

Strengthening and Repairing Trust at the Organizational Level



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A photograph of a man and a woman in conversation. The man, on the right, is smiling broadly and looking towards the woman. The woman, on the left, is seen in profile, looking towards the man. They appear to be in a professional or educational setting.

Introductions Pair Up

1. Share your name, where you work, and what you do.
2. Share one thing that is interesting or unique about yourself.
3. Share why you are here in this session.

Working Definition of Trust

Trust is a belief in the character, ability, reliability, and intentions of others and the willingness to risk vulnerability with them.

3 Dimensions of Organizational Trustworthiness

Benevolence



Organizational actions showing genuine care and concern for the well-being of people.

Integrity



Action that consistently adheres to moral principles and a code of conduct acceptable to employees, such as honesty and fairness.

Ability



Collective competencies and characteristics that enable it to function reliably and effectively to meet its goals and responsibilities.

Trust Violations



Major incident or a cumulative series of incidents that threaten the legitimacy of the organization and has the potential to harm the well-being of one or more of the organization's stakeholders.

Trust violations are a consequence of actions, or negligent inaction, from organizational agents who have acted as authorized, instructed, or otherwise facilitated by the organization.

What we know about organization-level trust repair

- A single response is rarely sufficient.
- Involves a protracted process requiring several responses at multiple levels.
- Those hurt by the trust violations typically have limited information about the reasons which compounds the experience.
- People weigh integrity, ability, and benevolence evidence differently, but all three must be addressed.

