

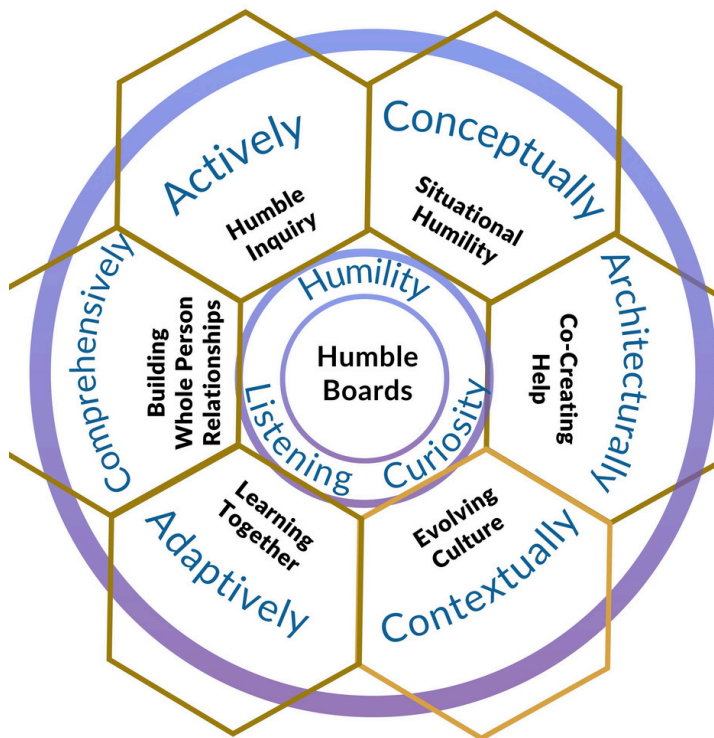
HUMBLE BOARDS



SIX HELPFUL BEHAVIORS FOR HUMAN CENTERED GOVERNANCE

An organization's board of directors and executive leadership have a unique opportunity to impact our world in positive and profound ways. How these leaders work together matters and has great influence on what happens both inside and outside of the boardroom.

Becoming a Humble Board offers an effective way of working and being together. These **six healthy behaviors and listening skills** support leaders in developing highly functioning and effective relationships with each other. Humble Boards are equipped to learn, grow, and evolve their organization towards a vibrant future.



At the very core of these six healthy behaviors are three interwoven human skills: humility, listening, and curiosity. Simply stated:

Humility is recognizing and respecting other people as on par or ahead of yourself. To be humble is to intentionally lower oneself in service to another person.

Listening is actively attending to what someone else is saying to you. Being present in the moment to comprehensively understand the content and context of what is being shared with you.

Curiosity is the human desire to know and learn something, driving exploration, discovery, and innovation.





① HUMBLE INQUIRY & ACTIVE LISTENING

Humble Inquiry is both an art and an attitude: the art of asking questions when we genuinely do not know the answers, and the attitude of listening deeply, responding with empathy, and revealing enough of ourselves to build trust.

A Humble Board strengthens this practice by **listening actively** with attention, presence, and genuine curiosity, which helps others feel valued and understood. Together, humble inquiry and active listening deepen understanding, strengthen relationships, and create the conditions for more collaborative leadership.



② SITUATIONAL HUMILITY & CONCEPTUAL LISTENING

Situational humility is a core leadership mindset rooted in accepting uncertainty, staying curious, valuing others' knowledge, and recognizing one's own biases—not as a momentary choice but as a constant way of engaging every situation and relationship.

Paired with **conceptual listening**, which draws on natural empathy to understand what others are truly thinking and feeling beyond their words, leaders develop deeper insight into those around them. Together, these practices create the conditions for genuine understanding, collaboration, and thoughtful action to emerge.



③ BUILDING WHOLE PERSON RELATIONSHIPS & COMPREHENSIVE LISTENING

Developing psychological safety through **whole-person relationships** is essential for effective executive leadership and board performance. This safety is enhanced through **comprehensive listening**—a skill that seeks to fully capture what another person is communicating, allowing leaders to reflect back with such clarity that the speaker feels truly understood. When leaders listen this way, they build trust, strengthen psychological safety, and support healthier, more effective board relationships.





