



Communication Skills

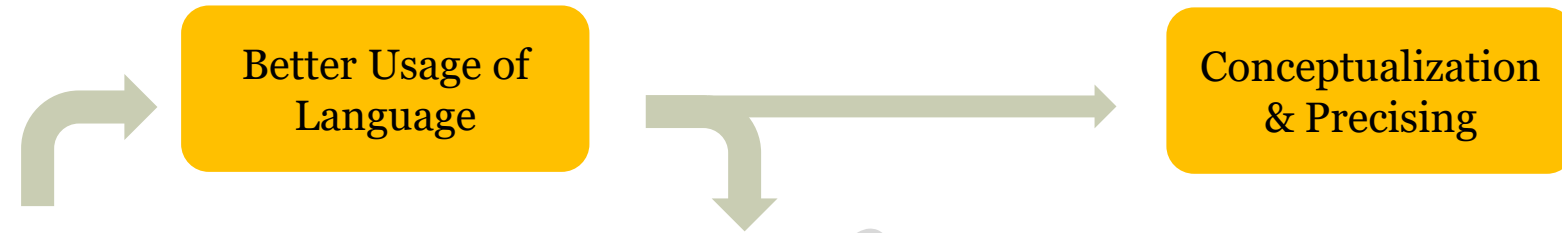
A managerial perspective

Nariman Dorafshan, 2024

Part 0.1

Session 04 Review

Introduction

Part 1
Personal PerspectivePart 2
Group PerspectivePart 3
Organizational
PerspectivePart 4
Cultural Perspective

Introduction

Part 1
Personal PerspectiveCrucial
Conversations

Self-Concept

Empathy Map

Part 2
Group PerspectiveFacilitation
Process

Silent Meeting

Part 3
Organizational
PerspectivePart 4
Cultural Perspective

Different Complexity Types

Technical
Complexity

Process
Complexity

Structural
Complexity

Organizational
Complexity

People
Complexity

Coercive
Complexity

Part 2.1

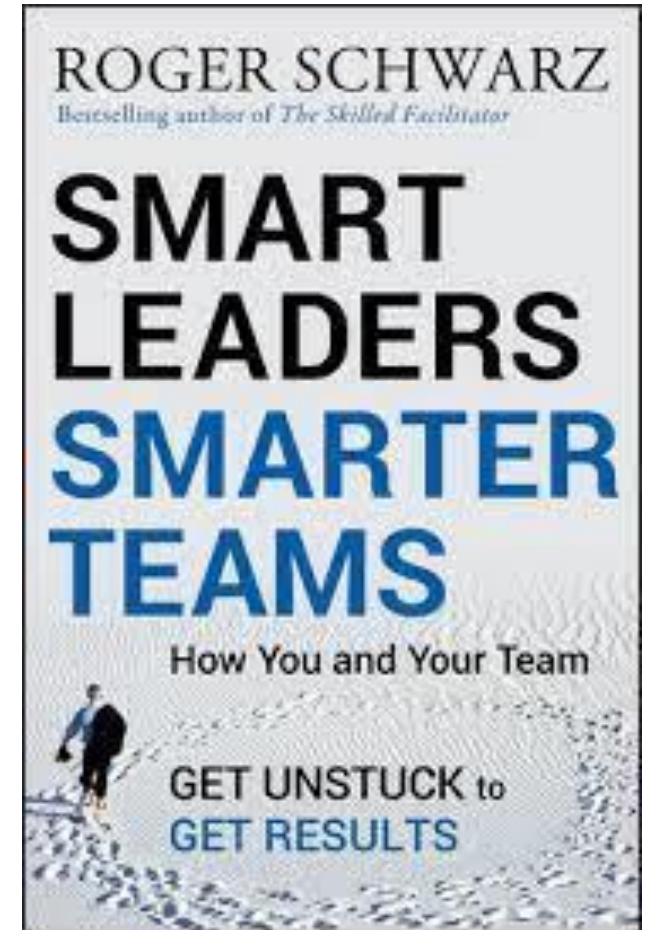
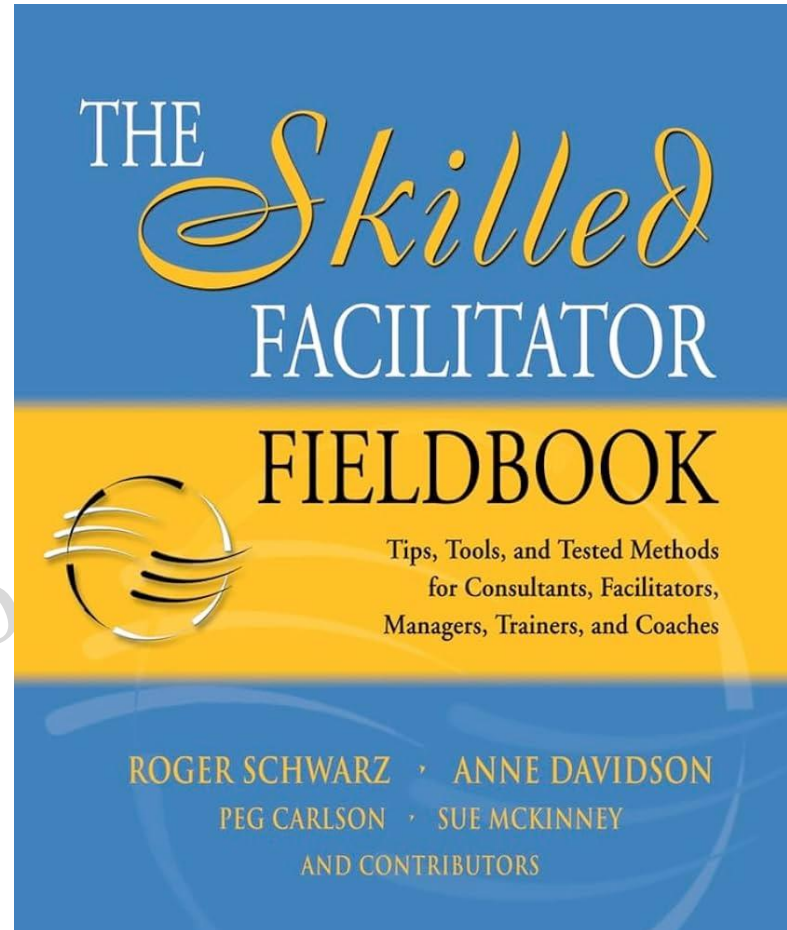
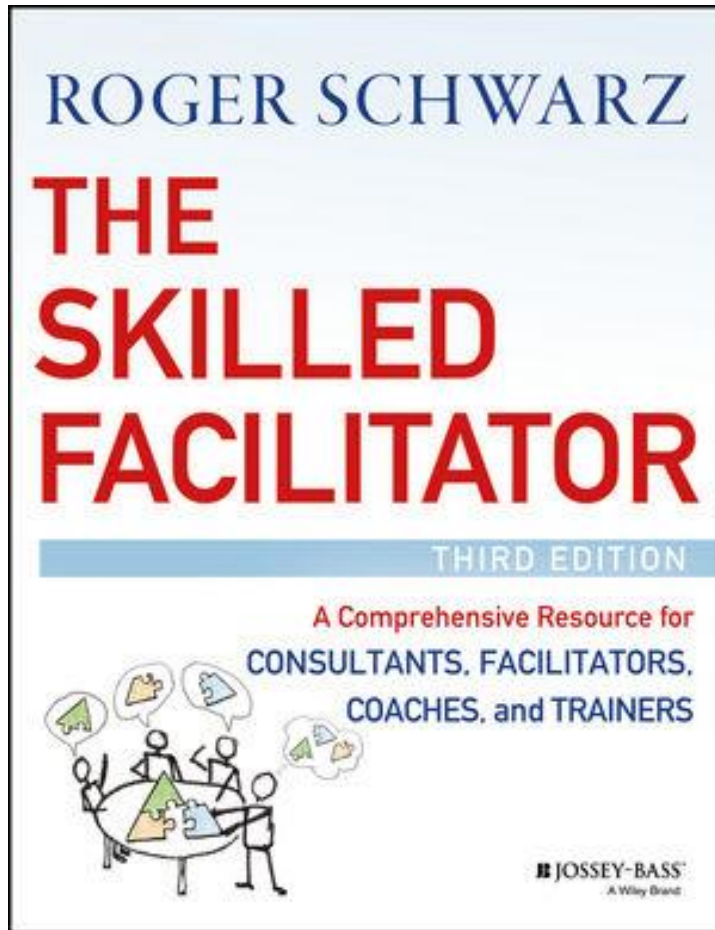
Facilitation

The Facilitator Role

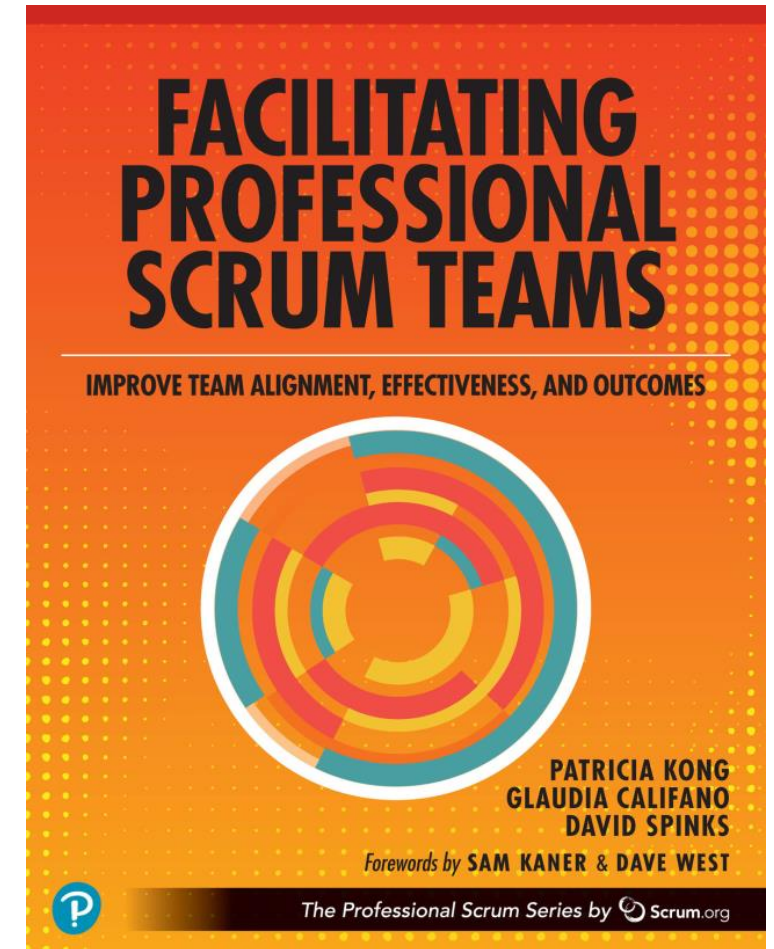
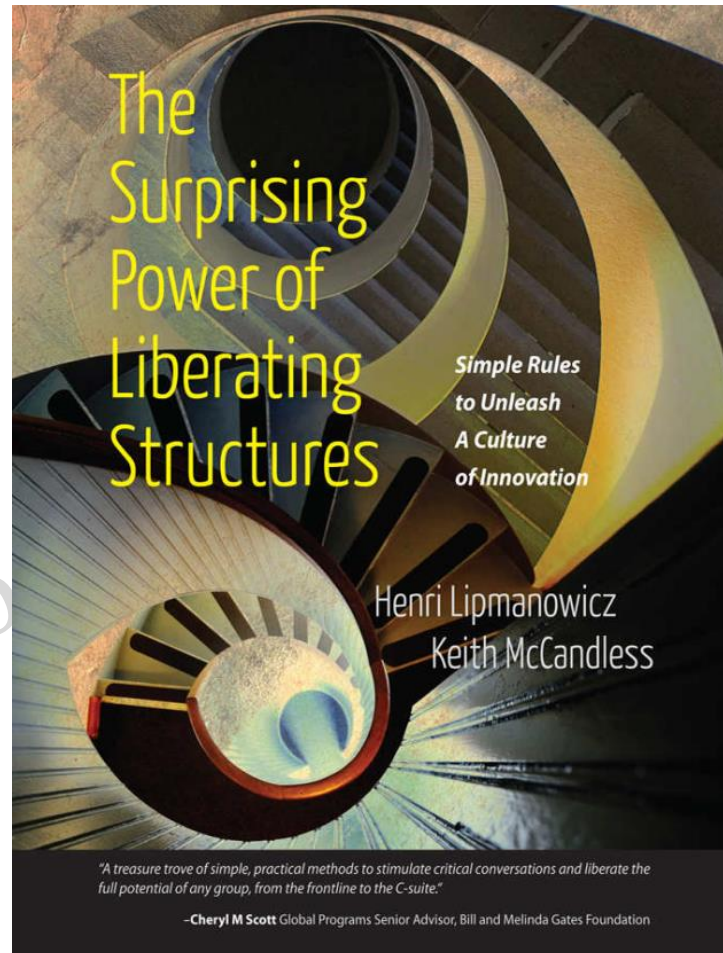
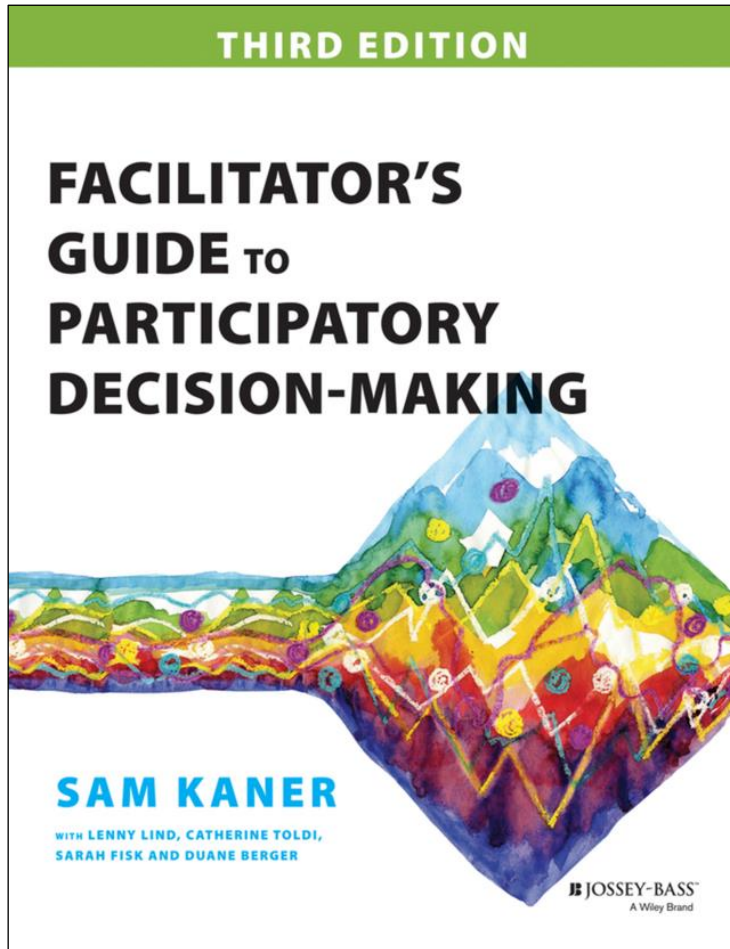
The Unilateral Control Approach

