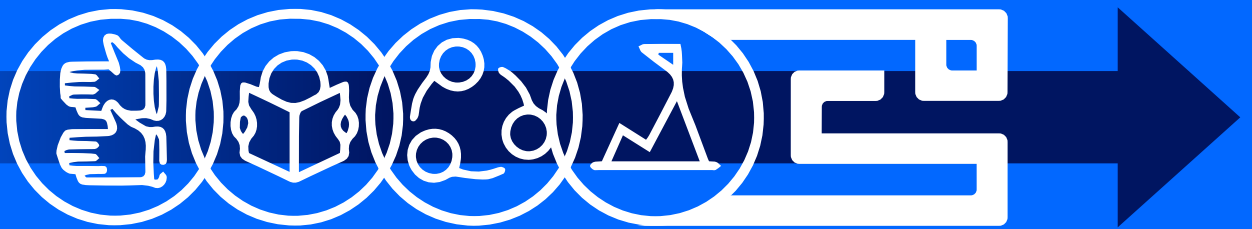


The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™

Survey Debrief Guide



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Purpose of the Debrief

There are three elements in the cultural transformation process:

1. Current state
2. Transition
3. Future state

The purpose of The 4 Stages™ Team Survey debrief is to interpret and define the current state of psychological safety across each of the 4 Stages™, using both quantitative and qualitative data. When you conduct a debrief session, resist the temptation to jump to the next step of defining the future state and how you will get there. That will be important, but requires a thorough debrief beforehand. Make it clear at the beginning of the debrief that you will focus solely on coming to a shared understanding of the “current state.” Let the data speak. Then listen. Far too often, teams begin defining the future state and the transition to get there without fully understanding where they are.

After the initial 4 Stages™ Team Survey debrief, you can bring the team together again to define the “future state,” set specific goals for improvement, and create a plan to achieve those goals.

Debrief Sequence

As mentioned, this 4 Stages™ Debrief Guide is designed to help you effectively debrief the results of a 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™ Team Survey. We recommend that you debrief first with the team leader, and second with the team members who have completed the Team Survey.

It's essential that you hold a debrief session with the team leader first because the 4 Stages™ Team Survey results are largely a reflection of that individual's overall leadership and modeling behavior. As such, the debrief can be a valuable and yet vulnerable experience for the team leader, and may not always reflect well on their performance. Further, to hold a debrief session with the entire team before the leader has the opportunity to review the survey results could be interpreted as an act of punished vulnerability. That is the last thing you want to do as a coach. As a courtesy to the leader, and also as a way to effectively prepare for the team debrief, hold a separate and private debrief with the team leader first. Then schedule and hold a second debrief with the leader and the team together.

The purpose of a debrief is to help the leader and team members understand their 4 Stages™ Team Survey results, or, in other words, the “current state” of psychological safety across The 4 Stages.

Based on our research, it is clear that teams need support in interpreting their Team Survey results. The more time team members spend with their data, the more value they will gain from their Team Survey experience. Please do not share 4 Stages™ Team Survey results with a leader or team and then expect them to interpret and act on the data without some level of coaching support. Do not assume that they can accurately interpret the results on their own.

Coach's Role

As a coach, you are responsible to present Team Survey data in an objective and accurate way. Do not draw conclusions, assumptions, or correlations that can not be supported by data. Let the data speak for itself and provide an opportunity for the leader and team members to sit with, internalize, and embrace their data set.

Debrief Preparation

The recommended time for a Team Survey debrief is 45-60 minutes. Set that expectation with the leader and team members beforehand. Given the risk of misinterpretation, we strongly recommend that you do not provide Team Survey results to the leader and team members until the actual debrief has begun.

Ground Rules

The act of debriefing a 4 Stages™ Team Survey with a team is itself an act of vulnerability for the coach, the leader, and the team members. As a result, your first priority is to acknowledge that fact and then create “a culture of rewarded vulnerability” (high psychological safety) during the debrief session. Be attentive to interpersonal dynamics and ensure that you and those present consistently model and reward acts of vulnerability during the session. You can do this by applying the following ground rules:

- Show mutual respect
- Listen actively
- Ask thought-provoking questions
- Show empathy and genuine interest
- Provide support to the team members
- Create a non-competitive atmosphere
- Provide undivided attention
- Let go of ego defense mechanisms and bias
- Keep confidences
- Communicate a “no multitasking” expectation
- Validate team members
- Resist the temptation to jump to solutions

Team Dynamics

As the coach, it's your job to monitor and manage team dynamics during the debrief. Administering The 4 Stages™ Team Survey should be an energizing and insightful experience for the leader and team members. But it can also be a process that creates anxiety and triggers a fear or defensive response, especially if scores are low and team members react defensively to those results.

