# Three Heuristics for Fostering High-Trust, Generative Culture

**For Slides, Worksheet, and Other Resources**

https://helpingimprove.com/devopsdayla-2024/

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HI HELPING IMPROVE

Raise your hand if you have read

Accelerate
State of DevOps Report 2023

Raise your hand if you have heard of

# A typology of organisational cultures

**R Westrum**

There is wide belief that organisational culture shapes many aspects of performance, including safety. Yet proof of this relationship in a medical context is hard to find. In contrast to human factors, whose contributions are many and notable, culture's impact remains a commonsense, rather than a scientific, concept. The objectives of this paper are to show that organisational culture bears a predictive relationship with safety and that particular kinds of organisational culture improve safety, and to develop a typology predictive of safety performance. Because information flow is both influential and also indicative of other aspects of culture, it can be used to predict how organisations or parts of them will behave when signs of trouble arise. From case studies and some systematic research it appears that information culture is indeed associated with error reporting and with performance, including safety. Yet this relationship between culture and safety requires more exploration before the connection can be considered definitive.

✋

Raise your hand if your org wants 👉

Westrum Generative Culture

# The study of information flow: A personal journey

Ron Westrum*

*Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, USA
Society and Risk, University of Stavanger, Norway*

- Safety researcher
- "Information flow predicts organizational outcomes"
- Developed instrument for assessing information flow and culture

# Westrum Organizational Culture

| Pathological<br>*Power-oriented* | Bureaucractic<br>*Rule-oriented* | Generative<br>*Performance-oriented* |
|---|---|---|
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# 2014 STATE OF DEVOPS REPORT

## High-Trust Organizational Culture

"One of the pillars of DevOps is culture, and we were pleased to prove what we already knew anecdotally: Culture matters. In fact, organizational culture was highly predictive of both IT performance and overall organizational performance. No one should be surprised to hear that high-trust cultures lead to greater performance, while bureaucratic and fear-based cultures are destructive to performance."
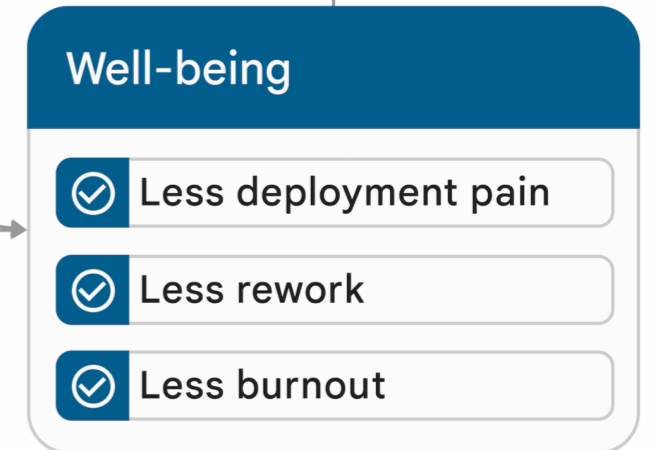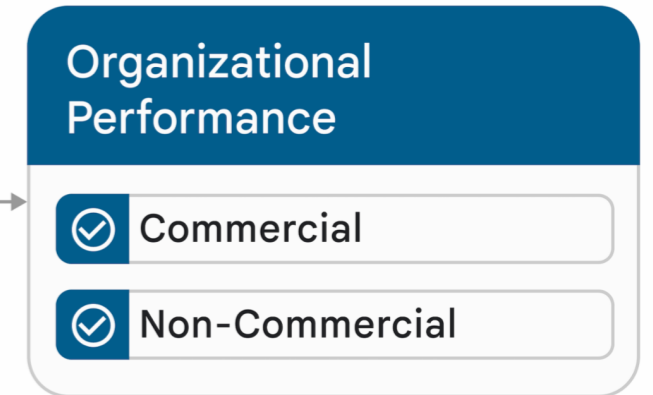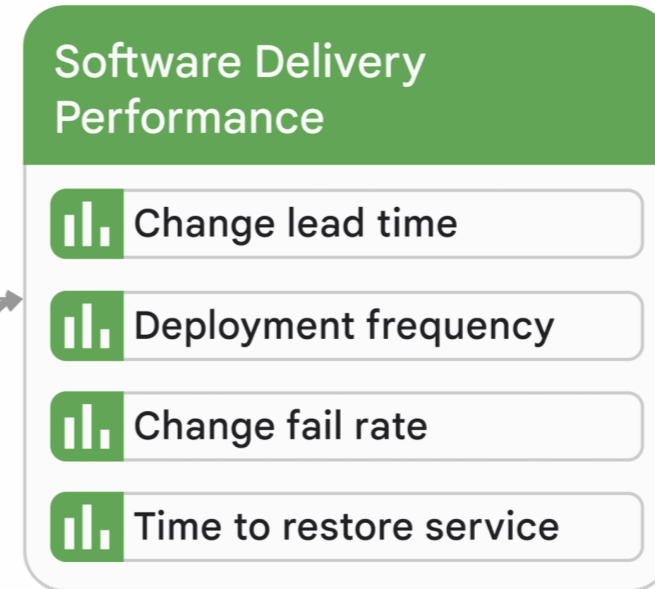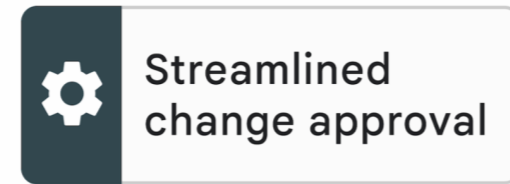
# Accelerate State of DevOps Report 2023

