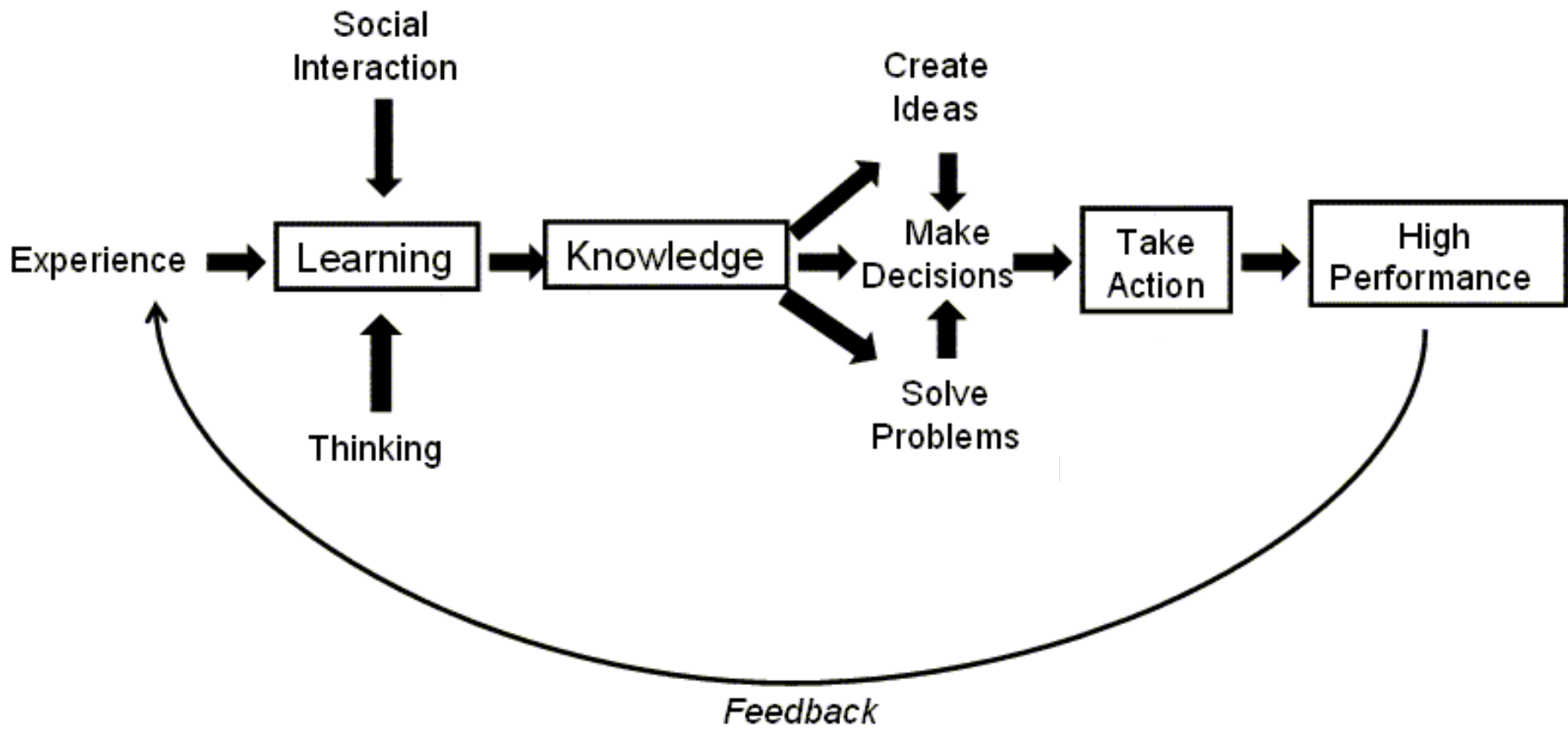


**Building
high-performing teams
through
Team Psychological safety**

What leads to high performance ?

