VEBRO SOLUTIONS · FIELD GUIDE

New Supervisor Psychological Safety Playbook

A 30-day field guide to build trust, voice, and team performance without fluff

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Research on psychological safety and supervision

30 DAYS · 4 WEEKS · 12 TOOLS

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About the Author

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A U.S. Navy veteran with more than three decades of government service—twenty-two years on active duty (including service as a Navy Chief) and continuing as a Department of the Navy civilian employee since retiring from active duty in 2016—his research examines psychological safety among federal employees at both the employee and supervisor levels. He is the author of the forthcoming book *The Supervisor Effect: What Federal Employees Say, and What the Data Show, About Psychological Safety* (coming soon in paperback), grounded in his 2023 Ed.D. qualitative study and 2025 Ph.D. quantitative analysis of Department of the Navy Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey responses. He founded Vebro Solutions to turn that research into practical tools for supervisors, leaders, educators, and researchers.

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How to Use This Playbook

You were promoted because you were good at the work. Now your job is to get good work out of other people, and one of the strongest levers you have is whether your team feels safe telling you the truth.

Most of that is decided **before anyone speaks up**. Long before someone raises a concern or pitches an idea, they've already been watching you and asking, "Is it worth the risk?" Silence at work usually has reasons, and the supervisor can do a lot about those reasons ahead of time. This playbook turns that idea into daily practice, and it works in any organization, public or private.

This playbook gives you **30 days, four weeks, and twelve tools**. Each tool takes 10 to 30 minutes and you can use it the same day.

Week	Focus	You will…
Days 1–7	**Listen & Map**	Learn where voice already lives (and where it doesn't)
Days 8–14	**Make It Safe to Speak**	Set norms for meetings, disagreement, and bad news
Days 15–21	**Fail Forward**	Turn mistakes into learning instead of blame
Days 22–30	**Lock It In**	Build habits that last past the first month

Three ground rules:

1. **Go in order.** Week 1 earns you the trust you need for Weeks 2 through 4.
2. **Fill in the blanks out loud.** The scripts are starting points. Change the words until they sound like you.
3. **Track it.** Spend five minutes every Friday on the Learning Log (Day 15–21). Small, steady moves beat one big speech.

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Part 1 · The Psych Safety Snapshot

What it is, what it isn't, and why it's your job

Psychological safety is a shared belief on a team that it's safe to take interpersonal risks: asking a question, admitting a mistake, raising a concern, or offering an idea without being embarrassed, punished, or shut out. The term comes from Amy Edmondson's research on work teams (Edmondson, 1999), and it has since been linked to team learning, engagement, and performance across many studies (Frazier et al., 2017).

For a supervisor, it comes down to one question your team is always quietly asking:

> **"What happens to me if I tell the boss the truth?"**

Your behavior, more than any policy or poster, answers that question.

Psychological safety IS...	Psychological safety IS NOT...
Candor: people say what they see	Being nice all the time or avoiding conflict
Admitting mistakes early, while they're still small	Lowering standards or excusing poor performance
Disagreeing about ideas, not attacking people	Everyone agreeing or "no bad ideas"
A team norm that you build every day	A personality trait or a one-time workshop
Something the supervisor models first	Something you can order people to feel

The two dials

Think of two dials you control:

- **Safety dial:** *Can people speak up without getting punished?*
- **Standards dial:** *Do we expect excellent work and hold each other to it?*

Edmondson describes high safety with high standards as the **learning zone** (Edmondson, 2018). High safety with low standards is comfortable but drifting. Low safety with high standards produces anxiety, and people hide problems. Your goal is to turn **both** dials up.

Five signs your team doesn't feel safe yet

- ☐ Meetings are quiet, then the real talk happens in the hallway or in DMs afterward.
- ☐ You hear about problems late, or from your own boss.
- ☐ The same one or two people do all the talking.

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- [ ] "Any questions?" is followed by silence.
- [ ] Mistakes get explained, defended, or hidden instead of discussed.

Check two or more? You're in the right place. That's normal for a new supervisor, especially one promoted from inside the team.

Why new supervisors matter most: before anyone speaks up

When a team is quiet, it's tempting to conclude there's nothing to say. The truth is often the opposite: people stay silent at work for good reasons, and the most important work happens **before anyone speaks up**. Each person is quietly deciding whether speaking up is worth it, and they make that call mostly by watching the person they report to.

Research on employee voice backs this up. People look closely at their direct supervisor's openness when they decide whether to speak (Detert & Burris, 2007). As a new supervisor, you're being watched more closely in these first weeks than you ever will be again. That's the pressure, and it's also your opportunity.

So your job isn't to wait for people to speak up and then react well. It's to change the conditions in advance, so speaking up feels worth the risk:

- **Ask before you're asked.** Invite concerns on a schedule (1:1s, huddles) instead of waiting for someone to work up the courage.
- **Show what happens to messengers.** The first time someone brings bad news, everyone learns what the next messenger can expect.
- **Go first.** Admit your own misses before you ask anyone else to admit theirs.

The four weeks ahead are built on those three moves.

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Part 2 · Days 1–7: Listen & Map

This week's goal: Talk less and learn more. Find out who speaks, who doesn't, and why.

Your week at a glance:

- Day 1: Announce your 1:1s (use the email in the Bonus Pack)
- Days 2–5: Hold kickoff 1:1s with everyone (30 min each)
- Day 5: Send the 5-Question Pulse
- Days 6–7: Build your Voice Map

Tool 1 · The 1:1 Kickoff Script (30 minutes)

Before the meeting: Block 30 minutes. Hold it somewhere private. Put your phone away. Take notes by hand if you can, since typing can feel like you're building a file on them.

Opening (2 min)

> "Thanks for making time, _____ [name]. This isn't a performance conversation. I'm new in this role and I want to understand how things actually work here from your side. I'll ask a few questions, and you can pass on any of them. Nothing you say gets repeated with your name on it unless you tell me it's okay."

Core questions (20 min). Pick 5 or 6.

1. "What part of your work are you proudest of right now?"
2. "What's one thing that slows you down that I might be able to fix?"
3. "When something goes wrong here, what usually happens next?"
4. "Who do you go to when you have a question you don't want to ask in a meeting?"
5. "What did your last supervisor do that you'd like me to keep doing? What would you like me to stop?"
6. "How do you prefer to get feedback: in the moment, in our 1:1s, written, or spoken?"
7. "What's something you think I should know that nobody's going to tell me?"
8. "If you were in my seat for a month, what's the first thing you'd change?"

Close (5 min)

> "Here's what I heard: _____ [summarize 2–3 points]. I'm going to look into _____ [one specific thing] and get back to you by _____ [date]. What's the best way to reach you if I have a follow-up?"

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After the meeting (3 min): Write down the one thing you promised. **Then follow through.** A kept promise in Week 1 builds more trust than anything else in this playbook.

Watch for:

- **Defensiveness in yourself.** If you hear criticism of how things were done (maybe by you, if you were promoted from within), say "Tell me more" and nothing else.
- **Fixing too fast.** Week 1 is for listening. Write down solutions; don't announce them yet.

Tool 2 · The Team Voice Map

After your 1:1s and your first couple of team meetings, fill in this map. It's for **your eyes only**. Don't share it, and don't store it anywhere shared.

Team member	Speaks up in meetings? (Often / Sometimes / Rarely)	Raises problems to me directly? (Y / N / Unsure)	Where does their voice go instead? (peer, DMs, silence, old boss)	What might be holding them back?	One move I'll make

Reading your map:

- **Quiet in meetings, but open 1:1:** They need structure. Use round-robins and pre-reads (Week 2).
- **Talks a lot in meetings, but never raises problems with you:** They may be performing confidence. Ask directly: "What's worrying you about this?"
- **Voice goes to peers or DMs:** There's an informal leader. Bring them in early on decisions.

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- **"Unsure" across the board:** That's a gap in your relationship, not a flaw in them. Schedule a second 1:1.

> **Remember:** Quiet doesn't mean disengaged. Some people need time to think, some come from cultures or past jobs where speaking up was risky, and some are simply new. Your job is to make more than one way to speak up.

Tool 3 · The 5-Question Psych Safety Pulse

A quick, anonymous check-in. Send it on Day 5 and again on Day 30 to see change.

How to run it:

- Use any free anonymous form tool (Google Forms, Microsoft Forms) with sign-in and email collection **turned off**.
- If your team has fewer than 5 people, skip the form. Anonymity won't hold. Ask these questions in 1:1s instead.
- Tell the team: *"I'll share the overall results with all of you, and I'll tell you one thing I'm going to do about them."* Then do that.

Rate each statement from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree):

1. If I make a mistake on this team, I can talk about it openly without it being held against me.
2. I can raise a problem or concern with my supervisor and expect it to be taken seriously.
3. People on this team can disagree with each other, including the supervisor, respectfully.
4. When I ask for help or ask a "basic" question, I don't feel judged.
5. My ideas and skills are valued and used on this team.

Optional open question: *"What's one thing that would make it easier to speak up here?"*

These items are a practical check-in written for this playbook, informed by published research on team psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). They are not a validated research instrument. For formal research or organizational assessment, use a published, validated scale with the proper permissions.

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Scoring worksheet

Question	Day 5 average	Day 30 average	Change
1. Mistakes			
2. Raising concerns			
3. Disagreement			
4. Asking for help			
5. Valued			

What to do with it:

- **Lowest-scoring item = your focus for Weeks 2–4.** Each item maps to a week: Items 2 and 3 → Week 2; Items 1 and 4 → Week 3; Item 5 → Week 4.
- **Share results within 3 days.** Script: *"Thanks to everyone who filled this out. Overall we scored highest on _____ and lowest on _____. Here's one thing I'm going to do differently starting this week: _____."*
- **Never try to figure out who wrote what.** If people sense you're guessing, the next pulse will be worthless.

Week 1 Checklist

- ☐ Kickoff 1:1 held with every direct report
- ☐ One promise made in each 1:1, and kept
- ☐ Voice Map filled in (private)
- ☐ Pulse sent, results shared with the team
- ☐ Lowest pulse item identified: _____

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Part 3 · Days 8–14: Make It Safe to Speak

This week's goal: Turn what you learned into clear, shared rules for how your team talks, disagrees, and delivers bad news.

Your week at a glance:

- Day 8: Draft meeting norms with the team (15 min in your regular meeting)
- Days 9–12: Practice the norms; introduce the Disagreement Protocol on a real decision
- Day 13: Share the "How We Handle Bad News" script
- Day 14: Quick check: "Are the norms working?"

Tool 4 · Meeting Norms One-Pager

Don't hand down norms. **Draft them with the team.** People follow rules they helped write.

Facilitation script (15 min):

> "I want our meetings to be the place where real issues come up, not the hallway afterward. Let's agree on a few ground rules. I'll suggest some starters; tell me what to cut, change, or add."

Starter norms (pick 4–6 and adjust):

1. **Bring the problem early.** A half-formed concern today beats a finished crisis next week.
2. **Questions are contributions.** No such thing as a dumb question in this room.
3. **Challenge ideas, not people.** "I see a risk with this plan" ✔ — "That's a bad idea" ✘
4. **Quiet voices first.** On big decisions, we hear from people who haven't spoken yet before the loudest voices.
5. **The supervisor speaks last on decisions.** *(This one is for you. Your opinion stops debate. Hold it until others have spoken.)*
6. **What's said here stays here, except for decisions and action items.**
7. **Leave with owners.** Every action has a name and a date.

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Our Team Norms *(print and post, or pin in your team channel)*

#	Our norm	What it looks like in practice
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Agreed on: _____ [date] · We'll review these on: _____ [date, ~30 days out]

Meeting moves that support the norms:

- **Round-robin:** "Let's go around. Everyone gives one reaction in a sentence or two. Passing is okay."
- **Silent start:** Two minutes for everyone to write ideas before anyone speaks. This levels the field for introverts and newer staff.
- **Pre-mortem:** "Imagine it's three months from now and this failed. What went wrong?" This makes it safe to name risks.
- **Closing check:** "What didn't get said today that should have?"

Tool 5 · The Disagreement Protocol

Use this when a real decision is on the table and people see it differently. It works in a meeting or a 1:1.

Step 1: Frame it (supervisor says):

> "We're deciding _____ [decision]. I want to hear the strongest case for each option before we choose. Disagreeing here is doing your job, not being difficult."

Step 2: Separate the positions.
Each person states their view using this stem:

> "I lean toward _____ because _____. The risk I see with the other option is _____."

Step 3: Steelman.
Ask someone from the other side to restate the opposing view until its owner says, "Yes, that's it."

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> "_____ [name], can you sum up _____'s view in a way they'd agree with?"

Step 4: Find the crux.

> "What would we need to know or believe to change our minds?"

Step 5: Decide and say who decides.
Be clear about how the decision gets made: *I decide after input, we vote,* or *we need consensus.*

> "Thanks, everyone. I'm going with _____ because _____. _____ [name], your concern about _____ is real, so here's how we'll watch for it: _____."

Step 6: Commit.

> "Can everyone commit to making this work, even if it wasn't your first choice? If something changes, bring it back to me. That's not reopening the fight, that's new information."

Red flags to step in on:

- Personal remarks ("You always…") → *"Let's keep it on the plan, not the person."*
- Pile-ons → *"Let's hear one more view before we go further."*
- Silent disagreement (crossed arms, no words) → In a 1:1 afterward: *"I noticed you were quiet when we decided _____. What's your honest read?"*

Tool 6 · "How We Handle Bad News" Script

How you react the **first time** someone brings you bad news teaches the whole team whether to bring you the next one.

Part A: Tell the team the rule (say it in a meeting, then post it):

> "Here's my promise: if you bring me bad news early, my first response will be 'Thanks for telling me.' I'd always rather hear about a problem from you on Monday than from a customer on Friday. Bringing a problem early never gets you in trouble with me. Hiding one might."

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Part B: When someone brings you bad news, use T-A-N-S:

Step	Say	Don't say
Thank	"Thanks for telling me right away."	"How did this happen?!"
Ask	"What do we know so far? What don't we know yet?"	"Whose fault is this?"
Next step	"What's the first thing we need to do? What do you need from me?"	"I'll take it from here." *(unless truly necessary)*
Schedule the learning	"Once it's handled, let's do a quick debrief, focused on the process, not on blame."	"We'll talk about this later." *(sounds like a threat)*

Part C: Check yourself afterward (1 minute):

- Did my face or tone say something different from my words?
- Did I thank them **before** asking anything else?
- Will this person bring me the next problem? How do I know?

> **A note on accountability:** "Blameless" doesn't mean "no consequences." Reckless choices, repeated disregard for safety, and misconduct still get addressed, privately and through proper channels. What you're removing is punishment for honest mistakes and for the act of reporting.

Week 2 Checklist

- [ ] Team norms drafted together and posted
- [ ] Disagreement Protocol used on at least one real decision
- [ ] Bad-news promise shared with the team
- [ ] I responded to at least one piece of bad news with T-A-N-S
- [ ] I spoke last on at least two decisions

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Part 4 · Days 15–21: Fail Forward

This week's goal: Show your team that mistakes become lessons, not records against them. You go first.

Why you go first. Before anyone admits a mistake, they check what happened to the last person who did. If nobody has ever admitted one out loud, especially the boss, the safest choice is silence. You can't order people to be candid about mistakes, but you can show them what candor looks like and what it costs (nothing). When you name your own miss first, calmly and specifically, along with what you're changing, you answer the question your team is already asking.

Day 15 script (2 minutes, in your team meeting):

> "Before we start, I want to own something. Last _____ [week/month], I _____ [what you did or didn't do]. The result was _____. What I learned is _____, and what I'm doing differently is _____. I'm telling you because I want this to be a team where we talk about misses early, while they're still small, and that has to start with me."

Your week at a glance:

- Day 15: Share one of your own recent mistakes and what you learned (2 minutes in a team meeting)
- Days 16–19: Run one Blameless Debrief on a real miss or near-miss
- Day 20: Do your own Supervisor AAR
- Day 21: Start the Learning Log

Tool 7 · Blameless Debrief Template (30–45 minutes)

Use after a missed deadline, a customer complaint, an error, or a near-miss. Run it **within a week**, after the immediate problem is handled.

Opening (supervisor reads):

> "We're here to understand what happened and improve how we work, not to find someone to blame. Assume everyone did the best they could with what they knew at the time. If we find a broken process, that's a win. I'll start by naming my own part."

Your own part (model it):

> "One thing I could have done differently is _____."

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The debrief

Question	Notes
1. What did we expect to happen?	
2. What actually happened? (Facts and timeline only, no judgments yet)	
3. Where did reality split from the plan?	
4. What made sense to people at the time? ("Given what you knew, why did that seem like the right call?")	
5. What conditions contributed? (Workload, unclear handoffs, tools, training, time pressure, missing info)	
6. What went well that we should keep?	
7. What will we change? (Process, not people)	

Action items

Change	Owner	Due date	How we'll know it worked

Close:

> "Thank you. Being honest about this is how we get better. _____ [name], thanks especially for _____ [specific: raising it early / walking us through the timeline]."

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Language swaps for the room:

Instead of…	Try…
"Why did you do that?"	"What was going on at that point?"
"You should have…"	"What would have helped you catch it sooner?"
"Human error."	"What made the error easy to make?"
"Who dropped the ball?"	"Where did the handoff break?"

Tool 8 · Supervisor After-Action Review (AAR), 15 minutes, solo

The After-Action Review is a well-established practice from military and organizational learning. This version is for **you** after a meeting, a hard conversation, or a decision. Do it in writing.

Event: _____ **Date:** _____

1. **What did I intend to happen?**

   _____

2. **What actually happened?**

   _____

3. **Why was there a difference?** (Include my own words, tone, timing, and assumptions.)

   _____

4. **What will I sustain?** (One thing I did that helped people speak up.)

   _____

5. **What will I improve?** (One specific behavior, next time.)

   _____

6. **Who do I need to follow up with, and what will I say?**

   > "I've been thinking about _____. I could have handled _____ better. Next time I'll _____. Anything you'd add?"

Safety lens: ask yourself three questions:

- ☐ Did anyone get interrupted or talked over, including by me?
- ☐ Did I react to bad news or disagreement in a way that might make someone less likely to speak next time?
- ☐ Who didn't speak, and do I know why?

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Tool 9 · The Learning Log

A running one-page record your team keeps together. It turns mistakes and experiments into shared knowledge. Keep it as a shared doc, a channel, or a whiteboard. Review it for 5 minutes in one team meeting each week.

Introduce it:

> "This is our Learning Log. Anytime something doesn't go as planned, or we try something new, add a line. It's not a list of mistakes. It's a record of what we know now that we didn't know before. I'll add the first entry."

Date	What happened (miss, near-miss, or experiment)	What we learned	What we're changing	Added by (optional)

Tips:

- **Add the first two or three entries yourself,** including at least one of your own misses.
- **Celebrate entries, not just fixes.** "Thanks for adding that" in the weekly review matters.
- **Let names be optional.** Some people will add more when they don't have to sign.

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Week 3 Checklist

- [ ] I shared one of my own mistakes with the team
- [ ] One Blameless Debrief run on a real event
- [ ] One Supervisor AAR completed
- [ ] Learning Log started with at least 3 entries
- [ ] I thanked someone publicly for raising a problem

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Part 5 · Days 22–30: Lock It In

This week's goal: Turn the first three weeks into habits that run on autopilot, so safety doesn't fade when things get busy.

Your week at a glance:

- Day 22: Set up your Weekly Rhythm (put it on the calendar now)
- Days 23–28: Use the Recognition Prompts at least three times
- Day 29: Re-send the 5-Question Pulse
- Day 30: Review results, revisit norms, start the 90-Day Sustain Checklist

Tool 10 · Weekly Rhythm Card

Print this and keep it at your desk.

When	Habit	Time
Monday	Team huddle: priorities, blockers, *"What's worrying anyone this week?"*	15 min
Mon–Thu	One 1:1 per person every week or two. Open with *"What's on your mind?"* before your agenda.	20–30 min each
Daily	Ask one genuine question and listen to the full answer.	2 min
Daily	Notice one example of someone speaking up, and acknowledge it.	1 min
Thursday	5-min Learning Log review in your team meeting	5 min
Friday	Your Supervisor AAR on the week's toughest moment	15 min
Friday	Close the loop: tell the team one thing you did with their input this week	2 min

The weekly closing-the-loop script:

> "Quick update: last week _____ [name or 'someone'] raised _____. Here's what we did about it: _____. Keep these coming."

Closing the loop is the habit that keeps voice going. If people speak up and never see anything happen, they eventually stop.

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Tool 11 · Recognition Prompts That Reinforce Safety

Recognize **the behavior you want more of**: speaking up, asking, admitting, and challenging, not just results. Be specific, timely, and sincere. Some people prefer private recognition, so ask them (see the 1:1 Kickoff, Q6).

Fill-in prompts:

- **For raising a concern:**
  "_____, thanks for flagging _____ early. Because you spoke up, we were able to _____."
- **For admitting a mistake:**
  "I appreciate you being upfront about _____. That's exactly the kind of honesty that makes this team better."
- **For disagreeing with you:**
  "_____, you pushed back on my idea about _____, and you were right to. Thanks for not just going along."
- **For asking a question others had:**
  "Good question, _____. I bet you weren't the only one wondering."
- **For trying something new (even if it didn't work):**
  "_____ tried _____. It didn't land the way we hoped, but we learned _____. That's the kind of experiment I want more of."
- **For helping a teammate:**
  "_____, I noticed you helped _____ with _____. That's what makes it safe to ask for help here."

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Recognition tracker (private, so you don't miss anyone):

Name	Last recognized (date)	For what	Public or private?

Tool 12 · 90-Day Sustain Checklist

The first 30 days got you started. The next 60 keep it going. Check monthly.

Month 2 (Days 31–60)

- ☐ Weekly Rhythm is on my calendar and I've kept it at least 3 of 4 weeks
- ☐ Every team member has had at least two 1:1s with me this month
- ☐ Team norms reviewed and updated with the team
- ☐ At least one Blameless Debrief run
- ☐ Learning Log has new entries from at least half the team
- ☐ I've updated my Voice Map. Who's speaking up more? Who still isn't?

Month 3 (Days 61–90)

- ☐ Pulse sent a third time and results shared with a "one thing I'll do" commitment
- ☐ I've asked my team directly: *"What's one thing I do that makes it harder to speak up?"*
- ☐ At least one team decision used the full Disagreement Protocol
- ☐ I've recognized every team member for a voice behavior at least once
- ☐ I've shared a mistake of my own in the last 30 days
- ☐ I've told my own manager what I'm doing and what's changing

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Warning signs to watch for:

- Skipping 1:1s "because we're busy." This is when you need them most.
- Reacting badly under pressure. Run a Supervisor AAR and repair it within 24 hours (use the "Admit a Miss" template in the Bonus Pack).
- The Learning Log goes quiet. Add an entry yourself and ask about it in the next meeting.
- Pulse scores drop. Share it openly: *"Our scores dipped. I want to understand why. What changed?"*

Week 4 Checklist

- ☐ Weekly Rhythm on my calendar
- ☐ Recognition prompts used at least 3 times
- ☐ Day 30 Pulse sent and compared with Day 5
- ☐ Norms reviewed with the team
- ☐ 90-Day Sustain Checklist printed and dated

Your Day 30 Reflection: what happens before anyone speaks up?

Thirty days ago you started with a quiet question your team was asking: *Is it worth the risk to tell the boss the truth?* You answer that question long before anyone speaks, through hundreds of small moments. Use this page to see what your moments have been saying.

