

Paul Tevis

Working with Team Conflict: Don't Go Too Deep, Too Soon



Agile ORLANDO
JULY 24-28 **2023**

#AGILE2023



PMO
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Hi, I'm Paul Tevis

I am a coach & consultant with Helping Improve.

I help people work better and work better together through process improvement and leadership development.



Please raise your hand if you...

...are a manager.



Please raise your hand if you...

...are a coach.



Please raise your hand if you...

...are a consultant.



Please raise your hand if you...

**...want to work
more effectively
with team conflict.**



On your worksheet..



Which emoji best represents your skill and confidence in navigating group conflicts? Circle it.

In a pair or triad...

Form a group with one or two other people. Then explain to your partners what the emoji you circled means to you.

Make sure you hear from everyone.



Your (Past) Situation

Think about a situation in which a group experienced some sort of turbulence or breakdown that got in the way of accomplishing their tasks and achieving their goals.

On Your Worksheet

- What was the situation?
- What do you think the problem was?
- What do you believe would have been an appropriate way of addressing this conflict?





Two Types of Work

"Functional Roles of Group Members"
by Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats

National Training Laboratories for
Group Development

Task Work



paul@helpingimprove.com
[linkedin.com/in/paultevis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/paultevis)

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 **HELPING IMPROVE**

Task Work

"Facilitation and coordination of group problem-solving activities."

Activities intended to achieve the group's project or goal.

Task Work Examples

- Making suggestions for ways to solve a problem
- Sharing facts or information relevant to the work at hand
- Coordinating activities among group members
- Applying skills, knowledge, procedures, or tools toward a solution

Maintenance Work



Maintenance Work

"Building of group-centered attitudes and orientation among the members of a group or the maintenance and perpetuation of such group-centered behavior."

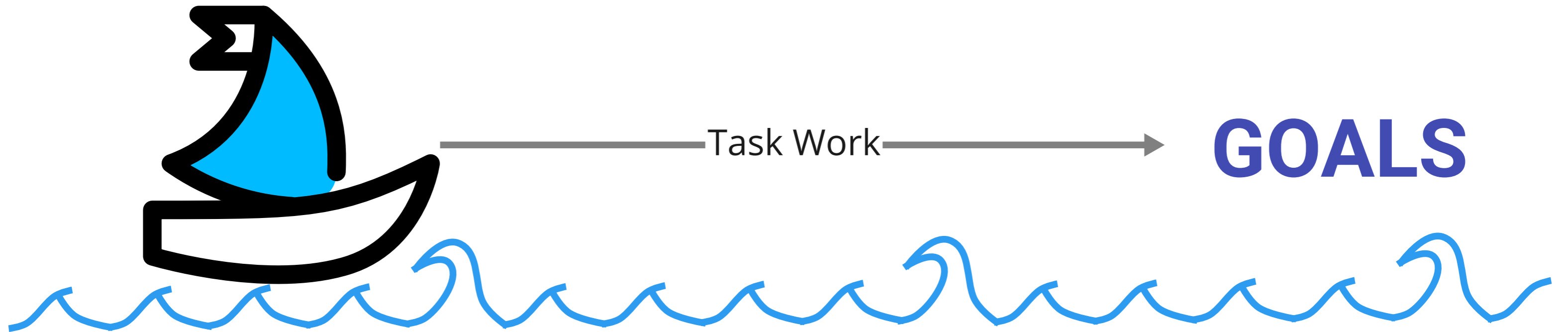
Maintenance Work

Activities intended "to alter or maintain the group's way of working, to strengthen, regulate and perpetuate the group as a group."

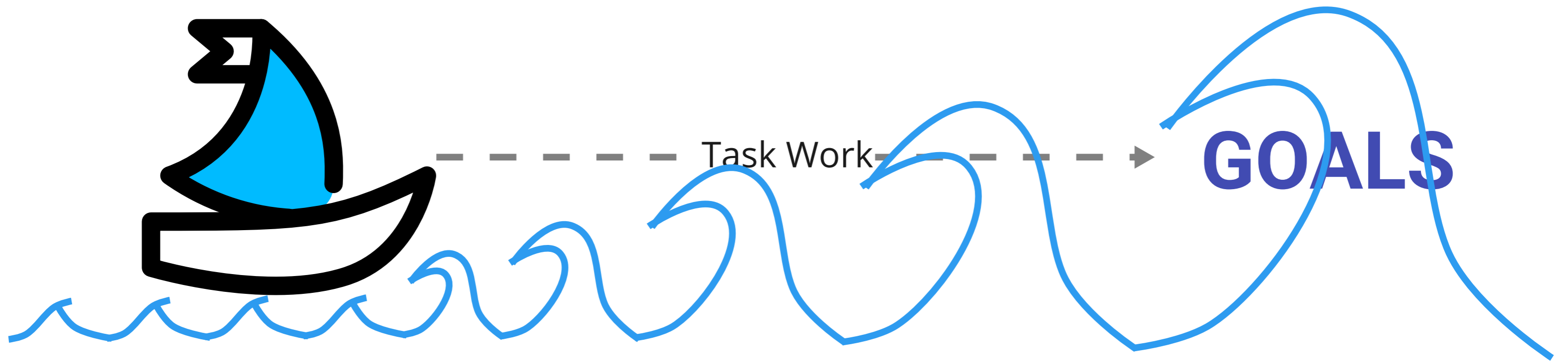
Maintenance Work Examples

- Commenting on the way the group is working together
- Mediating differences between group members
- Encouraging and acknowledging others' contributions
- Offering suggestions for improving the group's process for accomplishing its work

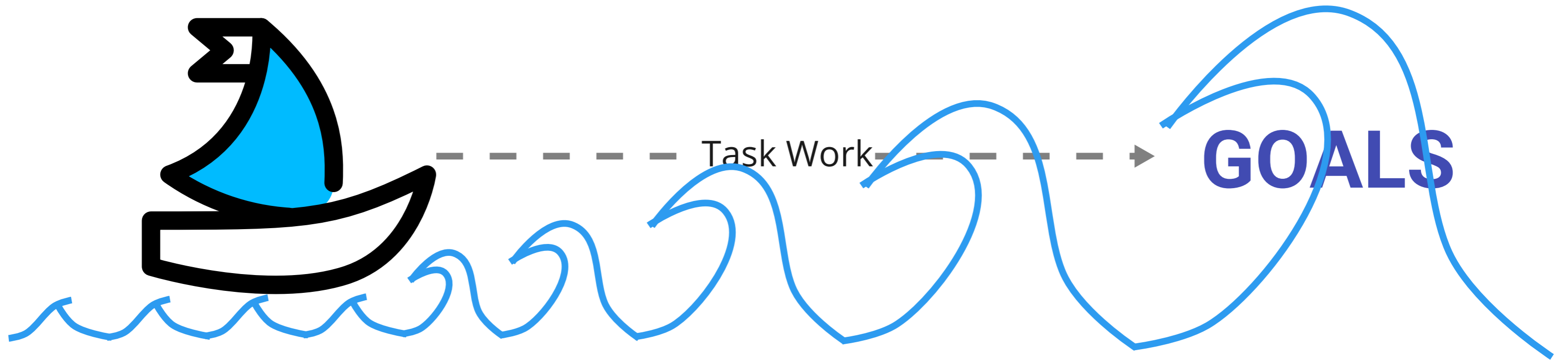
Smooth Sailing



Turbulence



Turbulence



This breakdown in task work is sometimes called
"conflict."

