

The Talent Professional's Guide to Building High- Performing Teams

An introduction to leveraging brain
science to enhance productivity,
collaboration, and inclusion



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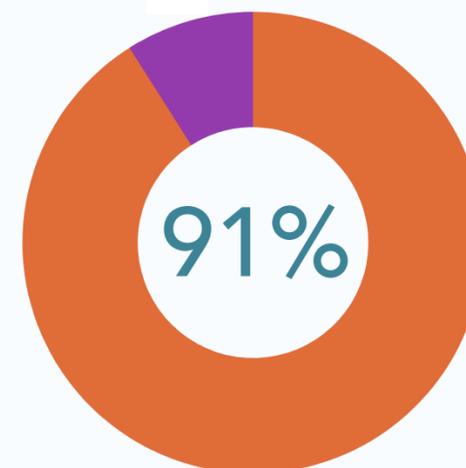




Teams matter more today than they ever have

Over 90% of employees say they spend one-third to one-half of each day working in teams¹ and are working on more than one team at a time.²

Around the world and across every sector, organizations are letting go of hierarchical structures and moving to team-based models, organizing employees into smaller networks that are agile and flexible.³ They're investing in web-based tools to enhance communication. And they're empowering employees to take control of their development more than ever before.



of employees and executives believe that teams are central to their organization's success.²

¹ Ken Blanchard Companies, Critical Role of Teams
² Center for Creative Leadership, The State of Teams
³ Bersin by Deloitte, Global Human Capital Trends



Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that is the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare.

Patrick Lencioni, Author
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team



Working in teams is challenging



1 out of 3 employees has considered leaving their job because of negative team environments.⁴

For many companies, the amount of time employees spend engaged in collaborative work has increased by roughly 50% and takes up 80% or more of their time.¹ We are on twice as many teams as we were five years ago.² And 65% of teams today are geographically dispersed.³

All of these shifts make coworking more difficult. Building relationships can feel forced rather than organic. And when relationship-building becomes shortchanged, it's harder to build trust, which in turn may lead to more conflict, decreased productivity, and ultimately attrition.

High turnover can devastate a group's development. Every time a team member leaves and is replaced, it not only pauses but actually backtracks progress. Over time, this can drive employee disengagement and turnover.⁵

1 Harvard Business Review, Collaborative Overload
2 Microsoft, US Information Worker Survey
3 Center for Creative Leadership, The State of Teams
4 Simpli5, Organizational Team Dynamics Survey
5 Andreatta, Wired to Connect



Dysfunctional teams are very costly

When employees leave, it can cost up to 250% of their salary plus benefits to replace them.¹ And disengaged employees cost their organizations 34% of their salary every year.² But disengagement and attrition only represent some of the potential costs. A team that fails to deliver on a project can cause enormous consequences, especially in today's fast-paced world where innovation and time-to-market can make or break a company. In some organizations, errors can threaten safety and even cost lives.

Consider the costs in your organization for these common consequences of poor or mediocre teams:³

- Declines in productivity, innovation, and quality
- Misses in production schedules and budget estimates
- Errors in judgment, procedures, and safety protocols
- Increases in employee disengagement and turnover

¹ Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

² Gallup, State of the American/Global Workplace

³ Andreatta, Wired to Connect

Leverage brain science to create great teams

Recent discoveries in neuroscience illuminate what differentiates the highest-performing teams from the rest. Brain science is universal, cutting across generation and gender as well as race and nationality.

While people are biologically wired to connect with others, critical conditions must be met in order to drive peak performance at work.

