Moral Foundations Theory: to Help Address Conflict

Linda Rising
linda@lindarising.org
www.lindarising.org
@RisingLinda

The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street

How do we deal with conflict now?


It's all about data ☺!

- We usually believe opponents are missing facts so all we need to do is supply the missing information.
- We lay out the facts and can't understand why they are still resistant.
- The problem must be with THEM!

Why don't THOSE PEOPLE listen to reason?

- We haven't evolved to listen to reason.
- Research asks people questions, times responses, scan their brains.
- Results show we reach conclusions quickly and produce reasons later to justify our decisions.
- We don't employ reason as a judge, impartially weighing evidence or as a teacher, leading us to wisdom.
- We use reason as a lawyer or press secretary, to justify our decisions and behavior.

Behavioral economics

Kahneman & Tversky changed the way we think about thinking.
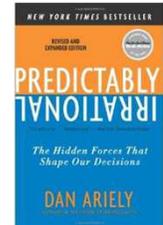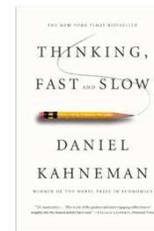
Confirmation Bias

- In the early 1960s, Peter Wason showed that after forming an hypothesis, we focus on evidence that fits our current view. He called this "confirmation bias."
- Two groups asked to read the same paper.
- The great promise of the Internet was that more information would automatically yield better decisions. The great disappointment is that more information actually yields more possibilities to confirm what you already believed anyway. – Brian Eno, Artist, Composer, Producer

AND the Backfire Effect

- When you argue using facts and evidence, people reject or discount the information…
- AND, cling even more firmly to their views.
- Brendan Nyhan & Jason Reifler called this "the backfire effect."
- Correcting people INCREASES erroneous beliefs ☹!
- http://theoatmeal.com/comics/believe
- Weapons of mass destruction ☹!

Cognitive Dissonance

- **Leon Festinger & J. Merrill Carlsmith published experimental results suggesting we are extremely uncomfortable holding contradictory beliefs. We just can't do it!**
- **Results immediately rejected by behaviorists – cognitive dissonance at work ☺!**
- **Contradictory "evidence" causes severe cognitive discomfort!**

## Skeptics vs Cynics

- **Skeptics are useful. Every group, every team, every meeting should have one. Champion Skeptic is a pattern from *Fearless Change***
- **Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats*: someone who wears the black hat.**
- **Cynics, on the other hand, are negative for the sake of being negative, not to be helpful, typically focused on low-level interests, not the greater good.**
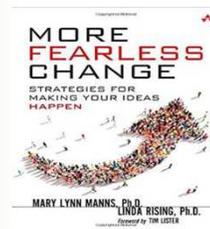
Fearless Change

Patterns based on

- **Social psychology**
- **Influence strategies**
- **Evolutionary biology**
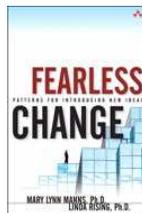
现在出版啦 Now out ☺!

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Fear Less

- **Pattern from *Fearless Change***
- **Listen with intent to understand – Stephen Covey – one of his "7 Habits"**

You do need a nice, clear, rational argument

- **Not because it's convincing!**
- **But we're good at explaining after-the-fact why we made a decision (our story or rationalization), so…**
- **Provide resistors a logical argument to use in their explanation to others and to themselves.**
- **Not just benefits: include costs, downsides, flaws in your thinking, unknowns and unknown unknowns**

Personal Touch

- **Pattern from *Fearless Change***
- **Everyone is asking, "What's in it for me?"**
- **You must address a genuine user need. Data does not equal empathy. Jeff Patton**

