



# Unlocking Success Through Psychological Safety

PRESENTED BY DAN CORBIN

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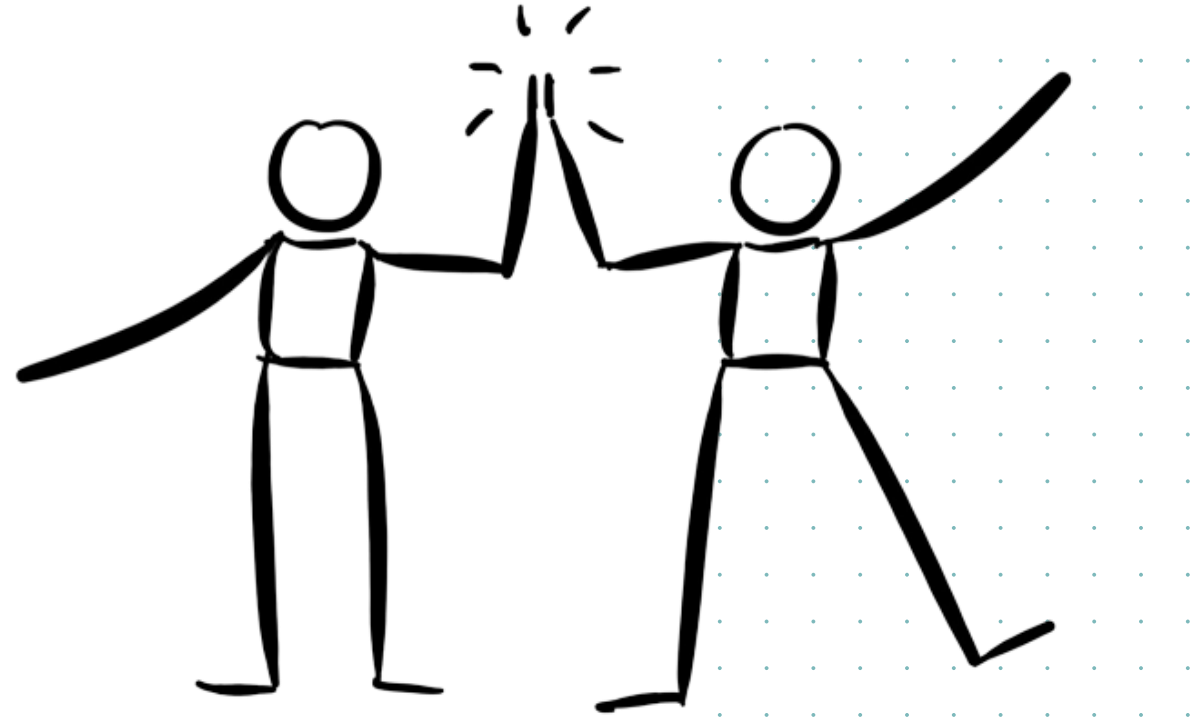
Previously:

- Principal Product Manager and Product Coach, H-E-B
- Product Management Instructor, General Assembly
- Sr. Director of Product Management, Return Path
- VP of Product and Operations at TrialSmith
- VP of Distance Learning at SeminarWeb

# What is Psychological Safety?

**Psychological safety** is the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

It's the shared expectation that teammates won't embarrass, reject, or punish you for sharing ideas, taking risks, or soliciting feedback.



# Activity Time!

What are you most interested in learning from this session?

How would you describe the levels of Psychological Safety at your job?



# Discuss

**What are the main things you hope to  
takeaway from this session?**



# Google's Project Aristotle



# Effective Teams

**1** Psychological Safety

Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

**2** Dependability

Team members get things done on time and meet a high bar for excellence.

**3** Structure and Clarity

Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

**4** Meaning

Work is personally important to team members.

**5** Impact

Team members think their work matters and creates change.

Ok, but how to we establish it with my teams?!

