



Liberating Structures

Leading & Innovating

by Including and Unleashing Everyone

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Social Invention Group
Plexus Institute


HOW RAVEN STOLE THE SUN

The sun figures prominently in Native American ceremonial

Impromptu Networking

Power of loose connections,
small things can make a big difference



An aerial photograph of a winding river or stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is a light, silty brown color, contrasting with the dark green and brown tones of the surrounding trees and land. The river meanders across the frame, creating a central path that draws the eye.

**What is a challenge
you brought to this
workshop?**

**What do you
hope to get from
and contribute to
this group?**

Find a partner...3-5 minutes sharing...
Then find another partner... then find another.

⋮
Transforming
Movements

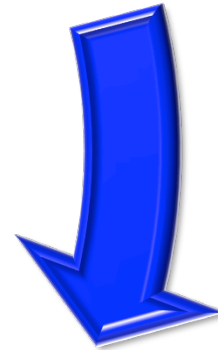


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Everyday
Solutions

Liberating
Structures

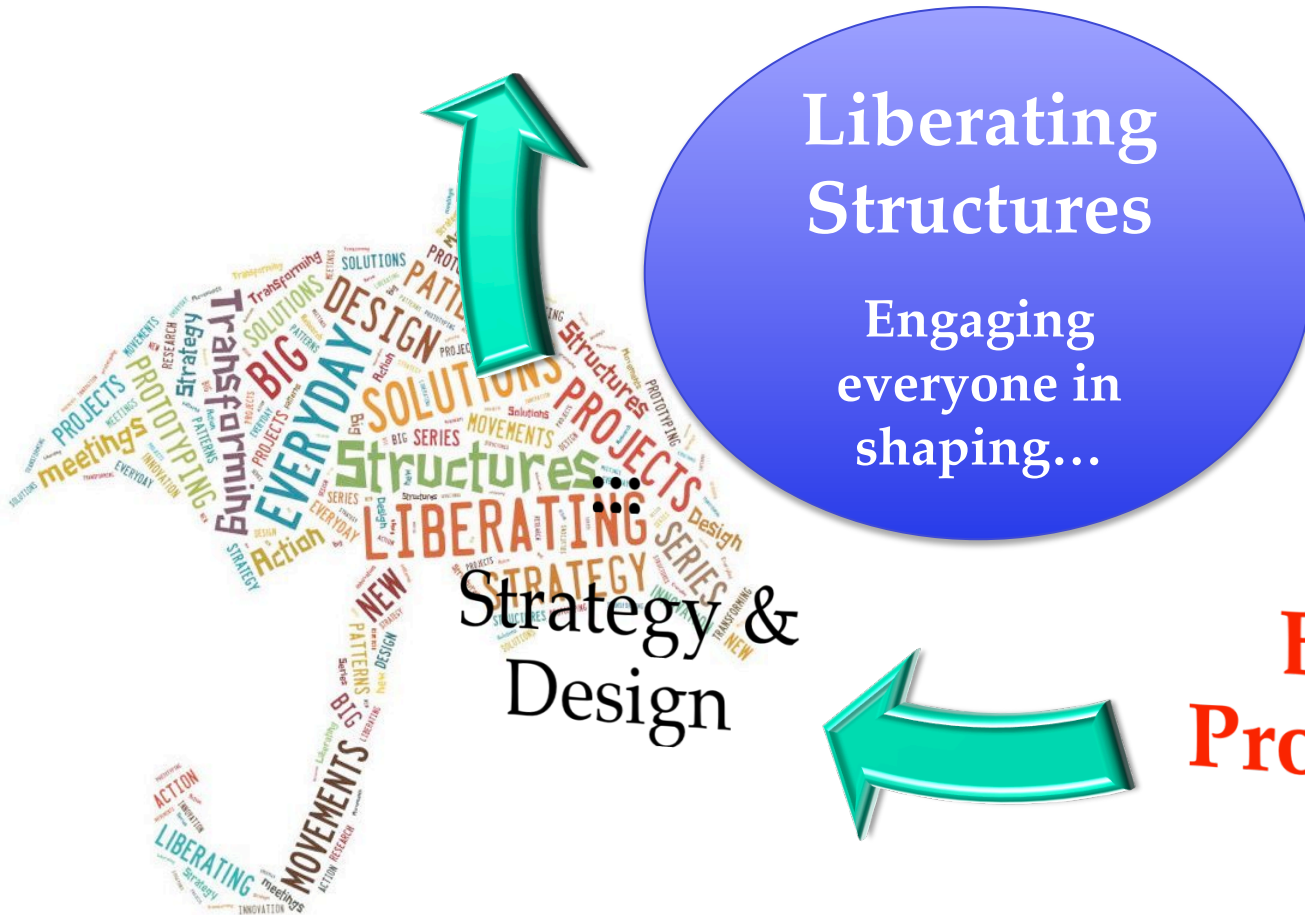
Engaging
everyone in
shaping...



