



Katie Hyten
NYC-DR Monthly
Roundtable Breakfast
February 2, 2023

Disrupting Old Patterns

Using Agreements to Invite Constructive
Dialogue Across Differences

essential PARTNERS

OUR MISSION

Essential Partners gives people the means to strengthen relationships, deepen belonging, and renew hope in their communities.

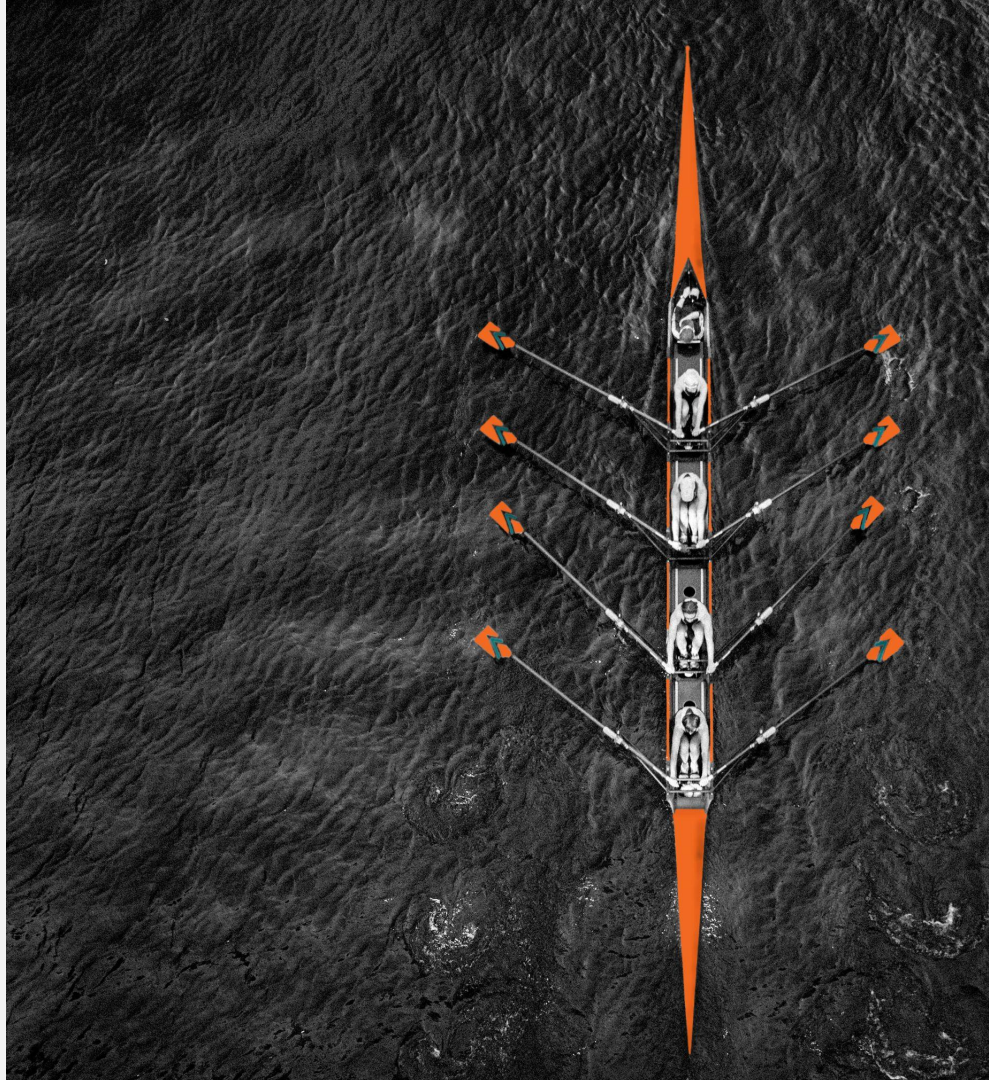
OUR VISION

We envision a world of thriving communities strengthened by difference, connected by trust.



