

THE NGO ACADEMY'S

*Advocacy
Algorithm*



with Karen Judd Smith

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Advocacy Algorithm



Module V: Lesson 23

Framing

“Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. In politics, frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out policies. To change our frames is to change all this... Re-framing is social change...”

George Lakoff
Don't Think Of An Elephant

“The work of NGOs at the United Nations is to change the conversation.”

FRAMING

Framing is about getting language that fits your world view. (But) it is not just language. The **ideas** are primary—and the language **carries** those ideas, evokes those ideas.

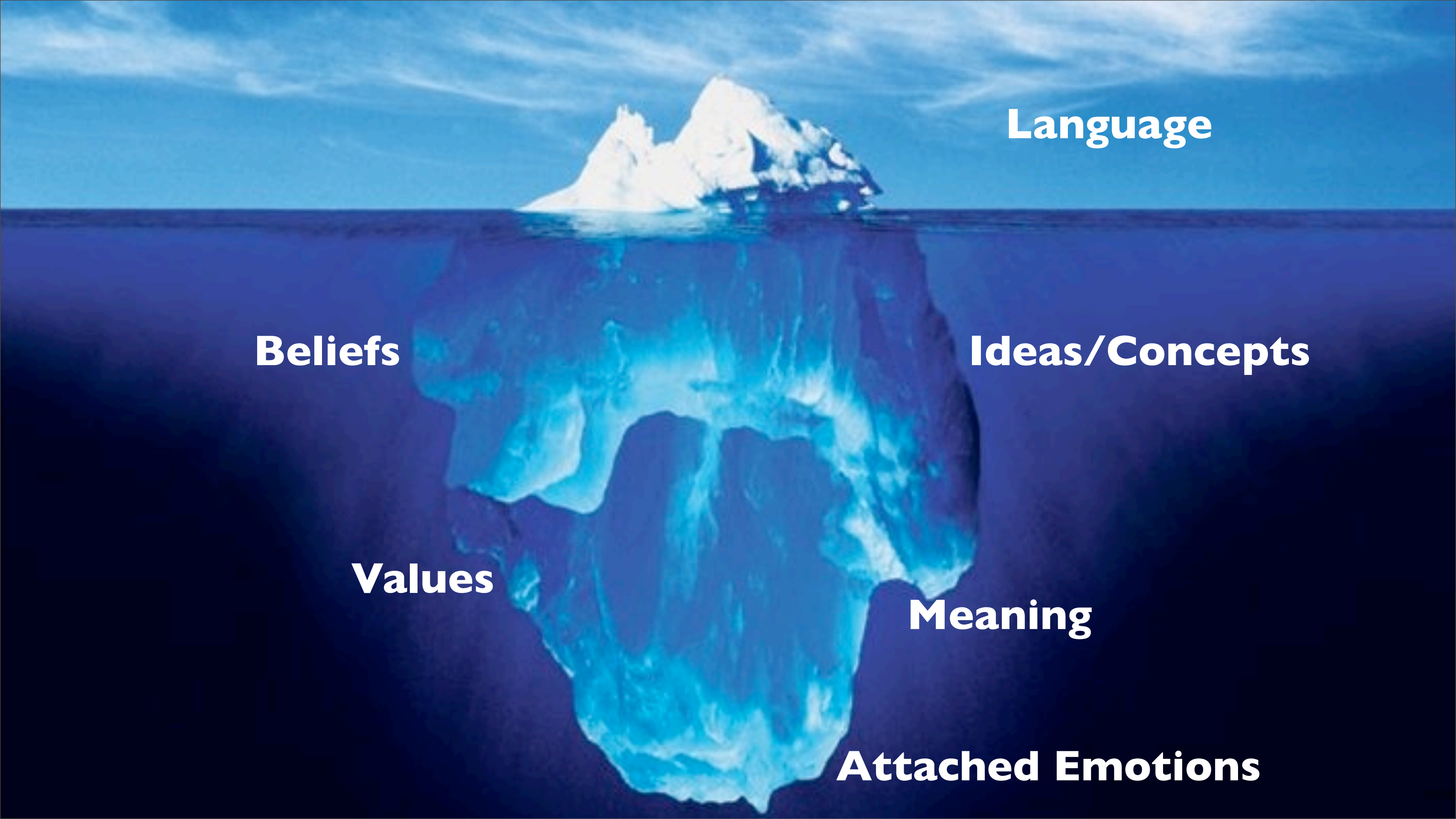
It's a way to **manage meaning** and is crucial craftsmanship for leaders.

