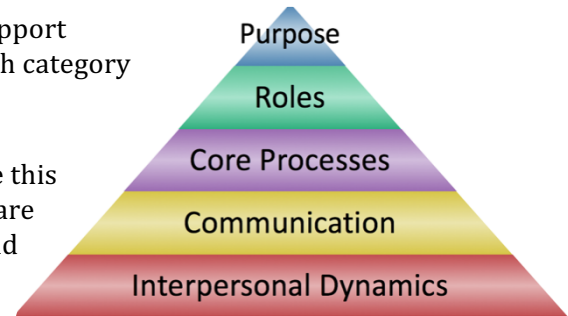


Repairing trust in groups and organizations, bridging understanding, and strengthening relationships

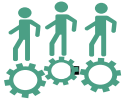
Research shows that there are patterns of behaviors that support organizational effectiveness and strong relationships. In each category below there are suggested behaviors to strengthen trust.

**Purpose** entails clarity about why the group exists. While this is primarily a leadership function, group members are also responsible for understanding the purpose and working toward it. Any uncertainty will adversely affect the rest of the pyramid.



- **Determine** – purpose, direction, scope, priorities, and boundaries
- **Align** – people, systems, and resources for success

**Roles** of each person in the group need to be fully understood by everyone in that group. Any fuzziness about who is supposed to do what affects how work gets done, how people communicate, and how they interact.



- **Establish** – clear roles and responsibilities; mutual expectations; and accountability
- **Set-Up** – people for success: delegate well and create support systems
- **Honor** – agreements, commitments, and confidentiality

**Core Processes** refers to getting work done effectively to carry out the purpose.



- **Improve** – operations, relationships, and results; be open to new ways of doing things
- **Ensure** – consistency, reliability, and responsiveness
- **Engage** – people; broaden decision-making; ask for input

**Communication** includes the nature, patterns, tone, methods, and intentions regarding how people communicate and make decisions



- **Listen** – openly without judgment or interruption; and tune into the quiet voices
- **Check-in** – on assumptions, intentions, and for mutual understanding
- **Seek** – feedback; sound and current data; and new perspectives
- **Inform** – share timely, relevant information; avoid surprises; be transparent and truthful
- **Foster** – curiosity, open-mindedness, and engage in healthy challenges to conventional thinking

**Interpersonal Dynamics** influences everything and everything above influences how people interact with one another. Personality style, family background, life experiences, cultural upbringing, education, racial, gender, age, and other social and diverse identities all have influence on our interpersonal dynamics. With trust issues, we tend to experience the interpersonal dynamics first.



- **Strengthen Relationships and Connectivity** – invest time and energy into building others up; avoid gossip which erodes self-esteem and group connectivity
- **Respect** – people's unique contributions; honor differing perspectives and styles; be inclusive and welcoming
- **Invest** – in the growth and development of others
- **Model** – high standards, integrity, and vulnerability
- **Acknowledge** – mistakes; your impact on others; and apologize timely and sincerely