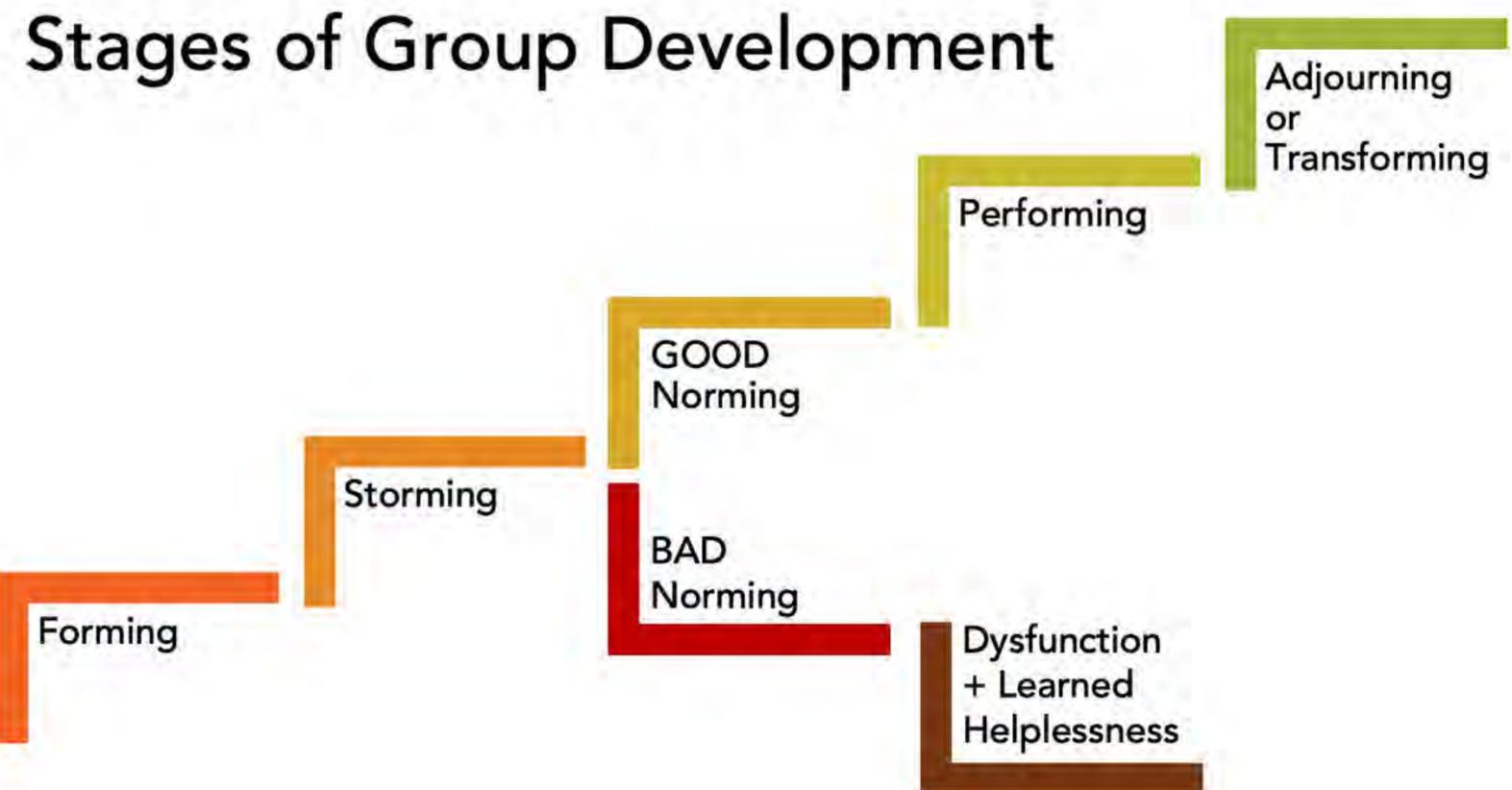
Use the following four steps to leverage the brain science of high-performing teams. These insights can be used in any industry and help you consistently build better and more effective teams.



Step 1

Help team leaders set the trajectory to high performance, early on.

Research shows that teams go through stages of development on their way to peak performance, and there is a critical juncture that sends them down one of two paths: good norming (respect, safety, trust) or bad norming (competition, apathy, toxic conflict). Team leaders play a critical role in which path the team takes as their early meetings and actions influence and establish norms. This ultimately determines whether the team's trajectory continues to high performance or spirals into dysfunction and learned helplessness.





Which path do teams at your organization follow?

