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# Creating Fearless, Emotionally Agile Workplaces

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MRO Security Training & Conference  
Participant Handbook

# THRIVING IN A V.U.C.A. WORLD

The world is changing rapidly; strategies and approaches that may have worked a few years ago quickly become irrelevant given changes in technology, our environment and demographic shifts and demands with the workforce. This requires showing up differently in order to thrive in this VUCA world; it requires building psychological safety where interpersonal fear is minimized so performance can be maximized.

Although the term VUCA originated in the 1990s in the military, it is becoming common vernacular because it describes a new reality:

- **V**olatile
- **U**ncertain
- **C**omplex
- **A**mbiguous

“Get people comfortable with being uncomfortable. Don’t wait for a return to simpler times; they are over.”

~Cy Wakeman

Essentially, we have entered a world where disruption is the norm. And this disruption can trigger us to not show up as our best selves. Most of us want to look smart, capable and helpful. In fact, we learn relatively early in life how to manage and avoid interpersonal risks where we might look ignorant, incompetent or disruptive.

Researcher and bestselling author, Brené Brown, describes this as “armoring up”; much like medieval soldiers would put on armor to protect themselves during a battle, we put on armor to protect ourselves and avoid looking bad. Add in the disruption of living and working in a VUCA world, and our instinct to armor up only gets worse.

We need to acknowledge that the world we live in is not certain, simple, static or easy. And we need to support each other in moving from self-protection to self-reflection – so we can show up as our authentic selves while also being effective. We need to create the conditions for everyone to be able to bring their best selves to work – and home – each day.

Our mindsets (and stories) are the primary source of our own stress and pain; they prevent us from finding peace and success. Therefore, it is imperative that we are able to accept what is (uncertainty and ambiguity included), focus on the present and what is known, move from judgment to self-reflection and actively work to succeed in spite of reality (rather than fighting it).

# Creating Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is just as important as physical safety - perhaps even more so. This is because when people don't feel psychologically safe, they will avoid speaking up when there's a potential issue or risk, are less likely to ask for help, and withhold their ideas and contributions. It's impossible to create the conditions for people to show up courageously when the environment is not psychologically safe.

## 12 Questions/Statements to Create Psychological Safety with Your Team:

1. ***What motivates you and how can we bring more of that to your work?***
2. ***What's one gift, skill or talent you have that I've overlooked, undervalued or under-utilized?***
3. ***What's one thing you need from me that will enable you to be successful?***
4. ***What's one thing I need to know about you that will improve our relationship?***
5. ***What's the thing I do that's detracting from our success?***
6. ***I really appreciate you bringing this to my attention; I'm sure it wasn't easy.***
7. ***There are many unknowns/ things are changing fast / this is complex stuff. So we will make mistakes.***
8. ***Bob, you look concerned. Jane, you haven't said much. Jason, what are you hearing in the plan / on the phones / on the road?***
9. ***What assumptions are we making? What else could this be / could we investigate / have we left out?***
10. ***What are you up against? What help do you need? What's in your way?***
11. ***Did everything go as smoothly as you would have liked? What were the friction points? Are there systems we should retool?***
12. ***Okay, that's one side. Let's hear some dissent / who's got something to add / let's have some give-and-take.***

# Enhancing Our Emotional Literacy & Agility

In Brené Brown's latest book, *Atlas of the Heart*, she uncovers how extremely important it is that we have the proper language to make sense of our experiences. Without being able to accurately name our feelings and experiences, we struggle to get the help we need, we can't effectively regulate or manage our emotions in a way that allows us to move through them productively, and our self-awareness is diminished.

As humans, we are meaning-making beings. Having a clear sense of place - understanding where we are and what we're experiencing - is central to being able to process what got us here and where we need to go next. Without enhancing our language and ability to accurately name our emotions and experiences, it's like being lost without a map - and it's much more likely that our Reactive Mind will hijack us and prevent us from having the impact we desire.

