PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

WORKSHEET 3: THE 4 CORROSIVES

SECTION A: DECISION NODES - Instructions:

Diagnose the Silent Killers Eating Your Culture Alive

1. Score Your Team: Rate each "corrosive" 1–5 (1 = Toxic norm, 5 = Healthy practice).
2. Identify Patterns: Use the diagnostic questions to uncover root causes.
3. Commit to Action: Focus on your lowest score first – no deflection allowed.

1 PERFORMATIVE HARMONY - "We're all fine!" (Spoiler: No one's fine.)

Score: ☐☐☐☐☐

Symptoms:

- Conflict-free survey results but high turnover.
- Meetings end with artificial consensus.
- Feedback is only given in private (if at all).

Diagnostic Questions:

- "What topic is off-limits in team discussions?"
- "When did we last disagree passionately – and resolve it publicly?"

Intervention:

- Run a quarterly "Conflict Debt" retrospective:
  - "What tensions have we buried over the past three months?"
- Reward Dissent: Add "constructive friction" to performance reviews.

2 PROXY PUNISHMENTS - Silencing critics under the guise of “culture fit”.

Score: ☐☐☐☐☐

Symptoms:

- “Difficult” people exit quietly (labeled “not a team player”).
- Praise flows to those who “keep the peace”.
- Feedback is weaponised as “unprofessional”.

Diagnostic Questions:

- “Who left recently – and what unspoken reasons drove them out?”
- “Are ‘culture fit’ hires replicating the same demographic/behaviours?”

Intervention:

- Rewrite Promotion Criteria: Explicitly value “challenging the status quo”.
- Conduct Exit Autopsies: Ask departing staff: “What couldn’t you say here?”

3 MARTYRDOM TRAP - Burnout disguised as “dedication”

Score: ☐☐☐☐☐

Symptoms:

- Overwork is celebrated (“Look how much Sarah sacrifices!”).
- PTO goes unused, or taking it triggers guilt.
- Quiet resentment toward “workhorses”.

Diagnostic Questions:

- “Who’s the ‘go-to’ for emergencies – and at what cost to them?”
- “Do we reward output or heroics?”

Intervention:

- Publicly Sunset “Hero” Narratives: Ban phrases like “above and beyond” in reviews.
- Cap Work Hours: Pilot a “No Emails After 6pm” rule for leaders.

4 INCLUSION THEATRE - Diversity stats ≠ psychological safety.
Score: ☐☐☐☐☐

Symptoms:

- Marginalised hires but homogeneous ideas.
- “Diverse” voices only consulted on “diversity issues”.
- Credit for ideas flows to dominant groups.

Diagnostic Questions:

- “Whose ideas get attributed to others in meetings?”
- “Do we tokenise underrepresented staff?”

Intervention:

- Audit Idea Attribution: Track who presents ideas in meetings vs. who originated them.
- Rotate Decision Owners: Give marginalised staff formal authority in key projects.

A ACTION PLANNER
(Skip this, and this worksheet is worthless.)

Lowest Scoring Corrosive: _____

Priority Action: _____

- Example: “Run a Conflict Debt Retro by [date].”

Success Metric: _____

- Example: “3 instances of public dissent this month.”

B REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which corrosive are we most defensive about? Why?
- What systems (e.g., promotions, meetings) sustain these corrosives?
- Who benefits from us avoiding this work?

C MORGAN NOTE

If your scores are all 4s and 5s, you’re either enlightened – or lying.

Re-run the survey anonymously.