

Blending in

The immigration saga



About me

- I was born and grew up in Barnaul, Altai Krai
- Graduated from Altai State Technical University
- Moved to Novosibirsk and worked at 2GIS/Flamp for about ~3 years
- Moved to Berlin, Germany in 2015 to join Amazon Web Services
- For the last 10 years I've been speaking English at work
- For the last 5 years – at home, mixing with German
- Nowadays I work remotely for Elastic



Let's split it in 2 parts

- **Language:** English vs Russian
- **Culture:** West vs Russia

An illustration featuring a man with dark hair, glasses, and a mustache, wearing a brown suit and tie. He is looking towards the left where three green, alien-like faces with large black eyes are visible. A yellow speech bubble above the aliens contains the word "um..." in a black, sans-serif font.

um...

Language

Cadence

Cadence

Space in between, speed

- In English breaks matter, in Russian they don't
- A wrong break in a wrong place is the same as a wrong word
- Use-case: punctuation, emphasis, dramatic speech
- **No** breaks after 'is' (to be), 'to' (prepositions)
- Native speakers try to fill the gap by repeating the last word

Cadence

Why this happens

- We rush through easy parts
- We stumble on difficult parts
- We don't plan our breaks, they're not deliberate
- We get emotional and everything is falling apart

Cadence

How to fix

- Slow down
- While you're saying simple parts, plan what's next – think ahead
- Watch content and try to imitate phrases people say
- Stay calm and thoughtful even if you get emotional
- Don't get stuck. Start over and re-phrase it

Articulation

Articulation

Words have letters for a reason

- All meaningful words must be articulated (be pronounced **slowly** and **clearly**)
- You can only get away with "*there's*", "*he's*", etc.
- There is nothing more annoying than someone asking you to repeat
- Better to be extra clear the first time

Articulation

Why this happens

- We're not confident about pronunciation of complex words
- We rush through words because we know them too well

Articulation

How to fix

- Slow down
- Be honest that you're not sure about pronunciation, communicate that
- Don't try to pretend, embrace that you're not a native speaker
- "Taste every letter as you speak"
- Repeat after someone (TV show, podcast, movies, etc)

Endurance

Endurance

Speak for longer

- If you train to speak only for 5 minutes, you will speak for 5 minutes
- Long conversations require long practice
- Your face muscles need training

Endurance

How to fix

- Role play, talk to yourself
- Make a friend

Vocabulary

Vocabulary

Focus

- Don't try to learn all words
- Pick a scope: your hobbies, your circles, your occupation, etc
- It's okay NOT to know a word

Vocabulary

What helps

- Know simpler alternatives
- We always understand more words than we use: passive vs active vocab.
- Passive -> Active transition needs work
- Think in English, don't translate. Count in English
- Watch movies you know in original voice



Culture

Exclusion

Exclusion

Might be unintentional

- "Cluster of Russians" at parties
- Don't speak for too long, nobody likes monologues
- Redirect conversations, play a "relay game"
- We all grew up with different shows, movies, memes, etc.

Unsafe Topics

Unsafe Topics

Have nothing to prove

- Avoid talking about **politics, religion, complaints, critique**
- Try to stay positive and avoid confrontation
- It's okay to state your point of view
- Don't try to convince everybody that it's right, let it go
- Fighting to be right is a sign of insecurity not knowledge
- The more positive and calm you're the more impact you have

Local Customs

Local Customs

Get to know local culture

- Local idioms, slang: "Fancy a cuppa?"
- Gestures
- Don't hesitate to ask, most people are happy to share their culture

