




Building Stronger Teams



Great West Life
Centre for
Mental Health
in the Workplace
www.greatwestlifecentreformentalhealth.com

What has been your best team experience?



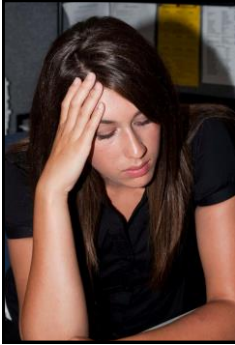


Building a resilient team
Group hugs and singing Kumbayah?









Burnout

- No mental reserve
- Lack of appreciation
- Blindsided by betrayal




Traumatic incident

- Powerless
- Intentional Cruelty/Blame
- Unexpected



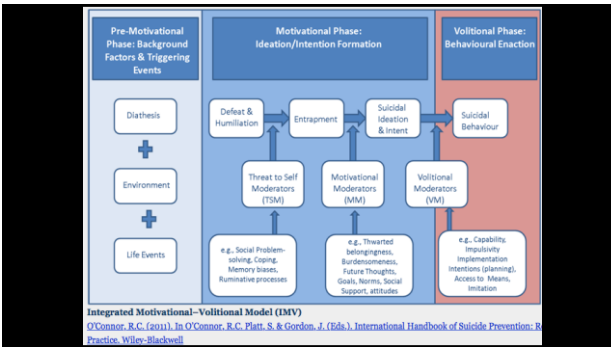
Conflict or Bullying


- Questioning assumptions
- Intervening/moral courage
- Managing perceptions



Common elements of:
Traumatic Incident | Burnout | Conflict or Bullying

- Powerless | No mental reserve | Assumptions
- Intentional cruelty | Lack of appreciation | No support
- Unexpected | Blindsided | Perception





Resilience is the capacity to adapt or recover in the face of:

- adversity
- trauma
- tragedy
- threats
- harassment
- stress
- relationship problems
- financial problems
- health problems
- workplace issues

Post-traumatic Growth

Consider the potential effects of NOT taking action

Conflict	↔	Irritability
Bullying	↔	Aggression or withdrawal
Chaos	↔	Incivility
Pressure	↔	Lack of energy or focus
Uncertainty	↔	Fear or paranoia

Building Stronger Teams
Supporting Effective Team Leaders



A leader's guide and activities for developing resilience for you and your team

For the leader:
Improve self-awareness
Increase communication effectiveness

For the team:
Build Resilience
Improve Effectiveness
Improve Cohesion





What is your interaction style?

Communication Styles

- Assertive** – straightforward and earnest
- Passive behaviour** – not expressing your ideas/feelings
- Aggressive behaviour** – expressing your ideas/feelings without allowing others to do the same
- Passive aggressive** – non-verbal behaviours such as eye-rolling, gesturing or ignoring others; giving deliberately frustrating verbal responses.

Communication Styles

There are four primary communication styles:

- Assertive
- Aggressive
- Passive
- Passive-aggressive

Assertive communication is open, straightforward and earnest. You communicate your message as clearly as possible without embedding any other underlying or hidden messages. Assertive communication can help strengthen relationships, solve problems more effectively, and reduce negative emotions such as anger, frustration, guilt and fear.

One key to communicating assertively is to take ownership of your feelings and behaviours and not blame others, i.e., *"I feel frustrated when you are late for our weekly progress meetings. I don't like starting over again and repeating myself."* This can make your directives and feedback easier to accept.

- Speak in a calm, clear and steady voice
- Show interest and sincerity by keeping eye contact, smiling and nodding as appropriate
- Maintain an open and relaxed posture
- Communicate your feelings and needs appropriately
- Communicate respect for others
- Ask for what you need rather than demanding it
- Ask questions to understand other people's perspectives
- Listen without interrupting
- Before you say no, respectfully ask why the request is being made to determine if you can meet the underlying need.

Aggressive communication means you express your own needs, desires, ideas and feelings without considering and respecting the needs or viewpoints of others. This often involves *"you" statements* and attacks on a team member, rather than effective expressions of needs. For example, rather than stating, *"you are never on time"* try, *"I need you to be on time"*.

