

Facilitating Psychological Safety in Teams

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Based on the work of Donna Hicks, PhD and Amy C Edmonson, PhD

DIGNITY – ELEMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS

“The most exciting breakthroughs of the 21st century will not occur because of technology, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.”

John Naisbett



Dr. Donna Hicks



Dr. Amy Edmonson

DIGNITY – ELEMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS

Human Dignity is the inherent sense of **value and vulnerability** that we have as a result of our evolutionary process.

Humans are dignified beings because **we evolved to be so**. Humanitarian law, human rights, citizen's rights, etc. only **recognize** that reality.

Dignity manifest itself in different **elements** that complement each other

Most dignity violations result from **temptations** to protect and promote our own dignity in ways that threaten or violate the dignity of others.

DIGNITY – ELEMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS

Ten Elements of Dignity

**Acceptance of
Identity**

Recognition

Acknowledgement

Inclusion

Safety

Fairness

Independence

Understanding

Benefit of the Doubt

Accountability

Ten Temptations

Taking the Bait

Saving Face

**Shirking
Responsibility**

False Dignity

False Security

**Avoiding
Confrontation**

**Assuming Innocent
Victim**

Resisting Feedback

Blaming Others

Gossiping

■ What is Psychological Safety?

- *“Belief that one will **not be punished**, excluded or humiliated for disagreeing with others, **asking questions, proposing ideas, raising concerns or admitting mistakes.**”*

In other words (shorter)

- *“Belief that our work environment is **safe for interpersonal risk-taking**”*
- A **team-level** phenomenon that emerges from team **dynamics**. It may **vary widely** between teams in same organization.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Benefits of Psychological Safety

■ Benefit 1: Faster Team Learning

- Routine, repetitive, predictable, modular work is **in decline**.
- Today, most work requires **good judgment**, coping with **uncertainty**, creativity, effective communication and coordination.
- **Voice is critical for process improvement and innovation.**
- Corroborated by:
 - Project Aristotle (Google, 2016)
 - Multiple research on R&D groups (Siemsen; Baer & Frese, Cheng & Jiang, 2009)

How?

- Increase capacity to **learn from mistakes**
- Faster quality **process improvement**
- Reduced **“workarounds”**
- More willingness to **share ideas** (even when not entirely sure)

- **Benefit 2: More Individual Engagement**
 - Engagement: Extent that employee feels **passionate** about job and **committed** to organization.
 - Proxy for willingness to put **discretionary efforts** into job.

- **Benefit 3: Moderator's Role**
 - Virtual teams (Gibson & Gibbs, 2007)
 - Conflict within teams (Bradley B. et al, 2012)
 - Synergy of Diverse views (Schilpzant, M, 2013; Sigh B. et at, 2013)

Benefit 4: Promotion of **other elements** of team effectiveness (Project Aristotle, 2016)

- **Dependability**- Team members **get things done** on time and meet expectations.
- **Structure and clarity**- teams have clear **goals**, and have well-defined **roles** within the group.
- **Meaning**- The work has personal **significance** to each member.
- **Impact**- The group believes their work is **purposeful** and positively impacts the greater good.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- How to **measure** Psychological Safety:

Sample Survey Questions (Likert scale Strongly agree/ disagree)

- 1. If you make a **mistake**, in this team it is often held against you.*
- 2. Members of this team are able to **bring up problems** and tough issues.*
- 3. People on this team often **reject others** for being different.*
- 4. It is safe to **take risks** in this team.*
- 5. It is difficult to **ask** other members of this team for **help**.*
- 6. No one in this team would deliberately act in a way that **undermines** my efforts.*
- 7. Working with this team, my unique skills and talents are **valued and utilized**.*

- How to **interpret** Psychological Safety results

“Based on our international **normative database**, psychological safety scores below **70%** are considered **below average**.”

