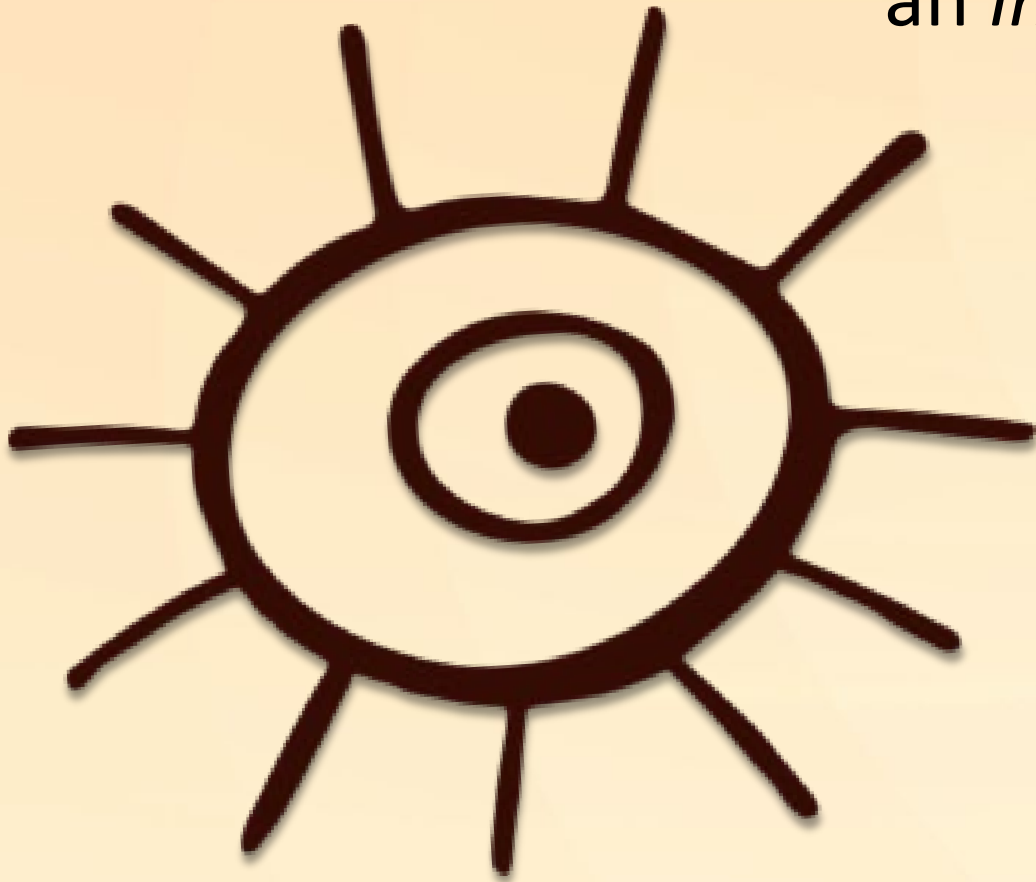


Perceptual Control Theory

an *inside-out* approach to systems thinking



Eva de Hullu, PhD

Assistant Professor Clinical Psychology

Open Universiteit, the Netherlands

Psychologist

Dimence Addiction & Mental Health, Zwolle

President

International Association for Perceptual Control Theory

Talk available as
recording on
[Youtube](#)

