

Managing Change

NYSACHO Public Health Leaders Summit, October 15, 2026



PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is building a better government and a stronger democracy.

01

FEDERAL TALENT

Government recruits, empowers and retains the nation's best talent.



02

PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP

Federal leaders are equipped to effectively achieve their agencies' missions and contribute to the public good.



03

SOCIETY'S COMMITMENT TO GOVERNMENT

Society trusts and engages with a well-functioning government.



John Zachary

- Former K12 educator and expert in organizational development and continuous improvement
- Spent years helping educators navigate challenging environments and deliver better outcomes for students
- Golf nut and hopelessly optimistic Washington Wizards fan



Objectives

Understand Change and Transition and leverage neuroscience to predict and understand common challenges in change management

Improve your ability to adapt to change that is outside of your control and better lead others through change



Agenda

Managing Change

Welcome, Intro

Change and Transition Basics,
Neuroscience of Change

Break

Managing Change You Control

Lunch

Communication Essentials

Break

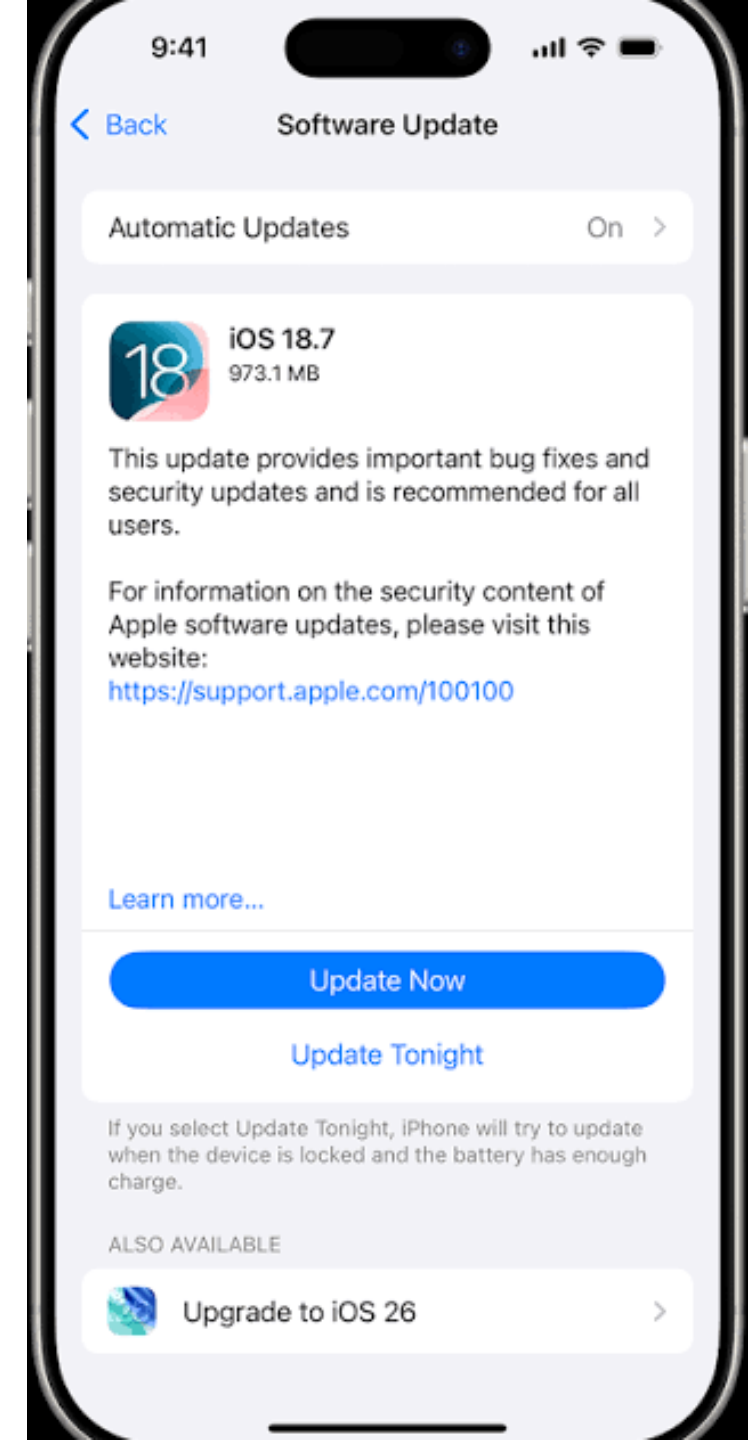
Managing Change You Can't Control

Bridges Transition Model

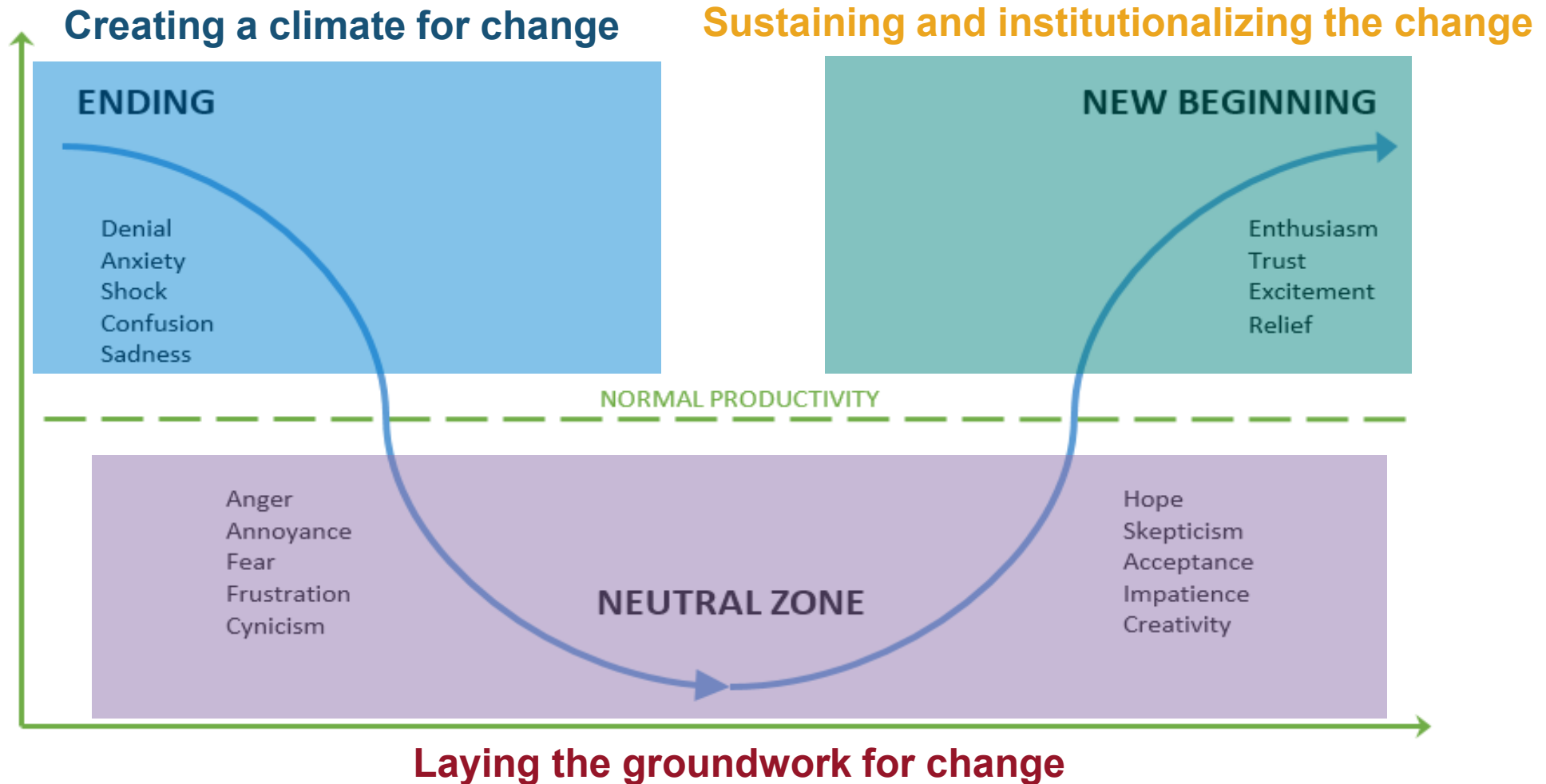


The Software Update

Let's talk about transition in its smallest form first.



The Transition Curve



Change is situational. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation or self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life. Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture. Unless transition happens, the change won't work, because it doesn't 'take'.

