
Dealing with Difference

Collaboration Skills for Today's Lawmaker



**Bowhay Institute *for*
Legislative Leadership Development**
MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

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Madison, WI**

Opening Task: Script

Think of a scenario where you tried to align with someone and failed. Isolate the most frustrating part of that interaction, and capture the script here.

What was said in the conversation

I said:

They said:

I said:

They said:

I said:

They said:

Example

I said: This project plan is not going to work.

They said: Yes it will.

I said: Are you kidding? We'll slip the deadline if we do it this way.

They said: I don't think so. Should be fine.

I said: No. It won't be, and it'll be our fault.

They said: Calm down. You're worrying about nothing.

Convince me...

- Small groups
- Three minutes
- Choose and prepare champ



“I’m not taking the vaccine”

Common Approach

ASSUMPTIONS

I'm right on this,

I'll show you how,

and I'll win you over

PURPOSE

**Convince them to
do/think something**

ACTIONS

**Build and Deploy
Argument**
Communicate talking points/key
messages, lecture, defend, etc.

Purposes

- **Enhancing your awareness of:**
 - the process by which you manage difference, influence and align across the aisle, internally, and with constituents.
 - the traps you may fall into when trying to manage difference, influence and align.
- **Understanding and using tools** for analyzing such influence conversations and better preparing for, conducting and reviewing them.
- **Building confidence** in your ability to improve your skills over time, and create a model through which you can practice.

THOSE OF US WHO FOCUS ON ISSUES
OF FAIRNESS TOO OFTEN EFFECT
AGREEMENT BY GIVING IN, INSTEAD
OF FIRST USING OUR POWERS OF
PERSUASION TO AFFECT A FAIR
OUTCOME THAT FULLY SATISFIES ALL
OF OUR LEGITIMATE INTERESTS

Aoccdrnig to rsaeerch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttær in waht oreodr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rgiht pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a big porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, btu the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh?

Tihs aslo eixaplns, at laest in prat, why so mnay of you messid so mnay of the froeuten leterts F in the lsat eexrsice. Yuor mnid was sieeng the wolhe wrod, and not loniokg for ecah lteter, eevn tuohgh taht was the tsak!

Certainty

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Study: tests of logical reasoning, grammar, and sense of humor:

People who scored the
LOWEST

They thought they did better than

62%

of their peers

had

the **MOST INFLATED**
opinions of their skills

*when in
reality*

They outperformed only

12%

of them

Certainty

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

The Dunning Kruger Effect:
The less intelligent we are in a particular domain, the more we seem to overestimate our actual intelligence in that domain



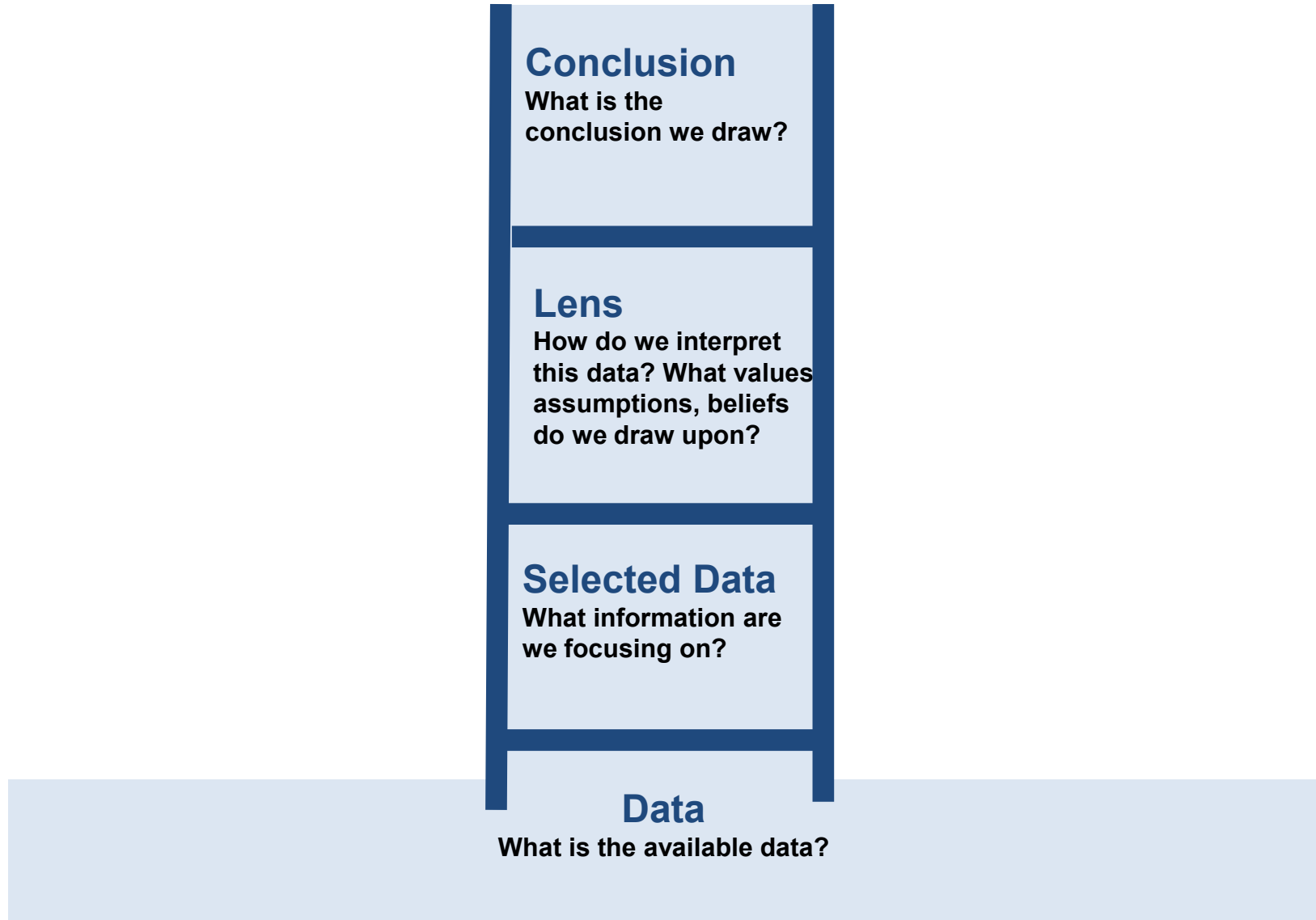
Ladder of Inference

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



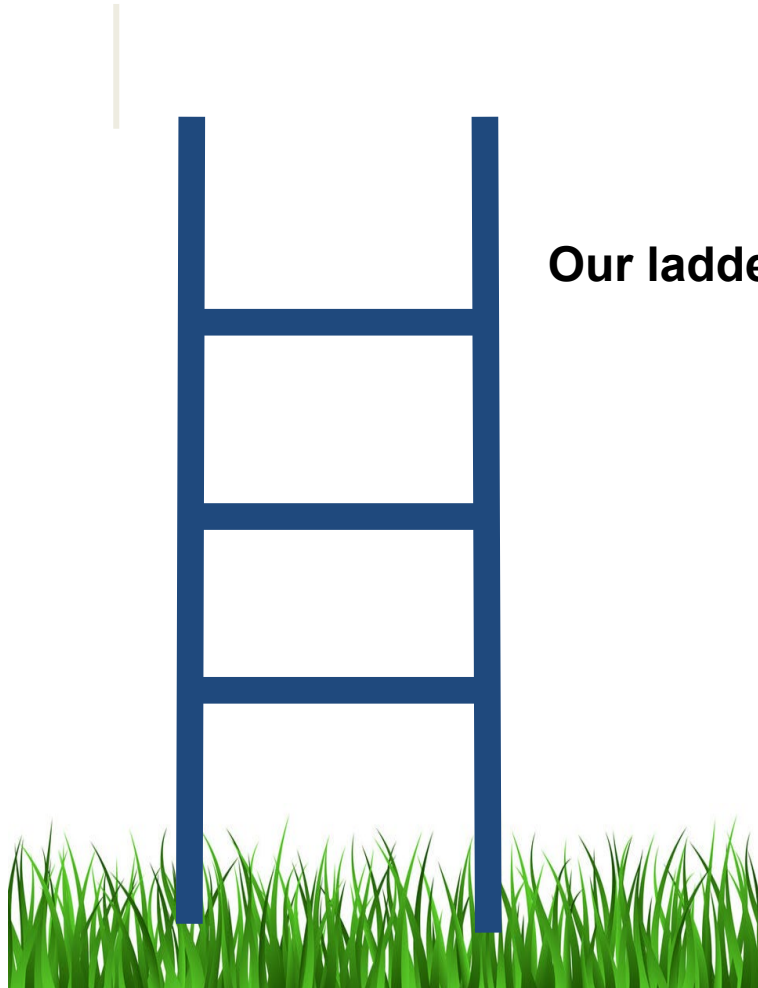
Ladder of Inference

ASSUMPTION:

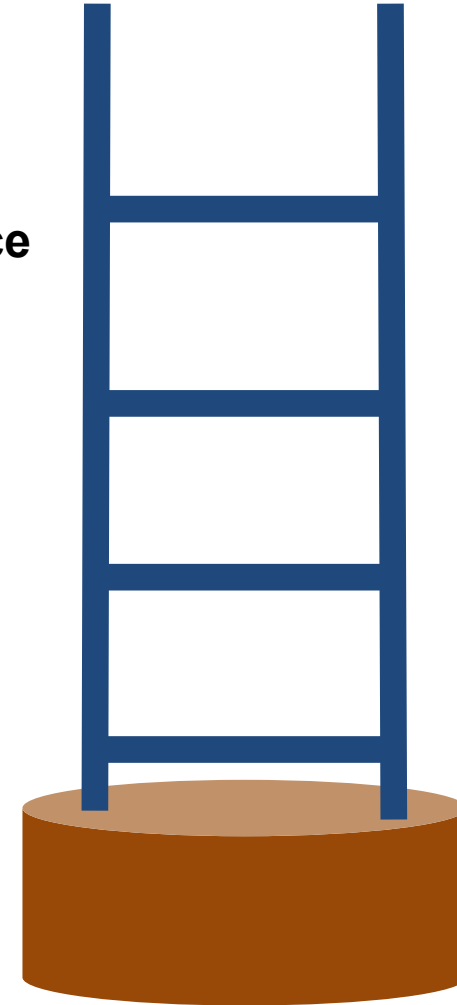
I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



Our ladders get more firmly in place



Biases

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Bias: the tendency to make decisions or take action in an unknowingly irrational way

We see what we believe

- **Confirmation bias** – caring about information that backs up what we already believe.
- Explains why facts and data are insufficient: vaccines, climate change, etc.

