

# 5 – Time to Think



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*learning*

# Time to Think



# Listening

- It is not only about listening but *the way you do it*.
- It is about what can happen if:
  - you listen as expertly as you can,
  - you ennoble people with the depth of your attention and shake them to their roots by convincing them that they can think for themselves,
  - you take them into your heart,
  - you show them that who they are and what they think matter, profoundly.

# Paying attention

- It is by simply paying attention that is dignifying and providing encouragement that the coachee can find themselves thinking clearly in the coach's presence, suddenly understanding what before had been confusing, finding a brand-new, surprising idea or perspective. This is being fully present.
- You may find excitement where there has been a tedium. *“You faced something. You solved a problem. You felt good again.”*

# Coach behaviour

- Keeping your eyes on the coachee.
- The way you lean back and an at ease posture.
- Facial expressions of affirmation when the coachee finds a new and precise way to express something.
- The tone used and the sounds made.
- Laughing with but not at.
- *Encouraging* exploration of new ways of thinking.
- Trust your own silence.

## Coach behaviour contd

- Cultivate genuine fascination with what is said.
- Allowing the coachee to express emotion.
- Not being alarmed at the subject matter.
- Not competing with the coachee for space.
- Providing the coachee with the required information.
- *Affirming* and not criticizing.
- *Not interrupting* or finishing sentences for the coachee.

# Quality of thinking

- Our thinking depends on the quality of attention we provide for each other. *The quality of a person's attention determines the quality of other people's thinking.*
- High quality listening ignites the human mind.
- At its core, it is based on an unswerving faith in the power of people's thinking.

# Action

- “Everything we *do* depends for its quality on the *thinking* we do first.”  
(Kline 1999)
- Every action is only as good as the idea behind it.
- To improve action we must improve thinking.
- It is important to implement the actions we identify and decide on.

# The environment

- This power can be liberated in a supportive space that offers the thinker (coachee), an engaged listener (coach) as well as the unrushed time, permission and expectation that the thinker will explore their situation at their own pace, to produce their own, meaningful answers.

# Liberating thoughts

- Between you and a wellspring of good ideas is a limiting assumption.
- This assumption can be removed with an Incisive Question.
- Incisive Questions will remove blocks and allow people to think of things they did not imagine before.
- Incisive Questions increase the functional intelligence of human beings.

# Solving problems

- With this high-calibre listening and with Incisive Questions, people solve problems they thought were hopeless, they build relationships and organizations that are inherently rich.

# Putting it into practice

- Yet is not necessarily simple to put into practice.
- Many of us equate giving advice and information with looking professional, so listening of the calibre integral to a true thinking environment effectively means unlearning much of our professional training.
- It means not interrupting, not interposing our own conclusions and not judging.
- It also involves stripping away, or at least setting aside, our own ego, to focus on the person we're listening to, giving them the attention, ease and encouragement they need to think freely.
- A thinking environment is natural but rare.
- The process should be simple, natural and enjoyable – this takes practice.

# Why it works

- IQ, age, background, gender and even experience seem to have surprisingly little to do with the times when students think well.
- The most important factor in whether or not they could think for themselves, afresh, at a given moment seemed to be *how they were being treated by the people with them*.
- When someone in your presence is trying to think, much of what you are hearing and seeing is *your effect on them*.
- Once you discover what that thinking-enhancing behaviour is, you could learn replicate it.
- Unlike IQ or background, *behaviour towards someone is not inherent - It can change*.

# Coachee Perspective

- Coachees often comment that they didn't think it was possible to come up with so many good ideas in such a short time.
- Ideas turn into action more quickly and positively after they have had time to think in this way.
- Coachees enjoy the process.
- They feel empowered.

# The thinking environment

- There are ten ways of being together and of treating each other.
- This combination is called the **Thinking Environment**.
- This is particularly effective in team dynamics.
- If you set up the right conditions, people *will* think for themselves.'

