



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

Master Program in Biostatistics

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# Being the messenger and not getting shot

Teaching master students responsible and effective communication skills in sometimes emotionally challenging consulting situations

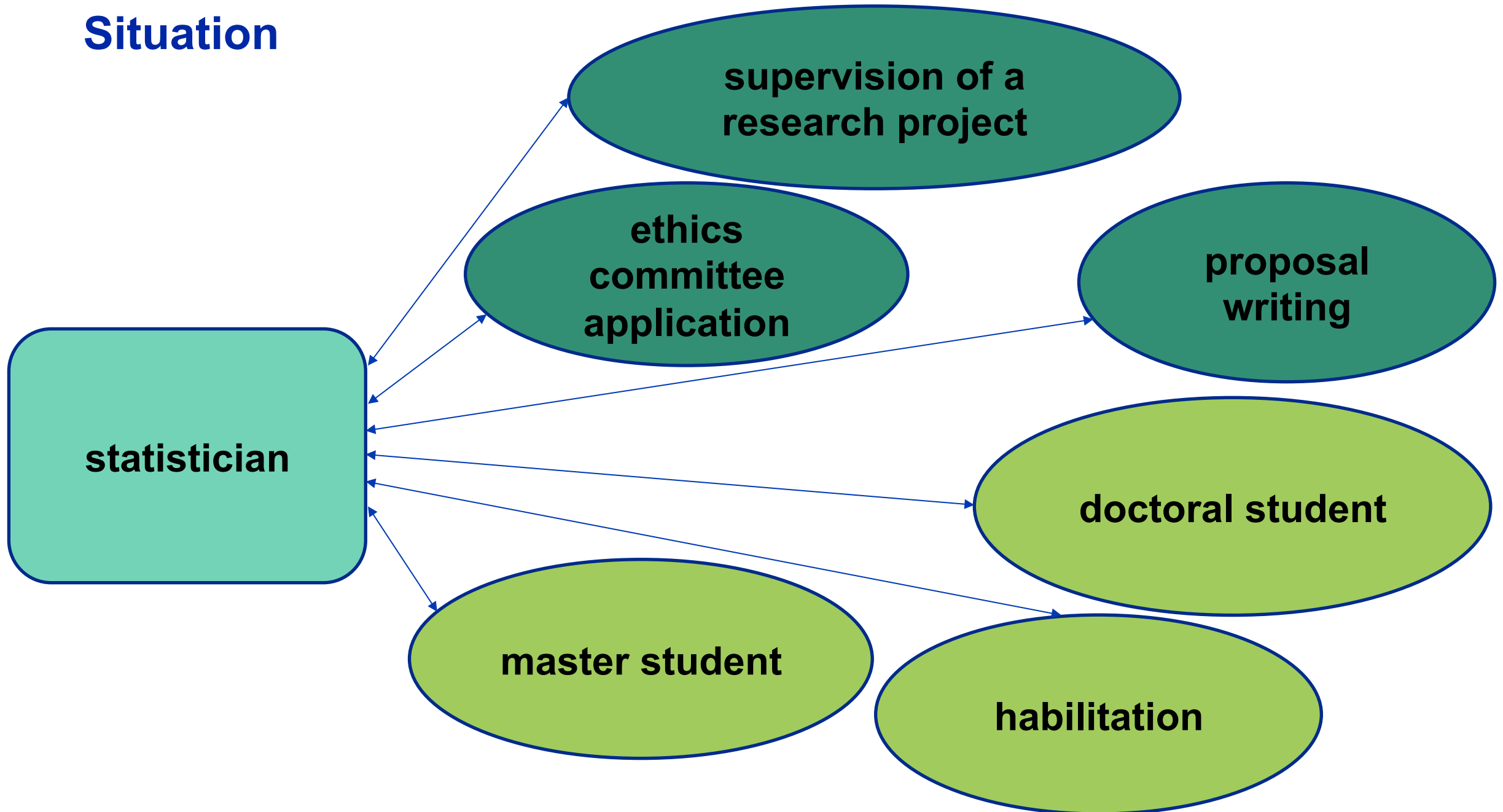
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# Situation



# Being the messenger and not getting shot

Our students will be messengers in the future and we want them **not** to get shot

→ Need to teach how to communicate properly!

