



Difficult Conversations Across Values Divides

May 20, 2025

aparna rajagopal (she/her)
Cianna Carrillo Walker (she/her)

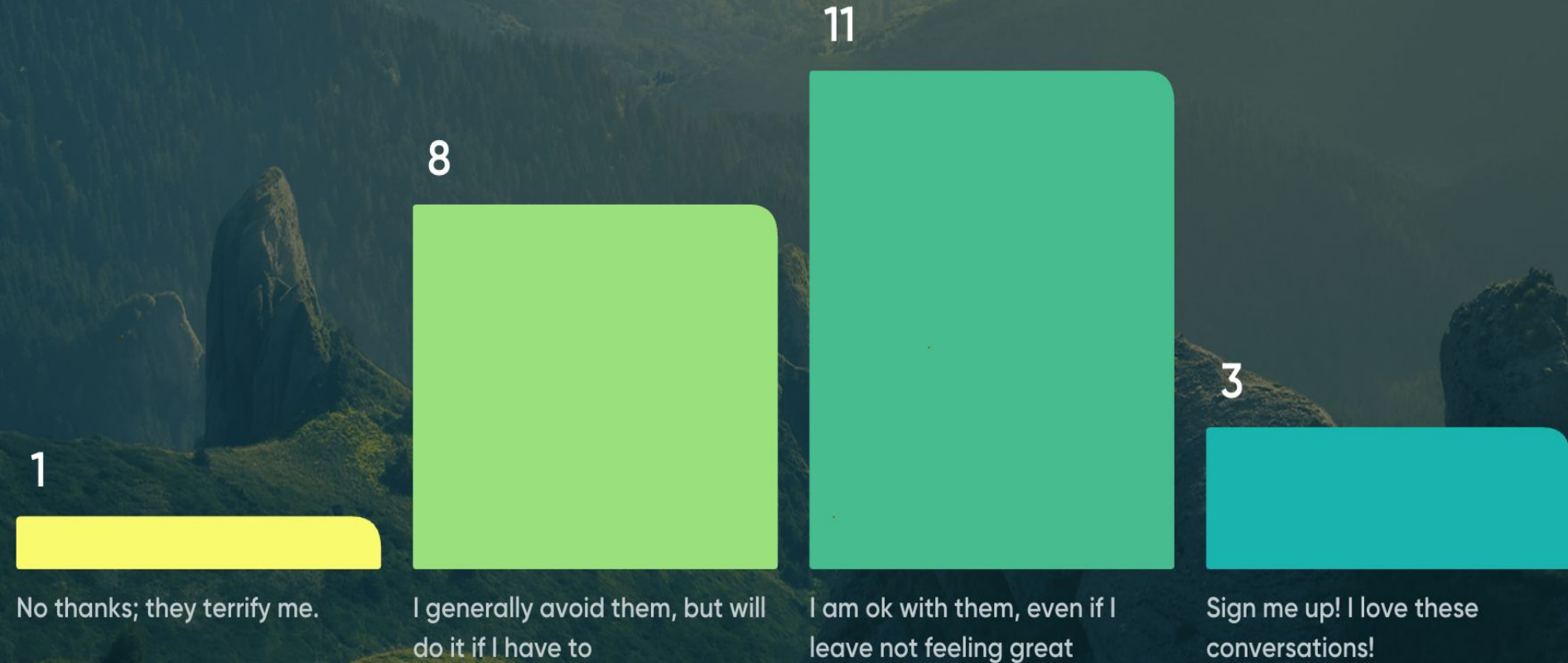


CROSSING VALUES DIVIDES

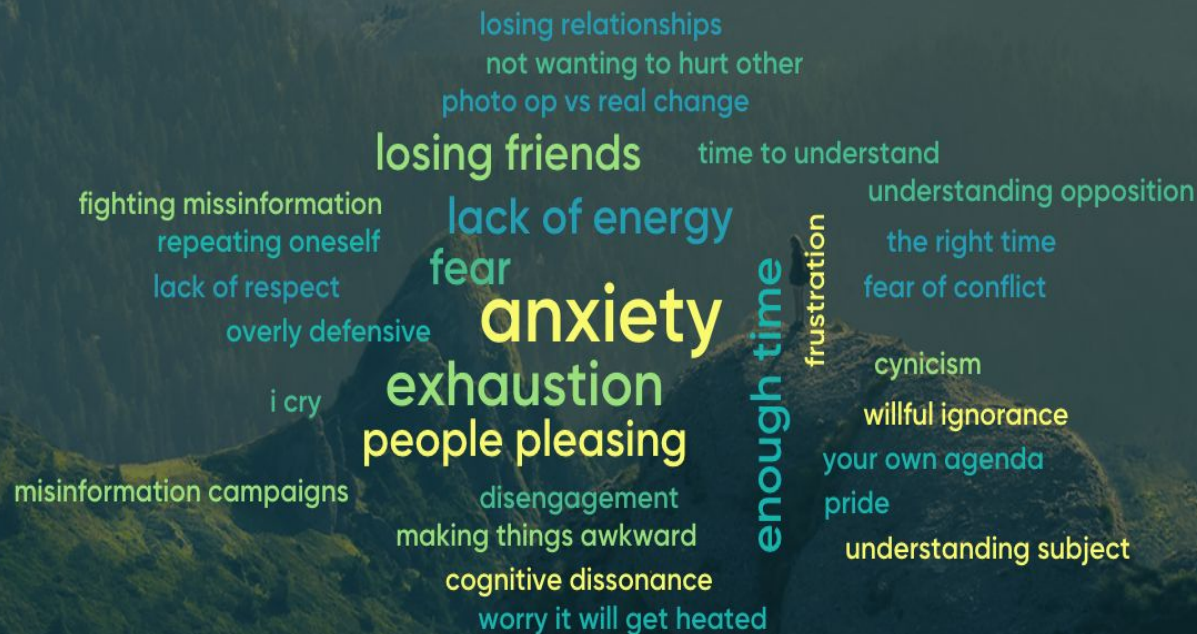
Having conversations with someone who you perceive has different values than you as an individual, or your organization. This could be related to:

- federal management of public lands
- allowable uses on public lands
- values around fairness, belonging, equity, etc.
- climate change and environmental work generally
- community engagement and outreach work

How comfortable are you having difficult conversations across values divides?



in one or two words, what are some things that get in the way of you having difficult conversations?



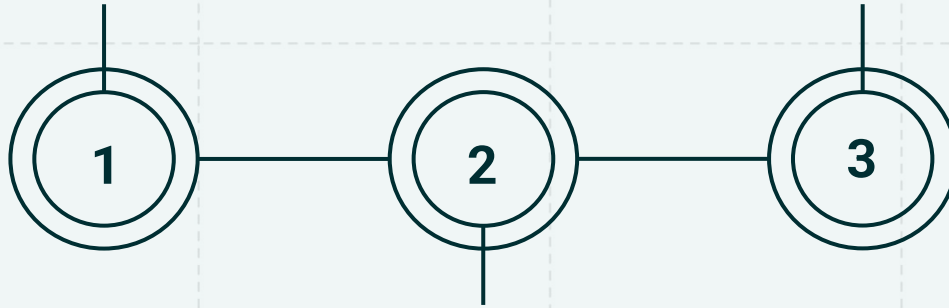
A word cloud centered on a background of a misty, mountainous landscape. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'anxiety' and 'exhaustion' being the largest and most prominent. Other words include 'losing friends', 'lack of energy', 'fear', 'people pleasing', 'misinformation campaigns', 'fighting misinformation', 'repeating oneself', 'lack of respect', 'overly defensive', 'i cry', 'disengagement', 'making things awkward', 'cognitive dissonance', 'worry it will get heated', 'enough time', 'frustration', 'understanding subject', 'pride', 'your own agenda', 'willful ignorance', 'cynicism', 'fear of conflict', 'the right time', 'understanding opposition', 'time to understand', 'photo op vs real change', 'not wanting to hurt other', and 'losing relationships'.

losing relationships
not wanting to hurt other
photo op vs real change
losing friends
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misinformation campaigns

AGENDA

Basic Checks

Supporting Self-Regulation



Guiding Principles for Bridging



01

Basic Checks

Safety

Your safety comes first – be sure that you feel safe or have a quick exit from the situation if start to feel unsafe (but remember discomfort isn't the same thing as unsafe)



Basic Needs

Be sure you are well-fed, hydrated, are well rested,, and any other basic bodily needs are taken care of



Time & Capacity

Be sure you have enough time to give to the conversation. Refrain from starting conversations you don't have adequate time to finish



Emotional Bandwidth

Be sure you are in a place where you can engage in emotionally-charged work



Your Desired Outcome

Educate, change behavior, change their minds, share your perspective, role model the conversation?



02

Guiding Principles for Bridging

Bridging

1. **Curiosity, not certainty:** Be curious about the root cause of their position; identify unmet needs
2. **Accountability, not punishment:** Work to focus on asking for accountability rather than punishing someone for their actions.
3. **Collaboration, not competition:** Work to support each other's learning rather than proving you know more
4. **Impact, not intent:** Focus on the impact of their actions, not their intent (which can be positive)
5. **Storytelling, not research/numbers:** Build a connection through stories rather than dropping facts and figures
6. **Find common ground, don't tell them they are wrong:** Do you want to be right, or in right relationship?

Bridging

- 1. Curiosity, not certainty:** Be curious about the root cause of their position; identify unmet needs
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The background features a light gray grid of dashed lines. Overlaid on this grid are several smooth, flowing, wavy lines in dark teal and light blue. These lines meander across the top and bottom of the image, creating a sense of movement and depth. The central text is positioned within the clear space of the grid.

“True listening is knowing truth that neither party possesses prior to the dialogue. The goal . . . is to create shared understanding grounded in actual lived experience without judgment.”

