

Polarity Thinking

Sue Brooks, M.A., L.P.C.

Polarities

- Opposites

Polarity Thinking

- Skill of managing the *flow* between the opposites

~~Polarization~~

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.

Einstein

We can't solve problems by using the same level of thinking we used when we created them.

Developmental Levels of Thinking

- Sense perception – basic brain processing
- Magical association – prejudice & superstition; symbols
- Rules & roles – actions have consequences; concrete operations
- Problem solving – logic, linear, empirical
- Deductive reasoning & abstracts
 - Polarity thinking – dialectical epistemology (Hegel, 1770-1831)

Thermodynamics

Pistons – expansion & contraction moves engine parts



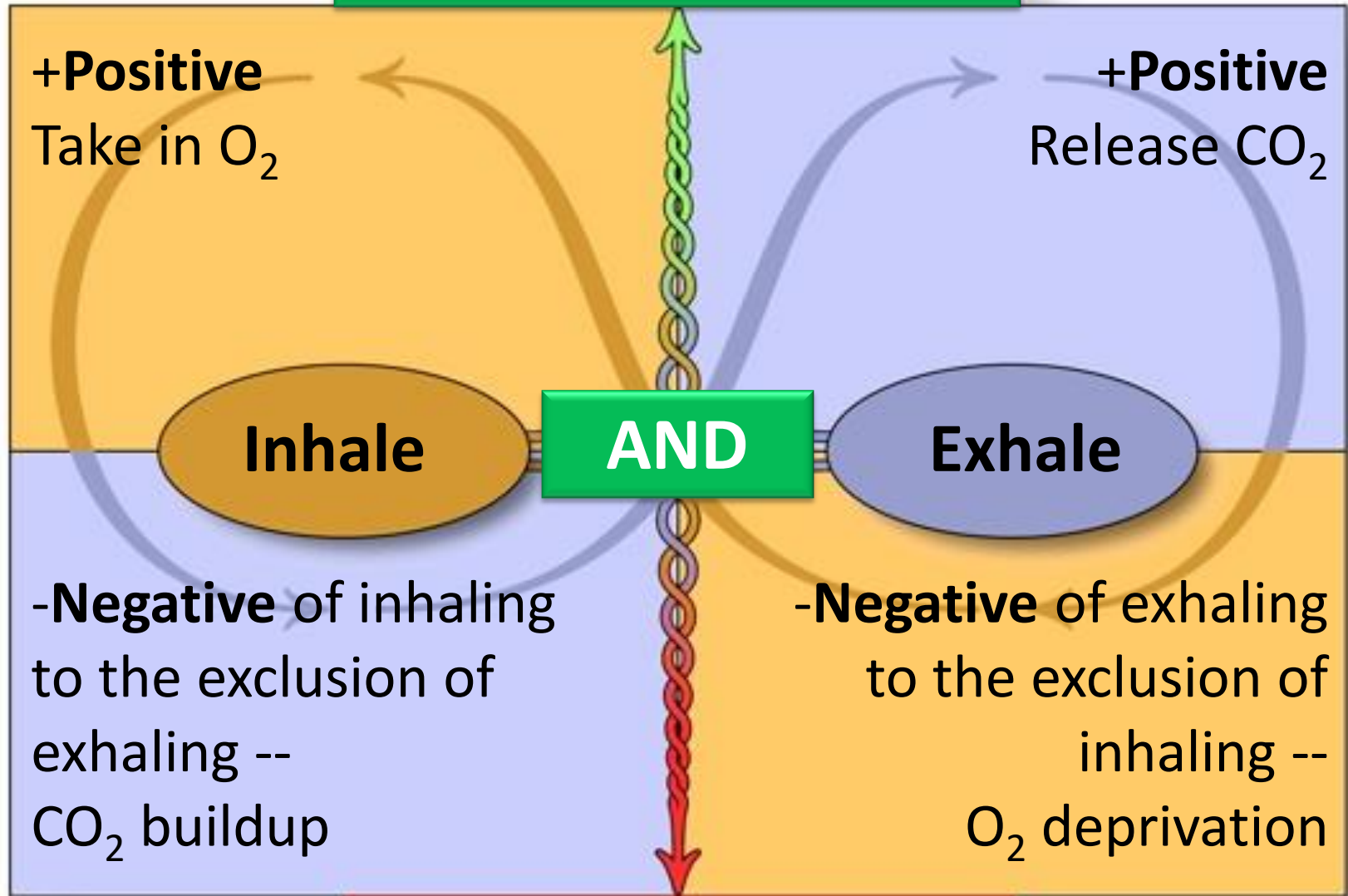
Physiology

Breathing – inhalation & exhalation
moves lungs



Polarity Management® Map

Goal: Sustain Life



Polarities

“Both” / “And”