If a team is healthy, the pattern of exchange will be free-flowing, candid, and energized. If it's unhealthy, the team will retreat into silence, superficial niceness, or some combination of the two. Ironically, when a team attempts to conceal its dysfunction, it reveals it. There's no way to fake rich collaboration.

Patterns of Participation

As you move through the debrief, pay close attention to patterns of participation. Specifically, pay attention to the team members who are not actively participating. They may be shy, introverted, or lack confidence. Find opportunities to include them and draw them out. Be alert for team members who have a tendency to dominate the discussion. It's your job to ensure that no team members feel excluded or marginalized. If the discussion becomes seriously imbalanced and some team members withdraw, you will need to skillfully and respectfully intervene to get the discussion back on track. If you need extra support managing introverts, refer to

LeaderFactor Note #1.

Common Coaching Derailers

The success of the coaching process is, of course, based on the attitudes, behaviors, and skills of the coach and the team members. On occasion, coaches exhibit what we call “coaching derailers”—behaviors that interrupt, stifle, or otherwise neutralize the effectiveness of the experience. Be self-aware and vigilant. Avoid the following and other coaching derailers:

- Demonstrating poor body language
- Giving your opinion too early
- Talking over people; cutting people off
- Finishing people's sentences
- Adding too much value—always giving your two cents
- Multi-tasking while you're trying to coach
- Showing impatience
- Showing indifference

Delicate and Dynamic

Remember that psychological safety is delicate and dynamic. It is perishable, not permanent. The job is never done. Creating and sustaining a high level of psychological safety is an on-going process. It's much like maintaining physical health based on diet, sleep, and exercise. If you stop focusing and investing in the process, you should not expect to stay in tip-top shape. Similarly, maintaining a high level of psychological safety on a team must become an applied discipline and way of life.

Phase 1: Pre-Data Debrief

In this first phase of the debrief, you will address a number of important topics before you analyze the actual Team Survey data.

Connect before you coach:

Don't jump right into the debrief. Observe the principle of seeking connection before you coach. In other words, make a human connection with the leader and team members. Greet them. Build rapport. Show energy and excitement. Ask them questions to get the collaboration gears moving. Demonstrate your genuine interest in them as human beings before moving to Team Survey results.

State the purpose of the debrief:

The purpose is to help a team understand its 4 Stages™ Team Survey results and interpret them correctly. Your objective during the debrief is to focus exclusively on the “current state.”

Overview The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™:

Ensure that participants have a basic understanding of The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™ framework.

Explain The 4 Stages™ Team Survey and survey method:

Intact team as unit of analysis. In almost every case, we survey at the intact team level. Why? Because the intact team is the basic unit of performance in nearly every organization. Further, every intact team has a micro-culture that is distinct for that team. This micro-culture largely reflects the modeling behavior of the leader, and has a profound influence on the behavior and performance of the team. The LeaderFactor platform allows you to aggregate data to create reporting at higher levels of the organization, but the most actionable data is almost always found at the intact team level.

Manager exclusion. When we survey an intact team, we almost always exclude the manager or team leader from their team's survey. The manager or team leader normally exerts the most influence on the level of psychological safety of the team. At the same time, they often perceive that the team's level of psychological safety is higher than it really is. They “project” their own experience to the team. Because the manager or team leader is highly susceptible to this pro-

jection bias/error, we deliberately exclude them from participating in the Team Survey in order to eliminate the possibility that they might skew the data.

Quantitative & qualitative data. The 4 Stages™ Team Survey uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative side of the instrument consists of 12 items that are scored on a 0-to-10 scale. The qualitative side of the instrument consists of four question prompts, one for each of The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™. The quantitative items allow us to measure psychological safety using numbers to understand a team's level of psychological safety based on The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety™. In other words, quantitative data provides the “what.” But the limitation of the quantitative data is that they don't tell us “why” a team is performing the way it's performing. Only the qualitative data, collected in the form of verbatim comments, can do that. It's through the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data that we gain the fullest and deepest understanding of both the “what” and the “why.” Understand that when analyzing Team Survey results, quantitative data and linear thinking can lead to blindspots. Inform the process with qualitative data and lateral thinking, meaning that you try to make connections across the data.

Phase 2: Data Debrief

In this second phase of the debrief, you will address the actual Team Survey response data, both quantitative and qualitative. As you do, encourage the leader and team members to capture any insights they have during the debrief at either a personal or team level.

