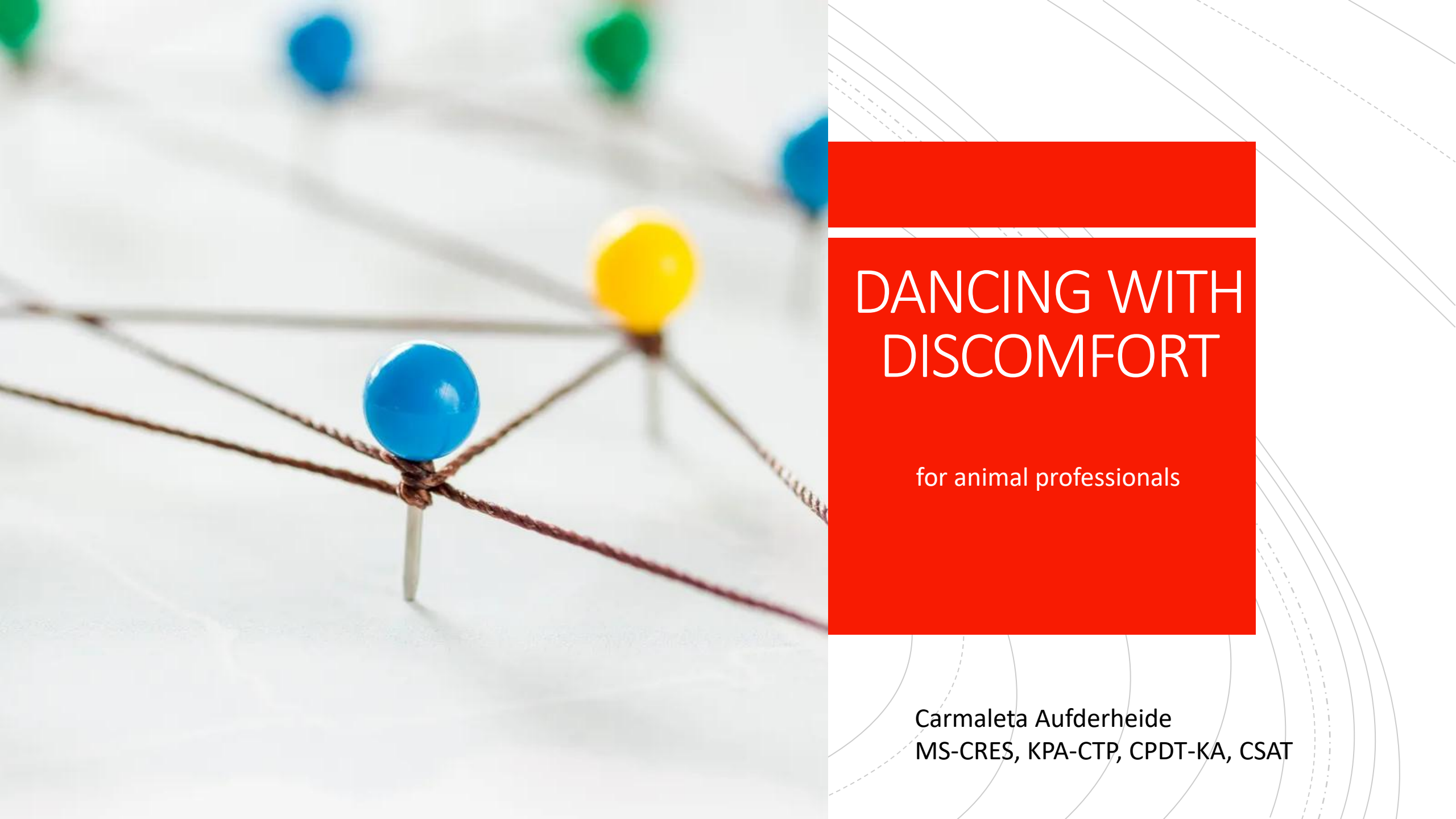




DANCING WITH DISCOMFORT

for animal professionals

Carmaleta Aufderheide
MS-CRES, KPA-CTP, CPDT-KA, CSAT

“Unpleasantness is part of the game,
every game...and those who
make peace with that, dance with that,
tend to have a more satisfying experience”



