Healthy Teams

Resources for you and your team. From starting off, to resolving issues to the best practices we have for building and maintaining healthy teams.

- What can help make a team healthy within XR?
- Building Trust
- Creating Intentional Cultures
- Tension Shifting Session
- Healthy Teams Workshop
- Exit Process
- Communication in online chats

What can help make a team healthy within XR?

Introduction

It is often hard to put your finger on what exactly your team culture is or isn't. We say **we are transitioning to regenerative cultures, but what does that mean in practice?** Here we will outline some activities you could bring into your teams to help you develop sustainable and healthy cultures.

We would identify a healthy team as one where the following working conditions are prioritised:

- High levels of trust
- Intentional choices are made to work in regenerative ways
- Members of the team feel safe, valued and have a sense of belonging;
- There are clear roles and responsibilities
- Connections are strong with the parent circle and sub circles

By giving attention to the following aspects, these working conditions can be developed.

1. Connecting with each other

Who is in the Room - Life Stories. Every group and team within XR will have a slightly different culture even though we have all agreed to the P&Vs. Local Groups will vary across the country, arts-focused groups will work in a different way to data-focused groups, and the culture of a team can often come down to the people in it.

We have all come from different backgrounds and different experiences. We have arrived here for a variety of reasons on a whole range of paths, there is no single route to becoming a rebel. So take some time to get to know each other and the paths we took to get here; not just to Extinction Rebellion but specifically to this team.

Think about the series of events that have taken place in your life, from your childhood all the way to the present day. How have your experiences shaped you and contributed to the decisions which have brought you here? You can go as deep or as broad as you feel comfortable doing in the moment.

Give everyone space to talk. This can be done all together as a group or in break out rooms of 2-4 people. It can take anything from 3-10 minutes, so decide on a length of time that fits the

space you have. When setting up this activity give participants 2 mins to reflect and think before they start sharing. And set aside some time afterwards for folk to connect before moving to anything new.

The sharing of life experiences helps people come together, to see each other as full and complete individuals, as well as illuminating the reasons they may have for being here. Better understanding of each other as individuals can help a team pull together! As new members join it is a great opportunity to recap life stories too.

2. Celebrating success, gratitude and appreciation

It may be beneficial to your team to spend some time noticing the things you are doing well, which can include appreciating the work of individuals in your circle.

- Make a list of all of the things you and individuals in your team have done well in the last month.
- Give space for gratitude at the end of your agenda or as part of your check-outs.
- Appreciate those that leave the circle or step back from a role.
- Accept the possibility of feeling some discomfort as others appreciate you.

3. Aligning through the Principles and Values

Working in your circle will be a great opportunity to bring the P&Vs to life and as such it is worth spending time checking-in to to get a shared understanding of them and to ensure they underpin how you are working.

Read the P&Vs in full here

Some of the P&Vs underpin the general direction of the movement (eg 1, 2 and 4) and it might be difficult to see them specifically in action in your circle. But the others are all about how we work together, the processes and the spirit. One P&V that is highlighted in our everyday working is 10; the self organizing system (SOS) is XR's way of bringing this P&V to life and it influences all we do in XRUK. For more details go to SOS - making it work for you.

Other aspects of the P&Vs can be explored further by following these links:

- Our ways of working
- Our meetings
- Our cultures
- Accessibility
- Mental health and wellbeing

4. Aligning with the circle mandate

The reason for doing the work you do is contained in the purpose of the circle, which is clearly described in the circle mandate and everyone's alignment with this is essential for the work you do to be meaningful. It is worth going back to the mandate to ensure you're not losing sight of what the purpose is.

More information about mandates and how they fit within the SOS process can be found here

5. Connecting across the movement

To work in a healthy way, circles need to have strong and effective connections with various other parts of the movement (some may not be relevant to your particular team)

- Your broader circle
- Any sub circles you may have
- The XRUK Strategy

6. Maintaining a balance between task and maintenance

Each team is made up of the individuals in it. Each person brings their own skills and experience and will naturally fall into different roles in the group dynamic. These roles usually aren't specifically mandated but functions in group dynamics, for example:

Task Focussed	Maintenance Focused
Bringing in new project ideas	Checking in with team members
Keeping track of progress on tasks	Setting group boundaries to preserve capacity
Consulting other teams for input	Unblocking tensions when they arise
Clarifying success criteria	Ensuring everyone's voice is heard in meetings

You can probably see from this that "Task" roles focus on the work of pushing projects forward and meeting goals, whereas "Maintenance" roles focus on the work of keeping the team together, preserving capacity and creating a team that can continue to function well together. This split can be likened to "long term vs short term" thinking and a healthy team needs a balance of these roles fulfilled at any one time.

