

NaBITA

# Difficult Conversations: Theory and Skill Development

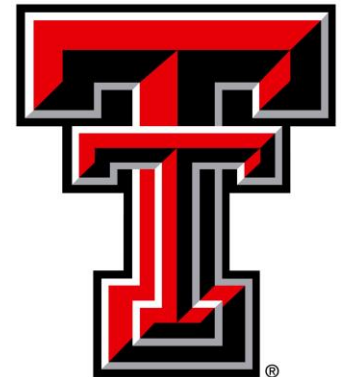


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*"It was a party school."*

Introduction

Change Theory, REBT, Covey

Counseling Skills, Rogers

Advanced Motivational Interviewing

# Introduction

- How do we manage difficult conversations with students to improve the likelihood of a change in his or her behavior?
- What are some techniques we can use to address the range of behaviors we encounter that challenge faculty and staff to stay focused on a solution?













**CollegHumor**

















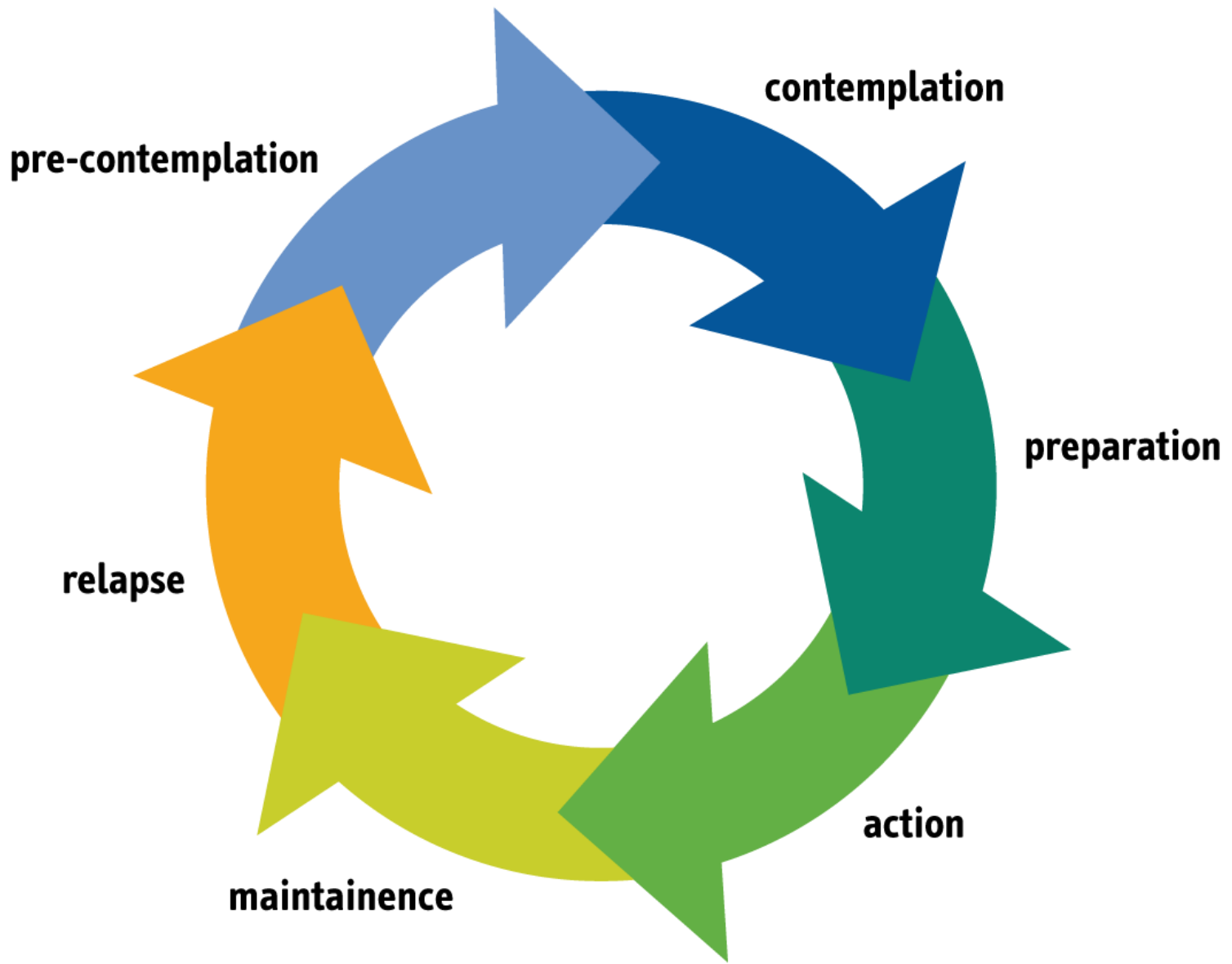








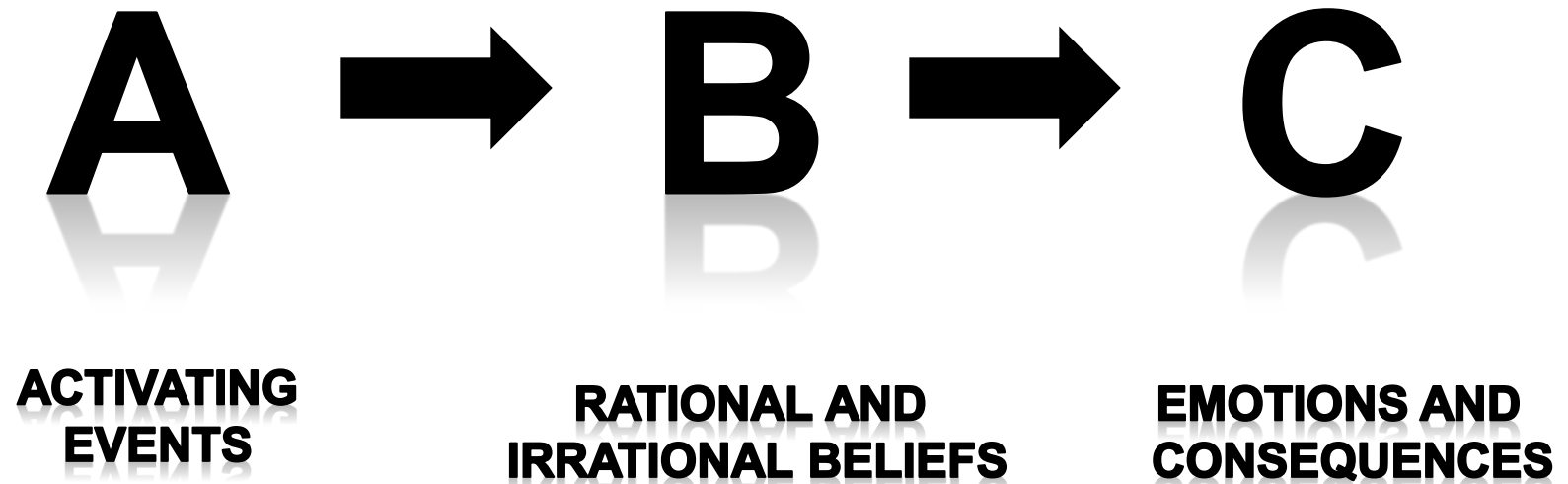




**Transtheoretical Model of Change**  
Prochaska & DiClemente



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey



A= cause of stress, activating event

B= belief, your interpretation

C= consequence, your reaction



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

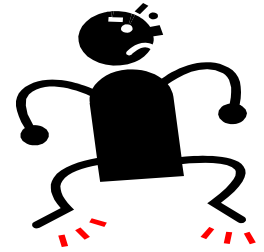
- A: A student comes into your office upset and yelling about a grade he received on an exam