# Steps to Psychological Safety



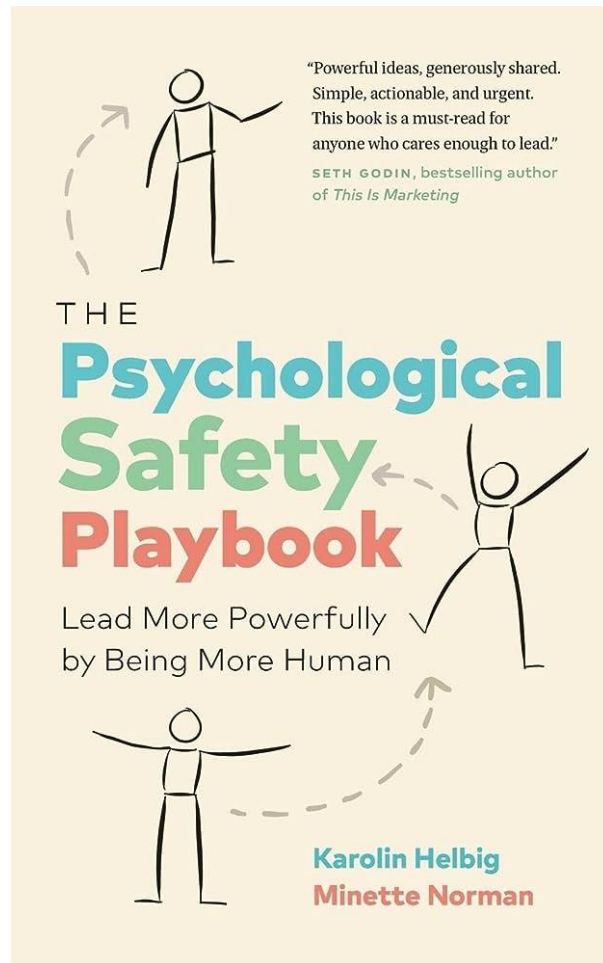
## Making Safety a Priority

**Psychological Safety  
must be an explicit  
priority**

## Making Safety a Priority

**Psychological Safety  
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# The Playbook



1. Communicate Courageously
2. Master the Art of Listening
3. Manage Your Reactions
4. Embrace Risk and Failure
5. Design Inclusive Rituals

You don't need to be the team leader to lead by example

# Communicate Courageously

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## What does it mean to Communicate Courageously?

- **Solicit differing viewpoints.** Ask “What am I missing?” or “Let’s hear a different perspective.”
- Embrace constructive debate to **avoid groupthink.**
- Reacting positively to different perspectives signals that **everyone’s input is welcomed and valued.**

# Open Up and Show Vulnerability

- Being authentic and showing **vulnerability is a superpower.**
- Team should **strive for continuous learning.** Admitting when you don't know something is good!
- **Be vulnerable** – ask for help, admit your mistakes, and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.



# Be an Honest Broker

IF YOU  
WANT TO  
BE  
TRUSTED,  
BE

- If you are a Product Manager, you **MUST** be an honest broker.
- You must communicate courageously and not give different messages based on the audience.



I'm sorry, what was that?

# Mastering the Art of Listening

# Mastering the Art of Listening

- **Be fully present** and focus on the conversation.
- Be curious: **“That’s interesting, tell me more...”**
- Repeat back to check understanding and **ask clarifying questions.**
- But most importantly, truly listen **instead of just preparing a response.**

# Mastering the Art of Listening

Realize **our perspective is not the truth.**

We have biases, blind spots, and might not have all the data.

Listening is about **empathy.**

Ask if you clarified their point and **allow them to correct you.**

# Mastering the Art of Listening Tips

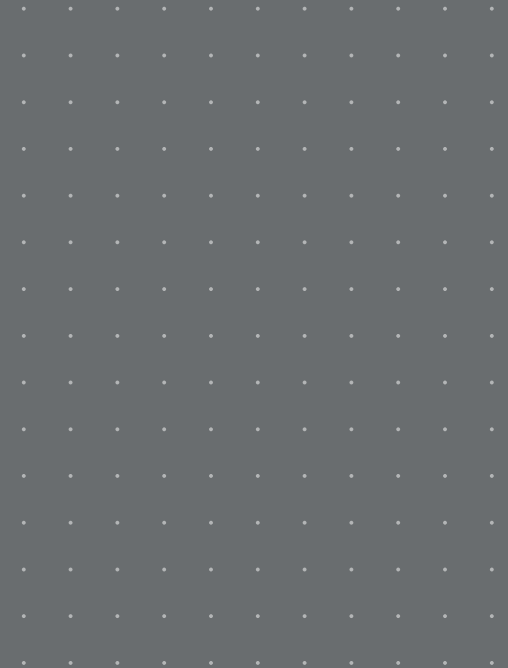
1. Embrace the silence
2. “Tell Me More...”

