

# Working Well With Devs (no code required)

Katherine Wu



@kwugirl



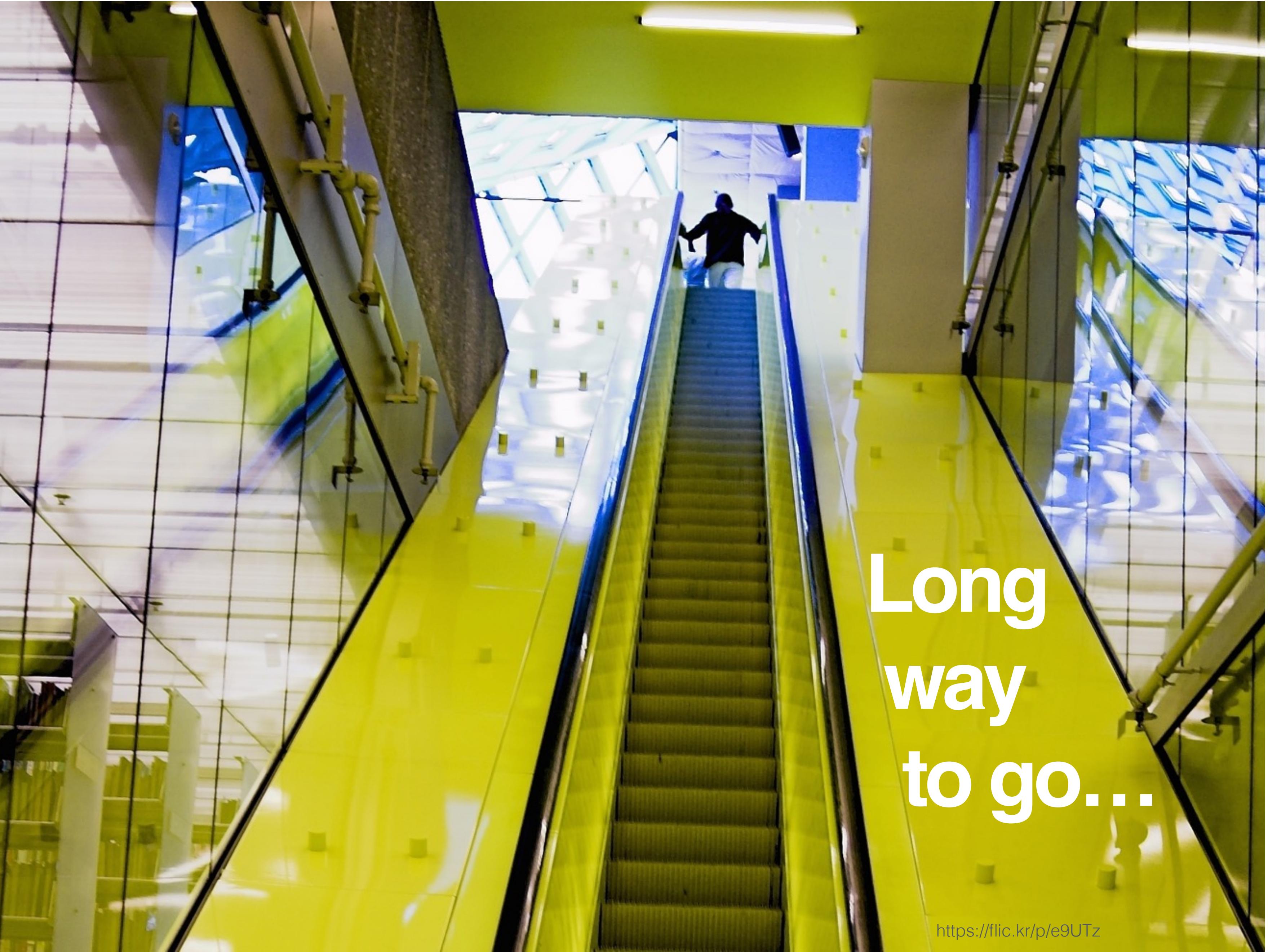
New Relic®

Software Engineer

where I'm coming from

where I'm coming from >

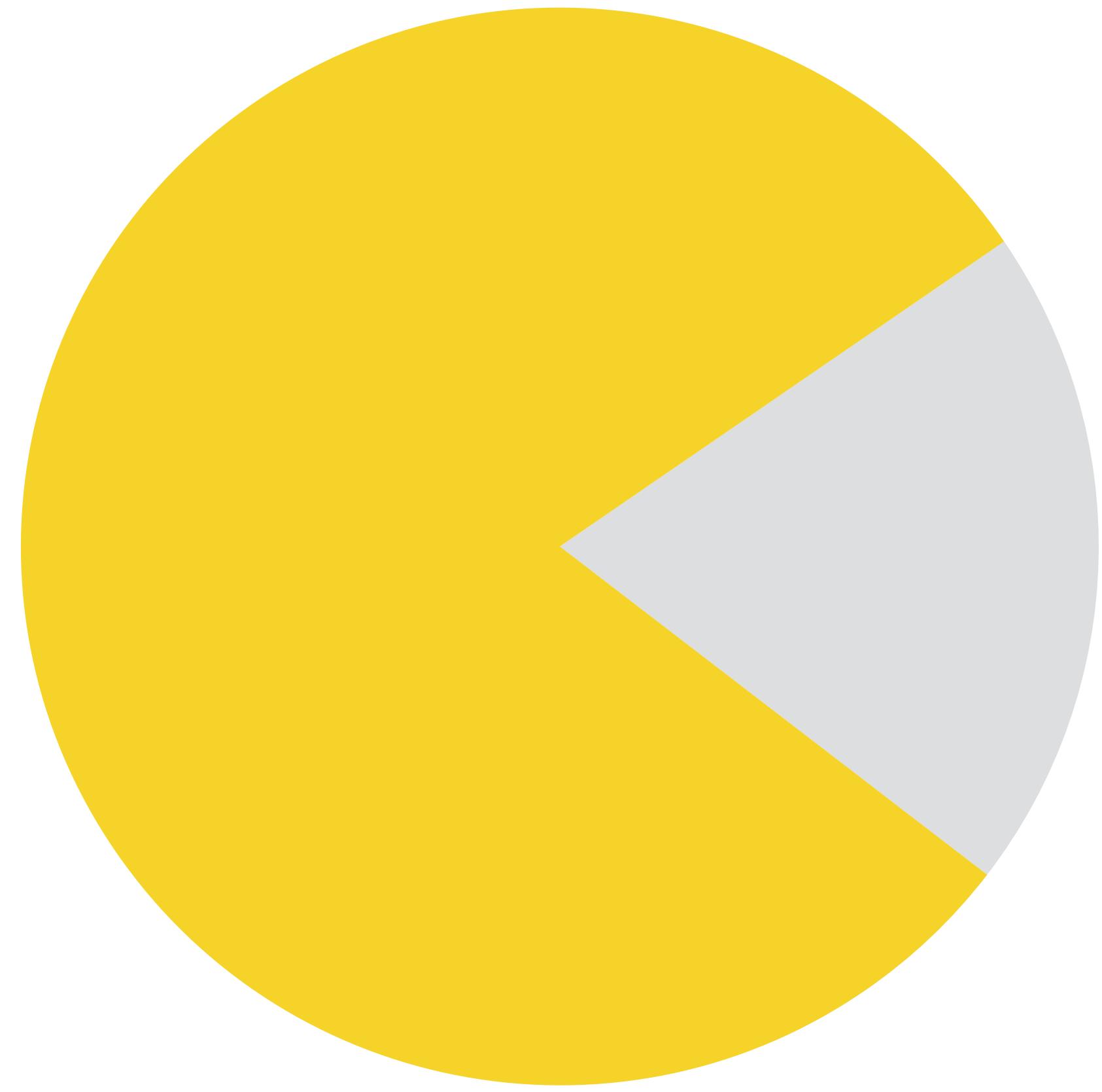
@kwugirl



Long  
way  
to go...

