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Leading Difficult Conversations

Facilitator slides

Andrew Betts

ICONDA Solutions





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Intro to Film Scene Improvisation

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Our goal: A Blockbuster Film!

We are the actors and directors

We have the scenario and the scenes, but that's all

We'll use **improvisation** to create the script



Difficult
Conversations

Scenario & Scenes



Organisations

Rest of Company



...

G1



...

G2

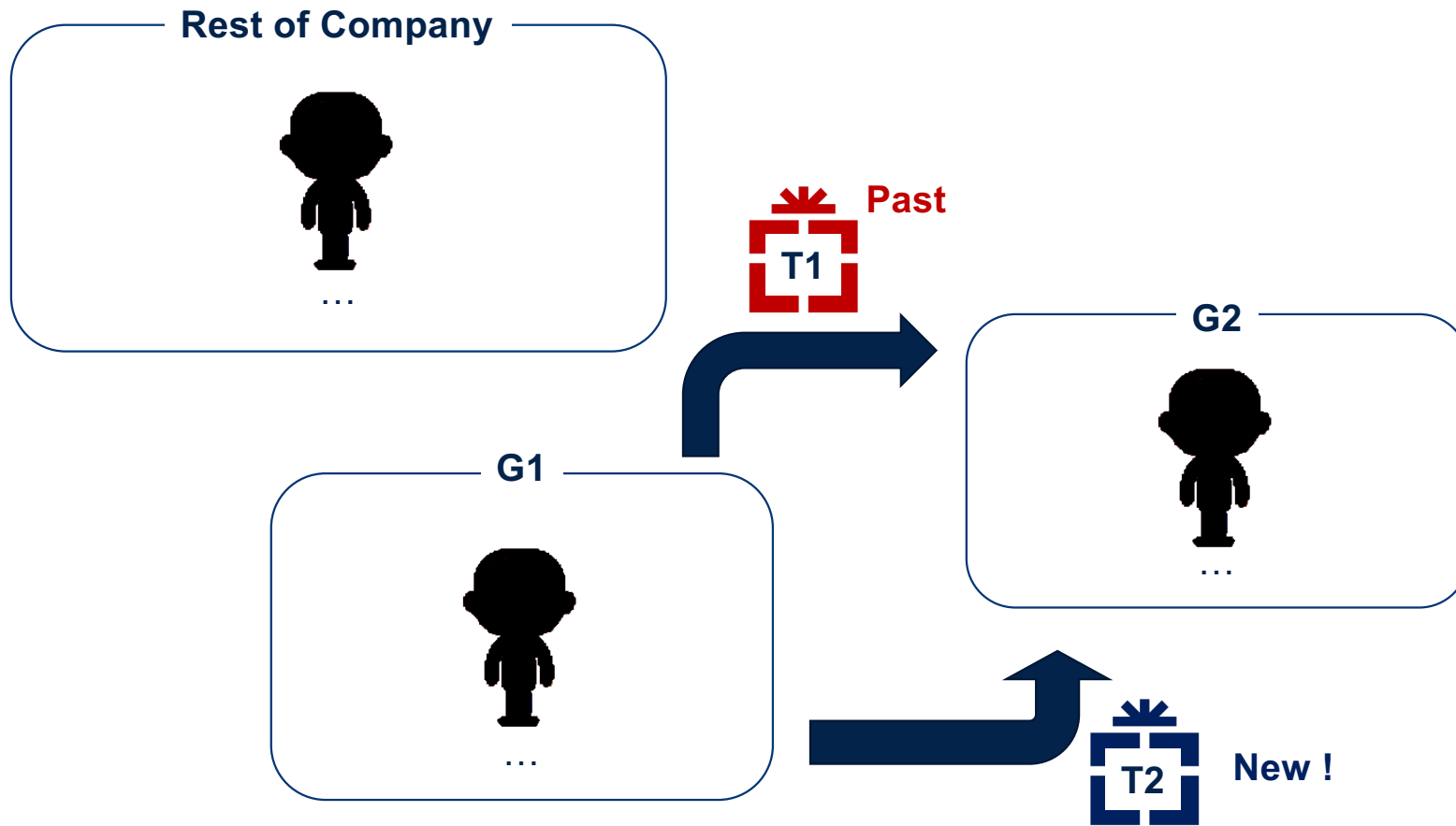


...

