GROUP CAREER COACHING - EMPOWERING LEARNERS AND INNOVATING PRACTICE.
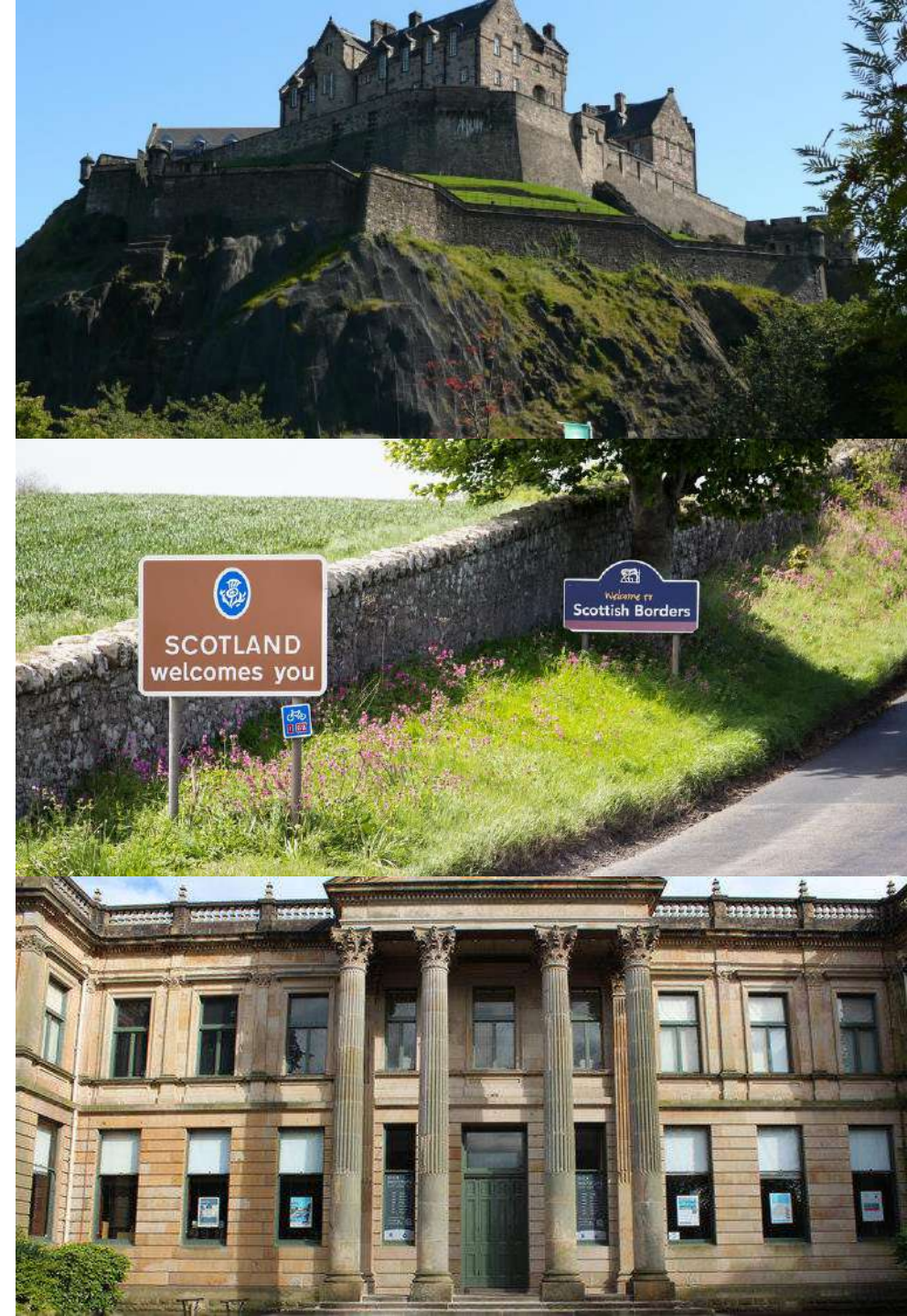
OPENING A GATE TO BETTER FUTURE?

Susan Meldrum

Edinburgh Napier University

➤ Work in Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland.

➤ Live in Scottish Borders.

➤ Interest in how people interact and grow in groups.

Group career coaching

Using critical pedagogy to empower learners

The GATE model
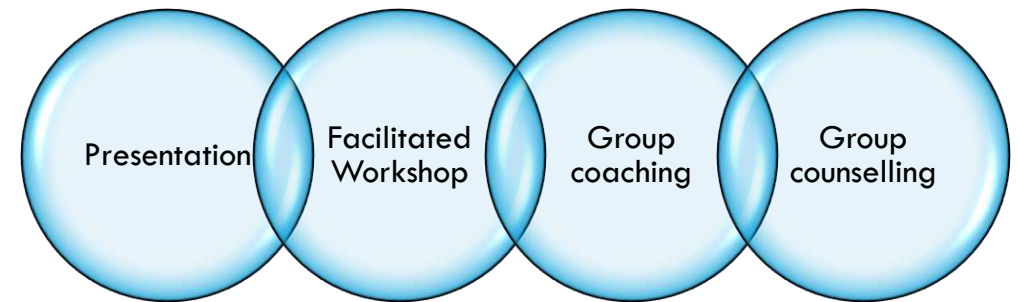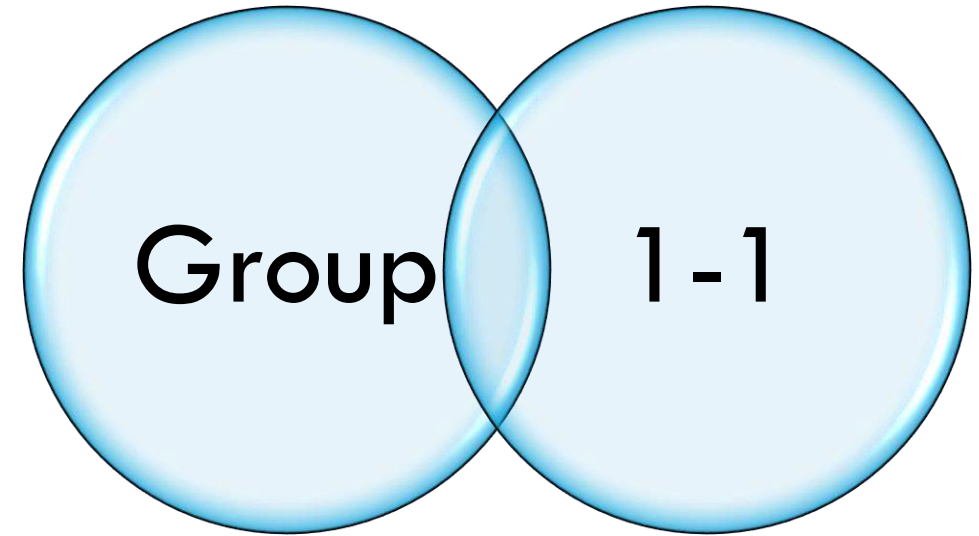
Applying it to practice

Case Study

Group Career Coaching

Enters space between group work and 1-1.

Closer to 1-1 practice.

More building up relationship compared to presentations and facilitated learning.

More learning content and structure than group counselling.

Group   1-1

Presentation   Facilitated Workshop   Group coaching   Group counselling

Edwards (2024)

A COACHING APPROACH TO GROUP WORK

Small groups of between 4-8 members work best.

Utilises counselling and coaching skills – active listening, paraphrasing, summarising, challenging.

Uses fluid coaching structure which encourages collaboration and discussion.

What skills do you think practitioners need to plan and deliver group career coaching?

What do you think are the benefits of group coaching?

What do you think are the challenges of group coaching?

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EMBEDDING EMANCIPATORY PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE — FIVE PILLARS (HOOLEY, SULTANA, AND THOMSEN, 2021).

1 build critical consciousness

2 name oppression/ barriers

3 question what is 'right'/ normal

4 work with both individuals and groups

5 work at a range of levels

# WHY NEEDED IN FIELD OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Opportunities available to individuals and groups not equal.

"intervene to help change lives of themselves and others" (Hooley, Sultana and Thomsen, 2021, p. 59).

1-1 practice relies on personal agency and does not easily address inequality (Hooley and Sultana, 2016).

Consider coaching in groups? Not new but under used, under researched and under valued.

PAULO FREIRE

PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED
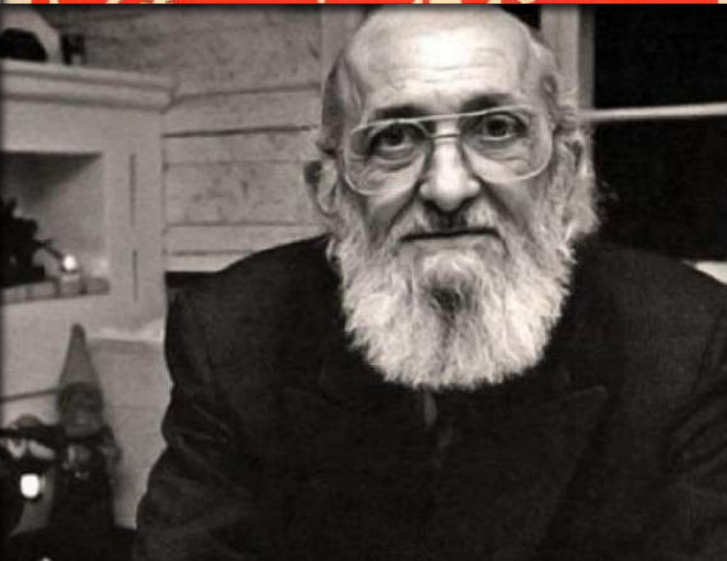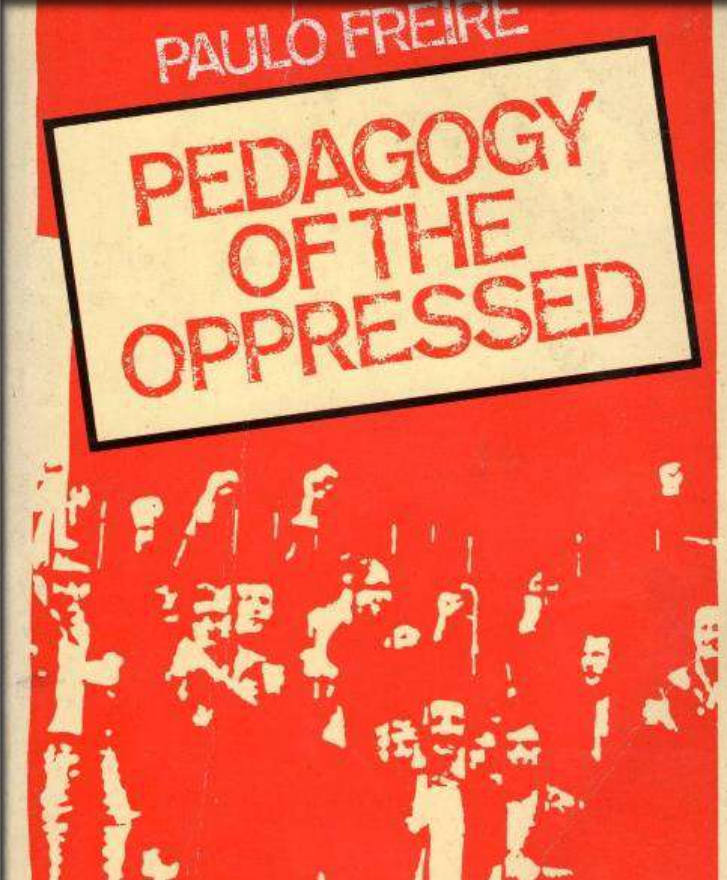
Rejected "banking model" of learning.

