

Polarity Management: Leveraging the power of “AND” to promote transformation in times of crisis

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‘How wonderful that we
have met with a paradox.
Now we have some hope
of making progress.’

~ NIELS BOHR

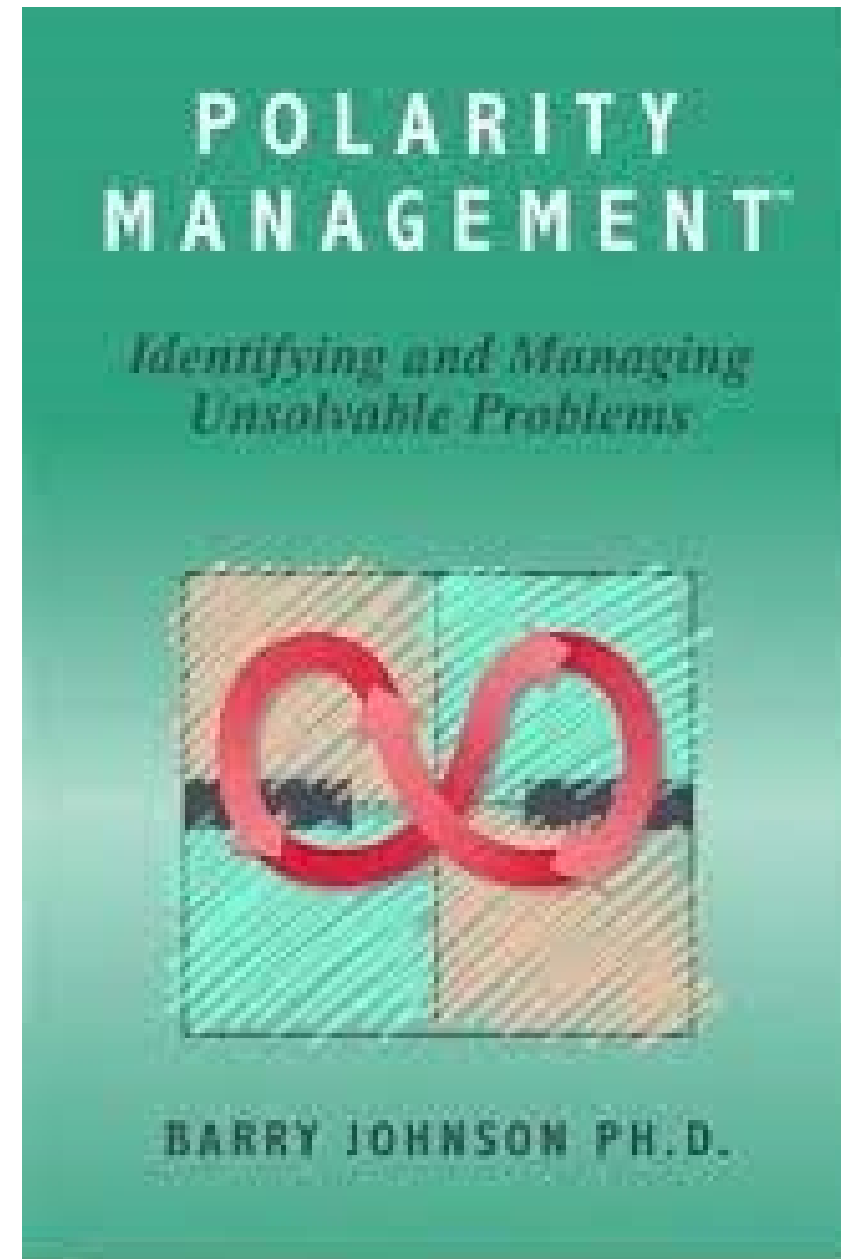
‘How wonderful that we
have met with **CONFLICT**
Now we have some hope
of making progress.’

~ NIELS BOHR

What is a polarity?

“Polarities ... are sets of ***opposites*** that can't function well independently. Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one as a 'solution' and neglect the other.”

~ Barry Johnson



PROBLEM

- A **problem** can have a right — or best — answer. A solution exists.
- Problems can be **simple** or **complicated**, but they are solved by a decision or a set of decisions.
- e.g.
 - “What should I have for breakfast?”
 - “Should I hire Jill?”
 - “Why did the space shuttle blow up?”



Failure = Catastrophe

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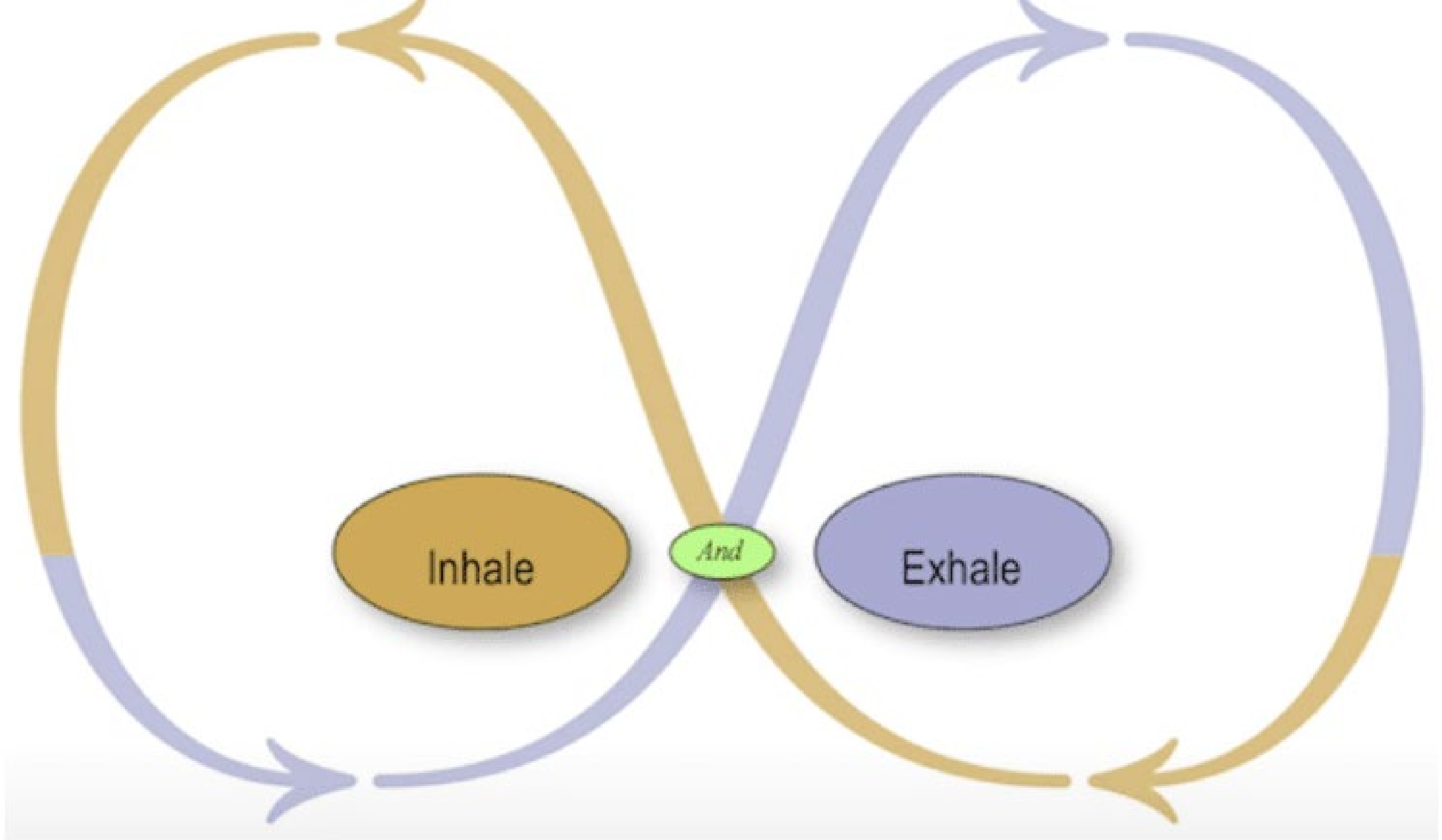
POLARITY

- A **polarity** — also described as a paradox, conundrum, or contradiction — is a dilemma that is ongoing, unsolvable, and contains seemingly opposing ideas.
- The situation is **complex**. It is always changing and there is no single best decision or behavior.
- e.g. “Should I give my children structure or flexibility?”



Failure = Regeneration (Learning)

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Examples

- *Acting and Reflecting*
- *Built*
- *Environment and Natural Environment*
- *Challenge and Support*
- *Compliance and Choice*
- *Confidence and Humility*
- *Direct and Diplomatic*
- *Directing and Empowering*
- *Diversity and Commonality*
- *Short-term and Long-term*
- *Speed and Quality*
- *Structure and Flexibility*
- *Stability and Change / Innovation*
- *Centralization and Decentralization*
- *Part and Whole*

Choose your preference from each pair

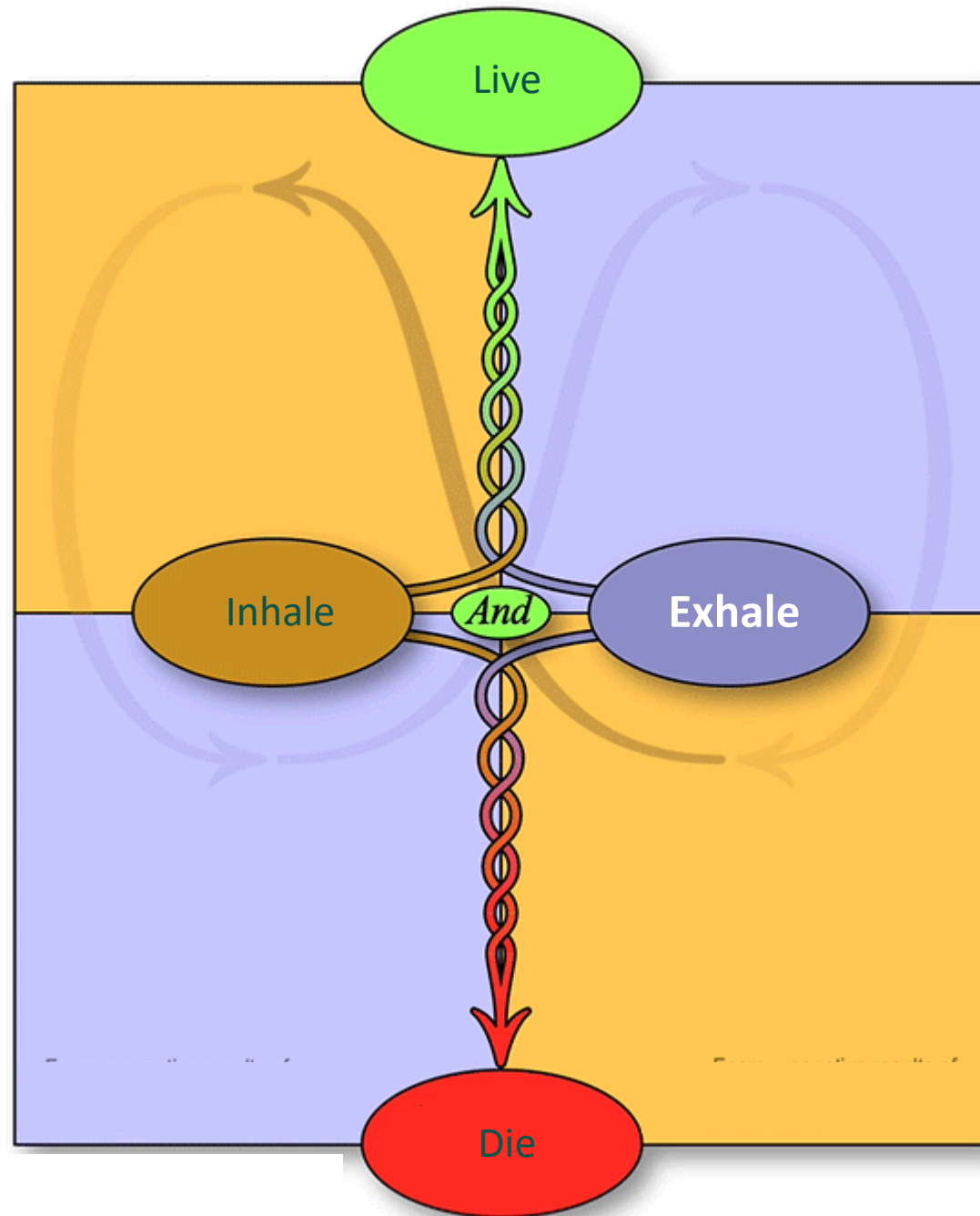


Intuitive	Data-driven
Innovative	Staying the course
Foster unity	Encourage debate
Entrepreneur leading	Partners leading
Simplicity	Deep understanding
Pushing Maverick	Patient Partner
Revolutionary	Evolutionary
Focus on task	Focus on relationship
Visionary	Grounded
Highest leverage	Easily sellable
Implement	Plan

We tend to have preferences about which pole we think is “right”