Learning leads to high performance



**What are the factors affecting
learning in a team ?**

FACTORS AFFECTING TEAM LEARNING

Shared mental models

Team psychological safety

Group potency or group efficacy

Cohesion

Team development and team learning dynamics

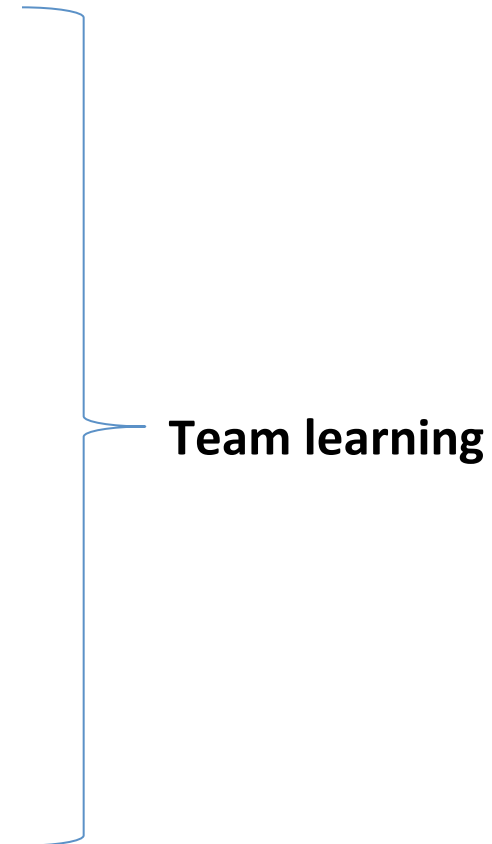
Team leadership

Interdependence

Team structure

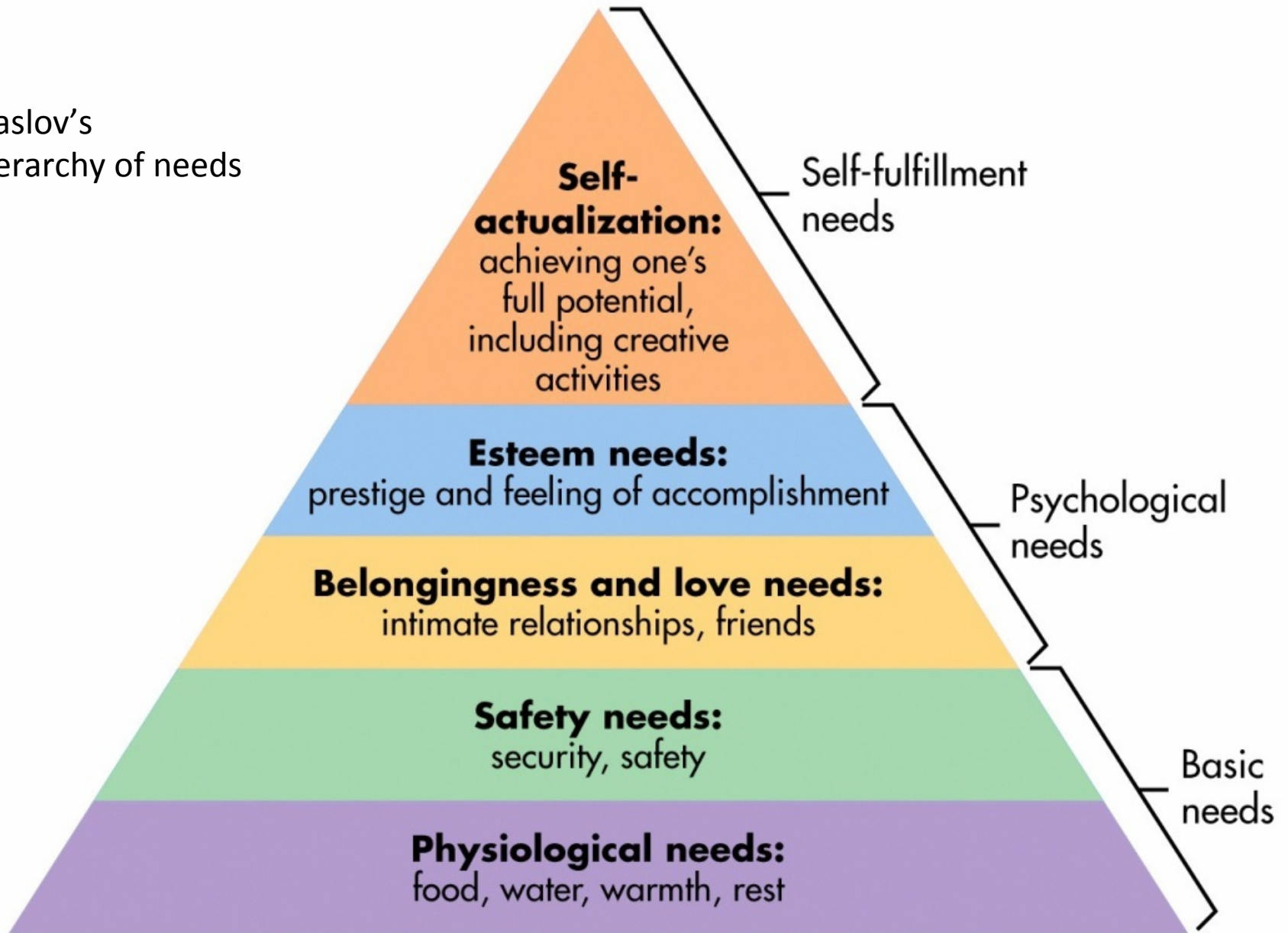
Organizational strategy

Team member systems thinking



**So what is
Team Psychological Safety ?**

Maslov's
Hierarchy of needs



Psychological safety was further applied in the contexts of ...

... organizational change

-> psychological safety as a counterbalance for the ambiguity and insecurity that comes with change
([E. H. Schein & Bennis, 1965](#))

... learning

-> psychological safety helps individuals overcome their “learning anxiety”
([Edgar H. Schein, 2004](#))

From ... psychological safety for the individual

... to ... psychological safety that resides at the level of the group

Team Psychological Safety

“a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking”

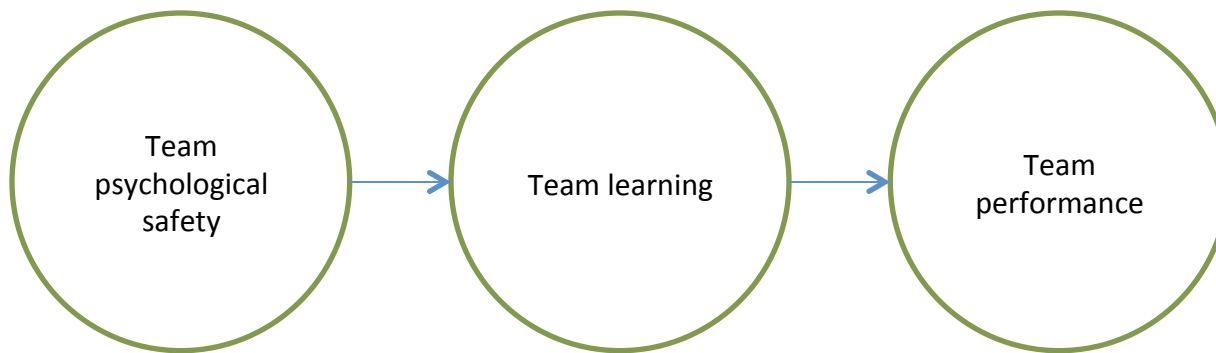
(Edmondson, A. C. 1999)

Measuring Team Psychological Safety

1	If you make a mistake on this team, it is not really held against you.
2	Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3	People on this team never reject others for being different.
4	It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5	It is easy to ask other members of this team for help.
6	No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7	Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

strongly disagree
disagree
disagree somewhat
undecided
agree somewhat
agree
strongly agree

Team psychological safety positively impacts team learning, which in turn positively impacts team performance