On Your Worksheet

- In your situation, what was the task work?
- How did you know it was breaking down?
- What did you observe?



Above & Below the Water

**ABOVE THE WATER:
TASK + CONTENT**



GOALS

**BELOW THE WATER:
PROCESS + RELATIONSHIPS**

Remember the Two Types of Work

Turbulence and breakdowns in **task** work is a sign that **maintenance** work would be useful.

Navigating Conflict

Knowing what level of performance you're trying to get back to helps when you know when you've weathered the storm.



Levels of Depth

With maintenance work, you have lots of choices about how to intervene. A key choice is the level of depth.

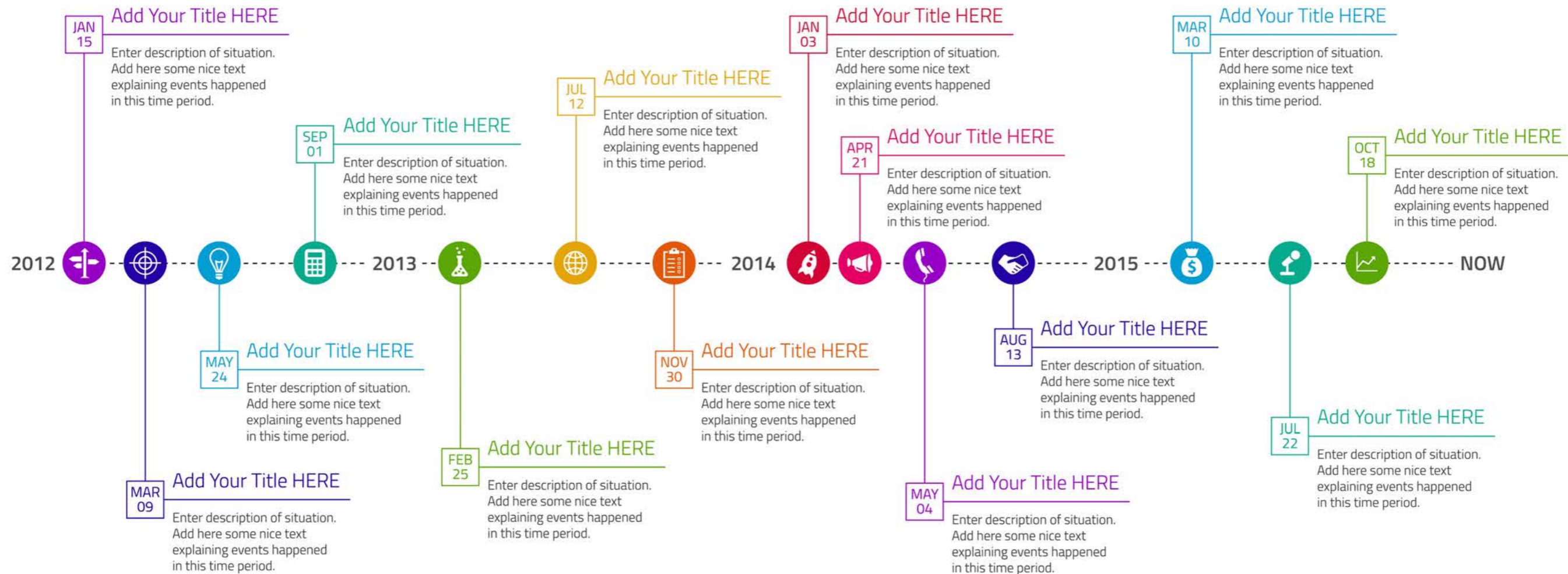


Roger Harrison,

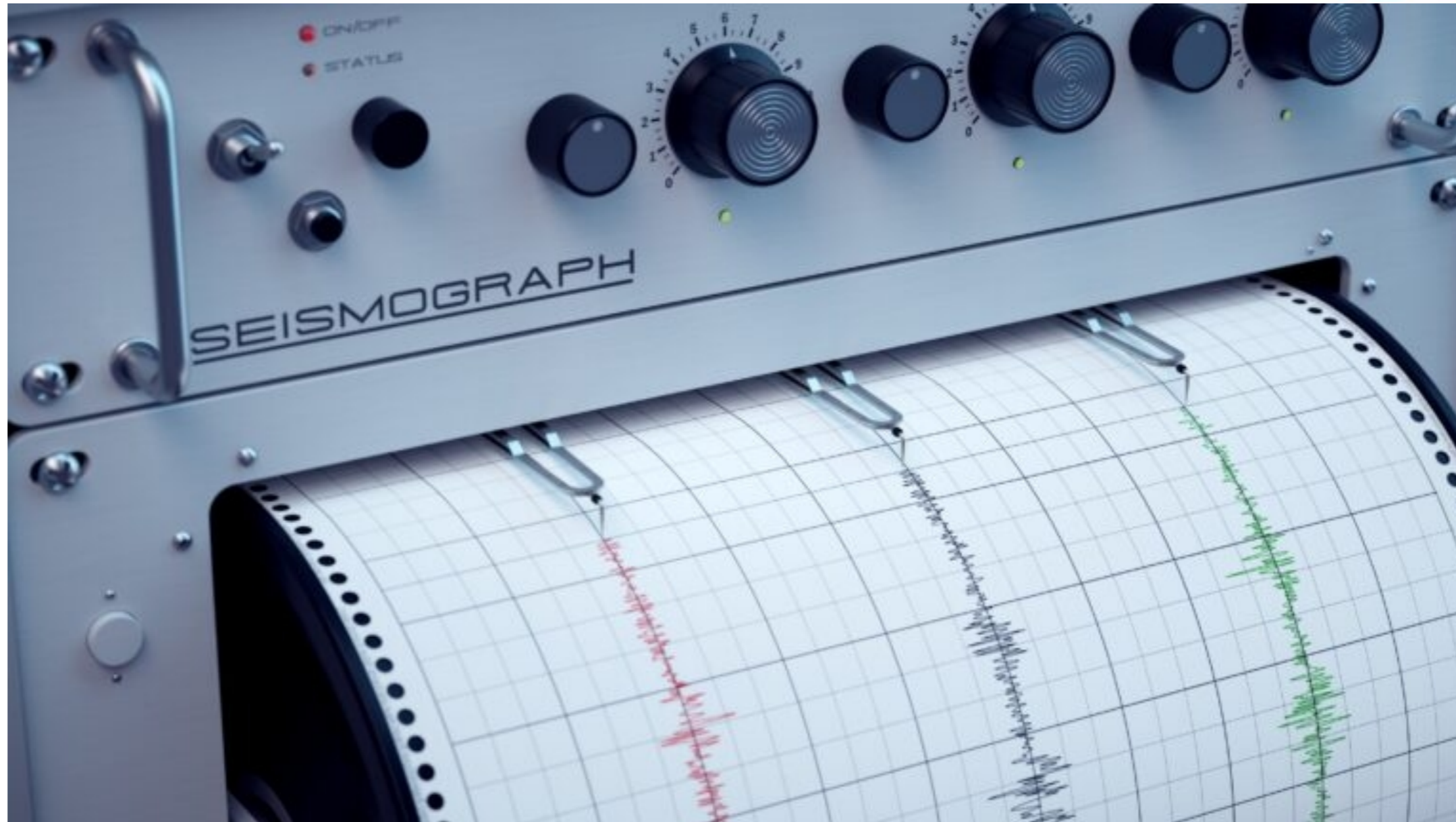
"Choosing the Depth of Organizational Intervention"

