

Getting Ahead Theory of Change



The Getting Ahead Theory of Change is the basis for the entire Getting Ahead process. It recognizes the Investigator as being a problem solver.

This packet is designed to be an in-hand tool for facilitators when presenting the Getting Ahead Theory of Change to investigators in the *Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting'-by-World* workshop. All content is from the Getting Ahead Theory of Change model designed by Ruben Perez, and is based on the Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting'-by-World Facilitator Guide by Phil Devol.

How to use:

The Getting Ahead Theory of Change is one of the few things you will actually “teach” to the investigators. You will do this by drawing the model in front of the group and explaining what each aspect means as you move through the steps. You can either read the content on each page, or use it to prompt your own explanations.

Materials needed:

For Facilitator

- A large blank surface to draw on: white board, piece of poster board, or something similar
- Markers: one of each - red, blue

For Investigators

- A blank piece of paper
- Colored pens or pencils: one of each – red, blue

THEORIES OF CHANGE

Below is a list of some approaches – or models – that agencies use to help clients change. Some models are very sophisticated and based on research. Others are based on good intentions or common sense without much evidence that they work. Most of these models have value, but they also have some shortcomings.

Education model: If we're given accurate information (an education), then we'll change.

Support model: If we're given support that removes barriers to participating (like transportation, childcare, etc.), then we'll change.

Access model: If a program is designed so we can participate, then we should be able to change.

Incentive model: If we're aware of the benefits of change, then we'll be motivated to try new behaviors.

Sanctions model: If it's painful or we feel personally threatened by a problem, then we'll be willing to change.

Skilled self-interest model: If we have the skills to change and the benefits outweigh the costs, then we'll change.

Accountability model: If we're held accountable for our choices and behaviors, then we'll change.

Redemption model: If we believe in _____ and pray, _____ will provide what we need or want.

Reflecting on your *My Life Now* mental model, think about the history behind your model and answer the following questions.

a) How long you have been living the life shown in your *My Life Now* mental model?

Answer: _____ years

b) How is your model unique or special to you?

a) Have you wanted to break loose from the life shown in your mental model?

- If yes, in what ways?
- What is stopping you?

The Getting Ahead Theory of Change . . .

Step 1:

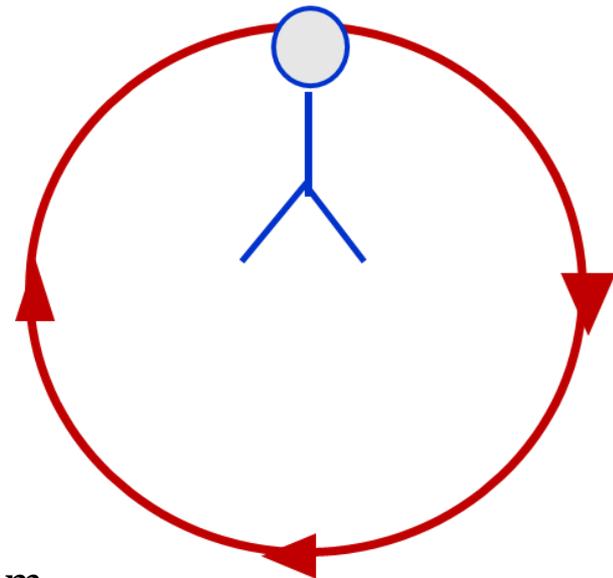
In blue, draw a stick figure with no arms.

In red, draw a circle around the stick figure allowing the top of head to peak above.

This is the *My Life Now* part of the mental model.

Many times it feels like we are living in the *tyranny of the moment*. This is the “our own little world,” full of life’s major demands that keep us focused on what has to be dealt with immediately.

The circle and arrows outline this concrete realm - our every day reality. It shows the boundary of the present moment that’s hard to see past.



