

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.

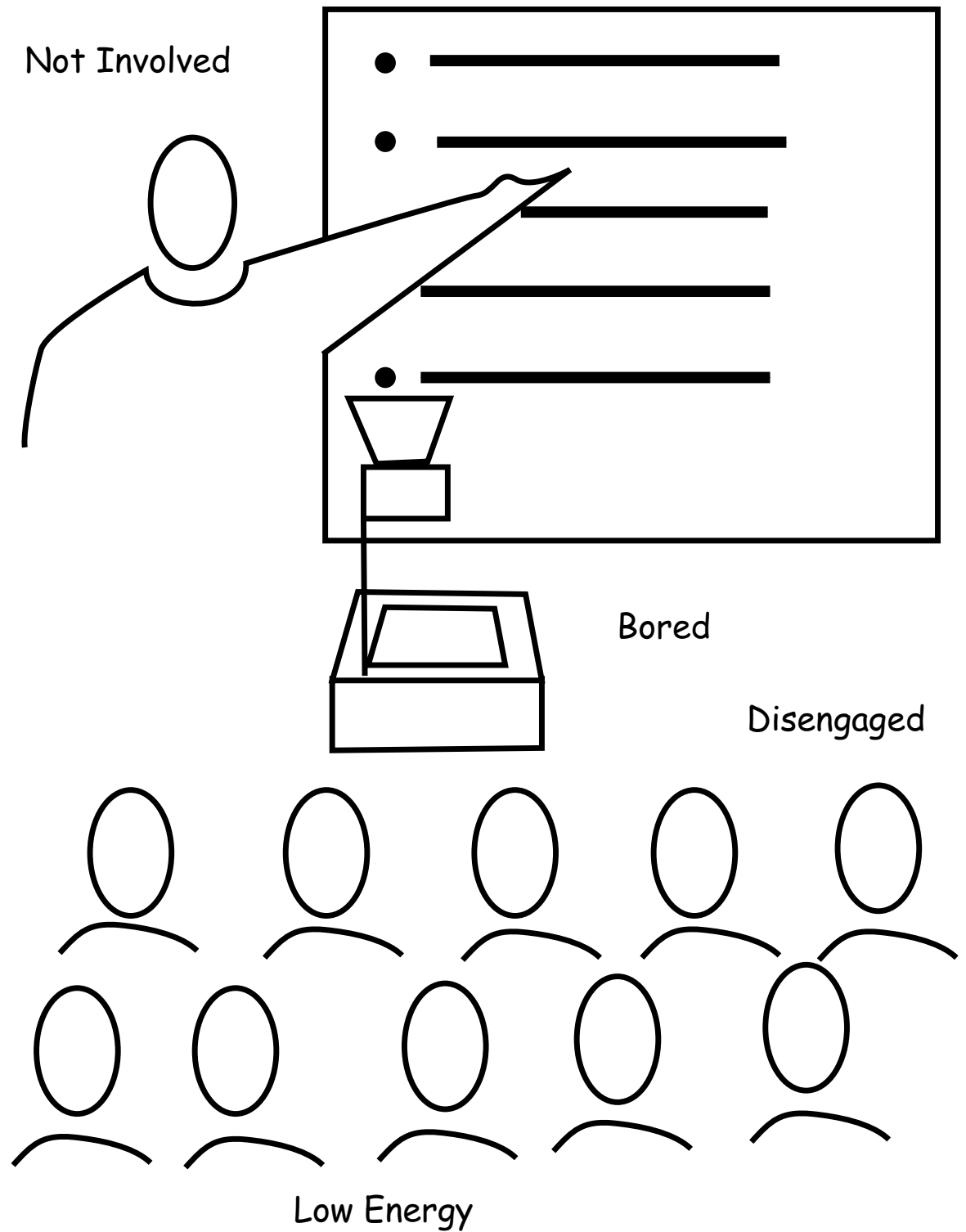
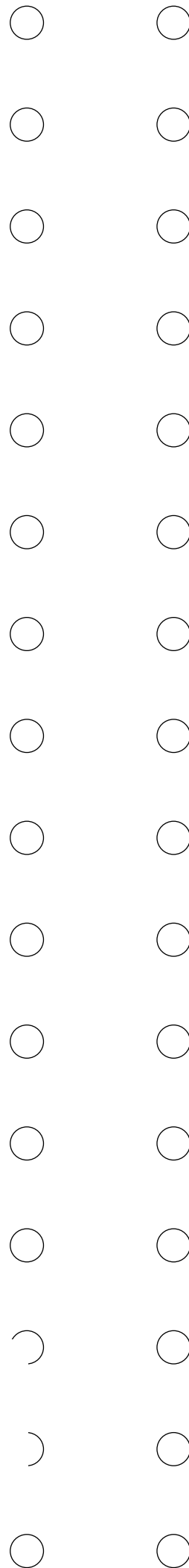
- Thomas Jefferson