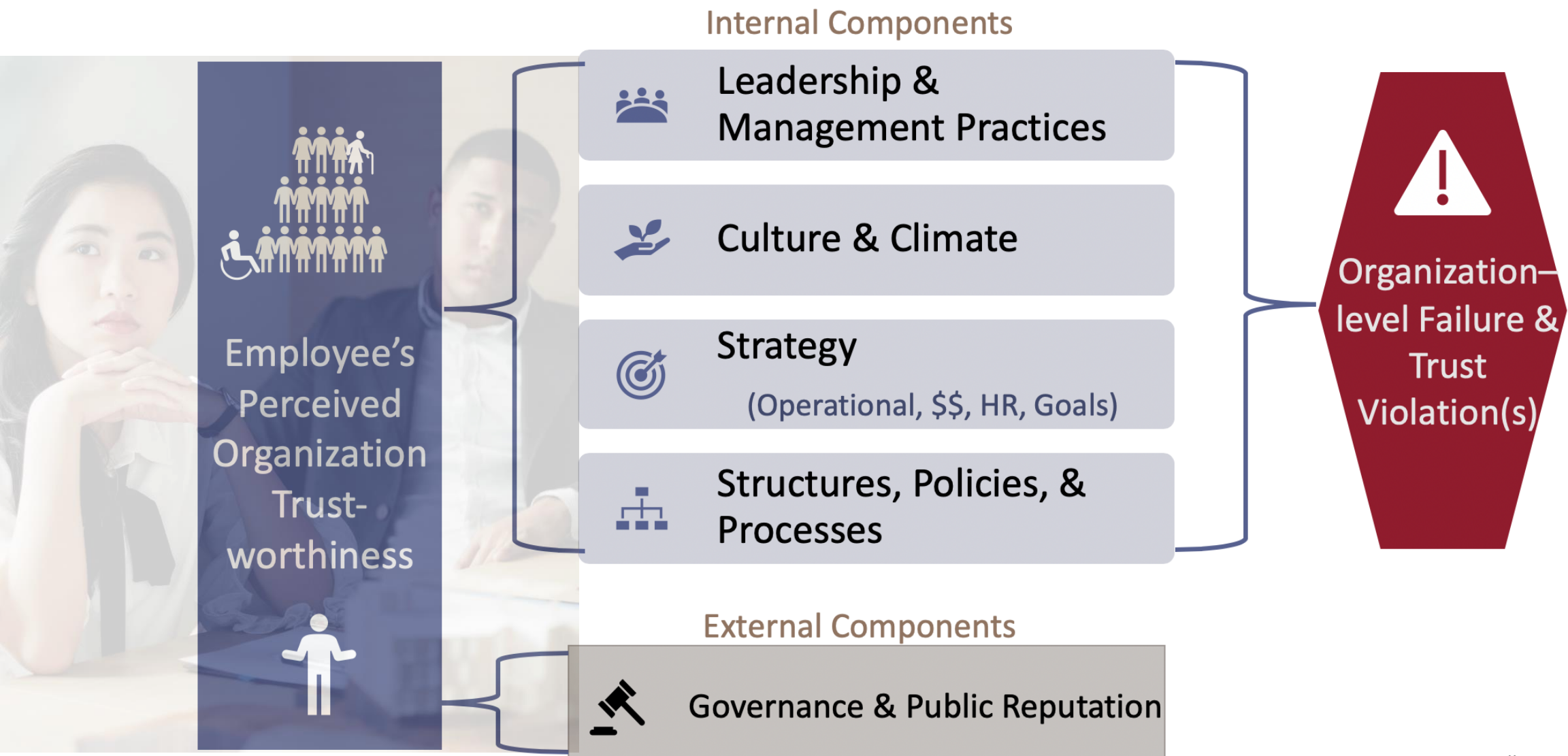


Trust repair must target multiple levels of Human Systems





Organization System Components and Their Effects on Employee's Perceptions of Organization Trustworthiness and Trust Violations



Discussion

Pick one component and discuss a real example of how that influences positive or negative trust.



Internal Components



Leadership &
Management Practices



Culture & Climate



Strategy

(Operational, \$\$, HR, Goals)