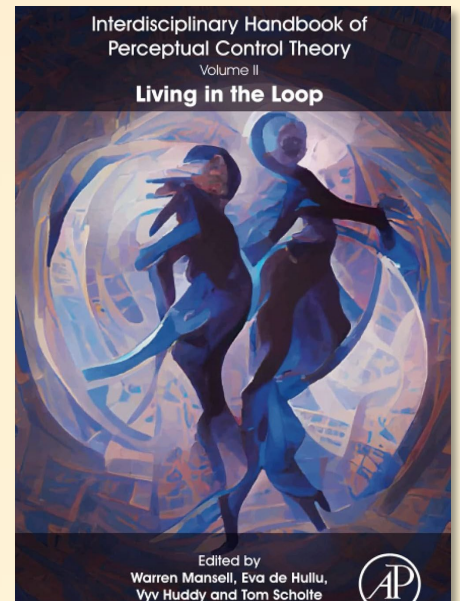
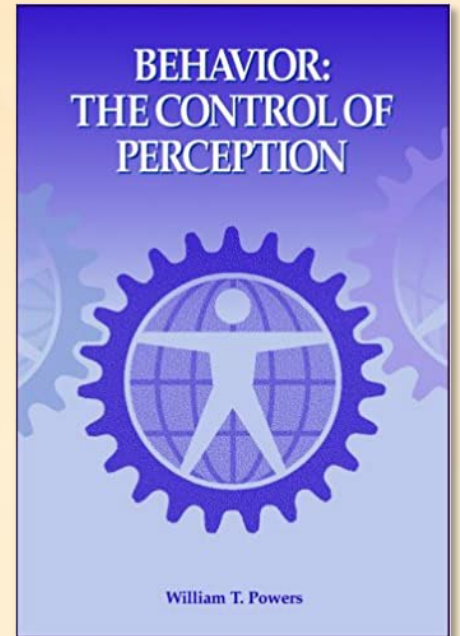
Perceptual Control Theory

- William T. Powers

Behavior: the control of Perception (1973, 2005)

