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A GUIDEBOOK FOR BUILDING TEAM COHESION

Kraus, Thomas D.

Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

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SUPPLEMENTAL TO THESIS: A GUIDEBOOK FOR BUILDING TEAM COHESION

A GUIDEBOOK FOR BUILDING TEAM COHESION

by

Thomas D. Kraus

December 2022

Thesis Advisor:

Matthew R. Zefferman

Second Reader:

Roberta Kraus,

Center for Sports Psychology

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MAJ Thomas D. Kraus



A GUIDEBOOK FOR BUILDING TEAM COHESION

PROVIDING LEADERS WITH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO CREATE HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

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Thomas D. Kraus

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

What this is: This is a guidebook for building team cohesion, filled with team-building tools and techniques. It is a catalog, from which the facilitator can choose the tools and techniques best suited for the needs of their unit. Not every tool or technique must be used to achieve greater team cohesion. The tools and techniques can be implemented at any time.

Why this is important: For a unit to consistently operate as a high-performing team, they need to be grounded in the characteristics of team cohesion: communication, feedback, trust, and unified commitment. The material in this guidebook helps leaders instill and promote those foundational characteristics.

Who this is for: This guidebook is designed for ARSOF (Army Special Operations Forces) company command (O-4 grade) and team leader (O-3 grade) levels. Even though this guidebook presumes the company or team grade officer is the facilitator, the senior enlisted advisor at these grade levels may also be the facilitator or co-facilitator. Additionally, a junior team member may be assigned to facilitate a tool or technique as part of their individual development. In any case, it is best to implement this guidebook from a unified command team approach (CDR and 1SG). Lastly, it is ideal that every member of the company or team be present when conducting these tools and techniques because each person is vital to the success of the unit.

When to use this: The optimal time to implement these tools and techniques is within the first few weeks of a new company commander or team leader assuming command and/or with the arrival of a new senior enlisted advisor. A new leader's job is to help shape the way they want their unit to operate. Furthermore, building team cohesion at the earliest stage allows the new leader to lay the foundations to consistently operate as a high-performing team.

The beginning of a new command is not the only time this guidebook can or should be used. The leader can incorporate the tools and techniques throughout their time in command. For example, the leader could conduct quarterly workshops to build upon previous tools and techniques or introduce new ones that the team has not been exposed to before.

Another time to consider implementing tools and techniques from this guidebook is if a new team member arrives. It may be beneficial to conduct a few of the tools and techniques to ensure that the new member is on the same page as the rest of the team.

Ultimately, it is up to the discretion of the leader and/or command team to decide when and how often they want to use tools and techniques from this guidebook.

How to use this: The tools and techniques in this guidebook can be implemented in formal or informal settings. The leader may decide to put the execution of them on the training schedule to ensure that time is dedicated to them in a structured manner. In addition, the leader could keep some tools and techniques at hand in case some free time arises and they can be executed in more of a "hip-pocket training" style. However, this guidebook is ideally implemented in a more formal manner to ensure that all, or at least most, members of the unit can actively participate.

How this is organized: This guidebook is laid out in three main parts. The first part includes the Introduction and Preparing the Environment (Sections 1 and 2). The purpose of this part is to give a broad overview of this guidebook and highlight how to get optimal results from the tools and techniques. Furthermore, it explains how you can present these tools and techniques to your unit since people are often hesitant toward the notion of "team building training."

The second part (Section 3: Tools & Techniques) is a compilation of various exercises, activities, and models that are broken down into four categories: 1) Communication, 2) Feedback, 3) Trust, and 4) Unified Commitment. These four categories are essential characteristics of high-performing teams.

The last part includes the Conclusion, FAQs, Notes, and List of References (Section 4, as well as Appendices 1, 2, and 3). This section and these appendices are there to help the facilitator get the most out of this guidebook.

Some potential outputs: The tools and techniques in this guidebook are not only aimed at helping a unit instill the characteristics of high-performing teams, but also provide opportunities to generate tangible outputs for command teams. One example is that leaders can use the feedback and ideas brought up during debriefs to help shape their commander's vision statement. Leaders can also incorporate major themes into initial counseling statements. These outputs will help generate more buy-in from the members of a unit because they were part of the process of creating the team's identity.

The goal of this guidebook is to equip *you*, the leader, with tools and techniques to help bring your team closer together and function more effectively as a cohesive unit. Your responsibility is to dedicate time to use this team cohesion guidebook.

The ability of people to work together... is positively related to productivity. A common organizational myth is that there is no time to deal with personal relationships; there are deadlines, bottom lines, and payrolls to meet, and they take priority. **But ignoring teamwork problems in favor of 'practical' matters is the expression of a massive organizational self-deception.** It is more true to say that an organization cannot afford not to take the time to deal with relations with other people; otherwise, those relations inevitably affect productivity, often in a devastating way.

– Will Schutz, Ph.D. (*Human Element*, 1994)*

*Schutz is an American psychologist who worked with the Department of Defense on improving group dynamics.

SECTION 2: PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENT

How to present this to your unit: Many times, people, particularly in the military, cringe at the thought of participating in team-building training because they perceive such training as “soft” and “emotional.” However, most elite organizations and teams (Fortune 500 companies, Olympic/Paralympic and professional teams, etc.) use team-building tools and techniques to consistently perform at high levels. Here are some ways to overcome potential resistance:

Professionalize the name – Refer to this as a “team developmental workshop” instead of “team building training.” Participants may perceive this title as more professional and be more receptive to executing these tools and technique

State what this IS NOT – Say this is not about “touchy-feely, kumbaya” therapy stuff.

State what this IS – Say this is about developing into a cohesive unit by learning from doing, and by implementing tools and techniques that high-performing teams from the sports and business worlds use. Examples may include:

- Other SOF units or senior military leaders and their teams (e.g., GEN McChrystal).
- Olympic teams – 1980 “Miracle on Ice” hockey team or 2016 USA Paralympic gold medal men’s wheelchair basketball team (had not won gold in 28 years).
- Elite sports teams – Golden State Warriors, Duke Blue Devils, etc.
- Well-established civilian companies – Google, Amazon, Tesla, etc.

Address the elephant in the room – Acknowledge that there might be some individuals in the unit who may feel hesitant and/or may not see the value. Let them know it’s okay to initially feel this way and encourage them to be open-minded.

Gain support beforehand – If conducting at the company (O-4) level, bring your team leaders and team sergeants into the fold beforehand. Express the intent and importance of the workshop and your belief in its benefits and ask for their support.

Identify potential resisters early – If you know of one or two individuals who are likely to be resistant and vocally negative about participating, you could pull them aside or bring them into your office beforehand to address their concerns and share your motivation.

Persuade over mandate – Even though you are in charge of the unit and what you say goes, it is better to approach everyone in a persuasive manner rather than a forceful one.

Create the right mental climate: It is important to create a positive and collaborative environment to get the most out of this guidebook. Here are a few things you can do before executing the tools and techniques:

Get on the same page with your senior enlisted advisor. Then address your unit from a unified command team approach.

Urge everyone to leave their preconceived notions and assumptions at the door.

Show your passion. Others are more receptive to doing something if they see and feel the passion coming from you.

Let everyone know that they have a role in and responsibility for the collective success of these tools and techniques.

Roles of the facilitator:

Actively listen – Seek to understand the why behind what each team member says.

Encourage different perspectives – Acknowledge that no one has all of the answers and that it's your goal to have everyone come together to find the best solutions for the group.

Remember servant leadership – Your job is to serve those around you and help everyone reach their maximum potential for the greater good of the unit.

Roles of each team member:

Be present as a learner – Team members will mentally choose to participate as learners, prisoners, vacationers, or tourists. Each of those mental states is driven by a personal motivation that ultimately affects the productivity of the workshop. Tell them that each of them owns the way they show up and participate.

Engage in active conversations – As you open up to your teammates, so too will they open up to you. It is from here that real development occurs.

Roles for both facilitator and team members:

Come with a lens of curiosity – Through genuine curiosity, you can reach deeper levels of understanding and connect more with one another.

Have fun – These tools and techniques should be considered “serious play.” They are meant to be both challenging (pushing your team beyond its comfort zone) and enjoyable.

“I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.”

Optimal implementation timeframe: When and how often tools and techniques from this guidebook are incorporated is at the discretion of the leader. However, leaders should try to follow this recommended timeline:

Within the first 30 days of taking command – Set the precedent for the entire unit and your time in command. Implementing these tools and techniques at the beginning helps to establish a foundation of team cohesion that your unit can build and improve upon.

Monthly or every other month – After laying the groundwork, it is a good idea to regularly incorporate some aspect of team development.

Quarterly – If only able to conduct quarterly, explore the different team cohesion characteristics

Semiannually and annually – Focus on bigger themes affecting your team's cohesion. Ask and identify what's working and what's not working, this will help in deciding which tools and techniques to use.

Before a major training event and/or deployment – Determine which tools and techniques are best to review before an upcoming exercise/deployment to get everyone on the same page.

Facilitator preparation recommendations: Below are some important self-reflection questions to discuss with your senior enlisted advisor before using any tools and techniques:

- What are my primary and secondary goals? What does success look like?
 - These goals can change depending on which tools and techniques are used.
 - Goals may also differ based on the maturation and longevity of the current unit and its members.
- What are some potential tangible outputs?
 - For example, shaping a commander's or unit's vision statement or creating a unit motto (e.g., "punch above your weight class").
- Do I have a clear purpose and expectations?
 - How will I express these to my unit?
- How am I going to capture the feedback I receive from members of my unit?
 - Do I have a designated recorder, am I going to take mental notes, will I take pictures of what is written on whiteboards/easels, etc.?
- What else must I do to prepare to facilitate this session for my unit?
- How can our unit sustain and build upon the tools and techniques used during this session?

SECTION 3: TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

What this section is: This section is the meat and potatoes of this guidebook. It is separated into four broad categories (also referred to as characteristics) that units should develop and utilize if they want to consistently operate as a high-performing team:

Communication

Feedback

Trust

Unified Commitment

Each category contains three tools and techniques (also referred to as exercises) that your unit can use to instill, build upon, and sustain the characteristics needed to consistently operate as a high-performing team.

Even though each exercise within this section is a standalone, the exercises are ordered such that the lessons reinforce concepts from preceding exercises(s). Leaders do not need to complete all three exercises within each category before implementing exercises from other categories. However, it is recommended that you complete at least one exercise from the previous category before implementing one from the next category, starting with Communication.

The templates: Each category and exercise in this section follows a standard.

Category - gives an overview of important aspects of that characteristic. Many remarks may seem like common sense, but the concepts are often taken for granted.

Category

Why this is important:

How this is challenging:

How this improves your unit:

List of exercises:

Why this is important: Why implementing this category is important for high-performing teams.

How this is challenging: How/why it can be difficult for teams and their members to fully implement this category.

How this improves your unit: What teams can expect from effectively implementing this category.

List of exercises: Exercises, in the recommended order, for this category.

Exercise - Guides facilitator through implementing that tool or technique.

<h2>Exercise:</h2>	
Summary:	Facilitator Prep Time:
Purpose:	Exercise Prep Time:
Directions:	Execution Time:
(x-x mins) Step 1	Materials Needed:
(x-x mins) Step 2	Handouts:
(x-x mins) Step 3	Break Out Groups:
Debrief: (x-x mins)	Facilitator Implementation Scale:
Discussion prompts:	
How this translates to team cohesion:	
Self-reflection questions:	
Handouts:	

Summary: A quick overview of what that exercise entails.

Purpose: Reasons for conducting that exercise.

Directions: In the title of each step is the suggested time allocation, followed by the name of that step. Step names assist the facilitator during execution. Within each step are several instructions for the facilitator.

Debrief: The time allocation for the debrief includes both “discussion prompts” and “how this translates to team cohesion.” “Discussion prompts” close out the exercise and make connections to team cohesion learning points. “How this translates to team cohesion” provides knowledge on how participants can apply these lessons within their team. The self-reflection questions are takeaways for individuals and teams to consider.

Handouts: A brief explanation of how many handouts are needed and how to distribute them. Copies of the handouts are provided at the end of each exercise so facilitators can print, copy, and/or display them.

The items below appear in the upper right at the beginning of each exercise:

Facilitator prep time: The amount of time a facilitator should expect to mentally prepare for leading that exercise (e.g., reread through exercise to refresh on the directions, discuss desired goals with senior enlisted advisor, etc.).

Exercise prep time: The amount of time needed to physically prepare for that exercise (e.g., set up, print handouts, etc.).

Execution time: The time window a facilitator should plan for when conducting that exercise, including both directions and debriefing portions.

Materials needed: A generic list of materials that are needed for that exercise.

Handouts: A quick reference if handouts are needed or not for that exercise.

Break Out groups: A quick reference as to the size of break out groups for that exercise.

Facilitator implementation scale: A three-level scale indicating the difficulty of conducting that exercise. The levels are based on the difficulty of execution and the level of vulnerability needed by both participants and facilitator(s).

- Easy: Exercises tend to be nonthreatening (people staying inside their comfort zone) and uncomplicated for the facilitator to implement.
- Moderate: Stretches people slightly outside their comfort zone and provides participants with the opportunity to feel more comfortable talking in small groups.
- Challenging: People are being asked to step out of their comfort zone and verbally share what they are honestly thinking and/or feeling.

Note about exercise handouts: Many of the handouts used throughout this guidebook have been adapted with permission from their authors. At the bottom of each adapted handout, the organization that provided the original handout is credited. Handouts received from Roberta Kraus, Ph.D., president of the Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs, have been accumulated and adapted over her 30-year career in the field.

COMMUNICATION

Why this is important:

- Every successful organization and team is grounded in effective communication.
- Communication encourages engagement from every team member, which leads to more creative ideas and solutions.
- Poor communication or miscommunication causes the majority of interpersonal conflicts within a team.
- Communication is key to better team cooperation.
- Ultimately, effective communication enhances the performance of individuals and teams.

How this is challenging:

- Becoming a team centered around effective communication requires time and energy.
- Everyone needs to be committed to developing their own communication skills, as well as understanding the communication styles of their teammates.
- Each team member needs to deliberately reflect on how well they communicate.
- All team members, particularly leaders, need to leave their egos at the door and be open to listening to others' thoughts and ideas.

How this improves your unit:

- Encourages collaboration and increases the unit's effectiveness, with fewer misunderstandings.
- Increases morale, loyalty, and job satisfaction among team members.
- Members resolve differences more amicably, thereby creating a more cohesive environment.
- Transformative, not only for the individual, but the team and company as well.

List of exercises (in recommended order):

1. Sports Perception
2. TRIZ
3. Visualization Imagery

EXERCISE 1: SPORTS PERCEPTION

Summary: In small groups, participants communicate to determine the sports term for ten images.

Purpose:

- Show that input from all team members is often required for a team to be able to see the whole picture and understand the context.
- Illustrate the power of collaboration when all voices on a team are heard.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5-10 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 25-35 mins

Materials Needed: Projector or Handouts

Handouts: 1 per group (if not projecting)

Break Out Groups: 3-5 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy

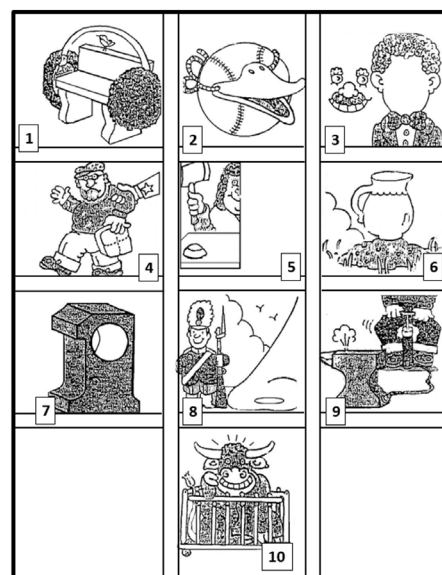
Directions:

(3-5 mins) Step 1 - Initial Instruction

- 1) The facilitator provides the below instructions prior to breaking into small groups.
- 2) Participants break into four- to five-person groups, with one person volunteering as the recorder.
 - a) Groups record either on scratch paper or on the handout that the facilitator distributes.
- 3) The facilitator instructs the groups that their goal is to quickly and correctly identify the sports term for each image on the handout.
 - a) Say, “An example could be an image with a quarter drawn on a person’s back. The term would then be quarterback.”
- 4) The competition ends when 1) one team has completed all ten terms and confirmed that their answers are correct with the facilitator or 2) after the allotted time had ended.

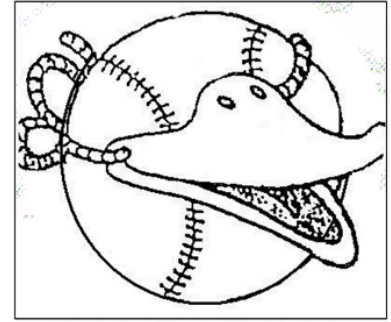
(8-10 mins) Step 2 - Handout Distribution & Competition

- 5) Display the handout via TV or projector, or print a copy of the handout for each small group.
 - a) If handing out, ensure the handouts are upside down so no team gets a head start.
- 6) Small groups begin the competition at the facilitator’s mark.
- 7) The competition ends once one group has all ten terms correct, or after the allotted time expires (six to eight minutes).
- 8) Exercise tips and hints:
 - a) The facilitator can walk around stating out loud how close or not close other groups are to finishing to make the environment more competitive.
 - b) At times, groups will get stuck and stop talking among each other. The facilitator should encourage



groups that are stuck to say out loud every detail they see in the picture and hopefully the right answer will emerge.