Essential Partners

- Train and engage 3,000 people annually to communicate effectively across differences in difficult moments, impacting over 100,000 people in schools, civic spaces, and organizations around the country
- Offer coaching, consultation, and ongoing support to communities over time as they navigate the world's most pressing challenges



Plan for Today

Opening Reflection

Overview of Reflective Structured Dialogue

Stories from the Field

Trying it Out / A Tool You Can Take Home

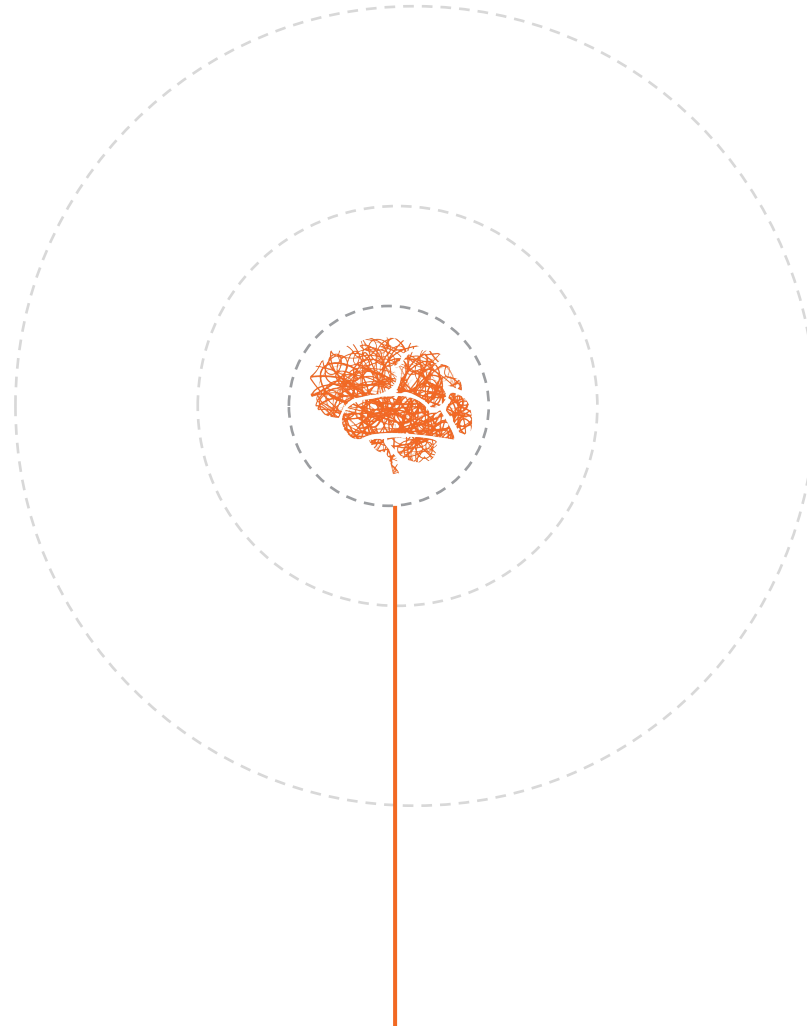
Questions

Close



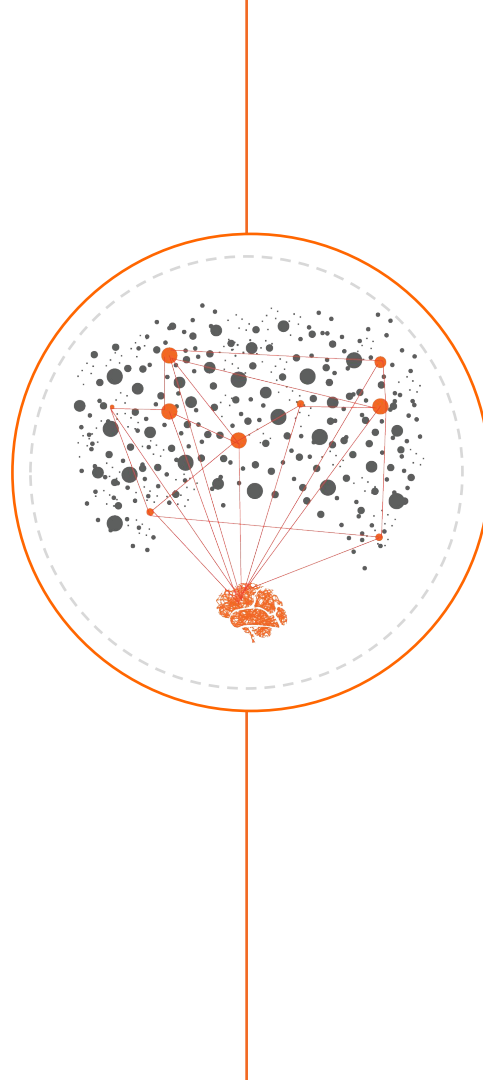
The Brain

We think about how the brain has evolved to help us survive and the effects that has on how we communicate.



