

# A RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK FOR CARDIOLOGY TEAMS

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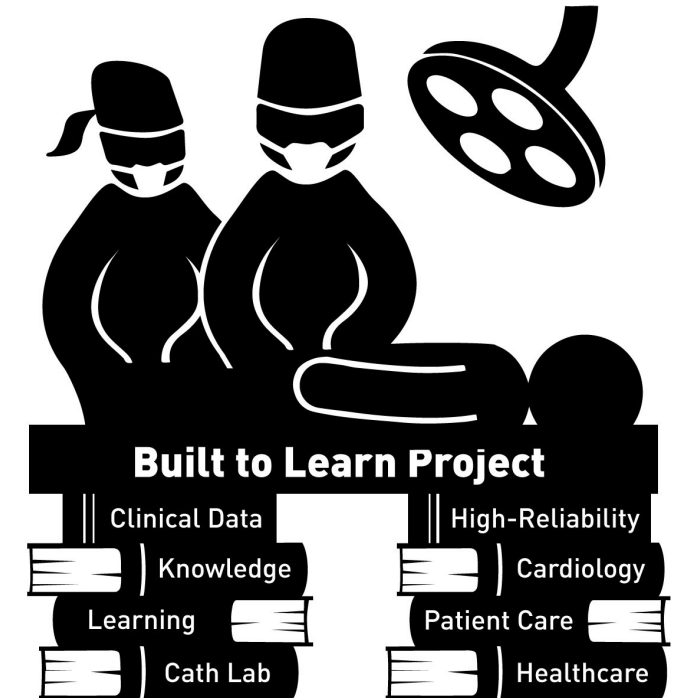
The **Built to Learn Project in VA Cardiac Cath Labs** is a research program that investigates learning environments and high reliability practices to support the VA journey towards high reliability.

In my work, I noted that guidance on how to develop high quality relationships and communication within teams was universally lacking.

To fill this gap, I reviewed the literature, surveyed staff in 2018 & 2020, and interviewed cath lab clinicians and managers to gather best practices.

The information gleaned from these sources led to the development of the Relational Playbook.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I would like to acknowledge the expertise and commitment of the following persons, who made critical contributions to this Playbook:*

Dr. Karen Albright; Dr. Catherine Battaglia; Ms. Brigid Connelly; Dr. Marguerite Daus; Dr. Jacob Doll; Ms. Regina Knowles; Ms. Candice Mueller; Dr. Katerine Osatuke; Dr. Jenna Reno; Dr. Meg Plomondon; Dr. Stephen Waldo; Ms. Cynthia Wilson.

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# CATH LAB VOICES

*Cath labs are a really strange place to work.*

*The skill set here is really unlike anywhere else in the hospital. The level of technical responsibility is immense. Physicians depend on us to be doing things and having a level of clinical competence that I don't think really transfers to any other area of the hospital.*

58-year-old Cath Lab Nurse, 6.5 years VA

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# INTRODUCTION

- The Relational Playbook is a “do-it-yourself” tool that cath lab managers and members of the clinical team (e.g., nurses, physicians, technicians) can use without significant training.
- The Playbook includes over 50 evidence-based practices gathered from the fields of:
  - Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry, Relational Coordination, Humble Inquiry, Servant Leadership
  - Joy in Work and VA Whole Health Framework
  - VA High Reliability Clinical Team Training Framework
- The Playbook is different than existing workshops, books, or toolkits in the following ways:
  - The content is inspired by and designed for VA Cardiology teams
  - The language is simple, and the practices are easy to implement, at no cost, by any member of a team
  - The Playbook is an entry-level guide for teams to change their culture towards learning and high reliability

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# WHY IS A RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK NEEDED?

- Cardiology teams are adopting and implementing new, complex procedures at a rapid pace
- Current research in VA Cardiac Cath Labs identified that the clinical team and managers launching new programs receive little guidance on how to:
  - Build relationships between new and existing team members to establish mutual respect, shared goals and shared knowledge to positively impact performance
  - Establish structured processes to ensure frequent, timely, accurate and problem-solving communication to positively impact performance
- Research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic identified that VA Cardiac Cath Lab staff taking on new projects work within a system challenged by:
  - Inadequate staffing
  - Limited time for education and training as a team (physicians, nurses, technicians)
  - The VA culture of status quo versus a culture of innovation and learning
  - COVID-19 exhaustion and burnout

