

Kansas State University Libraries

New Prairie Press

Academic Chairpersons Conference
Proceedings

40th Academic Chairpersons Conference

Embracing the Tension: A New/Ancient Approach to Problem Solving

Rick Olsen

University of North Carolina Wilmington, olsenr@uncw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/accp>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

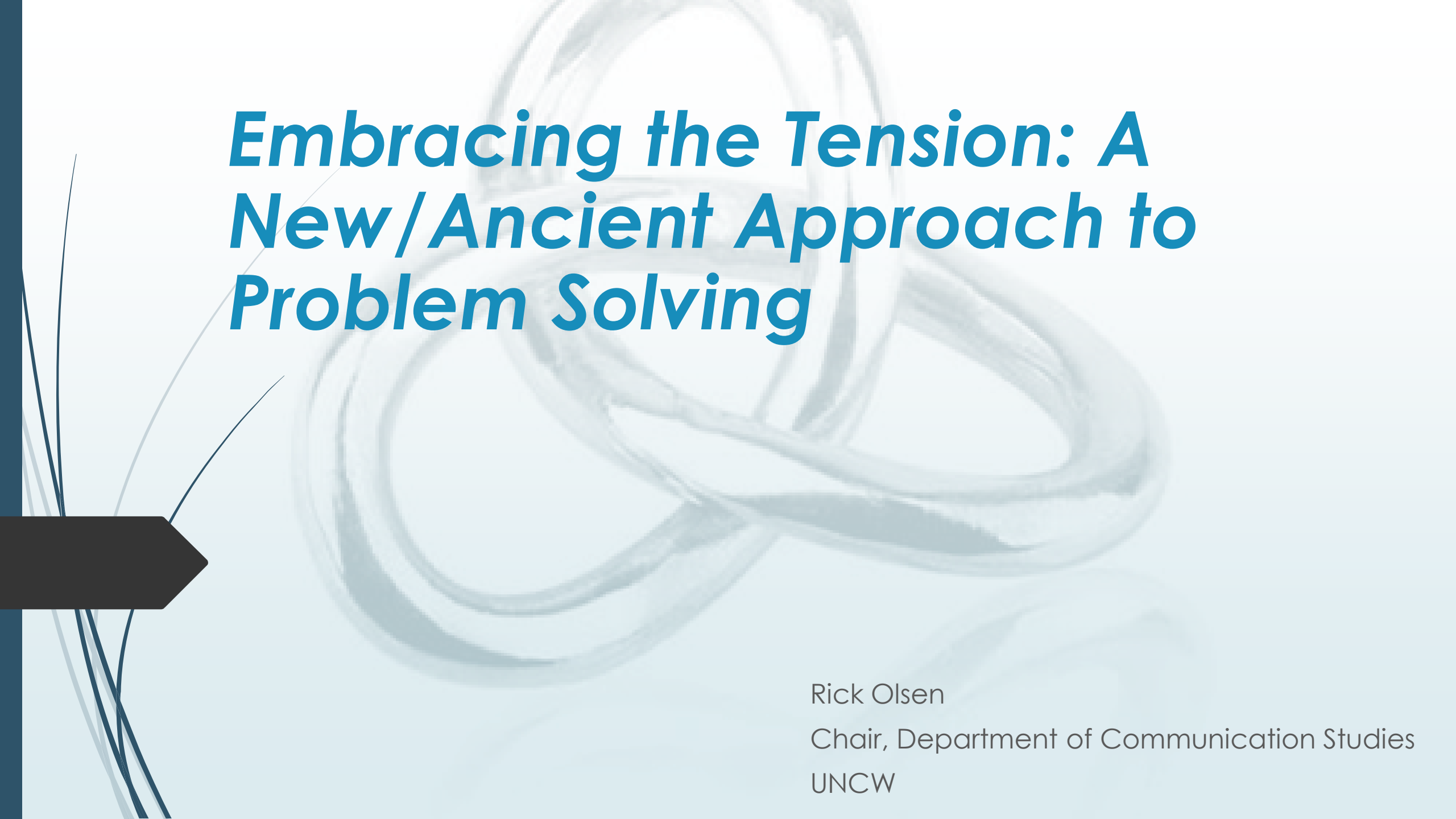


This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Olsen, Rick (2023). "Embracing the Tension: A New/Ancient Approach to Problem Solving," *Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings*. <https://newprairiepress.org/accp/2023/servant-leader/4>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.