The Mutual Learning Approach

Resources



Resources





مدرسه سیمرغ



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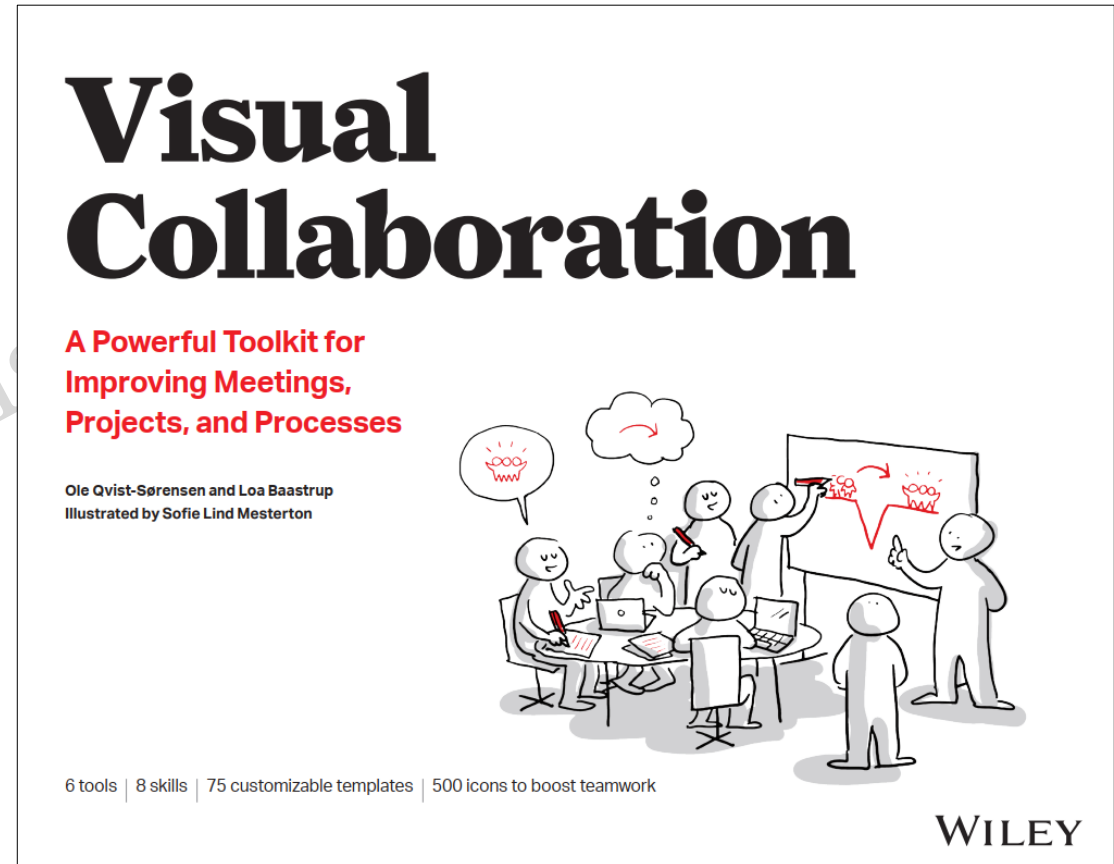
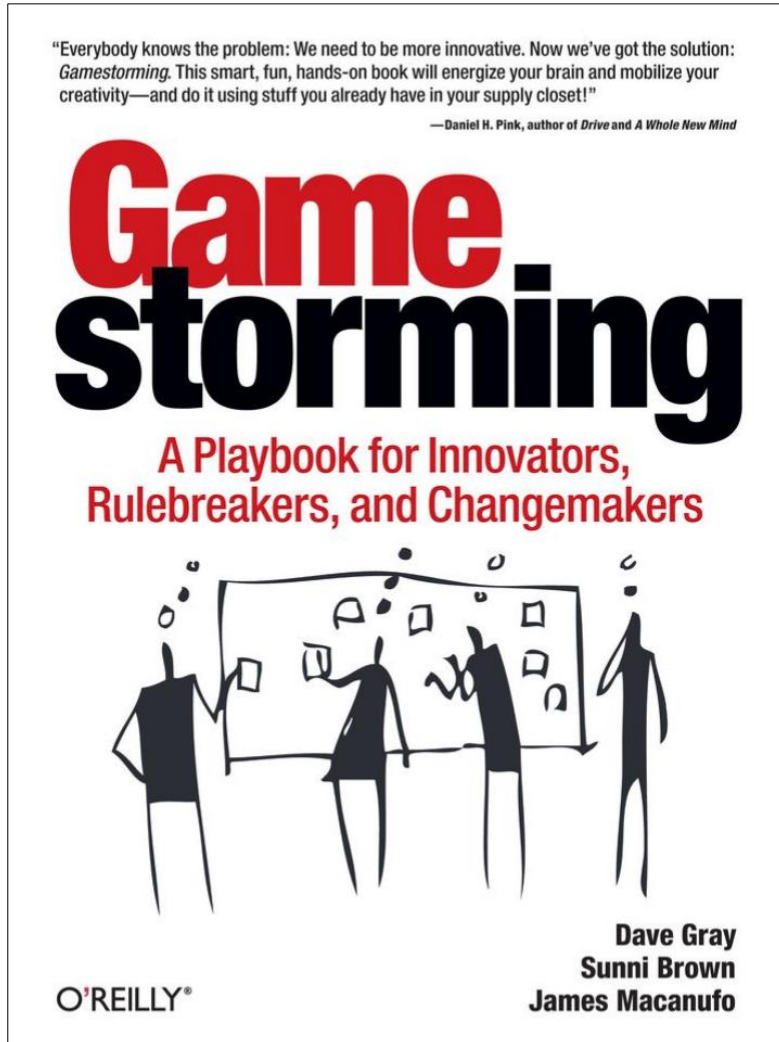


COACHING WAYS
Middle East

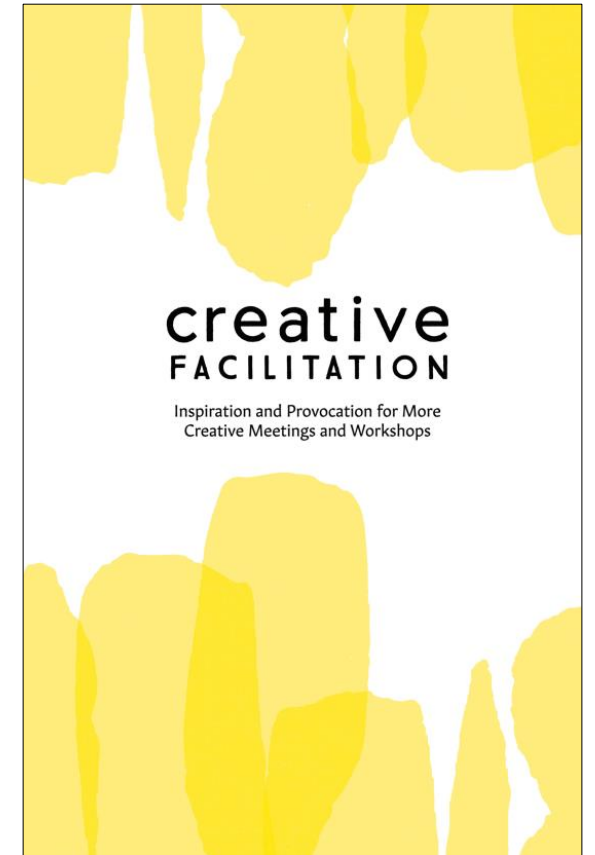
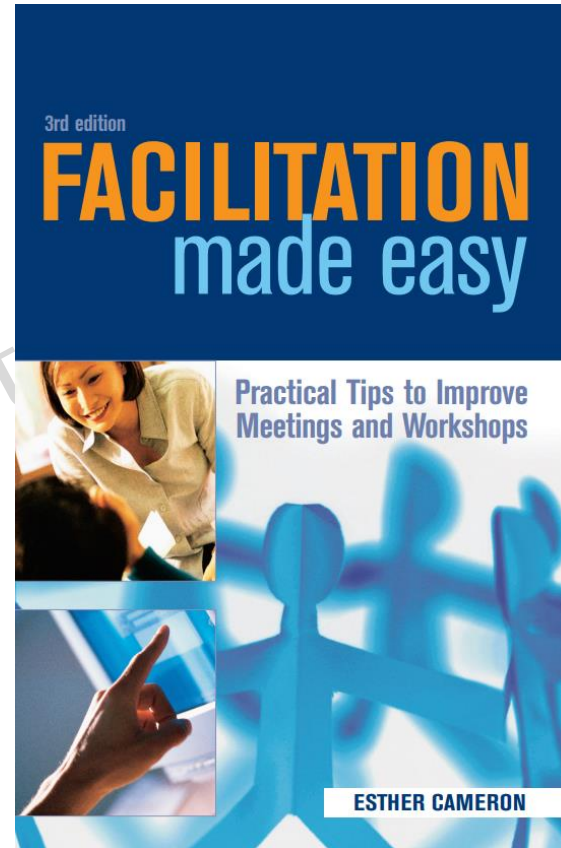
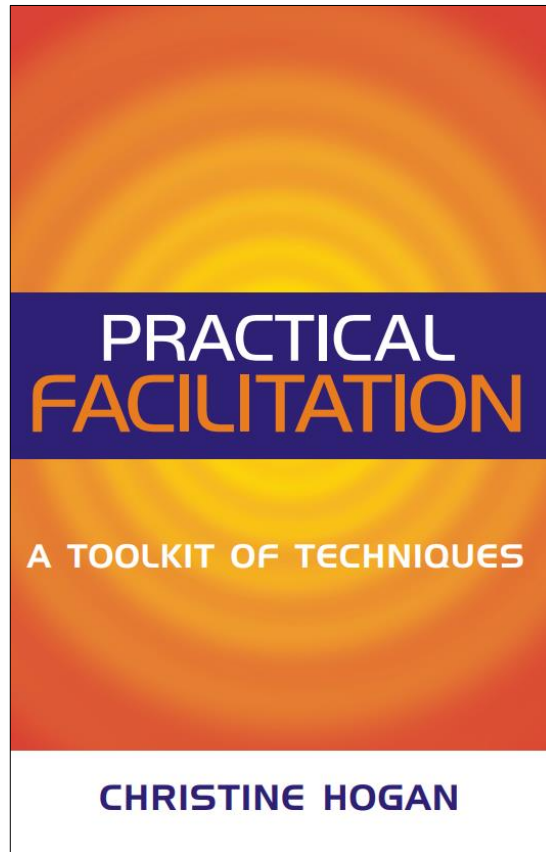
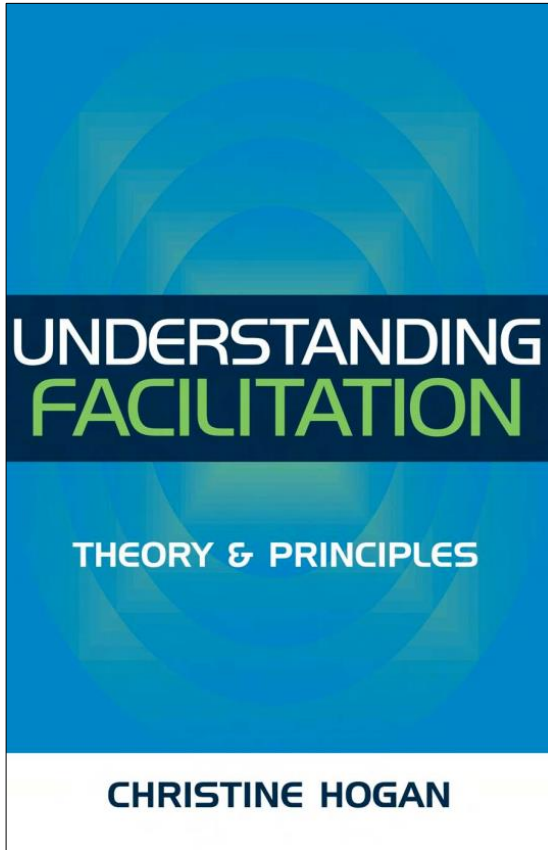
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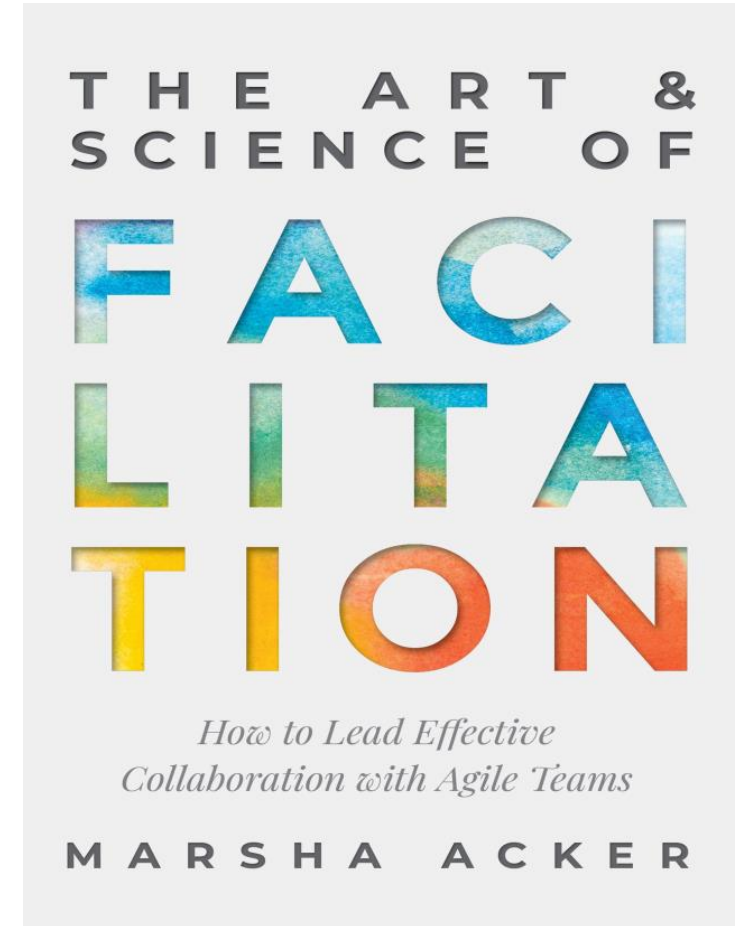
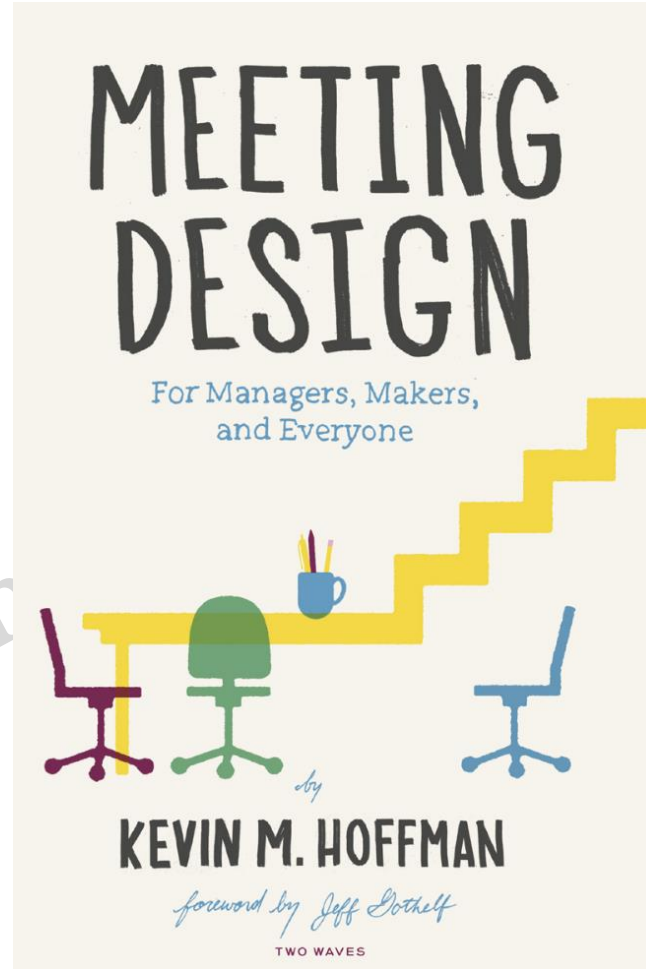
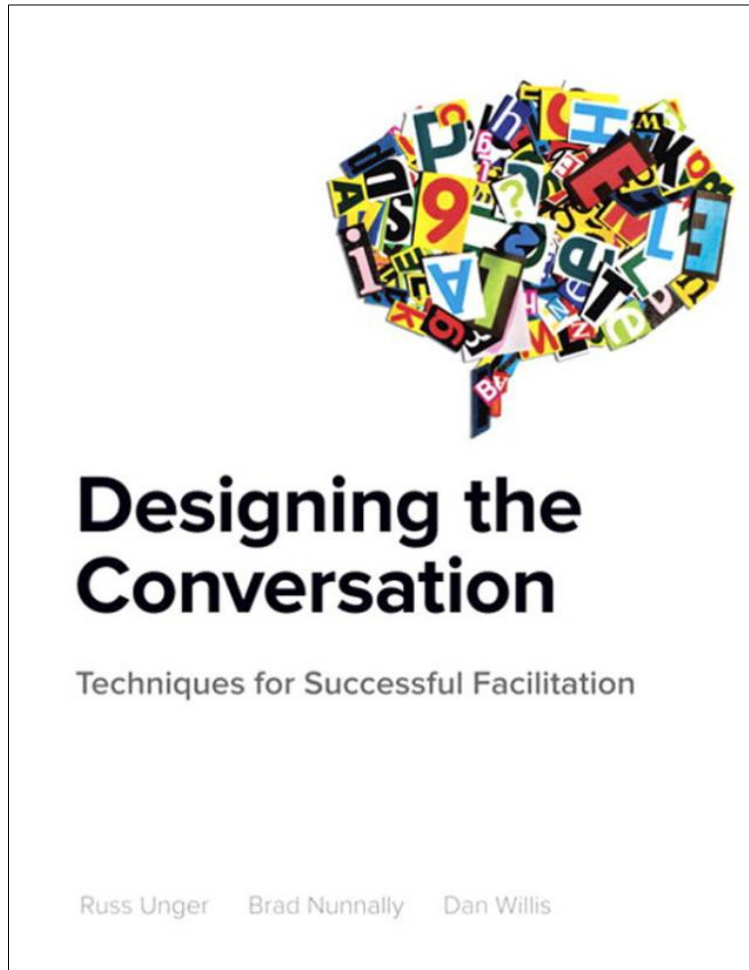
Resources



