Question Guide to Accompany
Creative Tension Model

Focus on what
we want to create

Creating

Creative
Tension

Generative
Orientation

Vision

**Structural
Tension** ←〜〜— I —〜〜→ **Gap**

Current
Reality

Stressful
Tension

Reactive
Orientation

Focus on what
we DON'T want

Problem
Solving
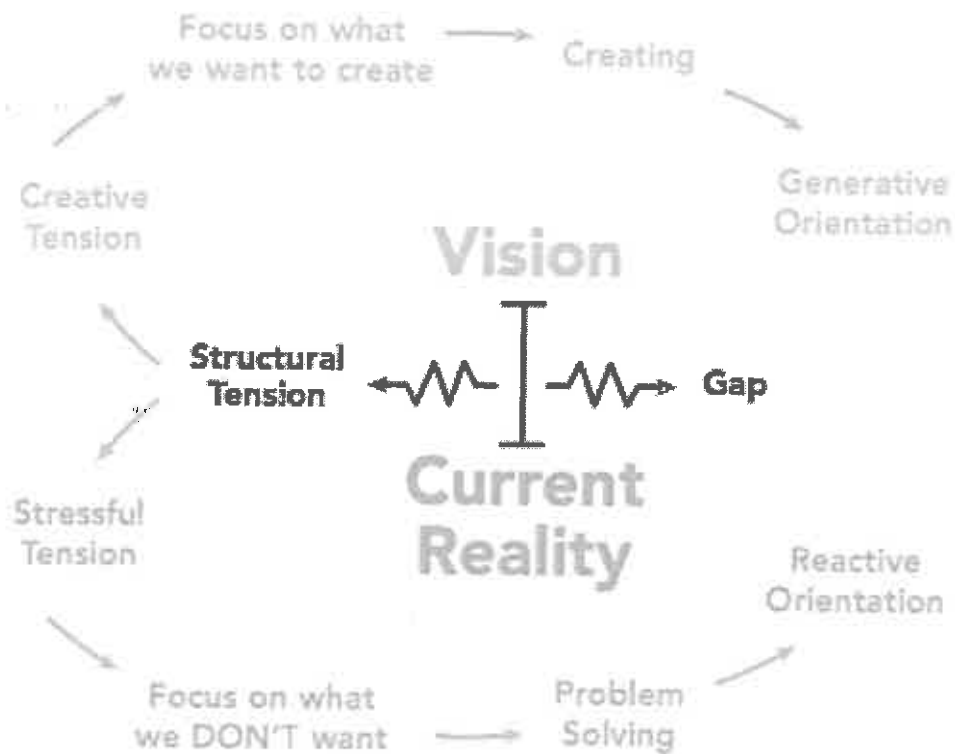
Creative Tension Model:
Developed by Daniel H. Kim and Diane Cory. Adapted from Robert Fritz, *The Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life.* New York: Ballard Books, 1989.

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This Guide
The purpose of this guide is to provide a partial list of powerful questions that can help groups apply the Creative Tension Model to their work. At different points in the evolution of your group and its work, different questions will be appropriate.

The Model
From *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* :
"The juxtaposition of vision (what we want) and a clear picture of current reality (where we are relative to what we want) generates what we call 'creative tension': a force to bring them together, caused by the natural tendency of tension to seek resolution." (Senge, 2008, p. 132)

Vision
- Who needs to be part of the process of creating shared vision for our community, team, project or work?
  - Who has been historically excluded from determining the future of the community? How can we engage them respectfully now?
  - How will we engage youth as leaders, partners and full participants in imagining the future for our community?
  - What sectors of the community (or organization) typically have not worked together, but should be part of the conversation about the shared vision for the future we want to create? Who is the best person or what is the best group to secure their engagement in creating our shared vision?
- What is the future we truly care about creating for children and families in our community?
- If we could create things the way we want them to be, what would that look like?
- When we reach our vision, what will children and families experience?
  - As concretely and with as much detail as possible, what will youth and adults see, hear, do, and feel in the community of our vision?
  - It is ten years from now and our vision has become reality. A reporter comes to the community to see the results. What does the reporter write or say about daily life in the community?
- What events will be capturing the attention of people in our community ten years from now because the vision has been successfully achieved?

Current Reality
In the context of our shared vision, what aspects of current reality are relevant to our work? (Note: *Not everything in current reality is relevant to your area of focus.)*
- What is happening now in our community (or organization/team)?
- What events are capturing our attention?
- What patterns do we see emerging?

- o Which patterns are troubling? Why?
- o Which patterns are hopeful? Why?
- What are children and families currently experiencing in their lives?
  - o As concretely and with as much detail as possible, *currently* what do youth and adults see, hear, do, and feel in the community compared to the future that is possible in our vision?
- What aspects of current reality can be leveraged to support achieving the vision?
- What resources currently exist that we can redirect toward the group's desired future?

Structural Tension/Creative Tension/Stressful Tension

Structural tension is the source of the creative tension and creative energy that will lead to the shared vision we want.

- What questions or approaches will help us live with the tension that results from the gap and remain focused on what we want to create?
- What events, information, and pressures might move us into a reactive orientation? What approaches can be used to refocus on what we want to create together and maintain a generative orientation?
- What is the source of our discomfort with the gap between vision and current reality?

Problem Solving/Reactive Orientation

- What is the source of our impatience with the speed of the process of creating and working toward our shared vision?
- What well-intentioned quick-fixes or piece-meal solutions have been tried in the past?
  - o In light of these efforts, resources used, and the valiant efforts of talented people, why are we still experiencing problems in current reality?
  - o What have been the unintended negative consequences of some of the solutions we have tried?
- Why, despite our best efforts, is current reality not meeting our expectations?
- What aspects of current reality are pulling us into a reactive, problem-solving response? What can we do to reduce anxiety, while maintaining a focus on creating?

Creating/Generative Orientation

- What commitment are we willing to make in order to achieve the future we truly want to create?
- If resources were not a concern, what would we create together in service of our shared vision?
- What already exists today that we could build on to create the future we want for families and children in our community?

- Who else shares our passion for creating this vision? How can we bring them into partnership with us?

Maintaining a Focus on the Creative Path
- What will achieving our shared vision contribute to the lives of children and families in our community?
- How long have the patterns we're seeing now in our community existed? What is a reasonable time, then, for us to take to achieve the shared vision we've committed to?
- What has already begun to move toward our preferred future, simply through the act of creating a shared vision?
- What will we do to document and communicate emerging changes and milestones on the path to making our vision a reality?

References and Resources

Fritz, Robert. *The Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life.* New York: Ballentine Books, 1989.

Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.* New York: Doubleday, 2006 (2nd ed).