

Transcript - Amy Edmondson - What is psychological safety?

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Nathalie 00:08

Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast, developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Nathalie Nahai.

Ross G 00:16

And I'm Ross Garner.

Nathalie 00:17

This week we are asking what is psychological safety and how can leaders and managers promote psychological safety in a hybrid working context. So going for the really big questions. To answer these queries we're speaking with Amy Edmondson, Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management at Harvard Business School and author of the fantastic book which I can highly recommend called *The Fearless Organisation Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning Innovation and Growth*.

Nathalie 00:49

Hello Amy, how are you doing today?

Amy 00:51

I'm very well, thank you.

Nathalie 00:53

Thank you so much for coming on the show and talking with us. I want to dive in at the deep end and ask you as the person who has pioneered this field, how do you conceive of psychological safety?

Amy 01:07

The shortest way to say that is psychological safety is a sense of permission for candor. It's a belief that you can speak up. And I've always been particularly interested in work-relevant ideas, questions, concerns, and even mistakes.

Amy 01:26

You can speak up, and it won't be held against you. Well, that's it, right?

Nathalie 01:32

Okay, so quite a simple principle in practice. In theory, what are the main challenges that you see crop up time and again with the organisations and people you work with?

Amy 01:44

I think you're meaning the other way around, right? It's simple in theory, but quite challenging in practice. And you're absolutely right, right? I mean, the idea that we should almost robotically be able to speak honestly and candidly, especially when you're doing work that's knowledge work, which is just about everybody, is kind of straightforward.

Amy 02:10

But, and the big but is it actually is extraordinarily rare, hard to do. And that's in part because of our wiring as human beings. You know, we're more or less hardwired to have, to an asymmetry. Let me explain what I mean.

Amy 02:34

The asymmetry is it's always safe to be quiet, right? It's always basically risk free to be quiet. If I decide not to say something, no one will hold that against me because they didn't even know I had a thought.

Amy 02:47

The thought was invisible. If I decide to speak up, there's a chance that my peers and maybe even especially my manager won't like it, right? And that that will either overtly or in a more subtle way be held against me.

Amy 03:02

So the calculus is set up, you know, the very, I think most of the time unconscious calculus, but the calculus is set up for

people to hold back, not to just jump in and contribute if you will.

Nathalie 03:16

So to what extent do you feel we can really have psychological safety in a work environment? So I'm thinking, can you truly speak up and say what you think in a context in which the leaders or managers have basically the final say on your salary, the projects you're assigned, your future progression and so on.

Nathalie 03:33

Talking about that asymmetry, how does that show up as a blocker for psychological safety in that context?

Amy 03:42

You know, this is a really important question. And the answer is it's hard, as I already said, right? It's to what extent can you really have it? Well, you know, most of the time you won't because you're not going to be willing to do the work to have it.

Amy 04:01

And I think that's a shame because I think doing the work pays off. But, you know, you're essentially saying is it realistic to imagine people can be, you know, can be candid, can be honest, can be speaking up when there are people around who have some power, right?

Amy 04:18

They manage their assignments, their pay, et cetera. And my answer is yes, in well run organisations, absolutely. And here's why, because they recognise what's at stake when they're not hearing from people.

Amy 04:35

And there's two big buckets of what's at stake when you're not hearing from people. And let me touch on both of them. And so and then why you might say, OK, this is important enough for me to, you know, work hard to get people engaged.

Amy 04:50

So bucket number one is avoiding preventable failures, business failures, human safety failures, project failures. More often than not, when a project or a company experiences a big failure, you can trace it back and realise that at least one, probably several people saw it coming.

Amy 05:13

But we're reluctant to be the bearers of bad news. Right. So that's that's expensive. You know, and most intelligent managers don't want to bear those costs. Bucket two is the innovation that doesn't happen.

Amy 05:27

Right. And and and that's because when people aren't sharing their crazy ideas or teaming up across knowledge boundaries, you know, different different expertise or different functions to come up with new and better ways to serve the customers.

Amy 05:42

And they don't do that when they don't have a certain degree of psychological safety. Then your company is not benefiting from from that. Now, here's the problem. Right. The problem is both of those two buckets are things that.

