

# The Geek's Guide to Leading Teams

@patkua  
ThoughtWorks

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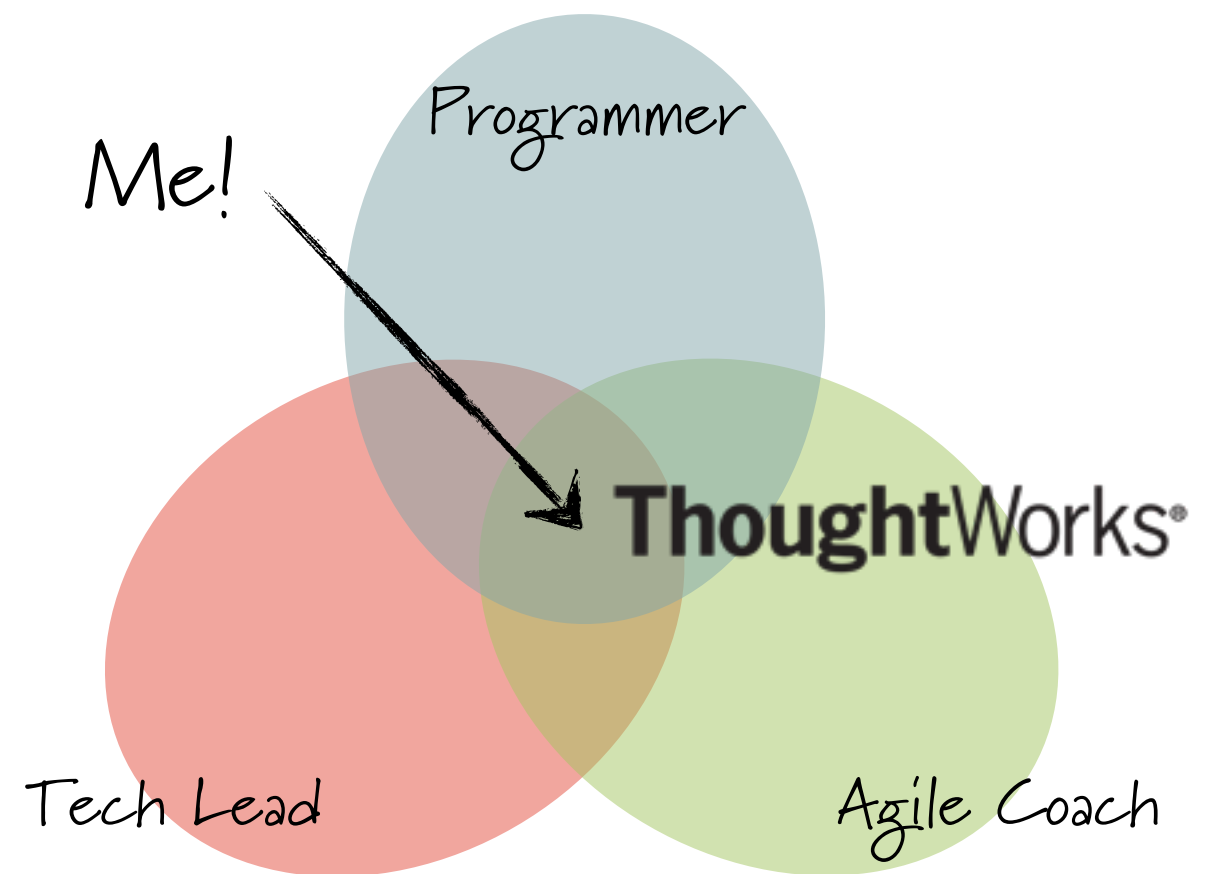
Who am I?



Who am I?



Who am I?

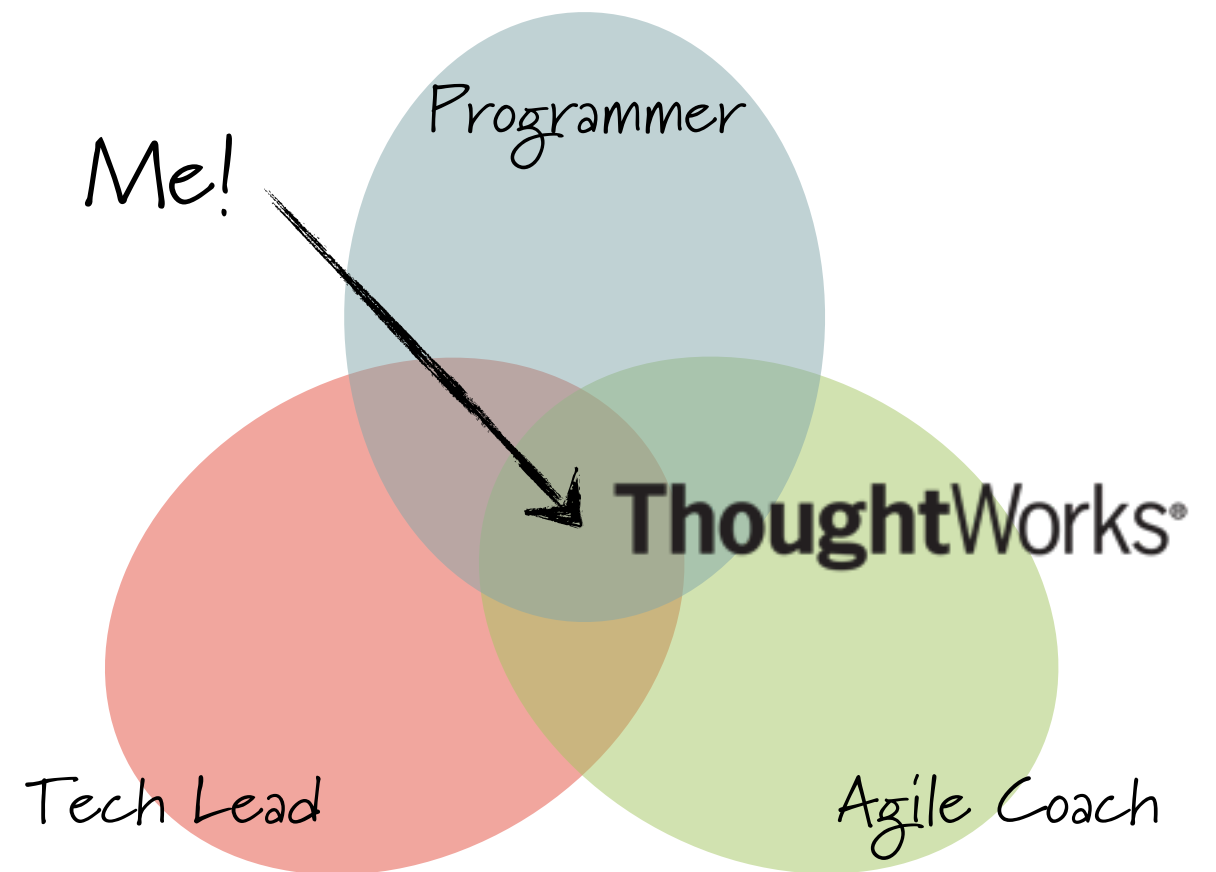


Who am I?

Author →



<http://tiny.cc/retrobook>



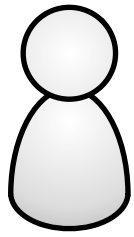


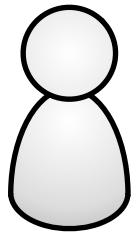
Why do we need a  
Tech Lead?



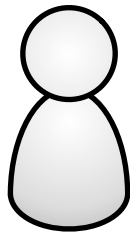
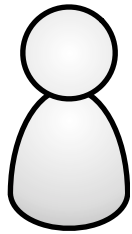
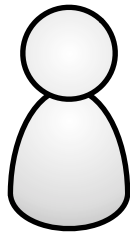
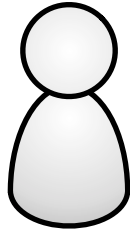
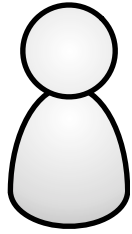


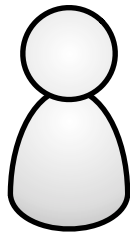
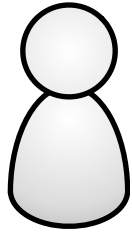
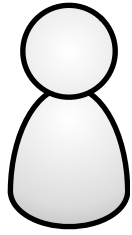
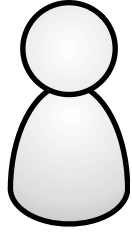
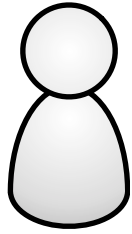


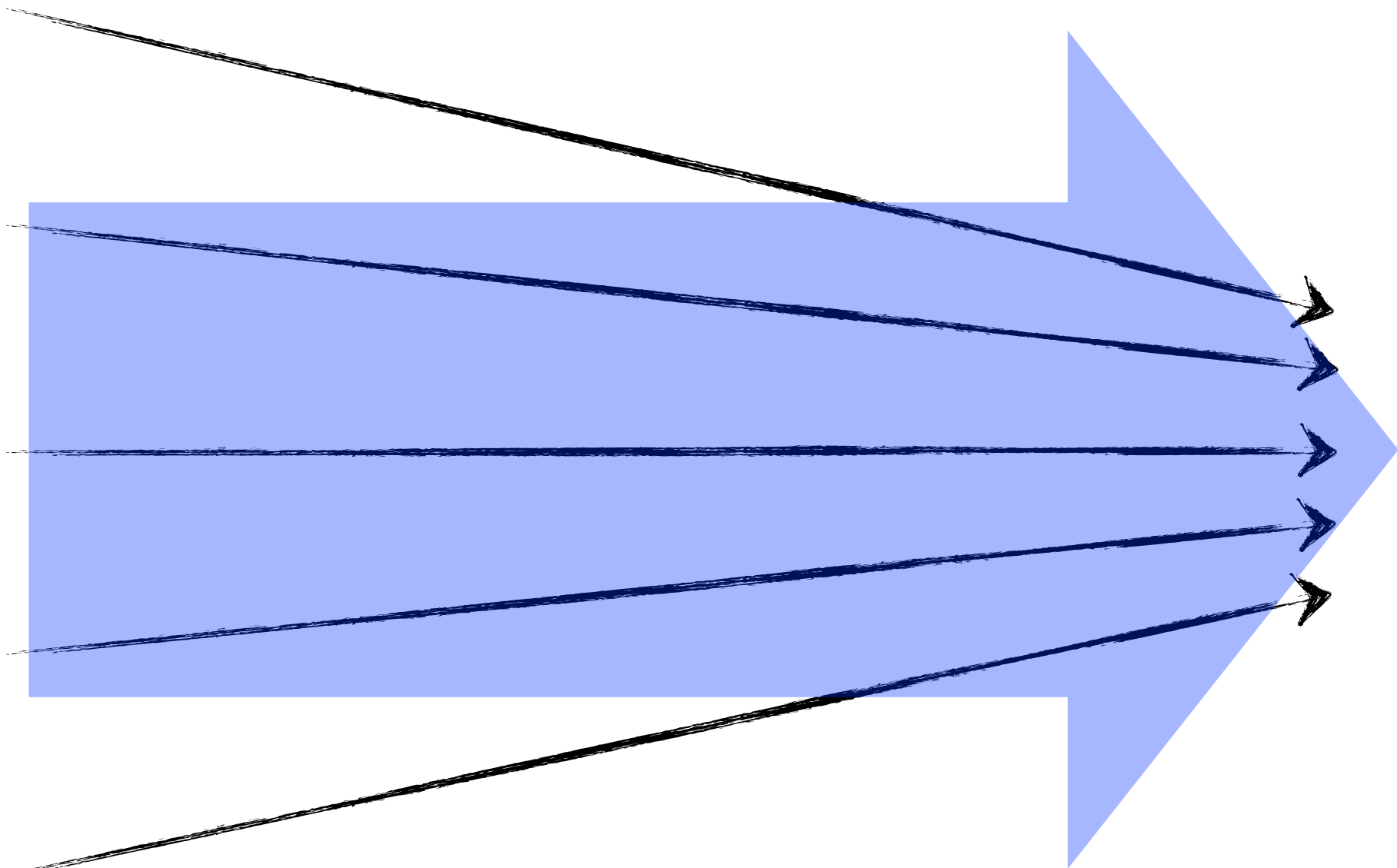
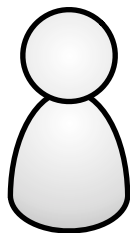
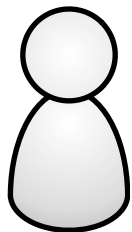
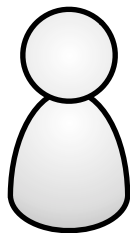
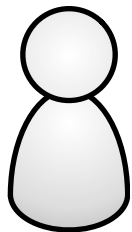
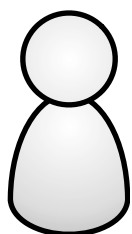




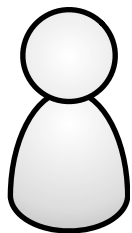
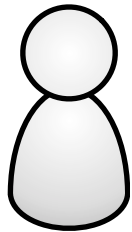
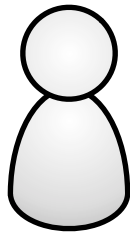
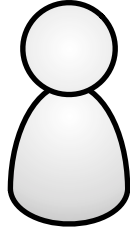
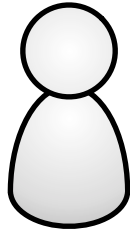




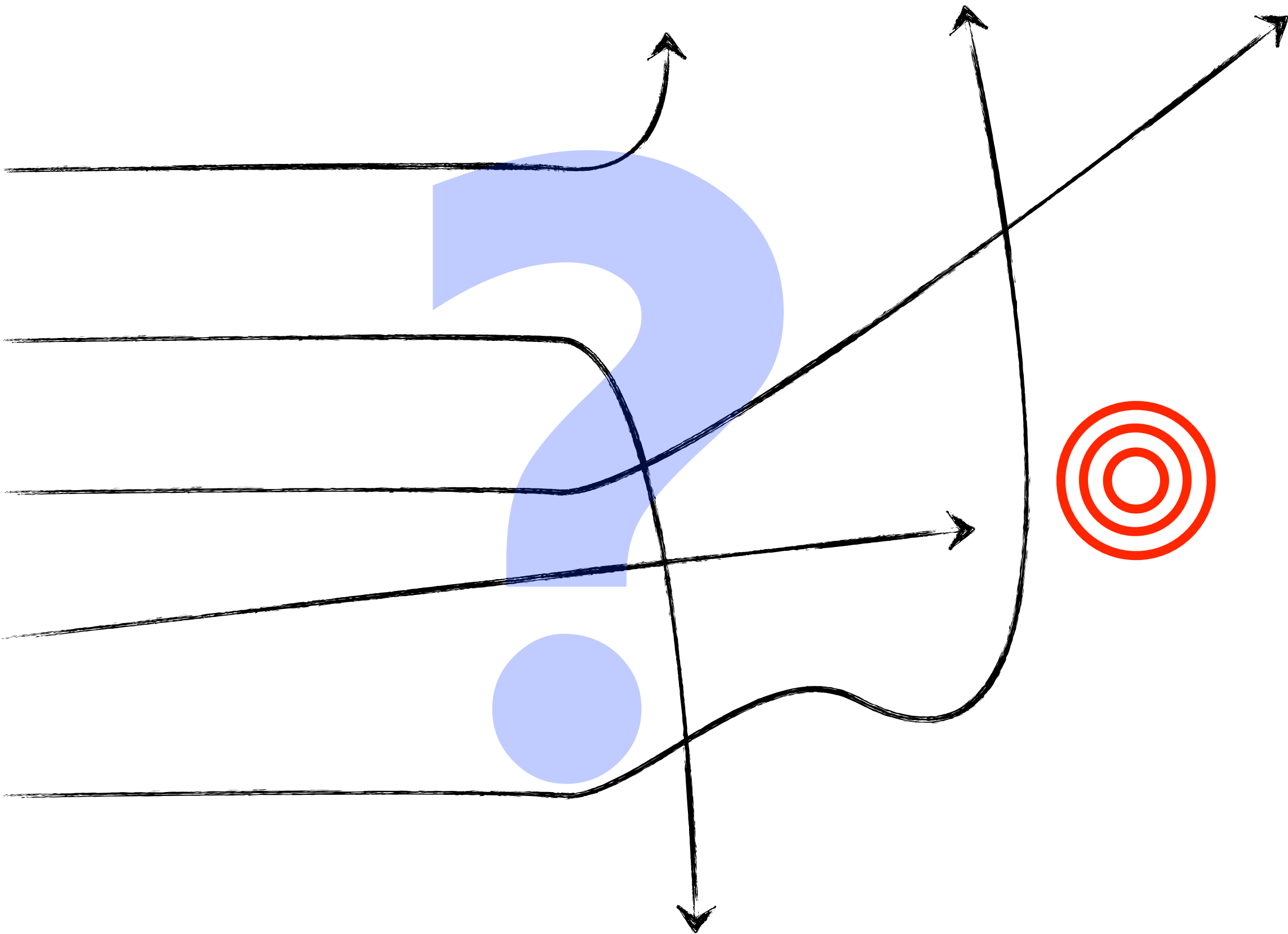
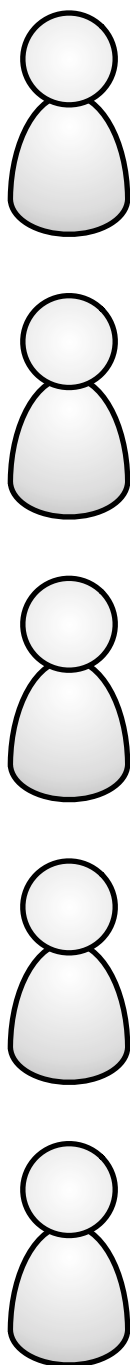
















Think this doesn't happen  
in the real world?





@julianboot





@julianboot

@thejayfields: I had ten guys on my last project, all of them had opinions and all of them were expressed in the code base #speakerconf

Source: <http://twitter.com/julianboot/status/232830267822309376>



A simple test for an  
effective Tech Lead...





Does the codebase look like it was  
written by a single person?

☐

Yes

☐

No



What does a good Tech  
Lead focus on?



P

P

P

# Programming

P

P

# Programming

## People

## P

Programming

People

Process

# Programming



Do effective Technical Leaders need  
to code?

Do effective Technical Leaders need  
to code?

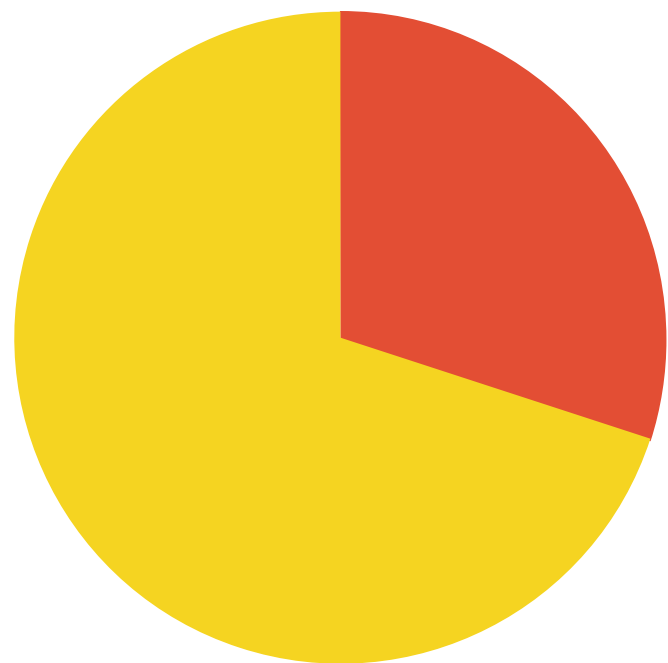
**Definitely!**

Do effective Technical Leaders need  
to code?

**Definitely!**

Do effective Technical Leaders need to code?

**Definitely!**



At least 30% of the time with the team

## Opinion: The unspoken truth about managing geeks

j.ello

September 8, 2009 ([Computerworld](#))

I can sum up every article, book and column written by notable management experts about managing IT in two sentences: "Geeks are smart and creative, but they are also egocentric, antisocial, managerially and business-challenged, victim-prone, bullheaded and credit-whoring. To overcome these intractable behavioral deficits you must do X, Y and Z."

X, Y and Z are variable and usually contradictory between one expert and the next, but the patronizing stereotypes remain constant. I'm not entirely sure that is helpful. So, using the familiar brush, allow me to paint a different picture of those IT pros buried somewhere in your organization.

My career has been stippled with a good bit of disaster recovery consulting, which has led me to deal with dozens of organizations on their worst day, when opinions were pretty raw. I've heard all of the above-mentioned stereotypes and far worse, as well as good bit of rage. The worse shape an organization is in, the more you hear the stereotypes thrown around. But my personal experiences working within IT groups have always been quite good, working with IT pros for whom the negative stereotypes just don't seem to apply. I tended to chalk up IT group failures to some bad luck in hiring and the delicate balance of those geek stereotypes.



Jeff Elio

Recently, though, I have come to realize that perfectly healthy groups with solid, well-adjusted IT pros can and will devolve, slowly and quietly, into the behaviors that give rise to the stereotypes, given the right set of conditions. It turns out that it is the conditions that are stereotypical, and the IT pros tend to react to those conditions in logical ways. To say it a different way, organizations actively elicit these stereotypical negative behaviors.

Understanding why IT pros appear to act the way they do makes working with, among and as one of them the easiest job in the world.