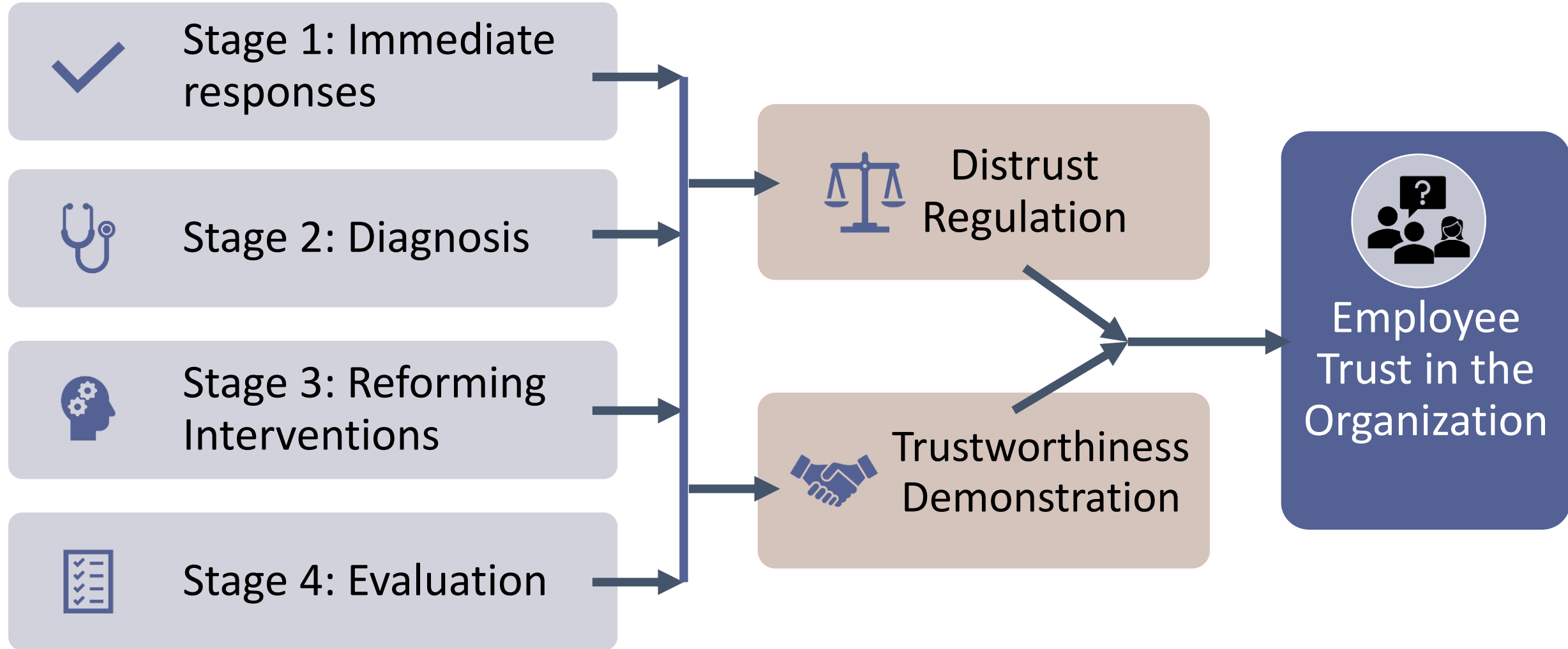
Structures, Policies, &
Processes

External Components



Governance & Public Reputation

Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



Stage 1: Immediate responses



Verbal

- In the first 24-72 hours, communicate to all employees and stakeholders about the failure/violation.
- Acknowledge, express regret, and apologize.
- Response needs to be well-considered, timely, and credible.
- Commit to a full investigation into root causes and to prevent future reoccurrences.

Action

- Take immediate actions against known causes.

Organizational Level Trust Repair Process

Action

- Engage in accurate diagnostic process
 - ✓ System-wide
 - ✓ Multi-level
 - ✓ Timely
 - ✓ Transparent
 - ✓ Credible source, experts, neutral party to conduct diagnosis

Verbal

- Communicate at key milestones of diagnosis process. Careful not to place blame too early, but transparent enough to share useful information.



Stage 2: Diagnosis



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



Stage 3: Reforming Interventions



Verbal

- Acknowledge and apologize.
- Make reparations, for example:
 - Establish new roles & responsibilities
 - Correct the mistakes, failures
 - Create prevention systems

Action

- Implement reforms across the organization.
- Prioritize according to failure type and risk.

Comparison of the Violation and the Attempt to Repair

Nature of Violation(s)	Attempts to Repair Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breach of confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-chartered team with clear expectations and consequences if confidential information is shared again
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person lied when confronted initially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement and sincere apology from violator to whole team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violator wanted to be liked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violator honored tasks and worked hard to restore trustworthiness with other team members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole team discussion to get clear on what happened
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection period – right after the violation occurred, spent time thinking about what to do, roles people played
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed personal commitment by every team member toward purpose and each other

More Interventions

Comparison of the Violation and the Attempt to Repair

Nature of Violation(s)	Attempts to Repair Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy changes that affected livelihood (e.g. changes to retirement benefits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding issues and new board members made a strategic choice, but not communicated well to the organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psychological contract change 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structural changes in management, key folks not on leadership team any more 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived not “valuing” of long term employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intervention that used photos as a way to connect people to organization at a mission level and values level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership: Wrong person and unclear intent communicated with major changes in organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leader was not present to give the message directly to employees during significant change

