

IT'S NOT THE CALLS: MENTAL HEALTH AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Chief David Rhodes / FDIC 2023



- “There has really been little focus on the mental health effects of poor leadership. We tend to talk about PTSD because we can blame that on an incident beyond our control. But we don’t want to talk about the root cause of the MAJORITY of the stress that causes us issues: organizational vindictiveness, discrimination, favoritism, and exclusion.” – **Chief David Rhodes**

**“Leadership is a practice,
not a catchphrase.”**

-Ben Shultz



Adam Grant ✓
@AdamMGrant

Leaders are not born. They're made.

There's no such thing as a natural leader. Everyone starts out with shortcomings as well as strengths.

Leadership potential doesn't depend on the traits you possess. It emerges from the values you choose and the skills you learn.

**“Stop the sneaky snaky
backstabbing bullshit.”**

**-Battalion Chief Candace
Ashby PhD
FDIC 2023**



CHICAGO LOCAL 2 EAP SERVICE

2,803 contacts over 15 years
(Average 187 a year)

1. Relationship
2. Organizational
3. Alcohol
4. Legal/Financial
5. Drugs
6. PTSD.



-Chief Daniel DeGryse

Voluntary service vs draft

Men w/military service are now twice as likely to report childhood sexual assault

U.S has highest reported rate of PTSD in history, and in the world



Only 10% experience actual combat
No relationship between combat and suicide

“Safer” wars yielding ↑ rates of PTSD
Today: 3x disability claimed, 1/3 causality



Change

Insomnia

Horrible
boss

Burnout

Financial
stress

Grief

Loss

Divorce

Harassment

Disaster

Illness

Racism

Bullying

FINANCES
FAMILY
POOR LEADERSHIP
TRAINING
BAD CALLS
MICROMANAGEMENT
RELATIONSHIP
LACK OF SLEEP
NUTRITION
WORK STRESS

If the bucket overflows:

Injury
Depression
Getting sick
Mental breakdown
PTSD
Suicide

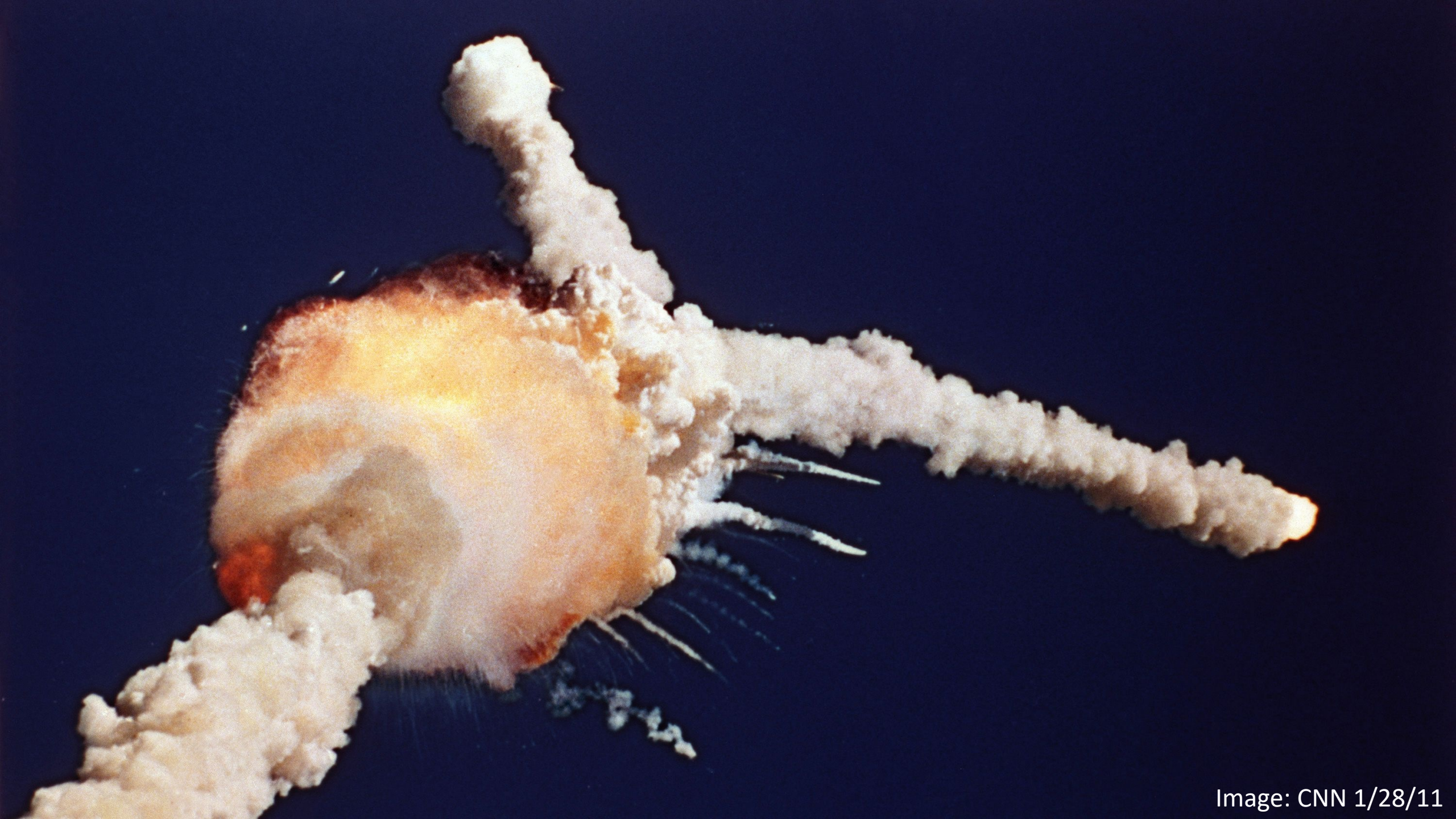


THERAPIST
Laughing, Sleep,
Gratitude, Rest,
Yoga, Exercise,
Relax, Friends,
Mindfulness,
Psychological
Safety



Adapted from illustration by Rob Leathen





WHEN YOU HAVE IT

See mistakes as opportunities to learn

Willing to take risks and fail

Speaking your mind in meetings

Openly sharing your struggles

Trust in your teammates and supervisors

Sticking your neck out

WHEN YOU DON'T

See mistakes as threats to your career

Unwilling to rock the boat

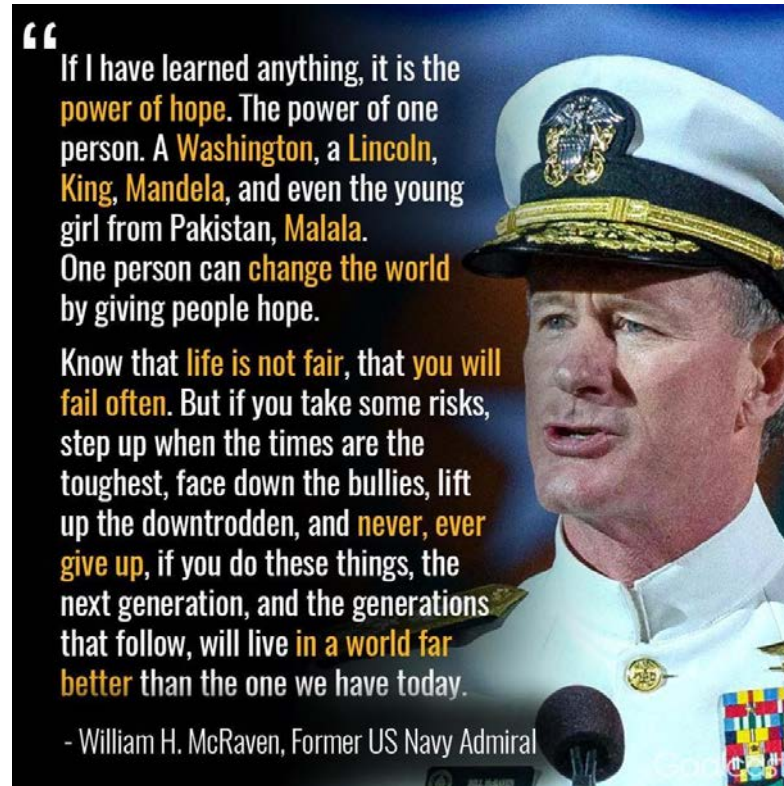
Keeping your ideas to yourself

Only touting your strengths

Fear of your teammates and supervisors

Having your head chopped off

Admiral William H. McRaven



"You may be in charge, but it's never about you and you can't forget that."



"It's not just about holding people accountable, it's making sure the people around you understand that their effort is worthwhile."





Increase Your Bandwidth

THROUGH

Improved Vagal Tone and Heart Rate Variability

ACHIEVED WHEN

we rest, sleep, practice mindfulness, gratitude
and spend time with people

Relationships

A good support network is the single most powerful protection against traumatization

Visceral level

Safety and terror are incompatible



CORTISOL

OXYTOCIN

- Adrenaline released to bloodstream
- Short term
- Low grade release
- Inhibits Oxytocin
- Shuts down immune, digestion, and growth

CORTISOL

OXYTOCIN

- Boosts self confidence
- Increases empathy
- Reduces stress
- Increases cognitive abilities
- Inspires us to work together



ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

**“Perceived support from
supervisors is the strongest
predictor of decreased PTSD
severity.”**

Stanley, I.H., Hom, M.A., Spencer-Thomas, S., & al. (2017). “Examining anxiety sensitivity as a mediator of the association between PTSD symptoms and suicide risk among women firefighters.” *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 50, 94-102.

CULTURE

**Latin word cultus,
translates to care.**

BELONGING CUES

- **Energy:** they are invested in the exchange
- **Individualization:** they treat people as valued
- **Future orientation:** signal the relationship will continue

“Group performance depends on behavior that communicates one powerful overarching idea: We are safe and connected.” - Daniel Coyle The Culture Code

THE CULTURE CODE



Profuse eye contact

Lots of short energetic exchanges

High levels of mixing

Few interruptions

Lots of questions

Intensive active listening

Humor

Numerous small, attentive courtesies such ("thank you's")

MAGICAL FEEDBACK

“I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them.” (Coyle.)

GOOGLE'S LASZLO BOCK

- What is one thing I should continue to do?
- What is one thing I should do more often?
- What can I do to make you more effective?

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake and sharing what was learned

Asking for help

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help and committing to learn

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help

Showing Emotion but practicing self awareness

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know but having a plan to figure it out

Talking about personal struggles

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake

Asking for help

Showing Emotion

Saying I don't know

Talking about personal struggles to connect, not therapy

Being unsure

LEADING WITH VULNERABILITY

Admitting to a mistake and sharing what was learned

Asking for help and committing to learn

Showing Emotion but practicing self awareness

Saying I don't know but having a plan to figure it out

Talking about personal struggles to connect, not therapy

Being unsure but having a vision.



Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department Tailboard Critique Format

AC Dan Shaw

Announce on the fireground the time & location of Tailboard.

Ensure all Officers hydrate prior.

Incident Commander starts with synopsis of dispatch and conditions upon arrival.

Review following tactical objectives:

- ✓ *Apparatus Positioning*
- ✓ *Water Supply - 2 continuous water supplies*
- ✓ *Communications*
 - *ONS Report / Lap / Sit Rep / Future Reports*
- ✓ *Hoseline (1st & 2nd) Selection and Placement*
- ✓ *Search (Primary, Secondary, VEIS)*
- ✓ *Ventilation (Horizontal, Vertical, etc.)*
- ✓ *Ladders (Portable and Aerial)*
- ✓ *Overhaul / Salvage Procedures / Rehab*

Goal of Tailboard:

- ✓ Hold each other accountable for performance and execution of mission.
- ✓ Start with IC and continue with each officer:
 - What could have been done better?
 - What went well?

- Do it right away
 - Discuss
- Decisions/Processes
- Resist temptation to wrap it in a bow
- Goal is to build a shared mental model
- NOBODY can see/know it all

I screwed that up.



In our line of work, courage isn't running into a burning building; that's what we do.

Courage is speaking up, stepping up, and doing the right things when you know it will make you a target.