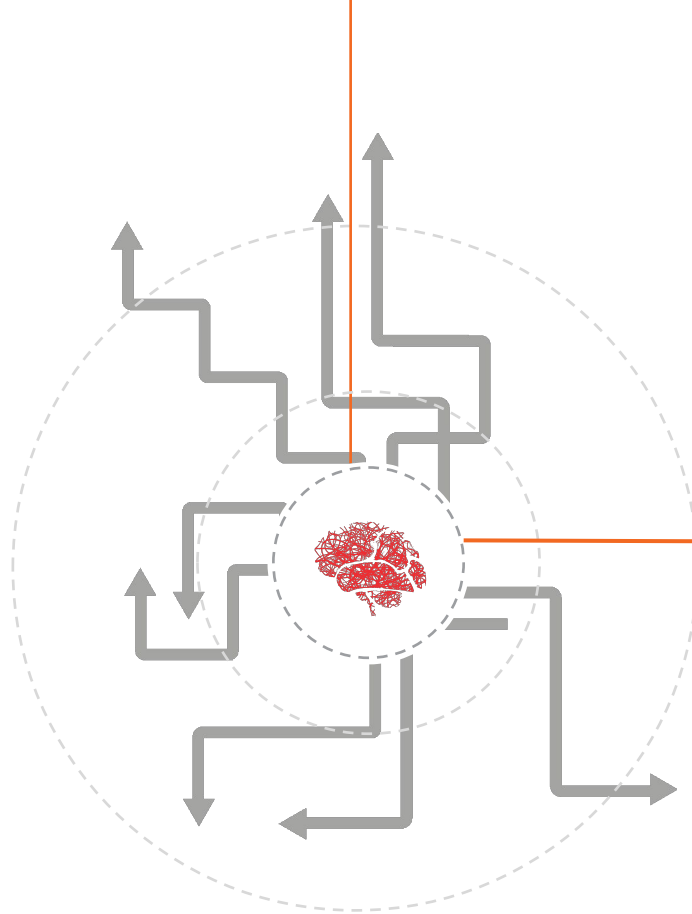
When
in crisis...

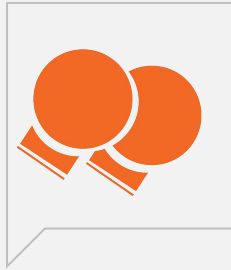
our brains help us
make sense of
things really quickly
in order to survive.



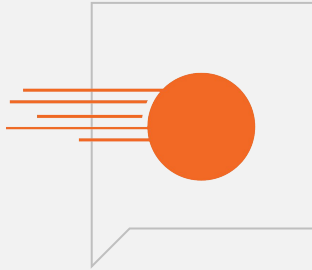
Our brains
help us
automatically
decide what
data to pay
attention to...

And our
brains focus
us on
responding
to threat...

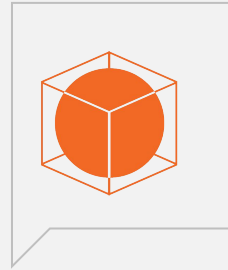




FIGHT



FLIGHT



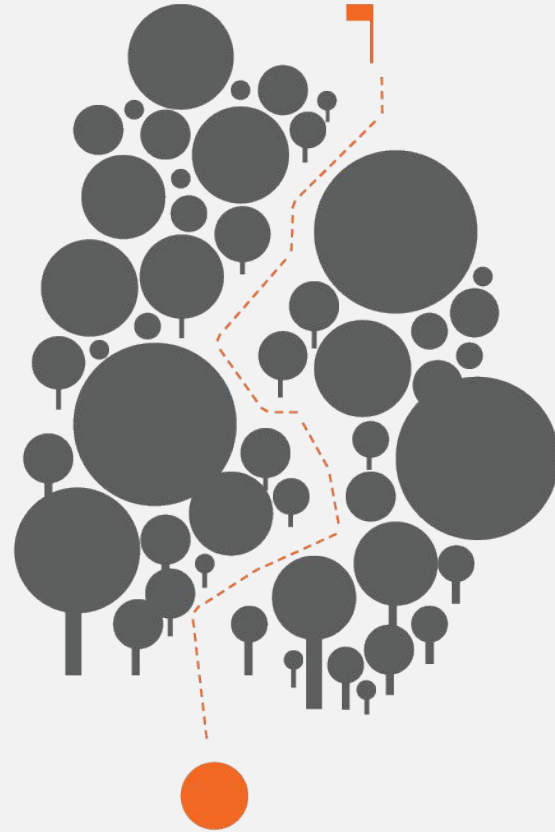
FREEZE



It's natural: the conclusion comes first, and the arguments follow.

