CULTIVATING COMPASSION AND BELONGINGNESS IN TEAMS

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LW | LEAH WEISS, PhD | HUMANS AT WORK | leahweissphd.com |

21st C LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES
According To Stanford Business School

Compassion, courage, curiosity, and humility

COMPASSION

noun • \kuh m-pash-uh n\

Recognizing suffering in others and a willingness to alleviate that suffering

Neff, 2013

"THE EXPECTATION THAT WE CAN BE IMMERSED IN SUFFERING AND LOSS DAILY AND NOT BE TOUCHED BY IT IS AS UNREALISTIC AS EXPECTING TO BE ABLE TO WALK THROUGH WATER WITHOUT GETTING WET."

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen

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REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPASSION

Recognize suffering
(not rushing or distracted)

Make the appraisal that the person needs **and** deserves help (ie. common humanity)

Make the appraisal that I have the capacity **and** resources required

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53% OF AMERICANS EXPERIENCE INCLIVITY @ WORK

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We need to move past individual solutions to workplace wellbeing and focus on interpersonal relationships…

"We should be trying to identify and analyze the critical components of 'bad' situations in which many good people function. *Imagine investigating the personality of cucumbers to discover why they had turned into sour pickles* without analyzing the vinegar barrels in which they had been submerged."

- Christina Maslach, PhD

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WHY FOCUS ON TEAMS?

Change at an organizational level takes years and significant resources.

But change at a team level can help foster resilience at a pace that is more achievable in the short term.

HARD TO DIAGNOSE
It is very difficult to self-diagnose things like burnout

MORE AGILE
Teams are more agile than large departments & organizations
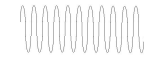
HIGH FREQUENCY TOUCHPOINT
We spend 1/3 of our lives at work, most of it with our teams

LARGEST CHURN PREDICTOR
75% of employees state they left a job because of a direct manager or team

NORM-SETTOR
Teams are the ones that set and apply norms

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FOUR PILLARS OF TEAM HEALTH

Through research we identified the foundations of Team Health

Team-Awareness	**Autonomy**
Structured R&R	**Community**

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FOUNDATIONS OF TEAM HEALTH

Through research we identified the foundations of Team Health

Team-Awareness

- As a team, we know our how our personal **strengths/weaknesses** impact the group
- As a team, we are aware of **each others' needs and triggers**
- As a team, **we are aware of each of our members values and our collective values**
- As a team, we know our **sense of purpose** and how it relates to each of the team-members'

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FOUNDATIONS OF TEAM HEALTH

Through research we identified the foundations of Team Health

Autonomy

- As a team, we have input **on priorities**
- As a team, we have a say in terms of how we **get to those priorities**
- As a team, we have some autonomy in terms of how we **organize our time**
- As a team, we receive a balance of **support and flexibility** to make the right decisions and execute as needed

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FOUNDATIONS OF TEAM HEALTH

Through research we identified the foundations of Team Health

Structured R&R

- As a team, we are thoughtful about **planning out and structuring work and rest** so that both are protected.
- As a team, we **honor individual and team guardrails** that help to separate work and personal life.
- As a team, we are **thoughtful about how we distribute work** across a team, especially in **aligning with the need for intermittent respite**.
- As a team, we are good at **prioritizing and saying "no".**

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FOUNDATIONS OF TEAM HEALTH

Through research we identified the foundations of Team Health

Community

- As a team, we have robust **psychological safety and belonging**, along with regular practice spaces. We each have a "diving buddy" at least **1 person who is a close/trusted 'friend'** in the group.

- As a team, we have **open collaboration & communication.** There is **compassion** for the struggles one another are experiencing and the type of support that they value.

- As a team, we **feel supported by others** even when it is costly to them.

- As a team, we understand **how each person's work fits in with the rest of the team's/organization's leading** and recognize how they contribute to our larger mission/goal).

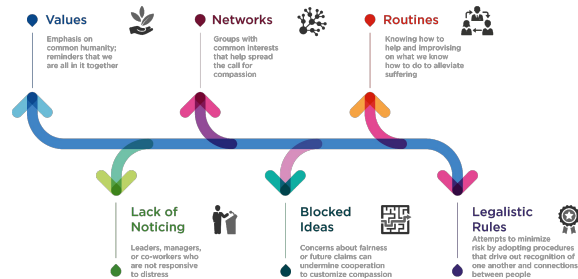## REFLECT: How Is Your Team Doing on the Community Pillar?

What does your team do well? Where can you improve?