Depth = "How private, individual, and hidden are the issues and processes you are trying to get information about and influence?"

Shallow: Timeline



Deeper: Emotional Seismograph



Why Depth Matters

1. Deeper interventions are more expensive.
2. Deeper strategies require more buy-in from the people affected.
3. Not going deep enough means the change doesn't happen

Scherer and Shore's Levels of Depth

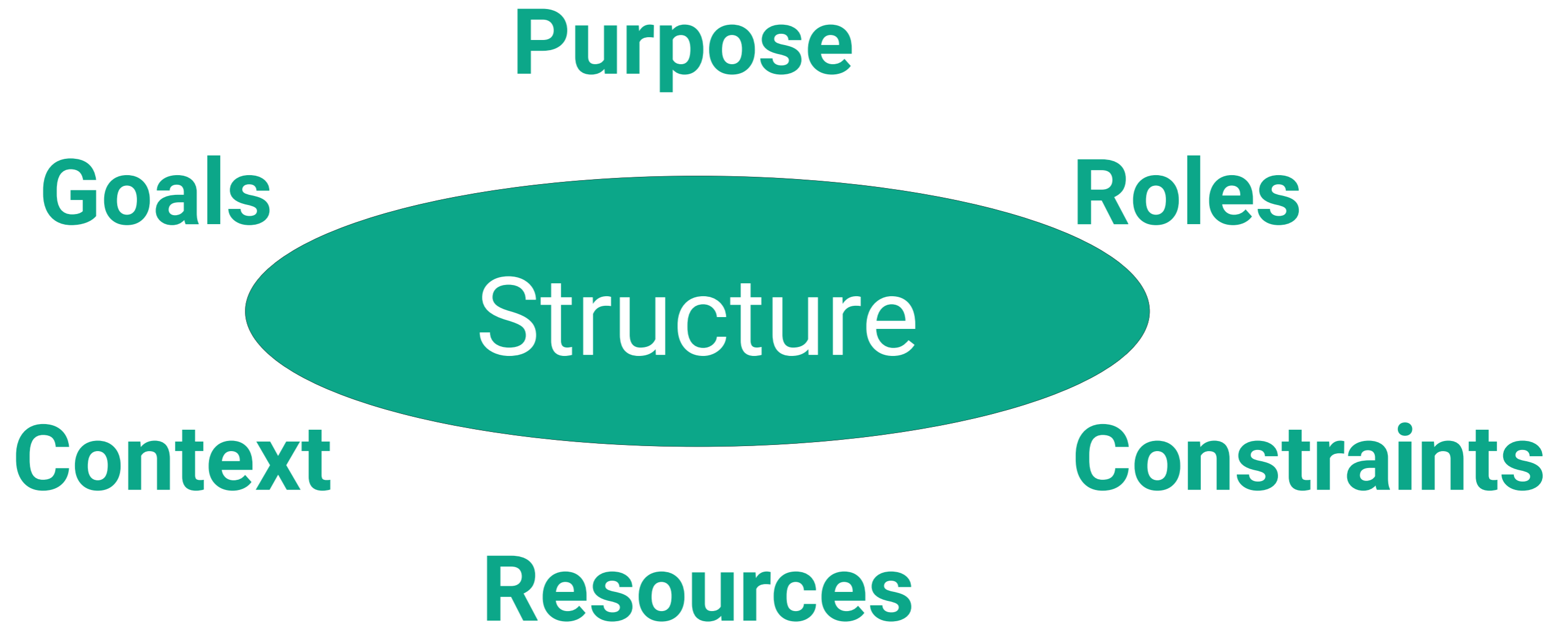
Structure

Dynamics

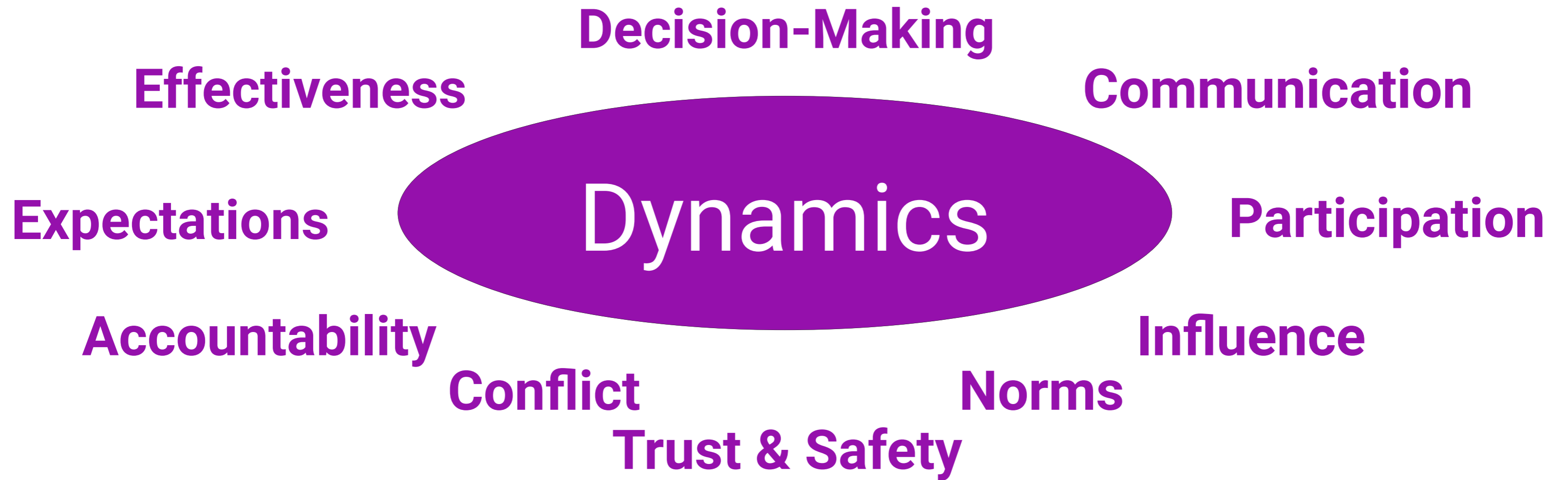
Interpersonal

Individual

Level 1



Level 2



Level 3

Assumptions

Baggage

Empathy

Conflict

Respect

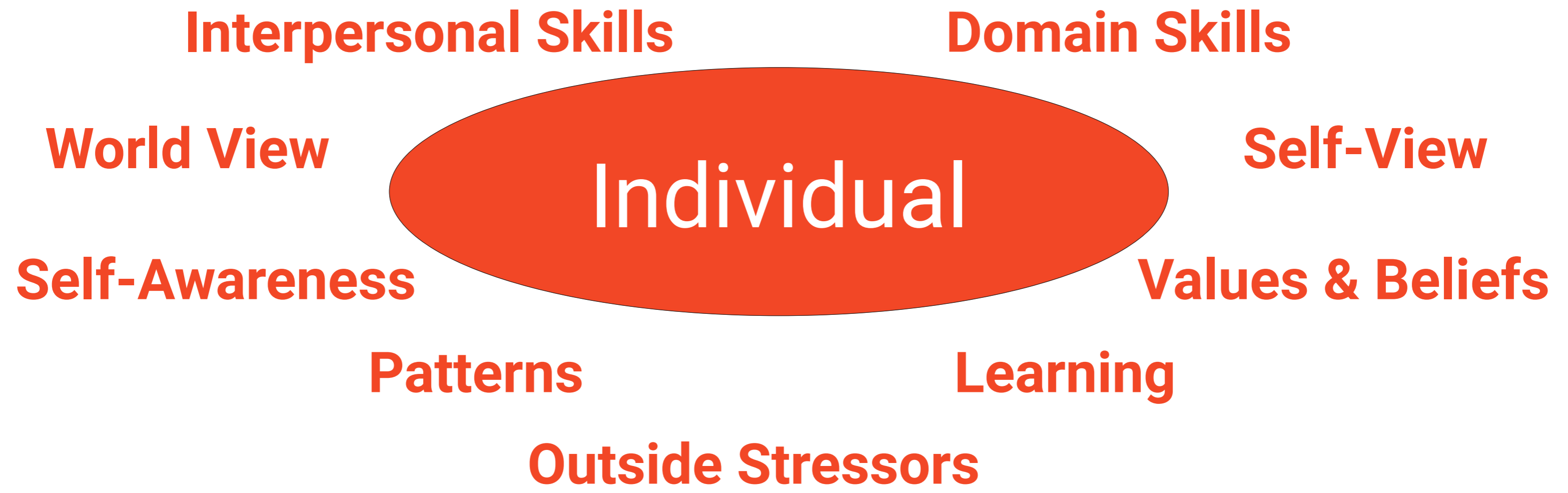