Ask yourselves:

- Does your team as a whole feel like it is always pushing towards goals and never has time to breathe? Or...
- Does it feel like you have long meetings but never seem to get any concrete outcomes?

If either of these feel accurate then maybe you need to intentionally bring your team back into a balance of task and maintenance.

You might want to consider how your team is doing around these particular aspects of maintenance:

7. Welcoming new people

Here is a broad range of tools for recruiting and onboarding new members.

In the spirit of working in a healthy way, we encourage circles treat new members with high levels of respect by; Give space to hear their stories, explaining the terms and processes that are part of the team's work and giving them opportunities to ask questions and grow into the role. Using a buddy system might be a good way of doing this.

8. Dealing with personality clashes and group tensions

Short Feedback Loops

Here is some comprehensive guidance around using short feedback loops to encourage prompt and direct conversations when tensions arise between individual members. Short feedback loops guidance In a nutshell, these conversations are best held using the model of nonviolent communication, focusing on observations, feelings, needs and requests.

Embed a culture of airing and moving through difficulties in your team.

Here is some guidance for incorporating tension shifting as part of your circle’s meeting schedule. It is recommended to hold these sessions on a regular basis to ensure the tension shifting ‘muscle’ is developed.

Building Trust

The strengthening of relationships, key to healthy team working, requires moving towards greater degrees of trust.

Trust allows us to commit more fully, to invest more of ourselves in the projects we are working on and to develop those one to one friendships that can sustain us and support us through tricky times.

Our ability to trust will depend on all that is external to us; the attitudes and behaviours of those around us, the structures and working culture of the group, as well as our own internalised attitudes borne of our individual experiences.

In order to help **create the structures and culture** that will help build trust there are a number of things that it will be useful to have happen simultaneously;

- Clear mandates that are referred to on an ongoing basis.
- Ongoing reflection of P&V's to create a framework for working.
- Looking at individual capacity as well as each person's understanding of consent.
- Listening to life stories that can develop strength and confidence through shared vulnerability and depth of experiences; understanding where people are coming from.
- Modelling attitudes of kindness, compassion, patience, empathy and inclusivity where everyone is heard and welcomed.
- Encouraging the voicing of differences, disagreements and the resolution of these, accepting differences whilst building consensus; handling conflict well.
- Reviewing projects and development of the team; keeping what's working and identifying and letting go of what isn't.

Individually, it may be worth thinking about the times when we were let down and what impact that had on us and our ability to trust.

A decision to trust within a certain time frame can be a useful way forward, provided reviews are embedded in the structure of the team's operation; this is, agreeing to be led by other's ideas.

Creating Intentional Cultures

Group agreements

These allow us to understand our shared values as a team and how we would like to work together. They set expectations for how we choose to interact and are key to building a healthy and resilient team culture.

By creating some group agreements we are explicitly saying “this is how we choose to work.” They can be around how meetings are held, how decisions are made, how we choose to interact etc. Here are some example Group Agreements:

- This is a safe sober space
- We consider W.A.I.T – Why Am I Talking – before we speak
- We speak from our roles
- We use hand signals to help facilitate conversations

Having clear and explicit group agreements is a great tool for inclusivity. It allows anyone to look at those agreements and ask themselves “Is this a psychologically safe space for me to step into?” The explicit nature of these agreements can help neurodivergent people better understand the social norms of the space. And often the group agreements we put into place are there so we can use them to better mitigate issues around power in groups.

Creating a group agreement

Suggested steps to creating and getting consent for a group agreements:

- **Solo** - Ask everyone present to reflect for 3 mins on what would make the space safer and easier to engage with. Remember meetings should be fun and productive.
- **Pairs** - Ask participants to pair up and compare what they came up with, combining any similar suggestions.
- **Group** - Go around the group and ask people to read out one of their suggestions and why it is important to them. Continue around the group aiming to not repeat ones already stated until everyone has come to the bottom of their list. Note these somewhere everyone can see.
- **Clarify** - Give space for anyone to ask any questions so that everyone full understands the suggestions as written.
- **Reaction** - Create space for everyone to react to the suggestions. Take down any controversial ones to be reworded or reworked for next time. It’s okay if some people have no reaction.
- **Consent** - For each suggestion hold it up to the group and ask if everyone consents to have this as a Group Agreement. If there are objections, based on a tangible issue it will

cause, either try to reword the suggestion or put it down for another time. The suggestions that get consent from everyone present become your group agreements.

