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**OPEN,
HONEST,
&
DIRECT**



**A GUIDE TO UNLOCKING
YOUR TEAM'S POTENTIAL**

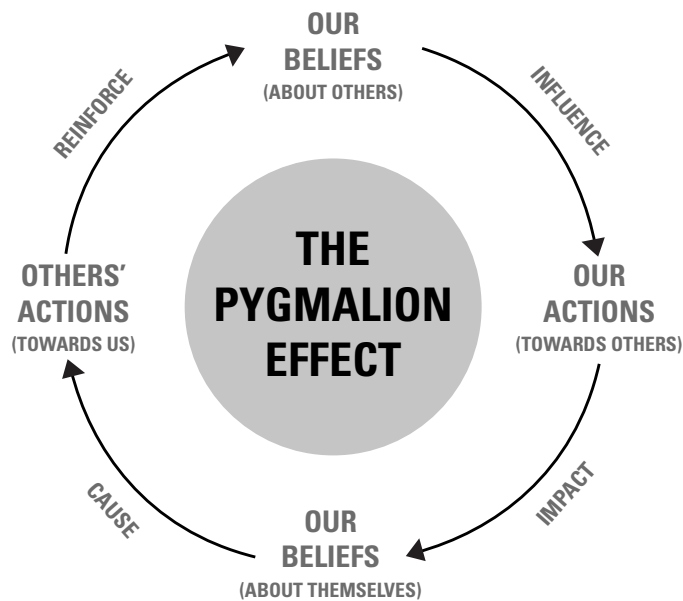
ACTIVITY: THREE QUESTIONS FOR HIRING RIGHT

- Does she want to lead?
- Do I have the right metrics in place to measure her success?
- Does she have the skills to lead others?

ACTIVITY: IDENTIFY YOUR INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

1. Create a list of all your people managers.
2. Go through each manager on the list one by one and ask yourself:
 - a. Does she truly want to lead? (yes, no)
 - b. What is the impact of her managing people on your team? (positive, neutral, negative)
 - c. Is she better served as an individual contributor? (yes, no)
3. Put a big star by each manager who is a better fit as an individual contributor.
4. Determine your course of action with each manager.

EVALUATING MANAGERS				
Manager name	Do they truly want to lead? (yes, no)	What's the impact of their managing people? (positive, neutral, negative)	Are they better served as an individual contributor? (yes, no)	Action to take
Noel	Yes	Neutral	No	Invest in her development as a leader.
Steve	No	Negative	Yes	Share insights with Steve and opportunity to transition to more strategic role where he doesn't manage people.
Latoya	Yes	Positive	Yes	Check in with her to learn what she's doing well and how you can continue to support her.



ACTIVITY: BEING IN SILENCE

1. Find a partner.
2. Sit directly in front of your partner so that you are facing each other with your knees almost touching.
3. Set a timer on your phone for three minutes and then put your phone facedown, near you, and on silent mode.
4. Stay silent with this other person for the full three minutes.

ACTIVITY: DISCOVER YOUR LISTENING BLIND SPOT

1. What is your natural tendency when listening to others (at work or home)? What are you listening to do?

You may feel that several of the blind spots listed earlier describe you. For the sake of becoming a better listener, pick one. This is where you will focus your awareness and attention.

I listen to _____.

2. How has your blind spot helped you in your career?
3. How has it held you back?
4. What impact does your blind spot have on your team?

ACTIVITY: CHECKLIST FOR LISTENING

Follow this checklist prior to a conversation in which you know it's important to be present, and to listen with intention and attention.

Remember your listening blind spot

Simply being aware of your own listening blind spot ahead of time will help you notice when you are doing it. And when you notice, you can choose to stop.

Remove all distractions

One client, Joan, a senior director at a large national wellness company, realized for each meeting she had with her employees that she was in front of her computer, which made it quite hard for her to be present and focused with her team. So she stopped bringing her computer to meetings. It was that simple.

This step is about removing the distractions that will get in the way of you being able to be present in the conversation. It could mean putting your phone on silent, turning off alerts on your computer, or not having your phone out at all. Even the presence of your phone facedown on the table during a meeting is a distraction for your brain, which is why my phone stays on silent in my pocket!

Clarify the meeting's purpose

Start the meeting by getting clear on the purpose. What is each person trying to accomplish in this meeting? What would success at the end of the meeting look like? By beginning with the end in mind, you can let go of trying to wonder what the point of the meeting is and stay on task with the person and the meeting.

