

Don't Be CREEPY

A sort-of memoir on social skills and neurodiversity

a 2023 talk by Graham M
comprising 65 slides

dontbecreepy.com

High-School Teacher

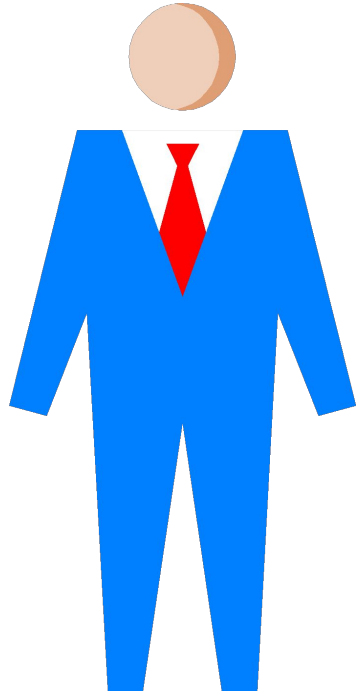


Software Engineer

The Backstory

Tips for Not Being

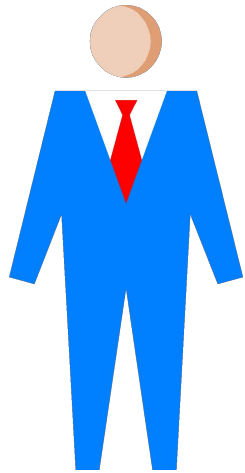
CREEPY



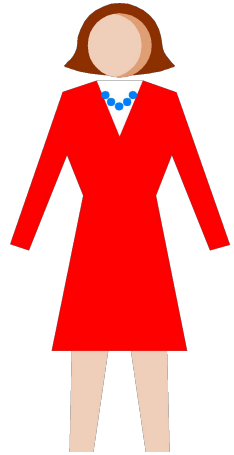
Bob



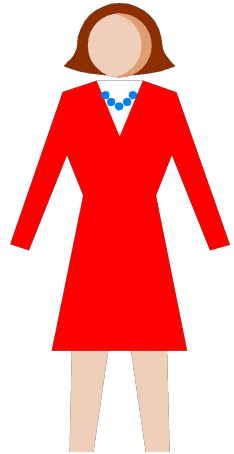
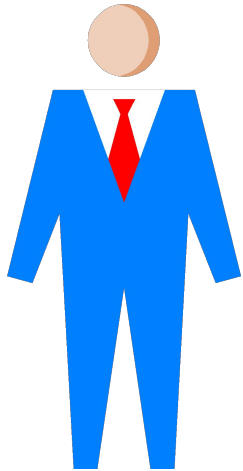
Alice



1. When Bob learns something *about* Alice, but not *from* Alice, then Bob might seem **creepy**.



**2. When Bob wants to
tell Alice something
without *talking* to her,
it probably feels
creepy.**



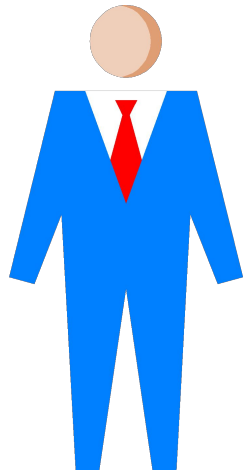
**Relationships grow
by *talking*.**

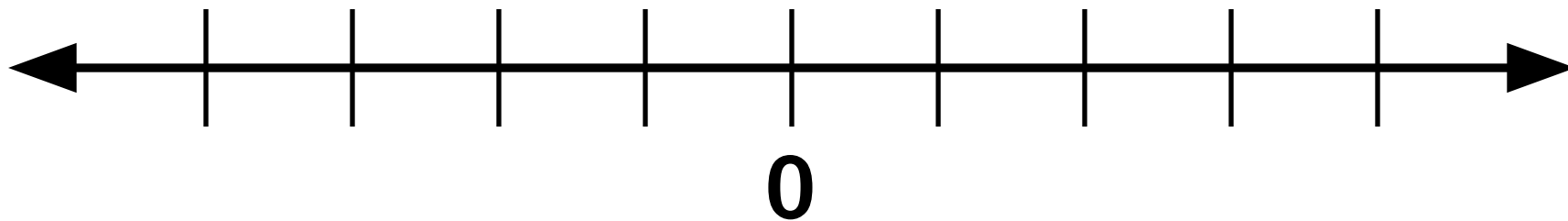
In person, if possible.

3. Even if Bob knows everything *about* Alice, it does not mean that Bob *knows* Alice.

And it usually doesn't make Alice want to know things about Bob.

And it doesn't feel good.

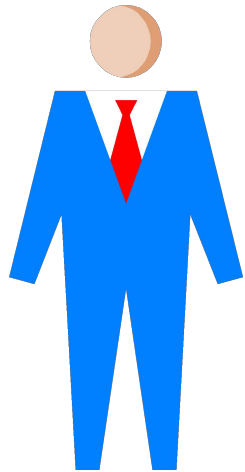




**4. If Alice “likes” Bob,
then she might be
flattered when he says
or does nice things.**



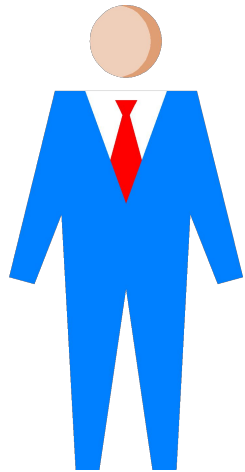
**4. If Alice “likes” Bob,
then she might be
flattered when he says
or does nice things.**



**If not, she will probably
be creeped out even if
he says or does the
same things.**



5. If Alice isn't interested in Bob, then *nothing* Bob can say or do is going to change her mind (probably).



Alice may only change her mind by watching Bob interact with others for a long time.



**If she's not interested,
*leave her alone.***

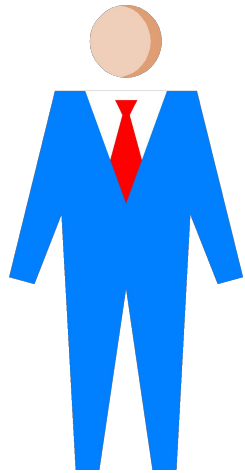
You can't flip that switch.

**Compliments, acts of service,
physical touch, words of
encouragement, gifts: these were
good and now they cause pain.**

**But you still have those instincts,
so you trigger them a lot.**

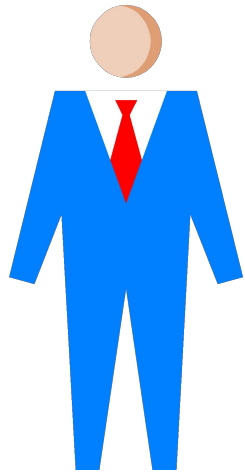
**Processing
Break!**

People might think you're creepy if:



- You follow people around
- You call someone (or email or text or IM) and you haven't asked them first
- You wait for people to show up where you know they're going to be
- You touch people and they rarely touch you back
- You are always the initiator or the one doing the 'seeking behavior'
- You're always trying to buy/do nice things for someone you're not dating
- You leave anonymous notes

You can tell they're probably not interested if:



- They don't look at you when you're talking
- They never seek you out in a group
- They never ask questions when you're talking
- They have closed body language

On Relationships

Stages of typical relationships:

0. unknown
1. strangers
2. acquaintances
3. friends
4. dating
5. boyfriend/girlfriend
6. engaged
7. married

**“Creepy” is when you
want something
from another person
and
you pursue or express it
in a strange way.**

**I can't control if people
think I'm strange, or
even if I *want* something.**

**I can only control
my actions.**

Austin-area SAA:

**“Walks all the way across the
(big) room to talk to me”**

**“Moves into my space when I'm
moving away, sometimes corners
me with chairs right behind me”**

Austin-area SAA:

“Keeps trying to hug me - I feel bad declining; I don't want to hurt his feelings!”

