

MSSM Student Welfare Committee “book report”

The Culture Code

By: Daniel Coyle

Report by Charlene Orne

Summary of the book (in my own words)

“Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It’s not something you are. It’s something you do”

Quote by Daniel Coyle.

The book begins with the definition of the word CULTURE: from the Latin *cultus*, which means **care**. Care is the theme throughout this book as the author begins to share his research into how some groups succeed and others don’t. What is group culture and what makes it successful? Coyle spent 4 years researching the world’s most successful groups including a special-ops military unit, an inner-city school, a professional basketball team, a movie studio, a comedy troupe, and gang of jewel thieves. This very eclectic mix of groups lead the author to determine that these groups all contained a very specific set of 3 skills. The skills are described below....

1. Build Safety- this explores how signals of connection generate bonds of belonging and identity.
2. Share Vulnerability- explains how habits of mutual risk drive trusting cooperation.
3. Establish Purpose- tells how narratives create shared goals and values.

The book carries you through each skill, giving examples, describing how to put it into practice and then ends with concrete suggestions on applying these skills to your group.

Skill set pearls for MSSM

Building Safety-

This skill is necessary for MSSM because of all the group learning and group living. It was found that the groups studied, their performance depended on behavior that communicates one powerful overarching idea; *We are safe and connected*.

Patterns of interaction were found after studying successful groups and are as follows:

- Close proximity, often in circles
- a lot of eye contact
- Physical touch (handshake, fist bumps, hugs)
- Lots of short, energetic exchanges (no long speeches)
- high levels of mixing, everyone talking to everyone
- Few interruptions

- Lots of questions
- Intensive, active listening
- Humor, laughter
- Small courtesies (thank-you)

For MSSM students and staff, learning the “Belonging cues” would benefit all and result in a condition called psychological safety.

The *Belonging Cues* are...

1. Energy - They invest in the exchange that is occurring
2. Individualization - They treat the person as unique and valued
3. Future orientation - They signal the relationship will continue.

Share Vulnerability

Basically, this skill will enable students and staff to deepen their relationships with one another and take away any hierarchy that exists. The students need to feel that they can be vulnerable with each other and see the vulnerability in their teachers/staff.

Coyle writes, “At some level, we intuitively know that vulnerability tends to spark cooperation and trust”

“Trust comes down to context. And what drives it is the sense that you’re vulnerable, that you need others and can’t do it on your own”

Establish Purpose

Successful productivity in a group needs a common purpose. The MSSM community can learn to focus on the common goal and repeat it often. One example might be to have posters of mottoes and catchphrases that are popular and well liked in the school. They should be short, simple, action-oriented, and forthright. Some examples:

“Pound the rock”- (San Antonio Spurs), “Leave the jersey in a better place” (New Zealand All-Blacks), “Create fun and a little weirdness” (ZAPPOS).

I procrastinated doing this book report, but I thoroughly enjoyed the book and highly recommend this to anyone working with groups for a vocation. I think this should be a must read for teachers/staff/students at MSSM and I hope you too decide to pick it up, it’s a quick read and you won’t be disappointed. Enjoy!

I will leave you with the very simple rules of “Slime mold” that is researched at the University of Sydney but applicable to the MSSM community!

- “If there’s no food, connect with one another.
- If connected, stay connected and move toward the light.
- If you reach the light, stay connected and climb”