Amy 05:56

Well, the second one is innovation. It doesn't happen. You'll never know it. Right. You'll never be the wiser that you have squandered potential value. Bucket two, you will find out about those failures.

Amy 06:11

But just not in a timely way. Right. So that bucket the failures come back to haunt you and they're unignorable. And ultimately, what this means is, you know, because there's all this information behind the scenes that could have been put to use both to succeed rather than fail and to innovate rather than stagnate.

Amy 06:37

The bosses, if you will, are living in a fool's paradise. Right. They didn't know they thought everything was fine and they didn't know what they were missing. Right. And thoughtful managers recognise that and they're unwilling to settle for that.

Amy 06:54

Right. They want to create an environment at least in their team. And we could talk about the difference between team and

organisation if you want. But at least in their team, they want it to be a place where people can contribute.

Amy 07:09

Right. I hired you. Right. You're smart. You're, you know, maybe you've got a certain expertise. That's what I'm paying for. I want it. Right. Selfishly, I want to hear from you. And I think that's what thoughtful managers realise.

Amy 07:23

And so they overcome the the upstream swimming aspect that your question points to.

Ross G 07:32

I'm working on a project just now on risk management. And it strikes me that a lot of what you're talking about aligns with that. And I'm aware that risk management often comes across as the most boring discipline you could possibly investigate.

Ross G 07:44

But it's actually really interesting once you start working on it. Because what you're talking about, well, it aligns really nicely. Because what you're talking about with risk management is what are the opportunities that I haven't identified, because no one's told them.

Ross G 07:58

No one's mentioned them to me. And what are the risks that I'm not aware of that are going to come back and bite me later on?

Amy 08:04

That's a discipline, right? So risk managers are disciplined people, or they've learned to be disciplined, because they're always systematically going, what are we missing? Because if we're missing something that comes back later to cause a big business or human safety failure, that's on me, right?

Amy 08:24

So they're sort of always saying, what do we know? What do we not know? How do we learn more? The good ones, that is. And in fact, I teach next week in an executive program on risk management. So I'm completely in alignment with you.

Amy 08:36

This is a big issue. Now, not all risk managers realise that this is under their purview, but it is. And so I teach a couple of sessions on the human side of risk management.

Ross G 08:49

Great. So I am interested in opportunities and I am wary of risks. But here's a couple of reasons why I still might not care. And so I want to run some objections past you and see what you think of these.

Ross G 09:01

And just very quickly. The first one is I want people to tell me when things go wrong, but I don't want there to be no consequences for those mistakes.

Amy 09:11

So let me differentiate between mistakes, which is one subset of things going wrong, and all of the other ways things go wrong. Things may go wrong because the supply chain breaks down. Things may go wrong because there's a sudden hurricane.

Amy 09:27

Things might go wrong because some coordination between functions broke down in ways that are a little hard to attribute causality. So yes, I'm actually a big fan of holding people accountable for explicit infractions, which by the way are different than mistakes.

Amy 09:45

All of us make mistakes. To err is human. And so we will make mistakes. But if we violate policies, if we do things wrong, if we engage in abusive or harassing behaviour, in a psychologically safe environment, people know this is part of what makes it safe.

Amy 10:04

They know there are consequences for everything from explicitly bad behaviour to even just mailing it in. In a very energised and well-run team, people know that you don't just show up and go through the motions.

Amy 10:24

You show up, you roll up your sleeves, and you're engaged because you care.

Ross G 10:28

Okay, here's another objection. So I'm worried that if everyone's invited to give an opinion, it'll slow us down. If I have to lead this team, I can't do it by committee.

Amy 10:38

Also a discipline issue, right? So I want people to feel safe enough to speak up. I also want teams to embrace a discipline of systematic conversation. What does that mean? That means rounds. Sometimes we go, well, Ross, Nathalie, you know, what's on your mind?

Amy 10:55

And I'm explicit about the process, which is I need to hear from you and then I'm say the team leader, I'm gonna make the final call or I'm explicit about the process, which is we're gonna do a vote or whatever it is, let's be explicit about it.

