Organizational Wellness: A Strategy for Rural Behavioral Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Rachel L. Navarro, Ph.D. & Topaza Yu

University of North Dakota

February 8, 2024

Disclaimer and Funding Statement

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).
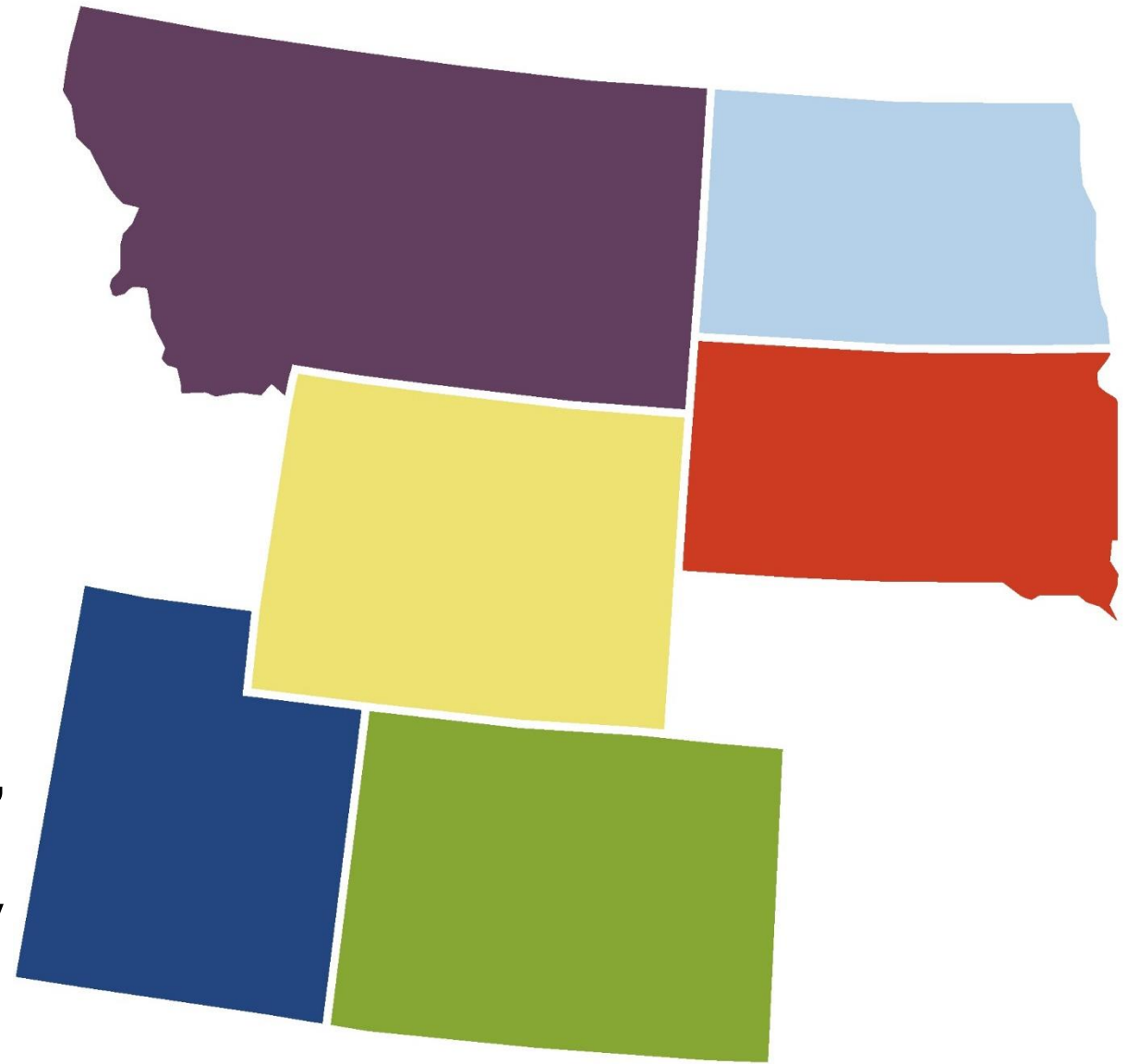
Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.
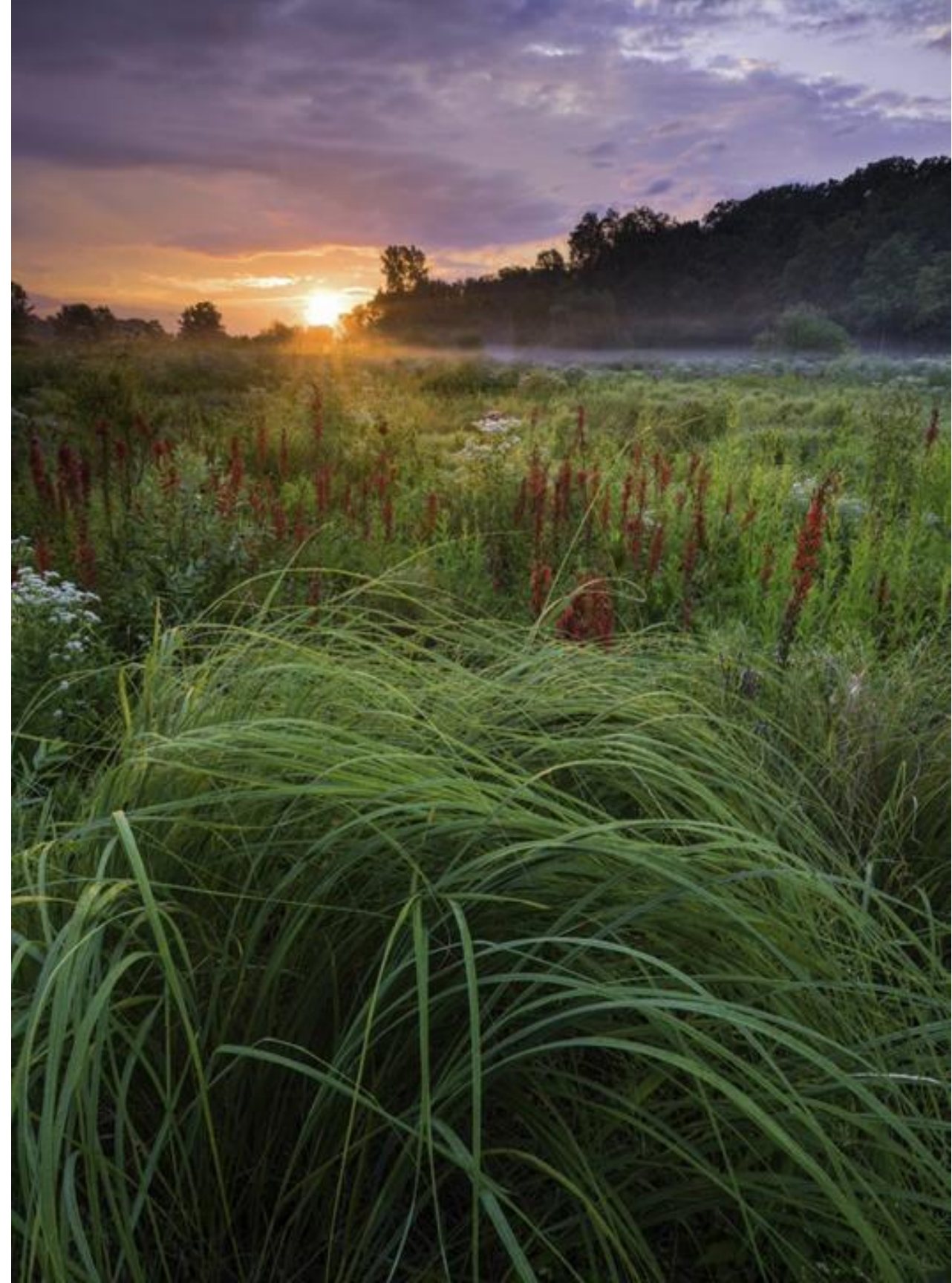
The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING IN THEIR OWN JOURNEYS