“To be effective leaders today, we must understand how to function as managers of meaning... The essential tool of the manager of meaning is the ability to frame.”

**Gail Fairhurst
Robert Starr**
The Art of Framing

FRAMES OF REFERENCE

- A frame of reference, or 'frame' is a complex schema of unquestioned beliefs, values and so on, that we use when inferring meaning.
- If any part of that frame is changed (hence 'reframing'), then the meaning that is inferred may change.



Language

Beliefs

Ideas/Concepts

Values

Meaning

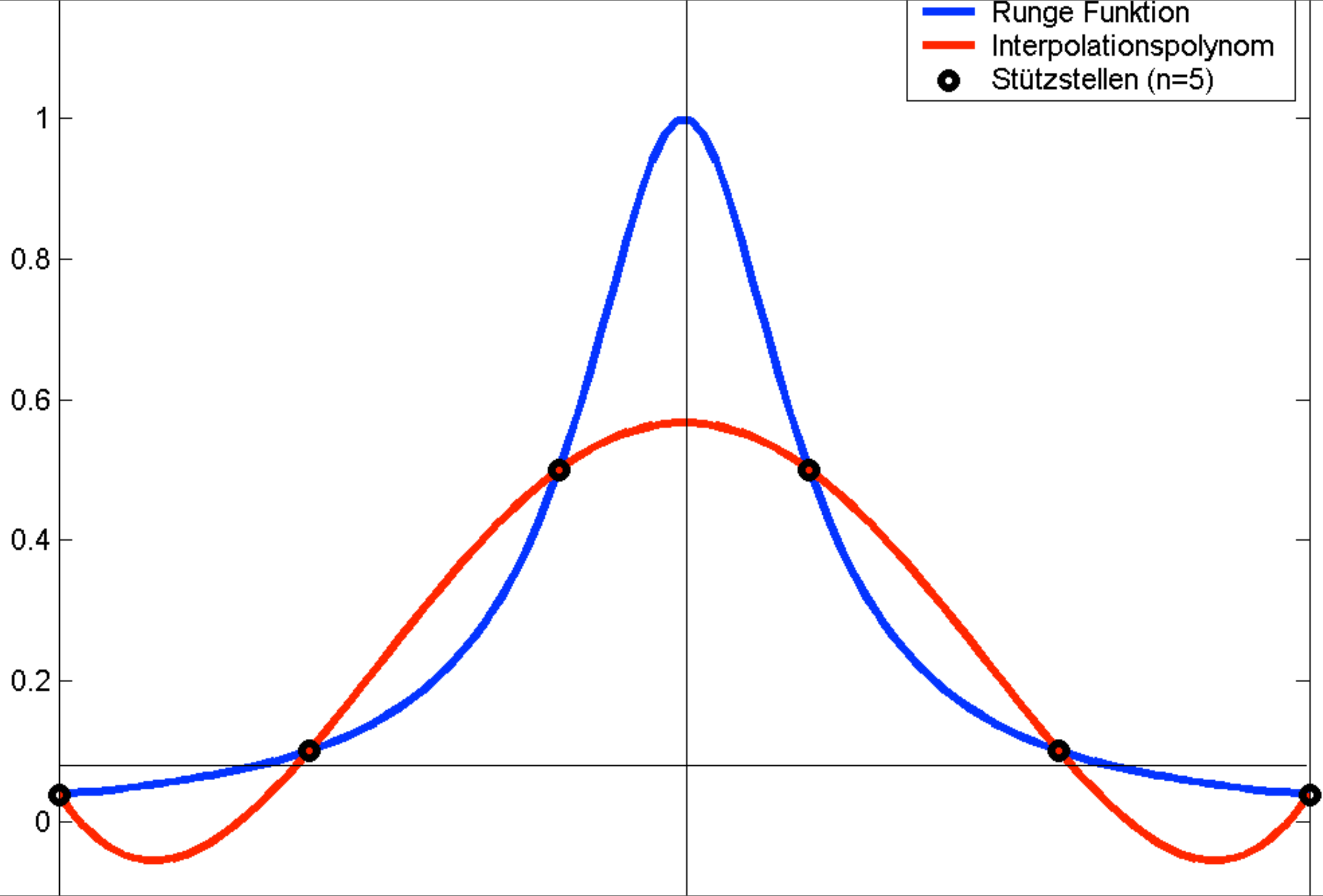
Attached Emotions

FRAMING ACKNOWLEDGES...

