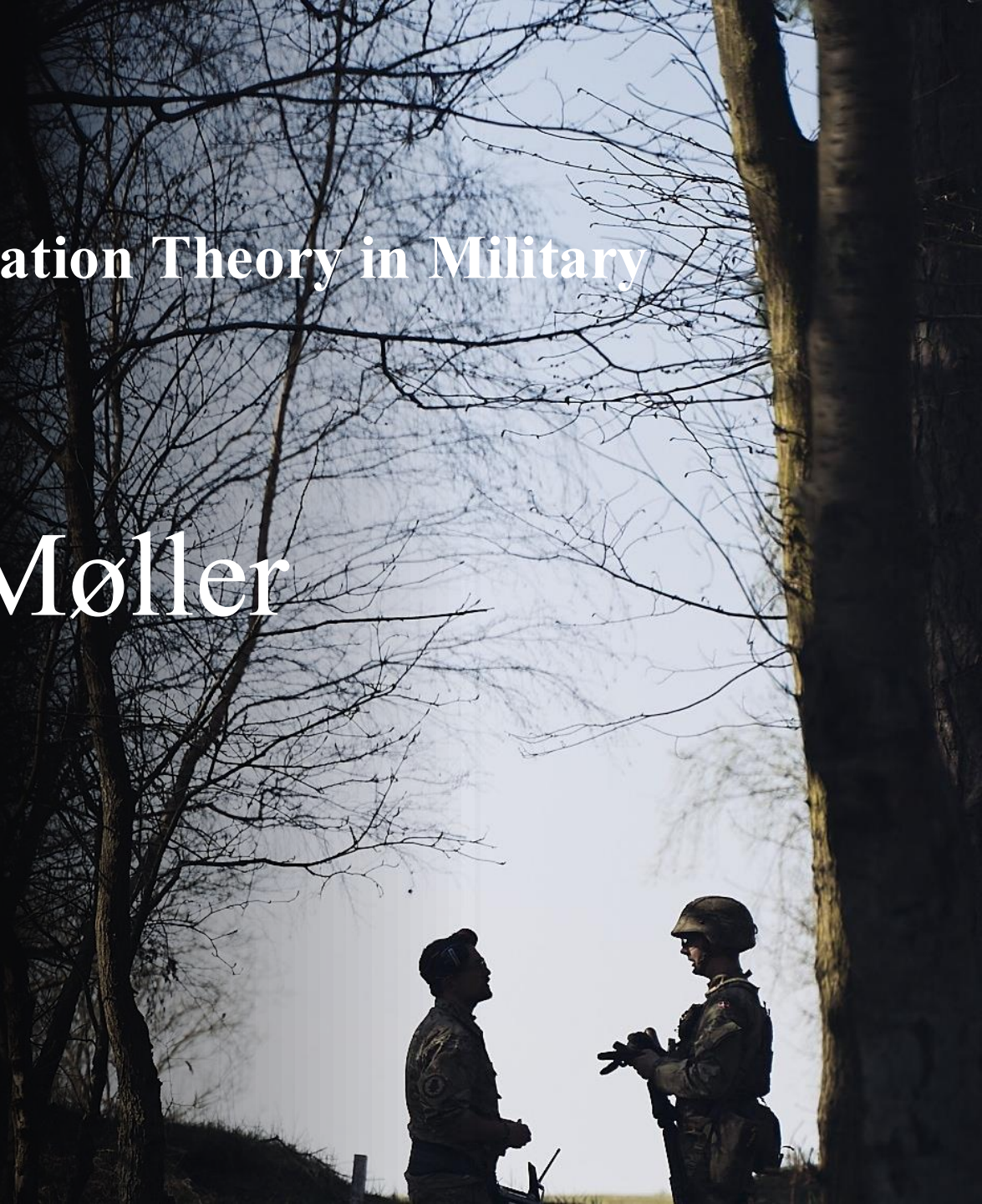
Exploring Heutagogy and Self-Determination Theory in Military Education

