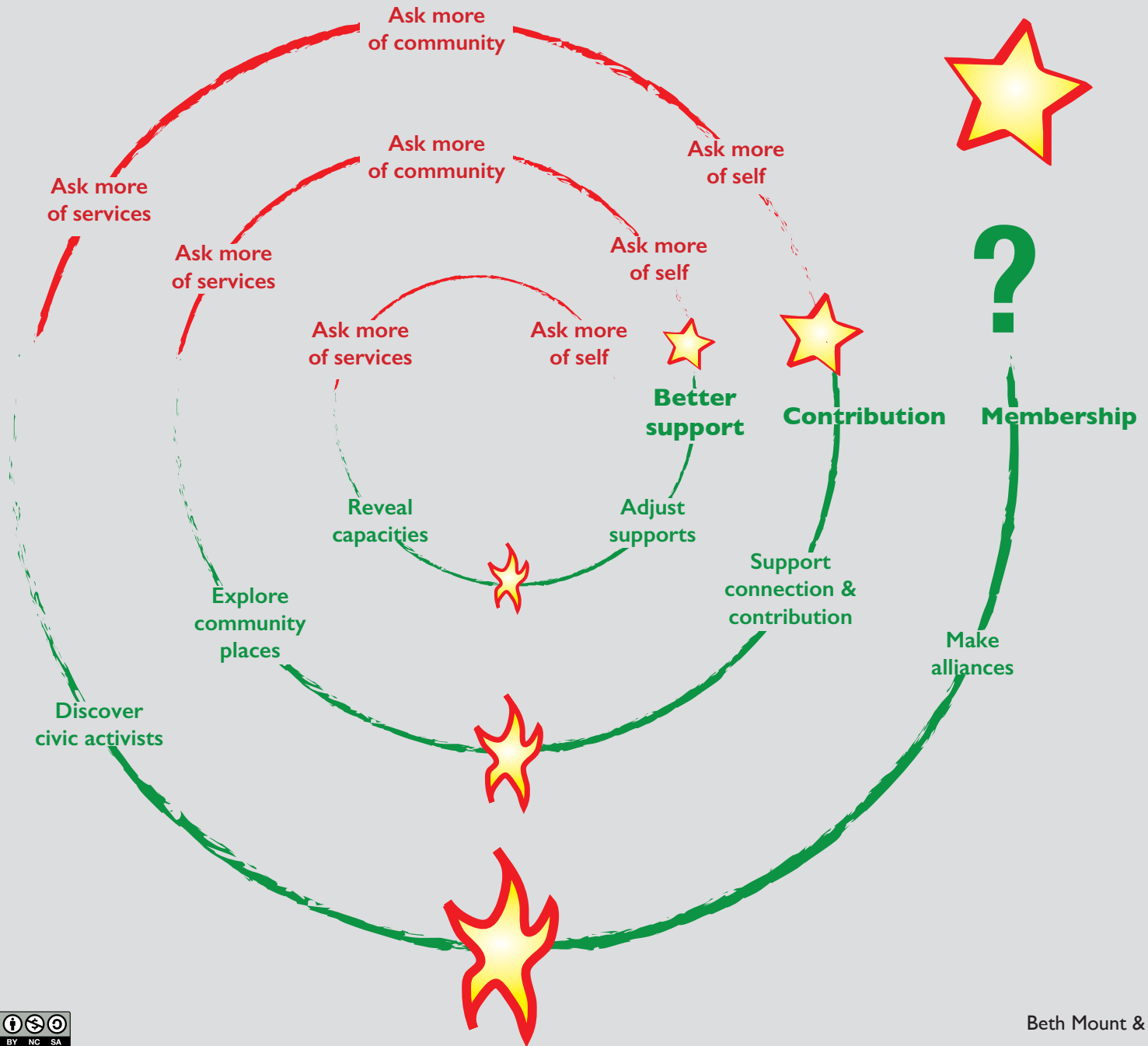
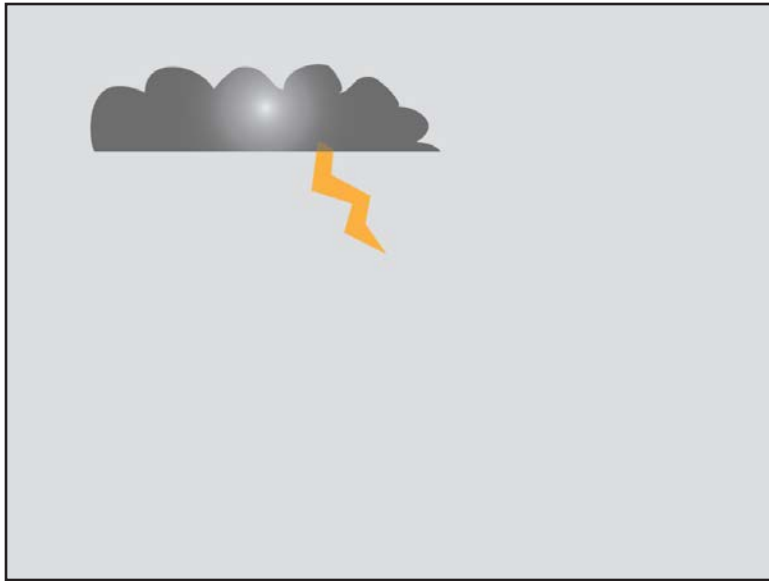