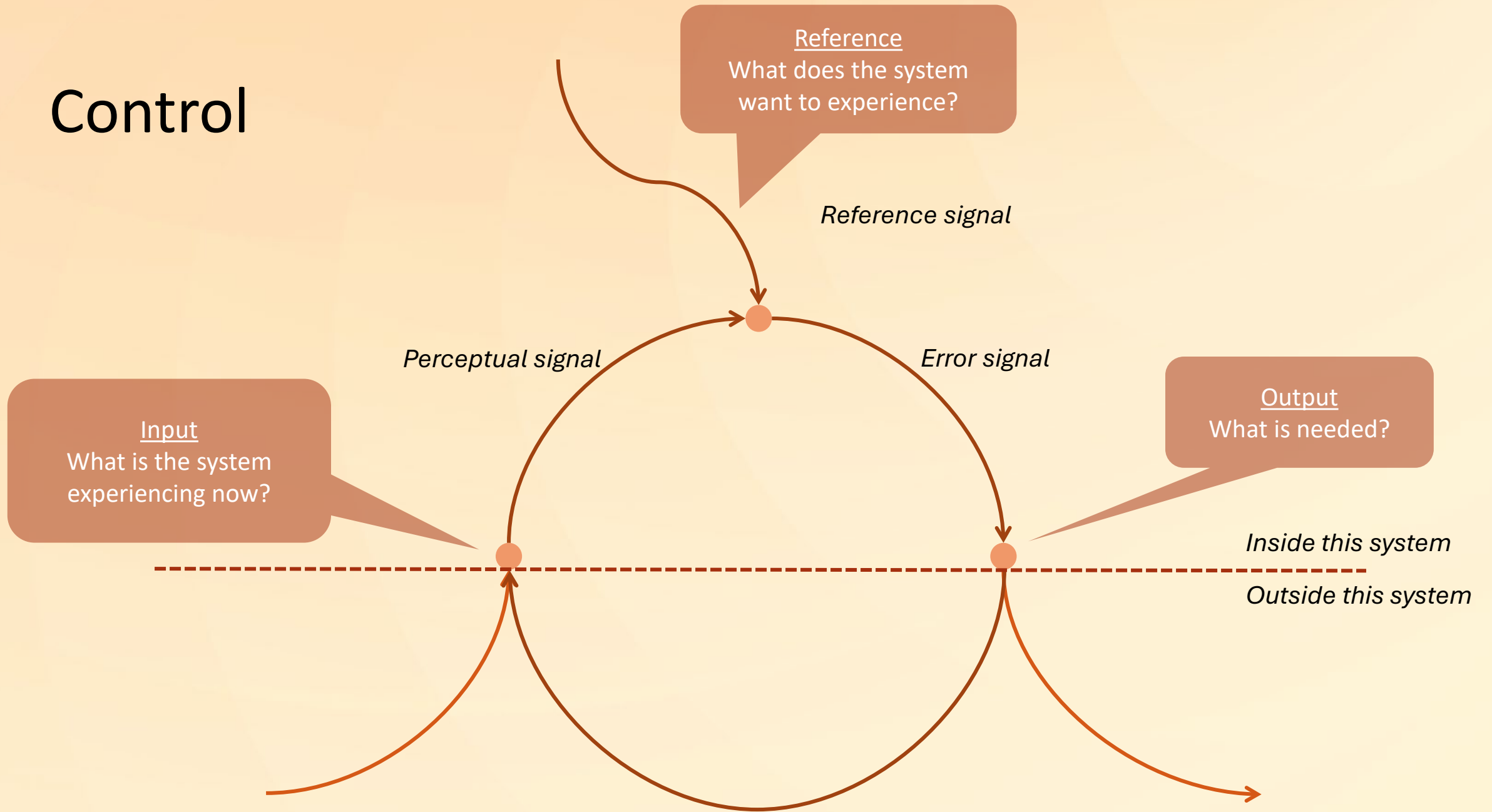
- Links to cybernetics

(see Open Access [Preface](#) Handbook vol II-2023)





Control



What do you control?

Please type your answers in the chat



Perceptual Control

Intensity of pressure on your skin

Sensation of the taste of chocolate

The movement of a tree leaf

How objects on your desk relate to each other

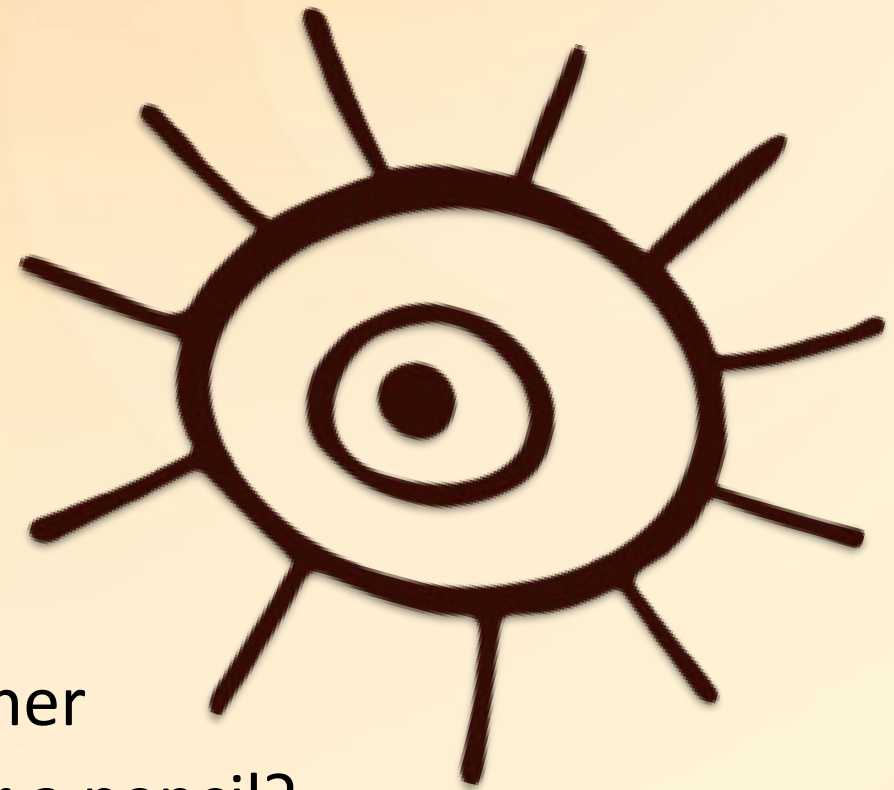
Distinction between things – a pen or a pencil?

