

Together, we will address inequality & empower **EVERYONE** to be active in a way that works for them

Maximising the potential of walking • Considering the impact on climate change • Addressing inequalities created by Covid-19

Enabling children & young people to have positive experiences of being active **THROUGHOUT THEIR CHILDHOOD**

Creating accessible, safe, & inclusive places & environments for physical activity

Maximising the potential of physical activity to improve physical and mental health

Working with people & communities who experience the greatest inequality

Creating a culture where everyone can be active & **MOVE MORE**

HOW?

GROWING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES by working closely with lived experience and listening to resident voices

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY across and between partners and sectors

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE who can lead and influence others to move more

TARGETING AND ALIGNING INVESTMENT to where it's most needed

ADVOCATING FOR AND INFLUENCING policy and practice

FOCUS ON LEARNING AND ADAPTING, understanding what works and applying it to our work





Active Partners Trust

Systems Leadership Workshops

Workshop 1: Thursday 28th March 2024, 1.30 pm –4.30 pm

Introduction to Systems Leadership

Debbie Sorkin, National Director of Systems Leadership, the Leadership Centre

What we'll be covering this afternoon: (hopefully a fair amount of ground)



- **Session 1:** working in complexity: the context in which we're working and why things happen the way they do; what happens in these situations and what to avoid
- **Session 2:** what you can do instead. Approaches, ideas and behaviours, especially around shared purpose
- **Session 3:** tools in your armoury and putting this into practice – what this might mean for you

Session 1: Working in complexity: why things happen the way they do



Context: Not everything is terrible,

but there's no shortage of problems outside our control



- Possible that if trends continue, waiting lists for elective care will rise to > 8m by summer 2024
- c. 80% of schools now providing food parcels or food bank support for pupils and their families
- All 42 Integrated Care Systems now in deficit (on top of ICBs having to make significant staffing cuts and many local authorities in difficulties)
- (Dis)satisfaction with public services starting to feed through into social attitudes, e.g. with access to NHS and primary care

Sources: Health Foundation, National Foundation for Educational Research, Health Services Journal, NatCen British Social Attitudes Survey, Ipsos Mori

But there are things you **can do.**
To start with: note that you, and the people you're working with/supporting, will be working in complexity



Simple



Complicated

UK sport strategy: Government plans to get extra 3.5m active by 2030

© 29 August 2023 | Sport |



The initiative aims to increase sport participation in 2.5 million adults and over 1 million children

Complex

It's likely you're ticking every box for working in complexity, at least for some of your work

- ✓ Deep-seated, multi-faceted issues
- ✓ Been around a long time
- ✓ No easy or obvious solutions (or money/ other resources)
- ✓ Cat-herding (and cats with strongly ingrained ways of doing things)
- ✓ Issues that shape-shift
- ✓ Political or politicised environments
- ✓ Ways of working around this that can feel highly counter-cultural or a distraction



And some things follow... does this ring bells with you?

- You won't be able to guarantee in advance how – or whether – things will work: no cause and effect
- Few levers to pull – and those that you think you have may turn out not to work (or work in the way you hoped)
- Lots of different people/ organisations and different sectors, perspectives and priorities; and politics – large and small 'p'. At all levels
- It might involve new – and counter-cultural – ways of working. Lots of reaching across silos.



So leadership in these situations is always about working with risk and uncertainty

There is a tendency to pretend things are simpler than they are. This is not risk-free

Two teenagers placed in foster care after weight loss plan fails

Family court judge says parents failed to help severely overweight children and did not understand worry of West Sussex social services



▲ The family was supplied with fitness trackers from the local authority but failed to pass on the data from the devices. Photograph: Paula Solloway/Alamy

The Guardian, 11th March 2021

“Everyone agrees that this is a very sad and unusual case, of a loving family...[but] both the children are severely overweight...and the parents have shown an inability to help the children manage this condition” *(from the judge’s ruling in the family court)*

“The local authority had provided Fitbits and paid for gym membership for the family, who had signed up to Weight Watchers...

...but months later...there had been no reduction in the children’s weight, and they had not provided recordings from their Fitbits or attended the Weight Watchers appointments consistently.” *(from the report)*

Conversation



Please have a think, and then say, or write in the Chat Box:

What's resonating for us in this?

What's complex about what we're seeing or dealing with at the moment?

How does it play out? What happens? Is there a tendency to see issues as simple or complicated when they're complex?

What happens in these situations: what to notice and what to avoid



It's difficult. Complexity can be unpopular. People will go to great lengths to avoid it. NB It can be about fear of **loss as much as change**



- Denial/default behaviours/tribalism
- Obscure or vague language, opacity, lack of clarity
- Doing the wrong thing busily/expertly
- Seeking refuge in management or in process or in governance
- Delegating work to the wrong people
- Shooting the messenger

So it's worth considering the extent of what people have lost, or might fear losing, whatever your role in relation to physical activity, and showing that you recognise this

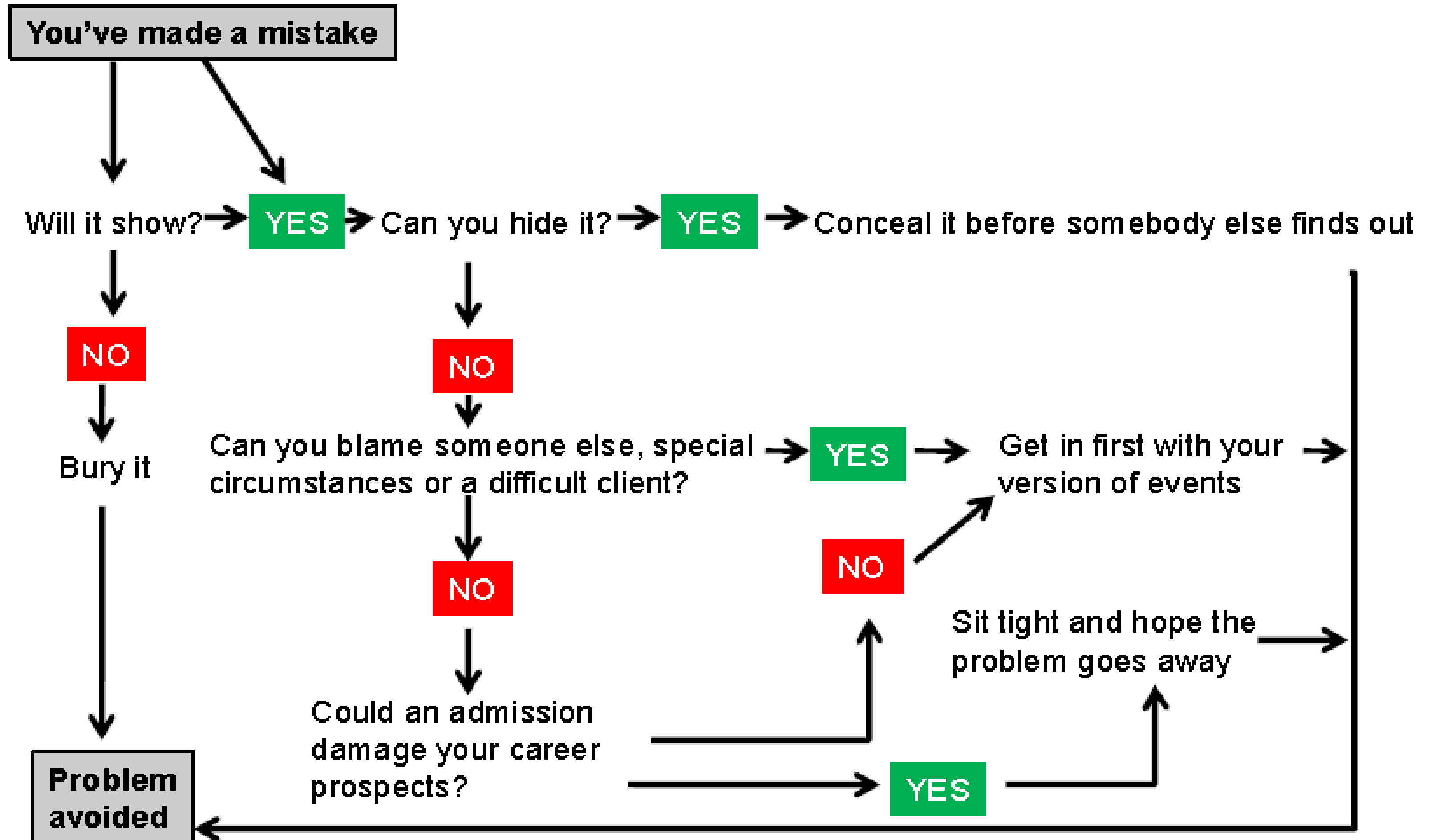


Other things to watch out for (and avoid if you can)

- Trying to command and control
- Jumping to solutions
- Playing the blame game
- Pretending everything is a success (when it isn't)
- Trying to manage your way out of this



