



*The Path of
Contemplative Dialogue:
Engaging Collective Awareness*
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contemplativedialogue.org

Preface

What we refer to as the practice of Contemplative Dialogue is a synthesis of the work of many people from many fields. Taken together, this mix of theory, skills, and values produces new possibilities for understanding and engaging relationships, communities and organizations with depth, compassion, and effectiveness.

This manual is a work in progress. It is intended to be a descriptive tool for those learning this work. It describes some of the basic elements that undergird Contemplative Dialogue, and brings them together in what we hope is a distilled yet accurate way.

We attempt to clearly identify theoretical sources when we base elements on the material of others. We choose to describe the approaches of those who clearly capture particularly important details. Even though we identify particular source thinkers, in most cases there are others who point to the same realities using the language and theory of their different professional or cultural fields. The fact of this 'redundancy' is an assurance that what is being described here has a universal quality that is not limited to a particular profession or belief system.

We think it points to a common wisdom and experience of what it means to be human and to seek to live together mindfully.

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This background information is provided for support purposes and as an introductory resource to the practice of Contemplative Dialogue. We encourage you to explore beyond the theories and descriptions and engage the depths of Contemplative Dialogue practice.

Seeing the Group Mind

Contemplative Dialogue has effectively assisted both groups and individual leaders in engaging the 'Collective Mind' of their organizations. It has also been effectively used in working with informal groups and creating a deep experience of community where division or separation may have been the felt starting point.

Insofar as the process of Contemplative Dialogue works with what is most essential about the human person, it requires no explicit language or particular belief system to be effective. It makes no effort to 'change' or 'fix' participants. Rather it assists them in touching what is most central and trustworthy in their human experience, and speaking of it with deep integrity.

From this common ground, groups and individuals both find new awareness and freedom to create the lives and organizations they aspire to.

*The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless.
It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept.
Not that we discover a new unity.
We discover an older unity. We are already one, but we imagine that we are not.
And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we already are.
- Thomas Merton -*

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The Practice of Contemplative Dialogue

An Experiential Introduction

What is Contemplative Dialogue, and what real use does it have?

Recall for a moment the experience of waking up this morning. If you were at home, perhaps you looked around a familiar room and maybe even recognized a familiar person sleeping next to you. You went through your morning routine, perhaps making breakfast, checking your e-mail, showering, and dressing for your day. If you left your home, you began to see familiar neighborhood and maybe even neighbors that you know. If you used your car, you drove on familiar roads past familiar scenes. And depending on how long you've lived in the area, it may seem as well known to you as the proverbial back of your hand.

But look at that experience with fresh eyes. As you moved through your home in the morning, think of all the ways in which you are interacting with complex realities that you may or may not understand well. Not to be mysterious here, but most of us depend on a local power company to provide the energy that heats, cools, and powers our homes. Others maintained and provided complicated energy systems that allowed your light switch to react in a familiar way when your fingers found it. The coffee or tea you may have prepared had been grown, shipped, processed, packaged, and touched in hundreds of ways you may never even think of.

This 'blindness of the familiar' doesn't just affect you. It affects all of us humans. The family members we awaken to may be such long-standing companions that they have become taken for granted, familiar to the point of having lost their mystery.

*After all, when you come right down to it,
how many people speak the same language
even when they speak the same language?*

- Russell Hoban -

How many of our close friends or family members know us that well? While being known and understood may be part of our intimate relationships, we may still recognize places in our lives where we remain a mystery to ourselves. Alternatively, we may feel that those around us have limited their understanding of us in ways that miss what feels essential about whom we are.

Despite the familiar visual aspect of the neighborhood outside our door, we literally plunge into an unknown universe almost the moment the door opens. How many of us have physically even been inside the homes of our neighbors? Do you really have any idea what life may be like beneath its external appearances for those around us? Think of how often we are surprised to hear of difficulties we never imagined happening in the lives of people we thought we knew well. Imagine for just a moment the incredible diversity of family, culture, relational practices, concerns, hopes and dreams that lie hidden in the people we pass every day.

With every step we take, or distance we drive, the mystery and the unknown reality grow in magnitude. As we cross invisible lines of economic, ethnic, and regional differences, the mystery expands to mind-boggling proportions. The comfortable habit of feeling that we 'know' the people and things that surround us may even make it impossible to consider the preceding questions with much felt seriousness. Yet we personally experience the depth of misunderstanding that exists in our world whenever we read a newspaper, listen to

accounts of life at work or church, or hear friends describe their closest relationships. Most of us know the deep longing we have to be understood deeply and fully without fear of ridicule or judgment.

Richer awareness is not merely an individual exercise or some philosophical flight of mind. Most of us don't need another theory in our lives, what we need are concrete ways to communicate and to live more effectively with the people around us. Contemplative Dialogue is an attitude and practice of being attentive and open to the mystery of life around us in a way that allows us to know it more intimately, more productively, and with far richer understanding. It is a way of being in relationship to the ordinary reality about us that makes available not just the visible and material qualities, but also the less tangible depths that lie hidden beneath mundane appearances.

*The worst is not death but being blind,
blind to the fact that everything about life is in
the nature of the miraculous.*

- Henry Miller -

The challenge both individually and organizationally is to first awaken awareness, and secondly to cultivate it so that we can increasingly draw on this power. There are many starting points and the situation and application will suggest how best to engage this process.

The Stance of Contemplative Dialogue

Contemplative Dialogue consists of three interrelated 'stances' or 'practices.'

I. Contemplative Noticing or Mindfulness

What we do not notice, we cannot freely respond to or choose to engage. Developing clearer awareness and understanding of personal mental and perceptual filters is a foundational starting point in this work. A variety of tools and frameworks for clarifying both interior and exterior perceptions are presented here, but any practice which supports engaging reality accurately is compatible with this approach.

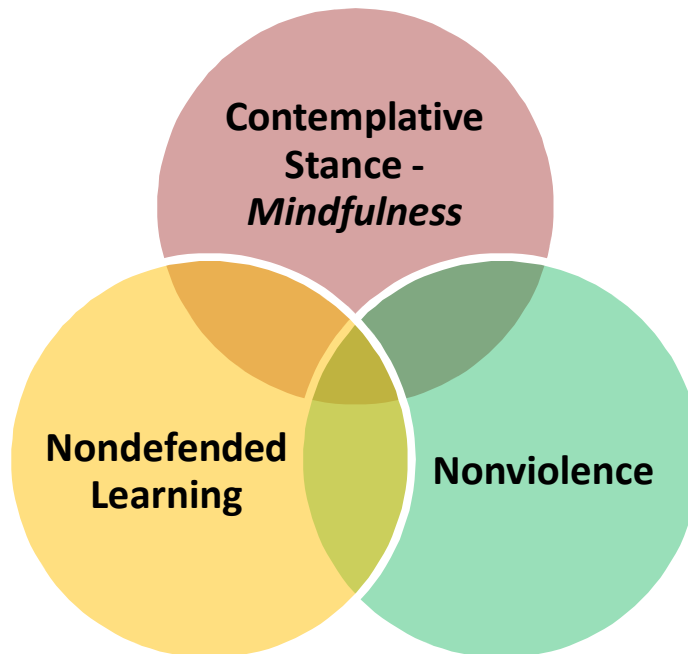
Contemplative: "To take a long, compassionate look at the real."

II. The Nondefended Learning Stance

We naturally and necessarily learn ways to fit in, protect and advance our interests, and get along in the human community. The 'defended' social and individual strategies limit our freedom of decision and choice as individuals and groups. The nondefended learning stance is an approach that supports us collectively overcoming these powerful limiting behaviors. This approach is described in a variety of approaches and disciplines that share a commitment to support free and informed choice, a commitment to the truth and developing collective commitment to the common good.

III. Nonviolence

At its highest level, Contemplative Dialogue develops a consistent ability to relate with and to the collective mind of a group. The regular practice and discipline of this stance will assist groups and their members in working toward the common good while achieving the



quality of group safety that allows fundamental problems to be solved. This stance provides the commitment to authentic presence that deep group freedom and learning require.

Freedom and Awareness

The practice of Contemplative Dialogue is based on a particular understanding of the way in which human consciousness develops. This developmental pattern is seen both in individuals and groups. A first assumption is that being human is more than just the sum total of the details of our daily lives. The distinctive element of human consciousness is that despite our finite limitations we nonetheless have the ability to make choices that create the person we are to become.

We as humans are painfully aware of the many limitations we experience every day. Yet if we stop and reflect, we may recognize that each and every day we make choices that shape who we are and who we will become. Although we don't always recognize it, we have a good deal of freedom. In a surprising number of ways we are free to make choices about how we respond, whom we relate with and the way in which we do the things we do.

Subjectively, we may not feel very free. We feel like we "have to go to work" or "have to take care of the kids". We may feel like our emotional reactions are largely beyond our control. We become used to responding in particular ways to particular situations. Cut off in traffic, I may habitually respond with anger. Yet beneath the comfortable and familiar responses we often work out of, most of us know we actually have choices about the ways in which we respond.

