

# Navigating Emotional “Sparks” When Facilitating Experiential Learning



Academy  
of Management

Learning &  
Education

Teaching material based on:

Lundgren, H., Morrison, E. A., & Sung, S. (2023). Sparks and Dynamic Co-Emergence—How Facilitators Make Sense of and Learn from Critical Incidents in Experiential Learning and Teaching. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 23(2).

The authors consent and encourage other scholars to use this material for their teaching.

Acknowledgment: We would like to thank Kourtney Clark, graduate assistant in Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy (LEAP) at the Mary Frances Early College of Education, University of Georgia for her creativity, input, and support in assembling these workshop materials.

# Pedagogical Notes

These materials were designed for those who have facilitated experiential learning activities in academic settings in a variety of disciplines (e.g., business, education, health). Drawing from our research, we invite facilitators to reflect on their experience and to anticipate what types of emotions have emerged or may emerge in future experiential learning facilitation. These slides can be used in large classrooms or small group settings.

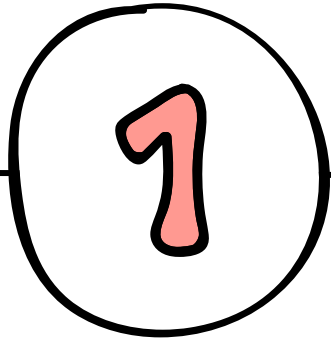
The 90-minute workshop outlined on the next slide ("run sheet") has been successfully piloted within adult education and health professions education contexts. Materials required: Slide projector, printed handouts (slides 8 + 11), writing utensils.

Please send us feedback on what works and what doesn't, especially if you improvise or develop alternative activities that work particularly well. Please also be in touch if you're interested in contributing to ongoing research related to this line of work: Henriette Lundgren, [lundgren@uga.edu](mailto:lundgren@uga.edu)

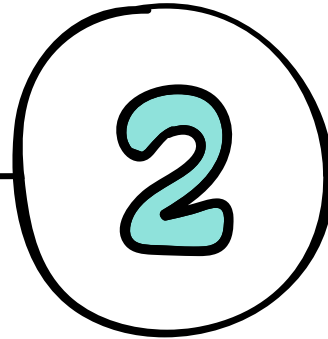
# Workshop Run Sheet

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Slides</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
00:00-00:05	Welcome & learning objectives	4	Participants settled in; learning objectives shared
00:05-00:10	Experiential Learning (EL) intro	5	Different experiential learning interventions shared
00:10-00:20	Vignette and introduction of "the spark"	6-7	Read out vignette; idea of the spark is introduced
00:20-00:35	Activity 1: Think – Pair – Share (with handout)	8 (handout)	Opportunity to link abstract concepts to own experiences of emotional sparks
00:35-00:45	Emotions debrief	9	Range of emotions, interaction of emotions, emotional contagion debriefed
00:45-00:55	Model of dynamic co-emergence	10	Dynamic co-emergence model introduced derived from critical incident technique research
00:55-01:15	Activity 2: Your own critical incident (with handout)	11 (handout)	Opportunity to reflection on own EL experiences with support of peers
01:15-01:20	Tools for Navigating the Spark and Emotions	12	Debrief of three layers: Become aware, recognize the emotion, take informed action
01:20-01:30	Wrap-Up and Close	13-14	Learning review and references

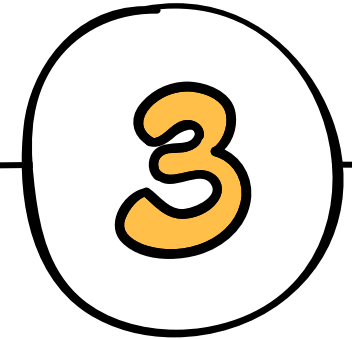
# Welcome!