⋮

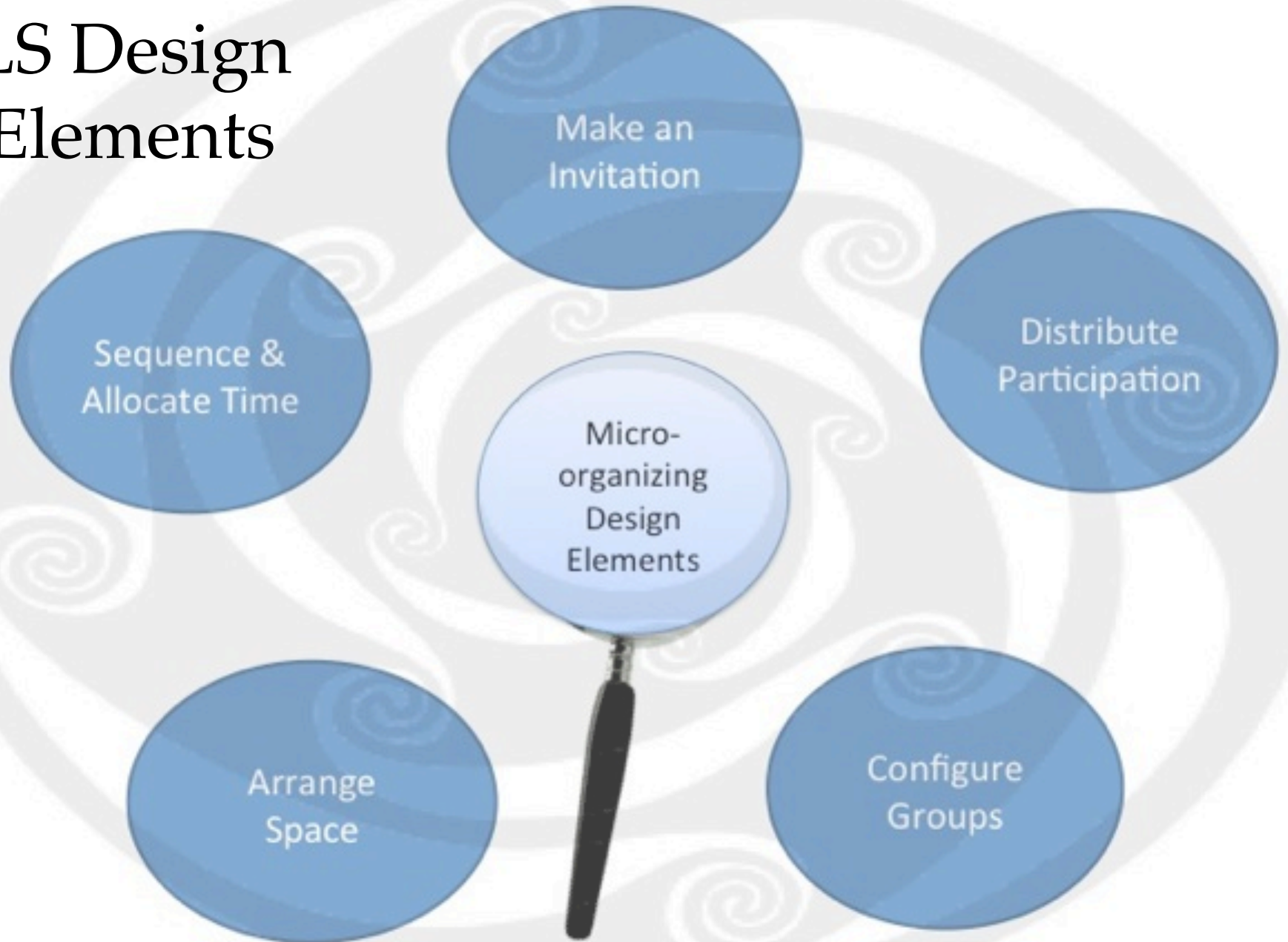
Big
Projects

Strategy &
Design



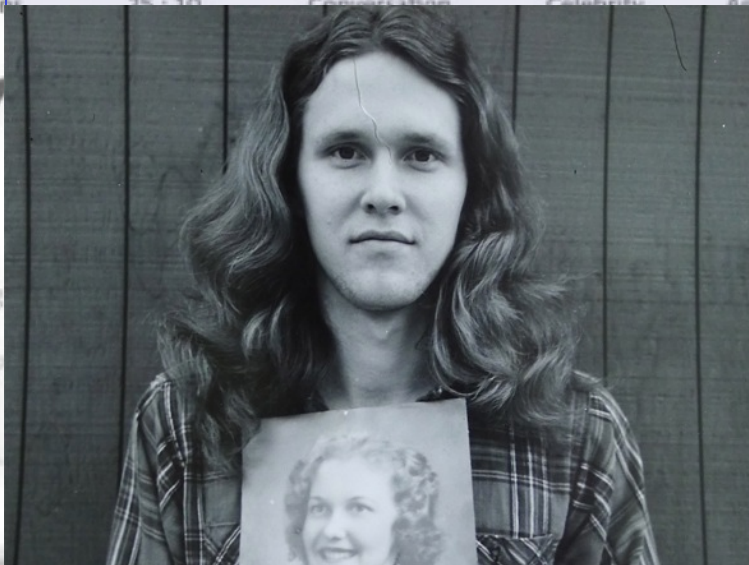
LS Palette	Wicked Q's	What ³ debrief	Min specs	Heard, seen, respected	What I need from you	Integrated autonomy
1-2-4-All	Appreciative interviews	Discovery and action dialogue	Improv prototyping	Drawing together	Open space	Critical uncertainties
Impromptu networking	TRIZ	Shift & share	Helping heuristics	Design storyboards	Generative relationships	Ecocycle
9-whys	15% solutions	25 : 10 crowdsourcing	Conversation café	Celebrity interview	Agree/certainty matrix	Panarchy
	Troika consulting	Wise crowds	User experience fishbowl	Smart network webbing	Simple ethnography	Purpose to practice

LS Design Elements



Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch

*What is your
ground game?*



This Is Not A Certification Course!

- **First experience is enough to get started using Liberating Structures**
- **YOU will decide how to achieve mastery personally**
- **LS are simple, powerful & subtle**
- **LS are easy to copy and spread by word of mouth**
- **Practice makes perfect**

Attributes Of Complex Systems

Natural
Emergence &
Creativity

Adaptable
Elements

Min Specs /
Microstructures

Order w/o
Central
Control

*You don't see something until
you have the right metaphor
to let you perceive it.*

