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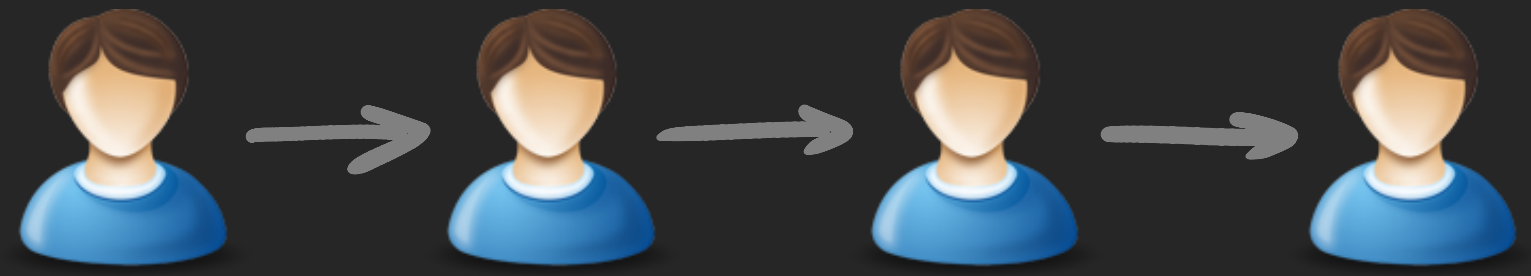
Structured Soft Skills (not only) for Technical Leaders

Typical career path in IT



Junior developer → Developer → Senior developer → Tech/team leader

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Soft skills

Personallity traits

optimism, common sense, responsibility, sense of humour, integrity

And abilities

empathy, teamwork, leadership, communication, negitiation, sociability, ability to teach

... a lot of emotional stuff

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Experiment

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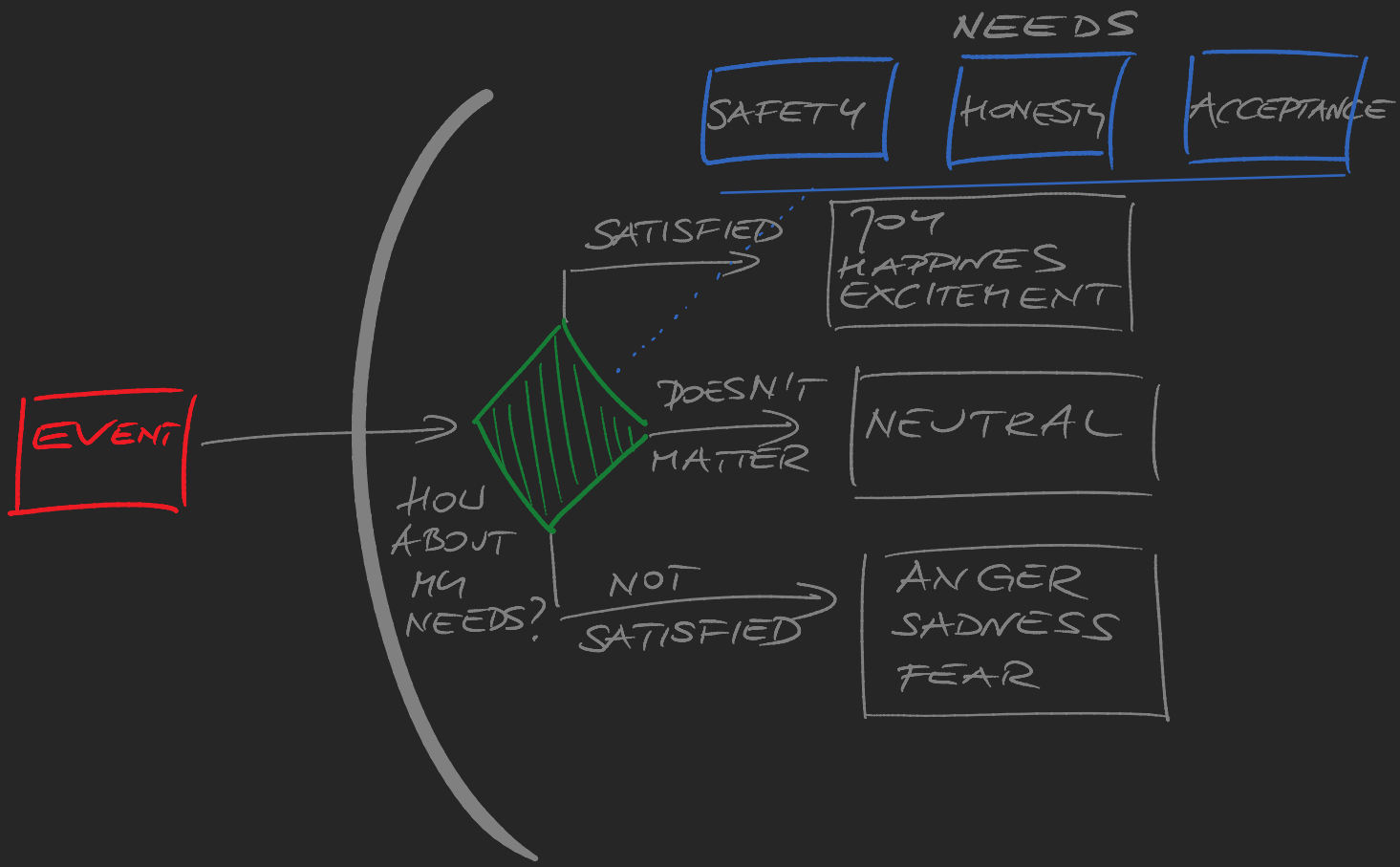
Structure of emotions



