



# resilience now

Sustainable solutions for resilient communities

<http://resilience.ngo>

## Psychology of Change *a crash course*

This crash course aims to present the main principles of the psychology of change, aka what makes people change habits.

These tools are useful for community workers; to help them introduce new practices within communities.

Content:

- What does not work
- What does work
- Tips to reach actors of change
- Tips to ensure effective learning
- How to use these tools in a project

Some illustrations were found on the web.

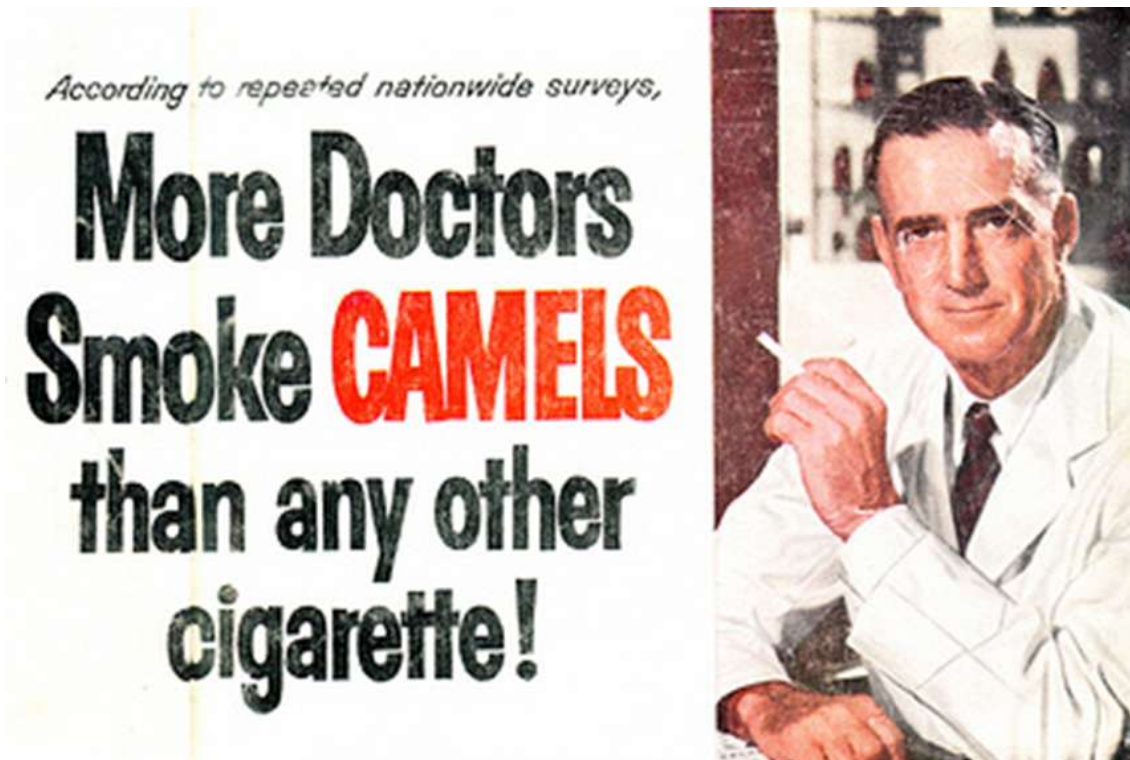
Thanks to their authors, for sharing them.

resilience now

**What does  
*not* work**

## What does not work

### *Don't just provide information*



Having access to information is not what changes people's practices.

Otherwise, doctors wouldn't smoke, would they?

It's not because they know their behavior is bad that people will stop it.

It's not even when people are motivated. (We all want to lose some weight, right?)



## What does not work

***... even on the best solution ever***



In refugee camps in Chad, women wouldn't stop listing the advantages of solar cookers over the traditional open pit fires or improved cookstoves: *"No more tedious hours of collecting the wood outside of the camp in dangerous conditions, and feeding the stove and stirring the food so that it won't stick to the pot. No more accidents with children falling into the fire, no more smoke smell on our clothes, no more coughing and lung problems... With the solar cooker, you just prepare the dish and explain to a kid how to follow the path of the sun. Then you can go run your errands."*

They even said they wouldn't return to their previous practice even after they go back to their normal life!

