Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. As always thank you for tuning in. Today I want to talk about psychological safety. We want to talk about the definition, why it's important, and five tips for how to get more psychological safety in your workplace.

But first, I want to follow up on the announcement we made a couple weeks ago about our contractor business boot camp. We talked about, this is a 20-year dream come true for us, and we're actually way ahead of schedule and filling up our first class. We only have eight seats left to get to our target number in our first class, so we're actually way ahead of schedule. So, if you have an interest in sending your young high potentials or nominating a valued subcontractor for contractor business boot camp, by all means, click on the link below, jump on it because we are filling up fast. We want to be able to accommodate everyone, but we only have a certain amount of room. So, having said that, we will look forward to hearing from you, and Charlotte will follow up as soon as possible.

Now back to psychological safety. All right, so all of our clients focus on safety in their workplaces, and our contractor clients in particular are obsessed as they should be with safety. So, everybody wears hard hats, you cap off the rebar, you clearly mark roof edges, and elevator shafts and all those kinds of things. It's all about physical safety. So, what is this thing psychological safety? That's kind of a ... This is a new concept for lots of people. Psychological safety is simply the belief that you won't be punished or ridiculed or penalized somehow for making a mistake in the business. You're allowed to do your job with a certain amount of latitude to get things done.

You can speak your mind, you can take moderate or reasonable risks in getting the job done. You can change the way the job gets done, potentially, but you're allowed certain latitudes, and that's psychological safety. Now you say, well, we have that in our business, Wayne, Golly Moses, we're just as sweet as we can be around here. The Gallup Organization says that only about 30% of businesses in America, only about 30% of employees in America say that they enjoy psychological safety at work. So, guess what, you're more likely to be in that 7 of 10 that doesn't genuinely have psychological safety.

Over the years, I've observed that most family business leaders sort of practice the Vince Lombardi style of leadership, where if you make a mistake you get your fanny chewed. You, by Gosh, you come down like a ton of bricks, sometimes on these people, and when they do things, well, they rarely get an Attaboy or a pat on the back or a job well done kind of a thing. It's leadership focused on, "Don't make mistakes, don't screw up," versus leadership based on, "I'm encouraging you to do a great job, and I'm appreciating it when you do so." So, the Vince Lombardi style was predominant when I was a kid. Vince Lombardi was considered the leadership icon. Well, today, the pendulum has swung quite a bit the other way.

Now, to be a great workplace, you have to have both physical safety and psychological safety. So, the question is, how do we get it if we don't really have psychological safety in our organization? How do we get it? So, five quick tips.

The first is we talked about this all the time, you've got to have a common purpose in the organization. Everybody needs to be going in one the direction, so that means focusing on your culture. It means focusing on your values. It means focusing on the mission and the purpose of the organization, and continually broadcasting that message in the organization. Now, if you as the leader or leaders are working 80 hours a week and task after task, after task, and meeting after meeting after meeting, you're not able, you don't have the time, you don't have the luxury of promoting culture in your business. So, part of being a great leader is breaking away from the day to day, and allowing yourself the luxury of taking five hours a week, or two hours a week or something, and focusing on the big picture, 30,000 foot view of the company.

The second tip is you've got to be available to your people. So there again, if you're working 80 or 100 hours a week and task after task, you're not available to your people. We really encountered a guy one time that had 24 direct reports. Now, nobody, nobody should have 24 direct reports first of all. But the complaint was not that he wasn't getting his job done, the complaint from the direct report was guess what? They couldn't get enough time with their boss. He had no time for them to give them direction and coaching and all the kinds of things that aspiring young leaders want from their boss.

The third tip is Covey's Habit 4: Think Win-Win. So, when you do have a beef in the workplace and you're in disagreement with somebody, or there's some sort of adversarial relationship going on, that triggers our lizard brain to think fight or flight. When your brain engages in fight or flight, it's a survival tool right from 30,000 years ago or whenever, and you literally lose the ability to think clearly. So, in the organization, if you have a win-win mentality that we're all in this together, we're all on the same team, even if you don't get your way on this thing, you'll get it potentially in a future matter, it helps our lizard brains get a little more quiet. And we can think about overall big satisfying outcomes that everybody can be a part of.

The fourth tip is to anticipate reactions and objections when you know you're going to be on different sides of an issue with another leader, or your boss or somebody in the organization. So, think through what are the likely objections or what are the likely areas of disagreement on this particular issue? How can I react to them? How can I agreeably but forcefully make my case? How can I be assertive in a charming way? What am I likely to hear back from the other person, and where can we find the common ground?

The fifth tip Ask is the Leader. Ask for blind feedback. If you encourage blind feedback about your own performance, that'll trickle down in the organization. That will allow for other feedback and other constructive criticisms, if you will, from your junior leaders, and even back up and down the food chain in the organization.

One final thing this isn't a tip, but a good thing to practice is measure psychological safety. You can use these online tools, Survey Monkey or whatever it is that you use, and you could do a blind survey. Real simple thing to do is ask your people on a zero to 10 scale, with 10 being super safe psychologically and one being not safe at all psychologically, how would they rate the organization? If it comes back a four or five, well, guess what you're about average are probably a little below average. If it's an eight, or nine or 10, good for you, that's great. But the idea isn't to find the number and then go, "Oh, my gosh, oh, this is horrible. We're only a four." The idea is to get that for up to a six and then a seven and then an eight by improving the culture over time.

So, everybody talks about the buzz words about employee engagement, and culture in the organization's and everybody has trouble hiring people right now. If you want to hire great people, you've got to have a great organization. One of the only ways to have a great organization is to focus on the culture, and one of the first things that you need to focus on in culture is, guess what? Psychological safety. So, that's our topic for today.

Thank you for tuning in, and don't forget about that contractor business boot camp. Click on the link below, and let us hear from if you have an interest so we can get this thing booked and done and meeting on April 26th and 27th of this year. This is Wayne rivers. Thank you.