

# What is a system?

“An interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something. ... a system must consist of three kinds of things: elements, interconnections and a function or purpose.”

(Donella Meadows)

So a system has:

- parts that affect each other.
- interactions between parts → effects different from the effect of each part on its own.
- a reason for existing.

By studying the structure of a system, we have a potentially powerful tool to find **leverage points** to change how it works.

# Recognizing the limits to our awareness



<https://www.adventisthealthcare.com/living-well/the-blind-men-and-the-elephant/>

System: all the interactive/interacting sets of variables that could be controlled by the participating actors.

Environment: all those variables that, although affecting the system's behaviour, could not be controlled by it.

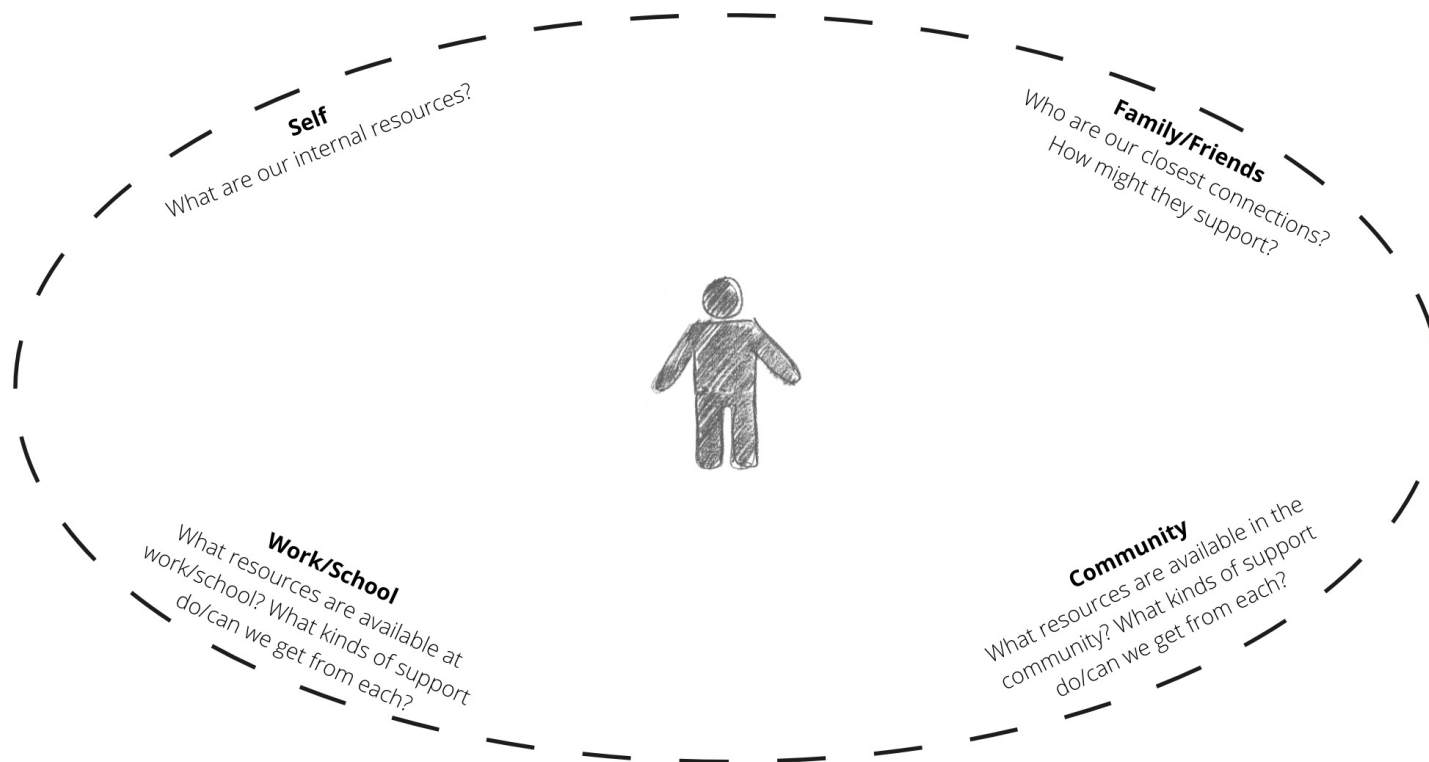
System boundary: an arbitrary subjective construct defined by the interest & level of the ability and/or authority of the participating actors.

