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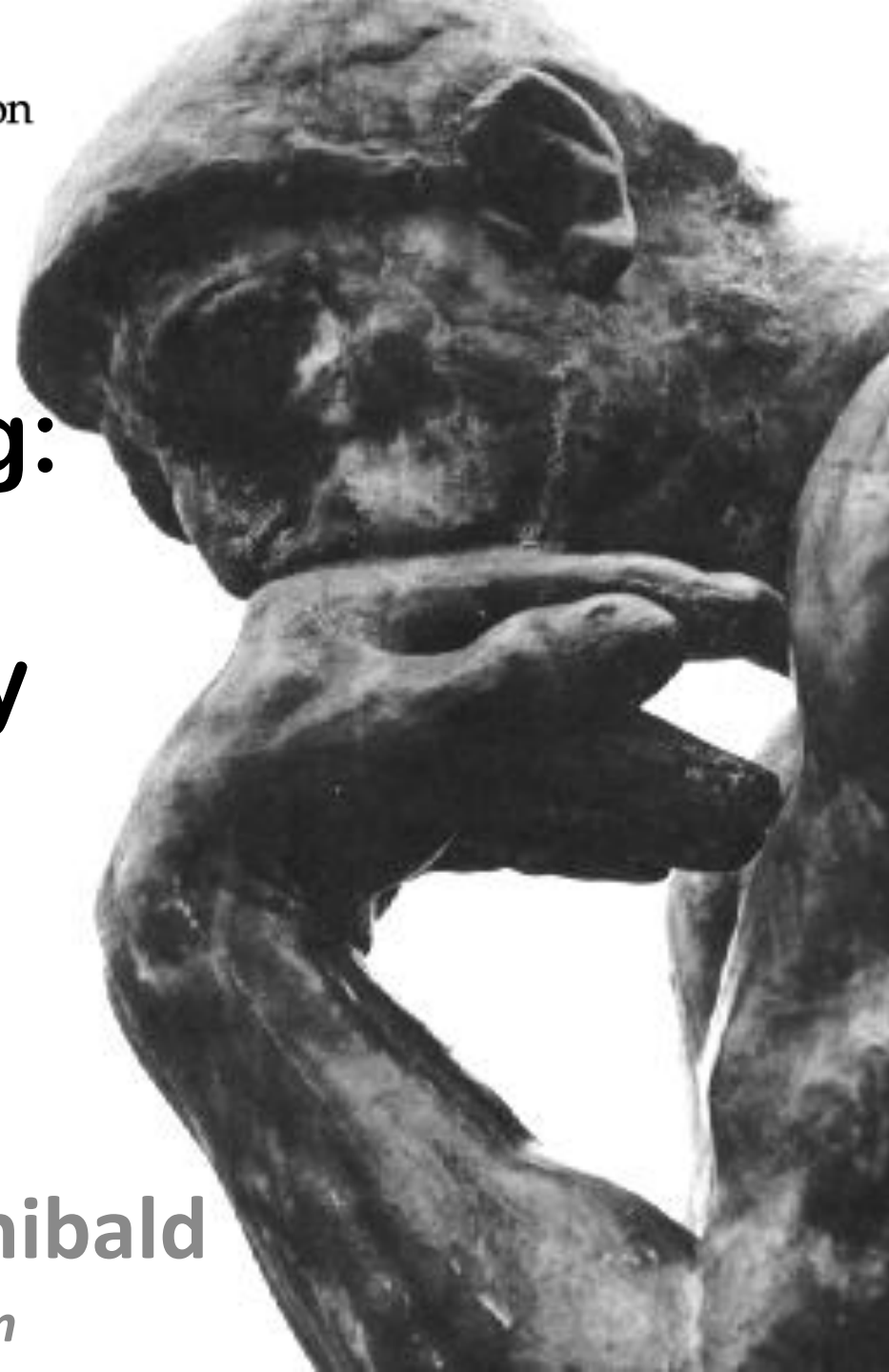
Promoting Evaluative Thinking: A key ingredient in evaluation capacity

