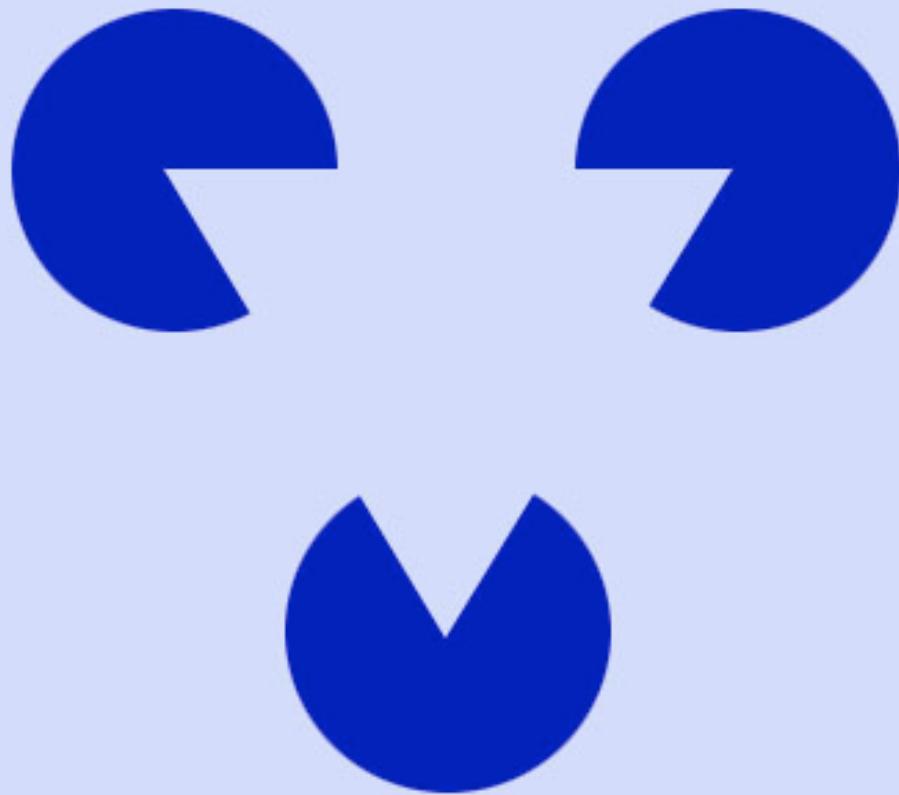
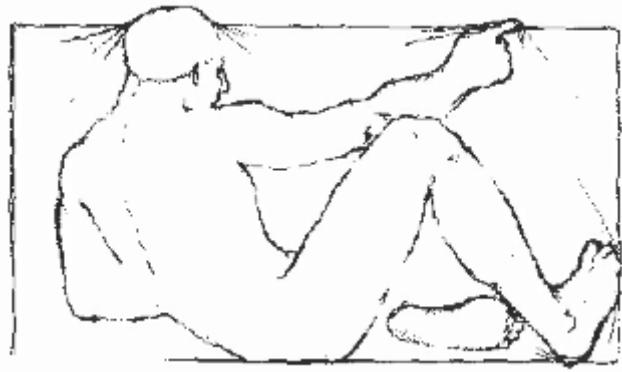


Discontinuous Learning

Igniting the Genius Within by Aligning Self, Work and Family



Prasad Kaipa, Ph.D.



Discontinuous Learning

*Igniting the Genius Within by
Aligning Self, Work and Family*

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For Ravi Kaipa (1957-2002), who was born later but learned earlier about discontinuous learning, equanimity and what is essential in life.

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A Note To Readers and Future Contributors

This book is not mine though I had a role to play in bringing it to stage so far. It is a result of the collaborative effort of many people – Steve Johnson, Rain Blockley, Darryl Smith, Paul Gleberman, Olivia Hitchner, Frauke Schorr and Ragunath Padmanabhan in addition to many other wonderful friends appreciated by name in the acknowledgments section.

This book is intentionally left incomplete from my perspective and I want your contribution to make this truly yours. When you read the book you will see that it has a framework strand and a personal story strand. They are not integrated in the end and that integration has to take place in the heart of the reader, **you**.

What it means is that you can add, change or modify aphorisms, stories, questions, quotes, references to make this book yours. You can also send those changes and suggestions to us if you like us to keep the book updated for now.

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Prasad Kaipa
April, 2006

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**The following Foreword was written in 2002 for
what was going to the print edition of the book and
we add it here with much appreciation to
Peter Block.**

FOREWORD

By Peter Block

Most books about learning and transformation pose a problem and then proceed to offer answers. Useful, practical answers that can be implemented with the promise of clear and rewarding result. A book of answers is always reassuring, for it promises the possibility of a predictable and manageable world. Discontinuous Learning, however, makes no such promise. Instead, it presents a framework for seeing the world and then offers a series of questions. The belief that questions are the only promise the future makes us is a welcome relief.

Prasad, by the nature of who he is and the way he thinks, has written a book with a wide scope and a great respect for the possibility of unity and wholeness. Using the context of discontinuous learning, he takes us on an encyclopedic sweep of what a serious commitment to transformation and change might entail.

This book is particularly welcome in a world consumed with speed and determined to reduce everything to an easily digestible commodity. We want our food fast, our books condensed, and our learning to be instant and online. Even the arts are subject to reduction: instead of listening to an artist's body of work, we can now buy a cd of Bach's Greatest Hits. Some day, perhaps, we will save even more time by being able to buy a cd of Bach's Greatest Notes!

The passion for speed and ease is justified as a market phenomenon, but it is also a powerful expression of our materialism and willingness to stay on the surface of life by skipping the deeper questions and settling for simple answers.

One effect of our materialism is the split we feel between our work and personal lives. When you ask people what their most compelling question is, they often respond: "How do I bring more balance into my life?" We are out of balance, tipped in the direction of a workplace that reaches its tentacles into more and more aspects of our lives. Our imbalance with work influences not only where we spend our time, but our values and beliefs about what constitutes a life worth living. The market mentality too easily leaks into treating our souls as a commodity to be managed. Same with our bodies,

which become objects to be trained, shaped, and sculpted. Or we feel guilty because we are not training, shaping, and sculpting.

In this human-as-product context, we need a remembrance that we are each whole spirits, always capable of recreating our sense of aliveness. We need to recognize the possibility that our own physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual healing is good for the performance and productivity of our institutions.

This is what Prasad offers us in this book. It is a calling to return our selves to the experience of being whole, sensing, and creative people. The book integrates the Eastern belief in the unity of all things with the Western commitment to performance and the energetic construction of the material world. Touring this book's landscape leaves us feeling both more uncertain and more whole. The uncertainty comes from the fact that we face a lifelong task. The wholeness comes from both the comprehensiveness of the ideas and the infinite possibilities ingrained in its language.

Prasad's writing carries curious and intelligent neutrality. Compassionate to the human condition it presents our foolishness and suffering in an even-handed and energetic way. This tone conveys an acceptance of the reader's point of view, whatever it might be. This encourages our exploration and leaves us with nothing to defend.

At every turn, though, are the questions. Questions that appear too simple at first glance. Ones that we thought we had already answered. In this way, we are asked to set aside our sophistication, thinking that we are past certain questions, that we have been there and done that. These are the ultimate defenses against our own deepest knowing and our own capacity to be surprised. The certain innocence that Prasad brings to the world is embodied in the creation of this book and this may be one of the work's greatest gifts.

As a final comment, this book is about discontinuous learning, learning that jumps out at us and shifts our way of being. Well, the book can be read in a similarly discontinuous way. I am not sure it has a beginning or an end, so readers can start anywhere along the way, can even start many times. In this way, the book is receptive to being created by each reader . . . in the reader's own good way and own good time. And so the book itself becomes an example of its own theory.

—Peter Block

PREFACE

Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions. —Oliver Wendell Holmes

What is Discontinuous Learning?

Conventional learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to function efficiently in known and recurring situations. It is the learning that allows us to add to what we knew before, develop a new skill without having to change our perspective and helps us to solve problems that have been recognized as problems. Conventional learning does not demand that we shift who we are in terms of perspective, assumptions, beliefs and values and it attempts to maintain the systems that we live in.

On the other hand, in times of turbulence, a discontinuity, uncertainty and rapid change, another kind of learning brings about a major shift in perspective. The interruption of continuous learning leads us to a shift in how we look at the world and how we view ourselves. Discontinuous learning raises our awareness about our awareness. It allows us to learn about ourselves, alters our mental models, and changes our relationship to the world. Discontinuous learning is subjective in nature and deals more with subtle and not so explicit issues like values, beliefs, attitudes, and ethics. Major discoveries and inventions have come about when people had 'aha' experiences in the most unexpected times and places due to discontinuous learning.

My Relationship With Discontinuous Learning And My Own Journey of Discontinuous Learning

For years, I have been interested in the relationship between ordinary and extra-ordinary leaps or changes in thinking; between individual learning and learning in the team; and how to synthesize the wisdom of the ages on learning (for example, from Classical Hindu texts like Upanishads) with contemporary ways of thinking including computational ones.

Formally, I have been immersed in the field of human learning for over 18 years. However the journey into learning-research began

at a much earlier date as I began to be an observer to my own wondrous learning path.

This remarkable journey has led me from physics to computers to marketing, preluding at the fascinating exploration of learning and creativity. I noticed many discontinuous and unpredictable learning shifts in my life and I was curious to explore the reasons that led me on this unique path.

I wondered what made me move from physics, a study known for its attempts to understand universal principles and their interrelatedness and interactions, to the wholly different field of information technology, which seeks to develop tools that augment human communication capabilities, and finally settling to creativity, spirituality and learning explorations. What is it that connects these dots for me to make sense of my discontinuous learning journey? This wonderment led me to conceive theories, practices and tools that together form the field of discontinuous learning.

Let me briefly share my journey, and how I arrived where I am now so that later, while meandering through various aspects of discontinuous learning, the reader can have a sense of where they are coming from.

My journey began with summer vacations at my grandmother's.

My grandmother adored me. I loved spending as much time with her as possible while growing up. She lived near a large, ancient Hindu temple in a small town not too far from where we lived. She was a great storyteller and my agreement with her was that she would tell a new story every day that we spent together. Each afternoon, people used to come to our home to listen to her read and explain the Hindu epics. I was truly inspired by her and learned much about Hindu and Indian tradition through her stories.

The temple itself, several acres in size with many buildings inside the compound, was very busy with festivities, events, and rituals most of the year. Spiritual music, chants, and prayers would be broadcast before sunrise and I was very eager to wake up at that time to go “sing into the microphone”. This was the inspiration for my learning many poems, hymns and prayers. During the day, I amused myself by telling stories to other children, reading, swimming, attending Sanskrit classes and going to the temple each day to have a chance to ring a huge bell for 20 minutes – a highlight every time I was allowed to do it! Being a small boy, the bell I faced

was just about the size of my own body and so one can imagine how challenging it was to focus and ring it with the prescribed rhythm - the call to announce lunch-time rituals at the temple. A challenge that I was proud to encounter with all the skill and strength I was able to muster.

My learning therefore was rather informal during vacation. I learned many life-forming lessons while spending time with my grandmother, playing with other children and participating in temple events.

During my school year, my education was much more formal and by far, less inspiring. While I did reasonably well in my classes I never really stretched myself during those days. It was a source of frustration to my parents and teachers that I did not use the opportunities I had to excel in the early stage. What can I say? I was simply not inspired at that time. In addition to regular school, I used to go to a private teacher who taught Sanskrit in the mornings. He was a very loving and kind gentleman and even to this day, I recite some of the mantras that he taught me when I was thirteen years old.

Reflecting on my past, I can clearly see some patterns. While the formal education process grounded me it did not nurture or inspire me. In contrast to these formal education settings, interactions with people like my grandmother and my Sanskrit teacher at a younger age as well as informal interactions with my physics teacher when I was in college inspired me deeply and I learned effortlessly.

In 1981, I left India and immigrated to the USA for further work. I accepted a faculty position at the university of Utah. An interaction with another teacher provided crucial insights for my self-exploration. This conversation made me realize that learning about physics did not necessarily help me to learn about myself. This insight was so simple – yet – mind-boggling. It led to a new-found journey of intense self-inquiry asking myself about the purpose and vision of my life.

With a series of coincidences guiding me, I ended up working with personal computers. The graphical capabilities and user interface of Apple Macintosh became instrumental in bringing the element of play back into my life. On this new path into the world of computers I explored completely new and exciting elements of my professional life: I started several companies, wrote for magazines,

worked for Apple in their International Marketing, and became a research fellow at the Apple University.

In 1989, my colleague Bill Atkinson and I moved into the fascinating arena of human learning. We attempted to understand the nature of learning so that we could design tools to augment human intelligence. To do that we interviewed a large number of Nobel Laureates, successful business people, star athletes, and great artists and writers who had made significant leaps in creativity, and learning, and had made significant contributions to their respective field or to humanity in general.

From our research, it quickly became clear that while rational, logical and linear approaches to learning are programmable; emotional, discontinuous and spiritual shifts are not. It was captivating to gain insights into human learning with our study. We began to realize the immense potential we had just started to tap into:

Insights on who we are, what makes us tick, what inspires us to excel and what grounds us. We felt that these questions have not been appropriately explored because they are “fuzzy” and complex problems. In exploring these wicked problems, I discovered the connection between my research study at hand and the ancient Hindu spiritual texts (Upanishads and other Vedantic works), where learning, creation, and management and transfer of knowledge are discussed at length. Upon further exploration, I realized that the ways many of these issues were addressed in the Hindu texts are common to other great cultures and religions too. Being grounded in my tradition and luckily having had some education in the Sanskrit language, I began to delve into these ancient texts that discuss methods of knowledge creation, learning processes and transformational approaches. I was fascinated at the wisdom that has long been available and the consistency of it with the most modern research on brain, psychology and human development. I began to integrate some of that ancient knowledge and modern research with what I had learned from interviews and research into other disciplines.

⦿ The key, I discovered, is that the spirit of who we are informs what we do! When we align who we are with what we do – in other words, when we align our work, family and self, we tap into something deeper and ignite our genius within.

The Relationship of Discontinuous Learning to Ancient Knowledge

In ancient India, the tradition of transferring knowledge, both practical and transcendental, was through oral and experiential approaches. And their essence was communicated through aphorisms. An aphorism, is a succinct statement expressing an opinion or a general truth. An aphorism is like a string on which the beads of the necklace are strung together. The string stays invisible but still provides the continuity, flow and connection from one bead to the other hence preserving the integrity of the whole necklace.

The teachers take one aphorism at a time and within the context of the student, elaborate it minimally. Then they may add a story if necessary, ask questions and allow the student to reflect and bring his/her own life experiences and past knowledge to determine what the aphorism could mean. Through inquiry, dialogue and reflection, the student develops his/her own understanding, insight and wisdom about the essence by going from one aphorism to the other until the body of knowledge is understood.

So while the essence remains the same (the aphorisms do not change), the understanding, interpretation and approach of making that essence applicable to the student becomes interactive, reflective and personal. Each teacher brings his/her own wisdom to bear on the essence and each student creates the meaning differently.

So the learning in the ancient times of India was not based on everybody following one interpretation but everybody aligning around one consciousness, one truth, one essence and having the freedom to come up with ways to make it their own. Learning was intentional, reflective, interactive, and context sensitive and allowed each person's natural genius and uniqueness to be ignited through this process. It is said that the truth continues to be objective and impersonal while its interpretations and the applications are completely subjective. When these two are aligned within a person, or group, then that particular truth unfolds itself in a developmental way to that person or group.

Somehow, this approach of discontinuous learning has been lost. In the name of objectivity, our schools and spiritual organizations started teaching not only the essence but also their interpretation of that essence fused together. As scholars,

administrators, scientists, political and religious leaders, the thought leaders in our society ignored the inner wisdom of the teacher and the student -- their ability to interpret, contextualize and grasp the essence in their own unique way, using their own learning and communication styles. This process has been going on long enough that it has resulted in the standardization of one interpretation of a truth. And the original intent, the truth got lost. When different people, in different disciplines, cultures and times attempted to practice what they understood to be "the truth" (their interpretation), conflicts arose. Because we are not aligned with one truth any more, there was no basis for conversation, dialogue or reconciliation. The 'book' whether it is a religious document or a scientific document has become the 'source' and our inner 'source' our inner wisdom is negated.

We have gotten so used to getting the 'solution' to our problems from the experts, consultants, books, in other words, an external source of reference, our internal ability to inquire, reflect, think and create is for ourselves reduced significantly. We 'benchmark' best practices, we adopt successful approaches of other companies, and we repeat what others did to succeed. At the same time we fail to acknowledge our own value and to learn from our own unique selves.

What is this book about?

This book is about rejuvenating discontinuous learning. It is about bringing integrity back to who we are and tapping into our own unique capacity to discern, create, think and learn. It is truly about aligning self, work, family, and community. I adopted the 'sutra' or aphoristic approach to write this book because sutras sometime contain paradoxes and can evoke strong reactions in the readers. When the reader gets engaged, short commentaries on the aphorisms, and stories are designed to deepen the engagement. The questions are intended to deepen inner inquiry and open the reflective process for personal answers to life situations.

Who is it for?

This book is written for business people, educators, innovators and culture creatives who are seeking deeper approaches to innovation, change and leadership. It is for those who are always looking for ways to see beyond the superficial, who are interested in reflecting on increasing their effectiveness.

Discontinuous Learning is not a recipe for action. There are many other wonderful books that give excellent recipes. Reading this book and reflecting on its questions does something different: it leads us to our own insights and allows us to ignite our own natural genius. Nor is this book about reading from beginning to end, instead it is about picking a chapter or an aphorism from the table of contents that speaks to us. (In the appendix, there are guidelines on creating study groups to explore this book together through shared reflections and sharing answers to the questions in the book).

Discontinuous change is important to those of us who are saying, "What I'm going through is unique." When we come across a situation where we can bring ourselves to make a significant contribution to our own lives, or when we come to a fork in the road that presents multiple options leading to almost the same outcomes, we need to question ourselves - What are we passionate about? What makes us really tick? Where would we like to be, and be going? If everything else is equal, what direction would we choose? For those who are interested in exploring such questions, I hope this book holds great value.

It is important to remember that this book is intentionally left incomplete. When you read the book, you see that there is no true integration of framework, stories and questions as well as references. Hopefully, it creates a sense of discontent in you, the reader. When you experience it, it is your signal to leap into discontinuous journey yourself. When you begin to reflect, take action and make changes and modifications to what is written here to reflect what you believe in and what you want to practice, then this book becomes yours and ignites your genius. So, my dear friend, it is you who can align your work, family and self and who can tap into something magical and I hope this attempt ignites that spark – that genius -- in you. Share the spark and the book with others and keep the discontinuous learning alive.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My special thanks to Bill Atkinson for suggesting in 1989 that I join him in exploring learning in order to design a “learning processor”— a tool to augment human learning. That partnership ignited my passion and commitment for exploring what we called the next breakthrough in learning, and I am still passionate about researching the mystery of human learning behavior and patterns.

Special thanks to Chris Newham, who dialogued with me extensively on nonlinear thinking, and for helping me in manifesting three dimensional learning tools (the tetrahedron framework that is used in his book). He also is the co-creator of the discontinuous learning model.

This book would not have come about if not for Darryl Smith and Rain Blockley. Darryl committed to publish my book, and Rain helped edit and reframe my manuscript into what it is. At one point, I asked Rain to become my co-writer but she graciously declined, saying that the ideas and concepts are mine and hence the fame and blame should be mine, too. Thanks Rain! It is great working with you.

My good friends Paul Gleiberman and Olivia Hitchner spent several days going through the manuscript and offering significant editing changes. I appreciated the energy, time, and inspiration that they provided.

It is my privilege to acknowledge and thank the many reviewers who gave their time to various versions of my manuscript. The latest manuscript benefited from the comments of Don Benson, Jim Botkin, Phil Dixon, Ed Haskell, Toni Ivergaard, Dennis Jaffe, Joyce LaValle, Frank McKeown, Ketan Mehta, Tom Milus, John Moran, Ragunath Padmanabhan, Susan Osborn, Anil Paranjape, Dilip Patel, Anjali Raina, Sangeetha Sampath, Frauke Schorr, Menal Shah, Nancy Southern, Domien Van Gool, Bill Veltrop, Russ Volckmann, and Doug Walton.

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Harvinder Singh helped design and implement an early electronic version of some of this material. Special thanks, too, to my friends Keith Allaun, Steve Johnson, and Michael Miley, who worked extensively with me on the first draft of this book and brought in dimensions that I had not perceived.

This work would not have been possible without the stimulation and support from my wife Vinoda, my uncle Jayaram, and my parents, Kamala and Lakshmi Narayana. Thanks, too, to Pravin and Vidya for being my children and teachers: You provided many questions, stories, and insights for me to reflect on as I researched the nature of learning over the past nineteen years.

Ragunath Padmanabhan took special interest in this book and became the project manager for past several months in creating this final edition and the wikibook. He also recreated many of the drawings and put together the pictures that go with various sections. Thank you Ragu!

Finally, I acknowledge you, the reader, for integrating the book in you and igniting the discontinuous learning through your questions, suggestions, modifications that will keep this book a continually changing book.

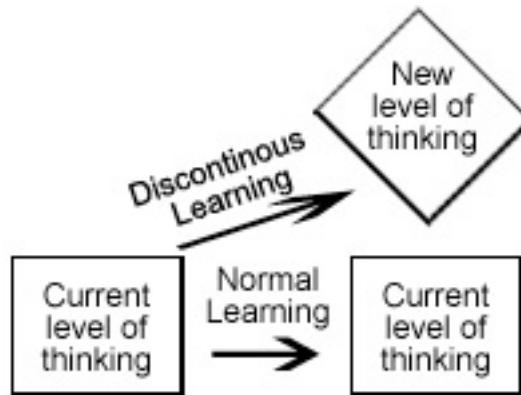
0 INTRODUCTION

Starting with 0...

Many of us have experienced the occasional sudden jolt of recognition, flash of inspiration, or burst of insight. In a moment, we see a piece of truth that we did not recognize before. We see things differently, understand the world in a completely new light, and know that we have changed irreversibly in some thrilling way.

Such experiences always leave us feeling good. Tying up the loose ends of our brains is profoundly satisfying. It creates a surge of warmth and energy, and we feel more complete. We never doubt the validity of the new wisdom. Somehow, we simply know it to be true.

When we receive these learning experiences with an open mind, they have systemic effects on our perspective. Our entire system of thinking, feeling, moving, and interacting shifts. I call this shift discontinuous learning because it catapults us to a radically different level of thinking. When we are not open to learn from these experiences, we tend to regard them as anomalies, ignore them, and continue perpetuating our old thought patterns.

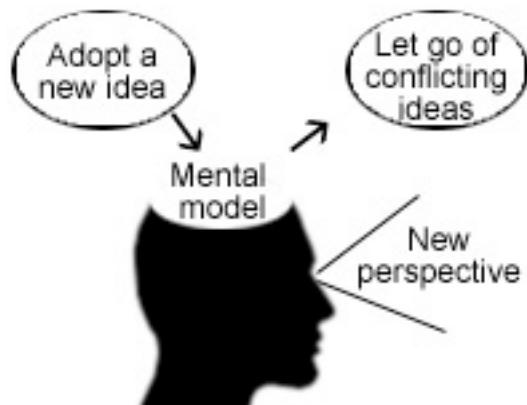


The number of this chapter, zero, is an example of an opportunity for discontinuous learning. In India and many other countries, elevators begin at zero, the ground level, whereas most

u.s. elevators do not use the zero. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that the concept of zero came from Aryabhatta, a man from India. Arabic numbers did not include zero. Similarly, when Americans say how old they are, they name the year they've just completed. People in India tell you the year they are in.

In the context of learning, starting from zero means starting from a completely open mind without a trace of past thought patterns. Zero is also critical because that is what differentiates between 1 and 100,000. In discontinuous learning, we learn to be open minded at the right times - it is as though we learn where to put the zeros so that we multiply the value of learning to a whole new level. Rather than moving from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4, we can move from 1 to 10 to 100 and so on.

Growth and development emerge from a foundation of learning and unlearning. Any new idea or outlook that conflicts with an old one in some fundamental respect cannot enter our mental model of the world. If we want to adopt the new one, we must discard our allegiance to the old one. This unlearning is the first step in the adult manifestation of discontinuous learning.



In ordinary learning or thinking, continuity runs from the past to the present to the future. In discontinuous learning, on the other hand, our openness enables deep and rapid change along that path. We encounter a break as well as a ‘choiceful moment’, and our openness is the key. We go from ordinary to extraordinary thinking,

transcending our usual state of consciousness. We are suddenly free to think, feel, and act differently. This book is about such learning, how to understand it, and how to foster it.

The wisdom we uncover through discontinuous learning triggers countless other reactions of the mind. It often takes care of unresolved issues that then cascade down to affect smaller and finer loose ends. In light of all these shifts, our old thought patterns lose their grip and realign, and we feel more alive than moments before the breakthrough.

Dimensions of Discontinuous Learning

The capacity for discontinuous learning creates a much more exciting and prosperous future than ordinary learning. Ordinary learning usually means gaining new knowledge or developing new skills. This kind of continuous learning has a linear relationship with our effort: the harder we work, the more we add to our knowledge or skills.

However, knowledge of the past and of existing technologies is no longer sufficient to navigate our current turbulent times. We need to develop new knowledge and new skills on a regular and accelerated basis. The individuals and companies that thrive in the third millennium will be those who understand competence, capacity, learning, and the unlearning process. Aside from nurturing and developing these, success means employing them to manifest a future in line with what we value.

Competence and capacity building are meta-level skills. For instance, developing competence and capacity in new areas may require selectively setting aside our unworkable assumptions or emphasis on old skills. In this case, competence includes the skill of unlearning formerly helpful skills.

Knowledge and skills are the explicit and most familiar parts of learning—what we learn in school and at work—while competence and capacity are subtle or hidden factors that drive the other two. Competence is not a skill or knowledge or potential. It has more to do with attitude and feeling and the ability to get a job done. It is not easily measurable. “Competency combines knowledge, skill, potential, and personality traits in an integrated way to carry out a complex mission,” according to Robert Aubrey, a management thinker from France.