## What does not work



The solar cooker is indeed a good solution compared to firewood. So it should be mainstreamed and used every place where firewood is an issue, right?

No!

The only reason why the women in the refugee camp adopted the solar cooker is that they had no choice. The alternative for them was to venture outside of the camp and be abused by the local people, who themselves were under stress.

So people will not necessarily adopt a solution because they know that it's better for them than their current practice. There are many example of very good solutions that people are aware of but wouldn't adopt.

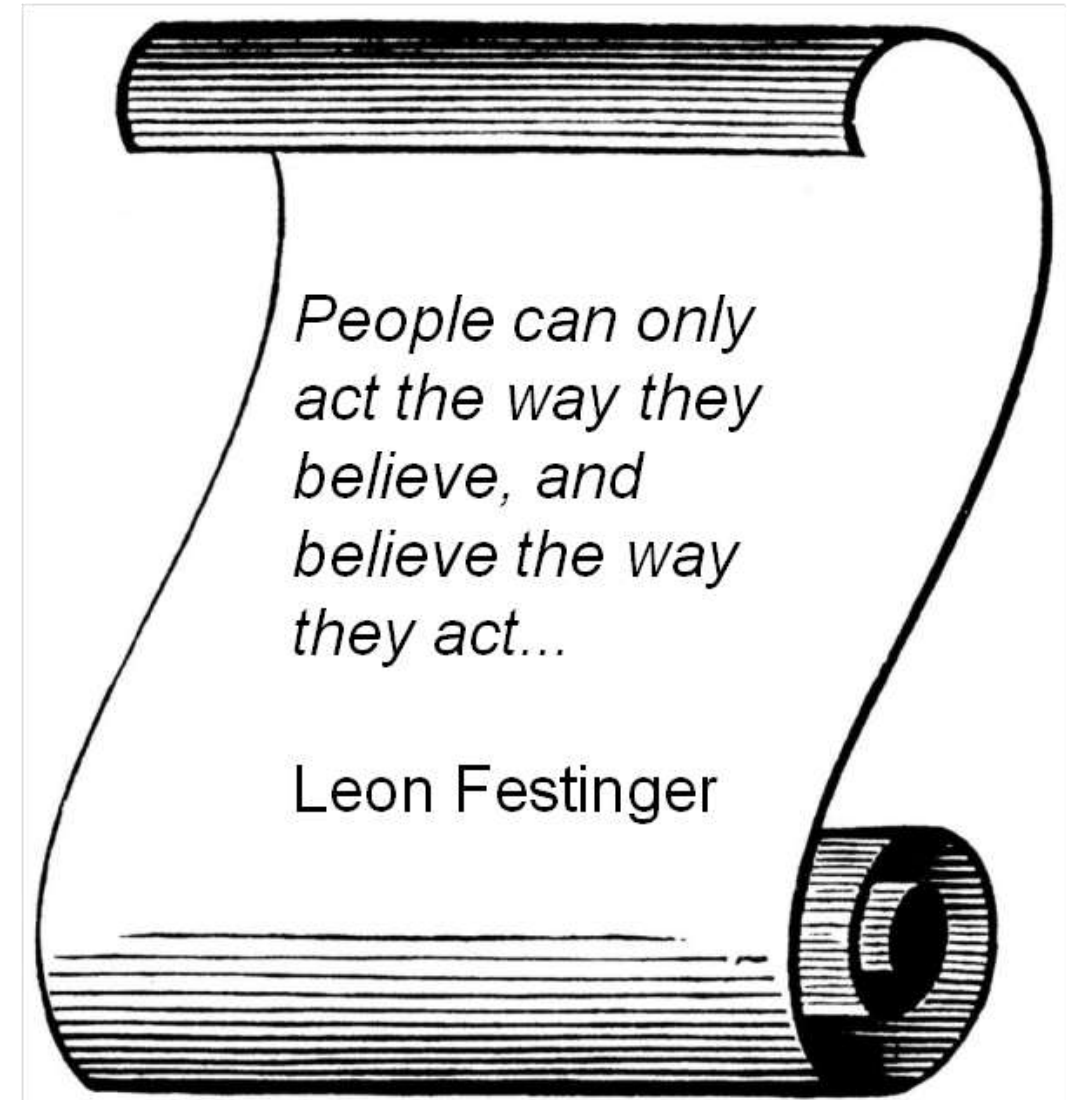
No matter how good the alternative is, just providing information doesn't work.

