

Team Norms Dimensions

Deep Dive Modules · Team Building

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Part 1 · Overview

Team Norms Dimensions

Building the Standards That Build Your Team

Embrace, Empower & Evolve — The Recovery Files

Invisible Rules

Unspoken, inconsistent, imposed

→

Living Agreements

Explicit, fair, team-owned

Reading Sections

The Invisible Rulebook: Why Unspoken Norms Are Destroying Your Team

The Accountability Tightrope: Individual Performance Meets Team Culture

Living Agreements: Building Norms That Breathe, Flex, and Grow

Self-Assessment

Worksheets & Exercises

Part 2 • The Invisible Rulebook: Why Unspoken Norms Are Destroying Your Team

The Invisible Rulebook: Why Unspoken Norms Are Destroying Your Team

Every clinical team operates by two sets of rules. The first set is written down somewhere — in policy manuals, job descriptions, employee handbooks, and organizational procedures. These are the official rules, and everyone can point to them when asked. The second set of rules is far more powerful, and it exists nowhere in writing. It lives in the unspoken expectations, unstated assumptions, cultural habits, and implicit standards that actually govern daily behavior. This is the invisible rulebook, and if you are a clinical leader who has not made it explicit, it is almost certainly undermining your team.

The invisible rulebook governs questions like: How quickly should I respond to a coworker's message? Is it acceptable to push back on a supervisor's clinical recommendation? How much personal sharing is appropriate in team meetings? What does "on time" actually mean — exactly at the scheduled time, five minutes early, or within a ten-minute window? Is it acceptable to eat lunch at my desk, or am I expected to be available to colleagues during breaks? When a client is in crisis, who takes the lead? What happens when two counselors disagree about a treatment approach — who decides?

These questions have answers on every team, but on most teams those answers have never been spoken aloud. They were learned through observation, osmosis, trial and error, and sometimes painful experience.

The problem with the invisible rulebook is not that the rules are bad. Many unspoken norms develop for good reasons — they reflect accumulated team wisdom, practical adaptations, and professional culture that has evolved over time. The problem is that unspoken rules are unequally accessible. Team members who have been on the team longest, who share cultural background with the team's founding members, who are socially attuned enough to read implicit signals, or who happen to have been mentored by someone who explained "how things really work" — these people know the invisible rules.

Team members who are new, who come from different cultural or professional backgrounds, who are neurodivergent, who are introverted, or who simply weren't lucky enough to have the rules explained to them — these people are constantly violating expectations they didn't know existed. And they are being judged for violations of rules no one told them about.

In substance use disorder treatment, the invisible rulebook carries particular weight because the field attracts people from dramatically different backgrounds. Your team may include clinical professionals with graduate training in counseling or social work, peer recovery specialists whose primary credential is lived experience, case managers from community health backgrounds, nurses with medical training, and administrative staff who may have no clinical background at all. Each of these individuals brings a different set of professional norms, communication styles, and expectations about how teams function. When the team's actual operating rules are invisible, each person fills in the blanks with assumptions from their own background — and those

assumptions frequently clash.

The solution is not to create a bureaucratic manual that governs every aspect of team behavior. The solution is to identify the expectations that actually matter — the standards that, when violated, create genuine problems in team function, clinical quality, or interpersonal relationships — and make them explicit. This means having conversations that feel redundant to long-tenured team members ("Why are we talking about this? Everyone knows this") but are revelatory to newer ones. It means being specific enough that someone with no insider knowledge could understand what is expected. And it means acknowledging that what "everyone knows" is actually what some people know and others have been guessing at.

Making the invisible visible requires courage because it forces you to examine whether your unspoken rules are actually fair, reasonable, and clinically sound — or whether some of them are artifacts of habit, bias, or convenience that should be changed rather than codified. The process of articulating norms is also the process of evaluating them, and that evaluation may reveal uncomfortable truths about whose comfort and preferences have been privileged in the invisible rules your team has been operating by.

Reflection Questions

1. Name three "invisible rules" on your team — expectations that everyone is supposed to know but that have never been explicitly stated. How do new team members learn them?

Your reflection...

2. Who on your team knows the invisible rulebook best? Who is most disadvantaged by its invisibility? What is the connection between these two answers and factors like tenure, background, or social connection?

Your reflection...

3. Describe a situation where a team member was judged for violating an expectation that was never clearly communicated. What happened, and how could it have been prevented?

Your reflection...

4. If you asked each team member to independently write down the team's top five norms, how much agreement would there be? What would the disagreements reveal?

Your reflection...

5. What is one invisible expectation on your team that should be made explicit this week? How will you do it?

Your reflection...

Part 3 · The Fairness Fracture: How Inconsistency Destroys Team Trust

The Fairness Fracture: How Inconsistency Destroys Team Trust

Inconsistency in norm enforcement is one of the most corrosive forces in team dynamics, and it is also one of the most common. When team members see standards applied differently to different people — or applied rigorously one week and ignored the next — the resulting perception of unfairness damages trust, morale, and performance far more than having no standards at all. At least with no standards, everyone operates in the same fog. With inconsistent standards, some people are held accountable while others are not, and the determining factor often appears to be favoritism rather than fairness.

The most common form of inconsistency is person-based variation — applying different standards to different individuals for reasons that are invisible or unjustifiable to the team. The high-performing counselor who is chronically late receives no feedback while a newer counselor is corrected for the same behavior. The team member who has a close relationship with the supervisor gets gentler feedback than the one who doesn't. The staff member who pushes back loudly gets accommodated while the one who raises concerns quietly gets ignored. Each of these inconsistencies is noticed, catalogued, and discussed — not with you, but among the team members who feel disadvantaged by them.

The second form is situation-based variation — standards that hold during calm periods but collapse during crises, busy seasons, or leadership transitions. Documentation requirements that are strictly enforced in January become optional by March when caseloads increase. Meeting attendance that was non-negotiable during the audit period becomes flexible once the audit is over. Professional communication standards that apply in the office disappear in email. These variations teach the team that norms are provisional — they apply when convenient and disappear when inconvenient — and the logical conclusion is that none of them actually matter.