“Texts me (business-related) when he could easily text someone else.”

Graham's Rules:

- **Pay attention to body language.**
- **I don't want anything from you.**
- **I won't trap you.**
- **I'll ask permission.**
- **I compliment things under their control. (Choices, not inherent qualities.)**

On Popularity

Social norms are usually:

- arbitrary
- temporary
- subtle
- non-verbal



(drink me)



**Bob wants to be
“popular”, but
not badly enough
to put in the work.**



**At age 21,
I discovered that people
sometimes tell me things
they don't mean.**



7% words used

38% tone of voice

55% body language



**Only a fraction of
communication is
based on words.**

Most is non-verbal.

“Bella,” my mom said to me — the last of a thousand times — before I got on the plane. “You don’t have to do this.”

My mom looks like me, except with short hair and laugh lines. I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost, but still...

“I *want* to go,” I lied. I'd always been a bad liar, but I'd been saying this lie so frequently lately that it sounded almost convincing now.

from Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*

Juliet: No, no. But all this did I know before.

What says he of our marriage? What of that?

Nurse: Lord, how my head aches! What a head have I!

It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.

My back o' t' other side, - ah, my back, my back!

Beshrew your heart for sending me about

To catch my death with jauncing up and down!

Juliet: In faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.

Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

Nurse: Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous,
and a kind, and a handsome; and, I warrant, a virtuous - Where is
your mother?

Juliet: Where is my mother? Why, she is within.

Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest!

'Your love says, like an honest gentleman,

"Where is your mother?"'

Nurse: O God's Lady dear!

Are you so hot? Marry come up, I trow.

Is this the poultice for my aching bones?

from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Renée: Bella, you don't have to
do this.

Bella: I want to go.

Renée: Tell Charlie I said hi.

Bella: I will.

if Shakespeare had written *Twilight*



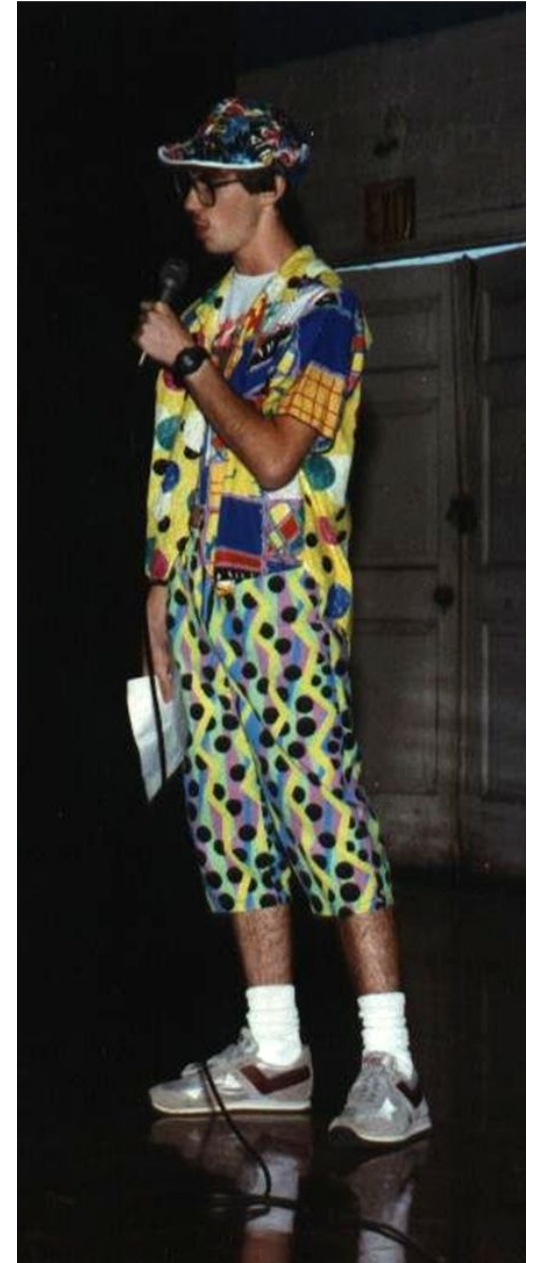
deaf ?





Graham Mitchell

“former” weirdo



Big Idea #1

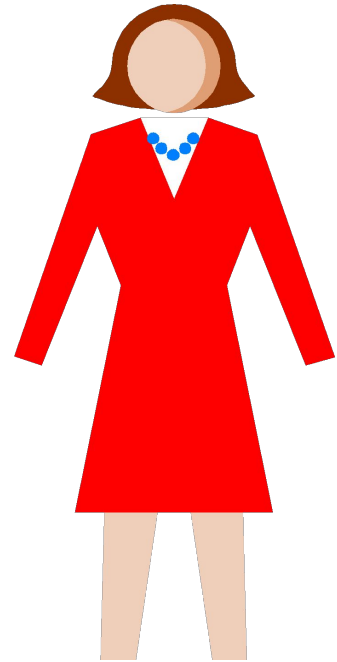
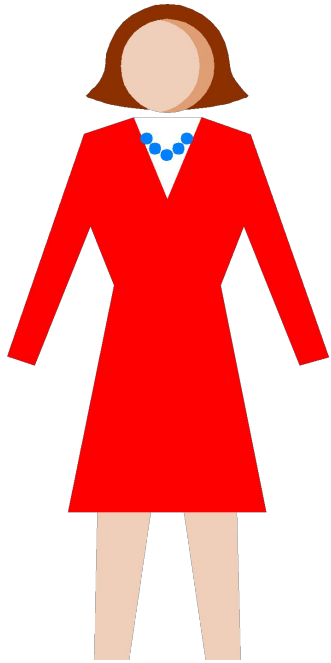
Bob is worse than average at non-verbal communication.