“Numbers in statistics are necessary and wonderful to discover the truth. But they are not enough to change beliefs, and are virtually useless for motivating action.”

- Tali Sharot, neuroscientist at University College London

Biases

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

We dismiss what we don't believe

- **“Asymmetrical updating”**: When we receive information that contradicts what we believe, we dismiss it.
- “As we get more and more information, we will change our beliefs more and more but mostly in response to information that already fits our views.”

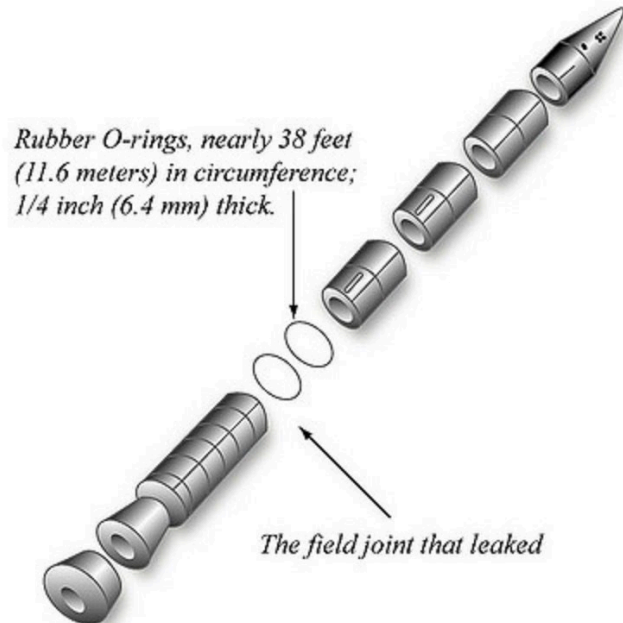
Biases

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



- Lowest temperature allowed for safe launch: 54 degrees F
- Temperature on Jan. 28, 1986: 28.9 degrees F

Biases

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Change is hard

- **Status Quo bias:** When making an important choice, we are more likely to pick the option that maintains things as they are currently.
 - Making new investments
 - Sticking with your cable provider

Biases

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

We get attached to what we see first

- **Anchoring bias**: we over-rely on one key piece of information—usually the first one we received



Assumption Two: Exercise

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

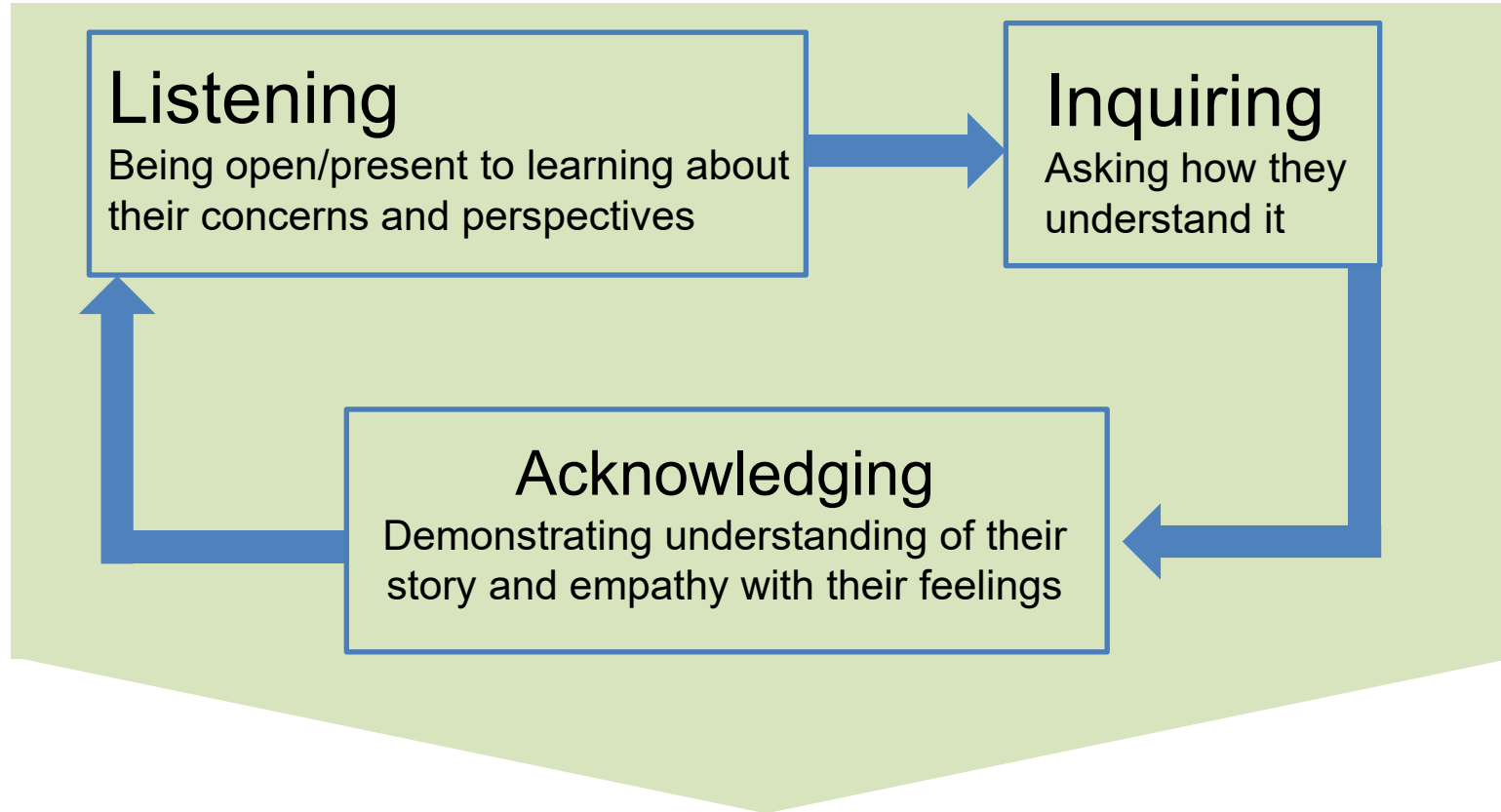
- Partner up
- Choose A and B
- A's task
- B has confidential instructions

Confidential instructions for B:

**COUNT (IN YOUR HEAD) THE
NUMBER OF STATEMENTS AND
QUESTIONS THAT A MAKES. BE
READY TO REPORT ON EACH**

Key Skills

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS



ADVOCACY SKILLS

Advocate Skillfully

Relying on Advocacy

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



Roger Boisjoly

22



ASSUMPTION:

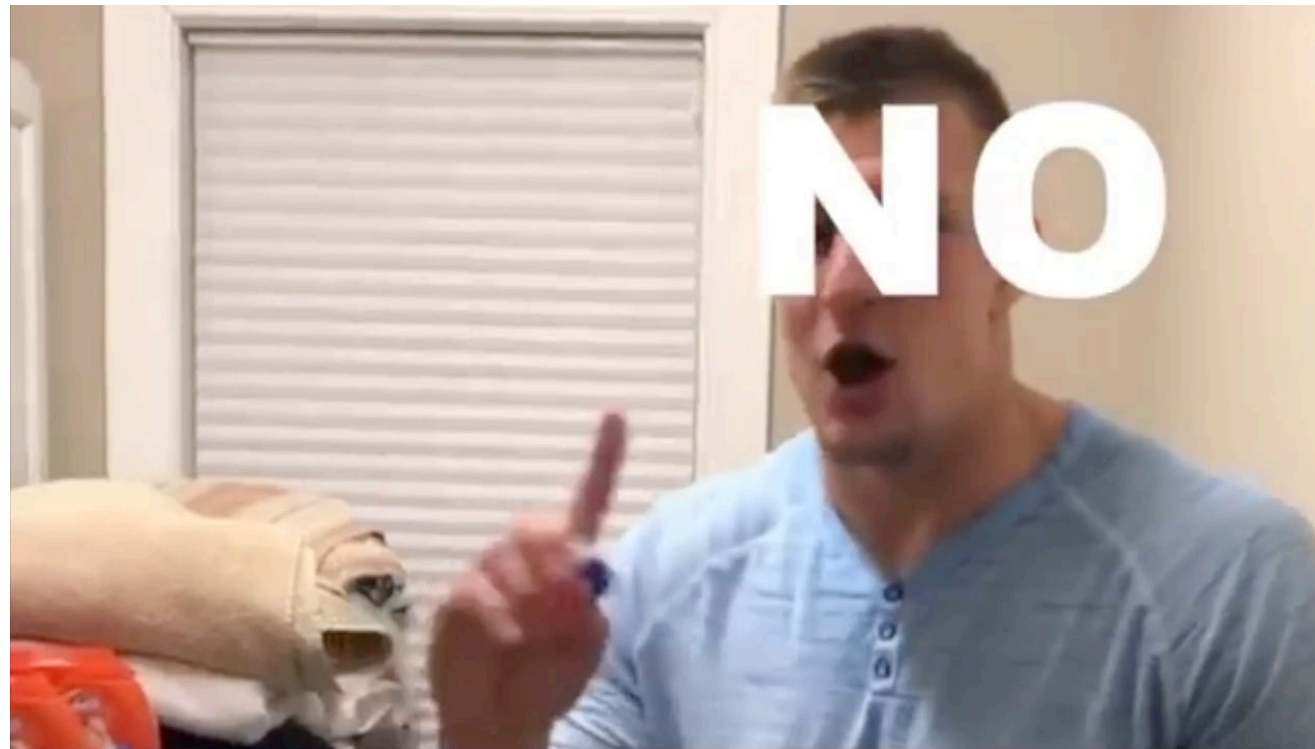
I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



- Tweet from Tide: “What should Tide PODS be used for? DOING LAUNDRY. Nothing else. Eating a Tide POD is a BAD IDEA...”