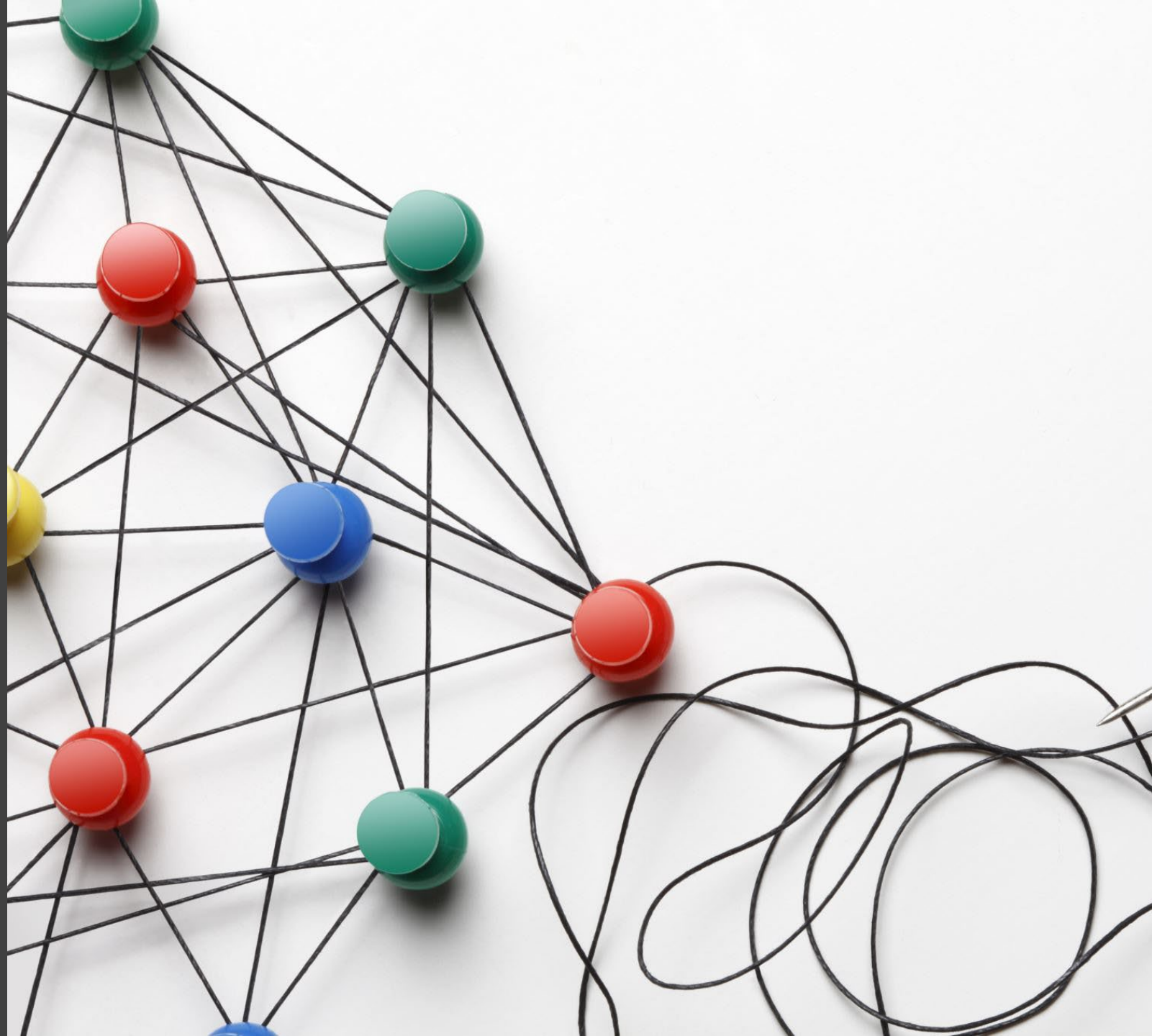
Embracing the Tension: A New/Ancient Approach to Problem Solving

Rick Olsen

Chair, Department of Communication Studies
UNCW

What We Will Try to Get Done Today

- ▶ Basics Assumptions: communication is a tool not simply a solution.
- ▶ Exploring Dialectic Tensions: what they are, how to clarify them.
- ▶ Application: Self Work
- ▶ Application: Collaborations
- ▶ Sharing: Victories, insights, etc.
- ▶ Q/A and wrap up
- ▶ But first . . .