# Benefits of a thinking environment

- ‘We don’t take time to think about what we are doing; we are too busy doing it’, there *is* time to think. In fact, *to take time to think is to gain time to live.*
- We should create a Thinking Environment because it works. Because everything depends on it. And because if you get good at it, you have a tool for life.
- The Thinking Environment could become the centrepiece of organizations, relationships and families. We have ignored it for too long.
- By mastering the theory and skill of a Thinking Environment work, their life and relationships will be enriched.
- Organizations produce better ideas in less time with better business outcomes. Motivation and commitment of the work force is improved. And children who grow up in a Thinking Environment do treat others well and live responsibly.
- Most important is the possibility of world which is a Thinking Environment and is stimulating, kind, alive, authentic, where no human mind is wasted, and no human heart is trampled.
- We will not only improve things for ourselves but we may also create a legacy we would be proud to leave.

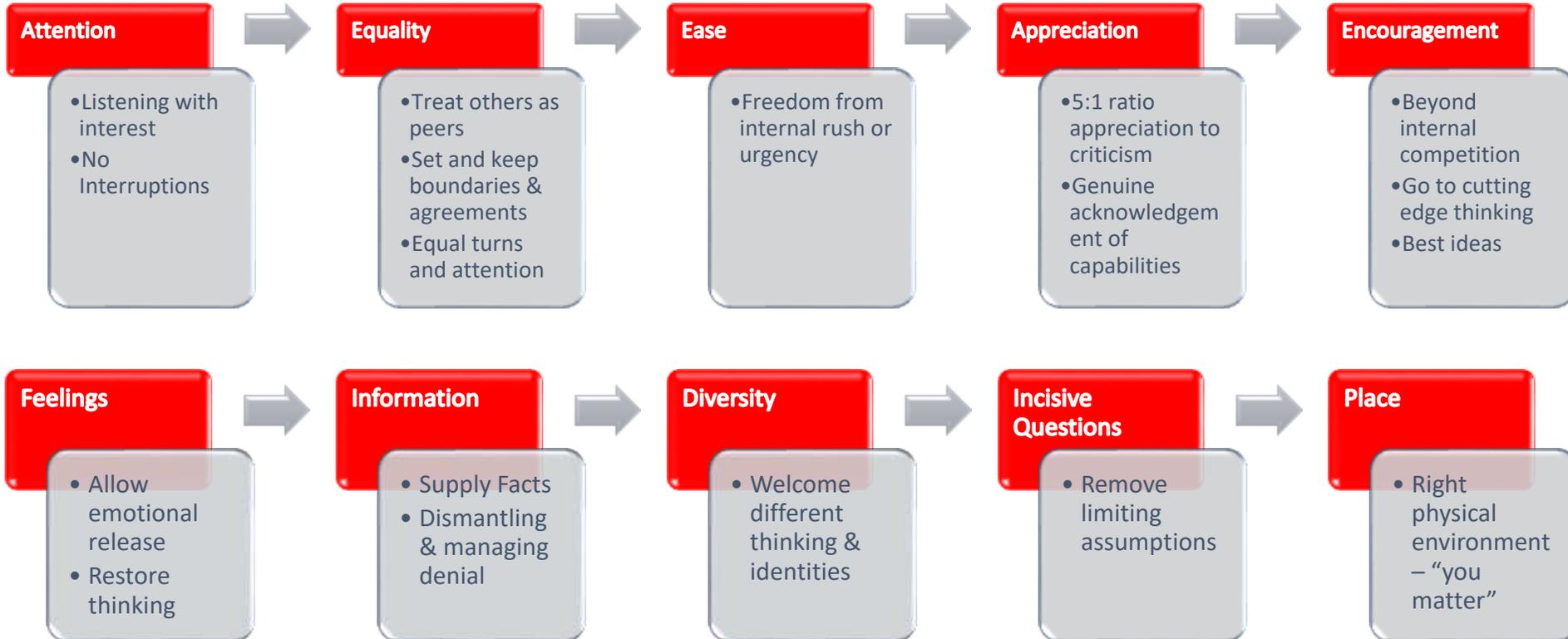
# Application

- There are two major applications of the theory:
  - the Thinking Organization and
  - the Thinking Partnership.
- We can apply the thinking to five important arenas of human life and work (health, schools, politics, love relationships and families). (Wheel of life).
- These could change if they became Thinking Environments.

