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Smells Like Team Spirit: How to Foster Psychological Safety and Enhance Team Creativity

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by

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An Abstract of a Project
in
Creativity and Change Leadership

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

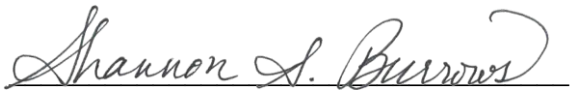
May 2023

Buffalo State University
State University of New York
Department of Creativity and Change Leadership

Abstract of Project

Creativity is one of the most sought-after skills of the 21st century, yet team members may be reticent to contribute to creative problem-solving out of fear of ridicule, retribution, or because of rigid hierarchical team structures. However, psychological safety is the underpinning of creativity; without it a culture of silence prevails, mistakes go unreported, and team creativity languishes. But how do leaders cultivate psychological safety in their teams? This project seeks to answer that question. Although the term "psychological safety" has become common in the corporate lexicon, misconceptions abound. Through the creation of a short, animated video, this project addresses these common misconceptions and introduces ways in which leaders can cultivate psychological safety in their teams. Key learnings include the popular understanding of psychological safety, script writing and animated video creation, and tools for leaders. Future creative possibilities are also discussed.

Keywords: creativity, psychological safety, innovation, organizational teams, leaders, Vyond™



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May 11, 2023

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Dates of Approval:

May 11, 2023 Susan Keller-Mathers

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I want to extend my most heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Patrick Burrows, for whom my love and appreciation defies language. Every journey is better because I have you to share it with. Thank you, deeply and truly.

Lastly, my sincere thanks to anyone who excavates this work from the dusty thesis catacombs and actually reads it.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose and Description of the Project

There is a running joke that people who major in psychology in their undergraduate degree programs are simply interested in figuring out their own life issues. There is truth in humor, at least as far as I'm concerned. When I sought my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, I did so to understand the inner workings of my mind, my emotions, and the actions of those with whom I was in relationships. With each class, I took an introspective journey into why I thought and acted the way I did. It was uncomfortable at times, but as my classmates, professors, and I got to know each other better, we all felt comfortable sharing our innermost fears, insecurities, and dreams. It turned out that I wasn't so different in my thoughts and feelings. This realization gave me both consternation and comfort; I'm less unique than I thought, but I'm less alone, too.

When choosing to pursue my Master of Science degree in Creativity and Change Leadership, I let curiosity be my guide and companion, imbued with a certain confidence that like our thoughts and feelings, creativity isn't so different in all of us. But as the program chugged along, questions percolated in my mind that brought into focus a vital piece missing from the creative problem-solving process. I realized that we're not all operating from the same starting point. Some of us are dealing with traumas that preclude the ability or desire to engage in divergent thinking or to embrace ambiguity. Some are oppressed by institutional racism and their creative ideas may go unrecognized or be outright shunned. Some of us have "art scars" and have a fear of ideas that are wild and unusual. And some of us might hold back during ideation because our prior experiences included ridicule or humiliation.

I suppressed my participation during the first course of the Creativity and Change Leadership program, "Principles in Creative Problem-Solving." During an ideating warm-up exercise, the group was asked to call out ideas on ways in which one might remove a hippopotamus from a bathtub. My colleagues and I participated enthusiastically, but as we stretched ourselves to reach for more and more divergent ideas, I found I was reluctant to call out some ideas lest I be seen as strange, immature, or even cruel. As a new group, we'd not yet established psychological safety and as result my divergent ideas were inhibited. My perceived lack of safety tamed my creativity.

Rationale for Selection

The more I thought about the factors that affect creativity, the clearer it became to me that feeling safe – safe in our bodies, our communities, our workplaces, and in our teams – is vital to creativity. In Dr. John Cabra's class "Facilitation of Group Problem Solving," he discussed with us one shortcoming in the convergence phase of the Thinking Skills Model (Puccio, et al., 2012). Cabra said that when a client "marks the hits" during the convergence phase, it's nearly impossible for the facilitator to know if the client is selecting ideas that they know their boss will support, if they're choosing ideas that will gain the most consensus, or if they're really picking the ideas that resonate the most. In fact, I would argue that it's not just the convergence phase that is affected; a lack of psychological safety can also negatively affect the divergence phase of creative problem-solving as evidenced in my personal anecdote. It begs the question: if one doesn't feel psychologically safe within their work team, how can they effectively defer judgment and reach for wild and unusual ideas?

It became clear to me that what is missing within the creative problem-solving framework is the inclusion or cultivation of psychological safety to enhance the creative process. Even if the client teams to which Dr. Cabra referred had a generally positive attitude toward the creative process, I believe it's not enough.

While positive attitudes may create lasting change when CPS is used in organizations (Mastria, et al., 2019), psychological safety enhances all types of creativity. Harvard professor and researcher Edmonson popularized the phrase "psychological safety" (Edmonson, 1999, 2004, 2018). She defines it as, "taken-for-granted beliefs that others will respond positively when one exposes one's thoughts, such as by asking a question, seeking feedback, reporting a mistake, or proposing a new idea." (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006, p. 110). When teams in an organization require creativity or innovation, a lack of psychological safety can inhibit creativity because part of the creative process involves taking risks and tolerating ambiguity (Puccio et al., 2010). Team members who lack psychological safety shy away from offering divergent ideas to a creative problem, asking questions that might make others perceive them unfavorably, or engaging in knowledge sharing (Edmonson, 1999). In my professional life, I've worked on teams in which I was hesitant to speak up at meetings with questions or ideas for fear of being humiliated; however, impression management hinders collaboration and risk-taking (Lewin & Reeves, 2011). As researchers posit, psychological safety does not mean members of the team are interpersonally close or that there is a lack of pressure or problems (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006). Psychological safety within teams and organizations simply means that when problems arise, team members have productive discussions, refrain from harsh criticisms, and feel confident that leaders and team members will respond with openness. In fact, research conducted by Edmonson and Mogelof (2006) examined which factors contributed to psychological safety in

innovation teams both at the organizational and personal levels, and of the Big Five Personality traits, openness, defined as the inclination to demonstrate curiosity about the environment and interpersonal interactions, was positively correlated with psychological safety, whereas neuroticism, which is the tendency for individuals to exhibit consistent negativity, shame, anxiety, and suspicion was negatively correlated. Additionally, these authors posit that psychological safety changes throughout the project lifecycle, that positive company and team interactions, and goal clarity – the level at which team members felt they were clear on the goals of the project on which they were working – had the greatest impact on psychological safety. From a practical standpoint, it seems that as the project lifespan continues, it would behoove leaders to check in with team members to ensure everyone is clear on the project goals.

I saw this play out within my cohort in the "Creativity and Change Leadership" course. As the deadline approached for the culminating paper of the course, many of us were feeling uncertain – some would even say panicked – over the particulars of this assignment. However, Dr. Puccio created psychological safety within the group by providing goal clarity, reviewing the requirements, and giving examples of exemplary work from our fellow colleagues from which we could draw inspiration.

Ensuring team members have goal clarity is one way in which leaders can foster psychological safety in their teams; however, day-to-day positive interactions within teams is, according to Edmonson (1999), the most critical factor to establishing psychologically safe environments. When I led a team of quality assurance engineers, I practiced participative leadership, a style of leadership that includes employees in decision making (Northouse, 2018, p. 202). In my experience, allowing team members to have a say in the decisions and direction of the department provided them a sense of empowerment, and their involvement afforded them the

safety to take creative risks. Unbeknownst to me at the time, participative leadership is argued to be the "most humanistic approach to leadership" (Amabile et al., 2004), and research confirms that participative leadership leads to greater employee creativity by way of psychological safety and creative process engagement (Chen et al., 2020).