-George Goehl, *To See Each Other* podcast



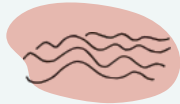
LISTEN...



with presence and focused
attention



to understand



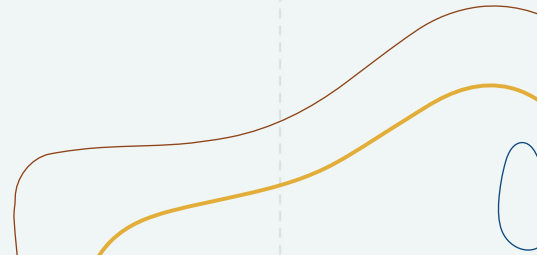
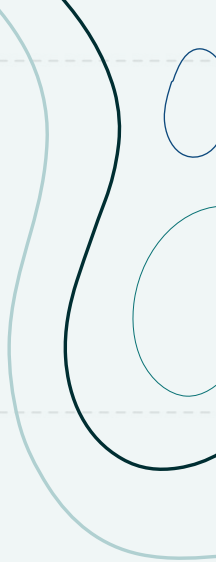
without interruption



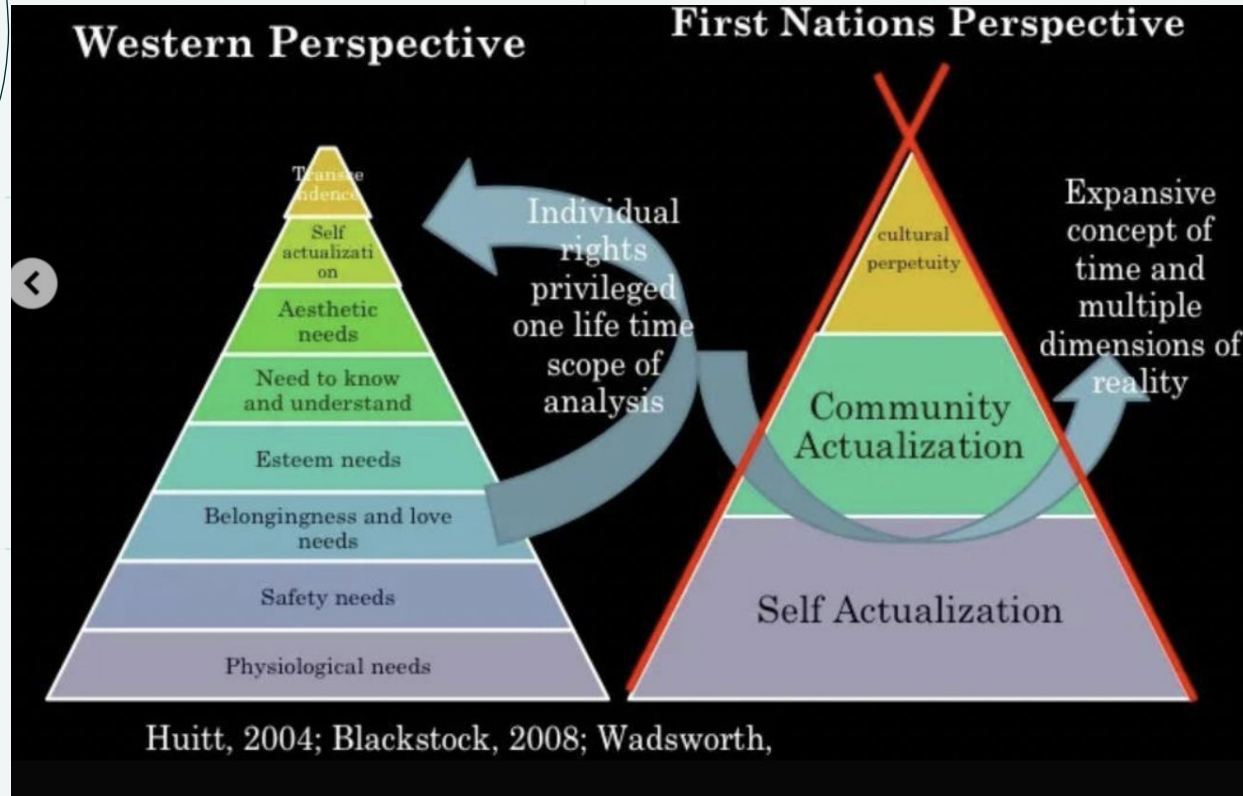
without judgment



with affirmation



Identify Unmet Needs



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EMERGENT STRATEGY SERIES

WE WILL NOT CANCEL US

 AND OTHER DREAMS OF
TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE.

by **adrienne maree brown**

Afterword by Malkia Devich Cyril

Punishment

- Conflating accountability with punishment
- Public call-outs and shaming of people we perceive have made mistakes
- Knee jerk collective punishment in movements. (amb)
- Using callouts to shame and humiliate people
- Using callouts to address misunderstandings, mistakes, and contradictions

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Competitive Wokeness



- “Dividing people into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ categories to ... separate the hip, anti-racist, on-top-of-their-stuff white people from the generally unaware white masses.” (Joanie Mayer)
- Distancing yourself from others who aren’t as aware
- Dismissing others as being self-righteous

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**Acknowledge
their intent, but
focus on impact**

