Creating a
Team Culture of
High Performance,
Trust, and Belonging

WE'RE ALL IN
THIS TOGETHER

MIKE ROBBINS

Author of
Bring Your Whole Self to Work

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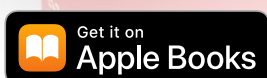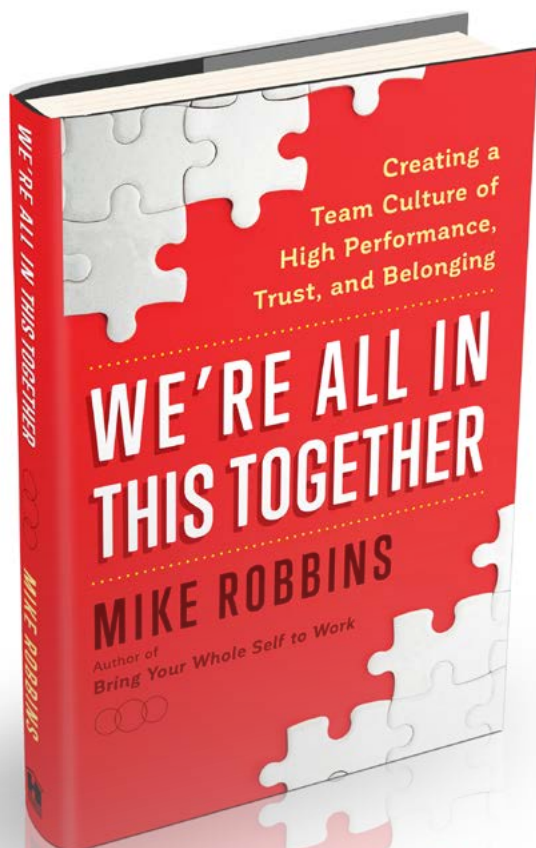
Praise for *WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER*

"Creating a healthy team and a strong culture are essential competitive advantages in today's business world. Mike Robbins shares tangible techniques that leaders and teams can use to excel, backs up his ideas with important research, and provides a road map for creating a team environment of personal connection and optimal performance."

— **Tom Rath**, *New York Times* best-selling co-author of *How Full is Your Bucket?*

"Great teams embrace conflict and inclusion. What a powerful paradox. I love this book as an inspiration every day to self-reflect on our culture. It's not a coincidence that the rallying cry for our customers is '*All Together Now*,' as we try to integrate siloed IT teams with our products. Teamwork is compelling business."

— **Dheeraj Pandey**, CEO of Nutanix

"Building and sustaining a team that loves working together takes courage, commitment, and a willingness to be radically candid. The tools Mike Robbins offers in *We're All in This Together* give you and your team the skills you need to love your work—and working together."

— **Kim Scott**, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Radical Candor*

"Mike Robbins has been a great partner for me and our team at Deltek. The important ideas he shares in *We're All in This Together* have had a positive impact on our team, our customers, and our culture."

— **Mike Corkery**, President and CEO of Deltek

"I've been friends with Mike Robbins since we were teammates at Stanford. Whether it's in baseball, business, or life, he knows what it means to be a true champion. *We're All in This Together* is a book that will help you and your team come together and perform at the highest level."

— **Brodie Van Wagenen**, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the New York Mets

"The powerful ideas that Mike Robbins shares in *We're All in This Together* have inspired me and my team at the NBA. This book can help unlock the greatness in your team by teaching you specific tools for authentic connection, giving and receiving essential feedback, and challenging each other in a way that brings out the best in everyone."

— **Amy Brooks**, President, Team Marketing and Business Operations and Chief Innovation Officer of the NBA

"Great leaders, teams, and organizations know that culture is a fundamental competitive advantage. In *We're All in This Together*, Mike Robbins gives you and your team ways to build trust and an authentic sense of belonging."

— **Chip Conley**, author of *Wisdom@Work* and Strategic Advisor for Hospitality & Leadership at Airbnb

"Working with Mike Robbins over the past decade has been a catalyst for the growth and success of our culture and our business. The concepts he teaches in *We're All in This Together* have had a profound impact on me, our leaders, and our entire company."

