

Leading Design, 2023

# It's Okay to Be the Boss

A talk in four acts

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# Where we are going...

Act 1: A Tale of Two Leaders

Act 2: Authentic Connections

Act 3: Making Things Happen

Act 4: Mapping the Territory

*With a brief foray into leadership embodiment.*

# What you will learn...

- An understanding of two essential skills of effective leadership
- The basics of leadership embodiment
- A useful tool for managing paradoxes
- Get a little more comfortable being the boss

# Act 1: A tale of two leaders



# The Action Leader

- Goal focused
- Makes decisions
- Makes things happen



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# The Collaborative Leader

- Cares about thoughts and feelings
- Invites curiosity
- Collective sense making



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- ✓ Makes decisions
- ✓ Makes things happen
- ✗ Unhappy CEO
- ✗ Broken Trust

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# The Action Leader

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- ✓ Makes decisions
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# The Collaborative Leader

- ✓ Cares about thoughts and feelings
- ✓ Invites curiosity
- ✓ Collective sense making
- ✗ Unhappy CEO
- ✗ Nothing happens



**Building trust and getting things done.**

the right

**Building trust and getting<sup>the right</sup> things done.**

the right

**Building trust and getting<sup>the right</sup> things done.**

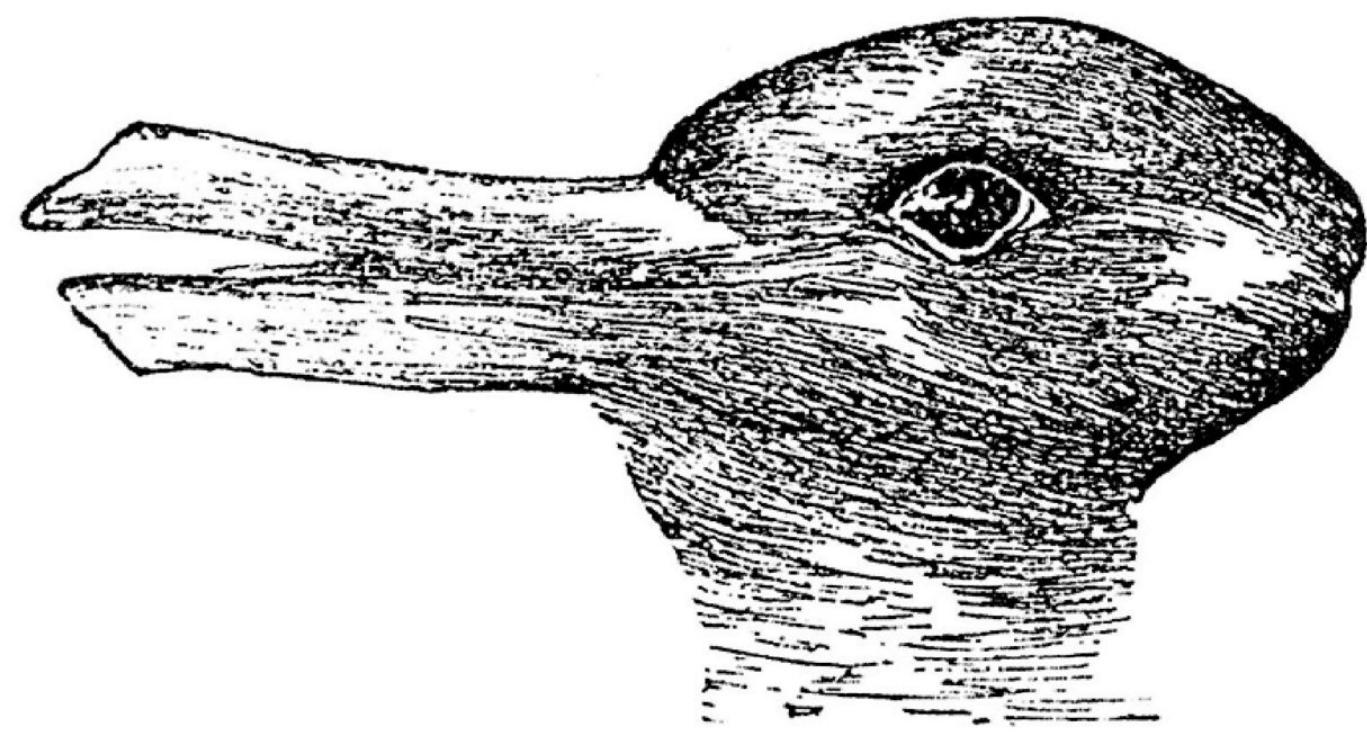
**Relational and strategic.**

**Should a leader be relational or strategic?**

**Should a leader be relational or strategic? Yes.**

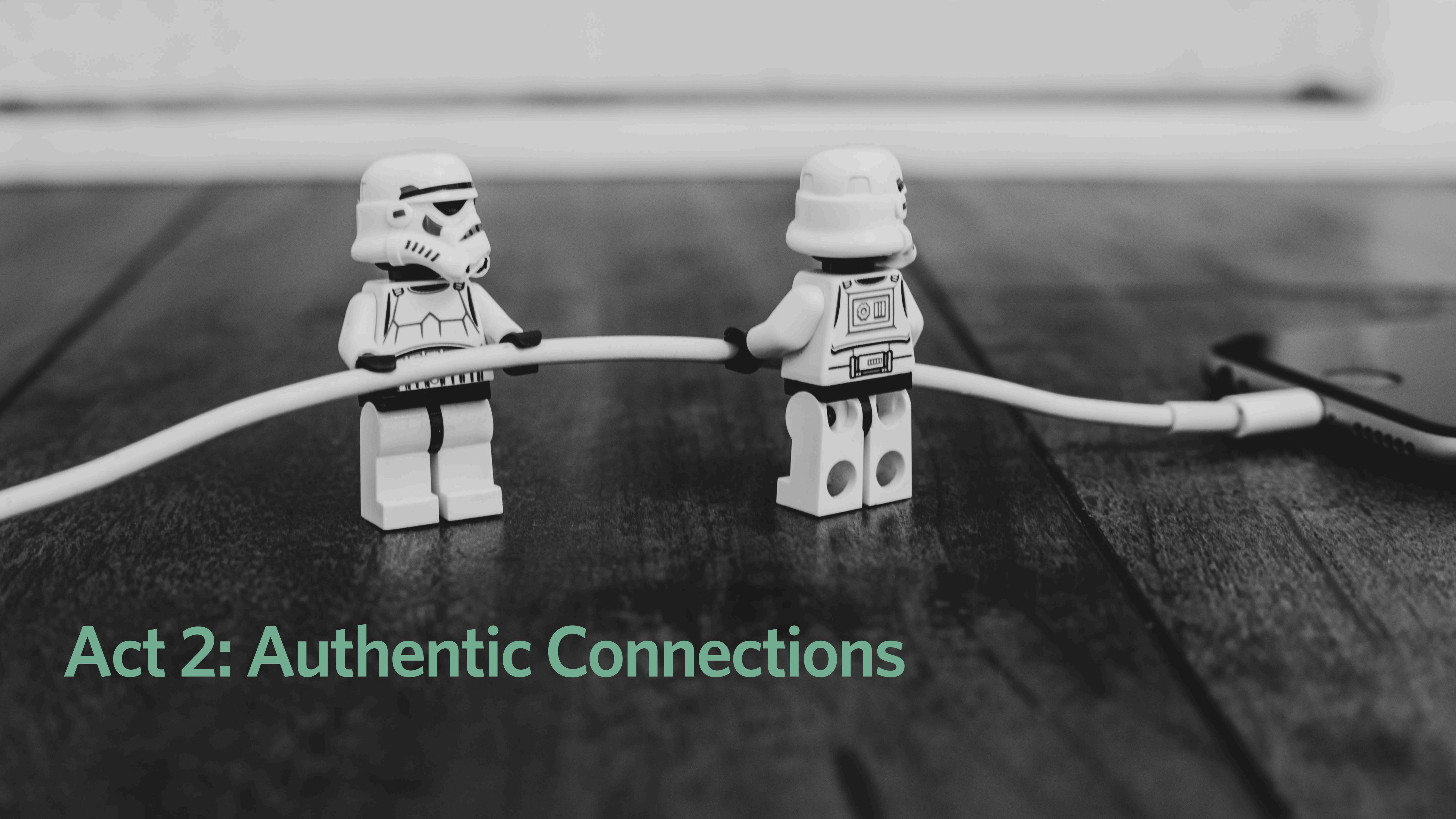
You are not just problem solvers.

You are also *paradox managers*.



One more thing...

**Relational and strategic *interactions*.**



## Act 2: Authentic Connections

# Relational interactions are not...

- Check-ins
- Offsites
- Team outings
- Knowing the name of someone's dog/cat/goldfish

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- Check-ins
- Offsites
- Team outings
- Knowing the name of someone's dog/cat/goldfish