50 hobby ideas for people with no idea



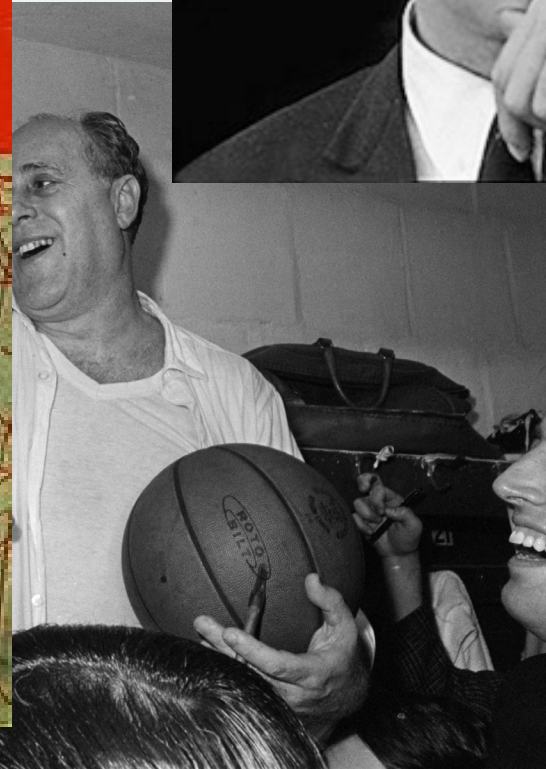
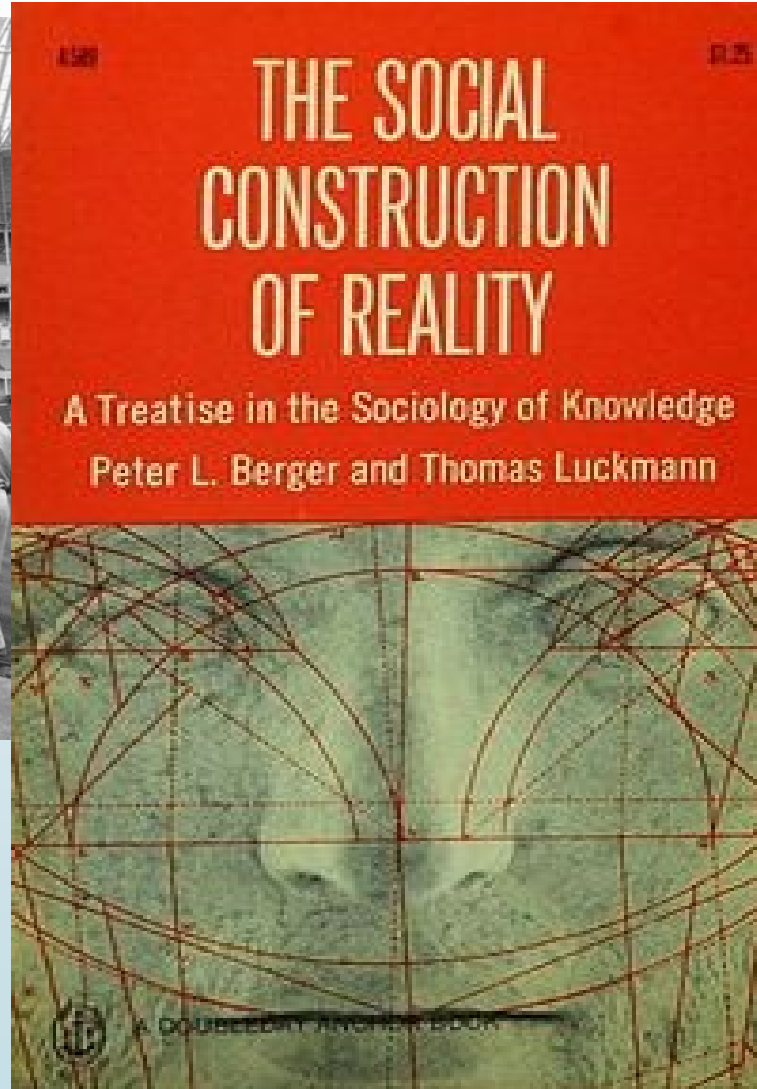
Who is in the Room?

1. Knitting.
2. Crochet.
3. Cross stitch.
4. Embroidery.
5. Quilt making.
6. Decoupage.
7. Upcycling.
8. Scrapbooking.
9. Pencil drawing.
10. Water colour painting.
11. Oil painting.
12. Adult colouring books.
13. Writing short stories.
14. Reading novels.
15. Reading comics.
16. Drawing comics.
17. Photography.
18. Graphic design.
19. Photo manipulation (photoshop).
20. Silk screening.
21. Lino cutting.
22. Calligraphy.
23. Litter picking.
24. Volunteer work at an animal shelter.
25. Cooking.
26. Baking.
27. Watching documentaries.
28. Watching films.
29. Watching anime.
30. Dog walking.
31. Hockey.
32. Basketball.
33. Football.
34. Rugby.
35. Tennis.
36. Badminton.
37. Table tennis.
38. Netball.
39. Yoga.
40. Pilates.
41. Zumba.
42. Spin classes.
43. Cycling.
44. Hiking.
45. Speed walking.
46. Glass blowing.
47. Pottery.
48. Sculpting.
49. Leatherwork.
50. Wood crafting.

- Preferred name
- Current Institution
- Role
- Time at that Role
- Hobby or interest outside of work*

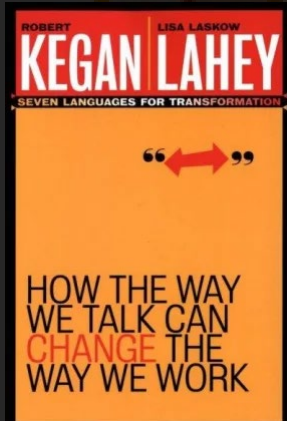
*If you have no time for interests outside of work, the conference offers mentoring sessions—please sign up!

The Year was 1966 . . .



We Live in a World of Meanings Not Things

→ “All leaders are leading language communities. Though every person, in any setting, has some opportunity to influence the nature of the language, leaders have exponentially greater access and opportunity to shape, alter, or ratify the existing language rules. In our view, leaders have no choice in this matter of being language leaders; it just goes with the territory.”



Interactions Co-create and Sustain The Meanings in Our World

- ▶ Meet someone new.
- ▶ Think of a word, phrase, frame or story that is sometimes or often that is helpful in referring to the challenges of your unit.
- ▶ Think of a word, phrase, frame or story that is sometimes or often used that is not helpful or even harmful in meeting the challenges of your organization.



