

Stuck happens.



But we know how to unstick!



# 5 QUESTIONS THAT GET US UNSTUCK



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# BEING STUCK

How do you describe being **stuck**, in anything you're doing?

Here's one way of seeing stuck: when what's happening isn't getting to great.



# WAYS WE GET UNSTUCK

How do you help yourself, or someone else, get unstuck?

When we get unstuck, we've usually seen one of these in a new way:





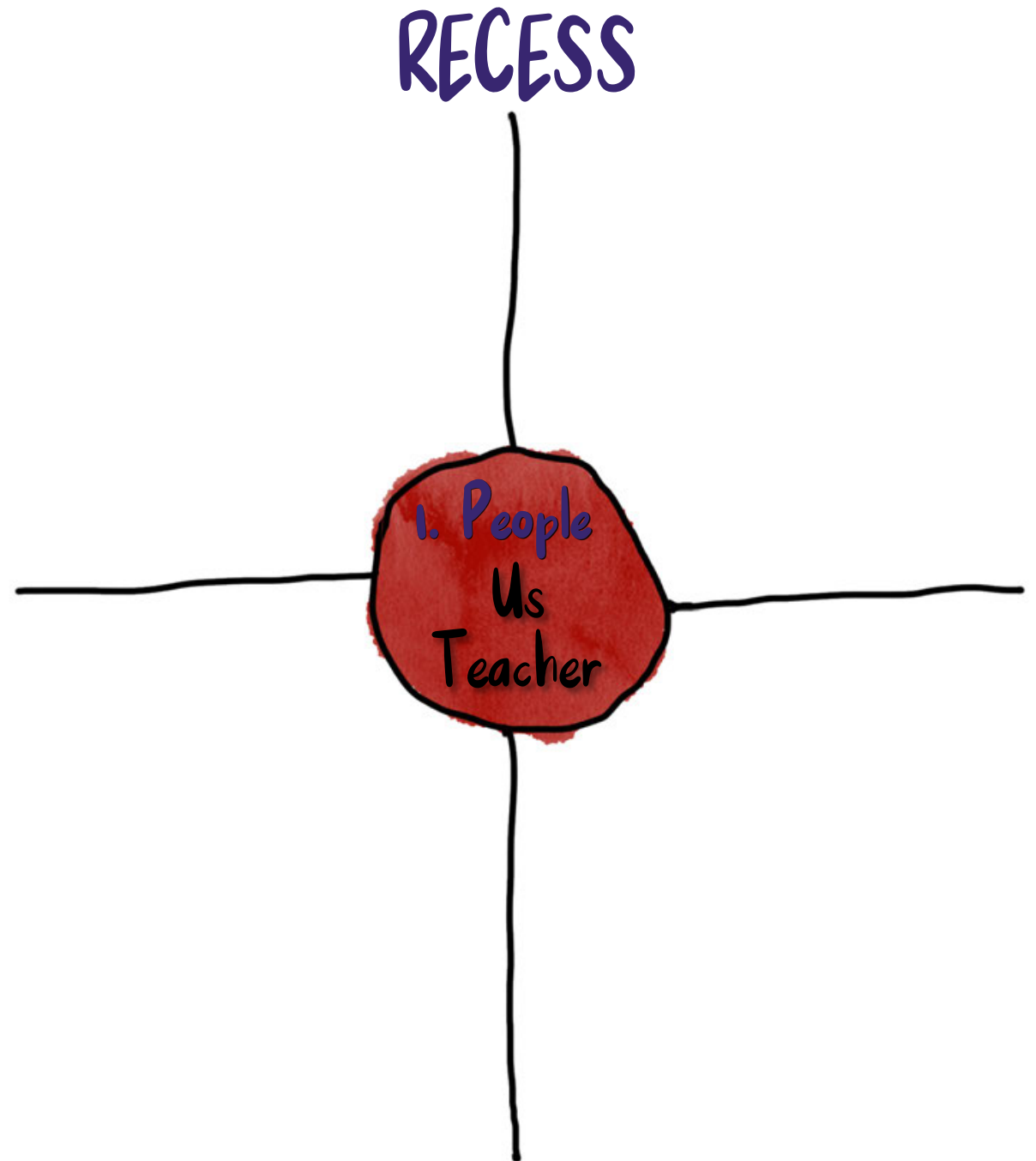
These five powerful questions help people of all ages, in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, stuck in arguments, choices, big goals or little challenges, even when it feels like there's no time—which is all the time! They're like a compass to explore all sides of any **stuck!**



# UNSTUCK STORY

Many schools have shared that they've gotten unstuck around playground problems.

In one second-grade classroom, a teacher drew a big compass like this and invited his students to explore these questions together (instead of always tattling to him).



Using sticky notes, they explored  
**What's happening? Why?**

They started with upsides:  
*Talking. Playing. Tag.*

Then they explored downsides:  
*People keep telling on people.  
People block the slide.  
They always play tag.  
They exclude me.*





With their teacher writing, they explored **What matters most?**

Running and safety.

Having fun and including others.

Talking and listening.

Free choice and agreeing on rules.

Now they could see their challenge and get creative!

