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Soft skills are not hard

… but they can be confronting.

13 October 2014

Listening

You are always listening.
I have said nothing aloud and yet you are already listening, from your own history.
Before I speak your listening is already there. Always.

Your listening is always and already.
You have already made decisions about what I can offer to you, already made decisions about what you will hear me say, and what you will not hear me say.

We are blind to what we cannot hear.

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What do you hear?

"A newspaper is better than a magazine. A seashore is a better place than a street. At first it is better to run than to walk. You may have to try several times. It takes some skill, but it is easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it.

Once successful, complications are minimal. Birds seldom get too close. Rain, however, soaks in very fast. Too many people doing the same thing can also cause problems.

One needs lots of room.

If there are no complications it can be very peaceful. A rock will serve as an anchor. If things break loose from it, however, you will not get a second chance."

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Kite

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Outline

1. Context for the workshops - why are they needed?

2. A framework for coordination - the ‘hard’ concepts we introduce.

3. Experiential components - developing embodied competencies.

4. Program reflections

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Stage 1 Engineering Competencies

3. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

3.1. Ethical conduct and professional accountability

3.2. Effective oral and written communication in professional and lay domains.

3.3. Creative, innovative and pro-active demeanour.

3.4. Professional use and management of information.

3.5. Orderly management of self, and professional conduct.

3.6. Effective team membership and team leadership.

accountability

proficient in listening

team membership

3.2 Effective oral and written communication in professional and lay domains.	**a) Is proficient in** listening, speaking, reading and writing English, including: - comprehending critically and fairly the viewpoints of others; - expressing information effectively and succinctly, issuing instruction, engaging in discussion, presenting arguments and justification, debating and negotiating - to technical and non-technical audiences and usin ıe context; - representing an engineering position, or the engineering profession at large to the broader community; - appreciating the impact of body language, personal behaviour and other non-verbal communication processes, as well as the fundamentals of human social behaviour and their

commitment to critical self-review

body language

Earns the trust and confidence of colleagues through competent and timely completion of tasks.

non-verbal communication processes

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Industry assessments

“I am loathe to say this but to put it frankly we are not impressed with his performance so far.”

“...falling asleep at work often”

“We have not received any work from him although his preliminary findings should have been reported well before now.”

“...seems disinterested in the work and the people here and as such is not fitting in particularly well.”

“...hard for him to have moved so far away from home and so is dealing with those emotional issues.”

“I have told him that if he has not lifted his game by the time I am back we will have to seriously consider ending his stay with us.”

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Industry assessments

“Quite a dependable worker ...as she progresses through the work and gains understanding of what is required, she picks up and carries those responsibilities.”

“Relationally – very good... easy to work with”

“...the memo would have taken me 2-3 days to write. I probably spent just under one day reviewing her work.”

“A joy to work with” “Attitude – Extremely keen”

“...has kept records of test conditions and this has been valuable when we have had to back track on work.”

“...has the attitude, personality and technical brain to make a fine engineer when she does enter the workforce.”

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Basis for assessments?

Rarely an issue with ‘hard’ technical competencies.

Concerns and praise most often relate to softer competencies:

Communication
Accountability
Team membership
Emotions
Trust

That was a concern for BE/ME program.

Industry experience is an important aspect in the formation of young engineers.
Success for the student is success for everyone!

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Program Components

A. Framework for understanding coordination
- Conversations for Action, Fernando Flores

B. Framework for understanding emotions and motivations
- Affect Script Psychology, Silvan Tomkins

C. Opportunity to practice A + B
- start to develop embodied competencies

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Conversations for action

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Basic unit of work?

Task

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Basic unit of work?