Other characteristics of aggressive communication may include:

- Speaking in a loud, bossy and demanding voice
- Having piercing eye contact
- Maintaining an overbearing posture
- Dominating/controlling others by blaming, intimidating, criticizing, threatening or attacking
- Acting impulsively, intensely or rudely
- Demanding what you need instead of requesting it
- Focusing on your own needs and rarely asking questions
- Not listening well to the other person
- Interrupting the other person frequently
- Being unwilling to accept "no" or to make compromises.

(continued on the next page)

Passive communication occurs when you do not express your own needs, desires, ideas and feelings.

This may include:

- Speaking in an overly apologetic or submissive manner
- Avoiding eye contact
- Having a slumped body posture
- Holding back on stating your feelings and needs
- Giving in to other people, and ignoring your own needs
- Doing what you are asked regardless of how you feel about it
- Being unable to say “no” when asked for a favour
- Rarely asking other people for help.

Passive-aggressive communication involves being passive in the manner in which you express your needs, desires, ideas and feelings, but being aggressive in your underlying intent. Communicating passive-aggressively often involves not speaking your truth, but rather trying to convey it through challenging, sarcastic or ambiguous comments and actions. Team members are behaving passive-aggressively, for example, when they avoid speaking directly about their concerns, and express their dissatisfaction through other behaviours that may seem manipulative. This may include:

- Speaking in a sarcastic voice
- Using non-verbal behaviours such as sighing and eye-rolling
- Using facial expressions and body language that are inconsistent with how you feel, such as smiling when you’re upset
- Avoiding dealing directly with a disruptive issue
- Appearing cooperative but acting uncooperatively
- Sabotaging another person to get even.

Aggressive, passive, and passive-aggressive communication each risk eliciting negative reactions from others. While assertive communication techniques cannot guarantee positive reactions, they are usually more effective. Communication is affected in part by the level of trust that team members have in your ability to lead.

This trust includes faith in your character and integrity, as well as in your competence to fulfill your role and lead your team.

Where trust is built up, small errors in communication may be overlooked or forgiven. Where trust is absent, even an innocent comment may be taken out of context and seen as threatening or disrespectful.

Notes:

Identifying Your Interaction Style

Now that you understand the different communication styles, let's think about how and when you use them. Although you may have a style that you use most of the time, it is common to use all of the styles at some time or another.

Think about your default style when under stress. What types of workplace situations may trigger each of the following styles for you?

Passive behaviour (not standing up for your rights; not expressing your ideas/feelings)

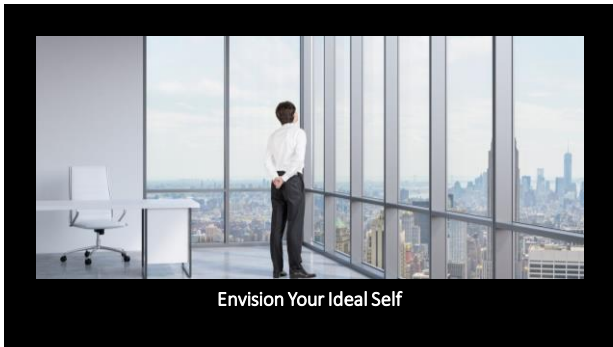
Aggressive behaviour (expressing your ideas/feelings without allowing others to do the same; getting your way at the unfair expense of others)

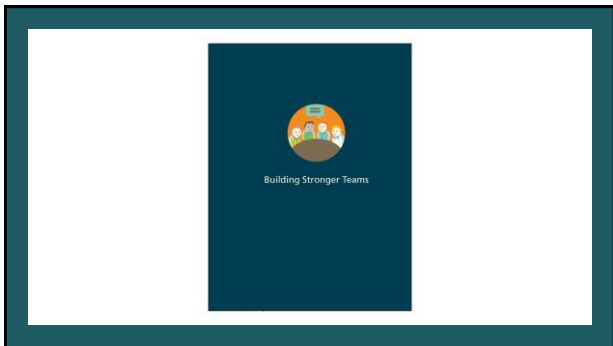
Passive-aggressive behaviour (communicating a hostile/unkind message through non-verbal behaviours such as eye-rolling, gesturing or ignoring others; giving deliberately frustrating verbal responses)

Think about what you can do in stressful situations to actively remind yourself to engage in an assertive communication style where you express your needs in a clear, open, non-defensive and respectful manner, while allowing others to express their needs. This can help you interact more positively with your team members and set the stage for more open and less judgmental conversations

Notes:







How Would Others Describe You?