**When you're accustomed
to rejection, kindness
feels like interest.**

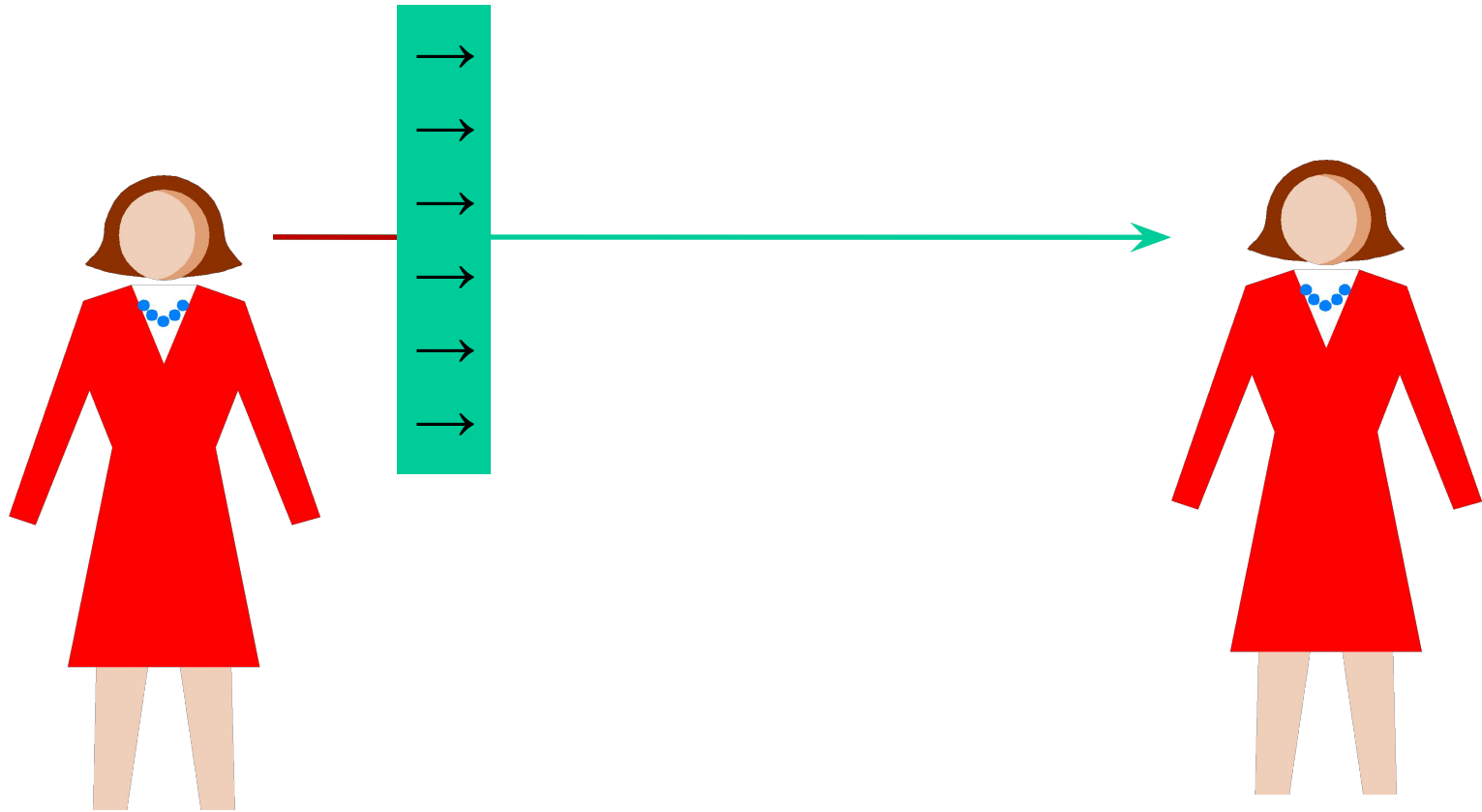
Tact Filters

(idea courtesy of Jeff Bigler)