~~Task~~

Promise

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PREPARING
LISTENING TO CONCERNS

CO-INVENTING
NEGOTIATING, ASSESSING

Make Request or Offer

[DO X, BY TIME Y]

Conditions for Satisfaction / Success

Shared Care / Concern

[2 MUTUAL PROMISES]

Declare Satisfaction

Promise / Agree

Assert Completion

CUSTOMER

PERFORMER

ACCEPTING
ASSURANCE, INCORPORATING

EXECUTING
PERFORMING, COORDINATING

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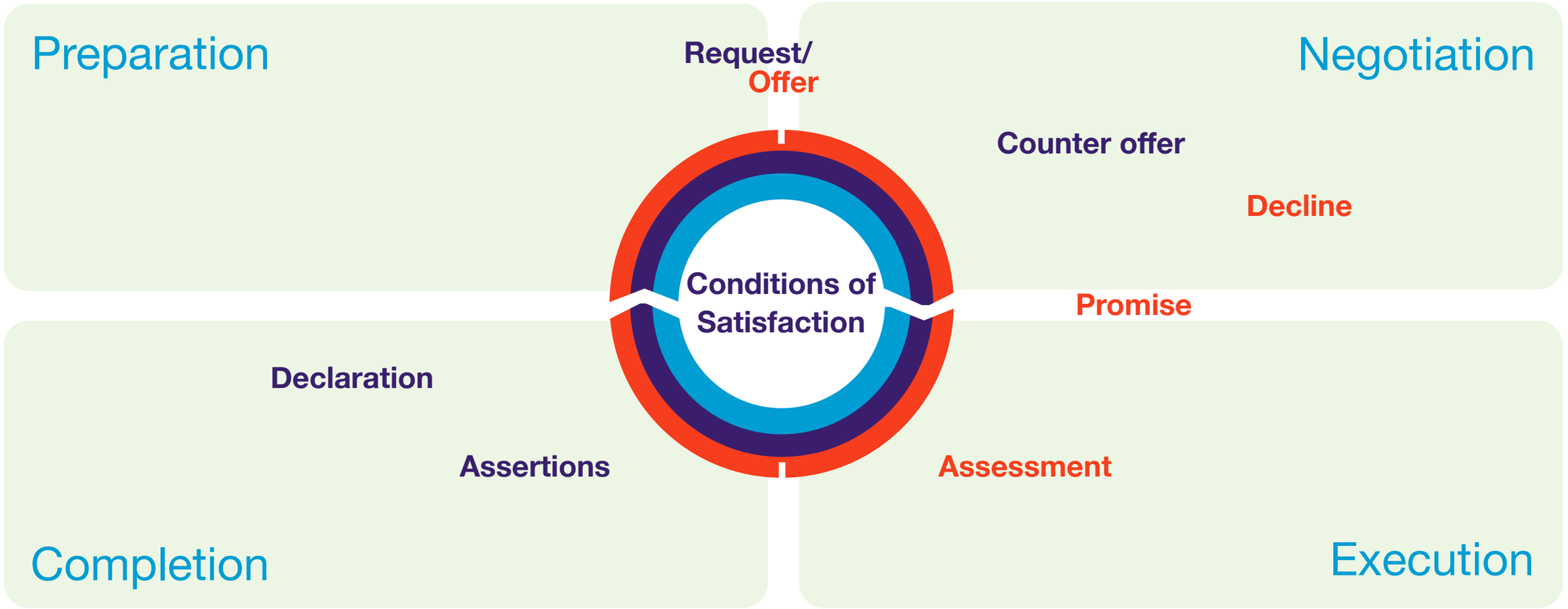
The Conversation for Action

Tools to get things done



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The Conversation for Action

As a tool for diagnosis ...

Preparation

Customer

Performer

Negotiation

… we are not impressed with his performance so far.

…preliminary findings should have been reported well before now.

Completion

Execution

"...falling asleep at work often"

… as she progresses through the work and gains understanding of what is required, she picks up and carries those responsibilities.