# What Matters

## 3. Principles

• Talking - playing

• Fun

• included

• Running

• agree on our rules

• safe

• free choice

• people listen

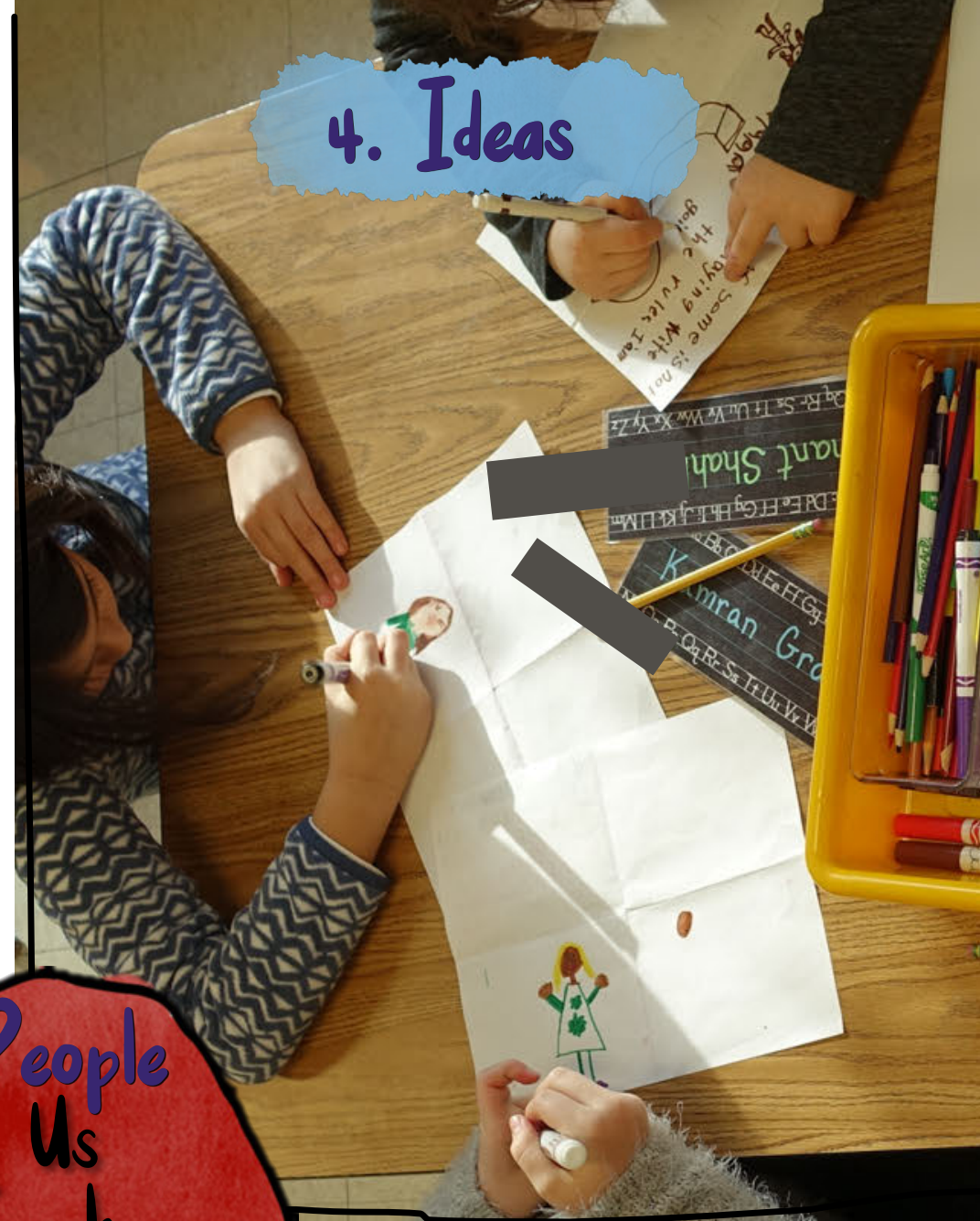
1. People  
Us  
Teacher

On their own paper, they explored **What ways are there?**

Here many of them drew pictures: new games, rules, props and signs to help them.

1. People  
Us  
Teacher

4. Ideas



The very next recess they dove in with **What's a step to try?**

They picked a few ideas that seemed to fulfill their principles and found the easiest step to try them!

This was a quick reminder they made to not block the slide.



