Psychological Safety

Making It Real for Your Teams

Meet Your Facilitator

Quick LIfTTS
Leadership Insights for Technical Teams Series

Christa Kirby, MA, LCAT, PMP, CSM, CSPO

Vice President, Talent Development &

Practice Director: Management and Leadership

Corporate Education Group

- Licensed psychotherapist
- Executive coach
- Prosci® Certified Change Practitioner
- TED Speaker
- 25 years of experience as a leadership facilitator, consultant, and coach for corporations, non-profit organizations, and international NGOs
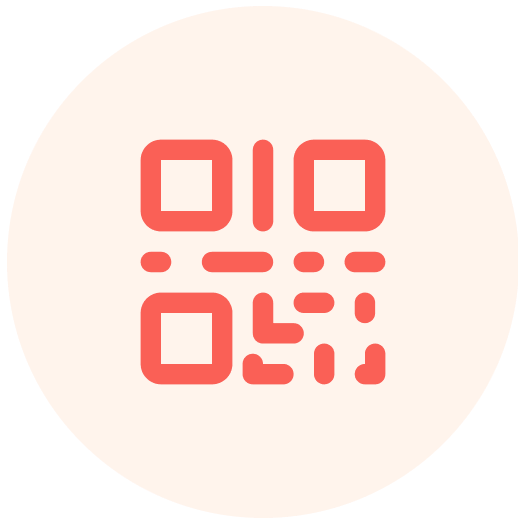- BA from Duke University; MA from NYU
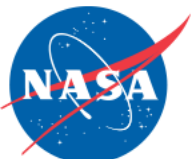
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Session Topics

This session includes the following topics:

- What Is Psychological Safety?

- 4 Stages of Psychological Safety

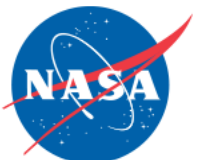- Setting the Stage

- Inviting Participation

- Responding Productively

Google's Project Aristotle

In 2012, Google's People Analytics team launched a research study code named Project Aristotle.

- Collected data on 180 top performing global teams at Google.

- Focus was on **how to build the perfect team**.

- Looked for patterns with regard to WHO was on the team; what is the best mix of:
  - Skills
  - Backgrounds
  - Personality types

Duhigg, Charles. "What Google Learned from Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team." *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 2016, https://nyti.ms/2GxVcjC

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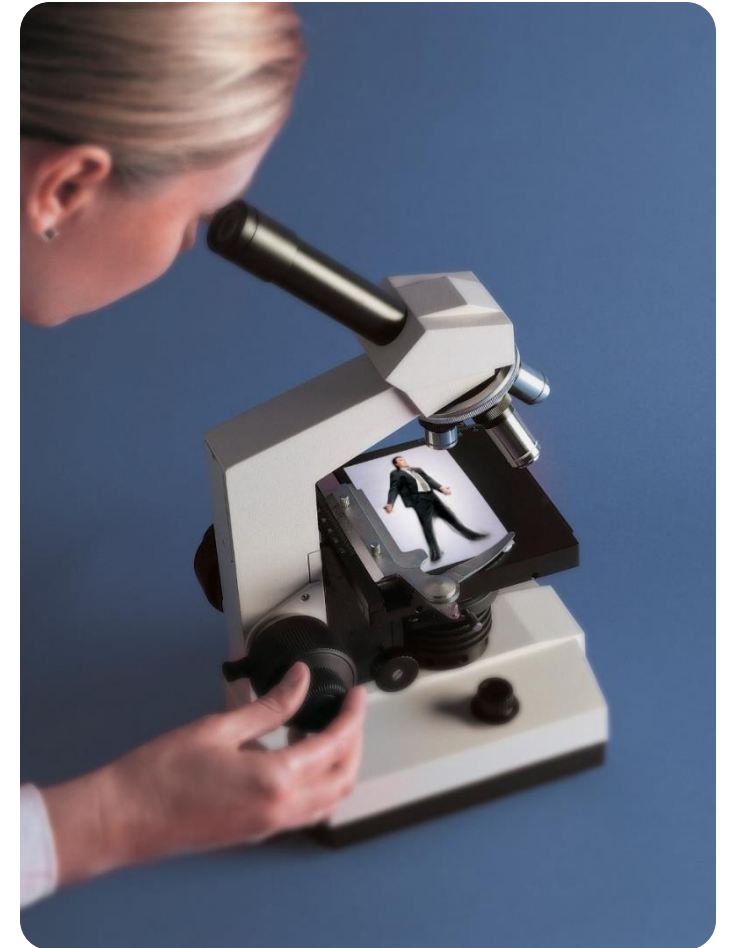
WHO is on a team matters less than

HOW the team members interact, structure their

work, and view their contributions.

