

*alchemy of* **RELATIONSHIP**

**10 SAVVY TIPS FOR TRANSFORMATION**



# **COPPING TO THE CHARGE**

*cop to the charge and quickly move forward*



## THE CONCEPT

Copping to the charge isn't an admission that the other person is right about the facts of the matter—it's the recognition of the other person's experience of the matter. Which is always true. When we cop to the charge gracefully and quickly, we free the relationship from the bonds of the past and create a pathway into the future.

## THE DEEP DIVE

We overestimate *the facts of the situation* when it's actually a person's *sense of the situation* that matters most—their experience of the event. This is why clarifying your intentions when another person feels hurt by something you said or did usually doesn't help. It's too late. Even though they intellectually get it now, they've already had the difficult experience. This is why copping to the charge is so powerful. It moves the center of the relationship from its history to the present. And now there's a way to the future. It also releases bound energy.

When people have the courage to let you know that something you said or did offended them, they are offering you a glimpse. Of them! Not just you. Embody their experience and perspective—pass fully over to their standpoint—and it will all make sense. This is when one of the most powerful and exquisite moments arises—just saying, “I get it.”

But there are times when copping to the charge is not the best course of action. One example is when an individual is totally out of their power and unable to stand up for themselves. So in copping to the charge, they get walked over. Another example is when people cop to the charge as an act of passive aggression. And finally, there are times when it's really important to clarify the facts of the matter. Like, “I actually didn't light the barn on fire.”



**THE SHADOW**

*own in yourself what annoys you most in others*

## THE CONCEPT

What you find most annoying about other people is closely related to what you find unacceptable about yourself. This is your shadow—aspects of yourself presently out of sight. When you project your shadow onto the world, it warps your perception of what is really going on. A person predictably experiencing a lot of difficult people is often experiencing their own shadow. Because of this, their circumstance may change frequently and dramatically, but they will continue to experience a world they overshadow. When we recognize an aspect of our shadow for the first time, we bring it into our view where we can understand it, accept it, and transcend it.

## THE DEEP DIVE

What we resist in others often arises from a resonant quality in ourselves. Said more simply, we may be *very much like* what we *despise most* about others. This is one of the most humbling truths.

We often see this in the tumultuous relationship between mother and daughter—or other parent/child dynamics. Not because the parent and child are foreign to each other, but because there is a shared quality that is not fully in view—a quality working its way from shadow to light. And turbulence is how it makes itself known—how it gets noticed.

One of the ways to know what you are like is to simply observe your statements about *what you are not*. I am not a cat person. I am not a dog person. I am not a party person. If you were *not any of these things*, you wouldn't make the proclamation—there wouldn't be enough resonance for it to come up.

This is a difficult insight, but it is incredibly empowering. By embracing our shadow—and our shared quality in others—we discover more of our power. The gift that has been hidden in our shadow is finally illuminated. What threw us before doesn't throw us anymore. But more importantly, the quality when brought into light expresses in ways that serve both others and us.



# THE NEMESIS

*recognize nemeses as allies*

## THE CONCEPT

Every image has a figure and ground. The ground helps define the figure. Your nemeses help you understand who you are—they are a ground that helps define you. A nemesis illuminates all your edges—the places you feel unsure, uncomfortable, or vulnerable. A greater understanding and embrace of your edges expands your ring of awareness and allows you to thrive in an even larger domain.