ACTIVITY: THE STAY INTERVIEW

1. Outside of your normal 1-1
2. Start by asking
 - a. What skills are you looking to develop?
 - b. How can I support you?
3. Shut up and listen

ACTIVITY: COGNITIVE BIAS

Consider Linda, a thirty-one-year-old woman, single and bright. When she was a student in high school and college, she was deeply involved in social justice issues and also participated in environmental protests.

1. Which is more probable about Linda's occupation today?
 - a. Linda works as a TV reporter.
 - b. Linda is a bank teller.
 - c. Linda is a bank teller full time but remains active in the environmental movement.

Quick. What's your answer—a, b, or c? And in what precise order do you think them most likely?

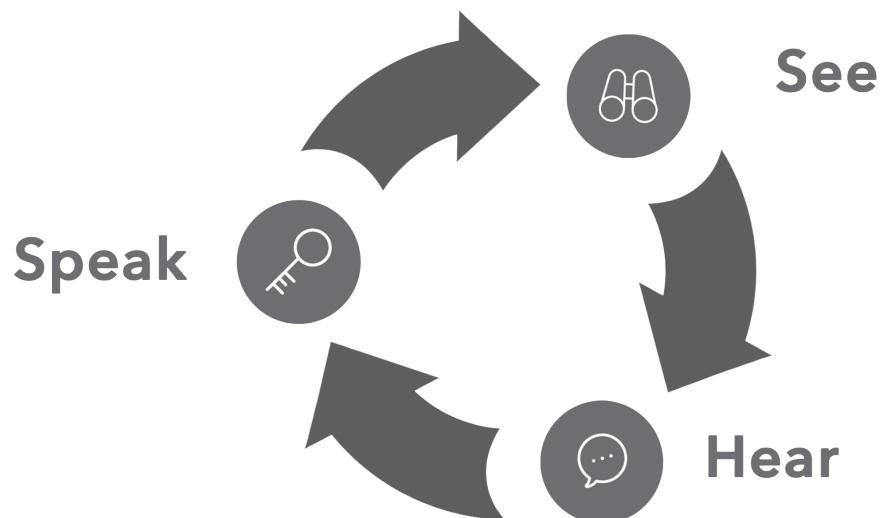
Here's the solution: First, ignore how you ranked *a*, as it is irrelevant to this mind teaser. The key is this: If you ranked *c* as more probable than *b*, you are wrong—and in very good company. That is what most people tend to answer when they are given this particular brainteaser. Statistically speaking, it is more probable that Linda is a bank teller, of any kind, than that she is both a bank teller and active in the environmental movement, which is a subset of the whole category of all bank tellers.⁴

ACTIVITY: POWERFUL QUESTIONS CHECKLIST

Is the question

- Open ended?
- Coming from a beginner's mindset?
- Clear and succinct?
- In context?
- Impactful?
- In the moment?

SEE-HEAR-SPEAK: A POWERFUL QUESTIONS FRAMEWORK



ACTIVITY: THE HOT SEAT

The goal of this activity is to provide you and your team a platform to practice asking powerful questions. I especially love this because it forces you and your leaders to ask questions of real work scenarios you are facing today. In addition to helping you practice, it will also help you and your team solve key people-issues you're facing.

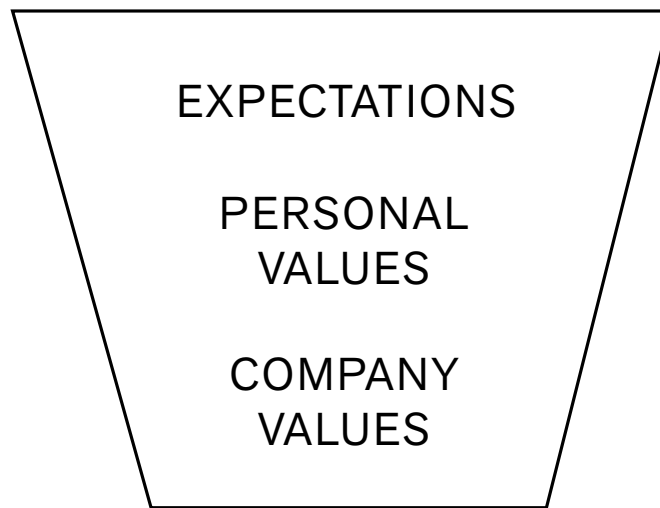
Prior to your next team meeting, ask one team member to come prepared to share a challenge they are facing, one to which they don't know the answer. It usually works best when they type up a few notes and share with the team beforehand. Here are a few tips to guide your team member in their preparations.

- The problem: Use one sentence to describe the problem you are looking for help with.
- What's at stake: What makes this problem so important to solve?
- The facts: What are crucial facts to know about the problem? Describe these in three to five bullet points.
- The purpose: What's your desired outcome? What would success look like?