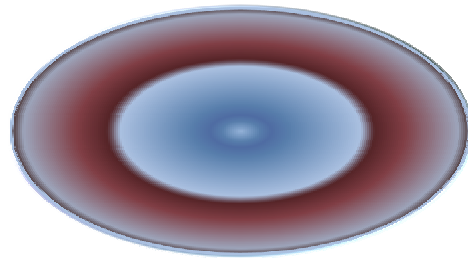
And though the relative degree of freedom we choose with may be limited by individual factors such as intelligence, psychological profile, and by cultural and educational factors, the possibility of choosing to respond in slightly different ways is a freedom that we possess. Even the addict, who may have little control over his or her addictive behavior, can nonetheless choose to recognize the very powerlessness of their situation. The choice to recognize that reality is itself an act of freedom.

The quality of our freedom is also limited by our habitual ways of noticing, thinking, and behaving. We may sleepwalk through our day, with little awareness of the choices we're making. Even the way in which we think about those free choices may blind us to the possibilities. In U.S. culture, we persistently hear free choice defined as making a consumer choice. So our understanding of freedom may become focused on whether I drive an SUV or a smaller car, or dress conservatively or more trendy.

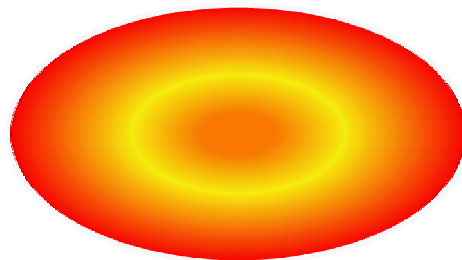
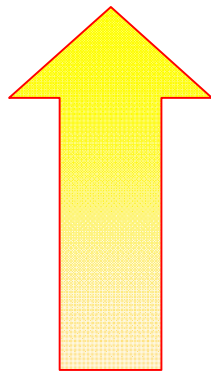
Explicitly, we use the framework described by German thinker, Karl Rahner. Rahner distinguishes between two realities or poles of our consciousness. The first he calls the subjective pole, and describes this as the ever present sense of "I", the moment to moment experience of myself as conscious person or subject. The second he calls the objective pole. This objective pole consists of our collective self-descriptions, categorizations, and our self-judgments. This pole consists of any conscious or unconscious attempt to capture or define the elusive reality of present centered awareness that is the subjective pole. No matter the limitations or judgments we objectively make, he nonetheless points out that it is the subjective person who in the very act of naming limitations already demonstrates an awareness that exceeds those finite limits.

Rahner goes on to suggest that this continual self-transcendence and ability to create ourselves in our accumulated free choices demonstrates the reality of the human spirit. Other philosophical approaches use different language, but still point to a similar reality.

It is this common ground or collective awareness that Contemplative Dialogue seeks to engage and make manifest. This collective mind is accessible in any moment and via any person. It does not depend on the use of particular language or belief systems, but rather on a process that engages the depth and capacity of any human person or group. It can therefore be used appropriately in the workplace, on the street, or in any relational setting.



Object-ive
Pole of Human
Awareness
*Our 'busy' or 'everyday
mind'*



Subject-ive
Pole of Human
Awareness
*Our 'essential self':
our place of
transcendent freedom*

Collective mind or awareness reflects not merely, the sum of the individuals gathered, but the deep conscious and unconscious wisdom and tradition of the group. It consists of both that which is articulated, unarticulated, and that tacit or unknown reality which nonetheless is present. By maintaining a focus on the collective mind of the group, dialogue is able to draw on the strength and resiliency of a group's common ground. This stance reflects a deep awareness of the reality of our interconnectedness across distance, across time, and across perceived divisions.

Although it is not necessary to hold spiritual or philosophical beliefs to be part of a contemplative dialogue process, the practice nonetheless is grounded in the assumption that all humans share a common ground. That despite the finite limitations of intelligence, education, and cultural influences, human persons have the capacity, by their intentional exercise of free choices, to create who they become, what values they contribute to the world, and thereby together the future reality that the world will consist of. Even at a completely concrete level, we recognize that the choice between acting with violence or compassion implies vastly different possibilities of future outcomes and responses on the parts of others. Hence the remarkable power of the nonviolent U.S. civil rights movement, which mobilized a nation to overcome tremendous obstacles and resistance to the basic practices of integrated society. How very different our current reality would be had those

many choices been for violent resistance. Perhaps we see the difference in the current state of Israel and Palestine.

The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in one another.

- Thomas Merton -

Process Values

What distinguishes Contemplative Dialogue from other contemporary approaches is melding the ancient contemplative traditions of awareness and attention to the real, with current theory on dialogue. This synthesis in practice adds a depth and consistent ability to touch the collective mind of a group, or more to the point our collective human awareness.

One of the reasons Contemplative Dialogue has this capacity results from particular process values that raise the capacity of a group's members to touch this level of awareness.

- Trust in the basic unity of human people and all life.
A foundational process value and assumption is of the fundamental unity of all humanity. We assume that while differences and divisions are real at many levels, the deepest reality is of a common unity and ground that connects the human family.
- Nonviolence in presence, word, and action.
Contemplative Dialogue accepts the message of Gandhi and King that while violence and force may be quicker, in the end they fail to fundamentally resolve problems. Only solutions that respect all parties, and invite them into the solution are capable of long-term and lasting resolution.
We further assume that the practice of true nonviolence (in thought, word and presence) creates a dynamic openness in communities and systems that is both creative and deeply healing. This spirit of Gandhian nonviolence overcomes the fundamental dualities of human thought that doom efforts at 'good communication' that demand no change in the participant. Nonviolence has great power provided it really witnesses to truth and not just to self-righteousness.
- Commitment to seeking truth with compassion and humility.
We assume that each of us witnesses to the truth as best we are able. We point to truth 'where' and 'as' we've experienced it. If a particular philosophy or religion has led me to a deep experience of truth in my life, I may likely assume that others will find truth in the same place and fashion. My attachment to particular language, imagery, or descriptive ideas may blind me to others' attempts to describe what may be common in our experiences.
- Commitment to speaking truth with compassion and humility.
My ardent desire to share truth as I've experienced it may unintentionally lead me to forcefully attempt others conversion to 'my experience.' My insistence on 'preaching' a good value, motivated by my deep love and concern, may do more to harden others in positions of opposition.
Telling the truth with compassion challenges me to first recognize what the core experiential values or truths are behind my ardent positions. It then requires me to

Speak to that meaning, and then trust that the common truth in what I share will eventually touch others and connect with the truth within them. The practice of 'telling the truth with compassion' is an act that has profound consequences for those attempting to do so as well as those who hear it. This form of truth telling has nothing in common with the safer practice of 'telling the truth politely.' Politeness leads to avoidance, white lies, and defensive work-arounds. Compassion on the other hand, is an act of deep solidarity and commitment to others.

The truth never hurts a just cause.

- M. Gandhi -

- Respect and support for participants' freedom and self-determination. This value demands that the process reflect and embody a commitment to participants' freedom of choice and self-determination. It assumes that anything less is coercive and will fail to honor the sacred being and becoming that each of us is. Beyond mere tolerance or individualism, this commitment demands a mutuality and involvement, a willingness to engage so that free choice is informed and enhanced by intentional relationship.
- Willingness to risk suspending the rush to action. The stance of contemplation, 'taking a long, loving look at the real,' trusts that without this 'watchful suspension of action' we are doomed to sustain past patterns of interaction. The power of looking with a 'beginner's mind' creates the necessary openness and possibility of true freedom and mindful action.

The Ladder of Inference: Noticing our mind's rush past reality

The ladder of inference is a framework for understanding the way in which our minds quickly process information and make judgments. It comes from the work of Chris Argyris.

The world around us is a flood of sensory information that could easily overwhelm our capacity for receiving it. For us to act effectively, our brains must filter the sensory data that comes in at every moment. This normally happens transparently, with little or no conscious awareness on our part. As a result, we walk through the events of our day with the belief that we are seeing raw unfiltered reality all about us.

Based on this life-long sense that we experience the reality about us as it is and as we interpret it, we develop beliefs about the world that make perfect sense to us.

- ✓ We feel that our beliefs represent *the truth*.
- ✓ It also seems self-apparent to us that the truth is obvious for anyone to see.
- ✓ This makes sense to us because we know our beliefs are based on the facts of our *own experience*.
- ✓ And while there may be many versions of facts out there, we know which ones are truly important.

Each one of us walks around trusting our experience more or less because of the way our awareness is shaped. And the readily apparent diversity of viewpoints, opinions, and theories that others hold about what is real and true in the world around us does little or nothing to shake our confidence in our own positions. Argyris suggests that this situation results from the ways in which our minds work.

The human ability to move quickly from concrete data to abstract judgments is the quality that has made us such an evolutionary success. Yet this instant movement to abstract thoughts and conclusions has a downside. It makes it increasingly difficult for us to agree on common starting points in our increasingly diverse and complex world.

We humans are meaning-making creatures. We tell ourselves stories that make sense of the world around us. The problem is that the stories are based on the facts as we know and select them. Argyris uses the image of a stepladder to represent this movement from concrete reality to increasing abstraction. Reading the ladder from its base upward helps us to see the distinct movements in this 'meaning-making' process.

