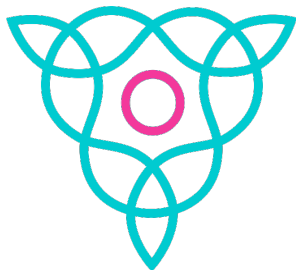




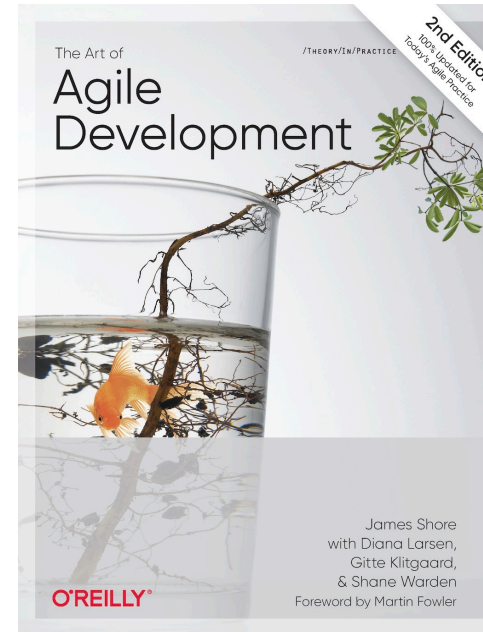
We still don't have psychological safety

Agile Cambridge, October 2025

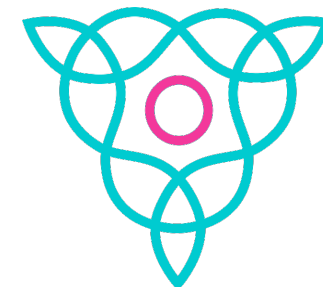
Gitte Klitgaard @nativewired



Psychological safety and me



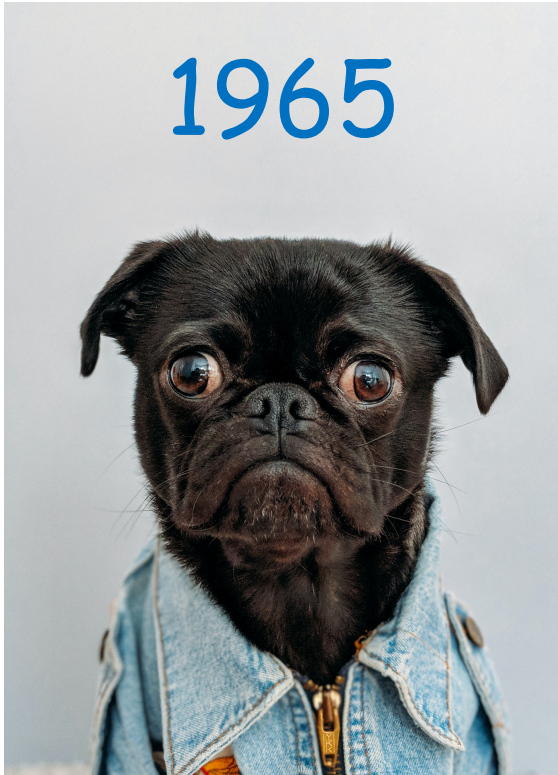
Pronouns: She/her



@nativewired.com

It is not new

1965



1990s



Project Aristoteles

Google



Dependability



Structure & clarity



Meaningful
work



Impact of work



Psychological
safety

And we have talked about it ever since
Emphasis on "talked"

So, what is psychological safety?

Definition of psychological safety

”Psychological safety is being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career” (Kahn)

Safety is not (always) comfort



Photo by [Jordan Whitt](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Why do we need it?

What will it help us with?

