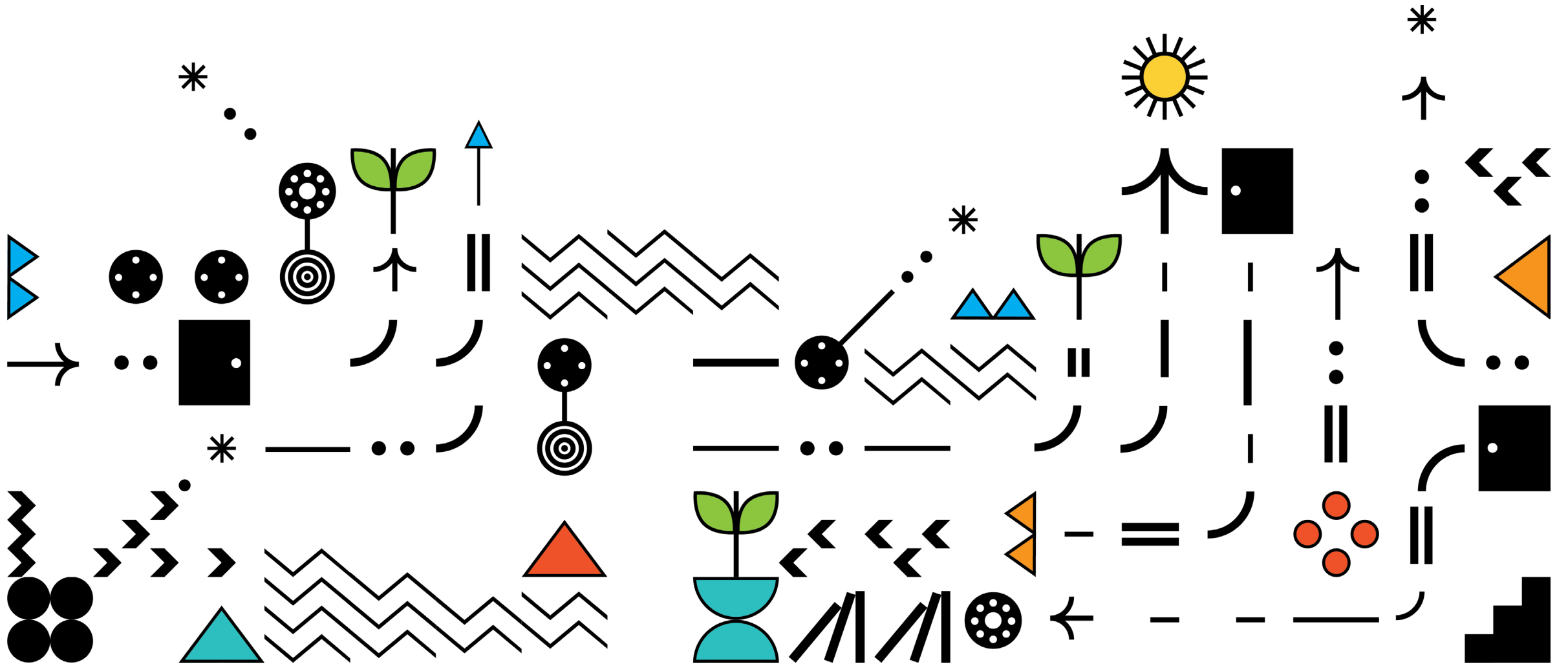


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Welcome to the Panic Room – Managing Challenging Scenarios

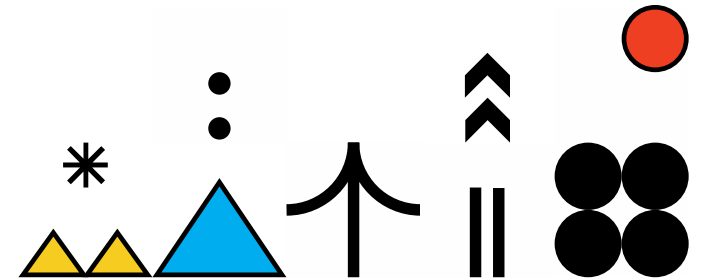


PI Network Session

Curie Scott, Academic Developer, University of Southampton

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Session objectives

- Understand the stress cycle
- Consider some potential unsettling scenarios faced by yourselves as managers of researchers
- Overview of different types of helping
- Working step-by-step through the CALM approach to handling these scenarios