Amy 11:11

Let's do it with discipline and speed, recognising that at the end, there may still be uncertainty and dissent. The question is, do I have your permission? Is it safe to test it? Because I don't think we'll ever be perfectly clear about whether this is the right answer, but is it a good enough answer to go try it and get the data, right, to see what happens?

Amy 11:34

So no, when things go on too long and conversations are not well run, that's not a psychological safety problem. That's a discipline problem.

Ross G 11:45

Yeah, and what I like about what you're talking about there is that you're inviting everyone to contribute and not just the ones that always speak up, it's the interpreters that also getting invited.

Ross G 11:53

And because I think my third objection, I think you would give the same answer, is that some people on my team, and if I'm being honest, I am talking about myself and how I behave at work, won't shut up.

Ross G 12:05

So you don't need to comment on absolutely everything that happens.

Amy 12:09

Right. And good process is your friend. Right? You know, good process and sticking to it, recognising uncertainty. You know, what you really don't want is to miss something crucial. That's someone new, but either afraid or blocked out by people who are doing all the talking.

Nathalie 12:30

And I think some of it, as you just described, is being very clear on expectations. And this is not necessarily going to be a process in which it's going to be decisions through committee or consensus that we can expect there to be friction and discomfort.

Nathalie 12:45

And by naming it, it's almost giving permission for people to be actually very vocal without assuming that that means that they're then going to just have, you know, the say on what happens ultimately.

Nathalie 12:55

So also kind of baking that into the expectations at the outset. I imagine staves off some of the more rambling objections some people might have.

Amy 13:04

Exactly right.

Nathalie 13:05

So then, with so many of us now working more remotely, or at least in some form of hybrid setup, what does psychological safety mean in perhaps a more mixed or virtual environment?

Amy 13:18

Two things. One, it's harder. I think one of the things we're noticing with the remote work and hybrid work is that people are still collaborating. We have to, but people are tending to collaborate more with the people they already know, compared to people that are newer or what the sociologists would call weak ties, people that I might reach out to or might even cross paths with if I were in an office, but I won't when I'm at home.

Amy 13:49

It's awkward and unusual to reach out and just pick up the phone. I'm going to call Ross now and see what's on his mind. At work, I might do that. Right? What we're seeing is people are, their circles of collaboration are shrinking, and that includes the expertise.

Amy 14:08

I'm more likely to just be with people in my function, in my silo, than to connect with people across silo. That's just observed patterns during this, that's been published in research during this period.

Amy 14:23

The impact of that on psychological safety, I think, is pretty clear, which is again, there are narrower circles in which I feel comfortable. Now, let's add in the media with which we communicate, whether it's Zoom or Teams.

Amy 14:43

It's just harder bordering on impossible to really read the body language, to know when it's, let's say you're an introvert, or let's say you're maybe someone who is just leaning in with an odd idea that isn't squarely in your domain.

Amy 15:04

Much harder to do on Zoom than in a table, around a table. Around the table, someone's going to notice that you sort of are leaning in and seem to have a thought or your get up. You sit up straight all of a sudden because you've got a thought and someone gets curious and invites you in.

Amy 15:21

None of those subtle cues are available to us. Point one is, we've got to recognise that psychological safety has taken a hit. We'll continue to take a hit with remote and hybrid worlds. Then number two is, how do we create it anyway?

Amy 15:39

The answer is going to be that we have to be even more explicit about it. We have to be more disciplined and more systematic. We have to do things like go around the screen and get people's thoughts, invite them in or have a process or use the polls or use the chat.

Amy 15:58

We have to be creative because this isn't just about helping people feel that they belong and they matter, which I care very much about, but it's really about doing good work as well. Having successful projects, not missing something.

Ross G 16:18

It also feels like it's influenced by the extent to which an organisation is supportive of people working in a distributed fashion. So I think what we've seen over the past year and a half is the organisations where trust was at a premium have kind of flourished and they've done okay with people being remote because they already had that trust in place in the first place.

Ross G 16:40

So they're almost prepared to have people no longer physically co-located, whereas the ones that didn't have trust have really struggled with it. And you've seen the more draconian policies coming in or like arbitrary policies like you have to be in the office three days a week.

Ross G 16:56

There's no particular reason for you being in the office three days a week. It's just a blanket decision that we've made. I think part of the reason for the second piece is I laughed when you mentioned media earlier on because I thought you meant news media.