NB Avoiding blame ≠ avoiding accountability: Keith Grint



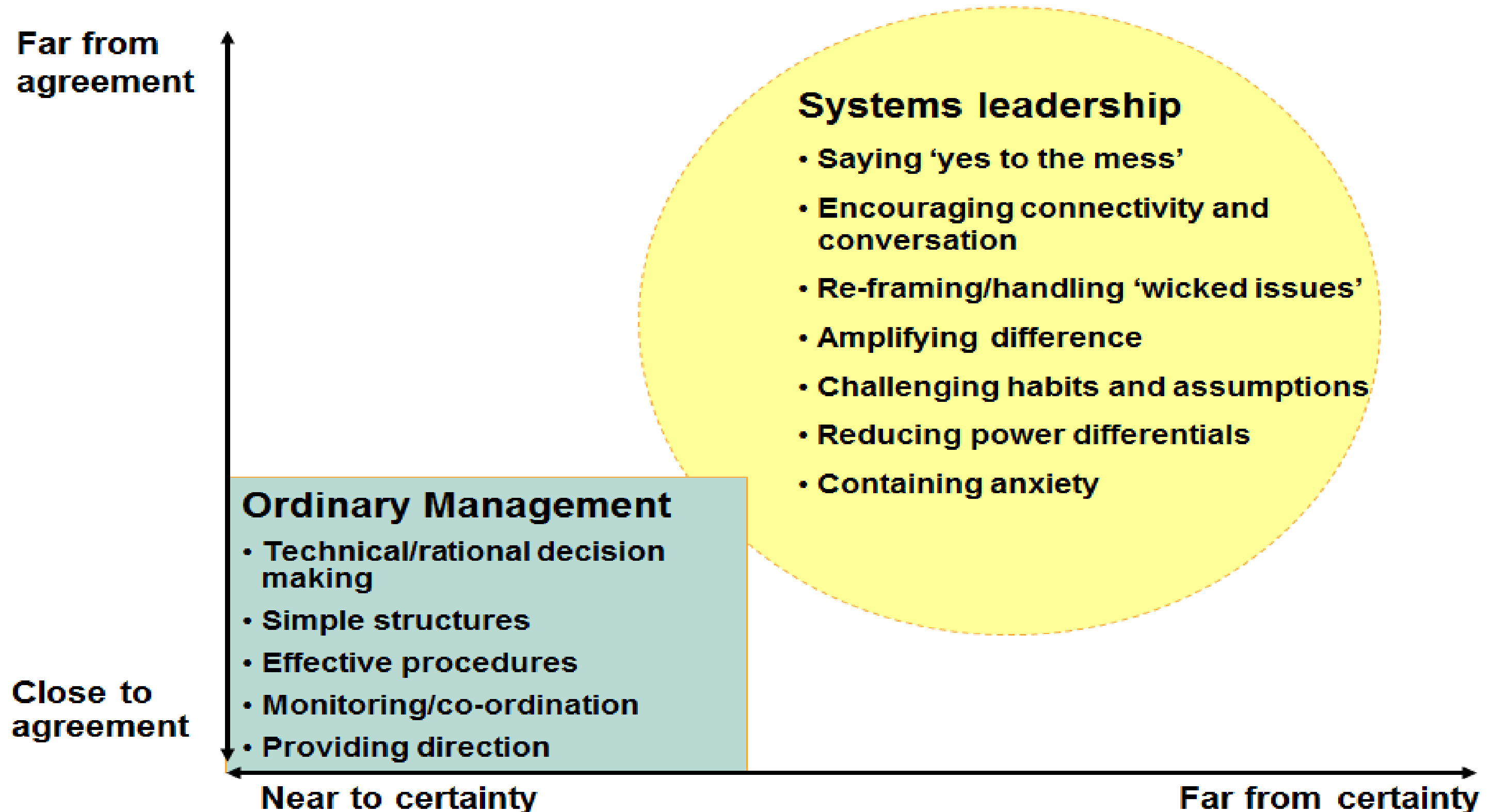
Watch out for people trying to pretend everything is a success (when it isn't)

- **Prozac Leadership: David Collinson, 2012**
- Unremittingly positive approach
- Encourages leaders to believe their own propaganda
- Discourages people from raising problems, admitting mistakes
- The only people who believe the (corporate) messages are the (corporate) leaders...
- ...who are then surprised when things go wrong, given how well everything was going



And don't put things in the wrong box:

leadership ≠ management²



Conversation in break-out rooms



Please have a conversation in small groups, then we'll take some feedback in plenary.

What forms of push-back are we seeing?

Obscure language? Default behaviours? Seeking refuge in process, or management? Shooting messengers?

What are the losses people might be perceiving?



What this can look like in practice: organising a children's birthday party



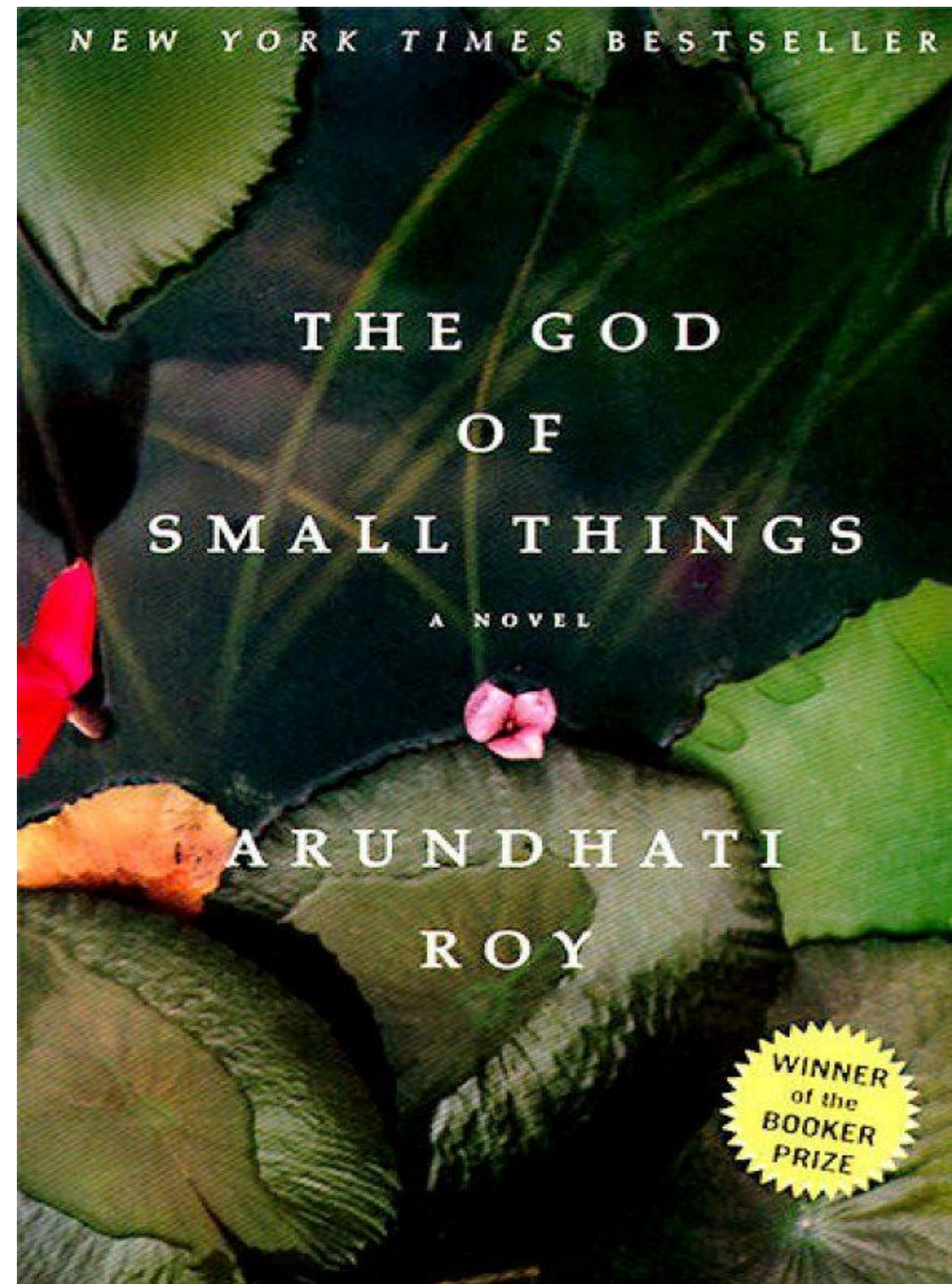
Introduction to systems leadership

Tea/comfort break



Session 2: What you can do instead:

Systems leadership ideas and approaches



There's a lot you can do – using systems approaches - to improve things, not least for yourselves

- Don't wait for plans/perfection – take **action**
- Focus on what's in your gift to control or influence
- Do what's **small, practical and doable** for you – e.g. key stakeholders
- Don't have imposter syndrome
- Build **relationships, trust and influence**
- Understand there's a difference between **influence and power**
- **Behave in ways that lead to change** – ground things in your values, sense-make for others, support them to work in new ways, let others step up and deliver
- Understand and **change perspectives**, e.g. loss
- Keep going – allow change to accumulate over time



Firstly, this is about leaderSHIP, and it's about everyone

“Leadership is taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty”

*Professor Marshall Ganz,
Harvard Kennedy School*

- It's about taking action
- Open to all
- In relationship to others
- With uncertainty as a given
- But always with a view to change – systems are not set in stone

Do NOT have Imposter Syndrome about this



Use systems, or adaptive, leadership approaches

“The *collaborative* leadership of a *network* of people, in different places and at different levels, creating a common *purpose* and co-operating to make significant *change*”

