A person wearing a dark grey suit, white shirt, and dark tie is holding two worn, brown leather boxing gloves. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a chalkboard.

# How to Handle Emotionally Charged Situations in the Workplace



Sherry Prindle



# Outcomes of Today's Presentation

- Understand what triggers anger and assess personal attitudes.
- Recognize a problem situation before it reaches crisis stage — and avert it entirely!
- Learn innovative practices to help gain control in the crucial first moments of a crisis.
- Transform negative energy of anger into a positive, productive force.
- Build successful relationships, resulting in increased trust, harmony and teamwork.

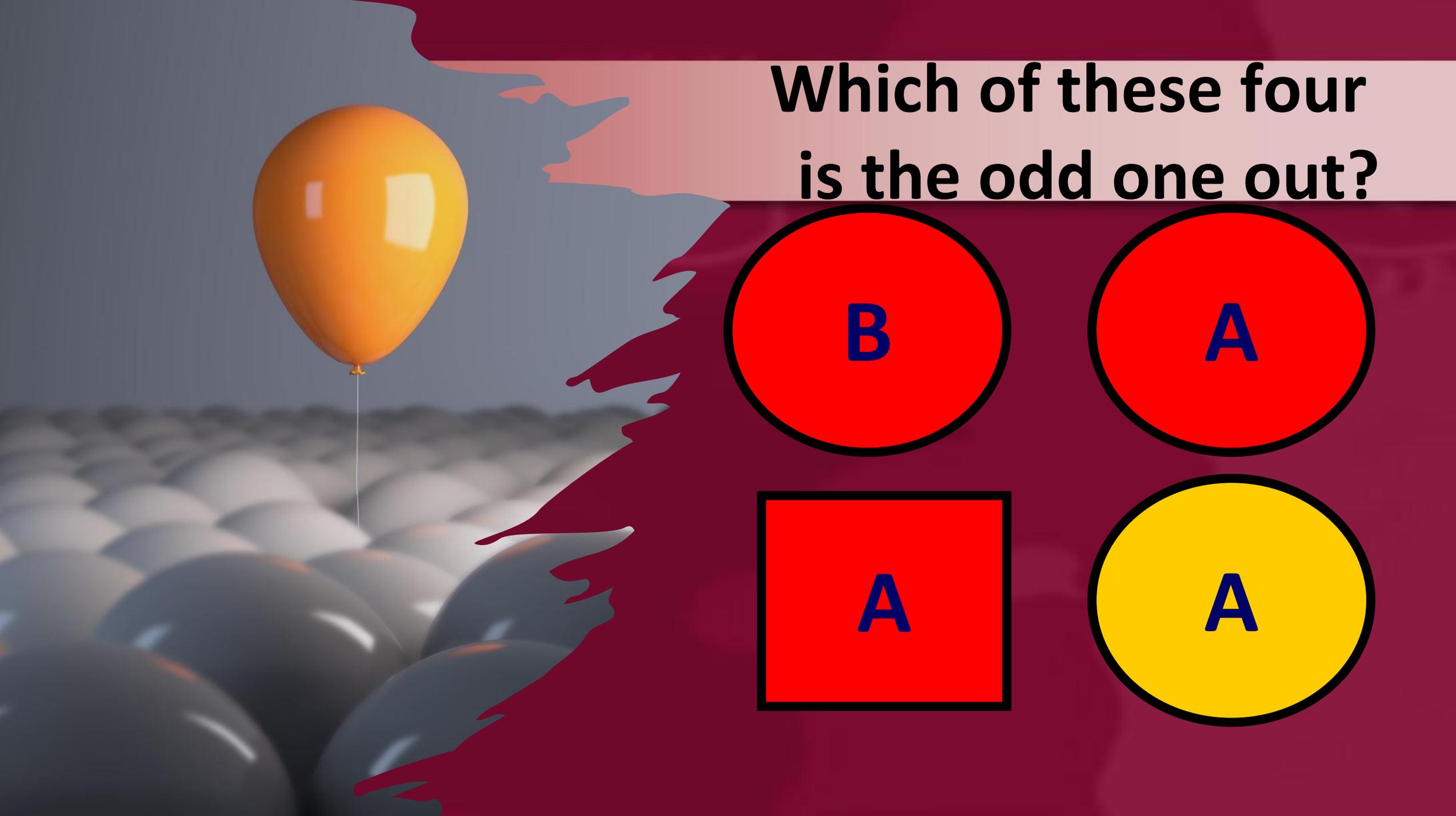
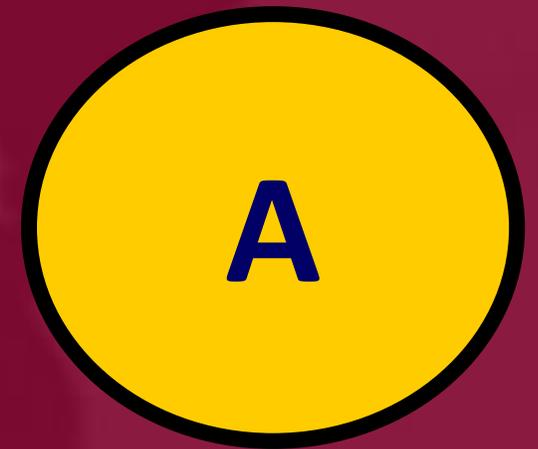
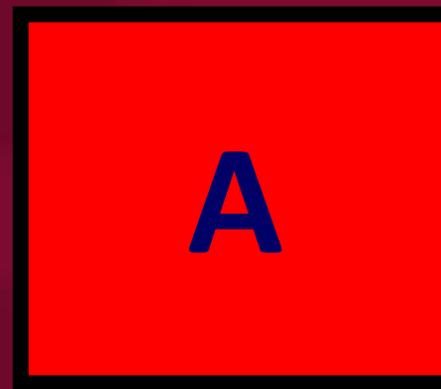
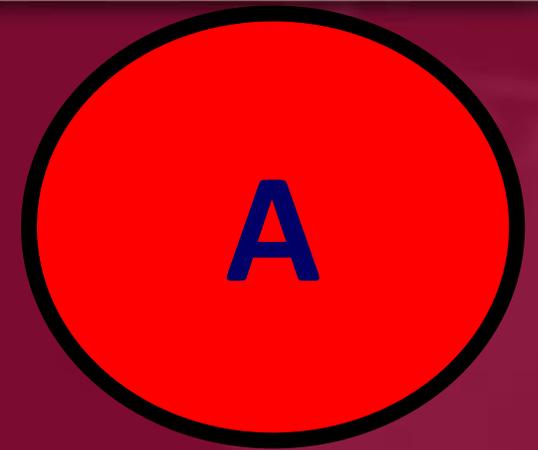
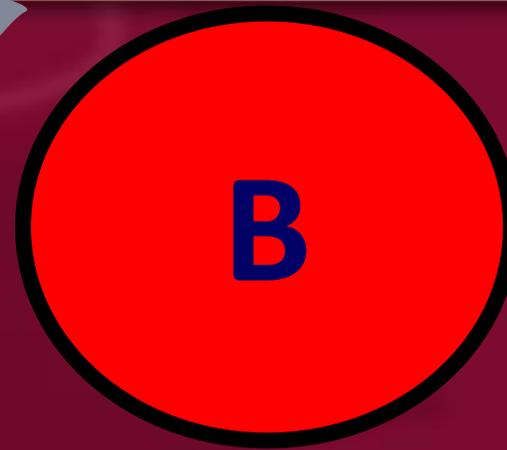
# Triggering Events

**What are  
your  
emotionally  
charged  
situations?**



**Share them with those around you**

Which of these four  
is the odd one out?



