Safe Space Leadership

LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

Opening the conversations waiting to happen

Prompts that make it easier for people to say what they've been holding back

Use them in a one-to-one, after a meeting, or when something feels unsaid.

In many teams, there are conversations waiting to happen: a concern not yet raised, a disagreement left in the meeting room, a workload no one has mentioned. They rarely surface on their own.

Before speaking up, people weigh two things: whether it's safe, and whether it will change anything. These prompts make the first step easier, and the three steps below make the second one worth taking.

Prompts for three moments

THE MOMENT	OPEN WITH	OR WITH
In a one-to-one	*"Is there anything you've been wanting to raise but haven't found the right moment?"*	*"What's something I might not be hearing about?"*
After a meeting	*"Was there anything in that discussion you saw differently?"*	*"What didn't get said in there?"*
When something feels off	*"I've noticed [what you've seen]. How are things going for you?"*	*"Is anything getting in the way that I could help with?"*

When they do speak up

01

Thank them for raising it, even if it's hard to hear.

02

Ask before you answer: "Tell me more."

03

Say what you'll do next, and when. Then do it.

ONE QUESTION TO RETIRE

"Is everything okay?"

The easiest answer is yes, so that's usually the answer you'll get. Ask something specific instead, and leave a pause long enough for a real answer.

People speak up when it feels safe, and worth it. How a leader responds the first time decides whether there's a second.

Want to know where your leaders stand?

The free Retention Scorecard takes about 10 minutes and shows the leadership area that needs attention most.

safespaceleadership.com.au/scorecard

SSL builds leaders people choose to stay for.

General information about leadership practice. Updated November 2026. © Safe Space Leadership 2026