Annasofie Wædeled-Møller



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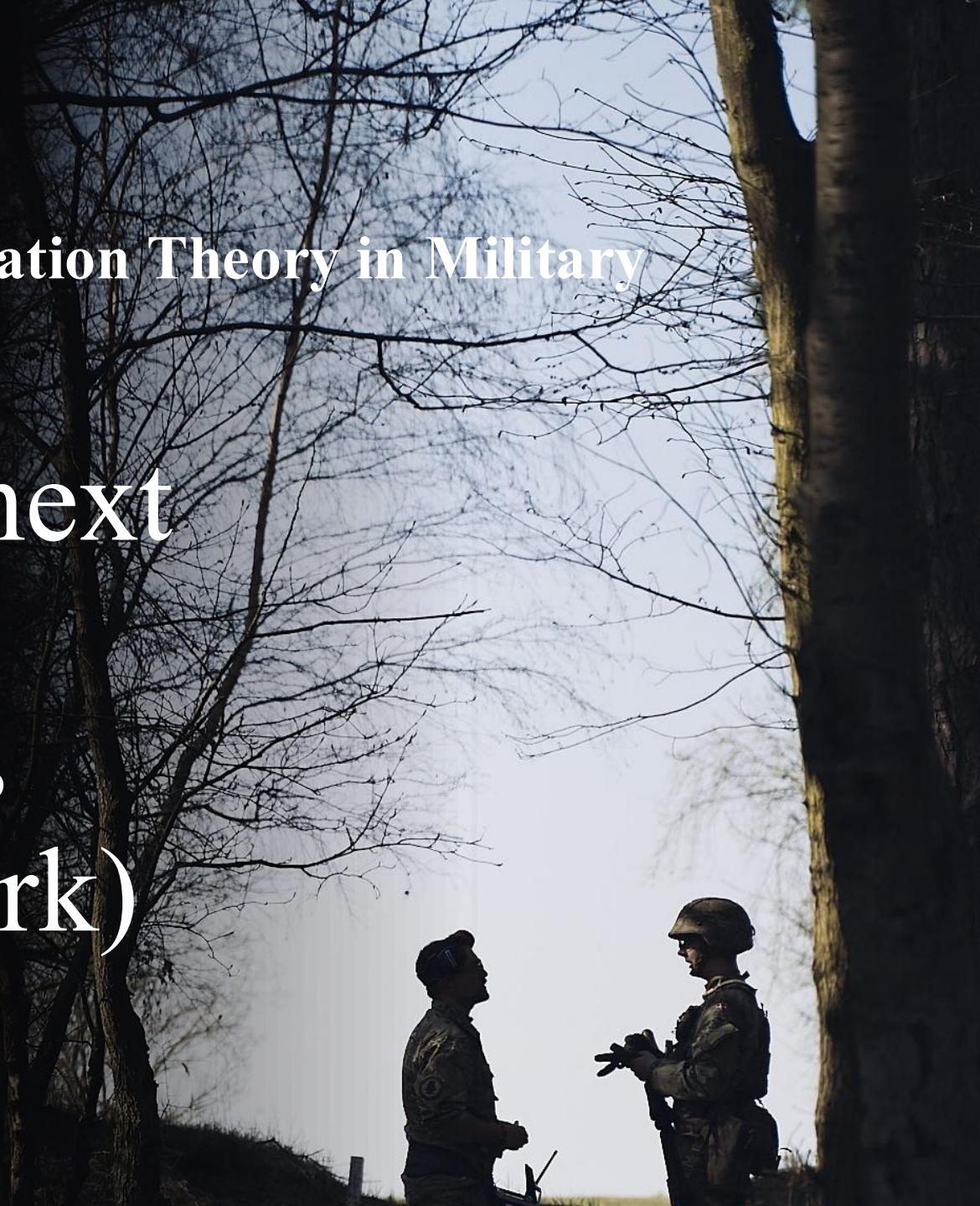
Welcome – please sit next to a person you don’t know that well for this workshop (for pair work)