### It's all about respect

Few people notice this, but for IT groups respect is the currency of the realm. IT pros do not squander this currency. Those whom they do not believe are worthy of their respect might



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X, Y and Z are variable and usually contradictory between one expert and the next, but the patronizing stereotypes remain constant. I'm not entirely sure that is helpful. So, using the familiar phrase, allow me to paint a different picture of those I call "geeks" in your organization.

My career has been stippled with a good bit of disaster recovery consulting, which has led me to deal with dozens of organizations on their worst day, when opinions were pretty raw. I've heard all of the above-mentioned stereotypes and far worse, as well as good bits in between. The worse an organization is in, the more you hear the stereotypes thrown around. But my personal experiences working within IT groups have always been quite good, working with IT pros for whom the negative stereotypes just don't seem to apply. I tended to chalk up IT group failures to some bad luck in hiring and the delicate balance of those geek stereotypes.

Recently, though, I have come to realize that perfectly healthy groups with solid, well-adjusted IT pros can and will devolve, slowly and quietly, into the behaviors that give rise to the stereotypes, given the right set of conditions. It turns out that it is the conditions that are stereotypical, and the IT pros tend to react to those conditions in logical ways. To say it a different way, organizations actively elicit these stereotypical negative behaviors.

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"...respect is the currency of the realm"

## Opinion: The unspoken truth about managing geeks

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““The amount of respect an IT pro pays someone is a measure of how tolerable that person is when it comes to getting things done...””

I can sum up every article, book and column written by notable management experts about managing IT professionals. Geeks are smart and creative, but they are also egomaniacal, antisocial, socially inept and business challenges, vision-people, multi-tasked and creative. To overcome these intractable behavioral deficits you must do X, Y and Z.”

X, Y and Z are variable and usually contradictory between one expert and the next, but the patronizing stereotypes remain constant. I'm not entirely sure that is helpful. So, using the familiar but hollow words, I present a different picture of the IT professional in your organization.

My career has been stippled with a good bit of disaster recovery consulting, which has led me to deal with dozens of organizations on their worst day, when opinions were pretty raw. I've heard all of the above-mentioned stereotypes and far worse. It has gone from "they are lazy" to "they are stupid" to "they are dangerous." More recently, I've heard the stereotypes "they are lazy" and "they are stupid" around. But my personal experiences working within IT groups have always been quite good, working with IT pros for whom the negative stereotypes just don't seem to apply. I tended to chalk up IT group failures to some bad luck in hiring and the delicate balance of those geek stereotypes.

Recently, though, I have come to realize that perfectly healthy groups, when adjusted, can and will devolve, slowly and quietly, into the behaviors that give rise to the stereotypes, given the right set of conditions. It turns out that it is the conditions that are stereotypical, and the IT pros tend to react to those conditions in logical ways. To say it a different way, organizations actively elicit these stereotypical negative behaviors.

Understanding why IT pros appear to act the way they do makes working with, among and as one of them the easiest job in the world.

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Jeff Elio

Consistency over Cleverness





Tabs OR Spaces

Brackets OR not

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces

Curly brace end of line  
OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore

Tabs OR Spaces

Brackets OR not

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces

Curly brace end of line  
OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore

Tabs OR Spaces

Brackets OR not

There are more important topics

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces to spend time on...  
Curly brace end of line  
OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore

# Team Culture



Programming

# Team Culture

A close-up photograph of several hands stacked on top of each other, palms facing up. The hands are of various skin tones, suggesting a diverse group. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Programming



# Team Culture

How long does the build  
stay broken?

# Team Culture

How long does the build  
stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?



# Team Culture

How long does the build  
stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?

# Team Culture

How long does the build  
stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?

Do people flag when they  
need help?

# Team Culture

How long does the build  
stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?

Do people flag when they  
need help?

Do people feel okay to  
admit being wrong?



Vision

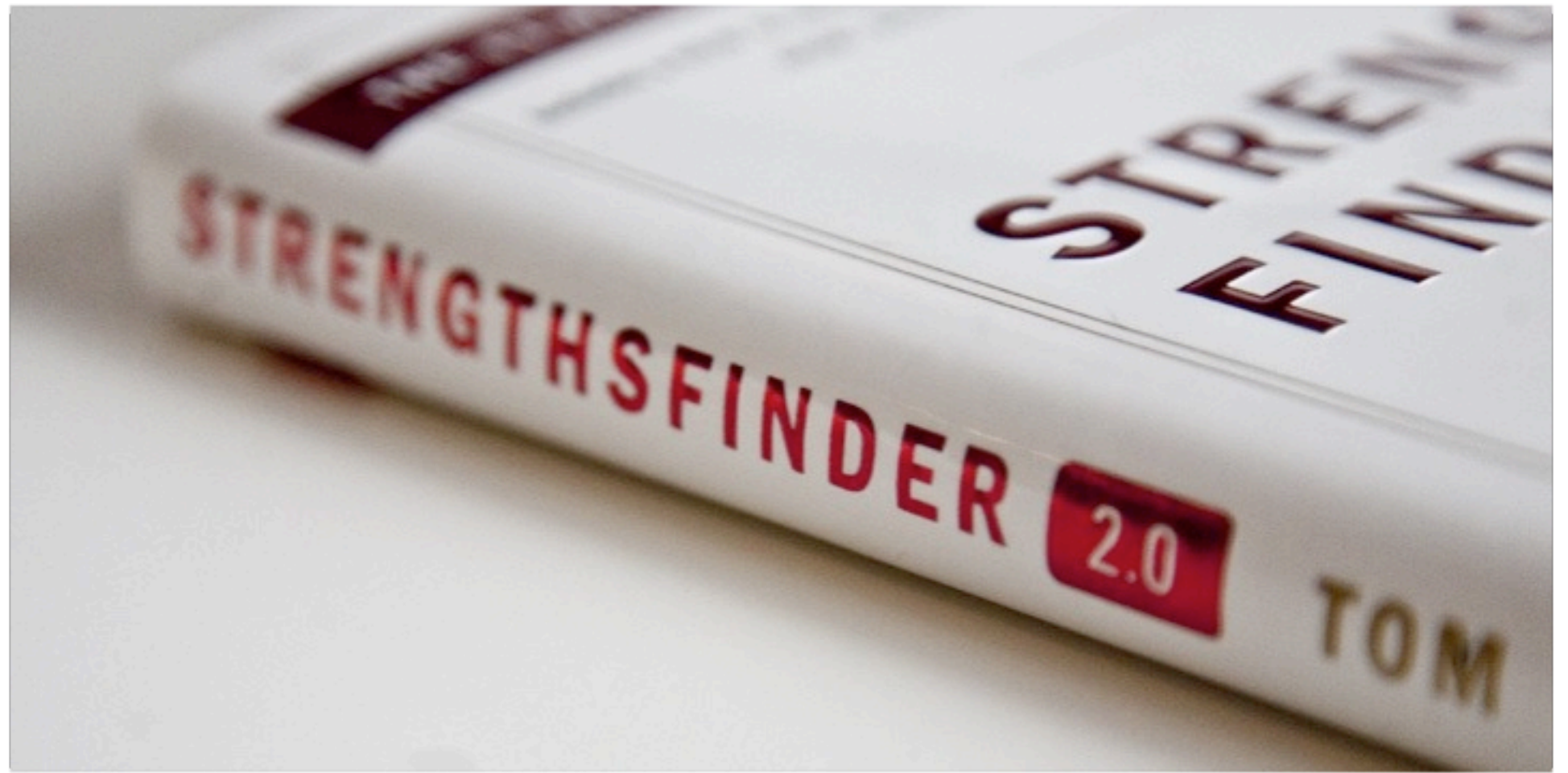


Programming

People

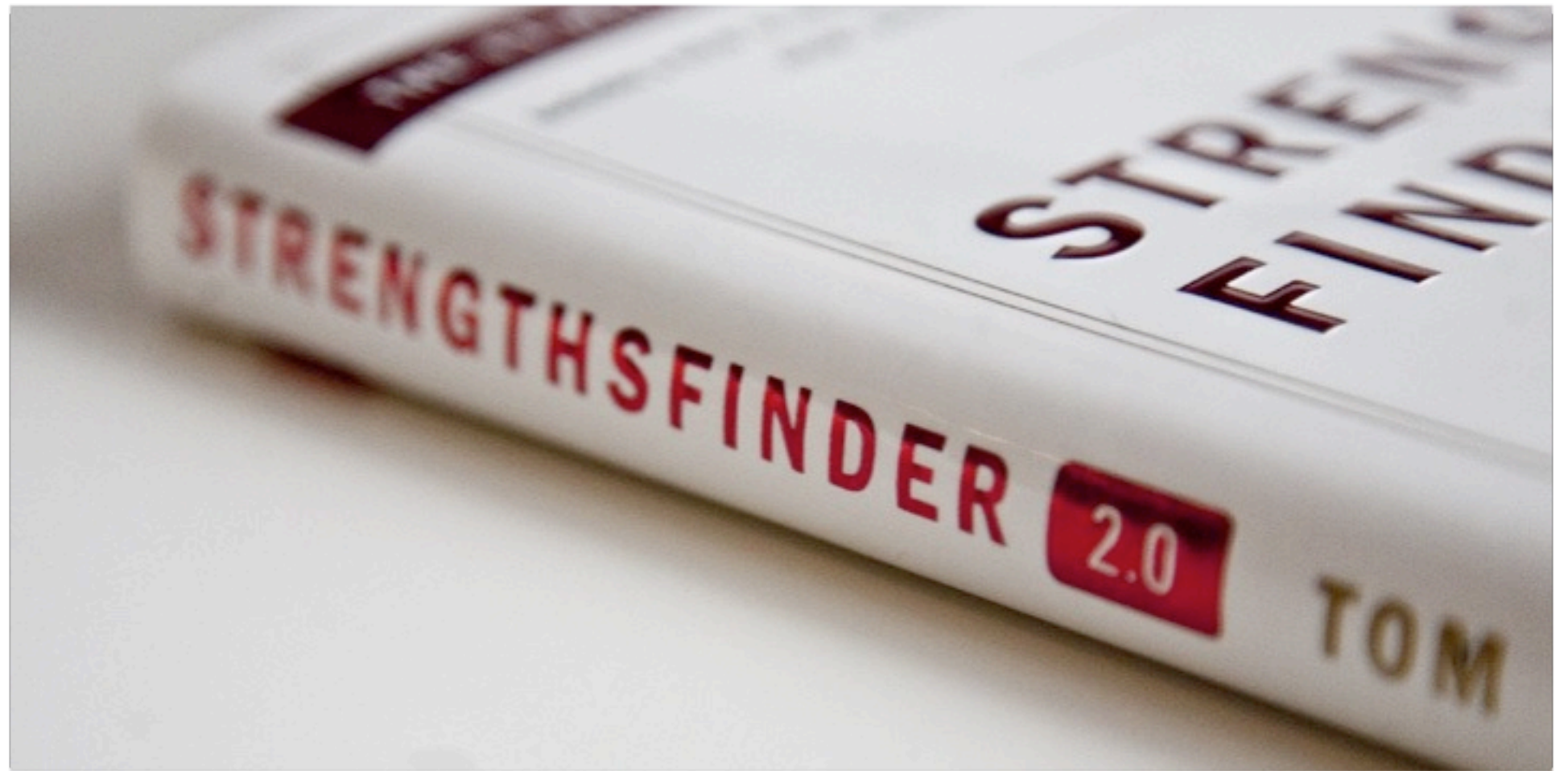
# Strength in Diversity





People

Woo



Intellection

Analytical

Strategic

Achiever

Activator

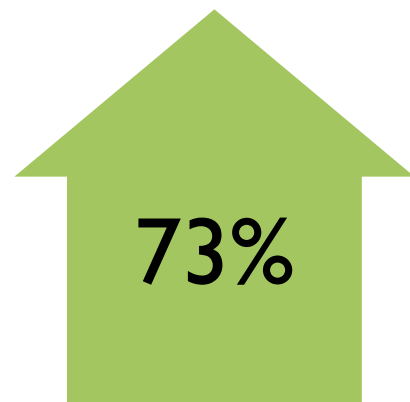
Input

People

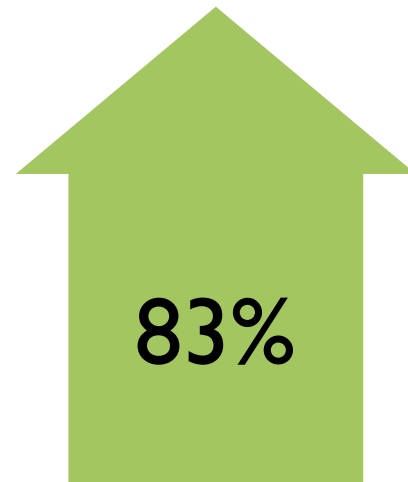


Fortune 500 companies with **3 or more women on the Board** gain a significant **performance advantage** over those with the fewest

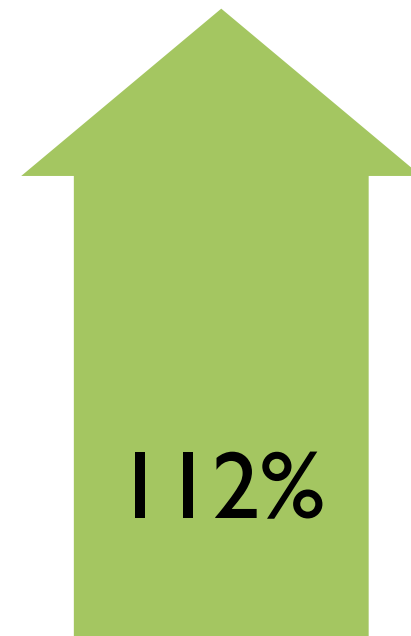
Fortune 500 companies with **3 or more women on the Board** gain a significant **performance advantage** over those with the fewest



Return on Sales



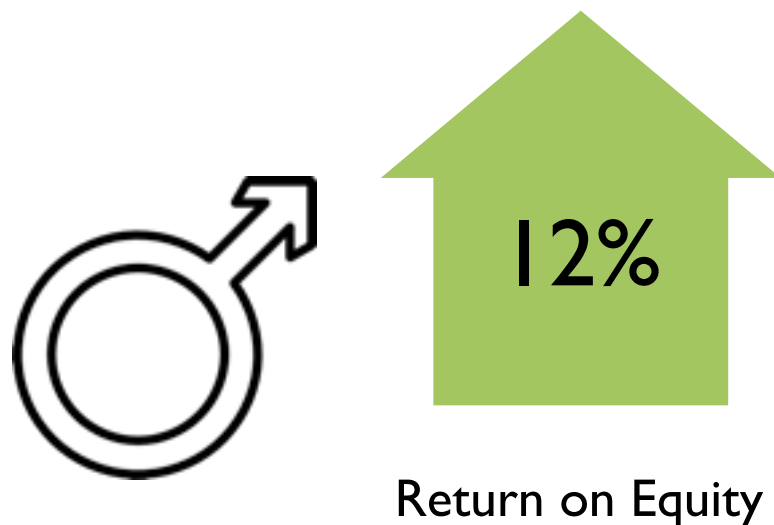
Return on Equity



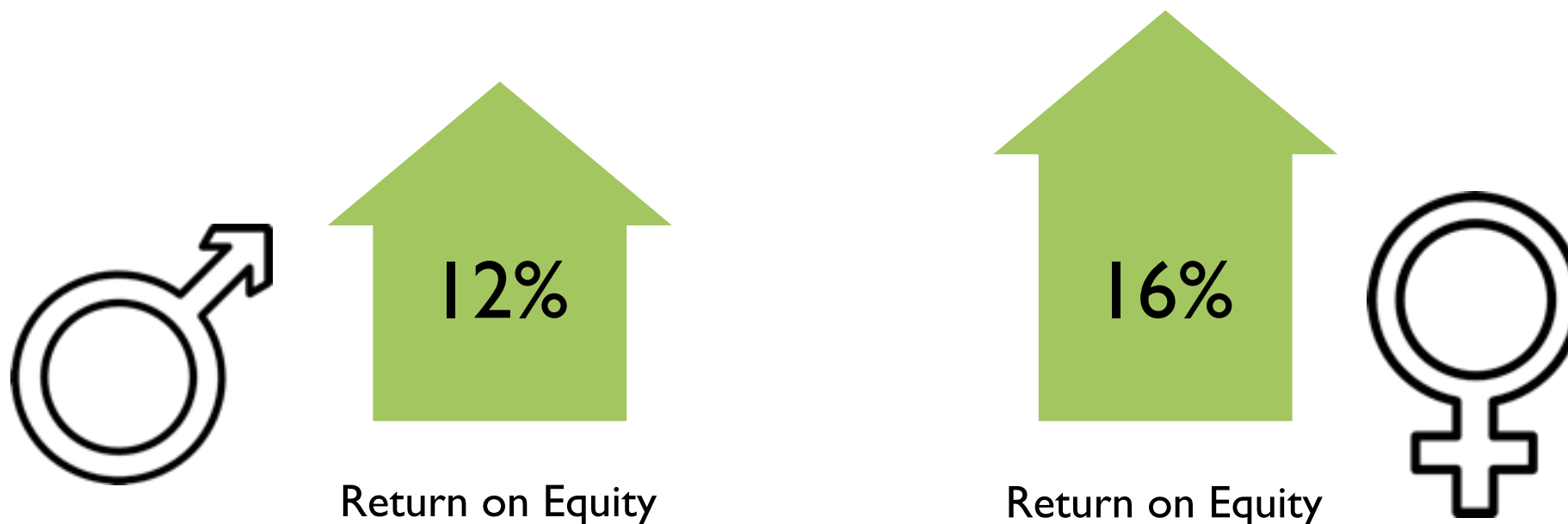
Return on Invested Capital

“...over the past six years,  
companies with at least **some female board**  
representation **outperformed** those with no women  
on the board in terms of share price performance.”

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Scott E. Page

# THE DIFFERENCE

HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY  
CREATES BETTER GROUPS, FIRMS,  
SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES

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HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY  
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SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES

$$\text{Collective Accuracy} = \text{Average Accuracy} + \text{Diversity}^*$$

Scott E. Page

# THE DIFFERENCE

HOW THE POWER OF DIVERSITY  
CREATES BETTER GROUPS, FIRMS,  
SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETIES

$$\text{Collective Accuracy} = \text{Average Accuracy} + \text{Diversity}^*$$

\* Requires ability to integrate

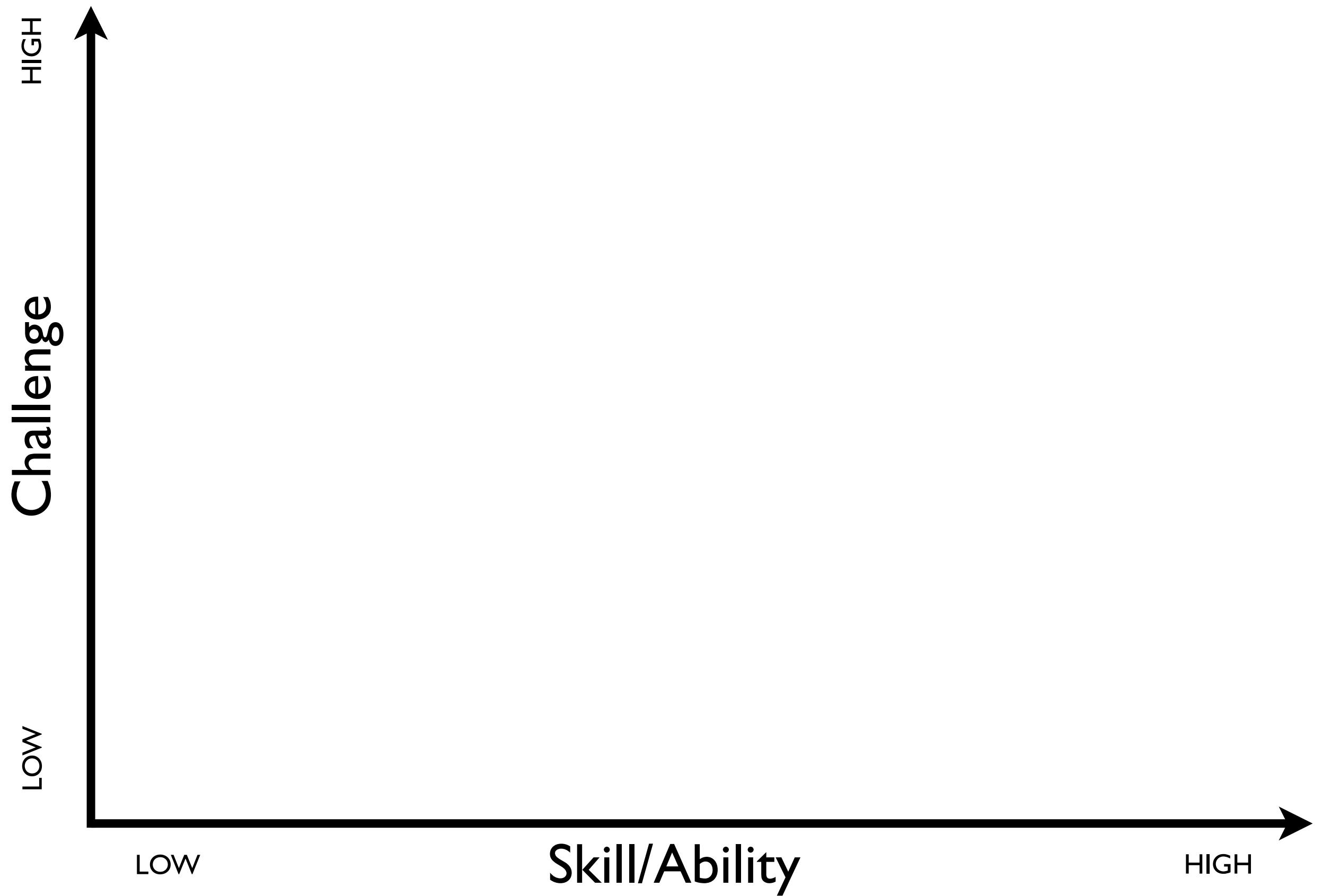


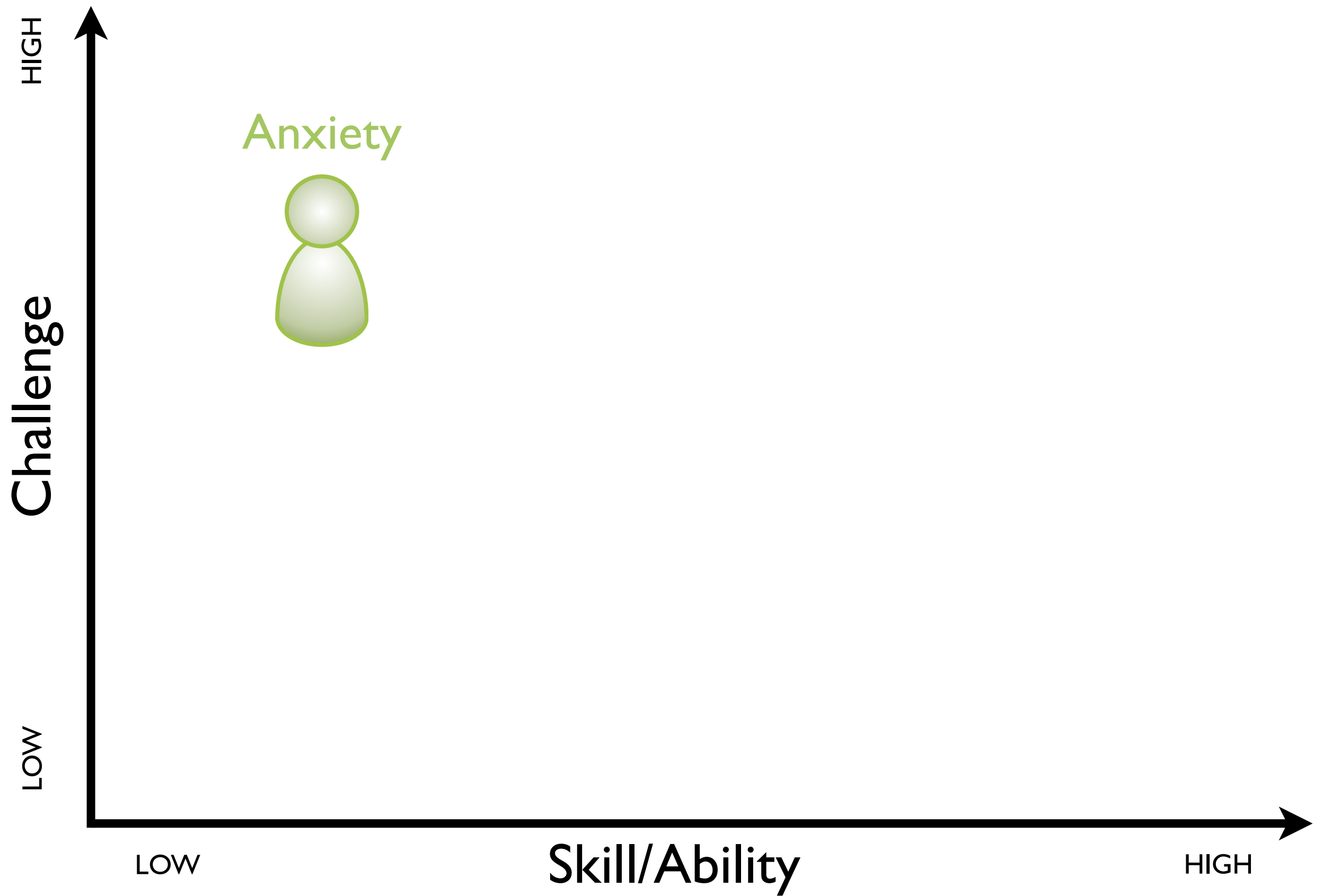
Trust isn't built in one day

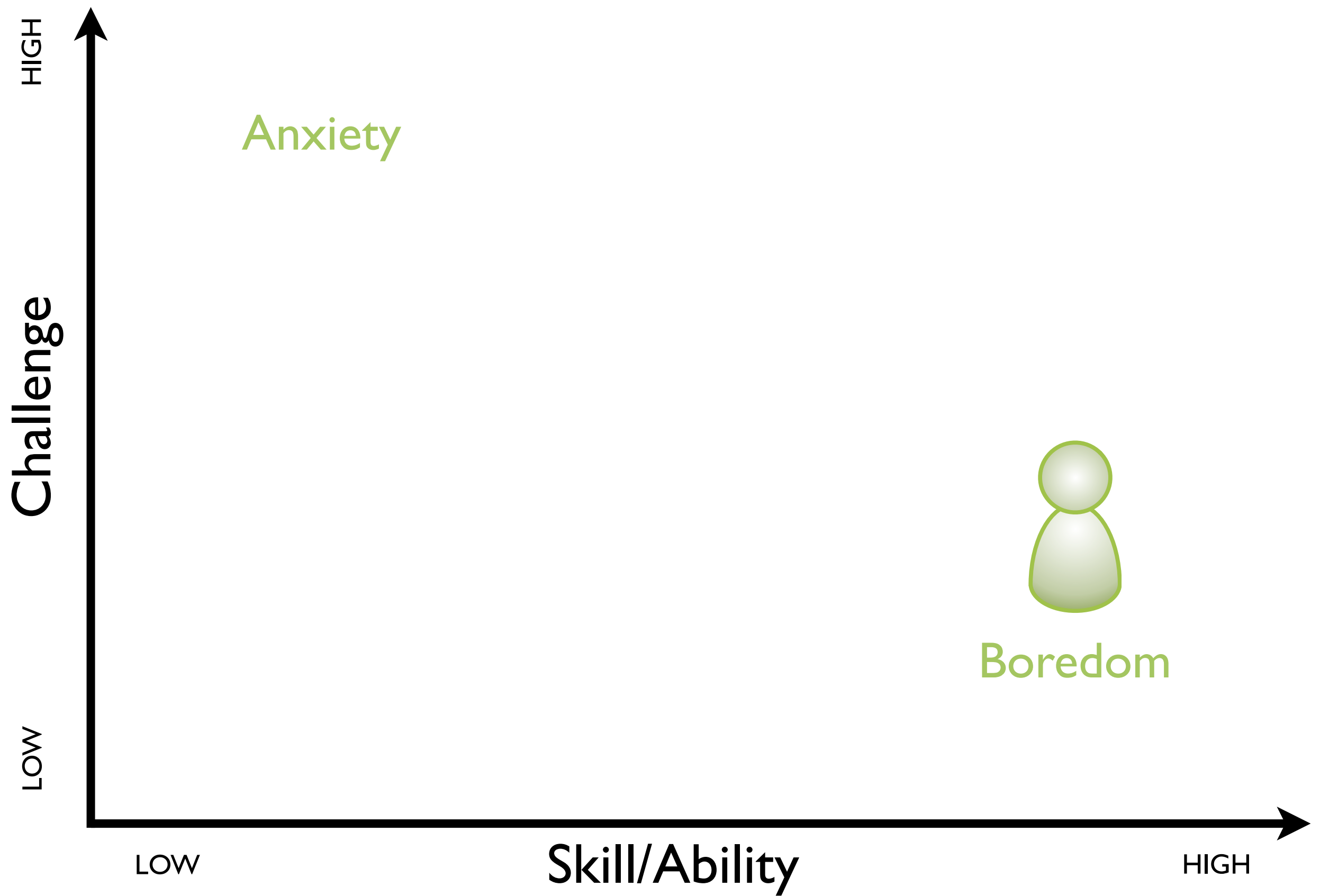


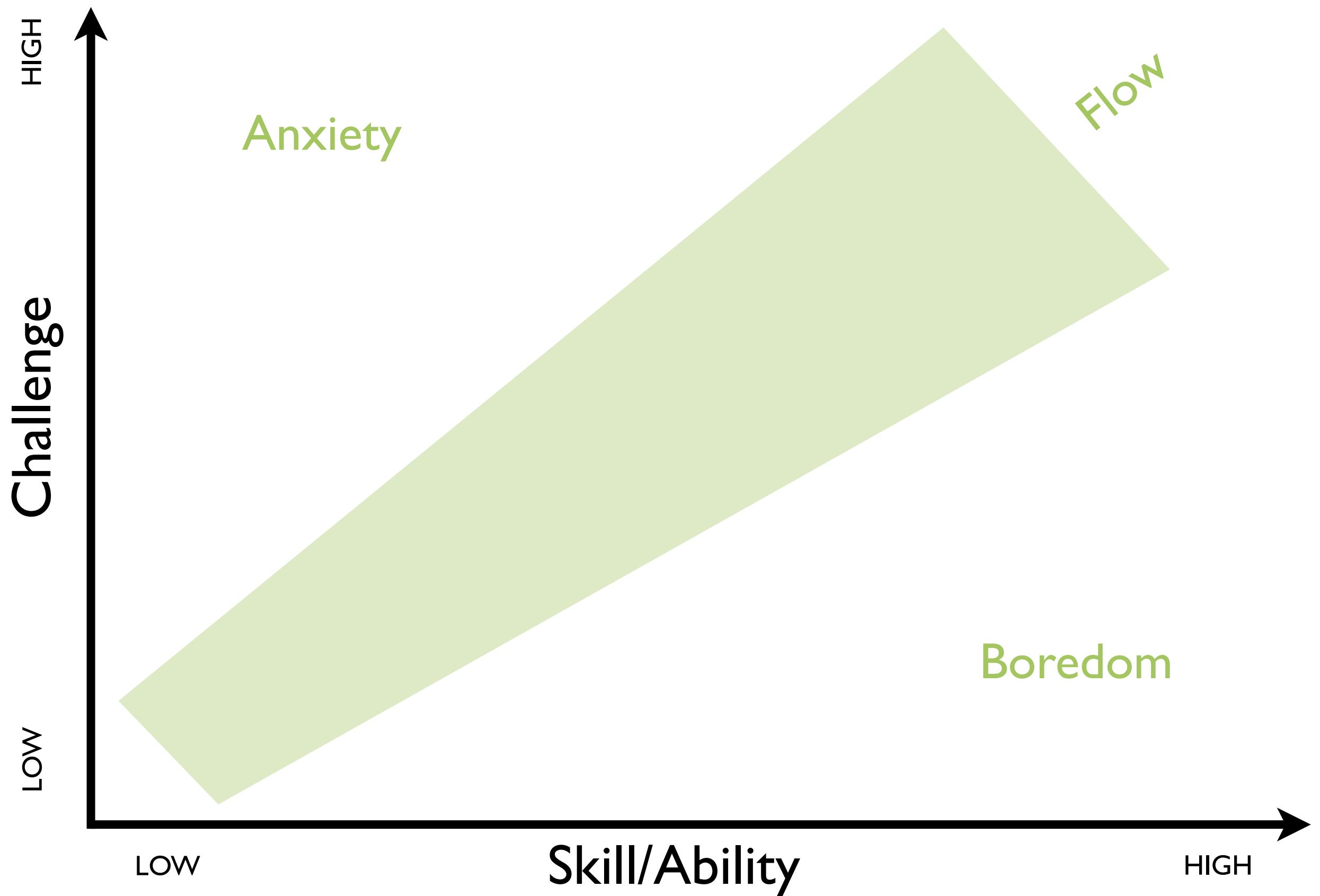
People

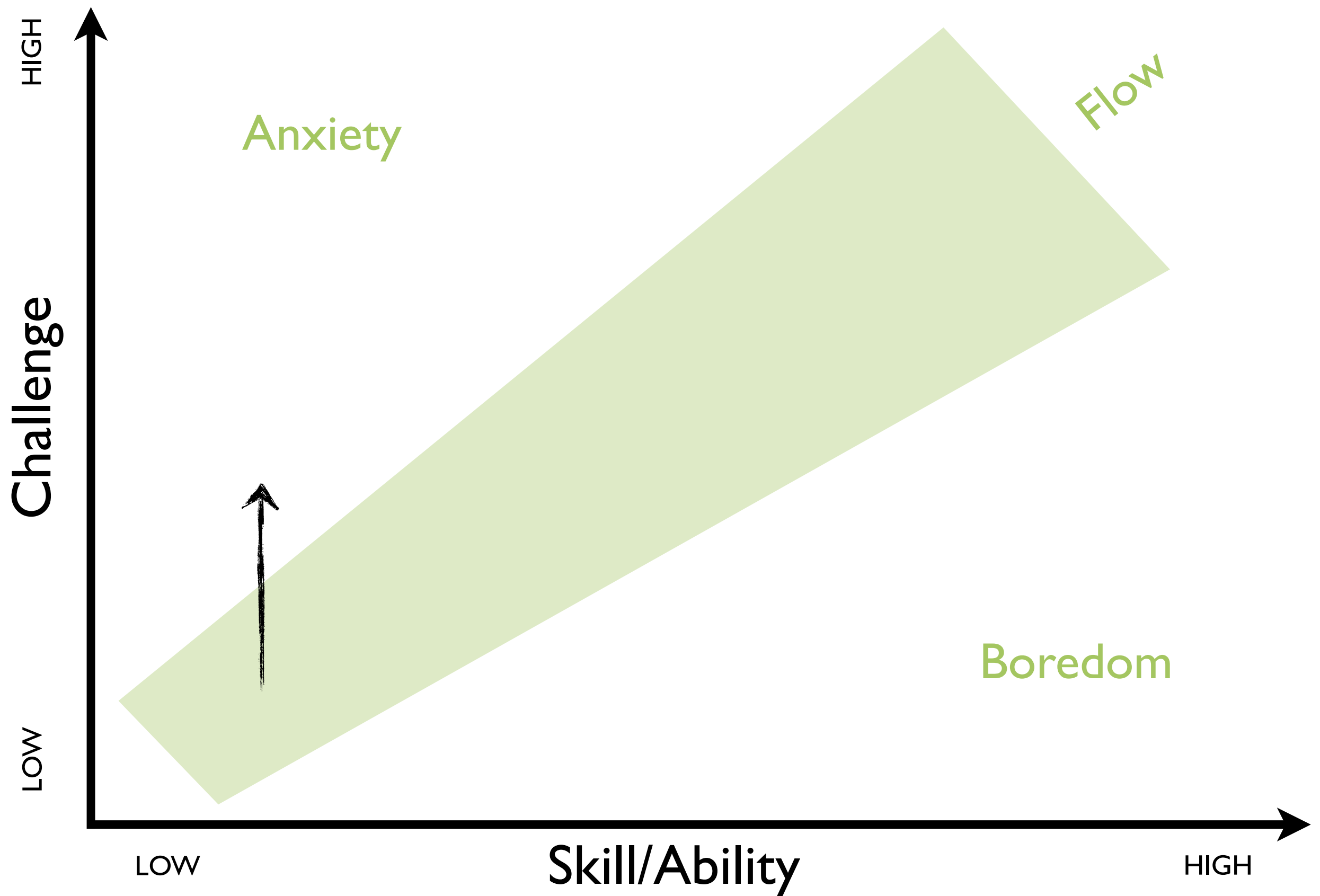
Growing People

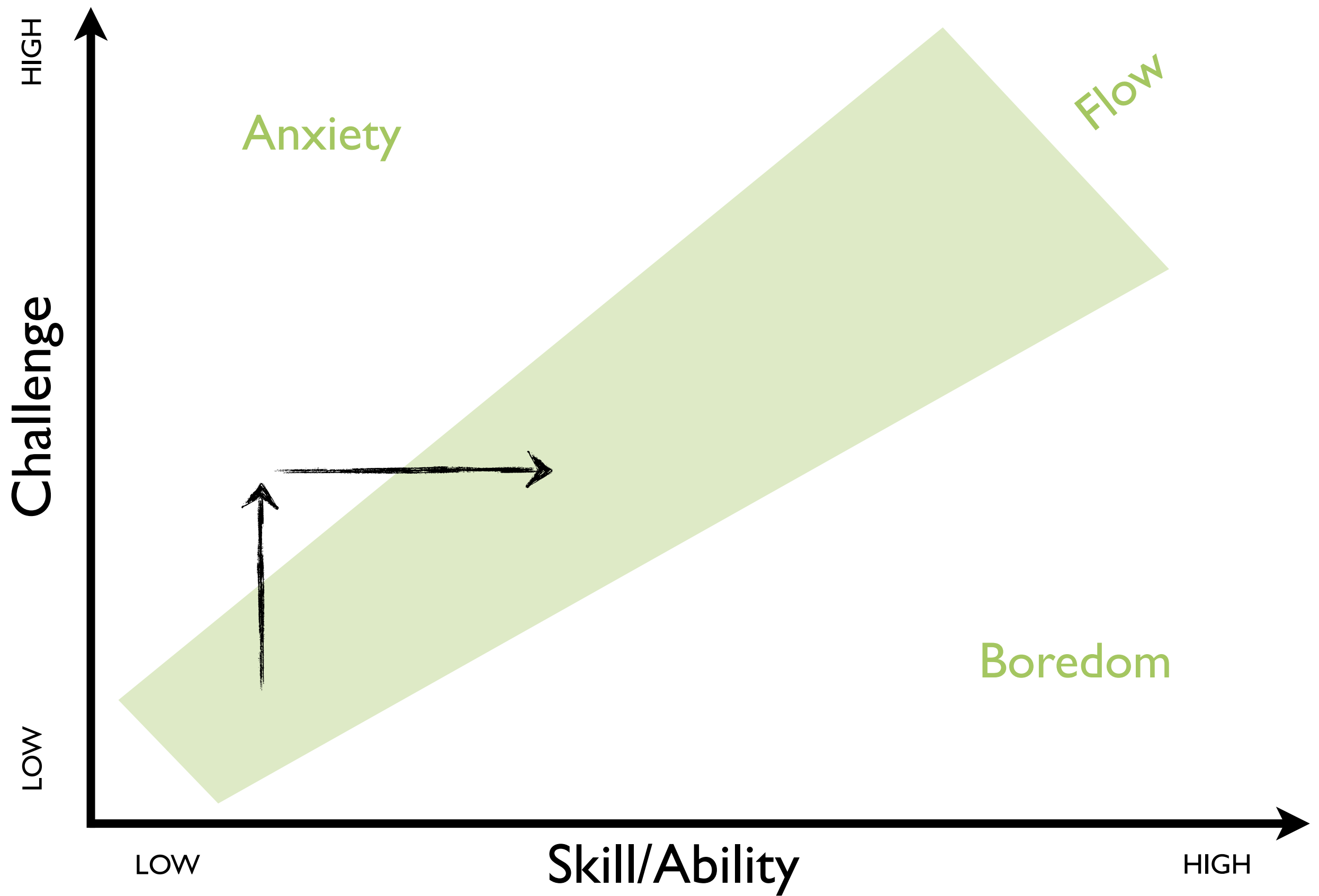




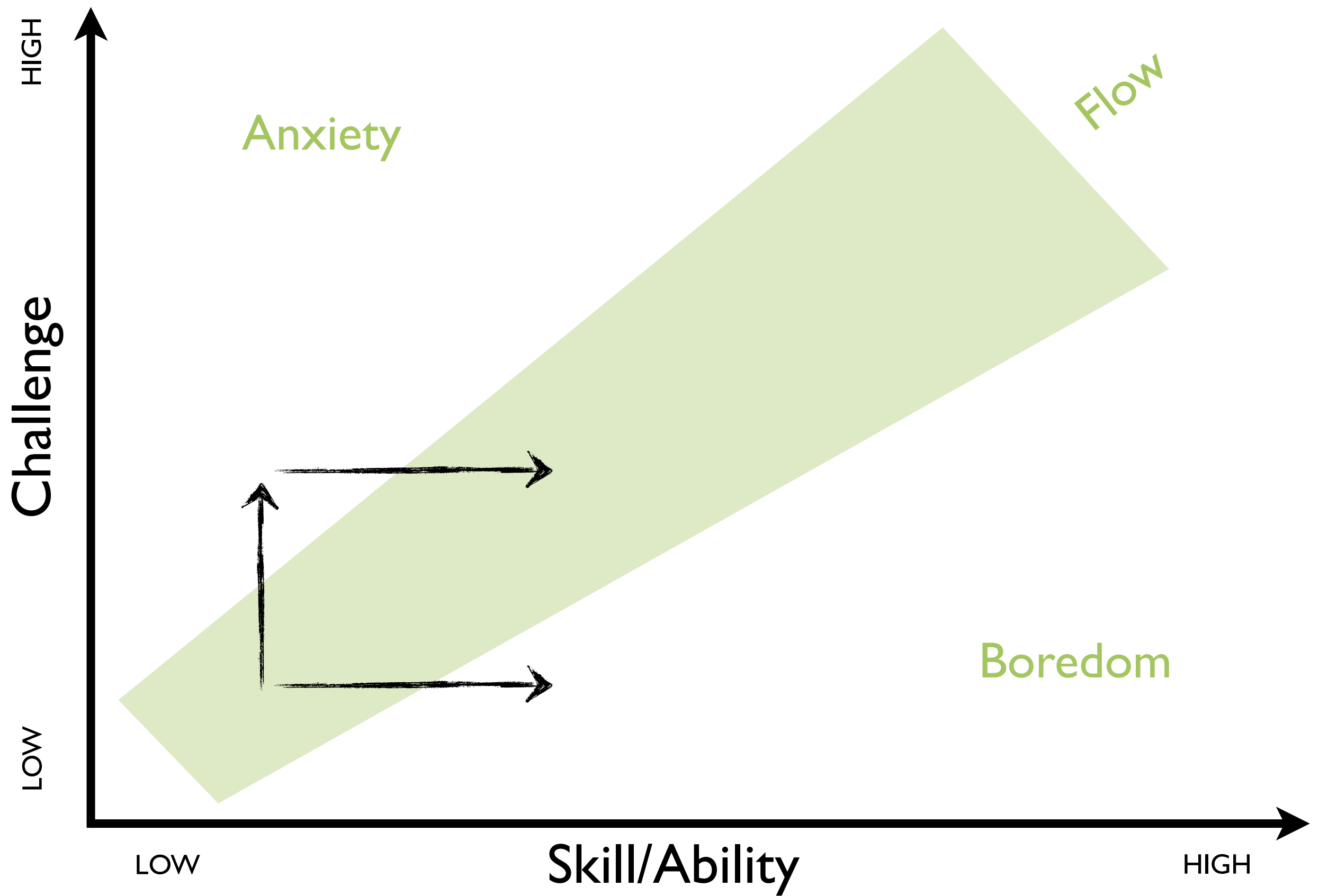