Brendan O'Meara

Creative Nonfiction Podcast

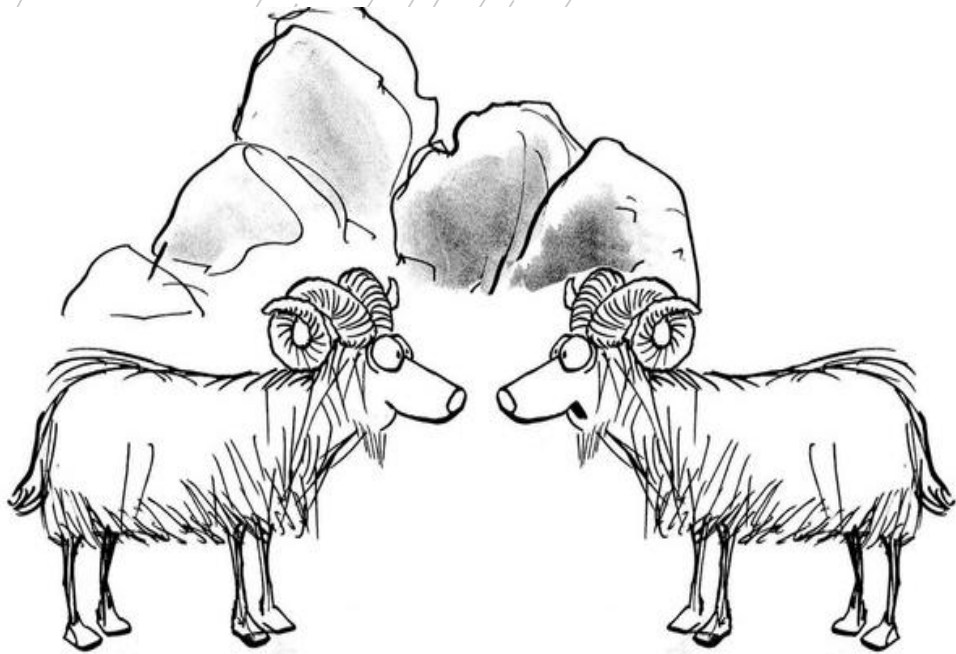
- 
- What is Conflict Resolution (CRES)?
 - Common Myths about Conflict
 - Avoidance & Resilience
 - EQ & Emotional Hijacking
 - Safe Spaces
 - Histories Matter
 - Matching Principal
 - Nonverbal Communication
 - Curiosity, Mirroring and Looping
 - Facts and Science
 - Boundaries
 - Takeaways

Agenda



Inspiration

What is Conflict Resolution?



“The last thing I want to do is butt heads over this.”

A set of dialogue skills and a mindset designed to help individuals navigate and engage in difficult conversations, rather than avoid them or attempt to control the other party involving:

- Supporting the other person’s experience – Active listening with sincerity
- Understanding their perspective - Curiosity
- Developing problem-solving teamwork
- Willingness to “dance” with the unpredictability
- Finding common goals rather than differences to focus on – is this enough?
- Managing emotions in heated discussions

Conflict Myths

1

Conflict is **ALWAYS** negative

Many believe conflict is inherently bad and should be avoided.

Conflict is natural and if managed well can lead to better understanding



2

All conflict can be resolved

Some disagreements may remain unresolved, especially those rooted in core values.

Not every conflict has a solution.



3

Avoidance is the best policy

Avoiding conflict may seem easier in the short term but frequently adds to unresolved issues, increases resentment for bigger problems down the road.



4

Resolution means everyone must agree

Conflict resolution does NOT always mean reaching total agreement. Sometimes it means acknowledging differences and still finding ways to work together.



5

Compromise is **ALWAYS** the best solution

Compromise can be useful, but it can sidestep deeper issues brewing. Effective resolution may require ongoing dialogue rather than opting for a quick fix.



What's your response to conflict?

FIGHT

Directly confronting the conflict, often assertively or aggressively



FLIGHT

Avoiding or escaping the conflict by withdrawing or refusing to engage



FREEZE

Becoming immobilized or unsure of how to proceed causing inaction



FAWN

Attempts to appease the other party by giving in or excessively accommodating them



FESTER

Suppressing or ignoring conflict, allowing resentment or negative feelings to build up internally



**Why do we avoid
difficult
conversations**

Might be worried about:

- **Hurting someone's feelings**
- **Rejection**
- **Not getting the outcome we want**
- **Making the situation worse**