EDNYS

GOSSIP: AKA SLIMY WEASEL LANGUAGE



- Gain validation (Ego)
- Control others (Manipulate information others receive)
- Attention (when we have nothing meaningful to share gossip draws us to connection)
- Divert attention (shift attention to somebody else)
- Avoid conflict (often easier to gossip, than address concerns)

GOSSIP AKA SLIMY WEASEL LANGUAGE



1. Is there negative intent? If so, Stop, it's gossip

2. Would you be willing to speak directly and in the exact same way to the person? If not, Stop, it's gossip



TRUST

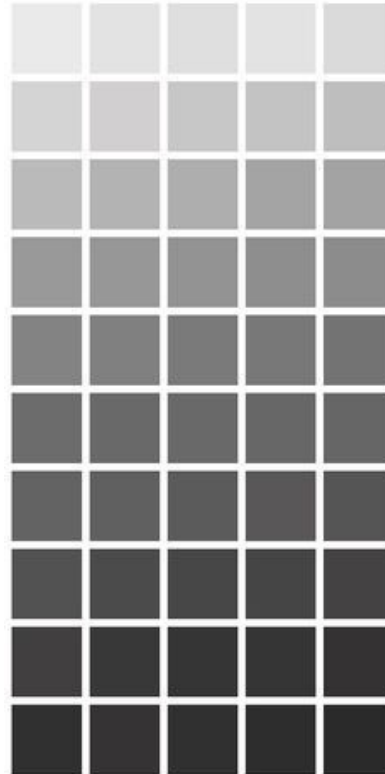
- Trust is built rather than depleted by use.
- Although it takes time to build, it can be lost in seconds.
- The most important and most difficult objective in managing relationships.

HOW TO BUILD TRUST

- Open communication
- Willingness to share
- Consistency in words, actions, and behavior over time.
- Reliability in following through

DEFINING THE 50 SHADES OF

Sterile Environment
Lack of Humor
Lack of Trust/Bonding
Fear



Physical Assault
Sexual Assault
Verbal Assault

SUBTLE ACTS OF EXCLUSION

- Expect this behavior to happen and at times, to unintentionally occur.
- Communicate the norm of speaking up, not condemning, but rather educating.
- Practice speaking up. (This also means practicing not becoming defensive but relatively open to learning).

THE IMPACT: WHAT THE DATA SAYS

- Exposure to frequent workplace bullying was related to 8 or more days of sickness presenteeism annually.
- Bullying also is associated with an increased risk of sleep disturbance, with more frequent bullying leading to greater severe sleep disturbance.

HOW COMMON IS IT?



37% of personnel had experienced or witnessed the bullying of a co-worker

Rates of bullying in the general population are typically around 10%

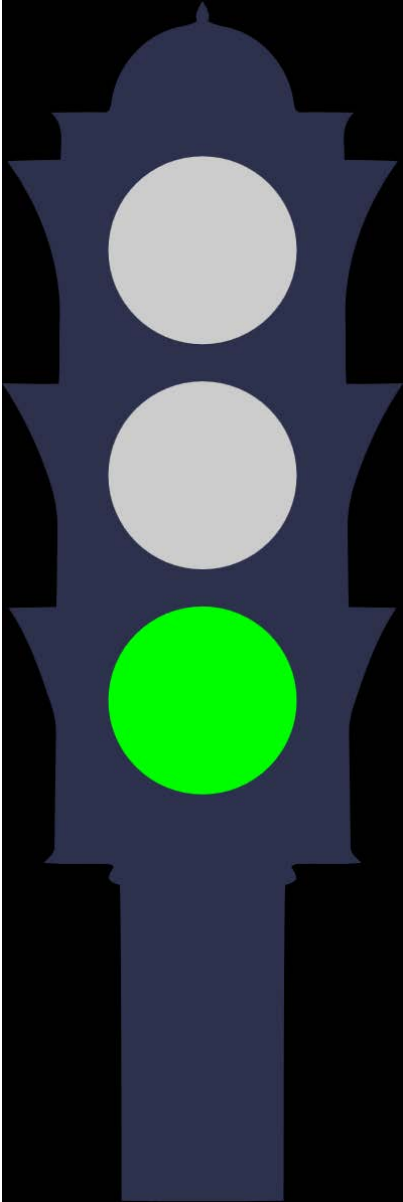
Nearly a quarter of firefighters responding to the survey indicated having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace

Dr. Sara Jahnke Center for Fire Rescue & EMS Research

BYSTANDER IMPACTS



- Witnesses of workplace bullying can lead to lower job satisfaction, poor morale, and undermining of the team environment that is critical for crews in the fire service
- Sleep disturbances found among bullied personnel are mirrored in the results of bystanders who witness workplace bullying with increasing disturbance with increasing frequency.



BYSTANDER IMPACTS

- If firefighters are not motivated to report and rarely report, it is the equivalent of a “green light” for perpetrators within that culture
- When a peer intervenes, more than half of bullying stops

Dr. Sara Jahnke Center for Fire Rescue & EMS Research

DO'S AND DON'TS OF BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

DO

- **Move near person**
- **Take cues from the person being bullied**
- **Decide on best way to approach the issue**

DON'T

- **Escalate the situation**
- **Do nothing**

<http://www.peoplesresponseteamchicago.org/>

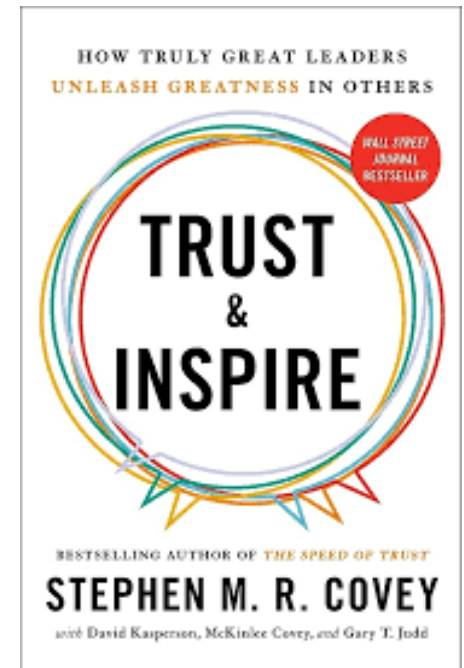
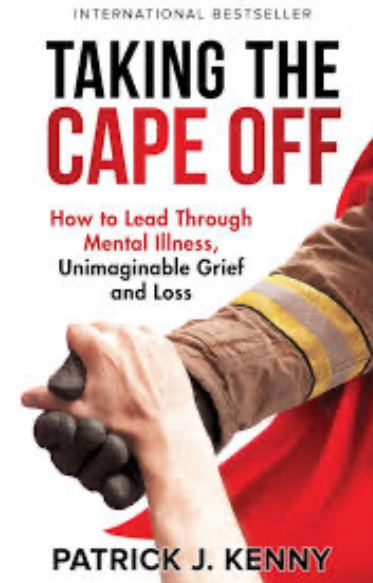
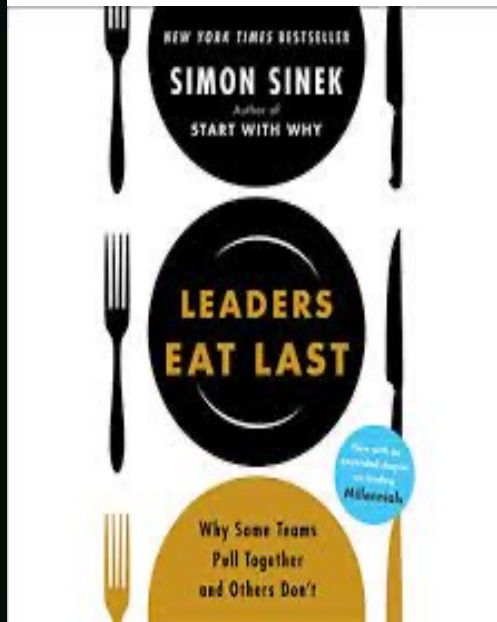