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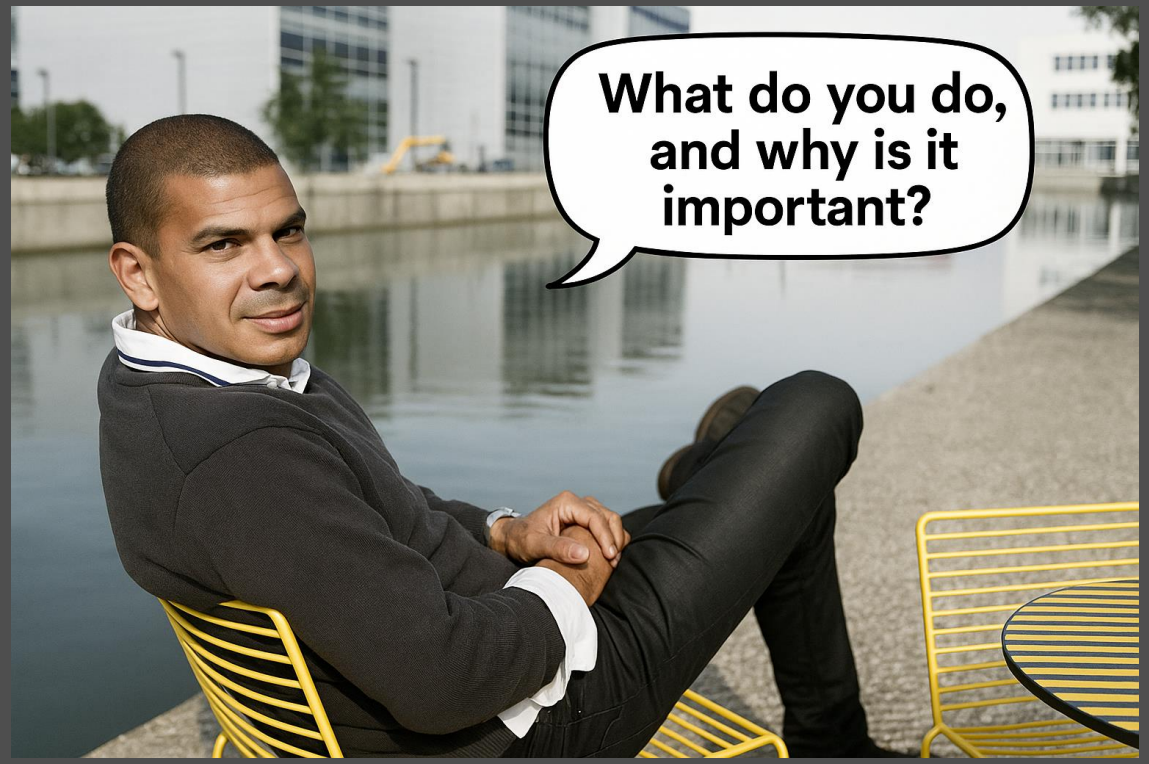
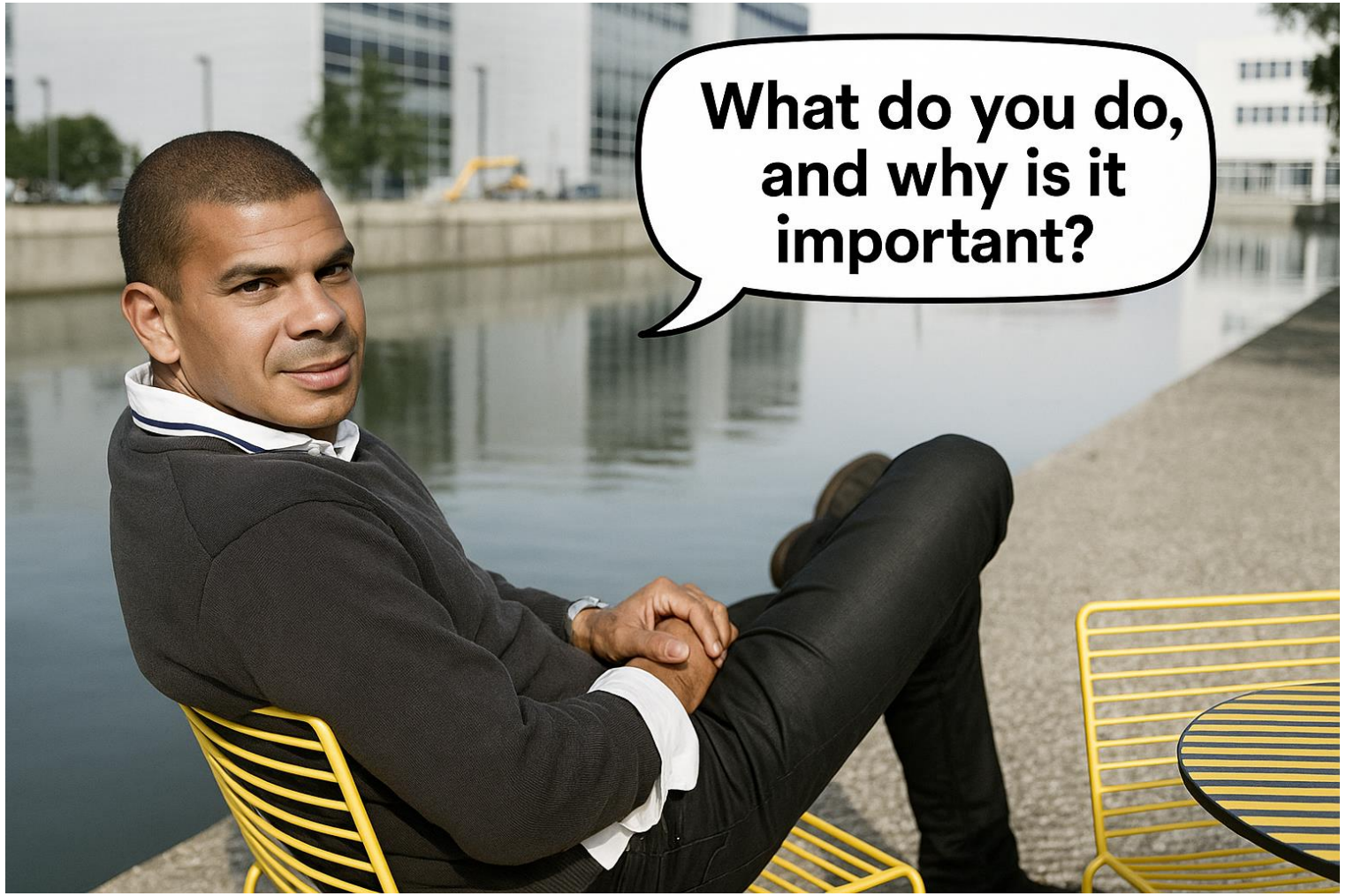