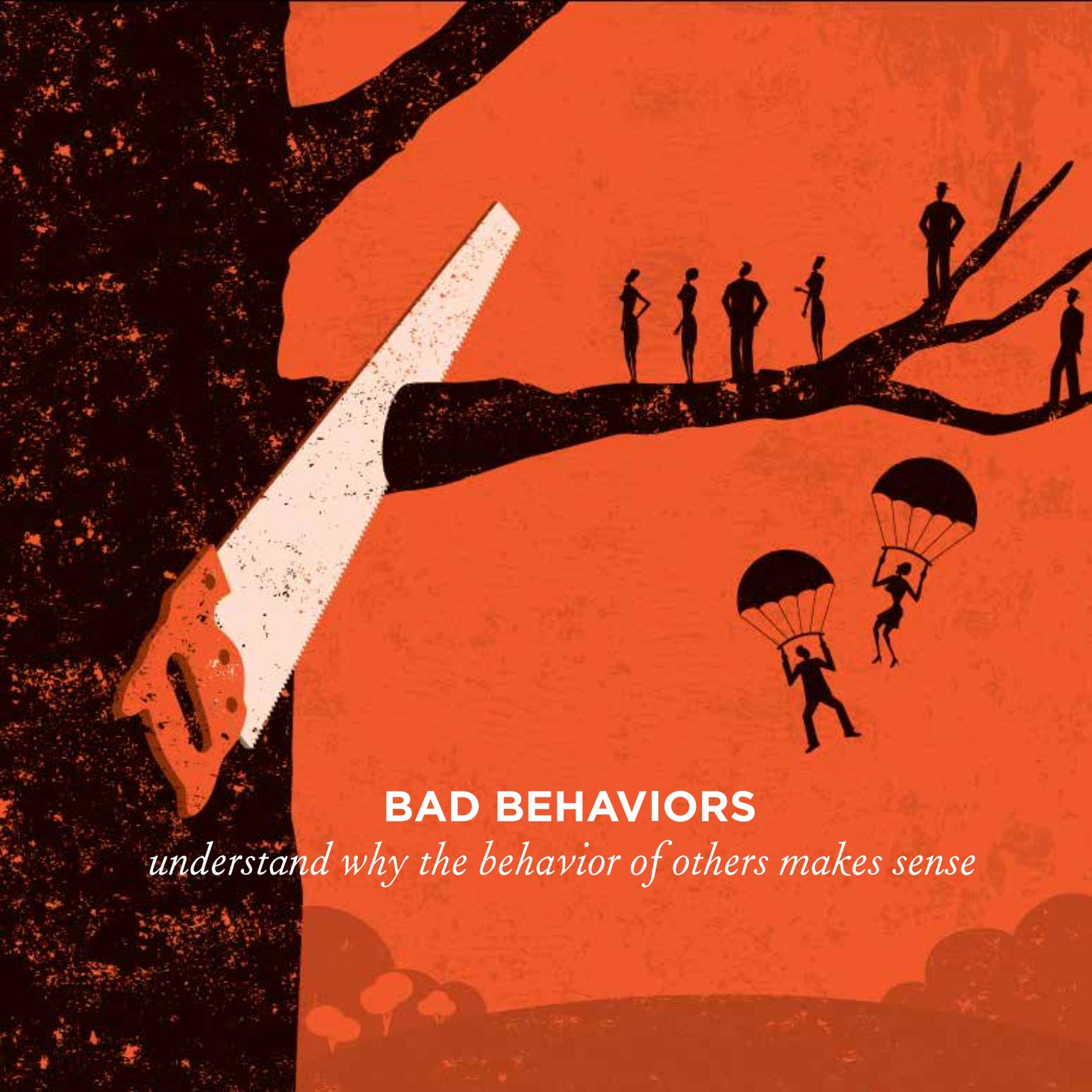
## THE DEEP DIVE

We can get so good at designing increasingly comfortable conditions that we design the grit out of our lives. Nemeses are the grit—they are a refining, purifying force that allies rarely provide.

Instead of purging difficult people, have a chuckle and step *toward them*. There's something to learn that they are courageously offering to teach. If they wanted the easy path, they would just withdraw and let you be on your way.

But there is a difference between a nemesis and people who are simply toxic. One of the ways to tell the difference is that a nemesis feels like they are fully in their power. Toxic relationships often dilute and muddle the power of both parties.

It's appropriate to design *some* difficult people *out of your life* and design *others* more *into your life*. But it's important to know when to do the one, and when to do the other.



