

# MillerKnoll

Emotionally Healthy Workplaces –  
Psychological Safety  
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**The highest-performing teams have one thing in common: psychological safety — “Psychological safety at work means that...you speak up, knowing that your team has your back, and you have theirs.”**

**-Dr. Amy Edmondson**

A modern office meeting room with people collaborating around whiteboards and laptops. The room features a large window on the right side, providing a view of a city skyline. The interior is furnished with several whiteboards, some of which have diagrams and charts on them. A man in a dark suit is standing on the left, pointing at a whiteboard. A woman in a black blazer is standing in the center, also pointing at a whiteboard. Several other people are seated around a table, working on laptops. The room has a contemporary design with a grey wall, a patterned wall, and a large window. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

**The Power of Psychological Safety to Support Emotionally Healthy Workplaces**

## **Psychological Safety's Relation to Emotionally Healthy Workplaces:**

Social rejection physically hurts.

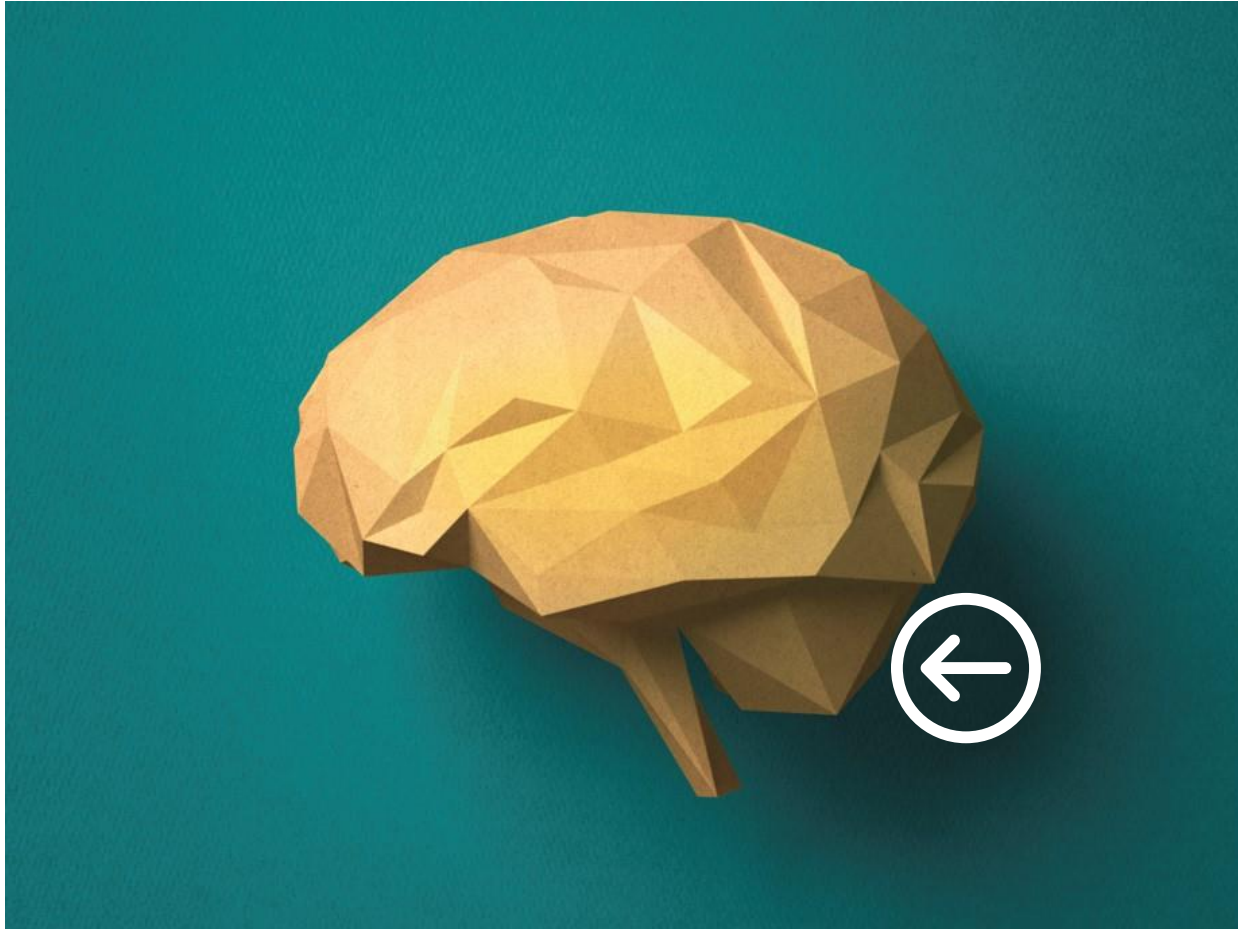
An attack on our psychological safety triggers a stress response.

Stress “shuts down” thinking.

A “hit” to our psychological safety can have a deeper, longer impact than a punch to the face.