- We are not primarily the products of our conscious thinking.
- The conscious mind gives us one way of making sense of our environment.
- The relative importance of emotion over pure reason

REFRAMING

To reframe, then, means to change the **conceptual** and/or **emotional setting** or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which **fits the 'facts'** of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and *thereby changing its entire meaning.*



FRAMES

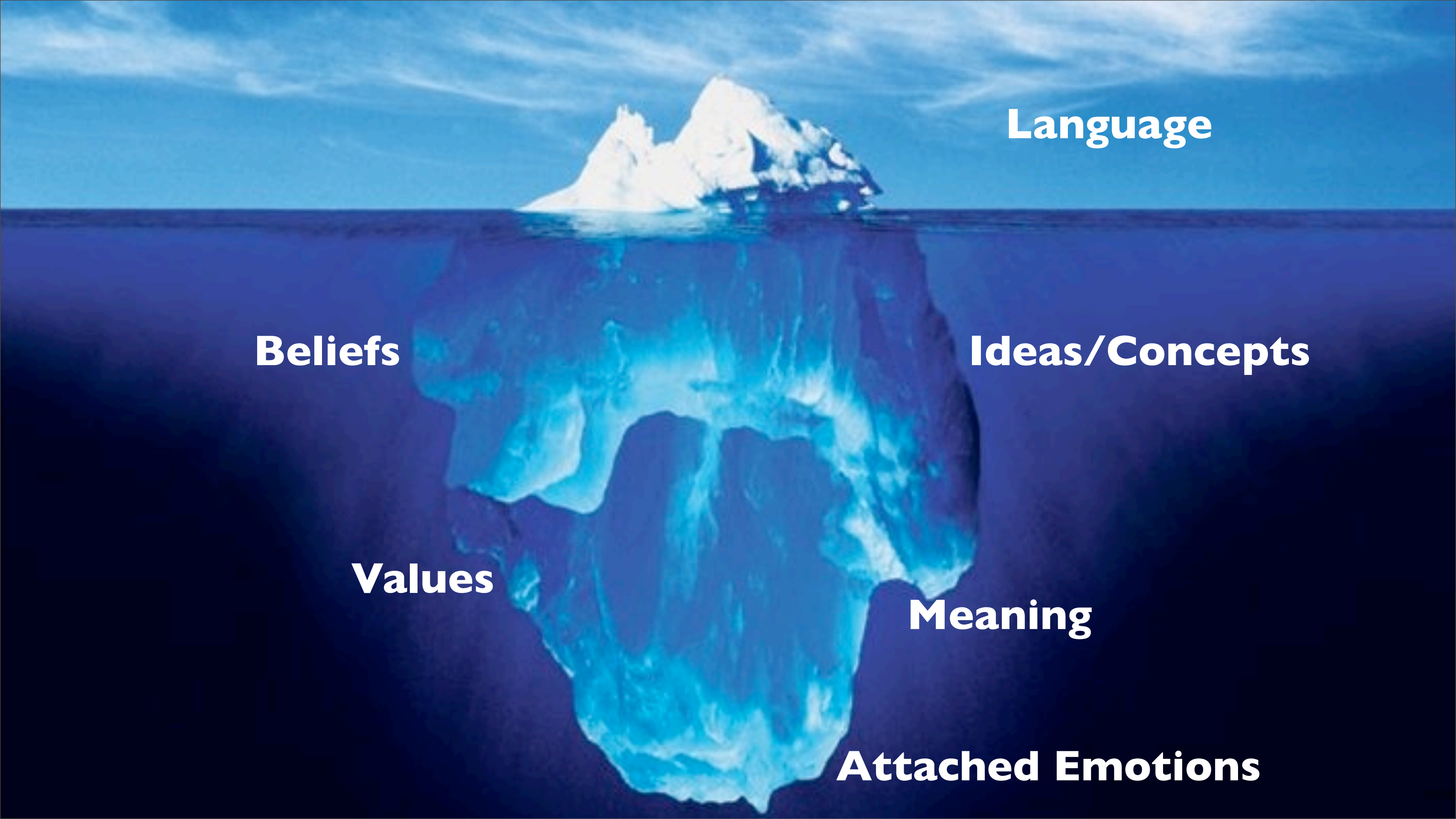
People think in frames. Not in sentences.