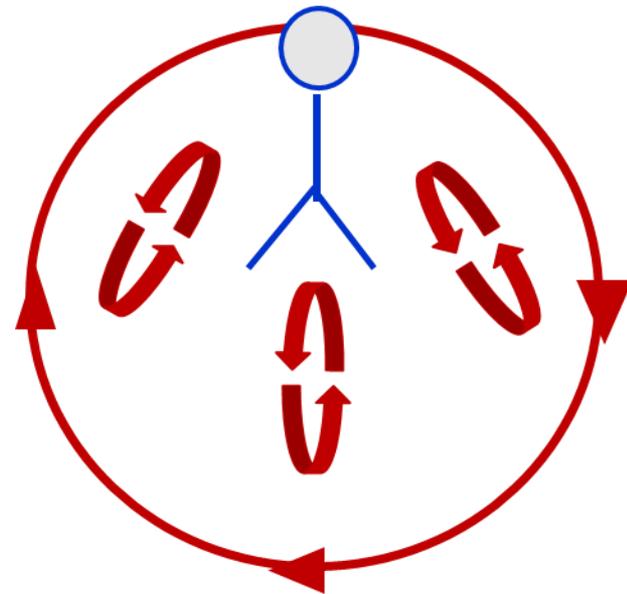
Step 2:

In red, draw three sets of arrows within the circle.

These arrows represent problems in our everyday life that feel never ending.

When life is unstable we tend to focus on the problems that come up again and again like getting groceries, paying bills, fixing the car, finding transportation, finding child care, etc.

For us, these challenges consume all our time and energy. It seems like we'll never be able to get past them, and every day is just a reset of same "impossible" struggle we had the day before.

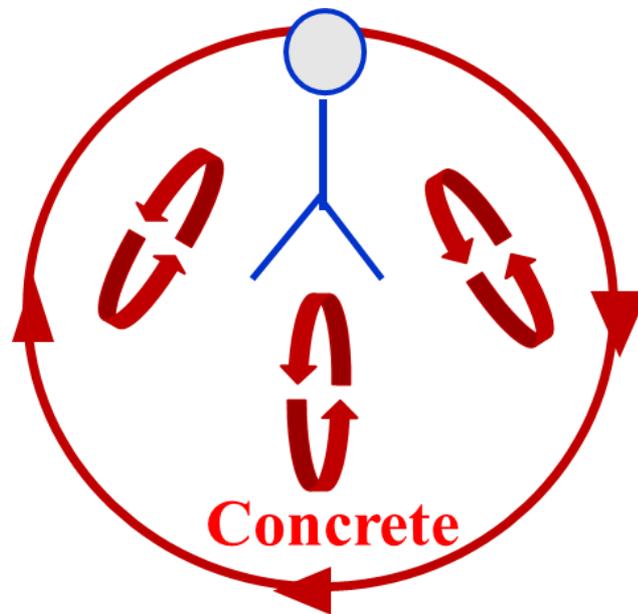


Step 3:

In red, write the word 'Concrete'.

This term refers to the kind of problems or issues we deal with on a regular basis. These problems are real and right now,

Concrete issues normally deal with survival and center around the five senses; for example the things we taste (food), touch (shelter & transportation), see (our immediate surroundings), smell (hygiene), and hear (the talk around us).



These are the problems that are extremely hard or impossible to escape.

For example: You need to eat, there's just no way around it. Or, you can avoid the drama, but it will still try to find you.

Step 4:

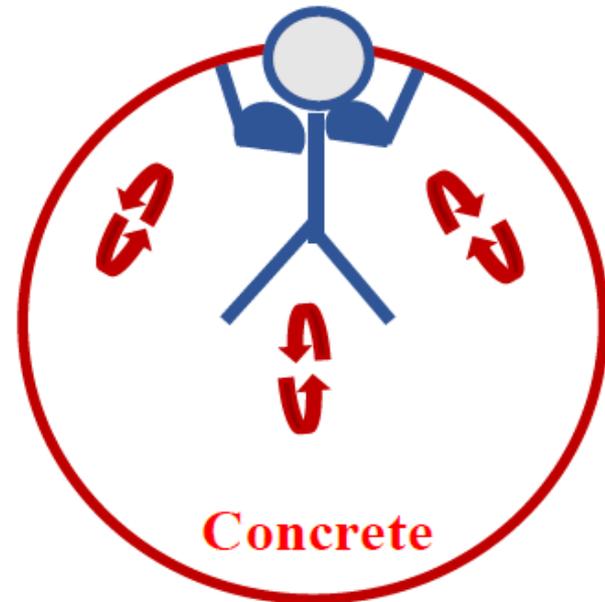
In blue, draw muscular arms on the stick figure.