- * **Asking questions**

instead of staying quiet in fear of looking ignorant

- * **Admitting mistakes**

instead of hiding them in fear of looking incompetent

- * **Offering ideas**

instead of holding on to them in fear of looking intrusive

- * **Challenging norms**

instead of sitting back in fear of looking negative

Amy Edmonson

Psychological safety and performance

	Low standard	High standard
High psychological safety	Comfort zone	Learning and high performance zone
Low psychological safety	Apathy zone	Anxiety zone

Do we need it?

- * From a talk by @drunkcod
“Things become better when we *accept* them as they are.
Not as we want them to be.”
- * Not that we should just accept things, but that we accept, where they are right now. Then we can do something about it or not.
- * And yes we need it



What role does leaders and managers play in this?

What do we need in the future?

- * Learning
- * Change readiness
- * Innovation
- * Resilience
- * Great leaders
- * Great teams



Europe

Gallup report
2024

Employee Engagement

ENGAGED

13% 0

NOT ENGAGED

72% 0

ACTIVELY DISENGAGED

16% 0

Life Evaluation

THRIVING

47% +1

STRUGGLING

49% +1

SUFFERING

4% -2

Daily Negative Emotions

Emotions experienced during
a lot of the previous day

STRESS

37% -1

ANGER

15% +1

SADNESS

17% -1

LONELINESS

14%

Job Market

JOB CLIMATE

Good time to find a job

57% +1

INTENT TO LEAVE

Watching for or actively seeking new job

32% -2

Managers play a big part

The Role of the Manager in Worker Wellbeing and Organizational Performance

Managers account for 70% of the variance in team employee engagement.

01 Managers have more negative daily experiences than non-managers and are more likely to be looking for a new job.

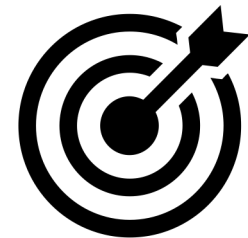
02 Across countries, when managers are engaged, employees are more likely to be engaged.

03 In best-practice organizations, three-fourths of managers and seven in 10 non-managers are engaged

When organizations increase the number of engaged employees, they improve a host of organizational outcomes, including profit, retention rates and customer service.

A modern leader needs to

- * Set frames and a strong direction
- * Care for people
 - * And provide regular feedback
- * Work with accountability and responsibility