- i) For example, on # 2, many groups get stuck thinking “duck ball” or “fly ball.” If the group considers other terms for bird/duck species, they may identify the term “fowl” (for “foul ball”).



Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

(2-3 mins) Step 3 - Competition Results

- 9) After the competition ends, the winning group (that got all correct first or the most correct within the allotted time) will have their recorder stand up and read the answers out loud.
 - a) If there are any terms that no group got correct because time expired, the facilitator states the correct answer.
 - b) Every group grades their own answers and writes how many they had correct.
- 10) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- Were there any unique perspectives that someone offered that helped the group come together to determine an image's meaning?
 - How did they articulate their thoughts (e.g., descriptive adjectives, identifying the sport, providing an analogy, etc.)?
- Was the group able to speak freely, throwing out wild suggestions that allowed others to build off one another's ideas and eventually led to the right answer?
- How long do you think it would take someone to get all ten answers by themselves?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- This exercise's purpose is to highlight that every team member comes to a team with a different perspective based on their unique background. Those perspectives can sometimes help others see things through a different lens.
 - Thus, it's important that every team member is able to share their thoughts and ideas to help their team see the whole picture and understand the context.
- One aspect of team cohesion is a collaborative climate, in which everyone participates, not just a single or select few dominating the conversation.
- Cognitive synergy resembles teams playing off of one another's ideas to come together in finding the right solution more effectively and efficiently. As stated in its name, it is the group's ability to mentally cooperate together to achieve an end state or operate as a more cohesive unit.
- Cognitive synergy is the ability of a group to mentally cooperate to achieve an end state or operate as a more cohesive unit. It involves teams playing off one another's ideas to find the solution more effectively and efficiently.

Self-reflection questions:

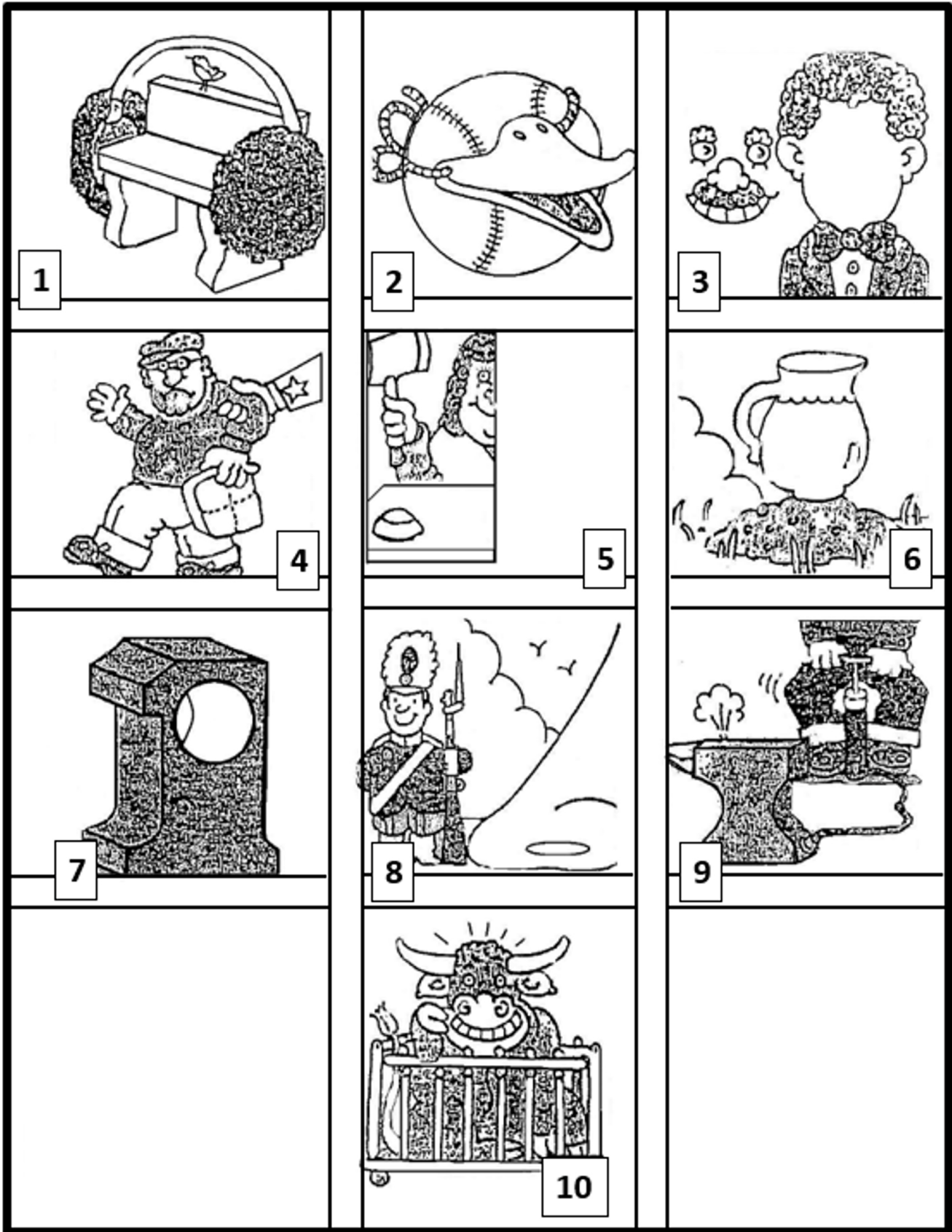
- Have there been moments when I did not speak up or clearly communicate with my teammates to help provide a clearer picture of the situation?
- How can I communicate my thoughts/ideas in the future so my teammates understand my perspective?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into their small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Answer Key:

- 1) Bench Warmer 2) Foul Ball 3) Faceoff 4) Stealing Base 5) Half Court
6) Pitcher's Mound 7) Hole-in-One 8) Nose Guard 9) Pumping Iron 10) Bullpen

Handout:

- Sports Perception Exercise - one per small group.²



Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

EXERCISE 2: TRIZ

Summary: In large group and small group discussions, participants describe collaboration (positively and negatively) and learn about the importance of detailed communication that is behavior-based.

Purpose:

- Provide a method for solving both technical and organizational problems that may not have an obvious solution.
- Help teams clearly identify and define the most productive ways to achieve their objective(s).

Facilitator Prep Time: 10-12 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 50-65 mins

Materials Needed: Whiteboard, Easel, or Scratch Paper

Handouts: n/a

Break Out Groups: 3-6 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy to Moderate

Directions:

(5-7 mins) Step 1 - Large Group Definition of “Collaboration”

- 1) In a large group setting, with all participants in the same room, have the group define the word “collaboration” (three to five minutes).
 - a) Ask them, “What does it look like?”
- 2) Have someone annotate responses on a whiteboard or easel.
 - a) You will likely hear the following: teamwork, respect, communication, synergy, cooperation, partnership, etc.
- 3) Then tell participants that their goal in the upcoming small group discussions is to define what it would mean to really fail at “collaboration.”
 - a) Ask them, “What does failure in collaboration look like? What could you do to ensure failure?”

(10-12 mins) Step 2 - Small Group Discussions on “Failure of Collaboration”

- 4) Participants then break into 3-6 person groups and move to separate locations.
- 5) Each group discusses all the different ways they can ensure failure at collaboration (eight to ten minutes).
- 6) The group records their top five responses that they will share when they return for the second large group discussion.
- 7) *Note - the facilitator can bounce in and out of small group discussions, encouraging them to be creative and specific, or let the small groups discuss in private.
- 8) After the allotted time, all participants move back to the large group discussion room.

(8-10 mins) Step 3 - Large Group Discussion and Explanation of TRIZ

- 9) Once everyone is back in the large group room, have each small group share their top five ways to ensure failure at collaboration.
- 10) The facilitator now explains the point of that exercise as it relates to a theory called “TRIZ.”

- a) TRIZ (pronounced “treez”) is a Russian acronym for the “Theory of Inventive Problem Solving,” invented by Genrich Altshuller and his colleagues in the mid-20th century. Researchers determined that we remember more details about our failures, and as such, we can vividly define what failure looks like. On the other hand, when it comes to success, we tend to talk about success in general, nonspecific terms.³

11) Now, refer to the comments made about collaboration during the first large group discussion. Compare the generality of those comments with the level of detail in the comments about failure in collaboration.

- a) The facilitator could say, “Notice how easy it was to come up with specific behaviors to fail at collaboration, yet when we originally defined collaboration, we used more general words that were not necessarily observable.”

12) An additional comment the facilitator could offer is, “Neuroscientists have also confirmed that this is how our brain works. We are wired to pay more attention to specific behaviors from our failures, rather than specifics from our successes.”⁴

(10-12 mins) Step 4 - Small Group Discussions on “Successful Collaboration”

13) Participants then break into their previous small groups and head back to their separate locations.

14) Keeping their top five ways to fail at collaboration in mind, small groups discuss and describe in detail behaviors they could engage in to be successful in collaboration (eight to ten minutes).

15) Each group records their top five responses that they will share when they return for the final large group discussion.

(5-7 mins) Step 5 - Large Group Discussion on “Successful Collaboration”

16) Once everyone is back in the large group room, have each small group share their top five ways to ensure success at collaboration.

17) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- First, a rhetorical question to pose to the group:
 - “In the beginning, did you notice the generalization when describing collaboration? Was it difficult to fully understand or make a vivid mental image with general descriptors?”
- Refer to one of the more general terms a participant brought up in the beginning and ask them to describe the behavior they had in mind when they said _____ (e.g., teamwork).
 - Then ask a fellow participant to describe what behavior they thought of when they first heard that same word (e.g., teamwork).
 - The above question serves to show that talking in generalities leaves a lot of room for interpretation and miscommunication.

- What did you notice were the big differences when describing something negatively compared to describing something positively?
 - When describing something negatively, did you find it easier to create a mental image because other people used detailed words rather than generic terms?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- To achieve an objective, especially an organizational or group objective, you need to clearly and vividly explain what is required and how you are going to get there.
- If you describe accomplishing a goal in a generic way, people within your team may interpret your words differently. This difference of interpretation makes it harder to be in sync and achieve your goal.
- Rhetorically ask, how do you think we can apply this methodology to our unit?

Self-reflection questions:

- Do I have a clear and detailed image of what I need to do to achieve my personal goals?
- How can I improve my communication with others so they can visualize and understand what it takes to reach our team's goal?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into their small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts: n/a

EXERCISE 3: VISUALIZATION IMAGERY

Summary: Each participant follows instructions on their handout and responds as the facilitator reads 20 sentences. Participants then try to identify nouns and adjectives from 20 questions read by the facilitator.

Purpose:

- Highlight that creating a vivid mental image when communicating with others assists them in remembering details.
- Shows participants that communicating with clear details helps others create the same mental image(s) and correctly see the goal, which leads to common understanding among the team.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5-10 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 40-55 mins

Materials Needed: Handouts

Handouts: 1 per pax

Break Out Groups: n/a

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy

Directions:

(12-15 mins) Step 1 - Distribute of Handouts and Read Sentences

- 1) The facilitator prints an equal number of the two handouts and gives half the room Handout A and the other half Handout B. The facilitator then tells the participants to silently read the instructions at the top of their handout.
- 2) The facilitator then reads the 20 sentences from the Facilitator Handout out loud for the group.

*Note - ensure you are clear while reading and articulate each word. However, do not take more than a few seconds to read each sentence and read them only once.

HANDOUT A

Please rate the sentences I will read on how easily you can pronounce them. Repeat the sentences silently to yourself. Use the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5

Very difficult to pronounce			Very easy to pronounce
1.	6.	11.	16.
2.	7.	12.	17.
3.	8.	13.	18.
4.	9.	14.	19.
5.	10.	15.	20.

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

HANDOUT B

Please rate the sentences I will read on how well you can from a vivid mental picture or image of the action of the sentence. Use the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5

Very difficult to image			Very easy to image
1.	6.	11.	16.
2.	7.	12.	17.
3.	8.	13.	18.
4.	9.	14.	19.
5.	10.	15.	20.

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

FACILITATOR HANDOUT

PRONOUNCIATION AND IMAGING EXERCISE

Sentences to read and articulate each word:

1. The noisy fan blew the papers off the table.
2. The green frog jumped into the swimming pool.
3. The silly snake slithered down a steep sliding board.
4. The crafty surgeon won the daily double.
5. The skiing trumpeter started a gigantic avalanche.
6. The plumb chef liked to jump rope.
7. The captured crook liked to difficult crossword puzzles.
8. The small child sat under a lilac bush.
9. The medieval minstrel strolled along the babbling brook.
10. The distressed teacher ate a worming apple.
11. The chocolate choo-choo train chugged down the licorice tracks.
12. The marching soldier lit a cigarette.
13. The long-haired woman had a phobia about scissors.
14. The cheerful choirboy sang off key.
15. The toothless bathing beauty hardly ever smiled.
16. The sweaty gardener was wearing a scarf and mittens.
17. The spotted dog was sleeping in the sun.
18. The lanky leprechaun wore lavender leotards.
19. The bearded plumber was flushed with success.
20. The novice camper got lost in the woods.

Questions and Answers

1. Who won the daily double? (crafty surgeon)
2. What chugged down the licorice tracks? (chocolate choo-choo train)
3. Who liked to do difficult crossword puzzles? (captured crook)
4. Who sang off key? (cheerful choirboy)
5. What blew the papers off the table? (noisy fan)
6. Who hardly ever smiled? (toothless bathing beauty)
7. Who slithered down a steep sliding board? (silly snake)
8. What was sleeping in the sun? (spotted dog)
9. Who strolled along the babbling brook? (medieval minstrel)
10. Who was flushed with success? (bearded plumber)
11. What jumped into the swimming pool? (green frog)
12. Who lit a cigarette? (marching soldier)
13. Who got lost in the woods? (novice camper)
14. Who started a gigantic avalanche? (skiing trumpeter)
15. Who wore lavender leotards? (lanky leprechaun)
16. Who liked to jump rope? (plumb chef)
17. Who had a phobia about scissors? (long-haired woman)
18. Who sat under a lilac bush? (small child)
19. Who ate a wormy apple? (distressed teacher)
20. Who wore a scarf and mittens? (sweaty gardener)

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

(10-12 mins) Step 2 - Participants Identify Nouns and Adjectives from Questions

- 3) The facilitator instructs the group to turn their handouts over and write the numbers 1 through 20 on the back.
- 4) The facilitator tells the group that they (the facilitator) will read 20 questions out loud and the participants' goal is to answer each question with the correct noun and coinciding adjective.

- a) Participants get one point for every correct noun, and an additional point if they get the correct adjective that coincides with that noun.
 - b) For example, if the sentence was “The tall lady bumped her head on the door” and the question was “Who bumped their head on the door?” Then the correct answer (for one point) would be the noun “lady.” If a participant writes the adjective “tall” then they would also receive an additional point.
 - i) *Note - a participant can not get the additional point without writing down the correct noun (e.g., no points would be awarded if the participant was only able to answer “tall” from the above example).
- 5) After giving the nouns and adjectives instructions, the facilitator quickly asks all 20 questions without spending more than a few seconds on each question.
- a) *Note - questions are intentionally listed in a random order and are not tied to the number sequence in the sentence portion on the facilitator handout.

(8-10 mins) Step 3 - Review Correct Answers and Tally Scores

- 6) The facilitator then instructs everyone to grade their own responses as they (the facilitator) read the correct answers.
 - a) Remind the participants that they receive one point for the noun and an additional point if they also get the coinciding adjective.
- 7) After reading all the answers, participants tally their scores and then go around the room sharing their scores out loud.
- 8) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- Did anyone notice how half of the room generally scored higher than the other half?
 - After posing the first prompt, have one person with Handout B (mental image instructions) read their instructions out loud. Then, have one person with Handout A (pronounce instructions) read their instructions out loud.
- For those with Handout A, were you surprised and/or anxious when you were stuck trying to think of the answers and you noticed others (likely those with Handout B) were all writing answers on the back?
 - Did you find it difficult to process and retain the information when you focused your attention on the pronunciation rather than taking in the image of each sentence?
- For those with Handout B, after hearing Handout A’s instructions, can you imagine the level of difficulty those with Handout A had in processing and retaining information from the sentences?
 - Imagine trying to focus on just the words and not creating a mental image to understand the entire sentence.

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Words are important in communication because words have meaning. When communicating with others, we need to ensure we create a mental image with our words. This will help people leave conversations with the same understanding, instead of potentially walking away with different interpretations.
- Communicating with the intent of creating a vivid mental image, instead of just using a lot of words, also helps the receiver to remember more effectively what was said because they can visualize it.

Self-reflection questions:

- Am I too wordy? Meaning, do I go on and on with words, instead of creating a vivid mental image for the receiver?
- How do I check in with people to make sure they have the correct vivid mental image of what I am communicating?
- *Note - The facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- Half of the participants get Handout A and half get Handout B.
- The facilitator uses Facilitator Handout.⁵

PRONOUNCIATION AND IMAGING EXERCISE**Sentences (be clear and articulate each word):**

1. The noisy fan blew the papers off the table.
2. The green frog jumped into the swimming pool.
3. The silly snake slithered down a steep sliding board.
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6. The plump chef liked to jump rope.
7. The captured crook liked to do difficult crossword puzzles.
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10. The distressed teacher ate a wormy apple.
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Questions and Answers

1. Who won the daily double? (crafty surgeon)
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Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

Please rate the sentences I will read on how easily you can pronounce them. Repeat the sentences silently to yourself. Use the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5

**Very difficult
to pronounce**

**Very easy
to pronounce**

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. | 6. | 11. | 16. |
| 2. | 7. | 12. | 17. |
| 3. | 8. | 13. | 18. |
| 4. | 9. | 14. | 19. |
| 5. | 10. | 15. | 20. |

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

Please rate the sentences I will read on how well you can form a vivid mental picture or image of the action of the sentence. Use the following scale.

