



Love in the time of Corona

Psychological safety, trust,
and the cognitive dissonance
of virtual environments

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Adjustment Disorder

DSM-5 309.0-9 (F43.20-25)

Psychological safety

Inigo Montoya
(1973)

“You Keep Using That Word.
I do not think it means what you think it means”

Poll

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best, rate how comfortable you feel discussing interpersonal issues with colleagues at work.

Poll

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all and 5 is totally, rate how much your comfort level has changed since January.

Trust

Question

Think of the last time where you gave someone your trust. How did you feel while you did it? One adjective.

Holmes and
Rempel (1989)

“The establishment of trust is a process of
uncertainty reduction”

The cognitive dissonance of virtual environments

Petriglieri (2020)

“I ... finally understood why everyone’s so exhausted after video calls.

It’s the plausible deniability of each other’s absence.

Our minds are tricked into the idea of being together when our bodies feel we’re not.

The cognitive dissonance is exhausting.”

Merleau-Ponty
(1968)

“I look at him. He sees that I look at him. I see that he sees it. He sees that I see that he sees it. There are no longer two consciousnesses, but two mutually enfolding glances.”

Friesen (2014)

- Eye contact is lacking
- Looking awry
- Feeling watched
- Squelching voices

Lanier (2001)

“Human interaction has both verbal and nonverbal elements,
and videoconferencing seems precisely configured to confound the nonverbal ones”

Solutions

Petriglieri (2020)

“Social media was practice. This is the real game. We’re not just learning new tools. We must re-learn how to be with each other. Or we lose. And being an existential game, what we lose is our self—if not our life.”

Attributed to
Darwin

“It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able to adapt to and to adjust best to the changing environment in which it finds itself”

Some tips (that you probably know already)

- Place your camera at eye level
- Sit further away from the camera to minimise parallax effects
- Don't use video conferencing

Petriglieri (2020)

“I am finding Zoom easier if I don’t make eye contact. Then I can mimic a distant presence, which feels more real. If I want intimacy, and we’re apart, I’ll phone. And If I want to say thinking of you, I’ll write.”

Conference call bingo

- Sorry, I was on mute
- Do we have a Zoom URL for the call?
- Can everyone see my screen?
- Can you repeat that?
- Hi, who just joined?
- Can you hear me?
- You're still sharing...

Trust Games

Hardin (2003) suggests games to experiment and learn trust, using variants of the prisoner's dilemma and other collaboration challenges.

Woolley et al. (Engel et al., 2015; Woolley et al., 2010; Woolley et al., 2015) have used similar techniques to research team performance both co-located and online.

Ivonne Rohner has developed a number of games and exercises, such as the retrospective “getting back 2 face 2 face”, to help Agile teams build trust after the pandemic.

4 Practical Steps

1. Start measuring

- Safety check
- Edmondson questions
 - If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.
 - It is safe to take a risk on this team.
 - It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.

2. Create awareness

Joseph's Template

<In this context/situation/environment>

I feel I can most be myself

when I can <my action>

without/and <your action>

3. Be a Role Model

4. Create your environment

Poll

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the normal and 5 is opportunity,

rate how much you want to return to normal vs. how much you embrace this crisis as an opportunity for change.

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