

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING SESSION

Aims:

- Prepare people to cope emotionally with the experience of dialogue around difficult topics
- Help people to express their needs in a positive and assertive way
- Help people to listen and understand one another better

Session time: 90 minutes

Credit to: Marshall Rosenberg's method of Non-Violent Communication

1. EXPECTATIONS:

Start by explaining that having dialogue about topics that we feel strongly about can be difficult and is best done once we have prepared for it by learning some social and emotional skills. Highlight that **this is not about learning to be 'nice', but about acquiring skills that make it more likely you will get what you need out of a conflict situation. Before engaging in dialogue or conflict resolution with others about sensitive or emotive topics, it is essential that we learn these skills, otherwise we can do more harm than good by attempting the dialogue when we are not equipped.**

Run through the first slide, letting the students know that this session will be interactive, will focus on emotional literacy, and ask them if they have any examples of when they have found dialogue difficult, or any specific needs they have to communicate better with those who think differently from them. Assure them that this is a safe and brave space where best intentions will be assumed and they can speak freely and be honest about things they find challenging.

2. INTRODUCTION:

Explain that most of us are programmed from an early age to respond to stressful conflict situations in an instinctive way, a bit like a jackal.

Ask students what characteristics of a jackal might represent how humans naturally respond when they feel threatened, then show them the slide with the characteristics listed.

Explain that this is predominantly a language that emanates from our minds. It labels people and events mostly in a critical and judgemental and frequently adversarial manner. It makes moral, rather than value judgements. It says who is **"right or wrong", "good or bad", "normal or abnormal", "black or white", "male or female"**. If anything, it recycles the violence, certainly verbally and emotionally, even intellectually and/or spiritually and subsequently physically. It perpetuates and maintains the conflict.

We need labels to connect one with the other and to feel relatively safe in our world. However, because of this, we believe we are right about our labels, which often makes other people wrong about their labels in our eyes. A defensive posture very quickly becomes an offensive one, then aggressive and subsequently violent, whether VERBAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL and/or PHYSICAL violence.

- Can you think of any examples (so far this week) when you have had an instinctive, emotional response?

We need to become aware that we are using labels and that while we may be correct about such use, there are alternative labels that can be equally valid. We need to become aware of the alternative language, a process which requires self-awareness and 'emotional literacy'.

Show the 'nature – help or hinderance' slide. Say that it's important to remember that we developed these emotions over thousands of years as a survival tactic to bind the group together and protect from other, hostile groups. Emotions can be positive drivers or motivators, they are not 'bad' in and of themselves. However, they no longer serve us well in our modern, complex, globally interconnected societies, where we need to find solutions for conflicting viewpoints together, and allow different perspectives to stand side-by-side, rather than dictating what everyone in the society should think or believe.

Tell them to watch out for the role of the Reticular Activating System, which is the part of our brain that is responsible for filtering the information around us, so we only take in what is useful. Apparently, there are millions of bits of information about our surroundings at any given moment, which is too much for the brain to process. The Reticular Activating System learns over time what to take notice of, and what to ignore. It is also responsible for some of that information being stored in the brain as a memory. The problem with complex topics, is that when strong negative emotions are activated and 'fight or flight' mode is turned on, the RAS becomes highly narrow and selective as a survival instinct, drawing on what it has already learned is true or important. This can lead to people hearing things that are not said and not hearing things that are said. It can also lead to confirmation bias, where we tend to hear and prioritise only the things we already agree with.

So how do we deal with this problem? Show the giraffe slide and ask the students to think of why a giraffe might be a good symbol to represent how humans could communicate better, then show them the slide with the characteristics listed.

3. PREPARING FOR DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS: EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Move to the next section and explain that there are some tools that can help us to behave more like a giraffe. One of the most important things that influences the chances of a dialogue process having a successful outcome for all parties, is people's emotional state as they participate. These are the four zones of regulation, which is a useful tool for helping people to analyse what state they are in. There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these zones; they are natural, human emotions, but there is an optimal zone for people to be able to practice the skills needed for productive dialogue, which is the green zone. If we can achieve this emotional state before we enter the dialogue, we will be more likely to be able to practise active listening, and good communication skills.

Show the 'tools' slide and explain that if people are not in that state, it is recommended to implement certain techniques before you facilitate or participate in dialogue. Breathing and grounding exercises can really help. For example, 'candle-breathing' means smelling the candle (deep breath in through the nose) and blowing out the candles (long breath out through the mouth by blowing). Try leading on a breathing technique for the group!

Also point out that it is fine to step away for a while if not feeling in the green zone and come back to the dialogue later. It's better to do this than try to continue and cause more harm than good to the situation. Say that people can designate a quiet space in another part of the room, or in an adjacent room, where people can step out and practise some of these techniques if they need to during the process. This space should be interaction-free, with the assurance that people who go there can stay quiet and look after themselves if they need to.

4. PREPARING FOR DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS: COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING TECHNIQUES

The language of emotional literacy is the language of compassionate communication and empathic listening. We hear and see what we are feeling and needing first without judgement or criticism, then similarly hear and see what the other person is feeling or needing without judgement or criticism.

This is achieved by learning and practising the four-step process '**SOAR**':

1. **S** **TOP!** What do I observe without any value-added judgement, criticism or evaluation?
2. **O** **bserve** my emotions and take responsibility for them.
3. **A** **NALYSE** what needs I have – why am I feeling what I am feeling?
4. **R** **EQUEST** - what requests can I make in practicable, do-able language and not in the language of demand?

EXAMINING THE STEPS IN MORE DETAIL:

A) **STEP ONE: STOP**

This is about temporarily stepping back from the situation in order to calm the emotions and to make clearer distinctions about what we are seeing and hearing, and **not at this stage**, mixing these observations with any value-added element involving evaluation, criticism, analysis or judgement which may subsequently turn out to be inaccurate.

Example:

"He is not very intelligent" is an evaluation/opinion.

"The last time his IQ Test scored 65" is observation only.

"I read the psychiatrist's report that he was labelled "unstable." Is observation only. A direct quote, if accurate, is observation only.

Static versus Process Observation/Evaluation:

Observation and evaluation may be expressed in a static way of speaking or as a process statement.

Static: i.e. saying what someone or something IS (status) not what the person or thing DOES or SAYS (action).

Process: i.e. saying only what a person DOES, not what who or what a person IS, that is important and meaningful.

In other words, the static statement is a "stuck" non-growth one – the process statement however, is one of movement and flow in accord with the action of the person, which recognises the potential for change and growth.

Example:

"He is sexist" is a static statement.

He SAID **"women were meant to stay at home and have babies"** is a process statement.

Practice Exercise 1: Look at the following statements and decide whether they are observations without being mixed up with evaluations. (Whole group verbal exercise, go through the statements one-by-one.)

- a) Jane was cross with me last week for no reason (*Jane said/did..... last week.*)
- b) Peter asked my opinion in the meeting (*Yes, observation*)
- c) My sister is a good girl (*My sister often says/does...*)

- d) Mary talks a lot (*Mary spoke forminutes*)
- e) John is aggressive (*John often says/does...*)
- f) She said pink suited me (*Yes, observation*)

A break could be taken here, if needed.