Building Conflict Resilience

Viewing conflict as an opportunity

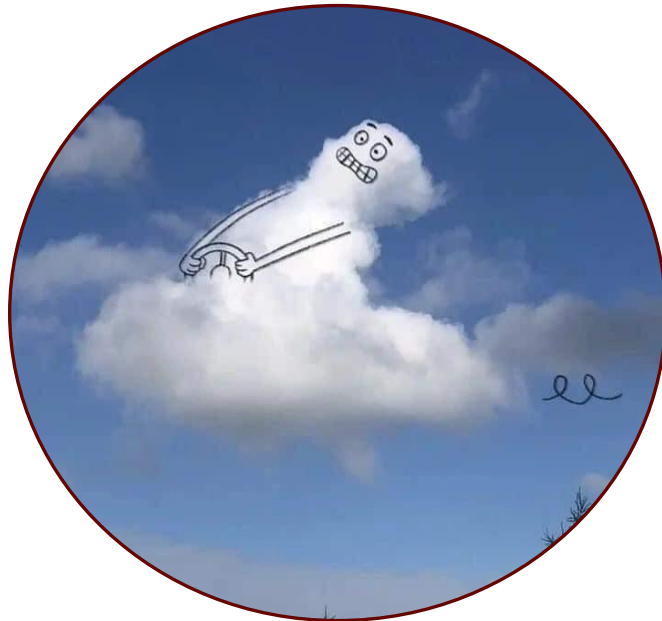


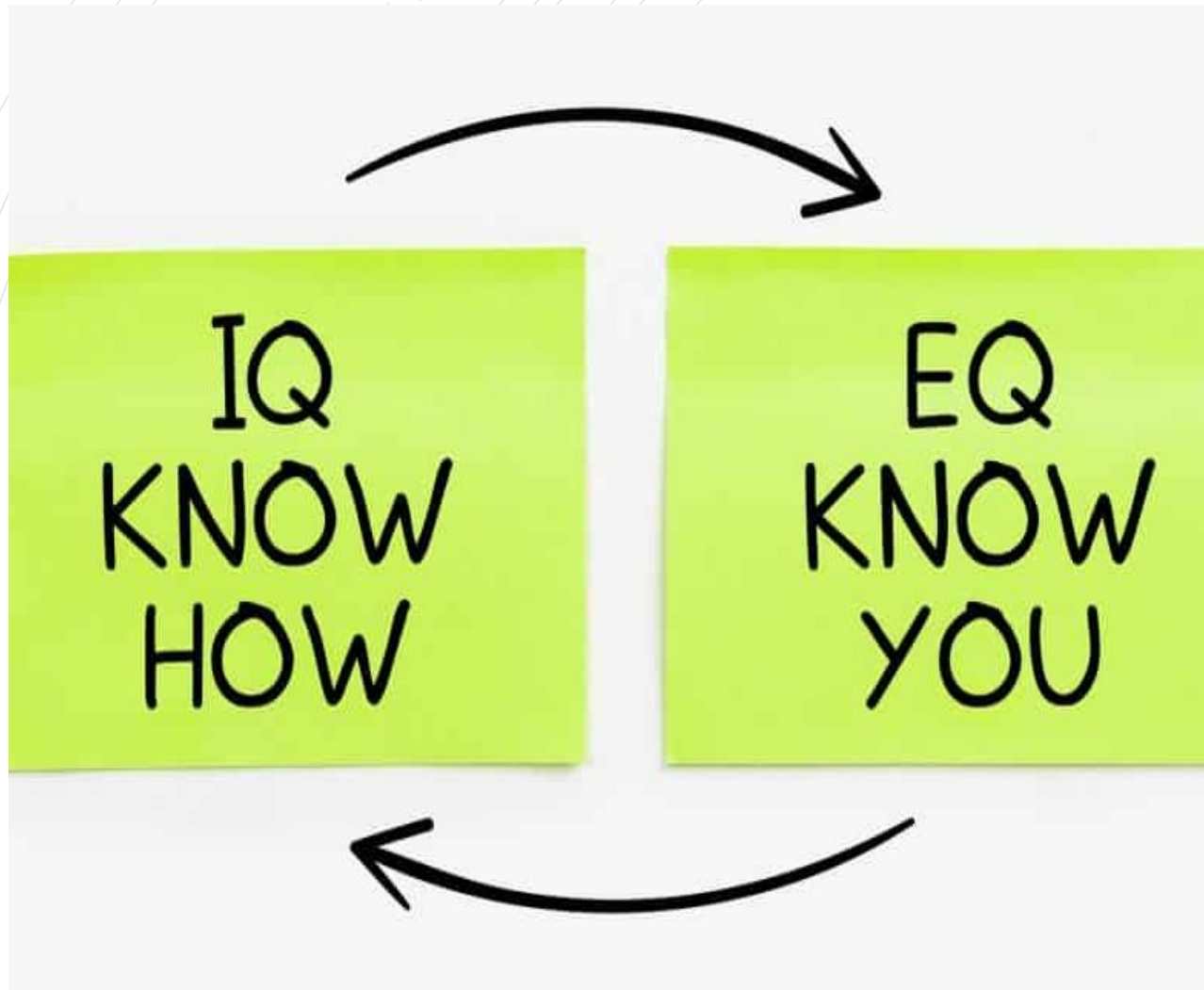
The Man in the Arena – Brene Brown



Avoid emotional hijacking...

Who's in the drivers seat when
you feel triggered?

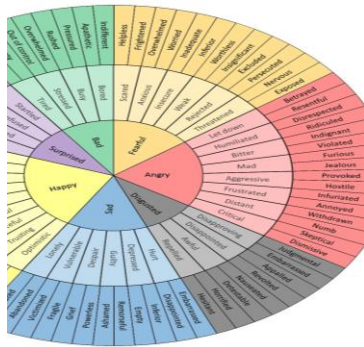




Emotional Intelligence: EQ

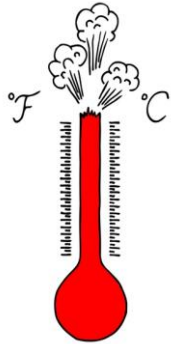
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

Awareness & Regulation



Identifying Emotions Accurately

Identify and articulate your emotions with greater precision, fostering self-awareness.