Ross G 17:08

Because there was a story I was looking at today which was working from home increases your risk of making mistakes, which was in the Daily Mail. I'll go look for that. It's an exciting headline.

Ross G 17:22

I did because I'm a nerd, look up the paper it was referring to. And it was about comparing the performance of chess champions at a face-to-face tournament. And then once they started competing online in April 2020, and they made more mistakes once they were online in April 2020.

Ross G 17:40

And I'm like underlining that because they were working from home in the context of the world shutting down and the pandemic and they made mistakes. And then to get from that, that people working from home.

Amy 17:54

There may be other things going on there. Also, chess is such a specific task, right? And it's a specific task with very specific rules. And that's not the kind of work that most of us do. So I think you're absolutely right to be sceptical because we can't infer very much from that at all.

Amy 18:18

But one thing you did mention, you know, when trust is high, you're better off, right? I mean, you're more able to withstand the assault of the distance and the extra challenge to coordinate with each other.

Amy 18:33

What we don't yet know, and I think it remains a kind of research question is, does the trust erode for the high trust organisation? The less, the more time goes on where we're not actually seeing each other face to face in any way, any social way.

Amy 18:54

What happens to trust? I think we don't yet know.

Ross G 18:58

Yeah, I think we would see some evidence for that in Bowling Alone. I forgot in the author's name. Robert Putnam is that him?

Amy 19:09

Yeah, Bob Putnam.

Ross G 19:10

He writes about his attendance of community clubs, churches, bowling clubs, is where the name comes from, as that's declined in the United States, I think since the 50s. The level of trust within the kind of public at large has eroded.

Ross G 19:27

And I think we've seen a lot of that in terms of the polarization that's going on. It's hard to imagine that further isolation online is not going to contribute to that.

Amy 19:37

No question about it. We are social creatures, and even though we're connecting through Zoom or other tools, it turns out it's not the same. It's not the same as just grabbing lunch. It's not the same as the physicality of being in the vicinity.

Amy 19:57

And you feel a different connection with people, especially in big meetings. I think the one-on-ones or the very small groups can feel very connecting virtually. But the large meetings are just performance art, really.

Nathalie 20:16

I think there's also the question of the fact that when we talk about belonging and we talk about purpose, which are themes

that are coming up a lot in organisations at the moment, a lot of that and the trust that comes from relating is cultivated through shared, presential experiences.

Nathalie 20:31

So being physically with one another, going through ritual together. Various people have written interesting things about this. Casper ter Kuile, who's written a book called Power Ritual. Dr. Julian Isaacs Russell, who's a psychotherapist who works increasingly in this space, talk about the importance of physically moving through a space together on the encoding of memory on the multi-sensory aspect of our lived experience, not just being audio-visual, for instance, there's always facets that I think based on kind of a wider look at psychological safety and its connection with relationship and trust and belonging, that we kind of, we don't yet know the full range of impacts that's stripping all that away through tech-mediated interactions is going to have on the longer term resilience and flourishing of a business.

Nathalie 21:17

I think that's why it's so important that conversations and questions are happening.

Amy 21:22

And I can't help thinking that smell and visuals. And quite often you remember the conversation you had with someone that was embedded in a particular room or at a particular table in the cafeteria and it all comes flooding back with the scaffolding of all those additional supports, sensory supports.

Amy 21:50

And when you're sitting in the same chair day after day, it all blurs together in a kind of interesting, but maybe problematic way.

Ross G 22:00

Do you think that can have a positive effect on psychological safety though? Because there's a lot of the physical trappings of an office like which floor the executives work on or where the doors are open or shut and these kinds of things have a way of, they send a signal about expected behaviour.

Ross G 22:18

And when everyone's online and you can suddenly see their dog and you know, they're wearing a hoodie or whatever it might be, it does have a levelling effect.

Amy 22:28

I was just gonna use that word. It is absolutely a levelling effect. And I think that can be, let's leverage it. Let's put it to good use. I don't think it's automatic. I think the levelling is automatic, but then making sure you put that levelling to good use isn't automatic.