Tension Shifting Session

The facilitator needs to read the facilitation tips before the session.
Pre meeting - Agree the facilitator and notetaker.

Check-ins (5 mins)

Could be one thing you're grateful for, how are you feeling, and what would make it easier for you to be present in this meeting today

Regenerative cultures Reminder

Ask if someone wants to share something that has been moving them recently. If no one is moved to share something: go with a Regenerative Cultures reminder.

Updates

Before diving into the tension shifting meeting, ask if there are mission critical updates for the group. Facilitation Tip: don't let it become a discussion about each project. This is just for essential updates only!

Feedback & Tension Shifting

Facilitation Tip: explain the importance of feedback to learning how we can do our work better.

Prepare for shifting

- **Check** openness for feedback (1 min)
  - Show of fingers 1-5, how available are you to receive feedback?
- **Journal** any tensions since the last tension shifting session individually (4 min)
  - **Identify** any that emerge as most significant.
  - People to put their 1 major tension on a shared google doc (as a record of tensions emerging)
- **Read** through each other's tensions (2min)
- **Internal mood checker** - supported by the facilitator (5 min)
- **Sort** the priorities (4 min) - The facilitator sorts tensions in order of significance (example of categories below):
  - Emergency / High Intensity
  - Regarding group functioning & relationship with whole group
  - Individualised & Interpersonal Tensions
  - -> **Check Consent** to agree on priorities

Shift Tension

- **Understand** and hear the person’s tension
  - Ask person to share more
  - Practice Active Listening (mirroring what has been heard)
  - Give space for clarifying questions
  - Try to hear the person
- **Explore** possibilities for shifting
  - Brainstorm: What ideas might meet the needs?
  - Variety of possibilities
- **Decide** next steps with your normal decision making process
- **Check** whether tension feels shifted

Facilitation Tip: Repeat if there is time for a second or third tension

Recap conclusions & celebrate

- Review APs & Agreements
- Move any leftover tensions to the next Tension Shifting session (agree when this will be)
- Does anyone need any support?
- Celebrate

Check Out (5 mins)

- Round of: How everyone is feeling at the end of the meeting?

Healthy Teams Workshop

This workshop is designed to be used as a tool by any team that wants to run a health check on the way their team is functioning.

It focusses on both task and maintenance. Task means getting stuff done. Do you achieve your goals? Maintenance means how you get stuff done eg: looking after the team, the people in it and the systems and processes that keep the team alive and developing. Is everyone on board with the Principles and Values? Do they understand where the team fits in the whole movement and where they fit in the team? Are they comfortable enough and enabled to be brave and step out of their comfort zone? Are there any issues under the surface that need to be addressed?

The workshop is designed to be flexible. It can be done as a whole at one sitting or it can be broken up into several different activities which can stand alone. It can be done in a face-to-face setting or online. One or two team members can facilitate. Someone should take notes. A follow-up meeting may be needed to decide on actions arising from the workshop.

Facilitators may need to have available XR Principles and Values and relevant team documents such as mandate, agreed strategy, and designated roles.

1. Welcome to the Workshop

Regenerative Culture Reminder, Lighting the Children’s Fire,

Check-in go round: (Names, pronouns, roles, a word or animal that conveys how each person is feeling)

Is there anything anyone needs to help them participate?

Benefits: gives everyone a chance to become present, remember what is important and ask for anything they need, establishes a brave space.

2. Purpose of the Workshop

A time to pause and reflect together, review how it is going, check if there is anything you need to change. It looks at group maintenance as well as task performance. It gives everyone an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about your team working, identify team strengths, weaknesses and blind spots, issues to be addressed in the future.

Benefits: clarifies that this workshop is for everyone to contribute to improving team working, identifying rather than solving any problems (this is done as a follow up).

3. Individual extended Check-In: Life-story in 3 minutes: “How I got to this point”

A facilitator demonstrates the process, picking out key factors that led to them being in this team at this time. Strictly timed.

Breakout rooms. Small groups so that everyone gets three minutes to tell their story.

Feedback to full meeting: respect confidentiality, feedback on how that exercise was for you, what did you learn about yourself, any insights or discomfort. No note-taking.

