

August 2026



**How Teams Get Stuck:
Navigating Relationship Skills and Real-Life**

Presenters:

Meri McCoy-Thompson and Jonelle Zachary
Dovetail Learning and The Dibble Institute

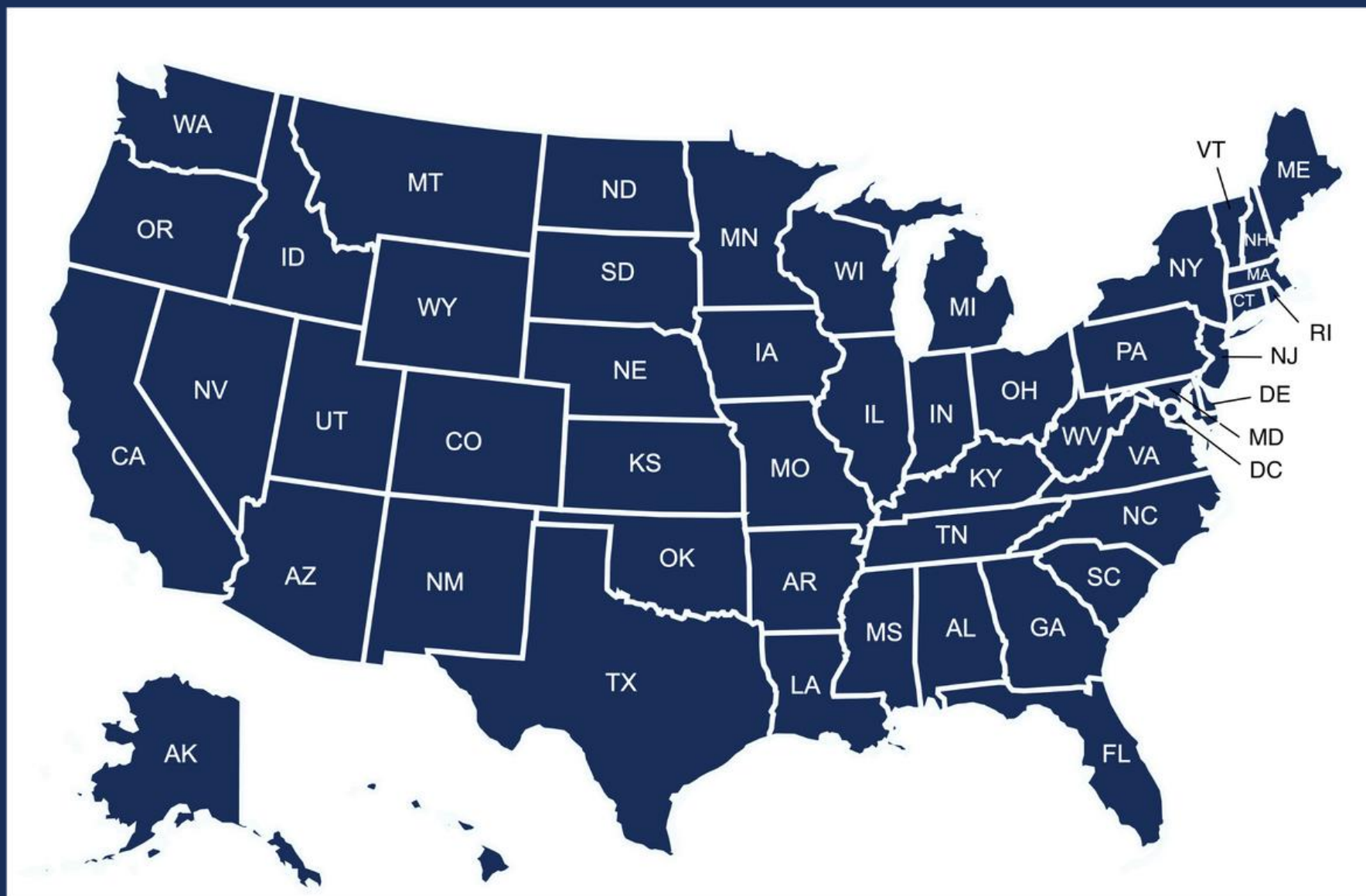
Webinar Resources

1. If you cannot hear this presentation, **check your audio settings located in the control panel.** If that does not work, please dial in using the number found in your invite.
2. We will be putting “**handouts**” in the chat located in the control panel.
3. Please **tell us who you are and where you are from** in the chat.
4. Questions? The **Q&A box** is located in your control panel.
5. **Closed Captioning** is available in your control panel.

Charlie and Helen Dibble



2024-2025 Clients
served approximately 117,000 youth



The Dibble Institute
is a national,
independent non-
profit organization.

Our Mission

Empowering youth and young adults with skills to build and sustain healthy interpersonal and romantic relationships.



We believe in research.



We believe in **stable, safe, and nurturing** families.