Learners passively 'accept' what is learned with no opportunity to question.

Perpetuates cycles of social injustices.

Reduces chances for change.

Freire proposed practitioner-student learning model.

Involves cycles of-

Collective dialogue

Reflection

Action

Group career coaching
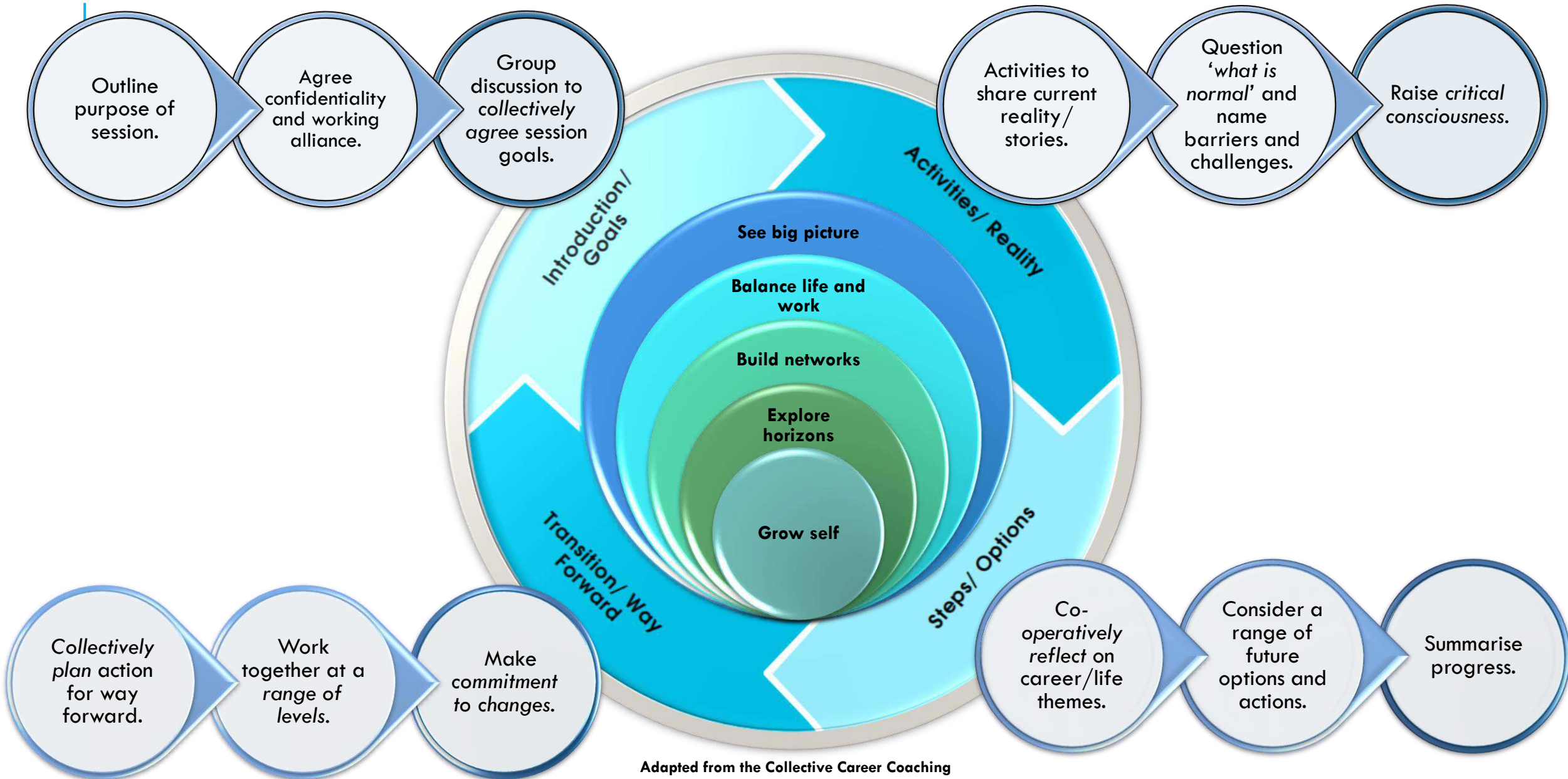
Using critical pedagogy to empower learners

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Case Study

Group Approach To Empowerment (GATE) Model

Outline purpose of session.

Agree confidentiality and working alliance.

Group discussion to *collectively* agree session goals.

Activities to share current reality/ stories.

Question *'what is normal'* and name barriers and challenges.

Raise *critical consciousness*.

Introduction/ Goals

Activities/ Reality

See big picture

Balance life and work

Build networks

Explore horizons

Grow self

Transition/ Way Forward

Steps/ Options

Collectively plan action for way forward.

Work together at a *range of levels*.

Make *commitment* to changes.

Co-operatively *reflect* on career/life themes.

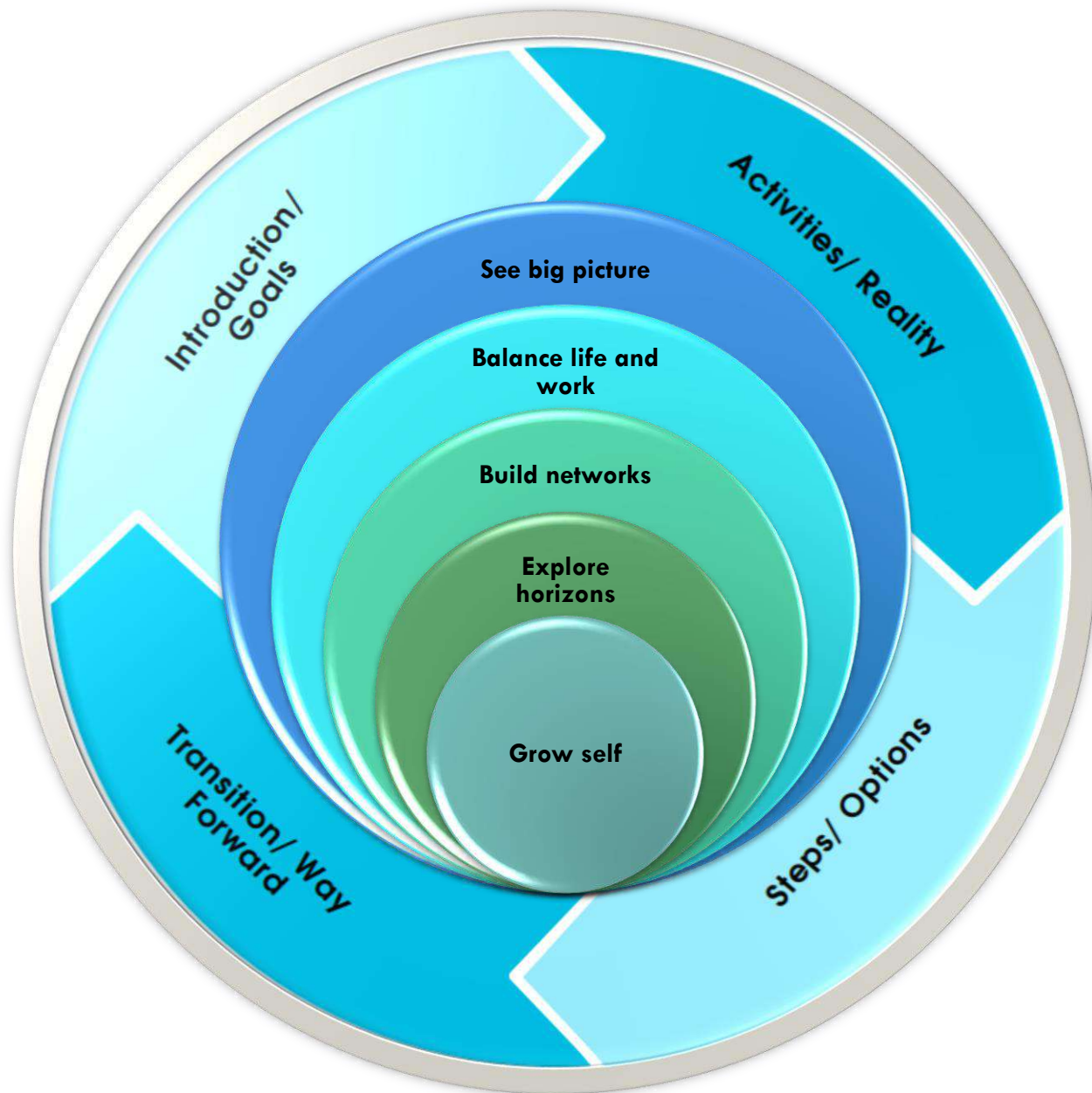Consider a range of future options and actions.