Competence is about creating something in the present, while building capacity is about creating the future. We develop competence and capacity from experiences in our personal and social relationships.

Gaining knowledge and skills may result in degrees, certificates, and experience; Feeling competent and building capacity, on the other hand, tap into the heart and spirit of who we are. Know-how and skills allow us to work with what's around us, whereas competence and capacity help us understand ourselves in the context of the world.

Building capacity in an organization is about unleashing employees' latent creativity and creative capabilities. This is obviously incompatible with a command-and-control culture, which usually attacks problems by stepping up resources—human or material. This seldom works over the long run. Nor can control-minded managers keep expanding their capacity, which requires tapping into their mindsets, assumptions, and shared values. Such a process generally requires aspiration and mutually trusting relationships, which do not thrive in a command-and-control culture.

When we do tap into our hidden—or resigned—aspirations and see a possibility for them to come true, discontinuous shifts take place and anything blocking our capacity melts down, resulting in increased capacity. Such aspirations reflect discontinuous learning and thinking.

To build capacity, we can wait until the command-and-control approach breaks down and feel desperate meanwhile, or we can choose to create a new culture out of our generative aspirations. Building capacity through discontinuous learning is not about enhancing existing products or marketing existing companies. When we are in the vanguard with new technologies and new ideas, we cannot force-fit them into the old business. Rather, we need to create a whole new business in an entirely new industry that others have not yet imagined. Sometimes, we have to come up with new business models and approaches that are dramatically different from the old ones. Manifesting a thriving future takes a special kind of thinking and being.

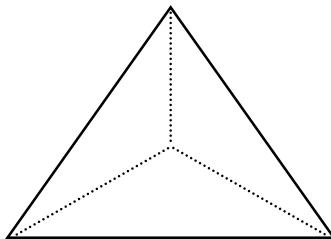
We need to shift our attention from external sources of wisdom to improving our own learning process. In the workplace of the future, outside-the-box innovation will come from learning not what

others have already done but what we alone can do. This kind of self-understanding and self-knowledge merits much more focus than in the previous century. This sort of learning process ignites our natural genius and initiates breakthroughs in thinking.

When breakthroughs occur, we usually experience a torrent of creativity and significantly accelerated learning. Or as Michael Lindfield of Boeing says, “Learning is what you breathe in, and creativity is what you breathe out.”

Designing organizations that learn in all four dimensions—knowledge, skills, competence, and capacity—is the challenge for today’s organizations. To survive in today’s economy, we need to make a discontinuous leap between the past and the future. We need to create new systems, cultures, learning paths, and communities, while unlearning and unthinking old structures, mindsets, and procedures.

A Three-Dimensional Model of Learning



To help make this leap, and to examine the (un)learning process and how to enliven it, I have created a three-dimensional model. Continuous (ordinary) learning can be shown in two dimensions, such as lists of sequences or steps. To represent the richness of discontinuous learning, however, the third dimension is essential. Conveying the dynamic interplay of multiple factors, this three-dimensional model looks like a tetrahedron, or pyramid.

The reason for a three-dimensional model is that, in some respects, our thinking has much more depth than what language can usually communicate. Language is what frees us and also is what binds us. It’s represented in two dimensions, even though linguistic expressions such as poetry and haiku often transcend this. In

general, language limits our thinking to two dimensions. What we are missing is the dimension of depth.

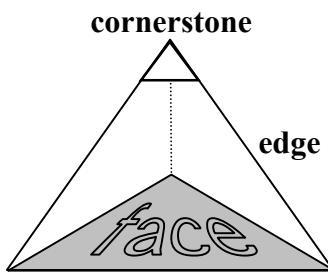
The tetrahedron framework is a powerful tool for mapping any system. It represents the essence—what I call the “DNA” of a person, or an organization. The tetrahedron’s nature is interactive—every corner, face and edge connects and affects each other—so it is particularly suited for mapping connections among any group of people, ideas, or factors. If we list four words—grounding, nurturing, stretching, inspiring, for example—we get one effect. If we put these words on the four corners of a tetrahedron, they suddenly create a space by literally mapping out a three-dimensional territory.

Three-dimensional thinking helps elucidate and inquire into the nature of things. The tetrahedron (sometimes loosely called a pyramid) presented in this book is a map of the discontinuous learning process.

The tetrahedron shows three paths to reach any apex, rather than moving linearly from the current state to the desired future state—the way we’ve always done something or the way our teachers or parents taught us, or the way we learned from someone else who inspired us at some time. Having three modes gives us three times as many ways to accomplish things. This is like expanding our freedom, our options, three hundred percent.

In companies such as Boeing, Quaker Oats, Xerox and Cisco, I have used three-dimensional thinking to help people develop more innovative capabilities, leadership capability, and tap into their passion.

I chose the tetrahedron because it is the simplest three-dimensional solid. It is beautiful and elegant in its simplicity. Mathematically the length of the tetrahedron’s edge is the only dimension that we need to create it. The tetrahedron is very symmetrical, and we can turn it any way we like without losing its shape.



Each cornerstone of the tetrahedron connects with the other three through the three edges. Each face connects with the other three through the edges. The interacting parts of the tetrahedron create a dynamic tension that can either help or hinder discontinuous learning. They indicate how quickly and how well we learn, as well as the obstacles we face.

Each cornerstone pulls us to maximize its growth while sub-optimizing our potential for discontinuous learning. Maximizing the potential for discontinuous learning is dependent upon balancing the paradoxes, oppositions or polarities between our intentions, two at a time through the edges and three at a time through the faces.

Edges represent how we balance the tension and interaction between any two cornerstones. Each edge names a competency we need—or need to develop—to balance that tension. When we focus on only one intention (cornerstone), then the edge becomes unbalanced and loses its tension and energy.

Each of the pyramid's four faces represents the arena in which three of our intentions balance the tensions that arise among them.

Finally, there is the union point that we have not yet addressed. The center of the tetrahedron, invisible to us because it is inside and not on the surface of the tetrahedron, represents the essence or DNA of who we are and informs all our intentions and actions. This is the central point that remains unchanged and unmoving while all the changes take place around it. All intentions are generated from this point and pull away from it. All domains remain equidistant from this point and polarities and interactions take place around it but never affect the union point. This point represents the shared truth, the seed of our consciousness or essence and holds the key to building our capacity.

We now have a tactile representation that we can hold in our hands, turn, and explore consciously. We can examine and consider the various parts and relationships that bring integrity to the process of learning. Naming these factors and giving them a structure helps us appreciate what we experience.

Part of the Tetrahedron	Meaning	Component of Learning
Cornerstone	Intention	Grounding Nurturing Stretching Inspiring
Face	Arena	Physical domain Emotional domain Intellectual domain Generative domain
Edge	Competency or energy	Play Care & Empathy Opportunities Love & Commitment Purpose and Vision Appreciation
Union Point	DNA, Essence	Capacity, spirit

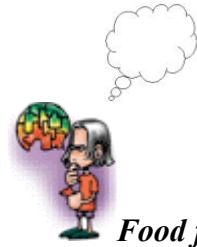
To foster discontinuous learning, Part I of this book examines the four cornerstones: grounding, stretching, nurturing, and inspiring. Each of these intentions plays a necessary role in learning, and they also help us define an individual's uniqueness or a company's leading edge. Then, Parts II through III explore the pyramid's other components—four faces and six edges. Part IV talks about the *process* of discontinuous learning. The final chapter invites us into ways to keep the discontinuous learning alive.

In conclusion, this book offers a way to reflect upon and integrate discontinuous learning so that we can connect with and balances our organizations and ourselves as we create the kinds of places in which we love to work, play, relate, and learn.



*Stop learning. Start knowing.
The rose opens, and opens,
And when it falls,
Falls outward.*

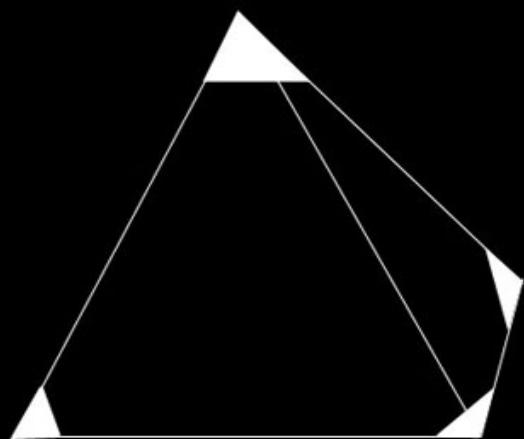
—Rumi



Food for Thought:

- Where have I mistaken skills, knowledge, and potential for competency in myself?
- What has kept me from building my competency and capacity? (Choose a specific example)
- Where have I already experienced discontinuous learning in my life? What came out of it?
- When did I break out of my old ways of thinking and discover an innovative approach to something?

Part I - The Cornerstones



THE CORNERSTONES

When we encounter the latest idea in self-improvement or management, the cornerstones provide a framework for understanding topics systemically. This lets us find inspiration and add to our strengths rather than constantly acting out of the fear of losing our edge. Finding our own authentic differentiation means we can be inspired from any direction, any field.

I've never been an artist or shown any interest in art, but I doodle. I get bored easily, and I've found that doodling helps me listen and engage with what others are saying. During a gathering last fall, the host had put out colored pens, so I doodled various patterns and colored in some of them.

My friends there loved these "energy patterns," as they called them, and made copies of some. This inspired me to take some art lessons at my local community center, but I could attend only two of the classes. We squeezed paint out of big tubes, and the teacher told us how to mix colors and paint various objects. I struggled. In the domain of painting, I had no practice in making distinctions.

Then, over the Christmas holidays, I kept having vivid dreams about painting some of my favorite Hindu deities. One dream was so inspiring that I bought a set of paints and began my first work. Nothing went the way it had during my classes. When I dipped my brush into water and tried to use it, it didn't work. The paint was not drying, so my hands and clothes were sticking to the picture. I was completely baffled, not realizing that the acrylic paints we'd used in class were from different oils. The tubes looked pretty much the same.

I went ahead with the painting and stretched myself to the fullest possibilities because I was committed to doing this picture. I had a very clear vision of the finished image, and I told myself I was just going to play with it. "I'm not going to look at it with any judgment, because I don't have any formal training. It doesn't have to be a great painting or even a good one. I'm just going to do this. It's an inspired painting, it came in my dream!"

It took three weeks for that painting to dry, and it's still one of my best paintings. Through all this, I found out that if I can play with something, have a clear vision of what I want to accomplish,

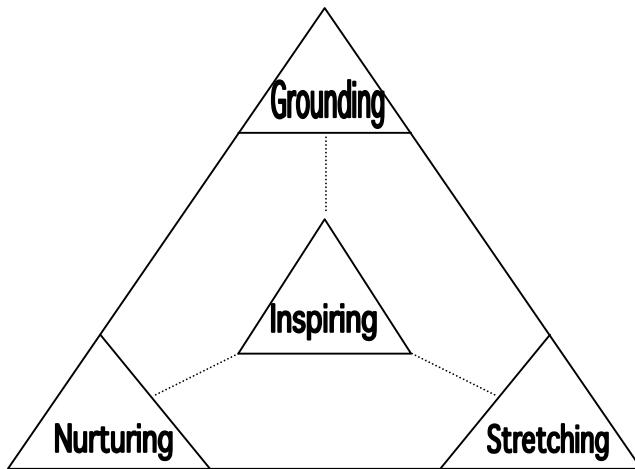
and create an opportunity to express myself the results are very fulfilling.

In my story, the enthusiasm for my doodling nurtured my confidence, and I took an art class. I ran into trouble, however, because I bought oil paints instead of acrylics. Without being grounded in what tools I needed, I created unnecessary headaches for myself. What I learned therefore is that the right tools need to be in place to create the space for my fullest capabilities to come to light. Despite of this experience, the vivid inspiration of my dream kept me going, and I stretched beyond what I already knew, creating a new picture as well as a new sense of confidence.

Many of us work just as hard at learning. We keep up on the latest books, hoping to find advantageous ideas from among them. Last year's hot topic may have been balanced scorecards; some years before, core competencies; and in between, perhaps re-engineering. This shifting focus among organizations leaves us feeling that whatever we've got is not good enough—something else is now more important.

Discontinuous learning differs significantly. By identifying the pyramid's cornerstones as part of an interdependent system, we begin building a durable matrix. Like a skeleton does for the muscles and other tissue that connect to it, this matrix provides a frame and a context for understanding why particular ideas catch on in the business world. On the pyramid, the corners represent these four intentions:

- Grounding (foundational)
- Nurturing (essential)
- Stretching (growth)
- Inspiring (transformational)



Each one of the cornerstones answers the question of *what* we intend to manifest in our organizations, the world, or ourselves. Discontinuous learning requires a balance of all four intentions. Otherwise, a deficiency in one leads to overemphasizing the others. If we decide that generativity is the most important, for example, and that we'll focus only on innovation, we steer straight for mistakes. Not enough balance with the other intentions results in overstretaching and frustration in our attempts to explore new information or perspectives. Discontinuous learning emerges when all four intentions are flowing freely and interacting dynamically. We are not attached to the power of any one cornerstone.

All four cornerstones are equally important at different times. Sometimes, we need to focus more on a particular intention. As long as we pay attention to the fundamental ebbs, flows, and connections among these components, no problems arise. If we omit or neglect any cornerstone, chances are that we end up as a one-trick pony going down the same old path, even after it stops working for us. Discontinuous learning comes when we are detached while we engage in all four processes, deal with their interactive tensions, and discriminate among their effects.

Ensuing sections elaborate on the unique contribution of each cornerstone. This helps us understand how we learn and how we can make discontinuous leaps in our comprehension or creativity.



*O friend, behold my chariot through which
I am always decidedly victorious.
Strength, discrimination, self-control
and charity are its horses.*

—Ramayana



Food for Thought:

- What ideas or events have stopped me in my tracks and truly changed my personal or my professional life?
- How have they changed me specifically?
- Which cornerstone is getting most of my attention today? What is the reason for my energy going into this particular cornerstone at this point in my life?
- Which is getting the least? And what is stopping me from giving more energy to this particular cornerstone at this point in my life?

1. GROUNDING

Grounding is the foundational cornerstone of discontinuous learning. Being grounded in our own nature, manifested in body, mind, ego, and spirit, creates safety and security. It takes intentionality to know our true nature. Self-mastery and inquiry become important here. Nobody else can do this for us.

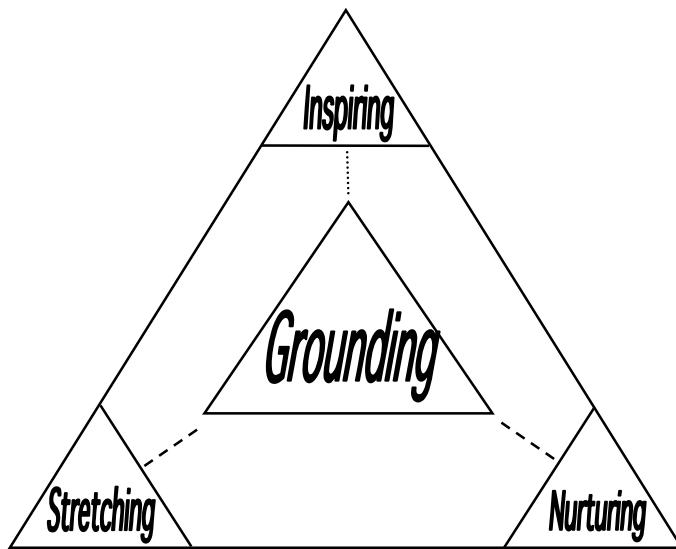
Grounding comes through three behaviors: having a clear intention, knowing the context (such as knowing the market), and being aware of the exact question or problem. Any of these behaviors ground us in ourselves, in the situation, or in the present.

Being grounded allows us to mine our insights. Insights create tremendous energy, like lightning bolts (“Wow, I guess that’s possible. I could be like that. Maybe I should try that!”). Only if that kind of energy is grounded, it will be available to us and we are able to act on our insights.

Being grounded lets us harvest energy. When we are open and aligned, we become a lightning rod, the path of least resistance for the tremendous power of inspiration and genius. Mining this energy provides the “electricity” for our system. Our greatest inspiration can find what it needs to emerge into reality.

Grounding and inspiring are in polar tension with each other. Most of us still need to learn how to mine our insights. Some of us have inspired ideas but merely dismiss most of the meaning that emerges out of our lightning. Some of us burn out in exhaustion because we rush to manifest our ideas before we design systems that are sturdy enough to support them.

Stretching, nurturing, and inspiring influence grounding, through the edges that connect to this cornerstone.



Setting ground rules in the best sense of its meaning “grounds us”. It is an important first step for interaction. In physical activities, it provides the structure for safety. We all agree to drive on one side of the road, for instance, and that expectation contributes to our welfare as well as our sense of security about what to do. In a manufacturing setting, disregard for the rules can lead to producing items with lots of parts missing. At the same time, an overemphasis on rules turns us into an extension of the institutions or machines we serve. The supply chain—the assembly line, for instance—becomes the critical part while everyone in them is an add-on. Stretching, inspiring, and nurturing take a back seat to maintaining conformity to the rules. In successful military operations, obeying the ground rules obviously gets more attention than the other cornerstones as soldiers learn how to separate from their fears enough to go into battle. Nurturing, inspiring, and stretching are still just as important but are curbed relative to the military regimen.

Other than the armed forces, organizations suffer when their leaders focus on structure, discipline, and rules at the expense of the other three intentions, or cornerstones. We need the safety and sense of containment that ground rules offer, and we also need to stretch,

nurture, and inspire each other and ourselves to move toward our goals, learn, and invent the future as we go.

When we appreciate each other for following the rules about teamwork, quality standards, or doing things on time, for instance—we feel inspired and committed to our work. Appreciation is the best way to inspire each other.

Similarly, having opportunities to stretch allows us to see the value of staying grounded. We are not just arbitrarily making rules and expecting others to follow them. Rather, we are creating opportunities that help us stretch.

Finally, when we demonstrate empathy and caring about each other, we feel nurtured and grounded in our relationship. In other words, we are willing to support and work with the ground rules we set.

Professional relationships as well as matters of the heart require grounding. What feelings do we allow ourselves to explore, and when? What roles do we play when we experience something or relate our experiences? How do we handle friction or conflict?

Without grounding, our interactions—inner, personal, and professional—swell with discord. Showing appreciation, providing opportunities, and demonstrating care and empathy allow others to set and follow appropriate ground rules and make the energy of this cornerstone come alive in the process of learning.

In learning, being grounded is usually less conscious and explicit than having ground rules in formal contracts, yet it matters tremendously. Without clarity about our roles and limits, we operate without feeling secure or safe. This, as a later section shows, is the greatest inhibitor to learning and igniting creativity.

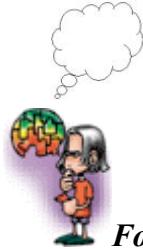
Sharing a consensus about how to function and relate in the world usually reflects the culture or community in which we grew up. This chapter explores how we first encounter ground rules, how they shape our learning patterns, and how we can use alternatives to deepen and accelerate our learning.

To figure out our own personal capacity, we need to stretch far beyond where we have been before. This means exploring, reflecting, and spending time to become inspired to the greatest heights we can reach. When we can look at what's possible, what's potential, what truly inspires us, then we can see whether those ideas overwhelm or frazzle us. If we can hold those visions and nurture

them and stretch our actions and continue to inspire ourselves or others long enough, then discontinuous learning takes place.



“It is important to have our feet touching the ground and head touching the clouds”



Food for Thought:

- How do I ground myself? When? What happens when I do?
- Where am I not grounded? Why?
- What tolerances do I have at work and at home?

Firm ground allow safe take offs

One way of grounding ourselves is to set ground rules for whatever relationship, sport, or venture we are pursuing. Again, this helps define intention, context, and exact question.

For example, the government of Singapore has strict traffic rules, as the city is small in size. One day, a friend gave Heather a ride somewhere. Just after they merged onto the freeway, a police officer stopped them. Heather was concerned, especially after hearing stories about strict laws in Singapore. But the officer simply handed the driver a gift certificate.

Flabbergasted, Heather asked, “What is this for?”

“I observed that your friend’s manner of driving was very polite,” the officer replied. “She let other drivers move in when she was merging. We just want to acknowledge and appreciate that.”

This story completely reframes our usual relationship with ground rules. Most of us follow the rules when we notice someone whose job is to enforce them, but we may not feel like we want to do something positive. We become careful. Our brains downshift to make sure we are within the rules. In the gift certificate program, people who work with the rules have a way to set a different emotional tone and an appreciative relationship with the people they serve.

Setting ground rules is about establishing elementary agreements, including:

- What are we going to do?
- Who does what in this undertaking?
- How will we measure progress?
- When will we start and stop?

Setting ground rules for learning is like drawing up a business contract, which specifies what we expect from each other in the process we undertake, the results we desire, and the consequences of fulfilling or not fulfilling their commitments. If we ignore setting appropriate ground rules, we promise but never deliver.



*Ground yourself; strip yourself down,
to blind loving silence.
Stay there, until you see
you are gazing at the Light
with its own ageless eyes.*

--**Rumi** – translated by Andrew Harvey in The Way of Passion:
Celebration of Rumi



Food for Thought:

- Do I believe in ground rules? What is my rationale?
- How do I create ground rules for myself? For others? How is the way I am creating ground rules useful?
- What ground rules exist in my work? How do they help bring out the best in me and in others? How do they limit me?

Effective leaders create safe playgrounds.

A fundamental role of leaders is to create a safe playground in which we all help to identify, create, and evolve ground rules for the game. These create safety and security for all the players. We can then tap into our intrinsic motivation and body wisdom, and bring our creativity to the team.

At a project review meeting for the Boeing 777, I heard this story about ground rules from Alan Mulally, then general manager of the commercial aircraft division. Mrs. DeKlever, his son's

kindergarten teacher, had asked Mulally to speak to her class about his work. In the process, he talked about ground rules and encouraged the kids to create their own rules for the class. They did:

- 1. Love yourself.
- 2. It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn—plus, Mrs. DeKlever makes them all the time!
- 3. Give and get at least four hugs a day.
- 4. Be crazy and silly. It's wild fun.
- 5. Share.
- 6. Laugh a lot! It feels great.
- 7. Hug an animal.
- 8. Give at least 20 warm fuzzies a day.
- 9. Always remember that cold prickles are very freezing.
- 10. Try your best for you, not for anyone else.
- 11. It's what's inside that counts, not for anyone else.
- 12. Keep our Earth clean.
- 13. Smile, it's catching.
- 14. Cheer sad people up.
- 15. Don't forget snack time.
- 16. Make friends.
- 17. Try new projects. They are awesome
- 18. Be thankful for what you have.
- 19. Think.
- 20. Watch out for your buddies at recess.
- 21. Dance a lot, even sitting down.
- 22. Talk about your feelings.

- ! 23. A warm fuzzy is like a pillow or a blanket. It feels very soft and fluffy.
- ! 24. Remember that everyone is special.
- ! 25. You don't have to be perfect.
- ! 26. Imagine impossible things that you couldn't do, like flying. That's neat.
- ! 27. Be nice.
- ! 28. Dream—good ones.
- ! 29. Tell someone you like their new hair-do.
- ! 30. Take your time. Don't hurry.
- ! 31. Sing some really cool songs.
- ! 32. Build a city out of blocks.
- ! 33. Tell someone with your eyes and your voice and your words if you get a cold prickly. Use their name. They will probably say they are sorry.
- ! 34. Try a Hula Hoop.
- ! 35. Read a book or have your mom or dad or teacher read one to you.
- ! 36. End each day with a "Happy Thought."



If you have both feet planted on level ground, then the university has failed you.
Robert F. Goheen.





Food for Thought:

- Where do I feel energetic and empowered? Creative?
- How do I create a safe space for others to manifest their creativity?
- How can I set ground rules to work with others and have fun?

Simultaneously, conditioning defines what is acceptable and obscures what is authentic.

Many of the ground rules we bring to any situation come from the ones we learned in our families, schools, workplaces, and other communities. This kind of subtle but effective training, or *social conditioning*, lubricates our interaction with the society into which we're born or with which we work. Conditioning helps us learn how to function and be effective within a system of tacit constraints. We learn what works in society.

Instinct alone is not enough to live by; we need to learn efficient, reliable ways to handle life's complex but predictable events. Social conditioning helps develop our sense of belonging, fitting in, and becoming part of our society. Our acquired habits and ground rules thus show up in the scripts we write for ourselves and live by throughout life. Our social selves evolve out of this early conditioning.

As powerful and essential as this is to our growth, conditioning also has drawbacks. Imagine it as an invisible box in which we each choose to live. During early childhood, we form perceptions of the culture, values, beliefs, and assumptions of parents, relatives, and society in general. Adjusting ourselves to the energy that surrounds us, we fall in step and play-act our roles. The mental box we construct under these conditions is almost entirely outside of our awareness, however, so we cannot escape it easily—or our attachment to it.

This works well enough in childhood, usually, but some of us continue playing the same role forevermore (even though conditions have changed and society is not the same). Occasionally, we may detect its inadequacy, but we may not see it clearly enough to reflect on the matter very long. So this box of conditioning shapes our reality. It is as if we have green colored glasses on (but forgot that we have them on) and the world looks green. Only when we are desperate—or inspired—enough to find a better role do we choose to understand our conditioning better, and do something about it.

The first step is to notice our first reactions. Do we use expressions such as, "We don't do things like that in this company" or "That's impossible"? These typify responses from our conditioned selves that formed limiting beliefs. It helps to write

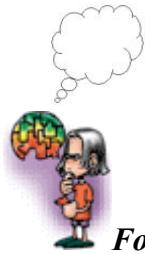
them down and reflect: Can I change these reactions? Can I choose not to listen? Is this really a fact or can I take charge and initiate a change?

Both high aspiration and high desperation allow us to think outside the box and act outside our conditioned responses. This puts us in touch with our essence, and we tap into our authentic selves. Otherwise, we ignore our authentic selves, suffer internal conflicts, and experience gaps between our actions and our words.