Resources



Resources



Most people who need to use **facilitative skills**
don't need to be facilitators

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Why is it hard to define “facilitator”?

- Developing a clear understanding of the facilitator role has become more difficult in recent years because organizations now use the word facilitator to indicate many roles.
- Human resources experts, organizational change consultants, trainers, coaches, and even managers have sometimes been renamed facilitators

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Six Facilitative Roles



Schwarz, “The Skilled Facilitator”, 3e, 2017

The Facilitator Role

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A Group Facilitator

Is a person who, in order to increase the group's effectiveness ...

1. Is **not a member** of the group,
2. Is **Content Neutral**,
3. Has no content decision-making authority or input,
4. Is acceptable to all the members of the group,
5. Diagnoses and Intervenes in a group, so as to
6. Help it improve the process by which it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions

Not a Member of the Group (1/2)

- You can't be a facilitator for a group you're a member of because you **can't be completely neutral about issues** in your group.
- Even if the issues you're facilitating don't directly affect you, your membership in the group can **indirectly influence** your neutrality.
- If you're a group member or leader, other members will reasonably expect you to be involved in the content of discussions and, depending on the topic, have a role in decision making.

Not a Member of the Group (2/2)

- The facilitator needs to be *a third party*,
- Even if you aren't a member of the immediate group that requests facilitation, members *still may not consider you a third party*.
 - For example, if the group is seeking facilitation to address concerns with the division it is part of and you're an internal facilitator working in the same division, group members may consider you a member of the larger group and not a third party.
- To serve as a facilitator, the group requesting help needs to consider you a third party.

Content Neutral (1/4)

- By content neutral, it doesn't mean you have **no opinions on the issues** that the group is discussing. That would be unrealistic.
- Rather, it means that you **facilitate the discussion without sharing your views**, so **group members cannot infer your views** on the group's topics.
- Consequently, you don't influence the group's decisions, directly or indirectly.
- Group members are easily and justifiably annoyed by a facilitator who claims to be neutral and then acts in a way that isn't neutral

Content Neutral (2/4)

- By being content neutral,
you increase the chance that all group members, regardless of their views on the topics, will see you as **trustworthy**.
- In addition, content neutrality ensures that
the **group remains responsible** for solving its problems and making decisions.

Don't Confuse it with
Process Neutrality!

Content Neutral (3/4)

- To remain neutral

requires **listening to members' views** and **remaining curious** about how their **reasoning** differs from others (and from your private views) so that you can help the group engage in **productive conversation**.

- If you trade your curiosity for a belief that some members are right and others are wrong, or that the group as a whole is going in the wrong direction, you **give up your ability to help** **group members explore their own views** and differences and replace it with **your desire to influence** **the content** of the discussion.

Content Neutral (4/4)

- If you find yourself **invested in** an issue or in having the group reach a particular outcome, or if you have **expertise** on the subject that makes it **difficult for you to remain neutral**,
then consider serving in one of the **other facilitative roles**.

Do not Distribute

No Decision-Making Authority or Input

- This is **an extension** of the facilitator's **content neutrality**.

Content decision-making authority or input means you have the ability either to make or participate in decisions regarding the group's topics of discussion.

- Even if you haven't expressed your view on the topic, the **facilitator role prohibits** you from being part of a vote or other decision-making process on the group's topics.

Acceptable to All Members of the Group

- Requiring that you are acceptable to all members of the group is another way to ensure that you meet **each group member's criteria** and that the group will be **open to your facilitation**.

Do not Distribute

Diagnoses and Intervenes in a Group

- A group facilitator **works with the entire group**.
- At times, you may meet with subsets of the group, including individuals, but the group is the basic venue in which you work.
- You watch the group in action,
diagnose what is happening, and **intervene** to help the group become more effective in its problem-solving and decision-making processes

Improves the Processes (1/2)

- *Process* refers to **how a group works together**.

It includes how members identify and solve problems, make decisions, and handle conflict.

- In contrast, content refers to the **topic** a group is discussing.

The content of a group discussion might be whether to enter a new market, how to provide high-quality service to customers, or what each group member's responsibilities should be.

Improves the Processes (2/2)

- Whenever a group meets, you can observe both content and process simultaneously.
 - For example, in a discussion about how to provide high-quality service, suggestions about providing special services to loyal customers or giving more authority to those with customer contact reflect the content of a discussion.
 - However, members responding to only certain colleagues' ideas or failing to identify their assumptions reflect the group's process.

A facilitator is content neutral
but also, a process expert and advocate

Do not Distribute

As a Process Expert (1/2)

- You know what kinds of **mindset** (values and assumptions), **behavior**, **process**, and **underlying structure** are more or less likely to contribute to high-quality problem solving and decision-making,
- and contribute to the three results of effective groups: **performance**, **working relationships**, and **individual well-being**.
- If you ask a group to use **certain ground rules** or if you identify certain ineffective behaviors in the group, it's on the basis of this process expertise

As a Process Expert (2/2)

- You advocate that the group
adopt a mindset and behaviors that improve its effectiveness, at least for the time you're actively facilitating the group.
- But being a process advocate
does not mean you make these decisions for the group.
- You ask the group whether it sees any problems with your design for the facilitation, including the process you're advocating.
- For all of these decisions about the facilitation process, you are a partner with the group.

Myth of Total Facilitator Neutrality

- “content neutral” means that a facilitator conveys no preference for any solution the group considers.
- **When the content is group process, facilitators are not neutral.**
 - Not only do they have a point of view; they also are—or should be—experts.
 - As a skilled facilitator, you know what kind of behavior and processes lead to effective problem solving and other important group outcomes, and you use this knowledge to facilitate the group.
 - This is why groups hire you as a facilitator

Every action you take and intervention you make
with the group **signals your beliefs** about what makes
for effective process

Implicit Beliefs

- When you **ask** group members to use **certain behaviors or ground rules**, or when you **intervene** to help members act consistently with these behaviors, you're implicitly **stating your belief** that these behaviors and related processes will make the group more effective.

Do not Distribute

Six Facilitative Roles



Schwarz, “The Skilled Facilitator”, 3e, 2017

Group Facilitator

Purpose	Help group use effective process to make decisions and increase its effectiveness
Group Member	No
Context Involvement	Content Neutral
Context Decision-Making Involvement	Not Involved

Facilitative Consultant

Purpose	Provide expert advice on client's issues
Group Member	No
Context Involvement	Content Expert
Context Decision-Making Involvement	May be Involved

Facilitative Coach

Purpose	Help an individual, group, or team achieve goals and increase effectiveness
Group Member	Can be
Context Involvement	Maybe Involved
Context Decision-Making Involvement	Not Involved

Facilitative Trainer

Purpose	Help people develop knowledge and skills
Group Member	Can be
Context Involvement	Content Expert
Context Decision-Making Involvement	May be Involved

Facilitative Mediator

Purpose	Help two or more people resolve a dispute
Group Member	No
Context Involvement	Content Neutral
Context Decision-Making Involvement	Not Involved

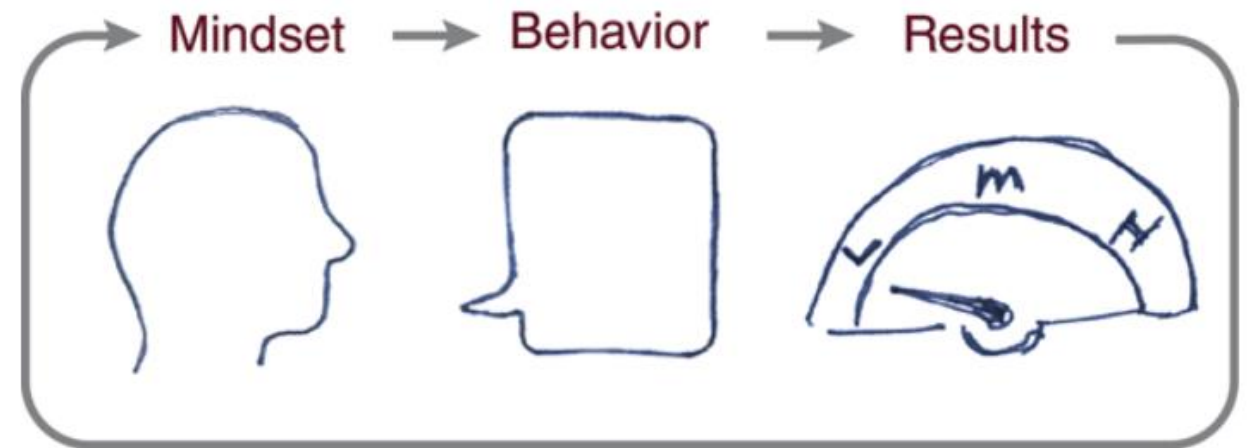
Facilitative Leader

Purpose	Influence a group to achieve goals and increase its effectiveness
Group Member	Yes
Context Involvement	Involved in Content
Context Decision-Making Involvement	Involved

Six Facilitative Roles

	Facilitator	Facilitative Consultant	Facilitative Coach	Facilitative Trainer	Facilitative Mediator	Facilitative Leader
Group Member	No	No	Can be	Can be	No	Yes
Context Involvement	Content Neutral	Content Expert	May be Involved	Content Expert	Content Neutral	Involved in Content
Context Decision-Making Involvement	Not Involved	May be Involved	Not Involved	May be Involved	Not Involved	Involved

How You Think Is How You Facilitate



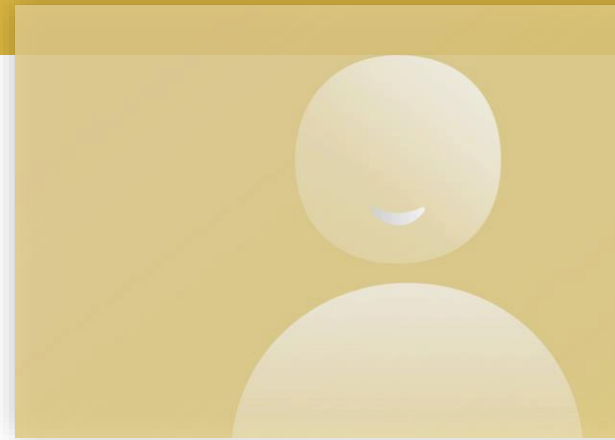
- Everything you do starts with your mindset.
- Your mindset is **the way of seeing** that shapes your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Your mindset is the **core set of values and assumptions that drives your behavior**.
- Your mindset is what ultimately shapes the results you get for yourself and the groups you're trying to help



مدل ذهنی و کاربرد مدل ذهنی در مدیریت (نقشه راه درس)

Two Problems of Mindset

1. When we find ourselves in **challenging situations**,
in which the stakes are high, having strong views and strong feelings, or feeling psychologically threatened, frustrated, or potentially embarrassed
2. Our **lack of awareness** about our mindset



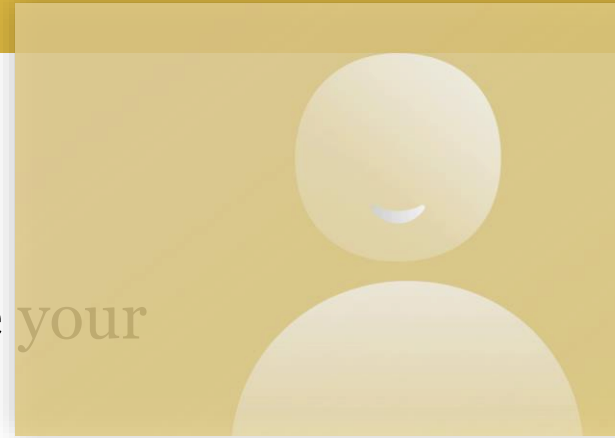
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Lack of awareness about our mindset

- We're also usually unaware of your mindset.
 - When we're intervening to stop a group member from participating too much, we're not aware that we may be thinking, "This guy doesn't get it. He doesn't see how he's dominating the conversation."
 - You just respond, seemingly without thinking.
- The fact that your mindset operates out of your awareness is a good thing—until your mindset becomes the cause of problems.

The Unilateral Control Approach

- When you use the unilateral control approach, you try to achieve your goals by **unilaterally controlling the situation**:
 - You try to get others to do what you want them to do **without being influenced** by them.

