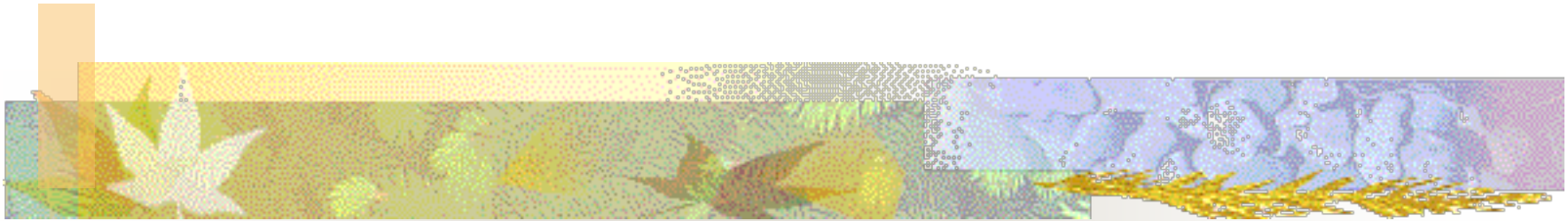


How to Talk to the Elephant



Linda Rising

lindarising.org

linda@lindarising.org

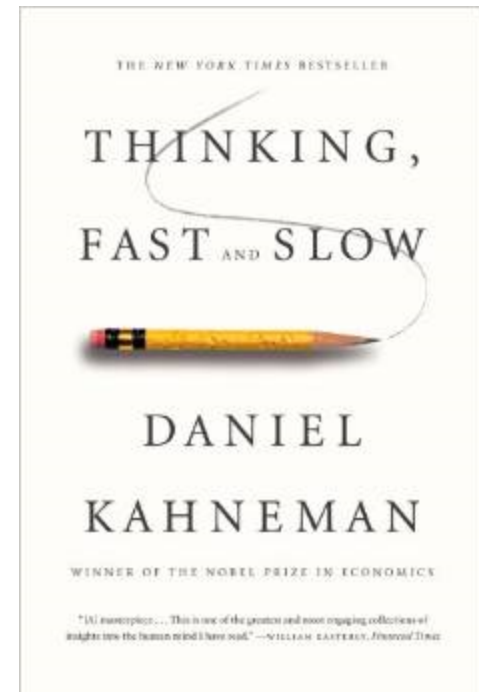
[@RisingLinda](#)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindarising/>

Behavioral Economics

Psychologist Daniel Kahneman won the Nobel Prize for “Economic Sciences” in 2002.

Kahneman & Tversky changed the way we think about thinking.





Which System?

System 1

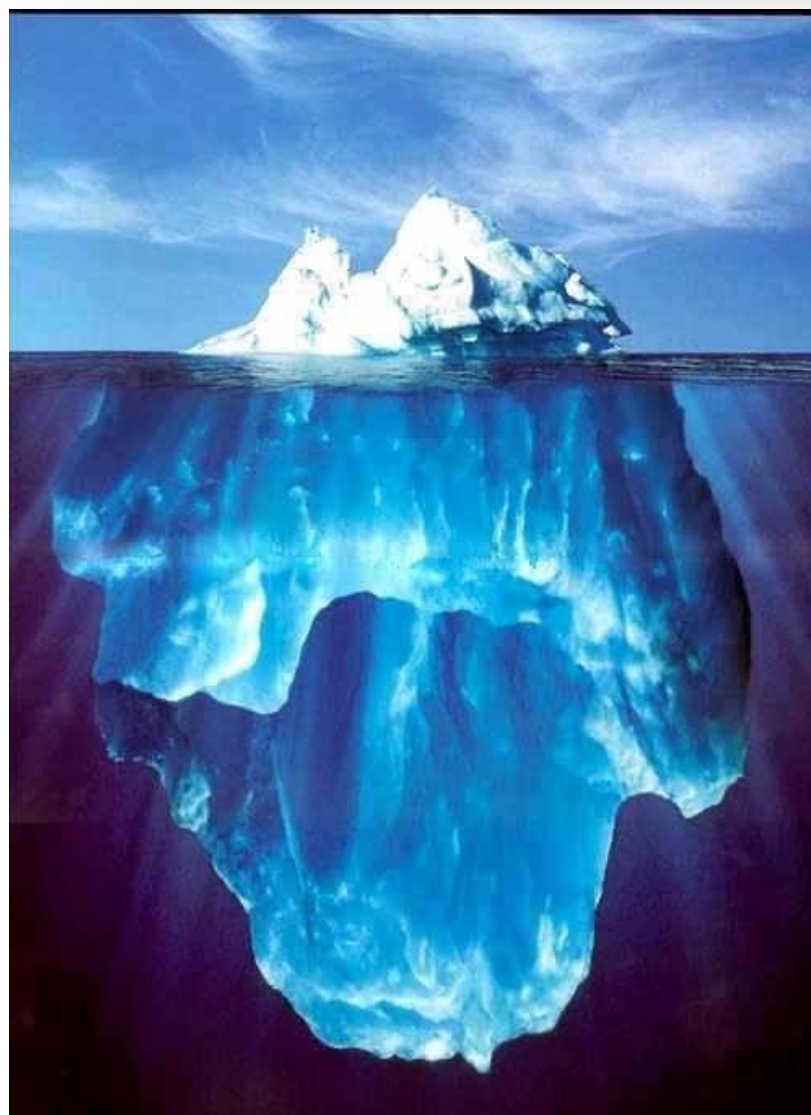
Unconscious (runs 24/7)
Older
Multiple modules
Fast
Intuitive
Can multi-task
Remembers everything ***
11 million bits/sec
BUT inaccessible