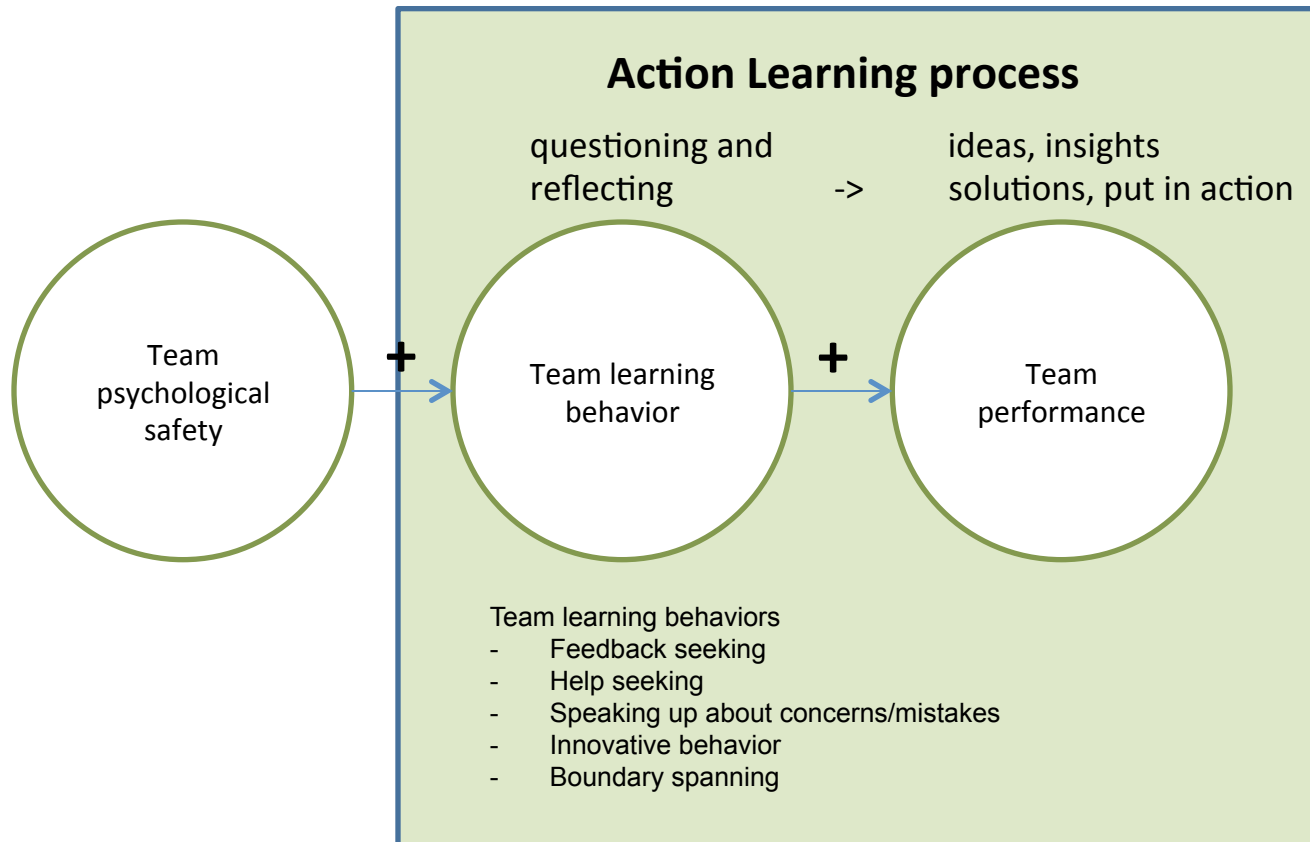


(Edmondson, A. C. 2003)

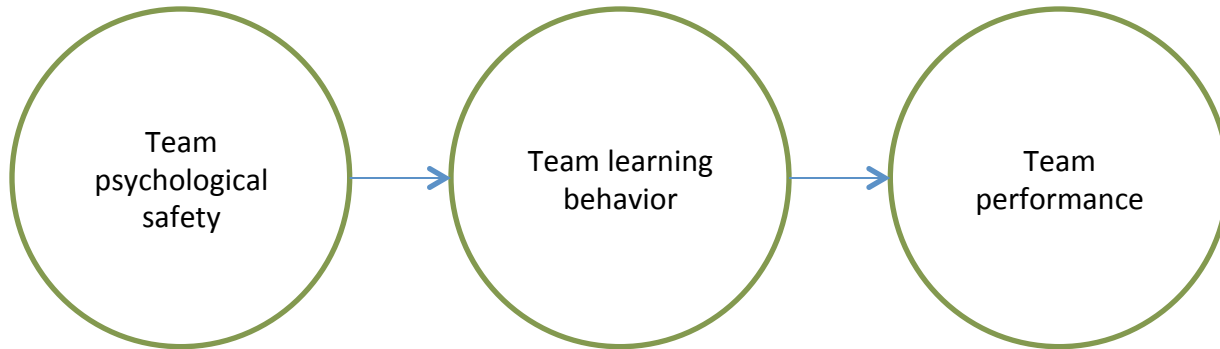
What are learning behaviors ?

Team learning behavior and Action Learning

An obvious link



**So what leads to the development
(or not) of
Team Psychological Safety
in a team ?**



Antecedents to team psychological safety:

- Team leader behavior
- Informal group dynamics
- Trust and respect
- Use of practice fields
- Supportive organizational context

-> **leader behavior**

how the leader uses his/her “power” affects the psychological safety in the team, and further impacts ...

- + the team climate in general
- + the willingness of the team members to share knowledge
- + motivation for team learning

-> **informal group dynamics**

interplay of roles and “characters” that people assume or are assigned

-> **practice fields** (or managerial learning laboratories)

opportunities for teams to practice and to reflect upon the results, rather than to take action

-> trust and respect

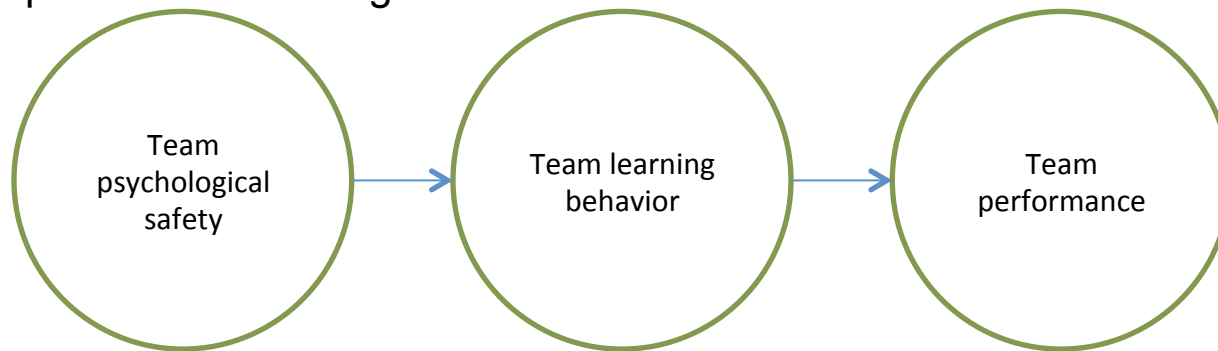
between the different pairs of individuals in the team

