

Gossip, Communication, Leadership

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Ok welcome to the webinar. I'm Scott Herbst, the owner and president of SixFlex training and consulting. We help companies apply behavioral psychology to workforce engagement. That includes things like performance management, performance pay. One of the things we do is provide coaching from an ACT model.

Today we're going to talk about gossip, communication, and leadership.

My intentions for today are that you learning a little something about Relational Frame Theory. Even if you're an expert already, you should get some insights about how to talk about it with people who aren't experts.

Second, that you discover something about how gossip impacts your life. And finally that you leave with an exercise for having conversations that open up new possibilities for action and experience in groups that are important to you – I'll focus on work groups, but this applies anywhere you participate with other people and you all talk about each other.

Before we get started, there are a couple of housekeeping things to manage. First off, I am recording this.

Second, there are a couple of places to participate. If I ask for a show of hands, you can click this little hand right here. I'll use that to see how many people can relate or maybe to take a quick yes or no poll.

At times I may ask for questions or comments... If you have one of those, then you can use this questions box.

Ok let's get into the agenda...

- A brief tutorial on Relational Frame Theory and how language works.
 - Basic facts
 - A new view of rule governed behavior.
 - Who "you" are, as an identity
- A functional approach to gossip.
 - The reinforcers and what we get out of it.
 - The cost or impact it has on ourselves and others.
- Conversations for leadership

Now how many of you would agree that gossip, generally, is more hurtful then helpful.

Great. Now, how many of you gossip. In other words, how many of you say things to other people, about other people, and the people you're talking about aren't there AND you would NOT want those not there people to find out you were saying those things?

Specifically, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to give you a very cursory overview of relational frame theory. I'm not going to get into the technical mumbo jumbo about it too much, just remind you of a few things to demonstrate the effects and power of language so you can start to see its effects and how it relates to gossip.

Then, I'm going to give you a new view of rule governed behavior, and in doing so, probably eliminate the need for ever using that term again.

And then we're going to talk about you as a person and an identity – looking from that model. You know that “you”, you talk about when you say that “someone really gets me” or “I can't really be myself around those people?” We're going to talk briefly about who that person is, because it's important to understand why you gossip.

Then, we're going to get into a functional approach to gossip including looking at the reinforcers that you get from it, and by you, I mean all of us who raised our hands when we said we do it.

And then we're going to look at the impact and what it costs us. And we're only going to scratch the surface on that one, because the cost is way, way deeper than we can even measure. If you and I really got the cost of our gossip there's no way we would ever, ever gossip again. But we're going to scratch the surface and hopefully that'll do something for some of you to actually take some committed action.

And speaking of committed action, then we're going to cover a model for conversations that actually interrupt gossip conversations. And not just stop them, but actually make possible new shared views of people and events that leave people transformed. And when I say transformed I mean that you are now dealing with new people and dealing with them from a completely new experience.

And in my book, that's leadership. When you can speak in a way that offers people a view they didn't have before, such that they have a new experience and are able to take new actions, you're a leader.

Before we start, I want to say one thing. Most of this is theoretical. If there's a good way to test what I'm about to put forth, I haven't thought of it and, even if I did, I'm not interested in executing it. If you are interested in doing that work, get at me. I'm not hard to find. That said, I know these conversations work. I've used them in organizations, in work groups, and in my family and, if you look back at leaders through history – the ones we give holidays to – like Martin Luther King – you'll see that the way they spoke was completely consistent with what we're going to talk about here.

Ok, let's jump in.

Language and Relational Frame Theory...

Here's the bottom line on relational frame theory.

As people, we're able to make relations among events and, the way we relate things alters how we see other things.

But let's dig into that a little to make it a little more real.

First, there's the fact that we relate things with words. Here's a word. It's how we're able to talk. I say the word apple and you're immediately able to imagine one of these things. You relate the word – whether it's printed or spoken, with that type of fruit. That's a relation.

Ok, so we've done that. Now, let's build some more relations. I say this is one – and so in the context of numbers you now relate this with one... and I say this is two, and in the context of numbers, you're able to relate a group of this number of things with the sound two...

So we've got one is the same as this, and two is the same as this... and now that we have two things, we've got the basis for another relation, and in this case, we're going to say more than and less than...

So what you see is that we don't just relate things in terms of same... we can also relate things in terms of more or less.

So if I say a rumpoogle is a unit of money and is more than \$100... and ask you which you would rather have, you'll pick the rumpoogle...

What you want to notice there is that you have no history with rumpoogles, because I made it up yesterday while I was typing this. But, by virtue of relating dollars with things (which makes dollars a reinforcer), and you relate dollars as the same as money, which makes money a reinforcer, and I immediately trained a relationship with rumpoogle and money,,, which makes rumpoogle a reinforcer, - and that's a whole bunch of frames of coordination...

But now because you are able to also make relations of comparison – in this case more or less – we immediately establish one rumpoogle as a more powerful reinforcer than \$100. How awesome is that?!

Ok – so that's part one of relational frame theory. We are able to derive relations. Meaning, we are able to relate things that have never been related.

Let's review to drive that home.

You have been directly trained that dollars have value, maybe because you were able to exchange them for candy.

And then you were separately trained that dollars = money.

And now you're trained that money = rumpoogle

AND a rumpoogle is MORE THAN \$100!!!

And OMG!!! What do I gotta do to get a rumpoogle.

Nothing. There are no rumpoogles. In fact, there's no dollars either. Not in the real world. In the world of language, yes. But dollars only exist because we agree that there are dollars AND agreement only occurs in language. Rumpoogles, dollars, money = it's all imaginary – and it seems like it's not because WE ALL AGREE.

THIS IS NOT A Superfluous point!!!

I actually want to pause here and let you get present to how much MONEY runs your life. Every time I go to Costco, there is a line of people who WAIT in line 20 minutes to save 10 cents on gas. A lot of these people drive BMW's our audis or range rovers. Lets say one of those cars holds 20 gallons – they're waiting 20 minutes to save \$2. That works out to \$6 an hour. If you're driving a BMW, your time is worth much more than \$6 hour AND YOU'RE WILLING TO WAIT 20 MIN to avoid losing \$2 worth of

something THAT DOESN'T EVEN EXIST EXCEPT THAT WE ALL AGREE IT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THERE IS.

And if you honestly look at how we relate to money...

It's a marker of our success.

It's a marker of our self-worth.

And while we all like to post meme's on facebook with a little phrase over fields of flowers or sunsets about how money doesn't make me happy, if we all got really honest about how we live our life, we live life like if I can just get enough money... and get my money handled... and get rid of all my debt THEN I WONT BE SO WORRIED ABOUT MONEY AND I WILL BE HAPPY!!!

And here's the bad news. You're never going to get enough money. You're never going to get it all handled. You're never going to have enough. BECAUSE THERE IS NO MONEY. Money only exists inside our agreement and until you really get that for yourself, you're in the trap of money.

Now, I said this is not a superfluous point and you're probably asking yourself what this has to do with gossip. You could be saying, "I didn't come to a webinar to worry about money and now here I am worrying about money!!"

What's worth noting and putting a pin in for later is that a lot of what we consider to be real and true about the world – like money has a real effect on our behavior – is completely made up and only exists as real for us by virtue of our agreement. AND – the more we agree about things, the more real they become. There is so much agreement that money is a thing it's almost impossible to imagine that it's not. And even if you can get that intellectually, which I suspect most of you can, you're still going to walk away from this webinar in an experiential reality that MONEY IS REAL!!!

What this has to do with gossip is that, if you look at a gossip conversation, what tends to happen in them – especially if you keep having the same ones OVER AND OVER with the same people, is that one of the outcomes is some sort of agreement about HOW THE WORLD IS. You share a view (which is a behavior, by the way – your view is behavior) – you share a view and someone else reinforces it, and you mutually shape and reinforce each others' view about how people and organization ARE, and that view becomes the quote reality that you live in.

But hold that thought. We're still on RFT, and this is a perfect time to bring up the second point.

We've covered the fact that we can derive relations. We relate things in terms of same. We relate things in terms of comparison – in the pumpoogle example we had more/less relations, but we can also relate things in bigger/smaller, better/worse, lighter/darker... etc.

We derive relations in terms of opposite...

Different...

Hierarchical

Spatial relations...

You get the idea...

But you'll notice that, not only do we relate these things to each other, but that based on how we relate things, the effect that they have on our behavior changes. A few minutes ago, the sound rumpoogle would have been a completely neutral stimulus for you, probably. It didn't have any effect on your behavior. If I said rumpoogle at most you would think you didn't understand what I said, or maybe I was being silly, or be confused about this thing you had never heard of. The question, Rumpoogle? What do I have to do??" would not have crossed your mind. Because a few minutes ago, "rumpoogle" you had no history with rumpoogle and, in your behavior, hadn't related it with any words that do have function for you.

But now, if every time someone types a question in the question box, I say great, you get one rumpoogle, we'll probably see a lot more people typing a lot more things in the question box. The function of the term rumpoogle has been transformed. It was previously neutral, and now by virtue of all these other relations you have with things being related to dollars and dollars being related to money and now rumpoogle being related with money and being more than a hundred dollars, rumpoogle has the power to influence your behavior.

Now, this behavior of relating things with other things – and doing so with things that have no formal or real world similarity or temporality with other things, AND THE FUNCTIONS OF THINGS CHANGING BASED ON RELATING THEM... that's language. That's what we're doing when we're talking and communicating, but it's likely that a lot of our relating doesn't even happen in words – or at least we're not aware of words while we do it.

SO... words can acquire reinforcing functions so we'll work to hear those words), and words can acquire aversive functions (so we'll work to avoid them)...

But not only that, given that the functions of words can change, when words are applied to THINGS – it changes the functions of things. Our words, applied to things change the way they function for us... AND to make that more real... they change the way they look, sound, smell, feel, and taste...

In other words... the words we use and the relations we derive between things CHANGE OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD. Our view of the world is constituted by how things look, sound, smell, feel, and taste to us... Our view of the world is constituted in language. Our language is not something we use to DESCRIBE our view of the world... OUR LANGUAGE GIVES US OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD!!! And if you get that in your bones, not as an intellectual understanding, but experienced as lived, that's a powerful thing to get. And, being a powerful thing to get, it's worth getting interested in where you think you're describing the world when in fact you're creating a view of it that gives you your experience.

That's the basics of relational frame theory. We derive relations... Meaning I now related rumpoggles with things I like by virtue of relations with other things = dollars = money = rumpoggles... there's now a relation between rumpoggles and things.

And the functions of rumpoggles (and everything else in your life) transforms based on these relations...

Now I said I was going to give you a new view of rule governed behavior. Skinner said something along the lines of a rule is a contingency specifying stimulus. So take the umbrella so you don't get wet specifies a contingency between the behavior of taking an umbrella and the negative reinforcer of avoiding drips on your perfectly coiffed dome.

But here check this out... I want to show you this picture of a Tibetan house slipper...

NOW, that is not a Tibetan house slipper and I have no idea what constitutes appropriate homewear in Tibet but when I'll bet when I put this picture up and said it's a Tibetan house slipper you immediately started interacting with it as you would something that you put on your foot. You started wondering well how would get that thing on and make sure it doesn't come off, and wondering if there was some special way to wrap it, you might have started to comparing it to all the other shoes that you've worn and thought, jeez, someone really needs to show these Tibetans slide sandals.

And the truth is that this is just a picture of a silk scarf that I found when I googled weird thing. But when I applied the verbal stimulus "Tibetan house slipper to it" all the things you could have possibly used it for took a back seat to you interacting with it as if something that goes on your foot.

And likely, even now that you know it's not a Tibetan house slipper, some of you are still looking at it and thinking how, possibly, it could be used as a slipper.

The label shaped your view of it, and in shaping your view of it, narrowed down the way that you interacting with it.

As such, I'm going to posit a new way of understanding the term rule to call it any verbal behavior- being a word or set of words – that limits and constrains the way we interact with an object, event, or whatever it is a human being is.

Well, if that's what a rule is – a word or set of words that limits and constrains the way we interact with an object, event, or whatever it is a human being is.

And – our view of the world is constituted in words... then guess what?! We don't really need to talk about rule governed behavior because there isn't a thing we look at and interact with that isn't touched by language.

And what you want to take note of now is that, when we gossip, we are talking about people, what they did, why they did it, what it is about them that has them act the way they act, AND THAT IS ALL VERBAL BEHAVIOR that, whether you experience it that way or not, shapes your view of that person. It limits and constrains what's possible for you in interacting with and experiencing them.

Just like calling that thing a Tibetan house slipper changes the way you see it and interact with it, the things you say about people change the way you see and interact with them. AND, when you talk about your views with someone else and you both agree – or we might say mutually reinforce each other's way of looking at a situation – you are fundamentally constraining and limiting the way you interact with that person.

Ok but why? Why would you do that? It's the next logical question, but to get into that in a way that's actually useful – and by useful I mean gives you access to engaging in conversations that are more aligned with what you're actually committed to for yourself and others, I want to get into who you are.

Remember, we relate things with words, and then words with other words, and how we relate them changes our view of the world.

Now, as a human being, we don't really KNOW what you are. You could say you are your body, and that's probably mostly what we think of when we think of who we are, but we probably only mostly

think of what we are at a very superficial level. I'm guessing you don't spend a good part of your day thinking, "who am I, really..." You just take it for granted that you are something and you have a pretty good idea of what that something is, and you don't question your own judgement too much. AND – not thinking about it too much, it's a pretty safe bet to say that when you think of who you are, that includes your body.

You post pictures on facebook and you tag yourself or your friends tag you and when you look at that picture, move your cursor over it, and your name comes up, you don't question that that person behind the name is you.

But ok look. You've all had the experience of being with people who accept you for who you really are. And there have been times when you feel like you can't really be yourself, AND IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR BODY!! In fact, you and I say I want someone to love me for me, often times what we mean is "I want someone who is interested in me for more than my body because my body IS NOT WHO I AM!"

So if you're not your body, then who are you? I won't take a lot of time to have you go exploring this one, but will say that if I left you with a challenge to go find the person you're talking about when you say "I or "me." You won't be able to locate them.

You'll quickly realize. Holy moly. I have no idea who I really am.

So let's look at who you are from an RFT perspective.

You've got a perspective, a view of the world and, though the things you're looking at may change depending on who is around, where you are, and what you're saying about those things, you're always looking from the same perspective – the same point in space – RIGHT HERE. Whenever you say to yourself or someone, "I've got to get out of here," it's a hopeless cause. Wherever you go, from your perspective, you're always right here.

So you're a perspective, and that perspective moves around inside this thing you call your body. And it isn't long into your life before your environment trains you to call that perspective "I" and anything that seems to also have a perspective but isn't your perspective, you, him, her, they or them.

You "you" are that perspective, now related with a sound called "I", and what you want to notice is that – and this is why you can't find yourself when I tell you to go look for it – the sound "I" isn't actually "you" but a bit of verbal behavior coming out of that perspective that, in your behavior, you now relate with the perspective.

And why you can't find you is because you can't see your perspective. It's like trying to look at the back of your eyes. In fact, it IS TRYING to look at your eyes. But it's not your eyes that you're trying to look at but trying to find "you" is quite literally trying to catch yourself engage in the behavior of seeing. You're trying to see yourself but who you are is the act of seeing and the act of seeing can't see it's own action.

I hope that made your head spin a little.

You've been sitting there thinking you're a thing when in fact the you that you call "me" or "I" is actually a perspective and that perspective is made of behavior. And being made of behavior, there's you have

infinite possibility for being and acting. Anything anyone could do is possible and available to you right now.

But it doesn't feel that way. You don't feel like a perspective that is made of possibility for action. It doesn't feel like you're just an ongoing dynamic spring of behavior that could flow in any direction at any time.

No, you and I mostly feel like and experience life like there's things we can do and things we can't do and who we are determines those things we can and can't do. "Well I could never say that my mom!" "I could never get in front of a group like that." "I couldn't sing karaoke. Not sober, anyway."

Who we think we are IS OUR VIEW OF OURSELVES – and OUR VIEW OF OURSELVES IS MADE OF BEHAVIOR that, because of its relationship to our perspective, tricks us into thinking of and relating to ourselves as an object. Our view of ourselves is constituted in language, and being constituted in language it limits and constrains our actions.

Now, I don't want to get too much into the words about the object today. In personality psychology, that's largely comprised of your "personality" traits. In other branches of psychology, they might call it your identity. We would call it self-as-content or your conceptualized self. That's a different webinar. What I will throw in here that isn't so relevant to the current conversation is that the person you say you are – and boy oh boy, do you and I say a lot about ourselves, are rules for action about what you will and won't, can and can't do. If you're interested in expanding your capacity for action and branching out into things you can't do, you might start exploring the things you say about yourself more as rules about where to and where not to move the perspective – and less as an object existing solidly in space. But like I said, that's another webinar.

What I do want to dwell on as we move into the function of gossip – the "why" of it – which from our case deals with the reinforcers we get out of it, be they positive or negative – is that, while "you" are behavior, the nature of that behavior is such that the behavior you are has your perspective see you as a "thing" that is distinct from other perspectives that are also "things"

So you occur for yourself like a thing. Your view, inside language, is that you are a thing. But your thingness is actually behavior, but inherent in the action of behaving as such is the experience of yourself as a thing.

As an action, experiencing yourself as a thing, living life, you do other actions. Some of them result in things you like and we call that positive reinforcement. And some of them result in things you don't like and we call that punishment. You're apt to do more of the things that result in things you like, which we call good, and less of the things that we don't like and call them "bad."

But that isn't it. As you're doing things, living life as a dynamic flow of action thinking you're a thing, when you do thing that result in things you don't like, a natural action is to relate the action that resulted in something you don't like – which we tend to call bad... when you do an action that results in something bad... to call the action bad. In fact, it's pretty culturally acceptable and common to call behavior that results in bad things BAD BEHAVIOR.

AND... being made of behavior (though you experience yourself as a thing) it is a natural consequence of calling the behavior bad to then call yourself BAD.

Conversely, when you do something that results in something good, the next natural action is to call the action good and then to relate to yourself as good.

Very quickly, it becomes important to you to do things that will have you think of yourself as GOOD and to avoid doing things that will have you see yourself as BAD. Because doing good things means you are good, and doing good things is BAD.

And one more step, and then we'll be at the function of gossip. You have a perspective that you call I or me and the other people around you call you, and having a perspective that you call "I" and perspectives around you that you call you or them, it isn't long into your life before you get very interested for doing things that others will call good AND avoidn doing things others will see as bad. AND it isn't long before you get very interested in doing things that, from your perspective, others will see as good and avoid doing things others will see as bad WHETHER THEY SAY THEY'RE GOOD OR BAD OR NOT.

As humans, we are designed – as much as hundreds of thousands of years of evolution had any design in mind – to act so as to manage others' perceptions of us and most of that has to do with trying to look good and avoid looking bad. And that's because, through our design and the magic of derived relational responding, looking bad, while not a real threat to our existence, occurs like a MASSIVE THREAT TO OUR EXISTENCE!!!

And that, my friends, is the function of gossip, that's what it for. When you gossip, it is all to look good and avoid looking bad. And whether it actually functions that way or not – that is – whether it's effective – it is a lever you press so you get to be right.

Now, it usually has some source that we're not being responsible for or that if we admitted to, would make us look really bad... Usually gossip, as a mechanism to be right is a justification for

- Justification for being some way we didn't like
- Our own lack of integrity...

We were some way with them that we didn't like and to make that way of being OK, we create and share a narrative where our way of being makes sense. OR, there's something we didn't do, did halfway, a promise we didn't keep, etc., that – as long as that person is the bad person – we get to justify. We get to cut corners and still be a good person.

And that's it.

Story about working at Trinity...

It's not blowing off steam. It's not trying to figure out how to deal with a situation. It is to be right and, in the process of being right, you make others wrong. It might be a little worth it to get a little disgusted with yourself right now. And not because you've done anything wrong in gossiping, or that you're a disgusting person, or anything else. There's no morality in this. But it might be worth it to get a little grossed out because it's usually in getting at least a little grossed out with how I'm acting right now – and what I'm putting my time and energy into – that I usually find the willingness to take some action toward what I really care about. And you might be different but when I am engaged in gossip I am never taking meaningful, committed action towards what I really care about and I am never fulfilling on the difference that I really want make for people and the planet. You may be different, but I doubt it.

I do want to put in here that this is very speculative. One thing I struggled with personally in putting this together that there are at least three different ways of getting to the functions of gossip that I could have come up with that are consistent with an RFT model of thinking and language. So don't delude yourself into thinking – or thing that I've deluded myself into thinking – that this is the truth.

Now, are you ready to deal with the response cost or, said in everyday language, what the impact is of talking about other people when they're not around in the service of looking good? If you're not grossed out already, get ready.

Here's the impact:

When you engage in gossip you're doing two things...

- First, you're making you and the people who surround you miserable, and if you're not making yourselves what you would call miserable, you are at the very least giving yourselves something to deal with that I can guarantee you do not want to be dealing with.

Let's dig into that. In the case of gossip, in order to look good and be right, you have to have someone you're talking about AND THAT PERSON HAS TO BE THE BAD GUY!! While you're pretending that they're the bad guy so that you can look good, you – by definition – HAVE TO HAVE A BAD GUY!! You don't have conversations about people who aren't around that you wouldn't have with them unless THEY ARE A BAD PERSON. And don't give me... "well I wouldn't say they're bad..." Bullshit! When you gossip the reality is you're making them look bad and any pretense that you're not is you pressing more of the looking good lever. And if you're saying anything else you're not being honest with yourself.

And if you really take on and get in your bones that language is creative – that is that it assigns functions rather than describes them – then what you are doing when you gossip is CREATING something aversive that you then have to survive.

And in creating something to survive, you have to do and experiencing all the things that go along with survival. You have to work yourself up to go have a conversation with them. You have to put off and avoid having conversations with them. You get tense when you walk past their desk or office. You start to get tired Sunday night of YOUR WEEKEND because, when you go into work tomorrow, you have to deal with a monster AND IT'S A MONSTER THAT YOU CREATED!!!

Then, when you do talk with them, just like your vision narrowed down when I showed you the picture of the house slipper, your actions are constrained and narrowed down to whatever actions you have available for dealing with however you say they are. And you keep having the same conversations. Things keep going the same way. And while you're having the same conversations and nothing's changing your life turns gray.

That's the impact on you.

Now guess what? While you've been creating a monster, there's an impact on the monster.

What do you think it's like for the monster to be in a world of people relating to them like a monster. OR a bore? Or a pain in the ass? Or however it is that you've been saying how they are.

And don't let yourself off the hook by saying, "they don't have any idea." You've been in a room full of people where you know that everyone has an opinion about you and no one's sharing it. You felt it. And you didn't like it.