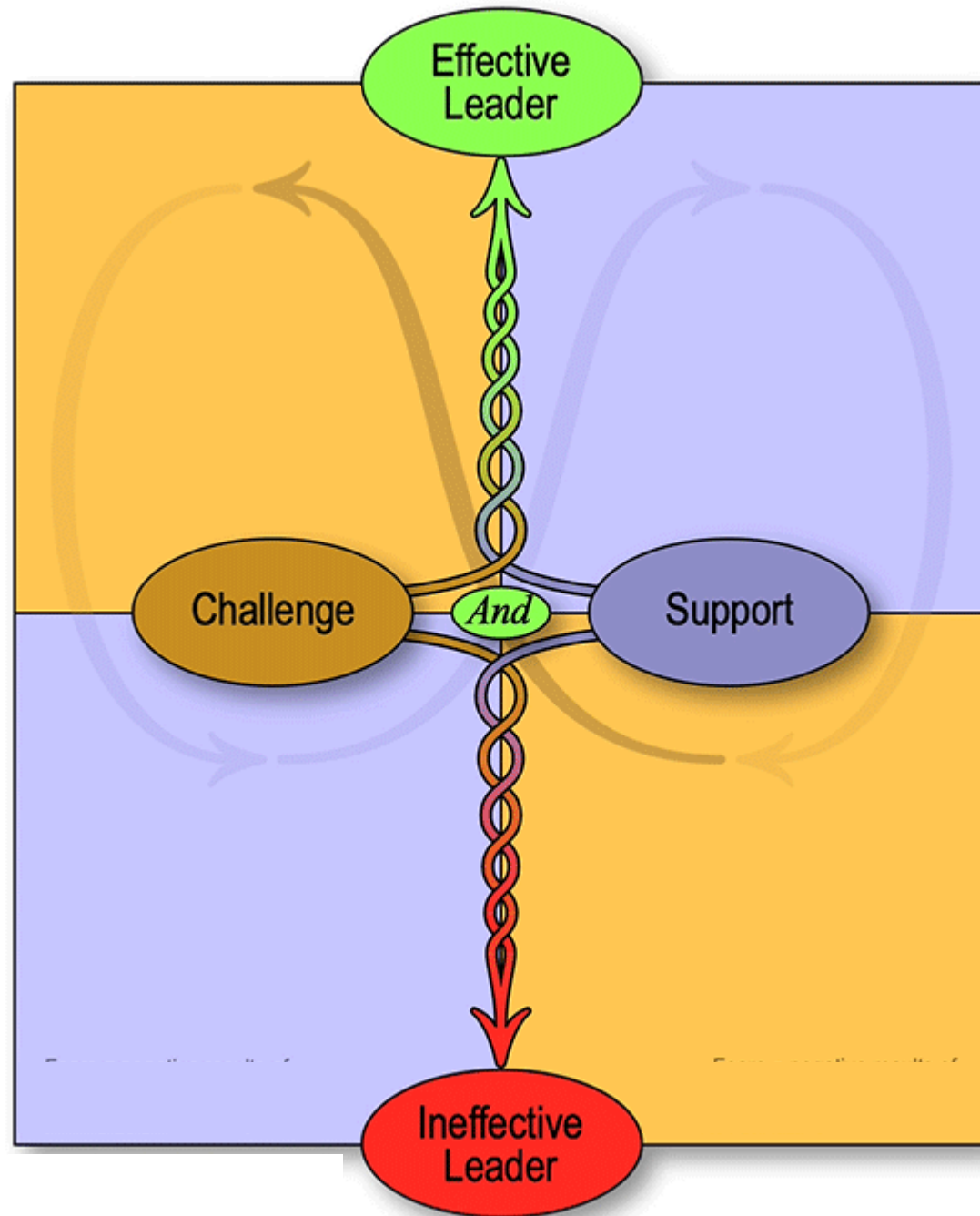
Polarities have predictable natural patterns

1. They move toward the benefits of one pole.
2. Eventually, the disadvantages of that pole begin to happen.
3. They then shift toward the other pole in order to gain the benefits.
4. Eventually the disadvantages of the other side begin to happen and the cycle repeats.
5. If the transitions are well-managed, the system gets the benefits of both sides and thrives.
6. If they are not well managed, the system experiences the disadvantages of both sides, and deteriorates.

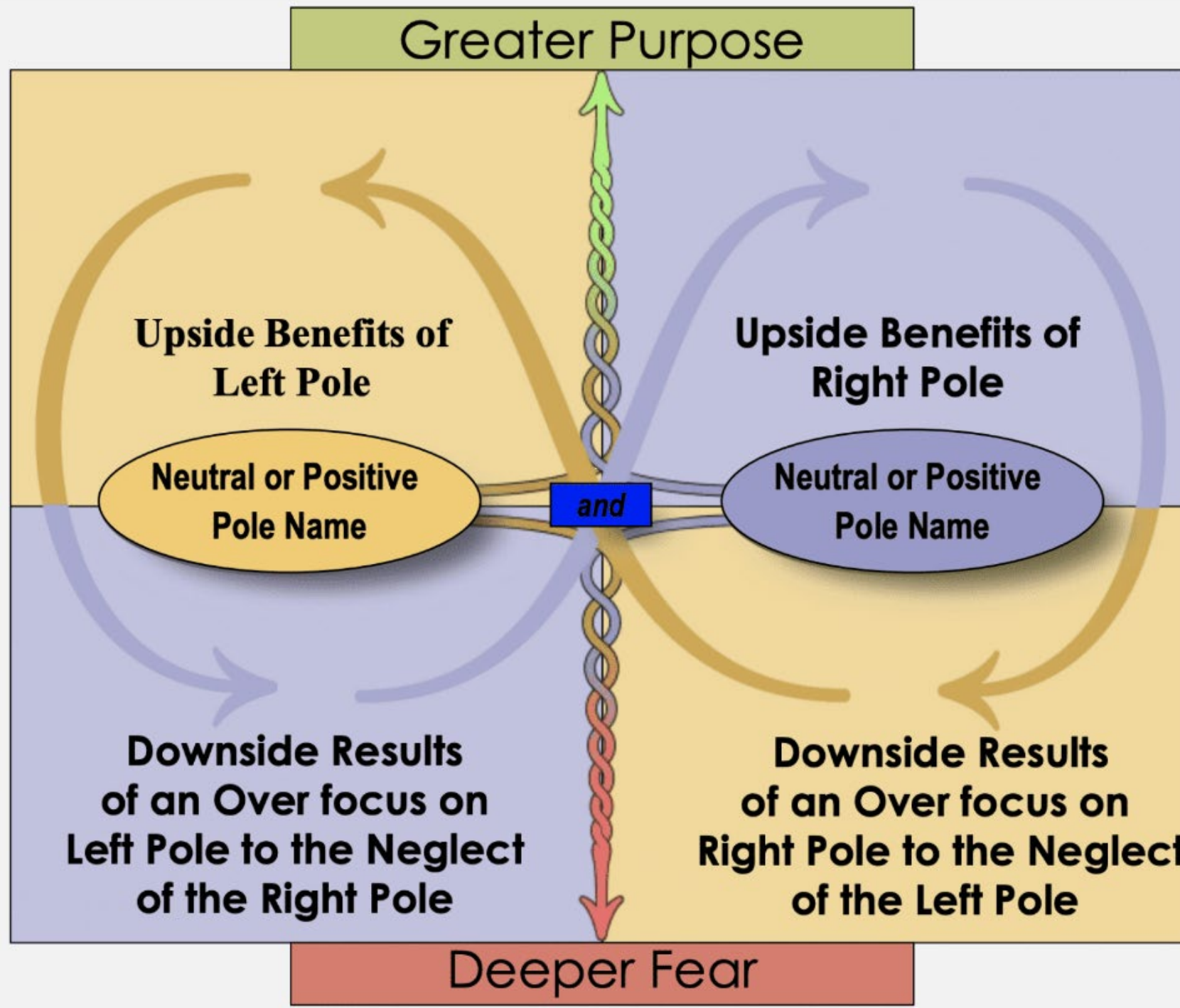


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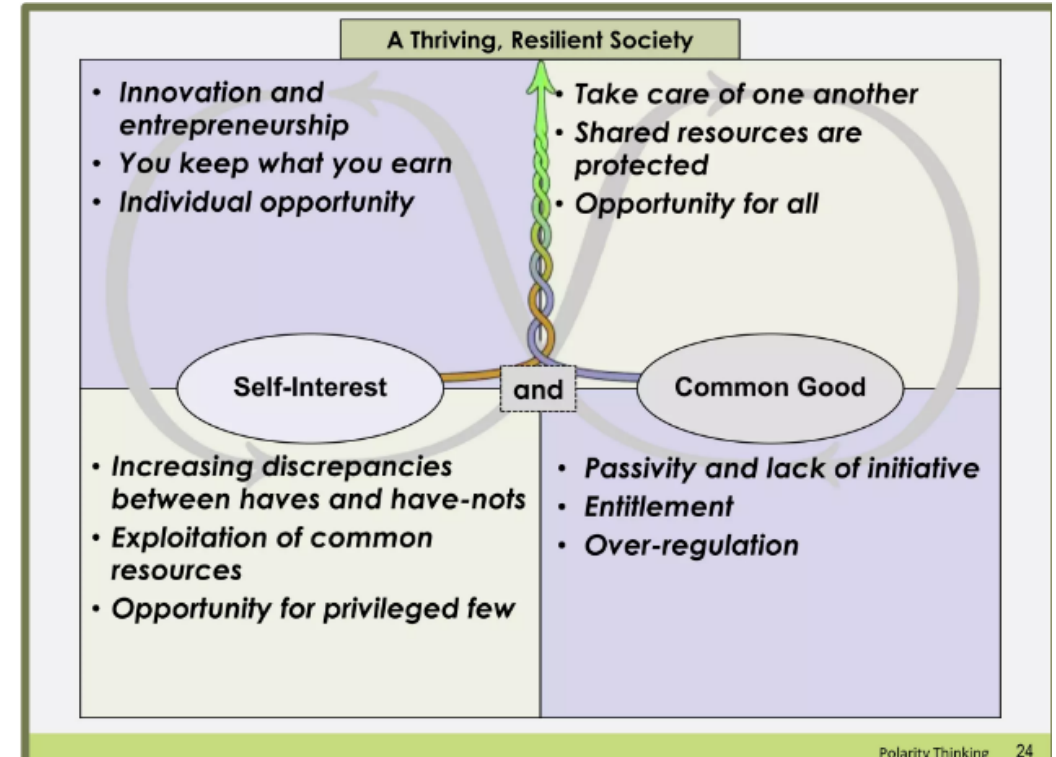
Social systems either rise toward their greater purpose or surrender to their deeper fears.





Principles of Polarity Management

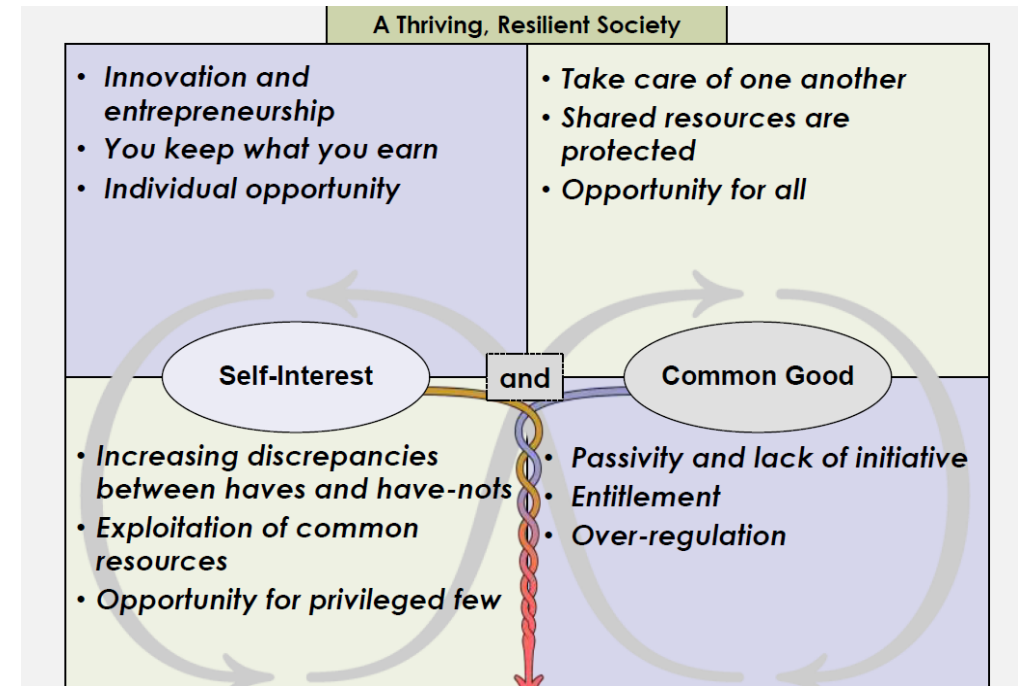
Work towards the upsides of both values and you create a Virtuous Cycle leading to the Higher Purpose.



