

BEING HUMAN

The infinite potential of how we work, lead, and live.



Hello again, I'm grateful you're here.

BY MIRJANA BOZNOVSKA

In Edition 1, we opened the door to bringing more of our humanity into work. In this edition, we go to the heart of what truly matters:

To feel safe being ourselves.

Not the checkbox.

Not the HR policy.

Not the culture-slide promise.

The human kind of safety that lets you drop the mask, speak authentically, and show up fully, day after day.

And if we're honest, people don't feel that way at work. Global research consistently shows that many people don't feel safe enough to be their true selves. When safety is missing, people hold back. They guard themselves. They soften their ideas. And work slowly becomes transactional instead of human.

As you read this edition, think:

What becomes possible when we use our energy to express ourselves authentically... instead of guarding or protecting ourselves?

IN THIS EDITION

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Safety starts with the leader, but it doesn't end there...

*A leader once said to me,
"I keep asking my team to challenge me more...
but no one ever does."
So I asked him a simple question:
"When was the last time you admitted you didn't
know something?"
He paused.
Then quietly said, "...I can't remember."
That was the moment everything clicked for him.
It wasn't that his team lacked courage.
It was that he hadn't gone first.*

Psychological safety is built in small, human moments, and most often, it starts with the leader. But it doesn't end there.

Every one of us shapes the level of safety around us, every day, through how we listen, respond, include, and show up. That's the power of Being Human at work.



Safety: biology at work

Have you ever noticed how differently you show up when you feel safe compared to when you don't? Your voice changes. Your body tightens or relaxes. Your ideas either flow or get filtered. Your nervous system is constantly reading the environment and deciding one thing: Am I safe here?

When you don't feel safe:

Your brain senses threat.
Stress hormones rise.
Thinking narrows.
Creativity drops.

You shift into "survival mode." You protect, stay quiet, or go on the defensive. Not because you don't care, but because the biology of your nervous system is prioritising your safety.



When you do feel safe:

The nervous system settles.
Happy hormones activate.
Confidence stabilises.
Motivation increases.

Your brain moves into "connected mode", where thinking expands, creativity opens, and collaboration flows. This is when learning happens. This is when innovation returns. This is when you grow.



States of experiences at work.

Connected (Safety)

When safety is present, you move into connection.

- you relax and are receptive
- you think more clearly
- you share ideas openly
- you speak honestly
- you take healthy risks
- you ask for help
- you collaborate
- you contribute fully

This is an abundant state, where energy goes into possibility, creativity, and meaningful performance.

Survival (Threat)

When safety is missing, you shift into survival.

- you protect yourself
- you shut down
- you overthink
- you avoid risk
- you hide mistakes
- you stay small
- you play it safe
- you filter what you say

This is a fear-based state, where energy is spent on self-preservation, not progress.

Every person at work moves between these two states.

The question is: which one are you in most often?

Because the state you spend the most time in shapes how you think, speak, connect, and ultimately how you perform.

And culture is simply the sum of these states, repeated day after day.

Why You React the Way You Do at Work

Most fear-based behaviour at work isn't deliberate. It's learned. Long before your first job, you absorbed subtle messages about how to stay safe: moments of being judged, dismissed, blamed, ignored, or compared. Over time, those experiences shaped quiet rules about how to protect yourself and:

- avoid being wrong
- avoid being judged
- avoid rejection
- avoid standing out
- avoid not knowing
- avoid taking up too much space

Those early patterns don't disappear at work. They simply change form. You might protect or intimidate. Play small or overperform. Overthink, procrastinate, overmanage, or have trouble letting go of control.

And beneath it, they often show up as

- **defensiveness**
- **perfectionism**
- **people-pleasing**
- **fear of conflict**
- **fear of failure**
- **fear of visibility**
- **fear of disappointing others**
- **imposter syndrome**



Underneath it all is something deeply human: a desire to be seen, heard, and valued. This is why psychological safety isn't a "nice to have." It's how people grow beyond the patterns they inherited. And when you see behaviour through this lens, something shifts. You stop taking it personally. Your compassion expands. Your leadership deepens. And workplaces become more human.

So, what creates safety at work?

Psychological safety doesn't come from policies, posters, or one-off initiatives. It's built, or broken, in everyday moments. Safety grows when three core human needs are consistently met. This is where real culture is shaped.

Optimise Autonomy

People feel safe when they feel trusted.

Network Meaningfully

Safety grows through relationship, not role.

Elevate Competence & Impact

Safety grows when people are supported to develop, not just deliver.

When autonomy, connection, and growth are present, safety becomes the norm, not the exception. And that's where real culture is shaped.



The Happy Hormones of Human Work

You've probably felt this before. Some days at work, you feel energised, clear, and connected. Other days, you feel tense, flat, or on edge, even if nothing "big" has happened.

That's not willpower. That's chemistry.

When you feel psychologically safe, your body releases a set of hormones that support how you think, feel, and perform.

Together, they create the conditions for human flourishing at work.

Serotonin—Confidence + Belonging

This rises when you're respected, recognised, and appreciated. It steadies your confidence and reminds you that you matter. **You've felt it when your contribution is acknowledged, not just the outcome.**

Daily action: Acknowledge effort publicly. Thank someone specifically for what they contributed.

