

# FLOW SYSTEM

## PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

### Distributed Leadership

### Workbook: Shared Mental Models



[getflowtrained.com/playbook/shared-mental-models/](https://getflowtrained.com/playbook/shared-mental-models/)

# Shared Mental Models

Shared mental models (SMM) are defined as the collective understanding among a group of members, one in which members have a shared understanding of the problem, processes, goals, definitions, and resources.



Alternate definitions include team members' overlapping mental representation of knowledge associated with the team's tasks, equipment, relationships, and context.

Shared mental models can be categorized into four themes: shared or overlapping, similar or identical, compatible or complementary, and distributed.

Developing shared mental models can be achieved through various techniques. A few of these techniques include stability of membership, closed-loop communication, training, metacommunication, psychological safety, and the use of tools and technology.

In the current exercise, identify how well your organizational structure is at developing shared mental models. Provide an example of how your organization supports each technique listed in the table and rate, on a scale of 1 through 7 (1 being *not at all* and 7 being *always*) how well your organization is at supporting/practicing each technique. Offer suggestions for your organization to improve upon these techniques to build a stronger culture, one that facilitates the development of shared mental models among all members.

SHARED MENTAL MODELS	
TECHNIQUE	Current Example and Improvement Idea Rate (1 = not at all, 7 = always)
<p><b>Stability of Membership</b> It is beneficial to have members work together for a period. Membership tenure is required before SMM can develop.</p>	

## SHARED MENTAL MODELS (CONT.)

### **Training**

Training as a group. Training how to be a team and how to communicate and coordinate activities effectively is essential in developing positive SMM.

### **Metacommunication**

Communication about the process of communication.

Metacommunication forces members to discuss how, when, and through what medium communication will take place.

### **Psychological Safety**

Creating a constructive climate provides a supportive environment for developing SMM.

### **Tools**

Virtual whiteboards, shared concept maps, asynchronous communication applications, and briefing/debriefing exercises are ways to develop and maintain SMM.

## Connect the Three Helixes:

Flow can only be achieved when the three helixes are interconnected. To identify how this can occur, the next exercise requires the reader to identify examples of different methods from each of the other two helixes (complexity thinking, team science) that might work well with or support the development of shared mental models.

### COMPLEXITY THINKING



### DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP



### TEAM SCIENCE



## CONNECT THE HELIXES

Select a scenario or problem that would benefit from developing shared mental models.

Identify three methods from complexity thinking that could work with shared mental models and give a brief description about how they complement one another.

CT Method 1:

CT Method 2:

## CONNECT THE HELIXES

**CT Method 3:**

**Identify three methods from the team science helix that could work with or support the development of shared mental models and give a brief description about how they complement one another.**

**TS Method 1:**

**TS Method 2:**

**TS Method 3:**

**Provide a description explaining which methods from each of the three helixes (with shared mental models being the DL method) work best for the scenario/ problem identified earlier.**