We believe that relationship education is for everyone.



How Teams Get Stuck: Navigating Relationship Skills and Real-Life

Jonelle Zachary, Training and Outreach, The Dibble Institute®

Meri McCoy-Thompson, Executive Director, Dovetail Learning



Why We are Here

Mission



Vision



**We help people discover
HOW to be the best possible
version of themselves.**

About Me



Meri McCoy-Thompson
Dovetail Learning
Executive Director, Coach



www.dovetaillearning.com

**Helping to empower others
to live their best life!**

***"In the middle of
every difficulty
lies
opportunity."***

— Albert Einstein



DOVETAIL LEARNING

2008 – Founded for K–6 social-emotional learning

2018– Widespread adoption of our classroom-based program growing our sales from \$300k annual to peaking at \$1.5 million→ serving 250,000 children in 38 states

2019 – Pivoted to adult resilience after recognizing the critical gap

2020 – Launched *We Are Resilient™* and began supporting teams and leaders across many sectors

2024 – Published *The Heart of Resilience*

What we've learned: Lasting change begins with the adults who lead, teach, and care for others.

All Types of Groups



Our Path Today...



- What we are all carrying—and **what that means** for our teams
- Why **relationship skills** can be hard to access under stress
- The **Protective and Cultural Patterns** that show up in us and in the people we serve
- How **curiosity** and **simple resilience practices** can help us respond more effectively



Challenges



- **Where do your implementation teams see these stressors showing up most?**

**Put your
answer in
the chat!**

Teams have stressors.

- Uncertainty
- Potentially scary consequences
- Lots of strong, conflicting emotions
- Those around us have different reactions
- Feel vulnerable and perhaps even powerless

Resilience turns stressors into strengths.



Resilience is a both/and mindset



The Challenges

& the Joys





Resilience is not just about enduring challenges.

It creates a foundation for thriving.





What gets in the way?



Why Smart People Do Unhelpful Things

Even when young people know what healthy communication looks like, **stress makes it harder for all of us** to:

- . listen
- . stay curious
- . regulate emotions
- . repair after conflict
- . ask for what they need

What happens

Drop a 👍 or comment if you have left a meeting wondering:

- How did that become so difficult?
- Why didn't we solve anything?
- Why do we keep having the same conversation?"



Two Paths. Very Different Outcomes.

Many teams move through this cycle:



CONFLICT

Differences, tension,
misunderstandings



REACTIVITY

Defensiveness, blame,
protection, escalation



DISCONNECTION

Trust erodes, collaboration
breaks down, nothing gets solved

High-performing teams learn:



CONFLICT

Differences, tension,
misunderstandings



CURIOSITY

Asking, listening, seeking
to understand



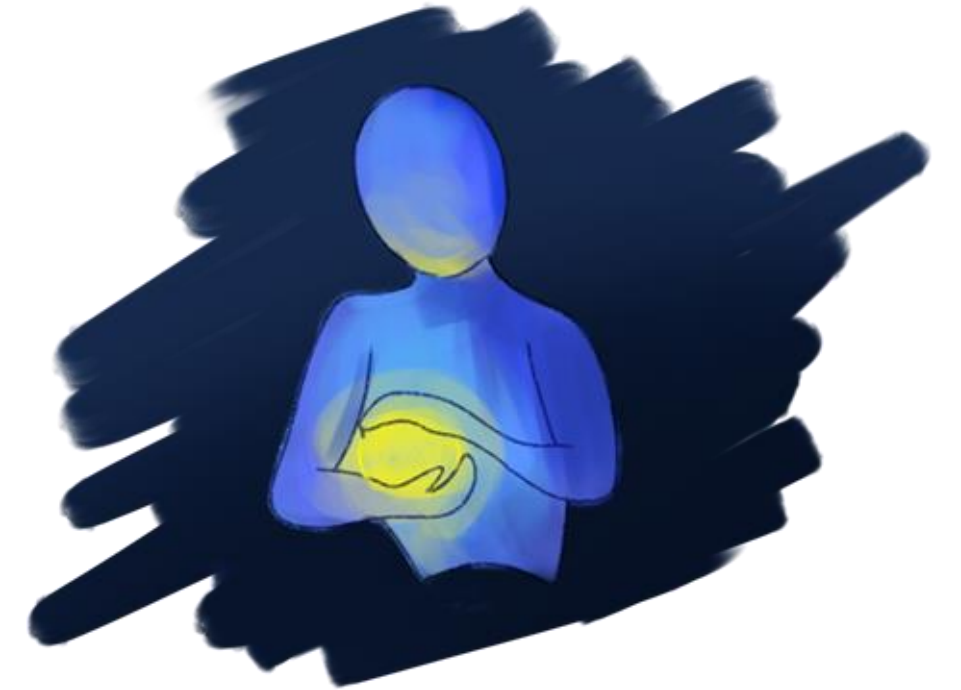
REPAIR

Trust strengthens, solutions
emerge, team moves forward

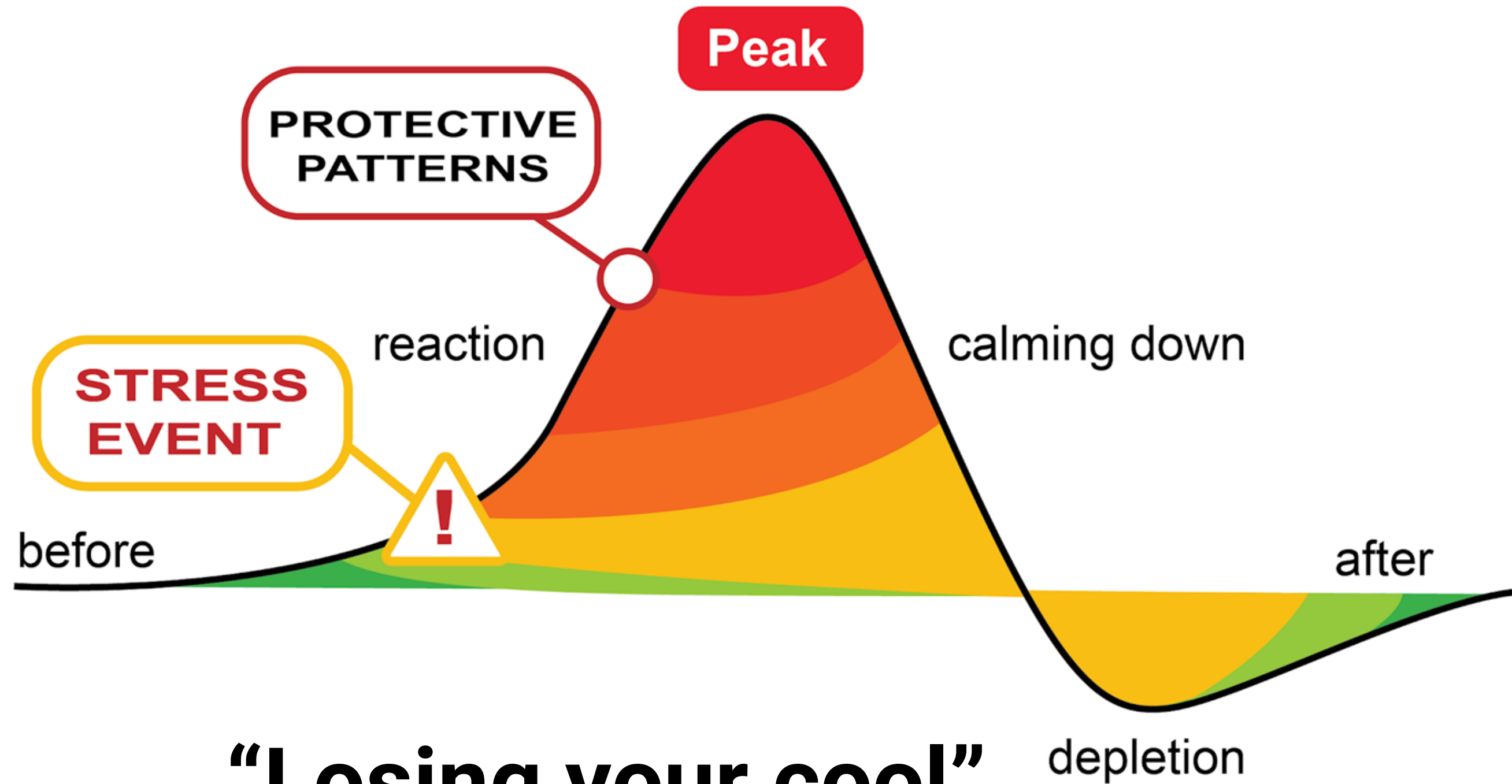
The cycle you create determines the culture you cultivate.

Why Smart People Do Unhelpful Things

- Under pressure, our brains shift into protection.
- These reactions are called **Protective Patterns**.



Noticing our Stress Reaction



“Losing your cool”



Emerge when we feel vulnerable.

Physically, emotionally,
socially, mentally, economically...

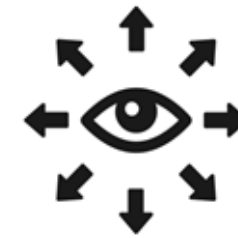


Evolved to help keep us safe.

Common Patterns



Distrusting



Hypervigilance



Hyper-Caretaking



Avoiding



Defending



Attacking

We all have protective patterns



What's Your Style?



Avoid?

Attack?





Hypervigilance



Constantly scanning for danger or problems. ***“I need to stay on guard.”***



How can it help?

- **Identifies threats early** providing time for creating appropriate actions and defenses

How can it harm?

