



Adaptive Leadership

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Stanford Leadership Development Program





LEADER



MARTIN
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING SERVICES

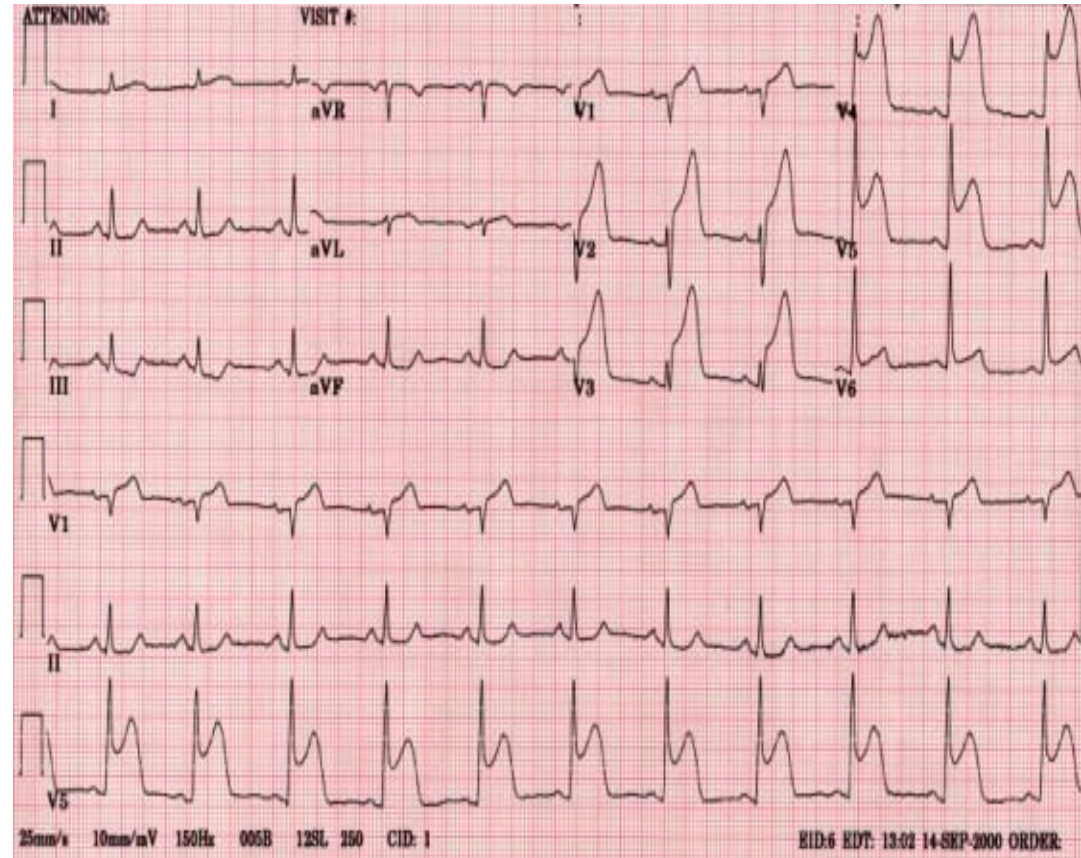
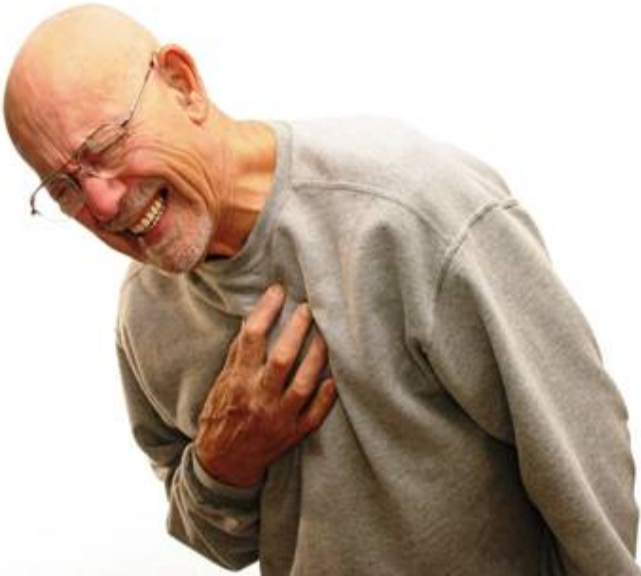


Why Adaptive Leadership?

- Describes what people do
- Describes what people exercising leadership can do if they see differently
- A way of developing a shared language to describe group dynamics
- Describes a way to be an active engaged organizational citizen
- Really resonates with professionals in health care



Technical Problems



Apply abilities that already exist in the system's capabilities

Adaptive Challenges



People deeply and broadly in the organization need to learn new capabilities

Properties of Adaptive Challenges

Wicked Problems

- Gap between way things are and desired state



- Varied points of view



- Requires difficult learning



- Involves facing loss



- New competencies must be developed

- People with problems have problem solving responsibility

- Takes longer than technical work



- Requires trying things

- Generates disequilibrium, distress and work avoidance





Leadership Challenges

Technical work

- Clear answers, minimal uncertainty
- Straightforward, few big choices
- Execute via precise instructions
- Requires hands, feet, mouths
- Focus on task
- Linear, demands precision
- Runs smoothly

Adaptive work



- No clear answers, often high uncertainty
- Time consuming, difficult choices
- Demands lots of conversations
- Requires hearts, eyes and ears
- Focus on people
- Spiral, demands creativity
- Conflict, distress and fear