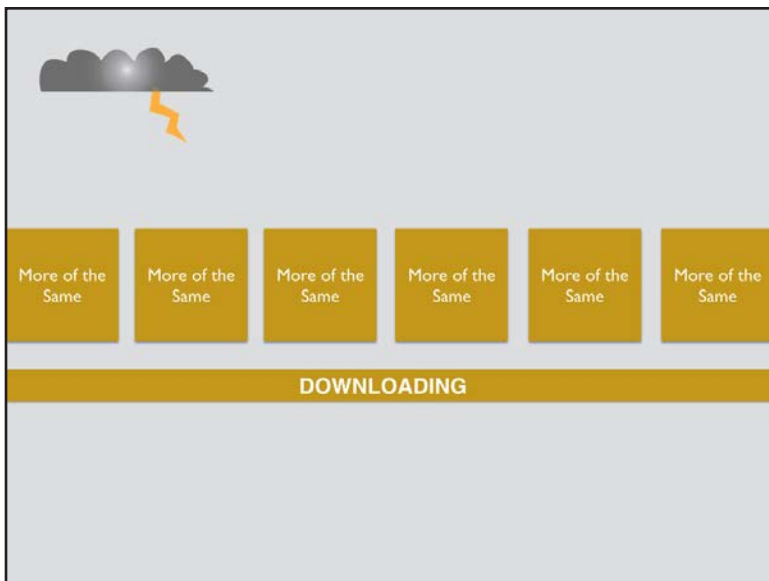
What more is possible?



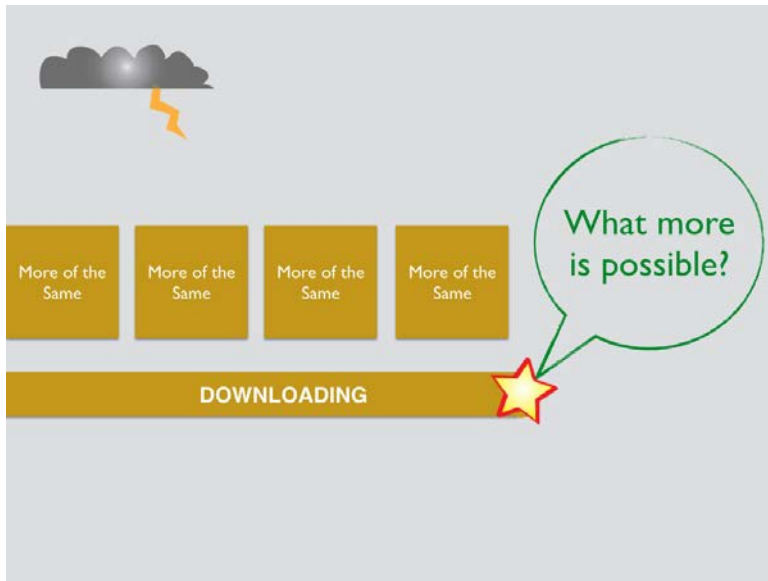


The systems that support people with developmental disabilities are under increasing pressure.

- A growing shortfall of available funds for the number of people eligible for services
- Imposed strategies to control growth of costs based on belief in a managed medical-care market
- Near panic level concern to avoid risk & liability
- Consequent fear and scarcity driven attention to deficiency, distrust, & vulnerability
- Managerial belief that person-centered, self-directed supports can be produced in the resulting environment by employing mechanistic, command & control tactics

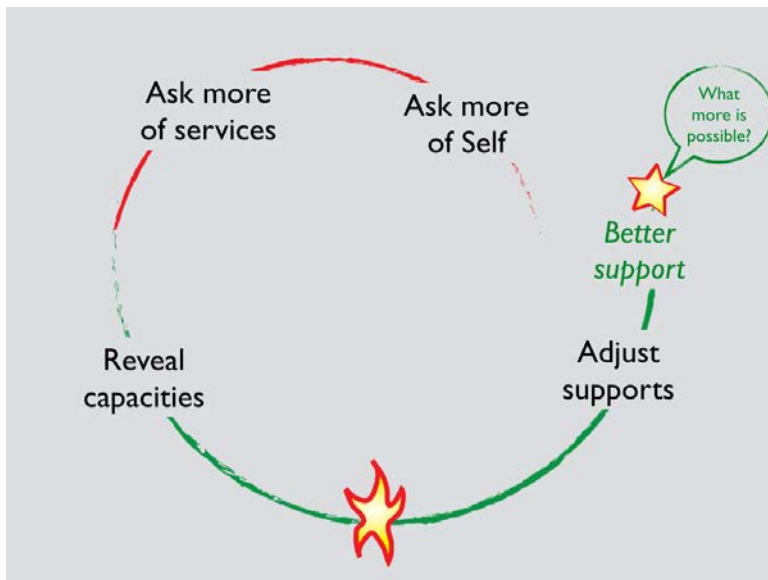


This stressed environment makes it hard for those who offer support to develop the partnerships with people with developmental disabilities and their allies necessary to create pathways to active citizenship. Service providers get stuck, denying the possibility of significantly better lives and believing they are doing all that is possible without additional infusions of public money, becoming numb to the costs of ignoring higher purposes and habituated to managing the life of groups pulled together at the outer margins of community life. Mindless downloading of familiar patterns of exclusion and control reproduces more of the same forms of service regardless of the common practice of re-labeling cosmetic variations of typical practice as “person-centered” and “self-directed”.