***Mind is consciousness, which has put on limitations.
You are originally unlimited and perfect. Later you take on
limitations and become the mind.***

—the Taittiriya Upanishad



Food for Thought:

- What are my main rules about relating with others?
- How do my rules free me? How do they limit me?
- Have I ever revised any rules? What brought about that revision?
- How has conditioning affected my life, positively or negatively?
- How do I help others and myself to grow beyond our perceived limitations?

A boundary exists only after we discover that someone's just crossed it.

Each of us has many invisible boundaries. These are like personal boundaries that we create and operate within to feel comfortable. They reflect our ideas about what's appropriate, and we assume, in general, that others have similar boundaries and comfort zones.

Let me illustrate this point. Talking with another participant at a recent conference in Ireland, I realized that I was moving backward every few minutes as this man moved his face closer to mine. He kept moving into my personal space. Out of my discomfort, I kept backing away to create more distance. With an obviously different need for personal space, he kept coming closer.

In some respects, our boundaries are like ground rules. When somebody encroaches on those invisible boundaries knowingly or unknowingly, we feel uncomfortable or unsafe and act to bring more safety.

Ground rules help define an interaction so that we feel secure and safe enough to engage in it. In this respect, *boundaries* are imaginary lines that delineate what's okay and what's over the limit or out of bounds. As they are invisible rather than real, we do not always recognize them until someone runs right over them. The previous passage examines "undiscussable" topics and expressions, such as "We don't do things like that here" or "You're out of line." These are all mental boundaries that indicate what is acceptable and what is not.

We all bump into or cross each other's boundaries, and those interactions shape our experiences of each other.

Phil, a marketing executive for a communications company does not recognize boundaries. He comes across to others as pushing his own point of view even when he doesn't have to. He sees himself as having the right answer and keeps pushing until others give in or leave him. His team members eventually stopped supporting him. He lost his job, marriage and social relationships but is still clueless about why these bad things keep happening to him. He considers others to be unreasonable and unfair.

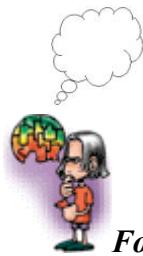
Our egos create our boundaries as well as our reactions when we cross people's lines or they cross ours. Depending on our

interactions, we make assumptions about each other and about ourselves. Those assumptions become the filters that mediate further perceptions and reactions. We quickly come to believe that we are experiencing the truth—the only truth—about others and ourselves. This mental box shapes our reality, and anything outside its boundaries becomes insignificant or invisible to us.



Don't believe what your eyes are telling you, all they show is limitation. Believe with your understanding, find out what you already know, and you'll see the way to fly.

—Richard Bach



Food for Thought:

- How do I know that I respect other people's boundaries?
- What feedback would be helpful?
- Who gives me an honest opinion about my blind spots?
- How do I react when someone crosses one of my lines?
- Which boundaries matter most to me at work?
- Which boundaries matter most to me at home?

Exploring our boundaries allows us to discover new freedoms.

I remember going to a park with my son when he was two or three years old. He climbed up a very tall structure while I was looking at something else. When I turned my gaze and saw him, I was afraid to follow him, yet I couldn't reach him from the ground. I felt frightened, and for him it was fun. I told him to be careful, but he slowed down only after he noticed his feet slipping.

It is natural for us, as children, to play with and continually push against boundaries and rules. This is how we establish the limits of our freedom. When we recognize a boundary, we also recognize—or learn—the consequences of crossing it. Without an awareness of boundaries, we experience consequences as unfair and arbitrary.

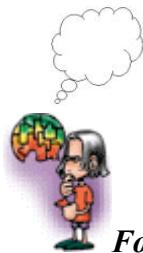
Learning by experience is usually more valuable than learning by teaching. We cannot argue with our own experience even though we may ignore its wisdom. The more we know about something, the more we learn about our own ignorance. This is the first step to greater awareness and freedom.

Paul and Vevee were on a team with Warren and Maryanne and were developing a creativity workshop for their colleagues. They did all the research and then asked me to facilitate their course. After a brief discussion with them, I realized that they should take on the leadership role because I knew that they would get more out of creating and performing the workshop. It took some convincing for them to trust their capabilities but once they believed in themselves, it was magical. They split up the tasks because it was clear to them how much research they had to do. The more they learned about creativity, the more they realized their own boundaries and worked harder. They involved others and created the course that was most meaningful to them. I was available as a mentor and a coach but my role was minimal as they came alive in unleashing their own creativity and inspiring that of their colleagues.



It is from the depths of unconscious that the truly original ideas spirit forth, where our wave of becoming resides. This is the

place you really have to dig. This is where the abilities to play, fantasize, imagine, dream, laugh, and be spontaneous and crazy actually live. Here is where 90% of our potential lies. This is where we connect with our wave of possibilities.
—George Land and Beth Jarman



Food for Thought:

Of the lessons that matter to me:

- Which came from my experiences?
- Which came from the warnings of others?
- Which came from formal learning settings?
- What freedoms have I experienced when I explored my boundaries?
- Where do I experience boundaries in working in teams?
- How do I go about finding new freedoms?

2. Nurturing



2. NURTURING

A colleague, Nancy and I once worked as design consultants with a large manufacturing company to create an executive development program. Many of the design team members were hard-core business executives typical of our future participants: engineers, attorneys, quality-control executives, and so on, all at the level of vice-president or senior director. They had never been part of a leadership development program, let alone its design, so they were not sure what they could contribute. In the beginning, their focus was almost entirely on the content rather than the process.

At the first meeting, Mike, an ex-military executive, turned to me and said, “I know about you consultants. You are the guys who ask me what time it is, take my watch to see the exact time, put the watch in your pocket, and then charge me for the time you engaged with me.” I was uncomfortable going into that group, and I wondered what kind of output would emerge.

At another meeting early in the project, Gary, the director in charge of the development team, asked all of us to come to the next meeting with an object that was very near and dear to us. We were to share the story of that object and our relationship with it. Some members looked around and snickered about this “touchy-feely” request.

To our surprise, everybody did bring in something. They spoke about the photographs of their families or the jerseys they wore when they played football in college, and how they cherished those memories and relished bringing them back up. As we went along, some members said, “This is a waste of time. We’re not getting anywhere.” But by the end of that exercise, the team began to gel.

Because members felt nurtured and heard more fully as human beings, rather than just their professional roles, more of who they were was brought into the design. The design community became closer, and team members who had never seen each other except at the office were now inviting the whole team to their homes.

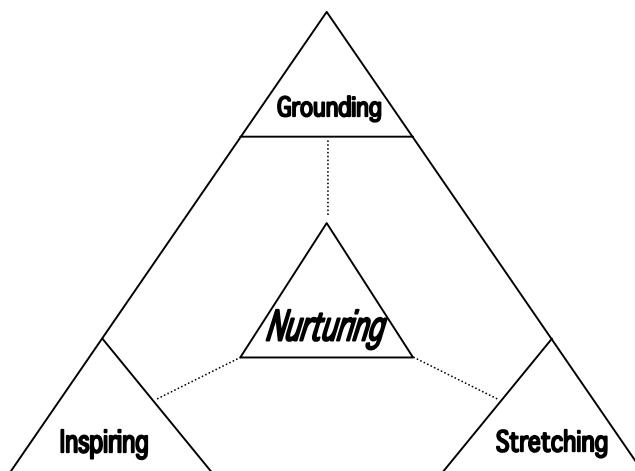
Out of that, during the next several design meetings, we brought in the emotional intelligence component that was present in our own group. The time that Gary regularly set aside during the design process created a space for nurturing who we were.

At the last meeting, Mike (who’d once made the joke about consultants) shook my hand, then said, “What the heck,” and gave

me a hug. That was one of the greatest compliments I have had, and one of my most powerful design experiences. By nurturing who we were, we were able to stretch, play, and bring more of our expertise, love, and commitment to the task at hand. Various papers and magazines later wrote our design up as one of the most innovative executive development programs.

Ten years later, I still see nurturing as one of the most ignored parts of business. Whenever business gets tough, nurturing goes out the window and we expect people to work twice as hard without it. The lack of play, caring, love, and commitment means nurturing disappears. This soon has a negative impact on the productivity of the entire group. When care and empathy are present, if we need to work extra hours, we are able to put in more energy because of our relationships. It's more than an impersonal transaction. Nurturing allows for acceptance of each other, respect for one another and fosters the ability to team. When combined with a clear direction or an identifiable goal, nurturing empowers us.

Nurturing is the second and essential cornerstone of discontinuous learning. Nurturing allows for dealing with ground rules with care and empathy. Nurturing enables our love and commitment to grow and empowers us to act when inspired. Finally, nurturing brings playful ways to stretch others and ourselves in our relationships. Learning takes place most easily in such a context.



In the physical domain, nurturing entails attending to such things as our nutrition, exercise, and rest. When our physical selves

do not have adequate nurturing, we lose energy and stamina, if not our health—all of which play key roles in our ability to learn.

In the emotional domain, we flourish best when we can express our hearts and our curiosity to an audience that both nourishes and challenges us. Such audiences can be colleagues, friends, family members, ourselves, or any combination. Emotional nurturing helps us to identify our true worth and thrive at our fullest potential. Just as grounding and ground rules are vital to a military organization, nurturing is the key cornerstone in families. It's part of what goes into the extraordinarily powerful bonding that endures life's ups and downs.

Without emotional nurturing, our passion does not get ignited. When we are not passionate about who we are, and what we do, the quality of our lives suffers—in our relationships, communication, and work. We become emotionally brittle and have difficulty making friends or sustaining bonds. We also lack what it takes to answer for ourselves. Without emotional nurturing, we also operate out of what we are supposed to do rather than what we feel inspired to do. Teamwork becomes drudgery instead of fun when team members are not bonded emotionally.

Likewise, intellectual nurturing involves both support and stimulation. Especially for deep and discontinuous learning, our brains need challenges and opportunities to develop new perspectives, if not entirely new concepts. Only when such opportunities show up and we are willing to rise to the occasion of accepting them do our mental activities focus enough for us to leap to a new level of thinking. Suddenly, we generate new ideas and approaches rather than merely reshuffling our old thoughts and old data, finding more evidence to support our old mindsets. Without intellectual nurturing and stimulating, we stagnate and rigidify intellectually.

Nurturing our generative domain refers to our creativity as well as our coaching others. Creative impulses abound when we attend to them, both in others and in our own lives. This kind of nurturing might involve meditation, visualization, storytelling, and community activities that have nothing to do with our regular activities. This is because when we learn a new skill or play a new game, we ultimately integrate those new experiential dimensions into our day-to-day professional and personal lives.

The source and focus of nurturing shifts as we go through life. When we are young, we receive nurturing from others. When we nurture others, we complete the cycle. For example, mentoring or coaching others creates self-acceptance and self-confidence to risk trying new ideas and behaviors. The following sections in the chapter show us how to nurture ourselves, so that we do not go through adulthood depending on others to do all the nurturing for us. They also examine how other kinds of nurturing inform our current personal and professional desire for discontinuous learning.



Resentment begins as we give up our responsibility to take care of ourselves and put it into the hands of others.

—Paula Englander-Golden and Virginia Satir



Food for Thought:

- How do I nourish my creative self?
- How do I nurture myself intellectually?
- How do I nurture myself physically?
- How do I nurture myself emotionally?
- What kind of nurturing do I accept? How does that benefit me? How does it limit me? (Consider a specific example)
- What kind of nurturing do I reject? How does that benefit me? How does it limit me? (Consider a specific example)
- How do I create a nurturing environment with my team?
- How do I create a nurturing environment with my family and friends?
- When do I nurture others?

Working together is the foundation for learning together.

An excellent example of creating a solid foundation for learning together in the corporate world was the Boeing 777 Program Reviews conducted by Alan Mulally, VP and General Manager of the 777 program (since I met Mulally, he moved on to become the President and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes). I attended one of the project review meetings that he managed and was quite surprised at what happened there. Their ground rules provide clarity of where they stand and how to proceed on a project. The key was how Mulally nurtured his colleagues and took into account the emotional, cognitive and generative aspects of learning together in each meeting. Here are the ground rules that he presented at the start of every meeting:



Purpose/Review

Together:

Where Are We Are On Our Plan?
Where Do We Need Special Attention to Accomplish
Our Plan?



Principles

and

Practices:

- Use Facts and Data
- Listen to Each Other
- No Secrets
- Help Each Other, Include Everyone
- Whining is OK Occasionally
- Enjoy Each Other And The Journey
- Propose a Plan, Find A Way
- Emotional Resilience

The aspect of nurturing the physical or habitual learning is reflected in the consistency of their 'Project Review' meetings, which were always scheduled on Wednesday mornings from 8 - 11

a.m. Alan Mulally starts the meeting exactly at 8:00 am with a big picture review. He welcomes guests one by one, acknowledging their notable contribution. He then reviews principles and practices. He emphasizes the point that there is opportunity for team members to complain. Once somebody complains, it is also his or her responsibility to propose a plan and find a way that would work for everyone. Another key measurement they use in their Project Review meetings is based on a traffic light metaphor: All items are marked in green on the 'moving on' schedule. Items listed in yellow require special attention. Red listings are warning signals requiring everyone to help each other. The emphasis here is that they are all in it together.

I was curious about how willing his team was in sharing their weaknesses as well as their strengths in public. When I spoke with Alan Mulally, he made it clear that during his meetings he encourages them to tell the truth and do not hide their mistakes from others. This is because Mulally himself is willing to show his vulnerability in front of others, to tell the truth, and to practice the values he preaches. When he demonstrates courage, vulnerability and authenticity in front of his team he inevitably nurtures those qualities in others.

I also noticed that Mulally only talked about changing behavior through rewards, never through punishment. He implicitly believed in the goodness of human beings. As skill levels are not in question, he is willing to support them in doing what is good for them. In return, his colleagues seem to also do what is good for the whole 777 team. New people on the team might not want to practice teamwork and may initially feel uncomfortable and exposed in the "working together" culture of 777. This is likely to change as they begin to become conditioned to the culture of telling the truth and taking responsibility.

The meeting I attended was very nicely organized with no blaming and no complaints. Customers, suppliers and visitors from other parts of the Boeing company who go to these Project Review meetings are impressed at how much information gets communicated, how issues get resolved, and how each of the participants, including guests, gets a chance to contribute, give feedback, and become part of the larger project. Ownership,

responsibility and accountability all emerged out of nurturing the working together and learning together aspects.



Coming together is a beginning,
Staying together is progress,
Working together is success.
-Henry Ford



Food for Thought:

- How Do I nurture my team (in workplace, family, or community?)
- What are my ground rules?
- How do I practice those ground rules?
- How do I nurture my ground rules in others?
- How much am I acting out of team rather than individual strengths?
- When did I start focusing on myself instead of my team?
- When do I start focusing on my team instead of myself?
- When have I meaningfully worked together and learned together? What worked?

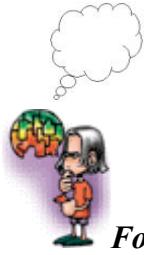
Success is about nurturing the fullest future.

When I consulted for Xerox in the 1990s, I used to go to Rochester, New York every month. I met an Indian CEO who ran an order fulfillment company and seemed to be quite energetic and reflective. In one of the conversations, he told me a story of how 40% of his business was coming from Hispanic markets. I was curious because he is not necessarily in Texas or California or other south western states where he is continually exposed to opportunities in Hispanic market. Apparently, a new MBA graduate, named, Jose joined his company two years before. Jose was enthusiastic and came to be known as a go-getter. He came from Mexico and still had a strong connection with his family back home. In his visits to Mexico, Jose identified opportunities and alerted them to his manager. However, the manager did not pay enough attention or provide enough encouragement to Jose about pursuing new opportunities in Mexico as the business was doing well. But Jose was not, in fact, one to give up easily. During the Christmas party that year, Jose cornered the Indian CEO and passionately pitched his ideas. He also mentioned that his manager did not show much interest. The CEO did not want to discourage the young man. He asked Jose whether he could get his work done in 80% of the time and spend the rest in creating a proposal with a full cost-benefit analysis for a presentation it to him in a month or two. That way, Jose can understand for himself whether the business is real or not. During his analysis, Jose realized that in addition to Mexico, the Hispanic market in the US was a significant opportunity for his company and he presented his analysis to my friend. To make a long story short, within two years, they were a major player in that market.

If the CEO was not willing to nurture Jose and his seemingly far-fetched ideas, he would not be sitting so comfortably now. His success definitions and his personal experiences did not extend to Hispanic markets. But when he was open, recognized the passion in Jose, he created a win-win situation for Jose and the company.



What we prepare for is what we shall get
William Graham Sumner



Food for Thought:

- How do I nurture myself (and others) in ways that unfolds our fullest future?
- How can I adjust my nurturing to fit circumstances that keep changing?
- What are my fears that stop me from nurturing others explore their dreams and visions?

Love is worth a hundred books.

In the three-dimensional model of learning, nurturing's prime domain is the heart. In that sense, we can think of love as nurturing's essential energy. It has less to do with knowing than feeling. Still, people like me attempt to know more than feel. When I do feel at last, it hits me like a thunderbolt.

A few years ago, my wife was thinking of going back to her medical practice and had to take medical board exams. As she was away from the field for several years, she joined Kaplan test preparation and wanted to spend most of the day in the Center and prepare for six months. I felt that it was appropriate for me to take a year off and be a "soccer dad" so that she could do what she wanted. In the beginning, it was fun. We both were getting the kids ready to go to school and then I used to drop my wife at the Stanley Kaplan center. Then come back, take care of other things at home and prepare snacks for the family. Later I used to bring my daughter back from school, feed the children, take them to tennis, to the library or to friends' houses and then go back to pick up my wife from Kaplan around 8:00 pm.

Very quickly, I found myself impatient, snappy and overwhelmed. What comes naturally to my wife was very difficult for me. Nurturing my kids, myself and my wife I found, is an intentional act. I realized that I don't love what I do every moment and when I don't nurture that feeling of love continually, I become overwhelmed.

Until that point, I was under the impression that I understood what my wife did and it looked really easy from the outside. When I really got down to doing it, it was not only difficult but also very demanding. Further challenge was that my two children were very different in their individual food habits. Their daily schedules were different. I struggled to balance their needs with my offerings. There were several times, I was upset with myself about my emotional reactions and impatience. I was trying to read books and understand how to deal with my kids, the situation and myself.

When I asked my wife how she manages the chaos, she smiled and said "when you love someone, you do what works for them. You might have 100 reasons for not doing something but if there is one good reason – you love it—then you might want to do it."

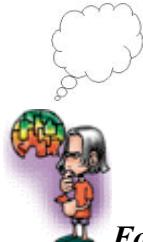
It was quite revealing to me that I have been traveling the world attempting to understand learning and here she is, sitting with mother load. What was even more revealing was the reaction of my mother when I told her about my experience. She smiled and nodded. My mother knew it too.

It took a while, but I did finally understand that nurturing has nothing to do with what I think should be done. It is about doing everything that I do with love and with care. When I can come to that place of love and care, whatever I do bears my signature!



"The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention."

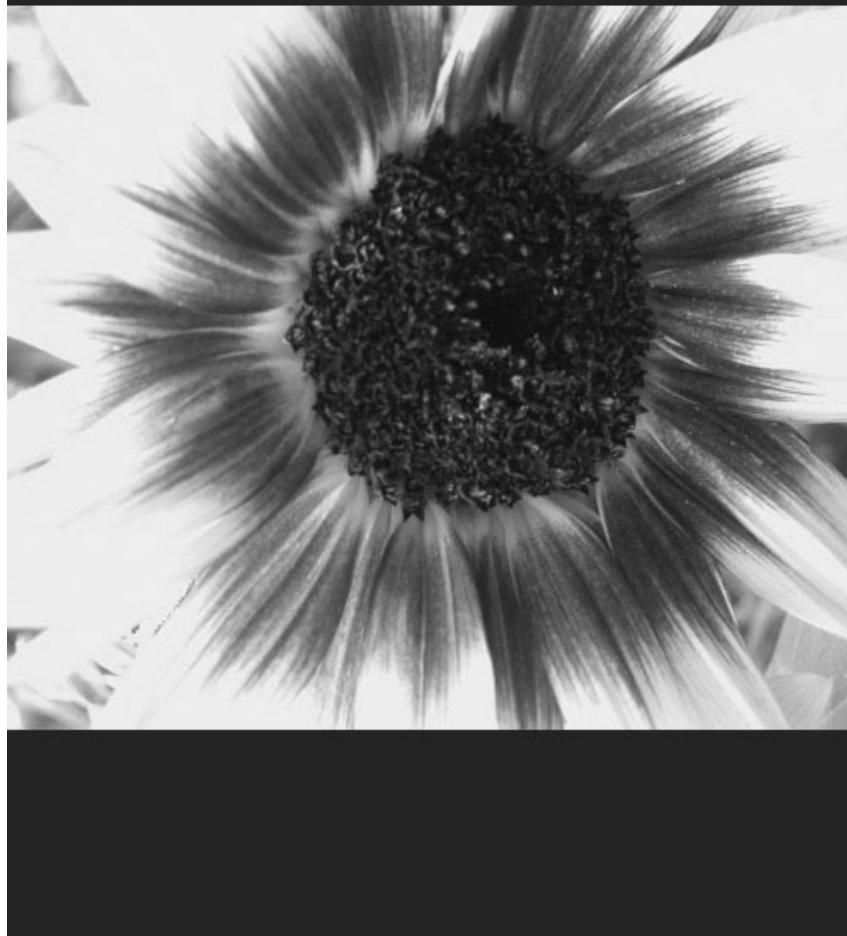
■ Kahlil Gibran



Food for Thought:

- Who nurtures you at home? Who nurtures you at work?
Make a list.
- What exactly do they do that nurtures you?
- How do you nurture others in your life?
- How does nurturing at work differ from nurturing at home?

3. Stretching



3. STRETCHING

In the Hewlett-Packard circles, one story goes that their dominance in the market for dot-matrix printers was about to face a new challenge from Canon. Nobody knew much about Canon's new printer, but the rumor was that it was a whole different kind of an animal. It would be much smaller, priced at a fraction of the cost, and capable of printing in color.

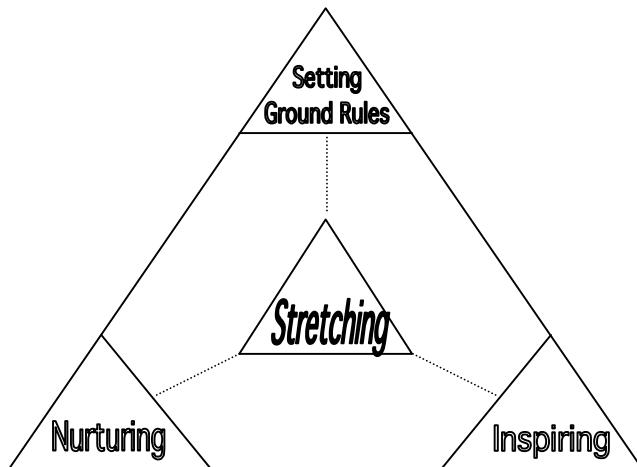
One of the HP managers talked about this with one of the lab's top engineers. "I've known you for many years, and you always rise to the occasion by coming up with new ideas. Can you think of a way we can keep this Canon product from hurting our bottom line?"

The engineer, grounded in his technical capabilities, nurtured by the confidence of his manager, was intrigued and stimulated enough to go to work on this puzzle. Playing with concepts of bubble jets and not knowing what Canon could be doing, he stretched beyond the paradigm of his dot-matrix printer expertise and came up with the ideas behind the ink-jet printer. By quickly putting a team to explore these new ideas, HP got it to the market before Canon's new offering.

This story exemplifies the third cornerstone of discontinuous learning, *stretching*. The act of stretching beyond our current limits pertains to all of the domains—physical, intellectual, emotional, and generative—and often signifies our first impulse to change, if not learn.

When we feel stiff physically from staying in one position too long, for instance, we naturally stretch our limbs and move around. Or, when we're taking up a new activity or sport, our muscles usually need to expand their repertoire of tensing, relaxing, moving, and coordinating with each other.

Likewise, on an intellectual or emotional level, feeling stuck or stagnant tells us it's time to find a different perspective, explore our responses or ideas, or learn alternative approaches to what we're doing. This may lead to generative stretching, in which we stretch beyond our current limits to add to what we know or create something novel. Generative stretching also includes supporting others to stretch beyond their comfort level.



Without stretching, we don't learn from our failures or take actions that move us beyond our status quo. We then we repeat those failures because we haven't developed any other way to do things, and ascribe our lack of success to destiny rather than exercising our free will to change the course of our future.

When we find innovative ways to do something, we are stretching our old ideas, attitudes, and assumptions; Self-limitations, fears, physical endurance and creative energy. The more we stretch, obviously, the greater the change in us. And the more a new perspective or idea stretches or transforms our old ones, the deeper the learning.

We stretch whenever we have a clear vision or sense of purpose, playful attitude, and opportunities to grow. Vision creates a desired future state that pulls us forward. By inspiring us, purpose also has this effect. Playfulness connects with emotional stretching. When we explore opportunities that life presents to us, we stretch intellectually.

One reason that stretching is a cornerstone of learning is that our capacity to learn grows as we keep stretching. Conversely when we get too grounded and attached to what we have learned before, past, knowledge gets in the way of what is yet to be learned. It shows up in our assumptions, rigid attitudes and positions we take. For deep and discontinuous learning, unlearning is essential. To the extent that we unlearn and let go of old unworkable mindsets, we create mental space that allow new learning and build capacity.

 ***How can we remember our ignorance, which growth requires, when we are using our knowledge all the time?***

—Henry David Thoreau



Food for Thought:

- What scares me about stretching?
- What excites me about stretching?
- When was the last time I wanted to consciously stretch myself professionally or personally?
- What past incidents in my life really stretched me?
- What did I learn from past incidences that stretched me? What were the surprises?
- What concerns arise when I help another to grow professionally?

We understand learning before we even begin to learn.

Another aspect of innate learning is that we engage in it long before anyone tries teaching us. More impressive still, as children we acquire many more skills much more quickly than we do as adults.

When Vidya, my daughter, was ten months old, she stood up for the first time and tried to walk. She usually walked only two steps before she fell, but falling never seemed to discourage her. That June, I watched her make sixty attempts in one day. The thought of failure never seemed to enter her head. What began as curiosity quickly became a compulsion to learn. In between, she showed no period of fear.

