

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



Our shared aims:

1. CREATING A CULTURE where everyone can be active and move more.
2. Enabling CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE to have positive experiences of being active throughout their childhood.
3. Working with PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES who experience the GREATEST INEQUALITY.
4. Maximising the potential of physical activity to improve PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.
5. Creating ACCESSIBLE, SAFE, and INCLUSIVE PLACES AND ENVIRONMENTS for physical activity.



In addition to the imbalances and inequalities of Covid-19, there are two themes that cross through all of the aims - the **POTENTIAL OF WALKING** in a way that's accessible to everyone and **OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT AND IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT**. These considerations feed into almost all of our aims and actions.



Our united approach

This is a systems-based, collaborative approach with everyone leading and participating together. Partners and communities uniting around a shared vision and adopting shared outcomes so that we are aligned and working towards the same things. The power of our collective work is in the sum of the parts, including integrated health and care, voluntary and community organisations, young people services and education, wellbeing, sport, leisure, transport, housing, environment, community safety and planning, to name but a few.

At the heart of this united approach is people and communities 'owning' the change they're trying to create by being involved and feeling empowered. Everyone and every place is different, and it's important to understand and appreciate individual and local circumstances that influence people and communities to be active.

How we work to achieve this is key. We're learning that it will take a commitment to:

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

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

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY across and between partners and sectors.

FOCUSING ON LEARNING AND ADAPTING, understanding what works as well as what doesn't and applying it to our work on an ongoing basis.

ADVOCATING FOR AND INFLUENCING policy and practice.

TARGETING AND ALIGNING INVESTMENT to where it's most needed.

We've already started our journey towards a united approach, and are already growing the movement. And while we're not starting from scratch, we do recognise that there are ways we can better come together and unite to encourage physical activity in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.



Active Partners Trust

Additional Systems Leadership Workshops

Workshop 9: Wednesday 29th January 2025, 1.30 pm – 3.30 pm

Having difficult conversations: what to watch for and how to have them

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

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Why complexity lends itself particularly to difficult conversations



- ✓ These are inherently difficult issues
- ✓ You'll often be dealing with deep-seated, multi-faceted issues that have been around a long time
- ✓ So things can have been *left* for a long time
- ✓ Some people will have a vested interest in things not being clear (and there will be consequences they don't want to face – or they want someone else to face for them)
- ✓ You'll be coming up against issues around loss – e.g. status, identity, control – and people taking refuge in managerialism rather than management

With difficult conversations, “not now” can easily become “never”. But there are things we can do.

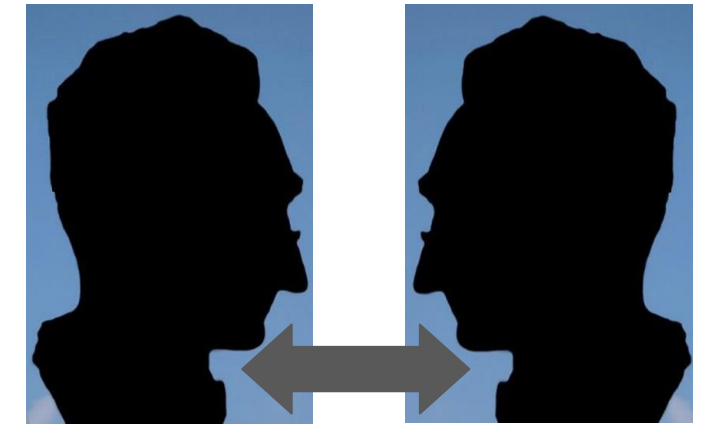


So today is about giving yourself a chance to air and explore a conversation you want to have but might have been avoiding, or you have had and want to learn from

Handling Difficult Conversations – the theory behind the practice

The “DNA” of vital conversations is where there are:

- high stakes with significant perceived or real consequences
- these could be physical/tangible and psychological/intangible
- opposing viewpoints
- uncertainty
- historical baggage and bias
- powerful emotions.



There are costs to avoiding difficult or vital conversations. In the words of Martin Luther King:
“How soon ‘not now’ becomes ‘never’ ”

Extracted from “Vital Conversations – Making the impossible conversation possible” by Alec Grimsley (Barnes Holland) 2010

Sources of pictures (used under attribution license): silhouette heads – Paleontour @ Flickr.com; “mind” – eliazar @ Flickr.com; iceberg and ladder – David Love

Starting point: the biggest factor in the outcome of a difficult conversation is the mindset we bring to it

- Our underlying mindset, rather than the level of our skill, has a bigger impact on determining whether we will be successful in our difficult conversation or not.
- Grimsley identifies 3 levels of thinking:
 - **1st level – fight or flight**
 - **2nd level – manipulation and control**
 - **3rd level – mutual understanding and compassion.**
- Making effort to focus on creating and sustain Level 3 thinking is likely to lead to a successful outcome and he identifies “7 Cs” as a guide to achieving this:

(self) Control

Clarity

Compassion

Curiosity

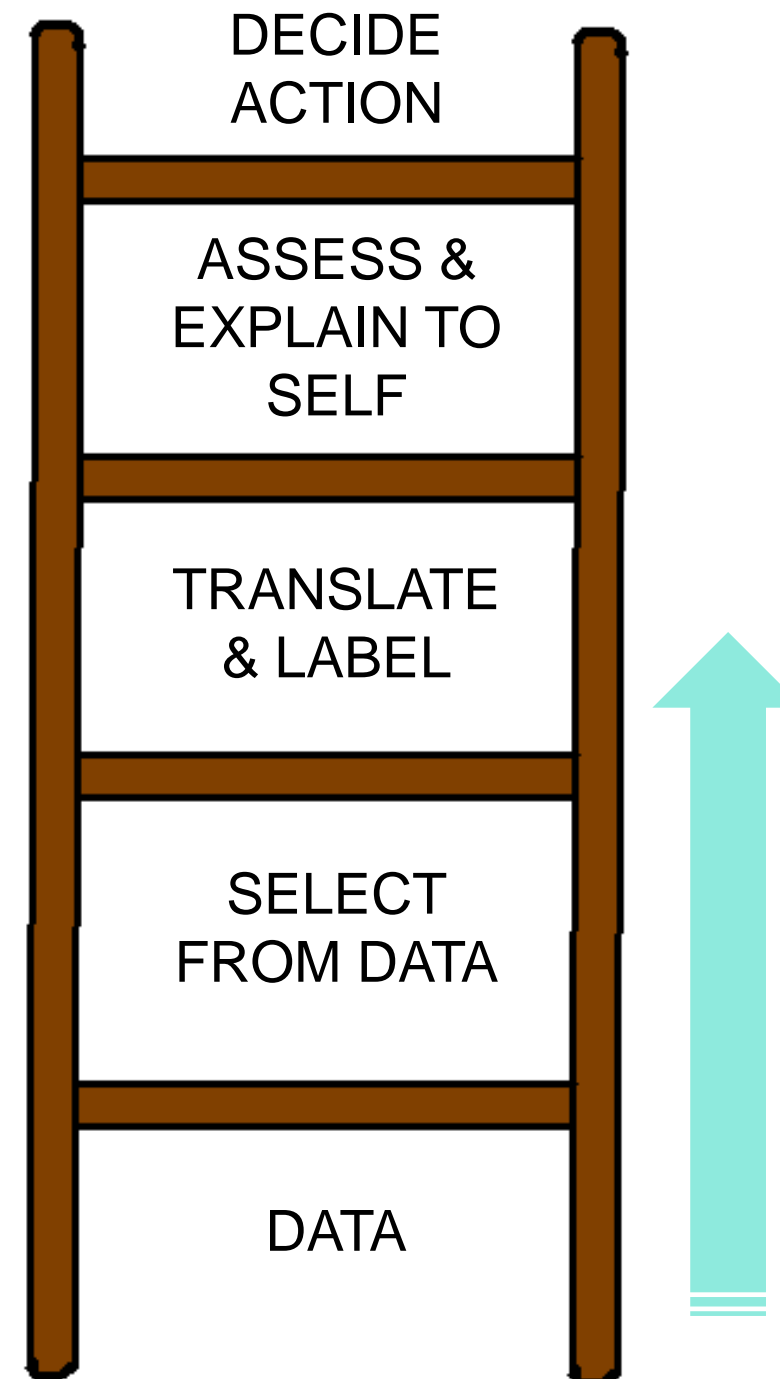
Courage

Collaboration

Commitment

**So we need to be aware of what our mindset is, and why.
We build “stories” about others on the basis of selective
attention – this acts as a starting point**