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Using soft skills structures is like using stair railing.

It might be dangerous to live without it.

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Conflict resolving

If you try to convince each other

You will mostly argue

Usually only one side wins (if any)

At best you may compromise

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You can’t resolve conflicts on a level they arose

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Conflict resolving Hello World

OK!

Him

Her

OK!

Bright violet

No, I don't like pink as much as white

AND

Maybe another bright color

Pink

I don't want to live in hospital (NOT WHITE)

AND

I want a very bright color

Why is it important?

Why is it important?

I want a blue color

Grrrr... I want white!

Her

Possible Solution
(BRIGHT VIOLET)

Him

Need/Intent
(NOT WHITE, NOT PINK)

Still conflict! NOT PINK!
AND
Let's redefine the need!

Need/Intent
BRIGHT COLOR

Possible Solution
(PINK)

Need/Intent
(NOT WHITE)

AND

Need/Intent
BRIGHT COLOR

Why is it important?

Why is it important?

Statement
(I want a blue color)

Statement
(I want a white color)

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Conflict resolving basic structure

New conflict?
Try again...

Possible Solution

Need/Intent

Need/Intent

AND

Why is it important?

Why is it important?

Statement

Statement

Main questions you may ask to level up the discussion

Why is it important?

What do you need in this situation?

What is your intent?

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Another samples

Dev

Devs do minimal technical knowledge training for PMs

PM

Be able to talk about choosing better technical solutions

AND

Project success

Why is it important?

Easier to talk about requirements and their consequences

Why is it important?

Time for supporting project success

Why is it important?

You don't have a technical knowledge

Why is it important?

We are not paid for this

Dev

PM

- Partially participating in meeting
- Be ready for consulting
- Let's analyze last cases

I want to **spend time effectively**

AND

We can **make better decisions**

Why is it important?

I don't want to be invited unnecesarily to meetings

Why is it important?

Your knowledge might be cruciual

Problem solving

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How do we usually try make things done?