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Very difficult to image					Very easy to image
1.		6.		11.	16.
2.		7.		12.	17.
3.		8.		13.	18.
4.		9.		14.	19.
5.		10.		15.	20.

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

FEEDBACK

Why this is important:

- Feedback is one of the most important tools a team can use to develop itself and its members.
- Given today's complex environment, both deployed and stateside, people need and expect feedback more than ever.
- Teams that routinely provide feedback to one another consistently grow in their competencies and communication
- Constructive and honest feedback helps individuals manage their weaknesses and build upon their strengths.

How this is challenging:

- Feedback is a challenging skill to master because it requires practice and transparency.
- It often involves difficult conversations because opinions may vary, emotions run high, and/or behaviors need changing.
- What makes feedback particularly difficult to give is the fact that it is often about one's interpersonal style.⁶
- Feedback needs to be regularly implemented to have the greatest impact on a team.
- Leaders often get caught up in day-to-day tasks and lose track of developing those around them through feedback.

How this improves your unit:

- Improves the team's overall effectiveness because conversations are more transparent and productive.
- Allows the receiver of feedback to walk away with an understanding of exactly what they can start doing, stop doing, and/or continue doing to increase their performance.
- Promotes a culture of continuous development and growth.
- Boosts self-awareness of one's impact on others, which can then strengthen relationships on the team.

List of exercises (in recommended order):

1. Geometric Shapes
2. Dominant Thought (warm/cold)
3. Feedforward

EXERCISE 1: GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Summary: Participants pair up and try to produce two identical drawings, one without partner feedback and the other with partner feedback.

Purpose:

- Exemplify the necessity to give and ask for feedback to make sure teammates are on the same page.
- Highlight the importance of continuous feedback when trying to accomplish a team task.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 30-45 mins

Materials Needed: Handouts, Scratch Paper, Writing Utensil (pencils preferred)

Handouts: 1 for every 2 pax

Break Out Groups: n/a

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy

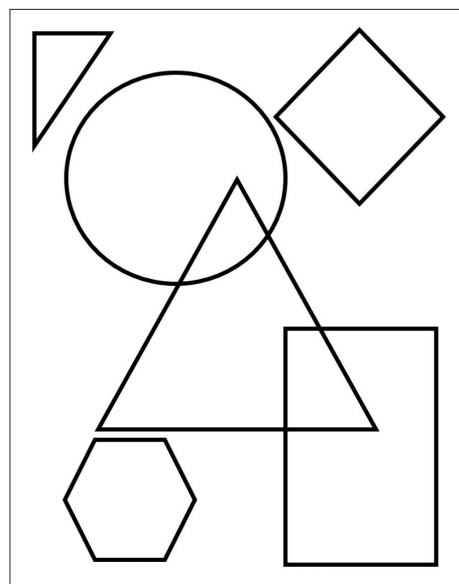
Directions:

(3-5 mins) Step 1: Pair Up and Distribute Handouts & Scratch Paper

- 1) Participants break into pairs, preferably with someone they do not know so well.
- 2) One person (Person A) from each pair comes up and grabs the Geometric Shape handout and a piece of scratch paper from the facilitator. Person A then returns to their partner (Person B) and gives Person B the piece of scratch paper.
 - a) *Note - ensure only Person A sees what is on the handout.
- 3) Pairs then sit back-to-back (can do it standing if need be).
 - a) Try to keep everyone in the same room (the noise from other teams adds to the complexity of the exercise).

(7-10 mins) Step 2: 1st Drawing (no communication)

- 4) Person A, using only verbal instructions, describes the images on the handout to Person B.
- 5) Person B then draws what Person A is describing to them on the piece of scratch paper.
 - a) Person B has five minutes to draw the shapes.
 - b) The goal is to have both sheets look exactly the same (same size, dimension, location, etc.).
- 6) *Note - Person B is NOT allowed to talk or ask questions during this time. NO DIALOGUE, NO COMMUNICATION, NO NONVERBALS, ETC.
- 7) When five minutes are up, both people turn around and compare Person B's drawing to the Geometric Shapes handout.
 - a) The pair exchange feedback and talk about what it was like to experience only one-way communication.



(7-10 mins) Step 3: 2nd Drawing (switch roles; draw and describe simultaneously)

- 8) Person A leaves the room so the facilitator can tell Person B the next drawing. Each pair will draw the same image.

- 9) The facilitator then writes on the board or says out loud (but not so loud that Person A can hear) the image that Person B has to draw and simultaneously describe to Person A in the next portion of this exercise.
 - a) Images could be a paintbrush, hammer, plane, bicycle, etc.
- 10) The facilitator lets Person A back in the room, where they join their partner and sit/stand back-to-back.
- 11) Person A and Person B both flip over their pages so they have a blank sheet.
- 12) The facilitator tells the pairs they have five minutes to draw the next image.
- 13) Person B draws and simultaneously describes the image to Person A.
 - a) Person B describes the image to Person A WITHOUT saying what the image is or using other clues to give away the image.
 - i) For example, if the pair is drawing a plane, Person B can not say “this object flies in the sky and transports passengers.” They must describe the image using geometrical shapes, such as “draw a three-inch-long oval in the middle of the paper that is horizontal and shaped like a cigar.”
- 14) This time, however, the pair are ALLOWED to communicate back and forth while drawing.
- 15) After the allotted five minutes, both people turn around and compare their drawings.
 - a) The pair exchange feedback and talk about how they communicated this time.

(3-5 min) Step 4: Show Off Drawings

- 16) The facilitator lets pairs share their drawings and any initial reactions with the group.
- 17) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- What were some of your initial reactions during the 1st Drawing?
 - For the describer, what was it like giving instructions and not getting feedback on how those instructions were being received?
 - For the drawer, how difficult was it not being able to ask questions or otherwise communicate with the describer?
- Minus people’s artistic abilities, how did the 2nd Drawing compare to your experience with the 1st Drawing?
 - What helped this time? What could have been better?
 - For the describer, how hard was it to draw and describe the shapes simultaneously?
 - Were there any times you felt that either of you was overcommunicating?

How this translates to team cohesion:

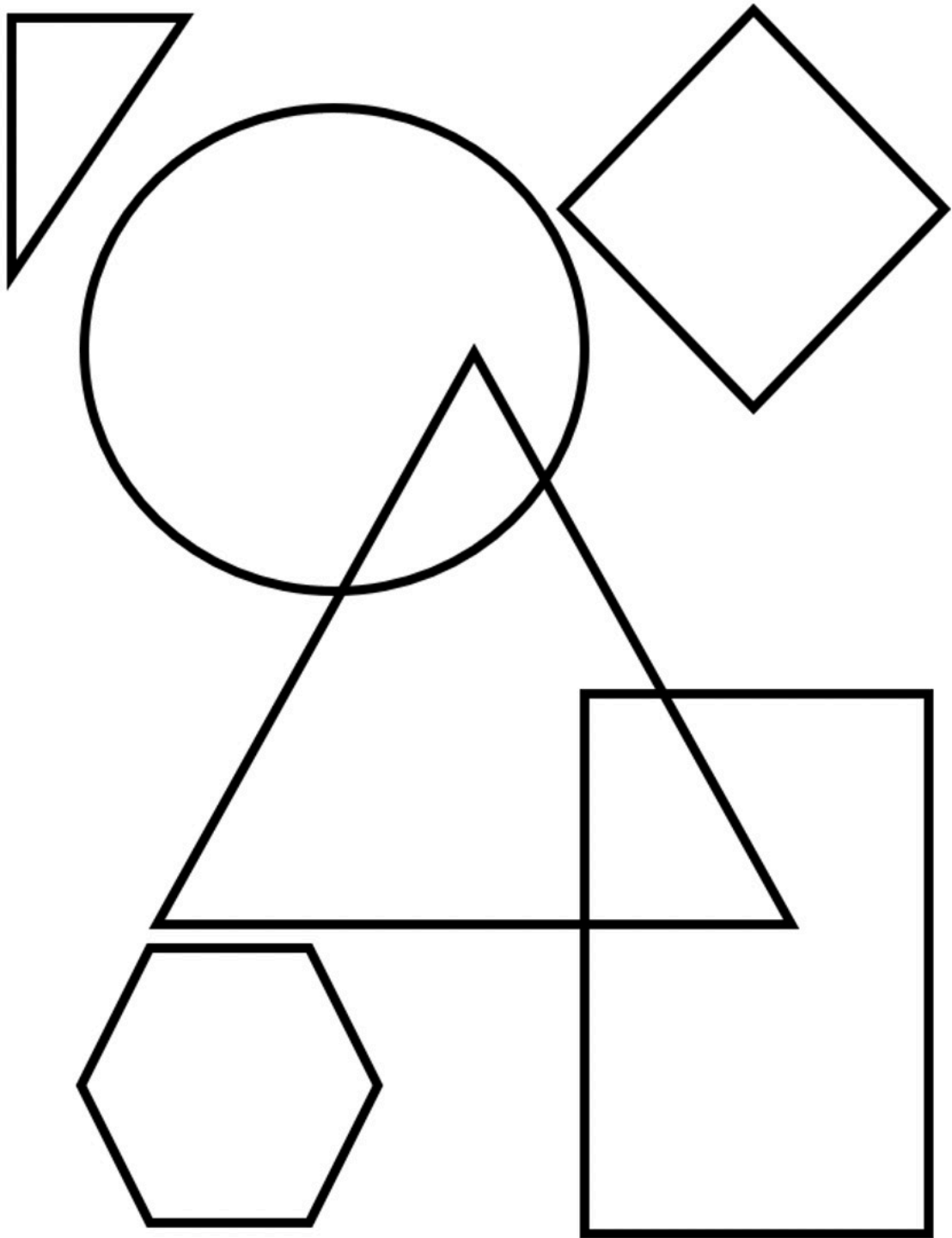
- Feedback, especially two-way feedback, is important to ensure that individuals and teams are on the same page and going in the same direction.
- Feedback is much more effective when the person giving the feedback has time to prepare their message.
 - For example, imagine if Person B (in the 2nd Drawing) had been able to first draw their image and prepare how they wanted to communicate with Person A, instead of doing both in real-time.
- Feedback can also lead to a mutual coaching conversation regarding what the receiver should stop, start, or continue doing.

Self-reflection questions:

- How do I prepare to give my teammate(s) difficult feedback?
- How do I follow up to see if the feedback I gave was understood?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- Person A receives the Geometric Shapes handout (the back side is blank).
- Person B receives a sheet of paper that has both sides blank.



EXERCISE 2: DOMINANT THOUGHT (WARM/COLD)

Summary: Participants circle which words best describe their gut reaction to an incoming fictitious soldier they will have to work with in the future.

Purpose:

- Illustrate that the last word or phrase in someone’s mind (dominant thought) directly affects how they perceive something/someone, as well as how they act or react to something/someone.
- Exemplify that dominant thought can directly impact (positively or negatively) one’s behavior.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 25-35 mins

Materials Needed: Handouts

Handouts: 1 per pax

Break Out Groups: n/a

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy

Directions:

(3-5 mins) Step 1: Distribute Handouts and Create Mental Image (PART I)

- 1) Evenly distribute copies of the warm and cold handouts. One half of the room gets the warm handout and the other half of the room gets the cold handout.
 - a) Handouts are intentionally not labeled. The way to distinguish is to look at the last descriptor word in the list of seven adjectives. The last word is either “warm” or “cold.”
 - b) *Note - do not let participants know there are two different handouts.
- 2) The facilitator reads the instructions for PART I and the first three adjectives: *skillful, confident, intelligent*.
 - a) Mention that participants should focus on the seven adjectives in PART I.
- 3) Participants silently read the adjectives on their handout, then close their eyes and make an overall impression of this new soldier they will work with in the near future.
 - a) Tell them to make a mental image of what this soldier is probably like.

Part I
In the box below is a list of characteristics that describe a new soldier you will have to work closely with in the future.

----- You have never met this soldier before but the following characteristics are valid.
----- Read them carefully to yourself and try to form an overall impression of the kind of soldier described.

Skillful - Confident - Intelligent - Determined - Practical - Cautious - Cold

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

(3-5 mins) Step 2: Participant Selects Words (PART II)

- 4) The facilitator then reads the instructions for PART II.
- 5) Then tell participants to quickly go through each word pairing and circle the word that their gut tells them what this soldier is probably like.
 - a) Rhetorically ask, “Would you say they are generous or ungenerous?”
- 6) Remind participants to go as quickly as possible and let intuition drive word selection.
- 7) Participants turn their handouts over when they are done to let the facilitator know they have completed their word selections.

Part II
Now, with that overall impression in mind, select from the following list those traits that are most in accordance with the picture you have formed of this soldier.

Circle one word in each pair

Generous	Ungenerous	Ruthless	Humane
Shrewd	Wise	Good-looking	Unattractive
Unhappy	Happy	Frivolous	Serious
Irritable	Good-natured	Restrained	Talkative
Humorous	Humorless	Self-centered	Unselfish
Sociable	Unsociable	Imaginative	Hard-headed
Popular	Unpopular	Strong	Weak
Reliable	Unreliable	Dishonest	Honest

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

(6-8 mins) Step 3: Review Word Selection

- 8) The facilitator asks participants to either stand or raise their hand if they chose this word:
 - a) Generous.
 - i) Those participants will either stand or raise their hand to let everyone see who circled that word.
 - ii) Then the facilitator can rhetorically ask, “That means the rest of you sitting or not raising your hand said ‘ungenerous,’ correct?”
 - b) The facilitator repeats this process for the six-word pairings below:
 - i) Unhappy... Happy
 - ii) Irritable... Good-Nature
 - iii) Humorous... Humorless
 - iv) Unsociable... Sociable
 - v) Unselfish... Self-centered
 - vi) Ruthless... Humane
 - c) After going through these six-word pairings, the facilitator could say something along the lines of, “I like this side of the room better. I think I am going to stand over here” (referring to the side of the room that has warm handouts).
 - d) *Note - Participants with the warm handout likely chose words that are more positive, compared to those with the cold handout.
- 9) The facilitator acknowledges that there seems to be a pattern in the room.
 - a) This half of the room has more negative words circled and this half has more positive words circled.
 - i) Then ask the room if they noticed that also.
- 10) Have one person with cold instructions read their seven adjectives from PART I out loud.
- 11) Then have another person with cold instructions read their adjectives out loud.
- 12) After that, have someone with warm instructions read their seven adjectives out loud.
- 13) At this point, all participants should realize that the only difference between the handouts is the last word on each handout (“cold” and “warm”).
- 14) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- Did everyone hear the one adjective that was different between the two handouts?
 - If need be, have someone with the warm handout reread their adjectives out loud.
- Rhetorically ask, isn't it interesting that everyone had the same words in exactly the same order except for the last word?
- Do you think the placement of that adjective had something to do with your perception of what it would be like to work with this new soldier?
 - How do you think that affected your opinion?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- This exercise highlights that one's dominant thought (the last thought on one's mind) will directly impact how one perceives, acts, or reacts to something or someone.
 - Dominant thoughts are generally either positive or negative.
- Each member should strive to be aware of the last piece of feedback they communicate to themselves (i.e., self-talk) and/or their teammates.
 - Key takeaway: you get the behaviors you pay the most attention to in self-talk and team-talk.
- Furthermore, when you are in a leadership role, the last piece of feedback you put in the mind of your team is powerful in determining how well or poorly your team will perform.
 - If your last message is negative and reactive (what we don't want to do) you are more likely to do exactly what you don't want to do.
 - If your last message is positive and proactive (what we want to do) you are more likely to do exactly what you want to do.
- The goal is to reframe your self-talk and the team-talk of those around you.

Self-reflection questions:

- When giving feedback, are my dominant thoughts more inclined to be positive or negative? How are they typically received?
- What can I do to improve the dominant thought in myself and in my team?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- Half of the participants get the cold handout and half get the warm handout.⁷
 - Handouts are intentionally not labeled so as to not signal to the participants that there are two different handouts.

Perception Exercise

Part I

In the box below is a list of characteristics that describe a new soldier you will have to work closely with in the future.

----- **You have never met this soldier before** but the following characteristics are valid.

----- Read them carefully to yourself and try to form an **overall impression** of the kind of soldier described.

Skillful - Confident - Intelligent – Determined - Practical - Cautious -Cold

Part II

Now, with that overall impression in mind, select from the following list those traits that are most in accordance with the picture you have formed of this soldier.

Circle one word in each pair

Generous Ungenerous

Ruthless Humane

Shrewd Wise

Good-looking Unattractive

Unhappy Happy

Frivolous Serious

Irritable Good-natured

Restrained Talkative

Humorous Humorless

Self-centered Unselfish

Sociable Unsociable

Imaginative Hard-headed

Popular Unpopular

Strong Weak

Reliable Unreliable

Dishonest Honest

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

Perception Exercise

Part I

In the box below is a list of characteristics that describe a new soldier you will have to work closely with in the future.

----- **You have never met this soldier before** but the following characteristics are valid.

----- Read them carefully to yourself and try to form an **overall impression** of the kind of soldier described.

Skillful - Confident - Intelligent – Determined - Practical - Cautious - Warm

Part II

Now, with that overall impression in mind, select from the following list those traits that are most in accordance with the picture you have formed of this soldier.