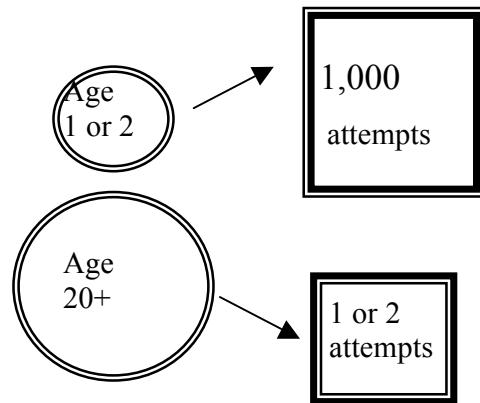
By the end of July, she was running all over the house and comfortably climbing up and down the stairs. That means she probably attempted to walk a thousand times before she mastered the process.

We adults normally give up trying something new after our first or second fruitless attempt. Our discomfort with taking risks and failing stems from a habit of focusing solely on the desired end result.

In addition, many of us fail to appreciate failure. Often, we erect mental blocks or boundaries in the hope that they will protect us against future so-called failures. This comforts us for a while—and then these self-imposed limits sabotage our growth and enjoyment of what life offers.

By learning to stretch, we can break through mental barriers and discover our untapped potential. Especially when we know that others are appreciating rather than judging us, we have an easier time stretching beyond our former limits.

It is still the rare individual who persists after repeated failure, but in diverse fields—including sports, music, literature, and business—we all know of people who achieve greatness after practicing something over and over. Why didn't they fear failure and stop trying? Have they found a way to reconnect with the drive they had as children?



In our personal and professional lives, we face more complex tradeoffs than we did as toddlers. Nonetheless, the clues here are significant for deepening and accelerating our learning. After all, we also have access to far more resources and resourcefulness than toddlers do.



*Childlikeness has to be restored with long years of training
in the art of self-forgetfulness.*

—D. T. Suzuki



Food for Thought:

- When do I pursue learning?
- What supports my learning?
- When do I avoid it?
- What initiates my disengagement?
- What kinds of things do I persist in until I succeed? Why?
- When do I experiment?
- Can I create those conditions more often?
- How am I encouraging others to increase persistence and experimentation?

Vulnerability is strength

We can learn without stretching, but we cannot learn as deeply or as rapidly unless the process moves us beyond our limits physically, cognitively, emotionally, and creatively. Stretching takes a willingness to be vulnerable.

Most of us avoid being conscious of vulnerability because it reminds us of feeling weak. However, *vulnerability* is about not knowing—the only state in which we are open to learning. It is a mandatory asset for discontinuous learning.

How deeply and quickly we learn is directly proportional to our willingness to occupy a vulnerable position consciously. At a gathering of couples, for instance, many of us husbands got excited about taking a bicycle tour of a nearby village. Then one gentleman quietly said he could not go with us because he'd never learned how to ride a bicycle. To my surprise, another friend admitted he did not know how, either. The first man had given him the courage to say so in front of others. Our spouses quickly joined the conversation and we found that only two of the eight wives knew how to ride a bicycle. In short, touring as a group had never been feasible and we found out only because of one gentleman's willingness to be vulnerable. Fortunately, his courage resulted in our having enough time to plan something else.

Starting from relatively vulnerable positions like this, we use our inborn predispositions to stretch, grow, and make successful transitions from a dependent infancy to an interdependent adulthood. In the stretch mode, we become immensely creative and passionate. Our passion fuels our attempt to stretch in the first place, and it is one of the characteristics of those who garner success.

Another factor in success is intention. To stretch optimally, our intentions must be clear, active, and flexible. Being willing to stretch beyond our own perceived limits, of course, requires taking a risk.

Risking vulnerability means being willing to fail, look stupid, and ask questions instead of pretending to know or making assumptions. It also sometimes means speaking our truth without being sure what consequences may follow. The benefit is that, in risking this way, we model a behavior that leads others to stretch, too. We create an environment of nurturing and caring in which we

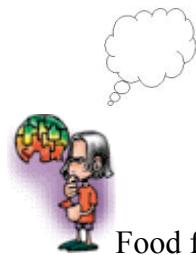
can also let our guard down and discover ourselves to be bigger than we ever imagined.

Curiosity, genuine inquiry (not inquisition), empathy, and appreciation provide the impetus and support for us to stretch beyond our self-imposed limits into openness and vulnerability to discover new possibilities. We can then employ all kinds of learning styles, including innate, instinctive, and imitative ones. After that, how deeply and quickly we teach or learn depends greatly on how inspired we feel by the vision we're dancing with.



Why is ‘uninhibited wonder’ something we generally restrict to children? If doing good inquiry is at the heart of organizational development, why then so little talk of things like awe, curiosity, veneration, surprise, delight, amazement, and wonder -- in short, everything that serves to infuse what has traditionally referred to as the “spirit of inquiry”?

—David Cooperrider



Food for Thought:

- To practice stretching, how can I find opportunities to learn and be vulnerable?
- What helps me enter a vulnerable state? What hinders me?
- How can I foster vulnerability in others?

Competence sometimes breeds incompetence

Exploring our vulnerability includes becoming aware of our *core incompetence*—the area of our lives where our feet are stuck to the floor, where we experience only one option. Statements such as “I have no choice but to—” often point toward this facet of vulnerability. In other cases of core incompetence, we feel paralyzed by delusions about our gifts, fears about our abilities, anxiety about productivity, or judgments about how others judge us. We cannot see how to stretch beyond what we already know.

We develop core incompetence whenever we automatically rely on an area where we think we are strong. Our core incompetence hurts us not because it is bad or inadequate but because we overuse it. It tends to be a trait or a process that served us very well in the past, but as we repeat it over and over, we get stuck in our thinking. Our former success traps us, and our strong suit becomes a blind spot, an area of incompetence. If we were playing basketball, we’d lose possession of the ball for holding it too long without moving (or moving it).

For instance, one customer service manager I knew was very charismatic. Whenever she met with a customer, that person walked away happy. Having heard such feedback many times, the manager learned over time that she excelled in one-on-one situations. She found she could also charm colleagues, bosses, and suppliers.

Soon, however, many of them dreaded meeting with her individually. They preferred to deal with her by phone or e-mail because they felt vulnerable to her charm and feared she would take advantage of them again. In her company and among many of her business contacts, nobody trusted her to be fair or to be on their side of any transaction. Used indiscriminately (and unconsciously, I am sure), her gift with people became her core incompetence and backfired. She focused on scoring baskets for her own record, as it were, rather than for her customers or her team.

In a more general scenario, let’s say I ignore all other tools in my box because I can do magic with a hammer. Unconsciously, I choose to do everything with my hammer, even though other tools would be more effective in many cases. I tell myself I am learning and demonstrating how much better I am becoming with my hammer. Meanwhile, others see my showing off (ouch! their

judgments really hurt) and feel sorry for me because I am making no other choices.

In both situations, we rarely find freedom from our foot being nailed to the floor, and others see it long before we do. As long as we are unaware of it or not willing to pay attention to it, our core incompetence controls us and keeps us from moving forward toward our vision.

Once we discover where we are stuck, we gain the freedom to make a new decision. In other words, whatever we become aware of, we can use. The first question is whether we're willing to accept our predicament, that is, what currently exists. Next, are we willing to explore other tools and become aware of the alternatives we have? When I really find out where my foot is stuck to the floor, I gain the freedom to do something with it. Then it is truly possible to turn a weakness into a real strength.

Focusing on our vision or purpose also helps free our foot from the glue of past successes. Focusing solely on our core incompetence gives it more power. To loosen the grip of the past requires becoming aware of bigger perspective, a different future. The unknown can bring tremendous magic if we stretch ourselves into it.

This process—becoming aware, accepting the dance that currently exists, exploring a fuller menu of choices, and experimenting with new choices with an eye to our larger purpose—allows us turn vulnerability into a valuable strength. We can tell an immobile foot to pivot. We can also tell our stuck foot to become even more stuck, more disconnected from our purpose, and then watch what emerges.



Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

—Frank Outlaw



Food for Thought:

- What is my core incompetence?
- Where is my foot stuck to the floor?
- What is the core incompetence of my division or organization?
- How do we turn that vulnerability into strength?

4. Inspiring



4. INSPIRING

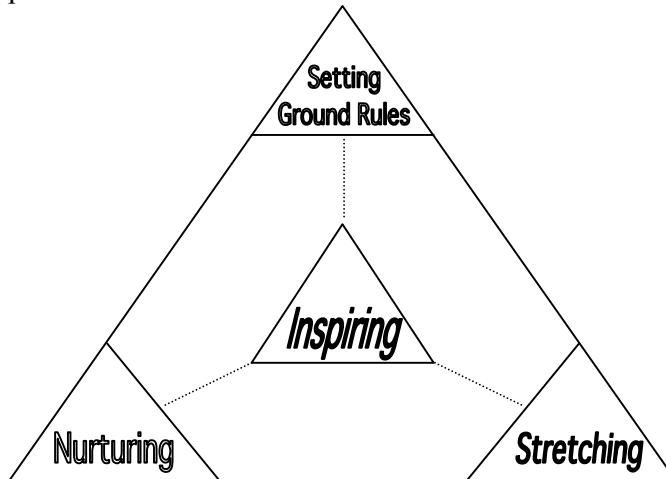
"I don't think these kinds of sessions work with *intact* work groups. It does not allow each other to open up and say anything meaningful because it could be used against them" said Andy at the beginning of a leadership development workshop for a company. It led to a mini confrontation between the HR manager and Andy and I had to step in to calm both of them down. On the last day, Andy commented that he was wrong and he did get a lot of value and he will withdraw his complaints about the HR manager. Those comments stunned the room. Andy is normally a cynical executive with critical opinions about everybody and is difficult to get along with. He rarely makes positive comments about anything. The HR manager was affected the most. She burst into tears, turned to Andy and said, "I just want you to know that I resented your jokes and your attitude. I ignored your requests because I wanted to teach you a lesson. Instead, you taught me a lesson. You showed me that you *could* be open, honest and take responsibility for your impact. It has been difficult working in this company with all the legacy issues that I have to deal with and I am realizing that I have been the one who was resenting, closed and opinionated. I want to apologize to you and others sincerely, and I will attempt to be more open and receptive to you. I was hired to serve you and help you become more effective and from now on I will get with it."

The rest of the attendees gave both of them a standing ovation. After the applause stopped, someone said, "Just by this one exchange, you've eliminated what we've been thinking about Human Resources being a hindrance to our work and not adding value to us. Your authenticity, and vulnerability—that's what we're taking away as your leadership gift. You're able to tell the truth even if it does not put you in a good light. That inspires us." The HR manager was shocked at their response. She could not see what was so inspiring about telling the truth and admitting that she screwed up. She was planning to pay more attention to her job. What are these guys so excited about!

Inspiring means "making somebody feel more enthusiastic, confident, or stimulated" according to the dictionary that comes with the Office software. What we think that will inspire others may not be inspiring to them at all. Authenticity, vulnerability and truth-telling inspires us even though we might not be aware of them while

we are sharing ourselves. When we are operating out of our authentic self, the spirit of who we are, what we do inspires others because they resonate with us and connect with our authentic self. The process is discontinuous, and we cannot predict or prepare for it other than be aligned with our own spirit.

In discontinuous learning, inspiring each other is a central experience as it allows us to let go. It is the “AHA!” moment when our minds seize on a new perspective and release the old. Our spirits soar, and our bodies rush with elated dynamism. In the deepening that can take place, we can find new themes. Creative ideas and applications set each other off like firecrackers on a string.



In the three-dimensional model, *inspiring* is the fourth and transformational cornerstone, from a developmental perspective. It refers both to feeling inspired and to inspire others. The ensuing sections elaborate on the pleasure and speed of learning while inspired.

Feeling inspired in the physical domain is having so much energy that our bodies are eager to take on that morning jog, game of handball, or glorious walk in the park at lunchtime. It is also about appreciating our boundaries, grounding ourselves, and using those as the foundation to grow and make discontinuous leaps.

In the intellectual domain, inspiration can suddenly grab our curiosity or crystallize a new concept, sending us off on a grand journey of exploration. When inspired, our insights could trigger “what if” reactions in us and if those are explored appreciatively, we could end up with a clear vision of what we could do and purpose

that stretches us and fulfills us. These ideas will be further explored in the chapter that addresses intellectual domain.

In the heart or emotional domain, being inspired means tapping into our passion and commitment. It is about finding what we love and are committed to. Love with commitment is what allows us to mine inspiration to its full extent by implementing it in our own lives. Neither love without commitment nor commitment without love can sustain inspiration. Both are necessary.

In the generative domain, inspiration fuels our imagination, love and creative drive. Based on what we love and what we are committed to, inspiration may give us visions of what we are about to bring into existence or draw us powerfully along a path toward creating some new process or product. Or, inspiration may wake us up one morning by playing a few notes from the song we're about to write.

When we are not inspired, we put ourselves through some of the dullest efforts imaginable. Exercising without wanting to is a painful inner conflict between willpower and inertia. Intellectual endeavors feel slow, stale, and flat. Questions cease engaging us, and answers fail to emerge with any grace. Similarly, uninspired emotional and creative lives feel alienated and empty. We yearn for the far more illuminating pool of energy in which we once swam and played.

When we act out of inspiration, it spreads quickly. Others suddenly see new ways to act in areas where they felt stuck. When we notice that others are inspired by us, we often feel inspired to take more responsibility and accountability for our own actions. This positive cycle continues.



*... in moments of inspiration and
intuition, . . . the mind calms down and*

we center in the inner Self.

—Joan Borysenko



Food for Thought:

- Who are the people who inspired me in my life? What did they do?
- In my life, what have I done in an inspired way?
- Where do I find inspiration nowadays?
- What does it feel like to be inspired?
- When I feel inspired, what happens?
- When have I inspired another person? How did I do that?

We might travel the world for a lifetime trapped in our own pond.

An old fable tells about a frog in a pond. Another frog arrives from the ocean. The first frog asks about how big the ocean was. “The ocean is very large, and the pond is so small compared to the ocean,” the second frog responds. The first frog cannot imagine anything bigger than the pond it has always lived in, so it goes away thinking that the second frog is the biggest liar ever.

We might ask ourselves whether we look at the world this way. Do we consider what we hear from others from our own pond? How do we know that we are able to see things that lie outside our particular frame of reference or mindset? What do we use as a way of judging how big the ocean is?

These are good questions to ask because, being comfortable within our “boxes,” we tend to think that we are learning and growing. Learning within such a frame of mind, however, essentially means finding more data to support our current mindsets. It does not inspire us to stretch beyond our horizons and explore the unseen and unknown. We find excitement when we stretch and explore, and inspiration is the foundation for discontinuity.

Stretching toward something that inspires us gives us immeasurable flexibility in learning deeply and rapidly. Nothing stands in our way for long because the only barriers to learning are those we have created. With a clear idea of where we want to go, unlearning and dismantling those barriers are no problems.

Until we arrive at that magic mix of inspiration, vision, and stretching, however, many of us assume otherwise. Once we settle in an outlook, we believe we cannot change our fundamental patterns, beliefs, or personalities. We somehow ignore the unlearning part of learning, or we feel ashamed of needing to unlearn current ideas. We feel generally resigned to our “inadequacies” and assume that this is the way we’ll always be. Such thinking becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because we find validation everywhere we look. This is self-conditioning.



Organizations get into the same trap as individuals. Traditional printers and publishers neither invented nor embraced desktop publishing. The CNN news channel did not come from the well established ABC, NBC, or CBS networks. Kodak failed to see the possibilities of photocopying when the Battelle Memorial Institute introduced the inventor Chester F. Carlson with his faint imaging on metal plates. That is how the Xerox Corporation was born.

If we work for a company that is not recognizing opportunities lying outside its pond, what would we do? Are we willing to look outside our own pond to discover what customers are clamoring for? Would we be willing to hear what our colleagues are saying about us?



Xerography was not the answer to a problem waiting to be solved. Rather, the discovery of xerography was a case where invention was the mother of necessity. I am convinced that, without Chet Carlson, there might have never been xerography, not in our time perhaps, not ever.

—Sol M. Linowitz

Chair of the Xerox Corporation

Board of directors, 1958–66



Food for Thought:

- What do I believe about my capacity to change?
- What inspires me to engage fully in things that challenge my established thinking patterns?
- How do I respond to others who feel hopeless to learn or change?
- How do I know about my own boundaries?

The self who sets goals usually differs from the self who accomplishes them.

When we feel inspired by someone or something and suddenly discover some new sense of purpose, we become willing to stretch. Inspiration and stretching then evolve together. The more inspired we feel, the more we stretch. This builds capacity. When we put our inspiration into practice, we may also increase our skills and knowledge.

When inspired, we see clearly and want to act. In this sense, our guidance comes from within, from our essential selves. The part that performs, however, is our acting self, which also holds our skills and knowledge. Trouble arises when this acting self is at odds with the essential self. Unless they are aligned, we cannot align our actions and words. We lose our integrity.

This happens because our inspirations, aspirations, and creativity come from a sense of connecting with the larger spirit. For each of us, the *essential self* manifests a subset of this larger spirit. The essential self is distinct from the ego, or *acting self*. We also need to differentiate our essential selves from our physical substance, our bodies, to move into a perspective in which powerful learning can occur.

When inspired, we do align our words and actions. The acting self is congruent with the essential self, in other words. Indian spiritual tradition defines *integrity* as aligning words, thoughts, and feelings with action. This is considered the highest form of authenticity.

Discontinuous learning's power connects with congruence. In pulling apart our previous modes or models, we release tremendous energy and integrate some part of the unlearning experience. This happens not so that we can do anything in particular, but to internalize things from our own success. In turn, this factors into the alignment between essential self and acting self. The three-dimensional model lets us map, clarify, and examine this as one of the various things that also bring integrity to the process of discontinuous learning.



Authenticity is an attitude of awareness in which we are willing to experience our thoughts and feelings as they are.

—Joan Borysenko



Food for Thought:

- How connected do I feel to a spirit larger than my ego?
- How do I identify my essential self? My acting self?
- When do my actions match my words, thoughts, and feelings? In what situations do they differ?
- What are my beliefs about integrity and authenticity?
- How can I support others to be authentic?

More businesses now have a heart.

Inspiration is also a powerful approach to building creative capacity in the corporate world, where words such as *heart*, *soul*, and *spirit* are already occupying more and more space. Employees who are uncomfortable with this changing scene and vocabulary tend either to leave, fight a losing battle, or break through into a new sense of their professions and professionalism.

Mastek Ltd. is one example of how heart shows up in companies. An international software firm headquartered in India, its various other divisions are in Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Using my three-dimensional approach to thinking, they contemplated the dynamics in their company and came up with a mission statement and a customized pyramid to represent their company. An excerpt from the company's 1999 stockholders' report tells more:

At Mastek, we decided to make our Mission far more dynamic and action-oriented, providing people with a tool to guide them in their everyday transactions through The Mastek Pyramid. A way by which people can carry our Mission around with them, every day. The four vertices, or "Cornerstones" of the Pyramid, are fundamental to the Mastek Mission. These are:

*Love and Commitment
Growth & Sustainability
Systems & Processes
Creativity & Fun*

Love & Commitment, the "True North," is our aspiration. Evoking the spirit of service—within and outside the organization. Love towards our stakeholders in increasing their capability, providing the space for them to achieve their potential. And the commitment to support them in translating this capability into actual performance. Providing results for our stakeholders.

Being in win-win partnerships with our Customers to evolve Information Technology solutions that enhance the

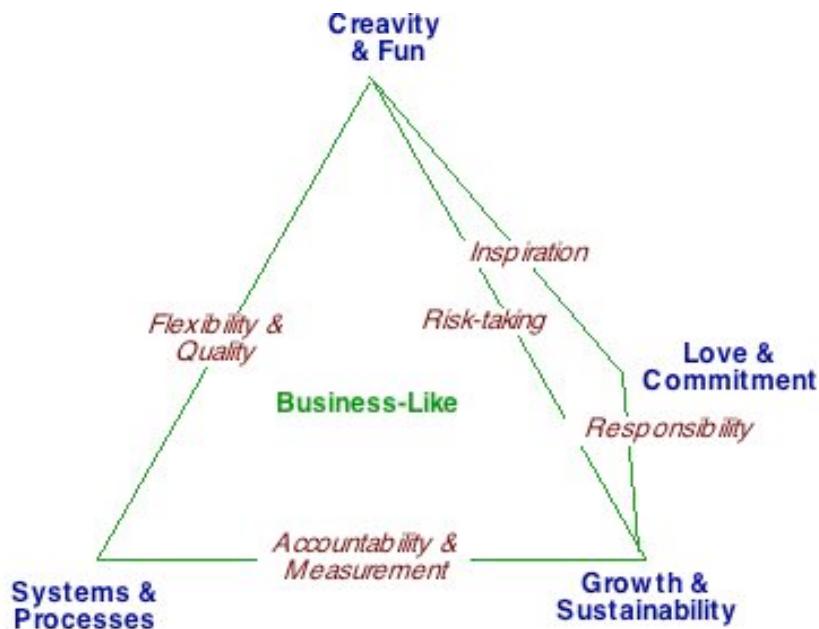
value of their business and enable them to service their customers better.

Providing an open, nurturing, yet demanding work environment to our Employees, grounded in mutual trust and respect, enabling them to be their best.

Being a source of long-term capital appreciation to our Stakeholders.

Having a synergistic relationship of mutual value with our Suppliers and Alliance Partners.

Being a responsible Corporate Citizen in the countries we operate . . .



From my first conversations with its founders and executives, it was clear to me that making a difference and leaving a legacy as a humane company interest them more than just making money. The firm has since doubled from 600 to about 1,200 people. All four

directors and founders are still there—and are still passionately committed to making a difference.

Having a heart and caring for others can be a competitive differentiation, as companies today are discovering. In a recent article in *Fast Company*, Tim Sanders of Yahoo says that love is a “killer application” that has not received enough attention.

In a sidebar titled “Why Love Conquers All,” he gives five tough-minded reasons why having a heart and being generous is the best strategy:



- We differentiate ourselves from others and build an outstanding brand.
- We create an experience for people who interact with us because we can be fun, interesting, and valuable.
- People pay attention to us—a most difficult achievement, and one that means results.
- We harness the power of positive presumptions about trust, knowledge and intentions.
- We receive valuable feedback about what we bring in terms of ideas, knowledge, and contacts—feedback that is not easy to get these days.

So inspiration leads to more inspiration. Paying attention to what we care about and bringing heart to work pays off handsomely. This is especially true in these days of short attention spans and constant uncertainties.

Helping us balance between work and life is another way heart is playing more of a role in some organizations. Many Fortune 500 companies are attempting to take care of people who work for them. Ultimately, though, it is people—inside organizations or outside—who bring the heart and make the connection. Are you one of them? If not, why not? How do you justify your role?

A developmental relationship exists among the four cornerstones. Grounding is the foundational intention, and nurturing others or ourselves is the next important developmental milestone.

Stretching becomes critical once our cognitive capabilities mature, and then inspiring brings the element of spirit into our interactions with others.

However, the process of developing each factor's energy is dynamic and is different in each person, household, or organization. As the Mastek 1999 Financial Report states, "true alignment and power are available when all four are pulling in the same direction." The same is true if we want to experience or engender discontinuous learning.



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor touched...but are felt in the heart.

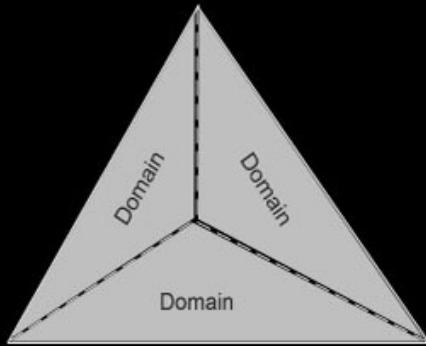
—Helen Keller



Food for Thought:

- Do I bring my heart to work?
- How connected do I feel to a spirit larger than my ego?
- What specific actions am I willing to take?
- How do I respond to people and organizations that bring more heart and spirit into their operations?

Part II - The Domains



PART II THE DOMAINS

The story goes that Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, one of the key writers of India's constitution, went to Mahatma Gandhi and told him that he was resigning from the constitution committee. It was in late 1947, India had just gained independence from British rule, and people considered Gandhi the father of the nation.

Gandhi inquired why and found that Dr. Ambedkar was hurt because of the comments of other people. He thought they didn't value his contribution. Gandhi reportedly asked him to find out where the hurt was. Was it the ego that got hurt, or was it the self? Dr. Ambedkar, it seems, reflected and decided to withdraw his resignation. He resumed work on the constitution.

When I heard this story, it dawned on me that how we perceive ourselves is not the same for everybody. For instance, I may think highly of my intellectual brilliance and feel hurt if somebody calls me stupid. Paul, who is creative, may react this way when other creative people do not pay attention to his ideas. My friend Lilly feels most hurt when others do not demonstrate caring or do not listen when she is talking. Gene, on the other hand, has his total focus on his body and muscles. His ego resides in his body image.

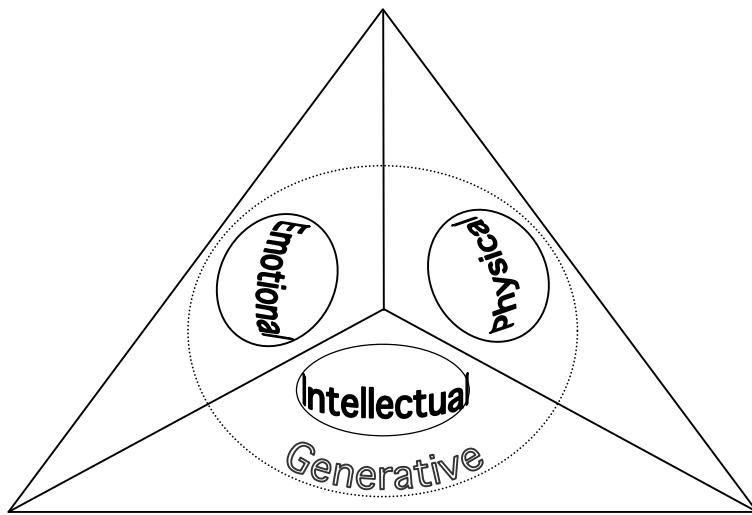
Our identities reflect how we perceive ourselves in four domains:

- Physical (kinesthetic intelligence)
- Emotional (emotional intelligence)
- Intellectual (cognitive intelligence)
- Generative (creative intelligence)

While these do not include all the intelligences described by Howard Gardner—the renowned Harvard University theorist on multiple intelligences—they do correspond on a Meta level. Later sections describe those connections. Meanwhile, we tend to be unaware of how these various intelligences affect our self-perception, so by learning about them and how each affects our identities, we can develop distinctions that are important to discontinuous learning.

