Growing Pains Symptom Checker

## If you’re in a period of transition, where your team, projects, or resources have grown, use this symptom checker to assess whether you’re experiencing growing pains, and what might alleviate those pressure points. Please note, like with other symptoms, there may be causes other than “growing pains.”

| **Symptom: What You’re Experiencing** | **Treatment: Actions You Can Take** |
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| **Overwhelmed PI/leader**: Feeling like you're constantly pulled into 100 directions, with meetings and administrative tasks leaving little time for research or strategy. | - Delegate non-essential tasks to trusted team members or administrative staff - Implement regular "protected time" without meetings, prioritizing critical “needle-mover” activities.  - Use project management tools (e.g., Trello or Asana) to reduce decision fatigue and streamline task tracking. |
| **Bottlenecks in Decision-Making**: Team members frequently come to you for decisions that could be made independently. | - Establish clear decision-making authority for team members (e.g., empower individuals to make routine choices).  - Draft a "decision tree" to guide team members in assessing when they can act independently. |
| **Role Confusion**: Unclear roles and responsibilities leading to duplicated efforts or gaps in work. | - Clearly define job descriptions for each team member, including responsibilities and reporting structures.  - Regularly revisit team roles during group meetings to ensure clarity and alignment. |
| **Inefficient Communication**: Multiple email threads or meetings that don’t lead to clear outcomes or actions. | - Introduce a weekly team huddle or smaller “working group” meetings with clear agendas and action items.  - Implement a shared communication tool like Slack for faster, more focused discussions. |
| **Personnel Turnover**: High rates of turnover due to burnout or dissatisfaction among group members. | - Conduct exit interviews to understand the root causes of turnover.  - Establish regular check-ins with team members to understand and address concerns early.  - Provide professional development opportunities to retain talent. |
| **Stalled Projects**: Projects seem stuck or aren’t progressing on schedule. | - Use a project management tool to set clear milestones and track progress.  - Schedule a team brainstorming session to identify obstacles and brainstorm solutions.  - Consider reallocating resources or personnel to stalled projects to reinvigorate them. |
| **Unclear Research Focus**: Expanding into too many areas without a clear research niche. | - Refocus by identifying your program’s primary research objectives.  - Use a visual roadmap to prioritize projects that align with your core research mission. |
| **Difficulty Tracking Outputs**: Losing track of key metrics like publications, grants, awards, or student progress. | - Implement a shared tracking system or database for grants, publications, and team achievements.  - Assign a team member to oversee and update these records. |