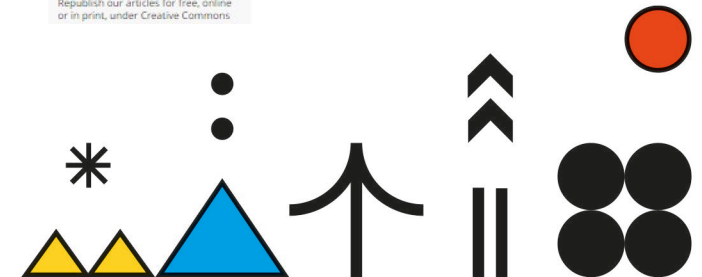
The stress cycle has three stages:

- **stage 1** is perceiving the threat
- **stage 2** is the fight-or-flight response, driven by our stress hormones: adrenaline and cortisol
- **stage 3** is relief, including physiological and psychological relief. This completes the stress cycle.

The screenshot shows a news article on 'THE CONVERSATION' website. The article title is 'Stuck in fight-or-flight mode? 5 ways to complete the 'stress cycle' and avoid burnout or depression'. The author is Theresa Larkin, Associate professor of Medical Sciences, University of Wollongong. The article discusses the stress cycle and provides five ways to complete it and avoid burnout or depression. It mentions that chronic stress increases chronic health conditions, including heart disease and diabetes, and can lead to burnout or depression. It also mentions that exercise, cognitive, creative, social and self-soothing activities help us process stress in healthier ways and complete the stress cycle. The article is published on April 16, 2024, at 3:23pm BST.

https://theconversation.com/stuck-in-fight-or-flight-mode-5-ways-to-complete-the-stress-cycle-and-avoid-burnout-or-depression-218599

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Examples of unsettling scenarios

- Managing conflict or disagreements between researchers in your team
- Supporting researchers through challenging personal scenarios
- Delivering feedback in a constructive way
- Rejecting researchers you know personally following applications to postdoc positions
- Dealing with a researcher's lack of understanding of the demands on you in your role as a PI
- Communicating bad news about funding (such as funding being suddenly revoked)



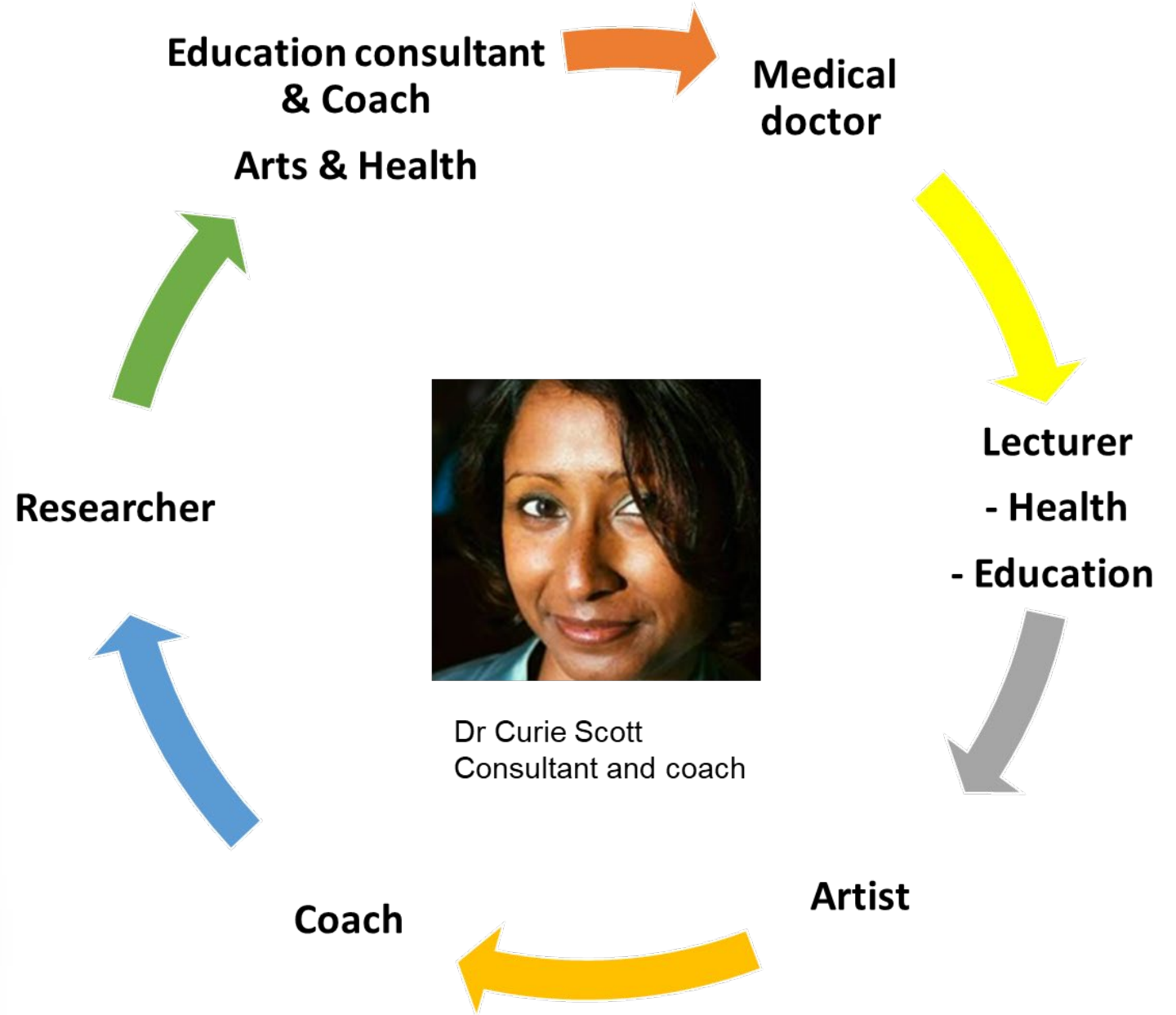
Personal reflection activity

Think of a scenario you have personally encountered and found challenging.

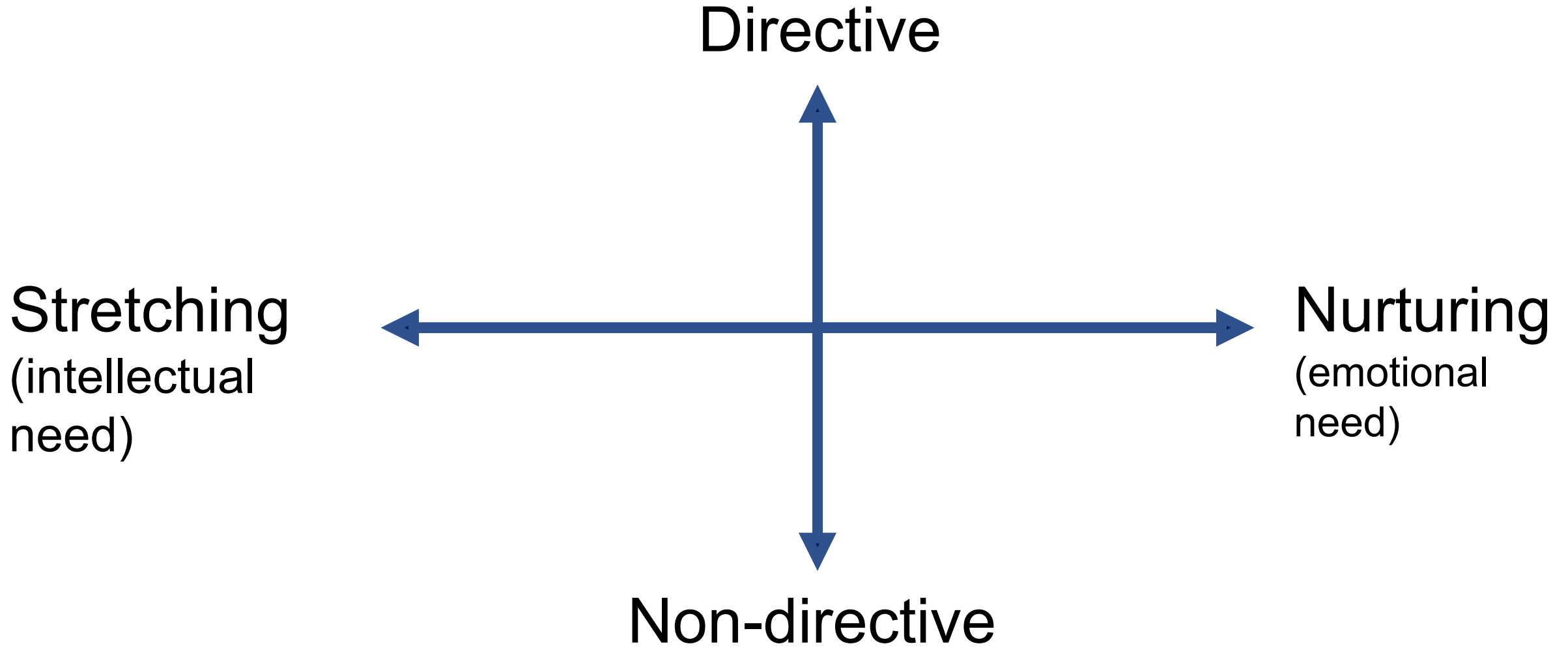
- How did you feel at the time?
- What specifically did you find challenging about the situation?
- How did you deal with it?