Sample Survey Results & Analysis- BlueEQ

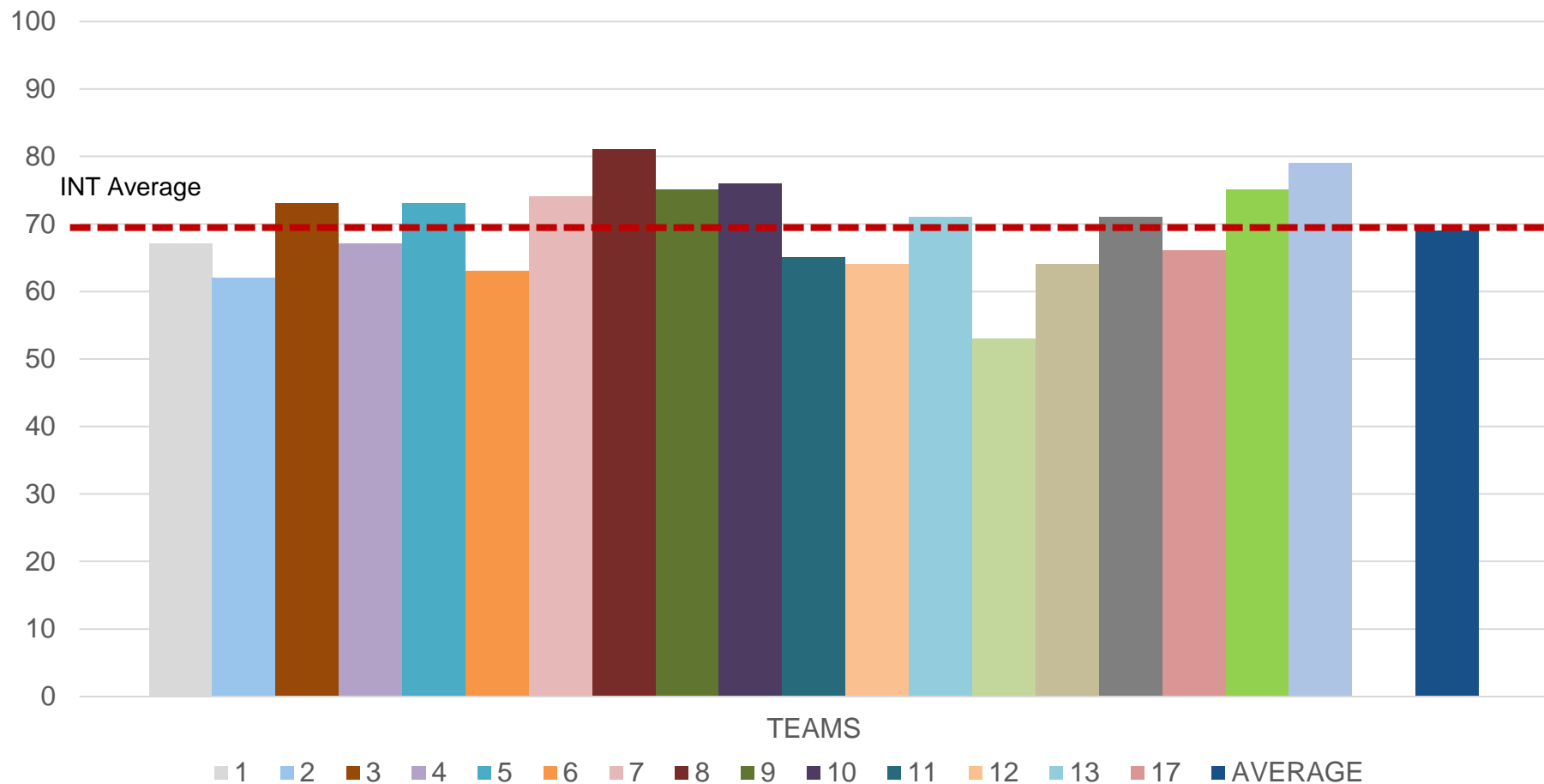
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Sample Team 1 (n= 9)

Question	EDES Averages	+/- Intl Average
1. Mistakes	78%	8%
2. Communicating problems and tough issues.	72%	2%
3. Treatment of others for being different.	81%	11%
4. Taking Risks (interpersonal)	72%	2%
5. Asking for help.	97%	+27%
6. Undermining of work.	83%	+13%
7. Use of skills and talents are valued and utilized	83%	+13%
OVERALL	81%	+11%
Uncertainty	+/- 6%	

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

OVERALL PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY (19 GROUPS)



Psychological Safety **Team Facilitation**

The facilitator of a Psychological Safety facilitation helps teams to **assess and improve** their level of psychological safety by **providing a structured processes** that increases the quality of the **communication**.

Process

steps, ground rules, session structure, summaries

Skills

active listening, asking questions, summarizing

Psychological Safety Team Facilitation: Process

Before

Psychological Safety **Initial Measurement** .

Optional: facilitator **meets individually** with each participant

During

- Session 1: **Assessment** of Psychological Safety Measurement.
- Session 2: Psychological Safety **Vision**.
- Session 3: Creation of Psychological Safety **Recommendations**.

(each session 90 minutes, summaries between sessions)

After

Implementation of recommendations (team)

Psychological Safety **Follow-up Measurement** (6 months of session 3)

