

# Imagining Possibilities with Liberating Structures

with Beth Cougler Blom



# Some LS Principles to Guide Us

1

Include and  
Unleash  
Everyone

2

Practice Deep  
Respect for  
People and  
Local Solutions

3

Build Trust As  
You Go

4

Practice  
Self-Discovery  
Within a Group

5

Engage in  
Seriously-Playf  
ul Curiosity

# Impromptu Networking

3 rounds of pairs  
conversations;  
4 minutes per round  
(2 min each)

What moments have you experienced lately that felt just right?

Where or with whom are you seeking support or connection this week?

# What are Liberating Structures?

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Conventional Structure: Presentation/Lecture





Conventional Structure: Open Discussion

# Conventional Structures can be...

## Too Tight

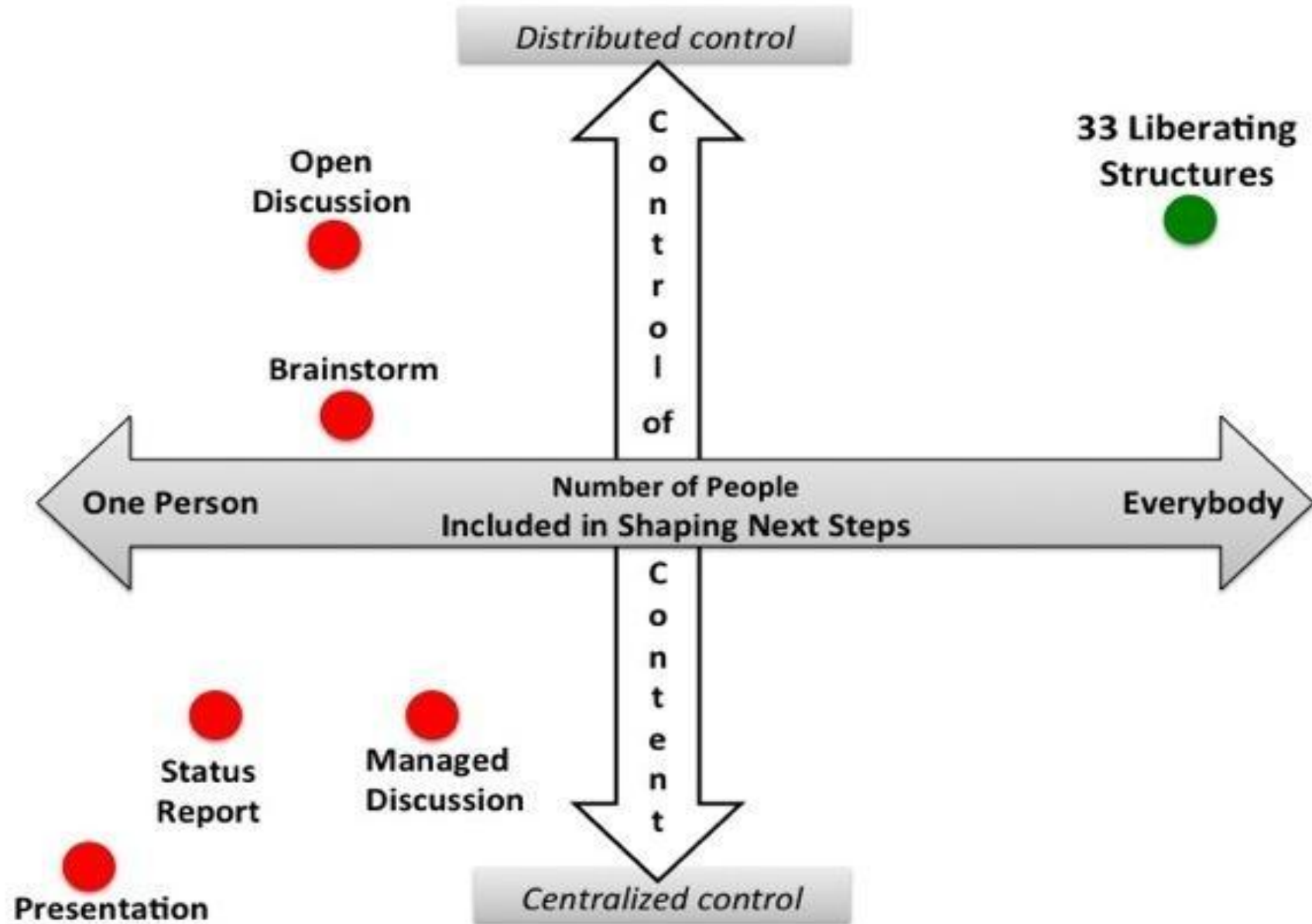
e.g. Presentation

- Over-controlled
- Little active engagement and meaning making

## Too Loose

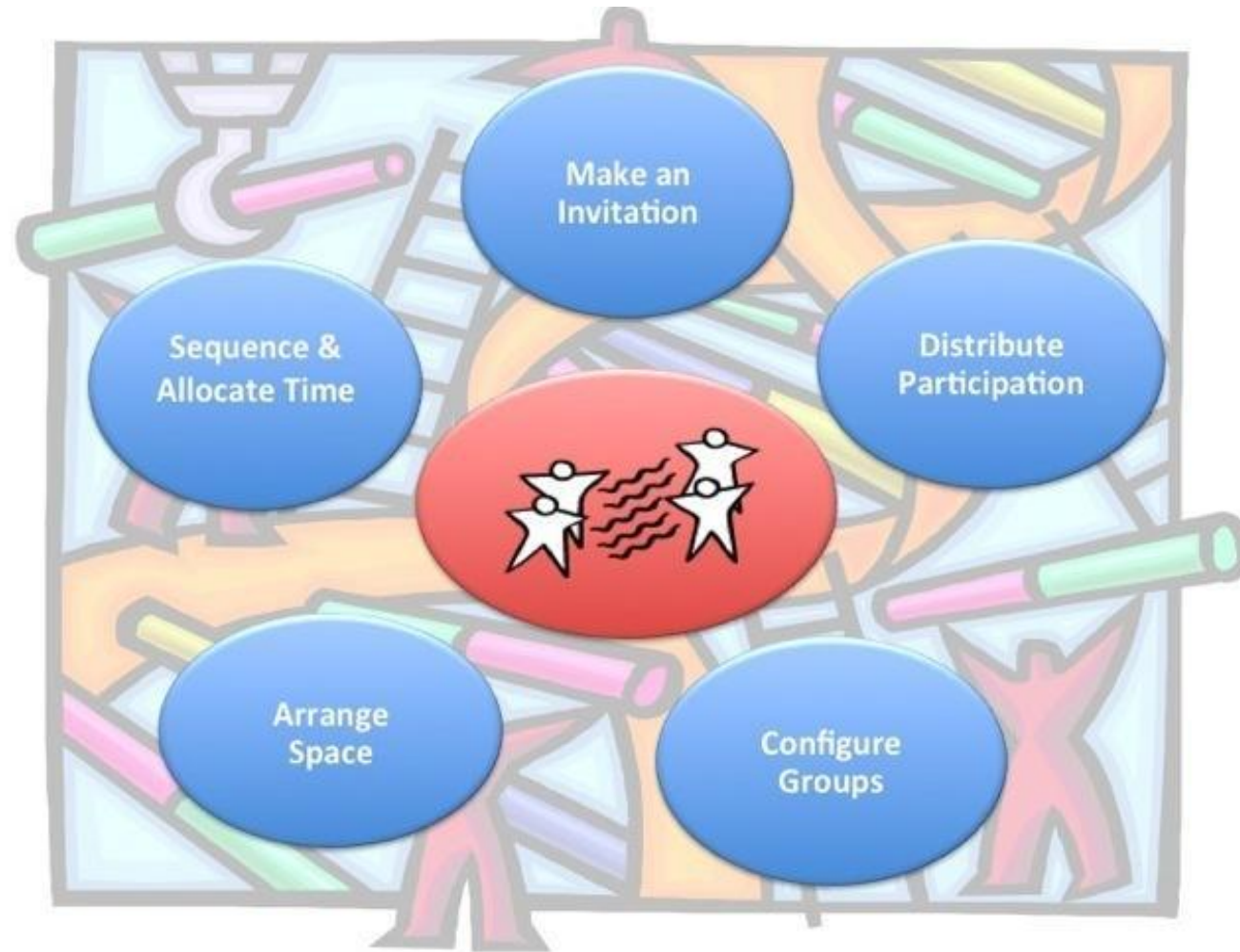
e.g. Open Discussion

- Under-controlled
- Activity is random, unpredictable, may not lead to productive end points