1. People  
Us  
Teacher



4. Experiments

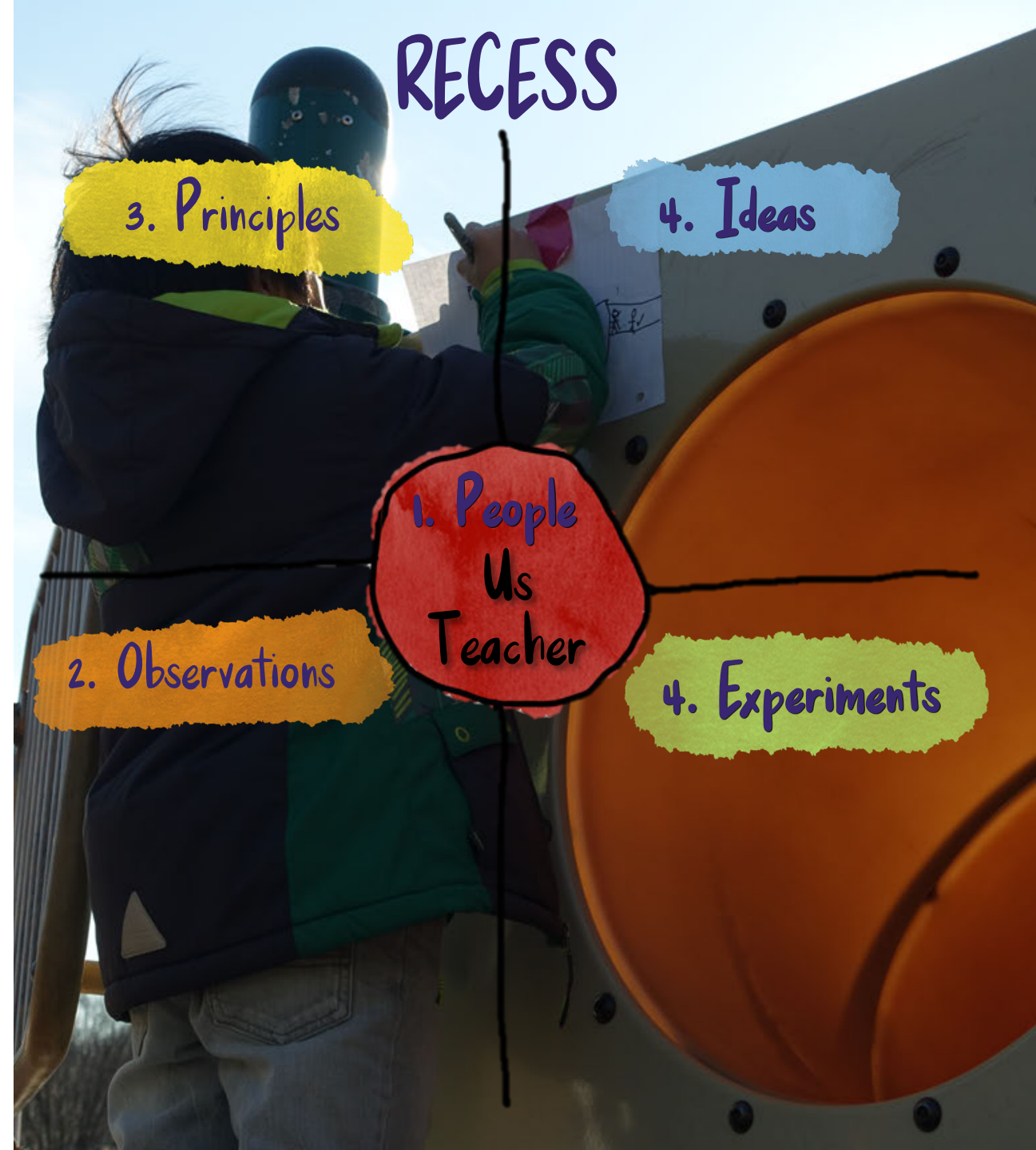


no  
blocking  
the  
slide!



Then they again observed what happened. Some things got better, others didn't.

They didn't waste any time—but instead tweaked their ideas, like this student who added a picture to his original sign, or came up with new ideas. And they tried again, making their recess more fun, safe, free, and inclusive.

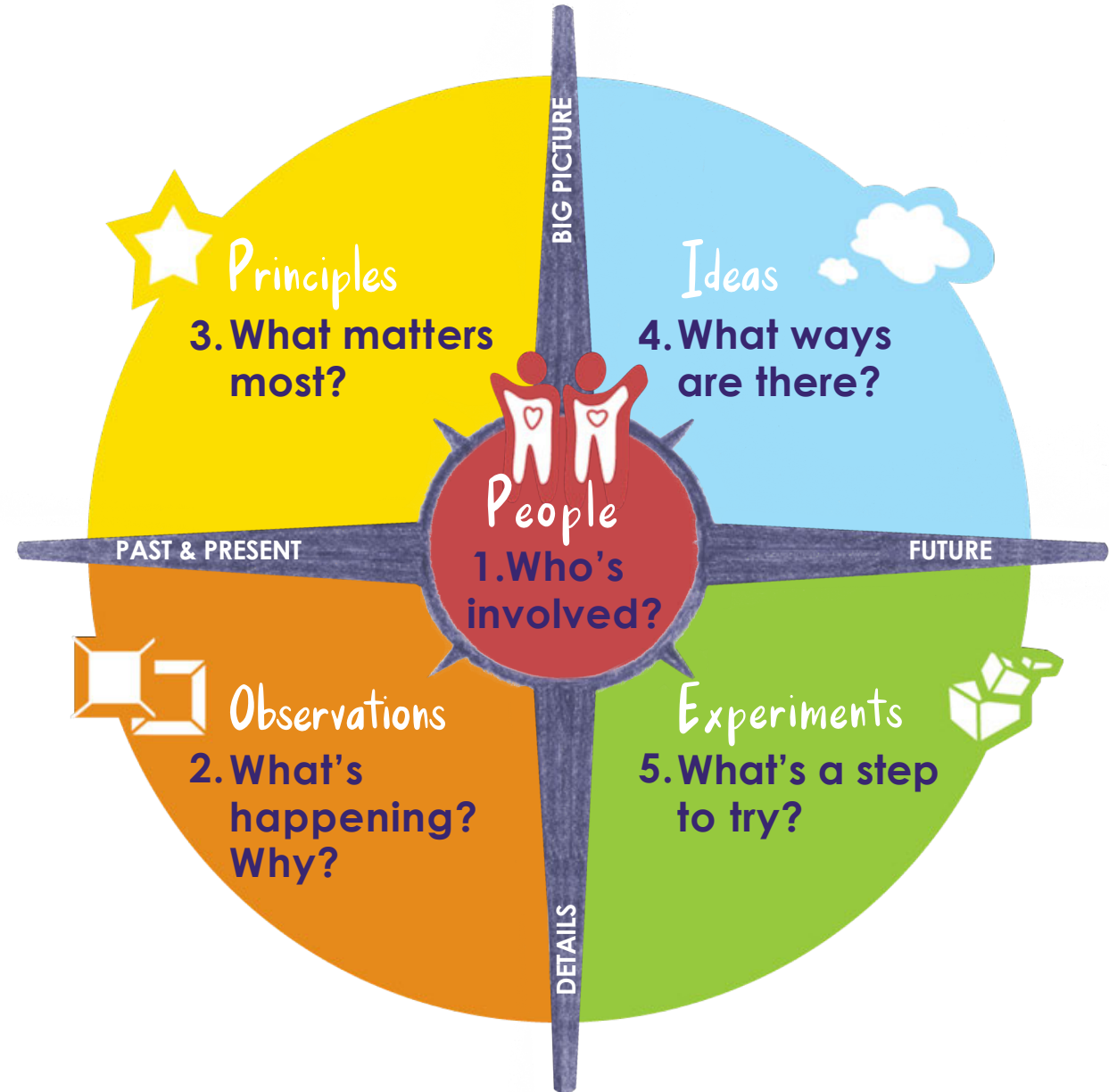


When we ask questions like these  
we don't stay stuck.  
We make things better.  
That's what **innovators** do.

This is our INNOVATORS'  
COMPASS for our own world.

We start by sensing "stucks" in  
our hearts: is what's happening  
now what matters most for all the  
people involved?