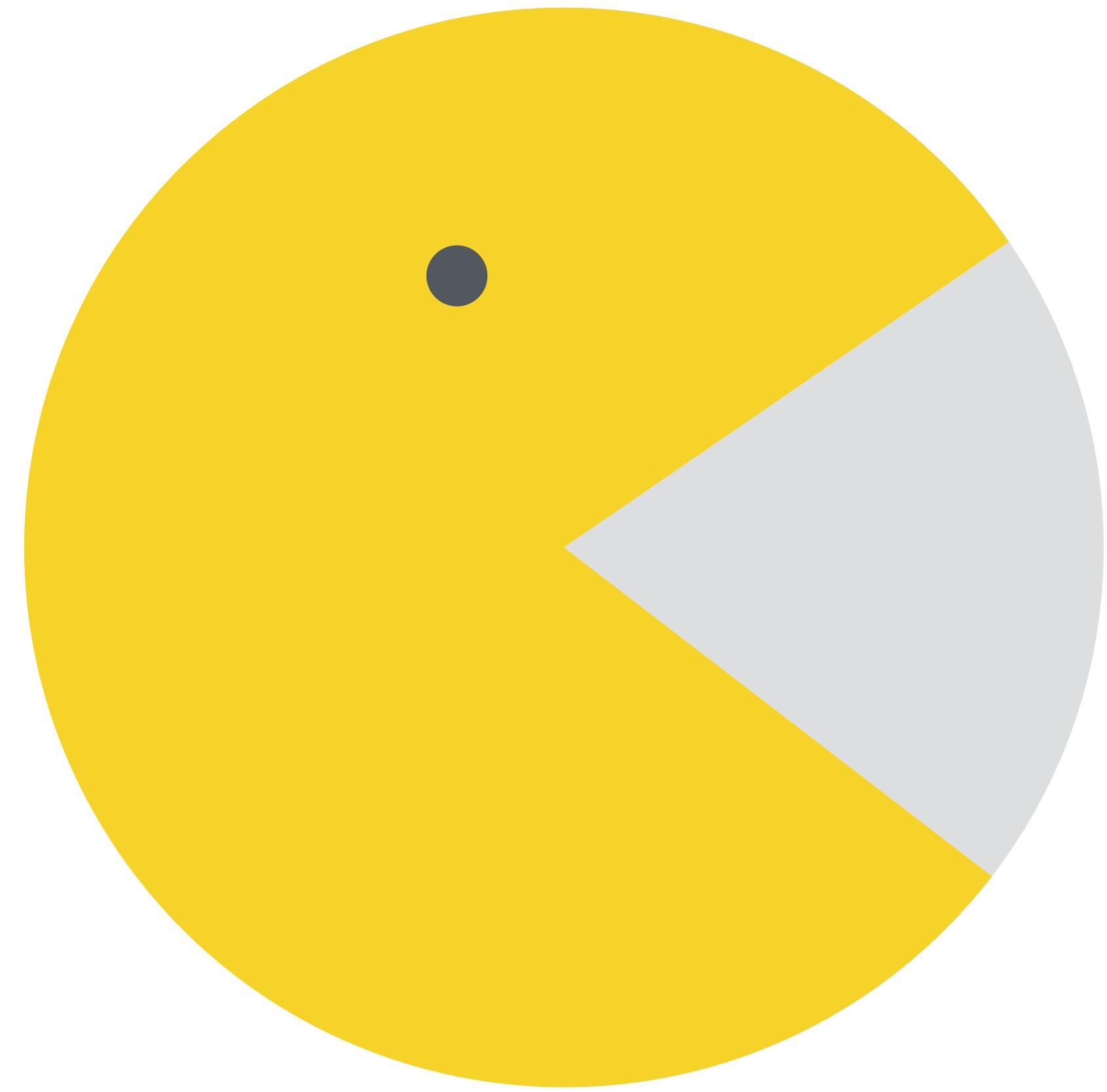
where I'm coming from >

@kwugirl

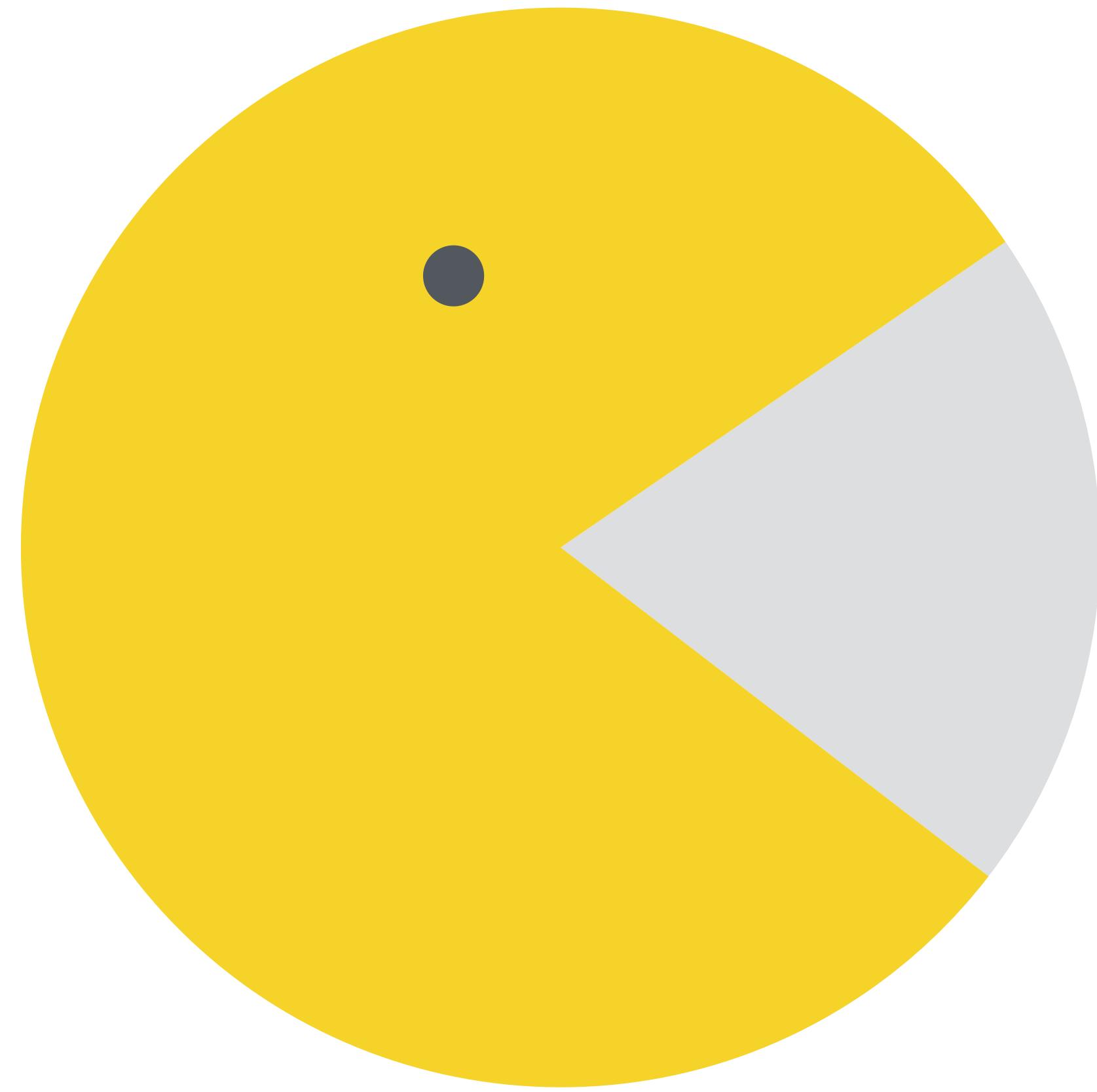


where I'm coming from >

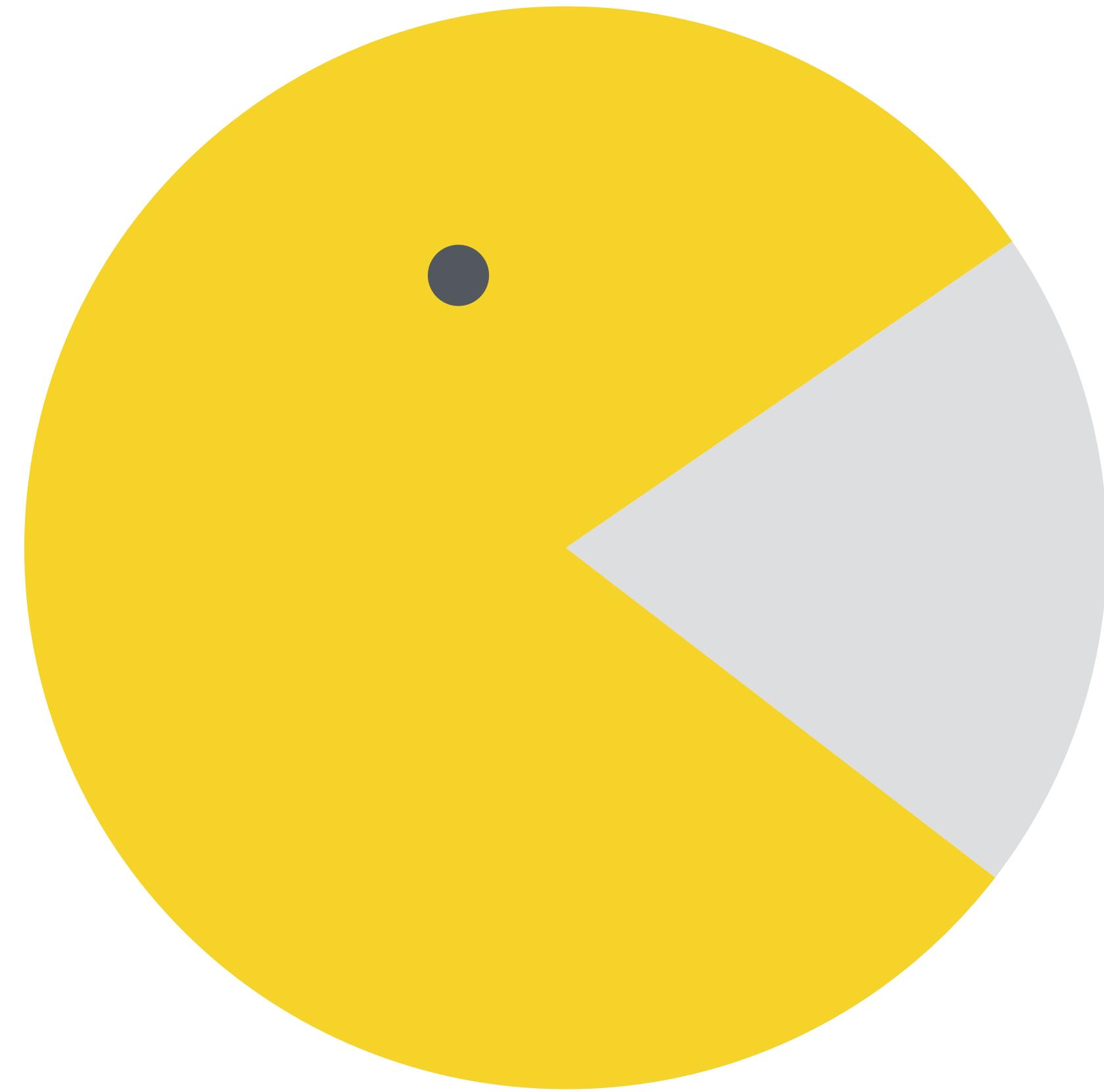
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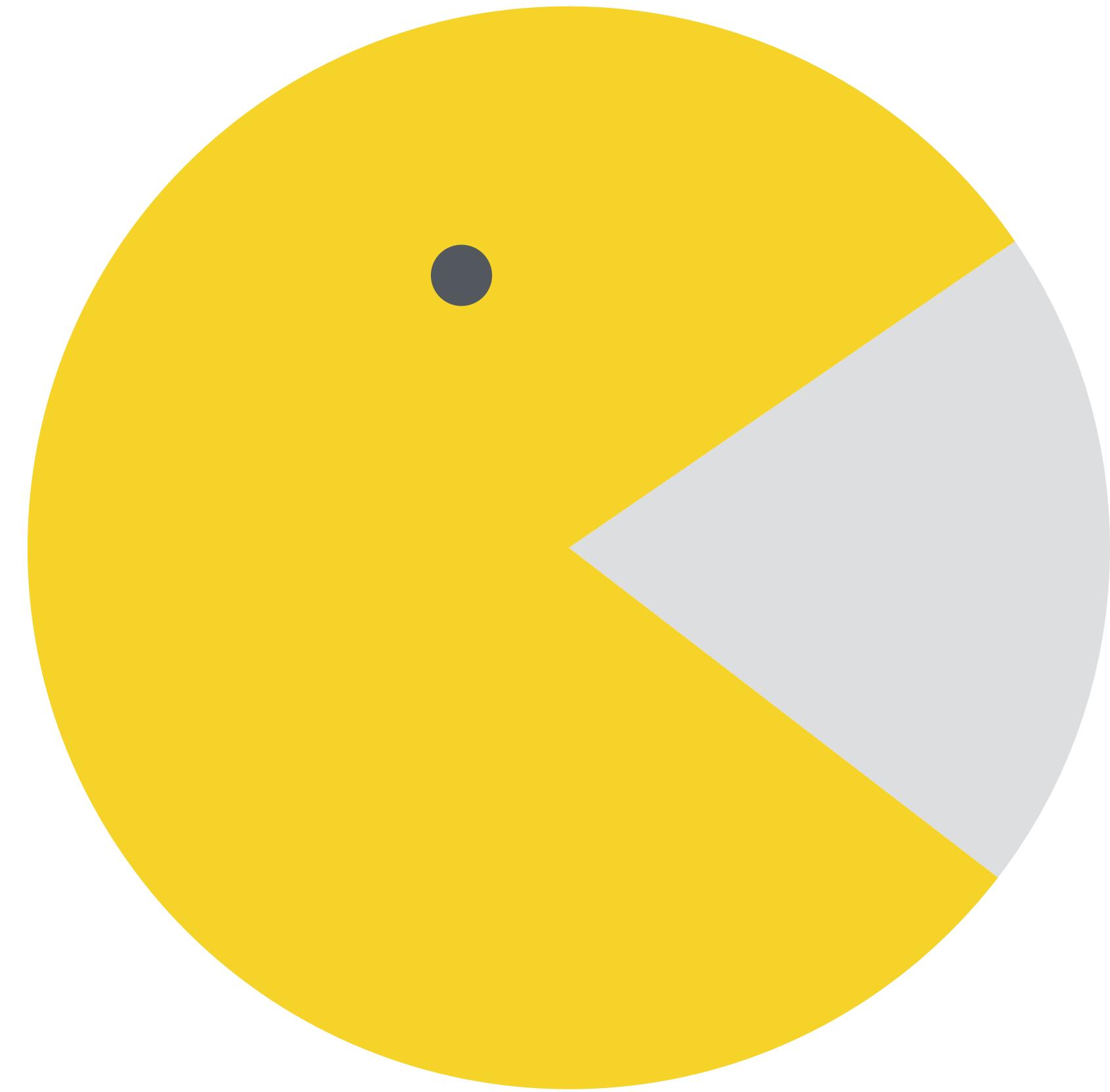
● Pac-Man