We can also think of these domains as the arenas for potential outcomes, which their corresponding cornerstones and edges

demarcate. In other words, these domains embody the effect of three intentions at work simultaneously with three competencies. They answer the question of *where* those intentions and competencies show up, the field of intelligence in which our learning appears.



Outcomes in the intellectual domain, for instance, arise according to how we ground, stretch, and inspire ourselves. If we neglect or scrimp on any of these, our results suffer. This chapter concerns itself with how we control these fields and how we make our dynamic interactions work.

The components represented by the four cornerstones and the magnetic interactions among them contribute to the domain's integral wholeness. As long as the interactions are heading in an appreciative direction, the domain expands. Once they turn in a negative direction, the field reduces and the results go south.

It's like having a conversation with others, or when we form a team within our organization. When we can respect each other's opinions and ideas, we create an appreciative field in which what we build is no longer about managing tensions between "your" ideas and "my" ideas. A different kind of domain—a domain of workability—emerges in which we can create a flow and *to will* something collaboratively.

The degree of integrity we have in each domain determines our level of awareness and the depth of our learning process. Discontinuous learning is a process that reflects and affects our entire system of thinking. By examining each domain in detail, then, we can foster discontinuous learning by understanding more about which domain it shows up in and how we can enhance that domain's particular intelligence.



I would like to propose another way of construing identity: as a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world.

—James E. Marcia



Food for Thought:

- When has my learning experience included all the domains? What was that like for me?
- How can I include all four domains in my current learning process? In my coaching of others?
- How do I perceive myself?
- What uniqueness of mine do I value above the rest?
- Of what am I most proud?
- What hurts me?
- What kind of intelligence do I value most: Kinesthetic? Emotional? Cognitive? Creative? Why??

5. The Physical Domain



Photos Courtesy of the Associated Press.

5. The Physical Domain

Without playfulness, neither learning nor magic occurs much. At the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Sara Hughes won a gold medal for figure-skating. That amazingly inspiring performance reflected something about the *physical domain* of discontinuous learning. Sara was grounded in the situation at hand but wasn't feeling the pressure to win. She just wanted to play with the energy that came in, enjoy it in the moment, and celebrate it as she skated.

She became a physical movement of spirit. Several comments I heard referred to her as a Zen dancer. That flow did not rest with her alone. Her alignment with herself and with the energy of that whole performance—mesmerized the audience and the television viewers. She was in that state of flow, and it showed up differently than in other athletes because she was just playful. Stretching beyond her previous accomplishments, nurturing herself, and being playful all contributed to a spectacular event.

The physical domain refers to the bodily aspects of our existence, balance, and consciousness. As the foundation for our experiences, the physical domain determines what we can perceive and process in terms of information (perceptions and sensations) and energy (intensity, passion, love, hatred, grief, happiness and urgency).

That, in turn, determines what we can learn and, to some degree, how quickly. In other words, our bodies hold a vast reservoir of intelligence that is mostly unused because input from our brains takes precedence. Many times, what we perceive overrides objections from our bodies. If we overlook the physical dimension of learning, we impede ourselves significantly.

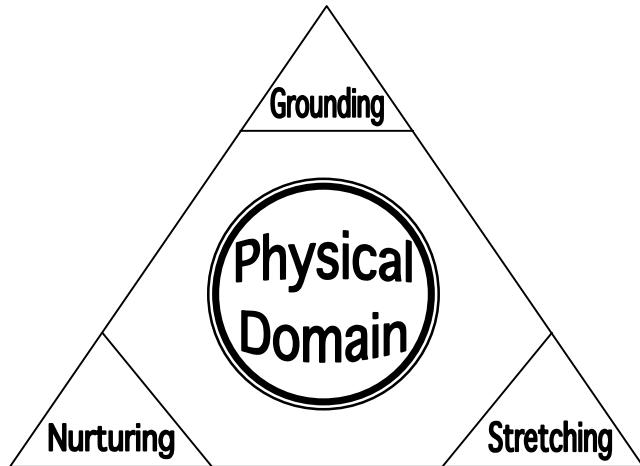
As the domain that deals with kinesthetic intelligence, the physical field is the foundation for all of our other capacities. Without developing this domain and keeping it in good order, no other capacities take root in our being. One such capacity is *awareness*, the process of distinguishing and making concrete connections between our perceptions, our subconscious thought patterns & feelings, and our behaviors. For instance, we can develop and practice awareness by observing what we eat and drink. Being

mindful in the moment of what goes into our bodies can help us stop eating on autopilot. This mindfulness, in turn, unfurls new choices.

It is extremely important to develop mindfulness and awareness in our actions because we are connecting and communicating with each other at the speed of electrons. Pressing the wrong key or sending the wrong note to the wrong person sometimes spells doom in our work. Many of today's transactions are so automated that we need tremendous physical awareness and self-control to avoid mistakes that we regret later.

Most of our awareness is tacit, which means that our brains do not interpret it. We seldom understand what our body is saying. Fortunately, it is possible for us to develop an awareness of our awareness. We can deliberately choose to pay attention, for instance, to our thoughts, feelings, energy shifts, and body sensations (such as pains or pleasures). By developing awareness, we can detect when we stray from the future we want to create for our work, our relationships, and ourselves. In other words, when we become aware, we plant a seed in the field of our physical intelligence, where it continues to evolve even after we move our attention to something else. When we are aware of our awareness, however, our continued focus and attention nurtures the seed and it grows stronger.

The physical domain speaks to us through breath patterns, body sensations, and energy. Sensing tightness in our muscles, not feeling right, or feeling excited for no reason are examples of signals that merit attention. They signify messages from outside our conscious awareness—from our observing self, as it were—so we benefit by stopping to reflect on what those messages mean. The more aware we are of our breath, senses, and energies, the more keenly we become aware of both internal and external contexts and the opportunities available to us. This way of being aware of our awareness is an emergent principle. It means we are dancing with life and what promotes life rather than with what is temporary, decaying, or taking away life.

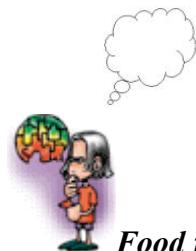


On the tetrahedron, the physical domain connects three cornerstones: grounding, nurturing, and stretching. The rules allow for safety; nurturing for persistence in the face of setbacks; and stretching for the development and expansion of what we are or what we know. This chapter expands more fully on how these cornerstones relate through the physical domain.



Know that the soul is the lord of the chariot, the body is the chariot, the intellect is the charioteer, and the mind is the reins. The senses, they say, are the horses and the material objects are the fields of pasture. The wise men say that the soul, joined with the mind and senses, enjoys the material objects.

—Kathopanishad



Food for Thought:

- How aware am I of what I do when I do it?
- How does my physical well-being affect my personal and professional pursuits?
- Am I aware of my own awareness? What is it like? What do I notice now?

Resisting the undesirable may also shut out life's desirables.

One story goes that Indra, an Indian king of Gods, learned that he would be facing seven years of misfortune because of a curse by Shani, the God of Bad Luck. To prevent the curse from taking effect, Indra wanted to hide from Shani. So he went to a remote cottage without telling anyone, including his family and everybody in his kingdom.

At the end of seven years, he came back. The first person he saw in his kingdom was Shani. Indra mocked him, saying that he had escaped Shani's curse and that soon everybody would learn how to do the same, so that Shani would lose all his power.

Shani just smiled and was about to leave, but at Indra's insistence, he explained that he was unconcerned about losing his power. If the curse had been ineffective, why had the king of Gods spent seven years in hiding, with only the sparsest of comforts and without his family and pleasures? Preoccupied with running away from a curse that was difficult to imagine and accept, Indra had gone through real physical hardship but had not even known it.

Change is not a discrete phenomenon. Even in the physical domain, it is a continually occurring subtle shift that often remains below our conscious awareness. We notice it only when a significant difference exists between the current state and the old state. We know when the temperature changes, for example, but we perceive this only when it changes four degrees Fahrenheit or more. This is sometimes a matter of awareness and attention to the differences—the ability to distinguish, in other words. Sometimes, it is a matter of the physical domain's thresholds for perceiving and reacting.

What does it mean? While we are busy avoiding change that we can recognize, we miss out on major transformational shifts. Basing our choices on what we like and dislike can mean overlooking opportunities to play with exciting new approaches. Our thinking does not stretch beyond its current level until we bring more information—if not more of the physical domain's perceptive powers—into our process of gathering data, experimenting, and nurturing the possibility of change.



Some people make things happen, some watch things happen, and some wonder what happened.

—Author unknown



Food for Thought:

- What kinds of changes do I welcome?
- What kinds of change do I resist?
- What kinds of change sneak up on me?
- How can I actively create changes that I welcome?

How can I help others to embrace change?

Nurturing the body nurtures the mind.

When my mother told me to eat and sleep well before my final exams in college, I did not pay attention. During those stressful days, I prepared late into the night every night and survived on junk food.

Halfway through my exams, I found that my memory was failing me. I had neither stamina nor clarity of mind. Over the weekend, I fell sick and decided that I could not get through my exams. Instead, I learned to relax.

After eating properly for two days and sleeping well, I took my exams, feeling clear-headed and remembering what I needed to know. When my grades came out, I was surprised to find that I had done better in the exams that followed more sleep and less preparation.

Even now, when I am exercising and maintaining regular food and sleep habits, I am more equanimous and have better decision-making capabilities than when I am stressed and overwhelmed. For me, nurturing the body means exercising it properly, eating food in a timely and balanced way, and resting six to eight hours a night.

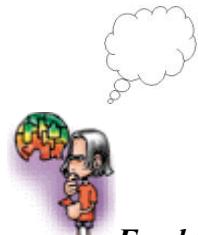
Performance in skiing, tennis, golf, and other physical games also benefits through nurturing. In team sports, players attain better results when they play their games with relaxed tension, mindful presence, and easy confidence.

When we experience caring in our physical domain, the payoffs are huge. In workplaces, we can improve fitness, morale, and productivity by creating break rooms, facilities for exercise, sports, and meditation or prayer.



A pat in the back is only a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants, but is miles ahead in results.

—L. J. Peter

***Food for Thought:***

- How do I nurture my body?
- What signals from my body am I aware of when I am well?
When I am ill?
- What is my attitude toward nurturing the body while at work?
- What steps can I take to improve people's physical surroundings at work?

Playfulness stretches, intensity breaks.

A friend of mine did everything he could think of to lose weight. He is intense in everything he does, and he went from one diet plan to another, from one fitness coach to another. Then he met and started dating a wonderful lady. He was so busy having fun being with her—playing tennis and biking on weekends—that he stopped paying attention to weight and his obsessive habits. To his amazement, he felt much lighter, lost more weight, and was in better moods than he had been for several years.

When we take up new activities and bring new purposefulness and clarity into life, we sometimes affect our bodies in a discontinuous way because we are shifting our attention to fun and play. We stretch not when we are rigid but when we are playful with the boundaries we have. Children excel when challenged playfully but stress out and lose when they feel pressure during games. Anything in excess is bad, even challenges or exertion. Our physical bodies certainly do not know how to deal well with excesses.

When times are tough in an organization, pressure, intensity, and fear increase while productivity and efficiency go down proportionally. But when we issue playful challenges, when friendly competition exists in a group, people stretch beyond their old limits and perform in an unexpected way. It is not competition *per se* that is good. The keys are friendliness, fun, and playfulness. These are the dynamic tensions that arise among the physical domain's cornerstones of grounding, nurturing, and stretching.



*Life is like a game of cards.
The hand that is dealt you
represents determinism;
the way you play it is free will.*
—Jawaharlal Nehru





Food for Thought:

- How do I achieve what I want – through intense effort or playful attempts?
- When did I last accomplish something unexpectedly while playing?
- How do I create an atmosphere of fun and play at work so that we stretch beyond our current stopping points?

6. The Emotional Domain



6. The Emotional Domain

The energies of the emotional domain are vital at work, especially when we want to be more creative and want to demonstrate leadership. On sabbatical in 1988 from the University of Utah, I worked as a product marketing manager at Apple International. Bored with that after some time, I felt I needed some new ideas and challenges. Before leaving, I wanted to express a few points about the management process. So I called the head of the management development center at Apple University, who happened to be an Englishman named Phil Dixon.

“I’d love to get feedback,” he said, and the care I experienced as he talked made it clear that he was very appreciative that a line manager was willing to take time to give him comments about management processes that could be improved. So we met at a Sri Lankan restaurant, where he asked, “What are you doing? Where are you going? Why do you want to quit Apple?” Then, after I told him, he asked more pointed questions about my competencies, experience, and relationships with coworkers. He ended with, “I recommend that you come and see my boss before you decide to go back to Utah.”

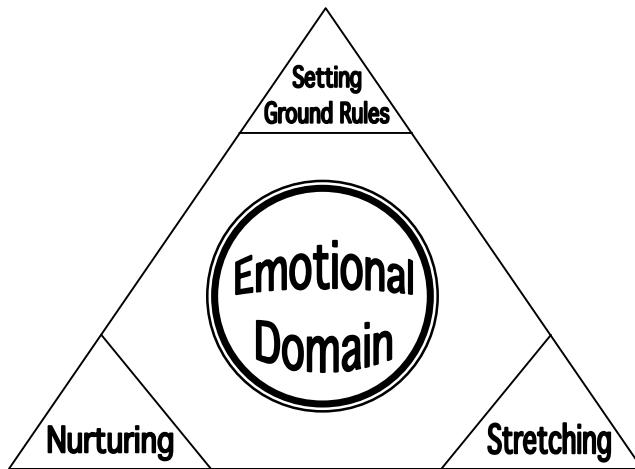
“Why?”

“Apple would be losing a gem, if we lose you,” he responded. “I’d like to figure out a way in which you could work with us. I don’t know how, but I appreciate what you bring. Come and meet my boss.”

I was deeply touched and inspired by this man’s commitment to Apple, his commitment to make a difference to me, and his commitment not to lose someone with my experiences and aptitudes. Within twenty-four hours, he had made an appointment for me to meet with his boss. Two weeks later, I was working with Apple University. That work changed the course of my career, for which I am very grateful. Looking back, I see that the key parts were Phil’s commitment to and love for Apple, his empathic and careful listening, and his appreciation for me, even though the points I raised were pretty elementary. This kind of nurturing represents the emotional domain at work.

In discontinuous learning, this domain has three cornerstones: grounding, nurturing, and inspiring. Given the grounding that provides the kind of limits in which we feel contained and secure,

we can receive the care and attention that then give us solid footing to open ourselves to inspiration.



By the same token, when we manage or coach or parent, we need to fulfill the same needs if we want them to learn. We need to set out clear conditions so they can function with a sense of knowing what we expect. Our attention and care for their interests needs to be timely, reliable, and appropriate if they are to flourish enough to find the inspiration to grow.

Branding is extremely powerful when it is consistent with an organization's emotional tone. We also create our organizational cultures in the emotional domain. Grounding, nurturing, and inspiring create the foundational field in which we foster loyalty and retain and motivate people's talents and unique capabilities.

In such fields, which ideally align with a larger purpose for collaboration, the impact of the larger spirit is far greater than that we bring through our respective acting selves. Meaning emerges in the field because it is no longer contained merely by each individual container. Fear diminishes, and the field becomes larger. The group has more magic available to it as a dance begins to take place in our midst, in an open way, in which that spirit gathers the strength of our focused attention.

The emotional domain's downside is also significant. Structure engenders a love-hate relationship if it comes with too many ground rules, too little appreciation, and too little inspiration. When others don't appreciate hearing our truth, most of us resort to seeking

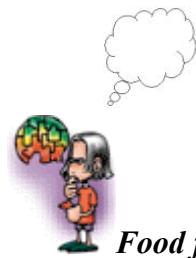
approval rather than saying what's on our minds. Morale plummets when we sense that others are not caring about us, and our commitment to the work or the relationship eventually dwindle.

We thus need to devote ongoing attention to having appropriate parameters, nurturing each other to grow and learn, and pursuing goals that inspire us. Discontinuous learning and innovation depend on the health of our emotional domain.



Where appreciation is alive and generations are re-connected through inquiry, hope grows.

—David Cooperrider



Food for Thought:

- How much attention do I give the emotional domain?
- In what learning experiences was I aware of the emotional dimension? What do I remember?
- Can I deepen the learning process (for other or for myself) by adjusting or clarifying the grounding, nurturing, and inspiring?

**Being studious leads us away from learning.
Or trying to learn really hard, one may end up
hardly learning.**

Perhaps the worst thing we can do when studying is to be studious. Cramming usually reflects our fear of failing the exam rather than our intention to learn. When we genuinely want to learn the material, we do better to follow our instincts, relax, and simply read with interest.

We cannot rush or contrive deep learning any more than we can guarantee laughing or falling in love by trying harder. If we are enjoying the material, we may stop every now and then to contemplate the subject and perhaps walk about awhile. Before continuing to read with yet more fascination, we may want to refer to another book that this one reminds us of.

Such acts reflect the inspired and nurturing energies of learning's emotional domain. Approaches like these help us learn in a deep and powerful way. It is hard to do, obviously, if we are in panic mode. Most of us think we should sit still and glare at the book until well into the night. We hope that its contents will somehow transfer to our brains. Trying too hard produces constrained focus. It is difficult to sustain attention when we strain.

Fun, play, and learning are all the same to us as they are for children. Learning at a fast rate occurs when children are laughing, making noises, and trying new things. It rarely occurs when we are sitting quietly, working alone, and following rigid rules. (Structure has important uses, but it does not necessarily have much to do with learning, as such.) By allowing ourselves to divert our attention from what looks like education, we can accelerate our learning.

It is difficult to think of anything we've learned well that was not enjoyable in some way. Without enjoyment, the most we can gain is some factual knowledge. Sometimes this is good enough, but generally, we do not use this type of knowledge in any deep or creative way.

Some time ago, for example, I was playing in a finals match of a tennis league. After losing 6–1 in the first set and trailing at 2–5 in the second, I was ready to give up. I had lost hope of winning the match, and I just wanted to go home and hide my face.

As I prepared to receive my opponent's serve, a wave of hopelessness came over me. Then I felt a strong intention to fight. With nothing to lose at that point, I deliberately loosened up. I returned the serve aggressively and focused on returning the ball. Within a short time, my opponent and I were tied. Somehow, I won the second set and then the match.

In his famous book, *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Tim Gallwey describes the state of mind that produces such results. What he calls *the zone* is an inner place from which we play like a dream. Nothing goes wrong. By playing the game without worrying about the result, we draw from deeper reserves of talent and so develop new skills rapidly in real-time.

Gallwey also talks about two selves: the “I” that performs, learns, and plays; and the other “I” that observes, judges, and evaluates. When our observing self gets out of the way and allows our playing self to play, we can achieve dramatic improvements in performance.



I have learned throughout my life as a composer chiefly through my mistakes and pursuits of false assumptions, not by my exposure to founts of wisdom and knowledge.

—Igor Stravinsky



Food for Thought:

- What relaxes me when I am learning? When do I strain?
- How can I get my inner evaluator/judge to step aside while I am learning?
- How can I create an emotionally healthy environment for working with others?
- How can I create an emotionally healthy environment for promoting curiosity and learning?

High IQ does not mean high EQ.

Roger had a high IQ and was very smart. After graduating at the top of his class from a prestigious university, he got a master's degree at an Ivy League school. He was charming, passionate, and articulate. Yet he lost his marriage, job, money, and many of his friends. People avoided him like the plague.

Easily distracted, Roger got bored in meetings yet wanted everybody to pay attention to his questions and requests. His colleagues learned to ignore him or sympathize with him but soon became unwilling to work with him. They knew he would take all the credit rather than learn how to value their contributions. Roger blamed every misfortune on anybody but himself.

His case is not unique. Just being brilliant guarantees us neither accomplishment nor satisfaction. Appreciating, loving, committing, caring, and empathizing are exactly what they would like to receive from others, yet these are not at the top of their own priorities.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) has little to do with external measures and approvals. It is about self-awareness, self-control, self-discipline, self-management and good communication. In addition, it is about building and managing social relationships. By paying attention, we can develop these key competencies of the emotional domain. The attitude with which we practice also produces surprisingly wonderful results.



Leaders' emotional states and actions do affect how the people they lead will feel and therefore perform. How well leaders manage their moods and affect everyone else's moods, then, becomes not just a private matter, but a factor in how well a business will do.

—Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis
and Annie McKee

***Food for Thought:***

- What would I let go if I had to choose between IQ and EQ?
Why?
- Which one is behind my success so far?
- How did I develop it?
- What parts of my IQ do I value the most?
- What parts of my EQ do I value the most?
- Which one contributes to wherever I am stuck in my life?
Which one helps me move?

What we appreciate, appreciates.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an effective tool for interviewing people and simultaneously creating positive effects. David Cooperrider and others originated this AI process at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. It then spread to all parts of the world.

In 1993, Harvey Hewitt was a factory manager in Rochester, New York, for Xerox Corporation. He and his colleagues had been struggling for some time to improve the morale of employees in the factories. Experts had advised them on how to implement empowerment at work, but the end results were not satisfactory.

I offered to work with Harvey on a different approach to empowerment. We designed a workshop to help people discover what empowerment meant for them.

About 35 senior managers came from various Xerox factories and sat around tables of six. The first exercise was to share a personal story about the time when they were most empowered and motivated to act. Once people started relating their experiences, the energy in the groups soared.

I then asked the people at each table to pick one resonant story and to share it with everybody in the room. After that, I asked everyone to identify three key characteristics of their empowerment, and we pooled that data to create a three-dimensional model for discontinuous empowerment.

The four cornerstones for their pyramid were:

-  Communication from the heart
-  Trust
-  Knowing the boundaries
-  Information to get the job done

All four factors were essential. When heart was missing, they said, they might understand what needed to be done but had no intrinsic motivation to get it done. In the learning pyramid, this is comparable to the emotional domain.

Without trust, they experienced ownership in their individual jobs but did not collaborate in their teams. When information to get the job done was missing, they had high self-esteem but did not make decisions well. Finally, when boundaries were unclear, they had a shared vision but did not increase their productivity.

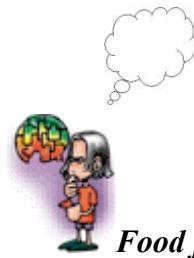
By end of that day, the room was fully charged. By appreciating what empowered them, they were clear about what to do to ignite intrinsic motivation in others. Before the workshop, they were confident only about their ability to empower themselves. After the workshop they knew they could create conditions for others to empower themselves in the workplace.

This experience was very satisfying for many of them because they had connected with and added to what they already knew about how to do this. During this workshop, they each ignited their own natural genius by making conscious connections between their experiences and their choices of action. Like appreciative inquiry, the answers often lie in amplifying what works. The energy of the emotional domain is vital yet easy to overlook.



*Don't hide your heart but reveal it,
so that mine might be revealed,
and I might accept what I am capable of.*

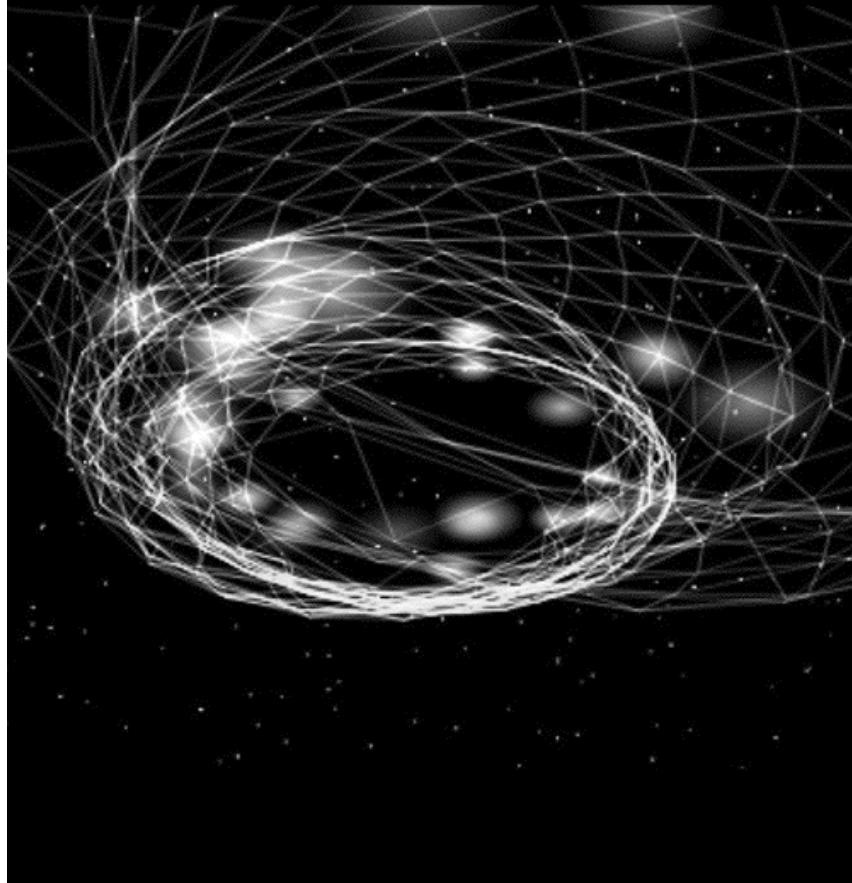
—Rumi



Food for Thought:

- When did I feel most appreciated? What were the essential ingredients?
- When was the last time I appreciated somebody openly?
- What prevents appreciation from taking hold in my organization? What more can I do to help it take hold?