**Exercising leadership to do
adaptive work
means
disappointing people's
expectations at
a rate they can tolerate.**

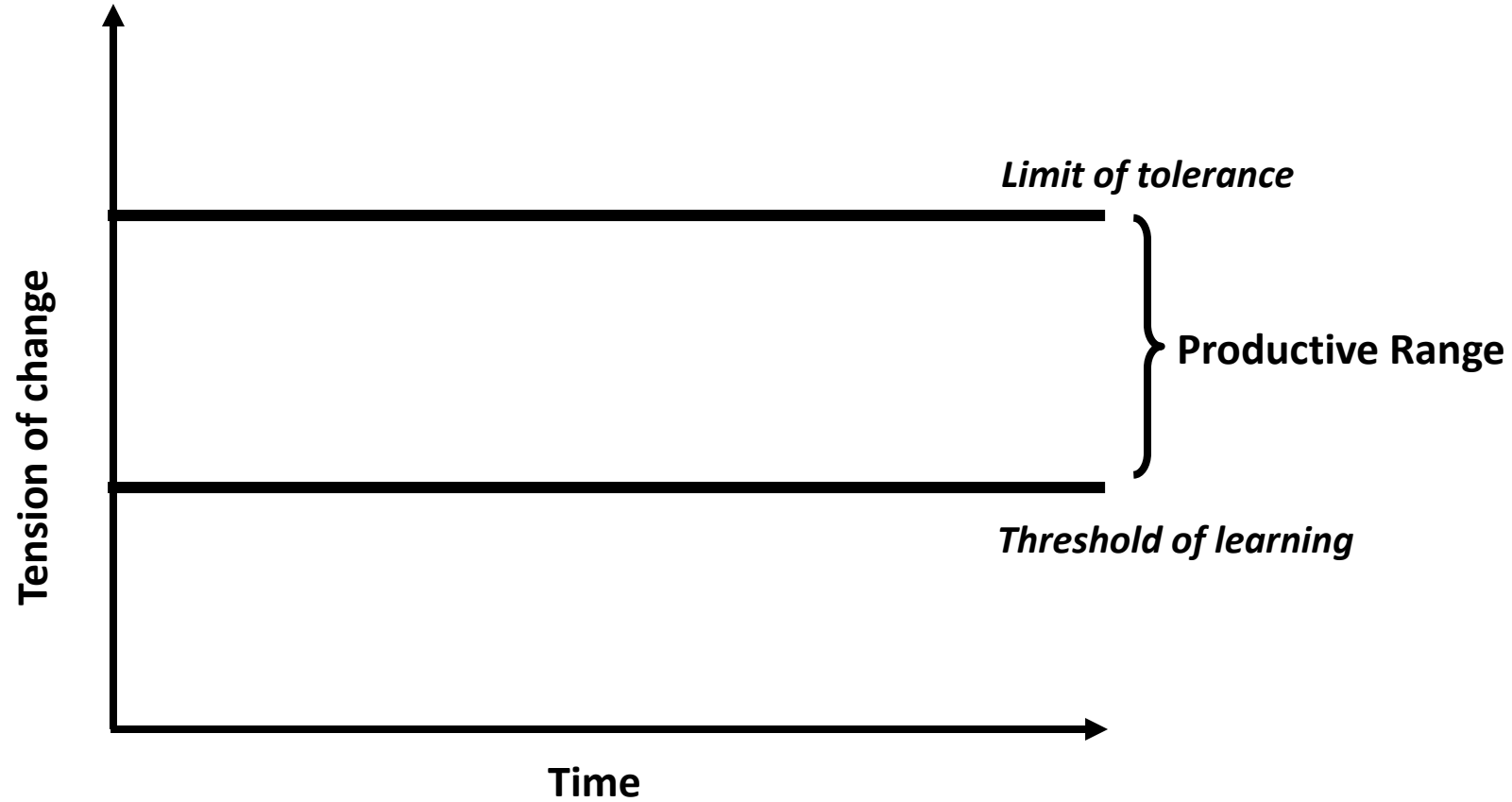
The most common cause of leadership failure is treating an adaptive challenge with a technical fix.



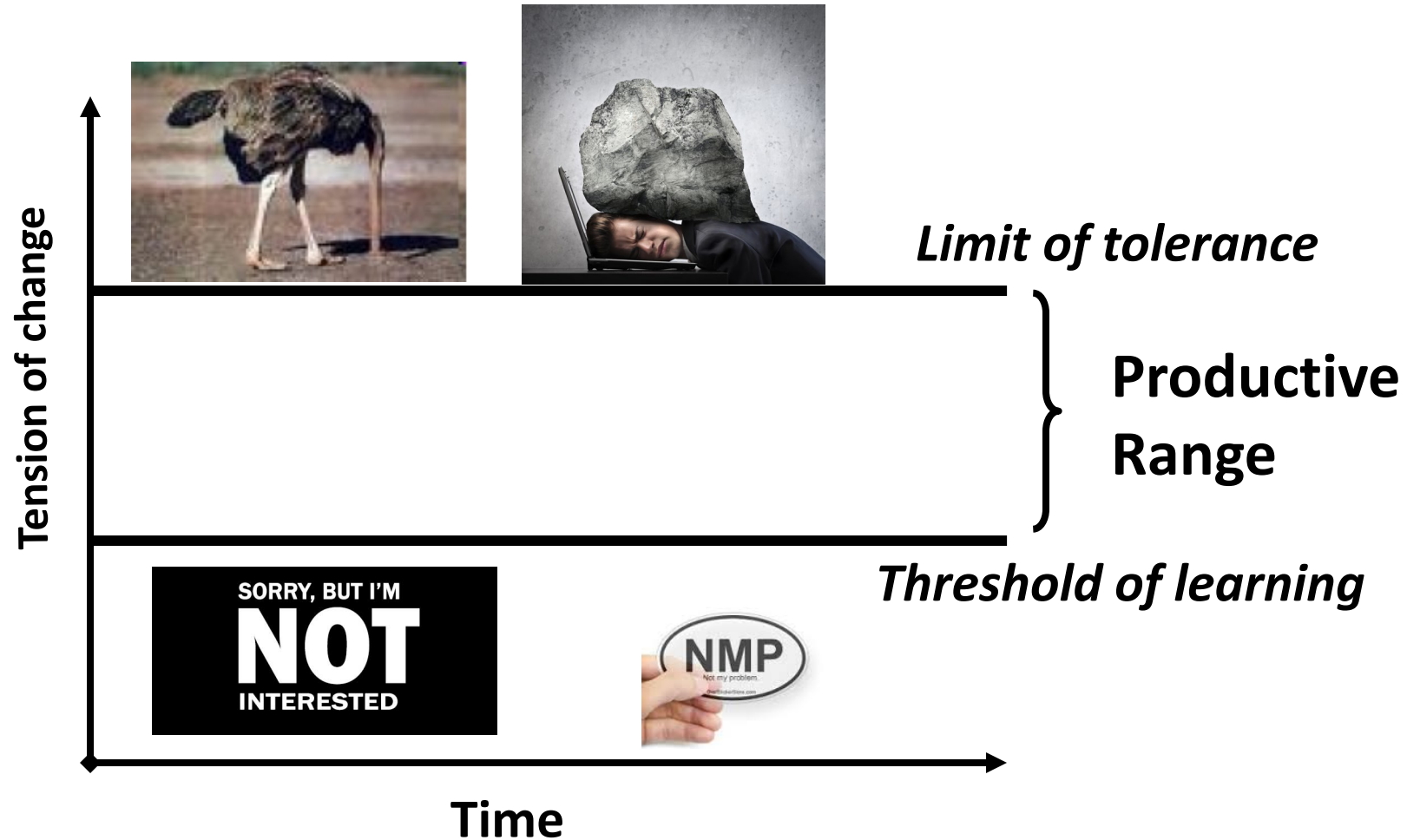
**What are the technical and
adaptive pieces/aspects of your
project?**

