Project Management Institute. New Jersey

Tomorrow's Trends

A Power Skills Model for Building Phenomenal Team Culture

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Benefits of Positive Workplace Culture

Increased

- Employee engagement and retention
- Higher customer satisfaction
- Increased Innovation and creativity
- Resilience

Applied to teams, positive culture reduces energy devoted to:

- Competition
- Protecting individual success
- Needing to be good at everything

Easy right?

Just create a little empathy…

Just make a great atmosphere...

A Power Skills Model

This model concentrates on a combination of skills that can facilitate building a phenomenal team culture.

Make the team feel **Heard**	Make the team feel **Safe**	Make the team feel **Valued**
High EQ	Adaptability	Impartiality
Tact	Problem Solving	Connections

Making the team

Feel Heard

- Building a collaborative environment by honing your EQ

  - Using tact as a tool

How Does High EQ Make the Team Feel Heard?

Our Focus Areas

These focus areas serve to reduce emotional response to situations, conflicts, and team member actions.

5 Components of Goleman's EQ Theory

- Empathy
- Social Skills
- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation

Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence – Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, published in 1995 propelled the concept of Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Quotient into popularity. His model is still widely cited today.

Empathy

Used as a tool, empathy helps us reduce assumptions and the corresponding conflict responses that accompany them.

Social Skills

Communication assumptions comprise the root cause to a great deal of workplace conflict. Learning to identify them and diffuse them is key.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness enables better decision making, better use of strengths, and better influence through focus and clarity.

Self-Awareness

In a business sense this translates to understanding things like your strengths and weaknesses, inherent mannerisms, bias, triggers, values, or motivators

Making Better Decisions
Helps to walk the team through less emotional decision making

Leveraging Strengths
Help the team leverage individual strengths appropriately

Creating the Calm
Mitigate anxiety with focus and clarity

Ways to Develop Self-Awareness

- Seek feedback from others
- Ask others how they see you
- Identify your values
- Examine your automatic emotional reactions
- Practice mindfulness

Social Skills –Communication Assumptions

Even well into the performing phase of team development, common communication assumptions can bring about conflict when our brain's automatic system fills information gaps inadequately.
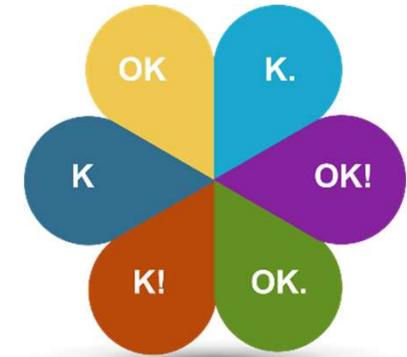
Nonverbal Cues

Nonverbal communication is the transfer of information through the use of body language. It includes things like facial expressions, gestures, body language and appearance.

Yawning
Static Picture
Facial Expressions
Distraction
Appearance
Nervous Habits

Verbal Cues

Verbal communication is the transfer of information through spoken language and includes tone, language, and volume.

Vocabulary
Voice Inflection
Feedback Cues

Written Cues

Written communication is the transfer of information through use of the written word and can include level of detail, punctuation, and style.

Punctuation Selection
Punctuation Placement
Lack of Detail
Brevity/Verbosity

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Social Skills – Tact

While a component of social skills related to communication, tact is so important it warrants its own attention

Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy

-Isaac Newton

PRO Powerful tool for conflict management

CON Can be exhausting and time consuming to hone

High Value Focus Areas

Focus on eliminating blame

Keeps others from going on the defensive

Speak as we the team

Reinforces collective ownership

Social Skills – Tact Used as a Tool

Tact as a tool focuses on eliminating blame from your communication and keeping people off the defensive

Common Scenario
There are opposing viewpoints on the project approach and the team needs to come together to resolve

