

# The Culture Code By: Daniel Coyle

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## Highly successful groups:

- Build safety through bonding in physical and emotional ways
- Share vulnerability by remaining open and humble with one another
- Establish purpose by creating physical and emotional environments designed to inspire

## Summary

The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups follows Daniel Coyle as he interviews the leaders of different successful organizations throughout the United States. By interviewing leaders of these organizations and analyzing the core ideologies of the organization, Coyle is able to find common themes throughout these groups. Some of the groups Coyle analyzed for his book include the Navy SEALs, including SEAL Team Six, the San Antonio Spurs, as well as Pixar Studios, among others.

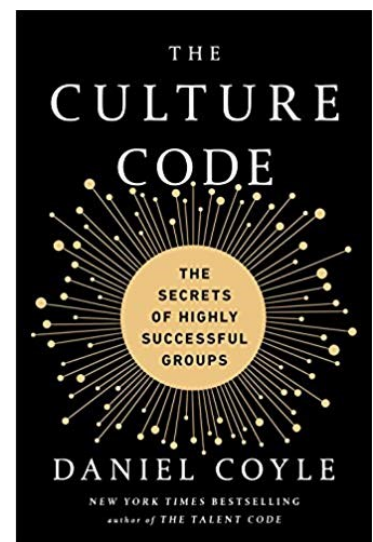
While organizations create culture in different ways, the groups Coyle analyzed all followed similar ideolo-

gies of building safety, sharing vulnerability, and establishing purpose. Highly successful groups can build safety by creating strong emotional bonds between the leader and followers, as well as within the peer group of followers, and connecting followers' work to their potential future. Leaders in highly successful groups also need to make sure that everyone is humble and honest enough to be able to have an open and understanding relationship. Establishing purpose in these organizations is done by creating rich physical and emotional environments that reaffirm the shared visions of the leader and their followers.

## About Daniel Coyle

Daniel Coyle is the best-selling author of such books as 'The Talent Code,' 'Lance Armstrong's War,' and 'Hardball: A Season in the Projects.'" Coyle resides

in Cleveland, Ohio, where he works for the Cleveland Indians baseball team, as well in Homer, Alaska.



When organizations use these ideologies to create culture, they are able succeed because of their positive, open, and trusting nature. Furthermore, these organizations inspire those both inside and outside of the group.



## Build Safety: The Good Apples

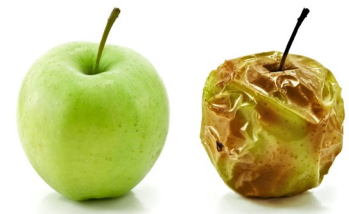
Researchers have found that even when participants in group work studies are actively trying to sabotage the group, 'good apples,' or those who create a safe environment for others, are able to transcend the 'bad apples.' Servant leadership techniques tell leaders to create safe environments, as well as conditions for others to perform, in order to create a high functioning group of followers.

Highly successful groups usually have a high degree of chemistry within

their group of peers. Often the chemistry runs so deep within these groups, they refer to each other as family. Additionally, this type of chemistry and familial feel allows for calculated risk taking among group members.

It may be difficult for any given group to create high levels of chemistry based on characteristics and traits of particular individuals. If team members are not as invested as others, they may feel as though they lack be-

longing in the group. Therefore, it is paramount for group leaders to create a sense of safety and security to achieve a high level of functionality



## Techniques and Signs of Good Apples

You may have good apples in your workplace if you see:

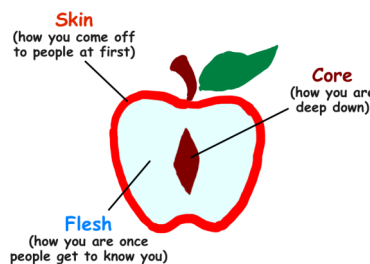
- close physical proximity
- lots of eye contact and touching
- short, energetic exchanges
- high levels of mixing
- few interruptions
- lots of questions
- intensive, active listening

Good apples drive performance when:

- everyone in the group talks and listens in roughly equal measure
- members maintain high levels of eye contact and have energetic conversation and gestures
- members communicate directly with one another

You can be a good apple by:

- investing energy into the exchange that is occurring
- treating others as unique and valued
- providing signals of a lasting relationship



- members carry on side conversations within the team
- members explore outside the team, and bring back information to share with others

**"Safety is not mere emotional weather but rather the foundation on which strong culture is built." (p. 6).**

**Key Question: What can you do to become a 'good apple'? What can you do to create 'good apples' in your organization?**

## Build Safety: Culture of Commitment

In the early 2000s, Google was able to outcompete larger, more experienced companies through its ability to create a community of belonging and safety. Rather than hire high achievers or look for specific skill sets, Google hired in order to develop shared values and emotional bonds within their workers. This commitment model of hiring works for many companies as it allows its workers to feel safe and cared for. When people feel a sense of care, they are able to increase their

productivity, as their motivation and enjoyment are dramatically increased.



