5 Behaviors That Foster Contributor Safety.

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. Here are five behaviors that will help you create contributor safety on your team.

1. Shift from Tell to Ask. A leader's coaching continuum ranges from telling at one end to asking at the other. A good leader uses the entire continuum. Too much telling breeds dependency and learned helplessness. Shift as much as you can to the ask end. Lead through questions more than answers.

2. Ask People What They Think. It may be true that the four most beautiful words you can ask a team member are, "What do you think?" Those four simple words invite contribution and increased confidence in the process. Never use these words gratuitously, when you don't really mean it. At the same time, don't move to a decision or action without asking, even when you think you know the right answer.

3. Celebrate Small Wins. Certainly accomplishment is its own reward, but receiving genuine recognition from your peers makes it all the sweeter. As a leader, recognize the successes of your team quickly. Never delay and never resent the opportunity. Celebrate the successes of others and show genuine excitement for their accomplishments.

4. Help Other People See Their Strengths. Many team members deliver mediocre performance because they don't realize their strengths. They don't know themselves. When someone points out their contribution and strengths, they're shocked and accelerate to a higher level of performance. Do that. Identify the hidden or undervalued strengths that your team members have and bring them to their attention. Ignite the desire to contribute more.

5. Approach Failure with Curiosity Rather Than Criticism. When performance falters, it means our inputs are not producing the outputs we expected. Something is wrong in what we thought the cause and effect relationship would be. When this happens, approach your team members with curiosity rather than criticism. Engage them in a root cause analysis. This will often diffuse the stress and emotional tension that often surrounds poor performance.

Note #24

Learn more from our book: *The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety*