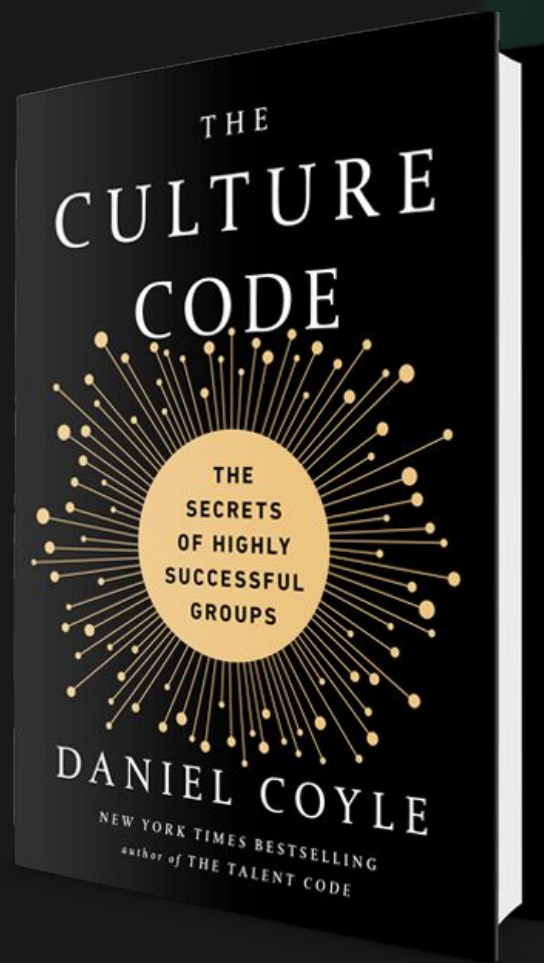# Safety & Belonging
Rituals for Psychological Safety

Iris Zhang, Games Engineer

Image: Illustration by Chelsea Beck

Inside The Culture of Sexism at Riot Games, By Cecilia D'Anastasio Published Aug 7 2018

THE
CULTURE
CODE

THE
SECRETS
OF HIGHLY
SUCCESSFUL
GROUPS

DANIEL COYLE

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Safety & Belonging is a powerful ritual to create trust, build camaraderie, and increase the efficiency of our teams.

Safety

The highest-performing teams have one thing in common: <u>psychological safety</u> - the belief that you won't be punished when you make a mistake.

Belonging

Core need at work defined by
community, well-being, and connection

https://www.palomamedina.com/biceps

How to put it into practice?

A 3-part Workshop

1 - Trust building

Establishing norms, explaining the abstract concepts and the why, and practicing vulnerability in a relatively low-stakes environment

2 - Feedback

How team members like to give and receive it. When did they see it given well or poorly?

3 - Burnout

An important issue as seen from our org's employee health survey results. This could replaced with a metric that has been lagging for your team.

Example Norms

- Have this meeting with everyone

- Anything said stays in this room

- Be respectful while others are talking - one voice

- Willingness to be vulnerable

Trust - Workshop 1

Questions
Going around the room in order. Answer any question from the list. Try to keep your response under 2 minutes. Optionally add a new question.

- Tell us something about your best friend growing up
- If you were not in your current field of work nor in games, what would you be doing?
- What's something challenging about where you grew up?
- What's your most memorable meal you've eaten and why?

Best Practice

Establish norms

Do it at the beginning, with input from team members. And keep repeating them.

Repeat the Ritual

Set a recurring time on a cadence (such as every 2 weeks.) It is not a one-day workshop.

Engage

Pick topics that spark discussion, using employee health surveys or by asking the team.

Find the right group

5 to 9 people who work closely and have lots of touchpoints day to day is ideal.

Strong facilitator

See Lara Hogan's resources for team facilitation.

Lived Experience

Encourage leaning on personal experiences, instead of making generalizations.

You may get push-back. Get buy-in from folks who remain skeptical by addressing their misconceptions directly.

It's "Just" Trust-Building Exercises

The first one may feel like an extended "getting to know you" but that should only be the beginning

Endless venting or group therapy

Though sensitive topics may come up, the role of the facilitator is key. Keep the discussion on track and tag in HR for support.

"Safe Space" where nobody disagrees

These rituals should lead to a team where power dynamics prevent folks from feeling like they cannot speak up in disagreement.

Resources

- The Culture Code, Daniel Coyle
- High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety: Here's How to Create It - Laura Delizonna, HBR
- Belonging, from BICEPS
- Lara Hogan's Facilitation Resources
- Inside The Culture of Sexism at Riot Games, By Cecilia D'Anastasio Published Aug 7 2018