- B: You are annoyed he has interrupted your day and are frustrated with the rude intrusion
- C: You tell him he needs to schedule an appointment to talk about this problem and hint that “if he did the work he was supposed to, he wouldn’t have created this situation he finds himself in now”

# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- Our reactions become so familiar we don't think about them.
- These “automatic reactions” are simply bad habits.

# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

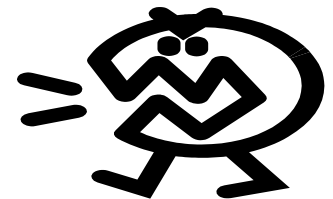
If you magnify an activating event such as...



- Rude or disrespectful behavior
- Student demands your immediate attention
- 1 or 2 poor appointments out of 30

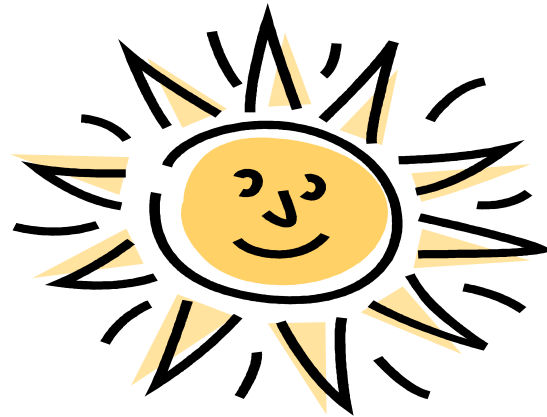
You also magnify your stress

- You become upset and uncomfortable
- Your thinking becomes muddled
- Your frustration and stress increases



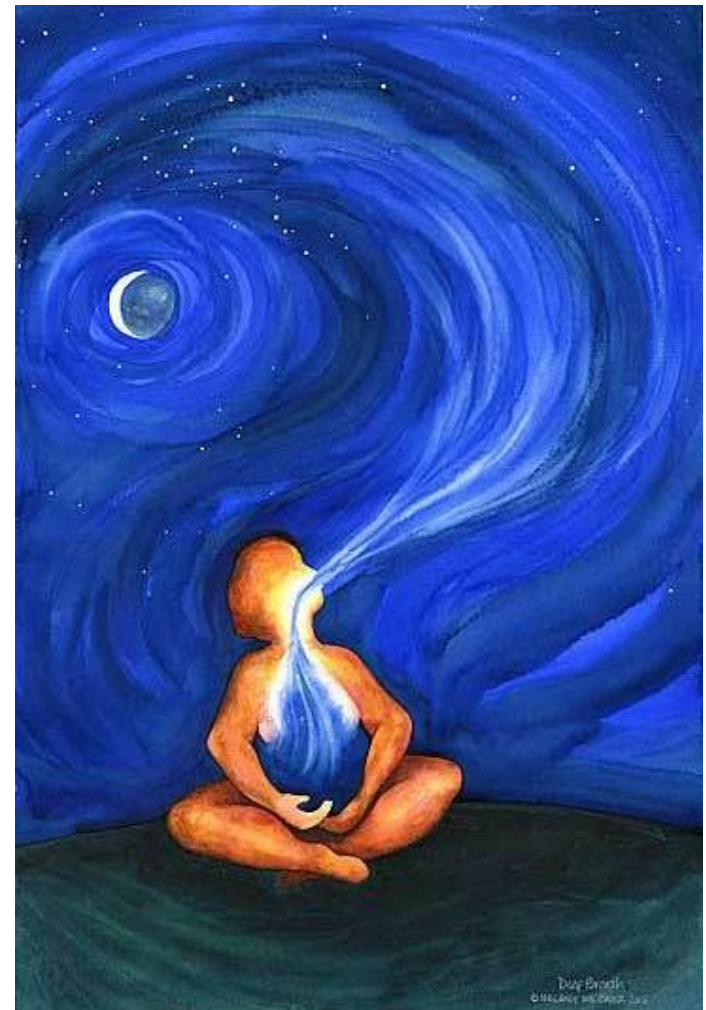
# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- Instead, if you minimize an activating event
  - You are calmer and at ease
  - You think more rationally and clearly
  - You are better able to solve problem
  - You eliminate the source of your stress