DORA — DevOps Research & Assessment
Google Cloud
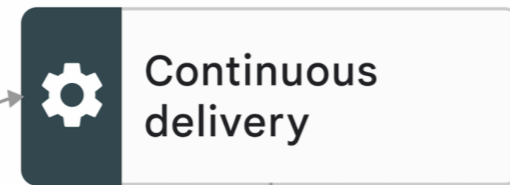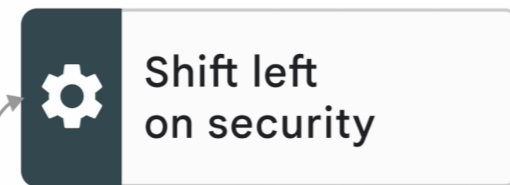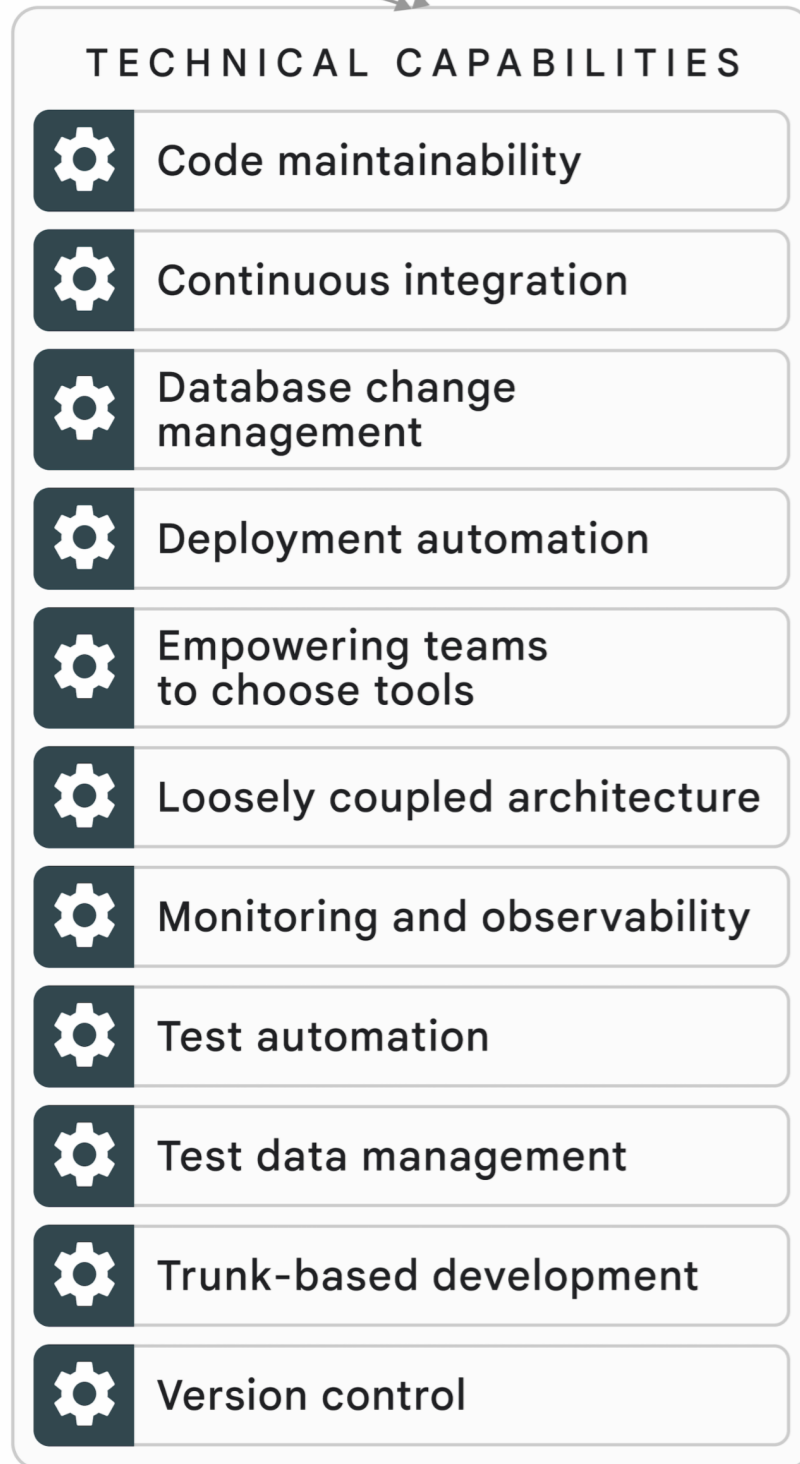
## "None of this works without investing in culture"

### "Teams with generative culture have 30% higher organizational performance than teams without"

| Effect on team performance | Effect on organizational performance | Effect on software delivery performance | Effect on operational performance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | |

| Effect on trunk-based development | Effect on reliability practices | Effect on continuous integration | Effect on continuous delivery | Effect on loosely coupled architecture |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase |

| Effect on burnout* | Effect on job satisfaction | Effect on productivity |
|---|---|---|
| ⬇ Substantial decrease | ⬆ Substantial increase | ⬆ Substantial increase |

**DORA** Core Model — dora.dev/research

capabilities → predict → performance → predicts → outcomes

Flexible infrastructure

Documentation quality

**TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES**

- Code maintainability
- Continuous integration
- Database change management
- Deployment automation
- Empowering teams to choose tools
- Loosely coupled architecture
- Monitoring and observability
- Test automation
- Test data management
- Trunk-based development
- Version control