## **BAD BEHAVIORS**

*understand why the behavior of others makes sense*

## THE CONCEPT

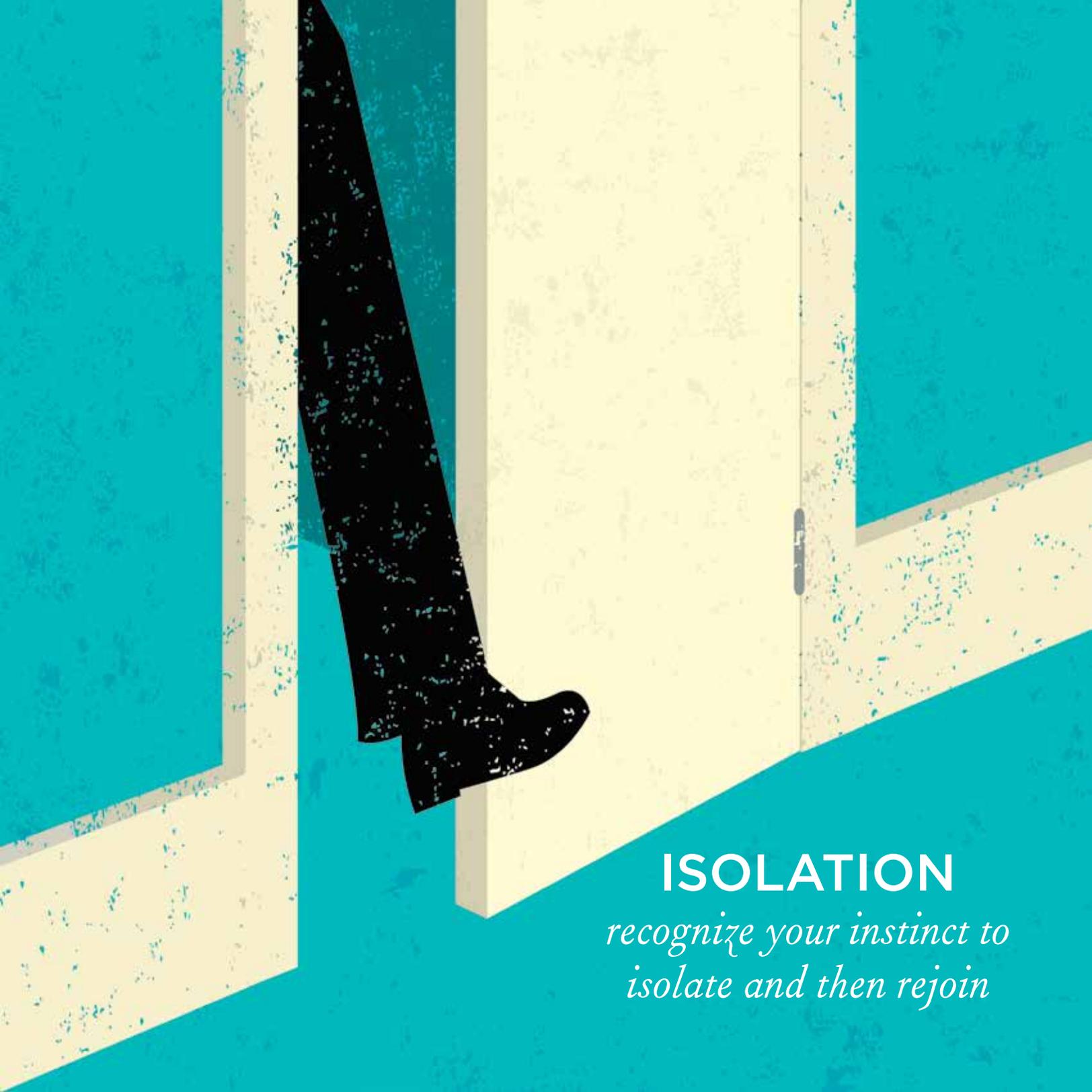
Walking in another's shoes is more than just imagining what it would be like to be them. It's the total surrender of ego to fully become *as they are* for a moment. From this space, everything about their life makes sense—their decisions, their interactions with others, and their vulnerabilities. Occupying this space, even for a brief time, creates a lasting bridge that allows you to design a richer, more informed space in between.

## THE DEEP DIVE

You've probably never gotten up in the morning and decided for *that day* to make the worst decisions possible. And you are not alone—other people don't do this either. So when you “can't believe someone did something,” it's a failure on your part to understand context. It doesn't mean what they did was right—it means you are not able to understand why *what they did* makes sense.

This insight is incredibly helpful because we are more cautious about assigning ill intent to the “crazy behavior” of others. It's not about you. It's about the best decision someone else can make in the moment. And once we have this wisdom, we are in the best position to help design the conditions for others to make better decisions.

This is also a powerful insight about the “crazy things” we do ourselves. We simply don't do things that don't make sense—we do things that make sense in a given moment from a limited frame of reference. Unless we understand this, we will be victims of shifting context—a disaster waiting to happen.



## ISOLATION

*recognize your instinct to  
isolate and then rejoin*

## THE CONCEPT

When a relationship gets difficult, we may draw back and not only isolate ourselves from the other person, but from everything else around us. This disconnects us from all of our resources and relationships. It's important to step into the most difficult relationships and understand the issue is usually more about how people come together than it is about either of them individually.