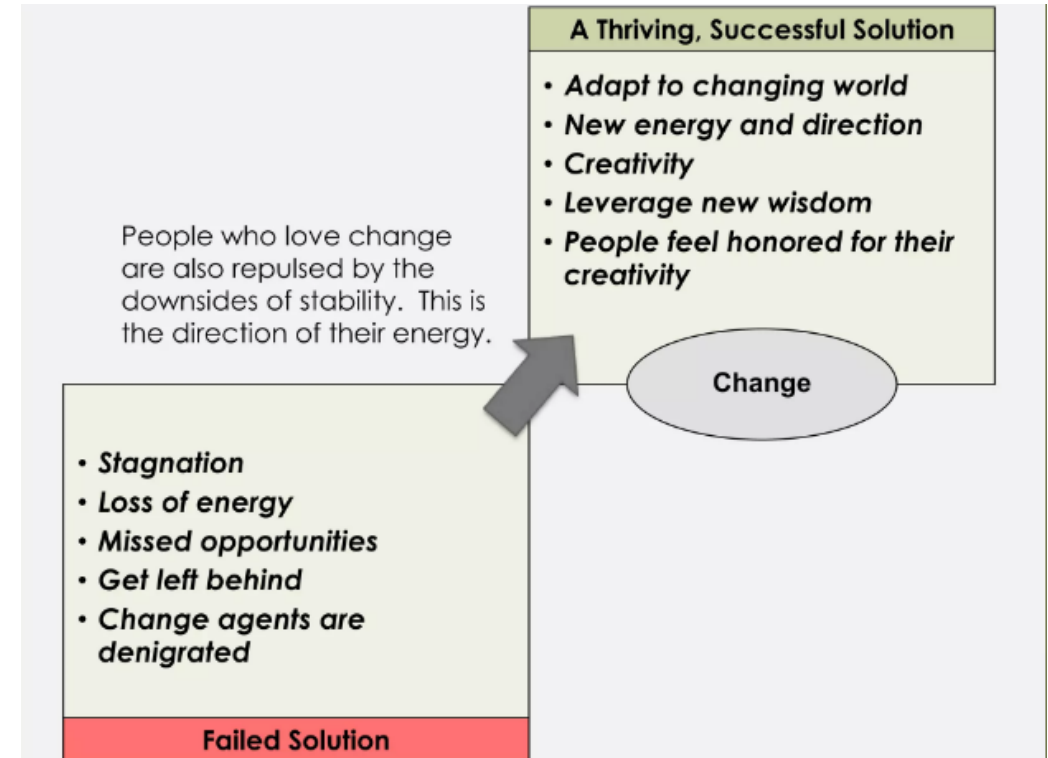
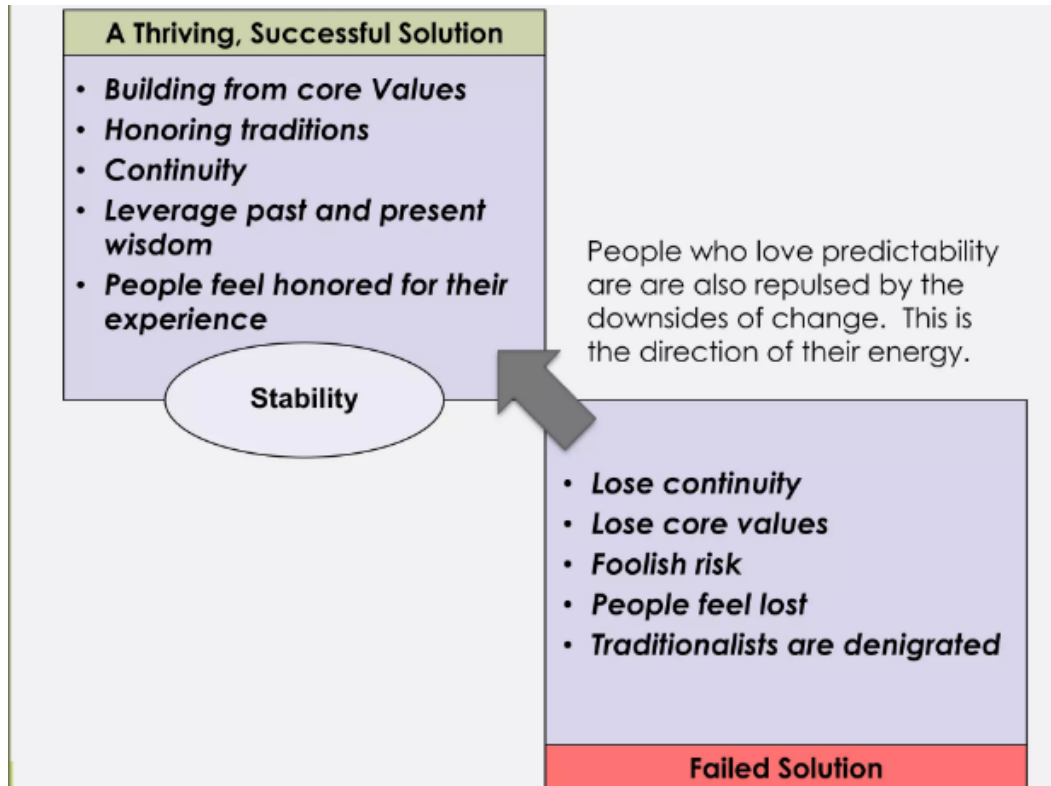
Principle #1: Work toward achieving the benefits of both values.

When you over-focus one value over time, to the neglect of its pair, you get:

- 1. The downsides of the chosen value*
- 2. A Vicious Cycle of polarization that eventually leads to the downsides of both values*



Principle # 2: Avoid over-focusing on one side.

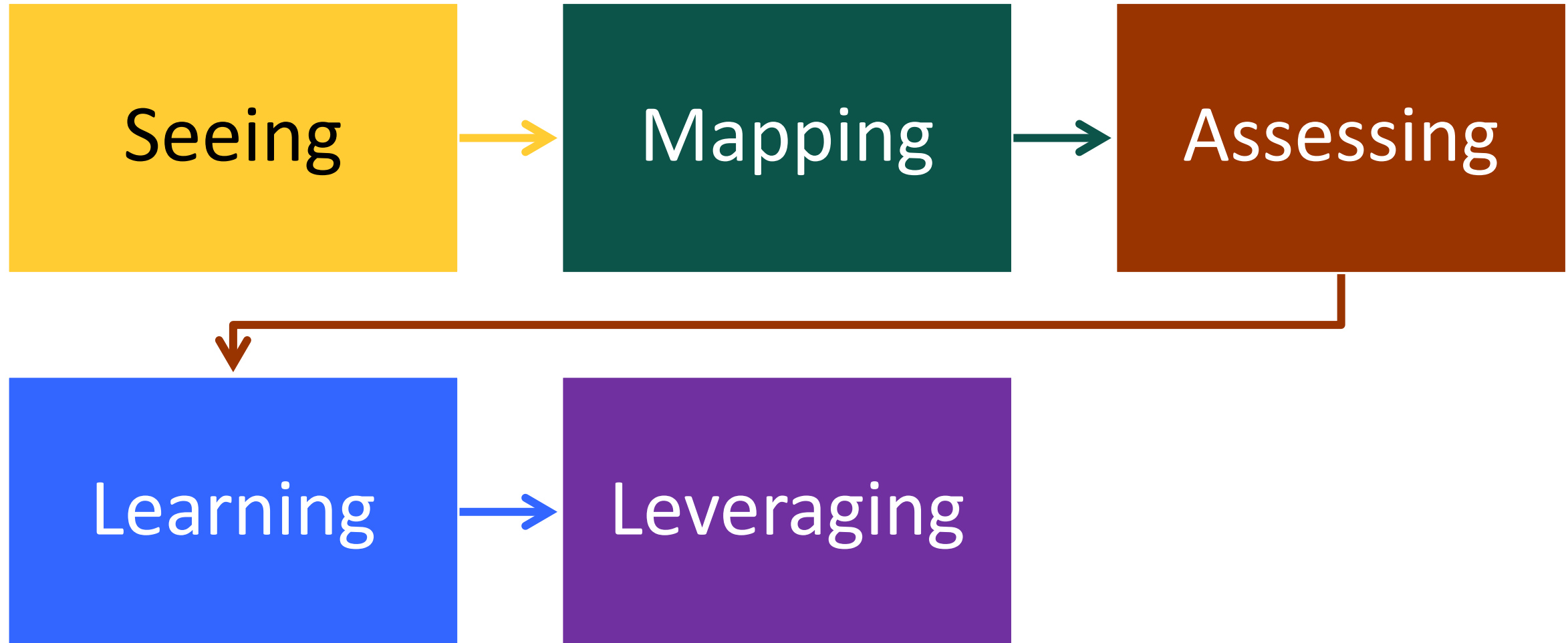


3: We fear losing the things we value the most

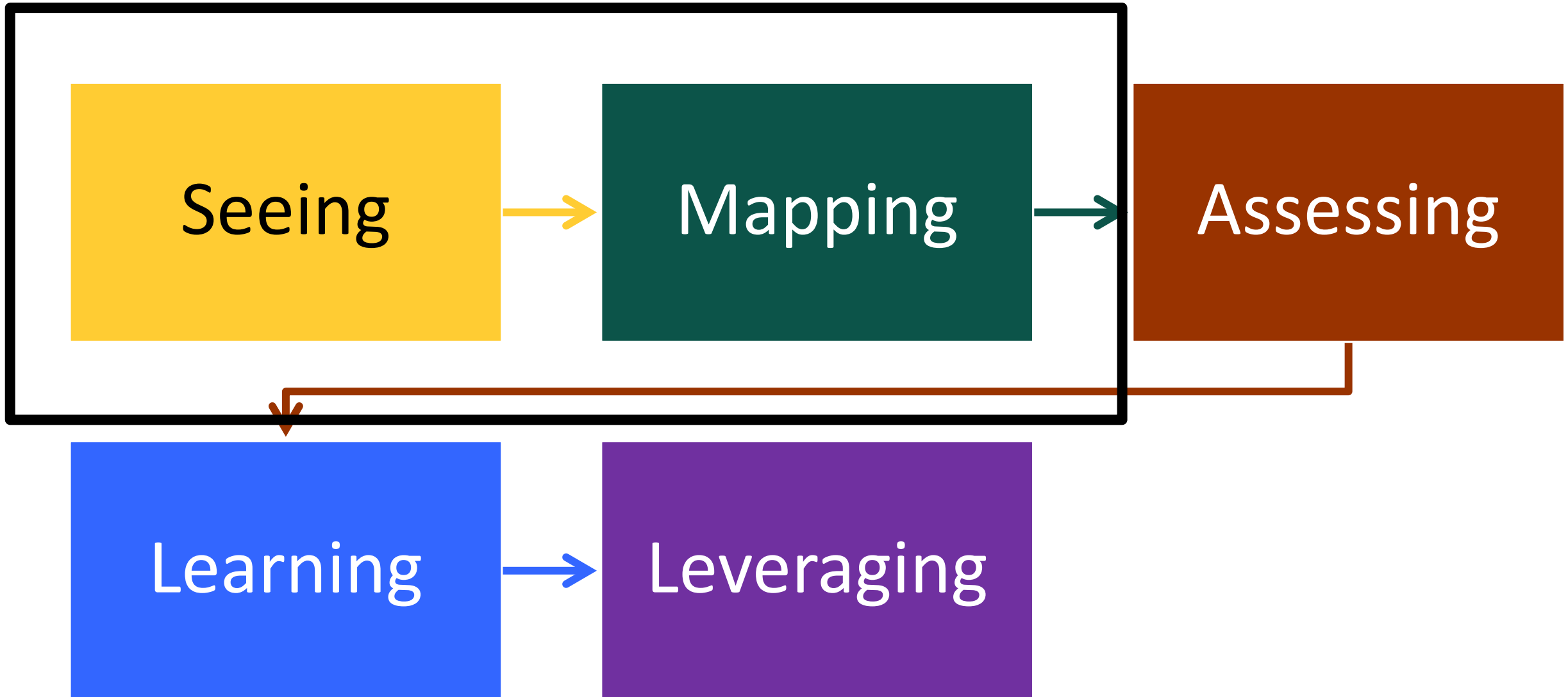
FEAR ARISES FROM THE PERCEPTION THAT "OTHERS" ARE CAUSING THE LOSS OF SOMETHING WE DEEPLY VALUE.

Method for managing polarities

SMALL: A five step process for dealing with polarities



SMALL: A five step process for dealing with polarities



Seeing

Seeing is often
the most
difficult step...

One clue is that you
feel like this.

Or you feel stuck

Or a problem or
conflict won't go
away no matter how
hard you try.





Relationship with conflict...

- Polarities lead to conflict when each person is attached to a different pole.
- Each one sees their side as a *value*.
- Each one experiences *fear* about the other pole.
- Fear is a very powerful motivator.
- Can you reduce the other person's fear?

To find polarities, look for:

1. Dominant values, statements of pride, or favored competencies
2. Frustrations with the way things are or have been
3. Fears about a direction, proposal or “fix” that others are asserting



What polarities
are you observing
and experiencing
now?