# Nancy Kline's Thinking Partnership®

- Nancy Kline's question framework comprises a six-stage process underpinned by ten components or behaviours and positive philosophical choice.
- One of the key theories which determines how we work with clients in the "coaching conversation" is that of "positive philosophical choice" which is the "chosen philosophical view that *human beings are by nature good: intelligent, loving, powerful, multi-talented, emotional, assertive, able to think through anything, imaginative and logical*".
- Kline says that "behaviour to the contrary is seen as the result of assumptions generated over a lifetime by events, conditions and attitudes in a person's environment" (Kline, 2005:4).

# Time to think components



# Six-stage Thinking Environment<sup>®</sup> coaching process

- In Kline's Thinking Environment<sup>®</sup> sequence, the crucial work is to identify and replace limiting assumptions with a more powerful worldview by choosing one core limiting assumption at a time that is relevant to the presenting issue.
- Our thinking, feeling, decision-making and action are driven by assumptions. The good ideas and feelings come from true liberating assumptions. The bad ones come from untrue limiting assumptions.

# From bad to good

So, to breakthrough from bad to good, the mind seems to go through roughly this sequence of questions:

- What am I assuming that is limiting my thinking here?
- What am I assuming that is most limiting my thinking here? (Core limiting assumption).
- Is that assumption true?
- What is a liberating true alternative to the limiting assumption?
- If I knew (insert true alternative), what would I think or feel or do?

