



Royal Academy  
of Engineering

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# Inclusive Cultures and Psychological Safety: Practical Strategies for Success

Safety and Reliability Society

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## Session Objectives

- 1**

Understand importance of psychological safety and the business benefits they bring to engineering project groups.
- 2**

Learn key strategies to create and maintain psychological safety.
- 3**

Gain practical, actionable tips to implement these strategies in day-to-day work.
- 4**

Be inspired to seek out opportunities to address the lack of diversity in engineering by promoting inclusion.
- 5**

Commit to taking concrete steps to enhance inclusivity within their own teams and organisations.



## What Is Psychological Safety?

- Feeling of belonging
- Environment where contributions are valued
- Ability to speak up, share ideas, and take risks
- Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities
- Varies for different people

## The business benefits of psychological safety and inclusion



**People:** Inclusive teams create a better employee experience



**Partners:** Engagement with EDI can attract investment and enhance reputation



**Products & Services:** Diverse teams innovate and make your solutions more inclusive



**Processes:** Addressing EDI can mitigate legal, reputational, and safety risks)



Scan the QR code to access the Academy's latest research report: The EDI Engine

## 4 Strategies to Build Inclusive Cultures

### 1. Inclusive Communication

- I ask open questions to understand other people's point of view
- I let other people speak without interrupting them
- I use inclusive and respectful language
- I speak up and object to any unkind or unfair communication I witness



#### Inclusive Communication



### I ask open questions to understand other people's point of view

Try to check all of these off in the next two weeks:

- Use How, Why or What at the beginning of each question you ask
- Ask an open question to get more information when I'm disagreeing with someone
- Ask follow up clarifying open questions before offering my own thoughts
- Plan how I'm going to ask questions before a difficult conversation



#### Inclusive Communication



### I let other people speak without interrupting them

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Realise you've interrupted and apologise afterwards
- Notice if there is anything similar about the people you interrupt - are they the same gender or ethnicity for example?
- Leave a pause for a few seconds to ensure someone has finished speaking



#### Inclusive Communication



### I use inclusive and respectful language

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Use a gender neutral term to refer to groups (folks, team)
- Share your pronouns with someone
- Review your written communication to ensure it's inclusive and respectful
- Use plain accessible language rather than jargon



#### Inclusive Communication



### I object to non-inclusive communication

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:


- Let someone know they've used gendered language (eg. guys, chairman)
- Speak up when someone says something a little off (even if they didn't mean it)
- Actively notice the words used to describe people and question any implicit meaning (eg. fiesty, emotional, aggressive)
- Let someone know they've used ableist language (mad, crazy, lame)

## 4 Strategies to Build Inclusive Cultures


### 2. Valuing Feedback

- I respond with interest to views different from my own
- I give specific feedback
- I ask for feedback
- I actively seek out opportunities to learn



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**Valuing Feedback**




**I ask for feedback**

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Ask for feedback via the Culture+ platform
- Ask a colleague for feedback about how your behaviour impacts them
- Ask for feedback on messy, unfinished work
- Ask someone for feedback who you've never asked before

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**Valuing Feedback**




**I give specific feedback**

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Give specific feedback via the Culture+ platform
- Ask someone if your feedback is actionable
- Prepare the feedback you're going to give in advance
- Give both specific positive and developmental feedback

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**Valuing Feedback**




**I respond with interest to views different from my own**

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Pause before responding to someone
- Thank someone for sharing their opposing view
- Ask a question to clarify before responding
- Take time to think through their suggestion

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**Valuing Feedback**



**I actively seek out opportunities to learn**

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Ask someone on your team for help
- Do something new for the first time in work
- Try something new connected to your Culture+ feedback
- Tell your team you don't know about something

## 4 Strategies to Build Inclusive Cultures

### 3. Considering Diverse Perspectives

- I invite a diverse group of people to meetings
- I seek out different viewpoints in decision-making
- I object if someone is prevented from contributing their ideas
- I listen to other people's views



#### Considering Diverse Perspectives



#### I invite a diverse group of people to meetings

Try to check all of these off in the next two weeks:

- Write a list of who has been part of important decisions
- Check if anyone is missing, read through yourself and ask other people who they think should be involved
- Send out invites well in advance (often we slip into our habits when we leave things to the last minute)
- Have a 1:1 meeting with someone you don't regularly talk to



#### Considering Diverse Perspectives



#### I object if someone is prevented from contributing their ideas

Try to check all of these off in the next two weeks:

- Object when someone is interrupted, "Can I pause you a moment, I'd like Connie to finish..."
- Highlight if someone has previously expressed the same idea "Is that similar to what Connie suggested last week..."
- Ask a follow-up question to allow someone to fully explain
- Notice if someone is dominating the conversation and discuss it with them



#### Considering Diverse Perspectives



#### I seek out different viewpoints in decision-making

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Ask someone their viewpoint for the first time
- Listen for something unexpected
- Write down valuable insights from gathering a different perspective
- Push yourself to re-consider a viewpoint you initially dismissed



#### Considering Diverse Perspectives



#### I listen to other people's views

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Let people know in advance what the discussion topic will be
- Allow silence in conversation - sometimes it takes people a little time to gather their thoughts
- Explicitly ask someone unfamiliar to share their views
- Repeat back what they've said to ensure you've understood

## 4 Strategies to Build Inclusive Cultures

### 4. Embracing Failure

- I respond positively when people take considered risks
- I encourage colleagues to share work in progress
- I change my behaviour by learning from my mistakes
- I acknowledge the things I don't know



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#### Embracing Failure



### I respond positively when people take considered risks

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Acknowledge what you've learned when something fails
- Let someone know that they have your support in a difficult situation
- Highlight the positive actions taken when discussing something that didn't work
- Share your own experience of not having a risk pay off

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#### Embracing Failure



### I encourage colleagues to share work in progress

Try to check all of these off in the next two weeks:

- Say yes when someone asks if they can run something by you
- Ask someone if they can share something they're working on
- Ask them what kind of feedback is useful
- Thank someone for sharing a work in progress with you

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#### Embracing Failure



### I change my behaviour by learning from my mistakes

Try to check all of these off in the next one month:

- Take action based on your Culture+ feedback
- Set a SMART goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) for a behaviour you want to change
- Share your commitment with someone and ask them to hold you accountable
- Share what you've learned from your mistake

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#### Embracing Failure



### I acknowledge the things I don't know

Try to check all of these off in the next one week:

- Use the phrase "I don't know but I'll find out"
- Research something you're unsure of outside your area of expertise
- Ask someone to explain something in their area of expertise
- Ask someone about their experience building their expertise in an area

# Action Plan

Create a plan to help you put the habits into practice



Which habit above would you like to work on?

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What is your goal?

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To start putting this habit into practice, break it down into a more personal, actionable goal for you. Think about what you can change over the **next 1 month**.

Your goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.



What is your best outcome?

If you achieved this goal, what will be the positive benefit/outcome? How would you feel when it happens? What would it mean for others in your team?

Take a moment to imagine this outcome fully.



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## What is your obstacle?



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What obstacles might hold you back or get in the way of achieving this goal? Use a clear statement to define this obstacle.

*For example: "Syncing everyone's calendars can be challenging since we are all really busy."*



## What is your plan of action?



If this obstacle occurs, **what can you all do to overcome it?**

Make a plan using the statement: "I will [action]".

Think of one specific action you can take to move past this obstacle.

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### Your Action Plan

If ----- [obstacle], -----

then I will ----- [action] -----