

demystifying

Theory of Change

(in 10 minutes-ish)

Simple language, simple metaphors, clear purpose



why 10 minutes?

Why a 10-minute Theory of Change?

Understanding and communicating what you do and the value you create is important.

A Theory of Change is one way of doing this. But often it's seen as something hard, complicated, something that needs an expert. Even the name comes across that way.

And yes, there are times when outside help is useful. But the experts you need are the people in and around your work.

So I challenged groups to create a Theory of Change in 10 minutes. Rather than frameworks, I gave them three metaphors — Journeys, Stones and ripples, Seeds and plants — and set them away.

Will it be perfect? No. Will it need doing again? Yes. But that's kind of the point.

The best tools are the ones you use. Making it easy for everyone to do this stuff, naturally and ongoing, can really help.

This doesn't replace well thought-out frameworks or the excellent people who support this work. It helps, so that when support comes it's even more valuable.

three metaphors

Three Ways to Tell Your Story

Pick the one that feels right for your work. Each asks the same core questions in a different way.

01



The Journey

Where are we now? Where do we want to get to? What's the path? How do we know we're getting closer?

02



The Ripple

We drop a stone. It creates ripples. Those ripples spread outward into the wider world.

03



The Seed

What are we planting? What does it need? What develops? What's the harvest?

metaphor 01 · the journey

The Journey



you are here

there are many paths — knowing you're making progress is what matters

destination

Where are we now?

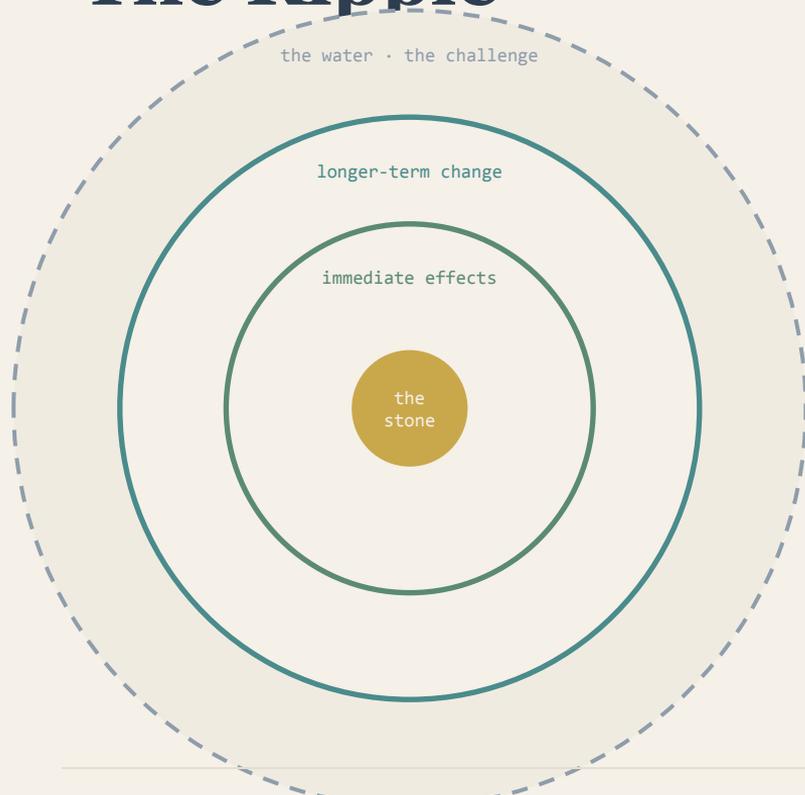
Where do we want to get to?

What's the path?

How do we know we're getting closer?

metaphor 02 · the ripple

The Ripple



0

The water

The context you work in — the challenge, the community, the need. Where you drop the stone shapes how ripples spread.

1

We drop a stone

The work we do, the activities we deliver

2

It creates ripples

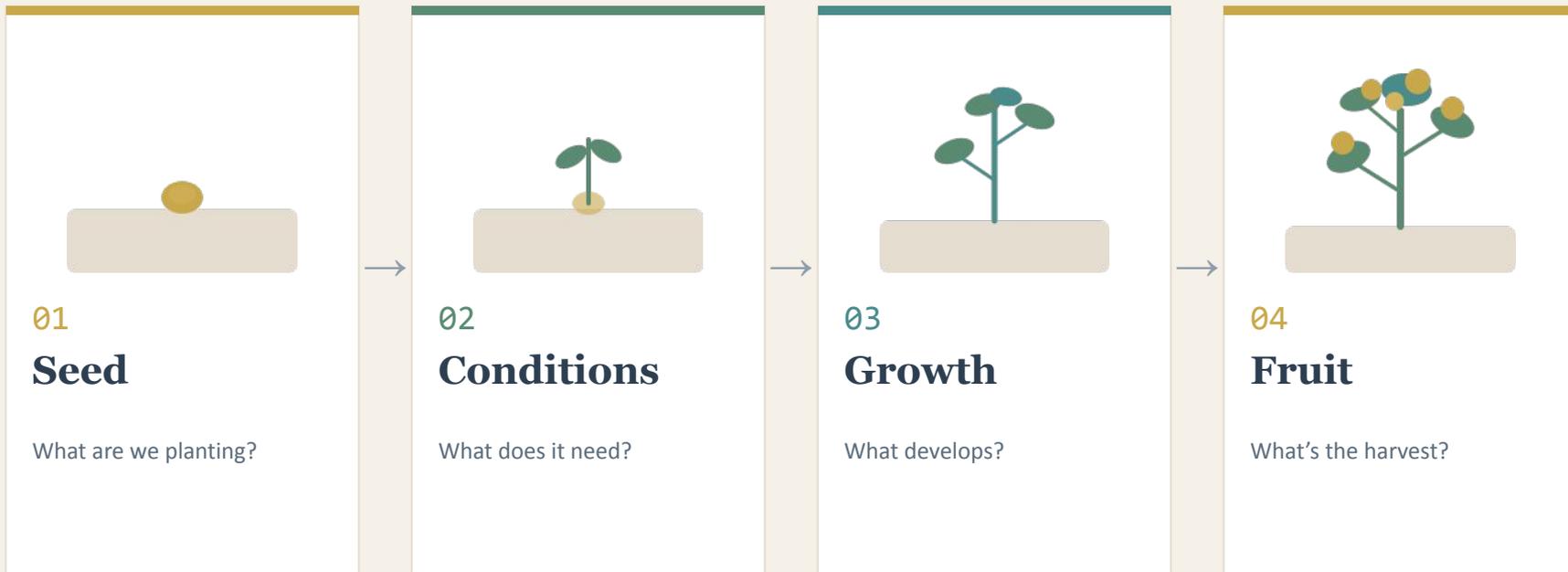
The immediate effects we can see and measure

3

Those ripples spread outward

The longer-term change in the wider world

The Seed



Growth takes time and the right conditions, but we can describe what we expect to see

putting it together

Four Simple Questions

Instead of "inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact" — try these

01

What's the challenge?

The problem you see in the world that motivates your work

02

What would better look like?

The change you want to see — your vision

03

What can we actually do?

Your activities — the things within your control

04

How would we know it's working?

Signs of progress you can point to

resilience

Why This Matters

A clear theory of change is the backbone of your Purpose pillar. It answers:



purpose

Why do we exist?

Not just "what do we do" — but why it matters

What would be lost if we weren't here?

Your unique contribution to the change you want to see

A compass for hard times

When purpose is clear, you have a compass for hard choices

The best tools are the ones you use.

Make it easy. Make it natural. Make it ongoing.

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