



The **6** Key Indicators

of highly functioning teams



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The Six Key Indicators of Highly Functioning Teams

Imagine pulling your top performing employees together and locking them in the boardroom to take on an important task. How will they perform?

Is your first thought: “These individuals are incredible on their own, together they’ll be even better?” Of course that’s what you’re thinking—it’s why you put them together in the first place. But, creating effective teams requires a lot more than that.

Improving a team’s ability to communicate, provide feedback, regulate emotions, offer direction, structure meetings, and employ accountability strategies will improve effectiveness and cohesion. Yet, none of these skills are adequate if employed in a vacuum. **All team members must apply these strategies in order to work better together.**

Turn underperforming teams into productive ones by developing these six key indicators of highly functioning teams.



1



COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is the lifeblood of a team. Teams that communicate effectively reduce misunderstandings and costly errors, minimize work delays, and enhance overall productivity.

Real communication requires **connection**, not just data dumping. While many organizations produce a constant stream of messages, much of it is ineffective. That's because effective communication requires parties to go beyond simply sending and receiving data. It requires listening to one another, working together to connect, explore issues, brainstorm for solutions and agreeing on an action.

Many teams stop being effective by simply sending and receiving too much data.



Common symptoms of ineffective communication:

- Individuals interrupting or talking over in meetings
- Individuals remaining silent when decision making is required
- Team meetings are not balanced forums for discussion
- Clear action plans are not agreed upon



The Communication Loop

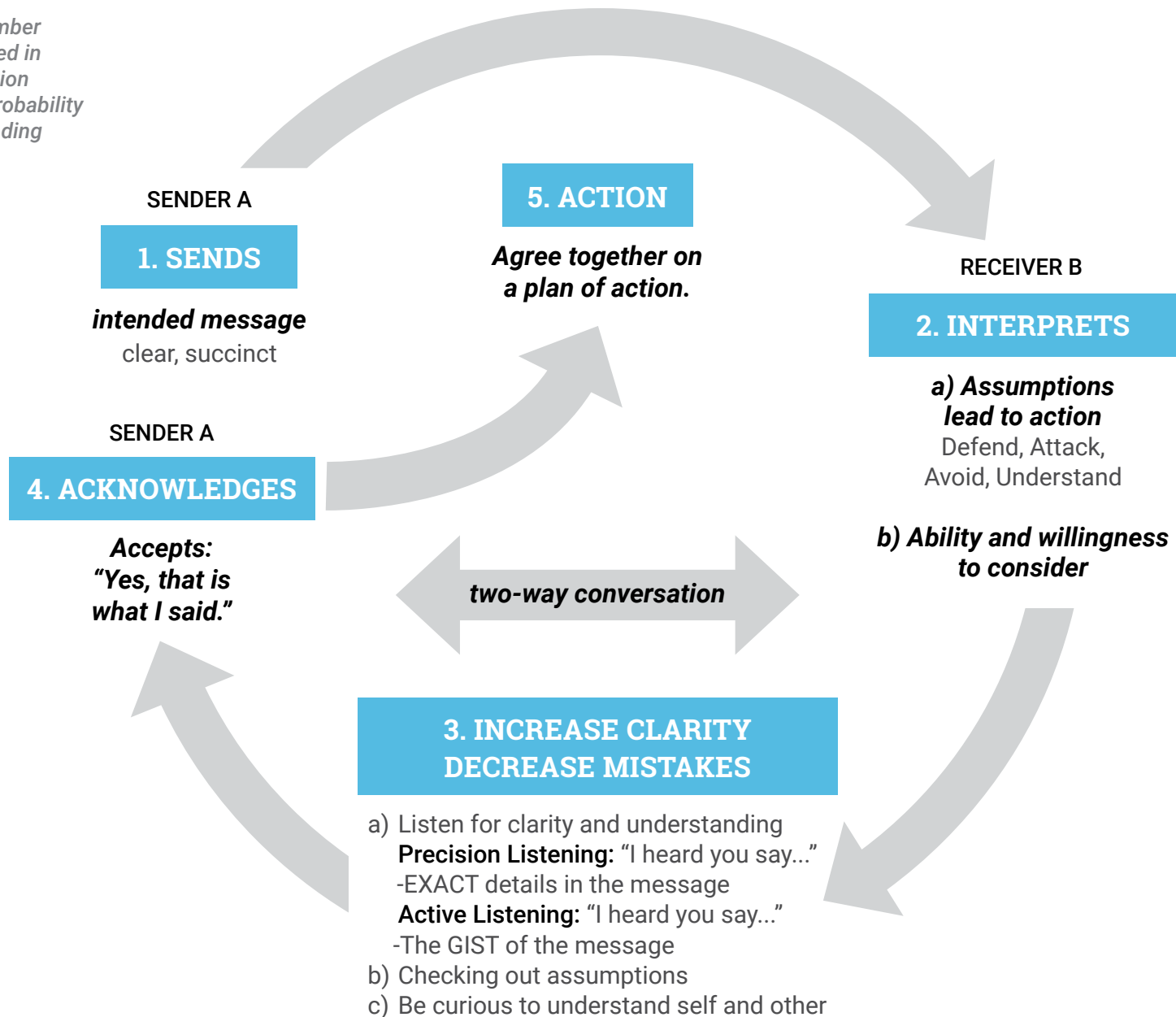
We spend 70% of our day listening. However, surveys of our clients show that only 30% have learned a model for communication, and only 7% say that they apply the techniques they've learned.