Shift left on security

Continuous delivery

Generative organizational culture

Streamlined change approval

**Software Delivery Performance**
- Change lead time
- Deployment frequency
- Change fail rate
- Time to restore service

**Organizational Performance**
- Commercial
- Non-Commercial

**Well-being**
- Less deployment pain
- Less rework
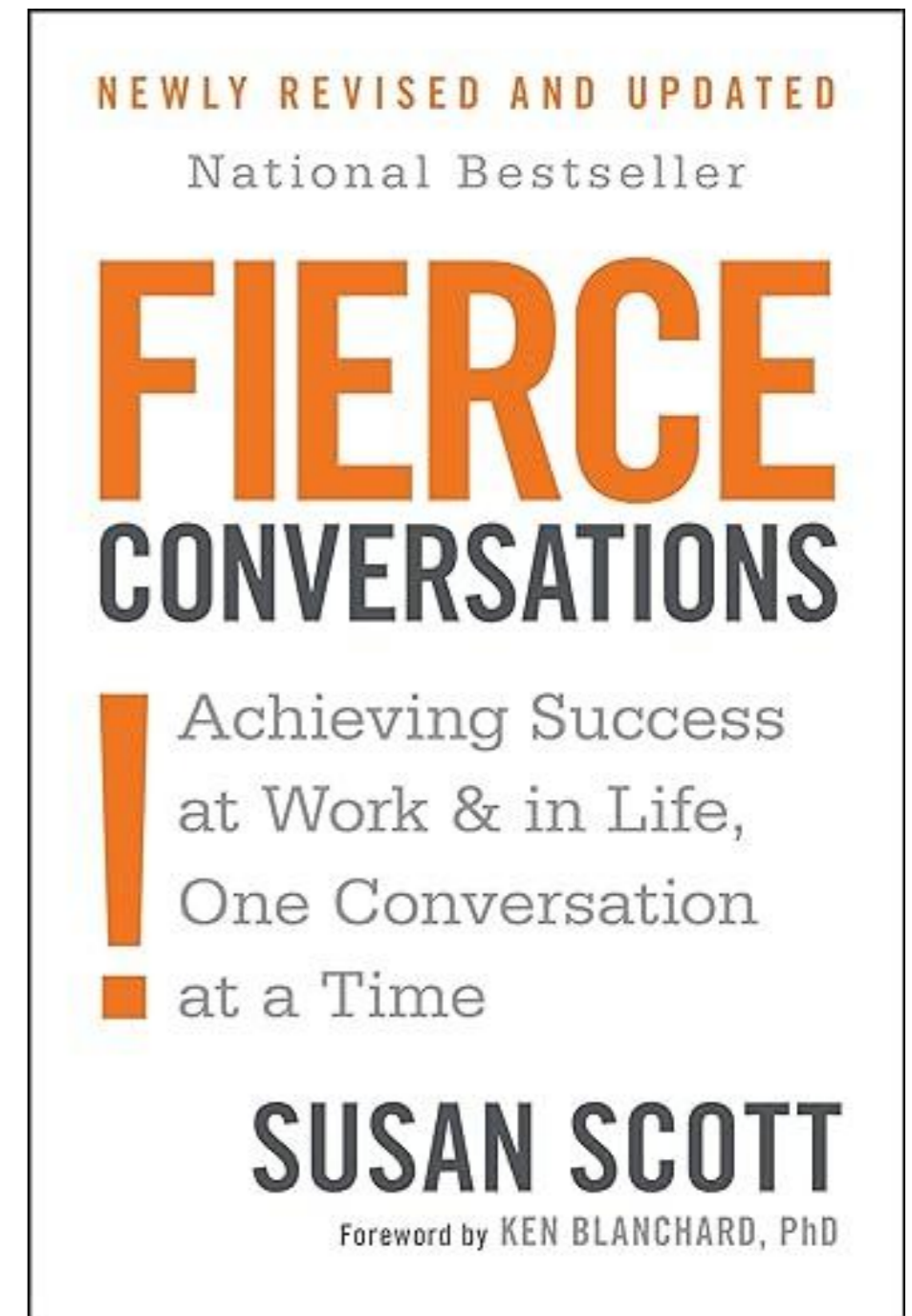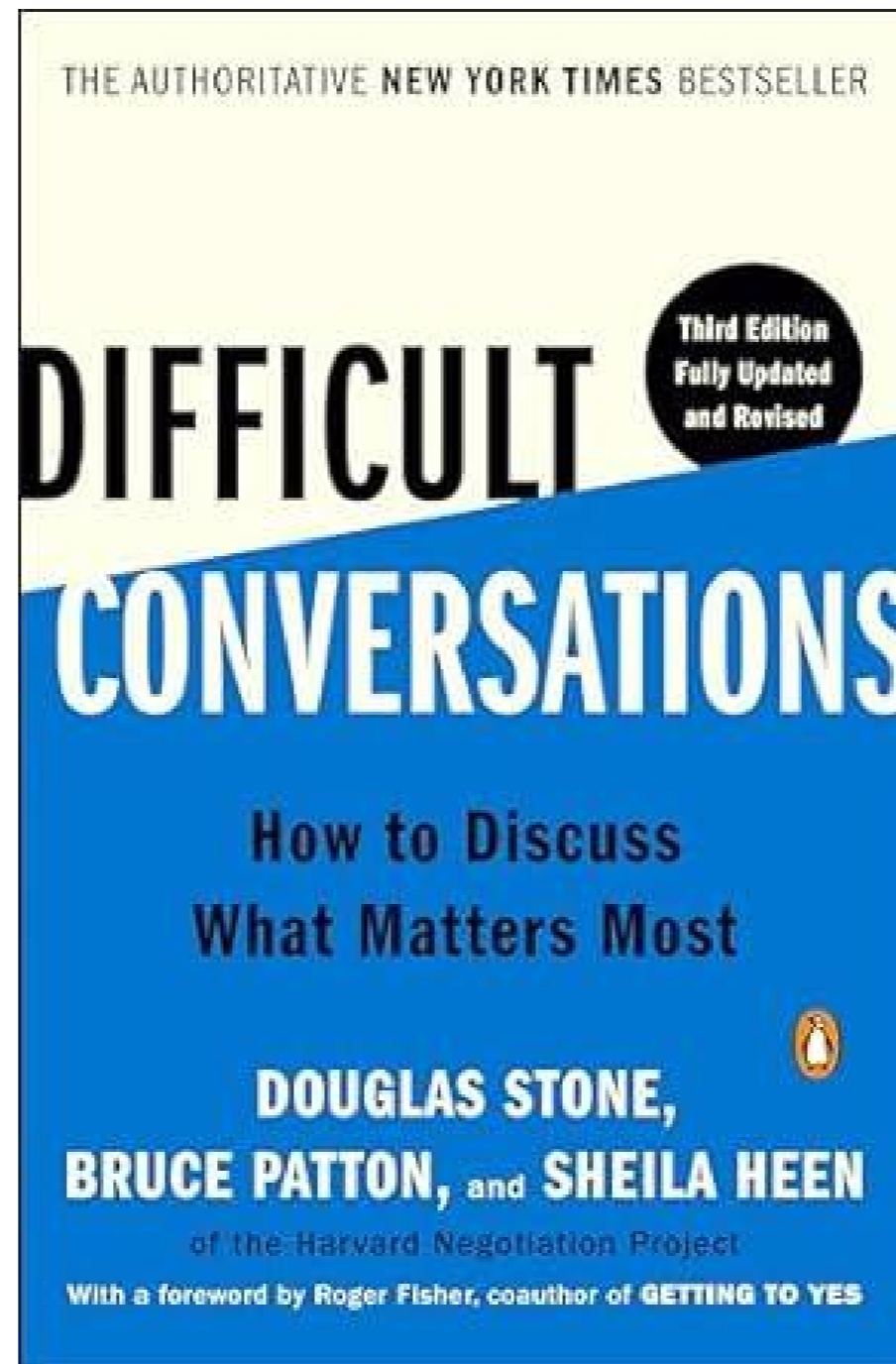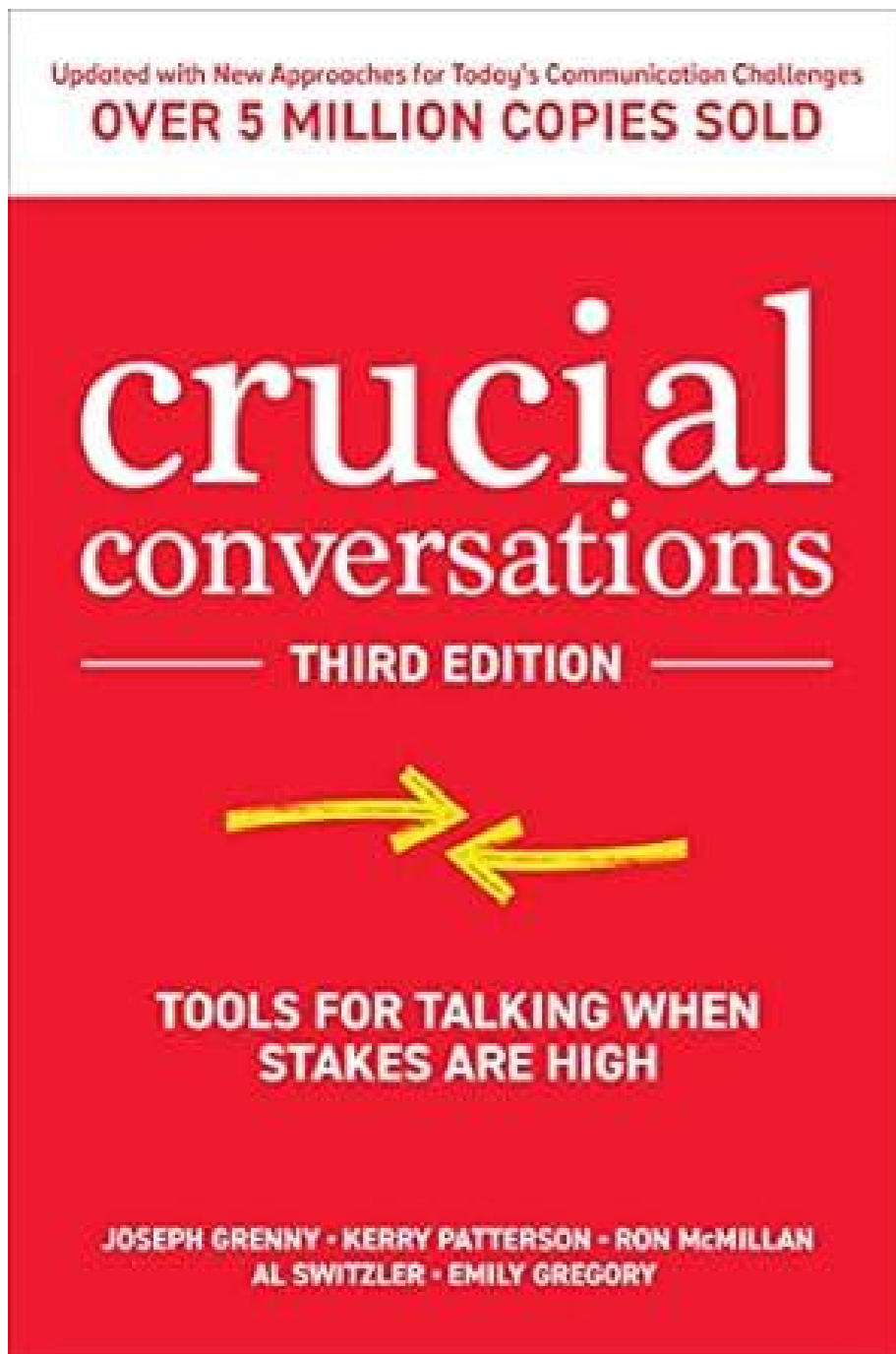- Less burnout