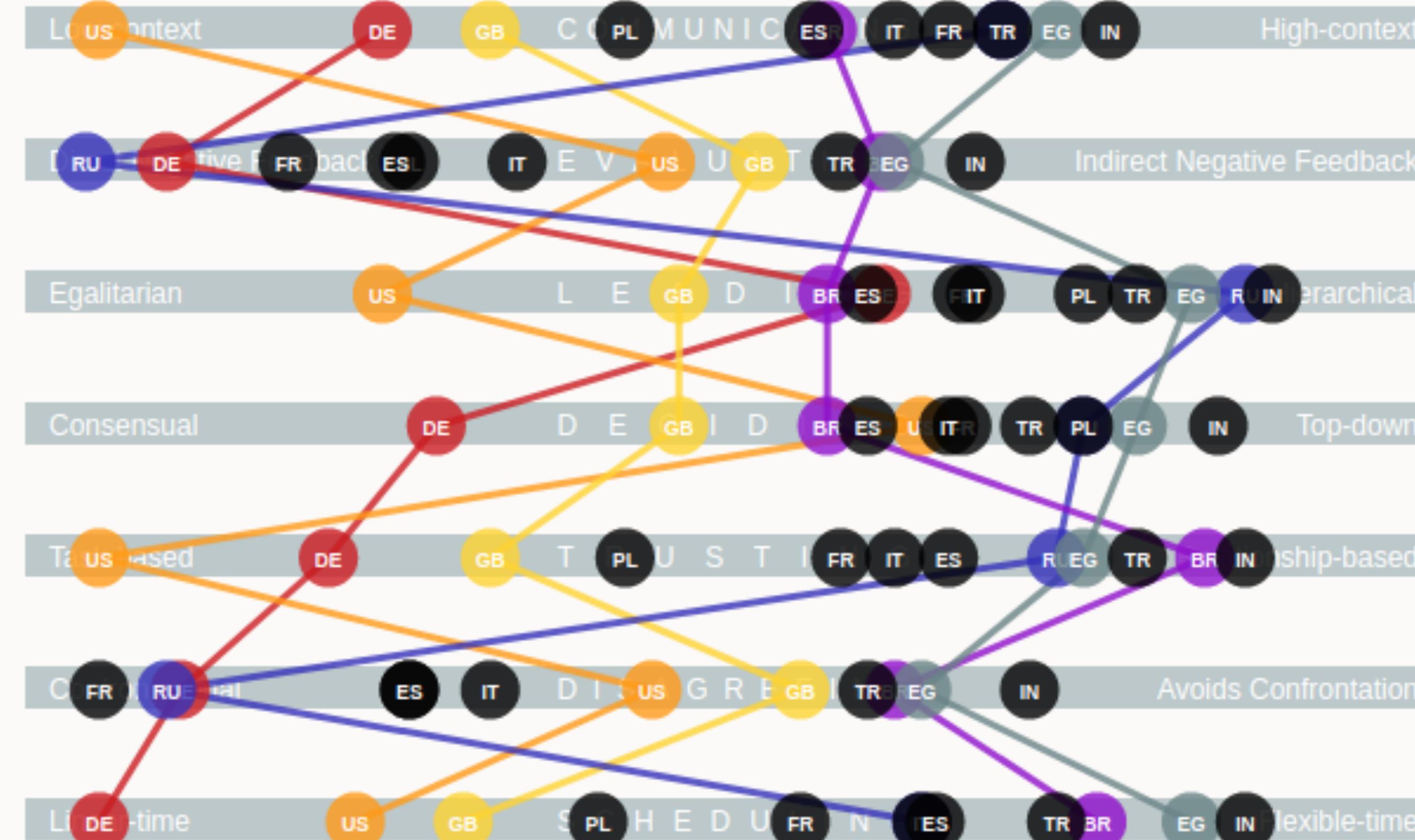