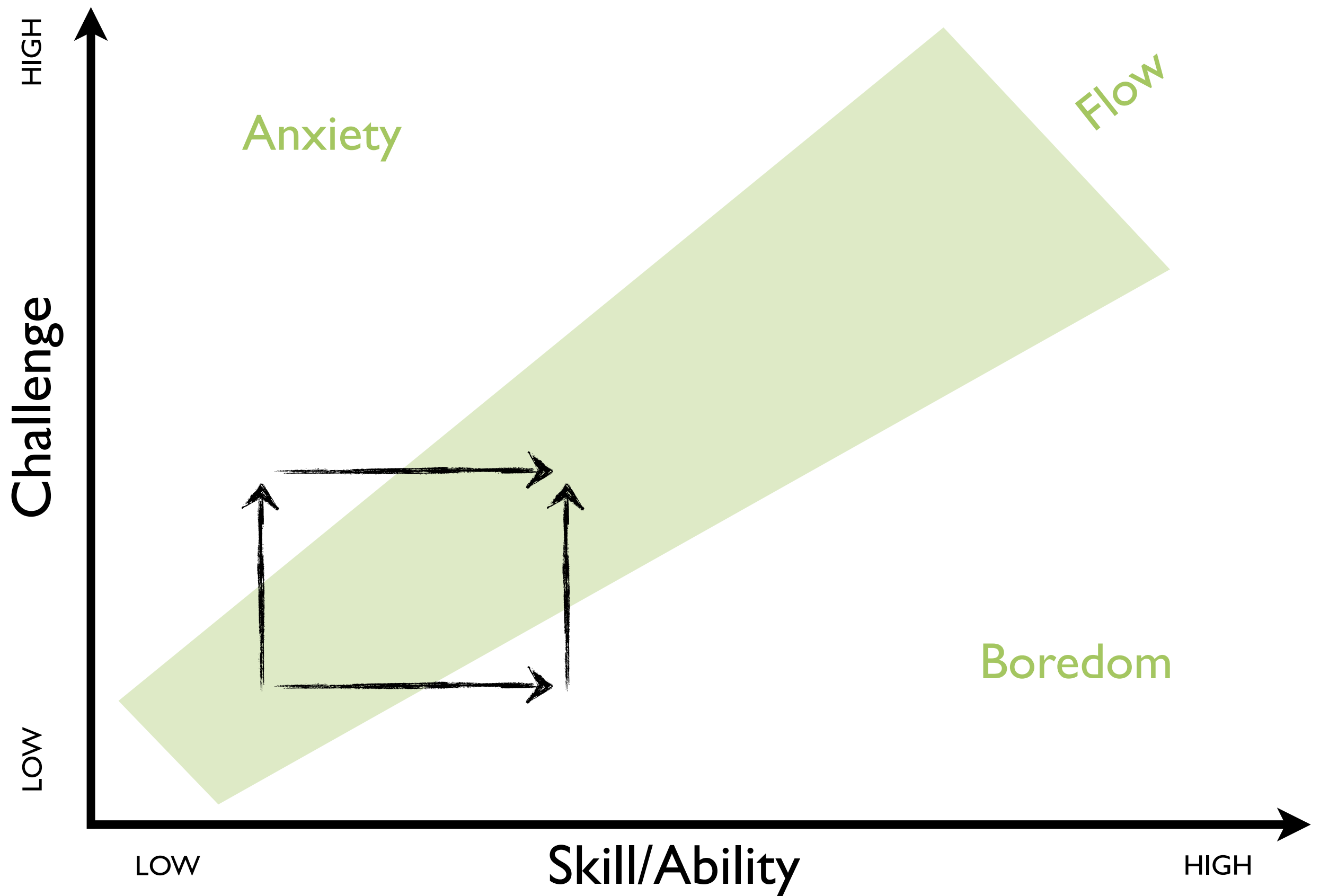


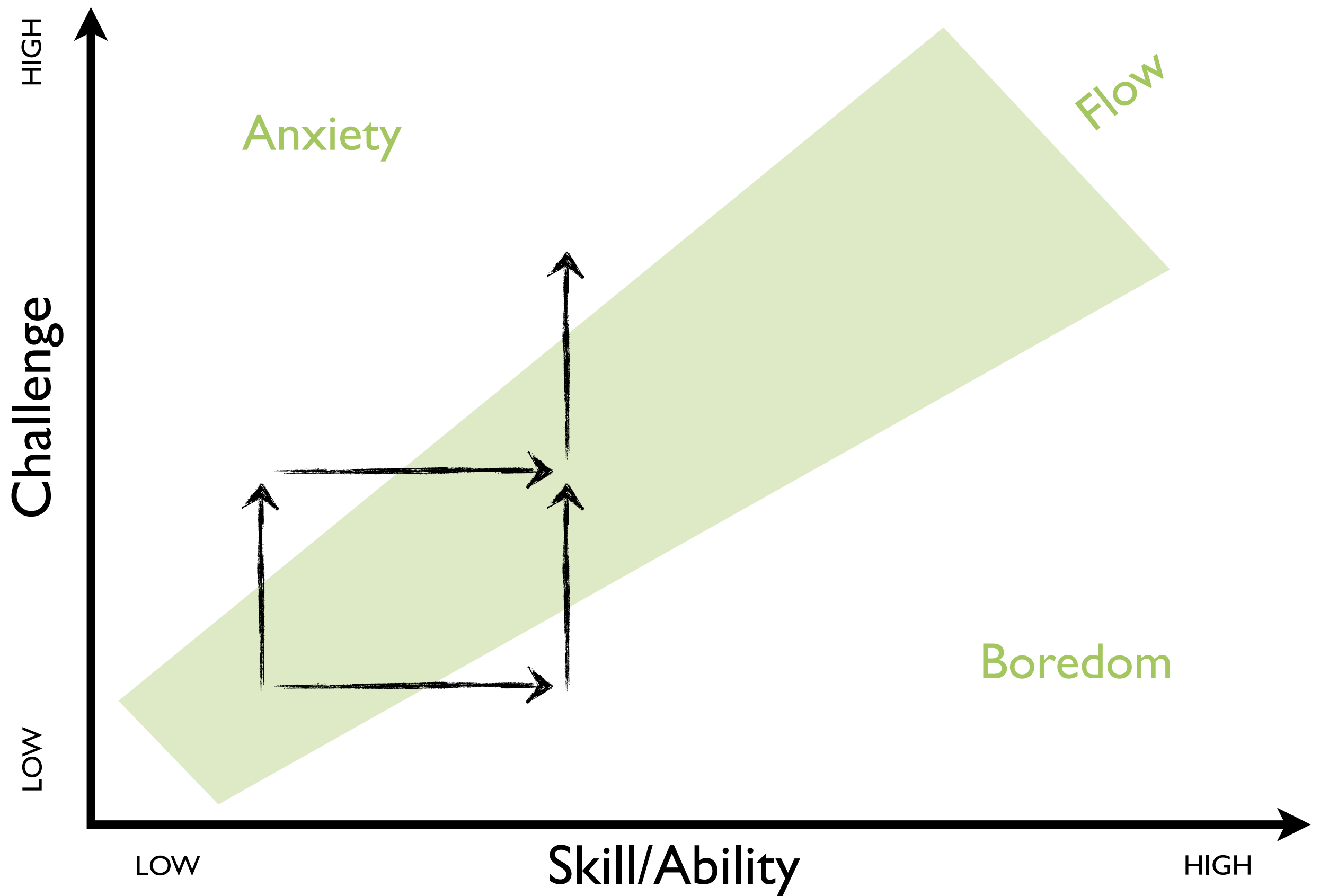


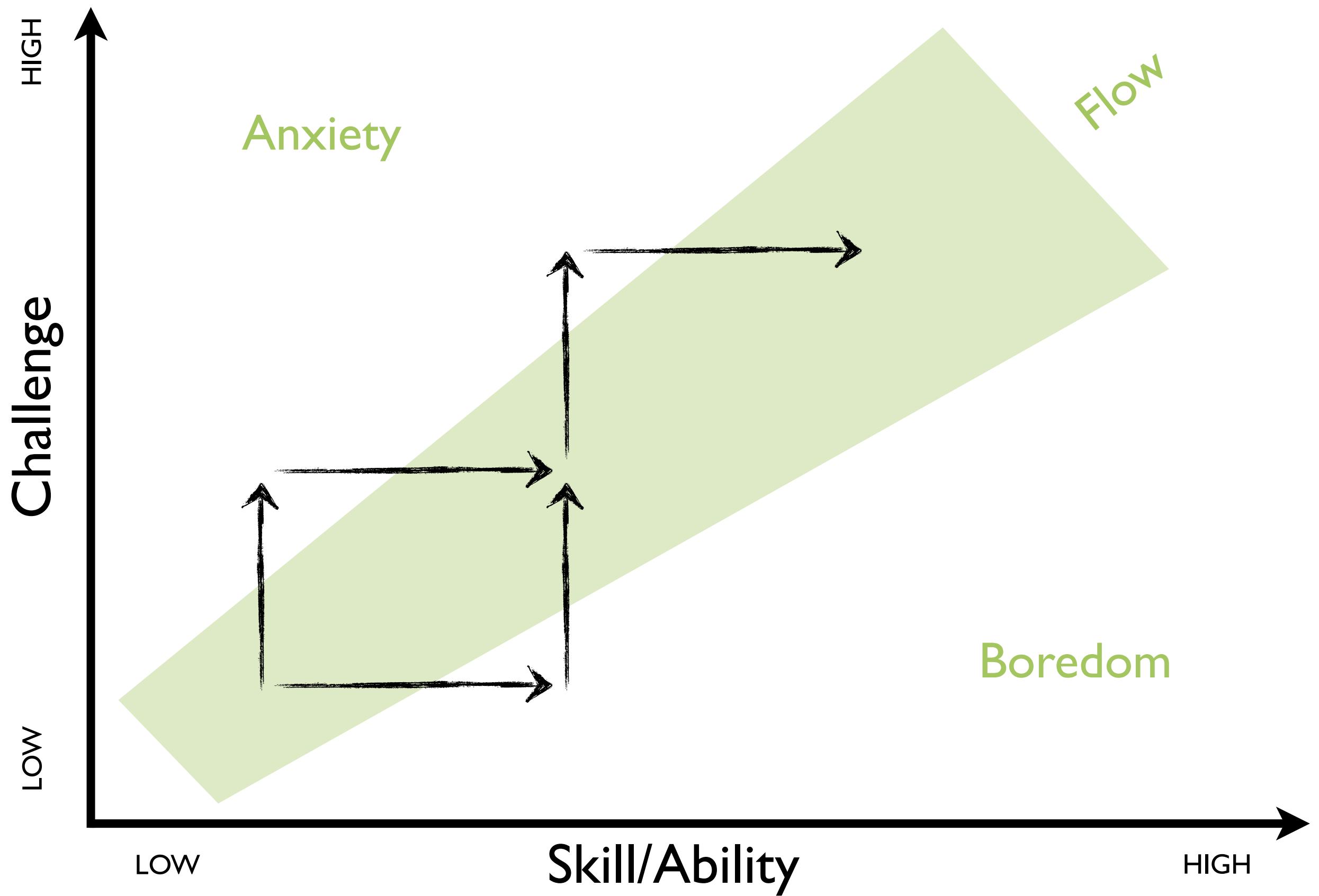


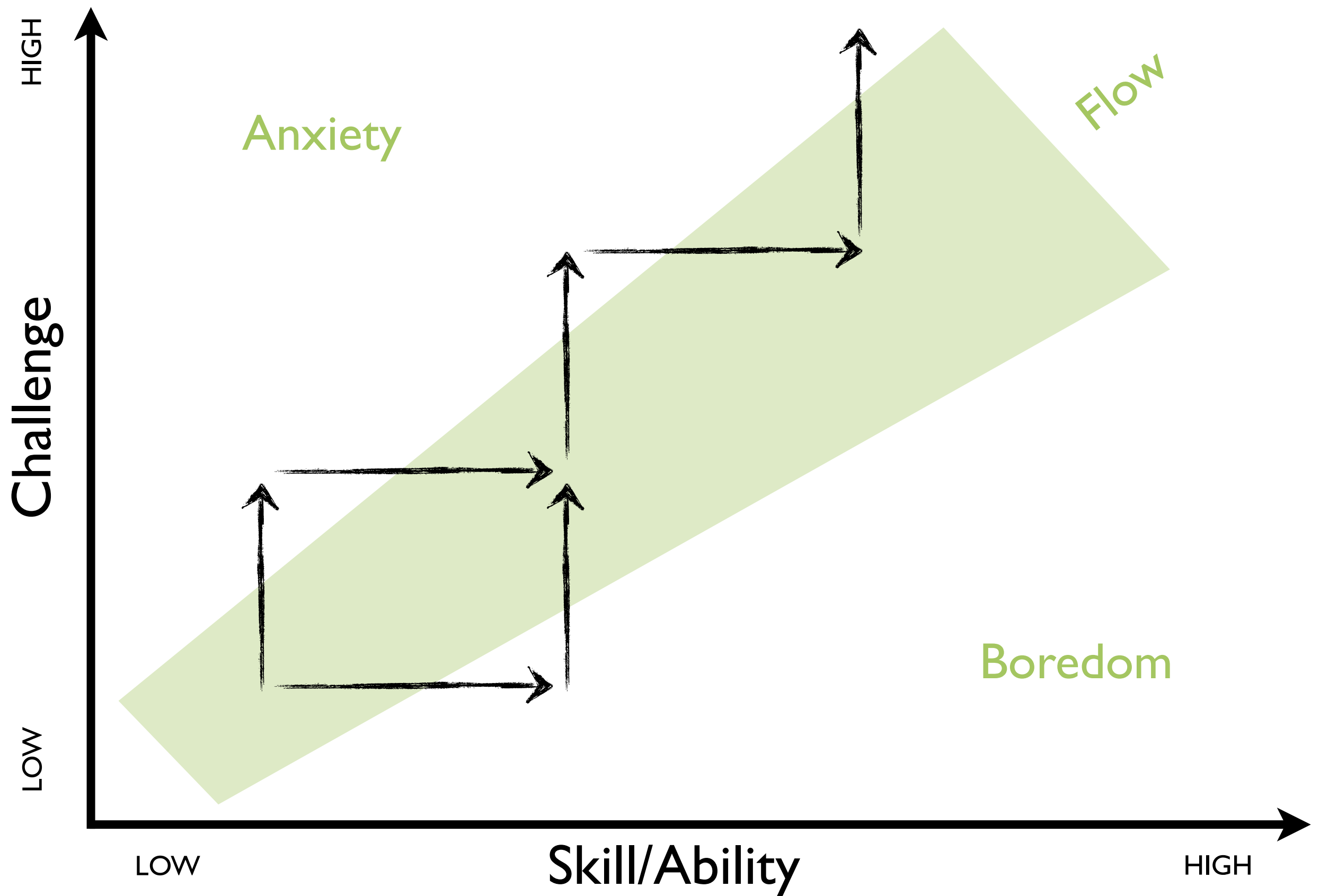












# Maximising Potential



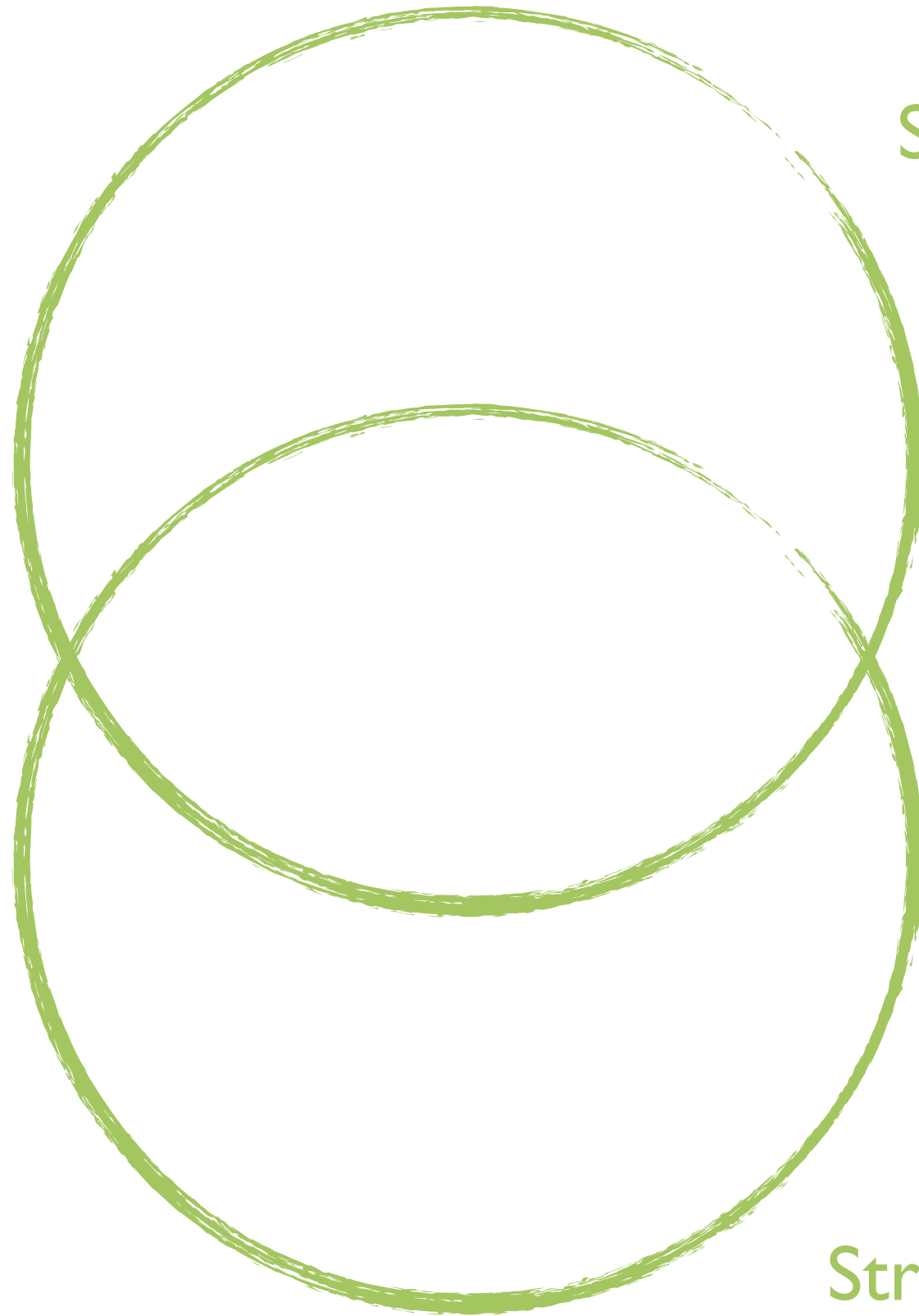
Skills



People



Skills



Strengths

People



Skills

Goals

Strengths

People

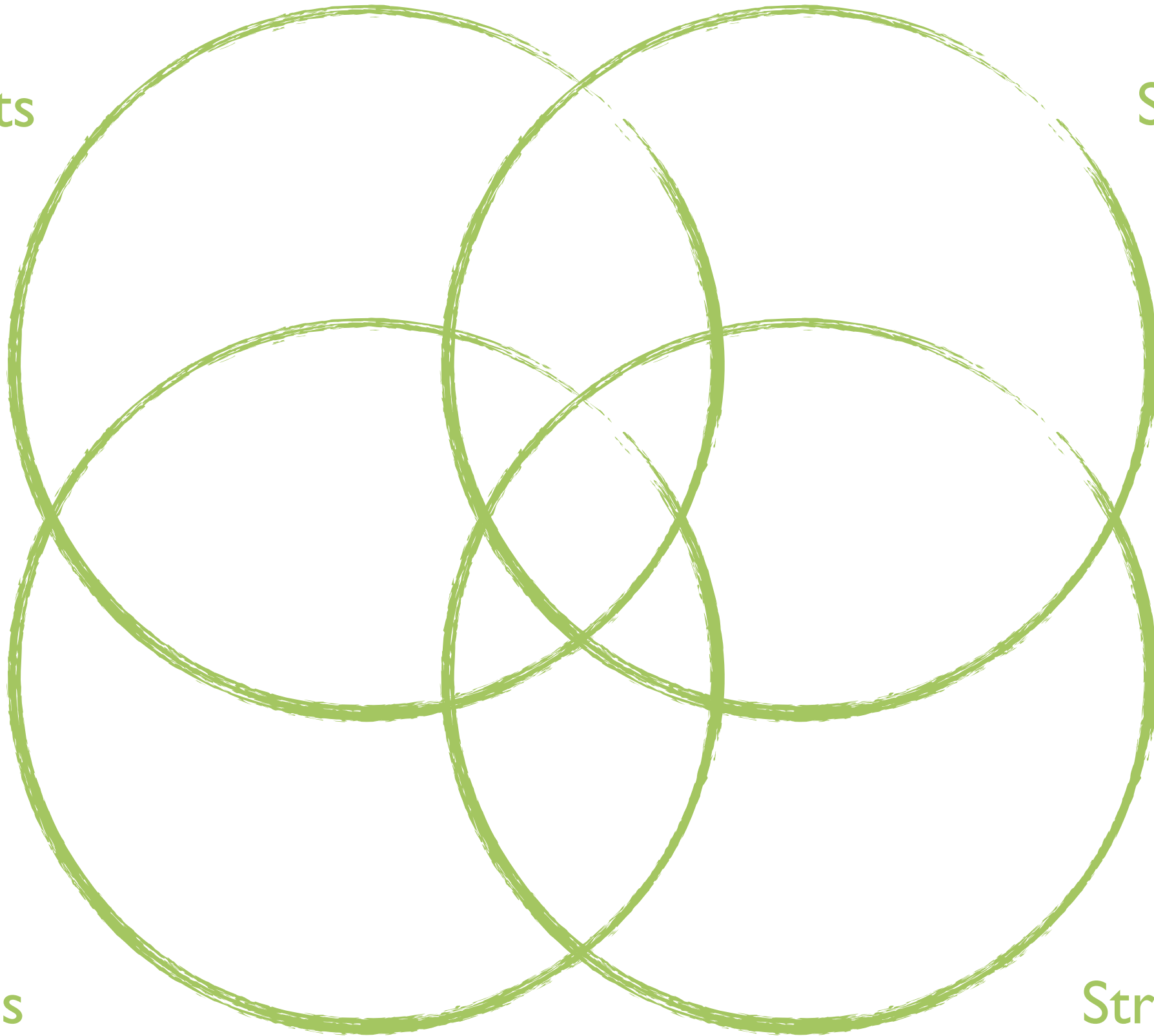
Interests

Skills

Goals

Strengths

People



Interests

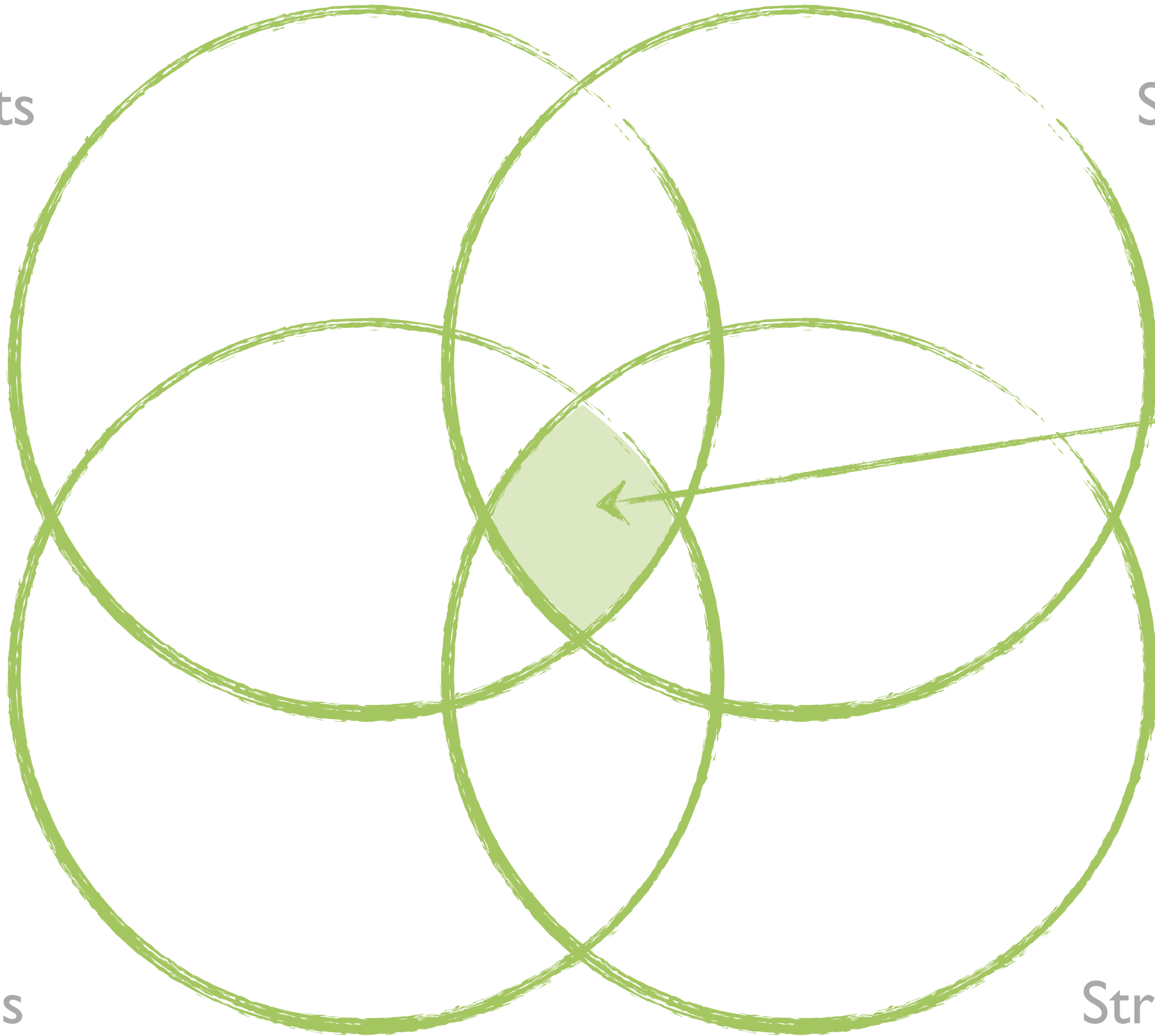
Skills

Sweet  
Spot

Goals

Strengths

People

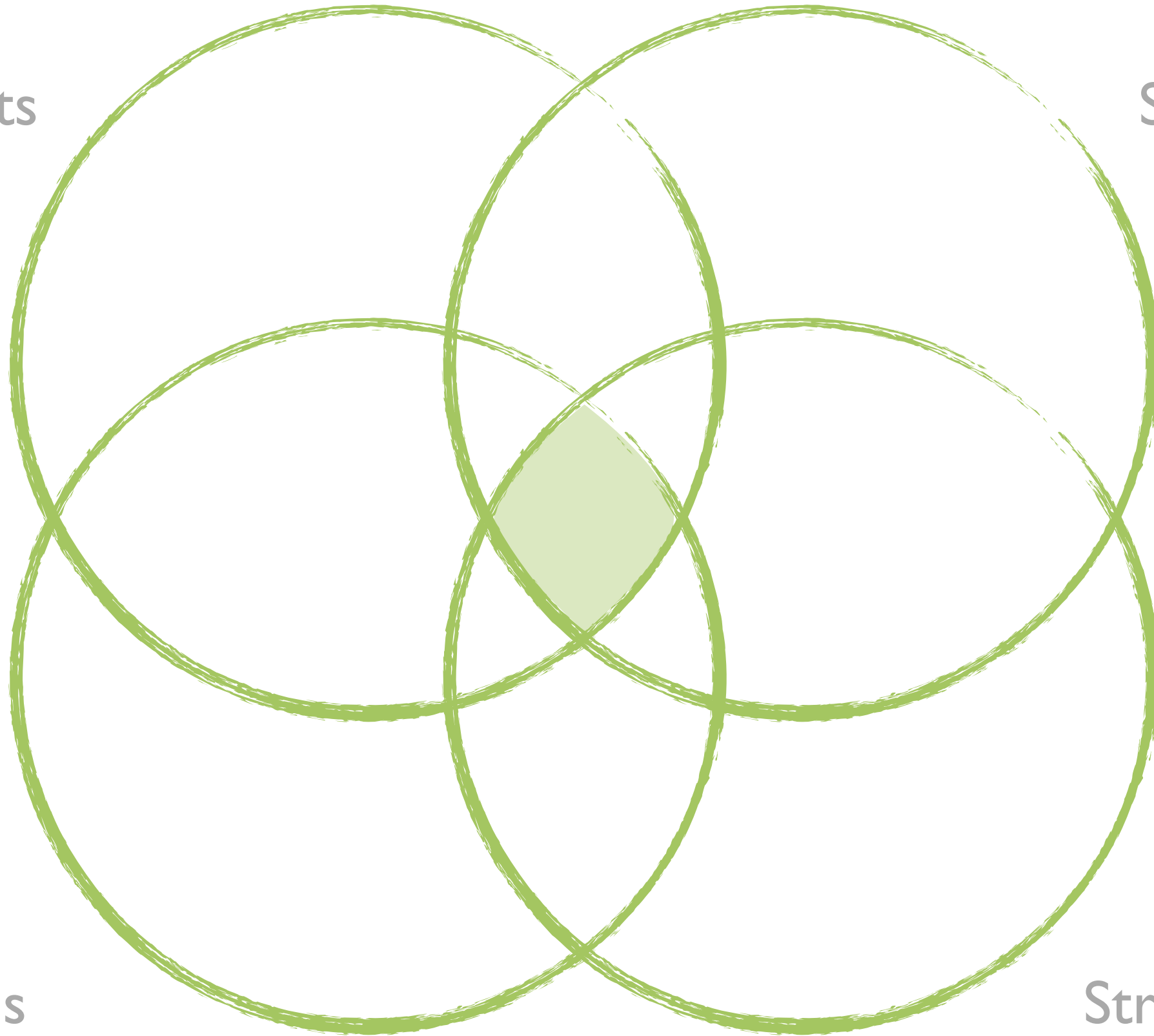


Interests

Skills

Goals

Strengths



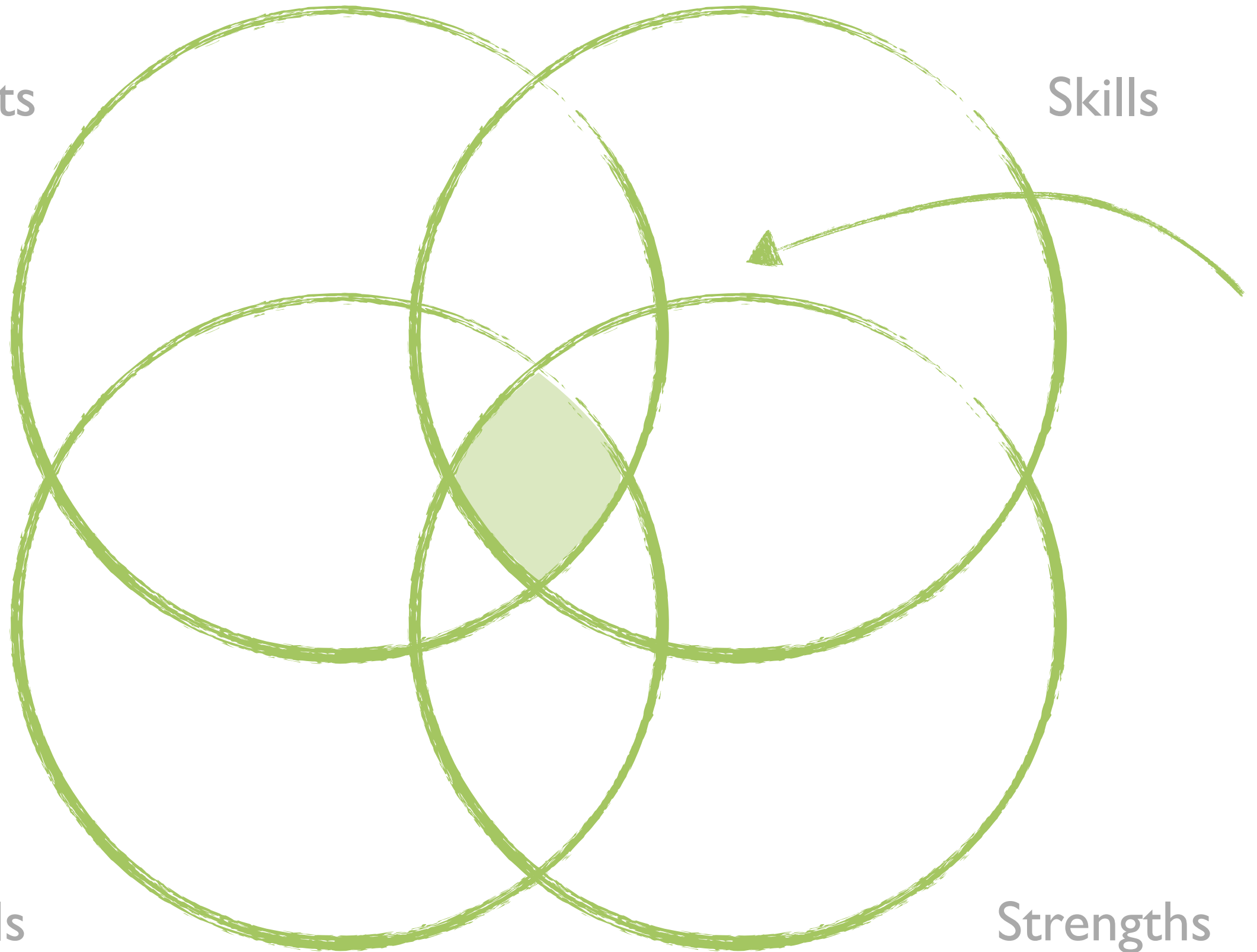
People

Interests

Skills

