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## Context to the nugget conversation

Amy speaks about the way she thinks about Psychological Safety - an environment where people feel free to take interpersonal risks. She goes on to speak about some of the pieces that people get wrong or miss. For instance, she speaks about the fact that this is not about being nice. She also teases out the nuance between developing trust with a leader and creating a climate of safety, something that people might mix.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And just for us to be on the same page, Amy could you define psychological safety the way you see it?

Amy Edmondson (Amy): Sure. So, I define it as an environment where people feel free to take interpersonal risks and maybe I should clarify what an interpersonal risk is. That's anything that you might do or say that creates a risk that others might think less well of you, right? So, if I ask a question, you might think I am stupid. If I offer an idea that you think is really a crazy idea you might think I am not in touch with reality. If I ask for help, you might think I am weak, right? So, all of those are in the category of interpersonal risks, and I would argue those are the interpersonal risks that good employees take every day because if you aren't offering ideas or asking questions or asking for help in a complex interdependent world, you are not doing your job.

DJ: Got it, got it. And I came across psychological safety when I was reading Charles Duhigg's article about Project Aristotle in Google but you have been studying it for much longer...

Amy: Longer, yes.

DJ: ...much longer. I am curious you use the term blogosphere to talk about sort of the street version of psychological safety. Which element of psychological safety do you find being underappreciated in sort of the public realm?

Amy: You know, probably the simplest way to talk about psychological safety is a sense of permission for candor, right? That one believes, you know, the way you are candid with your spouse, you are candid with your best friend but with your boss you might not be so candid. And yet, if you are in a psychologically safe work environment, you just understand that the work is too important, the customers are too important, the purpose is too important to hold back for a fear of not looking good. So, I loved Charles Duhigg's article and it really puts psychological safety on the map and I think he is a wonderful writer and I think he did justice to the study that was done at Google, Project Aristotle. So, that did the feel the big favor I must say. And it led at least some people to, you know,

maybe they read too quickly, didn't read carefully and they said, oh, they are talking about you just have to be nice. Whoa, no, that's not right because being nice often means to people not saying what you really think, not saying something that might be perceived as not nice even if it's the truth. And so, there are many misconceptions out there like that.

DJ: One more misconception you talk about in the book, Amy is psychological safety and trust, right? You say that psychological safety describes a temporal... temporarily immediate experience while trust describes an expectation about whether another person can be counted on to do something what they promise in a future moment. Can you talk a little bit about trust versus psychological safety?

Amy: Yeah, and you know this may be more of a semantic difference, a problematic difference but... because I think trust is important and it's a very meaningful part of human experience but it's not the same thing because trust is more... trust is fundamentally more cognitive, trust is my willingness to put myself at risk because I am confident that you will do what you said you would do, right? So, trust is about my perception of your trustworthiness if you will whereas psychological safety describes the environment in a group. I mean, it could, it can refer to a group of just two, but psychological safety is fundamentally about whether I feel it's safe around here whereas trust is fundamentally what do I think about you, are you trustworthy versus am I safe.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If this topic is of interest, you might like the Curated Playlist on Building Trust. You can go to [www.playtopotential.com/tags/building-trust](http://www.playtopotential.com/tags/building-trust). You might be specifically interested in a couple of nuggets there with Bill Campbell, the Trillion Dollar Coach who was anything but nice but still ended up building significant trust and creating psychological safety with the people he worked with.

*AE: "He first and foremost with anybody that he worked with he established you know a really strong we call it an envelope of trust and I think that's critical for any coaching relationship you know people knew that when they were talking to Bill that he had integrity, he would keep things in confidence and he truly had the best wishes the best interest of the person he was coaching in mind at all times. People knew that Bill had their back, Bill wanted what was best for them that was his only agenda and so was because of that trust that he could continue to work with competitors like Apple and Google even through the tensions of types because everybody knew that they could truly trust him. I would think that most coaches don't work in such tense environment in such competitive environments you know working with two competitors like that but still this element of really building really strong trust with someone is a critical first step toward building a good coaching relationship."*

DJ: Thank you for listening. For knowing more on this topic, please tune into my conversation with Alan Eagle (AE) about the Trillion Dollar Coach.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Alan Eagle that is referenced: [Building trust as a Coach](#).

## RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Building trust:** Becoming a Trusted Advisor is often the holy grail for a lot of Business Advisors. This issue is as relevant for businesses as they think about how their consumers interact with their brand. Leaders talk about what it takes to build trust with an individual. You can access the playlist [here](#).

**Psychological Safety:** Insights around what it takes to create a Psychologically safe environment for leaders and teams to feel safe for taking interpersonal risks which is at the heart of learning, taking risk and much more which drives effectiveness in teams especially in an environment of significant complexity and interdependency. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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## Amy Edmondson - Nuggets

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## About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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