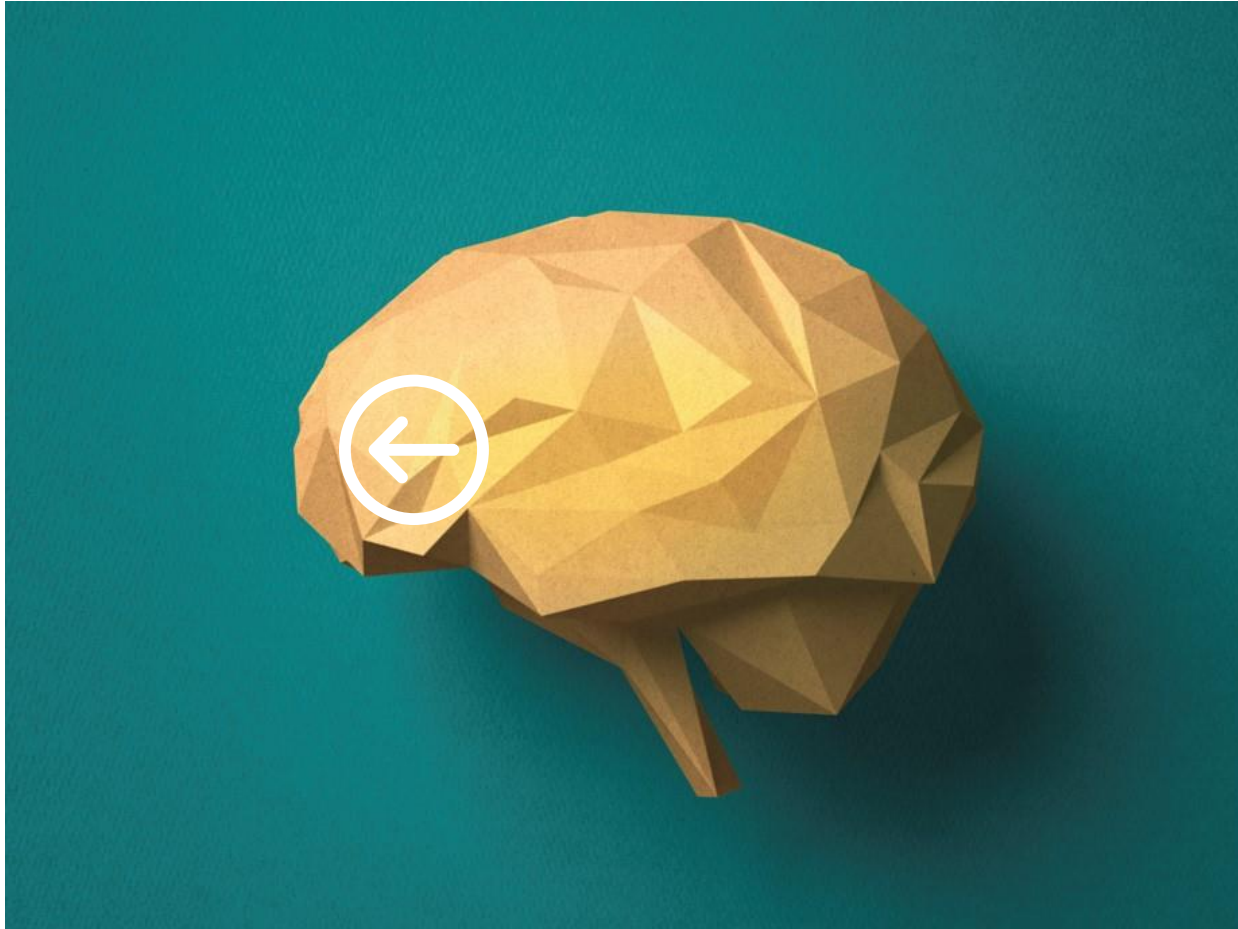


# Understanding the Brain – The Amygdala



- ✓ Old
- ✓ Emotional
- ✓ Focused on Threat
- ✓ Fear Response
- ✓ Instinctive & Impulsive
- ✓ Nonconscious

# Understanding the Brain – The Prefrontal Cortex



- ✓ New
- ✓ Executive Thinking
- ✓ Rational & Logical
- ✓ Controlled & Considered
- ✓ Conscious

# Understanding the Brain

The brain and society are at odds.



# Understanding the Brain

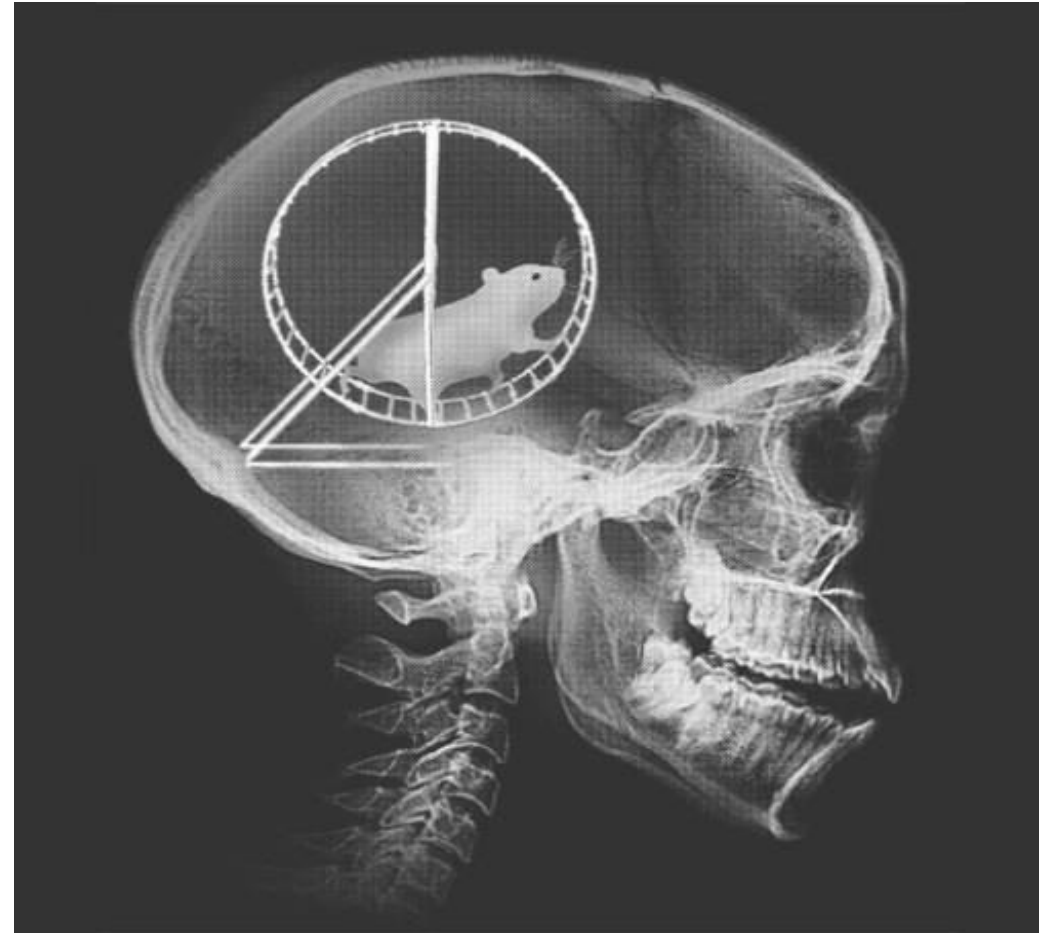
The brain processes physical threats and psychological threats in the same way