Feedback

Preferences

Style Differences

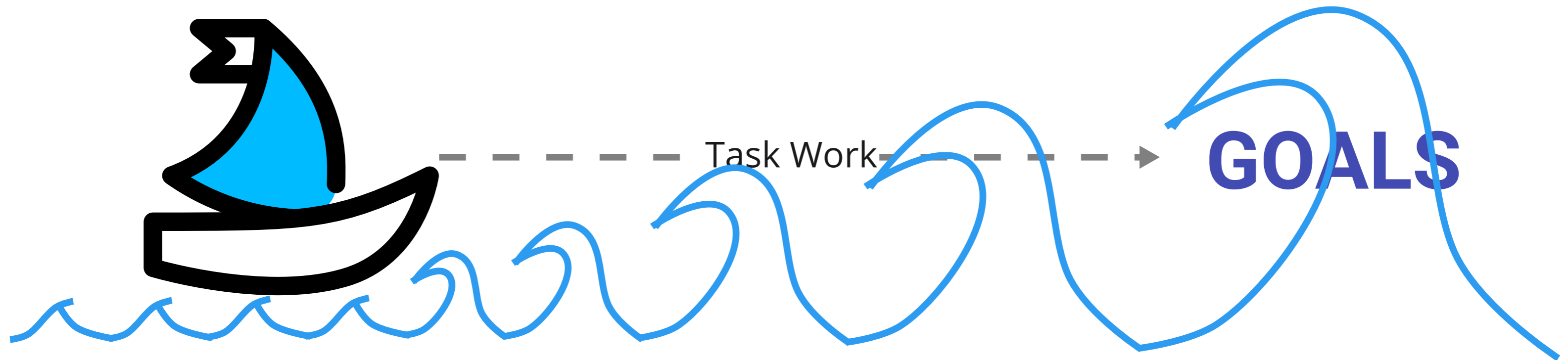
Level 4



Why Depth Matters

- Where are you most comfortable working?
- What tools do you have for each level?

Time for Maintenance Work



Choosing Depth

With maintenance work, you have lots of choices about how to intervene. A key choice is the level of depth.

How do you choose?

Roger Harrison,

"Choosing the Depth of Organizational Intervention"

"Noticing the agitation and defensiveness that people displayed as a discussion became deeper and more personal, I came up with the idea of dealing with problems at the shallowest level at which they could be usefully addressed."