7. Intellectual Domain

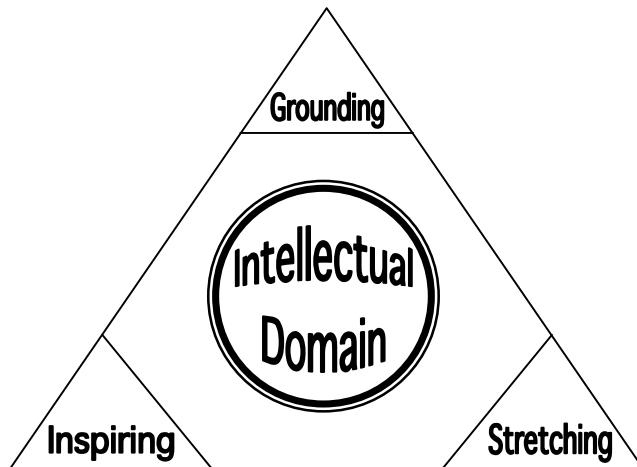


7. INTELLECTUAL DOMAIN

In 2001, conflict boiled up between India and Pakistan. It was a major problem in India, although it did not turn into war. A friend of mine (brother of my friend to be more accurate), Sunil Sachdev, was tremendously inspired by the soldiers who were trying to make a difference in the cold heights of Kashmir. Out of his total appreciation for them and their families, who subsist on meager pay, he turned his energies toward producing a simple yet effective television ad. At the small advertising agency he owns, he worked day in and day out, ignoring another important project that would have benefited his company. Stretching beyond his normal capabilities, he created a powerful ad that conveyed a clear picture of what it meant to be one of these soldiers, their vision for the region, what they were going through, and their willingness to risk death in service to their country.

For the next few days, he was concerned that the hard-worked ad may not raise much funds. But the ad inspired so many people that it raised 150 million rupees, a significant sum in India. In addition, the British Broadcasting Corporation apparently played that ad in Europe. An executive in France was so impressed by the ad's creativity and intellectual clarity that he sent someone to India to hire him to work on a project in France. It was the agency's first international contract, and that opportunity was created when my friend felt inspired and stretched beyond his own personal interest. This shows that in the intellectual domain, we draw on more than just the intellect, and we create more than just ideas.

The intellectual domain is the last face of the learning pyramid that includes grounding. Grounding ourselves implicitly or explicitly for this part of our lives—the first cornerstone—is a straightforward matter of establishing the material we want to learn, how we plan to do that, how we measure progress, and so forth. Without such fundamental agreements, the process can end in frustration rather than learning.



Inspiring is the second corner of the intellectual dimension. Consider how easy it is to learn something about which we feel very curious or uplifted. Being inspired releases tremendous energy, and learning without it is far more difficult, if not tedious.

True learning also requires intellectual stretching, the domain's third component. Given inspiration and a secure sense of containment for it, we are both equipped and motivated to move into unknown territory. Even ordinary learning often stretches our mental muscles and our cherished beliefs and ideas, so it is vital to balance the elements of all three cornerstones here.

Cognition is only one part of the intellectual domain. We also have intelligence at many other levels, including the body, the emotions, and at the level of creating something new. Discontinuous learning can flow into any of these.

To become more aware of our myriad processes, we can use reflective or contemplative practices. Writing a journal and examining our intentions on a frequent basis is an example that many people find helpful to develop an awareness of their awareness. By the same token, questions that punctuate the passages in this book aim at encouraging even more contemplation than we engage in as we read.

Without stretching in the intellectual domain, we may engage in a lot of work without new learning. Just as radical change entails moving beyond the status quo, deep learning involves stretching beyond what we already know.



No amount of sophistication is going to allay the fact that all your knowledge is about the past and all your decisions are about the future.

—Ian E. Wilson



Food for Thought:

- What kind of intellectual stretching do I enjoy?
- How does inspiration affect my willingness to stretch?
- How can I encourage others to stretch while learning?

**You may circle the globe seeking the best teacher,
only to discover that it is you.**

Many employers provide information access to their employees on what they call “need to know basis” just as parents prevent their children from going to internet chat rooms. These restrictions seem like good ideas at the time. Yet we all tend to be more interested in areas that are forbidden.

Unlike these situations, the scope of human intellect is unrestricted. We have no real limits to learning. It is easy and deep when we are free of filters, hidden agendas, complications, and ego. As deep learning stays with us, we are also free of any fear of forgetting.

If we do experience limits within the intellectual domain, it is because we have put barriers in our own way. These include our scripts or mental models—the boxes we build around our habits, attitudes, and relationships. As we can see only the inside of those boxes, we resort to instinct much more than cognitive modes of learning.

Our habitual boxes can trap us and fool us into thinking we have reached our boundaries when we are actually far short of our capacity. Fortunately, we can remove our own barriers as we have direct control over our learning capabilities.

Unfortunately, perhaps, only *we* can deconstruct our respective boxes. No external teacher can accelerate our learning as much as we can. After years of seeking someone who has mastered exactly what we want to learn, many of us realize that our time is better spent following our own vision and increasing our own understanding.

Even the most humble of situations offers something to learn. Consider the man who receives a spelling book intended for small children. Someone tells him that he can learn from it. He glances at it, sees that it explains how to spell *cat*, and throws it down disdainfully: “What an insult to my intelligence!”

The book then goes to a wiser man. Instead of allowing his ego to intervene, he decides to read the book from a child’s point of view. It not only sheds light on the thinking process of the young mind, but also he experiences what it is like to be learning

something important for the first time. He contemplates how challenging a book of strange symbols must look, particularly if the child has no clear understanding that books contain knowledge. They have to learn that symbols on the page represent spoken words. When the child's breakthrough occurs, the scale of that empowerment can hardly be overstated. "Perhaps," the man decides, "equally challenging but empowering symbols are all around me, which I have overlooked."

Only we know where our own boundaries lie, and therefore only we can be our own ideal teachers. What is the equivalent to *cat* at the next level of our particular learning?



Just as eating against one's will is injurious to health, so study without a liking for it spoils the memory, and it retains nothing it takes in.

— Leonardo Da Vinci



Food for Thought:

- What limits to learning do I encounter?
- How do these reflect my script?
- Am I willing to unlearn my internal barriers?
- How do I inspire others to transcend their sense of limits to learning?

Beliefs lie along the edges that learning moves us past.

Discontinuous learning and innovating depends on detaching from the limits of our current mental models of the world and our place in it. To understand how we came up with these models, we can turn to the development of our intellectual domain. As earlier sections show, we start by soaking up as much information as we can in infancy. We then learn how to walk and talk by copying people around us. Overlapping slightly with all this is the process of writing our first *script*—our preferred way of responding to the world. We begin building these models of the world and ourselves at a very early age.

Bit by bit, decision by decision, we construct and refine our entire belief and value systems. This is part of exploring our personal boundaries and creating our own character. Once we satisfy ourselves that our model of the world is workable, we forget the tortuous path we traveled to arrive at it. We assume that we have always thought this way. At an early age, large parts of our personality become set. We have our models, our beliefs, and our bearings, or scripts.

Scripts are the old “tapes” that keep replaying in our heads, often when we least expect them. These include our explanations about the world, our criteria for choices, our habits, and our formulas for success. When we learned to walk, for example, failed attempts didn’t prevent us from continuing to try. As we grow, whether we persevere in anything depends on how we interpret the situation and set our expectations—which are parts of our script. We succeed when we interpret our learning situation as part of our ultimate success, and we fail when we see our thwarted attempts as signals to stop.

How we interpret things reflects our particular intellect’s mix of grounding, stretching, and inspiring. We establish our interpretive patterns early, according to what we experience around us, yet we can also revise them later in life. To deepen and accelerate learning, such revision may prove especially potent.



Our self-image and our habits tend to go together. Change one, and you automatically change the other.

– Maxwell Maltz



Food for Thought:

- What is my process of interpreting what I see, feel, and hear?
- How do my interpretations help my learning?
- How do my interpretations hinder my learning?
- What keeps me learning in spite of mistakes or failures along the way?

Perception is a habit.

Learning hinges on perceiving the world around us and within us, but our very perceptions are governed by habit. What might we find when we stretch beyond the parameters of our current intellectual domain?

Experimental research relates some clues. In one study, a volunteer wore a pair of special glasses during all his waking hours. The glasses made everything look upside down. Naturally, this was highly disorienting at first, but gradually the volunteer adjusted. Eventually, he could function quite normally. Then, when he gave the glasses back, he was disoriented again. To him, everything looked upside down once again.

In another experiment, researchers showed a movie on a big screen to an audience of people who had never seen a movie. Whenever an actor moved off screen, the audience stood up and moved to the next room, expecting to see the actor there.

Both these examples are interesting and perhaps amusing. They also raise a disturbing thought: How do we know whether our own perceptions involve an element of illusion?

The very structure of our eyes helps us to form an impression of reality. Out of that, we build the mental models and habits of our intellectual domain. Yet no two people have an identical perception of the same shade of green, say. Some people cannot differentiate it at all from a particular shade of blue. Due to the structure of its sensory organs, a bat sees reality in a different way altogether.

Is there a true reality? Who are we to assume that we are always right? Yet how many of us question our ways of seeing the world? Again, this is a fertile area in which we can stretch ourselves intellectually.



As any action or posture, long continued, will distort and disfigure the limbs, so the mind likewise is crippled and contracted by perpetual application to the same set of ideas.

— Samuel Johnson



Food for Thought:

- When have my perceptions blocked me from noticing something I didn't expect to see?
- What do I remember about my feelings, what I saw, what I heard during that incident?
- What sorts of experiences share up my normal patterns of seeing, feeling, hearing?
- How can I expand the perceptive patterns of myself/other people in my professional life?
- How can I expand the perceptive patterns of myself/other people in my personal life?

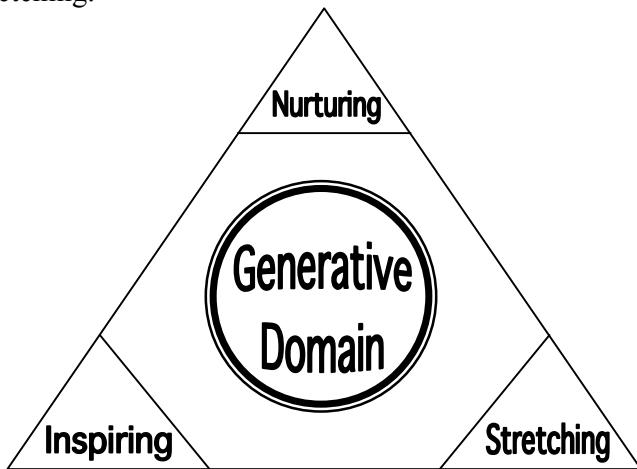
8. Generative Domain



8. THE GENERATIVE DOMAIN

Many people talk about generativity or creativity as something that some of us have but many don't. Or we say, "If I know how, I'll do it." But generativity is something that emerges from us, within us. So if we frame ourselves as being much larger, our generativity also becomes much larger. It's not about gaining information, or gathering things from outside. It's about getting in touch with and allowing the fragrance of our own authentic nature to emerge. We are attuned to our authentic nature when we are connected with our passion, being playful, having fun, and being with people we appreciate a lot.

The fourth face of the tetrahedron is where we find this *generative domain*, the dimension of learning that involves creative energy. This is where our values, principles, and capacities dance together. The cornerstones of this domain are nurturing, inspiring, and stretching.



Discontinuous learning both draws on and fuels our creative nature. For creativity to emerge robustly, we need an environment that nurtures its expression. Without feeding our generative energy, we restrict ourselves to a limited kind of learning and a life of habitual thoughts and automatic patterns rather than creative

thinking. Our unique playfulness, gifts, and contributions never come alive.

The literature about education traditionally discusses cognitive, affective, and physical aspects of learning. Little attention has gone to the generative domain, however. Its importance shows up more clearly in our continued emphasis on creativity, innovation, and knowledge creation, among others.

Competitive ventures thrive when they foster discontinuous learning, which links inextricably with the generative domain. Reducing the cycle time, for example, companies are now trying to bring out new products every quarter. Companies such as Intel and AMD reach most of their revenue goals through sales of products introduced during the previous one or two quarters. This means innovation and generativity are no longer simply nice to have in an organization. They have become essential to the organization's survival.

Rich rewards come from embracing the generative domain in parallel with the more familiar intellectual, emotional, and physical domains. Putting our creative spirits to work also is fun and brings out the best in us. Once something or someone inspires us to learn, we can find unknown innovative talents as we stretch beyond ourselves into uncharted patterns and concepts. In the case of deep learning, we generate new frames of reference, new scripts, and new perspectives for ourselves.

When we ignore the generative dimension, our experience is flat, dull, and shallow. Neither our stretching nor our inspiration gets full play, and whatever we take in does not develop in us or generate new applications. We may add another fact to our stockpile, but it sits on the shelf rather than being of much use.

It is useful here to distinguish acting from activities just as we contrasted thinking and having thoughts. Our capacity to act, to generate something in the present, likewise comes from a place of detached engagement in which we can discern things with a clear mind. Courage, for instance, exists when we are prepared to act in the face of fear. Rather than waiting for an absence of fear, courage detaches from it and engages with discernable possibilities for success.

Meaningful actions are generative in nature. Our capacity to act leads to creativity and to creating new knowledge. Like the physical

domain's learning through touch, the generative dimension employs more than our cognitive minds, as the next passage shows.



To ignore the challenge [of generativity] . . . will only lead to greater immaturity and a stifling of creative and nurturing energies . . .

—Edward C. Sellner



Food for Thought:

- How do I use my creative energy when I learn?
- What do I learn when I use my creativity?
- How do I detach enough from my concerns to pursue my goals?

We increase our uniqueness by imitating others.

It may seem odd to talk about imitation in a chapter about creativity. Imitating others accelerates learning, however, because it frees the energy of our generative domain from having to reinvent certain wheels. Also, as much as we imitate others, we still end up creating distinct identities and organizations.

Many of us use benchmarking and other forms of imitation only to address certain fears or social conditioning by acquiring specific behaviors or processes. Ford Motor Company benchmarked Toyota's manufacturing processes, but they didn't work at Ford. In the United States, teamwork is an acquired skill. People like their individualities, personal successes, and distinct rewards. We simply do not recognize taking second place.

In Japan, on the other hand, teamwork is not only essential but also a part of the culture. Promotions, bonuses, and other forms of recognition are to reward collaborative rather than individual creativity. Practices that evolve in Japan based on their culture usually fail in the United States. The work cultures differ vastly in terms of workers' social conditioning and working relationships.

Where magic begins, therefore, is when we are inspired by something and ask, "What allowed them to do what they did?" As mentioned, when organizations imitate each other's successes, we call the process *benchmarking best practices*.

To imitate behaviors or processes that others use successfully, we sometimes need to make various alterations. This starts with exploring our purpose and identifying opportunities to pursue it. This might entail looking, for example, at whatever materials or people (including ourselves) we have to work with. Do the purpose and the people suit each other? If not, what would it take to manifest our vision?

Once we identify a suitable opportunity to adopt a new process, we need to explore it with love and commitment. This means gauging our relationship with the people involved. Are we all willing to tolerate the difficulties that arise during any transition? This is crucial before we can discern how we can inspire the kind of magic that seems to show up in those involved. What engages the

best in us? Can we commit to getting through whatever comes up during the coming learning and unlearning?

When the imitation is done well and the new practices fit the organization's culture, then they pay off handsomely. A useful question, of course, is whether we are imitating yesterday's best practices. What are the best practices of the future? How do we come up with them? This means we need to clarify the larger purpose and vision with which we are dancing. What is your idea of where we're going? What's my idea? For stretching and inspiration, we need clarity.

Discovering our uniqueness depends on being attracted to a particular quality or trait in others. When we like something in others, chances are that we already have it. Exactly the same quality is just waiting for us to recognize and develop it. When we desire to make something our own, we unconsciously adapt it to our situation. How we adapt it is more important than the act of imitation. When we shift our attention onto how, we learn more about ourselves rather than others. This is a key to self-discovery.



*These leaves, our bodily personalities, seem identical,
but the globe of soul-fruit we make, each is elaborately unique.*

—Rumi



Food for Thought:

- What qualities have I picked up from others?
- How have I converted them into my own “uniqueness”?
- What other gifts have I seen that resonate with me?
- Would it make sense to pick up these gifts and suit them to myself? How could I do it?

- What am I evolving that goes beyond the best practices of other companies?

We learn more than we understand, and understand more than we know.

The generative domain includes experiences that happen outside our awareness. When we refer to learning, we usually relate only to our conscious minds—the part of our thinking that we use all day long. We learn facts, recite data, and have fun playing games about trivia. People talk to our conscious minds, and we talk to theirs.

Being so familiar with our conscious minds, it is easy to assume that we store all our information there. Yet, our subconscious minds evidently learn much more. We do not understand much about the subconscious, by definition, but it seems to recognize and record everything we see, say, and do. It performs this very challenging job effortlessly and tirelessly, without complaint, night and day without break, for our entire lives. How awesome is that!

It is often frustrating that we cannot consciously communicate with it. If we could, surely we would never forget anything, never fail an exam, and always have boundless wisdom at our disposal. Wouldn't we?

Direct access might jeopardize its very integrity, however. To function in its all-encompassing way, our subconscious minds must operate very differently from our conscious minds. If we could gain access directly, the subconscious would no doubt surprise us with its utterly distinct form of logic, for example.

Its profound elegance of thought indicates a deeper language than the one we use in our daily routines. The subconscious may think in metaphor and profound patterning, given its lightening-fast ability to recognize the potential for metaphor in a new stream of information. It sometimes recognizes something new by comparing it with a single experience from thirty years ago. As needed, the conscious mind then interprets and translates this response into verbal language.

How actively each brain searches depends on our respective skills and learning habits, yet even the most unpracticed or slovenly thinkers have access to a vast and complex subconscious collection

of patterns. Even their brains handle incoming information immediately and elegantly.

In our ever-hungry subconscious minds, deeper and more potent thinking can simmer and evolve. As with the electron field of physics, ideas and creative thoughts operate in a collective field. By tapping into that field, we learn different perspectives; and by applying that perspective to the question (or intention) we have in mind, we find our way to creativity and innovation. This is the process of building individual and organizational capacity, which involves recognizing a deeper connection with the collective and, sometimes, the spiritual dimension of being human.

We can say that this subconscious field is the collective capacity waiting to be unleashed. It also serves as the foundation for an organization's collective wisdom. In *Competing for the Future*, Hamel and Prahalad urge leaders to develop corporate foresight by shifting their points of view about unexplored opportunities.

As ideas and patterns simmer and evolve, the subconscious sends coded hints up toward our consciousness. As these codes are usually subtle, however, we often fail to recognize the patient nudges. To hear anything, we need to listen hard to a quiet voice. In moments of insight, stress, transition, growth, reflective solitude, or in the nightly adventures of our dreams, we can receive the benefits of wisdom from our inner voice or an unexpected contributor at work.

Troubles arise when the connection to our collective wisdom is relatively tenuous. Refusing to listen to people at work or to our own quiet wisdom creates incompatibilities, learning inefficiencies, stresses and perhaps, in time, even illnesses. Neglecting the energies of our generative domain gets in the way of learning and innovating.

Genuine breakthroughs in learning—beyond the conscious recall of mere facts—depend on recognizing our collective inner resources. Breakthroughs also require a sense of wholeness. To forge stronger links to subconscious or collective knowing, some of us need merely an awareness of the brain's duality. We can help create this by spending regular moments in contemplation and accepting the awe of the multi-leveled innovations in thinking that can result from tapping into the vast reservoir of the subconscious.



*The things we know best
are the things we haven't
been taught.*

—Vauvenargues



Food for Thought:

- What happens when I heed my inner wisdom?
- In my personal live, under what conditions do I sue my subconscious mind most effectively?
- In my professional live, under what conditions do I sue my subconscious mind most effectively?
- Is there a difference in using of my subconscious mind in professional surroundings to personal surroundings? How does that serve me? How does it not serve me?
- How can I use my subconscious resources more effectively?
- How can I inspire others to find and make use of their subconscious resources?

Automating current behavior often creates future problems.

Many of our “automatic” skills become habits that govern even some of our most trivial actions. For example, when we fold our arms across our chests, we almost invariably adopt the same method every time: right arm over the left, or vice-versa. The other way feels wrong and uncomfortable, even unthinkable.

Habits are powerful tools, but we do not benefit when our automatic pilots rule us and exclude our generative domain. Many of us have difficulty unlearning a habit—learning to drive on the other side of the road when in another country, for example. The conscious mind’s attempts to follow new rules conflicts with strong, hard-wired messages from the subconscious. After some struggle, we may adapt to driving on the “wrong” side of the road. Yet, under stress we often revert to our old conditioned patterns. It’s hard to unlearn things that have become automatic.

This is an important clue about learning. What other patterns of thinking or doing are we taking for granted? What else is so automatic that we assume it is the only way to do something?

Rethinking such habits can pose formidable challenges. It also can be invaluable. We have to work hard even to become aware of our established ways of thinking, let alone reverse them. Once we do, the mere recognition that others ways exist can be enlightening, even transformative. When we feel nurtured and inspired to stretch beyond our current thinking, we are combining the three intentions of the generative domain. This gives raise to our vision, our passion and commitment about manifesting the vision, and our delight in playing with our creativity along the way.

Learning does not always appeal to us, however. It works only when we embrace the endeavor, find the subject agreeable and worthwhile, and hold high expectations of success. How else could we expect anyone to throw away the self-perceptions and habits that have taken half a lifetime to amass?



*The unfortunate thing about this world is that good habits
are so much easier to give up than bad ones.*

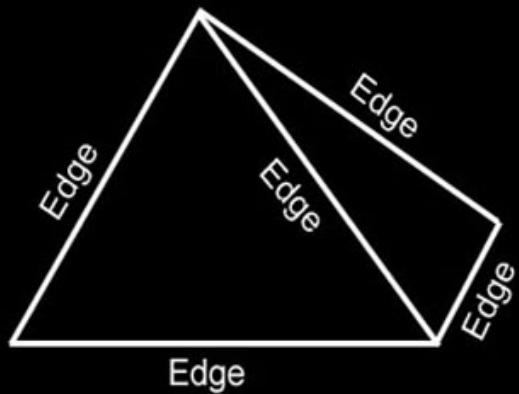
—Somerset Maugham



Food for Thought:

- What areas of my life run on automatic pilot?
- How does that serve me?
- How does it restrict me?
- What way of thinking is such a habit for me that I'm sure it's true?
- How do my habitual opinions affect my expectations of succeeding at something new?

Part III - The Edges



PART III THE EDGES

A monk once went to spend some time with Jiddu Krishnamurti, the sage and philosopher. They talked and, after some very good conversations, the monk said, “I keep searching with various teachers. Where can I find some appropriate answers for myself and for the problems that the world is going through?”

Krishnamurti replied, “Maybe you should stop searching.”

“But if I stop searching, neither the world nor I will find any solutions.”

“I didn’t say anything about the world finding some kind of a solution,” said Krishnamurti, “but you’ll find some solutions.”

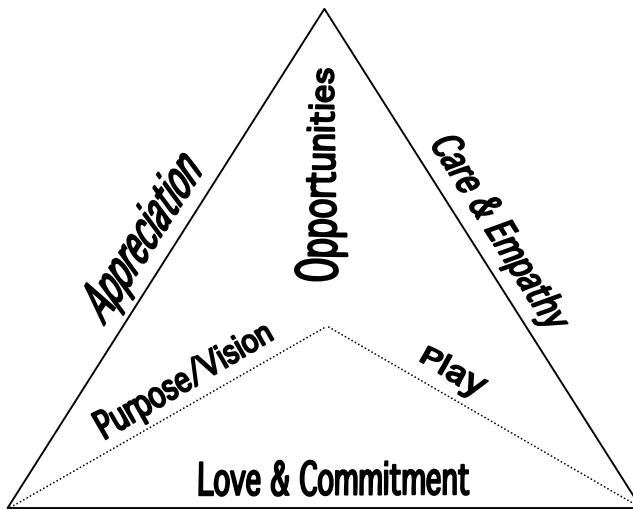
The monk sat, puzzled and upset. Suddenly, he lit up. For wisdom and self-realization, he’d always been looking outside himself. Now he saw that self-realization might not be a place to go to. It might be a place to come from. We don’t need to search for it, and there’s nothing to be found beyond wherever we are. When we are comfortable with who we are and when we act from that place, we bring lots of power, energy, and peace to the people with whom we interact. That’s how we spread what we intend to spread.

Becoming comfortable with ourselves is often a complex process that involves discerning, understanding, and balancing among competing values. The learning pyramid is useful for seeing how four particular intentions interact to produce dynamic tension. What results, as represented along the edges, is an opportunity to use various competencies:

- ➊ Care and empathy
- ➋ Love and commitment
- ➌ Play
- ➍ Opportunities
- ➎ Appreciation
- ➏ Purpose/vision

Energy flows along these edges continuously, shifting our focus and responding to changes around us and within us. This is part of dealing with practical, tangible concerns in the moment—recognizing and playing with the situations that face us. The six edges answer the question of *how* our intentions affect each other en

route to their manifestation, which competencies move us from our intentions to our desired results.



Dynamic interaction among the four intentions offers the greatest points of leverage for deepening and accelerating our learning process. If we alter the exchange of energy between our grounding and stretching, for instance, we also change what happens along the edge of opportunities. If we play more freely, by the same token, we affect more than our stretching and nurturing. Our physical feelings change, and then our thinking does, which may produce innovative new questions to explore.

Again, the point of this book is to explore a three-dimensional matrix so that our understanding of various components and their interactions makes it easier for us to enjoy, contemplate, and benefit from breaking through our customary patterns of viewing the world and learning from it.

At times, we each get into a state of flow. Our capacity to name and notice what we are experiencing helps sustain that flow. Knowing how to recognize and deal with our experience, how to be conscious of it, also keeps our egos from personalizing it. Taking things personally poisons the flow.