The third form is mood-based variation — enforcement that depends on the leader's emotional state rather than the standard itself. On good days, everything is fine. On bad days, suddenly infractions that went unnoticed for weeks become urgent problems. Team members learn to read the leader's mood rather than follow the standard, and their primary focus shifts from "Am I meeting expectations?" to "What kind of day is my supervisor having?" This is exhausting, infantilizing, and completely destructive to professional development.

For leaders in substance use disorder treatment, inconsistency has additional stakes. Your team members are working with a population that often experienced profoundly inconsistent authority figures — parents whose rules changed with their mood, institutions that applied standards arbitrarily, systems that promised fairness and delivered favoritism. When your team leadership replicates these patterns, even unintentionally, it creates a dynamic that can be both professionally demoralizing and personally triggering for staff members with their own trauma or recovery histories.

The path to consistency begins with honest self-assessment. Where are you inconsistent? With whom? Under what circumstances? What drives the inconsistency — relationship dynamics, avoidance of difficult conversations, genuine differences in context, or simple inattention? Most leaders who are inconsistent don't intend to be. They simply haven't recognized the pattern or examined its causes.

Genuine consistency does not mean rigid, identical treatment of every person in every situation. It means that the principles governing your decisions are transparent and defensible. When you make an exception, you can explain why — and the explanation would make sense to a neutral observer, not just to you and the person receiving the benefit. Consistency is about predictability of principle, not uniformity of application. Your team needs to know that the rules of the game are stable and fair, even when the specific calls vary based on context.

Reflection Questions

1. Name a specific inconsistency in how you enforce team norms. Who benefits from this inconsistency, and who is disadvantaged by it?

Your reflection...

2. How would your team rate the fairness of your norm enforcement on a 1-10 scale? Would different team members give different ratings? What drives the variation?

Your reflection...

3. Which form of inconsistency is your biggest weakness — person-based, situation-based, or mood-based? Give a specific example.

Your reflection...

4. Describe a situation where you made an exception to a norm. Was the exception transparent and defensible, or was it convenient and unexplained?

Your reflection...

5. If you committed to one consistency improvement this week, what would have the biggest impact on your team's perception of fairness?

Your reflection...

Part 4 · The Accountability Tightrope: Individual Performance Meets Team Culture

The Accountability Tightrope: Individual Performance Meets Team Culture

Accountability is one of the most misunderstood concepts in clinical team leadership. Many leaders equate accountability with consequences — the implied threat that poor performance will result in punishment. But genuine accountability is not about punishment. It is about clarity. Clear accountability means that every team member knows what they are responsible for, how their contribution connects to the team's mission, and what happens when expectations are met or unmet. Punishment is what happens when accountability systems have failed; clarity is what prevents the failure in the first place.

The tightrope of accountability in clinical teams involves balancing two legitimate but sometimes competing needs. First, individuals must be held accountable for their specific responsibilities — clinical quality, documentation, attendance, professional behavior, client outcomes. This individual accountability ensures that each team member contributes their fair share and that performance issues are addressed rather than absorbed by the team. Second, the team as a whole must share collective accountability for overall outcomes — program quality, client satisfaction, team culture, and mission achievement. This collective accountability ensures that team members support each other, share knowledge, and invest in group success rather than just individual metrics.

When individual accountability dominates without collective accountability, you get a team of isolated performers who compete rather than collaborate, who protect their own metrics rather than sharing challenges, and who view colleagues' struggles as "not my problem."

Documentation is completed on time because the individual is accountable for it, but knowledge sharing doesn't happen because nobody is accountable for team learning. Client transitions between counselors are rocky because each counselor is accountable for their own caseload but nobody is accountable for continuity across the program.

When collective accountability dominates without individual accountability, you get diffusion of responsibility — the phenomenon where "everyone's responsibility" becomes "no one's responsibility." Team meetings feel collaborative and supportive, but individual performance issues go unaddressed because confronting them feels like it violates the team's communal culture. Low performers are carried by high performers, and the high performers eventually burn out or leave. The team culture feels positive on the surface but is actually fragile because it depends on avoiding the difficult conversations that individual accountability requires.

The sweet spot is creating systems where individual clarity and collective ownership reinforce each other. This looks like: each team member knows their specific responsibilities AND understands how those responsibilities serve the team's shared mission. Individual performance is tracked and discussed AND team outcomes are reviewed collectively. A counselor who falls behind on documentation receives individual support AND the team examines whether workload distribution, systems, or training contributed to the problem. Individual excellence is recognized

AND collaborative contributions are equally celebrated.

In substance use disorder treatment, the accountability tightrope has unique characteristics. Clinical work is inherently collaborative — client outcomes depend on the coordinated efforts of multiple professionals, not just one counselor's skill. A client's recovery is supported by their primary counselor, their group therapist, their case manager, their medical provider, their peer specialist, and the administrative staff who ensure appointments happen and insurance is processed. When outcomes are good, it is tempting to credit individual brilliance. When outcomes are poor, it is tempting to blame individual failure. Both responses miss the systemic reality that clinical outcomes are team products, even when individual contributions are clearly visible.

The most dangerous accountability failure in clinical teams is the avoidance of difficult feedback. Many clinical leaders are deeply uncomfortable addressing individual performance issues because they fear damaging the relationship, triggering an emotional reaction, or being perceived as unsupportive. So they hint instead of speaking clearly. They address patterns "to the whole team" instead of naming the individual whose behavior is the issue. They rate everyone "meets expectations" on performance reviews because giving an honest "needs improvement" would require a conversation they don't want to have. This avoidance is not kindness — it is a failure of leadership that allows problems to compound and high performers to subsidize low performers without acknowledgment or relief.

Reflection Questions

1. On a 1-10 scale, how clear are individual responsibilities on your team? Could every team member write down exactly what they are accountable for without asking you?