These muscles represent the strength you have to hold up your world.

You are a problem solver!

Sometimes it's easy to forget how strong you are, and minimize all the problems you have overcome. The big muscles on the stick figure arms symbolize how amazingly strong and capable you are already.

You do what others think is impossible, so don't let anyone convince you (especially yourself) that you're not already a champion.



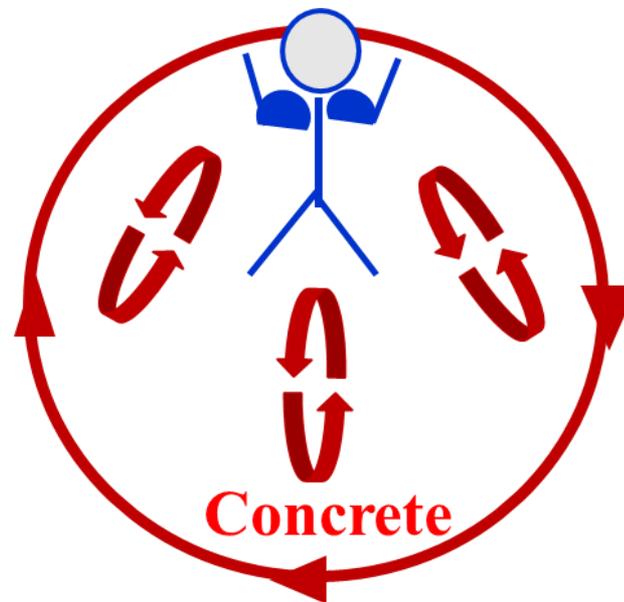
Step 5:

Thicken the line of the red circle and the arrows inside the circle.

The thick red circle with the arrows represents the trap that poverty can become.

When the same problems repeat themselves enough, it is only a matter of time before we accept the situation as normal. When every problem has to be solved right now we call it tyranny of the moment. The 'now' rules.

It's possible for problem solvers to solve the same problems over and over but still be living in a "getting by" world. The Getting Ahead theory of change can be used to break free of the concrete world, and get out of the tyranny of the moment.



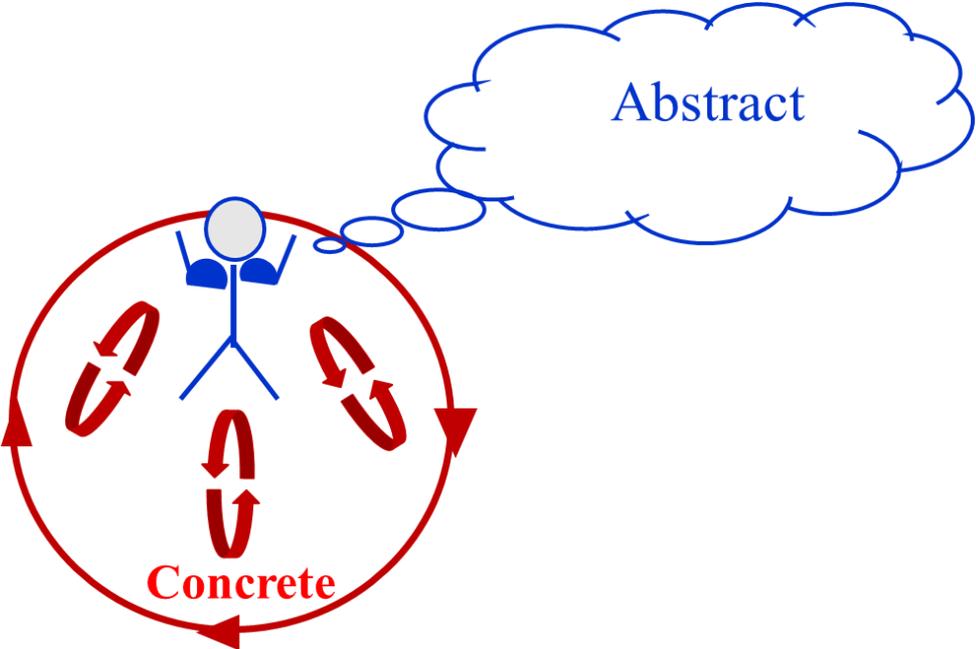
Step 6:

In blue, draw a thought bubble with the word 'Abstract' in it.

