

# Musculoskeletal Disorders Symposium

Invest in your people: build your business

# Engaging with workers- Understanding how people make sense of risk

Presenter: David Whitefield

4 November 2015



**PEOPLE AND RISK**

SAFETY · CULTURE · PRODUCTIVITY



# Webinar Presenter: David Whitefield



David Whitefield, Director of People and Risk runs his own consultancy business working with clients who want to focus on the human side of safety, primarily through the application of social psychological principles.

His current work is built on more than 20 years of experience in the safety industry across a wide range of roles and organisations, as well as tertiary qualifications in behavioural science, OHS, and social psychology.

# The Plan

## Context

(my biases/ worldviews about safety, risk & people)



## Content

(how people tick)



# Context- A Social Psychology Lens

*How social  
arrangements  
influence our  
judgements*



**Risk (and learning) is a social process**  
**Human (not behaviour) focused**

Context – Safety is a wicked problem



# **Wicked problems**

Tackle not Solve

Rittel & Conklin

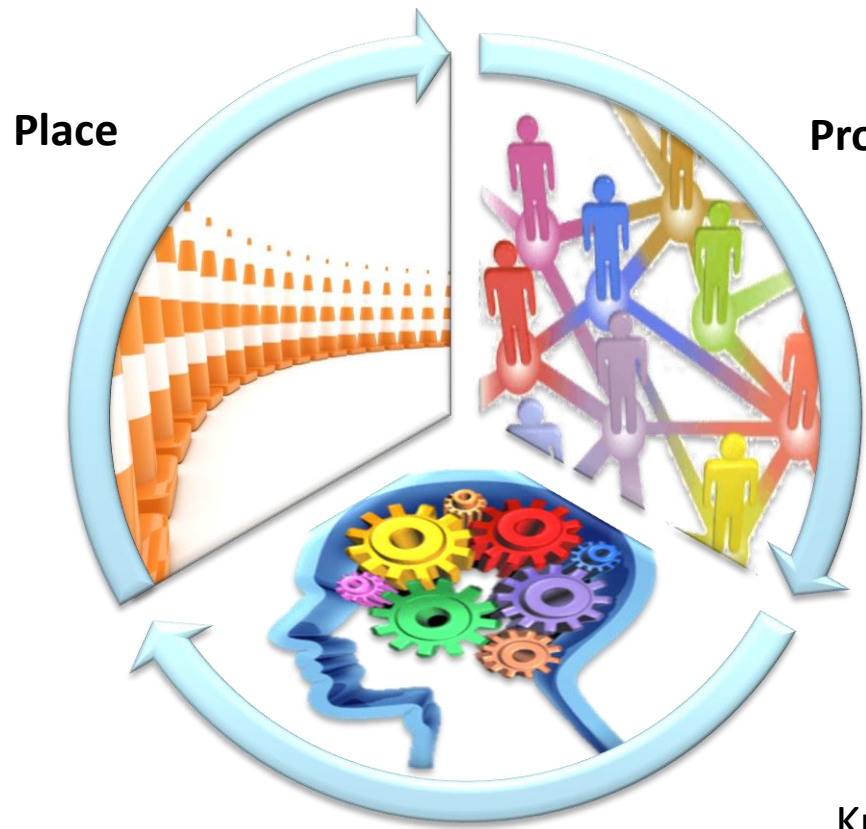


# Context- Risk as uncertainty



“The effect of uncertainty on objectives”

# Context – Balance & Trade-Offs



Knowledge/Understanding?  
Resources?  
Energy?



# Context – People and Systems

Procedures are a mean about which people deviate.

Violations are a characteristic of safe systems (which have procedures); they do not exist in activities that have no legislative framework and no rules.

Procedures that are poorly designed and too demanding automatically create violations



Should we (as an industry) be interested in how people make sense of risk and uncertainty?

Should we be fascinated about how people manage to operate safely nearly all the time, where we see people as the source of safety not the problem to be fixed?

Assuming we are interested, what influences the way people think about risk?

What role does culture and leadership play?

Again, assuming we are interested, how do I find out how others are thinking about risk (their sensemaking)?

# Human Focused Safety

The big questions



Conscious & Unconscious  
Thinking

Biases and Heuristics

Priming

Engagement, Leadership &  
Culture

## Conscious & Unconscious Thinking – Two Systems (really a spectrum)

### **SLOW**

Conscious  
Analytical  
Rational  
Systematic  
Optimizing  
Calculating  
16-40bps



### **FAST**

Unconscious  
Automaticity  
aRational  
Efficient  
Satisficing  
Adequate  
10B bps

Do you believe me?