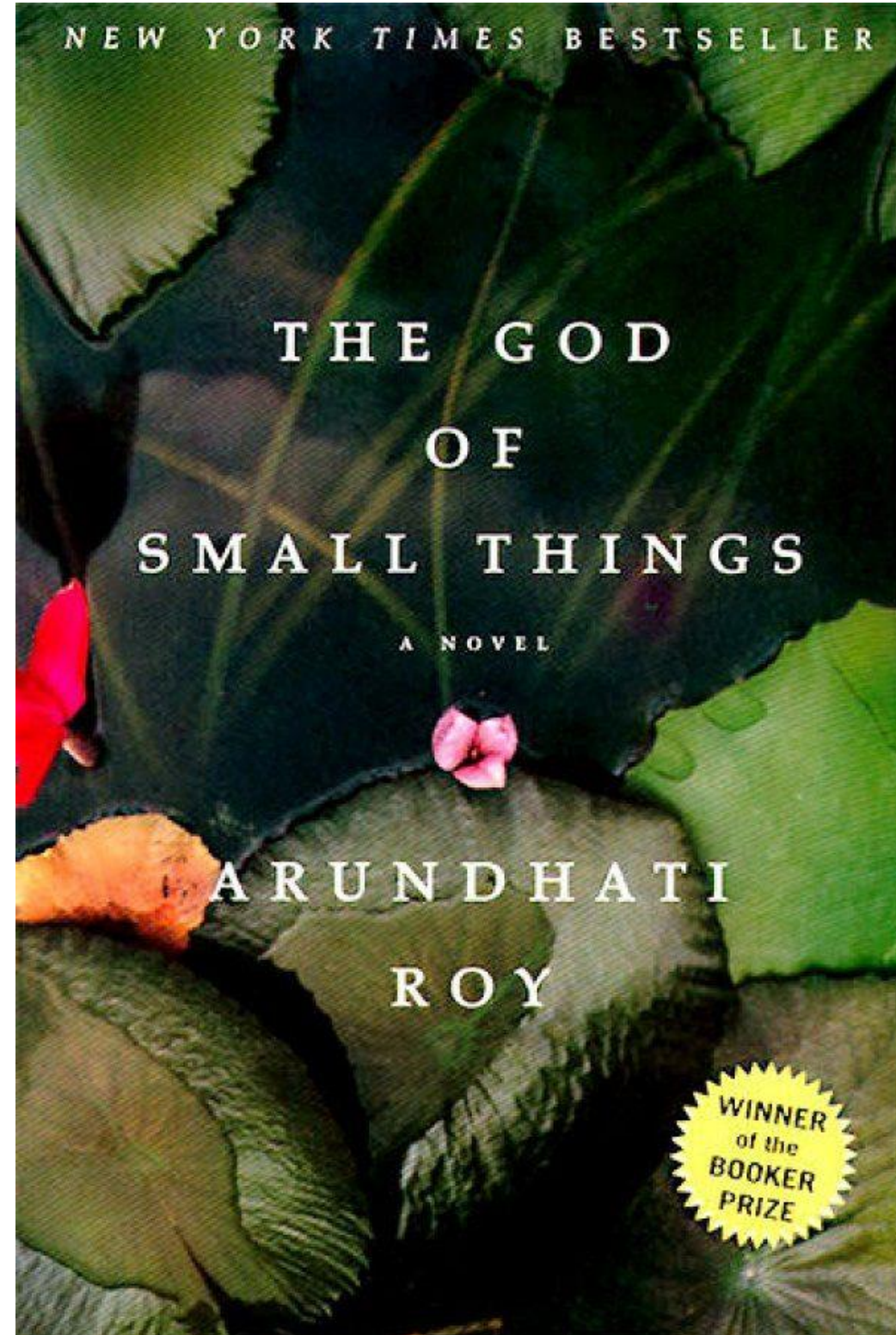
- Do what’s small, practical and doable (if unglamorous) for you
- Start with shared purpose
- Relationships + Trust => Influence and Change: *“systems move at the speed of trust”*
- Allow for emergence
- Networks and distributed leadership > control

Always start with shared/common purpose



- What do we want to do? Why do we want to do it? What are the benefits going to be?
- Foundation and guide rope
- Allows you to keep the focus on your agenda rather than everyone else's
- Absolutely practical – experiments, stakeholders, narratives – who can we learn from?

And never underestimate the power of small steps, if allowed to accumulate over time



When you have a moment, listen to 'Pod Save America' 12/11/20 and the interview with Stacey Abrams (c 45 minutes in) about starting small and where it can lead:

[Pod Save America on Apple Podcasts](#)

There are ways of behaving that are practical and really help



“The best people practising systems leadership are not described in terms of charismatic heroes or divas, but as thoughtful, calm personalities who are as confident working in the background, supporting and enabling others, as they are in the limelight, leading from the front.”

From: ‘Exceptional Leadership for Exceptional Times’, Virtual Staff College, 2013

https://www.leadershipcentre.org.uk/systemsleadership/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/VSC_Synthesis_exec_complete.pdf

Practise and encourage behaviours that lead to change



- Ground things in your values
- Make time for an observing eye – get off the dancefloor and onto the balcony
- Make sense of things for other people
- Enable and support people to try out new things
- Cede leadership

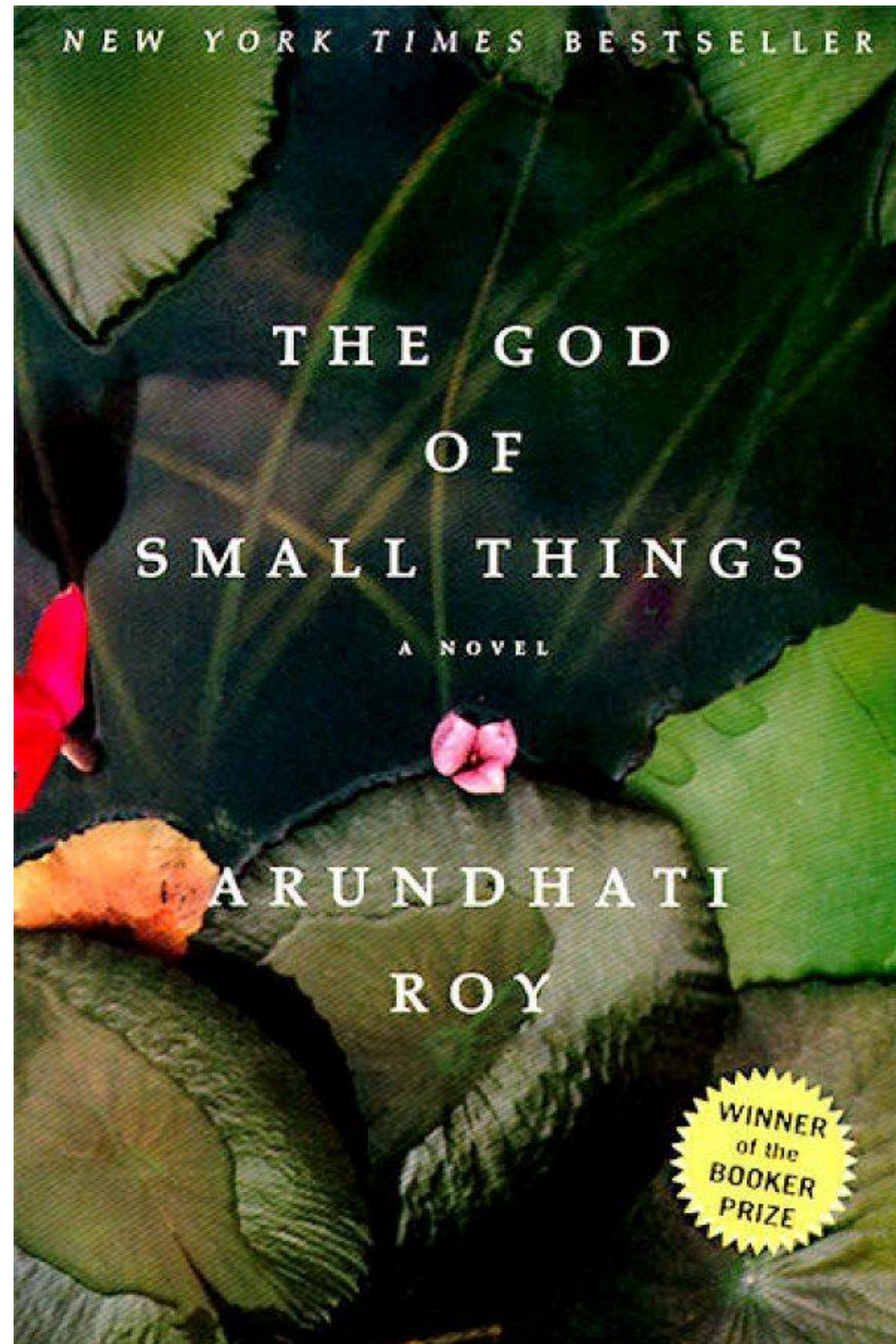
What this can lead to: different conversations, different players, stronger relationships and better outcomes



Calderdale: broad participation in increasing levels of physical activity

Health & Wellbeing Board/Public Heath worked closely with schools and the community: programme included training girls in schools in research methods so they could find out what would help/hinder more participation. Aiming to build social movement.

Q&A: Systems leadership and behaviours that lead to change



Please take a couple of minutes to have a think.

What questions would you like to ask, or what comments would you like to make, about systems leadership approaches and/or behaviours?

Then we'll share these in plenary.