Goals

Strengths



People

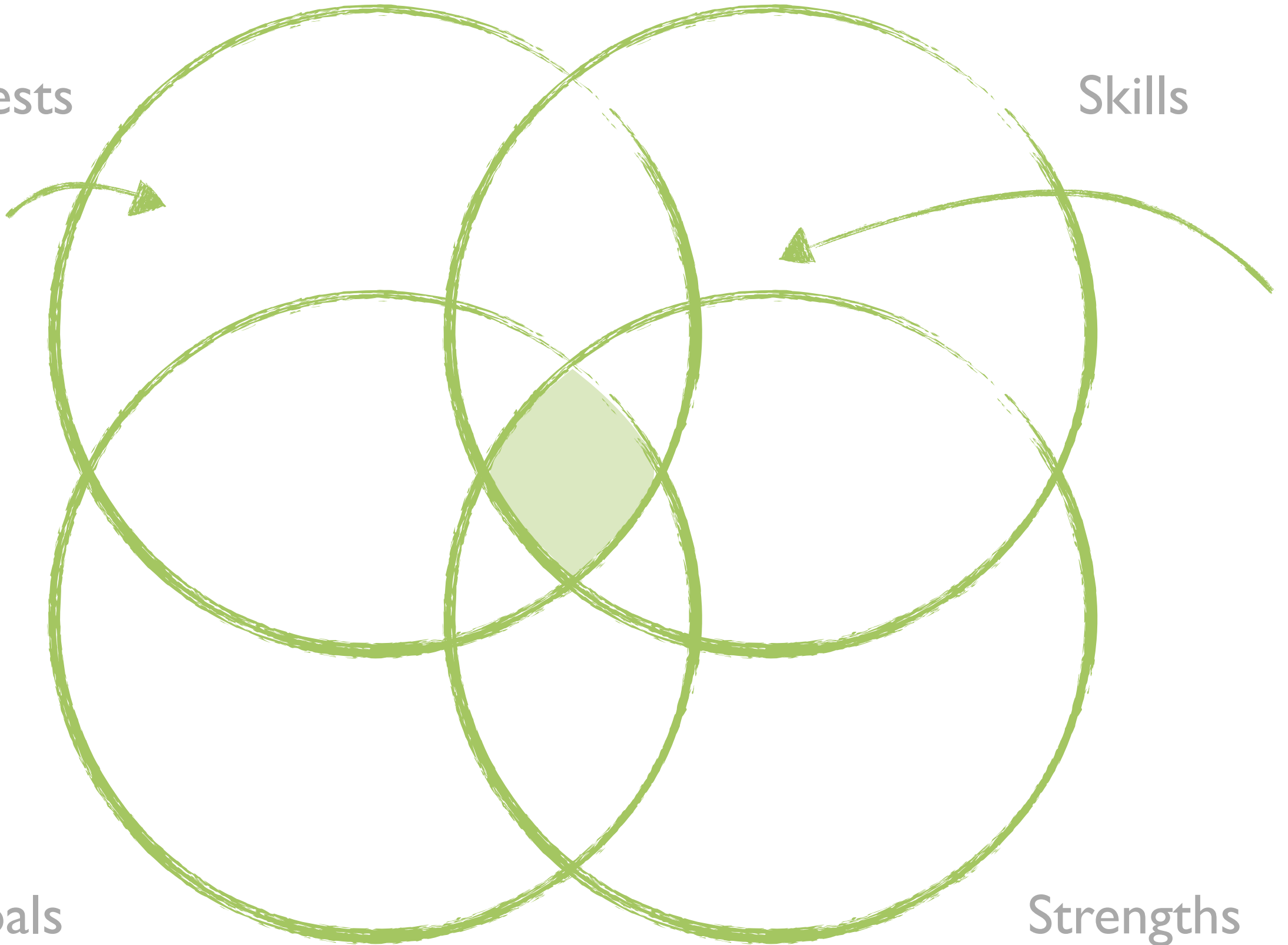
Interests

Skills

Goals

Strengths

People



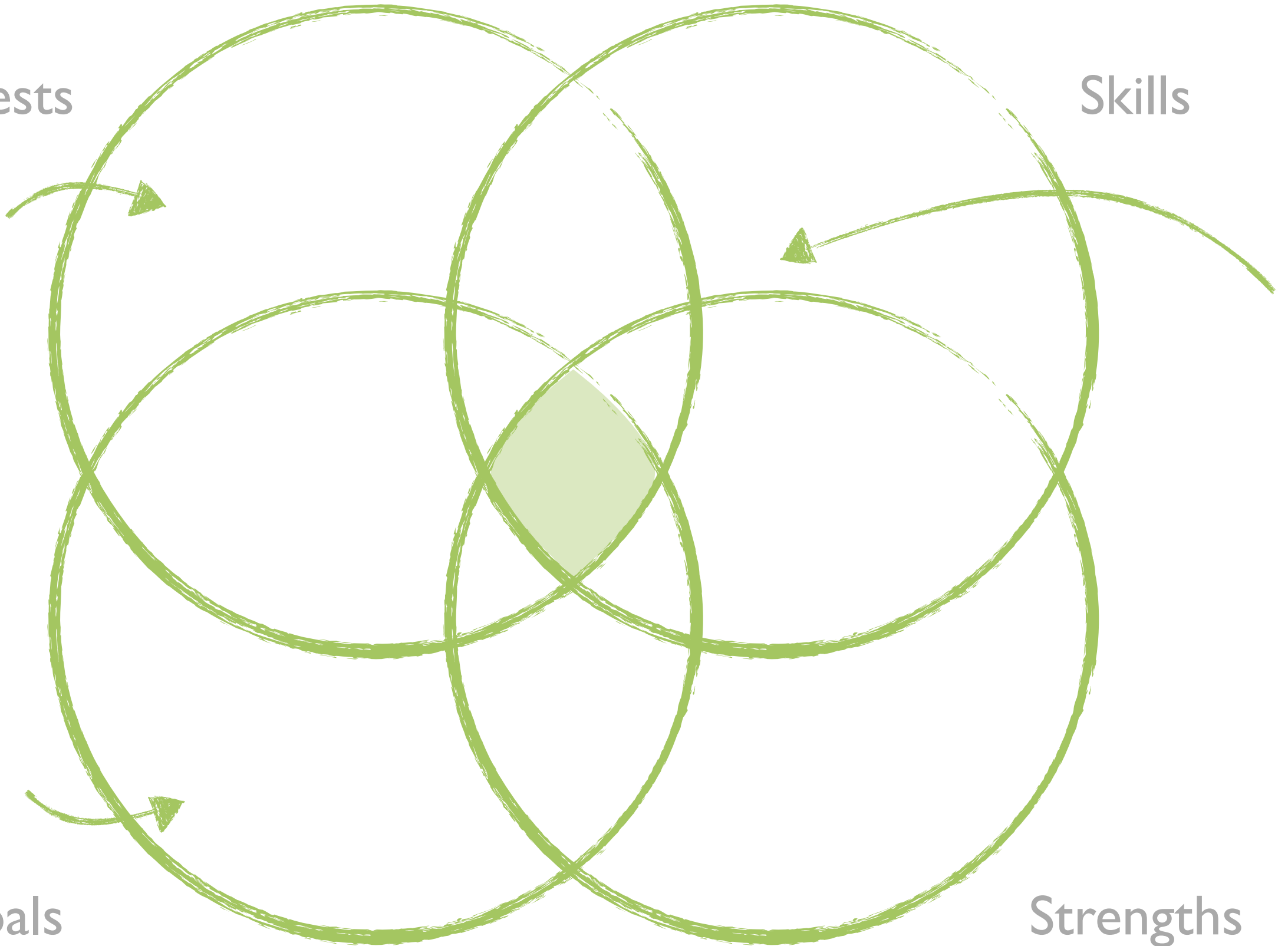
Interests

Skills

Goals

Strengths

People





# Learning Activities

Team code reviews

Brown Bag sessions

Pair Programming

# Learning Activities

Video/Book Club

Spike Showcases

Technical

Retrospectives



A close-up photograph of a large pile of apples. Most of the apples are green and yellow, indicating they are ripe. One apple, located in the center-right of the frame, is a deep red color, making it stand out from the rest of the pile. The apples are packed closely together, filling the entire background.