Silence check

1. Where was my team silent on Day 1 (topics, meetings, people)?

2. Where are they still silent today?

3. My best guess at **why** they're still silent there (not *who's* to blame, but what makes it feel risky):

Before-they-speak check

1. One thing I now do *before* problems come up that makes it easier to raise them:

2. The last time someone brought me bad news or disagreed with me, what did my response teach the rest of the team?

3. The mistake I owned out loud this month, and how the team reacted:

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Looking ahead

1. The biggest change I've seen on my team:

   ---

2. The tool that worked best for me:

   ---

3. The habit I'm most likely to drop, and how I'll protect it:

   ---

4. One person I want to hear more from in the next 60 days, and what I'll do *before* our next conversation to make it easier:

> **Want to go deeper?** More on psychological safety and supervision from the author: vern.in.

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Bonus Pack

Email & Slack Templates

Copy, paste, and edit so they sound like you.

Template A · Kickoff: announcing your 1:1s *(Day 1)*

> **Subject:** Getting to know how we work: 30 minutes with each of you
>
> Hi team,
>
> As I step into this role, my first priority is to listen. Over the next week I'd like 30 minutes with each of you, one-on-one. It's not a performance review. I want to understand what's working, what's getting in your way, and how you like to work.
>
> I'll send invites for _____ [days]. If the time doesn't work, just suggest another one.
>
> Looking forward to it,

Template B · Invite Feedback

Email version:

> **Subject:** Quick ask: how am I doing?
>
> Hi _____,
>
> I'm working on being a better supervisor, and I'd value your honest take. Two questions, and short answers are fine:
>
> 1. What's one thing I'm doing that helps you do your best work?
> 2. What's one thing I could do differently?
>
> You can reply here, tell me in our next 1:1, or skip it entirely. No pressure either way. Whatever you share, I'll take it as help, not criticism.
>
> Thanks,

Slack/Teams version:

> Hey _____, quick one: what's one thing I could do differently that would make your week easier? Reply here, tell me in our 1:1, or ignore this. All good. 🙏

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Template C · Admit a Miss

Email version:

> **Subject:** I got this one wrong
>
> Hi team,
>
> I want to own something. _____ [what happened, in one sentence]. That was on me. I _____ [what you did or didn't do], and it _____ [impact on the team].
>
> Here's what I'm doing about it: _____.
> Going forward, I'll _____.
>
> If it affected your work in ways I don't know about, please tell me. I'd rather hear it.

Slack/Teams version:

> Team, I owe you a correction. Yesterday I _____. That was my mistake. The fix: _____.
> Thanks for your patience, and please flag anything I missed.

Template D · Ask for a Challenge

Email version (before a decision):

> **Subject:** Poke holes in this plan
>
> Hi team,
>
> I'm leaning toward _____ [decision] for _____ [reason]. Before I lock it in, I want you to find what's wrong with it.
>
> - What am I missing?
> - What could go wrong?
> - What would you do instead?
>
> Disagreeing with me here is genuinely helpful. Reply by _____ [date], or bring it to _____ [meeting].

Slack/Teams version:

> Looking for pushback 👇 I'm planning to _____. What's the strongest argument *against* this?
> Best critique wins my thanks in Monday's huddle.

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Template E · Closing the Loop

Slack/Teams version:

> Update on the thing _____ raised last week (_____): we've _____. Thanks for flagging it. This is exactly why I want to hear about problems early.

Printable Wallet Card

Cut along the dotted lines, fold in half, and keep it in your wallet, badge holder, or notebook.

3 PHRASES THAT OPEN THE ROOM

1. **"What am I missing?"**
   Use before any decision. Invites challenge.
2. **"Thanks for telling me."**
   Use first, every time bad news arrives.
3. **"I got that wrong. Here's what I'm changing."**
   Use when you miss. Gives others permission to.

SPEAK LAST · THANK FIRST · CLOSE THE LOOP

New Supervisor Psychological Safety Playbook
Vebro Solutions · Vernon Brown, Ph.D., Ed.D.

✂ cut along the dashed line · fold on the center line

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Sources & Further Reading

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Vernon S. Brown, *The Supervisor Effect: What Federal Employees Say, and What the Data Show, About Psychological Safety*. Forthcoming (paperback, coming soon on Amazon). vebro.net/se

Keep Going

Thank you for investing in your team. If this playbook helped, the most useful thing you can do is pass one tool along to another new supervisor.

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