B) STEP TWO: OBSERVE THE EMOTIONS

This second step is fundamentally how we shift our focus and consciousness INTERNALLY to access our feelings and emotions. We then need to express them clearly in language that directly refers to our basic and primordial feelings and emotions and are not confused with, or expressed indirectly, via our thoughts and judgements.

Examples:

Basic feelings and emotions include FEAR, WORRY, ANXIETY, HURT, PAIN, HANGER, FURY, HATE, LOVE, HAPPINESS, JOY

"I feel I am being cheated" is not a feeling but an evaluation/judgement.

"I'm feeling tense right now" is expressing feeling only.

The other important part of expressing feelings and emotions is to take responsibility for them. This is clearly expressed by connecting the stated feeling with the words:

"Because I feel..." NOT "because you are doing..."

An instinctive response will often be to blame someone else for what he or she is feeling:

"When YOU said that, YOU really hurt me".

An emotionally literate response will be for the person to take responsibility for his or her own feelings:

"When I heard you say those words I felt hurt..."

Feelings Versus Evaluation:

Practice Exercise Two: Look at these statements in groups and decide which are pure emotion words, or what emotion could be behind each statement that does not contain pure emotion words. Is the speaker taking responsibility for their emotion in each case? How could they express themselves in a more 'giraffe' way?

- a) I feel you don't like me. (*insecurity, fear, vulnerability, unease*)
- b) I'm disappointed you're going. (*loneliness, dismay, dejection*)
- c) I'm afraid when I hear you say that. (*Yes, feeling*)
- d) When you don't say hello, I feel ignored. (*unease, insecurity, hurt*)
- e) I feel like hitting you. (*exasperation, anger, fury*)
- f) I feel misunderstood. (*frustration, sadness, perplexity*)

Responsibility for our feelings:

C) STEP THREE: ANALYSE THE NEEDS

Directly connected to feelings are needs. These two steps are interdependent, integral and pivotal. The more I am able to get in touch with the extent and range of what I am feeling, the clearer I will be about my needs that I have, regardless of
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any other or particular person. If I need food, drink, warmth, security, I need them because of me! If I did not have these needs, I would not have the feelings that go with them and vice versa. It's a circular process.

When I am in EMOTIONAL LITERACY mode I take responsibility for both my feelings and my needs.

When I am in INSTINCTIVE MODE I blame others i.e. the "blame frame"

Example:

"I'm sad because you are going out tonight." This is attributing the feeling to other people's action and not to the speaker's own needs – an instinctive statement

"I'm sad because I need some company this evening and I shall be alone." This is an emotionally literate statement.

Identifying unfulfilled needs:

Practice Exercise Three: Imagine yourself making the following statements, then write down at least three needs that you might have:

- a) "I think you are uncaring for my feelings." **If I said this I could be needing:** (*acceptance, reassurance, support*)
- b) "You can't be trusted to make all the correct adjustments." **If I said this I could be needing:** (*honesty, speed, shelter*)
- c) "You don't care about me." **If I said this I could be needing:** (*empathy, companionship, warmth, support, stimulation*)
- d) "Stop Talking!" **If I said this I could be needing:** (*peace, order, harmony, rest*)
- e) "He is not very bright." **If I said this I could be needing:** (*validation, recognition, appreciation*)

D) STEP FOUR: REQUEST WHATEVER YOU NEED

This fourth step is about grounding the previous three steps and achieving a positive, practical outcome to the process. It is done by expressing clearly in "do-able", now, action language, which is as specific as possible, what you **would like** the other person to do as distinct from **not** doing.

The purpose is to request, not demand of the other person whether he or she is willing to meet the request or not. Your reaction to a **"NO"** will determine if you have made a request or a demand. In other words, if you cannot handle a **"NO"** it is not the time for this step.

It needs to be emphasised that this fourth step does not necessarily achieve a quick or sustainable solution. However, it is a process which, if followed, will be a pathway towards a meaningful resolution. "Stay with the process and the solution will evolve."

Make sure your request is using Positive Action Language:

**POSITIVE
DO-ABLE
SPECIFIC
NON-DEMANDING**

Examples:

"I want you to listen to me" is a demand. It is too general and unspecific.

"I'd like you to tell me now and in your own words, what you heard me say before reacting to my request. Is that okay?" is a request

“I don’t want to complain as much as I have been”. Once again this is a demand (of myself), It is too general and unspecific and expresses what I don’t want not what I do want.

“I would like to list at least three positive things about my life” is a request.

Remember that if you hear the response “no”, there may be other ways to get your needs met. Explore further with the person why the answer is no – is it because of their own needs? Can you yourself or someone else meet any or all of the needs of the people in the situation? As long as the other person feels that their needs are being taken into account, the most likely result will be positive cooperation towards a solution.

Time to SOAR! - read through summary slide to recap

Application of the theory: Think of a conflict situation you have experienced in the past (that you feel comfortable sharing), or one that you witnessed and write what you remember about it. Share it with your partner and discuss whether it was more ‘jackal’ or ‘giraffe’. If it was more ‘jackal’, discuss what it would have looked like if the participants had been more ‘giraffe’ in their approach.

End with feedback from the group on what were the most helpful things people learned.

For help with this lesson plan, please contact:

team@sns.space

THANK YOU!

Social & Emotional Learning for Dialogue

What gives you hope?

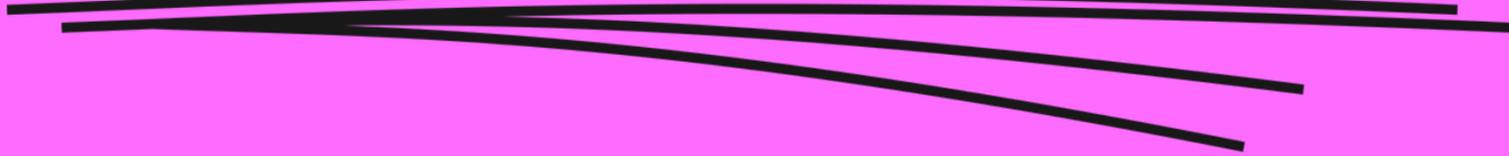
Why is peace so political?

How do you cope with fear or anger?

What helps build trust between people?

How do you react to hate?