Understanding Emotional Triggers

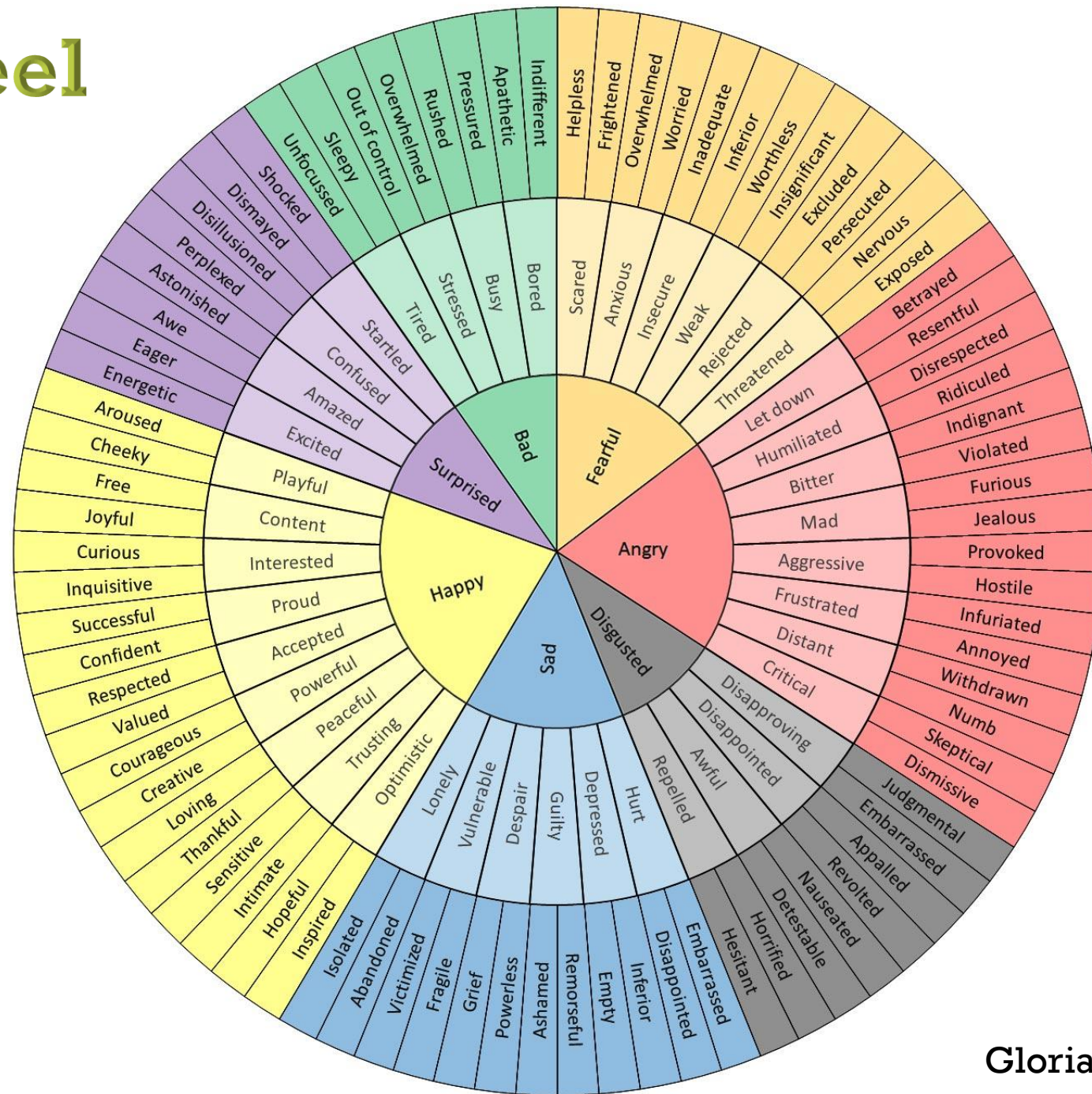
Recognizing specific feelings when triggered helps us make sense of our emotional responses to different situations.

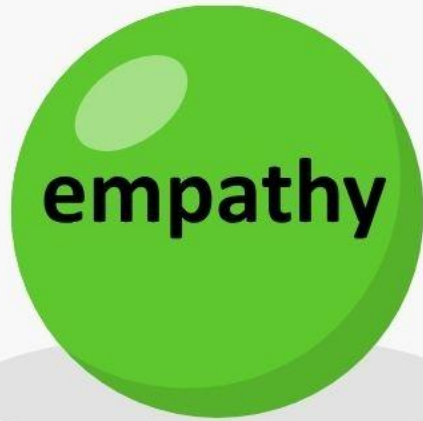


Supporting Emotional Regulation

Pausing for a brief moment of mindfulness allows us to manage our reactions and choose healthier responses in challenging moments (turn down the thermostat).

Feelings Wheel





Points to our ability to listen, understand, and appreciate someone's experience. We don't have to have experienced the same thing to empathize. Can we be empathetic after being emotionally triggered?



Emotional intelligence is interlaced with what motivates any conversation. It's not about being right.



Our ability to build and maintain healthier social and professional relationships hinges on the combined parts of EQ that allow us to be fully present and hold space for others when needed.

Create the Environment



**THIS
is A
SAFE
SPACE**

**It's not only about your skills...
It's about creating an emotionally
safe environment.**

Mutual Purpose

A safe space is created by ensuring all participants feel united and share a common goal during training.

Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is essential so clients sense genuine interest and engagement, free from judgment or discomfort.

Maintaining Safety Conditions

Consistent effort is required to sustain an environment where all participants continue to feel safe and valued.