Departmental Celebrations



We Live in a World of Meaning not
Things



Things



Meaning

Relationships, Movement and Meaning



“... we do understand the world better not in terms of things, but in terms of interaction between things, and how things interact with one another, even in biology. We understand biology in terms of evolution, how things change, and how — we understand the antelope because there's a lion and the lion because there's antelope. We don't have them in isolation.”

~ Carlo Rovello, Physicist



Make Room in Our Language to Move From Nouns to Verbs

Noun Focus

- “Build”
- Destination
- Closure
- Goal of Certainty
- Conflict as “breaking” continuity
- Solve Contradiction

Verb Focus

- “Navigate”
- Journey
- Process
- Goal of Adaptability
- Conflict as part of continuity
- **Manage tensions**

Performing Leadership: How should a leader be a “leader?”





We Live in a World of Motion and Relationships



Noun



Verb

We are Leading People, not Job Titles

- ▶ This perspective should foster humility, not despair.
- ▶ This perspective should help us remember that our expertise does not save us from basic struggles:
 - ▶ Autonomy
 - ▶ Mastery
 - ▶ Purpose
 - ▶ We're known, valued and accepted/loved



We Are Leading People, Not Job Titles



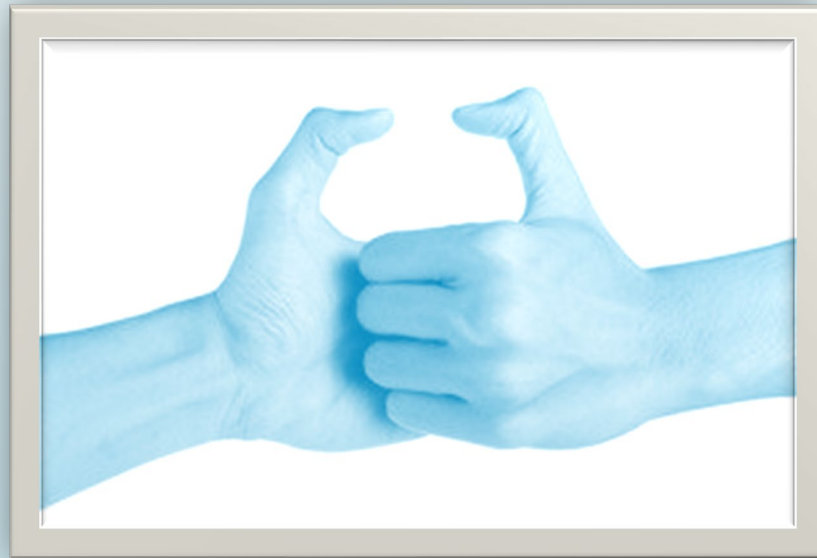


Personal Reflection and Application

- ▶ What aspect of “human nature” offers the biggest leadership challenge to you?
- ▶ What strengths do you have as a person that you anticipate leveraging in your approach to leadership?

Application Activity!

- ▶ Find a partner—someone you don't know yet!
- ▶ Introduce yourselves
- ▶ Try to get as many “pins” as possible