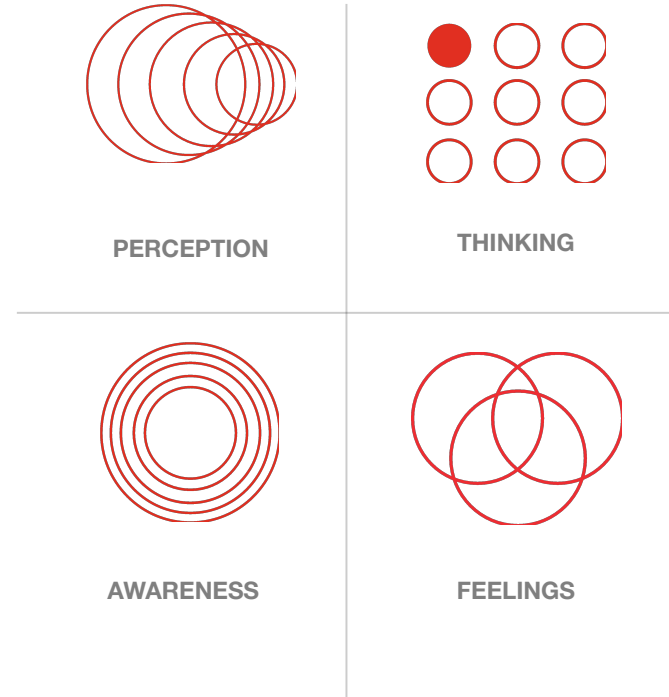
If we're being chased in the woods, fast thinking is helpful and keeps us alive.

IN RELATIONSHIPS WE GET STUCK

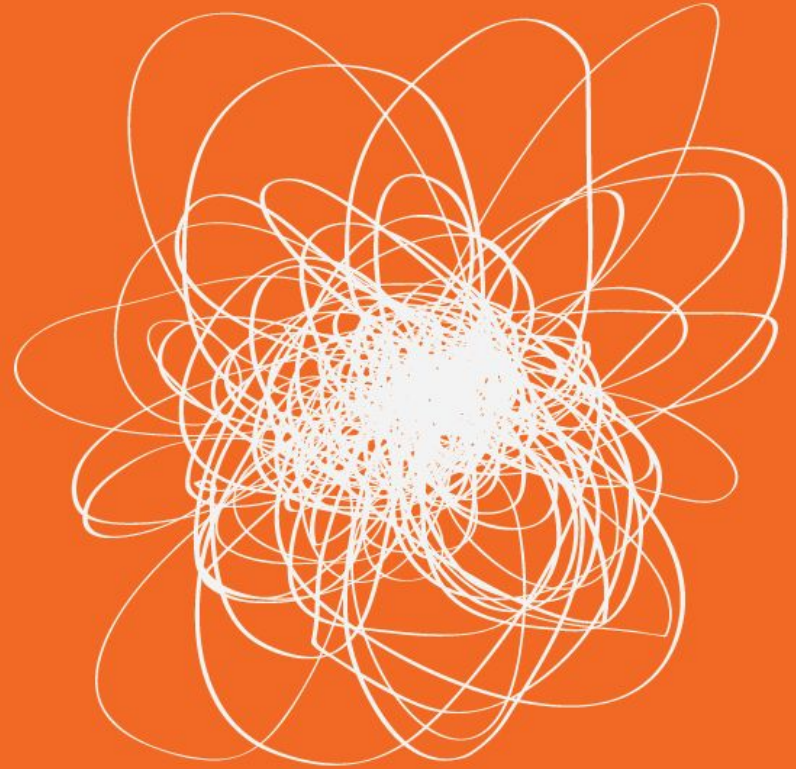


Impacts of Threat

- Perceptions narrow
- Parts of our brain that control rational thinking, creative thinking & curiosity lose blood & oxygen
- Ability to collaborate plummets
- Generalizations & over-simplifications increase
- Our sense of vigilance is heightened & we want to defend



