Belonging, 2.1: Theory

Brief Summary

- Belonging shapes how we feel and how we think.
- When we feel like we belong (eg. included, psychologically safe, cared for), we feel good (eg. oxytocin, dopamine) and are more likely to be in **discover** mode - open, curious, collaborative.
- When we feel like we don't belong (eg. excluded, judged), we feel bad (eg. cortisol) and are more likely to be in **defend** mode - looking for threats, defensive, shutting down challenges.
- This plays out at work all the time, and can significantly impact our experience and our behaviours.

Exercises

1) Consider the different teams, people, and places you encounter at work. How do you feel in them and with them? What creates a sense of belonging, and what creates any sense of exclusion? Make a list.

2) Based on this list, what can you do to improve belonging for others in those spaces? Is there anything you could ask of others to improve your sense of belonging?

Resources and links:

- https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-power-of-belonging/202304/the-new-psychology-of-belonging Readable and engaging introduction to belonging and why it matters
- https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10273830/ - Ethnographic study of how (un)belonging shapes workplace health.
- https://www.bmj.com/content/384/bmj.q392.full - Review of the importance of belonging in healthcare settings. Focuses on how belonging has to respond to the unique needs of the people in your team - there is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- What Is Psychological Safety? - Easy-read introduction to the value and creation of psychological safety
- https://carolinewebb.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Episode-3-Book-Excerpt.pdf Excerpt that describes the Discover/ Defend modes of thinking in more detail.

Evaluation:

We would really appreciate your feedback through these short questionnaires on the videos and their usefulness. Your feedback will help us improve future content.

Prior to watching the videos

After watching the videos