

12 Ways to Assess the Psychological Safety of a Virtual Meeting:

1. Cameras:

Are cameras on? Turning on your camera is the first act of vulnerability in a virtual meeting. Going off camera can indicate anxiety, fear, or low social and emotional energy.

2. Personal Check-ins:

Do people greet and check in at a personal level at the beginning of the meeting or do they get straight to business?

3. Formality:

Do people use titles or last names? Is the choreography of the meeting stuffy, staged, and scripted or more casual and free-flowing?

4. Respect:

Are team members respectful? Do they show kindness and courtesy with genuine intent, or do they interrupt, snicker, or talk over one another? Are team members fully engaged—emotionally and intellectually present—or are they distracted and multitasking?

5. Agenda & Flexibility:

Do you have a well-organized agenda that sets the terms of engagement and acts as a clear roadmap? Or, do you have either an overly rigid agenda, allowing no flexibility, or no agenda at all, leaving people insecure and frustrated?

6. Tell-to-Ask Ratio:

What is the split between telling and asking? Is the meeting a didactic encounter in which those possessing authority or dominant personalities do most of the talking? Or, are people in discovery mode, asking questions, clarifying expectations, and piloting ideas?

7. Facial expressions & vocal characteristics:

Do people smile easily and frequently? Do people freely express their emotions through facial expressions and vocal characteristics such as intensity, volume, tone, rate, pitch, and enunciation?

8. Humor:

Do people use appropriate humor without being cynical or sarcastic? Do they joke, banter, and laugh, or is the meeting muffled, tense, and serious?

9. Distribution of participation:

Can you track patterns of participation based on status and rank with some participants marginalized, or do you see a democratized pattern of participation that ignores power distance and includes everyone?

10. Acknowledgments & recognition:

Do people call attention to each other's contributions during the meeting? Do you see spontaneous expressions of appreciation and kudos.

11. Challenge & dissent:

Do people defer to positional power and the chain of command, creating an echo chamber, or do they unreservedly challenge the status quo and offer dissenting opinions?

12. Meeting size:

Is the meeting size appropriate for the meeting type? If it's a meeting to communicate and coordinate, you can have more than 20 people. If it's a meeting to innovate, and ideate, you can't.