

# 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





Failure is clearly,  
clearly not the goal!

A man with long, dark, wavy hair and a blue jacket is speaking in a church. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious expression. The background shows a church interior with a dark wood panel and a row of stained glass windows with colorful patterns. In the foreground, the heads of a congregation are visible, looking towards the speaker.

Well then, what is the goal?

Growth

Safe to Fail



Safe to Grow

What does a Safe to Grow environment look like?  
What bits are we doing well?  
What do we need to do 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

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, do we have a framework for doing this?



I didn't come last in the next race

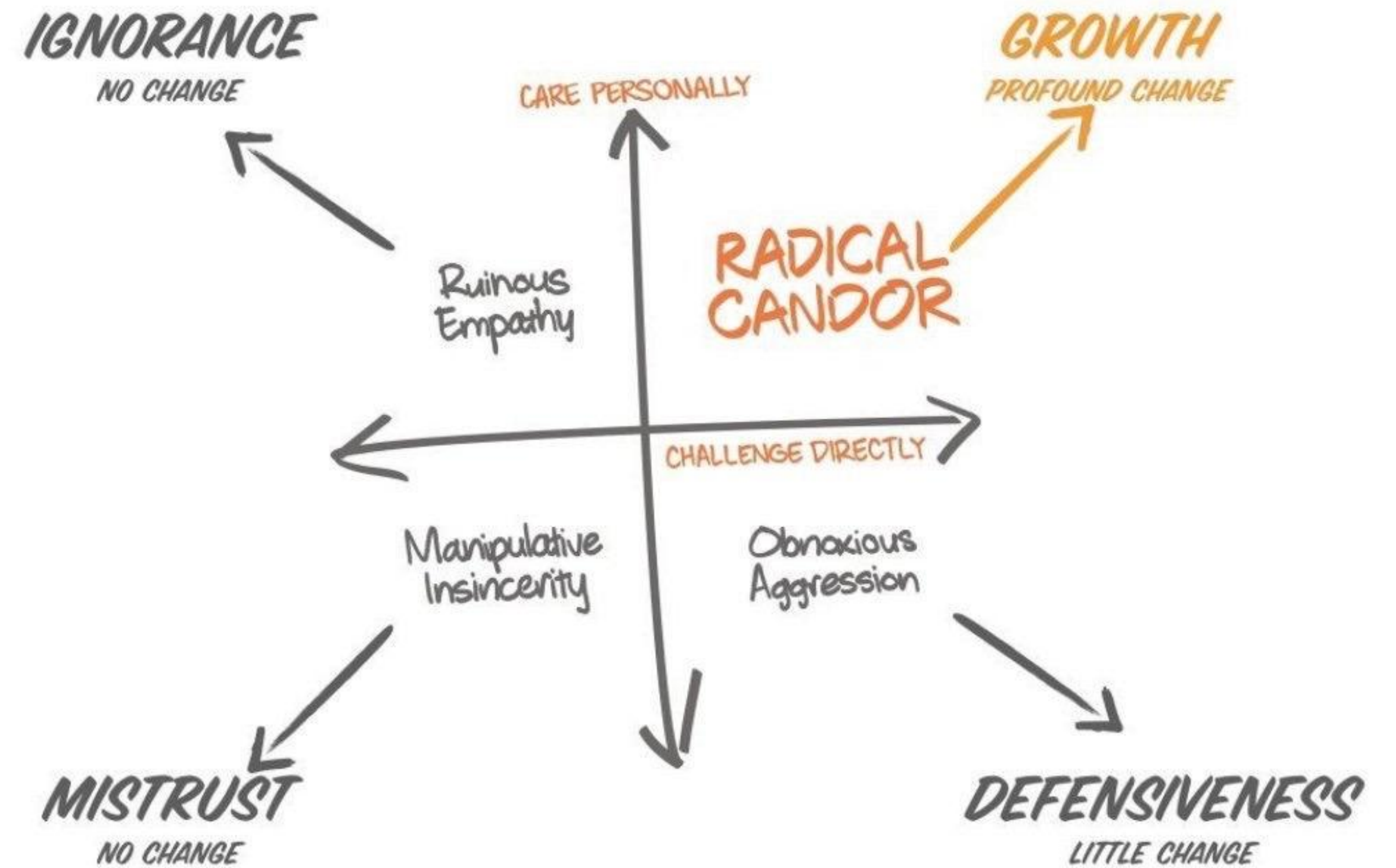
Focus on goals

(Very) objective measures of success