Which system made that decision?

Which one does most of the work?

Which one makes sense of risk (sensemaking)?

Where do safety procedures and systems sit?

Where do biases and heuristics sit?

Which one can be primed?

Which one is influenced by culture and leadership?

Daniel Kahneman

Let's have a quick look at your unconscious doing some work...

Don't worry, it will be fine...

No really...





red

green

blue

yellow

blue

red

red

blue

green

blue

yellow

red

yellow

green

blue

red

yellow

green

red

green

blue

yellow

blue

red

red

blue

green

blue

yellow

red

yellow

green

blue

red

yellow

green

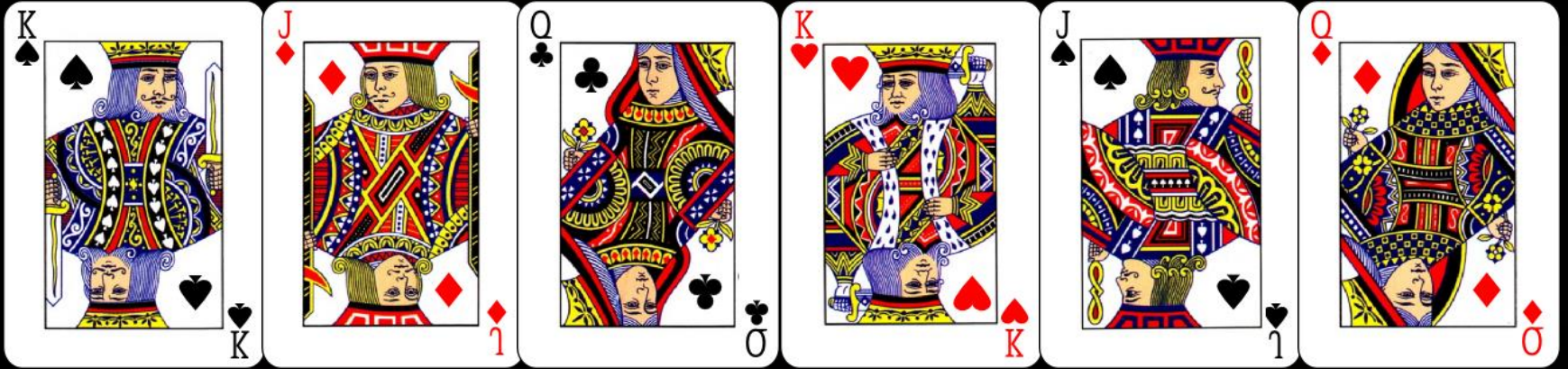


37 + 55

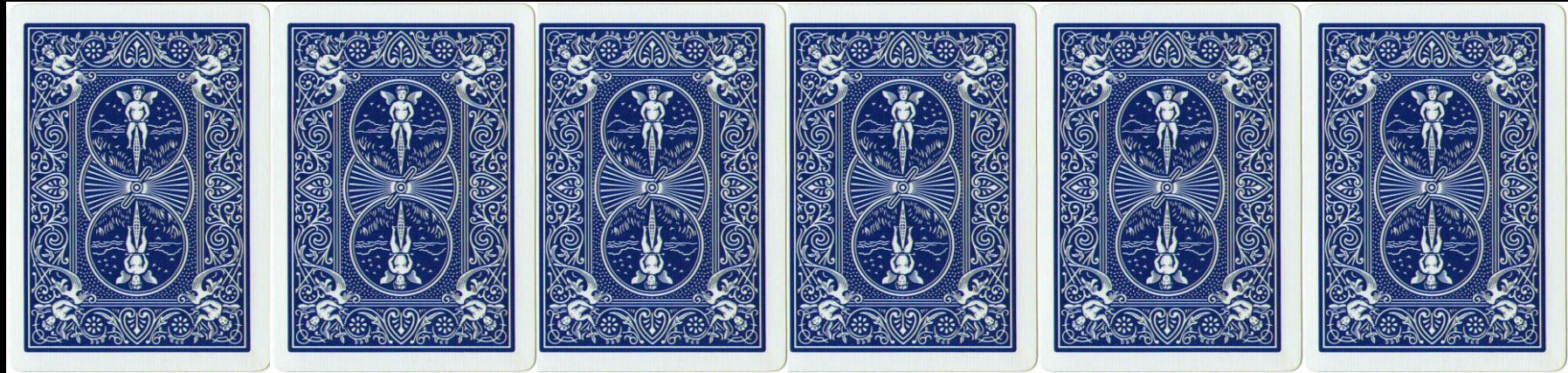
