

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

TOOLKIT





The problem

Psychological Safety is an invisible epidemic infiltrating the workplace at a cost unknown to most employers. But what can HR actually do to solve it? Leadership needs to create an environment where employees feel safe enough to disagree and at the root of this problem is power. Employers and employees, managers and subordinates, bosses and workers. Because of this dynamic, abuse of power can easily erode the relationship and affect your performance, turnover, and bottom line.

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What is a brilliant **jerk**?

How can you tell?

It can be difficult to spot a controlling leader because they are typically well respected, holds tenure, and has fostered close relationships within the organization.

They are skilled at playing by the rules and changing the narrative to fit their case. It is easy to see their side, after all they are brilliant. But at what cost to the organization and your reputation?

One of the most important signs is to **watch your turnover** and **resignations**. If there are frequent issues on a particular team. Watch the sequence of events. Did an employee complain and then get put on PIP (performance improvement plan)? These are red flags and can indicate some serious issues in your workplace.





What are the **signs**?

When an manager wants to get rid of an employee—but doesn't have a legitimate reason—they'll often target their performance.

Even if they are doing their job well, they may:

- Set vague or shifting expectations
- Withhold critical information or support
- Fail to communicate clearly
- Move the goalposts on performance metrics

This isn't about performance—it's about control. When bias or discrimination is at play, employers rarely come out and say it. Instead, they create an environment where success feels impossible.

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What is considered psychologically unsafe?

Cultivate Curiosity

Harvard Business Review describes psychological safety as an environment in which candor is expected and won't be penalized. Leaders are open to all viewpoints, especially when they differ from their own.

A safe environment is when your employees take interpersonal risks — by expressing unpopular opinions, disagreeing constructively, and sharing mistakes, failures, and other potentially embarrassing information. They feel comfortable being *vulnerable* with their leader and their peers.

What Psychological Safety Isn't:

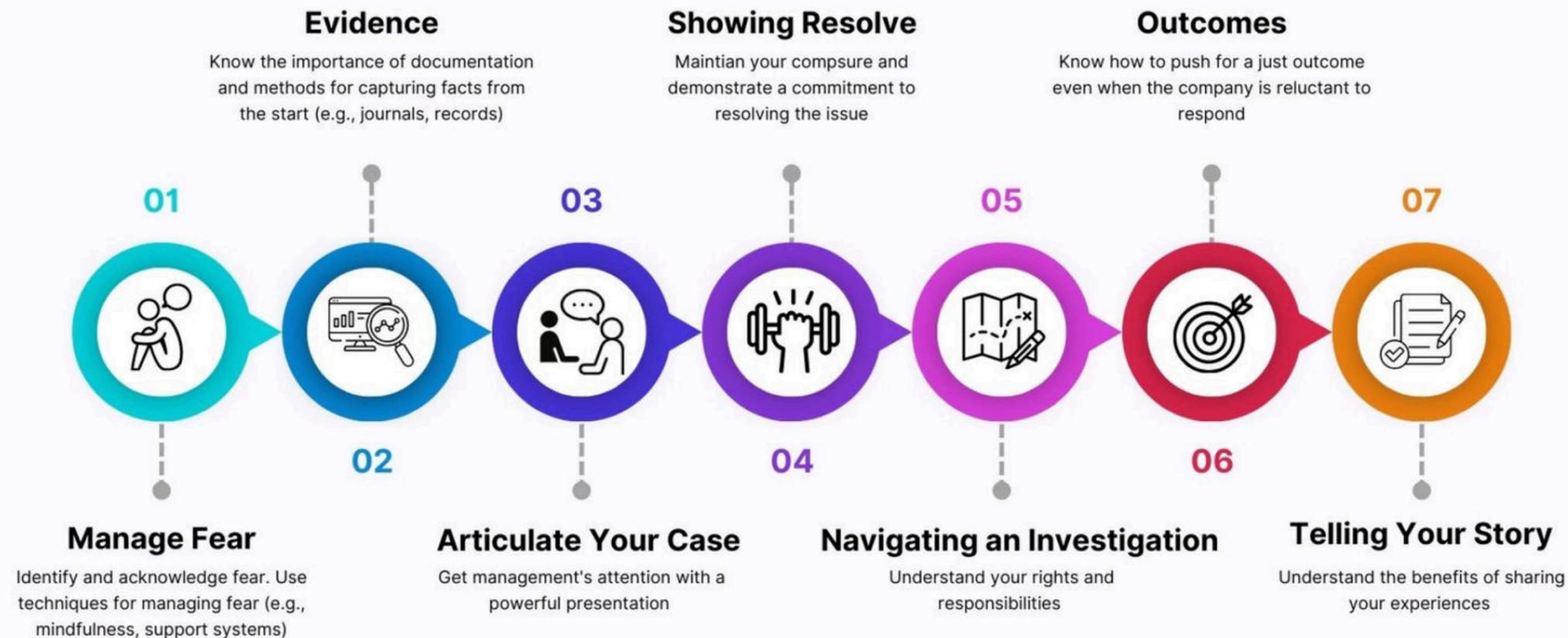
- Being nice or never arguing.
- That your idea will always be supported
- You're a company that never has layoffs
- You can't address weaknesses or assign accountability
- A policy



actively disengaged are only 30% productive



F.E.A.R. N.O.T. Framework



How to Navigate

Whether it's you or your employee, this framework shows the tools to use to navigate a psychologically unsafe situation.

Watch [Kim Williams on-demand webinar](#) to learn more about the FEARNOT framework and new tools and resources on the market for things like [document workplace issues with AI](#).