# Understanding the Brain

The non-conscious  
brain never rests



# Understanding the Brain

The brain is on  
autopilot



# Understanding the Brain

The brain is on  
autopilot

According to a research at Cambridge University, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

# Understanding the Brain

Good news? You  
have a co-pilot



# Understanding the Brain

Managing the day-to-day grind

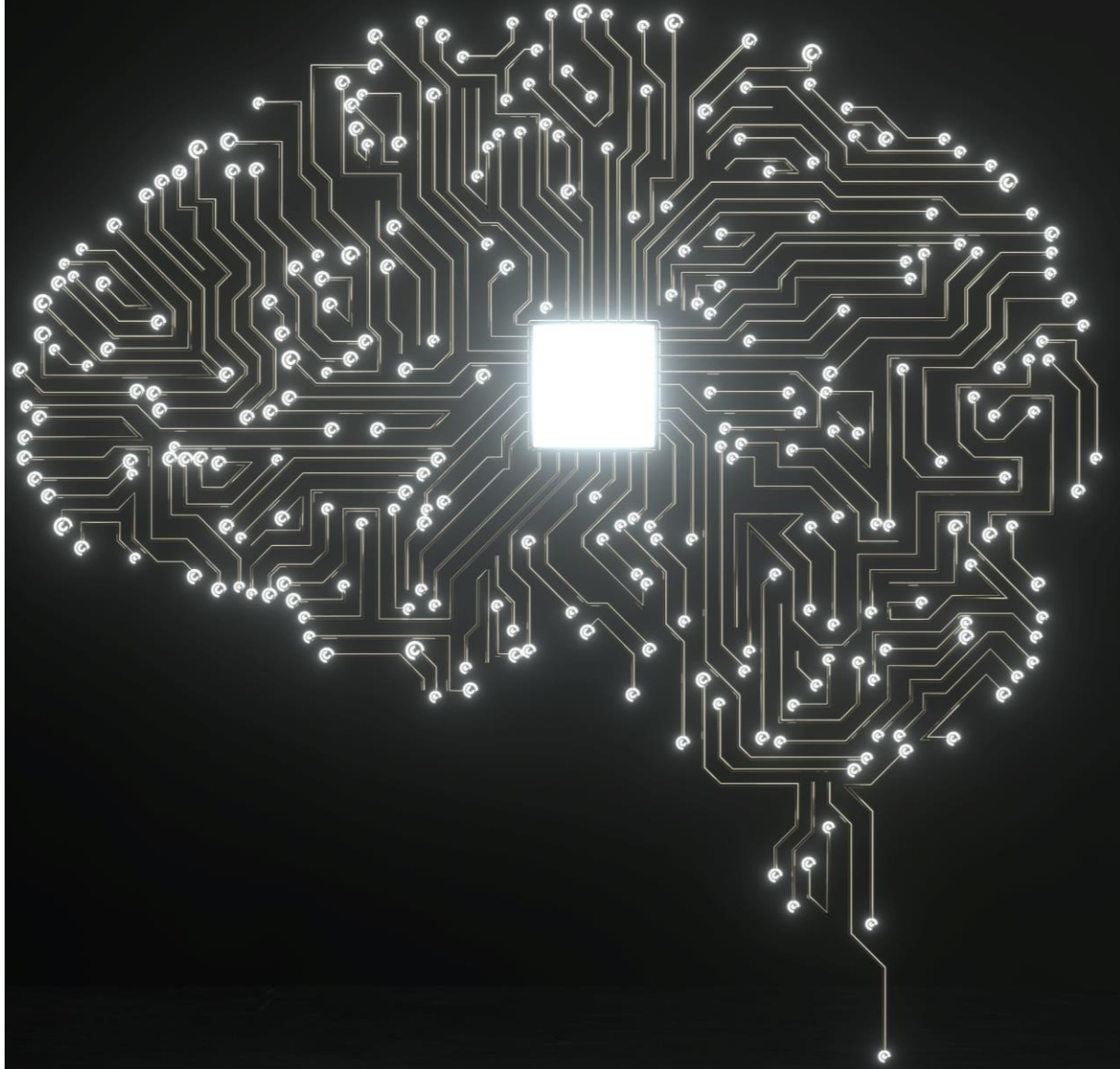


# Let's Explore a Language for Understanding Psychological Safety

Listen for which fundamental human need resonates with you.

SAFETY is ABL content.

See ABL at [brainleadership.com](http://brainleadership.com)