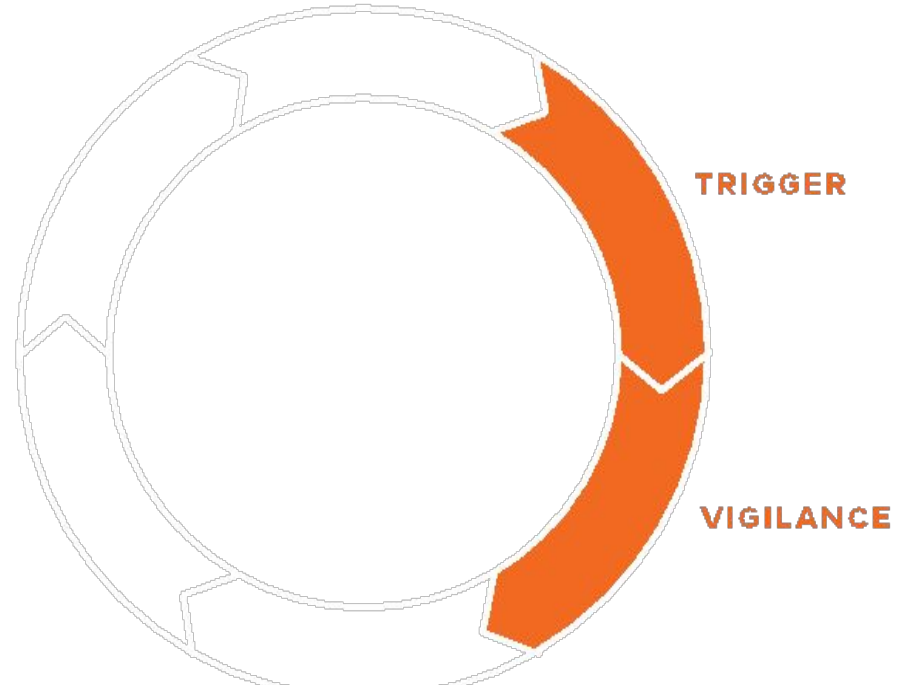
Fast thinking
takes over in
emergencies.