Today:  
Report about our approach and get your feedback

# Background: about the program

**Master Program in Biostatistics** at the University of Zurich: 3 semesters after a bachelor in mathematics, biology, psychology, etc.

- 1<sup>st</sup> semester: ground laying lectures in biostatistics  
→ learn about critical thinking
- 2<sup>nd</sup> semester: more lectures but also get more independent  
→ start to apply critical thinking under supervision
- 3<sup>rd</sup> semester: master thesis  
→ think critically

# Background: *STA 490 Statistical Consulting*

Students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> semester

- choose a real consulting project from (mainly) researchers at the university hospital
- communicate with the client
- perform the data analysis
- write a report
- present results

Senior statisticians supervise on a one-on-one basis

# Background: preparatory modules

*STA470 Good Statistical Practice: Computational Skills* (1<sup>st</sup> semester):

Clear message to students:

Be certain to get the facts, the correct facts and all the facts as a basis for any communication

*STA471 Good Statistical Practice: Communication Skills* (2<sup>nd</sup> semester):

Clear message to students:

Precision: content and targeting audience

Clarity: ask right question and answer it

Brevity: get to the point and nothing more

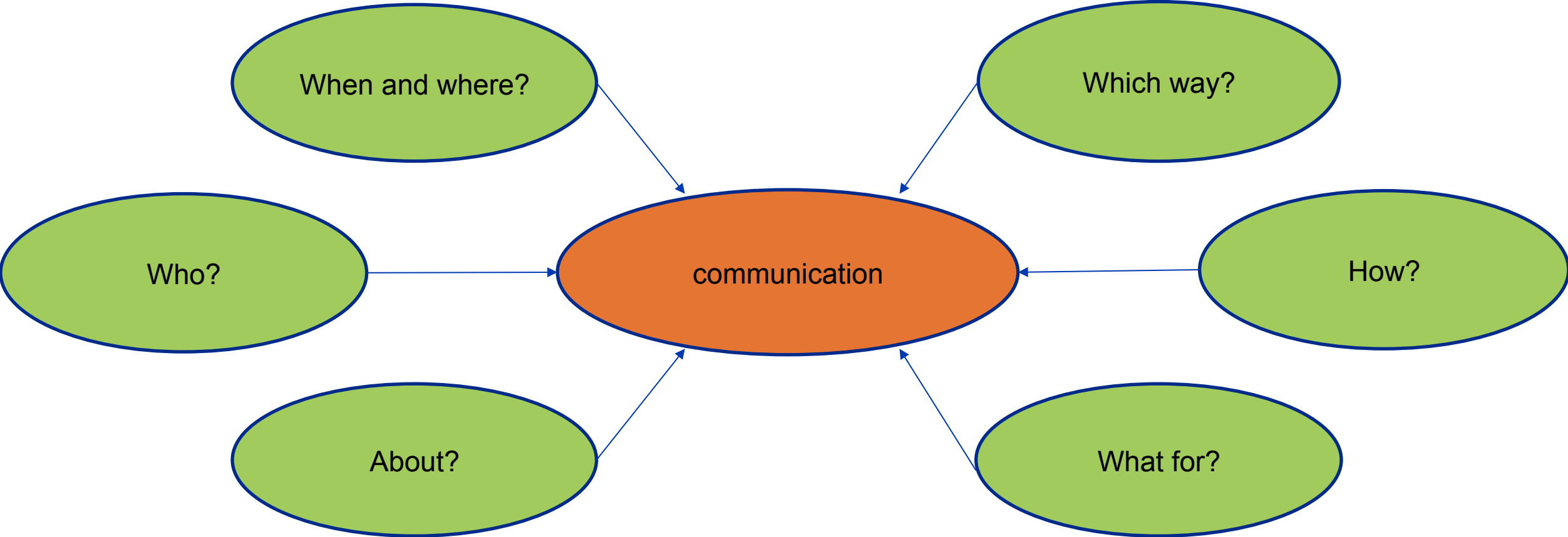
# Communication

→ Facts are the scaffolding for professional communication

→ Professional communication is the proper tool for not getting shot!