Further research posits that psychological safety is a mediating factor in increased creativity at work, and according to Carmeli, et al. (2010), inclusive leadership leads to increased employee creativity because, "… inclusiveness is key in providing leadership support for creativity, because it cultivates high quality relationships that further augment a sense of psychological safety." (Carmeli, et al., 2010, p. 257). The practical applications of these research studies are obvious in that different leadership styles detract from or contribute to psychological safety, which in turn directly affects employee creative output.

Personal Goals

Creativity is one of the most sought-after skills of knowledge workers in the 21st century. If psychological safety is the underpinning to creativity (Rozovsky, 2015), effective teaming (Edmonson, 1999) and innovation (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006), then it must be a priority of organizations, teams, and leaders who hope to stay on the leading edge of creativity. My personal goals for this assignment are to:

- Answer the question, "How do we cultivate psychological safety at work?"
- Define what psychological safety is.
- Define what psychological safety is *not.*
- Examine what happens when teams lack psychological safety.
- Explore ways to create lasting psychological safety in teams.

- Create a short, animated video describing the aforementioned components which can be used in business and educational settings.
- Gain a greater understanding of psychological safety so that I can engender it within my own teams.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Although Edmonson popularized the term "psychological safety" (Edmonson, 1999, 2004, 2018) other researchers examine the same concept and how it affects creativity (Carmeli, et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2013; Rogers, 1970). Some researchers refer to trust (Barczak et al., 2010), teaming (Edmonson, 1999), and team culture and inclusion (Leroy et al., 2021) as pathways to increased creativity. To completely understand how psychological safety underpins creativity in teams, I'll engage in reading to further understand the benefits and downfalls of psychological safety. As research and development of the animated short video commences, I anticipate additional resources will be added to this body of work. Below is a list of publications I plan to explore, although this list is preliminary:

Amabile, T., Schatzel, E., Moneta, B. and Kramer, S. (2004). Leader behaviors and work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support. *Leadership Quarterly*, *15*(1), 5-32.

Baer, M., & Frese, M. (2002). Innovation is not enough: Climates for initiative and psychological safety, process innovations, and firm performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *24*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.179

Detert, J. R., & Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Implicit voice theories: Taken-for-granted rules of self-censorship at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*(3), 461–488. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.61967925

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(2), 350–383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Edmondson, A. C. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth* (1st ed.). Wiley.

Edmondson, A. C., & Smith, D. M. (2006). Too hot to handle? How to manage relationship conflict. *California Management Review*, *49*(1), 6–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/41166369

Gibb, S., & Waight, C. L. (2005). Connecting HRD and creativity: From fragmentary insights to strategic significance. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *7*(2), 271–286. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422305274530

Hirak, R., Peng, A. C., Carmeli, A., & Schaubroeck, J. M. (2012). Linking leader inclusiveness to work unit performance: The importance of psychological safety and learning from failures. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *23*(1), 107–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.11.009

Hu, J., Erdogan, B., Jiang, K., Bauer, T. N., & Liu, S. (2018). Leader humility and team creativity: The role of team information sharing, psychological safety, and power distance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *103*(3), 313–323. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000277

Huang, C. C., & Jiang, P. C. (2012). Exploring the psychological safety of R&D teams: An empirical analysis in Taiwan. *Journal of Management & Organization*, *18*(2), 175–192. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1833367200000948

Liu, W., Zhang, P., Liao, J., Hao, P., & Mao, J. (2016). Abusive supervision and employee creativity. *Management Decision*, *54*(1), 130–147. https://doi.org/10.1108/md-09-2013-0443

Mastria, S., Agnoli, S., & Corazza, G. E. (2019). How does emotion influence the creativity evaluation of exogenous alternative ideas? *PloS One*, *14*(7), e0219298–e0219298.

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work.

Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, *77*(1), 11–37. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317904322915892

Milliken, F. J., Morrison, E. W., & Hewlin, P. F. (2003). An exploratory study of employee silence: Issues that employees don't communicate upward and why. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(6), 1453–1476. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00387

Owens, B. P., Johnson, M. D., & Mitchell, T. R. (2013). Expressed humility in organizations: Implications for performance, teams, and leadership. *Organization Science*, *24*(5), 1517–1538. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1120.0795

Puccio, G. J., Mance, M., Switalski, L.B. & Reali, P.D (2012). *Creativity rising: Creative thinking and creative problem solving in the 21st century*. Buffalo, N.Y: ICSC Press

Sharifirad, M. S. (2013). Transformational leadership, innovative work behavior, and employee well-being. *Global Business Perspectives*, *1*(3), 198–225. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40196-013-0019-2

Siemsen, E., Roth, A. V., Balasubramanian, S., & Anand, G. (2009). The influence of psychological safety and confidence in knowledge on employee knowledge sharing. *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management*, *11*(3), 429–447. https://doi.org/10.1287/msom.1080.0233

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

The most effective way to learn a subject is to teach it to someone else. That is why I've chosen to create a short, animated video as the deliverable for this project. This animated short video will explain what psychological safety is, what it is not, and how it can be leveraged to cultivate a team environment conducive to creativity. By contrasting the evidenced-based research of psychological safety to the popular psychology understanding of the construct, I hope to impart knowledge to my viewers so they may adopt psychologically safe principles and leadership within their teams and classrooms. Using animation, music, and an informative yet easy-to-understand script, I hope to engage viewers and spark a psychologically safe revolution where creativity and innovation thrive.

The intended audience for this resource is leaders in organizations, consultants who want to teach their clients about the benefits of psychological safety, and educators who wish to impart the importance of psychological safety to students engaging in group work. The research and development of this deliverable will also enhance my understanding of psychological safety and how to cultivate it within my professional teams. It will also serve as an adjunct to enhance the knowledge I've gained in the Creativity and Change Leadership program.

With consideration of the timeframe allotted for this project, I recognize the possibility that further editing and refinement of the animated video may be required beyond graduation. However, to accomplish the completion of this deliverable, I will conduct research on psychological safety through scholarly articles and popular press; I will learn how to use the video creation tool Vyond™ by watching tutorial videos and setting up training meetings with a member of the Vyond™ team; and I will script and create the video. A timeline of major milestones and deliverables is presented in table one.

Table 1
Project Timeline and Action Plan

Activity	**Deadline**	**Support Needed**
Proposal development	February 10, 2022	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Proposal approval	February 13, 2023	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Begin research and collecting information	March 18, 2023	
Submit Sections 1-3	April 2, 2023	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Attend training session with Vyond™ trainer	April 4, 2023	Vyond™ team member
Begin drafting video script	April 6, 2023	
Practice skills learned in Vyond™ training with a practice video	April 5, 2023	
Create and edit Vyond™ video	April 13, 2023	
Distribute poll on psychological safety to colleagues	April 2, 2023	Work Colleagues
Submit Sections 4-6	April 22, 2023	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Completed Master's Project Document Submission	May 1, 2023	
Completed Master's Project to Digital Commons	May 8, 2023	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
CRS 690 project completion and presentation	May 19, 2023	Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers

Table two includes my goals and the corresponding deliverables which denote the measure of success and/or completion of those goals.