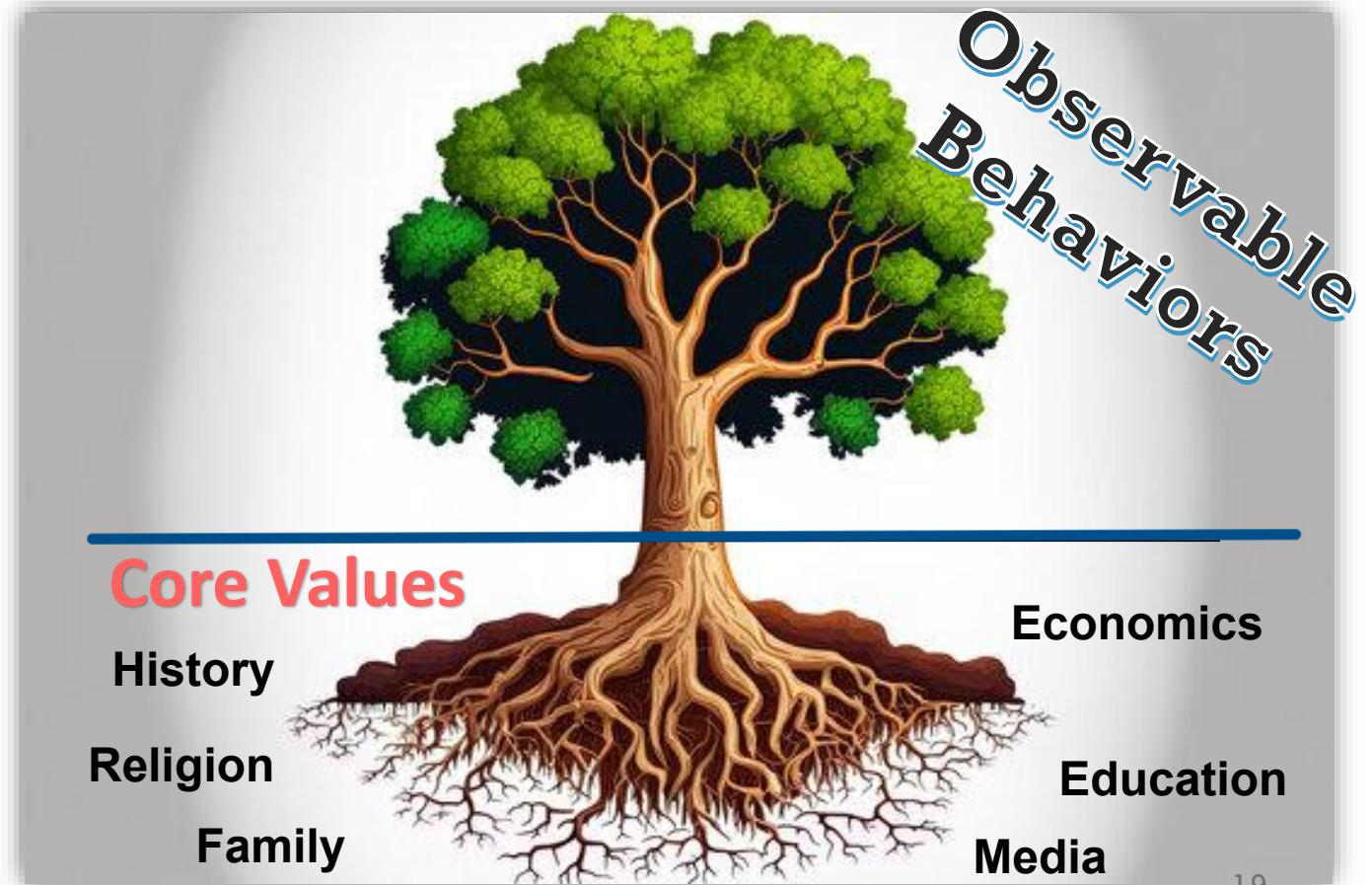
EVERYONE'S HISTORY

Impacts Communication

Core Values serve as our fundamental framework for moral judgements and decision-making

Ask yourself three questions:

1. What do I believe?
2. Why do I believe it?
3. What if I'm wrong?



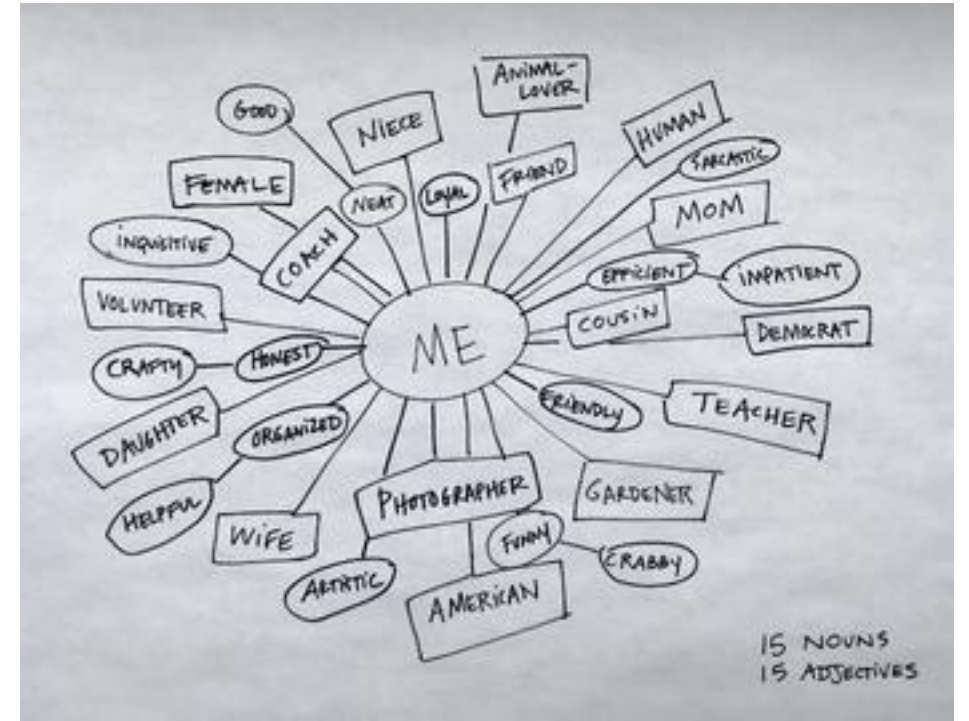
What are we talking about?