- ✓ The base that the ladder stands on represents the concrete physical reality of the world and the events around us. From this ocean of data, we selectively notice or choose particular elements.
- ✓ We add cultural and personal meanings to what we have "noticed".
- ✓ We make assumptions based on 'facts' and the meanings we have assigned to them.
- ✓ Based on the assumptions we make we form conclusions about the particular situation and those involved in it.
- ✓ These conclusions become beliefs about the world around us.
- ✓ We make choices and take action based on these beliefs.

This ability to quickly interpret the facts of the world around us allowed our ancestors to learn and respond to the natural environment. We are the descendants of those who were smart enough not to be eaten by wild animals or starve to death in times of famine. And the ability to quickly read a situation and make snap judgments is often a prized quality in managers and leaders. We tend to interpret it as a sign of intelligence and 'decisiveness.' However, the fact that this ladder of abstraction operates in hidden fashion below the level of our conscious awareness, gives it a tremendous power for mischief.

*The most dangerous thing in the world is to
think you understand something.*

-Zen Saying-

Each of us walks around with the belief that what I see and what I think accurately reflects complete reality, or at least what is most essential. In conversations or when some event happens we quickly assume that our beliefs and judgments effectively capture the real picture. The common outcome of this situation is that we heatedly debate our various ideas and interpretations, attempting to convince one another of the rightness of our viewpoints.

Learning to first be aware of my own movement to abstraction and up the ladder of inference is a beginning awareness and skill. Because the process happens in the blink of an eye, a first awareness is recognizing when we are holding an abstract conclusion or judgment. The next step is to ask myself what assumptions led me to that position. Naming these assumptions as concretely and clearly as possible is critical. We often take our assumptions for granted, which makes them even harder to spot. Once we have honestly and thoroughly looked at our assumptions, the next question is what meanings did we take from the situation that led us to those assumptions? In the process of looking at the meanings we drew from the events, we also begin to recognize what details and sense data seemed most important to us.

So for example, I'm walking down the hallway at work when my boss passes quickly by without speaking or even acknowledging my presence. Because this person carries a lot of importance in my world I immediately begin thinking why they might act in such an unfriendly and even hostile fashion. It comes to mind, that the project I have been working on is late. But that doesn't explain why my boss didn't even bother to speak to me. My boss treats me well only when there is something for me to do, but not at other times. What a jerk! You can't trust somebody like that. I had better watch myself more closely around here.

Notice for a moment the logical flow of that example. It doesn't seem altogether unreasonable that someone might draw those conclusions from that kind of experience. Notice again the original experience, of the boss rushing by without speaking. Although the person in the example interpreted that as an unfriendly and even hostile act, they really don't know the reason the boss acted that way. It's possible the boss just received an upsetting phone call about a family member and was too concerned to even notice the other person in the hallway. Perhaps he or she is suffering from some intestinal bug and is rushing to a bathroom oblivious to all else.

The point is that we can't know the real reason without asking for information we don't have. Before allowing ourselves the luxury of trusting the story we've told ourselves, we should first find out whether that behavior had anything at all to do with us. This intentional practice of recognizing and testing out each step in our ladder of inference is often referred to as backing down the ladder. Learning to do this on our own is one powerful skill. Learning to do it openly in the presence of others is an even greater learning step to take.

The discipline of noticing my own ladder of inference and openly working my way back down it helps me to be more directly in touch with what is real and essential in the world around me. Combining this with the ability to walk another person down their ladder of inference in a non-threatening way makes it possible to resolve a whole range of misunderstandings. Used proactively, this skill can be used to prevent many mistakes or miscommunications from taking place.

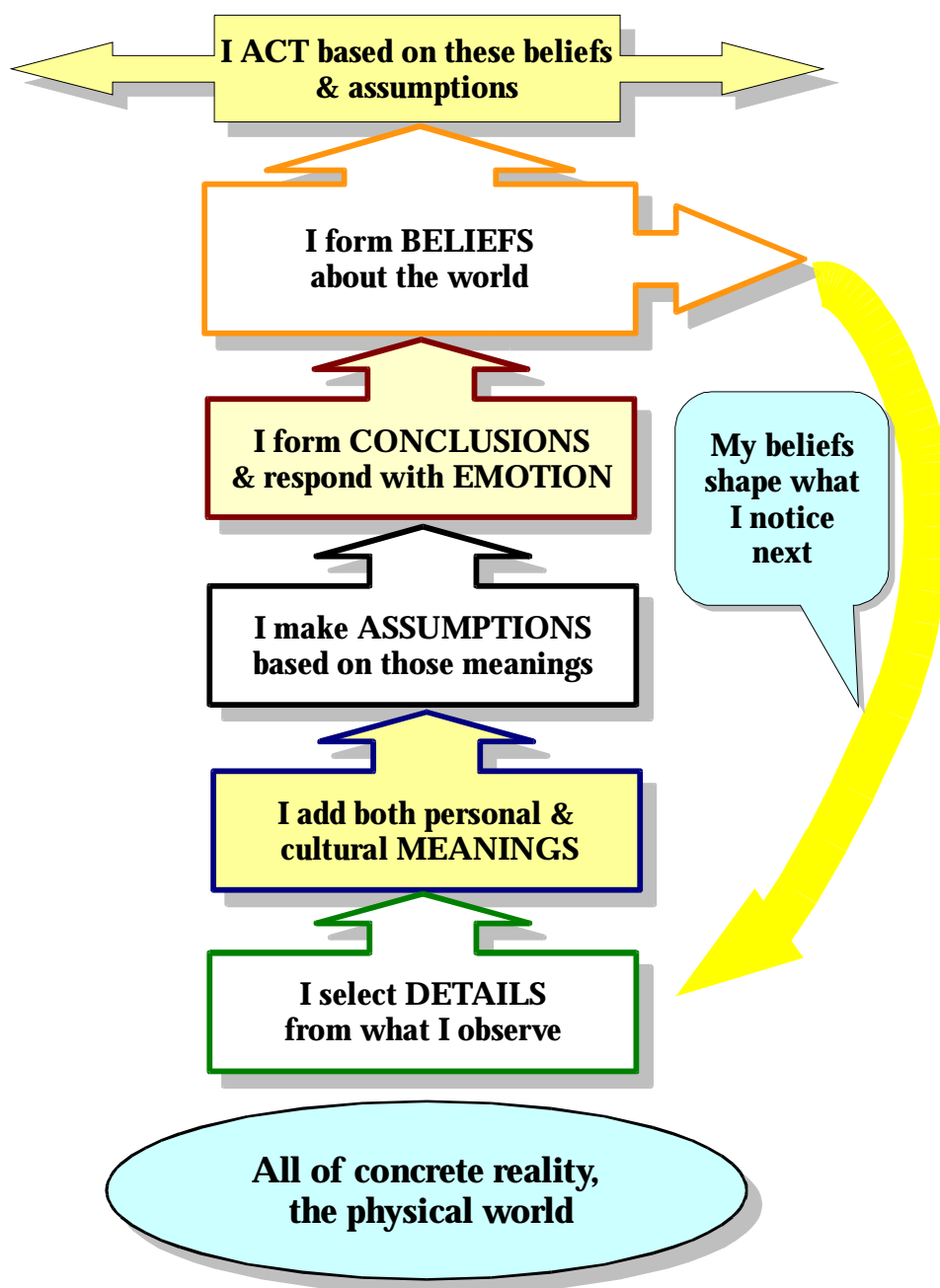
As adults, we spend endless hours in planning meetings only to find that the outcomes of our efforts often look nothing like we had anticipated. We may sit in meetings and talk to one another using exactly the same words, but holding drastically different assumptions about what the words mean and what implications they hold for our actions. And the ways

in which these misunderstandings can arise in male -- female relationships is the stuff of comedy clichés. Learning to be aware of our 'ladders of inference' gives us ways to understand one another much more effectively and accurately.

*Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and
look around once in awhile, you could miss it.*

- Ferris Bueller -

The Ladder of Inference

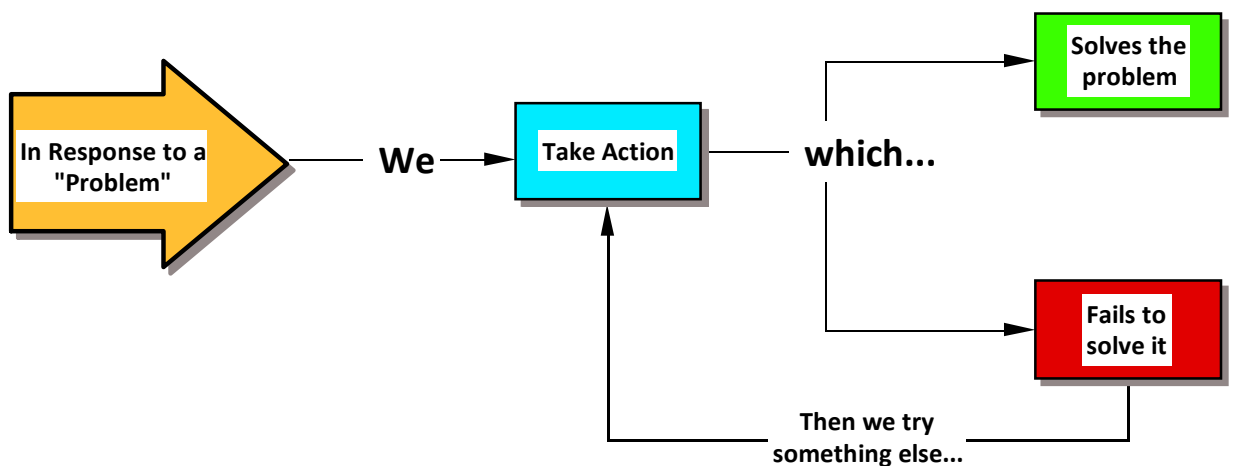


Concept by Chris Argyris

Single-loop and Double-loop Learning

Single and double-loop learning refer to two different strategies for engaging problems in our lives. Single-loop learning is the simple strategy we use when something is broken. We fix it, of course. If the light bulb is burned out in your reading lamp, you may first check to see if it is switched on, and check to make sure it is plugged in. The next thing you try may be to replace the light bulb with a new one. If the light begins working your problem is solved and you go on about your day.