Groups



Things (products, services)





People

Rest of Company



Francis
Corp Programs



Glen
IT



G1



Brennan



Alfie



Chris



Individual Contributors:
Brennan, Chris, Erin

Manager-Leaders:
Alfie, Drew,
Francis, Glen

G2



Erin



Drew





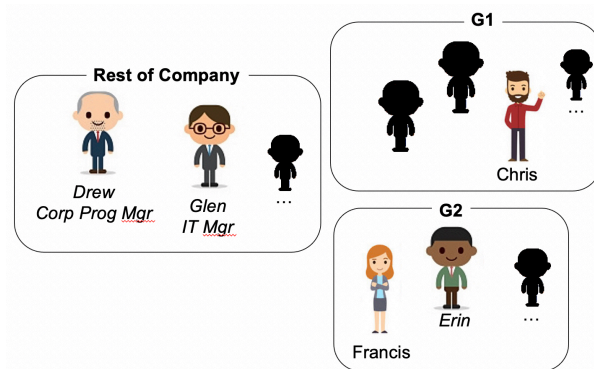
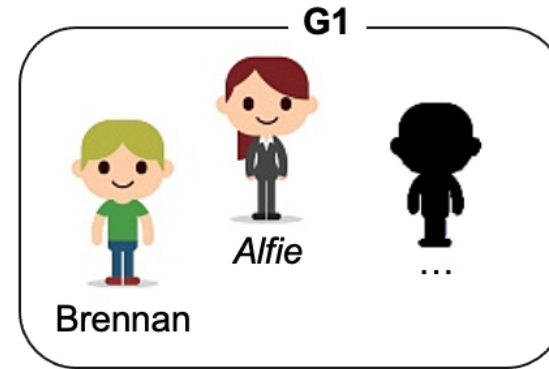
Instructions



Someone plays Alfie OR Brennan



Someone plays one of the other characters



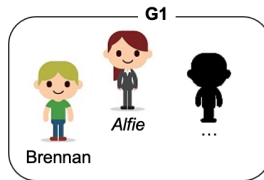
Someone is Director



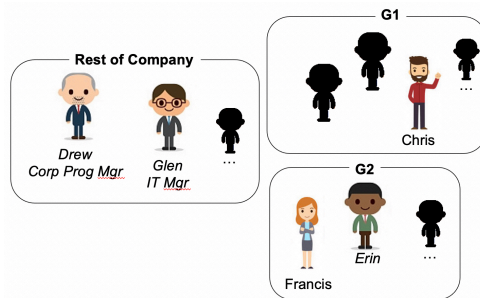
Everyone else is an Assistant Director



Improvisation guidelines



The person acting Alfie or Brennan does their best to achieve a successful encounter