Predictability

Plans, thinking, ways to do something

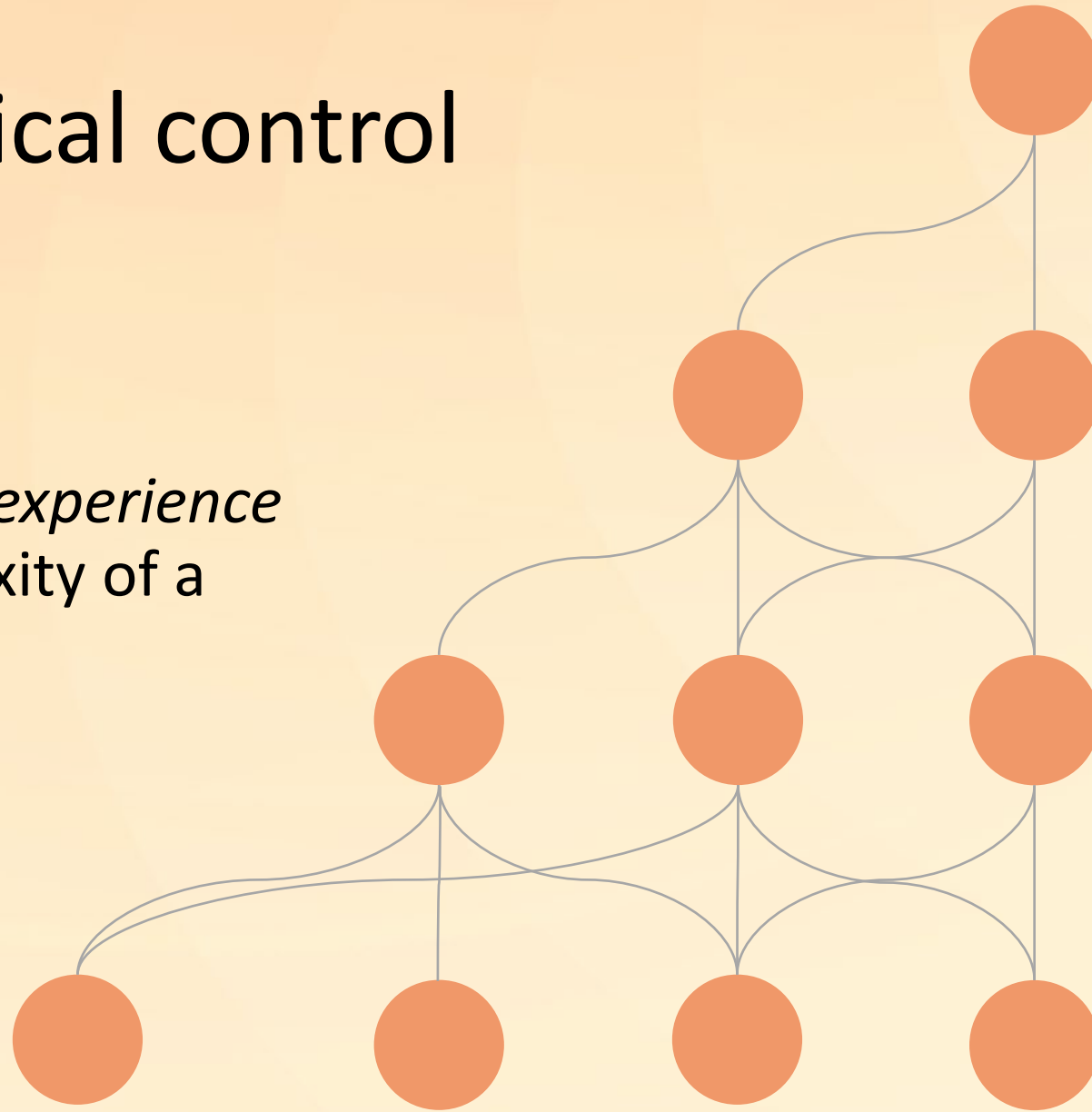
Values you strive for

Your worldview



Hierarchical control

From *sensory experience*
to the complexity of a
worldview



Control loss