Thomas Kuhn

Embedded
Systems or
Panarchy

Not Predictable
in Detail

Co-Evolution

Non-Linearity

Redux Workshop A G E N D A

. Impromptu Networking

1

2

3

4

5

Liberating Workflow

1-2-4 All

15% Solutions

Troika Consulting

Nine Whys

TRIZ

What³ Debrief

Design StoryBoards

Social Network Webbing



6

7

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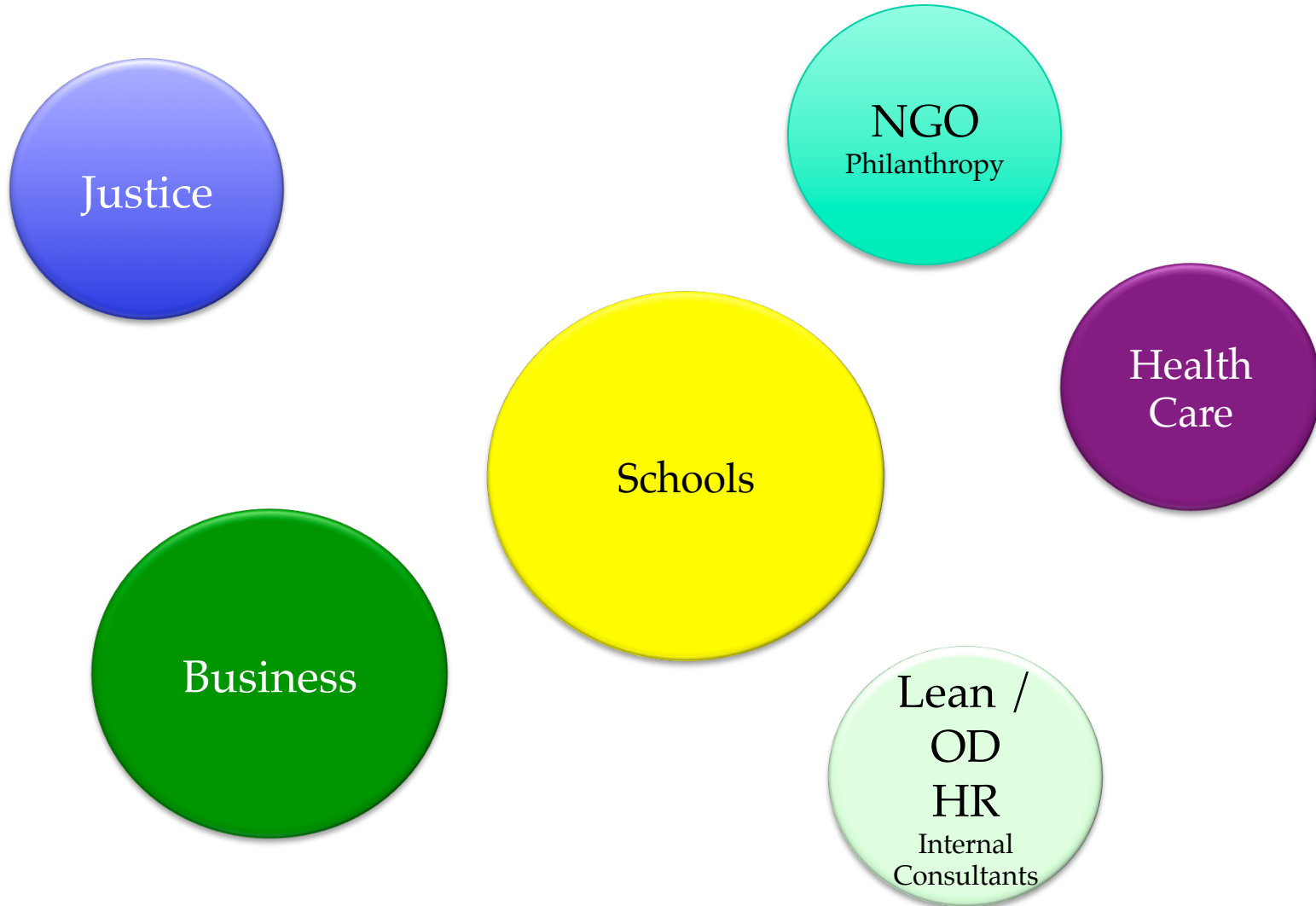
9

10



Group Possibilities

LS work best when there is a shared challenge with a local context





What opportunities do you see for including and unleashing more people in addressing your challenge?

1-2-4-All

Progressive, Rapid Cycle Conversation

- Self-Reflection (no talking, jot down notes)
- Pairs
- Small groups of four
- Whole group



Design Storyboarding

Topic	Goal	LS Micro-Structure	Why this LS?	Steps / Timing	Facilitator / Participants



15% Solutions

Noticing and Using the Influence,
Discretion and Power Individuals
Have Right Now

What can YOU do now to
address your challenge?