- Creates a **sense of fear** when none may be warranted
- Limits connection
- **Prevents appropriate risk taking** needed for growth





Hyper-Caretaking

Over-accommodating, not expressing needs, resentment later

“Let me make everyone happy.”



How can it help?

- **Helps others**
- **Creates connection**
- **Feeling of being needed**

How it can harm

- **Neglects your needs**
- **Doesn't honor self-reliance and capacity of others**





Defending

Explaining, interrupting, or countering before fully listening

“I’m not the problem!”



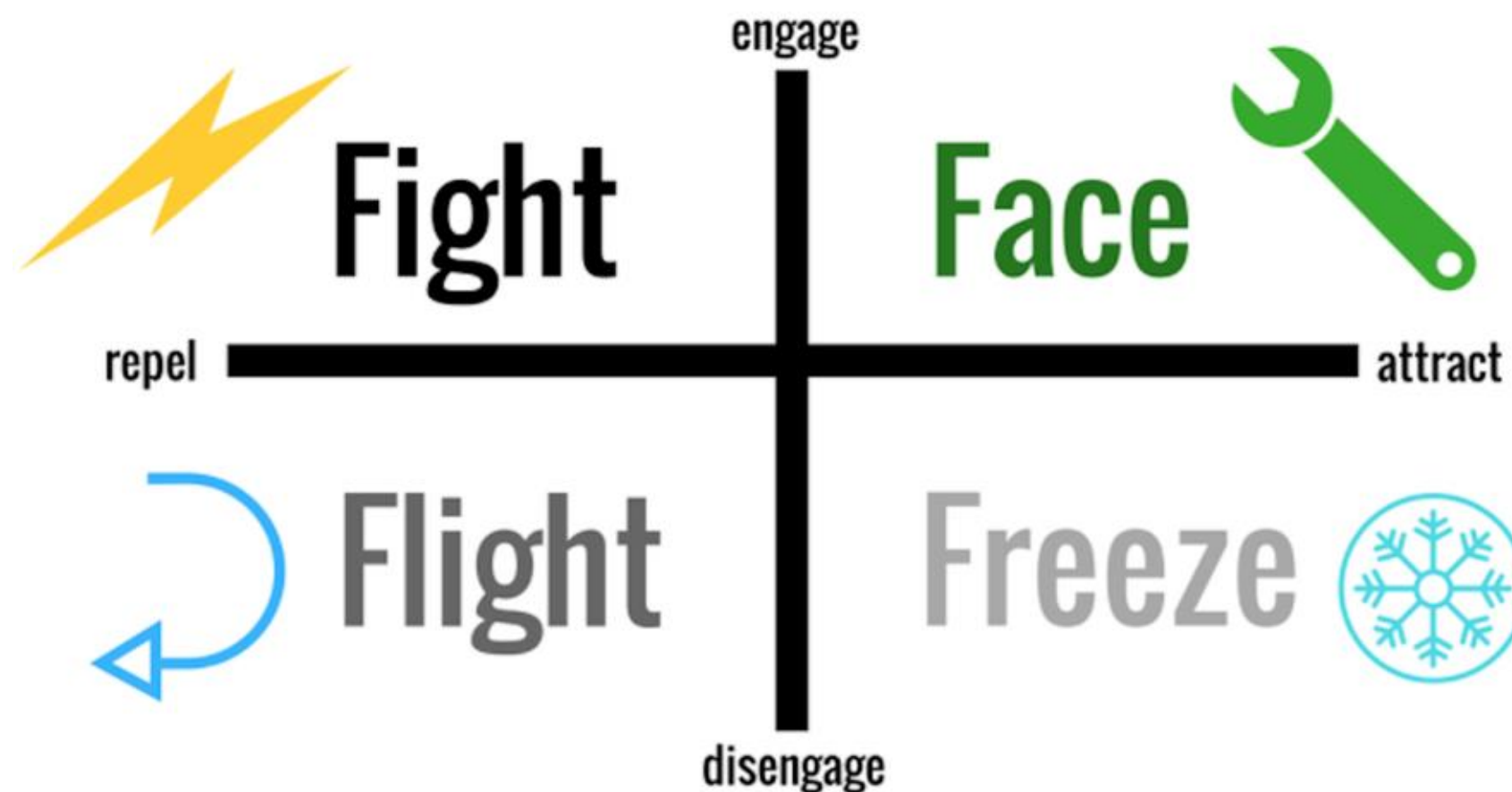
How can it help?

- To take a stand
- Hold a boundary
- Ensure others’ hear your point of view.

How it can harm

- Interrupts others
- Shuts down listening
- Escalates other’s reaction
- Creates distance

Responses to Stress



Resilience Skills:

- Centering
- Connecting
- Collaborating



Distrusting

Hypervigilance

Modified from Grace LaConte Consulting (2017)

We All Have Them



Distrusting



Hypervigilance



Hyper-Caretaking



Avoiding



Defending



Attacking

Poll!

