



THE POWER OF HEALTHY TENSION

With Tim Arnold
& Claudia Valle



THE POWER OF **HEALTHY** TENSION



IDENTIFY YOUR CRUX TENSION

Seeing is relieving



MIND YOUR BIAS

Embrace your opposite



LEARN THE LANGUAGE

There is wisdom in resistance



MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Go slow to go fast

CONTENTS

Introduction to Healthy Tension	3
Identify your Crux Tension	5
Mind Your Bias	8
Learn the Language	11
Make Informed Decisions	13
Appendices	16

1. INTRODUCTION TO HEALTHY TENSION

Using the Healthy Tension Worksheet on the following page, map out the **Embracing Change / Preserving Stability** tension.

POSITIVE RESULTS

- Start by identifying 3 positive results from **Embracing Change**. Write them in the box at the top left of the page.

NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE

- Then, identify 3 negative results when **Embracing Change** is overdone to the neglect of Preserving Stability. Write these in the box at the bottom left of the page.

POSITIVE RESULTS

- Next, identify 3 positive results from **Preserving Stability**. Write them in the box at the top right of the page.

NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE

- Finally, identify 3 negative results when **Preserving Stability** is overdone to the neglect of Embracing Change. Write these in the box at the bottom right of the page.

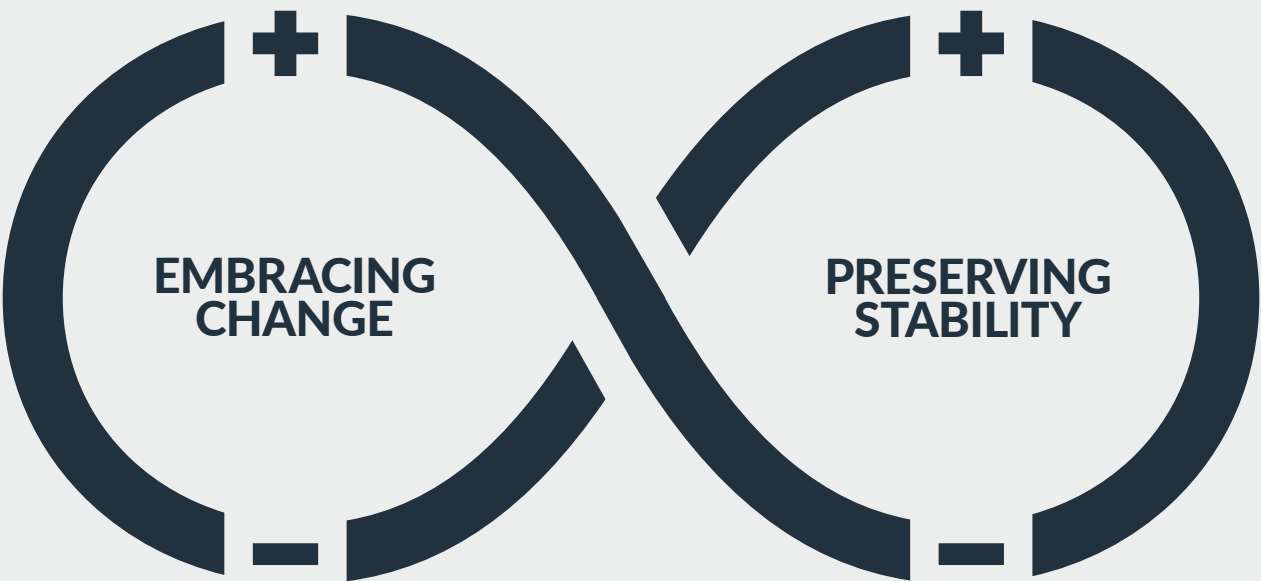
TENSION
EMBRACING CHANGE / PRESERVING STABILITY*

+

POSITIVE RESULTS OF CHANGE

POSITIVE RESULTS OF STABILITY

+



-

NEGATIVE RESULTS OF CHANGE
WHEN OVERDONE

NEGATIVE RESULTS OF STABILITY
WHEN OVERDONE

-

*Thanks to Dr. Barry Johnson, *Polarity Partnerships*



2. IDENTIFY YOUR CRUX TENSION

Take a look at this list of 20 tensions. Which is your crux tension?

