



# Building REAL Safe Spaces for Teens

EJS Project  
Aarif Khan & Emanuel 'Dupree' Jackson

## PRIME TIME PALM BEACH COUNTY AFTERSCHOOL SYMPOSIUM 2025

Empowering Young Minds, Engaging Communities, Creating Lasting Impact

#AfterschoolSYM2025



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# Building REAL Safe Spaces for Teens

The EJS Project's Approach





# Introductions



**AARIF KHAN**  
Senior Program Manager  
EJS Project



**EMANUEL 'DUPREE' JACKSON**  
Executive Director  
EJS Project

# Who's in the Room?







# Ice Breaker



**Let's take a quiz.**

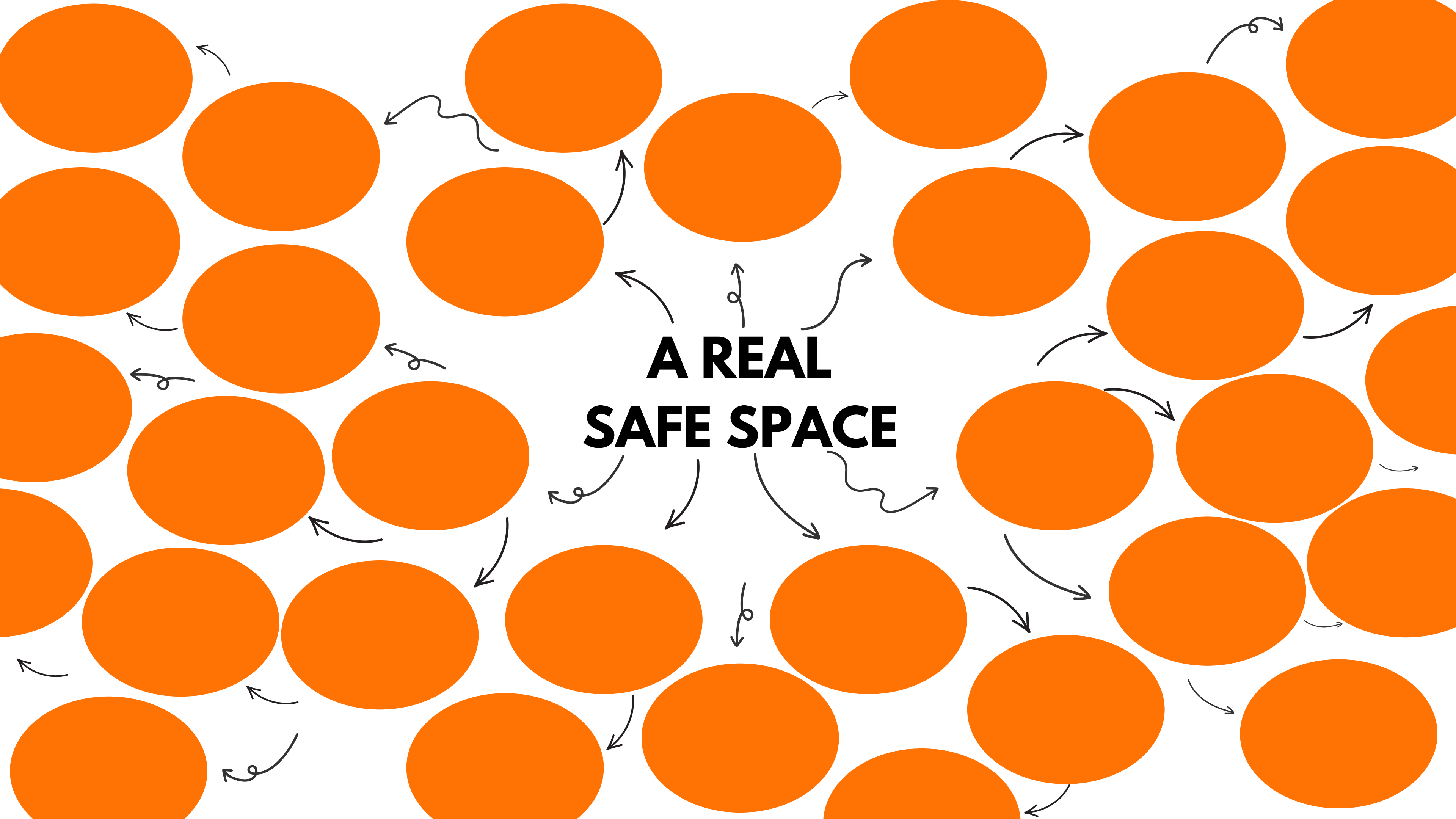




# **What is a safe space for students?**







**A REAL  
SAFE SPACE**

# Here is where it starts

- **Collective Impact**

- The collective impact model is a structured approach to tackling complex social problems through cross-sector collaboration and shared goals.
  - Individuals
  - Businesses
  - Government





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- Set of strategies and behaviors that aim to repair relationships and resolve conflicts. The goal is to create healthy communities and reduce crime and antisocial behavior.
- People feel valued and heard
- Relationships matter and feelings count Redirection focuses on building awareness of the effects of individual decisions on others
- Mistakes are viewed as coaching opportunities
- Process is valued, as well as outcomes
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- **Racial Equity (REI Workshop)**

- By fostering a common understanding of racism and evaluating progress through periodic check-ins, REI equips organizations with the tools needed to move toward becoming truly anti-racist institutions.