Your reflection...

2. Does your team share genuine collective accountability, or is "collective accountability" actually diffusion of responsibility? Give a specific example that illustrates your answer.

Your reflection...

3. Name a performance conversation you have been avoiding. What is the cost of continued avoidance — to the individual, to the team, and to your clients?

Your reflection...

4. How do your recognition practices balance individual and collaborative contributions? Are collaborative efforts valued equally, or do individual achievements get more attention?

Your reflection...

5. If your highest-performing team member left tomorrow and cited the reason as "I'm tired of carrying people who aren't held accountable," would you understand what they meant?

Your reflection...

Part 5 · Rules Without Ownership: Why Imposed Norms Always Fail

Rules Without Ownership: Why Imposed Norms Always Fail

There is a fundamental truth about human behavior in organizations that many leaders resist accepting: people support what they help create. Norms that are imposed from above — no matter how well-reasoned, clearly communicated, or fairly enforced — will always generate less genuine commitment than norms that were developed with meaningful input from the people expected to follow them. This is not a statement about what should be true; it is a statement about what is true, confirmed by decades of organizational research and the daily experience of every clinical leader who has ever wondered why their team complies with rules without actually committing to them.

The difference between compliance and commitment is the difference between a team that follows norms when the leader is watching and one that follows them because the team members believe in them. Compliance produces minimum acceptable behavior — people do just enough to avoid consequences. Commitment produces exceeds-expectations behavior — people invest discretionary effort because they own the standard and believe it matters. In substance use disorder treatment, where the quality of care depends on the authentic engagement of every team member in every client interaction, compliance is not good enough. You need commitment.

The challenge is that genuine participation in norm development is messier, slower, and more uncertain than simply telling people what the rules are. It requires structured processes that solicit real input, not performative consultation where the decision has already been made and the "input gathering" is theater. It requires the leader's willingness to be influenced — to change their mind about what the norms should be based on perspectives they hadn't considered. It requires managing disagreement without suppressing it, building consensus without demanding uniformity, and making decisions when consensus isn't possible without invalidating the voices that dissented.

Many clinical leaders have been burned by participatory processes that went sideways — meetings that devolved into complaint sessions, consensus-building that took so long it paralyzed the team, input-gathering that raised expectations that couldn't be met, or vocal team members who dominated the process while quieter ones checked out. These experiences create understandable skepticism about participatory approaches. But the failures were usually process failures, not participation failures. The answer is not to stop involving people but to involve them more skillfully.

Effective participatory norm development in clinical teams follows a specific structure. First, frame the conversation clearly: what is being discussed, what is the scope of input being sought, and what decisions are the leader's to make versus the team's to make. Second, create multiple channels for input — not just the team meeting where the loudest voices dominate, but also written input opportunities, small group conversations, and one-on-one discussions that capture perspectives from every team member. Third, be transparent about how input will be used — will it drive the decision, inform the decision, or be considered alongside other factors? Fourth, close

the loop — report back on what input was received, what decisions were made, and how the input influenced the outcome. Even when you cannot give people everything they wanted, demonstrating that their input was heard and considered builds trust and buy-in.

For substance use disorder treatment teams specifically, participation in norm development has therapeutic parallels that should not be overlooked. We teach our clients that recovery is about agency — taking responsibility for your choices, developing your own recovery plan, building intrinsic motivation rather than depending on external control. When our treatment teams operate by imposed norms that deny staff the same agency, we are modeling the opposite of what we teach. A team where norms are collaboratively developed and owned by the members is a team that practices the same principles of autonomy, responsibility, and shared purpose that we ask our clients to embrace.

The most common objection to participatory norm development is that it takes too long. This is true in the short term and completely false in the long term. Norms developed quickly through imposition take much longer to enforce, generate constant resistance, require continuous monitoring, and must be frequently reinforced because people do not own them. Norms developed through genuine participation take longer to create but require dramatically less enforcement, generate voluntary compliance, are self-reinforcing through peer accountability, and evolve naturally because the team is invested in their success.

Reflection Questions

1. How were the current norms on your team established? Were they imposed, collaboratively developed, or did they emerge organically without anyone making a deliberate choice?

Your reflection...

2. Where do you see compliance without commitment on your team? What norms do people follow when watched but ignore when unsupervised?

Your reflection...

3. When was the last time a team member's input genuinely changed a norm or expectation? If you can't name a specific example, what does that reveal?

Your reflection...

4. Which team members have the most influence over team norms? Which have the least? Does this distribution reflect the team's actual wisdom, or does it reflect voice volume, tenure, or proximity to leadership?

Your reflection...

5. If you committed to one norm revision using genuine participatory process this month, which norm would benefit most from team ownership?

Your reflection...

Part 6 · Living Agreements: Building Norms That Breathe, Flex, and Grow

Living Agreements: Building Norms That Breathe, Flex, and Grow

The best team norms are not rules carved in stone. They are living agreements — standards that are firm enough to provide structure and stability, yet flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances, team growth, and new challenges. Understanding the difference between a rigid rule and a living agreement is essential for clinical leaders who want norms that serve their team rather than constrain it.

A rigid rule says: "All clinical documentation must be completed within 24 hours of the client contact." A living agreement says: "Clinical documentation should be completed within 24 hours of client contact as our standard, with the understanding that crisis situations, staffing emergencies, or unusually complex cases may require flexibility — and when they do, the counselor communicates proactively about the delay and completes documentation as soon as circumstances allow." The difference is not in the standard — the expectation is the same. The difference is in the acknowledgment that real clinical work does not unfold in perfectly predictable ways, and that adults can be trusted to navigate exceptions when the principle is clear and the communication channel is open.