## Our INNOVATORS' COMPASS

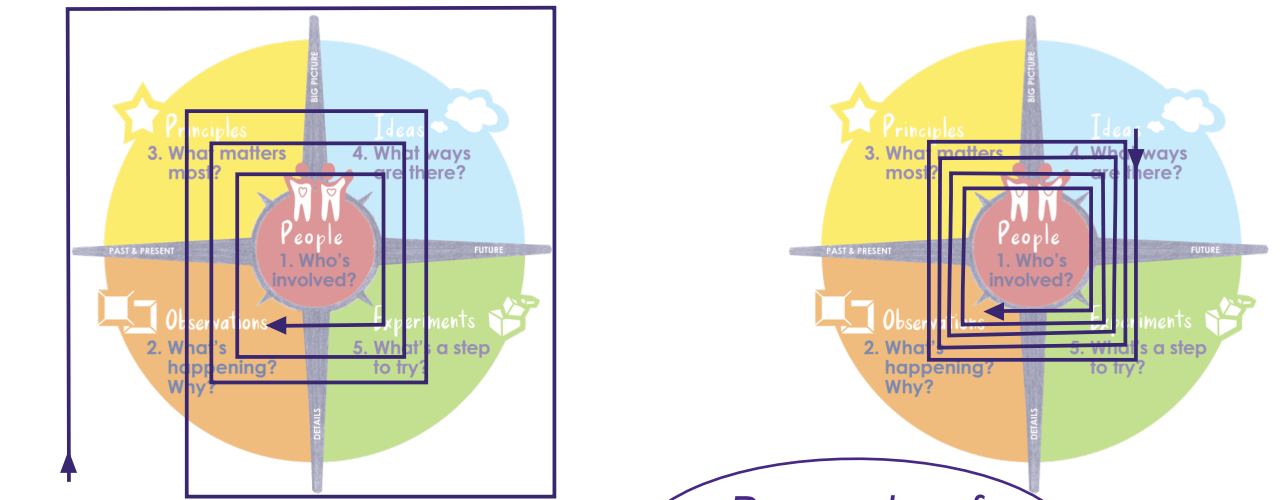




Then we go however helps.

One question might be enough for a quick unstick!

Or we can make and share our own maps of different challenges.



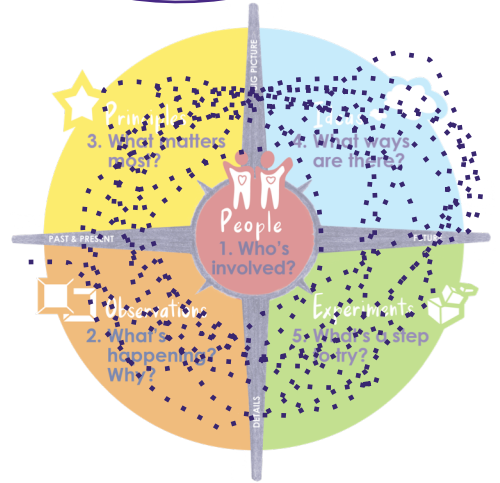
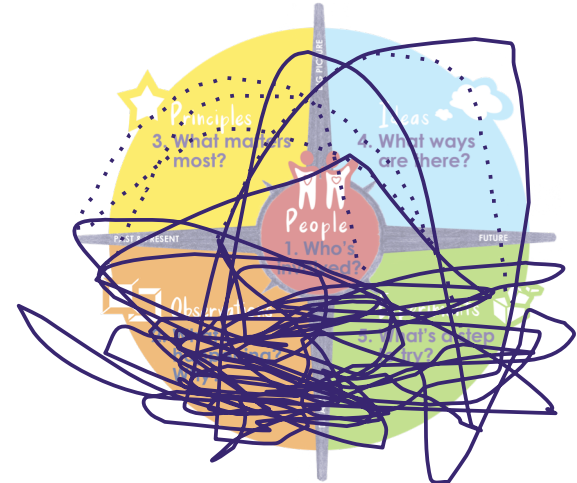
Let's go the careful, numbered way.

Rounds of try-and-learn?

Let's mess around!



Oh yeah! We just did that!



UGH! This is so frustrating!

Great observation! Got an idea?



# UNSTICK NOW!

Pick something on your mind to unstick or make better right now.

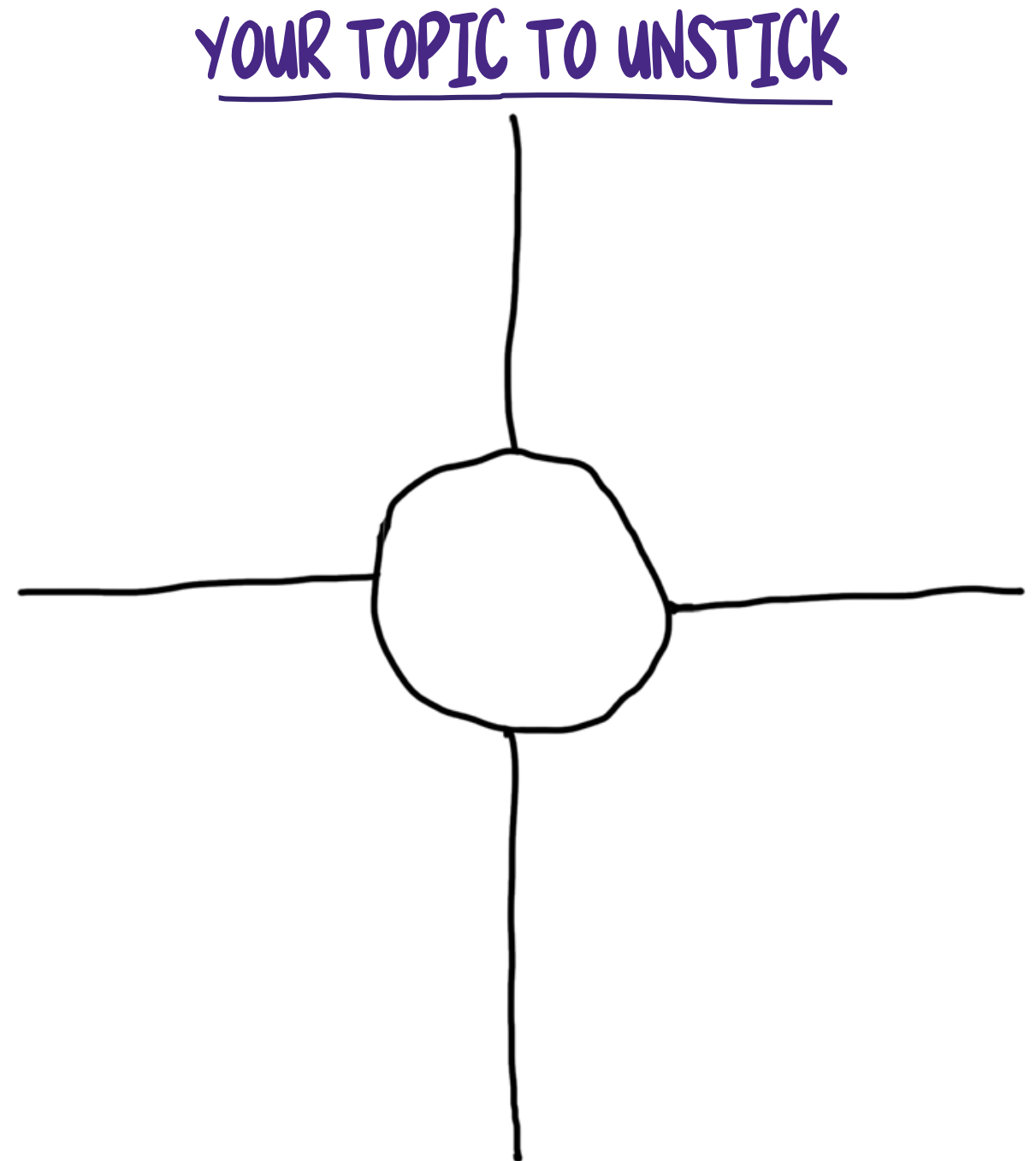
It can be making your next hour, day, or week great.