Amy 22:43

You're gonna have to draw people out. And especially for larger meetings. I don't know what size a meeting has to be. I mean, I think with three or four, you sort of stay present. But maybe much above six, it is irresistible to also try to process through some of those emails.

Amy 23:09

Or maybe whatever else, finish that paragraph. I mean, it's just not, I think it's not realistic to imagine you really have people's full attention. And so the levelling won't work if people are actually off doing something else.

Nathalie 23:26

So speaking to that levelling, I think one of the aspects that have been really, I guess, brought into the centre of the conversation is the fact that, you know, by moving online, it's so much easier now to access talent from all over the world.

Nathalie 23:38

So colleagues are now, you know, in teams that are maybe perhaps more culturally diverse than they previously were. So how can we promote and cultivate psychological safety in a more diverse context?

Nathalie 23:51

Are there certain cultural differences that you've noticed that we should be particularly aware of? Thank you.

Amy 23:57

Yes. And I can't help just saying that this, in a way, the advantage of being able to sort of hire and include people from anywhere because the importance of location shrinks is also set off by the disadvantage of the greater mobility everybody has.

Amy 24:18

Meaning, I mean, that's good, but it means that people are more and more likely to not stick around very long. Now, on the, you know, on the plus side, that puts a premium on every manager everywhere to really make your team and your organisation a great place to work because it's way too easy for people to just leave and go somewhere else.

Amy 24:40

They don't have to root their family, etc. They can just do it. So, that's good, right? Because the burden is you've got to make this the place they want to stay. But that's also another challenge that hasn't been part of their job in the past.

Amy 24:56

But cultural differences, absolutely lots of work on this. I'm sure you're familiar with the term power distance. Different cultures, different national cultures has been identified as having different power distance, which really means, you know, how much does hierarchy matter to us?

Amy 25:15

How seriously do we take it? And in high power distance cultures, notably Asian cultures in particular, hierarchy is taken even more seriously than in low power distance cultures like the Netherlands or the US.

Amy 25:34

So, the realities, all of us are very subject to power differences. I mean, we're very, very sensitive to them. But given those differences, it means it really just means be even more explicit about the invitation for voice.

Amy 25:53

If you're in an environment where you're unlikely to speak up unless spoken to, then we better make sure we're speaking to you. Nathalie, what are your thoughts? Or you had some interviews with the customers yesterday.

Amy 26:07

What did they say? But now, in any culture around the world, if I've asked you a direct question about a specific focused area that matters, you would feel extraordinarily awkward not speaking, right?

Amy 26:21

You know, oh, I'm just going to sit here and mute. Nope, not going to happen. So, it's creating those structures and being thoughtful about drawing people in and being explicit at the outset about the nature of the work we do and why it matters so very much and good performers are the ones who are contributing and so on and so forth.

Amy 26:44

And so, the good news is, you know, the bad news is it can be harder in some cultures than others to really have an engaged high voice culture. The good news is when you're able to do it, it's an even greater source of advantage because it's not as common.

Nathalie 27:02

So that's in mind then now as we look forward to probably some more tumult and you know, we're certainly not out of the woods yet in terms of the pandemic, etc. But what kind of qualities do you feel leaders and managers need to cultivate, whether in their own teams or in the wider organisation, in order to create psychological safety when working remotely?

Amy 27:24

I think part of the answer is self-awareness, which is not how I have responded to that question in the past, but increasingly, I think managers who are more aware, you know, more emotionally intelligent, more aware of the impact that they have just as people and the impact that their role might have on others, that self-awareness helps nurture, a kind of other orientation, which seems almost paradoxical, right?

Amy 27:58

If I'm more aware of myself, I will be more interested in you because maybe I'm more conscious of the challenge that you're

describing or that you're asking about. So more self-awareness, which leads to more other orientation, more curiosity, I think all of us and particularly leaders and managers need to cultivate curiosity in a dynamic changing world.

Amy 28:27

You know, a world that is so much more full of uncertainty than we ever appreciated two years ago. And when you have that curiosity, you're just poised to learn, you're poised to ask good questions, you're poised to listen carefully.