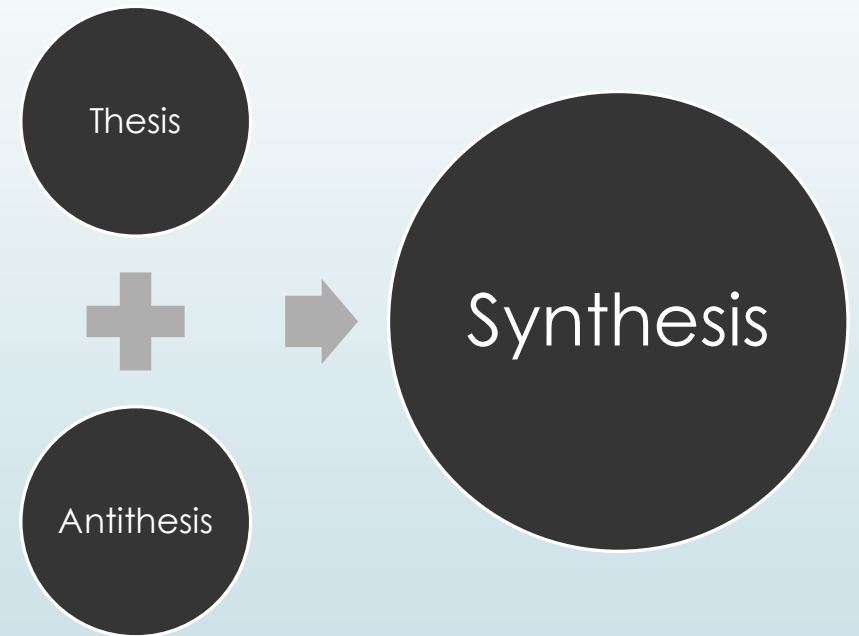


Responding to Enduring Challenges

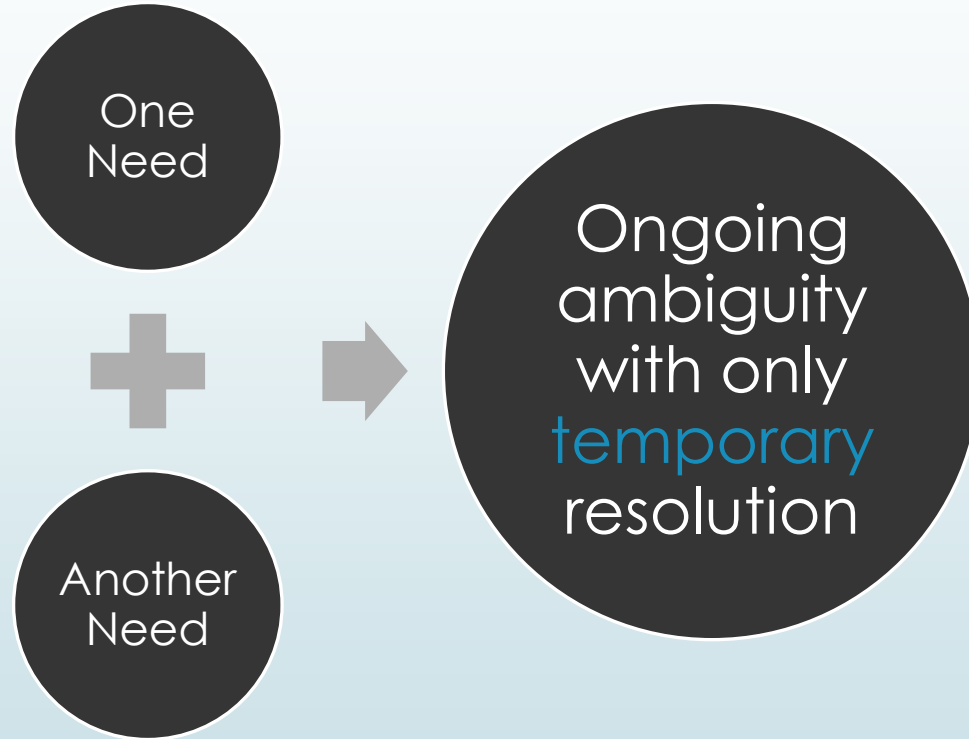
Is it a problem you can solve Or a problem you can only manage?

Dialectics: Ancient Roots

- Classical Era: Debate, Dialectic and Dialogue
- Hegel's Dialectic: contrary processes not just ideas
- Other synonyms: paradox, double-bind, etc.



Contemporary Dialectics: Management not Synthesis



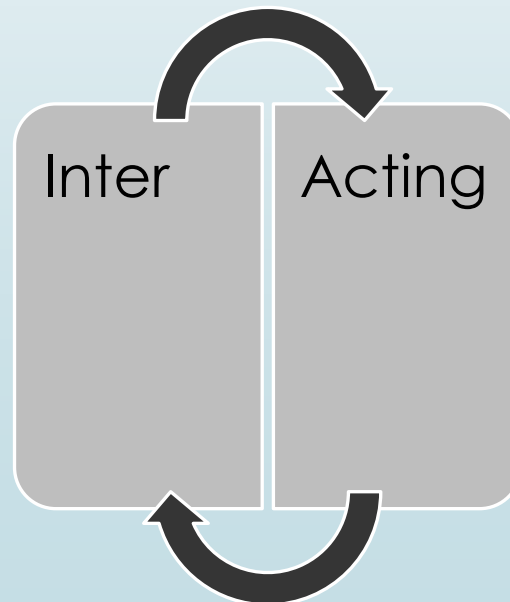
► Key Scholars

- Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery
- William Rawlins
- Many others have followed

Current best thinking/doing/being

Relational Dialectics: The Big Three

- Integration --- Separation
- Stability --- Change
- Expression --- Nonexpression





Many Other Tensions

- Ideal --- Real
- Empathy --- Efficiency
- Responsive --- Responsible
- _____ --- _____
- _____ --- _____
- _____ --- _____

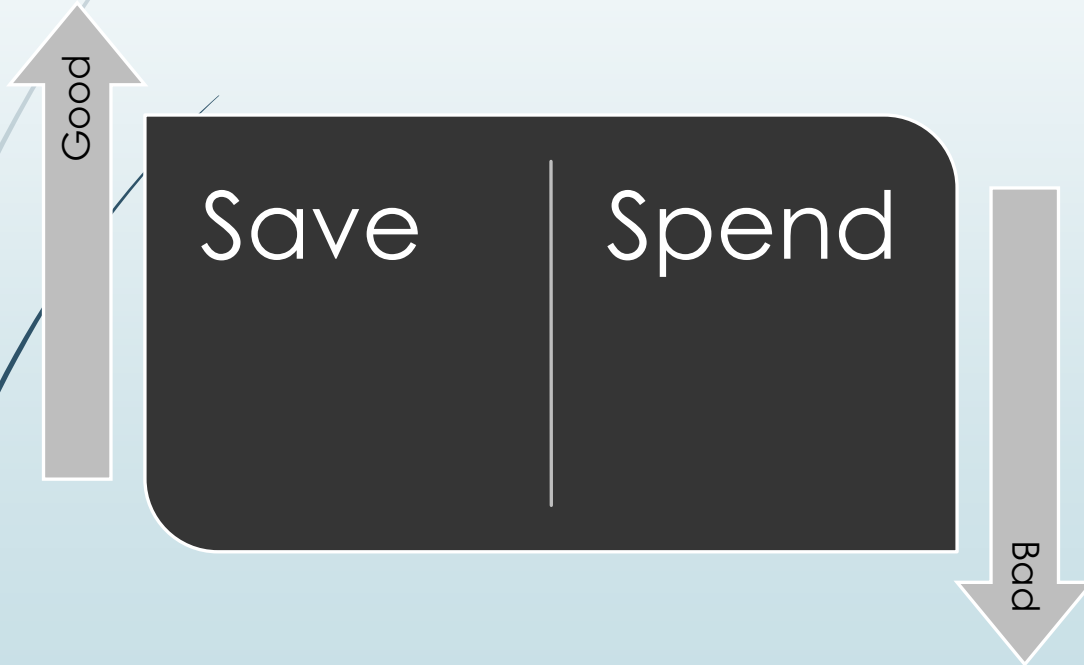
DEVELOPING FACULTY ACROSS THE CAREER SP.

