

# Lessons about failure, from the girl who came last

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Why is this story important?

I'm here to talk about failure

Who here talks or hears about failure?

Failure is embedded in many of our practices

Agile

# Hypothesis Driven Development



# Automated tests

# Lean customer research

Fail fast

Fail fast  
Fail often

Fail fast  
Fail often  
Fail better

Fail fast

Fail often

Fail better

Fail forward

Fail fast  
Fail often  
Fail better  
Fail forward  
Safe to Fail

Failure is the goal?

#xfactor  
FOX



Nope

What actually is failure?

Failure is not setbacks

Failure is not setbacks  
Failure is not experimentation

Failure is experimenting without learning

Failure is experimenting without learning  
Failure is giving up

Failure is experimenting without learning

Failure is giving up

Failure is abandoning everything

Failure is experimenting without learning  
Failure is giving up  
Failure is abandoning everything  
Failure is jumping ship



is clearly, clearly not the goal



Well then, what is the goal?

Growth

Resilience

Safe to Fail



Safe to Grow

What does a Safe to Grow environment look like?  
Are we any good at this?  
How do we get better?

Safe to Grow is not a digital concept



Safe to Grow is a high performance concept

What do high performance environments look like?

Collective accountability and growth

Agile

HDD

Lean/Kata

Let's pat ourselves on the back

But not too much...



Individual accountability and growth

we're not so good at that

Which is why I'm here

Why do we ignore the individual bit?



Well, um, it's awkward

The System is to blame

We don't have the skills

Maybe it doesn't even matter?



Brilliant jerks



“Do not tolerate brilliant jerks. The cost to teamwork is too high”

Reed Hastings, CEO Netflix

Ok, it's important and we're not good at it. Do we have a framework for doing this?



I didn't come last in the next race

Focus on goals

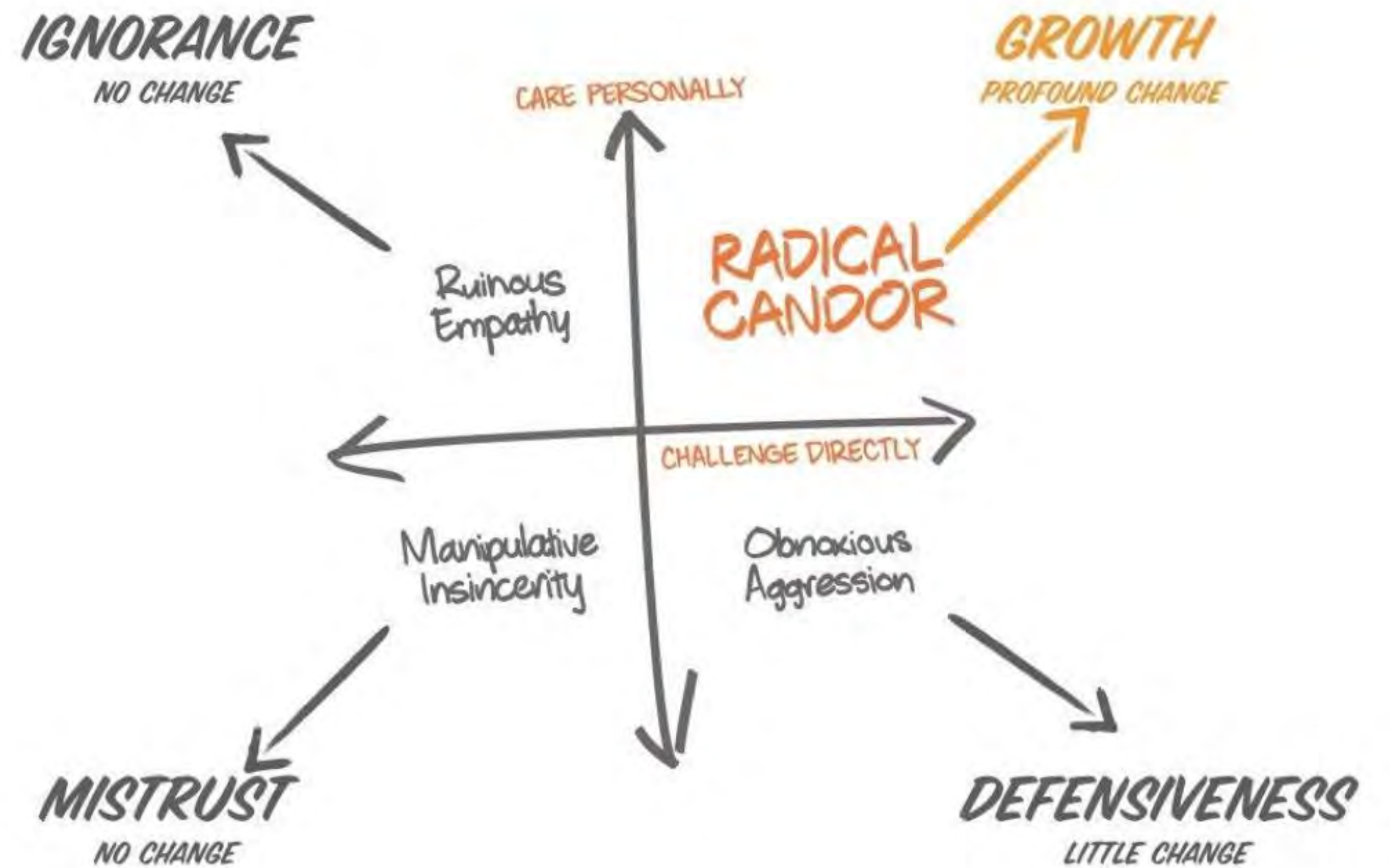
(Very) objective measures of success

You won't kick ass all the time

Transparent conversations



# A culture of candor



Radical Candour - Kim Scott

Safe environment

+

Framework for accountability

+

Communication for growth

$$\sin 2\alpha = 2 \sin \alpha \cos \alpha;$$

$$\cos 2\alpha = \cos^2 \alpha - \sin^2 \alpha;$$

$$\operatorname{tg} 2\alpha = \frac{2 \operatorname{tg} \alpha}{1 - \operatorname{tg}^2 \alpha};$$

The safety part....