Beware the bad apple



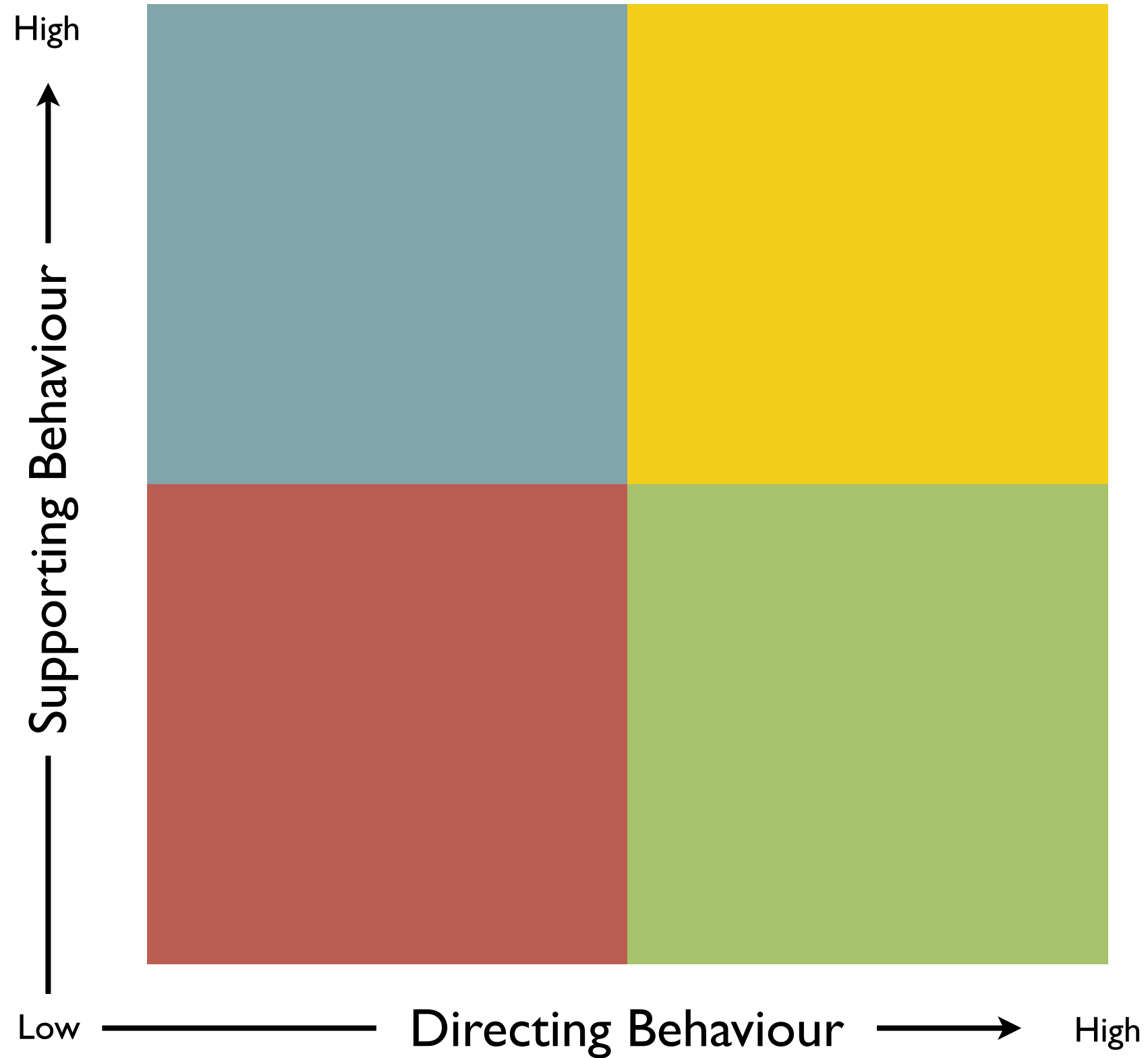


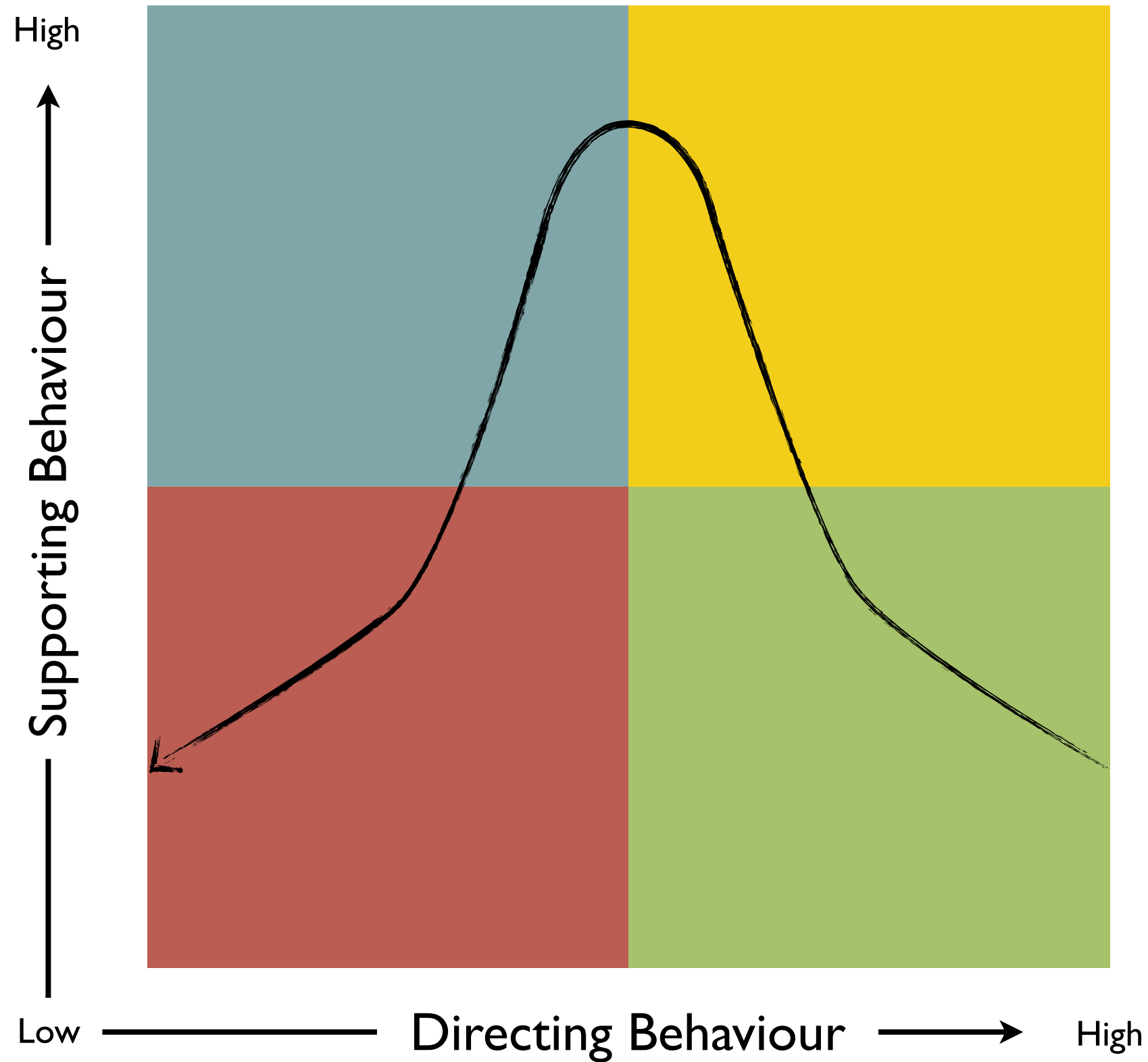
Is it okay to tell people  
what to do?

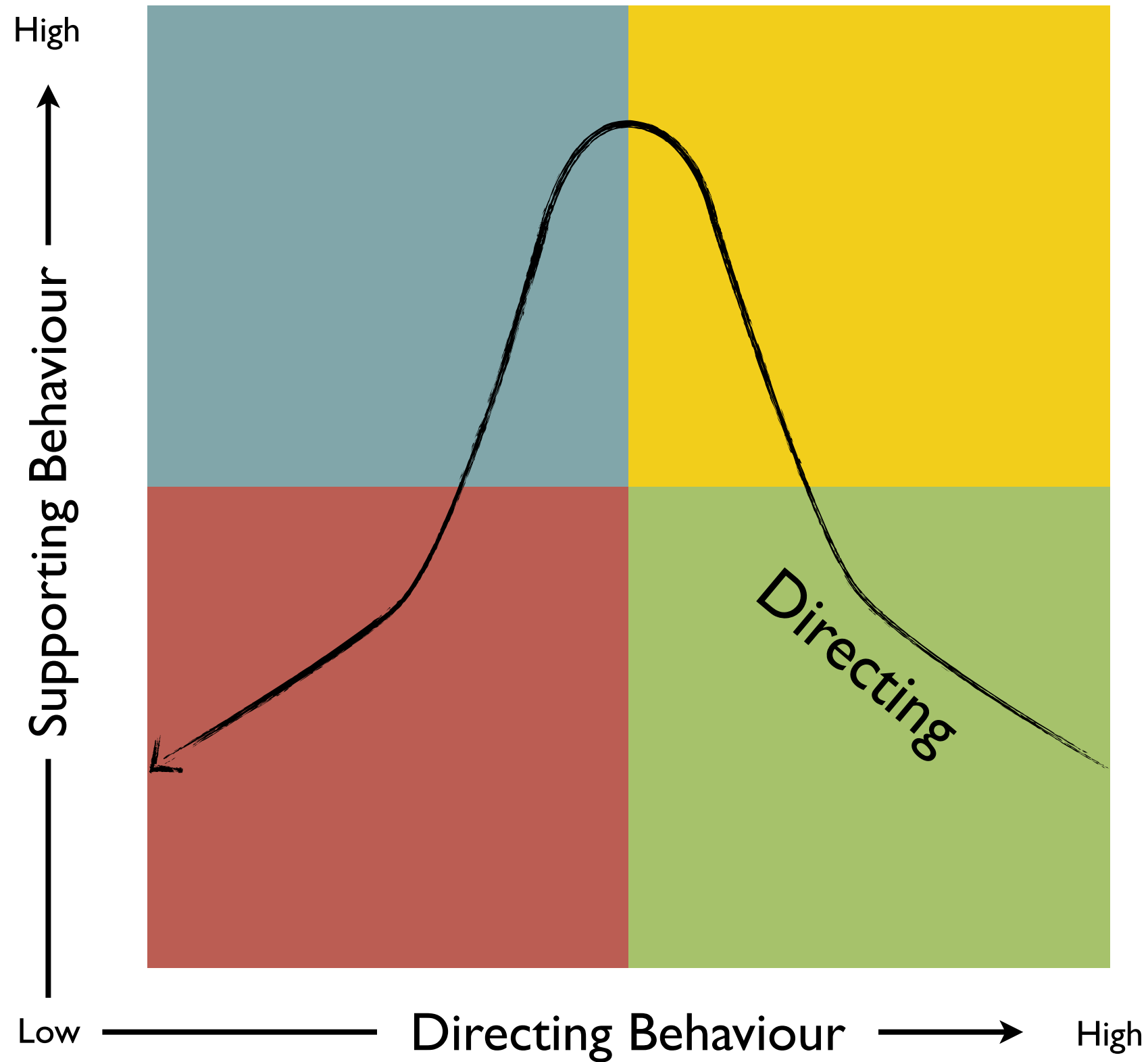
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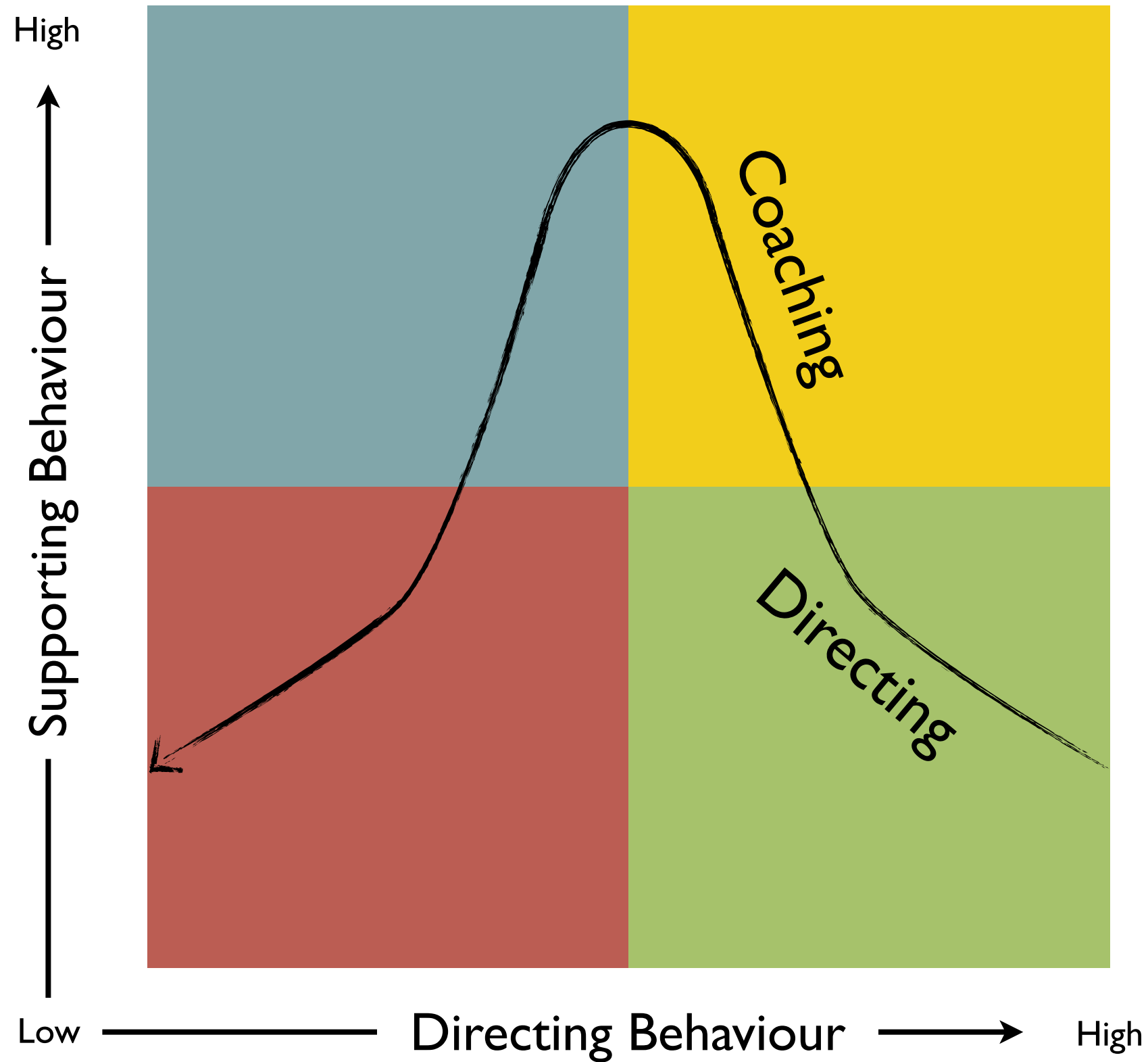
Yes  
(but only sometimes)

