

Leading Through Organizational Change

Practical Strategies for Supporting People, Strengthening Teams, and Navigating Transition

July 23rd, 2026

Risa Hayes, CPC

Program Specialist, Federal Health Solutions

Care Coordination Subject Matter Expert, Midwest QIN-QIO

Pre-Test Link:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/
r/Org-Change-Pre](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Org-Change-Pre)



Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this session is to equip you with practical insights, strategies, and tools to understand and effectively navigate major system change and transition.

1

Describe common human and behavioral responses to organizational change and transition.

2

Identify leadership and team practices that promote clarity, stability, trust, and psychological safety during change.

3

Apply practical communication, listening, and feedback tools to help individuals and teams navigate change constructively.

4

Recognize the shared roles of leaders, managers, and staff in supporting successful organizational change.

“Leadership is accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty.”

~ Marshall Ganz, PhD; Harvard Kennedy School

The Only Constant is Change

And yet, we all struggle with it. How can we manage change? How can we lead through change?



Reality of Systemic Change

- ▶ *Change is constant, complex, and often externally driven*
- ▶ *Organizations don't fail from change* - They fail from unmanaged response to change
- ▶ *It's not that people don't like change ... they don't like being changed.* And we like comfort, control, predictability

Poll:

- ▶ Are you experiencing transition or change in your work?
- ▶ Extent of disruption?
 - 0 – 5 rating scale:
 - 0 being no disruption
 - 1 being mild disruption
 - 5 being severe disruption/breakdown of systems

What Makes Change Difficult?

Impact to the People

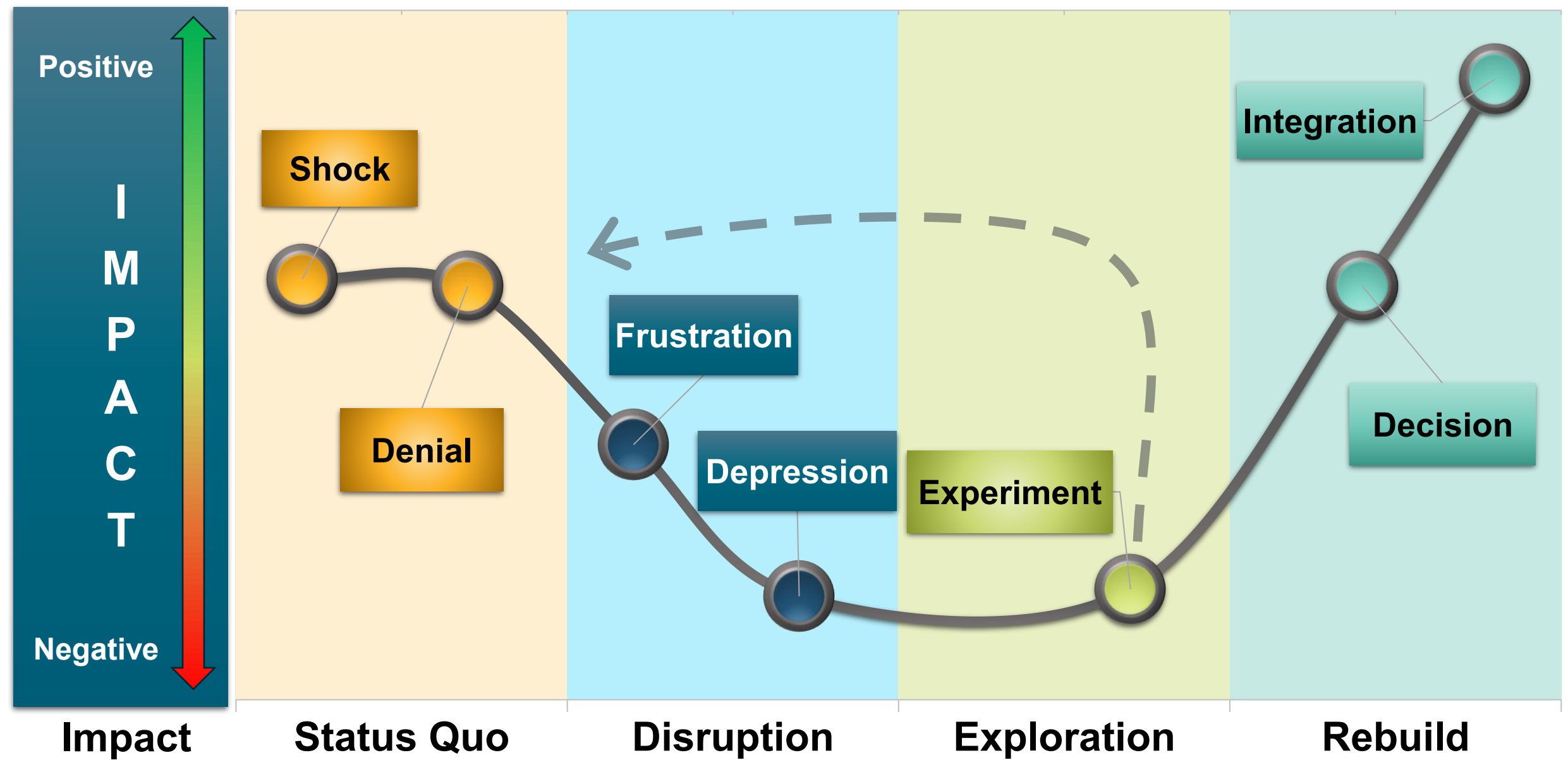
- ▶ Uncertainty
- ▶ Loss of predictability
- ▶ Perceived loss of control
- ▶ Competing priorities (service delivery vs transformation)
- ▶ Cognitive overload

Impact to the Organization(s)