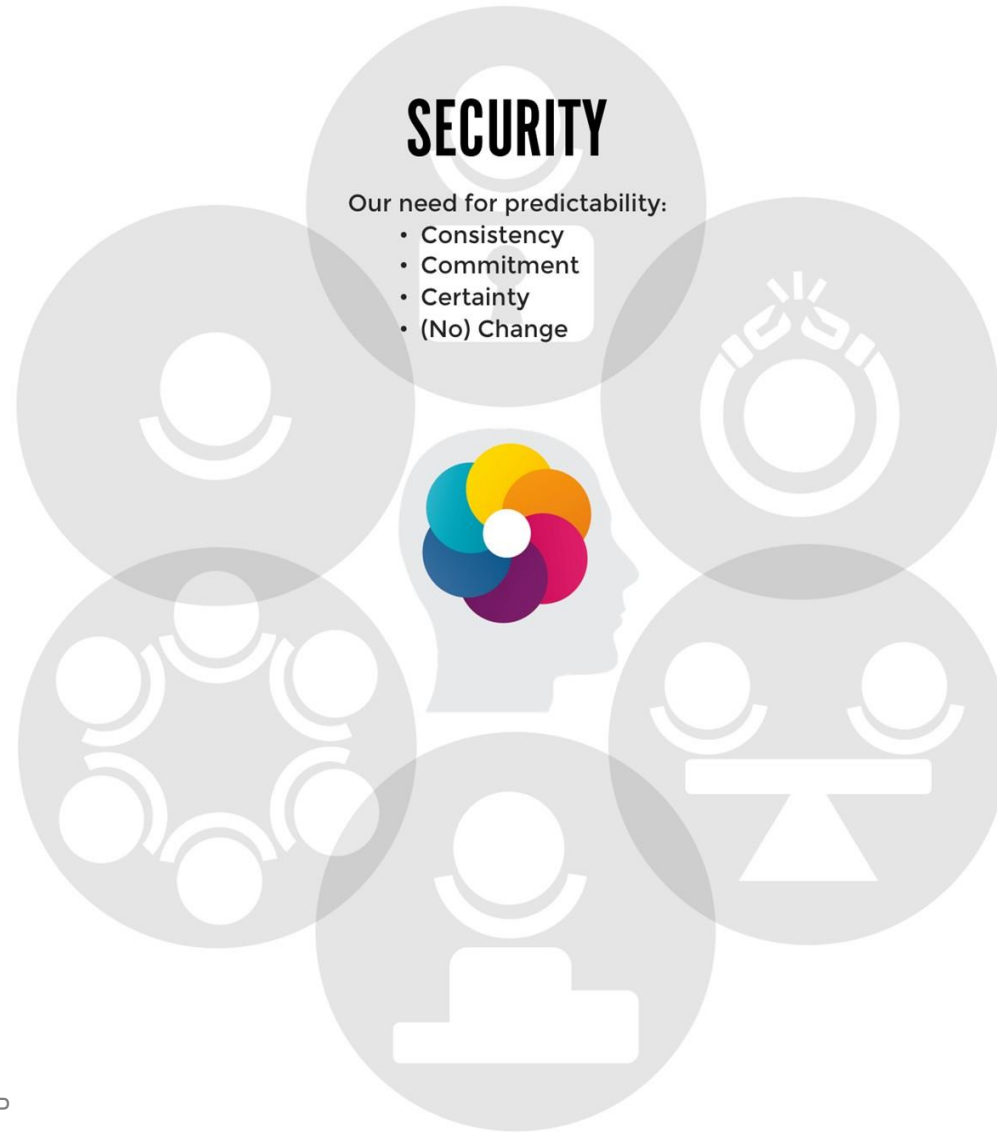
**S.A.F.E.T.Y.<sup>TM</sup>**

# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL

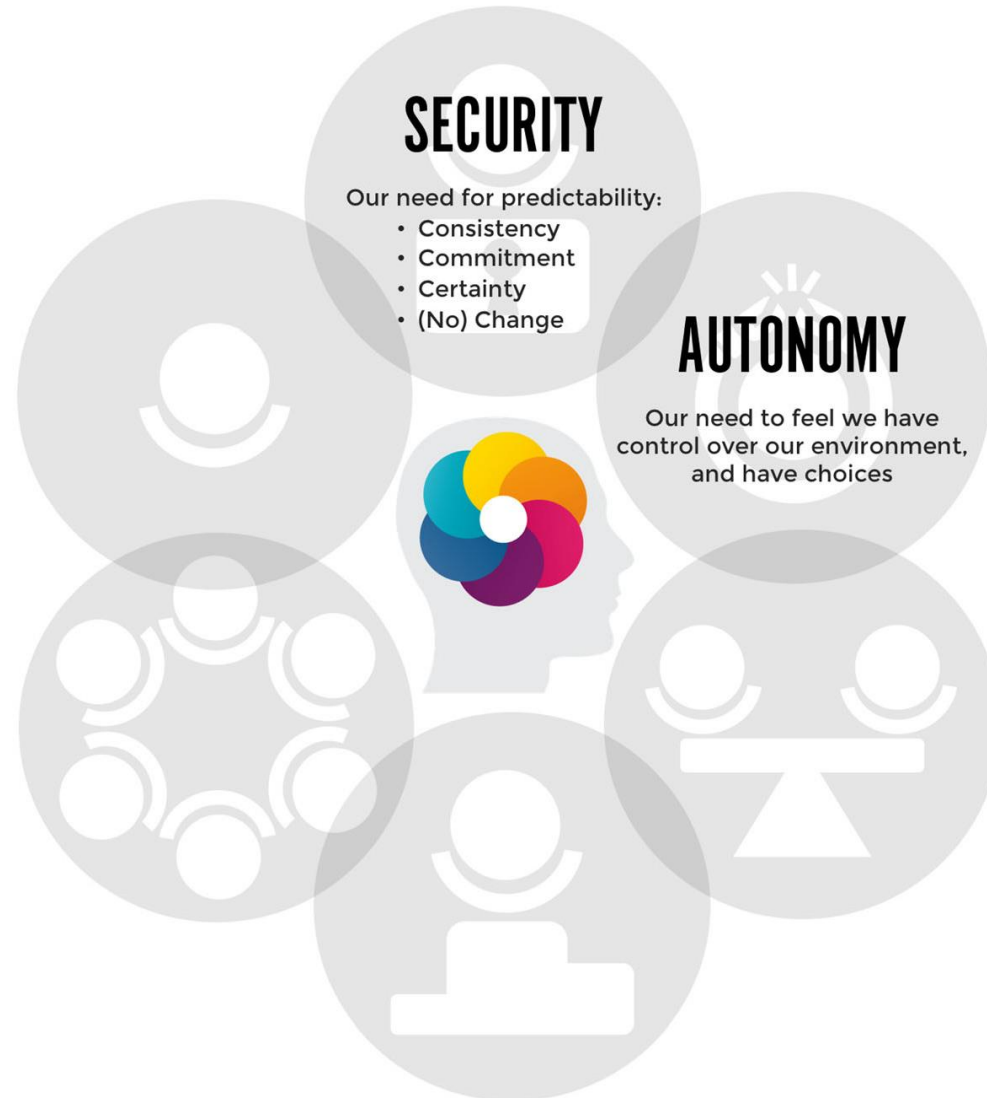