Focus on benefits, not risks

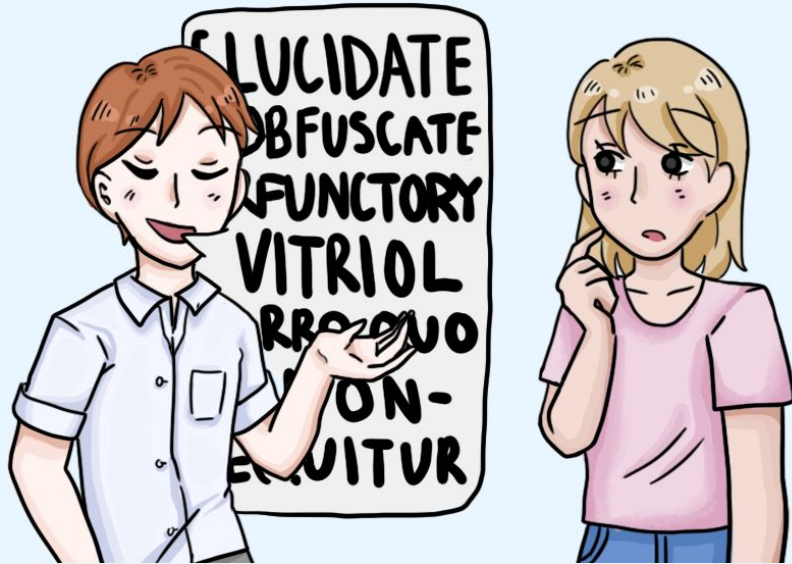
Sanitize Hands Upon
Entry/Exit of Rooms!

Aggregate GREAT SHIT!!
CS=95% WR=95% NR=90%

Guiding principles

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When you start rattling off research, data, and using jargon, people...



- shut down
- feel they are being patronized and talked down to
- feel alienated because they are not “in the know”
- are afraid to ask questions because they don’t want to come off as unintelligent
- double down on the “urban/coastal/intellectual etc.” stereotype

Tell a story

HOW STORYTELLING AFFECTS THE BRAIN



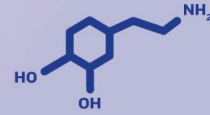
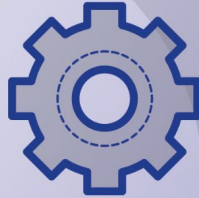
NEURAL COUPLING

A story activates parts in the brain that allows the listener to turn the story into their own ideas and experiences thanks to a process called neural coupling.



MIRRORING

Listeners will not only experience the similar brain activity to each other, but also to the speaker.



DOPAMINE

The brain releases dopamine into the system when it experiences an emotionally-charged event, making it easier to remember and with greater accuracy.



CORTEX ACTIVITY

When processing facts, two areas of the brain are activated (Broca's and Wernick's area). A well-told story can engage many additional areas, including the motor cortex, sensory cortex and frontal cortex.

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Maximalism

“considering anything less than the most idealistic position as a betrayal of core values and evidence of corruption, cowardice, lack of commitment, or vision”

- Maurice Mitchell

hostility to new ideas, reflexive criticism, and a vigilant search for mistakes and limitations.

- *Joyful Militancy*

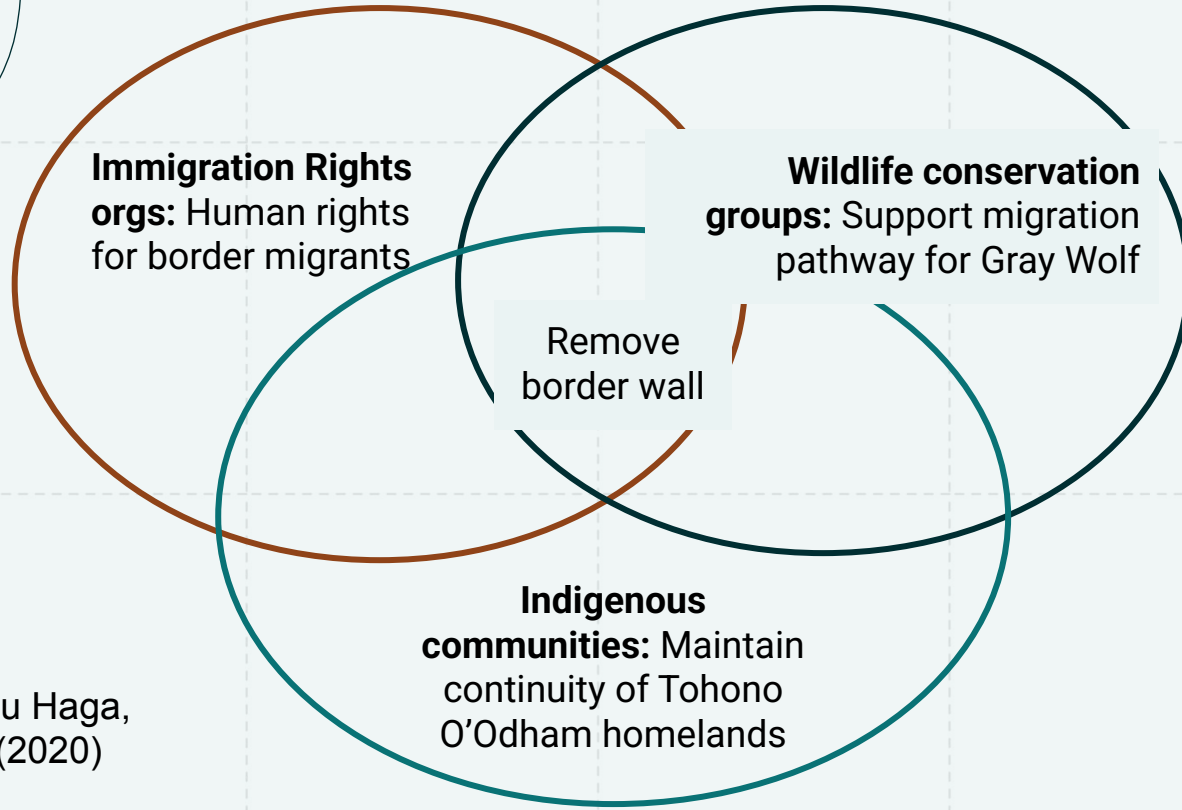


The slippery slope of self-righteousness

1. “They are ignorant.” They don’t have all the information and when we share it with them they’ll come around
2. “They are not smart.” They have all the information but aren’t smart enough to put it together
3. “They’re evil.” They have all the information and they’re smart, but they are just deliberately distorting it for their own malevolent purposes

