Beyond Hard Hats: How Psychological Safety Enhances Physical Safety in the Workplace

Building Safer Workplaces through Trust, Voice, and Ownership

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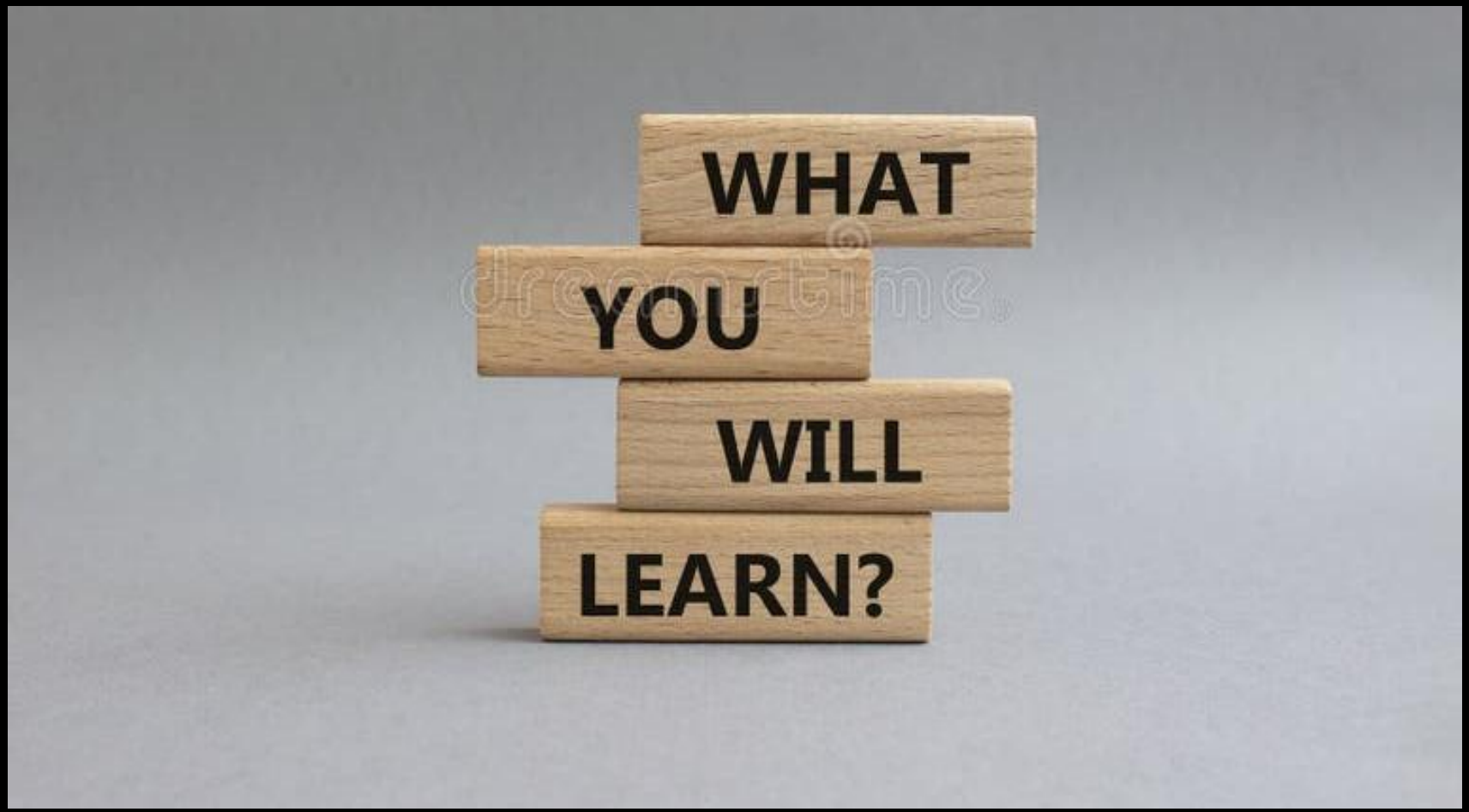
Session Overview

- Why Psychological Safety Matters
- Research + Real-world Examples
- Tools
- Action Planning

Learning Outcomes



What is Psychological Safety?

Shared belief it's safe to speak up

Ask questions

Admit mistakes

Raise concerns early

Why It Matters in EHS

Early hazard reporting

Near-miss learning

Better stop-work authority

Fewer injuries

High-Risk Industries Require High-Trust Cultures

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- Construction accounts for about 20% of U.S. worker deaths.
- Over 1,000 construction fatalities occur annually.
- Manufacturing accounts for about 15% of workplace injuries.
- Manufacturing injury rate is about 3 per 100 workers.

The Gap:
What We Know vs. What Gets Reported

80% of workplace injuries are preventable

4.1 million nonfatal injuries annually in the U.S.

28% of workers do not report unsafe conditions

The Data Says…

Teams with high trust report more hazards

More reporting → fewer serious injuries

Engaged teams outperform

Shared Ownership at Work

- Everyone responsible for safety
- Not just supervisors or EHS staff
- Collective accountability

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Benefits of Shared Ownership

Increased accountability

Better engagement

Faster problem solving

Sense of belonging

Safety Isn’t Compliance—It’s Engagement

Safety training can reduce injuries by 30–50%

ROI of safety programs: $4–$6 per $1 invested

Structured safety programs reduce serious injuries by up to 50%

Challenge: inconsistent buy-in across teams

Common Barriers

- Siloed goals
- Misaligned priorities
- Lack of trust
- Communication gaps

Exercise: Quick Poll

Where do people hesitate to speak up?