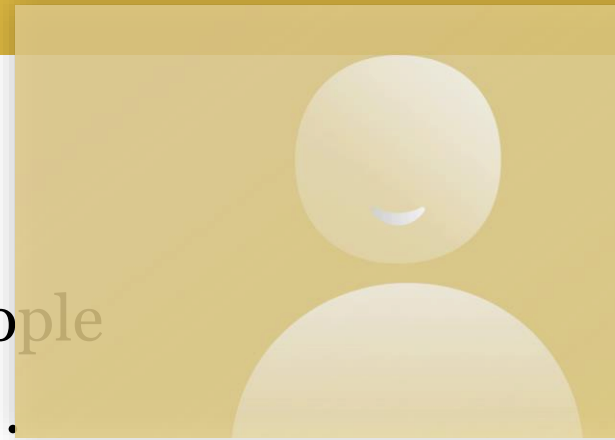


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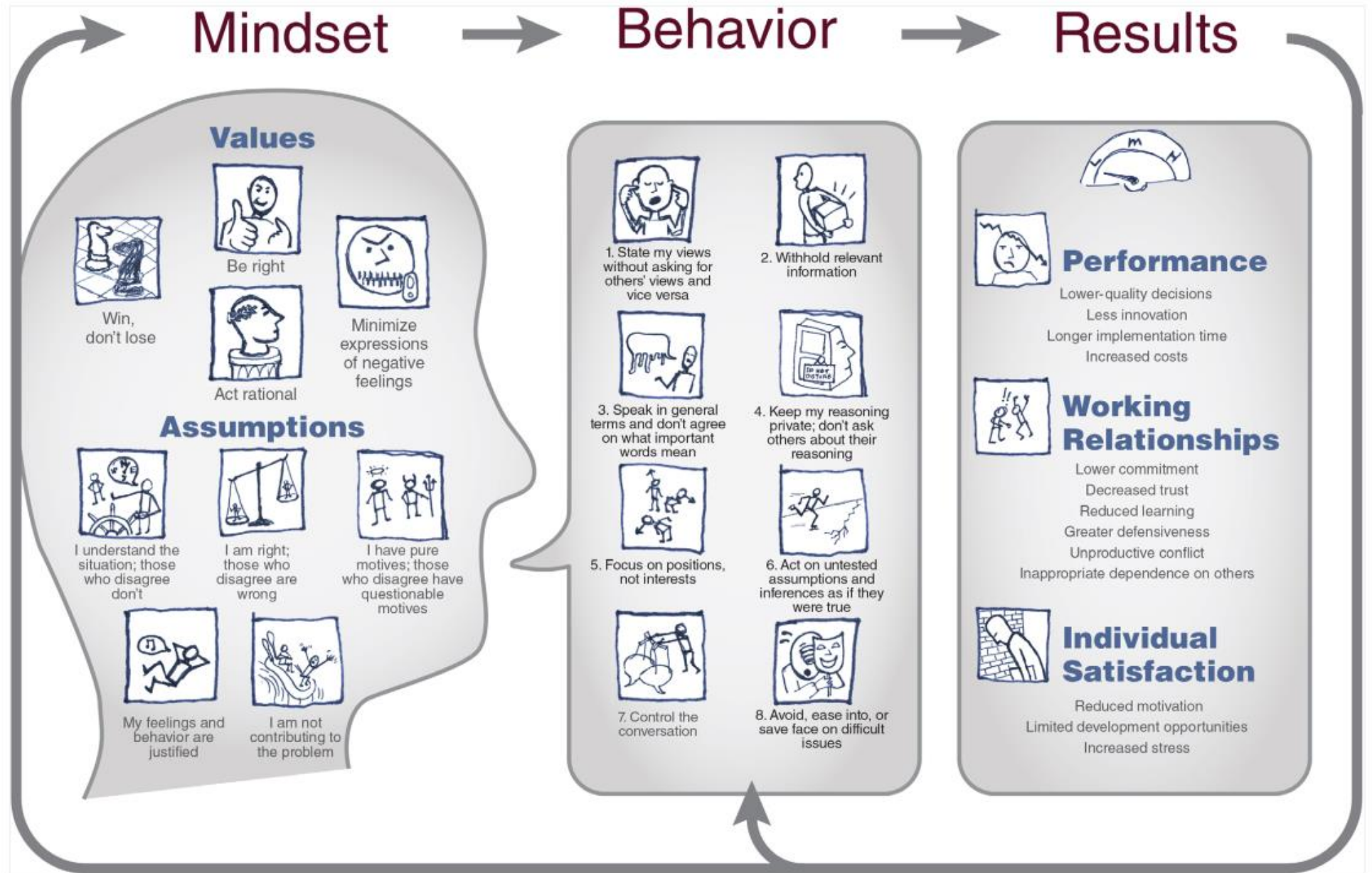
The Unilateral Control Perspective

- When you apply a unilateral control mindset to working with people who see things differently from you, your essential perspective is:
 - I understand the situation; you don't.
 - I'm right; you're wrong.
 - I will win.

Do not Distribute



The Unilateral Control Approach



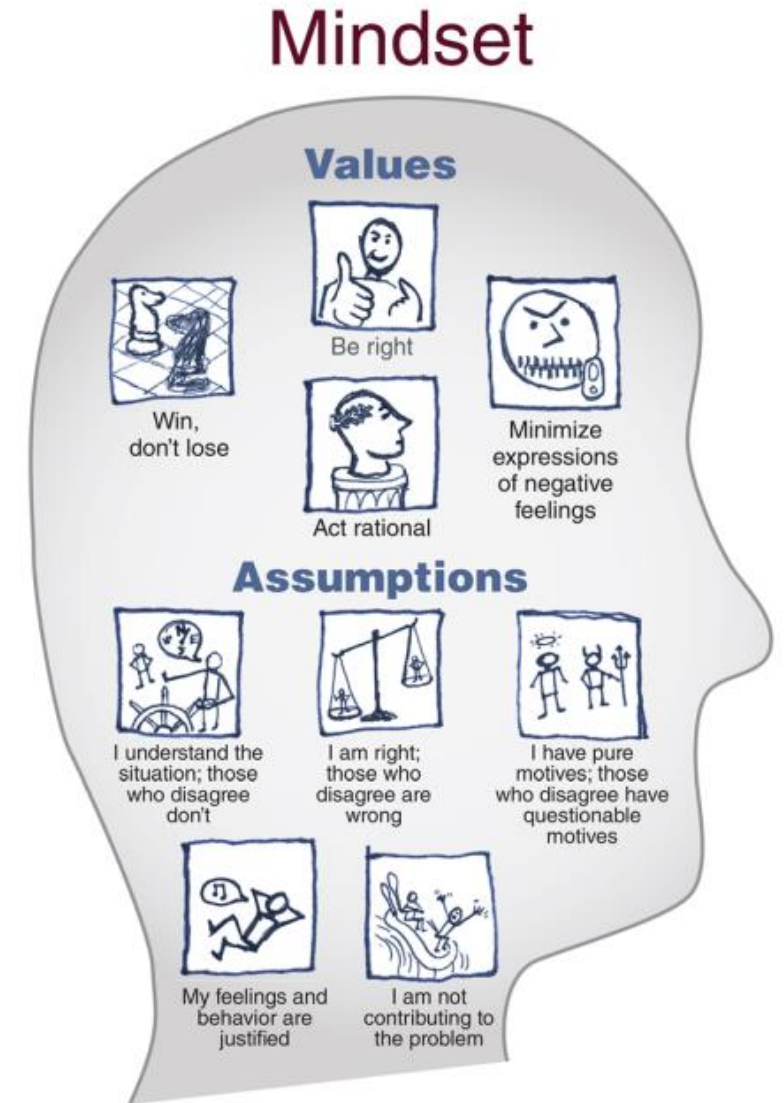
Core values:

end-states we think are worth striving for.

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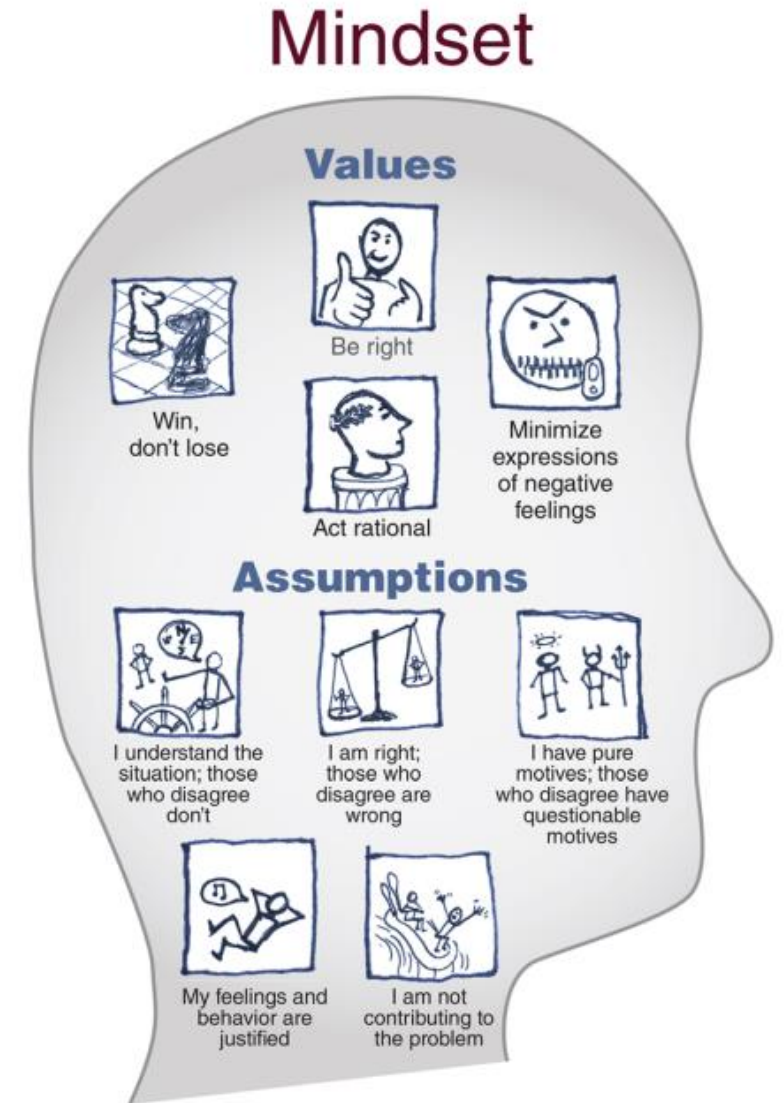
Win, Don't Lose

- Having goals can make you more effective.
- But when you operate from the unilateral control mindset, achieving your goals as you have defined them becomes an end in itself.
- You **frame the situation as a contest** in which there are winners and losers; therefore, you must be one of the winners



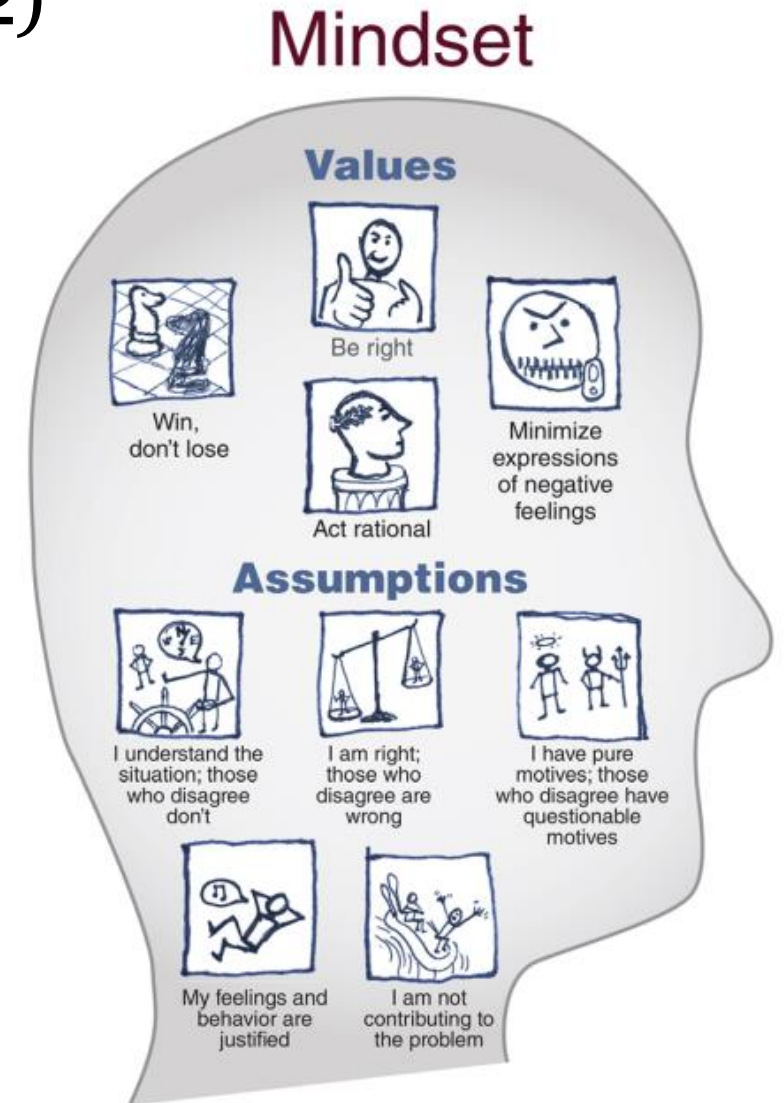
Be Right

- When you value being right, you take pride in showing others that your views are accurate.
- If you have ever taken satisfaction in thinking or saying to someone, “I told you so” or “I knew this would happen,” you know what it feels like to value being right



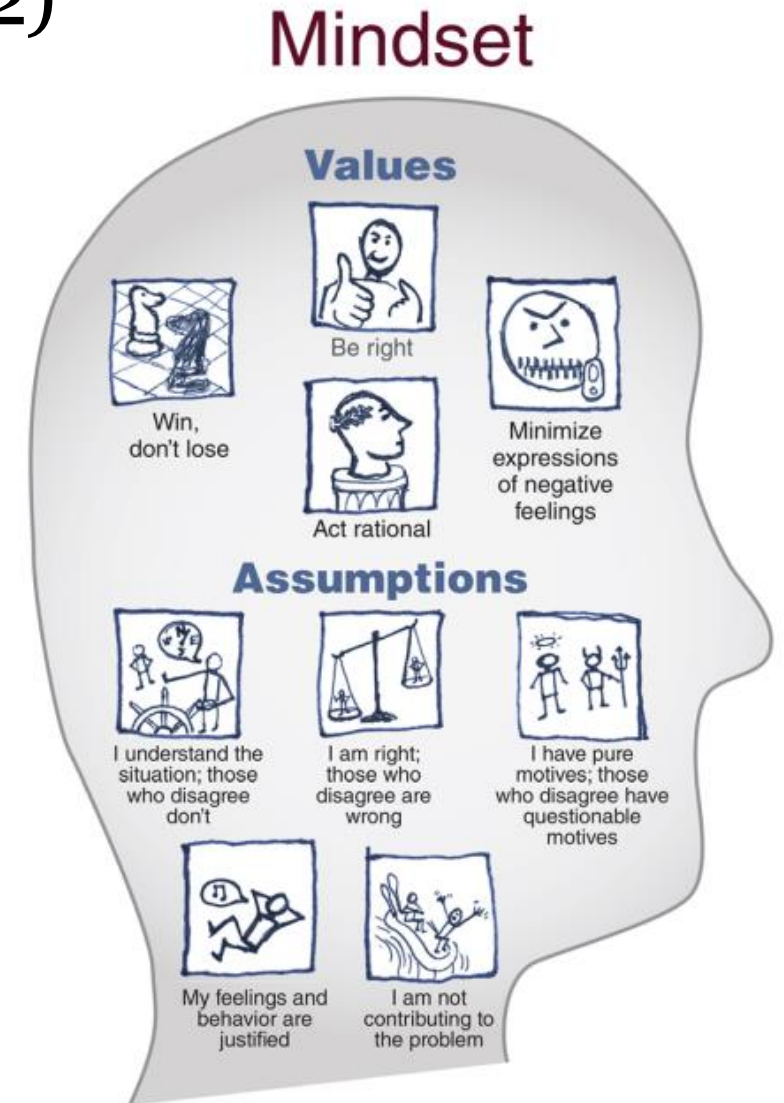
Minimize Expression of Negative Feelings (1/2)

- It means keeping unpleasant feelings - yours and everyone else's - out of the conversation.
- This value stems from a belief that **expressing anger or frustration** - or allowing others to express them - for instance, are **incompetent behaviors**.
- Expressing negative feelings may be seen as a sign of weakness or may hurt someone's feelings, both of which may make it difficult for you to accomplish your goals.



