

NUDGE TO ACTION ON:

Being a Learner

A predisposition towards open-mindedness and curiosity; a consistent interest in “getting something right,” rather than “being right.”



CULTURE IS AN EVERYBODY JOB:

Culture, in a quiet, compelling, unspoken way, drives how people approach problems and prioritize work.

- Normalize failure as part of a creative and innovative culture. Failure is clear feedback.
- Show a commitment to “getting it right,” rather than “being right.”
- Focus on creating value, rather than protecting ego.

PRACTICE BEING A LEARNER:

THINK:

- A “bias to action” is a strength (in a person/team/organization) when it is balanced with curiosity and experimentation. Unchecked, a “bias to action” can result in a culture that has no patience for understanding a problem before taking action.
- “Do I want to be right, or do I want to be in right relationship?”
- “What don’t I know about this person’s point of view?”
- “What do I believe – and how might I be wrong?”

FEEL:

What are your physical cues when you are attached to a point of view or outcome, i.e., what does certainty feel like in your body? How is that different from how curiosity feels?

DO:

- Demonstrate that you are listening with the intent to understand by asking clarifying questions.
- Keep your body language/posture relaxed and open.
- Wait for three people to contribute their point of view before you offer yours.
- Create dedicated meeting time for learning and ideation versus decision making.

BEING A LEARNER SOUNDS LIKE:

“I don’t know – what do you think?”
“What have I not asked you that would be important for me to know?”
“I’m not sure if I agree with myself, but my initial thinking is ...”
“It sounds like we are working from different points of view. Can you help me understand yours?”



SUPPORT FOR THE LEARNER LOOKS LIKE:

THE BOSS:

Notice how often you are the first person to offer a point of view and whether or not your team withholds their opinion in favor of yours. Challenge yourself to ask open-ended, genuinely curious questions twice as often.

THE PEER:

Practice curiosity and being a learner in your conversations. A simple “say more” or “help me understand your point of view” goes a long way.

THE DIRECT REPORT:

Expect that your boss will ask more questions and invite your opinion. Let them know that you appreciate the invitation and their willingness to entertain other points of view.



Mistakes WE MAKE:

- Think that, to be “unattached to an outcome,” we have to lack or give up our point of view.
- Intentionally or otherwise, we routinely give more airtime and weight to the opinions of senior people and subject-matter experts.
- We subtly or overtly shame people for challenging our point of view/course of action.
- Believe that changing our mind -- i.e., shifting priorities or changing direction – is a lapse in leadership, rather than a hallmark of agile leadership.

