Example of The COAA Way
{COAA member Owner PM email to a struggling project team}

Team,

This email is not meant to address any specific work on the project but to re-iterate that we are a team and not opponents. We have to figure out a way to play better in the sandbox together and position ourselves for success.

Negativity always results in more negativity. Negativity can fester and eventually kill a team's momentum and motivation. A negative attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and allowed to run unchecked it can ruin the project.

People generally give more psychological weight to bad experiences than good ones. Negative emotions have an impact close to three times stronger than positive ones. Great teams and great leaders don't run from negativity however. One of the biggest mistakes teams make is that they ignore the negativity within their team. They allow it to breed and grow, and it eventually sabotages the work. We must address the negativity. Confront it, transform it, or remove it. Whether we acknowledge it or not we are the team working together on this project at this time and we need to turn some things around. I'm not addressing any specific issues here, just an overall environment.

So, I want to re-frame our situation. At the end of the day this will be a very nice, state of the art building with a 50 to 100 year lifespan. We will all be able to drive past or remember this building in the future and be proud of the outcome, no matter the battle along the way. We are going to get there.

Where we are today is not bad. We are within striking distance now to turn over this jewel and it will be a memorable part of this campus and a real asset for faculty and students long after we are gone. In the long view it will not be important whether we hit our deadline or not. Let's not have the deadline, whether we make it or not, blind us to the task at hand. And I believe we all have the best of intentions to turn over the best project possible to {the end users}. That's the goal.

Where do we go from here?
Let's reset and re-establish ground rules for team interactions and behaviors. Let's involve the whole team, set new team norms and ask everyone to observe them. Can we agree to some or all of these?
- Avoid hidden agendas.
- Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings.
- Listen to understand.
- Practice being open minded.
- Don't be defensive with your colleagues.
- Give your colleagues the benefit of the doubt.
- Support each other; don't throw each other under the bus.
- It's okay to not know the right answer and to admit it.
- Present problems in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.
- Practice and experience humility.
- If you commit to doing something, do it.
- Respect the time and convenience of others.

Anything missing from this list?

THE COAA WAY

Example of The COAA Way

{COAA member Owner PM email to a struggling project team}

We definitely have some sticky issues that will have to be resolved and performance and communications have not always met expectations but we still have a job to do and we will have the best possible outcome if we can figure out a way to work together.

So let's attempt to create a more positive environment and create some space for success and positive momentum these next few months. All of us, including myself, need an attitude adjustment.

- Model positive behavior – It's helpful to model this type of behavior for the entire team. Offer your own constructive criticism while providing an alternative solution and using peer pressure to demonstrate a more productive way of contributing. Having difficult conversations nevertheless remains key to being a great team. We are not going to eliminate negativity entirely. We just don't want it to derail progress. Differentiate between the person, the issue and the behavior

- Don't let negative comments linger. Ask for clarification or more information about what the person means. Ask why they feel that way or have them use "but statements."

- Let's not be or tolerate energy vampires, folks who suck the energy out of situations with negativity and complaining.

- Let's institute the "No complaining rule": The rule is simple: <u>You are not allowed to complain unless you also offer one or two possible solutions.</u> This eliminates a lot of toxic complaining, and empowers the team to create solutions instead of focusing on problems. After all, if you are complaining, you're not helping. If you are complaining, you are focusing on where you are instead of where you want to be. Complaining causes you and your team to focus on everything except being your best. Complaining is like throwing up. Afterward you feel better but then the rest of your team gets sick. It's toxic.

Weeding out the negative doesn't mean eliminating disagreements. Teams are going to disagree and it doesn't mean we are a negative team. Conflict is necessary to have a strong team and often improves overall outcomes. And disagreeing with your team members doesn't make you are an energy vampire. If your desire is to make the team better, sharing a complaint and offering a better way to do something doesn't make you a complainer. Constructively criticizing a team member doesn't make you a bad team member. You just need to make sure you do it in a positive way. How would you like to receive constructive criticism for example. None of us are perfect. But to be a great team and to engage in positive conflict, we need to trust each other and have a relationship.

Specifics:
– Establish new ground rules
– List all the past grievances and put them behind us
– Different strategies may be required for different team members
– List our present problems and concerns and assign someone to resolve with a deadline
– No surprises going forward, team members should not surprise one another.
– Let's rely on data for predictable outcomes, not hoping and wishing
– Monthly executive meetings (I don't need more meetings but I think we could carve out a 30 minute slot before or after OAC meetings for the core team)

I welcome your thoughts and will be following up.

THE COAA WAY