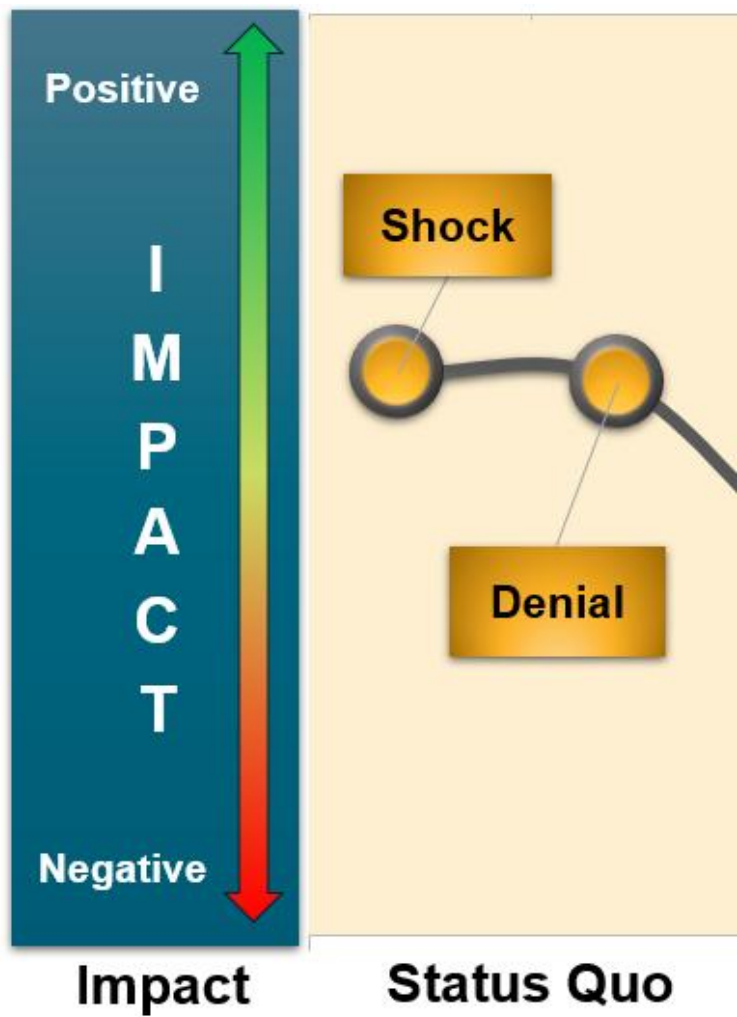
- ▶ Low morale
- ▶ Drop in productivity
- ▶ Decision paralysis
- ▶ Increased errors/compliance risk
- ▶ Staff disengagement or turnover

“Emotions truly are data and have just as much relevance as [any] data on sales, profits, or any other ‘tangible’ aspect of organizational performance.”

~ Jeanie Daniel Duck, author, HBR article - [Managing Change: The Art of Balancing](#), and [The Change Monster](#)

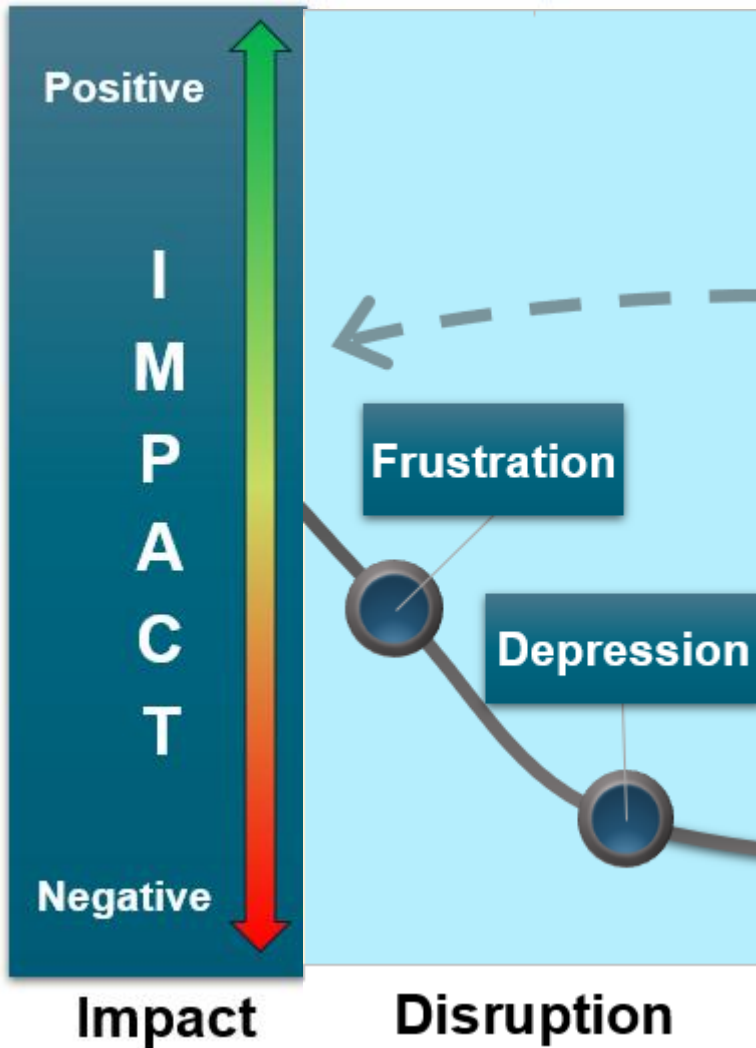


The Change Curve: Status Quo



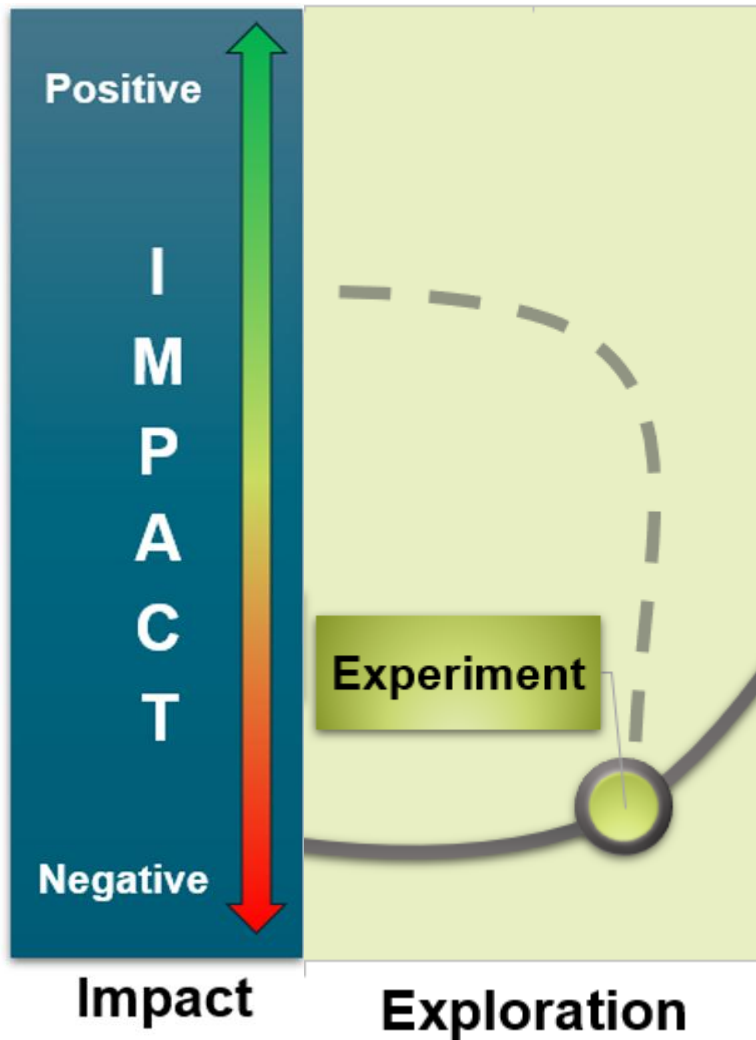
Reactions	Shock, disbelief, denial
Behaviors	Withdrawal, disengagement, refusal
Leadership Approach	Communicate & Contextualize
Strategies (DO)	• Create perception of control • Help people visualize the unknown • Anticipate confusion • Answer questions as many times as needed
Avoid (DON'T)	Thinking you've 'already' explained