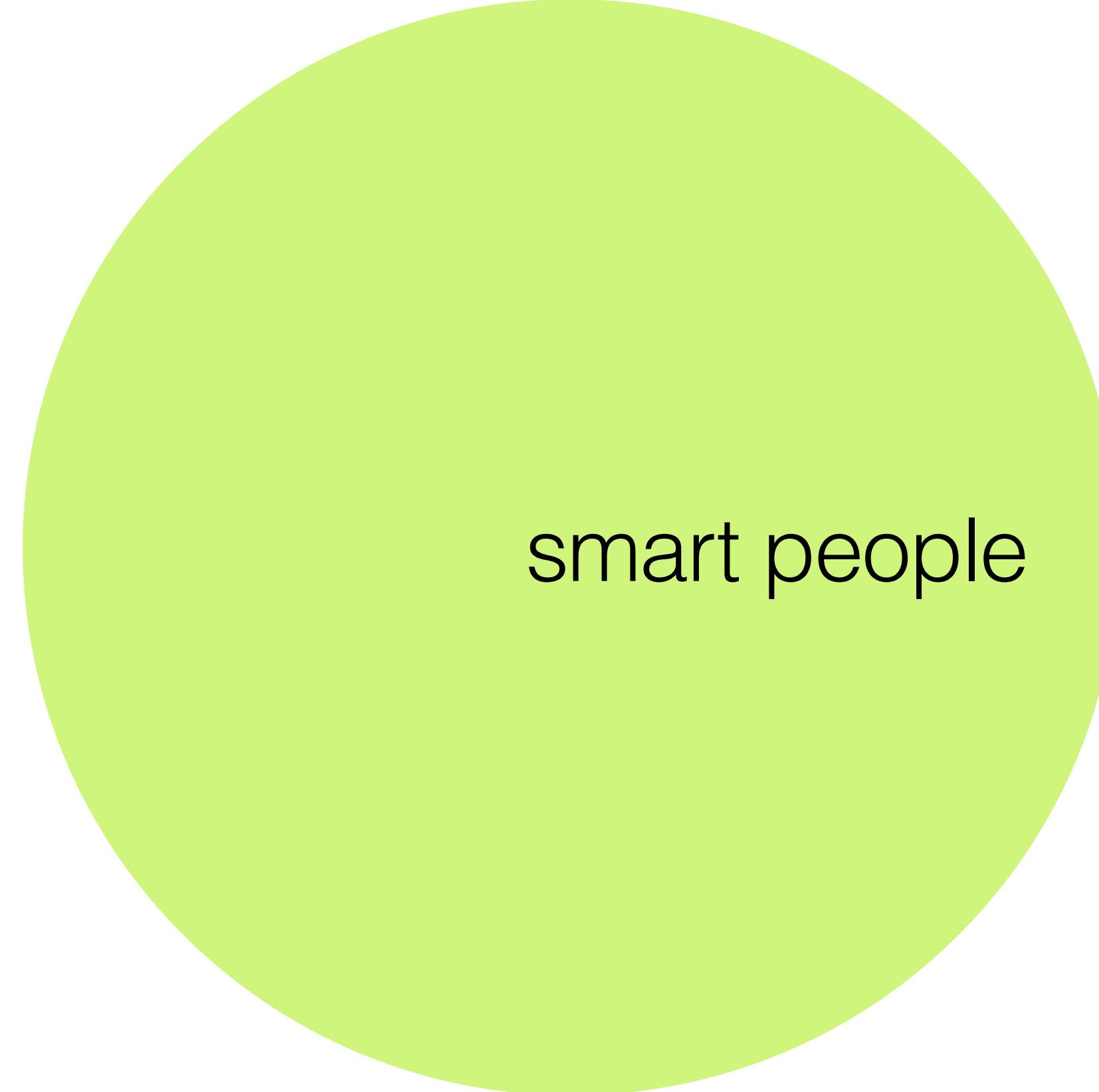


● Pac-Man      ● Not Pac-Man

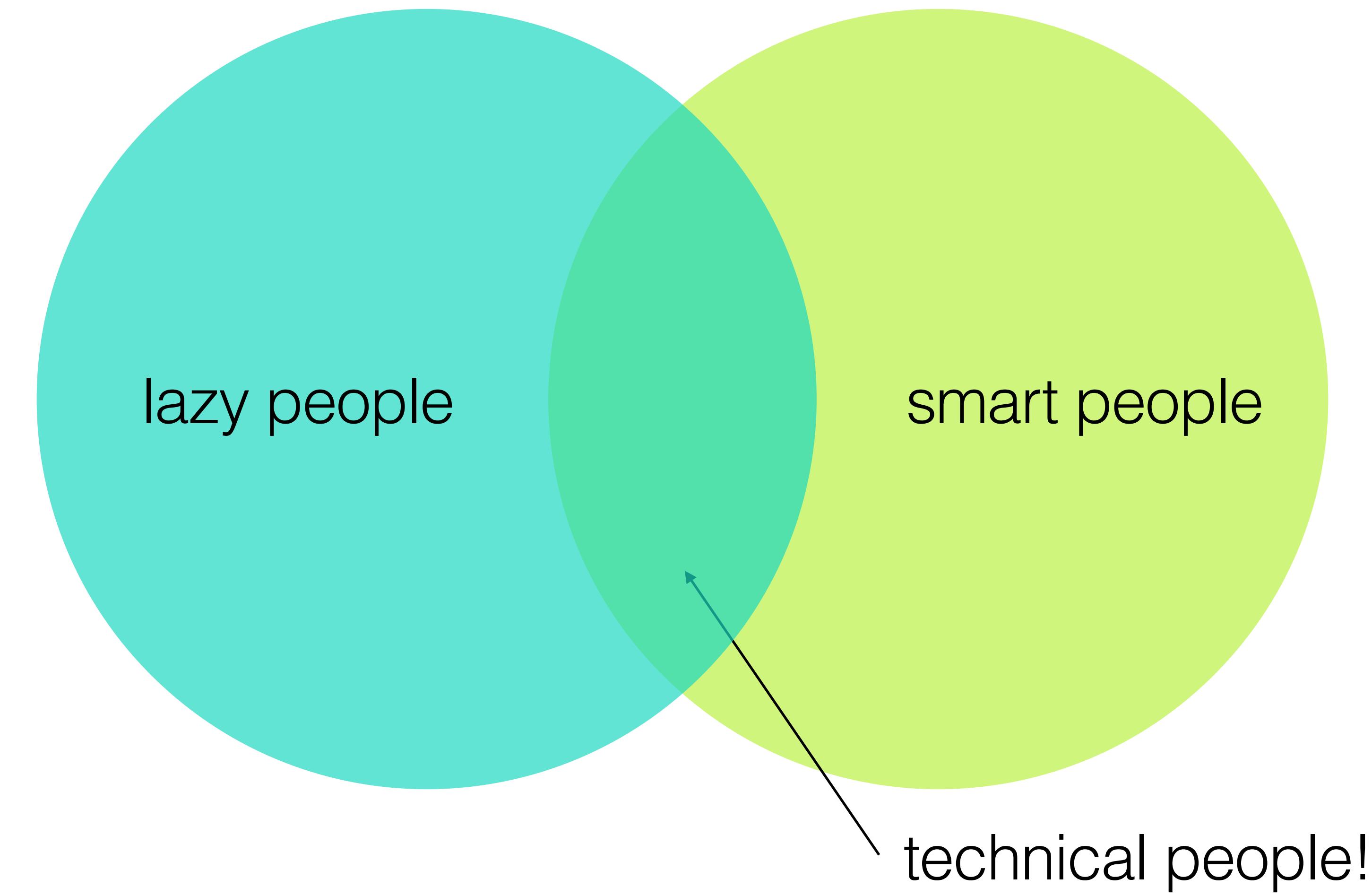


● Pac-Man    ● Not Pac-Man    ● Pac-Man's eye





smart people



these two weird tricks!!1!one!

# Where We Are

## **Better relationships**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **Better communication**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# 3-step plan for better relationships



**1. get people to want  
to help you**

# get to know people



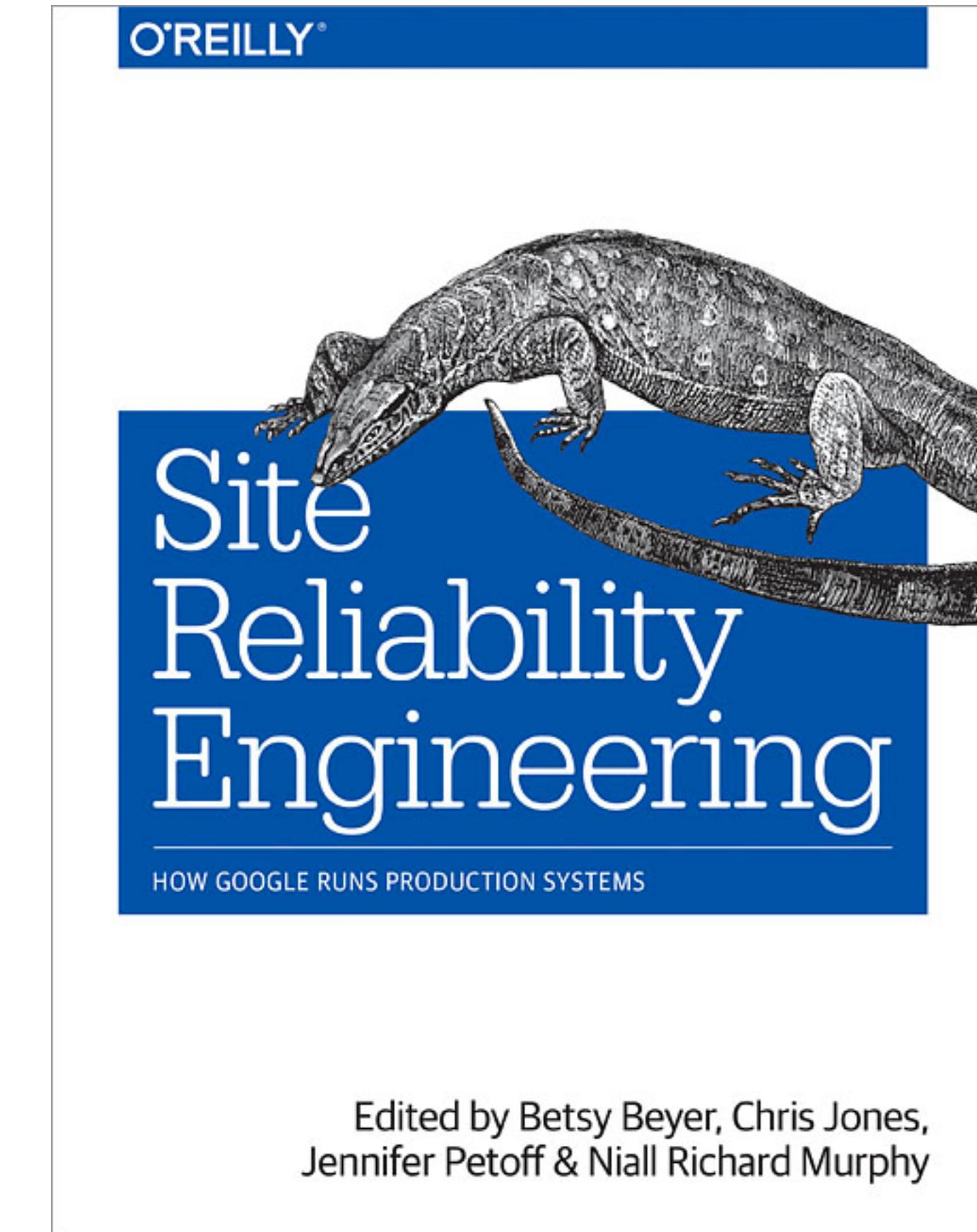


# share common interests

better relationships > get people to help you > share common interests

@kwugirl

# technical book club



# lunchconf

# lunchconf

[kwugirl.blogspot.com/2015/10/continuing-education-at-work-talk.html](http://kwugirl.blogspot.com/2015/10/continuing-education-at-work-talk.html)