- Unsolvable
- Indestructible
- Unavoidable
- No middle ground or gray area
 - “compromise fallacy”
- Manageable
 - flow, dynamic
- Keeps level playing field
- Interdependent
 - arise simultaneously and mutually
 - need each other over time
- Synergistic
 - combined wisdom from multiple perspectives
 - greater than the sum of the parts
- Relational & inclusive
 - requires cooperation

Problem Solving

“Either” / “Or”

- Predictive
 - logical consequences; cause & effect
- If we solve the problem, we get rewarded
 - achievement & advancement
- Eliminates wrong answers
- We learn indirectly that when we are right, those who disagree are wrong
 - But can bring about power struggles & unhealthy hierarchies
- May never find the right answer

Examples of Polarities

Problem solving & Polarity thinking

Competing & Collaborating

Individual & Team

Consistency & Flexibility

Reflection & Action

Candor & Tact

Family & Work

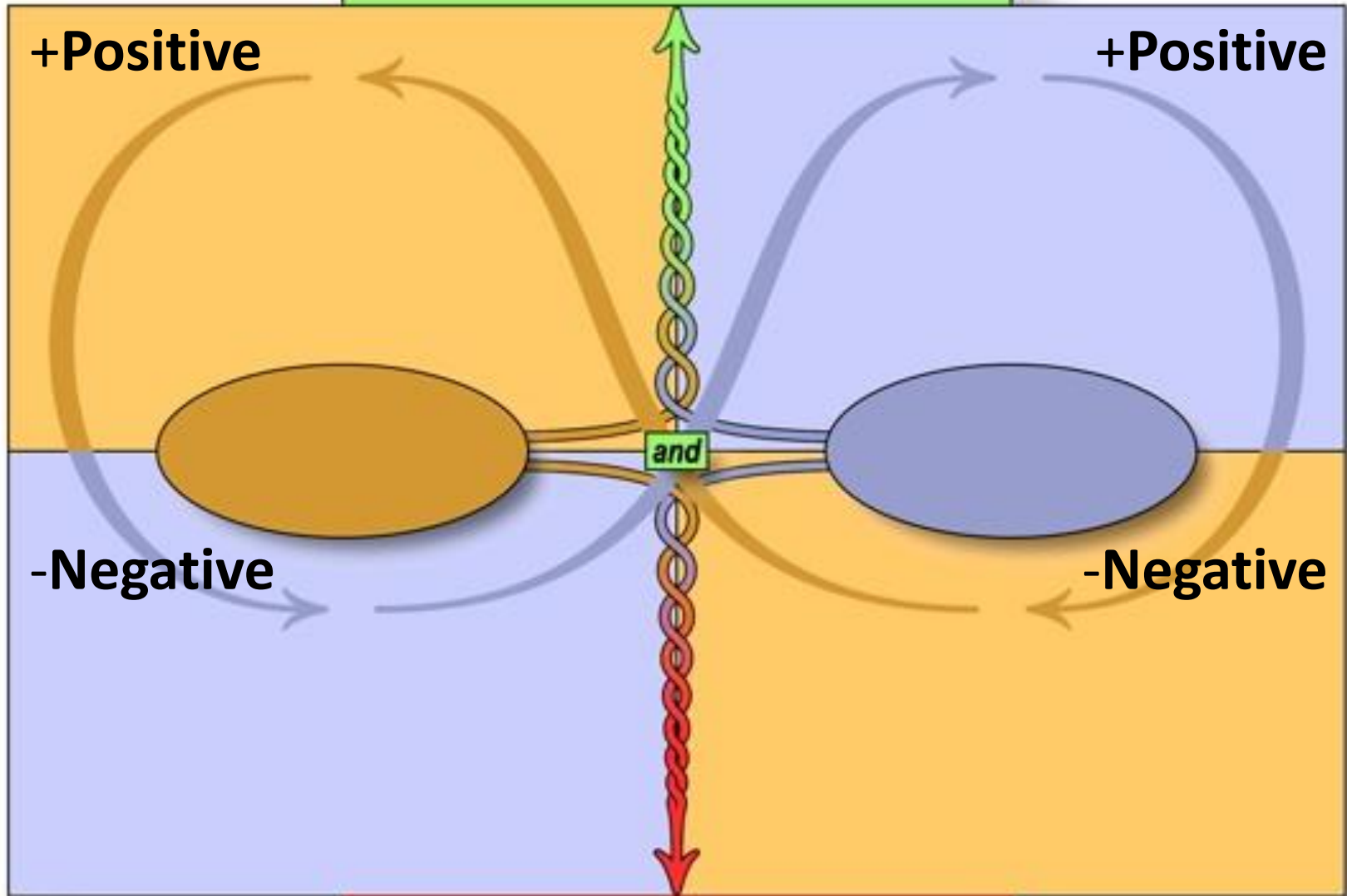
Individual & Family

Entropy & Evolution

Healthy Family

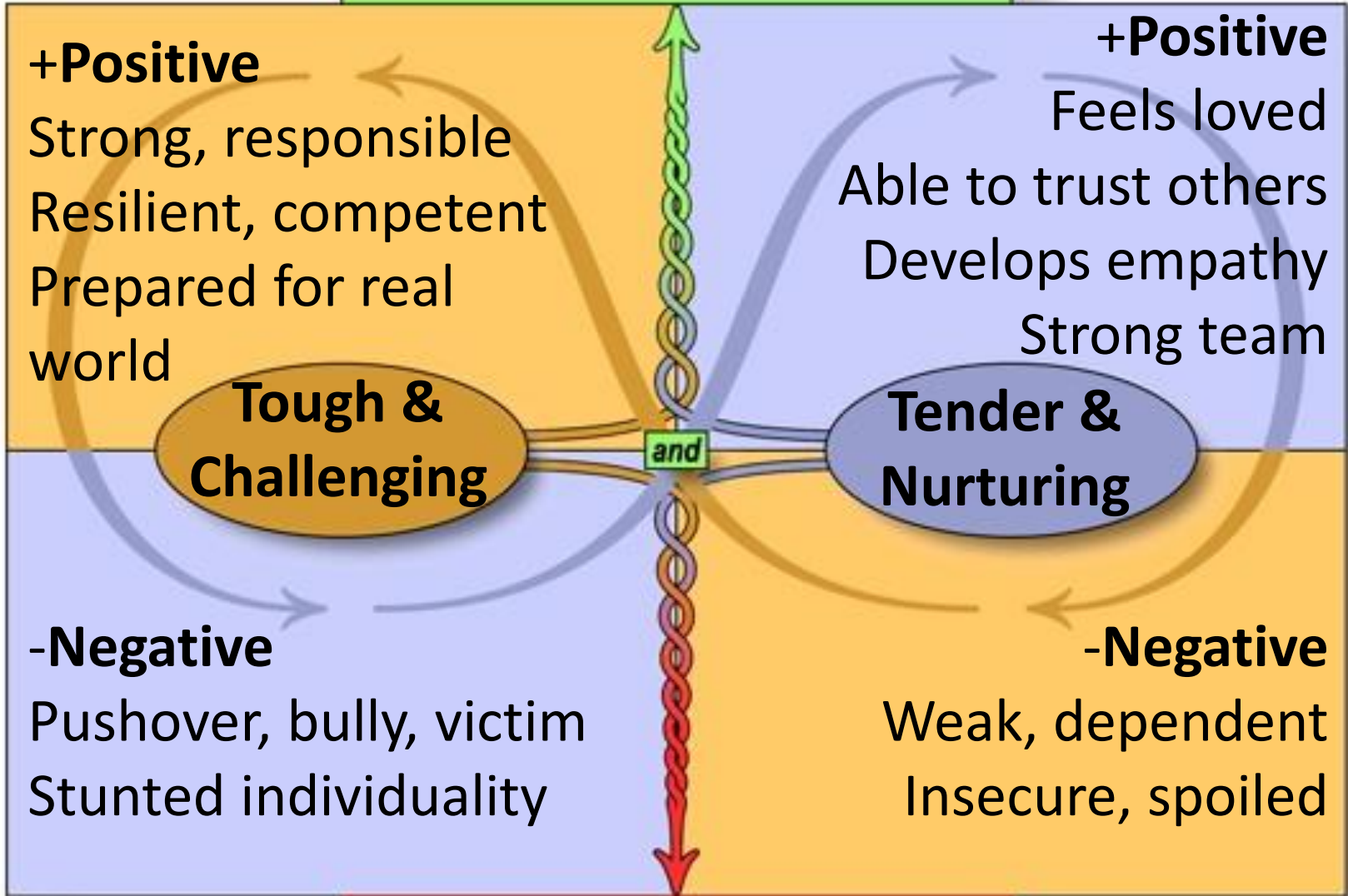
Polarity Management® Map

Goal – North Pole



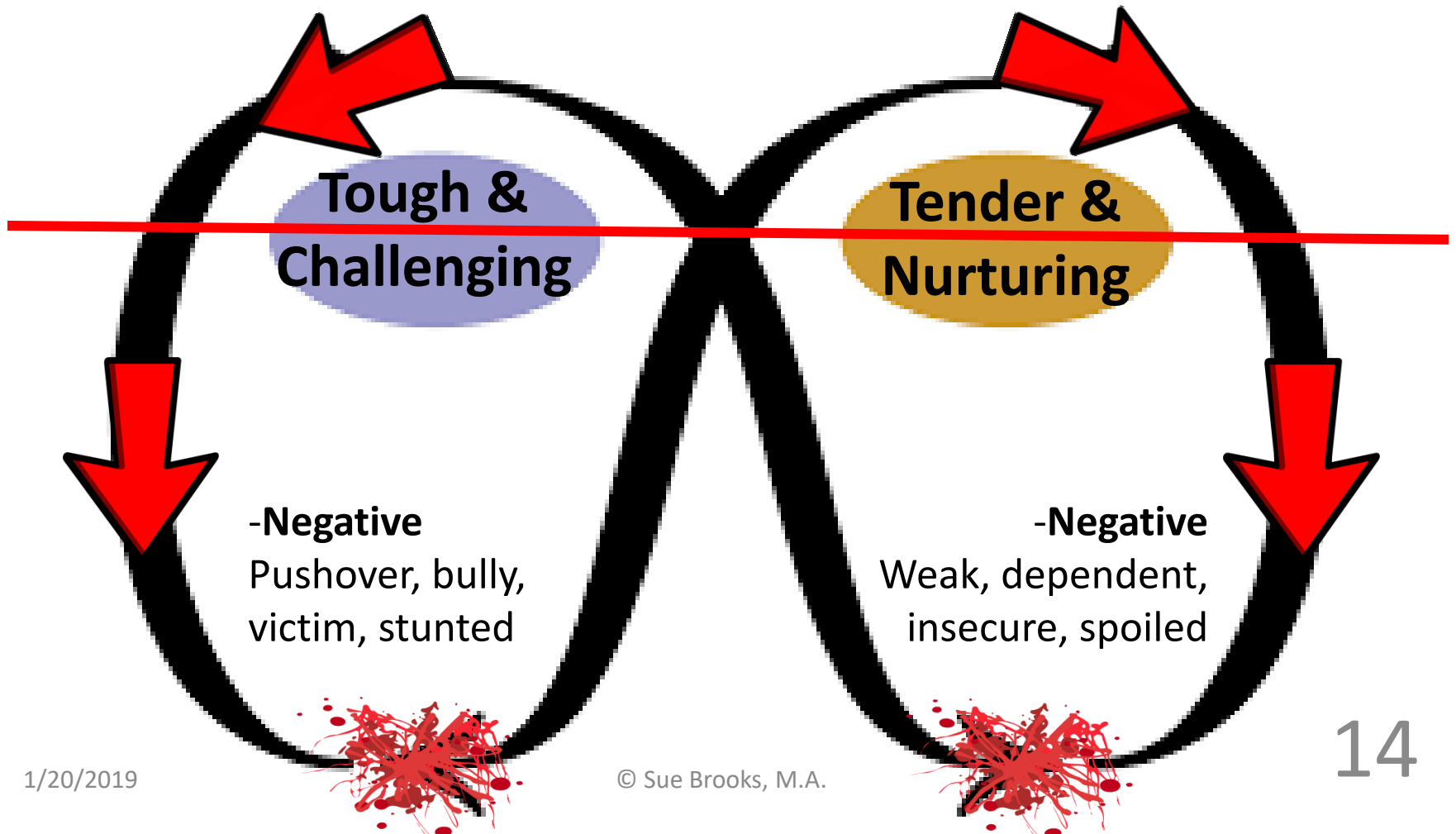
Polarity Management® Map

Goal – Healthy family