Good Norming

- Team members are engaged and treat each other with respect
- The group communicates clearly and effectively
- People listen to one another, offer empathy, and actively resolve conflict
- Everyone contributes and works cohesively
- Team leader empowers the group to succeed



Bad Norming

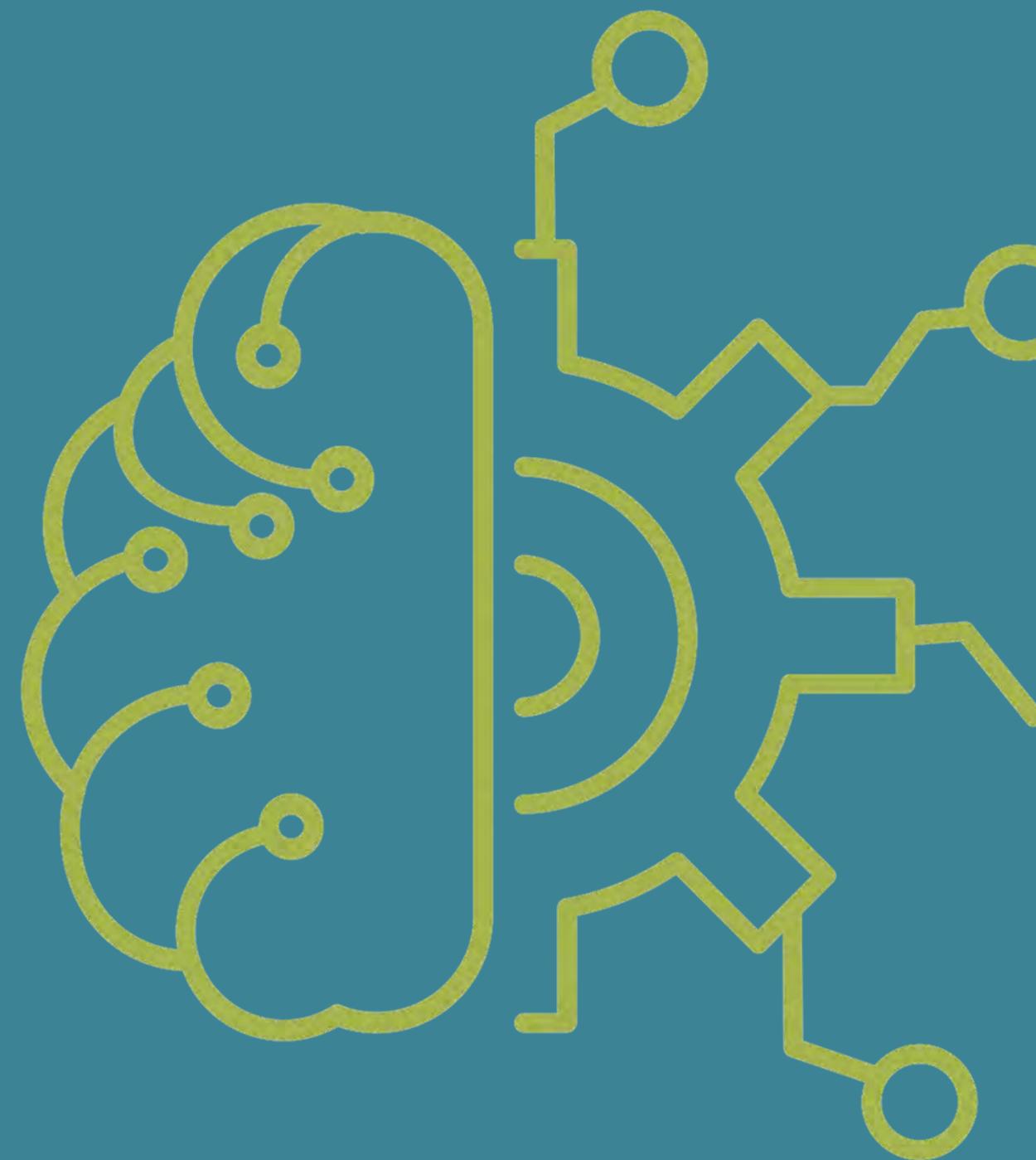
- Team members are apathetic or disrespectful to each other
- People don't communicate or actively withhold information
- People avoid conflict or talk about teammates behind their back
- The group splits into cliques
- Team leader is unaware or uninvolved

Brain Boost: high-performing teams

Peak performing teams exhibit what scientists call **neural synchrony** and **rhythm of team** where brain activity aligns as a sign of optimal performance.