As we start to grow our emotional vocabulary, we can ask ourselves 3 critical questions that are central to meaning-making:

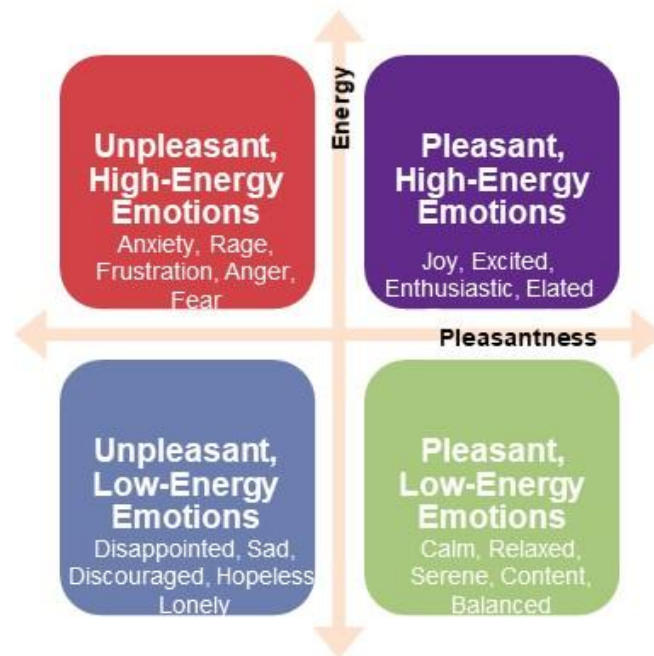
- ***Where am I?*** (i.e., what am I experiencing and feeling in this moment?)
- ***How did I get here from there?*** (i.e., what happened, what stories did I create from the experience, what pivotal points along the way to getting here are worth noting?)
- ***How do I get there from here?*** (i.e., what am I wanting for myself? What impact do I want to have? What do I need to hold onto or let go of in order to get to where I'm wanting to be? Do I need to ask for help, give feedback, set a boundary, etc.?)

***"Emotion and cognition unexplored drive every decision you make; you either develop self-awareness or these things control you." ~Brené Brown***

# Become an Emotion Scientist

Too often, we deny ourselves and one another the permission to feel. We suck it up, avoid the difficult conversations, explode at loved ones, stress eat or drink without knowing why, and the list goes on and on. We lose the ability to even identify what we're feeling and go a little numb inside; when this happens, there's a long list of unwanted outcomes that follow. We need to become "emotion scientists" – learning the skills to use our emotions wisely rather than suppressing or ignoring them by leveraging RULER

- **Recognize** emotions in self and others
- **Understand** the causes and consequences of our feelings
- **Label** and name our emotions
- **Express** our emotions
- **Regulate** our emotions



<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely
<input type="checkbox"/> Belonging	<input type="checkbox"/> Gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Love
<input type="checkbox"/> Blame	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief	<input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed
<input type="checkbox"/> Curious	<input type="checkbox"/> Guilt	<input type="checkbox"/> Regret
<input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/> Happy	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad
<input type="checkbox"/> Disgust	<input type="checkbox"/> Humiliation	<input type="checkbox"/> Shame
<input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassment	<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt	<input type="checkbox"/> Surprised
<input type="checkbox"/> Empathy	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
<input type="checkbox"/> Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> Joy	<input type="checkbox"/> Worried
<input type="checkbox"/> Fear/Scared	<input type="checkbox"/> Judgment	

Pick one of the emotions above that is hard for you - one that shows up in difficult ways at work. Then consider the following questions when you think about that emotion.

**When I experience the emotion:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. I'm feeling... (Affect or Emotion)  
*Where am I physically feeling this? How's my body responding?*
2. I'm thinking... (Cognition)  
*Is there a thought constantly looping in my mind? What's my go-to thought process?*
3. I do / I act... (Behavior)  
*What's the first thing I want to do? What is the only thing I want to do?*

# The Role of Anger

Anger is a powerful emotion that is often ignited by some sort of sense of injustice. It can serve as a catalyst for courage, love, change, compassion or justice. However, when we hold onto anger without tapping into its power to transform, it has consequences. For most of us, anger can also mask difficult experiences like grief, regret, or shame. In some cultures it's more acceptable and safer to be angry than to express sadness, fear or vulnerability. In order to experience and grow from emotions, we have to recognize, name and understand them.

<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief	<input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed
<input type="checkbox"/> Blame	<input type="checkbox"/> Guilt	<input type="checkbox"/> Regret
<input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed	<input type="checkbox"/> Humiliation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sad
<input type="checkbox"/> Disgust	<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt	<input type="checkbox"/> Shame
<input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassment	<input type="checkbox"/> Jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
<input type="checkbox"/> Fear/Scared	<input type="checkbox"/> Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Worried
<input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated	<input type="checkbox"/> Lonely	

Select the emotion(s) that you commonly experience that is masked by anger.

