

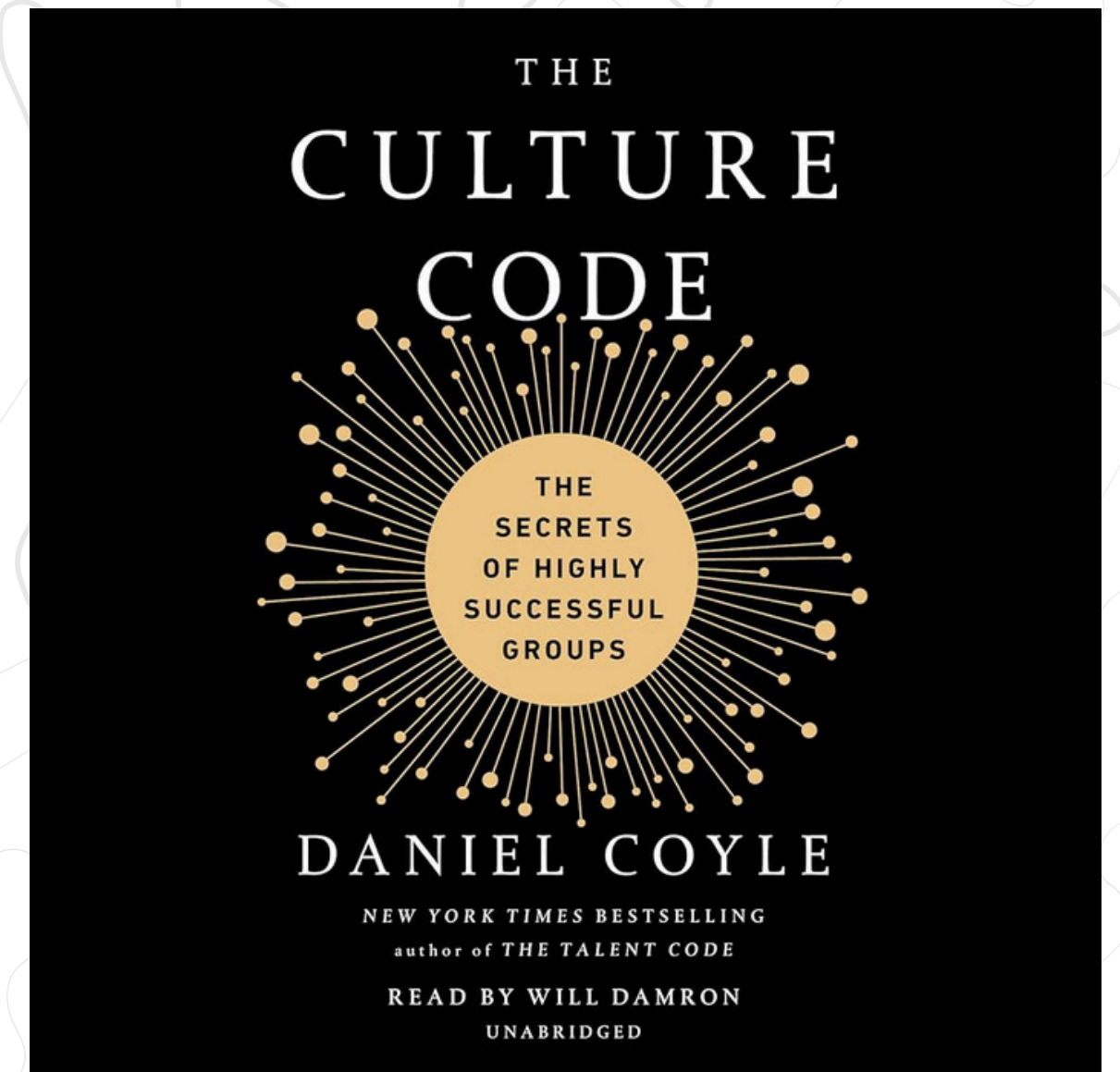


*The culture*  
**CODE**

**THE SECRETS OF HIGHLY  
SUCCESSFUL GROUPS**

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# SETTING THE

# Stage

- **Opening Question:** Why do certain groups add up to be greater than the sum of their parts, while others add up to be less?
- Group culture is one of the most powerful forces on the planet, yet the inner workings of culture remain mysterious. We tend to think about culture as a group trait, like DNA, and view a strong group culture as something we either have or don't
- Coyle views culture as something created by a set of skills explored in this book:
  - Skill 1 - Build Safety
  - Skill 2 - Share Vulnerability
  - Skill 3 - Establish Purpose
- Each section has three parts: exploring how each skill works, dissecting real-world examples, and providing suggestions for application.

**“Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It’s not something you are. It’s something you do.”**

*skill one*

**BUILD SAFETY**

# SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

# Interactions

- **Statements from Successful Environments:**
  - “We are solidly connected.”
  - “We are family.”
  - “I can’t explain it, but things just feel right.”
- **Patterns of Interactions of Successful Groups:**
  - Close physical proximity
  - Profuse amounts of eye contact
  - Physical touch
  - Lots of short, energetic exchanges
  - High levels of mixing; everyone talks to everyone
  - Humor, laughter
  - Intensive, active listening
  - Small, attentive courtesies (thank-yous, opening doors, etc.)

**What do we call this?**

**Chemistry**

# **BELONGING** *Cues*

- **Belonging cues are behaviors that create safe connection in groups.**