Living agreements require distinguishing between core principles and specific practices. Core principles are the foundational values that should not change: we treat clients and each other with respect, we maintain clinical integrity, we show up for the people who depend on us, we communicate honestly, we take responsibility for our work. These principles are non-negotiable — they define who the team is and what it stands for. Specific practices are the behavioral expressions of those principles, and they should evolve. How documentation is completed may change as technology changes. What "showing up" means may shift during a pandemic. How communication happens may adapt as the team's composition changes. A team that confuses core principles with specific practices ends up either rigidly enforcing outdated behaviors or recklessly abandoning foundational values. Neither serves the team or its clients.

The adaptation process should be proactive rather than reactive. Too many teams modify their norms only when a crisis forces them to — when a norm has become so dysfunctional that it creates a visible problem. By then, the damage is done: trust has eroded because people have been held to standards that clearly didn't work, or standards have been informally abandoned and the resulting inconsistency has fractured team cohesion. Proactive adaptation means regularly — at least quarterly — asking: "Are our current norms still serving their intended purpose? Are they supporting clinical quality, team function, and staff wellbeing, or have any of them become obstacles?"

One of the most challenging aspects of flexibility is accommodating different developmental levels within the same team. A newly licensed counselor and a veteran clinician with twenty years of experience should not necessarily be held to identical behavioral standards in every area. The new counselor may need more structured expectations around clinical documentation — specific formats, defined timelines, regular review. The veteran may need the freedom to document in a

style that works for their practice, with quality monitored through outcomes rather than process compliance. This is not unfairness — it is equity. It is giving each team member the level of structure that supports their professional development rather than applying identical structures that over-control the experienced and under-support the new.

For substance use disorder treatment teams, the concept of living agreements has a particularly important implication: our field changes rapidly. New research alters best practices. New regulations modify requirements. New treatment models challenge established approaches. Team norms that were perfectly appropriate two years ago may be clinically outdated today. A team committed to living agreements stays current because its norms evolve with the field. A team committed to rigid rules falls behind because the rules were written for a clinical reality that no longer exists.

The final characteristic of living agreements is that they include their own review mechanism. Every norm should answer not only "What do we expect?" but also "How and when will we evaluate whether this expectation is still serving us?" This built-in review transforms norms from static pronouncements into dynamic agreements that the team continually owns, evaluates, and improves.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of your team norms are rigid rules and which are living agreements? What would need to change to make the rigid ones more adaptive?

Your reflection...

2. Identify a norm that was appropriate when it was created but is now outdated or counterproductive. What has changed, and what should the new standard be?

Your reflection...

3. How do you accommodate different developmental levels on your team? Do newer and more experienced staff operate under the same standards, and should they?

Your reflection...

4. When was the last time your team formally reviewed its norms? If it has been more than six months, what has accumulated that needs attention?

Your reflection...

5. Write one "living agreement" statement for your team that includes the standard, the flexibility principle, and the review mechanism.

Your reflection...

Part 7 · Team Norms Dimensions Self-Assessment

Team Norms Dimensions Self-Assessment

Rate each statement: 1 (Not at all like me) to 5 (Very much like me)

Every team member can clearly articulate the behavioral and performance standards expected of them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have made implicit expectations explicit through written documentation, verbal reinforcement, and modeling

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

New team members receive thorough orientation to team norms that goes beyond policy manuals to include cultural expectations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team members rarely ask "What should I do?" in routine situations because expectations are clear enough for independent action

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Conflicts on my team are rarely caused by different assumptions about what behavior is appropriate

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I regularly check whether team members genuinely understand expectations rather than assuming clarity exists

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My standards are specific enough to guide behavior but flexible enough to allow professional judgment

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I distinguish between expectations that apply to everyone identically and those that must be adapted to role or experience level

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I apply the same standards consistently regardless of which team member is involved or how I feel on a given day

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

All team members receive feedback on the same types of behaviors rather than some receiving commentary while others perform similarly without consequence

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I maintain consistent standards even during high-pressure periods when it would be easier to let things slide

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team would describe my enforcement of norms as fair and predictable rather than arbitrary or mood-dependent

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I address exceptions transparently, explaining when and why flexibility is appropriate without creating perceived favoritism

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I hold senior or high-performing team members to the same standards as newer or struggling ones

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I recognize when I am avoiding enforcement with particular people and can identify why

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My accountability practices include positive recognition for meeting standards, not just consequences for failing to meet them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Each team member has clear understanding of their individual responsibilities and how those contribute to team success

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team shares genuine collective ownership of overall program outcomes rather than focusing only on individual metrics

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can address individual performance issues without damaging team relationships or creating a punitive atmosphere

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My recognition systems reward both individual excellence and collaborative contributions equally

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team members hold each other accountable rather than relying solely on me to address performance issues

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have created structures that make both individual and collective accountability visible without creating unhealthy competition

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

When a team goal is not met, I facilitate honest examination of both individual and systemic contributions rather than blame

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team members cannot avoid responsibility by claiming confusion about whether something was their job or someone else's

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team members were meaningfully involved in creating the norms they are expected to follow

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I use structured processes that genuinely incorporate diverse perspectives when developing or modifying team standards

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

All team members — not just the most vocal — have had genuine opportunity to shape team expectations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

When team members resist a standard, I explore the resistance rather than simply demanding compliance

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team demonstrates genuine commitment to agreed-upon norms rather than superficial compliance

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can distinguish between team members who disagree with a norm and those who were never truly consulted about it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I regularly revisit norms with the team to assess whether they still serve their intended purpose

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

New team members are integrated into the norm-setting process rather than simply told what the rules are

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team norms can accommodate reasonable exceptions without creating confusion about overall expectations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I distinguish between core principles that should remain constant and specific practices that should evolve with circumstances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

When organizational changes occur, I proactively review and adjust team norms rather than waiting for problems to emerge

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Different experience levels within my team are appropriately accommodated with graduated expectations rather than one-size-fits-all standards

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team feels that norms are living agreements rather than rigid rules that cannot be questioned or modified

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can modify expectations without creating a "moving target" that undermines trust in the stability of standards

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I actively solicit feedback about whether norms are helping or hindering the team's ability to serve clients effectively

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My norms have actually changed in the past year in response to team feedback or changing circumstances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team expectations are documented and accessible to every team member, not just communicated verbally or informally

