



The Team Discussion Guide

Ten provocations to start the conversation your team keeps avoiding

Ten stations from *Courage: Mind the Gap*, the book about the space between what you know and what you actually do. Each comes with questions built for a team session, and a quiet tip for whoever leads it. No slides. No workshop jargon. Just the conversations that do not usually happen.

For teams where the real conversation happens in the corridor afterwards.

TEN STATIONS ON SIX LINES

● GAP LINE	Stations 01 to 03	The space between knowing and acting
● HEART LINE	Station 04	Fear, read as a compass
● FOUR STEPS LINE	Stations 05 and 06	The Four Steps, practised
● JESTER LINE	Stations 07 and 08	The excuses, named with a smile
● EVERYWHERE LINE	Station 09	Courage far from the boardroom
● FUTURE LINE	Station 10	Courage with care, from here on

Why run this, and when

When to reach for it: meetings are polite but the real conversation happens in the corridor afterwards. Decisions get revisited instead of made. A reorganisation, a new leader or a merger has made people careful. The engagement survey says people do not feel safe to speak up, and nobody quite knows what to do with that. Or nothing is visibly wrong, and that is the worry: a good team that has stopped challenging itself.

What it meets: the need to name what everyone knows but nobody says, before it gets expensive. Ten short sessions build the habit of saying the true thing early, in the room: the difference between teams that correct course in the meeting and teams that correct course a quarter too late.

Where it helps: leadership teams and intact teams of 3 to 12, programme cohorts, offsites that need more than an icebreaker, and the first 90 days of a new team or a new leader.

How to run it

This guide works in 45 minutes with any team of 3 to 12 people. It also works in 10 minutes with one provocation at the start of a regular meeting: one station per week, ten weeks, no extra meetings needed.

THE 45-MINUTE VERSION

- 5 min** One person reads the provocation aloud. Yes, aloud. It lands differently.
- 15 min** Each person answers the first question. No discussion yet, no rebuttals: just answers.
- 20 min** Open discussion. Pick one or two of the remaining questions, whichever bite. The leader speaks last.
- 5 min** Each person names one small thing they will do differently this week. Write them down. Revisit next time.

On the questions: every station lists three or four. The first, in bold, is the opening round and is answered by everyone. The rest are alternatives, not a checklist: the leader picks the one that bites most. From session two, hand it round: let a different team member read the provocation aloud and choose the question, or make up your own. One question honestly worked beats four politely covered.

THREE GROUND RULES

The leader goes first on honesty, last on opinion. Courage cascades down. It almost never cascades up.

What is said in the room stays in the room. But what is decided in the room shouldn't.

No fixing. The goal is to name gaps, not to solve them in one session. Naming is the hard part.

A note on discomfort: if a provocation makes the room go quiet, that is not the exercise failing. That is the exercise working. Stay in the silence a few seconds longer than feels polite.

Facilitation for busy leaders

No coaching qualification required. You do not need to facilitate brilliantly. You need to go first on honesty, protect the rules, and resist the urge to fix. Everything below fits on one hand:

Open in one sentence. "We are going to read something short and talk about how it applies to us. I will answer first." Then read, answer the first question yourself, more honestly than feels comfortable, and hand over.

When it goes quiet: count slowly to ten before saying anything. Silence is the room working. The first person to rescue the silence is usually the leader, and it usually costs the session.

When one voice dominates: thank them, then: "Two voices we have not heard yet." Look at nobody in particular.

When it gets personal: steer from person to pattern: "What does this cost us as a team?" Names of absent colleagues stay out of the room.

When something big surfaces: do not solve it there. Name it, thank the person, and book the follow-up conversation before the session ends, in front of everyone.

Close with commitments, not conclusions: one small, concrete thing per person, written down. Yours is said first and checked first next time. That is the whole method.

START WITH A MIRROR, FREE

The ten sessions work on their own. But if your team wants more than a facilitated conversation with the images, start the process with data:

Before session one: each person takes the free 2-minute Courage Scan at 4stepstocourage.com/en/assess. Four questions, a first individual signal.