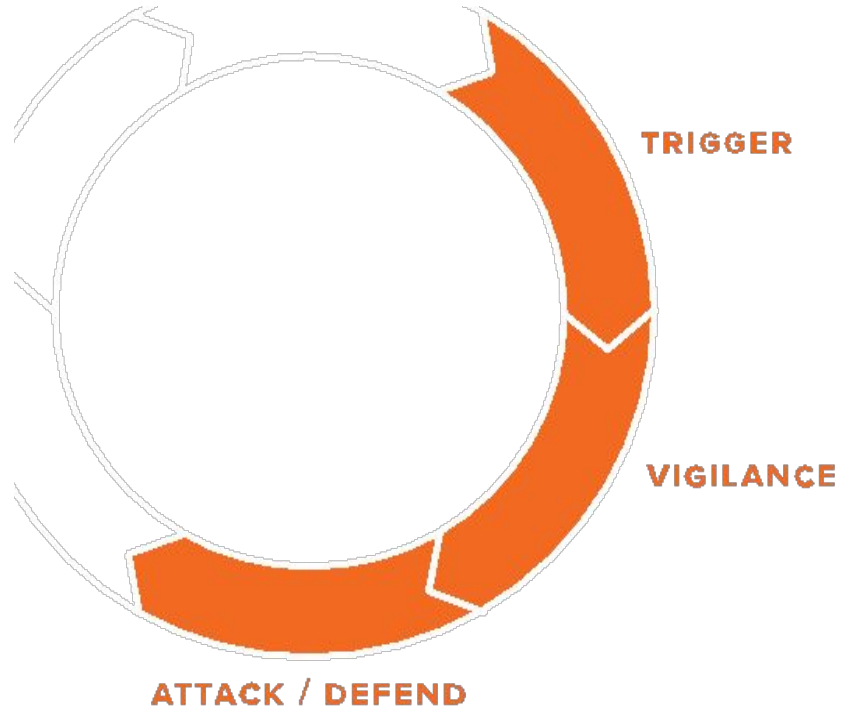


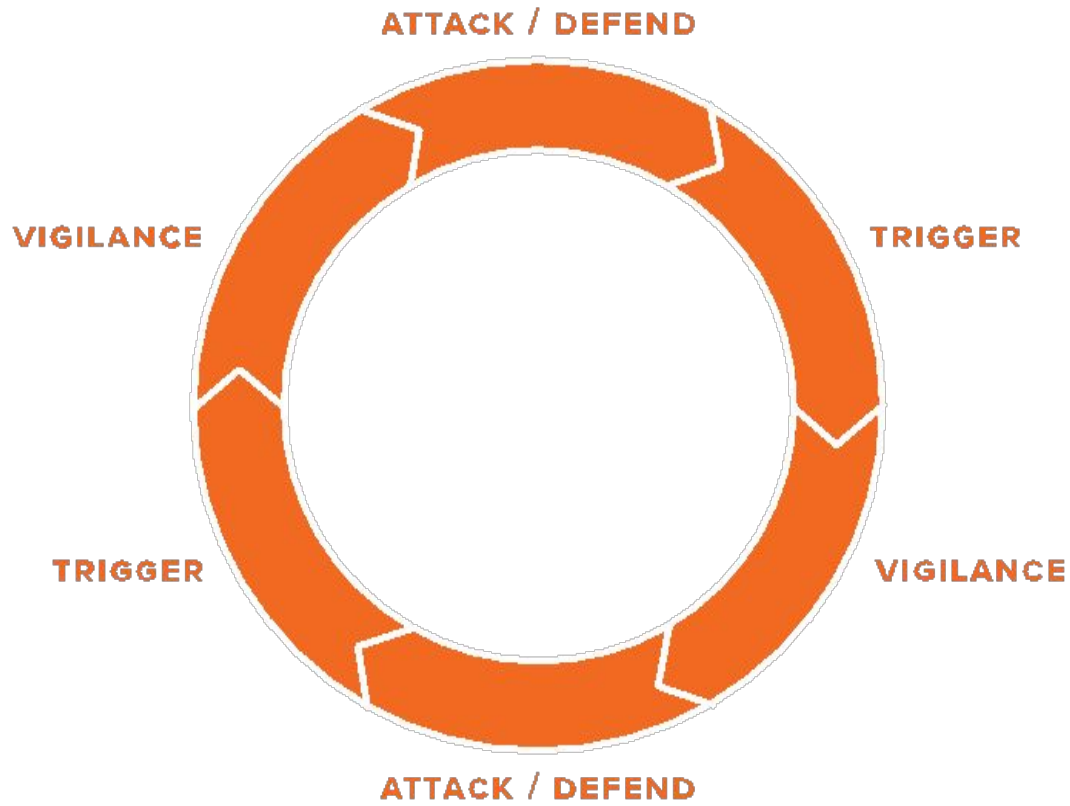


And we fall into a vicious cycle.



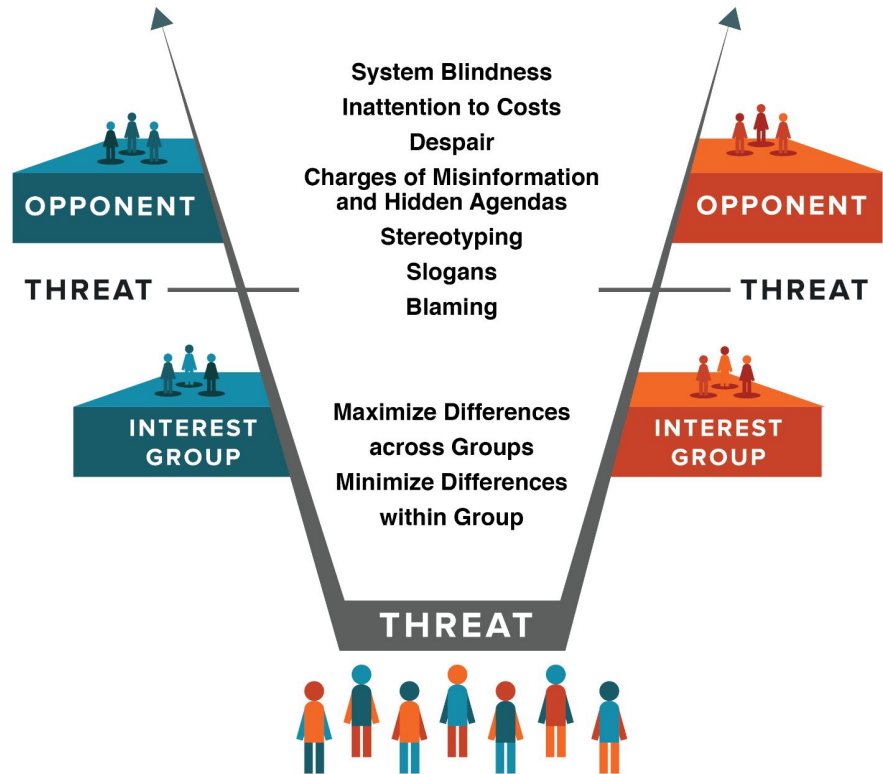






Polarization:

A self-perpetuating system



Created by Maggie Herzig



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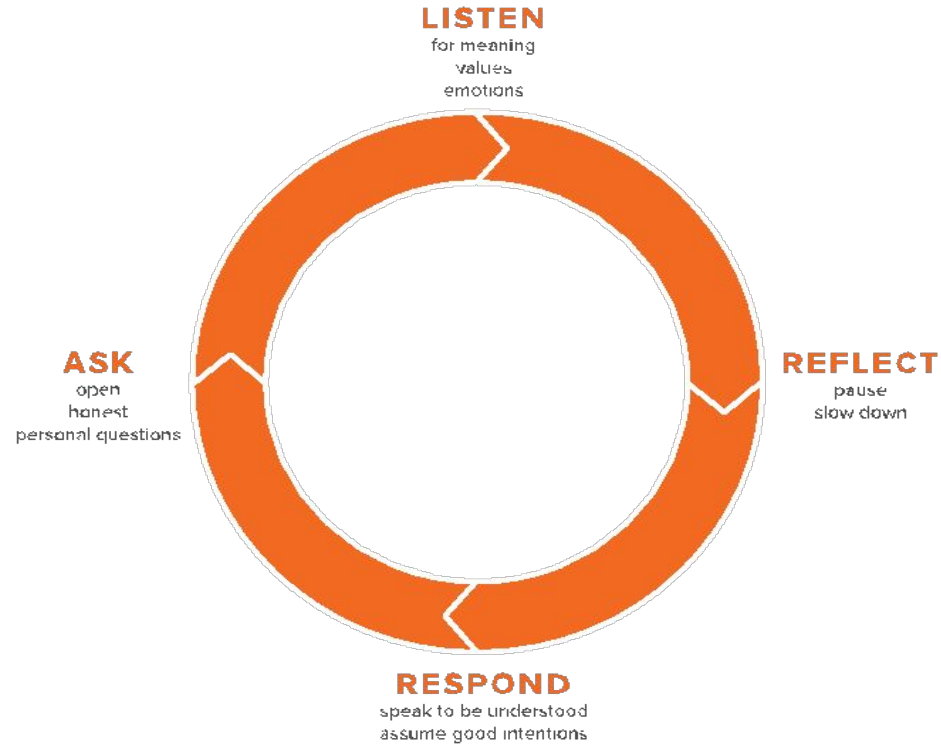
VARIED EXPERIENCES, BELIEFS,
IDENTITIES, HOPES

VARIED AND FLEXIBLE BONDS
OF AFFILIATION



Dialogue helps communities get unstuck.

The Constructive Cycle





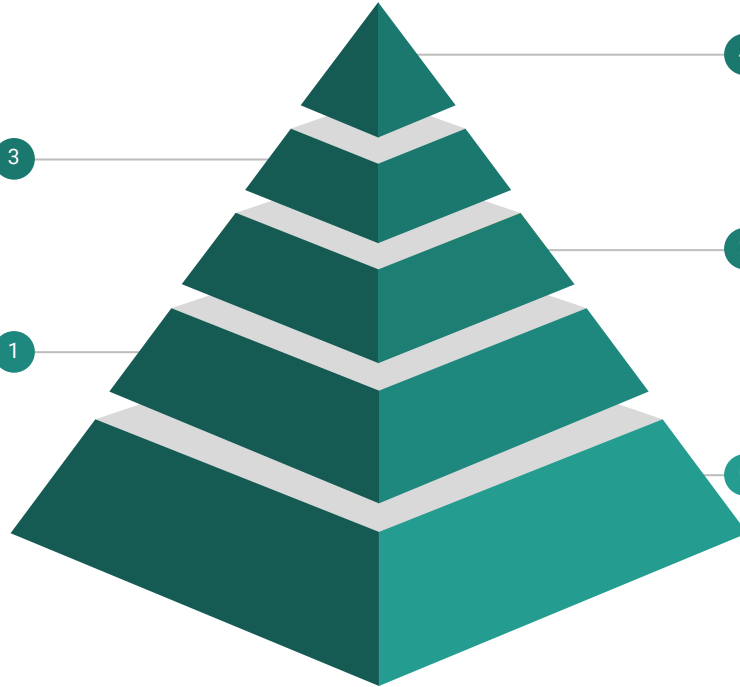
If you change how people have a *conversation*,
you can change the *relationship*.



If you can change the *relationship*, you can change what is possible in a *community* - and you can shift *culture*.

