

Handling Conflict & Difficult Conversations

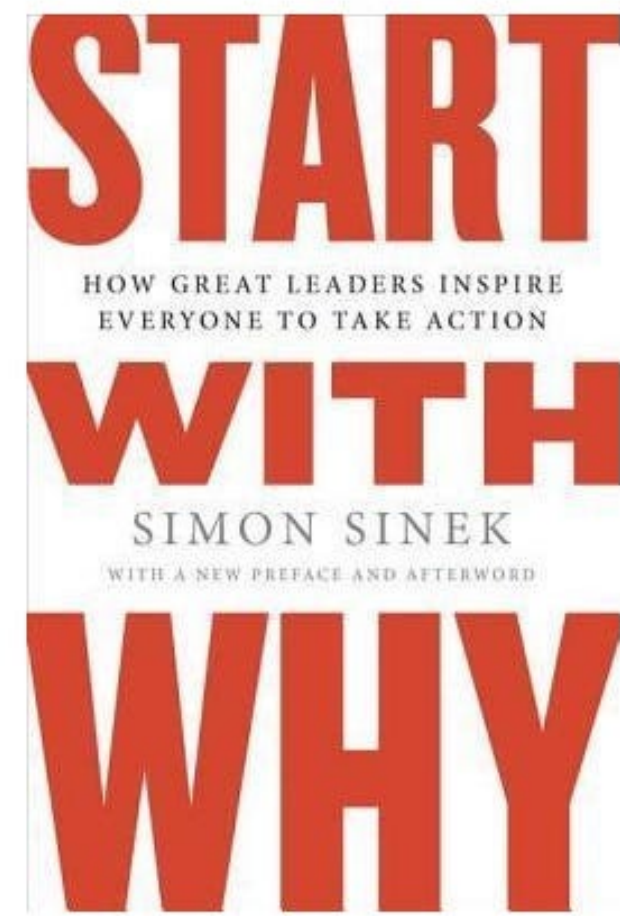
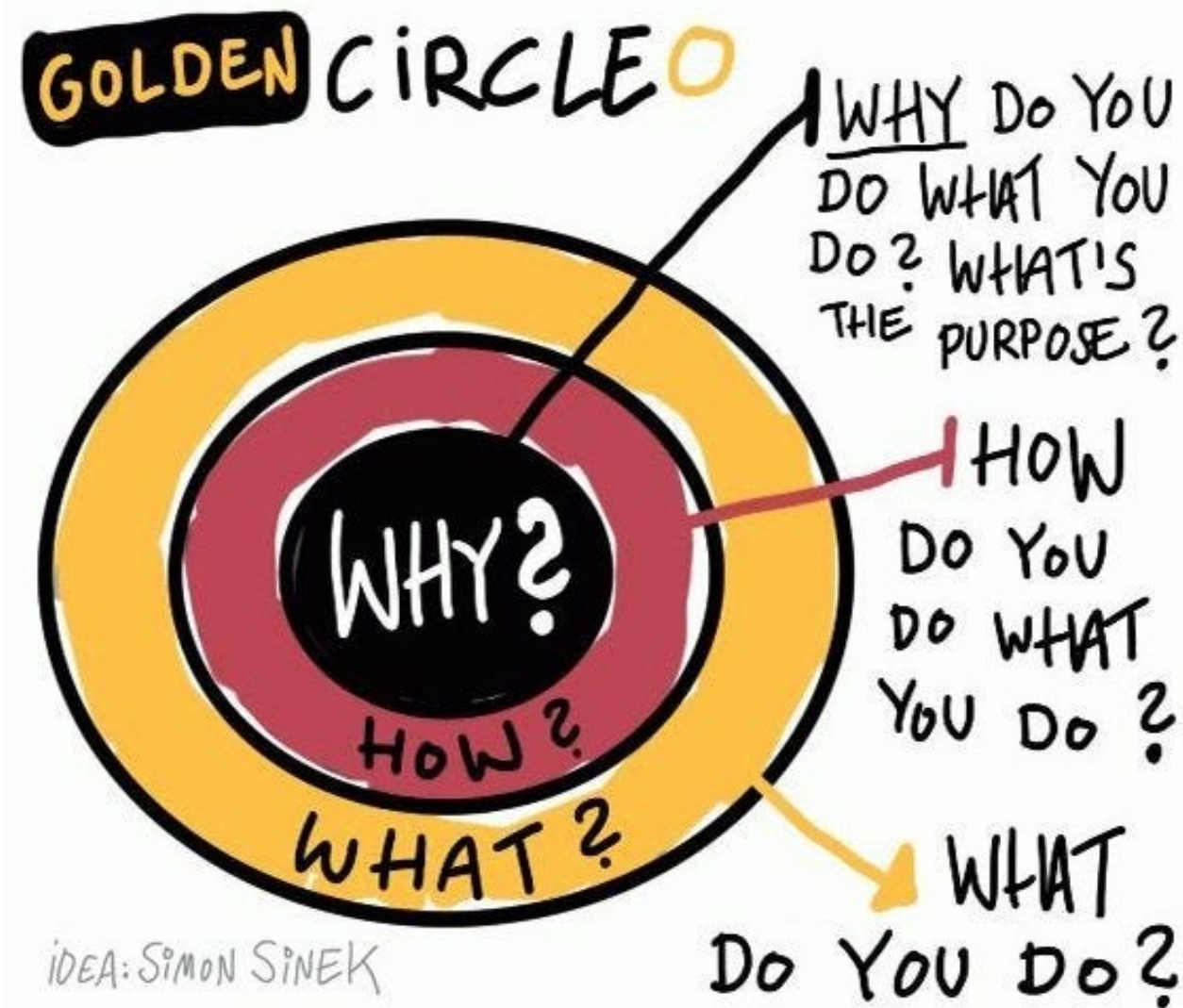
A Chameleon, psychology informed approach for teachers...

“How you react to a situation, not the situation itself causes the outcome.” Paul McGee - S.U.M.O

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Core Purpose, Core Values & Vision



Discussion...

What are the things about Cedar IPS that you want to protect at all cost?

What are the things you think need to change?

Core Values

Core Purpose

Shared Vision

To be continued...

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Core Values

- Why are these core values important?
- Do they change?
- What does change?
- What are the main challenges in meeting them consistently?
- How can you, as a school, best realise these values?
- Strength in consistency!
- Strength in unity!