Circle one word in each pair

Generous Ungenerous

Ruthless Humane

Shrewd Wise

Good-looking Unattractive

Unhappy Happy

Frivolous Serious

Irritable Good-natured

Restrained Talkative

Humorous Humorless

Self-centered Unselfish

Sociable Unsociable

Imaginative Hard-headed

Popular Unpopular

Strong Weak

Reliable Unreliable

Dishonest Honest

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

EXERCISE 3: FEEDFORWARD

Summary: Round-robin discussions to help participants receive positive suggestions to enhance their performance in the future.

Purpose:

- Create a culture grounded in individual and team development.
- Help show teammates how they can improve their future selves, not judge them for past mistakes.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 25-35 mins

Materials Needed: Scratch Paper or Notepad/book

Handouts: n/a

Break Out Groups: n/a

Facilitator Implementation Scale:
Easy to Moderate

Directions:

(3-5 mins) Step 1: Feedforward Concept

- 1) The facilitator starts by explaining the concept of Feedforward.
 - a) What Feedforward is:
 - i) A new approach to providing feedback that is future-oriented and positive.
 - ii) Developed by leadership coach Marshall Goldsmith.
 - b) Why Feedforward:
 - i) It's about a future you can change rather than a past you cannot change.
 - ii) It creates a performance improvement culture.
 - iii) It is not just top-down information but complete 360-degree information.
 - (1) For example, top-down, bottom-up, side-side, and/or receiver-initiated.
 - iv) Feedback is often limited and static, whereas Feedforward is more expansive and dynamic.⁸

(7-10 mins) Step 2: Round Robin on What You Want to Improve

- 2) Participants write down (in a notebook or on sheet of paper) one thing they would like to improve in their life.
 - a) Tell them the more specific the better.
 - b) The facilitator may give examples to help the participants generate thoughts.
 - i) For example, I want to procrastinate less, I want to be a better listener, I want to be better at presenting an opposing view, I want to improve my 2-mile run time, etc.
- 3) The facilitator allows participants a few moments to think and write down the thing they wish to improve.
- 4) At the facilitator's mark, participants stand up and have five minutes to go around the room asking as many people as possible for suggestions on how to achieve this change.

- 5) The one-on-one conversations between participants should follow this format:
 - a) Person A shares what they want to improve and asks Person B for two specific suggestions.
 - b) Person B offers two suggestions that are future-oriented and positive.
 - c) Person A writes down the two suggestions and then says thank you.
 - d) The roles reverse and the process repeats.
 - i) *Note – the person receiving the two suggestions should not comment on or judge the suggestions. They should just annotate them and move on.
 - e) After both people have shared specific suggestions, they find another person and quickly repeat the process.
 - f) The goal is to get as many different suggestions as possible in the time allotted.
- 6) This step ends once the time expires.

(3-5 mins) Step 3: Add Up the Total Number of Suggestions

- 7) While still standing, each participant adds up the total number of suggestions they received.
- 8) The facilitator then asks the whole group:
 - a) If you got 7-9 suggestions, raise your hand.
 - b) 10-12 suggestions, raise your hand.
 - c) 13-15, raise your hand.
 - d) 16 or more...
 - e) Then the facilitator singles out the person with the highest number of suggestions and can declare that person the winner.
- 9) All participants now take a seat.
- 10) Next, participants annotate the following on their paper:
 - a) Put a star or asterisk next to any suggestion that is doable for you.
 - b) Rank the four suggestions that you feel are most valuable.
 - c) Circle one suggestion you can implement in the next 48 hours.
- 11) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- How many people had heard of Feedforward before today?
- What was it like receiving Feedforward suggestions compared to feedback?
- What did you find useful about this exercise?
- Were there any suggestions that surprised you or any suggestions that you never considered before?
 - Would you mind sharing an example?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Feedforward is grounded in humility, the humility to be vulnerable and ask for suggestions while remaining open to those suggestions.
- Team members build trust with each other as they share suggestions and learn from one another.
- Feedforward is about looking towards the future (not dwelling on the past), identifying areas of improvement, and promoting a positive growth mindset.

Self-reflection questions:

- What specific Feedforward suggestions do I want to act on to make a positive difference in my life?
- How often do I seek out Feedforward suggestions from teammates, peers, and/or mentors?
- How can our team adopt a Feedforward mindset to continually improve ourselves?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts: n/a

TRUST

Why this is important:

- Trust is not only the glue that bonds team members together, but it also helps strengthen one-on-one relationships within the team.
- It encourages team members to communicate openly and honestly and is the avenue to deeper conversations.
- When high levels of trust are present in a team, individuals are more likely to share their true intentions and motives.
- Trust helps to foster a culture of collaboration and problem-solving.
- “Teams with low trust levels have decreased communication, less cooperation, and more conflicts that are harder to solve.”⁹
- Mutual trust in a team inspires team members to reach their full potential.

How this is challenging:

- Trust is inherently lower when a team forms or new members arrive. It takes time and energy to build.
- Building a high level of trust requires individuals to be open and vulnerable, which some may be reluctant to do.
- Team members need to be comfortable in entrusting others with important tasks and responsibilities.
- Without consistency of actions and words, team members (especially leaders) can be seen as not trustworthy.
- Once broken, trust is one of the hardest elements of a team to rebuild.

How this improves your unit:

- Encourages others to be more transparent.
- Helps teammates feel supported by one another.
- Provides a sense of community such that teammates are more committed to work together.
- Creates a climate of collaboration that helps increase team effectiveness.

List of exercises (in recommended order):

1. Iceberg & Johari Window
2. Blindfold Trust Walk
3. Fear in the Hat

EXERCISE 1: ICEBERG & JOHARI WINDOW

Summary: Two-part exercise in which participants first break into small groups to share several pieces of information from their personal “iceberg.” Second, in a large group, the facilitator demonstrates how the Johari Window model helps individuals learn more about themselves and their teammates.

Purpose:

- Help teams build trust by sharing information about themselves that they generally don’t share with others.
- Strengthen trust by helping individuals better understand themselves and others, which leads to increased team performance.

Facilitator Prep Time: 10-15 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 70-90 mins

Materials Needed: Projector or Whiteboard/Easel and Handouts

Handouts: 1 per pax

Break Out Groups: 3-6 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Moderate to Challenging

Directions:

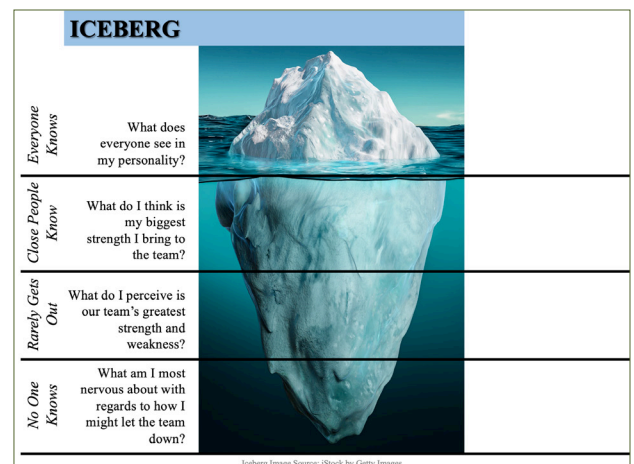
(1-2 mins) Step 1 - Introduction

- 1) The facilitator tells participants this exercise is broken into two parts:
 - a) Iceberg exercise:
 - i) Participants share several pieces of personal information in small groups.
 - ii) *Note – example prompts are given, but the facilitator can change them if desired.
 - b) Johari Window application:
 - i) Facilitator teaches the Johari Window model and emphasizes the main theme of the model.

(10-15 mins) Step 2 - Iceberg Explanation

- 2) The facilitator distributes the iceberg handout (one per person).
- 3) The facilitator then explains the concept behind the iceberg exercise.

- a) Why an iceberg?
 - i) Icebergs epitomize the notion that their real power is greater than what is seen above the surface.
 - ii) People, just like icebergs, are more complex and have more depth than what others can see.
- b) The “so what”:
 - i) The more others know what is under one’s surface, the better people understand each other.
 - ii) When people share what’s under their surface, which takes vulnerability, others often feel inspired to share what’s under their surface as well.



- iii) Openly sharing personal information with others helps build trust among a team.
- c) Levels of the iceberg exercise:
- d) There are four different levels in the iceberg exercise:
 - i) One above the surface and three under the surface.
 - (1) The deeper you go, the more open and/or vulnerable someone will have to be in sharing personal information.
 - (2) The more people share, the greater their trust builds.

ii) Level 1: Everyone Knows

- (1) This level is what everyone can see on the surface. It is what people generally know about you and what can be observed.

iii) Level 2: Close People Know

- (1) This level is what those close to you know. This group likely includes your immediate team and/or those you work with daily.

iv) Level 3: Rarely Gets Out

- (1) At this level, only select people know this information. You have likely only confided in one or two people, such as your closest peer or your battle buddy.

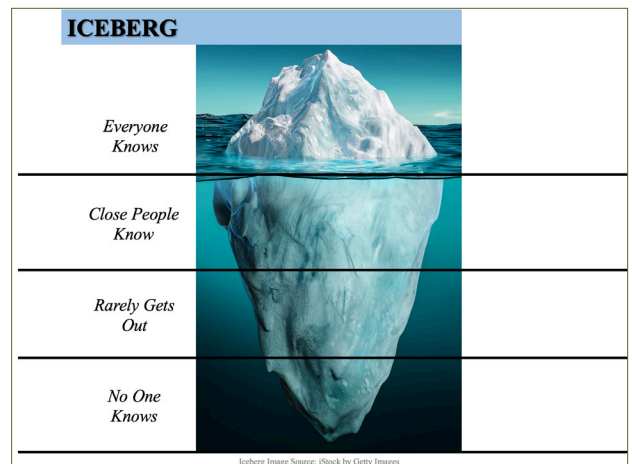
v) Level 4: No One Knows

- (1) The deepest level is the personal information that no one knows. This is what you keep to yourself and process internally.

4) The facilitator then moves on to the iceberg exercise instructions.

(25-30 mins) Step 3 - Iceberg Exercise Instruction and Break Out Discussions

- 5) The facilitator gives participants iceberg exercise instructions before the participants break into small groups.
 - a) Ideally, the small groups are people who work together on the same team.
 - b) The small groups move to separate locations.
 - c) They take five to seven minutes to individually answer each of the questions on the iceberg handout.
 - i) *Note - the facilitator can change the questions if they desire. Remember, the lower on the iceberg, the deeper and more vulnerable the question must be.
 - d) After everyone answers each question, members in the small group go around sharing their responses to question one, then question two, then three, and finally four.



- i) *Note - everyone must share their response to question one first before the group moves on to question two.
- e) After each person shares their response, they invite others to offer their reactions before moving on to the next question.
 - i) For example, Person A states that they feel their greatest weakness is that they suggest too many bad ideas. Person B might respond by saying that they are surprised because they see Person A as the one who usually comes up with creative ideas that helps everyone else think outside the box.
- f) After giving the instructions, the facilitator should (highly recommended) use themselves as an example and go through each of the four levels within the iceberg exercise.
- g) At this point, participants break into small groups and have 20 minutes to do the exercise.
- h) The small groups return to the large group discussion once they have gone through each of the iceberg questions.
 - i) *Note - the facilitator does not walk around to each of the small groups. The small groups share personal information only among themselves.

(6-8 mins) Step 3 - Midpoint Debrief (debrief Iceberg before introducing Johari Window)

- 6) The facilitator conducts a midpoint debrief once all the participants return to the large group discussion room.

Discussion Prompts:

- Raise your hand if you learned something new about someone that you didn't know before.
- What was it like to share something so personal in the small group discussions?
- Did you find it hard to be open and/or vulnerable the lower you went on the iceberg?
- Raise your hand if you learned something valuable that will help you interact better as a team
- Did you feel like trust within your team grew after sharing personal information with teammates?

How this translates into Johari Window:

- The importance of the iceberg exercise is to help individuals get outside their comfort zone and share personal information about themselves with their teammates.
- As you will see in a moment, the Johari Window is a more formalized approach to help individuals increase their self awareness and personal development, as well as teams with their team awareness and team development.

(15-20 mins) Step 4 - Johari Window Explanation

7) The facilitator starts by pulling up the Johari Window model for all participants to see.

8) This can be done by one of three methods:

- a) Draw on a whiteboard or easel.
- b) Project onto a screen or TV.
- c) Print a handout for all.

d) *Note - the first two methods are preferred because the facilitator can go step-by-step when explaining the model instead of having all aspects displayed at once (i.e., tell, self-disclosure, ask, feedback [see image below], etc.).

i) In the handout portion of this exercise, there are step-by-step images for describing the Johari Window model.

9) The facilitator then explains the Johari Window model.

- a) It is a psychological model created by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in the 1950s to help group members increase their understanding of and communication with one another.¹⁰
- b) The Johari Window model is still widely used today.
- c) It is used to help enhance people’s self-awareness, personal development, interpersonal communication, and group dynamics.¹⁰

10) Johari Window is broken down into four quadrants:

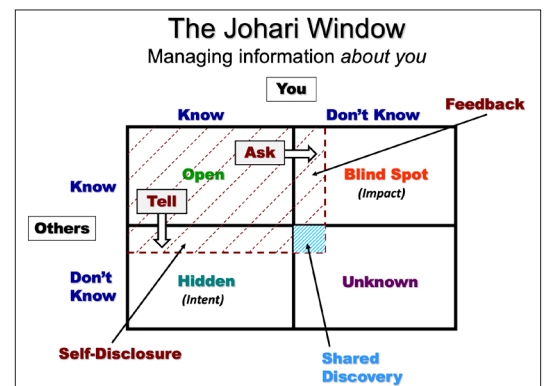
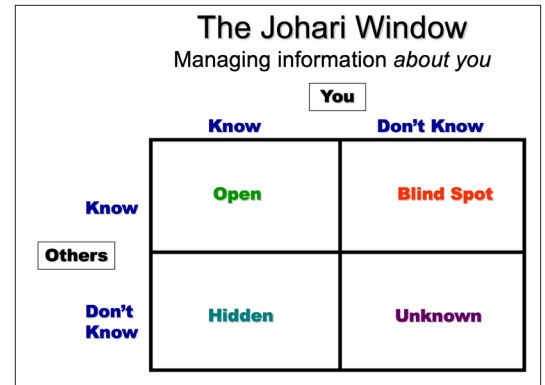
- a) **Open:** what is known by self and known by others.
 - i) Example - factual information, behaviors, personal motivators, etc.
- b) **Hidden:** what is known by self and not known by others.
 - i) Example - feelings, personal information, etc.
- c) **Blind Spot:** what is not known to self but known by others.
 - i) Example - habits and/or attributes others notice but you don’t, etc.
- d) **Unknown:** what is not known to self and not known to others.
 - i) Example - personal strengths that have not been discovered, etc.

11) The goal is for each person to expand their open window.

a) This will help increase both individual and team awareness, as well as improve self and group development.

12) You expand your “open” window through two actions: telling and asking.

a) **Telling:** you share personal information with others, just as you experienced during the iceberg exercise.



- i) By self-disclosing information, others have a greater understanding of who you are, how you see yourself, and how you want to be seen.
 - ii) Additionally, when you self-disclose your intentions, others are better able to understand where you are coming from.
 - b) Asking:** you seek out information from others to understand their interpretation of your actions.
 - i) By soliciting feedback from others, you learn different aspects about yourself that you were not previously aware of.
 - ii) You can then better understand the impacts of your actions and see if they aligned with your intentions.
 - c) Both actions help to build trust and connections with your teammates. Expanding your “open” window often inspires others to expand theirs as well.
- 13) The more your “open” window expands in both directions (hidden and blind spot), the greater possibility there is for you to experience shared discovery with your teammates.
- a) Shared discovery** is when you and your teammates find out something about you that neither knew before.
 - i) For example, you were put in charge of leading your team through physical training (PT) for the first time. The PT you led was extremely effective and everyone enjoyed the workout session. In the process, you discovered that you enjoy creating and leading unique PT sessions. Your teammates gave feedback that you seemed extremely comfortable leading in front of a group. Now you and your teammates are thinking about other work-related tasks you might be good at based on this experience.
- 14) Again, the goal is for each person to expand their open window.
- 15) The facilitator then moves to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- Keeping the Johari Window in mind, what do you think it would be like to have a teammate who...
 - Keeps their hidden window private and does not seek feedback?
 - The answer might be that they come off as aloof, uncommitted, and not enjoyable for a person to work with/for.
 - Only shares their hidden window, but doesn't ask for feedback?
 - The answer might be that they are oblivious to their impact and seem to distrust others.
 - Keeps their hidden window private but seeks a lot of feedback?
 - The answer might be that others are unsure of their true intentions because they are asking questions but are not offering any feedback in return or sharing information about themselves (e.g., intentions).

- Openly shares their hidden window and asks for a lot of feedback?
 - The answer might be that they have very productive relationships because they put people at ease with their openness and empathy towards others.
- What are some methods that you could implement on your team to help everyone expand their “open” window?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- The Johari Window model illustrates how expanding your open window helps you become more aware of yourself and the impact you have on others.
 - That awareness leads to improved trust, self-development, and interpersonal relationships.
- When members of a team strive to expand their “open” windows, then group dynamics, team development, and team performance typically increase.
 - Teams then become more cooperative, productive, and effective.
- As trust increases in a team, people’s “open” window usually becomes bigger. This is because individuals are more honest in sharing their “hidden” window, as well as providing feedback for a teammate’s “blind spot” window.
 - This is a positive feedback loop - more openness creates more trust, which creates more openness.

