



# a simpler way

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from the author of *Leadership and the New Science*



New Book!

# A Simpler Way (Wheatly & Kellner-Rogers)

ASWp2

• The primary question of this book is: How could we organize human endeavor if we developed different understandings of how life organizes itself?

• There is no one who lives life unaffected by the organizations we have created.

• If we can know our beliefs, we can then act with greater consciousness about our behaviors.

ASWp3

• The universe is a living, creative, experimenting experience of discovering what's possible at all levels of scale, from microbe to cosmos.

• Life organizes into greater levels of complexity to support more diversity & greater sustainability.

• Organizing is always an act of creating an identity.

• Life self-organizes. Networks, patterns, & structures emerge without external imposition or direction. Organization wants to happen.

• Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, meaning-seeking.

ASWp5

• The world seeks organization. It does not need us humans to organize it.

ASWp6

• We were taught to see the world as a great machine. We turned this world-image back on ourselves & believed that we too were machines.

• Fear leads to control.

• Whatever chaos is present at the start, when elements combine, systems of organization appear.

ASWp7

• It is we humans who are "the most striking realization of the basic laws of nature."

ASWp10

• Life is an experiment to discover what's possible.

ASWp11

• Life is about invention, not survival. We are here to create, not defend.

ASWp12

• In a creative & playful world, all of us are, all the time, poets.

ASWp13

• Life is intent on finding what works, not what's "right".

• There are no permanently right answers. The capacity to keep changing, to find what works now, is what keeps any organism alive.

• Life creates more possibilities as it engages with opportunities.



• There are no "windows of opportunity," narrow openings in the fabric of space-time that soon disappear forever. Possibilities are infinite.



ASWp14

• Everything participates in the creation & evolution of its neighbors. All participate together in creating the conditions of their interdependence.

ASWp15

• We say to one another, "Get it right the first time." How can we live with so much fear?

ASWp16

• There is no such thing as survival of the fittest, only survival of the fit. This means that there is no one answer that is right, but many answers that might work.

• Nature encourages wild self-expression as long as it doesn't threaten the survival of the organism.

• There is no ideal design for anything, just interesting combinations that arise as a living thing explores its space of possibilities.

ASWp17

• Almost always, what begins in randomness ends in stability.

• Life seeks order in a disorderly way.

• It takes a lot of repeated messes to get it right.

ASWp18

• Who we become together will always be different than who we were alone. Our range of creative expression increases as we join with others. New relationships create new capacities.

• Organisms do not experience environments. They create them.

ASWp19

• When living beings link together, they form systems that create more possibilities, more freedom for individuals.

• This is why life organizes, why life seeks systems — so that more may flourish.

ASWp20

• Experimentation doesn't use up possibilities; it creates more.

ASWp23

• Parallel systems are not afraid of error. Redundancy. In a serial system, one small error has the potential to crash the whole system.

ASWp25

• Tinkers make do with what is available, most often acting with fewer resources than desired. In this sense, they are extremely efficient. They experiment with what is at hand until they discover a workable solution.

• The solution is discovered through the doing.

• Playful enterprises are alert. They are open to information, always seeking more, learning for surprises.

ASWp26

• We often tend to limit our explorations of what's possible by surrounding ourselves with large amounts of information that tell us nothing new.

• Learning is available from all those things we decided not to measure.

• Whatever we decide to notice blinds us to other possibilities. In directing our attention to certain things, we lose awareness of everything else.



- In a creative organization, everyone in the organization feels compelled to be alert, seeking out new measures, new events to observe.

ASWp27

- The world does not stay attached to a particular way of being or to a particular invention.

- The world's desire for diversity compels us to change.

ASWp30

- Attraction is an organizing force of the universe.

ASWp31

- We live in a universe where we get "order for free".

ASWp32

- ~~When~~ When simple relationships are created, patterns of organization emerge.

ASWp33

- Strangely, the system maintains itself only if change is occurring somewhere in it all the time.

- When individuals fail to experiment or when the system refuses their offers of new ideas, then the system becomes vulnerable; its self-destruction is self-imposed.

ASWp34

- Life leaps forward by the sharing of information.

ASWp35

- If order is for free, we don't have to be the organizers.

- We could give up our belief that nothing happens without us.

- The world knows how to create itself. We are its

good partners in this process.

ASWp36

- Can organizations learn to sustain the energy & desire that called them into being? Can organizations learn how to support us as self-organizing?

ASWp37

- In all of human activity, self-organization is how we begin. It is what we do until we interfere with the process & try to control one another.

ASWp38

- Processes do their own work. Our task is to provide what they need to begin their work.

- Self-organizing systems create their own structures, patterns of behavior, & processes necessary to do the work.

