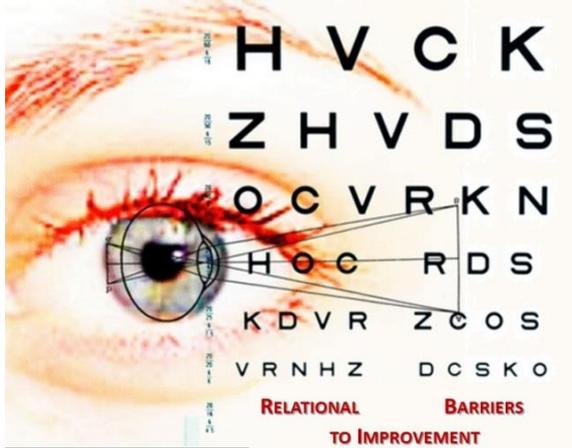


## Hidden In Plain View new data on relational barriers to improvement



Success sometimes depends on where you look.

Results from my survey of 420 healthcare leaders published in the *Physician Leadership Journal* in March 2016 suggest that **relational barriers** to improvement are very common but are all too frequently overlooked or inadequately addressed.

You can read the article at [Hidden in Plain View](#).

Since publication, a follow-up survey of 293 additional healthcare leaders adds to the story.

### New data suggests an opportunity for action.

80% of the leaders in the new survey reported that their organizations specify norms and values to guide behavior and communication. But, it appears these norms and values are not used as often as needed—such as to give feedback to address problematic communication getting in the way of collaboration. In these situations, *only 10%* of the leaders indicated feedback happens *very frequently* and *only 30%* indicated it happens *even half the time* it is needed.

One likely cause is that giving and receiving feedback is quite uncomfortable—even for people with advanced communication skills. It is very easy for anyone, at times, to not take action.

Also, it is easy to fall into thinking of norms as correcting “bad” behavior which further inhibits feedback. Stress and complexity will cause *everyone* at times to act in ways inconsistent with team norms. Feedback is not about scolding bad behavior but giving *necessary* reminders to help everyone more consistently act at their highest level of relational skills.

### How do you move beyond the discomfort of feedback?

You can't--feedback just *is* uncomfortable.

But you can decrease discomfort by steady practice. This takes courage, determination, and hard work. You could act now by creating or revisiting norms with teams and protecting time in meetings to review what is and is not working.

Or, more simply, you could start by reading about relational issues (see references below) and reflecting about what you believe makes for good work relationships--i.e. get clear on your own norms. Practice watching for inevitable times you do not act consistently with your own norms. Test giving and receiving feedback with trusted colleagues.

If you find yourself not moving forward, consider getting consultation and coaching. Our task is to keep relational issues from becoming hidden in plain view. Achieving the highest quality of teamwork and the best results are at stake.

### **Resources for team norms and feedback.**

- See the articles [An easily missed ingredient for high team performance](#); [Teamwork as perpetual feedback](#); and [Vulnerability, results, and leadership](#).
- An example of team norms can be found in the tool **In-the-Moment Reminder for Team Norms** for subscribers only—subscribe for free monthly resources at [Subscribe](#).

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### **About Neil Baker M.D.**

Neil Baker M.D. helps healthcare organizations enhance leadership and team impact through development "in-the-moment." This means making development as efficient as possible by focusing on immediate work challenges—using any work situation, even the most complex and difficult, as an opportunity to achieve immediate impact on development, quality of work environment, and progress toward results.

He has developed these approaches as a leader, speaker, consultant, and executive coach for 30 years. Past positions include serving as Director of Psychiatric Inpatient Services at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, Colorado; Medical Director of Quality at Group Health Cooperative in Seattle, Washington; and faculty and improvement advisor for nine years in primary and specialty care office practice redesign for the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

You can learn more and see client testimonials on his website at [neilbakerconsulting.com](http://neilbakerconsulting.com)