Self-reflection questions:

- Is it easy or hard for me to share stuff from my hidden window, and why?
- Am I open to receiving feedback from others on my blind spots?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- Iceberg - one per person.¹¹
- Johari Window - one per person.
- Johari Window step-by-by images (for facilitator use).

ICEBERG

*Everyone
Knows*

What does everyone see in my personality?



*Close People
Know*

What do I think is my biggest strength I bring to the team?



*Rarely Gets
Out*

What do I perceive is our team's greatest strength and weakness?



*No One
Knows*

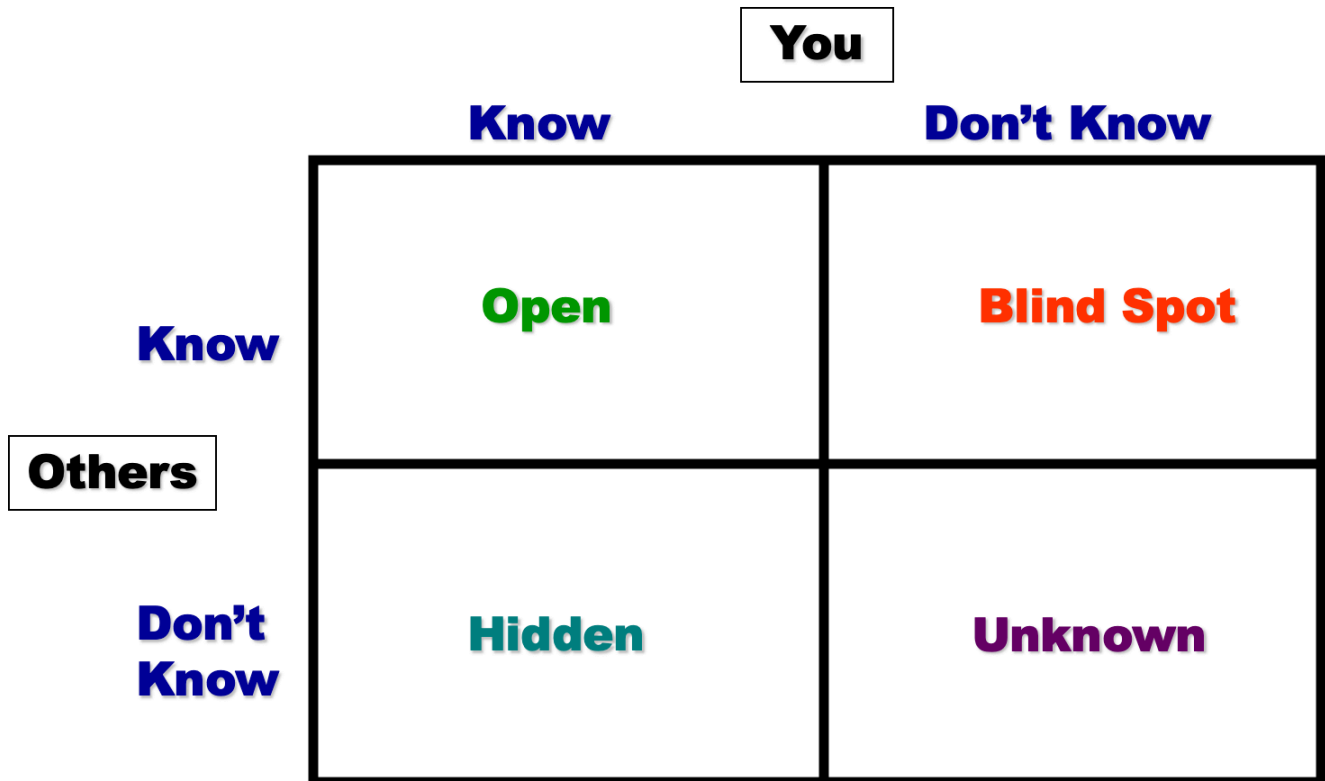
What am I most nervous about with regards to how I might let the team down?



Iceberg Image Source: iStock by Getty Images

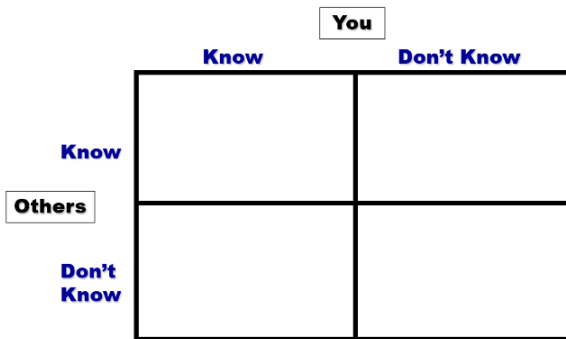
The Johari Window

Managing information *about you*



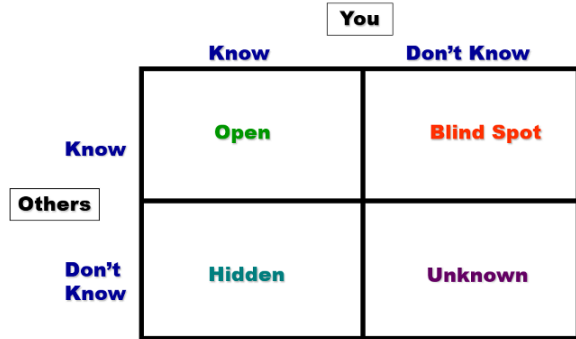
Step 1

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



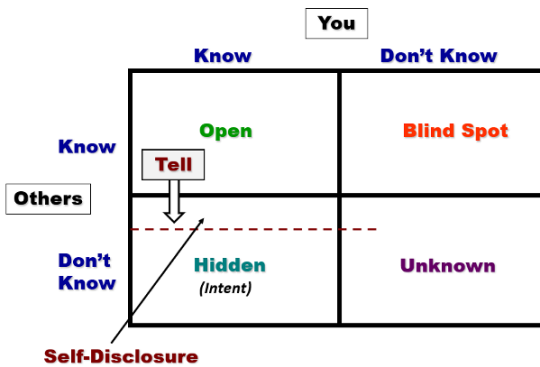
Step 2

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



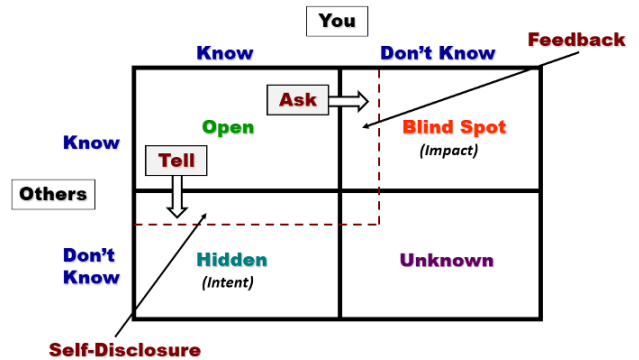
Step 3

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



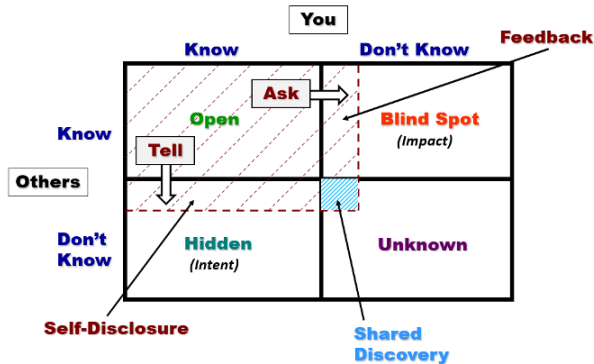
Step 4

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



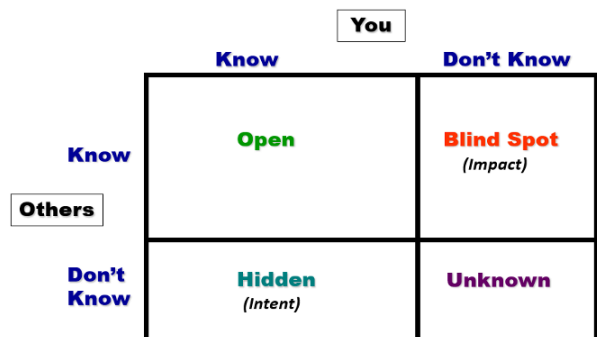
Step 5

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



Step 6

The Johari Window
Managing information *about you*



EXERCISE 2: BLINDFOLD TRUST WALK

Summary: Participants pair up and navigate an obstacle course while one partner is blindfolded and the other provides verbal directions.

Purpose:

- Show team members that they can trust one another even though only one member might see the whole picture.
- Promote the notion of letting go of control and putting trust in others. Leaders cannot do everything themselves and need to be okay with giving responsibility to others.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 10-15 mins

Execution Time: 35-45 mins

Materials Needed: Blindfold, Props for minor obstacles

Handouts: n/a

Break Out Groups: n/a

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Easy

Directions:

(10-15 mins) Step 1: Obstacle Course Setup (part of exercise prep time, not execution time)

- 1) Before participants arrive, set up an obstacle course that participants will have to navigate.
 - a) The key is to create an obstacle course with variety. Force blindfolded individuals to go over, under, and around obstacles of different shapes and sizes.
 - i) For example, an obstacle could be a string tied between two chairs to force participants to either go over or under the string.
 - ii) The number of obstacles should range from 7-10.
 - b) This could be done in the following settings:
 - i) Inside a large room with water bottles, boxes, chairs, string/rope, etc.
 - ii) Outside in a large area using similar props named above.
 - iii) Outside along a trail or in the woods with fallen trees, branches, etc.
 - (1) For example, it could be done during PT hours at the end of a run.
 - c) *Note - safety must always be the first and foremost consideration when selecting an area or putting up obstacles. Do NOT put someone in a position where they could be injured.
- 2) If able, create a second obstacle course in a nearby location so that when partners switch roles the newly blindfolded person does not have a mental image of the previous course.
 - a) Otherwise, the other partner will do the obstacle course in reverse with a few modifications.

(5-7 mins) Step 2: Obstacle Course Orientation and Instruction

- 3) All participants gather at a location directed by the facilitator (staging area).
 - a) The goal is to not let participants see the obstacle course beforehand.
 - i) If done in a large classroom, have participants stage outside of the classroom.
 - ii) If done outside, have participants stage in a location (inside or around the corner) so they cannot see the obstacle course.

- 4) Participants then break into pairs.
- 5) One of the partners volunteers to be blindfolded.
 - a) Blindfolds could include bandanas, shirts, blue painter's tape, etc.
 - b) Ensure that the blindfolded individual's ability to see is completely removed.
 - i) Eyes closed are not acceptable because the temptation to peek is too great.
- 6) While one partner puts their blindfold on, the other partner (guiding partner) follows the facilitator into the area where the obstacle course is located.
- 7) The facilitator gives an overview of the obstacle course, letting participants know the direction and how to negotiate certain obstacles (e.g., over, under, around, etc.).

(8-10 mins) Step 3: Partners Navigate First Obstacle Course

- 8) After the obstacle course orientation, the guiding partner ensures the blindfold is properly secured and their partner can not see.
- 9) The pairs then have one minute to strategize on how they will communicate and move safely through the obstacle course, with the guiding partner only able to give verbal instructions.
 - a) The guiding partner is not allowed to touch the blind partner unless the blind partner might get injured.
 - b) *Note- the guiding partner is responsible for the safety of their blind partner.
- 10) Pairs then negotiate the obstacle course, with the facilitator giving a little space and time in between each pair.
- 11) The pairs have five to six minutes to complete the obstacle course.
- 12) After completing the first obstacle course, all participants leave the immediate area so they cannot see the facilitator modify the course.
 - a) If there are two obstacle courses, pairs move to the staging area for the other obstacle course.
 - b) If outside on a trail or longer route, just switch roles after five to six minutes and continue moving in that direction (if space allows).

(10-12 mins) Step 4: Partners Navigate Second Obstacle Course

- 13) Once all participants are out of the obstacle course area, the facilitator moves and/or changes the location, heights, direction, etc. of some or all of the obstacles.
 - a) The goal is to not have the same layout as the previous obstacle course.
 - b) Doing the obstacle course in reverse is also an option.
- 14) The pairs then follow the same procedure they did for the first obstacle course.
 - a) Partners switch who is blindfolded.
 - b) The facilitator gives an orientation brief of the obstacle course to the guiding partner.
 - c) Guiding partner ensures the blindfold is properly in place.
 - d) Partners have one minute to discuss their communication and movement strategy.

i) Still using only verbal instructions.

15) Partners then have five to six minutes to complete the obstacle course.

a) *Note - again, the guiding partner is responsible for the safety of their blind partner.

16) If need be, after completion of the second obstacle course, have participants help tear down the course(s) and then move to the debrief location.

17) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- What was it like being blindfolded and not seeing what was in front of you or not knowing the big picture (the obstacle course)?
- Were there any challenges in trusting your partner while you navigated the course blindfolded?
 - What were they?
 - Why or why not were they challenging?
- What communication strategies helped build trust in each other?
 - How was that trust challenged when pairs came across an obstacle?
- How do you think a lack of trust affects the cohesion of a team?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Trust is one of the foundational principles of team cohesion.
- Trust helps to strengthen relationships within a team or organization.
- High-performing teams build and maintain trust among everyone on the team.
 - Most of the time, it takes a team of people working different lines of effort to accomplish a task/mission.
 - Leaders who try to micromanage and do everything themselves often fail: fail at accomplishing the task, creating a cohesive unit, or both.

Self-reflection questions:

- How trusting am I with my subordinates, peers, and/or boss?
 - Particularly when I am told to do something and I may not understand/see the whole picture.
- Can I think of a time when trust was missing on a team?
 - How did that affect the team's cohesion and performance?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handout: n/a

EXERCISE 3: FEAR IN A HAT

Summary: In break out groups, participants anonymously write a fear they have; drop the paper/notecard into a container; then pull out, read out loud, and discuss each fear. _

Purpose:

- Sharing one's fear(s) often promotes unity and trust because team members realize that others tend to have similar fears.¹²
- Showing team members the power of empathy and understanding when someone is willing to share their fear(s) helps build trust among everyone on the team.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 40-45 mins

Materials Needed: Scratch Paper or Notecards, and Box, Hat, or Container (put papers inside of)

Handouts: n/a

Break Out Groups: 6-8 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale:
Moderate to Challenging

Directions:

(3-5 mins) Step 1 - Introduction to the Topic of Fear

- 1) The facilitator introduces the topic of fear.
 - a) Everyone experiences some type of worry or fear about a variety of situations in both their professional and personal lives.
 - b) Fear can hold teams back from reaching their true potential.
 - c) A good way to manage or overcome fears is by acknowledging them openly with others.
 - i) Often our fears are very similar to, if not the same as, other people's fears.
 - ii) By expressing them out loud, people can see that their fears are not uncommon and that others have the same worry.
 - iii) This helps build trust within a team.
- 2) This exercise serves as a starting point to address those fears we all have by sharing them anonymously in a medium-sized group (6-8 pax).
- 3) *Note - facilitator needs to ensure they set the serious tone of this exercise.
 - a) Everyone needs to know this exercise is meant to empathically support one another and is part of the process of becoming a consistently high-performing team.

(7-10 mins) Step 2 - The Facilitator Provides Exercise Instructions

- 4) Before participants break into groups, the facilitator gives the following instructions for how each group will conduct the exercise.
- 5) Participants break into medium-sized groups (6-8 pax) and move to a different location (either spreading out in a large room or going to separate rooms).
- 6) Each participant takes two minutes to write down privately (on a scratch paper or notecard) a fear they have that is related to working within this company or on their team.
 - a) The facilitator can give a prompt for participants to help guide their responses.
 - i) What are you most afraid of?

- ii) What is the worst thing that could happen to you?
- b) Tell participants to be detailed in their responses.
 - i) The response (what is written on the paper/notecard) should create a mental image for the other participants when it is later read out loud in the break out groups.
- c) Examples of what fears might be written down:
 - i) I am afraid of being humiliated by a/my leader in front of my peers.
 - ii) I am afraid of failing at a task and looking incompetent.
 - iii) I am afraid of sending a bad report to my boss.
 - iv) The worst thing that could happen to me is analysis paralysis, where I am unable to make a decision and look incompetent in front of my team.
- d) An example of something that is too generic:
 - i) I am afraid of letting my teammates down.
 - (1) In this case, the participant needs to explain further why/how they feel they will let their teammates down.
 - (2) For example, I am afraid of letting my teammates down because I don't remember how to properly configure the radio and I will fail at that during our upcoming exercise.
- 7) After writing down their fear, participants place the paper/notecard into a hat, box, or another container.
- 8) One person volunteers to go first. They remove a single paper/notecard from the container and read its contents out loud to their group.
- 9) The reader then describes, in their own words, their perception of why this fear is justified.
- 10) The reader then provides a suggestion or two for how someone could manage or overcome this fear.
- 11) The reader then asks others in the group to offer their insight on this fear and share any suggestions they have on how to effectively manage/overcome this fear.
 - a) Example of what this dialogue might look like:
 - i) Reader: "This person says they are afraid of sending up a bad report."
 - ii) Reader: "This fear is justified because they do not want to look incompetent in front of their boss, nor do they want to make their team look bad."
 - iii) Reader: "A way to deal with this fear is to have other teammates review the report before sending it."
 - iv) Reader: "Does anyone else have any insights, suggestions, or ideas?"
 - v) Another Group Member: "I had this same fear when I first got to the unit, so I asked the boss for feedback after sending the first couple reports."

- vi) Another Group Member: “One suggestion could be to check with other teams before sending the report to ensure it’s in the right format and meets the boss’s intent. Or they could send it to the most senior NCO in the unit to review it and provide feedback.”

