

# Collaborative Mindset Values and Behaviors

## Governing Values

- **Authenticity** — Being honest with oneself and others, acting with integrity, demonstrating congruence between one's inner thoughts and external expressions.
- **Valid Information** — All relevant information is shared so that everyone understands what they need to know in order to make decisions and take actions based upon a . . .
- **Free and Informed Choice** — People make their independent decisions based upon good information, not due to coercion . . . which enables them to have . . .
- **Personal Commitment to the Choices Made** — Individuals have greater ownership and take greater responsibility for the choices that they participate in based upon . . .
- **Transparency** — Everyone feels comfortable with open, honest, and direct communication with no "hidden agendas" or undiscussables . . . which is best done with . . .
- **Humility** — A deep belief that we are no better than others. Rather, we are grounded in an understanding that we are not above others in value which, in turn, enables us to have . . .
- **Empathy** — Individuals have compassion for others and differing viewpoints and a genuine interest in understanding another's perspective . . . which is made possible because . . .
- **No One Person's Truth is Absolute** — Each person's truth is a reflection of his or her own reality, how he or she perceives and interprets the world. Discovering a holistic truth emerges from respecting and integrating others' truths.

## Enacting Behaviors

1. **Speak honestly** — This behavior involves speaking with integrity, telling the truth in a respectful way, and using the power of our voice/words to build vs. tear down. When we speak honestly, we speak from the heart in ways that work to inform and strengthen others and our relationships. Our authenticity and genuineness can enlighten, refresh, and disarm.
2. **Share all information that's pertinent to the situation** — People can only make informed choices or decisions when they have all of the useful and relevant information in front of them. This requires us to actively participate in dialogue with each other to say what we're thinking and what we know. Sharing all useful information includes saying "I don't have an opinion" or "I don't have anything to add to the discussion" rather than remaining silent (and causing people to wonder what we are really thinking!).
3. **Identify and test assumptions** — When you observe others making statements, taking actions, and making decisions, it's easy to make assumptions about their intentions/motivations. This enacting behavior first involves you *identifying* when you are making an assumption or inference about another person and then testing the assumption or inference directly by asking the other person for more information. Verify your "story" before you run with it!
4. **Suspend judgment** — In our normal conversations we tend to make quick value judgments about what others have said or done. We view others' statements or actions as good, bad, right, wrong, foolish, bold, brutish, bullying, caring, and so forth often without hard data behind our conclusions. With the *Collaborative Mindset*, we test out our assumptions and suspend our judgments about others. By suspending judgments we put our judgments on hold—creating enough distance between our judgments and ourselves to free us from having to act upon or be influenced by them and give us space to gather additional information to enable an informed judgment.
5. **Share your reasoning and intent and inquire into others' reasoning, intentions, perspective, knowledge, and experience** — This enacting behavior enables others to see how you reached the conclusions and judgments you did and to then explore areas of your reasoning where they

reasoned differently. When you explain to others *why* you think the way you do about something or why you made the statement you did, it enables them to better understand the basis for your words and actions and your purpose or reasons for doing something. The second half of this behavior involves actively *inquiring* into others' reasoning, intent, perspective, etc. When you genuinely inquire into others' reasoning, intentions, etc. you are able to better understand and appreciate what lies behind others' words and actions. Collaboration naturally evolves from the rich dialogue that emerges from this sharing of reasoning and intentions and an appreciation of divergent experience and backgrounds.

6. **Listen for understanding** — The *Collaborative Mindset* depends upon the skill of reflective listening with a focus on understanding and appreciating another's perspective. Reflective listening involves listening to what lies behind the words of others and then "mirroring" and paraphrasing what is learned back to the speaker in such a way that demonstrates your understanding. Reflective listening enables the speaker to confirm or disconfirm what you heard . . . leading to a deeper understanding of what the other was saying/thinking.
7. **Focus on exploring mutual interests, not defending positions** — Rather than focusing on positions (which, by definition, never intersect and which we tend to defend and hold), focus on better understanding and sharing your *interests* and exploring the interests of others. Our interests reflect the underlying needs and desires we have in a given situation. When we focus on *interests* it is far easier to find a solution. When, however, we focus on *positions*, we tend to *defend* and protect these positions — which profoundly limits understanding, agreement, and learning. [Note: adapted from *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury, 1991]
8. **Develop shared meaning of key words, concepts, ideas, events, decisions, and actions** — Creating a shared meaning and understanding around specific dates, times, places, and key words ensures that relevant information is available to all and enables people to make free and informed decisions and choices. When we have a shared understanding of key events and decisions we are more able to have an informed discussion on the issues before us. When we agree on the meaning of key terms (e.g., quality, learning, consensus, conflict, opportunity, etc.) we work from a shared understanding of the word/idea vs. drawing different meanings of these words and going off in different directions.
9. **Share decision making and action planning** — When we act unilaterally from a My-Way Mindset we attempt to impose our will onto others. The *Collaborative Mindset* involves working *with* others to jointly decide on what will happen and how to implement the decision. So, rather than imposing our way of thinking, we share our own ideas about next steps (and our reasoning behind them) and then invite others to share their thoughts (and the supporting reasoning). Based upon this valid information, we can then make informed choices on what to do next.
10. **See the parts, understand the whole** — By gathering all valid information in a given situation we can appreciate the pieces to the puzzle and make an informed choice about what to do next. The *Collaborative Mindset*, however, moves beyond just the parts to see the larger context and the fabric of the whole. People are moved to make decisions and take actions in their lives based upon the pieces *and* the whole. By understanding the whole vs. just looking at the parts, we can begin to appreciate why people do what they do. The larger context of their lives is as much responsible for their decisions and actions as a specific event or circumstance. When we see things holistically we tend to be more empathetic and understanding toward others and, therefore, more open to their experience, perspective, insights, and so forth.
11. **Use critical reflection to examine deeply held beliefs and behavioral patterns** — Critical reflection is the capacity to think deliberately about something in such a way that our underlying beliefs are open to challenge and change. Socrates once said that "an unexamined life is not worth living." He challenges us to critically examine our deeply held beliefs and behavioral patterns in such a way that we (1) are aware of their power and role in our life and (2) are then able to entertain and explore alternative beliefs and behaviors that may be more facilitative of understanding and learning.