*Relational interactions **do not require** honest and full disclosure!*

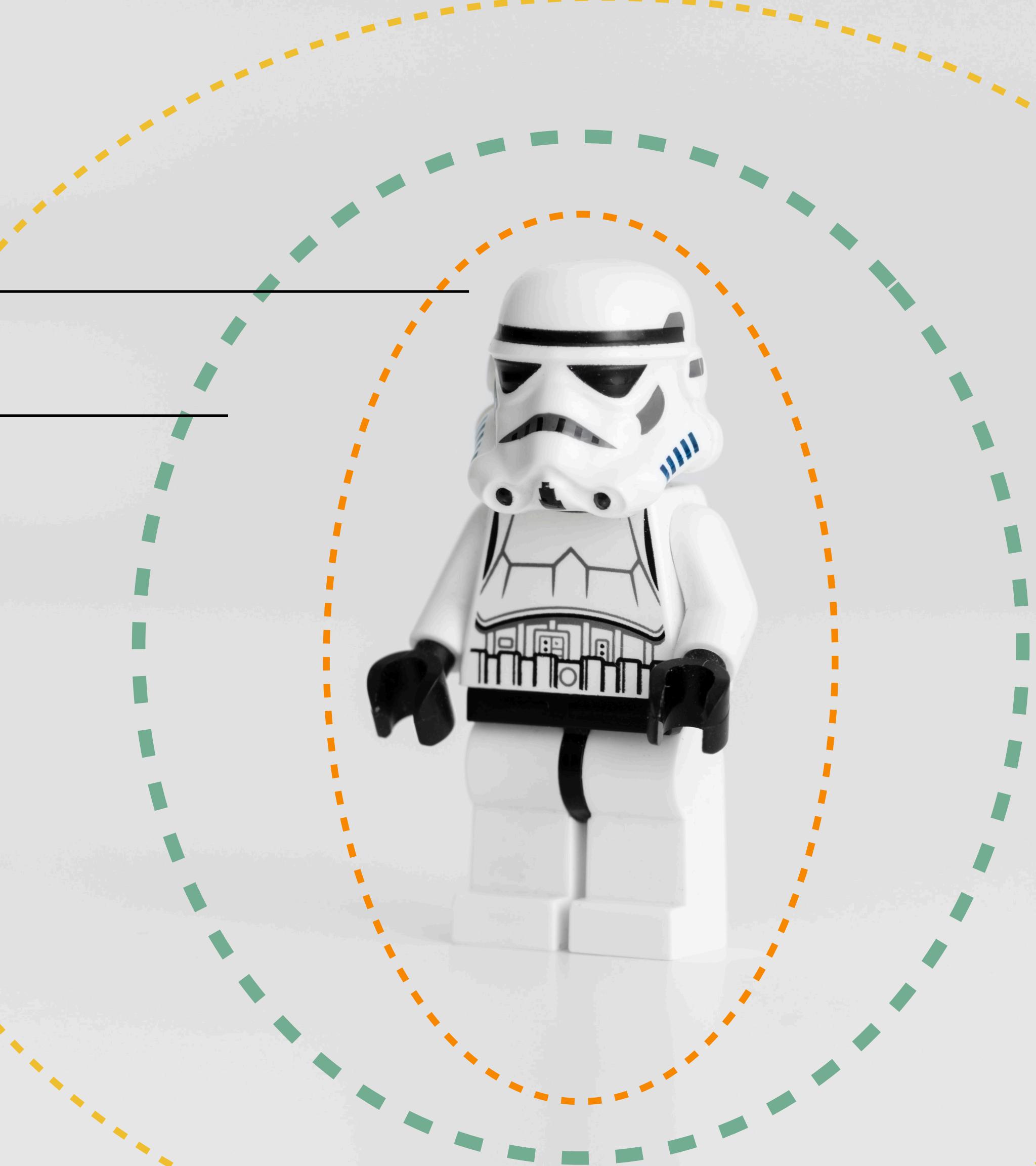


# Relational interactions...

- **Genuinely caring** about what each person is thinking and feeling
- **Connectedness** is a goal in and of itself
- Being together in **mutually powerful ways** (hierarchy disappears)
- Generates **curiosity** and **understanding**
- A commitment **not to blame** oneself or others