Based on these statistics, if you judge your team communication as effective, you need to challenge that assumption. Effective communication provides teams with a way of connecting that develops a shared understanding of issues. This requires certain skill sets on the part of both the sender and the receiver of the communication.

In Vivo Team's Communication Loop, the sender and the receiver engage in a back-and-forth communication process to ensure that the intended message is received, understood, responded to, and acted upon. This active, two-way method heightens engagement from the norm of communication, where data is merely sent, received, and acted upon.

THE COMMUNICATION LOOP

Note: As the number of people involved in the communication increases, the probability of misunderstanding also increases.



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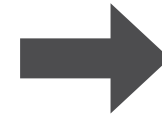
INTERACTIVE FEEDBACK

A feedback-oriented workplace culture provides essential information for decision-making and performance improvement by reflecting on the past and anticipating future results. It helps to ensure everyone is clear on goals and expectations, promoting team alignment while simultaneously decreasing personal and company blind spots.

Regular interactive feedback increases a team's ability to remain aligned to project results. Ultimately, people want to improve their skills, develop their abilities, and contribute to teams.

Our survey data demonstrates this again and again, with on average 87% expressing their keen desire for more feedback. One of the best ways to streamline results is to learn how to give and receive interactive feedback competently and courageously.

INTERACTIVE FEEDBACK



PAST

NOW

FUTURE

FEEDBACK

FEEDFORWARD

FOLLOW UP

Notice
PAST
behaviors

Suggestions
for the
FUTURE

Assess
PROGRESS,
if any

"I notice that you are doing a great job on helping me with this task."

"When doing this together in the future, I'd like to hear your ideas more."

*"How's it going?"
"What's missing?"
"Do you need any help from me?
If so, how?"*



Interactive Feedback

By promoting short and regular feedback opportunities, employees learn how their professional behaviors contribute both effectively and ineffectively to team performance. They become higher performers, ultimately building a stronger, more effective team.

When delivering interactive feedback, it is important to focus on behaviors. **Use the video test**, a tool to distinguish between what people are saying/think they are doing versus what they are actually saying or doing.

Here's how it works:

1. Imagine you are watching a video of what the person is or was doing or how they are behaving.
2. What do you see? What are the behaviors you want to address?
3. What would you say to the person based on your observations?

For example, instead of: "What's the matter with you? You're always late for meetings," you should say, "I notice that you've been late for our last three team meetings." Then pause and wait for the person to respond.

When feedback becomes a part of your company culture, it leads to enhanced communication, increased accountability to the team, and personal responsibility to individual roles.