63 + 14

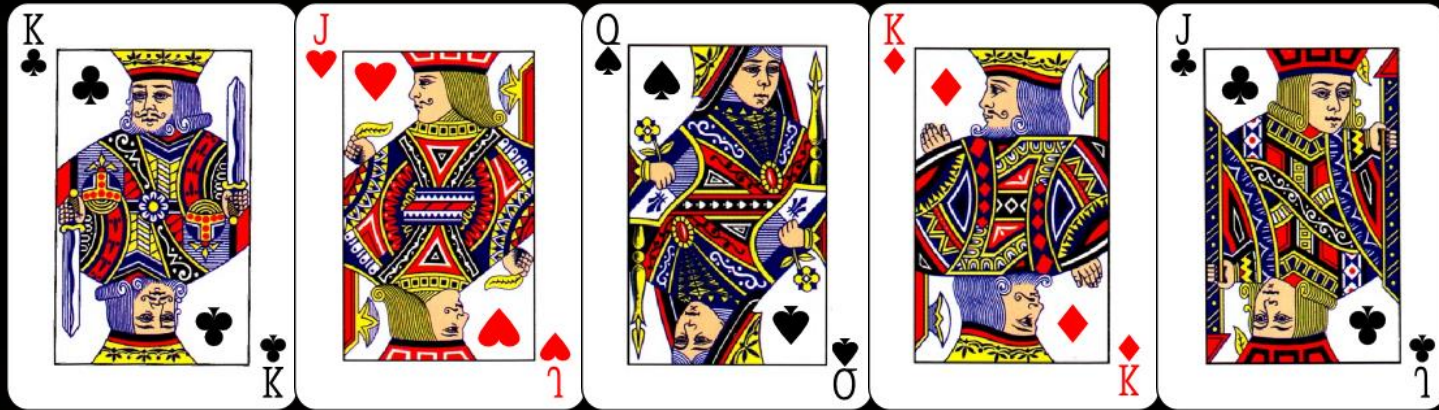


# Pick a card



# Concentrate....





We are always trying to make sense of our world

Our sensemaking is done mostly in our fast system

Our fast system is efficient and (as the name suggests) fast

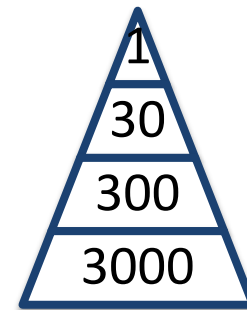
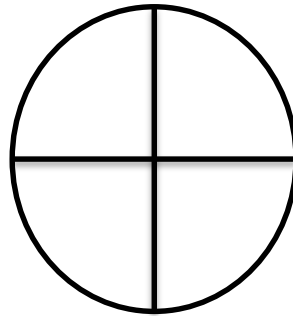
It is also fallible, biased, uses heuristics, and can be primed

# Biases & Heuristics



Optimism, Hindsight, Conformity, Change (blindness), Bystander Effect, Affect, Sunk cost, Attribution Error, Availability, Confirmation, Flooding... 200+

6 x 6 = ??



LTIFR

AS/NZS4801

# Priming



Success:	80%	4 out of 5
Failure:	20%	1 out of 5
Won't fail:	80%	4 out of 5
Won't succeed:	20%	1 out of 5