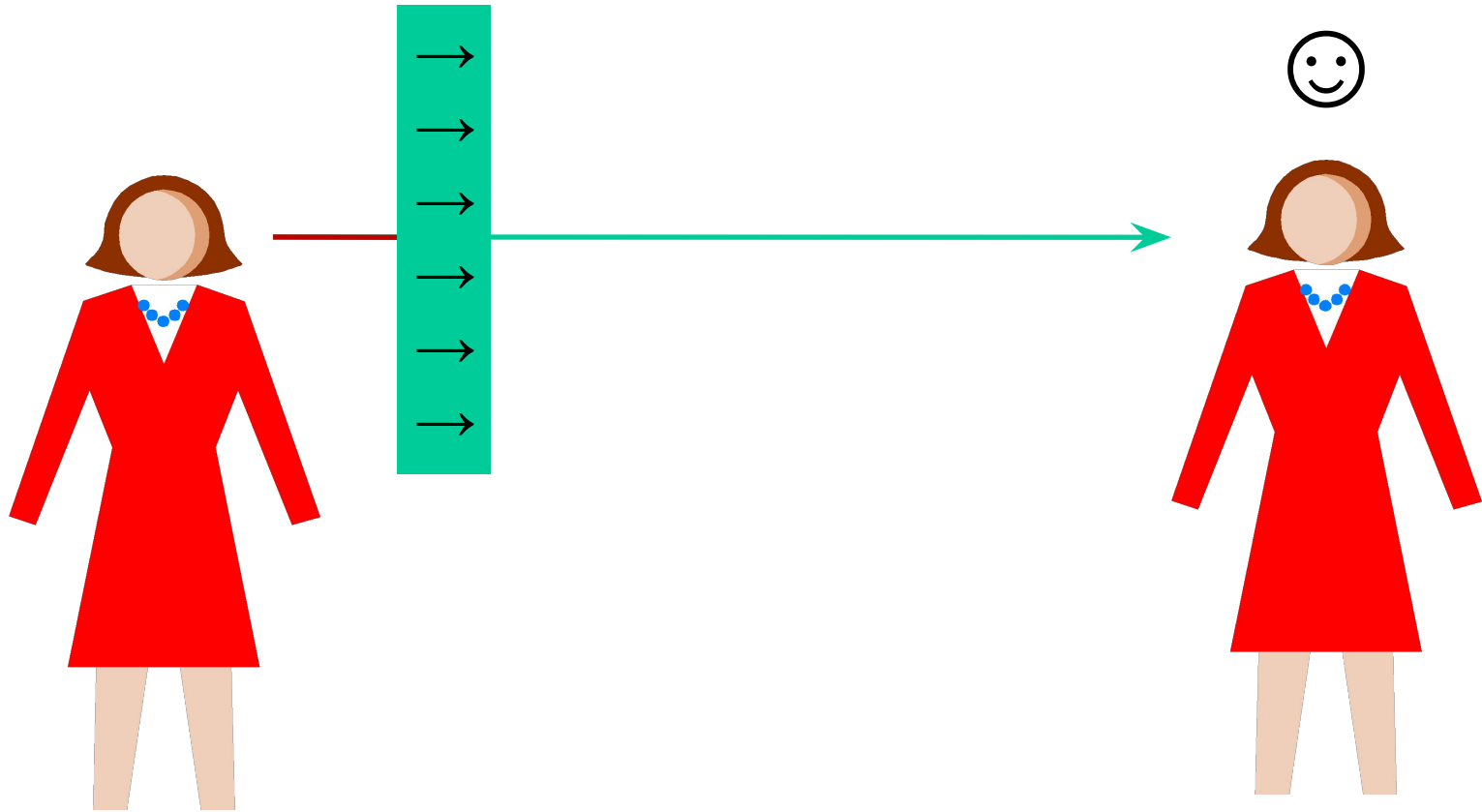
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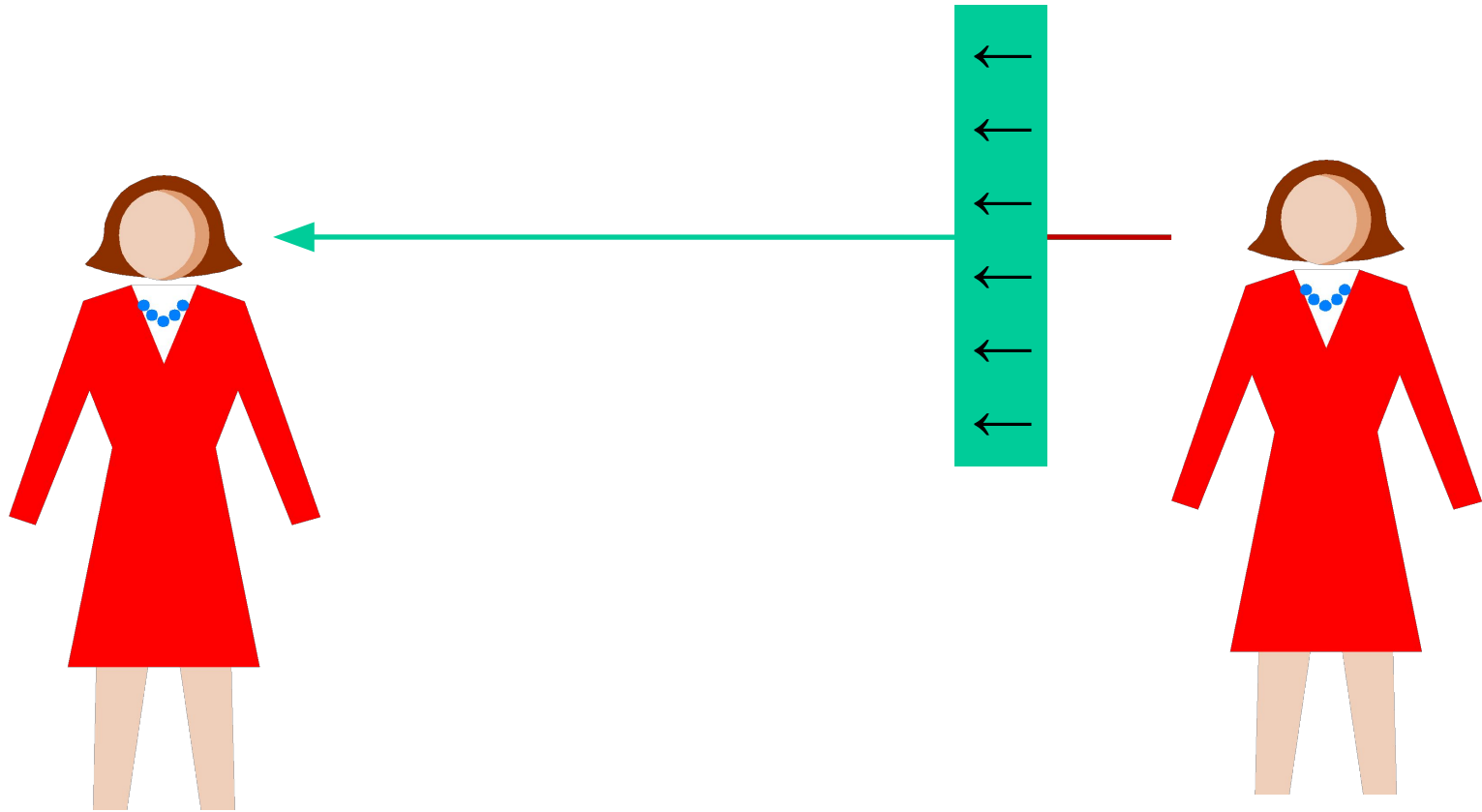
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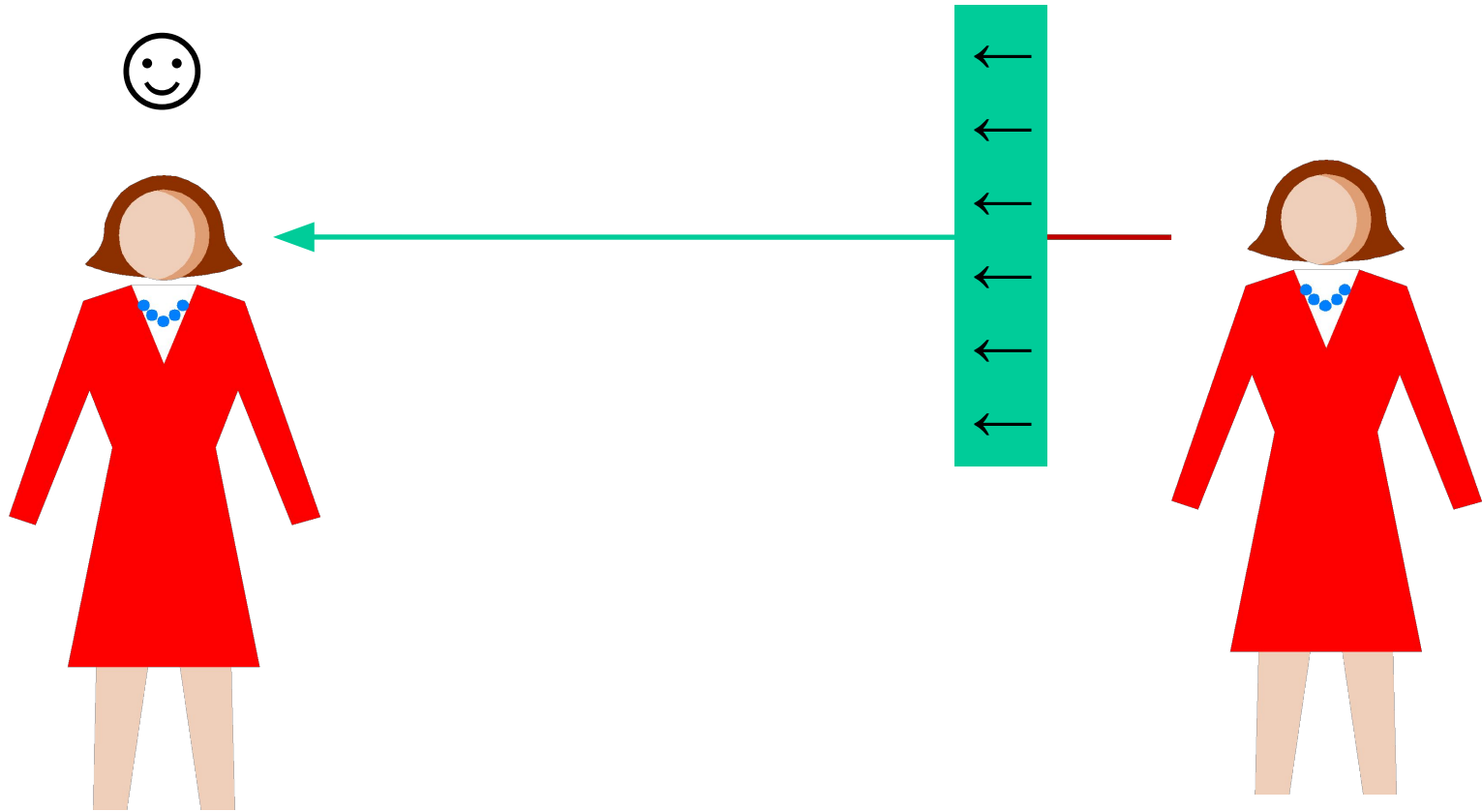