3

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holding one another accountable drives innovation, trust, and productivity. Set your team up for success by encouraging a culture of accountability tailored to your organization's specific structure and goals. This will support company goals, ultimately creating a sustainable system in which team members help and support one another.

Team members must learn to hold one another accountable for their actions without getting angry, emotional, and accusatory. However, they should also be aware of **diversion tactics**; the strategies used by individuals who are actively dodging accountability. When this happens, remind the individual of the team's **goals** and invite them to propose their own **solutions** to the problem. This helps avoid conflict and accusations, and puts the responsibility back in their court, giving them a sense of ownership over their own behavior.



ACCOUNTABILITY

6 STEPS TO TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY IMPROVEMENT



STEP 1

Get clear on **THE DEAL**.



STEP 2

Use **THE VIDEO TEST** to describe the performance issue or problem.



STEP 3

Leave a silent **PAUSE** of time and space for the person to respond to your *Video Test* observation of behaviors.



STEP 4

Remind the person of **THE GOAL**.



STEP 5

WORK TOGETHER to find a specific solution to the identified performance issue.

OR MAKE A SUGGESTION if the person cannot come up with a solution, then ask for their commitment to try it.



STEP 6

FOLLOW-UP consistently and with persistence.



Accountability

Managers who hold team members accountable for both their effective and ineffective behaviors can teach employees to engage in energized debate and conflict without negative emotion. Regular accountability check-ins will ensure that everyone is on the same page about what's working, what isn't, and what to do about it.

Always follow-up on plans to change specific behaviors. No follow-up leads to low improvement rates. Follow-up holds team members accountable for their behaviors.

Signs of an accountable team:

- The manager is spending less time on “people managing” because the team is giving and receiving peer-to-peer feedback
- People are following through on promises and getting projects done in a timely manner
- Project quality increases

4

STRUCTURES



Unifying and streamlining work processes and related behavioral norms builds the foundation for efficient and successful teams. This may include developing expectations and processes for meetings, email norms, and decision-making best practices. Efficient techniques that address common problems within the structures of a team set everyone up for success.

In order for teams to be effective, members must be able to come together to share information, support one another, and collectively create and execute action plans. Much of this collaborative work takes place in regular meetings.

With a disciplined approach to creating a balanced forum in a meeting, team members will actively participate and be accountable for their outcomes.

Daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings give teams a deeper understanding of who's doing what, the progress being made, and what support is needed for their projects.

Structures

Direct Ongoing Swift Encounter (D.O.S.E.)

If you do not currently witness regular team check-ins, it's time to implement the D.O.S.E., which should take no more than 10 to 12 minutes for a project team of 8-12 members.

This gives team members a chance to make a statement about what they're working on, and to identify stuck points and the impact they're having on the team's progress. Team members should also state a recent win – big or small.

Consider this your team's newsflash, a regular meeting of shared information. One key part of a D.O.S.E is that there is no discussion. The D.O.S.E is simply a reporting mechanism so everyone knows what's going on. Depending on your team and projects, you might consider doing this daily or once or twice a week.

DIRECT ONGOING SWIFT ENCOUNTER

OBJECTIVES

A 10-12 minute tactical meeting to:

- Share information
- Clarify stuck points
- Celebrate small wins
- Get clear on priorities

THE FORMAT

Each member of the team states:

- 1** What am I currently **WORKING ON?**
- 2** What are my **STUCK POINTS?**
• *impact to the team?*
- 3** What are my **RECENT WINS?**
• *impact to the team?*



Structures

Weekly or Monthly Project Meetings

In the spirit of getting results, teams need to meet weekly to review project progress and cross-functional task deadlines to make any needed project shifts. Shared knowledge on a team promotes productivity, because team members are armed with information and can continue working on their part of the project instead of wondering what's going on. Leaders who conduct regular tactical meetings with all of their direct reports have an ability to stay connected, plus, they can pick up on any overlap or misinterpretations.

Quarterly Strategic Team Meetings

Quarterly meetings are essential for a team's long-term strategy and project planning. The quarterly meeting is strategic, not tactical. Think of it as an opportunity for everyone to check the company GPS, and see if team members are on-track or off-course with the annual strategies.