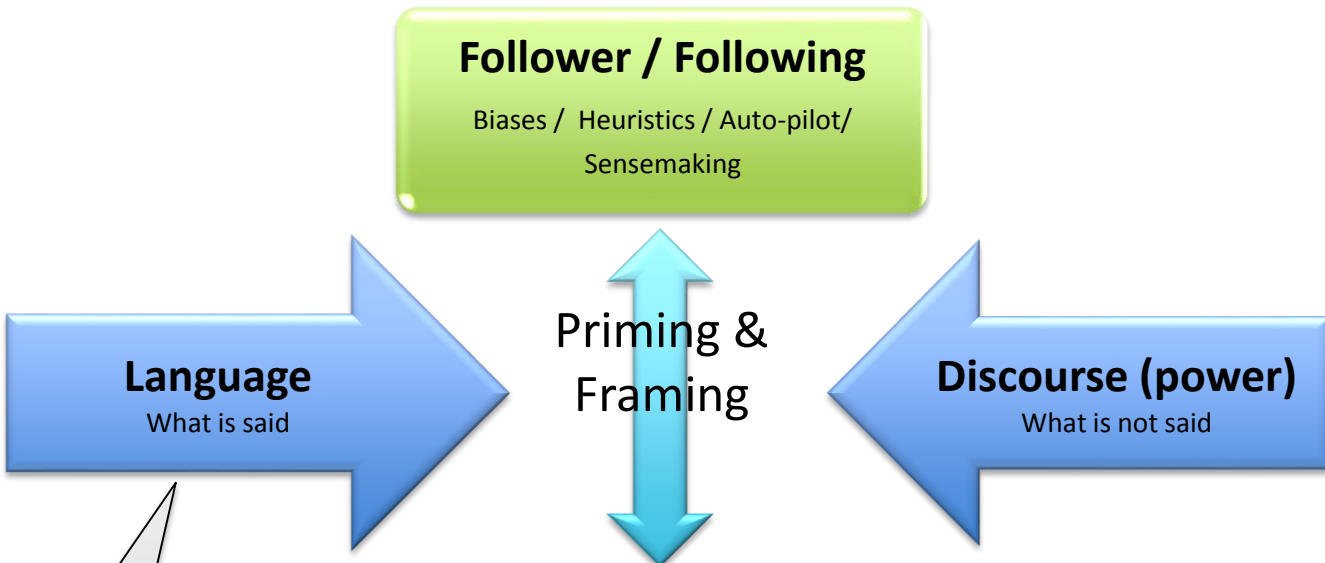
Speed: Smash- 65.7 Hit- 54.  
Glass?: Smash- 16/34 Hit- 7/43



(actually cognitive dissonance)

# Engagement-Leadership-Culture

Where is this heading?  
(Trajectory)



Are values aligned?  
(Ethics)