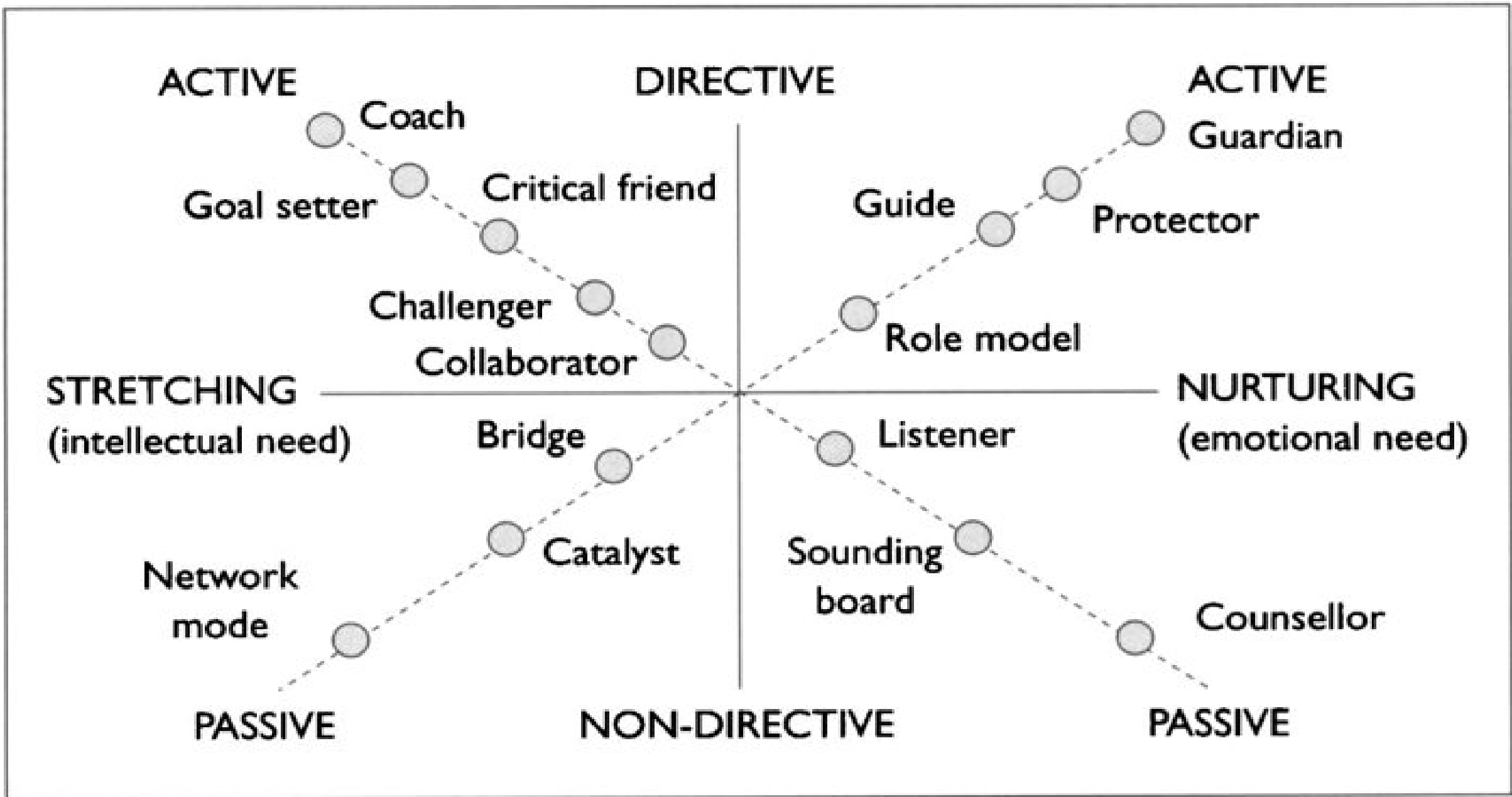
Your style
of helping
will be
influenced
by who
you are...