# The method in a nutshell:

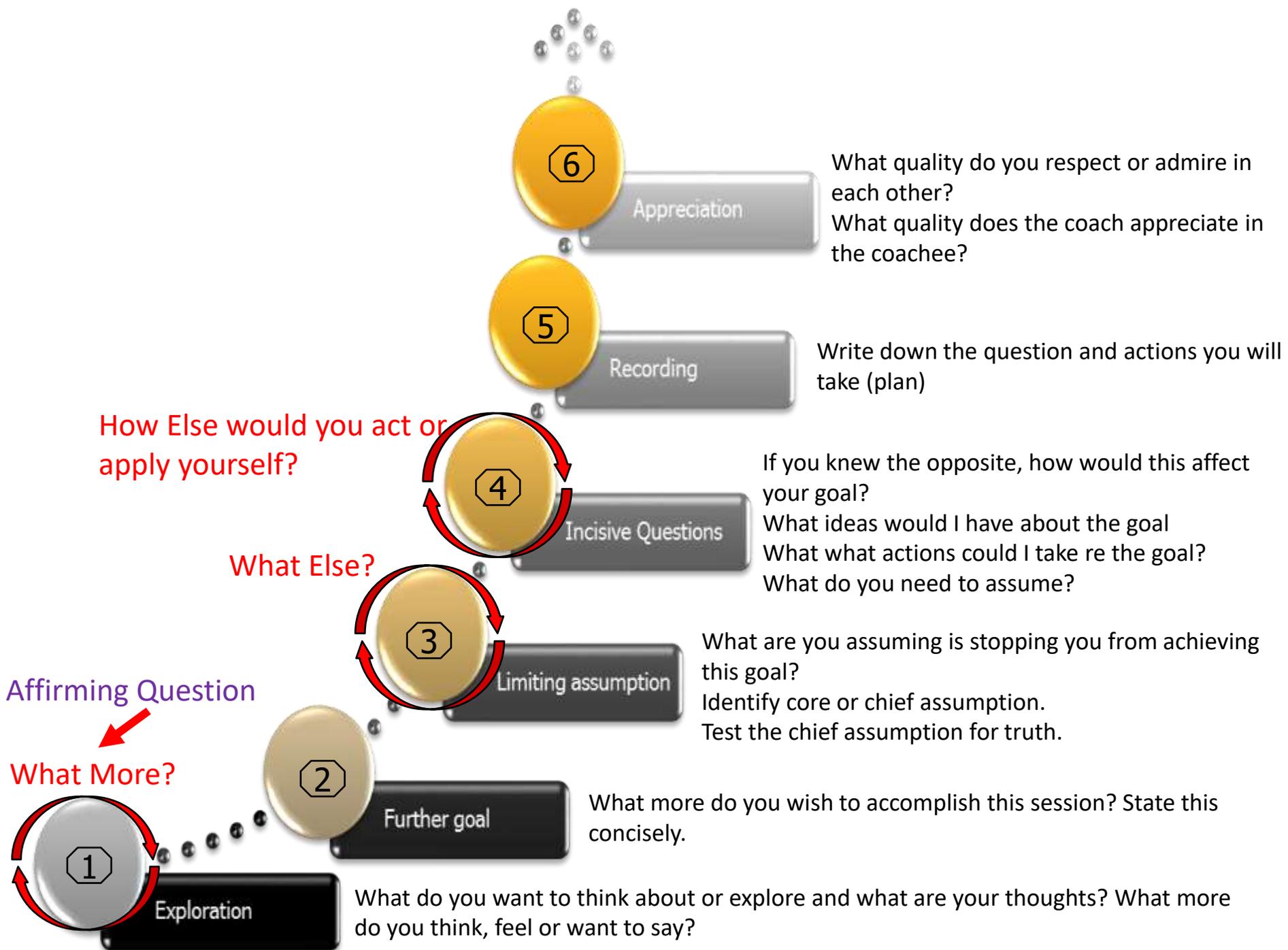
1. Think about something that you want but are having difficulty getting. (**the goal**)
2. What might you be assuming that's holding you back from getting it? (**limiting assumptions**)
3. Choose the assumption that you sense is at the heart of the problem. (**core assumption**)
  - What for you would be the 'positive opposite' of that assumption? (**liberating or positive opposite assumption**)
  - For example, a limiting assumption about going for a promotion could be 'I'm too young'.
  - A Possible Positive Opposite could be 'It's not about age, it's about experience'.

# The method contd.

4. Frame an incisive question using one of the following forms...
  - A. 'If I absolutely knew for a fact that (positive opposite of your limiting assumption), **what ideas would I have** about (your goal, situation, or challenge)?'
  - B. 'If I absolutely knew for a fact that (positive opposite your of limiting assumption), **what would I do** to create or bring about (your goal, situation, or challenge)?'

Be aware that the 'right' question is the one that feels right to you – some people describe it as 'having the lid peeled off your mind'!

Play around with different positive opposites until you find the one that fits best and frees your creativity and inspiration.



# The Incisive Question

- Rather than challenge an assumption or belief head on, **the incisive question makes it temporarily irrelevant**, and allows you to step beyond your old way of thinking about things and into a whole new world of possibilities.
- The incisive question is based on the idea that it is **our limiting assumptions** about situations, other people, ourselves, and our lives that **keep us stuck**.
- When we move beyond our limiting assumptions, we often receive **a rush of inspired ideas and proactive actions**.

# Incisive Questions

- The coach needs to **find the exact words** and phrasing that work best and are designed to remove the underlying limiting assumptions and replace them with positive beliefs that leave the way clear for us to identify solutions.
- Questions such as ‘If you knew that you are as intelligent as your bosses, how would you present yourself to them?’ allow new, creative, authentic ideas to fizz and bubble past the mental barriers that usually suppress them.