TASK FOCUSED AND RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED

CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND ENCOURAGEMENT*

CONTROL AND EMPOWERMENT

FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS AND FOCUS ON THE TEAM*

TRUTHFUL & CANDID AND TACTFUL & DIPLOMATIC**

FOCUS ON MY PART OF THE ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS ON THE WHOLE ORGANIZATION*

REALISTIC AND OPTIMISTIC

CENTRALIZED COORDINATION AND DECENTRALIZED FREEDOM

COLLABORATION AND COMPETITION

MANAGE COSTS AND MAINTAIN QUALITY

PRESERVE TRADITION & STABILITY AND STIMULATE INNOVATION & CHANGE**

FOCUS ON THE SHORT TERM AND FOCUS ON THE LONG TERM

FREEDOM AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CONFIDENCE AND HUMILITY

LOGIC AND GUT-FEELING

STRUCTURE AND FLEXIBILITY

PLANNING AND EXECUTION

PROFIT AND PURPOSE*

CARE FOR SELF AND CARE FOR OTHERS

WORK AND HOME*

*THANKS TO JIM COLLINS, *GOOD TO GREAT*

**THANKS TO DR. BARRY JOHNSON, *POLARITY PARTNERSHIPS*

YOUR CRUX TENSION

Which did you identify as your crux tension?

How well are you currently managing this tension?



Reflect on a recent example of when you've managed this tension very well:

Reflect on a recent example of when you've managed this tension poorly:

If you were able to manage this tension more effectively, what positive outcomes would you expect?

NEXT STEPS

- Find ways to make sure you that you stay conscious of your crux tension.
 - *Examples:* Discuss the tension at a team meeting, post the tension at your desk to make it visual.
- Make this part of your onboarding, orientation and staff training to make new team members aware of the crux tension.
- In the next week, talk to colleagues from other departments to get their opinion on how well your team is doing at managing this tension.

3. MIND YOUR BIAS

Looking at the common tensions below, identify your bias for each one.

Embracing Change		AND	Preserving Stability	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRONG BIAS	MODERATE BIAS		MODERATE BIAS	STRONG BIAS

Care for Self		AND	Care for Others	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRONG BIAS	MODERATE BIAS		MODERATE BIAS	STRONG BIAS

Flexibility		AND	Structure	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRONG BIAS	MODERATE BIAS		MODERATE BIAS	STRONG BIAS

Optimistic		AND	Realistic	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRONG BIAS	MODERATE BIAS		MODERATE BIAS	STRONG BIAS

Working Independently		AND	Working Collaboratively	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STRONG BIAS	MODERATE BIAS		MODERATE BIAS	STRONG BIAS

What did you identify as your crux tension? (page 6)

Which side is your bias?

Reflect on a recent example of when your bias has added value to your work and/or your team:

Reflect on a recent example of when your bias has hindered your work and/or your team:

Do you have an “opposite” - a person to help you mind your bias?

My “Opposite” (person with the opposing bias):

NEXT STEPS

- Commit to a conversation in the next week with this person to get their perspective on how well you’re managing this tension. Also, give them permission to help you mind your bias in the future.
- When will I have this conversation?

Date:

4. LEARN THE LANGUAGE

Refer back to your crux tension (page 6) and assume you're having a conversation with your "opposite" (from page 10). Practice the process by completing this 'Getting Unstuck' template.

Remember to replace the word "but" with "and" whenever possible.

1.

"Here's where you're right..."

Affirm / explore the value of the other person's point of view.

2.

"Here's where I can go wrong ..."

Acknowledge the downsides of your point of view when it's overdone.

3.

"Here's where I'm right too ..."

Suggest the values of your point of view.

4.

"So where do we go from here?"

Explore how both perspectives can work together.

NEXT STEPS

- In the next week, seek out a person who has a very different perspective than yours on an issue that matters to you. Look at the list below for some examples. Using the 'Getting Unstuck' approach, try to have a productive and respectful conversation with them.
 - Parenting - *Structure* vs. *Flexibility*
 - Yearly Budget - *Spend* vs. *Save*
 - Strong Country - *National Identity* vs. *Cultural Diversity*
 - Voting - *Liberal* vs. *Conservative*
 - Refugees - *National Responsibility* vs. *Global Responsibility*
 - Pipelines - *Focus on Economy* vs. *Focus on Environment*

5. MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

COMPLETE THE HEALTHY TENSION WORKSHEET

Using the Healthy Tension Worksheet on the following page, map out the crux tension you identified on page 6.

MY CRUX TENSION:

POSITIVE RESULTS

- Start by identifying 3 *positive results* from focusing on each side and write them in the two boxes at the top of the page.

NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE

- Then, identify 3 *negative results* when each side is overdone to the neglect of the other. Write these in the two boxes at the bottom of the page.