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I reinforce norms regularly through supportive dialogue rather than only addressing them when violations occur

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

When I address norm violations, I do so in ways that create learning rather than defensiveness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

New team members receive consistent orientation to team norms from multiple sources rather than learning expectations through trial and error

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I communicate the "why" behind each expectation rather than relying on "because I said so" or "that's just how we do things"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Team members feel safe asking questions about expectations without being seen as difficult or incompetent

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Important norm discussions happen in team settings rather than only in private conversations where information gets distorted

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I proactively address rumors or confusion about expectations rather than waiting for formal complaints

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My team norms are consistent with the broader organizational culture and policies rather than creating conflicting expectations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have considered how team members from different cultural backgrounds may experience our norms differently

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Our standards accommodate diverse work styles and communication preferences rather than privileging one approach

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Individual values that conflict with team norms are addressed through dialogue rather than forced compliance or silent exclusion

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Our norms actively support the work we do (treating clients with substance use disorders) rather than being generic rules imported from other contexts

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have examined whether any of our norms inadvertently create barriers for team members based on recovery status, education level, or background

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Our expectations reflect current best practices in SUD treatment rather than historical habits or personal preferences

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I actively seek to understand when a norm violation reflects cultural difference versus genuine performance concern

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

1. Which dimension scored highest? What practices have you used to develop this strength?

Your reflection...

2. Which dimension scored lowest? How is this gap currently manifesting as a problem on your team?

Your reflection...

3. Were any scores surprising? Did the assessment reveal a blind spot you hadn't recognized?

Your reflection...

4. If you asked your team to rate these same dimensions from their perspective, where would the biggest disagreement with your self-assessment be?

Your reflection...

5. Based on this assessment, name the single most important norm dimension to address in the next 30 days and explain your reasoning.

Your reflection...

Scoring guide

Reset all progress? This cannot be undone.

Higher scores indicate greater current effectiveness in each norms dimension. Lower scores reveal where your team's operating system has gaps — not failures, but opportunities to strengthen the infrastructure that holds your team together. The widest gaps between dimensions identify where dysfunction is most likely brewing beneath the surface.

Part 8 · Exercise 1: Invisible Rulebook Excavation

Invisible Rulebook Excavation

Making the Unspoken Spoken

The Excavation

For each domain, identify the unwritten rules that actually govern your team's behavior. These are the expectations that 'everyone knows' but no one has written down. The goal is to surface them, examine whether they are fair and functional, and decide which ones need to be made explicit.

Consider: What does "on time" mean? What about break times, leaving early, arriving late, schedule flexibility?

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: Response time expectations, tone in emails, who to cc, how to raise concerns, appropriate sharing in meetings

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: Documentation timelines, treatment approach expectations, case consultation norms, caseload management

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: How conflict is handled, personal sharing boundaries, gossip norms, support expectations between staff

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: After-hours availability, covering for colleagues, taking on extra work, saying no to requests

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: When to consult a supervisor, how to disagree with a decision, who has authority for what, how to escalate

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: Training expectations, supervision participation, continuing education, staying current with field

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

Consider: Lunch habits, celebrations, humor boundaries, dress code, personal vs. professional interactions

What are the unwritten rules in this area? List every invisible expectation you can identify.

Name the invisible rules...

Who knows these rules and who doesn't? How did the "knowers" learn them?

Trace who is in the know...

Are these rules fair and functional? Should they be made explicit, modified, or eliminated?

Evaluate each rule honestly...

1. How many invisible rules did you identify across all domains? Were you surprised by the number?

Synthesize your excavation...

2. Which invisible rules are causing the most harm — through confusion, unfairness, or conflict?

Synthesize your excavation...

3. Prioritize the top three rules that need to be made explicit this month. What is your plan for each?

Synthesize your excavation...

4. Write a commitment: "I will make the following invisible expectations explicit by [specific date]: [list expectations]."

Synthesize your excavation...

Part 9 · Exercise 2: Consistency Audit

Consistency Audit

Examining Where Fairness Breaks Down

Identify situations where you apply different standards to different people.

EXAMPLE 1

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 2

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 3

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

Identify norms that hold during calm periods but collapse under pressure.

EXAMPLE 1

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 2

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 3

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

Identify enforcement patterns that vary with your emotional state.

EXAMPLE 1

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 2

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

EXAMPLE 3

The norm and the inconsistency:

Describe the specific inconsistency...

Who benefits and who is disadvantaged?

Be honest about the impact...

What drives this inconsistency? (relationship, avoidance, stress, habit?)

Trace the root cause...

1. Which type of inconsistency is most prevalent in your leadership — person-based, situation-based, or mood-based?

Build your consistency plan...

2. What would your team say is the most unfair aspect of how norms are enforced? Do you agree with their assessment?

Build your consistency plan...

3. Name one inconsistency you will correct this week. What will consistent enforcement look like?

Build your consistency plan...

4. Write a fairness commitment: "I will apply [specific norm] consistently by [specific behavior change] regardless of [specific variable I currently allow to influence enforcement]."

Build your consistency plan...

Part 10 · Exercise 3: Accountability Architecture

Accountability Architecture

Designing Individual Clarity & Collective Ownership

The Architecture

This exercise maps both individual and collective accountability on your team — examining what each person is responsible for, what the team collectively owns, and where gaps create dysfunction.

Name or initials:

Be specific...

Individual Responsibilities: What is this person specifically, unambiguously accountable for? (Not their job description — their actual expectations)

Be specific...

Clarity Rating (1-10): How clearly does this person understand their individual accountability?
How do you know?

Be specific...

Collective Contribution: How does this person contribute to team-level outcomes? Do they invest in collective success or focus only on their own metrics?

Be specific...

Accountability Gap: Where is accountability unclear, avoided, or broken with this person? What has been the cost?

Be specific...

One Accountability Action: What specific conversation or system change would strengthen accountability with this person?

Be specific...

