

GETTING CURIOUS NOT FURIOUS

APPENDIX P

Team relationships kind of proceed through stages. Let's call this the "Team Relationship Stage Theory." In our experience, there are five stages:

1. *Discovery and Politeness:* In this stage, we are introduced to individuals on our team with varying backgrounds and experience. We discover basic information, and we interact with an emphasis on politeness and respect in efforts to "connect." If we receive politeness and respect in return, we advance to Stage 2. If we don't feel like we receive politeness and respect in return, we typically don't make it through.
2. *Comfort and Communication:* In this stage, we've spent enough time with one another to develop a basic sense of comfort (or discomfort). When we feel a basic sense of comfort, it helps open our communication channels. These channels help us dabble in simple conversations like, "How was your weekend?" or "How did your child's birthday go?" If we feel any discomfort, we don't progress through the stage and tend to regress to Stage 1.
3. *Do-You-Get-Me-or-Not-Get-Me?* In this stage, we've spent enough time together to question whether we "belong." This is obviously a critical stage in the teaming process. If we feel uneasy in this stage, team fissures are created, and we digress back to Stage 1. If we feel like we belong, we start experiencing those "extra" things in teams (e.g., covering a shift, remembering birthdays/important events, joking, supporting, etc.).
4. *Can't Live Without You:* In this stage, we enter either a healthy or unhealthy dependency on our teammates. A healthy dependency is built on trust and commitment. When we hold healthy (aka balanced) levels of trust and commitment with one another, we work to not let each other down. An unhealthy dependency occurs when we begin to "overtrust" or "overcommit" to one another. In other words, an unhealthy dependency means we simply can't operate if one of our teammates is not present.
5. *Look at Us!:* In this stage, we feel proud of the growth and connections we've made and are beginning to reap the rewards of healthy working relationships and solid improvements from the students we work with.

Like any good stage theory, we only progress to the next stage when we've overcome the pitfalls of each stage successfully. In Stages 1 and 2, the only pitfalls are time related. In other words, most of us can progress to Stage 3 with time.

Most of us can progress through Stage 3, but we won't unless we feel understood and like we belong. It is in this stage where we like to introduce the practice of "Curious vs. Furious" thinking. Stage 3 is full of potential misunderstandings and misperceptions. Feeling understood and like we

belong is a highly subjective experience. In other words, it is very hard to “prove” someone is understood or belongs. Typically, it’s just a feeling.

In an effort to enhance the likelihood of this feeling, we must introduce the idea of “curiosity before empathy.” This means that prior to demonstrating we accept one another, we must develop the acceptance first. Each of us needs to ask questions and be open to listen and learn about each other. Listening and learning about each other requires humility. Humility is simply admitting we don’t know something. Not knowing eventually (and almost always) leads to empathy. When we are truly empathetic toward our teammates, they feel understood and like they belong.

FURIOUS? GET CURIOUS WITH THESE STEPS:

1. Be curious about your own reaction. Why do you think you’re so upset?

2. Be curious about the action that caused you to be upset. Why do you think the action occurred? Was it intentional? Accidental?

3. Still have questions about the action? Ask questions and listen.

4. What are your thoughts and feelings after asking questions and listening?

5. Do you feel better about the situation after Steps 1–4? Why or why not?

