

7 Ways to Reboot a Silent Team with Psychological Safety:

Have you ever spent a day with a silent team? If so, you probably know that unnatural silence is usually one of the first indications that a team has been neutralized by fear.

Going silent is a normal response to being rejected, humiliated, or punished in some way. Silent teams disengage because they have no voice. They shut down because they have been marginalized.

So how do you reboot a silent team?

Answer: create an environment of rewarded vulnerability (psychological safety). Respect each member of the team, give them a voice, and re-invite them to participate. Here are seven specific suggestions:

- 1) Remember that all teams naturally feel for their limits. What are the rules, norms, and expectations? This is not a place to help your team thrive on ambiguity. Make the terms of engagement impossible to misunderstand.
- 2) Remember, you are a cultural architect. You set the tone at the top. At all costs, protect the team's right to speak up.
- 3) Never, never, never let hierarchy outrank truth. Don't hide behind title, position, or authority to justify or muscle a decision. That's an abdication of leadership.
- 4) Sometimes you will see something they can't. Sometimes they will see something you can't. If you jealously guard your own ideas, they will do the same thing. Display no pride of authorship.
- 5) Give every member of your team a license to disagree and assign them to use it. Then brace yourself to hear the truth. Remember that a negative response to bad news or new ideas will re-silence the team and seal your fate as a hapless leader.
- 6) Don't make it emotionally expensive to challenge the status quo. Normalize the behavior by asking the members of your team to challenge specific things and discuss ideas on merit.
- 7) Remember this pattern: A team often becomes lost and temporarily fails before it finds its way and eventually succeeds. This is a normal journey line. The process is messy, iterative, and non-linear, and there may be some pivots along the way. Point out that you're in uncharted territory and help your team enjoy the journey.

Note #8