

FACILITATOR NOTES
5-4-3-2-1 DISCLOSURE EXERCISE

MAKING TEAMS WORK. THE SURPRISING POWER OF DISCLOSURE IN FOSTERING TRUST.

The following disclosure & vulnerability exercise has been developed by Dave Stewart and colleagues at The Fresh Air Leadership Company. It was inspired originally by the personal histories exercise in the *Five Dysfunctions of a Team Field Guide*, P. Lencioni (2005). We claim no Intellectual Property rights and will be delighted if it is used widely to help leaders, teams, and organisations work more effectively together.

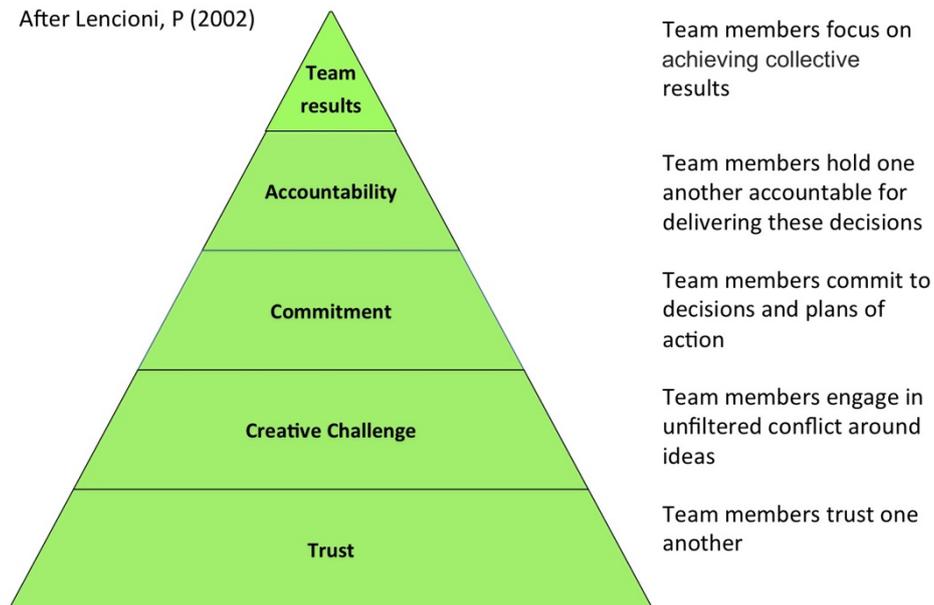
Dysfunctional teams are one of the most common blockers to progress in business. Whether it's dealing with change or performing well during business as usual, collaboration between team members is vital.

HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS TRUST EACH OTHER

Trust is the key foundation of effective teamwork. Trust enables creative challenge which in turn promotes commitment and mutual accountability which underpin achievement of collective results (*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Lencioni P, 2002).

High Performing Teams

After Lencioni, P (2002)



TRUST IS KEY

Trust requires a number of elements to be in place, not least of which is authenticity. This is the attribute which allows your colleagues to access the real you (*Begin with Trust*, Frei X, and Morriss A, Harvard Business Review, May-Jun 20).

Yet not many of us really know one another, or ourselves. Sometimes it's because we have forgotten our own back-stories. In an effort to fit into the workplace we have disappeared ourselves and grown increasingly less self-aware.

We turn up to work wearing our job specs like masks, and because no-one has thought to ask us who we are, we don't really think about what has shaped us and the influences that are playing out in the present at work and at home.

*The workplace can be an accidentally uncaring and courage-shrinking place,
and trust can't get a foothold!*

What if we could turn this around? What would a safer, more aware, more trusting environment enable? Bigger, richer conversations around more exciting, tougher topics? More commitment and momentum around a common purpose?

THE 5-4-3-2-1 EXERCISE

WHY?

At the Fresh Air Leadership Company, we use a disclosure framework to explore self-awareness and vulnerability, and to build trust. This can make calls on people's courage and as such is an opportunity for stretch and growth.

Make time and space for the whole team to do this together, and you'll find that powerful conversations unfold, and collaboration becomes easier.

WHEN?