Dysfunctional family

Doubling Down



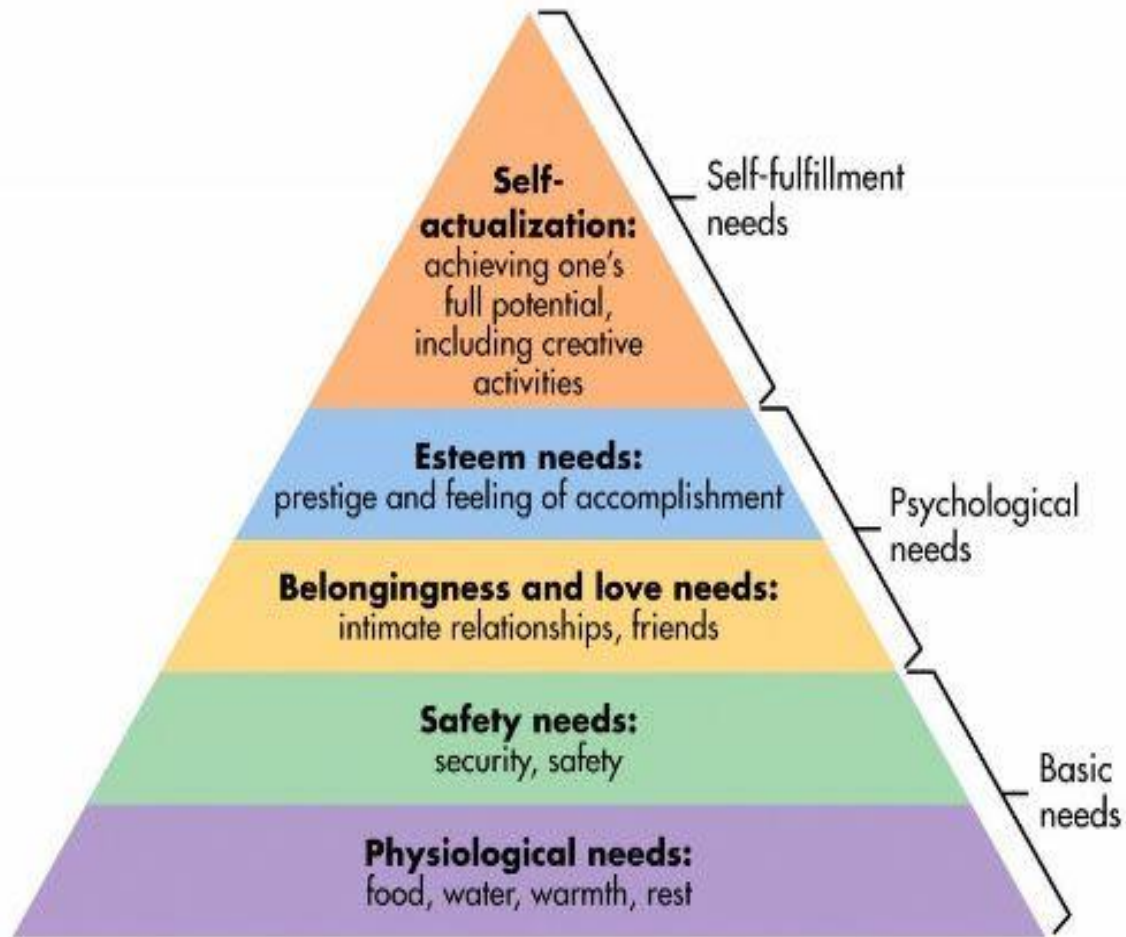
What is “America” / “American”?

- GEOGRAPHY – location on the planet earth
- Set of IDEALS, values & beliefs
- PROCESS – dynamic
- We the People – the citizens

– Cindy Wigglesworth

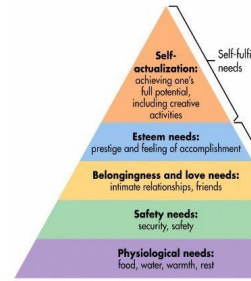


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



American Values

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



Level of Need*	American Ideals & Values	Where
Self-transcending	To grow up and contribute to the world	Avenues for human development
Aesthetic needs	To create and to be in the presence of beauty	National parks, museums, music arenas
Know & understand	To learn and grow	Access to learning and education
Self-actualizing	To achieve and express my talents	Merit-based systems encourage people to challenge themselves
Self-esteem	To feel competent in the world	Feel respected; rewarded for accomplishments
Belonging & Love	To be loved and to give love	Freedom to love whomever we love; supportive groups
Safety	To feel safe in my country & community	Justice is fair and equal; police & military
Physiological	To be alive & to live	\$, food, water, shelter, health(care)