— **Jason Hughes**, Chairman, CEO, and Owner of Hughes Marino

"For leaders, teams, and organizations to thrive in today's diverse business world, it's essential to actively create an environment where everyone is included and knows that they belong. *We're All in This Together* is a catalyst for creating and enhancing this type of culture within your team and company."

— **Jennifer Brown**, author of *How to Be an Inclusive Leader*

"In sports, business, and life, teamwork is fundamental to success. In *We're All in This Together*, Mike Robbins teaches us important techniques for how to come together, find common ground, and create a thriving team culture of high performance."

— **Andre Chambers**, Vice President of People Operations for the Oakland A's

"I've had the honor of working with high-performing teams in many different industries over the past two decades. The insights, techniques, and practices Mike Robbins shares in *We're All in This Together* will make your team great. I highly recommend this book!"

— **Jon Gordon**, *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author of *The Power of a Positive Team*

"I've known Mike Robbins for many years. His approach and ideas have had a powerful impact on me and my team. *We're All in This Together* is an important book that will help you, your team, and your organization be your best."

— **Keith White**, Executive Vice President of Loss Prevention at Gap Inc.

"Creating a culture of belonging is one of the most impactful actions leaders can take to create a high-performing team. In *We're All in This Together*, Mike Robbins shows us how to do this and gives us specific techniques for making it happen."

— **Eric Severson**, EVP and Chief People Office at Neiman Marcus Group

"What Mike Robbins teaches us is that having the courage to be vulnerable is necessary for teams to trust each other, collaborate, and perform at a high level. In his latest work, *We're All in This Together*, he inspires us to connect with each other authentically and create the psychological safety our teams need to thrive."

— **Aditi Dhagat**, VP and Fellow, Marketing Technologies at Intuit

"I've had a chance to travel throughout the world and meet people from so many different countries, companies, and cultures. As Mike Robbins addresses in *We're All in This Together*, we are all way more alike than we are different. Teams, organizations, and communities who understand and embody this are the most healthy and successful."

— **Gopi Kallayil**, Chief Evangelist of Brand Marketing at Google and author of *The Happy Human*

"Mike Robbins reminds us about the importance of embracing vulnerability, that we're much more than the masks we wear, and that we often have more in common than we think. *We're All in This Together* is a powerful call to action for us to come together and support each other."

— **Ashanti Branch**, Founder and Executive Director of the Ever Forward Club

Also by Mike Robbins
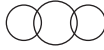
Books

*Be Yourself, Everyone Else Is Already Taken:
Transform Your Life with the Power of Authenticity*

*Bring Your Whole Self to Work: How Vulnerability
Unlocks Creativity, Connection, and Performance***

Focus on the Good Stuff: The Power of Appreciation

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Creating a Team Culture of High Performance, Trust, and Belonging

MIKE ROBBINS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

My first real awareness of the importance and impact of team dynamics came during my third season of Little League Baseball in 1985. I was 11 years old that summer. We got off to a hot start—winning our first four games, which was more than we had won in either of the previous two years. Getting off to that 4–0 start was exciting. Alex, our other pitcher, and I were pretty dominant and we had some real confidence. As a team, we also knew each other quite well, liked one another a lot, and seemed to really be rooting for everyone to succeed. Winning is, of course, much more fun than losing, and we liked it.

But then we lost our fifth game, pretty badly, and then our sixth one also. We didn't respond all that well to losing—there was lots of whining, finger-pointing, and arguing. Our coach, David, was frustrated with us but didn't really know what to do. Since I'd been on the team for a few years and was one of the best players, I found myself in a new and unique situation—essentially being the captain. David suggested that I call a player's only meeting to talk to the team about what was going on. Although I didn't quite know what to say or how to do it, I agreed.

I called the team down the right field line and we sat in a circle on the grass.

"We're much better than how we've played these last two games. And, I don't think us arguing and blaming each other is going to help us start winning again," I said.

We sat on that field and had a conversation for quite a while about our team and what we needed to do to get ourselves back on track. Toward the end of the discussion, my teammate Sam spoke up for the first time and said, "We gotta play harder and give it everything we have—110 percent!" Something about what Sam said and the passion with which he said it really resonated with me and a bunch of the other kids on our team. Our heads were nodding, and many of us were saying, "Yes!"