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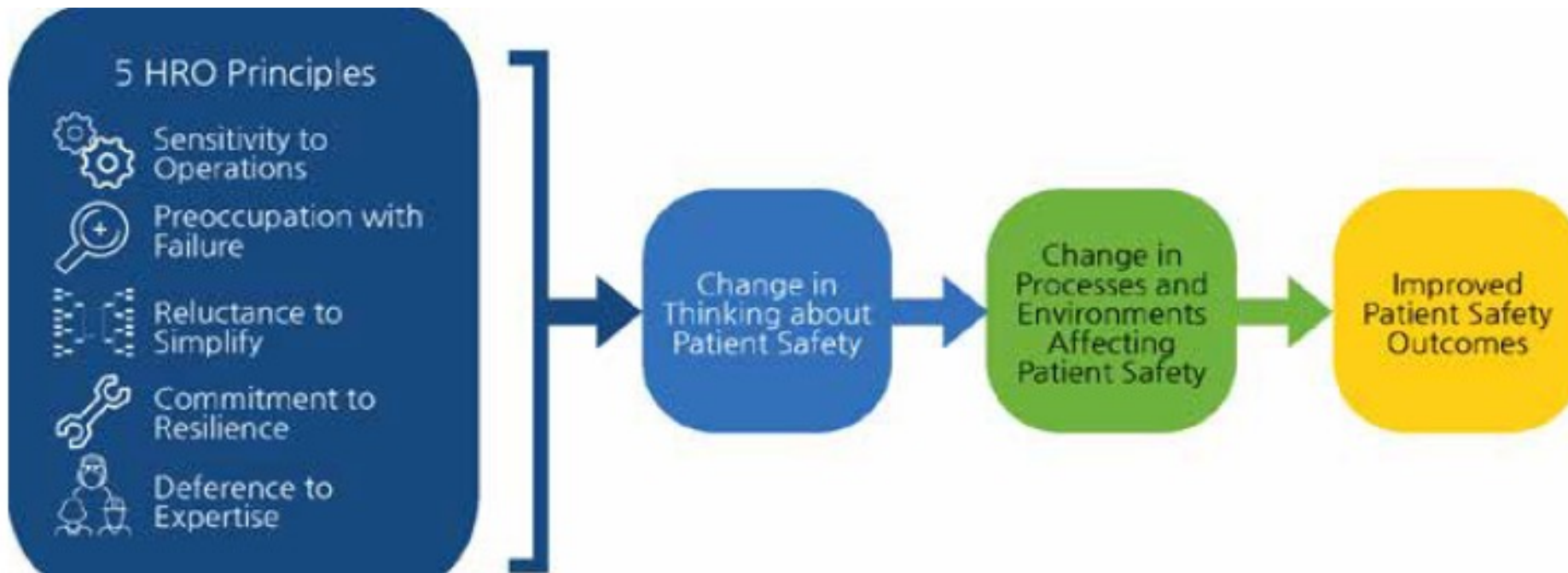
# WHO SHOULD USE THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK?

- The Playbook is designed to assist managers, clinical staff, and leaders in assessing and improving relationships and communication within or across teams.
- The Playbook may be used in the following ways:
  - *Clinical staff and unit management* may use the Playbook to build or change team relationships and communication patterns as part of performance improvement efforts, when onboarding and mentoring new staff, or when launching new programs or procedures.
  - *Department, physician and nurse leadership* may use the Playbook to support hiring, team building, team management, and to create communication and relationships structures and systems to support a culture of high reliability and learning.

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# THE VA HIGH RELIABILITY JOURNEY

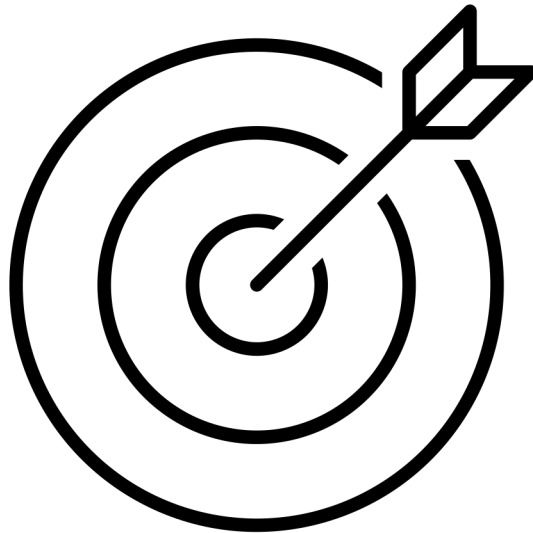
The Relational Playbook provides practices for teams to develop high quality relationships and communication which are foundational to the VA journey to high reliability.





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# PATIENT IMPACTS OF THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK

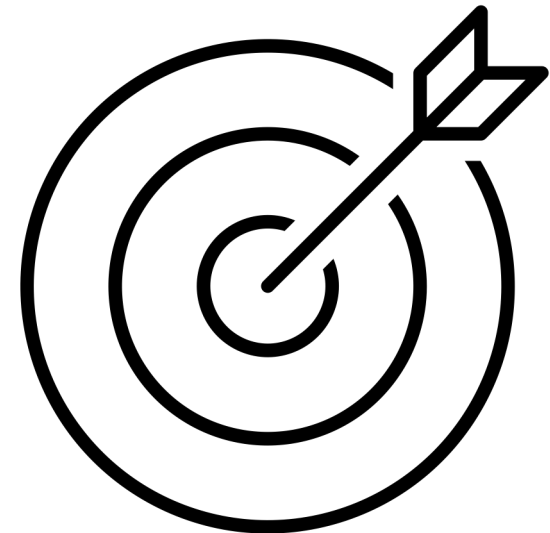


- The **Relational Playbook** practices have the potential to:
  - **Decrease** medical errors
    - Catheterization complications
    - Incorrect medication dosing
    - Transfusion error
  - **Prevent** harm
    - End-organ injury
    - Healthcare associated infections
    - Pressure ulcers