Introduction to systems leadership

Quick tea/comfort break



Session 3: Tools in your armoury and putting this into practice

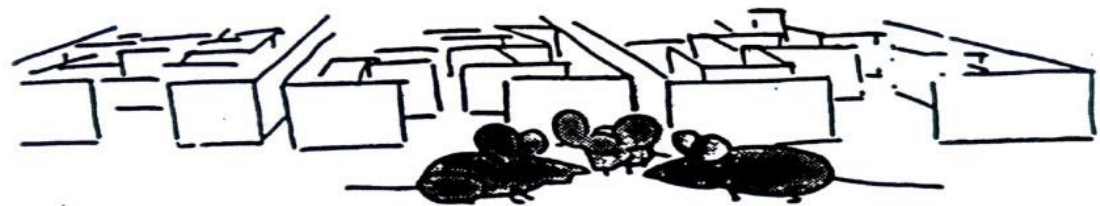
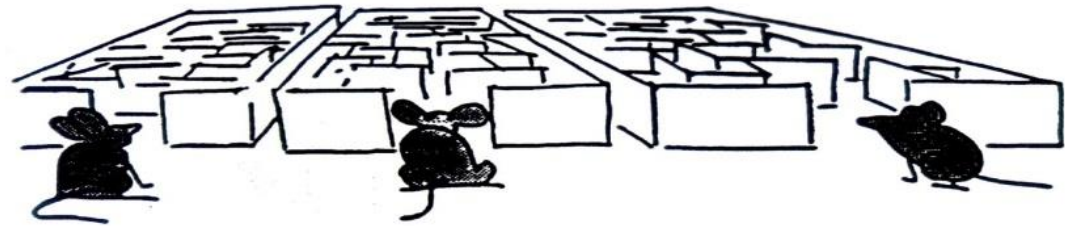


Starting point: there will always be good reasons not to do something

- Biggest danger in complex issues = work avoidance
- Culture and history are key: geography and politics make a difference
- It takes time and can feel messy – so it can go against the cultural grain, external environment and financial constraints: short v long term
- This is where you hold fast to shared purpose + values, to keep people going over the long haul, and encourage people to see themselves as part of a broader system – not just an organisation, or sector, or profession



But you can make a start without perfection: you get change by taking action and giving people agency



Myron Rogers' Maxims: paste these to your wall

- People own what they create
- Real change takes place in real work
- The people that do the work do the change
- Start anywhere, follow it everywhere
- Keep connecting the system to itself
- The process we use to get to the future determines the future we get

This is fundamentally about your (and others') power to influence (as opposed to formal power) and change perspectives

View from Leicester: 'Lineker stands up for people who don't have a voice'

Fans joining presenter in match-day crowd at club where he was a star striker, speak out on BBC controversy



📷 The Hartshorne family outside King Power Stadium on Saturday. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

"Gary is 100% right," said lifelong [Leicester City](#) fan John Farrell as he stood in the queue for a match-day programme before Saturday's kick-off at King Power Stadium.

While the 67-year-old, who was in the stands for Gary Lineker's Leicester City debut against Oldham Athletic on New Year's Day 1979, didn't necessarily agree with the content of the star striker turned broadcaster's tweets, he strongly supported his right to an opinion. "I agree with freedom of speech. This is not Russia."

The Guardian, 11th March 2023

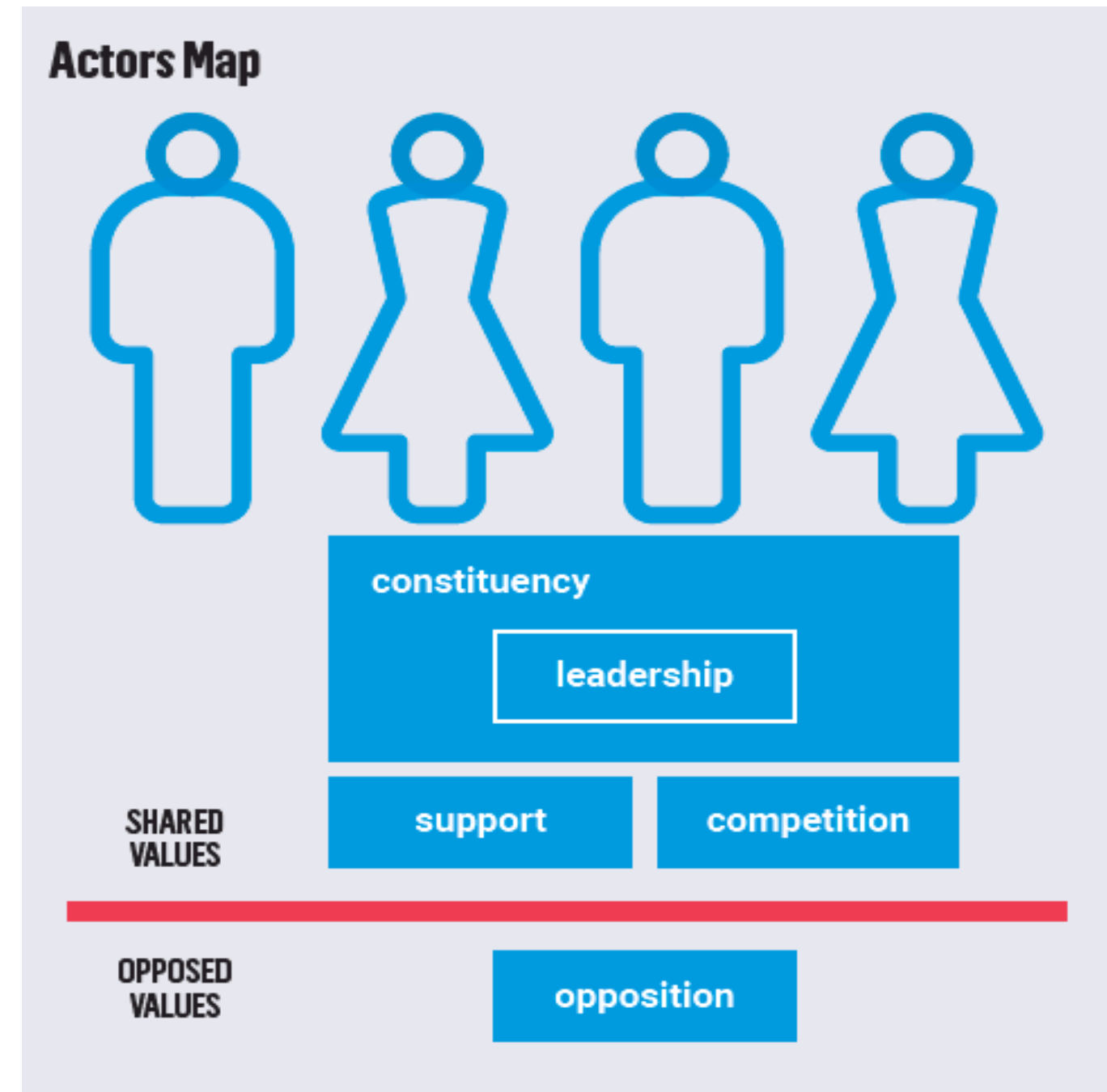
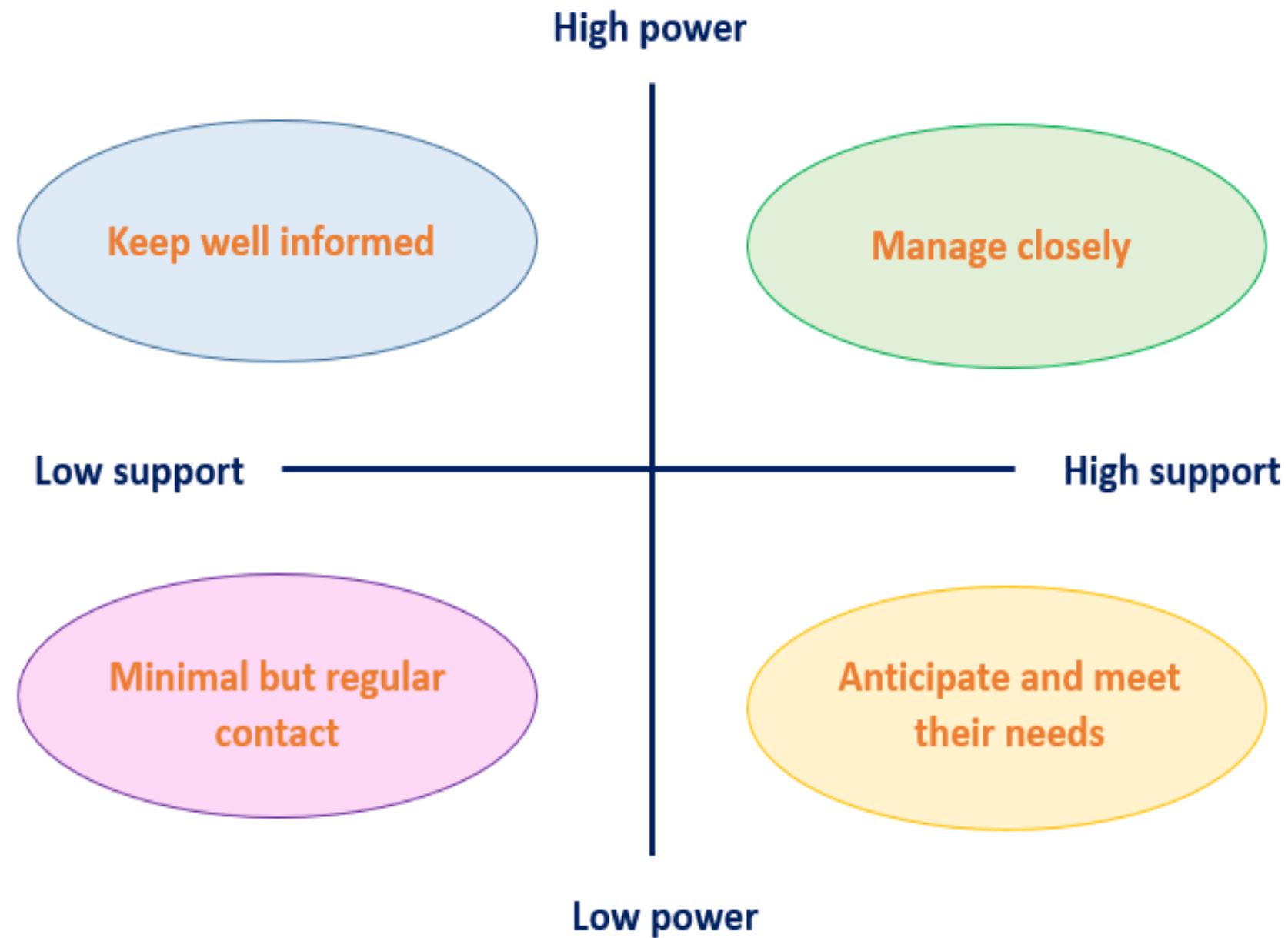
Who's in our system? What's the lie of the land?