# Incisive Questions

## When High-quality Listening Isn't Enough

- Sometimes listening, regardless of how well, is not quite enough. Something else is needed, that will take the thinker past blocks that expert attention alone is not able to dislodge.
- If we do not structure the process, we may impress with our input but we may not empower.
- Research has shown that the blocks are almost always **assumptions** being made by the thinker without them being aware of it. These assumptions seem like the truth. They make it impossible for the thinker's ideas to flow further.
- Limiting assumptions are the most restrictive to the thinking process.
- Incisive questions work in removing limiting assumptions.

# Types of limiting Assumptions

- I am too old
- I am too young
- I am not smart enough
- I do not have the time
- I don't have enough money
- My superiors will not listen to me
- I don't have the right team
- We will never get along

# Incisive Questions

- **Limiting Assumptions** (What are you assuming that is stopping you from [insert goal])?
  - What is the key assumption?
  - Is that assumption true?
  - What are your reasons for thinking that? (Look for alignment with positive philosophical choice, logic and information).
- **Transition question:**
  - (If it is true or possibly true): That is possible, but what are you assuming that makes that assumption hold you back from [insert goal]?
  - (If it is not true): As [insert untrue assumption] is not true, what are your words for what is true?
- **Invitation question:**
  - Given that that assumption is stopping you from achieving your goal, what could you more credibly assume that would help you achieve your goal?
  - Would you be interested in choosing that view for a few minutes?
  - So, it is not true that [restate the untrue limiting assumption]. What would be your words for what is true (for a liberating alternative to that assumption)?