Schedule for today's session



1. Expectations

2. Introduction

3. Emotional regulation

4. Communication and listening techniques

Expectations for today's training

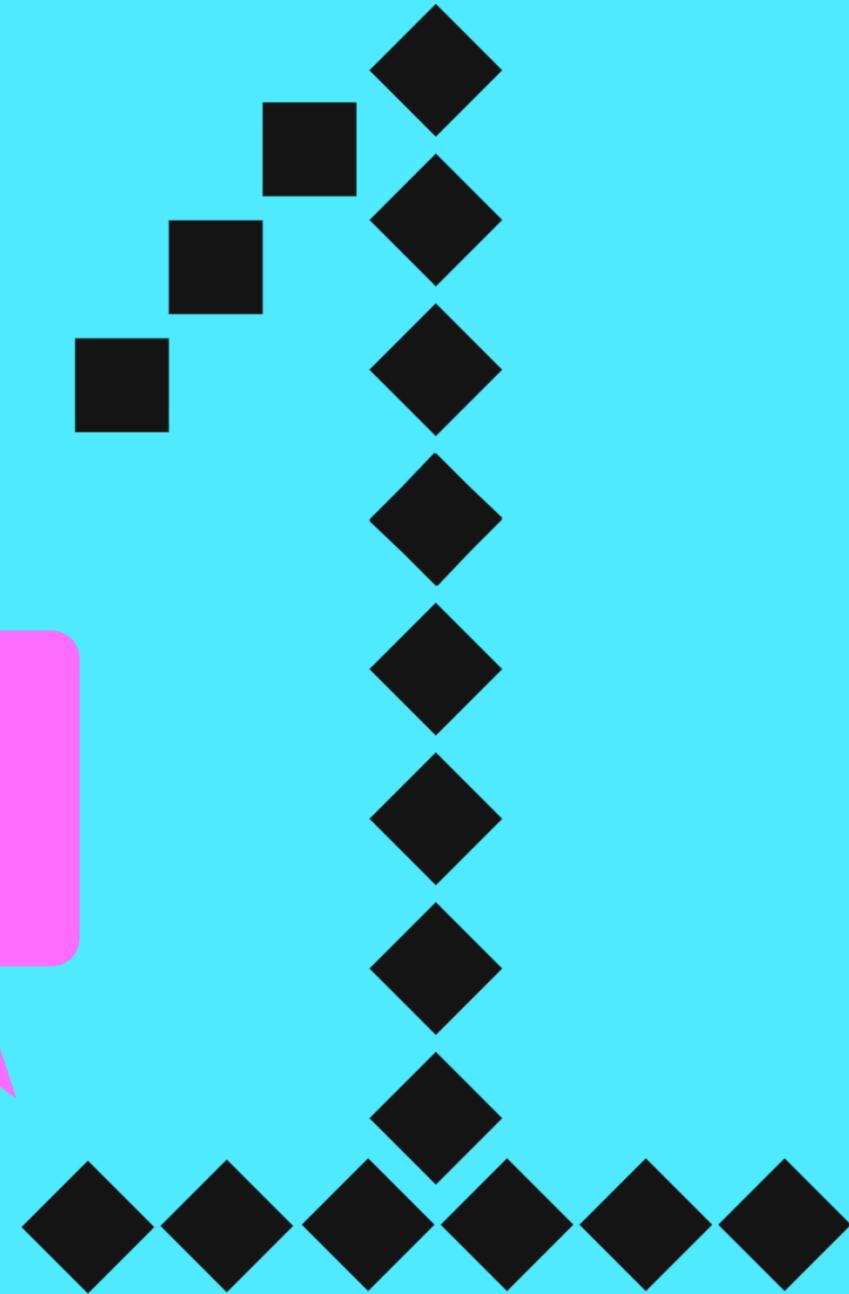
1. Interactive

2. Safe & brave space

3. Assuming best intentions

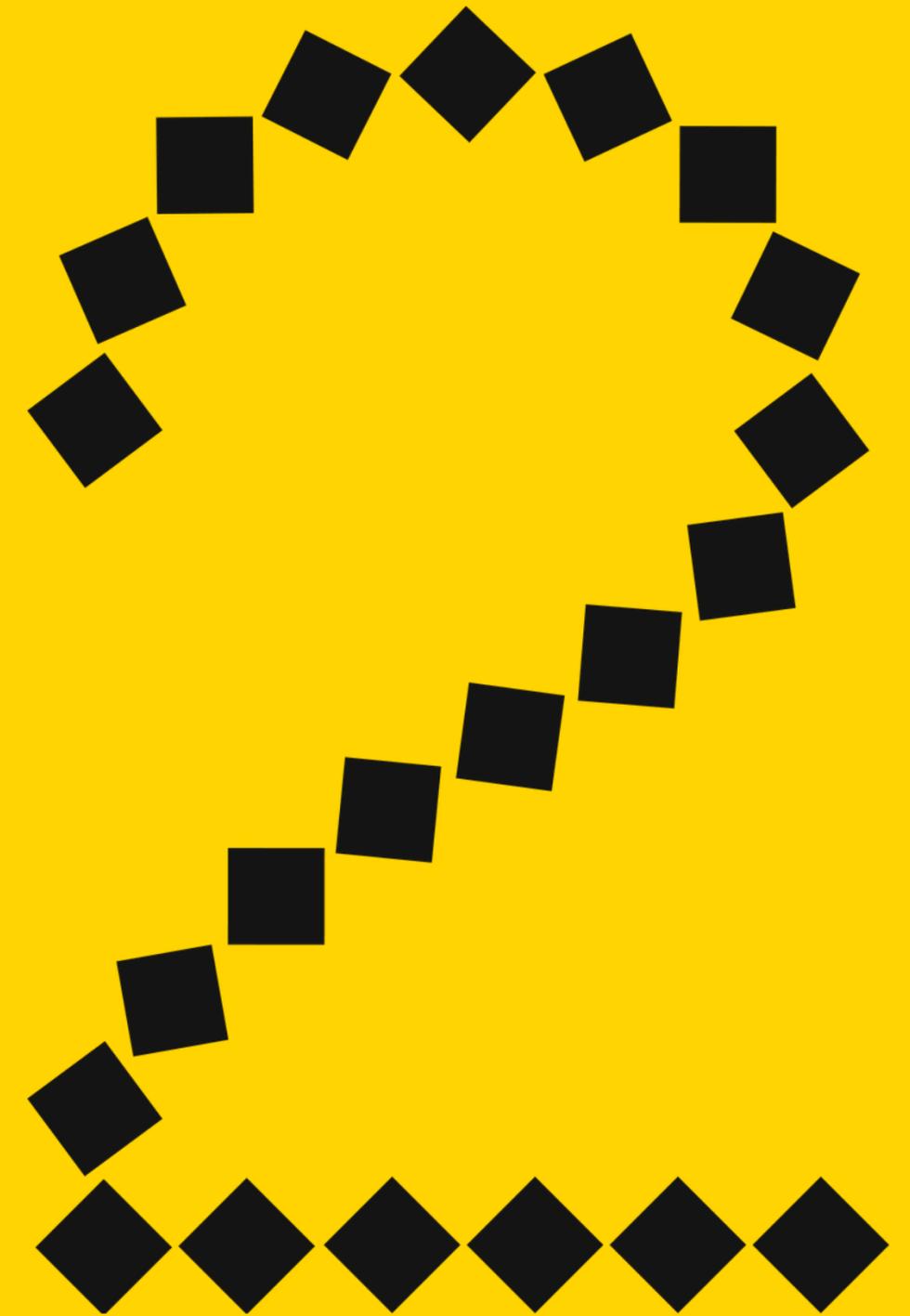
4. Emotional literacy

5. Let's get started!



Introduction

**Why are difficult discussions
so...well...difficult?!**



How might a jackal respond when threatened?



How might a jackal respond when threatened?