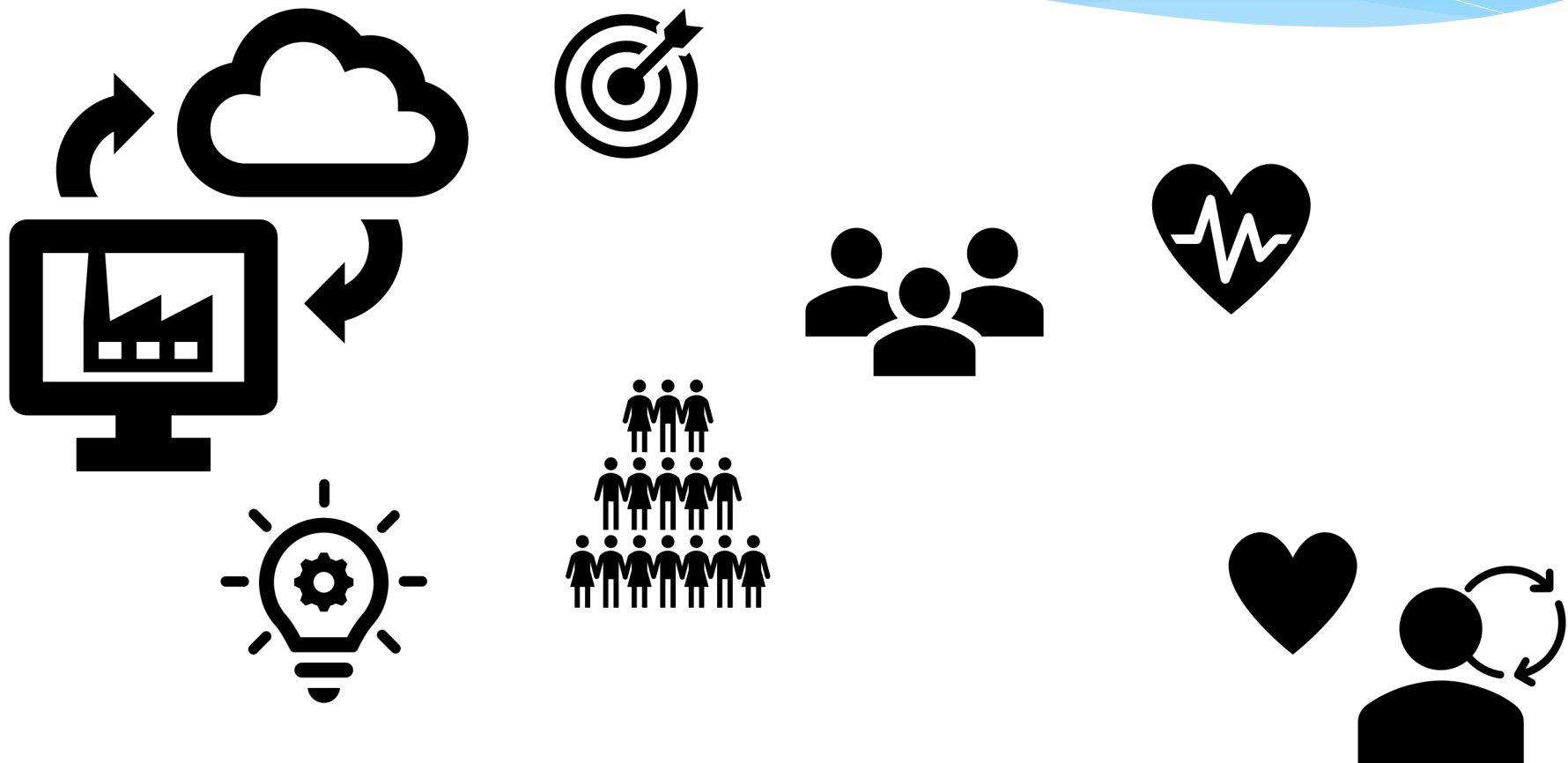
The good, the bad, and the ugly

Take responsibility

Give account



Responsibilities



Psychological safety and performance

	Low standard	High standard
High psychological safety	Comfort zone	Learning and high performance zone
Low psychological safety	Apathy zone	Anxiety zone

It is hard to be a manager

- * Fewer managers with more and more work
- * They don't always have the tools
- * People skills are underrated
- * Hard skills are underrated
- * Lack of time for self-care
- * Lack of support



Times are tough



“There can be a divide between who you are as a leader and what your company/society/surroundings says you should be.

That divide seems to be getting bigger”
Me paraphrasing Geoff Watts

@nativewired.com



Do we have it?



@it_depends_cp



Amy Edmondson @AmyCEdmondson · Apr 21

Most chilling line: Some employees said they had been punished or fired when they voiced concerns. That is as good a description of [#PsychologicalSafety](#) failure as any I've heard.



Claims of Shoddy Production Draw Scrutiny to a Second Boeing Jet

Workers at a 787 Dreamliner plant in South Carolina have complained of defective manufacturing, debris left on planes and pressure to not report...

[nytimes.com](#)

Smart boss :)

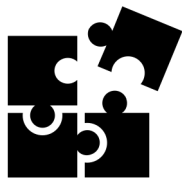
**”I think we have psychological safety,
but I also know that if we don’t have it, I
will probably not know”**

**Sara Fahlander, Head of Department,
SVTi**

Oh, but it is hard...