Equity of  
Opportunity

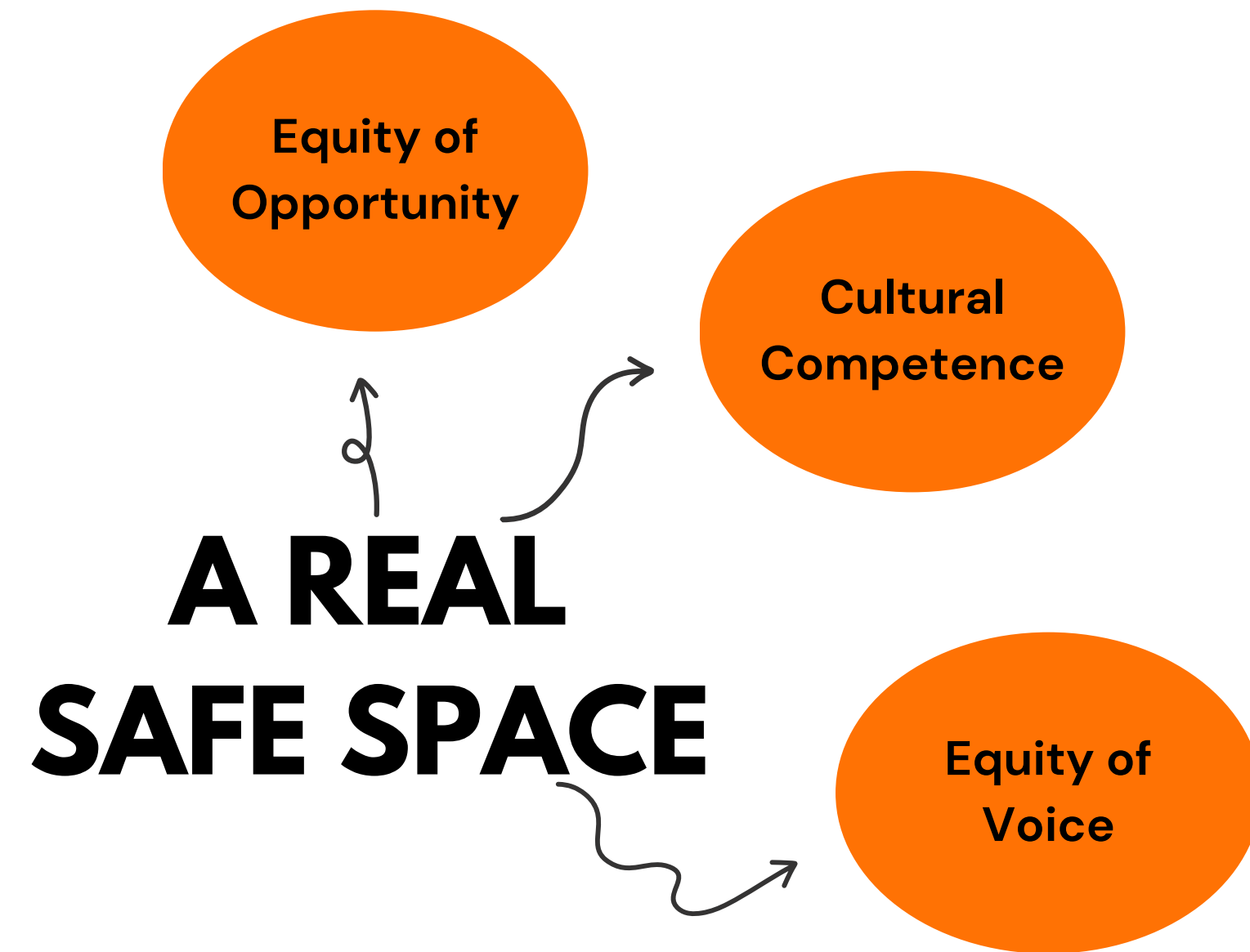


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  - What are some areas that you would like to see improvement?
  - Are you a part of/ involved in any other extracurricular activities?
  - Is there any particular program that sticks out to you that you would like to be a part of?



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  - No lying
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  - No disrespect
- This leads to our internal SWOT analysis of every student who walks through our doors



# Internal SWOT Analysis



## Strengths

- What does the student do well?
- What circumstances are currently working in the student's favor right now?



## Weaknesses

- What does the student struggle with?
- What circumstances are currently not working in the student's favor right now?



## Opportunities

- What opportunities can we provide to the student to uplift their strengths and work on their weaknesses?



## Threats

- What circumstances in this student's life can pose a threat to their success?
- How can we be proactive to this situation?



# Time to see an Example!

At your tables create a scenario








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**You will then act out an intake**





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**Let's do it!**





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You will then act out an intake