The other actor creates a challenge for Alfie or Brennan

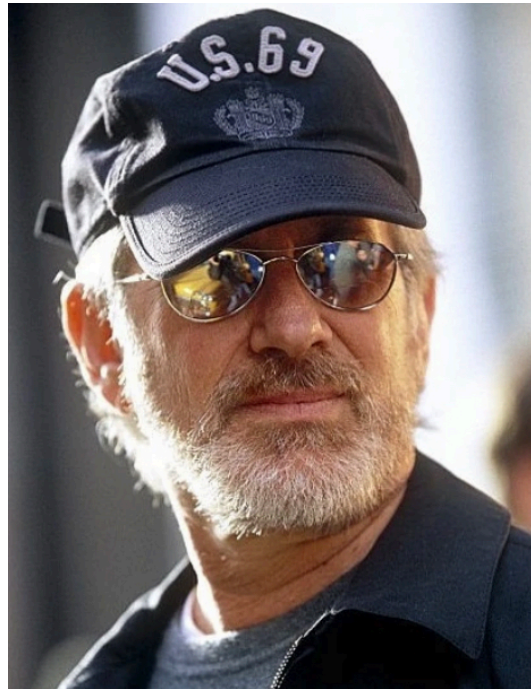


The Director makes cuts and retakes until they are satisfied

After a cut, the Assistant Directors suggest *how to improve the scene*



Your facilitator may take the role of Director



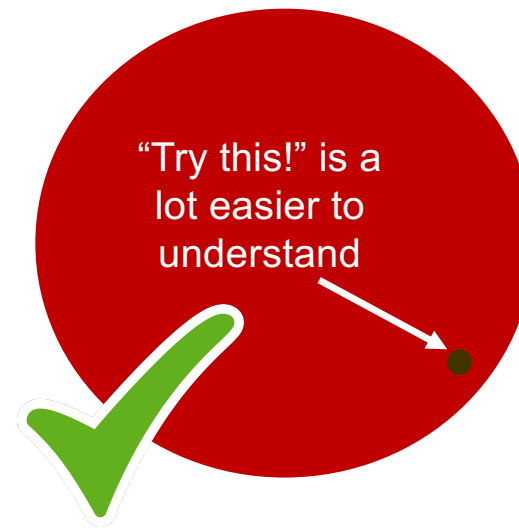
Or Actor-Director



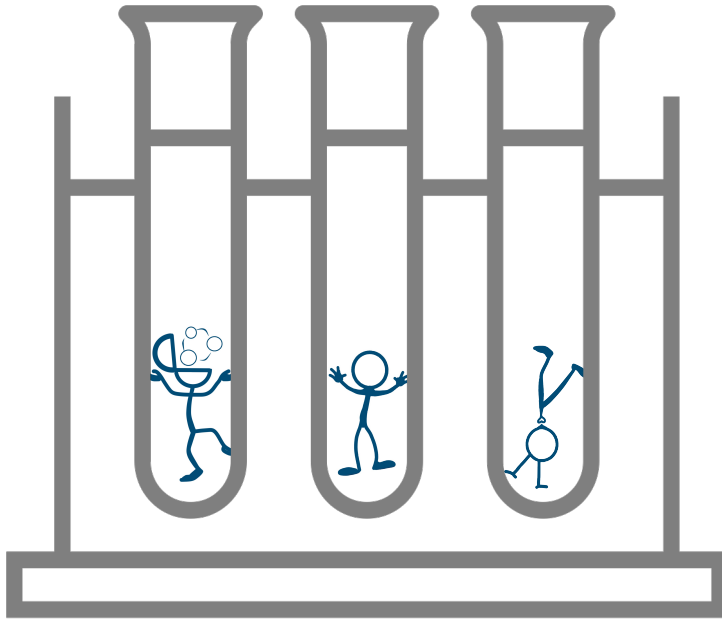
Assistant Directors

If the Director thinks the scene is not right, they'll say "cut!"

Then, your job is to suggest *how to improve the scene*.



We will produce lots of discussion material !



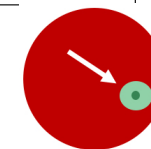
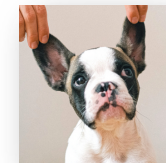
The purpose is NOT to judge the performance of the actors



It is to learn by daring to comment, to try, to take risks and by getting involved!

Checklist

	Ok 😊	Ko ☹️	Neither	Ok-ness: did Alfie/Brennan do the following?
Intention				Objectives include listening/understanding? Expectations are for here and now?
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Scenes

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Scene : 1. Refusing politely

Alfie has been working on a presentation for an important meeting with G2 for the past three weeks. He sent Francis a complete version, for checking, two weeks ago and has been regularly mailing and calling him to ask for feedback. Francis has been unresponsive.

The meeting in question is tomorrow and it's 6pm when Francis calls ...

Roles :

Alfie

Francis : A Corporate Program Manager (Manager-Leader in Rest of Company)

Results-oriented. Charming and persuasive. Has a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

Assistant Directors : everyone else



Francis

Hi Alfie, do you have a minute?

Alfie

Sure, I'm just finishing up for the day, but I've got a few minutes. What's up?

Francis

I just went through the presentation that you sent me for the inter-group call tomorrow. I like it a lot, but I think you should add backup slides with details of the T2 results that you told me about.

Alfie

Er Francis ... *[takes a few seconds to think]* ... before I answer, I've a question.

I'm not accusing, just a bit perplexed, and I'd like to clear the air before we talk about the details of the presentation. Is that Ok?

Francis

Sure. Is there a problem?

Alfie

Well, after I sent the slides a couple of weeks ago, I sent at least 2 emails and left a voicemail.

Did you get these messages?

Francis

Yes, I think so. But I've been so busy that I've just not had time for this. Sorry!

Alfie

Ok. I guess I was expecting you to jump on the slides as soon as I sent them, and that wasn't realistic ;-)

No problem.

Now, about the presentation ...

Scene : 2: Saying what you want

The quarterly inter-group operations review, chaired by Francis. There are about 20 senior people present in an atmosphere of inter-group politics and large egos.

Alfie's wants to get agreement for the use of T2 in G2 – this is the key message in their presentation (which Francis called about yesterday evening) .

However, it's late into this two-hour meeting and Alfie has not yet had a chance to talk about T2. Frustrated, Alfie decides to interrupt ...

Roles :

Alfie

Francis : A Corporate Program Manager (Manager-Leader in Rest of Company)

Results-oriented. Charming and persuasive. Has a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

Drew : Erin's boss (Manager-Leader in G2)

Conscientious. Holds strong views on *how* things should be done but is more flexible on *what* should be done.

Assistant Directors : everyone else

... the meeting is already underway as we join it ...

Francis

Moving on then, I'd like to hear from Nolan about their project. Nolan, what do you have for us please?