While it is important to create an environment dedicated to developing shared values and emotional bonds, it is important not to overlook the skill sets and abilities of potential employees. If one were to solely hire based on values and bonds, the group may lack abilities to complete work at a high level. Therefore, it is important to use a balanced hiring style if relying on the commitment model when applicants are unevenly matched in skill set.

## The Brain and Belonging

While the amygdala is primarily known for its role in the fight vs flight response our bodies experience in times of danger, it also builds and sustains social bonds. The amygdala has been proven to intensely track others in our social group, as they are considered valuable members of our team. In order for leaders to instill belonging in their followers, they need to commit to sending clear, steady signals that their followers will be safe as part of the group.

**"Belonging feels like it happens from the inside out, but in fact it happens from the outside in. Our social brains light up when they receive a steady accumulation of almost-invisible cues: *We are close, we are safe, we share a future.*" (p. 25 & 26).**

## Commitment and Spiritual Leadership

The commitment model of hiring employees is a direct example of spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership techniques place high values in engaging people at a core level. Spiritual leaders ask their followers to use their shared values and emotional bonds to function at a high level.



**Key Question: How can you ensure followers receive clear and steady belonging cues?**

## Build Safety: Effects of Belonging

The effects a steady stream of belonging cues has on a group of people can create environments with high levels of empathy and have a lasting impact on the people involved. However, reluctance to use belonging cues and reliance on fear based leadership can have the adverse effect.

The creation of a safe and belonging environment is one of the major causes of the Christmas Truce that occurred at Flanders during WWI. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, be-

longing cues were given and received in the forms of physical closeness, ritual sharing, and common stresses. Soldiers repeatedly shared "microtruces" at specific times, including meal times, during these weeks. This steady stream of belonging cues allowed for common ground to be found between groups.



The Minuteman missileers exemplify why fear based leadership results in poor performance by the organization. After a series of mistakes, the leaders of the missileers decided to crack down on what they perceived to be laziness and inadequacy. To do so, leaders harshly reprimanded the missileers for misbehavior and forced aptitude tests on them when mistakes were made. This fear based leadership only exasperated the issues the missileers faced, as they felt no sense of safety or future in their roles.

## Mindful Leadership: Bonding and Belonging

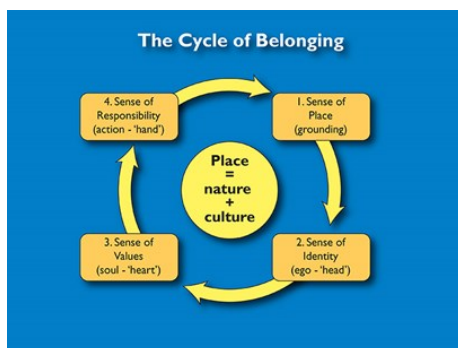
As school leaders, it will be imperative to create a culture that brings staff and students together to create bonds and a sense of belonging. When students and staff feel a bond with others inside of the school setting, they will feel connected to one another. An easy way to do this as a teacher or administrator is simply greeting those around you daily and being more polite.

Creating school goals for both staff

and students to work towards can also improve the bonding and sense of belonging in the school setting. School goals should be created to incorporate the shared vision the staff and community have for the students of the school.

If a particular student or staff member are repeatedly causing issues, it may be beneficial to focus on their needs. This focus can help them feel a sense of belonging, rather than fear of being reprimanded.

**"Belonging cues have to do not with character or discipline but with building an environment that answers basic questions: *Are we connected? Do we share a future? Are we safe?*" (p. 44).**



**Key Questions: What strategies can you implement to ensure that your followers feel a sense of belonging? What is the future you share with your followers? How do your followers know they are safe?**

## Build Safety: How to Build Belonging

Jim Popovich is known for being one of the greatest basketball coaches the NBA has ever seen. While Popovich is a fiery competitor and is known for his temper, he is also known for getting the most out of his players at key moments. One of the reasons Popovich is such an excellent leader is his ability to ‘fill the cup’ of his followers. Popovich has proven over time that he is able to use his superb servant leadership style to engage his players at a core level.

Jim Popovich relies on three key belonging cues that he uses steadily throughout the year with his players. Jim always makes sure he works with in close physical proximity of his players when he speaks with them, he provides feedback that tells his players



he holds them to high standards, and he creates a belief in them that they can reach those standards.

While Popovich’s style of leadership works for professional sports, it may not be readily transferrable to a normal workplace. As discussed previously, using fear based tactics, such as loss of temper, can create falling out with followers. Therefore, it is more impactful to work together with followers to understand their needs and wants.

## Using Popovich’s Belonging Cues in the Classroom

In order to create a sense of belonging inside the classroom setting, one can rely on the belonging cues Popovich uses as a coach. One of the most effective ways to communicate with students is to get down to their level in order to speak with them. This action brings you closer in physical proximity with the student, and allows them to feel safe and secure.