Our gut feeling

System 2

Conscious (on-line when awake)
Newer
Single module
Slow
Rational
Linear
Forgetful
40 bits/sec
Chatters constantly while we are awake

We identify with it

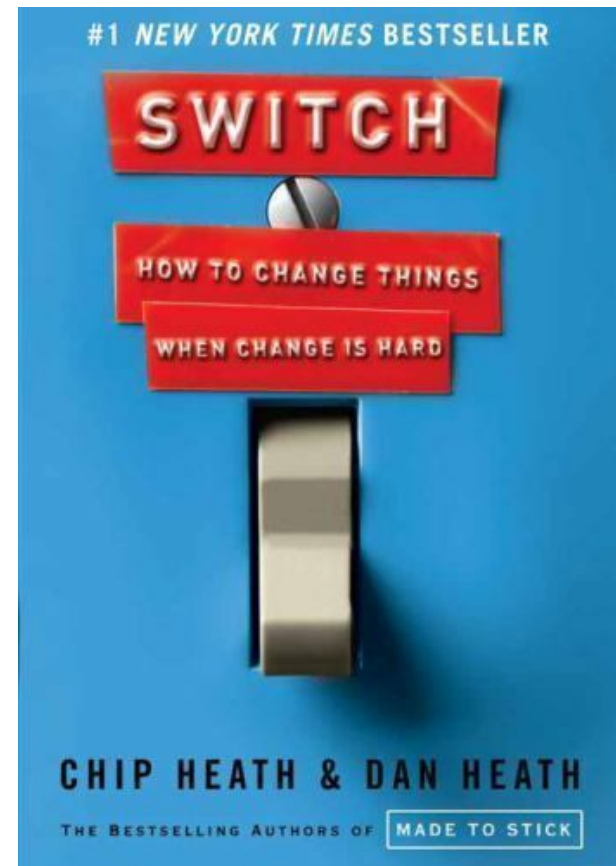
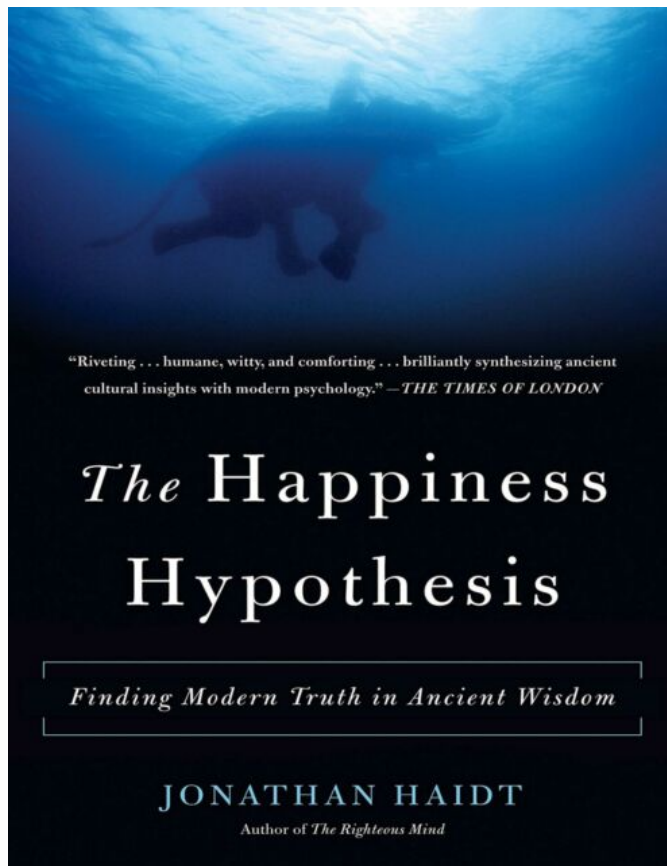