# Old MacDonald Slowed it Down

- **Event** – what happened: the trigger
- **Interpretation** – what you thought
- **Emotions** – what you felt
- **Action** – what you did
- **Outcome** – how things turned out

Break Down Emotionally Charged Situations



# Event: The Reticular Activating System Filters Most of It Out

*“Our human brain processes 400 billion bits of information every second; however, we are only aware of about 2000 of those billions of bits of data ... because we are not attending to those stimuli.”*

Dr Joe Dispenza *What the Bleep Do We Know?*

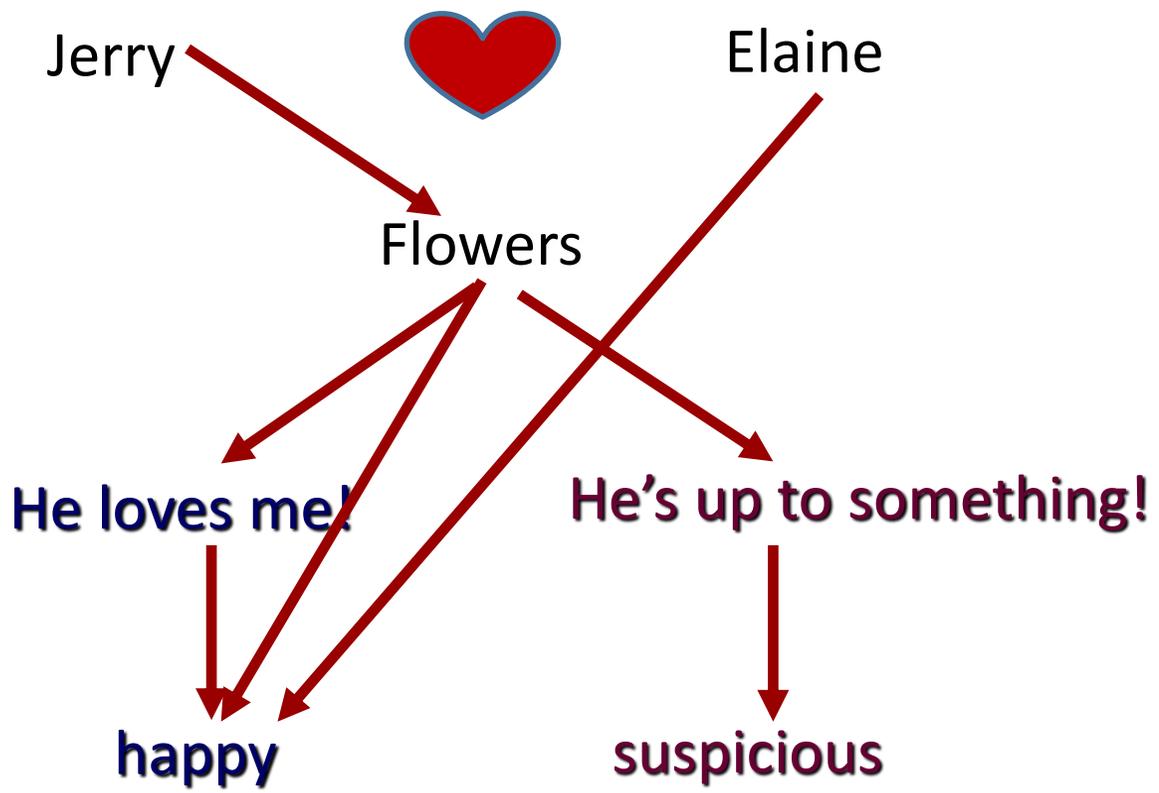




# Interpretations that Spark Emotion

1. Personal Attack
2. Incompetence
3. Unfairness
4. Indifference
5. Lack of Control
6. Tunnel Vision





***Self-Discipline and Emotional Control*** Dr. Tom Miller



# Interpretation – Personal Triggers

The unconscious survival mechanism protects us from harm by creating rules to live by like “don’t touch hot stoves; they burn you.”

Recall an early slightly painful memory. What happened?

What did you make it mean?

What did you decide about yourself? about the world?

Notice how you spend your life reinforcing that story.

Identify the strength you developed as a coping mechanism.

How could you explain it differently to reframe and disarm it?





# Interpretation – External Factors

What else besides beliefs and childhood conditioning impacts how we view events?