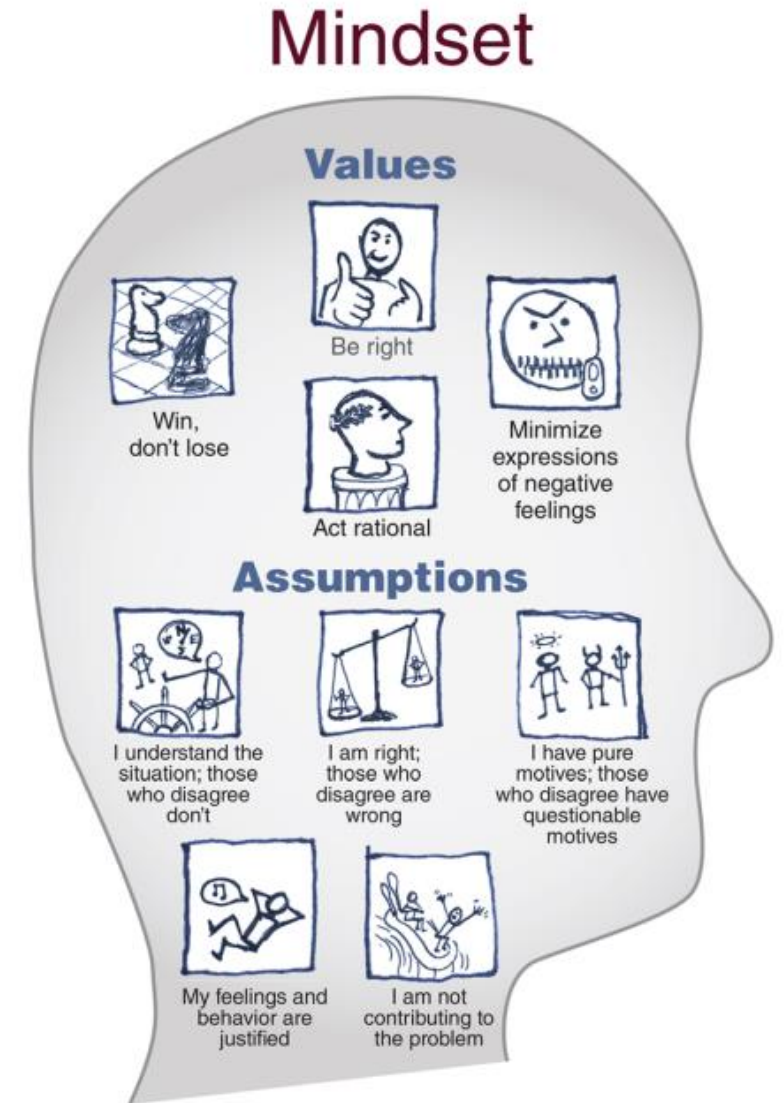
Minimize Expression of Negative Feelings (2/2)

- In the unilateral control approach, raising negative feelings can **lead to things getting out of control**.
- In short, you **believe that little good can come of people airing their feelings on a topic**; it **only leads to tension, wounded sensibilities, and strained working relationships**.



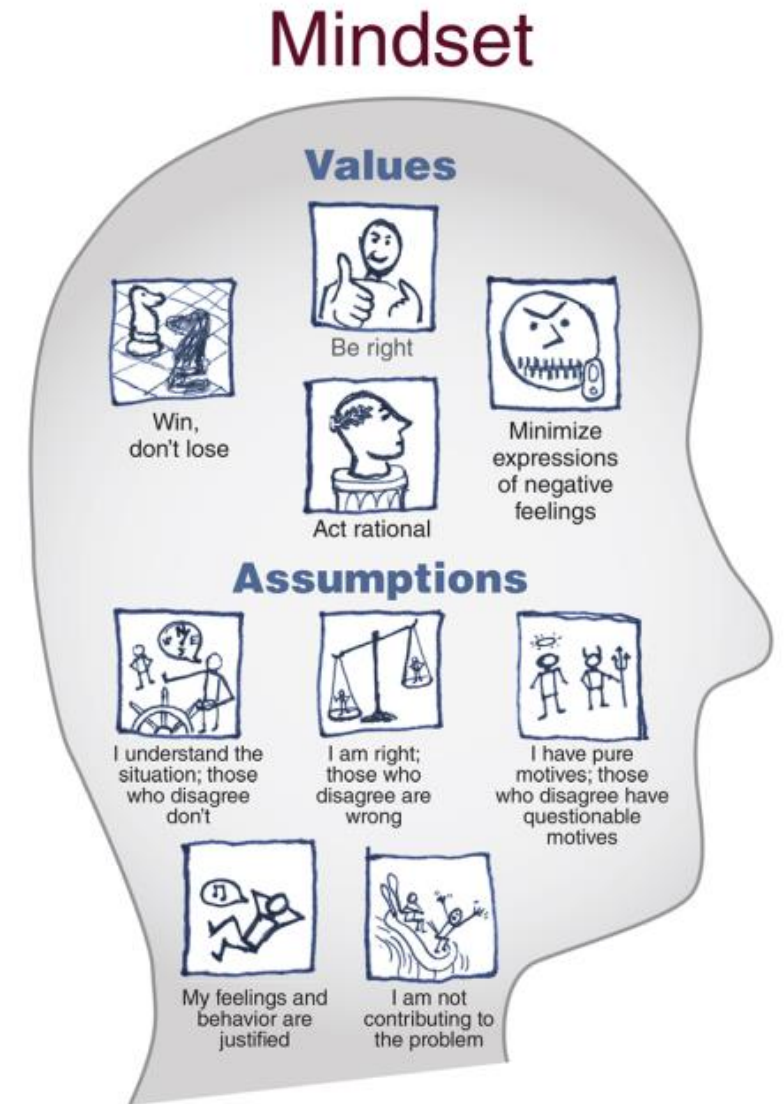
Act Rational (1/2)

- When you value acting rationally, you **expect yourself and others to remain purely analytical and logical.**
- You believe that if you simply lay out the **facts**, others, if they're being **reasonable**, will **agree** with you.
- You try to present issues as being **purely objective**, **regardless of how you or others are feeling about them.**



Act Rational (2/2)

- You consider feelings as a **barrier** to good problem solving and decision making instead of **as another source of important information**.
- The more you value acting rational, the more you want to be seen as having thoroughly thought through the matter at hand.
- When you discover **gaps** in your thinking, you try to **prevent** others from recognizing those gaps



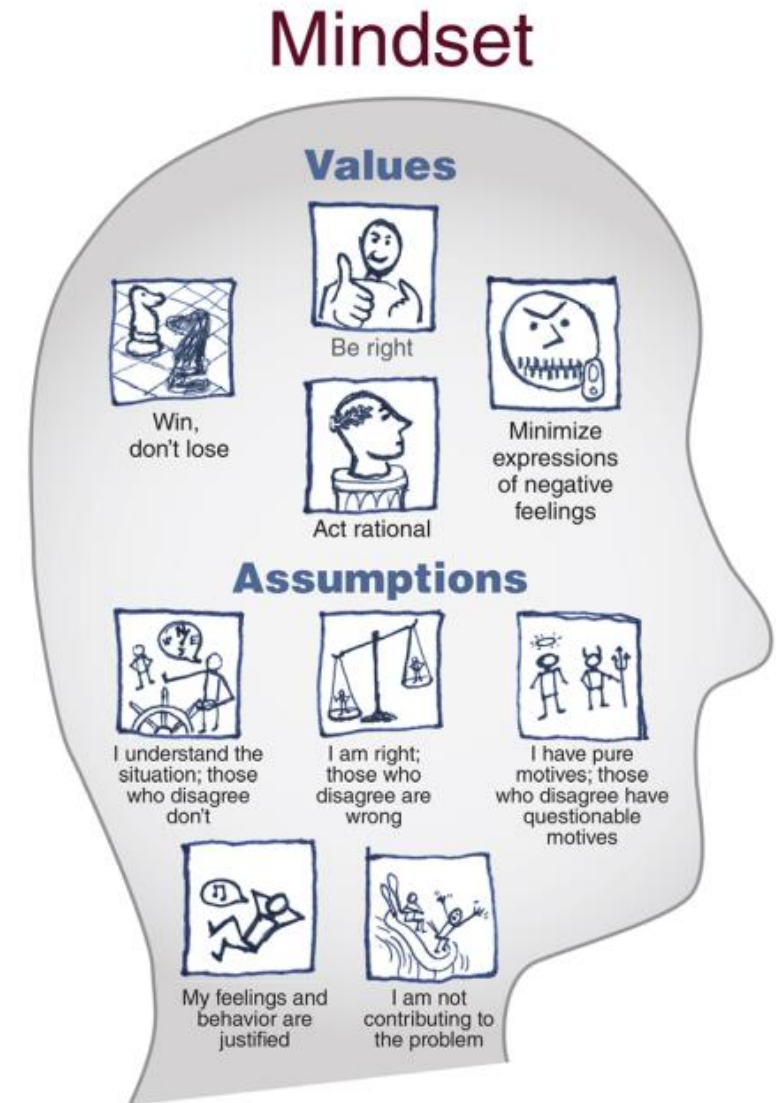
Core Assumptions:

fundamental beliefs we hold

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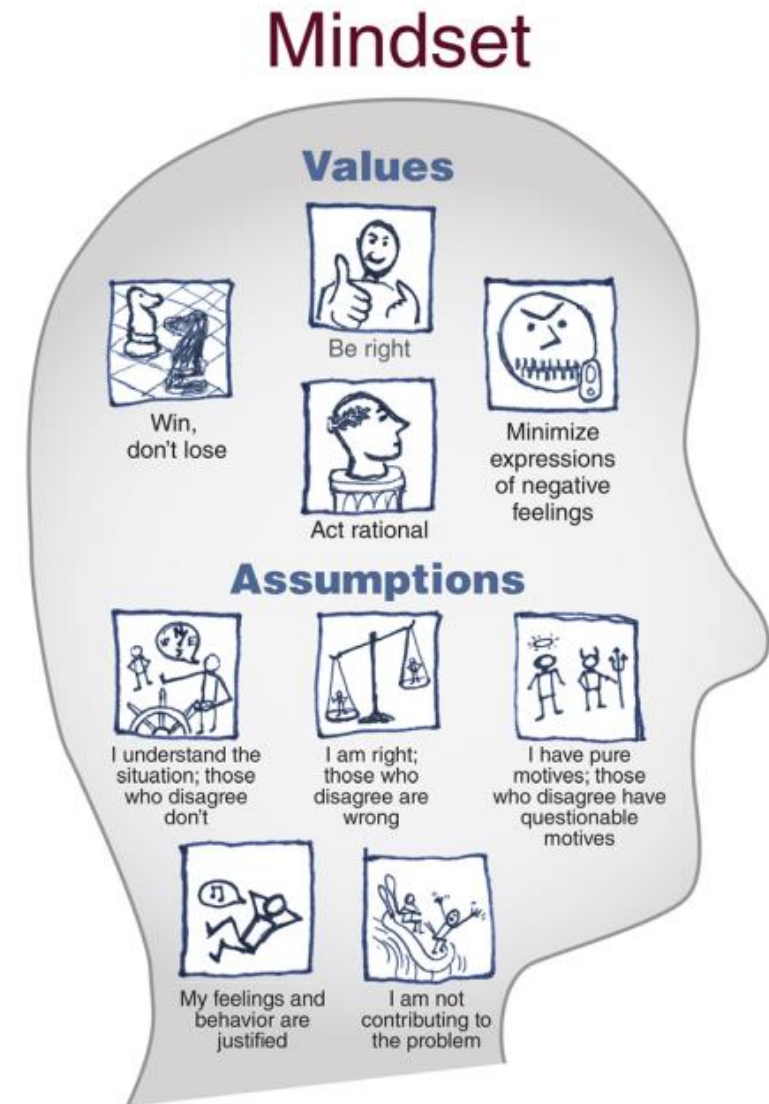
I Understand the Situation; Those Who Disagree Don't

- This assumption states that **whatever information and understanding you bring to the situation is accurate and complete**, and so are the conclusions you draw from them.
- In other words, **the way you see things is the way things really are**.
- If others hold different views, they just don't get it, are confused, misinformed, or simply clueless.
- If they understood what you understand, they would agree with you.



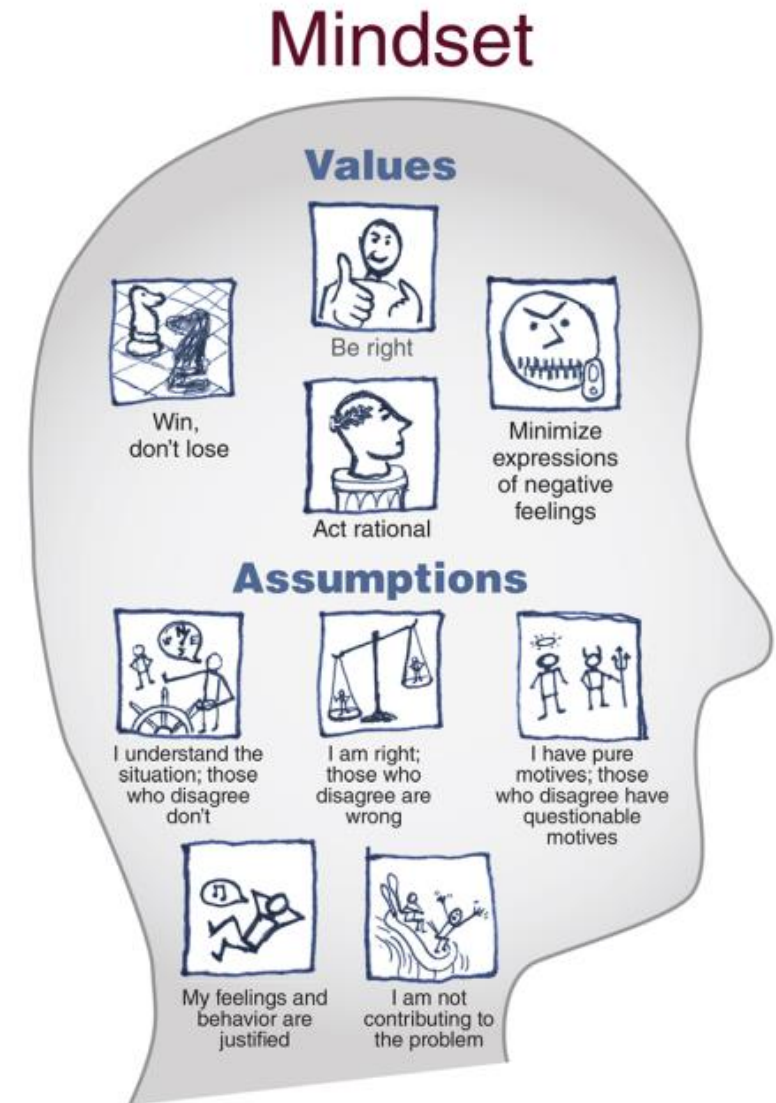
I Am Right; Those Who Disagree Are Wrong

- As an extension of the previous one, here you assume that **situations come with right and wrong answers** and that your answer is, of course, the right one.
- People who **disagree** with you or see it differently are simply **wrong**.
- When you hold this assumption, it's **not possible** that **you and the people with whom you are disagreeing can both be right**.