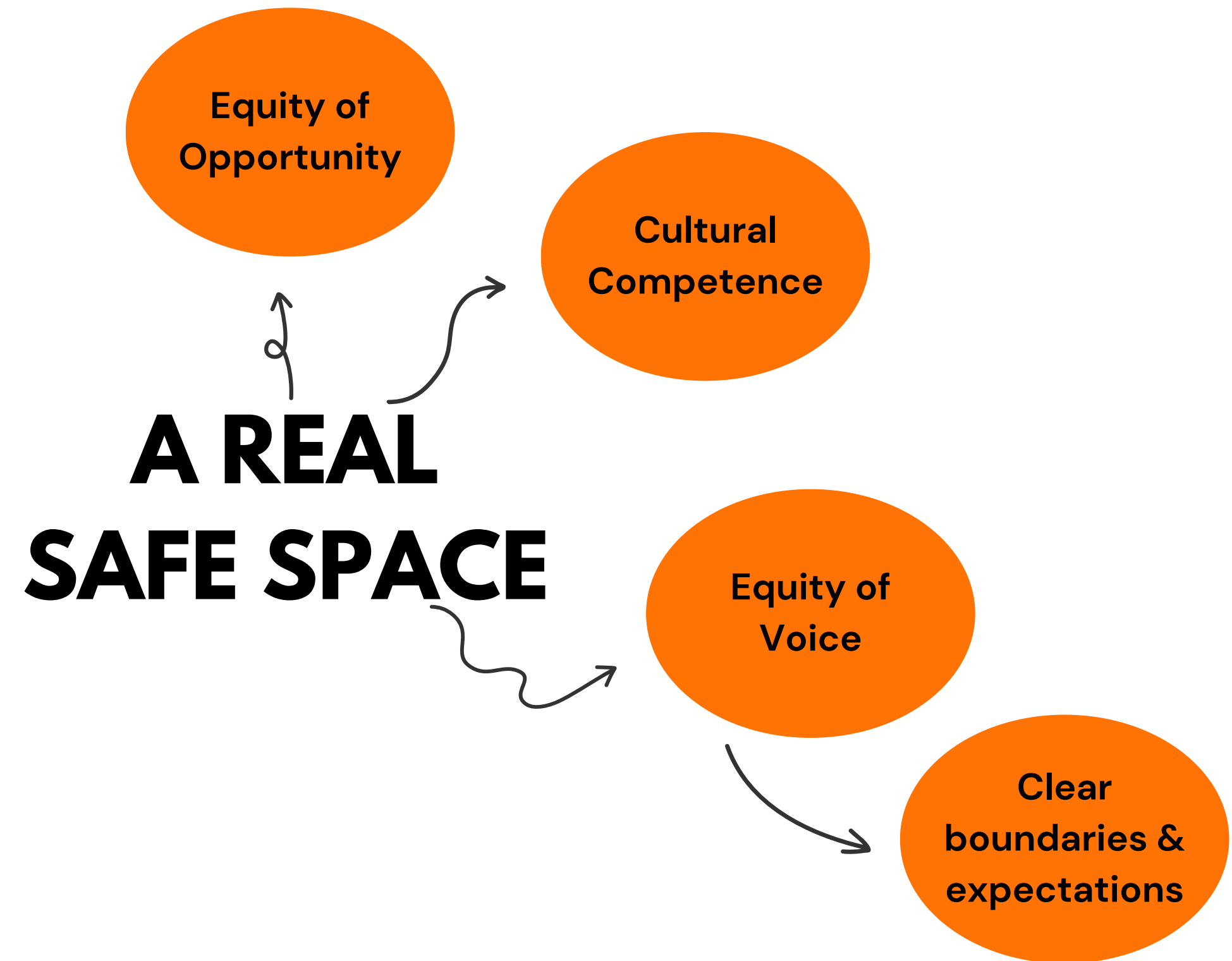
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parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student(s)

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Let's do it!

**Share...give the SWOT Analysis**

















# Restorative Practices





# Restorative Principles

- Acknowledges that relationships are central to building community.
- Ensures **equity of voice** among all members of the community. All voices are valued, **everyone is heard**.
- Establishes a culture of high expectations with high support, emphasizing doing things “WITH” not “TO” or “FOR”.
- Builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships and focuses on the harm done rather than only rule-breaking.
- Engages in collaborative problem solving.
- Enhances **accountability**, responsibility and empowers change and growth for all members of the community.



