

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when  
you know better, do better.”*

~ Maya Angelou

## CHAPTER 1

# Dare to Evolve

In the landscape of transformation, true change begins within. How do we seek to align with the divine design of all that is? For most people, sustainable solutions are not a question of unfamiliarity—they are a challenge of shifting deeply ingrained mindsets. To embrace change, we must first come to terms with the discomfort it brings. To enable people and communities to coexist peacefully with the environment and one another, let's examine how cognitive dissonance, social influence, and emotional resonance can guide us through that discomfort. Which in turn, can move us toward a deeper awareness of and a collective shift toward sustainability. We must shift to get back in touch with the world, and live in a way that respects both our duty and its wisdom. Even then, we must continue to challenge our cognitive dissonance in order to find the best path. What are we willing to relearn to support more congruent solutions? It is a challenge to cross that bridge of questioning our beliefs.

Astronauts have often commented on how the first view of Earth from space changed their perspective creating the sense there are “neither borders, nor boundaries.” Seeing the fragility of this planet puts into perspective that life is not about building an economy for exploitation but rather a collaboration for the health of all. While this is an experience the average person will not share, even viewing a picture of our planet from space can impart a sense of

wonder. A beautiful marble in the vastness of space. When we allow it into our psyche and consider everything we experience when we look around, it becomes intuitive that we are living in an illusion. One that is manipulated to seem as though things are more important than relationships. Let us Dare to Evolve toward loving all that is. Dare to venture out, confront our currently held beliefs, and courageously consider different ideas. Evolve to see new possibilities and be open to adopting the alternative.

Survival is the goal of all life. We see this when we observe a plant sprouting out of a crack in the sidewalk or a tree growing around a boulder. Survival for humans has changed many times since living in the wild and protecting ourselves from tigers, lions, and other predators. We developed the ability to build shelters and grow crops to assure a larger number of survivors. With each step, human evolution has enabled population growth. We then continued to invent new ways to ensure our comfort and protection from the elements. While some of these were good for our species, others have created many of the problems we face today.

Humanity stands at a crossroads, faced with a choice to continue the *unsustainable* practices that have led to environmental, health, and social degradation or to embark on a new journey—a journey toward sustainable living, harmony, and wholeness. The need to evolve, to shift our thinking and our actions, is undeniable. Chaos is uncomfortable and precarious. However, it is often in times of pandemonium that we are motivated to seek better answers. This is how positive evolution can enable workable solutions.

Just like a hero or heroine at the beginning of a journey, we are being called to awaken, to recognize that the status

quo no longer serves us. Our current systems—whether economic, agricultural, conflict resolution, sickness care, or social—are unsustainable. Nature herself has been sending us signals, asking us to listen and change course. The heroes and heroines of this journey are the everyday people who choose to see a truth, challenge the old paradigms, and step into the unknown with courage. Then do it again.

I was four when we moved to Idaho. We lived in the country. As an energetic and curious young boy, I was enthralled with the frogs in the gravel ponds behind our property. It was nature at its best with snakes, pheasants, ducks, and other creatures. Watching polliwogs grow and transform into frogs was exciting. Spending hours in that environment gave me an appreciation of how many things are interconnected by supporting not only themselves, but others also. To make money for the bubblegum machine, and an occasional candy bar, my cousin and I would walk the roads and pick up the bottles people had thrown out of their cars. We sold the bottles back for the deposit. During that time, while I was grateful for the money I made, I was also very puzzled by their behavior. How could people think it was ok to pollute such a divine system. Nature is so inter-connected. I was so blessed to be raised in such a beautiful environment, rich with a diversity of plants and animals, and have the freedom to wander and be in awe of their interaction with each other.

Many years later, while living in an apartment building in the 1970s, I was introduced to the idea of sustainable solutions for the first time. Another couple mentioned the recycling centers that were being established in our city. They thought we should make it easier for tenants in the building to recycle by gathering items in bins at the apartment building, and then we could take a big load to the

center. Not really being educated on the need for recycling, I had to first investigate and then decide if it was something I supported. That process helped me recall how I had once been so connected to nature instead of being so complacent. It was difficult to change my prioritization of work to accept that I could make time to take these bins, etc. to the city recycling site. After overcoming my cognitive dissonance and realigning my being with what I intuitively knew was right, we organized the bins and started doing weekly visits to the new recycling center. It took some adjusting of my desires, but it gave me a feeling of accomplishment and a sense of the potential for a better world. We later moved out of that building, but when visiting a friend who had moved into the same building, it was encouraging to find that the recycling system was all still in place. A few years later, the city started gathering recycling at the curb. Progress happens.

There have been occasions throughout my life when I found myself out of alignment with our divine natural architecture. In many cases, I was totally unaware that my actions were not in alignment with my being. I am so grateful when I have experiences that help me to reconnect to that early knowledge that everything is connected.

Many of us are caught between the world we know and the world we need to create. Every great journey begins with a challenge—an invitation to see the world differently. In this case, the challenge lies within our thinking. At the core of every meaningful change is cognitive dissonance—holding two opposing thoughts at the same time—the tension we experience when our actions don't align with our beliefs. Imagine using plastic bags out of convenience despite having serious concerns about the pollution that plastic causes. The clash between belief and action creates

psychological unease. We may respond by justifying our behavior, but the courageous among us lean into the discomfort. We recognize that the friction is a signal, a guidepost, that something needs to shift. And this process is not just about avoiding discomfort—it's about evolving toward choices that better support the self, daring ourselves to change, and aligning our values with higher, more balanced solutions.