Exercise: Map the statement to the polarity

What you might hear...	Polarities
"I am always going, going and don't get downtime."	1. Short-term & Long-term
"We need more accountability around here."	2. Freedom & Accountability
"I have good intentions but seem to upset other people."	3. Directive & Consultative
"Too few people make the decisions around here."	4. Efficiency & Effectiveness
"I seem to always sacrifice my long-term goals."	5. Strategy & Operations
"So-and-so just acts and doesn't think things through."	6. Staff Needs & Customer Needs
"I seem to sacrifice my own needs for what others want."	7. Intent & Impact
"I spend a lot of thinking and I don't get enough done."	8. Action & Reflection
"We pride ourselves on our efficiency."	9. Thinking & Doing
"I'm a great strategist."	10. What I want & What we need
"We are driven by customer needs."	11. Activity & Rest

Mapping

Polarity Map

Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

7. ACTION STEPS:
How to retain the current benefits

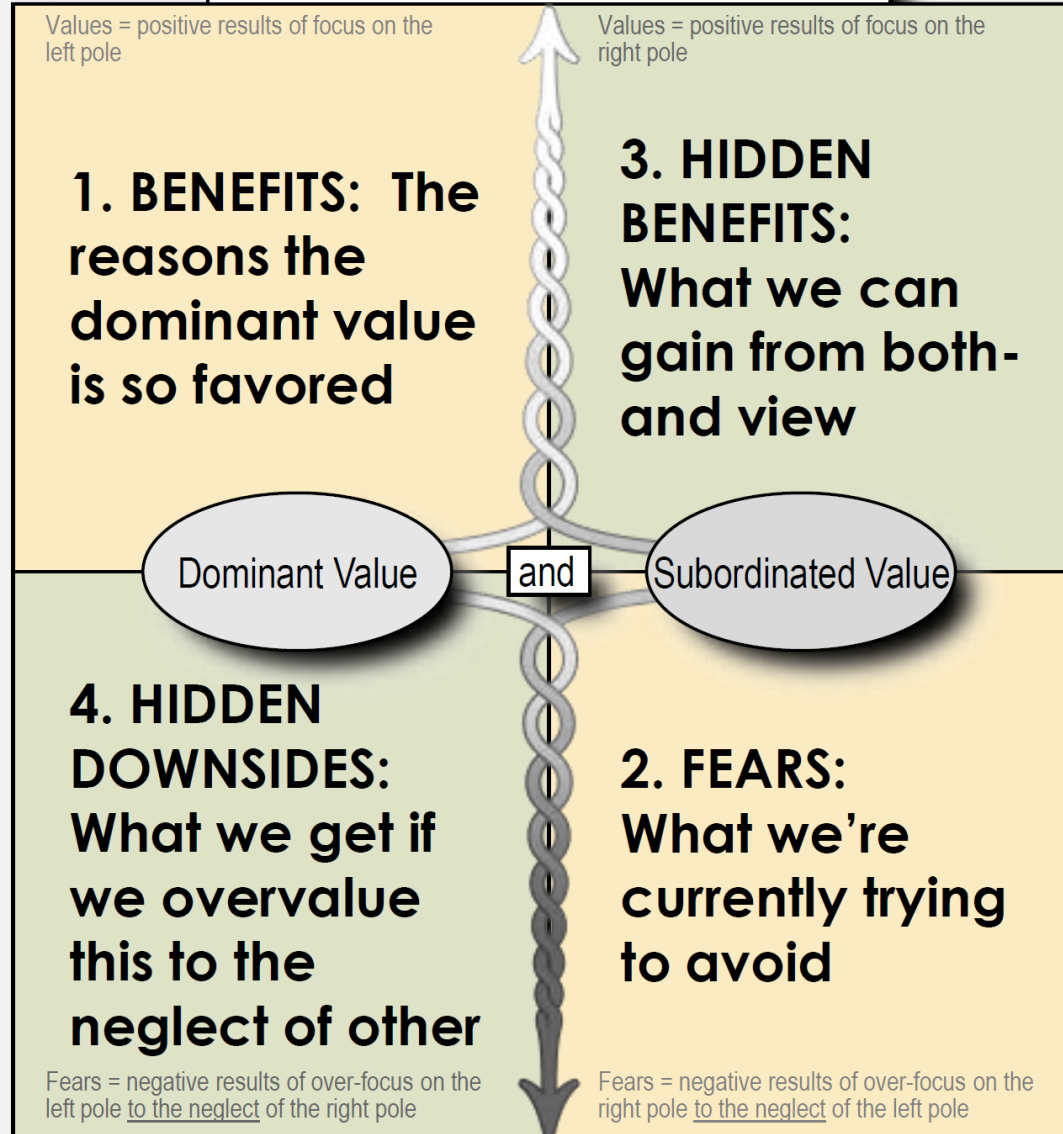
Early Warnings

Measurable indicators (things you can count) that will let you know that you are getting into the downside of this left pole.

9. WARNING SIGNS: How to be warned about getting these downsides

Greater Purpose Statement - why Leverage this dynamic tension?

5. Why pursue upsides?



6. Why avoid downsides?

Deeper Fear from not seeing and optimizing the tension

Action Steps

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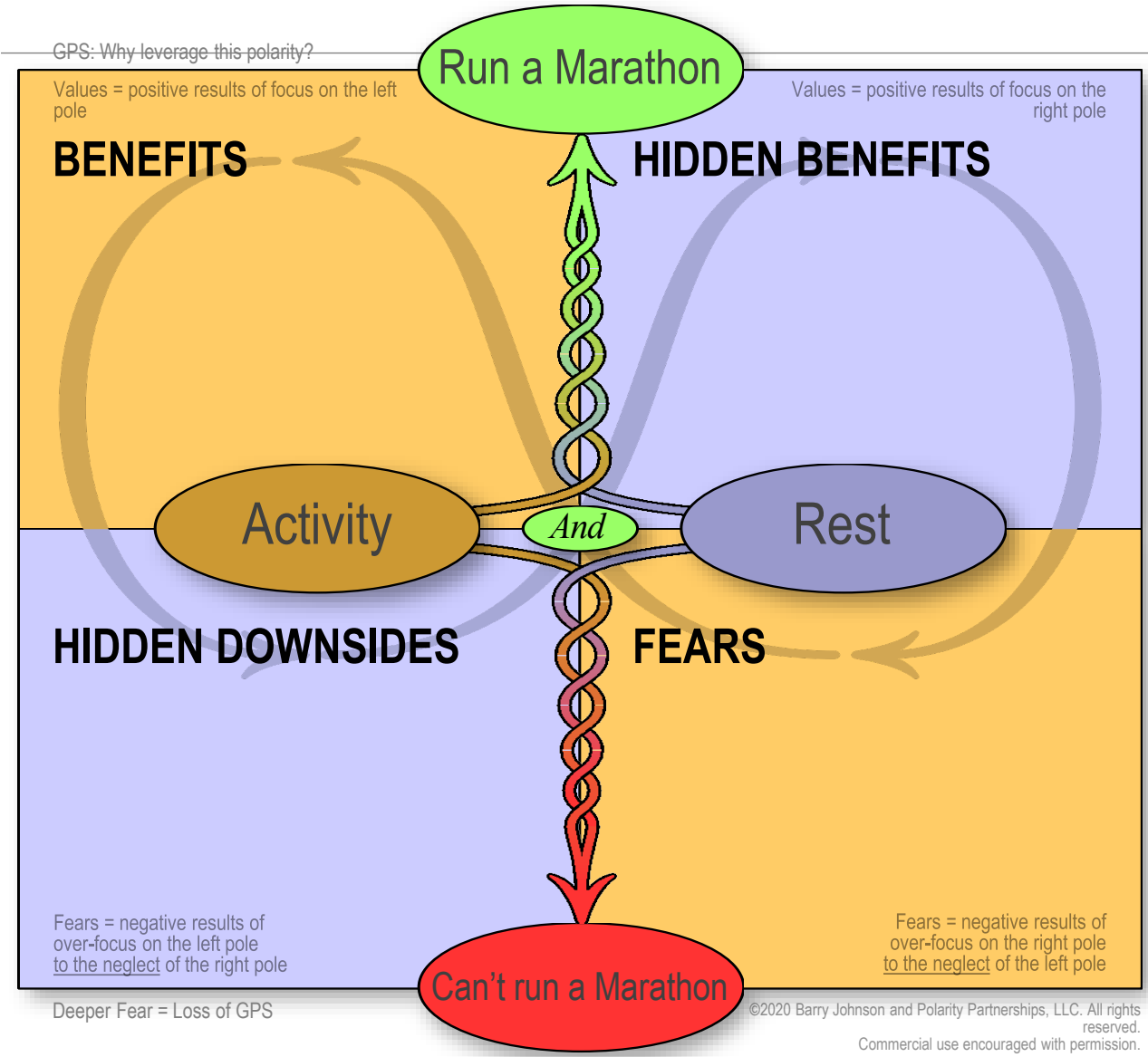
8. ACTION STEPS:
How to get the "Correction's" benefits

