The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety

STAGE 4
Challenger Safety.

DEFINITION:
Challenger safety satisfies the basic human need to make things better. You feel safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when you think there's an opportunity to change or improve.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE:
Air cover in exchange for candor.

STAGE 3
Contributor Safety.

DEFINITION:
Contributor safety satisfies the basic human need to make a difference. You feel safe to use your skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE:
Autonomy and accountability in exchange for results.

STAGE 2
Learner Safety.

DEFINITION:
Learner safety satisfies the basic human need to learn and grow. You feel safe to engage in the learning process—asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and even making mistakes.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE:
Encouragement to learn in exchange for engagement to learn.

STAGE 1
Inclusion Safety.

DEFINITION:
Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. You feel safe to be yourself and are accepted for who you are, including your unique attributes and defining characteristics.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE:
Inclusion in exchange for human status and the absence of harm.

(Source: Timothy R. Clark, The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation (Berrett-Koehler 2020).