Going deeper: the 20-question Courage Assessment, free to start the process, gives each person a private profile across the Four Steps. A mirror, not a ranking: nobody has to share anything. Bring the profiles to Station 05 and compare where each of you gets stuck.

If the team then wants the full, shared and facilitated mirror, that conversation starts at 4stepstocourage.com.

The ten stations

● GAP LINE

01 · The Meeting Where Nobody Speaks

Everyone knew the project was off track. The data said it. The faces said it. The energy in the room screamed it. Nobody said it. Afterward, in the corridor: "Why didn't anyone say anything?" Yes. Someone should have. That someone was you.

FOR THE TEAM

- **When was our last meeting-where-nobody-spoke? What did staying silent cost us?**

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- What would need to be true for the truth to be said in the room, not the corridor?
- Which current topic is heading for a corridor conversation right now?
- What would make it safe enough here, and who owns that: the leader, or all of us?

Leader's move: Open by naming a meeting where you stayed silent yourself. Then ask the first question and wait.



● GAP LINE

02 · The Two-Second Decision

The moment arrives. You feel it in your chest. Something true. Something that matters. And in two seconds, you run a calculation: political cost, the boss's face, whether it's "your place." Two seconds later, the moment has passed.

FOR THE TEAM

- **What goes into your personal two-second calculation in this team?**

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- Which item on that list is real, and which have we never actually tested?
- What has staying silent actually cost each of us this year? One sentence each.

Leader's move: Have people write their calculation privately first, then share. Writing is more honest than speaking.



● GAP LINE

03 · A Field Guide to Corporate Cowardice

The Deferricus Eternalis: "Let's revisit this next quarter." (Last heard: 17 quarters ago.) The Consensus Seekerus: "I think we're all aligned, right?" The Committee Formicus: "Let's set up a working group." Recognise anyone? Of course you do. You've been one of them. So have I.

FOR THE TEAM

- Which species lives in our team, and in which meetings does it appear?

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- What is our team's favourite phrase for postponing a hard call? Say it out loud, together.
- What would retiring that phrase cost us, and what would it buy us?

Leader's move: *Keep it light at first: laughter is the door. Then walk through it to one real, current example.*



● HEART LINE

04 · Fear Is a Compass

"When you're heading into the wind, the boat heels over. Everything in you says turn away. But the heel is how you know you're making progress. No heel, no speed." Fear works the same way. That dread before the conversation? It's telling you the conversation matters.

FOR THE TEAM

- Which conversation are we each dreading right now? (Name the topic, not the person.)

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- If dread means "this matters", what is the most important conversation on this team's list?
- When did dread turn out to be right: the conversation mattered exactly as much as the fear said?



Leader's move: *Model topic-not-person naming with your own example first, and protect that rule for everyone.*

● FOUR STEPS LINE

05 · Breathe

You inhale. Not because you chose to. Because your body knows what's coming. You hold. You exhale. You say it. The words are in the room now. They belong to everyone. Step Up. Step In. Step Forward. Step Together. You've been practising this your whole life.

FOR THE TEAM

- **Where does our team get stuck: noticing the moment, facing it, saying it, or backing each other after it's said?**

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- Who backed you up last time you said something hard here? Did they know it mattered?
- What does backing someone up actually look like in this team, in the meeting and after it?

Leader's move: *Draw the four Steps on a flipchart and let each person place a dot where they personally get stuck.*



● FOUR STEPS LINE

06 · The Rock and the Leap

There are two kinds of courage and they feel nothing alike. The first is a rock. You plant yourself and the pressure builds and you don't move. The second is a leap. You leave the ground entirely. The rock thinks the leap is reckless. The leap thinks the rock is stuck. One holds. One jumps. Same courage. Different direction.

FOR THE TEAM

- **Is this team better at holding (defending standards) or leaping (starting the unproven)?**

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- What is one decision in front of us right now that needs the kind we're worse at?
- Which recent "reckless" call was actually a leap someone deserves thanks for?