Other cues teachers can use with their

students are creating a set of expectations they are to follow. This set of expectations should indicate they are being held to a high standard.

It is also crucial for teachers to express their belief in their students, as this can lead to increased student performance. Additionally, expressing belief to students that they can reach those high expectations leads them to feel safer and take more independent risks.

**“I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them.” (p. 56).**

## Using Popovich’s Belonging Cues with Staff

One way administrators could use Popovich’s belonging cues would be to create spaces during staff meetings where teachers are forced to sit in close proximity to one another, as physical closeness is shown to increase feelings of belonging. Giving explicit expectations and appointing staff to lead directives is another example of setting high standards and putting faith into staff members that would fall in line with Popovich’s methods.

**Key Question: What are some high expectations do you hold your followers accountable to?**

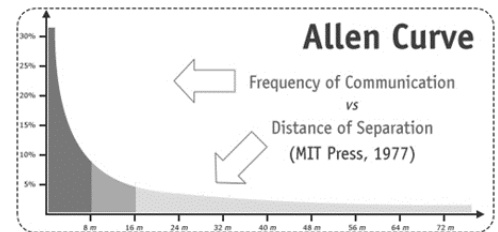
## Build Safety: How to Design for Belonging

In researching which groups are the most successful at solving the same problem, experience with similar problems and intelligence levels have little to do with the outcome. The greatest factor dictating how well a group can problem solve is how closely they work together on a day to day basis.

While modern architecture emphasizes wide-open spaces, newer schools may actually benefit by taking on older architectural designs. In doing so,

staff members would be forced to be in closer proximity more often. Not only does this close proximity allow people to feel more belonging with one another, but it creates an environment where the frequency of communication is forced to increase.

While it would be easier to create these spaces in common areas of schools, it is much more difficult to imagine how we could allow teachers to work closer to one another, while remaining in visual contact.



The Allen Curve illustrates the relationship between distance individuals are apart from one another and how often they will communicate.

## Applying the Allen Curve

There are many ways understanding the Allen Curve could be manipulated by administrators in order to improve the belonging between both themselves and their followers, as well as between followers themselves.

The Allen Curve stresses while individuals' proximity affects the amount they communicate, individuals also need to be in visual contact to communicate even more. To use this to your advantage, administrators could create common spaces with long narrow tables, where their followers would be forced to sit close to one another and look at many others across the table from them.

If a school were to have an issue that needed to be solved, it may be beneficial to group together individuals who work in similar wings or areas of the school in order to increase productivity. However, using this method to problem solve could lead to issues, as staff mem-

bers who work in specific areas may have different concerns than those working in other areas.



These types of designs could be used in common or staff only areas to increase communication.

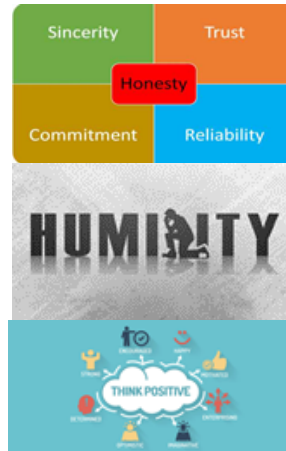


**"What mattered most in creating a successful team had less to do with intelligence and experience and more to do with where the desks happened to be located." (p. 70).**

**Key Question: Which areas of your workplace could you manipulate to align with the Allen Curve?**

## Build Safety: Ideas for Action

When you are building safety for your organization, there are three components the leader should focus on above all others: openness and honesty, humility, and positivity. Organizations emphasizing these three components will find they have created a culture of safety and belonging. It is not only important for leaders to use these components to improve the quality of the organization, but followers need to be pushed to communicate and share in these ideologies with each other, as well.



While being open, honest, humble, and positive are excellent foundations to create a safe, belonging culture, it is equally important to understand how to use techniques such as constructive criticism without creating feelings of negativity or hostility. Creating these types of safe, belonging spaces is not something that can be learned all at once, but is a feeling out process that depends on the ebbs and flows of the environment.

## Practical Ideas to Build Safety

- overcommunicate your listening by using open and accepting posture, expression, and verbal cues
- spotlight your own fallibility early on and be accepting of input from others
- embrace those who provide tough feedback
- provide snapshots of where followers may be in the future
- overdo thank-yous by saying them often and being showy with words and actions
- be painstaking in the hiring process to ensure you have hired the best
- identify and eliminate poor behavior and individuals who use this behavior
- create spaces where individuals feel welcome, are in close quarters, and face one another

**IDEAS**  
**+ ACTION**  
**= CHANGE**

**“[Building safety] requires you to recognize patterns, react quickly, and deliver the right signal at the right time. And like any skill, it comes with a learning curve.” (p. 74).**