Summarise progress.

Adapted from the Collective Career Coaching Approach (Meldrum, 2021)

Overarching purpose and outcomes of career learning and development.

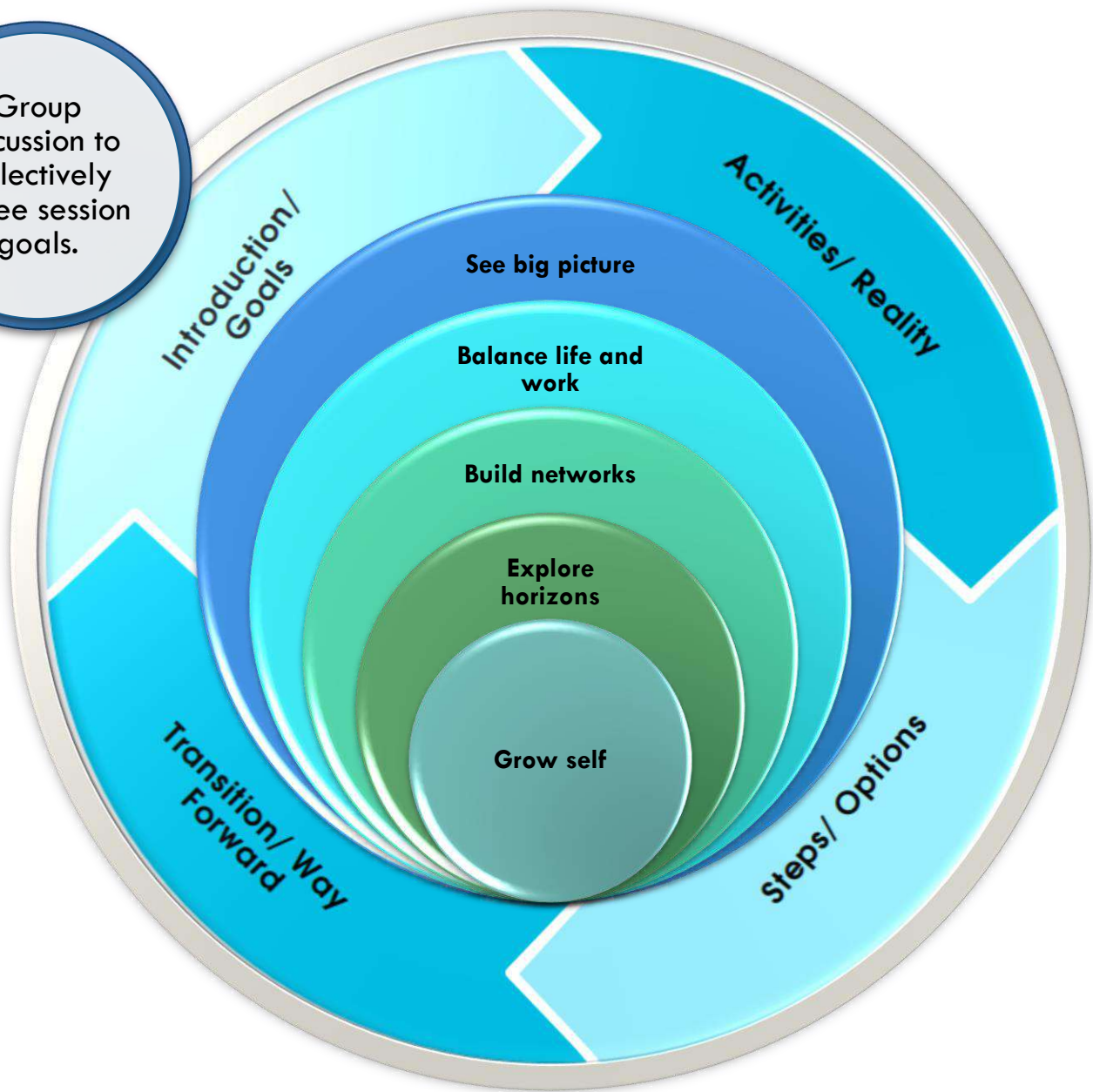Based on CDI Career Development Framework

CDI 107-Framework Handbook.indd
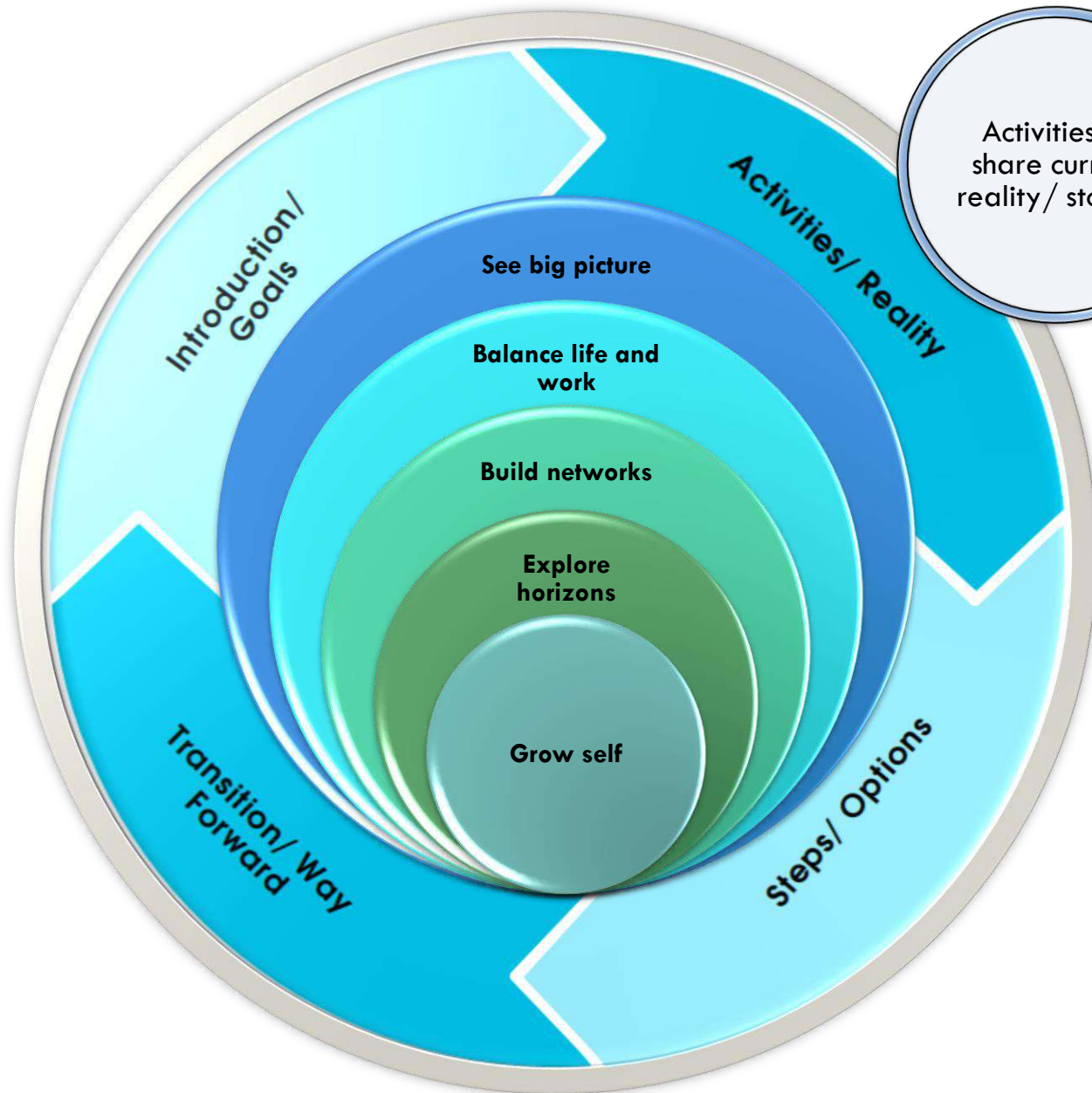
Blue outside rings – **structure** of coaching session.

Based on adapted four stage GROW model.

Activities to share current reality/ stories.

Question '*what is normal*' and name barriers and challenges.

Raise *critical consciousness*.