-> supportive organizational context

ease of access to resources and information reduces the level of insecurity
the team experiences in dealing with their challenge

Team psychological safety is most often described as a **STATIC CHARACTERISTIC** (a 'state') of a team

“a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking”



Antecedents:

- Team leader behavior
- Informal group dynamics
- Trust and respect
- Use of practice fields
- Supportive organizational context

Team learning behaviors

- Feedback seeking
- Help seeking
- Speaking up about concerns/mistakes
- Innovative behavior
- Boundary spanning

Action Learning's impact on Team Psychological Safety

Does Action Learning impact the level of psychological safety in a team ?

Several of the antecedents to Team Psychological Safety seem very compatible with the team dynamics and context created and enhanced by an Action Learning process:

team leader behavior -> the leader 'empowers' the team to propose solutions to a problem and to implement them

informal group dynamics -> action learning ensures participation from everyone in a focused but relatively unstressed context

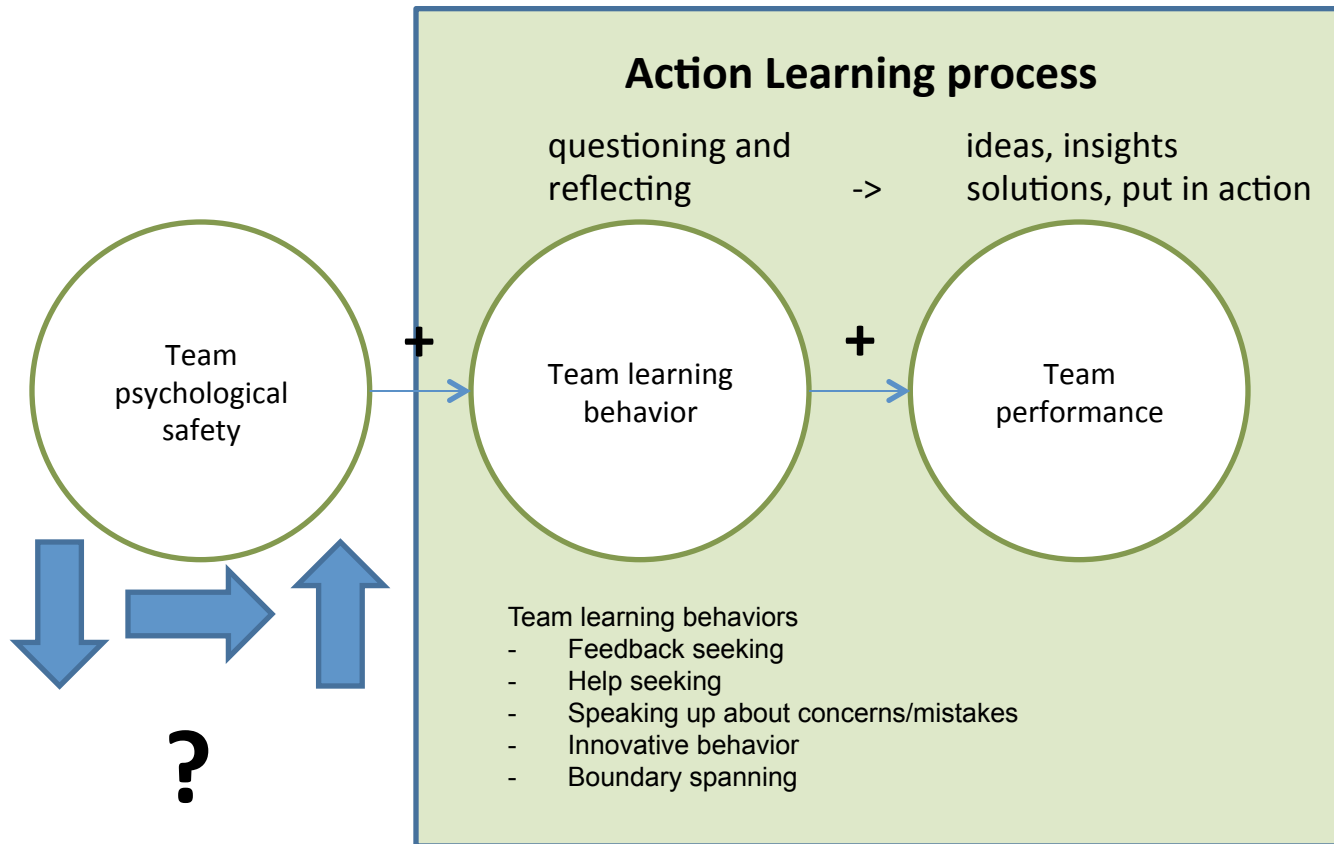
trust and respect -> asking questions, building on each other's ideas and reflecting on the team's dynamics increases the trust and respect among team members

use of practice fields -> the action learning process looks at different options in a meeting setting, before confirming the validity in actions after the session

Question: does Action Learning impact the level of team psychological safety ?

Team learning behavior and Action Learning

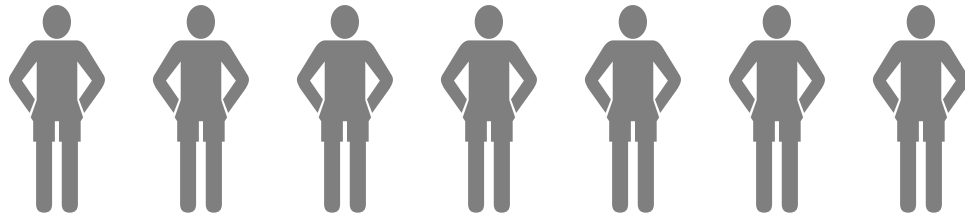
How does Action Learning impact the level of psychological safety in a team ?