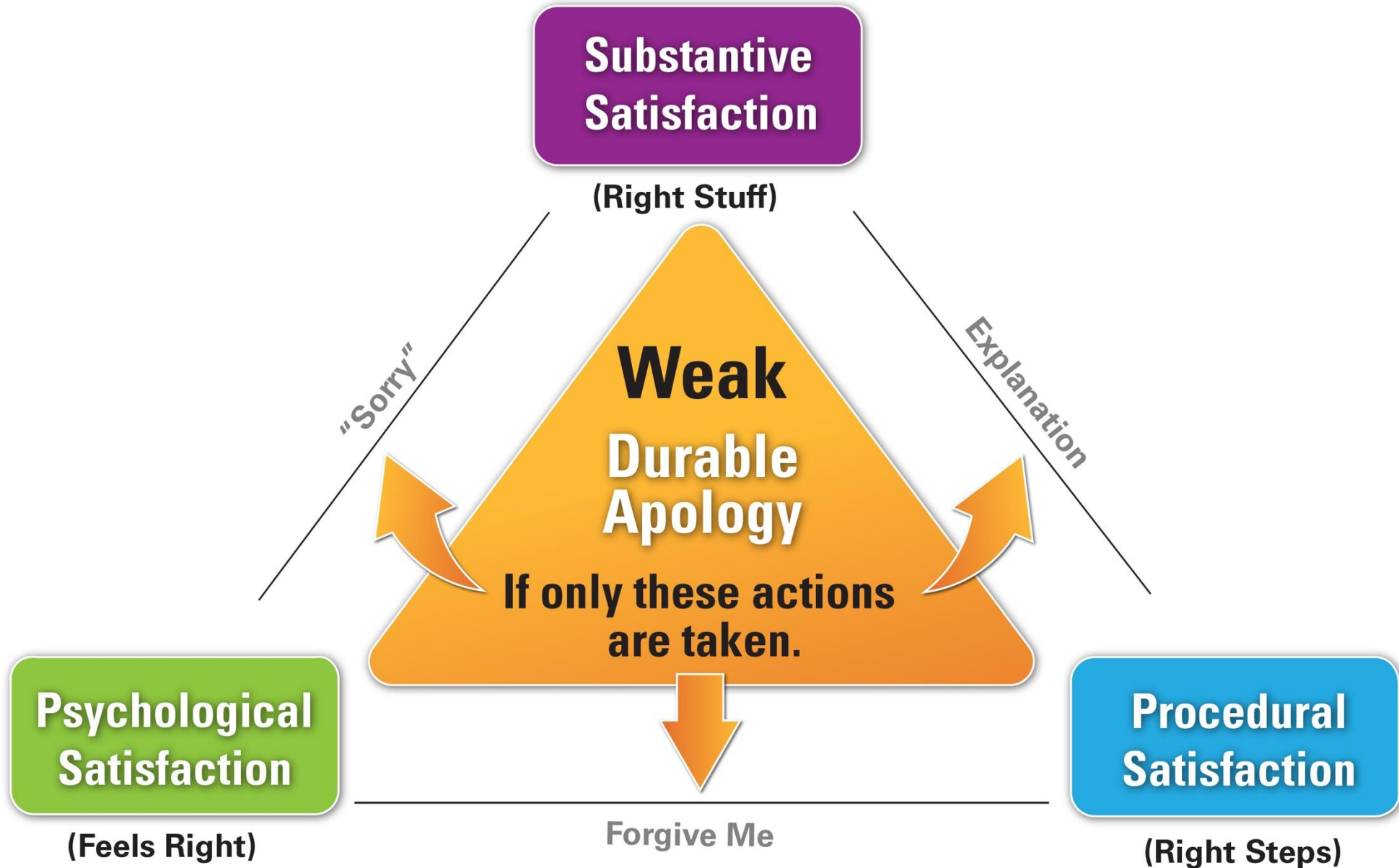
Not Responsive
To all violations

Research: The Art of the Apology

1. An expression of regret for the offense... “I’m sorry”
2. An explanation of why the offense occurred
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility for causing the offense
4. A declaration of “repentance” that the violator will not repeat the offense
5. An offer to repair whatever damage may have been caused by the offense
6. A request for forgiveness for having committed the offense

