

PX CONFERENCE REPORT

DETAILS

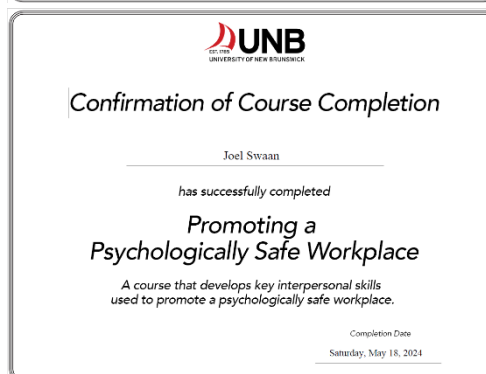
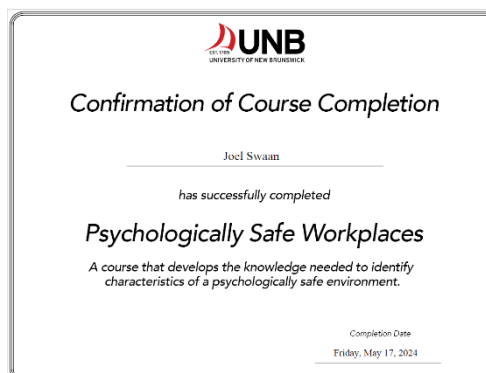
Date:	April 7-May 21, 2024	Conference:	Psychologically Safe Leadership Certificate
Time:	Flexible		
PX:	Joel Swaan	Location:	Virtual, University of New Brunswick

SUMMARY

I acknowledge that this virtual course was prepared on and delivered from unsundered and unceded traditional Wolastoqey land. The lands of Wabanaki people are recognized in a series of Peace and Friendship Treaties, first signed with the British Crown in 1725 and 1726, to establish an ongoing relationship of peace, friendship, and mutual respect between nations. These treaties recognized Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy title to the land and resources from where the work for this course took place.

The courses of Psychologically Safe Workplaces, Becoming a Psychologically Safe Leader, and Promoting a Psychologically Safe Workplace combine together to form a Psychologically Safe Leadership program offered by the University of New Brunswick, taught by Dr. Bill Howatt. To be honest, this certificate cost less than \$200, so I assumed each course might be a couple of hours at best, providing a "greatest hits" of leadership philosophies and suggestions. To my pleasant surprise, each course was rather a fulsome endeavour, with many additional articles and self-evaluative pieces to supplement the teaching.

Psychologically Safe Workplaces was broken down into four modules: Introduction to Psychologically Safe Workplaces, Characteristics of a Psychologically Safe Workplace, Link Between Psychosocial Factors and Hazards, and Role of Workplace Culture and Leaders. The premise is that a workplace with a low level of psychological safety will have a



significant percentage of employees come to work with a high degree of self-protection attitudes and behaviours. However, authentic leadership promotes a psychologically safe workplace, so leaders need to learn how to develop and nurture a workplace where employees feel safe to be their authentic selves (this was also discussed in the ‘Inclusion’ portion of the DEI Certificate). The frequency, duration, and intensity of unwanted stress or exposure to traumatic events can predict an employee’s degree of risk for mental health injuries or negative impacts on their mental health, and eliminating exposure is not always realistic for some vocations so it’s important for leaders to talk openly about psychological health and safety so that employees feel safe asking for and accepting health when it is needed.



There is a CSA National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety, and 13 factors of psychological health & safety in the workplace:

- Organizational Culture
- Psychological and Social Support
- Clear Leadership & Expectations
- Civility & Respect
- Psychological Demands
- Growth & Development
- Recognition & Reward
- Involvement & Influence
- Workload Management
- Engagement
- Balance
- Psychological Protection
- Protection of Physical Safety

A psychologically safe workplace culture believes:

- It's ok to make mistakes
- People own mistakes quickly, as it's viewed as learning
- Open sharing of ideas is encouraged
- Disagreement and debating points of view is the norm
- Leaders are viewed as caring and are respected

Characteristics of a psychologically dangerous workplace include:

- There are fingers pointed and blaming of others
- There is a high level of fear of making a mistake
- There is a fear of sharing points of view
- There is talking and complaining about others behind their back
- Negative gossip about leaders is the norm

There are four stages of psychological safety:

- Stage 1: Inclusion Safety, which satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong
- Stage 2: Learner Safety, which satisfies the basic human need to learn and grow
- Stage 3: Contributor Safety, which satisfies the basic human need to contribute and make a difference
- Stage 4: Challenger Safety, which satisfies the basic human need to make things better

Becoming a Psychologically Safe Leader focused on identifying the benefits of key intrapersonal skills attributed to psychologically safe leadership, identifying personal strengths and development gaps with respect to those intrapersonal skills, and creating an action plan for developing the necessary skills.

The intrapersonal skills necessary for the psychologically safe leader include:

- Has self-awareness: the degree to which you are aware of how your behavioural choices are affecting yourself and others
- Has emotional intelligence: the degree to which you can successfully manage your emotions
- Is open to receive feedback: the level of interest that you have in asking others – employees, peers, managers – for their feedback
- Has self-motivation: the degree to which you are driven by your own desires and ambitions
- Has self-confidence: the degree to which you have confidence in yourself and in your power and abilities
- Has self-discipline: the degree to which you correct or regulate for the sake of improvement
- Is patient: the degree to which you have the ability to wait for a long time without becoming annoyed or upset
- Is a self-starter: the degree to which you take initiative in situations

Leadership behaviors that we were challenged to self-evaluate were:

- Presenting personality – *Is your personality style working for you?* (The Big Five personality profiles: Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism)
- Showing Integrity – *Do you show integrity?*
- Being Trusting – *Do employees trust you?*
- Caring for Yourself – *Are you taking care of yourself?* (Be kind to yourself, Be self-aware, Work with a mentor, Create boundaries, Pay attention to daily health basics, Make movement a priority, Maintain social connections, Find a healthy outlet, Relax)
- Maintaining Resiliency – *How resilient are you?*
- Managing Your Emotions – *Are you flourishing or languishing?*
- Protecting Yourself from Mental Health Problems – *Are your protective factors strong?* (Factors can be Biophysical, Psychological, Social, & Spiritual)

The goals of **Promoting a Psychologically Safe Workplace** were to identify the benefits of key interpersonal skills used for facilitating psychologically safe interactions, to identify personal strengths and developmental gaps with respect to those skills, and to create a personal action plan for developing them.

Effective teams are not determined by who is on the team as much as they are measured by how well the team members work together. Some questions to consider:

- Do you think your team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other?
- What are you doing really well to encourage psychological safety?
- What are you doing really well to encourage dependability, structure and clarity, meaning, and impact?
- What could you target for change?

As a leader how well do you:

- Use active communication: the degree to which you can facilitate two-way communications, and clarify misunderstandings and miscommunication
- Have an ability to express oneself: the degree to which you can effectively say or show your thoughts and feelings
- Have an ability to listen: the degree to which you pay attention to someone or something in order to hear what is being said
- Have an ability to give feedback: the degree to which you effectively give constructive feedback to close performance gaps and to correct behaviours, as well as your commitment to provide regular encouragement and recognition for work well done
- Appear open to receiving feedback: the degree of approachability you have to encourage others – employees, peers, managers – to provide unsolicited feedback

Reflection opportunities were provided in the leadership areas of:

- Leading your team – *Is your leadership role working on your team?*
- Having a big picture perspective – *Do you have a big picture perspective on leadership?*
- Managing different personas – *How are you managing all the different employee personas?*
- Expecting conflict – *Are you expecting conflict?* (Set realistic expectations on workplace conflict, Discover the conflict landscape, Talk about conflict often)
- Addressing sensitive situations – *Are you addressing sensitive situations?* (As a leader, watch for the early warning signs of changes in performance or behaviour over a period of time that may include:
 - o Reduced quality of work; missed deadlines
 - o Increased presenteeism
 - o Irritability; a shorter fuse
 - o Relationship issues/conflict with co-workers
 - o Withdrawal/reduced participation
 - o Increased absence, tardiness, accidents, breaks
 - o Anxiety; signs of fearfulness and lack of confidence
 - o Reduced concentration and increased forgetfulness
 - o Complaints or unexplained aches and pains
 - o Changes in physical appearance
 - o Inappropriate behaviour, negative attitude)

While there was definitely overlap between the skills and concepts taught in this certification course and the diversity, inclusion, and equity certificate courses I took earlier this year, this served as an excellent leadership development tool, and I appreciated both the learning, and the focus on self-assessment and self-improvement that was integrated into the coursework. I would recommend this work for anyone in a leadership position.