Rich Pictures



- Not a work of art
- More about 'what does my/our system feel like?'
- Who's in the system? What are the relationships? Who isn't included? Where are you? Or the people you support/work with?
- As many stick figures as you like or as creative/colourful/symbolic as you like
- Shows up what's sensed but can't easily be put into words, or assumptions in play
- The point is not the picture but the questions the picture makes you – and others – ask

Once you have a sense of your system, you can identify your allies: who do you want to influence?



Changing perspectives: Empathy Mapping

A great way to connect/connect with silos. What's it like for someone to be on the receiving end of us (as a system)?

What do they SEE?

What does their environment look like? What surrounds them?



What do they THINK AND FEEL?

What matters to them (that they might not say publicly)? What's really important to them?

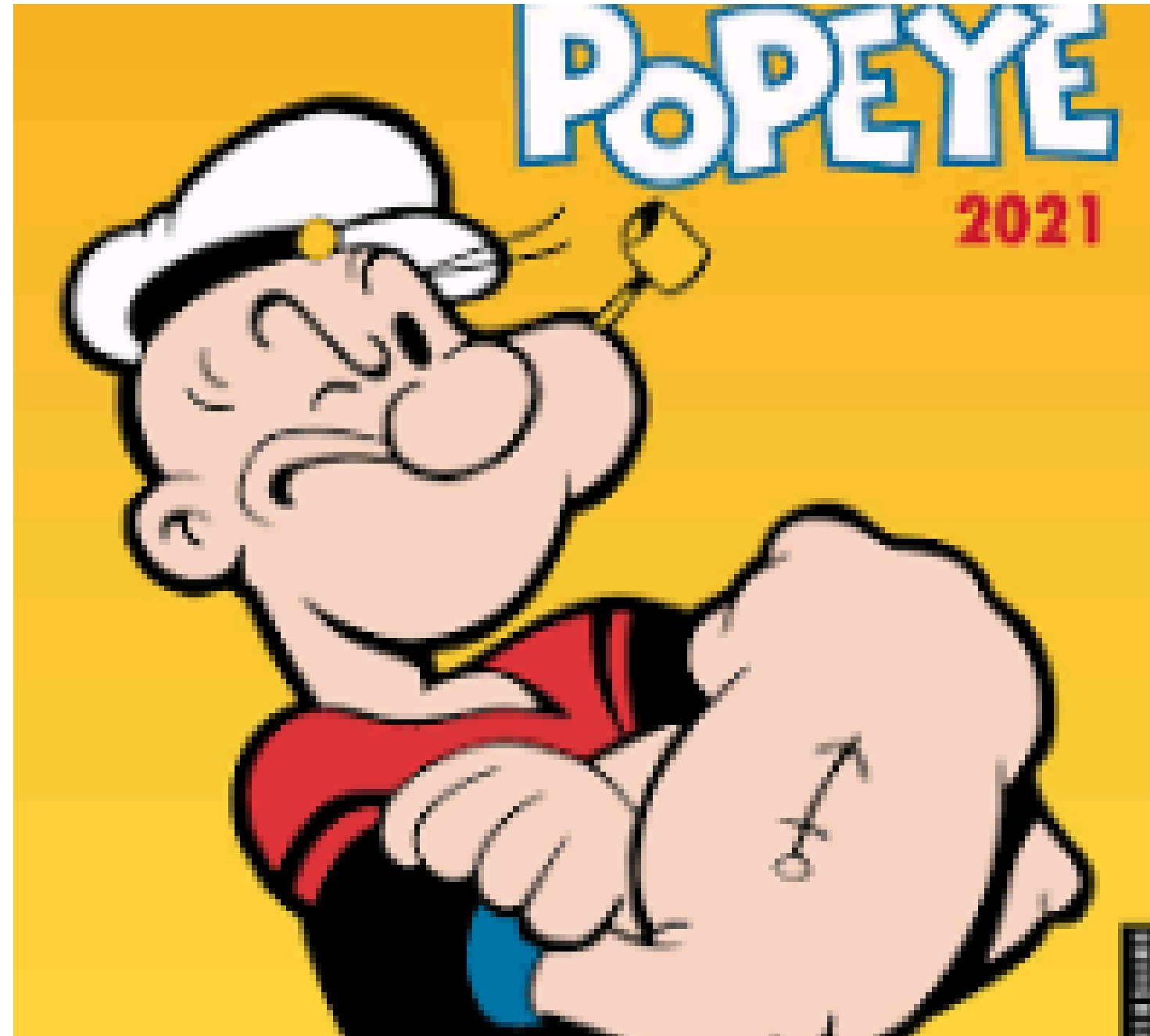
What do they HEAR?

Where do they get their information from? Who/what influences them?

What do they DO AND EXPECT?

How do they work? What decisions do they come to? How do they support one another?

Changing perspectives: Framing and reframing



Frames: culture in shorthand. Really powerful

- The Post Office remains a “mess”, plagued by a “toxic” culture where executives continue to mistrust sub-postmasters, despite exposure of the scandal, and where suspicion they are “digging into the [till] drawers is rife”.
- It still employs more than 40 investigators involved in the wrongful prosecution of sub-postmasters. These investigators are known as “the untouchables” inside the organisation because of the power they wield.

Former Chair of the Post Office, Henry Staunton, as quoted in the Sunday Times, 18th February 2024

Mental shortcuts to images and associations; affect the way we think/ make assumptions

Often grounded in metaphor, based in values/unspoken emotions

Prime for associations and can take precedence over evidence/rationality

Continually reinforced and familiar, so can be hard to stop

But not immutable: and once a new frame becomes accepted, it becomes the new common sense.

So reframing is a chance to get people to change their thinking

But. Reframing can have positive consequences

Bournemouth



*Homelessness as
public nuisance*

Worthing



*Homelessness as
public health*

What to do? Retaliate first. Put the argument on your territory and keep it there. And think about who your messengers might be



Using different messengers (here, in a sport/physical activity context)