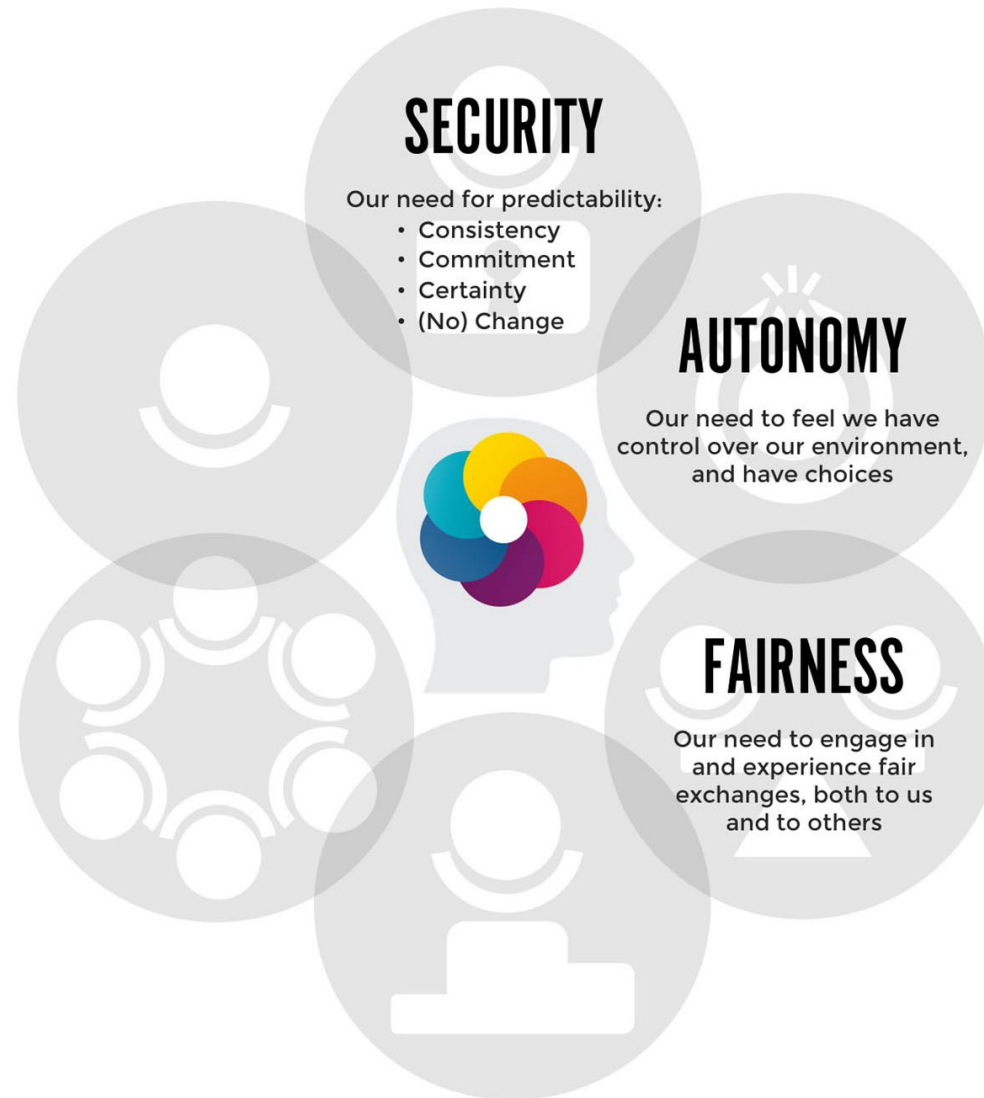
# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



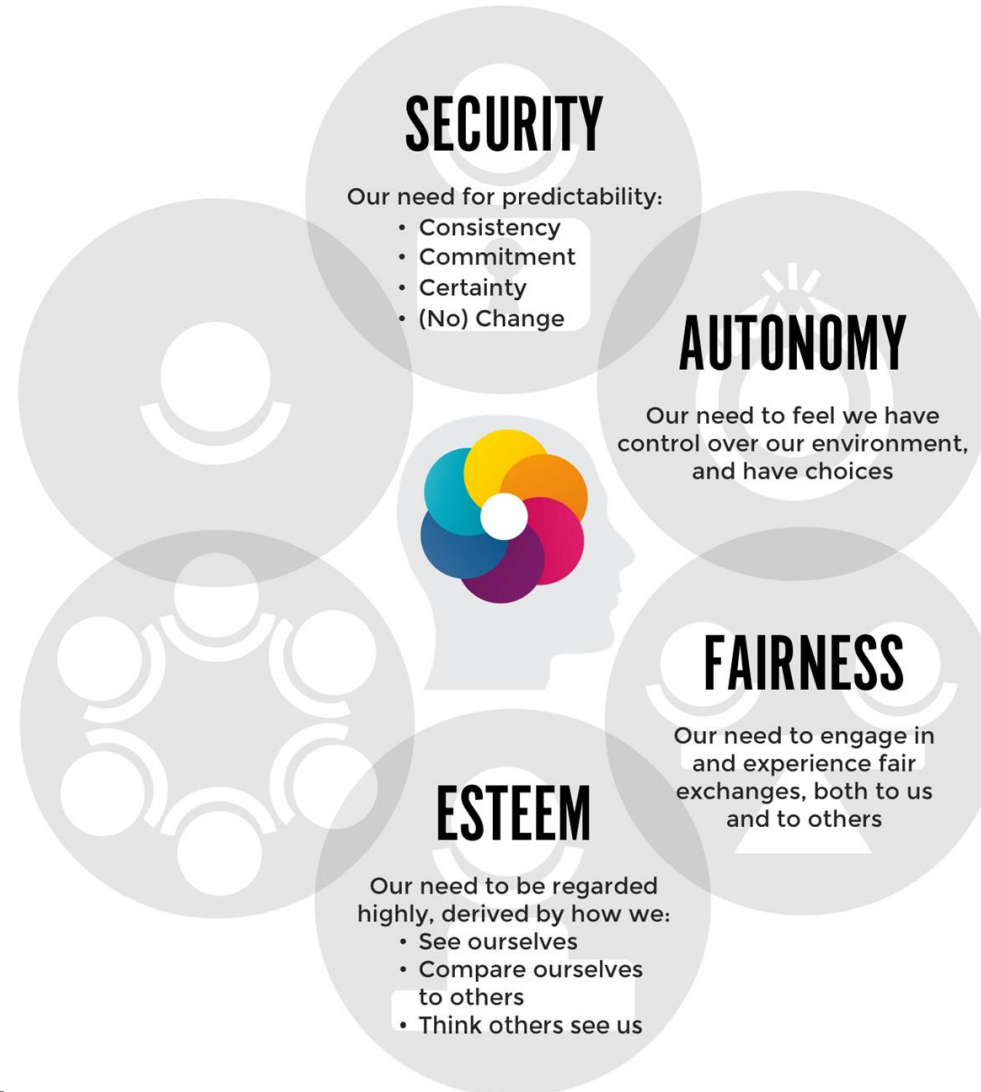
# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