The Change Curve: Disruption



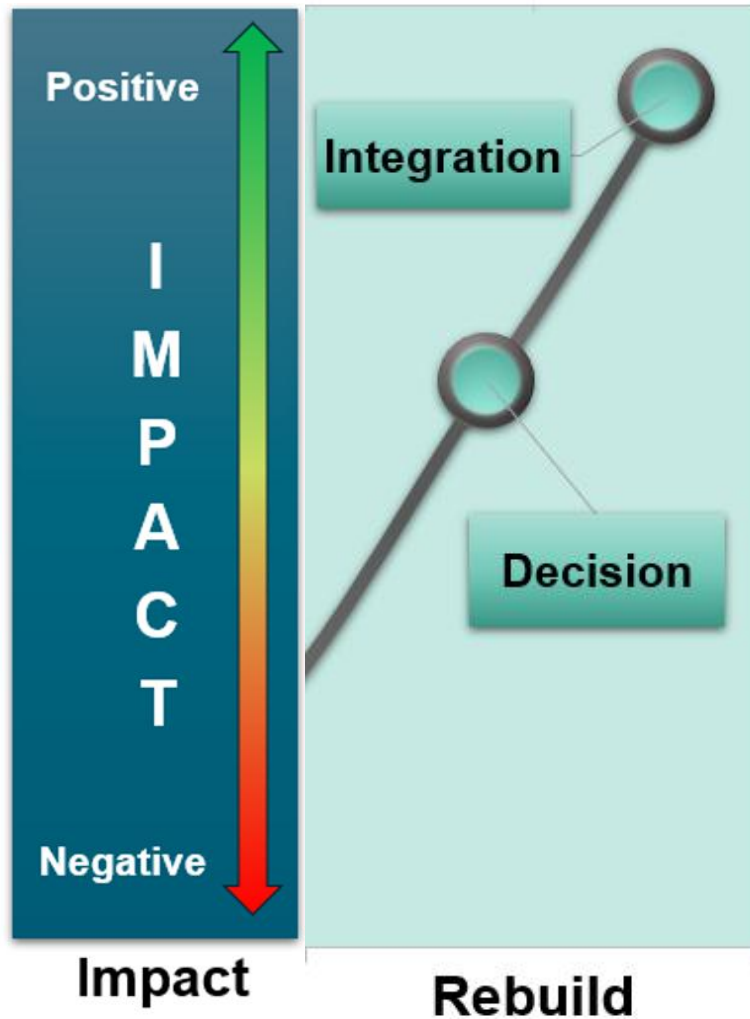
Reactions	Resistance
Behaviors	Frustration, Depression
Leadership Approach	Give People a Voice & Space to Voice Feelings/Opinions
Strategies (DO)	• Listen • Engage
Avoid (DON'T)	Try to combat emotional beliefs with facts

The Change Curve: Exploration



Reactions	Continued Resistance, Openness, Excitement
Behaviors	Experimenting, Working to Understand and Changes May Regress
Leadership Approach	Empower People & Teams
Strategies (DO)	• Enable experimentation and exploration • Support without judgment • Provide/allow as much autonomy as possible • Give time to integrate
Avoid (DON'T)	Take care to not stifle creativity or change processing

The Change Curve: Rebuild



Reactions	Acceptance/less resistance, more positive, forward looking
Behaviors	Integrating changes, adapting
Leadership Approach	Reinforce the good that has been done
Strategies (DO)	• Focus on and celebrate successes
Avoid (DON'T)	Assume everyone moves at the same pace, and all have adapted

“Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.”

~ Brené Brown – Researcher and Author, *Dare to Lead*





Organizational Change: Leaders

Role:

- Provide clarity
- Maintain direction & stability
- Model confidence

Key Behaviors:

- Visibility
- Transparency
- Empathy & Accountability

Strategies & Tools:

- Understand human factors
- Build/strengthen supportive systems
- Enable shared responsibility



Organizational Change: Managers

Role:

- Often primary interpreters of change
- Take pulse of up/down levels
- Recognize warning signs

Key Behaviors:

- Skillful communication
- Transparency
- Coaching

Strategies & Tools:

- Enable staff to raise concerns through:
 - Structured and unstructured communication channels
 - (1:1, small group, open office hours, feedback loops)



Organizational Change: Providers & Support Staff

Role:

- Test/carry out new processes
- Participate in the process
- Contribute to culture

Key Behaviors:

- Exercise Agency
- Reflection
- Engagement

Strategies & Tools:

- Use communication channels and frameworks

Markers of Effective Teams

Team Effectiveness

DREAM TEAMS



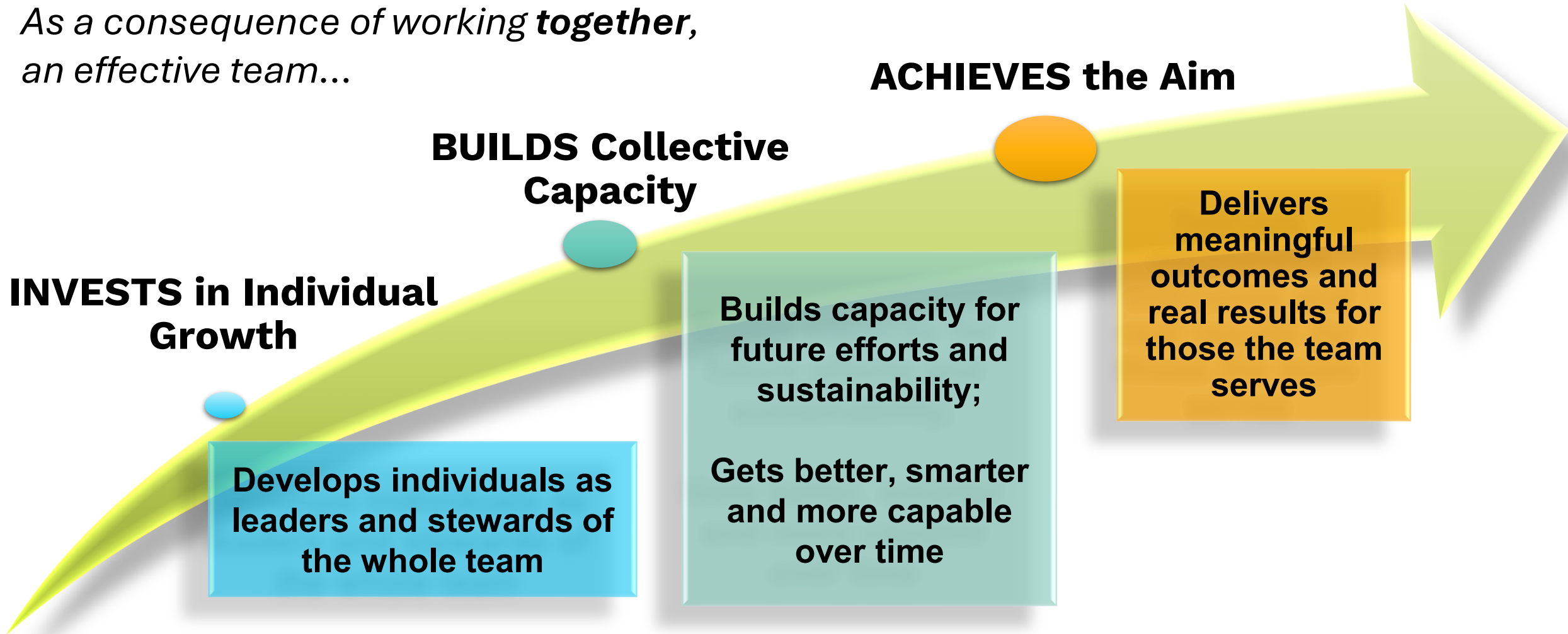
VS

SCREAM TEAMS



Measuring Team Effectiveness

*As a consequence of working **together**,
an effective team...*



Conditions for Team Effectiveness

The Essentials



- Bounded, stable & interdependent
- Essential resources, skills, and capabilities to lead inter-dependently
- Clear, compelling purpose
- The work is understood, challenging, and it matters...
- ...and you know **why** it matters

Enabling Structures



- Sound structures for how the team functions and interacts with one another
- Supportive organization systems
- Coaching

Team Processes

- Interdependent roles
- Real teamwork
- Accountability
- Effort builds shared commitment

Poll: Conditions

► Where do you think your organization is doing well?

- The Essentials
- Enabling Structures
- Team Processes

► Where do you think your organization could improve/has gaps?

- The Essentials
- Enabling Structures
- Team Processes

The Essentials

- Bounded, stable & interdependent
- Essential resources, skills, and capabilities to lead inter-dependently
- Clear, compelling purpose
- The work is understood, challenging, and it matters...
- ...and you know **why** it matters



Enabling Structures

- Sound structures for how the team functions and interacts with one another
- Supportive organization systems
- Coaching

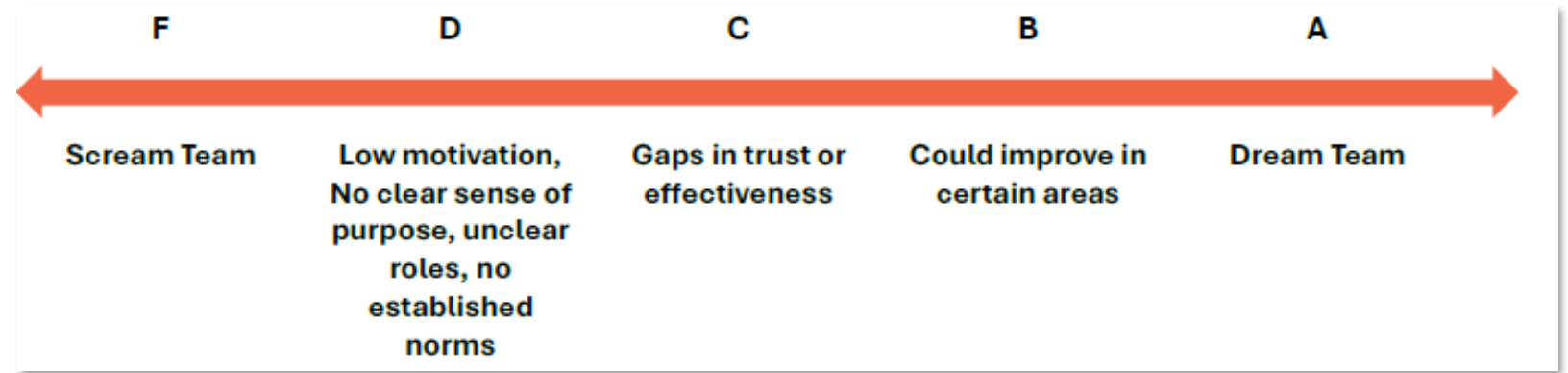


Team Processes

- Interdependent roles
- Real teamwork
- Accountability
- Effort builds shared commitment

Tool: Diagnostic Checklist of Team Effectiveness

Section 1: Compelling Purpose



Compelling Purpose	F	D/C/B	A	Overall Grade:
	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much	How might we Improve?
There is truly a shared purpose that is clear to all members.				
The work has serious consequences [for health and healthcare/ for the community/ for the department or the organization] – team members know that their work matters, and their success makes a difference.				
The work is challenging and engaging and requires committed effort from all members.				

Tool: Diagnostic Checklist of Team Effectiveness

Section 2: Capabilities, Resources & Skills

Scale

F: Scream Team

D: Low Motivation, No clear sense of purpose, unclear roles, no established norms

C: Gaps in trust or effectiveness

B: Could improve in certain areas

A: Dream Team

Capabilities, Resources, Skills	F	D/C/B	A	Overall Grade:
	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much	How might we Improve?
Members understand themselves as an important part of the team, not just a representative of their own position or department.				
The team, collectively, has a high level of collaborative skills (good listening, empathy, humor, integrity).				
Members have the ability to think about the overall system, not just their own place within the system.				
The team is comprised of people who have a diverse set of skills, resources and perspectives.				
Team leaders and members have skills to encourage and coach each other to build both individual and collective capacity.				
The team has a clear and stable boundary: it's clear who is on the team – it's not a random group at each meeting – and people stay long enough to learn to work together.				

Tool: Diagnostic Checklist of Team Effectiveness

Section 3: Enabling Team Structures

Scale

F: Scream Team

D: Low Motivation, No clear sense of purpose, unclear roles, no established norms

C: Gaps in trust or effectiveness

B: Could improve in certain areas

A: Dream Team

Enabling Team Structures	(F)	(D/C/B)	(A)	Overall Grade:
	Not at all	Somewhat	Very much	How might we Improve?
Team members explicitly understand how decisions will be made. Decision-making processes are transparent.				
The team has clear expectations and norms for how they will respect and empower each other during their work together.				
The team has talked about how violations of the norms will be acknowledged and addressed respectfully, without shaming.				
Individual team members are learning, team capacity is growing over time and the work is making a difference beyond the team.				
Team members have clear roles, not just job descriptions, but clearly understood roles for how they contribute to the success of the team.				
Individuals know their own role and where their role interacts with others. Members support each other while still “staying in their own lane.”				
The team communicates effectively. Team members are able to recognize and resolve conflict.				
The organization’s structures and systems enable and facilitate rather than undermine teamwork and interdependent leadership.				