Allison Pollard

Paul Tevis

## John Shook: How can you change the culture of your organization?

- Start by changing what you do rather than how people think.
- "It's easier to act your way of thinking than to think your way to a new way of acting."

# Westrum Organizational Culture

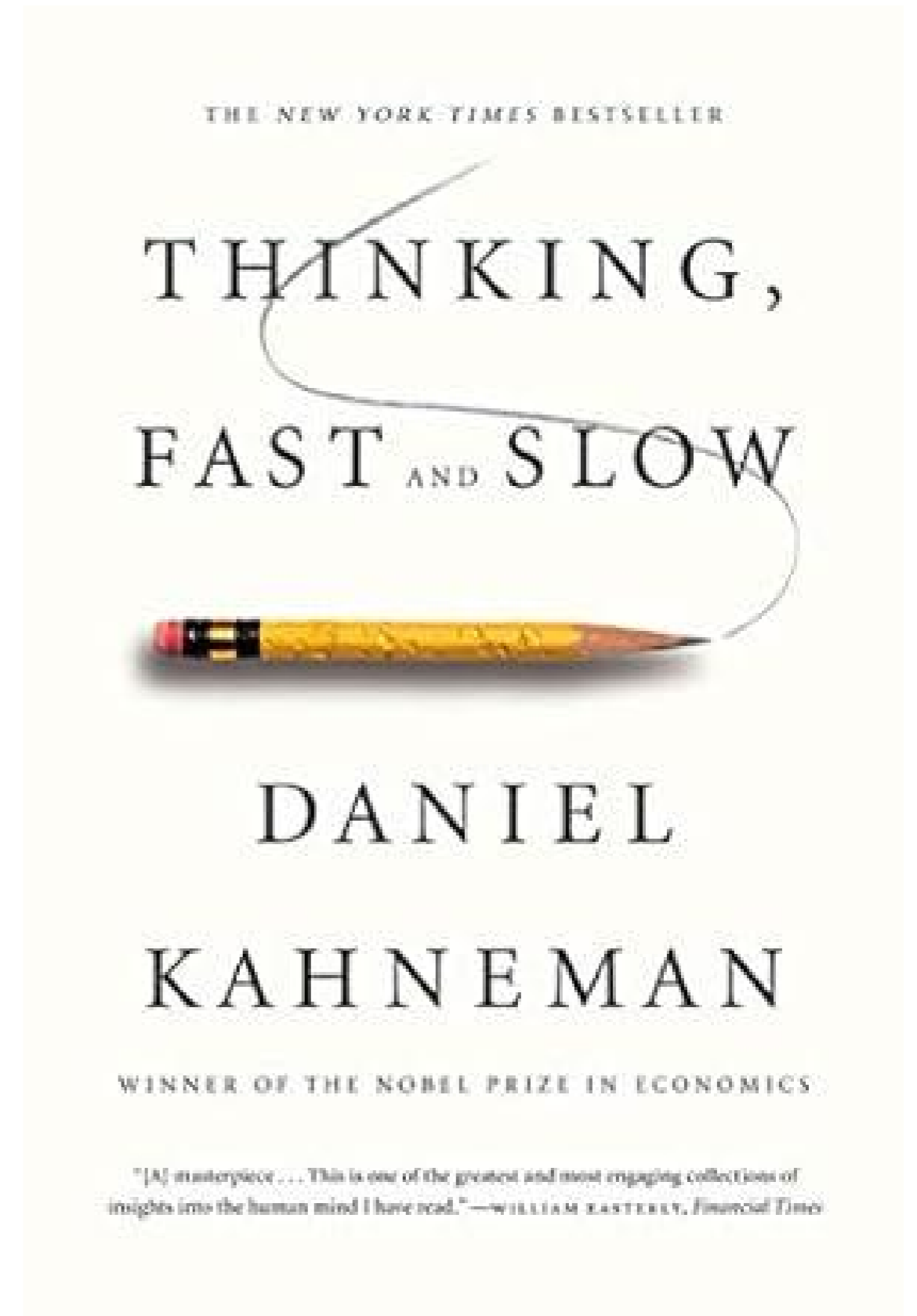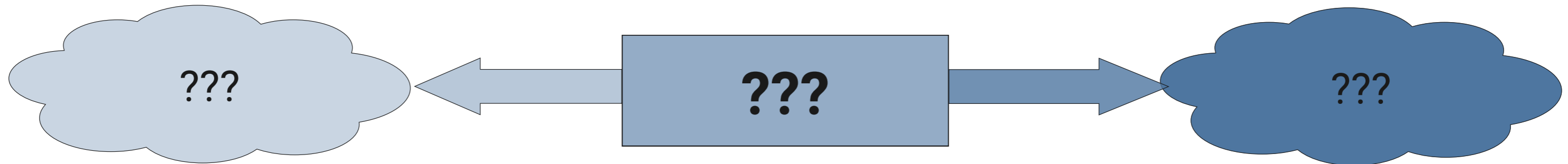| Pathological<br>*Power-oriented* | Bureaucractic<br>*Rule-oriented* | Generative<br>*Performance-oriented* |
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*I guess conversations are hard...*

# *Heuristics*

- AKA "rules of thumb"
- Mental shortcuts for complex situations
- Reduce cognitive load
- Quickly produce "good enough" results



THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW

DANIEL KAHNEMAN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

"[A] masterpiece . . . This is one of the greatest and most engaging collections of insights into the human mind I have read." —WILLIAM EASTERLY, *Financial Times*

# 6 Failure Modes & 3 Heuristics
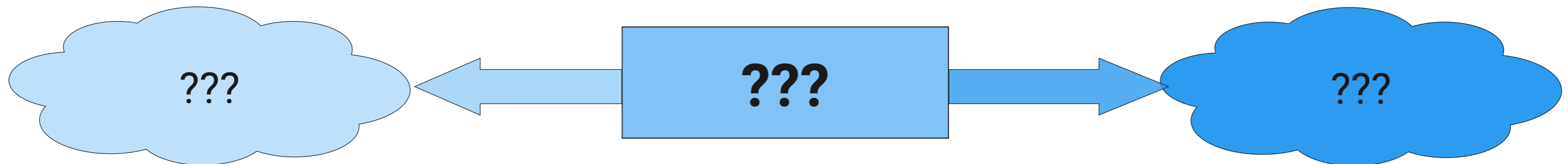
# Failure Mode: Vague

- They don't know what you think, feel, or want.

- "The details don't matter, just fix it."

# Likely Consequences: Vague

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# Failure Mode: Rigid

- Your vision is so detailed that there's no room for them.

- "We're doing it my way."

# Likely Consequences: Rigid

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# Heuristic #1: Clear

Vague ← Clear → Rigid

- "What I need from you is...
- "I know that you have concerns, and I've decided to proceed anyway.
- "What we know is... and what we don't is..."

# Being Clear Contributes to...

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# Failure Mode: Uninterested

- You don't ask for their perspectives, ideas, or feelings.

- "That's not how we do things here."

# Likely Consequences: Uninterested

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# Failure Mode: Interrogating

- Your copious questions hint at judgement or blame.

- "Why would you do it that way?"

# Likely Consequences: Interrogating

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# Heuristic #2: Curious

Uninterested ← **Curious** → Interrogating
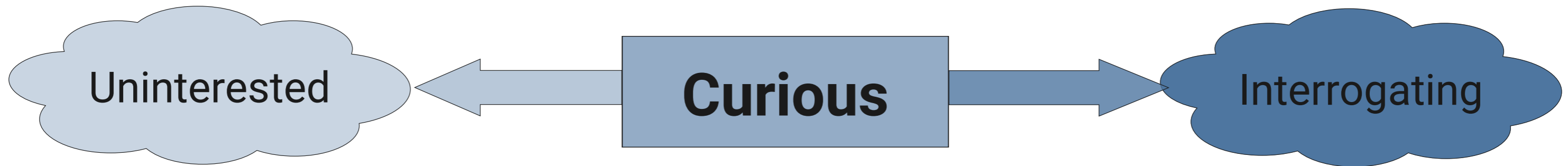
- "What did you notice?"
- "What do you recommend?"
- "How important is this to you?"
- "Where else might this happen?"