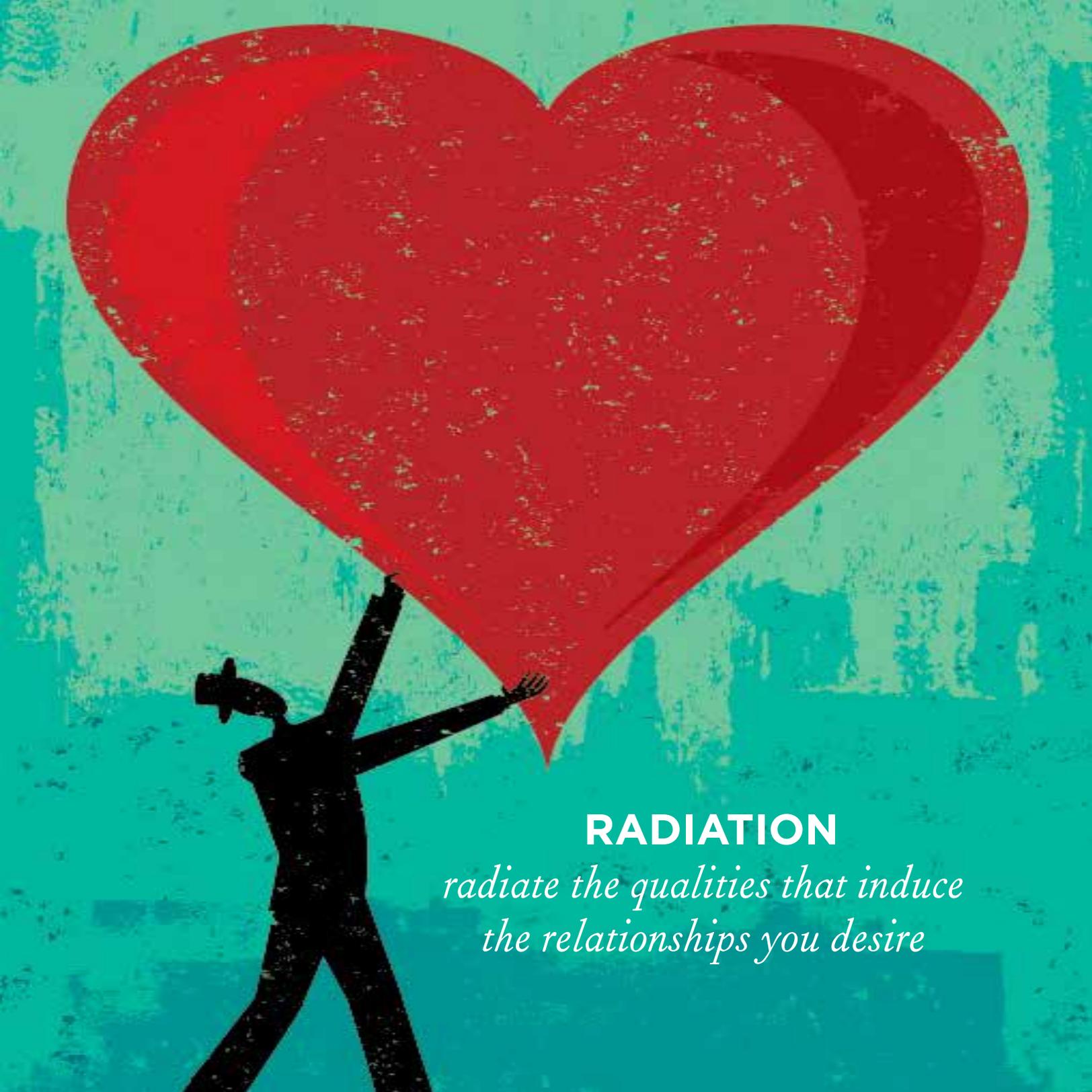
## THE DEEP DIVE

There are two fundamental movements in the world—joining and withdrawing. Love and fear. Unifying and separating. We are either becoming more a part of things, or stepping out.

When relationships get the most difficult, we often move into fear and step back too soon. This drawing back not only creates distance from the uncomfortable relationship, but distance from *all of our relationships*. We partially isolate ourselves from the world and step out of the center of action.

Sometimes the best way to make it better is to step in more—not less. Get a closer view. Work in a more concentrated way. But stepping more into a difficult relationship doesn't mean the relationship must endure. We may show up just to design the best ending.