- Four days later: Google searches for Tide Pod doubled. A week later, by 7x.
- Cases of teens ingesting Tide Pods more than doubled that of prior two years combined.

Autonomy

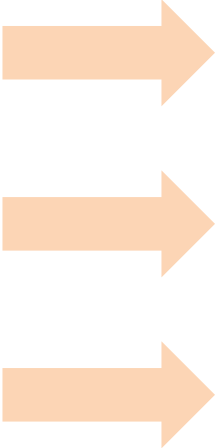
ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Denying Autonomy

- Instructing jurors to disregard inadmissible testimony
 - Telling people to stop drinking alcohol
 - Persuading people that smoking is bad for health
- 
- Jurors weigh it more heavily
 - College students drink more
 - They get more interested in smoking

Autonomy

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

How to reduce teen smoking?

- Cigarettes were largest cause of preventable deaths and disease
- In the US, smoking responsible for 1 in 5 deaths
- Cost of \$150 billion per year

Tobacco companies targeted teens

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of high school students had smoked
- One in four seniors smoked daily
- Teen smoking at 19 year high



Autonomy

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

The 'Truth Campaign'

- “The ad didn’t demand anything from teens. There was no message at the end telling them not to smoke, what to do, or what would or wouldn’t make them cool. The spot just let them know that, whether they realized it or not, cigarette companies were trying to influence them – and that the media was in on it.”



Autonomy

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Results

- In Florida:
 - More than 30,000 teens quit.
 - Within two years, teen smoking rates reduced by half.
- National campaign
 - Led to rates dropping by 75%
 - Prevented more than 450,000 youths from smoking in the first four years.



Exercise

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

- Find a partner
- From now on, no communicating at all
- You have 15 seconds
- Your goal is to earn as many points for yourself as possible

Assumption: I'll Win

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

Arm Wrestling	Assumptions	Arm Exercise
Beat them	Goal	Maximize my points
Use strength to impose my will	Strategy	Try to enlist the other person as a partner
Push (harder)	Actions	Pull my arm down Separate arms
Conflict Few points earned	Results	Cooperation Many points earned

Assumption: I'll Win

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN



The Costs of Competition

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

- “Goal drift”

	INITIAL	NEW
Goal	Get truck across border	Change soldier's mind
Strategy	Show clearance, follow protocol	Shame, lecture, educate

The Costs of Competition

ASSUMPTION:

I'M RIGHT

I'LL SHOW YOU

I'LL WIN

- “Goal drift”
- “Covert retaliation”
- “Ethical fading”

“The message that competition is appropriate, desirable, required, and even unavoidable is drummed into us from nursery school to graduate school; it is the subtext of every lesson.”

- Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*

So what do we do?

ASSUMPTIONS

I'm right

I'll show you I'm right

I'll win you over

I have an opinion and I'm open to change

We'll share our perspectives

We'll both evolve

PURPOSE

Convince them to do/think something

Understand each other's views

Understand why you might disagree

Co-create a new option

ACTIONS

Build and Deploy Argument
Communicate talking points/key messages, lecture, defend, etc.

1. Adopt Mindset
of curiosity and openness

2. Understand
their values, concerns, perspective

3. Skillfully Advocate
based on their perspective

Action One

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

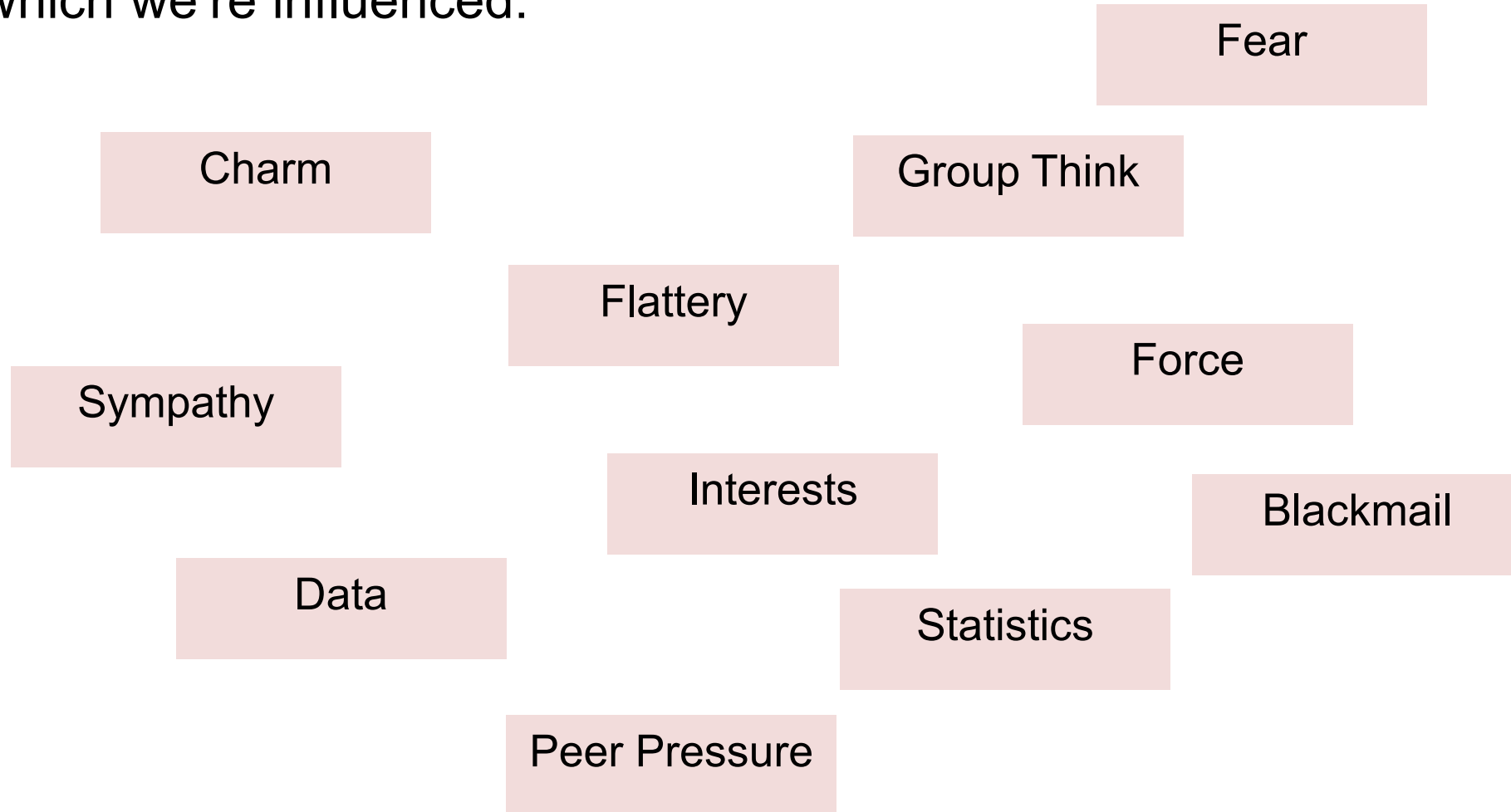
SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Think about:

- Your favorite class in high school.
- The last time you cried at a movie.
- Who you voted for in the last election.
- The last time you changed your mind.