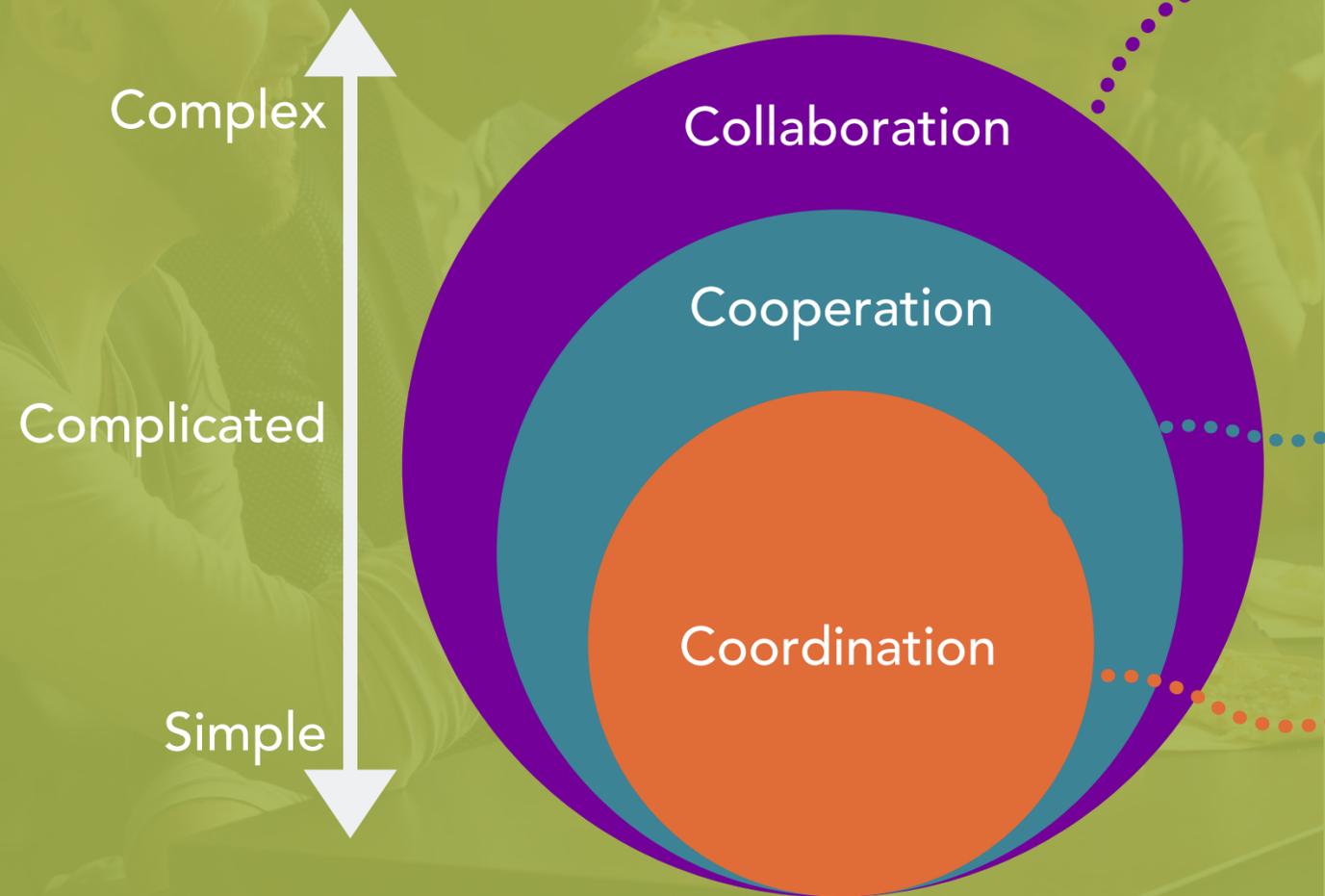
Mirror neurons fire in our brain when we see others in action or feeling emotions. This can help or hurt teams by fueling observational learning and empathy or group contagion of distress and disengagement.