When we isolate ourselves, we are cut off from a story in which we now have very little to say about its end. And we often experience the fracturing that inevitably comes from the worst kind of demise.

A silhouette of a person wearing a hat, standing with arms raised and holding a large, vibrant red heart. The background is a textured teal color. The heart is the central focus, and the person's silhouette is positioned in the lower-left corner, reaching up towards the heart.

## **RADIATION**

*radiate the qualities that induce  
the relationships you desire*

## THE CONCEPT

Any emotion you generate creates an in-kind response in everything around you—to some extent, you induce the world you experience. When we are non-judgmental, appreciative, and openhearted, we connect with others quickly and cleanly. People re-experience appreciative moments in their history by experiencing us. But when we are judgmental or fearful, we induce an in-kind response connecting people to the most difficult moments in their history.

## THE DEEP DIVE

The world we experience is as much about *us* as it is about *the world*. So two people can have radically different experiences in nearly identical circumstances. What presents to us is highly related to what *we present*.

We are always radiating our nature—there's no pretending. No persona. No masks. No front. Who we are tickles the cosmic web, and what arises is always in-kind to what we send out.

All of us have a background radiation and a foreground radiation. Our background radiation emanates from the sum of our life. It's everything we've been. Our foreground radiation emanates from what's going on right now—what's in the present. Our background radiation changes slowly over time. Our foreground radiation can change in a blink. What people experience is a mix of both.



## **BOUNDARIES**

*design to make the best way in between*

## THE CONCEPT

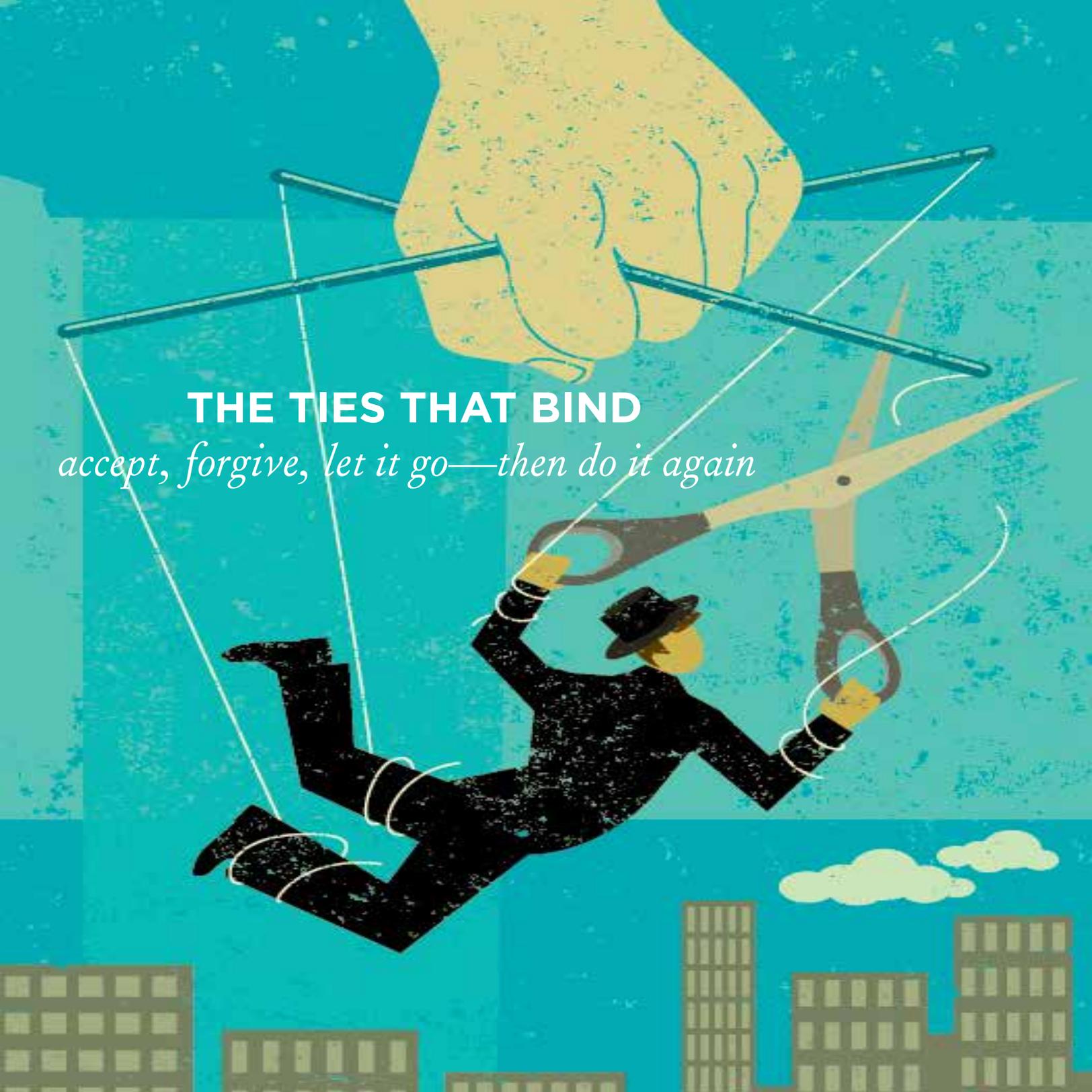
In their more limited form, boundaries are for keeping things in and keeping things out. In their more expansive form, boundaries are the co-creative space in between you and another. A well-designed boundary creates a space in between, where just the right amount of you meets just the right amount of the other. A poorly designed boundary may keep too much out, or let too much in.