What do you do, and why is it important?

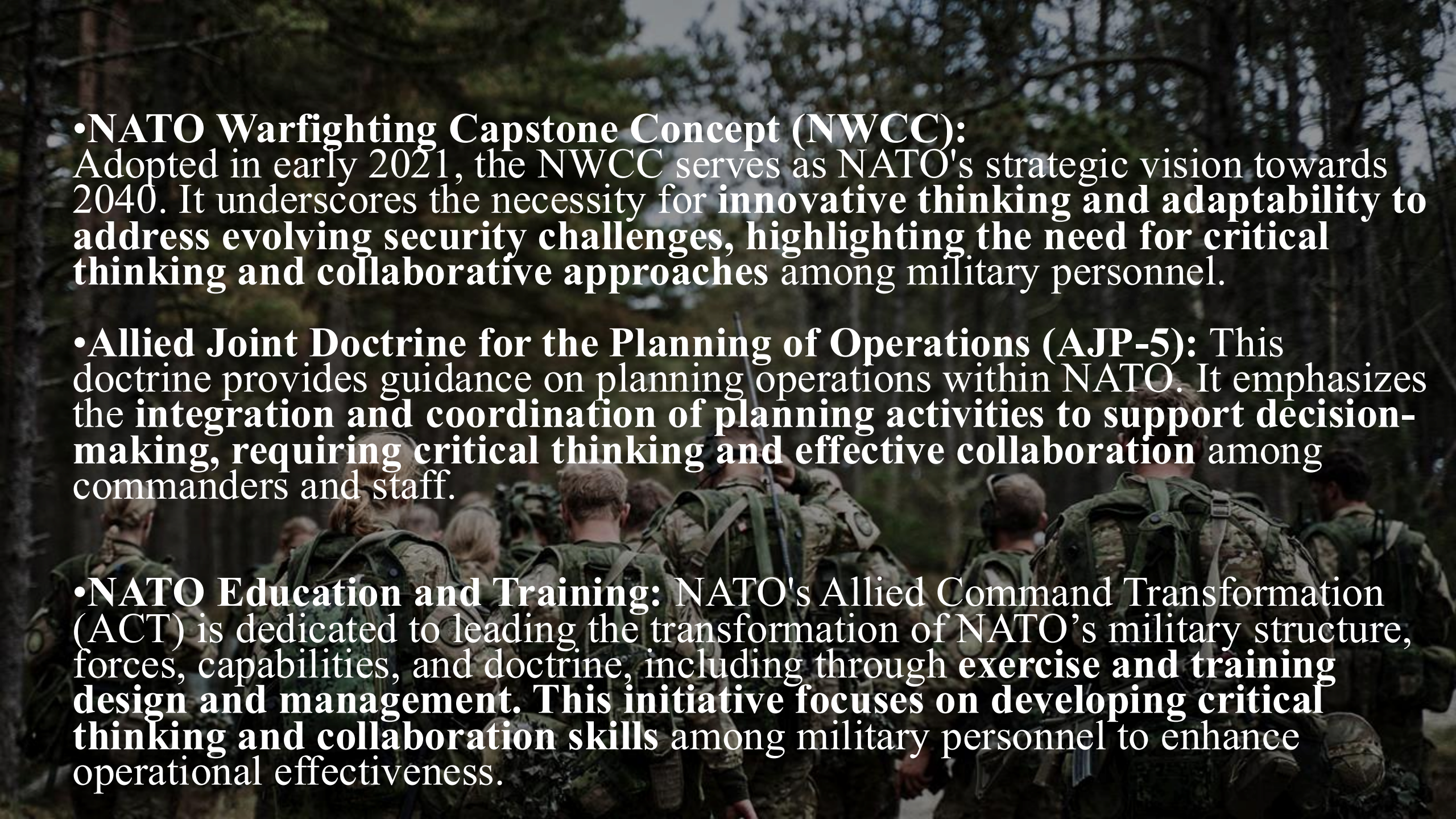
Talk in pairs
2x2 minutes



…And one fun fact

What are the required skills and competencies of military personnel?

- Problem solving
- Adapting
- Navigating fluenty
- Reflecting and discussing for better outcomes
- Cooperating
- Learning from practice



- **NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC):** Adopted in early 2021, the NWCC serves as NATO's strategic vision towards 2040. It underscores the necessity for **innovative thinking and adaptability to address evolving security challenges, highlighting the need for critical thinking and collaborative approaches** among military personnel.

- **Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations (AJP-5):** This doctrine provides guidance on planning operations within NATO. It emphasizes the **integration and coordination of planning activities to support decision-making, requiring critical thinking and effective collaboration** among commanders and staff.

- **NATO Education and Training:** NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT) is dedicated to leading the transformation of NATO's military structure, forces, capabilities, and doctrine, including through **exercise and training design and management. This initiative focuses on developing critical thinking and collaboration skills** among military personnel to enhance operational effectiveness.

Way Forward
Way Forward

Educator Centered Approach

Practice and Learner Centered Approach

Behaviorism

Heutagogy

Self-determined and transformative learning

Let’s look for learning opportunities

Personal Reflection – and then conversation

Think of a specific situation in your professional life where you felt highly motivated –

…and one where you really didn’t

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How was the need for **autonomy** fulfilled in this situation?

How did you feel **competent** in what you were doing?

What role did **relationships or support from others** play?

Opposite Perspective

Was there a lack of **autonomy, competence, or belonging**? How?