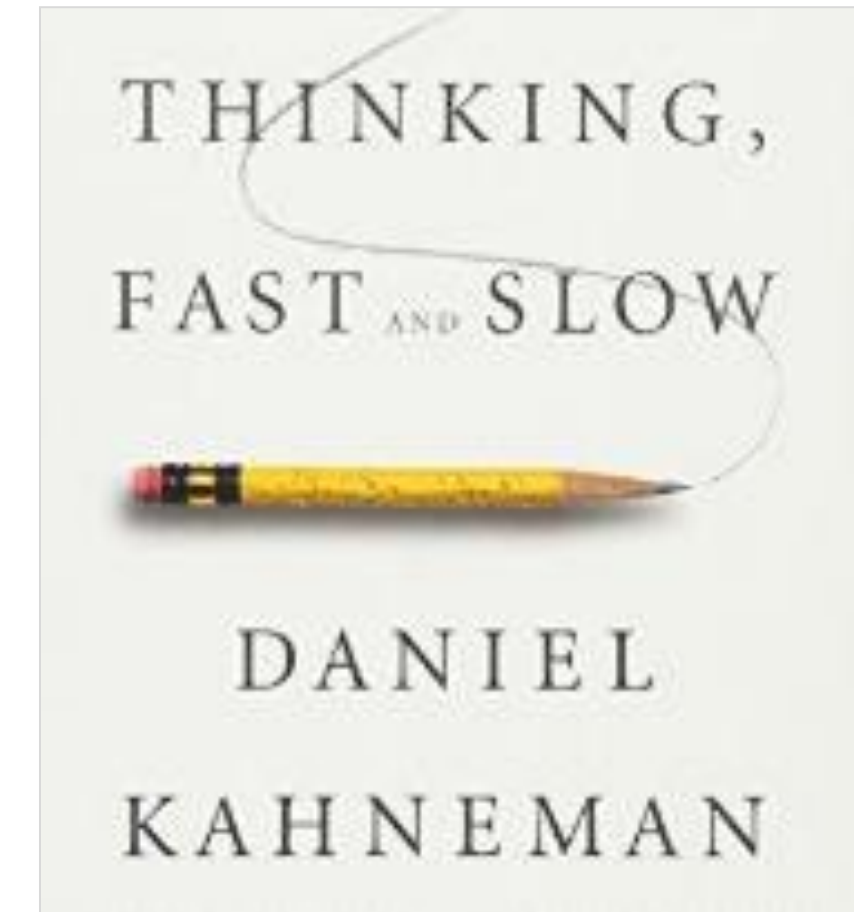


*We are undefeatable,
2020*

And tell your stories (for a purpose): public narrative



**Professor Marshall Ganz,
Harvard Kennedy School**



***“No-one ever made a decision because of a number. They need a story.”
Daniel Kahneman, ‘Thinking Fast and Slow’***

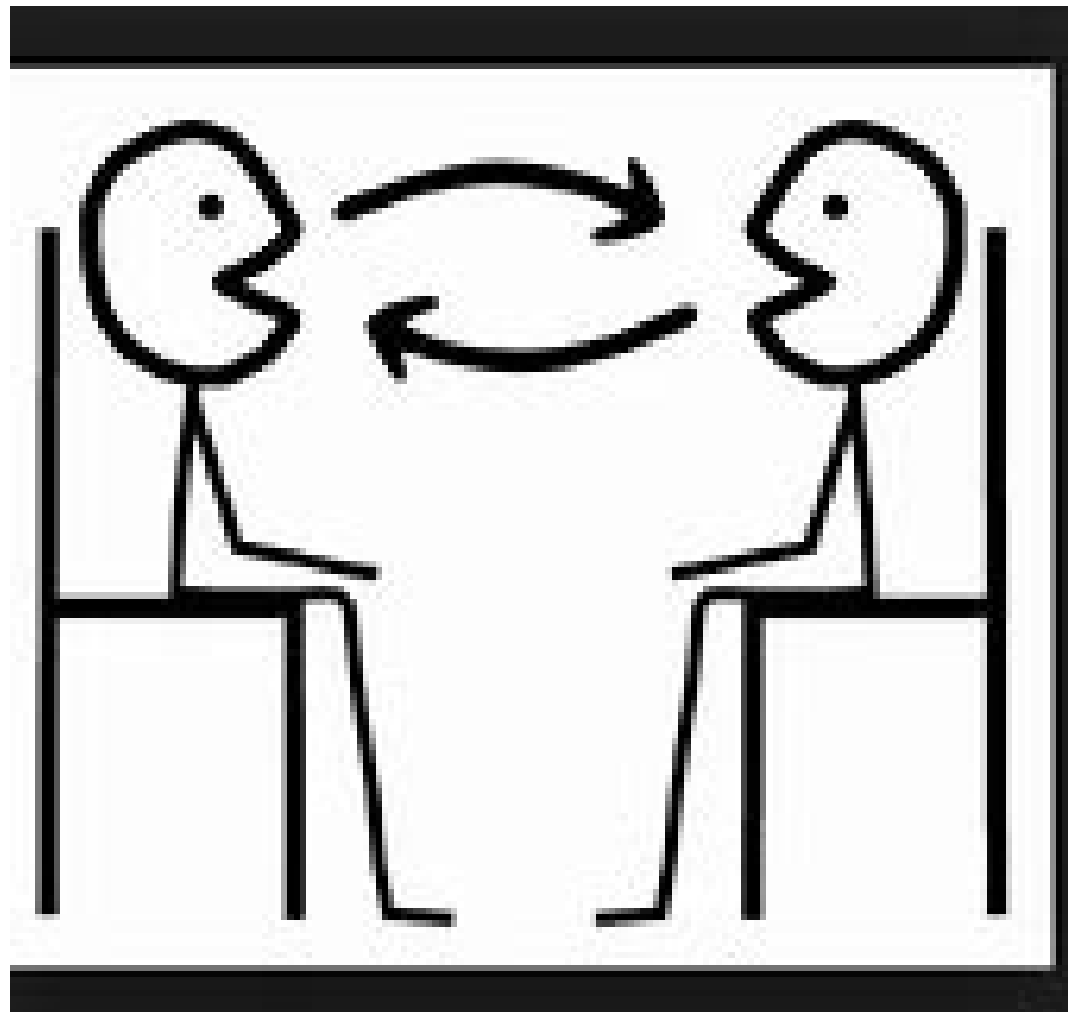
Stories for a purpose are a great way to change perspectives and are part of your leadership role

Leadership is **taking responsibility** for **enabling others to achieve shared purpose** in the face of **uncertainty**

*Professor Marshall Ganz,
Harvard Kennedy School*

What public narrative is... and is not

Public narrative is...



A **skill** to motivate others...
to **join** with you in **action**

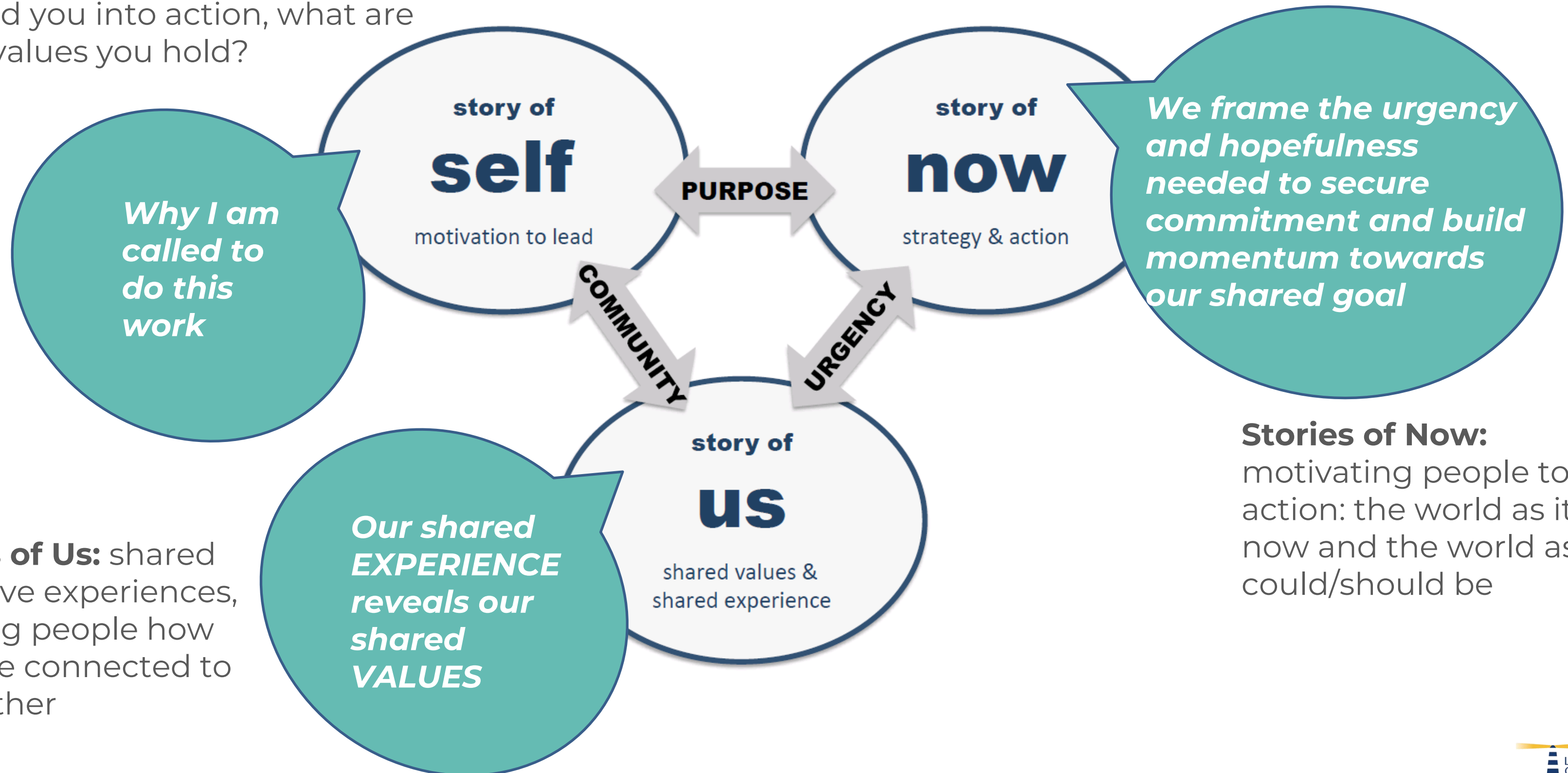
Public narrative is not...



A **script** or **performance**

The three components of public narrative

Stories of Self: giving a public account of yourself – what called you into action, what are the values you hold?