Table 2
Key Evaluation Assessments Towards Goals

Goals	**Deliverable**
Identify how psychological safety affects creativity and ways in which people can foster psychological safety in teams	Synthesize data collected from scholarly articles.
Learn how to use Vyond™	Set up a meeting with a member of the Vyond™ team for a walk-through tutorial.
Write an informative and engaging script for the animated short video	A video script
Create an animated short video in Vyond™	Create a digital resource that organizations, consultants, and educators can leverage to teach others about psychological safety.
Share the deliverable at work, if permitted	Share with my teams as permitted.

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

The purpose of this project was to create an entertaining training device to impart the impact psychological safety has on creativity. In order to create an engaging animated video that defines psychological safety and how leaders can cultivate it in organizational teams, I wanted to gain a sense of the current understanding of psychological safety. In so doing, I had a foundation from which I could build the video script, enabling me to include real-world examples of how people, often erroneously, define psychological safety. I gathered this data through a poll I distributed to my colleagues. Once I'd gathered the data from my colleagues, I incorporated those themes into the video script. The script would become the springboard of the video, the jumping off point from which I would craft the scenes. I created a draft of the video using Vyond™ (https://www.vyond.com/), a cloud-based animated video creation platform, after attending a one-on-one training session with a member of the Vyond™ team. The four outcomes of this project are discussed in detail below.

Popular Understanding of Psychological Safety

Pop psychology is ubiquitous. Serious and often debilitating psychological conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or narcissistic personality disorder have made their way into the common lexicon. We've all heard someone claim their propensity for tidiness is driven by their self-diagnosed OCD, or how our best friend's meddling and selfish mother-in-law is a narcissist. The term "psychological safety" is no different in the corporate world; many knowledge workers have heard of the term, but few really understand what it means.

This lack of understanding is the purpose behind my desire to create an animated video talking about psychological safety. Given the importance of psychological safety in teams and

the effect it has on creativity, it's important for organizational leaders to have a firm grasp on the concept. But first, I wanted to gauge the current understanding of psychological safety. To accomplish this, I polled my fellow colleagues, asking them to define psychological safety as they understood it. The answers I received were varied and largely incorrect, thus confirming the importance of creating a training tool on what psychological safety is and how leaders can create it in their teams.

The following is a sample of the responses I received from colleagues answering the question, "How would you define psychological safety in the workplace?"

- Feeling safe to bring my whole self to work.
- Including all team members to make decisions.
- Having trust in those around me and that I'm physically, mentally, and emotionally safe.
- Trust.
- Taking mental health seriously without discriminating its legitimacy or severity.
- Safety in speaking up with ideas, criticisms, questions, etc.
- Everything that includes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Having good work relationships with the people on your team.
- Knowing that speaking up will drive change in my team.
- Freedom for me to share my ideas while knowing that I'm being taken seriously.
- Having fun on a team while still accomplishing the team's objectives.
- Feeling safe in sharing my time, thoughts, ideas, and efforts.
- Treating mental health concerns as seriously as you treat physical health concerns.

- Having a good rapport with members of my team.

This exercise provided grounding on the current understanding of psychological safety. While there is some correct understanding, most of the answers missed the mark. Many of the themes that emerged included trust, inclusion, and positive personal interactions. While these concepts play a part in psychological safety, they don't encapsulate the construct. Psychological safety is the understanding that it's safe to take interpersonal risks (Edmonson, 1999, 2018). This includes feeling safe enough to voice concerns, ask questions, and offer ideas (Edmonson, 2018). Furthermore, Edmonson (2018) points out that psychological safety does not mean everyone on a team gets along or is "nice" all the time. It is the understanding that candor is welcome and team members are not penalized for speaking up. Using the nomenclature correctly is vital because when we homogenize it, the term loses all its meaning. Also, if common misunderstandings persist and the true meaning of the construct is never explained, those misunderstandings endure.

Learning Vyond™

As a video-creating neophyte, I enlisted the help of a trainer from Vyond™ (https://www.vyond.com/) to give me an overall sense of how the software worked, best practices, and tips and tricks for creating an engaging video. Although Vyond™ has robust resources available to users including a blog (Quinn, 2022), tutorials, and help articles, I scheduled a Zoom call with a Vyond™ video team member to decrease my ramp-up time.

Within the software, Vyond™ has a "stage" where the main components of the video are created and edited. Selecting from hundreds of pre-made templates and scenes, I can create an office environment or park setting with the click of a button. A robust library of assets – scenes, characters, props, music – are included within the software, or users can import their own. Each

of the system assets can be customized and animated. The Vyond™ trainer demonstrated how to continue the last scene to the next and how to create transitions between scenes to give the video a polished look.

Adding assets is as simple as selecting them from the asset library and then dragging them to the desired location within the stage. After selecting a template for the front of a house on a residential street for example, I can choose a dog from the asset library and place the dog on the sidewalk in front of the house. If I want the dog to move to the front door, I set the motion path, the action I want the dog to take (i.e., walk, run, jump), and the speed of the action. Once the dog is at the front door, I can add other animations such as tail wagging, or I can add sound effects like barking. If I want to switch the dog asset for a character, I can do so by selecting a character from the asset list.

Once I've switched the dog for a character, Vyond™ also allows users to add facial expressions. For example, if my character walked from the sidewalk to the front door and then knocked on the door, I could add a frowning facial expression when their knock goes unanswered. If I want my character to speak, Vyond™ has a lip sync feature where the animated character's mouth lip syncs the words to the audio track for that scene. As my character is speaking, I can zoom in on their face, creating a focal point and lending interest to the scene.

Often spoken dialogue – as opposed to on-screen text – is used to add interest to scenes; however, I do not have access to other voices for recording nor am I a voice actor. Therefore, if my character's knock resulted in another character opening the door and engaging in conversation, I can use the text-to-speech feature. The text-to-speech feature allows the user to insert text and select different voices and accents for that text. Different voices and accents can

be selected for each character in the video, thus eliminating the need for multiple voice recordings during video creation.

Beyond text-to-speech and lip syncing, Vyond™ has hundreds of different effects that can be applied to assets. Each effect can be used as enter and exit effects. Like transitions in PowerPoint, these effects can differ from when the asset enters the scene and when it exits the scene. For instance, in the original example with the dog, I could assign enter effects such as "sparkles" on the front door and insert exit effects on the dog such as "slide" thus adding visual interest and giving the scene a polished look.

In addition to animations, effects, and expressions, Vyond™ has a substantial library of music, ambient tracks, and sound effects. Background music can be added to the entire video to add auditory interest, or ambient tracks such as environmental noises can be added to scenes. Thus, if a scene takes place in a restaurant, I can use an ambient track of restaurant noise for that scene. All of the audio volume levels can be adjusted within each scene.

The combination of characters, templates, and assets are seemingly endless. But before any scenes, audio, or assets are added, the type of video style must be selected. Vyond™ offers three types of video styles: business friendly, casual, and whiteboard animation. Given the intended audience of this video, I decided that the business friendly or whiteboard animation styles would be most appropriate. The business-friendly style includes props and characters that are suitable for corporate audiences, whereas the whiteboard animation is a minimalist style where assets are actively drawn piece-by-piece. This style is good for engaging audiences on complex topics.

Throughout creation and editing, the video can be previewed from the beginning or from a selected scene. A timer runs along the bottom of the stage to aid in editing, and scenes can

simply be dragged left or right to shorten or lengthen them. Once the video is complete, the video can be compiled and exported.