Give the team member two to three minutes to describe the challenge and what success would look like for them in the given situation in the team meeting. Then share the powerful questions checklist so all can see. Go around the room, with each team member firing away a question of the presenter with the goal of learning more about the problem and, ultimately, of helping the presenter achieve their desired outcome. Avoid asking leading questions. Allow around twenty minutes for this.

Close out your questions by asking each person what they learned from this activity.

Hopefully, they—and you—will learn the power of asking questions versus giving advice and the impact it can have on someone's ability to learn, grow, and make impactful change. You'll also begin to notice what a powerful question looks like. Powerful questions are not formulaic, even when you have a checklist to follow. You can't simply write down your powerful questions to use again later. You have to step into the unknown and live in the contextual moment. It can feel uncomfortable, but the results are well worth it.



TEAM AGREEMENTS

ACTIVITY: FIVE WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOU

At the top of a piece of paper, write down the words “I am . . .” Then, close your eyes, put your left hand on your stomach and your right hand on your heart, feeling it beating, pumping blood to all the vital organs in your body. Take a deep breath in, slowly inhaling for five seconds, holding for one and releasing for five. Repeat this for five breaths. After the fifth breath, open your eyes and write down any words to describe yourself. Don’t think; just write the first words that come to your mind.

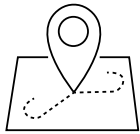
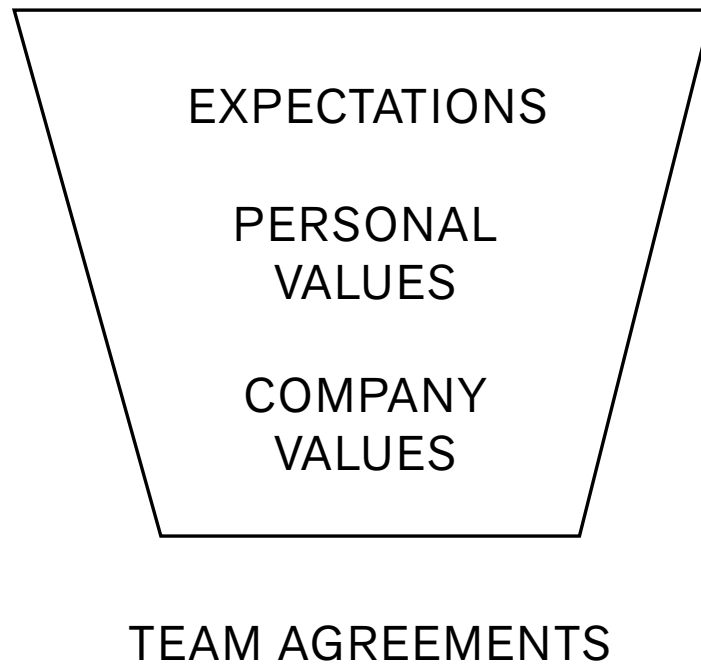
If you pause, you are likely thinking about the words to describe yourself instead of letting them come from within, from your core. If this happens, stop, even if you’re only at one word.

Share your list with a close friend, a family member, and a coworker. Ask them to share their opinion on the accuracy of these words describing you and whether they feel the urge to offer a word or two that were missed. You can choose to add their words to your list or not. These words are yours.

Here are mine as a thought starter for you.

I am. . .

- Loving
- Caring
- Funny
- Honest
- Courageous



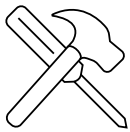
Standing in your commitment.

Be clear about the impact you are having on the world and take action from there.



Embracing a beginner's mind.

Trigger your curiosity, explore the unknown, challenge the status quo and ask the tough questions.



Doing the next hard thing.

Get out of your comfort zone, challenge yourself, make mistakes and learn from them.



Acting with authenticity and humility.

Be authentic in the actions you take, in sharing insights and hard truths—allow yourself to be vulnerable.



Having fun!

Enjoy the journey. Laugh, play and lead with love. We are all doing our best to work toward the same goal.

ACTIVITY: MAKE FEEDBACK A HABIT WITH YOUR TEAM

1. What's one thing you did that worked well?
2. Here's one thing I think you did that worked well . . .
3. What's one thing you would do differently?
4. Here's one thing I think you could do differently . . .