**About me**



**About the  
workshop**



**About the style of  
this workshop**

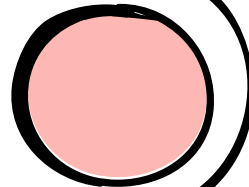
## **Workshop objectives:**

- Becoming aware of emotional "sparks" in experiential learning and teaching
- Recognizing and naming the underlying emotions at play
- Taking informed action to address tensions or redirect energy productively
- Engaging in reflection with your peers to integrate lessons learned

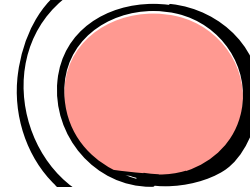


# Experiential Learning

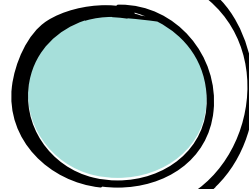
**Reflective  
journaling**



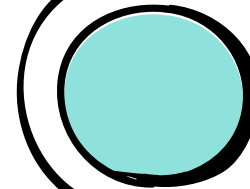
**Role plays**



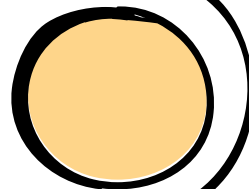
**Case studies**



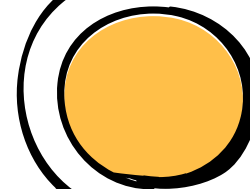
**Community  
service**



**Simulations or  
games**



**Virtual reality**





# Vignette

“I was facilitating a group exercise that required individual students to come to the front of the room and recite a poem or favorite piece of literature out loud. As I was gently nudging the student to connect with the audience through the words he was speaking, he got angry and yelled at me in front of the class saying that my guidance was ruining what he had intended. The student’s anger in the moment and subsequent anger directed towards me in later classes and submitted assignments made me aware [that] this was a critical moment.”



—Leadership Course  
Facilitator<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Lundgren, Morrison & Sung (2023) Sparks and Dynamic Co-Emergence - How facilitators make sense of and learn from critical incidents in experiential learning and teaching, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1-19.

# Sparks Examples

In experiential learning, there are often triggers or “sparks” that signal a shift for students or facilitators.

## Change in energy

Silence in the room;  
laughter

## Verbal reaction

“I don’t want to do this  
anymore!”

## Cynicism

“So we are all idiots  
now, aren’t we?”



## Physical reaction

Arms crossed;  
reluctant to participate

## Activity cue

Being done after 30 sec  
(instead of 20 min)