(Gharajedagh, 1999, p. 30-31)



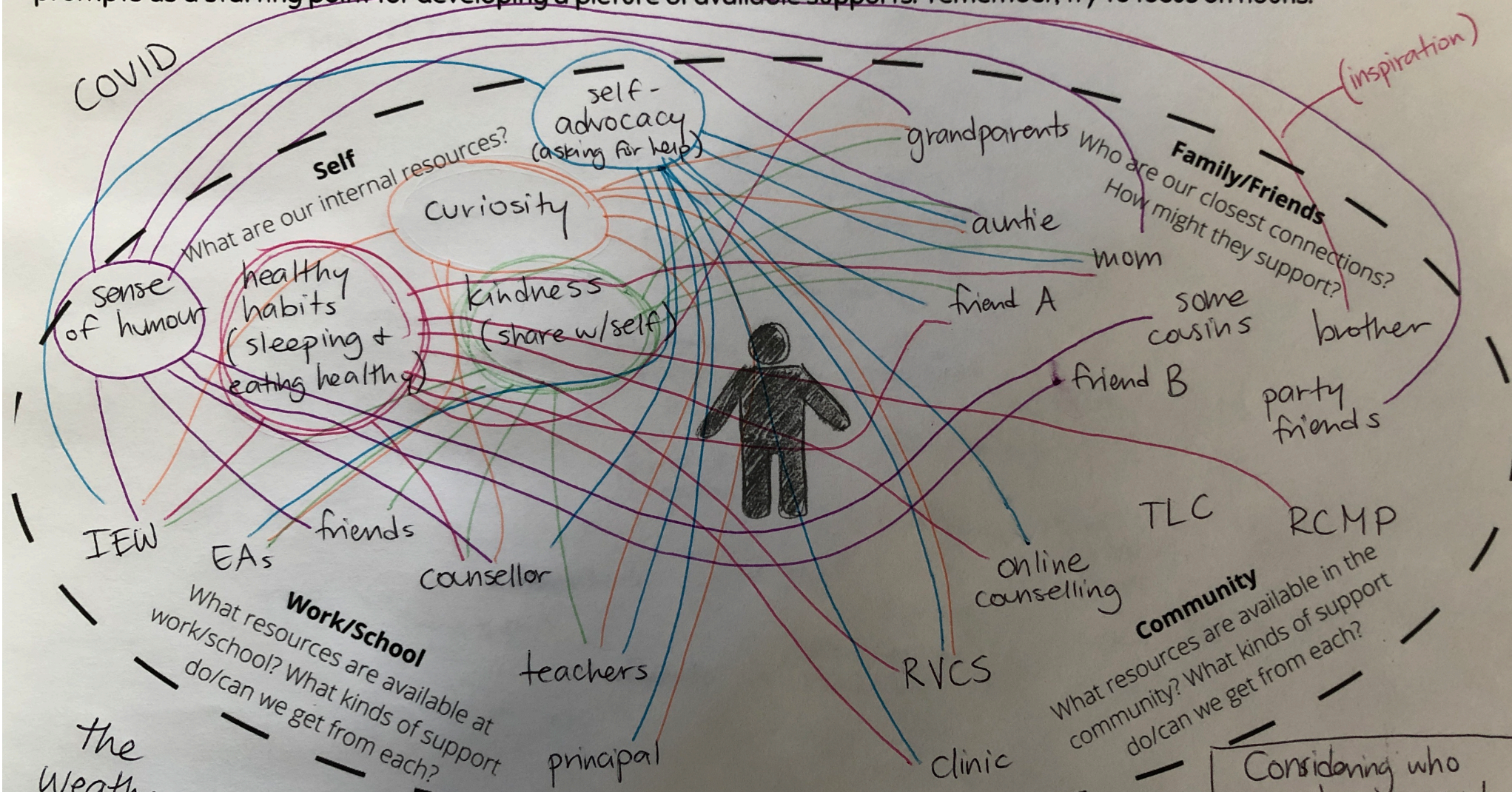
# Developing a systems map to map supports

Using this systems map frame, we can consider the pieces that might make up a system of support. What resources might be available for ourselves, our students, and/or our systems? What connections might we have overlooked? What might be leverage points where we can make small shifts that could have influence on multiple nodes or connections? Use these prompts as a starting point for developing a picture of available supports: remember, try to focus on nouns.