Prepare
Invite and create buy-in. Build skills.
Prepare facilitators. Intentionally prepare
people to join a different conversation

Map
Co-create and align People and Purpose,
which will become your North Star for all
other decisions.



Facilitate

Return to the design. Transparently
manage dilemmas. Remember that the
community is the expert of the community.

Design

Co-create a plan using structures,
agreements, intentions and questions
based on Purpose, People, Promote,
Prevent

Foundations of Dialogue

Family Systems // Narrative therapy //
Appreciative Inquiry // Conflict
Transformation // Social Identity Theory

Mapping and Customization

- Intake process to understand the context
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Custom design to meet unique needs for a community's goals



Training, Facilitation and Design

- On-site and virtual training for stakeholders
- Direct facilitation
- Collaborative design of next steps
- Evaluation program to gauge impact, needs



Continuing Support

- One-on-one coaching with an EP expert
- Exclusive resources and engagements
- Membership in a Global Community of Practice





Stories From the Field

Activists & Law Enforcement in North Carolina

Kate - a court mediator, activist, and mother to two black children - realized that she couldn't avoid conversations about Black Lives Matter, law enforcement, and racial prejudice. But her mediation skills wouldn't be enough.

EP launched listening sessions, a pilot training of activists and police officers, and has since trained dozens of facilitators. These facilitators have built a multiracial alliance that continues to use dialogue.



Cary Academy

- Project goal: build a school-wide infrastructure for dialogue, to better equip students to engage in dialogue across differences
- Over 100 faculty members trained in dialogue facilitation and more than 300 students participated in dialogues
- Upper school students facilitated dialogues on racial equity, stress and mental health, gender, and the 2020 election
- Impact: dialogic campus; embedded into new Center for Community Engagement



Bridgewater College



- Project goal: to transform campus culture to help students see themselves as empowered members of an academic and civic community (and improve student retention)
- Trained over 100 students and all faculty who teach the First Year Seminar; dialogue is now embedded all FYS courses
- Faculty members now train all first-year students in EP's approach
- Student facilitators have held dialogues on religious diversity, the 2016 presidential election, microaggressions, freedom of expression, campus protests, and more
- This work has led to better student learning outcomes and a stronger feeling of belonging among first-year students.

Our Impact:

92%

participants report greater **trust** in people who hold different beliefs, values, and/or identities.

+50%

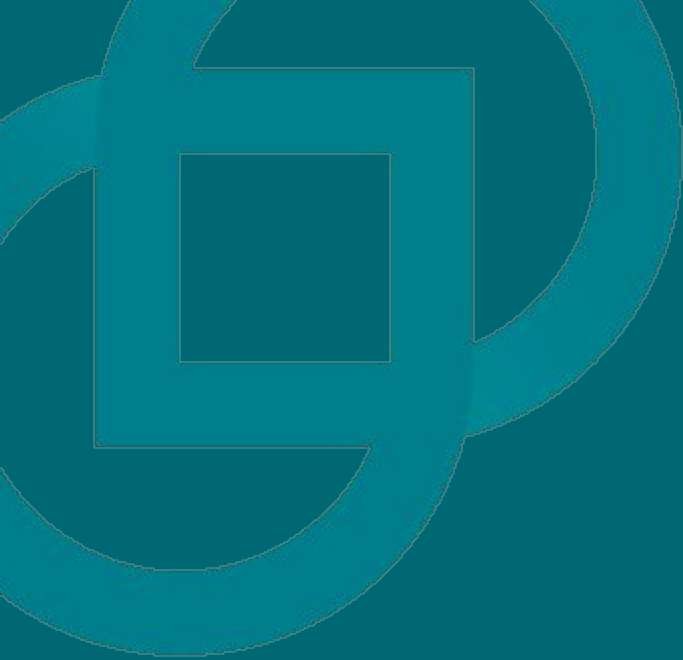
increase in participants who say they feel more **heard and understood** by “the other side.”

80%

of participants notice new **relationships** across differences more than a year after an EP engagement.

When it Works...

- Small coastal town
- There were protests outside of the police station because the precinct was flying a “Blue Lives Matter” flag
- It got to the mayor, who called EP to explore dialogue options
- A pull toward consensus-building and solutions-oriented planning
- An eventual openness to dialogue first, then action-taking with eyes open
- The establishment of a practice of dialogue in the town, with open sessions that are facilitated by a dialogue task force



Let's Try It Out!



Questions?

Connect With Us

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