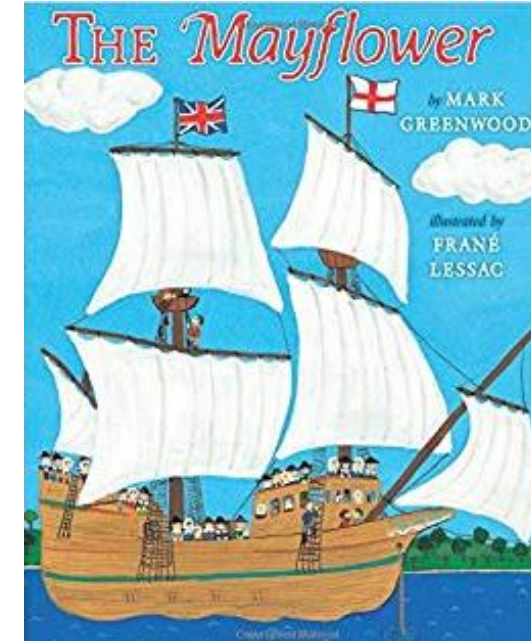


Stories of Us: shared collective experiences, showing people how they are connected to each other

Stories of Now: motivating people to action: the world as it is now and the world as it could/should be

You build on this to bring in what makes for a good story

- A **Character** – this could be you or others
- A **Challenge** and a **Choice** facing that Character
- **Action** – a **plot, something happens**, there's a sense of movement – even urgency
- **Telling details and images** – people can see, hear, sense what you're describing



Everyone can do this



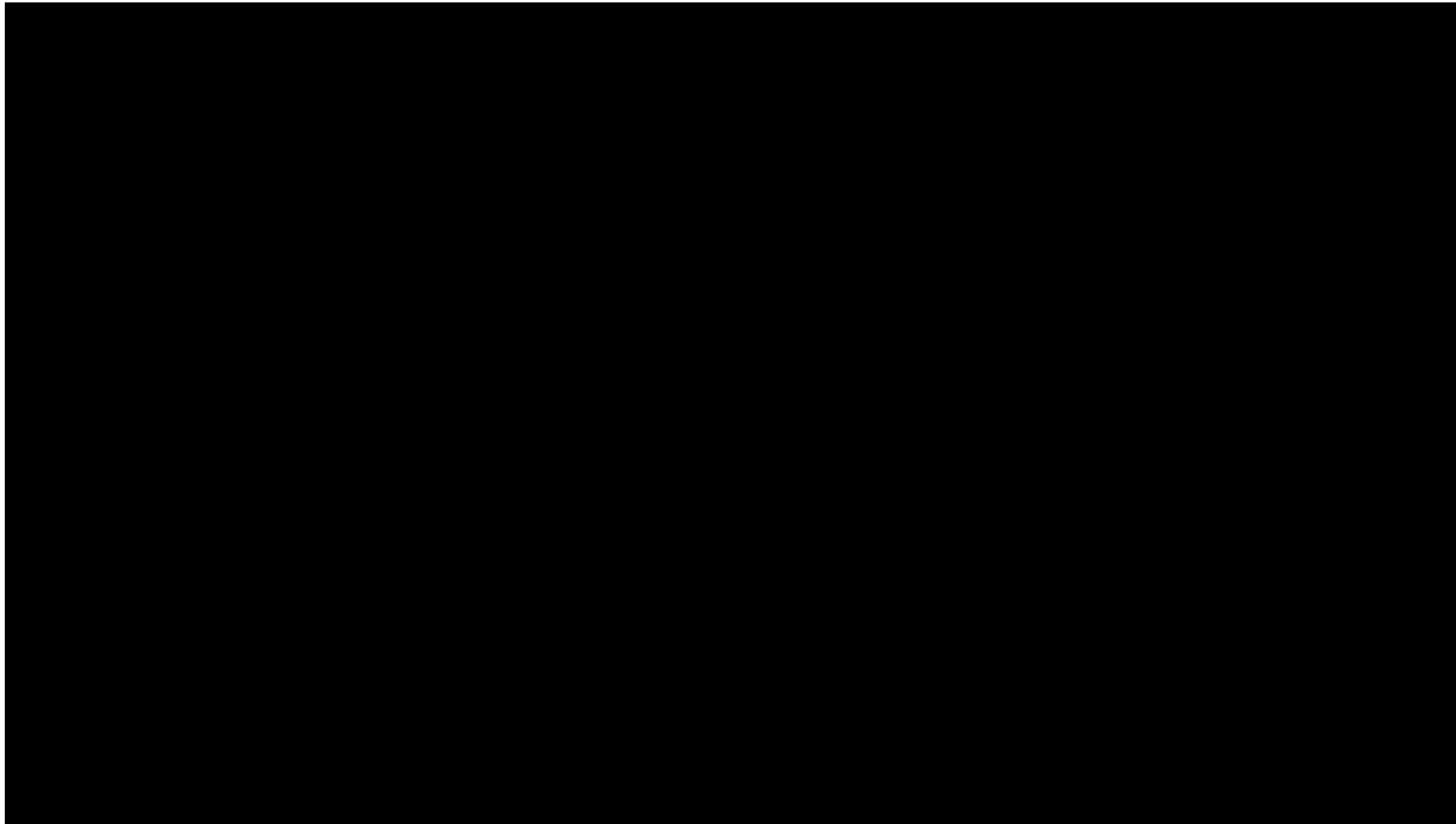
**Claire Farrow,
Integrated Services Manager,
Hull City Council**

“The approach definitely produced different results – the feedback I received was really powerful. It seemed to leave an imprint on people in a way that perhaps the data on its own simply couldn’t.”

People seemed enthusiastic to get on board and immediately made commitments to support change in their own particular spheres of influence, which was fantastic.”

[Storytelling conveying the impact of vaping on young people | Leadership \(leadershipcentre.org.uk\)](https://leadershipcentre.org.uk)

The key thing is to have a go. And learn from others: Arnold Schwarzenegger is good at this



https://www.youtube.com/watch?edufilter=NULL&feature=emb_logo&v=x_P-0I6sAck

Summing up. So where do you start? A potential ordering (and this will be different for everybody, depending on circumstances)

- Get a coalition of the willing together
- Work on your **shared purpose** first of all **Empathy Mapping**
- What actions/fail-safe experiments/indicators/narratives can we hang off this?
- What's the lie of the land? **Rich Pictures**
- Who do we want to build relationships/trust with, or get to join with us in action? Who can help us lead? Who are our allies/competitors/opposition? **Stakeholder/Actor Mapping**
- How do they currently see us (and vice-versa)? And what are our narratives? **Reframing and Public Narrative**

Conversation and Q&A



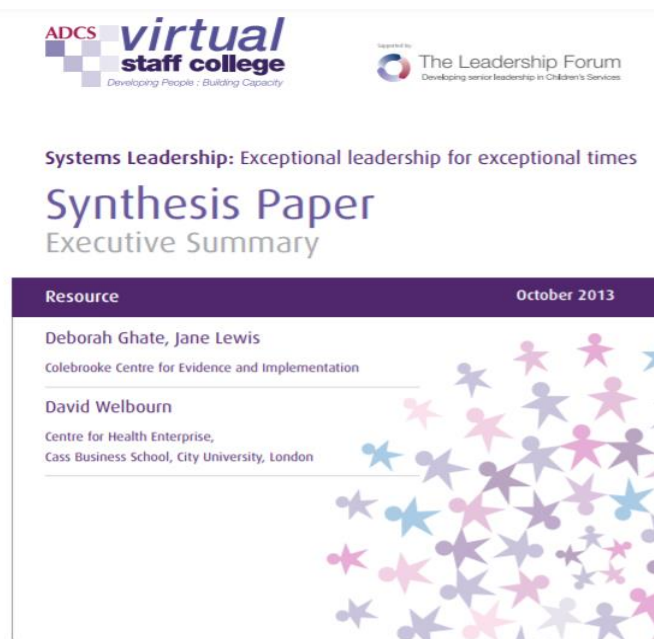
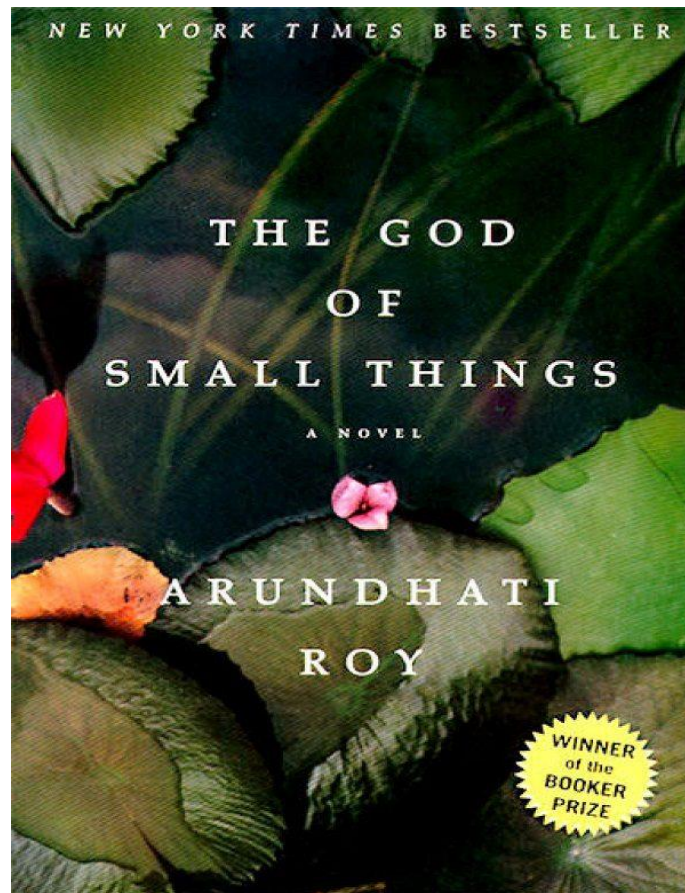
What questions or comments would we like to raise?