Sample quarterly meeting agenda:

- Check-in
- Strategy progress report to review red flags that are deterring progress and to celebrate achievements/milestones
- Brainstorming new strategies in order to keep on top of projects, the marketplace, and customer demand
- Prioritizing new activities
- Decision-making opportunities
- Presentations for feedback
- Closing statements to encourage on-going feedback

In order to be effective, meetings must occur regularly, be structured, and be interactive. Boring meetings, meetings that are too long, and those that are dominated by specific agendas or the loudest voices can kill a team's productivity. It's up to team leaders to ensure that their meetings keep teams engaged and productive.

Signs of effective meetings:

- Meetings begin and end on time
- Teams articulate clear action plans at the end of each meeting
- Increased team alignment and decreased errors/project mishaps
- People enthusiastically attend

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

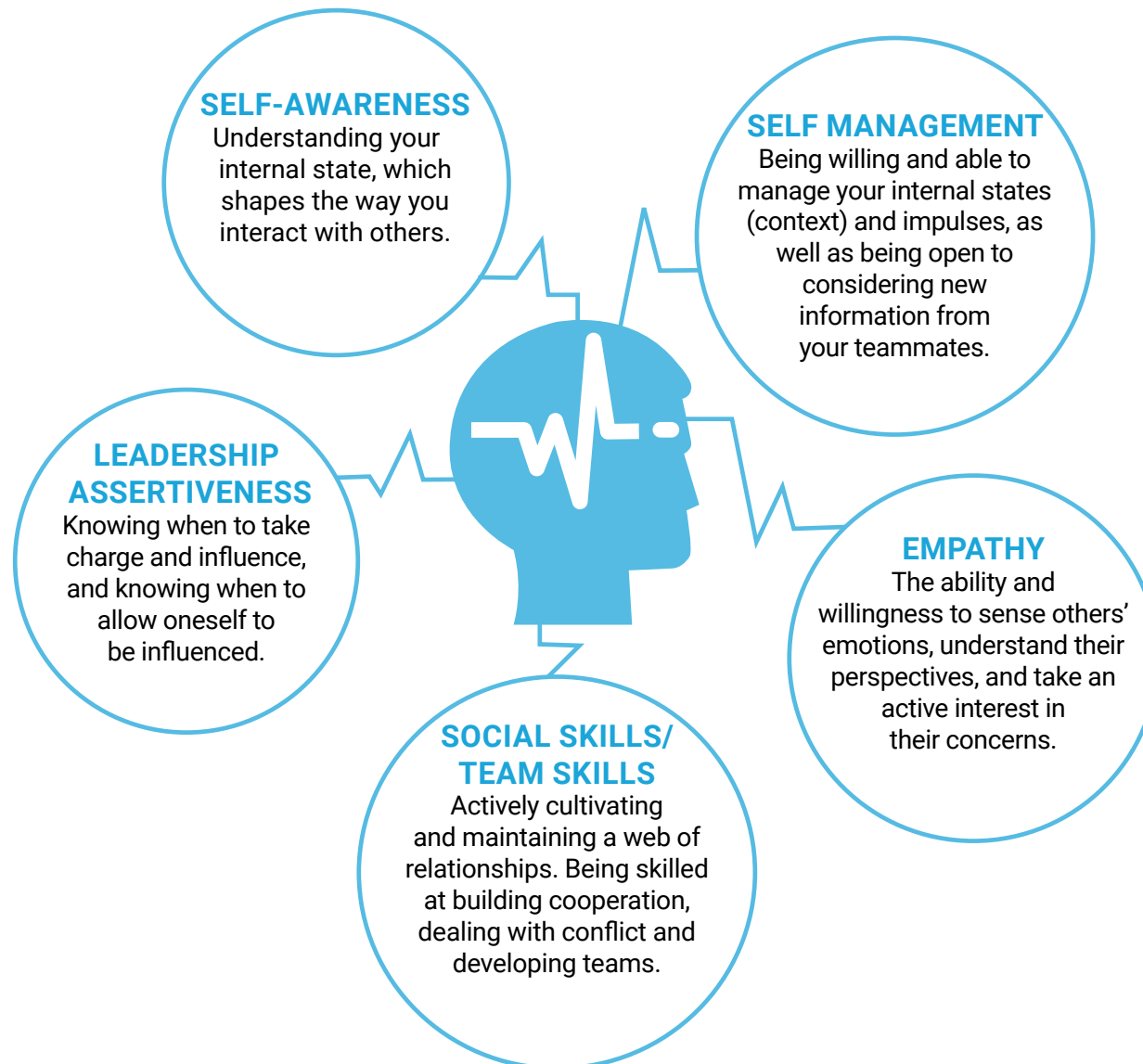
Awareness and management of one's emotions while navigating the emotions of others reduces assumptions and increases psychological safety and connection. Management of workplace behaviors is a critical skill, yet rarely discussed. Effectively conveying ideas and demonstrating empathy for the behaviors of others while remaining respectful, productive, and engaged is key.