Calculating the Cost of a Brilliant Jerk

Run 360 Performance Reviews

Include 360 reviews to capture peer and subordinate feedback. Pair with climate surveys.

STEP 1

Surface red flags

Flag employees ranked highly by their manager but negatively by peers and direct reports.

STEP 2

Dig in deeper

Understand if you have a brilliant jerk on your hands.

STEP 3

Pull salaries of negatively impacted employees

Pull these salaries based on your findings in step 1 and 2.

STEP 4

Cut these salaries in half

This is roughly how much money you are throwing away by ignoring the abuse.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Kim Williams, End Workplace Abuse



QUOTES

“When people withhold their ideas, questions, and doubts, their team’s risk of making mistakes and experiencing failure increases.”

Harvard Business Review



Training Checklist

Our emotions as leaders strongly influence our teams and organizations. A leader's impatience, fear, commanding nature, or frustration can stifle certain conversations. Facing an adaptive challenge can destroy a team's ability to creatively learn and find new solutions. Groups creatively overcome challenges when their leader is deliberately calm, hopeful, open-minded, and curious.

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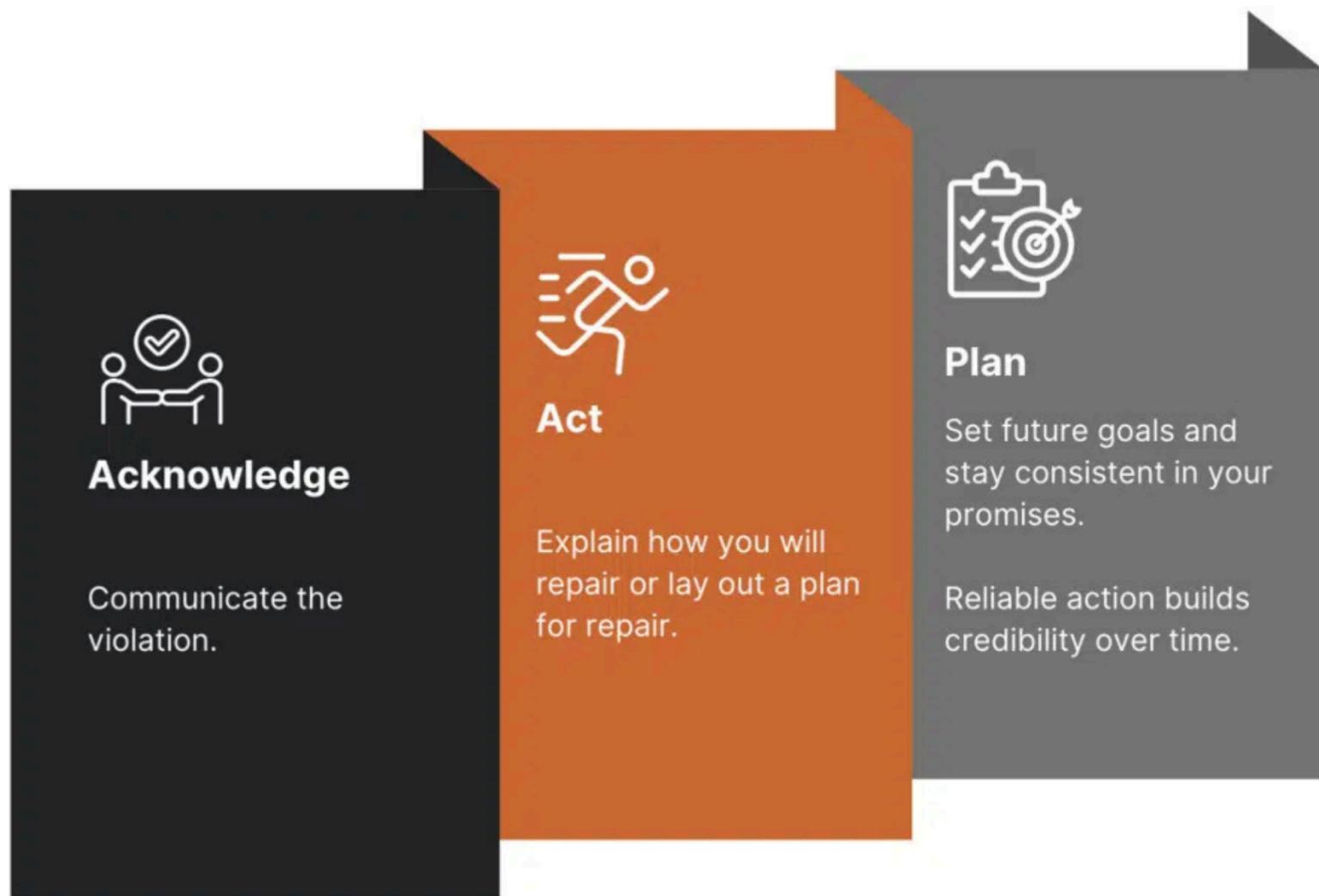


Psychological Safety Survey

This survey is based on Patrick Lencioni's "5 Dysfunctions of a Team," and will help us to understand the health of your team.

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How to Make Repairs

When violations are not repaired or acknowledged, it causes a dishonest environment and a psychologically unsafe environment. Most of the time, it seems employees are more comfortable ignoring a violation and moving on. The less confrontation in the workplace, the better, right? But when relationships are not inherently healthy in the workplace, the work suffers.

Three common stages

1. **Acknowledge:** Communicate the acknowledgement
2. **Act:** Lay out the repair or a plan for a repair
3. **Plan:** Set future goals and keep consistent with your promises.
Reliable action builds credibility over time.

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THANK YOU