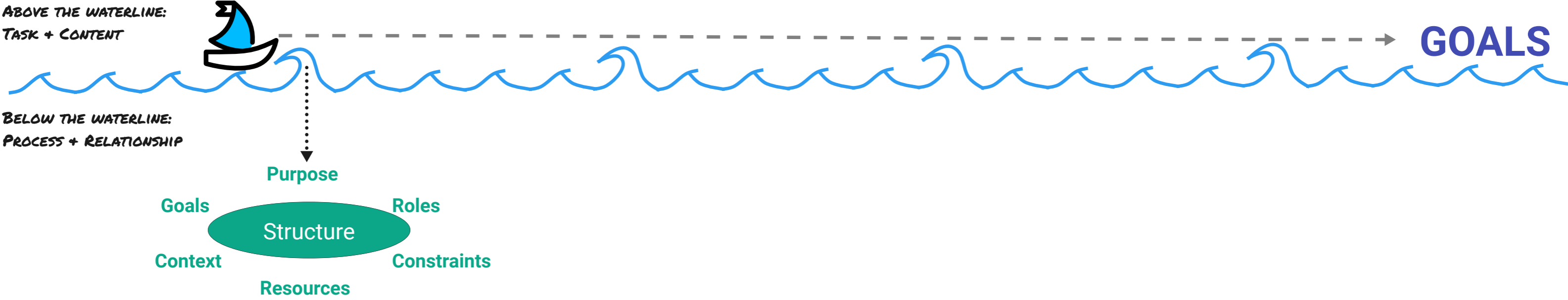
Principle 1

"Intervene at a level no deeper than that required to produce enduring solutions to the problems at hand."

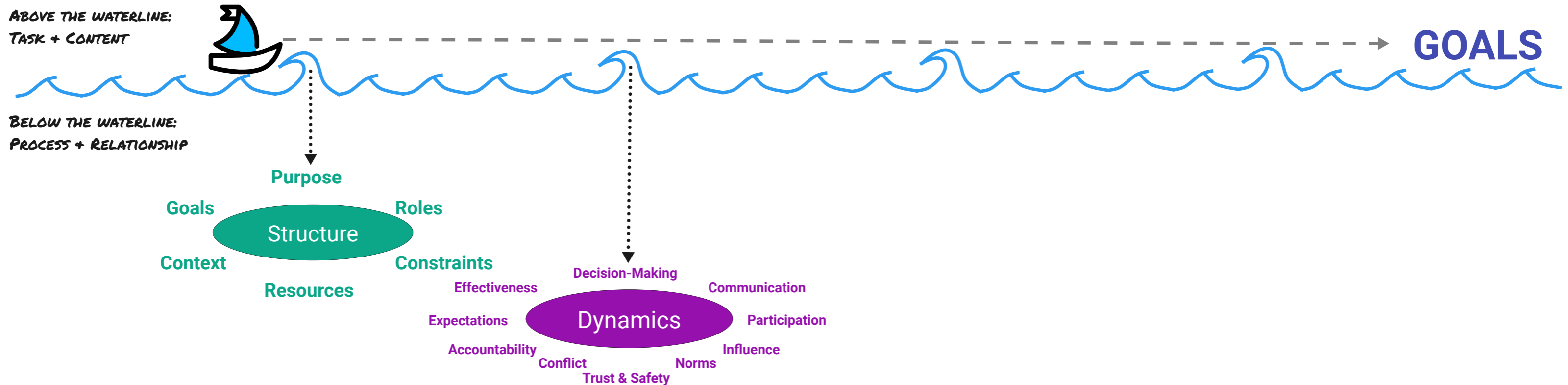
Principle 2

"Intervene at a level no deeper than that at which the energy and resources of the client can be committed to problem solving and to change."