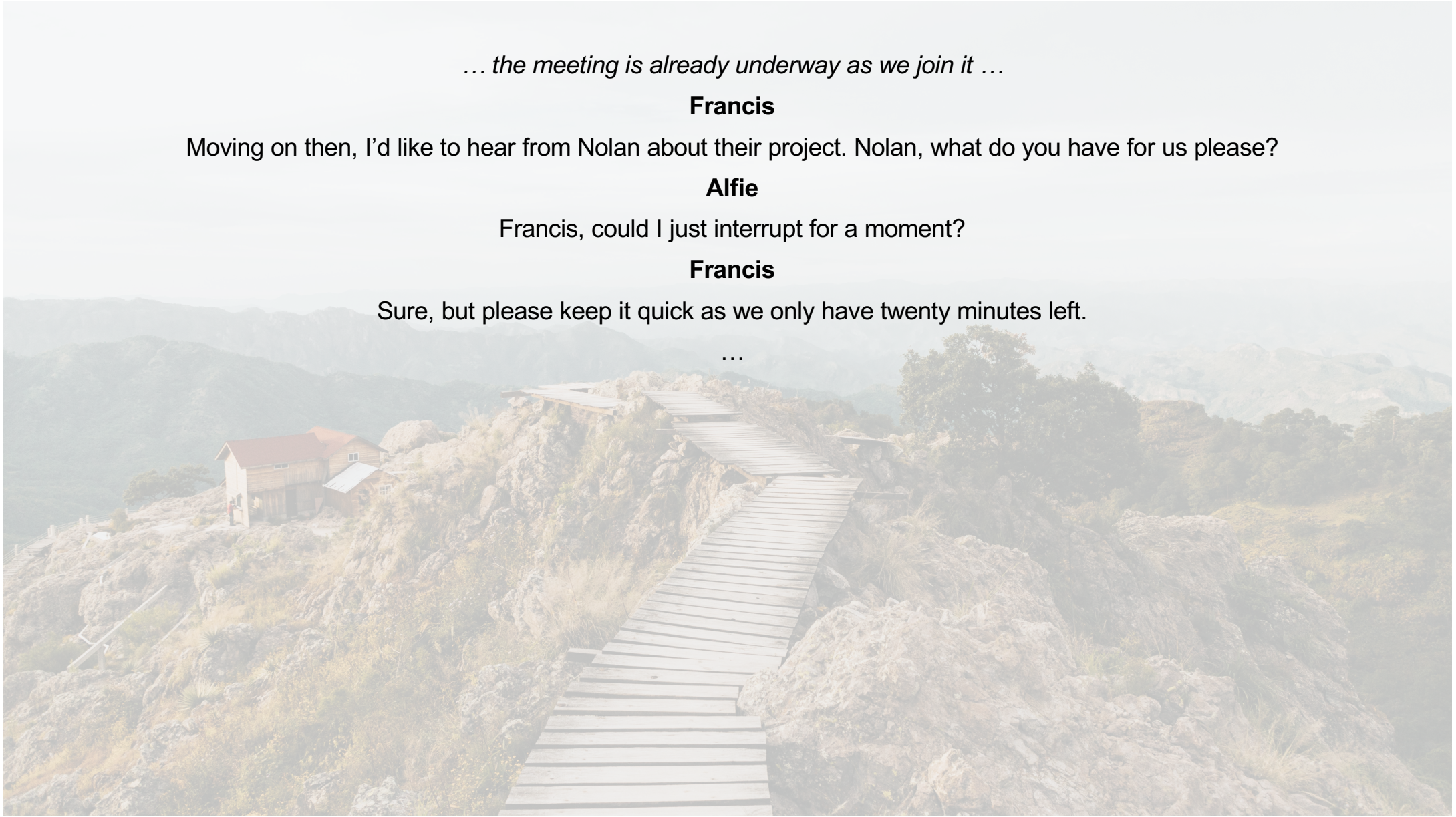
Alfie

Francis, could I just interrupt for a moment?

Francis

Sure, but please keep it quick as we only have twenty minutes left.

...



Scene : 3: Dealing with resistance

Alfie managed to schedule a meeting with G1 to discuss T2 deployment in their group.

We are in the requested G1-G2 meeting, discussing a possible T2 pilot project in G2.

The G2 people are wasting time, seeing more obstacles than opportunities , focusing on trivia and making it difficult for Alfie to talk about the main topic.

G1's objectives for the meeting are to obtain agreement for the pilot project or, if that is not possible, at least avoid a definitive 'no'.

Roles :

Alfie

Erin : An Engineer (Individual Contributor in G2 – reports to Drew)

Technocratic, logical, organized. Can be impatient with others who do not see things as clearly as them.