To conduct the data debrief, you have two reports available to review:

The 4 Stages™ Team Survey results (quantitative data)

The 4 Stages™ Team Survey verbatim responses (qualitative data)

Review response rate:

Recite the Team Survey response rate. For reliable and projectable results, we recommend that a team achieve at least a 70% response rate. Response rates lower than 70% are less reliable. Before you close your Team Survey, check your response rate. If your response rate is running low, send out additional reminders to encourage participants to complete their Team Survey. If your response rate is greater than or equal to 70%, communicate to the team that the results are highly reliable.

Explain Blue Zone, Neutral Zone, and Red Zone:

A Blue Zone indicates a culture of rewarded vulnerability. This typically means that a respondent is experiencing and observing a consistent pattern in which acts of vulnerability are met with some kind of rewarded response. A Blue Zone is an empowering environment that builds confidence, courage, and self-efficacy.

A Neutral Zone response reflects neither a strong response pattern of rewarded or punished vulnerability. Due to a mixed or inconsistent behavioral norm, it reflects uncertainty, hesitation, and a reluctance to engage in vulnerable behavior. A Neutral Zone is an environment of doubt.

A Red Zone indicates a culture of punished vulnerability. This typically means that the respondent is experiencing and observing a consistent pattern in which acts of vulnerability are met with some kind of punishing response. A Red Zone is a diminishing environment that induces fear.

Explain the rating scale and key:

11-point scale. We use an 11-point scale because it provides more gradation in responses which allows us to capture a more precise measure of psychological safety. Traditional 5 and 7-point Likert scales do not provide this type of gradation. Further, if a team is a true outlier, meaning that their level of psychological safety is significantly higher or lower than the mean, a 5 or 7-point scale will make it much more difficult to identify outlier status.

Net Promoter Score (NPS) data scoring. We interpret the response data based on the same methodology as Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is widely used throughout the world. According to this approach, we classify responses into three categories: 1. Blue Zone (rewarded vulnerability) 2. Neutral Zone, and 3. Red Zone (punished vulnerability). Responses from 1-6 in the scale are classified as Red Zone, 7-8 Neutral Zone, and 9-10, Blue Zone. Based on this scoring method, scores can range from -100 to 100. NOTE: Do not explain the data scoring approach to the team members, especially pre-survey. Experience has shown that when respondents understand how the data is scored, that knowledge introduces respondent rating bias. To avoid the introduction of this bias, which has the potential to skew the response data, please avoid this.

Recite the Blue Zone, Neutral Zone, and Red Zone scores. Ask team members if the scores are consistent with their experience and perceptions. Ask them if they are surprised or not surprised. Interpret the Blue Zone score, Neutral Zone score, and Red Zone score.

For example:

If you have a Blue Zone score of 32, a Neutral Zone score of 26, and a Red Zone score of 42, you can say that 32% of the time acts of vulnerability are committed on the team, they are consistently rewarded; 26% of the time, they are both rewarded and punished; and 42% of the time, they are consistently punished. This represents the overall pattern of rewarded and punished vulnerability on the team. Note the percentile score. The percentile score indicates the percentile this team scored based on the global normative database. For example, if the team scored in the 23rd percentile, this means 23% of teams globally scored equal to or below this team, while 77% scored higher than this team.

Review Results By Stage:

Recite the Inclusion Safety Score, Learner Safety Score, Contributor Safety Score, Challenger Safety Score, and their respective percentiles.

Review Stage 1: Inclusion Safety

Read the following definition: “Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to be included, accepted, and belong. It means it's not expensive to be yourself. You are accepted for who you are, including your unique attributes and defining characteristics.”

Recite the Inclusion Safety score, Blue Zone score, Neutral Zone score, Red Zone score, and percentile.

Recite each item, their respective scores, and percentiles:

“I am accepted as a member of my team.”

“I am treated with respect.”

“I feel included by the people I work with.”

Read each verbatim response. Discuss patterns, implications, and insights.

CAUTIONARY NOTE:

Due to the potential sensitive nature of the verbatim responses (qualitative data), they are maintained in a separate report. There may be times when verbatim responses are (1) too critical of a leader, (2) too revealing of a respondent, or (3) simply inappropriate. As the coach, it is your responsibility to thoroughly review all verbatim responses before you hold a debrief session of any kind. As you review all verbatim comments, identify anything that might be unproductive, destructive, or inappropriate in any way. Please be aware that you are not authorized to edit, censor, filter, or tamper with the verbatim responses in any way, but you should point out any comments that might be offensive to the team leader. As a matter of professional ethics, it is your responsibility to share all verbatim comments, in their entirety, with the team leader before you conduct a debrief with the entire team. Unless you have been directed otherwise by someone of higher authority in the organization, consult with the team leader to determine if you will share verbatim comments in the team debrief.