- 
- Time crunches
  - Potential threats
  - Ego challenges
  -

Scared  
Hungry  
Angry  
Lonely  
Tired

# Emotion – Get Ahead of It

## Stressor

Something asking you to respond

Event

+

Stress

Your body's reaction to a perceived threat

Perception of Threat

+

Activation of Protective Mechanism

=

10-Second Window

10-Second Window

What is the Warning Signal?

Fight, Flight, or Freeze



# Emotion – Circumvent Reactions

- Heart rate
- Breathing
- Warm or sweaty
- Tightening or clenching
- Aches or pains
- Emotions





# Emotion – Calm and in Control

Same Event +

Perception of Threat +

10-Second Window

Notice Body's Warning

Distract Yourself

Into the  
World  
(Colors)

Out of Your  
Head

Into Your  
Body  
(Breath)



# Reframing: Catch – Cancel - Change

Must, Have to, Got to, Need to, Ought to, and  
SHOULD

- Is it possible not to; irregardless of the consequences?
- Should => Is
- Well is it? Then what am I going to do?





# Action – Buy Time

## Triggers:

- Attitude
- Gaslighting
- Labeling
- Changing the Subject
- Nonverbal Manipulation

*Acknowledge  
and Redirect*

**Call Off the Game**

# Outcome – Impact of Destructive Behaviors

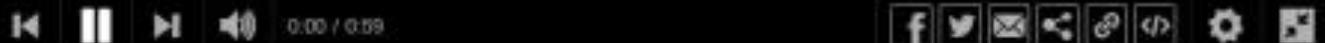
- Workplace stress statistics show that stress can lead to a loss of productivity, burning out, and confrontations at work. If left untreated it can cause depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health issues
- Stress causes around 1 million workers to miss work every day (American Institute of Stress)
- Companies spend around 75% of a worker's annual salary to cover lost productivity or to replace workers (HuffPost)
- Work-related stress causes 120,000 deaths and results in \$190 billion in healthcare costs yearly (Center for Workplace Mental Health)





# Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

William Hung in his famously viral American Idol Audition





# Blind Spots – Avert Crisis Early

What nonverbal cues do you get from others that tell you something is “off”?

Do you heed them?