Principle

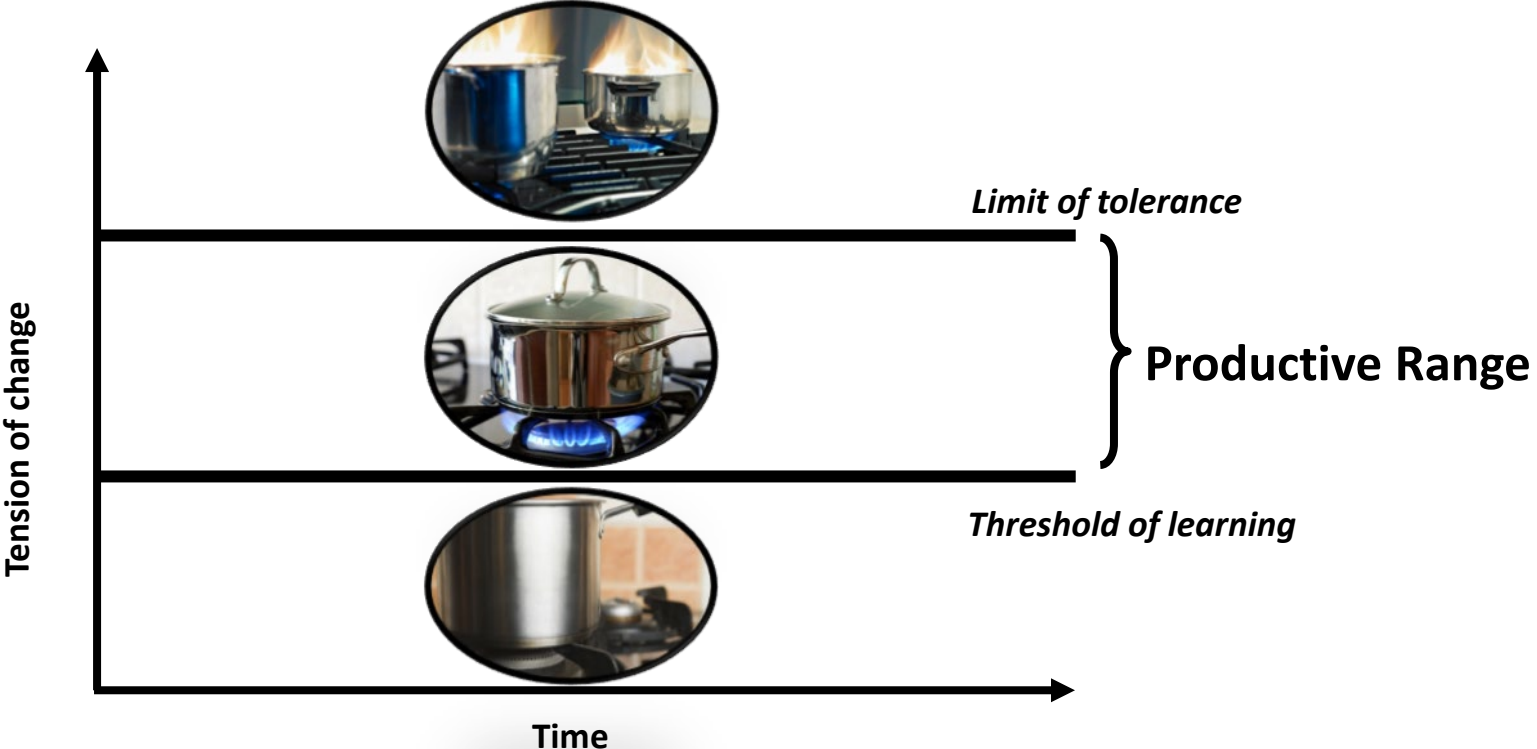
Recognizing and Sensing a Productive Range of Tension