— *William Bridges* —

AZ QUOTES

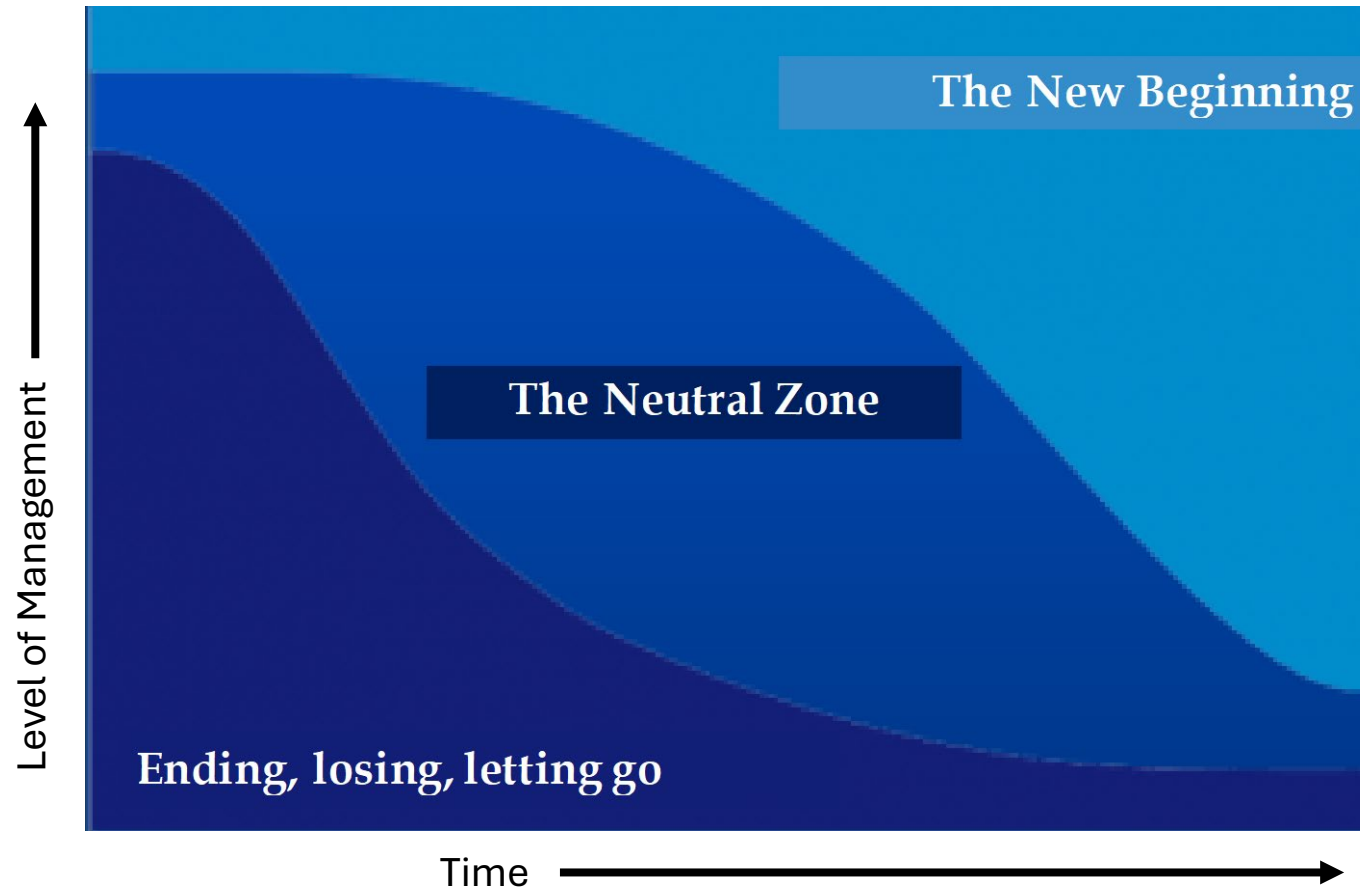


Bridges Transition Breakout

- With folks at your table, consider a current change you are experiencing at work – could be a big one or a small one!
 - Where are *you* currently – TODAY – on the Bridges Transition Model?
 - Where do you think most of your team is currently on the Model?
 - How might you use the Bridges Model to help yourself and/or the team navigate through the change?



Endings, Neutral Zone, Beginnings



Leadership Lessons from Dancing Guy



Neuroscience and Change



The Brain's Organizing Principle

Reward

**Threat or
Danger**

Approach & Engage

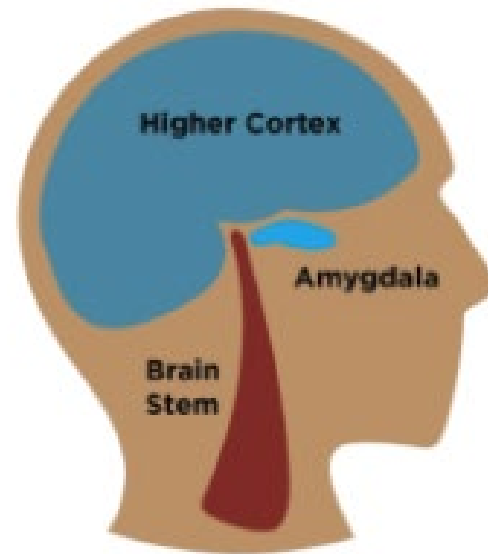
Avoid & Disengage



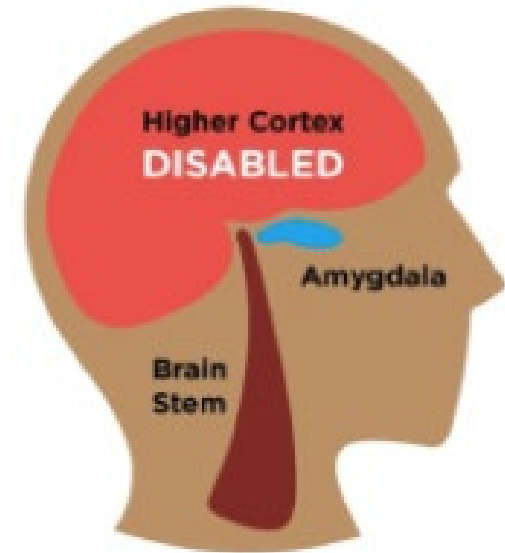
Neuroscience and leadership

Change causes the Amygdala to fire

- Adrenaline and cortisol are released - fight, flight, or freeze
- Known as "the amygdala hijack"
- Prefrontal cortex shuts down
- Digestion, sleep, breathing, memory can be inhibited



LOW Emotion
(Calm, Relaxed)



HIGH Emotion
(Anger, Fear, Excitement, Love, Hate, Disgust, Frustration)

Neuroleadership to the Rescue: SCARF Model

Status

- Am I heard, valued, and respected?

Certainty

- Am I clear on what is happening and why?

Autonomy

- Am I given choice and control?

