



# Ethics = Values<sup>2</sup>

Professor Melinda Edwards





# Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

*QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.*

*QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.*





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**Ethics = Values<sup>2</sup>**

## **Overview**

1. What is 'ethical' thinking?
2. How do we encourage it,  
for maximum value, in our organisation?

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- 1. What is 'ethical' thinking?**
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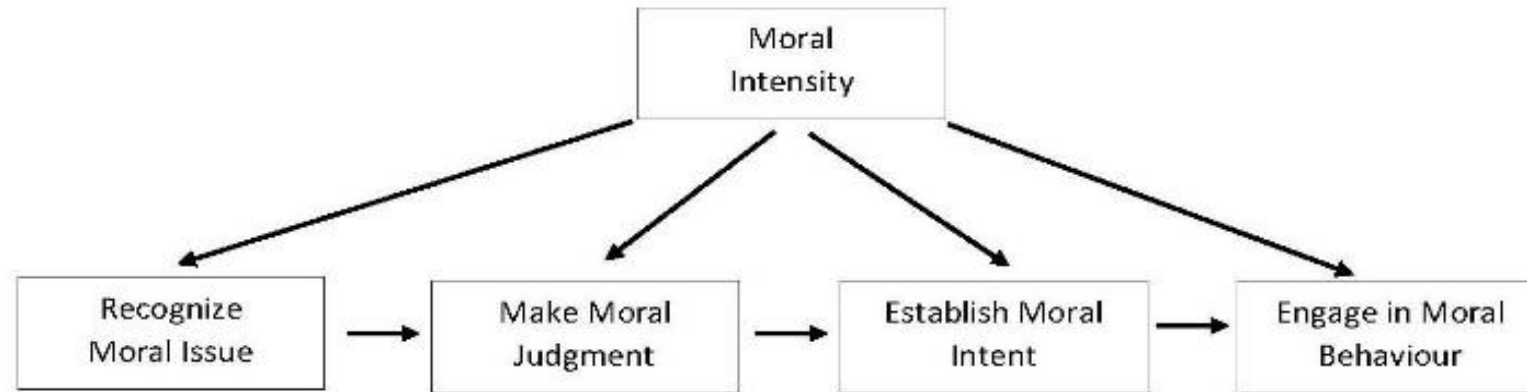


# How we think we make decisions



# Ethical Decision Making Theory

## Existing Theory – Jones Moral Intensity Model (1991)



Two fundamental assumptions:

1. That ethical decision making is a *rational*, cognitive process that can be taught
2. That unethical behaviour occurs due to:-
  - Greed
  - Poor Character
  - Bad values

**Conclusion: Bad People Do Bad Things**

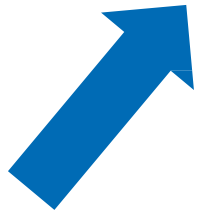
**Implications:** 1. Weed out the 'bad' apples 2. Re-educate on character and values 3. Establish strong deterrents



# How we really make decisions



## How do you lead a 'good' life? or How ought we to live?



What's right?

- Values and Principles
- Divine command theory
- Kantian universalism
- Aristotle virtue ethics



What's good?

- Outcomes
- Utilitarian thinking
- John Stuart Mill
- Jeremy Bentham

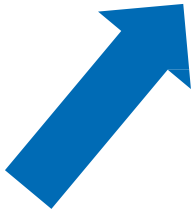


What's fitting?

- Culture and Context
- Ethical relativism

# Robin Hood?

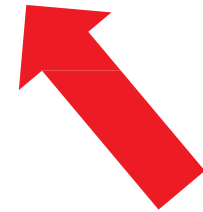
Robbed from the rich to give to the poor



Was this  
right or wrong?



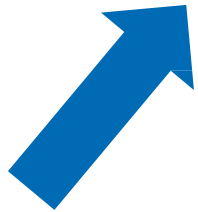
Was it a good  
outcome?