Presentation to the AEA

Thursday, October 25th, 2012

Jane Buckley & Tom Archibald

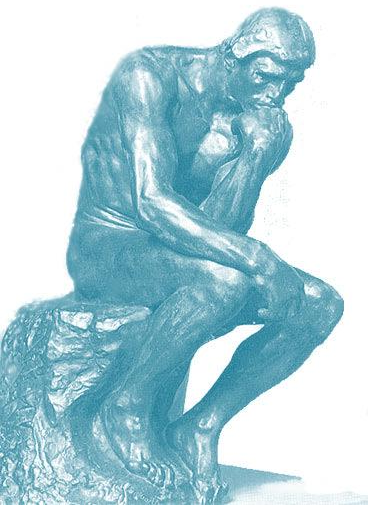
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introductions



defining evaluative thinking



evaluative thinking is...*mentioned*:

“How do we build the capacity of individuals, teams, and organizations to think evaluatively and engage in evaluation practice?”

- Hallie Preskill (2008)

“Evaluative thinking is not just limited to evaluation projects...it’s an analytical way of thinking that infuses everything that goes on.”

- Michael Patton (2005)

“The concept of free-range evaluation captures the ultimate outcome of ECB: evaluative thinking that lives unfettered in an organization.”

- Jean King (2007)

“Willingness to ask: ‘How do we know what we think we know?’”

- Michael Patton (2005)

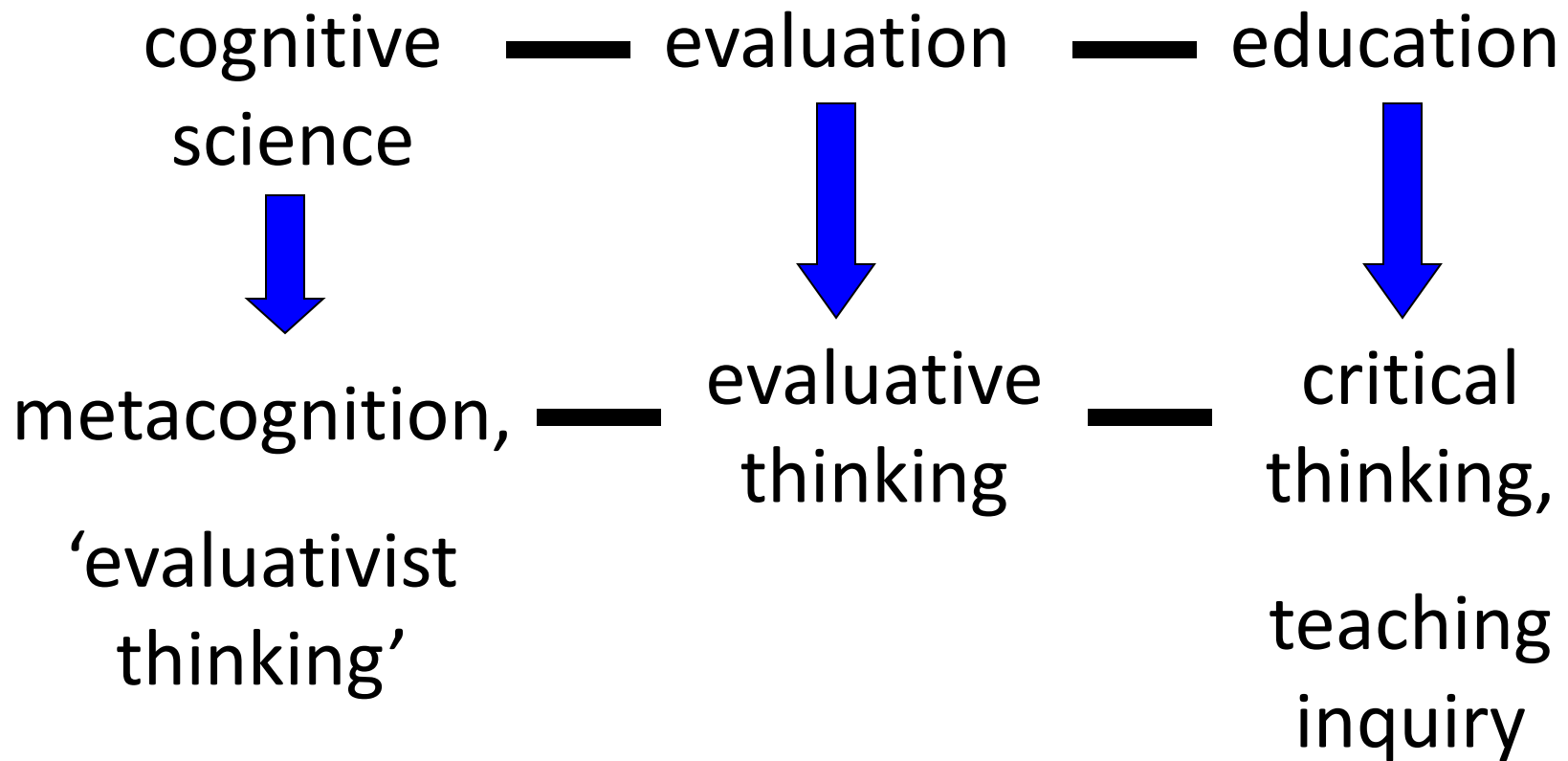
“Reminding all of us to think evaluatively!”