12) (Optional) Finally, the reader can then invite the person who wrote this fear to share their reaction to what they heard.

13) After discussing this fear, the container moves to the next person in the group and the process is repeated.

14) Below is a quick synopsis of the process:

- a) Read the fear out loud to the entire break out group.
- b) Acknowledge how/why this fear is justified.
- c) Suggest an idea or two for how someone could manage or overcome this fear.
- d) Invite others to offer their insight.
- e) (Optional) Allow the writer to share their reaction.
- f) The container moves to the next person.

(20-25 mins) Step 3 - Small Group Break Out and Conduct Exercise

15) After providing the instructions, have participants break into 6-8 person groups.

- a) The facilitator can join one of the groups for the exercise or bounce between groups.

16) Break out groups move to different locations and conduct the exercise.

17) After going through each of the fears (approximately three minutes per fear), participants return to the large group discussion room.

18) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- What was it like to write your fear and hear it discussed out loud?
- Were there any common fears that arose during your break out group discussions?
 - How reassuring was it to hear that people had similar fears?
- How do you think sharing your fears affects team dynamics?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Similar to previous exercises (Iceberg and Johari Window), sharing information about one's "hidden" window often helps teammates bond and build trust.
- Generally, two major fears hold a team back from becoming a consistently high-performing team: fear of failure and fear of judgment.¹³
 - Team members who come together and empathetically support one another have a better chance of managing or overcoming these fears.

Self-reflection questions:

- What fears am I holding on to? Have I shared these fears with any teammates?
- What can I do to help others feel comfortable trusting me with their fears?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups or their teams and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handout: n/a

UNIFIED COMMITMENT

Why this is important:

- Unified commitment promotes a sense of loyalty and mutual accountability among the team members.
- Unified commitment helps teams create shared goals derived from a common vision.
- Individuals tend to become more team-focused and therefore prioritize behaviors that help the team achieve its goals.
- “By promising to hold ourselves accountable to the team’s goals, we each earn the right to express [and discuss] our own views about all aspects of the team’s effort.”¹⁴
- Team members are more likely to work through challenges together.
- Teams often produce greater results when they work together in unison.

How this is challenging:

- The team’s atmosphere must constantly allow for open and honest dialogue to unite different viewpoints from each team member.
- Teams need to agree upon a shared vision before developing a unified plan of action.
- Individuals are required to put their needs below the team’s needs.
- Team members should regularly provide each other with genuine feedback and ensure they are progressing as a cohesive unit.

How this improves your unit:

- Fosters a culture of shared ownership and responsibility.
- Leads to more collaborative ideas and more cooperative action.
- Increases motivation among team members as they seek to achieve their goals.
- Encourages team members to communicate more frequently and effectively.
- Helps strengthen bonds as team members support one another.

List of exercises (in recommended order):

1. Blizzard Survival Scenario
2. Ladder of Inference
3. Fist of Five

EXERCISE 1: BLIZZARD SURVIVAL SCENARIO

Summary: Individually and in small groups, participants rank the importance of fifteen survival items and calculate the difference between their rankings and those of planning experts.

Purpose:

- Highlight the importance of open communication and cooperation in a team.
 - Leaders should not only be open to listening to others’ ideas, but should also encourage others to speak up.
 - Every member of a team may be able to provide valuable insight, with a different viewpoint, that could help solve a problem or accomplish a task.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5-10 mins
Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins
Execution Time: 55-70 mins
Materials Needed: Handouts
Handouts: 1 per pax
Break Out Groups: 4-6 pax
Facilitator Implementation Scale: Moderate

Directions:

(10-12 mins) Step 1: Distribute Handout, Read the Scenario, and Individually Rank Items

- 1) The facilitator distributes the handout so that every participant has their own copy.
 - a) Ensure the handout has both the scenario and ranking sheets.
- 2) The facilitator reads the scenario out loud while participants follow along.
- 3) After reading the scenario, the facilitator reads the task instructions and gives the participants five to seven minutes to complete the Individual Ranking column (Step 1).
 - a) Rank the items from 1 to 15, with 1 being most important and 15 least important.

Blizzard

The Situation

Your hiking party has been caught by a sudden blizzard while trekking in a remote region of the Rocky Mountains. A mad dash back to your midsize SUV resulted in a few scratches from slipping in the snow, but none of your party sustained any major injuries. Your attempt to drive out has failed. Veering slightly off the road to avoid a fallen tree, the SUV smashes into a hidden rock and careens into a shallow ravine. In the wreck, your headlights are smashed, and the oil pan is torn out. Getting the SUV back in working order is impossible.

On the radio, which is still working, you hear that the blizzard is a major one and is not expected to end until tomorrow night. Immediate clearing is expected then. Temperatures tonight are expected to plummet below freezing with winds more than 40 miles (64.4 kilometers) per hour. The high temperature tomorrow is forecast at 10° Fahrenheit (-12° Centigrade) with winds unchanged.

Your Task

Rank these items from most important to least important for your survival. You are to assume that:

- All members of the party have agreed to stay together.
- The number of your party is the same as the number of your group.
- The time is 3 p.m. Your families expect you home by 6 p.m. and have a vague idea where you are.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, originally produced in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training* Vol 2, 1974.

Rankings

BELOW ARE LISTED THE 15 ITEMS YOUR GROUP HAS COMPILED. YOUR TASK IS TO RANK THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR YOUR SURVIVAL.

Place the number "1" by the most important item, the number "2" by the second most important, and so on, through number "15" the least important.

	Step 1 Individual Ranking	Step 2 Team Ranking	Step 3 Planning Experts' Ranking	Step 4 Difference between steps 1 and 3	Step 5 Difference between steps 2 and 3
Beef Jerky					
Blankets					
Cigarette Lighter					
First-Aid Kit					
Gasoline					
Hoses					
Metal Hubcaps					
SUV Mirror					
Knife					
Magnetic Compass					
Map of the Area					
Shotgun					
Shovel					
Spare Tire					
Sunglasses					
TOTAL					

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, originally produced in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training* Vol 2, 1974.

(15-20 mins) Step 2: Small Group Teams Rank Order

- 4) The facilitator gives the following directions before participants break into small groups.
 - a) Teams need to collectively discuss and determine their group’s rankings.

- b) Do not just vote for majority rules: discuss why your group is ranking the items in that order.
- c) Give every person an opportunity to share the rationale behind their suggestion.
- d) Collectively come to an agreement after hearing people's rationales.
- e) Decide the whole ranking from first to fifteenth.
- f) In the end, everyone in a given small group will have the same rankings in the Team Ranking column (Step 2) on their handout.

- 5) Now, participants break into small groups and move to separate locations to discuss and determine their group's collective rankings.
- 6) Small groups have approximately fifteen minutes to decide their group's rankings.
- 7) After the allotted time, small groups return to the large-group discussion room.

(6-8 mins) Step 3: Expert's Rationale

- 8) Once all small groups return to the large group discussion room, the facilitator shares the Planning Experts' Rankings (Step 3 column).
- 9) The facilitator then summarizes the rationale behind the experts' rankings.
 - a) The facilitator does not need to give the rationale behind the ranking of every item.
 - b) The facilitator can choose which items to explain, choose items based on the participants' reaction to hearing a particular ranking, or both.
 - c) For example, the minivan mirrors are ranked 3 because they are effective signaling devices that can be used to reflect sunlight once the storm passes.
- 10) Each participant writes the experts' ranking under the Step 3 column.
 - a) In the end, every participant should have the same rankings in the Step 3 column.

Experts' Rationale

In this survival situation, there are three life-threatening problems:

- Death from exposure can occur in a few hours.
- Death from dehydration can occur in three days.
- Death from starvation can occur in one to three weeks, depending on physical exertion, exhaustion, etc.

#1 Knife: The most pressing survival need is to insulate your body against the cold. The primary methods of doing this are by creating a dead-air space around your body and protecting your extremities. The knife can be used to rip up the seats and the padding used as insulation inside your clothes. The knife has multiple other uses to be discussed later.

#2 Blankets: Heat flows from warm to cooler surfaces. Any areas of the body left unprotected allow heat to be conducted away from the body. Up to 50 percent of the body's heat production can be lost by leaving the head uncovered. Similarly, uncovered hands cause the body to lose heat. The two blankets, cut with the knife, can be used to form make-shift hats and gloves.

(Other than these two items, all that is needed to survive the blizzard itself is to restrict muscular action. Body heat, other than what is conducted away, is lost primarily through respiration and perspiration. Not moving around cuts down both of these sources of heat loss.)

#3 SUV Mirror: Effective signaling is impossible during a blizzard. Once the storm ends, a small mirror is the single most effective signaling device. In sunlight, its reflection can reach beyond the horizon.

#4 Cigarette Lighter: Any of several items will suffice to spark a fire, with the cigarette lighter being the handiest tool. Besides its other more obvious uses, fire is the most effective night signal.

#5 Gasoline: The best fuel for the fire. It can be siphoned with a water hose.

#6 Hoses: The hoses are useful for siphoning gas.

#7 Metal Hubcaps: Although dehydration would not seem to be a problem with tons of snow around, it is. Eating snow without melting it first dehydrates the body. The body also loses heat warming the snow to body temperature in the mouth and stomach. Therefore, to survive for any period of time, melting the snow is necessary. The best implement for doing this is the hubcaps bent into the shape of a pot.

#8 Spare Tire: A tire, which can be easily ignited if deflated and soaked with gasoline, will burn for some time, throwing off black clouds of smoke. The burning tire will serve as a continuous signal. Other fires, fed with evergreen branches, will also suffice, although the smoke is not as thick or black. Three fires burning in a triangle some distance apart is the international mountain distress signal.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, originally produced in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.*

#9 Sunglasses: Once the weather clears, the reflection of the sun off the surface of the snow can cause snow-blindness within a day. While not fatal in itself, snowblindness can be completely disabling, which in this case, would be fatal.

#10 Shotgun: Other than the fire, the shotgun is the only effective night signaling device. Three blasts in a rapid succession are an international distress signal.

#11 Beef Jerky: Death from dehydration and/or exposure would occur long before death from starvation. However, once fires are started to melt the snow, eating the beef jerky will produce body heat and ward off physical exhaustion which usually occurs as the result of nutritional depletion. The general rule of thumb is - if you have plenty of water, eat; otherwise, don't consume anything. Eating requires water to process the digestion of the food and further dehydrates the body.

Once enough water is available, anything which can be consumed should be to prevent physical deterioration. Hunting, except in the area around the SUV, is not recommended. Exercise can increase heat production only if plenty of food and water are available. Otherwise, physical exhaustion is the likely result of heavy exercise as the body sweats. (The sweat will later condense or even freeze if not allowed to escape, increasing the chance of death from exposure.)

#12 Shovel: A snow cave is warmer than a car, which conducts heat into the atmosphere. While it is not advisable to build a snow cave during the blizzard, the shovel (and the knife) can be used to build a snow cave or a lean-to after the blizzard. The shovel can also be used to scoop out an area for the fire(s).

#13 First-Aid Kit: Aside from the obvious uses, creams, sunburn ointments, gauze, and bandages provide useful protection against the sun.

#14 Map of the Area: Worthless, except as fuel.

#15 Magnetic Compass: Potentially the most dangerous item because it might encourage the party to try to walk out. Walking out during a blizzard would result in almost certain death. After the blizzard, it is doubtful that members could survive the one or two nights that would be spent in transit to the road. Dehydration and heat loss would increase geometrically, as would the chance of freezing to death in one's own sweat. The compass is not even particularly useful as a directional device in this instance. Should the party attempt to walk out, it would follow the SUV trail instead of going cross-country.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, originally produced in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.*

(7-10 mins) Step 4: Calculating the Differences

11) Participants now complete Step 4 (difference between Steps 1 & 3) and Step 5 (difference between Steps 2 & 3) columns.

a) The numbers are neither positive nor negative, just whole numbers.

b) For example, under Step 4:

i) If one participant had 8 for beef jerky in Step 1 and 11 for beef jerky in Step 3, then the number in Step 4 would be 3.

Step 4
Difference between
steps 1 and 3a

ii) Similarly, if someone had 4 for blankets in Step 1 and 2 for blankets in Step 3, then the number in Step 4 would be 2.

c) Likewise, under Step 5.

i) If a group had 9 for gasoline in Step 2 and 5 for gasoline in Step 3, then the number in Step 5 would be 4.

Step 5
Difference between
steps 2 and 3a

ii) Similarly, if a group had 6 for shovel in Step 2 and 12 for shovel in Step 3, then the number in Step 5 would be 6.

d) Participants should double-check their numbers after completion.

12) Once Step 4 and Step 5 columns are filled out, participants sum each column at the bottom, in the row labeled "TOTAL."

a) Everyone in the same small group should have the same numbers in the Step 5 column, to include the final number in the TOTAL row.

13) After figuring out the totals for each column, one person from each small group states out loud what their team total is at the bottom of the Step 5 column.

a) The small group with the lowest number is the winner because they were closest to the experts.

14) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (15-20 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- In your small groups, did you find yourselves just going with the majority rule? Or did you truly discuss the rationale behind each ranking?
 - I know time was limited, but did everyone in your group at least vocalize their reasoning before you arrived at a consensus?
- Do you feel like everyone in the group had an opportunity to share their opinion?
 - How receptive were others to your thoughts?

- Looking at the two TOTAL rows, how many people scored lower in Step 4 (total individual score) as compared to Step 5 (total team score)?
 - For those that scored lower in Step 4, how vocal were you in stating your reasoning? How influential were you in advocating your perspective?
- What do you think was the purpose of this exercise?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- When a team faces an ambiguous task, time is limited, and there is not one well-defined expert or solution, establishing a cooperative and unified information-sharing environment among team members is key for success.
 - Cooperation promotes the discovery and development of higher quality cognitive strategies since success often depends on sharing ideas and resources efficiently.
- When teams are unified and openly share ideas, decision quality often improves.
 - The initial time investment for a given decision is most likely greater for the team than what is needed for the leader to decide on their own. However, by discussing with others, you create a culture of free-flowing information and a stronger sense of teamwork.
 - Over time, that initial time investment will consistently lead to faster, higher-quality decisions.
- The term that encapsulates the points above is *team synergy*.
 - “Team synergy is how teams work together to complete their mandate [mission] by leveraging each team member’s strengths and unique perspectives to produce more remarkable results than what could be achieved alone.”¹⁵

Self-reflection questions:

- How much do I invite different perspectives from others before I take action?
- Do I tend to follow the majority rule too often?
- Do I promote an environment of open communication and diversity of thought?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- Each participant should have a copy of:
 - Blizzard and Blizzard Rankings.
 - Double-sided print is preferred for participants’ copies.
- The facilitator should have a copy of:
 - Blizzard, Blizzard Rankings, and Experts’ Rationale (two pages).¹⁶

Blizzard

The Situation

Your hiking party has been caught by a sudden blizzard while trekking in a remote region of the Rocky Mountains. A mad dash back to your midsize SUV resulted in a few scratches from slipping in the snow, but none of your party sustained any major injuries. Your attempt to drive out has failed. Veering slightly off the road to avoid a fallen tree, the SUV smashes into a hidden rock and careens into a shallow ravine. In the wreck, your headlights are smashed, and the oil pan is torn out. Getting the SUV back in working order is impossible.

On the radio, which is still working, you hear that the blizzard is a major one and is not expected to end until tomorrow night. Immediate clearing is expected then. Temperatures tonight are expected to plummet below freezing with winds more than 40 miles (64.4 kilometers) per hour. The high temperature tomorrow is forecast at 10° Fahrenheit (-12° Centigrade) with winds unchanged.

You are unsure of your exact position. Your best estimate is that you are 35 miles (56.3 kilometers) from the nearest paved secondary road.

Your midsize SUV is equipped with standard bucket seats in front and a continuous back seat and storage area in the rear. All windows are glass. In the storage area, you have the following items: several magazines, a magnetic compass, a map of the immediate area, one pound of beef jerky, a first-aid kit, a sheath knife, a shotgun, a shovel, several old pairs of blue jeans, two old blankets, and some metal hubcaps. Everyone in your party is wearing hiking boots and a wool jacket. In your pockets you have some cash and assorted change. In the glove compartment are sunglasses (one pair per member) and assorted maps. None of your party smokes.

In discussing your survival possibilities, your group has compiled a list of 15 items.

Your Task

Rank these items from most important to least important for your survival. You are to assume that:

- All members of the party have agreed to stay together.
- The number of your party is the same as the number of your group.
- The time is 3 p.m. Your families expect you home by 6 p.m. and have a vague idea where you are.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, based on a training exercise in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.*

Rankings

BELOW ARE LISTED THE 15 ITEMS YOUR GROUP HAS COMPILED. YOUR TASK IS TO RANK THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR YOUR SURVIVAL.

Place the number “1” by the most important item, the number “2” by the second most important, and so on, through number “15” the least important.

	<u>Step 1</u> Individual Ranking	<u>Step 2</u> Team Ranking	<u>Step 3</u> Planning Experts’ Ranking	<u>Step 4</u> Difference between steps 1 and 3	<u>Step 5</u> Difference between steps 2 and 3
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Blankets					
Cigarette Lighter					
First-Aid Kit					
Gasoline					
Hoses					
Metal Hubcaps					
SUV Mirror					
Knife					
Magnetic Compass					
Map of the Area					
Shotgun					
Shovel					
Spare Tire					
Sunglasses					
	TOTAL				

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, based on a training exercise in *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.*

Experts' Rationale

In this survival situation, there are three life-threatening problems:

- Death from exposure can occur in a few hours.
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#2 Blankets: Heat flows from warm to cooler surfaces. Any areas of the body left unprotected allow heat to be conducted away from the body. Up to 50 percent of the body's heat production can be lost by leaving the head uncovered. Similarly, uncovered hands cause the body to lose heat. The two blankets, cut with the knife, can be used to form make-shift hats and gloves.