Four basic styles of helping

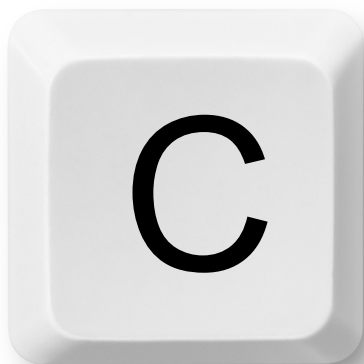


(Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002, p.17)



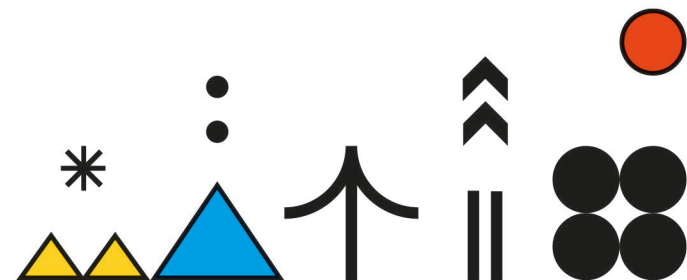
Four basic styles of helping Klasen, N. and Clutterbuck, D (2002) *Implementing mentoring schemes – a practical guide to successful programs*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, p.17

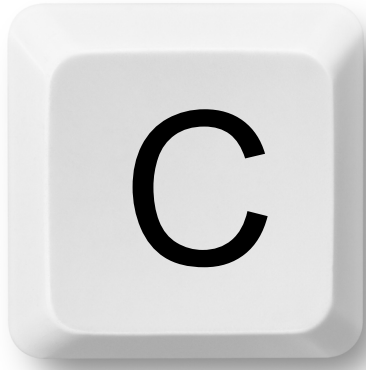
One approach to dealing with challenging scenarios...



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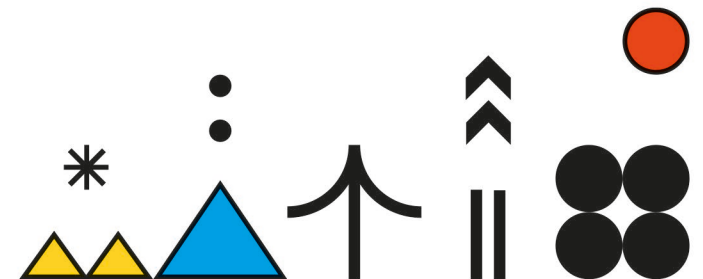