Was it contextually  
fitting?



# How do you lead a 'good' organisation?



What's right?

## Compliance

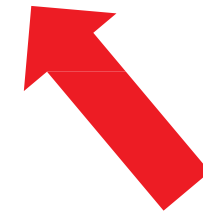
- Values and Principles
- Codes of Conduct
- Policies and Procedures



What's good?

## Outcomes

- Organisational Vision
- Strategic Goals
- Targets

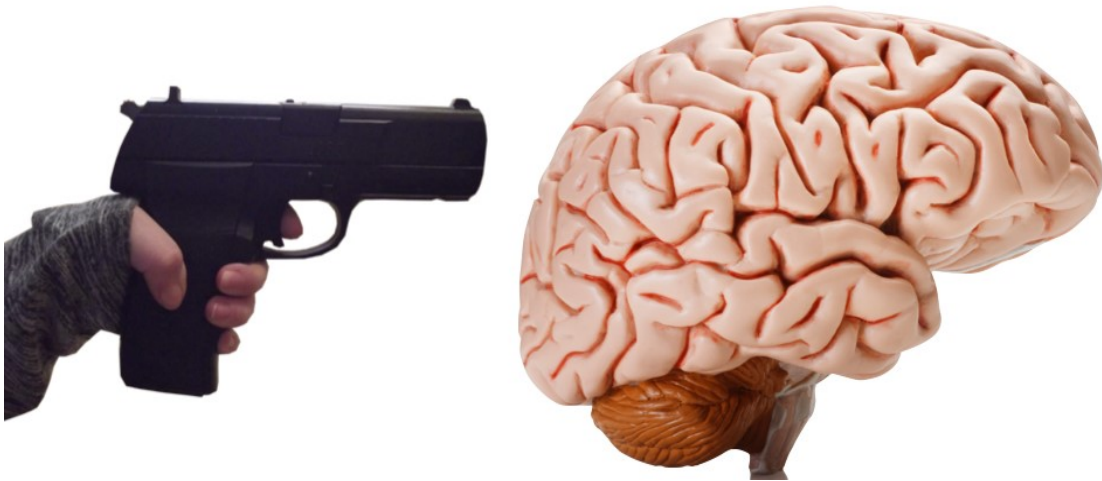


What's fitting?

## Culture

- The way we do things around here
- Shared norms, rituals, stories, legends

# The Neuroscience Perspective



- Stress = Amygdala Hijack
- System #1 thinking is our default program
- Mirror Neurons in the Neo Cortex
- Leaders need to model what they want mirrored



# Implications for ethical thinking:

- contextual and situational factors play a large role in influencing behaviour
- stress diminishes our ability to forecast consequences and self-regulate
- reflexive thinking cycle #1 is our default program
- confirmation bias - once we have made a decision we are inclined to dismiss evidence that questions its validity.



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**Conclusion: Good people can unintentionally create unethical outcomes**

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1. What is 'ethical' thinking?
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# How were they thinking?