They know. They might not know what it is, but they have eyes, and whatever ways of being and acting you have that follow the rule of how you say they ARE – they can see it and they can feel it. And whatever it's costing you in terms of dealing with a monster – they're dealing with the same things with you. They're getting tired on Sunday afternoon. They're hoping they don't run into you in the break room. They're surviving conversations with you.

That's the impact. When you gossip and tolerate gossip you're living in a world of survival. And living in that world, it's killing your creativity, it's killing off affinity and collaboration, and I guarantee it's killing off your experience of aliveness.

And while it's killing off those things, there's some value that you're not living true to. There's something that's deeply important to you that you just haven't been acting consistent with. And that's part of what's eating you.

Now, let's talk about having leadership conversations that not only interrupt but can – no kidding – transform your whole experience and the experience of your whole team. And when I say transform, I mean like, no kidding, one moment it's one way and the next it's another.

So, if you haven't already you want to start here. Now I've written out these questions to apply to the workplace, but these are really just starters. They're questions to get you thinking and it would be useful for you to look at other questions you might ask. But here's an exercise to work through that will give you the basis for forming a conversation for leadership.

1. Write down the rule.
 - a. What are the things you say to each other?
 - b. What justifications do you give for the things you say to each other?
2. Write down the actions that follow the rule.
 - a. What are the actions you personally take?
 - i. How do you act around the person/people you gossip about?
 - ii. How do you act with each other?
 - b. What are the actions the group takes?
 - i. When its time to start a new initiative?
 - ii. When reviewing old business.
 - iii. During different types of events
 - c. What actions don't you take?
 - i. Where don't you speak up?
 - ii. Where do you cut corners?
 - iii. Who don't you talk to?
 - d. What does this get you?
 - i. What are your personal results?
 - ii. What are the results of the team?
 - iii. What are the results for the company?
 - e. What is the quality of the results?

- f. What is the general mood or experience?
 - i. And what is that like?
 - ii. And what is that like?
- g. What do you think the impact is for the people on the other side?
 - i. What might their experience be, given how the group is acting?
 - ii. What actions might they take, given how the group is acting?
 - 1. How would you act, faced with that group?
- 3. What value haven't you been honoring?
 - a. Is there a sense of something missing? What is it?
 - b. What are you really committed to for your team?
- 4. If you were operating 100% consistent with that value...
 - a. What new actions would that make available?
 - b. What would your experience of work and life be then?

What you might notice as you do this exercise is that everything you write down is in a perfect dance with everything you write down.

And from there, what there is to do is have a conversation. Before doing this, I really recommend you ask yourself the question...

Am I willing to live the rest of my life like this?

Is this how I want to use my life?

I recommend you really dwell in that question because to step up and be a leader, it takes a certain amount of willingness. You have to get willing to hear people's communication. You have to be willing to have them see you as the enemy. And if you're in a group of people, there's a chance some of them are going to see you as the enemy. They're going to tell you you're wrong. They're going to tell you it will never work. They're going to give you every reason in the world why it's not their fault or your fault and give you every justification for the status quo. And if you're really going to stand for something, what there is to do is accept that some people are going to say those things and accept what they have to say.

Leadership takes willingness. The thing I most often hear from people who didn't say something that would have made a difference is that they didn't feel like they could say it. They didn't feel safe. They didn't feel like people were open to it. They didn't feel like they could.

If you're going to wait for your feel great before having a conversation for leadership, you could be waiting a very long time. What there is to do is acknowledge the feelings, thank them for caring about your survival, and then bring them along with you for a conversation, and be willing to hear what someone else has to say.

And if you honestly do the work and look at what you've been tolerating, you should be able to cultivate some willingness.

Then you're going to use what you came up with in the exercise, and you're going to go have a conversation with the people you've been gossiping with.

And it would go something like this...

I notice that we say...

And then we Act X, Y, & Z....

and then we have the experience of...

And meanwhile, what I'm really committed to for this team and this organization is...

From now on, I am going to act...

Uncle Kurt Story...