*... real power is found not in dictating the flow of events,
but in having the flexibility to redirect our course to go with the
ever-changing flow of possibilities that the universe unfolds before
us.*

—Joan Borysenko



Food for Thought:

- Under what circumstances do I learn best?
- What are my ideal conditions – physically, intellectually, emotionally, and creatively?
- What are less favorable conditions? How do I react to these conditions? (physically, intellectually, emotionally, and creatively)
- How can I find out what matters to the people I work with professionally?
- How can I find out what matters to people in my personal life?
- What areas of my life run on automatic pilot?

9. Care and Empathy



9. Care and Empathy

My friend Nina is an executive and coach in a big company. Professionally, she's paid to solve problems. At home one night, she was taking a leisurely bubble bath when her husband, Bob, an executive in an automobile company, came home and started complaining about how things were not working with this government and that government.

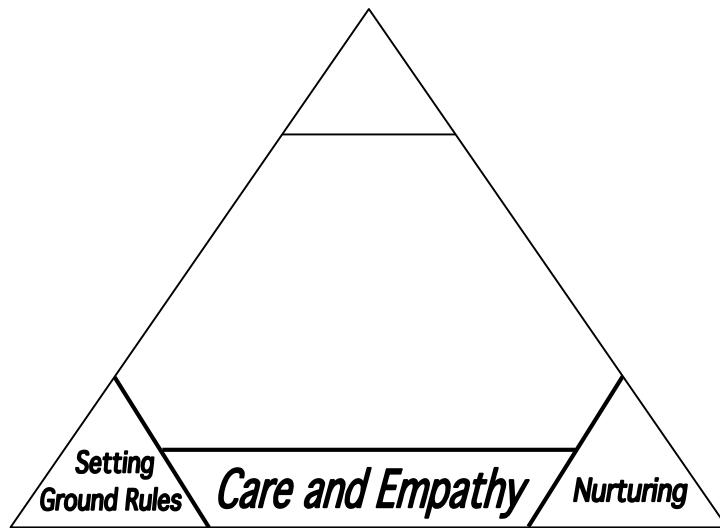
She interjected suggestions about what he should be doing and what he might want to consider. She also suggested someone who might help with one of her husband's problems.

After three or four of these interruptions, Bob stopped, turned, and put on the best smile he could. "Nina," he said, "if I need my problems solved, I will hire you as a consultant. As a wife, will you please listen to me and say, 'Poor Bob that must have been so difficult. Oh, I'm sorry, honey, you had such a bad day. I love the way you care about all these details. You're great about that, did you know that?' That's the kind of support I need. I need someone to whom I can bitch and moan."

He was looking for a demonstration of empathy and relatedness that would let him know she cared about him and his problems. This happens many times in organizations, where we try to fix problems when none need to be fixed. Especially in employee motivation, or when we talk about people feeling disgruntled, many of them need an opportunity to know that somebody cares and is empathic with the situation that exists or the position they've taken. If we can only bring that kind of a perspective, the emotional intelligence as well as the relationships become a lot deeper and more productive.

In the framework of discontinuous learning, *care and empathy* arise out of the interaction between grounding and nurturing. That is, by nourishing something or someone (or ourselves) within a securely defined context, we show consideration, compassion, and emotional understanding.

We also engage in much more dynamic, of-the-moment interactions, as we go along any of the pyramid's six edges. Let's say we are concerned about an employee who's not as productive as he once was. We play with our options: warning him, working with him, or laying him off. He's been a high performer in the past, so we may choose to be empathic.



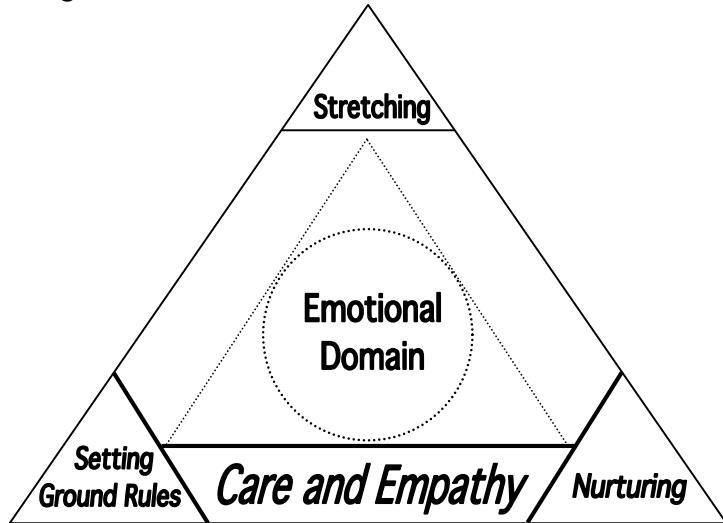
A certain universality characterizes caring, in some respects, so we can care about people without having to love or appreciate them. An example is the nurses and doctors who care for patients or flight attendants caring for passengers. This comes not from a perspective of “I know them, so I care about them” but from “I care about them because this is the choice I’ve made in choosing this profession.”

We may also care about and empathize with children who do not belong to us. We may care because they move our hearts. Our empathy may come from the times we scraped our knees when our moms weren’t there. We may be touched by the pain they’re going through.

While clarity of intention and awareness get us onto the path to success, empathy and compassion help us to extend support to others and gain it from them. As social beings, we discover who we are in the context of our relationships. Initially, our families and communities nurture and condition our self-awareness and context-awareness. The many other systems in which we live—school, work, social circles, and so on—continue to shape our awareness throughout life.

As we develop ideas of who we are, we also expand our awareness of what we are not. When we become more deeply aware

that we each have our own perspectives, we may be able to relax and become interested in how other people have evolved their respective points of view. Extending empathy is the imaginative act of being the other person. This is the foundation for emotional intelligence, which requires all three of this domain's dynamics: appreciation, love and commitment, and care and empathy. Only through the mediation of others do we look at the world differently.



By being kind and empathic when we could be harsh, we allow ourselves to build lasting relationships with colleagues, customers, and those we mentor. Loving compassion naturally goes a long way toward building deep and meaningful friendships. Without being attached emotionally, we can care about and appreciate each other for who we are or what we're doing.

When both grounding and nurturing exist in a personal or professional relationship, we give each other good soil for growing. Rules without nurturance are merely restrictive, and nurturing without limits yields indulgence out of proportion to the context.



Genuine compassion is based on a clear acceptance or recognition that others, like oneself, want happiness and have the right to overcome suffering. On that basis one develops concern about the welfare of others, irrespective of one's attitude to oneself. That is compassion.

—Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama



Food for Thought:

- How and under what circumstances do I create a context for showing people care and empathy?
- How important is it for me to be caring and compassionate?
- When do I demonstrate care and empathy toward people with whom I'm not attached emotionally?
- How did I feel when I was caring and compassionate in past situations? (think of a certain situation)
- How did my environment react to me being compassionate in this situation? (reflect on same situation)

Relating well is the foundation for success.

Relating well to others underlies any successful professional training and the ability to take ourselves and our organizations beyond our existing strengths. This is because care and empathy help sustain our awareness of the opportunities that give raise to our future.

Self-awareness and an awareness of the world around us go together like the front and back of our hands. Coupled with an awareness of our competencies and weaknesses, the awareness of possibilities in the marketplace helps us turn potentials into realities.

Things do not move as smoothly without the care and empathy that exist when we ground ourselves adequately and nurture ourselves or receive nurturing. In uncertain times and when we neglect nourishing ourselves, most of us tend to feel discouraged and pessimistic about future success. Experimenting, taking risks, and learning - all suffer. In some of us, rage or angry defiance characterizes the absence of care and empathy.

When we see ourselves in others and genuinely feel compassion, others reciprocate that feeling. Showing others that we genuine care usually brings positive results. In situations of conflict and divisiveness, tension often dissolves when we apply an attitude of warmth and affection. At that point, we can relax enough to entertain further exploration for an amicable solution.

The more we can incorporate care and empathy into our way of living and working, the better situated we are to experiment, learn, and change for the better.



To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Food for Thought:

- How do I nurture myself?
- How could I nurture myself better?
- How explicitly or consciously do I ground myself at home?
- How explicitly or consciously do I ground myself at work?
- How can I do an even better job in grounding myself?
- When I think of someone who shows me care and empathy, can I detect grounding in our relationship?
- How can I even do a better job in grounding our relationship?

The person with the highest IQ may be the least intelligent.

Care and empathy reflect an appreciation of our differences and realities. Some of us find it easier to appreciate people who seem intelligent and responsive, and many of us assume that intelligence quotient (IQ) tests are the best way to assess intelligence. However, research over the past few decades has shown that this is a very narrow test indeed. Its persistent popularity is highly misleading.

We need to unlearn the importance of IQ scores. Otherwise, we run the risk of demotivating intelligent people who fail a limited and fairly arbitrary but ubiquitous test. Furthermore, those who score well may receive undue accolades and close themselves off to further learning.

In *Frames of Mind*, Howard Gardner writes about *multiple intelligences*. His thesis is that we have at least seven equally valid ways of knowing the world, not just the logico-mathematical intelligence that standard IQ tests measure. The other six are: language, spatial representation, musical thinking, kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence.

When solving problems, we each use our own particular ways of relating to the world. In other words, we all have different approaches to finding solutions, just as we have individual learning styles, learning modalities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), and creativity styles. (Bernice McCarthy does a great job of describing learning styles in her book *The 4MAT System*.)

Everyone has strengths in one or more of Gardner's seven areas, which combine to become part of that person's individual reality. Unless we use different approaches when engaging different people, they may not hear our points. To communicate in a meaningful way, we need to tailor our delivery. This is a specific example of the dynamic tension between grounding (e.g., "we each have our own approach") and nurturing ("I respect your individuality").

Within our own boxes, we can be calm, collected, witty, and intelligent. It's easy and fun to relate to people who think and feel like we do. Birds of a feather flock together. It is not that we have a

conscious bias against people with different personalities, but we may not know how to relate to them unless we have a strong need or interest to do so.

This makes life easier and makes learning more difficult. If we cannot understand or like someone intuitively, it often helps to speak to another of their “selves,” where we can find talents and gifts we little suspected at first. This is true empathy: consciously learning about someone’s world and dealing in that reality.



Intelligence is quickness in seeing things as they are.

—George Santayana



Food for Thought:

- Among the multiple intelligences, what are my strong suits?
- How is having these intelligences serving me?
- What is the intelligence that I like to improve most?
- What is my preferred approach to learning?
- What approaches are difficult for me?
- How can I become more adept at one of these alternative ways of learning?

Our happiness gives us good health, not vice-versa.

To accelerate learning, we need to look at health. Our bodies and our minds are not separable. Many of us assume that being healthy makes us happy, yet the reverse is true. Giving and receiving care and empathy can create joy even when we are ill. And our happiness has more influence on our health than we used to think.

A high-level administrative officer in India told me the story of his son, who was diagnosed as being severely mentally retarded. Almost everyone gave up on the child when doctors told the family that he would probably never be capable of eating his own food, let alone taking care of himself.

That is, everybody gave up except the mother. Not even for one second did she believe that her son was a vegetable. Nor did she let him believe it. She spent all her time taking care of him. She kept singing to him, telling him stories, and taking him for walks. Her care and empathy for him continued for years.

This same son grew up to study music at college. He can type 100 words a minute, speak three languages, cook, clean, and take care of himself. Doctors and educators come from all over to see this miracle. The only answer the mother has for them is that there is nothing that cannot be cured by love.

Whatever took place, it begs two questions: How many times have we given up on learning because we felt incapable? How many chances to learn do we give others before we brand them uneducable?

We can learn how to improve both our happiness and our health. Much evidence suggests a relationship between our mental state and our body's immunity to disease, as well between our mental state and our ability to learn. During depression, for example, we not only find it hard to learn but our forgetfulness increases.

When we stop paying attention to our resolutions to eat well, exercise, and take care of ourselves, it is because we tell ourselves it doesn't matter, we don't care, or we're waiting for a better time. This reflects a lack of inspiration—a living and dynamic connection with the spirit. Without inspiration, we stop growing and learning and being healthy. Our egos and opinions move into the driver's

seat. When we experience trust, love, and compassion, on the other hand, healing starts between our inner and outer selves. Learning thrives only when we feel free to learn, which in turn occurs only when we feel whole—our natural state. This includes practicing care and empathy in relating to people with openness, mutual respect, and trust. Empathic relating includes *deep and active listening*—attending not just to the words but the meaning behind them.

Sharing from the heart nurtures strong relationships, as does empathizing with each other's pain. Empathy begets more empathy, and it is the source of creative partnerships.



***Think before you speak is criticism's motto;
speak before you think, creation's.***

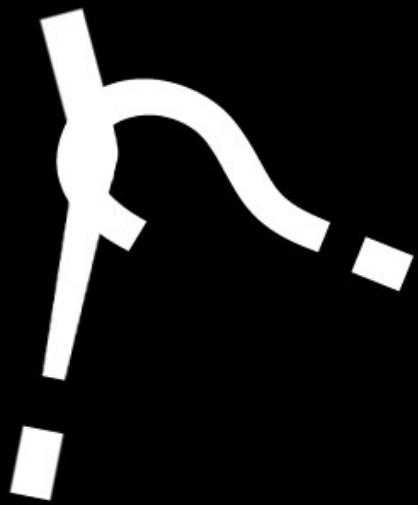
—E. M. Forster



Food for Thought:

- What needs to be in place so I feel free and open towards learning?
- When is it hardest for me to extend care and empathy to myself?
- When is it hardest for me to extend care and empathy to others?
- How many chances to learn do I give myself in various situations?
- How many chances to learn do I give others in various situations?
- What is my mood and outlook when I'm performing at my peak?
- What is the reaction of others when I perform this way?

10. Opportunities



10. Opportunities

Asking people to do something creates opportunities for them. Similarly, inviting them to linger over challenging questions offers more opportunities to engage in discontinuous learning than rushing to answers. This is because opportunities arise from the interaction between safety (grounding) and stretching.

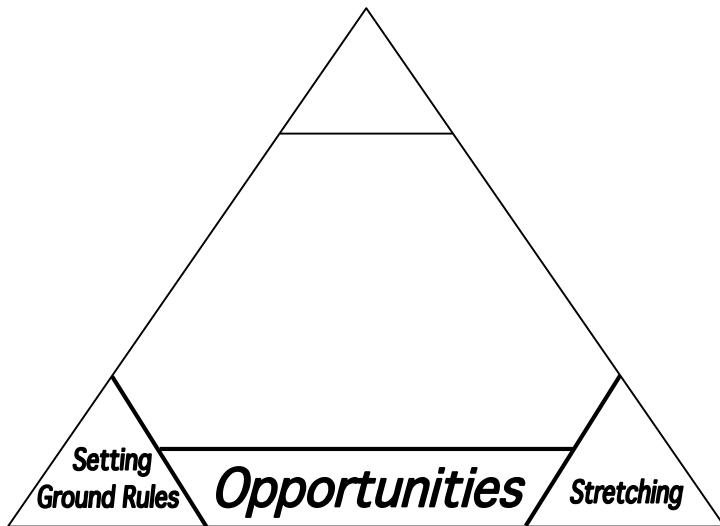
An Italian designer once came to the United States to study design and its evolution here. After he spent a year in various cities—San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Boston—he returned to Italy. A number of other Italian designers wanted to hear about his experiences and his opinions about the state of their field in the United States, so he met with them. “First,” he said, “let me ask you a question. What do you think Americans do when you ask them a question?”

They looked at him, thinking it was a rhetorical question. Then, realizing he was serious about getting an answer, they got into small groups and explored this question. After half an hour, they excitedly and eagerly presented thirty-six things Americans might do when someone asked them a question. “Which one of these do Americans do?”

He laughed and said, “When you ask them a question, they answer it.”

The other designers were baffled. “If the question does not remain open, where is the opportunity for design? If that is what Americans do, Italian designers don’t have to worry about competition from the United States for the next hundred years.”

Opportunities emerge from helping people ask questions that stretch them, that go beyond the ground rules, boundaries, and body of knowledge they already have. Questions that stretch them provide a chance for new and innovative answers to come up with.



In other words, our secure framework frees us to stretch into unexplored parts of the world in our quest for learning.

Without such opportunities, we might learn everything we could about the things and beings and events that lie within our own experience, but no more. Discontinuous learning is impossible unless we have the safety and support to stretch beyond our customary ways of viewing familiar things.



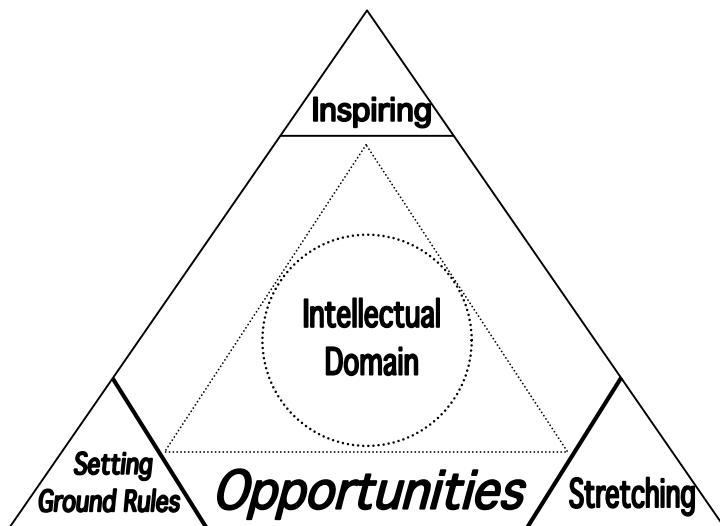
The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein



Food for Thought:

- How does my grounding encourage me to stretch?
- How does stretching influence my awareness of opportunities to grow and learn?
- How do I help others recognize opportunities to learn?



Change allows us to recognize continuity

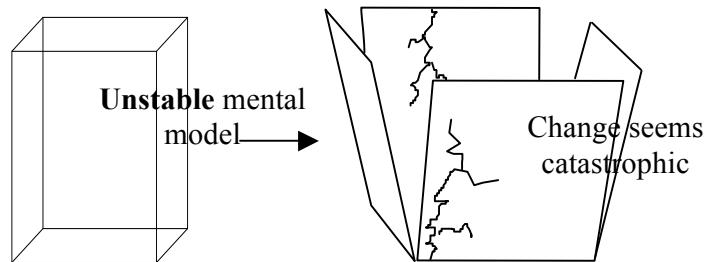
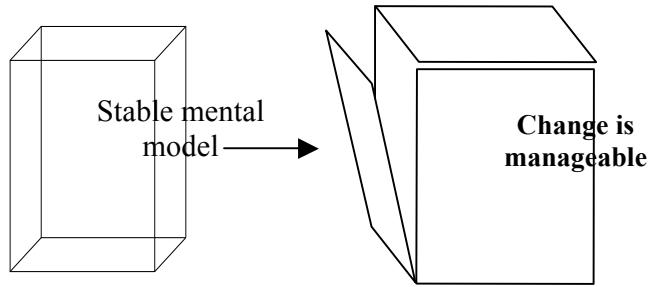
How do we reconcile our resistance to change with the idea that we change all the time? The answer lies in the scale of the change as well as in our scripts. We recognize the opportunity to have fun with something new that does not undermine other thoughts. On the other hand, having to rewrite fundamental concepts is another matter. If something challenges our entire belief system, we may feel strong resentment and refuse even to entertain the idea. Stretching beyond what we believe seems counter-intuitive, somehow.

Rapid or unwelcome change often evokes such reactions. Sometimes we also resist even trivial change. From a certain perspective, this makes sense. Imagine life as a boat. If we are living on a fragile, over laden boat, any slight gust of wind threatens disaster. Anyone who rocks the boat jeopardizes our future. Life seems even more precarious if the sea is stormy or rocky. In these circumstances, *any* change seems overwhelming.

Alternatively, if we live on a solid, reliable, ocean liner with a dependable crew, we can happily relax. We can play on the deck, suggest a new course, and invite friends and strangers on board.

In other words, we are never comfortable with change unless we develop an attitude of equanimity in which we can dwell securely, knowing full well that things change and outcomes are unpredictable. This means thinking through how things are, how they might change, and how we might prepare for various outcomes. One piece of a stable mental model, for instance, might be that no matter how fast change seems to be, we experience it in small increments, step by step.

Stability comes when we pay attention to what is constant and how that relates to changes around it. On a bicycle wheel, for example, the hub controls the rim's movement yet moves very little itself. Similarly, we define a circle by its center, but the center neither lies on the circle nor moves when the circle rotates. Ballet dancers and ice skaters both use this principle to keep their balance—their stability—while spinning.



*My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.*

—William Wordsworth



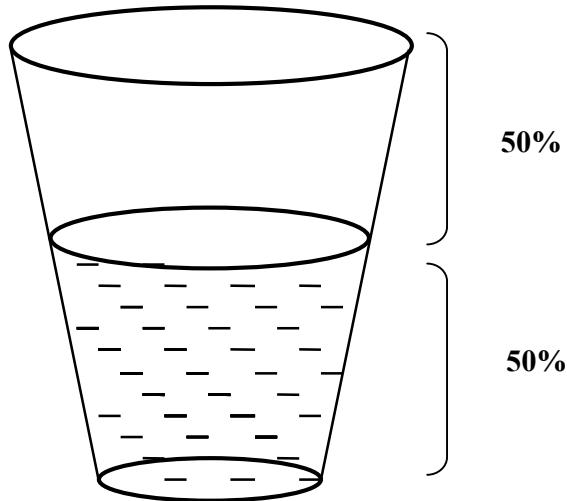
Food for Thought:

- What do I do when I encounter an idea that contradicts my beliefs?
- Under what conditions am I willing to stretch beyond lifelong assumptions?
- What is changing around me, and where does the center of that change lie?

There is all the difference in the world between a glass that is half full and one that is half empty

Here is a simple experiment about how people come to different conclusions—and see different opportunities—when looking at the same data. It starts with an empty glass, into which I pour water until it reaches the halfway point. How would you describe the glass?

Now let us repeat the same experiment with a glass full of water. I slowly pour its contents down the drain in front of you until water is again at the halfway point. How would you describe the glass at this moment? Is the description different?



We do not learn much merely by looking at a glass that is 50 percent full of water. But when we know the history and the process involved, we learn to see the glass in a new way.

Conditioning determines how we view the glass. If our conditioning is to see things a particular way, it is difficult but not impossible to break the habit. By definition, our intellects are logical and rational. Without some kind of transformative discontinuity in thinking, our intellects are incapable of discerning their own limitations or boundaries.

Given the nature of conditioning, optimistic children therefore tend to become optimistic adults, instinctively seeking solutions rather than being defeated by problems. To them, problems do not even look much like problems.

Society rewards the optimistic adult more than the negative one, because problem-solvers are more valuable in business and more attractive in our personal lives. They achieve success not necessarily through harder work or higher intelligence, however. As solving problems is easier with their optimistic attitude, some of these people's success stems "merely" from earlier conditioning. Significant people in their lives taught them that the glass is half full.



The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is so.

—James Branch Cabell



Food for Thought:

- Under what conditions do I see opportunities?
- How can I create more situations like this?
- In what respects have I stretched beyond the outlook I had as a child? How has that benefited me?
- How have I stayed with outlooks I created as a child? How does that benefit me? How does that limit me?
- What do I want others to learn from the way I recognize personal and professional opportunities?

Maintaining a mental box is easier than building a new one.

We rarely venture outside the box that houses our respective scripts and models of the world. Each time we attempt it, we experience resistance. This can be a formidable challenge to pursuing new opportunities.

This resistance to change is true of our physical routines, as well. After a six-month break from tennis, I once played two sets. My body did not like it at all, and I ached all over for two days. “Perhaps my body thinks that tennis is not good for it!” I mused. I had conditioned it in a particular way for the previous half-year, and breaking out of that box required work, regular practice. Maintaining a habit is easier than beginning it afresh.

Medical terminology refers to such resistance as *homeostasis*—a system’s tendency to maintain the status quo. We accustom ourselves to a certain lifestyle, say, without realizing that we are trapping ourselves in a box. Failing to stretch our minds regularly allows them to function only minimally. Like muscles, they go out of shape.

Without motivation to stretch or change, we often reduce ourselves to such minimal functioning. We easily forget that, in creating our respective boxes, we have developed a fixed way of seeing the world. What we selectively perceive of the world reinforces our beliefs rather than motivating us to break out of the box.

From inside any box, we depend on its windows to see out. We could think of the windowpane as filtering and therefore distorting information that passes through it. Perhaps the panes are bright, or of stained glass, or difficult to see through. They might make the outside look distant or frightening, playful or complex. In extreme cases, they might not let any light through at all.

The world regularly sees new alternatives, but our boxes reinforce the status quo. Depending on the box, new options out in the world may not be visible. If they are, our filters may make them seem inaccessible. Part of being in any box is a state of existing in homeostasis.

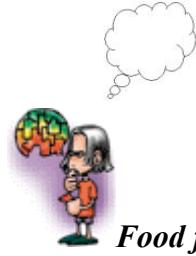
When our box was new, it might have had bright, clear, or even rose-tinted windows through which we could see opportunities all around. But the glass of any box has a special and important quality: It retains its clarity only through constant use. It also conforms to our moods and developing personality. The glass easily turns dark and distorts our view more when we lower our expectations or stop looking out the window.

Fish living in two parts of an aquarium divided by a glass partition generally continue to stay in their original half even if the partition is removed. Like them, we quickly become comfortable inside our individual boxes. We become unaware of our filters and even of the box's shape and size. We adapt to its constrictions. We therefore forget that it has walls. Only when we try to stretch do we notice them.



Two men look through prison bars; one sees mud, the other stars.

—Frederick Longbridge



Food for Thought:

- What distinguishes the box I in habit at work from the one I use at home?
- How does it benefit me to use these different boxes?
- How does it limit me to use the different boxes?
- What motivates me to look beyond my box?
- How does my own homeostasis help me professionally?
How does it get in my way?

11. Appreciation



11. Appreciation

On the edge between grounding and inspiring lies *appreciation*. This refers to how we value things and people, including ourselves, as well as envisioning the possibility of something greater. To appreciate anything, we observe it as if from a distance and notice what inspires us, what we feel we would like to have. As yet, we have no attachment or relationship with it.

Someone told me once that life is like a rose. Rose petals have a lot of qualities to appreciate: beauty, elegance, and the softness of their texture. The flower's budding and blooming and slowly falling away is such a complex process that it's a wonderful metaphor for life.