The next exercise asks you to think about how others may react to or perceive you.

Think of a current team member who you MOST enjoy managing. How would he/she describe you?
What specific words and descriptors would this person use?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Think of a current team member who you LEAST enjoy managing. How would he/she describe you?
What specific words and descriptors would this person use?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Place a next to those descriptors with which you agree and/or which you believe to be understandable perceptions of you.

Place an next to those with which you disagree.

Your behaviours may not always reflect the type of individual you perceive yourself to be. Think about why you might be perceived differently from how you would ultimately describe yourself. What factors might contribute to any discrepancies?

What are some specific things you could do to begin narrowing the gap between how you would describe yourself and how you might be coming across to others? Pick three specific things you could do. Be realistic.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Envision Your Ideal Self

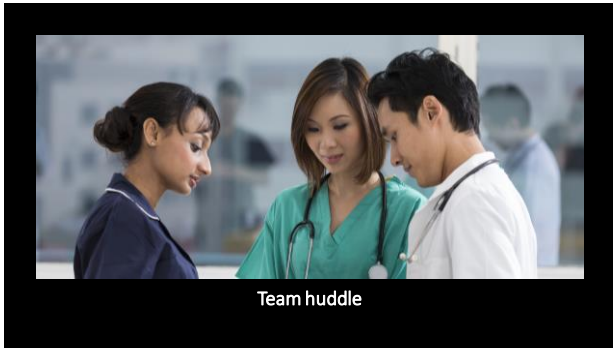
Now that you've considered how others might describe you, let's think about how you would prefer to be seen.

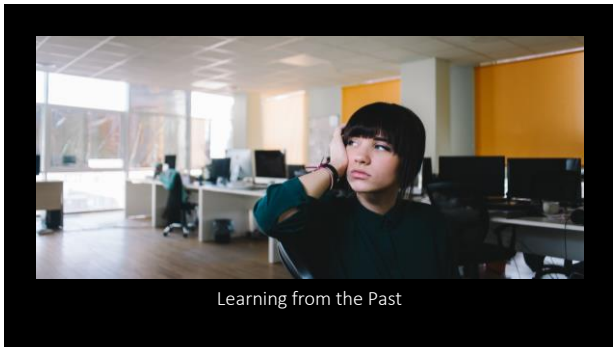
Imagine a staff meeting that includes all of the key individuals you work with: team members, colleagues and your own leader(s). You are not at this meeting, and those attending are asked to write a biography describing you as a team leader. Be as honest as you can, and write what you think they might realistically say.

Now imagine that you could rewrite/edit this biography to read exactly as you would ideally like it to. How would this revised version read?

Most of us will find some discrepancies between the realistic and ideal versions of our biographies. Think about the main differences. How could you make changes in these areas, and what specifically can you commit to doing differently? Be realistic.

Additional activities are available at:
www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com





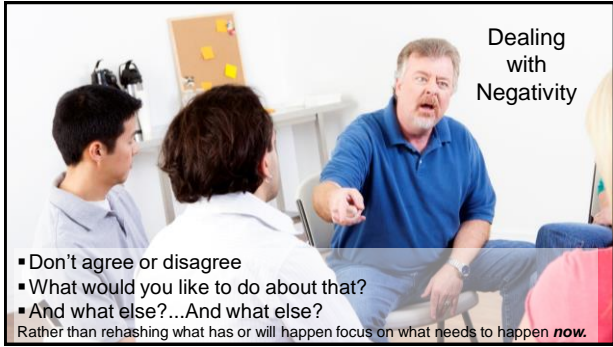




Creating a Workplace Agreement™ MARY ANN BAYLOR ASSOCIATES/ORGANIZING

1. What is already good about this team that you would not want to lose?
2. What is needed for you to feel this is a team you enjoy being part of and allows you to do your best work and still have energy left when you go home?
3. What will you do to contribute to this ideal team environment?
4. How would you like someone to approach you if you are having a bad day and not interacting in the way the team agrees is appropriate?







For free tools and printable resources, visit:
www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com

Workplace Strategies
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