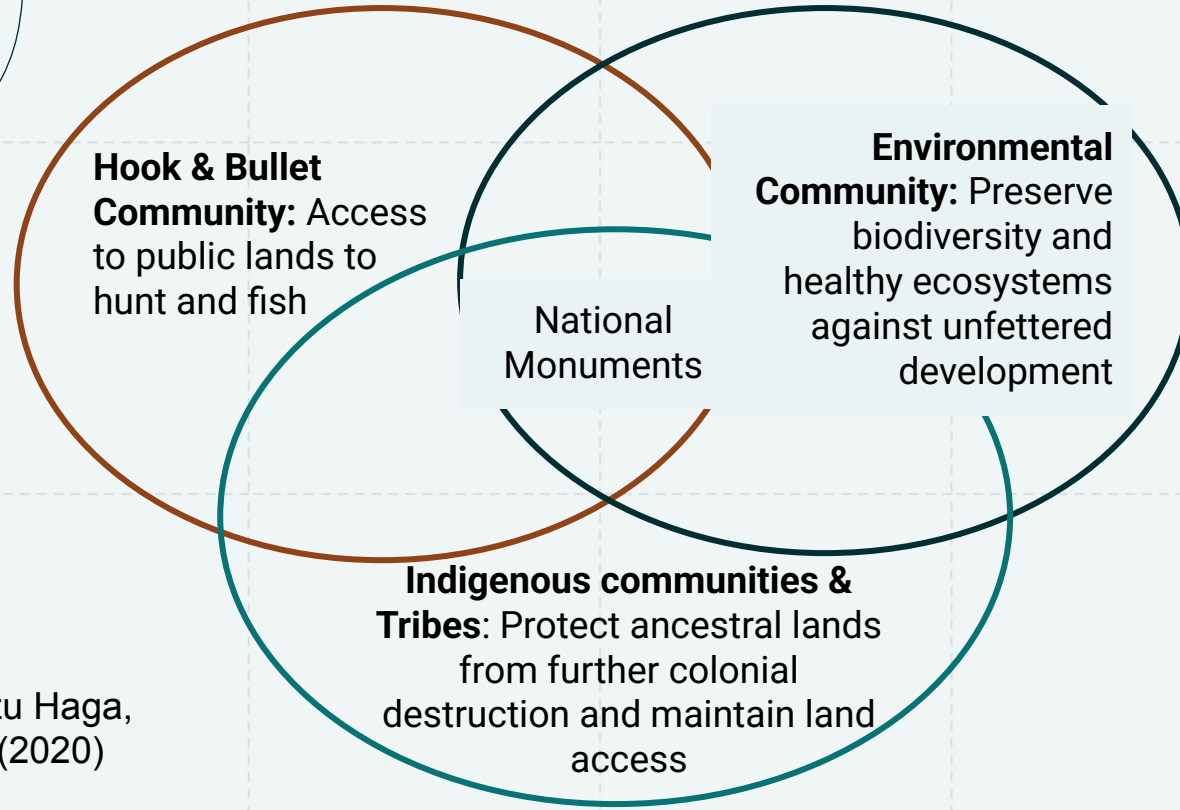
https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong

Find Common Ground

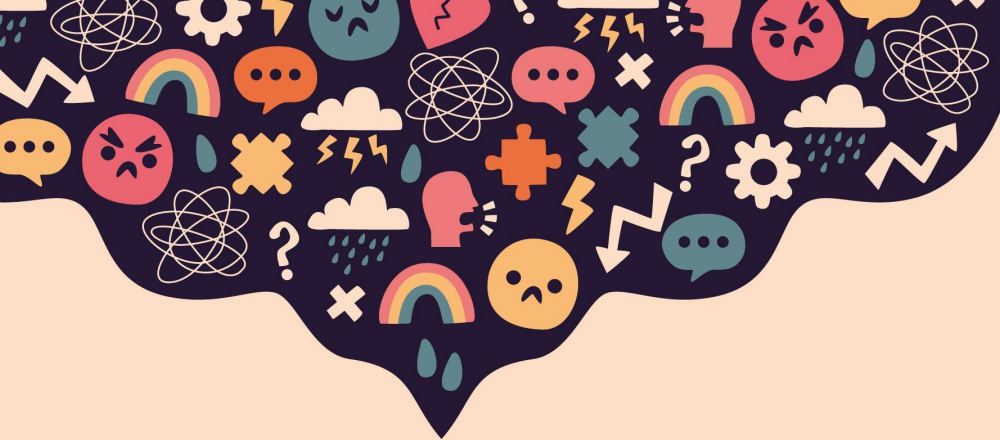


Adapted from Kazu Haga,
Healing Justice (2020)