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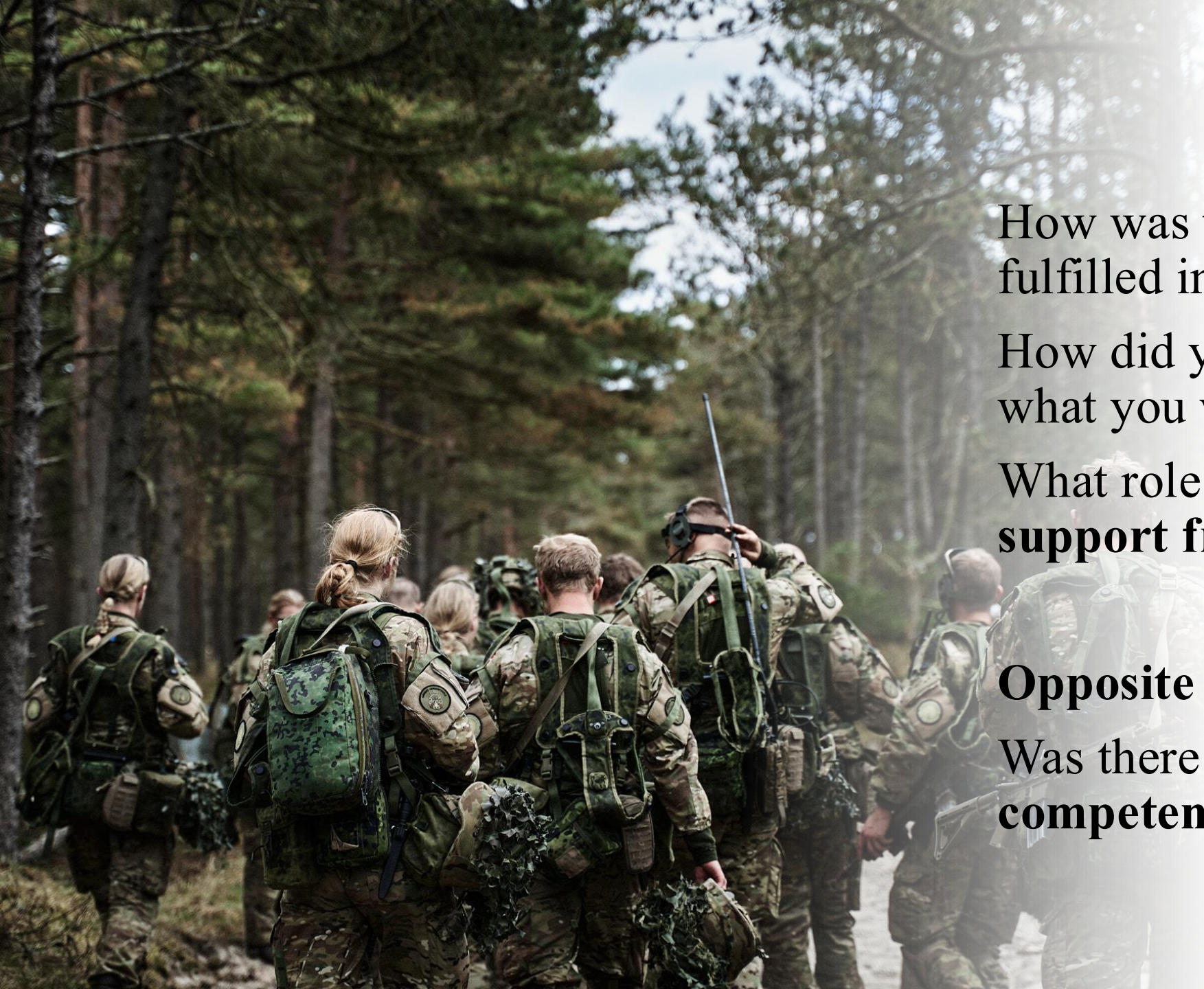
Pair interviews

–

What was situation?
And what was your “findings”?



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Sharing stories
from practise

Learnlab.net

- don’t log in.

- code 3260719

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)

BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

AUTONOMY

The need to feel volitional and self-directed

COMPETENCE

The need to feel effective and capable

RELATEDNESS

The need to feel connected to others

MOTIVATION CONTINUUM

AMOTIVATION — **EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION** — **INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**