# In Restorative Communities, There is a Shift in Orientation



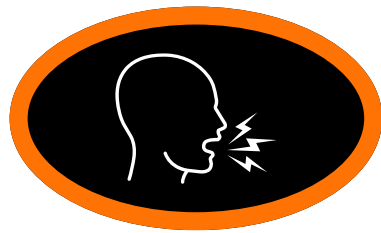
**Positional  
Authority**



**Personal Power  
"over"**



**Ruler of the  
environment**



**"Because I said so,  
that's why"**



**Detached  
Overseer**

- Dominant boss
- Uninvolved with student-to-student interaction



**Relational  
Authority**



**Ethical power  
"with"**



**Caretaker of the  
environment**



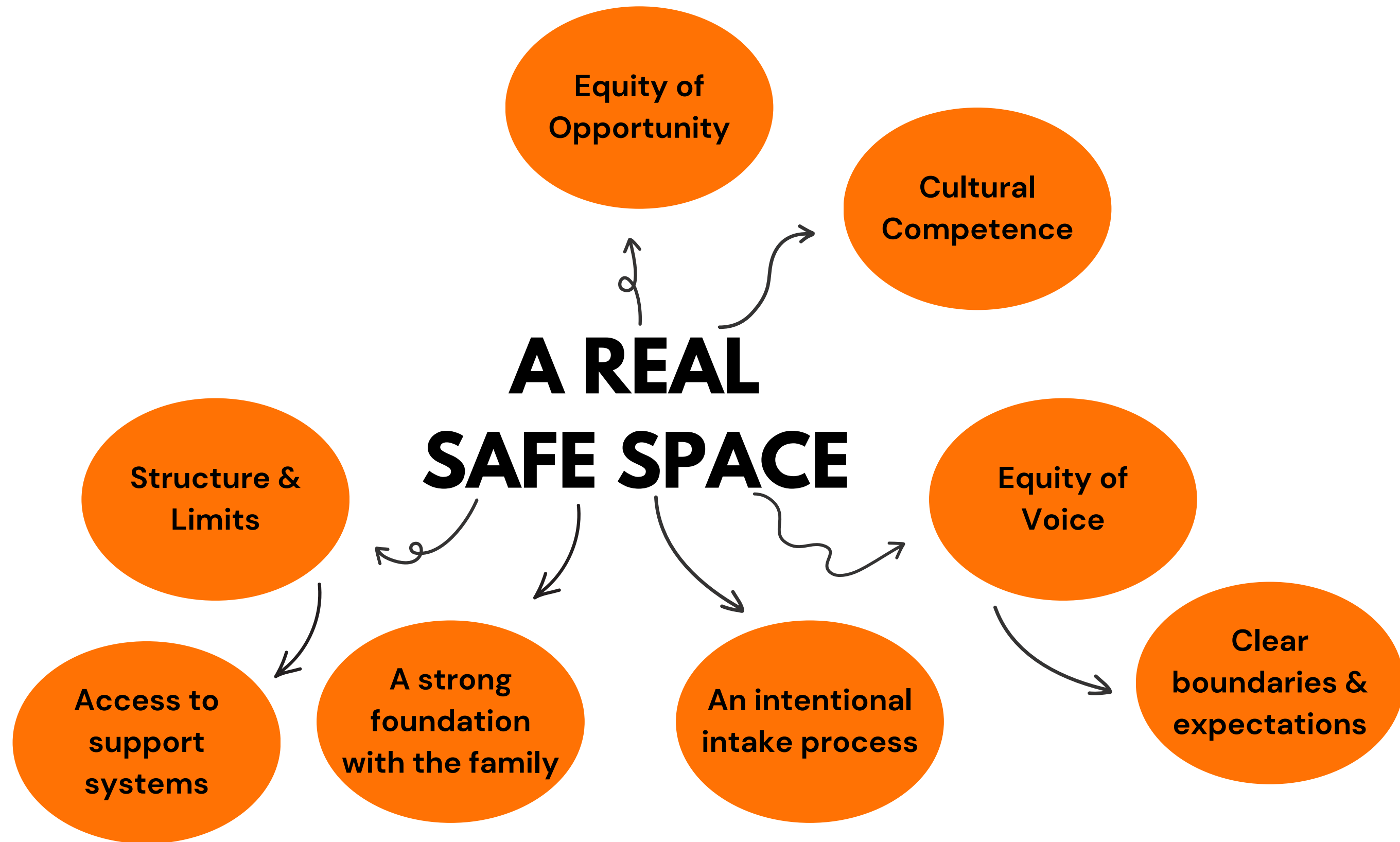
**"Because it helps  
all of us"**



**Knowledgeable  
ally**

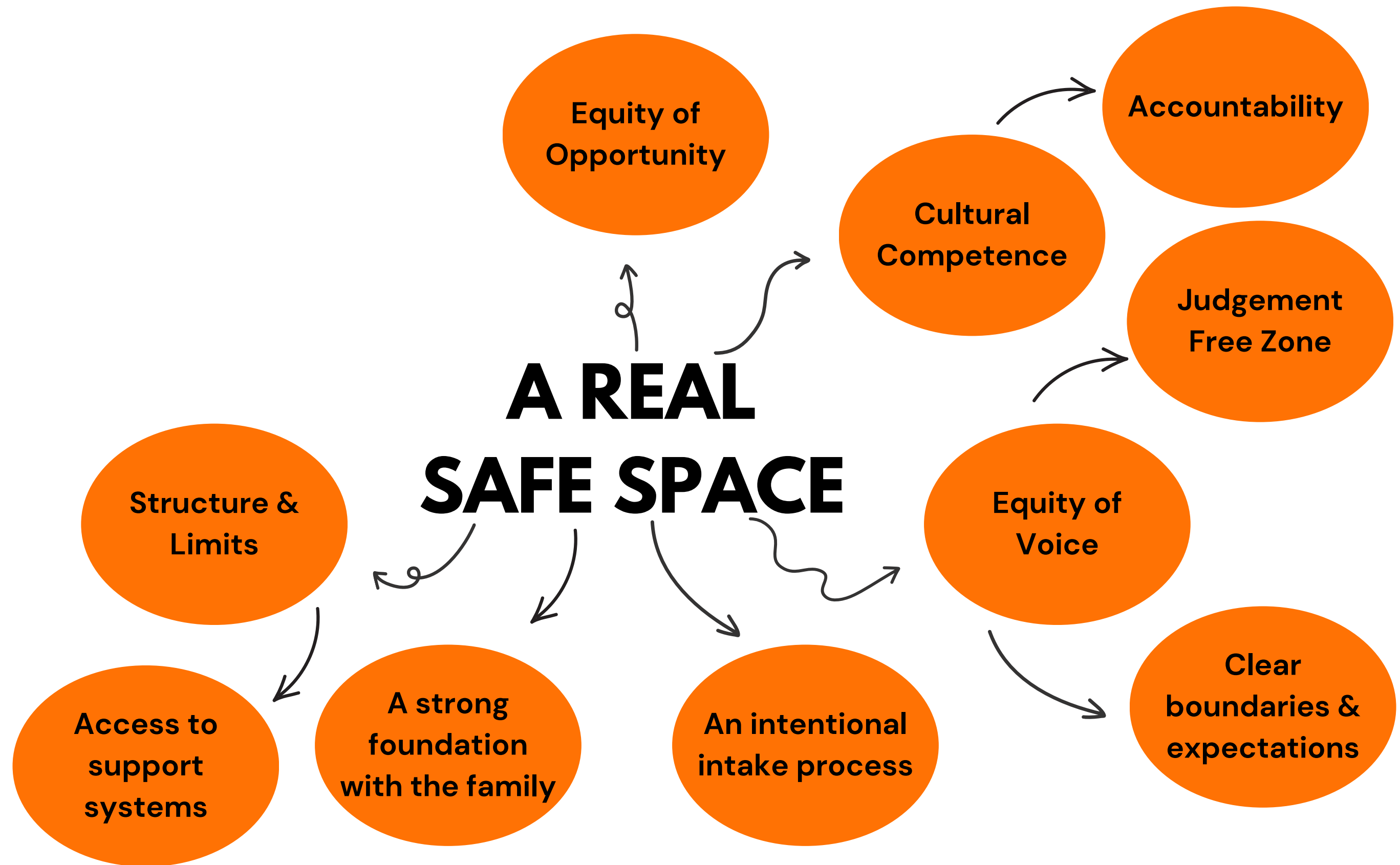
- Influential coach
- Attends to student-to-student interaction

