

The 3 Things All Humans Crave--And How To Motivate Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere

As you probably know, once we have food and shelter, but before we can seek self-actualization—the Smart State—we must feel safety, belonging and mattering. Without these three essential keys a person cannot get in their Smart State—they cannot perform, innovate, feel emotionally engaged, agree, move forward.



Image Credit: Christine Comaford Associates LLC 2013

What You Crave

Safety, belonging, and mattering are essential to your brain and your ability to perform at work, at home, and in life overall. The greater the feeling of safety, both emotional and physical so we can take risks; the greater the feeling of connection with others, or the feeling that we're in this together and we belong together; the greater the feeling that we personally matter and make a difference and are contributing to the greater good; then the greater the success of the company, the relationship, the family, the team, the individual.

In every communication, in every conflict, we are subconsciously either reinforcing or begging for safety, belonging, mattering or a combination.

It's neurological... it's primal... there is nothing you can do to override or change this subterranean subconscious programming as much as you may try.

Safety means creating an environment where we can take risks and stretch and grow. Is it safe to take risks with your group?

Belonging means creating an environment where we all feel like a tight-knit tribe, we're all equal and we're rowing in the same direction to reach our goals. Think about gangs—where people will literally kill to stay in the tribe. That's how powerful this stuff is.

Mattering means each of us contributes individually in a unique way. We all make a difference. We're appreciated and publicly acknowledged. Does your group culture work this way?

As a leader, and as a human, you must identify whether it is safety and or belonging and or mattering that is most important to the people in your life... and then do *everything* you can to satisfy that subterranean subconscious need.

Safety + belonging + mattering = TRUST.

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This means leaders must behave in ways that make group members feel that they are safe, that they belong, and that they matter. Doing so will help shift them out of their fear-driven Critter State (where all decisions are based on what they perceive will help them survive) and into their Smart State (where they can innovate, collaborate, feel emotionally engaged, and move the group forward).

At our emotional core, we *all* want safety, belonging and mattering. To influence anyone, we must influence emotionally.

The art (and science) of influence is more complex than can be fully explained here. However, I can share a few insights that may help you better open people up to their Smart State.

How to Get It

How do you boost the experience of safety, belonging, mattering within your group? Deliver safety, belonging, mattering through your behavior and communication. Here are behavior examples:

- Engaging Mission, Vision, Values – draws people together for a greater cause, helps us see where we're headed together, sets our "code of conduct" as a tribe
- Individual Development Plans – shows how we matter and belong here, how our company sees us as a long term investment (we're safe)
- Cultural Rituals: Rock Star, High Fives, Shout Outs, Public Appreciation – reinforces mattering and tribal customs (safety, belonging)
- Transparency: Accountability Structures, Open Communication, Fairness – we're safe, belong, matter since we know where the performance "bar" is and how to jump over it

Here are communication examples. These are especially helpful when a person is in their Critter State and we want to help them feel safe enough to shift out of it. For this we use three influencing phrases:

1. "What if": When you use this preface to an idea/suggestion, you remove ego and reduce emotion. You're curious—not forcing a position, but scratching your head and pondering. This enables someone to brainstorm more easily with you.
2. "I need your help": We call this a dom-sub swap, because when the dominant person uses it, they are enrolling the subordinate person and asking them to rise up and swap roles. This is an especially effective phrase when you want a person to change their behavior or take on more responsibility.
3. "Would it be helpful if": When someone is stuck in their Critter State and spinning or unable to move forward, offering up a solution will help them see a possible course of action or positive outcome.

Do you see how all three reinforce safety, belonging, mattering?

Every group member can be happier and more effective if you simply identify which of these three needs are programmed into their subconscious so powerfully that they literally crave them. Which do you crave? Which do the most important people in your life crave?