From then on, we took on the mantra of "110," which was code for *Give it everything you've got*. We started saying that to each other at our next practice, "110," and during our next game, "110," which we won. We ended up winning the rest of our games in the regular season, finished 8–2, and took first place in our division, which meant we qualified for the playoffs and would have a chance to play for the city championship, which was a new and exciting experience for us.

We played well in the playoffs, although we didn't end up winning the city title. However, that whole experience of starting the season well, struggling in the middle, coming together as a team, and then turning things around really had an impact on me. What made that team special and allowed us to be successful was the way we worked together, challenged each other, and supported one another. We had some pretty good players, but it was our *teamwork* that made the difference. Not only were many of us friends in school, we were also personally invested in each other's success. And, we were willing to push ourselves and everyone else on the team to give it everything we had (110 percent).

Yes, it was just Little League Baseball and I was only 11, but it was the first of many experiences I've had in my life

where the dynamics of the team, the relationships among the members, and the way everyone came together had a *huge* impact on the ultimate success of the group.

Have you ever been a part of a team or leading a team where the talent was strong but the team didn't perform that well? Most of us have had this experience. On the flip side, have you ever been on a team that may not have had a group of rock stars in terms of pure talent, but something about the team just *worked*, and the group really performed well together? Most of us have had this experience as well. I've been fascinated by this phenomenon ever since my Little League experience as a kid.

As you may know, I continued to play baseball and got drafted by the New York Yankees out of high school. I didn't sign a contract with them at that time, because I got an opportunity to play baseball at Stanford University. Although my childhood dream was to play in the major leagues, I chose to go to Stanford because of the high quality of education I would receive and the incredible success of the university's baseball team. Ultimately, I signed with the Kansas City Royals, who drafted me in 1995 out of Stanford.

When you sign a contract with a major league team like the Royals, or the Yankees, Giants, Cubs, or any other pro baseball team in North America, you first go into the minor leagues. There are six different levels in the minors to make your way through before you get to the majors. Unfortunately for me, during my third season in the minors, I tore ligaments in my pitching elbow. Two years and three surgeries later, I was forced to retire from baseball.

As devastated as I was when my baseball career ended— and I *was*—and as much as I loved the game—and I

did—my fascination with the impact of team dynamics on success continued to grow and expand. Some of the teams I was on had really talented players, but we didn't perform all that well. It didn't make sense to me. In sports, if you have good players you should have a good team, right? Not always. Yet there were other teams I was on where the talent was decent, not great, but the team was fantastic. We would sometimes beat other teams with better players, which I found both confusing and intriguing.

How was this possible? I wasn't completely sure at the time, but we did talk about it a bit among ourselves. We called it "team chemistry," and though no one could quite define what it was exactly, we knew when we had it, and we definitely knew when we *didn't*. And it wasn't just some warm, fuzzy, touchy-feely thing; it actually made a big difference in terms of how we performed. The teams with good chemistry played much better than the ones without it. And, for me as an individual, it was always easier to succeed personally when the chemistry of the team was strong.

After my baseball career ended in the late '90s, I moved back home to the San Francisco Bay Area and got a job working for a tech company. I assumed the business world would be really different than the sports world, and it was. However, not long into my first job working in online ad sales I realized that the whole team chemistry thing, which I'd erroneously thought was a sports thing, was not exclusive to sports. Deep down, it's really about groups of human beings and how they work with one another. In business, we call it *culture,* and it's made up of those intangible factors of a team that either bring them together or push them apart, as well as the quality

of the relationships and the collective sense of the group. In other words, it's how we feel about ourselves on the team, how we relate to our teammates, and how we feel about the group and what we're doing as a whole. As I'm sure you've experienced in your life and career, culture has a huge impact on the success or failure of any team or business. One of my favorite quotes about this, attributed to the late, great leadership guru Peter Drucker, is "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

After working for two different Internet companies in the late '90s, I ultimately got laid off when the dot-com bubble burst in 2000. However, I'd become so curious about the impact and dynamics of team culture by then, I decided to start my own consulting business and to focus my attention and my work on this full time. I wanted to figure out what could be done to create positive environments and true success for people, leaders, teams, and organizations. Why did some groups thrive while others struggled? It seemed to be more about these intangible qualities and less about the talent and skill of those involved.