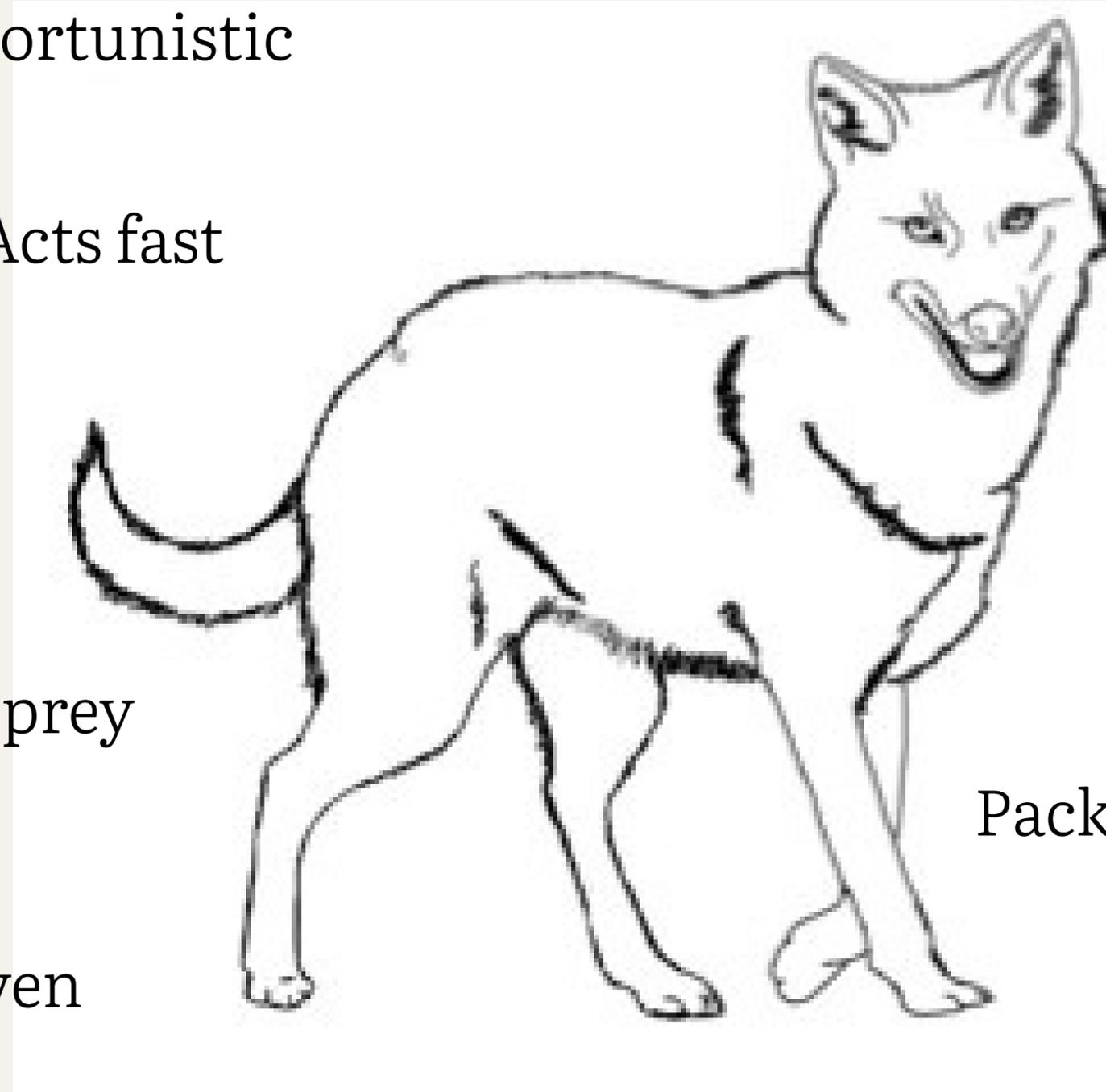
Opportunistic

Aggressive

Acts fast

Ambushes prey

Instinct-driven



Pack animal

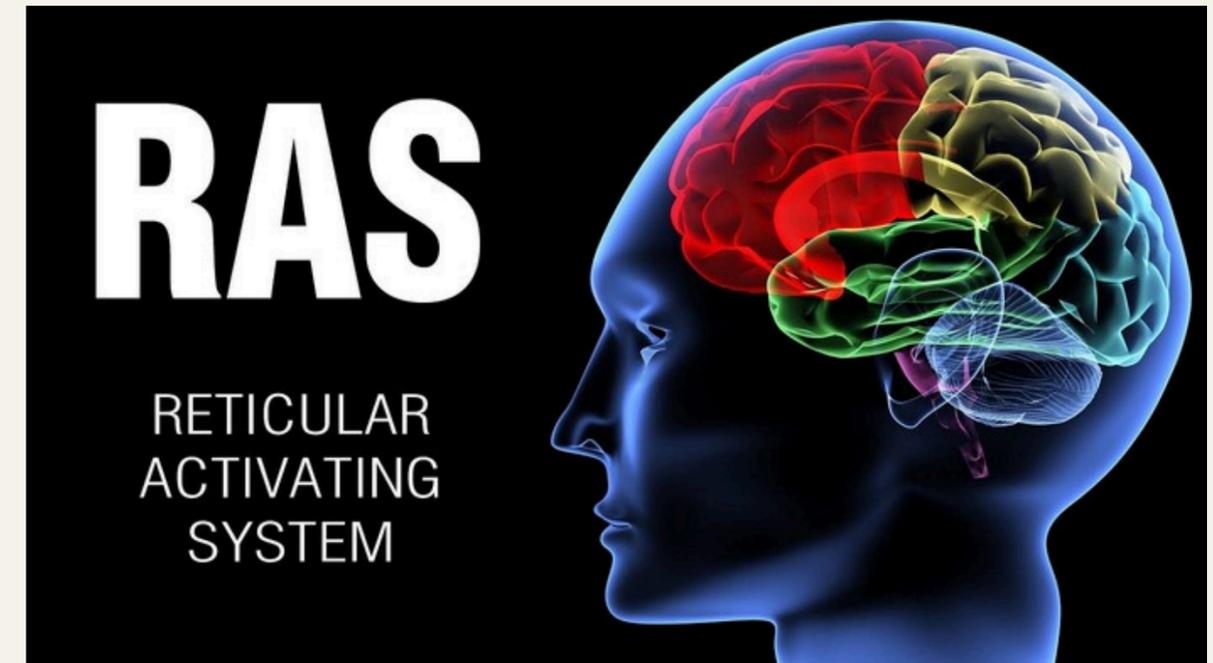
Loud bark

Sharp bite

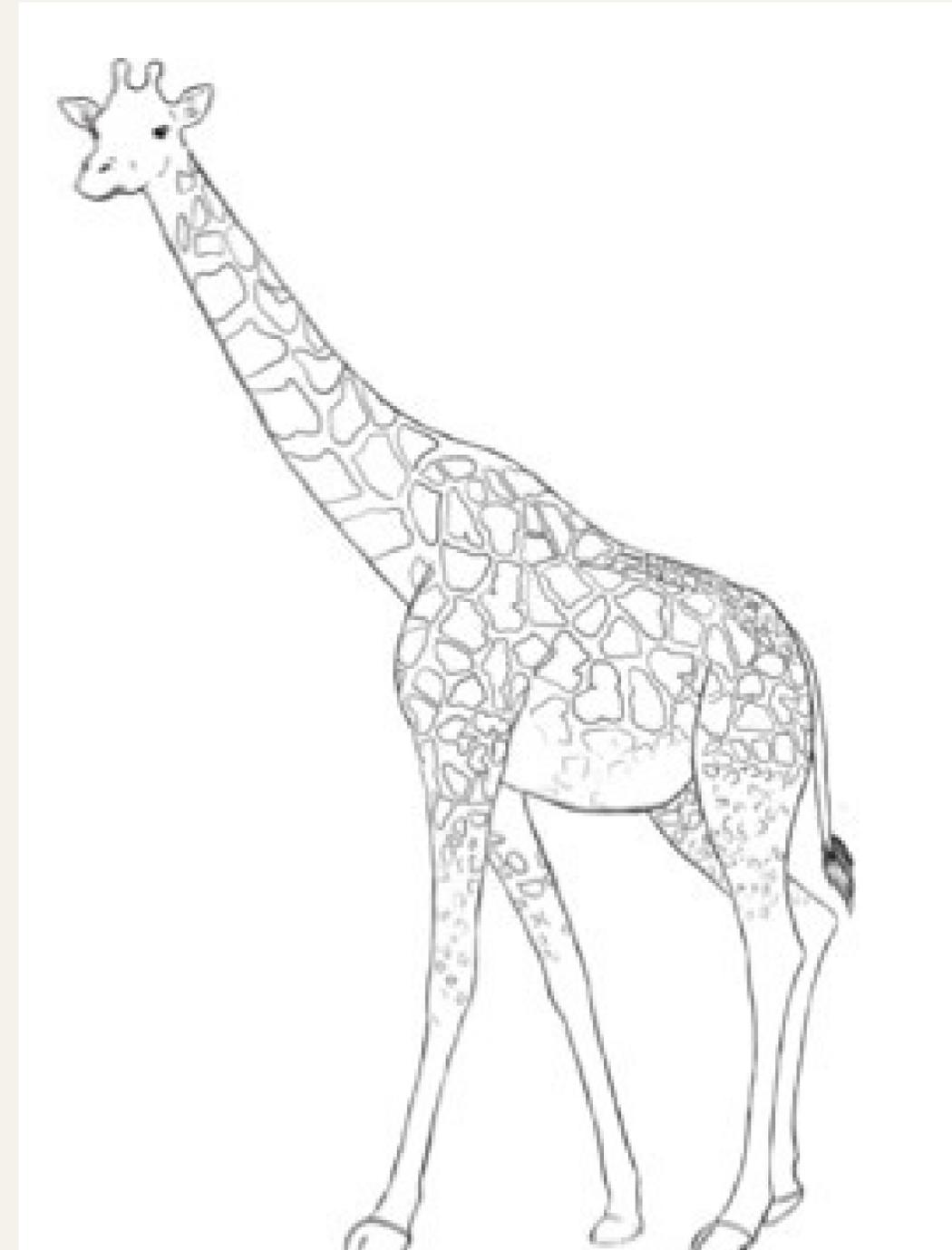
NATURE - HELP OR HIDERANCE?

It's important to remember that we developed these emotions over thousands of years as a survival tactic. Emotions are drivers or motivators.

However, they no longer serve us well in our modern, complex, globally interconnected societies.



What characteristics does a giraffe have that might represent a more constructive response?



What characteristics does a giraffe have that might represent a more constructive response?