Human Systems

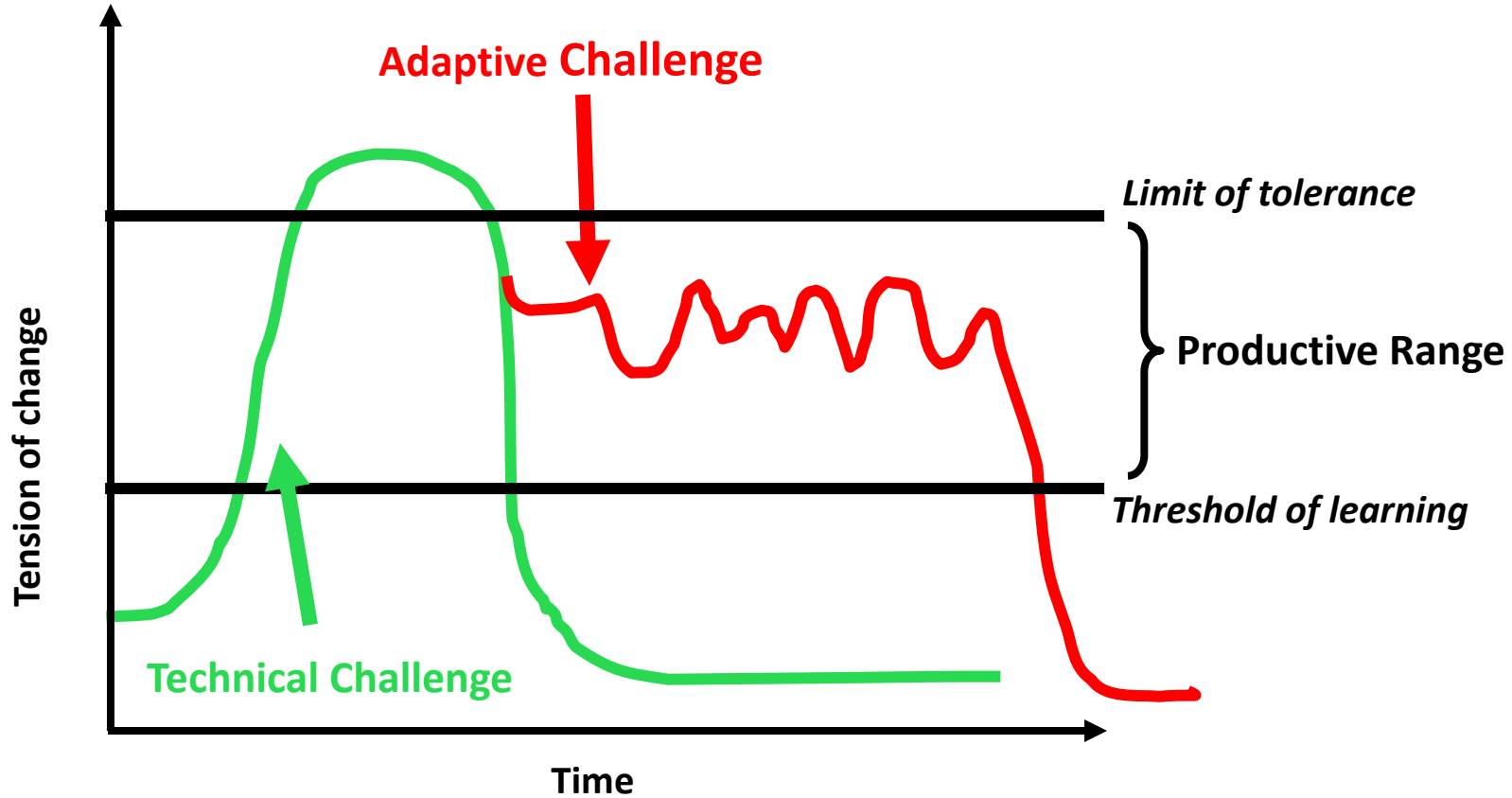


Your Work

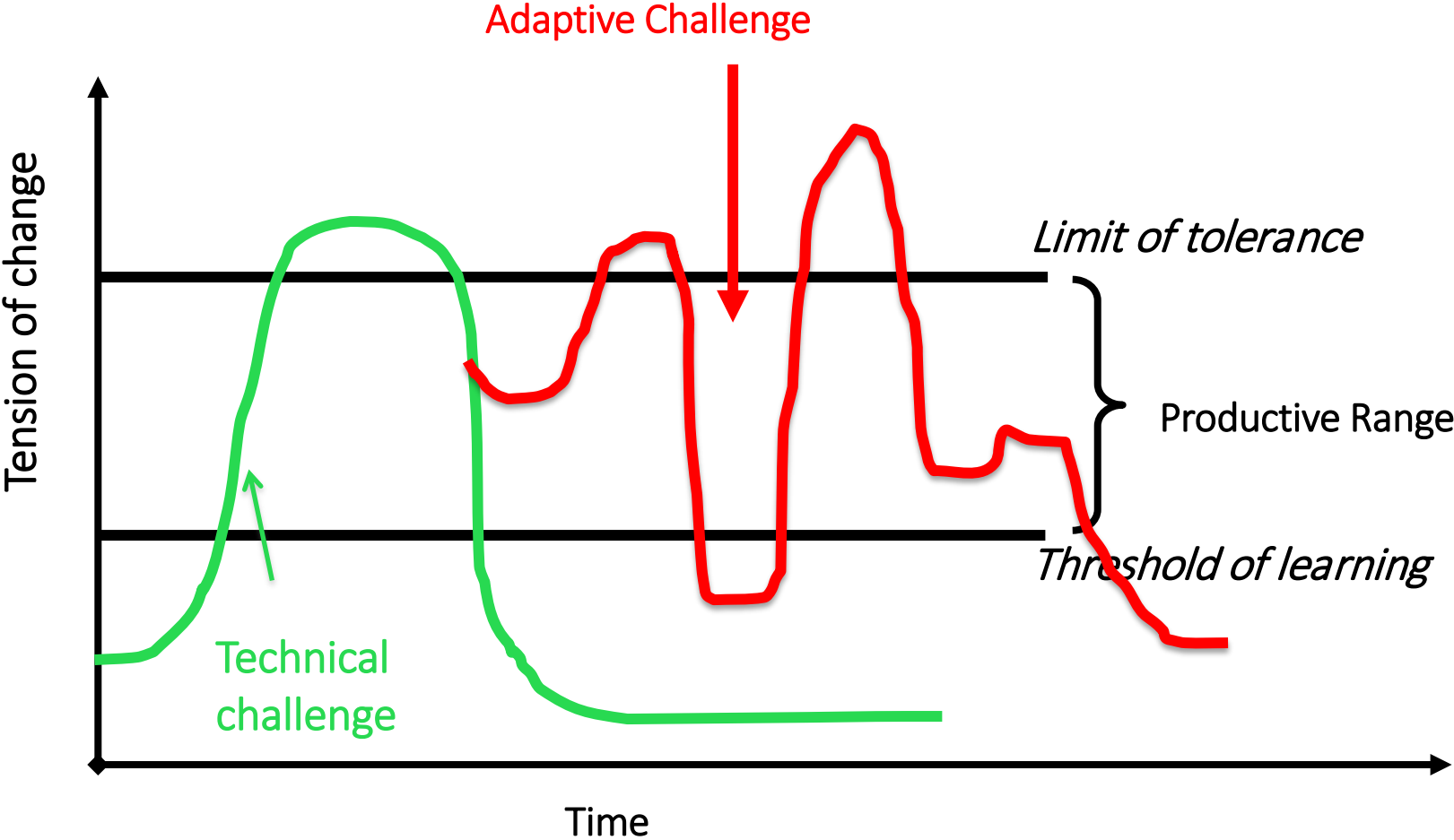


Based on R. Heifetz. and M. Linsky. *Leadership on the Line*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA,2002, pg. 108.