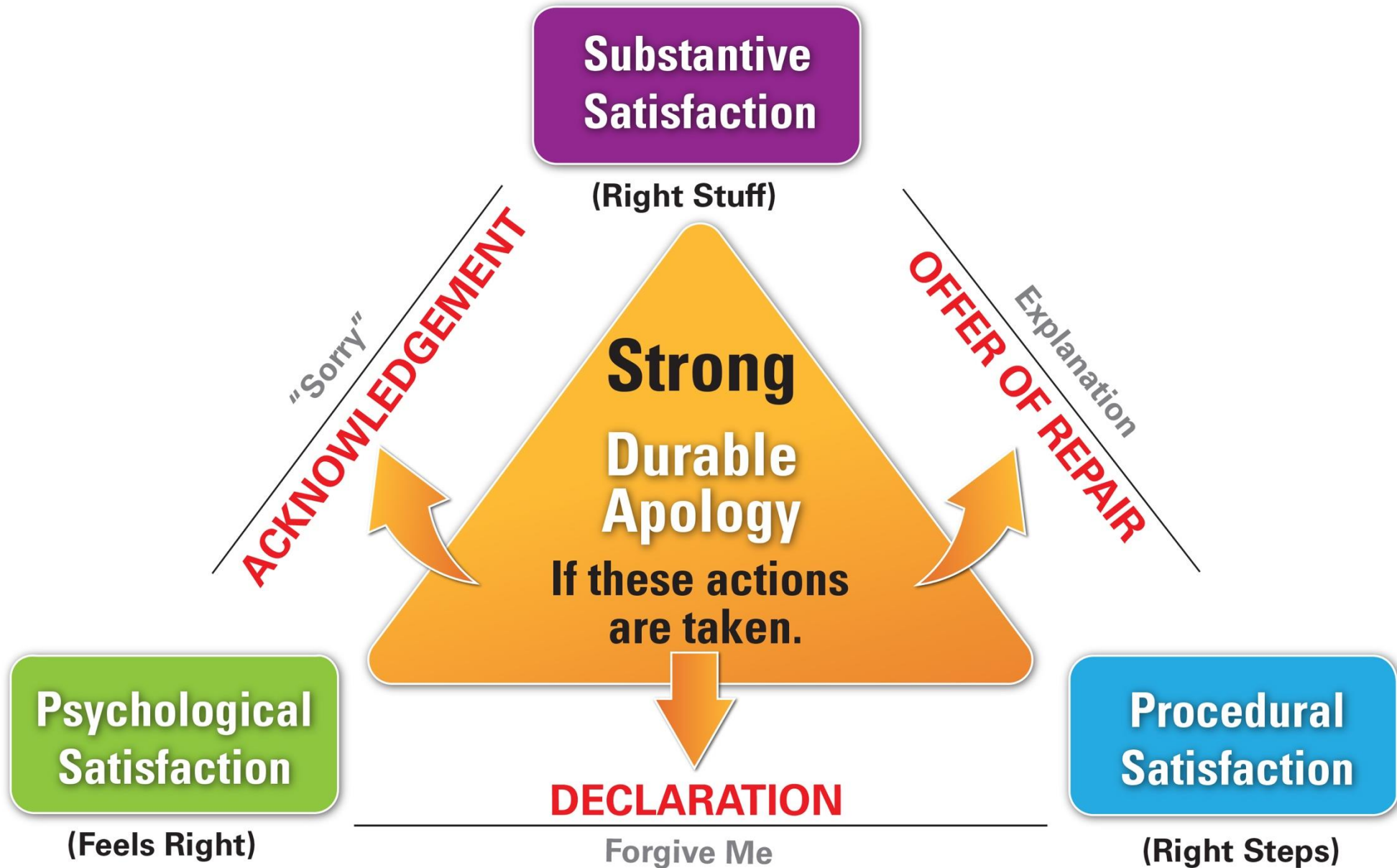
Weak Apology

Low likelihood of a meaningful and durable apology



Strong Apology

High likelihood of a meaningful and durable apology



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



Stage 4: Evaluation




Verbal

- Discuss progress made, results, changes still needed, and openly share action plans.