That's  
interesting,  
tell me more.

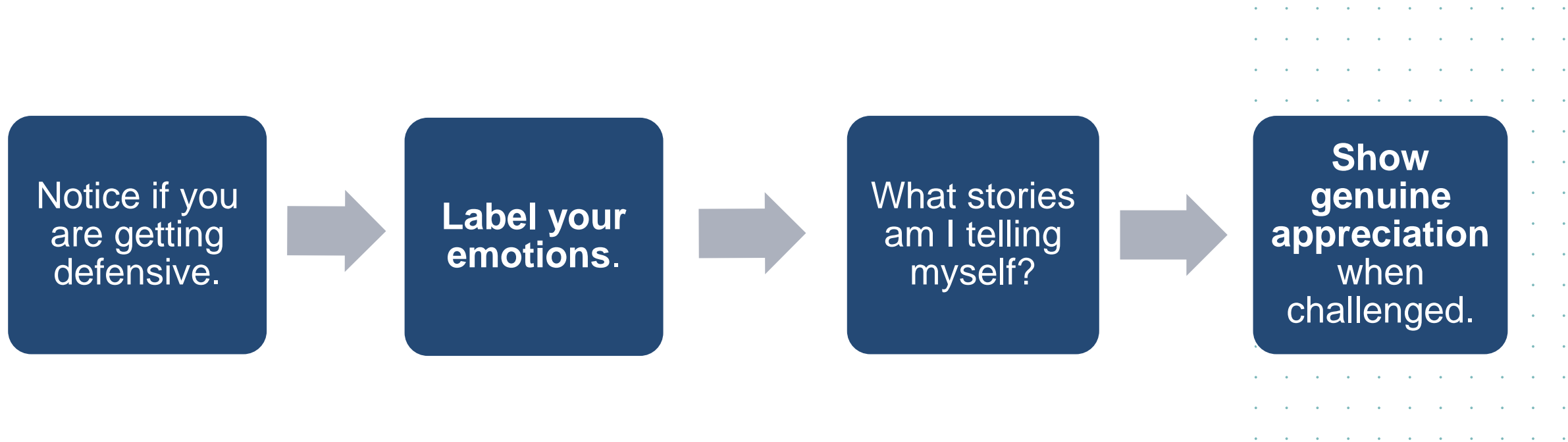


Pause and breathe

# Manage Your Reaction



# Managing Your Reaction



# Managing Your Reaction Tips

Constructive responses when challenged:

- Thanks for speaking up!
- Tell me more about your view.

Resist the urge to kill bad ideas. Instead try “Yes and...”:

- What I like about your idea is...
- A great benefit of that approach would be...



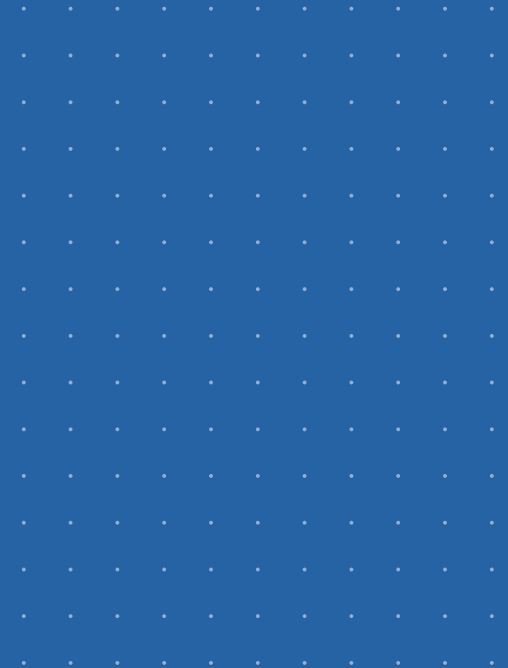


**What questions do you have about steps 1 – 3?**

- **Communicating Courageously**
- **Mastering the Art of Listening**
- **Manage Your Reaction**