Action One

Ways in which we're influenced:



Action One

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Working towards alignment is complex:

- It implicates **identity**, life experiences, and well-being
- Persuasion often occurs over **time**.
 - *Minds don't change overnight, they change over time.*
- It requires **autonomy**

Advice: Be present and open

- Focus on the other
- Pay full attention to them
- Be in the moment
- *Make the decision to be curious and to not judge.*

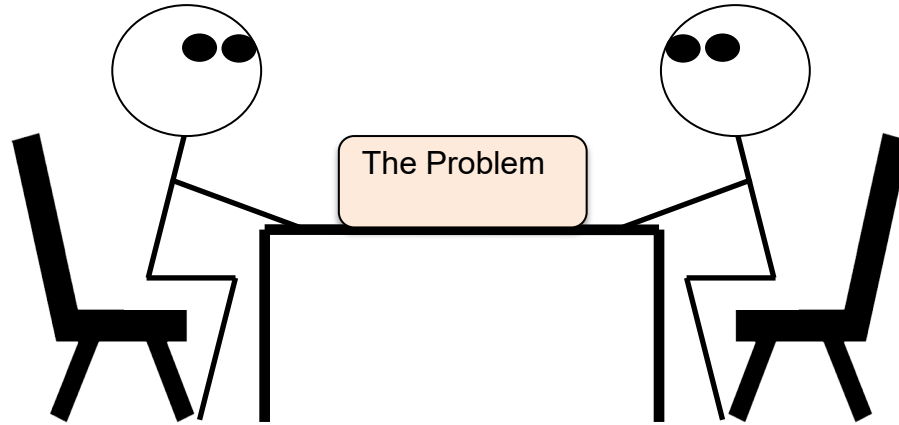
Orientation

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

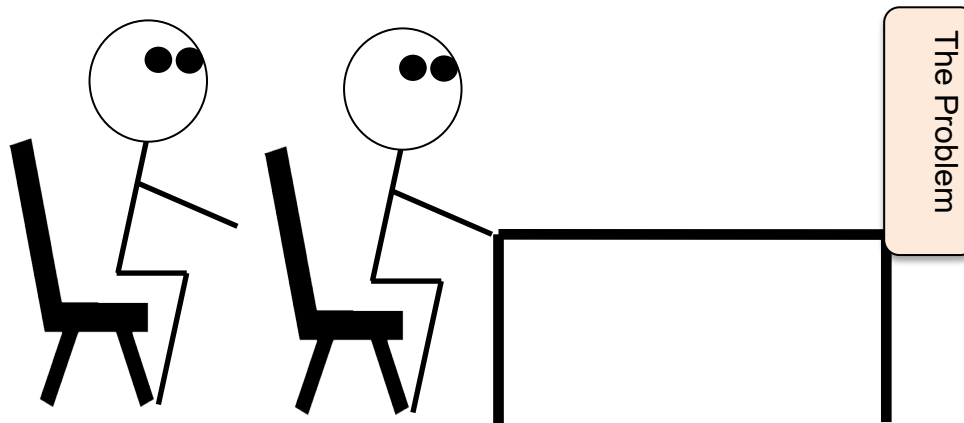
UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE



COMPETITIVE

- Someone wins, someone loses
- Relationship implications
- Untapped value



COLLABORATIVE

- We can both win
- Relationship implications
- Maximizing potential

Orientation: Collaborative

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

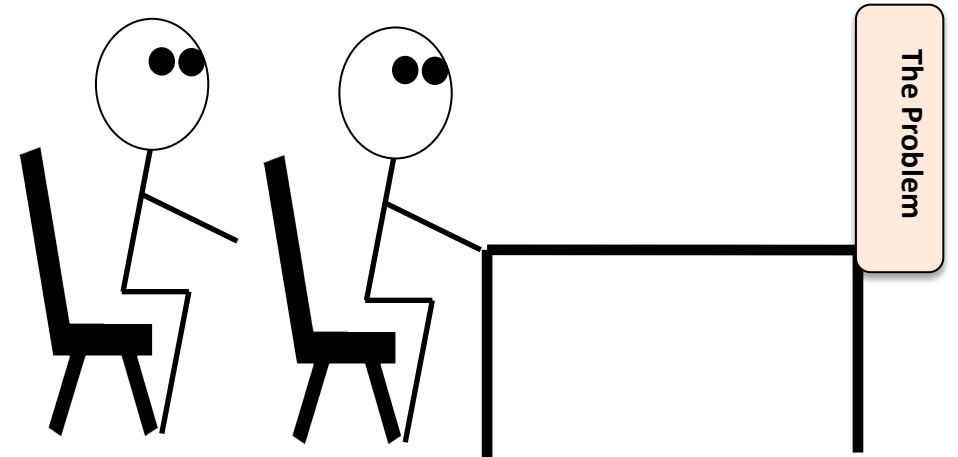
SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Remember: changing minds is complex:

- It implicates personal & group **identity**, life experiences, and well-being
What are you asking them to do?
- Persuasion often occurs over **time**, in stages.
Minds don't change overnight, they change over time.
- It requires **autonomy**:
People need to make their own decisions

Advice: Be present and open

- Pay full attention to the other
- Be in the moment
- Make the decision to be curious and to not judge.



Understand: Three Skills

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

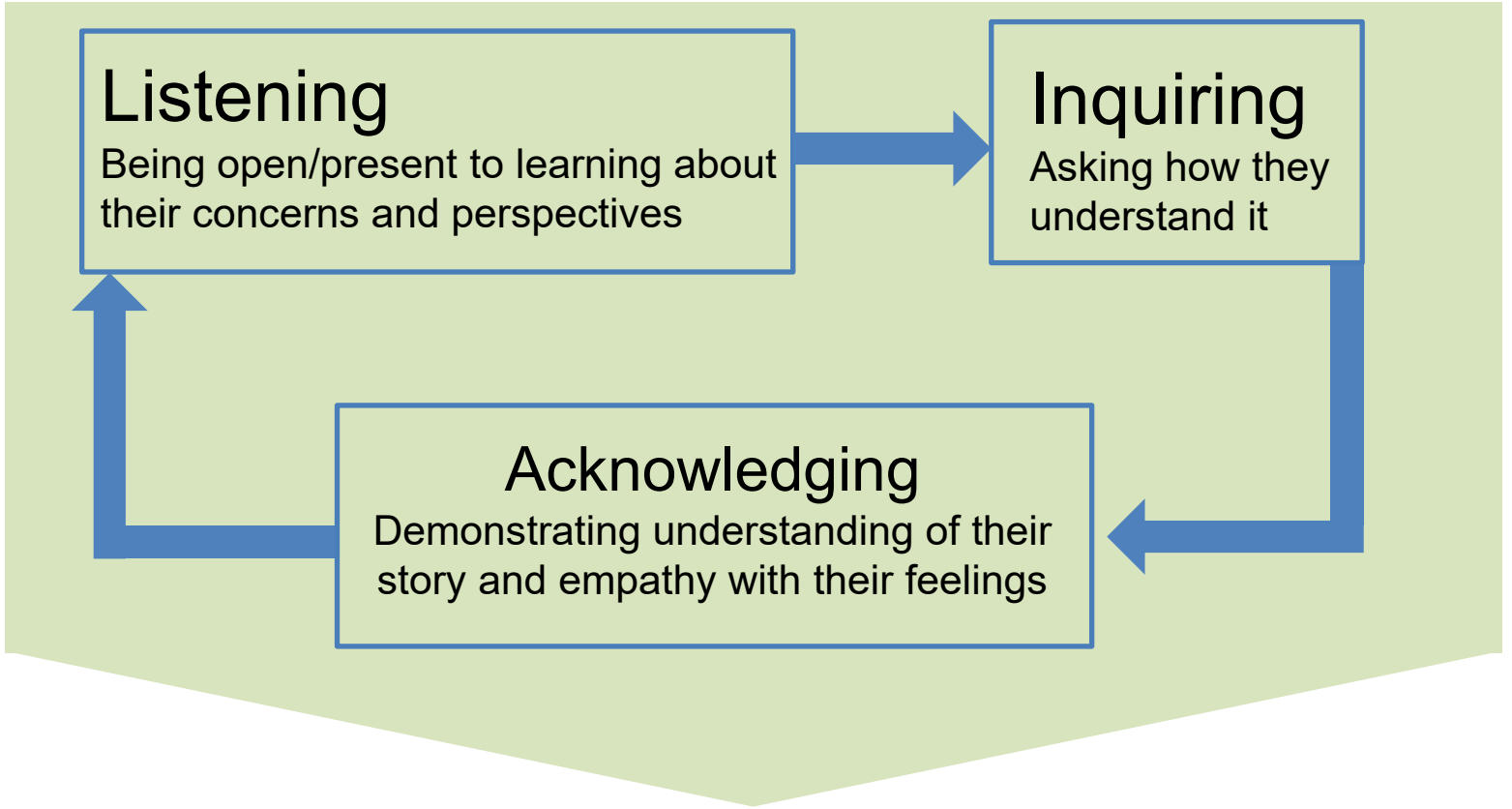
SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE



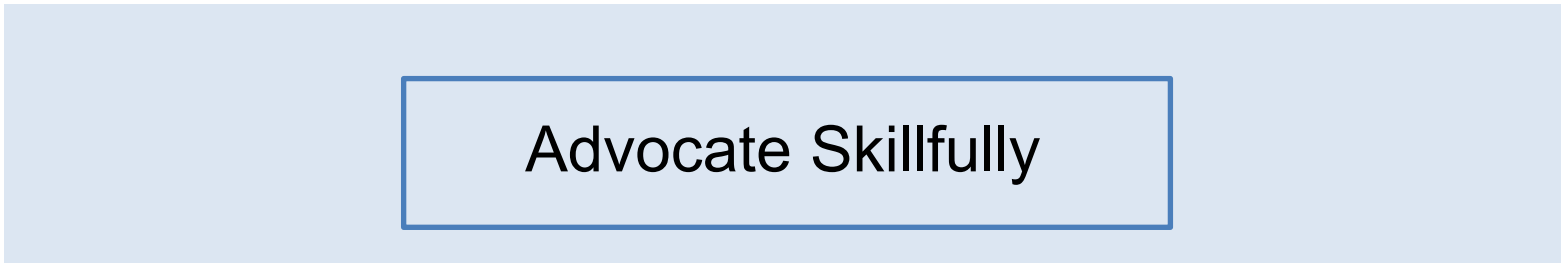
Understand: Three Skills

ACTION: ADOPT MINDSET UNDERSTAND SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