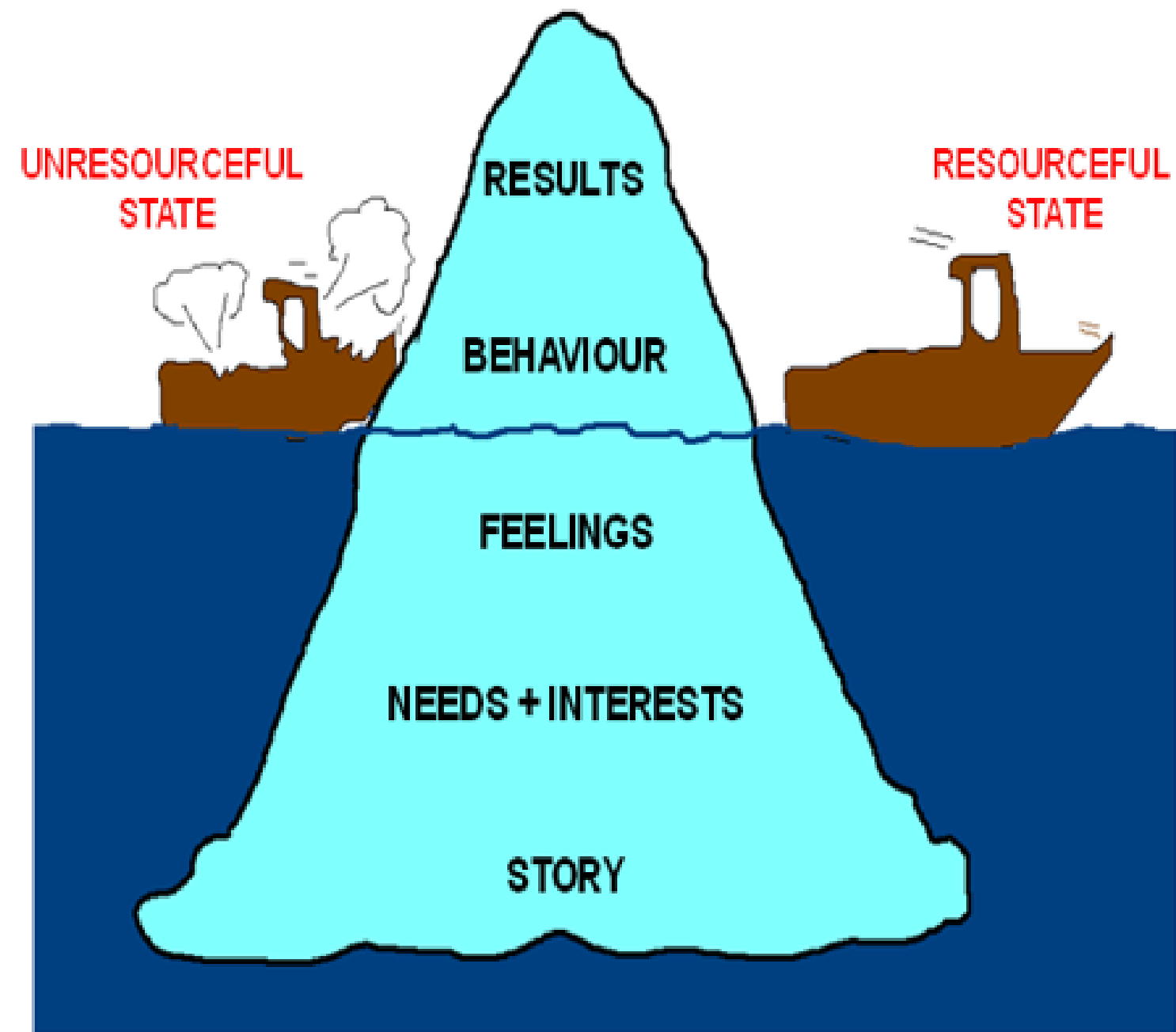
**THE LADDER
OF
INFERENCE**



Roger Schwarz

We can focus on what we want to see, and become “hostage” to negative stories – about ourselves and others

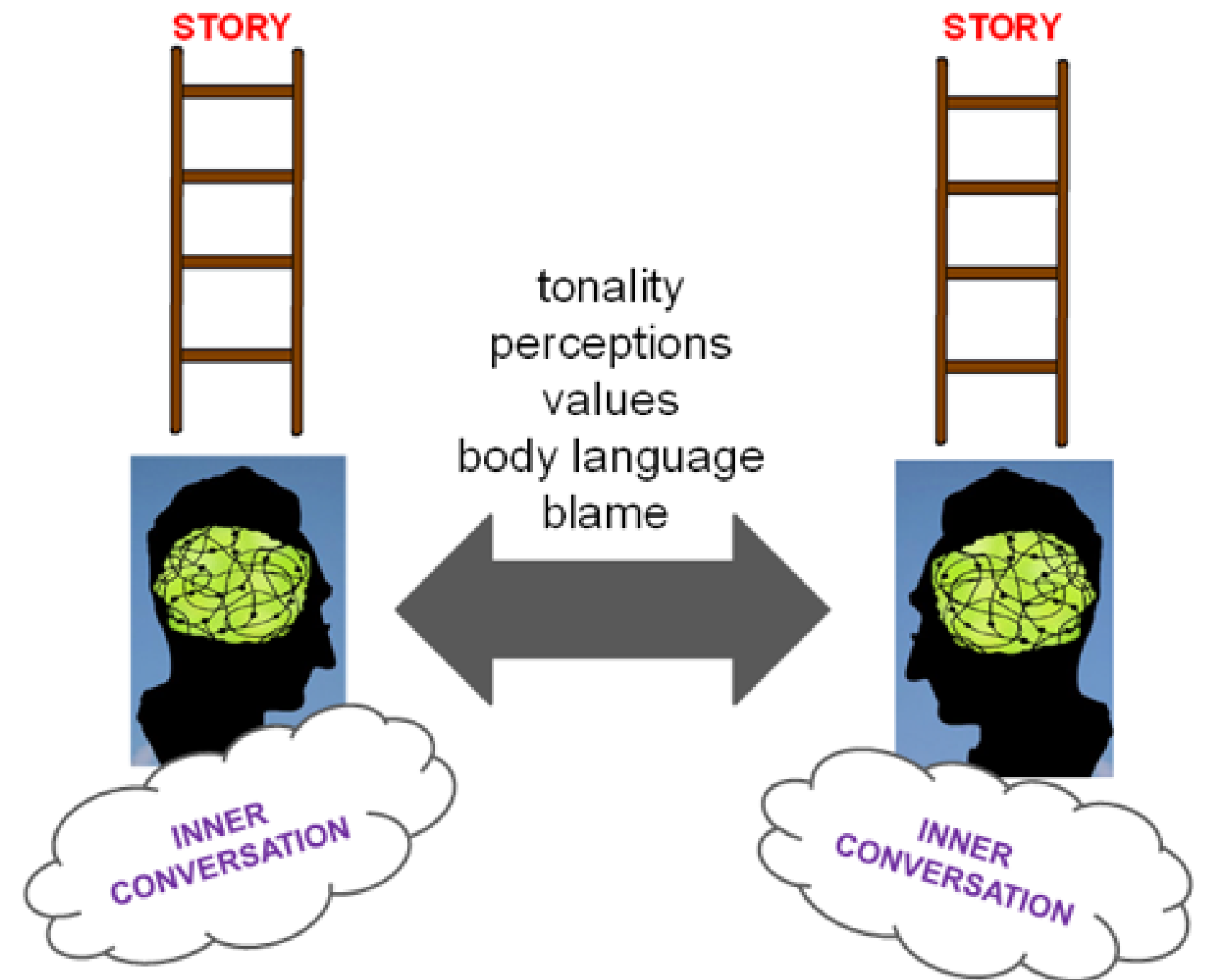
- In Grimsley’s view, most people approaching difficult conversations focus on the exposed tip of the iceberg ignoring the factors below the waterline.
- He suggests that “story” is often the most intransigent factor, with the danger that we become “hostages” to the negative stories that we create for ourselves.



