



Creating psychologically safe environments

Source article: [Jyoti Gosai, Sophia Jowett & Jose Roberto Andrade Do Nascimento-Júnior \(2023\) When leadership, relationships and psychological safety promote flourishing in sport and life, Sports Coaching Review, 12:2, 145-165.](#)

Definition

“ An environment that is **psychologically safe** is one that allows participants, as well as all other stakeholders, to openly communicate and take risks whilst not being scared or concerned that others will ridicule, reject or punish them (Edmondson, 1999).

Insights for coaches

As a coach you play a significant role in creating a psychologically safe environment, particularly in community sport, where participants often get involved to interact with others and feel better about themselves outside their typical daily activities.

While you need to show leadership as a coach, it is also critically important to build strong relationships and encourage open communication if you want to create a safe environment where your participants have a great experience, with long-lasting positive feelings toward sport.





Build relationships

- Participants feel psychologically safe when their coach addresses their needs, provides encouragement and instils a sense of achievement and inspiration.
- Take the time to get to know your participants and what they need, by asking them questions beyond their involvement in sport.
- Bring participants into conversations about their development.
- Be considerate of what they might be experiencing outside of the training session.



Encourage open communication

- The key to a psychologically safe environment is allowing participants to feel comfortable and confident when communicating.
- Ask team members questions and encourage discussion among team members.
- Reinforce positive behaviours.
- Learn how to resolve conflicts.
- Provide feedback when team members are not meeting goals.



More information

Read the full [research paper](#) or learn more about the modern approach to coaching on the [Australian Sports Commission website](#).