Pillars of Safety Culture

Clear purpose

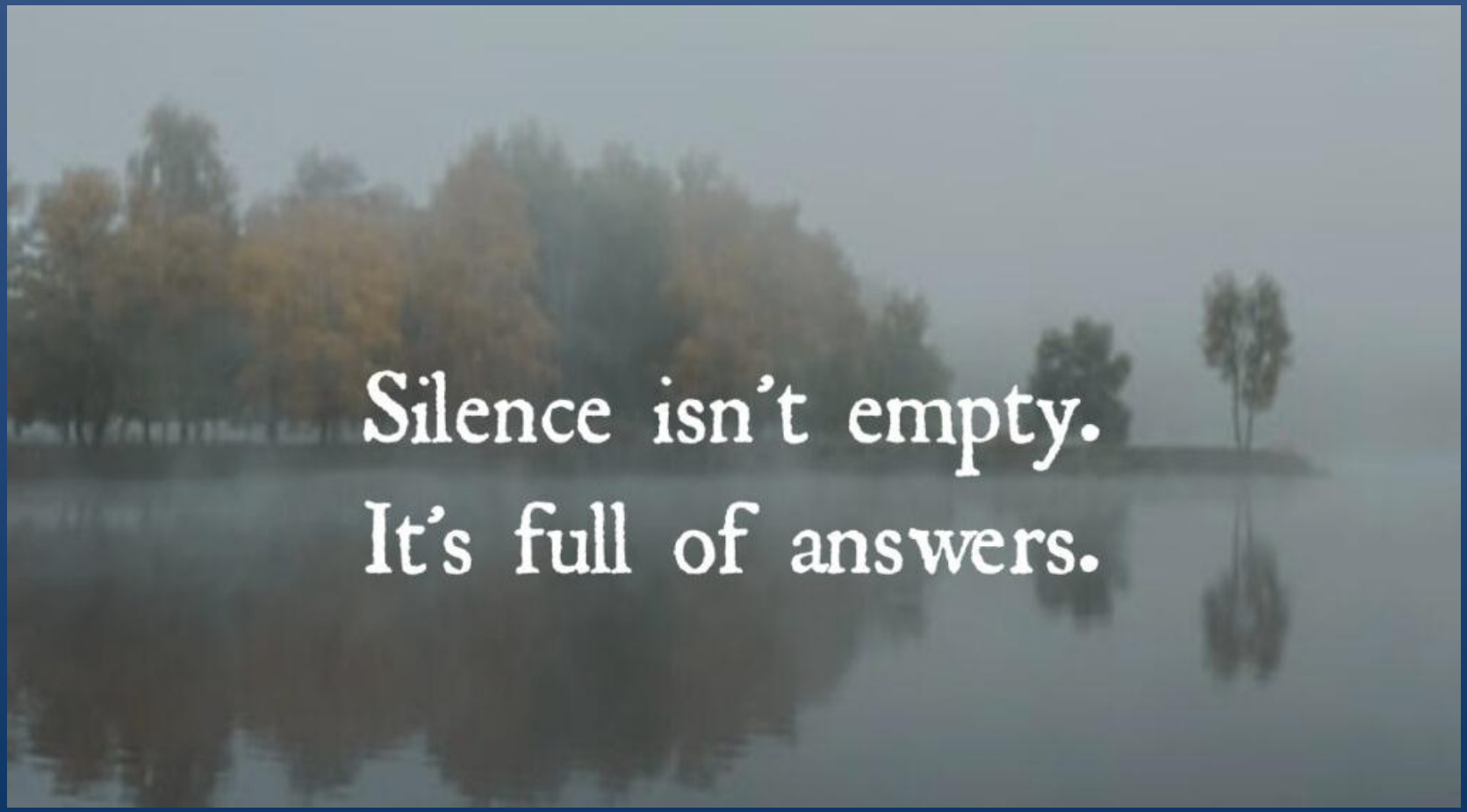
Aligned goals

Communication norms

Empowerment & trust

Feedback culture

Case Example: Silence



Practical Tactics

Start meetings with safety share

Thank reporters

After-action reviews

Anonymous channels

Daily Micro-Habits

01

Pause for questions

02

Check understanding

03

Model ‘I might be wrong’

04

Invite quieter voices

Tool: Speak-Up Script

‘I’m noticing…’

‘Can we pause and check?’

‘Let’s try a two-word check in.’

Building Your Action Plan

Start/Stop/Continue

Pick 1–2 priorities

Assign ownership

Key Takeaways

Trust drives safety

Voice prevents incidents

Ownership beats compliance

Small habits create big change

Thank You

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RESOURCES FOR ATTENDEES

ARTICLES:

Breaking the Silence | British Safety Council
Debunking Misconceptions about Workplace Psychological Safety | Harvard Business Review
How Psychological Safety Drives Workplace Dynamics, Wellbeing | HR Executive
Physical and Psychological Safety | LeaderFactor
Psychological Safety: A Genuine Risk to Physical Safety | British Safety Council
Psychological Safety: Inclusion in Action | National Safety Council
SAFER Trend Survey: Psychological Safety Correlates to Physical Safety | National Safety Council
The Dräger Safety and Health at Work Report 2025 | Dräger
What are the 4 C's of Safety? A Quick Guide | Inspire London College
What is Psychological Safety | McKinsey
How Brené Brown Runs Emotionally Intelligent Zoom Meetings | Inc. Magazine

PODCAST:

Psychological Safety & Failing Well | Talk About Talk (ep. 175) | with Harvard Business School Professor Amy Edmondson

BOOKS:

Adam Grant – **Think Again**
Brené Brown – **Atlas of the Heart**
Patrick Lencioni – **The Five Dysfunctions of a Team**
Simon Sinek – **The Infinite Game**

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