15%

Troika Consulting

- **Groups of three**
- **5 minutes per person**
- **1 minute reflection**
- **Share your 15% Solutions—no long explanations!**
- **Invite feedback and advice from your consultants... then turn your back on them**
- **Switch to next person...**

Brainstorm

When, where and how can you apply
these Liberating Structures?

Fit your answers into the Design Storyboard.



Flocking, Schooling, Learning

Min Specs and Self-Organized Patterning

Flocking & Min Specs Questions



- Did patterns form without a leader or detailed instructions? How?
- Do you know the people that picked you?
- What **enabled AND constrained** movement?
- What differences did you notice with and without a “boss?”
- What factors influenced the adoption and spread of innovations?
- Were the innovations predictable? Why did some succeed and others fail?



A green leaf is the central focus, with the text "9 Whys" written in white on it. The leaf is surrounded by a brown, textured background that looks like torn paper or bark. The text is centered on the leaf.

9 Whys



Becoming Clear on Purpose

Ask, when working on _____,
what do you do?

- Why is it important to you?
- **First answer**, “_____.”
Hmmm, why is *that* important to you?
- **Second answer**, “_____.” OK, if your dream came true last night, what would be different today?

Keep asking, “*Why... why... why...*” until you make a discovery about your partner’s *bedrock* purpose. Then switch roles.

Move to a group of four. Discuss similarities and differences. A community Purpose may materialize!

1-2-4-All schedule:

- 1 minute quiet reflection, generating an activities list
- 10 minutes in a pair (asking why-why-why questions), 5 minutes each
- 5 minutes in a a small group (4), then,
- 4 minutes debriefing, “What happened?” Did a community purpose emerge in your conversation?



Two Attributes of a Common **Powerful Purpose**



- A personal touchstone for you as an individual
- Fundamental justification for the existence of your work to the larger community

A powerful purpose attracts participation, including and unleashing everyone

Questions Hierarchy

What did you notice?

What happened?
What else?

Can you give me an
example or tell
me a story?

Small Questions:
Many,
Distributed
Answers

What seems possible
now?

WHAT?

What do we need
to stop doing?

Do you see a pattern?
Does it make a difference?

What is taking shape?

What first steps can
you take now?

Where do you have
freedom to act?

What made your
success possible?

HOW?

Who needs
to be included?

Is there anyone you know
who is able to overcome
these challenges? How?

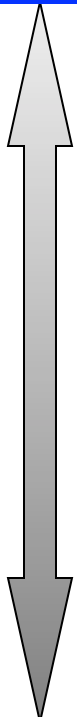
What do you
hope can happen
for us in this work?

WHY?

Why is this
important to you?

Why is this
important to
the organization?