Problem-solving



Emotional



Identity

The Matching Principle



Recognize Conversation Shifts

Identifying when conversations move between problem-solving, emotional, and social modes is crucial for effective communication.



Adapt Your Approach

Adjusting your communication style to match the current conversation type leads to greater effectiveness and connection. Ask questions or support the moment someone is in.



Avoid Communication Gaps

Staying in one mode while others shift reduces your impact. Stay flexible to maintain strong communication.



Power of Nonverbal Cues

Types of Nonverbal Signals

Nonverbal communication includes facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, and use of space to express emotions and intentions.

The 7-38-55 Rule

This rule states that body language accounts for 55% of communication impact, emphasizing the power of nonverbal cues.

“I just want whatever works. If a shock collar gets the job done, why not use it?”



“hold my leash”

“they’re using an E-collar”



“the most basic of all human needs
is to understand and be understood.
The best way to understand
people is to listen to them.”

- Ralph Nichols



Are you listening to respond
or understand?

Mirroring



1. Be Genuinely Curious

- Say the mirrored words as if you're asking a question.
- This signals you're wanting to understand not challenge them

2. Keep it SHORT (1-3 words)

- Don't repeat full sentences
- Pick out the last few words or most emotionally charged ones
- This will keep you from feeling like your trying to be a therapist

3. Pause After Mirroring

- Silence is your friend...it gives the other person room to expand and explain further



Looping

4. Now Paraphrase for Understanding

- **Facts** - what happened
 - **Feelings** - how it seems to impact them
- "It sounds like you're [feeling] because [reason]"*

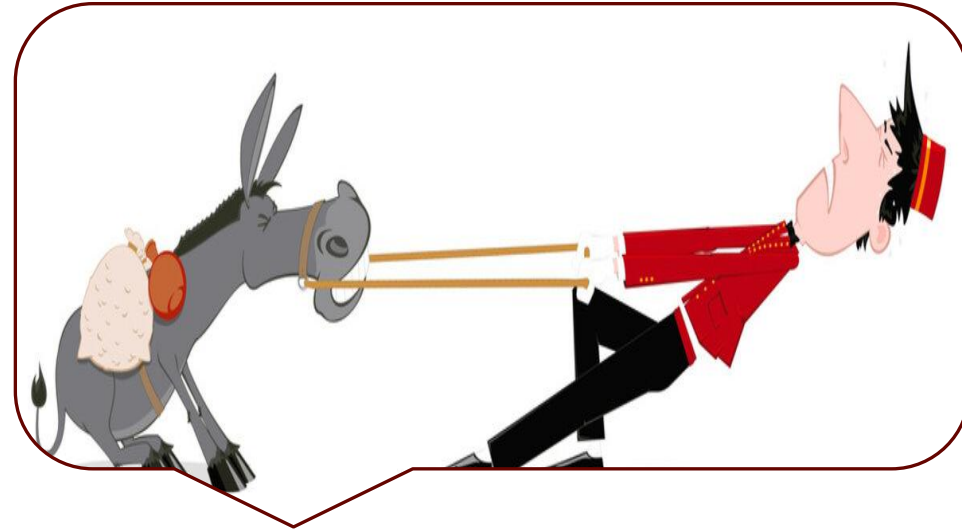
5. Ask for Confirmation

- *"Do I have that right? Is that what you mean?"*
- If they correct you, adjust your phrasing and loop again for confirmation.
- Repeat the loop until they say *"YES, exactly."*

6. Move Forward Together

- Share your perspective (they will be more receptive now)
- Explore solutions collaboratively

Did you know...



Facts Don't Change Minds...

Facts alone rarely influence someone's beliefs or change their minds because changing a belief means changing part of a person's social identity and emotional landscape.

People need to feel safe, respected, and understood before they can reconsider their views.



Boundaries & Self-Care

Develop a network of people you
can confide in



Give yourself some grace - this stuff
is hard



Taking a step back can be beneficial



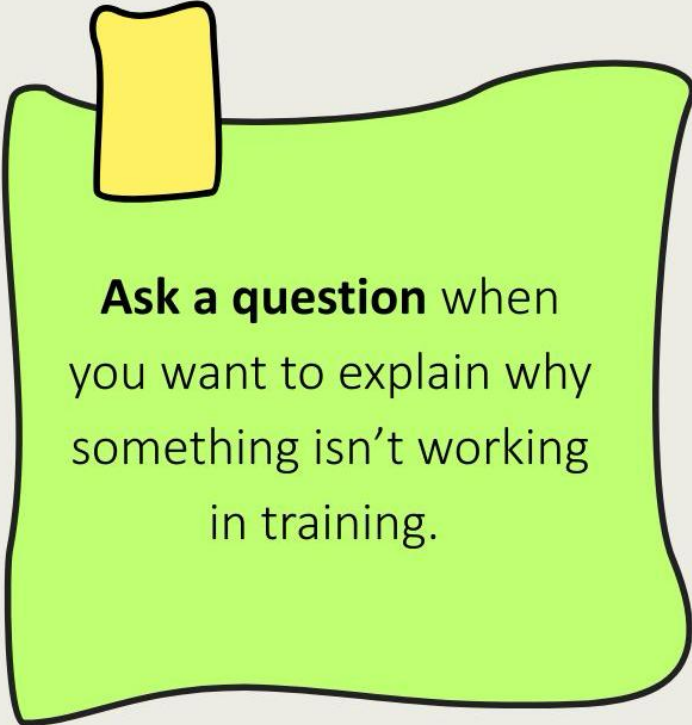
It's okay to let go of a client that
isn't a good fit