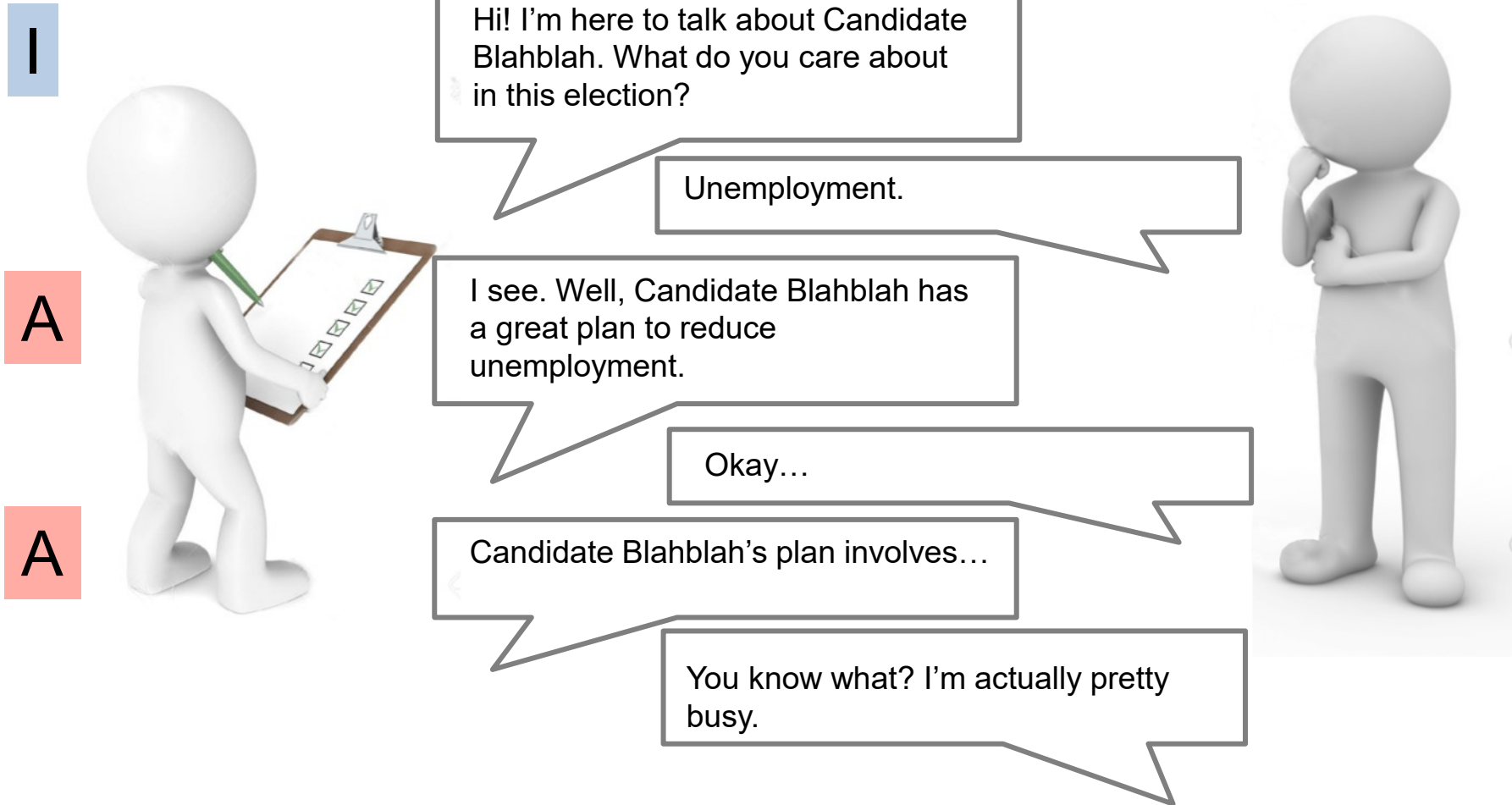


ADVOCACY SKILLS



Understand: Canvassing Example

ACTION: ADOPT MINDSET UNDERSTAND SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE



What I thought they cared about: UNEMPLOYMENT

Understand: Canvassing Example

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

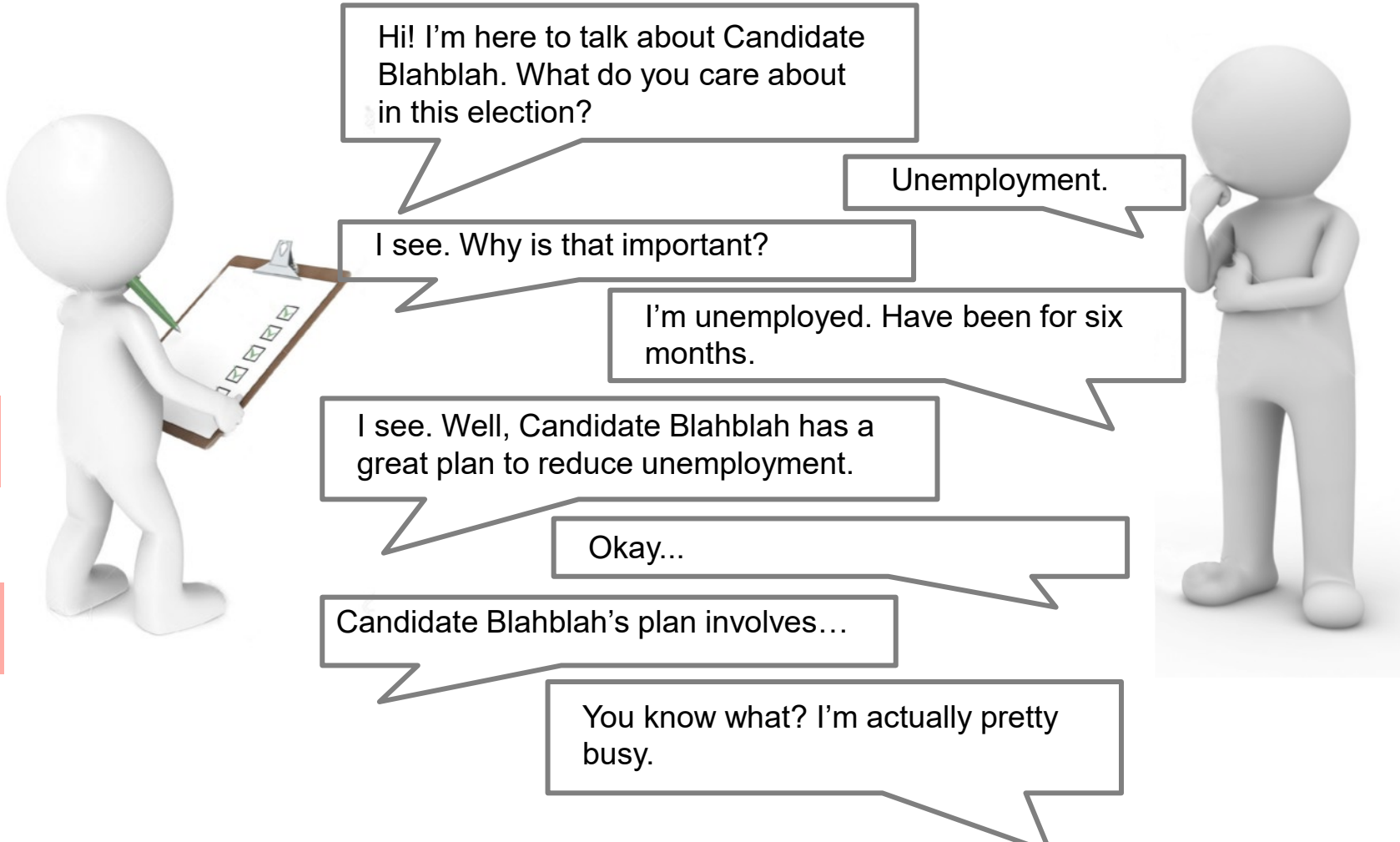
SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