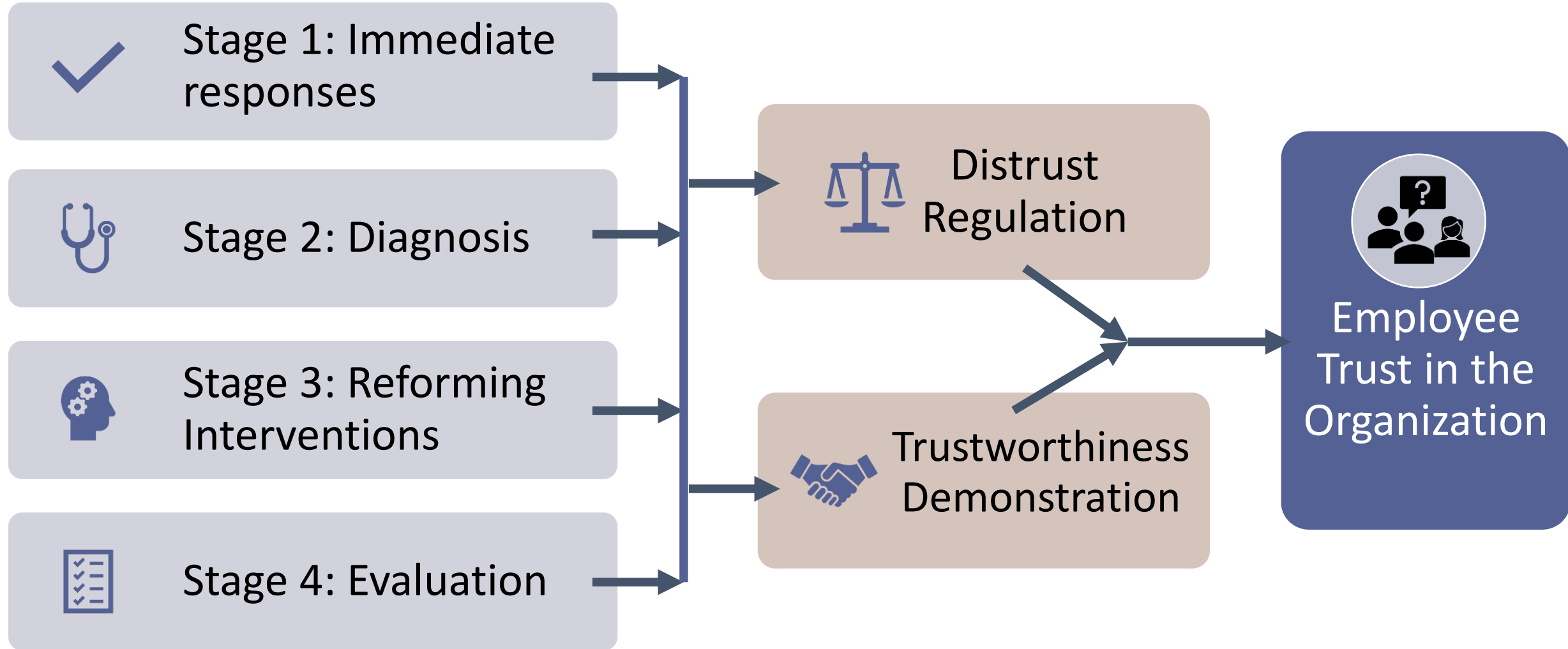
Action

- Accurate assessments along journey; record and share.
- Repeat evaluation at key intervals in future. Monitor progress.



“After a trust violation,
people pay attention
and attribute more
significance to negative
than positive evidence.”

Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process

Distrust regulation involves

- Imposing constraints, conditions and controls on people's conduct that are designed to ensure no reoccurrence of the failure/trust violation.



Distrust
Regulation

Examples

- ✓ New compliance procedures
- ✓ Revised process steps
- ✓ Overhaul of deviant cultural norms
- ✓ Removal of guilty or implicit parties



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process

Trustworthiness demonstration provide

- Compelling *new* evidence of the organization's ability, benevolence, and integrity over and above the distrust regulation reforms.