# Why People Behave the Way They Do



**RIDER:**

*conscious*  
**neocortex**

**HORSE:**

*unconscious*  
**limbic system**



**Patterns: Reach ~ Reach \* Reach !**



**How you handle one thing is how you handle everything?**

# Understanding the Horse

**Habit, Auto Pilot**

**Practice & Repetition**

**Survival**

**Safe = Same**

**Dangerous = Different**

**Chatter & Feelings**



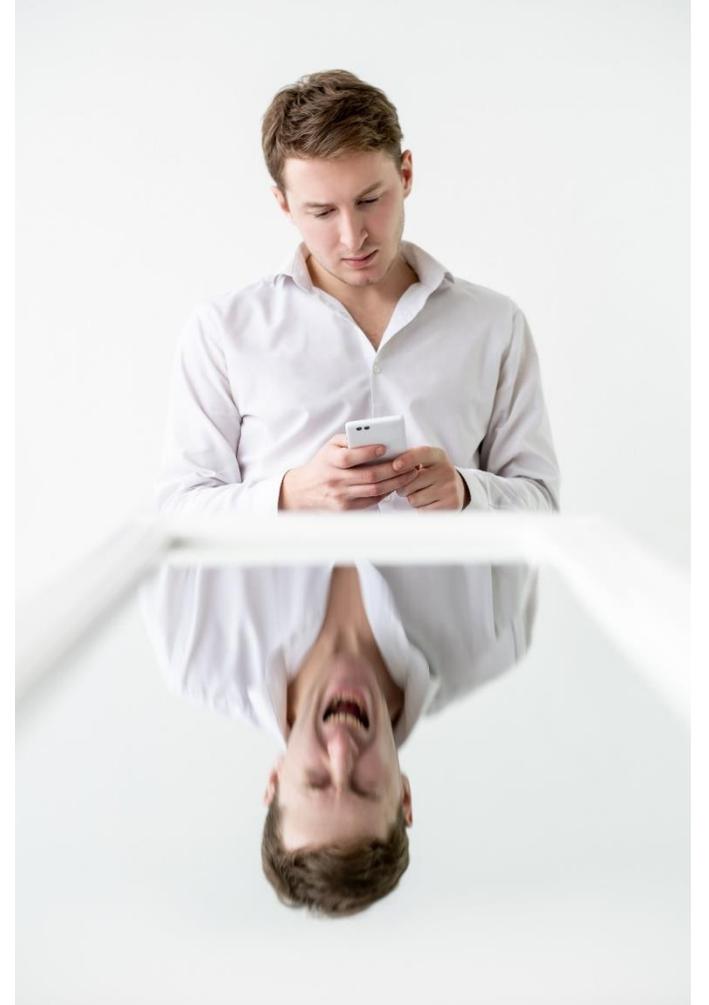
# Horse-to-Horse



# Communication

# When Your Buttons Are Pushed:

1. Keep Yourself Calm
2. Diffuse Their Emotions
3. Solve the problem





# Keep Yourself Calm

## Diagnose and Decide:

Why are they acting this way?

What's the payoff?

Do you pay or not pay?

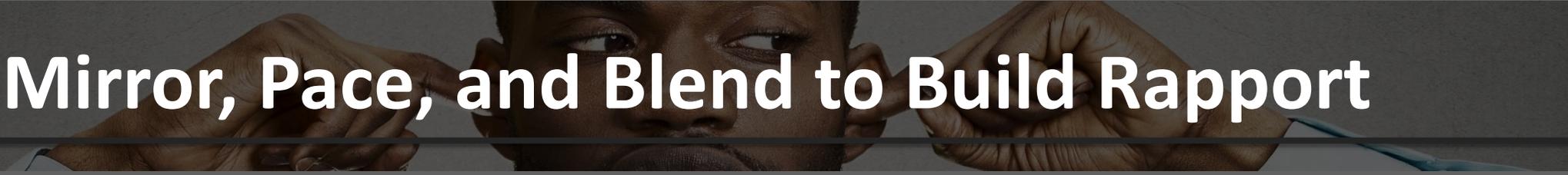


# Diffuse Their Emotions

- Matching
- Empathy
- “I” Messages
- Same Side



# Mirror, Pace, and Blend to Build Rapport



## How to build rapport

Discover the leader within

# Listen, Watch, and Match

- Posture
- Formality
- Words
- Tone
- Eye Contact
- Intensity
- Breathing
- Pausing
- Rate of Speed

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# Empathy: Help Them Feel Safe and in Control



Reflect feelings first; then focus on facts:

“You \_\_\_\_? Wow, \_\_\_\_.”

“It sounds like you’re \_\_\_\_.”

“I can imagine how irritating it is to ...”

“That must be frustrating.”



## Empathy Practice – Name Their Feeling

- I can't figure this out.
- I have a terrible headache.
- I wish there were three more hours in a day.
- Are you going to be able to get that done today?



## “I” Messages

- Take responsibility for the communication.
- Move from blame to action.
- Shift the relationship from parent-child or child-child into assertive adult.
- Focus on facts, not labels or judgments.



## “I” Statement Practice

- You were not clear.
- That’s now how you’re supposed to do that.
- You’re so OCD about things.
- It’s cold in here.
- Nobody cares whether things get done or not.

# Set Yourself Up on the Same Side

They win

- “You’re right.” “Good point.”

You concede

- “I apologize.” “I may not have fully listened to you.”

Make it Hypothetical

- “What would you say to someone who argued that...”

Rally Against a Common Enemy





## Solve the Problem – Facts

- What happened? How did you interpret it?
- How did you label it?
- What is the reality?
  - Facts
  - Behaviors
  - Intent



# Repair Relationships

- **Acknowledge and Validate:** Anticipate objections, concerns, needs, and meanings.
- **Give Options:** “What would you like...”
- **Trust:** What if you weren’t there to do it all?
- **Intent:** Reasons behind words and actions





# Acknowledgment

- Repeat Their Words
- Anticipate Objections
- Name the Elephant in the Room
- Validate Them

What do you need to acknowledge?