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Ask questions

This breaks a pattern of casual thinking

There are some questions specially powerful

You are likely to know one of this question if you are using

...5WHYS

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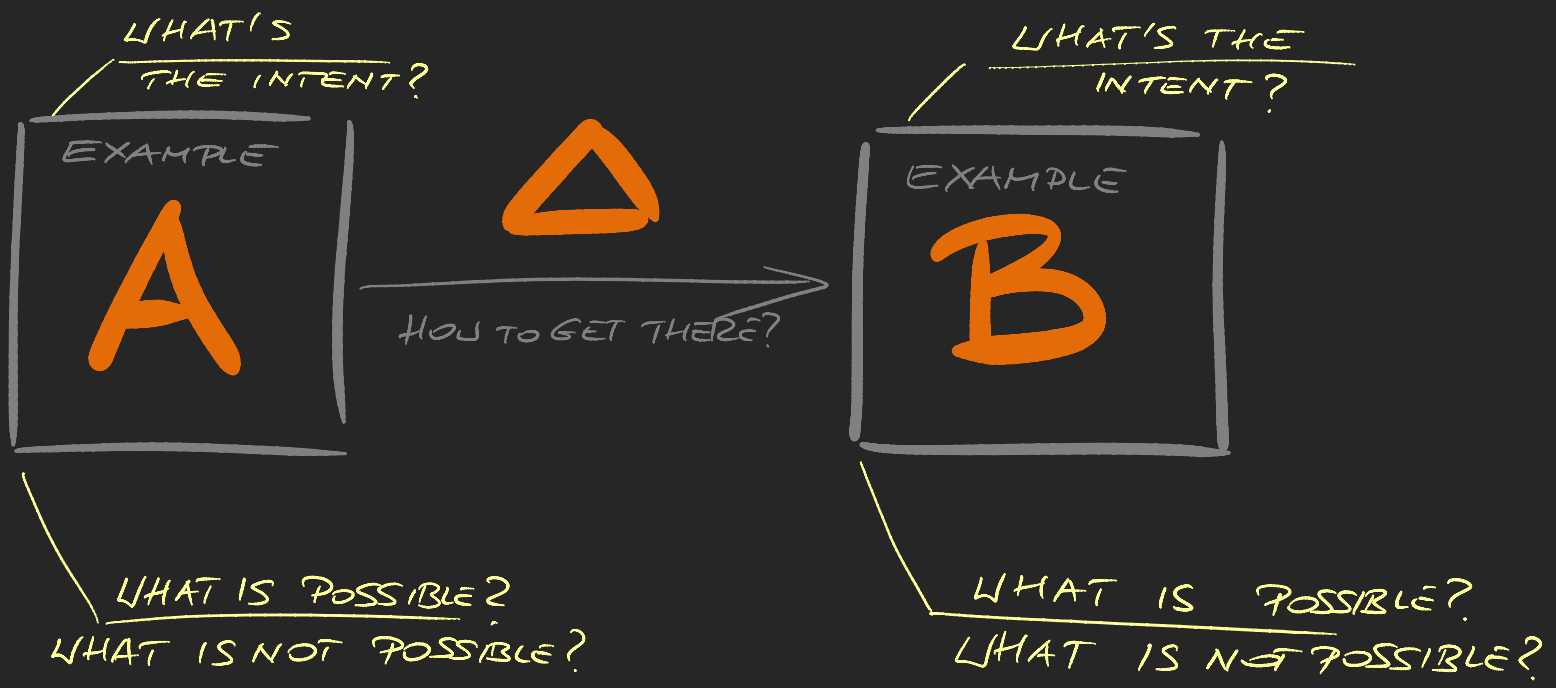
But questions are not enough



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Delta – how to get there

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Structuring meetings

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How does it usually look like?