- Those of us not directly involved in the doing of their work can give up fussing about designs, or believing that our timelines make things happen, or that our training programs change the behavior of the organization.

- In self-organization, structures emerge. They are not imposed. They spring from the process of doing the work.

- These structures will be useful but temporary. We can expect them to emerge & recede as needed.

- The conditions that will support the emergence of necessary structures require our attention.

ASWp39

- As we organize, we tend to keep inquiring into the quality of our relationships. How much access do we have to one another? How much trust exists ~~among~~ among us? Who else needs to be in the room? 171



- In healthy human systems, people support one another with information & nurture one another with trust.

ASWp40

- It is ironic to compare life's search for greater capacity & our own fearful designs for accomplishment.

In spite of our efforts to engineer & control people around us are already self-organizing to get work done. We see it in colleagues who decide to do whatever it takes to solve the problem.

ASWp41

- Stability is found in freedom—not in conformity & compliance.
- Sameness is not stability. It is individual freedom that creates stable systems. It is differentness that enables us to thrive.

ASWp42

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- Life creates niches not to dominate, but to support. Symbiosis is the most favored path for evolution. Niches are an example of symbiosis.

ASWp43

- Brutal species always destroy themselves, leaving the world to those who have figured out how to coexist with one another.

- While destructive species may come & go, cooperation itself increases through time.

- Animals ~~and~~ & plants are using their differences to find new ways of living together.

ASWp44

- We codetermine the conditions of one another's existence.

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ASWp47

- We make the world lonelier & less interesting by yearning for heroes. We deny our own capacity to contribute & expand.

ASWp48

- Self-organization is the capacity of life to invent itself.

- Who we are becomes an expression of who we decided to be. Our choices become limited as we strive to be consistent with who we already are. We reference a self to continue creating a self, & that reference constrains us.

ASWp49

- We can never direct a living system. We can only disturb it. As external agents we provide only small impulses of information.
- We can never give anyone an instruction & expect them to follow it precisely. We can never assume that anyone else sees the world as we do.

ASWp50

- Every change is fostered by a change in self-perception. We will change our self if we believe that the change will preserve our self. We are unable to change if we cannot find ourselves in a new version of the world. We must be able to see that who we are will be available in this new situation.

- Every change occurs only if we identify with it.

- We encourage others to change only if we honor who they are now. We ourselves engage in change only as we discover that we might be more of who we are by becoming something different.

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ASWp51

- There are no separated individuals.

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ASWp52

• A self that fails to create itself as a contribution to others is irrelevant in a systems-seeking world. It will go unnoticed or rejected, lacking the ~~self~~ sheltering stability & support that a system offers to its members.

• If our self-expression is not meaningful to others, we will not survive.

ASWp56

• Every self is visionary. It wants to create a world where it can thrive. So it is with organizations.

• Every act of organizing is the expression of a self that has realized it cannot succeed alone.

ASWp58

• We need to trust that we are self-organizing, & we need to create the conditions in which self-organization can flourish.

• Every organization is an identity in motion, moving through the world, trying to make a difference.

• The most important work we can do at the beginning of an organizing effort is to engage one another in exploring our purpose. We need to explore why we have come together.

ASWp60

• Organizations with multiple personality disorder confuse us with their incoherence. The only antidote is integrity.

• For people & organizations with integrity, when they go inside to find themselves, there is only one self there.

• We can't resolve organizational incoherence with training programs, about values, or with ~~beautiful~~ beautiful reports that explain the company's way, or by the charisma of any leader.  
We can resolve it only with coherence, fundamental integrity about who we are.

ASWp62

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• People want to love their organizations.

• Love is saying yes to belonging.

• Ethics is how we behave ~~we~~ when we decide we belong together.

ASWp63

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• What about those of us marooned in organizations of no belonging? Early, we offer less & less. We ~~we~~ withdraw our love & give it willingly to other areas of our lives.

• Instead of denouncing us as irresponsible, disloyal, or lazy, our organizations need to notice how they have disengaged from us.

• We can't train people to be open, or fair, or responsible if the real agreement is that we must succeed at all costs, or that we have no choice but to keep laying people off.

• Training programs can never resolve deeply incoherent messages. Neither can legislation.

• Behaviors change only when we bring to light these unspoken commitments.

• Organizations can keep searching for new ties that bind us to them — new incentives, rewards, punishments. But organizations could accomplish so much more. 181



If they relied on the passion evoked when we connect to others, purpose to purpose.

ASWp64

- We can seek the greater capacity offered to us by systems if we are willing to connect with those who feel strange, different, even deviant.
- Have faith that through differentness we can discover unifying identities.
- There is no safety in separation. In a systems-seeking world, we find well-being only when we remember that we belong together.

ASWp66

- Life is a one-way street to novelty. Life always surprises us.