And so we can end up with three conversations in one

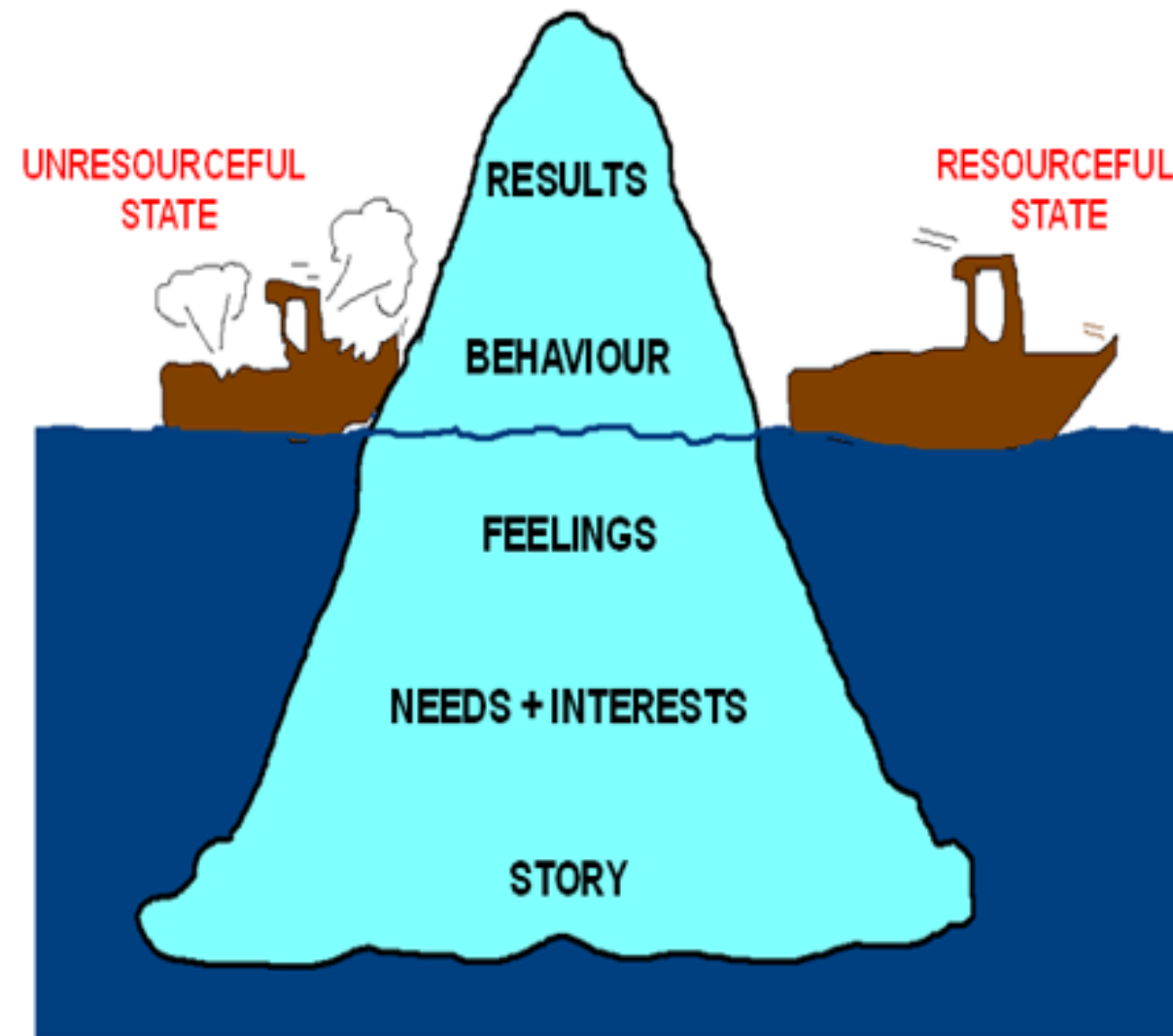
This means there are often 3 conversations going on at the same time:

- The one going on between ourselves and the other person....
- And the two hidden conversations that are taking place inside both our heads which will be linked to our respective stories.



What you can do instead.

1. Investigate the iceberg and the stories it contains



2. Plan out your vital conversation, in stages. Have a practice, if you can

- The “90 second” start
 - Define the issue and purpose
 - Reveal emotions (if safe to do so)
 - Express motivation to find a way forward
 - Create collaboration..... all in 90 seconds
- Explore both stories (and listen carefully to the other person’s story)
- Identify individual and shared interests, hopes, needs, fears, concerns
- Generate a range of options
- Agree on specific next steps
- The most successful vital conversations enable us to connect with the other person’s psychological needs



Source: Freepik

A mindset for a vital (difficult) conversation

- Advocacy and enquiry
- Focus on reasoning and motives
- Use non-defensive language
- Express feelings
- Test assumptions
- Focus on, and work through, impasses
- Think like a mediator



Source: Freepik

Another way of thinking about this.