STRENGTHS-BASED AND HOPEFUL

PERSON-FIRST AND FREE OF LABELS

INCLUSIVE AND ACCEPTING OF DIVERSE CULTURES, GENDERS, PERSPECTIVES, AND EXPERIENCES

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE

HEALING-CENTERED AND TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

CONSISTENT WITH OUR ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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SCAN ME
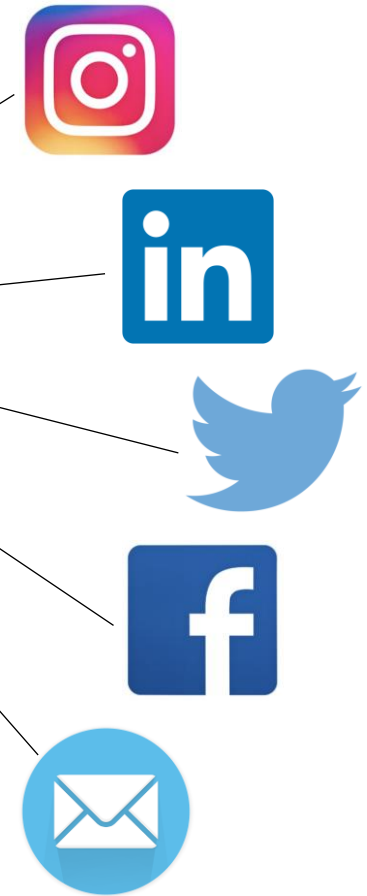
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SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)
MHTTC Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Today's Agenda

- Current Mental Health Workforce Trends

- Key Factors in Turnover & Burnout

- Key Factors in Retention

- Strategies for Recruitment and Retention

Current Workforce Trends

- Majority of behavioral professionals were practicing in metropolitan areas (Nguyen et al., 2016)

- Rural and frontier areas had lower ratios of providers to population (Nguyen et al., 2016)

- As of December 2023, more than half of the U.S. population lives in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (Mental Health HPSA) (National Center for Health Force Analysis [NCHWA], 2023).

- Substantial shortages of addiction counselors, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists are projected into 2036 (NCHWA, 2023).

Negative Consequences of Rural Mental Healthcare Worker Turnover & Burnout

Mental Healthcare Workers

EXTREME EXHAUSTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

INCREASED INCIDENTS OF ISOLATION, SUBSTANCE USE, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION

INCREASED PROBLEMS WITH INSOMNIA, HEART DISEASE, AND DIABETES

Patients/Clients/Consumers

DELAYS IN CARE

LOWER QUALITY CARE

Health Care System

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

LIMITED-SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY, AVAILABILITY, AND AFFORDABILITY

INCREASED COSTS

Community and Society

LIMITED-SERVICE ACCEPTABILITY

EROSION OF TRUST

(Murphy, 2022; Office of the US Surgeon, 2022; Watanabe et al., 2015)

Key Factors in the Turnover and Burnout of Rural Mental Health Providers

Stress, Isolation, & General Lack of Focus on Worker Well-Being	High Caseloads with Lack of Resources for Complex Cases	Inadequate pay or compensation	Limited Flexibility, Autonomy, & Voice
Poor Management Support and Leadership	Lack of Quality Supervision	Lack of Professional Development Opportunities	Lack of Teamwork, Collaboration, Vulnerability, & Collegiality among Staff
Limited Resources and Funding to Implement Best Practices	Biased and discriminatory structures and practices	Cultural Differences	

(Adams et al., 2022;,Murphy, 2022; Nicolotti, 2022; ,Office of the US Surgeon, 2022; Watanabe et al., 2015)

Workforce Retention

What is working? (Supports)

- Collaboration with organizations that can help in disseminating and implementing evidence-based behavioral health practices (Patel et al., 2022)

- Implementation of financial and technical assistance infrastructure (Hoge et al., 2013)
  - Loan Repayment Plans (Hoge et al., 2013)
  - Telehealth (Avey & Hobbs, 2013)

Workforce Retention

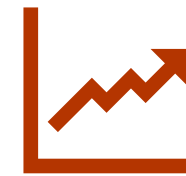**Other Reasons People Stay**

Compatibility of Values

Formal and Informal Relationships

Financial, Family, and Career Benefits

So……How do we recruit and retain a resilient rural mental health workforce?