Relatedness

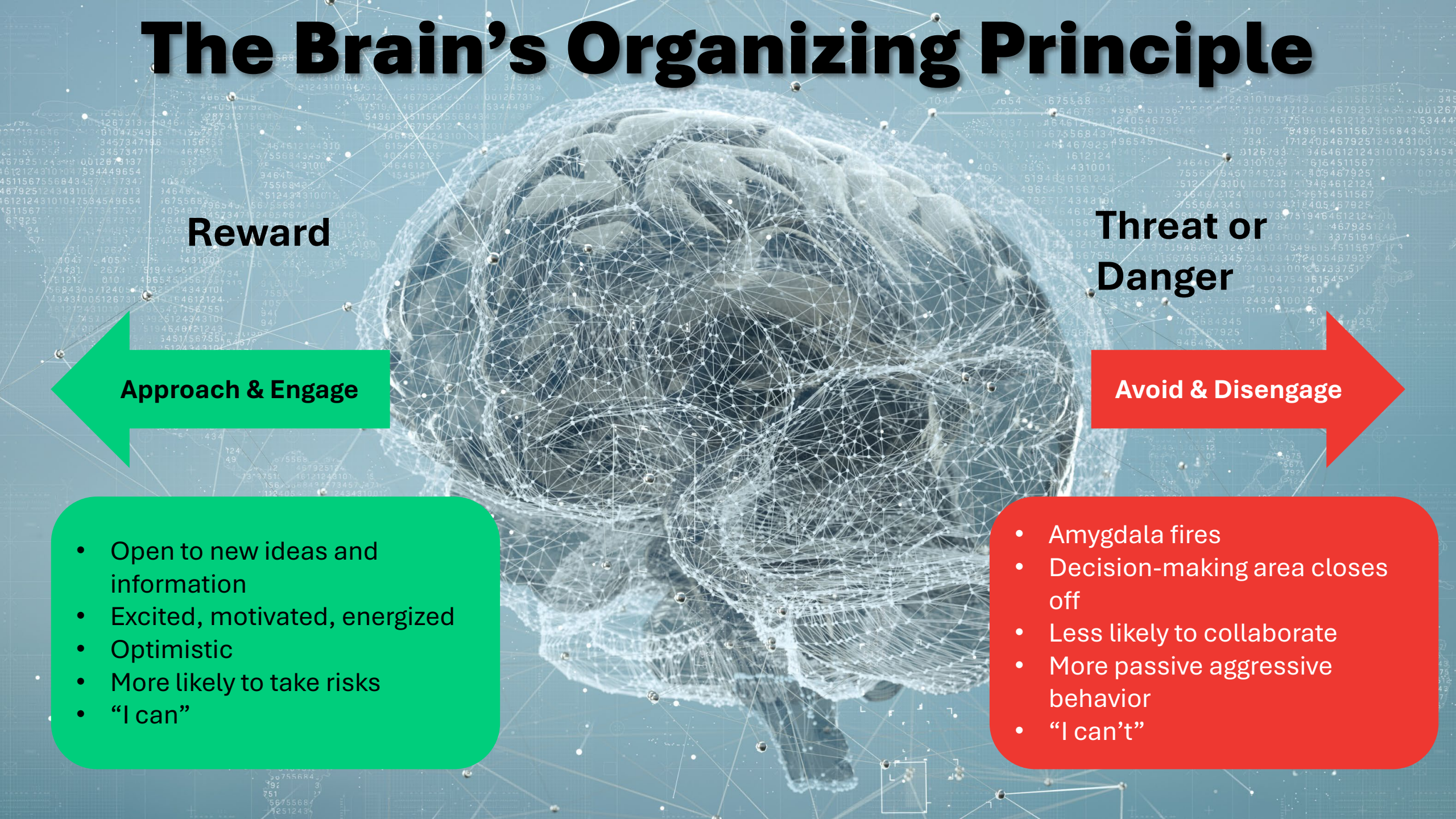
- Do I belong? Do others care about me?

Fairness

- Do I get the credit and opportunities that others do?



The Brain's Organizing Principle



Reward

**Threat or
Danger**

Approach & Engage

Avoid & Disengage

- Open to new ideas and information
- Excited, motivated, energized
- Optimistic
- More likely to take risks
- “I can”

- Amygdala fires
- Decision-making area closes off
- Less likely to collaborate
- More passive aggressive behavior
- “I can’t”

SCARF Assessment

Please scan the QR code and
take the SCARF Assessment
from the NeuroLeadership
Institute

They collect your email but do
not spam you with anything



SCARF Breakout

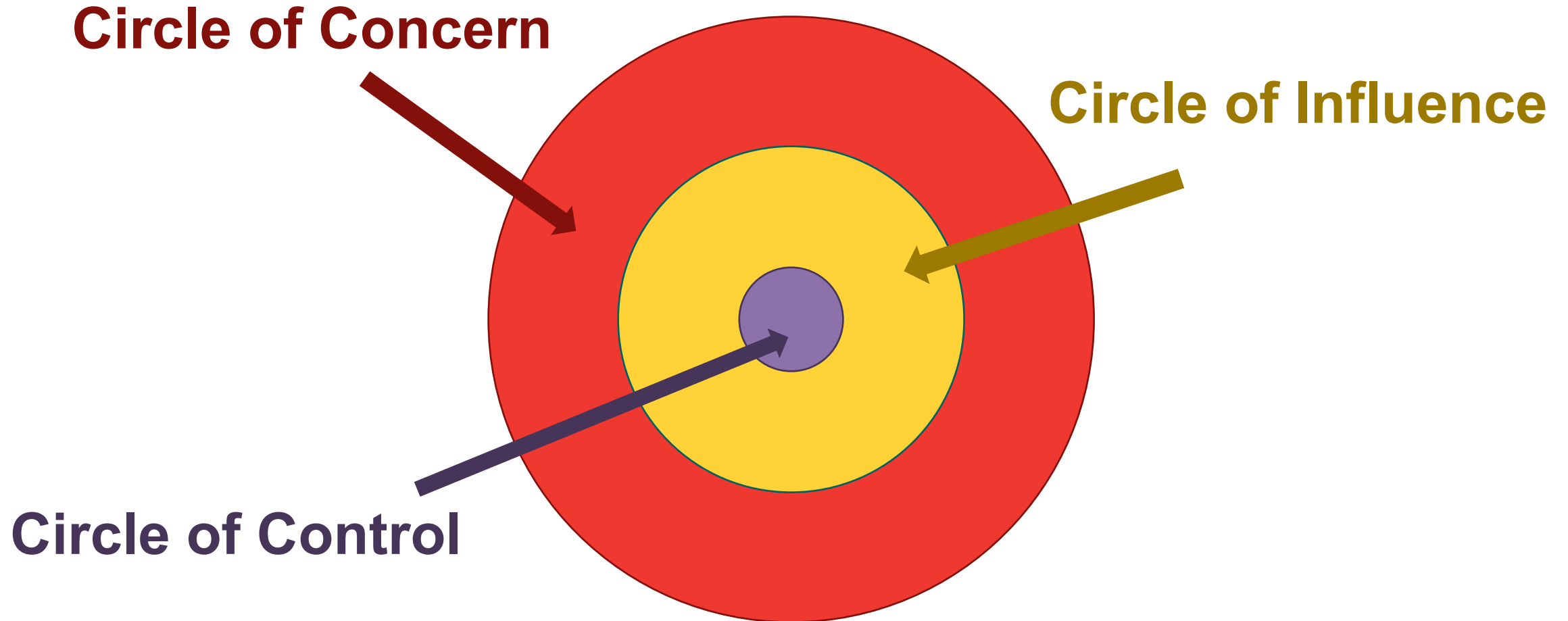
- In small groups please discuss:
 - What resonated about your SCARF self-assessment results?
 - What surprised you?
- Revisit the change you discussed during the first breakout:
 - What SCARF aspects are present?
 - What might you do to help folks approach the change differently and minimize the sense of threat?