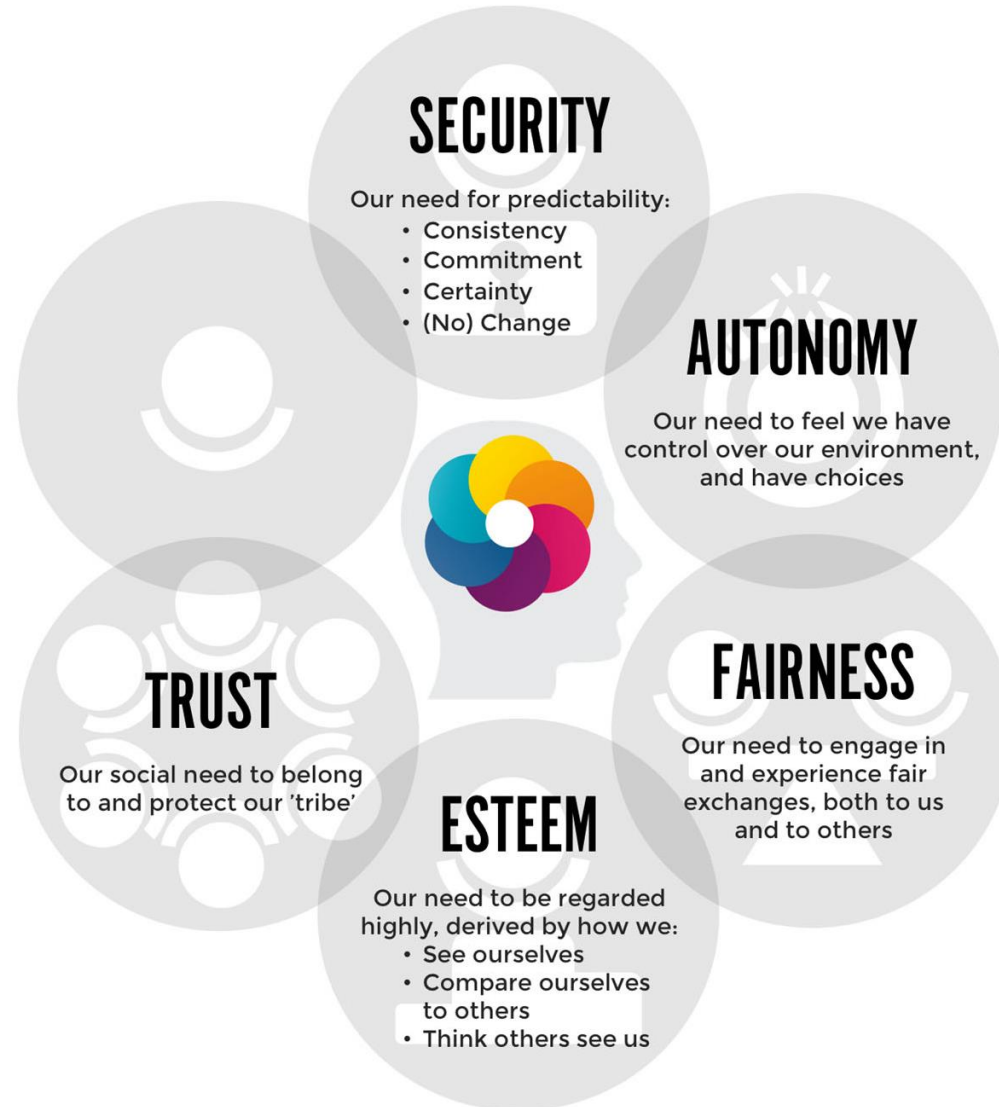
# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



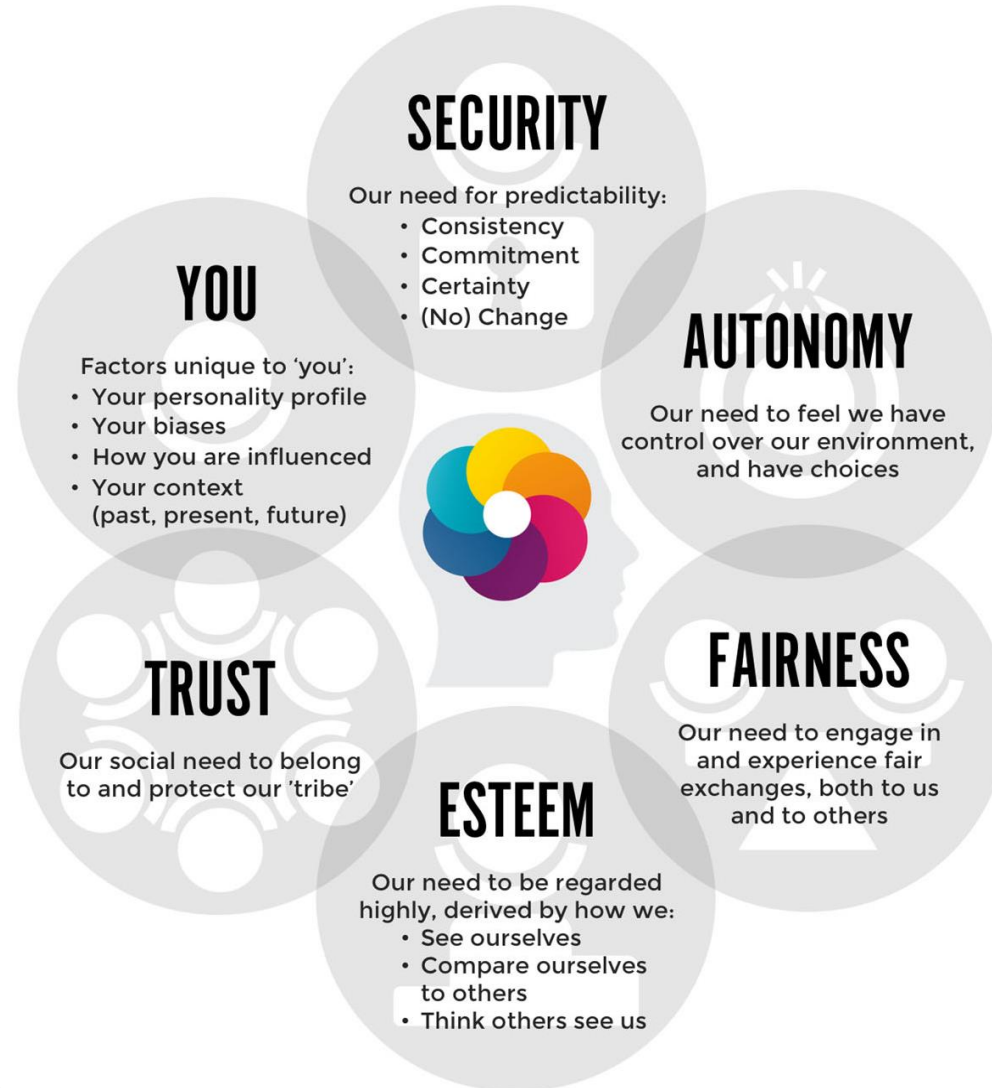
# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