The propensity to look for evidence to support our already-held beliefs is known as confirmation bias, and it frequently keeps us from considering alternative viewpoints. It's simpler to hold onto our comforting beliefs than to question our worldview. This prejudice keeps us stuck in our ways of thinking, which makes it difficult to change.

But we have to get out of our comfort zone if we want to progress. We have to be open to exploring concepts that push our boundaries and cause us to reevaluate our presumptions. To truly evolve, we must be curious and open to learning things beyond what we know.

Because we are social creatures, others around us have a big impact on the decisions we make. It inspires us to adopt sustainable activities when we witness others doing so. Conversely, it can be more difficult for us to take environmentally friendly actions when people in our social circles disregard environmental issues.

For civilization to truly advance, we must cultivate environments where sustainability is the rule rather than the exception. Social influence has the potential to be a very effective tool for good by inspiring people to make decisions that respect the environment and one another.

Not everything transforms at once. Change emerges from gradual exposure to novel approaches of doing and

thinking. Our smaller actions, such as cutting back on plastic use, saving energy, and promoting regional food systems, add up to something bigger. They gather momentum over time.

The key is to embrace the small steps while keeping the larger vision in mind—each new step lays the foundation for more profound systemic shifts in behavior.

Data and facts alone rarely drive action. Emotional resonance—stories that touch our hearts—often moves us toward change more effectively. When we connect emotionally to the impact of unsustainable practices on the planet or future generations, our cognitive dissonance becomes harder to ignore. It's the difference between knowing something intellectually and feeling it deeply in your heart. This emotional empathy compels many people to align their choices with their values. This book includes numerous examples of such changes across a variety of categories. Some will speak to you, while others may not. It is my hope there will be something that will engage your desire to experience a feeling of congruence with the whole, that knowing from the intuitive self. Our involvement with solutions always makes a difference towards a better ecosphere. Whatever your interest challenge yourself to engage in a positive manner.

The shift from passive awareness to active change is a dynamic process, one that unfolds through several stages. Each step of the process moves us closer to living a life that is consistent with our values. Being aware is the first step. This is when we start to realize how our activities affect our environment. Awareness creates the space for change, whether it is in the form of recognizing the trash we produce and the impact it has or the effects of our energy

usage. However, awareness on its own is insufficient; action is also essential.

As soon as we become conscious of these issues, we begin to inquire. Why do I still follow these routines? Is there a better way? This is a critical stage of change -- questioning the status quo. It challenges us to evaluate our actions and the systems in which we are involved. Evolution cannot occur without questioning. So, to spur your interest ask questions, seek and research for truth, get involved in areas of interest, be mindful when watching TV. Constrain your social media time. Limit areas where you turn off your mind. Instead of judgement embrace inquisitiveness.

Once our curiosity is sparked, we seek information. To find answers and gain a deeper understanding of the problems at hand, we look at the information and, by studying the patterns, turn it into knowledge. Knowledge equips us to make wise decisions, whether it is on regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, or lessening our carbon footprint.

Armed with new knowledge, we begin to experiment. It's the moment when we start putting what we've learned into practice. We might start small, like composting at home, using less water, or buying from companies that put sustainability first. The link between knowledge and action is participation in seeking an alternative.

The transformation begins with action. Research and testing are the moments when we start to match our actions to our moral principles. We begin to live change rather than just contemplate it. Every choice we make, like recycling, using renewable energy, or cutting back on consumption, becomes a declaration of our dedication to living in congruence.



Change is not a single event; it is a continual process of reflection and reinforcement. We consider the outcomes while we act. We then observe the effects these changes have on our surroundings and our own lives. This contemplation, paired with action strengthens our resolve and makes our new habits more ingrained. It also inspires us to keep developing and looking for fresh approaches to coexisting peacefully with the planet.

Change is uncomfortable, yet it is the most constant entity in the universe. We must be conscientious. Confronting the ways in which our actions fail to live up to our beliefs is not easy. It's difficult to move into the unknown and give up the comforts you know to pursue something bigger. However, it's essential. We must have the courage to shift our actions if we want to build a world in which all may flourish.

This process involves more than personal decision-making; it entails raising our collective awareness. It all comes down to learning to live with the discomfort that accompanies change and letting it lead us to a more peaceful, sustainable way of life. Have the curiosity and bravery to learn something, question, unlearn, and relearn with an unguarded, adaptable mind.

While I am encouraged by the things I have learned, I have also become aware of how much I still do not know. I recognize there is always the possibility that I am wrong about what I thought I knew, and therefore need to be open to unlearning and seeking anew. The blessing of a universe of possibilities.

It is a call to action to evolve. It is an encouragement to live a life that is respectful of the planet, ourselves, and one another. When we have the courage to change, we join a bigger movement that aims to achieve more than merely

survival. As we are all interconnected, our choices about how to evolve contribute to the creation of a world that affects the health and happiness of the Earth and all of its inhabitants.

Visit your sovereign space within, that self-determining universe only you can rule, and enable your curiosity. Remember in awe the marvelous interrelation of everything that exists and how each piece supports not only itself but also willingly sustains something else.

Where are you in resonance with the gift you are here to bring? How are you going to encourage and share that brilliance in your life moving forward? Can you create with ingenuity for the greater good?

Let us move forward for the sake of the planet, the next generation, and the potential for a more peaceful world—not out of fear but out of love.

Never underestimate the power of your conditioning.

*“The two most important days of your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.”*

~ Mark Twain

***How can we shift our daily actions and mindset to contemplate a change in our thinking?***