Introduction/ Goals

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Steps/ Options

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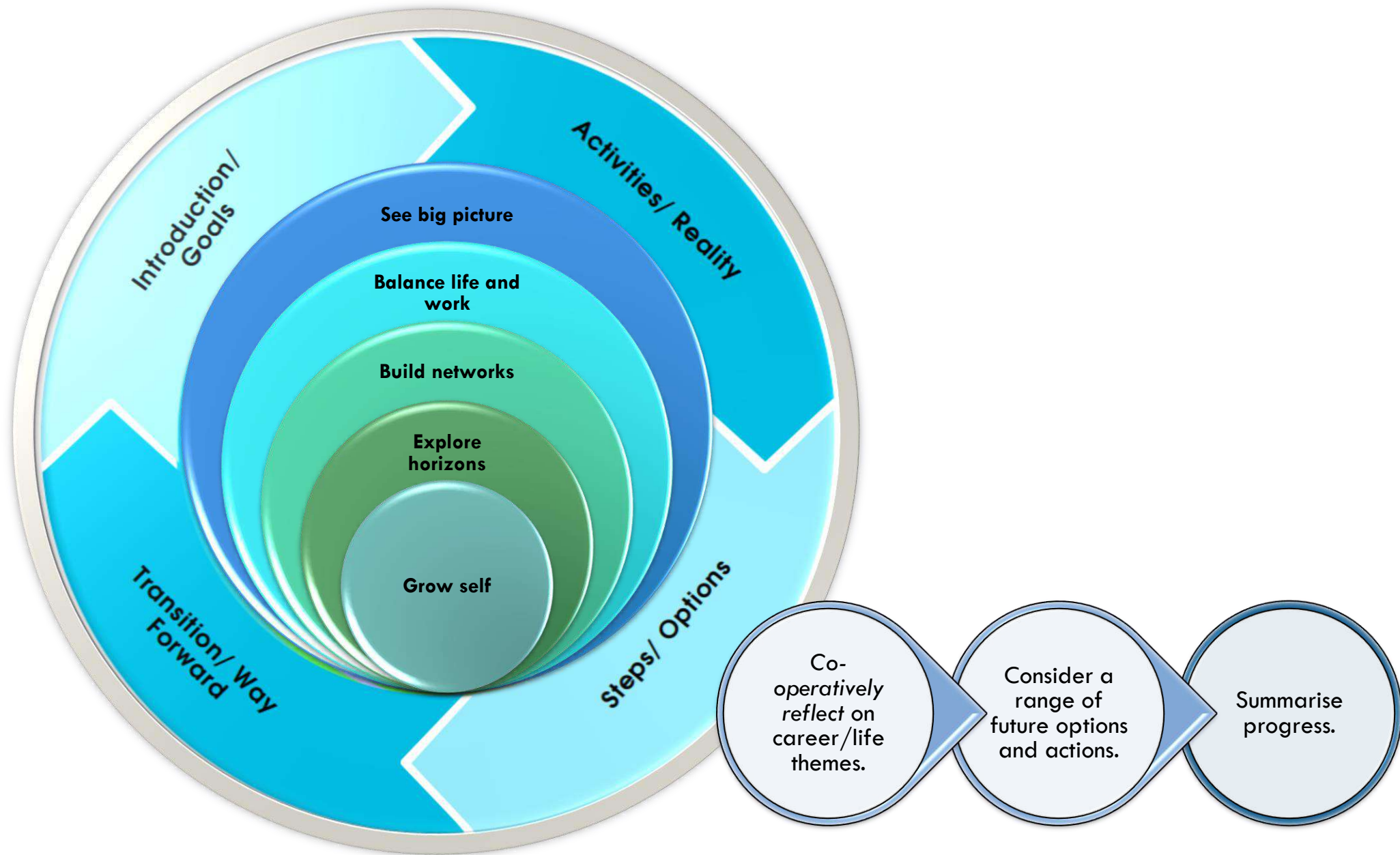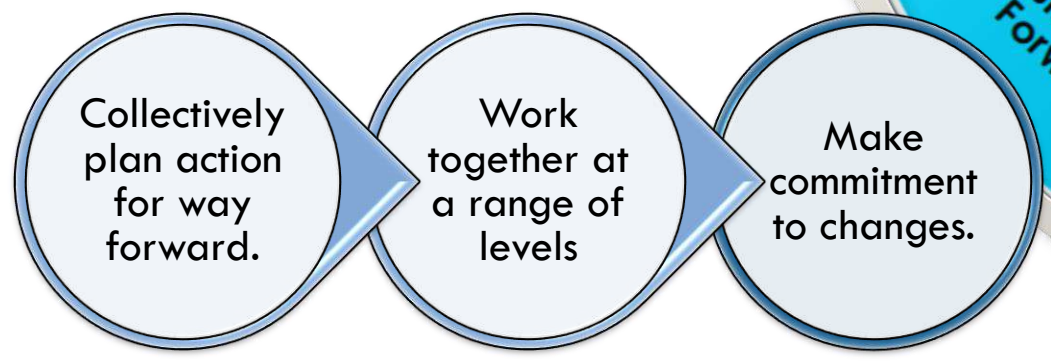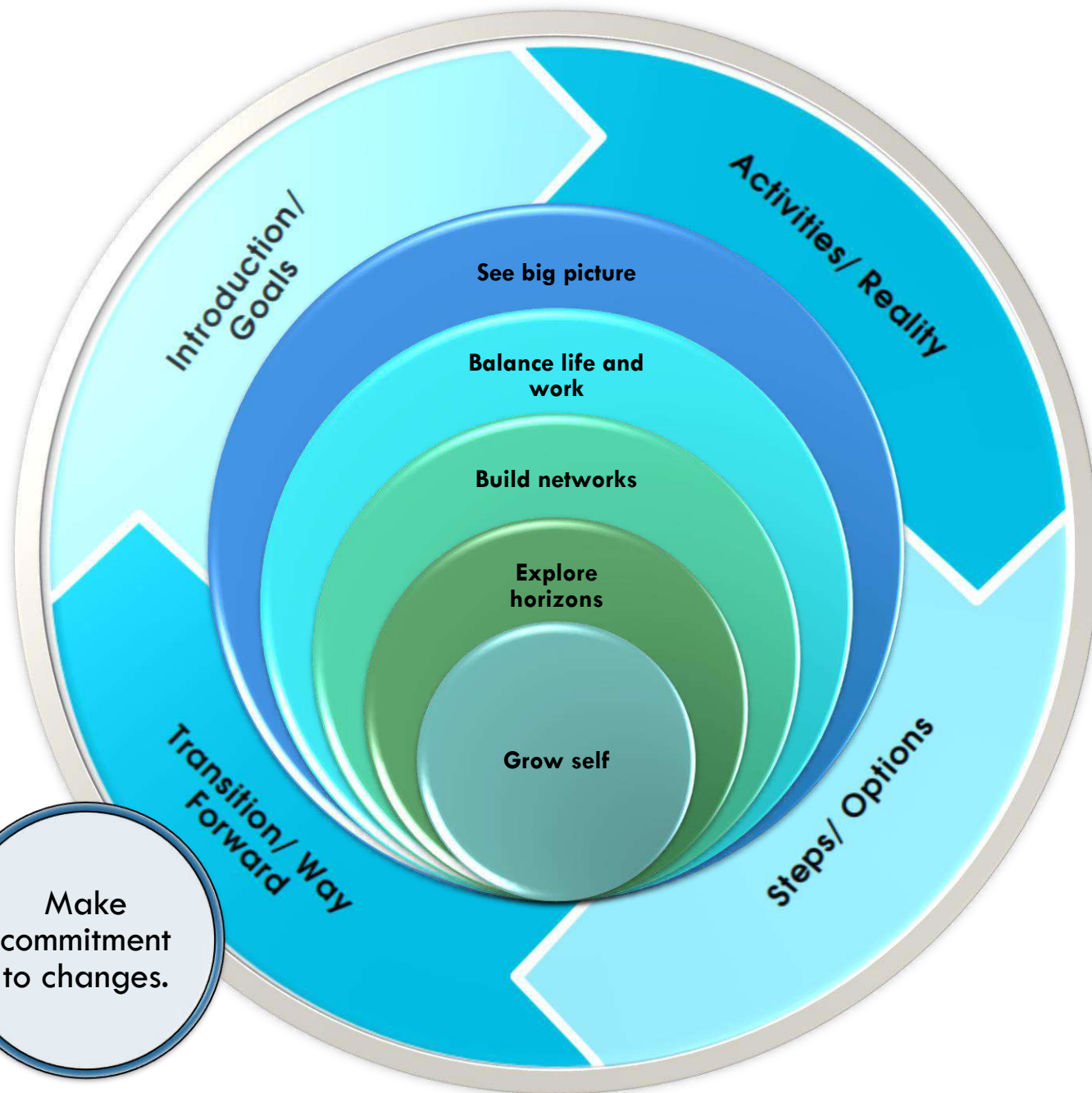Group discussion to *collectively* agree session goals.

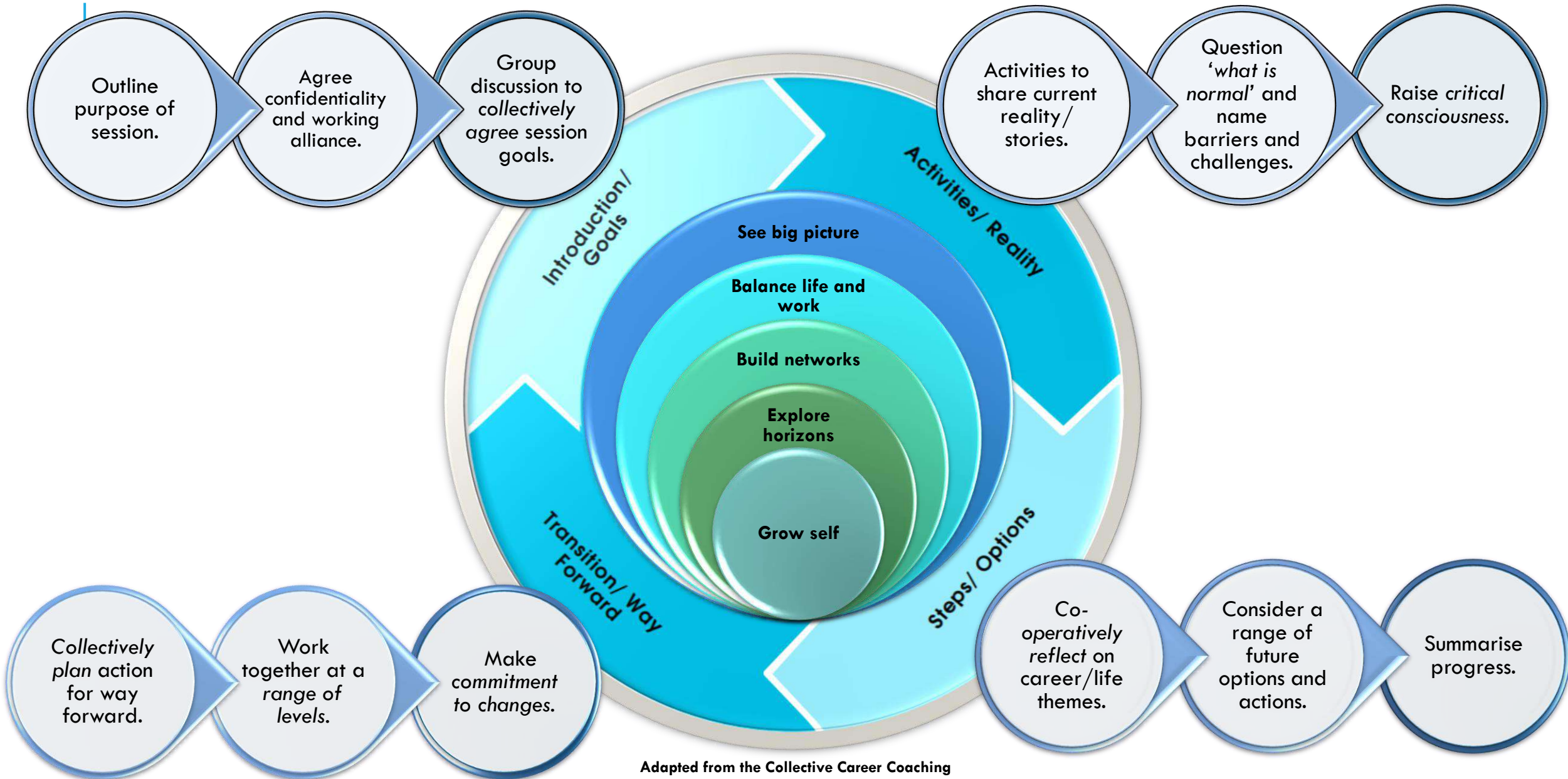Activities to share current reality/ stories.