Centre and **C**omfort appropriately

Assess and **A**cknowledge the situation

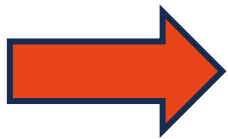
Lessen and **L**ower expectations

Mindful and **M**eaningful strategies





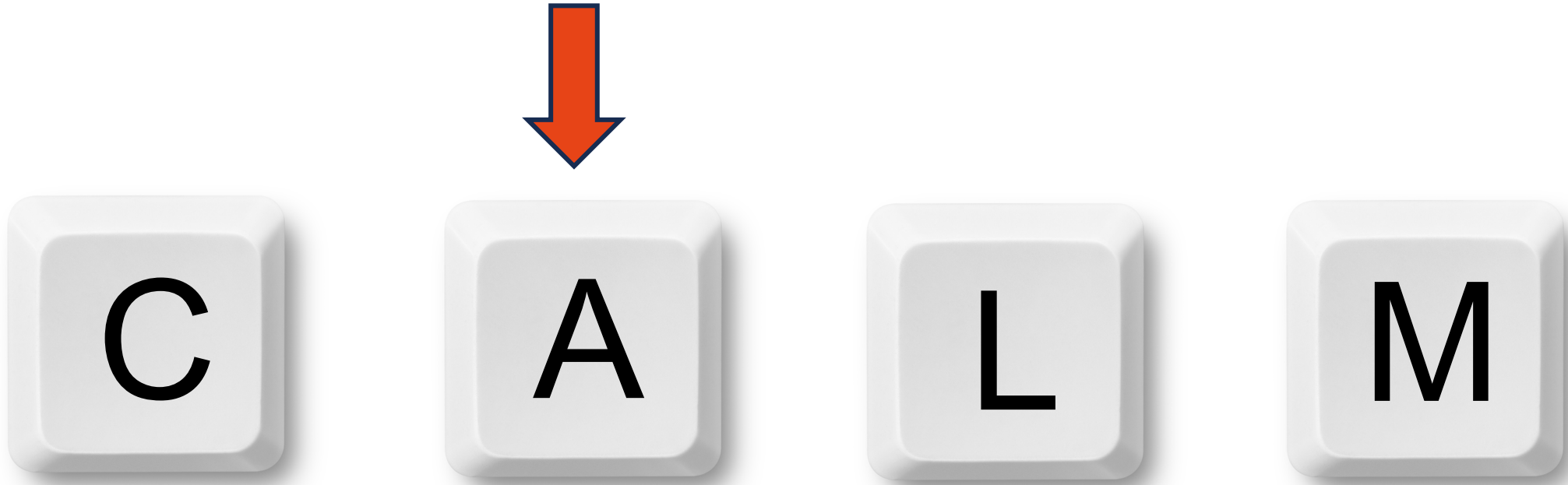
Centre &
Comfort
appropriately



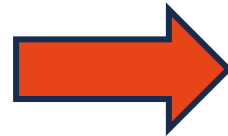
To de-escalate the situation and centre, create some calm and comfort in a way which works for you. You might do this by:

- Going for a walk
- Doing a grounding exercise or a five-minute meditation
- Simply have a tea or coffee

You can do alone - maybe involve the colleague? Go for a coffee together, for example.



**Assess &
Acknowledge**



Acknowledging a situation can be a relief to all involved. Some tips to help you do this include?

- Finding an appropriate time and place to discuss.
- Taking the lead but giving the other person chance to air their feelings.
- Plan what you want to say to open the conversation, and how you might restore calm if needed.

Top tip – assess and acknowledge early

As a manager, you may spot some early signs of your researchers struggling. Some of the below may be helpful to share as appropriate, based on your assessment and if want to acknowledge the situation.

For example, you may say,

‘I’ve noticed you seem a little more tense than usual. I’m here if you want to talk, but here are some resources I use to help me.’

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[Growth Mindset](#)

[Handling self-sabotage: 7 signs of self-sabotage and how to stop them](#)

[NHS ten stress busters](#)

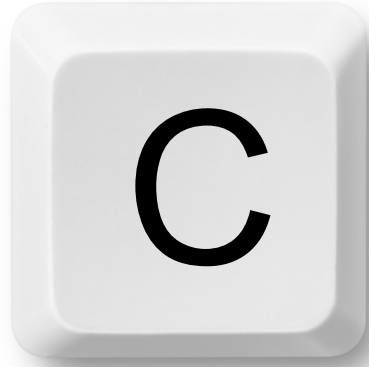
[NHS Self Help CBT](#) short videos e.g.

Reframing (Catch it + Check it + Change it) and Worry (worry time + action plan)

[Building self-confidence: 7 steps to self-confidence](#)

[Managing failure](#) : Perceptual Control Theory

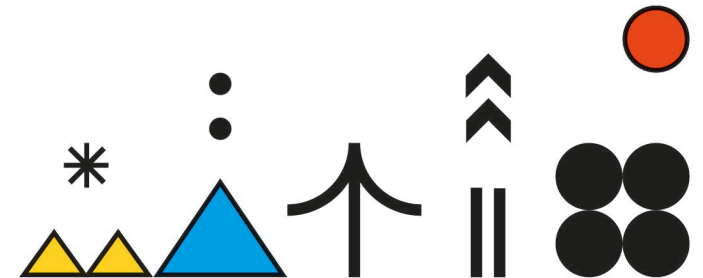


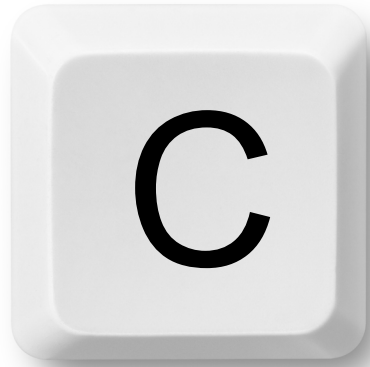


Instead of promising immediate solutions:

- focus on finding some small interventions that may improve the situation.
- Identify how you work together on these and manageable targets.
- Set dates to review progress.