Early Warnings

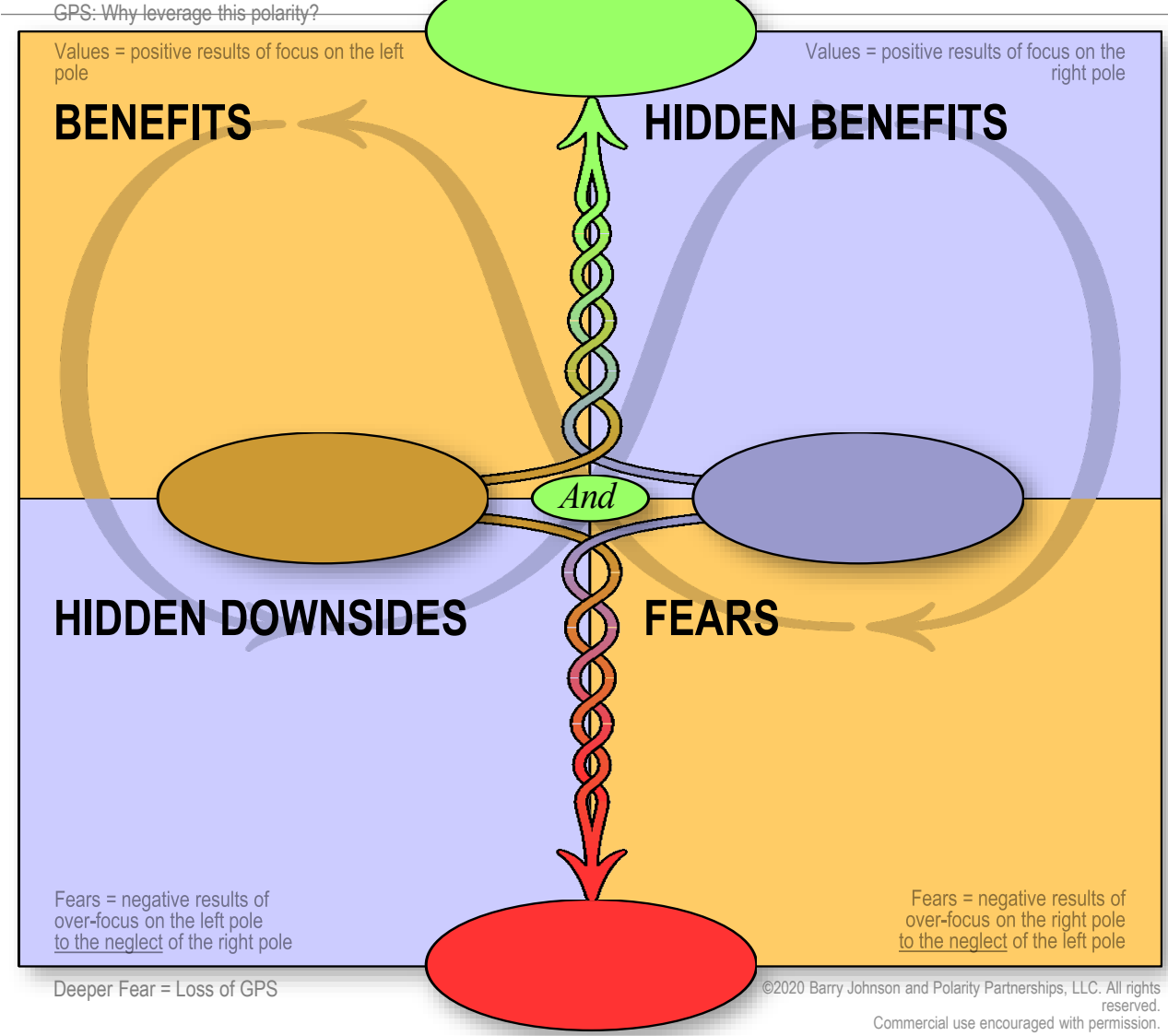
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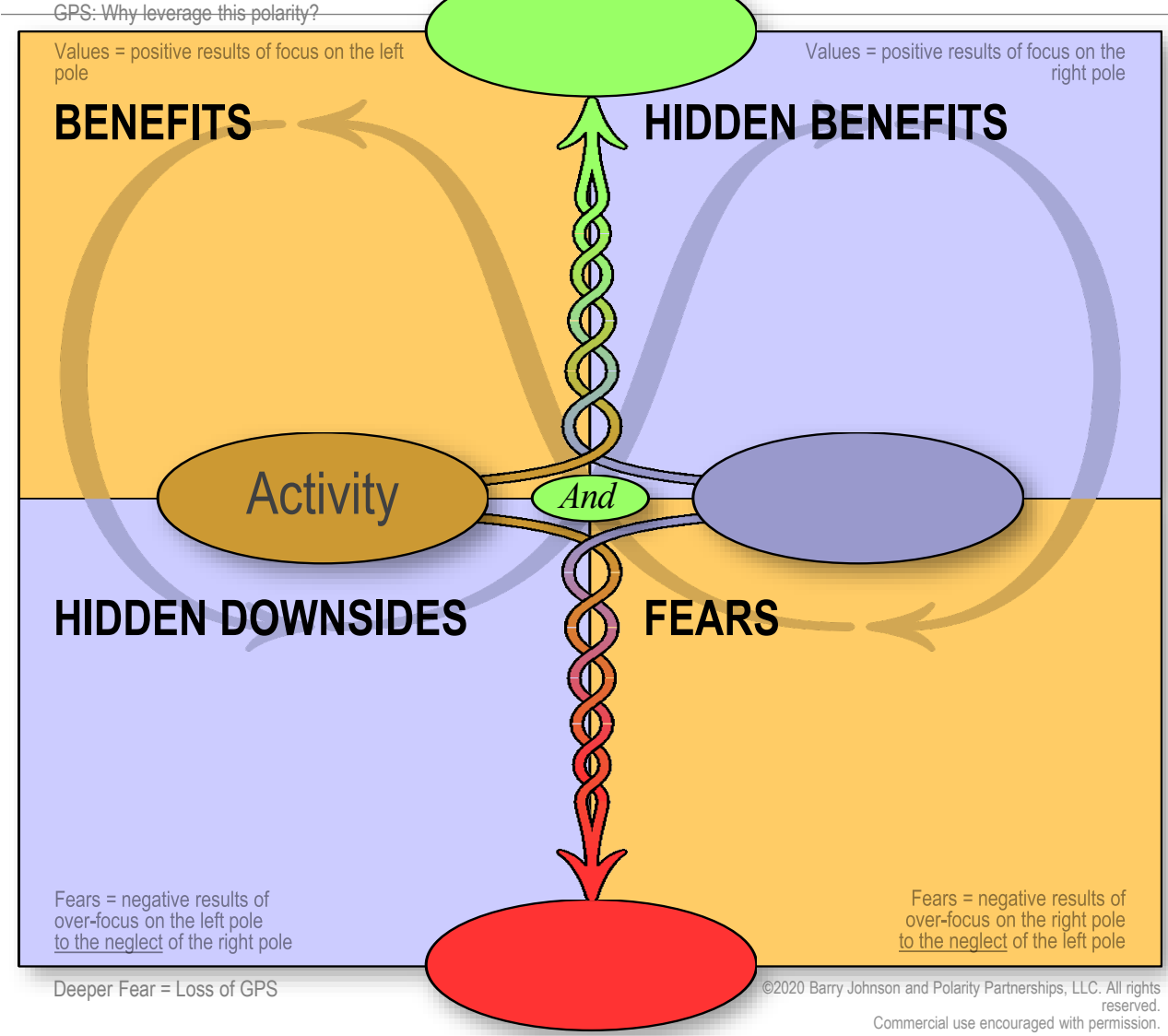
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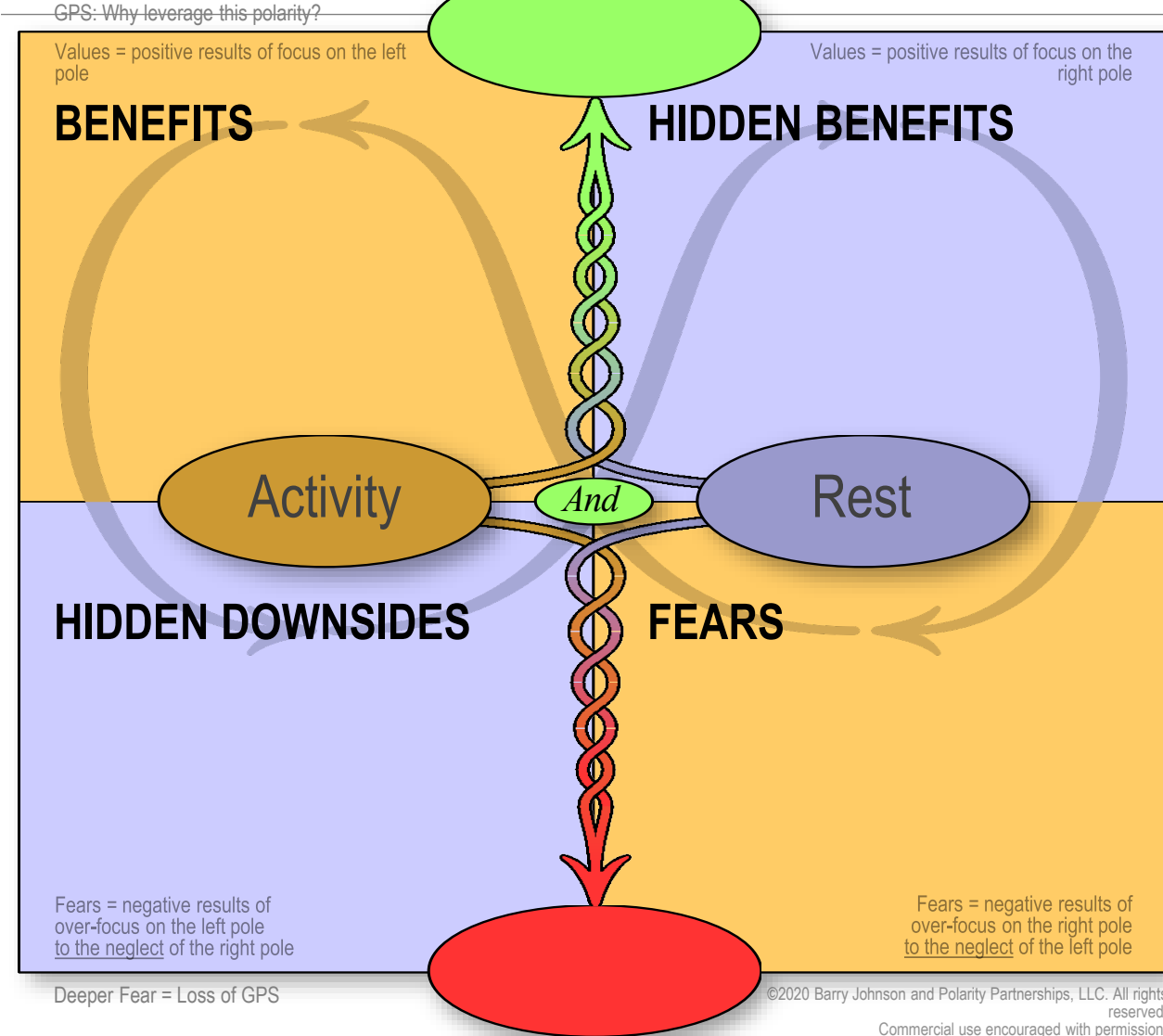
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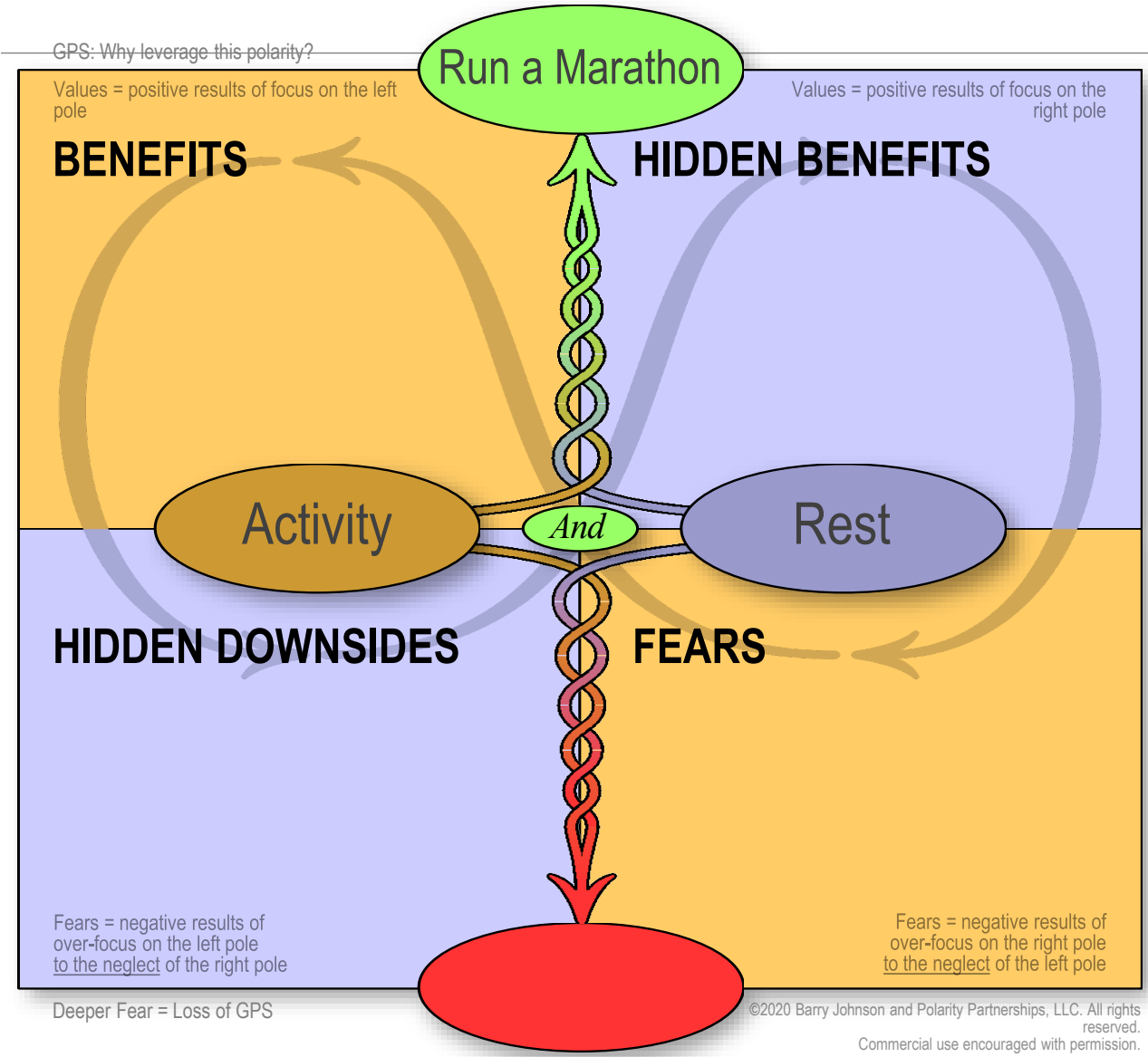
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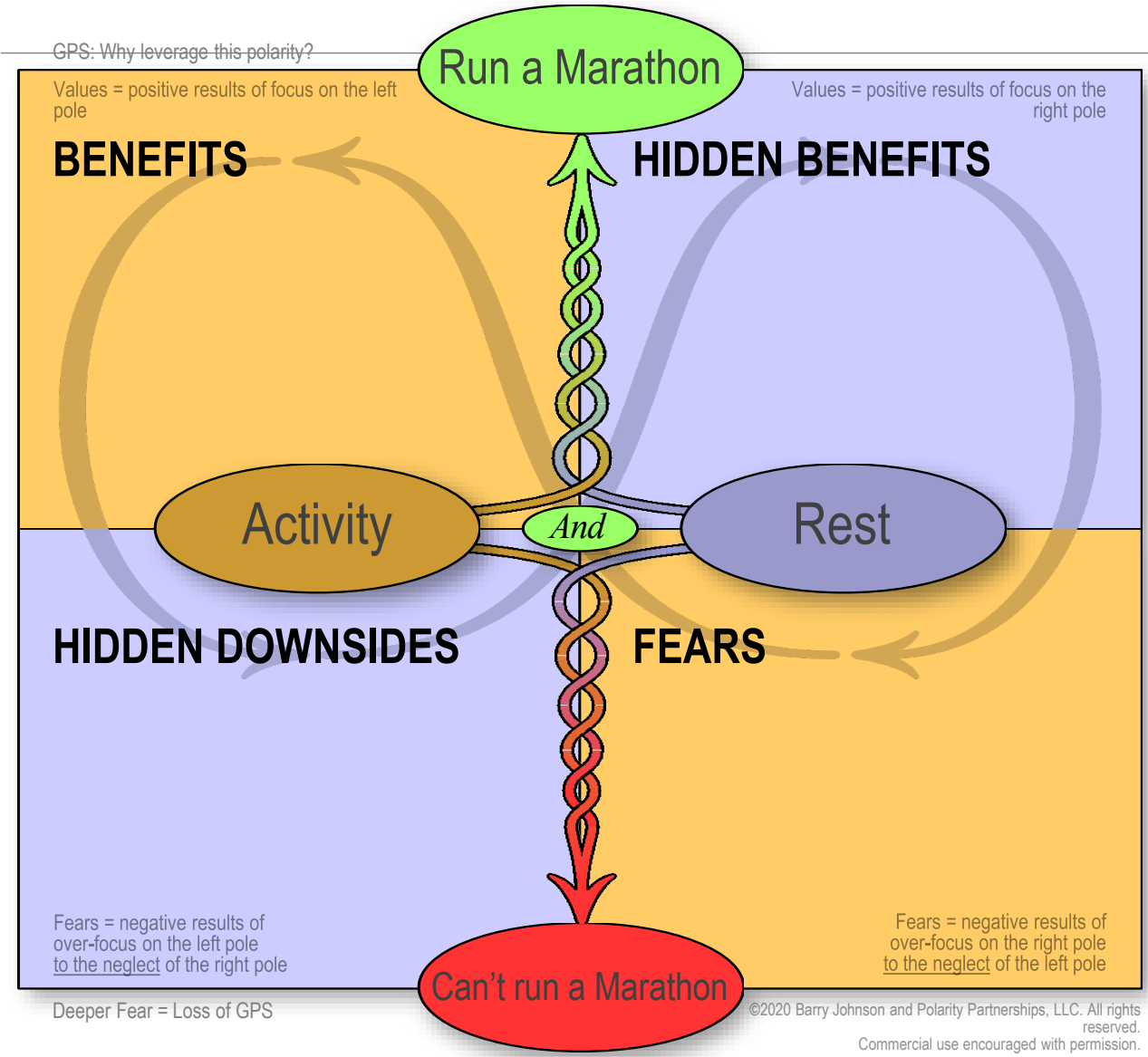
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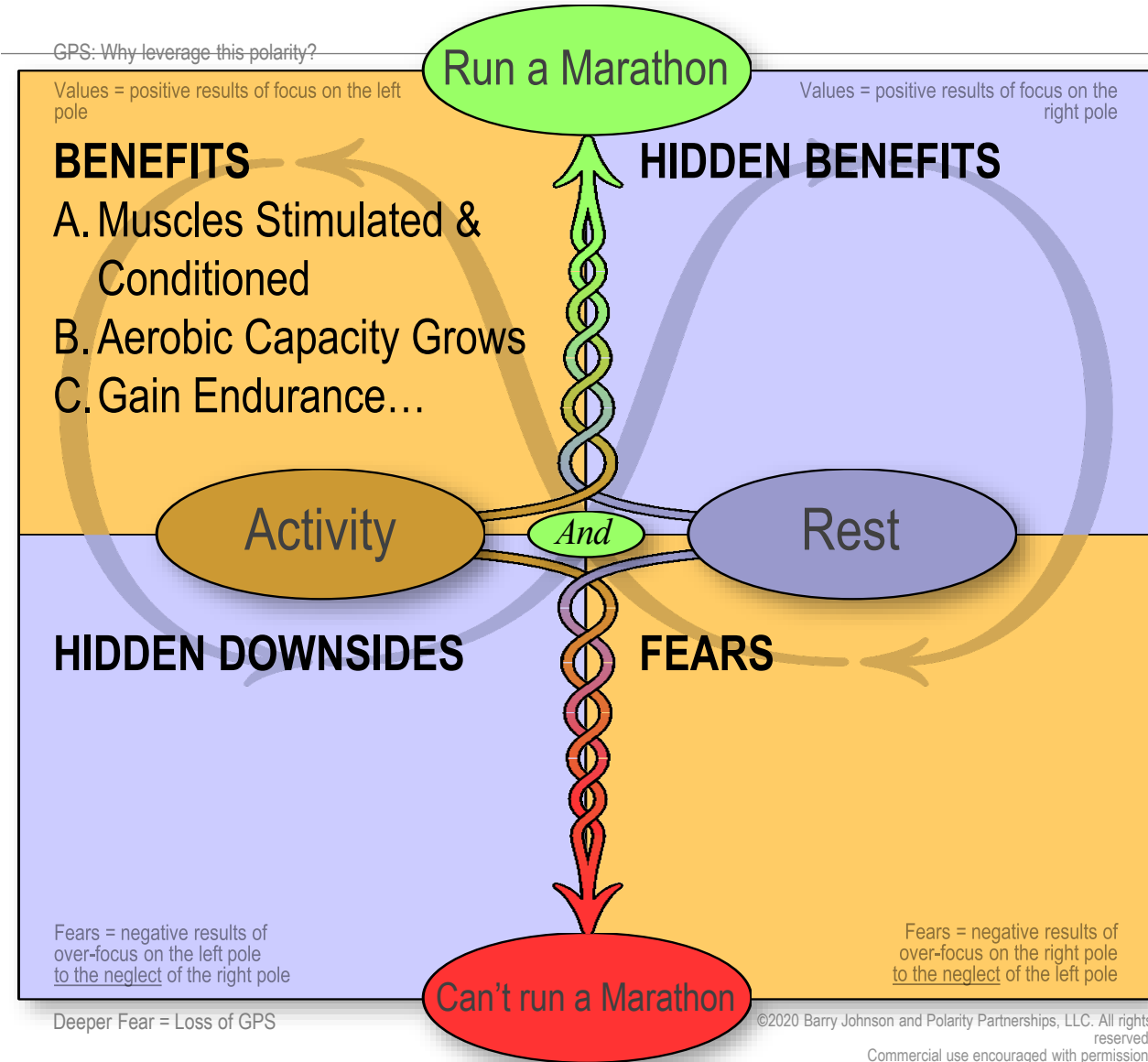
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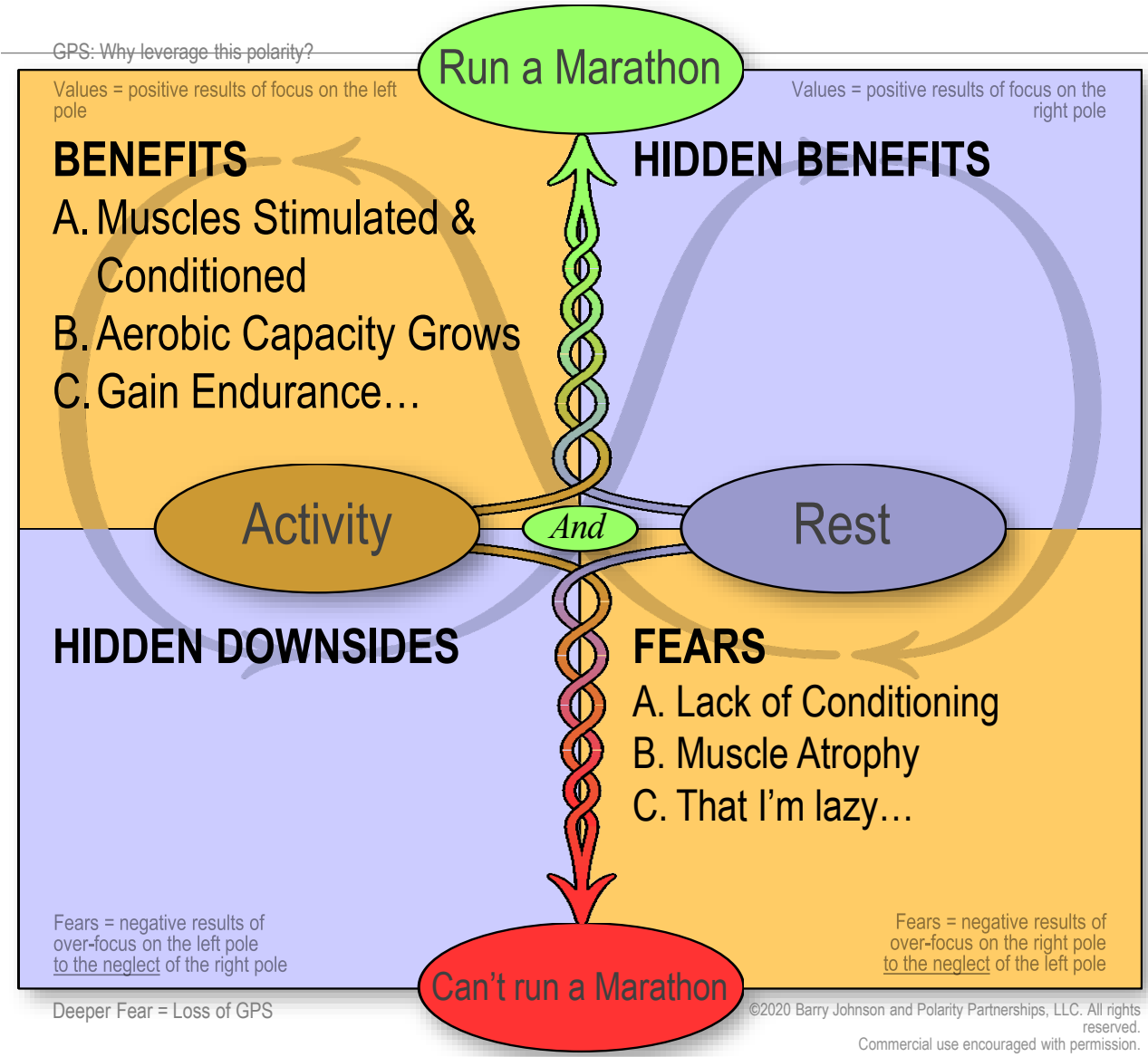
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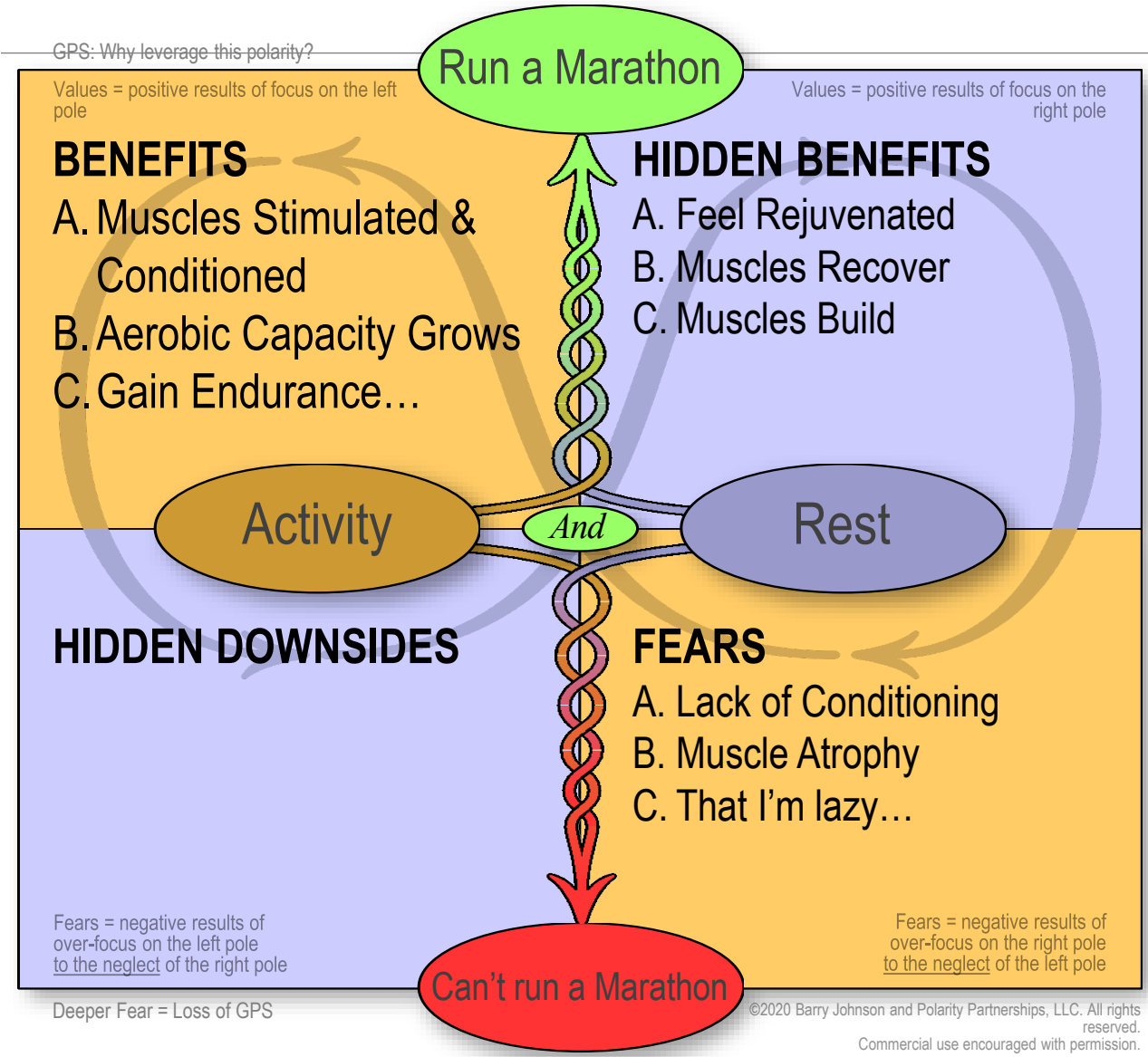
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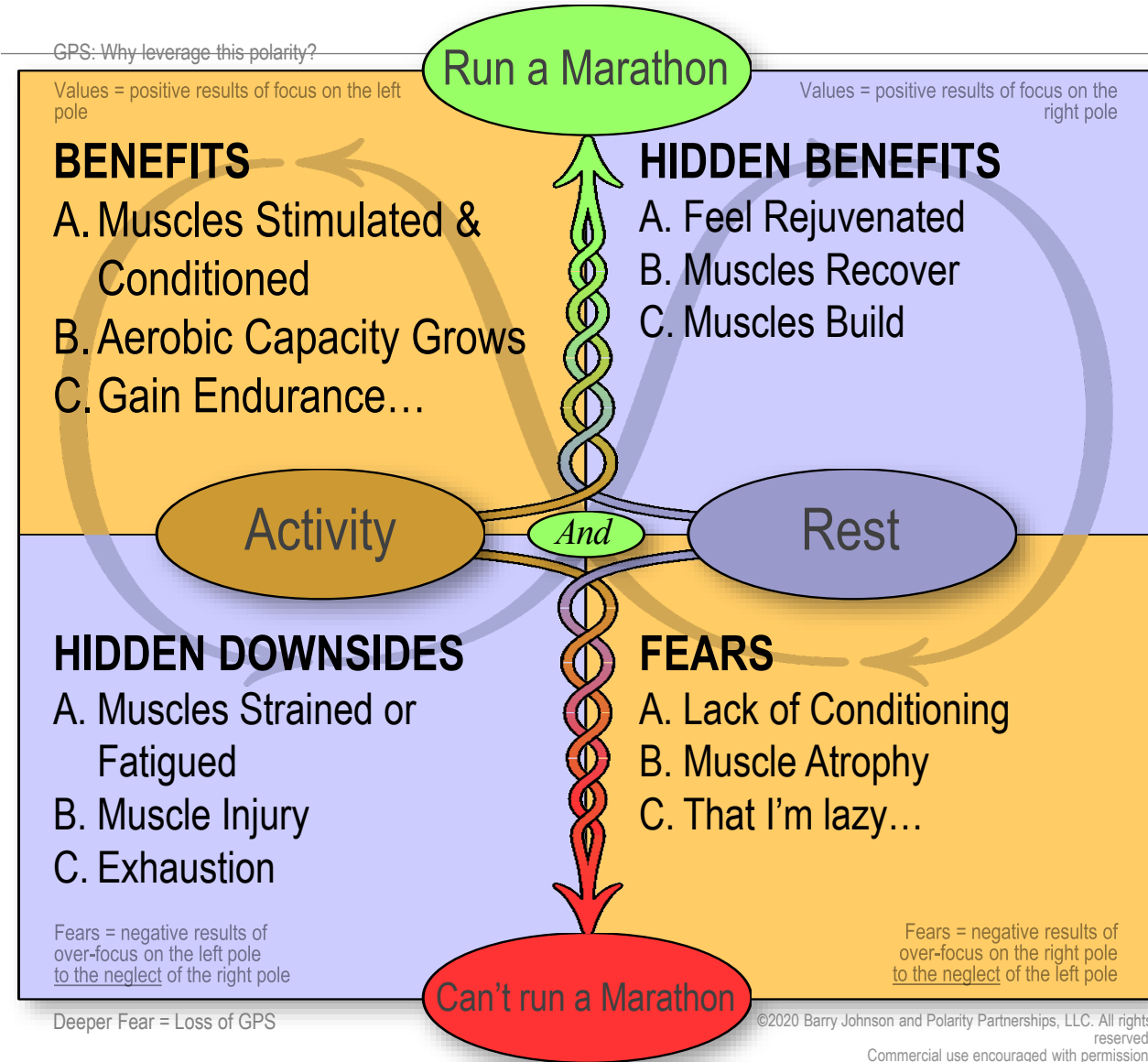
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Deeper Fear = Loss of GPS