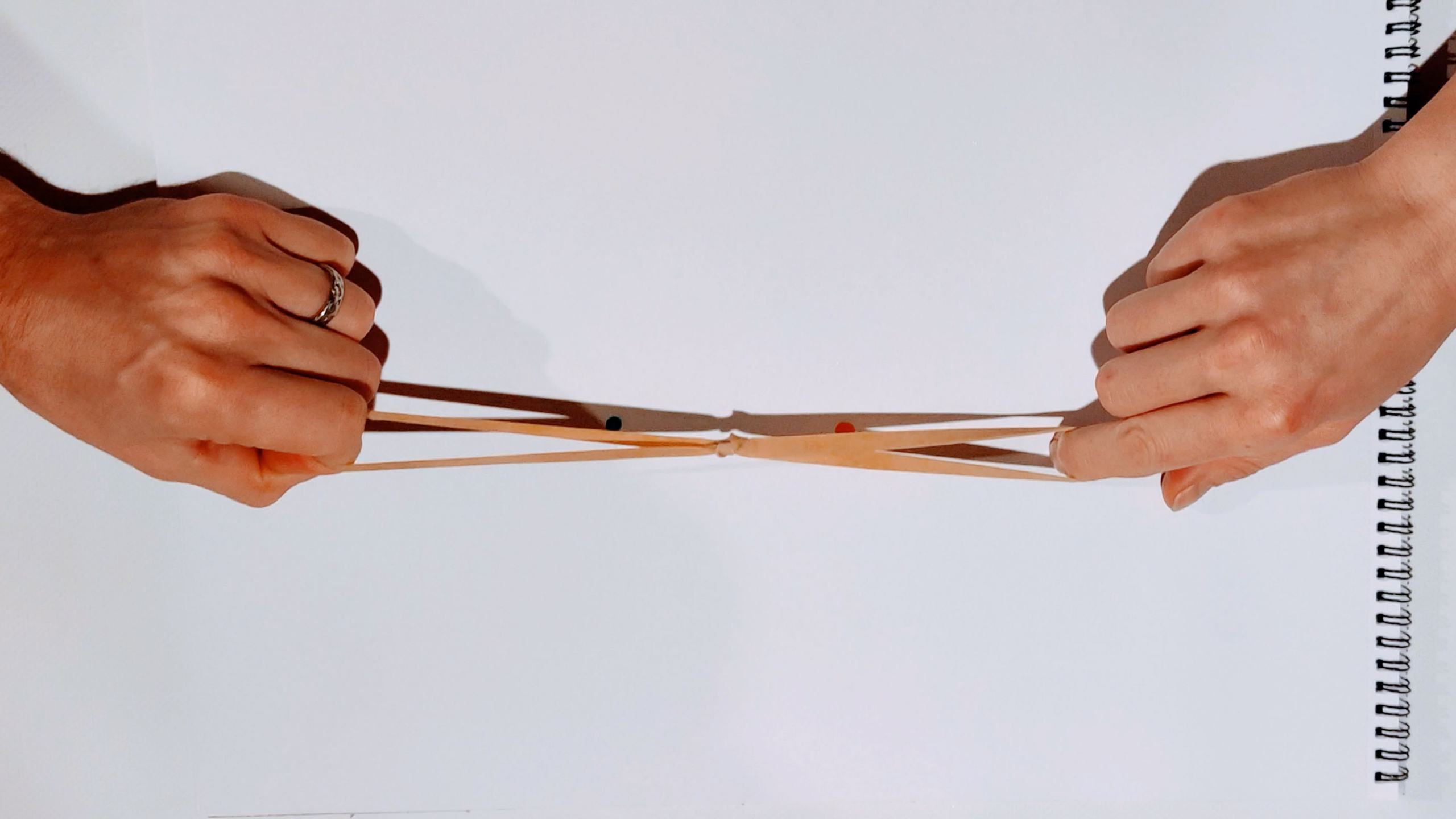
Disturbances

Something gets in the way

Conflict

Opposing goals





Conflict

- Two different reference values for the same controlled variable

You want to leave now - your children don't want to leave yet.