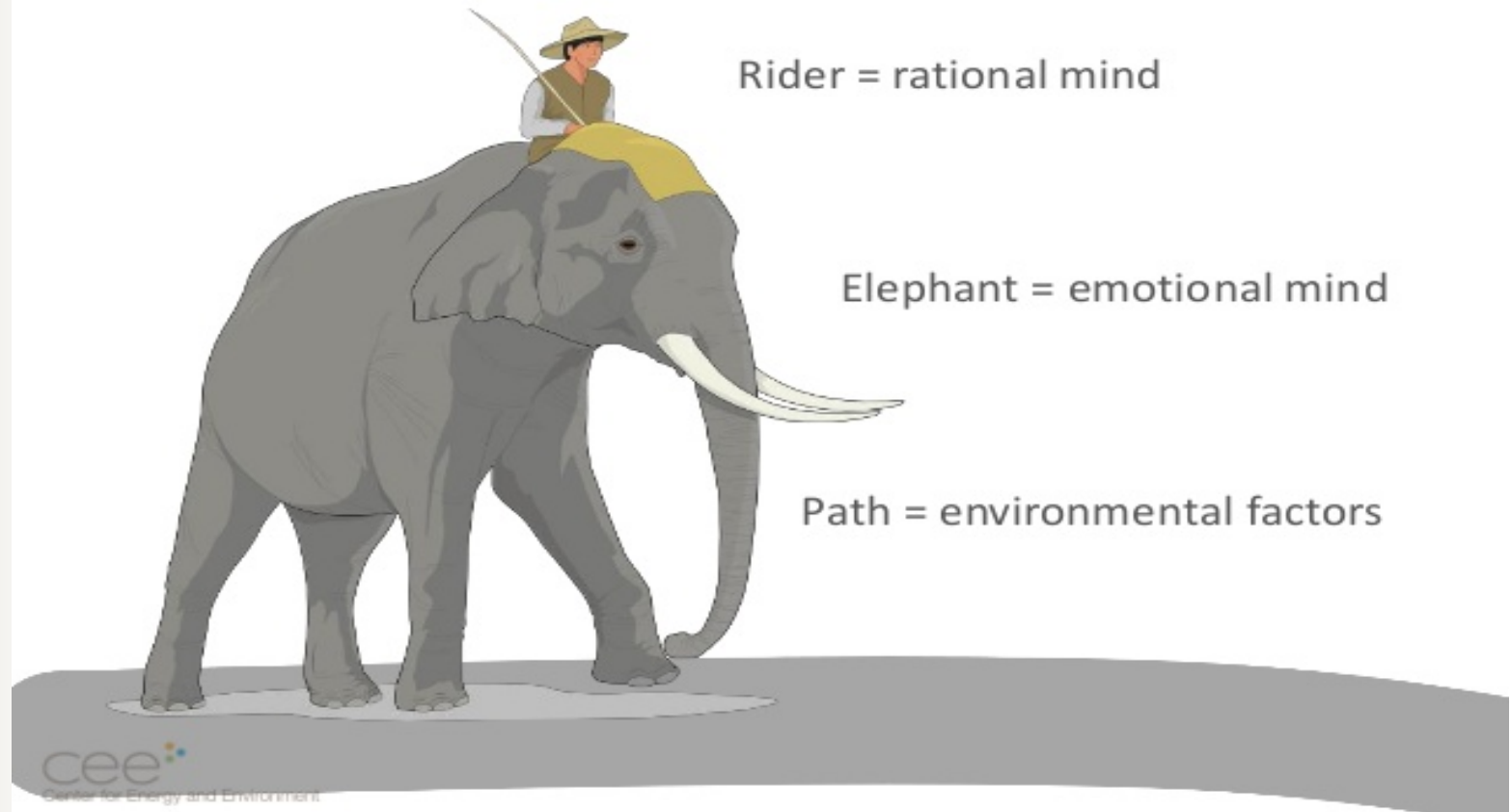
Models are not reality

- **Kahneman's model = an abstraction**
- **All models are wrong but some are useful. George Box, statistician**
- **There are other good models**

Jonathan Haidt & Heath Brothers



The elephant metaphor





The Elephant (System 1)

- **Has enormous strengths**
- **Runs on emotion —love, compassion, sympathy, loyalty**
- **Provides the energy and drive to get things done**
- **“You can’t change people’s minds by utterly refuting their arguments...If you want to change people’s minds, you’ve got to talk to their elephants.” Jonathan Haidt**

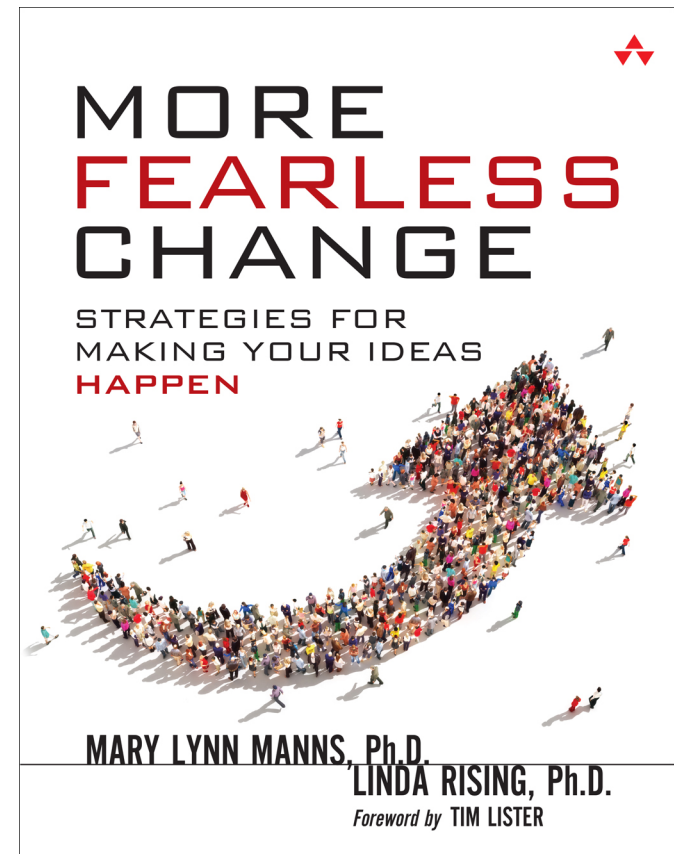


The Rider (System 2)

- Likes facts and reason
- Provides planning and direction
- Tends to overanalyze, overthink issues
- Believes he has more control than he does
- Who's in charge? The Elephant, of course!

My Favorite Books on Change 😊!

Patterns in Red Italics





Personal Touch

- Try to understand how the Elephant feels about the situation
- Try to understand what the Rider is thinking
- Check out the Path (walk a mile in the Elephant's shoes)
- We typically first and foremost consider ourselves. We focus on what is persuasive to us, our state of mind, our desires, our goals. If we want to change others, we need to understand what goes on in their heads.



Direct the Rider – Bright Spots

- Rider loves data and analysis
- Sees too many problems, spends too much time analyzing them => analysis paralysis
- Rider asks, What's broken? How to fix it?
- Instead, focus on bright spots, What's working? How can we do more of it?



It's all about data 😊!