The way to break out is by shifting your thinking from the concrete problems of the 'now' to the abstract where you have your dreams, ambitions, and goals.

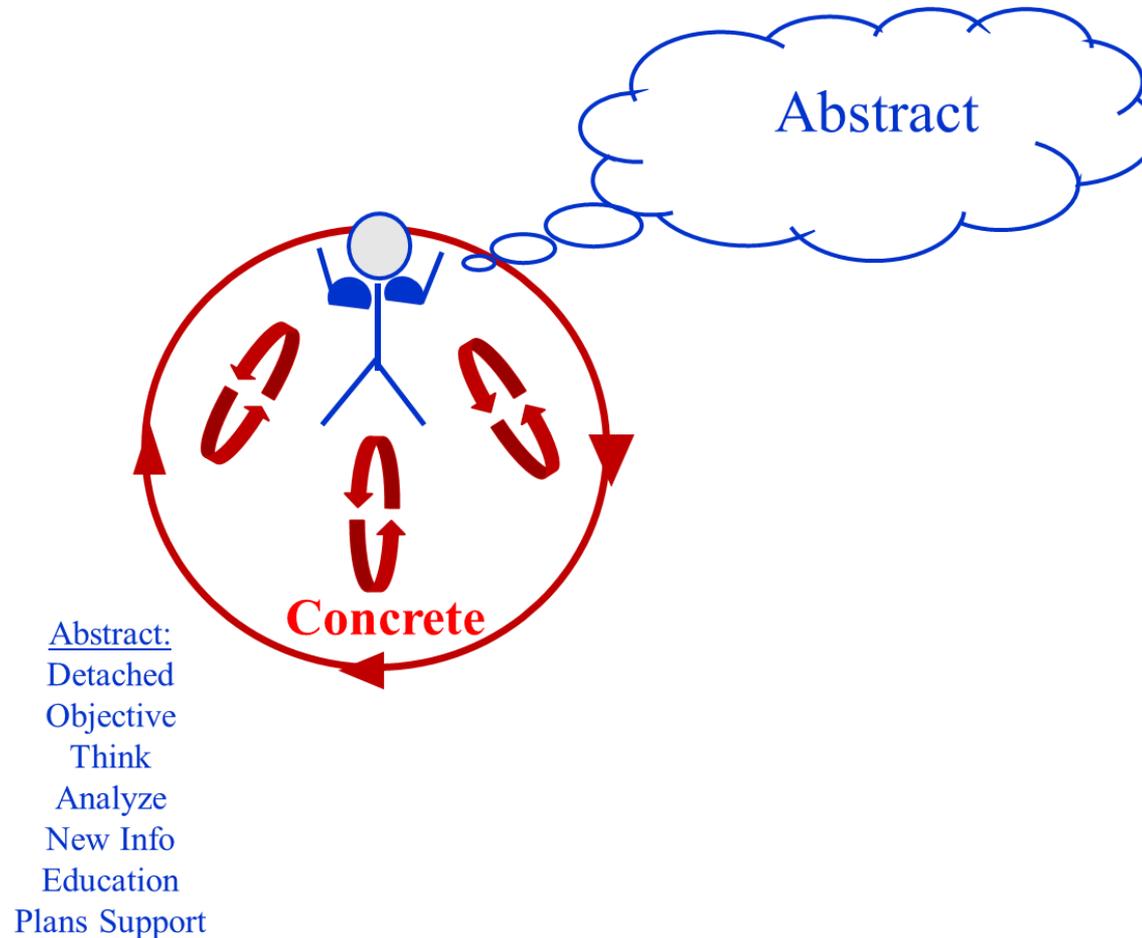
To get to the abstract you need a safe and calm place where you can escape from the chaos. The Getting Ahead workshop can be that safe place for you.