Community

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AMPLIFIERS AND INHIBITORS TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF COMPASSION

Values — Emphasis on common humanity; reminders that we are all in it together

Networks — Groups with common interests that help spread the call for compassion

Routines — Knowing how to help and improvising on what we know how to do to alleviate suffering

Lack of Noticing — Leaders, managers, or co-workers who are not responsive to distress

Blocked Ideas — Concerns about fairness or future claims can undermine cooperation to customize compassion

Legalistic Rules — Attempts to minimize risk by adopting procedures that drive out recognition of one another and connections between people

CompassionLab, Vervago, Dutton and Worline

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COMPASSION IS NOT

- Pity or looking down on the other person

- Empathic distress/overwhelm

- Being a hero and saving others

- Always saying yes or letting off the hook for taking responsibility

- Being naïve about motives

- Being a doormat!

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COMPASSION

VS.

EMPATHY

- Empathy is 'feeling with' another persona, attuning to what they are experiencing
- Empathy can become depleted, whereas compassion is a renewable resource
- Compassion prevents burnout and is used as an intervention to treat burnout
- Empathy fires mirror neurons in pain regions; compassion fires the reward regions

Decety & Jackson 2006, Frans de Waal 2008

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NEURAL SIGNATURE OF EMPATHY

Pain   Empathy

Tania Singer, 2004

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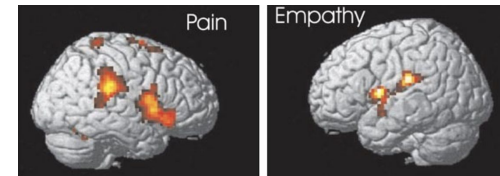
Compassion and Brain wiring
Brian Knutson's "Monk Study"

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MONK STUDY

A brain scan of a monk actively extending compassion shows activity in the striatum, an area of the brain associated with reward processing.
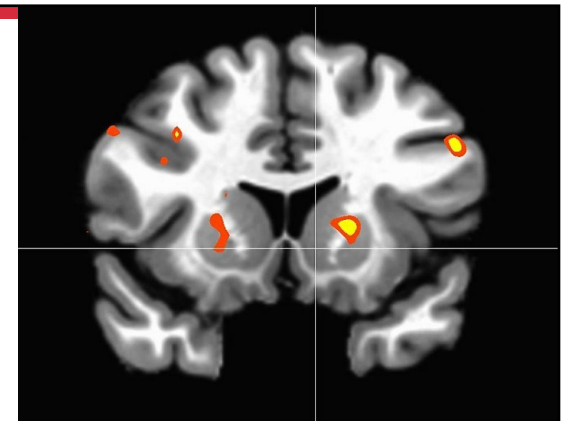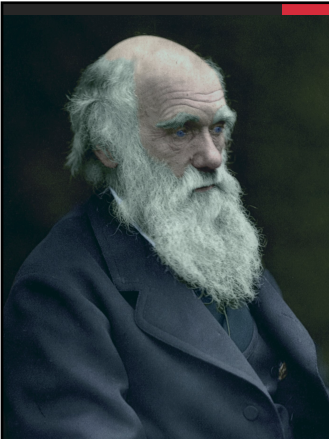
COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

Honoring the innate dignity of others, acknowledging the full context of their lives, and recognizing that people who are valued create value.

EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY: EVOLUTION DID NOT ONLY SELECT FOR COMPETITION AND AGGRESSION...

Sympathy will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.

Charles Darwin (1871)

DUAL DRIVES

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Compassionate management

includes how you…

- hire
- promote and incentivize
- run meetings
- use candor
- give feedback/review performance
- mitigate bias
- respond to struggles (personal/professional)
- offboard/furlough

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"THERE IS ALWAYS PAIN IN THE ROOM"

Peter Frost, PhD

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THE BUSINESS CASE FOR COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP?

An investment in compassion results in:

- Higher sales and profits
- Increased performance
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Increased retention of staff
- Improved patient outcomes
- Increased engagement

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Small Steps Matter

"In every interaction we have with other people, we can leave a trace that makes them [and ourselves] better off."

Jane Dutton, PhD

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BELONGINGNESS |
DEFINITION
Critical Facts

When individuals feel...

- that they are being treated **fairly**
- **respected by**/comfortable with colleagues
- **connected** to the people they work with
- that they **contribute** to meaningful work outcomes

...they experience a sense of belongingness.

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BELONGINGNESS |
WHY IT MATTERS
Critical Facts

Uncertainty about belonging uses up cognitive resources critical for learning in the workplace, diminishing performance.