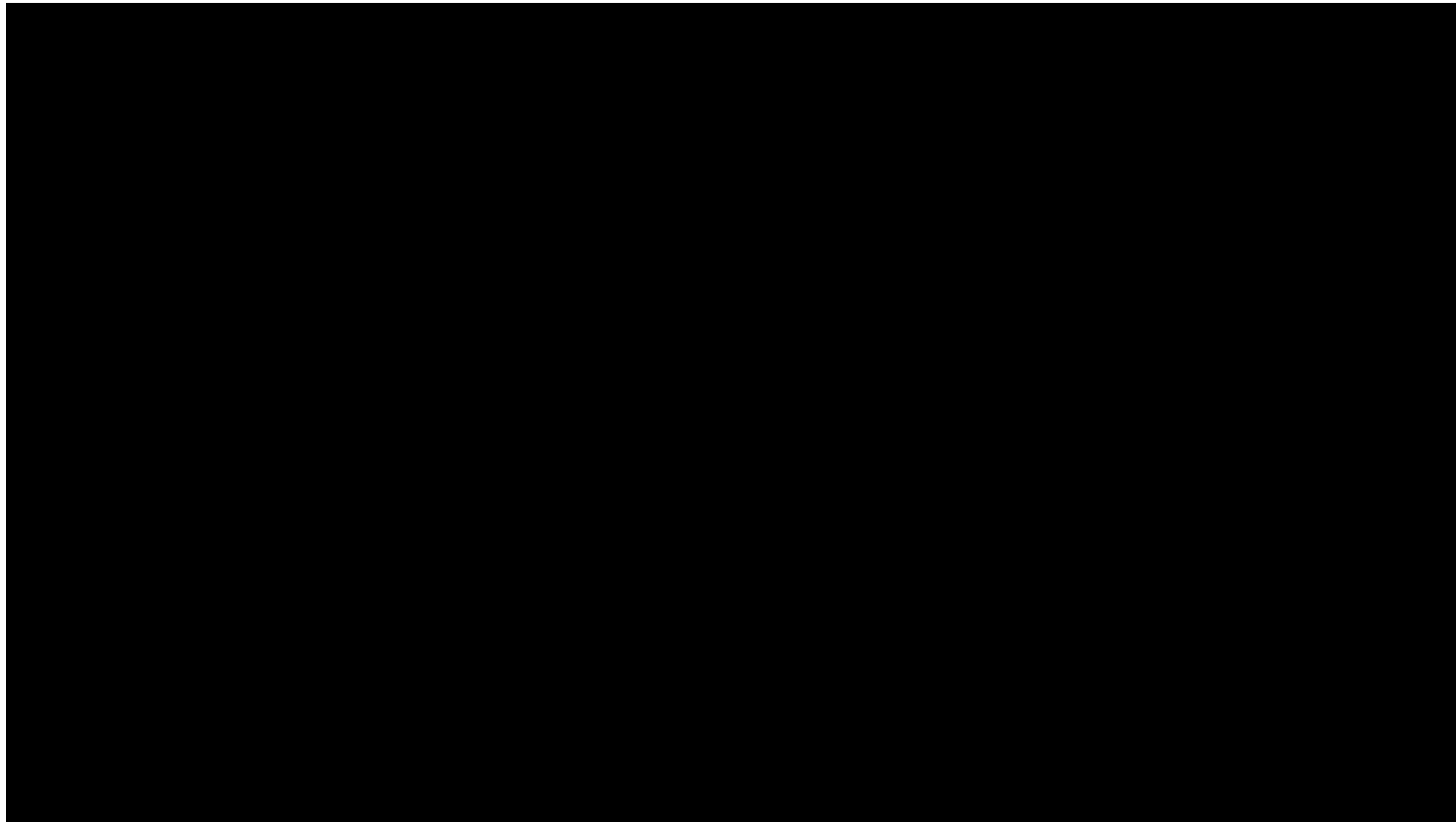


Teambuilding & Trust - Activity 1

The VUCA Prime Uplift

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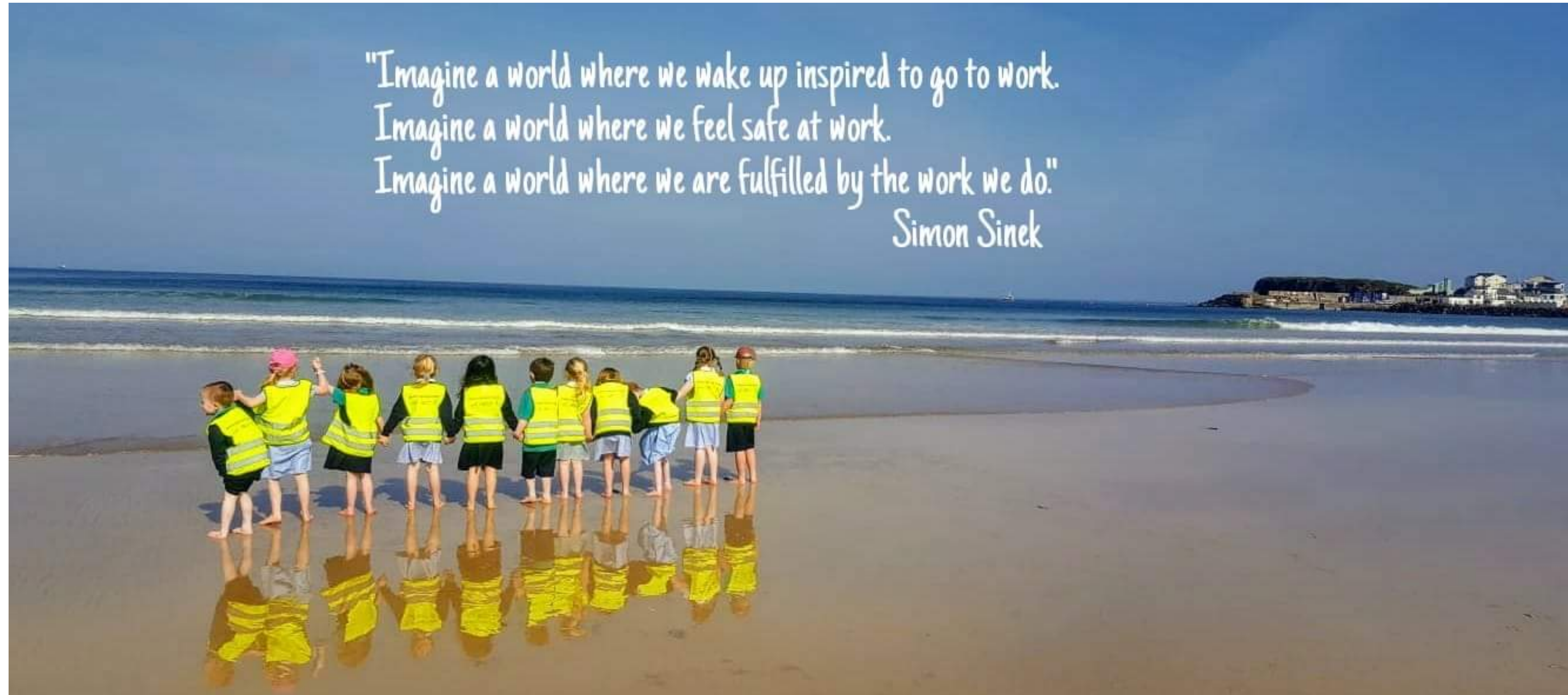
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“Emotional intelligence (EQ) is critical for an organisation’s success, driving up to 58% of job performance by enabling better leadership, collaboration, and conflict resolution. It fosters positive environments, increases resilience during change, and improves decision-making by managing emotions effectively.”

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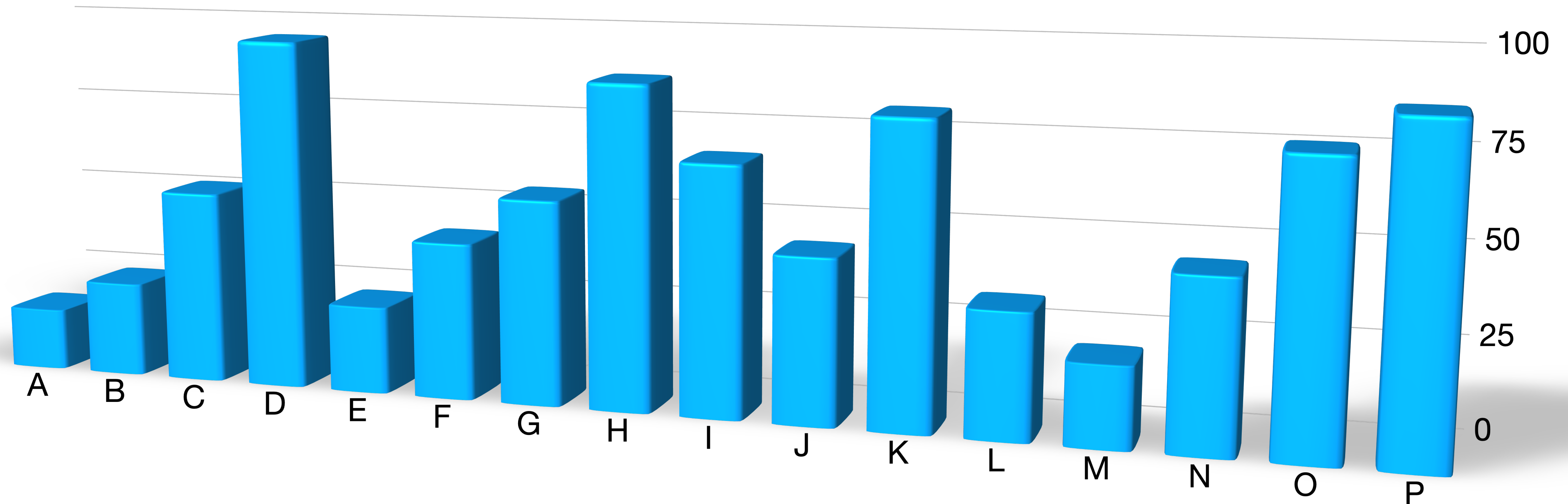
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- You don't 'fail' an EQ test
- Unlike IQ, EQ can be developed
- Everyone is different