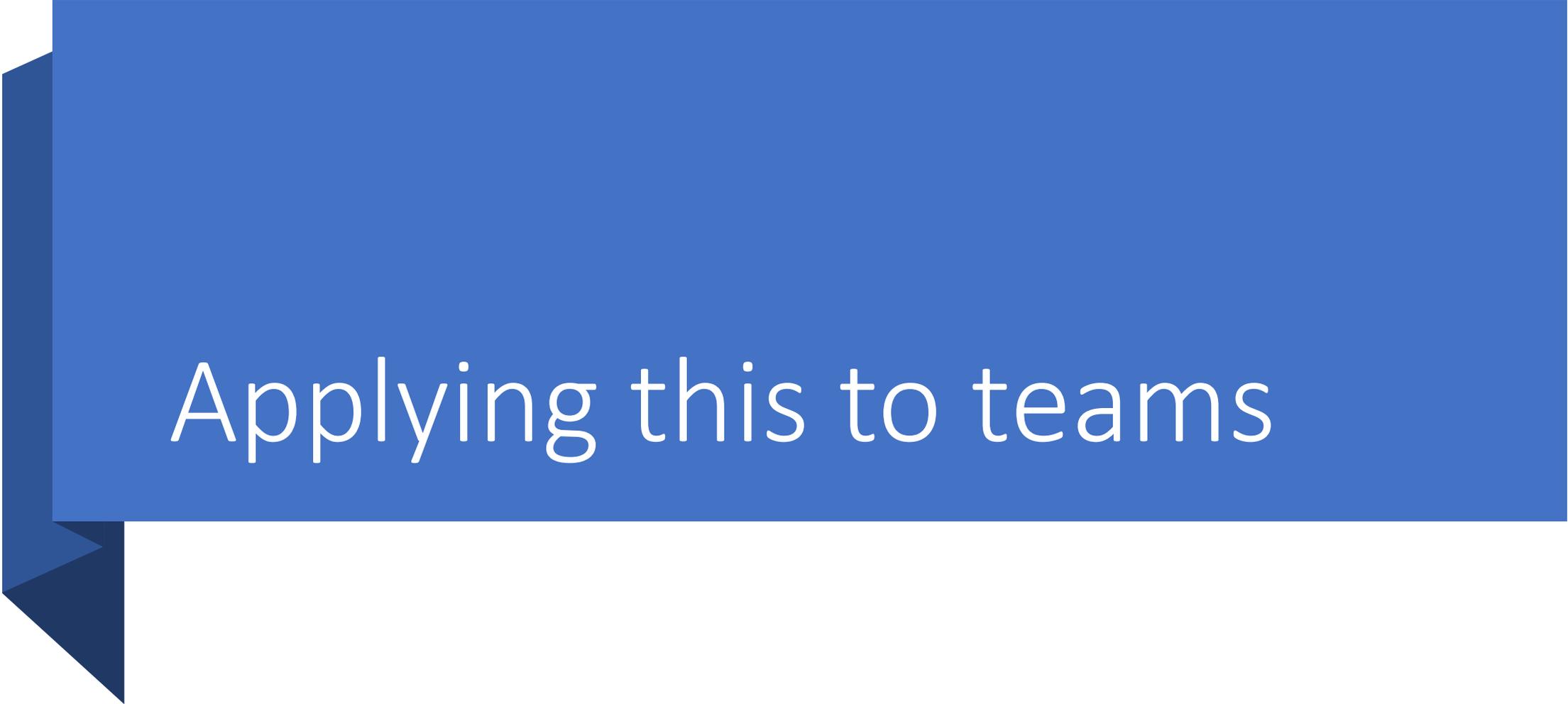
# Transformative listening

Transformative listening is nearly a work of art. It comes from genuine interest in where the person will go next in their thinking. It comes from your courage to trust their intelligence.

Adopt this attitude and general behaviour as you listen:

- Settle back
- Keep your eyes on the eyes of the person as they speak
- Cultivate fascination with what they will say next
- Achieve a composure that is wildly dynamic
- Do not interrupt
- Trust that not uttering a word is one of the most effective things you can do
- Know that your job is to help the person think for themselves, not to think for them
- Remember that the expression of feelings is often part of the thinking process
- Be aware that much of what they say will be the result of your effect on them

In the quiet presence of your attention, respect and ease, important things can happen for the person thinking. Fresh ideas can emerge; confusion can dissipate; painful feelings can subside; creativity can explode.



Applying this to teams

# Team Effectiveness

- According to Nancy Kline team effectiveness depends on the caliber of thinking the team can do.
- Yet most teams do not operate within a thinking environment with the 10 components necessary to enhance quality thinking and decision-making.

## Working with group identity and limiting assumptions

“Groups With Whom You Identify” is a diversity exercise designed by Nancy Kline (2012) which helps individuals to understand the groups with whom they identify, and about whom society holds many limiting assumptions. It is a useful coaching exercise to engage our thinking around all of the identity groups with whom we identify. Kline hopes this exercise can help women in particular to understand the limiting views they hold of themselves that might be sabotaging their own success. The exercise requires participants to answer the following questions (Kline, 2012):

1. What are the groups with whom you identify and about whom society makes assumptions that can limit those groups’ power, dignity and confidence?
2. Of those which are the three group identities that today, for whatever reason, most stand out for you?
3. What is the key group identity for you among those three?
4. What limiting assumptions does the world make about that group?
5. Of those assumptions which one do you think is the most limiting?
6. Do you think that assumption is, in fact, inherently true of that group? What are your reasons for thinking that?
7. What would be your words for a liberating true alternative to that assumption?
8. If you and the world knew that (true liberating assumption), what would change for you and the world?



Teams are the most strategic place to begin organisational change, but the limiting assumptions of each team member and the limiting assumptions of the group as a whole need to be identified and replaced with empowering assumptions.



The ultimate success of the thinking environment in the coaching context is in the client's implementing the goals that are set as a result.



This question framework helps us to understand the process of identifying limiting assumptions and replacing them with more empowering assumptions. This is a transformative process for the individual client.



In the Thinking Environment® question framework, awareness and insight is the context within which the coach works with the client to identify, understand and change those limiting assumptions that are most getting in the way of the client's taking responsibility, setting goals, taking action, growing and learning.

Thank You!