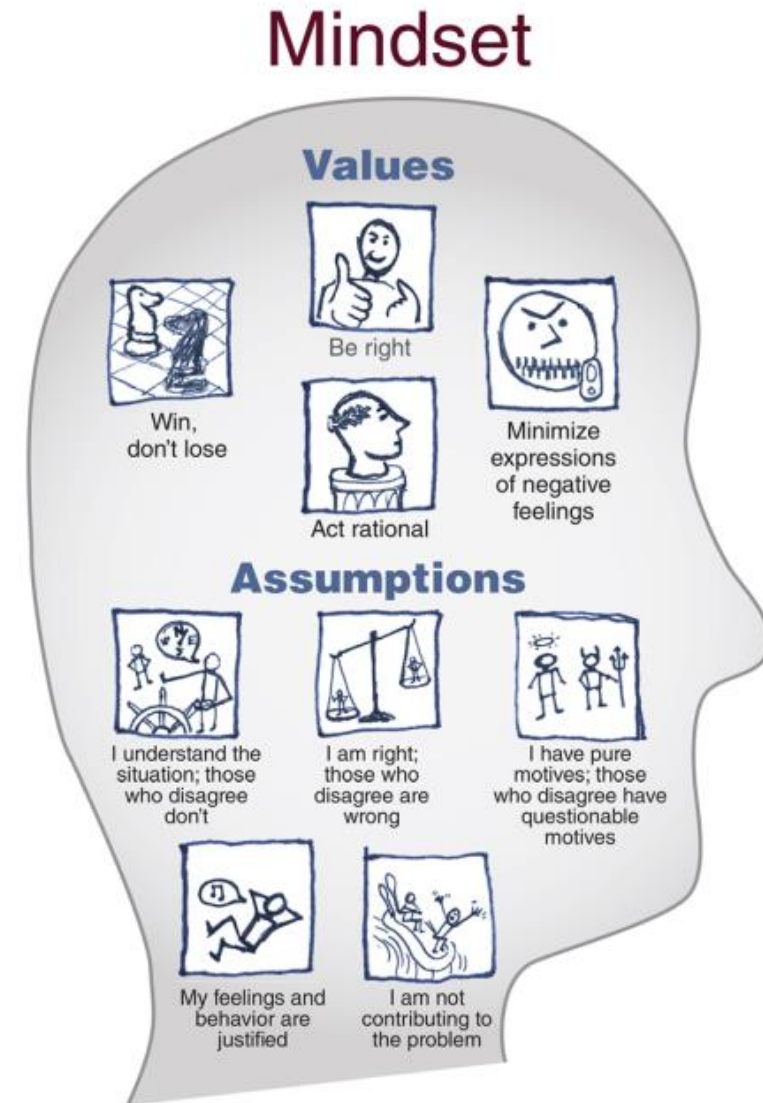
My Motives Are Pure; Those Who Disagree Have Questionable Motives

- You consider yourself to be **an earnest seeker of truth**, acting in the **best interests** of the group and organization.
- At the same time, you **question the motives of those who disagree** with you.
- You assume they may be motivated by self-interest or some other inappropriate concern.
- Maybe they're trying to increase their power, control more resources, or even undermine your efforts.



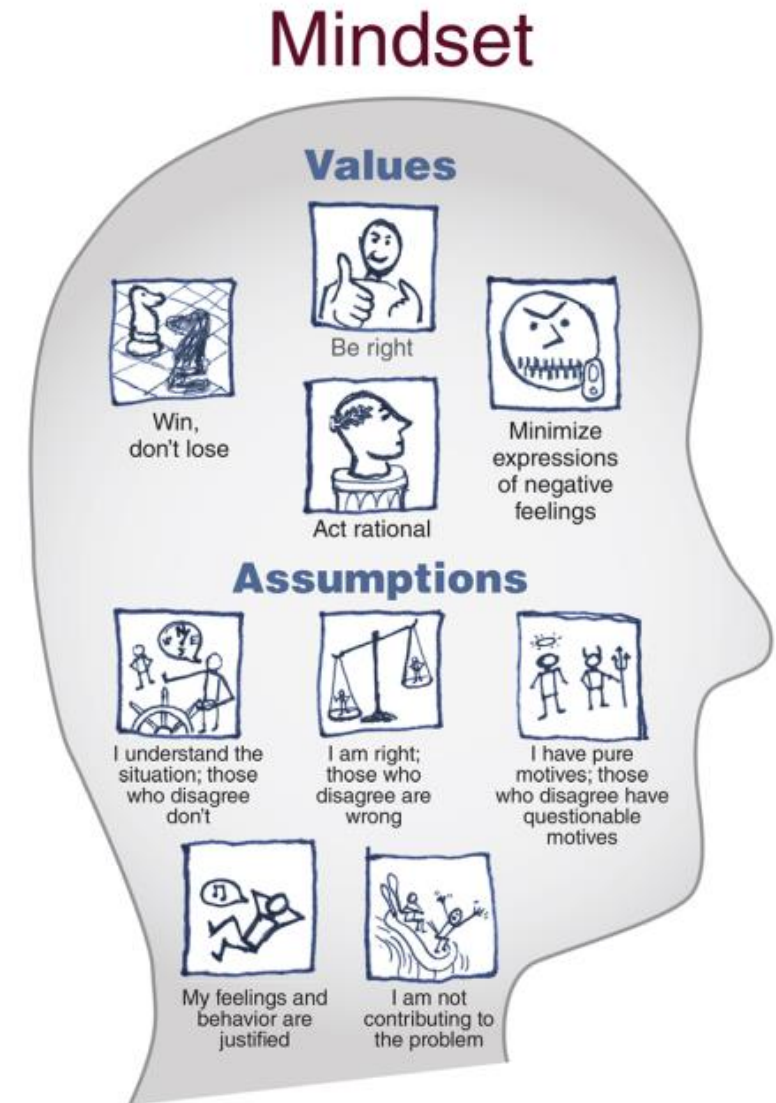
My Feelings and Behaviors Are Justified

- Because **others don't understand the situation** as it really is (meaning, as you see it), because **others are wrong**, and because **others may have questionable motives**, you **consider your feelings and behaviors justified**.
- If you're annoyed or frustrated, if you need to act in a manner that is inconsistent with your values, or if you need to depart from your role, it's all justified.
- Although you may have preferred not to do these things, others' behaviors have left you no choice.



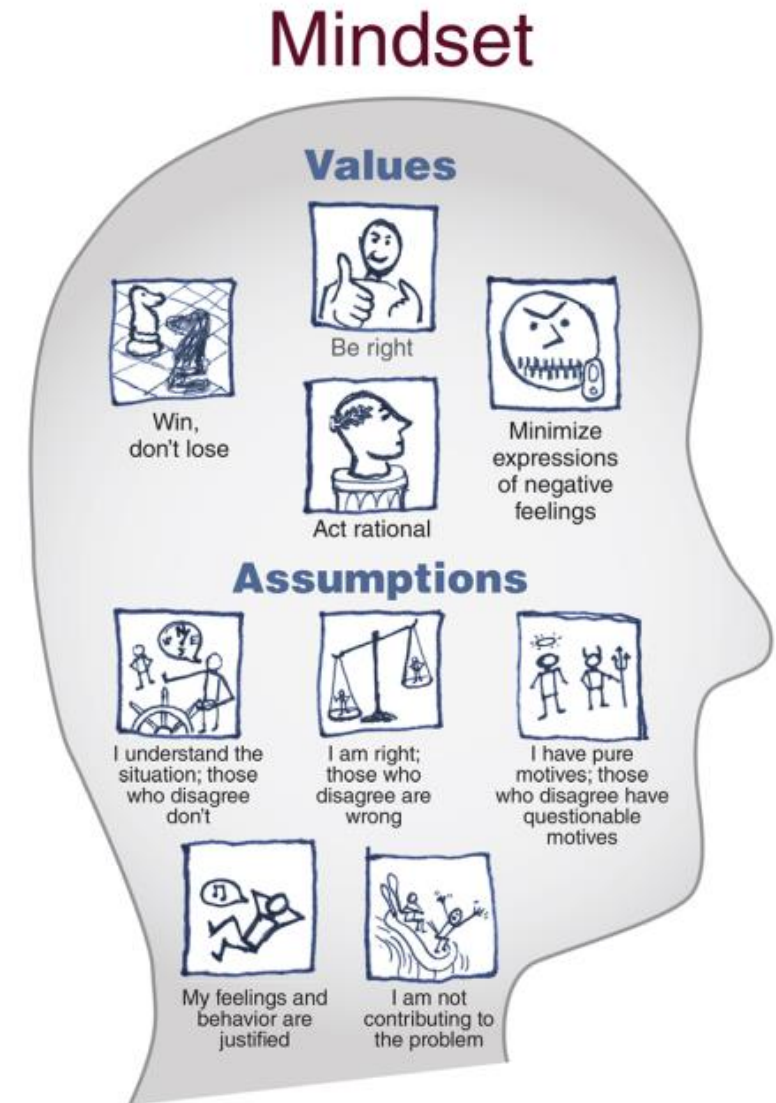
I Am Not Contributing to the Problem (1/2)

- In the unilateral control mindset, you see your feelings and the behaviors that result from them as the **natural and inevitable results of others' actions toward you**.
- You don't consider the possibility that you're **contributing** to the very problems you're privately complaining about.
- It doesn't occur to you that your thoughts and feelings may lead you to act **ineffectively**.



I Am Not Contributing to the Problem (2/2)

- In your view, all interactions go like this:
Others do things that are ineffective, and you respond to their mistakes accordingly and appropriately.
- As a result, you see others as needing to change, not you.
- The only sense in which you may see yourself needing to change is that you may need to develop new ways to get others to change their ineffective behaviors.



Behaviors

Do not Distribute

The need to convince others

- You use the beforementioned mindset—the core values and assumptions—to design your behavior.
- When you work with a group and assume that you understand and are right and that those who disagree with you don't understand and are wrong, you think you need to **convince** others.

Do not Distribute

State views without asking for others' views or vice versa (1/2)

- You either state your views without asking others what they think, or you ask others questions without sharing your view.
- As a result,
you and the group **end up talking past each other** and you don't reach genuine agreements.



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

State views without asking for others' views or vice versa (2/2)

- When you ask questions that aren't genuine, you often “**ease in**,” indirectly conveying your point of view.
- Easing in involves asking others questions or making statements that are **designed to lead others to figure out what you're privately thinking without your having to say it.**
- It's an indirect approach to get others to see things your way.



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8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Withhold relevant information

- Because winning is **paramount**,
you share the information that will advance your views
and withhold relevant information that won't.

Do not Distribute



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Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean. (1/2)

- When you make **general statements** like “I think it would be good to hear from some people who haven’t spoken as much,” the group doesn’t know exactly which people you’re talking about.
- As a result, some members whom you believe have been talking too much may speak up, believing that they weren’t speaking much.



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



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8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean. (2/2)

- Facilitators, consultants, and trainers often speak in general terms because they're concerned that by **naming individuals**, they may create **defensive reactions**.



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



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6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Do not Distribute

Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning

- You **don't explain why** you're saying what you're saying and asking what you're asking.
- **Sharing your reasoning** would make you **vulnerable** to people **challenging** your thinking, which could **reduce the chance that your view would prevail**.
- Asking others about **their reasoning** might **surface information** that's **at odds with your views** and increases the chance that they'll ask you to **explain** your views, both of which **decrease the chance that you'll win**



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Focus on positions, not interests

- By focusing on a particular solution instead of the underlying needs you're trying to address, you and the group **dig into your positions** and **fail to craft solutions** that meet group members' needs and generate broad commitment.

Solution-Driven Approach



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true

- Because you assume that you understand the situation and are right, there's no need to test any assumptions or inferences you're making.
- As a result, when your assumptions or inferences turn out to be wrong, you make poor decisions.



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Control the conversation

- To ensure that you win,
you **make sure** that **the conversation moves in the direction you think it should move.**
- You make sure that people talk about topics that you consider relevant and that further your point of view.
- When people don't stay on topic—as you define “on topic”—you find ways to bring them back on topic.
- As a result, the group you're helping **doesn't get all the relevant information on the table.**



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues

- Because you want to minimize the expression of negative feelings,
you **don't address issues** that could make the group or you **uncomfortable**.
- As a result, you don't help the group get to the **root cause** of issues, and the issues continue to reduce the group's and your effectiveness.



1. State my views without asking for others' views and vice versa



2. Withhold relevant information



3. Speak in general terms and don't agree on what important words mean



4. Keep my reasoning private; don't ask others about their reasoning



5. Focus on positions, not interests



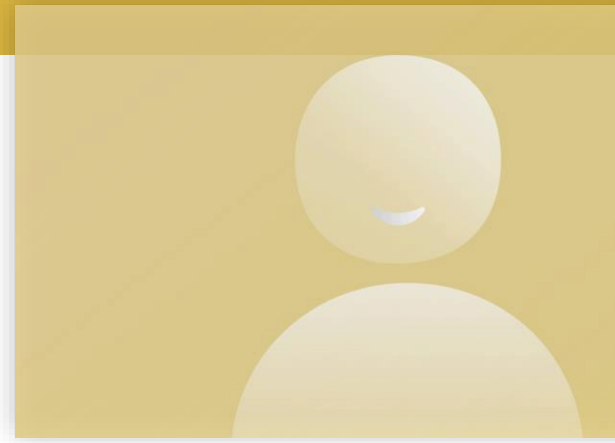
6. Act on untested assumptions and inferences as if they were true



7. Control the conversation



8. Avoid, ease into, or save face on difficult issues



Results

Do not Distribute

Lackluster Performance

- If you're operating with the unilateral control mindset and behaviors, you undermine your own performance.
 - Lower-Quality Decisions and Less Innovation
 - Longer Implementation Time
 - Increased Costs

Results



Performance

Lower-quality decisions
Less innovation
Longer implementation time
Increased costs



Working Relationships

Lower commitment
Decreased trust
Reduced learning
Greater defensiveness
Unproductive conflict
Inappropriate dependence on others



Individual Satisfaction

Reduced motivation
Limited development opportunities
Increased stress

Do not Distribute

Strained Working Relationships

- It decreases commitment, reduces team learning, and also
- promotes inappropriate dependence on others
 - Lower Commitment
 - Decreased Trust
 - Reduced Learning, Greater Defensiveness, and Unproductive Conflict
 - Inappropriate Dependence on Others

Results



Performance

Lower-quality decisions
Less innovation
Longer implementation time
Increased costs



Working Relationships

Lower commitment
Decreased trust
Reduced learning
Greater defensiveness
Unproductive conflict
Inappropriate dependence on others



Individual Satisfaction

Reduced motivation
Limited development opportunities
Increased stress

Do not Distribute

Less Individual Well-Being

- It can be stressful to realize that if you share what you're thinking, you may create negative consequences.
- It's stressful if you make untested inferences and attributions about others that lead you and others to become defensive

Results



Performance

Lower-quality decisions
Less innovation
Longer implementation time
Increased costs



Working Relationships

Lower commitment
Decreased trust
Reduced learning
Greater defensiveness
Unproductive conflict
Inappropriate dependence on others



Individual Satisfaction

Reduced motivation
Limited development opportunities
Increased stress

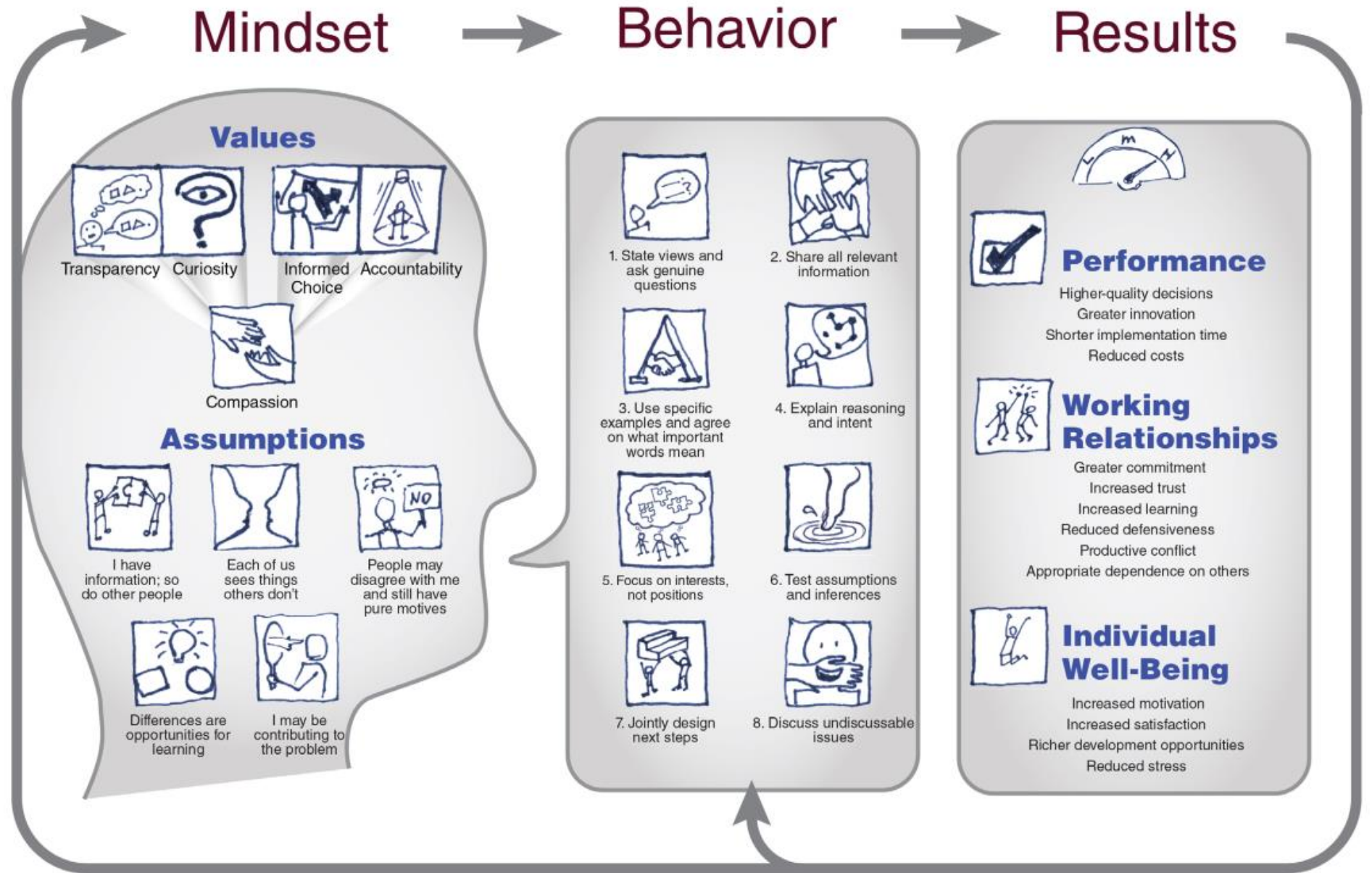
Do not Distribute

Question:

What shall we do instead?