## What does not work

### *Don't lecture about dark perspectives*

Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation where there is a conflict between beliefs and behaviors. The feeling of discomfort that follows leads to an alteration in one of the two in order to restore cognitive consonance.

(Leon Festinger, 1957).





## What does not work



Here is an example. Let's say my way of life does not mitigate nor prepare for climate change. If I start believing that climate change is happening, then I'm in a situation of cognitive dissonance between my beliefs and my behavior.

I can solve my cognitive dissonance in two ways :

1/ I can change my behavior to have a way of life that mitigates or prepares for climate change. (But it is very difficult to change well-learned behavioral responses.)

OR 2/ I can change my beliefs by acquiring new information that outweighs the dissonant beliefs: new technologies will stop climate change, the next climate change conference will work all this out, I won't suffer from climate change directly, my acts are not that important in the whole picture... (It's actually easier to change one's beliefs than change one's way of life.)



## What does not work



The compelling need to reduce one's cognitive dissonance explains why the strategy used by some environmentalists consisting of lecturing about a gloomy future does not work.

Warning people about the negative consequences of their current practices will not make them change their habits. It may even be counter-productive and lead to denial.

(Fortunately, this strategy is coming to an end: a video from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) states that what first inspires to take action is “Love. Not Loss.” )

resilience now

**What *does*  
work**

## What does work

### *Let people draw their own conclusions*



That's a trick they teach at law school: don't come to the conclusions yourself. Give the elements and let the judge draw the conclusions. It's far more effective.

If you tell people that their unsustainable practices seriously threaten their livelihoods, they'll wonder who on earth you are to lecture them.

But if you give them the space and the methods to analyze their situation, it will be much more powerful because they will author the conclusion.

Don't tell them what problems they face; let them find out. Have the beneficiaries make a participatory resilience assessment.



## What does work

*Use peer-to-peer learning  
when demonstrating  
new behavior*



Peer pressure is very powerful.  
People want to do like their neighbours.

## What does work

One hot summer in San Marco, California, graduate students put signs on every door in a neighborhood, asking people to turn off their air conditioning and turn on their fans. Three different reasons were used: “Save \$54 a month this summer”; “Protect the environment”; “Prevent blackouts”. None of these messages worked. They had no impact on energy consumption.



But a fourth message eventually worked out. It said: "When surveyed, 77% of your neighbors said that they turned off their air conditioning and turned on their fans. Please join them." The people who received this message showed a marked decrease in energy consumption simply by being told what their neighbors were doing.

*(Alex Laskey: How behavioral science can lower your energy bill.)*



## What does work

### ***Focus on the advantages of the new behavior***



The method of motivational interviewing has been developed in the field of drug addiction, to help quitting drugs.

Motivation based on the advantages of the new behavior (intrinsic motivation) is a much more efficient change factor than the motivation based on the inconvenience of the current behavior (extrinsic motivation).

*(Motivational Interviewing, William R. Miller, 1983)*

Use positive visioning: have the beneficiaries visualise their life with the new behavior.



## What does work

***Have people decide  
to do something***



“Will you watch my bag while I go to the restroom?”

That’s it ! Now you are stuck. You will watch the bag. Because you decided so. True, you were forced to...

People don’t behave following their ideas, convictions or beliefs, but because at some point they got engaged in a certain way. Look at what you do at work or in your relationships.

*(Moriarty, 1975).*

## What does work



One of the most famous studies uses a coffee place as a set up.

The subject is asked for a light by a researcher. As she can't provide it, the researcher steps away to get some, leaving their bag unattended. If a third person comes to rob the bag, only 12.5% of the people studied will react.

But when previously asked by the researcher: "Can you watch my bag while I get some matches?" then 100% of the subjects will stand up to the thief. (*Moriarty, 1975*).



## What does work



(It's interesting to see that the answer to the question "Can you watch my bag?" is always "yes".)

Same person, same situation, different behaviors. Why is that? The difference lies within the decision. The person had agreed to watch the bag.