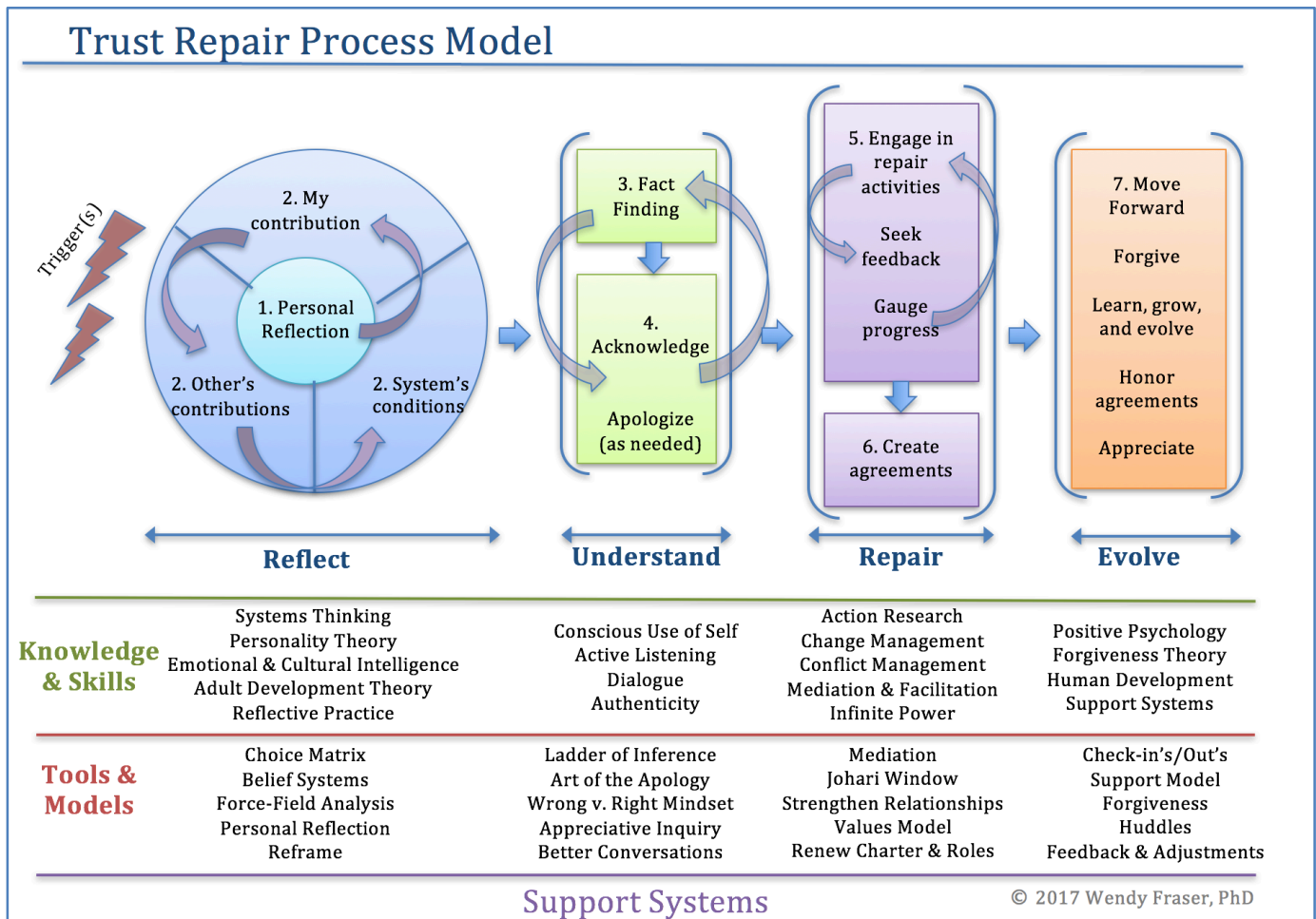
Repairing trust in groups and organizations, bridging understanding, and strengthening relationships



**Trust matters** because our daily lives depend on trusting others whether we are conscious about it or not. Purchasing food, seeking health care advice, driving to work, educating children, banking – almost all decisions involve trusting someone else.

Sometimes, groups experience difficulties in working together. When these stem from trust issues, it may completely impede group effectiveness and productivity. In this case, you have choices. Do you work on repairing it? What is the cost to repair versus not repairing? If you still need to work with this group of

people, then trust repair efforts become necessary. This model below is research-based and has proven useful in groups and organizations working on trust repair.

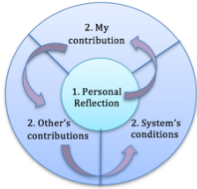


## Trigger Event(s)



Sometimes trust within a group erodes over time because of a series of small things: missing soft deadlines, claiming emails were never received, or doing sloppy work knowing that others in the group will fix it. Other times, trust explodes over a single incident.

## Reflect



- 1) As a first step, when someone feels triggered with emotions from trust violations, it's important to reflect on the experience. Interview the feelings: "Why am I feeling this way?" "Why did this situation bother me?"
- 2) Because we are operating in a system, all parts are inter-related and inter-connected. People must first consider their own contribution to the situation. Everyone plays a part in how the trust violation(s) happened – whether conscious or unconscious about it. So first, consider yourself. Then consider others on the team – what did they do to contribute to the situation. Then, there may be influences from outside the team or organization that affected the trust scenario.

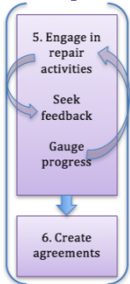
## Understand



- 3) Take the time to find out what happened. Collect sound and current data during the fact finding. Sometimes, it's just misunderstanding or miscommunication. Gandhi often talked about seeking the "Third Truth" which means you bring your truth about what happened and I'll bring mine, and together we create the third truth. As human beings, we miss things or don't know we had an adverse impact on someone else. This fact finding phase is critical to putting together as many of the pieces of the puzzle together as possible.
- 4) Acknowledge your part and acknowledge if any pain occurred to the other person(s) if you did something. Even if you didn't mean it, acknowledgement matters. And, if an apology is needed, make one sincerely and timely.