Big Questions:
Few, Tight
Answers



TRIZ

Designing a Perfectly Adverse System
to Make Space for Innovation

Begin by defining a
VERY unwanted
result of your
work together

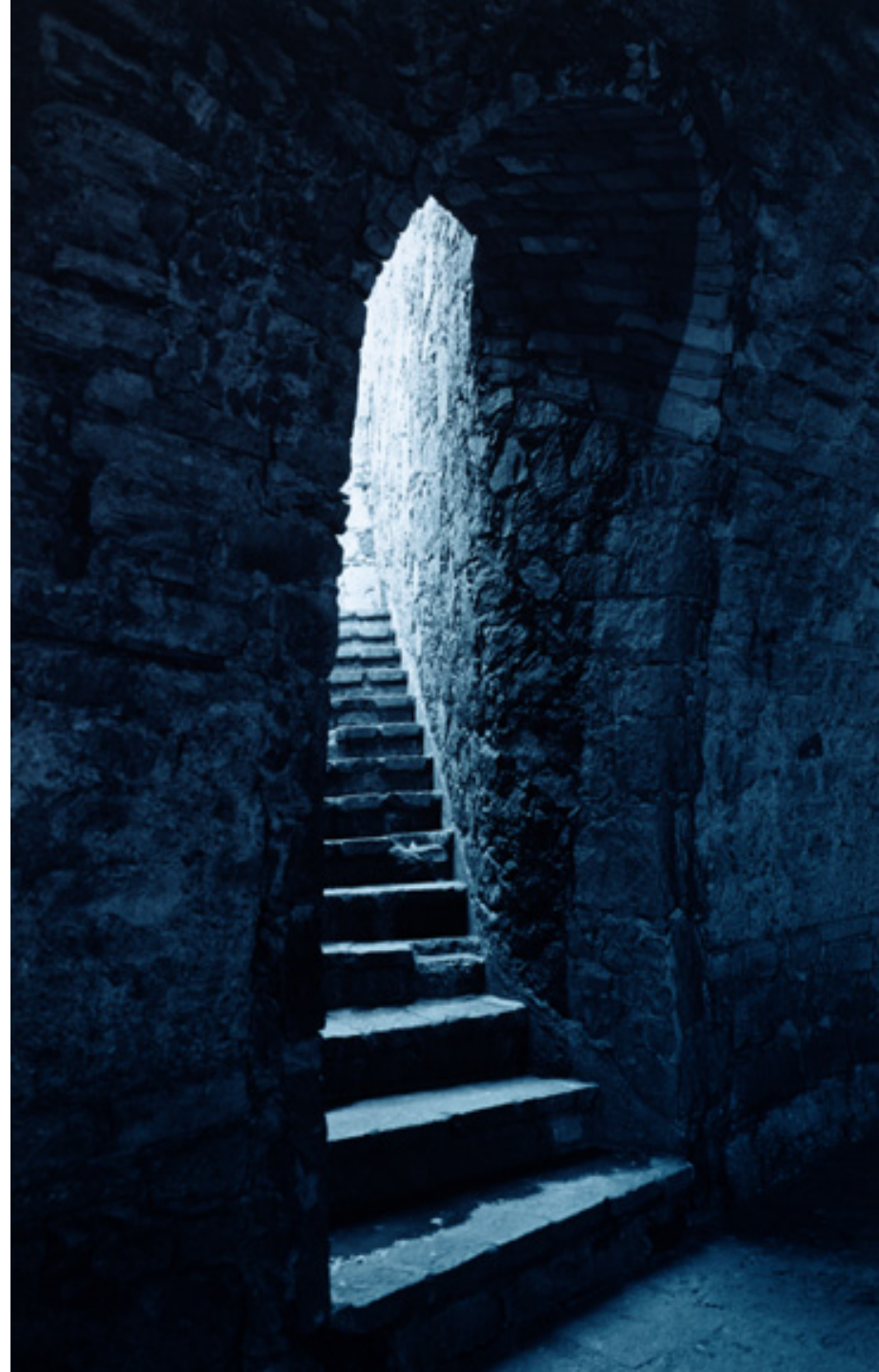
TRIZ – First Step

- **First alone, then in your small group, compile a list of todo's in answer to:**

How can I/we reliably create a very unwanted result...?

You never do anything with what you have learned here?

- **10 minutes**
- **Go wild!**





TRIZ - Second Step

- First alone, then in your group, go down your list and ask:
“Is there anything we are doing that resembles in any shape or form todo’ s on our list?”
- Make a second list of those activities & talk about their impact
- Be unforgiving
- 10 minutes

