



Randel Consulting Associates

Leading Organizations through Change and Growth



PERSEVERANCE

The Team

Perseverance Toolkit

Supporting your Team in Disruptive Times

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Four Tools That Support Depleted Teams

Each of the following practices are designed to be completed in 15-20 minutes during existing team meetings.

Week 1: “Naming What’s True”

A structured conversation that allows teams to acknowledge their exhaustion and the current realities they’re facing without trying to solve or minimize them.

Week 2: “The Weight We’re Carrying”

An activity that helps team members share the specific burdens they’re managing—both work-related and personal—and identify where mutual support is possible.

Week 3: “What We Can Still Shape”

A practice that distinguishes between circumstances the team cannot control and areas where they still have agency and choice.

Week 4: “Why We Continue”

A reflective practice that reconnects teams with their deeper purpose and the difference their work makes, even under current constraints.

Gauging Your Team’s Readiness

Be aware that not every team is ready for the same level of emotional processing. Consider these factors as you select (or adapt) activities to do with your team:

- **Cultural Context:** Some cultures process difficulty through direct discussion, others through shared action or symbolic activities. The workbook includes adaptations for different cultural approaches.
- **Team Trust Level:** Newer teams or those with recent conflicts may need gentler entry points before deeper conversations.
- **Current Crisis Level:** Teams in acute crisis may need more support-focused activities, while those in chronic stress might benefit from agency-building practices.
- **Leader Modeling:** Your own willingness to be vulnerable about the challenges you’re facing sets the tone for team openness.

Week 1: "Naming What's True"

Purpose: Creating psychological safety around naming difficult truths

Best for: Teams ready for honest conversation; adapt approach for cultures that process difficulty differently

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

This structured conversation creates space for team members to acknowledge their exhaustion and current realities without pressure to solve, fix, or minimize what they're experiencing.

Setup (2 minutes):

The facilitator (team leader or designated team member) opens by acknowledging that everyone is navigating difficult circumstances and that this conversation is about honest acknowledgment, not problem-solving. Set a clear boundary: "For the next 15 minutes, we're not trying to fix anything. We're simply naming what's true about how we're experiencing this period."

Individual Reflection (3 minutes):

In silence, each person considers: "What's one reality about my current work experience that I haven't been saying out loud?" This could be about workload, uncertainty, emotional strain, or anything else that feels significant.

Sharing Round (8-10 minutes):

Going around the team, each person shares their reflection in 1-2 sentences. No one responds, problem-solves, or tries to make anyone feel better. The group simply listens and acknowledges with a simple "thank you" after each share. The facilitator participates as an equal member, not as the person with answers.

Collective Acknowledgment (2-3 minutes):

After everyone has shared, the facilitator asks: "What did you notice as you heard others speak?" Allow 2-3 people to share brief observations about common themes or the experience of being heard.

Closing (1 minute):

The facilitator closes by acknowledging the courage it takes to name difficult truths and the value of not carrying these realities alone.

Cultural Adaptations:

Some cultures prefer indirect communication about difficulty. Consider using written reflections first, or framing as "observations about our current environment" rather than personal feelings. In cultures where hierarchy matters, the leader sharing first can create permission for others.

Week 2: "The Weight We're Carrying"

Purpose: Moving from isolation to connection around shared struggles

Best for: Teams with established trust; includes modifications for newer or more reserved teams

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

This activity helps team members make visible the specific burdens they're managing—both work-related and personal—and identify where mutual support might be possible.

Setup (2 minutes):

The facilitator explains that everyone is carrying multiple responsibilities and concerns, many of which others can't see. This practice makes the invisible visible, not to solve everything, but to understand the full picture of what teammates are navigating.

Mapping the Weight (5 minutes):

Each person takes a piece of paper and quickly lists (in words or simple drawings) the different "weights" they're carrying right now. These might include: expanded job responsibilities, family caregiving, financial concerns, health worries, uncertainty about the organization's future, or anything else taking up mental and emotional space. Emphasize that this is private—they'll only share what they choose.

Selective Sharing (8-10 minutes):

Going around the circle, each person shares 1-2 items from their list—whatever they're comfortable making visible to the team. As each person shares, others simply listen. After all have shared, the facilitator asks: "What surprised you about what you heard? What did you not know your teammates were carrying?"

Support Mapping (3-4 minutes):

The facilitator asks: "Looking at what we've heard, where might we be able to offer even small forms of support to each other?" This isn't about solving everything—it's about identifying small, practical ways team members can help each other. Examples might include: covering a meeting when someone needs flexibility, sharing information that reduces someone's research time, or simply checking in with someone facing a particular challenge.

Commitment (1 minute):

Team identifies 1-2 specific, small ways they'll support each other in the coming week.

Modifications for Newer Teams:

Keep sharing focused on work-related weights only. Allow people to share in pairs first, then selective reporting to the full group. Emphasize that sharing is voluntary.

Week 3: "What We Can Still Shape"

Purpose: Redirecting energy from helplessness to purposeful action

Best for: Teams feeling overwhelmed by factors beyond their control

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

This practice helps teams distinguish between circumstances they cannot control and areas where they still have genuine agency and choice, redirecting precious energy toward what can actually be influenced.

Setup (1-2 minutes):

The facilitator acknowledges that much feels outside the team's control right now, which can create a sense of helplessness. This practice helps identify where agency still exists—not to pretend they have more control than they do, but to focus energy where it can actually make a difference.

Two Lists (5-6 minutes):

Create two columns on a whiteboard or shared screen: "Beyond Our Control" and "Within Our Influence." As a team, rapidly brainstorm items for each column. Be brutally honest about what truly cannot be changed (funding decisions, policy changes, market conditions) versus what the team can still shape (how they work together, what they prioritize, how they communicate, who they support).

Energy Audit (3-4 minutes):

Look at the "Beyond Our Control" column and ask: "How much of our team's energy and conversation time goes to these items?" Then look at the "Within Our Influence" column and ask: "How much attention are we giving to these areas where we can actually make a difference?" Usually teams discover they're spending significant energy on things they cannot change.

Strategic Redirection (5-6 minutes):

From the "Within Our Influence" column, identify 2-3 specific areas where the team wants to focus energy in the coming weeks. For each area, name one concrete action the team can take. These should be genuinely achievable given current constraints.

Making It Stick (2-3 minutes):

Discuss how the team will remind each other when they're spending energy on things beyond their control, and how they'll redirect attention to what they can shape. Some teams create a simple phrase like "Is this ours to shape?" as a gentle reminder.

Important Note:

This practice is not about toxic positivity or pretending problems don't exist. It's about being strategic with limited energy by focusing where the team can actually make a difference.

Week 4: "Why We Continue"

Purpose: Sustaining commitment through meaning rather than motivation

Best for: Teams questioning whether their work still matters

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

This reflective practice reconnects teams with their deeper purpose and the difference their work makes, even under current constraints. It focuses on meaning rather than trying to manufacture motivation.

Setup (2 minutes):

The facilitator acknowledges that when circumstances are difficult, it's natural to question whether the work still matters or whether the team's efforts make any real difference. This practice isn't about cheerleading—it's about reconnecting with genuine purpose that can sustain commitment through hard times.

Individual Reflection (4-5 minutes):

In silence, each person reflects on these questions (write them where everyone can see them):

- "What specific difference does our work make, even now?"
- "Who benefits from what we do, even in this constrained environment?"
- "What would be lost if we stopped doing this work?"

Emphasize that answers should be concrete and honest, not aspirational or abstract.

Sharing Stories (8-10 minutes):

Going around the team, each person shares one specific example or story that illustrates why the work matters. These might be: a recent impact they witnessed, feedback from someone served, a problem that was solved, or a need that was met. Keep stories brief and concrete.

As each person shares, others listen for the thread of meaning running through the stories. The facilitator might occasionally pause to name patterns: "I'm hearing that even with reduced resources, we're still..."

Collective Purpose Statement (3-4 minutes):

Based on what was shared, the team crafts a simple, honest statement about why they continue. This isn't a motivational slogan—it's a clear articulation of the difference they're still making. For example: "We continue because families still need advocates who understand the system" or "We continue because this research will inform better decisions, even if it takes longer than we hoped."

Anchoring the Purpose (1-2 minutes):

Discuss how the team will keep this purpose visible during difficult moments. Some teams post their statement in meeting spaces, others reference it when making hard decisions about priorities.

Critical Note:

If the team genuinely cannot identify meaningful impact, that's important information. This practice might reveal that significant mission pivot or organizational change is needed—and that's a valuable, if difficult, discovery.

What? So What? Now What?

A leadership lens for meaning-making and action

Read one of the articles shared here. Next, spend 10-15 minutes working through the questions offered below. Focus on connecting the content to your current leadership challenges and opportunities.



Wedell-Wedelsborg
"How To Lead When Your Team Is Exhausted"

Knight
"Keep Your Team On Track Amid Cost-Cutting, Layoffs, and Uncertainty"

WHAT? - Understanding the Content

1. Key Insight Capture

What is the single most important idea or insight from this reading that resonates with your leadership experience?

2. Challenge Recognition

What problem or challenge does this article address that you're currently facing (or anticipating) in your organization?

SO WHAT? - Making Meaning for Leadership

3. Leadership Connection

How does this content connect to a specific leadership decision, conversation, or situation you're navigating right now?

4. Gap Analysis

What gap does this reading reveal between where you are as a leader and where you want to be?

5. Broader Implications

If you applied this article's main concepts consistently, what would change about your leadership approach or your organization's culture?

NOW WHAT? - Moving to Action

6. Immediate Application

What is one specific action you could take this week to begin implementing or testing this insight?

7. Conversation Catalyst

Who on your team or in your network would benefit from discussing this content with you? When will you initiate that conversation?

8. Progress Indicator

In 30 days, how will you know whether engaging with this content has made a difference in your leadership effectiveness?

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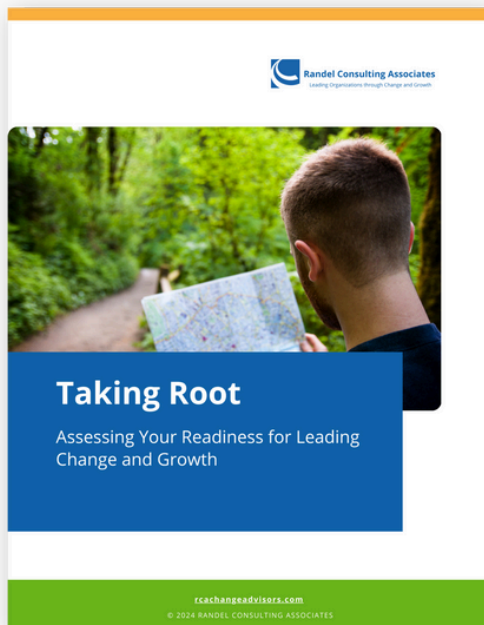
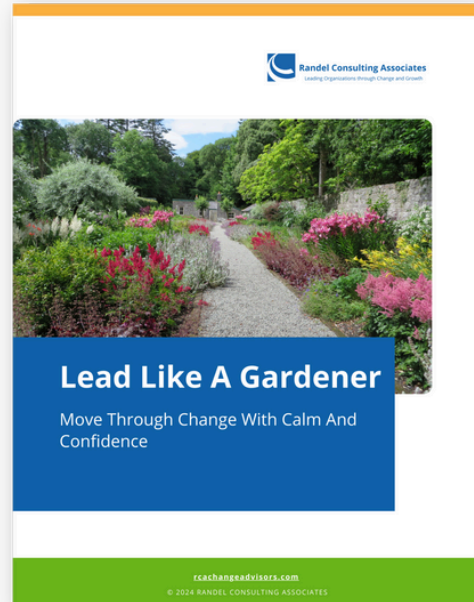
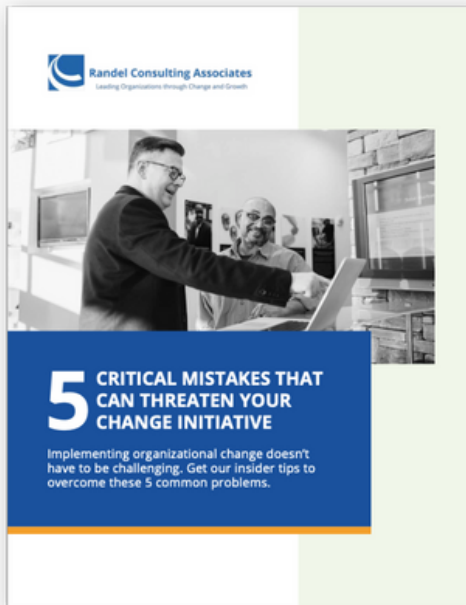
8. Progress Indicator

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