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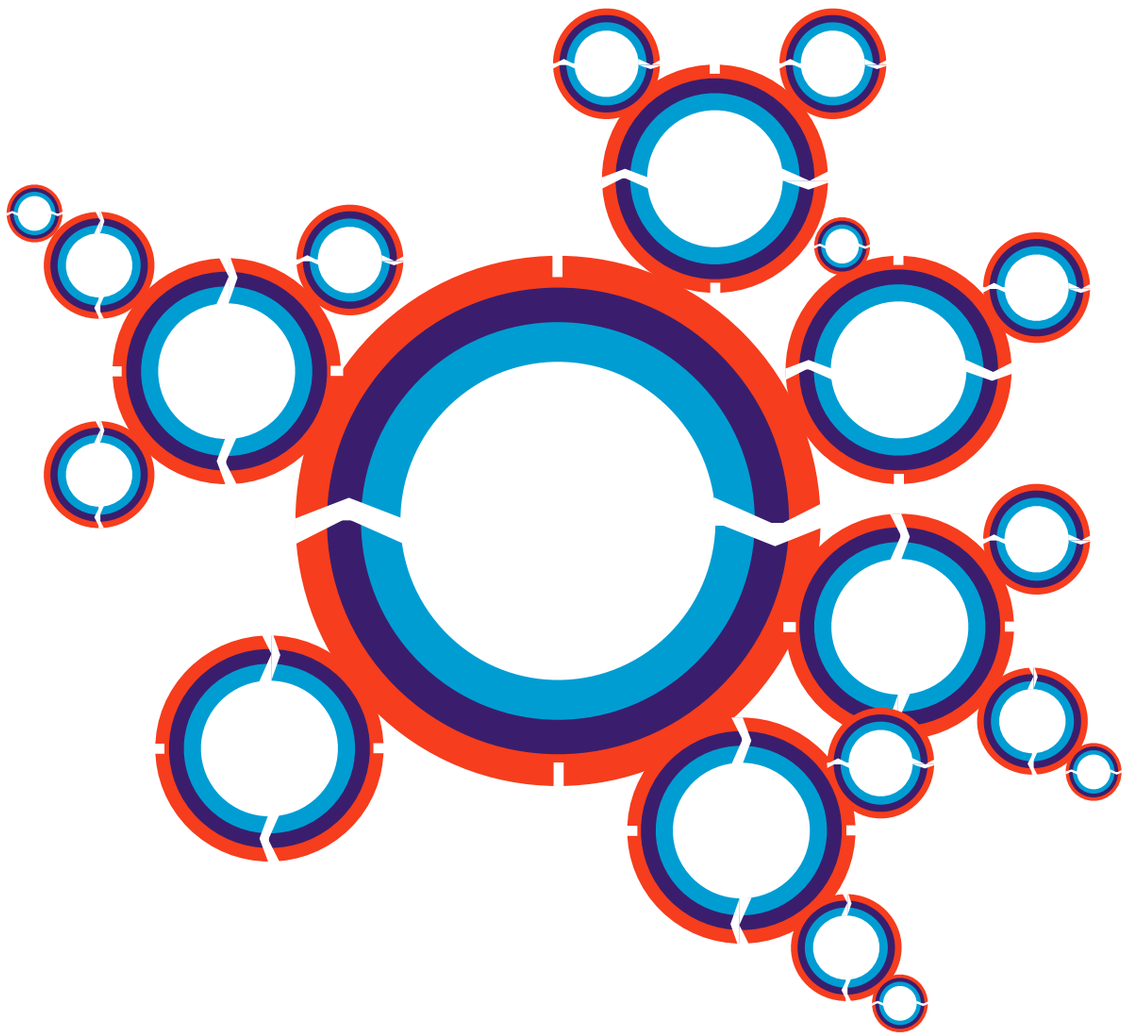
All project management is a fractal network of commitments.