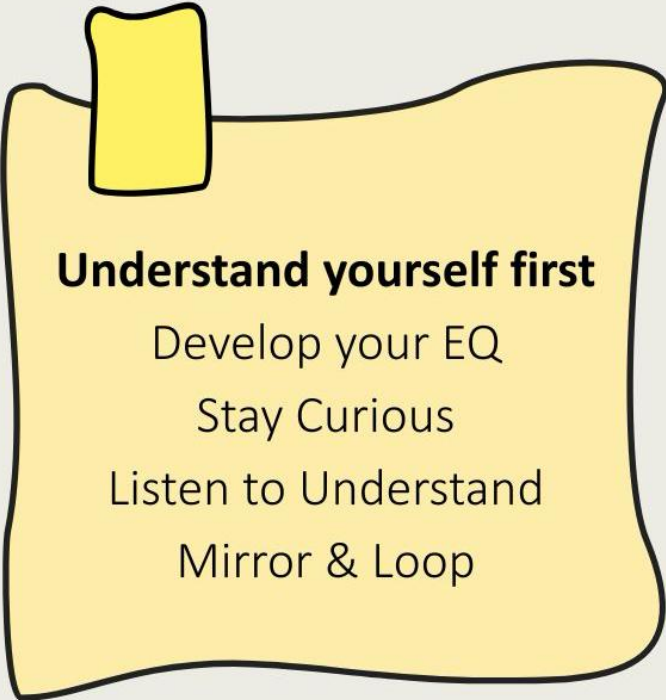
The Wishing Well...

- Not all discussions will end positively, which is okay.
- Practice self-compassion and create a metaphorical wishing well for the things you wish had gone differently.
- Focus on improvement without harsh self-judgment or unrealistic expectations.
- Progress, not perfection!

Takeaways...



Ask a question when
you want to explain why
something isn't working
in training.



Understand yourself first

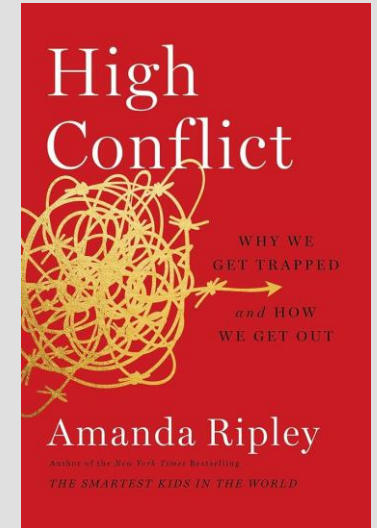
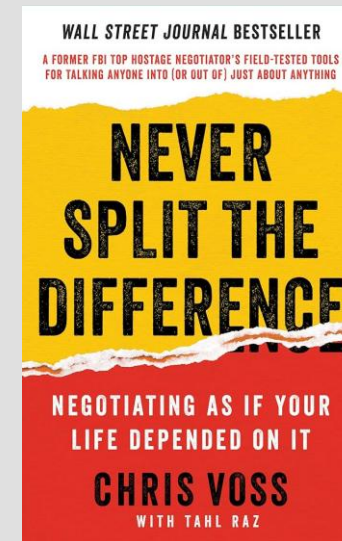
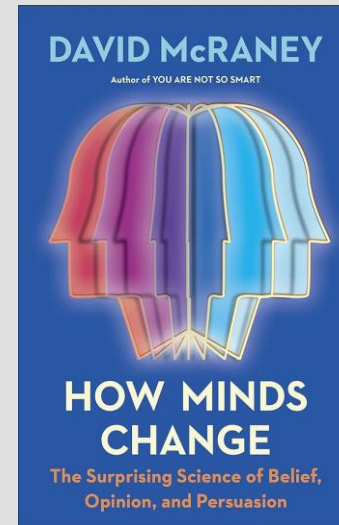
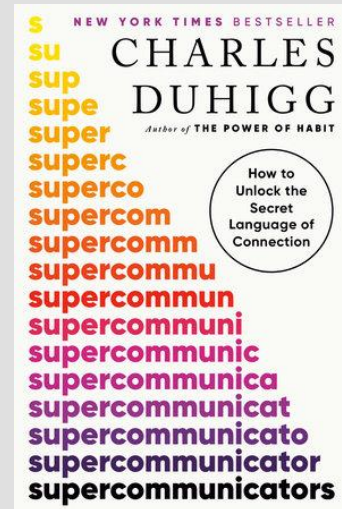
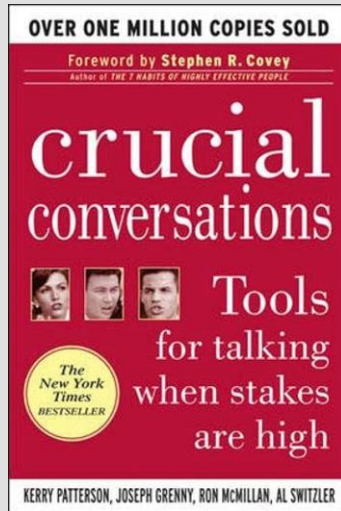
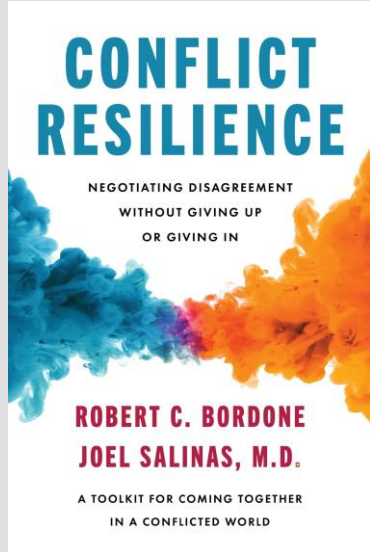
Develop your EQ
Stay Curious
Listen to Understand
Mirror & Loop



