

The research behind high-performing teams, and how to lead them in schools

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research  ED

Today's teaming journey

- 1. What is a high-performing team?
- 2. What truly underpins these factors?
- 3. Thriving School Teams

Filling school capacity

Student outcomes

Ofsted grades

Leadership

Curriculum

Behaviour

Learning and teaching

Being evidence-informed

Safeguarding and mental health

CPD, retention, recruitment

Do we underestimate the power of teamwork?



Team work remains the ultimate competitive advantage (Lencioni)



**How many of our teams are rowing
seamlessly in the same direction?**

What are common traits that high-performing teams share?



Codifying high-performing teams – what the evidence says....

1. Vision and purpose
2. Belonging and trust
3. Ambitious, clear team goals
4. Role clarity, mental models, and systems
5. Communication, candour, conflict
6. Review and evaluate
7. Team diversity and characteristics
8. Learning culture
9. Enabling organisational conditions

- Salas, et al 2018
- Tannenbaum et al, 2013
- Bell et al 2018
- Lacerenza, et al 2018

A high-performing, thriving team

Team Development

Learning, Coaching, Debriefs, Leadership

Team Dynamics

Motivation, Conflict, Cohesion, Wellbeing

Team Operations

Knowledge, Roles & Mental Models, Communication,
Meetings

Team Alignment

Purpose, Values & Behaviours, Goals

Team Belonging

Psychological Safety, Belonging, Trust

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Belonging matters

Higher team
satisfaction and buy in

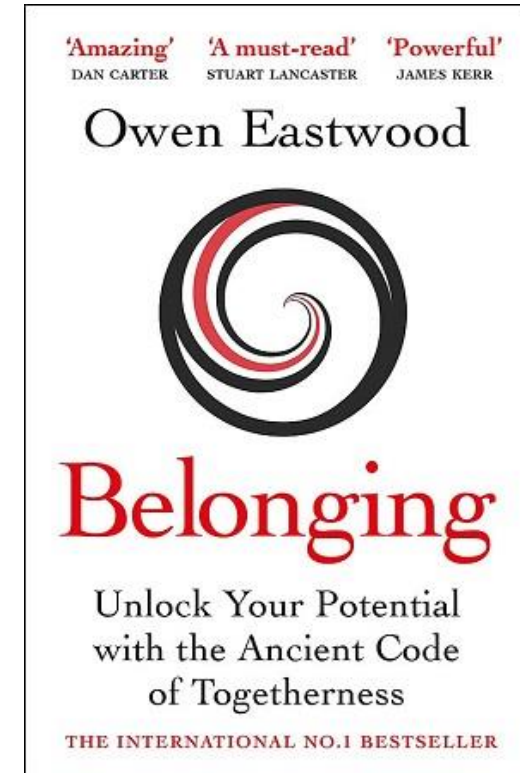
Higher retention




Increased team effectiveness
and cohesion

Increased wellbeing

- We all want to belong
- Belonging before performance
- Not a fixed state





You are part
of this group.

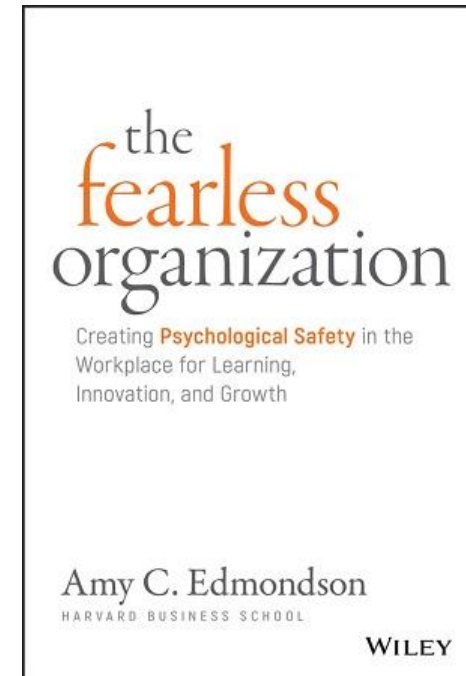
This group is special;
we have high
standards here.