Do not Distribute

The Mutual Learning Approach



Facilitative Consultant

Do not Distribute

Physician

vs. Therapist Approach

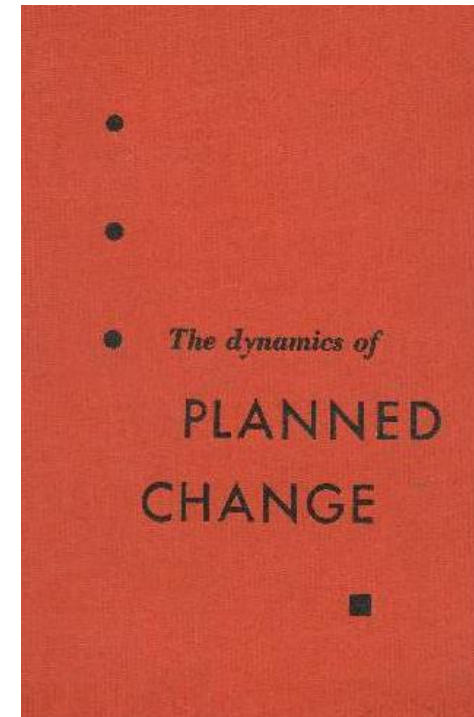
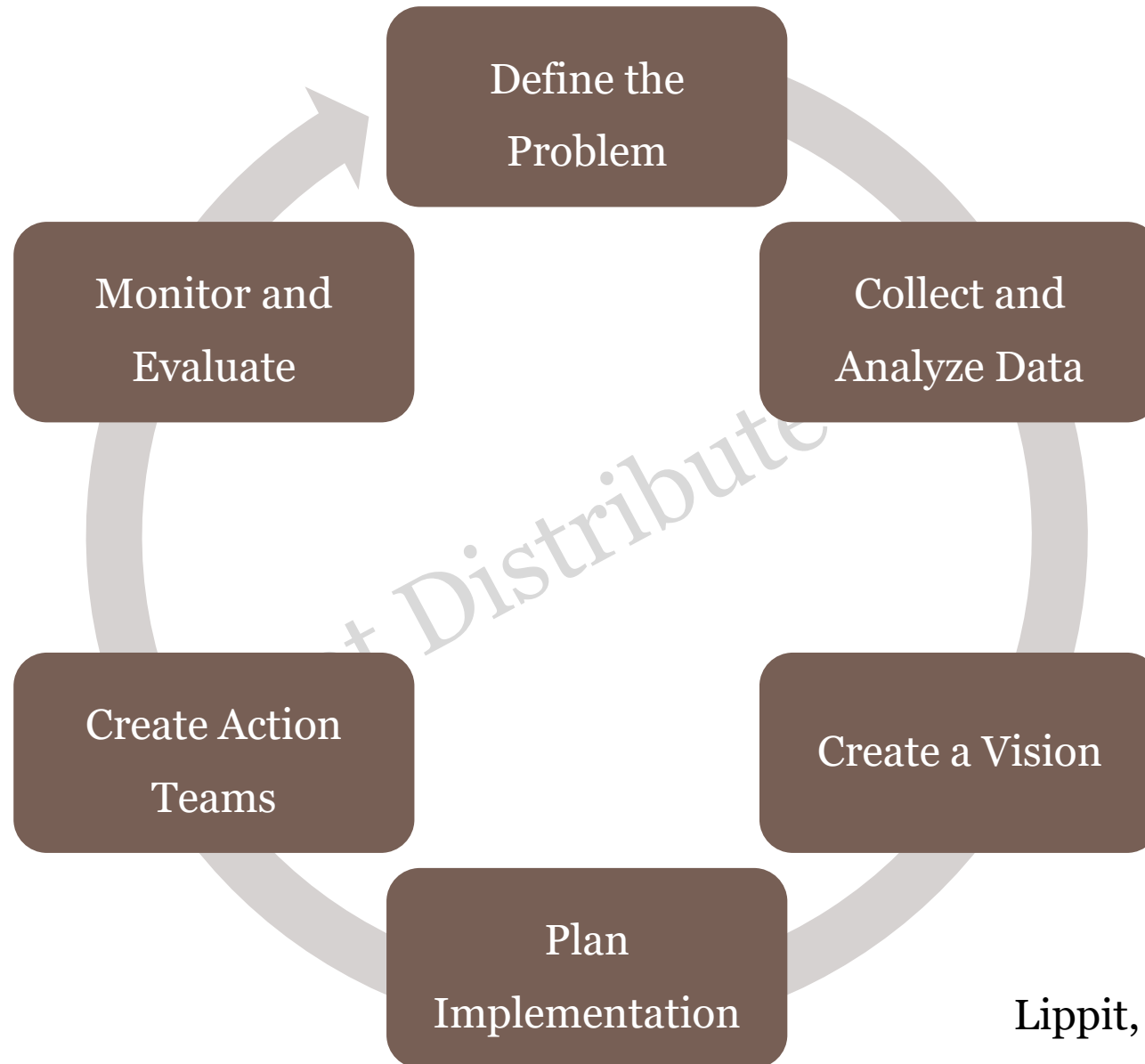
Do not Distribute

Expert Consulting

vs. Process Consulting

Do not Distribute

The Planned Change Model



Lippitt, Watson, Westley, Spalding,
“[The Dynamics of Planned Change](#)”, 1958

The unpleasant truth, however, is that planned changes in organizations **often fail**, or **at least fail to deliver** what was intended.

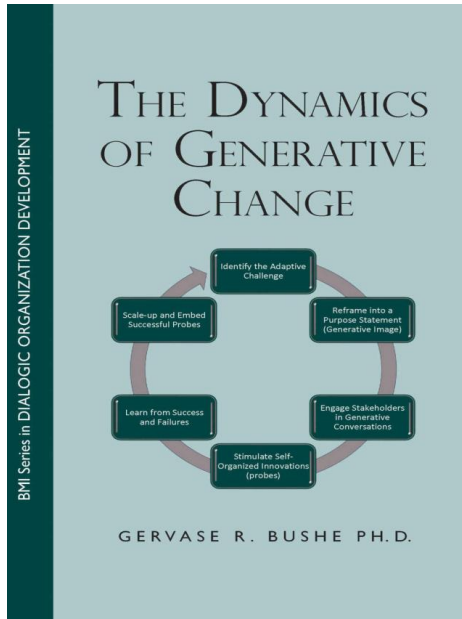
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In addition to all that, the most basic reason may be that most organizational problems are too complex for the planned change approach.

One of the emerging themes in organization studies is a distinction between complicated and complex.

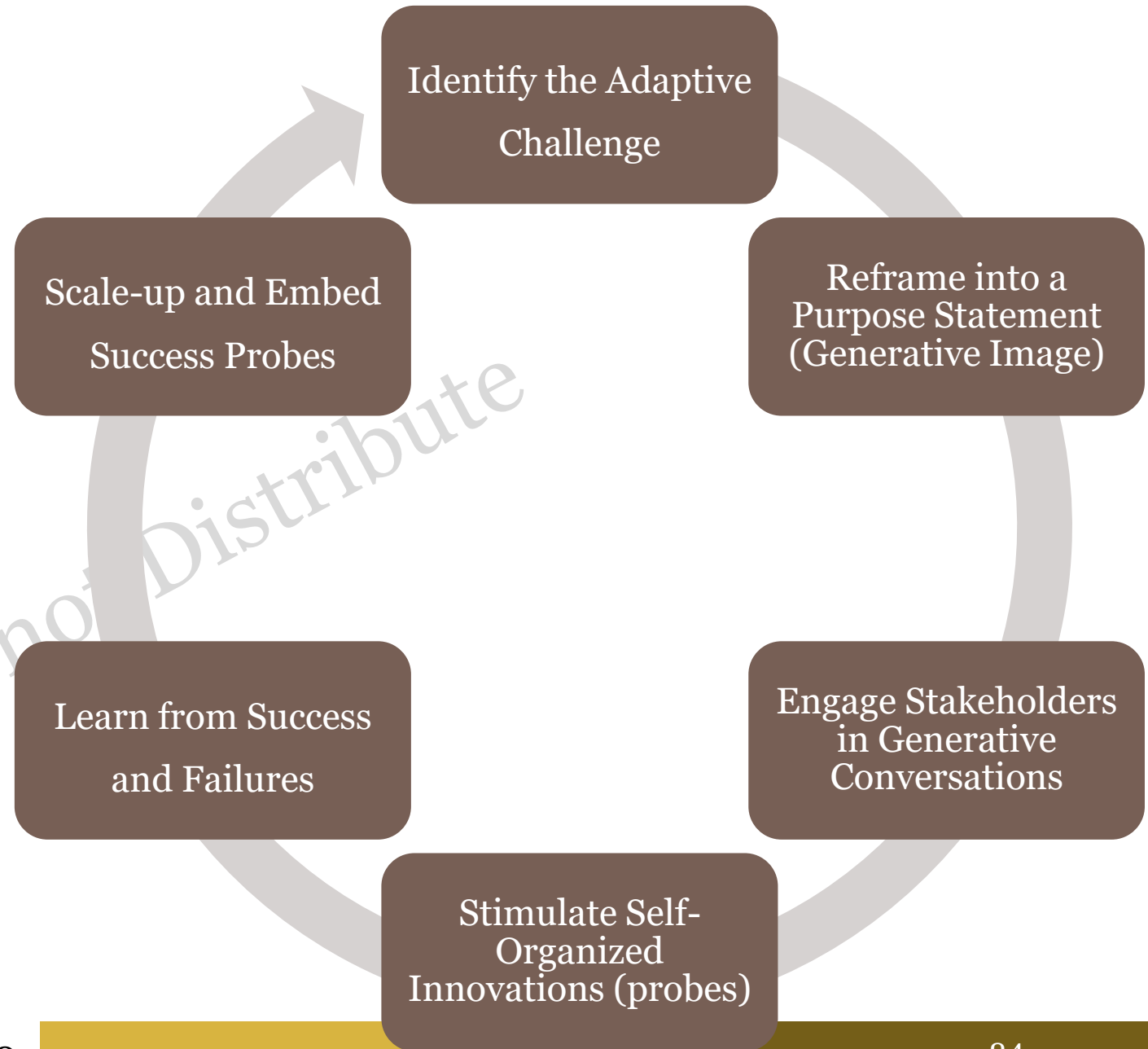
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The Generative Change Model



Gervase R. Bushe,

“The Dynamics of Generative Change”, 2020



As you go, conditions will change,

the environment will change, the people involved will change, the very things you do will cause the conditions to change

so that solutions that would not have worked last year may work now (and vice versa).

About Facilitating

- A facilitator is someone who helps a group of people work together effectively by guiding conversations, asking questions, helping spread participation, capturing ideas, suggesting processes for group work and then leading them.
- Normally, they don't have a personal interest in the issues being discussed, so they can guide interactions to produce outcomes the entire group is satisfied with.

However, some question whether this kind of facilitating produces less generative conversations

Hosting, not Facilitating

- When a consultant stands at the front of the group, capturing what people are saying on a board, all eyes are on him or her.
- That is not a conversation among stakeholders, that is a conversation where stakeholders are feeding the consultant what they think they are being asked for.
- Often, the outputs are clichéd, easy to justify, and abstract. While they might look like a great list, they rarely power any change in behavior.
- If the people in the room are talking to the consultant or facilitator, instead of to each other, something's wrong.

Be a Host

- Hosting has become a commonly used metaphor to describe a different approach to leading meetings
- This is often described as creating “containers” that support people having new and better conversations
- Typically, these are not facilitated; one reason is that it would require a small army of facilitators if you are working with a large group.
- Instead, design engagement events so that small groups can work on their own.

