

Helping Teams Where it Hurts

- Marcia Hughes and James Terrell



Copyright © Collaborative Growth ® LLC. All Rights Reserved.

While most of the work for organizations is accomplished by teams, just imagine team productivity if their pain was attended to! You can listen to our recent [webinar](#) to gain many specific strategies on how to help teams make this transition. In this article we will highlight several areas where we've seen considerable team pain and strategies for resolving the concerns.

Much of team pain revolves around emotions including as part of how they handle relationships, how they manage their impulses, and how team members communicate their emotions and manage their assertiveness. Each of these and so many other challenges are resolved by effective use of emotional and social intelligence, often labeled EI. Emotional Intelligence, or better yet, emotional and social effectiveness, is a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way. Teams benefit from team members who are skilled in effective EI and where they apply EI at the group level.

7 team competencies measured by the Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey (TESI) provide a strategic format for understanding team pain.

Team Identity reflects the level of pride and connection members feel with the team. It indicates how well the team demonstrates belongingness, and how strong a sense of role clarity is established for each member.

Pain/ Challenge points show up as:

- Disengaged / apathetic behavior
- Self-focused not team just a group of individuals
- Failure to know & agree on goals/mission

Solutions or strategic actions include:

- Facilitated retreat with an expert guiding the team through challenges and to develop new ways
- Build WIFFM (what's in it for me and for my team) so everyone knows WHY they are on they are on the team and why everyone else is there as well.
- Share responsibilities.



Motivation shows the team's level of internal resources for generating and sustaining the energy necessary to get the job done well and on time. It gives feedback on whether creative thinking is promoted and if members are driven to achieve together.

Pain / Challenge points show up as:

- Lack of trust
- Lack of purpose
- Lack of advocacy

Solution

- Team collaborates to establish purpose through focused discussion and an emphasis on reaching agreement that then is broadly stated and made visible to the full organization
- Establish reliable consistent communication
- Leaders advocate for the team and team members know about the advocacy.

Emotional Awareness measures how sensitive and responsive team members are to each other's feelings. Does the team value and respect negative as well as positive feelings?

Pain / Challenge points show up as

- Missing non-verbal communication, resulting in many feeling misunderstood
- Feeling wounded, taken for granted or not being seen
- Ignoring team members

Solution

- Non-verbal skills building
- Listen with the ears of your heart through active listening practice and then keeping attention on continuing to build this skill
- Focus on each member at various times in team meetings, have them give brief presentations, lead a topical discussion or take on other responsibilities.



Communication reflects how accurately the team sends and receives emotional and cognitive information. It indicates how well team members listen, encourage participation, share information and discuss sensitive matters. It indicates the extent to which team members acknowledge contributions and give feedback to one another.

Pain / Challenge is reflected through:

- Poor listeners
- Introverts not finding ways to engage
- Missing the message

Solution

- Active listening practice
- Develop new engagement strategies to bring team members together in new pairs or small groups that haven't worked together as much
- Match message & receiver by literally stopping during communications sometimes to see if what one is responding to reflects understanding of what the other intended to communicate.

Stress Tolerance measures how well the team understands the types and intensity of the stress factors impacting its members and the team as a whole. It addresses whether team members feel safe with one another, and if they will step in if someone on the team needs help. Stress tolerance reflects the level of work/life balance that the team is able to achieve including its ability to manage workload expectations.

Pain / Challenge

- Increasingly being asked to do more with less
- Team members feeling like they are in an emotionally unsafe work environment
- Resistance

Solution

- Listen & respond
- Facilitated intervention
- Establish positive approach by building speaking and acting strategies that create a positive environment – catch people doing things well and commend them!



Conflict Resolution capabilities show how willing the team is to engage in conflict openly and constructively without needing to get even. It measures the ability to be flexible and to respond to challenging situations without blaming one another. Conflict is natural, and will happen when any team is engaged in fulfilling its purpose. It can be an opportunity for growth or it can destroy a team.

Pain / Challenge

- Increasingly being asked to do more with less
- Abuse of power by leaders or de facto leaders
- Poor impulse control

Solution

- Build individual EI skills through individual and group coaching and training
- Set boundaries and enforce accountability
- Train and hold team members accountable to work together to resolve conflict.

Positive Mood reflects the positive attitude of the team in general as well as when the team is under pressure. Positive mood scores indicate the members' willingness to provide encouragement, their sense of humor, and how successful the team expects to be. It is a major support for a team's flexibility and resilience. Positive Mood gives feedback on how well the team deals with pressure and if the team has a can-do attitude.

Pain / Challenge

- Missing work/life balance
- No support from leaders above
- Dysfunctional organizational culture

Solution

- Act to manage workload
- Create support among the team members
- Advocate for organizational change – show the way through your team's functioning!

The benefits to noticing where your teams have pain and proactively responding are quite likely to exceed your expectations! Give it a go!