The cost of avoiding conflict

Research reveals:

- A majority of employees (85%) have to deal with conflict to some degree; 29% of this majority do so "always" or "frequently". "Frequently" has been reported in Germany as high as 56% and Ireland 37%.

- 1 in 8 employees say disagreements among senior team are frequent or continual.

- Primary causes are: clashing personalities 49%, stress 34%, heavy workload 33%; culture also plays a part in perception of causes.

- The average employee spends 2,1 hours a week on conflict, in Germany and Ireland up to 3.3 hours per week and in some organisations as high as 6 hours per week.

- Negative outcomes: such as where conflict is leading to personal attacks 27%, sickness or absence 25%; 1 in 10 (9%) saw it lead to a project failure.

Skill of leaders is the key determinant. 7 out of 10 employees see managing conflict as important leadership skill and 54% of employees think managers could handle disputes better.

Conflict can also lead to positive emotions, when managed correctly: generating energy.

Source: CPP Global Human Capital Report, July 2008

2. Approach conflict with empathy

Empathy is a skill and Compassion = empathy + desire to help

Emotion = a perception of reality based on previous experiences

- ❖ Labelling emotions reduces stress and leads to better self-regulation
- ❖ Changing the label = changing the experience
- ❖ Work on your emotional awareness to enable you to spot conflict
- ❖ A leader can infect the response of a team with positive emotional states – emotional contagion

Stages of group development

FORM

- Sensing each other out
- Vying/establishing a pecking order
- Conformity to expectations
- Superficiality/ subjectivity
- Status conscious
- Hidden feelings
- Poor listening
- Inflexible/bureaucratic

STORM

- Rebellious
- Opening up risky issues
- Emotive/volatile
- Aggressive
- Insecurity
- Lack of direction/boundaries

NORM

- Clarity
- Change/re-affirm goals
- Re-establish culture on honesty, tolerance and listening
- Re-structure tasks on individual & team talents
- Establish self & team disciplines & boundaries
- Develop assertiveness and objectivity

PERFORM

- Creativity, energy and initiative
- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Open, honest relationships and culture
- Commitment, pride in group's team spirit
- Maturity, resilience and high morale

european school of administration

Developed by Bruce Tuckman, 1965

GreenHouse Consortium
eu management training

The Leader's Tool Kit for building Psychological Safety

Category	Setting the Stage	Inviting Participation	Responding Productively
Leadership Tasks	**Frame the Work** • Set expectations about failure, uncertainty, and interdependence to clarify the need for voice **Emphasize Purpose** • Identify what's at stake, why it matters, and for whom it matters	**Demonstrate Situational Humility** • Acknowledge gaps **Practice Inquiry** • Ask good questions • Model intense listening **Set Up Structures and Processes** • Create forums for input • Provide guidelines for discussion	**Express Appreciation** • Listen • Acknowledge and thank **Destigmatize Failure** • Look forward • Offer help • Discuss, consider, and brainstorm next steps **Sanction Clear Violations**
Accomplishes	Shared expectations and meaning	Confidence that voice is welcome	Orientation toward continuous learning

Edmondson A., The Fearless Organization, Wiley 2019, p159

Creating Psychological Safety in the workplace

Below you find a self-assessment to help you put in place the Leader's Tool Kit for Building Psychological Safety.

Leadership Self-Assessment

I. Setting the Stage

Framing the work

- **Have I clarified the nature of the work? To what extent is the work complex and interdependent? How much uncertainty do we face? How often do I refer to these aspects of the work? How well do I assess shared understanding of these features?**

- **Have I spoken of failures in the right way, given the nature of the work? Do I point out that small failures are the currency of subsequent improvement? Do I emphasize that it is not possible to get something brand new "right the first time"?**

Emphasizing purpose

- **Have I articulated clearly why our work matters, why it makes a difference, and for whom?**

- **Even if it seems obvious given the type of work or industry I'm in, how often do I talk about what's at stake?**

II. Inviting Participation

Situational Humility

- **Have I made sure that people know that I don't think I have all the answers?**

- **Have I emphasized that we can always learn more? Have I been clear that the situation we're in requires everyone to be humble and curious about what's going to happen next?**

Proactive Enquiry

- **How often do I ask good questions rather then rhetorical ones? How often do I ask questions of others, rather than just expressing my perspective?**

- **Do I demonstrate an appropriate mix of questions that go broad and go deep?**

> Systems and Structures
>
> - **Have I created structures to systematically elicit ideas and concerns?**
>
> - **Are these structures well designed to ensure a safe environment for open dialogue?**

III.   Responding Productively

Express Appreciation

- **Have I listened thoughtfully, signalling that what I am hearing matters?**

- **Do I acknowledge or thank the speaker for bringing the idea or question to me? Listen thoughtfully?**

Destigmatize Failure

- **Have I done what I can to destigmatize failures? What more can I do to celebrate intelligent failures?**

- **When someone comes to me with bad news, how do I make sure it's a positive experience?**

- **Do I offer help or support to guide the next steps?**

Sanction Clear Violations

- **Have I clarified the boundaries? Do people know what constitute blameworthy acts in our organisation?**

- **Do I respond to clear violations in an appropriately tough manner so as to influence future behaviour?**

From "The fearless organisation", Edmondson C., Wiley & Sons, 2019, p 181-182

The need to reframe the role of the boss

	Default Frames	Reframe
The Boss	Has answers	Sets direction
	Gives orders	Invites input to clarify and improve
	Assesses others' performance	Creates conditions for continued learning to achieve excellence
Others	Subordinates who must do what they're told	Contributors with crucial knowledge and insight

Edmondson A., The Fearless Organization, Wiley 2019, p164