- **Belonging cues possess three basic qualities:**
  - **Energy:** They invest in the exchange that is occurring.
  - **Individualization:** They treat the person as unique and valued.
  - **Future Orientation:** They signal the relationship will continue.

# BELONGING *Cues*

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Are we safe here?  
What's our future with  
these people? Are there  
dangers lurking?

**Belonging Cues**

You are safe here.

# OBSERVING *Teams*

Team performance can be measured on five observable factors:

1. Roughly equal contributions to conversations by all members.
2. High levels of eye contact with energetic conversations and gestures.
3. Communication occurred between all individuals, not just through the team leader.
4. Presence of back-channel or side conversations within the team.
5. Step outside of team to gather information, and then bring it back to the others.

“Group performance depends on behavior that communicates one powerful overarching idea: **We are safe and connected.**”



**“...the deeper thing to realize is that you can't just give a cue once. This is all about establishing relationships, conveying the fact that I'm interested in you, and that all we do together is in the context of that relationship. It's a narrative -- you have to keep it going.”**

# FEEDBACK *for* BELONGING

Highly successful cultures are “energized and engaged, but at their core their members are oriented less around achieving happiness than around solving hard problems together. This includes many moments of high-candor feedback, uncomfortable truth-telling, when they confront the gap between where the group is and where it ought to be.”