***? But what about emotions in communication?***

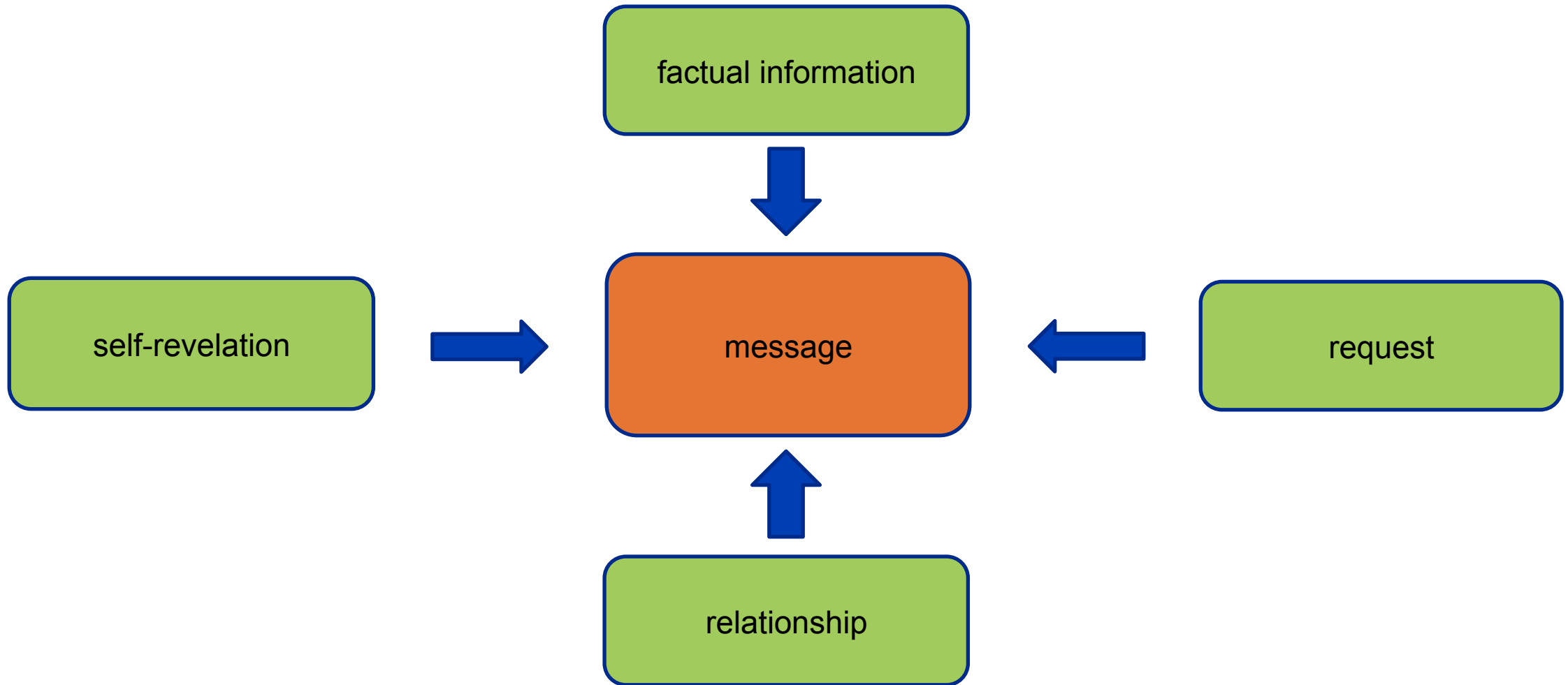
# Setting for communication



Heringer (2017)