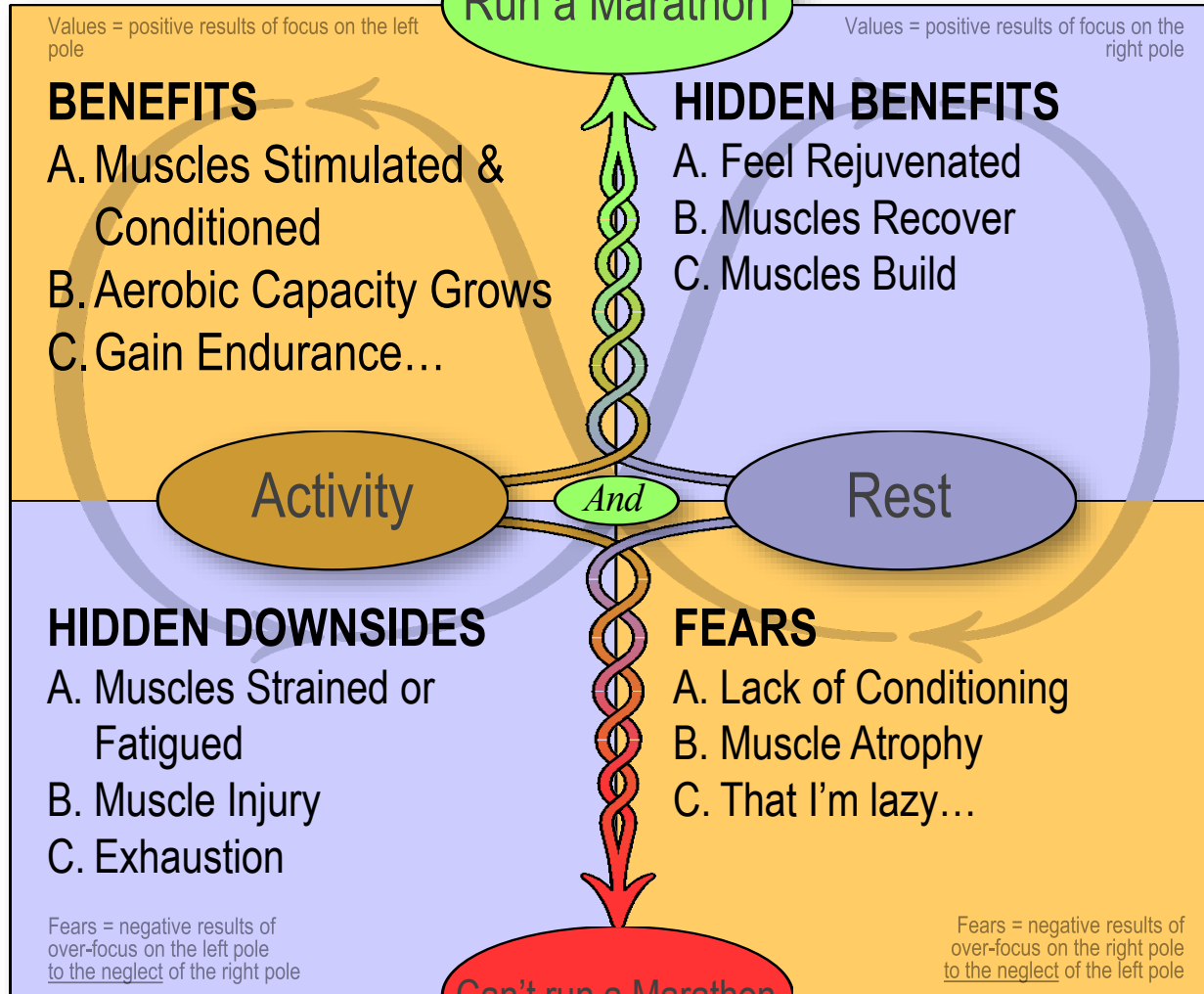
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Polarity Map [®]

Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

GPS: Why leverage this polarity?



Action Steps

How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

Deeper Fear = Loss of GPS

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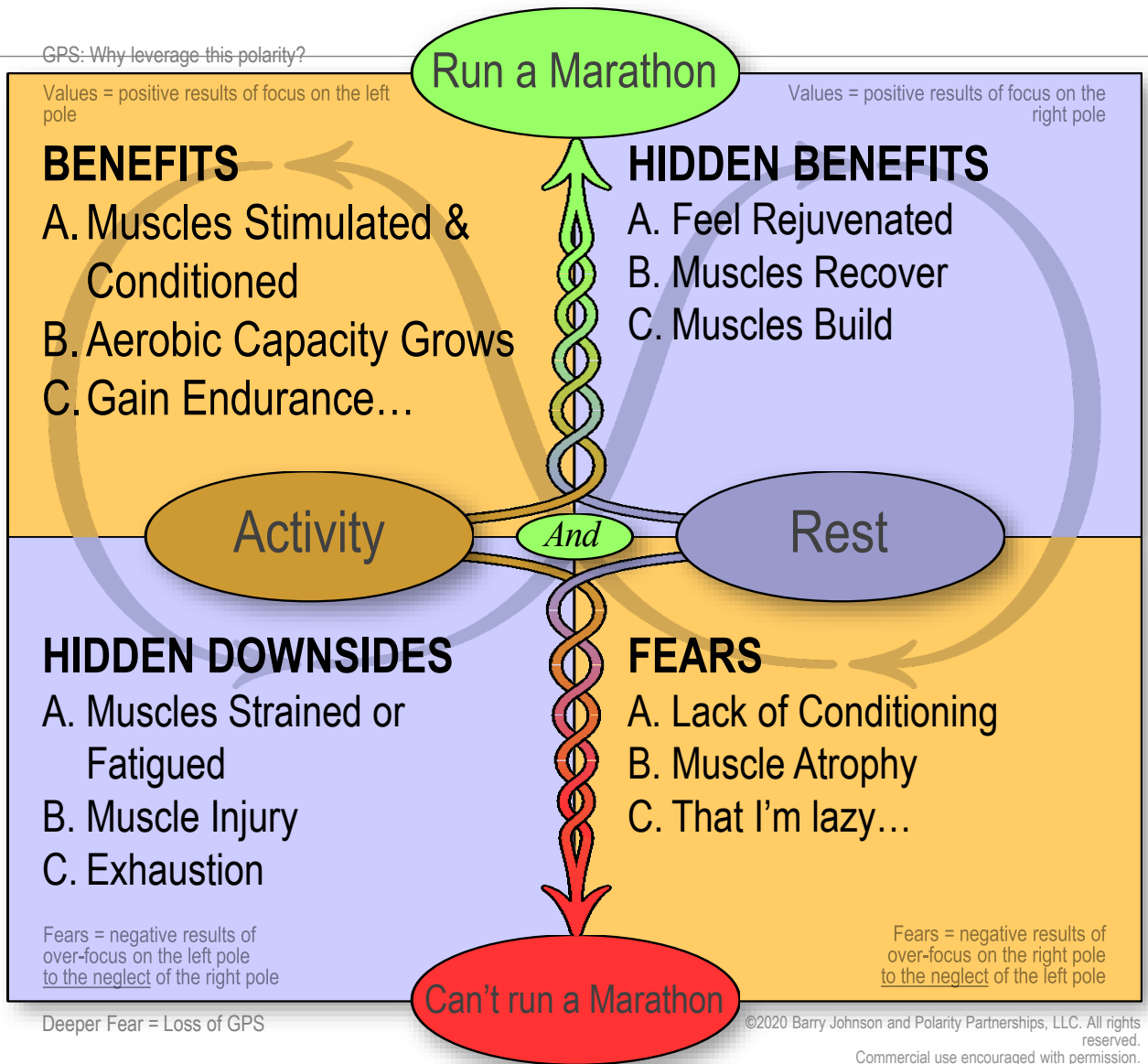
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How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

- Run further on most workout days
- Vary pace
- Make and follow training plan
- Get a massage