In the workshop, the group rules make it safe. This can allow you to let go of the immediate problems. All our voices can be heard, and everyone has something to offer.



Step 7:

In blue, on the bottom left side of the red circle, list the terms as shown below.



- **Detachment:** Being able to separate yourself from the problem, as in: “Poverty is the problem, I am not the problem.”
- **Objectivity:** Stepping away from the Mental Model of My Life Now and studying the mental model honestly and fairly.
- **Thinking:** This is when you reflect about what you are seeing and learning.
- **Analysis:** This when you can compare and contrast, break the information down into smaller parts, or look at the big picture.
- **New information:** This comes from doing investigations, not settling for the obvious answers.
- **Education:** You choose to learn more about topics that you find interesting or important.
- **Plans:** You shape new information and new ideas into concrete action steps.
- **Support:** Looking ahead, you know that you’ll need a team to help you and encourage you.

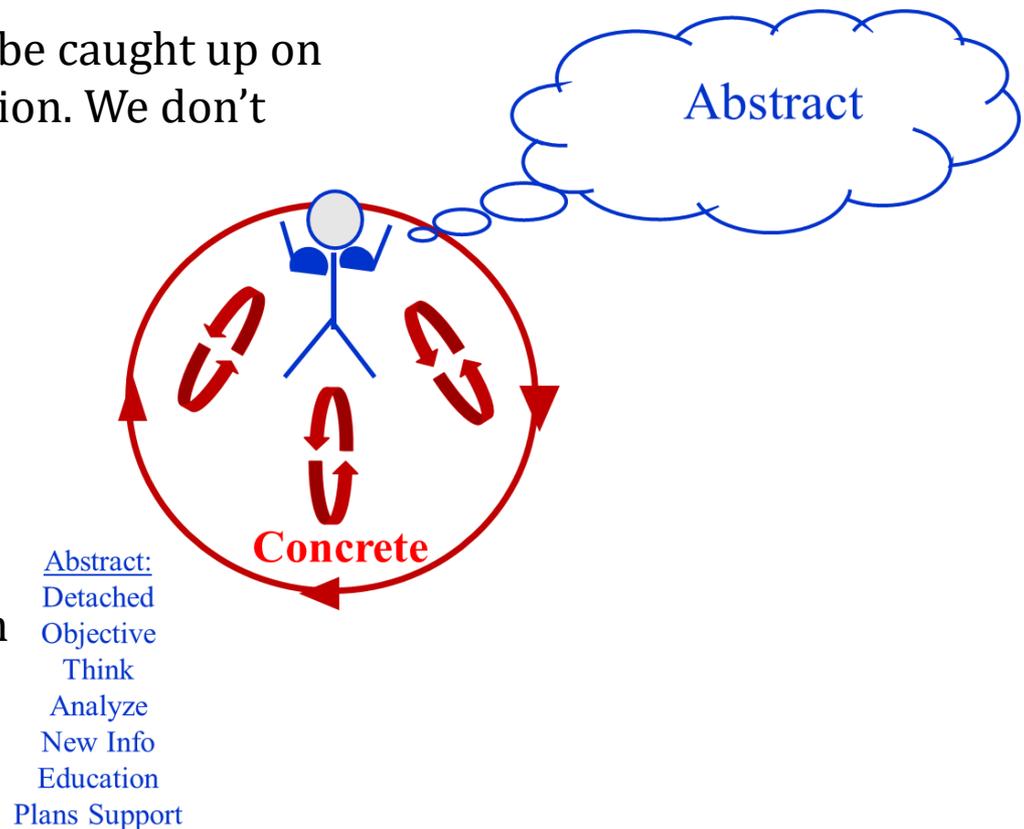
The abstract means that we can **“Detach”** from our problems. We can separate ourselves from our problems. We are more than our problems.

We can become **“Objective”** and not be caught up on all our feelings of fear, anger, frustration. We don’t have to be hijacked by our feelings.

We can **“Think”** calmly about many things and **“Analyze”** our lives and our situations.