This chart provides examples of the kinds of faculty development activities you may choose to engage in at each career phase at Seattle University through the Center for Faculty Development.

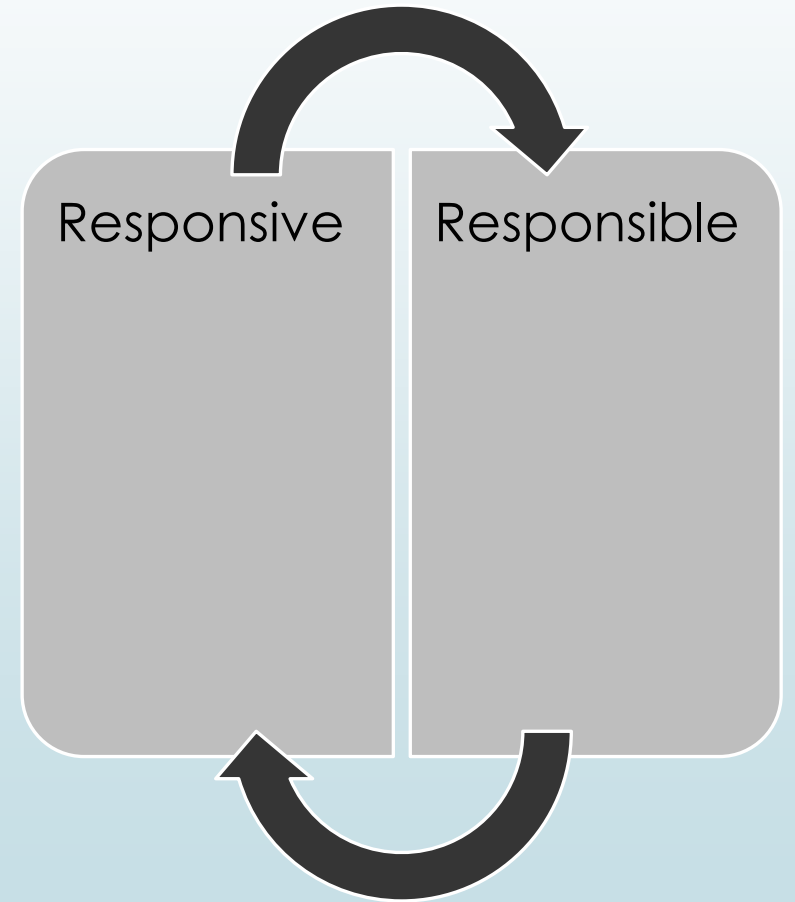
EARLY CAREER FORMATION establishing your academic career	MID-CAREER EXPANSION advancing in one or more area(s)	LATE CAREER GENERATIVITY investing across generations
New Faculty Institute Active learning workshops Course design workshops and learning communities Fine-tuning (consultations)	Program design sessions High-impact practices Peer consulting Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)	High-impact practices Peer consulting FAQNet internal network Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)
New Faculty Institute New Faculty Writing Groups "Building your scholarly profile" series NCFDD research practice teleworkshops	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes Scholarship of teaching & learning (consultations)	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes "Reframing your scholarly profile" series
New Faculty Institute The New Academic learning community NCFDD Core teleworkshop series	FAQNet internal networking New Chair & Director Institute Chairs' Community of Practice NCFDD one-off teleworkshops	FAQNet internal network Chairs' Community of Practice Encore careers (consultations) Pre-retirement sessions