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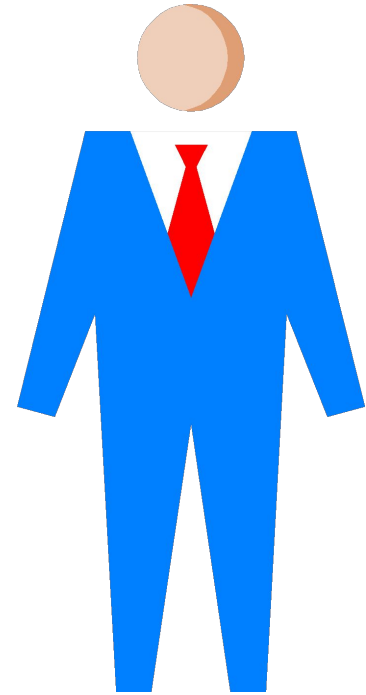
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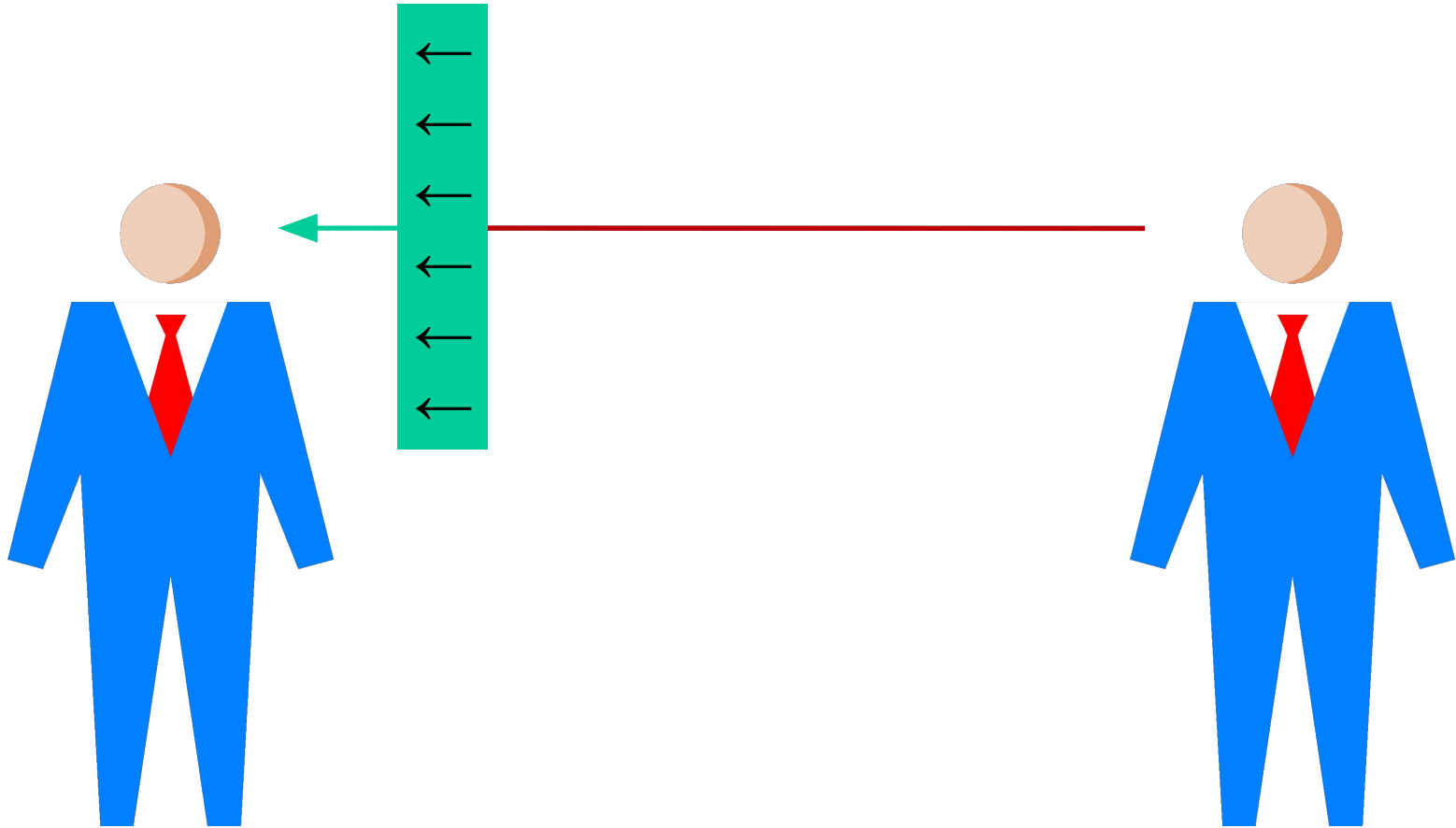
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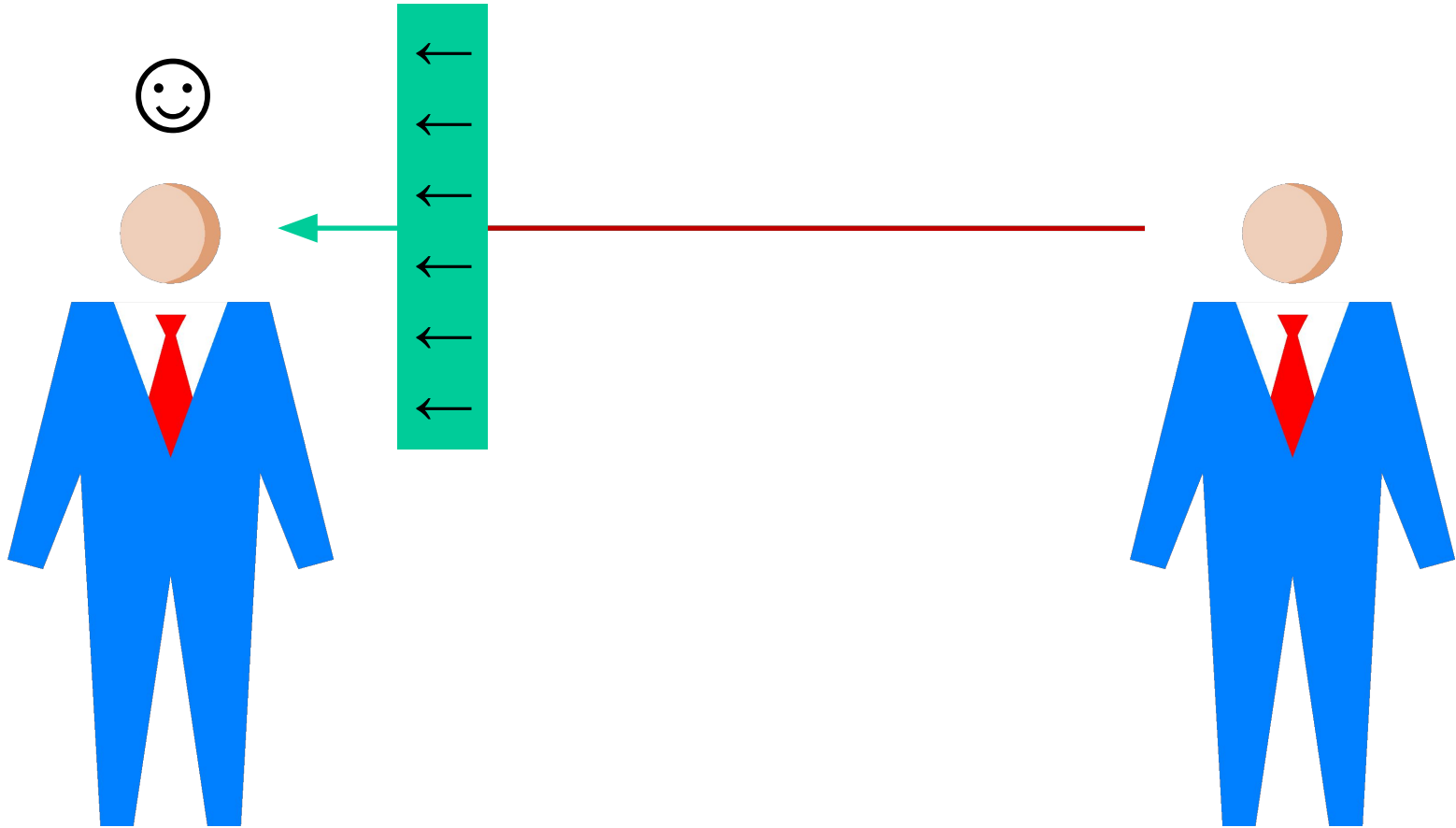