*Source: Connecting Strategic and Intimate Interactions: The Need for Balance*

**Leadership isn't just about what you do, it's  
about how you do it.**

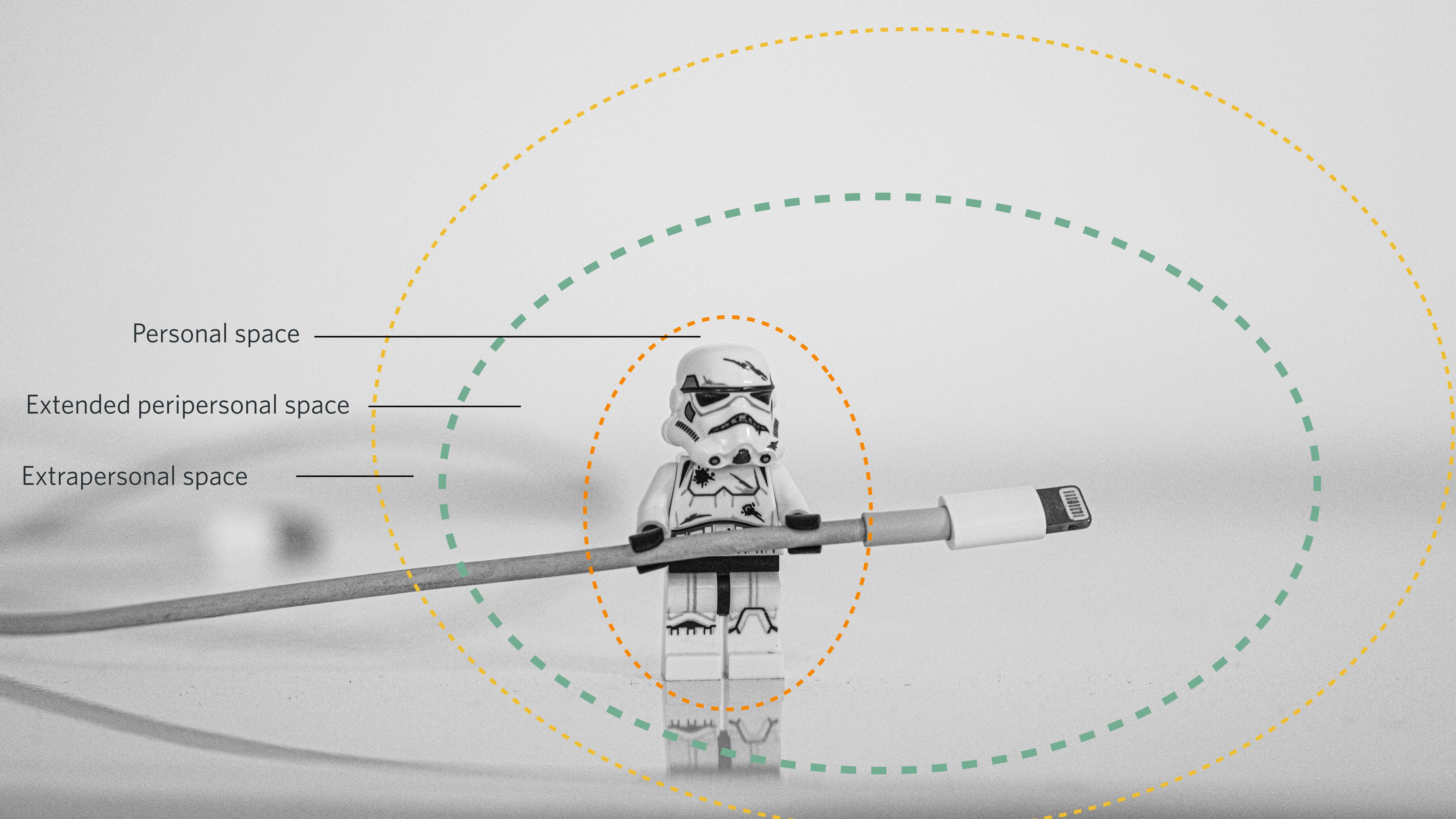


A white LEGO Stormtrooper minifigure stands centrally on a reflective surface. The figure is wearing its iconic white armor with black stripes and a black helmet. Behind the figure, three concentric dashed circles define spatial zones: a green dashed circle, an orange dashed circle, and a yellow dashed circle. To the left of the figure, three horizontal lines extend from the text labels to indicate the boundaries of these zones.