Intro 1	Intro 2
Harry and Sally are not able to agree on the development approach. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the approach options and decide which one to use.	We have two viewpoints on how to approach development. One approach excludes a particular functionality and the other includes it. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the approach options and decide which one to use.
• Focuses on a negative • Isolates those causing conflict and immediately puts them on the defensive • Members will be less engaged and meeting less productive	• Focuses on facts of the discussion over people • Puts all parties on neutral ground at the start • Becomes the team's issue to solve

Empathy – Used as a Tool

Empathy as a tool will focus your mind on alternatives and reduce your emotional response to a circumstance

Common Scenario
Circumstance → Lack of Facts → Assumptions → Conflict

Three Reason Rule
Challenge yourself to think of 3 additional reasons for a reaction, behavior or situation

Commitment

"He never stays after work to help so he must not care enough about the project."

| Family obligations | Traffic or public transport | Split time |

Body Language

"The client was very distracted in the proposal presentation. That must mean they aren't interested in our idea."

| Critical Issue | Family Obligations | Passed over for promotion |

Motives

"We've disagreed in the past and I think she is trying to discredit my opinion because of it."

| Protection | Weak data | Additional knowledge |

How Do These Tactics Make the Team Feel Heard?

Our Focus Areas

These focus areas serve to reduce emotional response to situations, conflicts, and team member actions.

Building a collaborative environment by honing your EQ

Empathy

+

Social Skills

+

Self-awareness

+

Using tact as a tool

Tact

This allows the team to move forward with a greater emphasis on collaboration.

If we use these tactics in concert, the team will have trust in:
- ✓ Being able to speak up
- ✓ Feeling respected
- ✓ Capitalizing on positive conflict

Making the team feel heard

Making the team

Feel Safe

- Enhancing adaptability through risk response strategies

  - Using expectation setting and guiderails to enhance problem solving

Failure

Adaptability – Response Strategies for the Win

One of the best ways you can heighten adaptability is by identifying risk response strategies

Risk identification strategies in projects and initiatives often fall short.
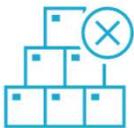
Most common risk response "non" strategies

Pushing dates → go live is delayed by 4 weeks

Making team work overtime → just get it done

Sacrificing quality → switching must have requirements to nice to have or cutting back test plans

We'll cross that bridge when we get there → we'll just fire drill if we run into it

The best thing you can ask:

What is keeping you up at night?

Then follow up with leading questions

When strategies are defined
- The team already knows what they will have to do to pivot and accommodate the risk if it is realized
- Suprises and fire drilling are reduced
- Builds the foundational skill to do this on the fly, faster and more efficiently