## Repair



- 5) Engage in repair activities. Depending on the situation, there are many approaches to supporting teams as they work through trust repair. Remember to seek feedback along the way to gauge progress. Some teams take 6 – 36 months to work through repair activities. Be patient.
- 6) Create agreements. Teams need structure and agreements – both about process, roles and responsibilities, but also about how they intend to communicate together, how they intend to make decisions, who's involved in those and when. But more so, agreements on the human side too – like ground rules or their own team engagement behaviors they want to see and experience.

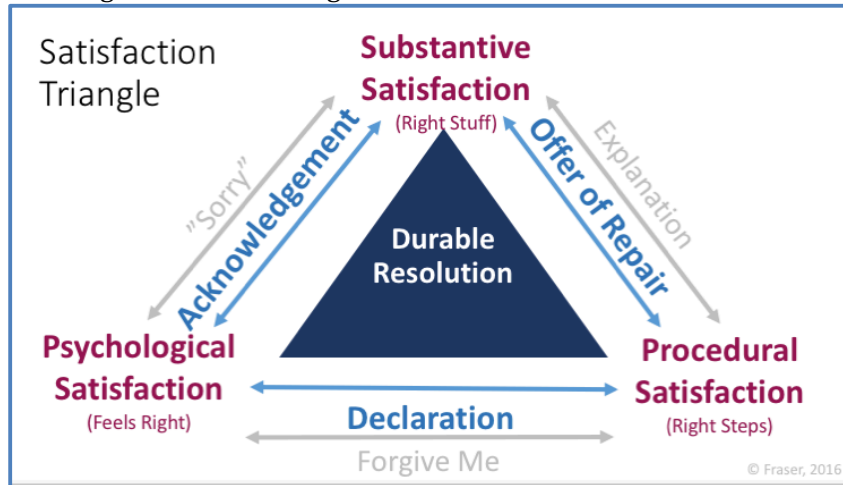
## Evolve



- 7) Moving forward with trust repair means acceptance and forgiveness, but it also means honoring new agreements. It means not holding people hostage to moments in time before when they let you down. We must let people grow and evolve and in doing so, we let ourselves change and grow. Remember to appreciate the steps forward and not play the "gotcha" game by wasting energy on catching people slip back into old patterns. Help redirect them and the situation. Use humor, patience, perseverance, and a little grace.

## The Art of the Apology (Lewicki, Polin, & Lount, 2016)

1. An expression of regret for the offense... "I'm sorry"
2. An explanation of why the offense occurred
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility for causing the offense
4. A declaration of "repentance" that the violator will not repeat the offense
5. An offer to repair whatever damage may have been caused by the offense
6. A request for forgiveness for having committed the offense



## Setting up your Work Team for Success – before any issues surface

1. Create a strong structural base: Use charters, set clear roles and responsibilities, create support systems.
2. Acknowledge past and present realities: Say where you have messed up in the past, how you learned, and what you intend to do differently.
3. Be authentic and transparent about intentions, hopes, and issues that may concern you: Be open to changing your mind.
4. Have faith and confidence in your people and their work: Communicate often to your team; Acknowledge and appreciate their work; and be clear about your expectations.

## Suggestions to handle trust issues – during the situation(s)

1. Refer to the agreements: Does anything need amending?
2. Acknowledge trust issues are emerging: Explore and reflect on the root causes; talk it through; be willing to alter approach; and own your part in the situation.
3. Take the time, have patience, show empathy, and even a little bit of humor can go a long way.

## Suggestions to handle trust issues – after the situation(s)

1. Acknowledge your part and apologize as necessary (timely and sincerely)
2. Be intentional, transparent and willing to explore all sides. Seek a neutral space to discuss.
3. Strengthen and modify agreements – like charters, roles, responsibilities, and decisions.
4. Reaffirm and communicate intentions – create learning stories and share them widely while honoring any confidential agreements made.

## Notes

- Take the time to listen and work through the issues. It may take several meetings, weeks or months.
- Be intentional and transparent. You must want to repair the issues and not just go through the motions.
- Stick with it...even if it feels messy and uncomfortable. In the end, it's worth it!