Managing Change You Initiate/Control



What can you control?



Leverage a Change Management Framework

- Kotter's 8-Step Process
- ADKAR (Prosci)
- Bolman and Deal Four Frame
- Six Circle Model
- McKinsey 7-S Framework
- Nudge Theory
- Kübler-Ross Change Curve
- Agile/Lean Change Approaches
- Literally hundreds more...

Two things to help you decide which one:

- How large is the change you are making?
Does it require lots of large structural change?
- How big are the possible SCARF triggers with this?

**LET'S LOOK AT A
COUPLE
EXAMPLES!**

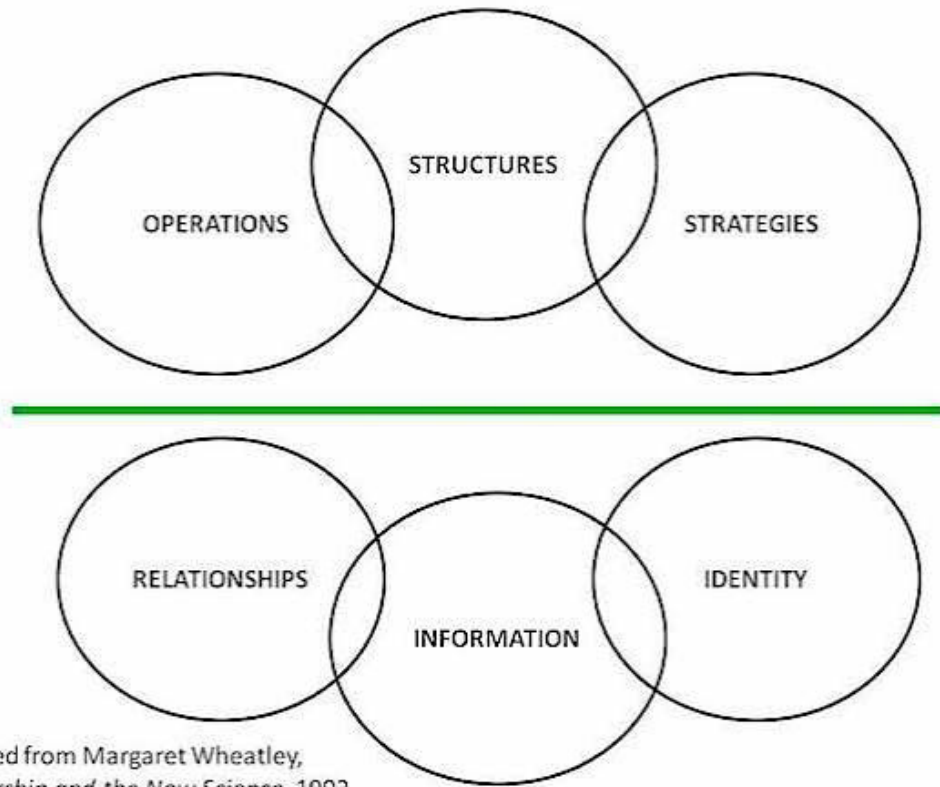


Let's Explore ADKAR

- Created by Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt
- Step by Step approach:
 - Awareness
 - Desire
 - Knowledge
 - Ability
 - Reinforcement



Let's Explore 6 Circle Model



Adapted from Margaret Wheatley,
Leadership and the New Science, 1992

- Change Model that emphasizes thinking about the entire system
- Sometimes referred to as "Above and Below the Green Line"
- Encourages starting "Below the Green Line" when initiating change





Lunch



Peanut Butter & Jelly Activity

In groups:

1. Generate instructions for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
 - What tools (kitchen items) and resources might people need?
2. Generate a visual or list to report out.
3. Select a spokesperson.



Core Principles of Communicating Through Change

- **Four Essential Communication elements to consider:**
 - **Clarity:** Be as direct as possible. Vague statements and euphemisms are the enemy
 - **Frequency:** Establish a cadence for updating folks and stick to it, even if an update is just "there is nothing new"
 - **Two-way dialogue:** Ensure you have a mechanism to hear how people are doing and get feedback as you go – and that the mechanism creates safety for honest feedback
 - **Tailor to the audience:** Consider SCARF and what you know about your colleagues. What is most important to them?



We're Living in a VUCA World



VUCA

NAVIGATING AN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD



VOLATILITY

RATE OF CHANGE

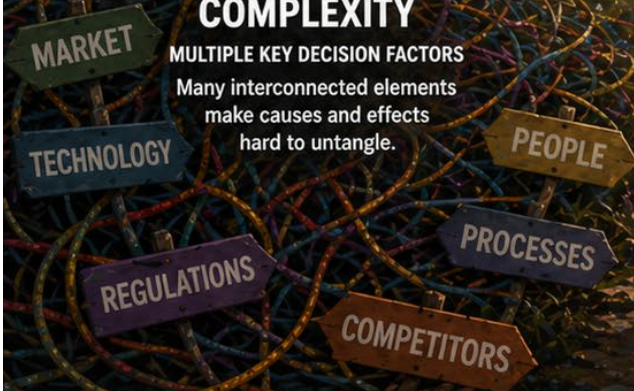
The environment can change quickly and unexpectedly.