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- How do you remain calm when experiencing an activating event?
  - Recognize the old habit taking over
  - Stop, take a deep breath, remain calm
  - Try an alternate interpretation



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- **Step 1:** Find the good in a bad situation



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- **Step 2:** Control your inner dialogue
  - “These students aren’t like other ones I’ve worked with. They can’t seem to get it.”

## **INSTEAD:**

- “Each person is different. I’ll have to find another way to have them understand the content.”

# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- **Step 3: Avoid the blame game**
  - It's natural to want to blame other people for the bad things that happen to us.
  - But what we really are saying to ourselves is we aren't in control of our lives.
  - Instead, accept responsibility for things that are in our control.



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- **Step 4:** Shift your focus forward
  - From- “what was, and can’t be changed.”
  - To- “what is, and what can be done.”
  - Don’t wallow in self pity; look for solutions.



# Change Theory, REBT, Covey

- **Step 5:** Keep your problems in perspective
  - View current difficulties as temporary setbacks rather than semester long events.
  - Put problems aside at the end of the day and tackle them fresh at the start of the next one.
  - Try to see the humor in a situation.
  - Expect both ups and downs; Don't expect your day to always be wonderful..



## 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Stephen Covey)

**1**

### **Be Proactive**

(create environment, choose response before problems start)

**2**

### **Begin with the End in Mind**

(create cognitive mindset, what is the vision, what is the habit)

**3**

### **Put First Things First**

(application of mindset, habit in action, short-term goals)

# Stephen Covey: 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

**4**

## **Think Win-Win**

(achievements depend on cooperation, working together)

**5**

## **Understand then be Understood**

(diagnosis first, then prescribe)

**6**

## **Synergize**

(the whole is greater than the sum of its parts)