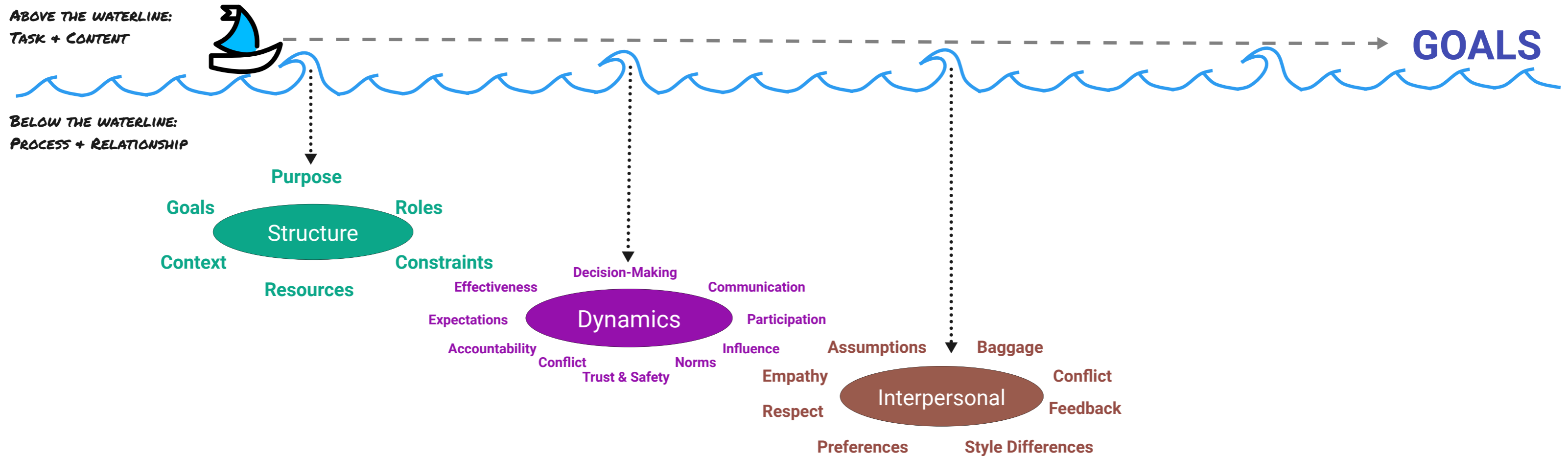
Start at the Shallow End



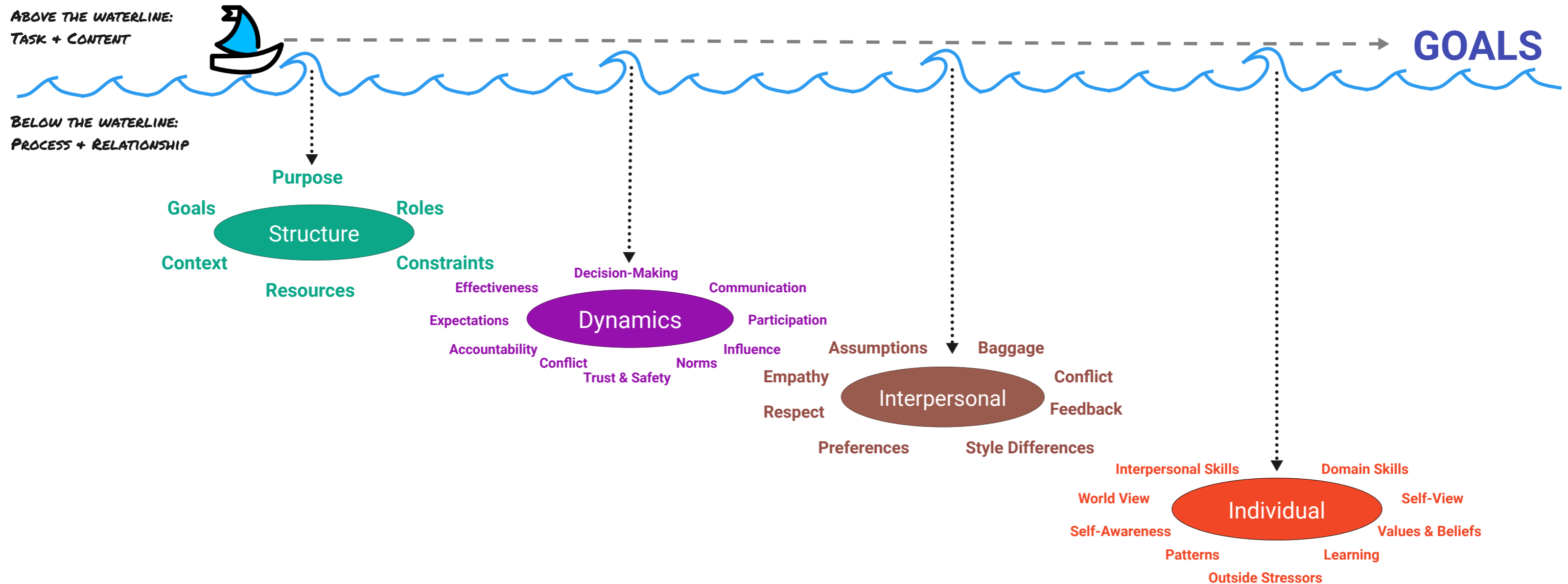
If That Doesn't Work, Go Deeper



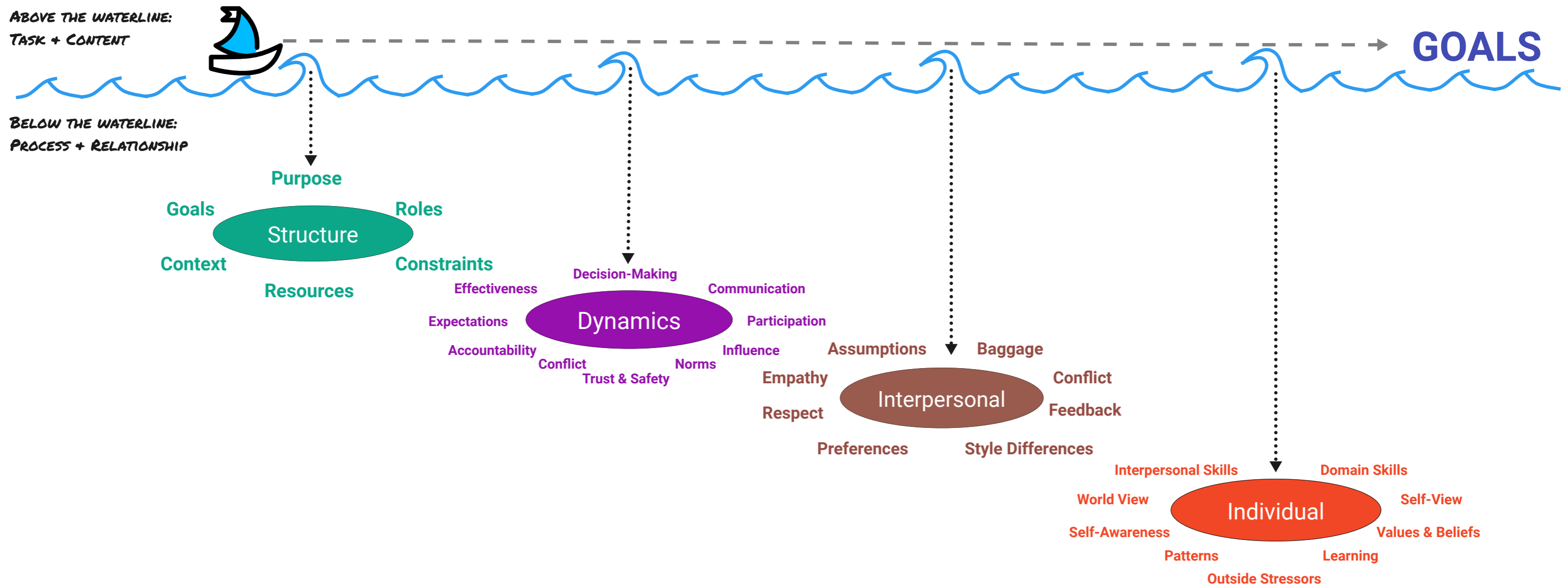
You May Need to Keep Going...