What's resonating for me from this?

What are the issues for us?

How might we do more/less/stop?

Any other tips and advice?



Thinking time: personal reflections from today

From all the conversations and the learning from today:

- What's particularly resonated with me?
- What have I learned?
- What am I going to do or try out? What do I want to improve (in a way that's small, practical and doable)?
- Where might I apply one or two of the ideas?
- ***Please keep a note of your learning and your commitments, so that you can refer back over time***



Coming up...

- Making the system work for you, and getting to shared purpose **25th April**
- Being clear about what you want to do and how you might get there **22nd May**
- Understanding your landscape: the lie of the land **18th June**
- The power of influence (1) Empathy Mapping and Reframing **11th July**
- The power of influence (2) Public Narrative **17th September**
- Keeping change going: leading through uncertainty and developing resilience **17th October**

To sum up

- Use adaptive/systems leadership
- Don't wait for plans/perfection – take action
- Focus on what's in your gift to control or influence
- Do what's small, practical and doable for you – e.g. key stakeholders
- Don't have imposter syndrome
- Build relationships, trust and influence
- Understand there's a difference between influence and power
- Behave in ways that lead to change – ground things in your values, sense-make for others, support them to work in new ways, let others step up and deliver
- Understand and change perspectives, e.g. loss
- Use all the tools in your armoury, esp. reframing and public narrative
- Keep going – you really will see change happen





Active Partners Trust Systems Leadership Workshops

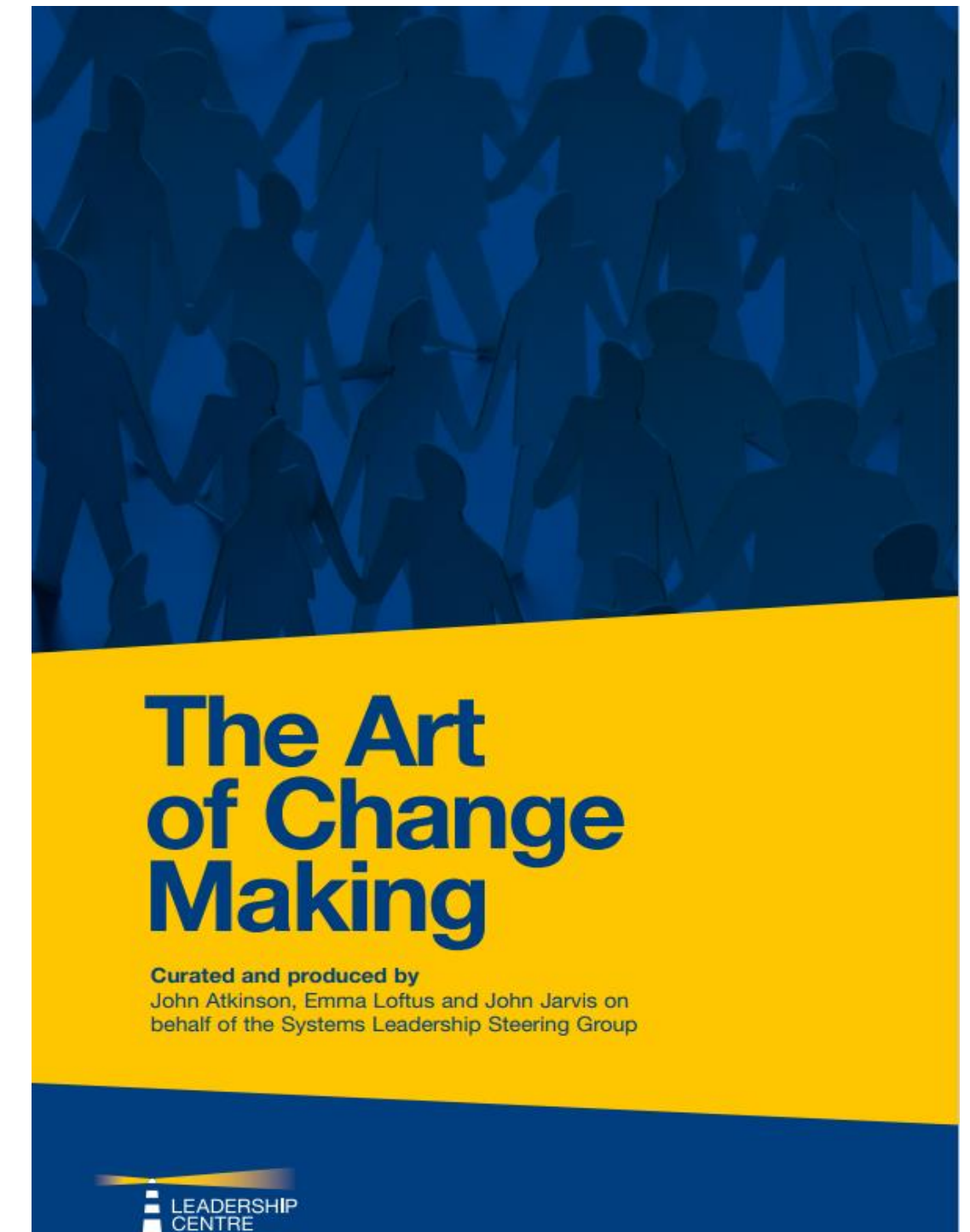
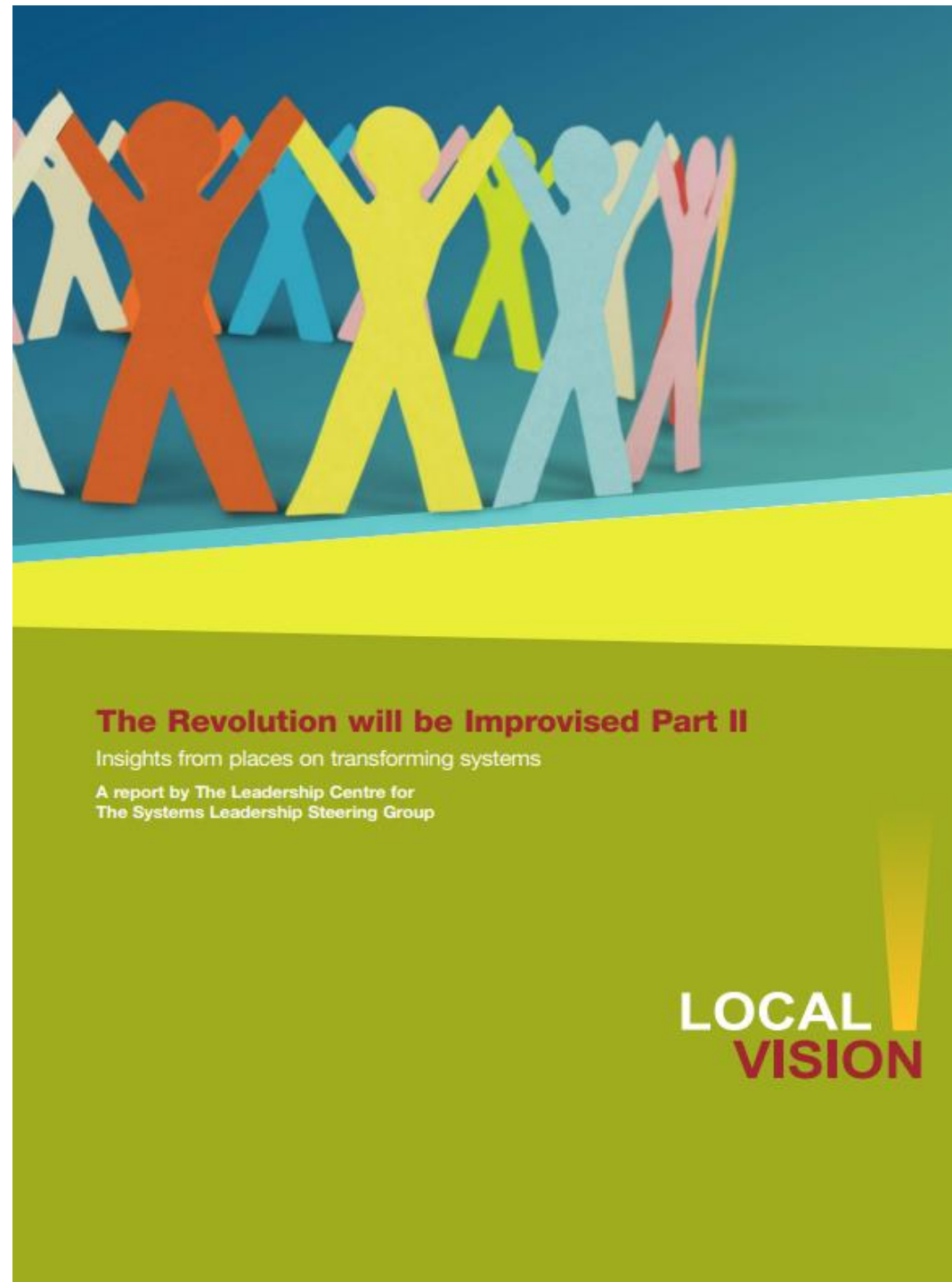
Workshop 1: Introduction to Systems Leadership

28th March 2024

Thank you.

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More case studies and lessons learned



All at www.leadershipcentre.org.uk