"There is no innovation and creativity without failure. Period." — *Brene Brown*

# Embrace Risk & Failure



# Cultivate a Growth Mindset

- Normalize Failure. Things won't go perfectly.
- Embrace a learning mindset and learn from mistakes.
- Start by admitting your mistakes.
- Celebrate continuous learning.

# Tip for Normalizing Failure: Pre-Mortems

## Step 1: Detail the plan

- What are the epics/milestones you are discussing?
- What are the t-shirt sizes for each?

## Step 2: Assume the worst the plan

- Hold a “brainstorming session of doom”

## Step 3: Organize the reasons for failure

- Organize the results of Step 2 into 2-4 of the biggest buckets

# The Pre-Mortem

## Step 4: Rank the risks

5x5 RISK MATRIX

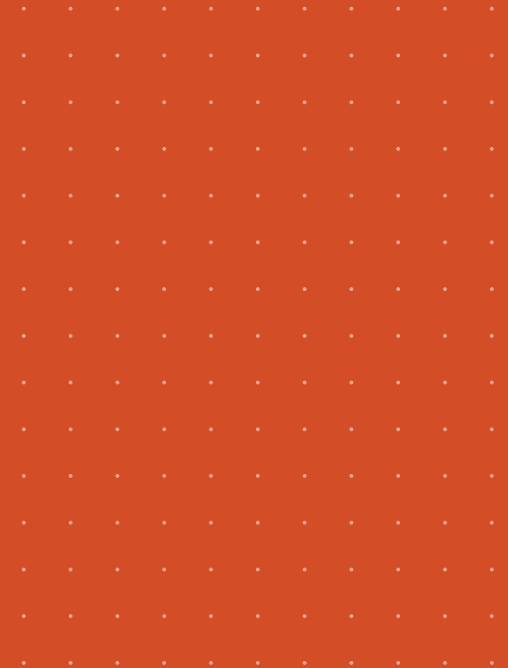
PROBABILITY	Highly Probable	5 Moderate	10 Major	15 Major	20 Severe	25 Severe
	Probable	4 Moderate	8 Moderate	12 Major	16 Major	20 Severe
	Possible	3 Minor	6 Moderate	9 Moderate	12 Major	15 Major
	Unlikely	2 Minor	4 Moderate	6 Moderate	8 Moderate	10 Major
	Rare	1 Minor	2 Minor	3 Minor	4 Moderate	5 Moderate
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
		IMPACT				

## Step 5: Strengthen the plan and create solutions

## Step 6: Update the plan based on your findings

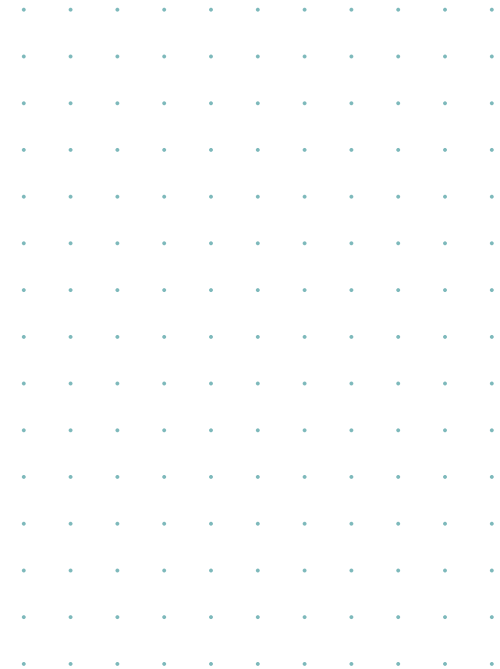
Getting everyone involved

# Design Inclusive Rituals



# Inclusive Rituals

- Appoint an inclusion facilitator
- The No Interruptions Rule
- No one speaks twice until everyone speaks once
- Track the Psychological Safety of the team