People tend to behave the way in which they got engaged. So, if you want your beneficiaries to make a decision, have them make a participatory action plan. They will keep to that decision.



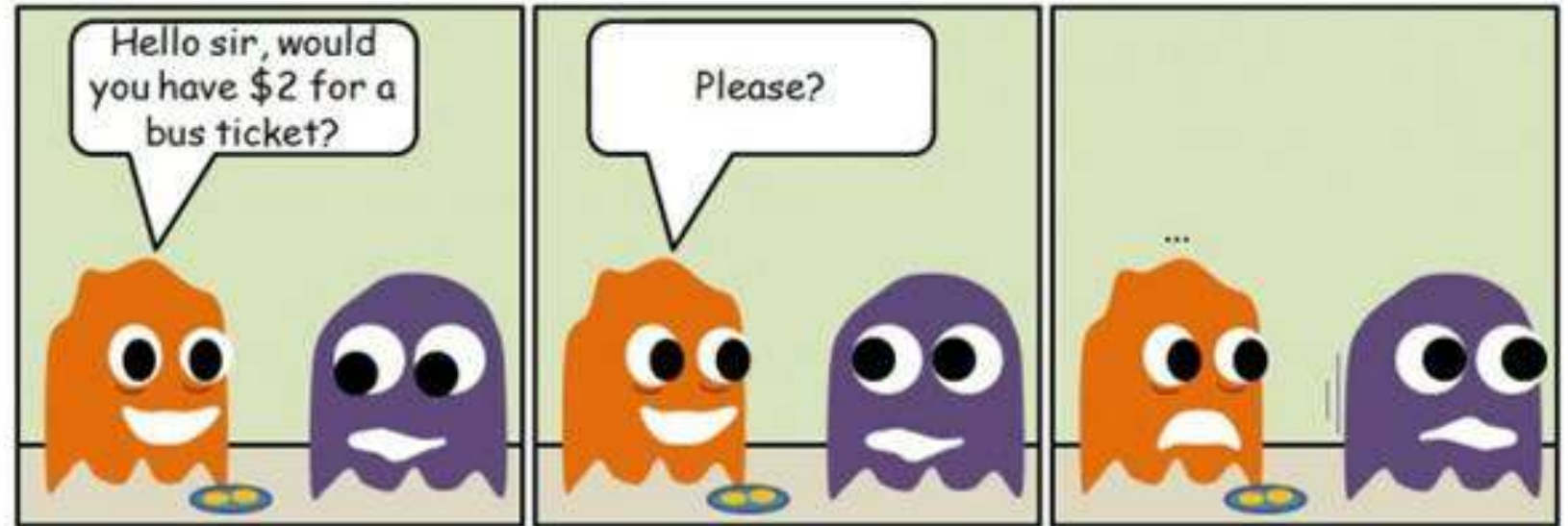
## What does work

*First, have people take a small step*

Now, you can help people make a decision with an introductory act...

One technique is “the foot in the door”: ask for something small so that the person can’t refuse, then ask for what you want.

### NORMALLY



### VINHLY



[www.vinh.ly](http://www.vinh.ly)

**resilience now**

## What does work

Another technique is “The door in the nose”: ask for something so big that the person has to refuse, then ask for what you want.

*(Cann, Sherman et Elkes, 1975)*



## What does work



Here is an example of these two preparatory acts:

The goal is to have some Bloomington inhabitants distribute flyers about road safety to the population.

To help them accept this request:

- A first group is asked to answer to three short questions about road safety. This a « foot in the door » strategy : most people will accept this small request.
- A second group is asked to count during two hours the number of vehicles crossing an important intersection for two hours. This a « door in the nose » strategy : most people refuse this big request.

In both cases, after these two initial requests, it was easier to get people do agree to the desired behavior, which was the distribution of flyers.



## What does work

***Have people make a strong commitment***



Also, the commitment is all the stronger if:

- It has been taken freely, explicitly and publicly;
- It comes from internal reasons (what I want) rather than from external ones (reward or punishment);
- It has a high cost (money, time), has lots of consequences and is irrevocable (in front of officials...)

*(Engagement Theory, Joule & Girandola, 2007) .*

## What does work

*Include religious and traditional leaders*



Beliefs are a huge part of a decision.