Productivity and effective decision making declines when people don't feel **physically and emotionally safe**.



Step 2

Get familiar with the 3 types of teamwork and how to help teams succeed at each level.



Each day, teams are asked to move between coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. But often, they don't understand the difference or have the right skills to be successful. Let's take a look at each.

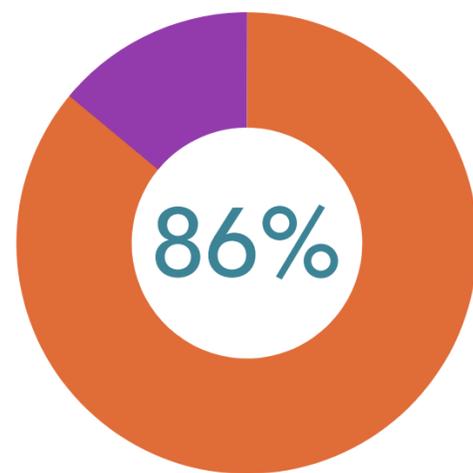
- **Collaboration** is the mutual engagement of a group of two or more people in a co-creative effort that achieves a shared goal or vision. The result is changed by the input of all the contributors. It requires the most advanced skills of building trust, engaging in creativity and innovation, and mindfully resolving inevitable conflict.
- **Cooperation** is the coordinated efforts of two or more people to perform their distinct portion of an agreed-upon process or task. It requires planning, alignment, and a clear process for execution.
- **Coordination** is the orchestrated efforts of individuals or groups to align separate actions to create efficiency. It requires basic communication and planning skills.

Team leaders are highly influential

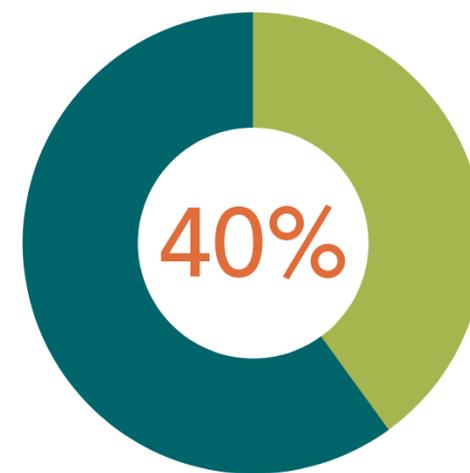
They create (or fail to create) the right conditions for team excellence, collaboration, and innovation.



But most organizations promote people into team leadership roles based on their performance as an individual contributor. Unless team leaders already possess a natural ability for creating the conditions for others to thrive, organizations should offer training in key concepts and skills.



of employees and executives attribute workplace failures to lack of collaboration or ineffective communication.¹



of employees believe decision-makers consistently failed to seek another opinion.¹



Assess your organization

Consider what collaboration looks like in your organization.

- How well do your teams move across the teamwork continuum?
- Are you assigning collaborative work to the right teams?
- Do your team leaders know how to create the right conditions for collaboration, by helping people think and perform together?





Psychological safety is a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject or punish someone for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. It is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking...

Dr. Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School and Author

Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy



Step 3

Teach team leaders how to create psychological safety, belonging, and inclusion.

Study after study has shown that psychological safety is the key differentiator of high-performing teams. It is the ground on which belonging and inclusion are built. Both team members and leaders need to understand how to create and maintain psychological safety.

INCLUSION

Intentional acts designed to help people feel part of something.

BELONGING

The feeling of being part of something; mattering to others.