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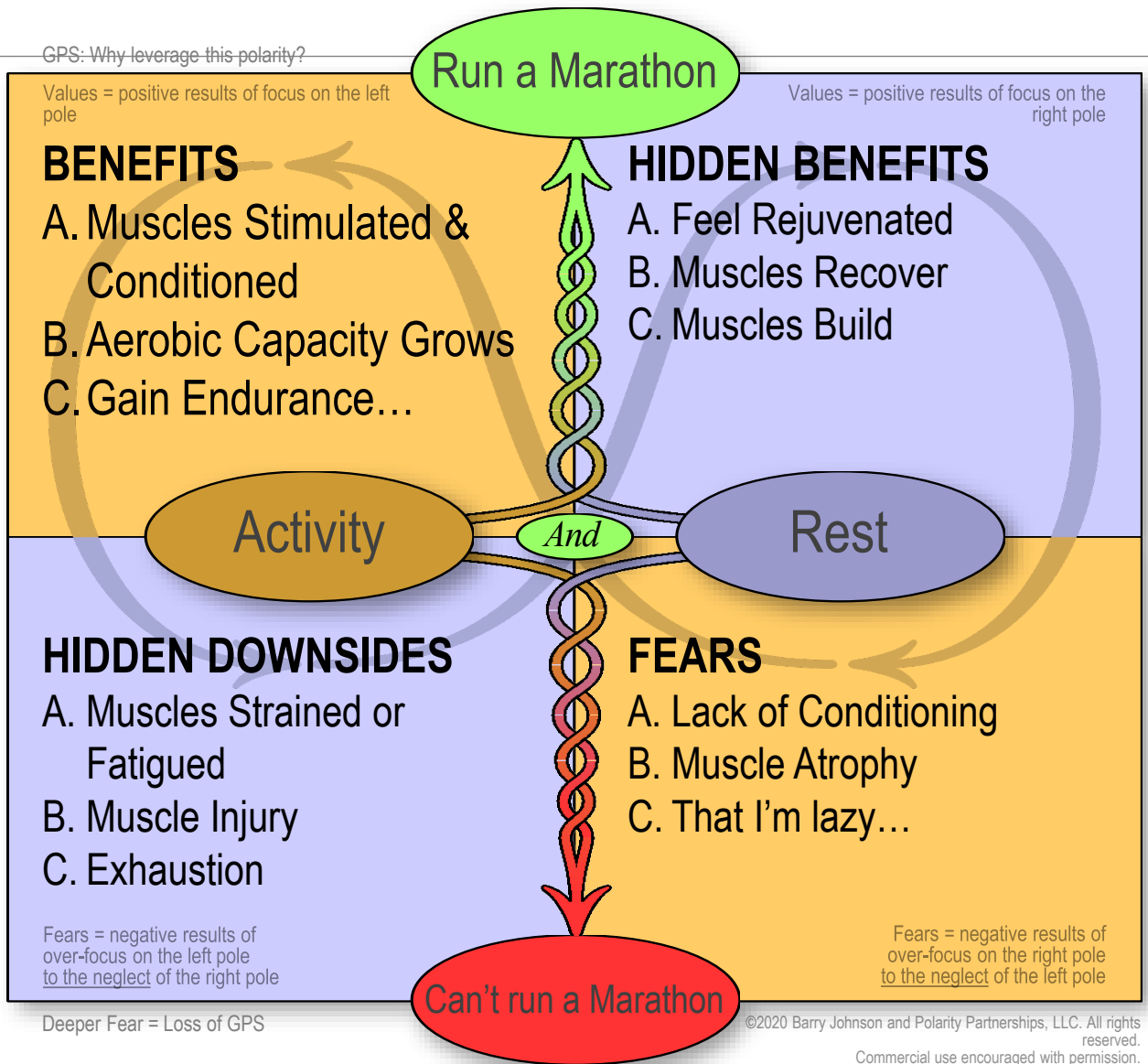
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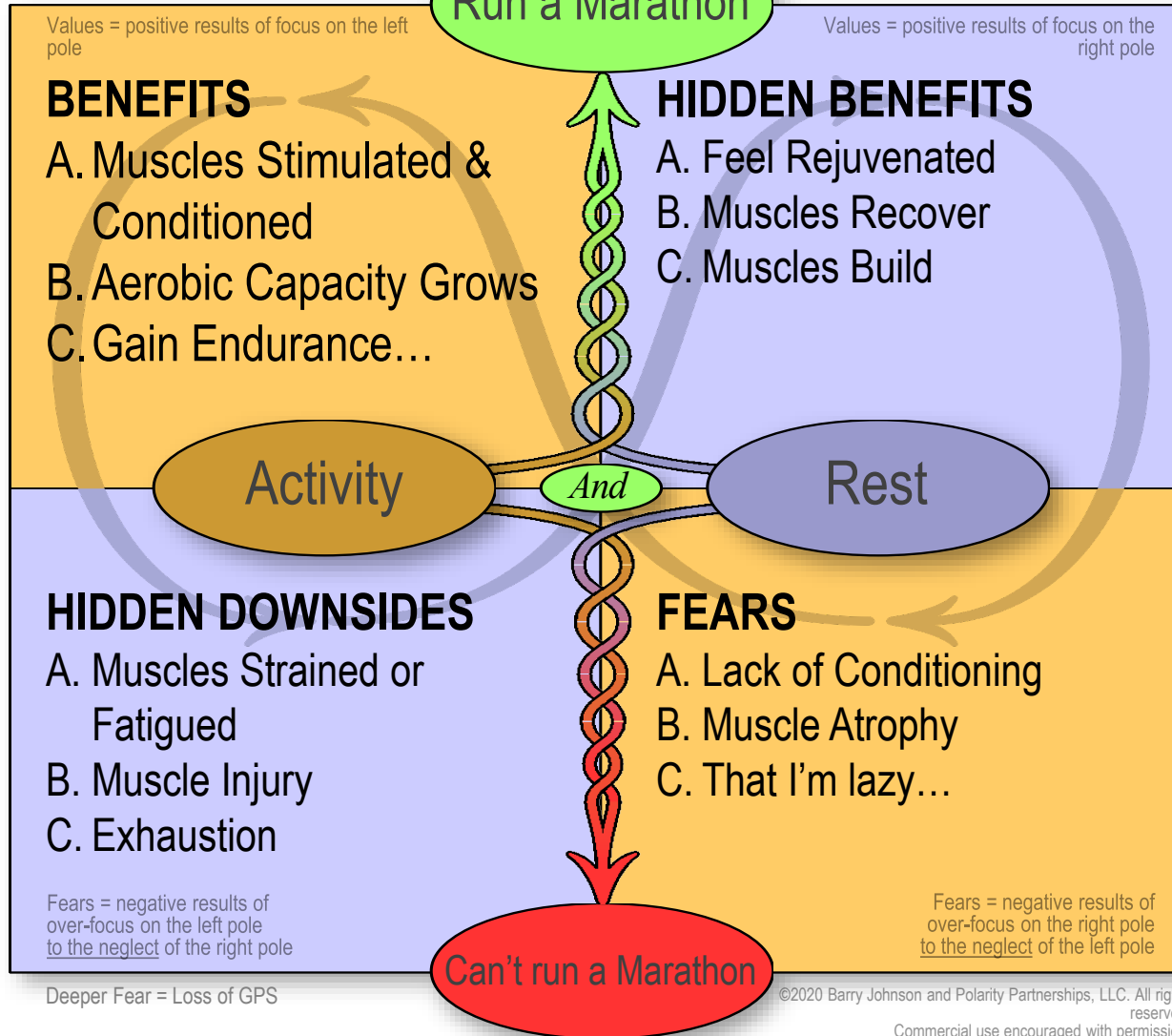
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GPS: Why leverage this polarity?



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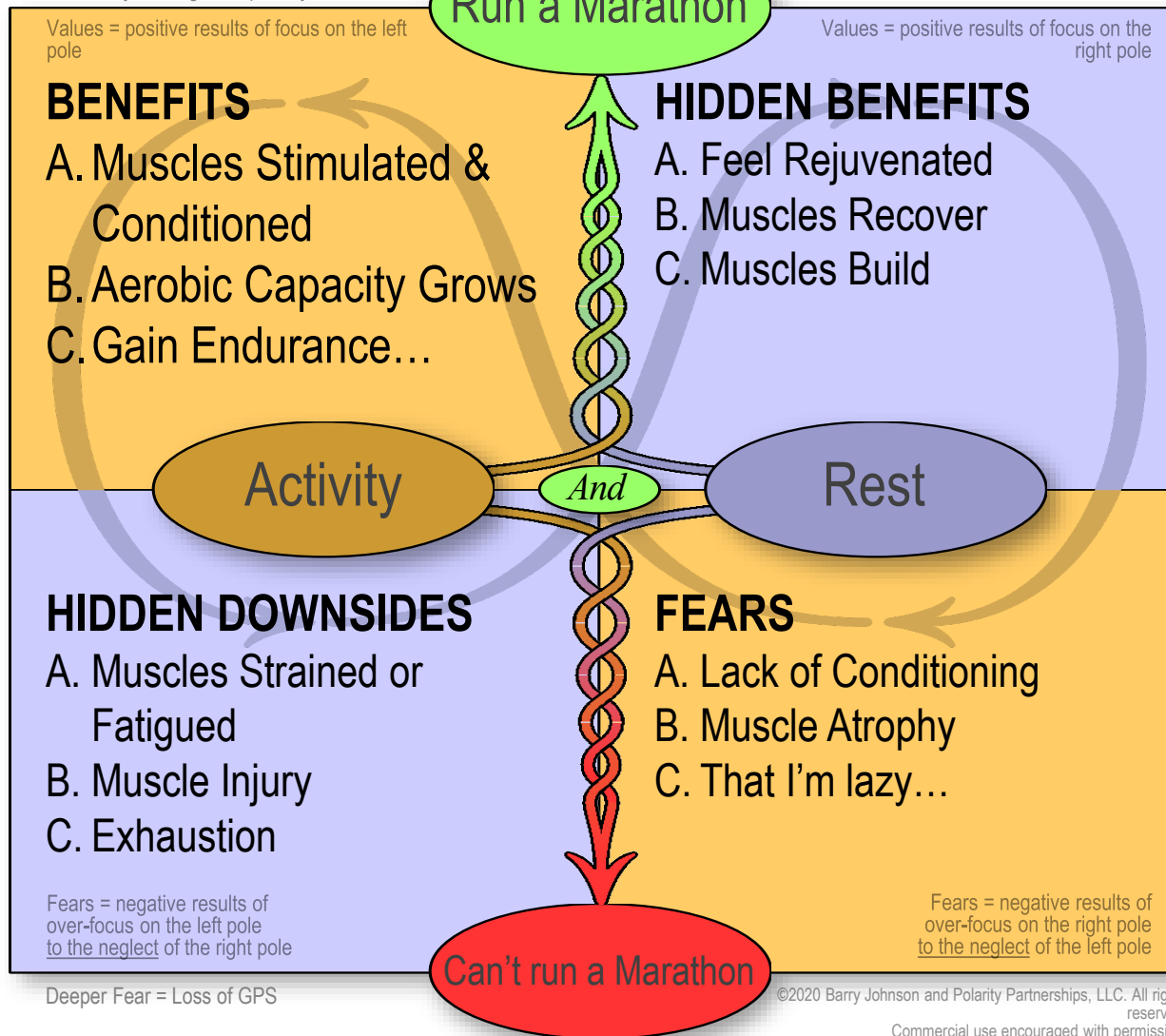
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- Feeling tired in the morning
- Feeling burned out
- Soreness doesn't go away

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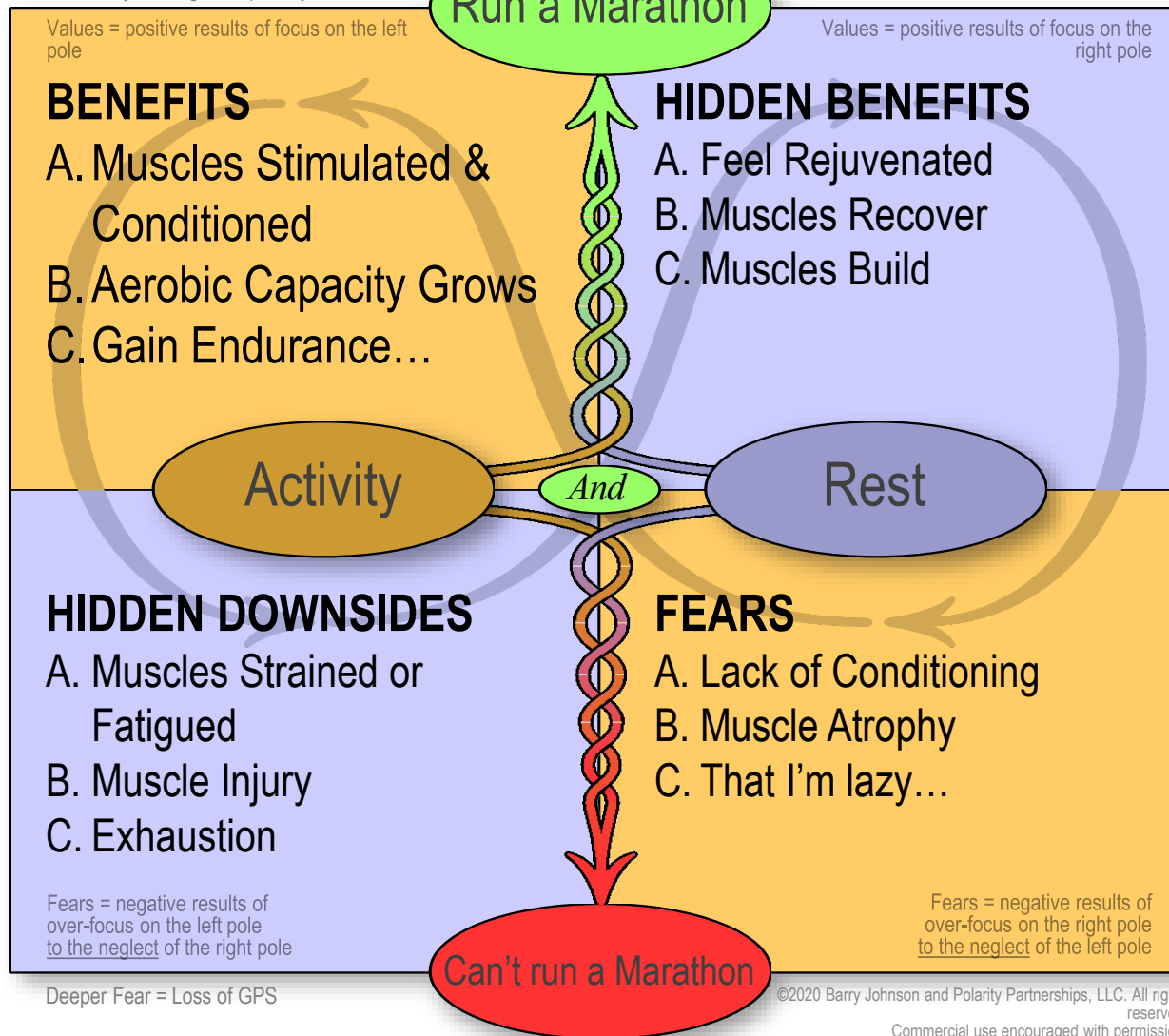
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- Feeling a spasm
- Feeling bored
- Not making progress