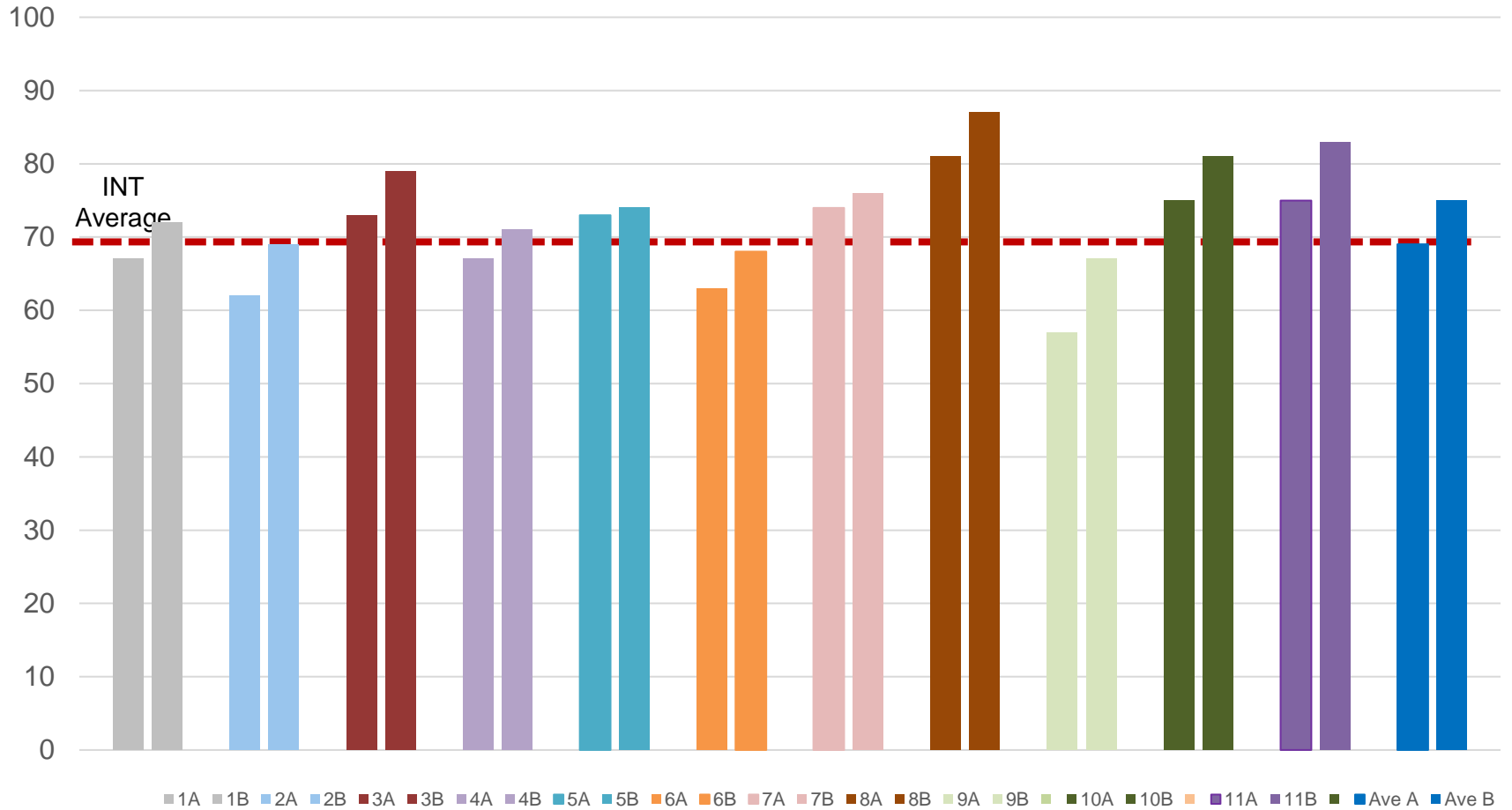
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Sample Team 2

Question	Pre-Team Facilitation (n=10)	Post Team Facilitation (n=10)	Difference (+/-)
1. Mistakes	50%	53%	+3%
2. Communicating problems and tough issues.	55%	66%	+11%
3. Treatments of others for being different	75%	84%	+9%
4. Taking interpersonal risks	37%	53%	+16%
5. Asking for help	70%	91%	+21%
6. Undermining efforts	55%	59%	+4%
7. Skills and talents are valued and utilized	57%	62%	+5%
TOTAL	57%	67%	+10%

DIGNITY – PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

SCORES BEFORE (A) & AFTER (B) TEAM FACILITATION



Conclusions

- ❑ Dignity is our inherent sense of **value and vulnerability** that manifest itself through **elements**, among them **security/safety**.
- ❑ Most dignity violations result from **temptations** to protect and promote our own dignity, among others: shrinking responsibility, not assuming our own mistakes, not speaking up.
- ❑ Psychological safety is a dignity element, consistent of the **belief that we are safe** from negative consequences when we make ourselves vulnerable by **speaking up**, admitting **mistakes**, bringing ideas, etc.

Conclusions

- ❑ Psychological safety has important positive impacts in team's **effectiveness** (learning, engagement, etc)
- ❑ Psychological safety can be **measured**.
- ❑ Team facilitation improves the levels of **psychological safety in teams**, regardless of the initial level.
- ❑ This can be achieved using **steps and skills** that allow team members to **assess** results, create a **vision** and **recommendations** to improve it.

Thanks!

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Based on: “The Fearless Organization” by Amy C Edmonson, PhD