Lessen
&
Lower expectation





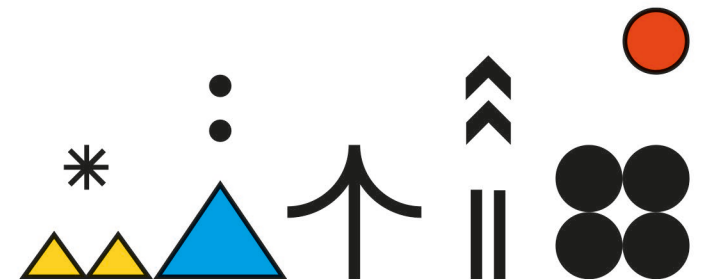
Identify a route forward together and strategies you can put in place to avoid reaching challenging situations in the future.

Some suggested strategies can be found on the next two slides.

Mindful & meaningful strategies

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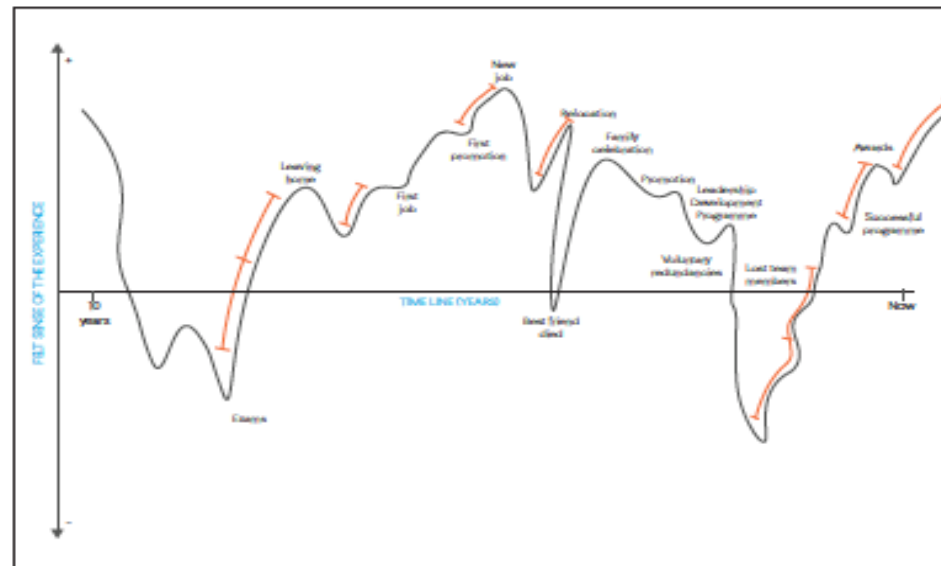
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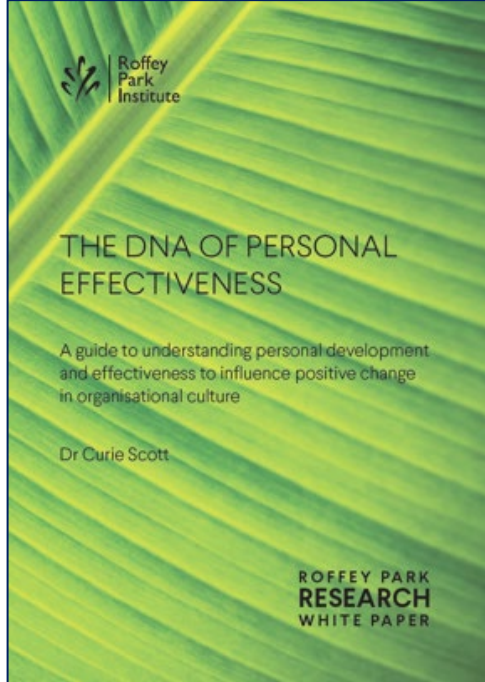
Strategy 1 - exploring visualisation: body, metaphor, drawing

Landscape of Life

You can write an autobiography of your life or draw it on a large page. Create a 'Landscape of Life' (Scott, 2021) of your whole life trying to capture your positive and negative life experience. This makes a visual landscape of the hills and valleys of your life. This discovery tool helps to see what has made you who you are today.



Strategy 2: using the DNA of personal effectiveness



<https://www.roffeyark.ac.uk/knowledge-and-learning-resources-hub/the-dna-of-personal-effectiveness/>

The DNA of personal effectiveness

Our global COVID-19 experiences has brought into sharp focus the complexity of life: our work 'selves' cannot be neatly compartmentalised. Who and how you are at work is naturally affected by the circumstances in the rest of your life. The current emphasis on wellbeing at work, taking a more integrative stance, is welcome. This white paper is based on an integrated embodied self in contrast to a performed self at work. To put it another way, we can act the 'right' way (performed) but this 'act' may not be sustainable during times of pressure. However, when your work is aligned to your values, purpose and sense of connection with others, your work-self is closer to your 'true' self and this is what is meant by being more embodied.