Horns—protective action when needed

Sensitive hearing—listens attentively

Quiet—doesn't speak (too) much

Large lungs—breathe to keep calm

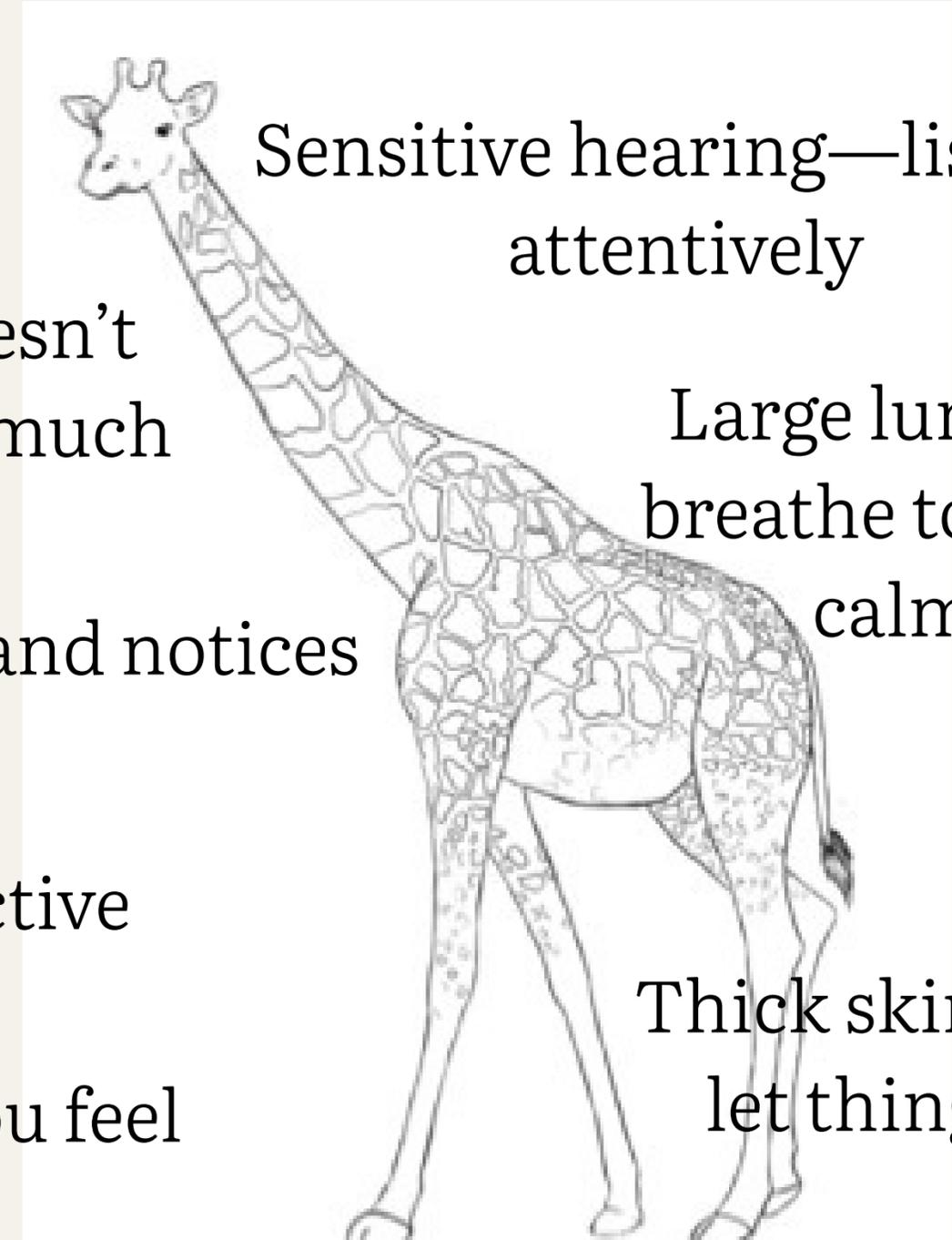
big eyes—observes and notices

Long neck—sense of perspective

Big heart—knowing what you feel

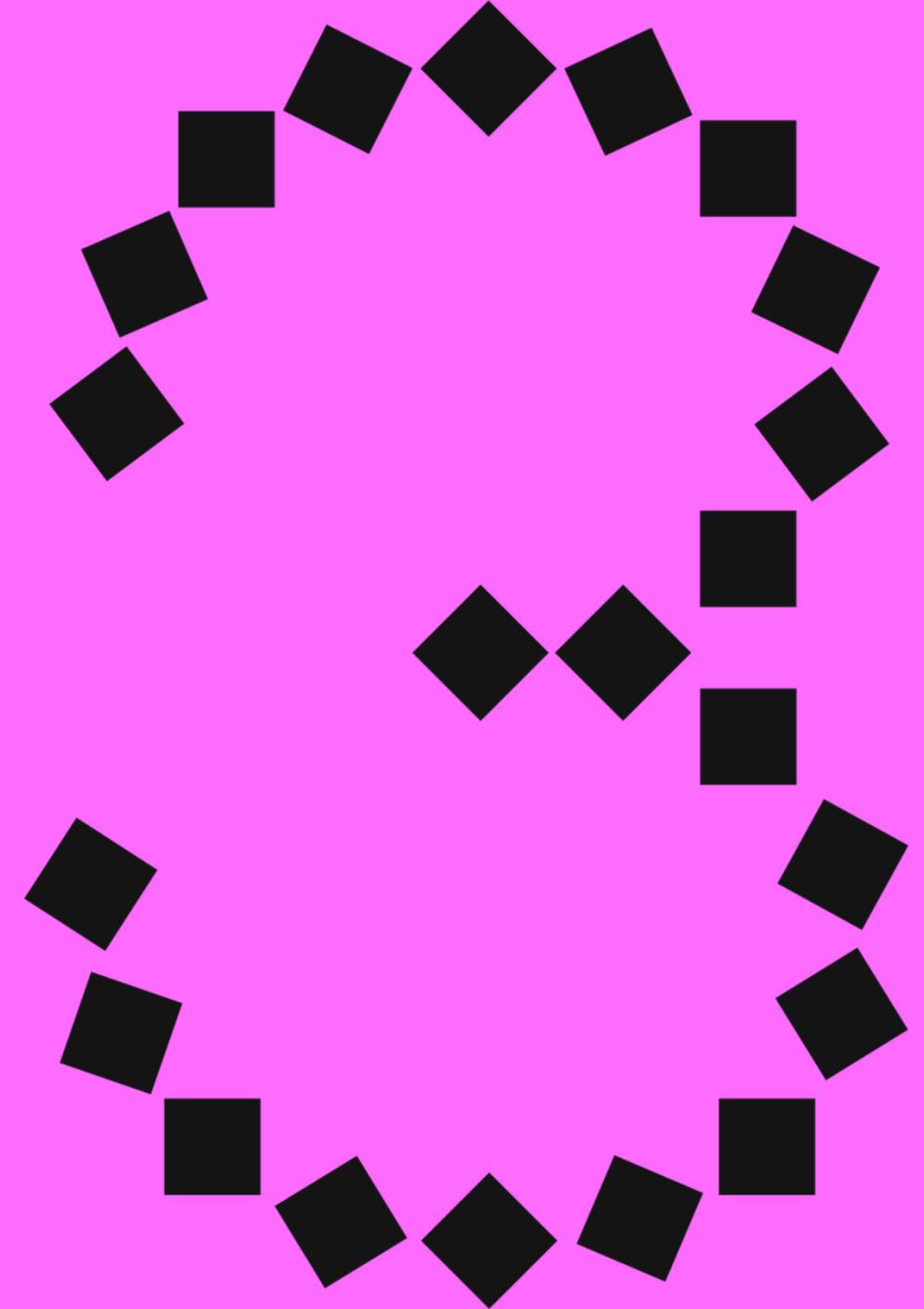
Thick skin—can let things go

Long legs—knows when to walk away



Questions?

Emotional regulation



Emotional awareness



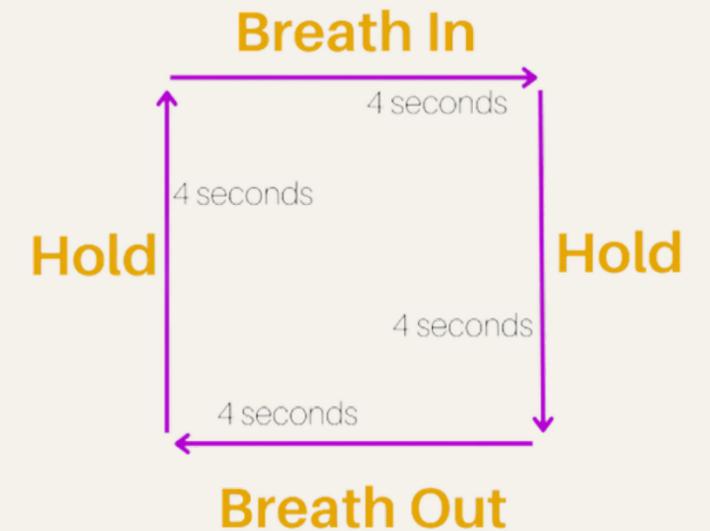
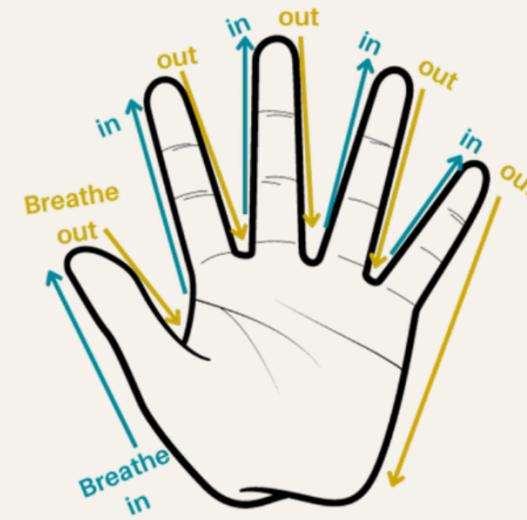