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Core anitpatterns

People not prepared

The hidden bottom

Drifting away

People not listening to each other

Lack of meaningful results

Lack of action plan

Lack of structure

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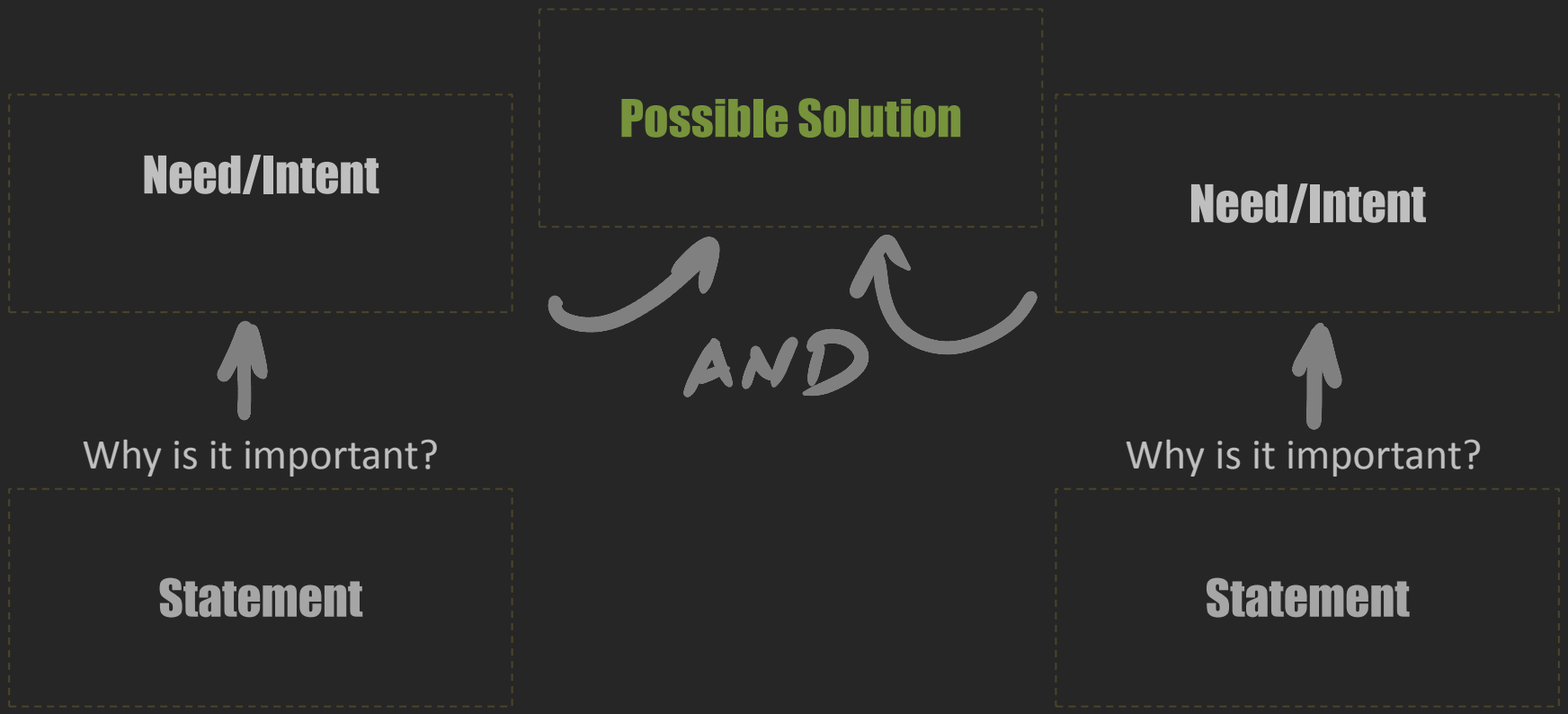
Meeting agenda

1. Introduction
2. Issues:
   - Too much documentation
   - More time for refactoring
   - PMs to have more understanding of technical aspects
3. Action plan
4. Summary

These are implicit conflicts!

Agenda is usually a weak structure!

