WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Make Speaking Up Worthwhile

A small change in how concerns are invited, received, and acted on.

25 minutes | Psychological safety and accountability

Use it in three moves

1. Choose a real moment when someone might need to question, disagree, or ask for help. Consider what doing so costs here.

2. Prepare both the invitation and your response. Keep expectations clear and provide a suitable route for sensitive concerns.

3. Show what happened to the input. Explain the action, the limits, and when people will hear from you again.

Name the work and the uncertainty

What requires learning, questions, or early warning? Keep standards and real responsibilities explicit.

Ask what speaking up costs here

Use voluntary, appropriate routes. Do not ask people to expose sensitive experiences in a public exercise.

Consider safety and accountability together

Low/low: disengagement risk. High safety/low expectations: comfort without progress. Low safety/high pressure: anxiety and concealment risk. Both: room for learning and clear standards. These are lenses, not scores.

Make Speaking Up Worthwhile

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Make an invitation specific and accessible

Name the uncertainty, ask a real question, and give time or alternate channels to answer.

Plan a useful response

Thank the person, understand the concern, state limits, and agree the next action. Follow appropriate reporting processes when needed.

Show what happened to the input

Who reports back, when, and with what privacy boundary?

A question for me

What did my last response to bad news teach everyone watching?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Name the work and the uncertainty

The team is trialling a new approval route. We need people to flag unclear cases before processing them.

Ask what speaking up costs here

Offer a private route and ask which situations make questions difficult. Do not infer safety from a quiet meeting.

Consider safety and accountability together

We have high pressure to clear the queue, but colleagues fear being seen as slow if they ask. Explore that account rather than labeling the whole team.

Make an invitation specific and accessible

Before we proceed, what exception have we not accounted for? Send notes afterward if you prefer.

Plan a useful response

Acknowledge the unclear case, pause that decision, and ask the process owner to clarify it. Do not promise secrecy you cannot keep.

Show what happened to the input

At Friday review, share the clarified rule and unresolved questions without identifying people who raised sensitive concerns.

The thinking behind it

Focus on what your everyday responses teach people. A survey score cannot substitute for changing the cost of asking, disagreeing, or admitting uncertainty.

Amy Edmondson's research describes psychological safety as a shared belief about interpersonal risk in a team. It can coexist with clear expectations and accountability. This original practice explores invitations, responses, and follow-through; it is not a validated climate survey or a guarantee of safety.

Amy Edmondson · Managing the risk of learning

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne