

Session 7: Presence

GOAL: During this session, your goal is to begin working on the two foundational practices in Culture in Action: PRESENCE and FOCUS. Today's session looks at how cultivating PRESENCE helps lead to high quality interactions and build the psychological safety necessary for high performing teams.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Pick a leader.

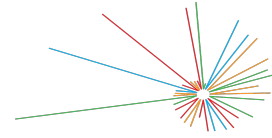
- Pick a team member to lead the session. You can select the same person who led an earlier session or rotate to give different people a chance.
- The leader should prepare the agenda. A standard agenda is with the course materials on the Culture in Action website. You can use the standard as is or adapt it to your needs.
- The leader should read the "Leader Tips," which are available on the Culture in Action website.

2. Get ready.

- The leader should schedule a 90-minute session, distribute this pdf (or a link to the website's "Course Materials" page) to all participants, and let participants know whether they should submit their session prep before the meeting.
- All participants should spend 30 minutes or so prepping for the session.
 - First, they should do the pre-reading (below), which discusses PRESENCE.
 - Second, they should do the "Session Prep" (below). For the first time, participants will start filling in the section focused on PRESENCE (and continue filling in the sections focused on ACTION, STORY, and TENSIONS).

3. Go.

- Hold the session. Go through each of the practices in order. As always, if you get stuck, the leader can refer to the Leader Tips for help.
- If you'd like, set aside a few minutes to discuss the role of PRESENCE.
- Briefly review ACTIONS from the last meeting. If the group is not consistently following through on commitments, decide where/how you want to deal with that. (You can make it a TENSION to be addressed in a Culture in Action session or handle it in another venue – but you should handle it somewhere, to make sure you're building a culture of accountability.)
- Name TENSIONS, select the one you'd like to focus on, and agree on any other actions you want to take on other TENSIONS.
- Continue to pay attention to making sure every person has a chance to be heard.



Session 7: Pre-Reading

PRESENCE is, in its simplest definition, a pause. It's about stopping long enough to let go of the past, the future, and all the thoughts and ideas that continually deflect your attention from the here and now.

PRESENCE practices often happen naturally in response to chaos and crisis. Our sixth sense says, "Stop. Walk away. Let it go. Get some perspective." For example:

- We breathe deeply when we hear things that make us uncomfortable or angry.
- We walk down the hall or around the building to relax the grip of a stressful occurrence.
- We indulge in a workout, a hot bath, music, or quiet time outside to release the day's anxiety.
- As parents, as friends, and as spouses, we encourage those around us to slow down and disconnect when they're upset or overwhelmed.

The practice of PRESENCE is foundational, particularly in today's world – when our attention is continually bombarded from a host devices and platforms, fractured into slivers as we multitask our way thru the day.

PRESENCE practice let us integrate these fractured pieces back into a harmonious whole. By taking a moment at the outset of a meeting to consciously become present, we become less fragmented and frantic. We let go of reacting, so we can start choosing. We reclaim a feeling of being grounded (i.e., in control of our mental and emotional self) and centered (i.e., connected to our core self, the self we return to when lift tips us off balance). We are able to open ourselves to hear others – particularly others whose natural style is different from our own.

This "coming together" is not a conscious process. When you stop, settle, and breathe, you gain balance and integration.

We cultivate PRESENCE so that we can act from our center.

TRY THIS:

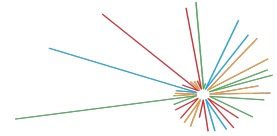
- Pause in silence and take an intentional breath. Listen to the breath coming in, listen to the breath going out. Then repeat two more times.
- As you stop and breathe, become open and aware. Let your thoughts and feelings exist as they are. Notice them without dwelling on them. Let go of where you were. Be here now. There is no intent other than being in the present moment.

There is no one right way to cultivate PRESENCE. The essential elements are pausing and paying attention to what is happening in the present moment —for example, "I am driving," or "I am writing," or "I am eating."

Studies show that disciplined practice will literally alter your brain and body so that you can more readily access PRESENCE.

Over time, PRESENCE practices let you develop the capacity to pause before a situation escalates and to respond from the strength of your center.

Presence is both an individual and a group practice. Individually, it involves choosing to be calm, open, and aware and to fully participate in the session. Collectively, it involves the mutual respect and potential for meaningful action that becomes possible when the group brings their full energy to the issues at hand.



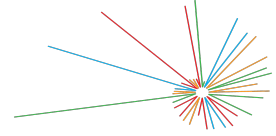
Session 7: Session Prep

Before every session, each participant should read the background materials for the session and think: about the last session, about what’s happening and what it means to them, and about the session to come.

The following chart will help you prepare. You can use this written form if it’s helpful.

If you like, your group can collect submissions in advance and share them. Doing so can help make **STORIES** more visible and streamline the identification of **TENSIONS**.

<p>PRESENCE: What are your current practices and how do you feel you’re doing with them?</p>	<p>The goal of this pre-work is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Think about PRESENCE, ACTION, STORIES and TENSIONS before the session. ➤ Collect TENSIONS in advance in order to make the session as efficient as possible. ➤ Make the STORIES, TENSIONS and ACTIONS public and a normal part of work. <p>Even though you won’t have time to address all TENSIONS during the session, it’s still valuable to spend some time naming them.</p> <p>At a minimum, it helps the group see things more clearly.</p> <p>Sometimes, simply naming TENSIONS is enough to make slight shifts to the system over time.</p> <p>If you want, you can agree to get together to talk about them in another setting.</p>
<p>ACTION: What actions did you agreed to at your last session? What progress have you made?</p>	
<p>STORY: Jot down a positive culture story – a real, recent example of something that you believe demonstrates the best of your culture in action.</p>	
<p>TENSION(S): What TENSION(s) do you want to FOCUS on/raise with the group? Remember to phrase them as questions: “How might I/we?”</p>	



Session 7: Additional Resources

For more on PRESENCE, see the Additional Resources page on the Culture in Action website.