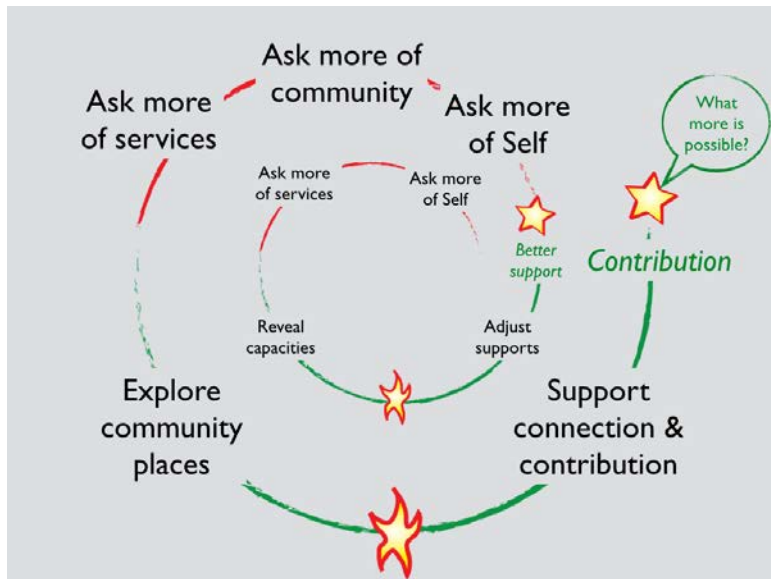
A simple question, sincerely and courageously held, breaks the spell of downloading. *What more is possible?* shifts perspective from inside the story that reproduces *more of the same* to an outside point of view that invites people to imagine generating different and better relationships. Inside the story of *more of the same*, power looks as if it is in short supply because people think power is held by some distant *them* who live beyond influence. The question, *What more is possible?*, draws energy from a conviction that it is possible to make space to work with the system's many constraints in positive and creative ways.* People have the choice to act hopefully and change the ways they relate to one another and to people they have not yet met. More equal and reciprocal relationships produce the power-with that allows action.

* Some systems do seem sadly, infuriatingly close to smothering the capacity to ask *What more is possible?* under a fog of fear and busy-ness in a scramble to comply with Byzantine rules. In these systems the best hope lies outside the system among people and families who live with minimal services.



The most common first movement in response to *What more is possible?* improves the fit between a person's capacities and preferences and the support offered them. Those who want to make the change begin by asking more of Self. This means opening to deeper listening and more creative action. Those who are listening let go of the certainty that all that really matters about a person is already accounted. They notice and move beyond the cynicism and fear that come from being stuck in too small a sense of self and freeze listening and harden the heart. After gaining a sense of capacities, they wait in stillness for insight to come that will show what offers the person greater freedom. They ask more of services, negotiating the flexibility to try and learn from adjustments to a person's supports.

As better support develops, a decision point is reached. Will this be the end of the journey or a better platform from which to ask, *What more is possible?*



A second turn of the spiral moves attention outside the familiar boundaries defined by services and explores local places where the person's capacities are welcome. It asks Self to sense and act in a wider social field that may be unfamiliar, even threatening, and attend in a way that mobilizes shared imagination and action in that wider context. This involves sensing and discovering the local places where there can be a fruitful meeting between what a person can give and what others there want to do. After a period of exploration, it calls for a stillness, letting go of preconceptions about person and neighborhood and being open to insight into new ways that a person can contribute. In the process of trying and learning how to make contribution possible, people will ask more of community in negotiating the roles and accommodations that allow a person to be successful. Offering necessary assistance in this new context demands that services invest more trust in self-direction and make their resources even more flexible.



A third turn of the spiral begins when people decide to ask *What more is possible?* when a person has contributing roles in community life. This calls for another shift of perspective, from looking for satisfying opportunities in community life from the person's perspective to sensing from the perspective of the whole community. This sensing process asks, *What will make this whole community flourish and who is organizing to create it?* Pursuing this question will often disclose groups working for social justice in various forms, groups committed to renewing culture and groups creating myriad forms of art. Being still to hear the call that arises from these groups for the person reveals the opportunities for making alliances. Each moment of asking offers the possibility of development. We ask ourselves to act from our highest purpose. We ask our services to fulfill their stated mission. We ask community settings for the opportunity to make them more interestingly diverse and more alive.