Video Script

Before I began crafting the script for the animated video, I needed to make some decisions including:

- The style of video (business friendly or whiteboard animation)
- The length of the video
- Whether the video will be scenario-based or a story narrative
- If I plan to have speaking characters or a narrator
- The setting of the video
- Details about psychological safety

Given the interpersonal nature of the topic of psychological safety, I selected business friendly for the video style. Rather than the black-and-white, minimalist style of whiteboard animation, I preferred the versatility and wider array of options available to me with the business-friendly style. Adding facial expressions and character movements would allow me to convey emotions, whereas the whiteboard animation added a level of emotional separation that did not serve my topic. The setting would be a professional workplace.

The length of the video would dictate the amount of information I could include. Considering I'd never made an animated video before and I was learning the process of video creation and editing during the scope of this project, I decided to keep the video length to approximately three minutes. A three-minute video script is approximately 450-510 words, so this provided a word count goal to work toward.

Considering the shorter duration of this video, I settled on narration rather than dialogue between the characters, relying on the use of expressions and animations to convey emotion. According to the coherence principle of multimedia learning, minimizing extraneous pictures, words, and audio helps people learn better (Moreno & Mayer, 2000); therefore, I would keep expressions to a minimum, allowing the visuals to remain an adjunct to the informational narration.

The redundancy principle also supports the use of narration. The redundancy principle states that the combination of narration and graphics is most effective for learning; however, adding on-screen text in addition to narration detracts from learning (Mayer & Johnson, 2008). As in a slide deck presentation, best practices dictate keeping text on the slides to a minimum and refraining from "reading" the slides, so I incorporated this same principle in my video. Accessibility is important, so I planned to include closed captions, but in the interest of learning, I did not add on-screen text.

Once the initial decisions about the video script were made, drafting began. My inexperience in video creation created quite a bit of creative anxiety in me (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), and despite watching the Vyond™ trainer navigate the software with ease, I knew I would need a lot of back-and-forth revising between the script and the video. Therefore, I initially created a shell script before moving to video creation. Employing the principles of scrum framework (Babaian, 2019) and agile methodology (Beck et al., 2001), I took an iterative approach to script writing and scene creation, changing both as needed.

Ultimately, the future versions of the script will begin *in medias res* (Dobson, 2007), or in the middle of the action where the characters are experiencing a lack of psychological safety and it negatively affects their creativity. For now, I dove right into the meat of the subject, tying

together psychological safety and creativity. Fostering psychological safety within the video itself, I discussed how misconceptions about the construct are common (Gu et al., 2013); some viewers may have an incorrect understanding of psychological safety and letting them know they're not alone set their minds at ease.

Defining psychological safety was important because of these common misconceptions, so next I gave definitions and examples. Starting with a brief history of the term, I introduced psychologist Carl Rogers who coined the term in 1954, initially identifying three components of psychological safety: our individual worth, the removal of external evaluation, and empathic understanding (Rogers, 1970). After discussing what psychological safety *is*, I discussed what it's not. This comparison served as a teaching tool, answering questions viewers may have about their mistaken beliefs.

After thoroughly defining the construct, I segued into why psychological safety is important. This contextual thinking (Torrance & Safter, 1999) grounded the topic in practical application, lending value to learning more and answering the rhetorical question, "Why should I care?" Once I established the ways in which team psychological safety increases knowledge sharing (Edmonson, 1999), eliminates a culture of silence (Edmondson, 2018), encourages creative risk-taking and increases tolerance for ambiguity (Puccio, et al., 2010), and contributes more divergent ideas from team members (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006), viewers would understand the inherent value of fostering psychological safety in their own teams and want to know how to do it.

Given the scope and time restrictions of this project, using an iterative approach proved useful; the original idea for content would have exceeded the video length. In future work, I will create a video series to include why psychological safety is critical for creativity and strategies

team leaders can use to foster it in their teams. These strategies include encouraging candor, engaging in transparency and caring, reframing failure, inviting participation, and responding productively (Edmondson, 2018). I will discuss this further in section six.

Figure one depicts a sample of the script used in the video.

Figure 1
Sample of Video Script

Scene	Action	Narration
1	Open with video cover page including title, characters are shown in the background, de-emphasized and lacking color.	You may have come across the idea of psychological safety
	Remove cover text and show characters in workplace setting, standing together in front of a white board.	When talking about creativity in the workplace.
	Characters move slightly to show they are animated.	In fact, the concept of psychological safety is so common in the workplace, that misunderstandings about psychological safety are common, too.
	Characters are in full color. Show them more animated. Show their mouths moving, talking, and interacting with each other.	Psychological safety is the belief that vulnerability to ask questions, give candid feedback, and admit mistakes is welcome. It's the taken-for-granted idea that speaking up at work is a safe thing to do.
2	Use wipe transition to new scene. Show Carl Rogers slide with name and face.	The term psychological safety was coined by Carl Rogers
	Quick slide-in text "Founding Father of Psychotherapy, Creator of Humanistic Psychology"	a psychologist who defined the construct in 1954. Initially, Rogers identified 3 components to psychological safety:
3	New scene, hand places text on screen "individual worth"	Our individual worth,
4	Continue scene, hand places text on screen, "external evaluation"	the removal of external evaluation,
5	Continue scene, hand places text on screen, "empathic understanding"	and empathic understanding.
6	Wipe transition to new scene. Show Amy Edmondson slide with name and face	Recently, however, researcher Amy Edmonson popularized psychological safety in teams. The definition of the construct we know and use today.
7	Transition back to first scene. Characters are now arranged to left of white board. New character is standing in front of the white board.	Despite widespread talk of psychological safety, misunderstanding abounds

Video Draft

Once the shell script for the video was drafted, I began creating scenes in Vyond™. Using assets from Vyond™'s extensive library, I created the scenes with characters and asset props in an office environment template. Following the script details, I added character movements and expressions after each of the scenes were created. Creativity is enhanced through team diversity

(Leroy et al., 2021), therefore I selected characters with a diverse range of age, race, religion, and physical ability to comprise the team in the video. In the scenes that included photos of Carl Rogers and Amy C. Edmonson, I used photoshop to remove the backgrounds of the images I selected from the internet.

The entirety of the original script would not fit while keeping the video under the three-minute mark. The current scenes include a definition of psychological safety, a brief history of the concept, and common misconceptions. Future work on this project, which I will discuss in section six, will include a series of videos on this complex topic.

After scene creation was complete, I selected background music from the Vyond™ music library that would play for the duration of the video, choosing music with a medium tempo that matched my narration speed.

Once narration recording commenced, I realized the quality of my microphone was low; it picked up background noise, the sibilant consonants were sharp, and the voice quality was not clear. To remedy this, I purchased a dynamic microphone with a unidirectional polar pattern so that only sounds from in front of the mic were picked up while eliminating ambient sounds. This microphone also has analog-to-digital converters built in (Samson Technologies, n.d.), so the voice quality is excellent.

While the new microphone greatly improved the sound quality of the narration, sound editing in Vyond™ is somewhat limited. To ameliorate this issue, I recorded the narration in Audacity (Audacityteam, 2023), a free audio editor and recorder. After recording the tracks in Audacity, I exported them as .mp3 files and then inserted them into the Vyond™ video.

Initially, I'd recorded the narration as one track, but as I edited the scenes in Vyond™, I quickly learned that it was nearly impossible to match the scene transitions, character actions,

and effects to the narration audio. Therefore, I re-recorded the audio as a series of short clips, splitting the narration for each individual scene. Overlaying the narration tracks on the background music was easy, and I could adjust the volume of each so that the voice was audible over the music.

Figures two through six depict screen shots of the Vyond™ stage for some of the scenes of the video including a numbered diagram demonstrating the most used features in the stage.