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BELONGINGNESS | WHY IT MATTERS?
Main Insights : Why belongingness matters in the workplace

Job Performance

A nationwide survey of close to 1,800 full-time workers found that employees with a high sense of belonging had **56 percent higher job performance**, and took **75% fewer sick days** than employees who feel excluded. The survey also found that **a single incidence of "micro-exclusion" can lead to an immediate 25 percent decline in an individual's performance on a team project** (BetterUp, 2019)

Organizations

Fostering belongingness in the organization is especially critical to promote psychological safety in the polarized and uncertain world that we live in today. The Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM's) Politics at Work survey found that **42 percent of US employees personally experienced political disagreements in the workplace**, and 34 percent felt that their workplace was not accepting of differing political perspectives (SHRM, 2019)

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BELONGINGNESS |
DRIVERS
Ways to amplify

Having even one reliable and supportive colleague at work improves a sense of belongingness.

BELONGINGNESS |
INTERVENTIONS
Ways to amplify

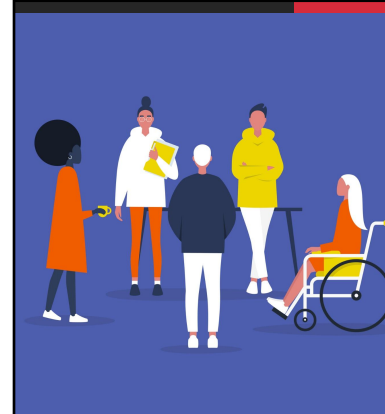*Promoting growth mindset and normalizing communication about belonging itself can help*

BELONGINGNESS |
INTERVENTIONS
Critical Facts

Using the Round Robin technique can help you promote inclusion and belongingness in your team. The technique also helps in encouraging individuals who generally do not speak up to share their ideas

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BELONGINGNESS | INTERVENTIONS
Main Insights

Intervention to promote a feeling of Connection:

Employee Resource Groups ("BLUE DOT" Initiative)

- *Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are workplace communities for individuals with shared interests and life experiences. These voluntary support groups promote employee engagement, professional development and create a safe space to discuss workplace challenges. Some examples of ERGs that are relevant for current workplace challenges are: working parents support group, mental health advocacy group, an LGBTQ network and network for people of color*

- *As part of its mental health ERG, Google runs a a "blue dot" initiative, in which employees can be certified as "listeners." A blue dot on their employee tag tells others that they are a safe person to talk to if they need a listening ear (whether for mental health or otherwise).*

TYPES OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Instinctive preferences or inclinations toward others that influence perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, focus, listening, affirmations and serve to undermine belonging in groups.

Conformity (peer pressure/group think)

Beauty (60% of CEOs are over 6', 15% of population is over 6')

Affinity/Similarity (people like us - race, education, political beliefs)

Ageism

Gender

Name (stereotypes you associate with a name)

Weight bias

Halo/horns effect (judge based on one component we value)

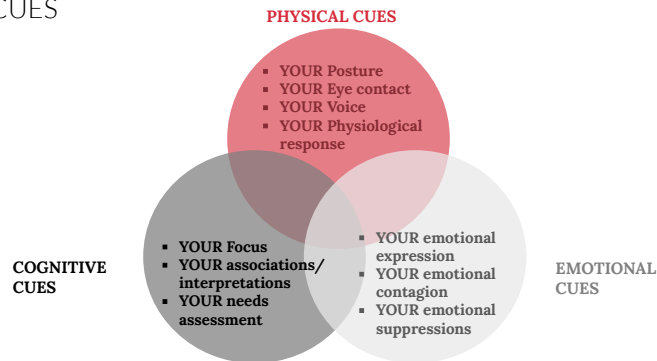**Contrast Effect** - evaluate by comparing people rather than criteria

Attribution (merit/luck) - my success is merit, yours is luck. Groups we see as less competent we focus on mistakes and are less likely to give specific, helpful feedback

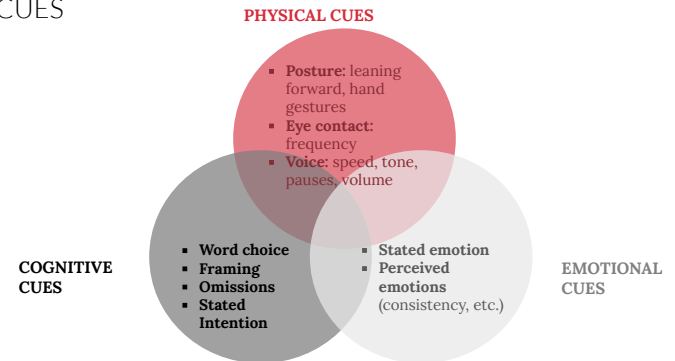**Confirmation** (look for what you already believe)

