

Healthy Teams: Dynamics and Tactics for Successful Working Groups



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**Kira Mauseth, Ph.D.
Astrum Health, LLC
www.astrumhealthllc.org**



COMMON WORK GROUP OR TEAM ISSUES

Any of these sound familiar?

- STRONGER, MORE VISIBLE EMOTIONS
- IMPULSIVITY (DECISION MAKING)
- REACTIVITY (TO OTHERS AND TO CHANGES)
- STRONGER, MORE ENTRENCHED OPINIONS
- ANXIETY AND FEARS ABOUT THE FUTURE (BUSINESS, GLOBAL, PERSONAL)
- MORE MISUNDERSTANDINGS



Consider the context of where we are with
behavioral health in 2023

**“A PROBLEM NEVER EXISTS IN ISOLATION;
IT IS SURROUNDED BY OTHER PROBLEMS IN
SPACE AND TIME. THE MORE OF THE
CONTEXT OF A PROBLEM THAT A SCIENTIST
CAN COMPREHEND, THE GREATER ARE
THEIR CHANCES OF FINDING A TRULY
ADEQUATE SOLUTION.”**

-Russell Ackoff

TOP THREE CONTRIBUTORS TO TEAM AND WORK GROUP DYSFUNCTION

1

Cultural and social
context of 2023
“post” pandemic
and global
awareness

2

Work culture,
technology,
burnout and
constant
“availability”

3

Difficulties in
managing personal
and family
stressors and
challenges



Social and cultural context

Global awareness, political strife, interpersonal (in-group / out-group) conflict, cultural change at a very fast pace, ALL contribute to increased stressors that have a physiological impact on how we function, how we sleep, communicate and engage.



Changing expectations around availability; the ways that remote work have changed our team dynamics, and where the boundaries REALLY are (or should be).

Necessary Workplace Cultural Shift



On-duty or
at work



On-call or
available



OFF

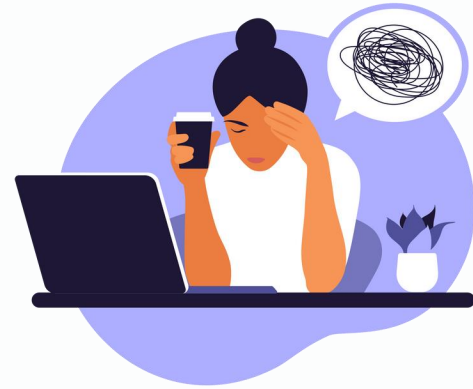


Personal and family stressors

The same challenging dynamics that play out in work groups are also playing out in our personal lives. We can't just turn that off and leave it at home during the workday- particularly if we are actually working in that environment.



CONSEQUENCES OF JOB STRESS OVER TIME



Burnout

Exhaustion of body, mind, and motivation due to exposure to prolonged and unresolved stress or frustration; a consequence of perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the available resources.



Compassion fatigue

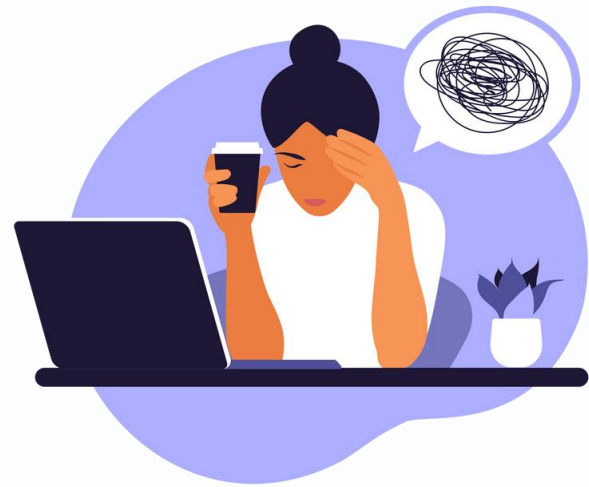
Emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, also described as secondary traumatic stress.



Moral Injury

Strong feelings of guilt, shame, or anger due to not being able to provide the kind of care or service you want and expect to provide; often a trauma response

BURNOUT



KEY TAKE AWAY

Healthy, clear boundaries between work and off time are essential for reducing burnout.

What to avoid:

- Professional and social isolation
- Saying “yes” when you need to say “sorry, no, I don’t have the capacity to do that right now”.
- Feeling guilty for taking some mission critical time off.

What do DO:

- Establish your “off time” boundaries. Hours, days or segments of time that are unavailable for work-related tasks.
- List things you can do during time off that are completely unrelated to work (e.g., re-watch your favorite show, teach yourself a new hobby using online resources, get lost in a book).
- Create and USE a personal coping plan

So, what can we DO?