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Thoughts

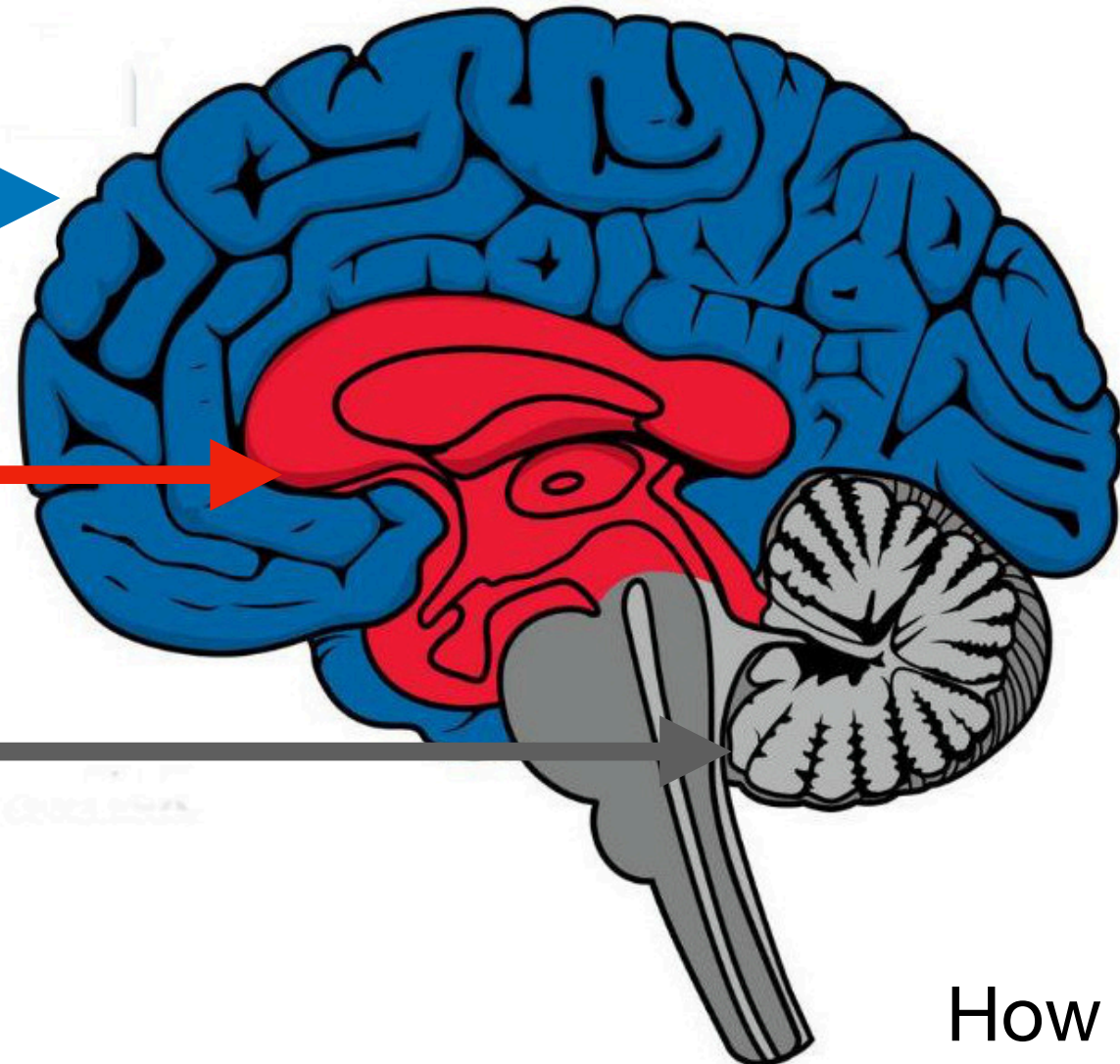
Neocortex

Feelings

Limbic System

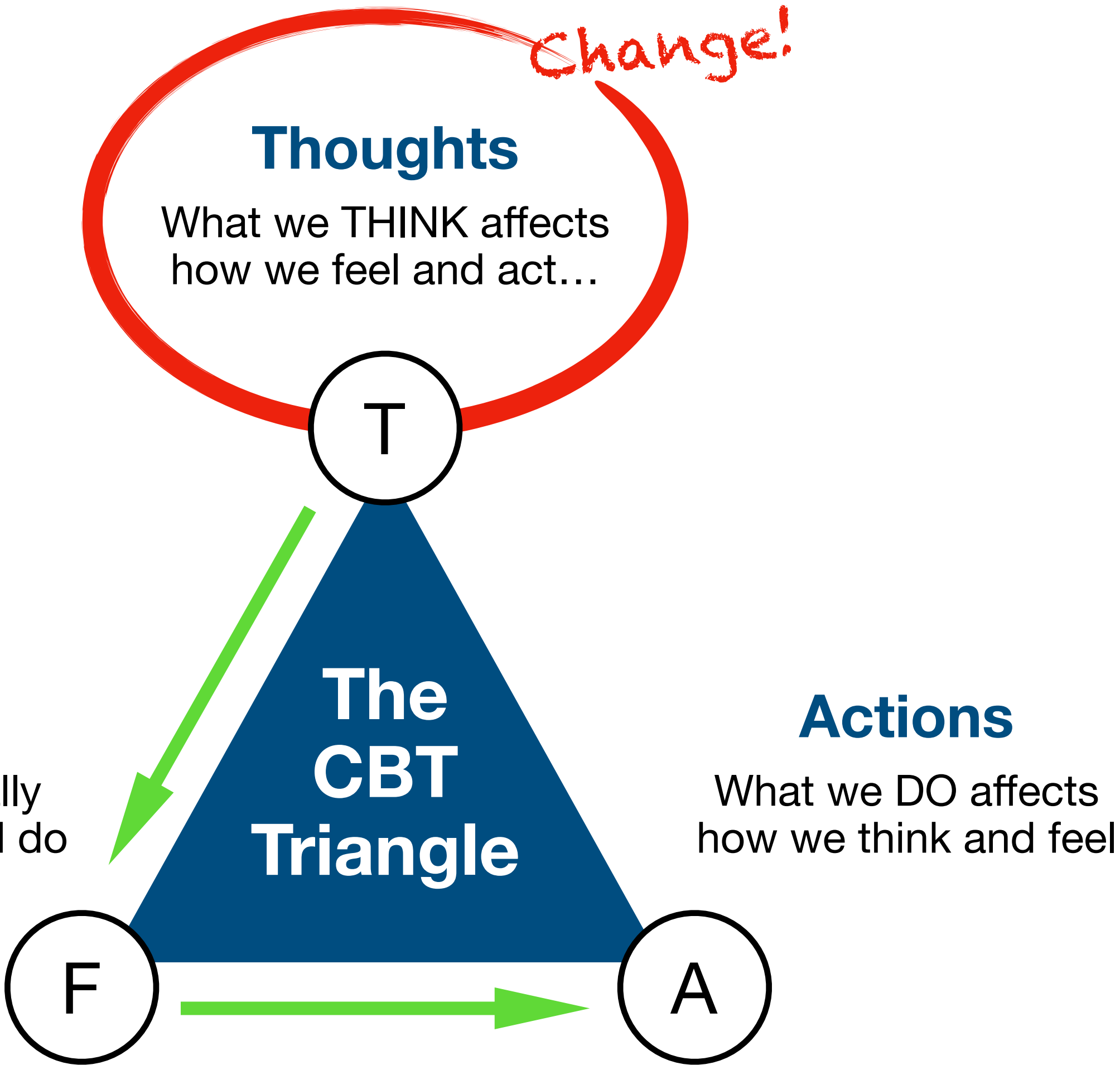
Actions

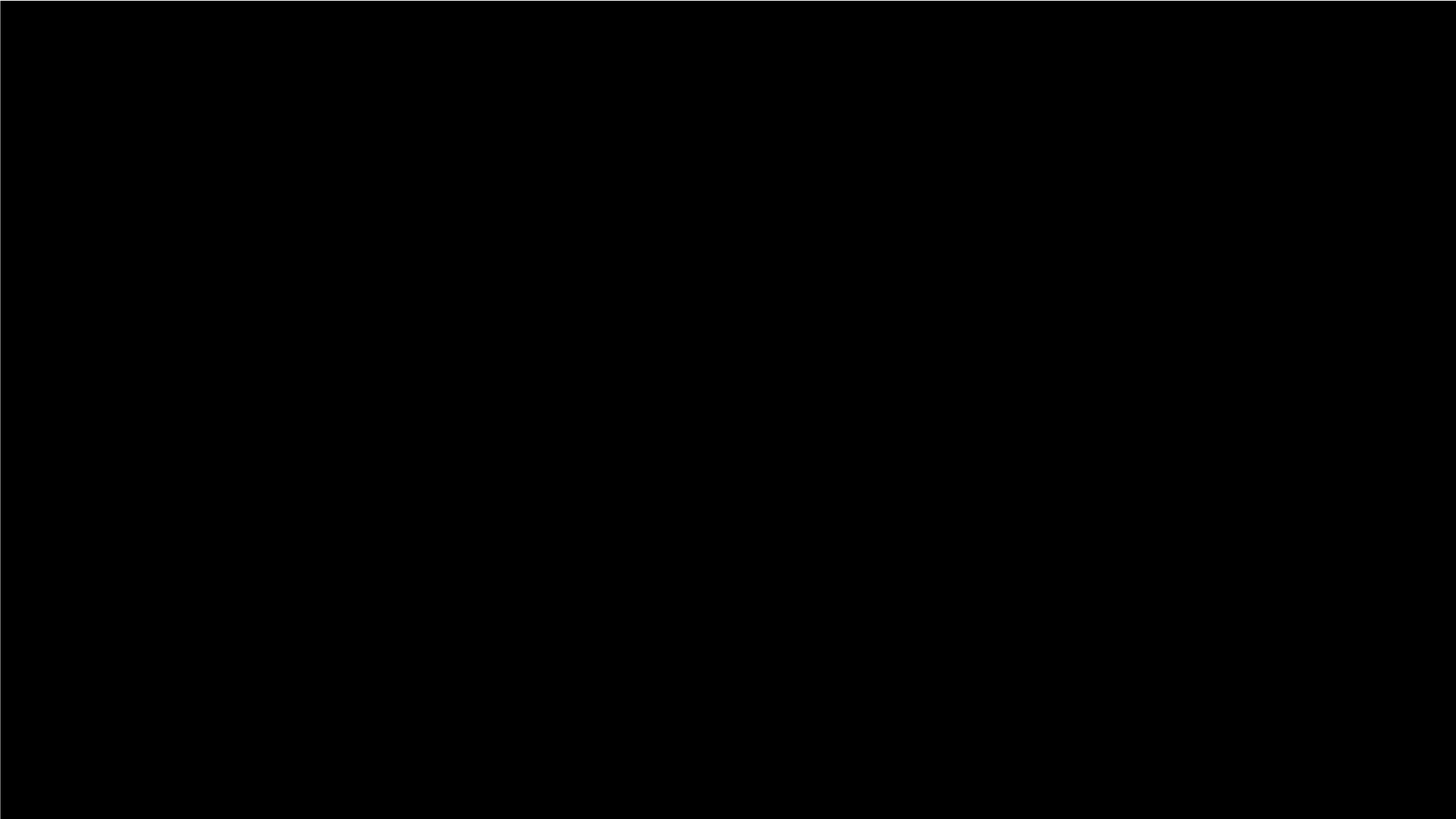
Reptilian Brain



$$E \neq O$$

$$E + R = O$$





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Why EQ Matters in Schools

- Conflict is inevitable in schools - how we handle it defines our culture.
- Teachers are emotional leaders; your response sets the tone.
- This session helps you respond with clarity, calm, and confidence.

Relationships

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The Psychology of Conflict

- **Threat response:** Fight, flight, freeze