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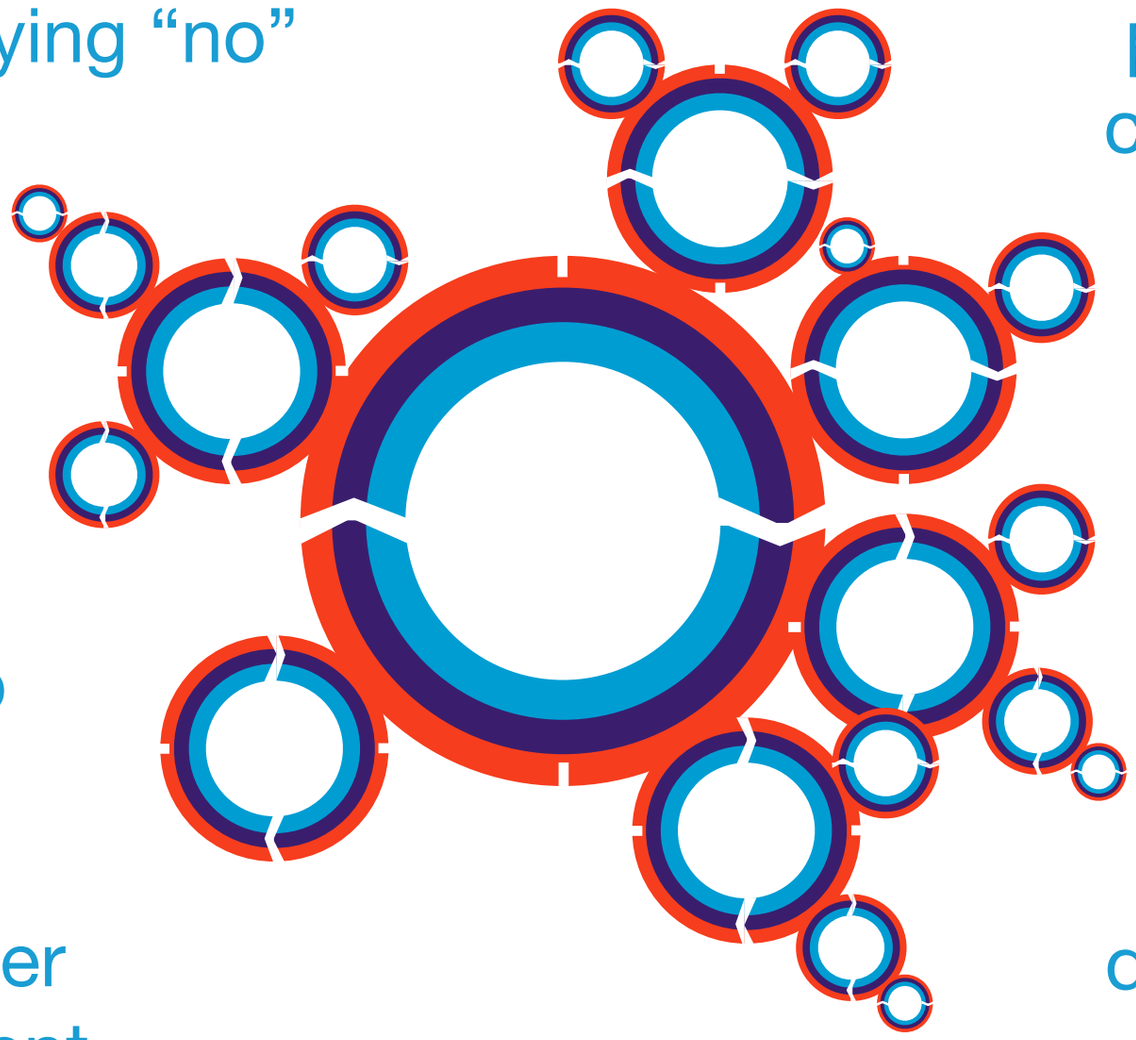
All project management is a fractal network of conversations between two people.