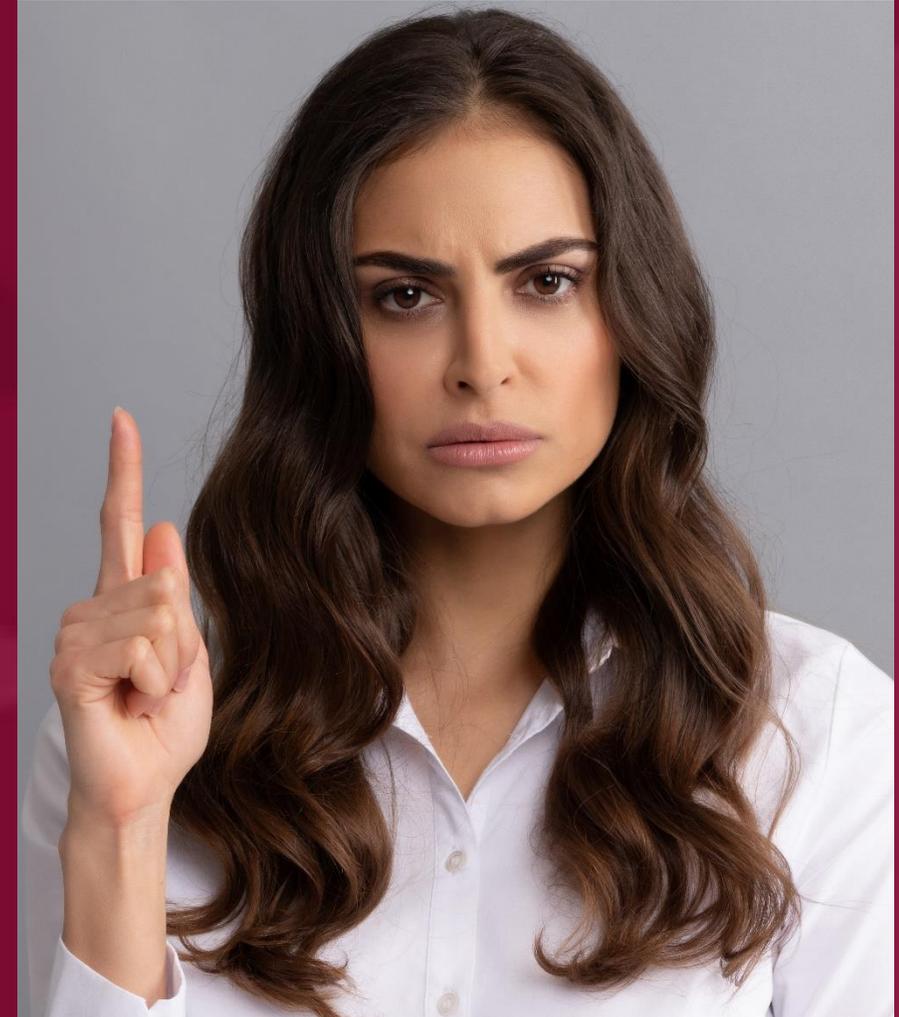




# Options

Law of Control – People are happy to the degree they feel in control

- Listen Without Anticipating
- Look for the Third Alternative
- Think of it as an Adventure
- Save Face
- Different ≠ Dangerous





# Trust

## Be Helpful, Not Co-Dependent

What exactly is it you need?

What are some options?

What do you recommend?