- **Emotional contagion:** Dysregulation spreads
- **Cognitive bias:** We assume, misread, and react
- **Identity threat:** “You’re questioning my professionalism?”



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What People Typically Do

- Avoid the issue
- Escalate with authority
- Over-explain or lecture
- Mirror the other's emotion
- Take it personally
- **Activity:** “Which of these have you seen or done?”

Add a Mentimeter QR
and sort build order ...

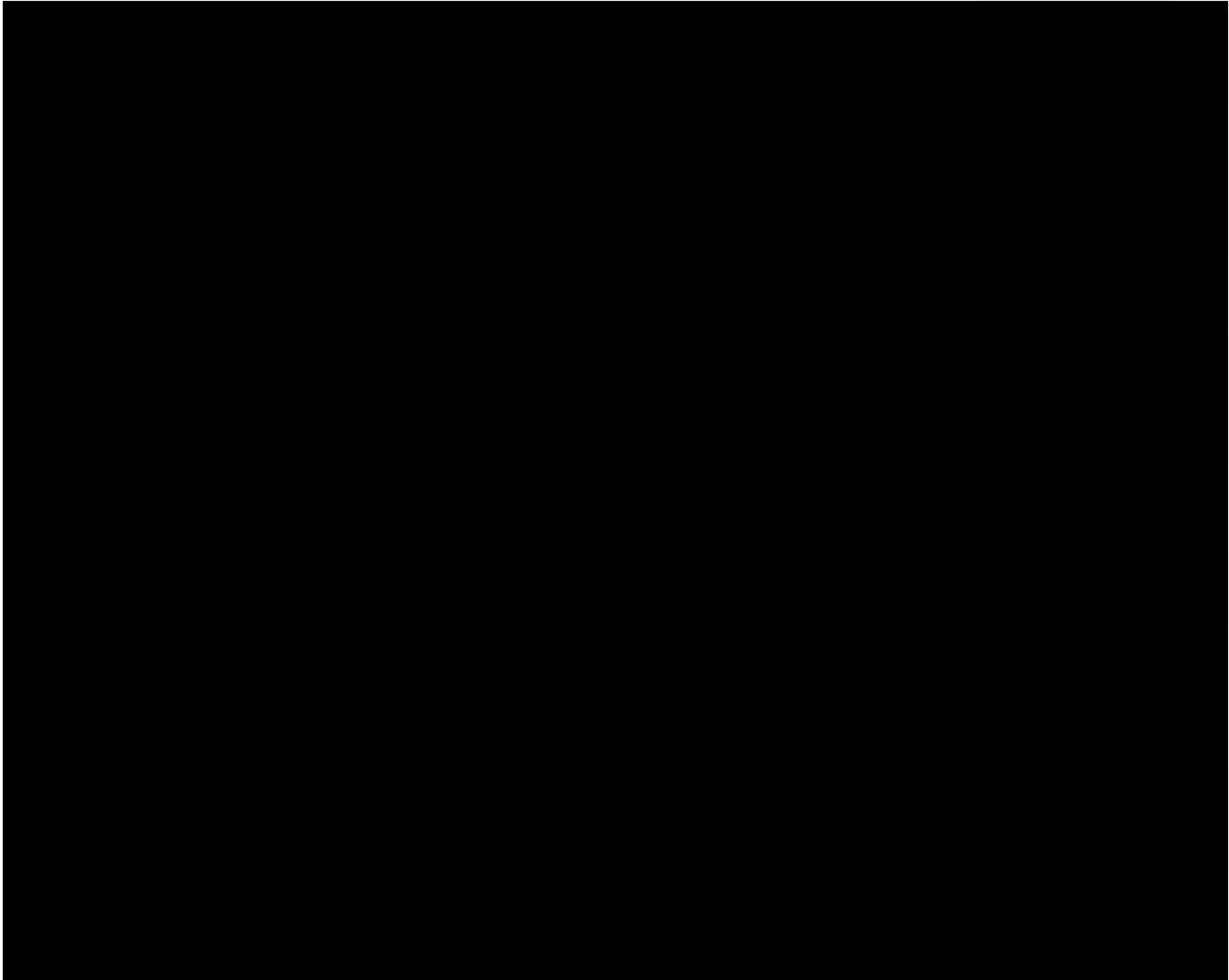


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What People Typically Do

Add Mentimeter Slide



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What Happens Next?