- Jim Rugh (n.d.)

...but not

succinctly defined

defining evaluative thinking



Thinking Skills

- Questioning
- Reflection
- Decision Making
- Strategizing
- Identifying Assumptions

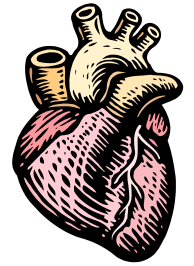
Evaluative Attitudes

- Desire for the truth
- Belief in the value of evaluation
- Belief in the value of evidence
- Inquisitiveness
- Skepticism



Evaluative Thinking is...

a cognitive **process**, motivated by inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, which involves:



- (1) identifying assumptions,
- (2) posing thoughtful questions,
- (3) pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective taking, and
- (4) making informed decisions in preparation for action.



indicators of evaluative thinking

Posing
Thoughtful
Questions

Describing and
Illustrating
Thinking

Actively
Pursuing Deeper
Understanding

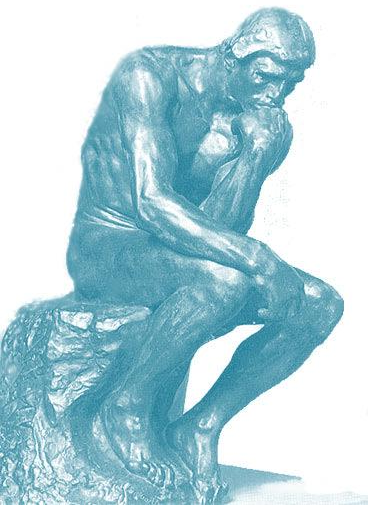
Expressing Belief
in the Value of
Evaluation

Seeking
Alternatives

Identifying
Assumptions



facilitating evaluative thinking



when to begin:

WAIT

Change our
organization's
culture?

Teach people
how to think?