Accessible tactics and strategies for
leaders and team members on the
path forward



Strategy is the action plan that takes you where you want to go



***Tactics* are the individual steps and actions that will get you there.**

KEY ISSUES ON THE ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

**Managing through crisis,
unknowns, upheaval and
associated fears**

3. ADAPT & THRIVE (c)

**2. Effective
Communication**

1. Process vs. Content



OVERALL GOAL: Managing through crisis and unexpected events

Strategy:

- **Create clear, structured and organized response processes for critical incidents, unexpected losses or tragic events.**

**EMERGENCY
RESPONSE
PLAN**

Tactics:

- Identify key roles for team members that are attached to the job / job description.
- Develop a solid understanding of human physiology as it relates to how the brain and body process stress so you can understand (and empathize) with how you are experiencing things and how others may be responding.
- Increase team member awareness of behavioral health as a priority for overall team success by talking about it regularly and checking in.
- Develop a team / group or larger response plan for larger scale incidents so people know what their roles are and what is expected of them.
- Create cultural team norms around expectations for support (acknowledgement, time away, etc)

SPECIFIC GOAL #1: Process over Content

- This one is a ‘hard sell’ for many managers: HOW you do things is often more important than WHAT you do. Particularly when a team or group is in upheaval and there are many unknowns.
- When establishing the new normal, focus on processes (when content often remains unknown)
- How do you want to feel about the choices and steps you are making, rather than what do you want to do?
- When faced with conflict or confrontation, focus your attention on HOW you are engaging, listening, responding and behaving.



HOW

Specific Goal #2: Maintain effective communication

Strategy:

- Develop insight and awareness about the tone, non-verbal messages, and response patterns YOU have when you are stressed or trying to get things done.

Tactics:

- Engage in more active listening (not problem solving)
- Apply evidence-based de-escalation techniques as needed

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

STARTS WITH FOUR THINGS

- Knowing what "temp zone" you are in
- Recognizing what "temp zone" others are in.
- Application of a "challenge" mindset (rather than threat)
- Mindful use of your non-verbal messages.





CLARIFY

REFLECT
BACK

**EXPRESS
EMPATHY**

~~**PROBLEM
SOLVE**~~

SAFE Model (c) for De-escalation

SAFE model provides key concepts to keep in mind:

- Self: monitor your own reactions, non-verbal messages, tone, wording and physical space
- Area Awareness: Be aware of resources, help, exits other things in your physical space
- Feelings: Use active listening to try to uncover the source of the anger; in crisis often the things people are angry about are not the same thing as the underlying causes.
- Engagement: Engage support for yourself following an encounter with an angry person, don't just ignore it or pretend it didn't happen.

SELF

- Non-Verbal Messages:
Posture, hands,
position, distance
- Tone of Voice
- Speed
- Your communication
"zone"
- "walk up" song / vibe





Area Awareness

Resources, Exits, Colleagues,
Potential Weapons. Avoid
"tunnel vision".



FEELINGS

“

**Anger is a Bodyguard
Emotion.**

Anger is very often an expression of grief, sadness, or fear. Use Active Listening to figure out what is happening UNDERNEATH the expressed distress.

"I sat with my anger long enough for her to tell me her real name was grief." - CS Lewis

ENGAGE

- Support for yourself
- Other, external resources
- Colleagues



**Specific Goal #3:
ADAPT & THRIVE (c)**



HEALTHY WORK TEAMS AND CULTURES

THRIVE

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with a
focus on...

Transparency

Health

Resilience

Integration

Values & Vision

Effort

THRIVE© with a focus
on
TRANSPARENCY



Modeling desired behaviors engages ‘Social Learning Theory’, the process by which much of human behavior is learned.



ALL TEAM MEMBERS can influence large-scale individual and cultural change



WALK the **WALK** with healthy behaviors and communication tactics
(not just Talk the Talk)