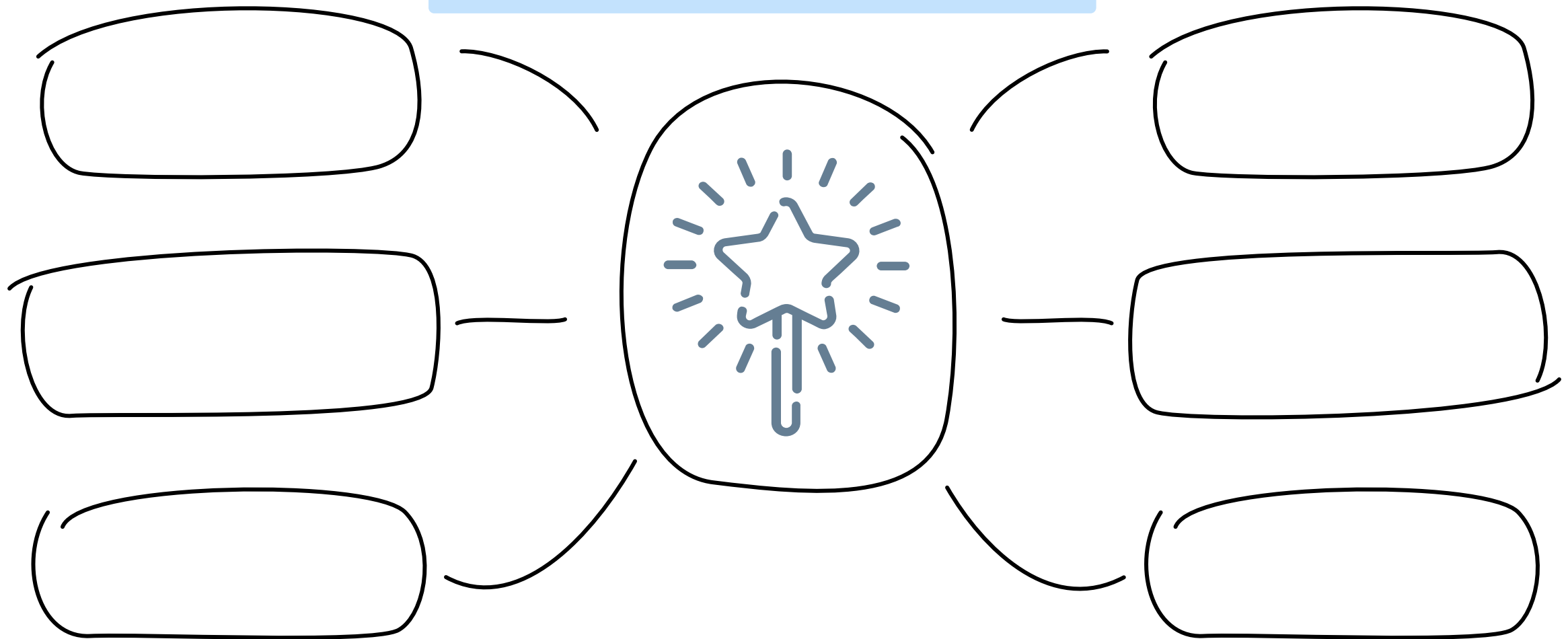
## Emotional cue

Frown, turning away;  
jumping up and down



# Activity 1 Handout: Think - Pair - Share

What sparks have you experienced in your own facilitation?





# Range of Emotions

**When things are uncertain or too much<sup>2</sup>**

**Facilitator<sup>3</sup>:** Anxious, doubtful, fear, nervous, **overwhelmed**, scared, stressed, worried

**Student:** Afraid, uncomfortable, unfamiliar, reluctant, vulnerable, **worried**

**When things don't go as planned**

**Facilitator:** Disturbed, failure, **frustrated**, disappointment, feeling under-prepared or **under-supported**, irritated, resignation, regret

**Student:** Bored, **disempowered**

**When it's beyond us**

**Facilitator:** Amazed, awe, determined, revealing, stunned, **surprised**

**Student: Aha-moment**, blown away, enthused, energetic, surprised

**When life is good**

**Facilitator:** Calm, delighted, exhilarated, happy, grateful, proud, **SQUEEE!!**

**Student:** Appreciative, grateful, excited, engaged, laughing, **light**, pleased

<sup>2</sup> Source: Brené Brown (2021) *Atlas of the Heart*, Random House

<sup>3</sup> Source: Morrison, Lundgren & Sung (2023) Learning to Surf: Catching the Waves of Dynamic Emotions in Experiential Teaching. In: *Honing Self-Awareness of Faculty and Future Business Leaders. Emotions Connected with Teaching and Learning*, Emerald Publishing



# Dynamic Co-Emergence

## Spark: Becoming aware



What do you notice?  
What is shifting?

## Assessing the spark

How do you assess the situation?  
How do you perceive the participants' state of being?