- Trust breaks down
- Behaviour escalates
- Emotional residue lingers
- More time spent managing fallout

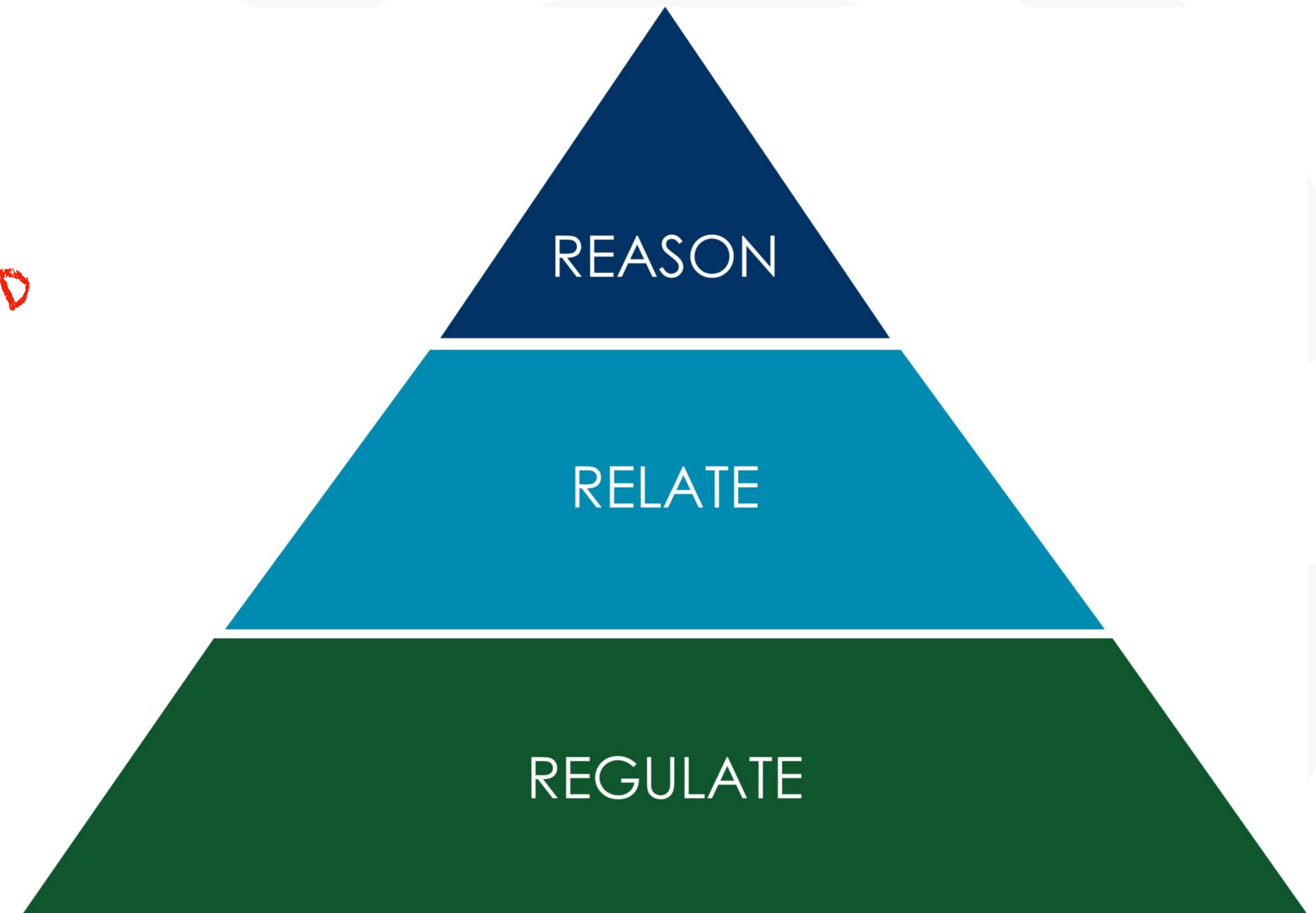


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What Works Instead

- Calm → Regulate → Relate → Reason
 - Curiosity over certainty
 - Validate without agreeing
 - Separate person from behaviour
 - Collaborate on solutions
- When in the history of the world... ASD*



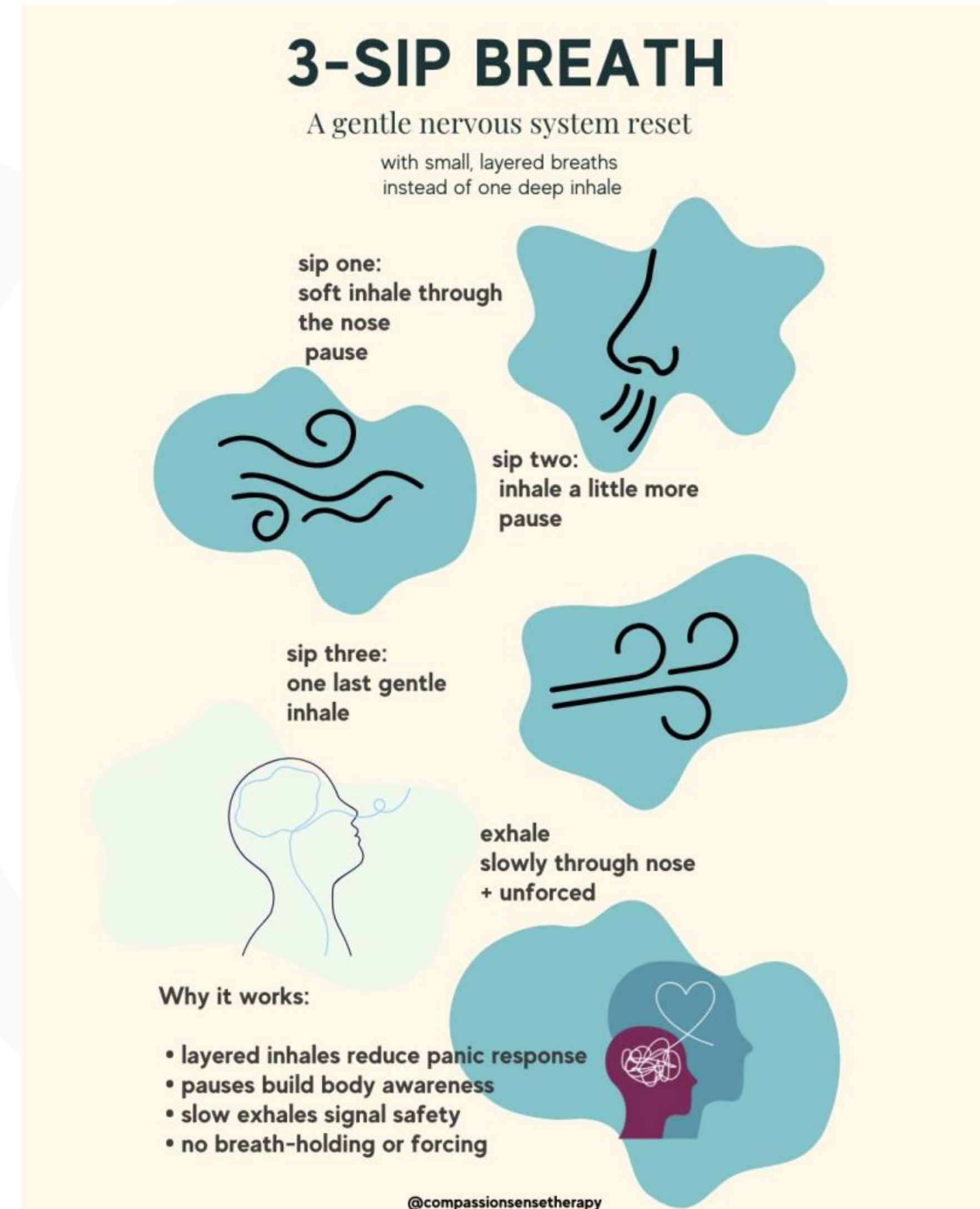
© Bruce Perry

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Regulate First

- Breathe, pause, ground yourself
- Use a calm, low, slow voice
- Name the emotion: “I can see this is frustrating”
- **Practice:** 3-second pause + neutral tone