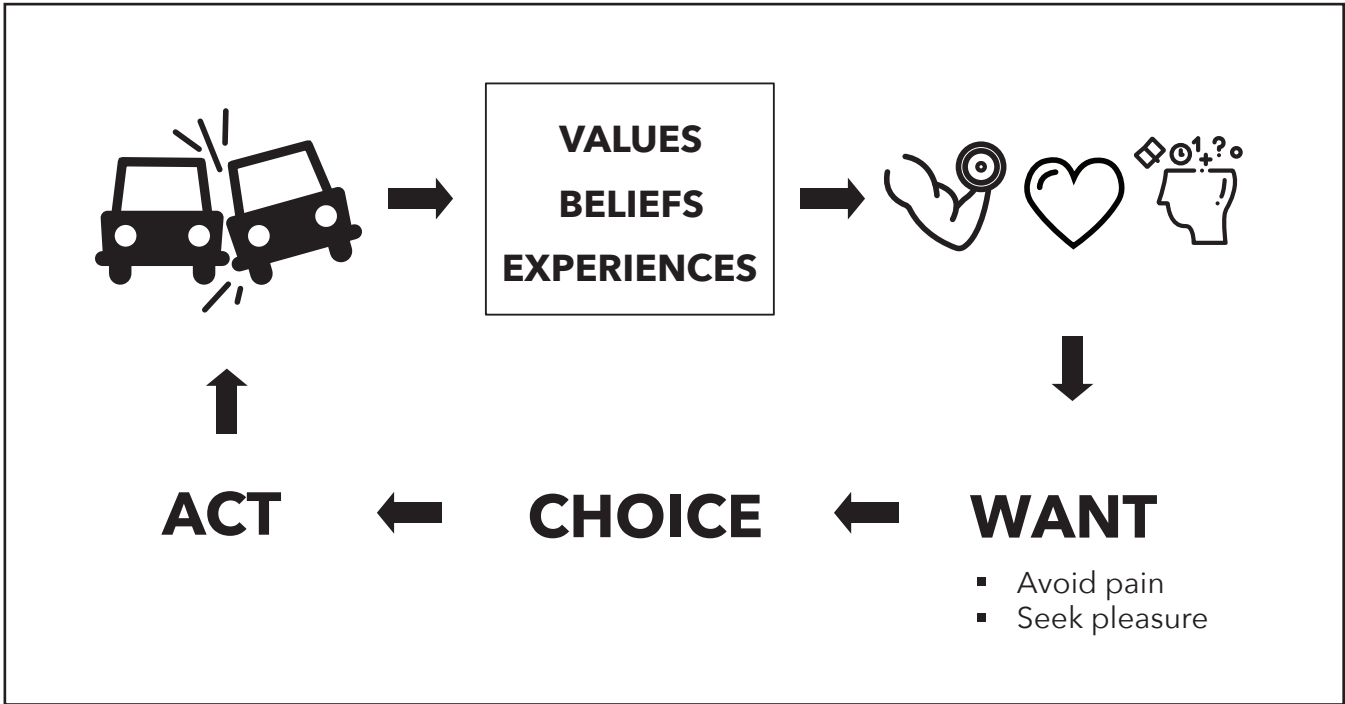
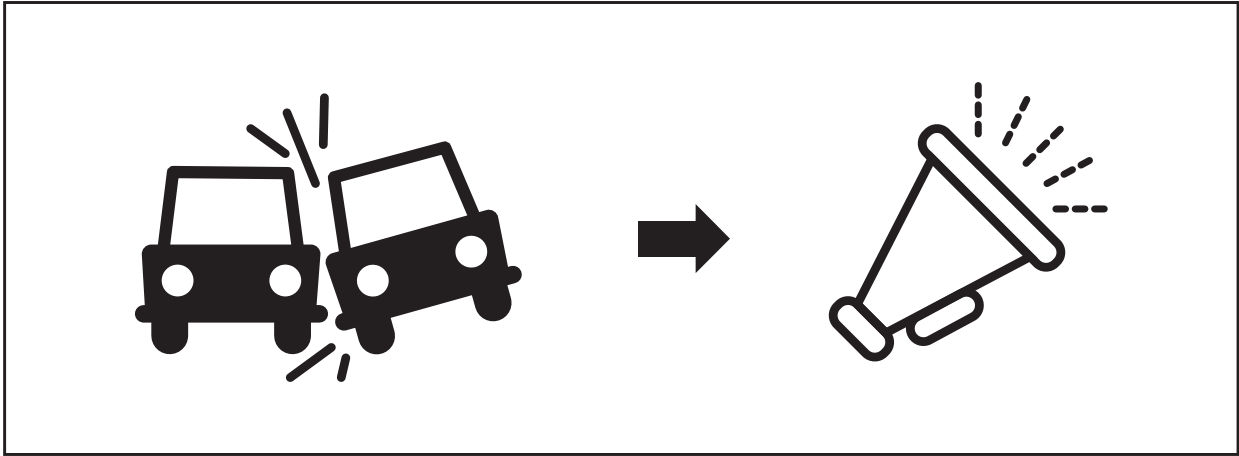
ACTIVITY: CRITICAL CONVERSATION CHECKLIST

- Is something at stake?
- What's the impact if nothing changes?
- Is action needed from both parties?
- Is it a conversation or ultimatum?