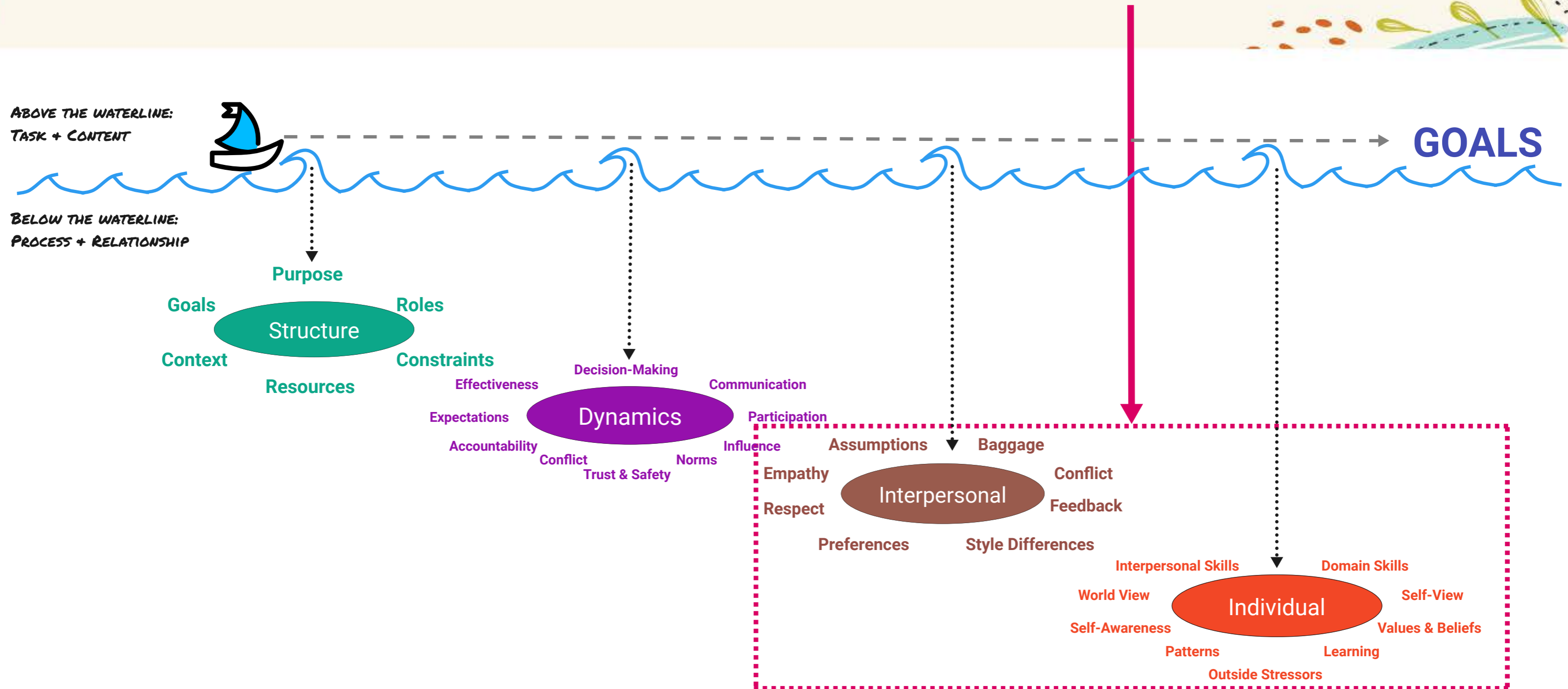
Rarely, You Need To Go All the Way Down



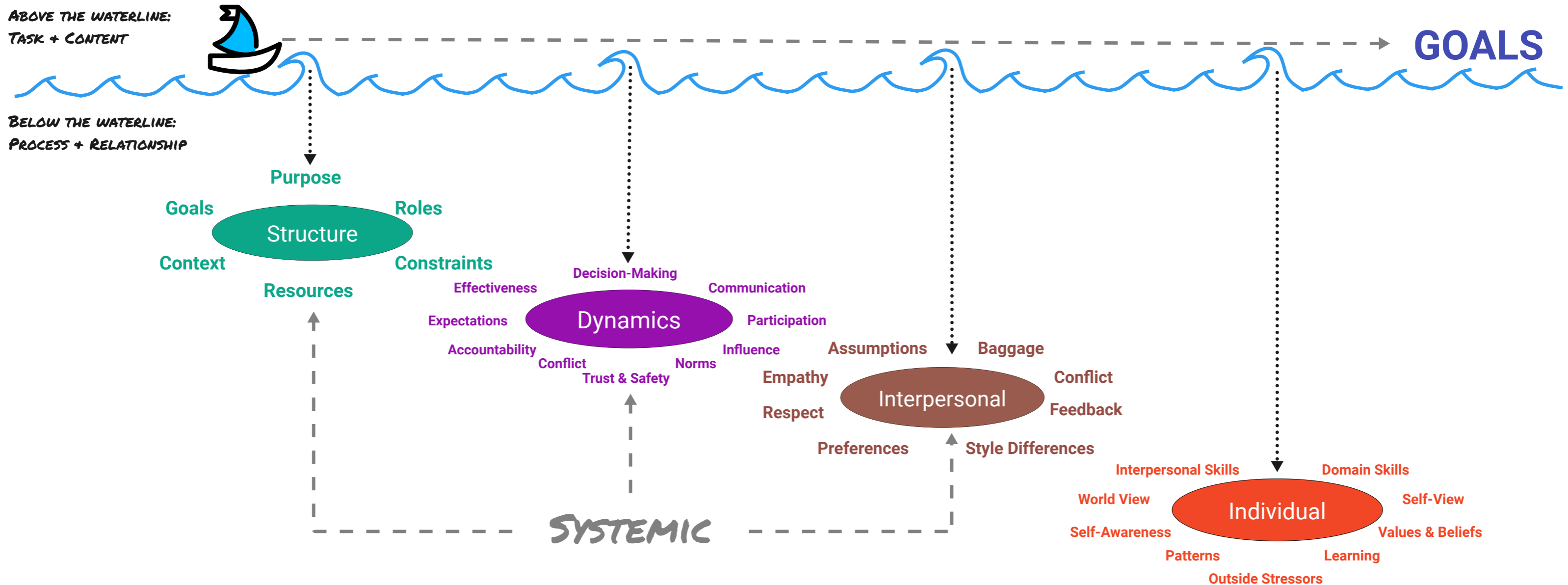
"Help Us With Our Working Agreements"



For Some Reason, We Often Start Here

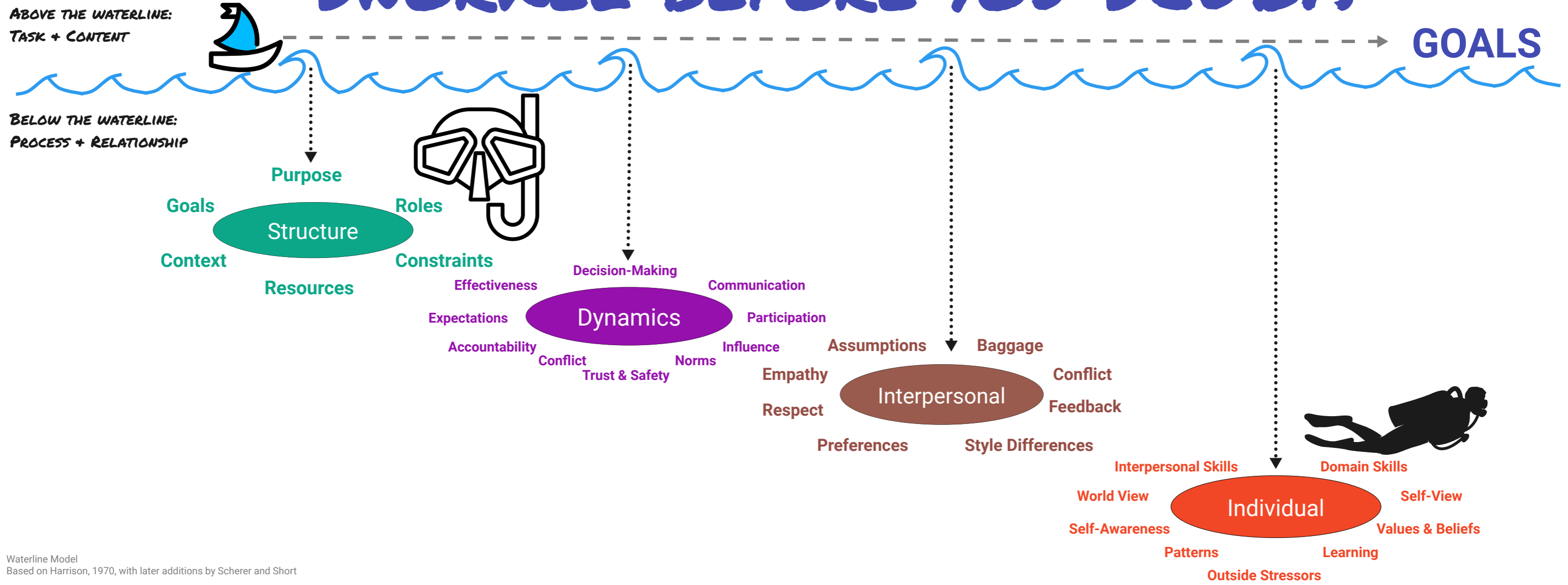


Don't Ignore Containers



So Remember...

