

Failing your way to better practice

How to tread carefully when things aren't going as planned

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The next 15-ish minutes

- The failure...s
- Practical wisdom for ethical practice
- Applying the tools to help navigate failure
- Implications for practice and professional growth

Program implementation = opportunity to explore use of particular methods for evaluating impact.

Need to understand whether we have the data to land it

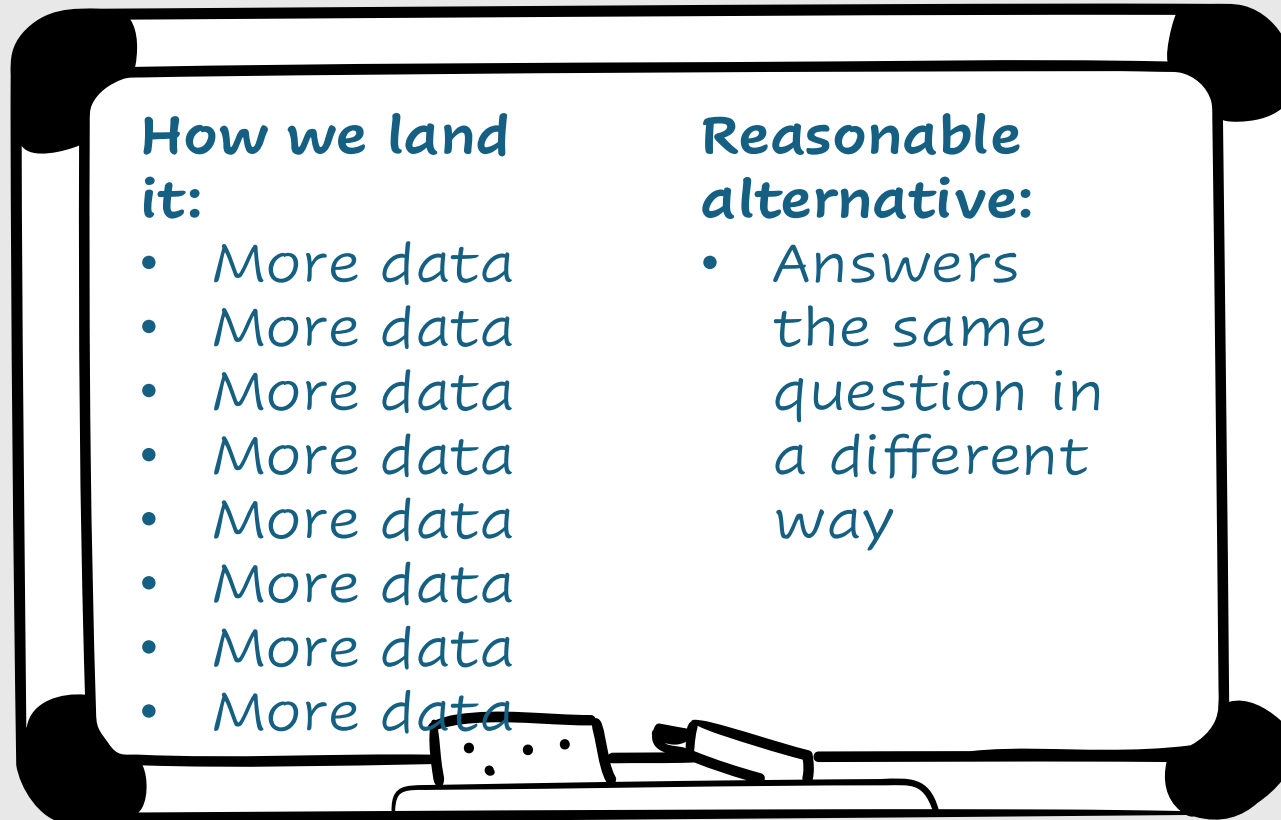
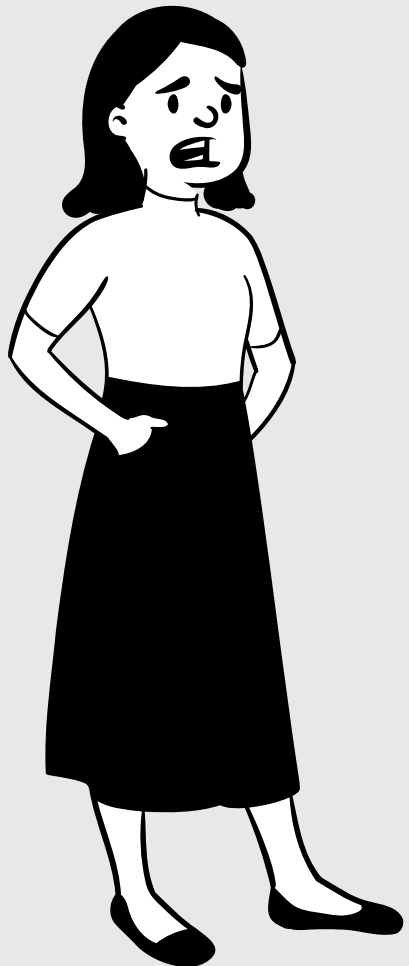
How we land it:

- More data
- More data
- More data
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- More data

Reasonable alternative:

- Answers the same question in a different way

We want both!