Adaptability – Lessons Learned
Use lessons learned as opportunities to pivot and adapt
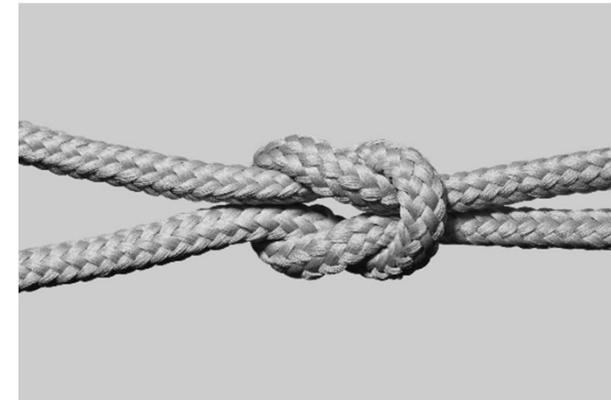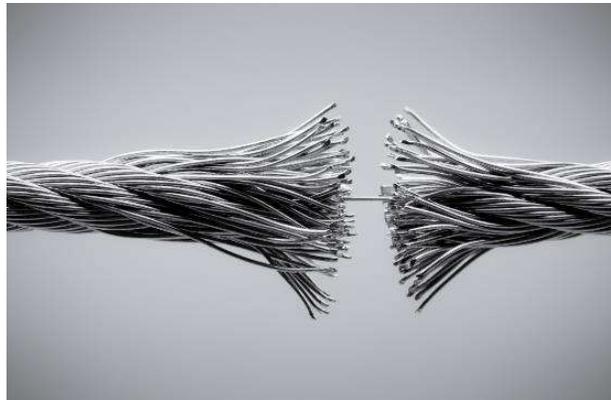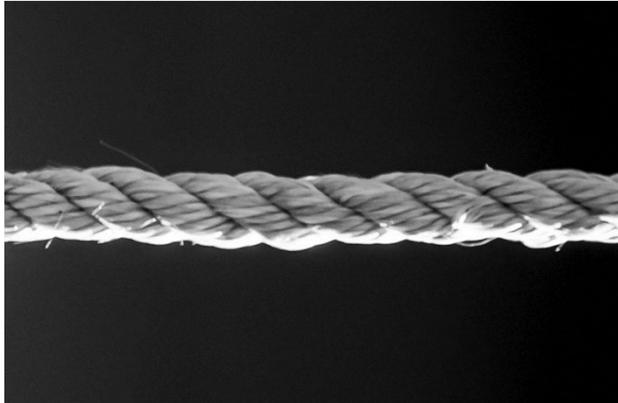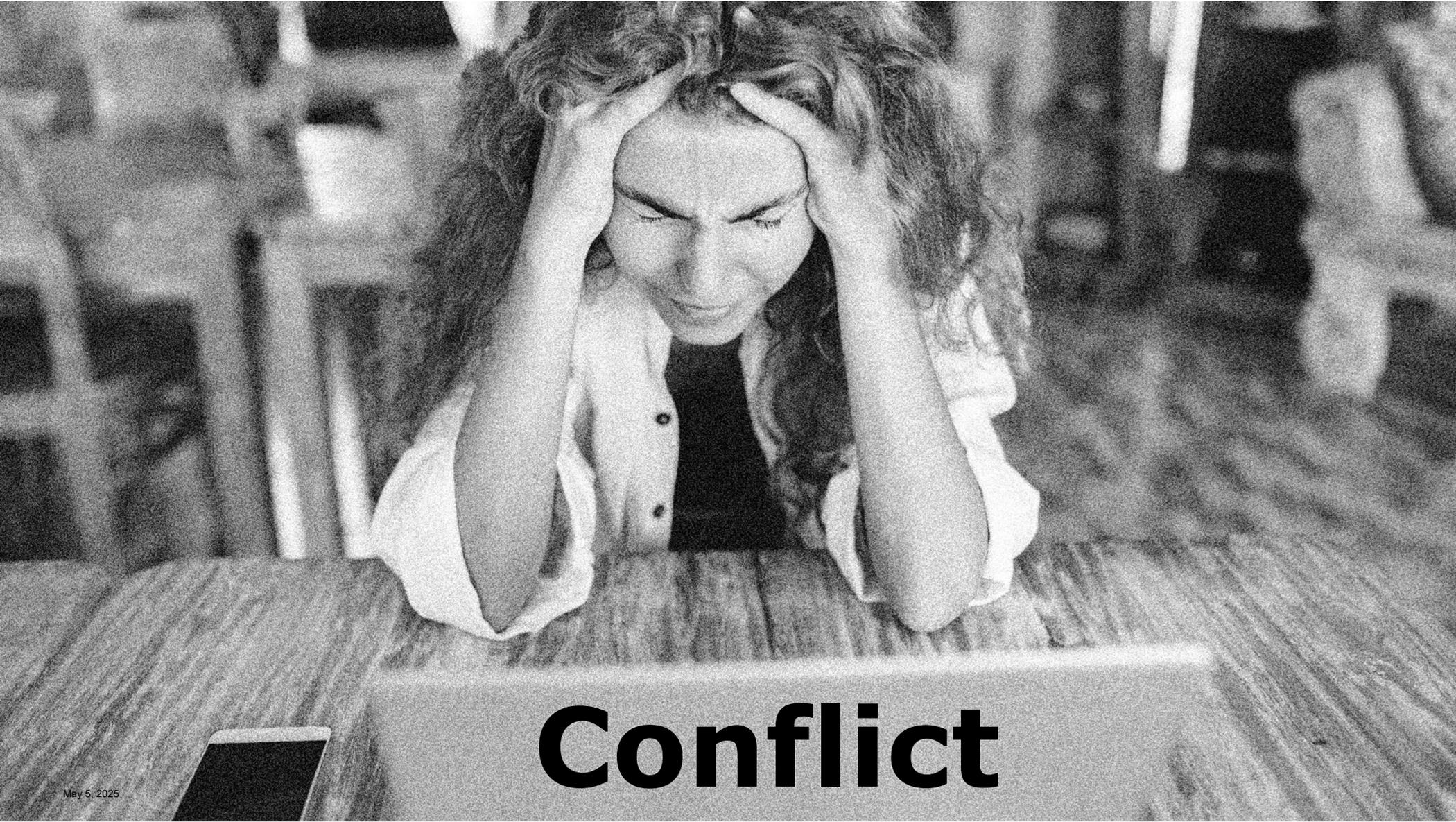
Lessons Learned Foster

