

Building Team Resilience Through Positive Mood

“Pride broadens your mindset by igniting your visions about other and larger ways in which you might be helpful.”

Barbara Fredrickson

- Marcia Hughes and James Terrell



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Positive attitudes on your team will build resilience and impact every dimension of team work. Positivity will impact how well people get along with one another, how pleased they are to be on the team, their motivation and their creative thinking. That is why this is one of the seven team competencies of the TESI® (Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey®). In her books *Positivity* and *Love 2.0*, Dr. Barbara Fredrickson provides the scientific grounding to prove the power of positive engagement. Probably because most of organizational work is accomplished through teams, we are finding a tremendous thirst to better understand what this means for teams and how to assist teams in growing their positive mood.

Positivity is central to the ability to collaborate, which is based on the ability to work jointly with one another, to listen to different perspectives and to find common answers. Collaborative Growth's team model demonstrates how we bring team emotional and social intelligence competencies together to create collaborative intelligence. One of the easiest team strengths to build is positive mood so take advantage of this and build your team skills.

Developing teams is a complex challenge that never stops requiring positive and proactive attention. One of the challenges to team effectiveness is the tendency for people to think and act individually and objectively, that is to focus on the task rather than each other. Busy team members can become so externally focused on projects and customers that they forget to pay attention to their personal needs or those of the team. This lack of internal team focus can occur for several reasons:

- Addressing interpersonal relationships can seem much less controllable or scientific and less predictable and thus too uncertain;
- Team members may not be trained to be good at team or human dynamics, they enjoy being an expert and they aren't expert in this field;



- Their external focus in getting all the jobs done may leave them drained with little energy left for the team; this is often compounded by highly demanding organizational politics;
- The team leader may be an expert in his/her production world but likely is not trained to be a team leader and to manage complex interpersonal situations and to build motivation while maintaining accountability; and
- The full organization may not be aware of the challenges their teams are experiencing nor understand how they could support the team in effective change.

Thus, intentional effort to build a team's positivity and resilience is needed to get the most from your team.

Art Aron, a human relations scientist, conducted research that shows how people move from a sense of separation – me and you – to a sense of being together - us or we. His research was done with couples, but the same principles apply to teams, which are a group of people working together to solve problems. The more overlap the individual team members see between each other, the more likely they will have a sense of “us” and that leads to a series of positive results. In turn, this increased connection leads to helpful responses among team members that build trust as team members learn they can rely on considerate and supportive responses from one another. Most people will say they agree with the maxim that “All of us are smarter than one of us.” Understanding the effects of positive mood helps show us how to act that way, not just say it.

Fredrickson writes that positivity broadens one's view from “me” to “us” and then to “all of us,” not just the part of the group that looks or thinks like you. Thus building positive attitudes within your team will expand the effectiveness of your diversity efforts. We often talk about emotions being highly contagious and that is so for positivity, just like it is for negativity. This makes it important for team leaders as well as all team members to be intentionally positive. Fredrickson explains that “positivity spreads because people unconsciously mimic emotional gestures and facial expressions of those around you ... positivity breeds helpful, compassionate acts.” Furthermore, she points out that when we act positively with others we are likely proud of our engagement and “pride broadens your mindset by igniting your visions about other and larger ways in which you might be helpful.” (*Positivity*, pp. 69-70) This is a goal all organizations have for their teams.



Building Team Resilience and Positive Mood

Resilience and positive mood are closely connected. Resilience includes the ability to bounce back and relies on teams having a reserve to tap into when big challenges hit. That reserve is built by how team members treat each other and what they expect of one another. The more positive members of a team are, the deeper the reserve and the less often they are likely to need to tap into it. Positivity builds perspective so teams take challenges in stride rather than making them a big deal that expands stress instead of resilience.

Tips and Strategies



Use emotional intelligence to grow your teams' positivity and resilience. Positive Mood and Stress Tolerance are two key competencies in the TESI that build team resilience. Of course while the team is building these competencies, they will find that some team members are more positive than others so the team leader needs to work with the whole team while respecting the differences as the team builds composite resilient strength. Tips for success include:

- Build the habit of finding people doing something well and publicly thank them. This can be implemented by the team leader as well team members.
- Start team meetings with a discussion of something that has worked well recently. Then the team can move to strategic analysis and can proactively cross map that skill that success reflects to other requirements.
- Social connections are at the heart of team success so take time for building connections – and emphasize it even more if you have a virtual team. Do something fun together, have a pot luck lunch, and start meetings with going around the team and asking everyone to comment on something particularly interesting or important to them.
- Find purposefulness in the team work so the team feels the sense of being a part of something bigger than itself. A traditional way to do this is with Mission, Vision and Values statements. Make sure those statements are meaningful and that the team feels ownership and pride or they won't help.
- Support team members in taking time to be relaxed with each other so the connections are built resulting in the natural desire to get one another's back when needed.
- Respond to comments made by one another. People want to be heard more than they want to be right. Applying skills such as active listening and empathetic responses will help people feel acknowledged and valued and that builds positivity and engagement.
- Intentionally tap into the team wisdom. Your team knows what they need, however you may need to facilitate their recognizing and employing that wisdom. Take creative brainstorming time to explore topics such as: "What works that we can expand?" and "What do we want that we can influence?"

Recognize that positivity and trust go hand in hand as positivity supports deepening relationships. Develop positivity deliberately and expansively for the benefit of all individuals, teams and the organization.