COMPLETE THE HEALTHY TENSION ACTION PLAN

To help manage your crux tension more effectively, complete the Healthy Tension Action Plan on page 15.

ACTION STEPS

- Start by identifying 1 to 3 actions you (and/or your team) can start, stop or continue doing to gain or maintain the positive results of each side.
- Ensure these are time sensitive (i.e. start dates, deadlines, etc.), and measurable. Write these down in the two boxes at the top of the page.

RED FLAGS

- Then, identify 1 to 3 red flags that serve as early warning indicators that a side is being overdone to the neglect of the other.
- For each red flag, ensure someone is responsible to alert the team if it is realized. Write these in the two boxes at the bottom of the page.

HEALTHY TENSION WORKSHEET

+ POSITIVE RESULTS

1.
2.
3.

POSITIVE RESULTS +

1.
2.
3.



- NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE

1.
2.
3.

NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE -

1.
2.
3.

For an example, refer to Appendix #1 at the end of the workbook.

*Thanks to Dr. Barry Johnson, *Polarity Partnerships*

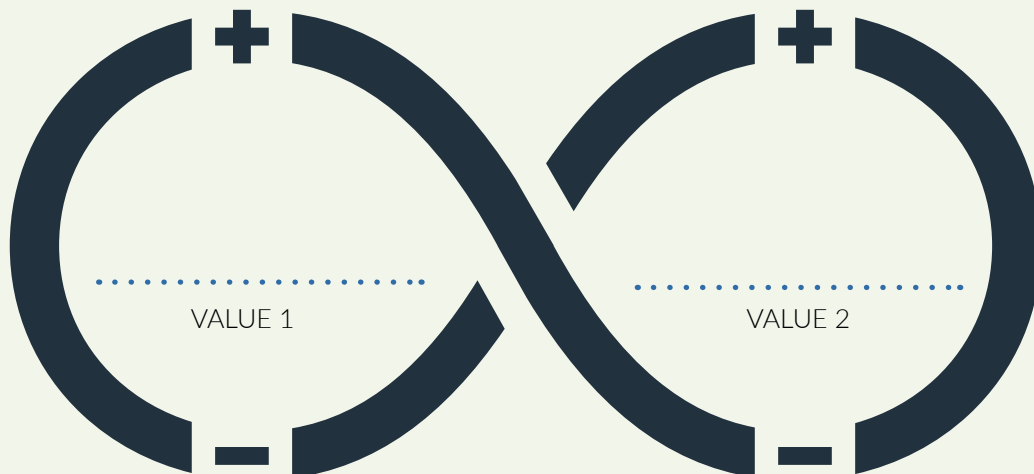
HEALTHY TENSION ACTION PLAN

ACTION STEPS: Something to start, stop or continue doing to gain or maintain the positive results of this value. *What? Who? When?*

1.
2.
3.

ACTION STEPS: Something to start, stop or continue doing to gain or maintain the positive results of this value. *What? Who? When?*

1.
2.
3.



RED FLAGS: Measurable indicators that this value is being overdone. *What? Who owns it? So what?*

1.
2.
3.

RED FLAGS: Measurable indicators that this value is being overdone. *What? Who owns it? So what?*

1.
2.
3.

For an example, refer to Appendix #2 at the end of the workbook.