Drew : Erin's boss (Manager-Leader in G2)

Conscientious. Holds strong views on *how* things should be done but is more flexible on *what* should be done.

Assistant Directors : everyone else

... the meeting is already underway as we join it ...

Erin

If we start working with T2, we're going to have to update all our IT packages.

Drew (*worried tone*)

That would be a pain. We all know how long IT changes take ;-)

Erin

Do you know if Glen is going to be able to support us for the IT update?

Drew

I think so, but he was very cagey about when they could start.
'Only saw them for a couple of minutes, at the coffee station with Indigo.

Erin (*sarcastic*)

Ah-ha! The infamous Indigo. Well I just hope they don't get put on the job!

Drew

Indeed. The last time I met Indigo ...

Alfie

Drew, sorry to interrupt. Please can we get back to the main topic?

Drew

Yeah, sure.

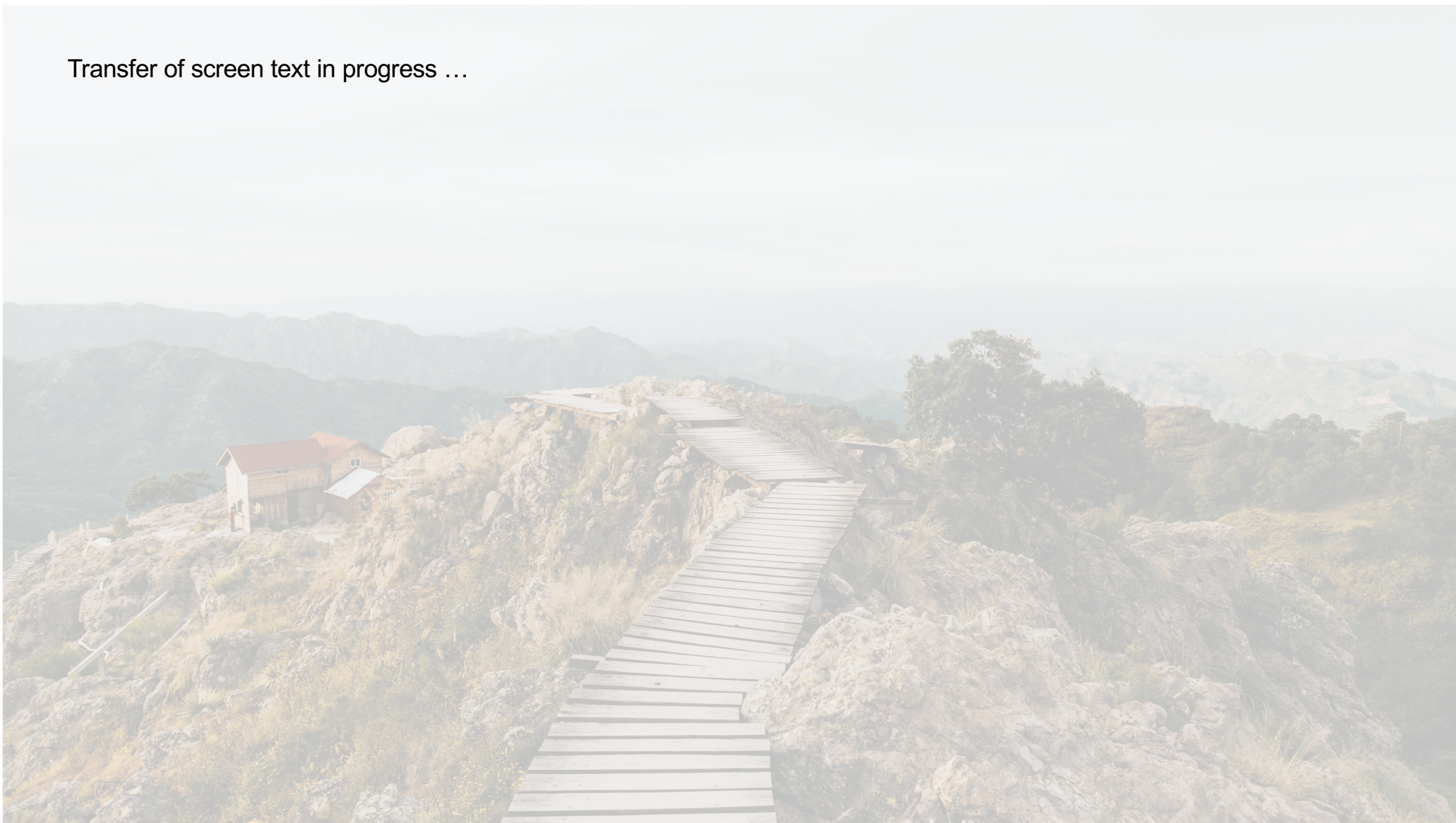
As I was saying earlier, I can understand that you want to get T2 deployed, but we've enough problems to deal with right now, and we're short of resources.