For the past 20 years, this is what I've been studying, researching, speaking, and writing about. I've had a chance to travel around the United States and the world, talking to and working with all different types of individuals, groups, and companies. I've been honored to partner with organizations like Google, Wells Fargo, Microsoft, Schwab, eBay, Genentech, Gap, the NBA, the Oakland A's, and so many others—helping them enhance the culture and performance of their teams. In addition to these large, well-known brands, I've also worked with small businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, nonprofits, local school districts, and more. And, while each team and

organization have their own unique challenges, goals, and dynamics, there are some universal qualities that allow teams to come together, trust each other, and perform at the highest level.

According to Deloitte's 2016 Global Human Capital Trends report, "There are few factors that contribute more to business success than the system of values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape how real work gets done within an organization." And, 82 percent of the respondents to this survey believe that "culture is a competitive advantage."

Working with so many successful and diverse groups has taught me a lot about what it takes for teams to thrive. It almost always comes down to our ability to connect, align, and create a culture in which we know *we're all in this together*.

The Fierce Urgency of Now

I felt compelled to write this book at this moment in time for two main reasons. First of all, the fifth and final principle of my last book, *Bring Your Whole Self to Work*, is "Create a Championship Team." And while I explored team performance in that chapter, I felt like it was important to double-click on this topic and dive deeper into the specific components that are necessary for great teamwork, as well as the practical steps needed to create a thriving culture. As I've seen through my latest research and by working with teams at every level, organizations of various sizes, and companies in different industries, having a strong culture is both more challenging and more essential than ever these days—especially given the incredibly fast-paced nature of business today, the fact that many groups

are distributed across multiple locations, and the global diversity of the workforce.

Second of all, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often spoke of the "fierce urgency of now." We are living in fascinating, intense, and challenging times from a cultural perspective—here in the United States and elsewhere. A lot has happened in our country and our world over the past few years that has more deeply divided us along cultural, political, and ideological lines. While this isn't a new phenomenon by any stretch, there is an element of it that has felt different and deeply troubling to me. We see it playing out in the news and our social media feeds every day. And it impacts how we communicate, interact, and work with one another. This book and my work are not about politics or society, per se. However, the way we engage with each other, discuss and debate important issues that we may disagree about, and challenge ourselves to find common ground with one another, especially when we have different beliefs and backgrounds, has *everything* to do with our ability to create a healthy team environment and do great work together. In addition, the current political and cultural climate, as well as the rise of important social movements, has brought more focused awareness to issues of race, gender, inequality, privilege, and more—both at work and in general. We can no longer opt out of addressing these things, even though they can often be confusing, uncomfortable, and difficult. How we think about these issues and deal with them in our teams and our work is *fundamental* to the overall success of our organizations and our society.

Addressing issues of diversity and inclusion aren't just important societally, they are good for the bottom line of business as well. In 2017, Boston Consulting Group found

that companies that have more diverse management teams have 19 percent higher revenue. And, according to a 2018 study conducted by McKinsey & Co., racially and ethnically diverse organizations outperform industry norms by 33 percent.

Our Very First Team

For most of us, myself included, our family is our very first team. It's the group of people we're born into that informs how we engage with and look at the world. The health, size, and overall dynamics of our family of origin also have a huge impact on us as we grow and evolve. My family situation, like so many others, was complicated and challenging. It affected how I interacted with other people and how I engaged on teams and within groups specifically, as it does for most of us.

I was born in Oakland, California, in 1974. My parents both came from the East Coast—my dad was Jewish and grew up in Hartford, Connecticut; my mom was Irish Catholic and grew up in the small town of Westerly, Rhode Island. They met in San Francisco in the late 1960s, got married, moved to Oakland, had my sister Lori and then me, four years later. They split up when I was three years old. Mom raised Lori and me basically by herself as my Dad suffered from bipolar disorder, and by the time I was about seven, he had lost his job in radio and spiraled down over the next few years. He was in and out of our lives and mental institutions and not able to contribute to our family financially, emotionally, or practically. It was painful, confusing, and sad for me to grow up without my father around. And while I came to more fully understand and have empathy for his mental illness as I got older,

when I was a kid it didn't make sense to me; all I knew was that my dad wasn't around much, couldn't work, and had some kind of strange condition that made him feel sad, angry, and unmotivated most of the time. My mom did the best she could but struggled in many ways raising us on her own.