Personal space

Peripersonal space

Extrapersonal space



Personal space

Extended peripersonal space

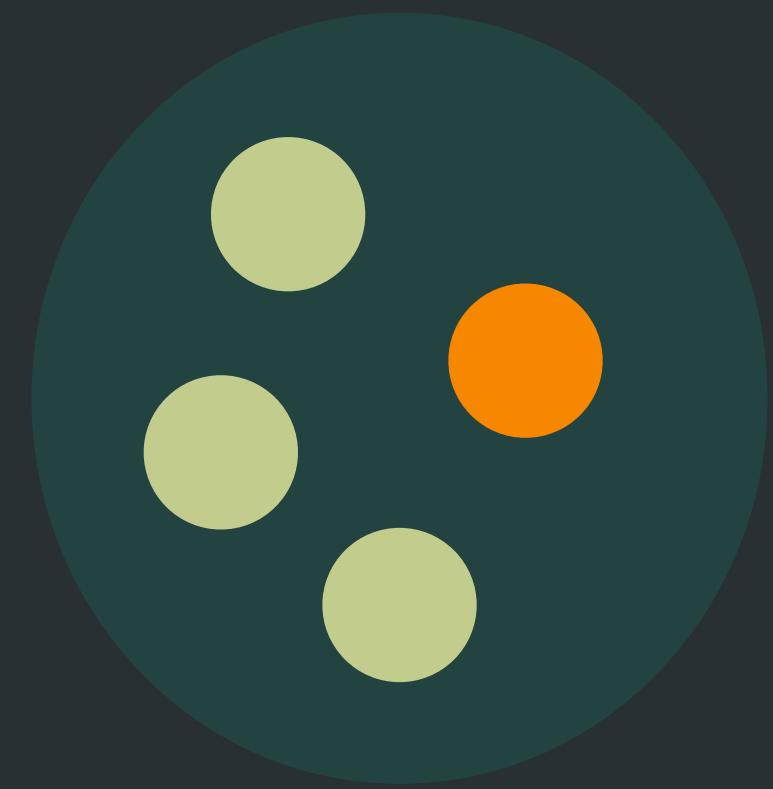
Extrapersonal space

# How?



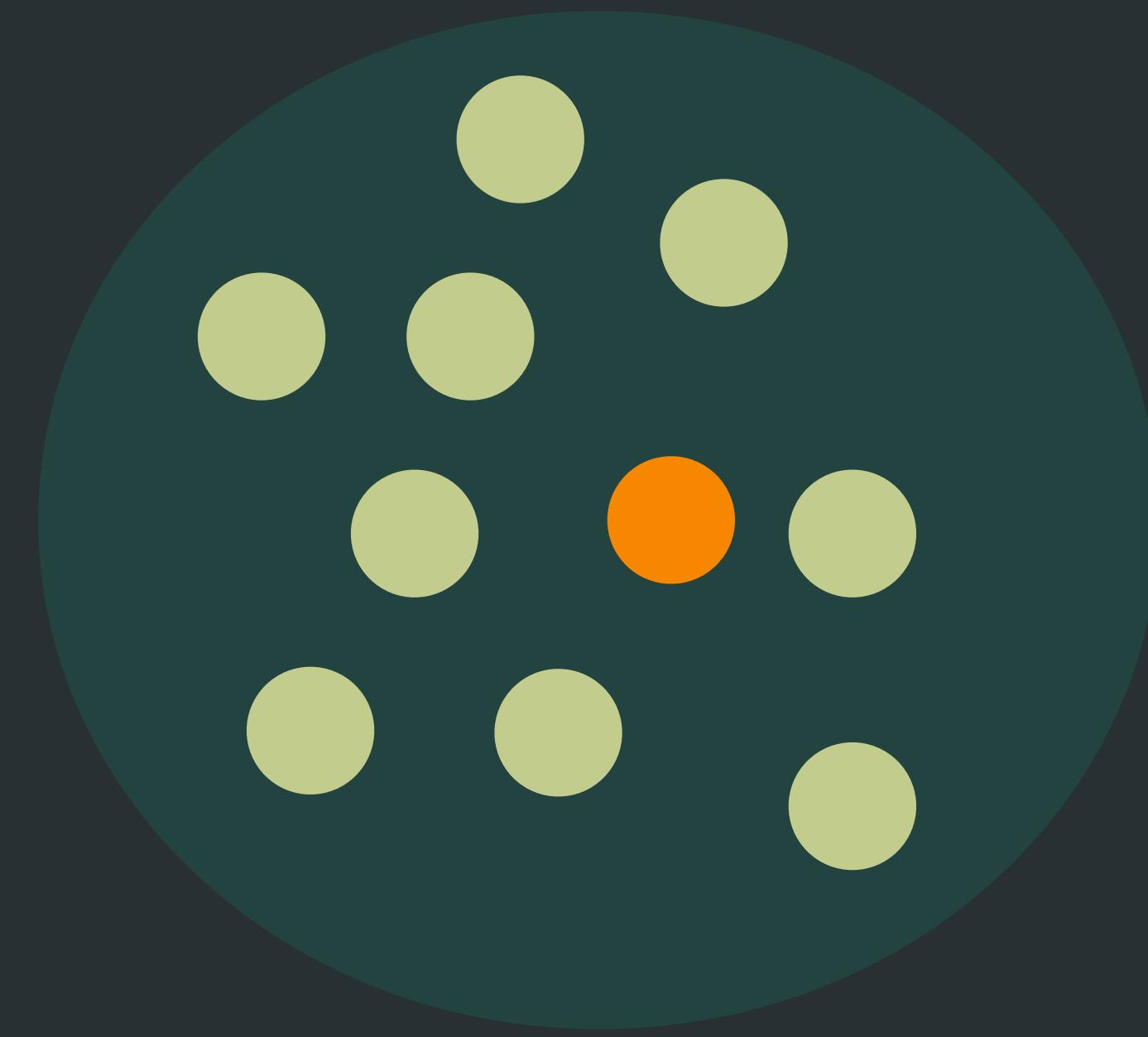
Source: *Leadership Embodiment*, by Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford

# How?



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# How?



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# Act 3: Making Things Happen

# Strategic interactions are not...

- Domination
- Being right
- Getting your way
- Making unilateral decisions
- Micromanaging
- Too much structure

# Strategic interactions...

- Stay **focused on a goal** without being deflected by emotions
- Willingness to **lead** and willingness to **follow**
- Willingness to step into **action-based exchange**
- Acceptance of **hierarchical differences** relative to authority
- The ability for those in the system to **make/follow unpopular decisions**
- The ability to make **clear** decisions

*Source: Connecting Strategic and Intimate Interactions: The Need for Balance*





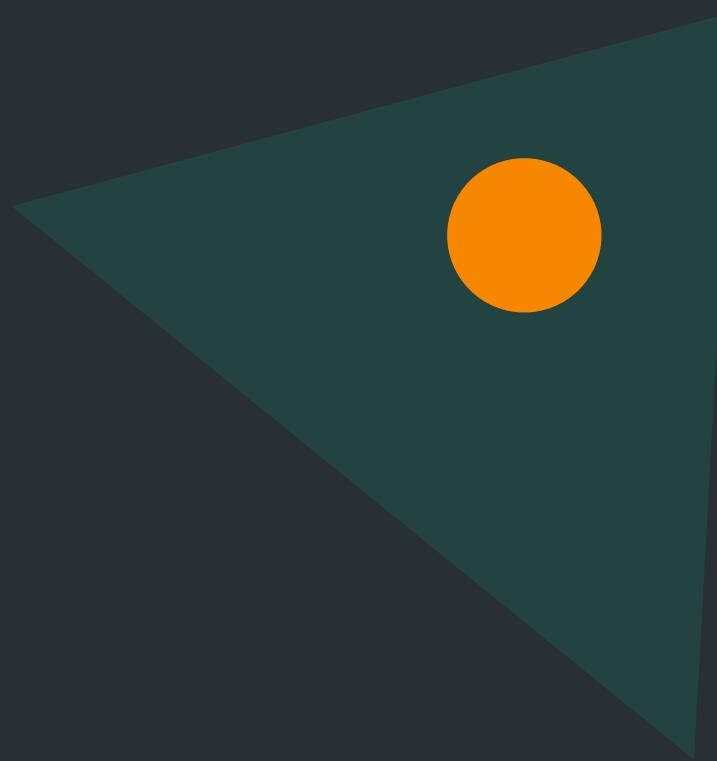
**Strategic interactions also require connection to  
be effective.**