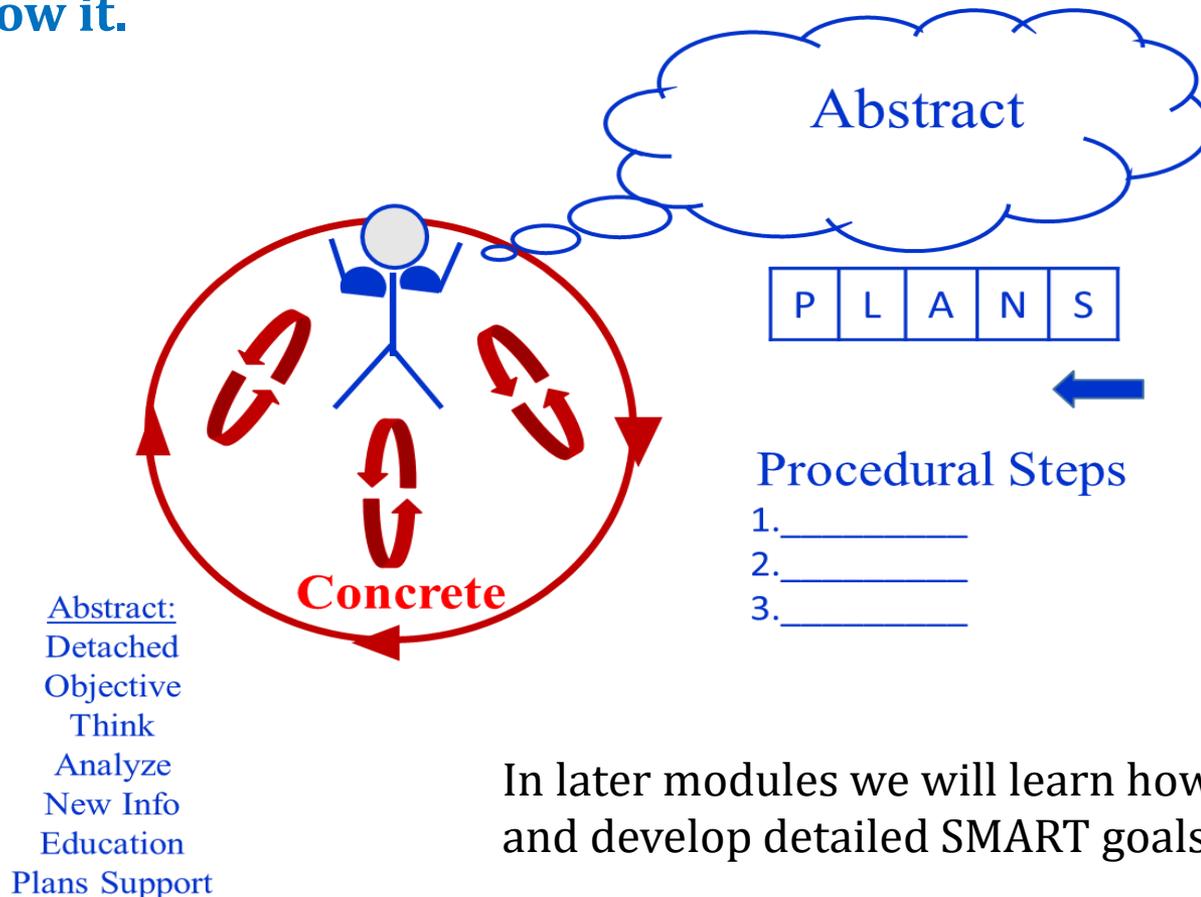
We can investigate **“New information”** and **“Educate”** ourselves by using the information in Getting Ahead.

We can make **“Plans”** and build **“Support”** for our plans.



Step 8:

In blue, below the thought bubble draw the word *PLAN* in boxes, then add an arrow below pointing to the left. Below the arrow, write the words *Procedural Steps* and list numbered blank lines below it.