Single-loop Learning



Single-loop (or cause and effect) learning may solve simple problems. It seldom solves problems with complex or hidden causes. Complicated problems may be impossible to solve using this approach.

Based on the work of Chris Argyris.

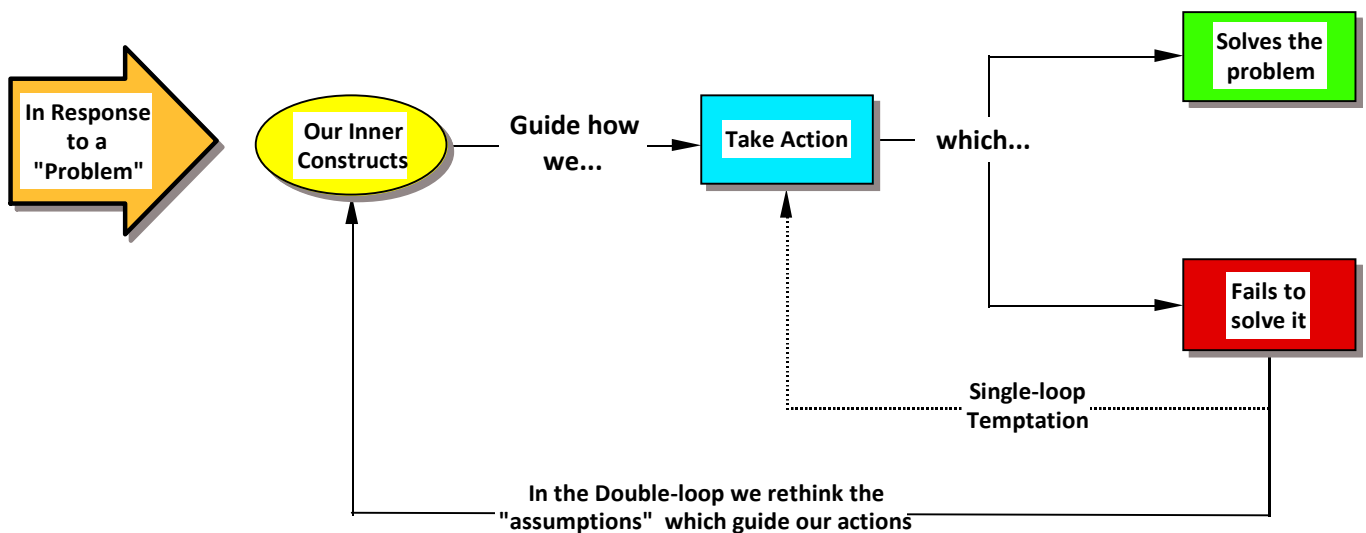
Another name for this process is simple cause and effect learning. We learned to solve problems this way as children. If you have ever seen the delight a toddler takes in turning power switches on and off and 'making' lights or the television go on and off, you have seen cause and effect learning at work. As adults, it's also a very effective way to solve many of the problems we find each day. If the car is almost out of gas, we stop at a gas station and refill the tank. We've just fixed a problem in a very simple way.

The problem with single-loop learning is that in some ways its simplicity and ease-of-use are addictive. The ability to be a problem solver is highly valued in our technical society. Corporate managers are brought in to solve major problems in a very short time span. (In August of 2001, MSNBC Financial News reported that a CEO was dismissed after only three months for failing to generate a rise in stock price for his company.) Yet, as problems become increasingly complex, the temptation of simple solutions enthusiastically applied inevitably creates more if not greater problems down the road.

*You can't solve a problem on the same level
you created it.*
- Albert Einstein -

One common practice that shows up in misapplied single-loop learning, is blaming. When an organization looks for a 'fall guy' to place the blame on, you can often be assured that a single-loop process is at work. Another common single-loop variation is used when an organization or group applies their preferred "solution" to every problem it faces. The dominant use of a 'preferred' or 'sanctioned' response is often rooted in values deeply ingrained in the organizational culture. While the value expressed maybe a very good one, applied in un-reflective 'knee-jerk' fashion, it may cease to produce the quality results that the organization believes it will.

Double-loop Learning



Seeing how the problem resists "solving," we take time to look at the "assumptions" or beliefs that may blind us to real solutions.

Image based on the work of Chris Argyris.

Examples of the exclusive use of single-loop learning can be drawn from almost any human situations: relationships, organizational life, and politics. One of the most challenging misuses is in the process of addiction. A person feels stressed or disturbed, and learns that alcohol helps them to feel better. Over time, more alcohol or more frequent use are needed to deaden the original disturbing feelings. Drunkenness itself begins to produce more problems, at work, at home, and perhaps with drunken driving arrests. The preferred solution becomes a source of more problems.

What makes double-loop learning different is the fact that instead of focusing purely on finding a solution to fix the problem, double-loop learning takes the extra step of reflecting on the possibility that my values or I may be unintentionally sustaining the problem. This is the genius of the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous; they draw attention away from outside circumstances and challenge the person to look at the ways that I am responsible and involved with the problem.

*In order to arrive at what you do not know
you must go by the way which is the way of
ignorance.*

- T.S. Eliot -

Taking time for double-loop reflection may slow the initial rush to action, but creates the possibility of a lasting and effective response to a problem. In order to engage in double-loop learning, we first must notice the process responses we get caught in. Implicit in saying this is that we must be willing to look with a degree of humility and willingness to learn. In a group setting, it may require willingness and the skill to ask questions that momentarily slow a strong rush to action and conclusion.

Dialogue Skills

The seven practices that we describe as 'skills for dialogue' come from the work of Chris Argyris and colleagues. Essentially, they can serve as a dialogue mindfulness checklist. Argyris' original title for them was "Rules for Developing Model II." referring to his Model II theory of action. They also refer to such practices as the Ladder of Inference.

The reason they are critical to the practice of Contemplative Dialogue is that they provide us a powerful tool for overcoming the defensive binds we so frequently run into. Unlike dialogue understood as well-intended 'heart-to-heart' conversation, these practices give us a way to work through hot conflicted moments.

1. Combine advocacy with inquiry. Don't just ask questions or just try to persuade others. Invite others into your viewpoint and let them explore and try to understand it. What's trustworthy or accurate should be able to stand on its merits.

2. Illustrate your abstract interpretations with concrete information. When you make a claim, provide the information upon which you base it. This could be for example, factual data, recounting an event, or even a role-play of what you mean.

3. Share your thought process and check for agreement at each "ladder of inference" step. This skill helps others understand your conclusions. It helps a group explore and negotiate different interpretations. Describe and share each step that led you to your conclusion. Check for agreement at each step. Move back a step when meanings conflict. Describe why you drew certain conclusions. Together we can notice where we make "abstract leaps" ('He was rude, so I assumed everybody here would be.') This way we can be more certain we understand each other *and ourselves*.

4. Look for contradicting data and alternative explanations. One common mistake in everyday practice is to look for reasons that agree with our position. This skill on the other hand encourages seeking out possible contradictions, so that a "tested" conclusion may be reached.

5. Support making mistakes in the service of learning. Illustrating your views, sharing one's thought process, and looking for contradicting data puts us at risk of discovering we're wrong. This tends to make us defensive. By supporting and encouraging each other to risk learning, we can overcome the temptation to get defensive.

6. Notice your own impact on a situation. Notice and check out the possible ways in which our different roles or communication styles affect the dialogue process. "Does my position make this awkward to talk about? I would feel awkward if you all were my boss...."

7. Experiment to test different views. Use surveys, role-plays, trial runs, or whatever seems appropriate to test out possible explanations. "Let's try it your way for a week and see if any problems come up."

Human Responses to Social Challenges

Chris Argyris, longtime Harvard University social and organizational psychologist, for many years studied the dynamics of organizations and why they so frequently showed an inability to solve problems they were seemingly well prepared to address. Despite the best of education, adequate support, and strong motivation to address the issues of concern, organizations showed a marked pattern of failing to successfully do so.

Over time this question led Argyris and colleagues to study the dynamics of defensiveness that appear to be universal in human beings. Studies conducted on various continents, with diverse cultures, both genders, and various generations, all identified two basic learned strategies we humans rely on when faced with potentially threatening or embarrassing situations.

Simply put, the first strategy is to attempt to control or dominate the situation and those involved in it. The second related strategy is to attempt to maintain relational connections, not hurt feelings, and trust that maintaining relationships will resolve the difficulties.