- **We usually believe opponents are missing facts so all we need to do is supply the missing information.**
- **We bombard opponents and can't understand why they are still resistant.**
- **The problem must be with THEM!**



Truth and Facts take a back seat

- **Yes, we are motivated to understand the world accurately.**
- **Yes, we can and do change our minds.**
- **But, our primary goals are identity affirmation and self-protection.**



Our narrative

- The story we tell ourselves.
- In experiments, subjects will make up a story to explain their behavior.
- The story isn't "true," it's our version of what's going on.
- We think we're being scientists but we're really lawyers – looking for flaws, with the goal of debunking information we don't like.



Motivate the Elephant – ***Emotional Connection***

- The Elephant is easily demoralized, spooked, derailed. It needs reassurance.
- Don't scare the Elephant!
- Tell a story to help the Elephant feel sad, happy, concerned – include a hopeful glimpse of the solution
- Elephants love stories about other Elephants just like them – include peanuts! ***Do Food***



Motivate the Elephant – ***Emotional Connection***

- Listen, Listen, Listen, be a trampoline
- Elephants need to be heard before they will listen to you
- It takes time and effort to build trust
- ***Stay in Touch*** - keep going back to reassure the Elephant, so it will get to know you



Motivate the Elephant – Show Progress

- **Show the Elephant how far he has already gone.**
- **Car Wash experiment.**
- **To the team learning a new software tool: “The interface for the <new tool> is a lot like the <old tool> you won’t have any trouble picking up the new features.”**



Motivate the Elephant – ***Baby Steps***

In a long drive, you think about your trip one town at a time, one hour at a time, or you promise yourself a coffee stop after the next 75 miles. It's easier to think "75 miles to coffee" than "8.5 more hours of sitting to Grandma's." Especially at first, take it step by step.



Motivate the Elephant – ***Baby Steps***

- Organizations want big change right away.
- Big asks typically get rejected – too different from what they are currently doing
- Ask for less initially, then ask for a little more.
- Break a large effort into small, manageable chunks.
- Elephant who drank 3 liters of Mountain Dew a day.



Motivate the Elephant – Shrink Change

- Big changes come from a succession of small changes.
- The first steps may seem almost trivial.
- Don't give the Elephant an excuse to give up.
- *Small successes* generate hope.



Motivate the Elephant – Growth Mindset

- **Businesspeople think of two stages: (1) Plan, (2) Execute.**
- **There is no practice or learning stage in the middle.**
- **We don't care how you do it, just get it done.**
- **To create and sustain change, be a coach not a scorekeeper.**
- **Embrace a growth mindset. Instill it in your team.**
- **Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter: “Everything can look like a failure in the middle.” [Ask for this paper.]**



Motivate the Elephant – Highlight Identity

- **Consequences model or Identity model**
- **Consequences model: weigh costs & benefits, maximize satisfaction, rational, analytical approach.**
- **Identity model asks, Who am I? What kind of situation is this? What would someone like me do in this situation?**
- **We want to be good mothers/fathers, patriotic citizens, etc.**
- **Change efforts that violate identities are doomed to failure.**



Ask for Help

- Ask for advice, a favor, loan (Ben Franklin effect)
- Arthur Helps: “We all admire the wisdom of people who come to us for advice.”
- When advice or favor is given, commitment & consistency kick in and we believe we like requestor, else why would we give time or resources?



Bridge Builder

- Have other Elephants talk to the Resistant Elephant
- It's often all about you, so hand off the job to someone the Resistant Elephant feels comfortable with
- A converted former skeptic is a great choice for this role



Whisper in the General's Ear

- **Never talk to Elephants in groups!**
- **Meet one-on-one with influential Resistors.**
- **Many high-level executives have terrified Elephants. They live with fear & ignorance but have no place to go.**
- **Gently offer wise counsel and easy-to-understand answers.**
- **Work on their schedule.**
- **Never share what goes on with anyone.**



Easier Path

- Popcorn experiment
- Sizes and locations of containers, sizes and colors of portions
- We don't believe we will be affected
- In 7 weeks, 2,000 people in Google's New York office consumed 3.1 million fewer calories from M&Ms