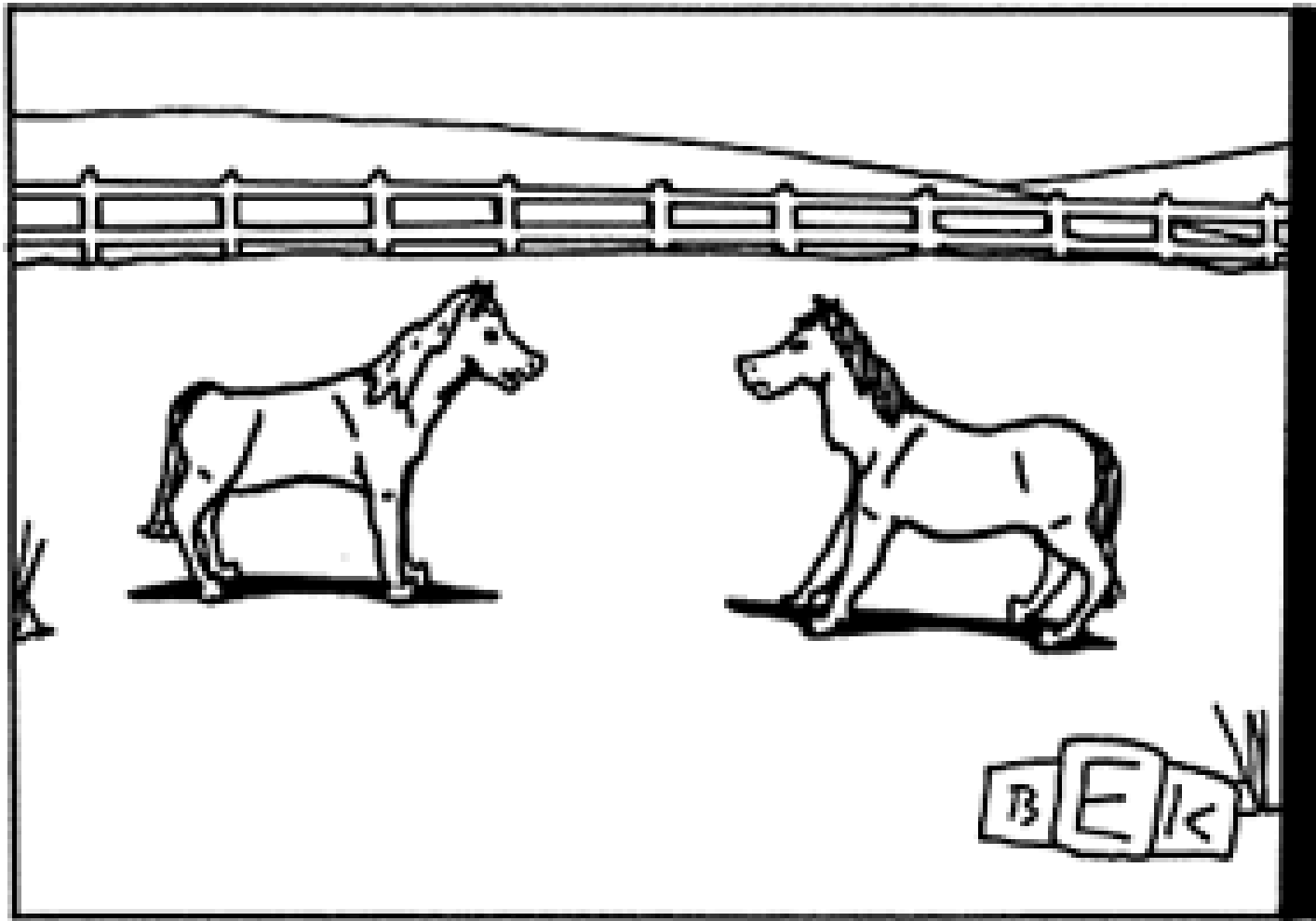
**7**

## **Sharpen the Saw:**

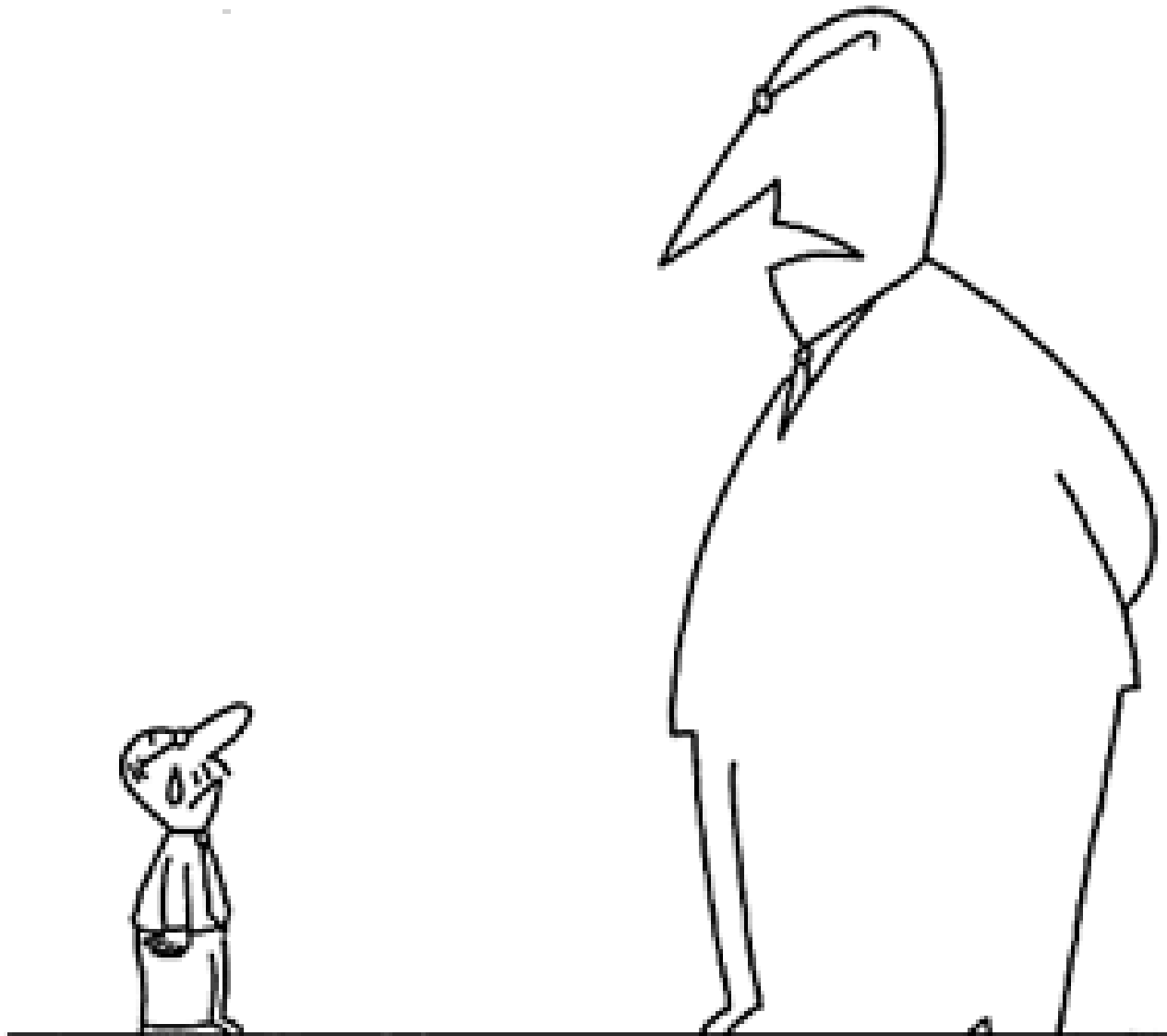
(maintain and renew)