I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them.

```
graph TD; A["I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them."] --> B["You are part of this group."]; A --> C["This group is special; we have high standards here."]; A --> D["I believe you can reach those standards."];
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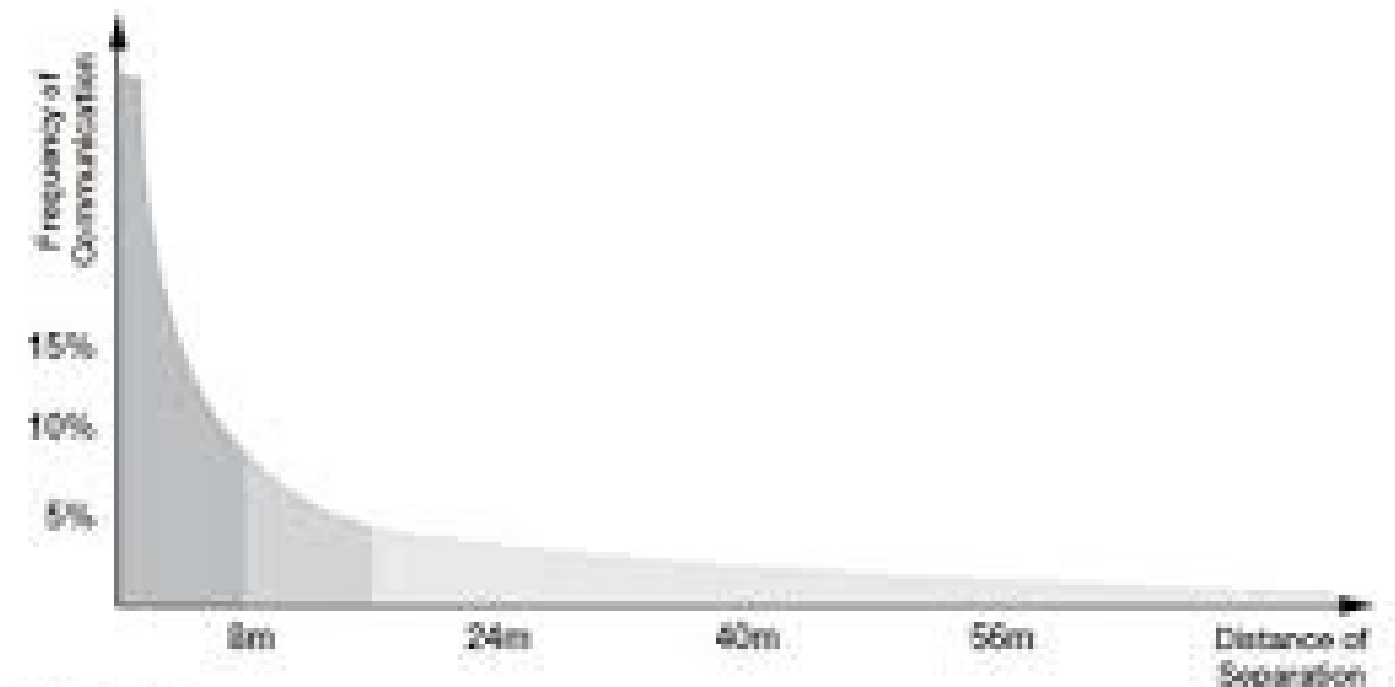
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# COLLIDING *for* BELONGING

- **Collisions:** serendipitous personal encounters
- **Creating Opportunity for Collisions:**
  - The Downtown Project: Closeness helps create efficiencies of connections
  - The Allen Curve: Communication frequency is significantly higher within 8 meters



# **BUILDING**

# *Safety*

- **Overcommunicate your listening.**
- **Spotlight your fallibility early on--especially if you're a leader.**
- **Embrace the messenger.**
- **Preview future connection.**
- **Overdo thank-yous.**
- **Be painstaking in the hiring process.**
- **Eliminate the bad apples.**
- **Create safe, collision-rich spaces.**
- **Make sure everyone has a voice.**
- **Pick up trash.**
- **Capitalize on threshold moments.**
- **Avoid giving sandwich feedback.**
- **Embrace fun.**

*skill two*

**SHARE**

**VULNERABILITY**

**“[Vulnerability is] about sending a really clear signal that you have weaknesses, that you could use help. And if that behavior becomes a model for others, then you can set the insecurities aside and get to work, start to trust each other and help each other.”**

# VULNERABILITY *Basics*

- It's less about the **sender** and more about the **receiver**.
- **Vulnerability Loop:** a shared exchange of openness that follows the below, discrete steps
  - Person A sends a signal of vulnerability.
  - Person B detects this signal.
  - Person B responds by signaling their own vulnerability.
  - Person A detects this signal.
  - A norm is established; closeness and trust increase.
- The vulnerability loop is contagious.

# COOPERATION *On* TEAMS

- Exchanges of vulnerability lead to trusting cooperation on teams.
- Cooperation comes from the intersection of vulnerability and interconnectedness.
- Goal of an After Action Review: “not to excavate truth for truth’s sake, or to assign credit and blame, but rather to build a shared mental model the can be applied to future [projects]”
  - What were our intended results?
  - What were our actual results?
  - What caused our results?
  - What will we do the same next time?
  - What will we do differently?



# SPARKING *Vulnerability*

- Find the Nyquist of the Team
  - “If I could get a sense of the way your culture works by meeting just one person, who would it be?”
  - Serve as a spark or roving catalyst for others
  - Asks questions to help surface the issue or solution

# **BUILDING**

# *Vulnerability*

- **Make sure the leader is vulnerable first and often.**
  - **What is one thing that I currently do that you'd like me to continue to do?**
  - **What is one thing that I don't currently do frequently enough that you think I should do more often?**
  - **What can I do to make you more effective?**
- **Overcommunicate expectations.**
- **Deliver the negative stuff in person.**
- **When forming new groups, focus on two critical moments--the first vulnerability and the first disagreement.**
- **Listen like a trampoline. Don't be a passive sponge. Be an active responder.**

# **BUILDING**

# *Vulnerability*

- In conversation, resist the temptation to reflexively add value.
- Use candor-generating practices like AARs, BrainTrusts, and Red Teaming.
- Aim for Candor. Avoid Brutal Honesty.
- Embrace the discomfort.