Leader's move: *Split the room: rocks one side, leapers the other. Ask each side what it needs from the other.*



● JESTER LINE

07 · The Seven Deadly Excuses

1. "The timing isn't right." (The timing is never right. That's what makes it courage.)
2. "It's not my place." (Whose place is it? Have you checked?)
4. "We need more data." (You have the data. You're missing the nerve.)
7. "Someone should really..." (Yes. That someone is finishing this sentence.)

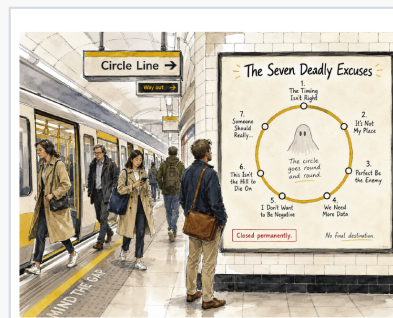
FOR THE TEAM

- Which of the seven is our house excuse? Which is yours personally?

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- Pick one "someone should really..." this team has been saying. Who is the someone, and by when?
- What is the polite version of "no" we use instead of actually deciding?

Leader's move: Write the team's excuse phrases on the wall. Agree that from today, anyone may point at the wall.



● JESTER LINE

08 · How Courage Dies in Organisations

Stage 1: Brave person speaks up. Stage 2: Room goes quiet. Stage 3: Manager says "Thanks for that." Stage 4: Topic is "parked." Stage 5: Later never arrives. Stage 7: Brave person stops being brave. Stage 8: Next generation watches and calibrates. Stage 11: Organisation puts up poster. (Return to Stage 1.)

FOR THE TEAM

- At which stage is our organisation right now? Be precise.

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- What happened to the last brave thing someone said in this team, and what did everyone watching learn from it?
- Which stage do we control directly, and what would moving one stage back require this month?

Leader's move: If the room says stage 7 or later, do not defend. Ask one question: what would rewind us one stage?



● EVERYWHERE LINE

09 · The Kitchen Table

A husband says to his wife over breakfast: "I think I need help." Not with the house. With himself. None of this will make a case study. None of it will win an award. Some of the bravest conversations in the world happen over a cup of tea. At a kitchen table. With no audience at all.

FOR THE TEAM

- Where did you last see quiet, unrewarded courage, at work or at home?

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- What would it change if we treated those moments as the standard, not the exception?
- Who in this team might be carrying something quietly right now, and how would we know?



Leader's move: This one runs quieter: pairs or threes first, then one line each in the full group. Never force a share.

● FUTURE LINE

10 · When Courage Goes Wrong

He called it courage. Everyone else called it exhausting. A knife in a surgeon's hand saves a life. In anyone else's, it's a weapon. Courage without care is cruelty with a better vocabulary. The hardest part isn't finding the nerve to speak. It's knowing when your truth is serving the situation and when it's serving your ego.

FOR THE TEAM

- Where is the line, for us, between candour and cruelty? Give a real example of each.

Alternatives, if one bites more:

- How do we want to challenge each other here: what is our agreed way of saying the hard thing with care?
- When did one of us get the nerve right and the care wrong? What did we learn from it?



Leader's move: End by writing the team's one-sentence "hard things, with care" agreement. Put it where you meet.

TELL US WHAT WORKED

Every team runs these stations differently, and the best moves in this guide came from real teams, not from theory. Tell us which stations landed, what you changed, and the questions your team invented: through 4stepstocourage.com or at ralf.schneider@betterbusinesspartners.biz. What worked for your team will make the next edition better.

46 more stations where these came from

Courage: Mind the Gap by Ralf Schneider: 56 provocations, 70 full-colour illustrations, built to be read between two meetings and passed on with a smile. Hardback, paperback and Kindle, published 31 August 2026 (Rowanvale Books).

Get the book: link.amazon/B0ecGsrs4

Free 2-minute Courage Scan: 4stepstocourage.com/en/assess, or scan the code.