- What's scary/unsettling/worrisome about giving yourself permission to feel the emotion (vs. masking with anger)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What's the cost of holding onto anger?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What would open up for you if you leaned into recognizing, naming and understanding your emotions when anger surfaces?

# Being Self-Aware

## Manage Triggers to “Armor Up”

The Frame is the lens through which we view the world, and it influences the choices we make and actions we take. Understanding your Frame will help you show up as the best version of yourself and maximize your positive impact on others

In order to do this, we need to tend to the SEE part of the Frame. How we SEE people/situations is most often run by our ego. Our ego is our filter on reality that leads us to please, perform, perfect and self-protect and keeps us from effectively collaborating and getting the results we want..

Being able to show up as a leader requires being aware of when our thinking is serving us well and when it's not. It's about moving from Ego and self-protection to openness and self-reflection.

**Lasting change doesn't come from simply DOING things differently; it comes from SEEING or thinking about things differently.**

*“If I continue to think as I have always thought, I will continue to act as I have always acted. If I continue to act as I have always acted, will continue to get what I have always gotten.”*

~Marilyn Ferguson



# The Frame

- The way we SEE things (our beliefs about situations, other people, and ourselves) affects how we FEEL.
- How we feel (our emotions) affects what we DO (our behaviors & actions)
- What we do affects what we GET (the results!)
- Lasting positive change doesn't come from simply DOING things differently. It comes from SEEING things differently.



# The Role of Self-Protection

Our brains are designed to maximize pleasure and reward and avoid pain and punishment. We experience social pain the same way we experience physical pain; our brains don't really know the difference. When we experience social pain and perceive something as a threat, we have a very predictable neurological response (i.e., fight or flight stress response or "the amygdala hijack"). Essentially our brains go into automatic self-protection mode; we "armor up" to protect ourselves and prepare for battle – hardly a good foundation for connection and collaboration!

When we are armoring up to protect ourselves, we are not operating from our best thinking. Neuroscientist, Dr. David Rock, explains this phenomenon with his SCARF model:

**S**tatus – how we stack up against other people

**C**ertainty – our ability to predict the future for ourselves

**A**utonomy – our power to control our own destiny

**R**elatedness – our sense of trust in the people around us

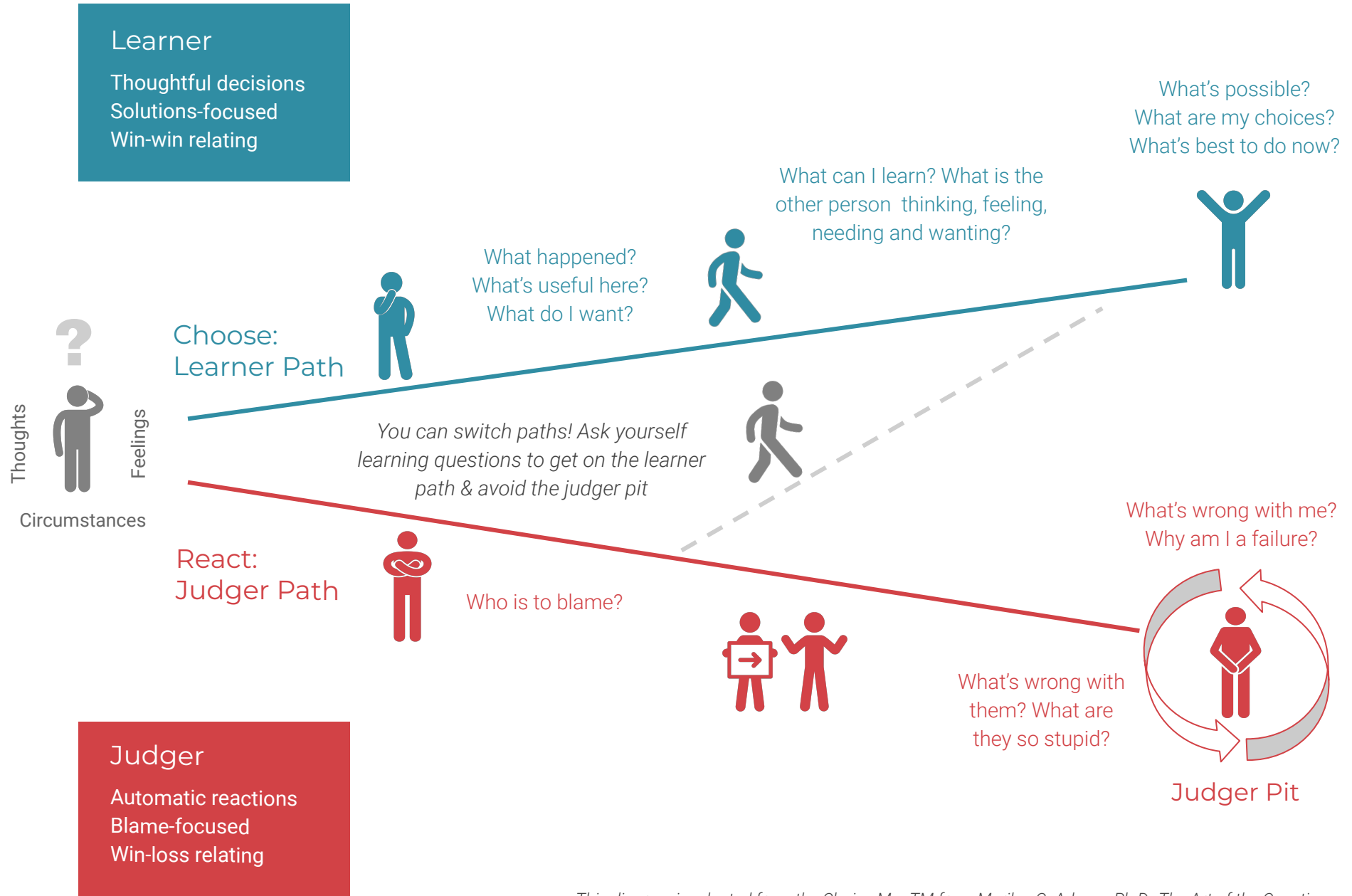
**F**airness – our trust that we are being treated as well as others

When we perceive a threat to any one of these SCARF areas, our instinct is to protect ourselves. Here are some examples how we might show up when self-protection is in the driver's seat:

- Protecting our turf rather than collaborating
- Judging others or throwing them under the bus
- Clinging tightly to the way we've always done things
- Being inflexible and unwilling to consider change
- Trying to control others
- Perfectionism and intolerance for error
- Hoarding information
- Overly skeptical and assuming people have poor intentions
- Focusing on all that is wrong
- Acting like a victim and blaming others

The key is to recognize this automatic phenomenon and realize when you are acting out of self-protection and tend to it. And when you think others might be in self-protection mode, get curious about why they might be behaving a certain way; look for opportunities to help them not see you or a situation as a threat.

# Learner vs. Judger



*This diagram is adapted from the Choice Map™ from Marilee G. Adams, Ph.D., The Art of the Question.*

# Judger vs. Learner

## Body Wisdom Exercise

Practice asking the Judger questions out loud and notice how your body feels. Are you tense, uptight, negative? **Write down your physical and emotional responses to the Judger questions.**

Practice asking the Learner questions out loud and notice how your body feels. How is your breathing, your mood, your emotions? **Write down your responses and notice the difference in how you feel when you are judging versus learning.**

# The Choice Line

*Learn to recognize when your own thinking isn't serving you well.*



**ABOVE THE LINE** proactive thinking and behaviors

**BELOW THE LINE** reactive thinking and behaviors



# Above / Below the Line

→ How I know / How I think and show up when I'm **ABOVE** the line:

→ How I know / How I think and show up when I'm **BELOW** the line:

→ Things that bring me Below the line (*i.e., my triggers*):

→ Things that help bring me back Above the line (*i.e., my trampolines*):

When I am ABOVE the line, my colleagues, customers look like (*the narrative I tell myself about them*):

When I am BELOW the line, my colleagues, customers look like (*the narrative I tell myself about them*):

When I'm staying below the line, how I want to protect the rest of my team:

**REFLECTION:** What are you beginning to notice about yourself with regards to your thinking?

# Inward Mindset

What can happen when we venture into the territory of being Below-the-Line and on the Judger path is having an Inward Mindset. When we operate from an Inward Mindset, we become self-focused; we focus on what we need from others to achieve our objectives and are primarily concerned with how others impact us (rather than how we impact others). In other words, instead of seeing others as PEOPLE who have their own needs, objectives and challenges, we view them as objects to help us with ours.