The failure...s

Contextualise

- Failure to update the risk assessment to incorporate emerging challenges

Personalise

- Focused on the decisions likely to be made, rather than the decision makers
- Allowing stakeholders to unduly influence the design

Adapt

- Not helping others to work with the need for change

Customise

- Preferred design pursued without deep regard for context and purpose

Potential misuse:

Changes to program now or in future



- Organisational policies and standards
- AES Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations
- AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework

Practical wisdom

Wisdom

Pursuit of '[g]ood science and good sense' (Love, 2023, p. 17); understanding of the practice developed through research and experience

Practical wisdom (prudence)

Doing the right thing in the special circumstances of doing the job (House, 2015, p.88)

Context

Specific situation of the evaluation, with values embedded

Excellence

Striving to apply what we know e.g. strive to management projects well, act ethically, report honestly...

Technical/expertise

Things and principles of production: Evaluation approaches, methods

Navigating failure

- Organisational policies and standards
- AES Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations
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Situation: Ethical implications for the evaluation and needs to be intentional when progressing.

Took action:

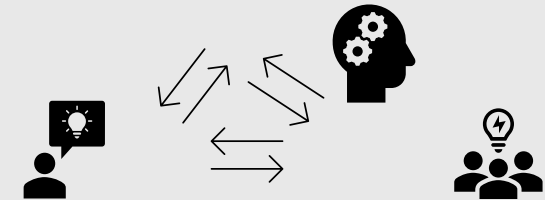
- sensemaking
- report inclusions
- broader data conversations

Building an ability to '[make] the right choices, at the right time, for the right reasons'

(Bradshaw, 2009, cited in Love, 2023, p.20)

Reflection-in-action:

- **Methods:** attribution – inadequate data
- **Client context:** good news stories; other evaluations – some data challenges
- **Org. & prof standards:** explore & articulate methods, limitations, implications
- **Pursue acceptance:** of findings and avenues to minimise risk



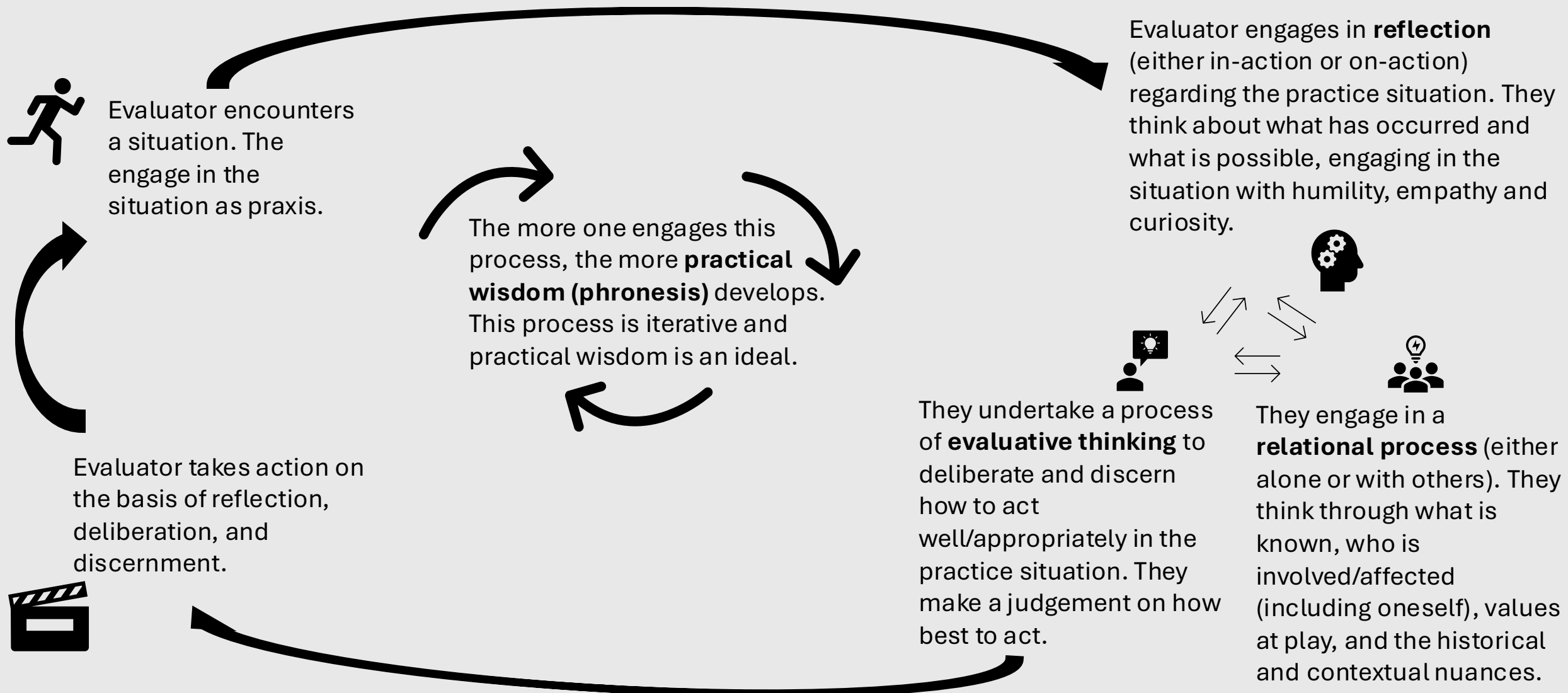
Option to progress:

Of the options on the table, which are the most appropriate?

Deliberating:

Bouncing ideas around, either internally or with others.

An evaluator's reflective practice cycle for fostering practical wisdom (Tovey & Archibald, 2023, p.94)



Implications for practice and growth

- Experiences are necessary (but not sufficient)
- Reflecting with others is invaluable
- We all have the tools at our disposal.

Let's chat!



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References and sources

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