START

where to begin:

1. Look to the literature on critical thinking
2. Establish guiding principles for facilitating evaluative thinking
3. Consider the context
4. Apply principles in a contextually appropriate way

START

Four Guiding Principles:

I. Evaluative thinking is not a born-in skill; it must be intentionally practiced, and does not depend on a certain educational background (Brookfield, 2012; Ericsson, 1994; Perkins, 1986)

II. Evaluative thinking must be applied and practiced in multiple contexts alongside peers and colleagues (Bransford et. al., 1999; Brookfield, 2012; Halpern, 1998; Simon 1996)

III. Evaluative thinkers must be aware of—and work to overcome—assumptions and belief preservation (Brookfield, 2012; Lord et. al., 1979)

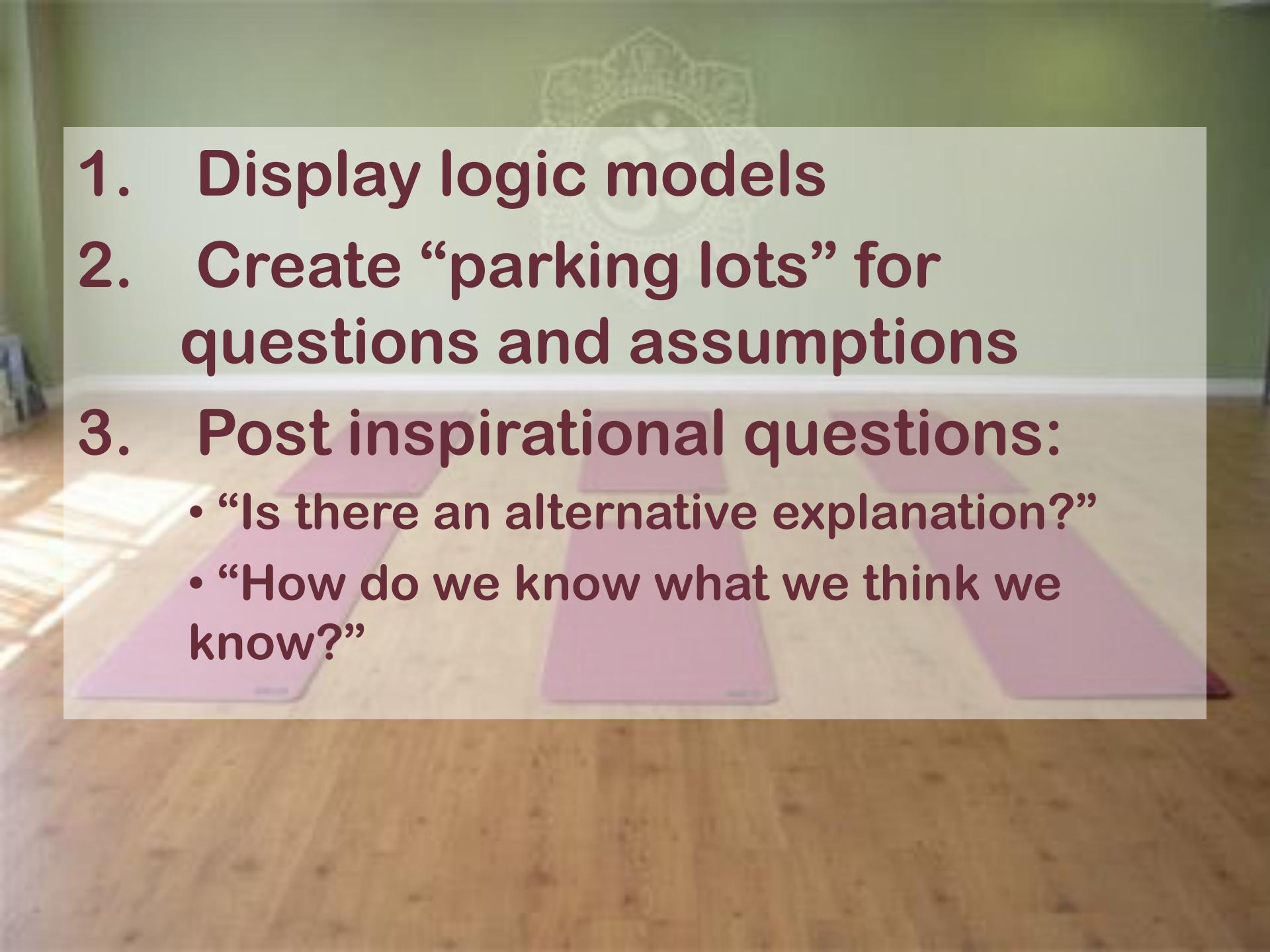
IV. Learning to think evaluatively (and practicing ET) must be intrinsically motivated and experienced incrementally (Bransford et.al., 1999; Brookfield, 2012; Piaget, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978)