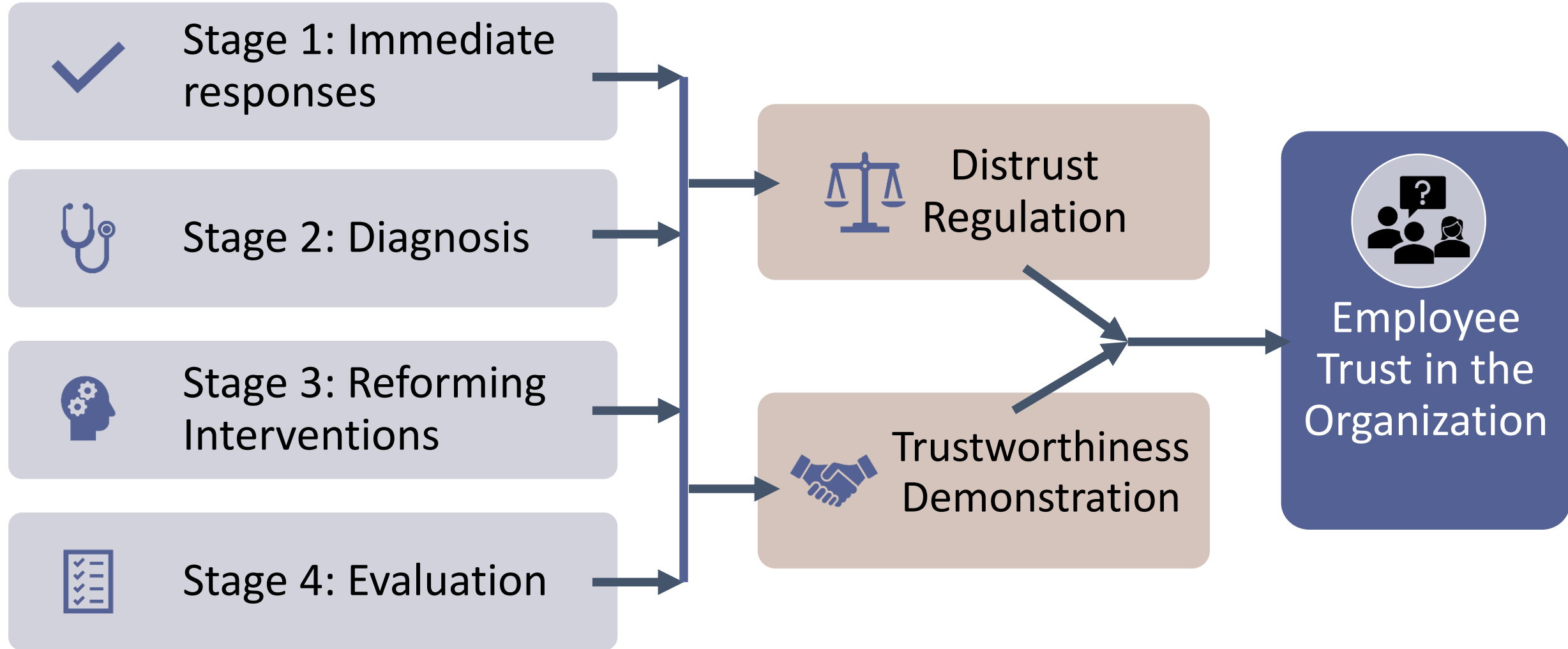
Trustworthiness
Demonstration

Interventions include:

- ✓ Apologies
- ✓ Paying penance
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Substantial investments in promoting trustworthy, ethical practice



Organizational Level Trust Repair Process



What if...the trust violation happened a long time ago?

- ✓ Start the trust repair process from the top (Stage 1).
- ✓ Acknowledge the pain and create opportunities for people to tell their stories (Stage 1).
- ✓ Do not rush through this part – consider it diagnostic data gathering. (Stage 2)
- ✓ Include employees in the intentional repair strategies (Stage 3).



“A trust crisis focuses and motivates the organization – providing strong and necessary impetus for radical change and unleashing resources and new ways of thinking that are often difficult to leverage under normal circumstances.”



I have a request...

References

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Questions?

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TRUST REPAIR

It **IS** Possible!

Proven Strategies to Help
Groups Get Unstuck

Wendy Fraser, Ph.D.