Continuous Improvement

Knowledge Sharing

Building a Growth Mindset

All of Which Enhance Adaptability

Conflict

Problem Solving – Expectations and Guidelines

One of the best ways you can facilitate problem solving is by setting clear working norms

Common Problem Solving Model

→ Identify and define the problem

→ Identify the root cause

→ Generate Possible solutions

→ Evaluate alternatives

→ Select the best option

→ Implement

→ Evaluate the outcome

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Tolerances	Ensure everyone understands the levels	1
Mantra	Develop driving statements in key areas	2
Clarity	Confirm everyone understands the problem to be solved	3
Inclusion	Ensure the relevant stakeholders are involved in the process	4
Accountability	Assign clear responsibility even if you think it is obvious	5
Empowerment	Identify what can be done at what level	6
Timeliness	Monitor the cadence of decision making and adjust	7
Data	Identify your sources of truth	8

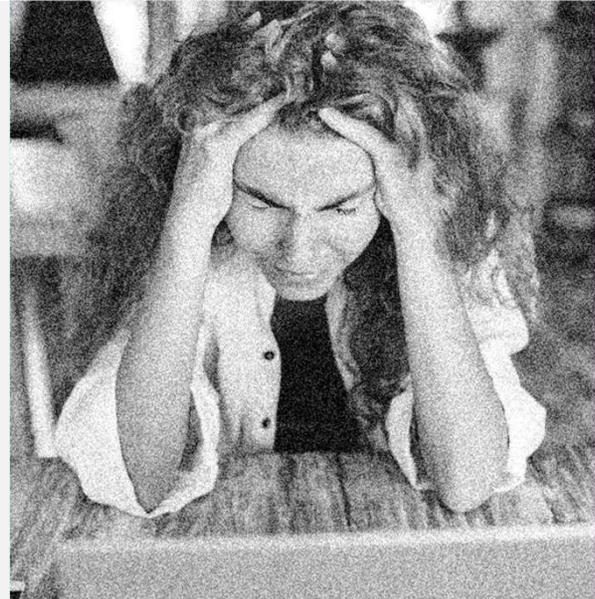**Align these up and down the leadership chain**

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How Do These Tactics Make the Team Feel Safe?

Reduce the opportunity to fail by being more adaptable

Change the perception of failure through lessons learned

Use working norms to set expectations and guidelines for streamlining problem solving activities

If we use these tactics in concert, we create a space where team members can feel comfortable taking appropriate risks and having healthy debate without the fear of repercussions.

Making the team feel safe

Making the team

Feel Valued

- Using impartiality and openness to build trust

  - Being the collaboration conduit and raising cultural awareness to make team connections.