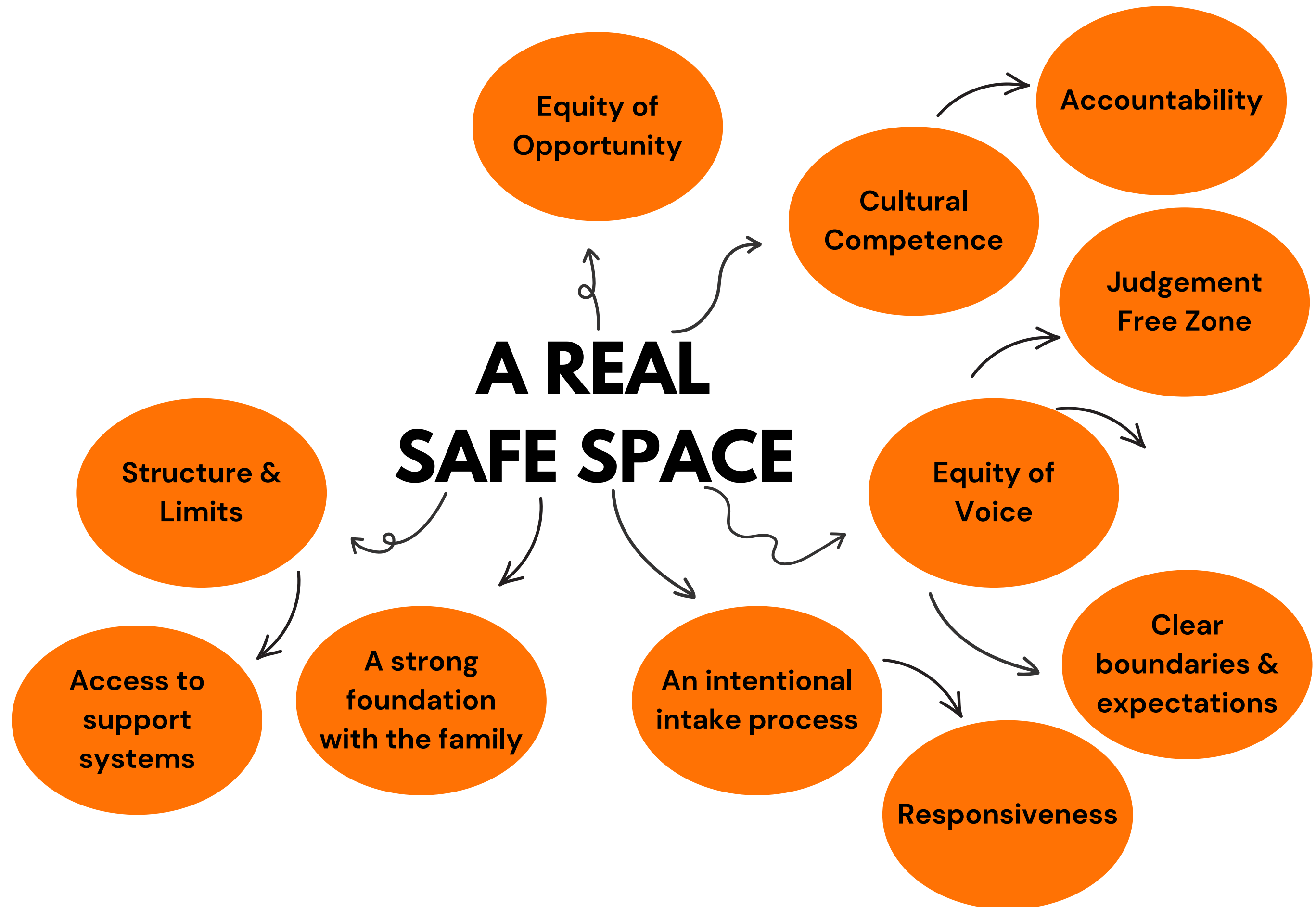
















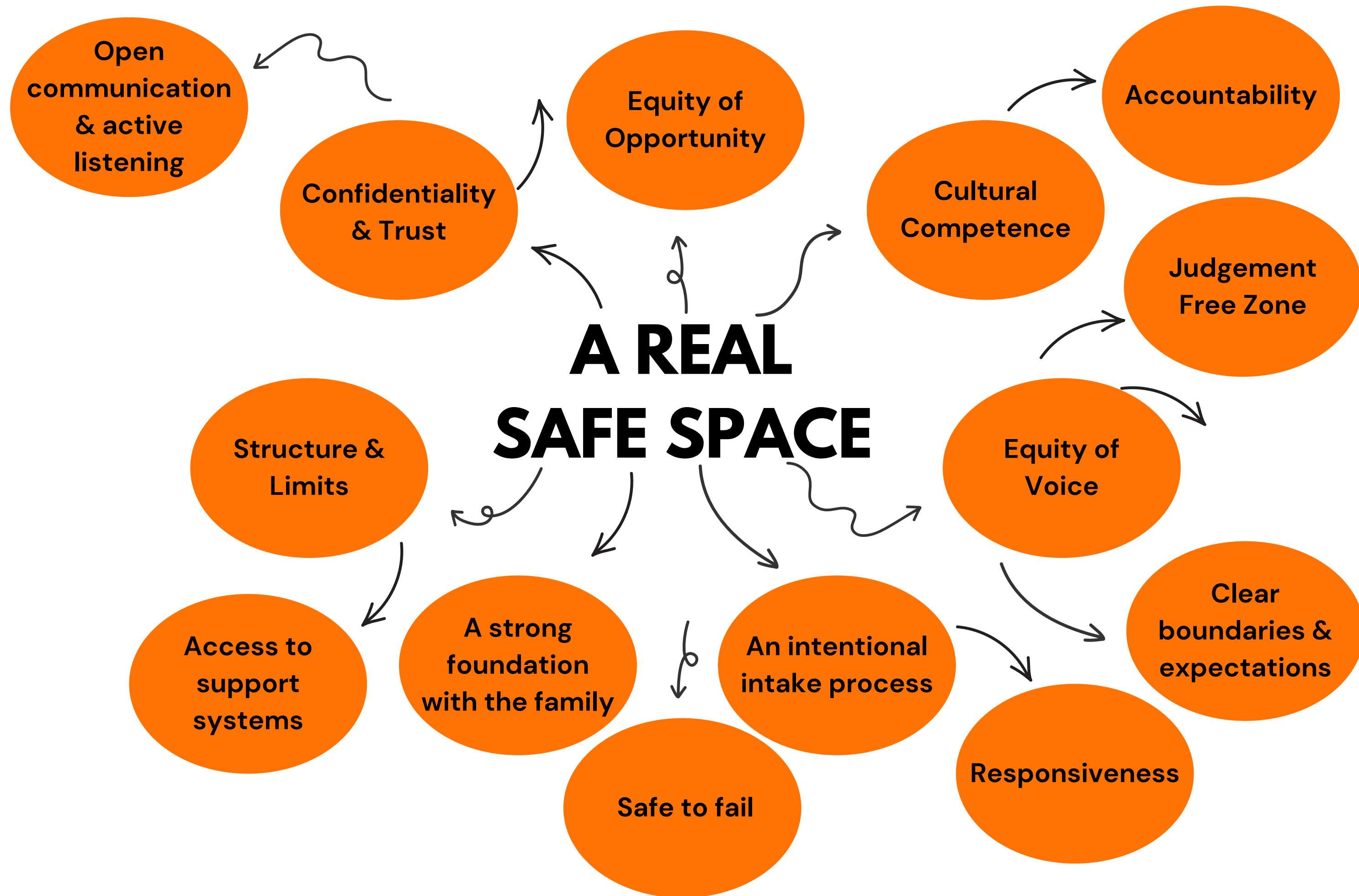








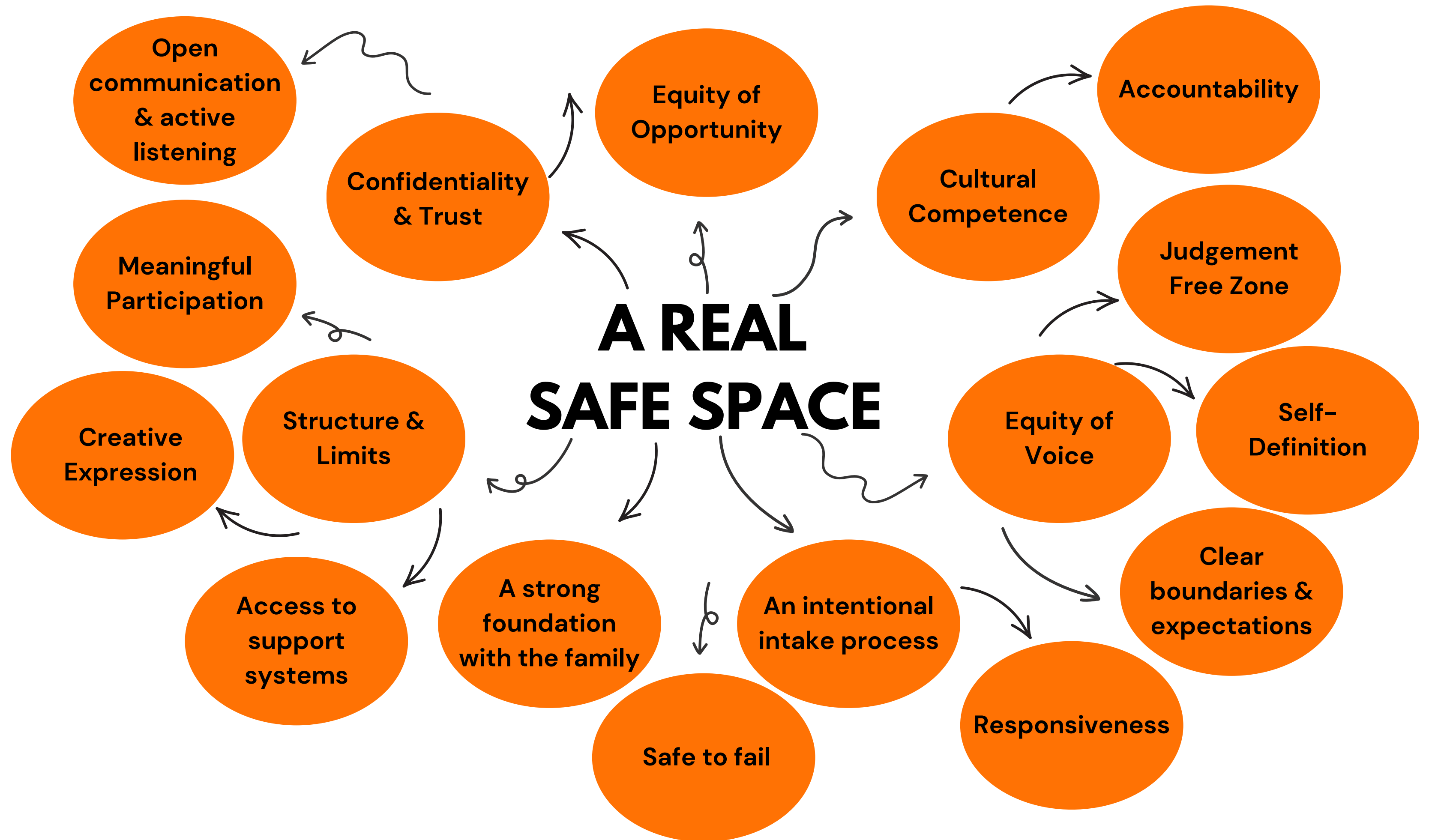
# How it looks

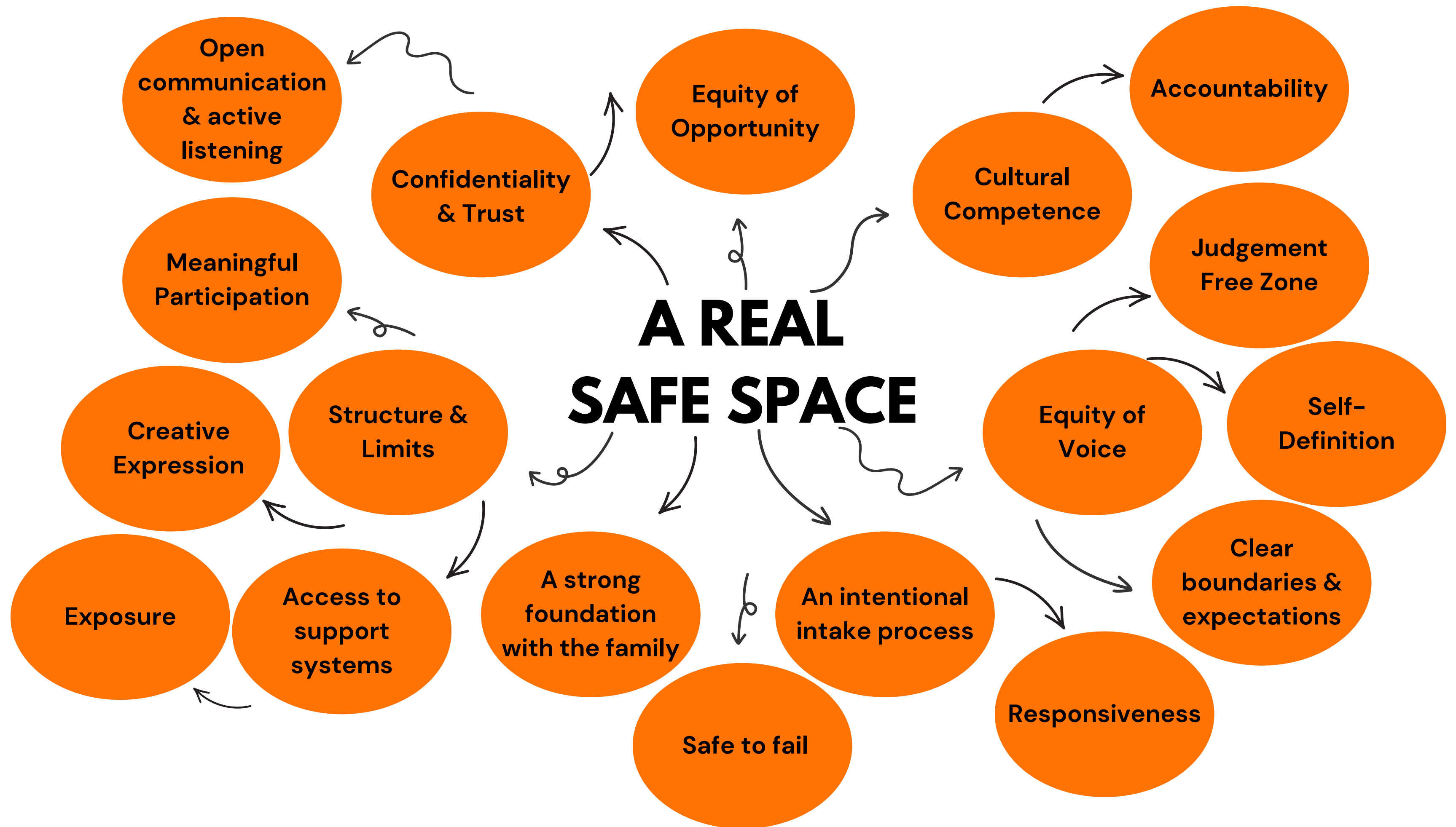


















# Red Tape





# What is Red Tape?








# What is Red Tape?

The dictionary definition is: excessive bureaucracy or adherence to rules and formalities, especially in public business.







**What are some examples of red tape policies in beyond school hours organizations?**





# Some examples include:

Strict No-Contact Policies  