Let's use conflict resolution structure



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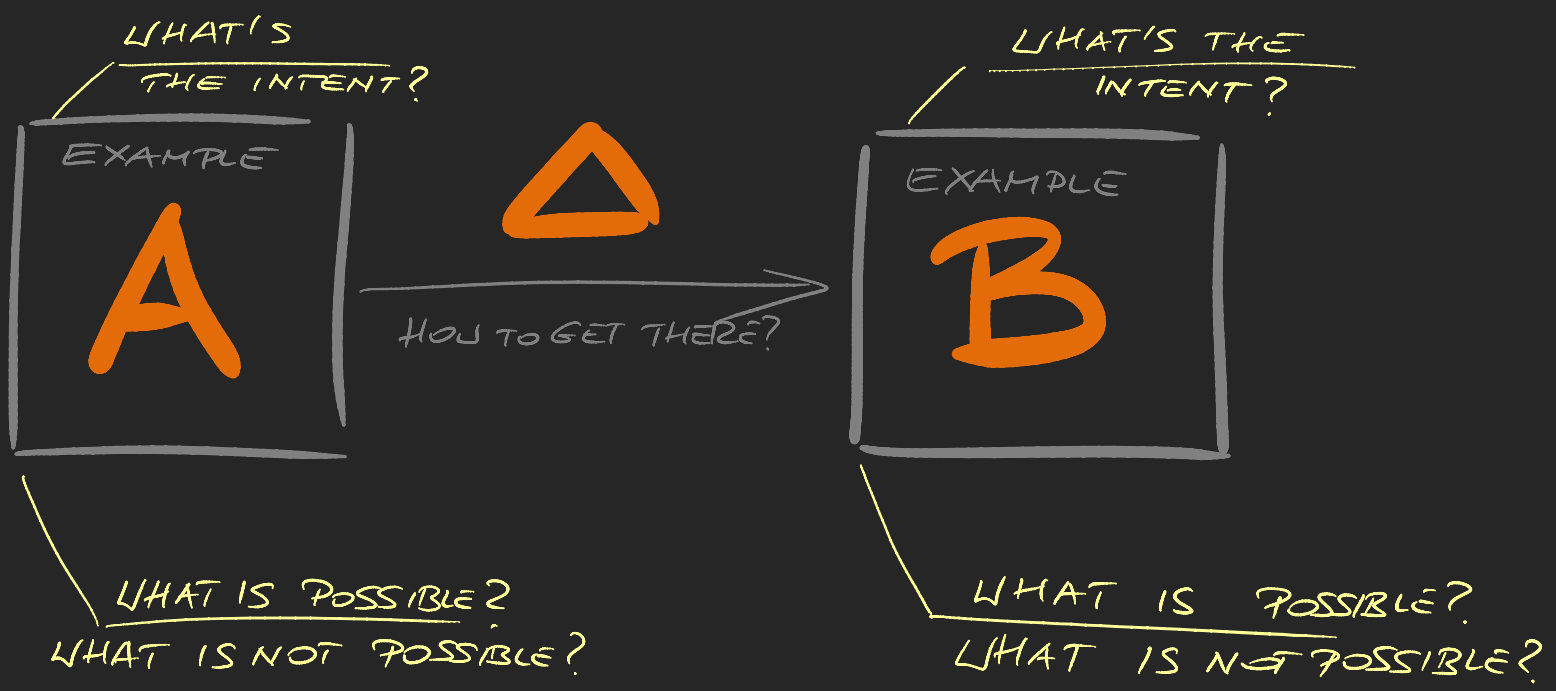
Or let's use problem solving structure