*It would feel AWESOME  
to make \_\_\_\_\_ better!*



Make a compass on any scrap of paper, board, screen...or in your head or conversation.

Each of these five spaces gives us a powerful unsticking tool. Let's go!



We're often stuck going it alone.

People unstick us when we fully see **who's involved?** and explore these questions together.

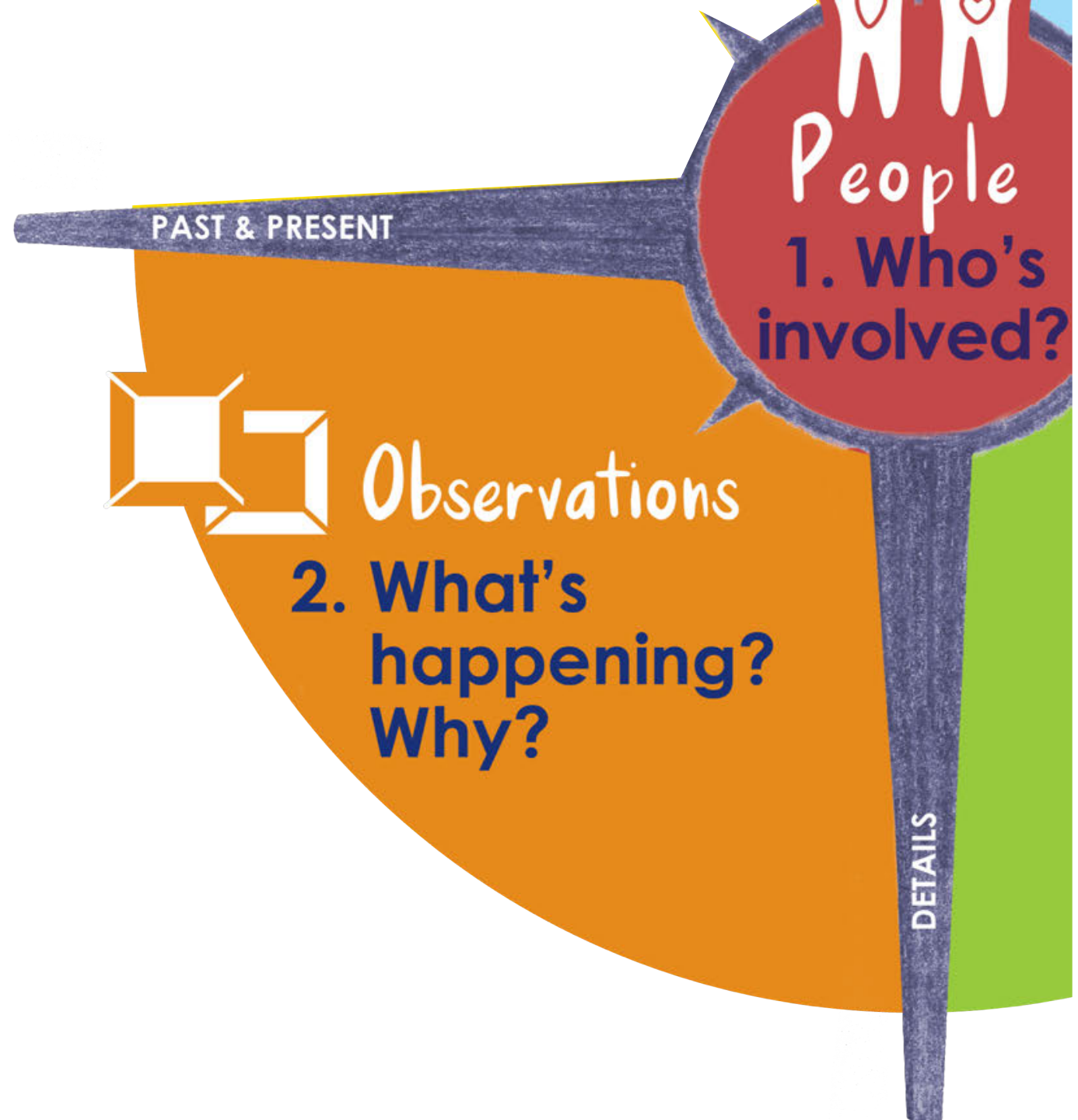
Put them at the center of your compass. It's fine to start on our own if we always add question marks about others.



When we can't see our stuck...

**Observations** unstick us with real details of **what's happening and why?**

Explore different sides of what people are doing, saying, thinking and especially feeling.