# show your appreciation

tell their manager

# Where We Are

## Better relationships

1. Get people to want to help you
- 2.
- 3.

## Better communication

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## 2. make your team look good

# give awesome demos

# write a script



# status updates

“...so what?”

before:

“We changed email reports to be sent at 1am local time.”

after:

“We changed email reports to be sent at 1am local time, allowing customers to receive data in the correct local time window.”

be responsive,  
thorough, & empathetic

# Where We Are

## **Better relationships**

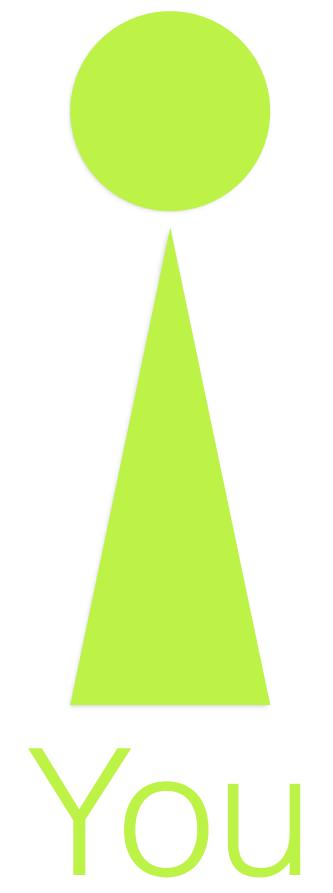
1. Get people to want to help you
2. Make your team look good
- 3.

## **Better communication**

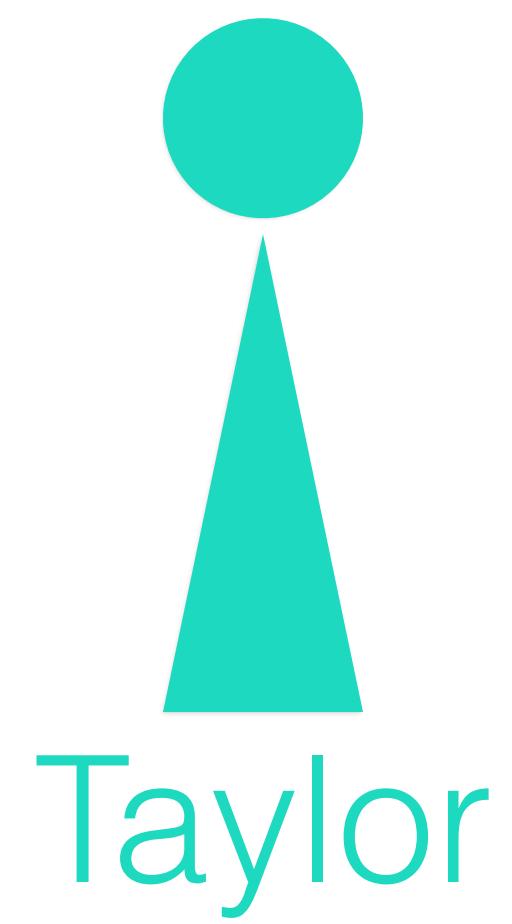
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# **3. recognize ask vs. guess cultures**

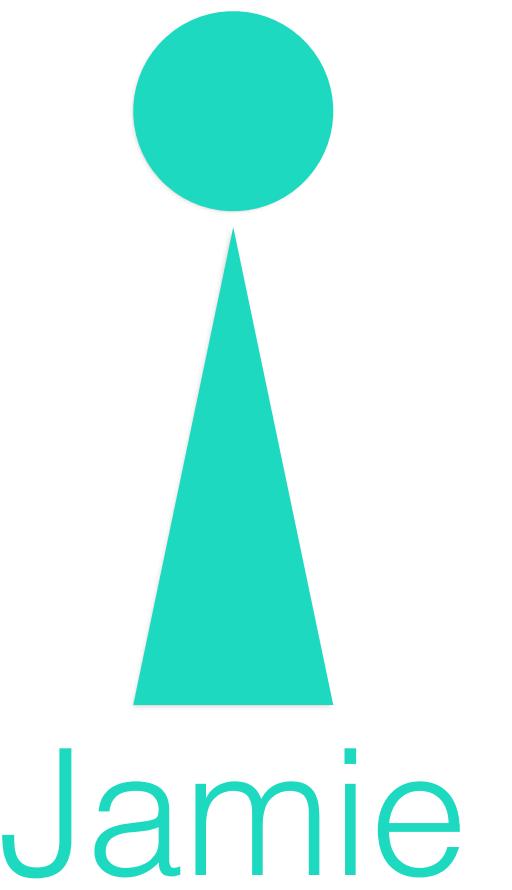




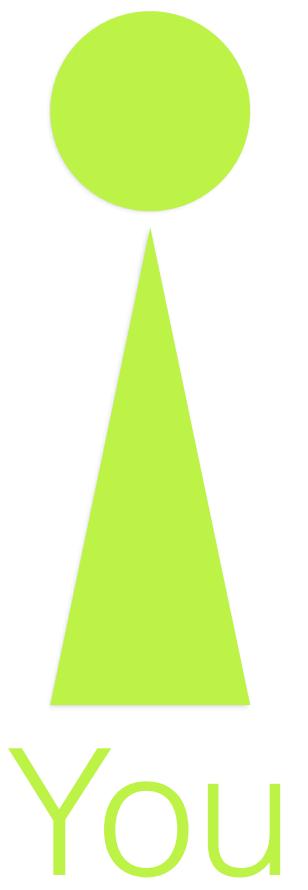




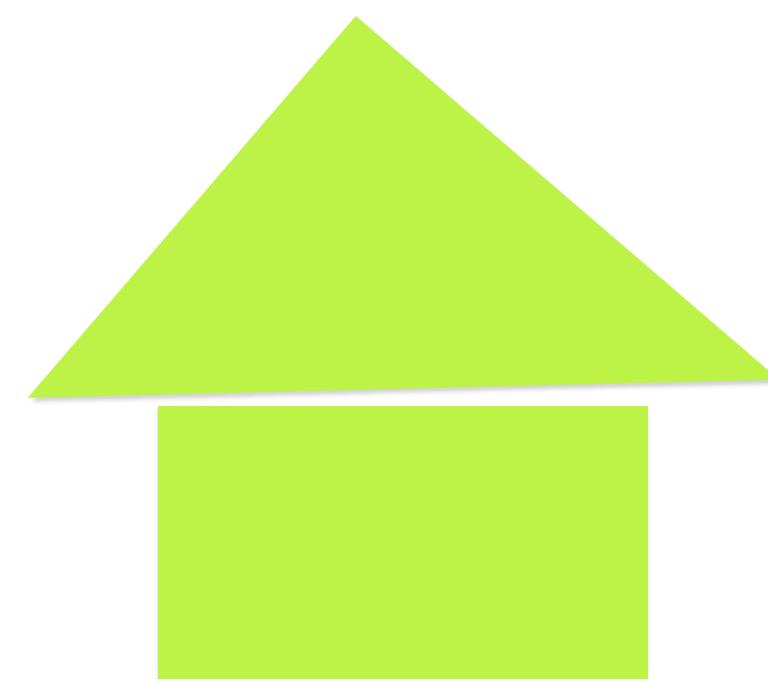
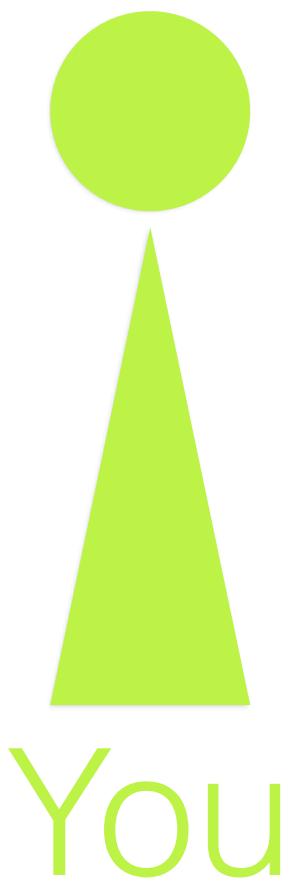
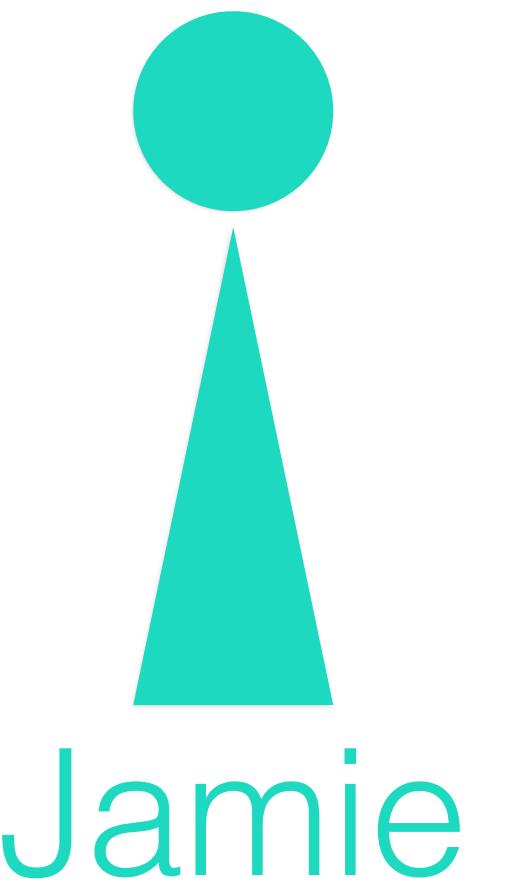
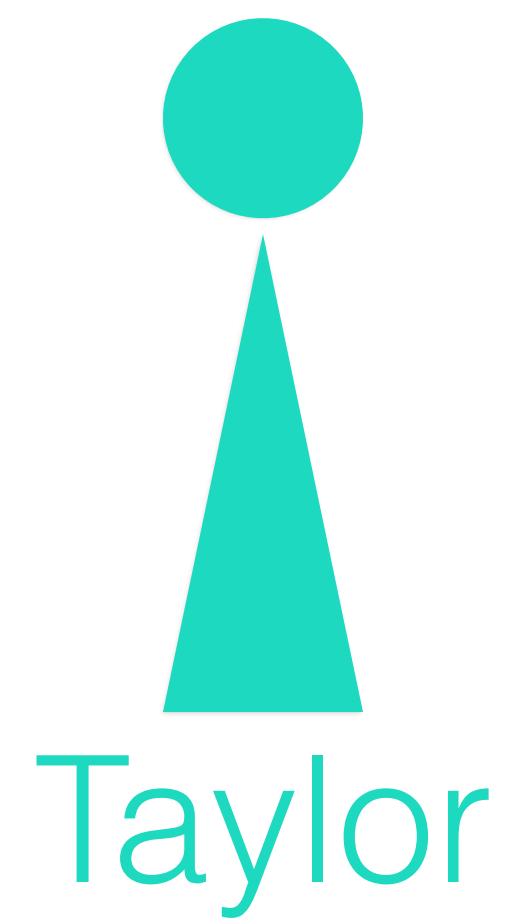
Taylor