Benefits: everyone is valued equally, gives a chance to get to know others as people with lives and history outside XR, reminds individuals of their own motivation, what they believe is important, why they are in this team.

4. Principles and Values

Facilitator displays or shares copy of XR Principles and Values

- Which ones shine through in this team?
- Which ones get overlooked?

Responses are recorded eg in the meeting chat.

Benefits: reminder of XR Principles and Values and their relevance to healthy team working. In every team there will be differences of opinions, views, styles, personalities, energy etc. That is healthy. Principles and Values are different. Shared values play a major part in holding a team together.

5. Mandate and Strategy

Facilitator displays the team’s mandate or purpose, agreed strategy and the designated roles within the team.

Discussion: Have you looked at this recently? *(wavy hand responses)* How does this fit together? Are there gaps?

- Everyone considers what they bring to the team and how that contributes to the team’s performance of its task.
- What are the team’s current priorities?
- Does anything need updating?

Responses to these questions are recorded.

Benefit: reminder of team’s responsibilities in the Self Organising System, opportunity to review how well the written purpose fits with team members’ sense of direction and commitment.

6. Successes

Where has the team done well, either in tasks or in team maintenance?

Brainstorm all the successes, big and small.

Responses are recorded. We use a copy of this Gathering Successes Document.

Benefits: recalling occasions when the team did well brings gratitude, joy and hope and increases motivation to work together.

7. Issues

What has not gone so well? No team is perfect. It's normal to have some slips and failings. If they are noted everyone can learn from them.

Give everyone an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings citing specific examples and using the framework:

- I observed or I noticed….
- I felt……
- I needed…..

This is not a time (yet) for answering or problem solving.

Responses are noted

Benefits: everyone is listened to equally, gives an opportunity for any disappointment or dissatisfaction to be voiced in a non-violent way and acknowledged without blaming.

8. Identifying the roots of issues and next steps

Discussion: Think about what these issues mean about the way the team works. Are there themes or common threads?

Looking at the successes and issues, the Principles and Values and the documented purpose of the team, where are the strengths and where are the gaps, blind-spots or weaknesses?

- What does the team need to work on?
- Think about what you might do differently as a result of the learning from this workshop.
- How will you go about making this shift?
- What help and support do you need and where will you find it?

Next steps: who will take the lead in moving forward? When? How?

9. Closing

Check-out go round

- Say one thing you are taking away from this workshop.

Extinguish the Children’s Fire.

Exit Process

> **Emergency Summary**
> Help I need to step back!
> **Step 1** Tell your Coordinator.
> **Step 2** Fill out This Doc to help your team pick up where you left off.
> **Step 3** Breathe.

We are all volunteers in XR. This comes with some benefits and also some drawbacks. The benefits are clear and include the ability for us to step up when we have time and step back when our circumstances change. We can tailor the time we give to suit our lives, give the things we want to give, and hold back as much as we need for ourselves. There are a lot of aspects to our volunteer structure that are inherently regenerative in nature: after all, we are all crew, we are a family.

However, sometimes we will offer to do things that take much longer than we had expected, or our other responsibilities change after we step up to be a part of a project. There are often conflicting responsibilities for volunteer teams, and this can mean that the team membership changes a lot, or that there are some months where the team just doesn't have the capacity to meet its goals.

We never want to blame our individual volunteers for this. It is not our fault when our situations change. However, we want to make sure that we can change our commitment to XR with the least impact on our teams.

Below are two suggested processes to guide Rebels in stepping back smoothly.

The Gradual Change of Focus

We often step into a team or role in XR to work on a specific project or for a fixed term. As the project or term ends, we may want to change what we are working on or move to another project. We don’t want to leave the role suddenly but we do want to transition our attentions to elsewhere.

1. **Let your Coordinators know you plan to change focus.** It is useful to give as much warning as possible if you plan to move from your team, because they can then redistribute tasks in your absence. But also make a firm end date for yourself - it is all too common for there to be that one last thing to clear up and it could take months for a clean separation! Don’t be afraid to leave some things unfinished.
2. **Find your new home.** If you don’t already know what you want to dive into next then check out the Volunteer Website. You may have used this when you joined XR but it is also a great way to see where help is needed in different parts of the movement.

3. **Find your replacement if necessary.** If your team or project is continuing without you, it would really help if you can help to find someone to replace you. This may mean holding an election for your role or onboarding a new Rebel. Don't be daunted by finding someone new - we can help!