# The Psychological Safety Assessment

I can make mistakes without fear that my coworkers will hold it against me.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

My co-workers welcome opinions different from their own.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

I feel safe to take a risk on this team.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

My direct manager values my ideas.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

People keep each other informed about work-related issues within the team.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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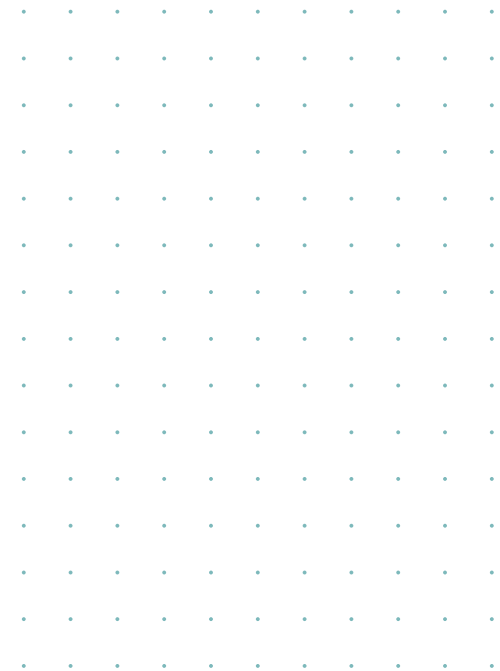
# The Happiness Metric

**On a scale of 1 to 5....**

- How do you feel about your role on the team?
- How are we doing as a team?
- How do you feel about our company?