Find Common Ground

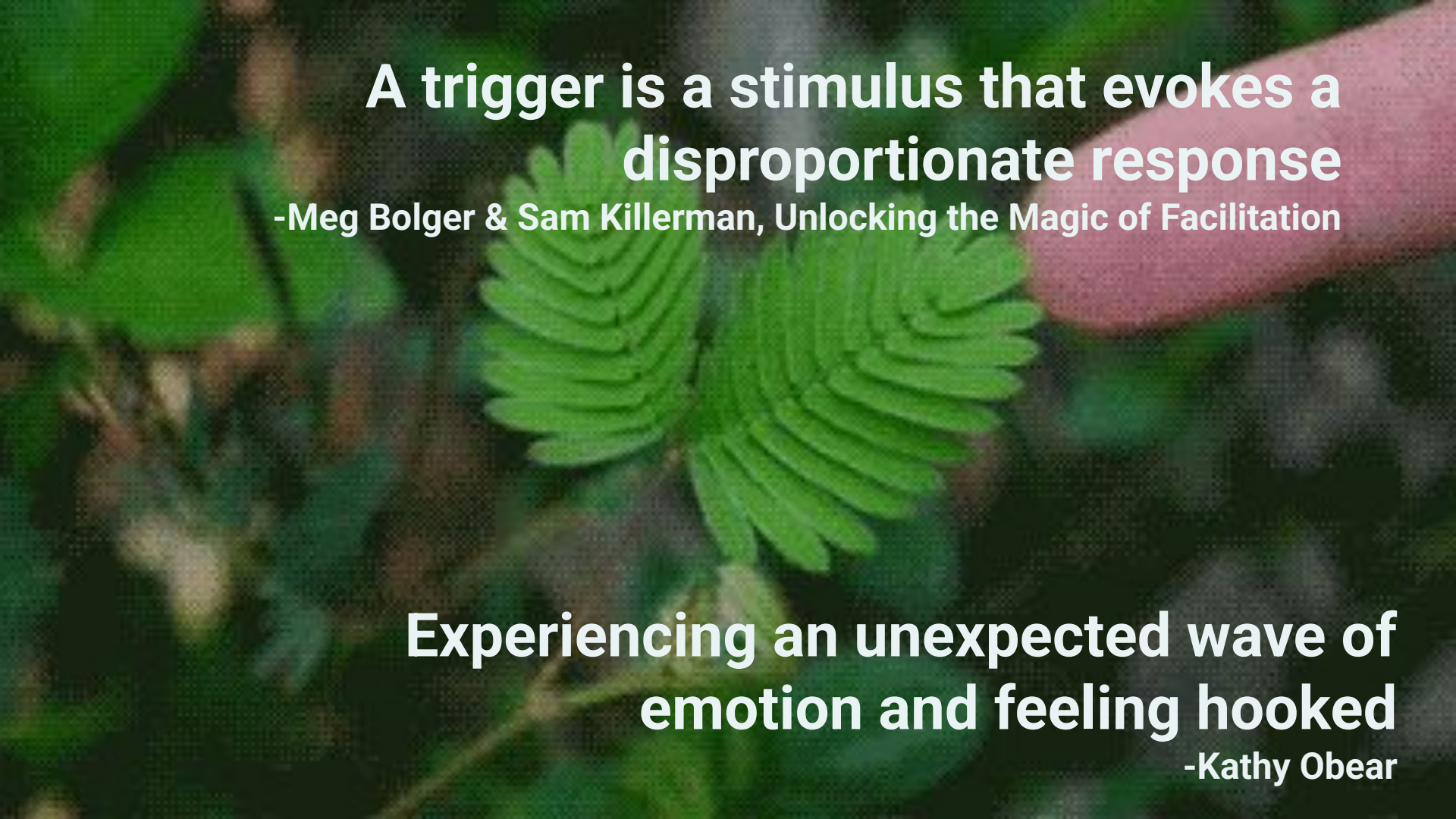


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03

Supporting Self-Regulation

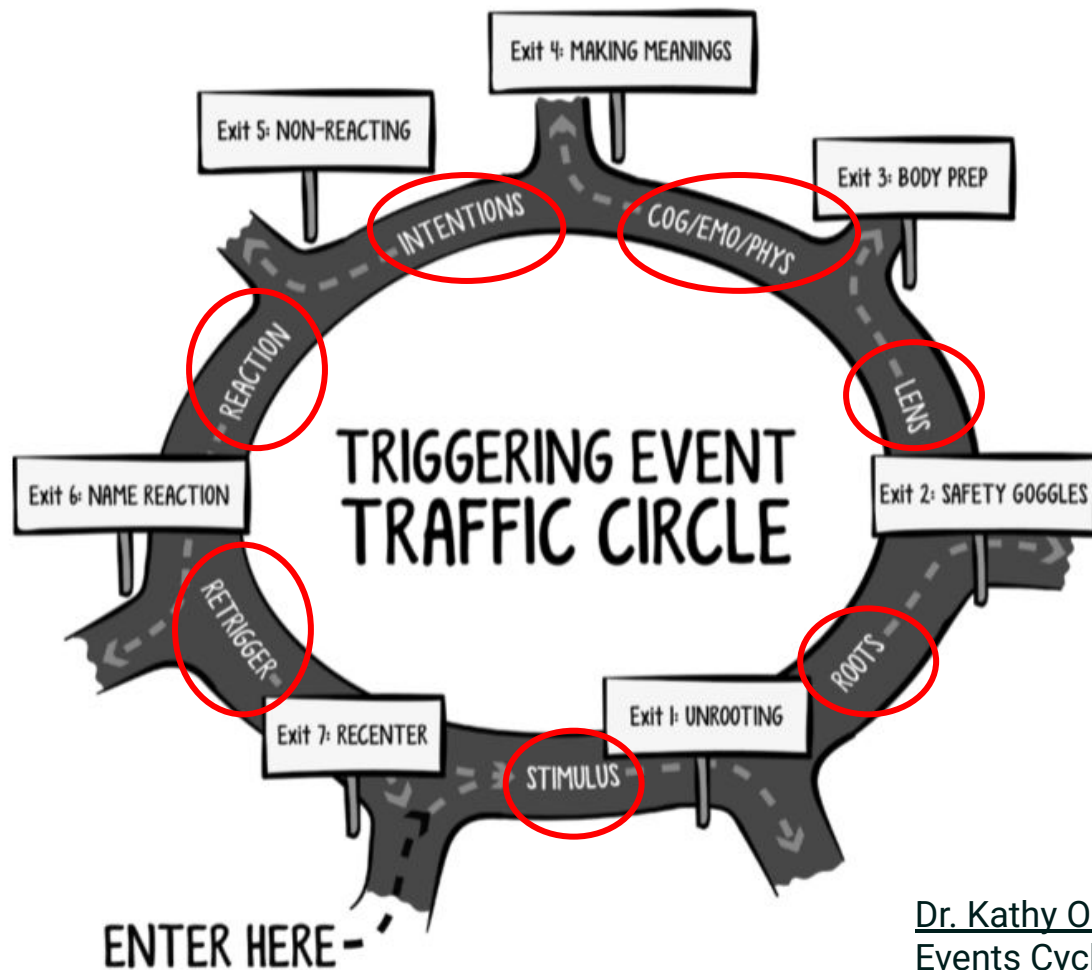