> **5 Steps to finding a New Rebel:**
>
> 1. Write up a short role/project description.
> 2. Ask your integrator or IC to post it on the Volunteer Website.
> 3. Once you get a response, reach out to them for a chat, send them the Rebel Starter Pack and give them a run down of the project.
> 4. Introduce the new Rebel to your team and let them shadow you for a week or two so then can slowly pick up the role.
> 5. Make sure you step back at the date you had planned. If possible, stay in contact with your replacement when they need help but make sure they know that the role is now theirs and they should fly.

4. **Wrap up your loose ends.** Take an hour or so to track down the loose ends that you will leave to your team (or teams). This will not only help your team in picking up where you left off but it will also give you a sense of rounding off so that you don't have to worry while your mind is needed elsewhere.

Consider:

- Making note of conversations you were having;
- Linking to any documents you were working on;
- Copying over your to do list and any unfinished action points or to-dos;
- Adding a couple of sentences on what your goal for the next few weeks was going to be.

This template loose-ends document may be useful.

5. **Say goodbye to your team.** Plan a small social or activity for your team to round off your time with them. We recommend Kumospace to bring larger teams together in a natural mingling way, or an intimate Zoom drinks party. Or you can host an activity, play a game or a gratitude sharing space.
6. **Stay in contact.** XR works due to our interconnectivity. In your new role you won't only bring yourself but you'll also bring your experience and knowledge of your previous teams. Use it. Make connections, start collaborations and most of all have fun!

The Swift Retreat

Sometimes the need to step back comes quickly and unexpectedly due to family responsibilities, mental health, job applications or many other things. Here is a roadmap for a swift exit which doesn't leave your team in the lurch.

1. **Let your Coordinators know that you need to step back.** Ideally give them a date (end of the week, after the next meeting etc.) but, if you need to go instantly, that is also okay. The important thing is that your team knows to not expect you to continue doing the work you had been.
2. **Compile your loose ends.** Take an hour or so to track down the loose ends that you will leave to your team (or teams). This will not only help your team in picking up where you left off but it will also give you a sense of rounding off so that you don't have to worry while your mind is needed elsewhere.

Consider:

- Making note of conversations you were having;
- Linking to any documents you were working on;
- Copying over your to do list and any unfinished action points or to-dos;
- Adding a couple of sentences on what your goal for the next few weeks was going to be.

This template loose-ends document may be useful.

3. **Set up auto replies.** On your Mattermost or your XR email address set up an auto reply saying that you have stepped back and who to contact instead. This will allow any contacts to connect with your team once you've gone. Consider writing a short message in a document that you can copy into your texts or emails to use if someone contacts you from XR but you cannot set up a generic auto reply for that account. For example:

> Hi Rebel,
> I'm sorry but I have had to step back from my XR work for the time being. If your question is about X please forward it to rebel1@example.com and if it is about Y then connect to rebel2@example.com.
> Love & Rage,
> Rebellina

4. **Take a breath.** You have now done everything to help your team continue the work without you. Thank you! Take a moment to yourself to reflect on the amazing things you have done with XR and don't be surprised if a few Rebels reach out in the coming days to say thank you. Come back when you are ready or good luck in the next adventure!

Communication in online chats

Statement to use to promote communication that connects in online chats

Developed by Systems and Cultures Circle June 2025

The statement below can be used by anyone who feels that the tone and language in an online chat needs to be de-escalated to allow everyone to feel they can use the space safely.

The statement can be modified and amended to suit the particular requirements but please keep the sense of using communication that connects.

Hey everyone,

Thanks to all of you who've been part of the chat — especially those trying to work things out and find ways forward. It's clear people really care, and that matters.

Differences of opinion are opportunities for growth. At the same time, it also feels like things are getting a bit tense, which totally makes sense because all of this is really important. Just wondering if we can all try to keep things as kind and constructive as possible in group and individual chats? Even when we're frustrated or hurt, using language that helps us stay connected can really make a difference.

It feels like some attention needs to be given to what's happening here, so if something's bothering you, maybe think about chatting to the person directly, asking this group for support or going to Systems and Cultures for guidance — this would help keep this space feeling safe for everyone.

We're all figuring this out together. Let's remember our commitment to how to work together in the Ways of Working document.

Please look out for opportunities to develop your skills in communication that connects on Movement Broadcast plus there is more information on the Rebel Toolkit here:

https://rebeltoolkit.extinctionrebellion.uk/books/healthy-teams. Thanks for being here and being part of it all.