- We view those who can help us as **vehicles**;
- Those who make things more difficult as **obstacles**; and
- Those whose help wouldn't matter become **irrelevant** to us.

The following are common behaviors we might engage in when we are operating from an Inward Mindset:

Hard Behaviors			Soft Behaviors		
Vehicles	Obstacles	Irrelevancies	Vehicles	Obstacles	Irrelevancies
Manipulate Threaten Control	Criticize Blame Punish	Ignore Exclude Belittle	Indulge Pander Try to be liked	Cope Avoid Leave	Engage in token niceties  Offer little feedback

An Inward Mindset makes things harder. We become attached to our own stories and rightness – ending up operating from our own Self-Deception box. Consequently, we end up with significant blind spots, siloes, blame, stuck-ness and low morale.



# Getting Off Autopilot

In order to be effective in our lives, we must get off autopilot and operate with greater intentionality. We must recognize that, as human beings, WE create our own experience by the stories we make-up.

We all have stories we hold - about ourselves, others, and how things work. The question is whether these stories serve us well. Much of the time, these stories are self-limiting and stem from our Ego (leading us to please, perform, perfect and self-protect).

The key is to start leveraging what author Kevin Cashman describes this as the Pause Principle:

“The Pause Principle” is the conscious, intentional process of stepping back, within ourselves and outside of ourselves, to lead forward with greater authenticity, purpose and contribution.”

The pause powers performance; pausing helps us regain our balance and feel grounded and centered. Additionally, the greater the complexity we face (i.e., VUCA world), the more the pause is needed to translate the complex and ambiguous to clear and meaningful. Imagine carrying around a laminated license:

This Grants You  
Permission to:

Exercise your power to  
**pause and reflect BEFORE**  
you take action.

# Building Grounded Confidence to Replace Armor

**Grounded Confidence =  
Rumble Skills + Curiosity + Practice**

There are several tools we can use to help build our grounded confidence to replace our armor.

## The 5Cs of Strategic Thinking, Decision Making and Delegation

- **Color**

Paint the full picture, including:

1. Setting a clear intention
2. Assignment the level of importance
3. Answering *"What does done look like?"*

- **Context**

No one has optics on everything that's going on in an organization. What's happening in other areas that will impact or be impacted by this decision or deliverable?

- **Connective Tissue**

How does this plan / strategy / decision / deliverable solve or amplify what's already happened or what's happening now? Or, how does it lay the groundwork for what hasn't happened yet but is part of the vision for the future?

- **Cost**

What will it cost us to do this in terms of money, time, bandwidth, focus, priority shifts, etc.? Is this cost tolerable? Expected? Agreed upon? Controversial? Communicated?

- **Consequence**

What are the consequences of not doing this? What is at stake? What are the consequences of getting it wrong? Are there any unintended consequences that we can anticipate or problem-solve now?

## Rumble Starters

- *The story I make up...*
- *I'm curious about...*
- *Tell me more...*
- *That's not my experience* (instead of "You're wrong about her, him, them, it, this...")
- *I'm wondering...*
- *Help me understand...*
- *Walk me through...*
- *We're both dug in. Tell me about your passion around this.*
- *Tell me why this doesn't fit / work for you.*
- *I'm working from these assumptions – what about you?*
- *What problem are we trying to solve?*

## Rumble Tools

- *What's my part?*
- *What does support look like?*
- *What key learnings can we take from this?*
- *Are there stealth intentions that we need to surface and name?*
- *Are there stealth expectations driving us?*
- *Is horizon conflict at play here?*
- **TASC**
  - **T** – Who owns the task?
  - **A** – Do they have the authority to be held accountable?
  - **S** – Do we agree that they are set up for success (time, resources, clarity)?
  - **C** – Do we have a checklist of what needs to happen to accomplish the task?
- *Let's paint done.*
- *The Turn and Learn to address the bandwagon and halo effects.*
- *Do we need to check our gritty facts and gritty faith?*
- *Time out*

**RUMBLE:** a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break and circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts, and, as psychologist Harriet Lerner teaches, to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard. More than anything else, when someone says, "Let's rumble," it cues us to show up with an open heart and mind so we can serve the work and each other, not our egos.



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