We focus on………..

Wellbeing and Wellness

A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
Stress and burnout are common, and reactive approaches are insufficient

AFFECTS SYSTEMS & WORKPLACE CULTURE
Healthcare professionals are a critical factor in creating healthy systems and environments for patients

AN ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY
We have a duty to help promote healthy workplaces and healthcare environments

RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Healthcare professional burnout leads to costly absenteeism, attrition, and hiring concerns

IMPACTS PATIENT CARE
Healthcare professional stress impacts delivery of services and patient care

A RESEARCH DRIVEN DECISION
Research suggests that programs to reduce stress and improve wellbeing are effective

Relationship of Organizational and Personal Wellbeing

Practical Strategies for Promoting Organizational Wellness

Practical Strategies for Promoting Organizational Wellness

- Organizational Commitment to a Culture of Care

- Compassionate Leadership

- Assessment of Organizational Culture & Climate

Organizational Commitment to a Culture of Care

Start with Recruitment

- Effective and fair human resources processes
    - Accessible and reasonable application process for the applicant
    - Equitable evaluation, interview, and selection processes of applications

- Interview day
    - set aside time for an informal meet and greet with current employees who will not be the job candidate's direct supervisors and who do not hold executive director or administrative roles

Organizational Commitment to a Culture of Care

Establish Organizational Rituals and Traditions

Starting each staff meeting with "good" or "new" news that folks would like to share with the group
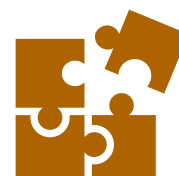
Monthly social events during the workday (e.g., coffee chats, short group-based scavenger hunts, trivia games, brown bag lunch socials, etc.)

Establish birthday and work anniversary traditions (make sure to ask each staff about their comfort level with this activity)

Organizational Commitment
to a Culture of Care

Make Meaningful Investments in People

GENEROUS BENEFITS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ONGOING FORMAL MENTORSHIP AND/OR COACHING

Organizational Commitment to a Culture of Care

Hold people accountable with care

Set clear expectations for yourself and your team

Maintain attention on the goal through reviewing progress in 1:1s and team meetings