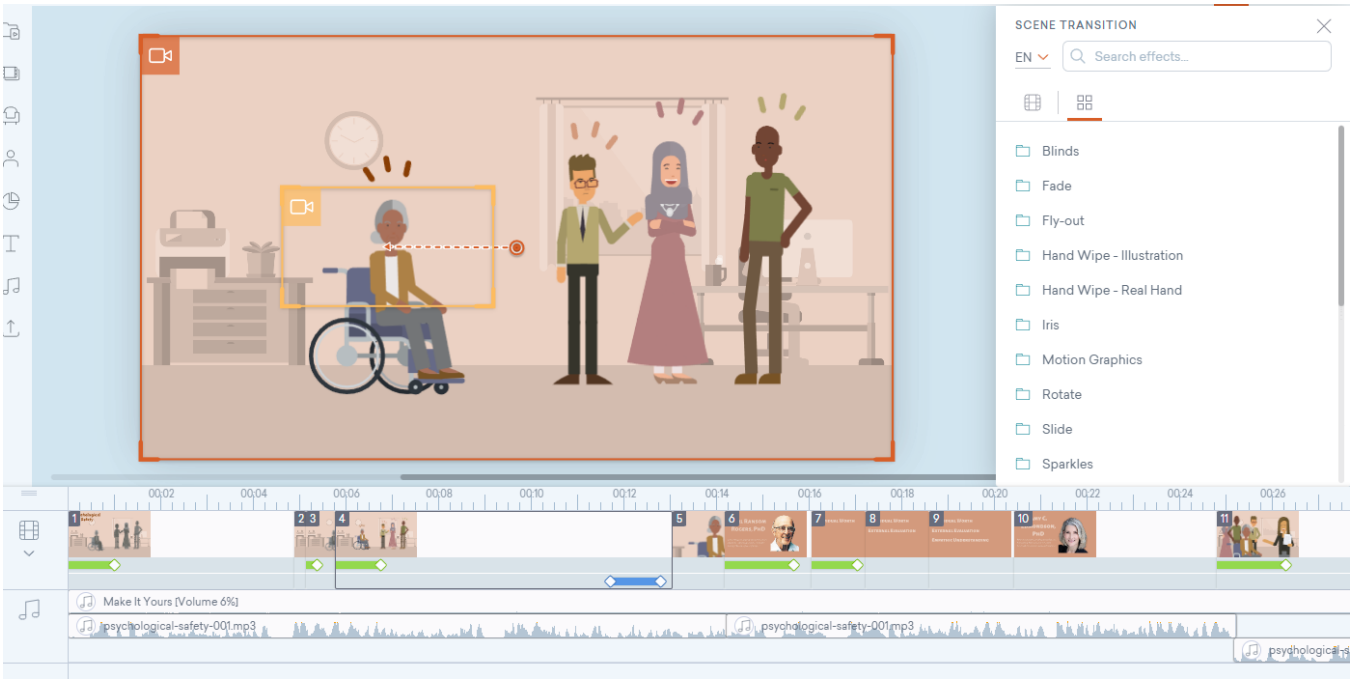
Figure 2
Numbered Diagram of Vyond™ Stage

Figure two depicts a numbered diagram demonstrating the commonly used areas in the Vyond™ stage. Below is a list of the numbers with their corresponding descriptions:

1. This menu bar contains buttons for the assets available within Vyond™ including characters, music, sound effects, text, charts, and props.

2. This is the main design area where you can add assets and effects.
3. This menu bar contains context-specific actions that can be performed depending on the selected asset in the main design area.
4. This is the timeline of the video that allows users to time effects, transitions, etc. The timeline is precise to the hundredth of a second.
5. This portion of the timeline allows users to create and time scenes. You can right-click here and create a scene or add transitions between scenes.
6. This portion of the timeline contains the audio tracks. This includes music and voice tracks.

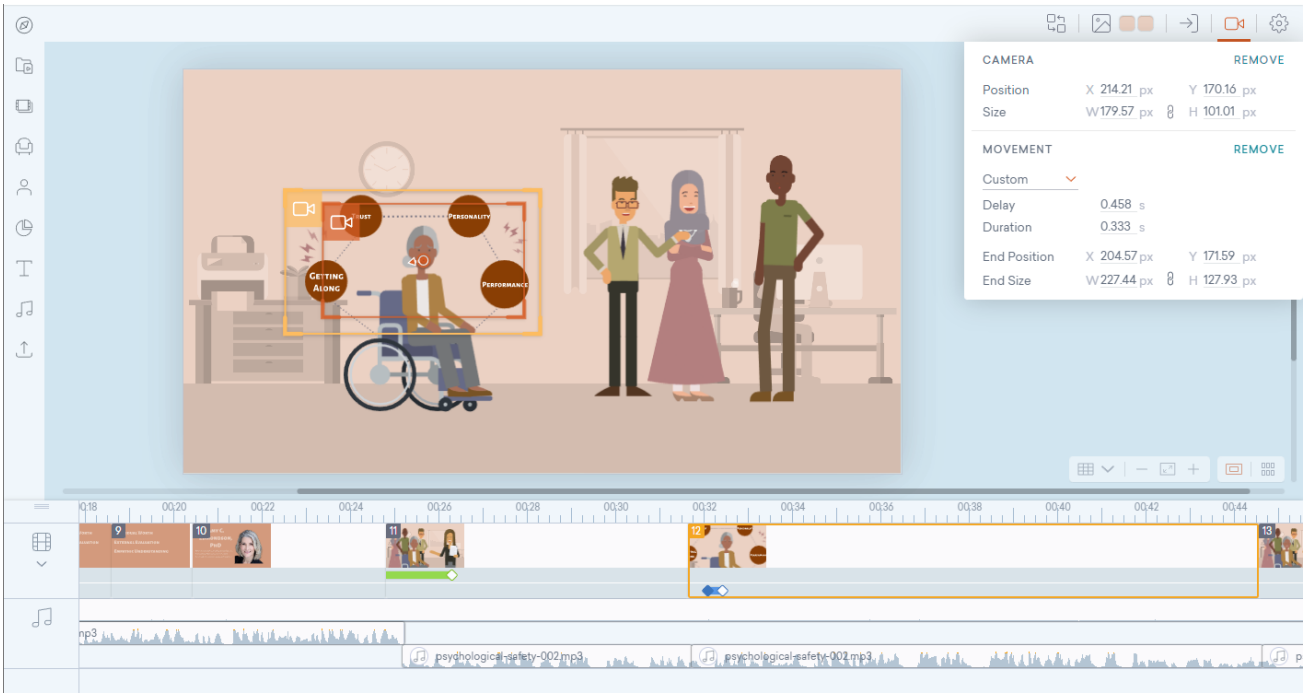
Figure 3
Example of Vyond™ Stage



The dialogue box in this screenshot demonstrates options for scene transitions. This screenshot illustrates the enter scene transitions for this particular scene. This menu is also used for exit scene transitions.

Here, the character in the wheelchair encounters coworkers ridiculing her creative ideas.

