

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION



Construction
Inclusion Week

TOOLBOX TALKS

07



Estimated Time:

15 minutes max



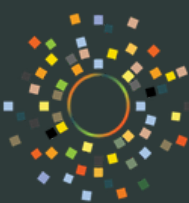
Audience:

**All workers, supervisors, leaders,
apprentices, and support staff**

CIW PILLARS:

*Belonging & Workforce Culture,
Attract & Retain*

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION



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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This Toolbox Talk is provided as a voluntary workforce development resource in support of Construction Inclusion Week. It does not impose or endorse any directives, quotas, or identity-based exclusions or preferences.

The content reflects voluntary best practices and is designed to promote safety, opportunity, and inclusive team culture benefiting everyone across the construction industry, to help support, attract, and retain top talent.

Construction Inclusion Week does not control or endorse the content of third-party links. Activities should be adapted to align with your company's legal policies and job-related criteria.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This conversation helps teams understand how safety isn't just about PPE, it's about people feeling safe to speak up, ask for help and be themselves.

- Define what psychological safety is and what it looks like on the job.
- Understand how team dynamics affect trust and safety.
- Learn what helps people feel safe speaking up.
- Practice how to respond when someone shares a concern.
- Connect psychological safety culture to mental well-being and performance.

DEFINITIONS

Psychological Safety:

The belief that everyone can speak up, ask questions, or share concerns without being embarrassed or punished.

Supportive Supervision: Leadership that values feedback, listens actively and responds with respect.

Trust Culture: A team environment where everyone feels like they will be backed up, not blamed.

Check-in: A simple, quick conversation asking someone how they are doing, workwise or personally.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- On the job site, people often stay quiet about problems because they fear looking weak, getting in trouble, or being judged.
- That silence can lead to actual harm, missed safety issues, burnout, or mental health struggles.
- **Psychological safety isn't about being nice, it's about trust, clarity, and respect when it matters most.** Example: When a new worker speaks up about a safety concern and the team listens—that's psychological safety in action.



KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Creating psychological safety means people feel like they belong and can ask for help.**
- Culture is shaped by how we respond when people speak up.
- Everyone, not just supervisors, can help others feel safe.

Safety includes equipment and culture, people must feel safe to speak up. When workers stay quiet because they fear being blamed, ignored, or embarrassed, problems grow. Psychological safety means team members can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

On a jobsite, mistakes happen, questions come up, and people notice risks others might miss. If workers don't feel safe sharing what they see, teams lose valuable input, and that can lead to bigger issues.

Psychological safety doesn't mean avoiding tough conversations. **It means creating a team culture where people feel respected when they do speak.**





When someone reports a mistake, they should be met with support, not shame. When someone brings up a concern, it should be taken seriously, not brushed off.

This starts with leadership but doesn't stop there. Everyone shapes culture. It's in how we react when someone messes up, who we invite into conversations, and how we treat people who speak out. It's also in how we check in with each other, build trust, and follow through on what we say.

When people feel safe to speak,
teams are stronger, jobsites are
safer, and work gets done better.





ACTIVITY OPTIONS:

General Ask:

Think about a time you had a concern at work but didn't speak up. Why not, and what might have helped you feel safe enough to say something. Now flip it. When someone brought you a concern, how did you respond?

The following page includes ways to practice mentorship, on site, in the office, or with community partners:



JOBSITE



OFFICE



**SCHOOL/
COMMUNITY**



GROUP



JOB SITE ACTIVITIES

- Start a “You Good?” check-in at the start or end of the shift; one team/crew member asks each person on the team. Consider adding a jobsite visual: “You Good? It’s OK to Ask” sign/poster
- Practice responding to mistakes with “Thanks for telling me” before problem-solving.
- Create a “Speak Up Wins” board to highlight when someone spotted and shared a concern.
- Discuss as a team: What’s one thing that makes people stay quiet? How can we change that?
- Role-play: Someone is nervous about asking for help; how do you make it easier?
- Build “Trust Norms” as a team with 3 behaviors you all agree to model.



OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- Review how mistakes are managed: do people get support or blame?.
- Start your next team meeting with a safety moment about speaking up.
- Have supervisors practice saying: “Thank you for telling me; I’ve got your back.”
- Share a real story where speaking up helped prevent something from getting worse.



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Teach students that safety includes mental and emotional well-being, not just gear.
- Practice “What would you do if...?” scenarios about peer pressure or fear of failure.
- Share stories from our craftworkers about times they needed help but stayed quiet, and what they would do differently now.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

- Break into small groups: each person shares a time they helped someone feel safe at work.
- In pairs, ask: What would help you feel more comfortable sharing a mistake or concern?
- Have each group write one sentence about what psychological safety means to them.
- Share the phrase, “It’s OK to ask,” and brainstorm how to make that real on the job.



Safety isn't just physical. Psychological safety **helps people stay, speak up, and do their best work.**



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What keeps people from speaking up at work?
2. How do you respond to mistakes, and what does that teach people
3. What does it mean to have someone's back here?
4. What's the difference between fixing problems and blaming?
5. What's one way your team can build more trust this week?

Protecting mental health is just as important as protecting physical safety.
Start today: Listen actively. Say thank you when someone speaks up.
That's how psychological safety begins.



THIS WEEK:

- Ask a teammate "You good?" and really listen.
- Thank someone who brought up an issue, even if it wasn't easy.
- Check your tone when someone makes a mistake, lead with support
- Start building "trust norms" as a team.
- Consider attending or promoting Mental Health First Aid Training.



POST YOUR IMPACT:

#ConstructionInclusionWeek
#CIWOpeningDoors
#YouGood?

Resources:

- Center for Construction Research and Training
- Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention
- Google re:Work – Guide to Psychological Safety