

Employee fact sheet:

Feeling safe to speak up at work



Feeling safe to speak up, ask questions, raise concerns or be yourself at work is important for wellbeing, trust and healthy team culture. Psychological safety means people feel able to contribute, share ideas, admit mistakes or raise issues without fear of embarrassment, punishment or unfair treatment.

When psychological safety is low, people may hold back, avoid asking for help, stay silent about concerns or feel anxious about how they will be perceived. This can affect confidence, connection, performance and wellbeing.

What psychological safety can look like

In a psychologically safe workplace, people are more likely to feel able to:

- ask questions or admit when they do not understand something
- have an avenue to raise concerns about workload, behaviour, risks or mistakes
- ask for support when they need it
- give and receive feedback respectfully
- speak without fear of being embarrassed, punished or excluded

Psychological safety does not mean everyone will always agree or that difficult conversations will never happen. It means concerns, differences and mistakes can be handled respectfully and constructively.

Common barriers to constructive conversations

Psychological safety can be affected by team culture, communication style, leadership behaviour, workload pressure, conflict, exclusion or previous negative experiences.

You may feel less safe to speak up if:

- your ideas or questions are dismissed or ignored
- mistakes are blamed rather than used as learning opportunities
- feedback is delivered harshly or unfairly
- people are excluded, interrupted or spoken over
- concerns are minimised or not followed up
- there is gossip, judgement or inappropriate behaviour
- you worry that speaking up could affect your role, reputation or relationships
- you have had a negative experience after raising a concern in the past

If you notice these patterns, confidential support is available through [PeopleSense by Altius](#), your EAP, to help you understand what is happening and consider what to do next.

Strategies that may help

1. Notice what is happening

Pay attention to situations where you feel unable to speak up, ask questions or raise concerns. Look for patterns in what is happening, who is involved and how it is affecting you.

2. Clarify what you want to raise

Before speaking up, take time to identify the main issue, why it matters and what outcome or support you are hoping for.

3. Choose the right pathway

Depending on the concern, you may choose to speak with your manager, another trusted leader, HR, a health and safety representative or another appropriate workplace contact.

4. Prepare what you want to say

It can help to write down key points in advance. Focus on the issue, the impact and what you would like to happen next.

5. Use clear and respectful language

Where possible, describe your experience in a calm and specific way. For example, you might say, "I'm finding it difficult to raise questions in meetings because I'm worried they will be dismissed."

6. Seek support before or after speaking up

If you are unsure how to raise a concern, or the situation is affecting your wellbeing, confidential support is available through [PeopleSense by Altius](#), your EAP.

7. Look after your wellbeing

Feeling unsafe to speak up can be stressful and isolating. Stay connected with people you trust and seek support if the situation is affecting your confidence, mood, sleep or work.



Reaching out early makes a real difference.
Contact [PeopleSense](#) to book a confidential
appointment with a qualified psychologist.

If you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek urgent support immediately. Call 000, Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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