I did feel loved and supported, especially by my mom and Lori, but there was a lot of pain and sadness, as well as shame and embarrassment given the situation with my dad, as well as our lack of money, which manifested in the relatively poor condition of our house, car, and other things. In addition, just about all of our extended family members on both sides lived far away, so we were isolated and forced to deal with these challenges on our own. As is the case in many families, especially when divorce happens, there were lots of unresolved resentments and unspoken expectations among various relatives on both sides, along with a significant lack of communication, understanding, and support.

My nuclear family was essentially a very small "team," isolated from our larger team (the extended family), with limited resources, and dealing with some significant challenges. Yet even with all of this going on, I was still a pretty happy kid. However, I found myself longing for deeper connections and wanting to be part of something bigger—a larger group of people, a thriving community, and a healthier environment. It was this desire, in part, that drew me to sports and other group activities. Playing baseball and basketball, being involved in student government, Boy Scouts, the school newspaper, the yearbook, and various clubs all made me feel like I belonged to something bigger than myself, and I loved that. These diverse groups and teams had more people,

additional resources, and provided opportunities for me to learn, grow, succeed, and connect with others from different families and backgrounds.

We each learn a lot from our very first team—our family. Regardless of how wonderful or challenging our family situation is, it gives us the initial lens we use to see the world and the framework for how we think about working with others.

Based on all that I learned through my family situation, as well as growing up in the incredibly diverse city of Oakland, going to Stanford, playing competitive sports for 18 years, working for two different tech companies, and now working with teams of all kinds in the business world over the past 20 years, I've come to realize some simple yet profound things when it comes to teamwork. We're all unique, which is important for us to try to understand, acknowledge, and appreciate as best as we possibly can, especially in today's world. And, paradoxically, at the very same time we're way more alike than we are different. Great teams figure out how to harness the positive power of their collective talent, perspective, skills, and personalities— even and especially if they may be different. However, this is often easier said than done. As important as teamwork is, it can also be incredibly difficult.

Five Reasons Teamwork Is Challenging

Although most of us think of teamwork as a positive thing, and our desire for healthy and productive collaboration is real, it's important for us to acknowledge some of the key things (in addition to any baggage we bring from our family of origin) that make working in a team challenging. According to a study conducted by

Salesforce, 86 percent of employees and executives cite lack of collaboration or ineffective communication for workplace failures.

Here are the five biggest things that make it difficult for us to work with others effectively and create a productive team environment:

1. We aren't trained to work in teams. Most of us didn't receive much helpful or healthy teamwork training growing up. Many, like me, had challenging family environments filled with varying degrees of pain and dysfunction. Even if we come from a really healthy family, played team sports, or were involved in other team-oriented activities, our primary training for work comes through school. And, what was "teamwork" called when we were in school?

Cheating!

We were encouraged to do our own work, and we were graded *individually* on how we performed on tests, papers, and projects. Group projects in school were few and far between, and often the experience of doing them was frustrating because it was hard to get everyone on the same page and to make sure they all did their fair share of the work.

And yet after years of education that often *discourages* teamwork, many of us find ourselves in the business world being told to work within a team. Although some organizations encourage teamwork more than others, we still tend to get evaluated, compensated, and promoted as individuals, so the incentive or motivation to work collaboratively is often undercut.

2. We get caught in the trap of "Us versus Them." There are so many examples of the "Us versus Them" trap in

our society today—along political, religious, cultural, racial, and other lines. And while these are often overt and upsetting for many reasons, it's sometimes the subtler ones that can be more insidious, especially inside organizations. I see this all the time with the companies I work with. It's the engineering team vs. the sales team, or the HR team vs. the legal team, or the San Francisco office vs. the New York office, and so on. We separate ourselves, compete with each other in negative ways, and defend our positions. In some cases, these divides are almost encouraged by the leaders, the structure, or the mentality of the organization—based on how the company operates, how people are paid, or the nature of recognition, communication, and expectations.