Breaking the pathways: the FAB approach

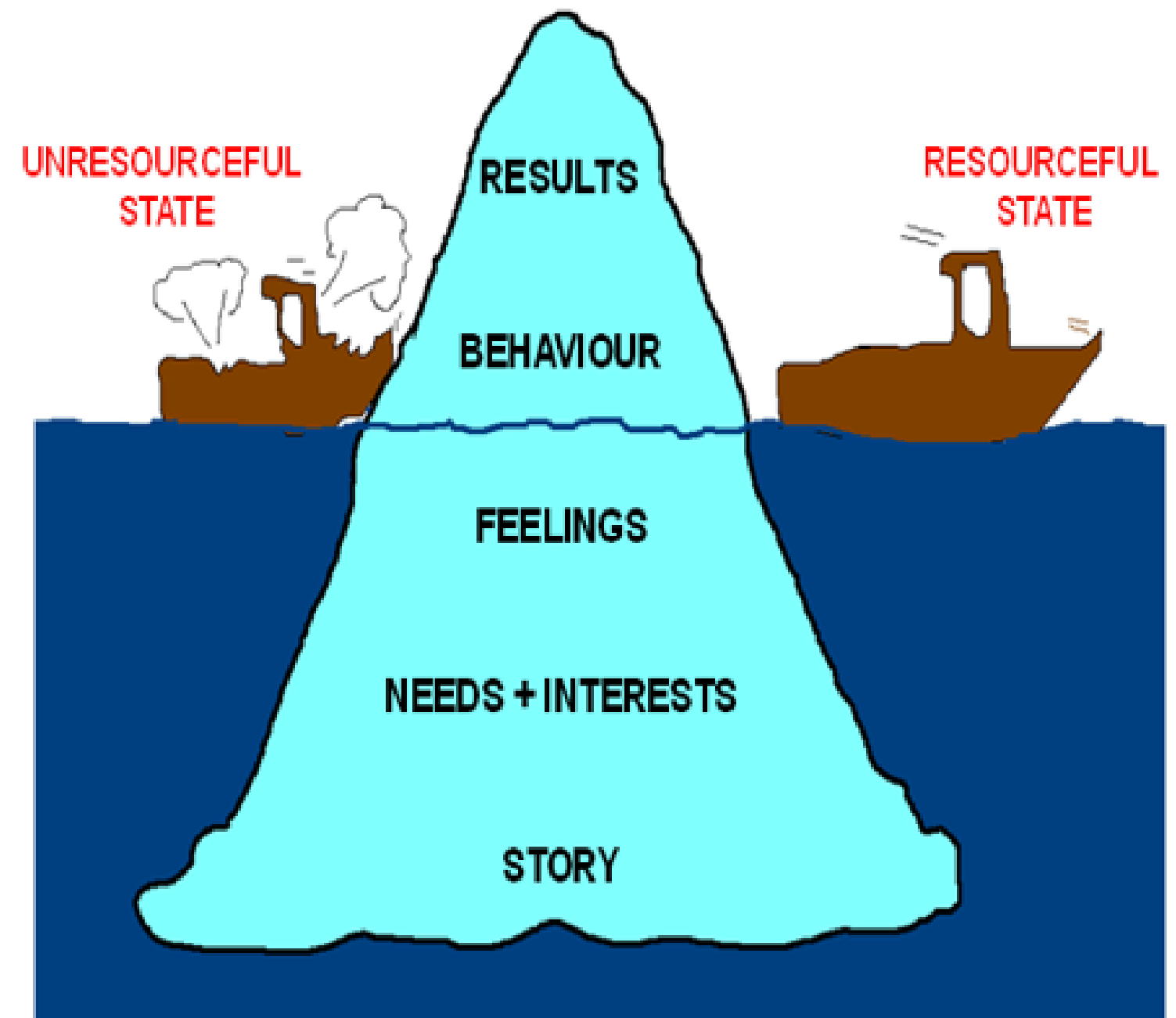


What we need to do is to break the pathways and cycles – learn to think in ways that get in the way of the brain's survival messages. We do this by conscious action.

- **Fascinating** – think 'fascinating', just say the word in your head – it's a trigger, a signal to our brain to do something differently and **think**
- **Acknowledge** – now acknowledge your emotion, e.g. 'this makes me feel bad because...'
- **Breathe** – concentrate on breathing slowly and deeply

Difficult conversations: initial reflections in groups, then feedback in plenary

- How is this resonating for us?
- What do we see happening around difficult conversations? How do they play out?
- Where might we use this?
- What might stop us, or get in the way?
- Who else needs this but keeps avoiding it?
- What questions do we want to ask? Then: an opportunity to explore a conversation that you need to have, or to reflect on one you've already had (and what happened).