# Delegation.

***“Delegation without follow-through is abdication.”***

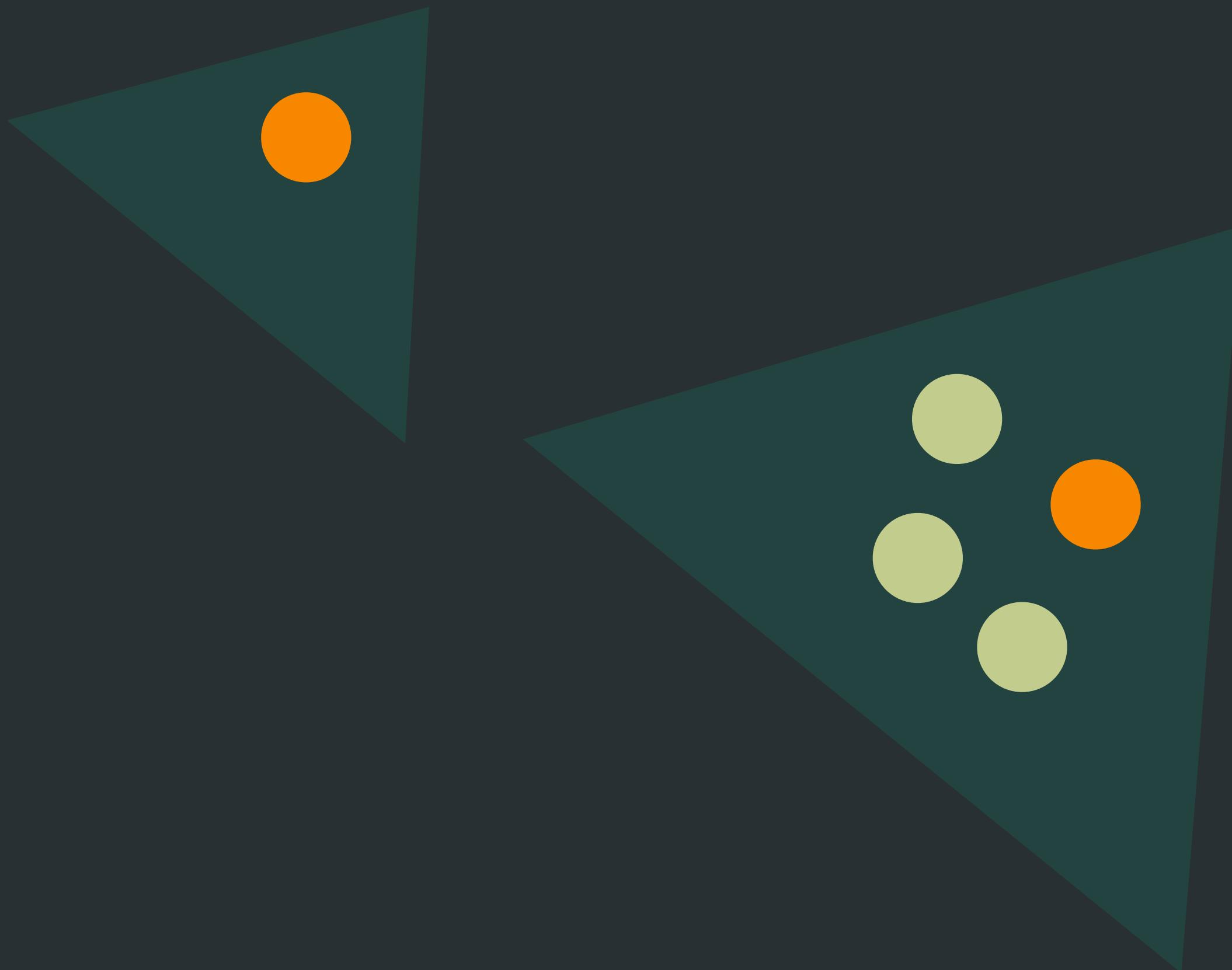
- Andy Grove

# How?



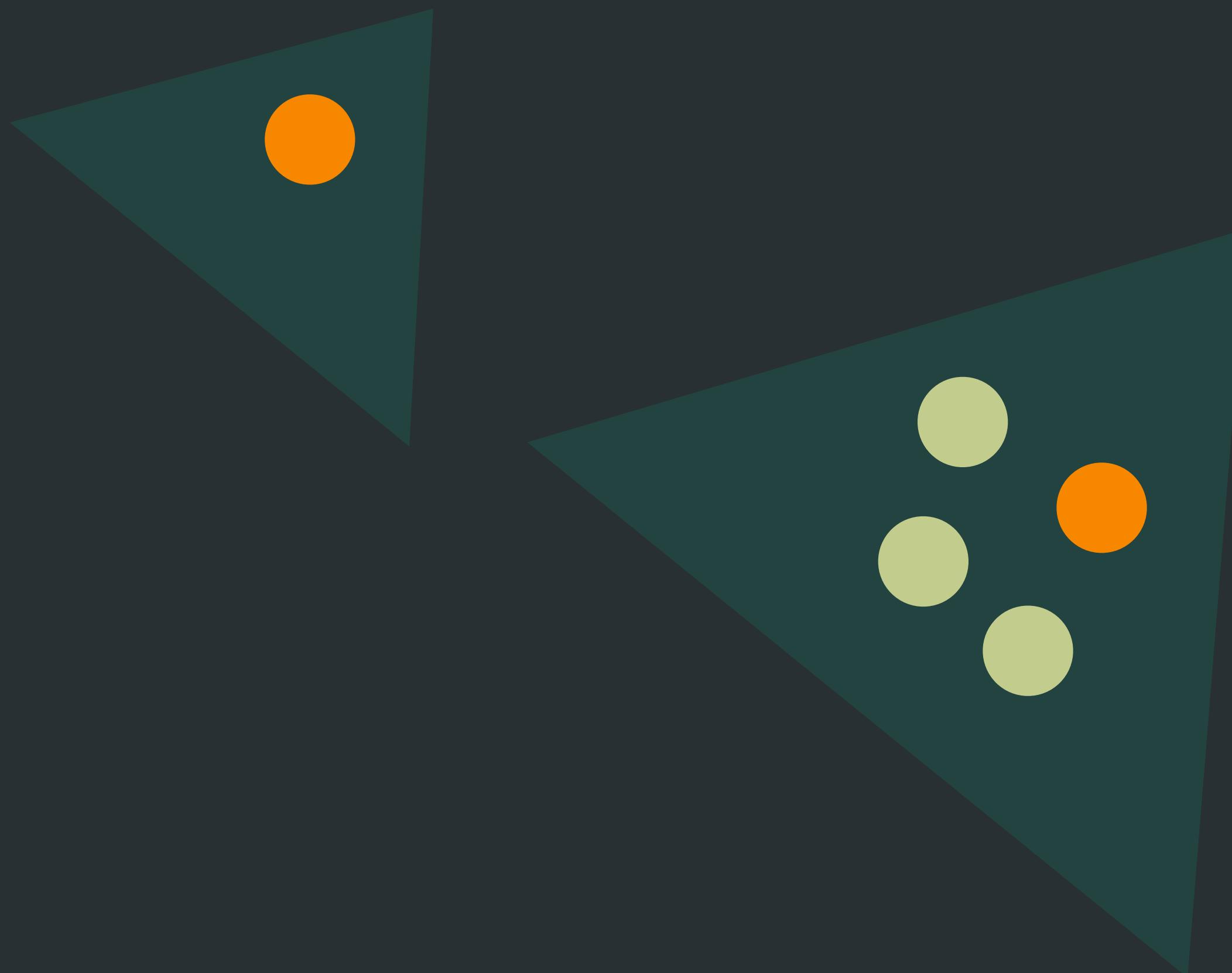