practical strategies





**create an intentional evaluative
thinking learning environment**

- 
1. Display logic models
 2. Create “parking lots” for questions and assumptions
 3. Post inspirational questions:
 - “Is there an alternative explanation?”
 - “How do we know what we think we know?”

establish ET practice-focused
discussions and/or meetings



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- The background of the slide is a photograph of a large, modern conference room. A long, light-colored wooden conference table is the central feature, surrounded by grey office chairs. Several blue water bottles and papers are placed on the table. The room has large windows with white blinds and brick pillars. Potted plants are visible in the corners. The text is overlaid on this image in a dark green color.
1. “Mine” your model
 2. Use opening questions (Brookfield, 2012)
 - a. What assumptions are we working under?
 - b. How can we check our assumptions for accuracy?
 - c. What alternative perspectives or explanations might we use?
 3. Conduct a media critique (Powell, 2010)
 4. Engage in critical debate (*neutral but relevant topic*)

A stage with red curtains and spotlights. The stage is set with a wooden floor and a white archway. Four spotlights are on the floor, casting light on the stage. The red curtains are drawn back, revealing the text.

**use role-play
when thinking
about
evaluation
strategies**

A stage with red curtains and spotlights. The stage floor is wooden, and there are four spotlights on the floor. The curtains are red and have tassels. The background is a dark wall.

1. Scenario analysis

(Brookfield, 2012)

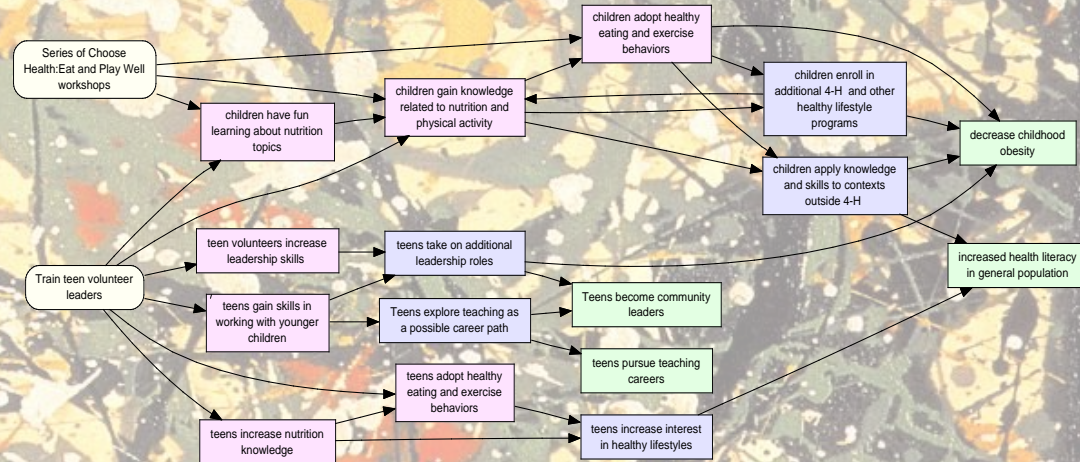
2. Thinking hats (De Bono, 1999)