- allow everyone to have a voice
- pick up garbage spontaneously
- pay attention to moments of arrival and make them memorable
- effective feedback comes from handling issues through conversation and giving authentic praise when it is deserved
- embrace fun

**Key Questions: Which practical ideas for action do you currently employ? Which practical ideas could you easily begin to employ? Which practical ideas do you need to work on?**

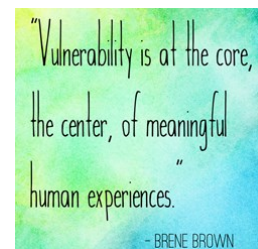
## Share Vulnerability: Allowing Help and Criticism

There have been many instances where leaders have taken it upon themselves to try to do it all, without any help, and failed miserably. However, when you are able to admit to your shortcomings and inabilities, you allow others to use their expertise to help along the way. Sharing these vulnerabilities and giving others in your organization the opportunity to take up positions of leadership creates a team that is able to problem solve through dire issues.

Before this type of cooperation happens, there must be a safe culture of belonging in place. When this occurs, people are able to be honest with one another and focus on tough issues to problem solve. Highly successful groups will sometimes incorporate painful interactions transparently in order to "...generate...highly cohesive, trusting behavior necessary for smooth cooperation." (p. 101).

If the organization has failed to generate a safe, belonging culture, these

types of painful interactions and tough issues can cause the group to fall apart. Leaders may feel self-conscious when their followers question their methods, and followers may feel they are not supported by their leaders.



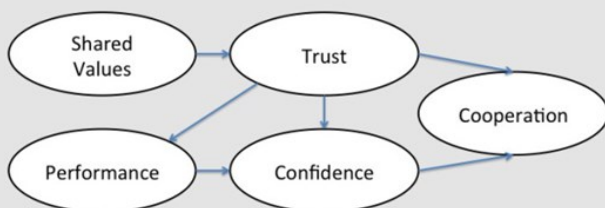
## Sharing Vulnerability at School

When schools are investing time and resources into new types of programs, school leaders need to be aware of how the programs are running. If school leaders are not willing to listen to critiques of the program they are trying to implement, there will never be a way to have the program run at full capacity.

One way school leaders could share vulnerability when they are implementing school programs is by allow-

ing their followers to offer tough questions and critiques in order to find out what is not working with the program. When these issues are raised, school leaders need to understand they are not being challenged personally, but need to allow for trusting cooperation to occur between themselves and their followers. When trusting cooperation is allowed to occur, key issues and problems can be solved within the school's programming.

**"The key...involves the willingness to perform a certain behavior that goes against our every instinct: sharing vulnerability." (p. 97).**



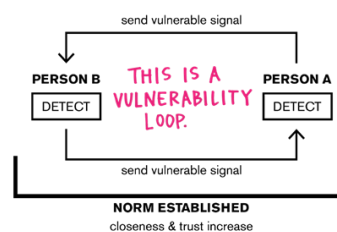
The TCC Model of Trust, Confidence, and Cooperation

**Key Question: Do you allow for painful interactions to take place in order to generate trusting behavior between individuals in your organization?**

## Share Vulnerability: The Vulnerability Loop

In order to create great bonds of trust and cooperation, leaders must model behavior that highlights their weaknesses. If the followers reciprocate by highlighting their own weaknesses, the leader and followers will create an environment allowing them to set aside their insecurities and participate in meaningful, cooperative work. When there is a shared exchange of openness, it is known as a vulnerability loop, which sparks cooperation and trust between those involved. Once an organization has created an en-

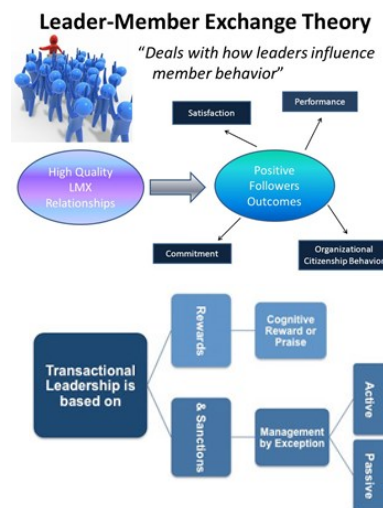
vironment incorporating vulnerability loops, they are able to use their relationships of mutual risk to function at high level.



However, these types of environments only succeed if everyone buys in. If a participant in the vulnerability loop decides to pretend they have no insecurities, or hides their insecurities, the group ceases to be as successful. In fact, it has been proven that those who are in positions of invulnerability are 50% more likely to be uncooperative with their vulnerable counterparts.

## Vulnerability and Leadership Theory

The vulnerability loop only succeeds if both sides agree to accept each other's insecurities while showcasing their own. This type of reciprocity between the leader and follower replicates the ideas of leader-member exchange theory, as their sharing of insecurities is a fair exchange between the leader and the member. Vulnerability loops also incorporate ideas from the transactional leadership theory, as leaders may provide rewards in order to offset their own shortcomings or fallibilities.