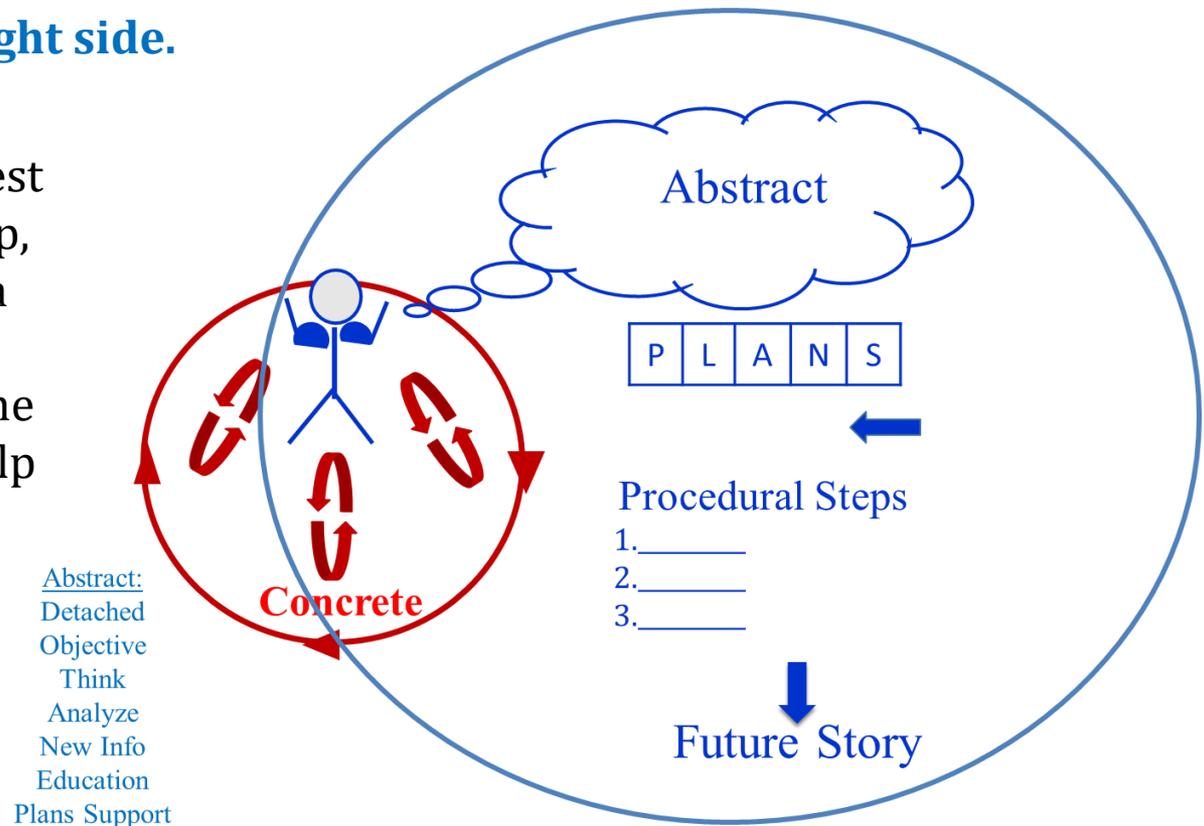
In later modules we will learn how to plan backwards and develop detailed SMART goals.

Step 9:

In blue, below the words *Procedural Steps* draw an arrow pointing downward. Then, below the arrow write the words *Future Story*.

