



# 5 Simple Strategies for Leading in Complexity

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# Brief Level Set

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- Think of a leader...
- Arvo Pärt and the priest
- Leadership's invitation and the centrality of desire
  - Take what is interesting; leave the rest
- Courage, renewal, and resonance
- Leadership and change don't work the way we want them to; we need something else!

# The Talk....

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- Complexity primer
- 5 (not at all exhaustive!) Strategies
- Questions
- Close



Turns out Complexity means some very specific things.

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# Why Complexity Matters

# Let's Play Some Thought Games

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- Line up by height
- Organize by month and day of birth, without talking
- Equal distance.
  - Choose 2 people; one near you and one far away
  - Attempt to keep them from knowing
  - You must stay in the room
  - Position yourself to be equal distance from both.

# Complexity's Fingerprints

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- Cause and effect decoupled
- Sensitivity to conditions/context
- Trial and error
- Seek options
- Establish and manage boundary conditions (time and/or money)



Interpretation is not limited to inkblots.

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# 1. Stop Managing, Start Leading

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# Defining Leadership

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- Do you consider yourself a leader?

*A real leader can somehow get us to do certain things that deep down we think are good and want to be able to do but usually can't get ourselves to do on our own. It's a mysterious quality, hard to define, but we always know it when we see it. – David Foster Wallace*



# Refocus Management

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- The essence of management is control through decision making.
- Delivery processes and machine environments are suitable for management; human beings are not.
- Focus tools of management (control) on:
  - Improving flow efficiency
  - Removing blocks and impediments
  - Investing in improvements

# Begin to Lead

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- Leadership that adapts is post-heroic!
- Seek to set the stage rather than play a central role on it.
- Key skills include:
  - Visionary; crafting and telling powerful narratives that draw people together.
  - Coaching: supporting people to become more of their best self and potential.
  - Affiliative: enabling and fostering robust positive relationships through the organization
  - Democratic: giving people the sense that they are able to contribute and shape decisions.

# Decisions, Decisions

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- The most informed decisions are made by those closest to implementation.
- Seek to balance their tactical data with sound strategic guidance.
- Create and manage *boundary conditions* to guide levels of authority.

# Getting Started

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- Reflect on the leader you would like to be. Get as clear as you can.
- Engage a professional coach.
- Craft a personal vision for your life.
- Begin a sustained cadence of personal renewal.
- Get high-quality feedback; identify gaps; start closing them!



Information flows along connections in a network.

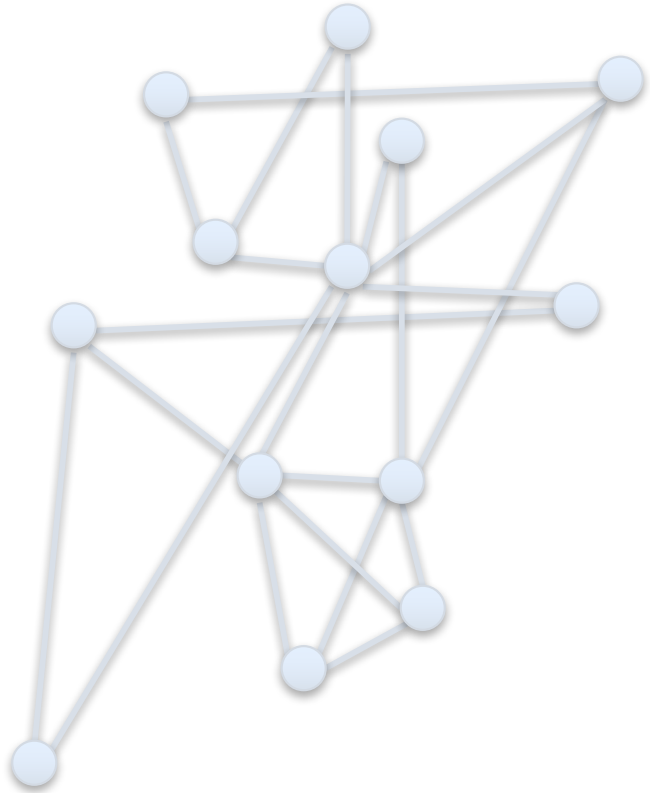
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## 2. Elevate Relationships

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# What Makes a Network?

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- Is this a network?
- Now?

# Things About Networks

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- Defined by their interconnects.
- Information flows along interconnects.
- In human systems, these are relationships!
- Healthy relationships are built on mutual trust and respect.

# More Things About Networks

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- Information flows along lines of relationship, not authority.
- To begin to know what is really happening: reinforce the channels, identify the connectors, listen to the real stories.
- In organizations, relationships are the connectors. Working with relationships is a function of Emotional Intelligence.



# Getting Started

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- Emotional Intelligence is understanding ourselves and how we impact others.
- EI is not about being "nice."
- EI is about being fully present to both our intent and the outcomes of our behavior.
- Explore what you are willing to learn about yourself; what would you consider to be a source of truth?



Deciding early is fraught with danger in Complexity

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## 3. Be Impatient With Easy Answers

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# Avoid Deciding Early

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- In Complexity: We. Do. Not. Know.
- What is your relationship to uncertainty? Volatility?
- Defer to last responsible moment; inform decisions with the best data (possibly full of contradictions).
- Know how you will measure outcomes prior to beginning.