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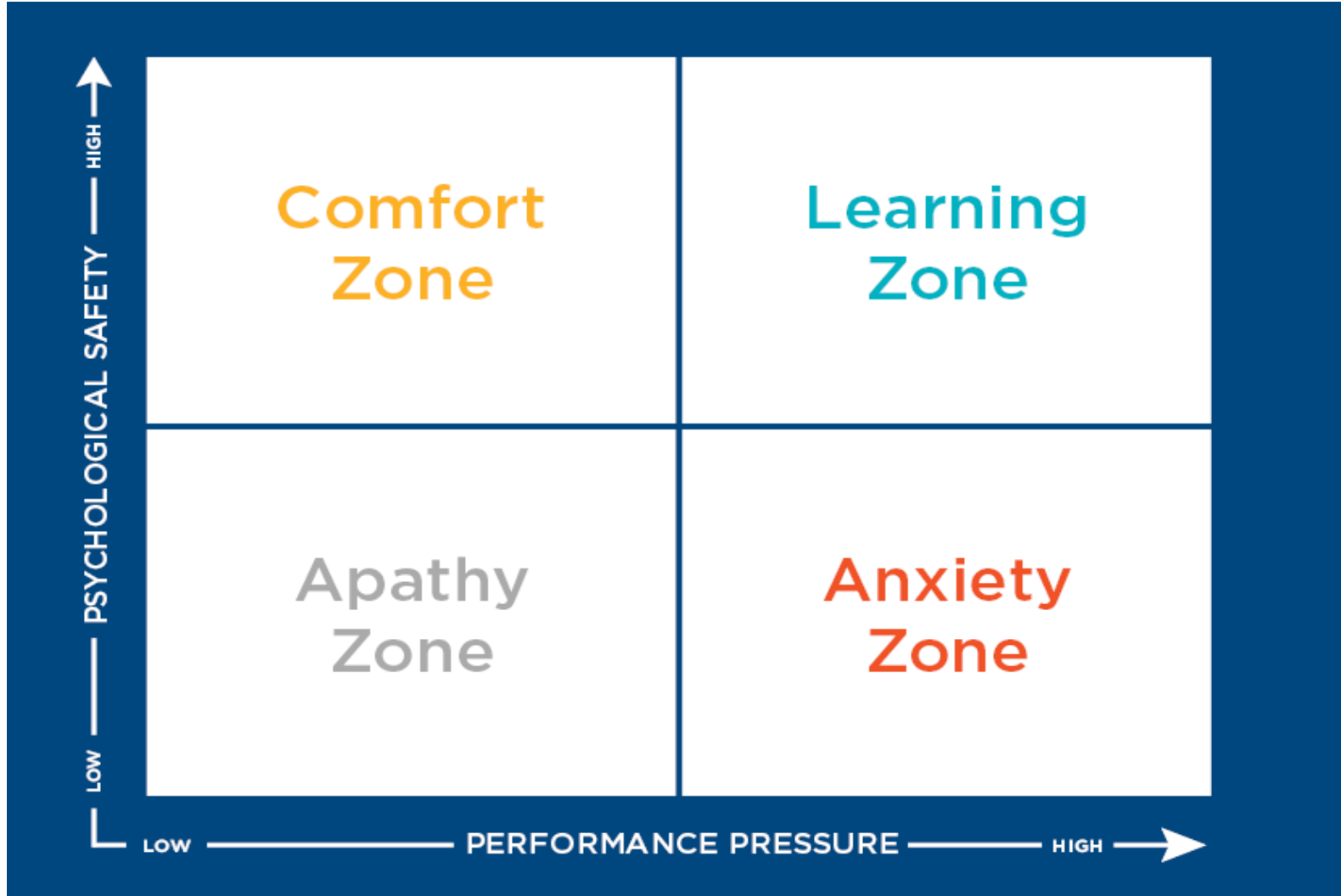