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Summarise progress.

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Group career coaching

Using critical pedagogy to empower learners

The GATE model

Applying it to practice

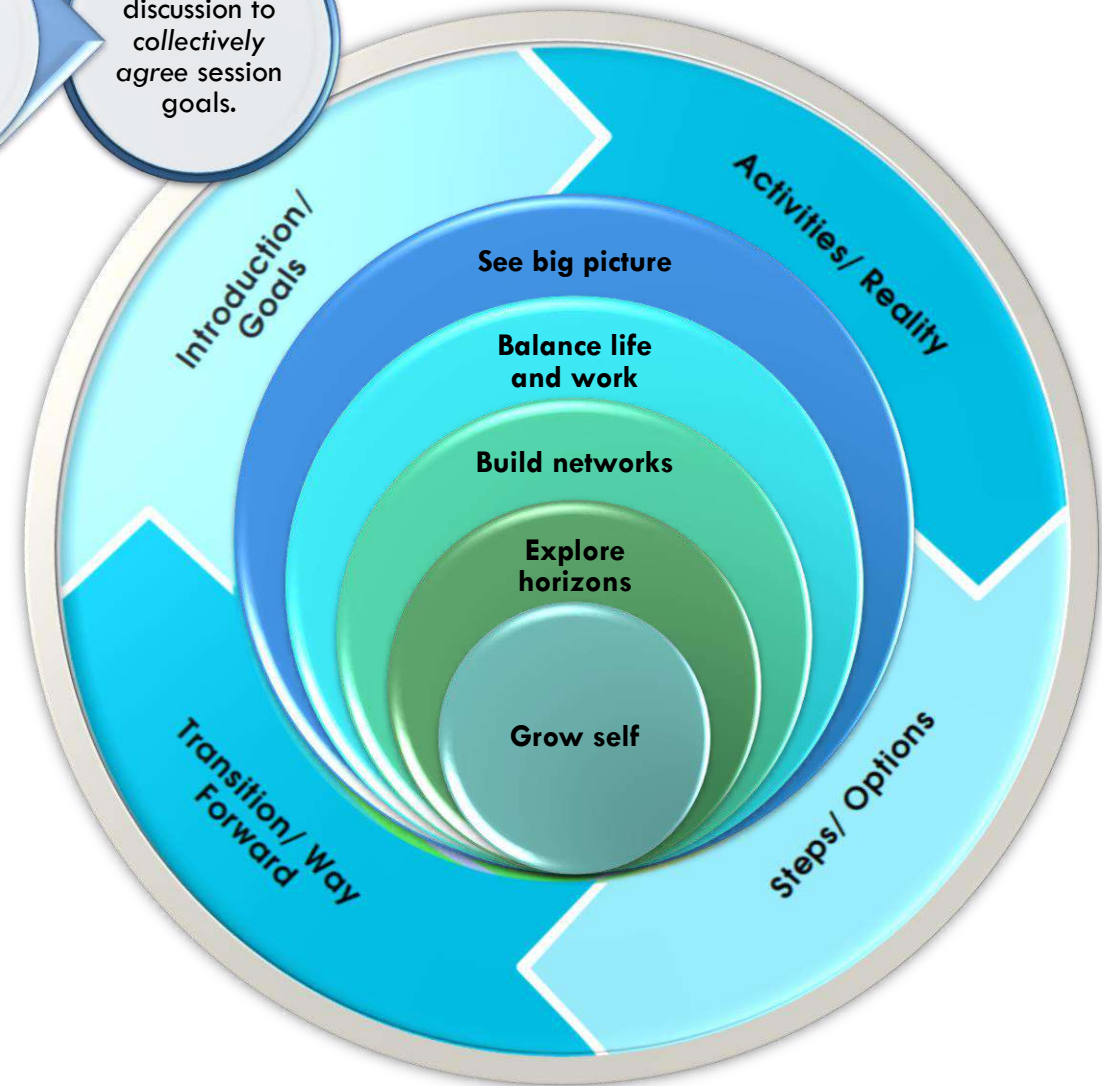Case Study

Example from practice

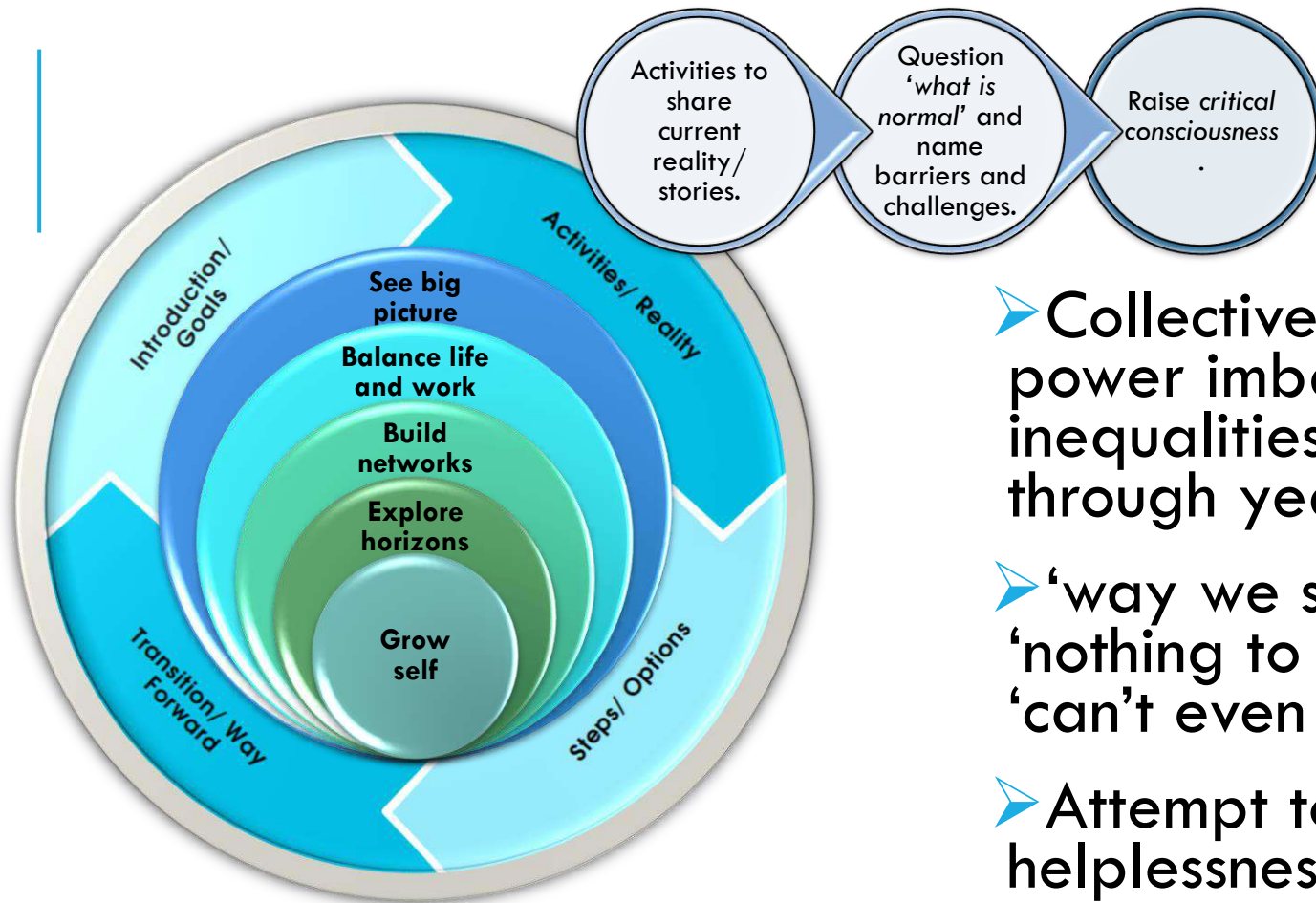➤Employability charity – work with supermarket (Meldrum, 2021)

➤ Career Consultant worked with 10 long term unemployed residents in economically disadvantaged area in Scotland.

➤ Multiple barriers – poverty, isolation, lack of support networks. Some faced health, childcare, drug/ alcohol/ domestic violence.

➤ Interested in retail but unable to find work in local supermarkets.

Outline purpose of session.

Agree confidentiality and working alliance.

Group discussion to *collectively agree* session goals.

➢Meet once a week

➢Goal discussed by group– overcome discrimination by employers (marganisation).

➢Find work in supermarket within three months.

Introduction/ Goals

Activities/ Reality

See big picture

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Transition/ Way Forward

Steps/ Options

Activities to share current reality/ stories.

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Activities/ Reality

Transition/ Way Forward

Steps/ Options

➢ Collectively discuss how barriers, issues, power imbalances, discrimination and inequalities limited ability to progress through years.

➢ 'way we speak' and 'we have no skills', 'nothing to offer', 'not taken seriously', 'can't even get an interview'.

➢ Attempt to break cycle of blame and helplessness felt.