- Align language with action.
- Build a wall between performance review and professional development.
- Use flash mentoring.
- Make the leader occasionally disappear.

*skill three*

**ESTABLISH**

**PURPOSE**

**“Purpose isn’t about tapping into some mystical internal drive but rather about creating simple beacons that focus attention and engagement on the shared goal. Successful cultures do this by relentlessly seeking ways to tell and retell their story.”**

# HIGH-PURPOSE

# Environments

- High-purpose environments are designed to create a link between the present moment and a future ideal.
  - Here is where we are.
  - Here is where we want to go.
- This is called **mental contrasting**. It helps to tell the story of where we want to go.
- Storytelling should not be thought of as casual, as stories do not cloak reality but create it, triggering motivation and new perceptions.
- “This is why we work. Here is where you should put your energy.”

# HIGH-PURPOSE

# Environments

- Five basic types of signals to promote high-purpose and successful teams:
  - Framing
    - Viewing training as an opportunity to learn something that would benefit others
  - Roles
    - Members are told explicitly why their individual and collective strengths matter.
  - Rehearsal
    - Taking time to elaborately plan, practice, and discuss protocols for communication
  - Explicit Encouragement to Speak Up
    - All members are encouraged to speak up if they see a problem.
  - Active Reflection
    - Discussion about improvement in between trials

# HIGH-PROFICIENCY

# Environments

- Use catchphrases that name the values and trigger **decision-making heuristics**.
- The trick is not to just send the signal but to create engagement around it.
- Examples:
  - You can't prevent mistakes, but you can solve problems graciously.
  - The road to success is paved with mistakes well handled.
  - Collect the dots and connect the dots.
  - Leave the jersey in a better place.



# HIGH-CREATIVITY

# Environments

- Creative leaders as creative engineers.
- Most successful creative endeavors can be described with this statement:
  - The project started out as a complete disaster, but then at the last moment, somehow we managed to rescue it.
- “Building purpose in a creative group is not about generating a brilliant moment of breakthrough but rather about building systems that can churn through lots of ideas in order to help unearth the right choice.”
- Don't focus on the ideas, focus on the people.

# ESTABLISHING

# Purpose

- Name and rank your priorities.
- Be ten times as clear about your priorities as you think you should be.
- Figure out where your group aims for proficiency and where it aims for creativity.
- Embrace the use of catchphrases.
- Measure what really matters.
- Use artifacts.
- Focus on bar-setting behaviors.

# TAKEAWAYS ON

# Culture

- **The Power of Culture:** Strong group culture thrives on safety, vulnerability, and purpose, creating environments where individuals feel connected and empowered.
- **Build Safety:** Foster trust and belonging through small, consistent actions that signal inclusion and shared identity.
- **Share Vulnerability:** Embrace openness and feedback to create authentic connections and drive collaboration.
- **Establish Purpose:** Align efforts with a clear and compelling vision that connects individuals to the group's mission.
- **Your Role:** Leaders are culture architects--your actions and signals set the tone for the group's behavior and cohesion.

**What steps will you take to cultivate and sustain a high-performing culture in your organization?**



*Thank You!*