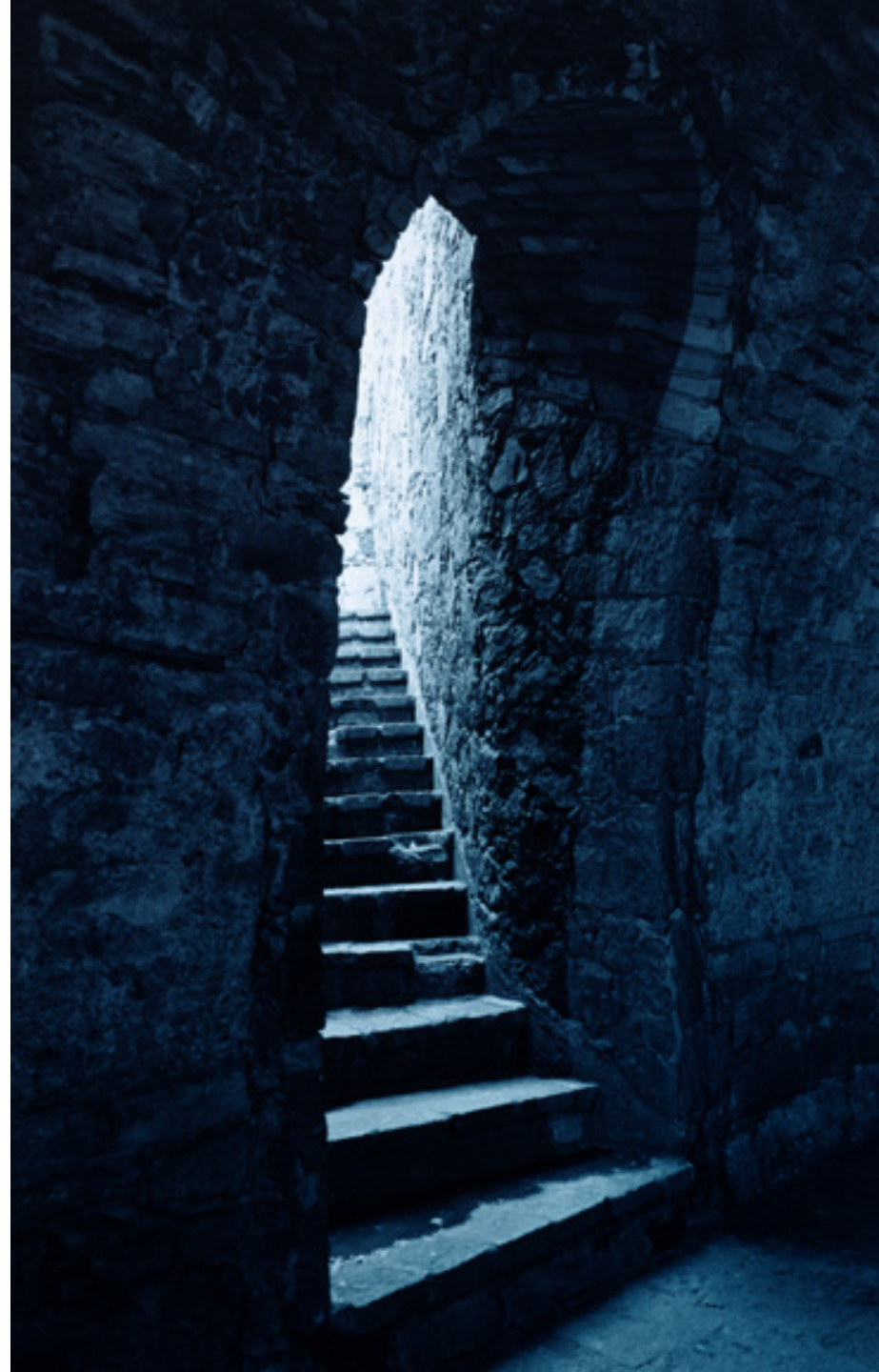
TRIZ – Third Step

- First alone, then in your group, compile the list of what needs to be stopped or changed
- Take one item at a time & ask:

How am I and how are we going to stop it?

