

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CORRECTIONS

What it is, why it matters, and how it supports professional judgment

OUR WORK IS DEFINED BY POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY

Correctional work fundamentally involves the use of power and carries immense responsibility.

Good intentions, while crucial, are not enough to guarantee positive outcomes.

Evidence helps us act in a way that is fair, consistent, and ultimately, more effective.

WHY PROFESSIONAL INTUITION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

- **Experience can reinforce habits, not effectiveness:** We can become very good at doing things the same way, without knowing if that way is the best way.
- **Organisational cultures shape our intuition:** The 'way we do things here' can sometimes overshadow what is most effective for the individual client.
- **Evidence provides a crucial check:** It helps us step back and question our routine responses, ensuring we are not on autopilot.



A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

EBP is the practice of:



Using the best available **research evidence** on what works.



Combined with your **professional expertise** and judgment.



Guided by a firm commitment to **ethics and human rights**.

THE THREE PILLARS OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE



WHAT EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IS NOT

~~Myth: It removes professional discretion.~~

~~Myth: It turns practice into a simple checklist.~~

~~Myth: It ignores the importance of relationships.~~

In reality, EBP supports reflective practice. It provides a framework to enhance, not replace, professional skill.

FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PRACTICE

Exploring Two Core Rehabilitation Models

We will now explore two of the most influential models in evidence-based corrections:

- The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model
- The Desistance Perspective



TOOL 1: THE RISK–NEED–RESPONSIVITY (RNR) MODEL

A structured model for targeting correctional interventions, developed from meta-analyses of what reduces reoffending.



RISK

Match the intensity of the service to the individual's risk level.



NEED

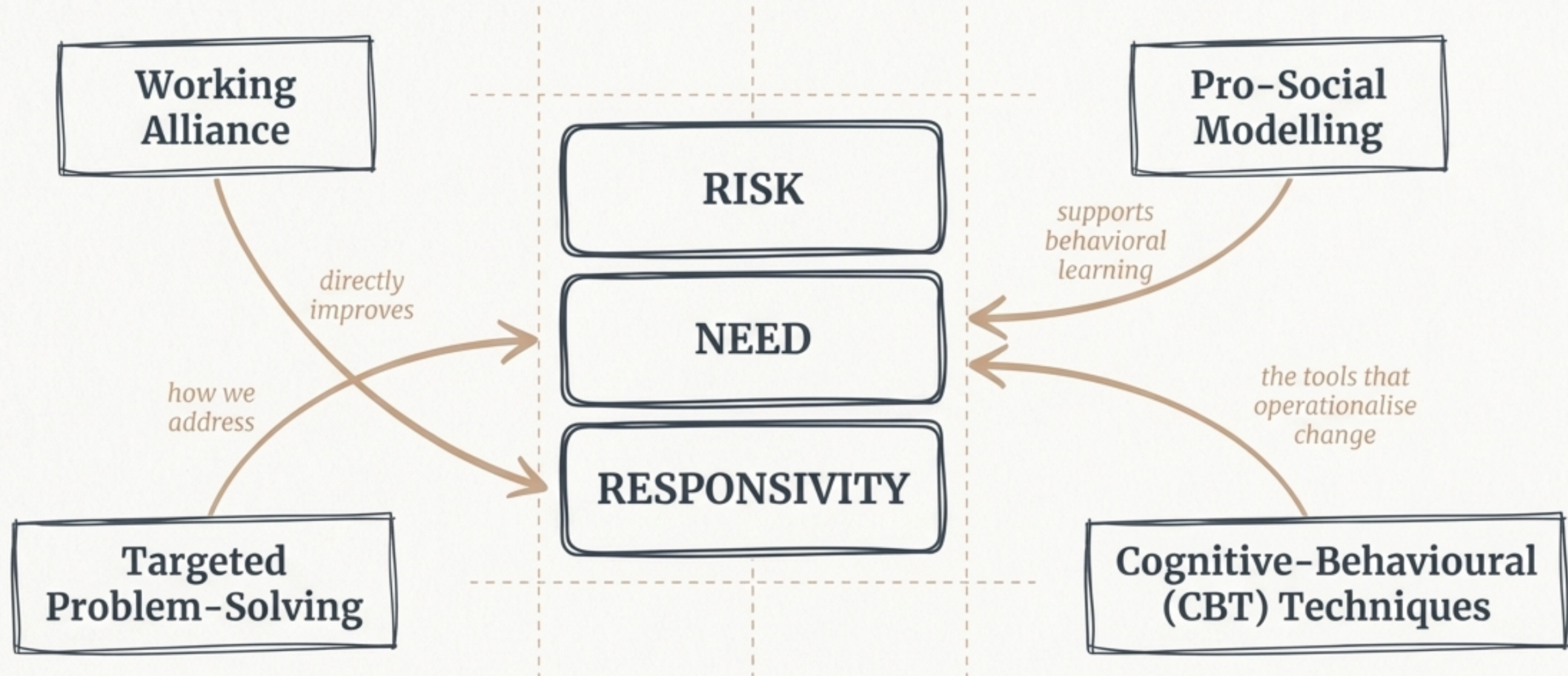
Target “criminogenic needs”—the specific factors that are directly linked to criminal behavior.