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Most Important Dynamic by Far

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Psychological Safety

Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?

Trust   **Empathy**   **Admitting mistakes**   **Listening**

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Psychological Safety and Performance

Individually, reflect on:

- A team experience you have had where:
  - There was a *high* level of psychological safety
  - There was a *low* level of psychological safety
- How was team performance impacted?
- What are the business risks of employees not speaking up at work?

Four Stages of Psychological Safety

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Psychological safety is a dynamic and delicate variable
that is hard to build and easy to destroy.

Stage 1
Inclusion Safety

Stage 2
Learner Safety

Stage 3
Contributor Safety

Stage 4
Challenger Safety

Source: Clark, T. (2020). *The 4 stages of psychological safety behavioral guide.* Berrett-Koehler.
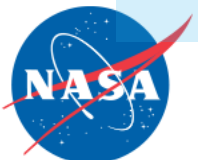
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Four Stages of Psychological Safety

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Stage 1
Inclusion Safety

Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. Whether at work, school, home, or in other social settings, everyone wants to be accepted. In fact, the need to be accepted precedes the need to be heard.

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Four Stages of Psychological Safety

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Stage 2
Learner Safety

Learner Safety satisfies the basic human need to learn and grow. It allows us to feel safe as we engage in all aspects of the learning process—asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and even making mistakes, not if but when we make them.

Source: Clark, T. (2020). *The 4 stages of psychological safety behavioral guide.* Berrett-Koehler.
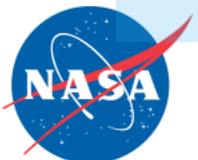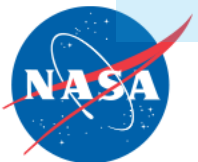
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Stage 3
Contributor Safety

Contributor safety satisfies the basic human need to contribute and make a difference. The more we contribute, the more confidence and competence we develop. When we create contributor safety for others, we empower them with autonomy, guidance, and encouragement in exchange for effort and results.

Source: Clark, T. (2020). *The 4 stages of psychological safety behavioral guide.* Berrett-Koehler.
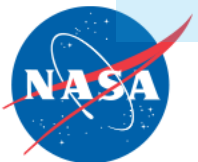
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Four Stages of Psychological Safety

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Stage 4
Challenger Safety

Challenger safety satisfies the basic human need to make things better. It's the support and confidence we need to ask questions such as, "Why do we do it this way?" "What if we tried this?" or "May I suggest a different way?" It allows us to feel safe to challenge the status quo without retaliation or the risk of damaging our personal standing or reputation. As the highest level of psychological safety, it matches the increased vulnerability and personal risk associated with challenging the status quo.

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Creating Psychological Safety

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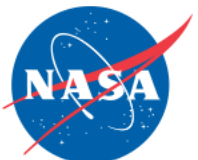Leadership Insights for Technical Teams Series

Leaders create psychological safety through 3 categories of action:

1.

Setting the stage

2.

Inviting participation

3.

Responding productively

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Design Experiences for Inclusion

To ensure "conversational equity" on your team, reflect on and be inclusive of individual differences in:

- Culture

- Cognitive/thinking style

- Personality (introvert, extrovert, ambivert)

- Ability/disability

- Neurodiversity

- Learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)

1.
**Setting the stage**

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Make Implicit Agreements Explicit

On our team, it's OK to:

- Bring your full self to work

- Exhibit your race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, background, family status, and all other parts of your identity without judgment

- Request accommodations

- Say "I don't understand"

- Not know everything

- Make mistakes and encounter problems

- Disagree with an opinion

- Ask for help
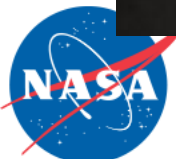
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(Re)Define Team Norms and Guiding Principles

A team charter:

- Defines the purpose of a team, expected outcomes, and how the team will work together for results