Self-Care

Set Boundaries
Create a Wishing Well

Recommended Reading



Northstartraining.info - click For Animal Pros
Email: carm@northstartraining.info

References

AVMA Veterinary Economics Division staff. "The Secret to Happy Clients ." *Dvm360*, vol. 53, no. 5, 22 May 2022, pp. 62–65.

Learn the 5 Conflict Resolution Styles to Handle Disagreements Like a Pro by Bob Bordone. YouTube, uploaded by Bob Bordone, <https://youtu.be/t4oFWOpJCPc>. Accessed July 8, 2025

Brown, B. (2016, November 13). Brene Brown – The Man In The Arena Speech (edited) Video. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/-s6DQrqVHxM>

Daniels, Julie T., et al. "I wish he'd listen: Client-centered interviewing approaches are associated with higher compliance with behavioral modification advice in pet dog owners." *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* , vol. 63, May 2023, pp. 22–30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2023.03.003>.

Duhigg, C. (2024). *Supercommunicators: how to unlock the secret language of connection* (e. g. 1). Random House.

Goleman, D. (2023, May 30). *4 Emotional intelligence skills for handling crises*. <https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/emotional-intelligence-skills-coronavirus-leadership#:~:text=The%20four%20domains%20of%20Emotional,reactivity%20and%20fewer%20unintended%20consequences>.

Grenny, Joseph, et al. *Crucial Conversations*. Third ed., MCGRAW-HILL EDUCATION, 2021.

Hughes, A. (2019, October 19). A small group of prolific users account for a majority of political tweets sent by U.S. Adults *Pew Research Center*.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/10/23/a-small-group-of-prolific-users-account-for-a-majority-of-political-tweets-sent-by-u-s-adults/>

Lasley, Martha. "Difficult Conversations: Authentic Communication Leads to Greater Productivity ." *PuddleDancer Press*, 2005, www.nonviolentcommunication.com/.

Mehrabian, A. (1972). *Nonverbal Communication* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351308724>

Mehrabian, A., & Ferris, S. R. (1967). *Inference of attitudes from nonverbal communication in two channels*. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 31(3), 248–252. <https://doi:10.1037/h0024648>

Oie Osterkamp. (2016, November 13). Brene Brown – The Man In The Arena Speech (edited) Video. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/-s6DQrqVHxM?si=M0zJsdszOC82BELW>

Paulson, S., Davidson, R., Jha, A. and Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013), *Becoming conscious: the science of mindfulness*. *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 1303: 87-104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.12203>

Robertson, Claire, et al. "Inside the funhouse mirror factory: how social media distorts perceptions of norms", 2024. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/kgcrq>
Simon Sinek. "What Makes the Highest Performing Teams in the World | Simon Sinek." YouTube, uploaded by Simon Sinek, 26 Jun. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP9jpxitfb41>

Stein, S. (2023, July 18). *The importance of community*. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-the-wild-things-are/202307/the-importance-of-community#:text=Experiencing%20a%20sense%20of%20belonging,to%20and%20create%20a%20community.>

Willcox, G. (1982). The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 12(4), 274–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378201200411>

Wooten, Sarah, J. (2023, May) *Managing Clients Who Deny Behavior Issues in Their Pet*. Clinicians Brief. https://www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/dog-cat-aggression-behavior-issues-clients-anxiety?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=Online+240513&oly_enc_id=6677B9196245D5A

"Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Communication Model." World of Work, 1 July 2019, worldofwork.io/2019/07/mehrabians-7-38-55-communication-model/.

"How to Use the 7-38-55 Rule to Negotiate Effectively." MasterClass, 7 June 2021, www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-use-the-7-38-55-rule-to-negotiate-effectively.

"Using the Feelings Wheel to Develop Your Emotional Awareness." TherapyHub.eu, 6 Jan. 2023, www.therapyhub.eu/using-the-feelings-wheel-to-develop-your-emotional-awareness/.

Mosunic, Chris. "The Feelings Wheel: Unlock the Power of Your Emotions." Calm, 18 Jan. 2025, www.calm.com/blog/the-feelings-wheel.

"Dei-Eq-Guide.pdf." Hudson County Community College, n.d., www.hccc.edu/abouthccc/resources/documents/dei-eq-guide.pdf.

Gailliot, Amandine, et al. "Cultural Patterns of Moral Cognition: A Review of Moral Reasoning and Judgment in Western and Eastern Cultures." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 12, 2021, PMC8710723[1]. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8710723/>

Israelashvili, Jacob et al. "Different faces of empathy: Feelings of similarity disrupt recognition of negative emotions." *Journal of experimental social psychology* vol. 87 (2020): 103912. <https://doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2019.103912>

Van Bavel, Jay. "How Social Media Warps Your Reality." *Jay Van Bavel Lab Newsletter*, Substack, 29 Jan. 2025, jayvanbavellab.substack.com/p/how-social-media-warps-your-reality