Care about your people. Not your resources.

# Be vulnerable



**Andy Kelk** @andykelk · Feb 26

"You can't be right all the time. The best leaders are those who will admit that they've been wrong."

[@jemolesky](#) [#1stConf](#)



Highlight everyone's skills



Sometimes it's less safe to grow



The accountability piece....

A bajillion goal setting frameworks

Measure outcomes

Communication for growth...

This bit is actually super straightforward

Have the awkward convo

Have the crucial convo



Simply learn how to give feedback



Feedback = observation + the way it made you feel

Continue vs consider

Safe environment

+

Framework for accountability

+

Communication for growth

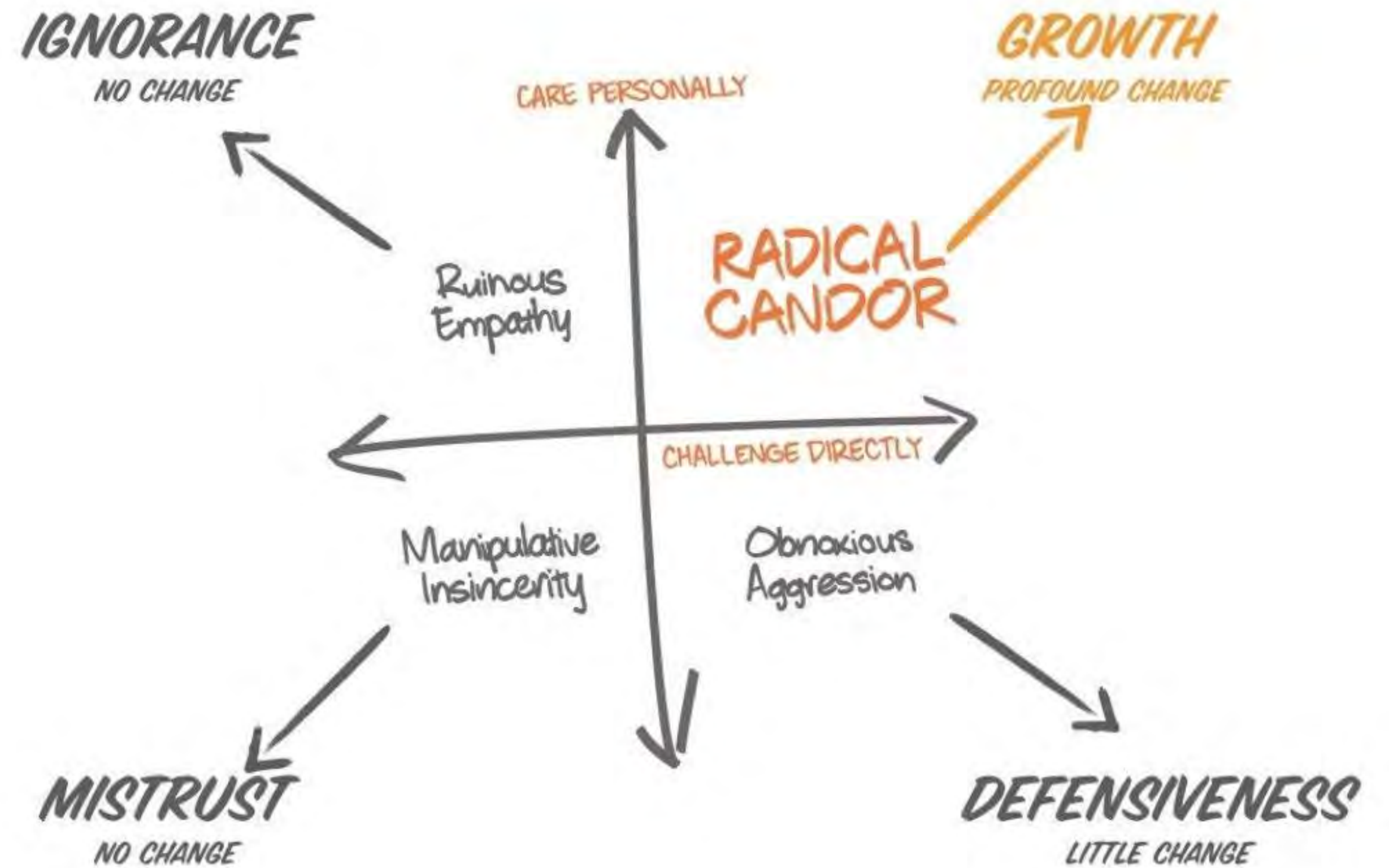
Where should I focus first?

Safety. Build safety.



It's the hardest bit

But it's the most important bit







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