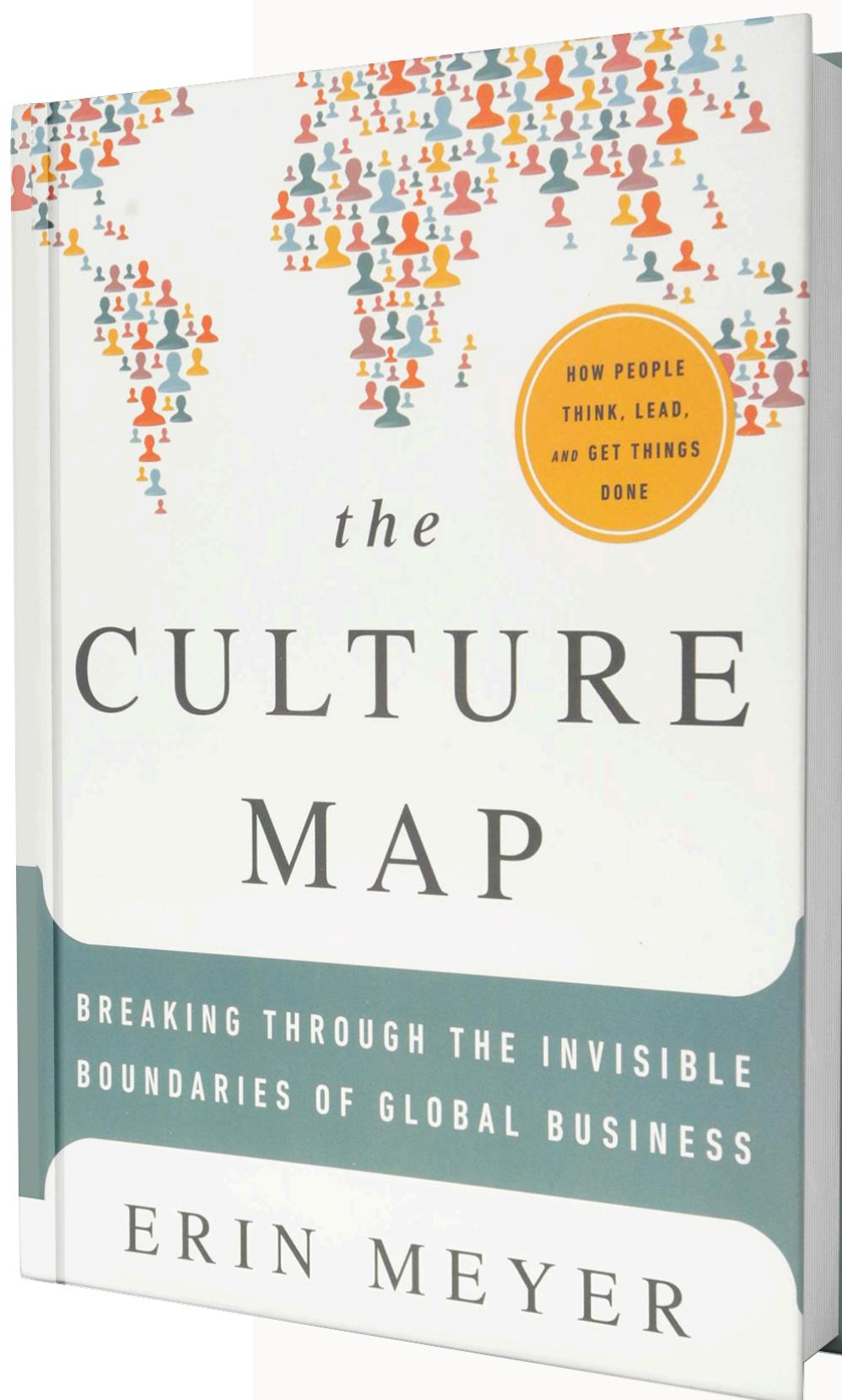
The Culture Map