3. Evaluation simulation



diagram or illustrate thinking when
communicating with colleagues

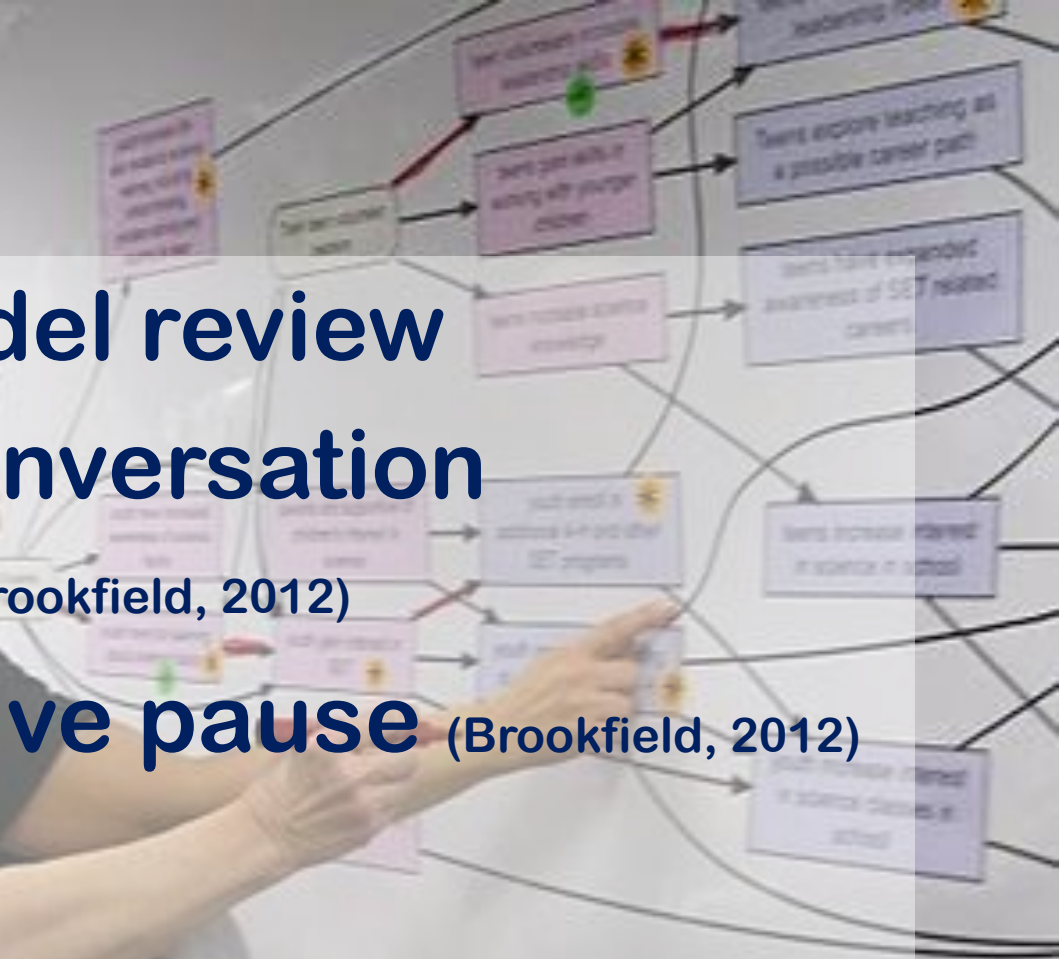
1. Build logic and pathway models



2. Diagram program history

3. Create a system, context or organization diagram

1. Logic model review
2. Critical conversation protocol (Brookfield, 2012)
3. Appreciative pause (Brookfield, 2012)



**establish time and space to
explore intrinsically motivated
evaluation questions both
formally and informally**

**don't leave
evaluation
exclusively to the
evaluator(s)!**



considerations at the organization level:

- Formal support in the form of policy
- Allocation of time and resources
- Buy-in and participation at all levels of the organization's hierarchy
- Start with evaluative thinking champions—work toward a tipping point



thank
you!

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