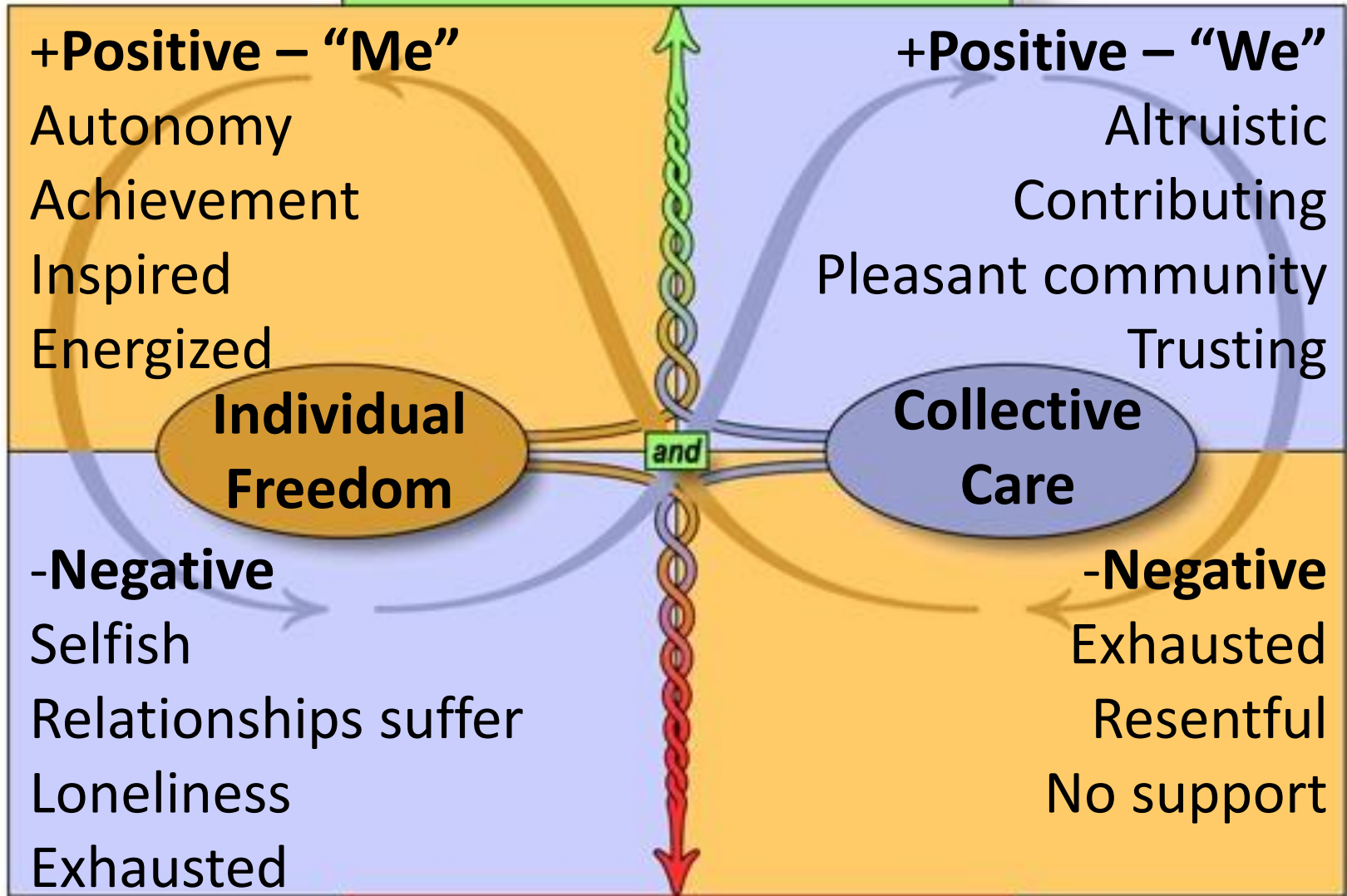


Examples of Political Polarities

My rights & Our rights
Individual autonomy & Collective responsibility
Stability & Change
Independence & Regulation
Freedom & Opportunity
Decentralize & Centralize
Hierarchy & Consensus
Hard power - military & Soft power - diplomacy