The Four Quadrants of Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is...

- “a condition in which one feels
 - (a) included
 - (b) safe to learn
 - (c) safe to contribute
 - (d) safe to challenge the status quo,
- without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized or punished in some way” (Clark, 2019).
- Timothy R. Clark speaks of this in terms of four stages or quadrants of psychological safety.



Inclusion Safety

- “I belong here and I feel welcomed.”



Learner Safety

- “I can ask questions and learn.”



Contributor Safety

- “I can use my voice and add value.”
- “I can make a difference.”



Challenger Safety

- “I can question and disagree.”
- “I can be bold and speak out.”

Belong → Learn → Contribute → Challenge and improve

How Leaders Can Support Psychological Safety

	What it Means	How Leaders Can Apply
INCLUSION SAFETY	Members feel safe to belong to the team	• Give people space to talk • Be curious • Acknowledge and respect boundaries
LEARNER SAFETY	Members can ask questions and learn	• Value honesty • Meet people where they are (don't assume familiarity) • Identify and share what was learned
CONTRIBUTOR SAFETY	Members feel safe to contribute ideas and skills	• Ask permission before giving feedback • Foster equal participation • Encourage open dialogue
CHALLENGER SAFETY	Members can question ideas and suggest meaningful change	• Ask for pluses and deltas (good and bad) • Invite dissent and alternative perspectives • Show gratitude for the opportunity to learn

Poll: The Four Quadrants of Psychological Safety

How does your team/organization compare to the four psychological safety quadrants:

- Where is your team/organization doing **well**?
- Where can your team/organization **improve**?



Inclusion Safety

- “I belong here and I feel welcomed.”



Learner Safety

- “I can ask questions and learn.”



Contributor Safety

- “I can use my voice and add value.”
- “I can make a difference.”



Challenger Safety

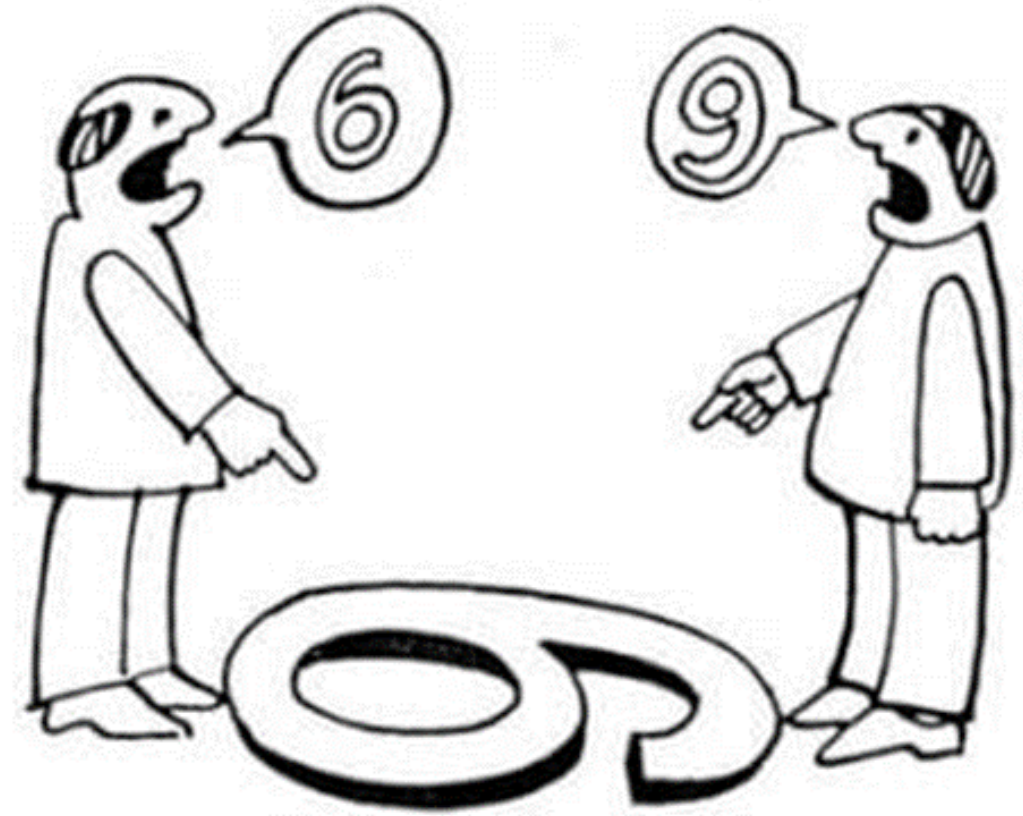
- “I can question and disagree.”
- “I can be bold and speak out.”

Belong → Learn → Contribute → Challenge and improve

Communication Tools

Perception

- ▶ A person's perception is their version of truth
- ▶ It is not a matter of right or wrong, good or bad
- ▶ Seek to understand the person's perception and what observations or experiences contribute to that perception



Tool: Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

- ▶ A communication model for everyday use, with or without conflict
 - It is a guide, not a formula
 - Sometimes called compassionate communication
- ▶ A skill that allows us to bring presence into our interactions and guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others

Observation

- “When I see/hear/notice...”

Feeling

- “I feel...”

Need

- “...because I need/value...”

Request

- “Would you be willing to...”

Increasing Awareness of Your Feelings

How am I feeling at this moment?