RESPONSIVITY

Adapt the intervention to the individual's learning style, abilities, and motivation.

PUTTING RNR INTO PRACTICE WITH YOUR CORE SKILLS

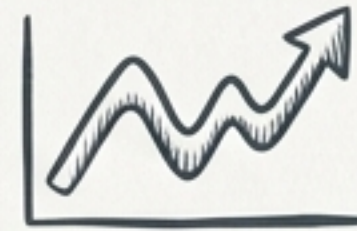


TOOL 2: THE DESISTANCE PERSPECTIVE

Focuses on the natural process of how people stop offending over time, emphasizing identity change, relationships, and finding meaning.



Change is a process, not a single event: We must work with the journey.



Motivation fluctuates: Lapses and setbacks are a normal part of change.

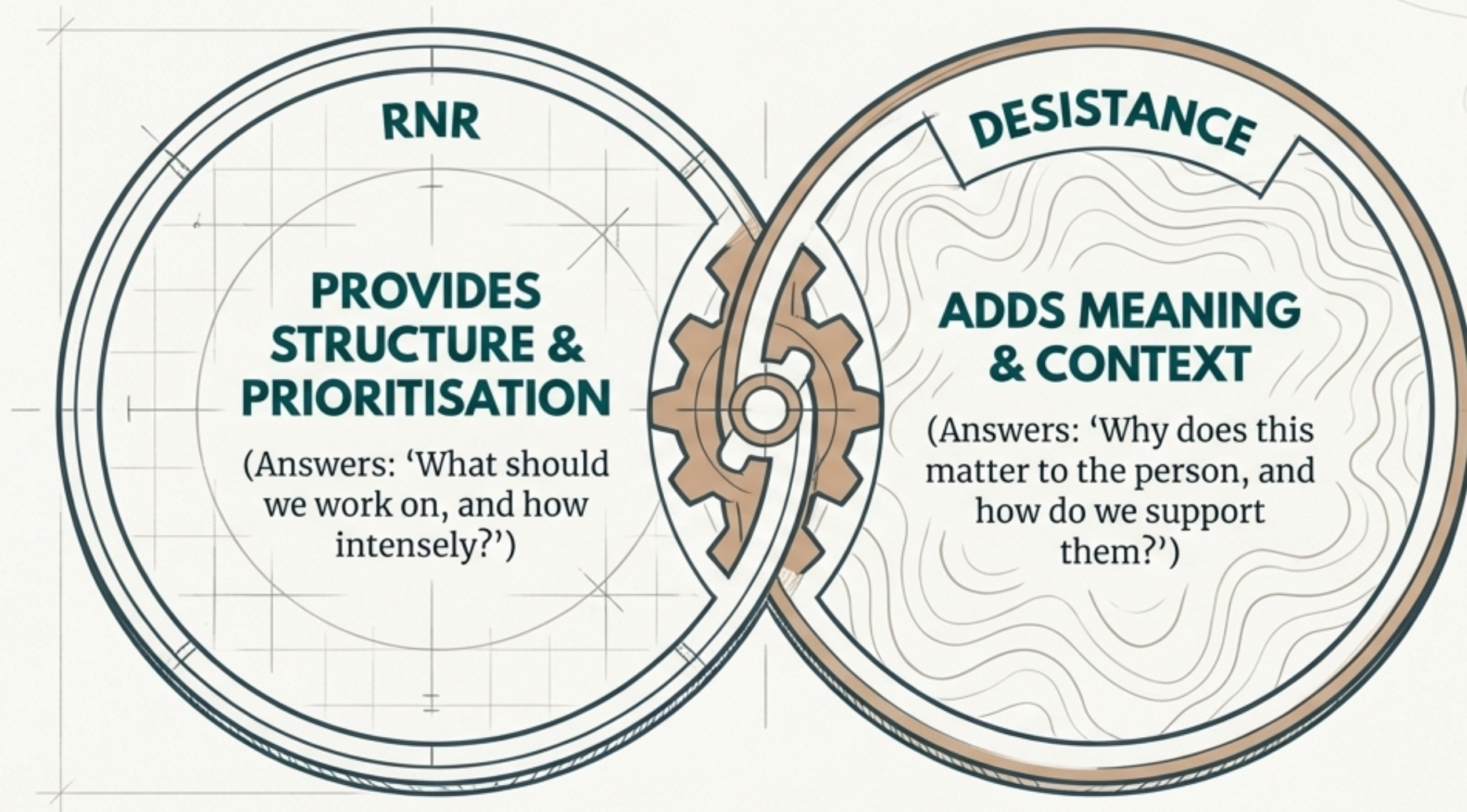


Social bonds and identity matter deeply: Who we are and who we are connected to drives long-term change.

SUPPORTING DESISTANCE WITH YOUR CORE SKILLS



RNR AND DESISTANCE: NOT OPPOSITES, BUT PARTNERS



Your skills are what bridge these two approaches in practice.