I believe you can reach
those standards.

Psychological Safety

Groups perform better when they feel safe, trusted, supported, free to fail, and can engage openly.

They use this foundation to set ambitious goals and to challenge each other to reach their potential



Google findings from their top teams



Top 3
elements
are about
team
work

What 5 dysfunctions of teams (Lencioni) teaches us about belonging and psych safety



Belonging, trust, psychological safety
When these things are aligned...



Team members can focus on their role

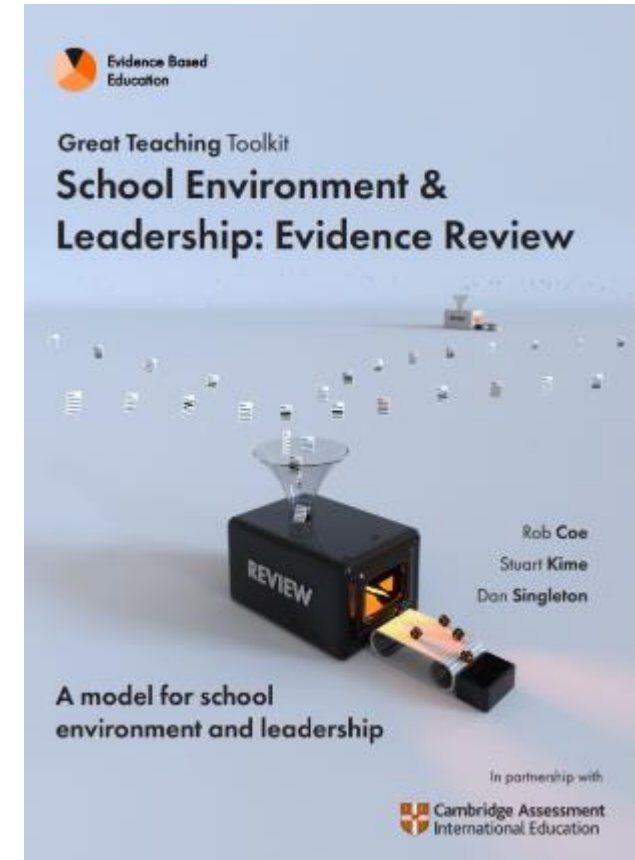
A Psych Safety Survey – how would your team do?

1. If I make a mistake on this team, it is never held against me.
2. When something goes wrong, we work as a team to find the systemic cause.
3. All members of this team feel able to bring up problems and tough issues.
4. Members of this team never reject others for being different and nobody is left out.
5. It is safe for me to take a risk on this team.
6. It is easy for me to ask other members of this team for help.
7. Nobody on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.

EBE School Environment and Leadership review 2022

First 'management factor' = supportive working relationships:

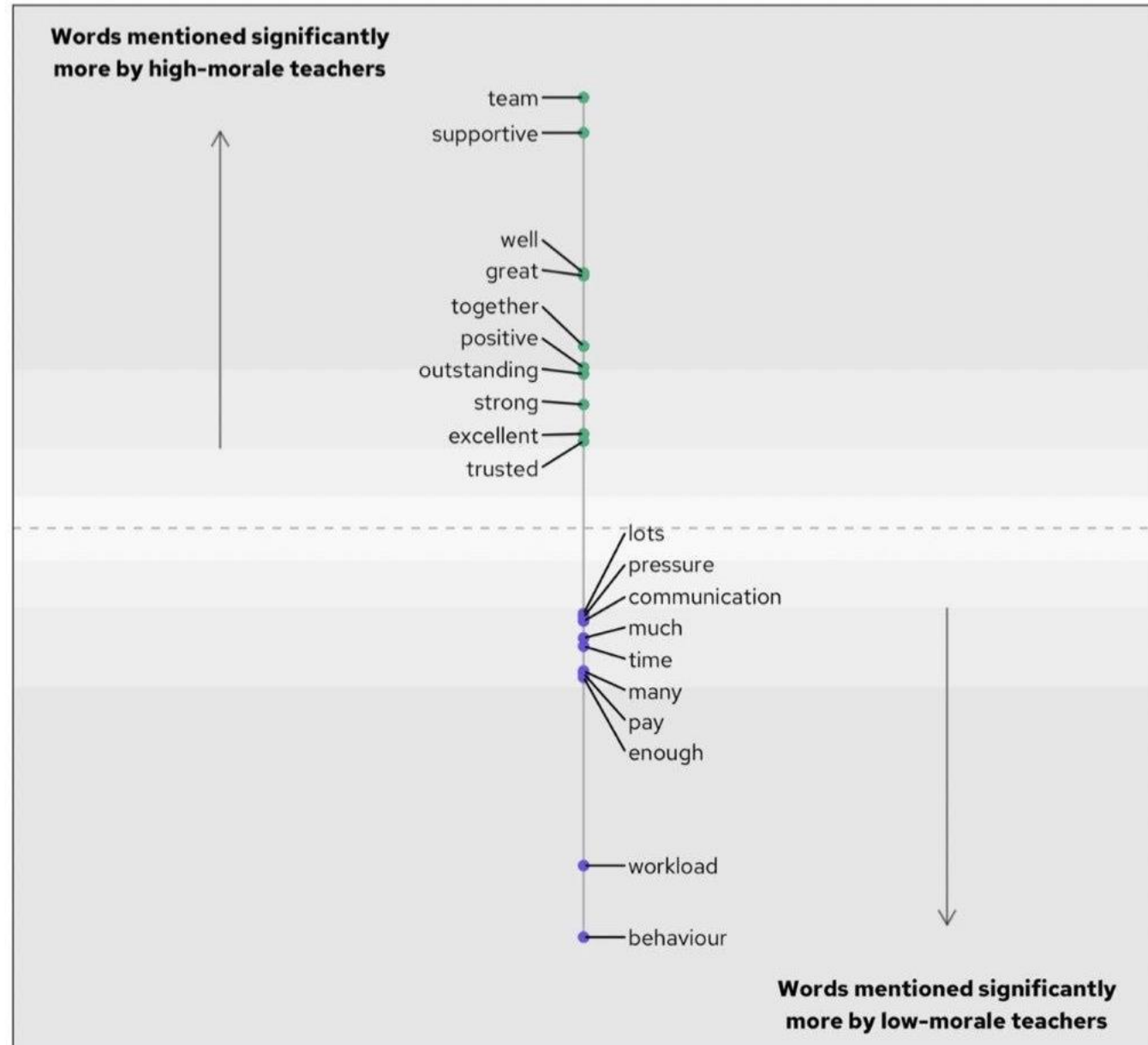
- Trust towards leadership
- Willingness from staff to share or expose vulnerabilities
- Feelings of psych safety – it's okay to take a risk or make a mistake
- *(Coe et al 2022)*



Keyness analysis of question "Tell us why morale is high or low in your school",
crossed against teachers' responses to how morale is in their school

Teacher Tapp 2023

9000
teachers



Your team's belonging

- Create your 'us story' – who are we, what do we do, what are our values and behaviours
- Survey for belonging and psych safety
- Use this to create and maintain a culture of psychological safety
- Remember, belonging is not a fixed state!

Part Three: Leading Thriving School Teams

- Unique challenges!
- Teams within the team
- How many teams are we part of?

4 *best bets* for thriving school teams

1. Mental models and knowledge
2. Candour and communication
3. Team meetings and debriefs
4. Team learning and development

I. Team Mental Models and Knowledge

Define the team's specific remits and knowledge

'A stronger focus on domain-specific expertise is required and the core responsibilities (or persistent problems) of leaders' roles are a good place to start' (*Barker and Rees, Ambition Institute, 2022*)

Teams function more cohesively when they understand roles, share expertise, and develop this knowledge together

I. Team Mental Models and Knowledge

Ask: What core, domain-specific expertise does your team require?

- **Audit and Codify** this knowledge and link it to the team's roles, remits and processes, i.e. its mental models
- Create methods to **share** the team's knowledge
- Develop team CPD that centres around the embedding, and development of, this expertise

2. Team Communication

A regular survey feature!