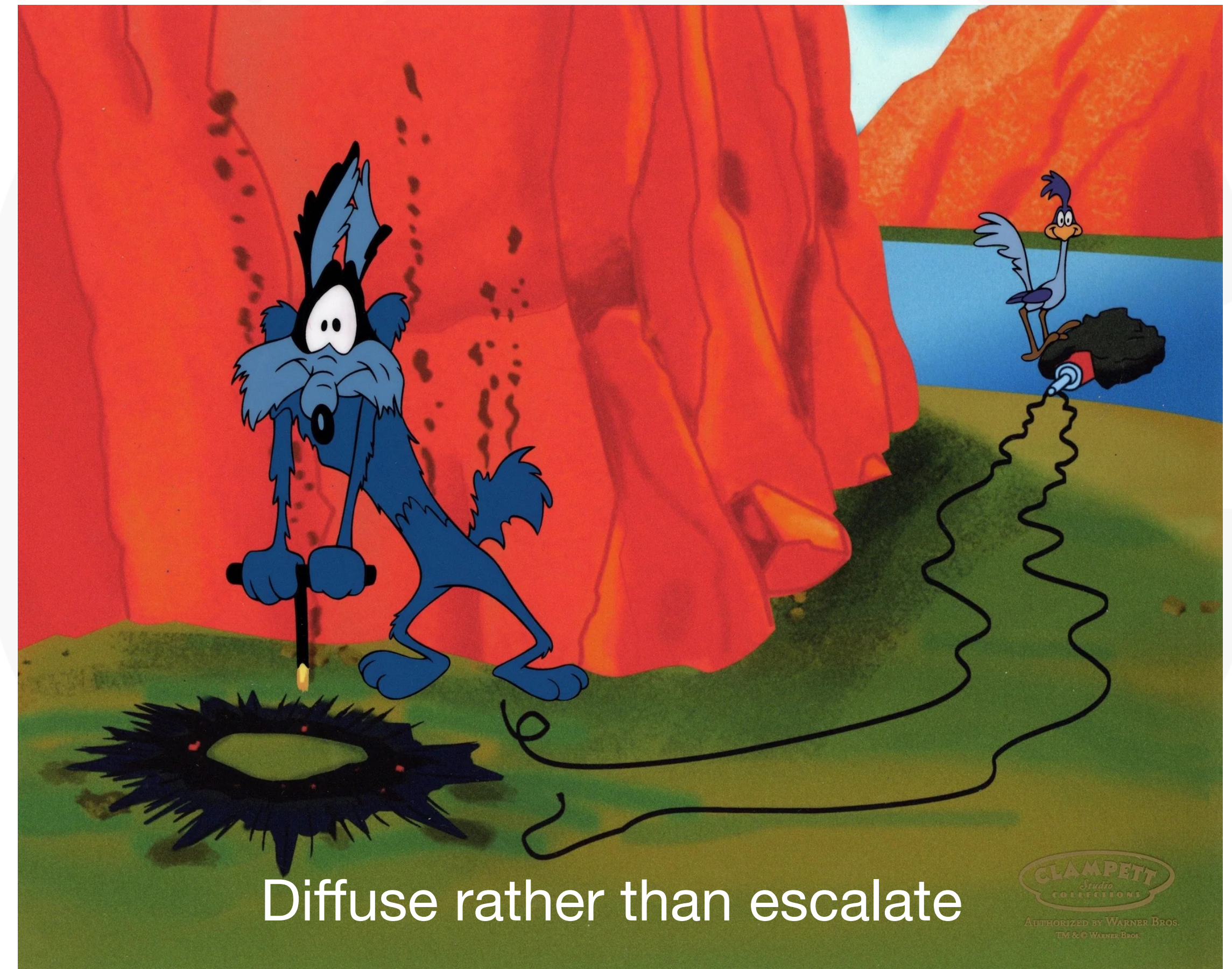
Coffee/Tea Break

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Curiosity Over Certainty

- Ask: “What happened from your perspective?”
- Avoid assumptions and accusations
- Listen for unmet needs
- **Framework:** “I notice... I wonder... I’m curious...”
- **Communication:**
 - 55% Body Language
 - 38% Tone
 - 7% Actual Words Spoken



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Validate Without Agreeing

- “That sounds really tough.”
- “I can see why you’d feel that way.”
- Validation ≠ agreement—it’s emotional first aid
- **Practice:** Rewrite a dismissive response into a validating one