# Being Curious Contributes to...

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# Failure Mode: Distant

- You don't seem to care about what they think, feel, or want.

- "Sure. But that doesn't matter right now."

# Likely Consequences: Distant

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# Failure Mode: Glued

- You care "too much" about their opinions and/or feelings.

- "Whatever you want. I'll get right on that."

# Likely Consequences: Glued

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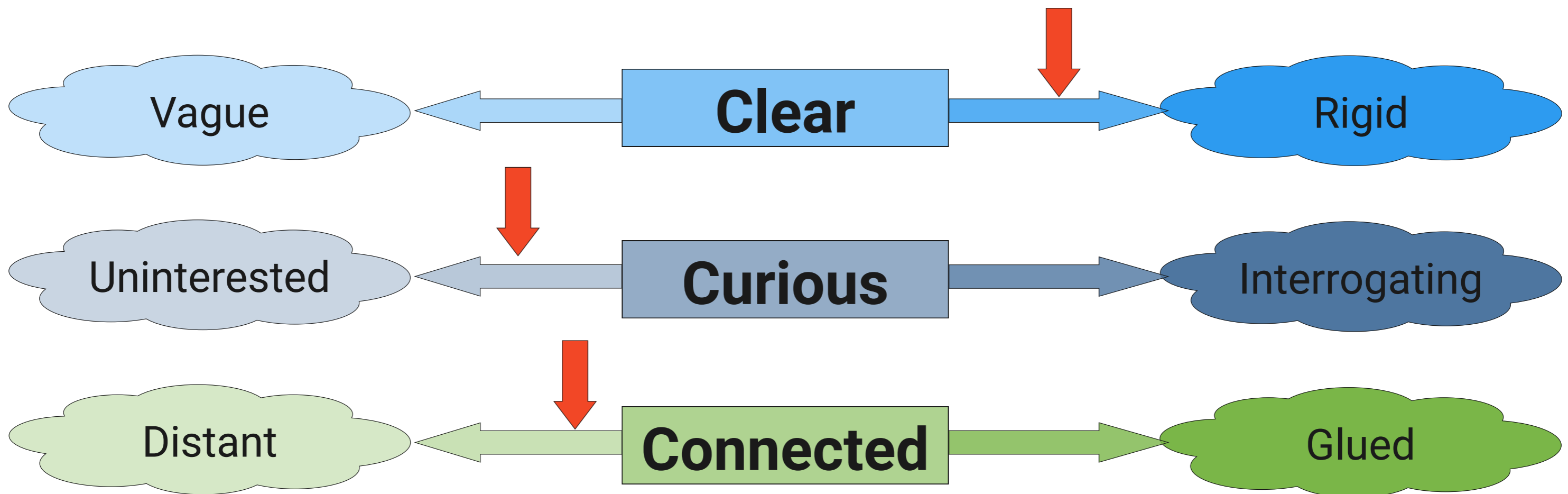# Heuristic #3: Connected

Distant ← **Connected** → Glued

- "Thank you for bringing this up."
- "It seems like what's important to you is..."
- "This problem might affect your group, too."
- "How can I help?"

# Being Connected Contributes to...

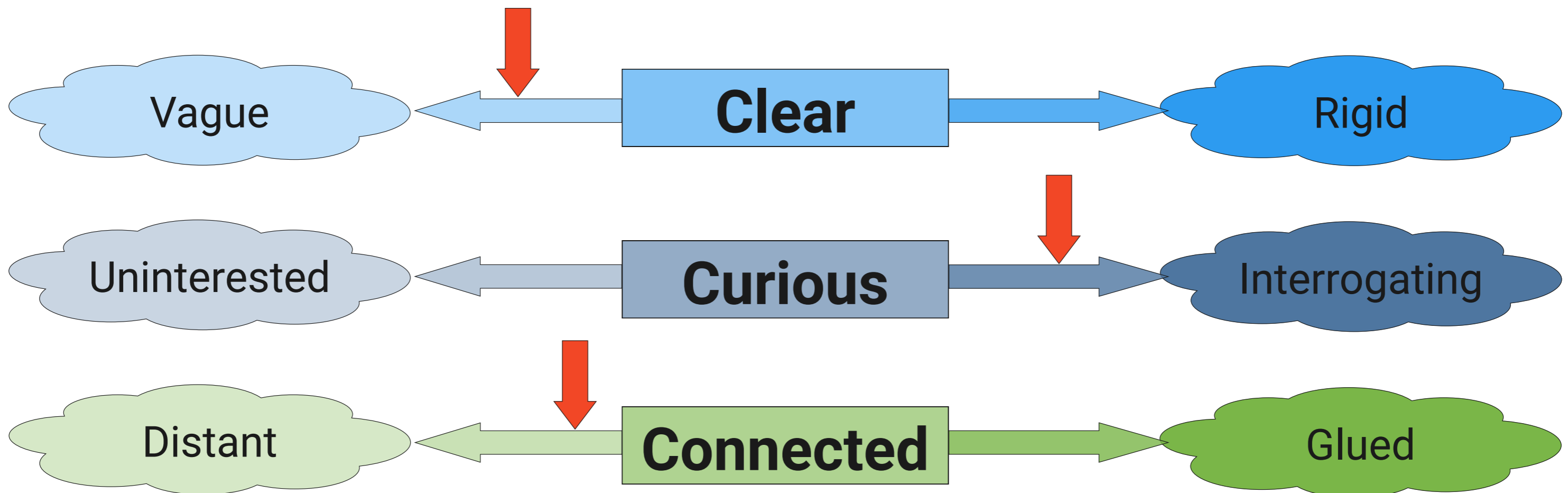| Pathological<br>*Power-oriented* | Bureaucractic<br>*Rule-oriented* | Generative<br>*Performance-oriented* |
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# Using the 3Cs