Business leaders who develop a high level of emotional intelligence are more likely to instill their workplace with a sense of enthusiasm, excitement, and optimism. They create an atmosphere of cooperation and trust through high-quality interpersonal relationships with their teams, suppliers, and customers.

Pre-and post-training surveys indicate employees increase team engagement by 82% and personal engagement by 48% as a result of learning and applying emotional intelligence skills.

Leaders who develop a higher level of emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own emotions, so they are more likely to engage in constructive thinking. They are able to stand back from the storm in order to more effectively facilitate higher levels of cooperation and risk-taking among various stakeholders. This leads to better ways of doing business for all involved.

5 INGREDIENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE





Emotional Intelligence

Each of the following behavioral changes will help you connect to yourself and your team at a deeper, more engaging level.

Listen: Instead of simply talking at others unconsciously, listen to what you are saying. Notice your personal convictions. What is most important and what is less important?

Feel: Pay attention to your emotions. When you get angry, try to determine where the angry energy sits in your body. Everyone experiences emotions differently, and once you understand how they physically manifest in your body, you can read your body's physical emotional cues in future situations. With this type of detailed physical emotional feedback, you will be able to better manage or navigate difficult team situations.

Reveal: Try speaking about your emotions in meetings with trusted peers. This act of self-disclosure will open up the lines of communication with others, giving you a deeper sense of satisfaction in your interpersonal relationships. It will also help you manage your emotions, all the while moving forward with the situation. If, instead, you leave your emotions at the door, you will spend your energy trying to keep them down, which, in turn, contributes negatively to your ability to move forward.

Learn: The more team members learn and seek to understand each other's values, positions, leadership and learning style, the more context they will all have about the dynamics of the team—its collective strengths and potential areas for improvement. It's also important to understand how your teammates experience and cope with their emotions.

Signs of improved emotional intelligence:

- Team members handle conflict more effectively
- Teams navigate misunderstandings better
- Team collaboration increases as individuals are less attached to being right than being happy