**"[Vulnerability is] about sending a really clear signal that you have weaknesses, that you could use help. And if that behavior becomes a model for others, then you can set the insecurities aside and get to work, start to trust each other and help each other." (p. 104).**

## Steps to the Vulnerability Loop

1. Person A sends a signal of vulnerability.
2. Person B detects this signal.
3. Person B responds by signaling their own vulnerability.
4. Person A detects this signal.
5. A norm is established; closeness and trust increase.

**Key Question: How can you maintain a constant stream of vulnerability in your organization?**

## Share Vulnerability: Super Cooperation

When leaders have created a culture of safety and belonging, it facilitates relationship building between members of the organization. These safe and belonging environments allow for individuals to be vulnerable with one another, which helps them feel a sense of interconnection. As individuals in these environments react to different events, they become comfortable taking risks, because they know they will be supported by others in their group when they do so. Addi-

tionally, group members learn to work interdependently by seeing where others are lacking and picking up the slack on their own end.



This whole system is based on trust. When leaders have broken trust, or create an environment of distrust, the group will not function at as high of a level. This could lead to group members being unmotivated to complete the goal that has been set before them. Not only is it difficult to complete a common goal when a sense of trust has been broken, but often times, the feeling of trust cannot be repaired.

## Creating Super Cooperation

Teams that have worked to build a sense of vulnerability, interconnect- edness, and interdependence, such as the Navy SEALs, usually operate in small teams. Part of the reason they are highly successful is because these small teams have practiced together many times, and understand how each person will react to specific situations. When this understanding has been reached, leaders are able to take a laissez-faire approach, and allow their

followers to lead themselves. When these small groups have generated a great enough sense of interconnect- edness, they are able to cohesively work together without needing direc- tion or orders from anyone.



**“[Sharing vulnerability] lets everybody on your team [know] who you are, because you left it all on the table. And if you did well, it builds a level of trust that’s exponentially higher than anything you can get anywhere else.” (p. 123).**

## When Vulnerability and Interconnectedness Meet

1. A teammate falters.
2. Others sense it, and respond by taking on more for the sake of the group.
3. Balance is regained.

**Key Question: When can you create time for small group teams to practice or continually work together to foster their sense of interconnectedness?**

## Share Vulnerability: Creating Cooperation in Small Groups

While most decisions in an organization come from the top of the hierarchy, if a leader wants to create cooperation within the group, they need to be vulnerable and allow others to critique their ideas. When leaders are confident enough to allow these critiques to openly and honestly occur, it allows for transparency and ownership between all group members to happen. Furthermore, groups need to practice these types of critiques in order for everyone to understand where everyone else fits into the group dynamic, rather

than focusing solely on themselves.



These types of discussions can only happen with a humble leader, as their judgment will not be clouded by their own self-consciousness. When decisions come from the leader without any input from the followers, the followers may resist putting their full effort into the decision, as it may not engage them at a core level. Additionally, when decisions are made without taking input from other members of the group, there may be scenarios that have not been thought of yet.

## Tips on Improving Group Cooperation

- incorporate ideas from all
- avoid reverting to using rank in order to make decisions for the group
- avoid using titles (especially hierarchical ones)
- ask questions rather than give orders
- allow others to challenge ideas
- encourage outspokenness
- spend time together outside of the organization

**“When we talk about courage, we think it’s going against an enemy with a machine gun. The real courage is seeing the truth and speaking the truth to each other. People never want to be the person who says, ‘Wait a second, what’s really going on here?’ But inside the squadron, that *is* the culture, and that’s why we’re successful.” (p. 145).—Former Navy SEAL Team Six Command Master Chief Dave Cooper**

**Key Questions: How can your organization work to develop a hive mind? How does your organization develop ways to challenge each other and ask the right questions, without deferring to authority?**

## Share Vulnerability: Creating Cooperation with Individuals

For leaders to engage their followers at a core level, they need to understand what makes them tick. To accomplish this feat, it is important that leaders learn how to become skilled listeners in order to identify the ambitions, fears, and motivations of their followers. When a follower's ambitions, fears, and motivations have been identified, it gives the leader opportunity to ask questions that examine tensions that person may be feeling, and it forces their followers to

be honest with themselves. Being able to ask these types of questions provides safety for followers to be more honest and forthcoming, and gives them a feeling of security, so they will take calculated risks.



In order for leaders to get to this point, they need to understand how to become active listeners and listen intently. This understanding only comes with the virtue of patience. Leaders need to be willing to invest the time to listen to what their followers have to say in order to engage them at a core level.