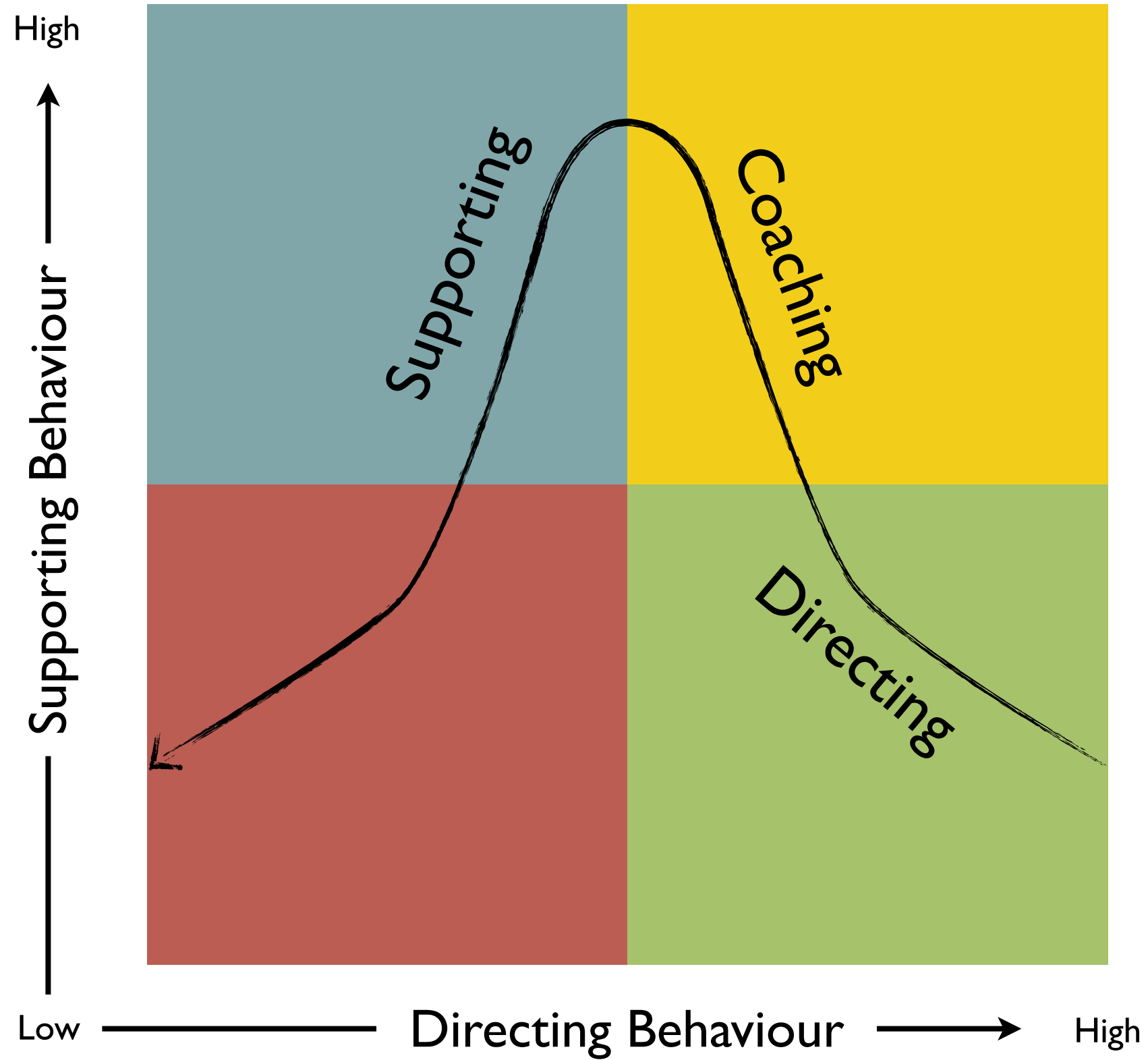


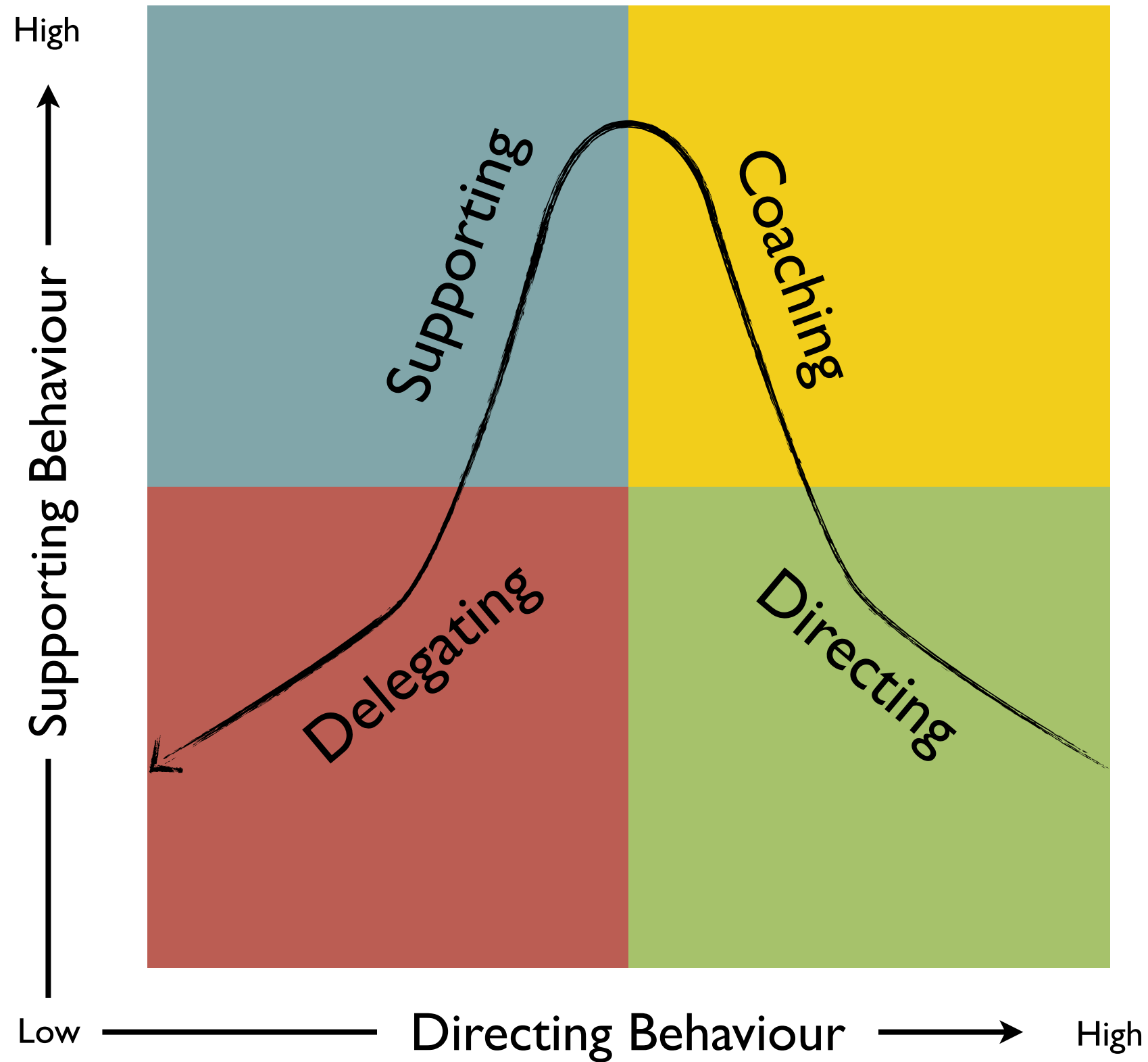


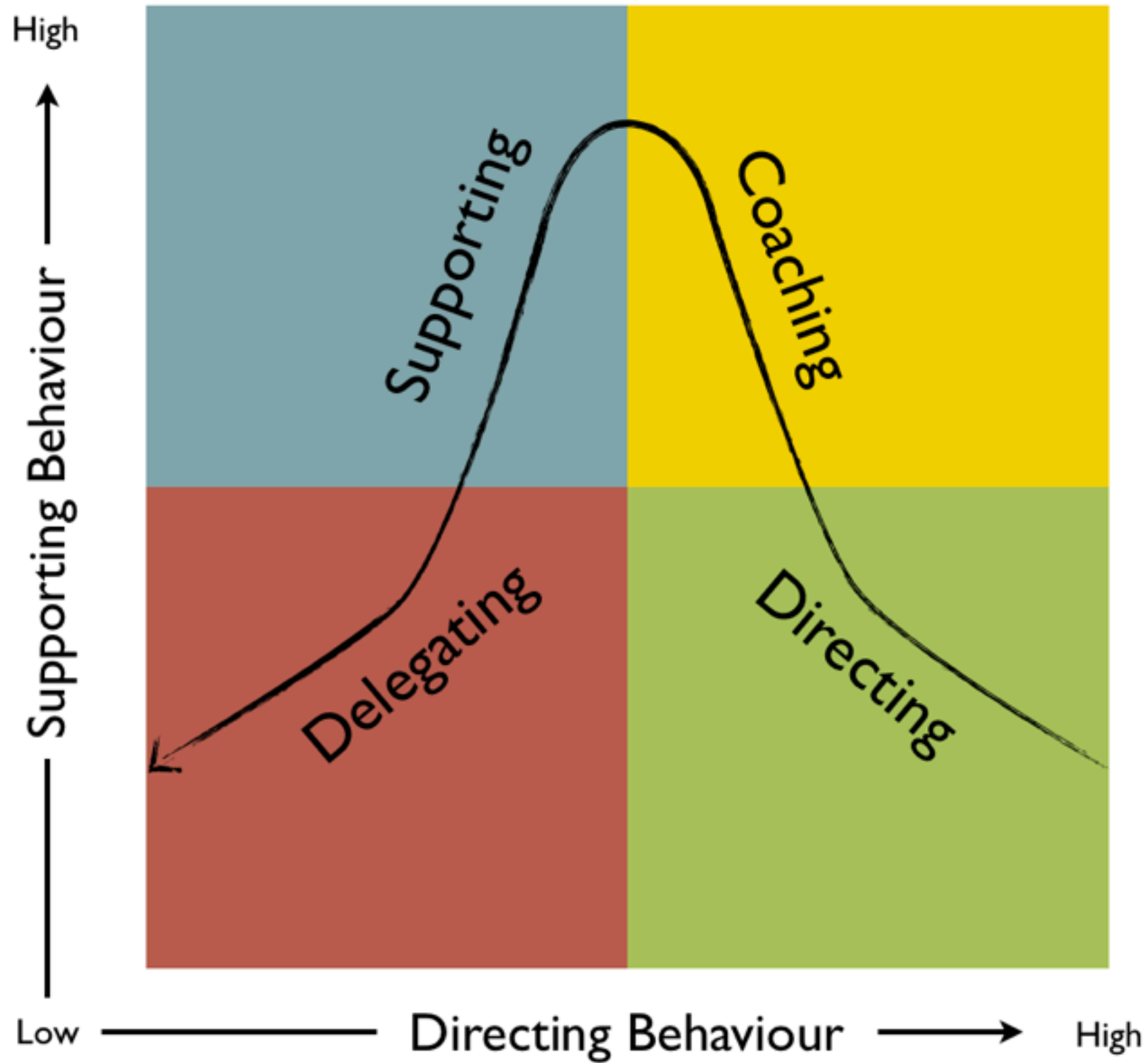


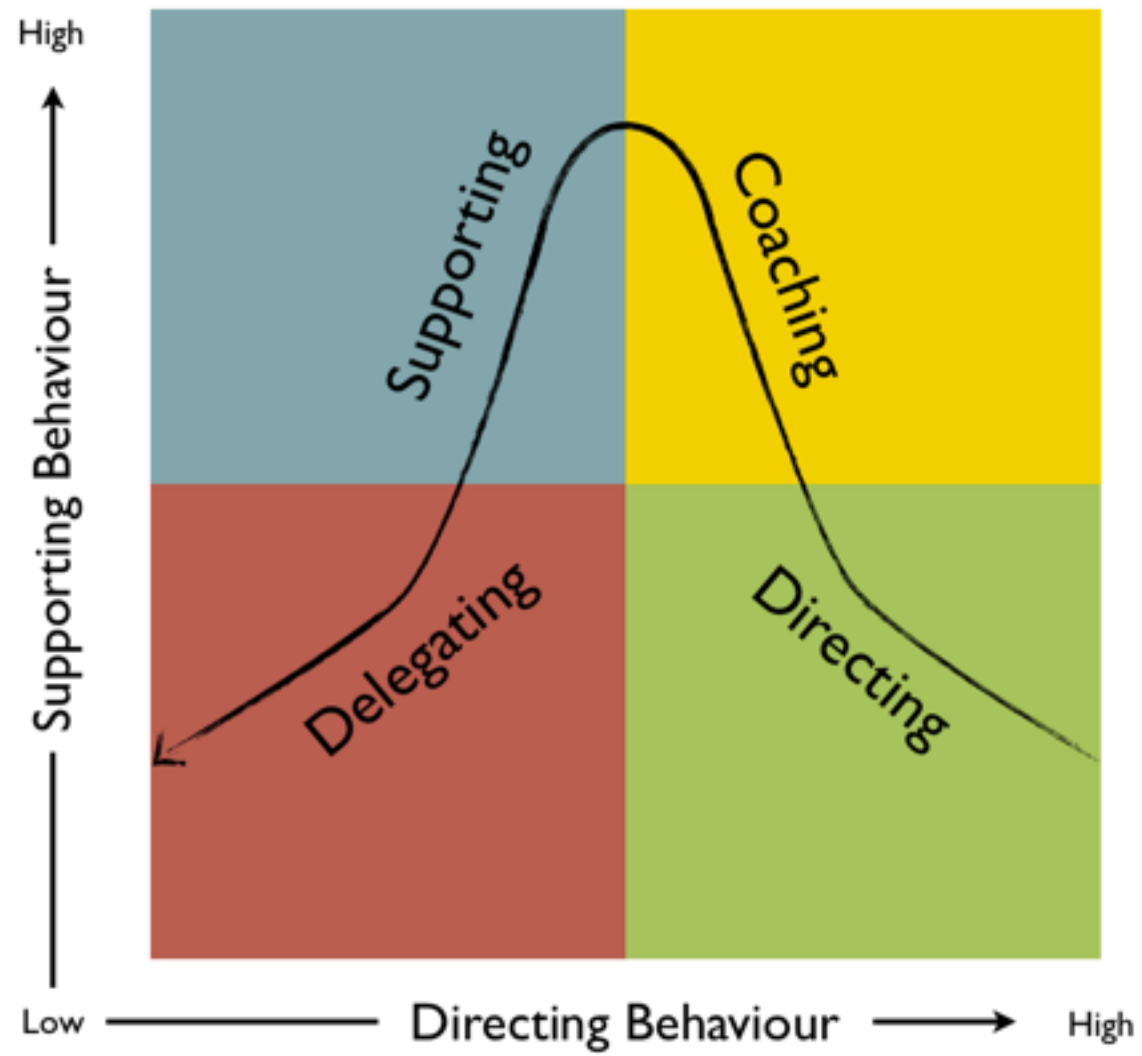




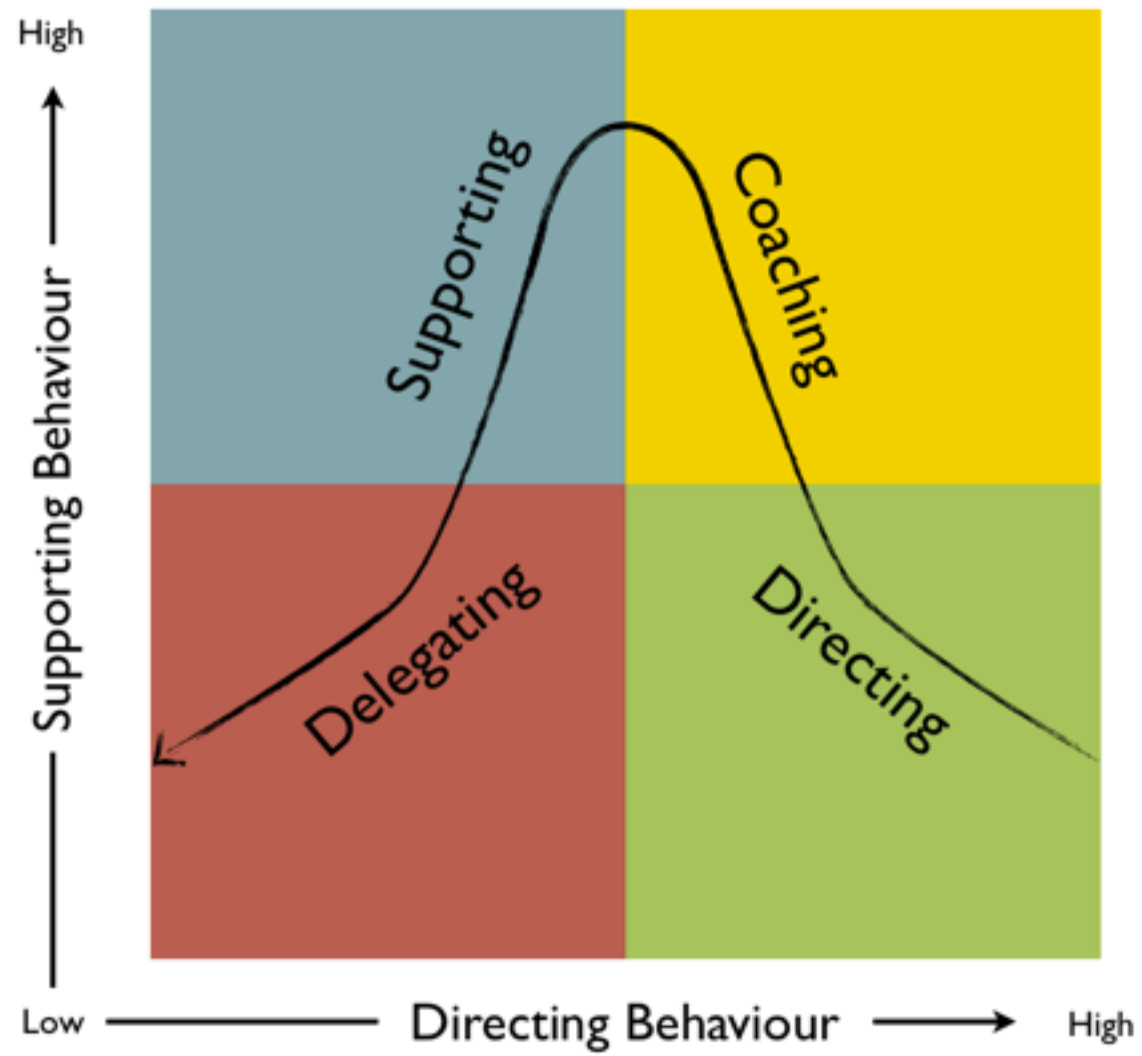






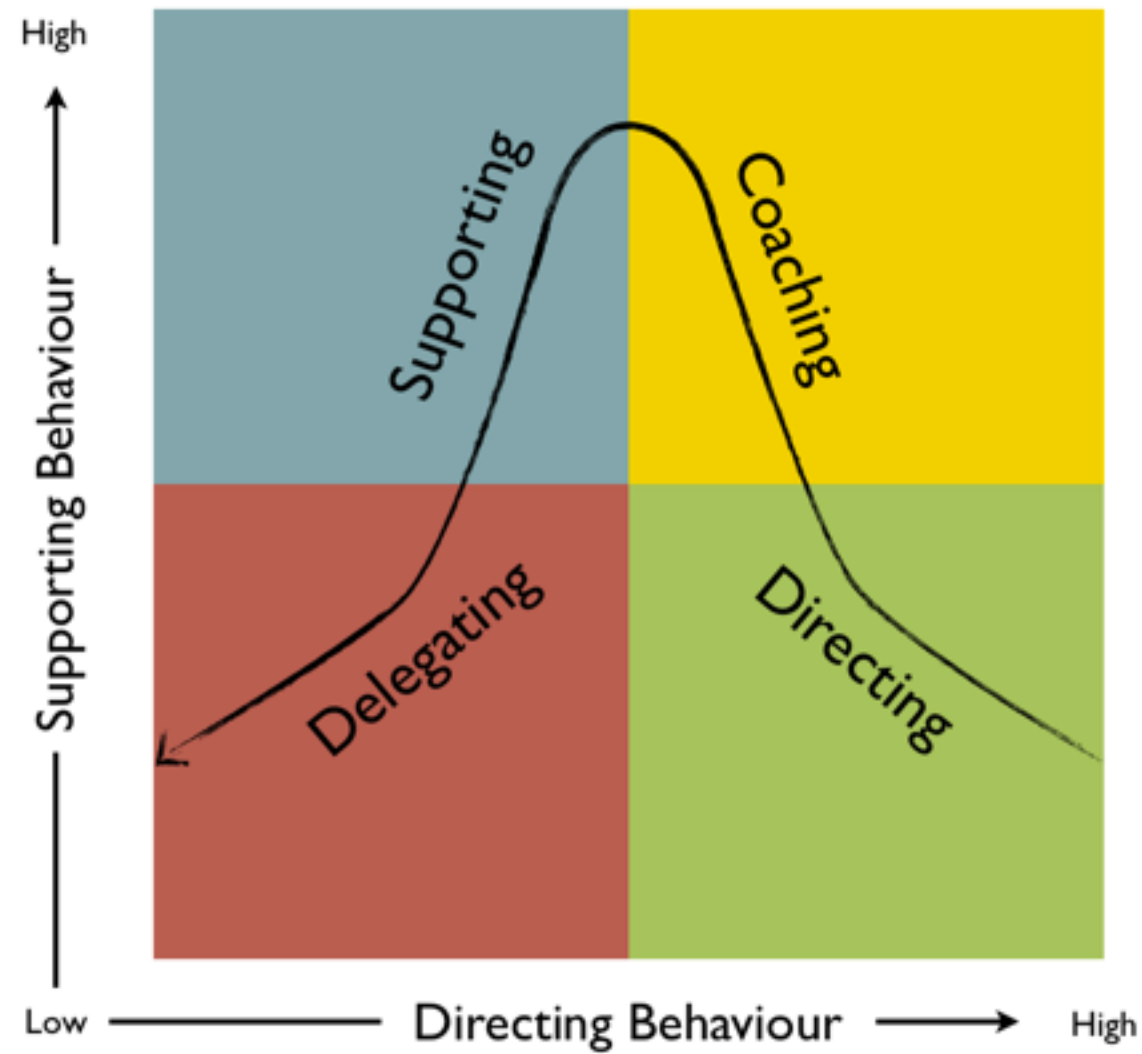






Development level of an individual

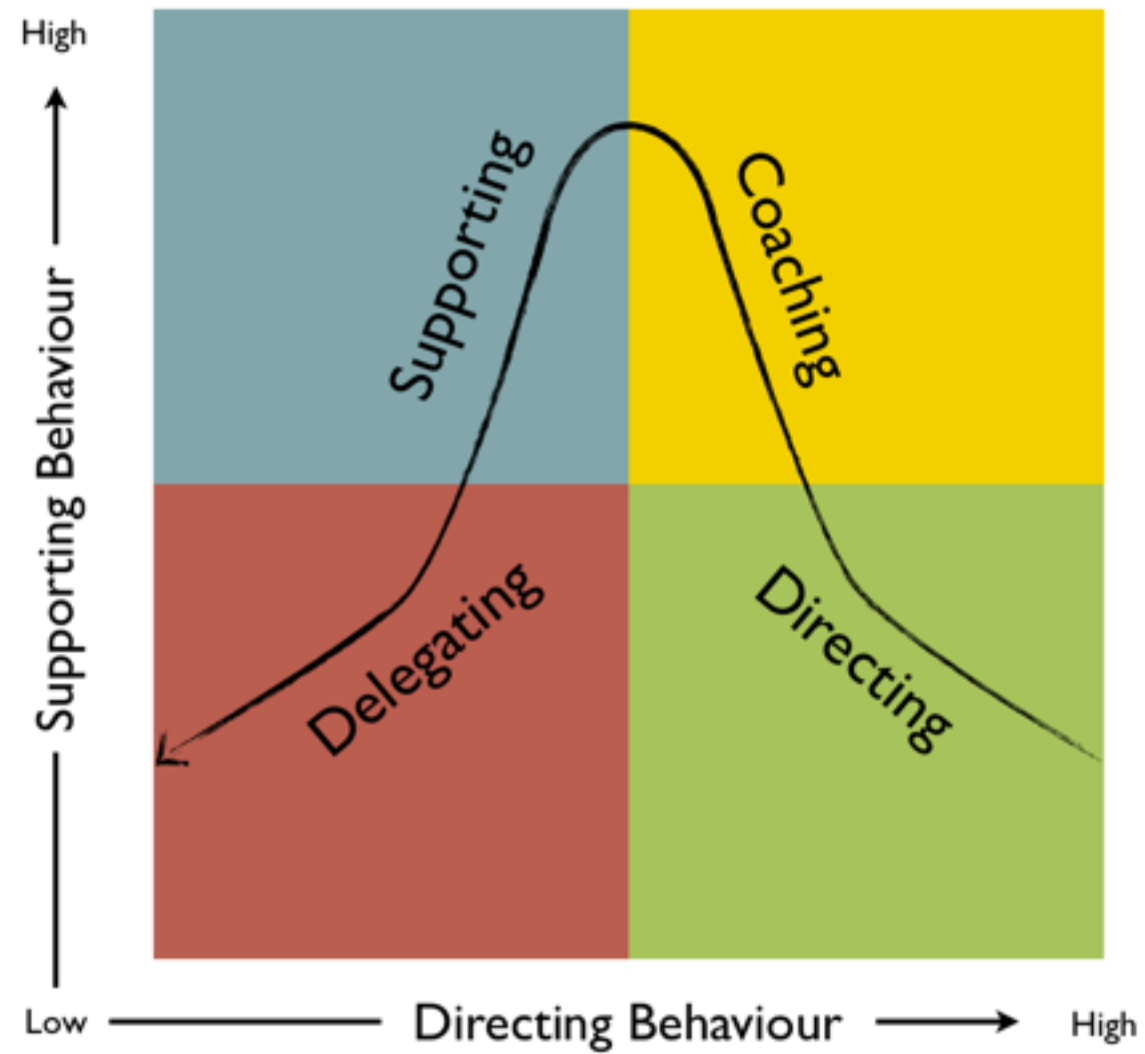
Developed



Developing

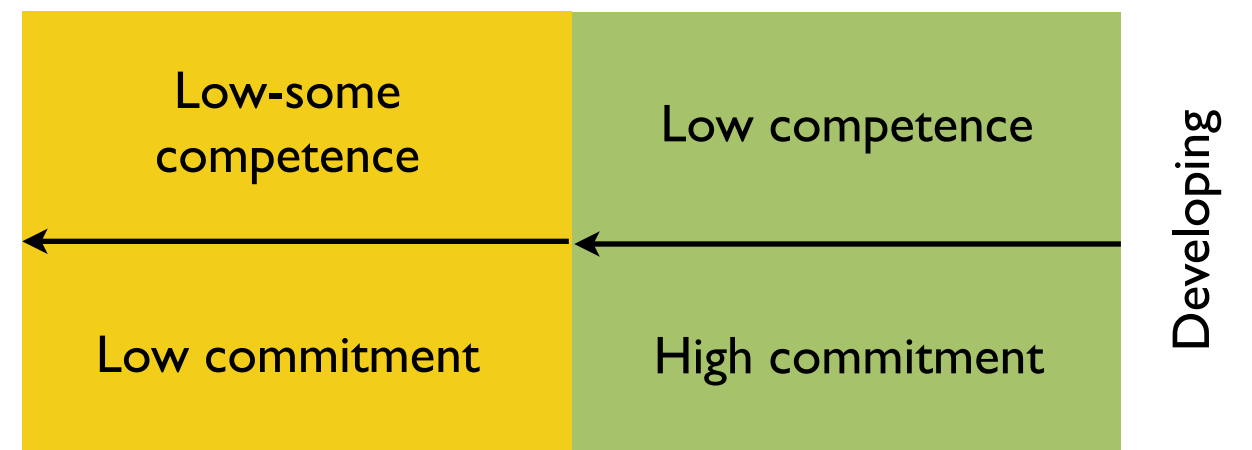
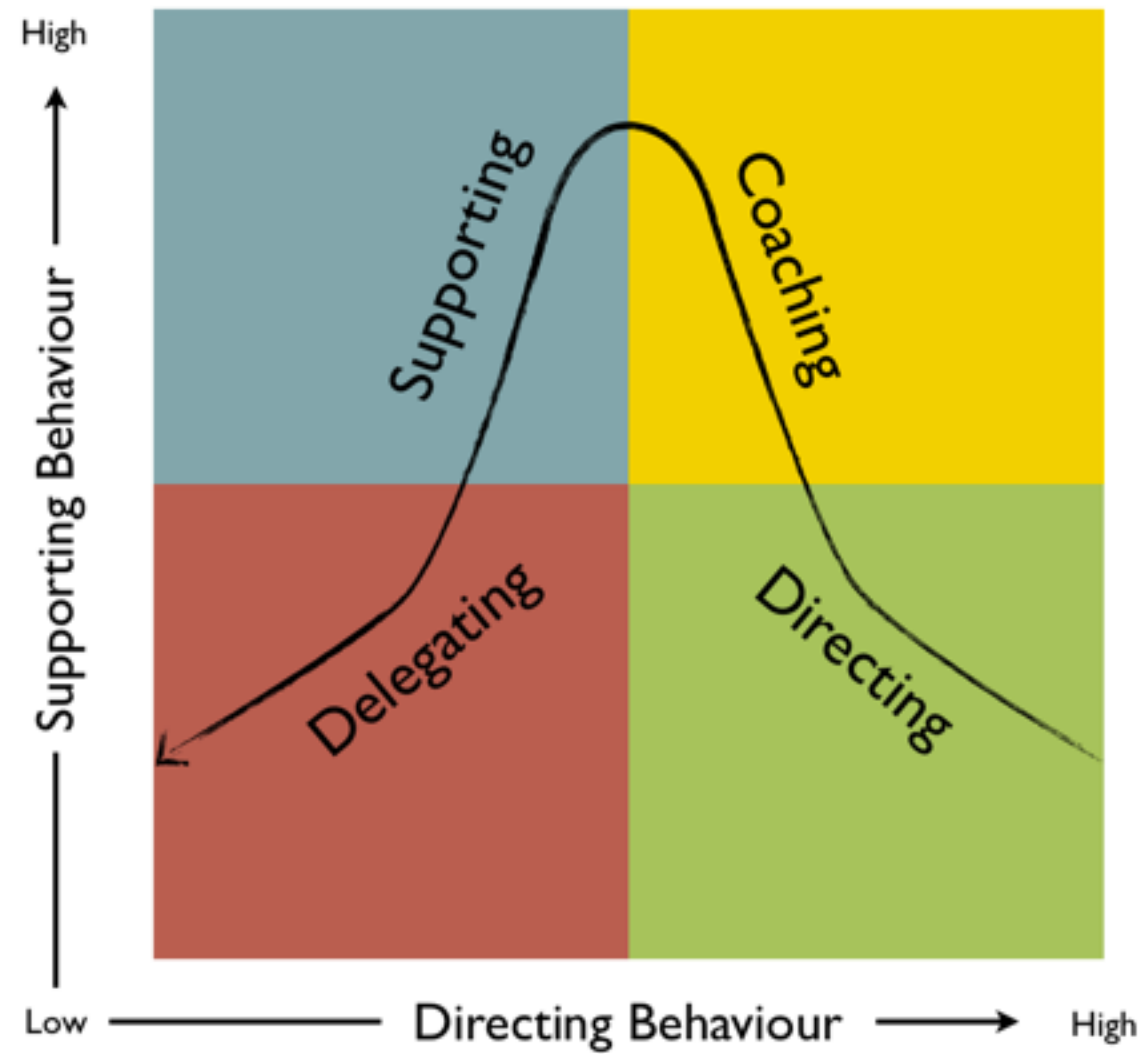
Development level of an individual

Developed

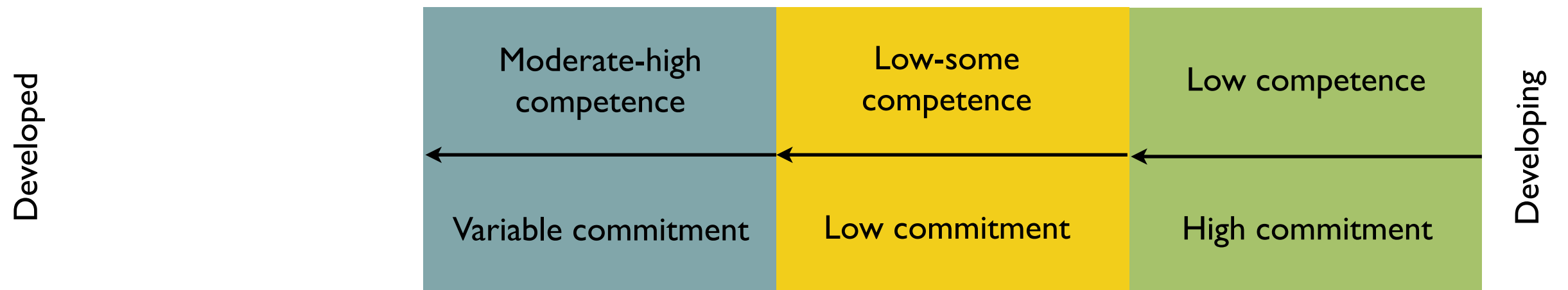
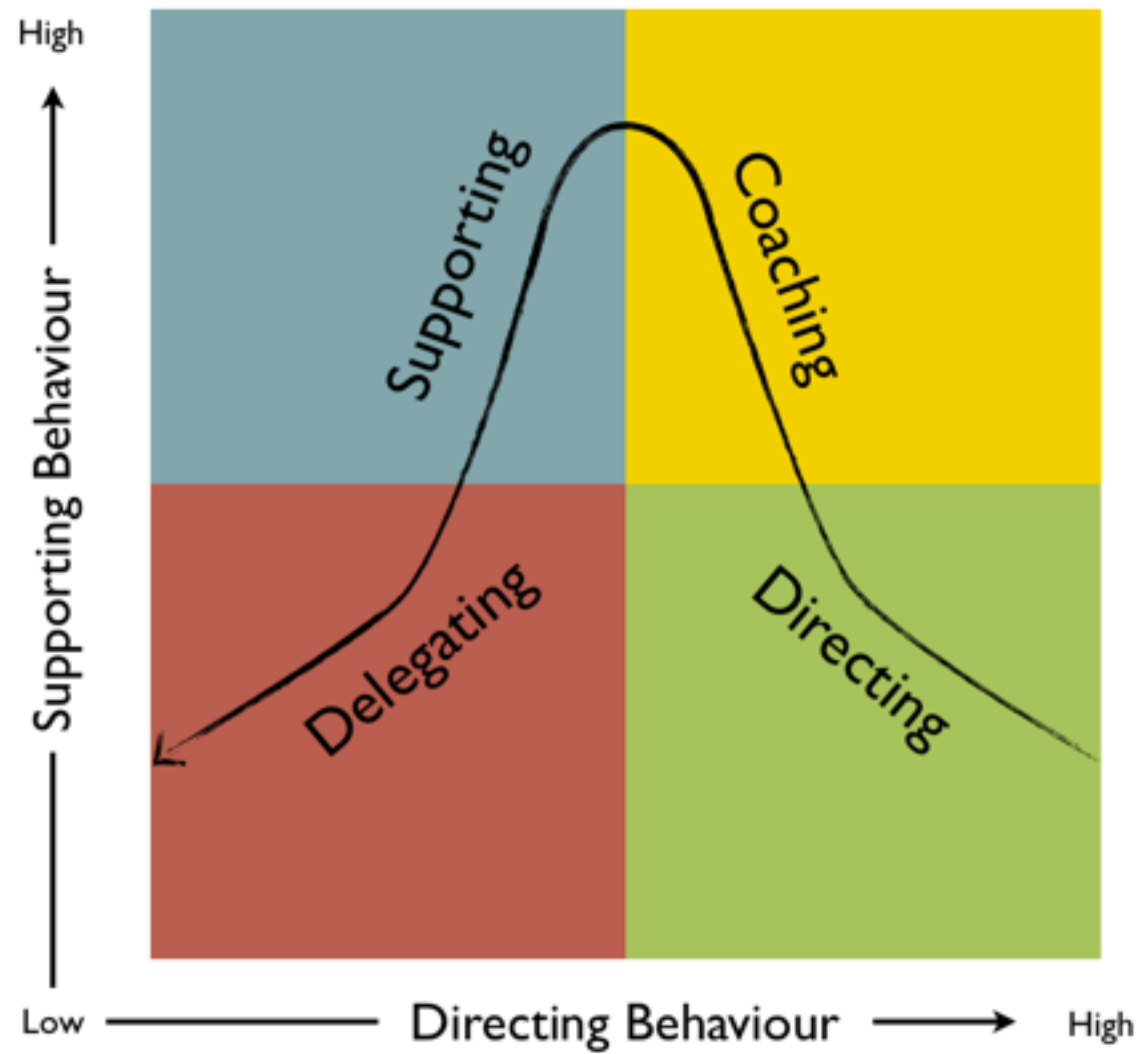


Development level of an individual

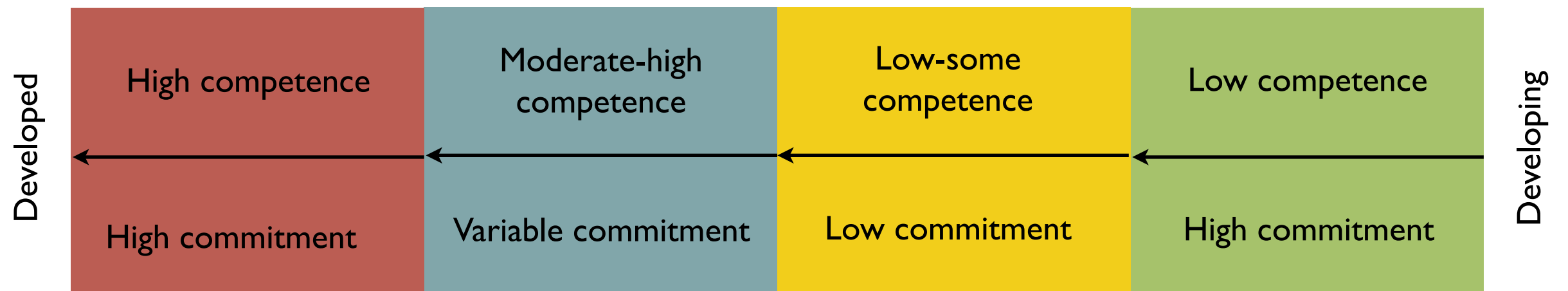
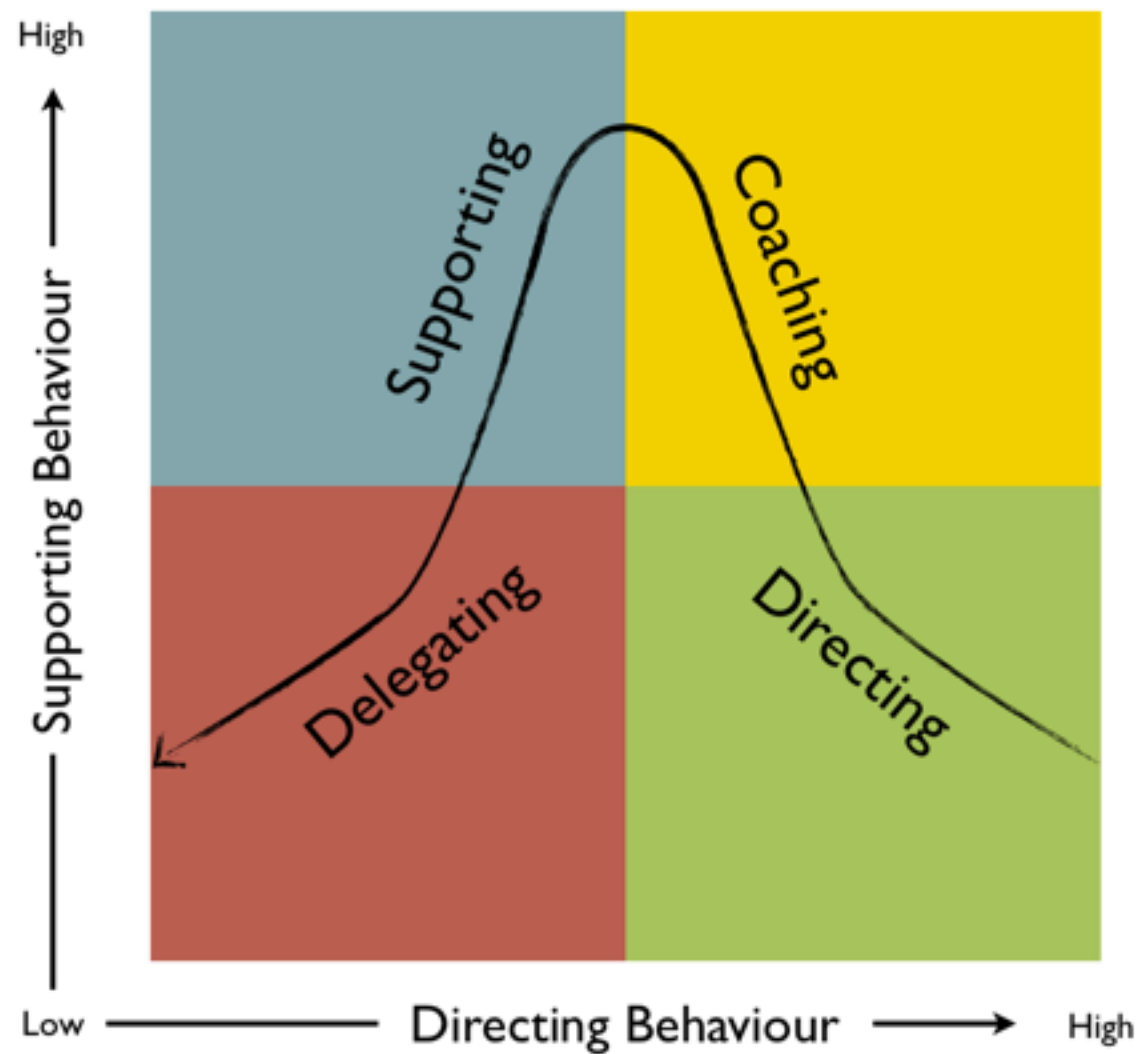
Developed