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# Psychological Safety

## What?

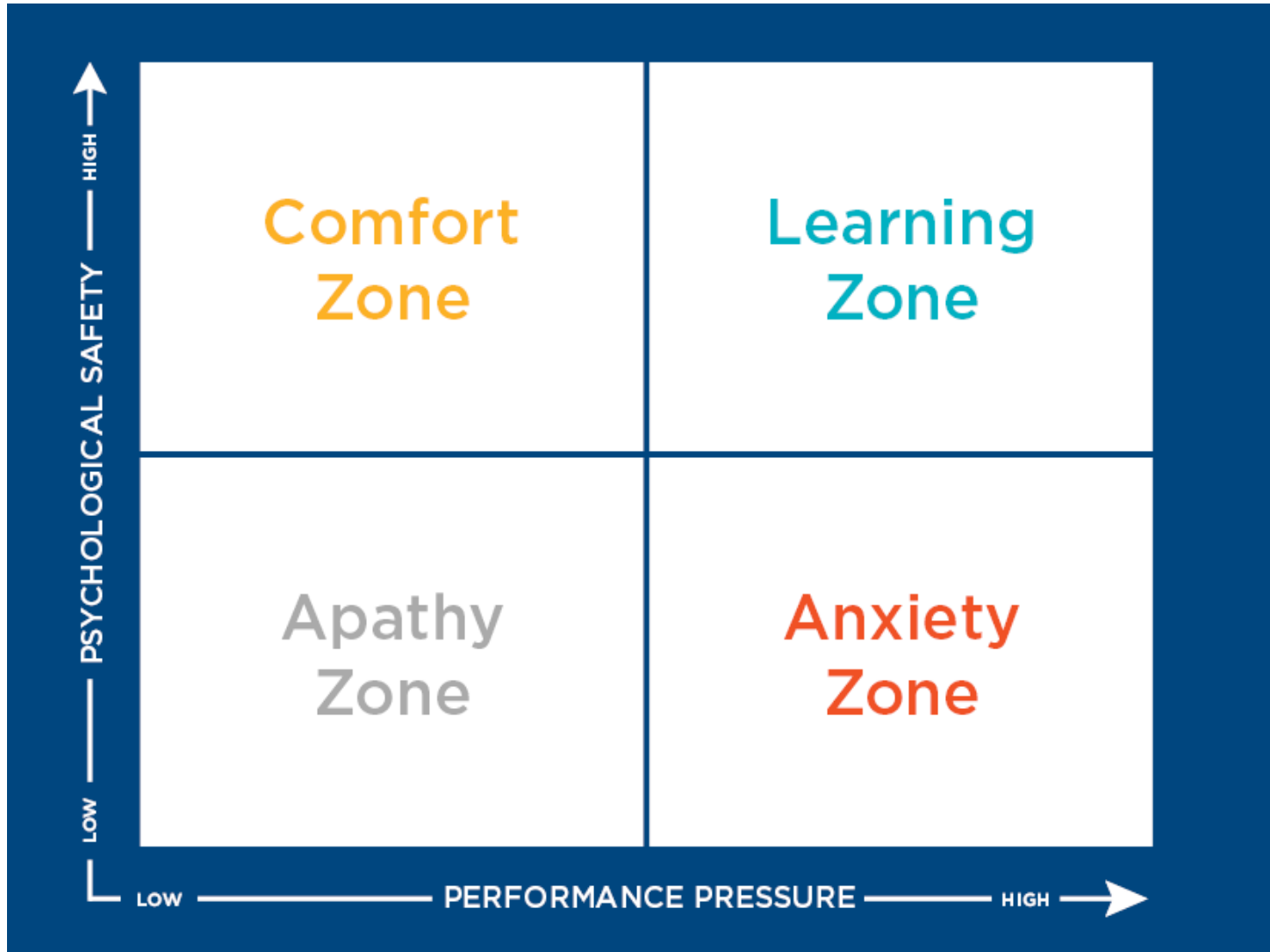


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Figure 4.1. Psychological Safety and Accountability. Adapted from “The Fearless Organization” by A. Edmondson, 2018. Wiley.