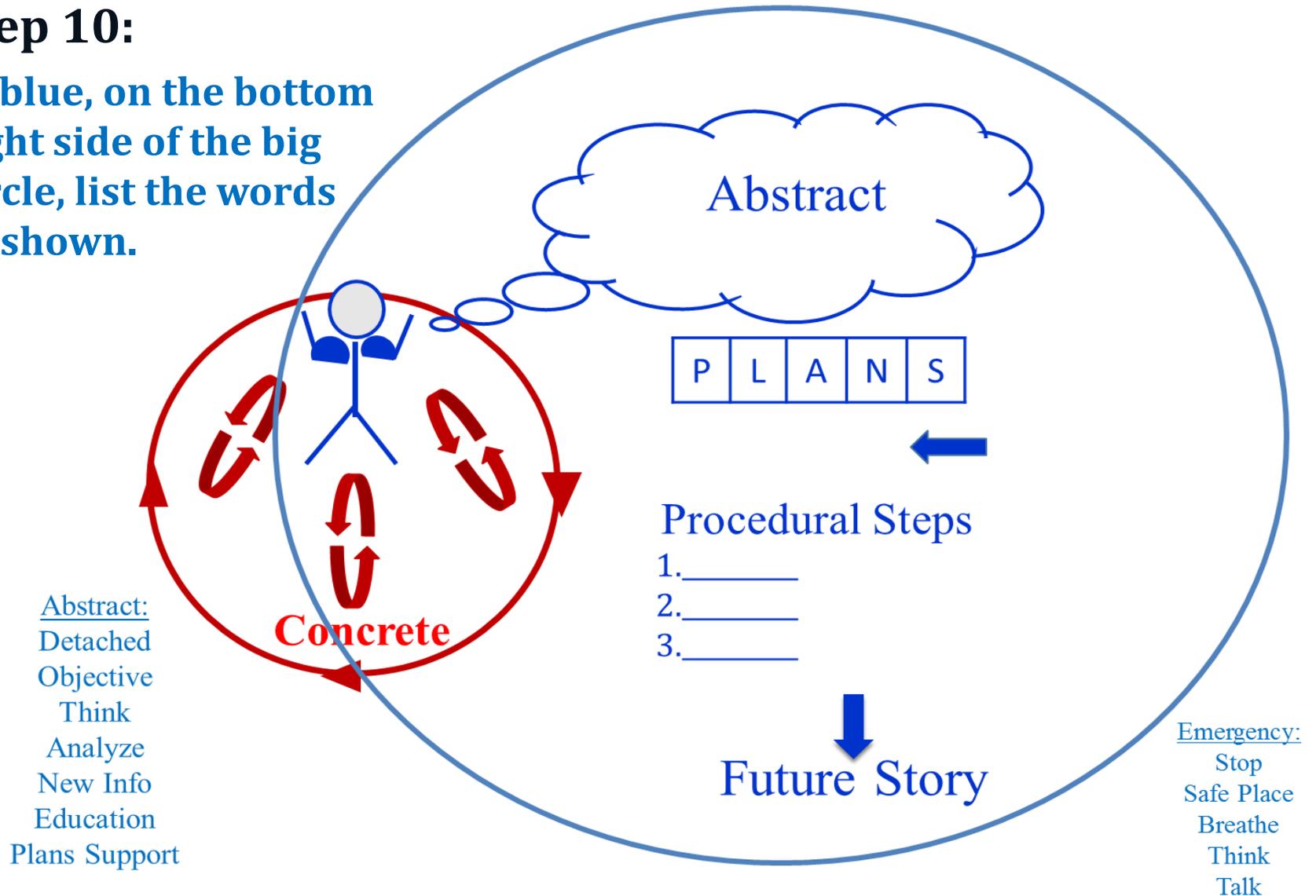
Next, draw a big circle that encompasses the blue stick figure, part of the red circle and everything on the right side.

As we work through the rest of Getting Ahead workshop, you will begin to develop a future story for yourself. The plans you make and the support you create will help you get ahead in a just gettin'-by world.



Step 10:

In blue, on the bottom right side of the big circle, list the words as shown.



Abstract:
 Detached
 Objective
 Think
 Analyze
 New Info
 Education
 Plans Support

Emergency:
 Stop
 Safe Place
 Breathe
 Think
 Talk

What to do in an emergency:

When everything goes wrong at once we often go back to old ways of solving problems. It helps to have a coping strategy to keep our future stories in sight.

1. **Stop:** When you notice in your body that your feelings are getting hijacked stop yourself from continuing down that path.
2. **Safe Place:** Find a safe and calm place like the outdoors, a quiet room, a car to sit in, a friend's house.
3. **Breathe:** Pay attention to your breathing, it's a good way to calm down. You don't have to change the way the breathe just think about each breathe as it goes in and out of your body. Tell yourself that nothing is more important than paying attention to that simple thing. Do that for five minutes.
4. **Think:** When your mind has quieted down think about your future story and your plans.
5. **Talk:** Find someone who knows about Getting Ahead and get the support you need from them to think in the abstract and avoid the tyranny of the moment.

Finished Model