Technical vs. Adaptive Work

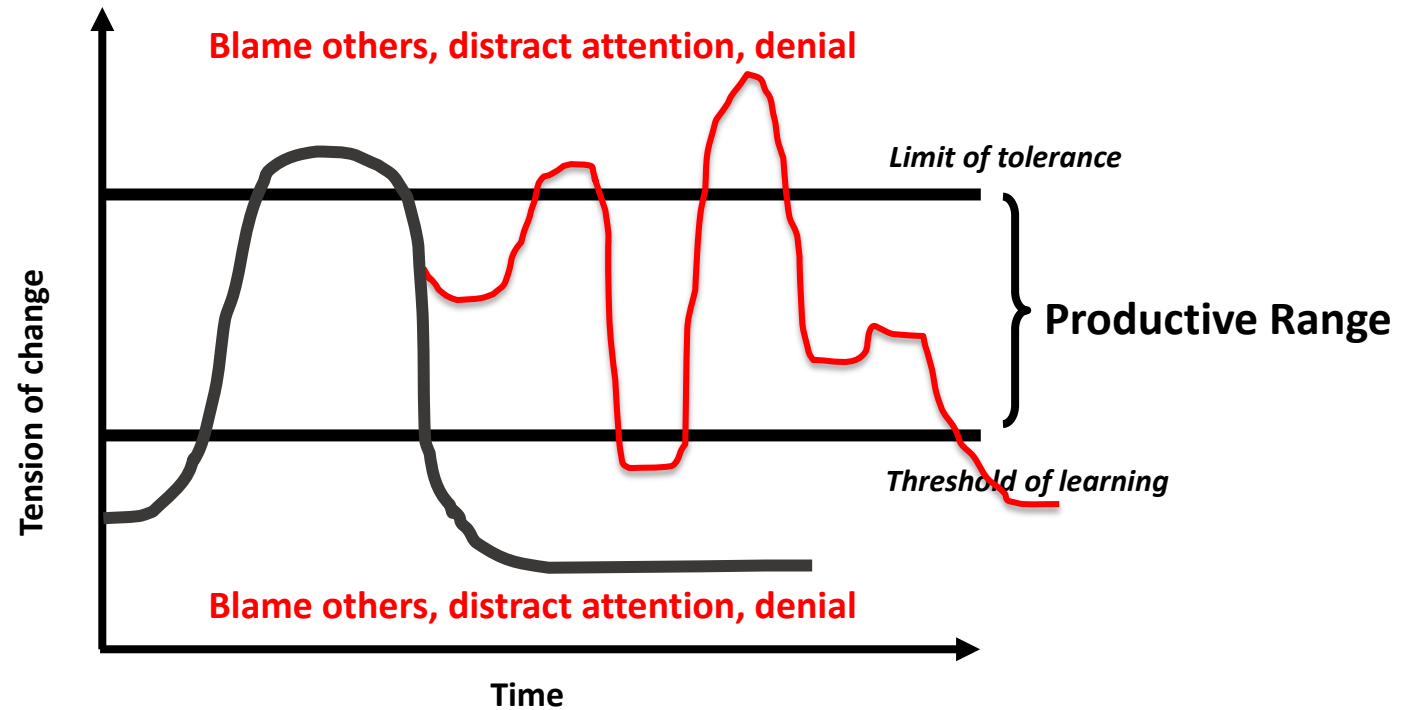


Making Progress on Work



Making progress on your work

What people will not tell you, their behavior will reveal



Work avoidance



- Displacing responsibility

- Attack authority
- Kill the messenger
- Scapegoat
- Discredit others

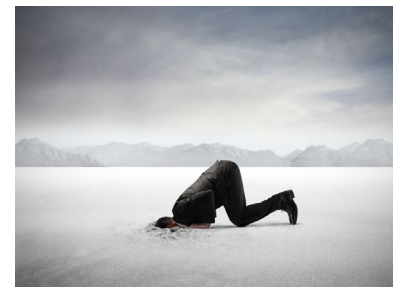


- Distracting attention

- Make the problem too big
- Meetings with only information dump when engagement is needed
- Indignation/picking fights
- Call for more meetings/taskforces

- Denial

- What problem?
- We aren't part of the problem





What kinds of work avoidance have you witnessed?

What kinds of work avoidance have you seen in yourself?



Common belief:
Those who resist don't care



Predictable fundamental human error of attribution

- Other behaves badly because of a character flaw
- I behave badly when I am in a tough situation