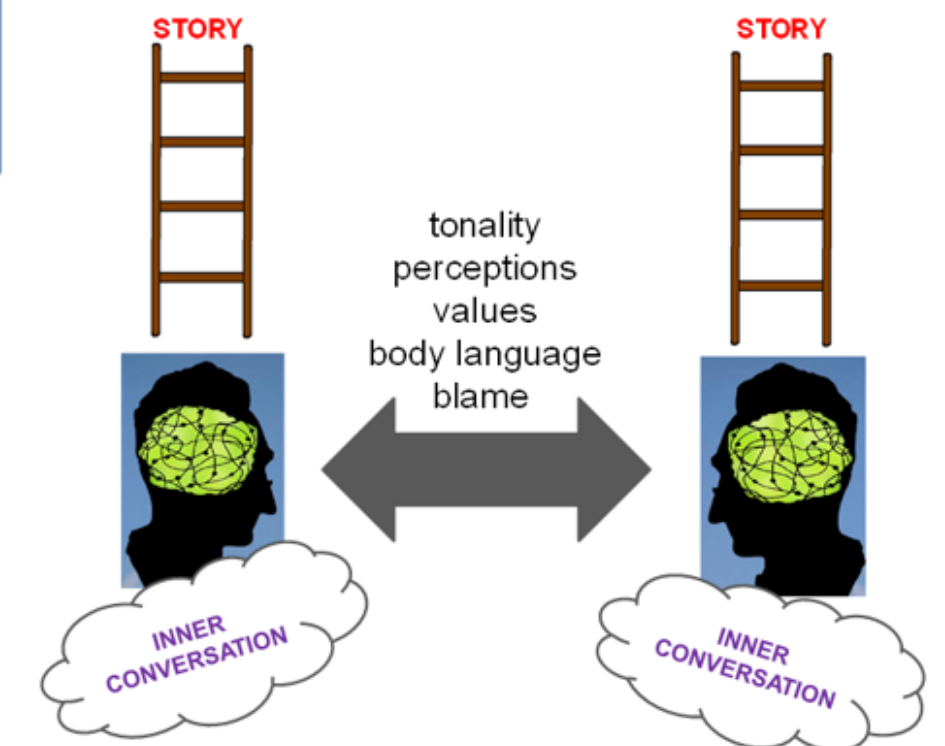
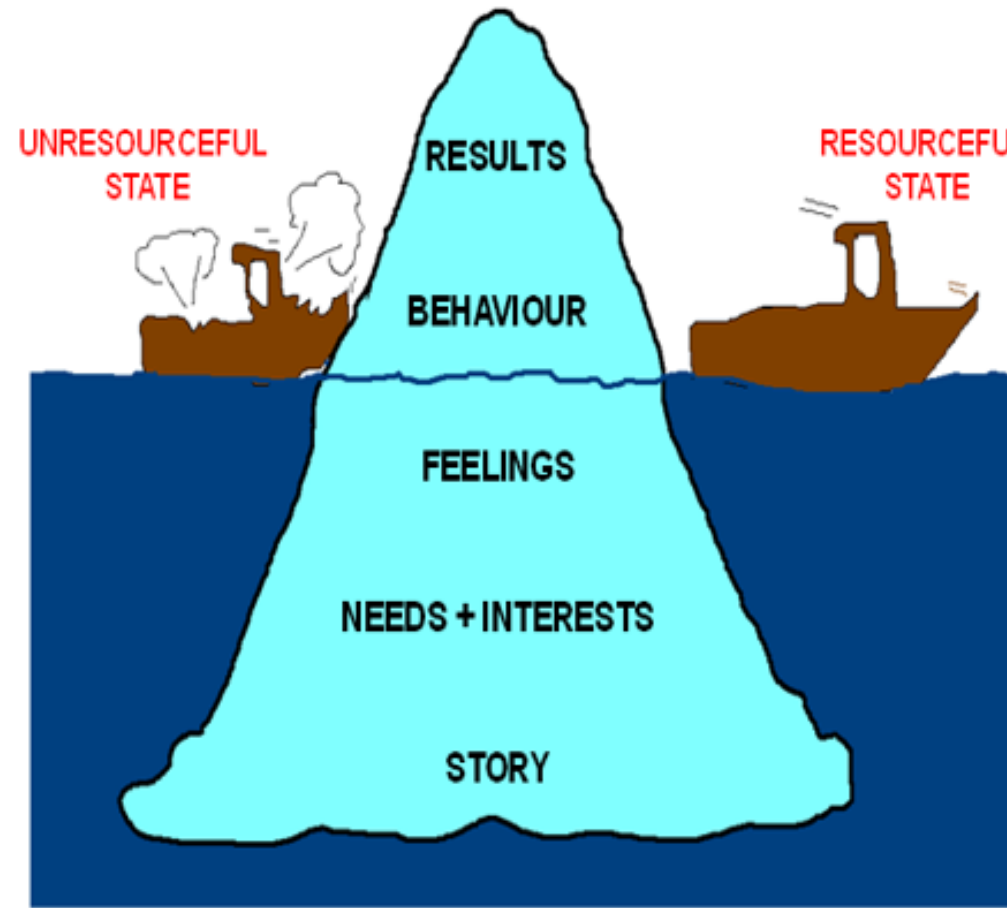
Having difficult conversations: what to watch for and how to have them

Tea/comfort break



Vital conversations: a chance to discuss and practise this/get coaching and feedback, using the ideas and approaches

- In pairs or groups of three.
- An opportunity to explore a conversation that you need to have, or to reflect on one you've already had (and what happened).
- You can talk about how you might apply Alec Grimsley's approaches – e.g. the 90-second start, or thinking like a mediator – and give feedback to each other.



Reminder – feedback and co-coaching skills

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• encourage your colleague to explore things for themselves	jump in with your take on the situation, or start to provide solutions yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge	assume challenge has to involve being very directive – reflecting back some assumptions your colleague is making may, in itself, be a powerful challenge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use active listening techniques – the <i>EARS</i> process can be helpful:<ul style="list-style-type: none">empathise – try to understand their perspectiveacknowledge – signal you are listening with words and body languagereflect – play back key words and phrases and give space for them to thinksummarise – frequently sum up what has been said and where the conversation has gone	make too many suggestions (the occasional idea may be helpful) – the focus needs to be on them and their thoughts/ideas, not you; be careful not to disguise your suggestions as questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ask open questions to enable your colleague to steer the conversation and use their own words to describe their situation	focus on yourself or become pre-occupied with what you are going to say next

Thinking time and reflection: please make time for this afterwards



- What have I heard today?
- What's resonated with me?
- What am I taking away?
- **One small, doable, practical thing I'm committing to and/or going to do.**