Name or initials:

Be specific...

Individual Responsibilities: What is this person specifically, unambiguously accountable for? (Not their job description — their actual expectations)

Be specific...

Clarity Rating (1-10): How clearly does this person understand their individual accountability? How do you know?

Be specific...

Collective Contribution: How does this person contribute to team-level outcomes? Do they invest in collective success or focus only on their own metrics?

Be specific...

Accountability Gap: Where is accountability unclear, avoided, or broken with this person? What has been the cost?

Be specific...

One Accountability Action: What specific conversation or system change would strengthen accountability with this person?

Be specific...

Name or initials:

Be specific...

Individual Responsibilities: What is this person specifically, unambiguously accountable for? (Not their job description — their actual expectations)

Be specific...

Clarity Rating (1-10): How clearly does this person understand their individual accountability?
How do you know?

Be specific...

Collective Contribution: How does this person contribute to team-level outcomes? Do they invest in collective success or focus only on their own metrics?

Be specific...

Accountability Gap: Where is accountability unclear, avoided, or broken with this person? What has been the cost?

Be specific...

One Accountability Action: What specific conversation or system change would strengthen accountability with this person?

Be specific...

Name or initials:

Be specific...

Individual Responsibilities: What is this person specifically, unambiguously accountable for? (Not their job description — their actual expectations)

Be specific...

Clarity Rating (1-10): How clearly does this person understand their individual accountability?
How do you know?

Be specific...

Collective Contribution: How does this person contribute to team-level outcomes? Do they invest in collective success or focus only on their own metrics?

Be specific...

Accountability Gap: Where is accountability unclear, avoided, or broken with this person? What has been the cost?

Be specific...

One Accountability Action: What specific conversation or system change would strengthen accountability with this person?

Be specific...

1. What team-level outcomes does your entire team share responsibility for? Are these outcomes clearly defined and regularly reviewed?

Design your accountability architecture...

2. When a collective goal is not met, what happens? Is there honest examination or does blame settle on individuals?

Design your accountability architecture...

3. Does peer accountability exist on your team — do team members hold each other accountable, or does all accountability flow through you?

Design your accountability architecture...

4. Name one individual accountability conversation you have been avoiding. Commit to a date for having it.

Design your accountability architecture...

5. Name one collective accountability system you need to build. Describe what it would look like.

Design your accountability architecture...

Part 11 · Exercise 4: Buy-In Assessment

Buy-In Assessment

Compliance vs. Commitment — An Honest Inventory

A norm where you see genuine commitment — the team follows it because they believe in it

The Norm: What specific expectation are you analyzing?

Analyze honestly...

How It Was Created: Was it imposed, collaboratively developed, inherited from a previous leader, or did it emerge organically?

Analyze honestly...

Team Response: How do team members actually relate to this norm — with commitment, compliance, or resistance? How do you know?

Analyze honestly...

The Connection: What is the relationship between how the norm was created and how the team relates to it?

Analyze honestly...

What Would Increase Buy-In: If this norm needs greater commitment, what specific process would build genuine ownership?

Analyze honestly...

A norm where you see compliance without commitment — staff follow it when watched but ignore it otherwise

The Norm: What specific expectation are you analyzing?

Analyze honestly...

How It Was Created: Was it imposed, collaboratively developed, inherited from a previous leader, or did it emerge organically?

Analyze honestly...

Team Response: How do team members actually relate to this norm — with commitment, compliance, or resistance? How do you know?

Analyze honestly...

The Connection: What is the relationship between how the norm was created and how the team relates to it?

Analyze honestly...

What Would Increase Buy-In: If this norm needs greater commitment, what specific process would build genuine ownership?

Analyze honestly...

A norm where you see active resistance — staff openly or passively resist the expectation

The Norm: What specific expectation are you analyzing?

Analyze honestly...

How It Was Created: Was it imposed, collaboratively developed, inherited from a previous leader, or did it emerge organically?

Analyze honestly...

Team Response: How do team members actually relate to this norm — with commitment, compliance, or resistance? How do you know?

Analyze honestly...

The Connection: What is the relationship between how the norm was created and how the team relates to it?

Analyze honestly...

What Would Increase Buy-In: If this norm needs greater commitment, what specific process would build genuine ownership?

Analyze honestly...

A norm you imposed without input — you made the rule and told the team to follow it

The Norm: What specific expectation are you analyzing?

Analyze honestly...

How It Was Created: Was it imposed, collaboratively developed, inherited from a previous leader, or did it emerge organically?

Analyze honestly...

Team Response: How do team members actually relate to this norm — with commitment, compliance, or resistance? How do you know?

Analyze honestly...

The Connection: What is the relationship between how the norm was created and how the team relates to it?

Analyze honestly...

What Would Increase Buy-In: If this norm needs greater commitment, what specific process would build genuine ownership?

Analyze honestly...

A norm that was collaboratively developed — the team was genuinely involved in creating it

The Norm: What specific expectation are you analyzing?

Analyze honestly...

How It Was Created: Was it imposed, collaboratively developed, inherited from a previous leader, or did it emerge organically?

Analyze honestly...

Team Response: How do team members actually relate to this norm — with commitment, compliance, or resistance? How do you know?

Analyze honestly...

The Connection: What is the relationship between how the norm was created and how the team relates to it?

Analyze honestly...

What Would Increase Buy-In: If this norm needs greater commitment, what specific process would build genuine ownership?

Analyze honestly...

1. What percentage of your team norms were developed with genuine team input vs. imposed? Is the ratio serving your team?

Build your buy-in strategy...

2. Which norm has the lowest buy-in? What would it take to rebuild ownership through a participatory process?

Build your buy-in strategy...

3. How do you currently handle resistance to norms — with curiosity (exploring the resistance) or authority (demanding compliance)?

Build your buy-in strategy...

4. Name one norm you will redesign using a genuine participatory process this month. Outline the process you will use.

Build your buy-in strategy...