COMPLEXITY

MULTIPLE KEY DECISION FACTORS

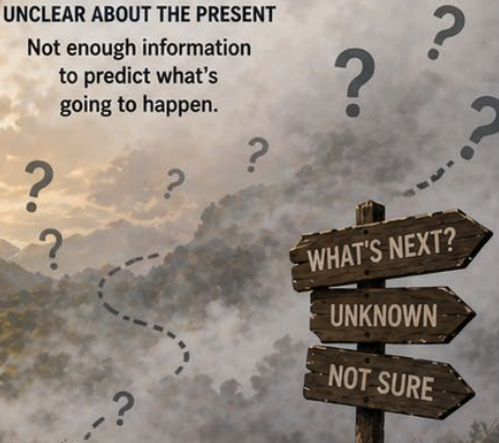
Many interconnected elements make causes and effects hard to untangle.



UNCERTAINTY

UNCLEAR ABOUT THE PRESENT

Not enough information to predict what's going to happen.



AMBIGUITY

LACK OF CLARITY

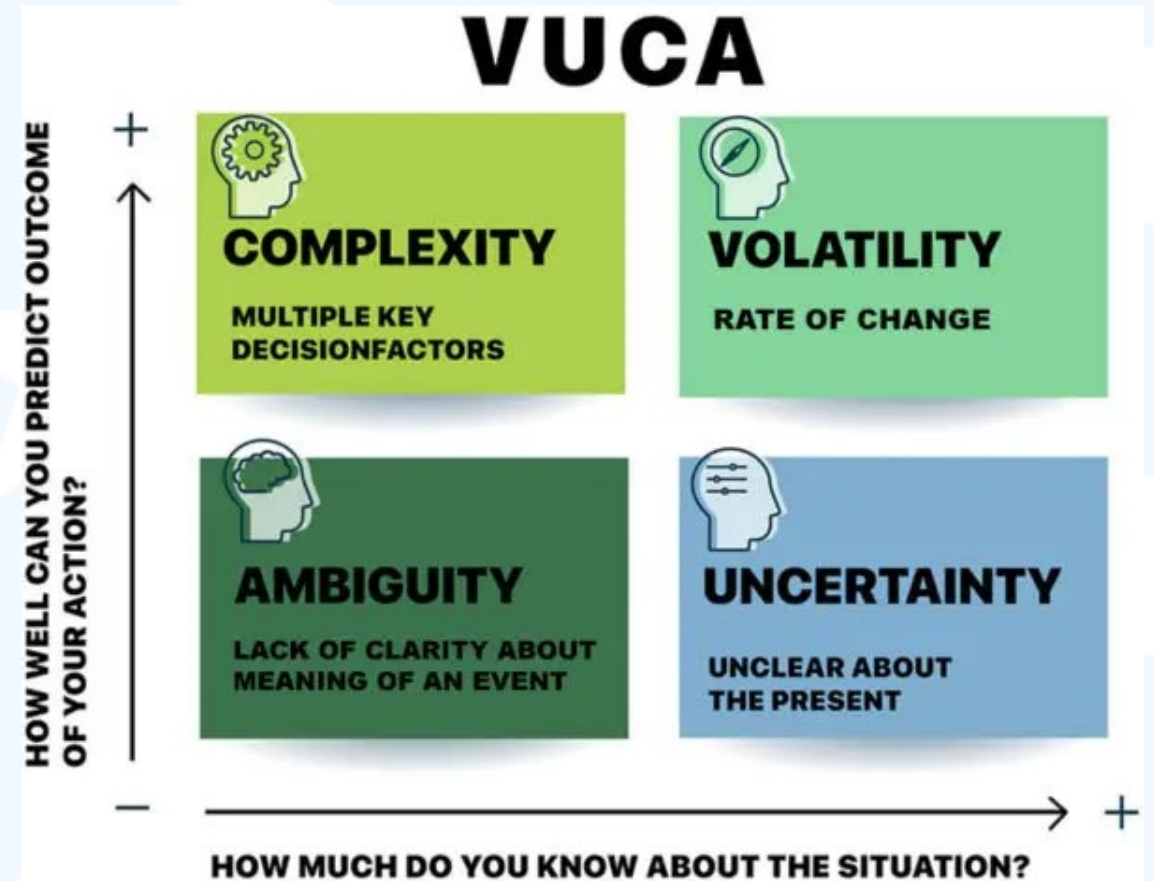
No clear meaning—signals are confusing and open to multiple interpretations.



