

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Build Self-Awareness with Help from Your Team

by [Audrey Epstein](#)

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Doug Perrine/Nature Picture Library/Getty Images

There are lots of compelling reasons to build a better team. Great teams deliver stronger results, faster. They're more innovative. They challenge you to learn more quickly and to be at your best. And, let's face it — they're simply more fun to work with.

Recently, I found a new reason to build a better team — to address the fact that most of us are surprisingly lacking in self-awareness. Researcher and author Tasha Eurich uncovered this disturbing statistic through her multi-year study on the topic of self-awareness: 95%

of us *think* we are quite self-aware, but only about 10-15% of us actually are.

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So how can better teams help with our own self-awareness? Here's the important connection: We need feedback to help match our internal view of ourselves with the external view. And on the best teams, not only are teammates willing to provide feedback to each other, they are required to do so.

On high-performing teams, peers feel accountable for each other's success, and willingly provide both generous support and candid feedback to help each team member be at their best.

Through years of research on teamwork, I have uncovered four distinct types of teams, from the worst of the worst, "Saboteur Teams," to the highest-performing, or "Loyalist Teams." While distrust, politics,

infighting, and gossip are hallmarks of Saboteur Teams (or "team hell"), trust, candor, feedback, shared goals, and joint accountability constitute Loyalist Team behavior. In fact, compared to Saboteur Teams, Loyalist Team members are:

- 292 times more likely to spend time debating, discussing problems, and making decisions
- 125 times more likely to address unacceptable team behaviors promptly
- 106 times more likely to give each other tough feedback
- 40 times less likely to have "undiscussables" that the team can't talk openly about

On Loyalist teams, team members talk honestly and openly about team and individual team members' strengths and challenges. And, because team members extend trust to each other, they assume positive intent when the tougher conversations happen. Therefore, authentic and candid feedback is more easily heard and valued. It feels okay to be imperfect or to experience setbacks. It is less scary to be vulnerable.

What if you could get honest insights and feedback from coworkers who are truly committed to your success and get to see you in action all the time, on both your best and worst days? You can, and you will, if you build a Loyalist Team. Think of how much faster you could address the unintended consequences of your actions if you were surrounded by people motivated to give you useful feedback.

If you want candid feedback, trust, and support from your teammates, try these five tips:

1. **Assume positive intent.** Give your teammates the benefit of the doubt. Assume they are providing feedback not to judge you but to make you better.
2. **Talk to your teammates, not about them.** You can't solve problems with gossip. Venting without follow-up action ensures that you are building cliques and solidifying rifts. It takes courage, but talking directly and respectfully with teammates when something goes wrong can solve many misunderstandings without creating drama or bringing others into it.
3. **Care about your teammates' success.** Start by taking an interest in your teammates' success. Ask questions about their concerns, know what their goals are, help where you can, and be a good listener and collaborator. You can't be a Loyalist teammate if you don't know what drives others' success.
4. **Push your teammates to do their best work and vice versa.** On Loyalist Teams, team members challenge each other to reach their goals. Loyalists don't spend energy watching their own backs, so they take risks and reach higher. Start by asking your teammates to challenge you. Bring them ideas and ask for input. Ask for feedback on your plans. Embrace the idea that your teammates make you better.
5. **Ask for personal feedback.** Before offering feedback, ask for it first. Ask your teammates what you could do to better support their success. Ask peers for suggestions

on one behavior you could work on to become a better teammate. Give permission for teammates to share feedback by asking for it regularly and listening openly. Thank others for giving you feedback.

To build greater self-awareness, work to create a team of Loyalists around you, people who trust you, support you, and challenge you to be your best. Surround yourself with people who will speak their truth, even when it’s hard. And then listen. When you do, you will see an amazingly positive impact — on you, on them, and on the overall success of your team.

Audrey Epstein is a partner at The Trispective Group and the co-author with Linda Adams, Abby Curnow-Chavez, and Rebecca Teasdale of *The Loyalist Team: How Trust, Candor, and Authenticity Create Great Organizations*.

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S. Brovkin a year ago

Simple but very clear division of teams into 4 distinct categories, based on teamwork research. And the benefits of a loyal team are clear and unquestionable. But the question remains: How do you “create a team of Loyalists around you, people who trust you, support you,

and challenge you to be your best”?
My response is: use Collectiver Q7 tool and adjust your team accordingly: <http://collectiver.com/q7/> .

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