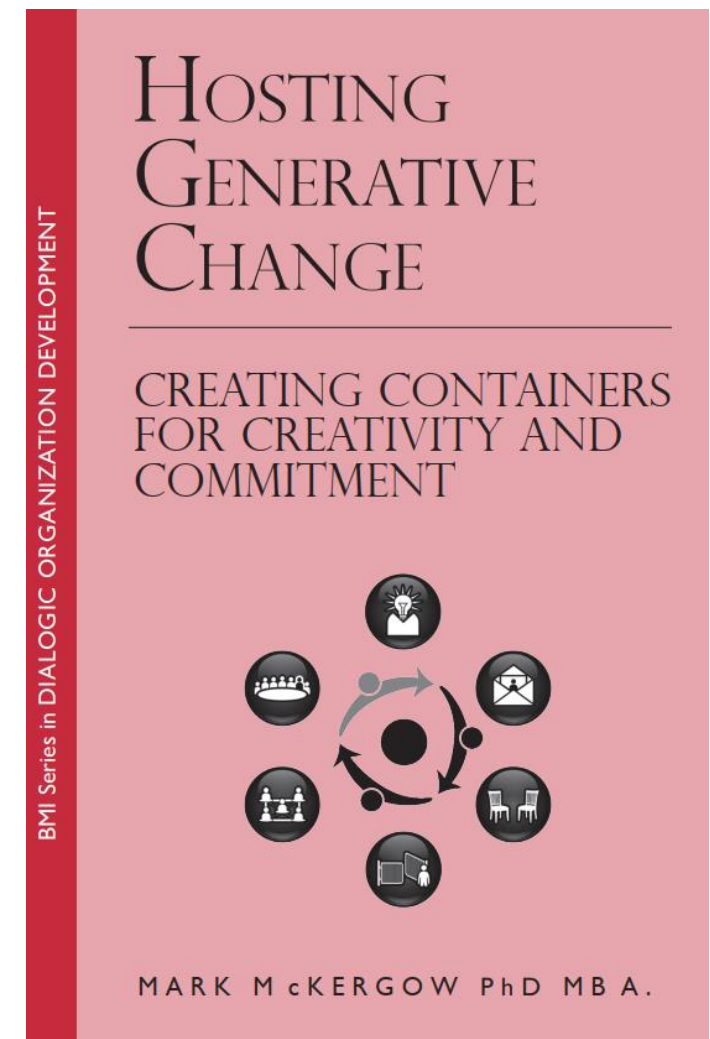
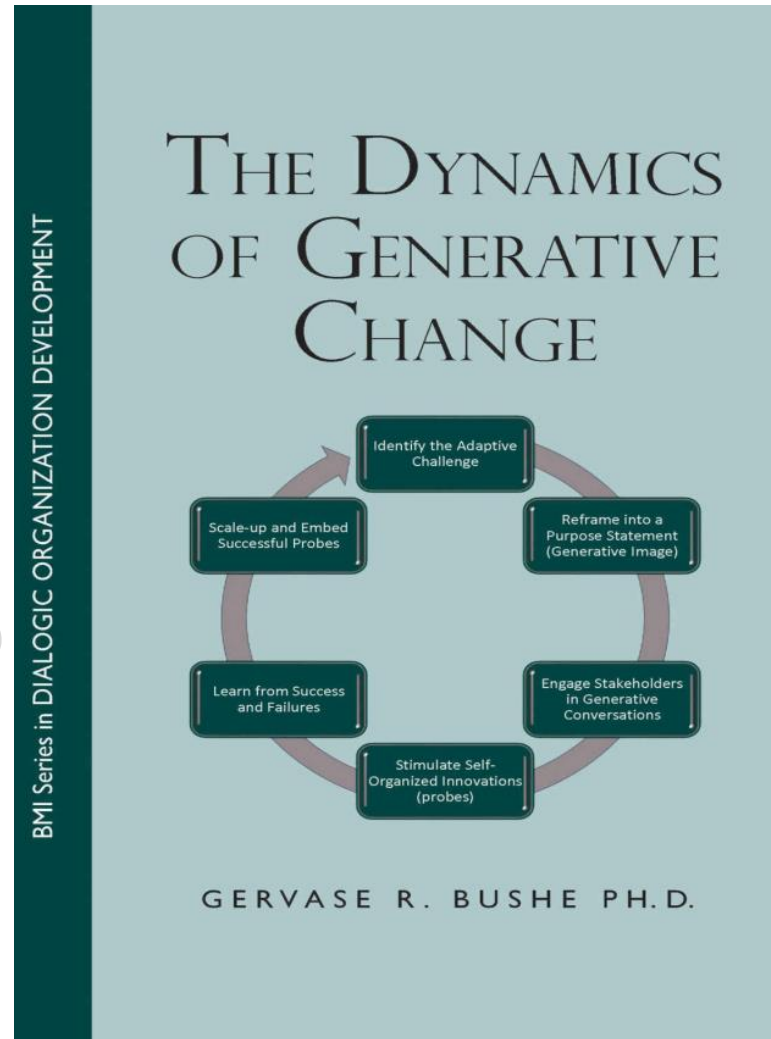
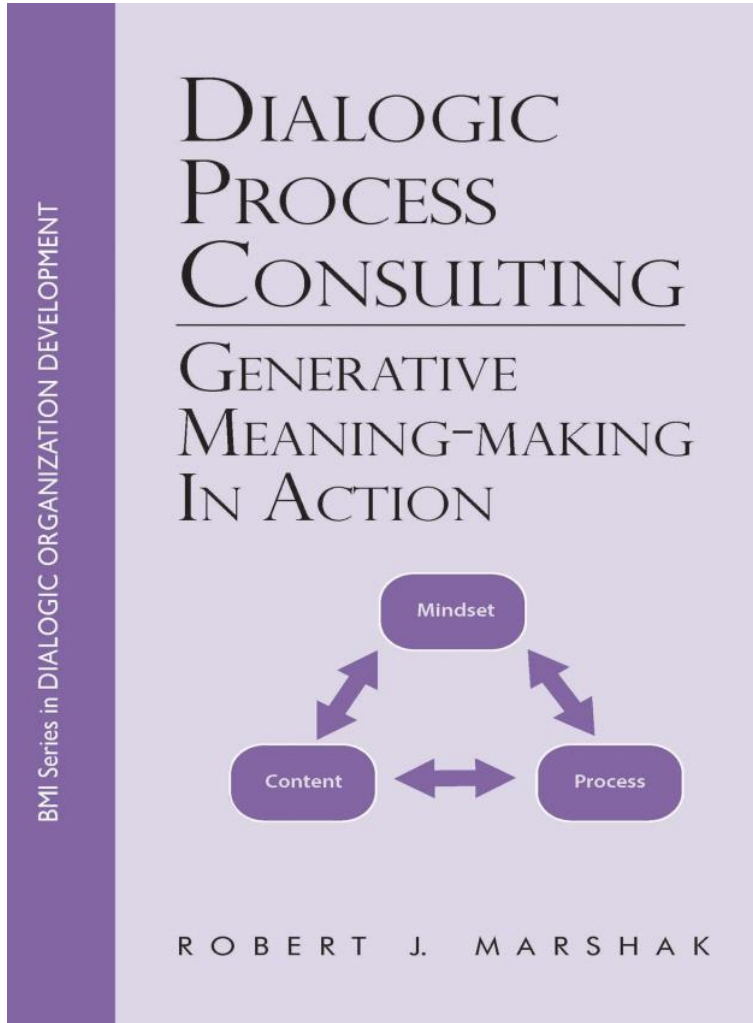
Good Hosting

- Good hosting requires paying attention to the energy and being ready to redesign on the fly when unexpected things show up.
- To produce probes, however, the design will have to be sequenced so that it naturally leads to people self-selecting themselves into groups focused on something they want to do.

Do not Distribute

BMI Series in Dialogic Org. Dev.

<https://b-m-institute.com>



Ecocycle Planning

Analyze the Full Portfolio of Activities and Relationships
to identify Obstacles and Opportunities for Progress

juggling too many balls

- How often have you found yourself juggling too many balls?
- You may start dropping things left and right in a frantic effort to keep everything in the air.
- You will also find yourself unable to pick up new balls as it will only add stress and chaos. This may happen to you personally. Or in your team. Or in your entire organization.



Background

- Ecocycle planning is part of the repertoire of Liberating Structures.
- Its purpose is to analyze the full portfolio of activities and identify obstacles and opportunities for progress in a markedly non-linear way.
- That makes is an excellent way to periodically reflect on your work together and to decide what to focus on next.

Do not Distribute

In these situations,
we have to **rediscover** our focus and
creatively ‘destroy’ what isn’t valuable anymore.

Ecocycle Planning is about exploring
what it is that you're keeping in the air (but shouldn't),
and what it is that you aren't (but should)

A metaphor from nature

The name of this Liberating Structures borrows from the ecological cycle of life.

- Plants, for example, grow from seeds when they land in fertile ground (**gestation** or **renewal**).
- When the ground is fertile enough, seedlings will sprout that in turn depend on sufficient sun, shelter and minerals to grow (**growth**).
- When these conditions have been met, seedlings grow into plants that bear fruits and/or spread new seeds (**maturation**).
- But eventually, even mature plants die and are composted to become energy for new plants.
- Or their removal simply makes place for new seeds to grow (**creative destruction**).

Even daily life works

- The work that we do in daily life can be plotted onto this cycle.
- We often embark on activities that may become valuable at some point, but require our energy and time to grow.
- Other activities are more mature in that we can do them without much effort to get a lot of value out of them.
- But as with plants, sometimes we need to stop activities (destroy them) to make space for something new in our agenda's

Gestation or Renewal



- Represents all the activities that you think would be useful to you (personally or) as a team, but you are not doing at the moment

Do not Distribute

Birth

- Represents the activities that you have just started doing as a team, or that you have been investing in.
- Although not fully valuable yet, and probably take effort and discipline to do, they will become increasingly valuable as you keep doing them.



BIRTH

Maturity



- Represents the activities that are comfortable and valuable to you as a team.
- It doesn't take much effort or discipline to do them.
- It's become part of your rhythm as a team

Creative Destruction

- Represents the activities that have either lost their value to you as a team or need to be reinvented in order to become useful again.
- Perhaps by doing it in a different way, or from a different perspective.
- Or you want to stop doing them altogether



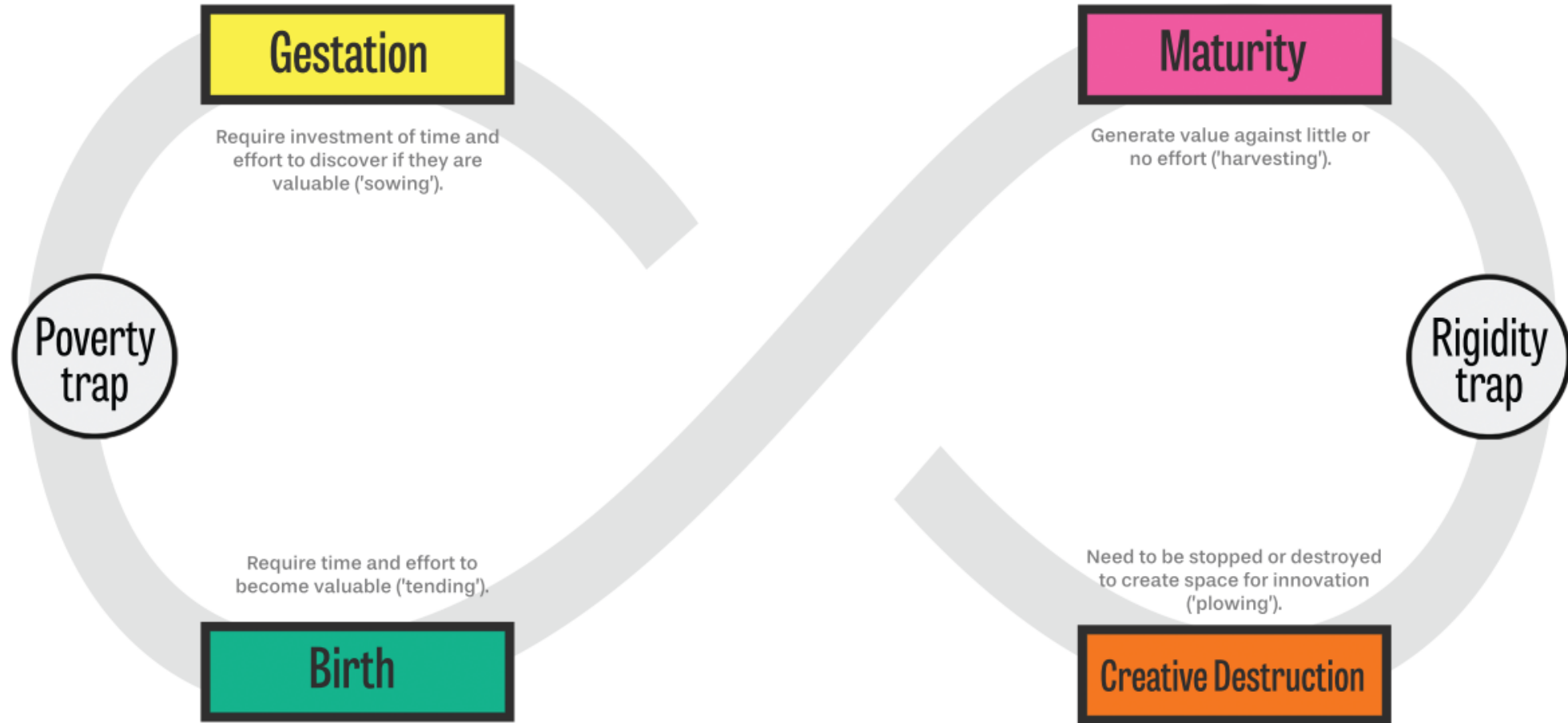
Poverty Trap and Rigidity Trap

- Some activities may get stuck in the Poverty Trap or the Rigidity Trap.
- **Poverty Trap:**
holds the activities that **aren't getting the energy and time** they **need to grow into something valuable**,
- **Rigidity Trap:**
holds the activities that are **costing us energy and time** while **their value is diminishing or diminished**.

Intrinsically Multi-layered

- As in nature, **ecocycles are multi-layered** in that every activity on the ecocycle **contains another ecocycle**, only on a lower level.
- So, one ecocycle may describe your personal hobbies or all the products you're working on as a team.
- A lower-level ecocycle can describe the activities you perform for one specific personal hobby or one particular product that you're working on.
- This layering also emphasizes that **everything is related**. **Change on one level impact activities on other levels.**

Ecocycle Planning



One suggested way of doing this (~60 mins)

- The steps of this structure are detailed in later slides.
- The timeboxes are indicative.
- It would be helpful to give a personal example while introducing Ecocycle Planning phases.
- You can combine it with ideation activities to think about 15% solutions for the obstacles you've found

Steps (1/4)

- **Step 1) Introduce Ecocycle Planning**, (5 min):
 - Explain the metaphor with an example, preferably a personal one;
 - If you're doing a group Ecocycle, bring a large version (the larger the better) or model it on the floor;
 - You can hand-out printouts of the Ecocycle to help people understand the model.
- **Step 2) Personal Reflection**, (5 min):
 - Invite people to **individually**, and **in silence**, **generate** a numbered list of activities that occupy their time.

Steps (2/4)

- **Step 3) working in pairs, (5 min):**
 - Invite people to work in pairs to share and plot the activities on the Ecocycle
- **Step 4) working in small groups, (10 min):**
 - Invite the pairs to pair up to form small groups and have them share and finalize the placement of activities and write them on stickies
- **Step 5) adding to the larger Ecocycle, (5 min):**
 - Invite the small groups to put their stickies on the larger Ecocycle that they share with all the other groups (5 min);

Steps (3/4)

- **Step 6)** reflect on emergent patterns, (15 min):
 - Use 1-2-4-ALL to have the small groups to focus on activities for which there is consensus among the groups and to reflect on the patterns that emerge out of the distribution of all the stickies.
 - Ask:

“What do we need to creatively destroy or stop to move forward?
What do we need to invest in?”

Steps (4/4)

- **Step 7)** identify [first-action steps](#) both of traps (each 10 min)
 - Invite the small groups to identify first-action steps or [15% Solutions](#) that can help stop activities in the *Rigidity Trap*;
 - Repeat for items in the *Poverty Trap* when you have the time.
- **Step 8)** explore activities for which there is [disagreement](#), (10 min):
 - If you have the time, invite the small groups to explore activities for which there is no consensus. When possible, identify first-action steps.

Tips (1/2)

- Include people with different perspectives and different stakes. This helps create a more complete picture;
- If you use small-scale versions of the Ecocycle (like A4 or letter), invite people to number the activities and put the numbers in the model rather than the activities. This leaves more space and makes it easier to identify patterns;
- Bring a personal example of an Ecocycle. People often struggle with the quadrants and the abstractness of the model. An example helps. But it also helps to emphasize that it isn't about getting it 100% right;

Tips (2/2)

- If you're daring, you can plot people instead of activities. This can help you identify the relationships that are starving and those that may be getting in the way as they are now. Rather than ending relationships that aren't helpful, you can use the Ecocycle Planning to discover which relationships may be in need of a shake-up in their dynamic in order to become fruitful again;

Do not Distribute

Possible Combinations (1/2)

- A single Liberating Structure is helpful. But their true power becomes apparent when you combine them into strings.
- Here are some potential variations:
 - Follow-up with a 1–2–4-ALL, [15% Solutions](#) or [25/10 Crowd Sourcing](#) to discover strategies and first steps that can help stop activities that are in the rigidity trap or reignite activities in the poverty trap;
 - Follow-up with a [What, So What, Now What](#) to identify patterns and discover meaning and actions together;

Possible Combinations (2/2)

- When using Ecocycle Planning on an individual level, follow-up **with Troika Consulting** to give and get help;
- Precede with a **Nine Whys** to first clarify the purpose of the group. Then identify all the activities and the work that the group does in order to achieve that purpose. Or simply use the purpose statement generated during Nine Why's to help the group identify what is valuable and what isn't;
- Embed within a **Panarchy** to emphasize and explore ecocycles on many levels and how they interact;

Blank Template