You won't kick ass all the time

Transparent conversations

# A culture of candour



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



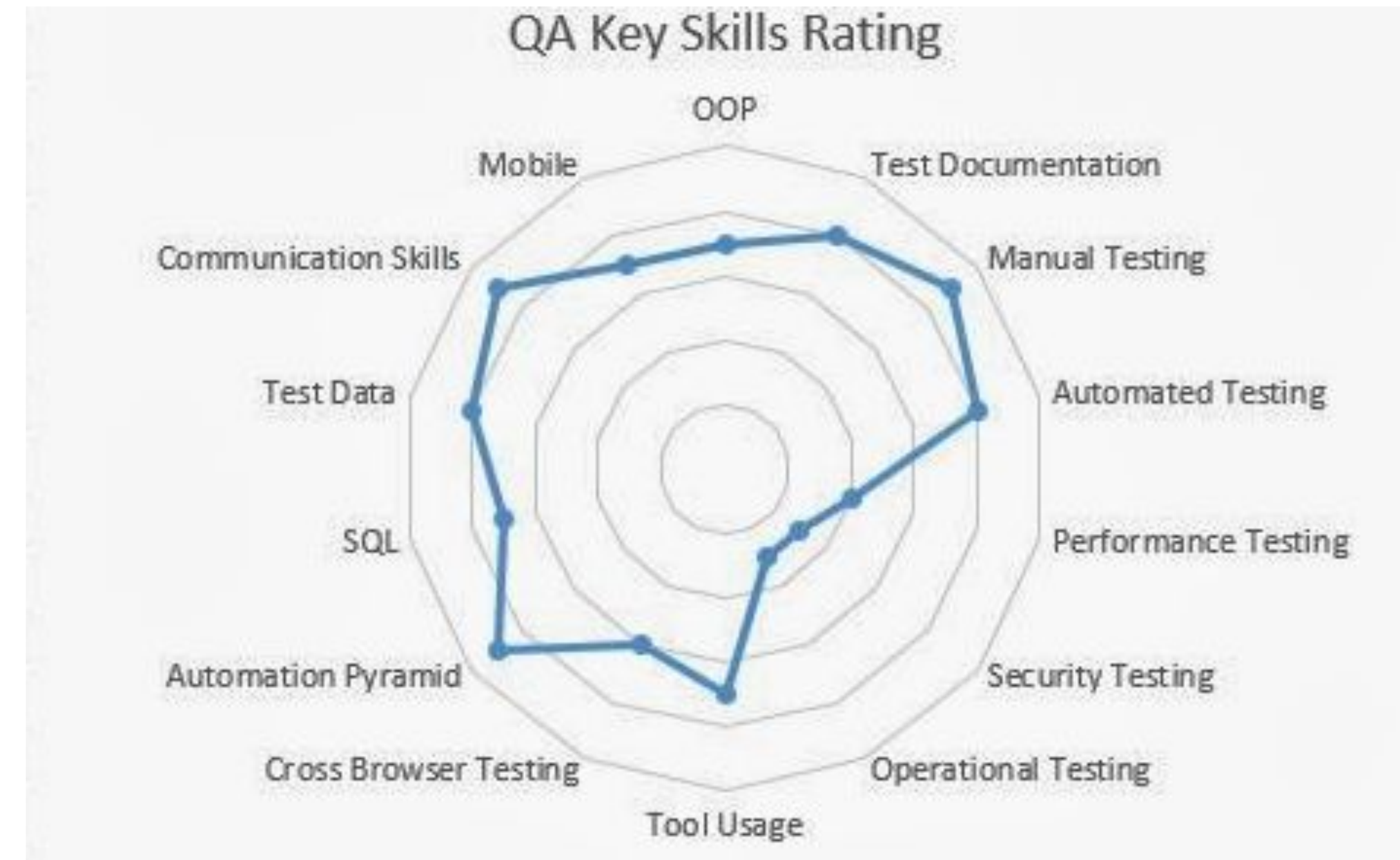
**Andy Kelk** @andykelk · Feb 26



"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 conversation

Have the crucial conversation

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# crucial conversations



**TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN  
STAKES ARE HIGH**

NEW FOREWORD BY STEPHEN R. COVEY

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHORS  
PATTERSON • GRENNY • McMILLAN • SWITZLER**

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

A young girl with blonde hair in two pigtails, wearing a pink hoodie, is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. She is holding a white object, possibly a piece of paper or a small book, in her hands. The background is a dark, textured wall.

