Organizations perform better — across a wide variety of measurements — when all team members voice their candid ideas (good and bad), feedback and concerns, and questions and uncertainties. But people often hesitate to speak up because of three key factors:

**A Leader’s Power Suffocates**: leaders talk too much and suffer from a variety of other power-oriented pitfalls.

**People Fear Judgment**: our team members succumb to evaluation apprehension, peer pressure, and perceived cultural norms.

**Rejection Leads to Fatigue**: the #1 reason people don’t speak up is they ‘don’t believe it will do any good.’

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**Solve the right problem**: Leader mindset and behaviors for cultivating a culture of candor...

Organizations often try to solve the wrong problem. We attempt to train those we lead to say things gently. But our people’s potential eloquence is not the solution. Instead of teaching every single person how to choose the right words, leaders must release people from the burden of saying things the right way.

The solution rests with leaders. Our mindset and behaviors are the true antidote to the problem of organizational silence. We must **Assume Positive Intent** when people speak up, and then seek to build a culture of candor with these actions...

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**Prove It’s Safe**
- **Make it explicit.** Tell your team you want them to “say anything” to you (and you will listen).
- **Lead the way** by admitting some of your own mistakes and uncertainties. **Be vulnerable.**
- **Rope off some boundaries**: “You can say anything to me, with these two exceptions…”

**Dignify Every Try**
- **If it’s not “life or death,” say ‘yes’** to people’s suggestions and ideas.
  People will test to see if it’s safe; **positively acknowledge attempts** (with words and body language).
  Overcome (or prevent) fatigue by **intentionally and quickly acting** on input from those you lead.

**Be Genuinely Curious**
- **Ask authentic questions** (as opposed to questions where you’re hunting for a preferred answer).
- **Listen.** Sit in the middle at meetings. Speak last. (Don’t anchor the team to your ideas by going first.)
- **Actively seek everyone’s opinions**: newcomers, introverts, the under-represented.