Lead the Elephant to Decide

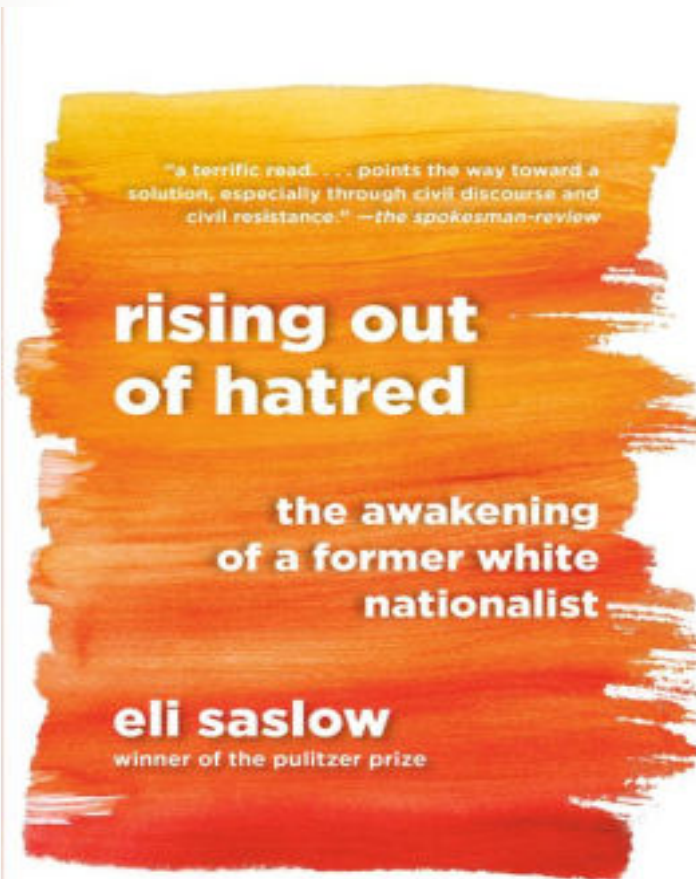
- **It's difficult to rewire the brain but we can change our environment. Research suggests this leads to better outcomes.**
- **Don't tell them what to do. Just make it easier for them to reach better decisions.**
- **This also works on your own Elephant. Don't buy M&Ms or if you do put them in an opaque container on the top shelf.**



Easier Path

- Rally the herd. Behavior is contagious.
- Humans are herd animals. We want to fit in, to bond with others, and to earn the respect and approval of our peers. Such inclinations are essential to our survival. For most of our evolutionary history, our ancestors lived in tribes. Becoming separated from the tribe—or worse, being cast out—was a death sentence.

Rising out of hatred



People who disagreed with me were critical in this process. Especially those who were my friends regardless, but who let me know when we talked about it that they thought my beliefs were wrong and took the time to provide evidence and civil arguments. I didn't always agree with their ideas, but I listened to them and they listened to me.



<https://braverangels.org/>

- Braver Angels is a citizens' organization uniting red and blue Americans in a working alliance to depolarize America.
- We try to understand the other side's point of view, even if we don't agree with it.
- We engage those we disagree with, looking for common ground and ways to work together.
- We support principles that bring us together rather than divide us.



Behavior not Beliefs

- Research shows that if we try to change how people think or their beliefs, we will fail.
- If we focus on changing behavior, this is not only achievable but often gives the results we want.
- Talk to the Elephant!
- Thanks to you and your Elephant for listening.

HOW TO TALK TO THE ELEPHANT

- BY LINDA RISING -

LISTENING IS A SKILL
THAT YOU CAN LEARN

THINKING FAST
& SLOW....



WHICH PART IS
STRONGER?

CONCIUS vs INCONCIUS



RIDER
RATIONAL



ELEPHANT
EMOTIONAL



PATH
ENVIROMENTAL
PATH

#AGILE100

@AGILE_100

TRY TO
UNDERSTAND

• SET THE
PATH

• LEAD THE
ELEPHANT
BY EXAMPLE

• DON'T TALK
TO ELEPHANTS
IN GROUPS

• THE ELEPHANT
IS NATURAL
CURIOUS

• WALK
LIKE A
WALKER



LISTEN FIRST BEFORE TALKING

(GET TO KNOW THE ELEPHANT)

by HENK WYHANDS