saying “no”

performance conversations

reviewing documentation



delegating

asking for help

setting KPIs

stakeholder management

determining scope

agreeing time frames

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Affect script psychology

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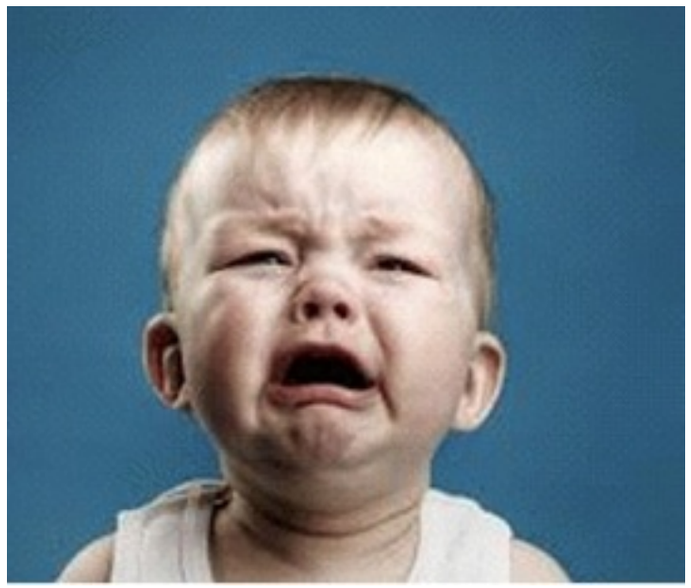
How do we know how we feel?

"I am happy!"

"I am sad!"



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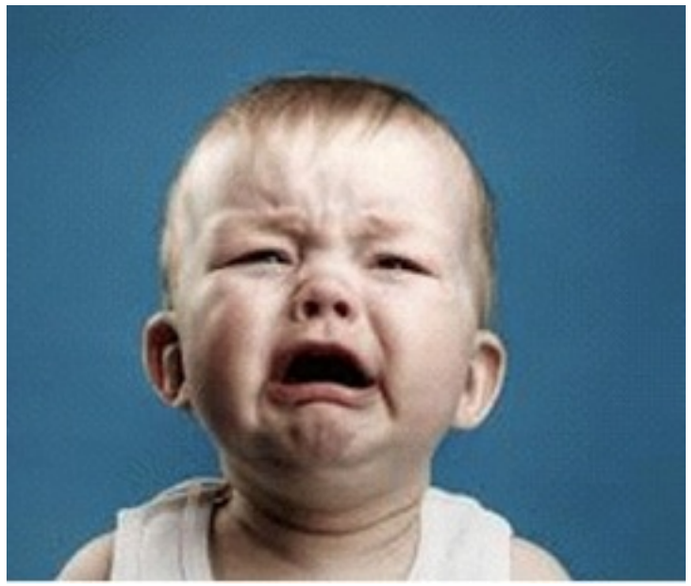
How do we know how we feel?

“I am happy!”



“I am sad!”