- Main methods and times?
- Ask the team and agree
- Use SharePoint, One Note, or another shared system
- Reduce workload, turbocharge systems and clarity

Email and Teams etiquette

General principles:

- Chats are for one-on-one communication and for small groups which aren't related to a specific class or task.
- Channels are for 1) General whole department chat – whole department; 2) year group issues; 3) Shared Classes – just those teachers.
- Each shared class must have a channel (rather than chat) – even if only 2 teachers – because a) it's good to just see conversations related to that class; b) in channels you start a conversation which can be replied to whereas chat is just a free scrolling back and forth.
- All one-on-one communication through chats should be responded to, at least with a thumbs up.
- When responding to a post in a channel, ensure to use the 'reply' button on that specific post.
- Reminders/announcements that reference Trello cards are fine but if you reference a Trello card, add a link to that card. To add a link to the card, click the card in Trello, click share [at the bottom] and copy and paste the link.
- Don't use email unless forwarding or communicating outside department.

Teams:

- The General channel is to be truly general whole department stuff, announcements, deadlines and admin (including admin queries) whereas Curriculum and T and L should include MQ queries, how to teach something discussions, resources, FOF discussions and mark scheme discussions.
- Specific year group channels can include teachers who don't teach that year group (teacher's choice).

Adam Boxer – Science department communication

Year Team - The Week Ahead: 28th March Week B



Key dates & events



Reflecting on our practice



Key messages for the week



CPD corner

3. Meetings and Debriefs

Reflecting: think about the last team meeting you had or ran. What was it like to be in there?

- Are meetings mainly logistical / informative?
- Does every meeting have an opportunity for learning?

What goes wrong in meetings?

- Too much admin
- Lack of psych safety
- Dominant voices
- **No one wants to go to a poor meeting after a 5-period day!**

Ways to improve meetings

- Start with knowledge sharing / CPD (give ownership)
- Review team processes with debriefs - 20-25% increase in team effectiveness (*Tannenbaum et al, 2013*)
- Should be lively, full of discussion! Beware quiet meetings!
- Long-term projects for autonomy and enhanced expertise

4. Team Learning and Development

- Coaching 'way of being' (van Nieuwerburgh)
- Reading together, learning together
- Projects and ongoing CPD, access to learning and development.
- Team considers one of its core remits as learning and growing as a group