*Thanks to Dr. Barry Johnson, *Polarity Partnerships*

SAMPLE HEALTHY TENSION WORKSHEET

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY / WORKING INDEPENDENTLY*



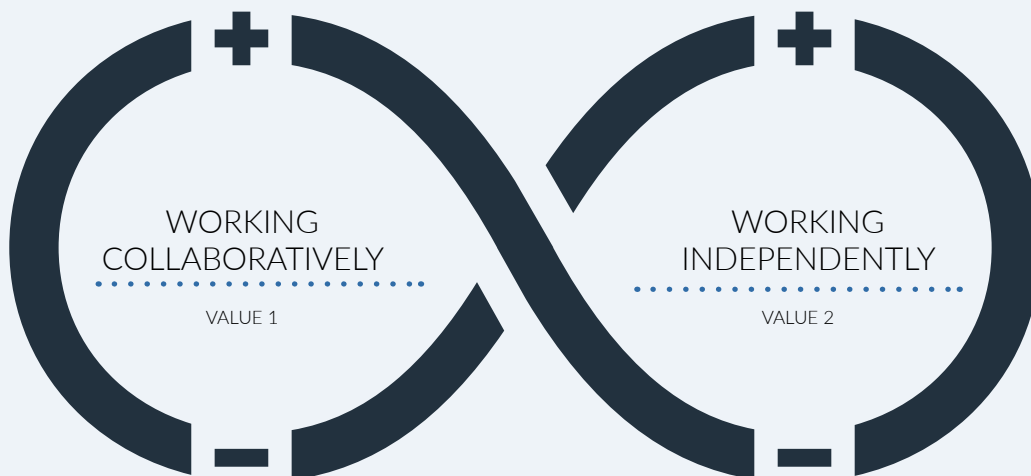
POSITIVE RESULTS

1. Higher quality work through more ideas and feedback
2. More energy, engagement and fun
3. Efficiency a result of less 'back and forth'

POSITIVE RESULTS



1. Accomplish more by 'dividing and conquering'
2. Higher focus and flexibility
3. Developing skills and confidence



NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE

1. Not seizing as many opportunities
2. Harder to get things done
3. Creating codependency

NEGATIVE RESULTS WHEN OVERDONE



1. Lower quality due to lack of perspective and feedback
2. Work is less fun and team relationships suffer
3. Duplication and mistakes due to blind spots

*Thanks to Dr. Barry Johnson, *Polarity Partnerships*

SAMPLE HEALTHY TENSION ACTION PLAN

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY / WORKING INDEPENDENTLY*

ACTION STEPS: Something to start, stop or continue doing to gain or maintain the positive results of this value. *What? Who? When?*

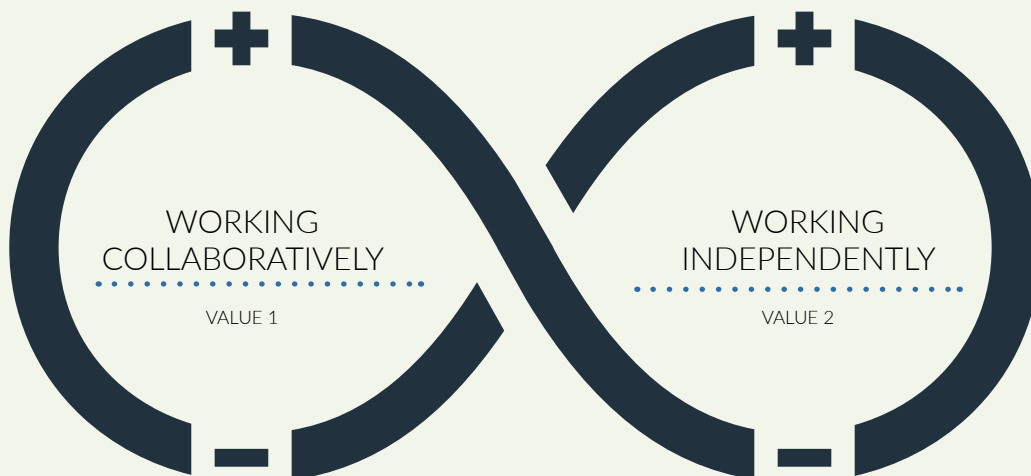
1. Commit to working together (in the same space) one day per week.

.....

ACTION STEPS: Something to start, stop or continue doing to gain or maintain the positive results of this value. *What? Who? When?*

1. Assigning independent responsibilities based on strengths.
(Tim= website, Claudia = Salesforce)

.....



RED FLAGS: Measurable indicators that this value is being overdone. *What? Who owns it? So what?*

1. We meet collaboratively and discuss the same work plan item 2 or more times.

.....

RED FLAGS: Measurable indicators that this value is being overdone. *What? Who owns it? So what?*

1. We realize we have been working off different versions of program materials (updates aren't consistent)

.....

*Thanks to Dr. Barry Johnson, *Polarity Partnerships*



Leaders FOR Leaders

Building Teams. Developing Leaders.

NEXT STEPS

Go deeper. Get the book.

GET THE BOOK



Give your team the core skills required for success.

Leaders for Leaders' live & virtual workshops provide you with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in the workplace.

BOOK A WORKSHOP

Help your leaders navigate conflicting points of view.

Tim Arnold helps you understand the chronic issues that hold back leadership and teamwork, so you can thrive.

BOOK A KEYNOTE



www.leadersforleaders.ca



info@leadersforleaders.ca



[@timarnold1](https://twitter.com/timarnold1)



[leadersforleaders.ca](https://www.instagram.com/leadersforleaders.ca)



[tim-arnold1](https://www.linkedin.com/company/tim-arnold1)