The problem with both of these strategies is the way in which they are used. Essentially, each of them is a strategy used to protect my interests or myself and to control the situation in the ways I see fit.

Both approaches are manipulative, not honest, and attempt to get others to behave in the ways I want them to. While at first glance, Argyris approach may seem 'technical' or 'complex,' it bears a strong correlation with other interpretations of the ways in which we humans manipulate relationships.

For descriptions of the same reality in other voices, see Thomas Merton's essay 'The Way of Nonviolence.' (Thomas Merton: Essential Writings. Christine Bochen, Ed.) or the Aikido practice of 'blending' described by George Leonard in his 'The Way of Aikido.' It resonates deeply with the foundational stance of non-violent action in King and Gandhi, and leads to a rich communal learning stance.

Model I Theory of Action – The ‘Defended Stance’

Argyris suggests that we universally learn these strategies for protecting ourselves in childhood. Although we ‘espouse’ elegant theories and reasons for our actions, when you notice the essential actions and strategies used, they more commonly reflect the two defensive approaches that are jointly identified as Model I in Argyris jargon.

Strong Model I may be stereotypically identified with the masculine ‘Executive’ persona. Nice or ‘Pastoral’ Model I is stereotypically thought of as a caring feminine approach. In reality, both genders employ both approaches, and alternate in their use of them as a situation may warrant.

Guiding Values

Strong Model I

1. Achieve the purpose as *I* define it.
2. Win!
3. Suppress or hide ‘negative’ feelings such as fear, doubt, anger, etc.
4. Be rational – “Just use your head.”

Or alternatively there is ‘Nice’ or ‘Pastoral’ Model I

1. Everyone participates in defining goals and outcomes.
2. Be sure *everybody* wins *and* no one loses.
3. Express, value, and care for feelings.
4. Don't be ‘heady.’ Avoid emphasizing too much left brain (logical) detail and logic.

Note: ‘Nice’ Model I is normally used in combination with Strong Model I. Generally, we try to use it and if it doesn't solve the problem we secretly switch to Strong Model I.

Behavioral Strategies

1. Control the relevant environment and tasks unilaterally.
2. Own and control the task (claim ownership of the task, be guardian of defining and executing the task).
3. Protect yourself unilaterally – ‘on your own’ – Strong Model I (Speak with more authority or certainty than you really have; ignore the impact of what you’re doing on others; ignore the gap between what you say and what you do; if necessary, hide this inconsistency by blaming and stereotyping others, or rationalizing; hide your feelings of doubt, hurt, or fear).
4. Take it upon yourself to protect others from being hurt – Nice Model I (hide disturbing information; create social rules to censor information and behavior, “Now don’t go bringing that up again, we’ve already talked about it”; hold private meetings with those who see things as you do).

Characteristic Behaviors

1. Making unillustrated attributions and evaluations.
2. Advocating courses of action in ways that discourage inquiry.
3. Treating one's own views as obviously correct.
4. Making covert attributions, evaluations, and face-saving moves such as leaving potentially embarrassing facts unstated.

Consequences

1. Defensive interpersonal and group relationships.

2. Low freedom of choice.
3. Reduced production of valid information. "We collectively no longer know the truth."
4. Negative consequences for learning because nobody publicly tests ideas.
5. Hypotheses or assumptions that people generate become self-sealing.
6. Learning that does occur remains within the bounds of what's acceptable.
7. Double-loop learning does not tend to occur.

Result: Problems escalate and problem solving deteriorates.

When individuals and groups use Model I in threatening situations:

- ✓ Key issues become undiscussable.
- ✓ Self-fulfilling prophecies abound ("I told you that's what he'd say!").
- ✓ Self-sealing and dead-end communication patterns develop ("No use telling Miss Know-it-all about it.")
- ✓ This in return creates win-lose group dynamics, conformity, polarization between groups, and organizational games of deception.
- ✓ These patterns feed on each other and create an atmosphere of cynicism and hopelessness.

Under these conditions, organizations can respond to problems that don't touch underlying issues, and they may work with great effort to correct situations that can't be hidden. They are unable to create solutions that involve questioning or changing underlying values. Often, they spin out elaborate webs of camouflage and members engage in "CYA" (*Cover your ---*) behaviors. All of this creates intolerable binds on the individuals affected by such organizations.

Model II Theory of Action – The Nondefended Learning Stance

Model II differs from the defensive stances in that it is committed to collective learning and honesty. It is non-violent, inclusive, and capable of great effectiveness in organizational practice. It also reflects some of the highest values of the contemplative traditions.

Guiding Values

1. Share valid information. Tell the truth with compassion.
2. Support free and informed choice.
3. The group maintains an internal commitment to the choice, and shares responsibility for monitoring its implementation.

Behaviors and Strategies

1. Continually create environments in which members are supported in authentically engaging the issues before them.
2. Share control with those who have competence and who are involved in the issue. Realistic joint control allows less defensive interpersonal and group dynamics.
3. Combine advocacy and inquiry, rather than one-sided advocacy (Strong Model I) or polite inquiry that conceals one's own views ("Nice" Model I).
4. When you speak, work to clearly reveal your own assumptions and information sources. Work together to reduce your own blind spots and inconsistencies. Encourage the group to surface conflicting viewpoints in order to openly explore and test them.

Consequences

1. Protection of each person is a joint enterprise, and is oriented toward growth.
 2. Individuals and organizations are better able to deal with threatening or embarrassing situations.
 3. Previously undiscussable issues can be brought to the surface, assumptions will be tested and improved, and "dead-end" self-sealing patterns begin to be rooted out.
 4. Both single-loop and double-loop learning can occur.
 5. Dysfunctional group and inter-group dynamics decrease, and there is less need for camouflage and games of deception.
-

Social Virtues

Model I and Model II cultures practice very different behaviors based on different sets of values. Model I values are likely different than those we publicly espouse. Because they differ from the values we profess to live by, they tend to remain hidden even when they guide our behavior. They only become apparent when we reflect on the subtle feelings and decisions that guide our social actions.

Model I Virtues		Model II Virtues
Help and Support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give approval and praise to others. • Tell them what you believe will make them feel good about themselves. • Protect them from being hurt and stress your caring for them. • When possible, agree with them that "the others" are the problem. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build others ability to recognize and reflect on their ideas and assumptions. • Assist them in noticing and clearly seeing their unsurfaced assumptions, biases, and fears. • Model this by intentionally revealing your own to others.
Respect for Others		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't challenge or confront others' reasoning or actions, they may not be able to handle it. • If others have more power in the situation give way to them. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attribute to others a reasonable capacity for self-reflection and self-examination. • Trust that others can see themselves without getting so upset they lose their ability to make good choices or be effective. • Continually risk testing this.
Strength		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argue your position in order to win. • Hold your position in the face of other's arguments. Don't budge. • Assume that feeling vulnerable is a sign of weakness and should be hidden. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak for your position, but combine it with inquiry and self-reflection. • Recognize that allowing others to explore your thinking and experience, despite feeling vulnerable, is a sign of strength.
Honesty		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe that you "should" tell the truth OR say nothing at all. • Claim that you're honest and hiding nothing while at the same time editing and leaving out delicate facts. Tell 'partial' truths or white lies if the situation requires it. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage yourself and others to share 'dangerous' assumptions or knowledge. • Recognize that these "undiscussables" will otherwise provoke unhealthy responses and distortions. • Acknowledge when power roles or social dangers are tempting you not to test out what you're noticing.

Integrity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dig-in and stick to your principles, values, and beliefs at all costs. • Believe the importance of your value justifies the means you must take to achieve it. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate your principles, values, and beliefs in ways that invite others to explore them. • This stance encourages others to risk doing the same.
Humor		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 'jokes' to soften otherwise uncomfortable messages • Bring others 'into line' or dismiss them with humor that cuts or silences dissent 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes rather than excludes • Provides self-aware context and supports deeper group learning

Polarity Management

We are painfully aware of the conflict between groups espousing positions with opposite values. For example, the debate between 'left' and 'right,' liberal and conservative, traditional and progressive, shows up in politics, religion, education, and almost any community setting. We all know the sound bites and catch phrases used by the spokespeople for each position. Often the debate is reminiscent of trench warfare in World War I, bloody and wasteful and moving nowhere.

Barry Johnson (www.polaritymanagement.com) suggests that underlying these embattled positions is a subtle dynamic we fail to recognize. We often treat issues as either or dilemmas. So too, we tend to frame potential solutions dualistically. That is, we often identify a 'right' solution and other 'wrong' solutions. Of course, the 'right' solution usually reflects our preferred position or values. When we attempt to address the situation, we insist that our preferred value is the all-purpose cure.

Johnson suggests that what we miss is the fact that dynamic situations seldom reflect one ideal value or quality. More commonly, they reflect a range of values between which they fluctuate. He describes these dynamics as polarities, situations in which two values are dynamically related. Think of breathing for example, inhaling and exhaling work together to provide our bodies with adequate oxygen. Likewise, think of rain and sunshine, the right combination of both provides the best growing conditions. An excess of either can produce disaster.

