

# Chesapeake Bay Program Learning Series

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## Module 1: Psychological Safety

*Planting trust and  
acceptance allows open  
communication and  
diverse ideas to flourish*



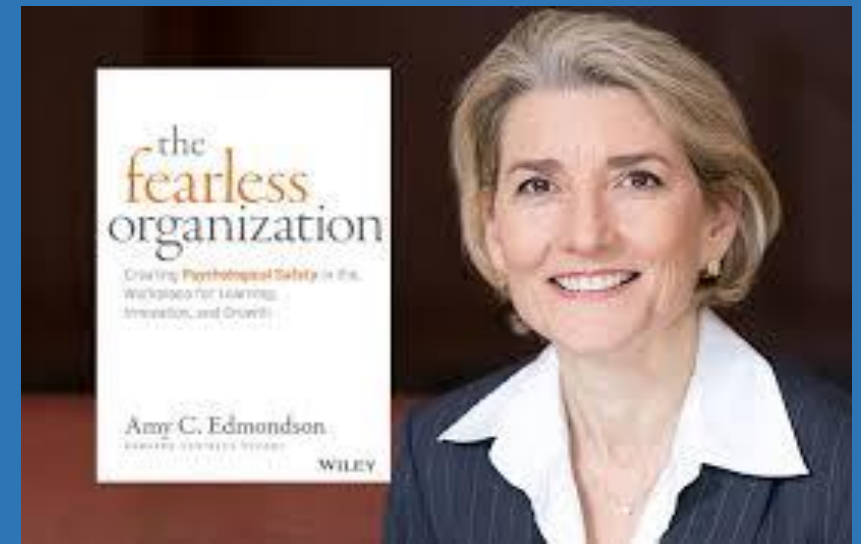
# About the Chesapeake Bay Program Learning Series

*A collection of  
resources focused on  
key factors of  
organizational  
excellence*

The **portfolio** for each learning module:

- Recorded one-hour interactive self-directed presentation
- Worksheets and other tools to allow team engagement on the topic
- Key topical references to provide deeper investigation and additional learning resources

# Defining Psychological Safety



“A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes and that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking”

Amy Edmonson

Professor of Leadership and Management

Harvard Business School

# Why is Psychological Safety Important ?



**Engagement**



**Motivation**



**Team members feel that their contributions matter**



**Absence of fear, a culture that welcomes diversity, equity and inclusion**



**Increases creativity**



**Increases commitment and retention**

# Values expressed through the practice of psychological safety ...



- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Represent the interests of people
- ✓ Operate with transparency
- ✓ Seek consensus
- ✓ Engage the public
- ✓ Promote environmental justice

## PRINCIPLES

The following principles are an overarching framework by which the Chesapeake Bay Program commits to operate. They encompass the partners' collective, core values and are intended to help guide us in our work as the Partnership develops policy and takes actions to achieve this Agreement's Goals and Outcomes.

### THE PARTNERSHIP WILL:

- **Collaborate** to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of this Agreement.
- **Achieve Goals and Outcomes** in a timely way and at the least possible cost to the public.
- **Represent the interests of people** throughout the watershed fairly and effectively, including a broad diversity of cultures, demographics and ages.
- **Operate with transparency** in program decisions, policies, actions and reporting on progress to strengthen public confidence in our efforts.
- **Use science-based decision-making and seek out innovative technologies and approaches** to support sound management decisions in a changing system.
- **Maintain a coordinated watershed-wide monitoring and research program** to support decision-making and track progress and the effectiveness of management actions.
- **Acknowledge, support and embrace local governments** and other local entities in watershed restoration and protection activities.
- **Anticipate changing conditions**, including long-term trends in sea level, temperature, precipitation, land use and other variables.
- **Adaptively manage** at all levels of the Partnership to foster continuous improvement.
- **Seek consensus** when making decisions.
- **Use place-based approaches**, where appropriate, that produce recognizable benefits to local communities while contributing to larger ecosystem goals.
- **Engage the public** to increase the number and diversity of people who support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities necessary to achieve the Goals and Outcomes of the Agreement.
- **Explore using social science** to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management and decision-making.
- **Promote environmental justice** through the meaningful involvement and fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income, in the implementation of this Agreement.

## *Barriers to establishing and cultivating psychological safety ...*

*What can get in the way of providing a psychologically safe environment in organizations?*

- Criticism and punitive behaviors
- Interrupting, dismissing ideas, and being dismissive
- Complacent leaders
- Fear of vulnerability and transparency
- Hierarchical structures

# *Nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...*



Make Clear  
All Voices  
Matter

Respond  
Constructively

Admit  
Fallibility

Actively  
Invite Input

# Nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...

**Make clear  
that all voices  
matter**

Most people feel safer when they hold back and keep their ideas and opinions to themselves

Discuss why we need to hear from all, why their viewpoint matters, and how it will affect the outcomes of the work

## ***Great Phrases:***

"We are looking forward to hearing from everybody on this important topic!"

"We can better understand the sentiment of the group when hear from everyone"



# *Nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...*

## **Admit fallibility**

Admit to fallibility by being vulnerable and demonstrating that it is encouraged to be open about mistakes.

Be humble and accept that no single person has the best ideas.

Tell stories about how you and others have identified areas for personal improvement based on feedback

Emphasize the importance of learning from mistakes.