**resilience now**

resilience now

**Tips to reach  
actors of change**



***Reach actors of change***

***Work with women***



The University of Pennsylvania studied students and professionals to find out **what predicts success in life**. Was it intelligence, money, social skills, social background, creativity, self-esteem, diplomas? Turns out, it's none of those.

They found that the only common denominator of successful people was... **grit**. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Not being distracted by short term rewards but being focused on long term achievement.

And what category of people among everyone has to practice grit? Women! That's maybe why women are known to be good actors of change.

**resilience now**

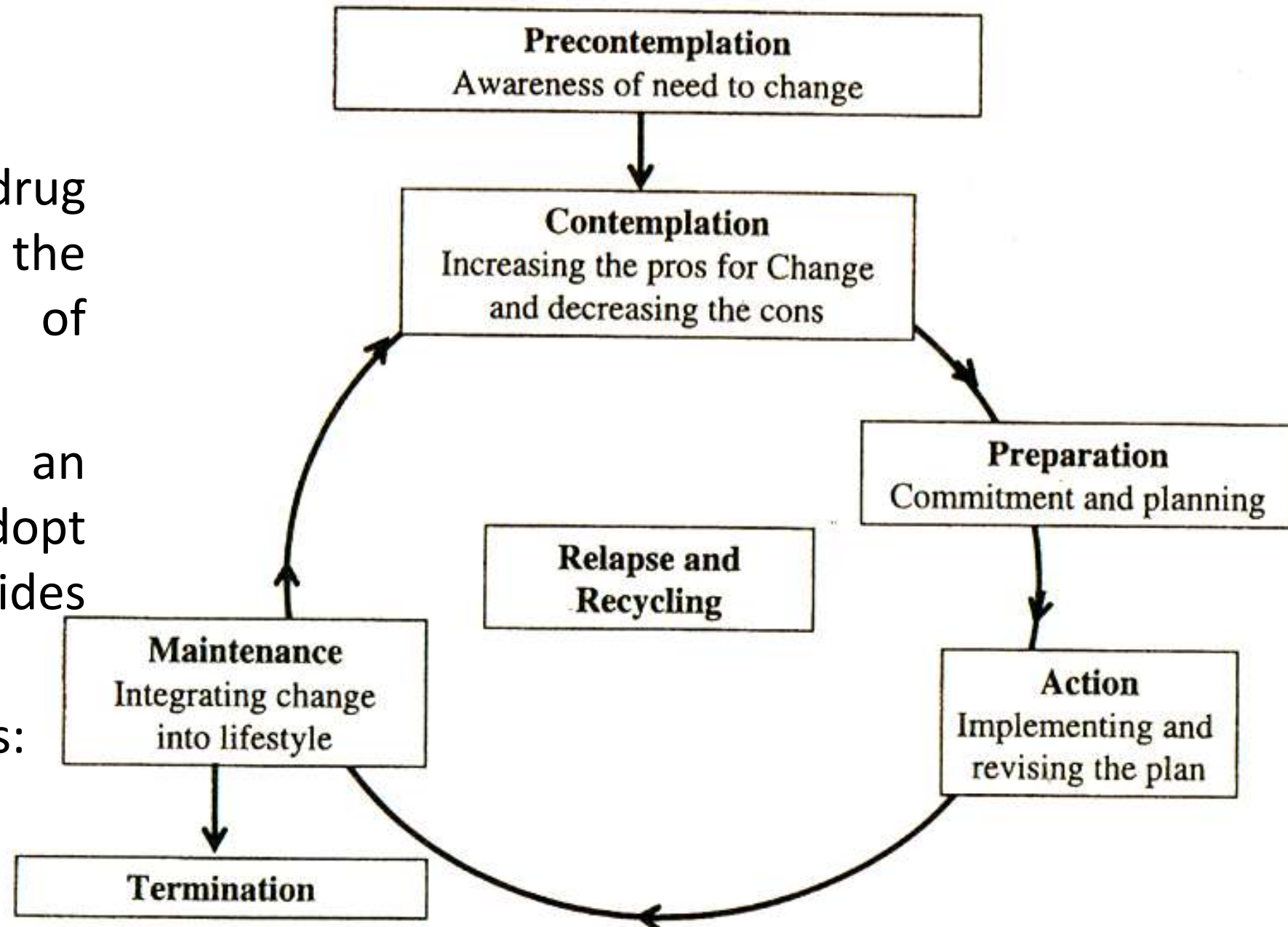
***Reach actors of change***

## ***Adapt your approach***

The research into drug addiction has developed the Trans-theoretical model of behavior change.