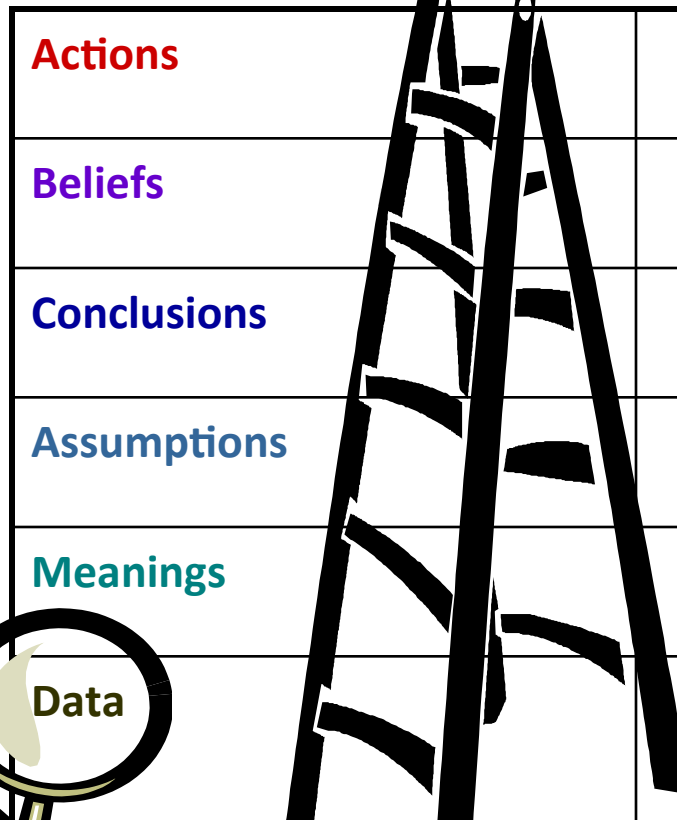
What is your first move?

- Be as concrete as you can
- Identify who else is needed to stop the activity
- 10 minutes



Climbing Up & Down

The Ladder of Inference



Actions	I take based on beliefs 3. Now What?
Beliefs	I adopt about the world
Conclusions	I draw 2. So What?
Assumptions	I make based on meanings
Meanings	I add (cultural & personal) 1. What?
Data	I select from observations

Reflexive Loop



Observable data and experiences

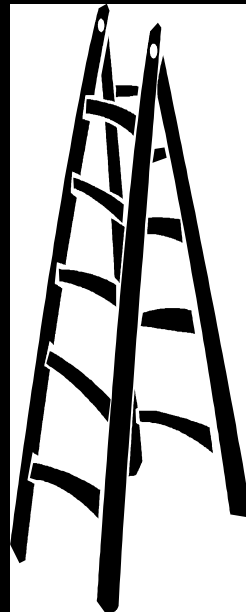
Adapted from
Chris Argyris, Harvard



What³ Debrief

Pick a ladder jumping enforcer




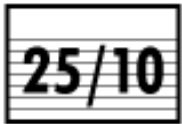
- **WHAT?**
 - What facts, data, & observations stand out?
- **SO WHAT?**
 - How do you explain what you see? What patterns do you see? Why is it important?
- **NOW WHAT?**
 - What action may help you move forward? Who else should be here?





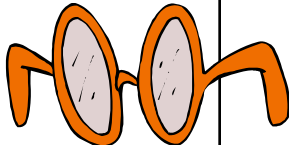






Storyboarding Components

Launching A Palliative Care Initiative

Topic	Goal	LS Method	Why this LS?	Steps / Timing	Facilitator / Participants
Welcome, Introductions	Form working group, get acquainted			3 rounds in pairs, 5 minutes each	Carlos, all
Preparing to Launch Project	Make space for innovation			3 steps, 20 minutes each	Ginny, groups of 4 then whole group
Attracting Participation	Define and sharpen purpose			Two rounds of 1-2-4, 15 minutes each	Katie, then groups of four
Action Planning	Identify action, get started now			25 minutes for 5 rounds + action group formation	Carlos, all

Sources of Knowledge & Innovation

	Explicit	Tacit	Latent/Emerging
Telling 	<p><u>ASK</u></p> <p>What your clients tell you they need when you ask (e.g., focus groups)</p> 		
		<p><u>OBSERVE</u></p> <p>What behaviors you see in their local context (e.g., ethnographic studies)</p>	
		 	<p><u>CREATE EXPERIENCE</u></p> <p>What you jointly develop with your clients (e.g., rapid prototyping efforts)</p>

Henri Lipmanowicz & Keith McCandless

Adapted from Alan Duncan, MD (Mayo Clinic)



Liberating Structures

- LS website www.liberatingstructures.com
- Book: Liberating Structures: Including and Unleashing Everyone (in progress)
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