I

I

A

A

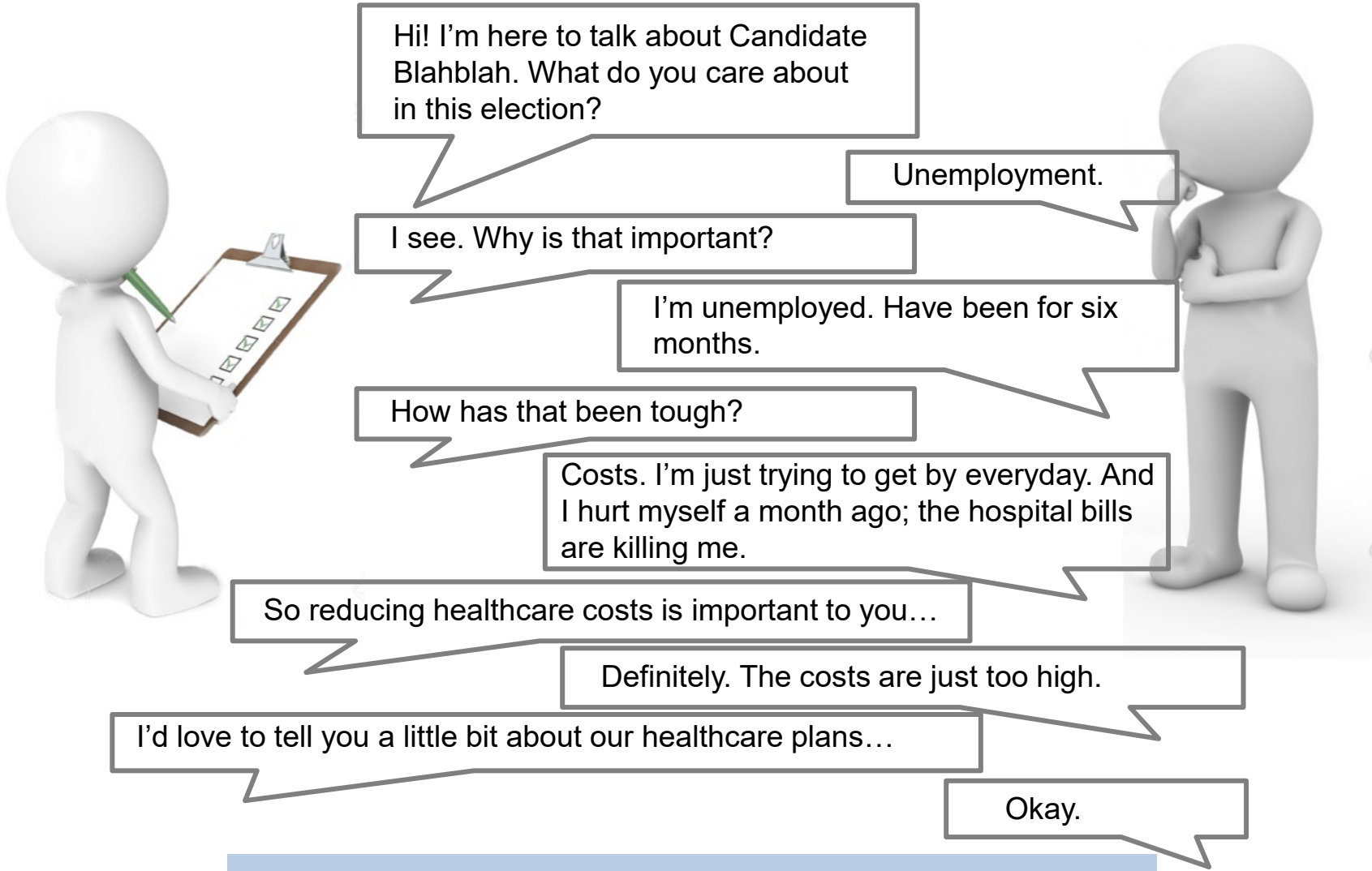


What I thought they cared about: UNEMPLOYMENT

Understand: Canvassing Example

ACTION: ADOPT MINDSET UNDERSTAND SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

I
I
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K
A



What I found out they cared about: HEALTH CARE

Action Two: Script

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Consider only what you said in the conversation:

- Write an “A” next to every advocacy statement
- Write an “I” next to every question
- Re-evaluate your “I”s — are they genuine inquiries or disguised advocacy?

What was said in the conversation

I said: This project plan is not going to work. **A**

They said: Yes. It will.

I said: We will slip the deadline if we go forward in this manner. **A**

They said: I don't think so. It should be fine.

I said: No. It won't be, and it will be our fault. Don't you think we should change it? **A, A**

They said: You're worrying about nothing.

"I'm not taking it"

vertical

Horizontal: "is that the one concern? Are there other concerns?"

"what's your concern?"

"I mean, it was called Operation Warp Speed."

"say more about that..."

"We were told the fastest time to develop a vaccine was four years. This got done in 9 months."

"what's your concern?"

"Safety."

SAFETY

"Folks in government keep changing what they say we should do."

"say more about that..."

"We shouldn't wear masks, we should masks."

"So what worries you now?"

"They have proven their incompetence. How can I trust them to oversee a vaccine?"

TRUST IN THE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE

"Even if I decide to take it, I don't know how I'd tell my family."

"Are you saying no one else in your family has taken it?"

"Yes, that's right. My father is really against it."

"What's your concern?"

"Explaining it to him, and he'll be disappointed in me."

STAYING LOYAL TO FAMILY

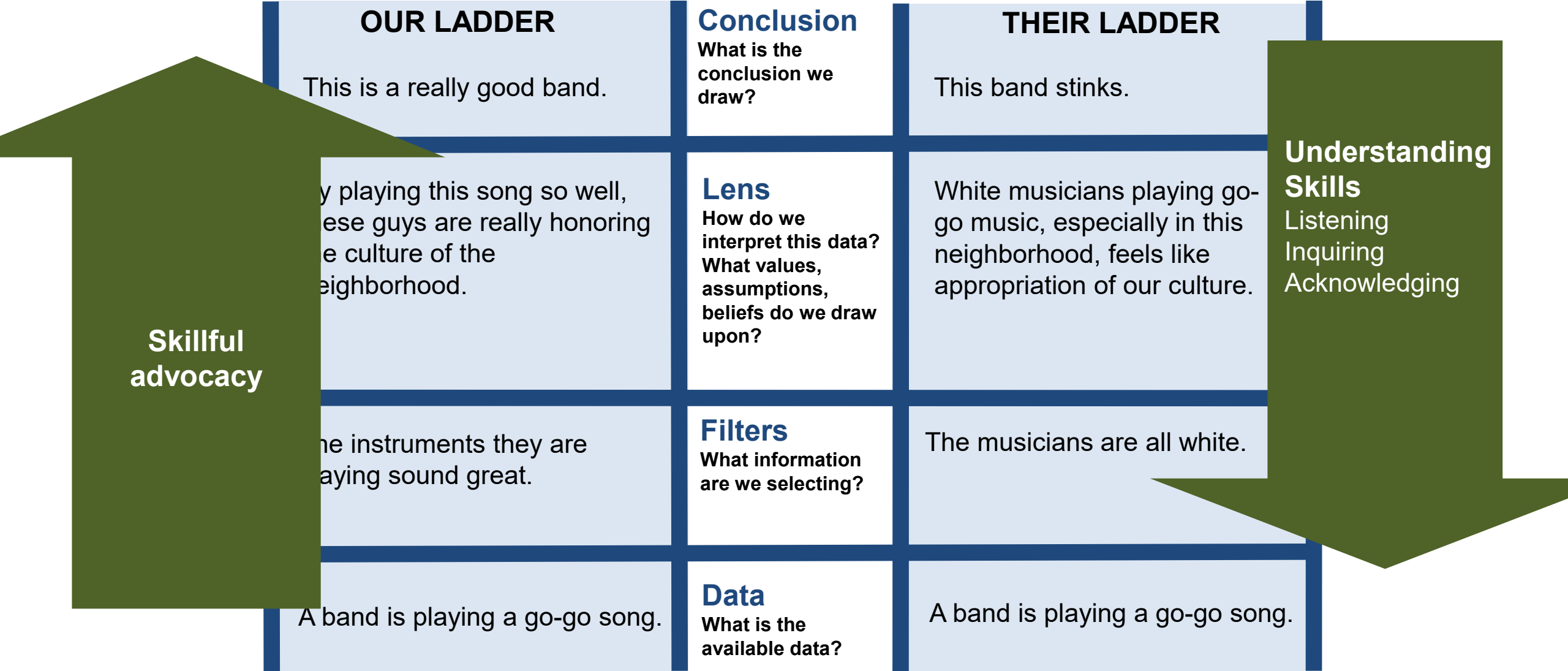
Ladder of Inference



Ladder of Inference

OUR LADDER	Conclusion What is the conclusion we draw?	THEIR LADDER
This is a really good band.	By playing this song so well, these guys are really honoring the culture of the neighborhood.	This band stinks.
By playing this song so well, these guys are really honoring the culture of the neighborhood.	Lens How do we interpret this data? What values, assumptions, beliefs do we draw upon?	White musicians playing go-go music, especially in this neighborhood, feels like appropriation of our culture.
The instruments they are playing sound great.	Filters What information are we selecting?	The musicians are all white.
A band is playing a go-go song.	Data What is the available data?	A band is playing a go-go song.

Ladder of Inference



Action Two: Examples of Inquiry

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Exploratory

- “So what’s your view on this?”
- ”Can you say a little more on...”
- “What concerns you the most?”
- “What questions do you have?”
- “Is there any other information that would help you decide here?”
- “What *other* concerns might you have?”
- “What would be helpful for you to know as you make this decision?”

Impact

- “What benefit do you see to my proposal here? For you? For others?”
- “Do you know anyone who is affected by this issue, and what their experience was?”

Clarifying

- “Can you say a little bit more about that?”

Action Two: Examples of Acknowledgment

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

Don't just TELL:

- “I understand where you're coming from”
- “I understand what you're going through”

Rather, SHOW that you are hearing them. Summarize, then ask what you've missed or misunderstood

- “So, you feel that...”
- “It seems like you're saying that...”
- “I can imagine that...”

And then...

- “Is that right?”
- “Is that a fair way to say it?”

Understand: Acknowledgment

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

“I understand”

“I understand what you’re going through.”



I understand you.

“I understand why you see things that way.”



I understand your reasoning.

Action **Two**: Examples of Acknowledgment

ACTION:	ADOPT MINDSET	UNDERSTAND	SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE
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Key tip: Use words they just used:



It forces you to take their perspective.



It shows you've heard them.



It gives them an opportunity to elaborate.