"SNORKEL BEFORE YOU SCUBA"



Waterline Model
Based on Harrison, 1970, with later additions by Scherer and Short

On Your Worksheet

Look at the conflict you wrote down in the opening.

- What level of depth was your diagnosis at?
- Given what we've discussed, what diagnosis might you make now?
- What actions might you take based on that diagnosis?

More Resources



<https://helpingimprove.com/agile2023>

Articles

- How Deep Do You Ask People To Go?
- Retrospectives are Real Work, Too
- Navigating Team Conflict with the Waterline Model

Other Resources

- Helping Improve Newsletter
- Managing Amazing People (Training)
- Upcoming Events
- Employing Differences (Podcast)





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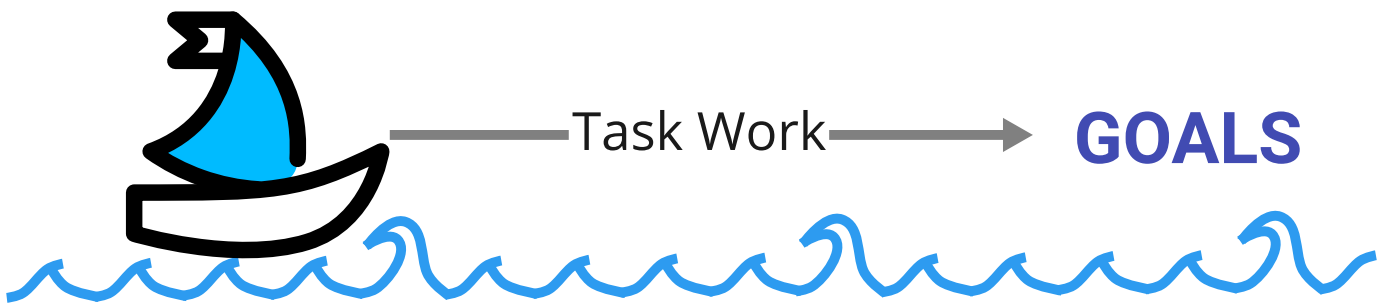
Paul Tevis – Principal Coach & Consultant @ Helping Improve

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Your Situation, Part 1: Think about a situation in which a group experienced some sort of turbulence or breakdown that got in the way of accomplishing their tasks and achieving their goals.

- What was the situation?
- What do you think the problem was?
- What do you believe would have been an appropriate way of addressing this conflict?



Your Situation, Part 2: Think again about the same situation as before.

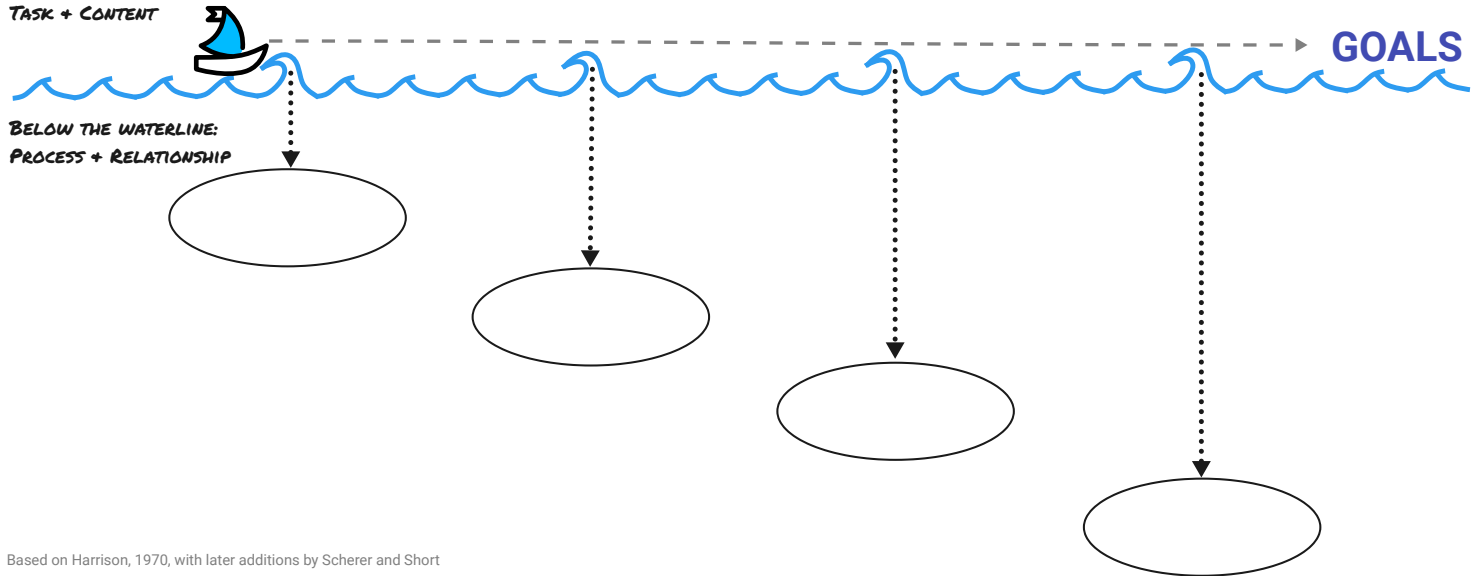
- What was the task work?
- How did you know it was breaking down?
- What did you observe?



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ABOVE THE WATERLINE:
TASK + CONTENT



Based on Harrison, 1970, with later additions by Scherer and Short

Levels of Depth

- Where are you most comfortable working?
- What tools do you have for each level?

Your Situation, Part 3: Think again about the same situation as before.

- What level of depth was your diagnosis at?
- Given what we've discussed, what diagnosis might you make now?
- What actions might you take based on that diagnosis?