We recognize many common sense polarities in our everyday lives. Spending and saving represents a polarity most of us deal with on a daily basis. To excessively choose one or the other can lead us to bankruptcy or miserliness. Being aware that related values govern a dynamic creates the possibility of wisely managing the polarities rather than blindly insisting on one solution all the time. This is not unlike the thermostat in our home that regulates temperature by balancing heating and cooling to maintain a comfortable range.

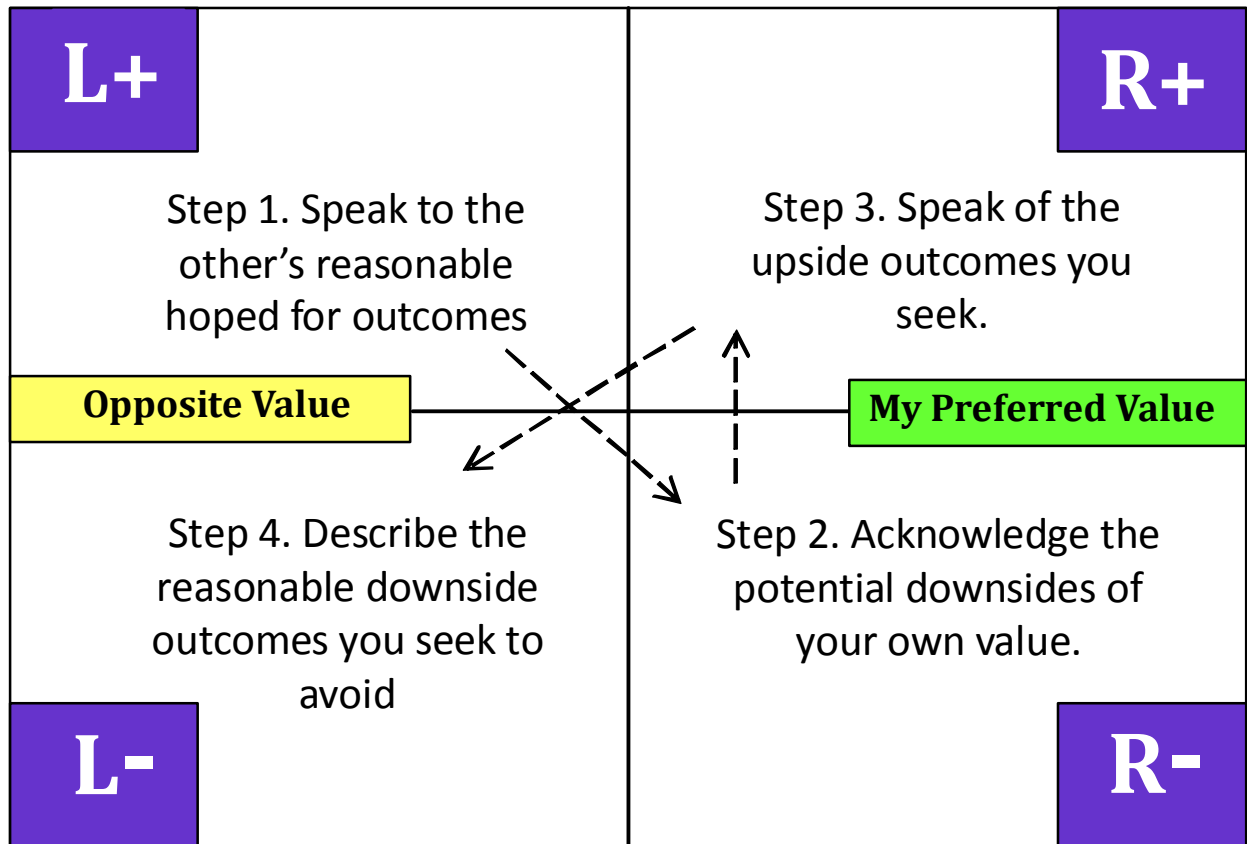
Awareness

When values are interrelated there is both a positive or upside to each pole (related value) and a downside or potential negative. For example, the traditional -- progressive polarity is common in a variety of settings. Each value has its potential positive outcomes, and each has a potential downside. Generally, the positive outcomes of the traditional position are: stability, clarity of roles and guiding values, builds on the inherited wisdom of the community. Likewise the positive outcomes of the progressive position are often: the ability to respond to new and changing realities; it includes those who may be new or traditionally excluded from the community; holds the possibility of growing beyond what the historic community was capable of.

Each position also has its potential downside. If the traditional stance were held to excess it could: be unable to adapt to changing conditions, reserve power for a select group, and develop a 'stick in the mud' irrelevance. The downside of the progressive position can be: an emphasis on change purely for the sake of change, discarding the inherited truth of the community and lapsing into relativism, creating instability that leads to organizational chaos.

In practice however, we often argue only for the upside in our position and choose to see nothing but the downside of the opposing position. Our opponents scathingly describe the downside of our position, and put forth the upside of their preferred value as the solution to all problems. First recognizing a polarity at work, and then being aware of the possible upsides and downsides of each value can help us to shift the conversation.

Initiating a Conversation Across Polarities



*Polarity Management by Barry Johnson
polaritymanagement.com*

Practice

A beginning point is to step back from the emotion of the debate and take time to reflect on the positive goals each value seeks. In the traditional / progressive example, most thoughtful people want our organizations to retain what's best in our tradition and to be able to change as new conditions warrant. A more challenging second step is to describe the potential downside of my own favored value honestly, and then to describe the downside of the other position using non-pejorative terms. It may seem at first difficult to recognize a downside in my own position, but think of what those in opposition to it point to. As you strip away the negative language, what downside outcomes do they fear? Recognize their concerns. Likely, you don't want those outcomes either.

Next, describe the downside outcomes of their preferred value that you fear. You may wish to have someone with different values than your own consider your choice of language to describe those feared outcomes. Is the language fair and not extreme? If 'they' used comparable terms for the downside of your position, would you consider it fair and not extreme language?

Use the blank 'Polarity Map' as a visual representation as you work with the related polar values. Put the name of one polar value in the smaller rectangle at left middle, and the other value name in the right middle box. Use the upper large rectangle at left and right to note the positive or 'up-side' (L+ and R+) for each value. Then use the lower 'downside' box (L- and R-) to record the negative outcomes for each value.

Normally, in a debate we speak only of the downside of the other's value, and advocate the upside outcomes of our own preferred value. Polarity awareness helps dialogue take place because it helps us to recognize the possibility of positive outcomes resulting from skillfully blending the related values. Likewise, it helps us articulate the downside potential for each value and then strategize how we might work to avoid it.

Help us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. From his view we may indeed see the basic weakness of our condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

- M L. King, Jr. -

Skill

When approaching conversation with someone who holds an opposite value to your own, begin first by acknowledging (authentically) the upside potential of their value. In other words, what is the reasonable good outcome they seek? This may take some advance reflection on your part.

Secondly, acknowledge the downside of your own preferred value. Do it truthfully. For example, "I know you fear that decentralizing our operation may cause chaos, and I admit that if it weren't coordinated that's a possibility."

Only after speaking of the downside the other fears do you speak of the positive outcomes you aspire to based on your value. Speak with balance, not to persuade or preach.

Lastly, acknowledge the downside of the opposite value and describe fairly why it concerns you. Then invite the other into dialogue about how you might work to achieve the good goals you each seek, while avoiding the downsides you both don't want.

In reality, adhering solely to one polar value may produce upside results for a time, but those results begin to diminish. Pursue that course too long and you're guaranteed to get the downside outcomes your opponents fear. Polarity management provides a productive way for formerly 'opposing' sides to work toward balance that can respond and be adjusted as situations change.