Part 12 · Exercise 5: Rigidity vs. Flexibility Analysis

Rigidity vs. Flexibility Analysis

Distinguishing Core Principles from Adaptable Practices

The Distinction

This exercise helps you sort your team norms into two categories: core principles (non-negotiable values that define your team's identity) and specific practices (behavioral expectations that should adapt to circumstances). Confusing the two leads to either dangerous rigidity or reckless inconsistency.

These are values and standards that define who your team is. They should not change based on circumstances, convenience, or personnel.

1. Core Principle 1:

Name a non-negotiable principle and explain why it cannot flex...

2. Core Principle 2:

Name a non-negotiable principle and explain why it cannot flex...

3. Core Principle 3:

Name a non-negotiable principle and explain why it cannot flex...

4. Core Principle 4:

Name a non-negotiable principle and explain why it cannot flex...

5. Core Principle 5:

Name a non-negotiable principle and explain why it cannot flex...

These are specific behavioral expectations that serve core principles but should change as circumstances, personnel, or evidence evolve.

Practice 1: What is the current expectation?

Name the current practice...

Which core principle does it serve?

Connect it to a core principle...

How should it adapt? What has changed that makes the current form outdated or insufficient?

Describe the needed adaptation...

Practice 2: What is the current expectation?

Name the current practice...

Which core principle does it serve?

Connect it to a core principle...

How should it adapt? What has changed that makes the current form outdated or insufficient?
Describe the needed adaptation...

Practice 3: What is the current expectation?

Name the current practice...

Which core principle does it serve?

Connect it to a core principle...

How should it adapt? What has changed that makes the current form outdated or insufficient?
Describe the needed adaptation...

Practice 4: What is the current expectation?

Name the current practice...

Which core principle does it serve?

Connect it to a core principle...

How should it adapt? What has changed that makes the current form outdated or insufficient?

Describe the needed adaptation...

Practice 5: What is the current expectation?

Name the current practice...

Which core principle does it serve?

Connect it to a core principle...

How should it adapt? What has changed that makes the current form outdated or insufficient?

Describe the needed adaptation...

1. Where is your team currently too rigid — enforcing specific practices as though they were core principles?

Analyze the rigidity-flexibility balance...

2. Where is your team currently too flexible — allowing core principles to bend when they should not?

Analyze the rigidity-flexibility balance...

3. How do you accommodate different experience levels? Is a brand-new counselor held to identical standards as a 15-year veteran? Should they be?

Analyze the rigidity-flexibility balance...

4. Write one living agreement that includes the core principle, the current practice, the flexibility clause, and the review mechanism.

Analyze the rigidity-flexibility balance...

Part 13 • Exercise 6: Norm Communication Inventory

Norm Communication Inventory

How You Teach, Reinforce, and Address Team Standards

How do new staff learn your team's norms? Is it systematic or haphazard? Do they learn the real norms or just the official ones?

Current Practice: How do you currently handle this communication context?

Be honest and specific...

What Works: What is effective about your current approach?

Be honest and specific...

What Fails: Where does your communication fall short? What gets lost, misunderstood, or experienced negatively?

Be honest and specific...

Improvement: What specific change would make this communication more effective?

Be honest and specific...

How do you reinforce expectations during calm periods — before violations occur? Or do norms only get attention when they're broken?

Current Practice: How do you currently handle this communication context?

Be honest and specific...

What Works: What is effective about your current approach?

Be honest and specific...

What Fails: Where does your communication fall short? What gets lost, misunderstood, or experienced negatively?

Be honest and specific...

Improvement: What specific change would make this communication more effective?

Be honest and specific...

When someone violates a norm, how do you address it? Does the conversation create learning or defensiveness?

Current Practice: How do you currently handle this communication context?

Be honest and specific...

What Works: What is effective about your current approach?

Be honest and specific...

What Fails: Where does your communication fall short? What gets lost, misunderstood, or experienced negatively?

Be honest and specific...

Improvement: What specific change would make this communication more effective?

Be honest and specific...

When expectations change, how do you communicate the change, the reasoning, and the timeline?

Current Practice: How do you currently handle this communication context?

Be honest and specific...

What Works: What is effective about your current approach?

Be honest and specific...

What Fails: Where does your communication fall short? What gets lost, misunderstood, or experienced negatively?

Be honest and specific...

Improvement: What specific change would make this communication more effective?

Be honest and specific...

When a team member claims ignorance of an expectation, how do you respond? Do you examine whether the claim is valid?

Current Practice: How do you currently handle this communication context?

Be honest and specific...

What Works: What is effective about your current approach?

Be honest and specific...

What Fails: Where does your communication fall short? What gets lost, misunderstood, or experienced negatively?

Be honest and specific...

Improvement: What specific change would make this communication more effective?

Be honest and specific...

Part 14 • Exercise 7: Cultural Alignment Check

Cultural Alignment Check

Do Your Norms Fit Your Team, Your Organization, and Your Mission?

Three-Level Alignment

Effective norms must align at three levels: with your organization's culture and policies, with your team's actual composition and diversity, and with the clinical mission of serving people with substance use disorders. Misalignment at any level creates dysfunction.

1. Are any of your team norms in conflict with organizational policies or culture? What tension does this create?

Examine the alignment honestly...

2. Does organizational leadership know about and support your team's specific norms? Or are you operating in a parallel universe?

Examine the alignment honestly...

3. When organizational priorities shift, how do you realign team norms? Is the process proactive or reactive?

Examine the alignment honestly...

1. Do any of your norms inadvertently privilege certain backgrounds, communication styles, or professional cultures over others?

Examine the alignment honestly...

2. How do your norms accommodate staff who are in their own recovery? Are there expectations that create unique pressure on this group?

Examine the alignment honestly...

3. Do your norms value formal education and credentials differently from lived experience and street-level expertise? Is the balance appropriate?

Examine the alignment honestly...

1. Do your norms support evidence-based, client-centered care, or have some become habits that serve staff convenience more than client needs?

Examine the alignment honestly...