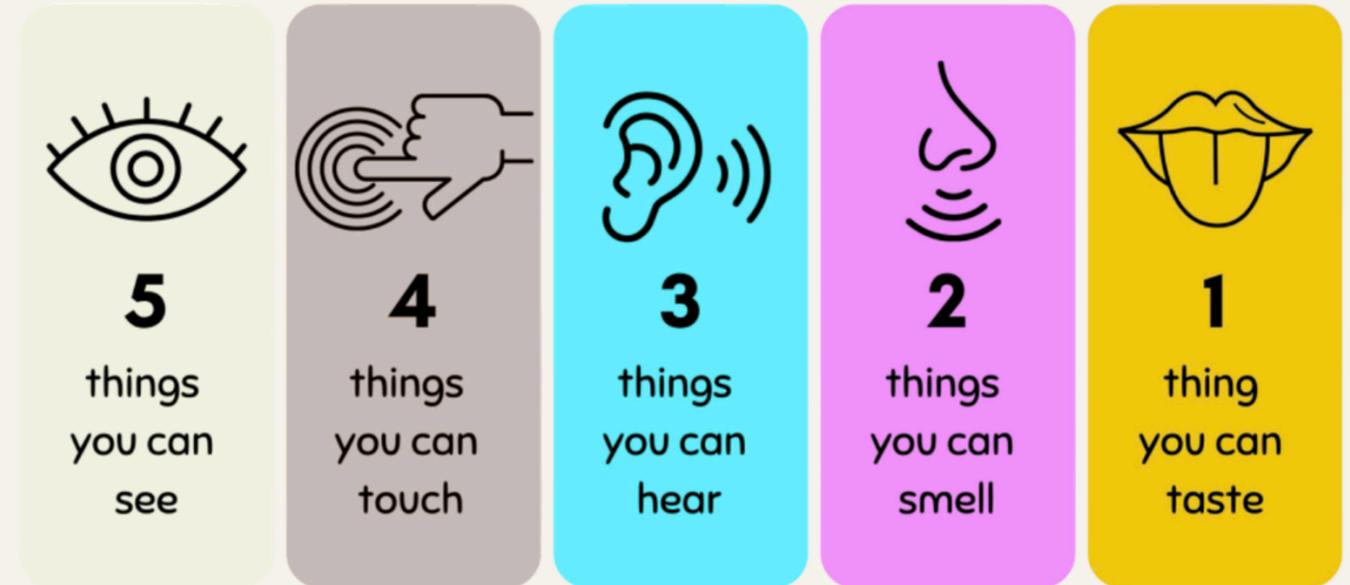
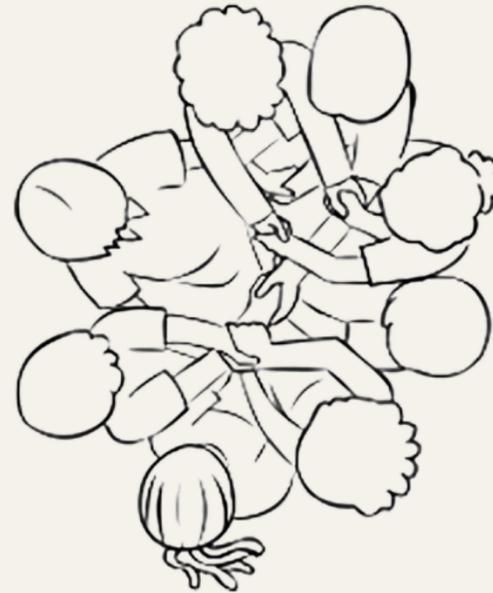
Some feelings in the BLUE ZONE	Some feelings in the GREEN ZONE	Some feelings in the YELLOW ZONE	Some feelings in the RED ZONE
Bored Hurt	Calm Happy	Frustrated Worried	Overjoyed Wild
Sick Tired	Okay Focused	Energetic Silly	Angry Out of Control
Exhausted Sad	Proud Relaxed	Excited Annoyed	Terrified Furious
Low levels of energy and down feelings	Calm energy and a sense of control	Higher energy and stronger feelings	Extremely high energy and strongest feelings