Impartiality – Be Neutral when Facilitating

Creating a neutral environment builds a culture of trust that all team members can contribute input and feel respected.

Do

- Indicate the desired outcome
- Let the team debate first
- Ensure equal time for all ideas

- Stimulate discussion with questions
- Provide opinion only when you are engaged
- Suggest escalation when appropriate

Don't

- Lead with your opinion
- Personally refute ideas
- Introduce bias
- Capture only ideas you agree with

- Reference insider jokes or information
- Base arguments on personal preference
- Allow discussion that veers from purpose
- Provide praise for popular ideas

Openness – Say the Hard Things

Pro Tip: Tell the team something awkward is coming

? Why does it work?
Breaks the ice giving participants a moment to prepare

> I sense some tension so I'm going to try and summarize.

> So I'm going to be the one to say this out loud, tell me if I have this right.

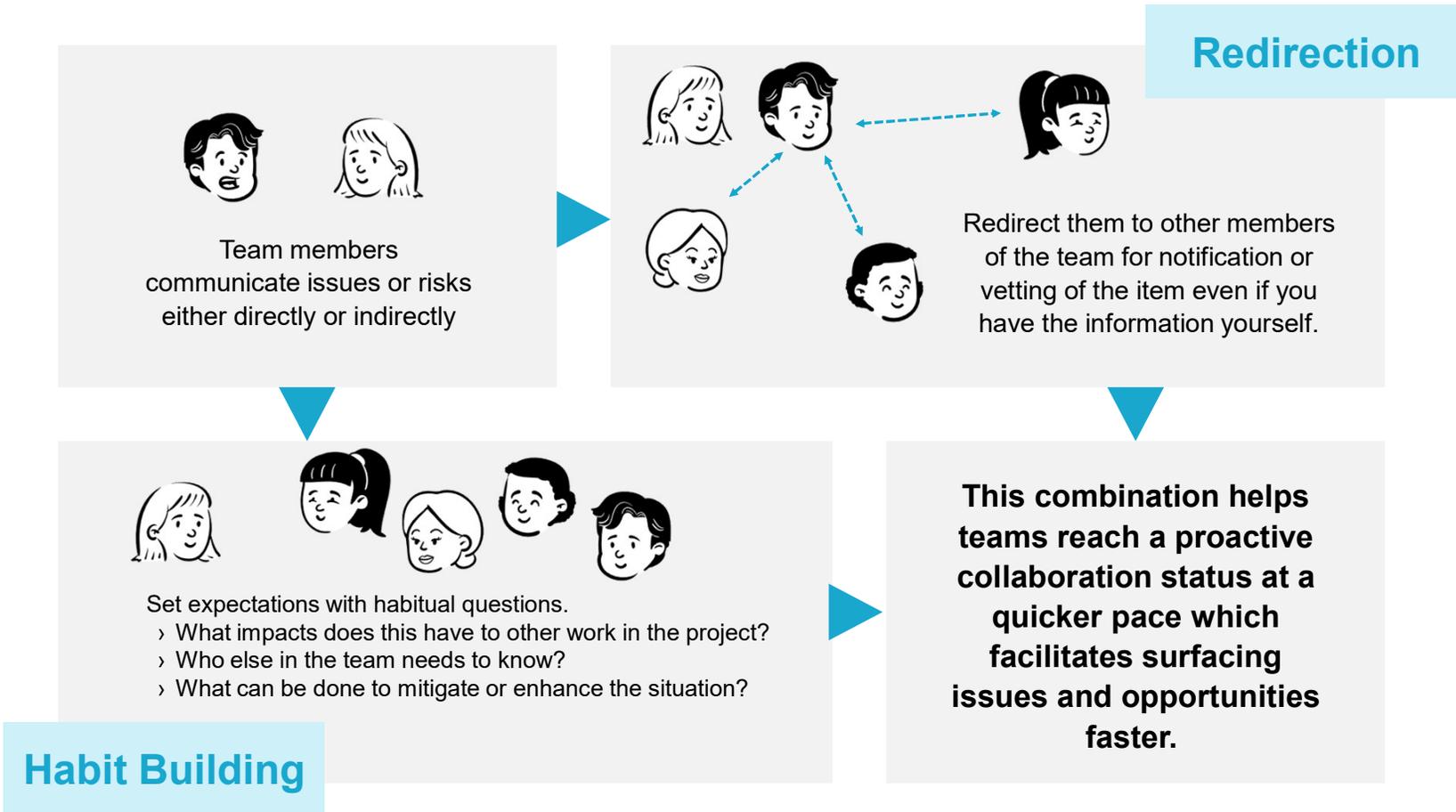> This is not going to be an easy thing to say but I'm obligated to raise this risk.