- Acknowledges that "this is our team culture, which we have explicitly agreed upon and all feel comfortable with"

Digital communication norms:

- Minimize the risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation (critical for hybrid teams)

- Co-create with team to establish and agree upon unambiguous expectations and norms around:

  o What channels to use

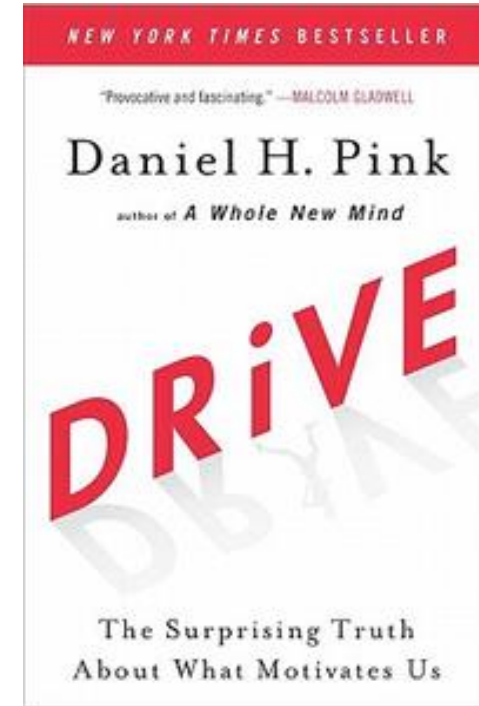 o When to use them

  o Expected response time
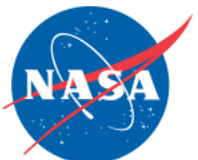
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3 Elements that Drive Behavior and Motivate

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There is a gap between what science knows and what business does when it comes to motivation.

1) **Autonomy** – the desire to direct our own lives

2) **Mastery** — the urge to get better and better at something that matters

3) **Purpose** — the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"Provocative and fascinating." —MALCOLM GLADWELL

Daniel H. Pink

author of *A Whole New Mind*

DRIVE

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

Source: *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us,* by Daniel Pink

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Critical Coaching Behaviors for Psychological Safety

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2.
Inviting participation

Listening Actively

Asking Powerful Questions

Guiding & Respecting

Communicating Directly

Giving advice
Solving the problem
Providing the answer

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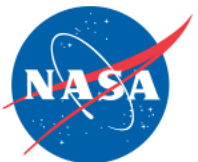
Words of Wisdom from Clayton Christensen

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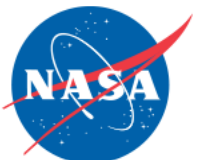
"Every answer has a question that retrieves it."