# S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ MODEL



# SECURITY



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The Academy of  
Brain-based Leadership



Our need for predictability:

- Consistency
- Commitment
- Certainty



The Academy of  
Brain-based Leadership



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# Security





## You might experience:

- A high need for predictability, direction and detailed plans
- A high resistance to change or risk
- Stress with ambiguity or when asked to do something new





## Others might experience you as:

- Predictable
- Risk averse and resistant to change
- Providing very clear details and direction

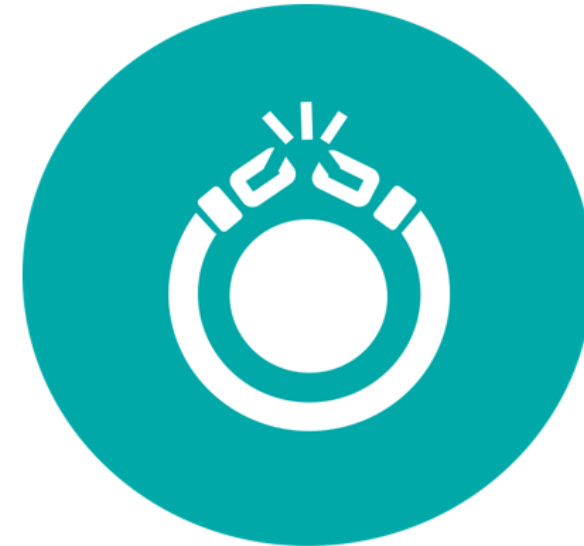




### **Strengths:**

- Loyal (Will not jump ship at the first sign of trouble)
- Detail Oriented (Need plans and details)
- Stable (Keep the trains running on time)
- Dependable (Tend to keep their promises)





Our need to feel we have  
control over our environment,  
and have choices



# AUTONOMY



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# Autonomy and Perception

## You might experience:

- A high need for independent thought, work and self-expression
- An ease in reaching your own decisions or conclusions
- A need to know that you have choices



## Others might experience you as:

- Resisting authority or stringent processes
- Overly prescriptive and directive in times of stress

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# High Need

**Strengths:**

- Self-Confident (Can be a great example in this area)
- Independent (Ready to provide an independent perspective)
- Self-Starter (Able to start and move forward initiatives)