2. Are your norms consistent with the principles you teach clients — autonomy, responsibility, accountability, mutual respect?

Examine the alignment honestly...

3. If your clients could observe how your team operates, would they see the values you espouse being practiced? Where would they see hypocrisy?

Examine the alignment honestly...

1. Where is the most dangerous misalignment — between your norms and the organization, the team, or the mission? What is the risk if it continues?

Develop your alignment plan...

2. Name one norm that needs to be revised because it does not fit your team's actual composition and diversity.

Develop your alignment plan...

3. Name one norm that needs to be revised because it does not align with your clinical mission.

Develop your alignment plan...

4. Write an alignment commitment: "I will realign [specific norm] with [specific context] by [specific date] through [specific process]."

Develop your alignment plan...

Part 15 · Exercise 8: Daily Norms Awareness (7 Days)

Daily Norms Awareness

7 Days of Focused Observation

Seeing What Was Always There

This 7-day exercise trains your attention on team norms as they operate in real time. Each day focuses on a different dimension. By the end of the week, you will see your team's operating system with new eyes.

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, notice every moment where someone on your team acts on an unwritten rule. How did they learn it? Would a new team member have known to do the same thing?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, pay attention to your enforcement patterns. Did you address an issue with one person that you overlooked with another? Did your mood affect your standards?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, notice where individual accountability is clear and where it is murky. Did anyone avoid responsibility? Did anyone carry more than their share?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, observe which norms your team follows with genuine commitment versus mere compliance. What is the visible difference between the two?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, identify a situation where a norm needed to flex. Was the flexibility appropriate, or did it undermine the standard? How was the exception communicated?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Today, notice how norms are communicated — through positive reinforcement, correction, modeling, or silence. Which method dominates, and what is its effect?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

TODAY'S OBSERVATION

Looking back at this week, which norms dimension needs the most urgent attention? What surprised you most about what you observed?

What did you observe?

Describe what you noticed...

What action will you take based on today's observation?

Name one concrete step...

Rate your team's health in this dimension today (1-10):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Part 16 · Exercise 9: Norm Development Toolkit Builder

Norm Development Toolkit Builder

Your Action Menu for Team Norms Excellence

Build Your Toolkit

Select the tools and practices you commit to implementing. The goal is a diverse toolkit so that when norms challenges arise — a new hire is confused, enforcement feels unfair, a norm is outdated — you have proven strategies ready to deploy.

Add your own tools for this category:

What practices work for you that aren't listed?

Add your own tools for this category:

What practices work for you that aren't listed?

Add your own tools for this category:

What practices work for you that aren't listed?

Add your own tools for this category:

What practices work for you that aren't listed?

Add your own tools for this category:

What practices work for you that aren't listed?

1. Which three tools will you implement first? Why these three — what problems will they address?

Make this commitment concrete...

2. For each tool, name a specific date and context for first use.

Make this commitment concrete...

3. Who will hold you accountable for actually implementing these practices?

Make this commitment concrete...

4. When will you review your toolkit's effectiveness? (Suggested: 60 days)

Make this commitment concrete...

Part 17 • Exercise 10: Team Norms Action Plan

Team Norms Action Plan

From Awareness to Living Agreements

Make It Real

This final exercise transforms everything you have learned into a concrete, time-bound plan for upgrading your team's norms from invisible rules to living agreements. Specificity is the key — not 'improve communication' but 'create a written team norms document and review it in a team meeting by March 15.'

1. Based on this intensive, describe the team culture you want to build. What does a team with excellent norms look like, feel like, and produce?

Be specific and honest...

2. What are the three most important insights from this intensive that have changed how you think about team norms?

Be specific and honest...

3. What is the single biggest barrier to achieving your vision for team norms?

Be specific and honest...

Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

Be concrete and specific...

90-Day Goal: What specific, measurable improvement do you want to achieve?

Be concrete and specific...

Three Specific Actions: What will you do to reach this goal?

Be concrete and specific...

Success Evidence: How will you know progress has been made? What will be visibly different on your team?

Be concrete and specific...

Accountability: Who will hold you accountable, and how will you track progress?

Be concrete and specific...

Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

Be concrete and specific...

90-Day Goal: What specific, measurable improvement do you want to achieve?

Be concrete and specific...

Three Specific Actions: What will you do to reach this goal?

Be concrete and specific...

Success Evidence: How will you know progress has been made? What will be visibly different on your team?

Be concrete and specific...

Accountability: Who will hold you accountable, and how will you track progress?

Be concrete and specific...

Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

Be concrete and specific...

90-Day Goal: What specific, measurable improvement do you want to achieve?

Be concrete and specific...

Three Specific Actions: What will you do to reach this goal?

Be concrete and specific...

Success Evidence: How will you know progress has been made? What will be visibly different on your team?

Be concrete and specific...

Accountability: Who will hold you accountable, and how will you track progress?

Be concrete and specific...

Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

Be concrete and specific...

90-Day Goal: What specific, measurable improvement do you want to achieve?

Be concrete and specific...

Three Specific Actions: What will you do to reach this goal?

Be concrete and specific...

Success Evidence: How will you know progress has been made? What will be visibly different on your team?

Be concrete and specific...

Accountability: Who will hold you accountable, and how will you track progress?

Be concrete and specific...

Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

Be concrete and specific...

90-Day Goal: What specific, measurable improvement do you want to achieve?

Be concrete and specific...

Three Specific Actions: What will you do to reach this goal?

Be concrete and specific...

Success Evidence: How will you know progress has been made? What will be visibly different on your team?

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Accountability: Who will hold you accountable, and how will you track progress?

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Current State: Where are you now? (Reference your assessment score and exercise insights)

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Your Anchor

Write a commitment that captures your vision for team norms, your top priorities, and your promise to build the team culture your staff and clients deserve. This is the statement you return to when the daily pressures of leadership make norms development feel like a luxury you can't afford.

I commit to building a team where...

Review Date (suggested: 90 days from today):

Set a specific date to revisit this plan...