This model helps assess an individual's readiness to adopt a new behavior, and provides strategies for each stages.

Here are the different stages:



**resilience now**

## ***Reach actors of change***



***Precontemplation:*** Subject has no awareness of the problem, no intention to change behavior in the foreseeable future.

***Contemplation:*** Awareness of the problem, serious thought about overcoming, but no commitment to take action.

***Preparation:*** Failure to take action in the past, intent to take action in the near future.

***Action:*** Modification of the Behavior, experiences, or environment in order to overcome the problems.

***Maintenance:*** Consolidation of the gains attained during action and prevention of relapse.

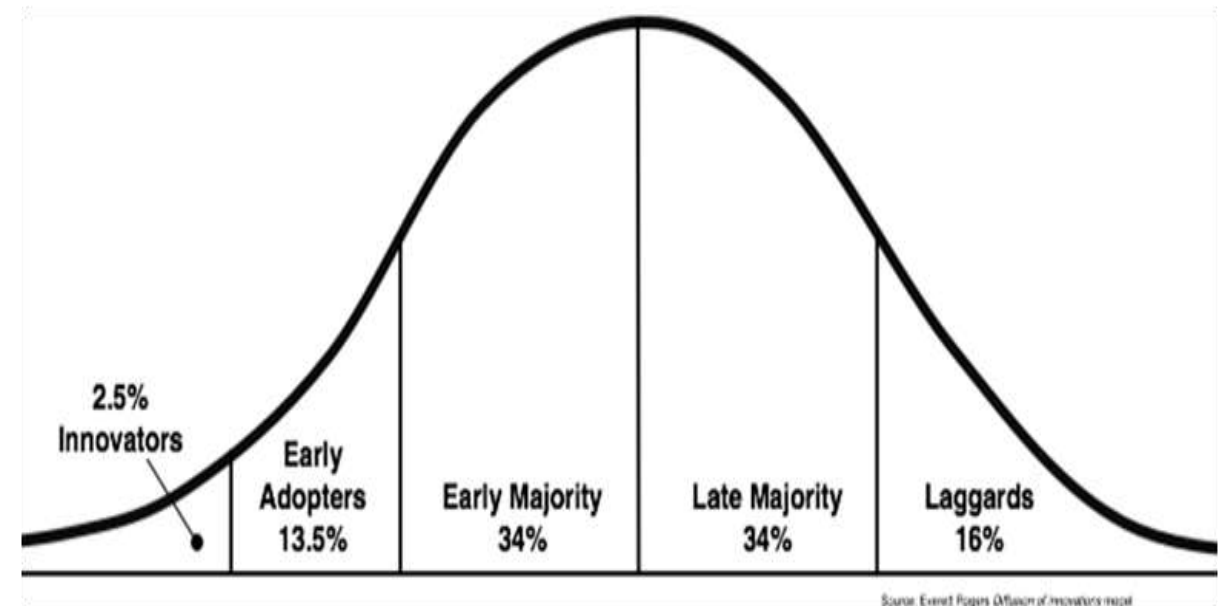


*Reach actors of change*

## *Find innovators*

In the pattern of introduction of any innovation, we know that people are split between innovators, early adopters, the early majority, the late majority, and laggards.

We want to work with **innovators**, the ones who are not afraid to stand out from the group and try new things.



resilience now

# **Tips to ensure effective learning**

## *Ensure effective learning*

### *Use an ultra-participatory process*

- Not pointing out the problems but supporting the community in assessing its socio-environmental resilience.
- Not identifying solutions but supporting the community to learn from others.
- Not suggesting how to implement but supporting the community in designing an action plan.