Common belief:
Those who resist don't care



Nobody behaves badly from a place of strength

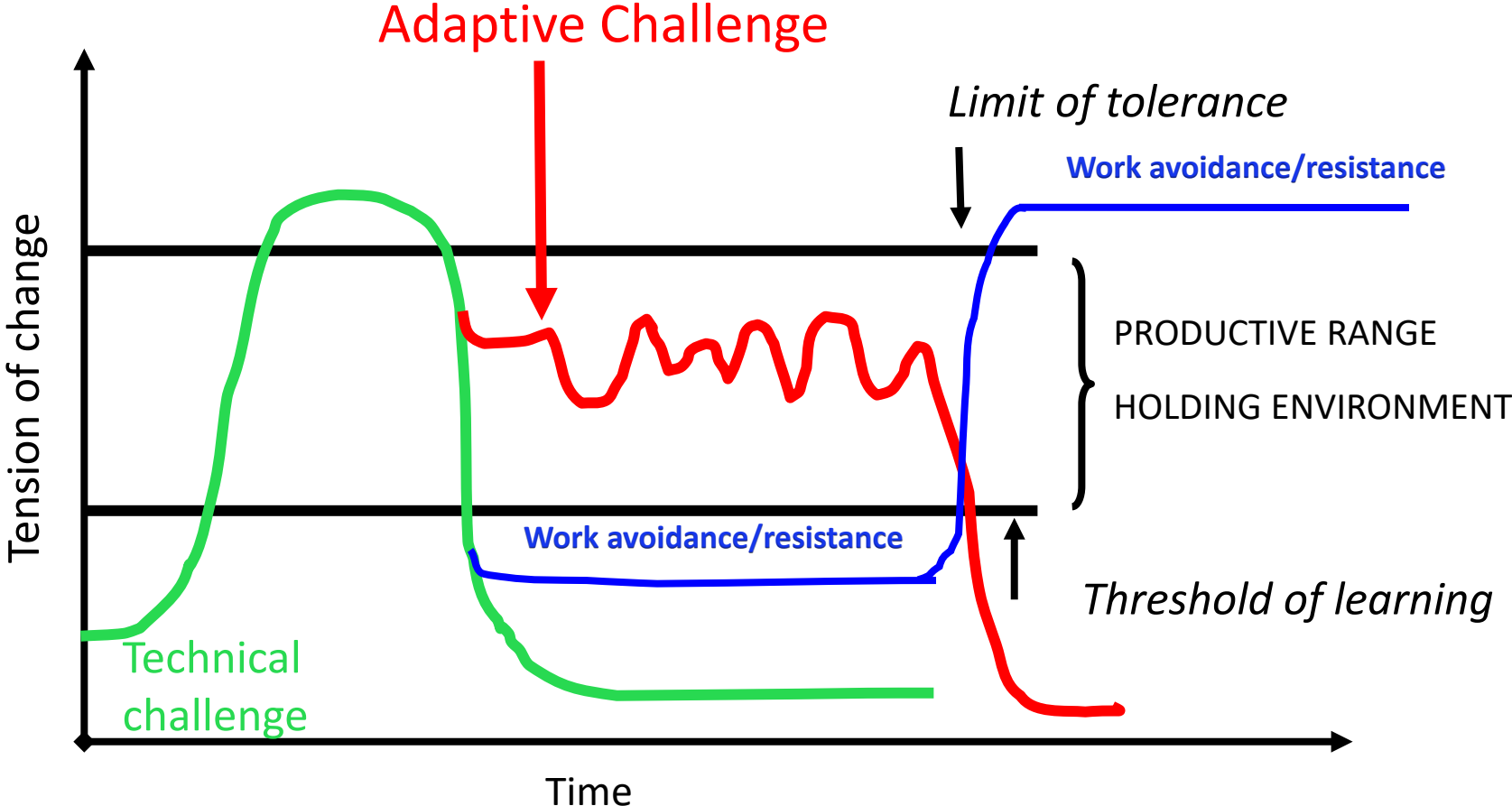
“People do not resist change per se.
People resist loss.”

Recognize Work Avoidance/Resistance as a Signal of Being Outside the Productive Range of Tension



Are You Reading the Signals People are Sending You?

Work Avoidance Signals Being Out of Productive Zone



Resistance

(passive or active)