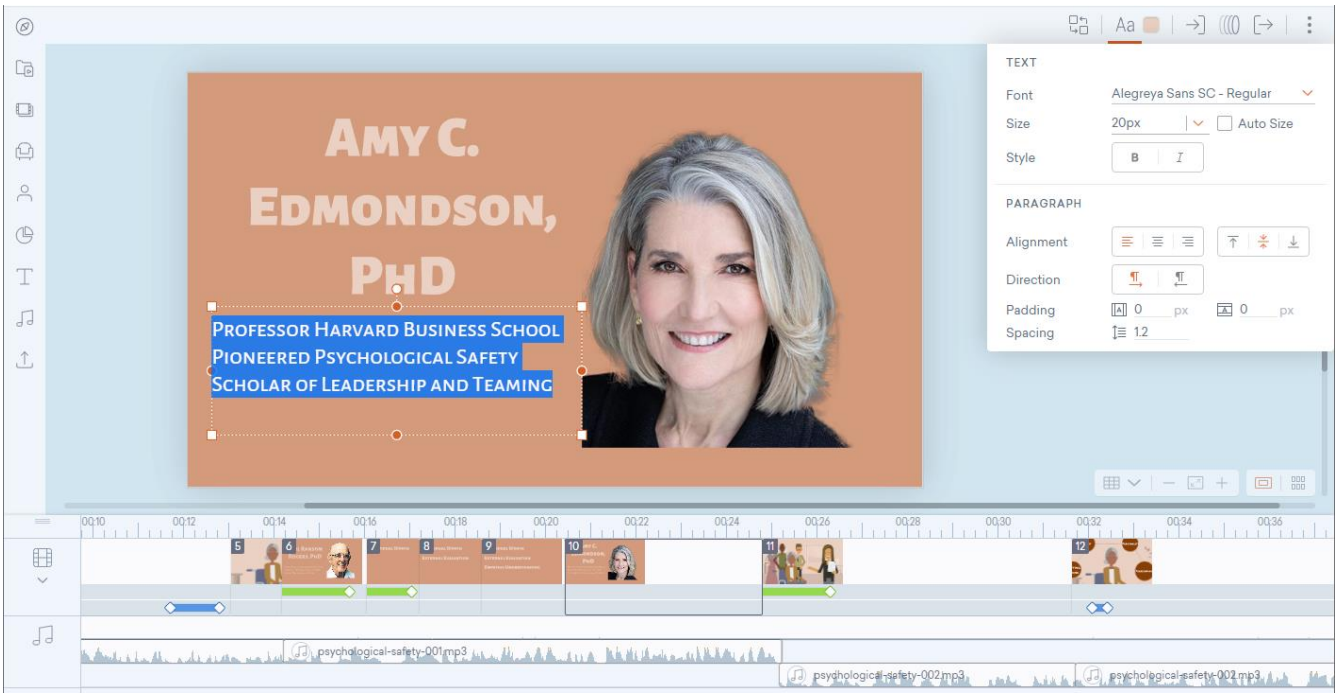
Figure 4
Example of Vyond™ Stage



In figure four, the dialogue box illustrates settings for the position and movement of the camera. It allows for custom settings that mimic a real camera. In other words, the camera can zoom in and out, and pan up, down, left, or right. There are also settings for how many seconds into the scene these effects take place and how long they last.

This scene is set to zoom in on the frowning facial expression of the character in the wheelchair followed by text bubbles appearing one-by-one around her face. The frown allows my character to emote, and the text bubbles "list" factors of psychological safety.

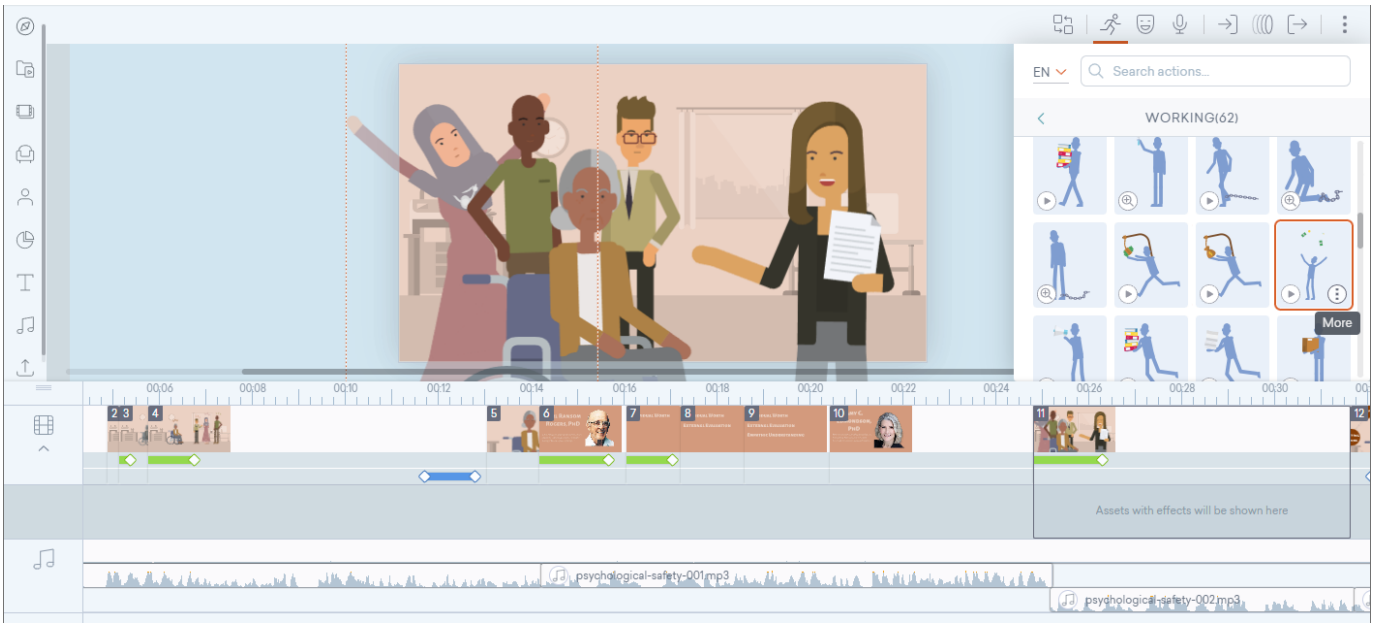
Figure 5
Example of Vyond™ Stage



The dialog box in this screenshot demonstrates the settings for on-screen text, including fonts, font sizes, alignment and direction of the text.

In this scene, I highlighted the text describing who Amy C. Edmonson, PhD is, then chose the font, size, etc.

Figure 6
Example of Vyond™ Stage



This screenshot demonstrates options for character animations. As depicted, the raised arm animation highligted in the dialogue box is assigned to the character in the headscarf. Her arm is going out of the safe space, or off camera. This is often used to convey depth in the scene.

The manager holding the paper is cultivating psychological safety within her team as evidenced by the happy faces and animations of the characters.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety

From the first course in the Creativity and Change Leadership program, I was curious about how our individual lived experiences shape our comfort levels in the creative problem-solving process. Initially, I questioned whether trauma affected our ability to effectively diverge on creative ideas. When people suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or are in a chronic state of hypervigilance, their attention, however subconsciously, is focused on salient stimuli as a means to ensure survival. That means that higher-order processes used in divergent thinking, for example, are downregulated so the brain can reallocate resources to increase survival (Vartanian et al., 2020).