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# EMPLOYEE IMPACTS OF THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK

- The **Relational Playbook** practices have the potential to:
  - **Enhance** job satisfaction
  - **Lower** burnout
  - **Lower** intent to leave
  - **Lower** cath lab turnover rates
  - **Enhance** perceived patient safety climate scores



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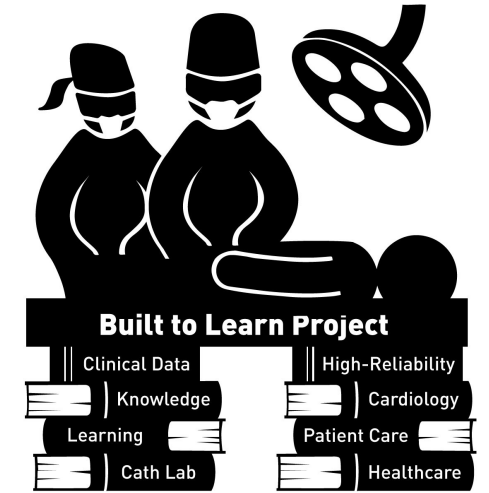
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# HOW TO USE THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK

Relational Playbook in Cardiology Teams



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

✓ **Chapter 1: Creating a Positive Culture**

- ✓ Three Good Things
- ✓ Assessing Team Well-being
- ✓ Appreciative Inquiry

✓ **Chapter 2: Teamwork**

- ✓ Building a Team
- ✓ Relationships at Work
- ✓ Difficult Relationships at Work
- ✓ Hiring for High Performing Teams

✓ **Chapter 3: Leading Teams**

- ✓ Wellness-centered Leadership
- ✓ Servant Leadership
- ✓ Essential Leader Skills

✓ **Chapter 4: Creating Joy in Work**

- ✓ Burnout
- ✓ Joy and Happiness
- ✓ Gratitude

✓ **Chapter 5: Communication & High Reliability**

- ✓ Effective Communication
- ✓ High Reliability Practices

✓ Inspiration and Encouragement

✓ Relational Playbook Study Recruitment

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# RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK FORMAT

- The Playbook is a visual document developed in PowerPoint.
- Information is broken into sections - one message per page.
- The layout is designed for easy reading on a computer.
- Hyperlinks allow you to move around the Playbook.
- Resources for additional learning and references are included with each section.



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# HOW TO USE THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK

- The Playbook is designed to be read in order, but you can also select a chapter most relevant to your team right now.
- Options to identify priority areas include:
  - Complete the [Learning Environment Assessment Tool](#)
  - Review your VA All Employee Survey results
- If you believe your team is in crisis, seek professional guidance from your VISN or facility leadership.



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# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

- The Learning Environment Assessment Tool is designed to help you think about the state of relationships and communication in your team or department.
  - The goal is to move your team from good to great.
- Each question in the assessment tool maps to a specific Relational Playbook chapter

Learning Environment  
Assessment Tool: [LINK](#)



Scan for mobile access  
(phone/iPad)



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# TIME GUIDANCE: RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK PRACTICES

When choosing which **Relational Playbook** practices to implement, consider the amount of time and resources the clinical team has available. For example:

- **Easy (No prep; minutes a day; individual activity):**
  - Adding 3 Good Things or Ice Breaker practices to daily huddles or standing meetings
- **Moderate effort (1-2 hours prep; periodic meetings; team activity):**
  - Building a Team practices when starting a new procedure
  - Developing interview questions that reflect the priorities of the cath lab
- **Major effort (1-5 hours prep; standing meetings; team activity):**
  - Addressing burnout through joy in work and positive culture practices
  - Implementing high reliability communication practices
- **Changes to personal practice (1-10 hours prep; every day; individual activity):**
  - Adopting a wellness centered or servant leader or essential leadership approaches
  - Role modeling effective communication skills

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# CATH LAB VOICES

*It's really critical that you get along with the people you work with. That they're easy or approachable... because, you know, if you had a major conflict with somebody and it was a very small team that would be problematic.*

58-year-old Cath Lab Nurse, 1 year VA

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# THE RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK TRIAL

- If you and your team are interested in:
  - Learning how to improve relationships and communication
  - Using best practices to hire new staff for relationships and communication skills
  - Integrating relationship and communication skills into clinical care
  - Learning how to practice relational leadership

**Become a site in the VA Relational Playbook Trial.**

For more information, contact Dr. Heather M. Gilmartin, PhD, NP, at [heather.gilmartin@va.gov](mailto:heather.gilmartin@va.gov)

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