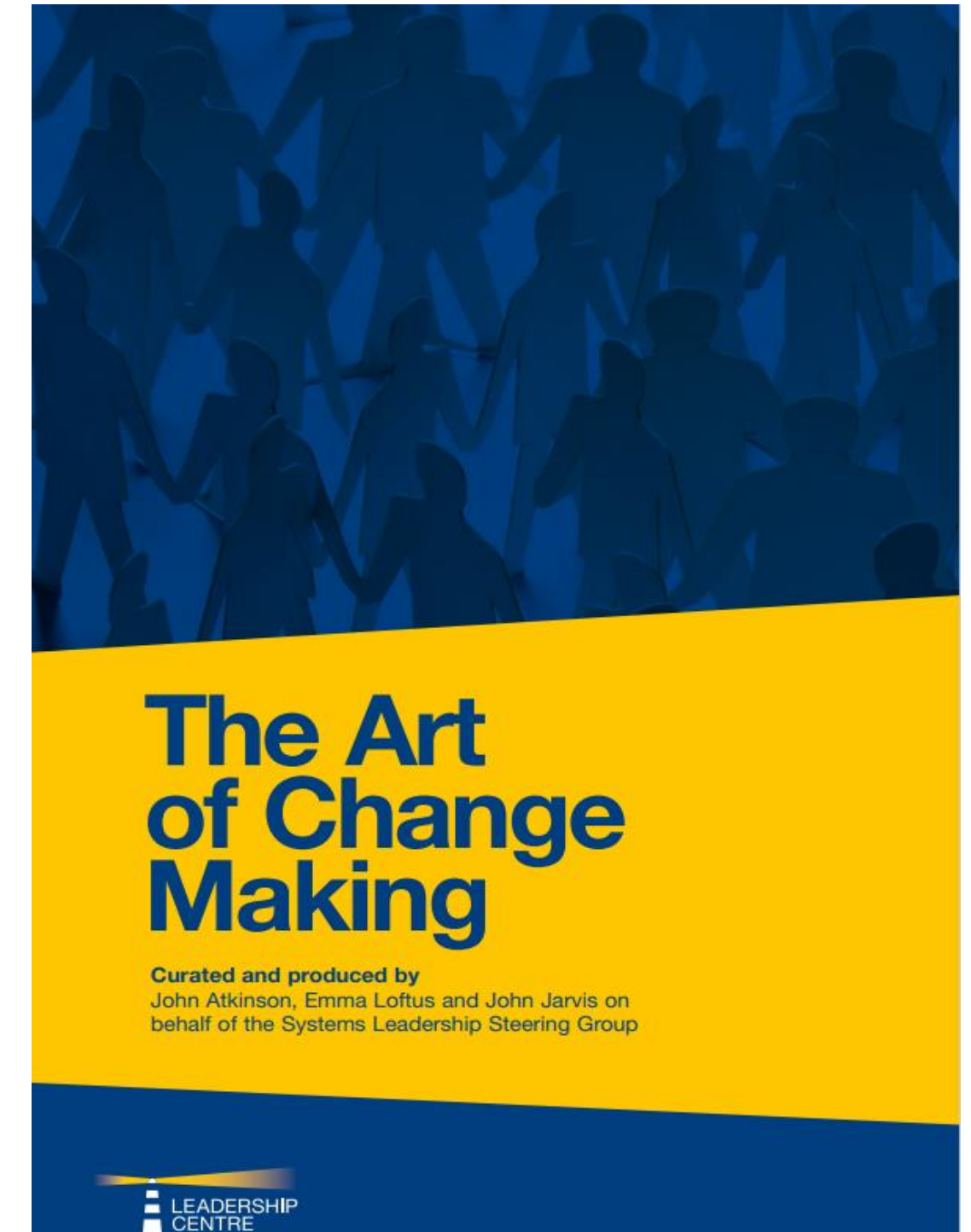
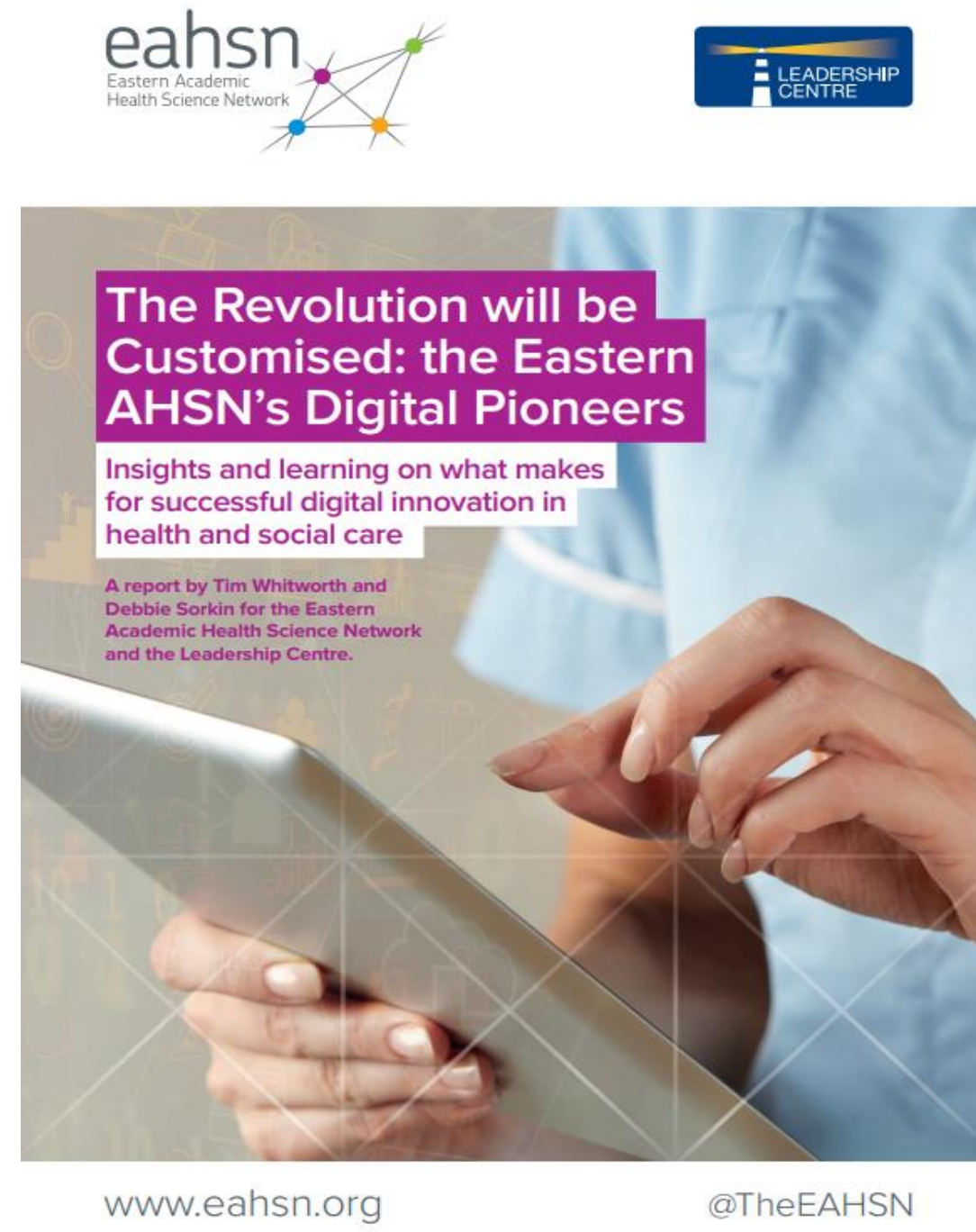
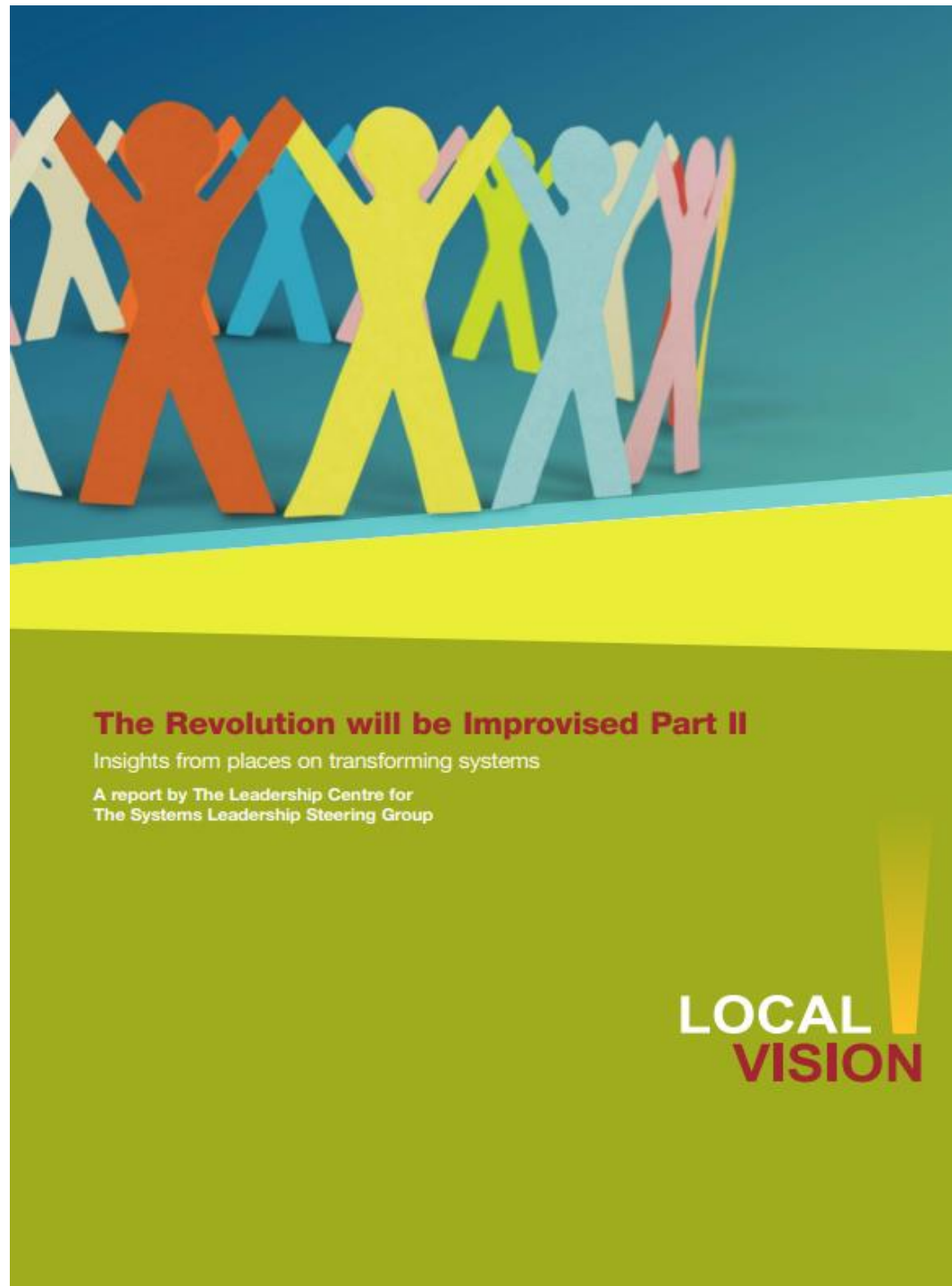
Please keep a note of your learning and commitments, so that you can refer back after today's session.

Coming up... Brand new additional workshop next month

- Understanding your system and what happens when things go wrong **25th**
February 2025



More case studies and lessons learned



All at www.leadershipcentre.org.uk



Active Partners Trust Systems Leadership Workshops

Workshop 9:

Having difficult conversations: what to watch for and how to have them

29th January 2025

Thank you.

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