**A trigger is a stimulus that evokes a
disproportionate response**

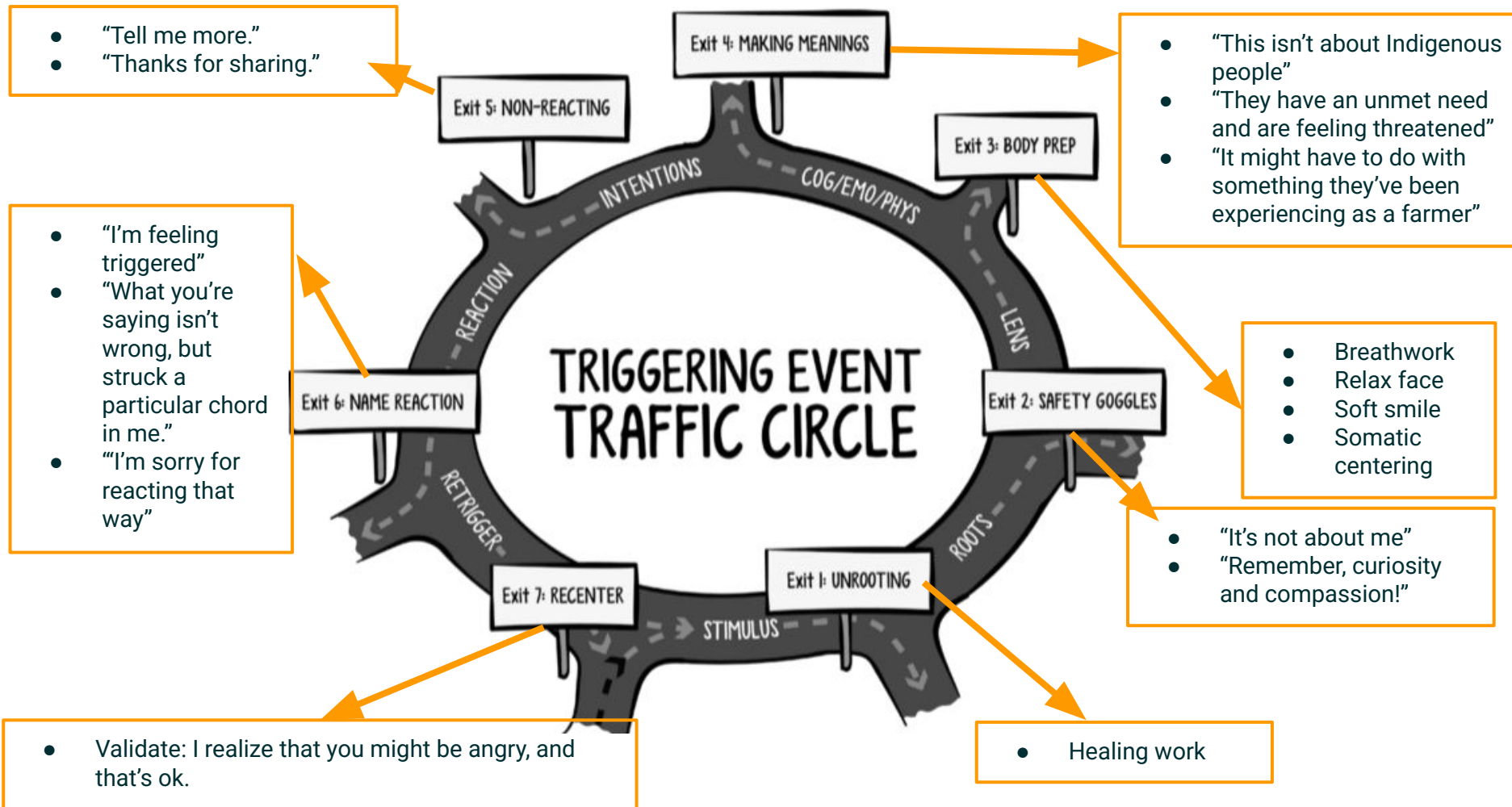
-Meg Bolger & Sam Killerman, Unlocking the Magic of Facilitation