4 CO-CREATING HELP AND ARCHITECTURAL LISTENING

Co-creating help in governance means centering the other person and building equitable, peer-based relationships that allow a Humble Board to offer genuine support rather than imposing solutions. This approach provides a model for the effective use of authority, power, and shared ownership. **Architectural listening**—listening underneath, around, and beyond what is said—enables leaders to discern what others are truly willing to do and to offer help that is aligned with their real needs and capacities.



5 LEARNING TOGETHER & ADAPTIVE LISTENING

By **Learning Together** healthy leaders grow both individually and as a team by cultivating openness, trust, vulnerability, and the self-awareness needed for shared learning. This collective growth is strengthened when board members understand their own open, blind, hidden, and unknown selves, creating the psychological safety essential for effective governance. **Adaptive listening**—listening within and beyond what the other person is saying—enables leaders to gain deeper insight, pivot wisely, and support more meaningful learning together.



6 EVOLVING CULTURE AND CONTEXTUAL LISTENING

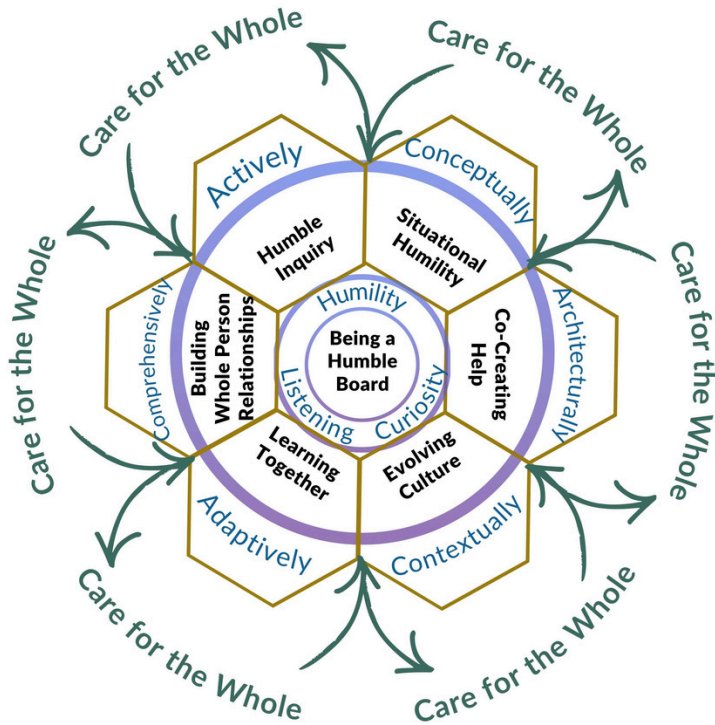
Boards often prioritize strategy and CEO oversight over **evolving culture** the deeper force shaping the organization's direction and future. A humble board recognizes that culture eats strategy for breakfast and actively engages to evolve culture towards vibrancy for the larger whole of the enterprise.

Contextual listening—listening underneath, forward, across, and beyond what is said—helps leaders understand how people experience the organization's culture and what they hope it becomes. By practicing this kind of listening, leaders can cultivate a more human-centered approach to governance and more wisely care for the whole of their enterprise.



CARE FOR THE WHOLE

THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF A HUMBLE BOARD



Care for the Whole is a universal concept found across cultures and centuries—from the European tradition of *Bildung*, to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* ("I am because we are"), to the indigenous principle of *Buen Vivir* rooted in harmony with nature, others, and oneself.

At its core, it reflects the belief that human beings are wired for harmonious relationships with one another and with the world around them. Therefore, any system designed to govern or guide a human enterprise should be grounded in this deep commitment to caring for the well-being of the entire community.



Hi, I'm Lon.

For nearly three decades, I've walked alongside leaders and organizations by posing helpful questions—the kind that bring clarity, deepen thinking, and open new pathways forward.

My approach is rooted in a Process Consulting philosophy, where I model listening, curiosity, and humility as essential tools for navigating the complex challenges leaders face.

Rather than prescribing answers, I come alongside those I serve, helping them discover alignment and direction that reflect their deepest values and aspirations for the people and organization they guide.



**A Cause Greater – Walking alongside organizations and their leaders
helping them transform for a vibrant future.**