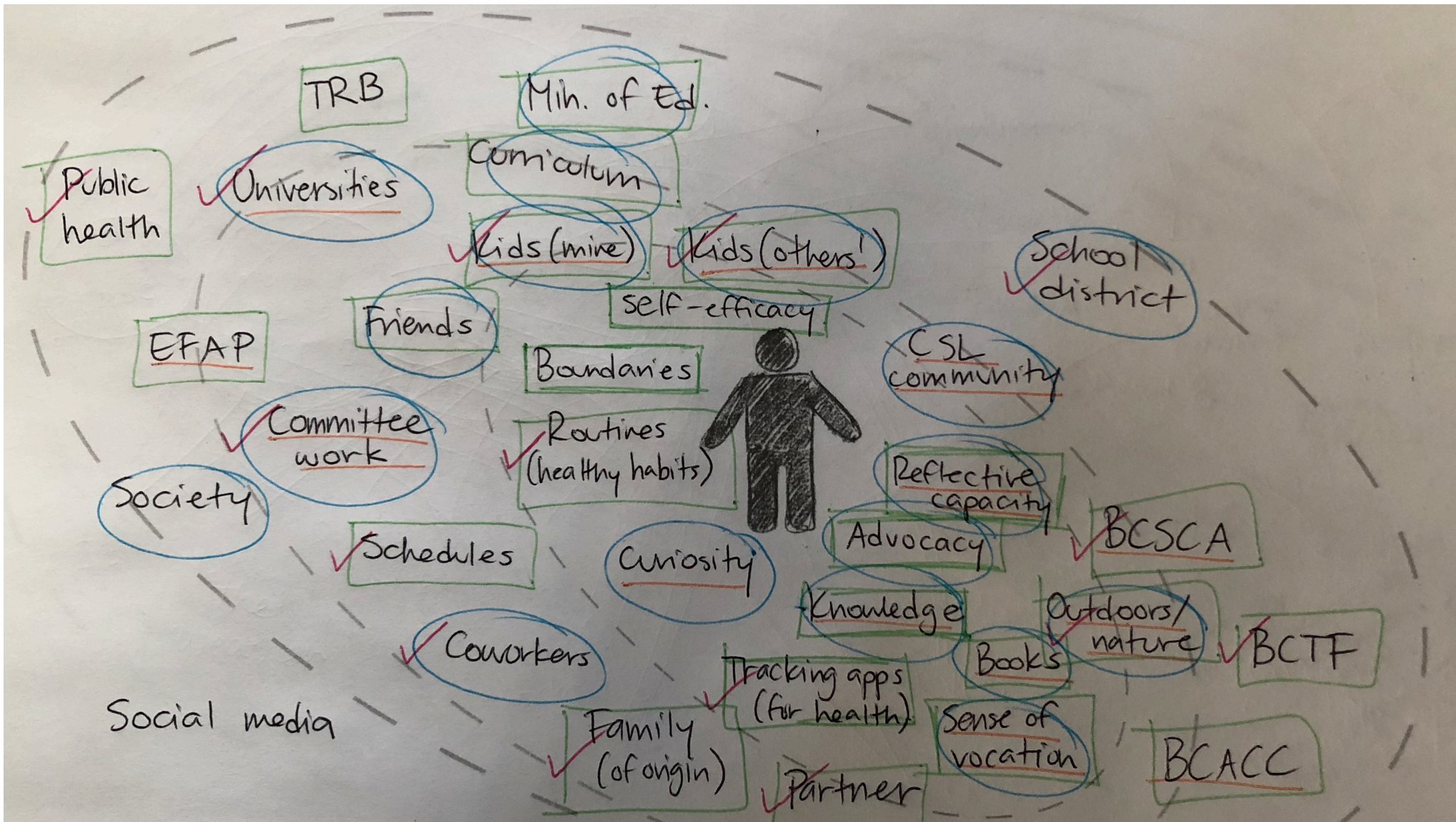




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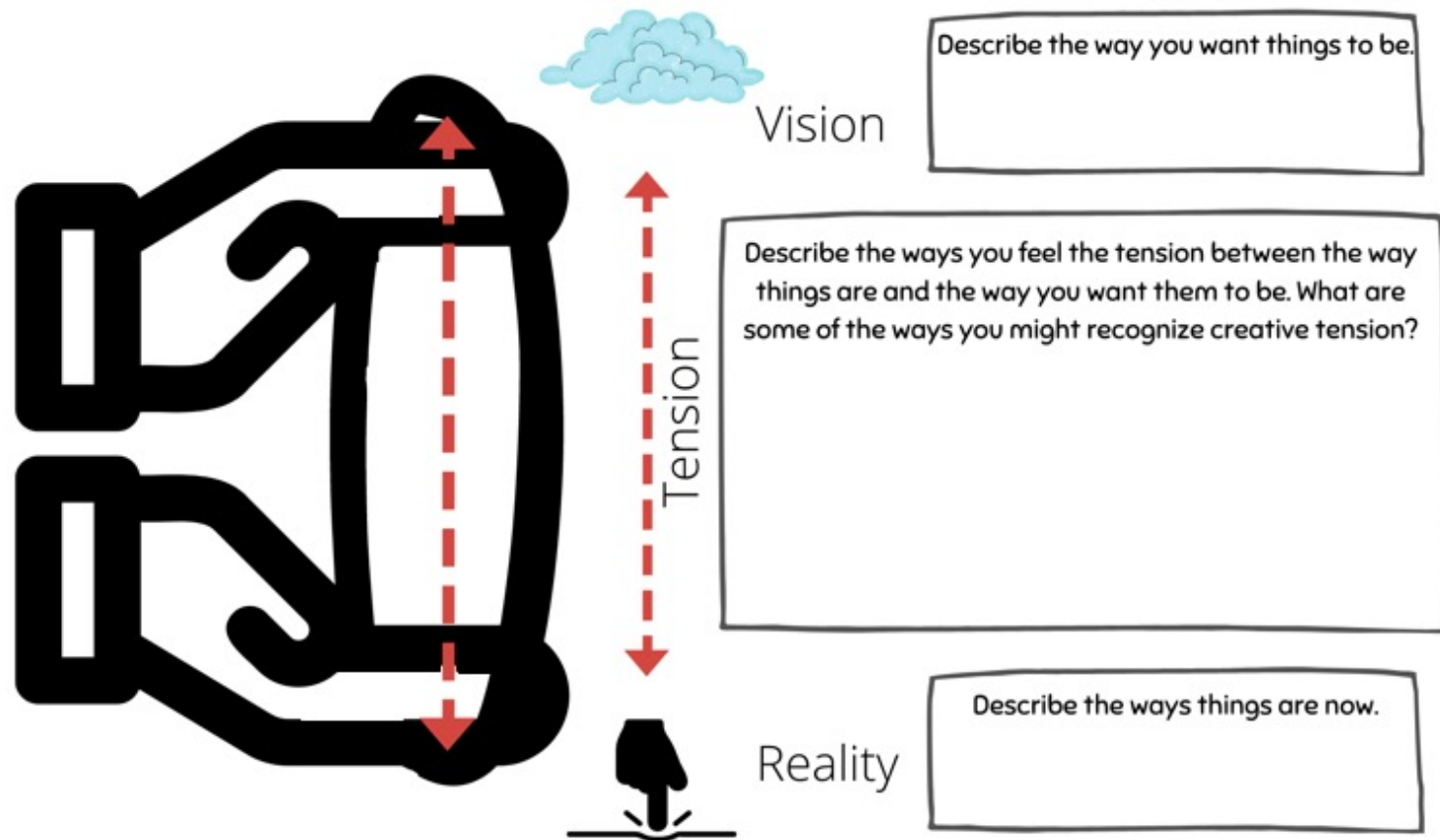






# Creative Tension

Creative tension is a way we can think about the gap between where a group is (current reality) and where it wants to go (vision). When we can recognize when a sense of conflict might indicate creative tension, we can use that tension as a source of energy to spark excitement, conversation, and creativity. We can also use it as a reminder that, in the moment, growth is often experienced as tension.





# How Might YOU Experience Creative Tension?