## THE DEEP DIVE

Our first experience of boundaries is for protection—and the way we apprehend *what we are* versus *what the other is*. It's how we discover ourselves in the midst of the overwhelming mix of the world. And how we sense safety for a time.

But boundaries are not only for differentiation, they can also be the bridge between the world and us. Our best approach to the world. And unless we elevate our boundaries beyond *all or nothing*, our interface is not sophisticated enough to incorporate a super-rich mix. We can't draw from enough stuff.

Ultimately, we progress from setting low-level boundaries to designing the best spaces in between things. And we start to create the best way for our *reaching out to the world* and for the world's *reaching out to us*.

An illustration on a teal background. At the top, a large yellow hand holds two thin metal rods. White strings are attached to these rods and extend downwards to a black marionette figure. The marionette is wearing a black top hat and is holding a pair of large, golden scissors. The marionette is positioned as if it is about to cut the strings. At the bottom of the image, there is a silhouette of a city skyline with several buildings of varying heights and a few white clouds in the sky.

**THE TIES THAT BIND**

*accept, forgive, let it go—then do it again*

## THE CONCEPT

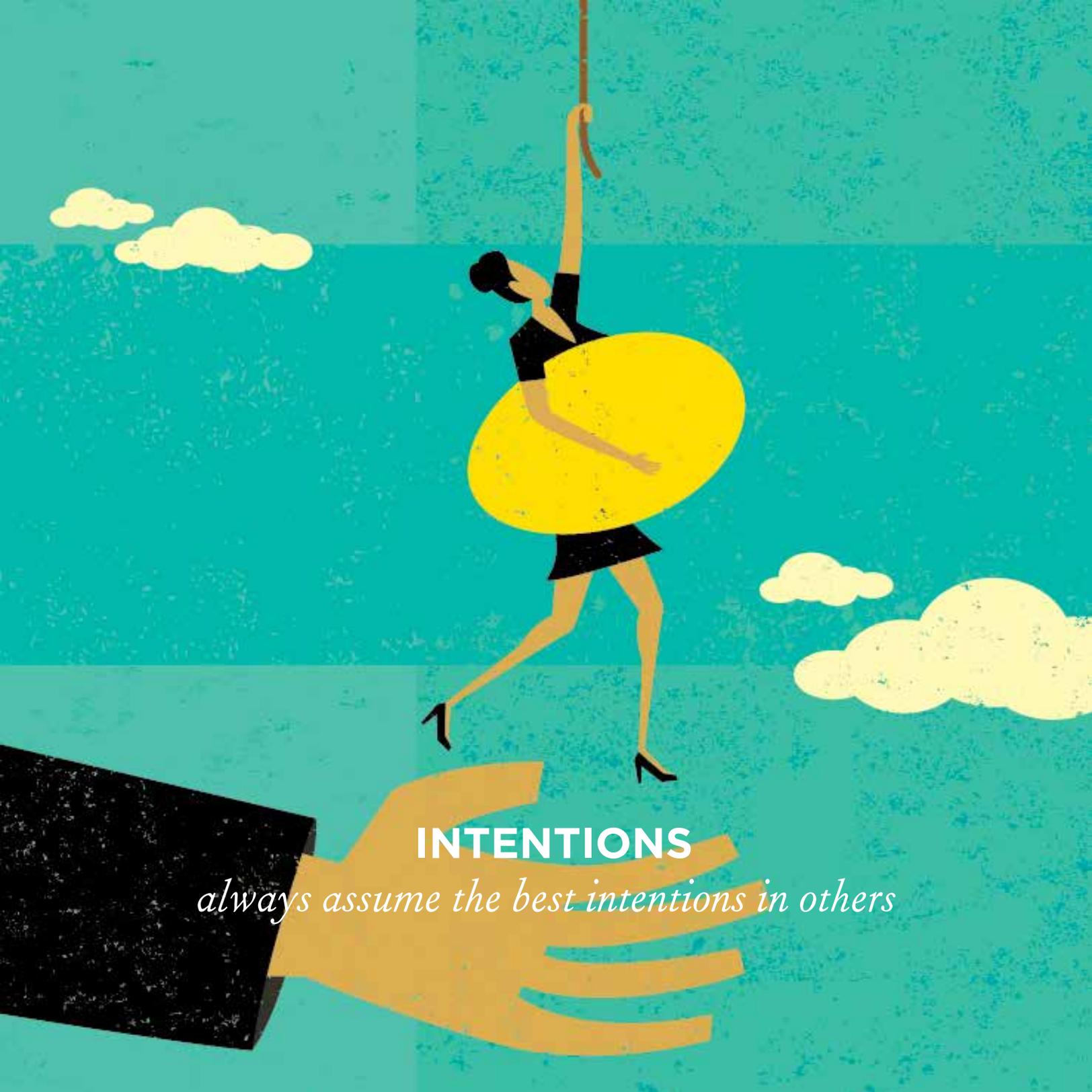
What we have not forgiven holds a piece of us in bondage. We are not only stuck in our history, but what is not forgiven siphons resources from the present and exhausts them in our past. If remembering an event still produces a negative emotional response, we are still held hostage. As we become increasingly forgiving, we become increasingly powerful.

## THE DEEP DIVE

The trauma of our past provides the perfect architecture to explain what's not working in our present. So we may cling to our most difficult events as a guidebook explaining some misery in which we find ourselves now.

But in doing this, we hand over *our present* to *our history*. And what is showing up for us in the present are fragments of our whole self. So we work with bits and pieces of our brilliance, but leave lots behind.

Regret, guilt, resentment, and remorse are the ties that bind. Until we understand that everything in our history is working to make way for our future, we remain in bondage.