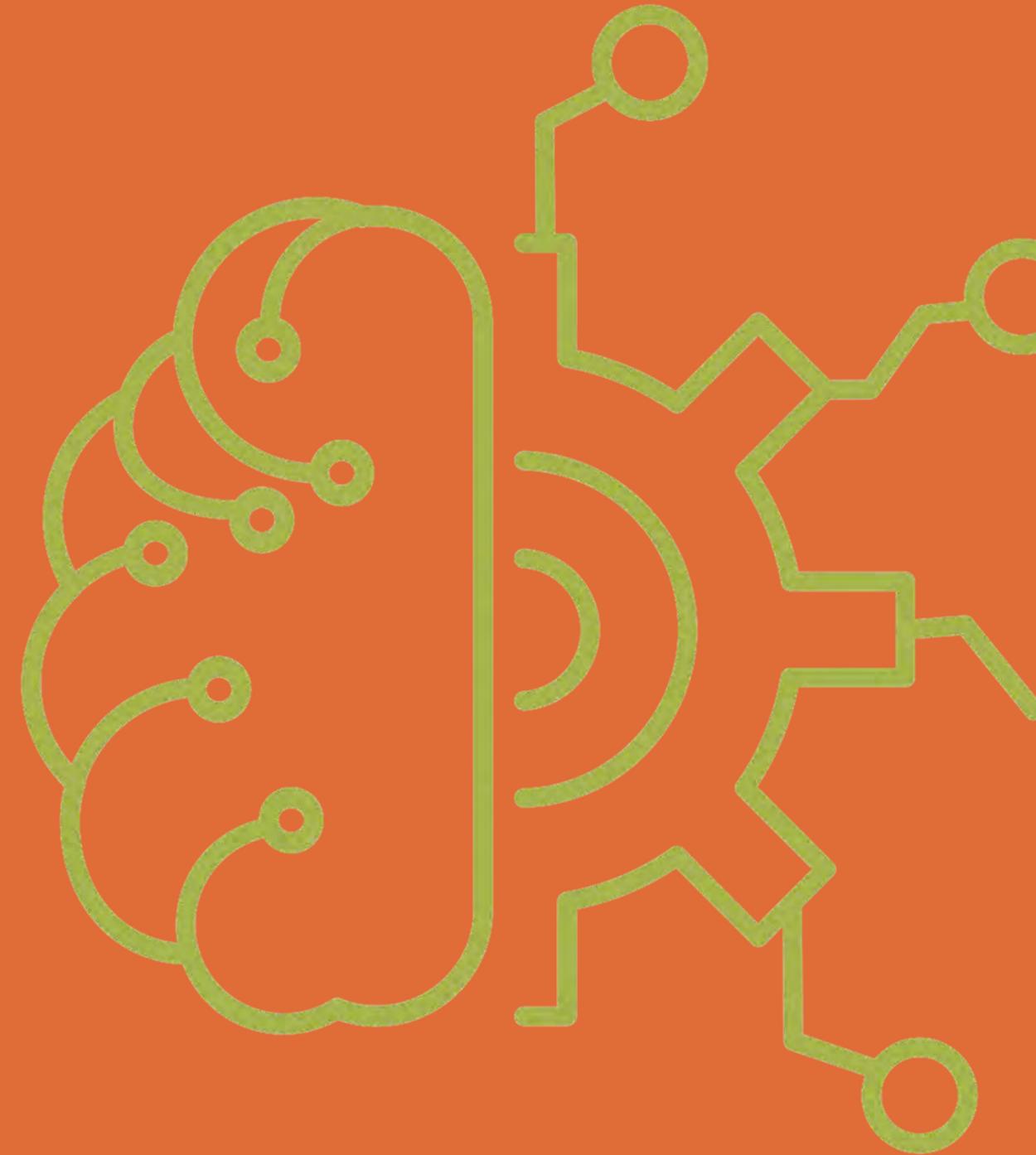
Brain Boost: why inclusion matters

Exclusion lights up the same part of the brain as **physical pain**.

Our brains continually track our social status and **potential marginalization** from groups.