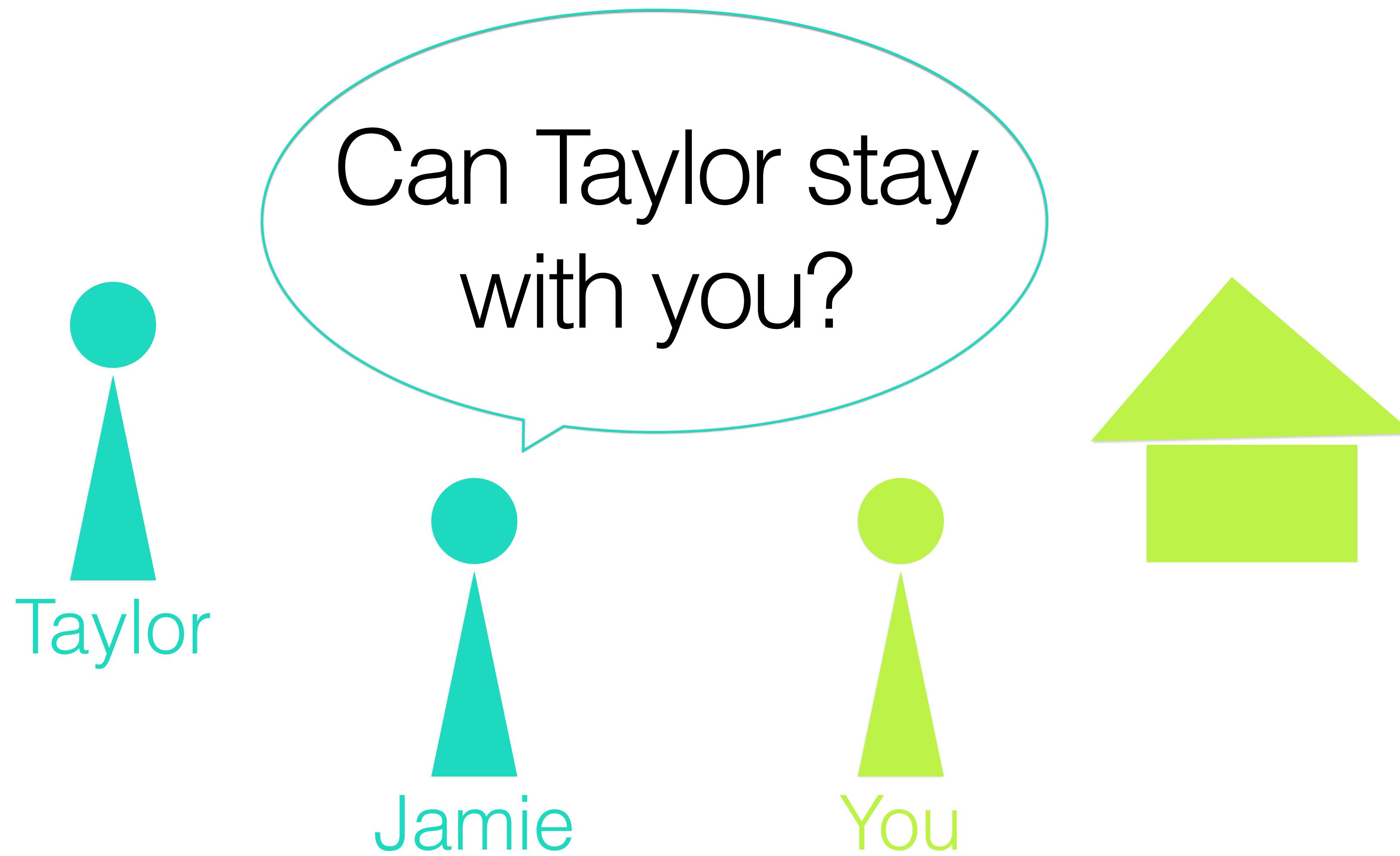


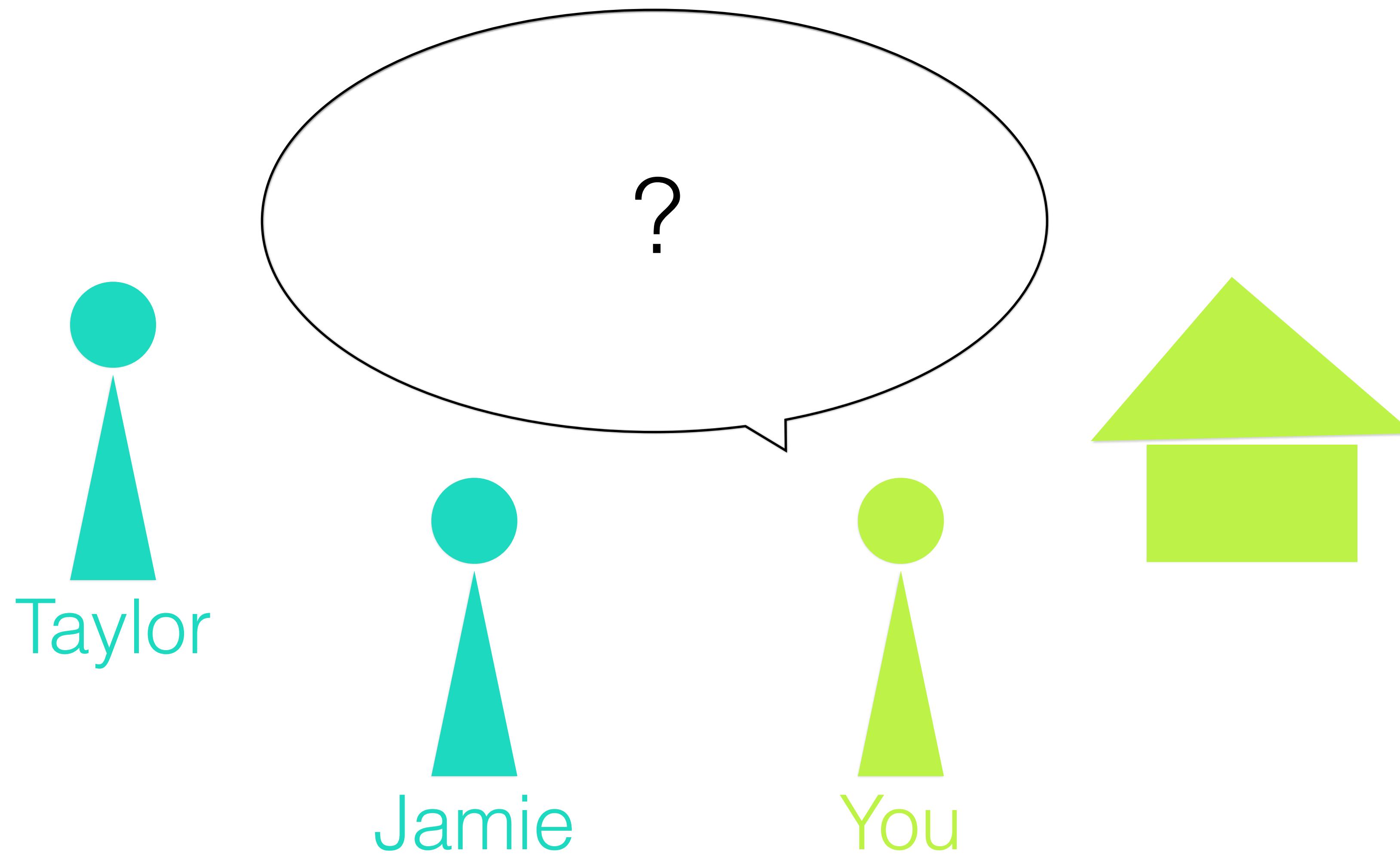
Jamie

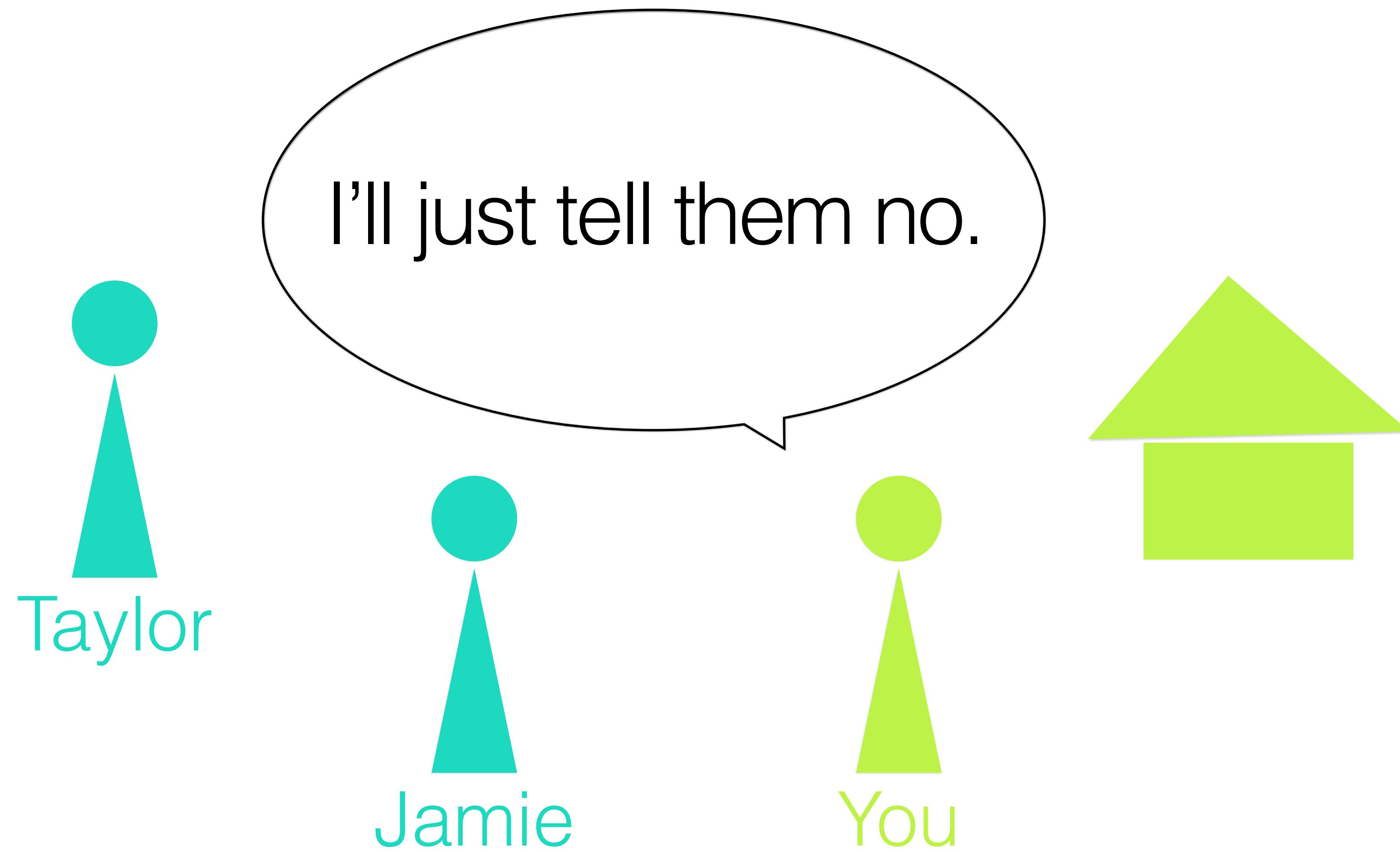


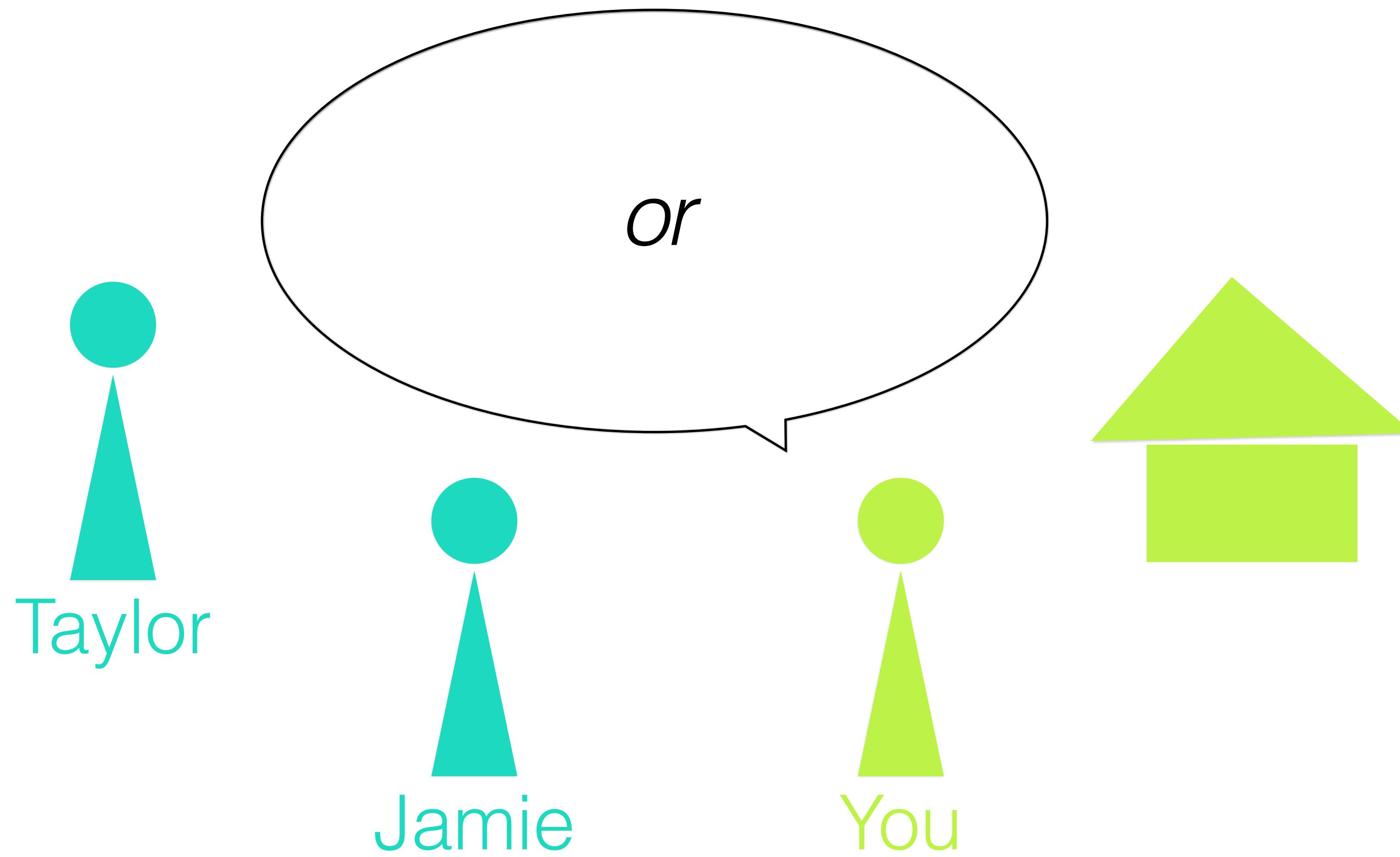
You

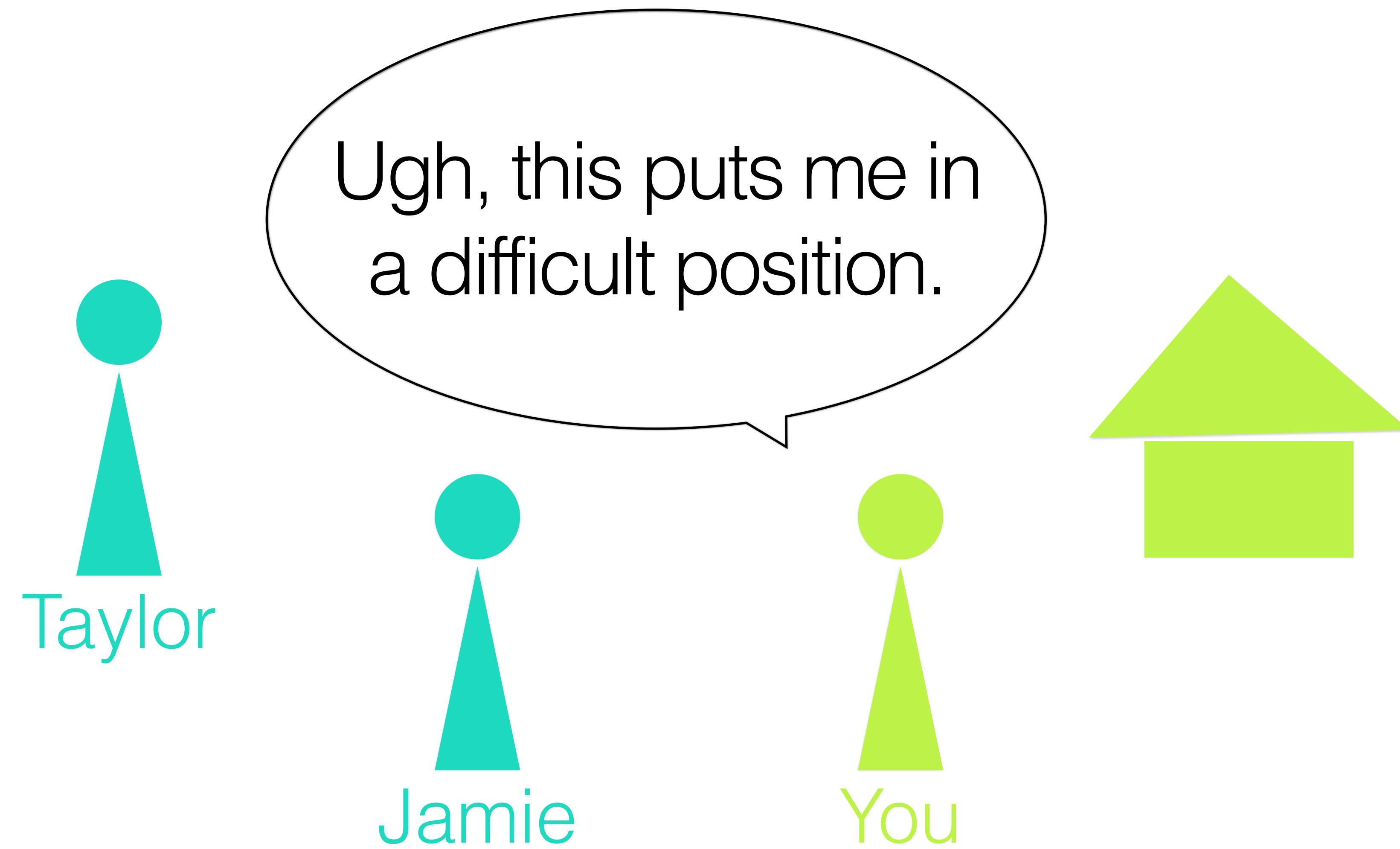












# Ask Culture

“I’ll just tell them no.”

# Guess Culture

“Ugh, this puts me  
in a difficult position.”

we're talking about American culture here, but if my husband and I visit NYC and stay in a hotel rather than with our friends, they get offended!  
January 16, 2007 [1 favorite]

lets Guess Culture.

The expectation that it's OK to ask for anything at all, but you gotta realize you might get no for an answer. This is Ask Culture.

request into words unless you're pretty sure the answer will be yes. Guess Culture depends on a tight net of shared expectations. A key skill is putting out delicate feelers. If you do this with enough skill then, the offer may be genuine or pro forma; it takes yet more skill and delicacy to discern whether you should accept.

the edges. If you're a Guess Culture person -- and you obviously are -- then unwelcome requests from Ask Culture people seem presumptuous and out of line, and you're likely to feel angry, uncomfortable, or annoyed.

Culture behavior can seem incomprehensible, inconsistent, and rife with passive aggression.

(I'm a Guess too. Let me tell you, it's great for, say, reading nuanced and subtle novels; not so great for, say, dating and getting raises.)

ong a subset of other Guess people -- ones who share a fairly specific set of expectations and signalling techniques. The farther you get from your own family and friends and subculture, the more you'll feel like you're being put in the position of having to be rude and say no a second time to a request for a favor.

This question, you can easily see who the Guess and the Ask commenters are. It's an interesting exercise.

January 16, 2007 [1555 favorites]

people think the request isn't rude. I think it's rude, or maybe a better word is pushy, to ask someone for a favor a second time after you've already been turned down once. I feel like the first refusal is the most polite way to say no, because it puts us in the position of having to be rude and say no a second time to a request for a favor.

rent ways of saying no - if it were me and I did want to have some future contact (but not a house guest), I would go with "No, we can't , have a great visit, let me know if you have time to meet up, etc."  
January 16, 2007 [6 favorites]

clearer demo of Guess-type thinking, complete with the assumption that you should never "put [people] in the position of having to be rude and say no" -- italics mine.

responses, see [dobbs](#) and [tkolar](#).  
January 17, 2007 [4 favorites]

people think the request isn't rude.