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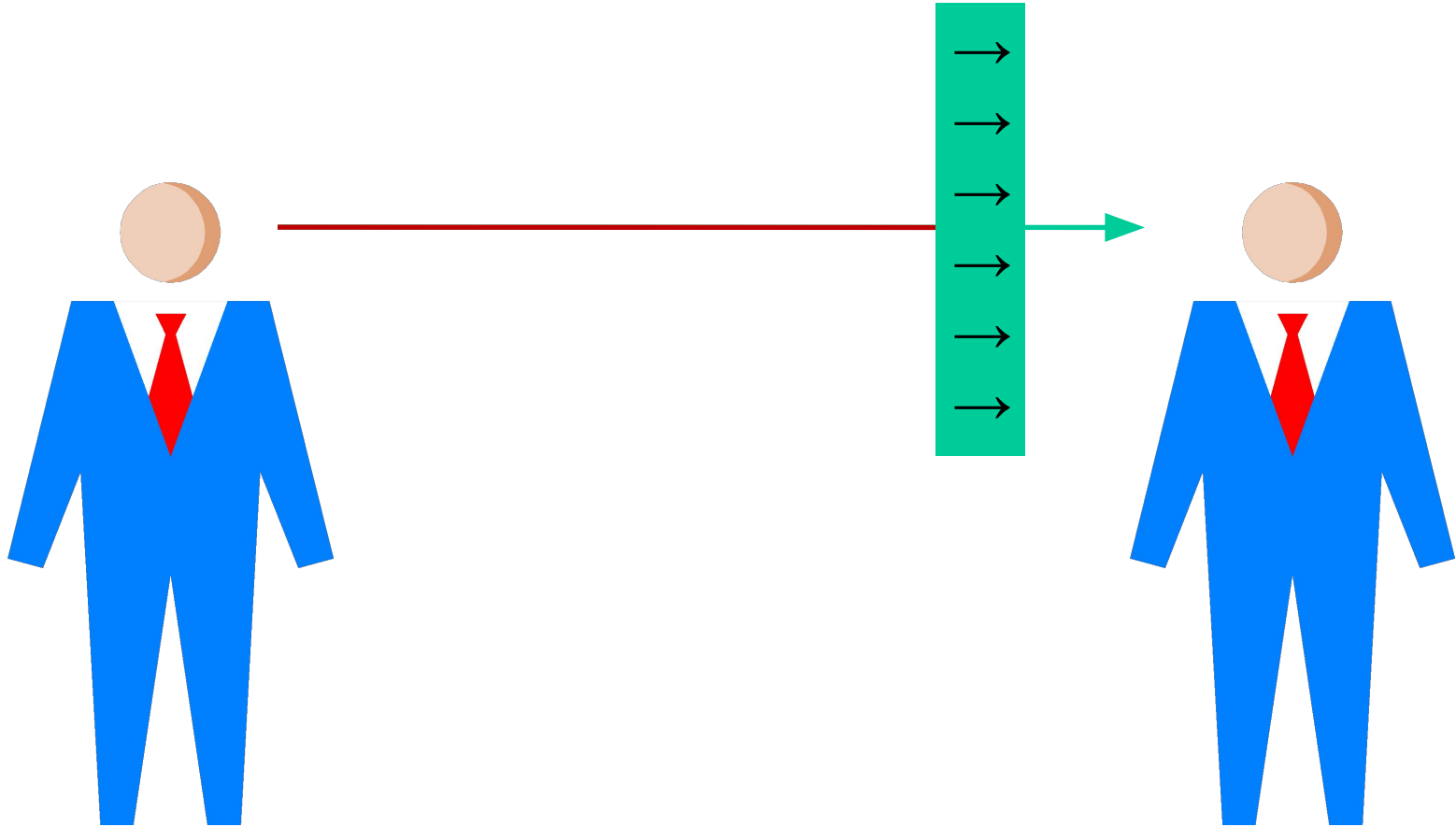
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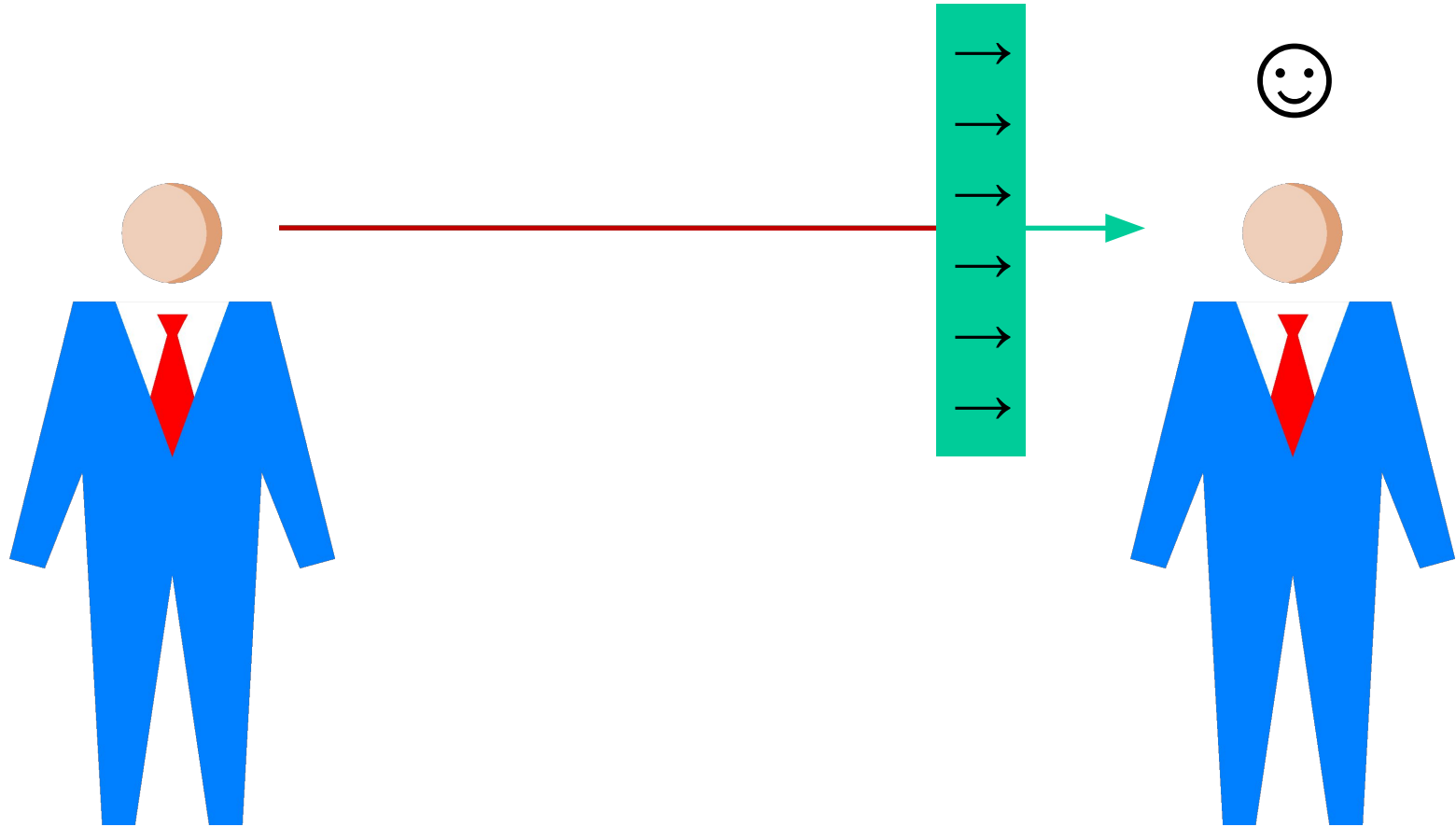
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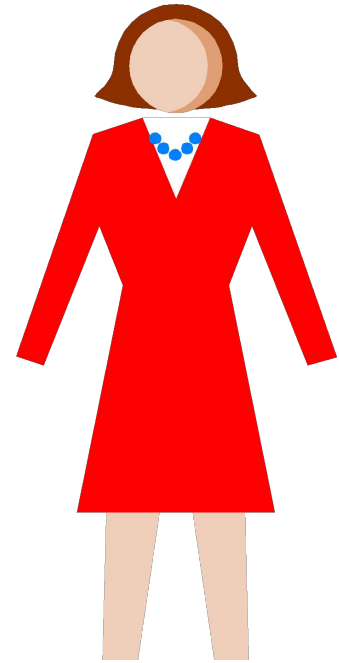