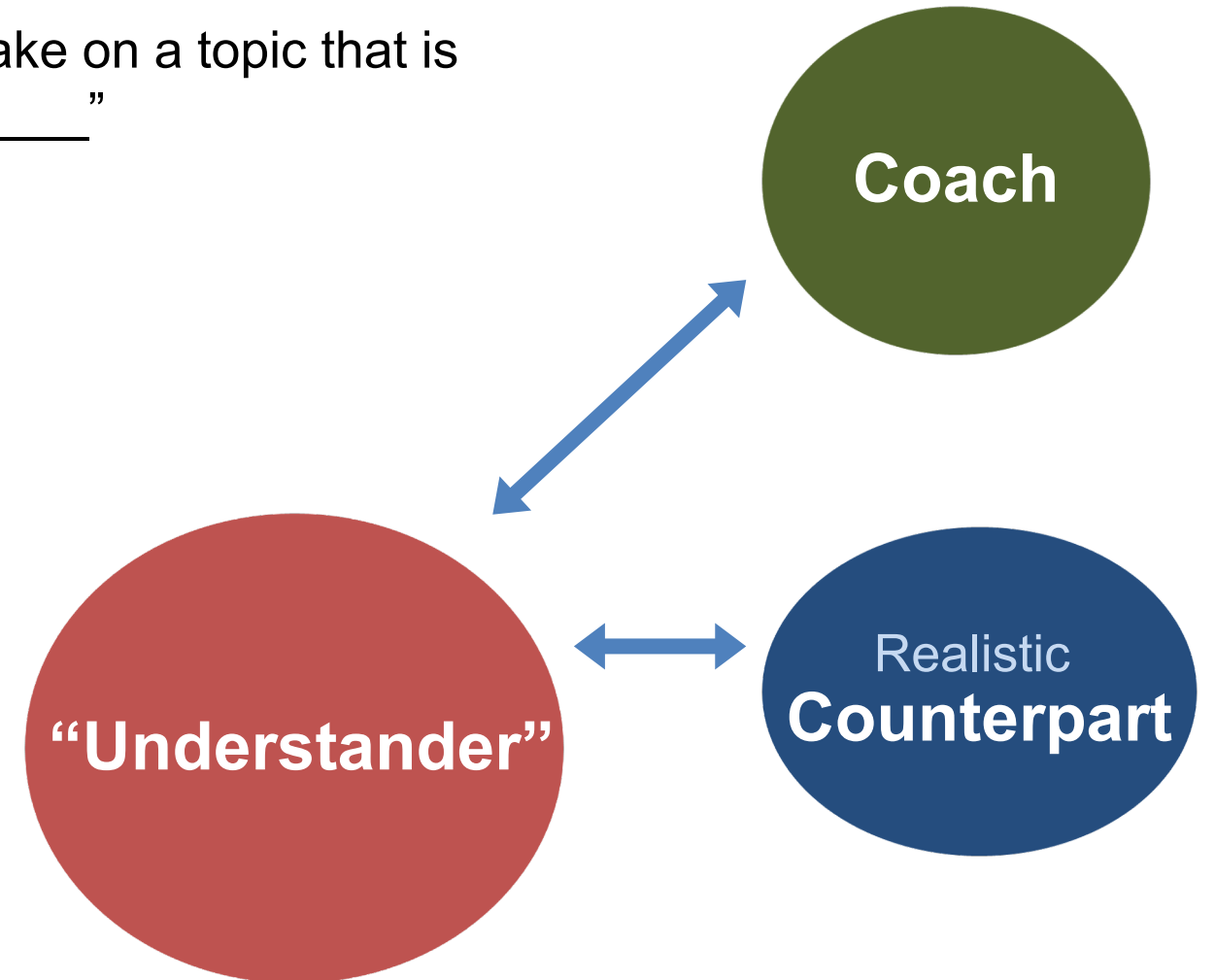
Role play

Right Now

- write down, in one sentence, a position you take on a topic that is important to you. “I believe strongly that _____”

Exercise

- Three roles:
- Choose who is who
- Counterpart role-plays, arguing the exact opposite of what Understander wrote down
- Understander uses only understanding skills: listening, inquiry, acknowledgment
- Coach supports Understander, calling ‘time out’ and offering advice



Role play

“False” Inquiry

- “Don’t you think that...”
- “Isn’t it true that...”
- “You don’t *really* think that...”

“False” Acknowledgment

- “I hear you but...”
- “I totally understand what you’re saying, but...”
- “So you’re saying [inaccurate]”

Action Three

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

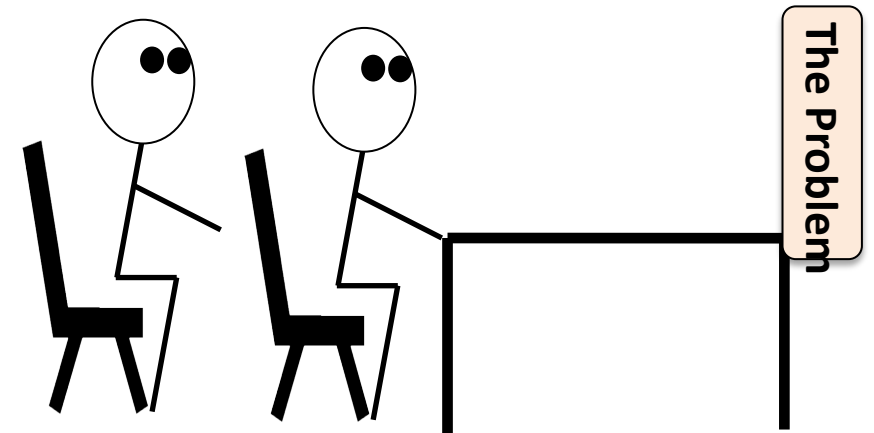
UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

1. Ask yourself: are they ready to hear my advocacy?

Before you share your story, ask yourself:

- Do they feel heard?
- Have they shown interest in solving this problem in general?
- Have they shown interest in helping you solve this problem?



Action Three

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

2. Connect to their concerns, use “testable advocacy”

- Share your reasoning:
 - “Here’s how I reached my conclusion...”
- Test Understanding
 - “What questions do you have about my view, and how I arrived at it?”
 - “Do you track my thinking?”
- Invite challenge
 - “Do you see different data? What have I missed?”
 - “Do you disagree with my conclusion?”

Action Three

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

“Nations with allies thrive, and those without allies decline — it’s that simple.”

“We must be willing to do more than to listen to our allies. **We must be willing to be persuaded by them.**”

- Sec. James Mattis



Action Three

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

3. To be persuasive, show you can be persuaded

- **Key questions:**
 - If you don't expect to change your thinking at least a little, why do you expect your counterpart to change theirs?
 - Does the solution reflect their thinking as well? If it doesn't, will it last?
- Research: inverse relationship between “source certainty” and persuasiveness, or...
 - The more of an expert I am in a topic, and...
 - ...the less I express certainty on that topic, then...
 - ...the more effective I become at persuading people on that topic

Action Three: “To be persuasive...”

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

UNDERSTAND

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

The Blemishing Effect

- Small doses of mildly negative information may actually strengthen a consumer’s positive impression of a product or service
- Why? When consumers receive mildly negative information after already receiving positive information, the “blemish” highlights the positive information and makes it seem even more positive

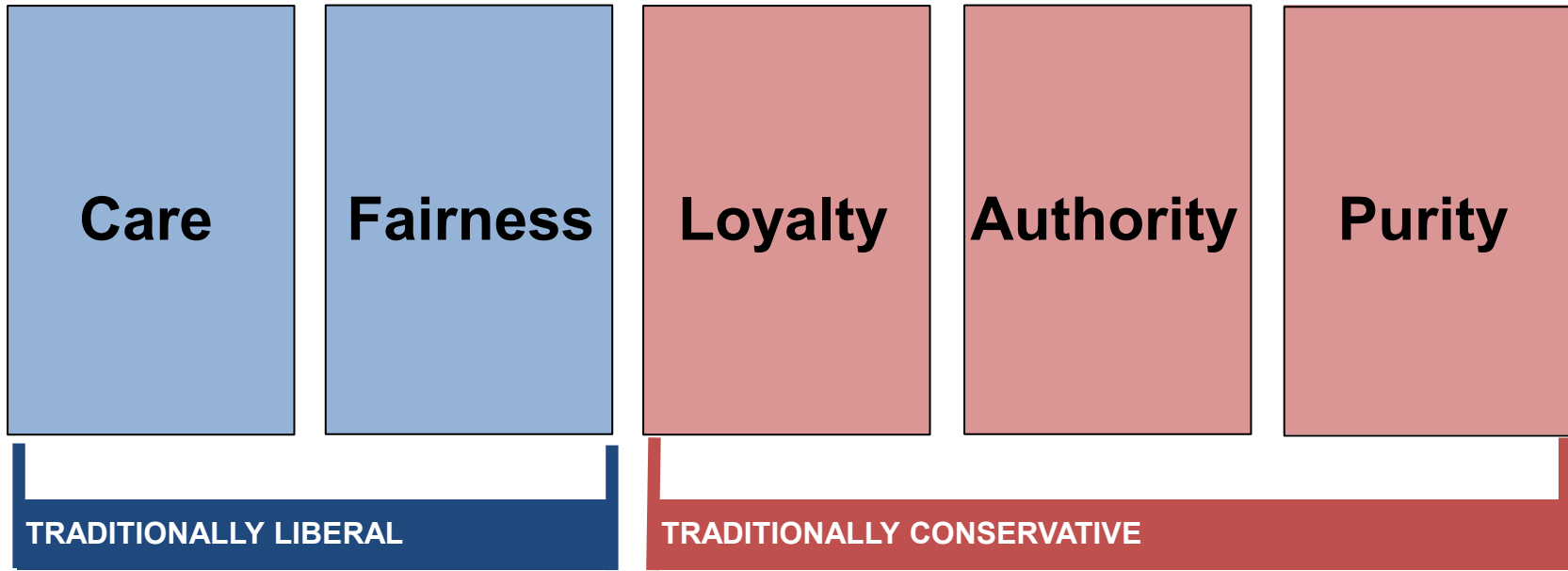
“As long as the negative information about a product is minor, your pitch might be more persuasive when it calls attention to that negative, especially if consumers have already learned some positive things”