WHY YOUR SKILLS MATTER MORE THAN ANY MODEL

The background features a hand in a sketchy, brownish tone holding a pen. The hand is positioned over a circular diagram of a human brain. The brain diagram is overlaid with various technical elements: a grid, a topographic map with contour lines, and a gear-like structure. The overall aesthetic is technical and artistic, suggesting the intersection of human skill and data-driven models.

Models **guide** our decisions about what to focus on.

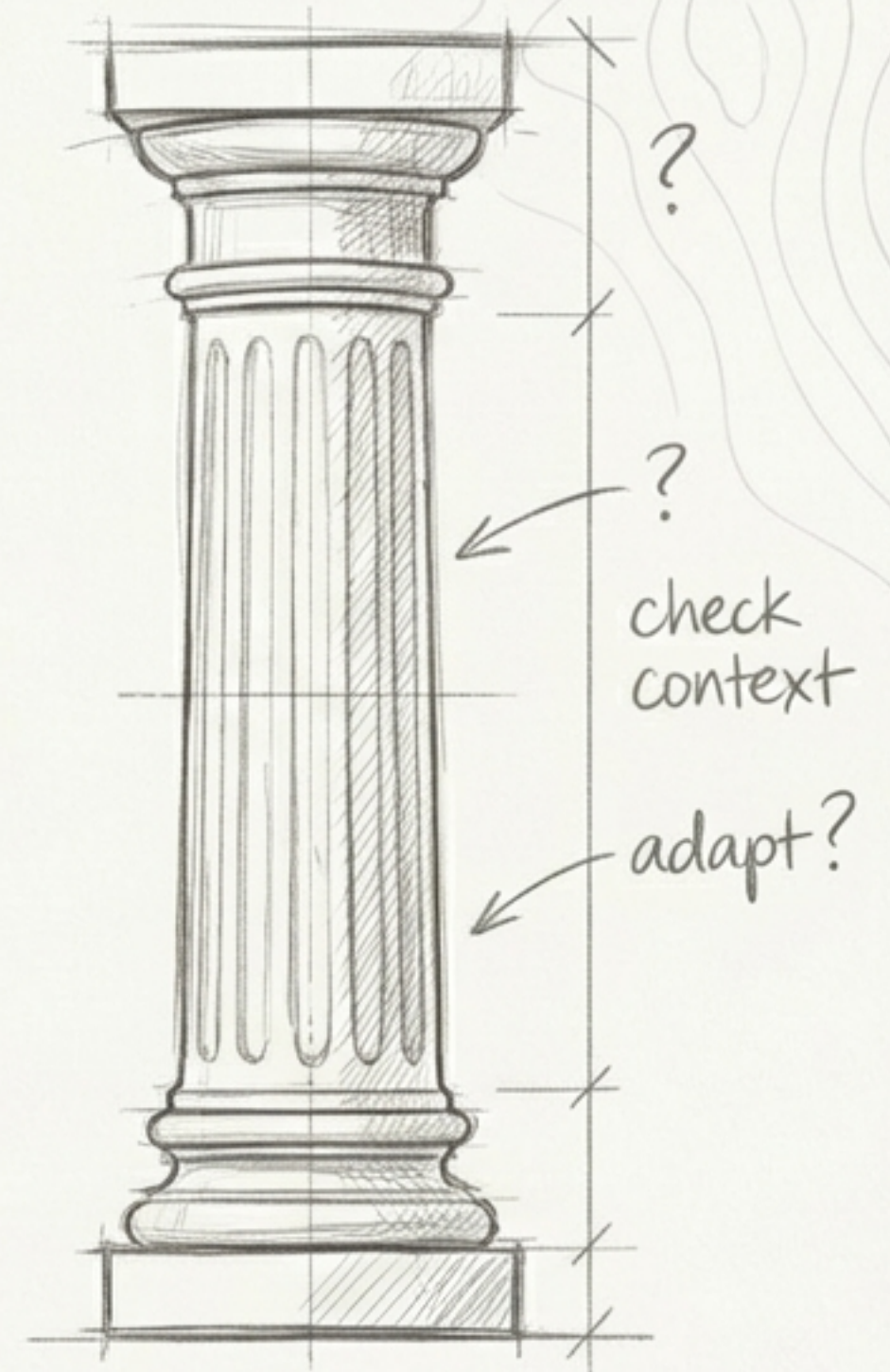
But it is our **skills** that shape the human interactions where change actually happens.

The ultimate effectiveness of any evidence-based model depends entirely on *how it is enacted* by a skilled, ethical professional.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LIMITS OF THE EVIDENCE

We must remain **critical and adaptive**, recognizing that:

- The evidence base is drawn mostly from **Western research traditions** and may not apply universally.
- **Organisational constraints** (like high caseloads or policy demands) are real and impact our ability to implement models perfectly.
- **Thoughtful adaptation** of these models to local and individual contexts is not just allowed, but essential.



KEY PRINCIPLES FOR OUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

1. **Evidence informs professional judgment, it does not replace it.**
2. **Models guide our priorities, but our skills are what make them work.**
3. **Ethical, skilled practice is the foundation that increases both our legitimacy and our effectiveness.**