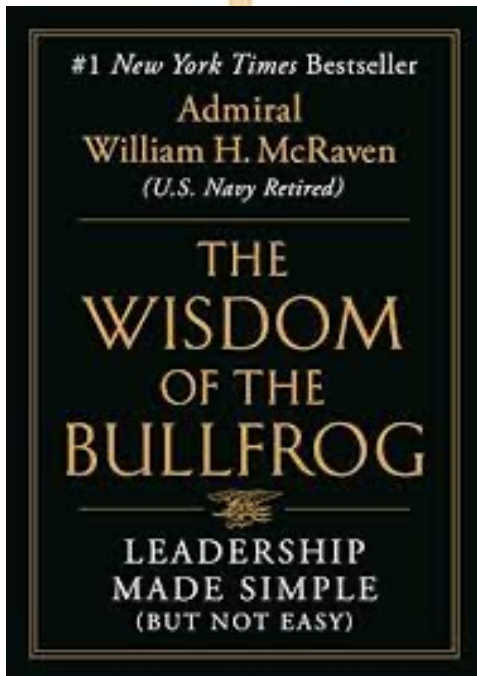
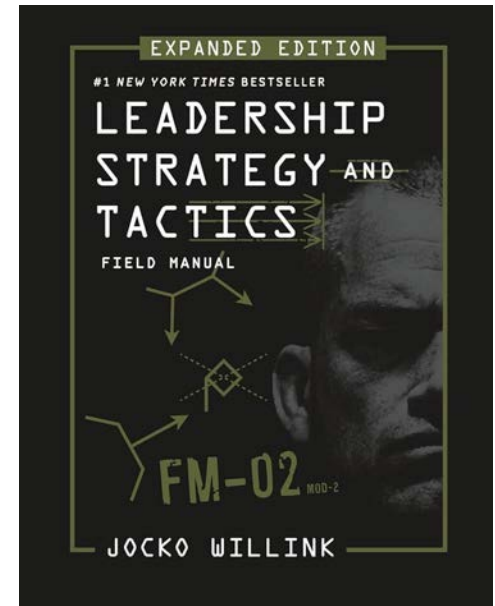
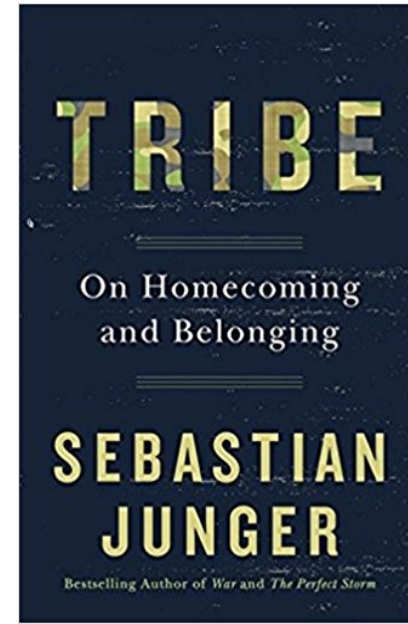
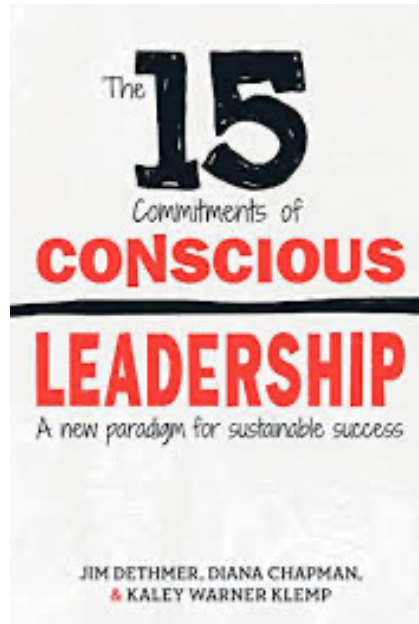
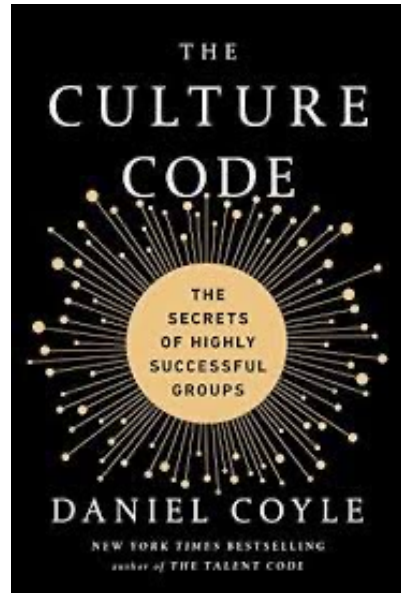
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#1 New York Times Bestseller
The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know

THINK AGAIN

ADAM GRANT

"Brilliant...guaranteed to make you rethink your hopeless and your most important decisions."
—Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman



**“I HOPE THAT EITHER ALL OF US OR NONE OF US
ARE JUDGED BY THE ACTIONS OF OUR WEAKEST MOMENTS
BUT RATHER BY THE STRENGTH WE SHOW WHEN AND IF WE’RE EVER
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