## **INTENTIONS**

*always assume the best intentions in others*

## THE CONCEPT

Assuming others are well intentioned makes us less, not more, vulnerable. It keeps possibilities for relationship open that will not be if we assume the worst. Much of the dysfunction in relationship has its genesis in our assumptions about the intention driving behavior, not the uncomfortable or confusing behavior itself. By assuming the best, we can address others' behavior from a neutral posture and help make the way for a more constructive relationship.

## THE DEEP DIVE

Ideally, we want to become *more trusting* and *less naïve*. Assuming the best intentions in others removes the projections arising from misplaced *mistrust*. From this neutral posture, we have more acute perception and a quicker response to authentic threat.

In contrast, a perpetual posture of mistrust muddles our perception. Our paranoia links things that are disconnected and assumes threat where there is none. We may even assume anything foreign or ambiguous is out to get us.

Assuming the best intentions in others creates an open platform for relationship. From this place we simply respond in a way that makes the most sense based on what we are experiencing right now.



# ENDINGS

*design good endings*

## THE CONCEPT

How we end relationships is as important as how we begin them—they deserve a good birth *and* a good death. Often we let relationships atrophy until they become so toxic they painfully fracture. And we carry the qualities of the failed relationship into our current and future relationships. A good ending fully accepts the other person, appreciates them for who they are, and recognizes that it's time for each party to move on and newly create with others.

## THE DEEP DIVE

We are often more intentional about *starting things well* than *ending things well*. This is because we have more comfort with birth than death. But good endings make the space for good beginnings—and free up the fundamental resources required to foster new creation.

Relationships are sacred, and we are accountable to fully show up all the way to the end. Withdrawing and letting the relationship atrophy and fracture is akin to being *missing in action*. And we end up missing out on the part that may matter most.

# NOTES





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