Deci and Ryan

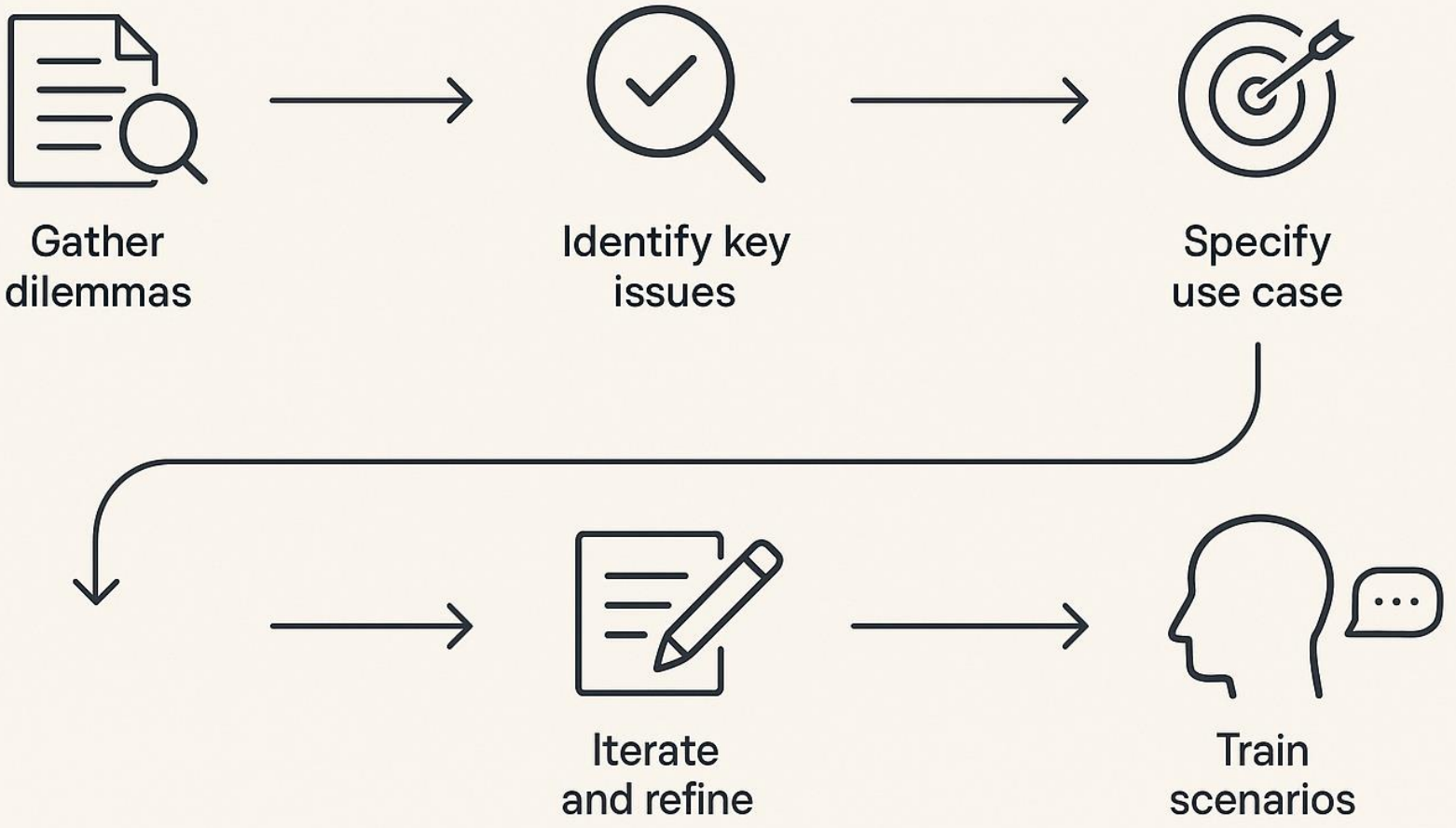
Transformative Learning in a Military Context