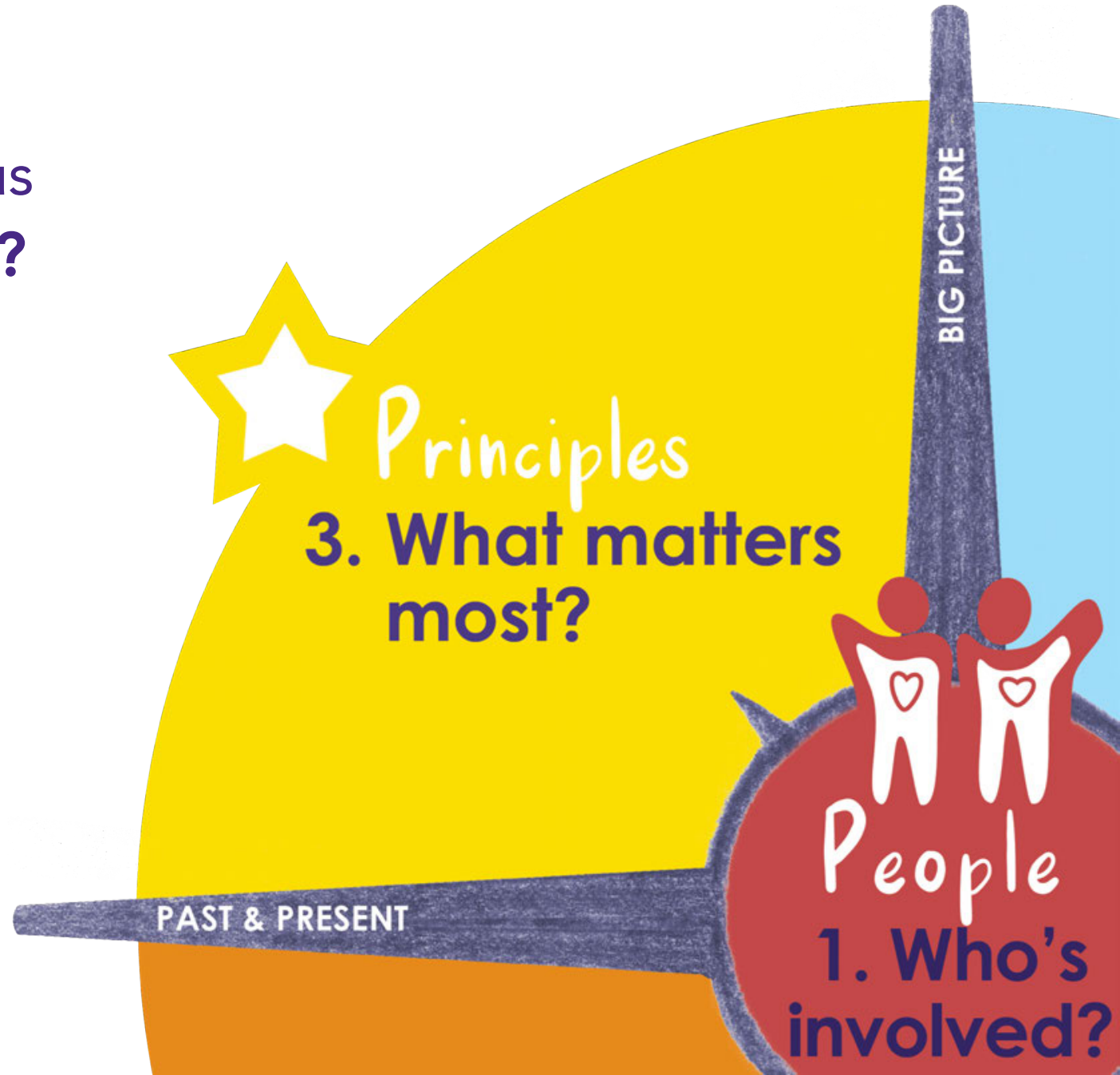
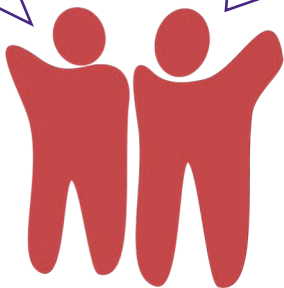
When there's a lot going on...

Principles unstick us by guiding us to focus on **what matters most?** in whatever we do here.

Explore what might matter more or less than you first thought!

Any Principles?

Oh, *THAT's* what matters most here!