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INTENTIONAL USE OF ATTENTION: NOTICE YOUR **OWN** CUES

PHYSICAL CUES
- YOUR Posture
- YOUR Eye contact
- YOUR Voice
- YOUR Physiological response

COGNITIVE CUES
- YOUR Focus
- YOUR associations/ interpretations
- YOUR needs assessment
- YOUR emotional expression
- YOUR emotional contagion
- YOUR emotional suppressions

EMOTIONAL CUES

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INTENTIONAL USE OF ATTENTION: NOTICE **OTHER'S** CUES

PHYSICAL CUES
- **Posture:** leaning forward, hand gestures
- **Eye contact:** frequency
- **Voice:** speed, tone, pauses, volume

COGNITIVE CUES
- Word choice
- Framing
- Omissions
- Stated Intention
- Stated emotion
- Perceived emotions (consistency, etc.)

EMOTIONAL CUES

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INTENTIONAL USE OF ATTENTION: GET FEEDBACK (REAL TIME OR AFTER CONVERSATION)

PHYSICAL CUES
- **Posture:** leaning forward, hand gestures
- **Eye contact:** frequency
- **Voice:** speed, tone, pauses, volume

COGNITIVE CUES
- Word choice
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EMOTIONAL CUES

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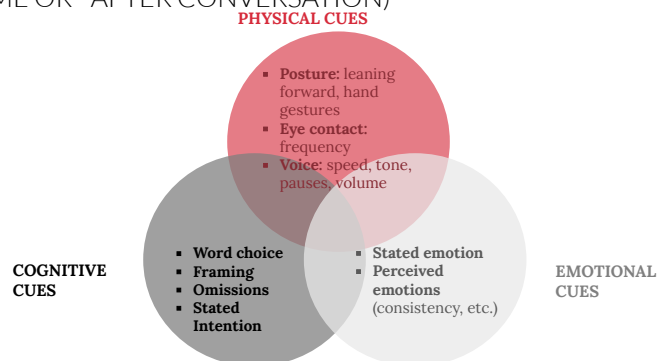
WHY MEASURE?

IN ORDER TO DE-STIGMATIZE THE INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS

TO ACCOUNT FOR POWER DYNAMICS

TO ADDRESS THE KEY ISSUES THROUGH COACHING/TRAINING

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HOW TO MEASURE

AT THE RIGHT LEVEL

WITH THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

TO DRIVE ACTION

WHEN YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT TAKING ACTION

WHEN YOU WILL SHARE BACK RESULTS AND ACTION-PLANS

Slide 2

BELONGINGNESS | MEASURE
Measuring belongingness

A Simple Exercise: to assess your sense of belongingness
(Rate the below questions from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree))

✓ I am able to work in this organisation without sacrificing my principles.

✓ I use to refer as "we/us" rather than "they/them" when I refer my organisation to outsiders.

✓ I feel that there is a semblance between my organisation and my own values and beliefs.

✓ I generally carry more positive emotions than the negative ones during my job.

✓ Being a part of this organisation inspires me to do more than what is expected.

✓ In my work unit I have many common themes with my co-workers.

✓ Fairness is maintained while executing rules and policies in my organisation.

✓ My personal needs are well met by my organisation.

✓ Whenever I have any personal or professional issues my organisation extends necessary help and support.

✓ My career goals are well considered by my organisation.

✓ My organisation tries to make my job as exciting and promising as possible.

✓ Accomplishments at work are adequately rewarded in my organisation.

(Jena & Pradhan, 2018)

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UNDERSTANDING BELONGING

When individuals feel...
- that they are being treated **fairly**
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UNDERSTAND

(1) Where did you score the highest/lowest personally?

(2) As a leader, which parts of your own identity do you hold back on at work?

(3) How do you sense others are experiencing your organization? What makes you answer this way (ie. how much visibility do you have)?

(4) Are there cultural norms in your organization that you sense may cause a sense exclusion for some of your people? What are they and how do you address them?

(5) Think of a recent contentious issue in your organization. What is your organizational culture currently like for respectful disagreement?

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Actionable Tips & Getting Started: Suggested Resources

- **Compassion Tool:** Practice compassionate communication with our interactive tool, <u>here</u>

- **Article:** *What Does Leading with Mindfulness and Compassion Look Like?* Interview for the ACCC, <u>here</u>

- **Book:** *How We Work: Live Your Purpose, Reclaim Your Sanity, and Embrace the Daily Grind* by Leah Weiss, available anywhere books are sold

- **Keep in Touch:** contact me at <u>leah@leahweissphd.com</u>, or sign up for my newsletter, <u>here</u>