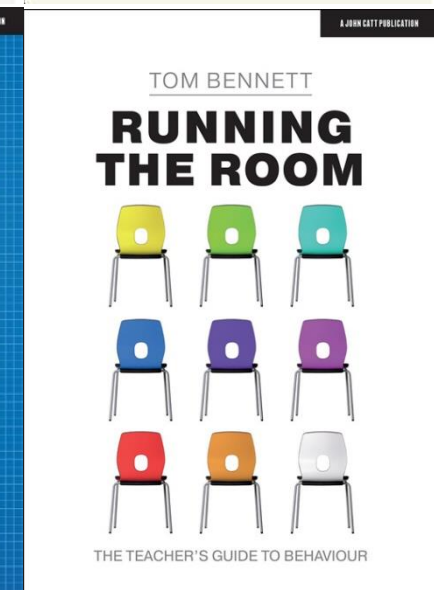
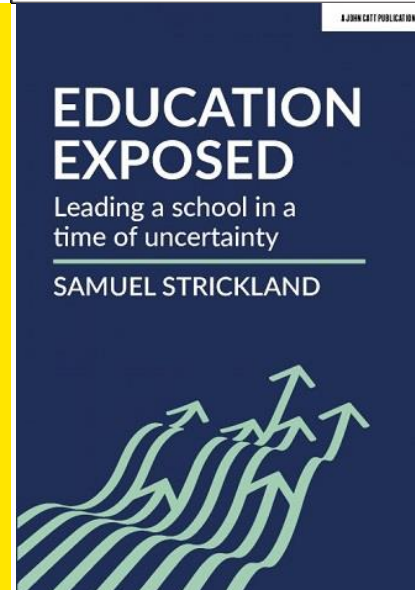
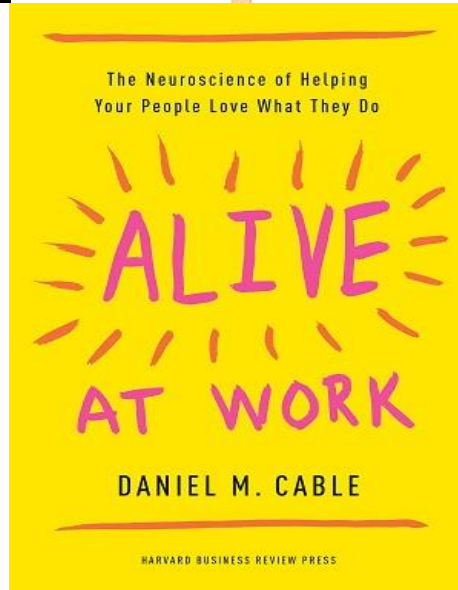
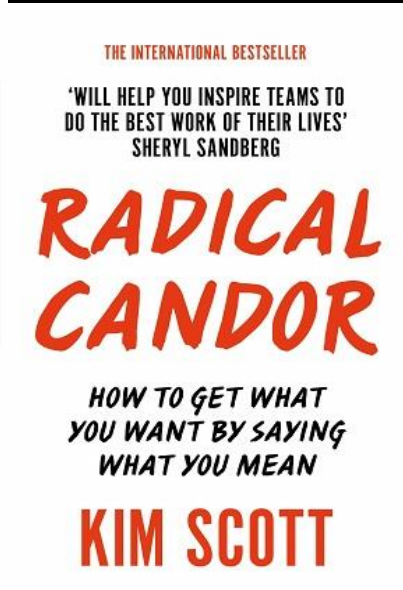
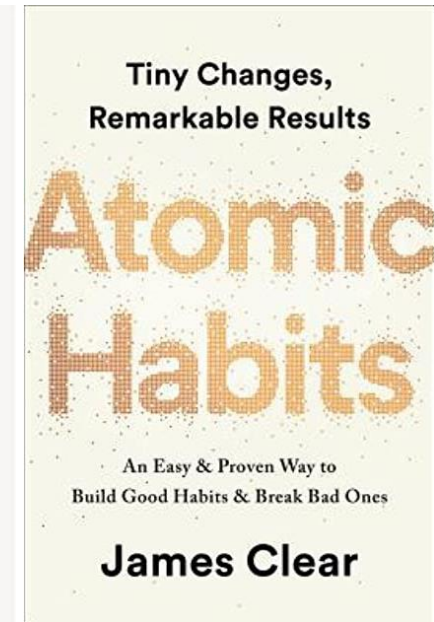
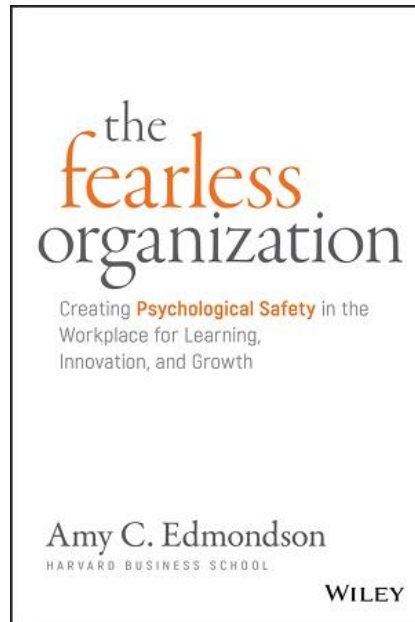
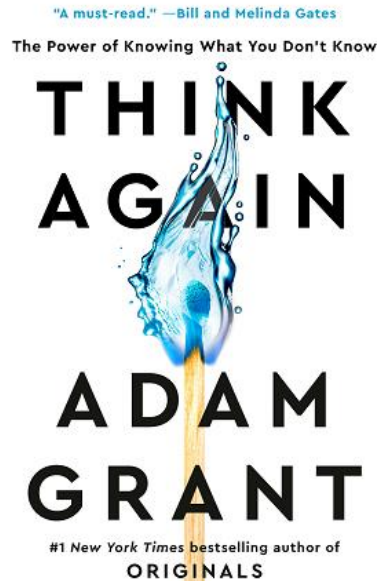
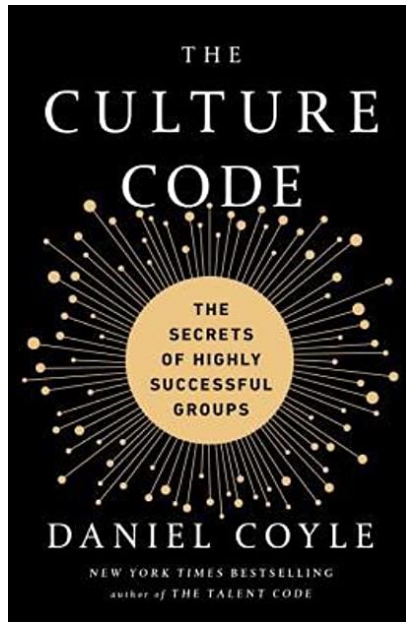
So, build belonging, then...