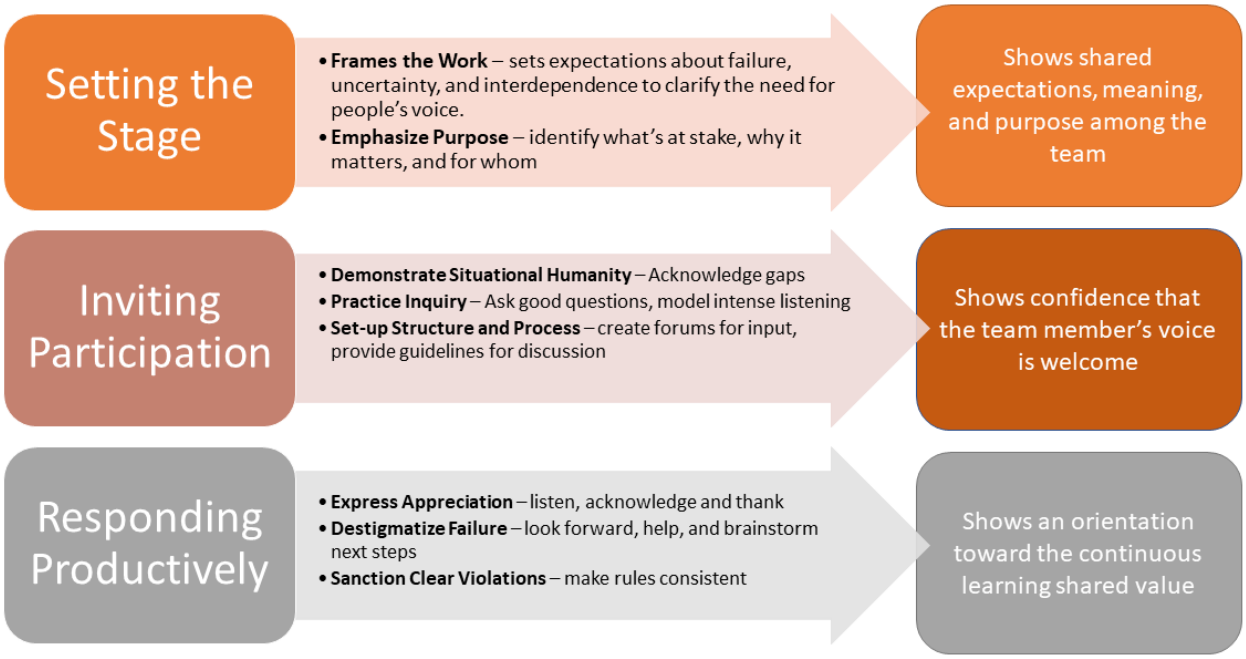
But what about people who experience reluctance to speak up or feel shame during work meetings or ideation sessions? Certainly not everyone has PTSD. I quickly learned that the answers I sought weren't rooted in trauma but in psychological safety. Without psychological safety, team members are afraid to ask questions, speak up with potentially wacky ideas, or offer candid feedback (Edmonson, 2018). Psychological safety is positively correlated with creativity and innovation (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006) and learning in teams (Edmonson, 1999). Like creativity, team learning is an "ongoing process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions" (Edmonson, 1999, p. 353). The success of this iterative process requires psychological safety.

A lack of psychological safety precludes teams from taking creative risks because a "willingness to think of new ideas, explore novel directions, and behave creatively may require a

safety net provided by a climate of psychological safety, since the process of exploration may be risky" (Kark & Carmeli, 2009, p. 788). While research from Edmonson (1999, 2018) and Kark & Carmeli (2009) makes it clear that psychological safety is critical for creative teams, what wasn't as clear to me was *how* leaders fostered it. This project deepened my understanding of the strategies and practices with which leaders can cultivate psychological safety and encourage creativity.

One resource that clarified leadership strategies is Edmonson's Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety (2018). This toolkit breaks down the components of psychological safety into actionable steps. Focusing tasks into three categories, Edmonson describes the leader task and the intended outcomes as displayed in figure seven.

Figure 7
The Leader's Tool Kit



Note. This model was adapted from Edmondson, A. C. (2018). The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth. p.169. Wiley.

Leaders begin setting the stage for a psychologically safe environment by framing the work and emphasizing purpose (Edmonson, 2018). Framing the work accomplishes several things. When leaders set expectations about failure, they promote open and candid communication when failure inevitably happens. This not only eliminates a culture of silence, but it allows for valuable learning by examining the reasons why the failures happened in the first place. It also clarifies team members' cross-functional roles, and that this interdependence requires curiosity and frequent communication. Furthermore, setting the stage normalizes the prevalence of uncertainty, allowing team members to stay open and curious when faced with

ambiguity (Edmonson, 2018). Tolerating ambiguity is an essential creativity skill (Puccio et al., 2010).

The second step in setting the stage is emphasizing purpose. Clarifying what's at stake for the project and the team members' roles offers important context. This context serves a creative function as well because it gives awareness of the problem (Torrance & Safter, 1999). Knowing what's at stake provides goal clarity, which is sometimes a matter of life and death. Airline pilots or surgical teams must be clear on the stakes, and leaders who ensure this encourage the need for voice despite hierarchical team structures. Lastly, emphasizing a shared sense of purpose is an effective leadership strategy because it increases motivation and inspires team members (Northouse, 2018, p. 264).

Once leaders have successfully framed the work, inviting participation is the next step in fostering psychological safety (Edmonson, 2018). When done genuinely and in a compelling way, leaders position themselves not as the know-it-all boss who gives orders and keeps tabs on employees, but as leaders who set the direction for the team and create conditions that encourage input and learning. Leaders who admit personal mistakes or when they don't know the answer model that it's safe for team members to do the same (Edmonson, 2018). This type of authentic leadership increases interpersonal effectiveness (Northouse, 2018, p. 308) with employees, thereby increasing psychological safety as well.

Inviting participation also includes asking good questions and listening intently. Good questions are thought-provoking, invite conversation, and spark curiosity. Appreciative inquiry, a tool used to invite participation, is a methodology used for "engaging participants in a collective process of reframing and generating possible futures," (Hart et al., 2008, p. 634).

The last step in Edmonson's Leader Tool Kit (2018) is responding productively. This includes expressing appreciation through active listening and thanking team members for their contributions, normalizing failure, discussing strategies for future directions, and clearly addressing violations in established policies (Edmonson, 2018).

When repeatedly and intentionally practiced, Edmonson's Leader's Tool Kit (2018) fosters psychological safety within teams. When organizations create psychological safety within their teams, creativity thrives (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2005).

Video Creation and Editing

Prior to this project, I had never created or edited an animated video. After researching the video creation software and settling on Vyond™, becoming proficient enough to complete this project required a tremendous amount of practice and learning. Implementing the creativity skills that I learned in the Creativity and Change Leadership program enabled me to approach this task in a systematic and creative way. For example, the Williams Model includes the creativity skills of risk-taking (courage) and complexity (Williams, 1993), both of which I embraced as a novice to multimedia learning. I also employed strategies from the Thinking Skills Model (Puccio et al., 2010) such as "exploring the vision" and "formulating a plan."

Although the scope of this project is beyond the time allotted, the skills I learned in video creation and editing will serve me well in my professional life. Animated videos are an excellent tool for engaging an audience while teaching complex topics. Vyond™ has a robust library of assets from which to choose, and the editing features enabled me to personalize the video. In the future, I would like to explore the whiteboard animation style, too.

Challenges

The amount of time video editing takes cannot be overstated. Even when a video looks straightforward or perhaps even basic in its composition, there is a copious amount of tweaking and fine-tuning that has happened behind the scenes to create that polished and professional product. At the outset of this project – and considering I'd never created and edited an animated video – I underestimated the amount of time this project required. My initial ideas included a narrative story with character dialogue, a compelling arc, and satisfying resolution. I planned to weave information about psychological safety and its effects on creativity into the narrative. However, it was not as easy as it looked to emulate the deft skills of the Vyond™ video expert. When I began my own video, it was then that I knew I needed to revisit my initial idea, simplify the script, and shorten the video length.