# Counseling Skills

**Developing counseling skills...**



*“Really, only you can tell yourself to giddyup.”*

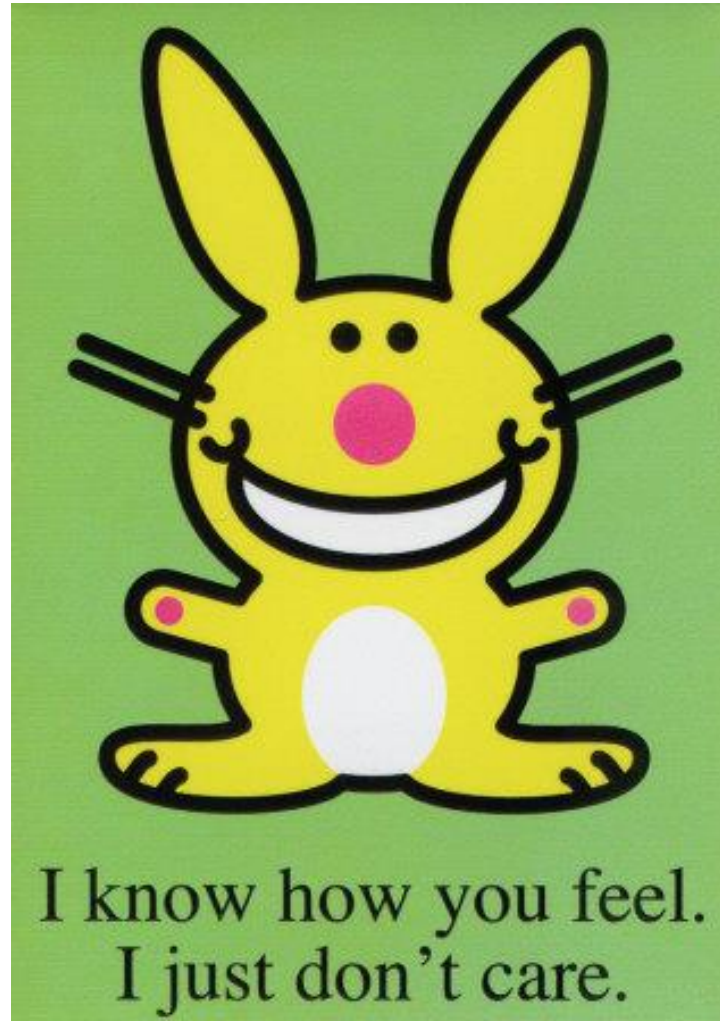


*C. Zornetti*

*“Is that one of the emotions people talk about?”*

# Counseling Skills

## Active Listening





# Counseling Skills

## Simple Reflection



# Counseling Skills

## Summary Reflection



# Counseling Skills

## Creating Dissonance



# Counseling Skills

## Reframe



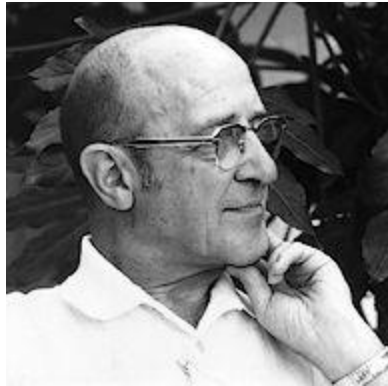


*"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."*



*"I love you. We all love you. Now throw some strikes."*

# Counseling Skills

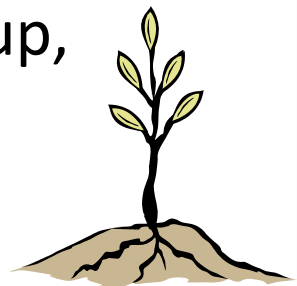


## Overview of Rogers/Person Centered Counseling

- Humanistic Counseling “Core Concepts”
  - Genuineness and Congruence
  - Unconditional Positive Regard
  - Empathy and perceptions of empathy

# Counseling Skills

“I remember in my boyhood, the bin in which we stored our winter’s supply of potatoes was in the basement, several feet below a small window. The conditions were unfavorable, but the potatoes would begin to sprout—pale white sprouts, so unlike the healthy green shoots they sent up when planted in the soil in the spring. But these sad, spindly sprouts would grow 2 or 3 feet in length as they reach towards the distant light of the window. But under the most adverse circumstances, they were striving to become. Life would not give up, even if it could not flourish ...”





# Counseling Skills

“The clue to understanding their behavior is that they are striving, in the only ways that they perceive as available to them, to move toward growth, toward becoming. To healthy persons, the results may seem bizarre and futile, but they are life’s desperate attempt to become itself. This potent constructive tendency is an underlying basis of the person-centered approach.”



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## **Motivational Interviewing involves:**

- Expressing Empathy
- Developing Discrepancy
- Avoiding Argumentation
- Rolling with Resistance
- Supporting Self-Efficacy



I HAVE  
NOTHING  
TO DECIDE  
EXCEPT MY  
GENIUS

# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Express Empathy

- Ask exploratory, open-ended questions (think first date)
- Have a burning curiosity for the person
- Avoid judgmental statements
- Stay in the moment, don't rush to solution
- Accept them were they are with their problems



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Develop Discrepancy

- Identify parts of the plan that aren't working
- Not judgmental, but helping them see the situation accurately
- Look for logical problems in the plan
- Ask clarifying questions to explore
- Present contrary information in the proper way, at the proper time
- “What is it you don't like about that...”