**A (partial) answer
Results of an experiment
with Action Learning**

“A problem solving process with a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning as individuals and as a team while doing so.”

CASE 1



Management team in a Thailand manufacturing plant

7 Thais (excluding Managing Director - French)

seniority from 1 to 10 years

age from 30 to 45 years

finance, sales, quality, customer service, IT, purchasing, QA

3 women, 4 men

different hierarchical levels (managers and the level just below)

problem addressed: reducing total factory inventory level

3 Action Learning sessions, 2 weeks apart, with external coach

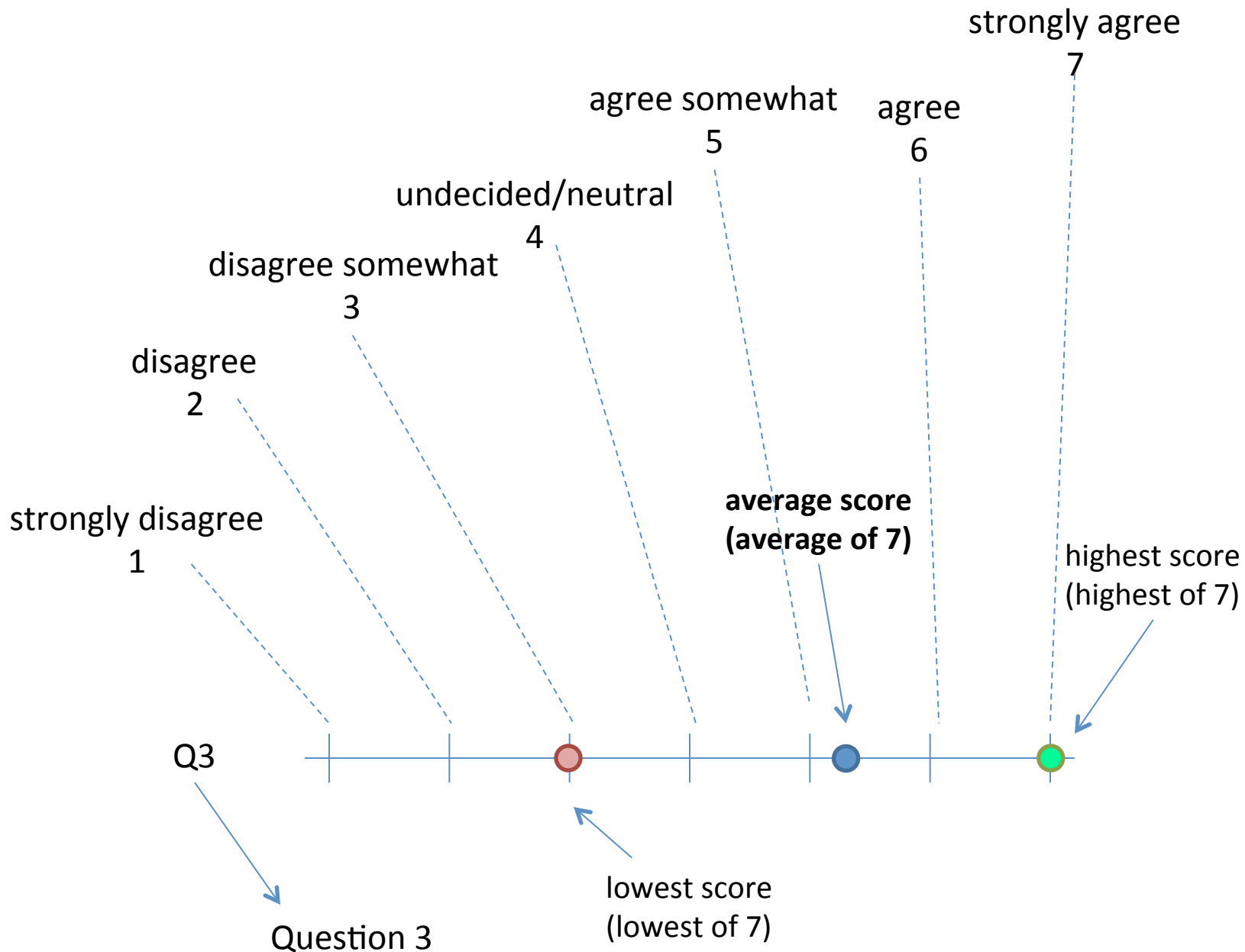
MEASURING TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

1	If you make a mistake on this team, it is not really held against you.
2	Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3	People on this team never reject others for being different.
4	It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5	It is easy to ask other members of this team for help.
6	No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7	Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

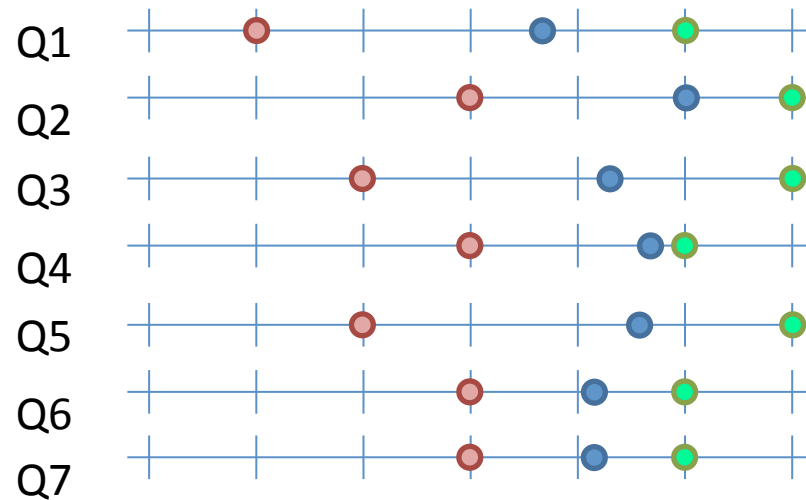
measured before the 1st session (13 Jan) and after the 3rd session (11 Feb)

strongly disagree
disagree
disagree somewhat
undecided
agree somewhat
agree
strongly agree