We have used it in new teams as a way of onboarding one another and accelerating trust. We have used it in long-standing teams as a means of getting beneath what can often be superficial and dysfunctional relationships. We have also used it across an entire workforce, at all levels, as a means of creating the conditions for engagement and collaboration.

The exercise can be repeated over time. On subsequent reflection, individuals often unearth and disclose pivotal moments they didn't the first time around. Their story, and sense of self, deepens and develops in the retelling.

WHAT?

Here it is. Make sure you read the "How?" notes that follow.

- 5 minutes to share your story with colleagues.
- 4 things that shaped you. At least one per decade. It's really important that this includes the formative periods of ages 0- 9, and 10 – 19.
- 3 things that make you come alive. Your passions.
- 2 ways to communicate and get your attention at work. We all have communication preferences, and you may have been turning one another off for ages by being unaware of this!
- Reveal 1 thing that no-one could possibly guess about you.

HOW?

<p>Pre-Event</p>	<p>Homework or Hot?</p> <p>Give colleagues notice to prepare their 5-4-3-2-1s. Setting this as “homework” a few days in advance can promote several reflective cycles and lead to fresh and deepening self-awareness.</p> <p>The exercise can also be conducted “hot” i.e., just give the storytellers 5 minutes to prepare their stories.</p> <p>We recommend the “homework” method.</p>
	<p>Managing Anxiety</p> <p>This exercise can be a source of anxiety for some colleagues, particularly if they are not used to speaking in groups.</p> <p>Inform colleagues they will be able to share their stories from any position they are most comfortable. Typically, this will be from their seats if indoors. This can reduce anticipatory stress. Delivery may also be more authentic.</p>
<p>On the Day</p>	<p>Process</p> <p>Remind colleagues of the 5-4-3-2-1 process.</p> <p>Offer an open invite for anyone to go first.</p>
	<p>Managing Anxiety</p> <p>Acknowledge anxiety. Offer public (not individual) respect for colleagues’ courage in coming to the workshop and offering to share their stories. Don’t highlight individuals verbally or with an inadvertent gaze.</p> <p>To reduce stress, get colleagues’ voices into the room with a quick round of self-introductions i.e., name, role, where they live. If everyone knows one another then ask another low vulnerability question such as, “what has been the high point of the week so far?” This will fire up the positive, affirming parts of the brain.</p> <p>Stress can be reduced further by asking colleagues to walk across the room and plot their hometowns on a map. It is the movement and the changes in biochemistry this creates which matter. If the exercise is being conducted as part of a walkshop then begin the exercise after at least 10 minutes of walking and chit-chat.</p>
	<p>Overruns</p> <p>Give everyone time to speak. If stories take longer than 5 minutes let them run. It is respectful to hear them out. Storytellers can also find themselves entranced. Bursting their bubbles can feel like a rude awakening and may lead to resentment.</p>

	<p>You may want to draw the groups attention to overruns if this is putting the rest of the programme at risk. Seek their buy-in to any overruns and the changes you need to make.</p> <p>Resist the urge to ask questions. It will encourage others. Remember, this is a listening exercise and storytellers must be allowed to get in zone undistracted.</p> <p>The exception is when a storyteller offers a generalisation such as “marriage” or “my children”. In such cases ask them to expand on how the event/experience shaped them.</p>
Breaks	<p>After every 4 stories or so, ask the audience to share what they recall from each of the speakers. This provides a break from intensive listening and reinforces new knowledge of one another. It can often release tension and create laughter.</p>
Don't rescue!	<p>Be ready for all sorts of surprises. There may be tears.</p> <p>Unless specifically asked by the storyteller don't dive in and “rescue” them.</p> <p>However well intentioned, say nothing, do nothing.</p> <p>Simply give them respectful space and be present for them (<i>Drama Triangle</i> after Karpman, S. (1968). <i>Fairy tales and script drama analysis</i>. Transactional Analysis Bulletin, 7(26), 39-43.)</p>
Completion	<p>On completion of each story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer thanks for sharing and lead the applause. <p>On completion of the 5-4-3-2-1 activity for the whole team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that if the exercise has stirred up some issues, to feel able to talk these through with whoever they feel is appropriate. • Offer thanks for sharing and lead the concluding applause.