Amy 28:42

And leaders who are asking questions and are listening are those who are engaging people and ultimately inspiring people to contribute to the enterprise. So I would start with self-awareness, move on to curiosity, and then throw in a little bit of empathy because you may not know exactly what your team members are up against, but you could be sure there are some hidden challenges and just be aware that what we're trying to do here matters and we have to do it against a context of not knowing all of the hurdles people are facing.

Nathalie 29:21

So to wrap up, this has been coming up a lot in conversations I've been having recently. I would be very interested to get your initial thoughts on what you think psychological safety might look like in the metaverse, by which I mean for the sake of being a little bit more clear, if we start moving into virtual reality environments so that we can kind of be visually and auditorily present with other people's avatars, colleagues around the world.

Nathalie 29:49

What are some of the psychological safety principles or practices or issues that you could imagine might arise in those contexts?

Amy 29:58

So the right answer is I don't know. And I'm always as a researcher, going into new territory, I need to say I don't know because that's why we'd wanna study it, right? But with that in mind, with not knowing in mind, there's at least a hypothesis that comes to mind, which is that it could be easier because I'm not me, I'm this avatar, right?

Amy 30:25

And that avatar is braver than I am. And that avatar is maybe less reluctance to look bad in front of your avatars. It seems the possibility is there that this will lower the hurdles that we as species have long faced.

Amy 30:56

And the psychological safety problem, the challenge that people don't engage, I think is deep in our evolutionary heritage. It's not only just in our own upbringing, where maybe well-meaning adults told us to, don't speak up unless you have the right answer.

Amy 31:16

But in early times, if you angered the head of the tribe, you might literally starve to death or die of exposure. And we harbor some of that same anxiety, even though we live in a very different world.

Amy 31:37

But when you're in the metaverse, you're sort of not in this world, you're in some other world. And maybe we have a new chance to be braver and more engaged. But as I said, I don't know.

Nathalie 31:52

Well, I like that optimistic stance.

Ross G 31:57

It's interesting because I think when we went, if we go back to like the start of the internet, one of the things that I think a lot of people, and particularly this kind of person that was drawn to the early internet, one of the things that they liked so much about it was that they could express themselves freely in a way that they could into the real world.

Ross G 32:12

So it didn't matter what your interests were or how you felt about your body or gender or sexuality, whatever it might be. You were able to find allies in that community online. And what's happened as the internet has gone on is that anonymity has been weaponized, and in fact it's turned into a way to criticise and throw stones at one another.

Amy 32:34

No, you're right. Because of course, I'm saying there's this possibility it could be our best selves, but also there's this possibility that that anonymity or quasi-anonymity puts forward our worst selves, which is then maybe does go back, Nathalie, as you were talking earlier, to issues of If we may need to really encourage people to be asking those kinds of deeper questions, you know, who are you, what's your life about, and what contribution do you want to make?

Amy 33:16

Because I think we all have it in us, but it's often either we haven't done that work or it's just too easy to make a splash some other way and sometimes even in very destructive ways.

Ross G 33:31

And separating those questions from your physical appearance is super interesting. Does my avatar need to look like me or not? And what's the impact either way on the psychological safety, you know, with a working context? There's a book in that, Amy.

Amy 33:47

Yeah, lots of good research.

Nathalie 33:56

So on that note, when we eventually have this conversation in shared virtual space, I'll be dressed up as a squirrel. What will you be taking from this very fascinating and rich conversation and applying in your life this week?

Ross G 34:13

Yeah, it went from risk management to the metaverse and avatars. It's very wide-ranging. I think for me, what interested me was psychological safety as a mechanism for retention, for team retention.

Ross G 34:26

I hadn't really thought of it that way, but the role of managers, creating an environment that people choose to stay in because they've got a lot more choice now that they're not tied to wherever they've taken out a mortgage. So that's really interesting.

Nathalie 34:38

I think for me it would be around the piece on self-awareness and curiosity, which I find particularly compelling. And then how that leads to empathy, I think in many instances. Amy, what about you?

Amy 34:51

Of course, I'm going to have to think more about the metaverse. But I suppose I'll take away the pushback questions. And they're not new.

Ross G 35:07

I thought I was being clever.

Amy 35:08

No, you were being very clever, but there is something, I think the reason why these questions are important and clever is that there's a part of us that's still locked in to an industrial era mindset, right?