On a human level, this is often driven by our significant need to belong to a tight-knit and specific group. We want to belong so much so that we identify with our role, level, function, office, region, or some other subset of the company to our own detriment. In essence, we forget that we're all part of the same larger team.

3. We focus too much on mechanics. I heard peak-performance expert Tony Robbins speak many years ago, and it had a big impact on my thinking. Tony said that, in almost every circumstance, "80 percent of success is due to psychology—mindset, beliefs, and emotions—and only 20 percent is due to mechanics—the specific steps needed to accomplish a result." Through my own experiences in sports and business, as well as my research on performance and success, I have found this to be true—both for individuals and teams. The challenge is that we spend so much of our time, energy, and attention focused on the mechanics that we sometimes forget to address the psychology, which diminishes our ability to be successful.

From a team standpoint, I often describe mechanics as "above the line" (what we do and how we do it) and psychology as "below the line" (how we think and feel, our perspective, and the overall morale and culture of the group). Since the below-the-line stuff leads to 80 percent of our success as a team, we have to pay more attention to these intangibles and be less obsessed with the mechanics. How open we are with each other, how much we trust one another, our level of appreciation, and the attitude of our group are some of the important below-the-line things that we can focus on as a team to help us truly succeed.

4. We're often separated by time and space. One significant consequence of today's global workforce and the advancements in technology that allow us to work from anywhere is that we're often separated by time and space. Many of the companies I work with have offices throughout the U.S. and around the world, which is amazing but also poses a myriad of logistical, relational, and cultural challenges. Even for smaller companies that may have fewer employees or who all work in the same location, people sometimes work from home and we often find ourselves doing business with people in other parts of the country or the world.

Basic things like times of calls or meetings, platforms of communication, and styles of working come into play and can create difficulty. Sometimes language and cultural differences play a role in our ability to connect and collaborate effectively. And there are many nonverbal and emotional aspects of our relationships and communication that we miss when we aren't sitting in the same room, looking in each other's eyes, reading body language, and spending time with one another face-to-face.

5. We're focused on ourselves. Even though we all want to belong, and we do care about others, let's face it: Most of us are self-interested, especially at work. This doesn't necessarily mean that we're selfish, it simply means that we're looking out for ourselves and our own interests. Given the nature of the global economy, the volatility we've seen over the past two decades in the job market, and the way we approach our careers today, there are lots of good reasons we tend to focus on ourselves professionally. When we do this, however, we aren't as plugged into what's going on for the people around us, don't put as much attention on the success of the team as we could, and sometimes worry (consciously or unconsciously) that if we pay too much attention to others and the team, it might have a negative impact on us and our career. While this is common and understandable, ultimately it makes partnering, collaborating, and teaming with others more difficult. Ironically, even if we don't really care at all about the success of those around us, it's actually in our best personal interest to be a good team player. Why? Because when we're on a team that does well, it almost always benefits us personally. And when we're on a team that struggles, it almost always impacts us negatively.

The paradox of teamwork is that for us to fully show up, engage, be successful, and create meaning and fulfillment in our work, collaborating with others is essential; yet, at the same time, there are forces within us (like our egos, personal ambitions, and fears) and within our teams and organizations (like negative competition, territorialism, and scarcity), that can spur us to focus primarily on ourselves. It's important for us to acknowledge these and other challenges with ownership and compassion, and

to work through them as best we can. Teamwork can be difficult, and often involves lots of growth opportunities for us and our colleagues. However, the benefits of healthy collaboration are so great, we must have the awareness and courage to move beyond these challenges, even if they're significant. Doing this allows us to create the type of culture that we truly want—one that supports the success of the team and everyone involved.

The intention of this book is to help you break down the barriers of whatever may get in your way—personally, organizationally, and culturally—so that you and your team can connect more deeply with one another, trust each other, and perform at the highest level. It can be a catalyst that takes you and your team from where you are right now to where you truly want to be. And, on a deeper level, it's about reminding you and everyone around you that there really isn't a "them," it's all us.