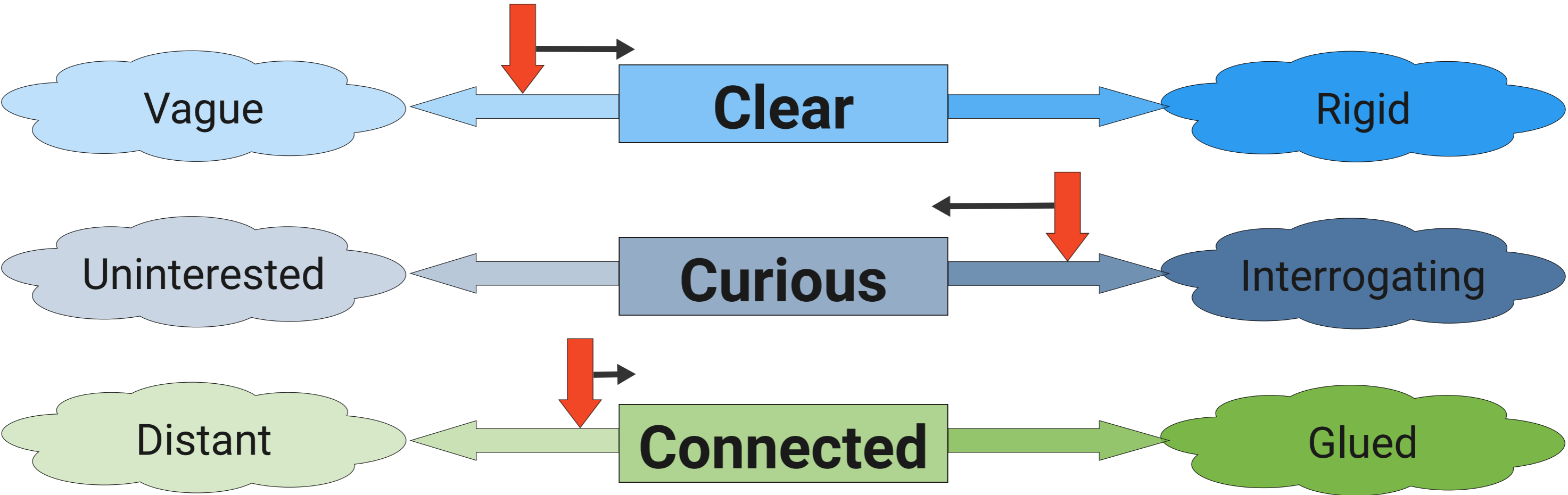In practice, the **3Cs** are not independent. Movement in one often shifts the others.

| Vague | ← | **Clear** | → | Rigid |
| Uninterested | ← | **Curious** | → | Interrogating |
| Distant | ← | **Connected** | → | Glued |

# During a Converation

Where are you, and what can you **do**, **say**, or **ask** to adjust the sliders you need?

| Vague | ← | **Clear** | → | Rigid |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uninterested | ← | **Curious** | → | Interrogating |
| Distant | ← | **Connected** | → | Glued |
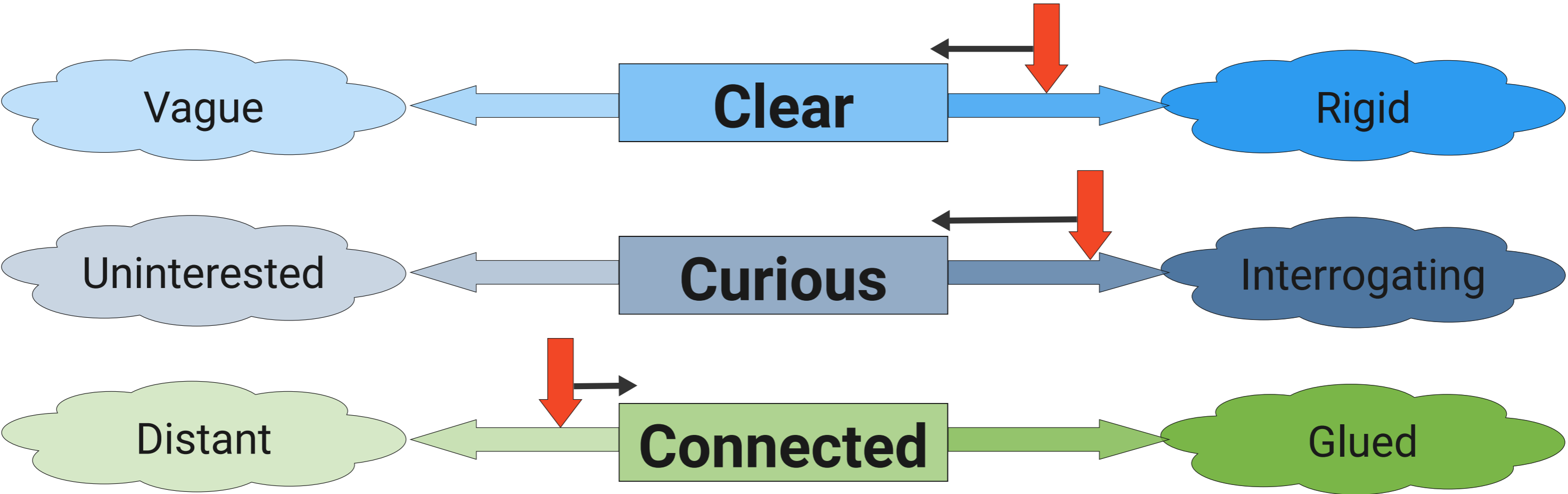
# After a Converation

How did they experience you, and what did you **do**, **say**, or **ask** that got you there?