ACTIVITY: PICK A CRITICAL CONVERSATION

What critical conversation do you need to have? Write down one critical conversation you need to have or have been putting off. Write down the situation and players involved in a brief paragraph for yourself.

Use this situation as your example to follow for the rest of this chapter. It will make the steps in the process more real for you, making it easier to take action and learn the skill. In short, you'll be strengthening your neural pathway for holding critical conversations.



ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON THE FACTS

- Document the facts of your situation—and only the facts.
- What would the hidden camera see or hear?

ACTIVITY: OWN YOUR REACTIONS

- Go back to your situation, replay the inciting incident in your mind, and notice how it felt.
- What thought(s) crossed your mind?
- What emotions came over you?
- How did it feel in your body? Did the muscles in your neck tense, or was it a pain in your stomach?

ACTIVITY: STAND IN YOUR COMMITMENT

- What is your commitment as a leader?
- Are you upholding that commitment in this conversation?

ACTIVITY: THE ROOT CAUSE

- Restate the purpose of the conversation.
- Write down what didn't work.
 - Look back at your facts section, and pick the action the other person did that didn't work. It is OK to share a few actions that highlight the main action.
 - For example, "Kevin left the room" highlights the main action of him shutting down the conversation after I shared a different idea.
- Document the impact of the main action.

ACTIVITY: YOUR REQUEST

- Write down your request now.

ACTIVITY: DIAGRAMMING THE DISCUSSION

This diagram should give you a better picture of how important creating an opening is.

5 minutes Share what didn't work, its impact and your request

20 minutes Create an opening for possibility

5 minutes Align on next steps

SCRIPT FOR HOLDING A CRITICAL CONVERSATION

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE

What are you hoping will be different as a result of having the conversation?

- I want us to be better at communicating disagreements with each other.

STEP 2: FOCUS ON THE FACTS

What would the hidden camera see or hear?

- Kevin raised his voice and asked me if I cared about the business and then left the room.

STEP 3: OWN YOUR REACTIONS

Go back to your situation, replay the inciting incident in your mind, and notice how it felt.

What thought crossed your mind?

- I thought he was being shortsighted and didn't respect or value my opinion.

What emotions came over you?

- Anger, fear, and doubt.

How did it feel in your body? Did the muscles in your neck tense, or was it a pain in your stomach?

- I clenched my fists and felt the muscles in my neck stiffen.

STEP 4: STAND IN YOUR COMMITMENT

What is your commitment as a leader? Are you upholding that commitment in this conversation?

- I want to help us unlock the potential of our business and thus of our working together.

STEP 5: GIVE A HEADS-UP

- "Kevin, I wanted to sit down because I'm concerned about how we communicate disagreements with each other. I'd like to share my perspective, hear yours, and have a conversation about how we can improve the way we communicate."

STEP 6: SHARE WHAT DIDN'T WORK AND ITS IMPACT ON YOU

- "During our account review meeting last week, after I shared an idea for how to solve ABC Corp.'s complaint, I noticed you ended the conversation by leaving the room."
- "It stopped our meeting in its tracks. We weren't able to come to a solution for how to approach ABC Corp. I fear our inability to communicate disagreements with each other will hold us back from serving our clients' needs and succeeding as a business."

continued

STEP 7: MAKE A REQUEST

- “When we come to a disagreement, I’d like you to ask me for the reasoning behind my opinion.”

STEP 8: CREATE AN OPENING FOR POSSIBILITY

- “I had to shut up and listen to Kevin’s side of the story.”

STEP 9: ALIGN ON THE NEXT STEPS

Get clear on your next steps in the meeting and follow up with an email.

Kevin, thank you for taking the time to sit down and talk about how we can improve the way we communicate with each other.

Here’s what I heard as next steps from the conversation; please review and let me know if you heard the same. When we come to a disagreement, one that is heated, that ends up with us ending the meeting, this is what I understand:

- I agree to allow you space to think and remind myself that you are frustrated with the situation, not with me.
- You agree to come back to me within twenty-four hours to meet again and determine the best next steps together.

Is this what you heard too? If not, let’s reconnect and realign on our actions.

Cheers,
Aaron