Principles

3. What matters most?

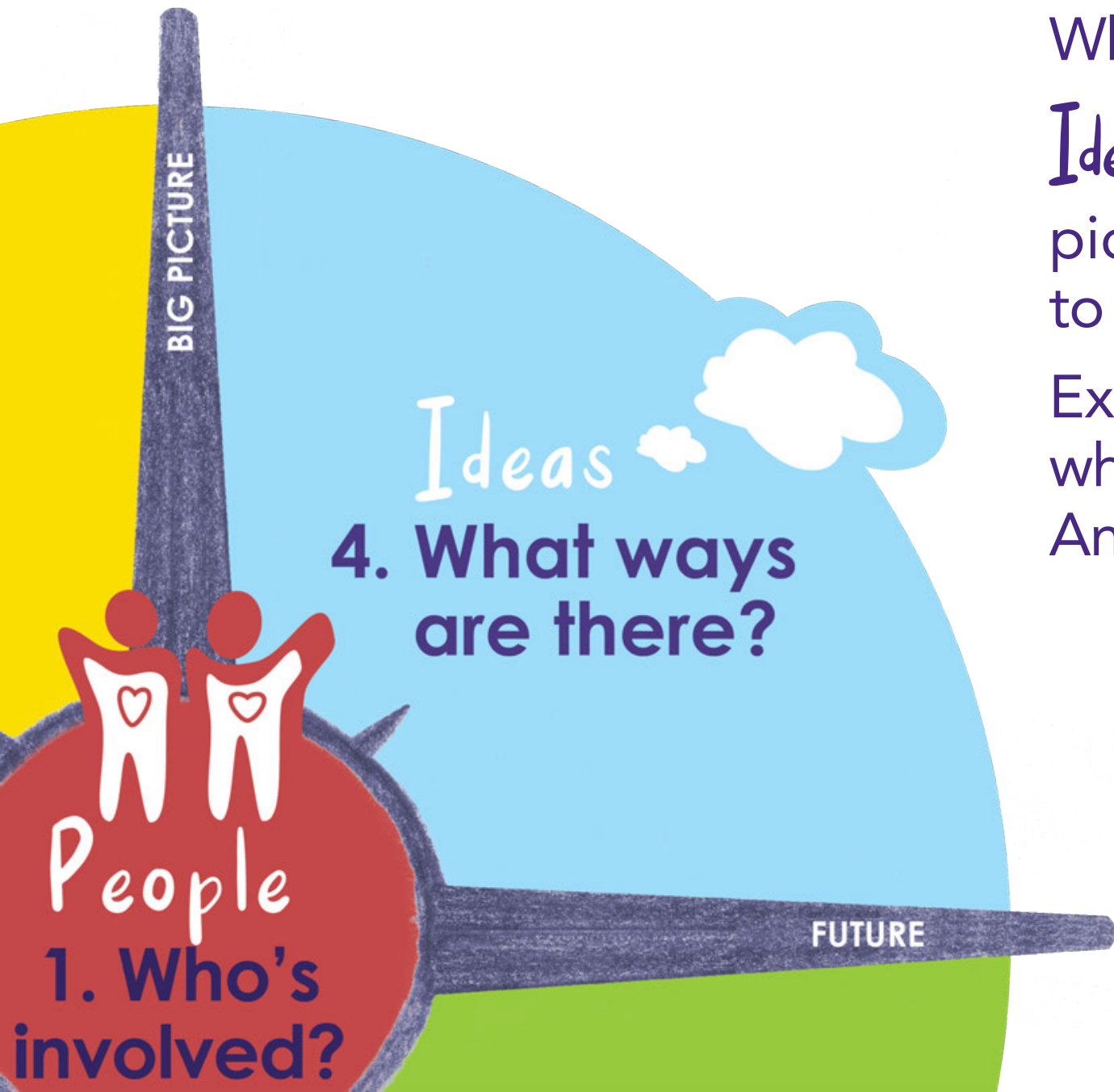
BIG PICTURE



People

1. Who's involved?

PAST & PRESENT

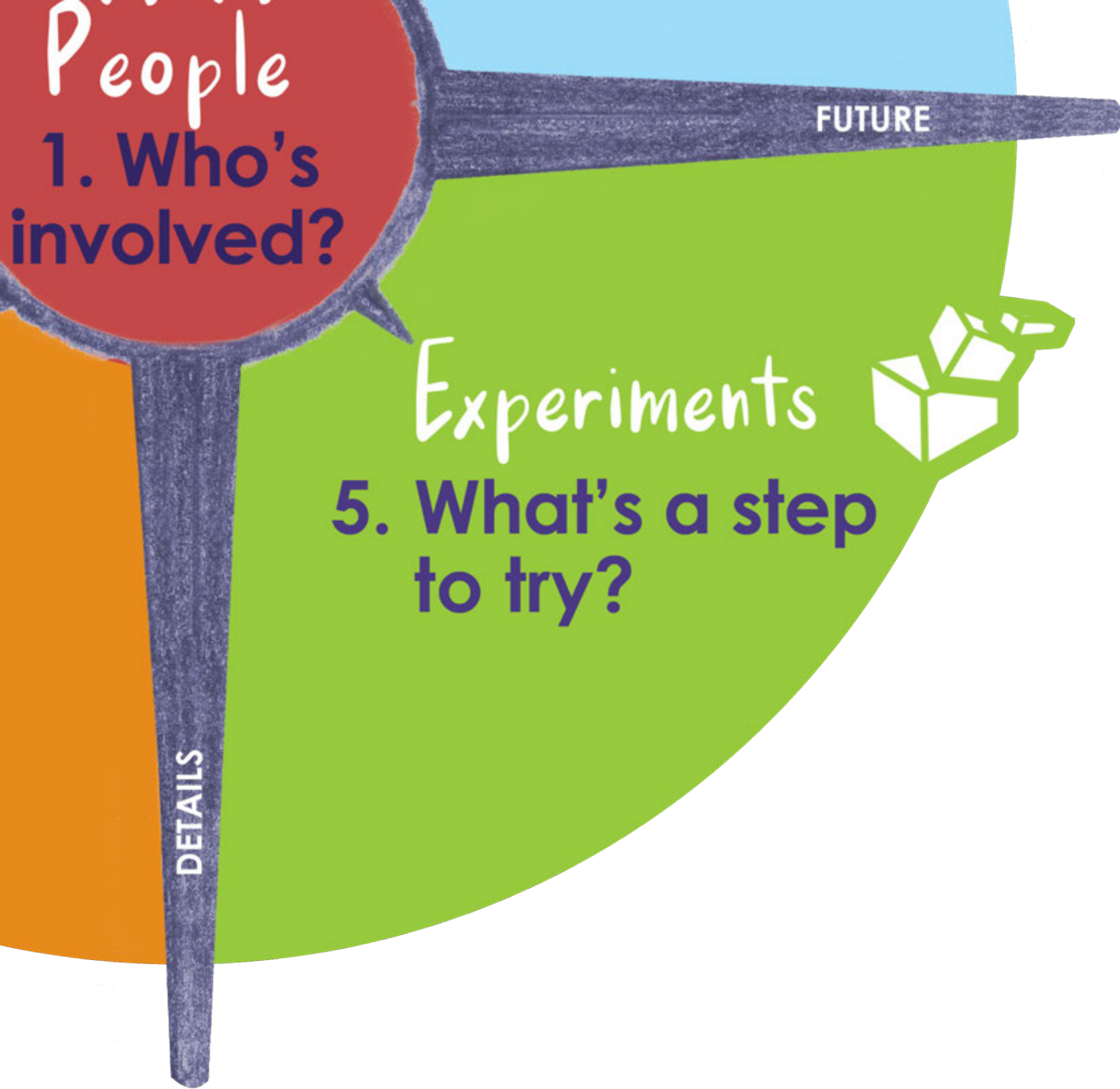


When we can't see another way...

**I**deas unstick us with a bigger picture of **what ways are there?** to do what matters.

Explore different who/what/  
when/where/hows! Look around.  
Anyone and anything can help!





When we don't get started...

Our **Experiments** unstick us by showing us **what's a step to try?** so we actually DO it!

Pick a small, specific who/what/when/where/how to explore an idea or unanswered question.



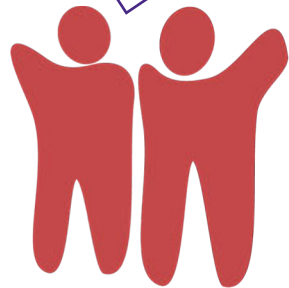


Try an experiment now!  
What happens?

Not great yet? Find a new  
observation, principle, or idea  
that points you to your next step!

Any observations about exploring  
these 5 questions? How'd it feel?