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Introduce the structure

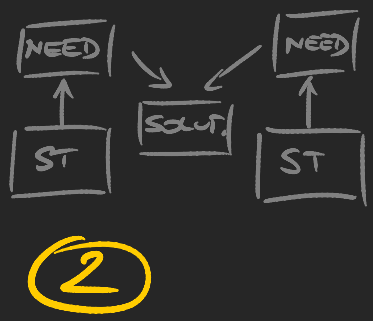
Conflict resolution

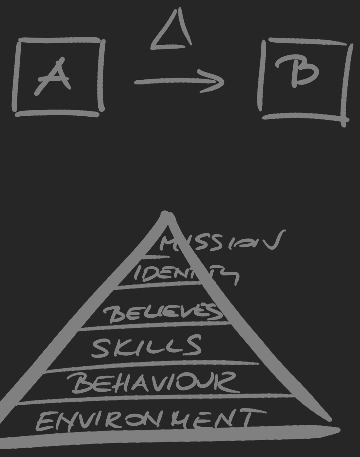
Problem solving

Facing the change

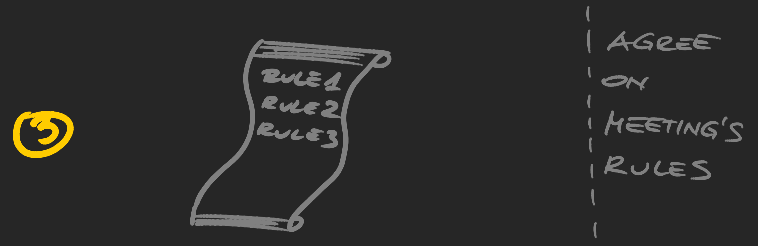
Creating a plan

Retrospective





Set or remind the rules



„Only one person is talking”

(especially when there are strong emotions, when you talk you don’t listen)

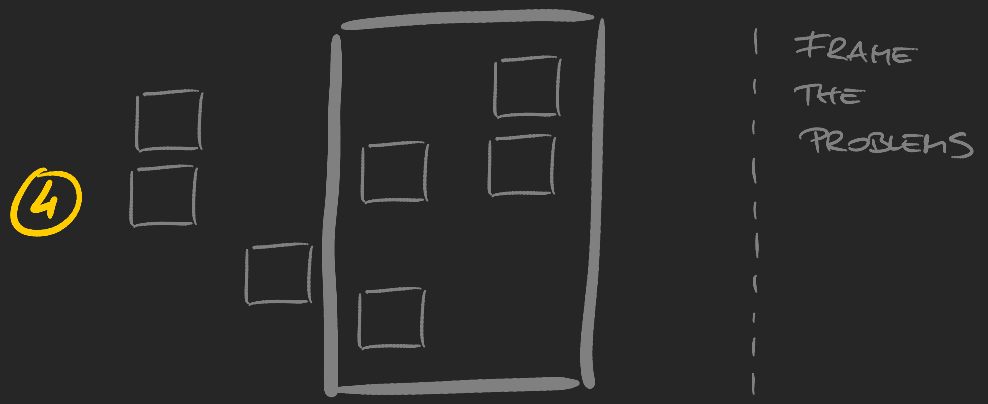
„One side talks and then another”

„A facilitator decides who talks next”

Frame potential problems

„It might be difficult to talk about problems and this is why we suppose a positive intention…"

„This form of meeting might seem strange for you but …"



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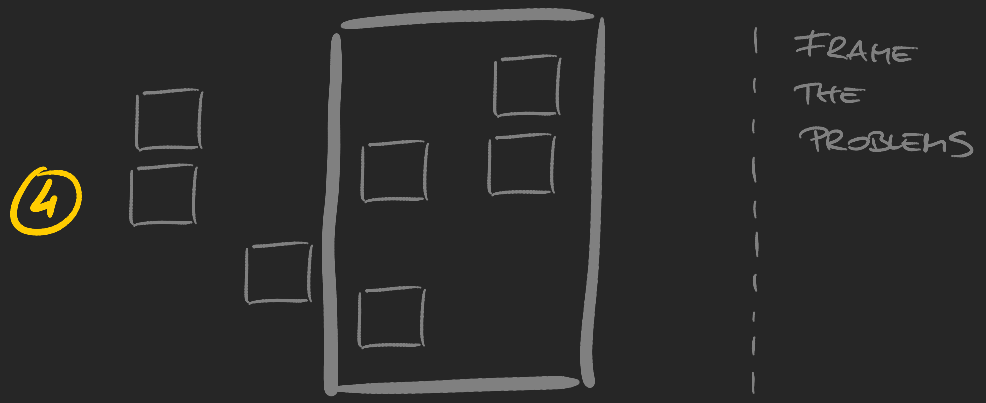
Frame potential problems

„You might want to talk about issues that are not in the agenda but …"

„We might come across an impass while looking for a solution but this is usually the moment right before the success …"