| Vague | ← | **Clear** | → | Rigid |
| Uninterested | ← | **Curious** | → | Interrogating |
| Distant | ← | **Connected** | → | Glued |
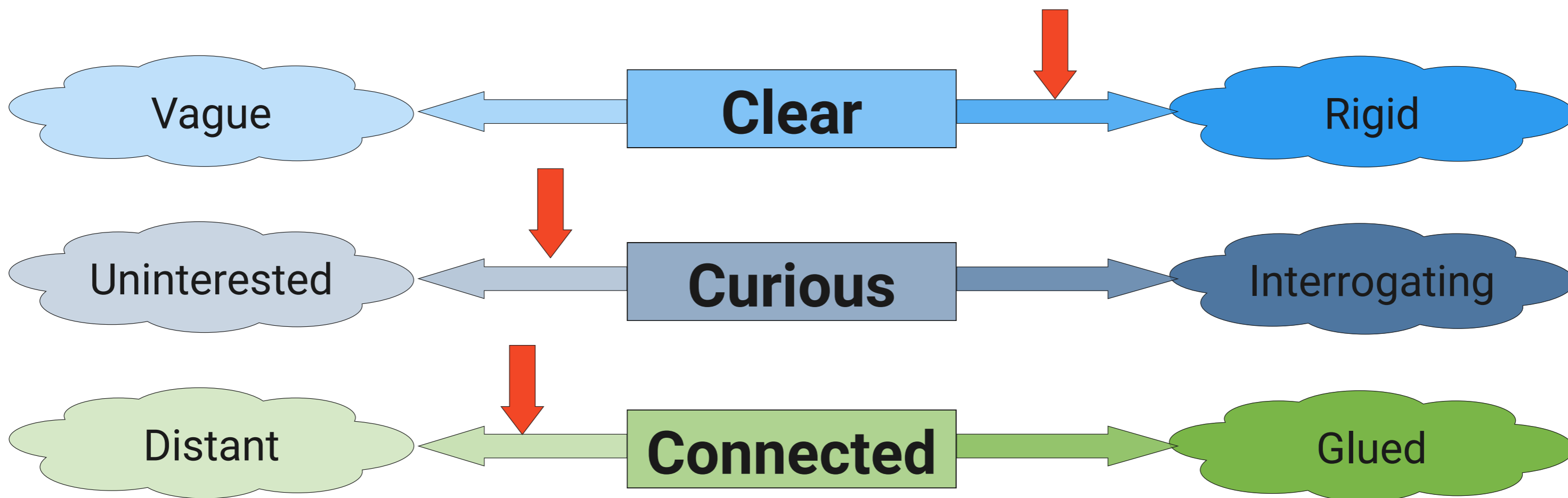
# Bonus Heuristic #2: PDR

**Plan**

BEFORE

**Dance**

DURING

**Retro**

AFTER

# 3 (+2) Heuristics for Fostering High-Trust, Generative Culture

*Clear – Curious – Connected*

*Do/Say/Ask*

*Plan/Dance/Retro*



**For Slides, Worksheet, and Other Resources**

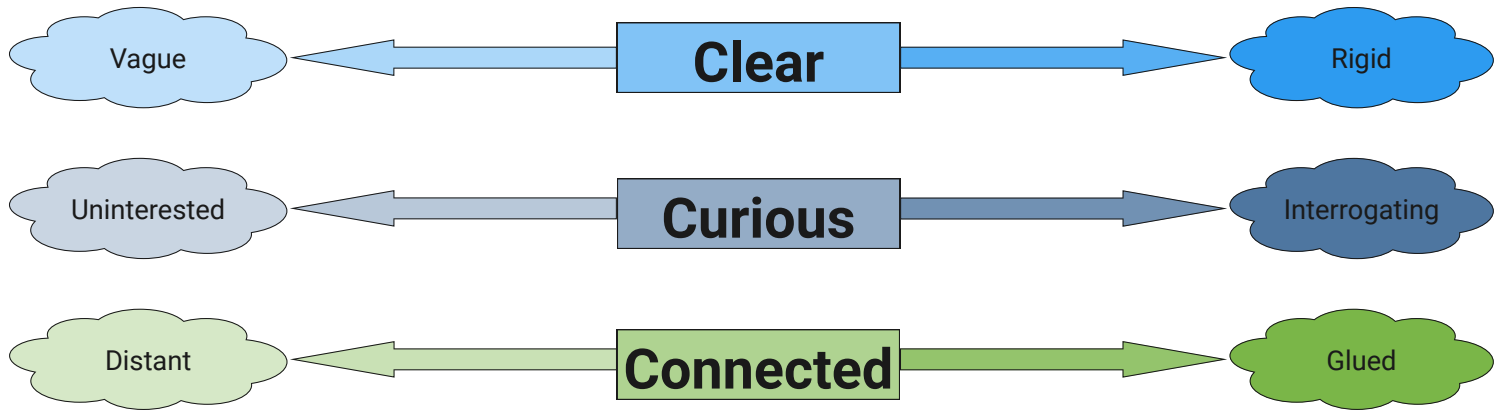https://helpingimprove.com/devopsdayla-2024/

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# 3 Heuristics for Fostering High-Trust, Generative Culture

Paul Tevis – Principal Coach & Consultant @ Helping Improve

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Vague ← | **Clear** → | Rigid |
| Uninterested ← | **Curious** → | Interrogating |
| Distant ← | **Connected** → | Glued |

| How will you know you've been *Clear*? | How will you know you've been *Curious*? | How will you know you've been *Connected*? |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

## What will you *Do*?

## What will you *Say*?

## What will you *Ask*?

# 3 Heuristics for Fostering High-Trust, Generative Culture

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## Guidlines for *Planning*

- Clarify your goal (s) for the conversation:
    - What do you need to accomplish?
    - How could the conversation improve the working relationship?
- Based on what you know about yourself and the other person, where are you likely to end up on each of the *3Cs* by default?
- To achieve your goal(s), which sliders do you need move from those defaults, and which direction?
- Each of your *3Cs* should be tied to the topic of the conversation. You can't say you were *Connected* because you talked about their cat.
- When things go awry...
    - What's a mantra you can repeat to yourself to get back on track? (This is a useful thing to *Do*.)
    - What's a soundbite you can repeat to them to get back on track? (This is a useful thing to *Say*.)
- Remember: The *3Cs* are about how they experience you, not just how you feel.

## Tips for *Dancing*

- Use the *3Cs* to gauge how things are going.
- Don't stop once you've gone through your initial plan. Keep dancing until you get confirmation for all of the *3Cs.*
- When things go awry...
    - Use your mantra to re-center yourself
    - Repeat your soundbite to get the conversation back on track.

## Questions for *Retrospecting*

- Did we accomplish what I needed from the conversation?
- Did we improve the working relationship?
- How did I do on each of the *3Cs*?
- What did I *Do/Say/Ask* that contributed to that?
- What do I want to take from this for future conversations, either with this person or around this topic?