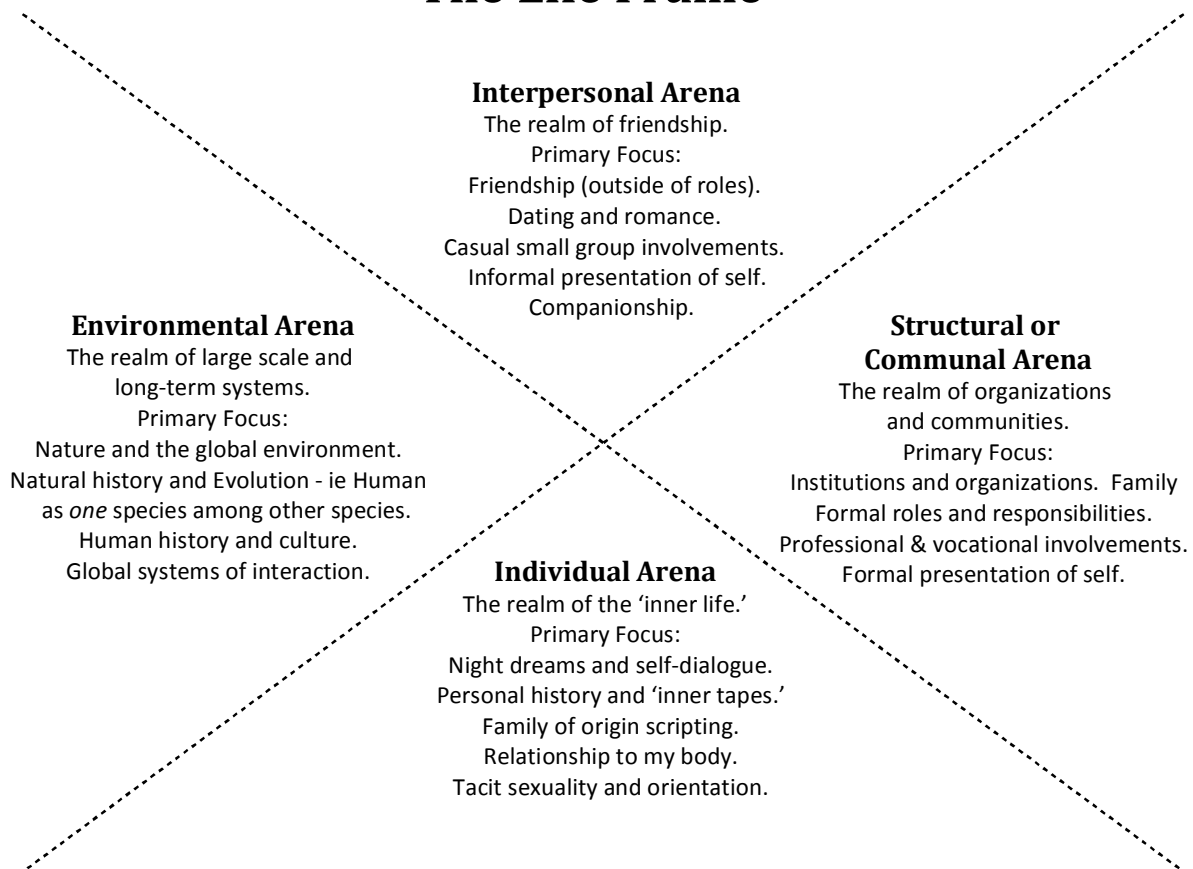
Life Frame Arenas

The Life Frame is a tool for noticing more of the reality around us. It distinguishes between different 'arenas' of focus. An arena is a place where things happen. Depending on the particular focus we use to notice, we may see and interpret reality with profoundly different vantage points. Often we develop a preferred frame or lens through which we learn to successfully notice and filter our experience. Based on the success it brings us, we instinctively trust and rely on this particular way of noticing increasingly.

We may even strive to 'deepen' our ability to notice, choosing tools or frameworks that increase the depth with which we work in our 'arena' of preference. Though I may have a secondary filter that life has led me to develop, I often find one to two of the other arenas feel foreign and untrustworthy.

The Life Frame provides an effective way to pay attention to both depth *and* span of awareness.

The Life Frame



Individual Arena

The Individual Arena encompasses all of that which is our inner experience. It includes such things as: the running 'stream of 'self-talk' conversation in our heads; our nighttime dreams; the personal history, stories, and "tapes" we've learned or experienced; our bodies and the attitudes with which we relate to them; our sexuality and orientation (as it exists distinct from those moments in which we are acting it out with another); the private judgments and assumption we make that influence our choices or behaviors; and often the feelings we notice during moments of turning inward.

Structural / Communal Arena

The Structural or Communal Arena encompasses the social element of our human experience. A "structure" or community is any social unit that exists for a particular purpose, and has defined rules and expectations, written or unwritten. Structures in which we all participate include: family, nuclear and extended; work, both our immediate staff and as a larger organization; local church; religious community; committees; civic organizations, and as a citizen participant in government at all levels, etc.

Globally, different national cultures relate to this arena in different ways. African, Asian and European cultures often hold it as a reference or focal point in ways that differ markedly from the emphasis on the individual that characterizes U.S. culture (Ref. "The Seven Cultures of Capitalism." Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars).

Interpersonal Arena

The Interpersonal Arena is the sphere in which we relate with others largely outside of the limitations imposed by structural roles. This arena is most obvious when we relate with others as friends or casually as neighbors. Its focus is primarily in one to one, or informal small group involvements.

Think of how dramatically a couple changes from the time they're dating compared to the married state. Wives and husbands will often comment on "How simple things used to be before we had to worry about kids, finances, and juggling work schedules..." This reveals the shifting complexity from the interpersonal experience of dating, to the structural experience of marriage and the roles of spouse or parent. Certainly, marriage doesn't preclude the friendship aspect of a couple's relationship, but most of us recognize that it adds a large layer of complexity.

Environmental Arena

The Environmental Arena is the realm of culture and history, biology and anthropology. It is where the systems of life impact us on some of the broadest scales. The experience of this arena consists of widely held assumptions, values, understandings of behavior, shared experiences, and processes and influences which are commonly not something we notice. Initially this may appear to be the least clear of the four arenas, because so much of what it points to is out of our normal range of awareness.

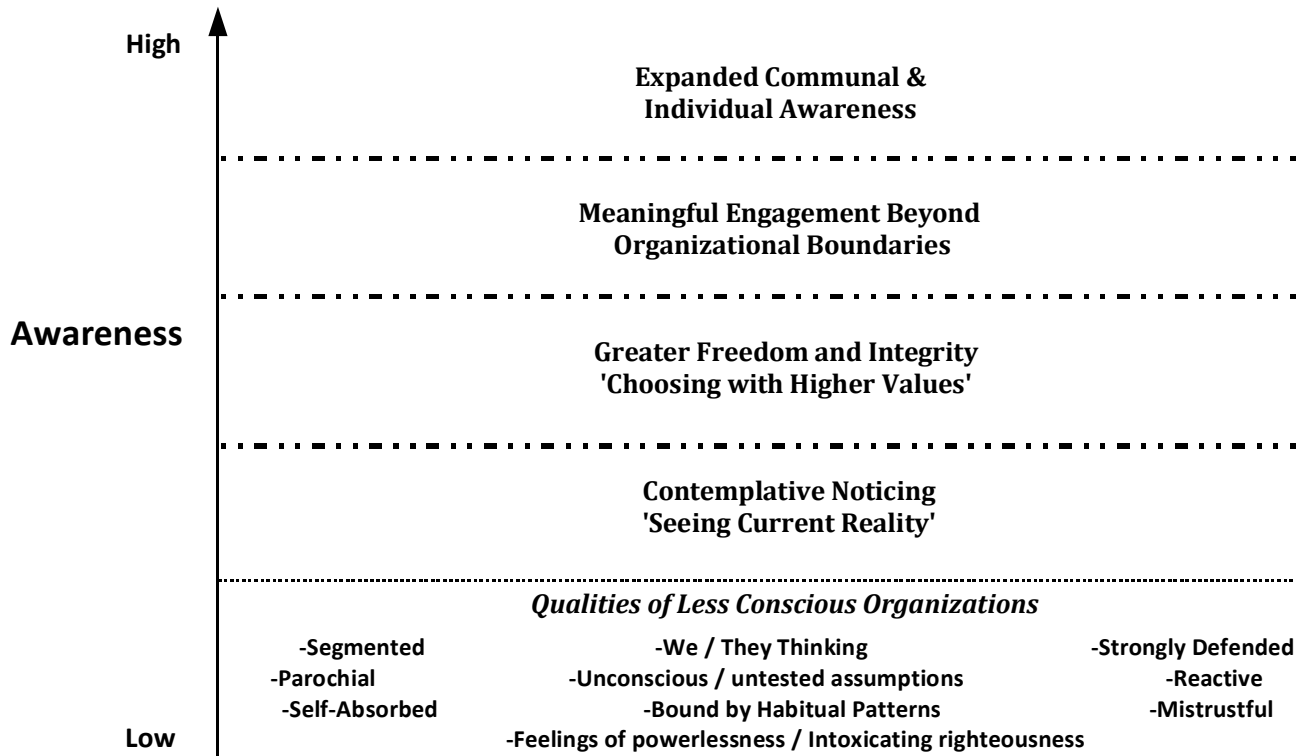
Its' clarity becomes razor sharp when we begin to look at the historical changes in our shared experience. In 1954 Montgomery, Alabama, "colored folks" rode in the back of buses. Today African-Americans are at least [in principle] expected to receive equal treatment in our society. Just thirty years ago, "ministers" meant ordained men, and "good" women were still primarily acting as stay at home wives and mothers. The emotional jolt you may have felt in reading the preceding sentences reveals the shifts in consciousness that have occurred culturally in this arena.

As it relates to nature, the lens of this arena recognizes humans as a species among other species and interdependent biosystems. Nature in this arena is not a backdrop or a metaphor for a world in which humans are the center.

The Development of Organizational Awareness

Just as an individual person may grow in conscious awareness, organizations and communities also have the potential to develop greater self-awareness. The table below first identifies some of the qualities of 'low' consciousness group awareness, and then indicates developmental steps in the movement to higher awareness and freedom.

Development of Organizational Awareness



Steven Wirth
contemplativedialogue.org

A community or organization with low awareness distinctively reveals certain qualities in its actions and the way members think and feel about themselves. These qualities shape the way power is thought of and used, the ways in which information flows or doesn't, and the relational patterns that exist internally and externally.

Assisting a community in growing in consciousness in a lasting way requires particular needs be met. The practices and values we collectively describe as Contemplative Dialogue support this movement to greater consciousness.

The stages beyond 'low consciousness' reflect particular developmental practices that must be present in order for a group to consistently live out of a greater awareness and wisdom.