Strict Transport Policies  
Overly Strict Attendance Policies  
Limited Communication Channels  
Restrictive Behavioral Policies





# What limited red tape can do



- What does healthy human interaction look like?
  - According to the National Institutes of Health, the average person needs “twelve hugs per day to achieve real psychological growth”
  - Students are forced to think about their feelings at least 1–3 times a day
- The EJS Project has been operating for 10 years for “high risk, high potential” youth in Palm Beach County. We are proud to say that we have never had a fight within our walls...
- If a student has an incident at school, before we find out from other students, teachers, or counselors, the student usually beats us to the punch to share the story themselves



## So we Ask...Why the Red Tape?









# ACTIVITY

**What does the power  
dynamics in your  
organization look like?**





# ACTIVITY

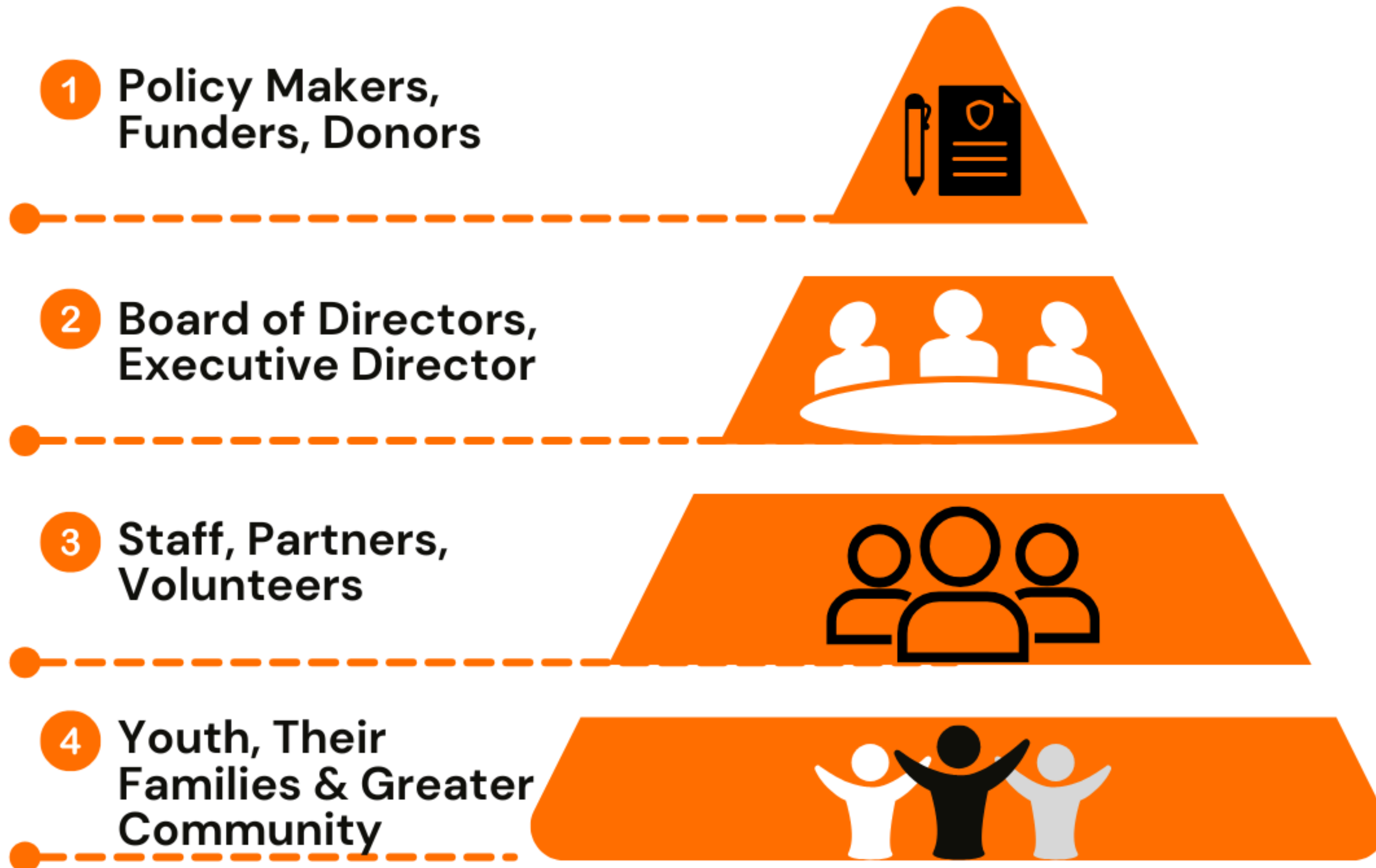
**What does the power  
dynamics in your  
organization look like?**

