



# Safety & Mindset

## *Changing thinking and acting by working with dilemmas*

For several decennia, NAM has operated gas fields in the Southern North Sea. And for decennia their safety performance has improved by an uninterrupted focus to prevent incidents from happening.

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The prevailing paradigms and the associated approaches to address safety have changed over the years. In the 60's and 70's, the focus was on improving safety from an engineering perspective: promoting safety through process design enhancements, handrails, personal protective equipment and safe tools. In the 80's and 90's, the focus was on procedures and safety management systems. Clear rules were established determining the conditions and steps under which work was allowed to be executed. This again resulted in a steep change in safety performance.

Since then, the insight has emerged that not all situations can be captured in procedures. The next focus in safety interventions and training during the last 15 years has been on behaviour. Behaviour is about what you do in the moment.

Very recently, a new focus has emerged, based on the insight that the actual behaviour of staff is influenced by more than just the ability to act in a certain way. Safe behaviour depends on having a safety mindset, and a team culture that supports communication and cooperation between individuals. That way of working involves people to see safety simply as part of their professionalism – safety is between the ears and the noses, before it is in your hands, one could say.

In 2009 NAM has conducted a number of workshops for

supervisory staff. In these workshops participants explored their safety mindset and the safety culture on their platform or plant. With a safety mindset we mean a deep understanding of one's own beliefs and mindfulness how these beliefs can result in safe, or unsafe actions.

### Starting Points

#### Adult approach

Core to our way of working is to make participants' mindset about safety explicit and reflect on it. We believe that people will merely tolerate the conclusions of others, but they will only act and adapt their mindsets based on their own conclusions. Through a dialogue among colleagues we challenge participants to review their beliefs, and consequent actions, when it comes to safety. We facilitate people to arrive at their own conclusions.

#### Professionalism

A second core element in our approach is our assumption that

## Safety Mindset: a deep understanding of one's beliefs and mindfulness



everybody has the professionalism to work safely. This forms the basis for a mature dialogue and gives the possibility to explore dilemma's participants face. Often, these are difficult decisions which are neither right or wrong. Next to technical competencies, your professionalism is also determined by your ability to share your beliefs with colleagues and adjust them.

**Safety**

Working on a safety mindset can only be done in a psychologically safe environment. We create a space in which participants can say what they think, can make mistakes and where there is no condemning of other people's beliefs. Only in such an environment professionals are willing to explore their own thinking, make doubts explicit and listen seriously to others.

**Program**

Based on the above mentioned core elements and following

discussions with several supervisors the following program has been developed.

We start the afternoon with a film in which we see how an incident develops. Several people make decisions in what we call the grey area; the area in which you know that a decision can be the wrong one, but at the same time that decision seems to be a logical step to take. After a group discussion about the film, the participants explore each other's beliefs on day to day safety aspects via statements. An example of such a statement is: "when I am working at home, I work as safe as on my platform". Such statements demonstrate large differences in beliefs between people who normally work together, often to their own surprise.

The next day the group (16-20 people in total) is split in smaller groups and we work in four studio's.

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Afternoon/Evening	Next Day	
<p><b>Setting the scene</b></p> <p>Introductions Video Plenary dialogue Statement game</p> <p>Dinner</p>	<p><b>Studio 1</b></p> <p>Intervening so that the other takes responsibility</p> <p>Adult to adult conversations (working with actors)</p>	<p><b>Studio 2</b></p> <p>What do I stand for?</p> <p>Exploring your values and beliefs in action</p>
	<p><b>Studio 3</b></p> <p>Beyond the toolbox talk</p> <p>Sensing and intervening on non-technical issues (working with actors)</p>	<p><b>Studio 4</b></p> <p>High Reliability Organisations</p> <p>How do I create a safety conscious culture?</p>
	<p><b>Plenary Close-out</b></p> <p>Reflection and sharing what we have learned</p>	



*Studio 1: Intervening...with the others as partner. How you intervene: hard on content, soft on the relationship.*

In this studio, with an actor, participants learn how to approach each other in an adult fashion on an unsafe act or situation, focused at changing the behavior of the other.

*Studio 2: What do you stand for? About personal beliefs around safety.*

In studio 2 we explore individual norms, values and beliefs of the participants with respect to safety. The facilitators holds up a sometimes confronting mirror.

*Studio 3: Working towards a safe working team: How to build a safe team during a toolbox talk?*

In this studio participants practice with interventions in a team. How do you influence people and what is the effect on the safety culture of that team? Actors provide realistic practice situations based on the experience of the participants.

*Studio 4: Working on a safety culture: How does a safety culture look like and what can you as a supervisor?*

In this studio we make a journey to a number of safe teams participants have worked in before and look at safe teams in different industries. What are the success factors and what can we learn from these?

Working with actors (studio 1 and 3) offers the following advantages:

- on behavior: participants learn practical skills which are immediately applicable back at work;
- on the mindset: participants are confronted with their own style and the 'shortcuts' in their thinking which determine their reactions and actions.

Finally: within the workshops we ensure a culture which is congruent with what we want to achieve: respect and in contact with each other, fun but also focus on content and process.

#### Quotes

"What I consider to be safe, could be unsafe for somebody else. Sometimes I make decisions based on my professional experience in which I deviate from the procedure."

"Too many procedures have stopped the thinking."

"You need to have experienced an incident yourself before you really learn."

"The Life Saving Rules and consequence management seem to be conflicting with a reporting culture. Furthermore, the space to discuss the rules and the way to apply them seems to become limited. The reason for that is the fear of the consequences."

"When you don't follow the rules, you think about how to defend your actions. Even if it is not logical to follow the rules in a certain situation."



### Results from the workshops

The workshops have an effect on behavior and mindset.

First of all we received many positive reactions during the workshops. "Great, no new set of rules or long presentations full of warnings or must do's. It is very effective to get the opportunity to reflect with my own colleagues on my beliefs and practice how my behavior can influence the safety culture"

In addition we heard from NAM that back at work different questions are being asked. From a focus on right or wrong to a dialogue why certain choices had been made.



### Quotes

"It was a delight to be able to talk about my dilemmas."

"The best workshop I attended in 7 years."

"No slides: finally a workshop in which I was not talked to."

"The size of the group (16-20) was great: it was personal."

"Very useful to work with the actors instead of looking at actors."

"Practical! Not a standard training: I had to work! Challenging....but not always easy as it was about me."



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