Dopamine—Motivation + Momentum

This activates when you see progress, purpose, and impact. It fuels motivation and keeps you moving forward. **You've felt it when you finish something meaningful or see your work make a difference.**

Daily action: Break work into meaningful steps and celebrate progress, not just outcomes.



Oxytocin—Trust + Connection

This is released when you feel valued, included, and understood. It's what helps you relax, connect, and trust the people around you. **You've felt it when someone really listens to you or when you feel like you belong.**

Daily action: Use someone's name. Make eye contact. Ask, "How are you....really?"

Endorphins—Energy and Resilience

These are released through laughter, movement, and moments of lightness. They help you reset, stay resilient, and remember you're human. **You've felt it after a genuine laugh or a moment that lifts the weight.**

Daily action: Invite lightness. Move your body. Share a laugh.



A Practical Shift: The 5-Second Safety Switch

Before you react.

Before you respond.

Before you decide.

*Pause, just for five seconds
and ask yourself:*

*“Am I creating safety right
now.... or pressure?”*

*Because every interaction
sends a signal:*

*Safety
or
Survival*

*This brief pause is powerful. It
interrupts old patterns. It creates
space for a different choice. And
over time, it reshapes culture.*

Real-Work Examples

Mistake—Blame → Learning

Old Pattern: A mistake surfaces. The instinct is to correct, question, or assign fault.

Human Reset: Pause. Breathe. Say.

“Thank you for being honest; let's work through this together.”

By pausing first, you shift the energy from blame to learning. You create safety, honesty, and trust, the very conditions where people actually grow.

Struggle—Judge → Connection

Old Pattern: Someone seems quieter than usual. You assume disengagement or lack of focus.

Human Reset: Pause. Breathe. Ask.

“I've noticed you're a little quieter today; how are you, really?”

By pausing first, you move from assumption to connection. Presence replaces judgment, and people feel seen instead of misunderstood..

Silence—Pressure → Permission

Old Pattern: You ask for input. No one speaks. The silence feels uncomfortable, so you fill it.

Human Reset: Pause. Breathe. Invite.

“Take your time; I really want to hear your thoughts. Every idea matters.”

By pausing first, you shift from pressure to permission. People open up, voices emerge, and ideas surface that would have stayed hidden.



BEING HUMAN IN ACTION

building more safety

As you move through the coming days, simply observe:

Where do people relax around you and open up?

Where do they grow quieter or hold back?

Then ask yourself, without judgment:

"How am I noticing people feel around me?"

Because safety isn't something we announce. It's something people *feel*.

It lives in our tone and gestures. Our presence. Our willingness to go first.

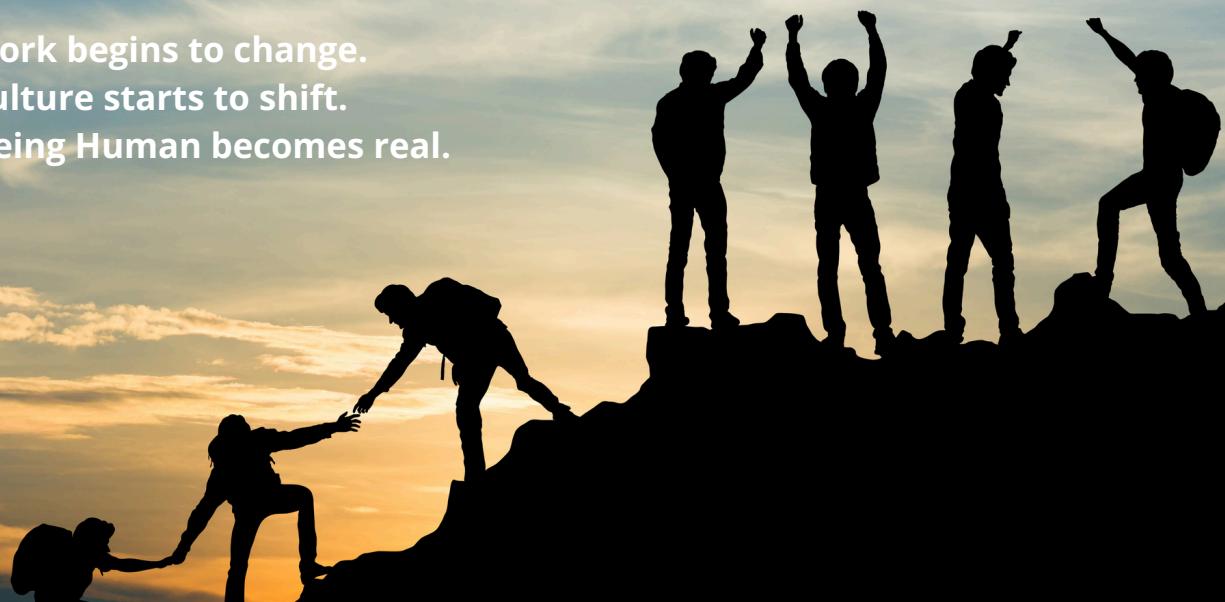
When people feel safe, they shift out of the survival state and into connection. They lead themselves authentically and show up more fully.

And when people are free to express themselves, potential no longer hides.

That's when work begins to change.

That's when culture starts to shift.

That's when Being Human becomes real.



“

The future belongs to those brave enough to build safety, not just strategy. Until next time, let your humanity lead.

— MIRJANA