(Other than these two items, all that is needed to survive the blizzard itself is to restrict muscular action. Body heat, other than what is conducted away, is lost primarily through respiration and perspiration. Not moving around cuts down both of these sources of heat loss.)

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#5 Gasoline: The best fuel for the fire. It can be siphoned with a water hose.

#6 Hoses: The hoses are useful for siphoning gas.

#7 Metal Hubcaps: Although dehydration would not seem to be a problem with tons of snow around, it is. Eating snow without melting it first dehydrates the body. Eating snow without melting it first dehydrates the body and causes the body to lose heat. Therefore, to survive for any period of time, melting the snow is necessary. The best implement for doing this is the hubcaps bent into the shape of a pot.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, based on a training exercise in A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.

#8 Spare Tire: A tire, which can be easily ignited if deflated and soaked with gasoline, will burn for some time, throwing off black clouds of smoke. The burning tire will serve as a continuous signal. Other fires, fed with evergreen branches, will also suffice, although the smoke is not as thick or black. Three fires burning in a triangle some distance apart is the international mountain distress signal.

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#13 First-Aid Kit. Aside from the obvious uses, creams, sunburn ointments, gauze, and bandages provide useful protection against the sun.

#14 Map of the Area: Worthless, except as fuel.

#15 Magnetic Compass: Potentially the most dangerous item because it might encourage the party to try to walk out. Walking out during a blizzard would result in almost certain death. After the blizzard, it is doubtful that members could survive the one or two nights that would be spent in transit to the road. Dehydration and heat loss would increase geometrically, as would the chance of freezing to death in one's own sweat. The compass is not even particularly useful as a directional device in this instance. Should the party attempt to walk out, it would follow the SUV trail instead of going cross-country.

Adapted from the Center for Creative Leadership, based on a training exercise in A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training Vol 2, 1974.

EXERCISE 2: LADDER OF INFERENCE

Summary: Participants listen to a fictional scenario and then discuss their conclusions in small groups. After, the facilitator introduces the Ladder of Inference model to the whole group, integrating conclusions from the scenario.

Purpose:

- Demonstrate how everyone instinctively draws different conclusions from the same information, which in turn drives how each of us behaves.
- Highlight the importance of discussing observable data from different viewpoints in order to better understand the motivation behind people's behavior.

Facilitator Prep Time: 10-15 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 60-75 mins

Materials Needed: Handouts, Projector or Whiteboard/Easel

Handouts: 1 per person

Break Out Groups: 3-6 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale: Challenging

Directions:

(10-12 mins) Step 1 - Distribute Handout, Read Scenario, and Answer Questions

- 1) The facilitator distributes a copy of “The Meeting with the Commander” scenario handout.
- 2) Each participant follows along as the facilitator reads the scenario.
- 3) After reading the scenario, the facilitator gives participants four to five minutes to write their responses to the questions, either in the margins or on the back of their handouts.
 - a) The scenario is designed to elicit different assumptions and/or conclusions to the same data.

(10-12 mins) Step 2 - Small Group Discussion on Scenario

- 4) Participants then break into small groups and have six to eight minutes to discuss their responses to the two questions.
 - a) Small groups can discuss in different rooms or separate locations within the large-group discussion room.
- 5) The facilitator instructs participants to include the rationale behind their responses when discussing in small groups.
- 6) After the allotted time, participants return to the large-group discussion room for the midpoint debrief.

(5-7 mins) Step 3 - Midpoint Debrief (debrief scenario before introducing the Ladder of Inference)

- 7) The facilitator conducts a midpoint debrief once all the participants return to the large-group discussion room.

The Meeting with the Commander

You recently graduated from the Qualification Course and arrived at your new unit hoping to start off on a good note, which might help you get the job you want in the future. You have been getting settled into the company for the past week or so, attending a variety of meetings and one single-day training event in-between the various in-processing tasks (along with all the other new soldiers coming to your same company). So far, the job/unit is just what you expected. Even though you have only been there for about 10 days, it all feels like the right fit for you. You have a good first impression of the soldiers within the company and the potential of what could come from being in this company. The commander has not made a final decision on which position/team you will be in, but you feel good about your performance and impression so far.

Last night you received a call from the commander, who has not only been evaluating your performance, but has also been observing your interactions with other soldiers and senior members within the company. The commander also reached back to the cadre of the qualification course to find out more about you and your work style/ethic. The commander says they have some concerns about you, and it warrants a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible. The only time you are available is after 1630 tomorrow. The commander says that will be fine and tells you to come directly to their office at the end of your day.

You arrive at 1630 and the commander is not in their office. There is a note on the white board that states they will be back by approximately 1645. You are obviously anxious about what the commander has to share with you. You wonder what type of person they really are. You wish you had spent more time getting to know them, but the reality is all your previous interactions have been mostly with other soldiers in the unit. You decide to try to get an impression of the type of person they are by looking around their office in their absence.

Their desk is neat as a pin. There are 3 books in a stack – all about developmental leadership coaching for new/junior soldiers. You notice a coffee cup filled with pencils and pens, the only other object on the desk is a clean, but very old looking spittoon for dipping chew. Behind the desk is a poster with a long list of rules on how to live a healthy life, most of which begin with the word NO in big bold letters. Near the desk, hanging on a coat hook is a really nice and expensive Gucci jacket. In contrast to their desk, the rest of the office is in complete disarray. The trash can is filled and overflowing with food wrappers and outdated STREPS and Storyboards. On the walls are a series of photos with quotes. They include Martin Luther King Jr., General George Patton, Robert E. Lee, and Condoleezza Rice. There is also a pristine original oil painting of a bronco rodeo rider. There are four plants. Two of them are dead and the other two aren't far behind. The only other chair in the office, besides where you are sitting and the one behind the commander's desk, is broken.

Q: What data did you pay attention to in the scenario?

Q: What conclusions can you draw about this commander?

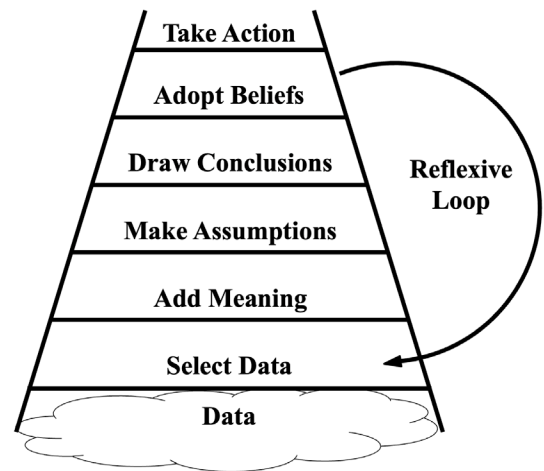
Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

Discussion Prompts:

- a) What were some of the common data points people paid attention to in your small group? What were some of the differences?
- b) Were there any instances where people paid attention to the same data, but came to different assumptions and/or conclusions?

(1-2 mins) Step 4 - Display the Ladder of Inference Model

- 8) After going through the midpoint discussion prompts, the facilitator then transitions to reviewing the Ladder of Inference model.
- 9) The facilitator can use either method below to display the Ladder of Inference model to participants:
 - a) Print a handout of the model for every participant.
 - b) Use a projector or TV monitor, or draw on a whiteboard/easel.
- 10) If not printing handouts, participants copy the model on the back of their scenario handout.



(20-25 mins) Step 5 - Explain the Ladder of Inference Model Using The Meeting with the Commander Scenario

- 11) Facilitator then explains the Ladder of Inference model.
 - a) First ask the group, “What does it mean to ‘infer’ something?”
 - i) The dictionary definition of infer is “to derive as a conclusion from facts.”¹⁷
 - ii) Another way to look at it, is that something happens and/or someone behaves in a certain way, and you strive to understand that situation in a way that makes sense to you.
 - iii) Your brain processes what you infer through seven psychological steps that are referred to as the Ladder of Inference.¹⁸
 - iv) This concept was created by Harvard Business School professor, Chris Argyris, as a means to better understand organizational development.¹⁸
 - b) Next, tell the group that we are going to use “The Meeting with the Commander” scenario to help us understand the seven steps of the Ladder of Inference.
 - i) First Step: Data - At the bottom of the ladder there are data points.
 - (1) The facilitator states some of the data points from the scenario that were brought up during the midpoint discussion.
 - (a) For example, there is a Gucci jacket hanging on a coat hook.
 - ii) Second Step: Select Data - You select which data you choose to pay attention to based on your prior experiences and beliefs.

- (1) Rhetorically state, “Did you notice how some people focused on certain data and not other data? There were some facts people paid attention to that you might have given no attention to.”
- (2) Ask one or two people to share any examples of data from the scenario that they didn’t give much attention to but others gave a lot of attention to.
 - (a) For example, the poster with a long list of rules on how to live a healthy life, most of which begin with the word “NO.”

iii) Third Step: Add Meaning - Next, you add meaning to the data you select.

- (1) The meaning you give to your selected data is based on your own interpretation (personal, cultural, contextual, etc.).
- (2) You also weigh certain data more heavily than other data.
- (3) Ask one or two people to share any examples where people assigned different meanings to the same data.
 - (a) For example, the commander could be from Texas or the Midwest because of the oil painting of a rodeo rider.

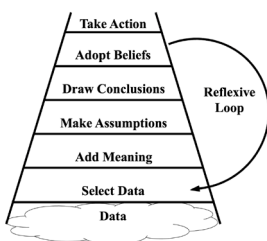
iv) Fourth Step: Make Assumptions - You make assumptions based on the meaning you gave to your selected data.

- (1) Assumptions are generally synonymous with adjectives.
 - (a) For example, this person is incompetent, messy, not organized, self-centered, hard worker, etc.
- (2) Ask the group, “What were some assumptions you made about the commander after reading the scenario?”

v) Fifth Step: Draw Conclusions - Your brain then starts to draw conclusions based on the assumptions you just made.

- (1) Conclusions are a broader labeling of someone or something.
 - (a) For example, this person has poor time management skills, is interested in developing soldiers, etc.

- (2) Ask the group, “What were some broader labels you concluded about the commander?”



vi) Sixth Step: Adopt Beliefs - You then adopt beliefs from the conclusions you came to.

- (1) Your beliefs are the truths you tell yourself.
- (2) You validate your beliefs by continuing to select additional data that reaffirms your conclusions.
- (3) Ask the group, “Did anyone find themselves reaffirming their beliefs about the commander by taking additional data into account?”

vii) Seventh Step: Take Action - Lastly, you take action based on your beliefs.

- (1) Rhetorically ask, “Imagine you are the soldier waiting in the office: based on

your beliefs right now about the commander, how might you behave when you first see them?”

viii) Reflexive Loop:

- (1) This last aspect of the model is important because it’s a reminder that your actions are driven by your beliefs, and your beliefs are driven by the data you select.
 - (2) So, if you want to change the way you are behaving in a certain situation or with a certain person, you have to first change your beliefs about the situation and/or person.
 - (3) To change your beliefs, you need to change what data you select and focus on.
- c) All seven steps within the Ladder of Inference happen at a very rapid pace.
 - d) In fact, some versions of the model actually combine steps because your brain is so quick to take shortcuts and speed up your thinking process.
 - e) The key idea is to consciously reflect on what data you are selecting and how that data is driving your beliefs.

12) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- Keeping the Ladder of Inference steps in mind, can a couple people share some of their steps (e.g., selected data, assumptions, etc.) that lead them to their beliefs about the commander in the scenario?
- Does anyone have an example of how this has played out in the past in a previous team or unit?
 - The facilitator can start by sharing their own examples.

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Understanding the Ladder of Inference has three major benefits.
 - Helps us interpret data correctly.
 - Improves team communication, as we can give insight into our thinking.
 - Helps the team be unified in its beliefs.
- We typically don’t have all the data. Since we tend to run up the ladder quickly, we need to pay attention to what data we are selecting and what assumptions and/or conclusions we are making.
 - We need to be attentive to the data we select.
 - Ask yourself if you are looking at enough data points.
 - As with a physical ladder, the wider the base (i.e., the more data you observe), the sturdier the ladder.

- Ask others if you are giving the selected data the right meaning.
 - Everyone on a team needs to be willing to change their assumptions and/or conclusions as team members bring attention to different data points.
- The key is to work backwards down the ladder to understand why you acted the way you did in a situation.
- The more open we are with others about sharing the internal steps of our ladder, the better off we will be in ensuring that everyone is on the same page.
 - Making our thinking and reasoning more visible to others will help them understand the intentions behind our actions.
- Teams should strive to be aligned in their beliefs because this alignment can lead to more unified actions and improve performance.
 - That alignment starts with what data everyone on the team selects.
 - If the team's beliefs are vastly different, then the team's actions will likely not be unified.

Self-reflection questions:

- How do I check in with my teammates to ensure my beliefs are accurate?
- Am I open to looking at other data to drive different assumptions and/or conclusions?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handouts:

- The Meeting with the Commander - one per person.¹⁹
- Ladder of Inference model - print the handout, or project it and have participants hand write it on the back of their scenario sheet.

The Meeting with the Commander

You recently graduated from the Qualification Course and arrived at your new unit hoping to start off on a good note, which might help you get the job you want in the future. You have been getting settled into the company for the past week or so, attending a variety of meetings and one single-day training event in-between the various in-processing tasks (along with all the other new soldiers coming to your same company). So far, the job/unit is just what you expected. Even though you have only been there for about 10 days, it all feels like the right fit for you. You have a good first impression of the soldiers within the company and the potential of what could come from being in this company. The commander has not made a final decision on which position/team you will be in, but you feel good about your performance and impression so far.

Last night you received a call from the commander, who has not only been evaluating your performance, but has also been observing your interactions with other soldiers and senior members within the company. The commander also reached back to the cadre of the qualification course to find out more about you and your work style/ethic. The commander says they have some concerns about you, and it warrants a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible. The only time you are available is after 1630 tomorrow. The commander says that will be fine and tells you to come directly to their office at the end of your day.

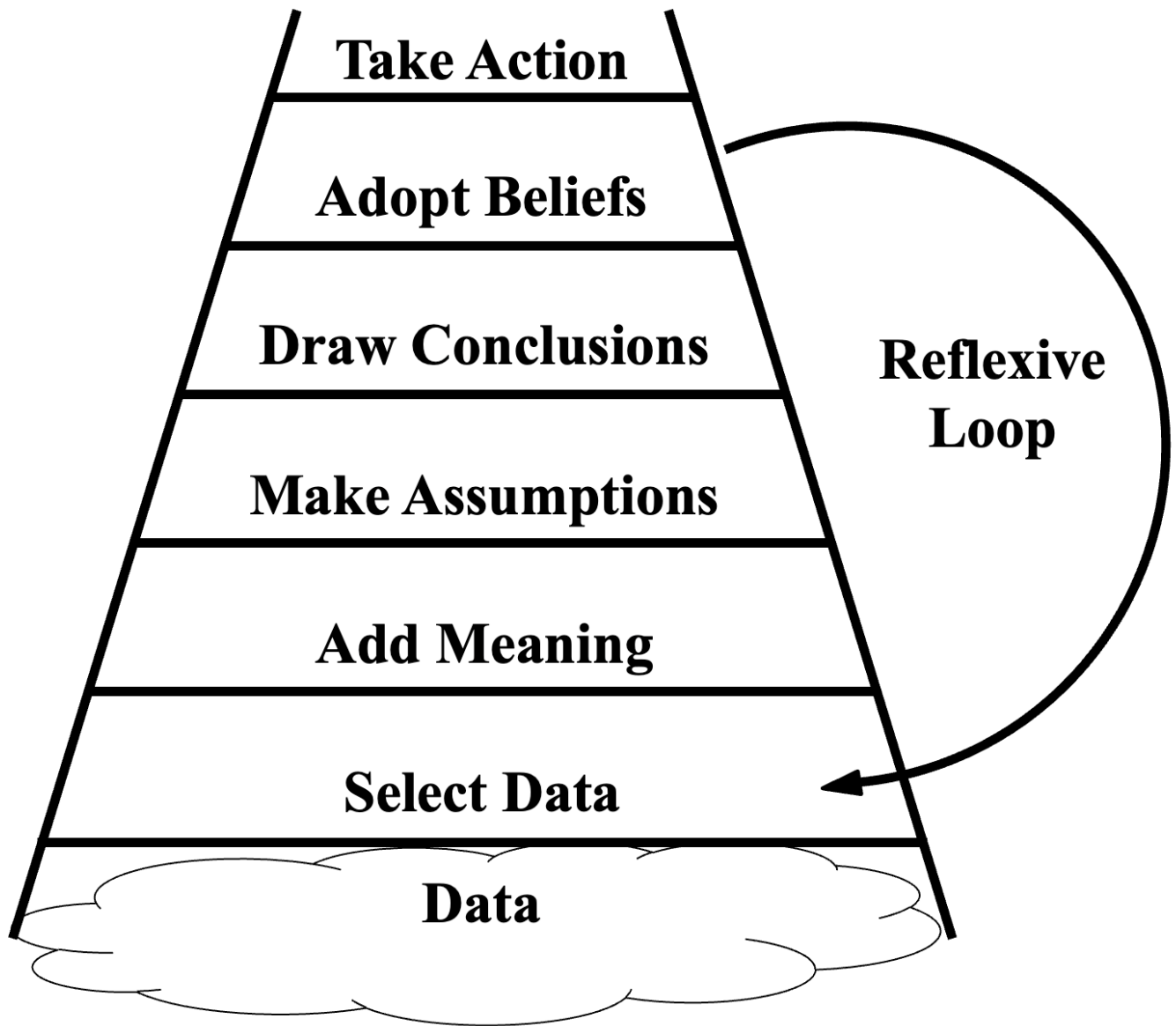
You arrive at 1630 and the commander is not in their office. There is a note on the white board that states they will be back by approximately 1645. You are obviously anxious about what the commander has to share with you. You wonder what type of person they really are. You wish you had spent more time getting to know them, but the reality is all your previous interactions have been mostly with other soldiers in the unit. You decide to try to get an impression of the type of person they are by looking around their office in their absence.