From a very early age we have been in meetings - family gatherings, school, church etc. As we grow older, for many of us attending meetings becomes part of our work and public life.

Most of us have stories to tell about how serious, lengthy, necessary, boring and disappointing meetings can be. How we have been unable to get our point across, our voice heard or our agenda met. We have

all been in meetings that were 'hijacked' by one or more speakers and meetings in which our contribution was not valued. Meetings in which we were mere audience, that went round and round in circles and were only 'saved' by the chairperson deciding for all present.

And it does not need to be like this. Meetings can be different, and not because of fancy ingredients, 'dry ice' and lots of entertainment. In our work we have designed and led many meetings with all kinds of groups, under varying circumstances and for many different reasons. We have discovered that the time people spend at meetings can be transformed into meaningful and rewarding experiences.



In this book we would like to share what we have learned about designing effective and rewarding meetings that take into consideration how the human brain works, acknowledges us as whole people and highlights how people work best in meetings as an individual (participant or designer) and as a group member.

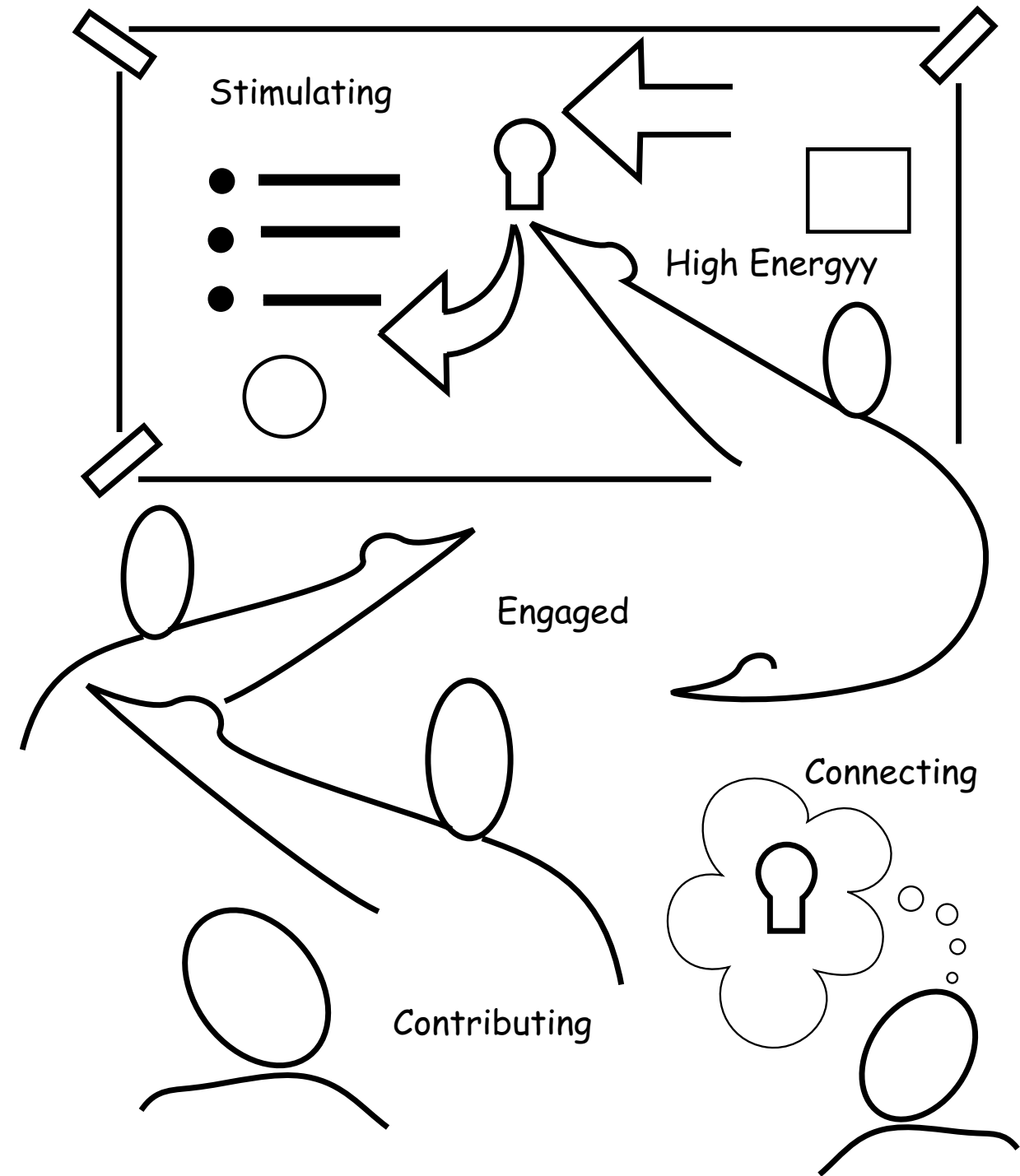
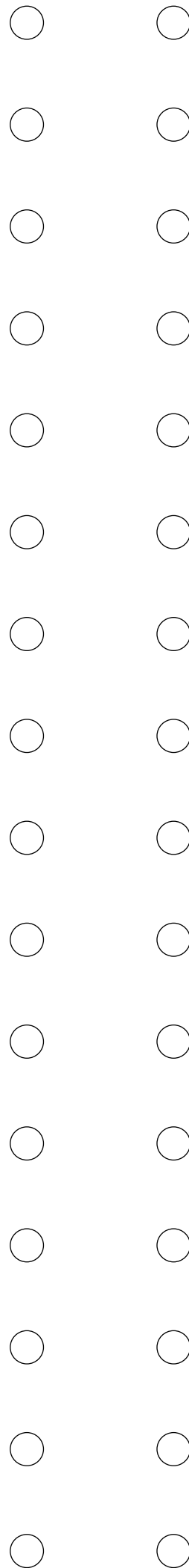
Changing the experience people have of meetings is a challenge that needs to be addressed at three levels: -

- Understanding basic principles and patterns that form the foundation of a good meeting. This will guide the process of meeting design
- Tools for the actual design of meetings