Development level of an individual



Development level of an individual



Development level of an individual

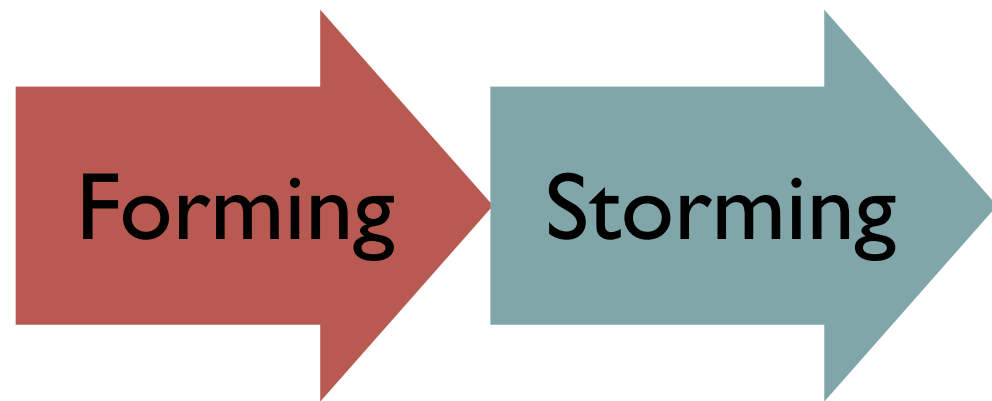
# Tuckman's Model



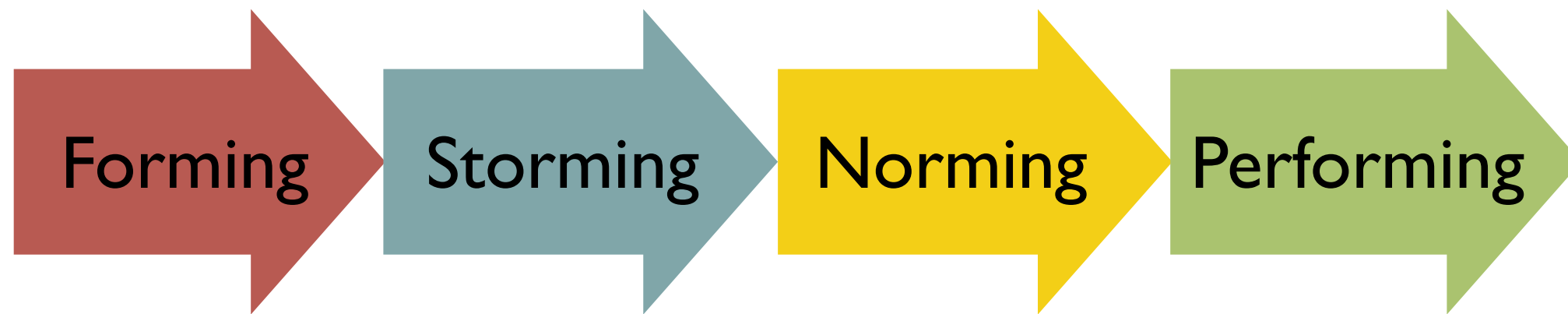




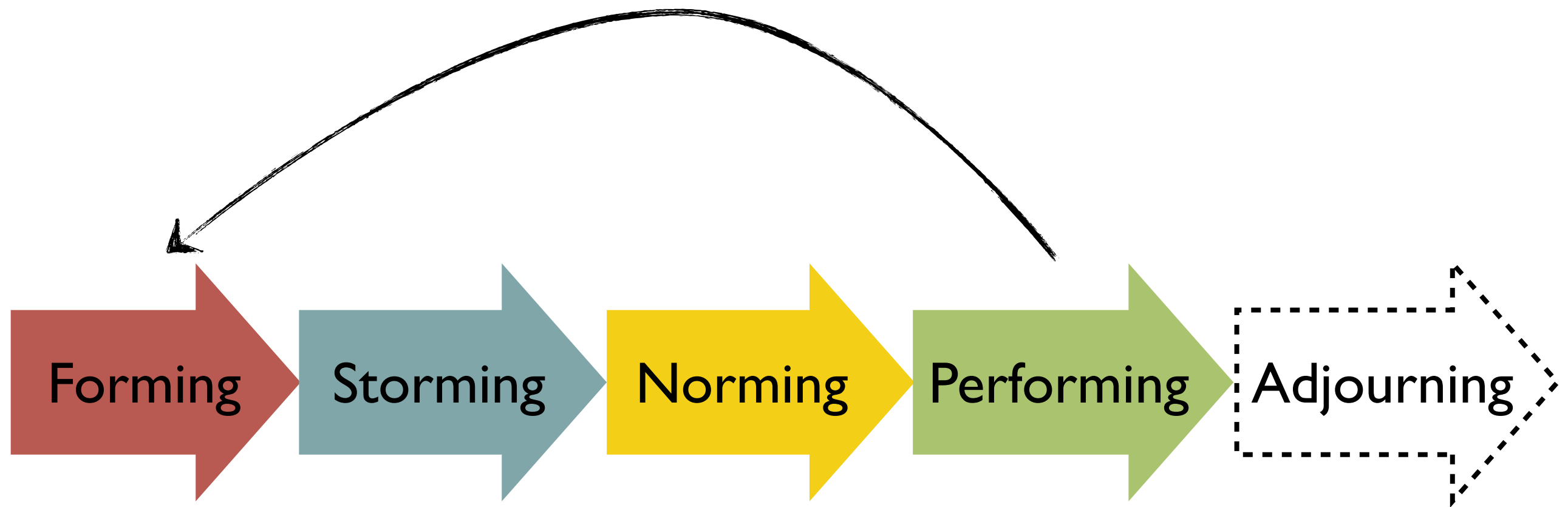
Forming











"Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful."

- George E. P. Box

Make time for you





Process





Process



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Email Time

Email Time

Email Time

Email Time

I:ls

Planning  
Time

Next week  
planning

Planning  
Time

9am

6pm

Process

# Concluding Thoughts

Programming

People

Process

# Questions?

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