Which pattern shows up most for you?

Cultural Patterns



1. **Messages about how to act or NOT to act→Beliefs, attitudes, behavior**
2. **Passed down**
3. **Inform our identity**

We are like a fish in water.



Team-Level Cultural Patterns



1. **We don't talk about problems.**



Avoiding

2. **We always need to be right.**



Defending

3. **We move so fast we don't listen.**



Hypervigilance

4. **Harmony matters more than honesty.**



Hyper-Caretaking



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The cycle you create determines the culture you cultivate.

Curiosity Helps Us Slow Down

When stress is high,
our brains often move
quickly toward

- Judgment
- Assumptions
- Certainty

Curiosity helps us pause,
understand more, and respond with more choice.

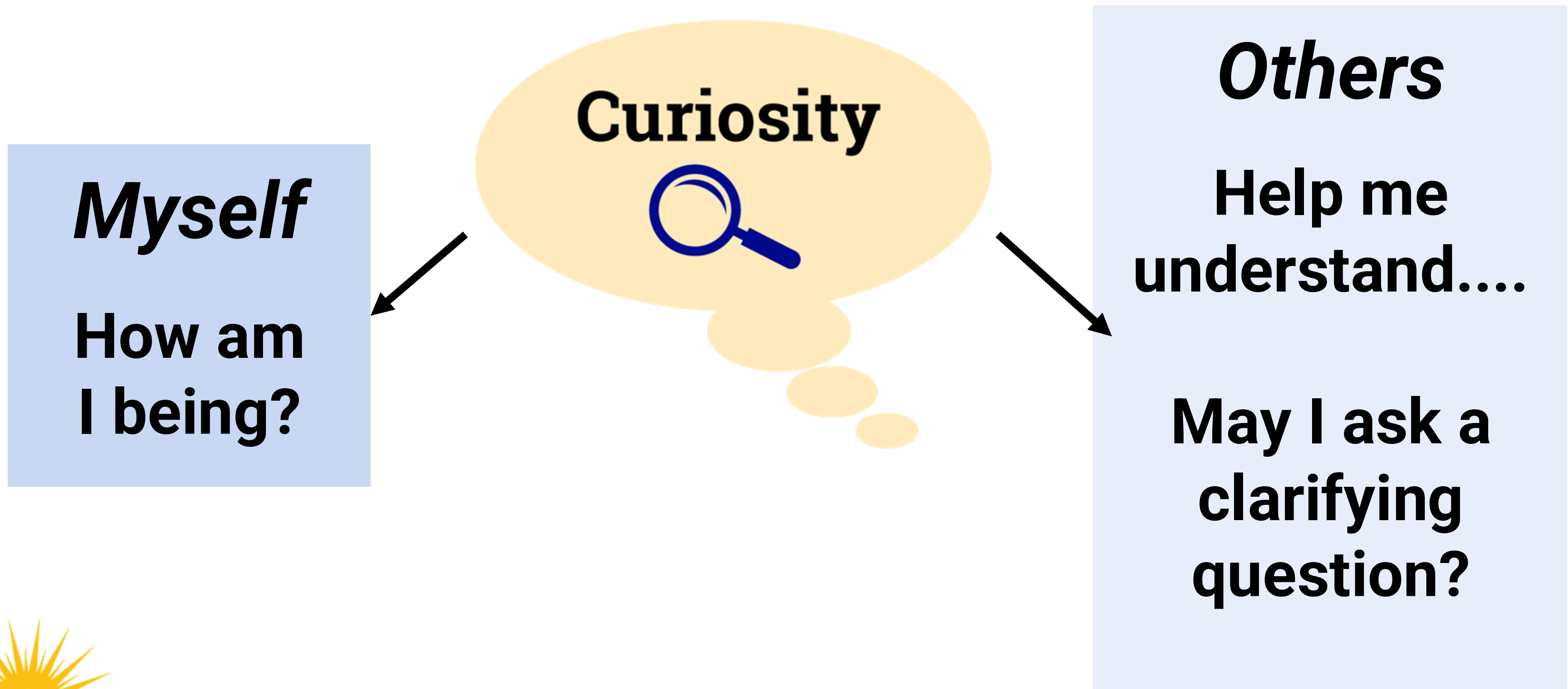


**This is a
mess!**

Curiosity



Curiosity Opens Us To Learning



When You Notice a Protective Pattern Showing Up

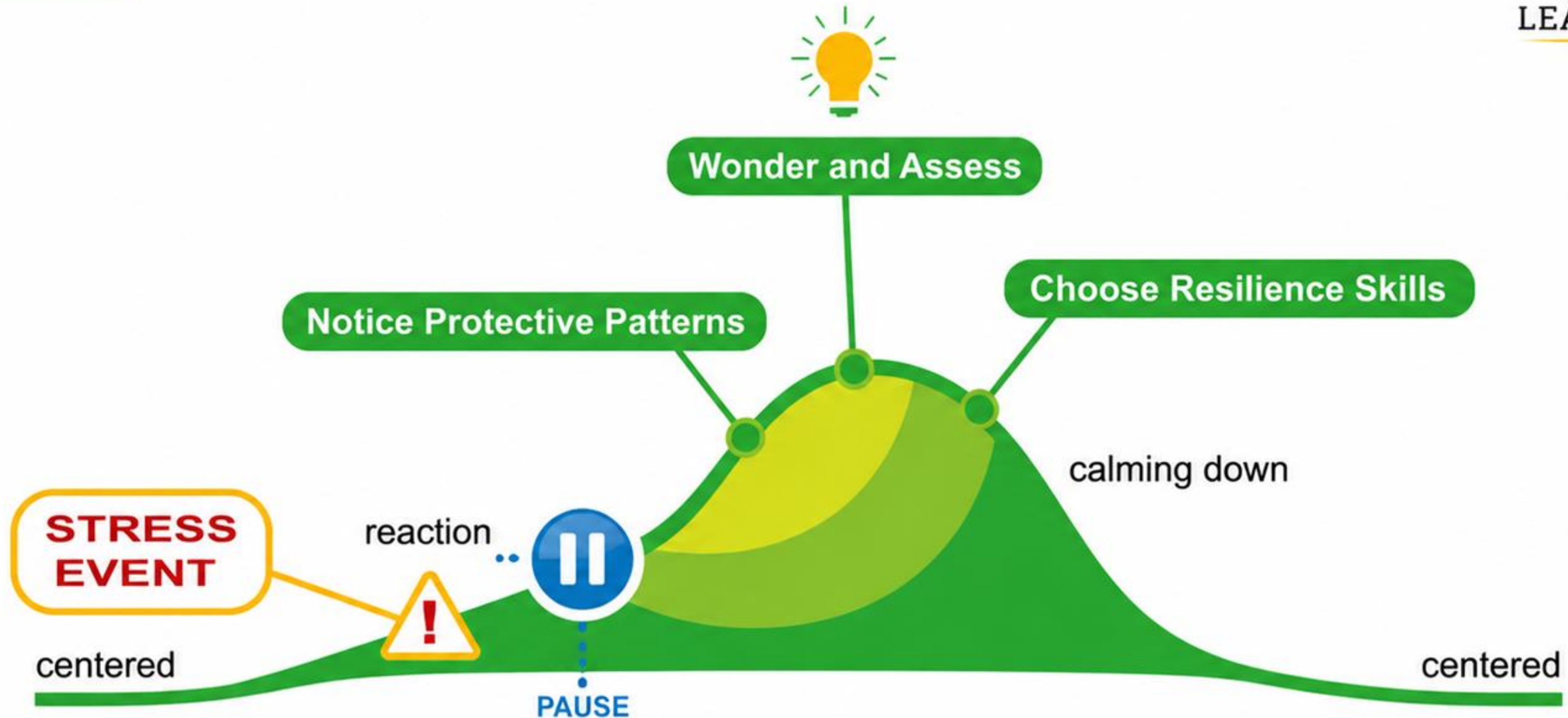


Curiosity



1. **Pause**
2. **Notice** the story you're telling yourself
3. **Ask** one curious question
4. **Choose** your next response

Getting better at it ...



“Keeping your cool”

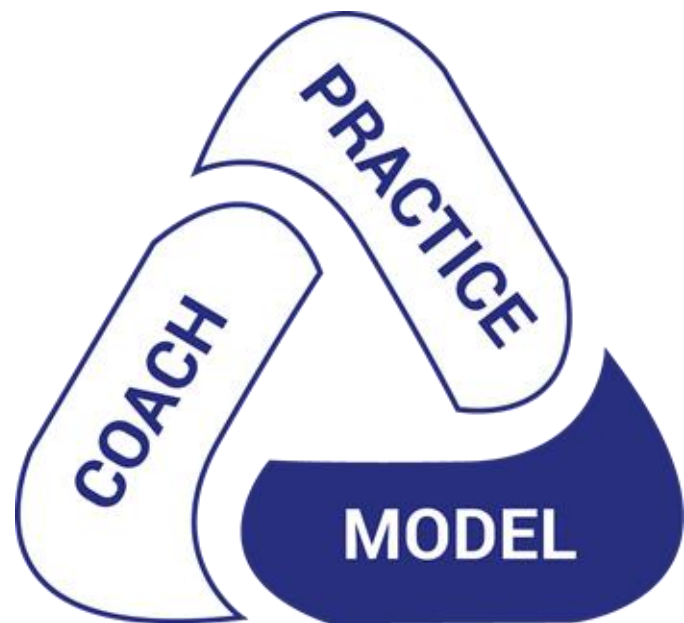


**HOW we are =
Our Most Important Gift**

How We Are Matters



“Children learn from *the way* adults *manage* frustration, stay focused in the face of distractions, and shift tactics when needed.”