Integrating new Things takes time – there are processes to follow ...

Erin (*a bit impatient*)

And I'd add, Drew, that we're still reeling from the problems we had integrating T1 ...

Transfer of screen text in progress ...





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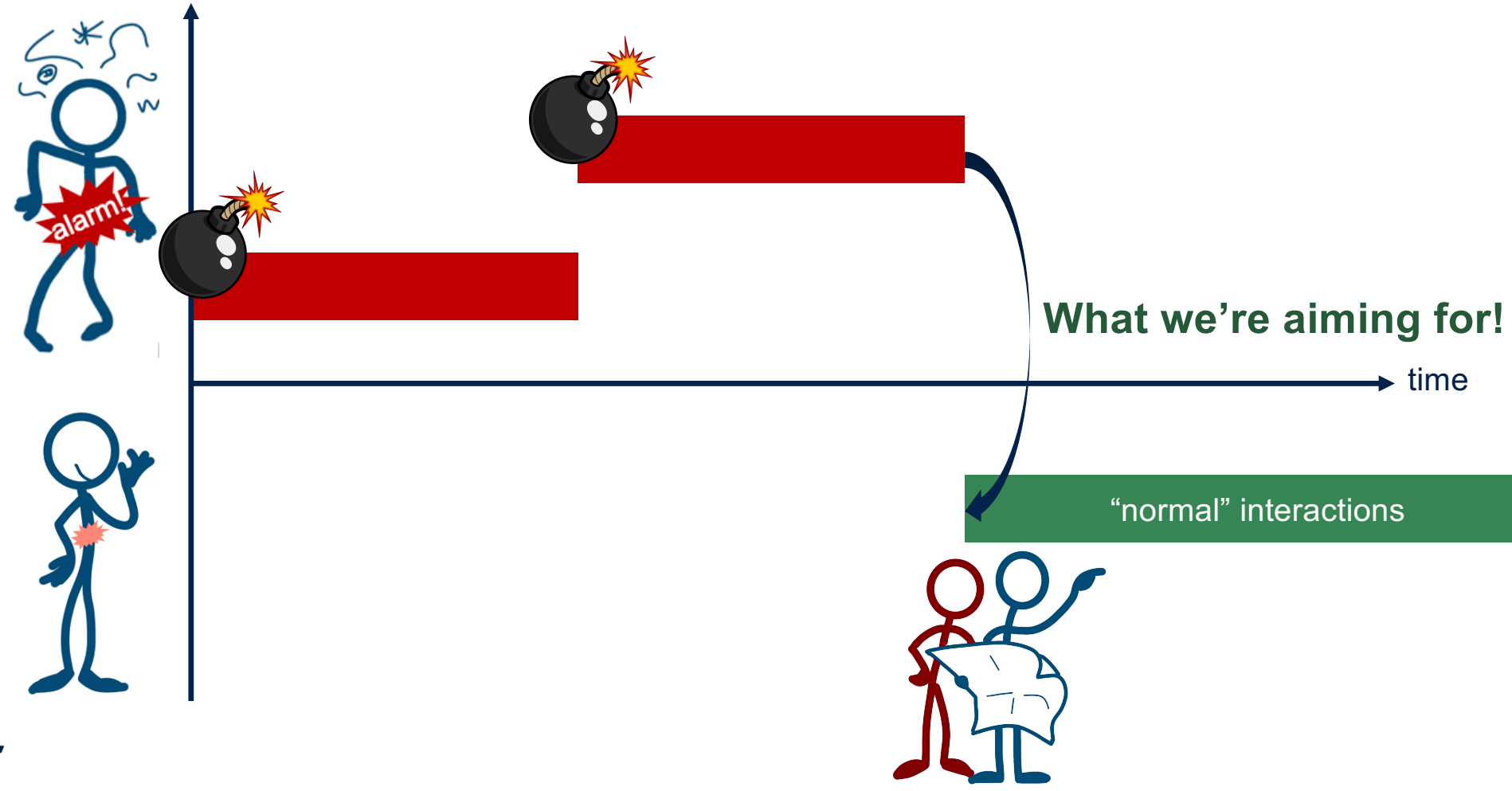
Cheat Sheets – 10 key slides