Moving upward, the first stage involves noticing and telling the truth of an organization's experience. This 'contemplative noticing' or in the words of Senge 'noticing current reality' is a first movement in being present to and naming the actual experience of a group. This may appear as an initial movement to wrestling with what is happening to a group, or how an organization does what it does. What makes this different than what happens in a state of low-consciousness is that commitment to the truth is the guiding value.

Valuing the truth in this way leads to a willingness to create greater safety for group members to speak their assumptions and experiences. As this happens, a group begins to better 'see' what it has really thought, believed, and done. Often this comes as a real discovery of unexpected ways that a group actually functions.

The result of taking this 'long loving look at the real' is that a group better understands and knows its own experience and reality. It begins to see more accurately and clearly what choices it has and what the values are that may guide those choices. This creates the possibility of the third movement of awareness, 'Greater Freedom and Identity.' The greater freedom that emerges is a result of an increased awareness of who the group actually is and what it chooses to be. Choices become more intentional and less reactive. They also are increasingly made with a desire to reflect a group's higher values, rather than being driven by lower values or perceived threats the way they would be in a less aware state.

A further development then is that boundaries within and without organizations become more permeable. The 'walls of the fortresses' begin to come down. Departmental, social, and other rigid obstacles begin to be replaced by a freer and healthier flow of information and interaction. This in turn has the effect of improving the mission effectiveness of the organization. It becomes more responsive and its members have an increasingly accurate idea of 'who we are and what we stand for.' This creates a far more effective shared effort, allowing members to act in an independent yet coordinated fashion. This is the 'shared vision' and 'team' quality that we so desperately seek in our communities.

As a group lives and works from these values, it may begin to produce an especially high level of group consciousness which we describe as 'Expanded Communal and Individual Awareness' in the chart. This quality is noticeable when an organization begins to consistently draw forth the best in its members and those it serves. Not only do they find themselves doing good work, but they are becoming their best selves because of their involvement in the work or their association with the organization.

In philosophical language, this may be described as a highly evolved system. The impact of its work is life-giving and generative (i.e. its positive effects ripple outward far beyond what might normally be expected).

At this level of development, the collective presence or mind of the organization supports others in living and working mindfully and with a deep wisdom. It allows us to do and to be with high levels of integrity and self-expression. And although this may sound like some 'mystical' or unreachable peak, these qualities are often described by people who've been associated with teams or groups that have touched these ways of being. One case in point, is the way in which many of those associated with the U.S. Civil Rights movement describe their formative years together. John Lewis describes this when he writes in his autobiography with great clarity of the learning and impact his time in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee provided him. Some athletes speak of how deeply impacted they have been by playing for particularly effective teams, not merely on the field but as persons.

Groups that work with this level of awareness characteristically have an impact that may long outlive their own life span. Their efforts are memorable for the effect they have on people's lives.

Signs of Creative Emergence in Organizational Life

Justice

after Reinhold Niebuhr

- o Inclusive – brings in voices that may have been over-looked, excluded, or left out.
- o Dynamic & optimally incomplete – not some 'ideal' or miraculous peak, but humanly sustainable steps that build the possibility of continued development.
- o Generative – its effects ripple outward and continue to produce life-giving results and possibilities.

Systemic Awareness

after Senge, Wilber, & others.

- o Seeing the forest AND the trees.
Sees both the system and the individual.
- o Reflective of systemic interdependencies,
takes the interlocking relationship into account.

Nonviolence

after Gandhi, King, & Merton.

- o Truthful (provides valid information)
- o Compassionate toward all parties.

Free and Informed Choice

After Argyris, Rahner, and others.

- o Responsibility for co-creating the future.
- o Deals with persons as subjects, not objects.

Glossary

Advocacy --Putting forth my belief or position. Used defensively, this may look like arguing forcefully for my way, or in a more moderate form, speaking persuasively to convince, sell, or persuade.

Collective Mind -- Refers to the shared mental, emotional, spiritual and physical consciousness of a particular group. It possesses both the capacity of its members, and at the same time may grow to exceed them. This 'mind' may be largely 'undeveloped' or unaware of its own existence, qualities, and behaviors. With attention it can develop a sense of its own identity and power to interact internally and externally. At its most unconscious may appear as 'mob' behavior. As it develops it may create a strongly felt sense of 'team' or community.

Contemplative -- "to take a long, loving look at the real." A stance of awareness that allows an other to be itself as it is at that moment, not what I wish it would be, not what it should be. This stance provides the personal presence to notice and perhaps to explore the reality of that which is being attended. This stance is committed to noticing 'current reality' and responding to it as it is.

Contemplative Dialogue -- refers to the process, skills, and awareness that intentionally engages and tends the group or collective mind in the present and developmentally.

Content Agenda -- particular decision or information goal or outcome I may carry for a conversation or meeting. If my goal and intention is to get a 'yes' decision from our conversation, that is my 'content agenda'. Compare to 'Process Agenda.'

Dialogue -- the intentional practice of seeking and working to build shared meaning. Although the word has many connotations in common usage, alternately used to refer to an academic exercise or a deep heart to heart manner of talking, in our usage it refers to any practice or engagement that creates shared meaning.

Field or Field Theory -- The awareness that complex systems have many interrelated levels and dynamics leads to the need to speak of a 'field' which assumes not merely a simplistic black and white reality, but a multi-dimensional reality perhaps with both obvious and hidden dynamics.

Freedom, Human -- The capacity that humans have to make choices and decisions, which 'create' the person, community or reality, that is to be. By the choices we transcend our current reality and become one of a possible range of future possibilities. For example, the decision to tend a child with care or with physical abuse creates two radically different futures, both for the parent making the choice and the child impacted by it. Human freedom in this transcendent form is distinguished from the more limited 'consumer' freedom of making choices that lack the power to shape the future in significant ways (a choice to paint my room green or blue, choosing to drink Coke or Pepsi).

Generative Learning -- Generative learning refers here not merely to knowledge stored in the head, or theoretical knowledge, but knowledge that has the power to be used actively to solve problems and create desired outcomes.

Holon -- philosophical term which denotes a 'thing' which in itself may be spoken of as an organic whole, that is at the same time composed of other 'wholes' and may be part of even larger 'wholes'. For example, it is true to speak of a human left kidney as a whole entity that may be removed, function well or badly, etc. At the same time, it is true that the human left kidney is made up of discrete cells and other elements which may all themselves be the object of our attention to a 'whole.' Likewise the kidney is part of a particular human body, a larger scale 'whole' than the kidney. Useful for recognizing differing scales of attention to reality.

Inquiry - Exploring another's opinion or position by asking questions and listening. This process of inquiry can at times be used directly in an attempt to lead another to a preferred way of seeing by asking directive questions.

Intimacy -- "The ability to be myself in the presence of an other." (Malone & Malone, The Art of Intimacy.) The human ability to attentively be present to something or someone in the current moment. This is a quality of contemplative presence and dialogue.

Mental Models -- The images, assumptions, and stories we carry that make up our understanding of 'how things work' and the rules that guide our behavior. For example, my mental model of a refrigerator explains to me what its use is and how to use it effectively for food storage. Often these 'paradigms' are invisible to the one using them.

Model I -- Argyris' jargon name for either of two 'defensive' strategies and postures that humans instinctively use to cope with potentially embarrassing or threatening social situations. The goal of each is to 'unilaterally' (on my own) control the unsettling or important situation and attempt to produce the outcome I want. These can become regular relational strategies that are hidden from the person using them. They tend to produce a shared dance or 'defensive routine' between those initiating them and those they are directed at.

Model II -- A conscious stance and values that enhance free choice, learning, and truthful interaction amongst people. In contrast with the defensive strategies of Model I, Model II is committed to authentic learning and engagement on the parts of all those involved with a situation.

Personal Mastery -- Phrase used to describe the personal capacity to create the outcomes we desire.

Polarity Management -- Practice of recognizing when a perceived 'problem' may actually be a conflict of balancing two related values. Appropriate response to a situation where polar values are related (Ex. liberal and conservative) may not be to emphasize one over the other, but to see the two in a relationship that requires balancing to maintain a preferred quality.

Process Agenda -- A set of values and awarenesses a participant or facilitator brings to a particular individual or group interaction. Like a referee who is guided by fair play in a sporting event, a process agenda is an intentional strategy or dynamic brought to the 'how' of an interaction.

SCR - Acronym for a 'Socially Constructed Reality,' any thing whose creation, existence, and meaning is a creation of human culture. The 'Republican Party' is a 'reality' of human mental construction with more or less identified and agreed upon cultural meanings, values, and components. This 'fact' or 'reality' of human making differs from 'physical' or 'material' facts such as water, gravity, or the human body. Different cultures and sub-cultures may not share SCR's (Ex. Israelis and Palestinians).

Systems Awareness -- A phrase that describes a broad collection of tools, theory, and practices to help us see the interrelated dynamics, parts and processes of the world around us. A system is any group of things, events, or processes that have an effect on one another both in the present and over time.

Time-Spirit -- A way of speaking about the values, qualities, and dynamics of a particular historical moment that shape the mood and reality of its people and events. For example, post-September 11 concerns about security may drive the choices and reactions of people in ways that would not have happened previously.