~ Jones, Bouffard, and Weissbourd (Harvard)

Being a change-agent



Practice: Become better
Micro-habits are key!

Model: Help others learn from you

Coach: Mentor using **curiosity, compassionate questions, and encouragement.**



“I am not my most resilient self at this moment.”

AND

“Why am I reacting this way?”

When Teams Get Stuck



1. Notice the Patterns
2. Pause the Reaction
3. Choose Curiosity
4. Repair Quickly
5. Listen Deeply

High-performing teams don't avoid conflict.

They learn how to move through it together

If you'd like to go deeper...

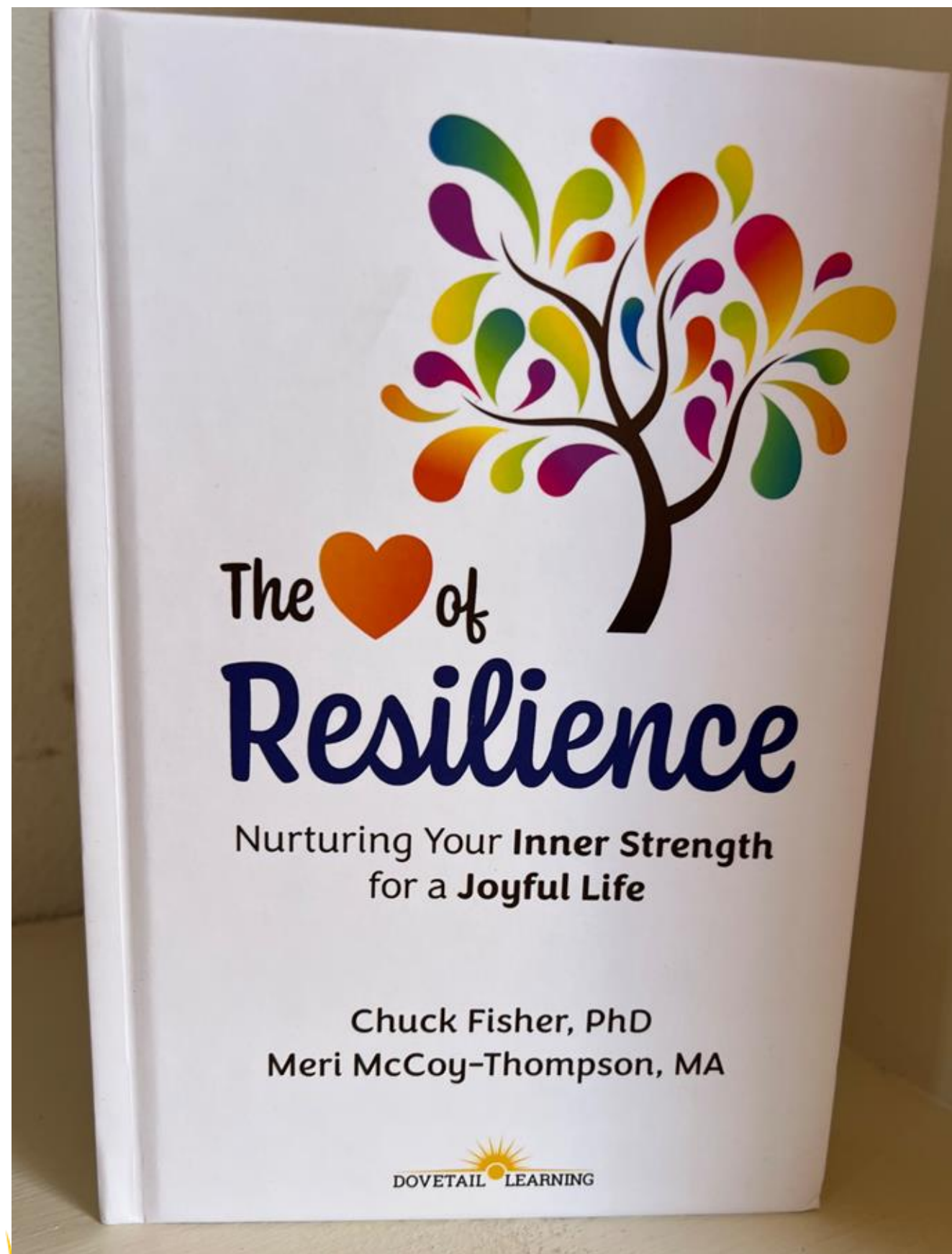


We Are Resilient™
Dovetail Learning



- **New App!**
- **Team trainings and facilitator workshops**
- **Coach certification / deeper resilience learning**
- **Encouraging Newsletter and Advice Column**
- **Free Digital Resources, Podcasts, Videos, Audiobook,**

Visit dovetaillearning.org meri@dovetaillearning.org



The Heart of Resilience

*“Chicken Soup for the Soul meets
Stephen Covey’s
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.”*

www.dovetaillearning.org

Thank you!