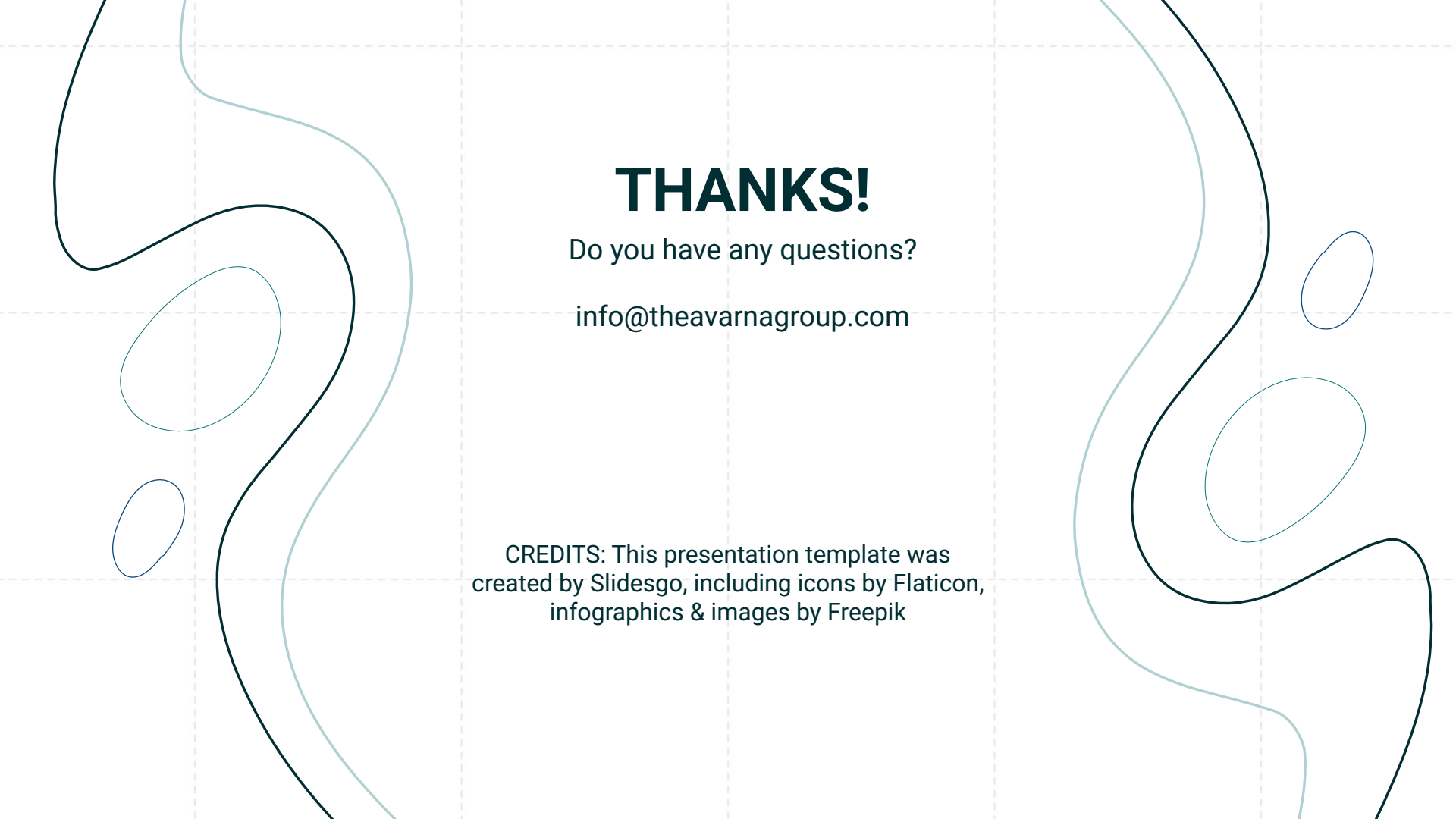
**Experiencing an unexpected wave of
emotion and feeling hooked**

-Kathy Obear



Dr. Kathy Obear on the Triggering Events Cycle as represented by Sam Killerman & Meg Bolger





THANKS!

Do you have any questions?

info@theavarnagroup.com

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