**Follower / Following**  
Biases / Heuristics / Auto-pilot/  
Sensemaking

**Leader / Leading**  
Influencer not Hero

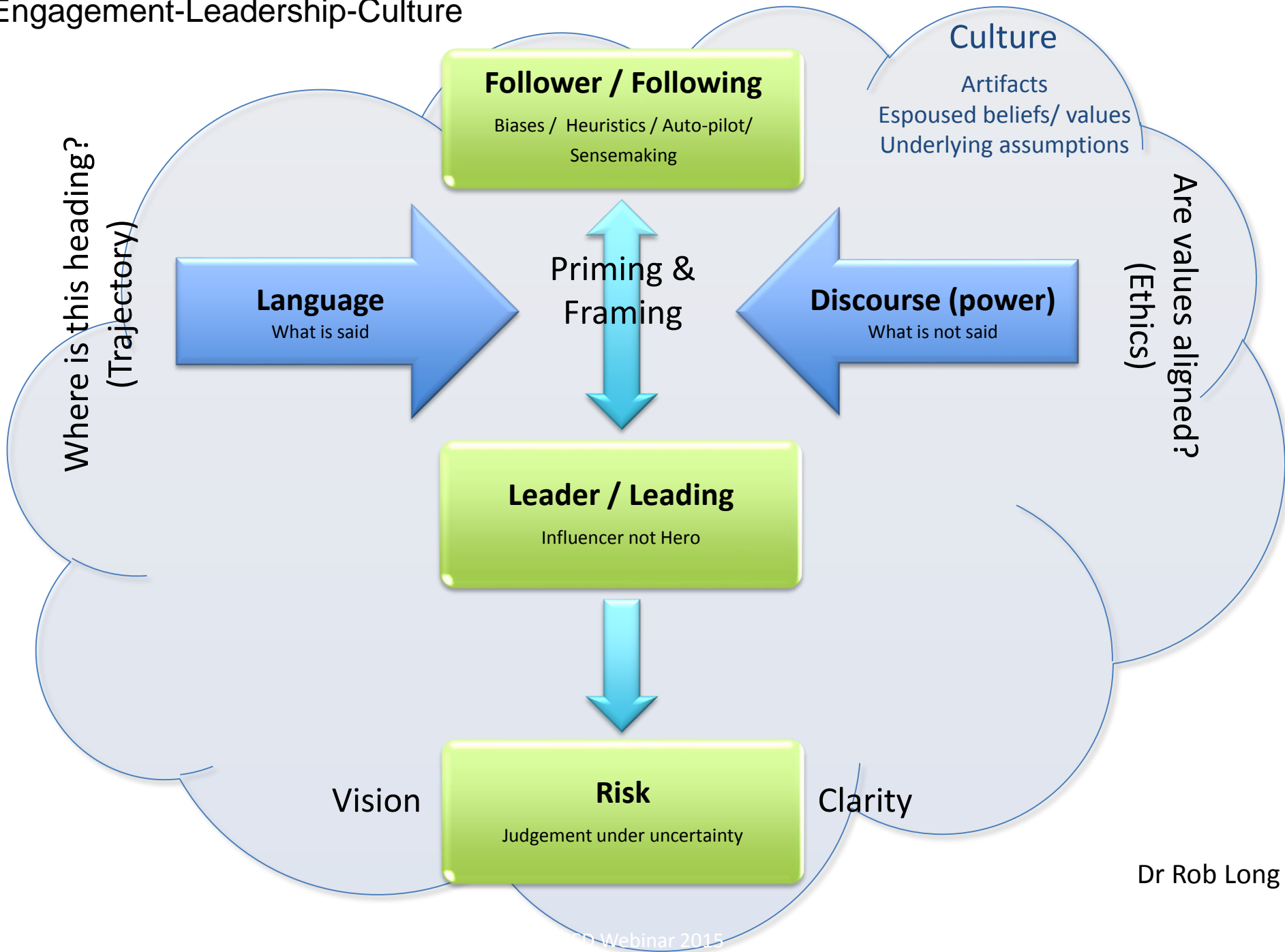
**Risk**  
Judgement under uncertainty

Vision

Clarity

Telling Vs Tell me about  
Whatever it takes  
I / You / We  
Life Saving Rules  
Absolutes (binary)  
Complacency &  
Common sense  
What went wrong Vs  
what's the story





Dr Rob Long

# Review



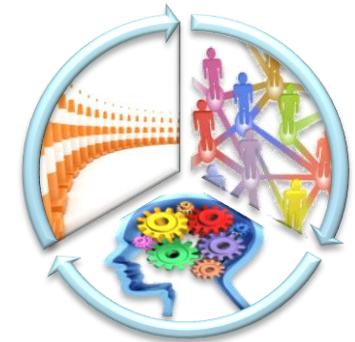
Risk is social  
(human focused  
safety)



Safety is a  
wicked problem  
(tackle not solve)



Risk is about  
uncertainty  
(not a number)



Still need to manage  
risks and have  
systems

## Content:

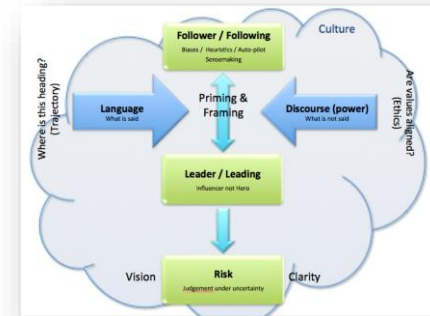
We have little to no awareness of most of our  
thinking (sorry...)

We are biased, use heuristics (but that's OK)

We can be primed by language, artifacts and  
our environment (so nothing is neutral,  
everything has meaning)

Leadership and culture influence (all the time,  
no matter what you do)

There is always a trade-off or compromise



What would it be like living in world filled with uncertainty and greyness?

What would it be like if we saw people are the source of safety rather than a problem to be fixed or controlled.

How would I engage with people if I knew that nothing is neutral and everything matters?

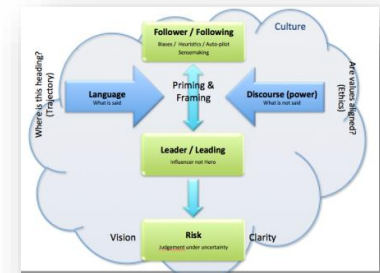
How would I approach people and what sort of questions would I ask?



Be curious not judgemental

Observe, listen, question, talk, connect

Seek to understanding how people make sense of risk



# Questions?

or email Dave directly on the  
details below

[dave@peopleandrisk.com](mailto:dave@peopleandrisk.com)

[www.peopleandrisk.com](http://www.peopleandrisk.com)



**PEOPLE AND RISK**

SAFETY · CULTURE · PRODUCTIVITY



Visit the WorkSafe Website for  
more resources

[www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)



# Upcoming MSDs Webinars

10 November

Sharon Vandermaat – City of Gold Coast Council  
and PErforM Program

11 November

Dr Jodi Oakman - The link between MSDs and  
psychosocial risk factors

17 November

Juliet Maynard - CSR Manual Handling Project