Different people react to new ideas differently
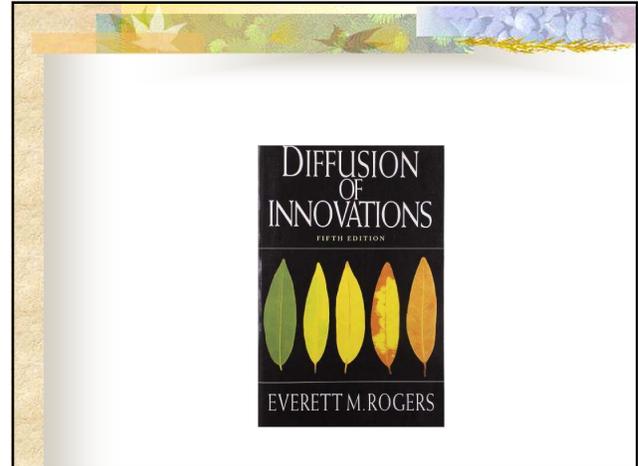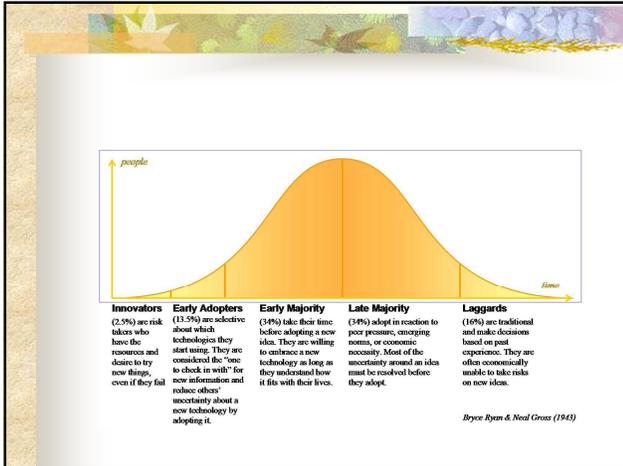
This is new so it's cool!
    (Innovators--2.5%)
It's interesting, but I want to learn more.
    (Early Adopter--13.5%)
I want to know what other people think.
    (Early Majority--34%)
If I have to. I guess.
    (Late Majority--34%)
We've always done it this way.
    (Laggards--16%)

Innovators
(2.5%) are risk takers who have the resources and desire to try new things, even if they fail

Early Adopters
(13.5%) are selective about which technologies they start using. They are considered the "one to check in with" for new information and reduce others' uncertainty about a new technology by adopting it.

Early Majority
(34%) take their time before adopting a new idea. They are willing to embrace a new technology as long as they understand how it fits with their lives.

Late Majority
(34%) adopt in reaction to peer pressure, emerging norms, or economic necessity. Most of the uncertainty around an idea must be resolved before they adopt.

Laggards
(16%) are traditional and make decisions based on past experience. They are often economically unable to take risks on new ideas.

Bryce Ryan & Neal Gross (1943)

Work with what is

- You can't fix it – so use it to your advantage!
- Why would we be hardwired for this?
- Don't rush to overcome resistance. Let the natural force of evolution work for you.
- Most are smart, care, want to do their best.
- The people in your organization will never all be in the same place at the same time.

Industrial Age Mindset

- Left-over from the Industrial Age – it's desirable to have everyone doing everything in the same way.
- Innovators and Early Adopters want to look ahead and experiment with new approaches – enable that.
- Others want to experiment within their comfort zone to improve what they are doing now – enable that.
- Learn from the results. Build on successes.
- Don't throw away everything when a new idea is introduced. Keep as much good stuff as possible – use it you move forward.

Listen, Listen, Listen

- Silence is good, short responses are good
- Maximal body language: open posture, nod, make eye contact
- Research shows that questions to promote discovery and insight show you are collaborating with the speaker
- Sometimes this is enough! I have "listened" people into agreeing with me ☺!

Two excellent references
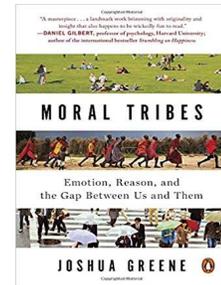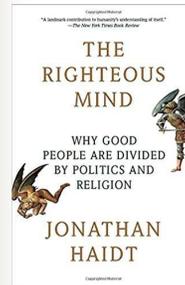
Tribes

- Are there moral tribes in the U.S.?
- Are there moral tribes in Agile?
- Are there moral tribes in project development?
- Morals, values, ethics – what is right and/or wrong

Moral Foundations Theory – Left/Right

- Care
- Fairness

- Loyalty
- Authority
- Sanctity

In your next conversation

- To persuade people, focus on what THEY value, not what you value
- Follow the sacredness. Think about the moral foundations. See which carry the most weight for a particular individual.
- To open your mind, open your heart first.