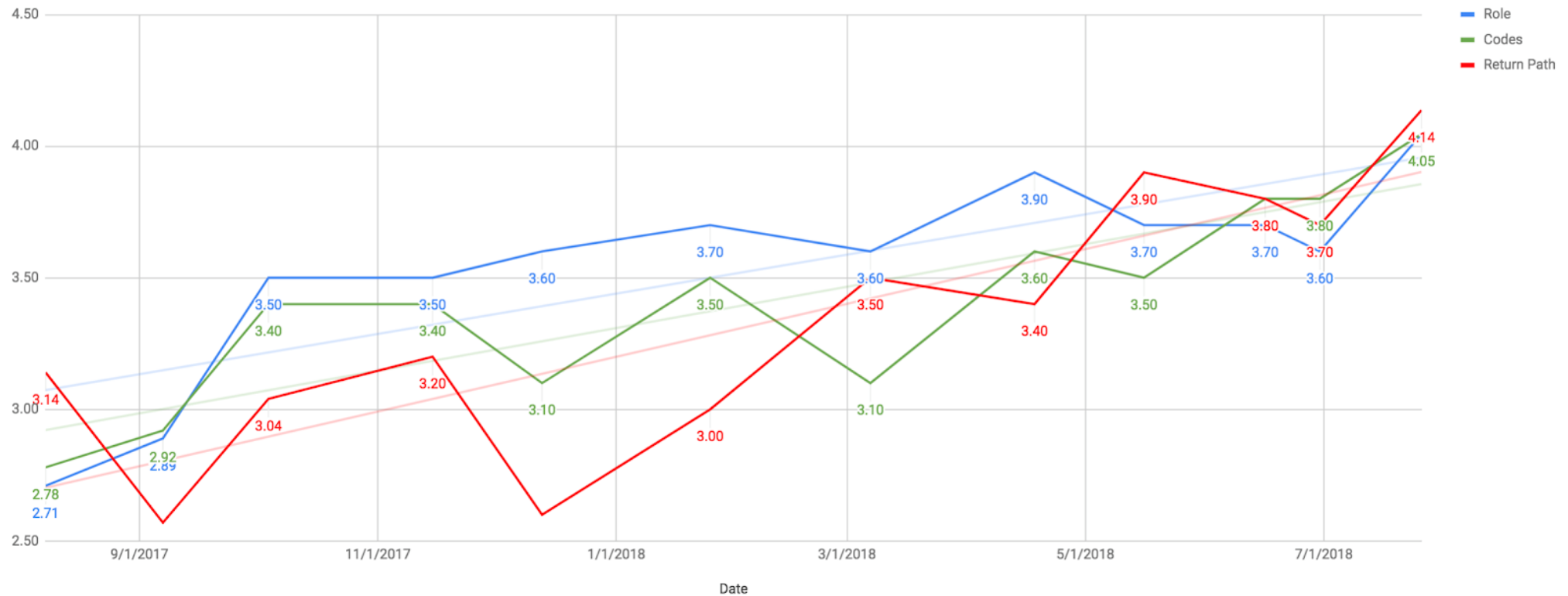
**One last question....**

- What's one thing we could do to improve these scores next sprint?



# The Happiness Metric

Happiness Metric Team Austin



# Working Agreement

## Make it Happen with a Working Agreement

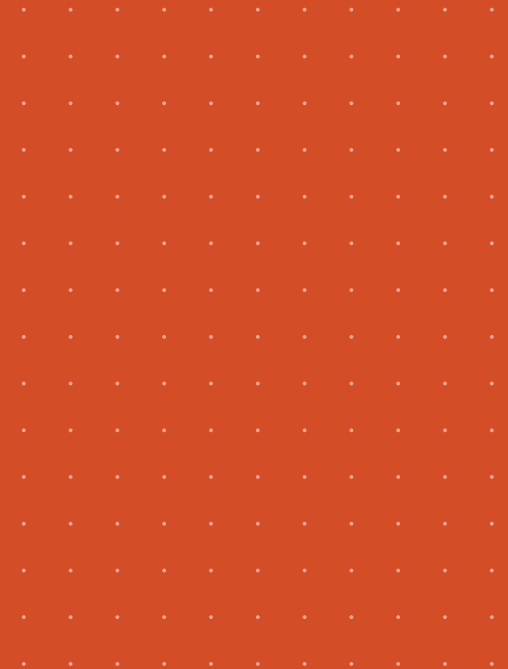
PRAGMATIC INSTITUTE		Working Agreement	Build
<b>TEAM INFORMATION</b>			
Team Name:	Team Mission:	Team Motto:	
Gondola	Provide a consistent and latency-free flow of customer data from the source to the data lake to the reporting suite.	Wherever the data flows, that's where we go!	
Roles and Responsibilities:		Metrics:	
Brenden- Developer		Data collection latency <2s	
Kendra- Developer (Lead)		Report request aggregation under 3 min	
Jiang- Developer		95% code test coverage	
Jamshid- Development Manager			
Pamela- Product Owner			
Titus- QA			
<b>AGREEMENTS</b>			
Positive Observable Behaviors:			
<b>Availability:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A team member will be available to answer data lake question between 8a-6p EST M-F</li><li>All team members are available to each other between 9a-4p EST M-F (not counting PTO, illness, holidays)</li><li>External questions will be responded to within 24 hours (either with the answer or a timeframe). We will make ourselves understandable by avoiding acronyms and any Gondolisms- speak plainly and speak clearly.</li></ul>			
<b>Ceremonies:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All team ceremonies are "device-free"; no extraneous tabs, apps, or devices other than what's necessary to be available and engaged</li><li>Only the person holding Venicio the stuffed Gondolier may speak in standup; everyone else shows their attention through eye contact and silence (when remote, post the Venicio emoji during your turn)</li><li>The Product Owner will post any changes to the product backlog that take place within a day of planning so available time is spent investigating the highest priority work</li><li>No favors! Any external requests for data or reporting will be directed to the product owner</li><li>Estimates on work that fall within one step will be estimated as the larger of the two. A wider gap in estimation must be discussed (not argued, discussed)</li></ul>			
<b>Development/Delivery:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Think of the customers- Bring Design in if desired solution affects existing APIs or interfaces</li><li>Trust but verify- Any dev that didn't write the code can review the code</li><li>Honor QA's time- questions will be responded to by developer or product owner within 24 hours</li></ul>			
<b>Overall</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assume your teammates have the best of intentions. When in doubt, ask. When you're asked, be attentive, be honest and be kind.</li></ul>			
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# Questions?