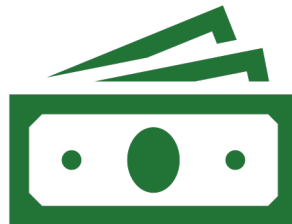
Yes, it is hard

- * It takes investment in people
- * It takes time
- * It is individual
- * It is continuous work



Oh, the times we live in

- * Focus on money
- * Focus on cost of people and not of value they add
- * Short term thinking
- * Want fast return in investment
 - * Especially if you are on the stock market
- * Firing rounds of many companies



So not really ☹️

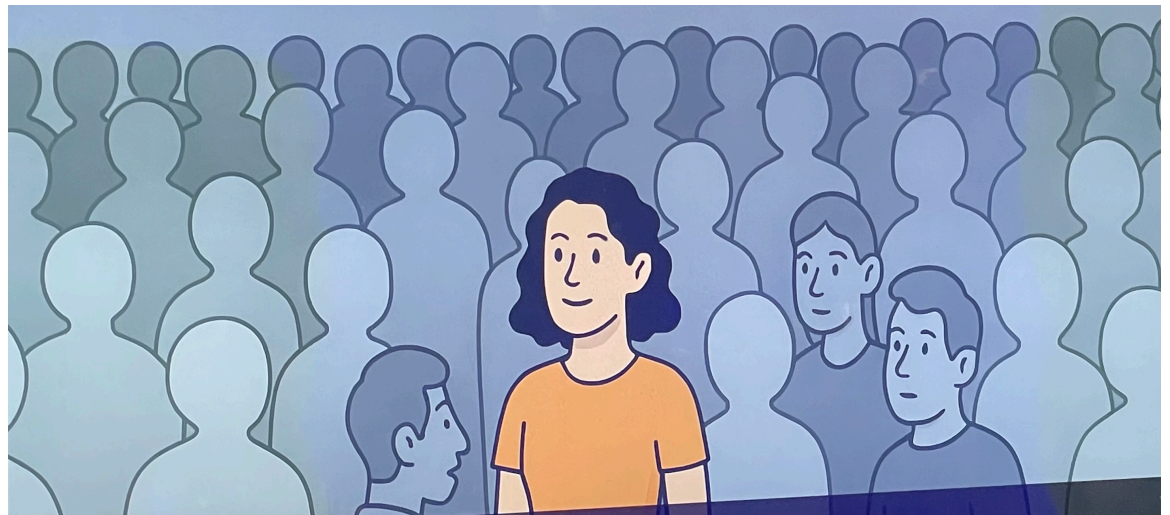
We have work to do

- * We need safety in organisations and in our lives more than ever
- * We can all make a difference