> This is a little awkward to discuss but I think we need to talk about this topic.

Connections – Being the Collaboration Conduit

Take every opportunity to channel discussions and meetings in a way that promotes proactive collaboration between team members.

Redirection

Team members communicate issues or risks either directly or indirectly

Redirect them to other members of the team for notification or vetting of the item even if you have the information yourself.

Set expectations with habitual questions.
› What impacts does this have to other work in the project?
› Who else in the team needs to know?
› What can be done to mitigate or enhance the situation?

This combination helps teams reach a proactive collaboration status at a quicker pace which facilitates surfacing issues and opportunities faster.

Habit Building

Connections – Raising Cultural Awareness

More awareness creates engagement stemming from the feeling of inclusion boosting teamwork to a new level.

Food & Beverage Customs

Customs can be passed down through generations. Many feel great pride in continuing these and finding opportunities to share experiences with team members thus heightening cultural exposure.
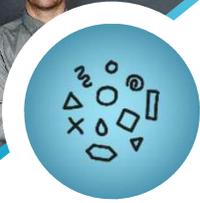
Cultural Icons

A deeper understanding of perspectives can be gained by discussing the people or items that represent a specific cultures.

Idioms

Lack of context for idiomatic phrases, specifically with non-native speakers, can cause team members to feel left out. Asking others to elaborate when these are used helps bring clarity and an opportunity for cultural education.

Holidays

Raising opportunities to chat about major holidays is a great way to facilitate sharing of customs between team members.

WoW Customs

Different cultures will have diverse outlooks on things like work hours, daily breaks, communication timing, professional etiquette, and many other working norms. Sharing these is an excellent way for the team to foster new perspectives.

How Do These Tactics Make the Team Feel Valued?

Openness

Breaking the ice to make way for crucial conversations

Impartiality

Creating a neutral environment where team members trust contributing

Culture

Create a feeling of inclusion to boost teamwork.

Collaboration

Redirect and build habit to facilitate surfacing issues and opportunities faster.

If we use these tactics in concert, we create a safe space where team members can feel a sense of pride.

Making the team feel valued

A Power Skills Model Recap

Building a phenomenal team culture through these tactics

Heard

High EQ

Build collaboration through EQ skills
- Empathy as a tool reduces assumption conflict
- Social Skills – diffuse communication assumptions quickly
- Self-Awareness – better decision making and influence

Tact

Focus on eliminating blame and speaking as the team to keep stakeholders off the defensive

Through these tactics, the team will have trust in being able to speak up, feeling respected, and capitalizing on positive conflict.

Making the team feel heard

Safe

Adaptability

Enhance adaptability using substantive risk response strategies

Change the perception of failure through lessons learned.

Problem Solving

Streamline problem solving activities through working norms

Through these tactics, we create a space where teams can take appropriate risks and have healthy debate without the fear of repercussions.

Making the team feel safe

Valued

Impartiality

Create a neutral environment where team members trust contributing

Break the ice to make way for crucial conversations

Connections

Redirect and habit build to surface issues faster and create inclusion to boost teamwork.

Through these tactics, we create a safe space where team members can feel a sense of pride.

Making the team feel valued

Thank You

Questions?

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