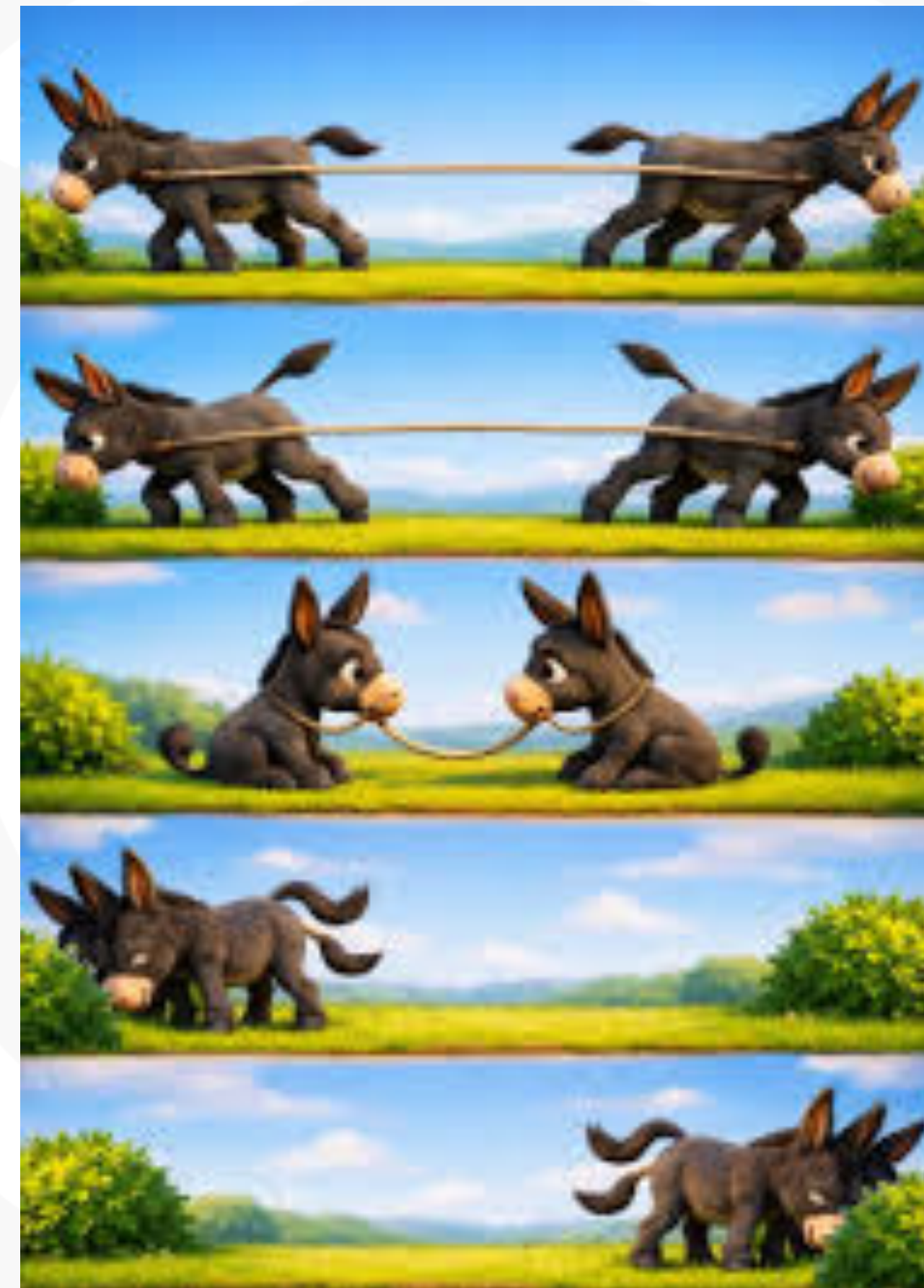


Bruce Perry - Audible

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Smartie Arm Wrestling

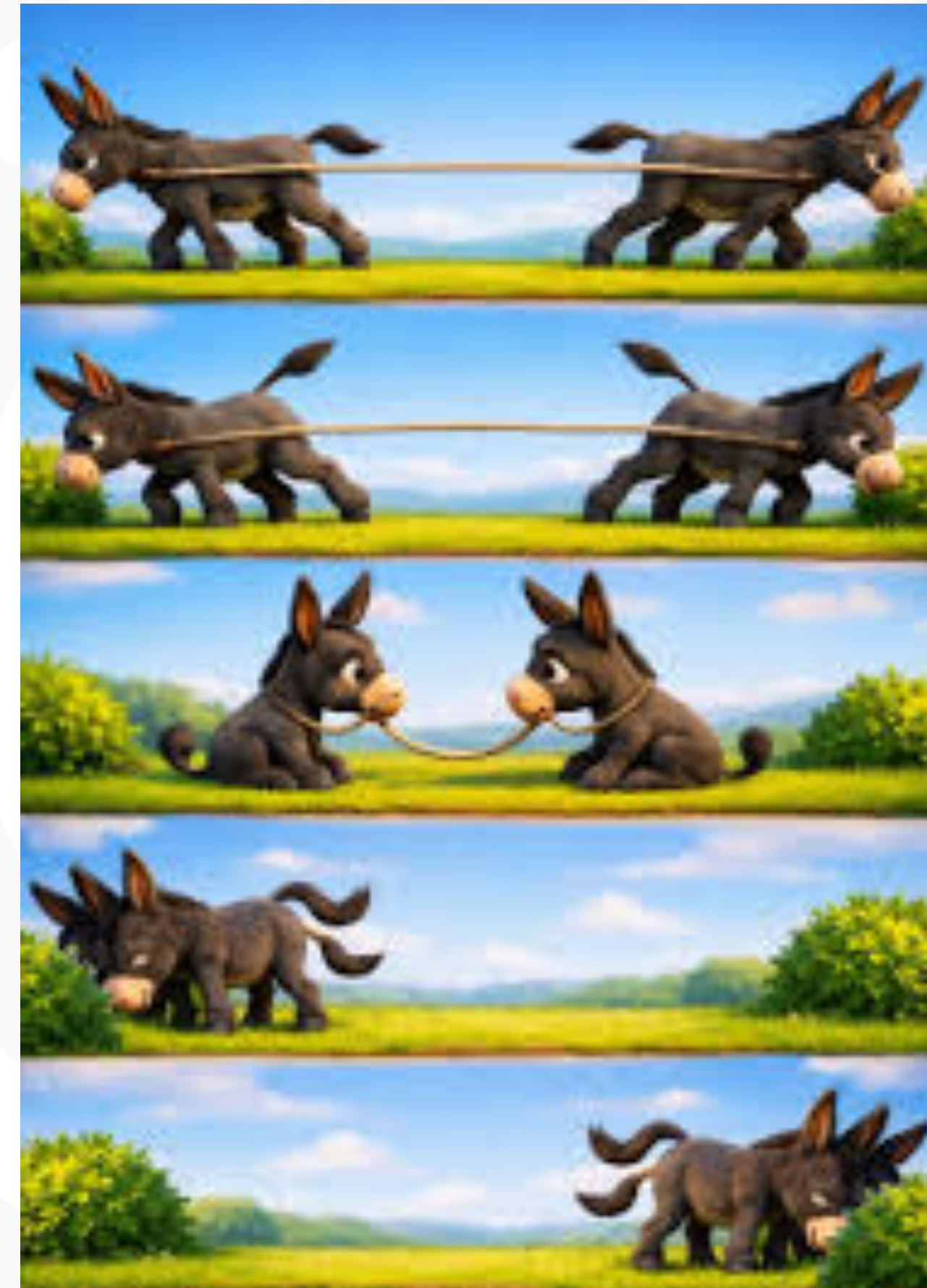


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Collaborative Problem-Solving

- Define the issue together
- Explore both needs
- Generate options
- Agree on next steps



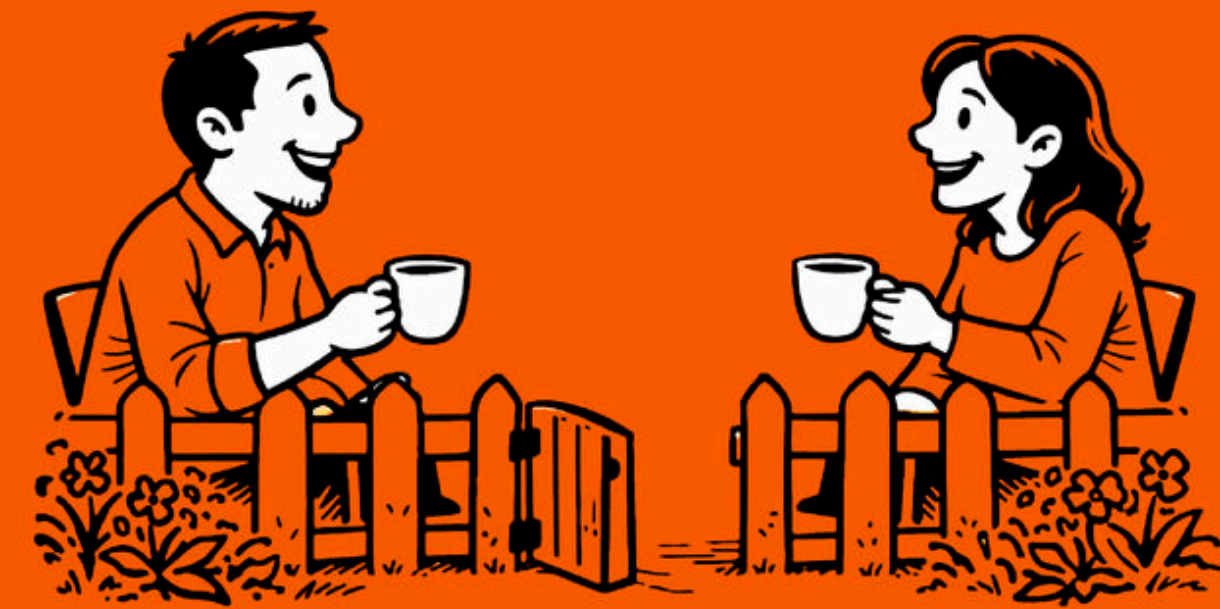
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Boundaries with Warmth

- “I want to talk, but I need us both to stay respectful.”
- Boundaries protect relationships
- Kindness + clarity = authority
- **Practice:** Say “no” with empathy

You can
be warm
and still have
boundaries.