About This Book

This book offers you specific insights, ideas, tools, and techniques that you can incorporate into how you work and lead, which will allow you to be even more successful and effective. I wrote this book specifically for teams, so you can read it along with the people you work with as a way to create, enhance, and deepen your culture of high performance, trust, and belonging, thus allowing you and your team to be the absolute best you can be.

Throughout the book, I share stories from my personal and professional life. I also share examples from the people I've interviewed on my podcast and from the companies I've worked with over the years. Additionally, you'll get some of the latest data and research on these important topics, along with ideas, techniques, and best practices I've learned from various experts, clients, and others.

The book is organized into four key pillars:

Pillar 1. Create Psychological Safety. Psychological safety is a shared belief that the team is safe for risk-taking. People on teams with psychological safety have a sense of confidence that their team will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for speaking up or taking risks. The team climate is characterized by an atmosphere of interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves without fear of negative consequences to their self-image, status, or career. Essentially, psychological safety is trust at a group level.

Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson has researched and written extensively about psychological safety over the past 20 years. "It's not enough for organizations to simply hire talent," she says. "If leaders want to unleash individual and collective talent, they must foster a psychologically safe climate where employees feel free to contribute ideas, share information, and report mistakes."

A 2017 Gallup study found that only three in ten employees strongly agree with the statement that their opinions count at work. Gallup calculated that by "moving the ratio to six in ten employees, organizations could realize a 27 percent reduction in turnover, a 40 percent reduction in safety incidents, and a 12 percent increase in productivity."

Pillar 2. Focus on Inclusion and Belonging. An essential element of creating a safe environment that allows people to trust each other, collaborate with one another, and perform at their highest level as a team is inclusion and belonging. There are countless studies linking inclusion to

higher profits, increased engagement scores, and enhanced business results.

For example, according to a study of 140 U.S. companies by Accenture alongside the American Association of People with Disabilities and Disability:IN, those that offered the most inclusive working environment for employees with disabilities achieved an average 28 percent higher revenue, 30 percent greater economic profit margins, and twice the net income of their industry peers between 2015 and 2018.

Inclusion means "having respect for and appreciation of differences in ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, education, and religion." It also means "actively involving everyone's ideas, knowledge, perspectives, approaches, and styles to maximize business success." And, as important as it is for us to focus on both diversity and inclusion, the ultimate goal is to create an environment on the team and in the company where everyone feels as though they belong, regardless of who they are, the role they have, and their background.

Pillar 3. Embrace Sweaty-Palmed Conversations. Great teams embrace conflict and feedback as natural and important aspects of growth, collaboration, and success. This means we have to be willing to have those awkward, uncomfortable, sweaty-palmed conversations with each other. The problem is that because conflict and feedback can be hard, most teams aren't very good at it. However, when team members create an environment that is conducive to having healthy and productive conflict, they have an ability to connect more deeply, navigate challenges effectively, give each other feedback in a way that makes everyone better, and innovate in ways that allow them to thrive.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Research conducted by CPP Inc., publisher of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, has shown that in the U.S., workplace conflict costs companies more than $350 billion a year. And that figure reflects just the time people spend dealing with conflict; it doesn't include the emotional, psychological, and physical toll it takes on people personally.

Nate Regier, author of *Conflict without Casualties*, whom I had a chance to interview on my podcast, says, "The purpose of conflict is to create, not destroy."

Pillar 4. Care About and Challenge Each Other. What I've seen, experienced, and learned about high-performing teams over the years is that they understand and have a balance of two important things at the same time: *Caring About Each Other* and *Challenging Each Other.* Both are essential and both have to be focused on with the same level of intensity for the team and all of its members to perform at the highest level.

For a team to thrive there must be a deep level of trust that everyone has each other's backs, has good intentions, and is moving in the same direction together.

In a piece published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2017, neuroeconomist Paul Zak writes, "Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report 74 percent less stress, 50 percent higher productivity, and 76 percent more engagement." In other words, creating a strong culture of trust, as well as an environment where people know they're cared about and supported by their teammates, leads to significantly greater engagement and performance.

xxviii

In every chapter of this book, I explore what each of these important pillars are, why they can be challenging, and how to implement them successfully into how you work, lead, and create team culture. I'm excited and honored that you've chosen to join me on this journey. I hope you and your team find it useful, enlightening, and empowering.

Here we go . . .

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