

Culture Over Courage: A Brain-Based Guide to Trust-Building Conversations



2026 Safety Conference
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Unforgettable Leadership. Unforgettable Results.



The 3 Big Deals

Big Deal #1:

Your prefrontal cortex is priceless

Big Deal #2:

Threat to the brain is threat to the brain

Big Deal #3:

Emotions run the show

BIG DEAL #1:

Your pre-frontal cortex is priceless

- Analysis
- Speech
- Creativity
- Willpower
- Innovation
- Planning
- Forming goals
- Evaluating consequences
- The brain's "CEO"

BIG DEAL #3:

Emotions run the show

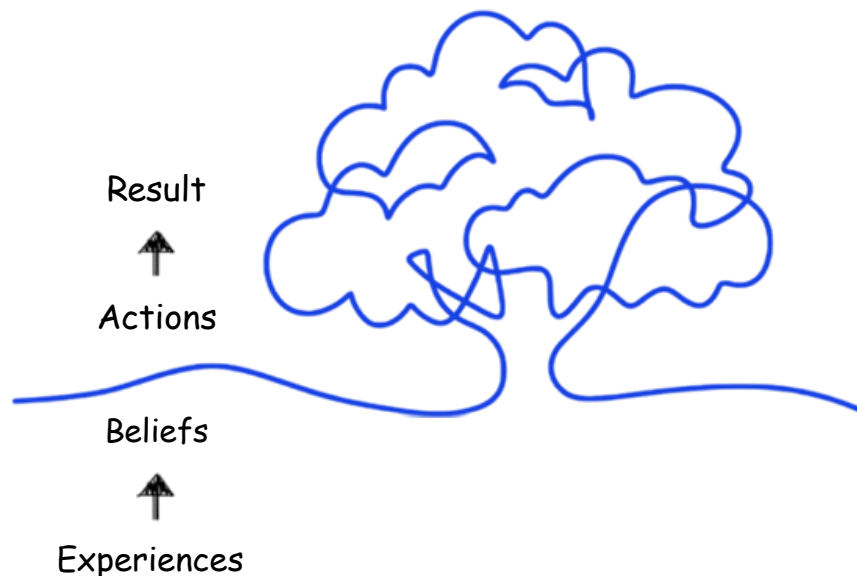
- Memory
- Health
- Emotions
- Critical role in learning
- Essential to memory
- Accelerating ingredient

BIG DEAL #2:

Threat to the brain is threat to the brain

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Basic body function
- Especially triggered by threat and fear
- The brain's "bouncer"

The Beliefs Model



YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Every interaction teaches the brain what to expect.
Our goal is to create experiences that teach the brain.

It's safe to speak here.

CONNECT

I matter here.

Start human.
Build a real connection
that says: I see you.
You matter.

What's important to you right now?

CELEBRATE

*What I do
matters here.*

Catch people doing
something right.
Recognition
reinforces that value.

What's going well?

SURFACE

*My voice
matters here.*

Listen to understand —
not to defend, explain,
or solve immediately.

What are you seeing that I may not be seeing?

ACT

*Speaking up
makes a
difference here.*

Take action. Follow
through. Close the loop.

What did I hear that needs action?



- How was your weekend?
- How is your family?
- Did you catch the game last weekend?

- What's a recent "win" you've had?
- Who have you seen doing something especially well or helpful? Is there anyone we can recognize?

- What's making it harder to do your job?
- What feels risky to say out loud?

- What solution would you recommend?
- How can I be most helpful?
- Who else needs to be involved?



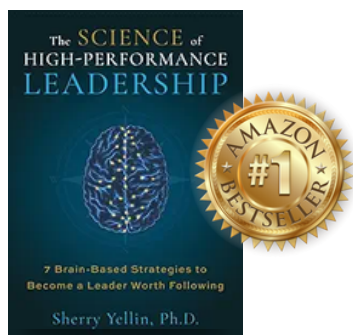
Connection builds safety. When people feel seen and valued, the brain feels less threat and more trust.

Appreciation releases dopamine, which builds motivation, engagement and a greater willingness to speak up.

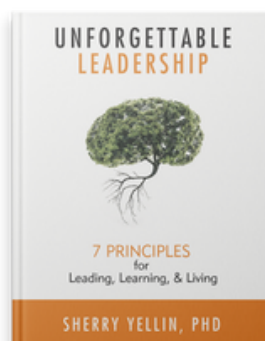
Uncertainty, lack of control, and anticipated negative consequences create threat. Your openness lowers threat and invites voice.

People are more likely to speak up when they've seen it lead to a safe, positive response.

BOOKS BY SHERRY YELLIN:



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