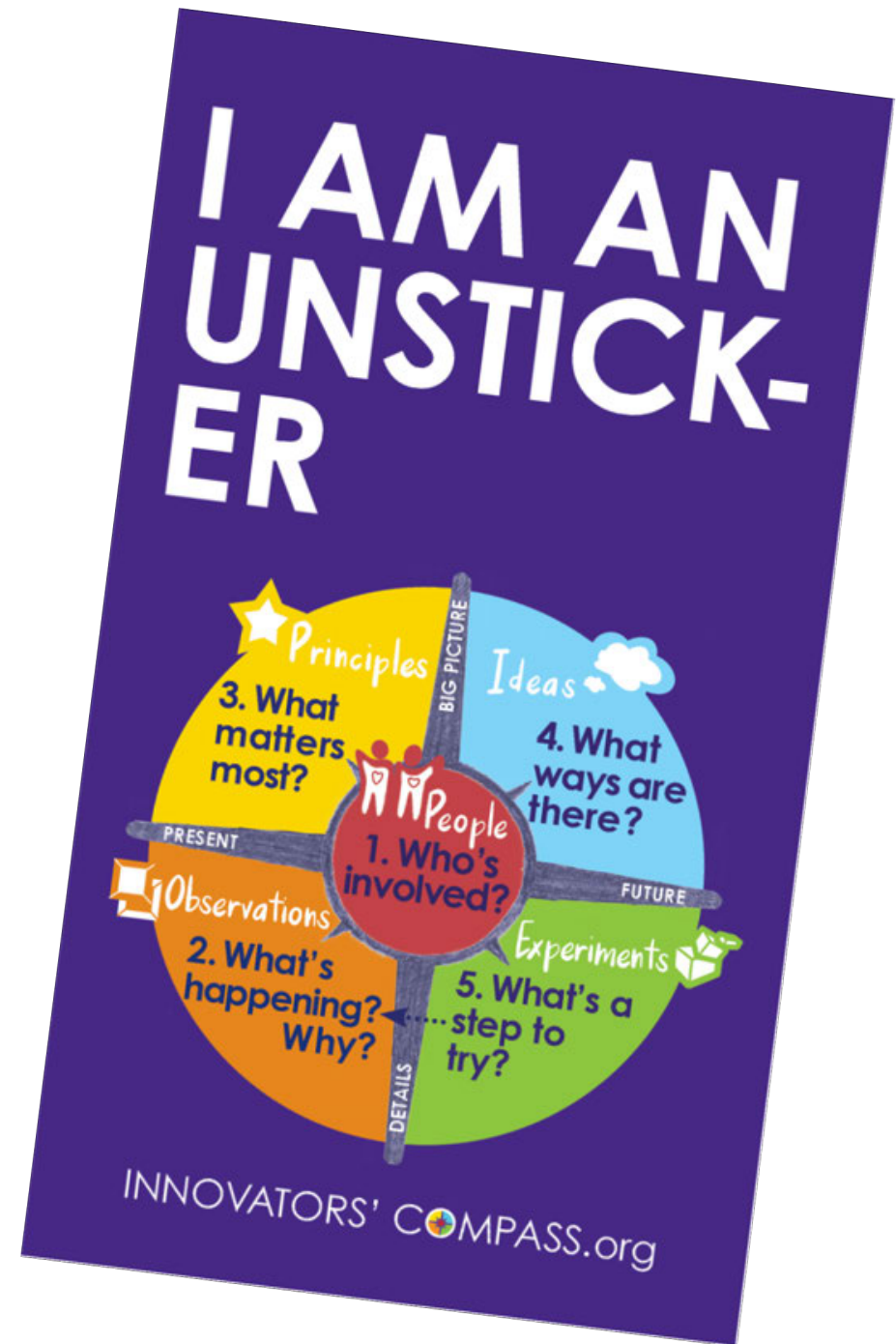
Woohoo! We're  
**UNSTICKING!**



So ask these questions more in any way to sense sticks and unstick them!

Share your ways of #unsticking with your #innovatorscompass!

Go be an *unsticker!*



# DIAGRAM OF

We are all innovators when we unstick stuff and make things better!

## our INNOVATORS' COMPASS

Plural—we make things better together!

Use it to find your way and map your challenges.

Five ways we move forward in any challenge, big or small: with and for everyone involved, we explore new possibilities in...

These are our “guiding stars,” and we “star” important things.

Blue sky because we’re free to dream!

**Principles**  
3. What matters most?

**Ideas**  
4. What ways are there?

There are always lots of ways! Try a different who, what, when, where or how!

People are always at the center—and feelings are our best clues!

**People**  
1. Who’s involved?

PAST & PRESENT

FUTURE

You can draw a compass to see your challenge! It’s just a circle and four lines.

**Observations**  
2. What’s happening? Why?

**Experiments**  
5. What’s a step to try?

Small steps that may not work at first—but help us and our ideas grow, so they’re spring green.

See different sides. Start with the upside!

Earthy orange since we’re getting “grounded” in what’s really happening.

Real details make observations and experiments more powerful!

Go wherever moves you forward! Try, question and change things. Or follow the numbered path—think: **POPIE** (“Pop-y”): **P**eople, **O**bservations, **P**inciples, **I**deas, **E**xperiments and back to what happens, for all involved.

# GLOSSARY OF REIMAGINED WORDS

**Innovators** – All of us when we see how things are, and how they could be, in new ways to make them better.

**Innovators' Compass** – Five questions that get us unstuck in one picture we can use.

**Stuck** – (adjective) When what's happening isn't getting to great for everyone involved. Also (noun) the challenge that has us stuck.

**Unstickers** – All of us when we sense "stucks" and unstick them.

**Unsticking** – Seeing a way forward that works for everyone.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Ela Ben-Ur** is an MIT engineer, former IDEO designer and leader, Olin educator, coach for people making a difference, and parent.

She's worked to find the common ground in ways of making lots of different things better. And, to share those in powerful yet simple forms that help *all* of us use them in any moment. So, she wrote this with her daughters:

**Dalia Katz** (7) loves cats and dreams of flying.

**Maia Katz** (9) loves bunnies and fairies.

**Arrin Katz**, engineer and Ela's husband, is a great supporter of this passion work—and no-nonsense proofreader.

We all love books and making them together!