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Roll with Resistance

- Partner with the person and move with them rather than against them
- Don't take the bait. Make it a game of catching them setting a trap for you
- Identify those times where a person has a plan but the plan won't work
- New ways of thinking about the problem





# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Avoid Argumentation

- Actively avoid pairing off against them
- Not possible if your 'goat is got' or buttons are pushed
- Avoid having them admit or accept anything
- Instead---use counseling skills
  - Active listening
  - Simple reflection
  - Summary reflection



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

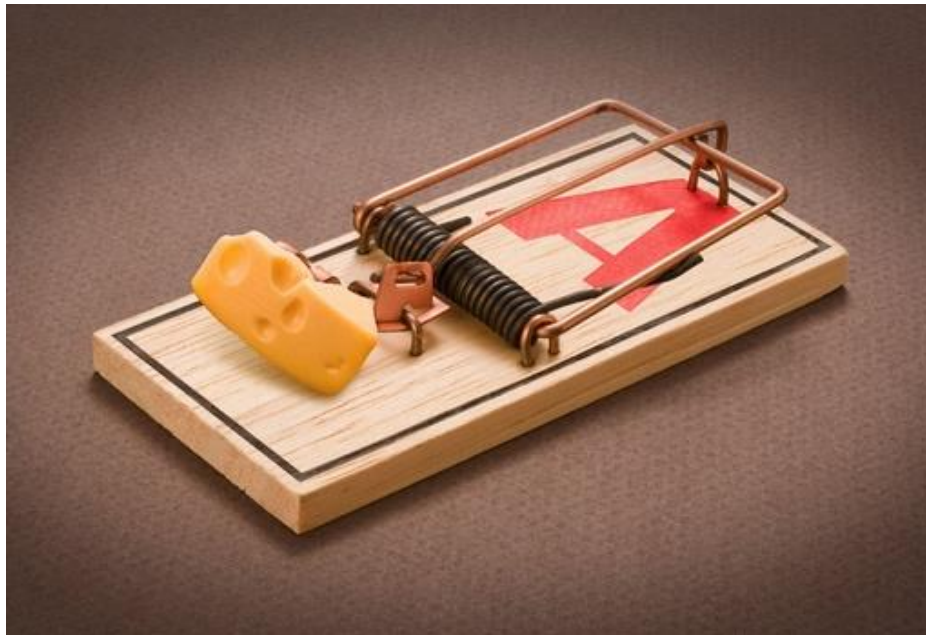
## Support Self-Efficacy

- Catch them doing well
- Look for a positive frame to their story
- Find ways to encourage hope, optimism, or even self-confidence

# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

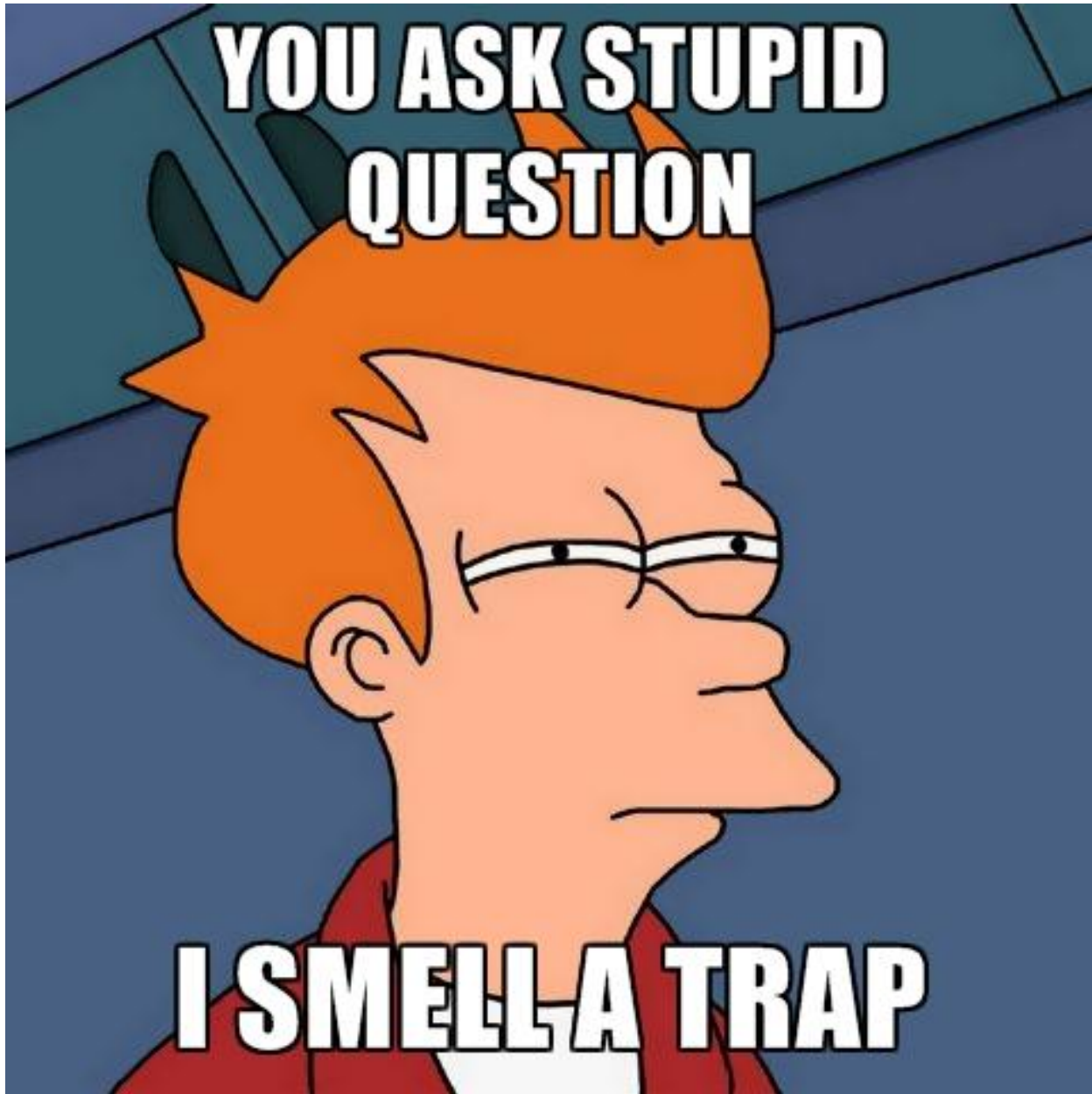
## Traps

- These are the traps you can unwittingly step on causing an explosion rather than a solution



**YOU ASK STUPID  
QUESTION**

**I SMELL A TRAP**



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Question/Answer Trap

- You fall into a pattern of question/answer, question/answer
- Fosters dependence rather than self-reliance
- Consider the 'teach a man to fish' idea






# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Confrontation/Denial Trap

- You fall into a pattern of back and forth argument around an issue with no movement toward resolution
- Identify the 'yes, buts'
- Here look to shift focus toward a potential solution

A meme featuring Woody and Buzz Lightyear from the movie Toy Story. Woody is on the left, looking slightly concerned. Buzz is on the right, wearing his green and purple space suit and holding a red marker, looking excited and pointing upwards. The background is a simple room with a door and a blue wall.

**EXPERTS**

**EXPERTS EVERYWHERE**

# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Expert Trap

- You become the fountain of all answers for the person on the line
- The person may only half-heartedly commit to change without fully understanding how they should approach the problem in question
- Leads to repeat calls and dependency
- Be wary about giving a simple answer before fully exploring the problem



# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Labeling Trap

- You end up seeing the person only one way---as difficult, a headache, frequent flyer, problem or hassle
- Fosters an us vs. them attitude that leads to a lack of connection and or moving forward
- Catch yourself if you use an objectifying label. Be aware of those times where dread a call

**DON'T "ASSUME"**

**ANYTHING**

# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Premature Focus Trap

- You end up focusing too quickly on the problem they initially present before fully understanding what the issues are
- Use reflection to make sure you fully understand the problem at hand
- Be patient early on in the conversation





# Advanced Motivational Interviewing

## Blaming Trap

- The person ends up looking for someone to take the blame for their problems or difficulties
- Can shut down conversation and create conflict
- Consider identifying the “elephant in the living room” around blame and seek to move forward

# Difficult Conversations

\*Nothing calms more than a sense of confidence...