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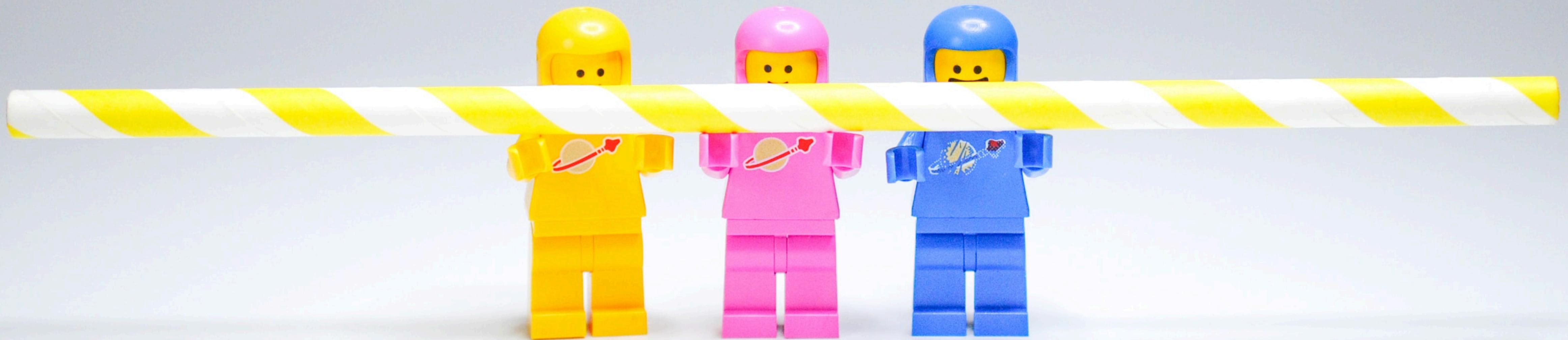
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Source: *Leadership Embodiment*, by Wendy Palmer and Janet Crawford