# Getting Started

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- Seek options.
  - Calculate costs to create and carry.
- Create boundary conditions.
  - Typically time and money limits.
- Invite people who prefer *diverging* into the conversation.
- Play games like *Ritual Dissent*.



“We did this ourselves”

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## 4. Seek To Become Invisible

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# Not A New Idea

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*A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worst when they despise him. Fail to honor people, They fail to honor you. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aims fulfilled, they will all say: We did this ourselves.*

*– Lao Tzu*

# The Construct of *Guest*

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- To what degree are you a guest of the systems you inhabit?
- What is the invitation extended to you?
- What invitations are you extending to others?

# Attend the Spaces Between

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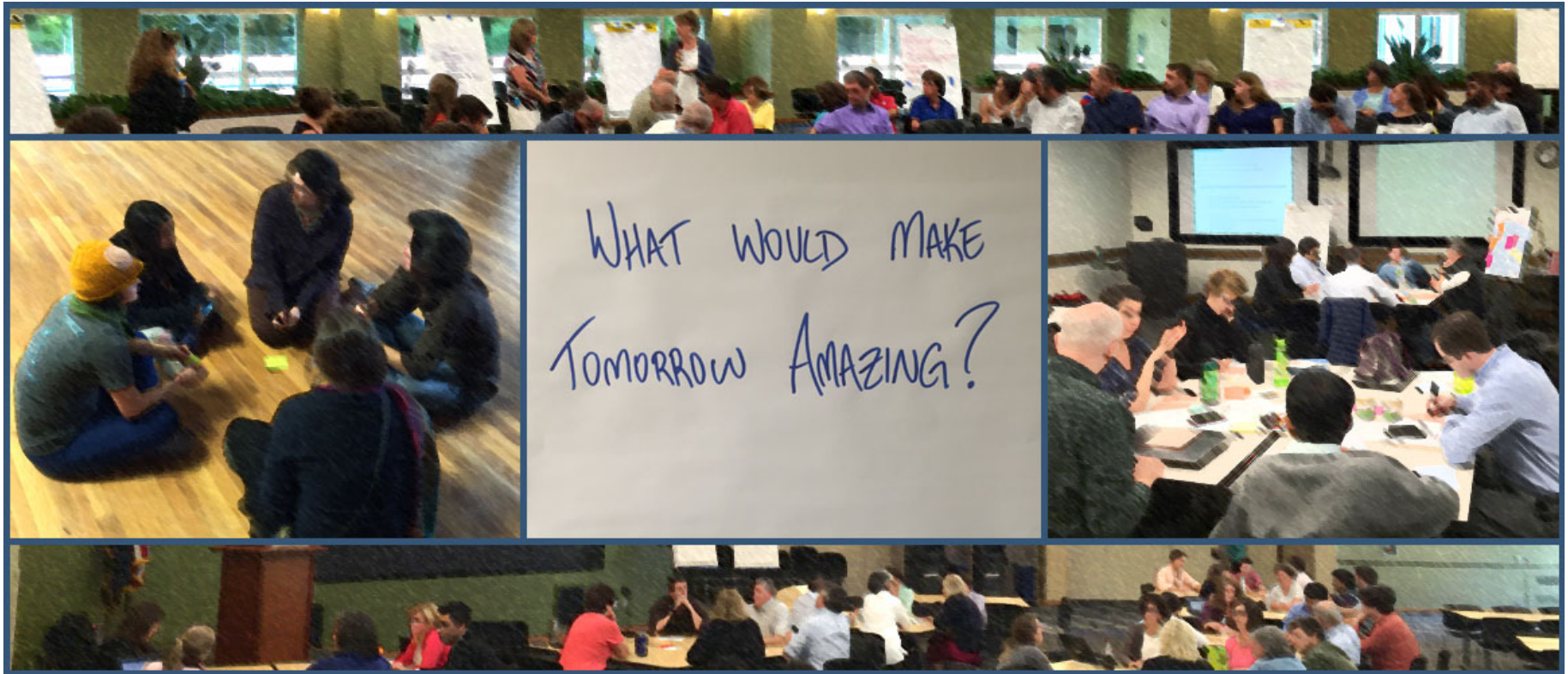
- Tend to the health and resiliency of relationships.
- Glue, oil, wedges, duct tape



# Getting Started

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- Explore who in your organization is actively attending to relationships (such as an effective ScrumMaster!)
- Evaluate your leadership between content expertise and relationship expertise.
- Explore what types of relationship-building behaviors are incentivized (or not).



Think like a gardener; cultivate desired outcomes

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## 5. Grow Strengths, Ignore Weaknesses

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# Seek to Become a Gardener

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- Relationship-based networks are *grown* more than *built*.
- Tend to the system; create conditions for growth to occur.
- Be prepared to be surprised!

# Pattern for Strength-Based Change

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- Articulate a future state that people *want* to be a part of (a narrative!)
- Use deep curiosity to explore what is already known about that state.
- Explore ways to leverage and amplify those strengths.
- Create and maintain boundary conditions to mitigate risk.

# Getting Started

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- Honestly assess: do I believe people can do this?
- Begin building skills of Resonant Leadership from Strategy 1.
- Bring along your skepticism and pragmatism; be aware the role they are playing.



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# Final Thoughts

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# Getting Started

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- Leadership is both a set of skills and a way of being; they can be learned.
- Change begins the moment we realize desired outcomes are not being achieved.
- Are you today the leader you want to be?
- Do you want to begin the journey?
- Then what's stopping you?



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# Thank You

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