the COUNTRY MAPPING TOOL

▼ Select Countries to Map

Read Descriptions of Culture Map Dimensions

● Germany ● United States ● UK ● Russia ● Brazil ● Egypt ● France ● India ● Italy ● Poland ● Spain ● Turkey



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Cultural Dimensions That Impact Business

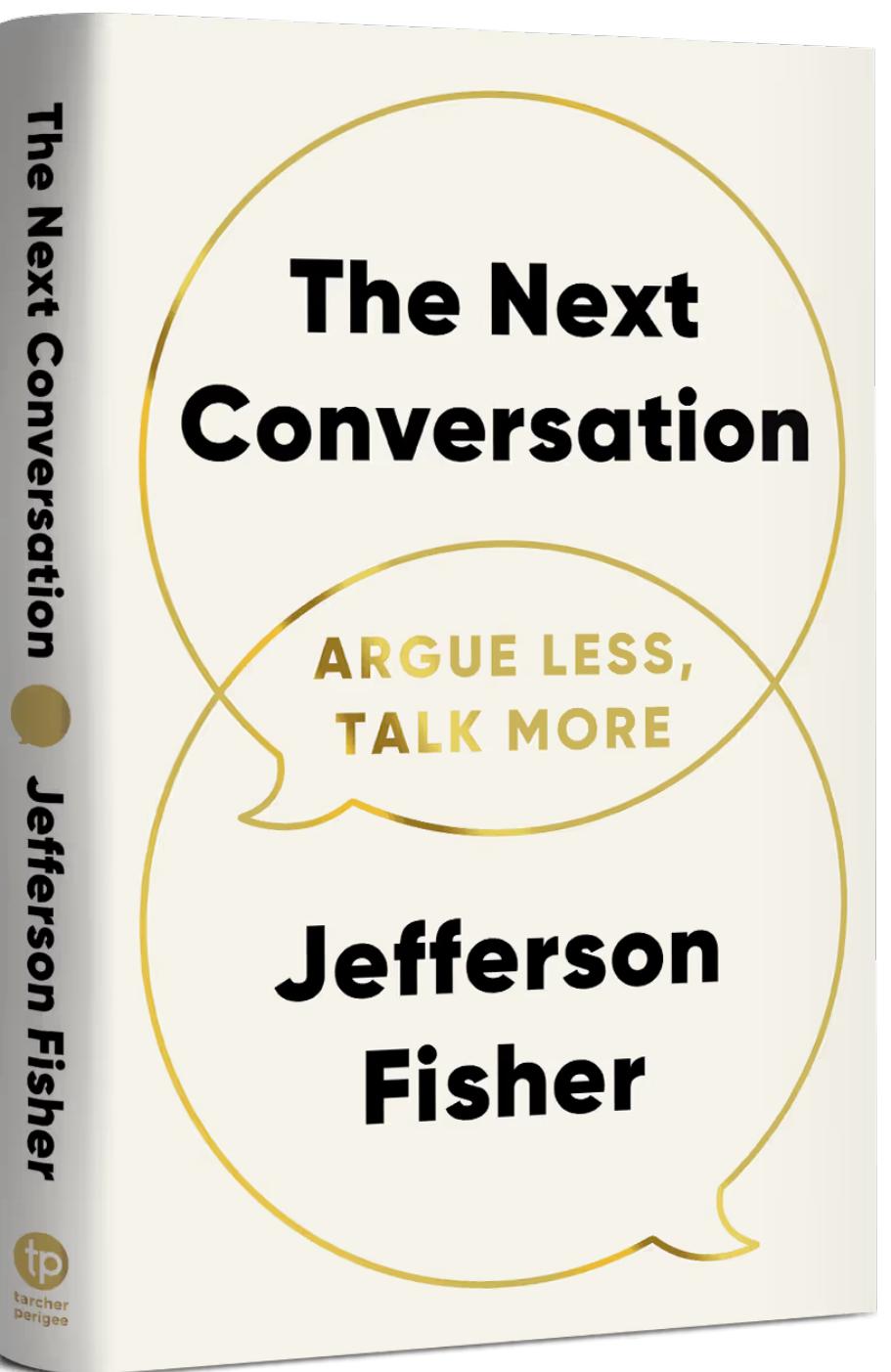
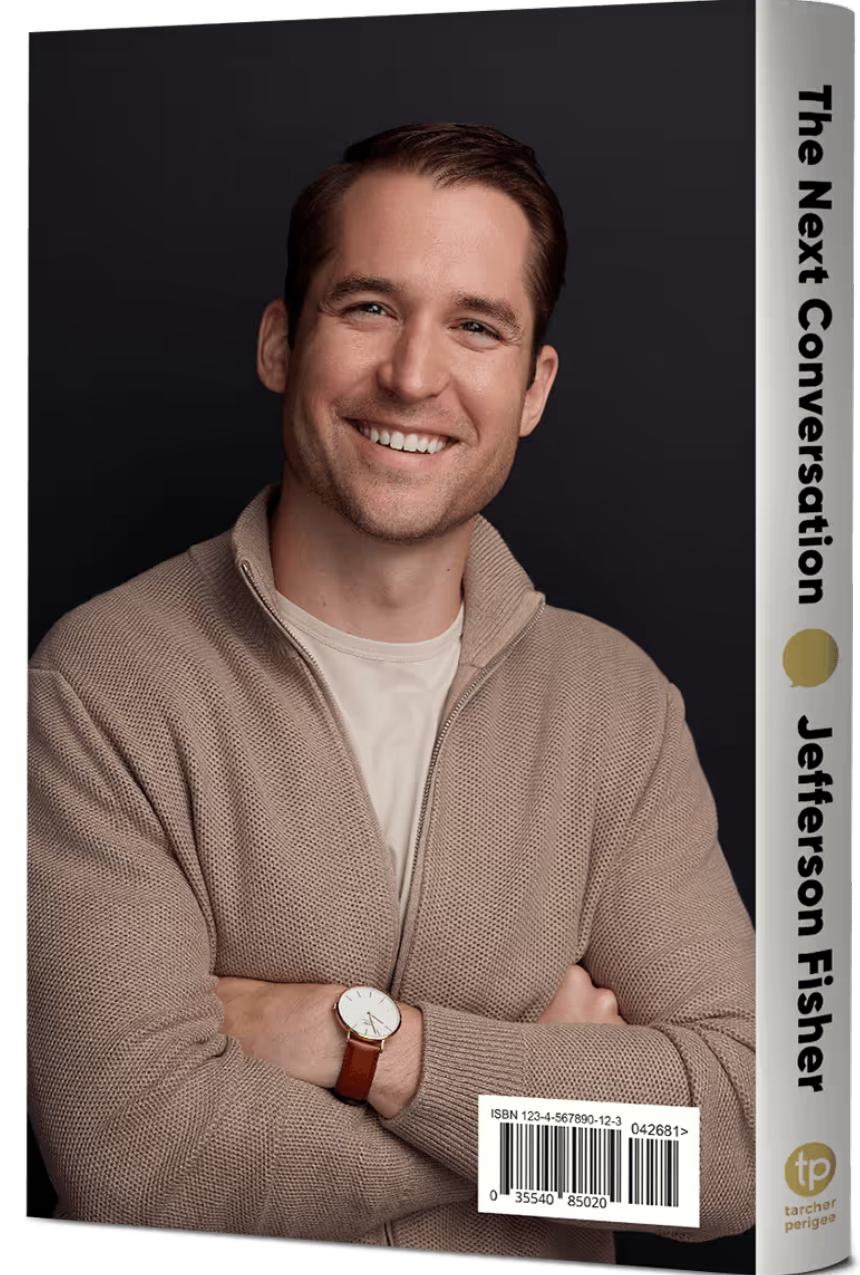


More

More

Jefferson Fisher – communication coach

- Interview
- Website and podcast jeffersonfisher.com
- Book



More

Evy Poumpouras – former secret agent

- Interview
- Website evypoumpouras.com
- Book





Thank you!