Effects of **long-term exclusion** include:

- Decreased performance and impulse control
- Increased illness, anxiety, and depression
- Increased likelihood of substance abuse and addiction
- Increased violence to self or others





7 strategies

leaders can use to build more inclusive teams

- 1 Onboard people to the group or project thoughtfully
- 2 Assign mentors or buddies to foster relationships
- 3 Empower social connections through activities
- 4 Address micro-aggressions and other acts of exclusion
- 5 Recognize and value each member's contributions
- 6 Have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying/harassment
- 7 Provide training on inclusion, bias, and empathy



If you are not actively working to make your team members feel part of an inclusive, supportive group, then there are a number of ways (many subtle and unintentional) that you may be creating an environment of social exclusion and its resulting negative consequences.

*Dr. Christine Cox, Cognitive Neuroscientist
New York University Langone Medical Center*





Assess your organization

Consider how issues of safety and inclusion play out in your organization.

- Do any teams seem to be showing signs of distress (for example, increased illnesses, disengagement, complaints, or attrition)?
- Which of your team leaders have the skills to build psychological safety and inclusion?
- Do your executives know how to create the right culture and climate for high-performing teams?



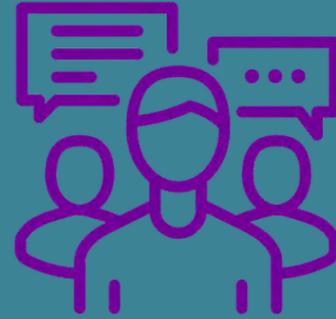
Step 4

Bring the Four Gates to Peak Team Performance model to your organization and unleash the potential of every team.

Join other organizations who are leveraging this new brain-based model to create high-performing teams time and time again. The data is clear: We are wired to connect with others and, when we do, both teams and individuals can perform at their fullest potential.

Four Gates to Peak Team Performance™





Teams naturally reach high performance in three to five years. But get this right and you fast track it to as little as six months. Understanding how the brain works literally accelerates everything.

Zane Harris, Chief Executive Officer
NeuroPower Group



Four Gates to Peak Team Performance



SAFETY

The first gate is a sense of physical and psychological safety. If we don't have that, it's impossible for team members to perform at their best, develop trust, or ever achieve peak performance.



PURPOSE

Next, every team member needs to have a clear sense of purpose for working together and the ability to make meaningful contributions. Otherwise, they won't lean in and bring their best work.



BELONGING

While most teams get to Gate 3, very few know how to excel here, and yet it's the secret sauce that catapults teams forward. The third gate is where teams develop a true sense of belonging and trust.



PEAK PERFORMING

The fourth and final gate is peak performance. The team is operating at its best, engaging in true collaboration and innovation that drives the organization forward. Members feel very positive about the team and their teammates.

The last piece of the model is the linchpin that holds it all together: teams have to be **held accountable as a unit**. This is where most organizations make their mistake. They have lots of groups working together but unless they are held accountable as a unit, it's not really a team.