At three minutes of total video time, I was unable to include all the information I'd scripted in the original draft. Also, the time constraints of this project precluded me from completing the video. Although I had considered this possibility when I began the video creation, once I got into the editing portion of the project, this possibility became a reality.

Another challenge of the project was the quality of the audio recording. My biggest criticism of Vyond™ is that the in-app audio recordings do not match the quality I wanted for my finished product. An audiophile I am not, but even my untrained ear could hear the audio quality was poor. Purchasing a new microphone and recording in a separate software program was not part of the initial plan; however, once I completed the audio recordings in Audacity, the overall quality of the video was greatly enhanced.

Despite the enhanced audio recording, editing the scenes to include effects that matched the cadence and tempo of the narration proved to be nearly impossible. For example, I added an

effect to zoom into my character's face, but when I attempted to match the cadence of the narration, the zooming effect was too fast. The purpose of zooming in on her face was to draw attention to her expression, thus the effect needed to be much slower. As a result, I was required to re-record the narration in Audacity, breaking the audio into separate tracks. While this made the video editing easier, there was more work on the audio frontend; each file needed to be edited so the volume of my voice was the same across all recordings. Audacity, however, has a much easier interface with which to adjust audio tracks. In fact, I only used a small portion of the software capabilities of Audacity.

Like Audacity, Vyond™ has a deep wellspring of features, including royalty-free music tracks, sound effects, and assets. As I was exploring the software, I found myself going down a time-consuming rabbit hole, spending – or some would say wasting – hours listening to the available audio tracks and sound effects. My mind was awhirl with possibilities wondering how I could incorporate the crack of a baseball bat, a stomach gurgle, or a horse whinny into a scene. Even choosing background music from the Vyond™ library took time. It wasn't immediately evident what tracks titled, "A New Path" or "Spoonful of Ginger" sounded like without listening to them, so it took me quite a bit of time to settle on "Make it Yours," an emotionally upbeat and mid-tempo track.

While I had a lot of fun creating this video, I experienced a lot of frustration particularly when my knowledge and skill didn't match my creative ideas. This lack of skill during the early phase of this project precluded me from reaching flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Given that my perceived skill level was low, and the challenge level was high, I hovered in a state of creative anxiety. However, as my perceived skill level increased, the challenge level decreased, and my anxiety turned into arousal and eventually flow.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

My personal experience and past conversations with friends and colleagues revealed that most of us have experienced a lack of psychological safety in our professional lives. From being slighted in a work meeting by coworkers, to outright humiliation from managers when we've spoken up, a lack of psychological safety can have severe detrimental effects on the efficacy of individual employees and teams. And while the term "psychological safety" has become common in the professional lexicon, many people have a misconception as to what psychological safety is. Common misconceptions are that psychological safety is simply trust or "getting along" with your coworkers. But research has revealed that psychological safety is much more than that (Edmonson, 1999, 2004, 2018; Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Rogers, 1970). A critical component to successful teams, psychological safety fosters a culture of candor, freedom to speak up with ideas and productive criticisms, and safety in reporting mistakes (Edmonson & Mogelof, 2006). The presence of psychological safety can even save lives; when a mid-air commercial airline pilot experiences an emergency, candid and open feedback from the co-pilot to her superior, the pilot, can mean the difference between life and death (Edmonson, 2018). A psychologically safe environment allows for such communication despite the hierarchical nature of the team. Had there been a lack of psychological safety, the co-pilot may have felt unsure about speaking up thereby endangering lives.

While not all teams have such high stakes, psychological safety is nonetheless important. When leaders foster an environment in which employees feel safe to admit mistakes or offer constructive dissent to a decision, employees feel empowered to take creative risks, have a

greater sense of belonging and purpose, and have the freedom to share knowledge with others (Edmondson & Mogelof, 2005; Gu et al., 2013; Leroy et al., 2021).

Future Creative Possibilities

Psychological safety is the underpinning of creativity (Rozovsky, 2015). If team members don't feel safe to speak with candor or offer zany ideas during the divergent stage of the CPS process (Osborn, 1963), then the process breaks down before it's even begun. Therefore, further research into the intrinsic tie between psychological safety and creativity could include establishing a psychologically safe environment before the start of a facilitated CPS session. Training leaders in the principles of psychological safety would not only serve to create an environment conducive to creativity, but it would increase teaming (Edmonson, 1999) and employee satisfaction.

The animated video I created for this project is an excellent foundation for what I envision as a series of videos on psychological safety and creativity. Extending the learning (Torrance & Safter, 1999) for this project could include creating a series of microlearning videos on psychological safety concluding with a certification test that employers could use for their leaders. Scenario-style videos using characters could demonstrate both situations that lack psychological safety and ways in which those situations could be remedied.

Beyond animated videos, I see myself developing a workshop for leaders during which I train them on what psychological safety is and how to foster it in their teams. Using role-playing, participants would have opportunities to practice implementing the tools they learned in the workshop. This workshop could be an antecedent to a facilitated CPS session.

Redefining Soft Skills

I've often bristled at the term "soft skills" that refers to the affective skills in the workplace. The irony is that soft skills are the hardest to teach, implement, and master. Soft skills are defined as "proficiencies related to communication, personality traits, social cues and behavioral habits" (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). I would argue that without effective communication and interpersonal skills, no amount of technical skills matter. Business is not done in a vacuum which is why teaming (Edmonson, 1999) and collaboration are essential for business creativity and innovation. A critical component to effective collaboration is team emotional intelligence (Barczak et al., 2010). When teams have greater overall emotional intelligence, which Barczak et al. (2010) states are the awareness and management of one's own and other's emotions, they engender greater trust, thereby increasing creativity. As I stated in section four, trust is a component of psychological safety, but not the entirety of it; therefore, establishing trust by increasing emotional intelligence could enhance team psychological safety.

To accomplish this, a portion of the psychological safety workshop would focus on building emotional awareness and granularity, or getting specific on what we're feeling, so that we can act appropriately. Based on a workshop I developed in Dr. Cabra's course "Foundations in Teaching and Training Creativity" in which I taught the process of noticing and naming our emotions, this future workshop module would include strategies to increase emotional intelligence. For example, I would demonstrate ways in which participants can create space between their emotions and reactions. Using cognitive defusion (Larsson et al., 2016), creating space would allow participants to consciously respond rather than instinctively react. Increasing interpersonal effectiveness and emotional intelligence of leaders would help them create psychological safety in their teams.

Personal Impact

The personal impact of this project was immense. Finding language for psychological safety to articulate my personal experience was powerful. Like my feelings during my undergraduate psychology courses, learning about psychological safety gave me both consternation and comfort; I was experiencing a lack of psychological safety at work, but I was now able to articulate my experience in a productive and self-compassionate way. Often, we attribute our feelings of embarrassment or shame to a sense of personal lack; however, learning that it's a lack of psychological safety that negatively affects us rather than blaming our personal shortcomings provided me with a sense of clarity and relief. The times I'd felt uncomfortable speaking up in a work meeting wasn't because of an inherent lack of confidence on my part, but a lack of psychological safety within my work team. This was further demonstrated when I *did* speak up on teams where psychological safety was present. My hope is that deepening my knowledge of psychological safety and its impact on creativity, and then transferring that knowledge to others will result in heightened awareness of the construct, more open communication, and increased creativity. When we feel the freedom that psychological safety provides to be our innate creative self, we have more fun. And isn't that what life's all about?

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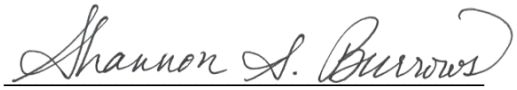

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