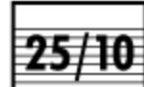











# The Five Design Elements of ANY Structure



# The LS Menu

<b>LS Menu</b> 	<b>Wicked questions</b> 	<b>What³ debrief</b> 	<b>Min specs</b> 	<b>Heard, seen respected</b> 	<b>What I need from you</b> 	<b>Integrated autonomy</b> 
<b>Design elements</b> 	<b>Appreciative interviews</b> 	<b>Discovery and action dialog</b> 	<b>Improv prototyping</b> 	<b>Drawing together</b> 	<b>Open space</b> 	<b>Critical uncertainties</b> 
<b>1-2-4-All</b> 	<b>TRIZ</b> 	<b>Shift &amp; share</b> 	<b>Helping heuristics</b> 	<b>Design storyboards</b> 	<b>Generative relationships</b> 	<b>Ecocycle</b> 
<b>Impromptu networking</b> 	<b>15% solutions</b> 	<b>25 : 10 crowdsourcing</b> 	<b>Conversation café</b> 	<b>Celebrity interview</b> 	<b>Agree/certainty matrix</b> 	<b>Panarchy</b> 
<b>9-whys</b> 	<b>Troika consulting</b> 	<b>Wise crowds</b> 	<b>User experience fishbowl</b> 	<b>Social network webbing</b> 	<b>Simple ethnography</b> 	<b>Purpose to practice</b> 



# Appreciative Interviews

## Step 1

In pairs, take turns telling stories. 7 min each; 15 min total

Please tell a story about a time when you (or someone else) shared lived experience or humanized education towards a positive result.

What is the story and what made the success possible?

# Interviewing Tips for Partners

Sit facing each other

Ask about the context – when, where, who, how

DO NOT share your own experience

Collect story details & notice success factors

Listen carefully so you can retell the highlights





# Appreciative Interviews

Step 2

Groups of 4  
15 min

Retell a brief version of your partner's story.

Everyone listens for patterns in conditions/assets supporting success and makes notes of them.



# Appreciative Interviews

Step 3

Whole group

Let's collect insights and patterns that led to the success.

What were the conditions/assets that supported the sharing of lived experience and humanizing of education?

# Appreciative Interviews/ 1-2-4-All

1 min alone; 2 min in  
pair; 4 min in four;  
whole group share

How are we investing in the  
assets and conditions that help  
people share their lived  
experience and humanize  
education?

What opportunities do you see  
to do more?

What are  
Liberating  
Structures?





# Abundant Endings

Triad groups, 4 min each. Take the full four minutes. Cannot give the time away. Silence is OK.

Where do you belong? How do you foster belonging?

On whose shoulders do you stand? Who are you supporting on your shoulders?

What has come into focus for you during this session?  
What's possible next?

# A selection of Liberating Structures you could try...to start

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- **Impromptu Networking** (*share challenges and expectations*)
- **1-2-4-All** (*engage everyone in generating ideas*)
- **15% Solutions** (*discover what freedom people have to act*)
- **Wise Crowds** or **Troika Consulting** (*tap the wisdom of the group*)
- **User Experience Fishbowl** (*share know-how with others*)
- **What, So What, Now What?** (*look back on progress*)
- **Wicked Questions** (*articulate paradoxical challenges*)
- **Conversation Café** (*engage everyone to make sense of a challenge*)
- **TRIZ** (*stop counterproductive activities and behaviours to make space for innovation*)
- **Min Specs** (*specify only the absolute “must dos” and “must not dos” for achieving a purpose*)

# Learn More About Liberating Structures

- Website
- App
- Book
- Slack group
- Worldwide user groups (Vancouver Island and Vancouver)
- Trello board (in development structures)
- Beth's **Introduction to Liberating Structures handout** (get the QR code)



# Contact Beth

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