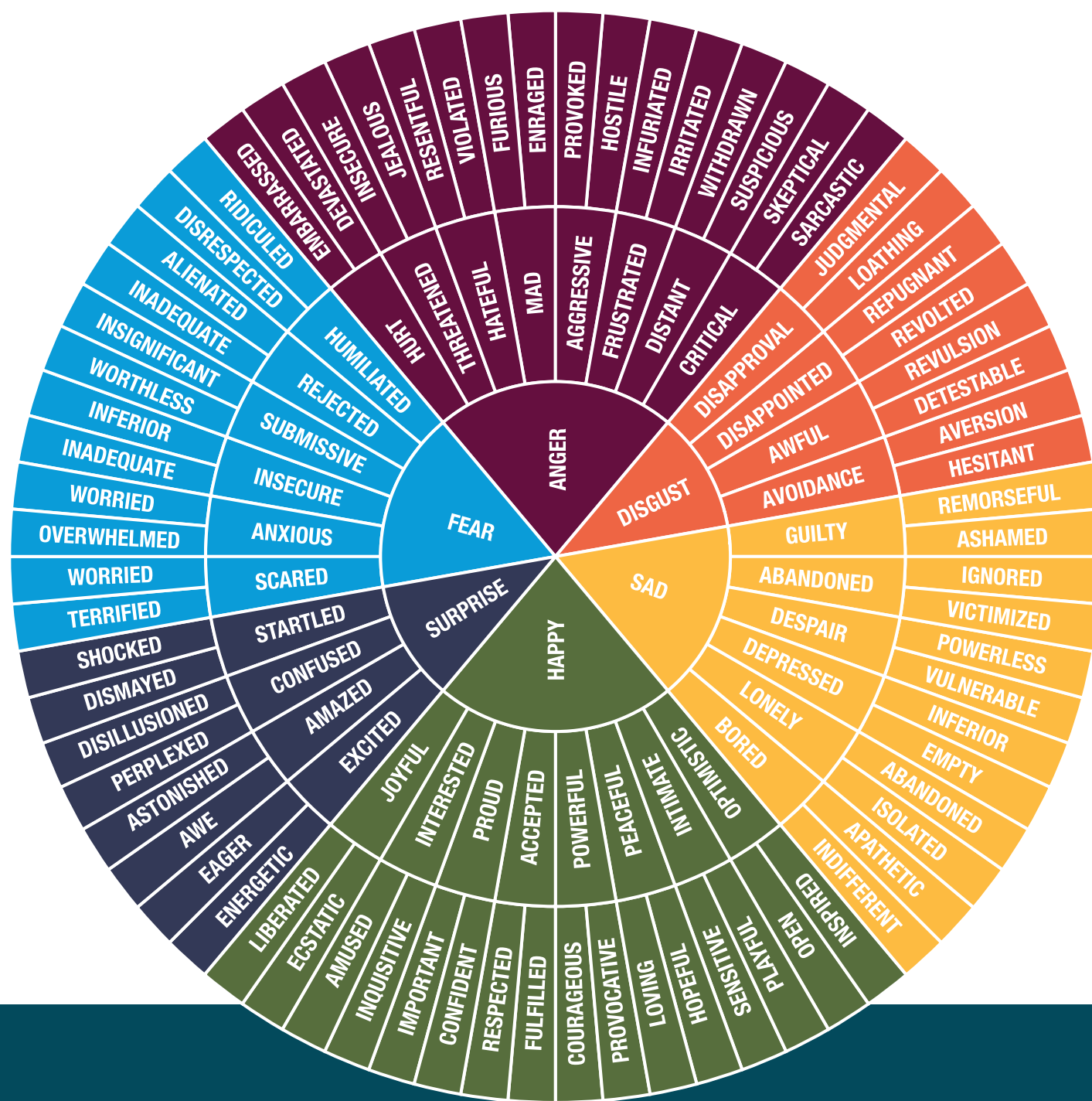
- I'm scared.
- I'm confident.
- I'm irritable.
- I'm relieved.
- I'm exhausted.
- I'm delighted.
- I'm disappointed.

Why is naming emotions/feelings important?

- Tells you something within isn't okay (out of balance)
- Something requires attention
- Points you in the direction of what you need
- Feelings keep you informed!

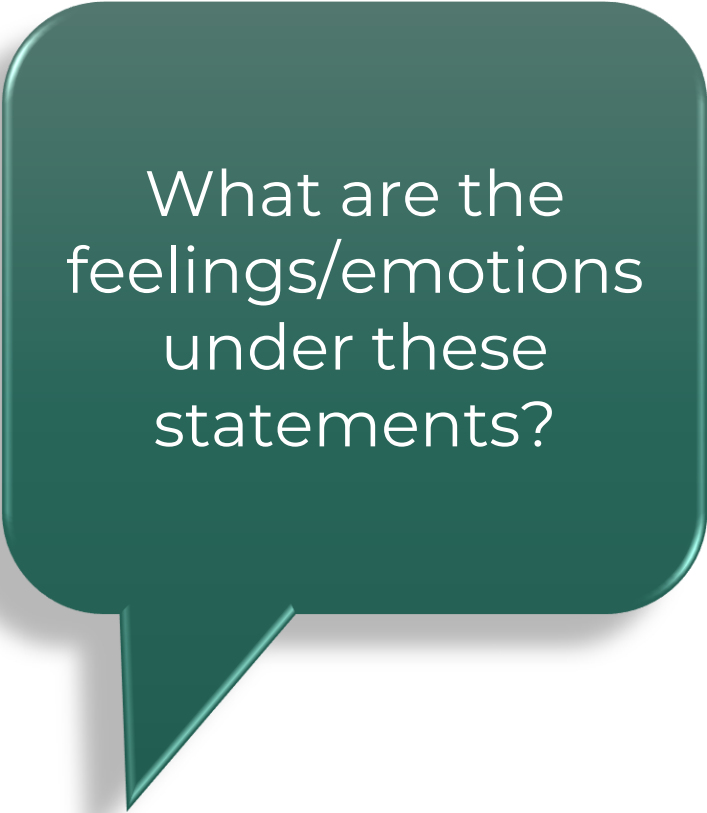
Feelings Wheel

- Expand your emotional vocabulary
- More accurately identify how you are feeling
- Name your feelings/emotions to others
- Begin to understand others' emotions – increase empathy



Feelings... *or Thoughts?*

- ▶ “I think it’s really complicated and could lead to problems.”
- ▶ “It’s very challenging and confusing.”
- ▶ “I feel like this is really complicated and confusing.”