# Intent

**We judge others by  
their words and actions**

**We judge ourselves by  
our intent**

- State intentions
- Assume Positive Intent



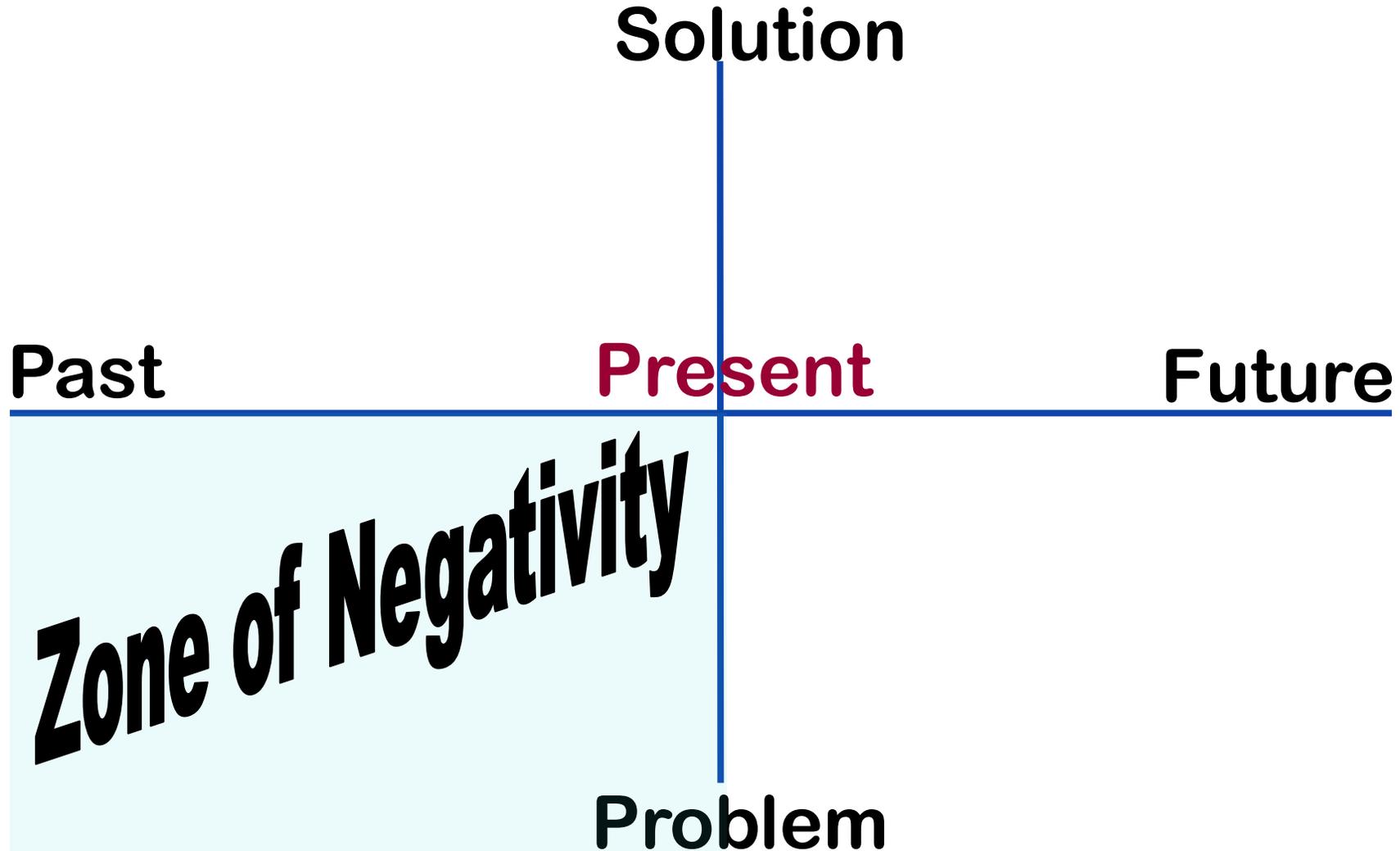


# The Art of the Apology



# Negativity is a Focus in Time

## Positive = Proactive



Focus in the Present and on the Solution



What can we  
do *differently*  
**THIS TIME?**

**Liked Bests**

**Next Times**



## Actions for Achieving Outcomes

- Understand what triggers anger and assess personal attitudes.
- Recognize a problem situation before it reaches crisis stage — and avert it entirely!
- Learn innovative practices to help gain control in the crucial first moments of a crisis.
- Transform the negative energy of anger into a positive, productive force.
- Build successful relationships, resulting in increased trust, harmony and teamwork.