# Psychological Safety

## Why?



Safety

Retention

Innovation

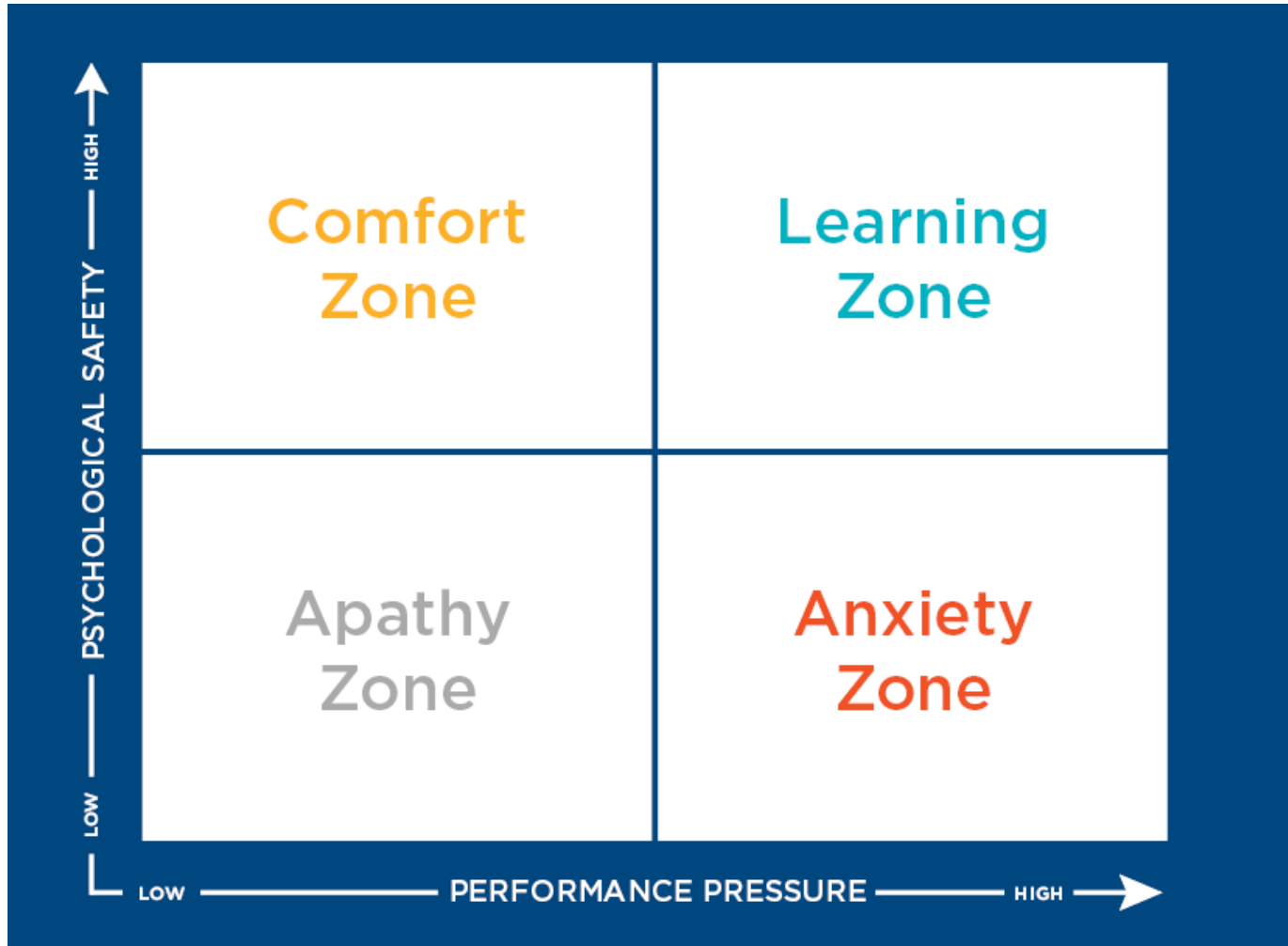
Value

Ethics

Figure 4.1. Psychological Safety and Accountability. Adapted from "The Fearless Organization" by A. Edmondson, 2018. Wiley.

# Psychological Safety

## How?



Learning Mindset –  
situational humility  
& curiosity

Destigmatise Mistakes-  
appreciate intelligent risks

Invite Participation

Figure 4.1. Psychological Safety and Accountability. Adapted from “The Fearless Organization” by A. Edmondson, 2018. Wiley.