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The Dibble Institute - Education Tools

Love Notes 4.1

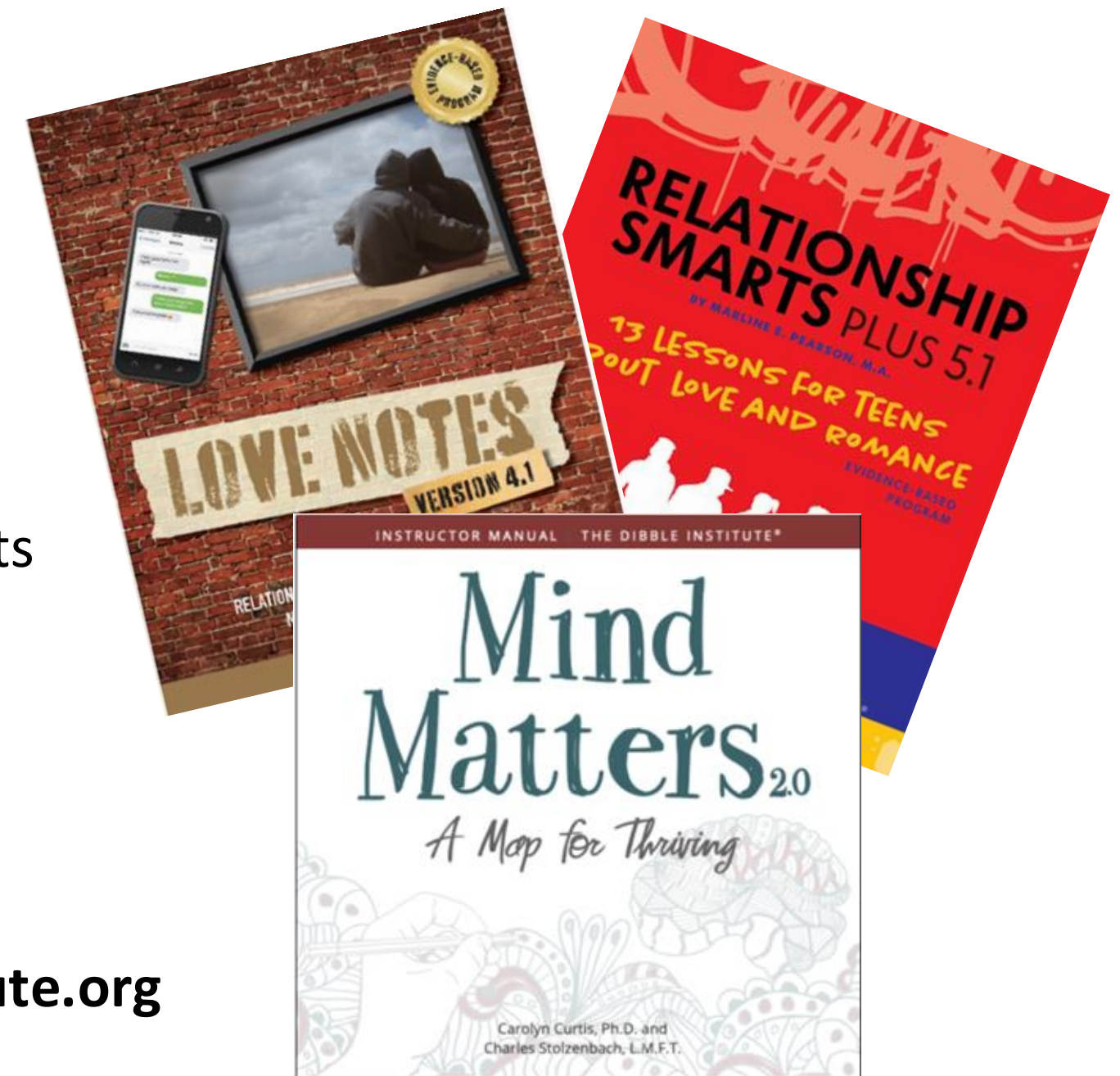
Relationship Smarts Plus 5.1

Mind Matters 2.0 - A Map for Thriving

- Widely Used
- Direct education materials for youth and young adults
- Request Review Copies



Scan or Email Jonelle@dibbleinstitute.org



Thank you for joining us today!

Please **keep your browser open** after we end.
A **brief survey** that will pop up automatically.
Thank you for providing us feedback!

Webinar will be available in 3 days:
<http://www.dibbleinstitute.org/webinar-archives/>

Need a certificate? Kim@Dibbleinstitute.org

Second Wednesday

Webinar

September 9, 2026



From Challenge to Opportunity:
Pivoting a PREIS Program to Community-Based Implementation

Karen Johnson

The Trinity Church