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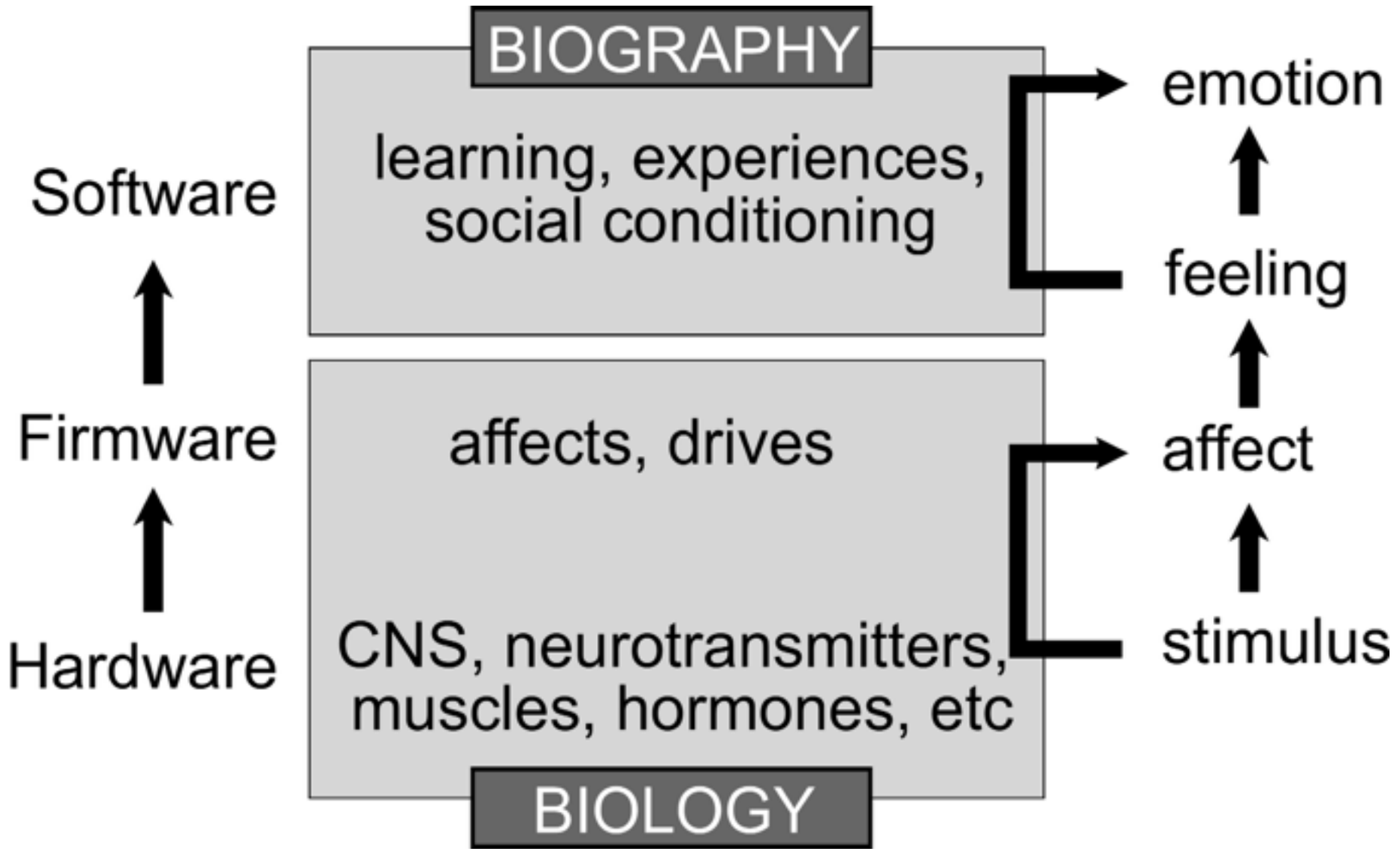
Emotions and motivations



From George, G., “Affect and Emotion in a Restorative School”,
in *The Psychology of Emotion in Restorative Practice*, Kelly & Thorsborne Eds, 2014

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Communication via firmware (affect)

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The power of a “no”

Declining a request is a powerful way of taking care of someone’s concern.

It opens the door to conversations that can create new futures.

Powerful way of earning the trust and confidence of colleagues.

Can be difficult or confronting - for both parties.

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Embodied practices

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The experience of “no”

What did you notice?

About yourself?

About your body?

About your responses to the responses of the others?