- **Clayton Christensen**
Harvard Business School Professor and
Disruptive Innovation Expert
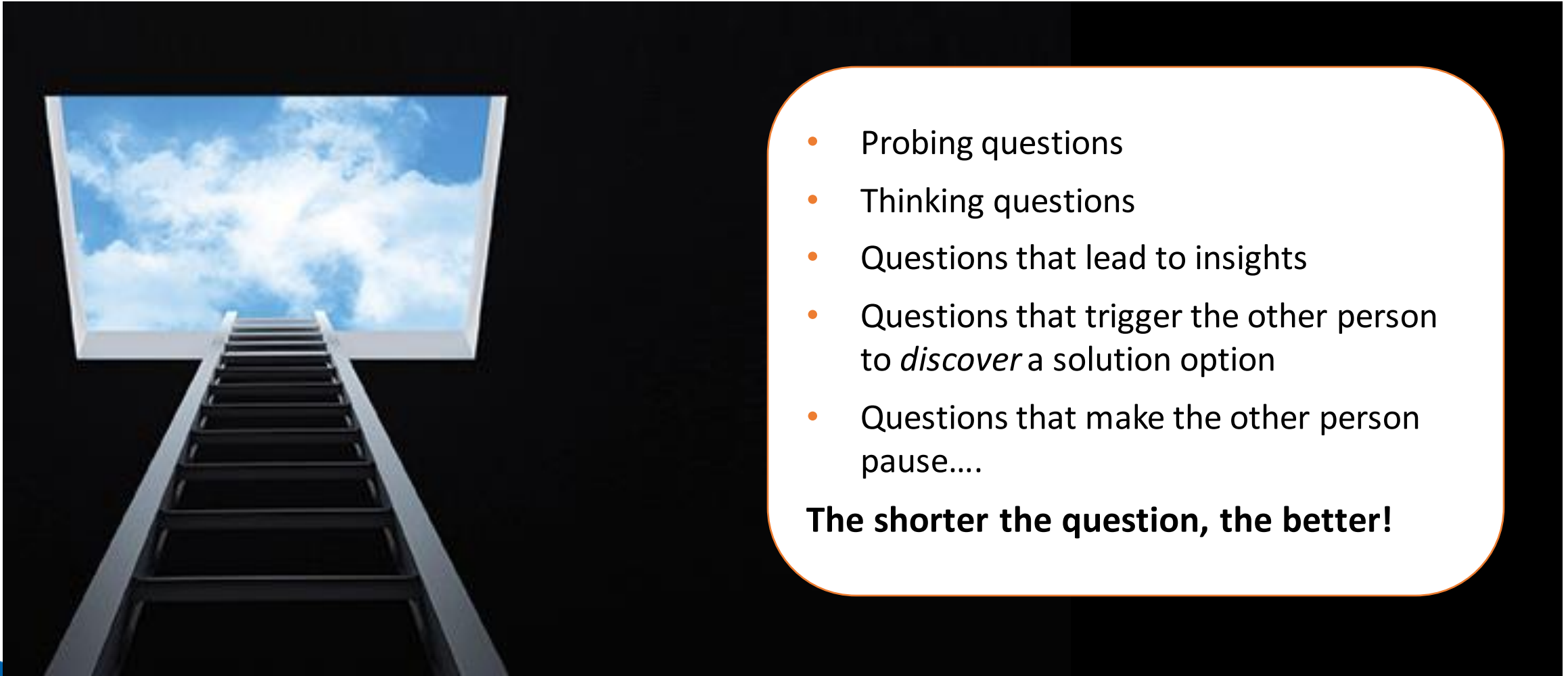
Source: www.claytonchristensen.com

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Powerful Question Types

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- Probing questions

- Thinking questions

- Questions that lead to insights

- Questions that trigger the other person to *discover* a solution option

- Questions that make the other person pause….

The shorter the question, the better!

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Closed Versus Open Questions

Closed Questions

- Prompt yes or no responses

- Short-circuit answers and exploration

- Stop the conversation

- Limit surprises

Open Questions

- Prompt answers that are sentences, lists, or stories

- Provoke deeper and new insights

- May reveal hidden mental models

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What Is the Open Question?

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Closed Questions	**Open Questions**
• Is something stopping you from making progress on this?	• What might be stopping you from making progress on this?
• Do you think you would use this?	• How do you think you could fit this into your work?
• Is there anyone else who could help in this situation?	• Who else might be able to help you on this?

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We Need to Create Intentional Space for Learning

Changing behavior requires practice, and we practice in the **learning zone**.

	Performance Zone	**Learning Zone**
Goal	Do our best – minimize mistakes	Improve
Activities for	Execution	Improvement
Focus on	What we have mastered	What we *haven't* mastered yet
Mistakes are to be…	Minimized	Expected
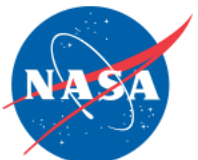
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Psychological Safety and Accountability

We have to intentionally make space for real learning and reflection.

Be Transparent

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Be Transparent on How Team Decisions Will Be Made

Communicate up front how you will make certain decisions. Will they be:

1) Unanimous

2) Consensus
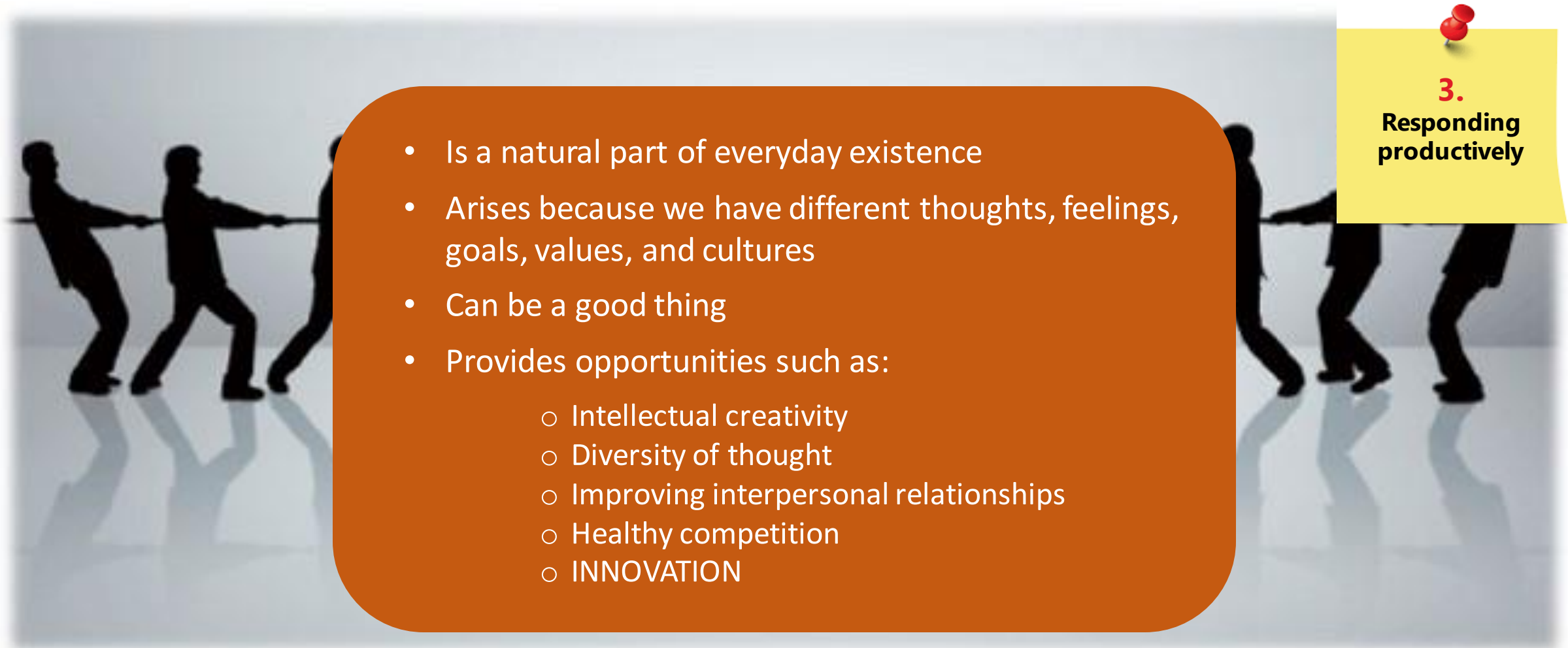
3) Majority rule

4) Expert

5) Executive

6) Default

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Conflict: The Basics

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3.
Responding productively

- Is a natural part of everyday existence

- Arises because we have different thoughts, feelings, goals, values, and cultures

- Can be a good thing

- Provides opportunities such as:

  o Intellectual creativity
  o Diversity of thought
  o Improving interpersonal relationships
  o Healthy competition
  o INNOVATION

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Two Types of Conflict

Functional conflict – we want to stimulate this

- Judgmental differences on how to achieve common objectives (cognitive diversity)
- Drives creativity, insight, and innovation
- Can lead to deeper, richer relationships

Dysfunctional conflict – we want to mitigate this

- Stressful, harmful, costly
- Drives disconnection and disengagement
- Can cause emotional, psychological, and physiological damage

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"Productive" Conflict Statement

- This project/process involves complexity, uncertainty, and risk.

- We anticipate that this project/process may result in some disagreements and differences of opinion.

- We will aim to resolve conflicts constructively and collaboratively.

- We encourage all team members to aim for productive conflict, with a win/win outcome.

- Our system for managing conflict will include face-to-face meetings between individuals when possible.

- If it isn't possible to meet face-to-face, we will meet virtually using video.

- If necessary, project managers and change agents will facilitate dialogue.