It's why we can speak of "underlying beliefs"

Why we emotionally react to certain "facts"

Why certain values thread our thinking and conversations

Why there is "lingo" and "jargon" that groups share



Language

Beliefs

Ideas/Concepts

Values

Meaning

Attached Emotions

FRAMES

Can we change “part” of a frame?

Innovative ideas or approaches to problems reframe intransigents, usually in such a way as to present *new ways to think and respond* to that problem while fitting the “old” facts and core values.

Revolutionary ideas massively change the meaning even of core values.

DONE WELL, FRAMING...

- Defines opportunities and issues in ways that lead to effective action and solutions.
- Enables a group to understand and decide:
 - *what* needs to get done,
 - *how* it is to be done, and
 - *why* it is important to do.

Lakoff offers four basic tenets to framing, which can be very useful to the advocate embarking on framing issues and policies:

- 1. Every word evokes a frame.
- 2. Words defined within a frame evoke the frame.
- 3. Negating a frame evokes the frame.
- 4. Evoking a frame reinforces that frame

FRAMING...

Focuses on a particular aspect of a subject and allows us to change the meaning that is found there.

When we choose to highlight some aspect of our subject over others, we make it more noticeable, more meaningful, more memorable for others.

EXAMPLES



Aviation failure



Rescue, heroes, community, selfless neighbors

FRAMING...

Frames exert their power not only through what they highlight, but also by what they leave out.

Assists in articulating the meaning behind issues and allows us to **invite others to share in the solution**

7 ELEMENTS OF FRAMING

RESEARCH	Know what you are saying. What are the 2 or 3 most compelling facts about the issue?
AUDIENCE	Know to whom you are speaking and the stakeholders. Keep both parties in mind.
PRECISION	Narrow the scope of your statement to the most salient or core point.
SIMPLICITY	Take complex ideas and simplify them. If they can't understand the idea, they won't care about it.

7 ELEMENTS OF FRAMING

URGENCY	Relate the issue to the individuals and determine whether the issue deals with “best”, “worst”, “first”, “last”, “most important” etc.
PERSISTENCE	A frame is not adopted with one hearing. It needs to be repeated to be “proven” and reinforced
ACCURACY	Good messages are factually correct and not hyperbolic

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS...

- What values underlie your advocacy efforts?
- Does your current framing clearly focus on those values?
- On what in the landscape can you focus to highlight those values? What would distract from this focus?

- What is the larger landscape surrounding your advocacy?
- Where are you choosing to focus?
- Can you narrow the focus to better define your goals?
- What is the core idea that is imperative to communicate?

- Does your current framing include all the people who can enact your preferred solution?
- Have you chosen a frame in which your audience is comfortable?
- What images best illustrate the values supporting your advocacy?

- What images might detract from your choice of framing?
- What frames might you be evoking, and reinforcing?
- Are you inadvertently reinforcing a destructive frame?

EXAMPLES

(1940's):The negro problem

Civil rights

(1960's):The elderly

Senior citizens

Because **framing is a way to manage meaning**, it is not only vitally important to advocacy, it is also vitally important to leadership.

What meaning do you seek to convey in each aspect of your work?

What solutions are you offering and who can help implement those solutions?

How are you framing organizational issues for your staff, colleagues, donors, and volunteers?

TODAY'S HOMEWORK

- What is the main/most powerful frame your NGO uses to convey the importance and effectiveness of its work?
- Are there any parts of your NGO's "story" that inadvertently undermine its central contribution in your key target's mind?