Connect to their Concerns

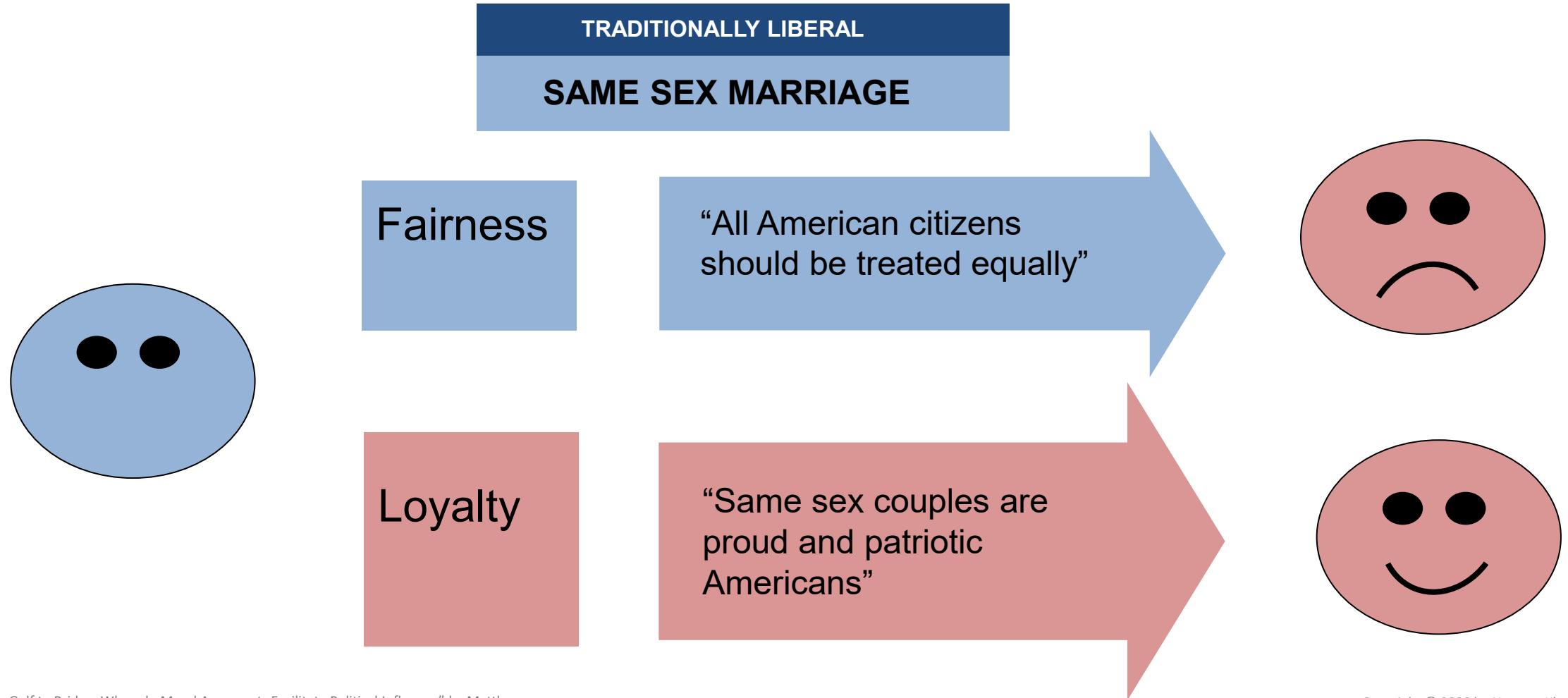
ACTION: **ADOPT MINDSET** **UNDERSTAND** **SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE**

FIVE MORAL FOUNDATIONS



Connect to their Concerns

ACTION: ADOPT MINDSET UNDERSTAND SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE

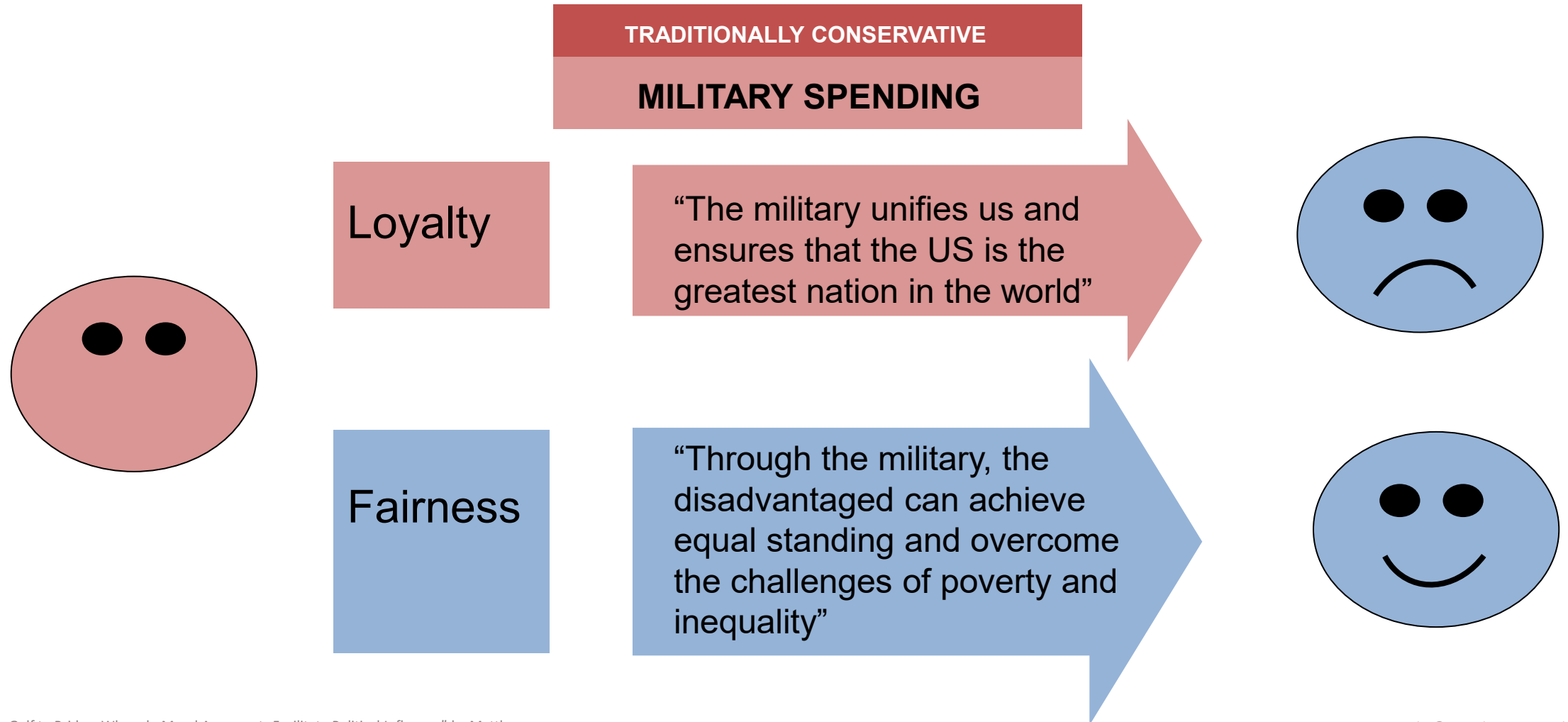


Connect to their Concerns

ACTION:

ADOPT MINDSET

SKILLFULLY ADVOCATE



Prepare for a Scenario

- Think about a real ongoing or upcoming scenario
- Prepare using tool

Summary of What We Did Today

Assumption: I'm Right

- Certainty
- Ladder of Inference
- Biases

Assumption: I'll Show You

- Selling exercise and Challenger
- Power of autonomy and Tide Pods

Assumption: I'll Win

- Arm Exercise
- The costs of competition
- Truck story

Adopt Mindset

- Curiosity
- Competitive vs. collaborative

Understand

- Listening, Inquiring, Acknowledging
- Using the Ladder of inference

Skillfully Advocate

- Build from their perspective
- Moral Foundation Theory
- To be persuasive...

Checklist

Adopt Mindset

- Self awareness: Am I aware of what persuades me?
- Do I have the appropriate mindset? Am I present?
Am I open to learning?

Understand

- Do I understand their ladder?
- Am I balancing the three skills of understanding before moving to skillful advocacy?
- Am I really understanding the problem before I'm trying to solve it?

Skillfully Advocate

- Am I tailoring the argument to the audience?
- Am I demonstrating openness to being persuaded?

Suggested Reading

Some related books, in no particular order:

- *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert B. Cialdini (New York: Collins Business Essentials, 1993)
- *The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone's Mind*, Jonah Berger (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020)
- *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*, Adam Grant (New York: Viking, 2021)
- *Influence is Your Superpower: The Science of Winning Hearts, Sparking Change, and Making Good Things Happen*, Zoe Chance (New York: Random House, 2022).
- *Leadership is Dead: How Influence is Reviving It*, Jeremie Kubicek (New York: Howard Books, 2011)
- *Masterful Coaching: Extraordinary Results by Impacting People in the Way They Think and Work Together*, Robert Hargrove (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995)
- *Descartes Error*, Antonio Damasio, (New York: Putnam, 1994)
- *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman, (New York: FSG, 2011)
- *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (New York: Bantam Books, 1995)
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