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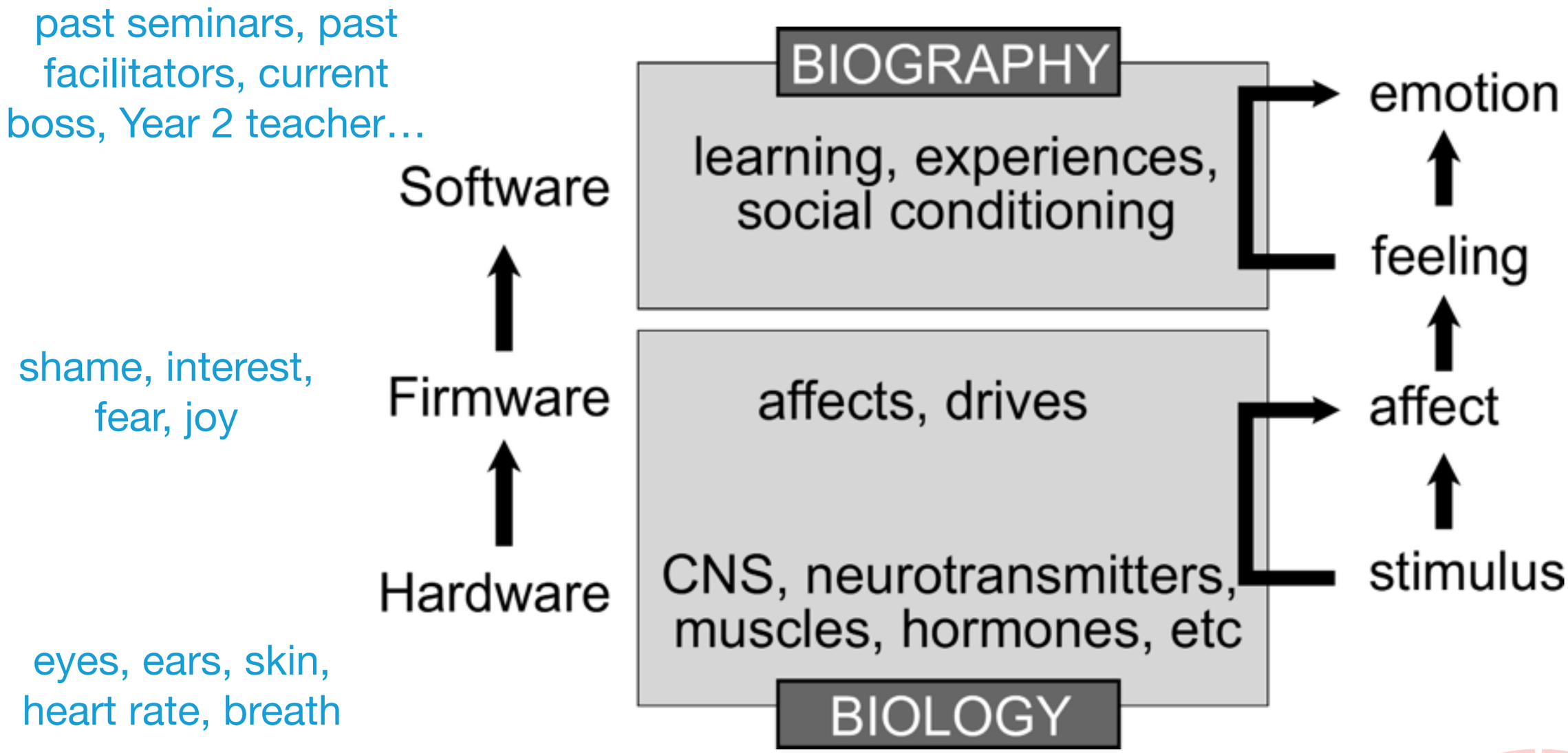
Experiencing affect



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Creating change by …

Creating an awareness of our habitual patterns

Introducing a new way in an environment that is safe for beginners

Practicing the new skills and gradually expanding capability

Example: **Giving or receiving feedback (assessments)**

As with saying no, there are two people involved in the conversation in two bodies with two biographies.

Provide a script for the new way of being

Practice giving and receiving assessment gradually expanding capability

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Delivering skill and will

	Giving feedback	Receiving feedback
Skill	People know how to deliver feedback effectively	People know how to receive feedback effectively so to encourage more feedback
Will	People want to deliver feedback to their colleagues	People genuinely want to receive feedback from their colleagues, and not just the good stuff

http://fistfuloftalent.com/2014/08/stop-teaching-people-give-feedback.html

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Outcomes

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Initial results

1. The change we see over the two days is remarkable

2. The students themselves see the value - “Why aren’t we all taught this stuff in first year?”

3. Students are continuing to apply the framework in their reflections during their industry placements.

4. Ongoing support and coaching would increase stickiness.

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Questions?