- In such a case where this is not possible, external support will be sought.
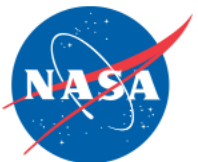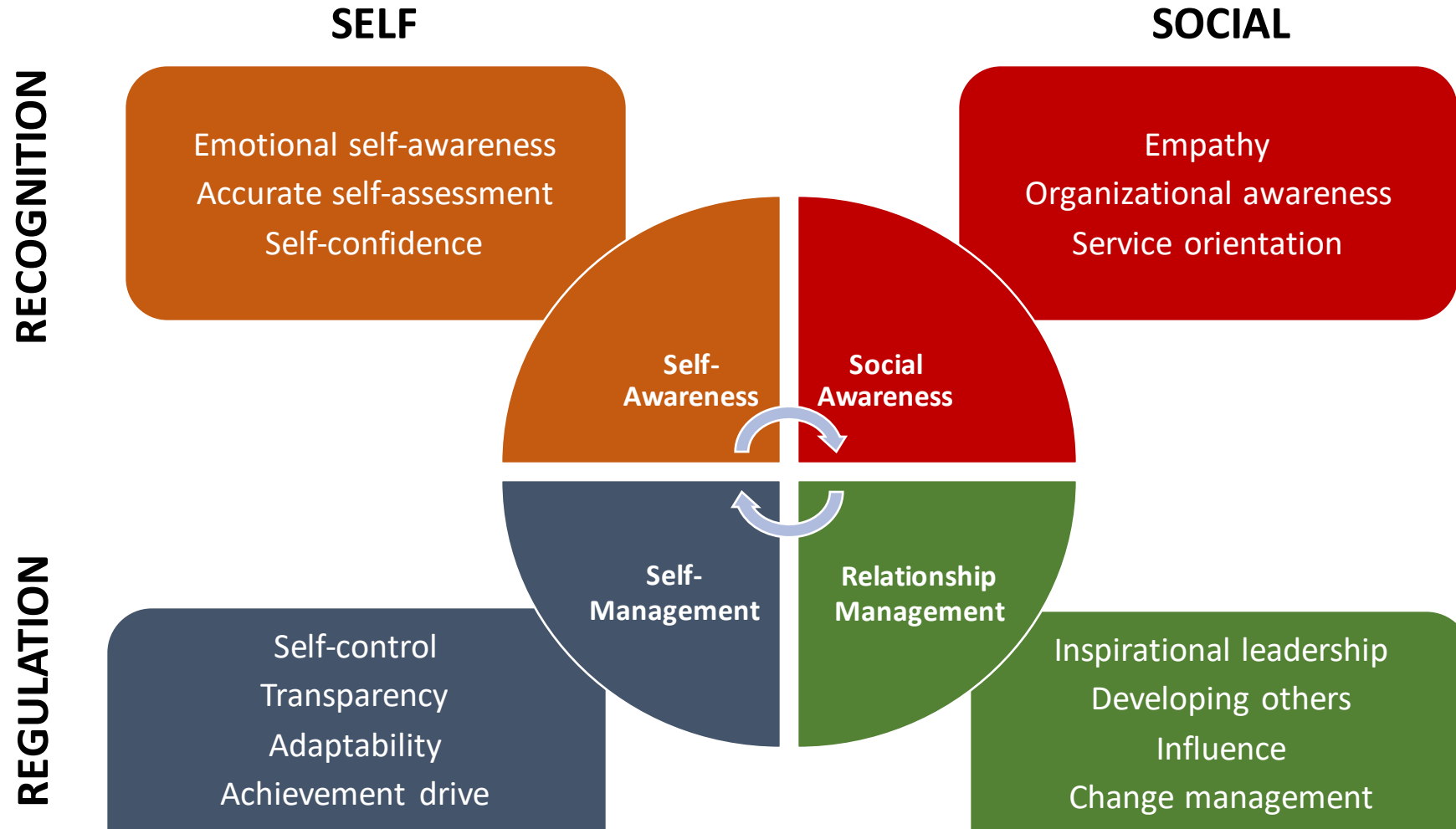
The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Dr. Brené Brown: "Biggest Myth About Vulnerability"

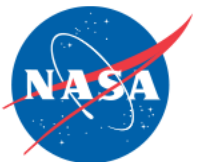https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkDaKKkFi6Y

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Actions to Enhance a Culture of Psychological Safety

- Create an environment of rewarded vulnerability

- Own and openly share your own mistakes

- Define what constitutes a smart risk…

- … and reward smart risk-taking

- Frame mistakes as opportunities for growth

- Know your own "triggers"… and be responsible for them

- Role model vulnerability

- Make time for reflection and real learning (for yourself and your team)

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What Questions Do You Have?

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