Reframing Enduring Challenges

Not This



But This





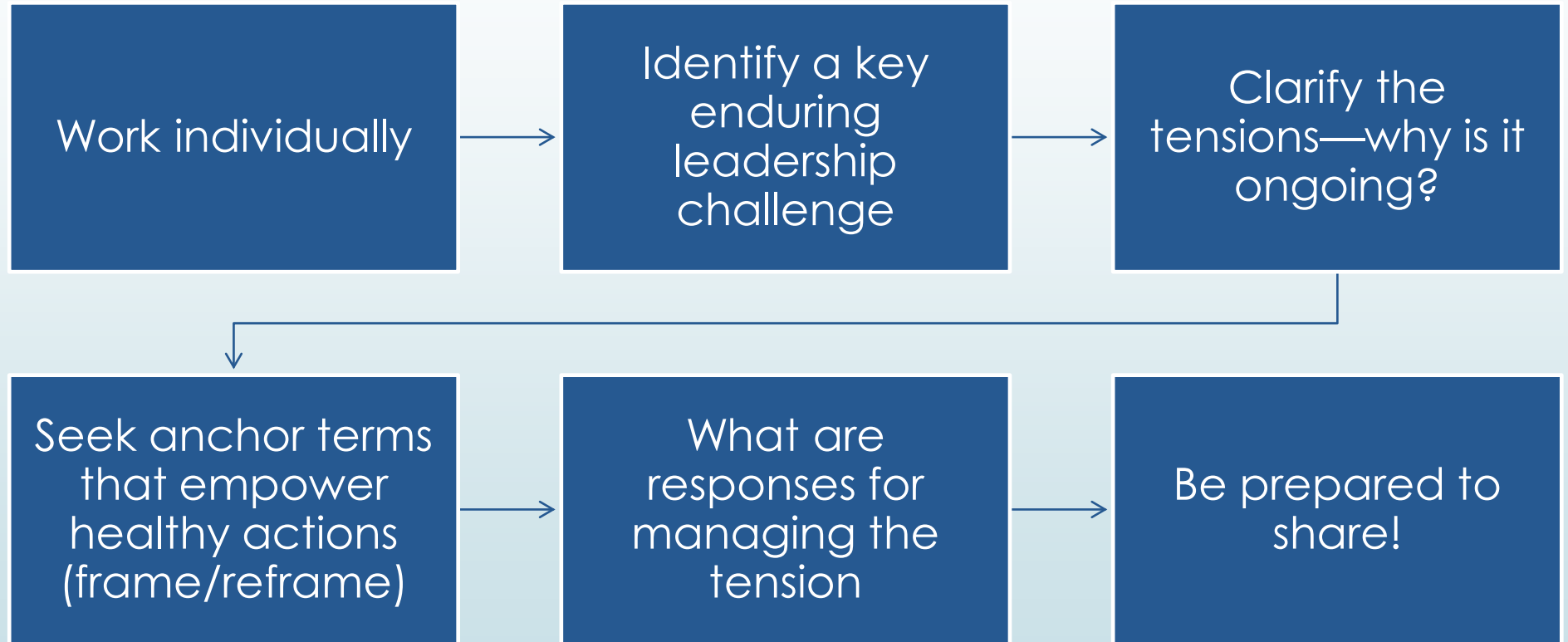
Many Other Tensions

- Ideal --- Real
- Empathy --- Efficiency
- Responsive --- Responsible
- _____ --- _____
- _____ --- _____
- _____ --- _____

DEVELOPING FACULTY ACROSS THE CAREER SP.
 This chart provides examples of the kinds of faculty development activities you may choose to engage in at each career phase at Seattle University through the Center for Faculty Development.

EARLY CAREER FORMATION establishing your academic career	MID-CAREER EXPANSION advancing in one or more area(s)	LATE CAREER GENERATIVITY investing across generations
New Faculty Institute Active learning workshops Course design workshops and learning communities Fine-tuning (consultations)	Program design sessions High-impact practices Peer consulting Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)	High-impact practices Peer consulting FAQNet internal network Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)
New Faculty Institute New Faculty Writing Groups "Building your scholarly profile" series NCFDD research practice teleworkshops	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes Scholarship of teaching & learning (consultations)	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes "Reframing your scholarly series"
New Faculty Institute The New Academic learning community NCFDD Core teleworkshop series	FAQNet internal networking New Chair & Director Institute Chairs' Community of Practice NCFDD one-off teleworkshops	FAQNet internal network Chairs' Community of Practice Encore careers (consultations) Pre-retirement sessions