You want to use system A – and your coworker wants to use system B

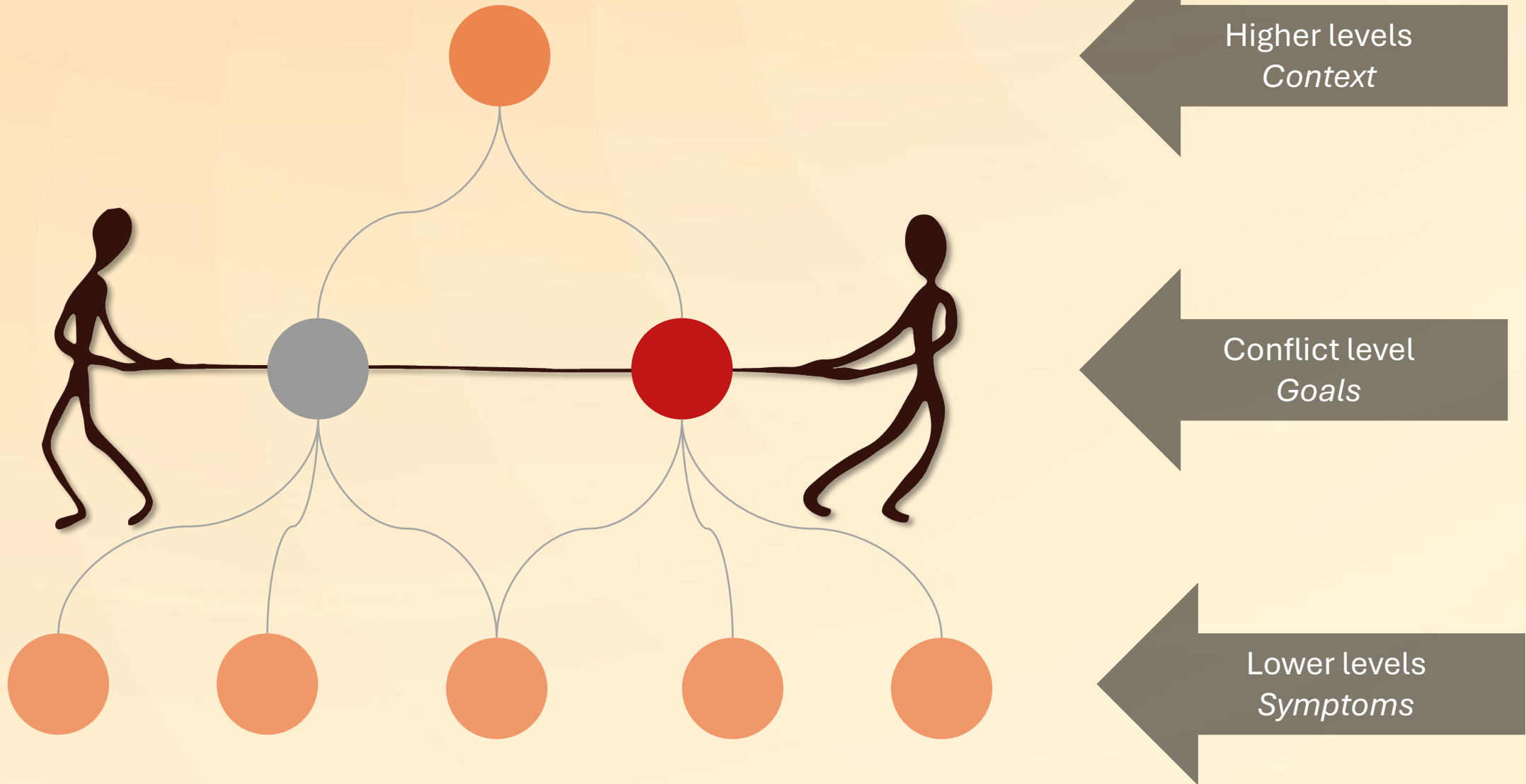


What conflicts do you experience?

Please type your answers in the chat



Conflict & Reorganisation



Reorganisation

- Pause efforts
- Focus attention
- Consider all systems involved

Reorganisation allows reference values to change

Higher levels:

- Insight
- New perspective



How to help reorganisation to take place?



- Don't take away control
- Curiosity! Explore all sides of the problem
- Notice everything: emotions, thoughts, imagery
- Sustain attention where it hurts

Applying PCT in your context



- What perceptions are people trying to control?
- Are there persistent conflicting goals?
- How can we facilitate reorganisation at the higher level?



Eva de Hullu, PhD

Open Universiteit, the Netherlands

eva.dehullu@ou.nl

@evadehullu

Learn more about Perceptual Control Theory

→ My website about perceptual control:

www.perceptualcontrol.nl

(mostly Dutch, some posts in [English](#))

→ International Association
for Perceptual Control Theory

www.iapct.org