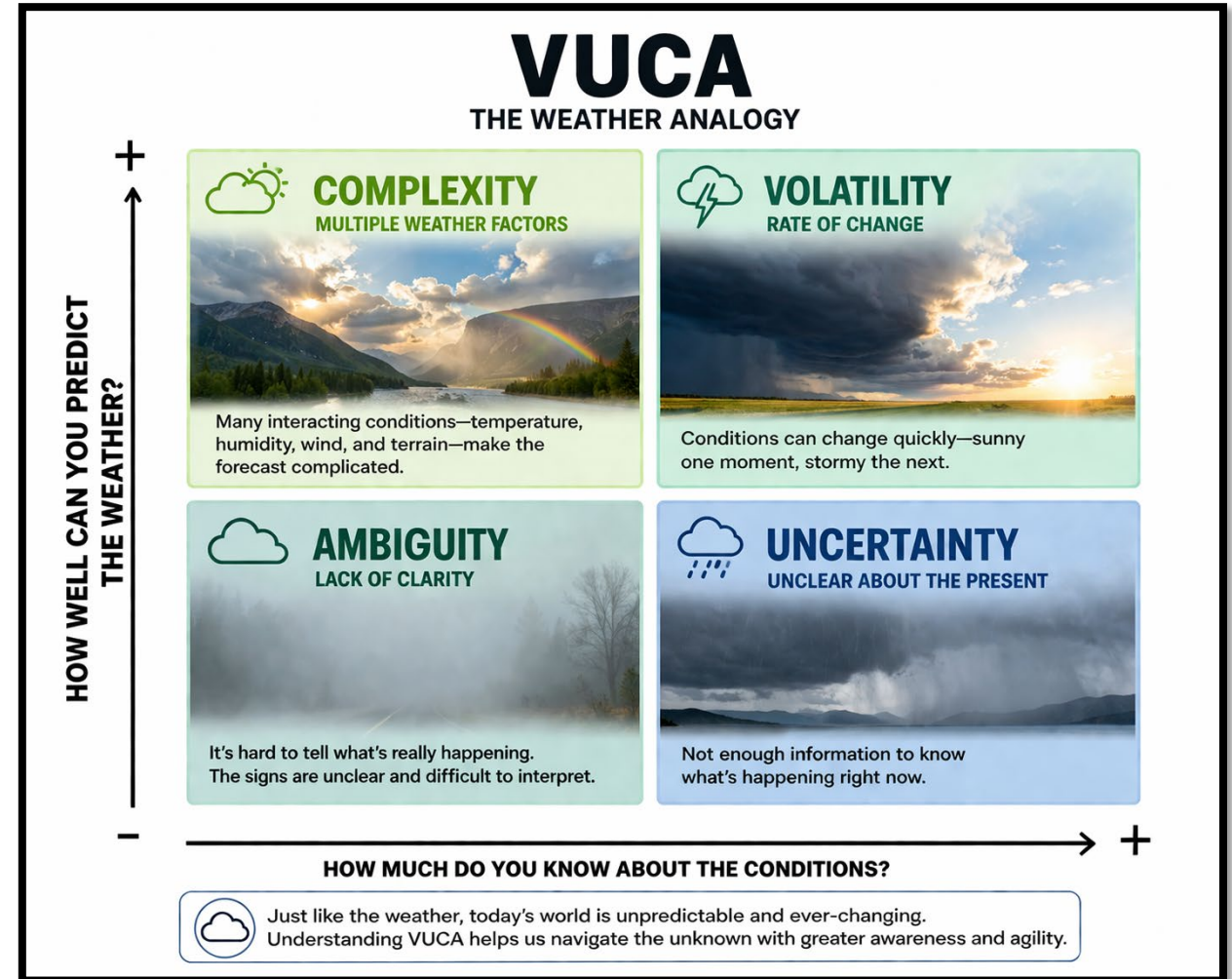
The Realities of the 21st Century Workplace

Reality of modern work & leadership

Requires adaptive strategies



The Realities of the 21st Century Workplace



Approaches to the VUCA Environment

A helpful way to think about VUCA comes from Bob Johansen's 2009 book *Leaders Make the Future*. He identified how leaders can respond to each element of VUCA:

Counter Volatility with Vision

- Keep a clear long-term direction, even when things change rapidly.

Meet Uncertainty with Understanding

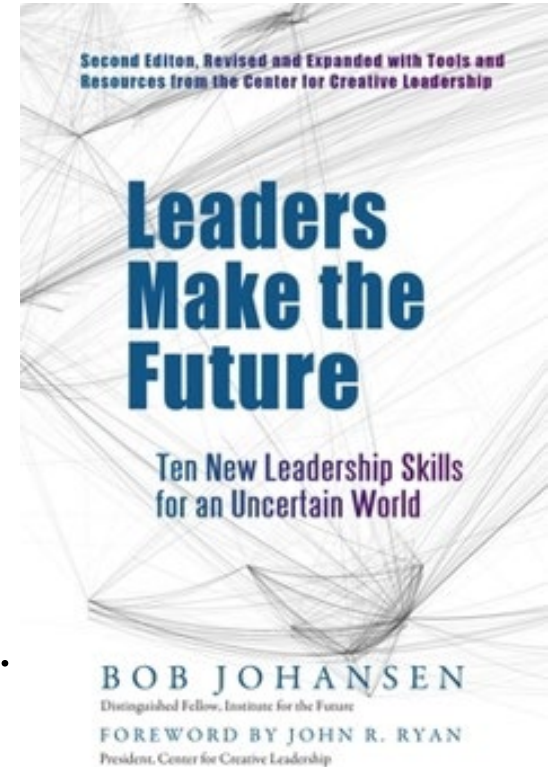
- Seek multiple perspectives, listen deeply, and build shared context.

Respond to Complexity with Clarity

- Simplify where possible, communicate priorities, and focus on essentials.

Address Ambiguity with Agility

- Experiment, adapt quickly, and stay flexible in how you move forward.



Approaches to the VUCA Environment

Which element of VUCA
(volatility, uncertainty, complexity,
or ambiguity) **feels most**
challenging in your current role?