“Let’s try it!” part ONE: Self Work

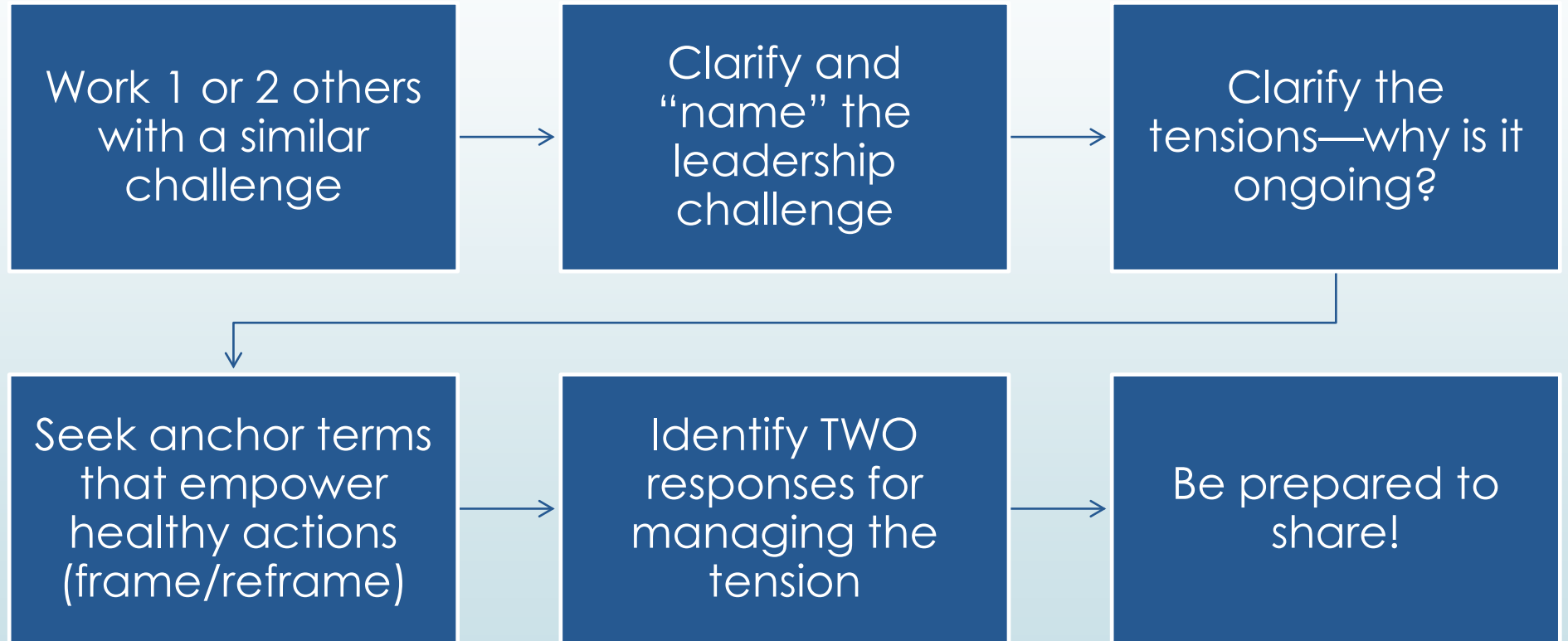


Key: Positive --- Positive

GOAL: “Healthy, Sustainable, & Effective Management of Ongoing Tensions”



“Let’s try it!” part TWO: Collaborations



Key: Positive --- Positive

Share the Brilliance!



Final “name” for enduring challenge



Final terms for clarifying tension(s)



How this help your leadership efforts

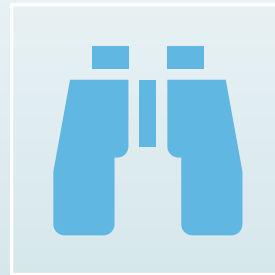


Two things to “verb” this insight

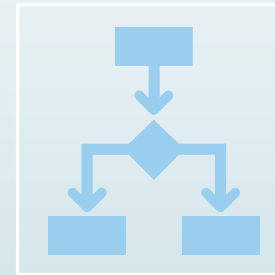
Bringing This Perspective Back With You



Explore meanings held by self and others through circular questioning.



Focus on “use” and “outcome” not right/wrong or good/bad.



Search HARD for the enduring tensions. Use them to frame/reframe enduring issues.

Rapid Review: Retirement for Faculty

- World of Meaning: What does retirement mean?
- World of Interactions: What interaction patterns are sustaining those meanings?
- Leading People: autonomy, mastery, purpose? Fears? Hopes?
- What imbedded tensions need articulation and navigation?

DEVELOPING FACULTY ACROSS THE CAREER SPAN			
This chart provides examples of the kinds of faculty development activities you may choose to engage in at each career phase at Seattle University through the Center for Faculty Development.			
	EARLY CAREER FORMATION establishing your academic career	MID-CAREER EXPANSION advancing in one or more area(s)	LATE CAREER GENERATIVITY investing across generations
LEARNING AND TEACHING	New Faculty Institute Active learning workshops Course design workshops and learning communities Fine-tuning (consultations)	Program design sessions High-impact practices Peer consulting Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)	High-impact practices Peer consulting FAQNet internal networking Experimentation and alternative pedagogies (consultations)
RESEARCH PRACTICE	New Faculty Institute New faculty Writing Groups "Building your scholarly profile" series NCFDD research practice teleworkshops	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes Scholarship of teaching & learning (consultations)	Mid-/late-career Writing Groups Interdisciplinary Research Sandboxes "Reframing your scholarly legacy" series
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	New Faculty Institute The New Academic learning community NCFDD Core teleworkshop series	FAQNet internal networking New Chair & Director Institute Chairs' Community of Practice NCFDD one-off teleworkshops	FAQNet internal networking Chairs' Community of Practice Encore careers (consultations) Pre-retirement sessions

How Can You Bring This Perspective Back With You?



Explore meanings held by self and others through circular questioning.



Focus on "use" and "outcome" not right/wrong or good/bad.



Search HARD for the enduring tensions. Use them to frame/reframe enduring issues.



Prep and Landing

- What questions can I respond to so this session is useful to you?
- What insights have emerged for you or your group that might help others see how to understand or apply what we've covered?
- Other thoughts or comments?

A black arrow points to the right from the left edge of the slide. Below it, several thin, dark blue lines curve upwards and to the right, resembling stylized grass or reeds.

Rick Olsen, Ph.D.
Dept. of
Communication Studies,
UNCW
olsenr@uncw.edu

A large, circular graphic with a textured, brush-stroke border in a teal color. Inside the circle, the words "Thank you!" are written in a white, cursive script font.

Thank
you!