Review Stage 2: Learner Safety

Read the following definition: “Learner safety satisfies the basic human need to learn and grow. You feel safe in the learning process—asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and even making mistakes.”

Recite the Learner Safety score, Blue Zone score, Neutral Zone score, Red Zone score, and percentile.

Recite each item, their respective scores, and percentile:

“I am allowed to learn from my mistakes.”

“I feel comfortable asking questions.”

“My team supports my efforts to learn.”

Read each verbatim response. Discuss patterns, implications, and insights.

Review Stage 3: Contributor Safety

Read the following definition: “Contributor safety satisfies the basic human need for autonomy and contribution. You feel safe and are given the opportunity and role clarity to use your skills and abilities to make a difference.”

Recite the Contributor Safety score, Blue Zone score, Neutral Zone score, Red Zone score, and percentile.

Recite each item, their respective scores, and percentiles:

“My team allows me to do my job.”

“My team values my contribution.”

“I am encouraged to contribute as much as I can in my role.”

Read each verbatim response. Discuss patterns, implications, and insights.

Review Stage 4: Challenger Safety

Read the following definition: “Challenger safety satisfies the basic human need to make things better. You feel safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when you think there's a need or opportunity to improve.”

Recite the Challenger Safety score, Blue Zone score, Neutral Zone score, Red Zone score, and percentile.

Recite each item, their respective scores, and percentiles:

“I can take reasonable risks without being punished.”

“I feel safe disagreeing with the way my team does things.”

“I have the freedom to challenge the status quo.”

Read each verbatim response. Discuss patterns, implications, and insights.

Review the Top Three Strengths and Top Three Opportunities:

Recite the team’s top three strengths (highest rated items) and their respective scores. Discuss the overall, Blue Zone, Neutral Zone, and Red Zone scores for each item. For example, the team’s highest rated items might be: “I am accepted as a member of my team” with 57 Blue Zone, and 43 Neutral Zone. Reflect on why the “current state” is this way.

Recite the team’s top three opportunities (lowest rated items) and their respective scores. Discuss the overall, Blue Zone, Neutral Zone, and Red Zone scores. For example, the team’s lowest rated item might be: “I can take reasonable risks without being punished” with 14 Blue Zone, 29 Neutral Zone, and 57 Red Zone. Discuss and interpret the ratings.

Again, resist the urge to talk about how to improve the ratings. Rather, focus on why the ratings are what they are today. Come to a shared understanding. For example, you might ask, the following questions:

- Why do team members so often feel punished for taking reasonable risks?
- Has this been the pattern for a long time?
- How do team members think they are being punished?
- Do team members consistently avoid taking reasonable risks to avoid punishment?
- Could there possibly be a perception that you would be punished, but it's not the reality?
- Do team members interpret taking reasonable risks in different ways?

Phase 3: Conclusion

In this final phase of the debrief, invite the leader or team members to share their takeaways from the Team Survey debrief.

On behalf of The LeaderFactor Team, we congratulate you for approaching your culture by design! Find ways to keep your 4 Stages Team Survey data top of mind. Remember, the job is never done. You may consider using your Team Survey results during one-on-ones, team meetings, and hiring interviews. Don't let this be the last time you reference these data.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the most common pattern in Team Survey data?

The global empirical pattern is one in which Stage 1: Inclusion Safety is rated as the highest stage and Stage 4: Challenger Safety is rated as the lowest of the stages. The data from the team you are debriefing may be different from this pattern, but it's important for you to understand the global pattern as context.

Is Stage 4: Challenger Safety always the lowest score in a Team's Survey data?

In the vast majority of cases, Stage 4 Challenger Safety registers the lowest score. It is an unmistakable empirical pattern to see Stage 4: Challenger Safety receiving the lowest average score compared to the other three stages. This can be explained by the fact that most people perceive challenging the status quo as a very high risk act of vulnerability.

Is it common for a team to show a higher Stage 3: Contributor Safety score than a Stage 2: Learner Safety score?

Yes. In fact, the global empirical pattern is one in which contributor safety is slightly higher than learner safety. We explain this based on the concept of "role-based security." Many individuals feel a high degree of security within the responsibilities, expectations, and parameters of their role. This gives them a "safe space" within which to work and perform their job. That security and sense of confidence within the job domain can translate into a high level of Stage 3: Contributor Safety. Again, we acknowledged that many teams have patterns that do not conform to the global pattern.