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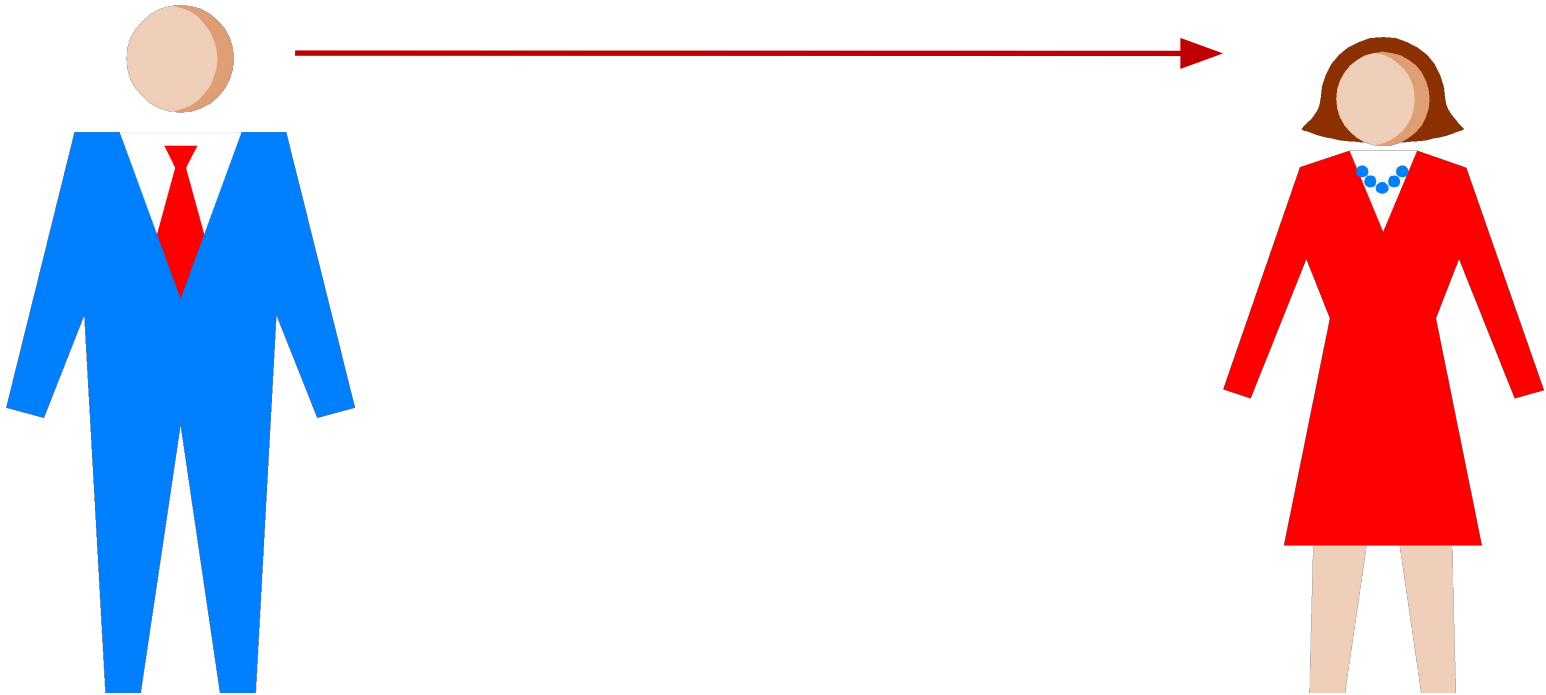
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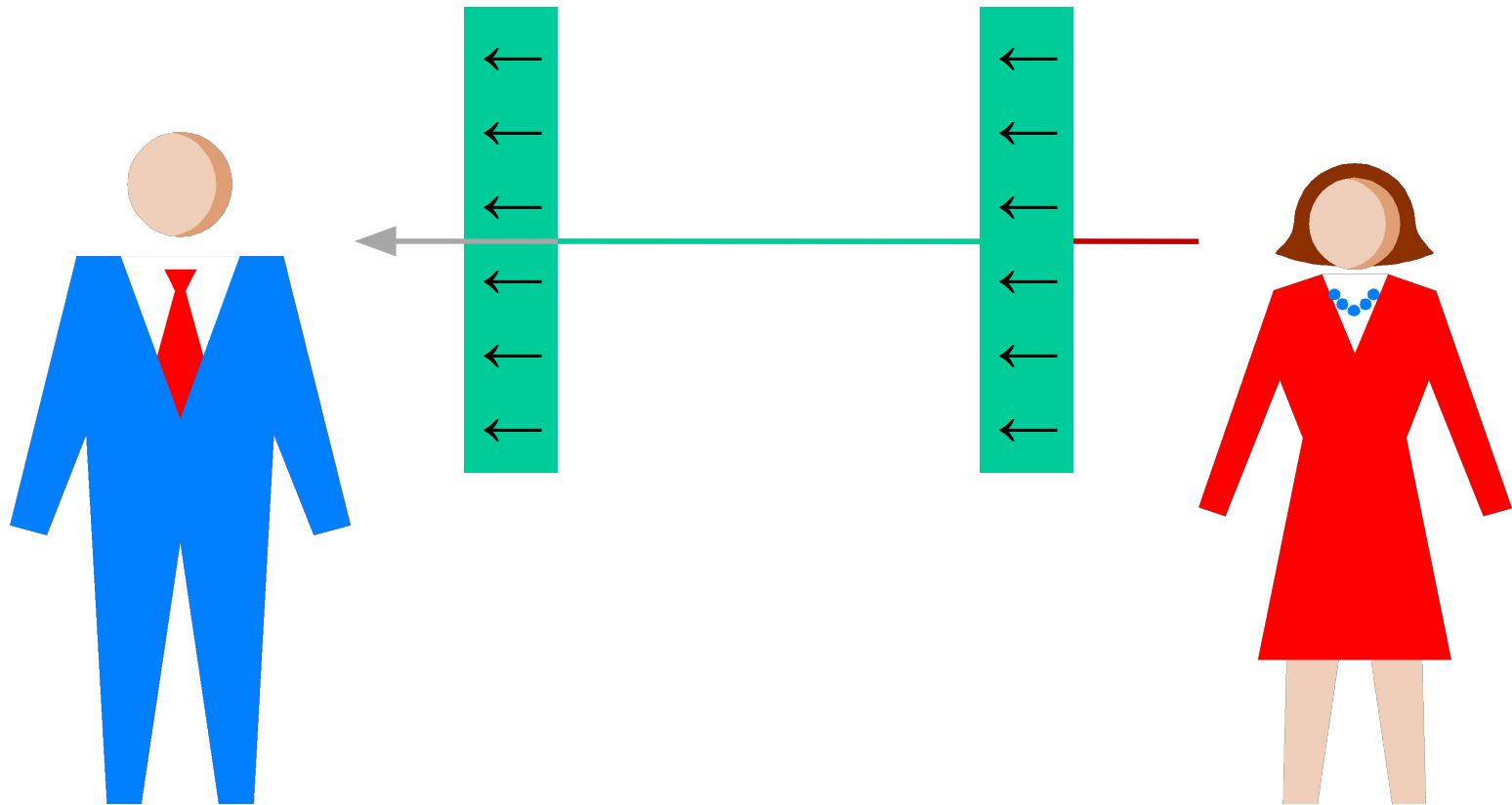
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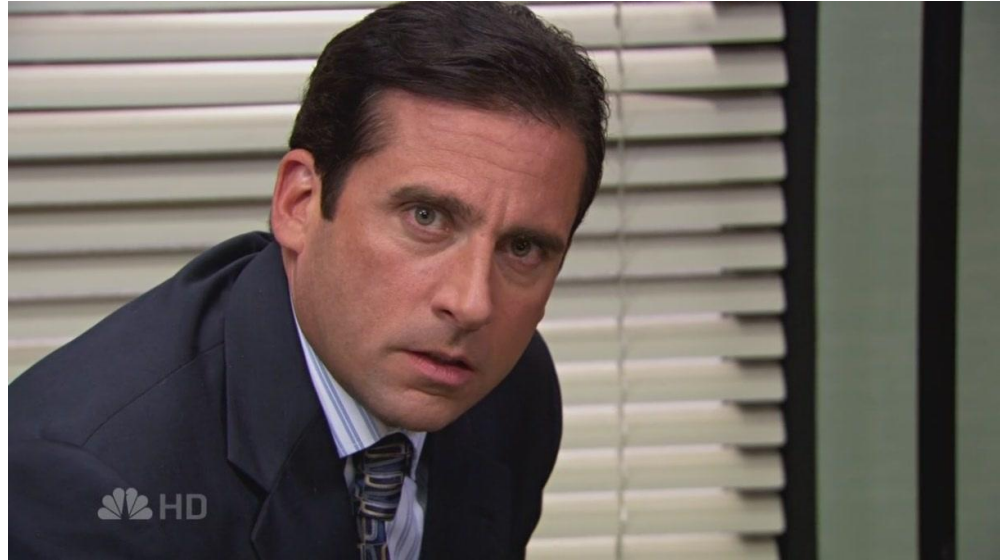