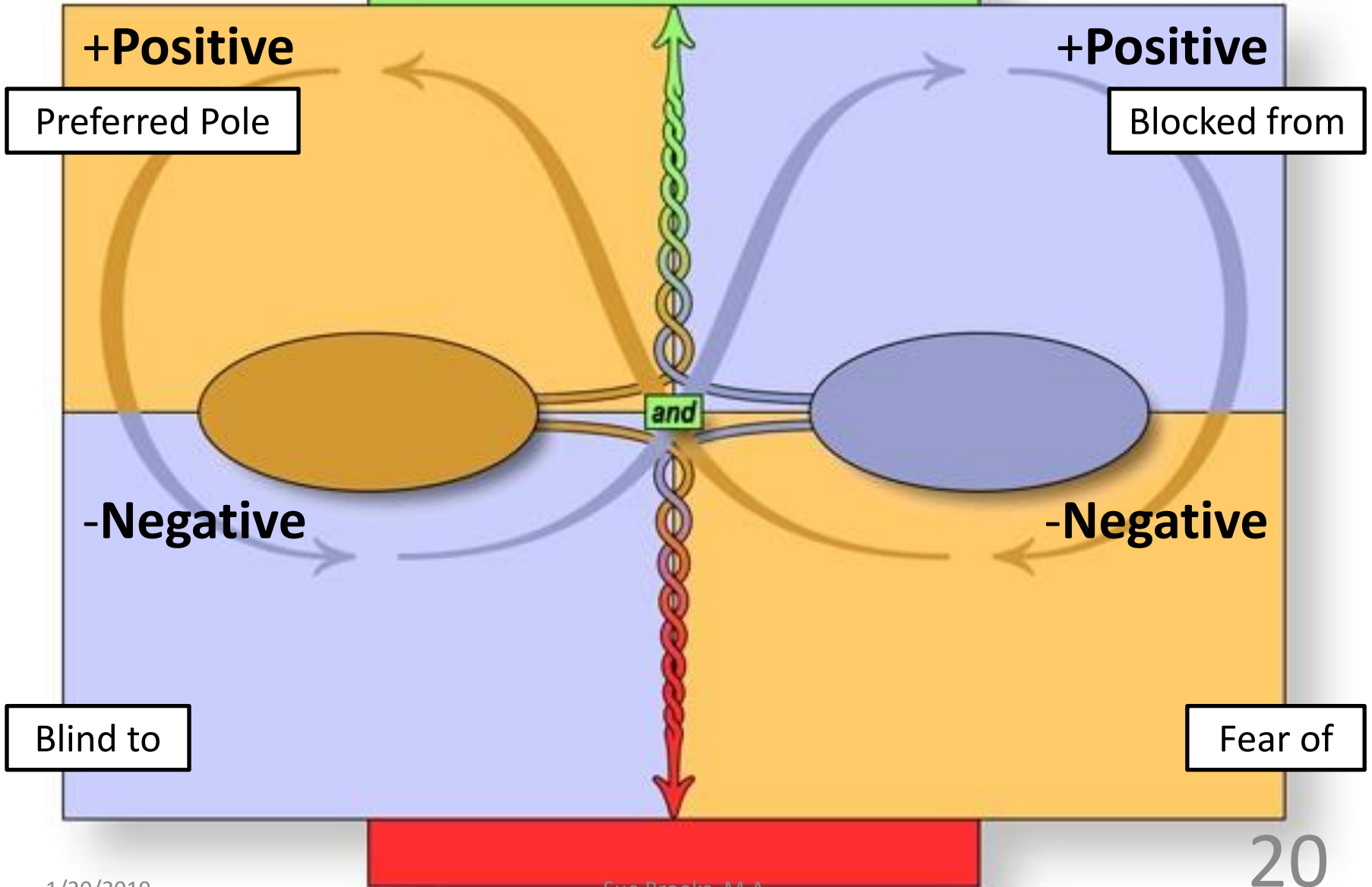
Polarity Management® Map

Goal – Ideal America



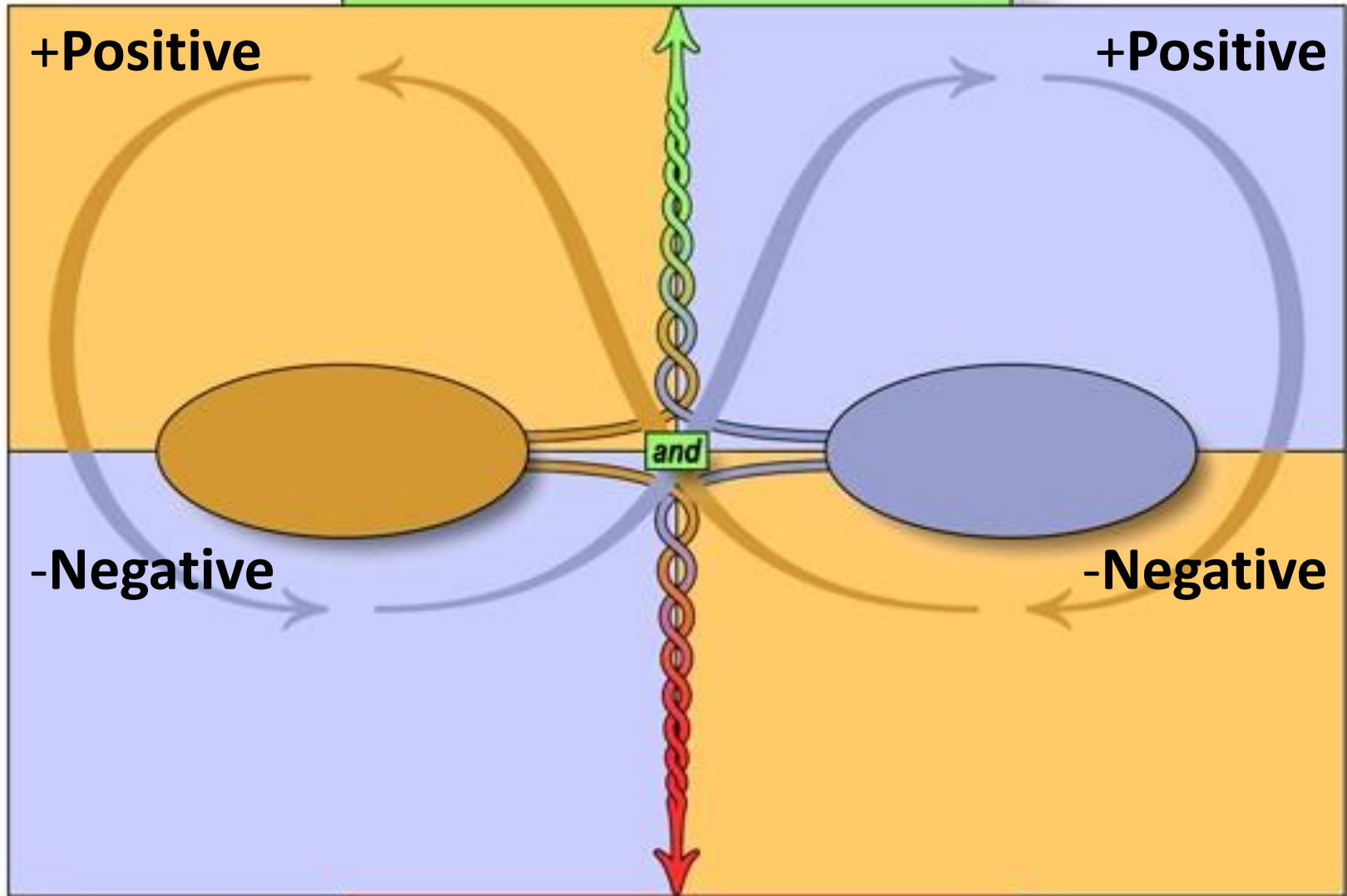
Polarity Management® Map

Goal – North Pole



Polarity Management® Map

Goal – North Pole



Harvard Business Review

- Step 1: Define exactly the change you want to see
 - **Manageable Polarity or Solvable Problem?**
- Step 2: Shift the spectrum of allies
 - **Synergistic**
- Step 3: Identify the pillars of power
 - **More people participating**
- Step 4: Seek to attract, not to overpower
 - **Allies**
- Step 5: Build a plan to survive victory

How Protests Become Successful Social Movements, 1/27/17,

<https://hbr.org/2017/01/how-protests-become-successful-social-movements>

Getting Unstuck

- Stay focused on the North Pole – the goal
- Understand *flow*
- Use your *own* fear & resistance
- Validate, validate, validate
 - “That sounds really important to you.”

References

- Polarity Management – Identifying & Managing Unsolvable Problems, by Barry Johnson
 - Business
- Necessary Wisdom – Meeting the Challenge of a New Cultural Maturity, by Charles Johnston
 - Includes spirituality; fallacies & bridges
- Managing Polarities in Congregations – 8 Keys for Thriving Faith Communities, by Roy M. Oswald and Barry Johnson