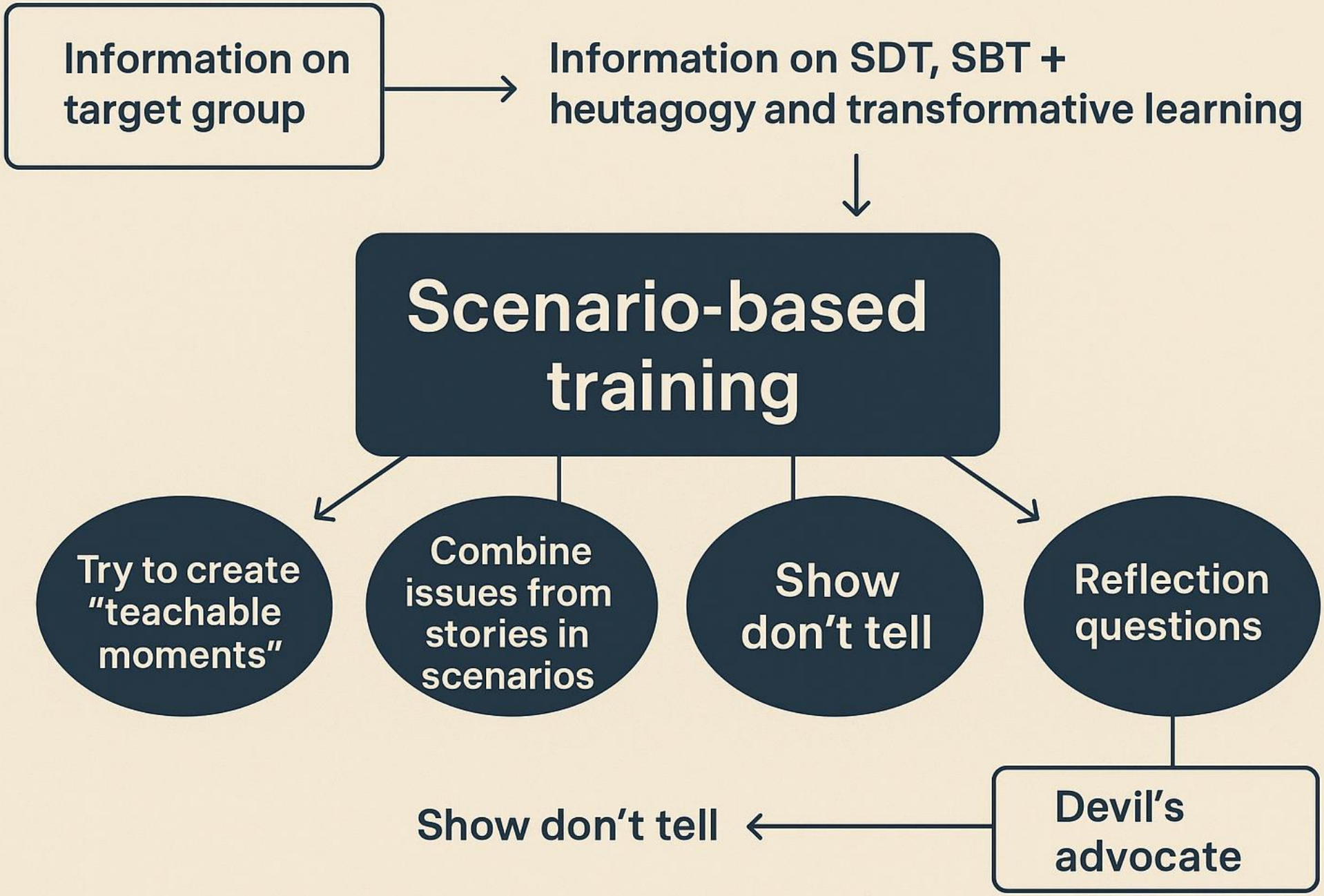
”When experience changes how you think, act, and understand yourself”

- It often happens in high-pressure situations
  – when routines no longer work, and new ways of thinking are needed
- It starts with a sense of inner conflict
  – something feels off, and your usual perspective doesn't fit (cognitive dissonance)
- It helps you notice blind spots
  – things you hadn't seen about yourself, others, or the situation become visible
- It requires critical reflection – alone and with others
  – through debriefs, feedback, and dialogue, you challenge assumptions and make new meaning

Based on transformative learning theory by Jack Mezirow

From Dilemmas to Training Scenarios




Information on target group
Information on SDT, SBT + heutagogy and transformative learning
Scenario-based training
Try to create "teachable moments"
Combine issues from stories in scenarios
Show don't tell
Reflection questions
Devil's advocate
Show don't tell

🃏 SCENARIO 3 - Faith in the Task – or in Yourself?

Case description:

You're asked to design a course you don't believe is relevant or meaningful for the participants. You're experienced and competent but feel like your professional skills are being used for something hollow. You lack support, direction, and a sense of purpose—and begin to question whether you still believe in the direction of your organization.

Dilemma:

You're expected to present the course to leadership. What do you do?

Options:

1. Present the course as requested, even though you don't believe in it.
2. Express your concerns and propose adjustments.
3. Withdraw emotionally from the task and do the bare minimum.

Reflection questions:

- What do you do when your professional integrity clashes with institutional expectations?
- When is it worth fighting for meaning—and when is it time to let go?
- What can you learn about yourself when confronted with a loss of purpose?

Devil's Advocate:

🔍 *What if the problem isn't the task—but your need for clarity and certainty?*

When you're deeply skilled, it can be hard to accept that learning and change also happen in ambiguity and compromise. Maybe your sense of meaninglessness is not just about the assignment—but a signal that you're in a personal transition.

- How was that?
- What made me think?
- What resonated?
- **What questions do I have?**