



(LEADER GUIDE)

# THE SAFETY PARADOX

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## LEADER {CORE} Guide: The Safety Paradox

*Why Leaders Who Need All the Answers Get None*

### Duration: 30 Minutes

#### Purpose:

To facilitate a meaningful dialogue about transitioning from invulnerable leadership to calibrated vulnerability, helping team members explore how to create psychological safety that enables breakthrough performance while navigating their own leadership uncertainties.

#### Pre-Session Preparation

- Send the article to participants 24-48 hours before the session
- Request that they bring one example of a leadership challenge where they feel pressure to have all the answers
- Set up a comfortable meeting space that encourages open dialogue
- Prepare materials for the Calibrated Vulnerability exercise
- Consider your own authentic example to model the process

#### Session Flow with {CORE} Process Opening (5 minutes)

- Welcome participants
- Briefly explain the {CORE} process (Call It, Own It, Response, Execute)
- Share a personal example of when practicing calibrated vulnerability led to better team outcomes
- Establish relevance: "Today we're exploring how we might shift from invulnerable leadership to creating psychological safety that enables breakthrough performance"

#### C: Call It - Questions of Clarity (7 minutes)

Group Discussion:

- "Based on the article, what is the fundamental difference between appearing invulnerable and creating psychological safety?"
- "What are the four safety behaviors educational leaders need to master?"
- "How does the Calibrated Vulnerability framework transform individual uncertainty into collective strength?"

#### Facilitation Notes:

- Capture key insights on shared space

- Clarify any misconceptions about vulnerability vs. weakness
- Reference key concepts from the article: "Teams with high psychological safety report 48% higher performance"

### **O: Own It - Questions of Meaning** (7 minutes)

#### **Individual Reflection:**

- "Which of the four safety behaviors do you find most challenging in your leadership practice and why?"
- "Where do you see yourself caught in the 'I must have all the answers' trap?"
- "What leadership challenge are you currently facing where psychological safety might unlock better solutions?"

#### **Paired Discussion:**

- Have participants share their reflections with a partner
- Partners ask: "Why does this matter to you and your leadership effectiveness?"

### **R: Response - Options for Practice** (8 minutes)

#### **Application Exercise:**

- Working in pairs, participants select one leadership challenge where they feel pressure to appear invulnerable
- Using the Calibrated Vulnerability framework, develop an approach:
  - o Transparency: Share thinking process, not just conclusions
  - o Curiosity: Model genuine inquiry rather than defensive certainty
  - o Fallibility: Acknowledge uncertainty without undermining confidence
  - o Learning: Demonstrate growth mindset
  - o Support: Show that asking for help is a leadership strength
- Partners provide feedback using the prompt: "How does this approach maintain professional competence while creating psychological safety?"

#### **Group Sharing:**

- Invite 2-3 volunteers to share their calibrated vulnerability approaches
- Facilitate peer feedback on effectiveness and authenticity

### **E: Execute - Commitment to Practice** (5 minutes)

#### **Individual Commitment:**

- Each participant completes the statement: "In the next week, I will practice calibrated vulnerability by..."

- Participants identify one upcoming leadership situation to practice psychological safety creation
- Each person names an accountability partner who will check in on their progress

### **Closing** (3 minutes)

- Round-robin: Each person shares one word describing their key takeaway
- Remind participants of the article's challenge question: "What's stopping you from making this shift?"
- Leader closes with commitment to model calibrated vulnerability in upcoming leadership situations

### **Key Concepts for Reference**

- "Psychological safety isn't built through perfection—it's built through calibrated vulnerability"
- The four safety behaviors: Inquiry Leadership, Failure Framing, Inclusion Practices, Feedback Modeling
- "Breakthrough performance depends more on psychological safety than individual expertise"
- The Invulnerability Paradox: "showing uncertainty doesn't undermine authority—it creates conditions for others to contribute their best thinking"
- Calibrated Vulnerability framework: Transparency, Curiosity, Fallibility, Learning, Support

**Remember:** Your role is to facilitate discovery, not direct conclusions. Model the very principle you're discussing by creating space for authentic leadership dialogue and personal insight.