We get lots of people visiting, lots of people asking to stay over. Is it rude? Depends. It depends entirely on context.

here and have been good guests, who have taken us out to dinner as thanks, who stay in contact when they're not in town and not looking for somewhere to stay. It's not rude when they ask. It's

contact when they want somewhere to stay, who pay for nothing when they're here and when we can't accommodate them, drop out of contact again. They're rude. It's all context. The OP has to be the one to decide.

point. Do you want to let someone stay? No? Then say so.

January 17, 2007

Wearing your phone after they've already asked a direct question -- and then lying if you get caught! -- is more polite than simply saying "I'm so sorry that we can't put you up"?

The object of your politeness doesn't buy it, then you've done nothing more than played a little game with yourself.

I'm trying to get out of the situation. Seems to me that the OP wants a) for the moocher not to stay at his house, b) to not have to get into a dialog with the moocher in which she's empowered to negotiate, c) to not have to say no. My solution (silence) achieves all those goals. The fact that the moocher might screw herself by holding out hope that she'll have a place to stay is, in the context of the objectives, a good thing. After all, she's going to be sleeping in a business trip; she's not going to end up sleeping in the park.

January 17, 2007

it's OK to ask for anything

+

you're OK getting 'no'  
for an answer

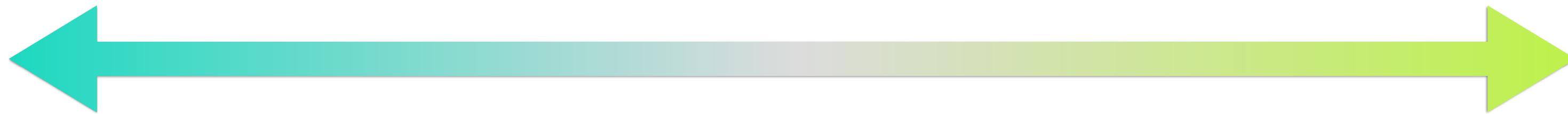
**ASK**

avoid asking unless  
the answer will be yes

GUESS

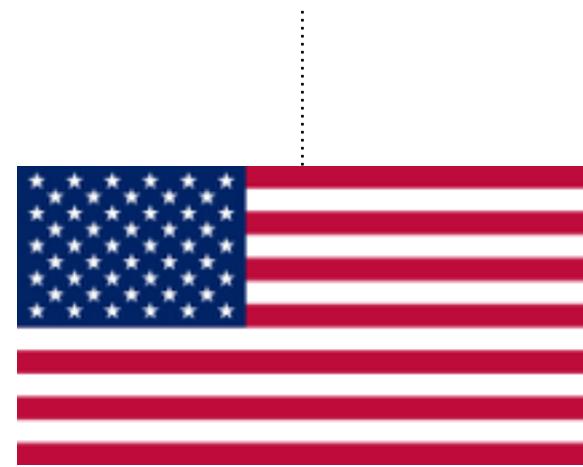
# ASK

# GUESS



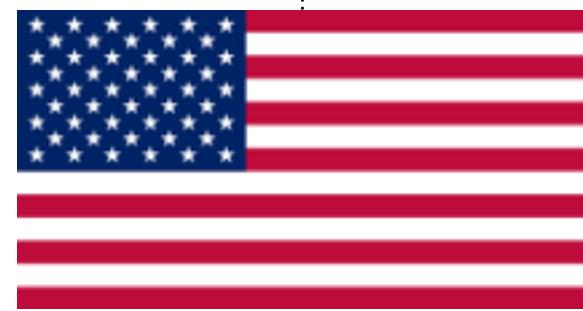
# ASK

# GUESS



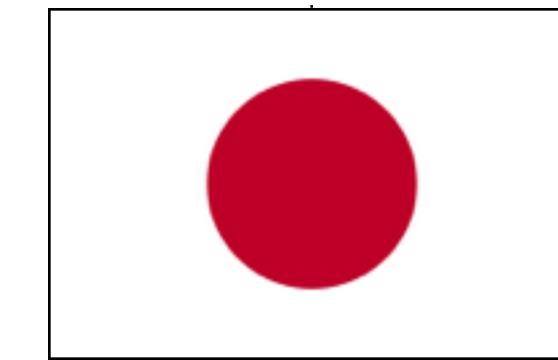
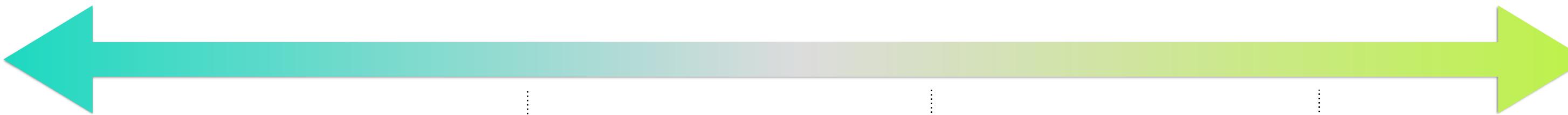
**ASK**

**GUESS**



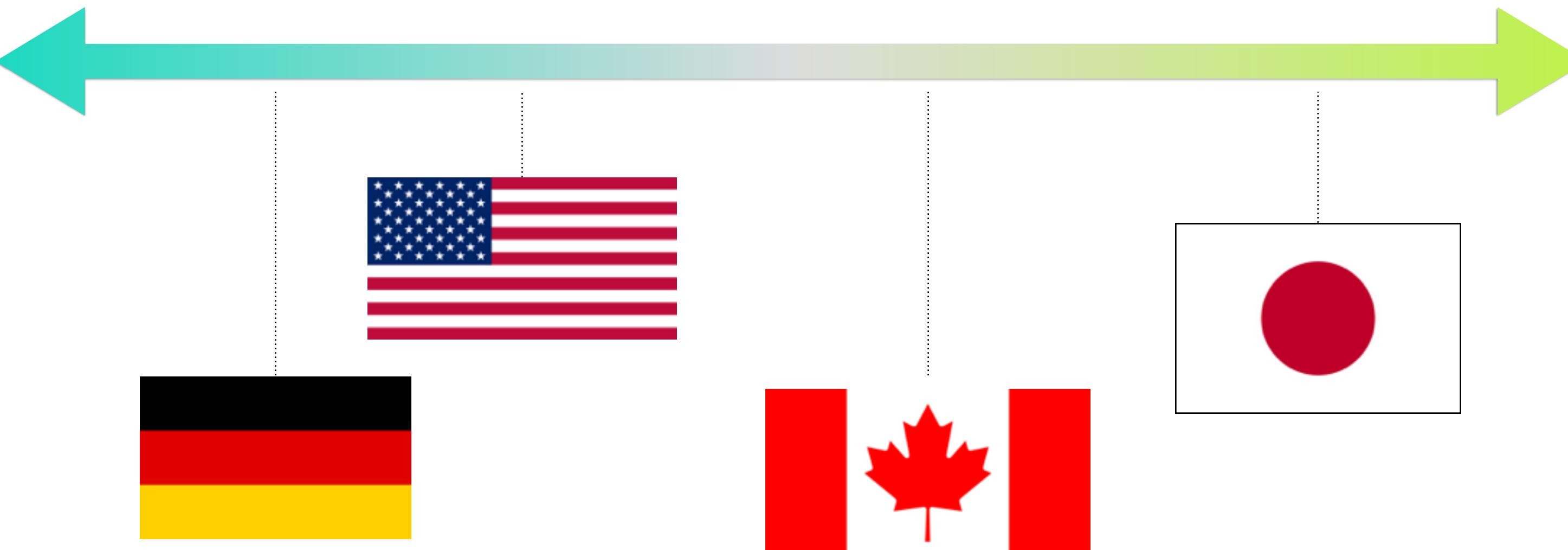
**ASK**

**GUESS**



# ASK

# GUESS

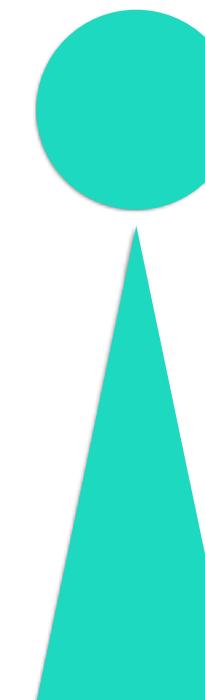


# a few examples

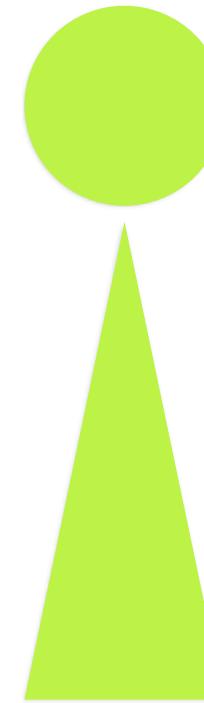
# “The Seattle No”

<https://medium.com/lessons-learned/the-seattle-no-177091f864a4>

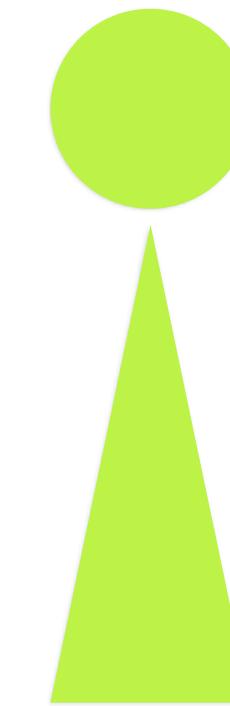
Hey, I'm going to this party,  
do you want to come?



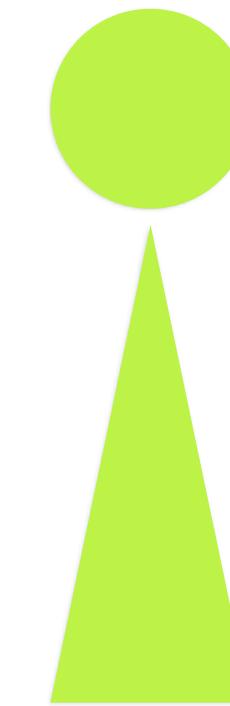
Hmm that sounds interesting,  
I'll have to check.



*or*

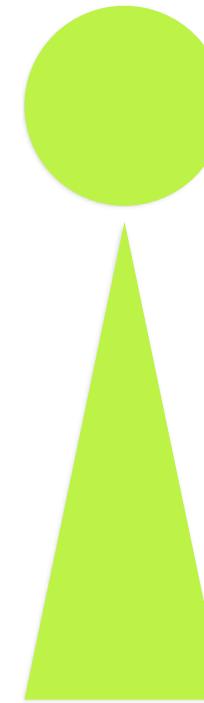


Oh yeah, maybe...



Oh yeah, maybe...