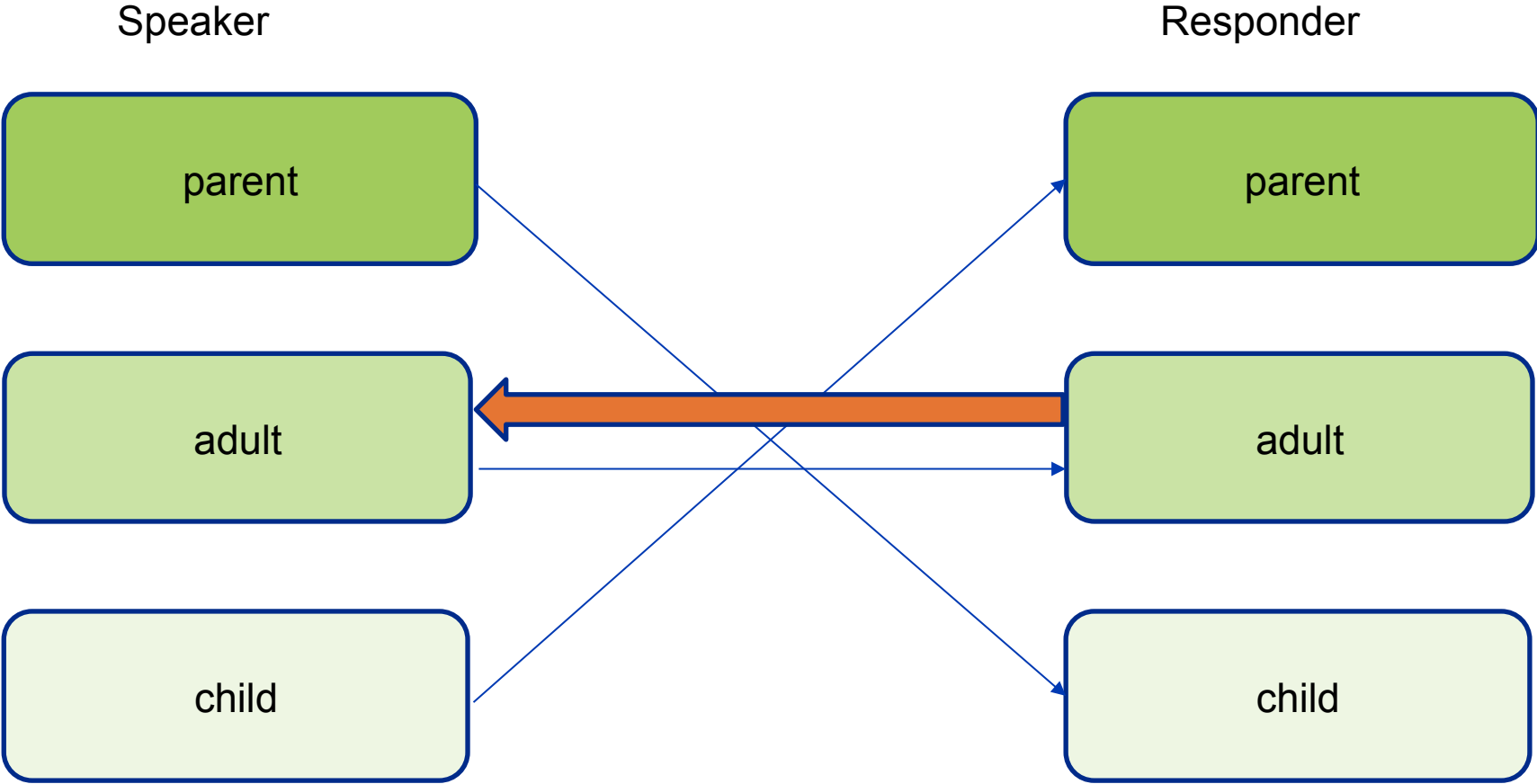


# Listening in communication



Friedmann Schulz von Thun (1981)

# Answering in communication



Eric Berne (1964)

# Conclusions

**Setting**

**Listening**

**Answering**

Thank you for listening!

Do you have any feedback?

# References

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More references available: contact us if interested