# Questions Submitted



# Questions

- Any tricks for team members who don't want to change or make spaces for others?
- How do you “repair” a team with a history of being unsafe?
- How can an IC contribute (with or without management support)?
- How to build psychological safety when teams are remote and not in person?
- Teams communicate to management differently than their teams, which can mask underlying organizational issues. How can management break down these barriers, and how do they know they succeeded?
- How to go from a lone wolf to a team participant to a team builder?
- How to get started with building psychological safety in a previously toxic workplace environment?



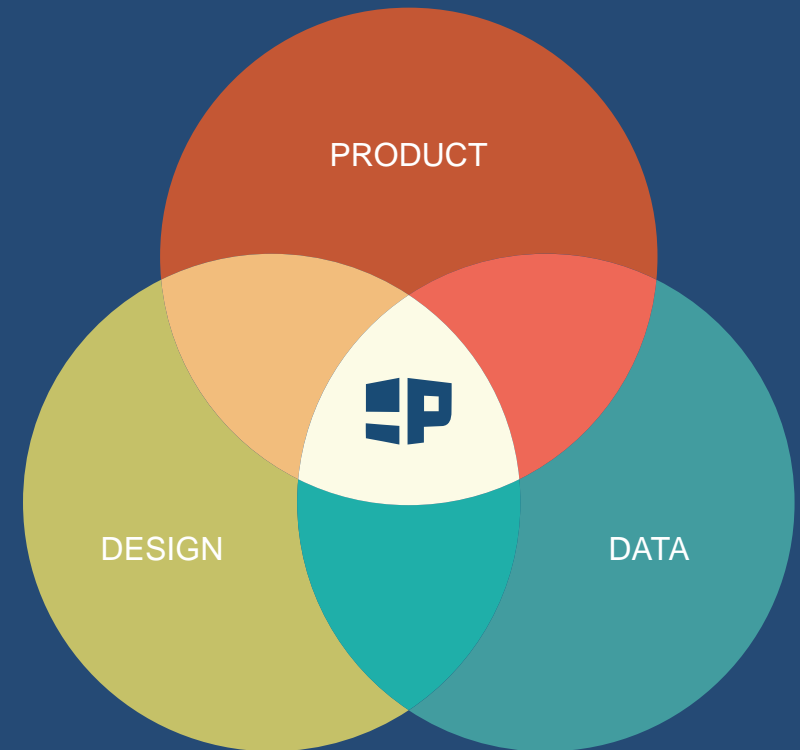
# Activity Time!

What are one or two things you'll do to increase Psychological Safety at your job?

# Pragmatic Institute. The Future Is Built Here.

Together, **Pragmatic's design, data** and product practices create a powerful professional education platform to enhance the knowledge and skills of key contributors and teams in your organization.

If you're ready to empower your teams to create truly innovative solutions for your market, you need Pragmatic Institute.





# Resources



# Resources

- [Psychological Safety Assessment Form](#) - Please make your own copy and do not edit
- [The Happiness Metric Template](#) - Please make your own copy and do not edit
- [The Happiness Metric](#) - Presentation you are free to use
- [The Pre-Mortem Template](#) - Please make your own copy
- [Avoiding Failures using the Pre-Mortem](#) – Presentation you are free to use
- [The Psychological Safety Playbook](#) by Karolin Helbig and Minette Norman
- [What is Psychological Safety?](#) - McKinsey & Associates
- [What Google Learned In Its Quest to Build The Perfect Team](#) – New York Times
- [Project Aristotle Psychological Safety](#) (LeaderFactor)

# Resources and Tools

- [Psychological Safety Is The Key to Successful Teams, According to Google](#) by Daniel Lehwych
- [Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace](#) - Amy Edmondson Ted Talk
- [What Is Psychological Safety at Work? How Leaders Can Build Psychologically Safe Workplaces](#) – Center for Creative Leadership
- [Crucial Conversations](#) by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler

For Pragmatic Alumni Members:

- [Working Agreement](#)
- [Working Agreement - Sample](#)