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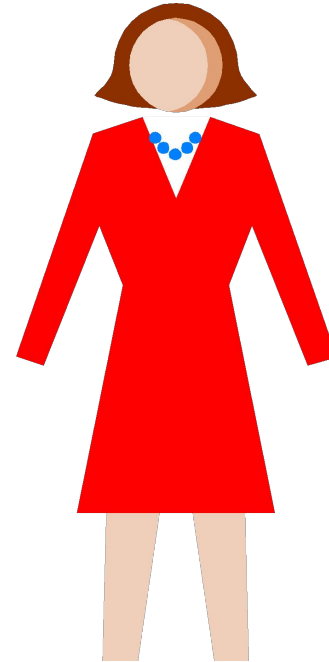


Big Idea #2

**Bob strongly prefers
“what is true”
over
“how you feel”**

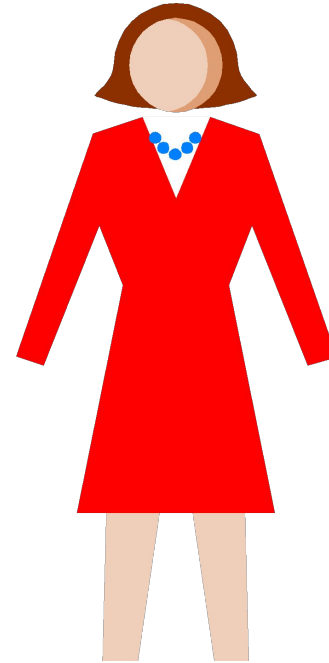


**It's okay to
be direct.**



**It's okay to
be direct.**

**Kind, but
direct.**



**Be a word
ninja.**



Big Idea #3

**Bob reacts negatively
to surprises.**

I'm Still Working On

Being *given* attention

VS

Having to *take* attention

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dontbecreepy.com