→ Zones of Regulation® Digital Curriculum

The Zones of Regulation framework was developed by Leah Kuypers.

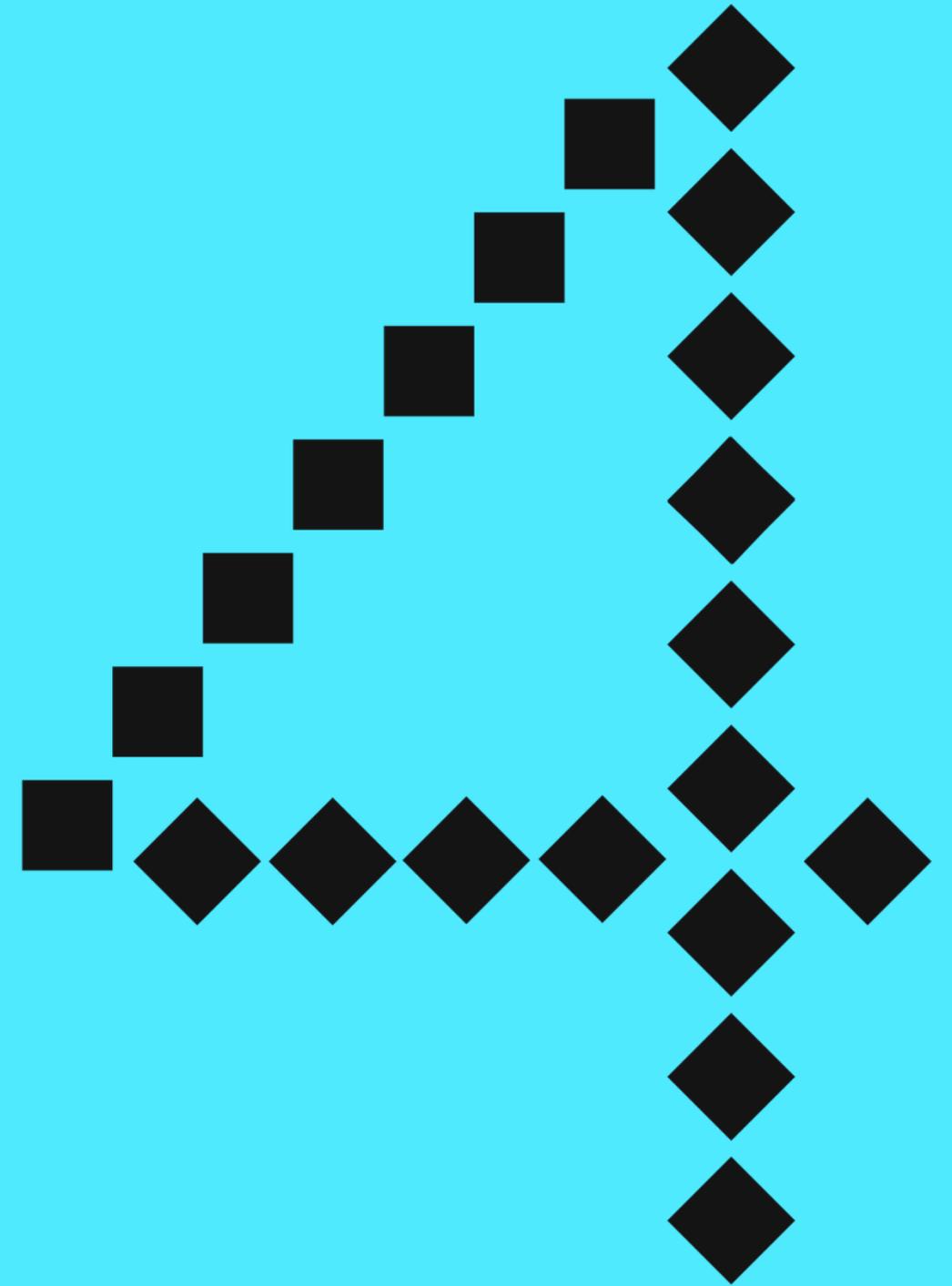
Which tools ?

- Breathing
 - Candle breathing
 - Hand breathing
 - Square breathing
- Grounding/mindfulness
- Trust-building
 - Eye Contact Activity
 - Trust Walk
 - Human Knot
 - Nostalgic Icebreakers
- Designated quiet zone



Questions?