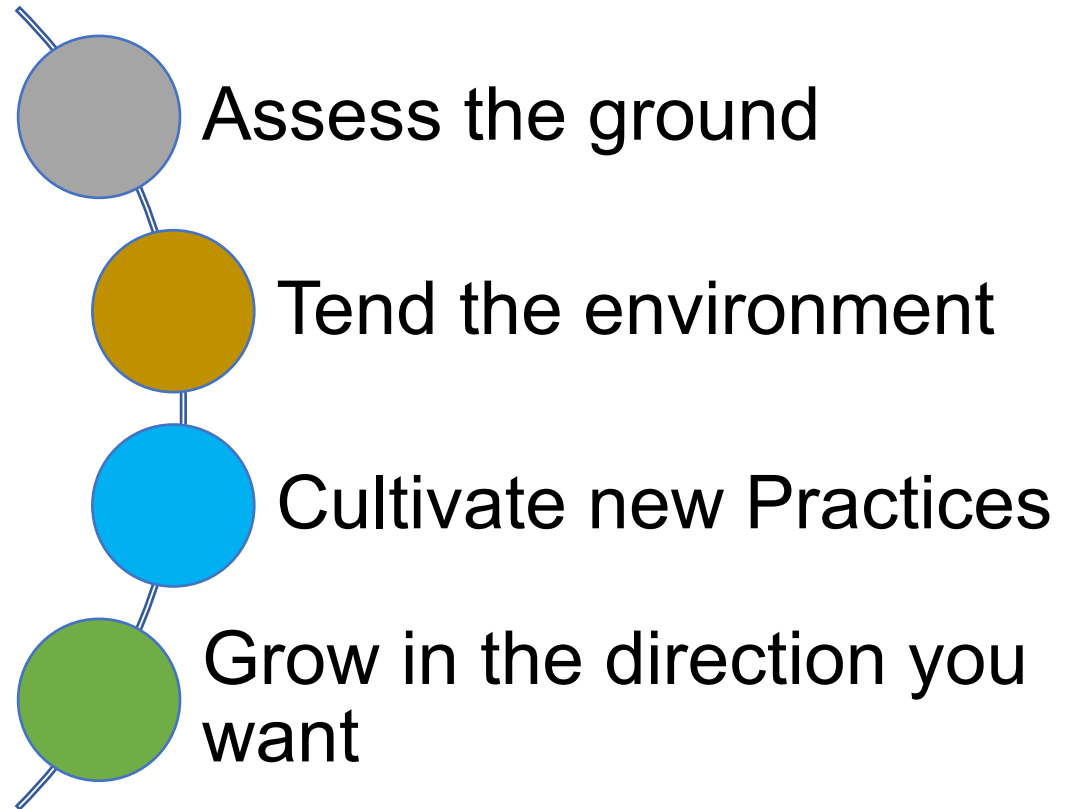
The framework presented here asserts that we, individually, are works-in-progress. This self-in-progress is shaped by our upbringing and past experiences and has the potential for continual change alongside other people and the surrounding environment. There is always the possibility of change through self-leadership which can then influence others around us.

The DNA for improving personal effectiveness here are playfully based on the first letter of the four nucleotide bases of DNA. These bases are adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), guanine (G). These four areas of improving personal effectiveness in a sustainable way interweave but will be dealt with separately with reflective prompts.

The DNA for improving personal effectiveness comprises the following:

ASSESS	Assess the ground
TEND	Tend the environment
CULTIVATE	Cultivate new practices
GROW	Grow in the direction you want

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Check out:

What items can you now add to PI toolkit to help your researchers thrive and deal with challenging scenarios?



Personal reflection activity – Part II

Think back to the scenario you noted at the start of this presentation.

Faced with the same situation again, which of these tools would you now use in this scenario?

How might these tools change the outcome for both you and the colleagues involved?



Links and resources

Self regulation video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INGgzlO7vOY>

Conversation article - <https://theconversation.com/stuck-in-fight-or-flight-mode-5-ways-to-complete-the-stress-cycle-and-avoid-burnout-or-depression-218599>

Four basic styles of helping Klasen, N. and Clutterbuck, D (2002)
Implementing mentoring schemes – a practical guide to successful programs. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, p.17

DNA of personal effectiveness <https://www.roffeypark.ac.uk/knowledge-and-learning-resources-hub/the-dna-of-personal-effectiveness/>

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