## Active Listening Skills

- lean forward
- wide eyes
- raised eyebrows
- make eye contact
- use reaffirming language with body and words (nodding, "Mhmm," "Yes," "Go on," etc.)
- use facial expressions and smile
- paraphrase
- ask questions to probe or clarify
- summarize
- allow speaker to finish their idea before speaking
- respond openly and honestly
- add insight



**"It's very hard to be empathetic when you're talking...When you're really listening, you lose time. There's no sense of yourself, because it's not about you. It's all about this task—to connect completely to that person." (p. 157).**

**Key Question: How can you find out the ambitions, fears, and motivations of your followers?**

## Share Vulnerability: Ideas for Action

In order to share vulnerability, leaders need to be reliable and patient communicators. In order to properly share vulnerability, leaders need to be able to listen to their followers in order to understand how they operate, and they need to be able to give the right kind of feedback when it is needed. Additionally, leaders who effectively share vulnerability create spaces where their followers are allowed to be open and honest about their feelings, as well as with what is going on in their organization.



When followers do not feel they are being listened to or like their opinions do not matter, they are less likely to be engaged at a core level. They may feel like the organization does not care about their wants and needs, which can lead to decreased motivation. If a leader fails to create a safe environment for their followers, individuals may feel they lack strong connections within the group. Furthermore, organizations unwilling to share vulnerability may have difficulty identifying practices that are ineffective.

## Tips for Building Group Vulnerability

- make sure the leader is vulnerable first and often
- overcommunicate expectations
- deliver negative news in person, no matter how small
- place major focus on the first vulnerability and first disagreement to ensure everyone is willing to grow together
- “listen like a trampoline” by absorbing, supporting, and adding energy (p. 162)
- wait patiently for others to finish speaking
- use candor generating practices (doing so without leadership present will boost openness and honesty)
- “aim for candor, avoid brutal honesty” (p. 165)
- embrace discomfort
- align language with actions to highlight cooperation and interconnection between group members
- keep performance reviews and professional development separated
- use many different mentors through many different short bursts
- remove the leader from the situation once in a while to let followers figure things out on their own



**“Building habits of group vulnerability is like building a muscle. It takes time, repetition, and the willingness to feel pain in order to achieve gains.” (p. 158).**

**Key Question: Which tips will work for you to help improve your organization’s vulnerability?**

## Establish Purpose: Creating Meaning

In order for a leader to establish purpose for their organization, they need to create meaning for their followers. To begin, the organization needs to identify the goal or story it is striving to meet or convey. Once the goal or story has been identified, it needs to be explicitly and blatantly expressed through a high-purpose environment. High-purpose environments are characterized as incorporating items and ideas that link the followers present work to a meaningful future. Once a

leader has created a high-purpose environment for their followers, the followers will consistently be reminded of their purpose within the organization.

If a leader fails to create a high-purpose environment, followers may find difficulty identifying the values and goals of the group. Furthermore, individuals working outside of high-purpose environments may lack motivation, as they are unable to see how their efforts fit in to their own future with the organization.



Pixar Studios uses many items from their movies in order to remind their workers of their accomplishments.

## Mental Contrasting

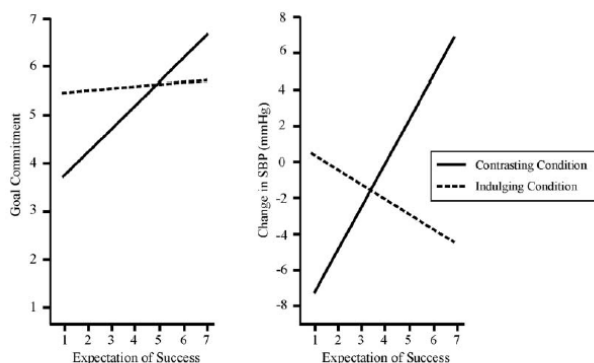
Mental contrasting is a psychological experiment proven to increase motivation towards a goal. There are two main steps behind mental contrasting: envisioning a reachable goal, then envisioning the obstacles.

“Step 1: Think about a realistic goal that you’d like to achieve...Spend a few seconds reflecting on that goal and imagining that it’s come true. Picture a future where you’ve achieved it.” (p. 181).

“Step 2: Take a few seconds and picture the obstacles between you and that goal as vividly as possible. Don’t gloss over the negatives, but try to see them as they truly are.” (p. 181).



“Purpose isn’t about tapping into some mystical internal drive but rather about creating simple beacons that focus attention and engagement on the shared goal.” (p. 180).



**Figure 1** Study 1: Regression lines depict the link between expectation and goal commitment (left) and expectation and systolic blood pressure (SBP) change in millimeters of mercury (mmHg; right) as a function of mental contrasting and indulging.

**Key Question:** What types of items can you incorporate into your surroundings to create a high-purpose environment?

## Establish Purpose: Sending Signals

In order to effectively establish purpose within a group, it is imperative to create a high-purpose environment with consistent, ultra-clear signals to connect purpose with the shared goal of the organization. These constant signals reaffirm what the group is striving for, and keep the group focused and motivated toward their goal. Leaders must remember when they are creating high-purpose environments to use many small signals in order to build the story, rather than relying on the use of infrequent, grandiose signals.