Create psychological safety aka do not expect perfection

Provide coaching when needed

Provide constructive and solution-oriented responses to missteps. "What can we learn from this?"
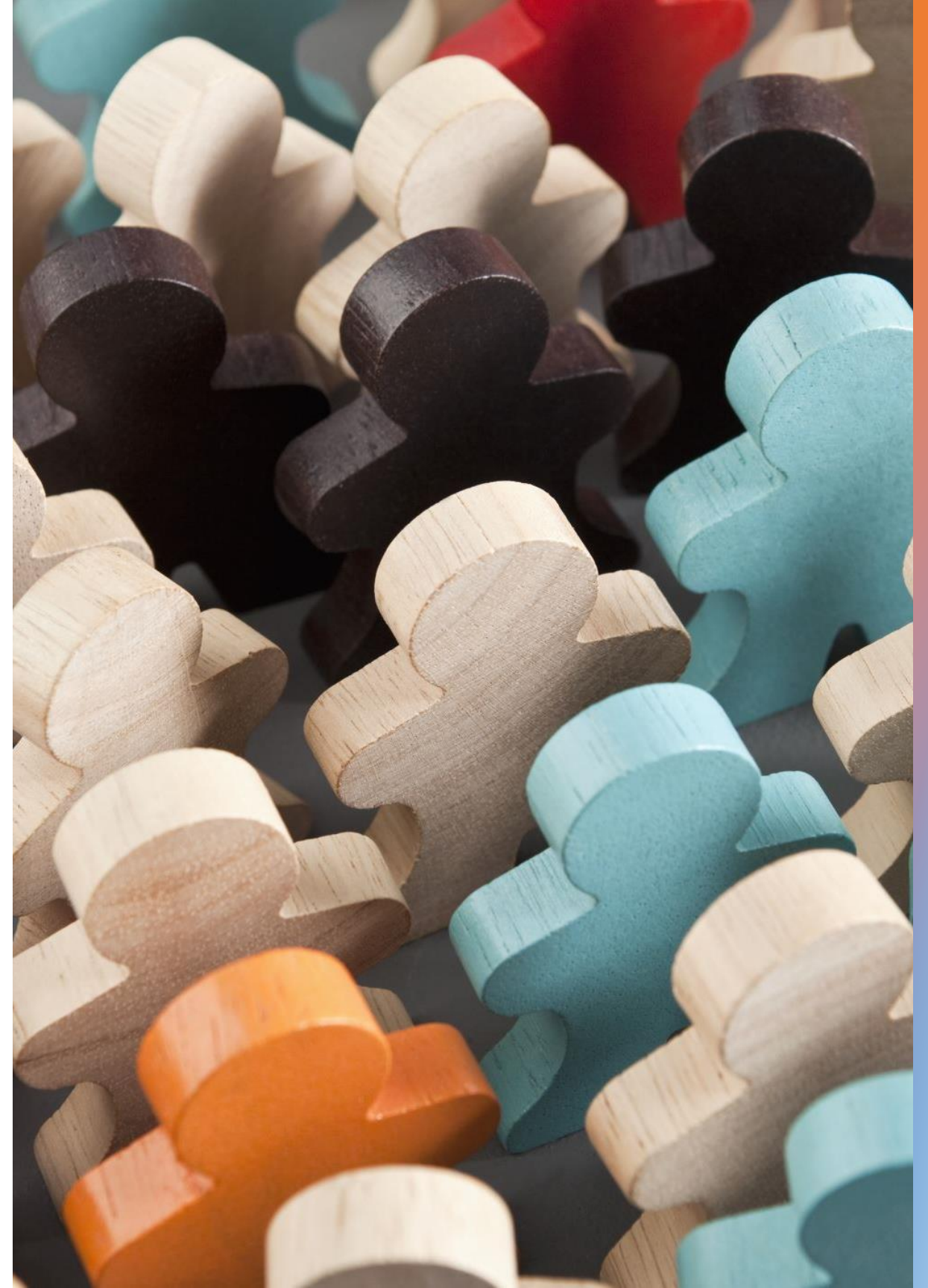
Compassionate Leadership & the Four Pillars

- Attending
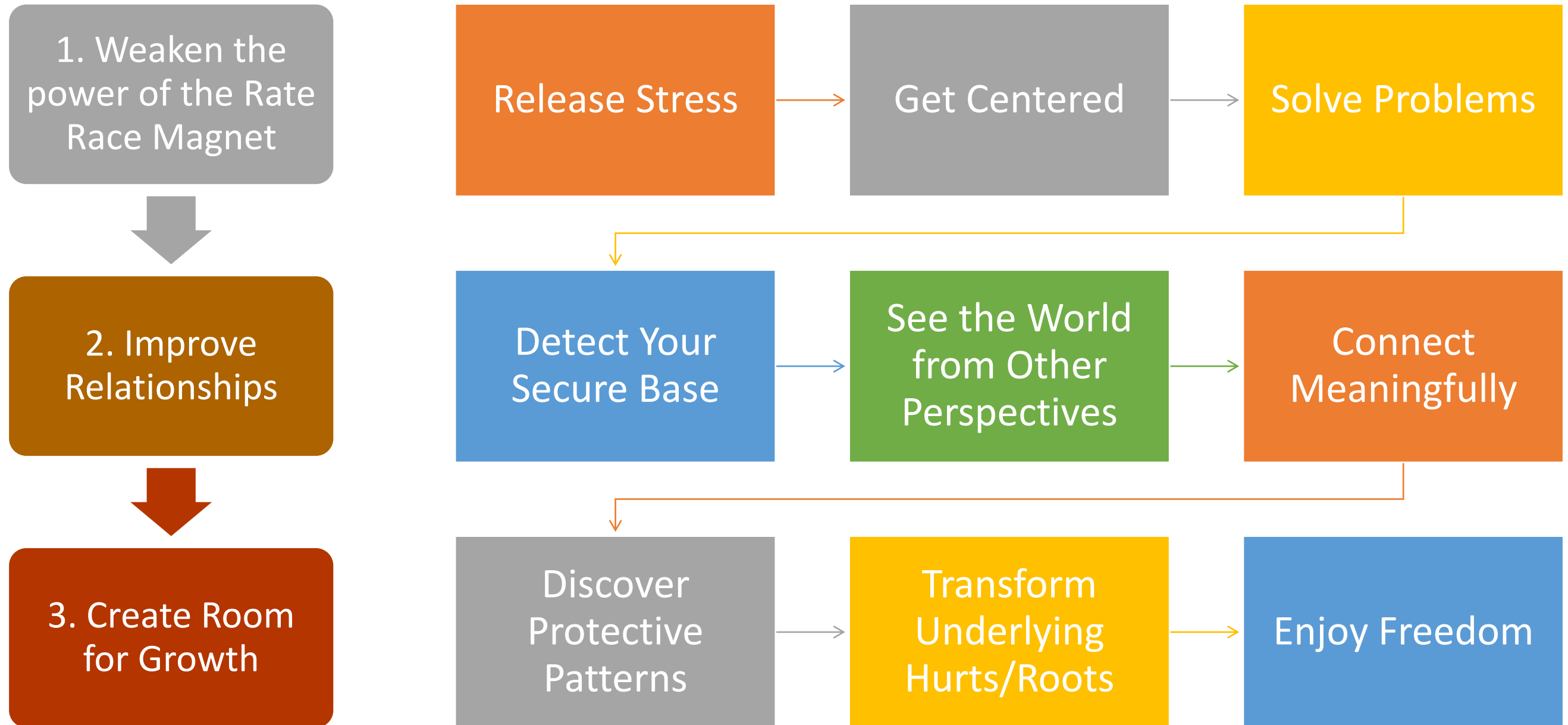- Understanding