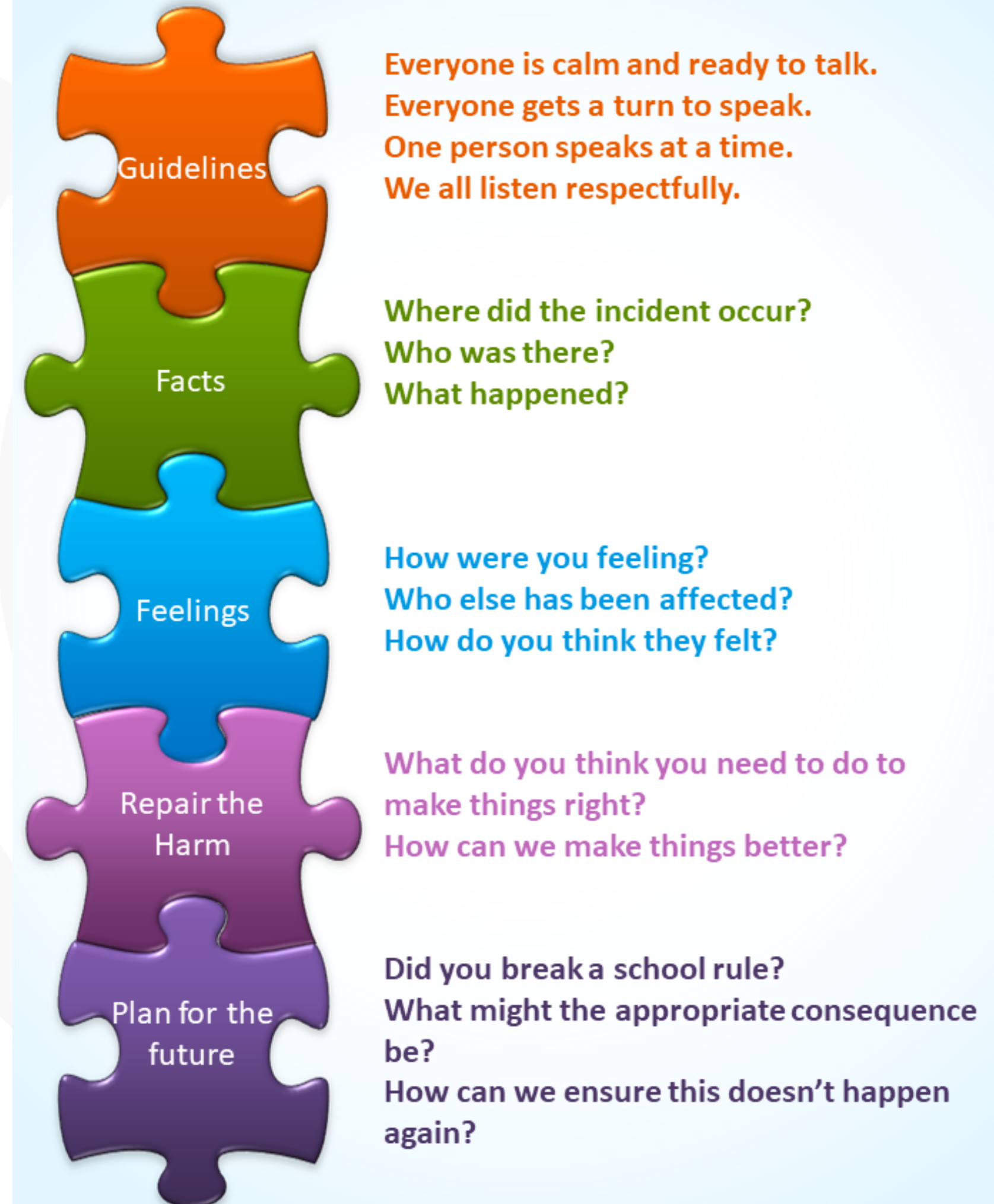
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Restorative Conversations

- Focus on impact, not blame
- Ask:
 - What happened?
 - What were you thinking?
 - Who was affected?
 - What have you thought since?
 - What needs to happen now?

Restorative Chats Focus on the Relationships



A restorative chat lets everyone share their thinking and feelings to repair harm.

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Real-World Scenarios

- Student defiance
- Angry parent email
- Colleague tension
- Feeling unsupported by leadership
- **Activity:** Role-play or “freeze and coach” with real examples



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Quick Tools You Can Use

- 3-second pause
- “What’s the need behind the behaviour?”
- “I notice... I wonder... I’m curious...”
- *“Seek first to understand, then to be understood”*
Stephen Covey
- Regulate—Relate—Reason
- Restorative 5 questions
- **Handout:** Pocket guide of strategies



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Conversation Frameworks

- **Traffic Light Model:**

- **Red:** Stop reacting
- **Amber:** Gather info
- **Green:** Move to solutions

- **GROW Model:**

1. GOAL
2. REALITY
3. OPTIONS
4. WAY forward

Coaching

School Development Planning

Conversation Framework



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Embedding in School Culture

- Model emotional regulation
- Use shared language
- Debrief with colleagues
- Build restorative routines
- Leadership sets the tone
- Initial impressions - 7 seconds



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Reflection & Commitment

- Think of a recent conflict:
 - What worked?
 - What would you do differently?
- One strategy you'll try this week
- **Activity:** Write & share in pairs



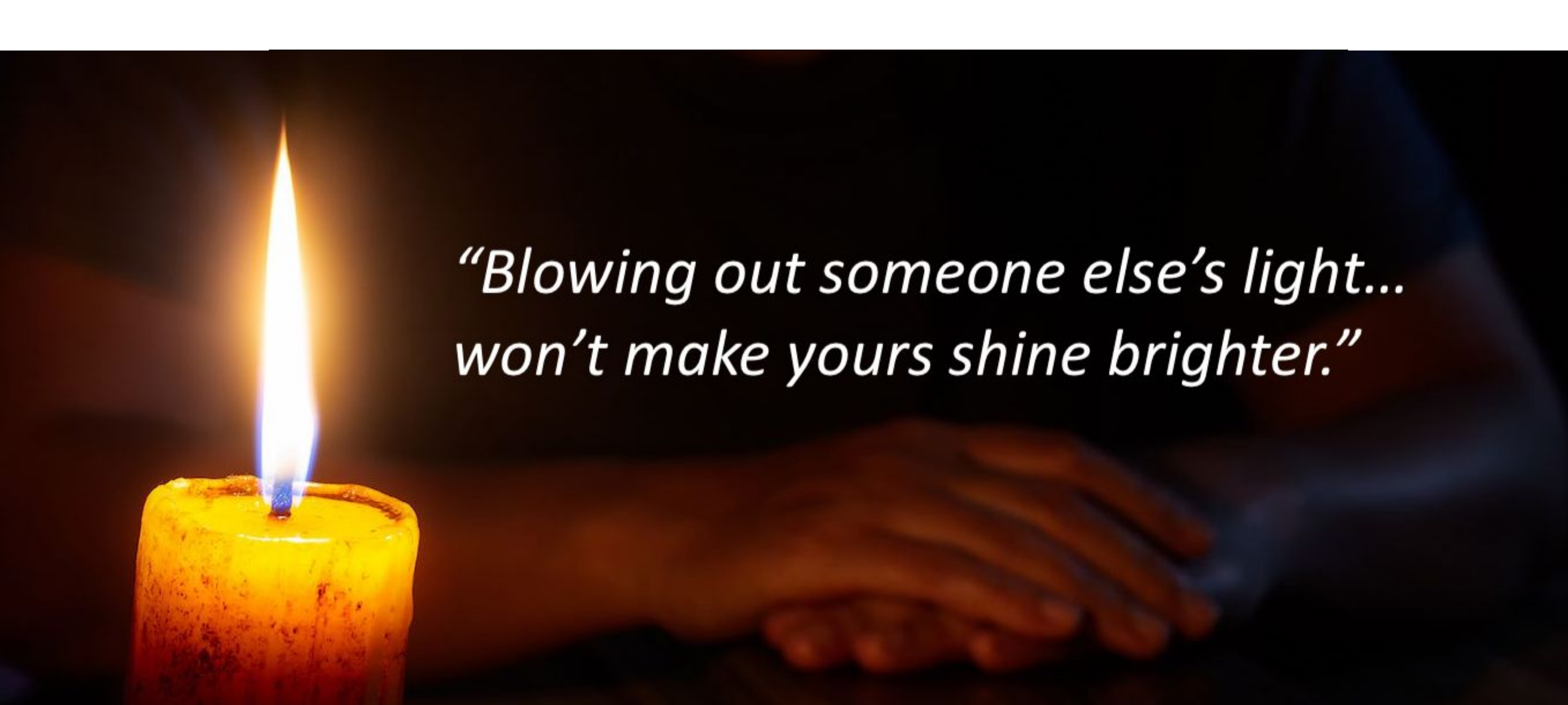
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Final Thoughts

- Conflict is a chance to build trust
- You don't have to be perfect—just present
- Small shifts = big impact



A lit candle with a bright flame is in the foreground on the left. In the background, a hand is visible, slightly out of focus, with fingers spread as if blowing air towards the candle. The scene is dimly lit, with the candle's light illuminating the hand and the surrounding area.

*“Blowing out someone else’s light...
won’t make yours shine brighter.”*

Feedback and Q&A



Thank You