Leaders who do not establish high-purpose environments may encounter lower motivation or effort in relation to the organization's goal. Furthermore, individuals working in an organization without a high-purpose environment may portray negative or counterproductive attitudes. Leaders also need to be aware of how often signals building story are being sent. If these signals become too infrequent, individuals may lose their sense of focus.



## Real Time Signals to Improve Group Performance

1. It is important for the leader to frame the situation as an experience that is positive for the group. By connecting experiences to future goals or experiences, leaders are sending the message that their followers have a future purpose in the organization.



2. Individuals need to hear how they will be able to contribute to the group's success. Additionally, leaders need to tell their followers why they are important to the experience.



3. Leaders can boost performance by preparing their followers and allowing them to practice. Allowing followers to participate in dry runs can help identify areas of difficulty before they arise.

**Practice  
makes  
Progress**



4. Even when there is a clear chain of command, leaders need to encourage their followers to speak up if they feel that something is out of place or will not go as planned.

5. Reflecting after an experience can help the organization what went well and what needs tweaking.

"[High-purpose environments] are less about being inspiring than about being consistent. They are not found within big speeches so much as within everyday moments when people can sense the message: *This is why we work; this is what we are aiming for.*" (p. 199).

**Key Question: When have you used real time signals in the past week, month, or year?**

Take time  
to reflect

## Establish Purpose: Leading for Proficiency

Highly successful groups that focus on proficiency all incorporate three main pieces into their organization. They create a clear and simple set of priorities, they name keystone behaviors, and they flood the environment with heuristics. When there is a clear and simple set of priorities, members of the organization are able to prioritize their own work, or parts of their work, in order to make it fit the priorities of the larger organization. Having explicit expectations of your followers,

and naming behaviors you would like to see from them, leaves no question about how you want things done in your organization. While modelling behavior helps people visualize what to do, stating how to behave explicitly sets purpose for action. Finally, creating a heuristic-dense environment provides a spark to drive behavior.



It is important for leaders to set clear and concise priorities in order to create unity within their organization, as individuals within an organization may have different viewpoints on what is or is not important to their work. Furthermore, without an environment that sends signals to drive behavior or convey how to do things properly, individuals within an organization may cut corners or do things simply to get them done, instead of doing things the 'right' way.

## Proficiency Leading and Transformational Leadership

As leaders are attempting to establish purpose for their organizations, they are incorporating techniques that match transformational leadership theory. By creating high-purpose environments, whereby leaders are looking to send consistent signals to their followers, leaders looking to establish purpose are also looking to

inspire their followers. In essence, establishing purpose is all about tapping into the shared goal and vision between the leader and their followers by engaging them and encouraging them to participate in a specific culture that has been created by the leader.

**"Creating engagement around a clear, simple set of priorities can function as a lighthouse, orienting behavior and providing a path toward a goal." (p. 210).**

### Transformational Leadership



**Key Questions: What are the top 3 or top 5 priorities of your organization? What are keystone behaviors of your organization? What heuristics drive behavior in your organization?**

## Establish Purpose: Leading for Creativity

One of the first choices an effective leader of creativity has to make is to allow disasters to take place and run their course. Most ideas do not start out as good ones, and need to be rescued in order to become a final product with polish. When an idea is brought to life in a creative environment, it is up to the entire group to be able to identify issues with the idea. In order to allow these types of issues to be raised, the creators of ideas need to be humble enough to listen to feedback given by others. Lead-

ers of creative environments should also create spaces that encourage interaction between many different parties at many different times. When all parts of an organization are able to interact with one another, many different issues and solutions are able to be discovered.

Leaders who are unwilling to allow disasters to take place and run their course run the risk of micromanaging their followers into a space where they are not able to allow their crea-

tive juices to flow. Furthermore, when a suggestion comes from someone who is in a position of authority, it tends to be followed. This type of action can create a sense of disengagement with followers, and does not allow them to problem solve.



## Creativity Leading and Laissez-Faire Leadership

In order for creativity to take place, leaders often need to remove themselves from the process. By doing so, leaders allow their followers to identify issues with their own work and hash out ideas between themselves, without fearing intervention. If individuals do not fear intervention from a higher authority, they are more likely to be honest and open about potential issues and how to solve them. Rather than

involving themselves, leaders can create a cross section of individuals from different areas of the organization to share ideas and perspectives. When barriers are broken down between different divisions of an organization, and rank is removed from the situation, individuals participating in projects are able to receive the best feedback from their peers.

**“Building purpose in a creative group is not about generating a brilliant moment of breakthrough but rather about building systems that can churn through lots of ideas in order to help unearth the right choices.” (p. 219).**

### Laissez-Faire leadership

***The laissez-faire leader is characterized by the following behaviors:***

- Permissiveness, with little or no control.
- Motivation by support when requested by the group or individuals.
- Provision of little or no direction.
- Communication upward and downward flow among members of the group.
- Decision making dispersed throughout the group.
- Emphasis on the group.
- Criticism withheld.

