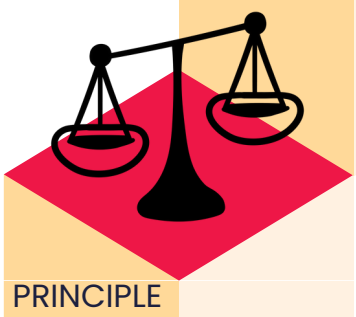
THE 12 BULLSHIFT PRINCIPLES

Helping people be happier, healthier, and more effective at work

PRINCIPLE 1

Don't be vague › Get clear

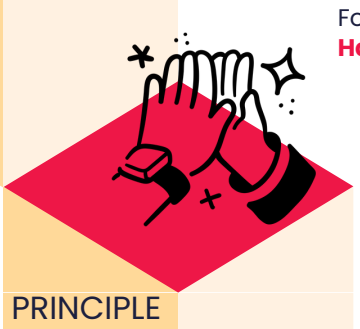
Check In to ensure people are connected and focused. Lead more effective meetings. Make decisions more robustly and confidently. Get the answers you need and the help you're asking for. Clarify and verify to confirm understanding. With this Principle, to help you get clear in every email, phone call, meeting and conversation, we teach four Bullshift habits.
Habits: Check In, Inform / Discuss / Decide, Use the Right Tool, and Clarify & Verify



PRINCIPLE 2

Don't have an opinion if you don't need one › Park it

If you don't need to have an opinion, don't have one. Assumptions and automatic opinions can stop you from listening, damage relationships, and lead to wasted energy. Keep an open mind. Focus your mental resources on what matters most.
Habit: Name and Park Opinions.



PRINCIPLE 3

Don't be defensive › Be curious

Make it safer and easier for people to ask questions, give feedback and be honest with you by shifting your defensiveness to curiosity. Build confidence and resilience by getting more feedback fit. When you feel threatened by what others are saying or asking, state your first reaction, then ask two questions and open up the conversation to be more collaborative.
Habit: 1 Statement, 2 Questions.

PRINCIPLE 4

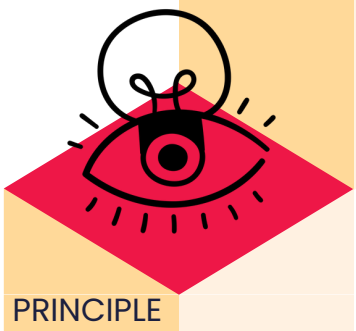
Don't get too emotionally invested › Detach to explore

If you get too emotionally invested, you can't see what's true and be open to opinions, feedback and change. If you get possessive, you'll get obsessive, blinkered and defensive, and it will be extremely hard for others to be direct and honest with you. Work with high passion / low attachment so you can detach to explore.
Habit: Replace "I" with "We" and "It".

PRINCIPLE 5

Don't make excuses › Take responsibility

If you want to work as an adult among adults, take responsibility for your choices, behaviours and actions. Replace the disempowering language of excuses with the self-empowering language of honest reasons. Owning your part gives you power to change it.
Habit: Use the Choosing Words.



PRINCIPLE 6

Don't express opinion as fact › Express opinion as opinion

Facts are objectively true - everything else is subjective. When we express opinions as facts, we distort reality and make it harder to get an honest, clear, collaborative conversation. Express your feelings as feelings, assumptions as assumptions, opinions as opinions, none of them as facts.
Habit: Use "I" Statements.

PRINCIPLE 7

Don't pretend › Be authentic

Being authentic doesn't mean "bring your whole self to work" or unfiltered honesty - we are still at work in a professional role with workplace boundaries - but pretending too much comes with costs and risks. It's helpful to have a practical way of being authentic under pressure to help us build more meaningful relationships and communicate honestly about issues and opportunities.
Habit: State Your Wants and Concerns.

PRINCIPLE 8

Don't mutter › Speak up

In Bullshift, we distinguish between healthy venting (to let things go), discussing (to get perspective), speaking up (to seek change) - which we see as Best Self or "above the line" behaviours - and whinging (not letting it go), gossiping (adding judgements and rumours) and muttering (recruiting others to join us) - which we see as Shadow or "below the line" behaviours. We help people to see what they're doing and shift to working above the line as professional adults.
Habit: Speak TO, Not About.

PRINCIPLE 9

Don't use sarcasm › Say it straight or don't say it

Banter and humour can be great for stress relief and bonding but sarcasm has a Shadow side. It can be used to obfuscate, attack, exclude and recruit. And when you factor in cultural diversity and neurodiversity, you realise it can also be very exclusive. Straight talk saves everyone time and energy and builds a more inclusive workplace.
Habit: It It Matters, Say It Straight.

PRINCIPLE 10

Don't gossip › Be respectful

Gossip is cancerous for culture. We recommend a zero tolerance policy. Speak with respect and empathy about people who can't hear you - it's professional and dignifying and lifts relationships up.
Habit: Talk Like They Can Hear You.

PRINCIPLE 11

Don't use corporate speak › Use meaningful words

Replace your corporate waffle with meaningful language that connects and communicates. Collaborators notice when the language - commercial, technical or historical - is keeping some people out of the conversation, and take a moment to explain those terms so they can contribute effectively.
Habit: Explain to Inlcude

PRINCIPLE 12

Don't compete › Collaborate

Don't compete against the people you're supposed to be working with. Reduce your silos, increase cross-team communication, connect everyone to the organisation's purpose and strategy, talk more about what WE are collectively trying to achieve together and celebrate all those unseen efforts that lead to shared success.
Habit: Ask, "How might we ...?"