Communication and listening techniques



The four-step process



1. **STOP!** What do I notice without any form of value-added judgement, criticism or evaluation?
2. **OBSERVE** my emotions, and take responsibility for them.
3. **ANALYSE** what needs I have – why am I feeling what I am feeling?
4. **REQUEST** - what requests can I make in practicable, do-able language and not in the language of demand?

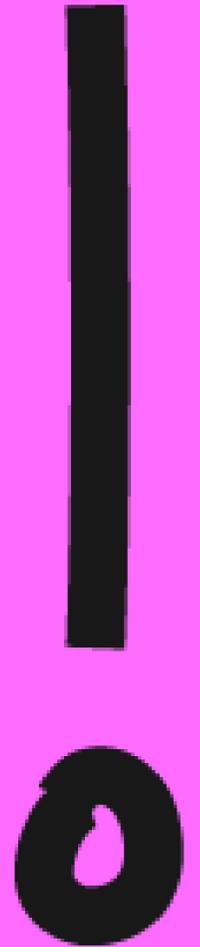
Step 1: Stop and notice



Examples: “He is not very intelligent” ...is a judgment/opinion.

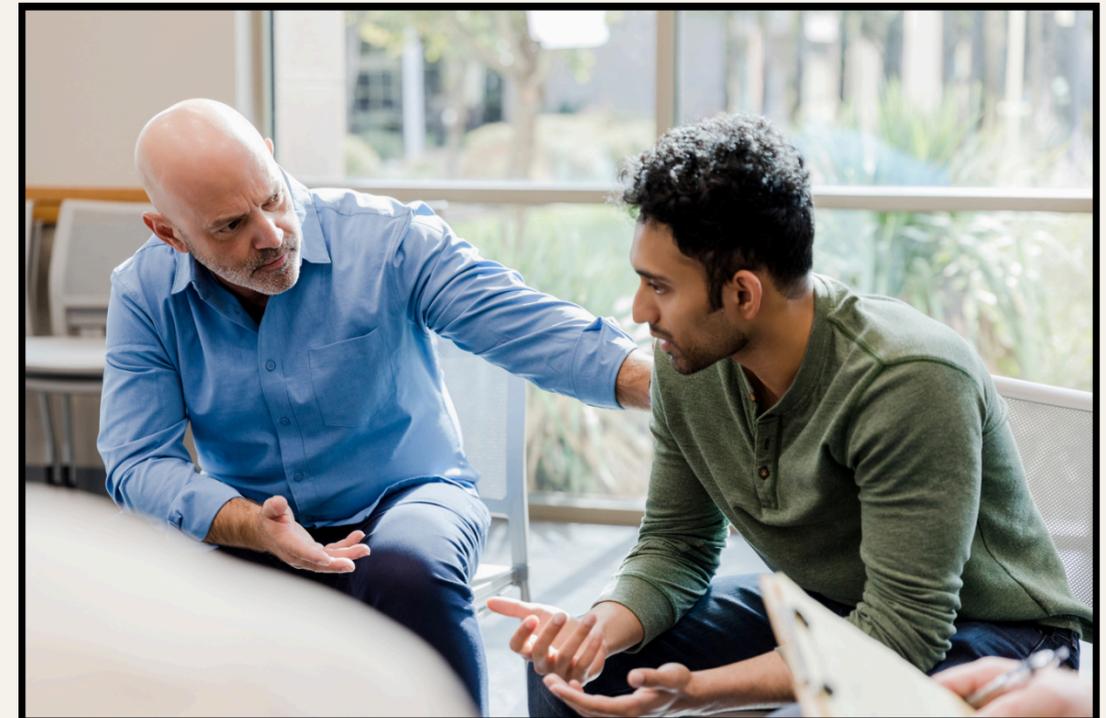
“The last time his IQ Test scored 65” ...is observation only.

“I read the psychiatrist’s report that he was labelled “unstable.”
...is observation only. A direct quote, if accurate, is observation
only.



STATIC VS. PROCESS LANGUAGE

Static vs. process language - be careful about labels, e.g. "He is irresponsible" is a static statement "He did not fulfil his responsibility" is a process statement



Observation or judgement?

Look at the following statements and decide whether they are observations without being mixed up with evaluations:

- a) Jane was cross with me last week for no reason
- b) Peter asked my opinion in the meeting
- c) My sister is a good girl
- d) Mary talks a lot
- e) John is aggressive
- f) She said pink suited me



s/s.

Step 2: Observe your emotions



Examples: Basic feelings and emotions include FEAR, WORRY, ANXIETY, HURT, PAIN, ANGER, FURY, HATE, LOVE, HAPPINESS, JOY

“I feel I am being cheated” ...is not a feeling but an evaluation/judgement.

“I’m feeling tense right now” ...is expressing feeling only.

AND take responsibility!



An instinctive response will often be to blame someone else for what you are feeling: “When YOU said that, YOU really hurt me”.

An emotionally literate response will be for the you to take responsibility for your own feelings: “When I heard you say those words I felt hurt...”



s/s. **What might be the emotions behind these statements?**

“I feel you don’t like me.”

“I’m disappointed you’re going.”

“When you don’t say hello, I feel ignored.”

“I feel like hitting you.”

“I feel misunderstood.”



Questions?

s/s.

Step 3: Analyse the needs



Example: “I’m sad because you are going out tonight.” This is attributing the feeling to other people’s action and not to the speaker’s own needs – an instinctive statement
“I feel I am being cheated” ...is not a feeling but an evaluation/judgement.

“I’m sad because I need some company this evening and I shall be alone.” This is an emotionally literate statement.

Identifying unfulfilled needs

Imagine yourself making the following statements, then write down at least three needs that you might have:

- a) “I think you are uncaring for my feelings.” If I said this I could be needing:
- b) “You can’t be trusted to make all the correct adjustments.” If I said this I could be needing:
- c) “You don’t care about me.” If I said this I could be needing:
- d) “Stop Talking!” If I said this I could be needing:
- e) “He is not very bright.” If I said this I could be needing:



s/s.

Step 4: Request what you need

66



The purpose is to request, not demand of the other person whether he or she is willing to meet the request or not. Your reaction to a “NO” will determine if you have made a request or a demand. In other words, if you cannot handle a “NO” it is not the time for this step.

Make sure your request is using Positive Action Language:
POSITIVE DO-ABLE SPECIFIC NON-DEMANDING

99

Demand or request



Examples: “I want you to listen to me” ...is a demand. It is too general and unspecific.

“I’d like you to tell me now and in your own words, what you heard me say before reacting to my request. Is that okay?” ...is a positive, doable and specific request.



Questions?

Think-pair-share

STOP! Notice
OBSERVE my emotions
ANALYSE what needs I have
REQUEST not demand

66

99

Think of a conflict situation you have experienced in the past (that you feel comfortable sharing), or one that you witnessed. Share it with your partner and discuss whether it was more ‘jackal’ or ‘giraffe’. If it was more ‘jackal’, discuss what it would have looked like if the participants had been more ‘giraffe’ in their approach.

Discussion

A decorative graphic featuring the word "Discussion" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by several small, solid-colored squares in yellow, pink, and cyan. Below the text, there are three thick, black, curved lines that sweep across the width of the word.

Thank you

**to Marshall Rosenberg and Leonard Daniels,
who introduced these communication and
listening techniques in the UK**



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sns.space