## Integrating lessons learned

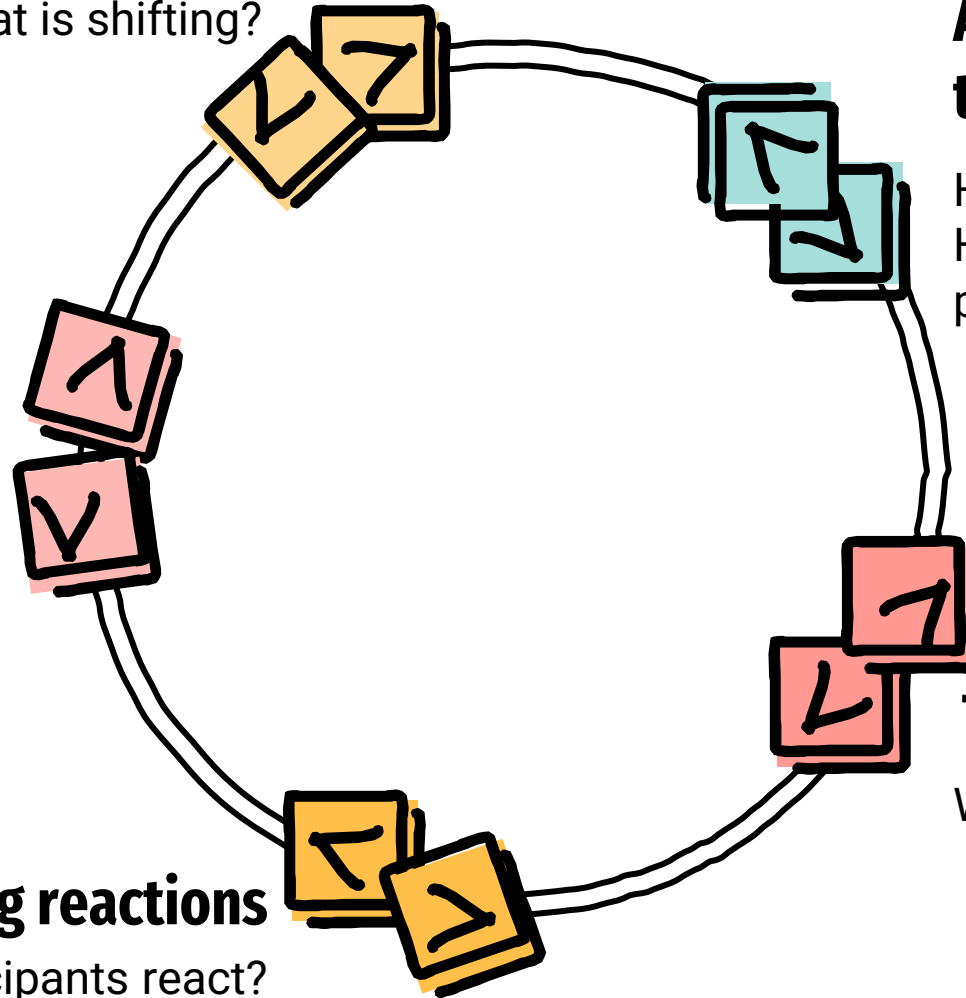
How do you look at the incident now?  
What (new) learning emerges?