Increased military spending

- (1) We should take pride in our military, which unifies us both at home and abroad and defends us from evil aggression.
- (2) In the military, the poor and disadvantaged can have equal opportunity with a reliable salary and a way out of the challenges of poverty and inequality.
- Conservatives equally influenced by either message because they support this issue
- But Liberals more likely influenced by (2)
- SO, consider your opponent's values!

We are reluctant to do this

- Research shows both Left & Right equally reluctant to use moral arguments to appeal to the "other side," even with incentives.
- This speaks to the power of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance.
- Do we not only want others to agree with our position but also agree with our values? No wonder we can't reach consensus!

Example: How to use MFT

In an argument with an uncle who insists Boy Scouts should exclude openly gay people from being scout leaders, when he says, "For thousands of years, society has been built on one man, one woman. It seems like a dangerous and unnatural social experiment to start having role models teaching kids it's OK to be gay."

WRONG RESPONSE: No, it hasn't! The concept of heterosexual, one-man, one-woman marriage is actually quite new. Haven't you read the Bible? Dudes had tons of wives back then! It's like you conservatives conveniently ignore history to fight gay rights.

Base your argument on your listener's values

I think you're definitely right that there's a long-standing, wonderful tradition of one-man, one-woman relations. I totally respect how much you care about that institution — I do, too! I think my main reason for allowing gay people to be scout leaders is I have gay friends who were Boy Scouts growing up, and who seriously treasure the lessons they learned during that time. They have the same ideals as you and I do, love our country for the same reasons. They just want to give back to an organization that helped shape who they are, that taught them all sorts of invaluable life skills.

Walk in the other's shoes

Look for important agreements. Agreements about what we want the world to look like. When unionists and nationalists in Ireland are asked what policies they would like to see in future, they disagree vehemently. When asked, "What would you like your community to look like?" the responses become quite similar. When asked, "What do you want life to be like for you and your family?" there's no difference at all. Find ways in which you share fundamental values and build on that.

Try your own experiment

- Imagine a conversation with someone who disagrees with you
- Outline two arguments for a:
- (1) Liberal (Care, Fairness) and
- (2) Conservative (Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity)
- Or use other appropriate sets of values
- Work in silence for 3 minutes

Results of your experiment?

- Could you create both arguments?
- Was one definitely more challenging?
- Could you feel yourself resisting the idea of using the "other side's" values?
- Did you feel you were compromising some internal set of principles?

I need practice!

<insert photo of Trump supporter>

I'm not ready for this!

<insert photos of 2 Trump supporters>

Listen, Listen, Listen

If people feel you are listening then they feel you care about them and what they have to say.

Still trying to win the duel ☹!

- **It's not about winning the point**
- **It's not about showing them how wrong they are**
- **It's not about showing how smart I am**
- **It's about opening your heart and your mind to another human being who's struggling just as you are**
- **Give yourselves a break!**

The Best Goal in a Conflict

If you approach someone whose views are different from your own, with the goal of bringing them over to your side – you're going to be disappointed, and there's going to be conflict. But if you hope the other person will change your views, that you will grow as a person, that this will be an opportunity for you to feel out the shape of your own ignorance, then you're almost guaranteed to get what you're looking for.

When to stop discussion

- **The key question: Is there something I can prove or demonstrate that would make you stop believing in <whatever>?**
- **If the honest answer is "No," then there's no point in continuing the discussion.**
- **Don't waste time and energy on the topic.**
- **Move on to something else.**
- **Ask YOURSELF this question to test your own confirmation bias.**

Monday, August 21, 2017

Monday, July 29, 1878

- **Rutherford B. Hayes**
- **19th U.S. President**
- **"His Fraudulency"**
- **Divisive election**
- **High end of the bottom half**
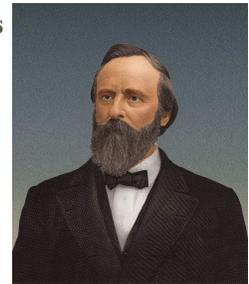
Summary

- **Maybe an awe-full moment will bring us together.**
- **My hope is that we will start listening to each other.**
- **I so appreciate your time today.**
- **Thanks for listening!**