Take 2 minutes to write it out in your  
hierarchy worksheet.

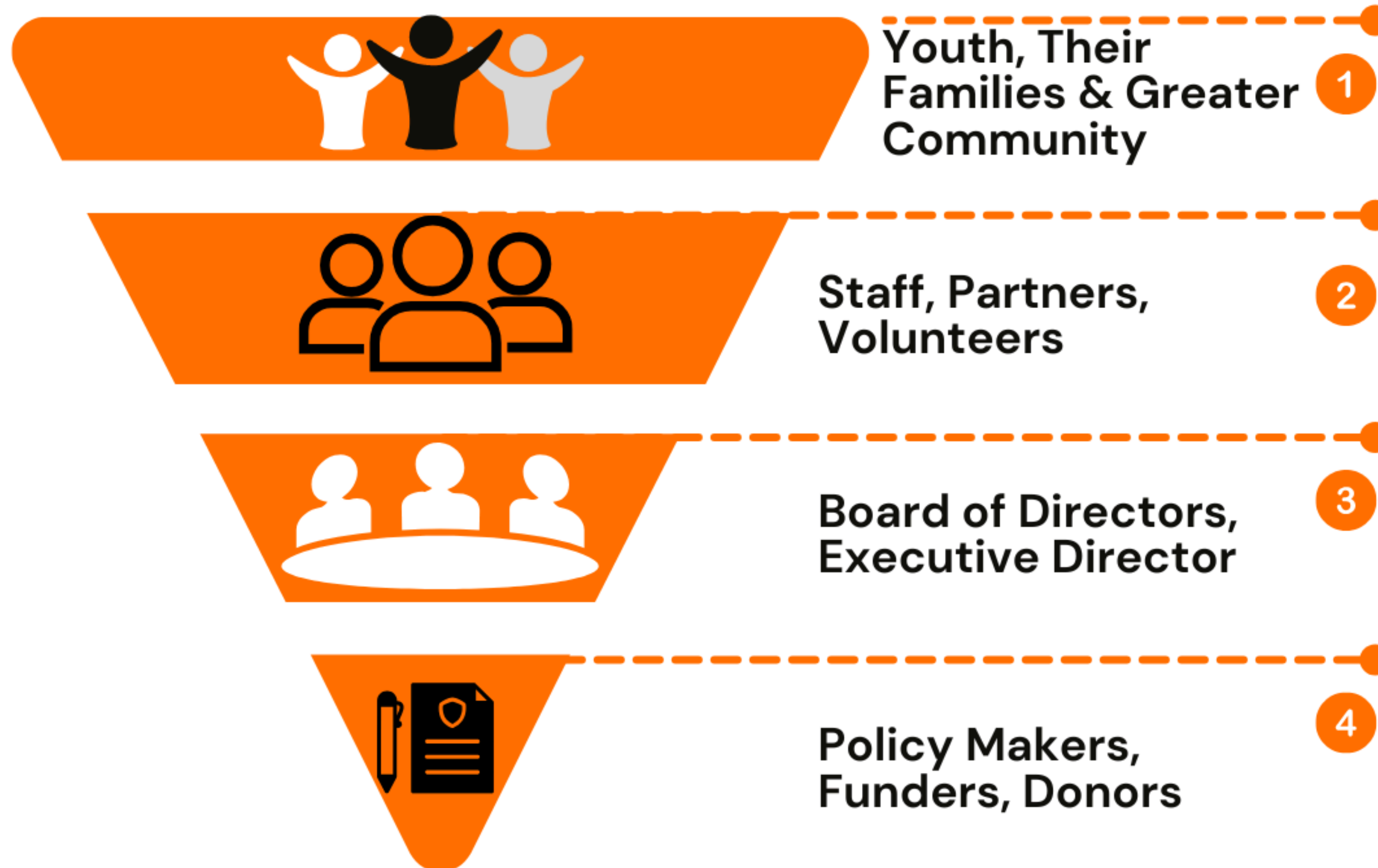




# Typical Logic Model



# Our Logic Model























***Always remember this:***



**Always remember this:  
When a student is ready, the  
teacher will appear!**







**THANK YOU!**





# Contact

Questions?







# Take the Survey!