# *Nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...*

## **Respond Constructively**

Having an authentic desire to hear the best ideas provides a growth mindset and allows leaders to regulate emotions and be grateful for input.

When team members know they have been heard, they are more likely to commit to a plan of action

Adopt a learning mindset

Replace blame with curiosity

# *Nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...*

## **Actively invite input**

Assume people won't always share what they are thinking and provide best ideas unless invited

### ***Great Phrases:***

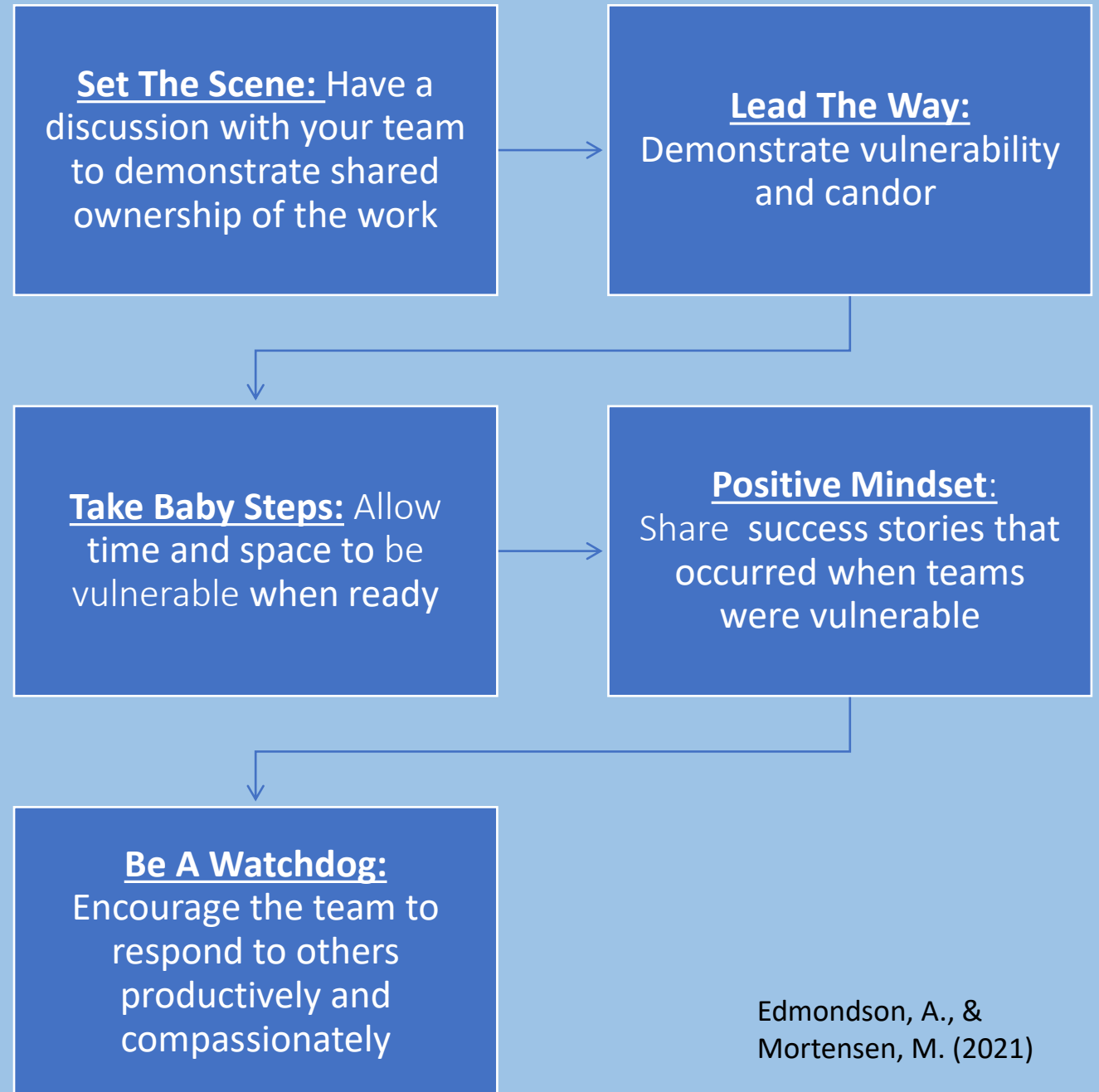
"You are a key team member and your perspective is important"

"What are you seeing?"

"What are your thoughts on this?"

"Where do you stand on this idea?"

# *Steps for leaders to nurture, cultivate and grow our culture of psychological safety ...*



Edmondson, A., &  
Mortensen, M. (2021)

# *How do teams and organizations demonstrate that Psychological Safety is a **priority...***

Cultural norms where teams celebrate supportive, open dialogue leading to new ideas and surprising outcomes!

Team members hold each other accountable for behaviors that do not support safe dialogue

Inviting feedback

# References

- Edmondson, A. (2017). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Gallo, A. (2023). *What is psychological safety?* Harvard Business Review, February, 2023
- Edmondson, A., & Mortensen, M. (2021). *What psychological safety looks like in a hybrid workplace*. Harvard Business Review, April.
- Hutchison, J. (2020). *Psychological safety and transparent communication at work: Strengthening collaboration and innovation* [Video]. Zoom. Michigan State University WorkLife Office, April.