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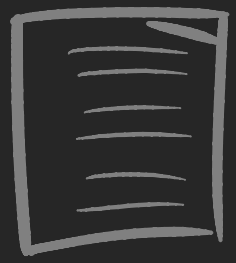
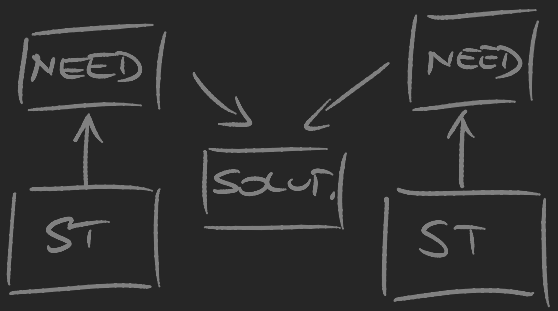
1



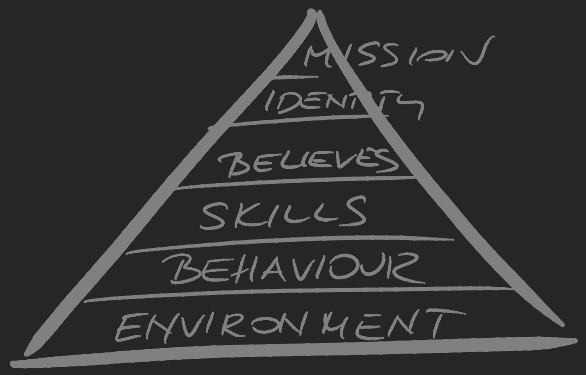
SHOW AGENDA

MAIN GOAL



SUGGEST MEETING STRUCTURE AND EXPLAIN IT

2



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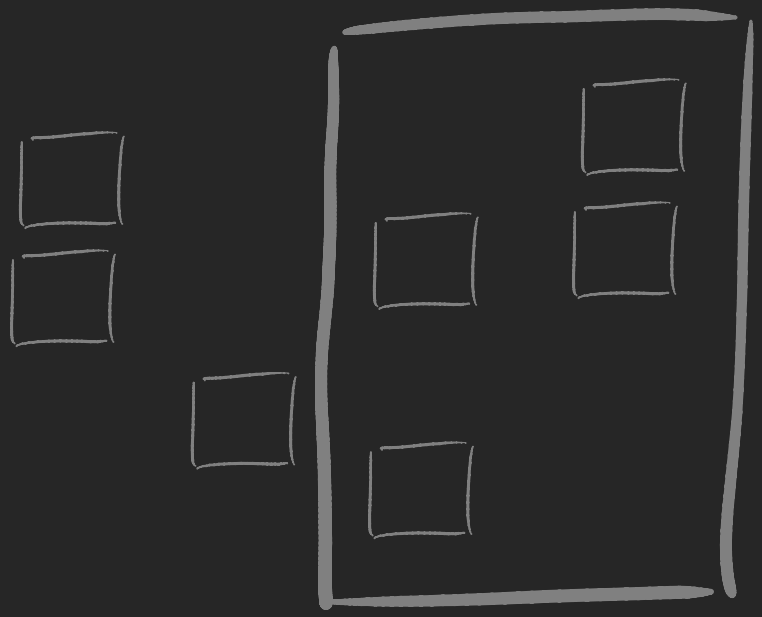
3

AGREE ON MEETING'S RULES

4



FRAME THE PROBLEMS

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5

USE THE STRUCTURE AND FOLLOW THE RULES

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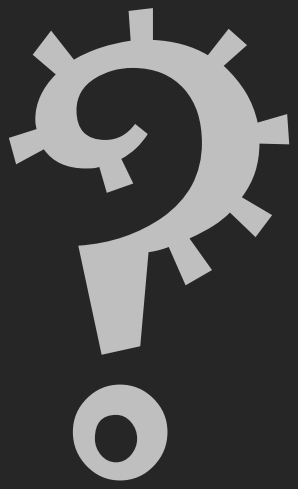
Summary

Using soft skills structures is like using stair railing. It might be dangerous to live without it.

You can’t resolve conflicts on a level they arose.

Instead of giving advices or forcing someone to do something, start asking questions.

Meeting agenda is not enough. Use deeper structure to make it effective.

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