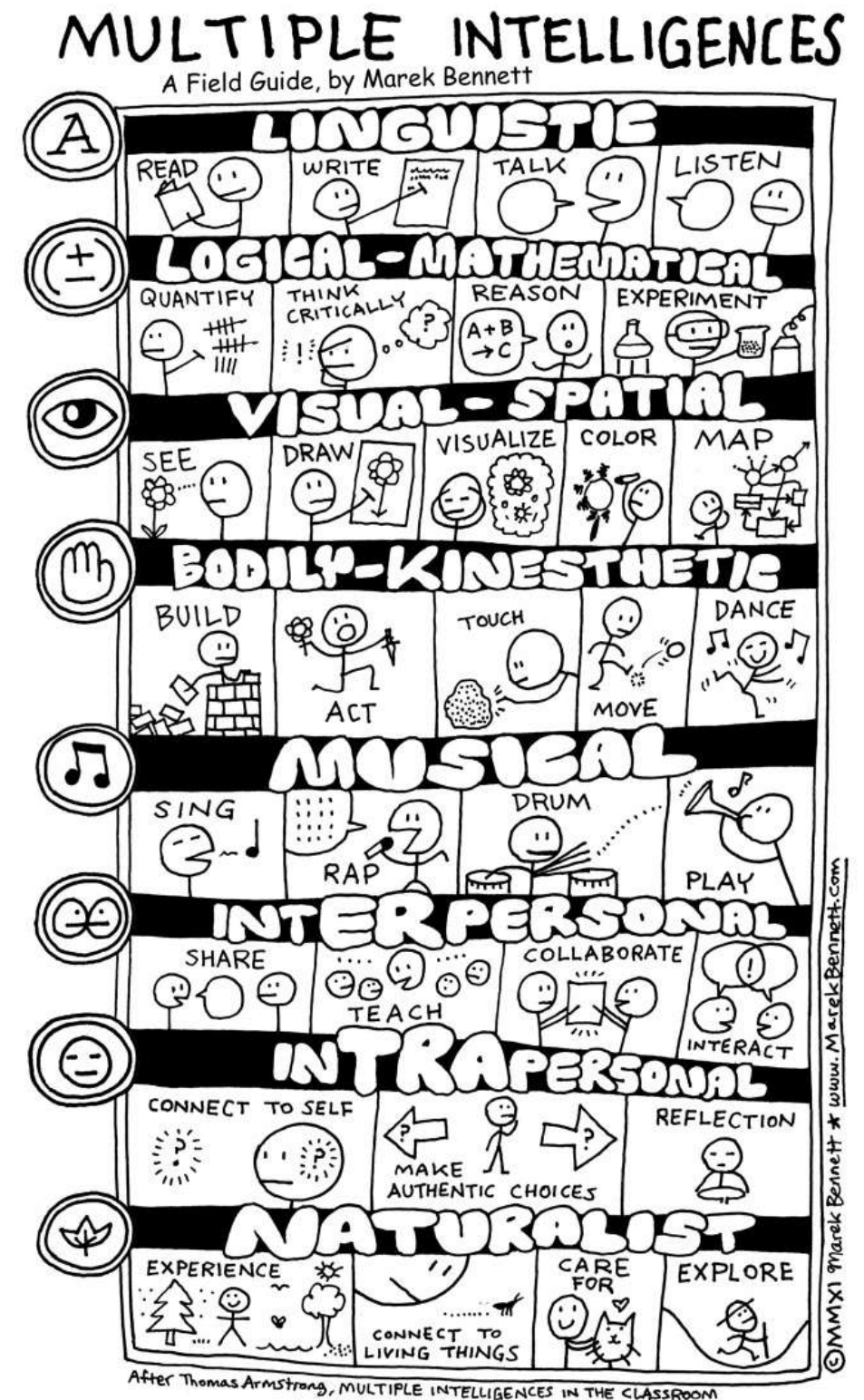


**Ensure effective learning**

**Use different kinds of memory/intelligence**

There are several kinds of memory/intelligence, and it's critical to use them during a training. To effectively pass on knowledge, it's better to present it several times, using different teaching methods; linguistic, logic, vision, movements, music, introspection, relationships and nature.

Have story-tellers participate in your training, use role playing...



***Ensure effective learning***

***Put the trainees in a position of teaching***



We never learn as well as when we teach

*(Additional benefit : They are put in a position of being the resource person for the future)*



# resilience now



**We hope these  
tools will be  
useful in your  
projects**

<http://resilience.ngo>