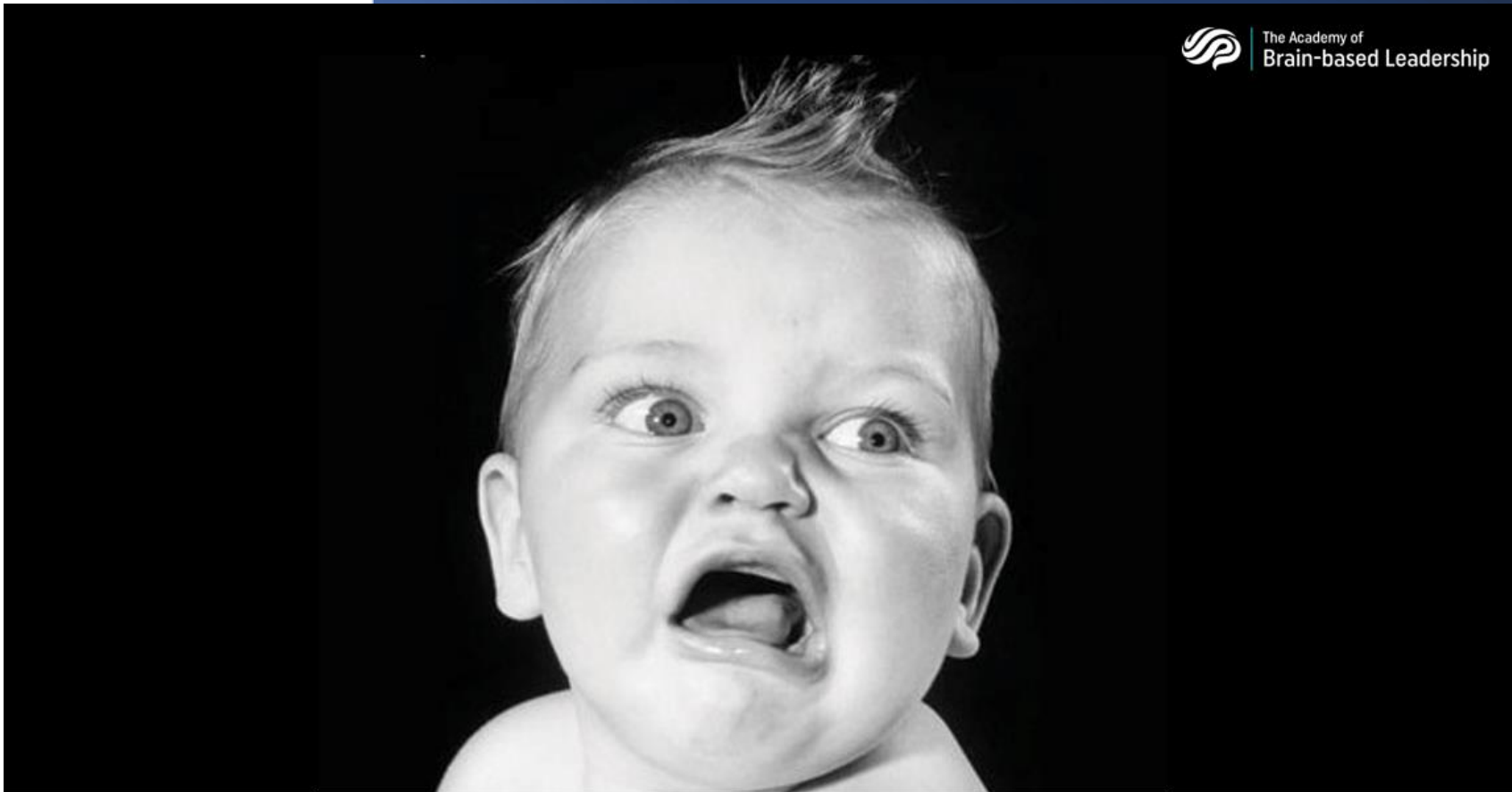
# FAIRNESS



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Our need to engage in  
and experience fair  
exchanges, both to us  
and to others



SAFETY<sup>™</sup>

Unfairness = Disgust

## You might experience:

- A high need to have your voice heard and opportunities to contribute
- A feeling of anger if you sense that someone has taken advantage of you or someone else
- A tendency to fight for justice



### **Others might experience you as:**

- Needing to ensure equity rather than focusing on results
- Stressed by lack of transparency or inequality
- Opinionated and frustrated from not being able to contribute



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## High Need

### Strengths:

- Just (Hold people accountable)
- Empathetic (Care about other people's tribulations)
- Transparent (You know where they stand)

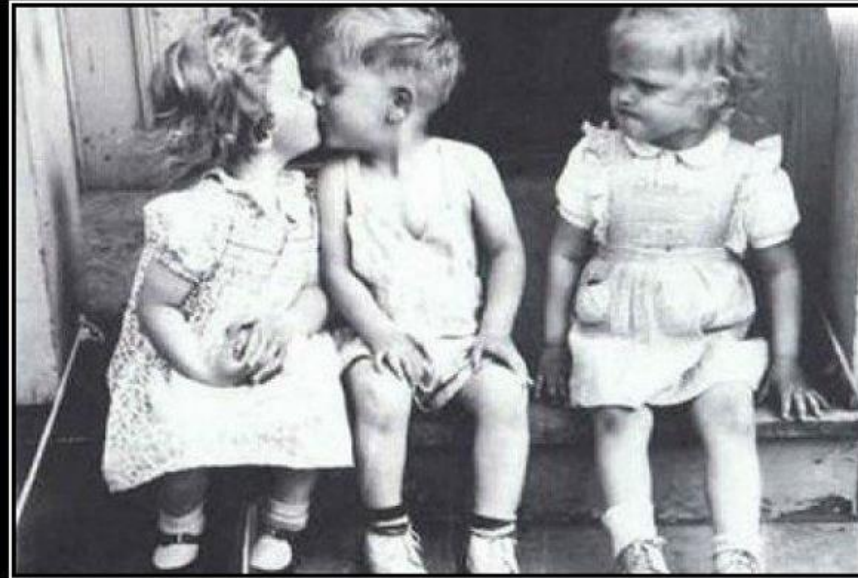


# ESTEEM



Our need to be regarded highly,  
derived by how we:

- See ourselves
- Compare ourselves to others
- Think others see us



# REJECTION

It starts from an early age. Get used to it!

[DIY.DESPAIR.COM](http://DIY.DESPAIR.COM)



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## Esteem & Threat Response

## You might experience:

- Learning where others stand before expressing an opinion
- High need for recognition and reward, ideally publicly





### **Others might experience you as:**

- Gaining your self-worth and driven by what others think of you
- Sensitive to criticism and resistant to situations that lower your status
- Openly proud of your achievements
- Highly competitive and ambitious



### Strengths:

- Networkers (Interested to meet and know people with power and status)
- Ambitious (Always driving towards higher targets)
- Good Storytellers (Able to sell themselves, ideas, and others)



# TRUST

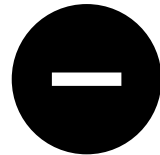


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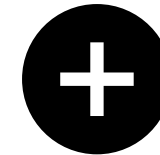


Our social need to belong  
to and protect our 'in-group'

Foe



Friend



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In Group / Out Group Bias

## You might experience:

- A high need to work with other people and excited by working on a team
- A high sensitivity to exclusion or rejection
- Strong loyalty to, and protection of your group
- Stress from working with people who are different



## Others might experience you as:

- Thriving on the team dynamics
- Extremely collaborative and a strong social connector
- Prioritizing group social considerations over other practical considerations, or even over personal needs.
- A tendency to view situations through an “us vs them” lens



## Strengths:

- Loyal (Will defend their team)
- Network node (Have a strong social group)
- Aligners (Keep the group aligned to norms)
- Social Glue (Prioritize the fostering of group bonds)



# YOU



Factors that are unique to 'you':

- Your personality profile
- Your biases
- How you are influenced
- Your context  
(past, present, future)





## To Support Emotionally Healthy Workplaces Remember:

Social rejection physically hurts.

Check your brain – check your bias.

Practice deep listening to understand what matters to one another.

Embrace differences to encourage open collaboration and foster psychological safety.



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