# Act 4: Mapping the Territory

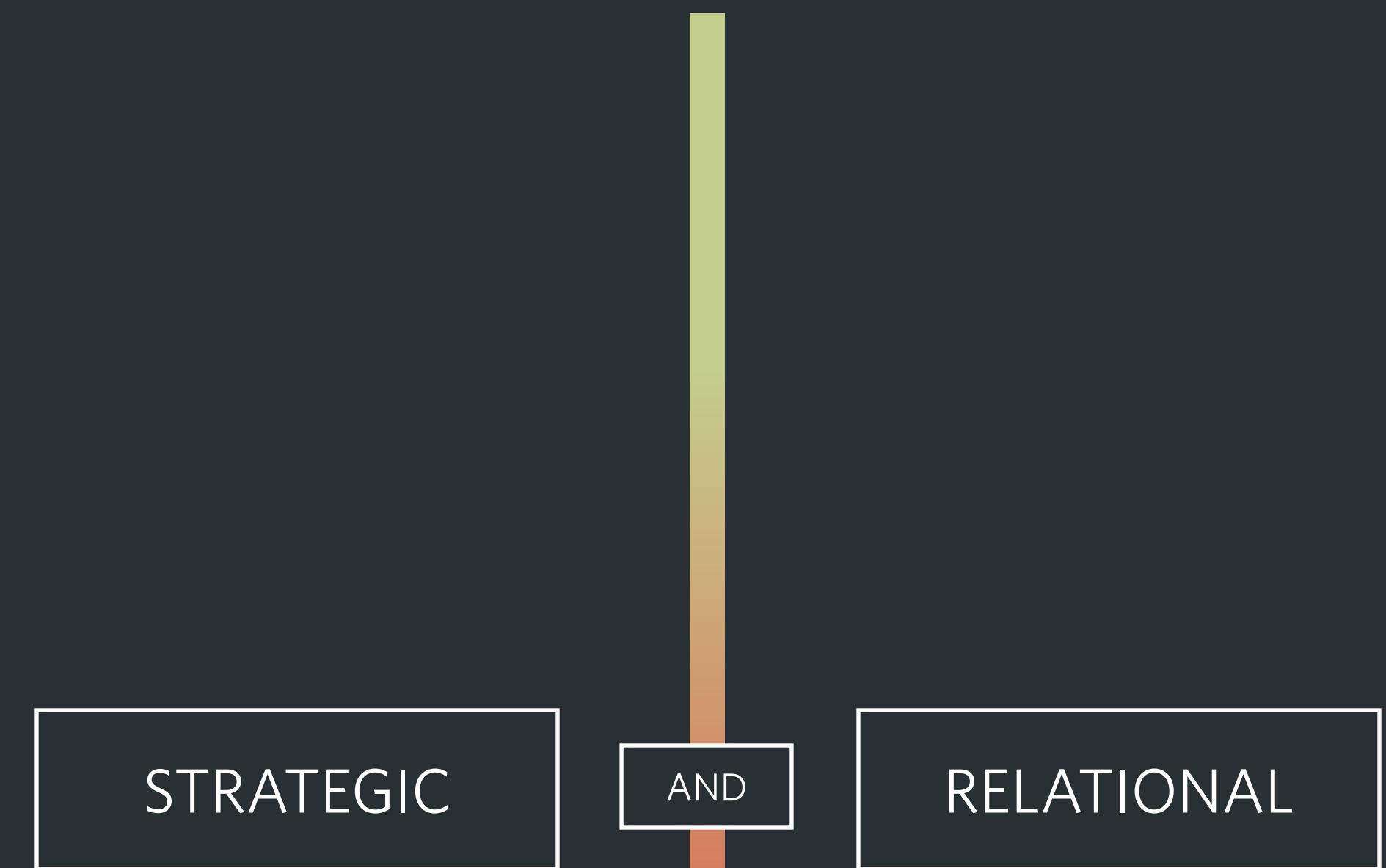


STRATEGIC

AND

RELATIONAL

GREATER PURPOSE  
Effective Leadership



DEEPER FEAR  
Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership

- Focused on a goal
- Efficient
- Decisions get made
- Clear accountability
- Hierarchy is okay
- Exciting

STRATEGIC

AND

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DEEPER FEAR

## Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership

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STRATEGIC

AND

RELATIONAL

- Emotions are ignored
- Lack of trust
- Lack of safety
- Isolation and loneliness
- Withholding information

DEEPER FEAR

## Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership

- Focused on the present
- Inclusive
- Dialogue is sustained
- Humor and spontaneity
- Hierarchy is suspended
- Trust and belonging

STRATEGIC

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DEEPER FEAR

## Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

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# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership

- Focused on a goal
- Efficient
- Decisions get made
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- Hierarchy is okay
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STRATEGIC

AND

RELATIONAL

- Feelings become facts
- Lack of action
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of direction
- Decision by consensus

# DEEPER FEAR

## Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership



# DEEPER FEAR

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DEEPER FEAR  
Ineffective Leadership

# GREATER PURPOSE

## Effective Leadership



# DEEPER FEAR

## Ineffective Leadership

- Slow down
- Check in
- Get curious
- Do not blame*
- Give and receive
- Have fun!

- Deadlines missed
- Inability to make efficient and effective decisions
- Too many meetings

# More paradoxes:

Efficiency <> Quality

Individual <> Team

Work <> Rest

Decentralized <> Centralized

Planned <> Emergent

Short term <> Long term

Challenge <> Support



# Now you know...

The difference between relational and strategic interactions

Leadership embodiment practices for each type of interaction

What a Polarity Map is

How to use a Polarity Map to manage the relational/strategic paradox

***That it is okay to be the boss.***

# Photo Credits

Batman and Robin photo: Yulia Matvienko - <https://unsplash.com/photos/kgz9vsP5JCU>

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Lego heads: Hello I'm Nik - <https://unsplash.com/photos/I4ADb9OVqTY>

# Thank you.

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