THOMAS WALKER CONSULTING

TEAMS & CHANGE · FRAMEWORK

Path to High Performance

Balancing psychological safety and standards to create a learning zone.

Psychological safety means people can raise ideas, questions, concerns and mistakes without fear of humiliation or punishment.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

HIGH

LOW

Comfort zone

High safety · low standards

Risk of complacency

Learning zone

High safety · high standards

Supports learning and contribution

Apathy zone

Low safety · low standards

Risk of disengagement

Anxiety zone

Low safety · high standards

Risk of silence and fear of mistakes

LOW — STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY — HIGH

From comfort → learning: raise standards while keeping safety high.

From anxiety → learning: build safety while holding standards.

Standards should be clear, achievable and adequately resourced. *A team discussion framework — not a prediction of performance.*

Adapted from Edmondson (1999), *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2); Edmondson (2008), "The competitive imperative of learning", *Harvard Business Review*; Edmondson (2019), *The Fearless Organization*, Wiley. TWC evidence-informed educational resource · Reviewed October 2026.