

Living as a Fully Healthy Team

Is your staff team a healthy team?

How do you know?

It's easier to know when a team is not healthy, especially if you look at the extremes.

The obvious symptoms are things like:

- Gossip
- Negativity
- Silos
- Complaining
- Conflict
- Unproductive

The outcome is that the team and organization do not function as they should.

But it's not always that obvious because most teams are not in the red zone of extremes. There may be some isolated problems but not pervasive conditions.

Many teams are in fact healthy, but experiencing a temporary setback.

A good comparison is the human body. A healthy body will function as it should. All organs and systems are working together as designed.

However, a healthy team doesn't mean a perfect team.

Your body can have a bad cold, flu, or bacterial infection and still be perfectly healthy. You can have a cut or a pulled muscle and still be in good health. The condition temporarily affects how you function, but you are still healthy.

Your healthy body goes to work to restore the condition.

If you ignore the health condition, it can get worse. If multiple issues arise, what was a simple cold or flu can become a complicated health risk, and your body may function poorly.

Your staff team is very similar. A healthy staff can handle difficulties, recognize problems and solve them. It has built-in systems to restore the condition back to health.

It's possible to get overloaded if too many things happen all in the same season, but you can still regain maximum health, (functionality), it just takes longer.

Symptoms of health look like this:

- Trust
- Honesty
- Alignment
- Joy
- Commitment
- Results

What is the state of your team's health? Excellent? Good? Average? Poor?

Whatever the condition, this process will help you gain full health as a team.

5 Steps to Restore Health:

1) Don't ignore the current condition.

If you have high blood pressure, it's not smart to ignore it. Right? The same is true for your staff.

Get honest about whatever condition might be present in your staff team. From performance to attitude, always deal with reality. If a ministry isn't working, expectations are unclear, trust is low, etc., get it on the table.

Don't gossip in the hallways. Do what you can personally, and if you can't solve it alone, get it to the table that can make a difference.

2) Play hurt.

It's nearly impossible to run consistently for more than thirty years and not have some minor injuries, but I just keep going.

More than twenty years ago, I was inspired by a friend in San Diego who had severe shin splints but kept running anyway. Jan would ice them down and keep going. It was painful, but she pressed on. I asked her why and she said, "Until I simply can't run, quitting is not an option." I've never quit since.

Sometimes your team is hurting. Keep leading. It's not a good practice to shut things down and focus so entirely inward that you can't keep building. You build new leadership muscle when you press through.

Make another phone call, invite another guest, pray again tomorrow, but keep going.

3) Shift leadership energy and stick together.

A friend of mine asked for advice about a situation on his staff that really rattled the whole team.

One of their staff fell into significant ethical and moral misconduct. The repercussions shook up the team and part of the congregation.

It caused doubt, mistrust, some people took sides, and a few left the church. The staff was definitely off their game and results began to wane.

I've been around too many churches that shoot their wounded, and leave others to pick up the pieces themselves. That never helps.

Healthy teams stick together. They do make the necessary tough decisions, but with as much grace as possible. Other leaders on the team will need to shift some of their time to step in and help with the ministry that is now suffering.

In this story the staff member had to be released from the team, in other situations, restoration is possible.

In all cases, talk openly with the staff. Treat them like adults; they know what's going on. Talk about it and process it appropriately. Stick together.

4) Establish benchmarks.

What does health look like for you on your team? Make that clear and talk about it openly.

You might include some of the things I mentioned like trust, honesty, alignment, joy, and commitment.

It's important to be clear on vision, direction, expectations, and results.

What does full functionality look like and what outcomes do you desire? Think that through, write it down, and make it clear.

At 12Stone, we use a process we call [MAPs](#). (Ministry Action Plans.) They contain measurable goals and elements of leadership development. The MAPs lead to an annual coaching conversation where open and honest conversations take place. This is a huge contribution to the health of a team.

5) Get some help.

There will be some things you and your staff can't handle without some outside help.

I had some trouble with my left foot that required minor surgery not too long ago. It was not going to eventually heal merely with the use of homeopathic remedies and by continuing to "run through the pain." I needed some help. I needed a good doctor!

You may need an outside consultant or leadership coach to come in with "fresh eyes," who can

help you gain a better perspective. Perhaps a pastor from a larger church can help.

The point is, sometimes the continued health of your staff needs a specialist who can help you focus on the issue and restoration to full health.

I have flown hundreds of miles just to get a couple of hours with a leader who could help me work through a problem that was bigger than my experience. That advice was transformative.

When you or your team needs some assistance, do what it takes to get the best help you can.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)