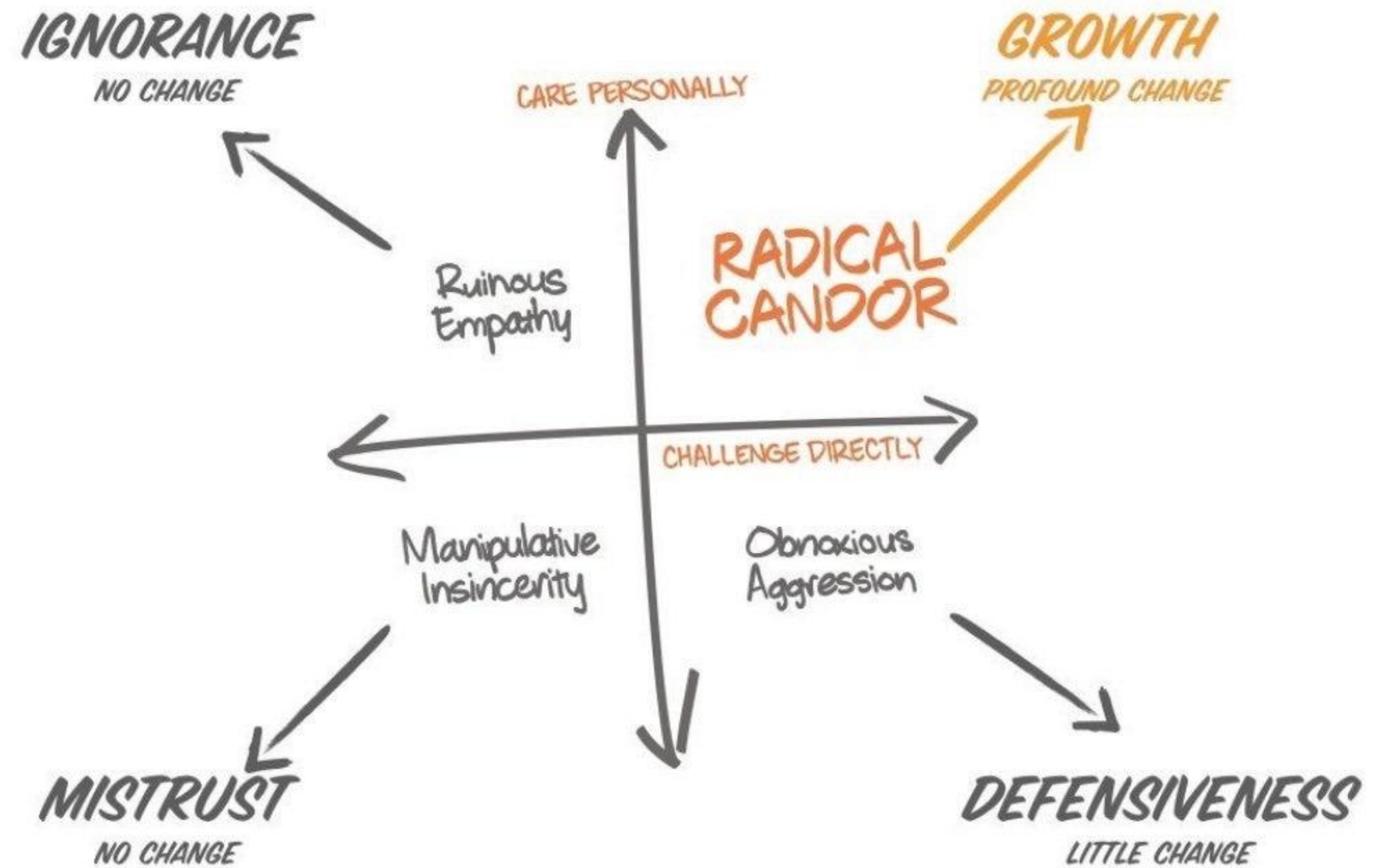
Where should I focus first?

Safety. Build safety.



It's the hardest bit

But it's the most important bit





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