Andrew Betts

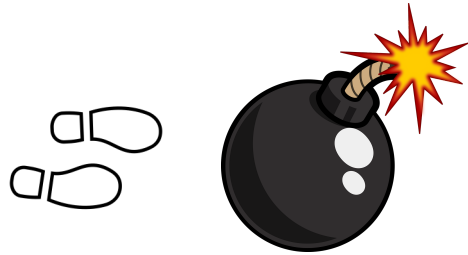
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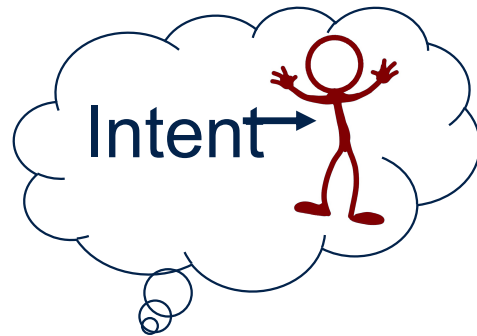
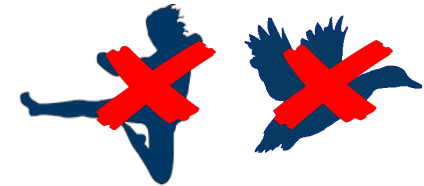
Difficulty = stakes x opinions x emotions



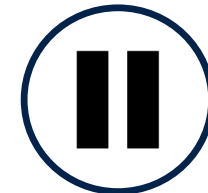
K
E
Y



I move towards the real difficulty,



master my intentions,



It's Ok to pause



communicate non-violently.

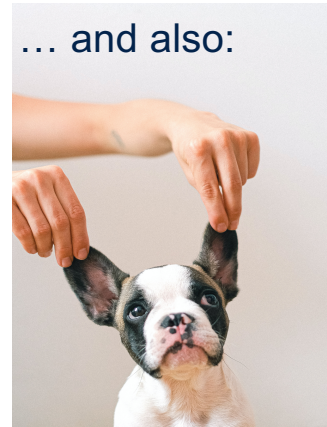
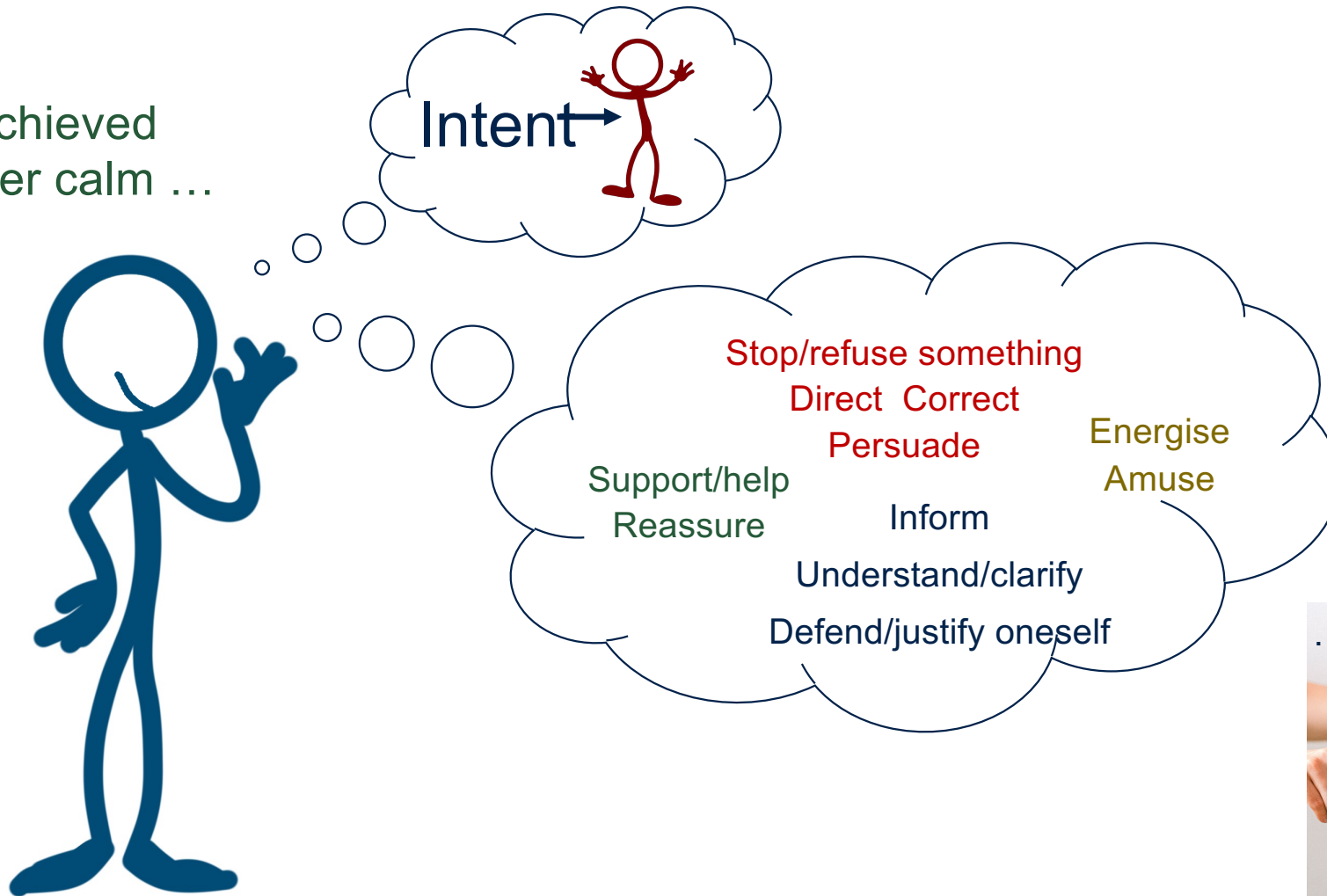
Observations