1. Understand team knowledge and expertise, codify and use to enhance smooth, effective team work
2. Use efficient, agreed upon communications
3. Hold purposeful meetings, and effective debriefs
4. Create and sustain a relentless learning culture, together

Reflecting on today



What can we do to maximise team effectiveness?



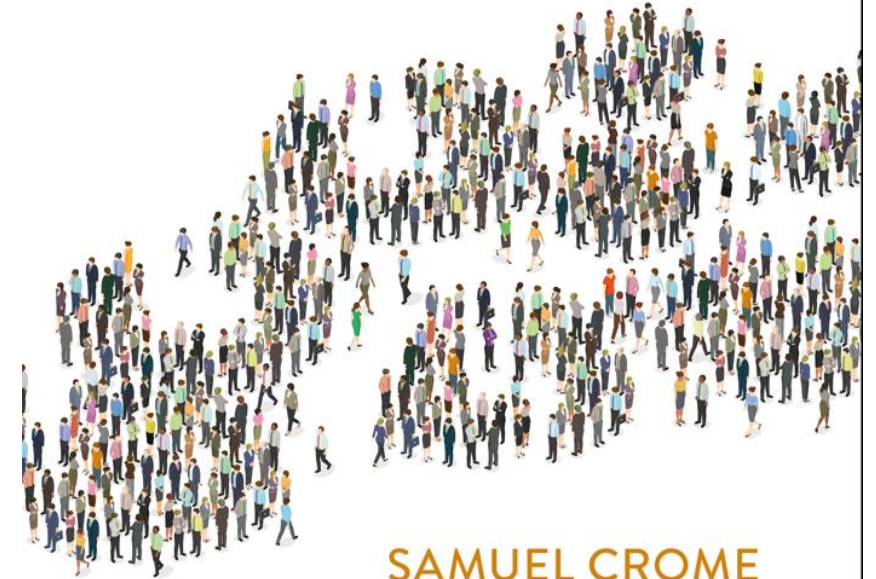
Thank you!

- @mr_crome

- <http://pocketwisdom.blog>

THE POWER OF TEAMS

HOW TO CREATE
AND LEAD THRIVING
SCHOOL TEAMS



References and further reading

- Bell, S.T., Brown, S. G., Colaneri, A., & Outland, N. (2018). Team composition and the ABCs of teamwork. *American Psychologist*, 73(4), 349–362
- Lacerenza, Christina & Marlow, Shannon & Tannenbaum, Scott & Salas, Eduardo. (2018). Team development interventions: Evidence-based approaches for improving teamwork. *American Psychologist*. 73. 517-531. 10.1037/amp0000295.
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- Tannenbaum, S. I., & Goldhaber-Fiebert, S. N. (2013). Medical team debriefs: Simple, powerful, underutilized. In E. Salas & K. Frush (Eds.), *Improving patient safety through teamwork and team training* (pp. 249 –255). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.