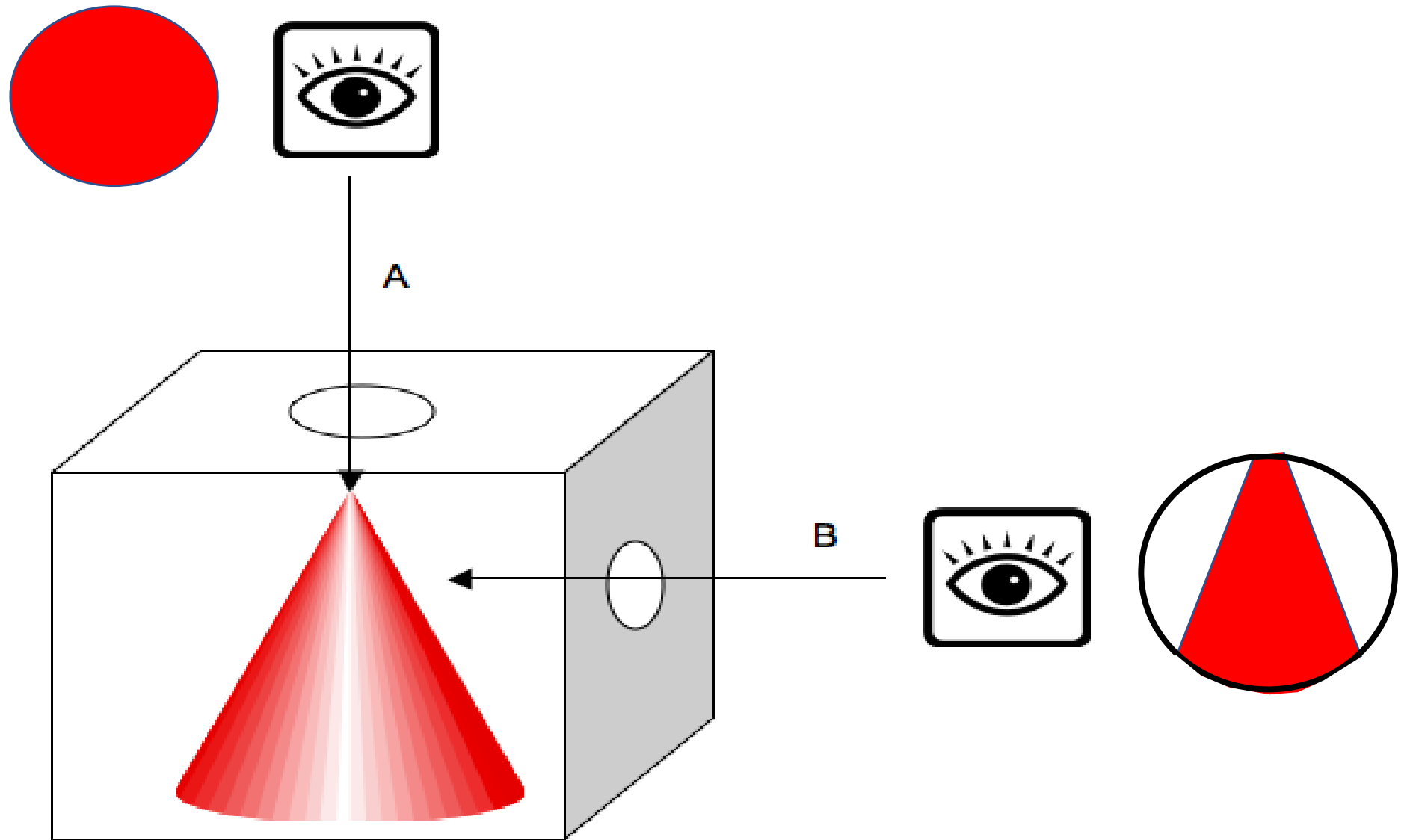


- **A signal** that you are losing influence and are exceeding the amount of loss and uncertainty people can tolerate
- **Clarify** your intentions
- **Refine your approach** to the tensions
- **Try again** to help the group make progress

Practical Approach

- Work closely with those that offer resistance- they're sending you a signal
- Try to understand other people's resistance to change.
- They know something you need to understand!





Courtesy of Judy Brown

How are the people who care about the work reacting to the work?

- Which ones are above the limit of tolerance?

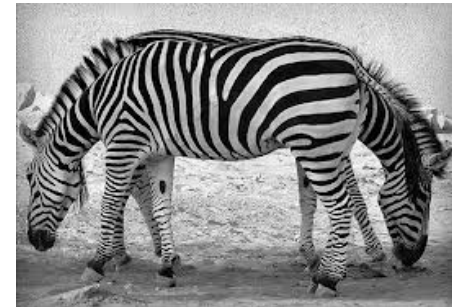
Heat too high

- Which ones are engaged in the work?

Heat is in the zone to keep things cooking

- Which ones are below the level of learning?

Heat too low



Begin to Plot a Strategy

- What do you need to do to make progress?
- What can you do to lower the distress on the stakeholders that are above the limit of tolerance?
- How can you maintain engagement of stakeholders that are currently engaged in trying to make progress?
- What can you do to raise the distress to a productive level for the stakeholders below the level of learning?



Keep an Experimental Mindset

- Exercising leadership requires keeping an experimental mindset
- Work avoidance looks the same when the heat is **too high** **OR** when the heat is **too low**
- Keep rechecking your assumptions
 - What looks like laziness may be exhaustion
- If what you try makes things worse try the opposite



Lower the Heat



- Validate feelings, acknowledge loss
- Simplify and clarify
- Restore, add, or reallocate resources

Raising the Heat



- Raise the standards
- Increase accountability
- Change the task to something more motivating
- Refocus on higher, more widely shared and yet compelling purpose

Principle

There is a difference between the role/use of authority and the exercise of leadership.



Authority \neq
Leadership



Key Practices

- Pay attention
- Set a great example
- Celebrate and learn from what is going well
- Talk about why you think this is important
- Ask questions
- Listen



Developing Influence

- Help them see what's in it for them
- Earn trust
- Speak to their perception of cost
- Acknowledge their perception of risk



Adapted from C. Dwyer, *The Shifting Sources of Power and Influence*, Amer Coll of Phys Executives, 1992

Build Up Your Emotional Bank Account

- Understand the individual
 - Seek to understand the way you want to be understood
- Attend to the little things
 - Be kind and courteous
- Keep commitments
- Clarify expectations
- Personal integrity
 - Walk your talk
 - Be loyal to those not present
- Sincerely apologize when you make a “withdrawal”



People will trust you when you fulfill their expectations (their wants and needs).

Your balance increases in their emotional bank account



People will distrust you when you fail to fulfill their expectations (their wants and needs).

Your balance decreases in their emotional bank account

When the going gets tough...