Feelings

Needs

Requests

Having achieved
some inner calm ...



I start the dialog with Observations because ...

It's safer!

1. For them

Facts are less likely to trigger defensiveness and resistance

2. For me

If the other person wishes me harm or denies facts then, recognising this, I may choose fight or flight!



The Observations Compass

Facts, experiences
Numbers, descriptions, verifiable data

Rules
“I must...”
“It should ...”
“I can’t ...”
“It’s impossible ...”

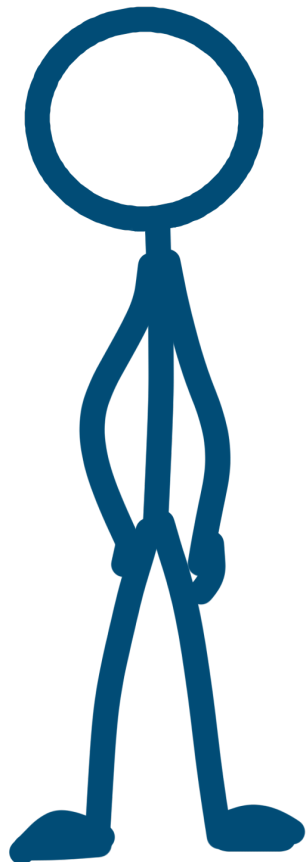


Judgements
“It’s important that ...”
“It took a long time ...”
“They’re slow ...”
“It’s good/bad/ugly ...”
“I am ...”

Suppositions
Assumptions
Hypotheses
Deductions
Projections

“Meta model”, John
Grinder and Richard
Bandler

Accuracy throughout ...



True observations - the objective situation

“it is ..., there are ..., on <date> ..., the email stated ...”

What I’m really feeling

“I am annoyed, embarrassed, confused, worried ...”

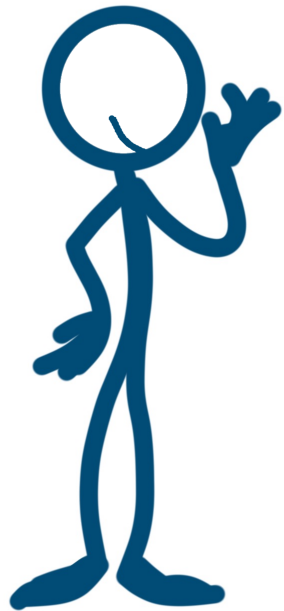
What I genuinely need

“I want, prefer, like, need, ...”

Exactly what I’m requesting

“Please could you, I’m asking you to, would you be willing to, ...”

... combining honesty with benevolence



me

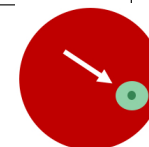
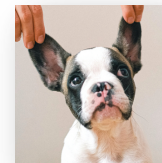


them

- Well-intentioned words sometimes detonate unseen issues !
- If necessary, I clarify what I **do** intend and what I **don't** intend

Checklist

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Permissions

1. Use your own style / vary your style

- Questioning
 - “What do you think?”
- Directive
 - “Tell me what you think!”
- Playful
 - “Yoda asks, explain what thinking you are” 😊
- Supportive / inviting
 - “Perhaps you see things differently? ...”

2. Sometimes, you may keep quiet

- You *cannot* **not** communicate: words are only one means



One Last Thing

Using NVC to Show Appreciation

Giving positive feedback that's easy to receive



1. Actions: What you did

2. Needs: Why it was right for me

3. Feelings: How I felt

Our technology starts with You

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