The world does not need more compliant, burned-out husks

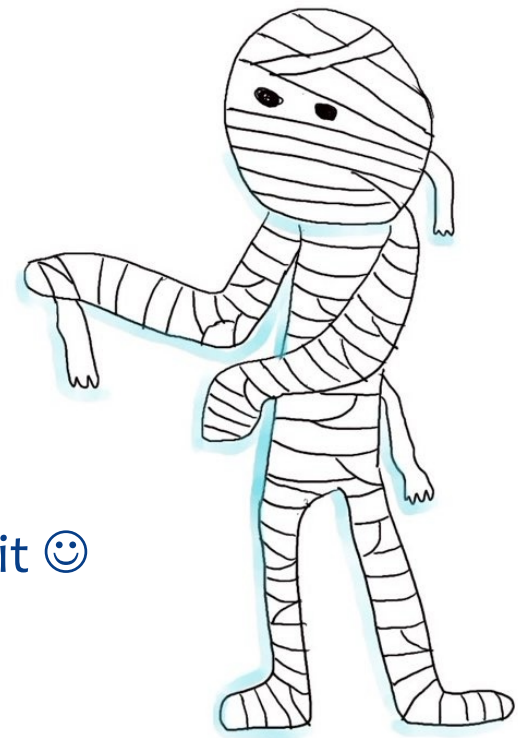
It needs more Calm REBELs
Geoff Watts

@nativewired.com



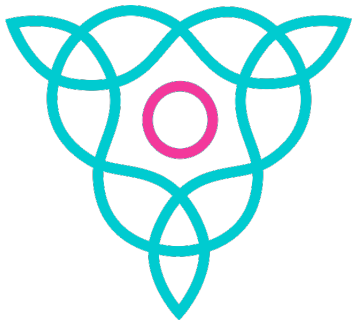
Wrap-up

- * Psychological safety is important
 - * For people, for innovation, for learning
- * And yet we don't invest (enough) in it
- * We need to invest in people and leaders
- * We need to invest in safety
- * Building safety takes an effort –and it is worth it 😊
- * Be kind – also to yourself



I love connecting

<http://www.nativewired.com/>



@nativewired.com

Looking for a workshop or a talk?

Thinking about getting some leadership coaching and guidance?

Want to be coached?
Have an organisation that could use help?

Anything else I can do for you?

Get in touch ☺



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dk.linkedin.com/in/gitteklitgaard/

Extra slides

Global Summary

Boxed numbers indicate the percentage-point change from 2022 to 2023.

Employee Engagement

ENGAGED

23%

0

NOT ENGAGED

62%

+3

ACTIVELY DISENGAGED

15%

-3

Life Evaluation

THRIVING

34%

-1

STRUGGLING

58%

+2

SUFFERING

8%

-1

Daily Negative Emotions

Emotions experienced during
a lot of the previous day

STRESS

41%

-3

ANGER

21%

0

SADNESS

22%

+1

LONELINESS

20%

Job Market

JOB CLIMATE

Good time to find a job

54%

+1

INTENT TO LEAVE

Watching for or actively seeking new job

52%

+1

How to create safety I (Edmonson)

As an organisation, look at the domains:

- * Attitude to risk and failure
- * Willingness to help
- * Open conversation
- * Inclusion and diversity

How to create safety II (Edmonson)

As a leader:

- * Frame work as learning
- * Model curiosity
- * Show fallibility



Photo by [Gary Butterfield](#) on [Unsplash](#)

How to create safety III (Me)

- * Set clear expectations
- * Listen
- * Care
- * Give and receive feedback
- * Be vulnerable
- * Be curious
- * Listen
- * Repeat yourself



Photo by [Brett Jordan](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Expectations

”I keep forgetting that I role model more than I assume; and without clear expectations, I create wrong implicit expectations”

Marcin Floryan

How to create safety IV (Me)

- * Set clear expectations
- * Listen
- * Care
- * Give and receive feedback
- * Be vulnerable
- * Be curious
- * Listen
- * Repeat yourself



Photo by [Brett Jordan](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Links and references

- * *A good intro to psychological safety by Amy Edmonson: [Building a psychologically safe workplace](#)*
- * *[Gallup State of Work report](#)*
- * *Article with 7 questions to determine psychological safety
<https://hbr.org/2023/02/what-is-psychological-safety>*
- * *Book: Amy Edmonson: “The fearless organisation”*
- * *Psychological safety when remote by Matthew Philip – talk and slides
<https://actineo.xyz/blog/psychological-safety-and-remote-work/>*

Links etc

- * **Gallup State of the workplace**
<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>
- * [The website of Geoff Watts](#)
- * Brene Brown:
https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en
- * Alex Harms: The Little guide to empathic leadership
<https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Alex-Harms/dp/0692674853/>

Photos from unsplash.com

- * [Jordan Whitt](#)
- * [Charles Deluvio](#)
- * [Thomas Kinto](#)
- * [Shane Rounce](#)
- * [Michelle Tresemer](#)
- * [Karol Stefański](#)
- * [Riccardo Annandale](#)
- * [Element5 Digital](#)
- * [Vlad Hilitanu](#)
- * [Daniel Gonzalez](#)
- * [Jakayla Toney](#)
- * Yusuf Onuk