**Key Question: When would you be willing to use a laissez-faire approach to leadership and allow someone to struggle?**

## Establish Purpose: Ideas for Action

In order for leaders to establish purpose in their organization they need to focus on the ability to be clear with their priorities and expectations, and they need to understand how to motivate their followers. Leaders who are clear with their priorities and expectations leave no doubt in the mind of their followers as to how or why something needs to be done. Furthermore, in order to inspire and motivate their followers, leaders need to understand how to engage their followers at a core level.



When leaders fail to be clear in their priorities and expectations, their followers are left unsure how to proceed with the clearest action. Additionally, this leaves followers to make decisions based on their own values, rather than those of the organization. If a leader has not found a way to properly motivate their followers, they have failed before they have begun. Without a high-purpose environment, followers will fail to receive the signals to establish purpose for the organization's shared goal.

## Ways to Establish Purpose

- name and rank the priorities of the organization (highly successful groups usually have five or less)
- overclarify your priorities, so they are abundantly clear to those inside and outside of the organization
- embrace catchphrases that are action oriented and direct in order to encourage keystone behaviors
- find group aims for proficiency by showcasing clear models of excellence, giving plenty of practice and feedback, highlighting causality, and focusing on the fundamentals of the skill
- find group aims for creativity by concentrating on team composition and dynamics, giving and protecting team autonomy, creating a safe environment for feedback, and celebrating group initiative
- measure what really matters
- use artifacts to convey signals of purpose towards the shared goal
- focus on bar setting behaviors, as they transmit, amplify, and celebrate the purpose of the organization

**Motivation is found when purpose is discovered.**

**"High purpose environments don't descend on groups from on high; they are dug out of the ground, over and over, as a group navigates its problems together and evolves to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world." (p. 228).**

**Key Question: What are ways you can establish purpose in your organization?**

# Critical Evaluation

David Coyle's 'The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups' conveys different leadership theories in different portions of the book. The safety building section of the book focuses on servant leadership, while the vulnerability sharing section focuses on leader-member exchange leadership, and the purpose establishing section focuses on transformational leadership.

In the safety building section of the book, Coyle focuses on leaders who look to meet the needs of their followers. By meeting and understanding the needs of followers, a leader is able to create trust, cooperation and service for one another, which ultimately leads to greater capacity. Coyle finds that leaders in successful groups create these feelings of safety by connecting with individuals in both physical and emotional ways. Building trust and cooperation by meeting the

needs of followers is a perfect example of servant leadership.

The vulnerability sharing section of Coyle's book directly relates to the leader-member exchange theory, as it requires each party to allow the other to see them as vulnerable. Once both sides accept the other's vulnerability, they are able to strengthen their bond and create trusts between themselves. While a major side effect of the leader-member exchange theory is creating 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, Coyle finds that highly successful groups attempt to remove barriers between different groups of their organization as best as possible.

The final section of 'The Culture Code' focuses on inspiring individuals in an organization. In this section, Coyle suggests that leaders are able to inspire their followers by creating environments that send consistent signals of the purpose of the group. While the

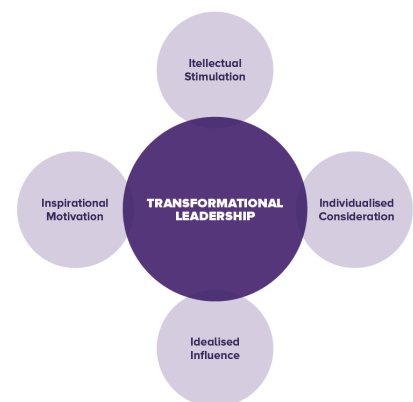
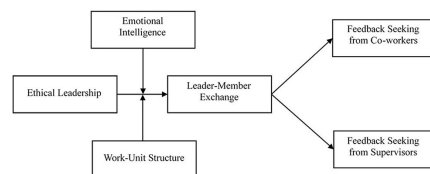
majority of this section focuses on the importance of an inspirational physical environment, Coyle shows that creating an inspirational ideological environment is equally important to convey the priorities and behaviors the organization identifies with. This section perfectly matches transformational leadership, which is based on inspiring others to perform.

Although there are semblances of other leadership styles and theories that appear throughout the book, the servant, leader-member exchange, and transformational theories are the ones that permeate each area of the book. The interviews, perspectives, and stories throughout the book show that using a combination of these theories allows a leader to create an organization that will be highly successful. Furthermore, Coyle is able to break down each section into ideas that can be easily put into practical use.

## 9 BEHAVIOURS of a servant leader

1. Serve first
2. Build trust
3. Live your values
4. Listen to understand
5. Think about your thinking
6. Add value to others
7. Demonstrate courage
8. Increase your influence
9. Live your transformation

Servant Leadership Institute



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