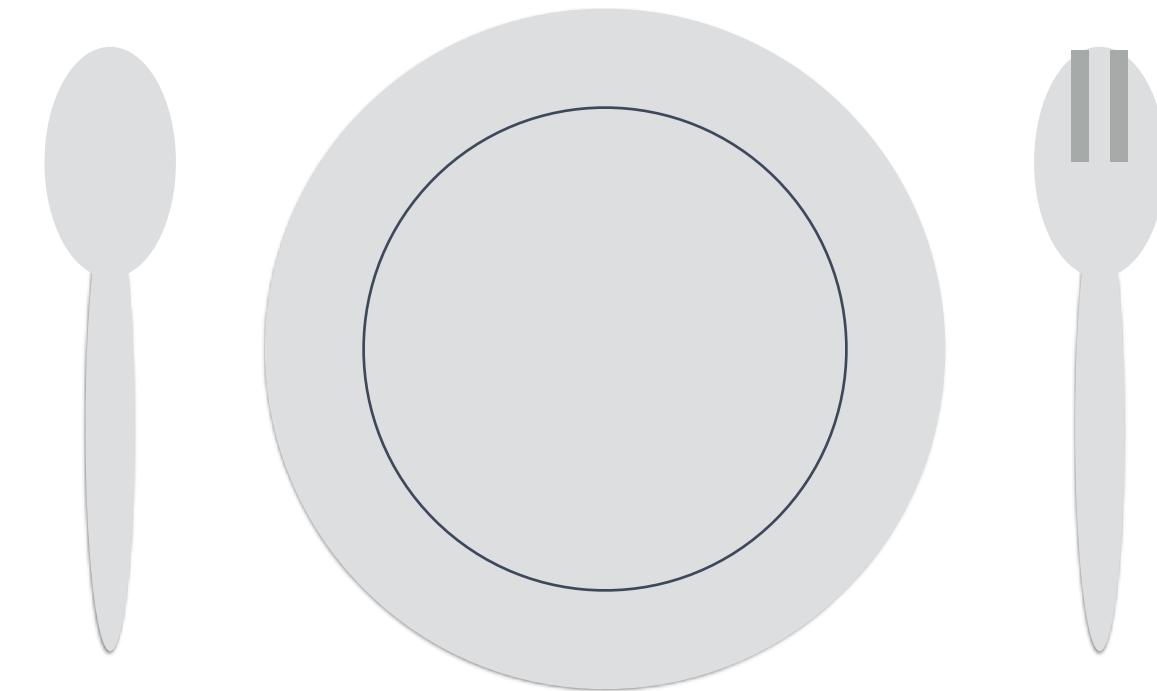
+ don't hear from them again about it



**THIS MEANS NO.**

# THIS MEANS NO.

(not obvious to all of us.)





“Hmm, I don’t have time to make lunch for next week.”



“Hmm, I don’t have time to make lunch for next week.”

↓  
**Dan** hears





“Hmm, I don’t have time to make lunch for next week.”



**Dan** hears



*“Could you make extra meals so I have lunch for the week?”*



“I’m going to cook 2 meals this weekend.”



“I’m going to cook 2 meals this weekend.”



I think





“I’m going to cook 2 meals this weekend.”



I think



*“That’s so weird, Dan’s planning to make an extra meal this weekend, but ok.”*



“I’m going to cook 2 meals this weekend.”



I think



*“That’s so weird, Dan’s planning to make an extra meal this weekend, but ok.”*

*What I did not say: “**Oh, you don’t have to do that.**”*

# End Result



# End Result



“Why do we have  
so much food  
in the fridge??”

# End Result



“Why do we have  
so much food  
in the fridge??”



# End Result



“Why do we have  
so much food  
in the fridge??”



“I’m *such* a  
good husband.”

# pros/cons

# Ask Culture



# Ask Culture

Prioritizes  
efficiency



# Ask Culture

Prioritizes  
efficiency

No ambiguity

# Ask Culture

Prioritizes  
efficiency

No ambiguity

Gets what you want  
(in the short-term)

# Ask Culture

Prioritizes  
efficiency

No ambiguity

Gets what you want  
(in the short-term)

More open conflict

# Ask Culture

Prioritizes efficiency

No ambiguity

Gets what you want  
(in the short-term)

More open conflict

Can make people feel uncomfortable

# Guess Culture

# Guess Culture

Prioritizes not  
hurting feelings

# Guess Culture

Prioritizes not  
hurting feelings

More polite

# Guess Culture

Prioritizes not hurting feelings

More polite

Hard if you're bad at reading social cues

# Guess Culture

Prioritizes not hurting feelings

More polite

Hard if you're bad at reading social cues

Can feel like no one is listening to you

# strategies for handling

# If you're from Ask Culture...

# If you're from Ask Culture...

Make a Guess Culture close friend

# If you're from Ask Culture...

Make a Guess Culture close friend

Listen more closely

# If you're from Ask Culture...

Make a Guess Culture close friend

Listen more closely

Apologize if you realize >1 interpretation

# If you're from Guess Culture...

# If you're from Guess Culture...

Remember that people might be  
unaware of “the rules”

# If you're from Guess Culture...

Remember that people might be  
unaware of “the rules”

Resist the urge to “soften” a “No”

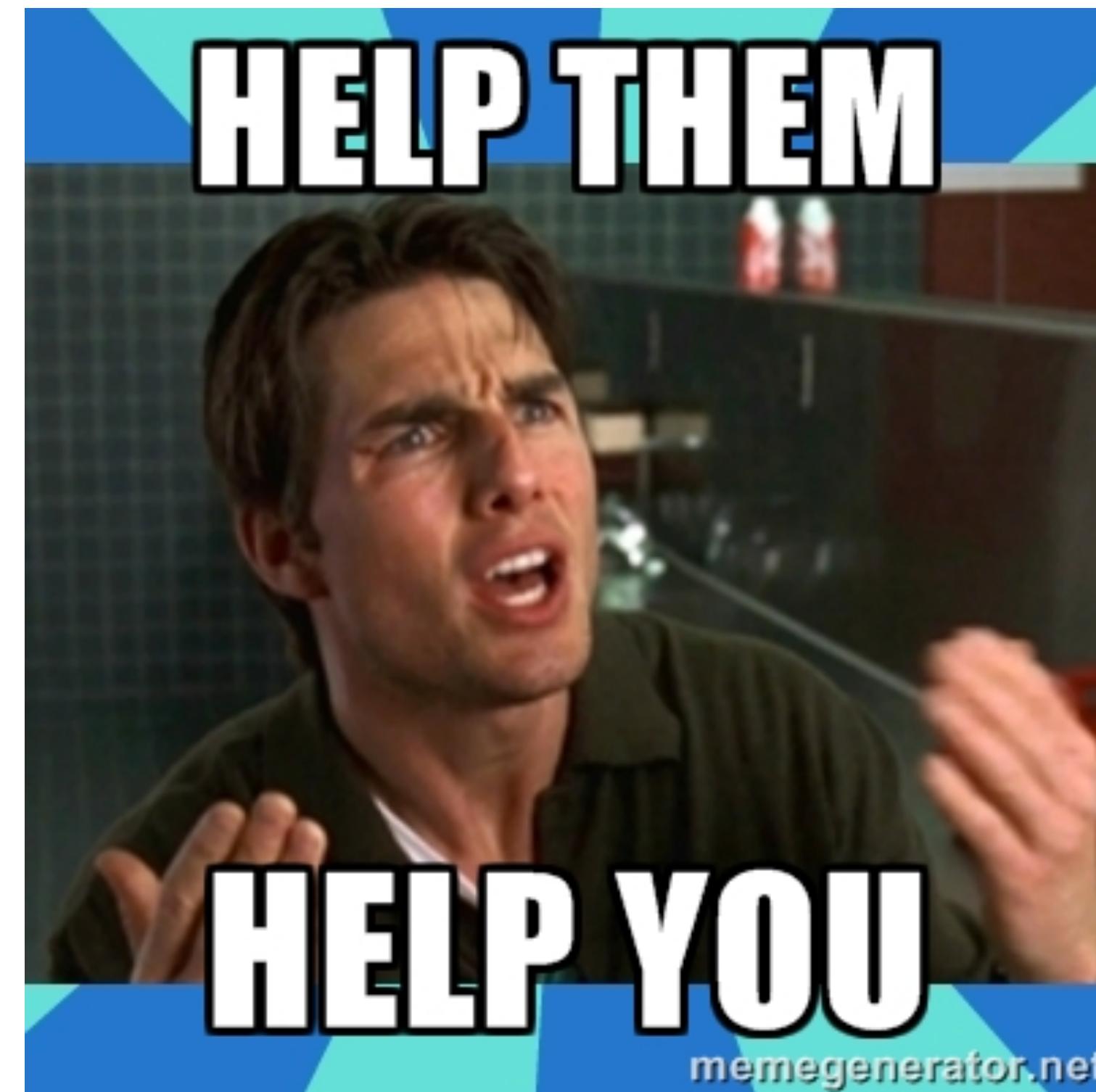
“Hey, I have a request,  
but it’s totally cool  
if you want to say no.”

# Better Relationships

1. Get people to want to help you
2. Make your team look good
3. Recognize Ask vs. Guess Cultures

# 3-step plan for better communication

**1. make it easy for  
people to help**



articulate why  
you're confused

“You had me up  
until \_\_\_\_.”

# give context

“I’m confused, because I  
thought you said  $a==b$ ,  
and  $b==c$ , but here...  $a!=c$ ?”

“I am trying to \_\_\_, so that I can \_\_\_\_.

I’m running into \_\_\_\_.

I’ve looked at \_\_\_ & tried \_\_\_\_.”



courage to say  
“I don’t know”

“Wait, I actually don’t even  
know what that word means.”

give specific, positive  
reinforcement

“It really helped me  
when you...”

# Where We Are

## **Better relationships**

1. Get people to want to help you
2. Make your team look good
3. Recognize Ask vs. Guess Cultures

## **Better communication**

1. Make it easy for people to help you
- 2.
- 3.

## 2. ask good questions

# how to use questions for good??



“Are we working on  
the right thing?”

“Is there a reason we’re  
doing it *this* way?”





# ask All The Questions

# Where We Are

## **Better relationships**

1. Get people to want to help you
2. Make your team look good
3. Recognize Ask vs. Guess Cultures

## **Better communication**

1. Make it easy for people to help you
2. Ask good questions
- 3.

### 3. give good feedback



A landscape photograph featuring a vibrant rainbow arching across a dark, cloudy sky. The rainbow is positioned on the left side of the frame. Below it, a dense line of green trees stands along the edge of a body of water. The water's surface is calm, reflecting the surrounding environment. In the distance, a long, low bridge stretches across the scene. The overall lighting suggests either sunrise or sunset, with warm tones reflecting off the clouds and water.

**speak up when  
you have good  
things to say**

“I don’t have an opinion  
on this topic.”

accept feedback  
graciously

# Better Communication

1. Make it easy for people to help
2. Ask good questions
3. Give good feedback

# pitfalls to avoid

<https://flic.kr/p/7Eu25y>

# “Girl Scout tax”



# stay focused on your goal



# Recommended Resources

*Team Geek: A Software Developer's Guide to Working Well with Others*

*Site Reliability Engineering: How Google Runs Production Systems*

*The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is the Key to Success*

“How to Survive Your First Year as a Programmer” (<http://bit.ly/1mSoyYI>)

“5 Undervalued Skills in Tech & Why You Should Master Them Anyway” (<http://bit.ly/1hu796E>)

“Self-promotion for Game Developers” (<http://bit.ly/1kdVsmH>)

“Becoming an Influencer” (<http://bit.ly/1htNrlt>)

## Better relationships

1. Get people to want to help you
2. Make your team look good
3. Recognize Ask vs. Guess

## Better communication

1. Make it easy for people to help you
2. Ask good questions
3. Give good feedback



Katherine Wu  
  @kwugirl

 **New Relic®**  
Software Engineer

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“Network Engineer”  
“Director of Site Engineering”  
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