## Taking action

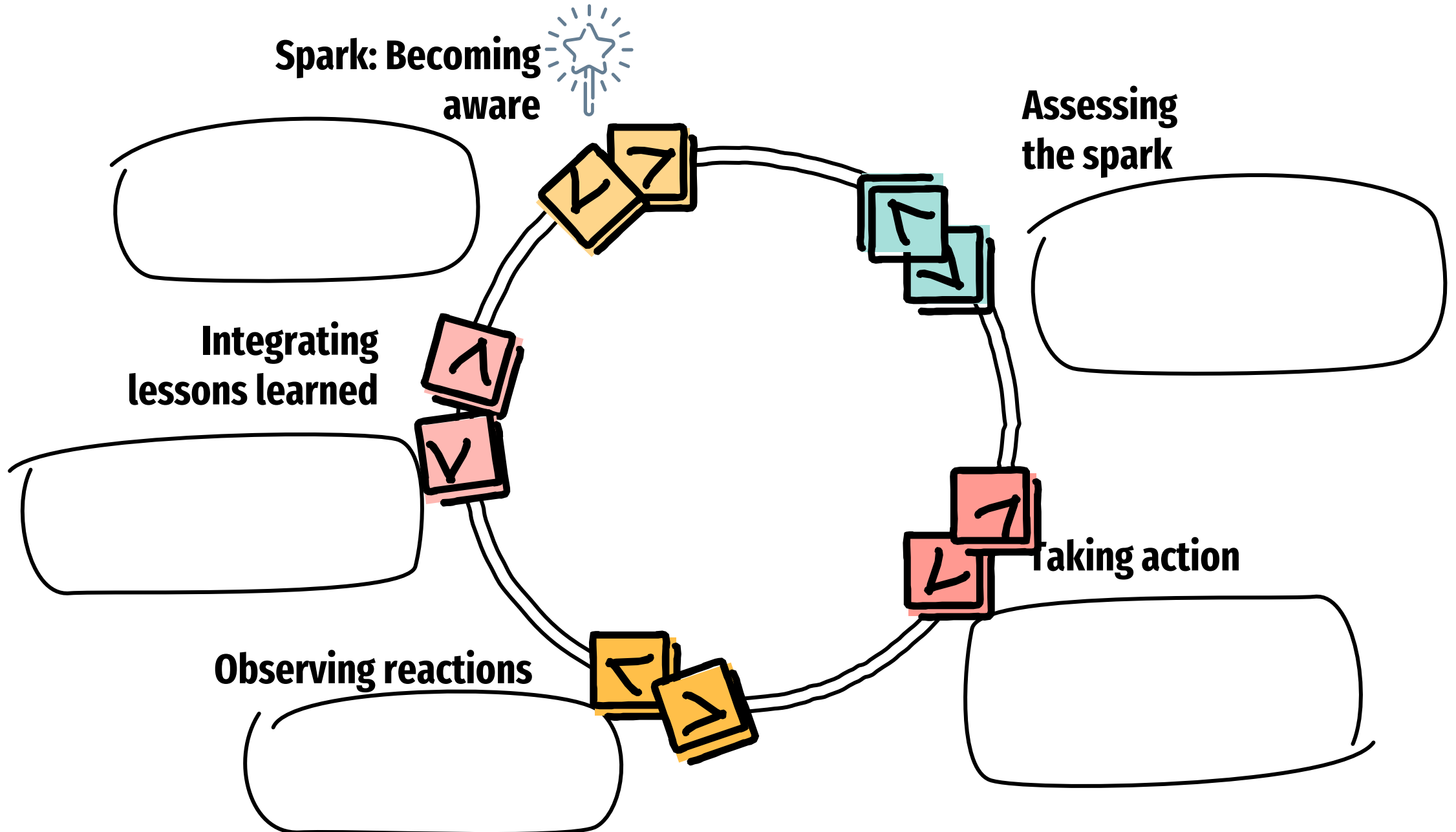
What do you do or say?

## Observing reactions

How do participants react?  
What happens next?



# Activity 2 Handout: Your Own Experience

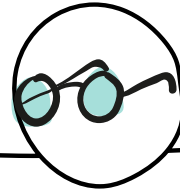


# Tools for Navigating Emotional Sparks



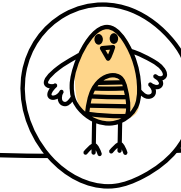
## Become aware

- Take a pause
- Use box-breathing
- Engage in the S.T.O.P technique
- Request a mini break



## Name the emotion

- Body scan
- Add the triggering issue to a "parking lot"
- Meet 1:1 with student after class



## Take informed action

- Debrief with a colleague
- Conduct "5 minute, 5 hour, 5 day, 5 week, 5 month" exercise
- Seek support



# Learning Review

## Square

What squares with you now?

## Circle

What is still rolling around in your head?

## Triangle

What change do you want to make?



# References

- <sup>1</sup> Lundgren, H., Morrison, E. and Sung, S.Y. (2023). Sparks and dynamic co-emergence – How facilitators make sense of and learn from critical incidents in experiential learning and teaching. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2022.0004>.
- <sup>2</sup> Brown, B. (2021). *Atlas of the heart: Mapping meaningful connection and the language of human experience*. Random House.
- <sup>3</sup> Morrison, E., Lundgren, H., and Sung, S.Y. (2023) Learning to surf: Catching the waves of dynamic emotions in experiential teaching. In: Kumar, P., Culham, T., Major, R.J., and Peregoy, R. (Eds.), *Honing Self-Awareness of Faculty and Future Business Leaders – Emotions Connected with Teaching & Learning*, Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80262-349-920231010>.