Their desk is neat as a pin. There are 3 books in a stack – all about developmental leadership coaching for new/junior soldiers. You notice a coffee cup filled with pencils and pens, the only other object on the desk is a clean, but very old looking spittoon for dipping chew. Behind the desk is a poster with a long list of rules on how to live a healthy life, most of which begin with the word NO in big bold letters. Near the desk, hanging on a coat hook is a really nice and expensive Gucci jacket. In contrast to their desk, the rest of the office is in complete disarray. The trash can is filled and overflowing with food wrappers and outdated SITREPS and Storyboards. On the walls are a series of photos with quotes. They include Martin Luther King Jr., General George Patton, Robert E. Lee, and Condoleezza Rice. There is also a pristine original oil painting of a bronco rodeo rider. There are four plants. Two of them are dead and the other two aren't far behind. The only other chair in the office, besides where you are sitting and the one behind the commander's desk, is broken.

Q: What data did you pay attention to in the scenario?

Q: What conclusions can you draw about this commander?

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs



EXERCISE 3: FIST OF FIVE

Summary: The facilitator teaches a method that teams can use for generating authentic feedback in real-time. Then, small groups use the Fist of Five method to discuss their team's effectiveness, which assists the team in developing a unified commitment to enhancing their performance

Purpose:

- Provide teams with an approach to receiving genuine, real-time feedback from each team member.
- Convey that honest and transparent dialogue is critical for teams as they assess their effectiveness and develop unified strategies to improve/sustain their performance.

Facilitator Prep Time: 5 mins

Exercise Prep Time: 5 mins

Execution Time: 40-55 mins

Materials Needed: Handout

Handouts: 1 per person

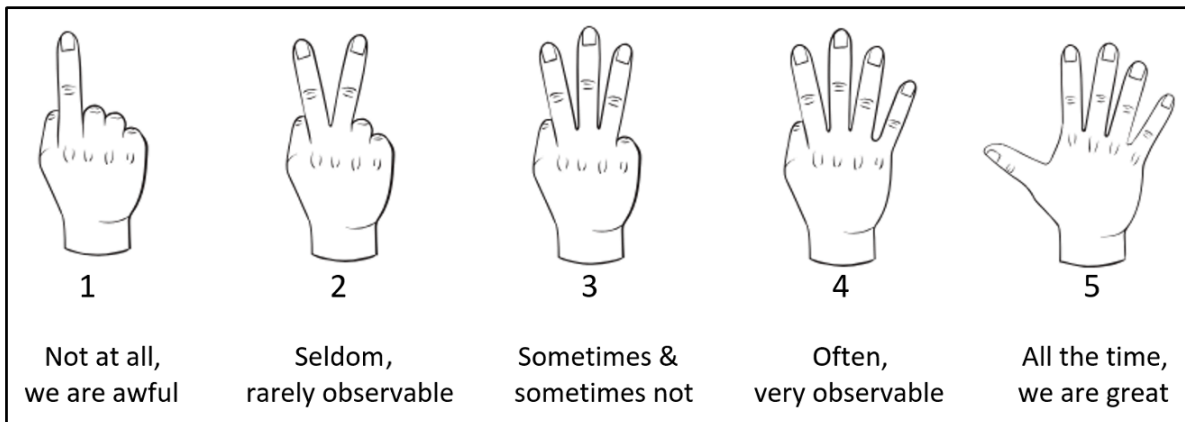
Break Out Groups: 3-6 pax

Facilitator Implementation Scale:
Moderate to Challenging

Directions:

(8-10 mins) Step 1 - Fist of Five Introduction

- 1) The facilitator explains the Fist of Five method.
- 2) A method for generating authentic feedback from team members at the same time via hand voting.
 - a) The number of fingers raised indicates whatever description the initiator assigns (see the box below as an example).
 - i) *Note - the initiator of the Fist of Five can change the language of the descriptions if they desire. They just need to communicate that with the team beforehand.



Hand Images Source: The Civic Canopy

- 3) How it is executed:
 - a) First, a team member (often the leader) will pose a question to the group.
 - i) For example, "Are we sharing information in a timely manner with one another?"
 - b) Then, on the count of three, all team members (at the same time) raise the number of fingers that they feel capture where the team is in relation to the question.

- c) After observing everyone's vote (rating), the leader and team as a whole seek to understand the rationale behind each team member's vote.
 - i) See where there are differences and acknowledge how big or little the point differences are in their ratings.
 - ii) First, ask those with the lowest ratings (1 or 2) to share their rationale behind their rating.
 - (1) "What would need to be different for you to move to a 3, 4, or 5 rating?"
 - (2) For example, going from a 1 to a 3, or a 2 to a 4/5.
 - iii) Then, ask those with a moderate rating (3) to share their rationale.
 - (1) "What would need to be different for you to move to a 4 or 5 rating?"
 - iv) Lastly, ask those with the highest ratings (4 or 5) to share their rationale.
 - (1) "What do you think the team needs to continue doing to maintain a 4 or 5 rating?"
 - d) Understanding the numbers:
 - i) If the majority of the ratings are low (1 or 2), then that means there are actions the team should either start or stop doing to get to a higher rating.
 - ii) If the majority of the ratings are moderate (3), then that means there are actions the team should either do more or less of to get to a higher rating.
 - iii) If the majority of the ratings are high (4 or 5), then that means there are actions the team should continue doing to remain effective.
 - e) Do not underestimate the power of positive acknowledgment when everyone responds with a high rating.
- 4) Example of Fist of Five:
- a) The team is preparing for a training event where they will be required to program and operate radios.
 - b) The team leader or team sergeant asks the team how prepared they think we are in accomplishing this task.
 - c) On the count of three everyone shows their Fist of Five.
 - d) The rating each team member gives are below:
 - i) Team Sergeant - 4 fingers.
 - ii) Team Leader - 2 fingers.
 - iii) NCO A - 1 finger.
 - iv) NCO B - 5 fingers.
 - e) The team members with the lowest ratings explain their rationale and state what would need to be different to get to a higher rating.

i) NCO A:

- (1) I have one finger up because I do not feel confident in doing this myself since I was gone during the company's refresher training and haven't used a radio in a long time.
- (2) To get to a higher rating, I would need to receive the entire refresher training on the radios.

ii) Team Leader:

- (1) "I have two fingers up because I didn't get a chance to do the hands-on portion of the company training since I had to leave and prepare a brief."
- (2) "To get a higher rating, I would need to practice the hands-on portion and have someone check that I am doing it properly."

f) Then team members with high ratings explain their rationale.

i) Team Sergeant:

- (1) "I have four fingers up because I used to be a communications NCO and I feel very comfortable around radios."

ii) NCO B:

- (1) "I have five fingers up because I led the company's radio refresher training and am very knowledgeable with all the radios."

g) The team then discusses and decides what action steps to take.

i) NCO B suggests that they retrain both NCO A and the Team Leader on the radios so the team as a whole will feel more confident going forward.

h) This is a very simple example of how the Fist of Five could be incorporated.

i) Small groups will use the Fist of Five method to initiate a more serious discussion on their team's effectiveness in the next step of this exercise.

5) The facilitator reiterates that the Fist of Five allows a team to:

- a) Gather genuine feedback from everyone at the same time.
- b) Identify and understand the lows so your team can determine what you should stop or start doing to get higher ratings.
- c) Acknowledge the highs and recognize what your team should continue doing to keep high ratings in the future.

(5-7 mins) Step 2 - Assessing Team Effectiveness

- 6) After going through the Fist of Five method, the facilitator distributes the team effectiveness handout to all participants.
- 7) The facilitator tells everyone to reflect on each of the questions and provide a Fist of Five team-assessment rating from their perspective.

Team Effectiveness

One of the most difficult skills to do as a leader/team is to assess a team's effectiveness. Encouraging feedback and dialogue from team members helps in understanding a team's current level of performance. After understanding the rationale behind why team members assess the team in a certain way, then the team can determine a unified plan to improve or sustain their performance. Honest and transparent dialogue among team members is key for both assessing performance and developing a plan.

Assessments should be conducted routinely because each assessment will allow:

- slight shifts to happen (instead of drastic changes)
- lessons of experience to be uncovered (both positive and negative)

Reflect on the questions below and provide a Fist of Five team-assessment rating.

Hand Images Source: The Clinic Company

1. _____ Effort is something you can see. Does our team seem to be putting forth sufficient effort? Are all team members engaged in their roles and responsibilities? Are some team members working harder than others?
2. _____ Knowledge and skills are something you can recognize. Does our team have the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed? Are the skills that team members bring to the team complimentary? Does our team have the knowledge and skills to be both confident and committed to the challenges we will face?
3. _____ Strategy is something you can understand. Does our team's strategy (i.e. our team's training plan) seem efficient and flexible? Will our current plan allow us to achieve our desired results? Is the plan of action clear to everyone?
4. _____ Group dynamics is something you can feel. How well are team members getting along with each other? How are they speaking and listening to each other? Are they expressing their support towards each other? Is there unresolved conflict among team members?

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

8) Each participant flips their handout after they finish rating each question.

(15-20 mins) Step 3 - Small Group Discussions on Team's Effectiveness

9) The facilitator gives the following directions before participants break into small groups.

- a) Small groups will go question by question, using the Fist of Five method.
- b) Example:
 - i) On the count of three, everyone put up their rating for the first question.
 - ii) Share and discuss the rationale behind each team member's rating.
 - iii) Then, decide together what actions the team would need to take to obtain higher ratings or to keep a high rating.
 - (1) For example, start or stop, do more or less, and/or continue doing.
 - iv) Continue through each of the four questions.

10) Small groups have fifteen to twenty minutes for their break out discussions.

11) Participants then break into small groups and move to separate areas.

- a) *Note - small groups should be people who work together on the same team.

12) After the allotted time, small groups return to the large-group discussion room.

13) The facilitator then moves on to the debrief portion.

Debrief: (10-15 mins)

Discussion prompts:

- How were the small group discussions? Did any teams have major differences in their ratings (e.g., one person had 1 or 2 and another person had 5)?
 - Did your team unify around any action(s) to help get most team members closer to 4 or 5 rating?
- What do you think of the Fist to Five method?
 - Do you feel that it is an effective approach to giving/receiving simultaneous feedback to/from everyone?
 - Is it useful for starting a conversation with your teammates to determine where you are and what you need to change or continue doing as a team?

How this translates to team cohesion:

- Before a team can decide where they need to go, they must first understand where they are currently at.
 - To pinpoint where a team is currently requires honest and transparent input from all team members.
 - Dedicating time and space to understanding other team members' rationales is an important step toward becoming a consistently high-performing team.

- After understanding the current situation, teams can then focus their efforts on working together to develop a plan that addresses team members' observations.
- Teams that unify behind both the analysis and action plan create the opportunity to consistently operate as a high-performing team.

Self-reflection questions:

- How honest was I when giving my Fist of Five ratings?
- How open am I to discussing/understanding ratings that are different from mine?
- What role does my behavior play in helping or hurting our team's effectiveness?
- *Note - the facilitator can suggest that individuals break into small groups and share any initial thoughts they have on the self-reflection questions.

Handout:

- Team Effectiveness - one per person.²⁰

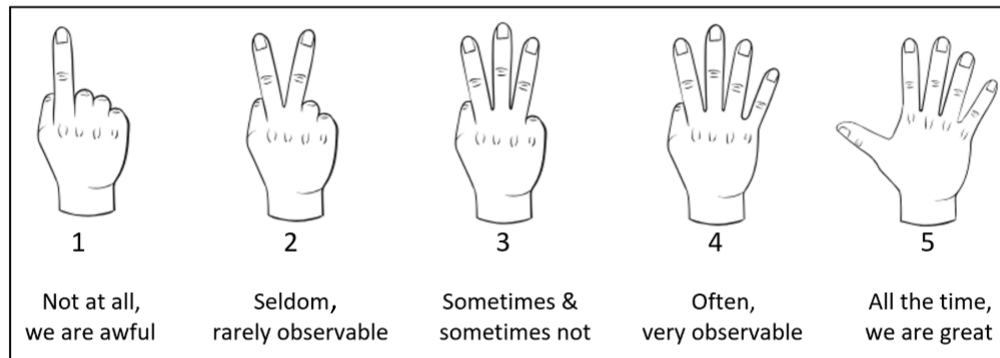
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One of the most difficult skills to do as a leader/team is to assess a team's effectiveness. Encouraging feedback and dialogue from team members helps in understanding a team's current level of performance. After understanding the rationale behind why team members assess the team in a certain way, then the team can determine a unified plan to improve or sustain their performance. Honest and transparent dialogue among team members is key for both assessing performance and developing a plan.

Assessments should be conducted routinely because each assessment will allow:

- slight shifts to happen (instead of drastic changes)
- lessons of experience to be uncovered (both positive and negative)

Reflect on the questions below and provide a Fist of Five team-assessment rating.



Hand Images Source: The Civic Canopy

1. _____ Effort is something you can see. Does our team seem to be putting forth sufficient effort? Are all team members engaged in their roles and responsibilities? Are some team members working harder than others?
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4. _____ Group dynamics is something you can feel. How well are team members getting along with each other? How are they speaking and listening to each other? Are they expressing their support towards each other? Is there unresolved conflict among team members?

Adapted from Center for Sports Psychology-Colorado Springs

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The tools and techniques within this guidebook provide leaders with great opportunities to strengthen team cohesion and intra-team relationships. Leaders across all domains, especially in the military, desire to create cohesive, high-performing teams. This guidebook is designed to help leaders bring their teams to that level by developing four categories/characteristics: Communication, Feedback, Trust, and Unified Commitment.

Each of these categories has various sub-elements that build upon and support one another. Those critical sub-elements can be found in the fabric of cohesive, high-performing teams. Team cohesion is influenced by the openness and clarity of two-way communication. Teams are more likely to succeed if members have the interpersonal skills to provide and request authentic feedback from one another. Teams thrive when they foster a climate of trust. As trust rises, team members share more of the motivations and intentions behind their actions and behaviors. This increase in trust helps fellow team members better understand one another and naturally brings them closer. Teams excel when they rally around a unified commitment. Team members then work in unison as they strive to accomplish their shared goals.

As teams take on this approach to team building, they can anticipate becoming more cohesive each step along the way. Teams that dedicate time to developing these categories can expect to increase the effectiveness of both their members and their team as a whole.

Important reminders for utilizing this guidebook:

Routinely implement – The lessons learned each time will “stick” more if you regularly incorporate these tools and techniques into your schedule. Just like anything in life, consistency is key for success.

- *“The best teams have consistency and chemistry.”* – Roger Staubach^{21*}

Depth over breadth – It is more important that you focus on the depth of conversations and future application(s) learned from each tool & technique, instead of seeing how many you can go through at a single point in time.

What you put in = what you get out – You are doing this for yourself and your unit. This is not a “check the block” kind of thing. If these tools and techniques are treated to the same level of importance as pre-deployment training, then you will witness the impact it has within your unit.

*Staubach, nicknamed “Captain Comeback,” served as a Naval Officer in Vietnam and afterwards played quarterback in the NFL for 11 seasons, winning two Super Bowls and being named as MVP for Super Bowl VI.

APPENDIX 1: FAQs

- 1. How do I decide which category and/or exercise to implement?** It is best to consult your senior enlisted advisor, and potentially subordinate leadership, to determine which tools or techniques suit the needs of your unit.
- 2. Where should I start/how should I prepare after I decide which exercise(s) I am going to conduct?** Discuss with your senior enlisted advisor the major lesson points (tangible or intangible) that you want the team members to take away. Then determine a time and location for implementing the exercise(s).
- 3. What is the best method for reading each exercise?** Skimming the debrief portion first helps provide context to the lessons that particular exercise instills. Then read that exercise from beginning to end while making notes to yourself in the margins.
- 4. Is it a good idea to have the facilitator also participate in the exercise?** It is highly encouraged that the facilitator participates in as many exercises as possible, which helps to demonstrate that they too are a member of the team and play a role in the success or failure of developing team cohesion.
- 5. What does closure look like for each exercise?** Your unit collectively identifies best practices to incorporate going forward as you strive to become a high-performing team.
- 6. In the debrief portions, can the facilitator use the text verbatim?** Yes, the facilitator can say verbatim the text in the debrief portions and/or adjust to their liking.
- 7. What is the difference between: 1) exercises vs. tools and techniques, 2) characteristics vs. category, and 3) team vs. unit?** There is no difference between these words. They are used interchangeably throughout the book
- 8. Is there a resource person I could contact if I have any questions about the exercises or models taught in this guidebook?** MAJ Thomas Kraus is available at thomas.d.kraus.mil@mail.mil and will gladly assist anyone who wants to implement exercises from this guidebook.

APPENDIX 2: NOTES

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