ASWp67

- Emergence is the surprising capacity we discover only when we join together.
- Once individuals link together they become something different.

ASWp68

- Life seeks order, but it uses messes to get there.

ASWp69

- Until we organize, we can't know what we accomplish together.

ASWp70

- Systems spring to life from agreements among individuals on how best they live together.
- Individuals didn't know they were creating a system. They were just trying to work out the details of relating to their neighbors. But from just such local activities large systems arise, stabilized structures of new capacity.

ASWp71

- No one worries about designing the system. Everyone concentrates on making sense of the relationships & needs that are vital to their existence. They are coevolving.

ASWp72

- Systems cannot be deconstructed. We can't figure out cause & effect or who contributed what.

ASWp73

- An emergent world asks us to stand in a different place. We can no longer stand at the end of something, we visualize in detail & plan backwards from that future. Instead, we must stand at the beginning clear in our intent, with a willingness to be involved in discovery.

- The world asks that we participate more than plan.

ASWp75

- To recognize that everything is surprising is the first step ~~process~~ toward recognizing that everything is a gift.

- Our plans are nothing compared to what the world so willingly gives us.

ASWp78

- For all of the terror, how often have we succeeded in changing organizations by changing individuals?
- Evolution occurs always from the desire to work out relationships for mutual coexistence.

- We can't change a system by changing individuals.

ASWp80

- We can't predict the system by looking at the individuals.



- We analyze individuals because we want to control them. We fill out a ~~form~~ form, learn our scores, & pretend that we know how life will unfold.

ASW p82

- Information feeds the local explanations that keep a ~~system~~ system viable & stable.
- With information free to move, possibilities can sprout up anywhere in the system. Each idea or solution is up to its creator, & each one is important to the system.
- No one knows what information an individual will choose to notice.

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- When we shrink people's access to information we shrink their capacity. They will still self-organize, but why make this process difficult? Why stifle people who want to create organization?

ASW p87

- There is greater value in circulating information than in protecting it. The system becomes focused on discovering what works. It stops defending itself from its people.
- Information that had been categorized as too incendiary to entrust to certain groups becomes the means for finding solutions together.
- Structures & behaviors emerge from decisions about how to belong together.

ASW p88

- Our seemingly separate lives become meaningful as we discover how necessary we are to each other.

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ASW p90

- In its great cohering motions, life is a poet. It brings together seemingly separate elements to create & discover new meaning.

ASW p91  
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- Could we take what feels like a threat & ~~alter~~ alter its role in our life?

ASW 92

- Self-creation either spirals inward to become simpler & more certain, or reaches out into the world to discover newness.
- Whatever the form, the desire to create meaningful lives is an irresistible current in all organizations.
- As we try & hold everybody still until we can figure ~~the~~ things out, the very energy that could assist us becomes a major difficulty. We try to contain people's desires to contribute rather than working with these surpluses of energy.

ASW p93

- We believe that fear is the primary motivator for change, that people change only when they are scared. We bully one another into new behaviors by telling terrifying tales of the forces that threaten us.

ASW p95

- The motions that we sought to wrestle from life's control are available to us, to support our desires if we can stop ~~the~~ being so afraid.

ASW p96

- We can be so fixated on the future that we often fail to notice how things are changing around us in the present.

ASW p97

- The only way to know a system is to play with it.

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- Instead of defining what's right for the system & then struggling to impose it, we must learn to say "Let's see."

- Life accepts only partners, not bosses. We cannot stand outside a system as an objective, distant director.

- If we aren't part of the system, we have no potency. Systems do not accept direction, only provocation.

ASWp08

- It is not volume or quantity that stirs any system. It is interest & meaning.

ASWp09

- Any time we attempt to impose a solution generated by another, any time we attempt to transfer a program from one place to another, we are not only wasting our time, we are insulting the systems.

Why should it even for a moment accept a solution that is the result of another system's creativity?

- We say that people innately resist change. But the resistance we experience from others is not to change itself. It is to the particular process of change that believes in imposition rather than creation. It is the resistance of a living system to being treated as a non-living thing.

ASWp100

- A self change when it changes its consciousness about itself. This is true for any system → individuals, organizations, society.

- The source of change & growth for an organization or an individual is to develop increased

awareness of who it is, now.

ASWp101

- Systems continue to thrive only if the freedom to experiment & change remains abundantly available to all system members.

- Move into the essential role of supporting the system to explore new connections, new information, new ways of being. It ~~means~~ means focusing on opening the system in all ways. And it means trusting that by doing so, the system will grow in health & capacity.

- Organizations that become more embracing of those they were defended against are always surprised at the interest & ~~involvement~~ involvement they receive from these "others."

ASWp102

- In fear, we stop the energy available to us. We restrict freedom to assert control. We choose control over effectiveness.