- Ways to support participants in keeping track of the process and progress of the meeting that are both informative, engaging and inspiring.

The graphics used throughout this book can be used for planning, in meetings, to capture and make sense of information - feelings and emotions as well as linear, logical data, engaging the "whole person".

We encourage you to start at whichever point suits your learning style best - with the process tips, with the theories and principles or at the end.

A warm welcome to everyone who participates in meetings in this journey of transforming them into positive, productive, creative experiences.



Purpose

So where can we begin with changing the way we run or participate in meetings? Well a commonly shared purpose or goal might be a good place to start, but how often are we involved in meetings where the goal is not explicit, shared or even exists?

A purpose guides all actions and activities, strategies and decisions. Shared purpose is an incredibly powerful tool in motivating and mobilising people to achievement of commonly sought after goals - whether they be for the whole organisation, individuals or teams. It helps create intrinsic motivation and provides a guiding light when things become messy, unclear or downright confusing.

This book is no different - purpose or goal would be helpful in not only understanding HOW it can help, but also why it should be written at all!

Our purpose in creating this resource can be simply put:

To make a difference to people's experience of meetings by providing structured and graphical resources to transform them into more positive, productive and creative experiences.

Later in the book we will spend more time looking at creating purpose - the difference that makes a difference. (Page links)