How might you apply Johansen's
response (vision, understanding,
clarity, or agility) **to navigate it?**

Counter Volatility with Vision

Meet Uncertainty with Understanding

Respond to Complexity with Clarity

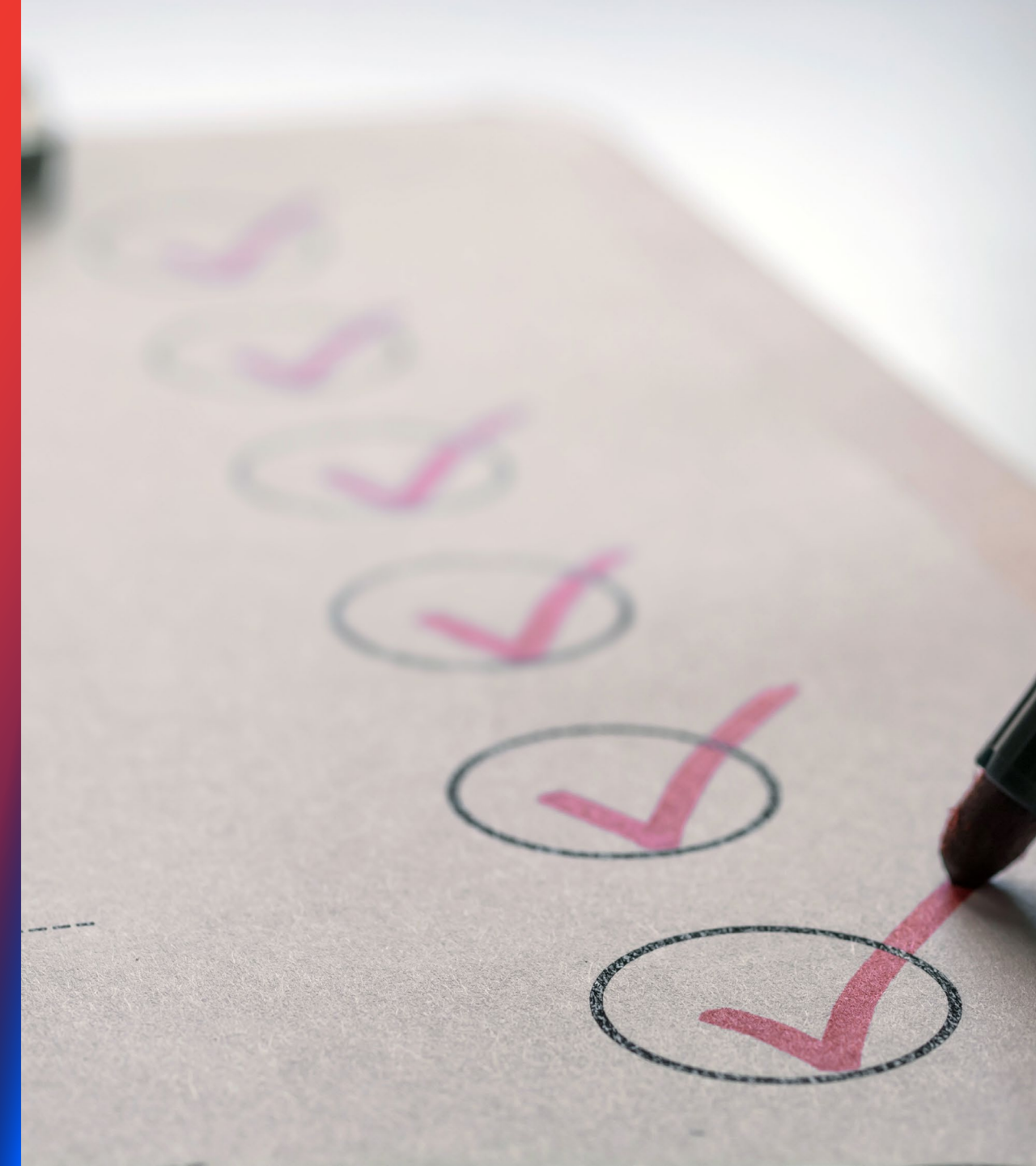
Address Ambiguity with Agility



Applying VUCA Breakout

- 1. Identify a challenge** that feels volatile, uncertain, complex, or ambiguous.
- 2. Share:** Why does it feel VUCA?
- 3. Discuss:**
 1. Which element of VUCA is strongest?
 2. Which response fits (Vision, Understanding, Clarity, Agility)?
 3. What's in your control or influence?
- 4. Capture 1–2 strategies** to share back.





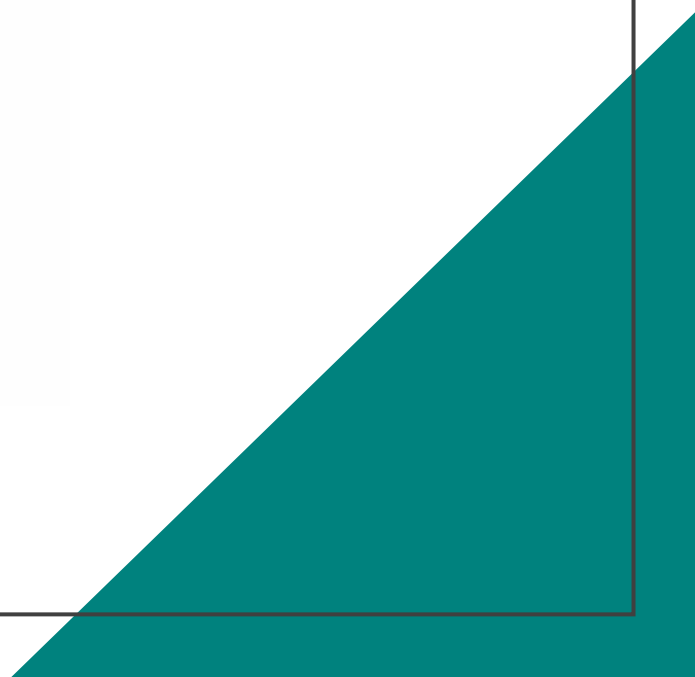
Commitment to Action

What is something you will do
or try because of what you
learned today?

and/or

What skill will you use right
away?

Evaluation



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