➢ Begin to work together to challenge what could be done about it.
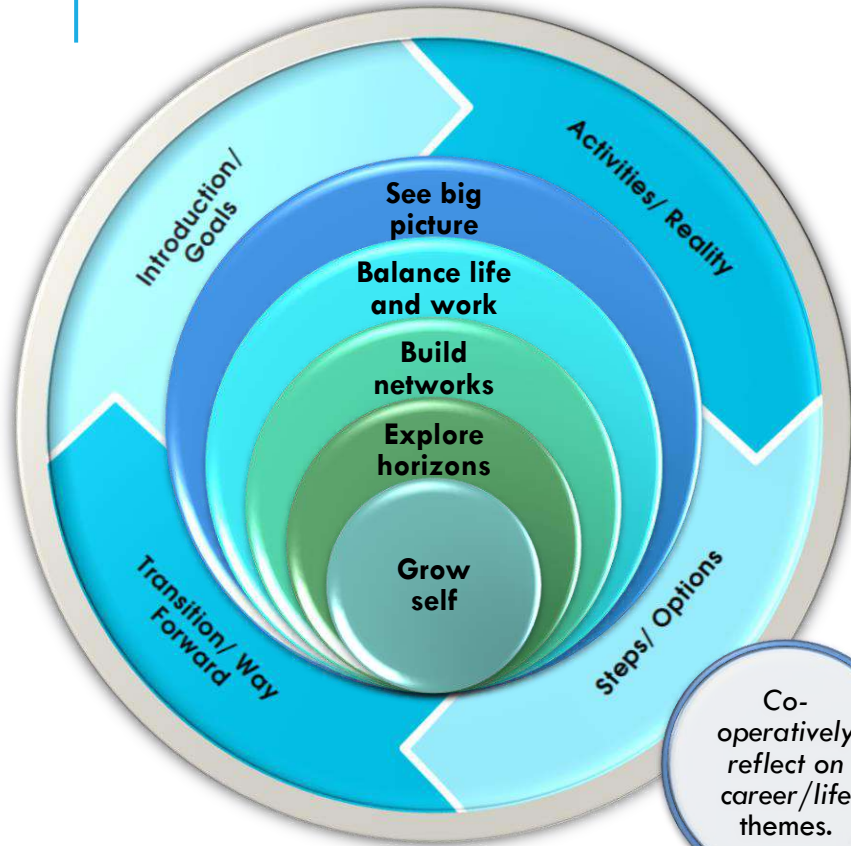
- **Group** identified **Career Consultant** should speak to management in supermarket.

- **Management** - low numbers of local residents applying, not attending interview and not sustaining job.

- Also
    - poorly completed application forms
    - At interviews displayed poor base level customer service skills.
    - Local resident employed lasted 2-3 weeks.

- Management agreed strategy with charity – guaranteed interview to each member of group.
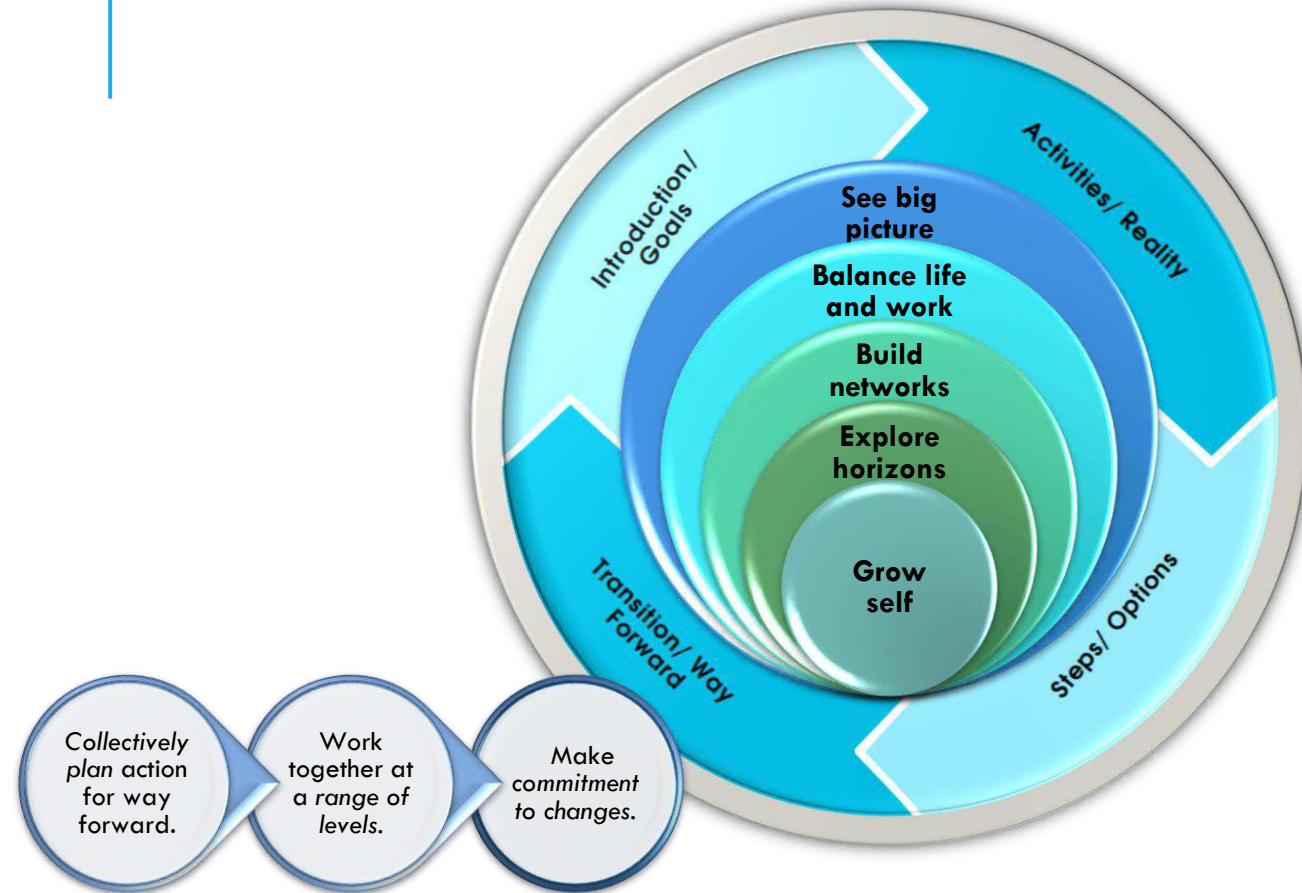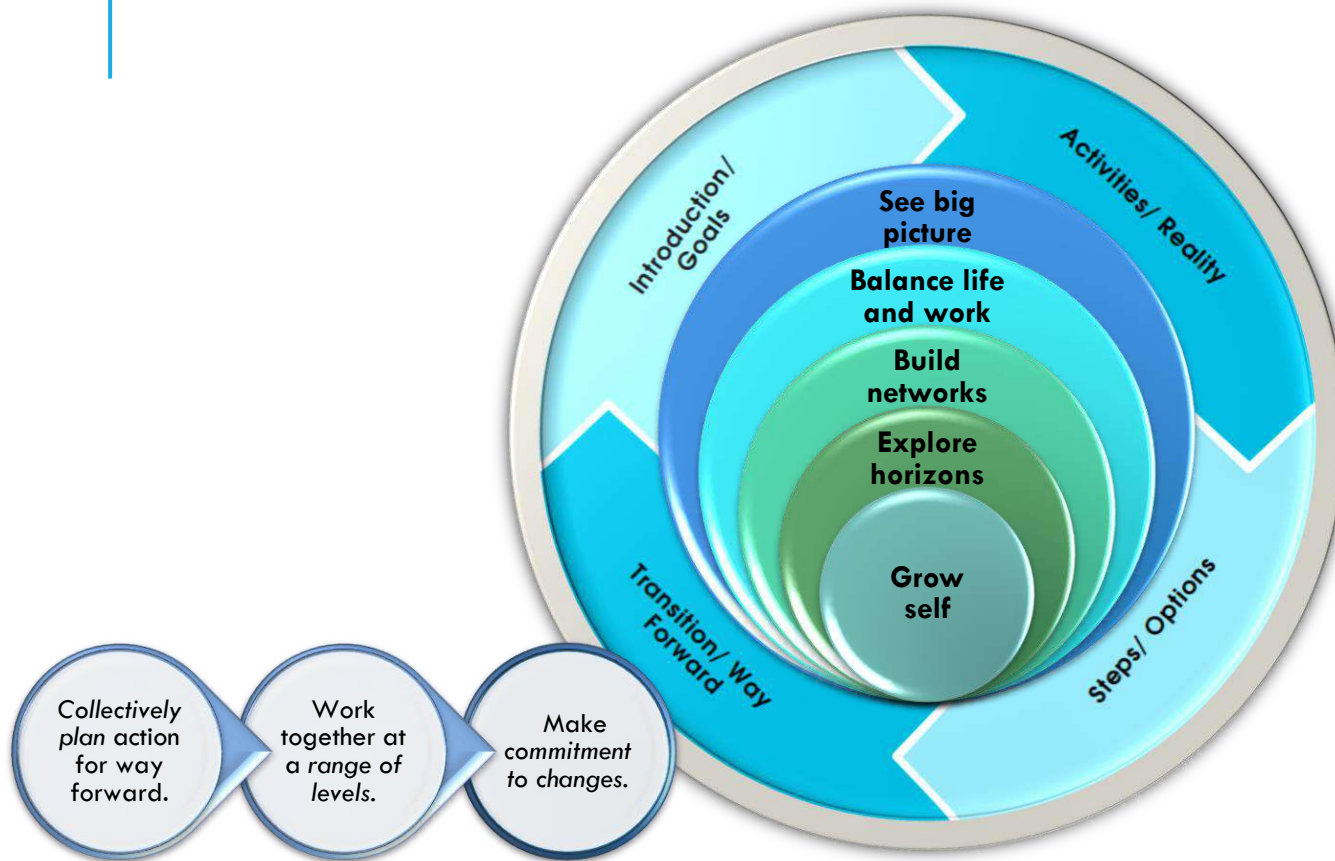
- Career practitioner –

- set up customer service short course at local college

- Worked on interview skills with group.