MEASURING TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



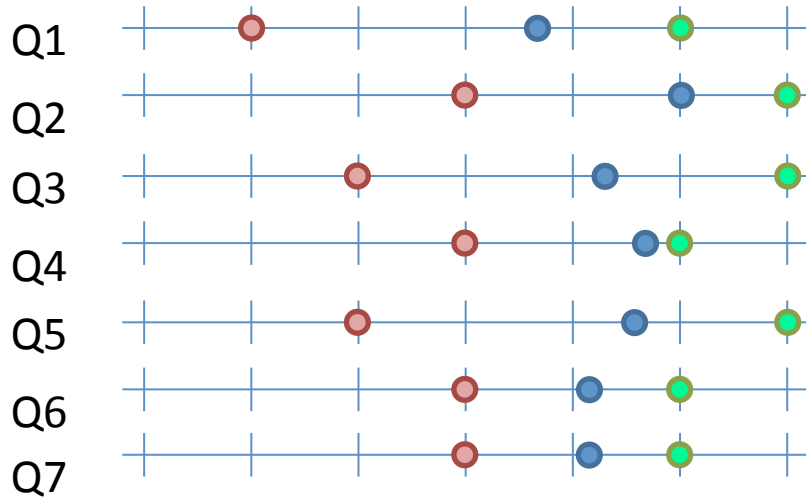
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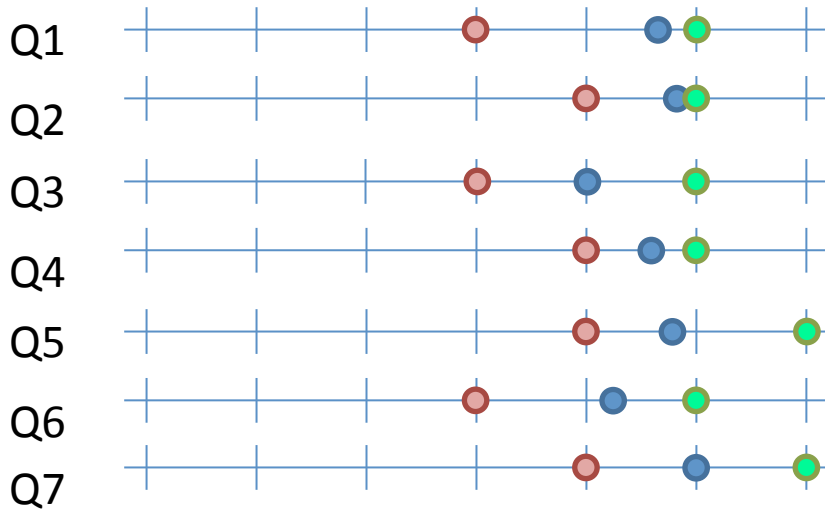
BEFORE

Average of all averages
(average of all answers on 7 questions)

5.3



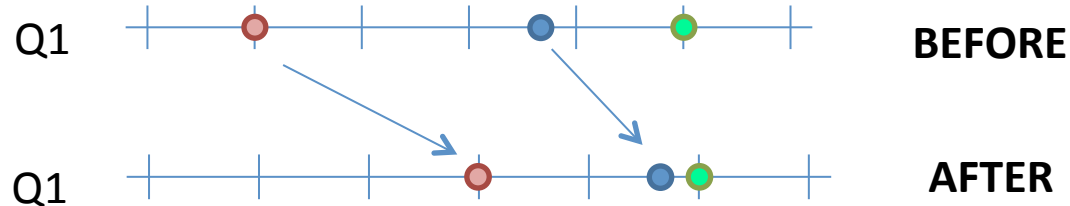
BEFORE
 Average of all averages
 (average of all answers on 7 questions)
5.3



AFTER
 Average of all averages
 (average of all answers on 7 questions)
5.6

Significant changes

1	If you make a mistake on this team, it is not really held against you.
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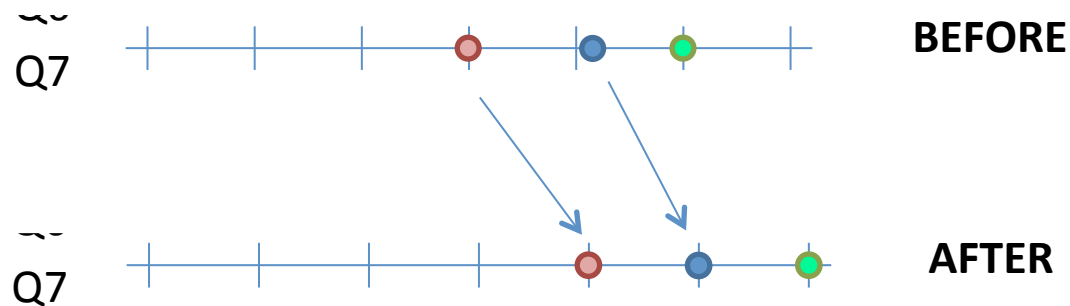
-> from 4.7 to 5.7 (+21%)

-> lowest score significantly higher

-> people feel more safe to make mistakes

Significant changes

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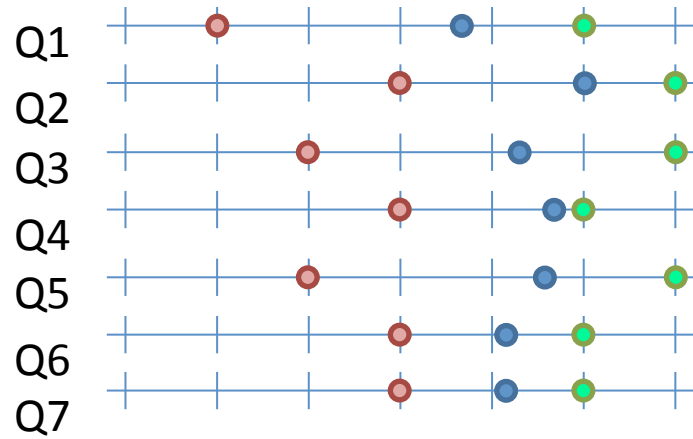


-> from 5.1 to 6 (+17%)