“Any leader who want to be a psychologically safe leader must be open and willing to learn how to build trusted and supporting working relationships.” – Dr. Bill Howatt

Reference Materials; articles available on request:

PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACES

A Culture Where Everyone Feels Welcomed & Safe
A Critical Element to a Positive Work Experience
Building a Psychologically Safe Workplace ([video](#))
13 Factors: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace ([video series](#))
Employee's Perceived Psychological Health & Safety Risk Screen ([online self-assessment](#))
The 13 Psychological Health & Safety Factors Organizational Benchmark ([online self-assessment](#))
What is Psychological Safety: Intro to The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety ([video](#))
Leaders Can Help Employees Reduce Their Risk for Mental Fatigue
The Emergence of the Digital Leadership Gap
Burnout: What Leaders Must Know and What They Can Do to Support Employees
Considerations for Hybrid Workforces
Domestic Violence: Responsibility for Employers with Staff Working Remotely
Facilitating an Safe and Respectful Workplace
Managing Impairment at Work: It's More Than You Think, but New CSA Standard Will Help
Suicide Prevention in the Workplace
The Inclusion Imperative: Creating a Psychologically Safe Culture
Tips for Maintaining Respect and Safety in Your Workplace When Tensions are Running High and Opinions Differ
Ignoring Workplace Violence Not an Option

BECOMING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE LEADER

Your Personality May Influence Your Communication Style
Big Five ([online self-assessment](#))
Want to be Trusted? Tell the Truth
Leadership Integrity Continuum ([online self-assessment](#))
Building Trust Between Leaders and Employees
The Power of Vulnerability ([video](#))
Likeability Quick Survey ([online self-assessment](#))
Why Supporting Employees to Develop Their Coping Skills and Resiliency is Good Business
Emotional Literacy a Core Competency for Psychologically Safe Leaders
Emotional Literacy is a Must for Effective Leadership
Emotional Well-being Non-negotiable Competency for All Leaders
How Are You Fitting in With Your Work Team
Intentional Leadership Can Aid Resiliency
Vulnerability a Beneficial Leadership Skill
What's Your Emotional IQ
360 In Vivo: Leadership Core Competencies ([online self-assessment](#))

PROMOTING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACE

Workplace Social Factors: Interpersonal Relationships
Authentic Leadership Skills
Empathy: A Micro-skill for Leaders
Cost of Ignoring Mental Health
Psychologically Safe Leader ([online self-assessment](#))

A More Inclusive Leader

Building Psychologically Safe Relationships

Ways that Organizational Factors Can Lead to Conflict

Healthy Workplace Relationships: Strategies for Repairing Emotional Ruptures ([link](#))

How Today's Workplace Leaders Can Become More Inclusive ([link](#))

Accountability Partner's Role in Facilitating Psychologically Safe Leadership Habits

Game Plan for Becoming a Trusted Leader – Leader's Toolkit

Game Plan for Becoming a Trusted Leader

Tips for Leveraging the Game Plan

Trusted Leader Primer

Tips, Guides, and Infographics ([link](#))

Are You Giving At-Risk Employees the Attention They Need

Creating Psychologically Safe Interactions in the Workplace

How Today's Workplace Leaders Can Become More Inclusive

It's Never Too Late to Develop Authentic Leadership Skills

Leadership Behaviours to Support Mental Health

Psychologically Safe Leaders Must Master Relationship Management

Psychologically Safe Relationships Occur More Frequently When Leaders Prioritize Them

Support Mental Health Accommodations

Workplace Mental Health Requires Psychologically Safe Leaders

Respectfully submitted,

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Provincial Executive