# Discussion



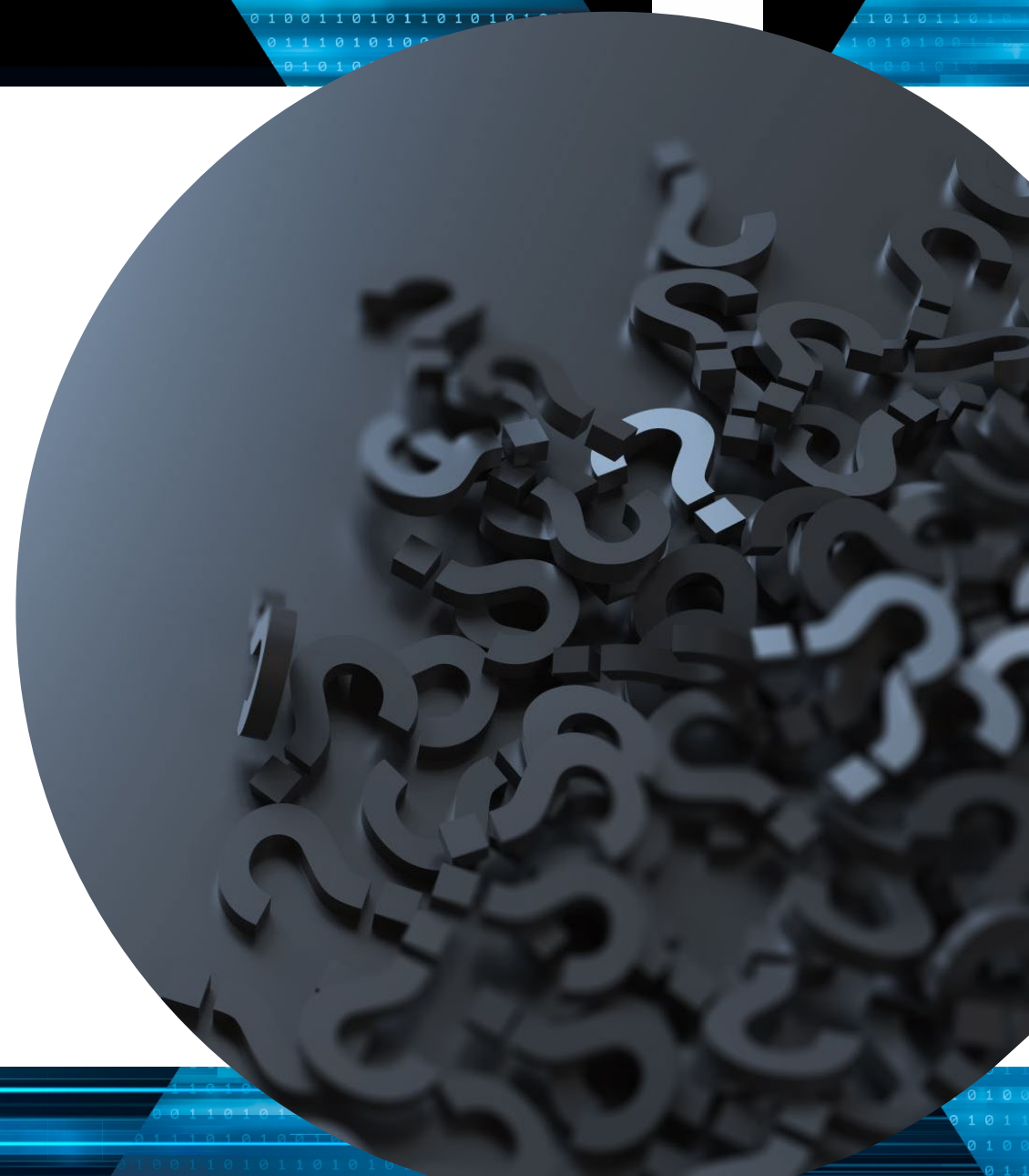
What is rewarded in our shadow culture?

(the way we do things around here – shared norms, rituals, stories, legends)

How safe is it to offer new ideas, ask questions and probe decision-making?

How do we privilege the learning space to promote a more agile and ethical culture?

# Questions?







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