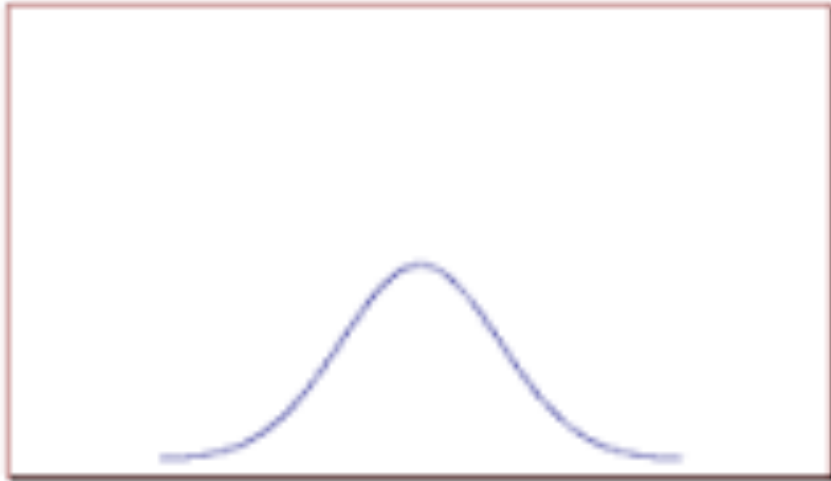
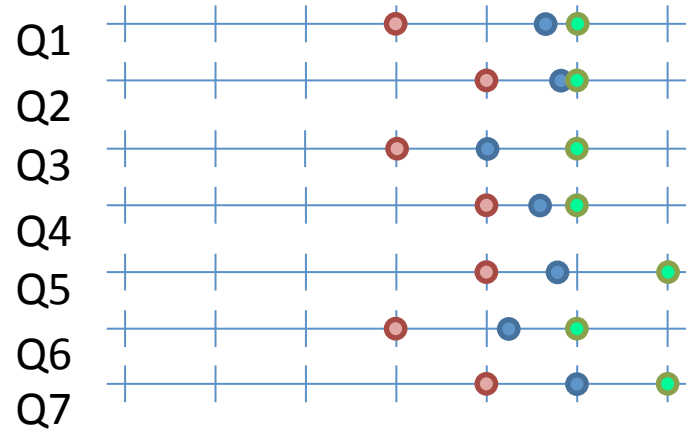
-> lowest score significantly higher

-> people feel that their skills/ideas are valued

BEFORE



AFTER

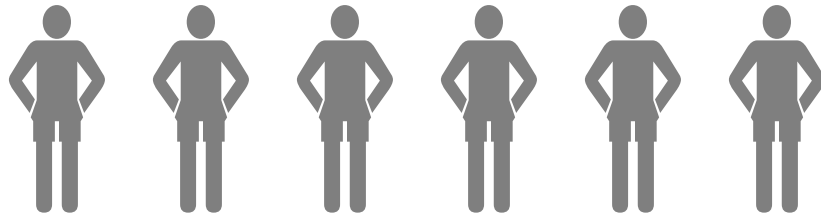


Standard deviation
1.2



Standard deviation
0.7

CASE 2



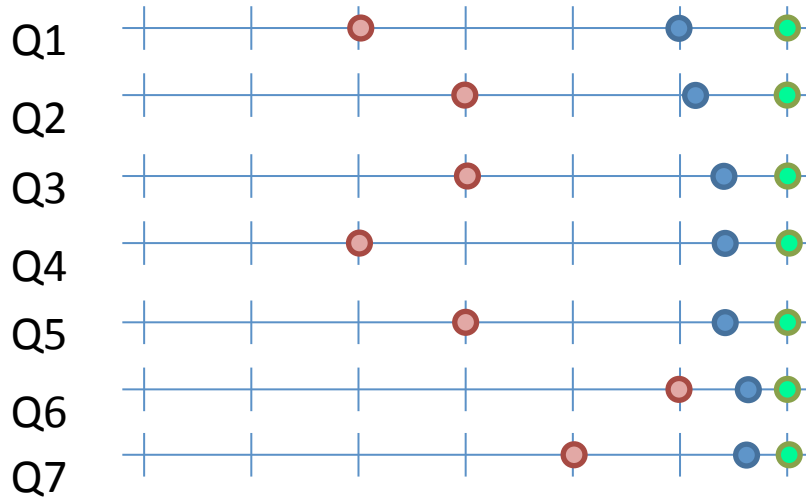
Supervisor team in a Thailand service organization

7 Thais
seniority from 1 to 20 years
age from 25 to 50 years
marketing, operations, accounting

6 women, 1 man
supervisors in all departments

problem addressed: reducing employee turnover

4 Action Learning sessions, 1 week apart, with external coach



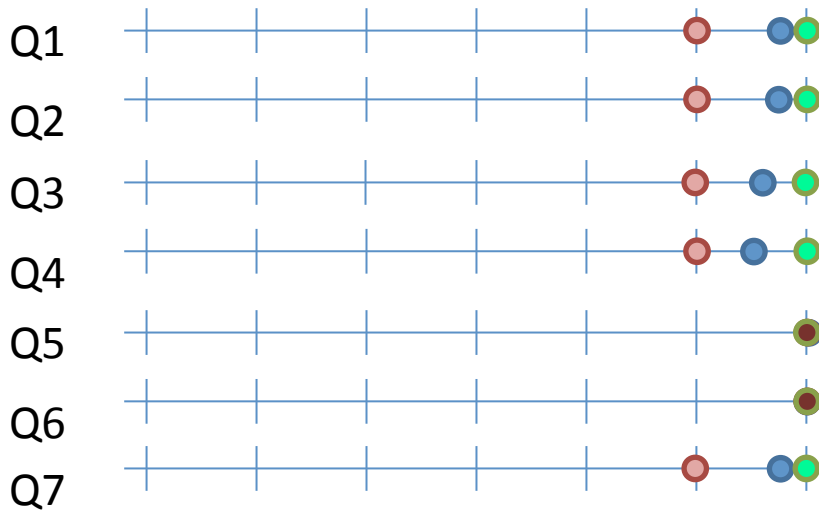
BEFORE

Average of all averages
(average of all answers on 7 questions)

6.3

Standard deviation

1.1



AFTER

Average of all averages
(average of all answers on 7 questions)

6.8

Standard deviation

0.4

So why would this be ?