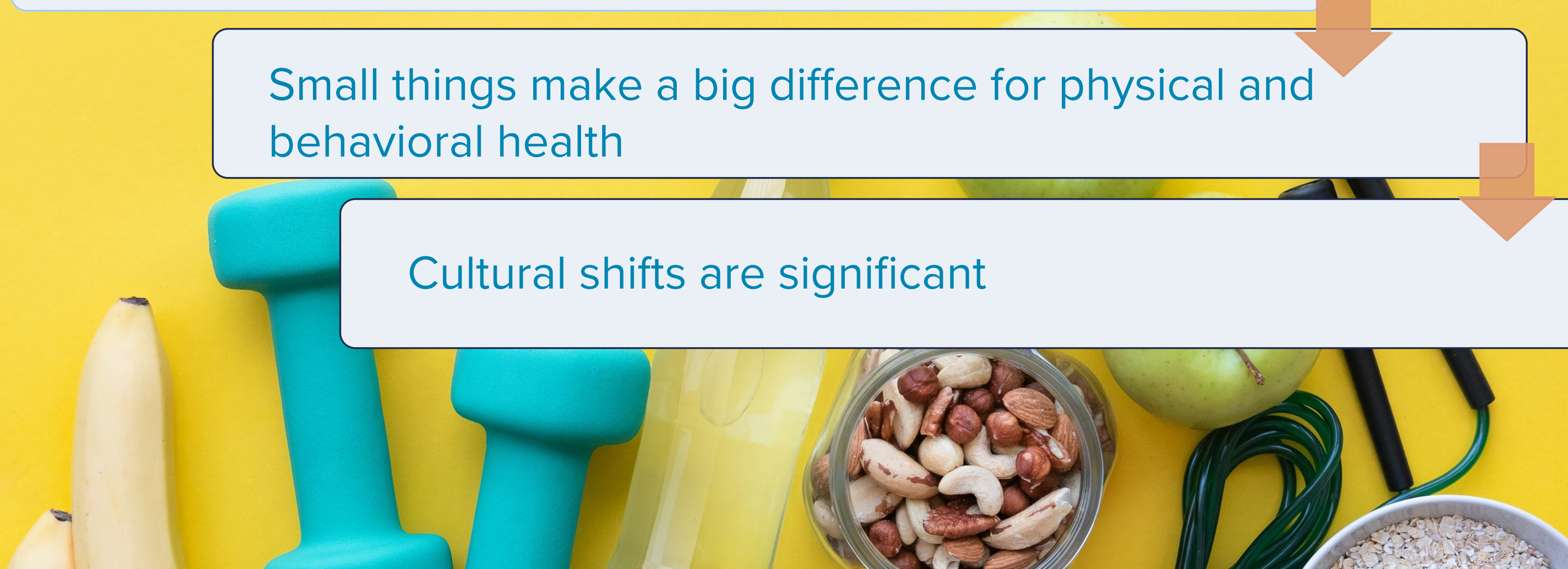
Transparency includes not-so-good news too, as well as coping strategies and struggles

THRIVE© with a focus on **HEALTH**

Health and wellbeing / wellness are 'mission critical'

Small things make a big difference for physical and behavioral health

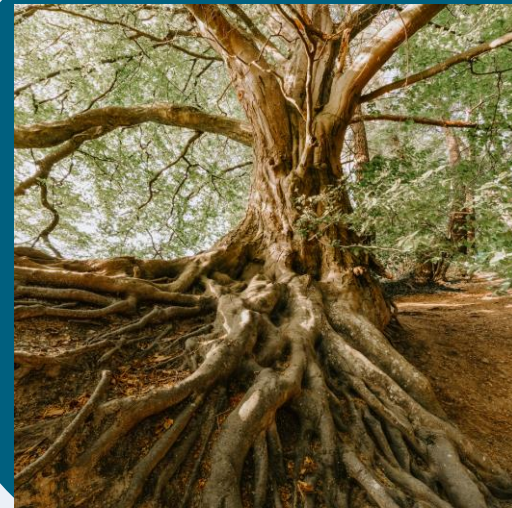
Cultural shifts are significant



THRIVE© with a focus on
RESILIENCE



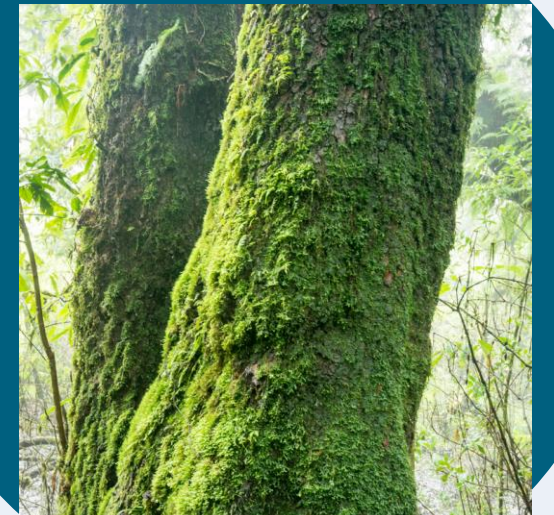
Purpose
(fruit of the tree)