**equanimity**

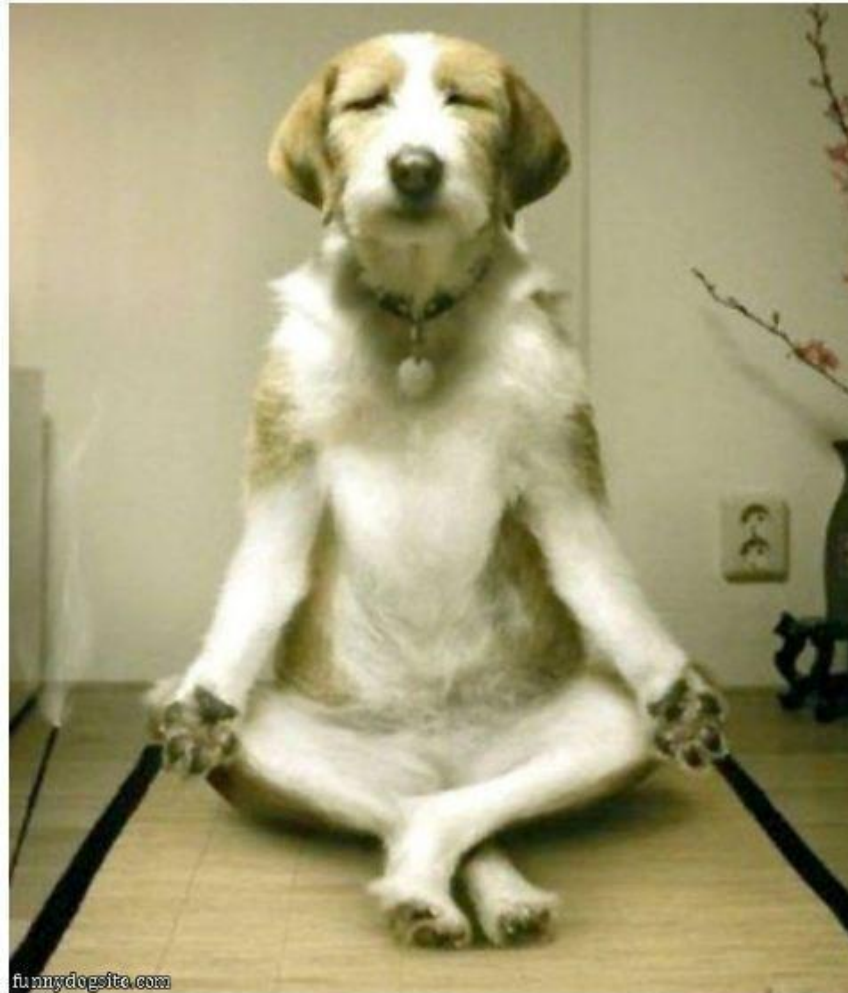
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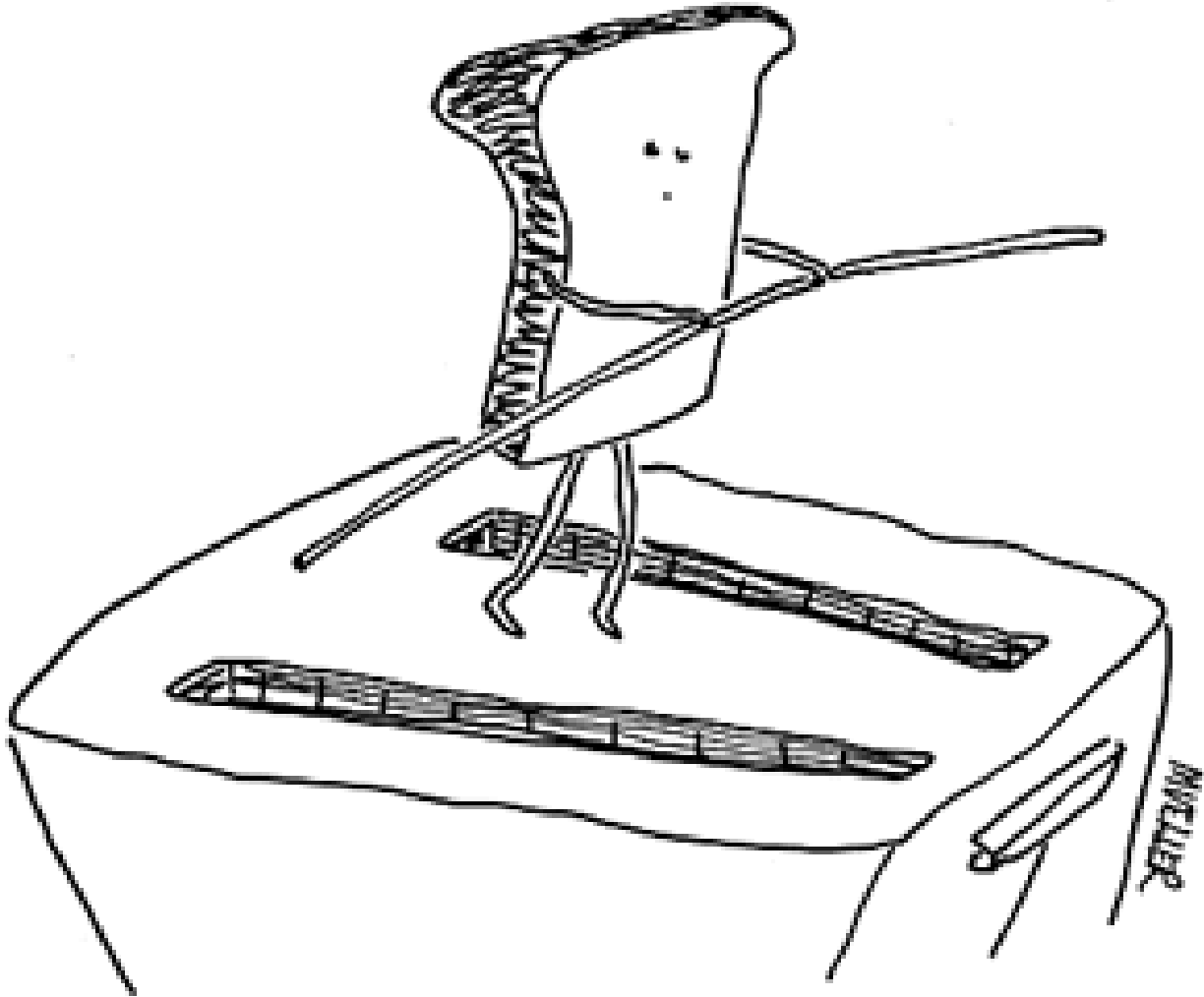
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composure or evenness of temper,  
especially under stress

# Difficult Conversations







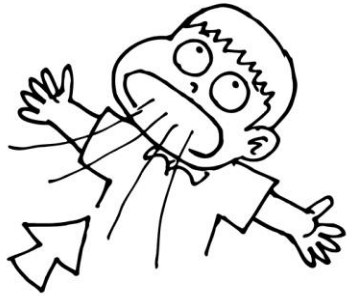
SIPRESS

# Difficult Conversations

- Cycle Breathing. Controlling the biological tendency for escalation

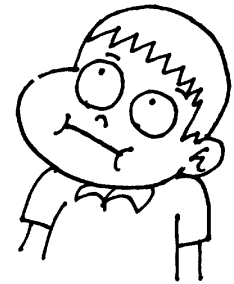


\*



Breathe in slowly to the count of  
1...2...3...4...

Hold your breath to the count of 1...2...



Breathe out slowly to the count of  
1...2...3...4...

Hold your breath to the count of 1...2...