- Supermarket –

- Reviewed recruitment and training – inclusive interview questions and two-week extended induction to improve retention.

See big picture

Balance life and work

Build networks

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Introduction/ Goals

Activities/ Reality

Transition/ Way Forward

Steps/ Options

Collectively plan action for way forward.

Work together at a range of levels.

Make commitment to changes.

Three months later-

➢**Nine** offered interview.

➢**Five** successful and other **three** found work in another supermarket.

➢Group coaching continued for further three months.

➢Group - same concerns with e.g. childcare affecting attendance, health concerns having impact.

➢but with **support of group** and employer were able to work through.

➢ **One member of group -** role of liaison person between workers and managers and helped recruit another group.

➢ Group career coaching helped group feel empowered by *breaking cycle of oppression and feeling less marganised.*

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Case Study

Case Study

You work as a career coach/ counsellor in a school. Many senior students (age 16-18) have part time jobs in retail and hospitality sectors and complain about poor working conditions, pay and unequal work (such as zero hours contracts). You would like to deliver a group work session to discuss 'fair work' or 'decent work'.
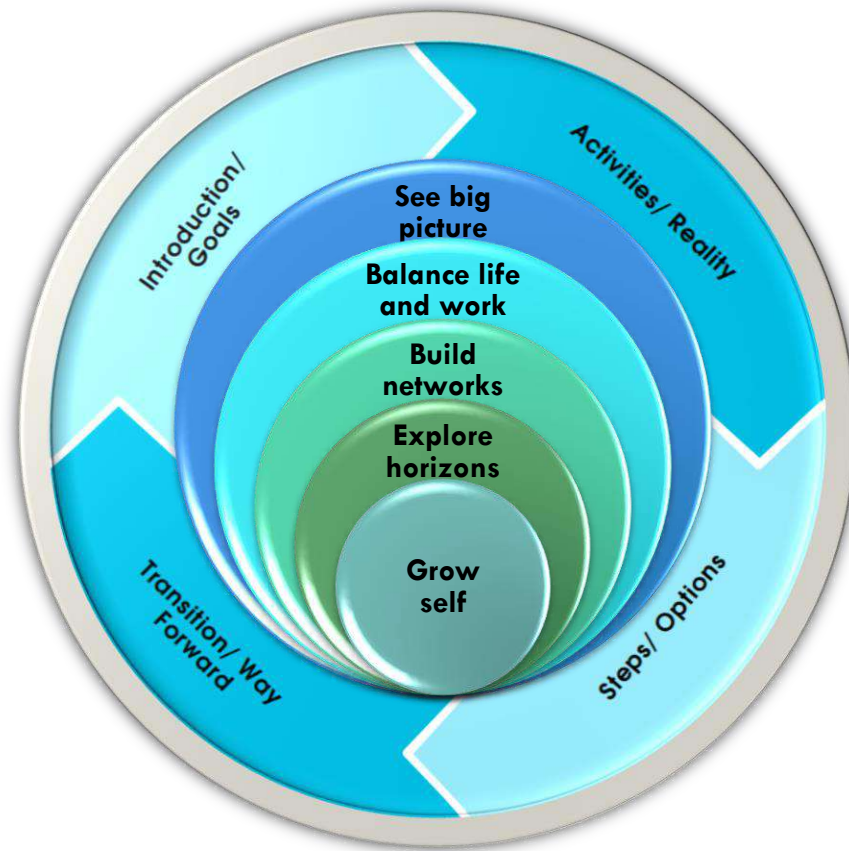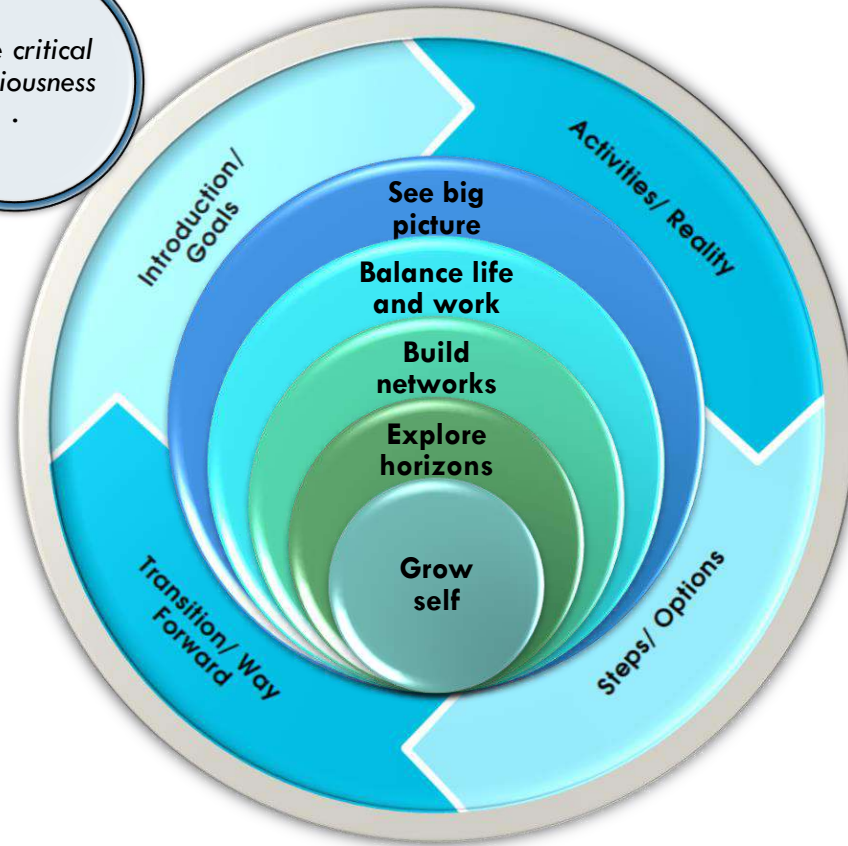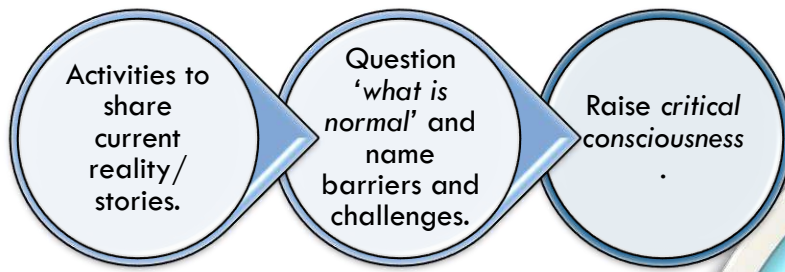
Pre-session

➢How will you promote this within school?

➢How many sessions will run? What problems could be encountered?

➢How could you overcome?

➢What could be the broad goal in session plan?
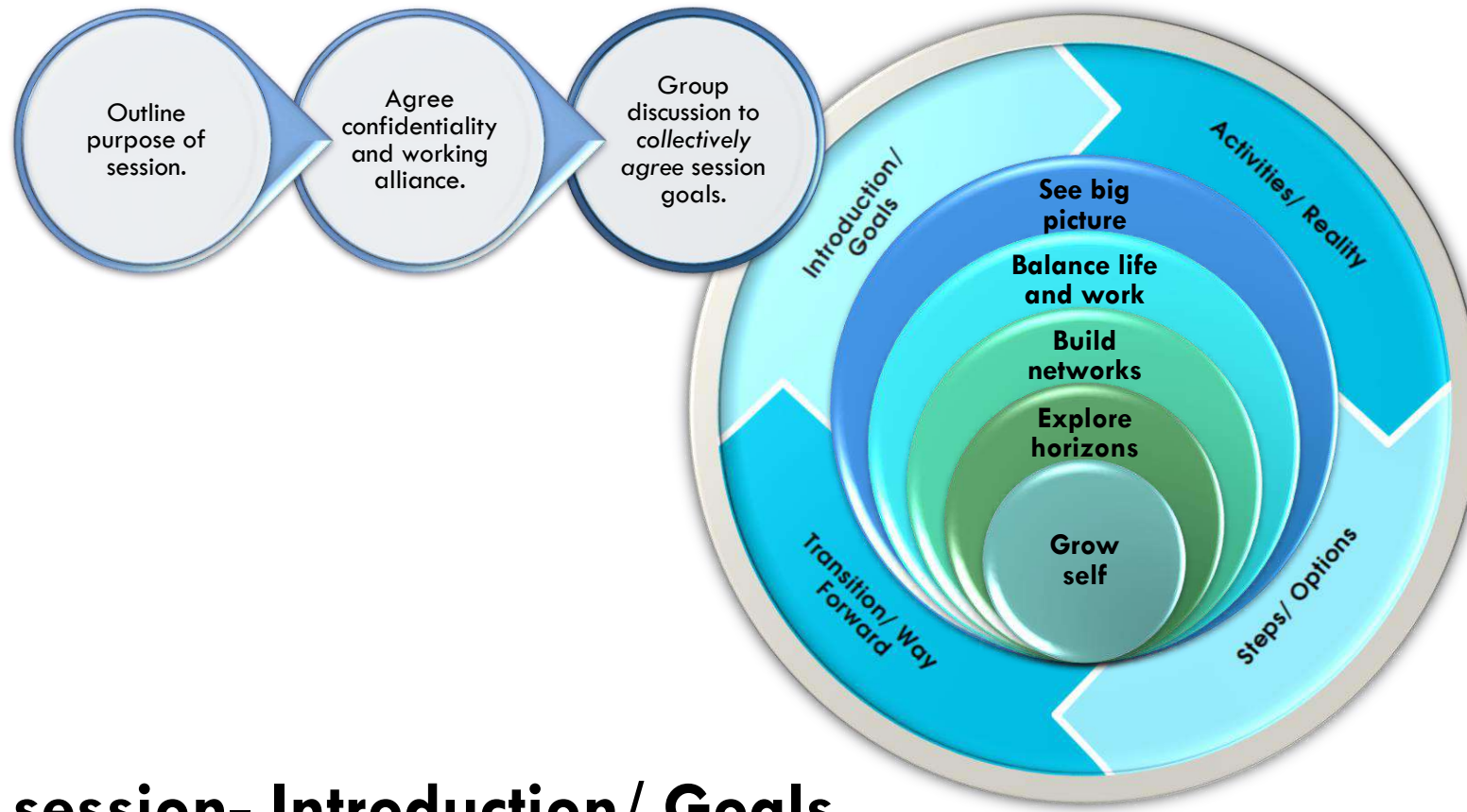
During session- Introduction/ Goals

➢ How will you deal with confidentiality/ working alliance/ ground rules? What problems could you encounter? How could you overcome?

