keeping properties and facilities safe for tenants.

Carola Mittag is the former owner of Workplace Safety Group and currently advisor to Mentor Safety.

MSCI offers professional safety consulting services and Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) – approved certifications for joint health and safety committees (in-class and virtual) and Working at Heights, as well as customized training programs.

MSCI has developed auditing tools to ensure that facilities and property managers meet all legislative health and safety compliance requirements. Email Carola at wpsgceo@gmail.com ♦



Carola Mittag, past President of Workplace Safety Group and contributing writer to the IHM Newsletter for many years, is now a Consultant and Editor for **Mentor Safety Consultants Inc. (MSCI)**, specialists in workplace health and safety.

MSCI offers professional safety consulting services and **Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) - approved certifications for joint health and safety committees**, (in-class and virtual) and **Working at Heights**, as well as customized training programs. MSCI has developed auditing tools to ensure that facilities and property managers meet all legislative health and safety compliance requirements. In addition, **MSCI is an approved WSIB Excellence Program Provider** which benefits workplaces including:

- Pandemic readiness materials, to help meet the challenges of operating safely during a pandemic
- Support and guidance from an experienced provider
- Reduced risk of hazards and a better health and safety culture
- Rebates on premiums and money saved by improving your safety experience
- Recognition to show employees, customers, and investors your commitment to health and safety
- Opportunities to network and share best practices with other like-minded organizations
- Earning rebates and recognition

Carola is excited to introduce **Mentor Safety Consultants Inc.** and be part of their team of safety professionals which include Dave Jarrett, acting Fire Platoon Chief, and Jamie Smith, a health and safety professor at Niagara College.

Carola will continue to provide readers of the IHM Newsletter, topical and property management relevant articles to assist them in being responsible, knowledgeable employers and managers.



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We know that a Property Manager's job can be both challenging and interesting. How often have you come to work with your day all planned in your head only to have something unexpected come along? We are looking for some stories to share with your colleagues in the Property Management field.

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