SCARF Model of Social Threats and Rewards



Status is about relative importance to others

Certainty concerns being able to predict the future

Autonomy provides a sense of control over events

Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe

Fairness is a perception of fair exchanges between people.

Status

is about relative importance to others

in AL

all participate equally

there is no « leader » in the group

the pizza man is listened to as much as the VP

Certainty

concerns being able to predict the future

in AL

a clear process with simple ground rules

follow up on action commitments in next session

step-by-step making progress on the problem

Autonomy provides a sense of control over events

in AL participants decide which leadership skill to practice
participants decide what actions to take between sessions

Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe

in AL ground rule of asking questions
coach interventions on learning
peer feedback at the end of the session

Fairness

is a perception of fair exchanges between people

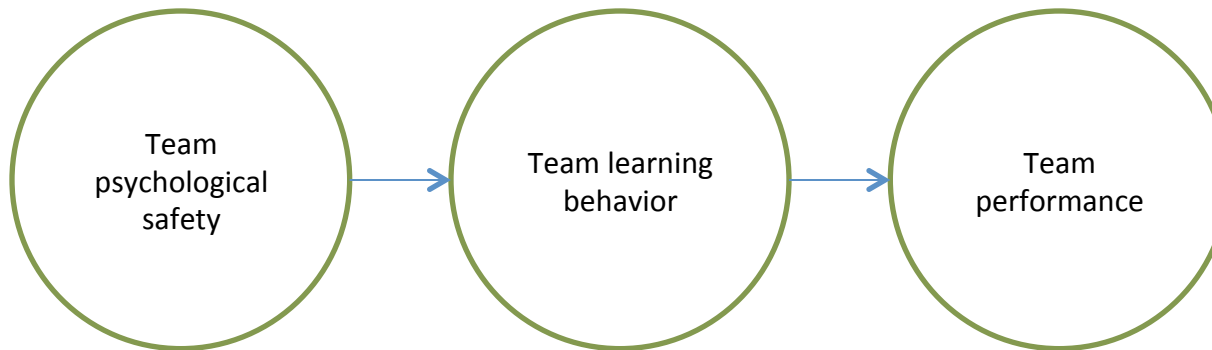
in AL

balance of contributions (if coach manages well)

everybody takes actions and shares on the learning

IN SUMMARY

“a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking”



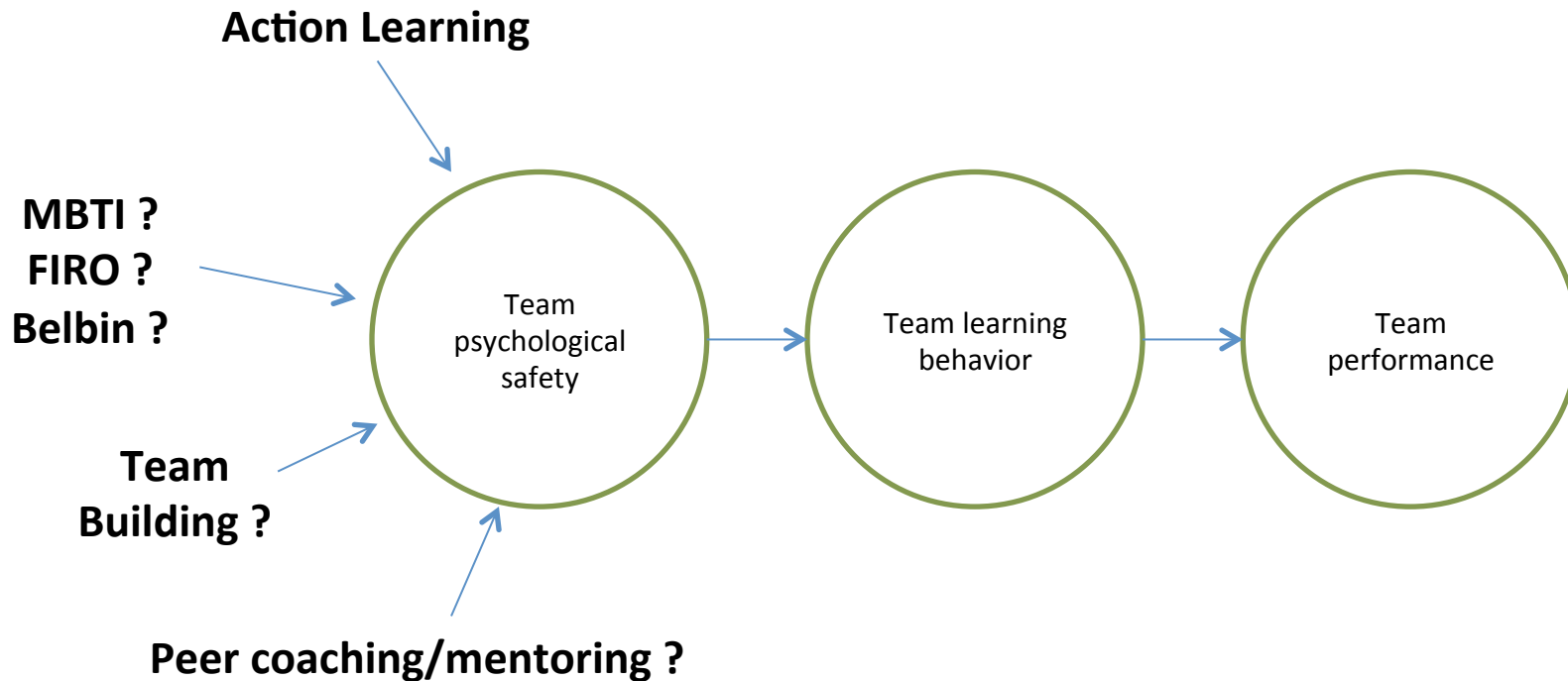
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Team learning behaviors

- Feedback seeking
- Help seeking
- Speaking up about concerns/mistakes
- Innovative behavior
- Boundary spanning

When working on
TEAM PERFORMANCE
think about what you can do to
ACCELERATE
the development of
TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



Action Learning is confirmed to have a **DOUBLE** impact on the team:

- (1) the **PROCESS** of questions/reflection help the team to increase problem resolution
- (2) the **CONTEXT** created enhances the psychological safety in the team, which in turn positively impacts the effectiveness of the team learning