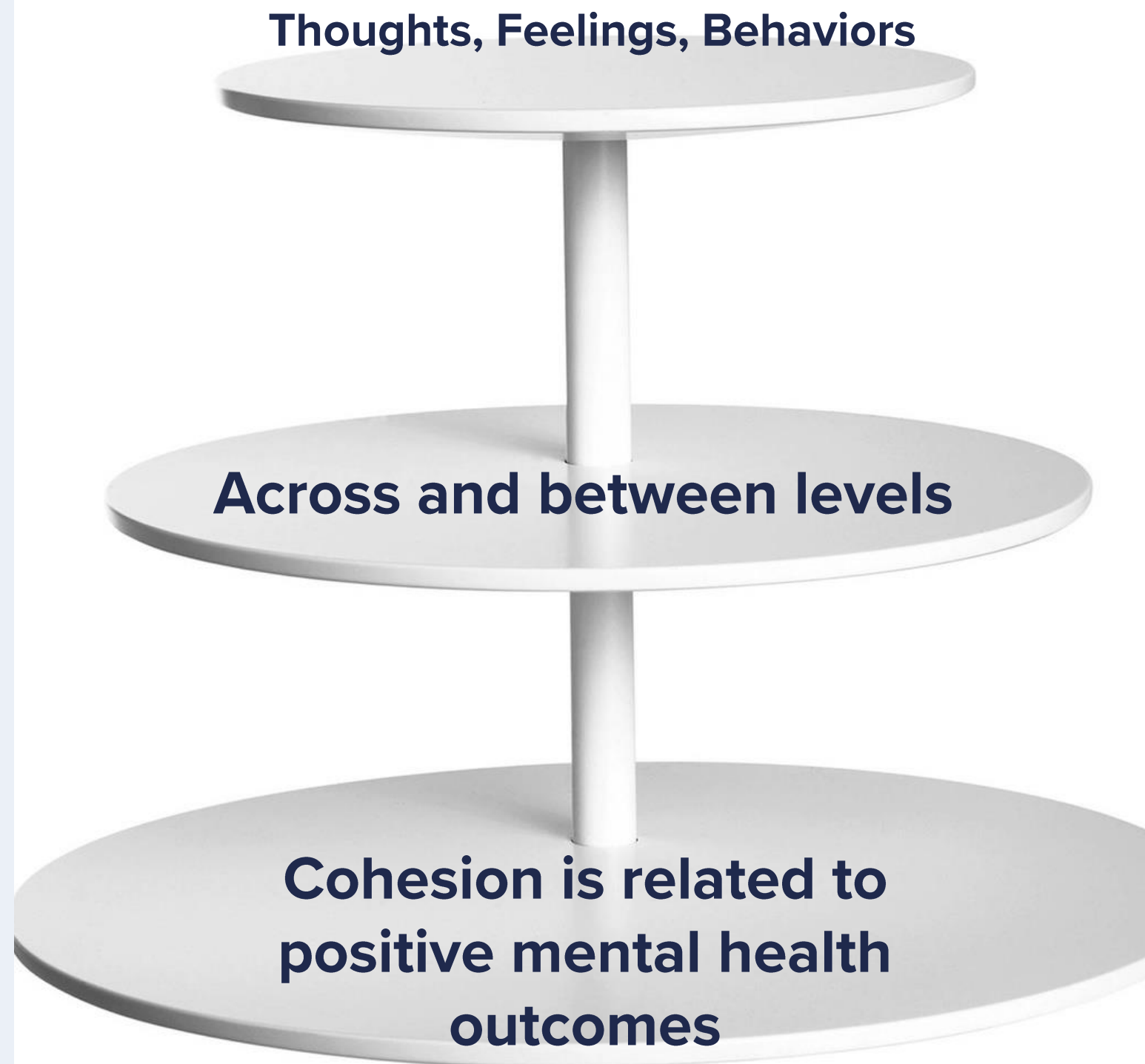
Connection
(roots of the tree)



**Flexibility /
Adaptability**
(trunk of the tree)



Hope
(moss on the tree)



THRIVE[©] WITH A FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

3. From the larger group to the public or external partners- what is the role and reputation we want our group to have?

2. Amongst team members = are we clear about our team goals and what we are working towards?

1. Internal = brain: limbic system and pre-frontal cortex

THRIVE© with a
focus on

VALUES & VISION

- Who do you want to be?
- How do you want your team to operate?
- What are your opportunities and challenges?
- Orientation towards core values (as an individual) and mission (as an org) makes decisions, actions and changes easier.

CORE VALUES

THRIVE© with a focus on

EFFORT

- Success and performance are more accurately measured by the degree of effort being put forth.
- Acknowledging the work that is being done in process, in a way that lands with people.
- Individual and team applications.
- Recognition of effort goes a long way in increasing team cohesion / unity.



TO SUM UP: BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTHY TEAMS

- COMMUNICATION strategies and tactics:
 - More transparency around resources, options, plans, etc.
 - More active listening
 - Slower, intentional, responding others with low defensiveness
 - Recognition of effort and appreciation for work. Expression of gratitude
 - Awareness of limbic responding, and ACTIVE repair attempts- taking responsibility when you act in a way inconsistent with your core values.
- An operational focus on resilience and wellness (this means healthy boundaries, programing, and logistical support). A culture where behavioral health is included as a priority.
- Cohesion and shared knowledge around what the group is doing, to become a “team” that is aligned and working together towards a goal or set of goals where everyone is clear on what that is and what their individual roles are.

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