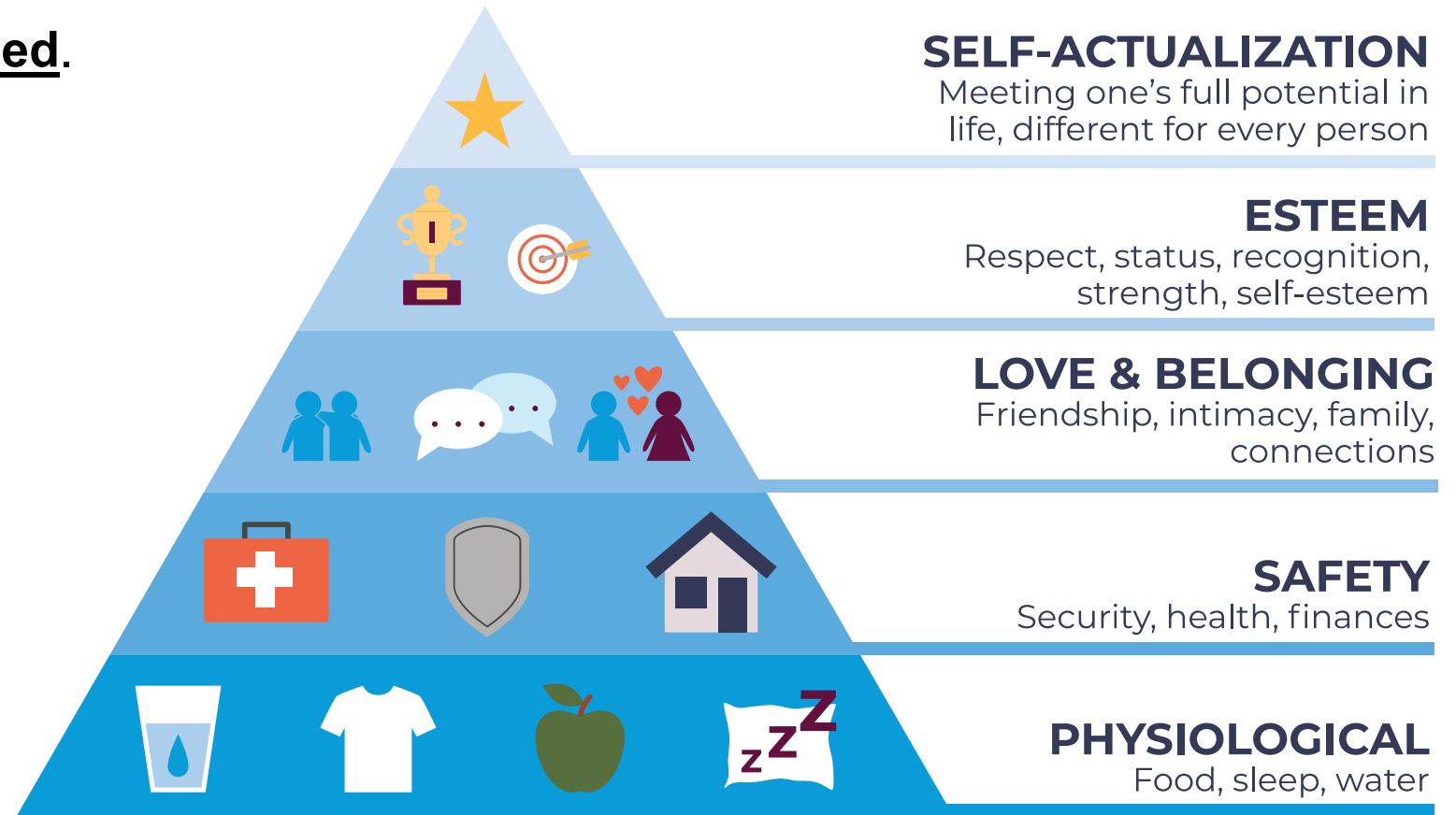


What are the feelings/emotions under these statements?

Universal Human Needs

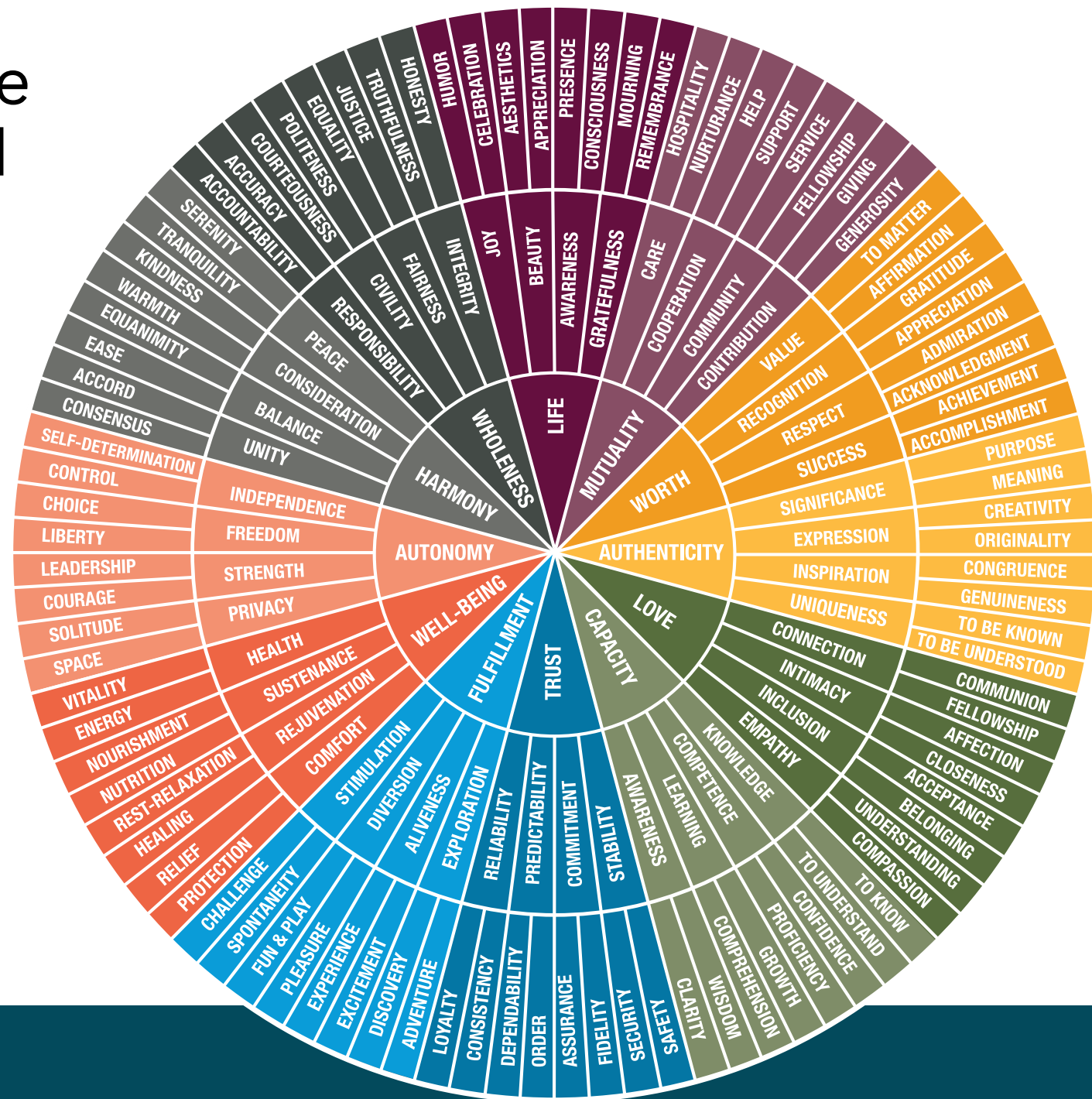
MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- Every **feeling** is connected to a **need**.
- The **need** can be met or unmet.
- The **feelings** are the **clues!**



Once You've Identified the Feeling, Identify the Need

- I'm feeling irritable. I need time alone and a snack.
- I'm scared. I need more information.
- I'm feeling overwhelmed. It's important to me that I can ask for help when I need it (the need in this example is trust).
- I'm encouraged (feeling) by the sense of renewed purpose (the need) with my team.
- I'm relaxed and appreciate that my supervisor listened to my ideal



TOOLS: Communication Frameworks

NVC Framework

Observation

- “When I see/hear/notice...”