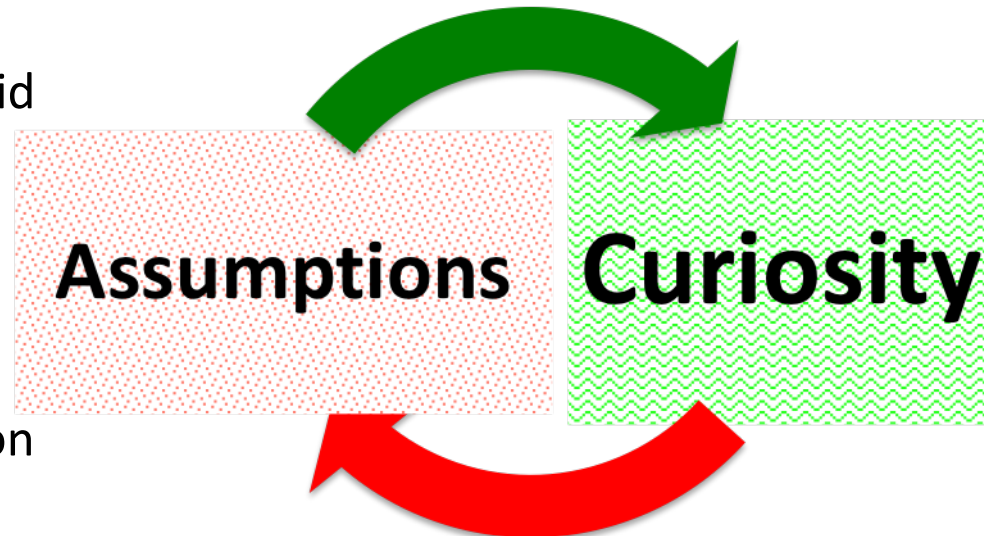
...turn to *wonder*

Parker Palmer

- Turn **off** assumptions

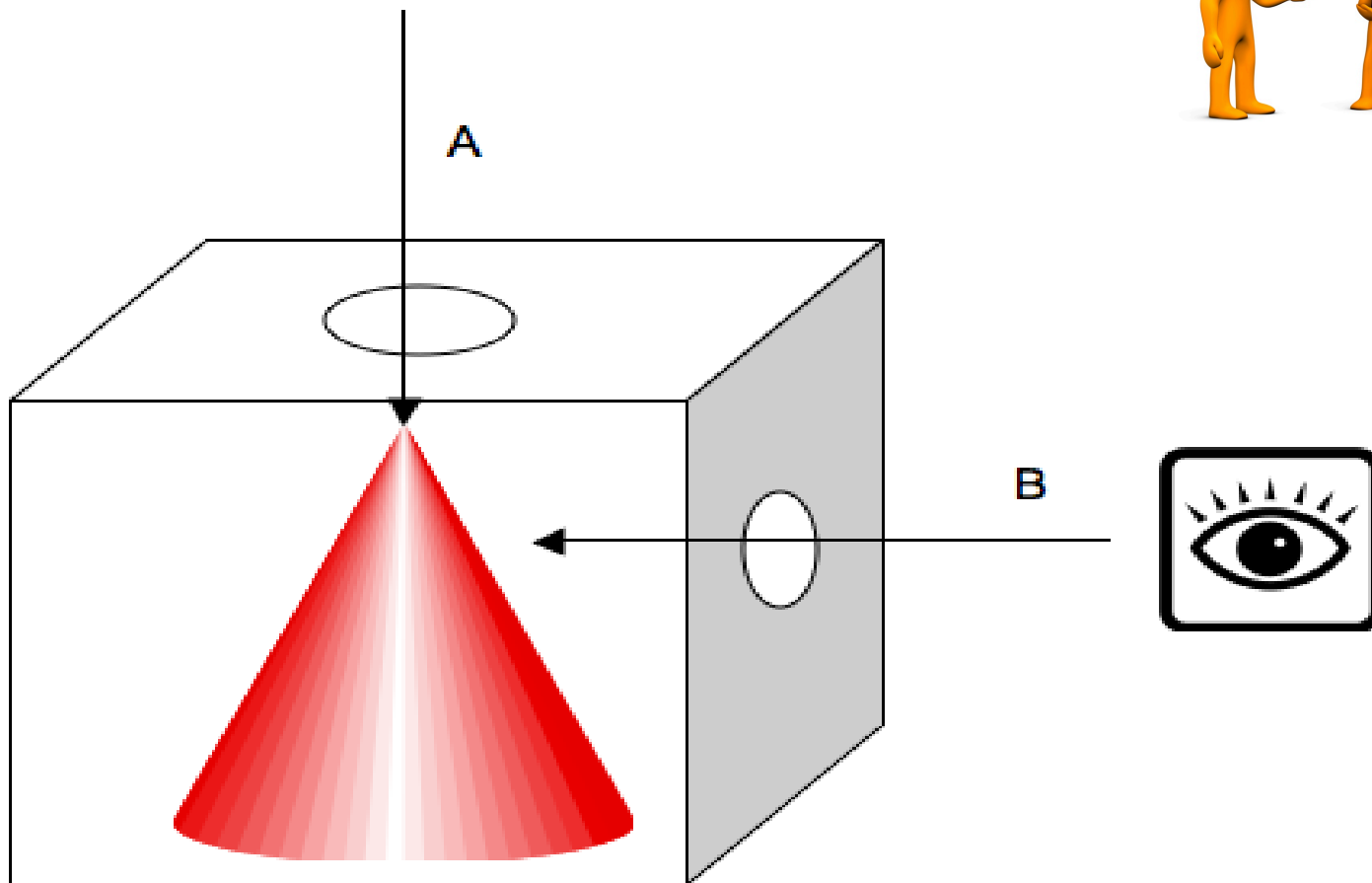
- Turn **on** curiosity

- “Can you tell me more?”
- “I wonder how what I just said landed for you?”
- “I’m curious about what’s really going on.”
- “I wonder if there’s a better way?”
- “What might the other person be really thinking and feeling?”
- “I wonder what part I’m playing in this situation?”





Be curious



Courtesy of Judy Brown

Ask a More Useful Question to Build Relationships

Low Value Inquiry	High Value Inquiry
Do you understand what I am saying?	
Don't you agree? Wouldn't it be better if...?	
Did you do that because of X or Y?	
Why can't you do X?	
Why didn't you just tell me?	

McArthur, Philip. "[Advocacy and Inquiry](#)"

Adapted from The Encyclopedia of Action Research, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi:

Sage Publications, in press

Interpret Resistance and Practice Compassion

Nobody misbehaves from a place of strength

When you don't know what to try first, lower the heat

- Validate feelings, acknowledge loss
- Simplify and clarify
 - Address the technical aspects
 - Break the problem into parts
- Restore, add, or reallocate resources
 - Temporarily reclaim responsibility for tough issues
 - Give your attention
 - Take stock of what is available
 - Allot more time, enrich knowledge and skills



Give What You Need

- Empathy
- Appreciation
- Recognition
- Honest feedback
- Respect
- A sense of connection to meaningful work



Use Yourself Differently

- Pay attention
- Set a great example
- Celebrate and learn from what is going well
- Talk about why you think this is important
- Ask questions
- Listen
- **Reflect in action**



Reflect in Action

Get on the Balcony and in the Dance



Perspective

Getting on The Balcony and The Dance Floor

A Basic Leadership Skill

- Interpreting reality
 - Ability to stop the action
 - Opens you to multiple possibilities
 - Wider differential diagnosis
 - Action based on a diagnosis
 - Test your interpretations
 - Even when you decide to take action - it is an experiment
- Think about your thinking


Balcony AND Dance Floor

Over focus on Balcony



Over focus on Dance floor





“Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good.”

Malcolm Gladwell

Leading Adaptive Change

A wooden ladder is positioned diagonally, leaning against a bright, glowing light source at the top of a dark, tunnel-like structure. The light creates a strong beam of illumination that highlights the ladder's rungs and the surrounding walls, creating a sense of depth and direction. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and forward movement.

- **What is the work?**
- **Who cares about the work?**
- **How are people who care about the work reacting to it?**
- **What do I do next?**



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Thank you!

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