Amy 35:26

It's sort of that there is a right way and that we need bosses to make sure the right way gets done. Even the idea that people's contributions would slow us down rather than speed us up is widely assumed to be the case.

Amy 35:49

In part because there's a little Henry Ford inside our brain telling us to get on with it. The last 18 months, 20 months have taught us that we might end up having to turn on a dime sometimes and invent a new way of working and who knows who's going to have the best idea about how to do that. It means we all have work to do.

Nathalie 36:28

So Amy, would you mind summarising this very varied conversations we've just had for our listeners and maybe speaking to how leaders and managers can promote psychological safety in a nutshell, in a hybrid working context?

Amy 36:41

Sure, a hybrid working context is full of uncertainty. Anyone and likely everyone's voice might matter. You won't know exactly who's got the ideas or the questions or the concerns at any given time. So you had better be curious and engaged and help others be curious and engaged to navigate through the uncertainty that lies ahead.

Amy 37:06

Hybrid working has exacerbated some of this uncertainty. It has also put a premium on the need and opportunity to build great teams that can solve problems together in an ongoing way.

Nathalie 37:29

Alright, that was very succinct. Let's move on to our final regular feature, which is one thing I've learned this week. I love this bit. Ross, do you want to go first? What have you learned this week?

Ross G 37:40

Sure. So this is quite related to our conversation actually, but where I work, we've got a group that's been experimenting with VR headsets. And last week I successfully managed to weasel myself onto that team.

Ross G 37:53

And so they sent me an Oculus Quest headset, which arrived yesterday and I tried out the International Space Station experience. I don't know, have either of you used the Oculus headset or any kind of VR experience?

Amy 38:06

Not yet.

Ross G 38:08

It's really quite incredible. You know, within a few minutes, I was just standing in my living room, but you're floating around the space station. There's no gravity, so you can move in three dimensions.

Ross G 38:18

I guess you always move in three dimensions, but you know what I mean, you're floating around in three dimensions, and you have to grab onto handrails to sort of hurl yourself through the space station.

Ross G 38:28

Really, really immersive. But what was even stranger is when I took the headset off, it felt very strange to be moving in gravity again. My legs felt weird. And even like the dexterity of my fingers, you know, you've got five fingers on each hand that you can use, whereas in VR, you're kind of, you can grab or you can point, and that's pretty much it.

Ross G 38:47

But it took me about 30 minutes to adjust to being back in the real world, which was an effect I hadn't anticipated going into the metaverse of the virtual one. That was something that I learned this week.

Nathalie 38:58

How about you Amy, what's one thing that you've learned this week?

Amy 39:03

Well, I'm gonna be glib. I've learned that chess players early on in the pandemic just made more mistakes.

Ross G 39:12

I could follow this. I'm sure the number of mistakes reduced over time as they got used to it, which I think that Daily Mail headline even less relevant than it first seemed.

Amy 39:23

Sure does, doesn't it? We can all learn new skills, new tricks, but it takes a little bit of time.

Ross G 39:31

It's like shocking.

Nathalie 39:40

I was going to go with something quite basic, but I was also thinking back to something else that I read this week that really

struck me. I've been reading a wonderful book by Rob Hopkins called From What Is to What If, which came out in 2019, so just pre-pandemic.

Nathalie 39:52

And of the many fascinating things that he talks about, one of the things that he wrote about was that in London, in Greater London, 47% of the land is actually green space, so it's one of the greenest cities in the world, which I miss living in Barcelona, which is beautiful but very un-green in comparison.

Nathalie 40:08

And that just three more percentage of space, so that's one meter squared per inhabitant of Greater London, would take it to 50%, and would be just amazing. So just as a model for future cities, I found that to be particularly inspiring, especially when we think about the climate things that we're having to face.

Nathalie 40:26

Yeah, there we go. Thank you so much, Amy, for your candour and your wisdom and your insights and for playing ball with us. It's been a real pleasure.

Amy 40:43

Well, thank you. It's really great talking with both of you. I could do it all day.

Nathalie 40:55

And that's it. You've been listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me and Ross Garner. Our guest this week was Amy Edmondson. Until next time, bye for now.