➢ How could you have a group discussion about collective goal setting? What issues could come up? How could you overcome?

➢ What goals do you think the group could come up with?

Activities to share current reality/ stories. → Question 'what is normal' and name barriers and challenges. → Raise critical consciousness.

Introduction/ Goals • Activities/ Reality • Steps/ Options • Transition/ Way Forward

See big picture
Balance life and work
Build networks
Explore horizons
Grow self

➢**Activities and Options stages**

➢Which activities would work well in a group to discuss fair work and barriers?

➢What problems could you encounter? How could they be overcome?

➢How could you engage students who are not talking or participating?

➢How could manage students who are talking too much/ dominating?

Transition stage/ Way Forward

➤Can you think of some examples of the collective actions the group could take?

➤How could you encourage students to work together and speak to others to plan next steps?

➤How could you motivate students to goal set and action their plans?

➤What problems could you encounter?

➤How could you overcome?

➤How could you evaluate session?
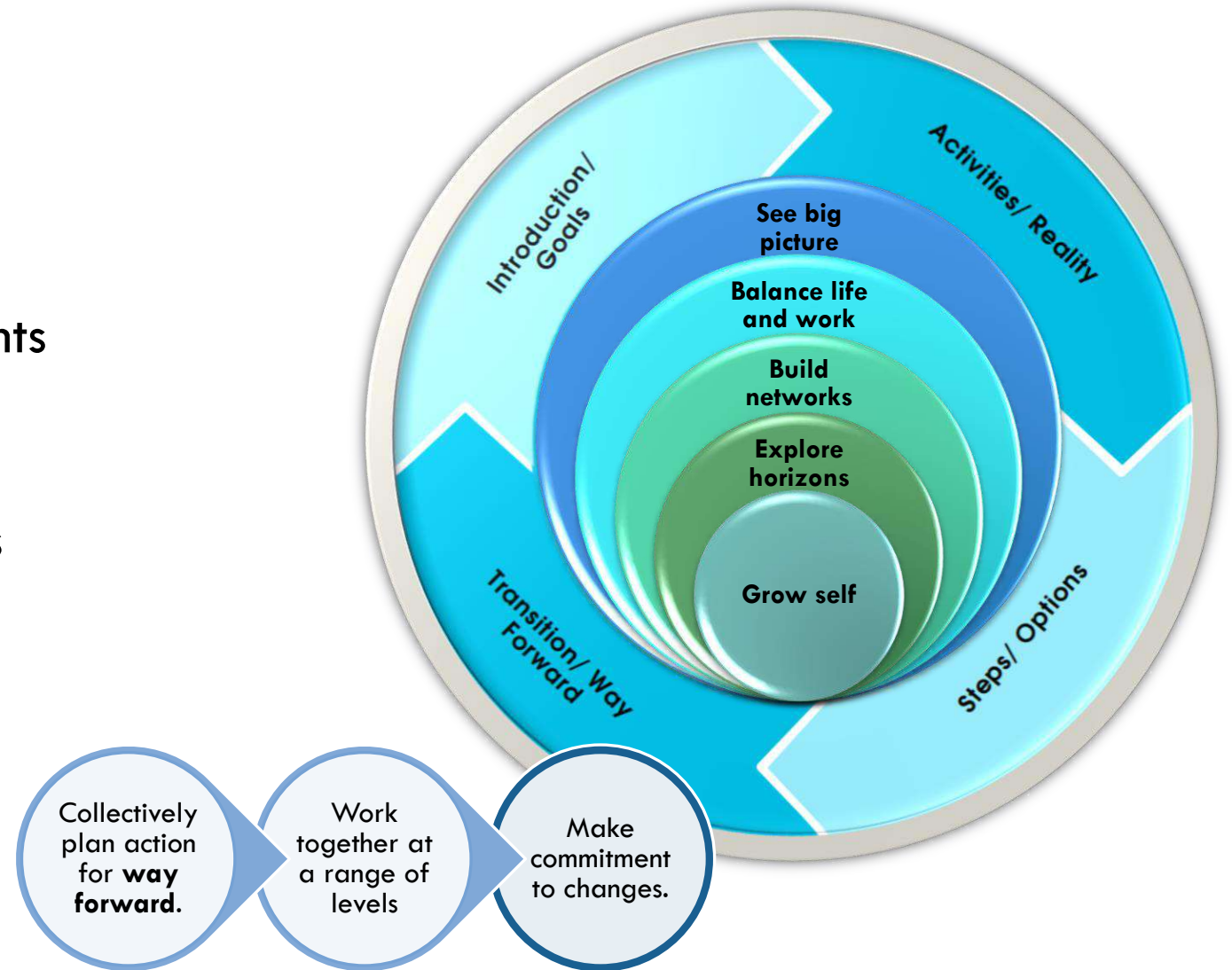
Move into two groups.

15 minutes.

Group 1 – look at pre session and introduction/ goals stages.

Group 2 – look at stages 3 and 4.

If time look at other two slides.

SUMMARY

➢Main focus of practice is on 1-1 practice in sector in UK and elsewhere.

➢Lack of confidence, training, models and support from employers often prevents practitioners from considering alternative delivery models.

➢However, growing movement towards group-based approaches to practice.

➢Group career coaching has potential to empower groups to collectively challenge power imbalances and inequalities.

➢Need within sector to support and develop collective approaches at research, practitioner and policy level.
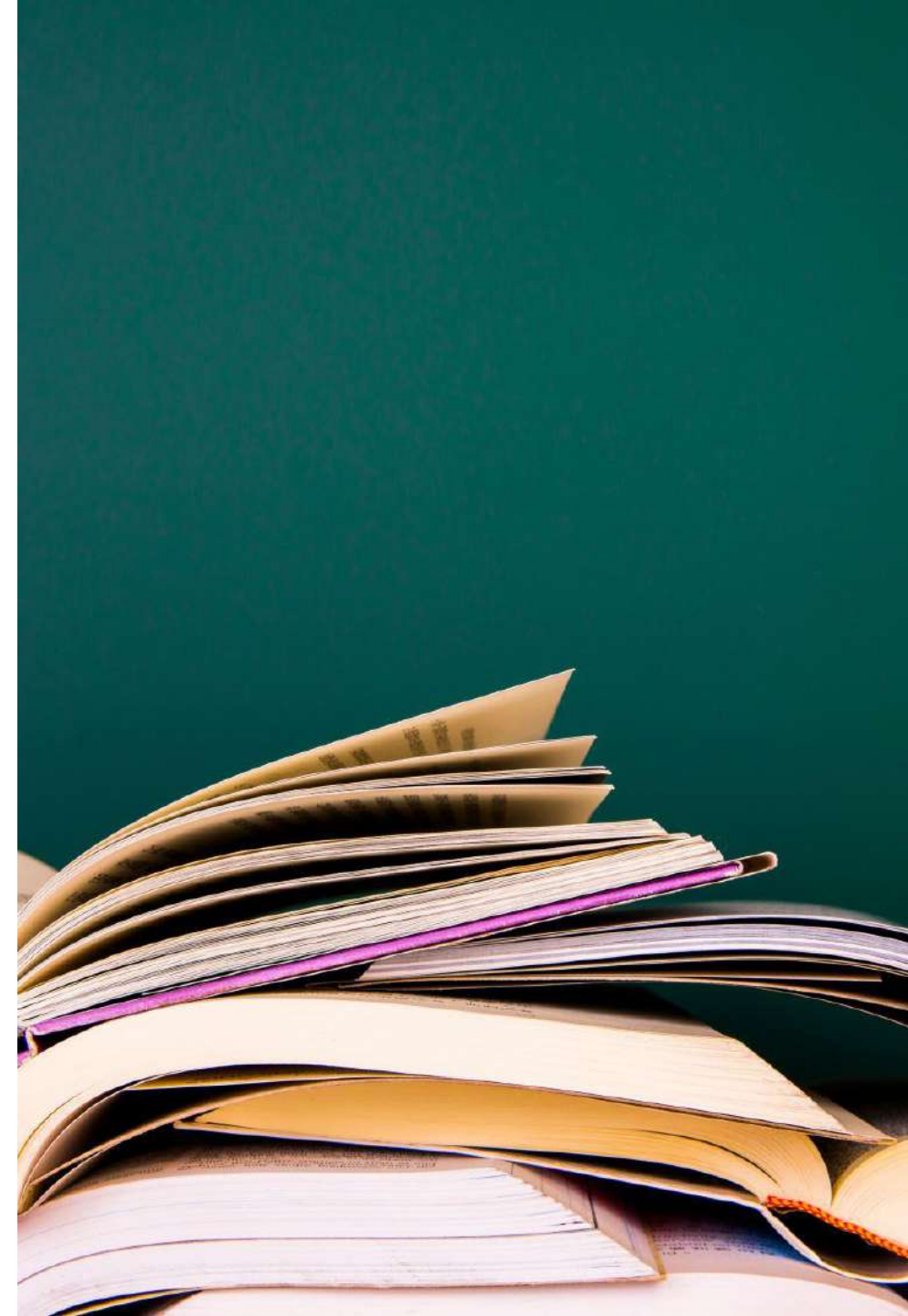
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▸Hooley, T., Sultana, R.G. (2016) Career Guidance for Social Justice, *Journal of the National Institute for career Education and Counselling*, 36(1), P2-11.

▸Hooley, T, Sultana, R. G. & Thomsen, R. (2021). Five signposts to a socially just approach to career guidance, *Journal of the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling*, issue 47, 59-66.

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