- Empathizing
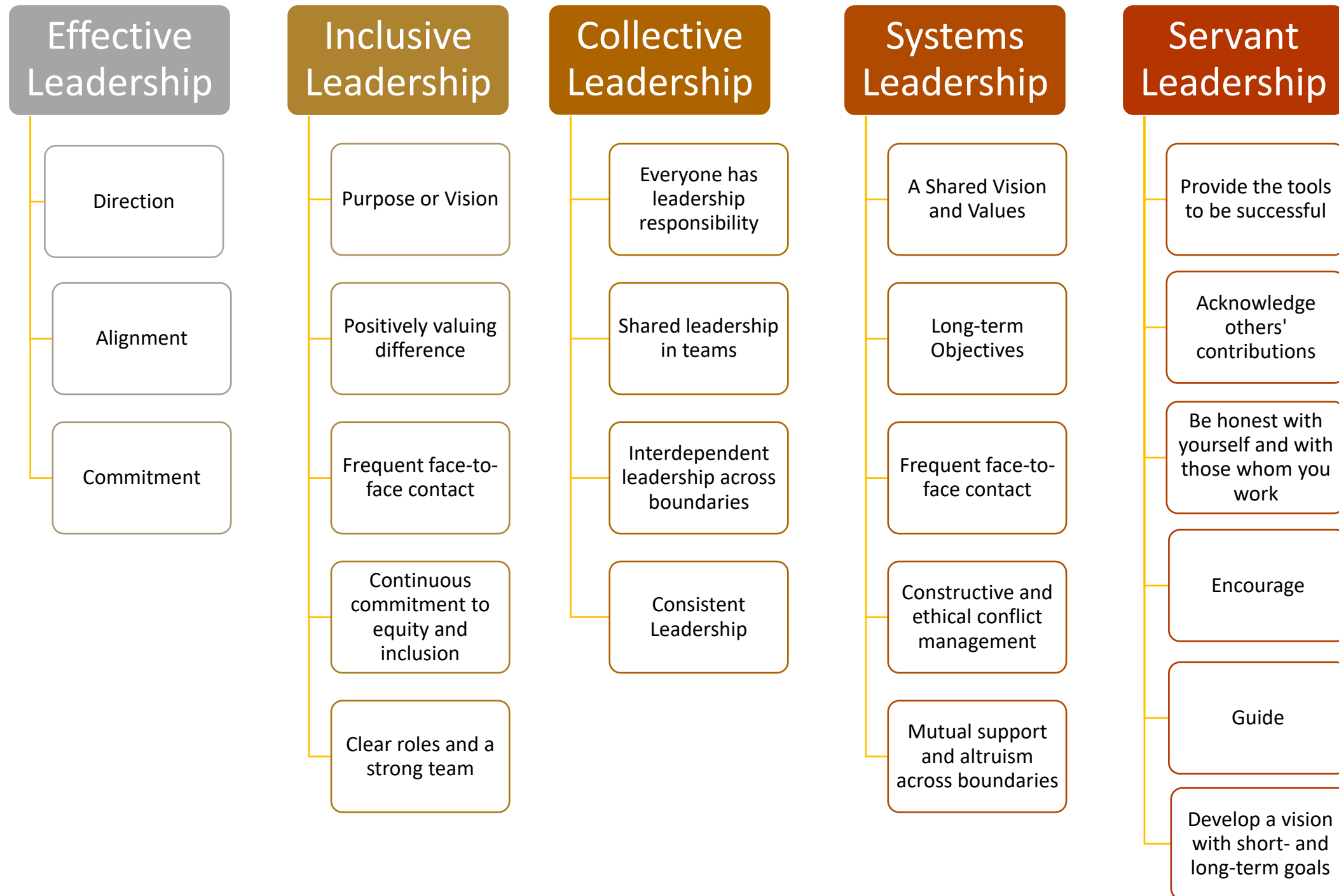- Helping

Compassionate Leadership Behaviors

1. Dignity
2. Authenticity
3. Presence
4. Accountability
5. Empathy
6. Integrity

Compassionate Leadership

Effective Leadership

- Direction
- Alignment
- Commitment

Inclusive Leadership

- Purpose or Vision
- Positively valuing difference
- Frequent face-to-face contact
- Continuous commitment to equity and inclusion
- Clear roles and a strong team

Collective Leadership

- Everyone has leadership responsibility
- Shared leadership in teams
- Interdependent leadership across boundaries
- Consistent Leadership

Systems Leadership

- A Shared Vision and Values
- Long-term Objectives
- Frequent face-to-face contact
- Constructive and ethical conflict management
- Mutual support and altruism across boundaries

Servant Leadership

- Provide the tools to be successful
- Acknowledge others' contributions
- Be honest with yourself and with those whom you work
- Encourage
- Guide
- Develop a vision with short- and long-term goals

Assessment of Organizational Culture & Climate

- On-going and iterative process

- Multiple levels of assessment
  - Self-assessment at all levels of the organization
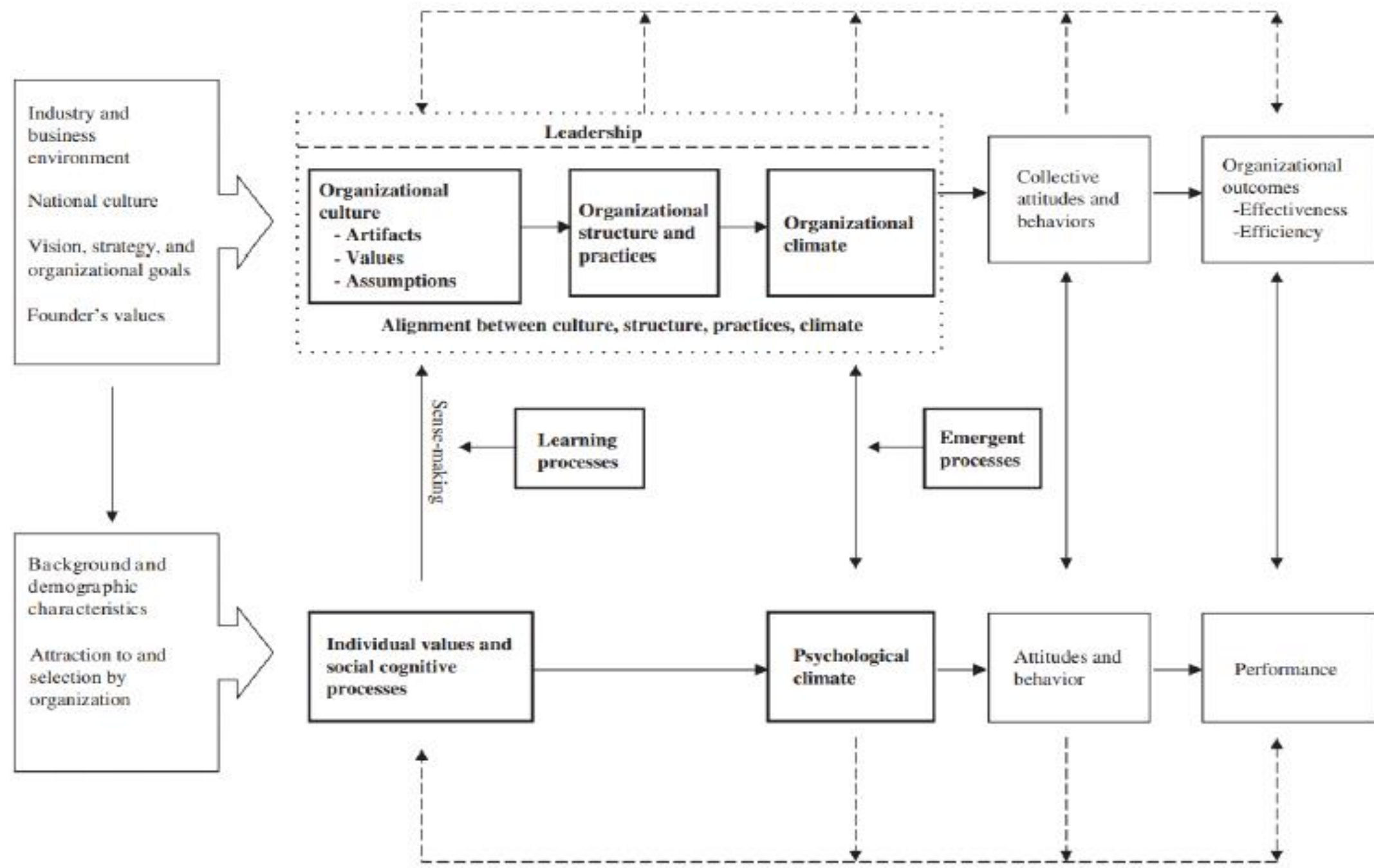 - Organizational assessment

Figure 24.1 Multilevel model of organizational culture and climate

Assessment of Organizational Culture & Climate

Open Access Products and Empirical Articles of Measures

- The Climate Assessment Toolkit

- Hsiung, K. S., Colditz, J. B., McGuier, E. A., Switzer, G. E., VonVille, H. M., Folb, B. L., & Kolko, D. J. (2021). Measures of Organizational Culture and Climate in Primary Care: a Systematic Review. *Journal of general internal medicine, 36*(2), 487–499. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-06262-7

- Powell, B. J., Mettert, K. D., Dorsey, C. N., Weiner, B. J., Stanick, C. F., Lengnick-Hall, R., Ehrhart, M. G., Aarons, G. A., Barwick, M. A., Damschroder, L. J., & Lewis, C. C. (2021). Measures of organizational culture, organizational climate, and implementation climate in behavioral health: A systematic review. *Implementation Research and Practice, 2.* https://doi.org/10.1177/26334895211018862

- Friedberg, M. W., Rodriguez, H. P., Martsolf, G. R., Edelen, M. O., & Vargas Bustamante, A. (2016). Measuring Workplace Climate in Community Clinics and Health Centers. *Medical care, 54*(10), 944–949. https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000585

- https://www.sap2.org.ar/i2/archivos/1876.pdf Team Leader assessment tools

Take Home Messages

- There is no one-size fits all approach to organizational wellness and wellbeing!
  - Engage in developing an organizational wellness approach that works within the culture in which that you, your colleagues, and workplace are embedded

- A Culture of Care and Compassionate Leadership have both individual and organizational benefits

- Ongoing assessment of your organizational culture and climate is one step in creating and sustaining a culture of care where the organization and its people are thriving and well.

Questions?