



Psychological Safety and Quality Improvement

Reading and Resources List

The psychology of improvement is a wide-ranging field, within which there is the concept of psychological safety – a willingness to take interpersonal risk at work. QI is all about learning together as a team. We can't learn if we don't feel safe with each other to raise ideas or concerns or simply to contribute.

This list of reading and resources is split according to different needs so that you can access what is most relevant to you. It is suitable for anyone who has an interest in QI. This is a growing subject area, so if we've missed something that you'd like to recommend to others, just let us know and we'll add it.

A. Easily accessible resources (mostly free of charge online)

Videos	
Edmondson A.	TEDx Talk – Building a psychologically safe workplace (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8
	TED Talk - How to turn a group of strangers into a team (2017) https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_edmondson_how_to_turn_a_group_of_strangers_into_a_team?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare
Podcasts	
<i>Psychological safety in teams – a leader's perspective.</i> Currently six episodes with a different leader each time.	
Many other podcasts cover psychological safety as a single episode – just search within your podcast app and see what comes up. Here's an example from HBR IdeaCast 'Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace' (22 Jan 2019).	



Articles & papers	
Edmondson A. (1999)	Psychological safety and learning behaviour in work teams (the original Edmondson paper – not free) https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2307/2666999
Duhigg C. (2016)	What Google learnt from its quest to build the perfect team https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html
Guidance	
Hilton K. & Anderson A. (2018)	IHI Psychology of Change Framework http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/IHI-Psychology-of-Change-Framework.aspx
Lucas B. (2015)	The Habits of an Improver. The Health Foundation https://www.health.org.uk/publications/the-habits-of-an-improver
NHS Horizons (2021)	A practical guide to the art of psychological safety in the real world of health and care http://horizonsnhs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/A-practical-guide-to-the-art-of-psychological-safety-in-the-real-world-of-health-and-care-.pdf
Books	
Edmondson A. (2019)	The Fearless Organisation – Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation & growth (book) www.fearlessorganization.com (incl. free PS organisational scan)
Reitz M. & Higgins J. (2019)	Speak Up. Say what needs to be said and hear what needs to be heard
Clark T.R. (2020)	The Four Stages of Psychological Safety



B. Academic publications (often requires database access which you may be able to get through your employer or university)

- Albritton, J. A., Fried, B., Singh, K., Weiner, B. J., Reeve, B., & Edwards, J. R. (2019). The role of psychological safety and learning behavior in the development of effective quality improvement teams in Ghana: an observational study. *BMC Health Serv Res*, 19(1), 385
- Aranzamendez, G., James, D., & Toms, R. (2015). Finding Antecedents of Psychological Safety: A Step Toward Quality Improvement. *Nursing Forum*, 50, 171-178.
- Duhigg, C. (2016) What Google Learnt From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team. *New York Times Magazine*.
- Carmeli, A., & Gittell, J. H. (2009). High-quality relationships, psychological safety, and learning from failures in work organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 30(6), 709-729.
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- Dixon, N., & Wellsted, L. (2019). Effects of team-based quality improvement learning on two teams providing dementia care. *BMJ Open Quality*, 8(2)
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- Gittell, J. H., Godfrey, M., & Thistlethwaite, J. (2013). Interprofessional collaborative practice and relational coordination: Improving healthcare through relationships. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 27(3), 210-213.
- Grailey, K. E., Murray, E., Reader, T., & Brett, S. J. (2021). The presence and potential impact of psychological safety in the healthcare setting: an evidence synthesis. *BMC Health Services Research*, 21(1).
- Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Rathert, C. (2008). The role of continuous quality improvement and psychological safety in predicting work-arounds. *Health Care Management Review*, 33(2), 134-144.
- Hilton, K., & Anderson, A. (2018). *IHI psychology of change framework to advance and sustain improvement*. Cambridge, MA :: Institute for Healthcare Improvement.



- 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.
- Hunt, D. F., Bailey, J., Lennox, B. R., Crofts, M., & Vincent, C. (2021). Enhancing psychological safety in mental health services. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 15(1).
- Javed, B., Naqvi, S. M. M. R., Khan, A. K., Arjoon, S., & Tayyeb, H. H. (2019). Impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior: The role of psychological safety. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 25(1), 117-136.
- Lucas, W. (2015) The habits of an improver: Thinking about learning for improvement in health care
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Siad, F. M., & Rabi, D. M. (2021). Harassment in Medicine: Cultural barriers to psychological safety. *CJC Open*

Singer, S.J., Benzer, J.K., Hamdan, S.U. (2015) Improving health care quality and safety: The role of collective learning. *Journal of Healthcare Leadership*. 91-107

Tucker, A., & Edmondson, A. (2003). Why hospitals don't learn from failures: Organizational and psychological dynamics that inhibit system change. *California management review*, 45, 55.

C. Other resources

www.psychsafety.co.uk – a great round-up of all things psychological safety, including a toolkit, updated every week via a free newsletter and you can join its Slack community.

Search tools – if you don't have academic database access, you can find lots of resources via Google Scholar which are free to access.

www.connectedpapers.com is a great and fast way to find related publications, using a single paper to build a visual graph of others.

Research Gaps

Some examples of questions that the literature hasn't yet fully addressed in relation to psychological safety and QI:

- Can team psychological safety really be untangled from other aspects of the team learning climate? If not, where does that leave us in developing effective interventions?
- (Subject to the first question) What interventions can QI leaders use to improve psychological safety and how might they fit with the improvement mindset and practice?
- What happens to psychological safety over the lifespan of a team, especially one that is convened for a specific time-limited purpose like a QI programme?
- Does psychological safety have an impact on patient (quality) outcomes?
- Are changes in the way we work impacting on the role or relevance of psychological safety – e.g. what does it mean for self-managing teams; virtual teams?
- What is the role of psychological safety in enabling participation in QI across traditional hierarchies and professional boundaries?
- What is the role of QI team members (as opposed to team leaders) in enabling or sustaining psychological safety?