Feeling

- “I feel...”

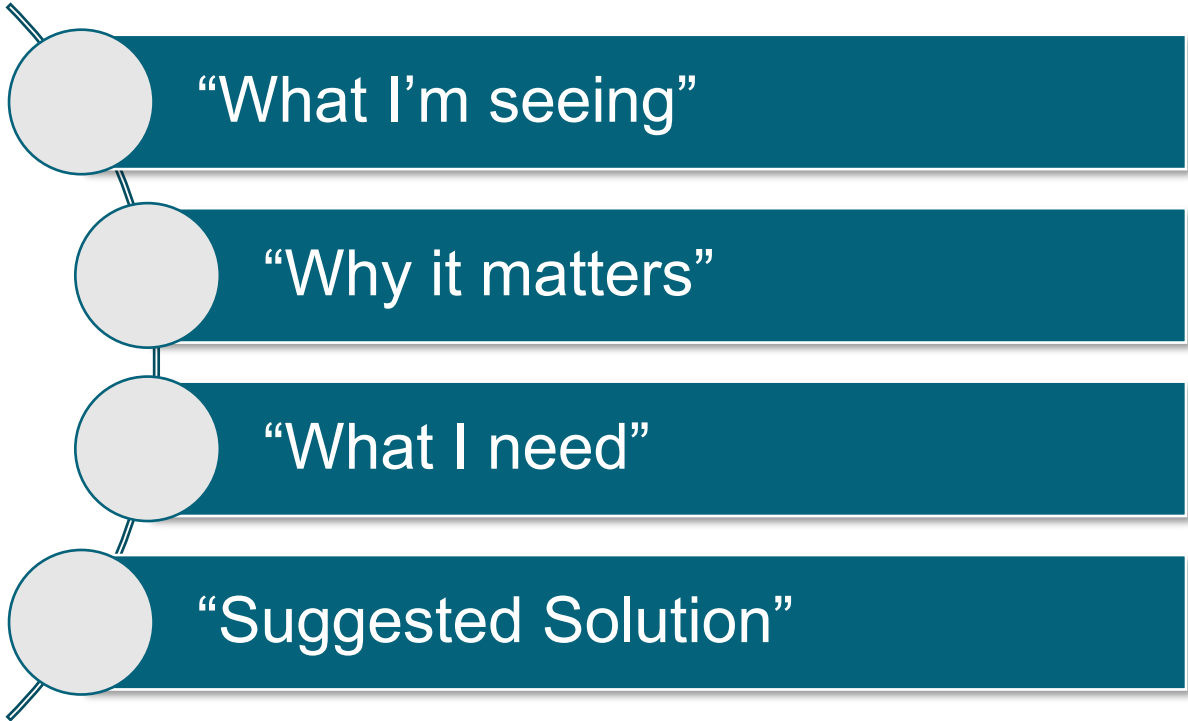
Need

- “...because I need/value...”

Request

- “Would you be willing to...”

Adapted Framework



“What I’m seeing”

“Why it matters”

“What I need”

“Suggested Solution”

Attuned Listening (Empathy)

- ▶ Sending the message verbally and non-verbally to the speaker that you want to hear them
 - *“I’m here, I care, I have the spaciousness and I’m available.”*
- ▶ To ensure you’ve fully heard the other person
- ▶ No agenda, no need to fix or solve anything
- ▶ Summarize what they said and ask, *“Did I get that right?”*
 - If no, ask them to share again
 - If yes, ask *“What else?”* or *“Is there more that you’d like to tell me?”*
- ▶ “Simply” to listen

We Need to Feel Heard to Listen

- ▶ We listen better after we have been fully heard
- ▶ It does not mean the other person agrees with us or our decisions
- ▶ It just means we feel heard without judgment, blame or criticism

WORD OF CAUTION:



Everyone wants to be heard and understood for what they said. We all do, or we wouldn't speak.

However, they may not be willing to bring their deepest needs and feelings to the surface.

TOOL: The Coaching Habit

1. The Kickstart Question: **What's on your mind?**
2. The AWE Question: **And what else?**
3. The Focus Question: **What's the real challenge here for you?**
4. The Foundation Question: **What do you want** (what would be the ideal result/outcome)?
5. The Lazy Question: **(To make sure I am clear) How can I help?**
6. The Strategic Question: **If you are saying Yes to this, what are you saying No to?**
7. The Learning Question: **What was most useful for you?**

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. In the foreground, there are large, dark brown fields. A road runs diagonally through the middle of the image. On either side of the road, there are farm buildings, including barns and silos. The background shows a small town or village with more buildings and trees. The sky is filled with clouds, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Questions

Risa Hayes, CPC
Program Specialist
rhayes@telligen.com



Health and
Human Services

References

- Cristina, Salagean. (2021). The Role of Applied Behavior Analysis in Increasing Employees' motivation and Productivity.
- Freeman, Jo. 1970. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." Berkeley Journal of Sociology. 1-8. Ruth Wageman, et al., Senior Leadership Teams. Chapter 1, "The Fall of the Heroic CEO and the Rise of the Leadership Team", (1-26); Chapter 9, "What It Takes to Make Them Great", (pp. 207-218).
- Deborah Ancona, Henrik Bresman & Katrin Kaeufer, "The Comparative Advantage of X-Teams", MIT Sloan Management Review, Vol. 43 No.3, Spring 2002 (pp. 33- 39).
- Richard L. Moreland, "The Formation of Small Groups", Group Processes, edited by Kendrick, C. (1987), (pp.80-105).
- Amy C. Edmondson and Zhike Lei. [Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct](#). Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior 2014 1:1, 23-43
- Kim S, Lee H, Connerton TP. [How Psychological Safety Affects Team Performance: Mediating Role of Efficacy and Learning Behavior](#). Front Psychol. 2020 Jul 24;11:1581. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01581. PMID: 32793037; PMCID: PMC7393970.
- Rosenberg, M.B. (2003). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life
- Lasater, JH, Lasater, I (2009). What We Say Matters: Practicing Nonviolent Communication
- Stainer, M.B. The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever Michael Bungay Stanier