5 strategies

leaders can use to hold teams accountable as a unit

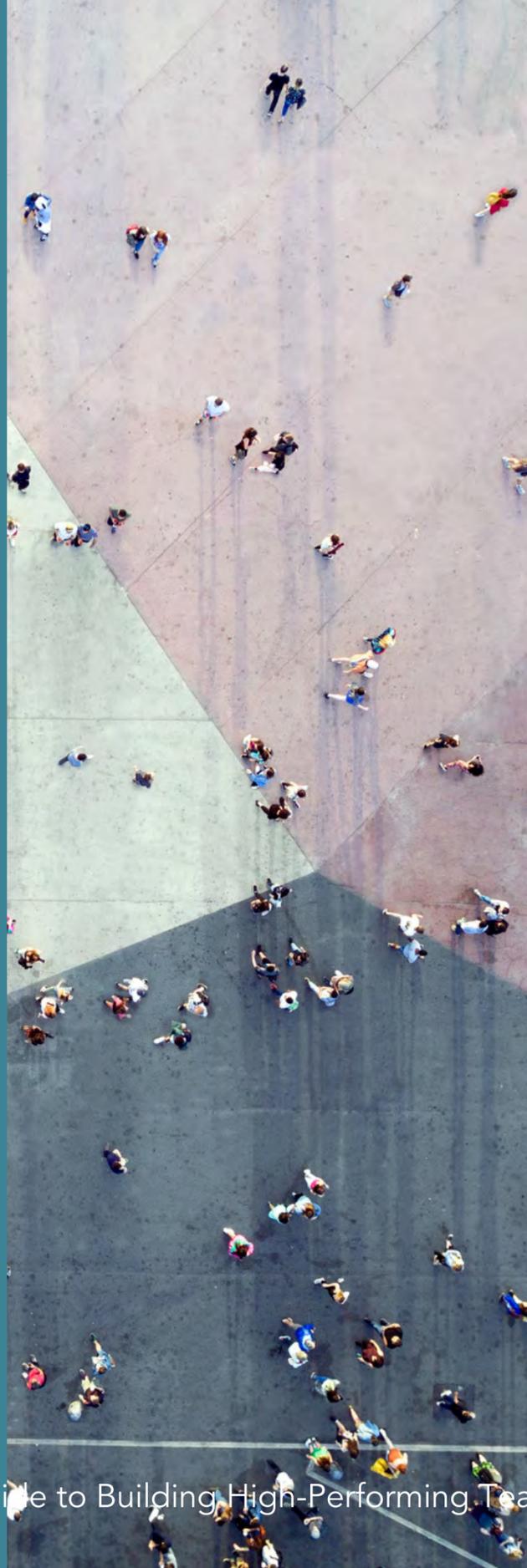
- 1 Set expectations and agreements in early meetings
- 2 Set up a process for resolving conflict before it arises
- 3 Create productive ways for teammates to call out compliments and critiques
- 4 Articulate clear and fair consequences for violations
- 5 In performance reviews, articulate the difference between contributions made to a team and other work done as an individual contributor



*You don't inspire your teammates by showing them how amazing you are. You inspire them by showing them how amazing **THEY** are.*

Robyn Benincasa, World Champion Adventure Racer and Author
How Winning Works: 8 Essential Leadership Lessons from the Toughest Teams on Earth





Invest in the future of teams today

You're now that much closer to leveraging the foundations of brain science to build productive, collaborative, and inclusive teams. Don't forget, successful adoption and behavior change requires buy-in and support from every member of your organization, from senior executives to team members. This ebook provides the insights to consistently create high-performing teams.

Let's get every team to Gate 4!

About Four Gates to Peak Team Performance

The Four Gates to Peak Team Performance is a brain science–based training program that helps individuals and organizations consistently create high-performing teams. You'll learn the secrets for leveraging human biology to bring out the best in teams again and again. This groundbreaking approach gives participants new tools and strategies they can implement immediately.

[LEARN MORE](#)



This robust, brain-based training program includes:

- Content for three audience levels: Team Leaders, Team Members, and Executives
- Extensive workbooks with engaging hands-on activities that drive real and sustained behavior change
- Micro-learning videos that support a variety of learning formats
- Ample materials to rollout in a variety of formats and timeframes
- Copy of "Wired to Connect: The Brain Science of Teams and a New Model for Creating Collaboration and Inclusion" Online and self-paced certification process makes it easy to get up and running quickly

About the Author



Britt Andreatta, PhD

Dr. Britt Andreatta is an internationally recognized thought leader who creates brain science–based solutions for today's workplace challenges. Drawing on her unique background in leadership, neuroscience, psychology, and learning, she unlocks the best in people and organizations. Her global clients range from Fortune 100 companies to nonprofit organizations and education institutions.

Britt has published several books on the brain science of success including her most recent book "Wired to Connect: The Brain Science of Teams and a New Model for Creating Collaboration and Inclusion."

She has over 10 million views worldwide of her courses on Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning, and is a highly sought-after and engaging speaker.

To learn more, visit her website and social channels:

 BrittAndreatta.com

 [linkedin.com/in/brittandreatta/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/brittandreatta/)

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