

Power Hoarding

Looks like:

- There is little value placed on sharing power. **Power is understood to be limited**, with only so much to go around.
- Those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes to how things could or should be done in the organization. Leaders perceive suggestions for **change as a criticism** of their leadership and fail to recognize this response as part of power hoarding.
- Those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume ill intent from those wanting change, characterizing the changemakers as **uninformed (stupid), emotional or inexperienced**.
- Ideas of leadership are rooted in a culture of 'leader worship,' conceiving of leaders as **saviors and/or heroes**.
- Power hoarding often requires **secrecy**. Those with power control what, when and with whom the information is shared; opaqueness in decision-making and schisms within the organization can cause additional problems.

Key Questions to Help Y'all Reflect and Discuss:

- Can my relationship with others be classified as either 'giving' or 'taking'? Or is there a two-way exchange of knowledge and resources?
- Do my actions demonstrate respect for the people and places I am working with?
- In hierarchical organizations, what are the structures that act as checks and balances for those in formal positions of power? How are conflicts of interest defined, identified, and addressed?
- In non-hierarchical organizations, how are informal power dynamics (e.g., seniority, social privilege, employment status) defined, identified, and addressed?

Power Hoarding (cont.)

Antidotes:

- **Embed shared power** in the organization's values statement, its structures and policies, and its day-to-day operations.
- Instill a culture of good leadership understood as **supporting the development of others' leadership skills**. Relatedly, such a culture necessarily abandons the idea of 'hero leaders.'
- Cultivate leadership ideals that incorporate an understanding of the **inevitability of change**. Challenges to leadership are important for the health of the team and the organization.
- Resist and challenge competitiveness. Prioritize **cooperation and collaboration**. This helps shift the implicit assumptions about leaders and leadership that can prevent power sharing from occurring.