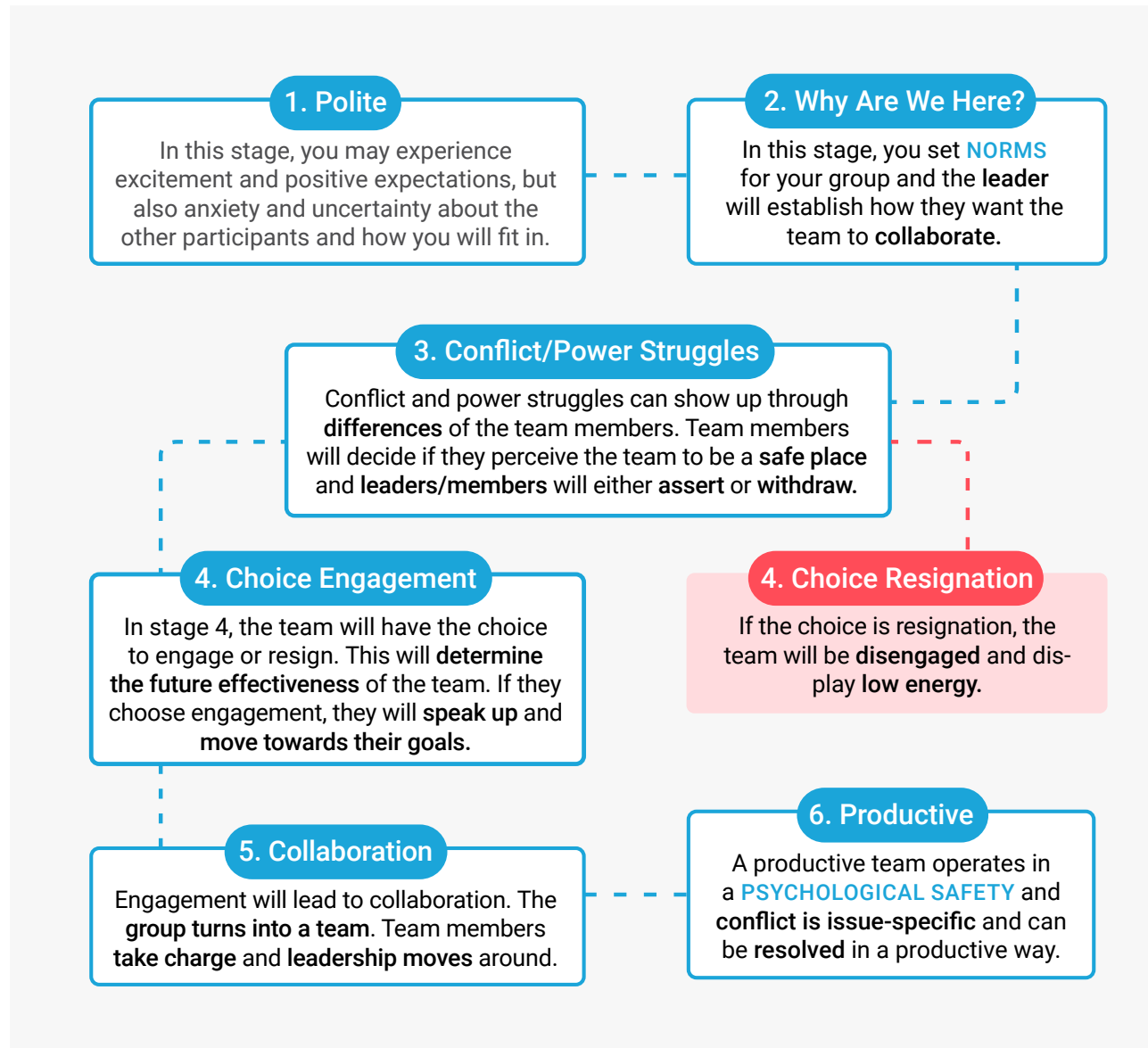
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COHESION

Team cohesion is directly tied to project outcomes, client satisfaction, team engagement, and collaboration. The key elements of a cohesive team are trust, the level of support one gets from their team, and openness to different opinions. Effectively and efficiently inspiring, guiding, and maintaining momentum allows team members to collectively reach their full potential.

COHESION

THE SIX STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT





Cohesion

Psychological safety is the shared belief that it's safe to take interpersonal risks as a group. It is the ability to take risks, speak up, work creatively and feel comfortable being one's authentic self without fear of reprisal. This sense of comfortability and safety stems from these five key factors:

- **Connectedness:** We tend to feel more comfortable with people we know
- **Respect:** This is the key to recognizing and appreciating a team member's contributions
- **Value:** Team members should be willing to seek to understand different points of view
- **Risk:** The willingness to be open to others when you don't know or understand yet
- **Trust:** What follows risk when a person consistently behaves with a respectful response toward you

Psychological safety fosters healthy team dynamics and interpersonal relationships, thus creating a human-centered workplace where people feel inspired to collaborate and build upon each other's ideas. This can positively affect the quality of decision making and innovation, ultimately leading to high functioning leadership and teams.