Many times, we engage with life only when it's wonderful, like appreciating roses from a distance. We want to store those good impressions in our mind forever. If we create our impressions just by looking superficially, based on some good moments, we'll never have the ability to appreciate life in all its depth and complexity. Like a plastic rose, it looks beautiful but does not have the depth of fragrance or liveliness.

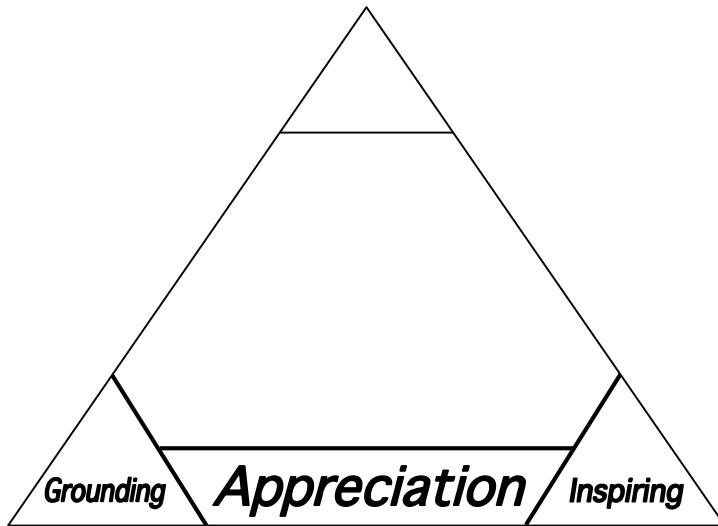
Keeping the memory of one incident in our minds permanently means that it is always going to be the same way. Without change, evolution, and devolution, nothing else gets a chance to take root. It cannot be replaced by something else that emerges. So true inspiration requires us to have liveliness, even though it might mean there are change, depth, attachment, and smell. We get inspired not by how things look but by their life energy.

Appreciating someone means embracing her genuineness and her authenticity—the smell of the rose, if you will, in addition to how she looks. This kind of appreciation goes directly to the heart of the other person. Our own authenticity about what we are experiencing in the moment inspires the other person. If we move to a level of abstraction or generalization—“You're a good person to work with, I love the way you do things”—the remark always looks the same, like an artificial flower.

In the three-dimensional model of learning, appreciation is one of two edges that connect with the intention of *inspiring*. Competence in appreciating allows us to savor beauty, art, or a lovely garden without necessarily meaning that we love it or that we

are committed to having it in our lives. Love is a state, while appreciation is an attitude or filter with which we can look at things.

It is the mildest but sometimes the initiative point. While empathy opens the door, appreciation welcomes us in. When we appreciate something, we want to know more about it. Its value to us increases when we appreciate it. We would like to do more of it, often.



Without the platform provided by grounding, as mentioned, we are unlikely to launch headlong into the space that inspiration clears for us. Instead, we organize our endeavors to gain approval, which is the shadow side of appreciation.

We need to appreciate who and where we are now, and what we are receiving, before new possibilities hold much appeal. Without a robust sense of appreciation, we tend to be more attuned to finding fault than cherishing one another as gifts.

Appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, is an extraordinarily powerful learning mode because it begins with acceptance. As learners, we accept who we are, what we do, and what it is we want to learn. Out of this self-appreciating, we're inspired to do more. We also find delineations between what works and what doesn't work in our experiments while learning.

When we embark on a particular line of inquiry, for example, we usually do so because it holds some value for us. It meets some criterion that we defined as worthwhile. If our inquiry begins paying off, that strengthens our inspiration as well as our parameters—as long as we can appreciate the indications that we’re making progress. Again, this depends on interpreting frustration and half-emptiness as milestones along the learning path.



The deepest principle of human nature is the craving to be appreciated.

—William James

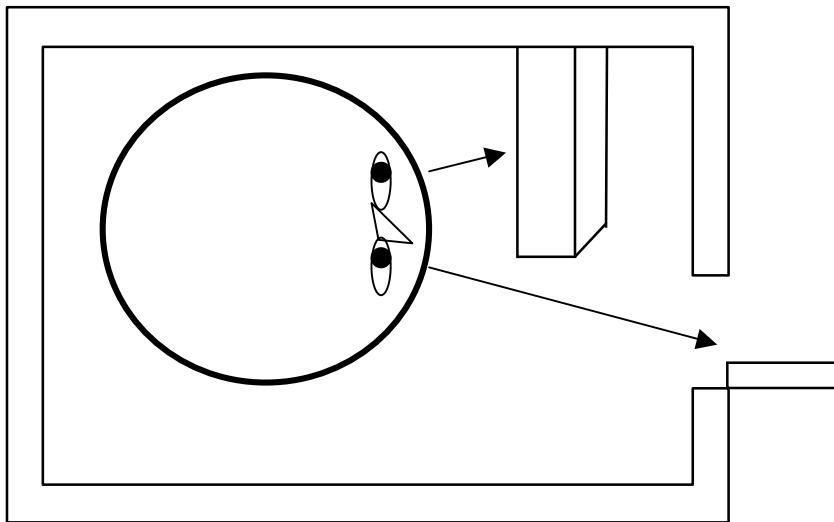


Food for Thought:

- How did I learn to appreciate people?
- How do I express my appreciation for people?
- How do I express my appreciation for myself?
- What do I appreciate about the things that inspire me?
- How do I appreciate things that inspire me?
- How do I express my appreciation at work? At home?

Exit doors in mental prisons are invisible until we look for them.

If we have no intention of escaping from the box, we never even notice opportunities to do so. Before we can conceive of escape, we need to appreciate that the box imprisons our thinking and our energies. Given that, we can then find inspiration—if not the door.



As the story goes, a beggar once lived on the streets of Calcutta. Every day for twenty years, he went from house to house on one particular street, begging for food. He was satisfied with his humble life and never asked for more.

The goddess Parvathi asked her husband, Lord Shiva, about the beggar. She asked him to give the poor man riches. Lord Shiva told her that until the beggar asked for prosperity; he could not give it to him. "He has to experience a desire to go beyond his poverty," Shiva explained. "Then I can help."

Parvathi was not satisfied. She wanted to try anyway. With Shiva's encouragement, she dropped a bag of gold coins in the beggar's path one morning just before he started walking down his usual street.

As it happened, however, the beggar had woken up that morning with a desire to learn what blind people experience on the streets of Calcutta. He decided that the only way was to close his eyes and go about his daily routine, and hence he walked past his fortune.

This classic story is not, of course, too realistic. If anyone had told him about the gold, the beggar might have chosen some other day to experiment with the experience of blindness. Or he may not have. We'll never know.

Meanwhile, the story does serve to highlight the topic of intention. Unless we actively look for something, we tend not to see it. This is true both literally and metaphorically. If we studied everything within our view with maximum intensity, excess data would inundate our conscious minds. That is the great benefit of our ability to see patterns: once we glance at and recognize things, we can safely ignore them, concentrating on newer information.

Yet, even that ability is not enough. Try as we might, we cannot avoid coming to some conclusions that are quite wrong, as with optical illusions. The same is true of our thinking process. We cannot avoid living in one box or another, and we need to make an effort to look for a way out. It is not apparent otherwise. The door has become too commonplace to notice, and after a while we may even forget the need for a door.

While I grew up in India, I did not care very much about Indian values, its heritage, or its culture. I was mostly unconscious of what it means to be an Indian. Moving to the United States brought my culture, values, and beliefs into sharper focus, which provided me an opportunity to learn more about my previous conditioning. If I had never left India, I probably would have never wanted to learn many of the things I now know about myself.



No man sees far; most see no farther than their noses.

—Thomas Carlyle



Food for Thought:

- What parts of my perspective feel like a prison?
- How do I shape my intention to perceive new opportunities?
At work? At home?
- When do I appreciate something that's outside my own
values?

Compliments foster the very skills they appreciate.

We can help change people's self images and beliefs by the way we acknowledge them. Angeles Arrien, a cross-cultural anthropologist, once said that each person is a leader, and effective leaders are ones who know how to acknowledge others. She also identifies four ways to acknowledge a person:

-  Acknowledgment of skills
(e.g., skills in delivery, performance)
-  Acknowledgment of character
(e.g., integrity, gentility, generosity, strength, trustworthiness)
-  Acknowledgment of appearance
(e.g., smile, twinkle of the eye, posture, beauty, grace)
-  Acknowledgment of impact
(e.g., inspiring, empowering, clarifying)

Positive comments invite change to occur in other people. Once they accept that invitation, their beliefs and self-perception may change, and then anything can happen. They may start to focus and develop in the area we've acknowledged. Their expectations change and, again, the new self-perception become self-fulfilling.

To foster change, we often do well to tell people the truth that is pleasing to them. This means withholding what they do not like hearing, even if it is our truth. The point is not that we should lie to please others. Instead, people may be better off if they discover such truths for themselves.

We can spend time each day to express our authentic appreciation for what others are doing in their struggle to achieve goals. This is good to do even when we then need to confer with them about how we can work together to improve efforts to get the desired results.

By letting people know that we genuinely and specifically appreciate what they are doing, we convey our honor and respect for who they are. Appreciating people and their work boosts morale and amplifies what gave rise to that appreciation in the first place.

If we find something to appreciate in every person we come across, and look into their eyes when we convey that, wonderful things happen. These include their seizing the opportunity to feel happy. In turn, many of them pass along occasions for happiness to those they touch. In the process, we all raise our openness to learn and grow.



When you cannot get a compliment in any other way, pay yourself one.

—Mark Twain



Food for Thought:

- What comments or compliments have inspired me to feel good about myself?
- How do I decide whether to compliment someone?
- When do I compliment skill, character, appearance, or impact?
- Remember a situation where you complimented someone else on skill, character, appearance, or impact – how did it effect this person's behavior?

Appreciating paves the way for accomplishing

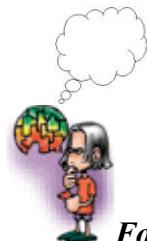
To value others as gifts in our lives, we need to value ourselves. This means that appreciation is also about self-acceptance. Most of us rarely appreciate who we are and what we receive. We tend to spend more time comparing ourselves to others and focusing on our flaws or unfinished work.

Accepting ourselves and acknowledging each step we take on our path accelerate the process of self-development. When we practice self-acceptance, it helps to create a daily ritual of identifying something positive that we've done or some contribution we've made to others. Even if our recent work has not yet produced the desired result, we can appreciate the progress we have made so far.

As distinct from flattery, appreciation is genuine acknowledgment of a quality or contribution. Appreciating ourselves requires focusing on our strengths and developing strengths. This does not mean ignoring or discounting the edges where we sense we can still learn and grow. We can appreciate ourselves without being perfect.

*Through our contemplation we might develop an ever-deepening gratitude and wonder for all those who have loved us first . . .
Such “going down into the cellar” might even help us begin to accept and celebrate both our strengths and limitations, in their totality. . . .*

— Edward C. Sellner



Food for Thought:

- What do I value about myself?
- What do I value about others?

- What do I value about what I value?
- How do I value what I value?
- How can I bring more appreciating and acknowledging into my way of being with people?

12. Play

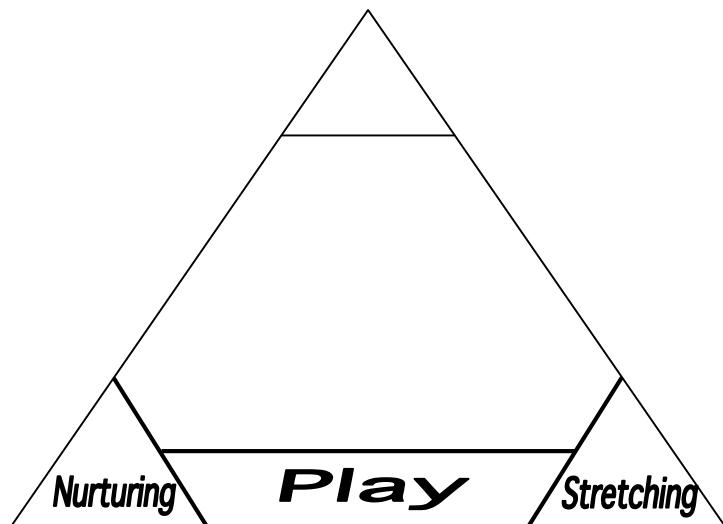


12. Play

Bill Atkinson, one of the three creators of the original Macintosh computer, told me this story. When they were creating the user interface, they wanted to come up with what turned into the mouse. It was difficult to decide about what and how this device should be, and be able to do, because they wanted something that would help create “a computer for the rest of us.”

So they kept playing with any idea that came up. They had an imaginary “Fred,” a fourteen-year-old boy. “How would Fred use this?” they asked each other. “What would Fred think about that?” This helped them explore and play with various alternatives; especially because it took away the attachments they might have to one way of designing software or doing business. Playing with that imaginary teenager also let them go through their design process in total secrecy and in a much more meaningful way than they would have done otherwise.

In the process of learning, the energy that flows between nurturing and stretching gives rise to *play*.



Nurturing provides the energy and substance for us to stretch our limbs, minds, and spirits out into the world. We break things by stretching them too far, and we fail to grow if we just stay with

things as they exist. When we combine nurturing and stretching, however, we create playful attitudes and interactions about exploring new ideas and approaches.

Without nurturing our bodies and our imaginations, we are in no position to stretch far beyond survival concerns. When we are fed but loathe to stretch, on the other hand, we become cumbersome, slow, and prone to inertia. Life eventually loses any spirit of play, and we stagnate. Everything takes on the feeling of obligation and seems like hard work.

The loveliest part of combining nurturing with stretching is that it makes learning tremendously fulfilling and relatively easy. The ensuing passages offer clues about how this works.



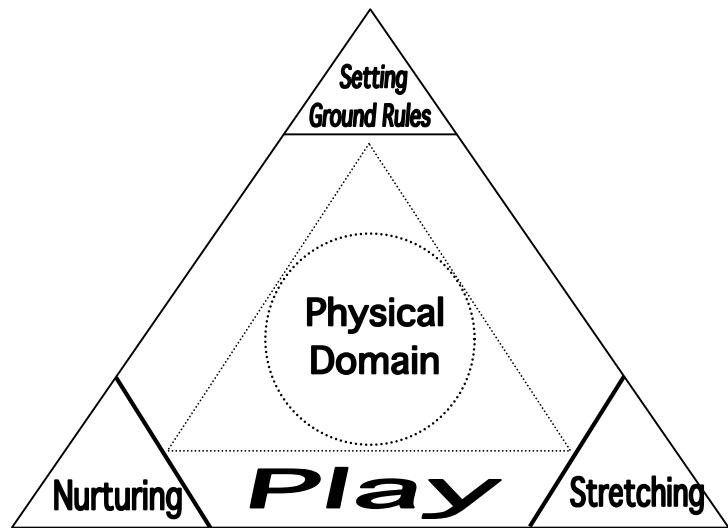
Well-being means to be fully born, to become what one potentially is; it means have the full capacity for joy and for sadness or, to put it still differently, to awake from the half slumber the average man lives in, and to be fully awake

—Erich Fromm



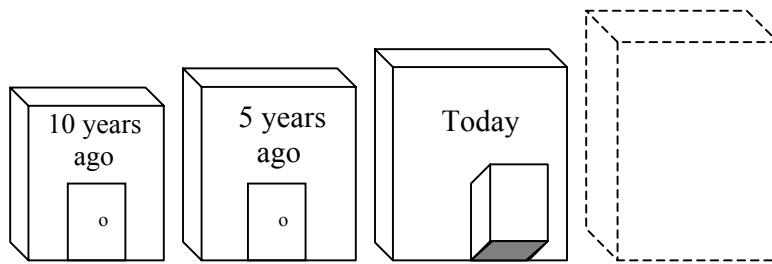
Food for Thought:

- How do I think about play in my professional life?
- How do I think about play in my personal life?
- What kind of self-nurturing helps me take a playful approach to complex issues?
- How can I be self-nurturing more often?
- How do I nurture and stretch others into playing as they learn?
- How can I do more of this?



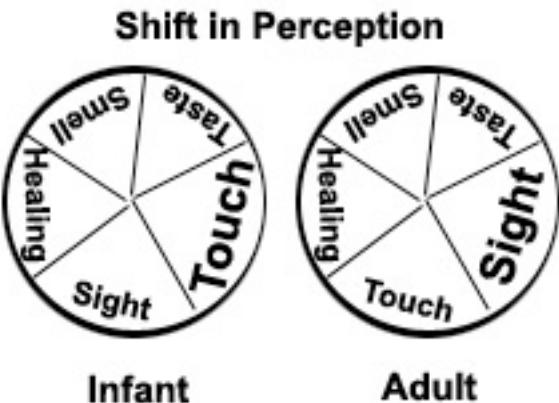
**The person each of us is today - is but
today's model.**

We outgrow or revise our mental models or boxes only through choice. Some of us look forward to exploring new alternatives, while some decide to protect our existing models by making them more rigid. Either way, our future models are not inevitable. Instead, they reflect the clarity of our vision and beliefs today. The more we nurture and stretch ourselves, the more free we feel to play with our mental models.



Throughout life, we outgrow our mental models and focus on different aspects of who we are. As unsettling as this thought may be, we each become a series of different people. We also forget what it is like to focus the way we did at, say, age ten. Effectively, we are no longer that ten-year-old.

In addition, many of us shift our sensory focus as we grow. Senses other than touch—vision and hearing, in particular—develop during our earliest years and, in some of us, overtake touch as our primary source of information. Some adults seriously consider only what they perceive through sight. They give no thought to touch. Other adults pay more attention to their auditory reality. Such shifts in sensory focus may disconnect us from our earlier sense of reality.



Perhaps meditation and physical intimacy are therapeutic because touch reaches into the powerful depths of our consciousness. In Buddhist meditation methods such as Vipassana, for instance, paying attention to body sensations is extremely important. I have seen spiritual healers and teachers touch people to heal, to open spiritual *chakras*, to awaken *kundalini* energy, and more.

Reestablishing the connection with our bodies may remind us that the world is safe and worth exploring. Similarly, shaking hands while meeting someone new at work may provide an important first impression. Such information may be crucial to our sense of play and nurture.

Regardless of which sense we rely on for perceiving information, perception is everything. Or, as the phrase goes, “Perception is reality.” For young children, according to the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, people and objects that are out of sight or touch simply cease to exist. If you hide a toy to which a toddler is paying full attention, the child assumes it has suddenly dematerialized forever. Even if the toy magically reappears moments later and you repeat its concealment, the child again thinks it has disappeared. This explains the extreme but temporary emotions that very young children display in such games.

Later, a major breakthrough occurs when it dawns on the child that the toy just might reappear. The youngster suddenly perceives a reality beyond what can be experienced directly. This is a profound

moment of growth. As adults, contemplating this breakthrough may help us stretch our own sense of reality.

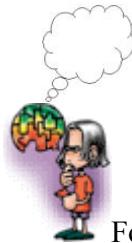
Not every adult, it must be said, develops full confidence in the continuity of this external reality. Perhaps jealousy and possessiveness characterize those adults who continue questioning whether people, objects, and relationships really do exist fully outside of the viewer's scope. Such viewers probably wonder whether they really will see those temporarily hidden people and objects again.

This outlook offers a glimpse of how important nurturing and stretching are to our sense of play. Unless we learn to nurture ourselves enough to risk stretching beyond our comfort zones, we stand little chance of developing an adventurous or playful attitude toward learning and change.



If man did not from time to time . . . close his eyes, he would finally be unable to see anything worth looking at.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Food for Thought:

- How much of a role does playfulness have in my attitude toward new options?
- What role does touch play in my personal and professional sense of safety?
- What realities have I encountered beyond what I experience through my senses?

Fear is the ultimate learning inhibitor.

Circumstances that lack love and care tend to disrupt our normal human pursuits of imitation, exploration, and play. Such environments thus inhibit our learning. We tend to fear embarrassment, retribution, and hurt feelings—in short, we avoid anyone who's not understanding or accepting.

As social beings, we clearly have a need to belong. This drive runs so deeply that many of us allow it to define us. We'd rather be on a team, that is, than to assert ideas that might invite friction. In conforming rather than risking conflict or ostracism, we build boxes that again inhibit our exploration and learning. Any unexamined drive or compulsion with such a profound effect blurs our ability to tell whether our thinking is objective. Our fears pose risks for perceiving, interpreting, thinking, and learning accurately.

Especially as children, we may need positive acknowledgment to realize that playing, experimenting, and learning is helpful. Those of us who lack enough encouragement may, at best, become passive watchers rather than active contributors. At worst, we exhibit (or bottle up) debilitating levels of resentment and frustration. These can be the red flags that alert us to being in a box, needing to find a door, and wanting to break through the limits we've set on our own nurturing, stretching, and playing.

What kind of learning comes easily to us today? What still seems too daunting? What would it take to change that?

Our scripts can have lifelong benefits or drawbacks. They contribute to our mental and emotional states, which affect our health powerfully. Those of us who tend toward anger, for example, have a tenfold chance of dying from cardiac arrest.

Abundant documentation links negative thoughts and emotions to hormonal secretions that increase the aging process, add stress to the immune system, and ultimately manifest in disease. In a thirty-year study, the University Of London School Of Medicine showed that negative reactions to stress are more destructive to health than cigarette smoking.

In another study, the Institute of HeartMath found that people's mental and emotional attitudes and states directly affect electricity in the heart. The normally scattered and incoherent frequency spectrum of the electrocardiogram (EKG) becomes dramatically ordered and coherent when people use mental and emotional self-

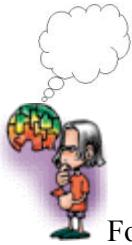
management skills to focus on feelings of love, care, or appreciation. Think of how much easier it would be to play with and explore new realities under such emotional and physical conditions. Rather than feeling the stress of anxiety, we could relax and enjoy each new discovery.

Electricity generated by the heart may reach the genetic material (DNA) in our cells much like a radio wave reaches a receiver. Unlike radios, the heart's communication probably changes the cells. Since DNA determines the formation of genes, which control enzymes, which control all cellular functions, according to HeartMath, distortion in this communication might explain a lot of health mysteries. It may also have significant bearing on our resistance to learning in the absence of feeling nurtured and well regarded.



We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when adults are afraid of the light.

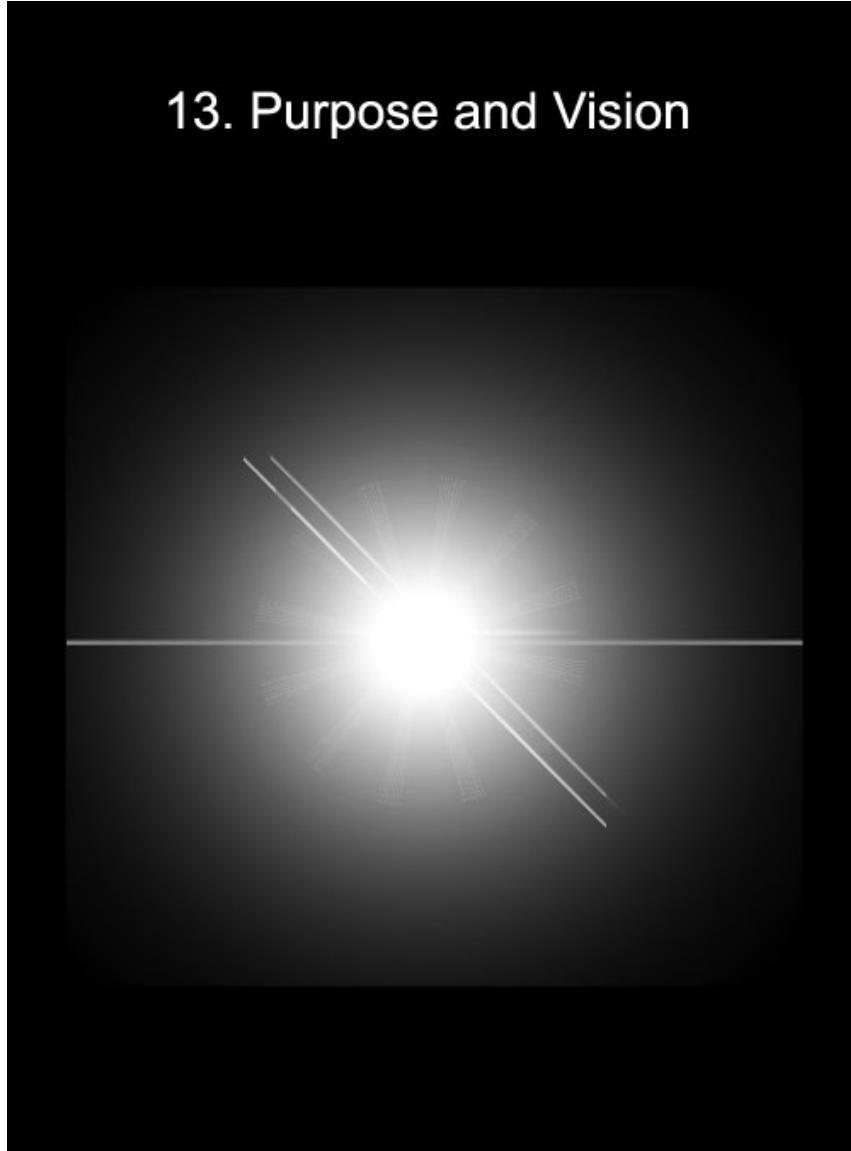
—Plato



Food for Thought:

- How does my script affect the way I feel about my competence to learn and change?
- How does my script affect people I work or live with?
- What might connect my mental scripts to my body's symptoms?
- What script might I write (differently) today?
- How do I support creating awareness for other people to their scripts?

13. Purpose and Vision



13. Purpose / Vision

A friend of mine suffered for years from a certain debilitating condition, found little help in traditional medicine, and spent enormous energy and time researching the subject. He had no medical degree or credentials in that field, but he knew about research and learned a lot about the condition, the difficulty of diagnosing it, and its significant and wide-ranging impact on health. For him, it grew into a cause. Everybody—his doctors, friends, and family—eventually discounted his conversations as ravings. Gradually, he became a laughing stock in his community.

One day, listening to his frustration, I asked, “What do you want to do with this? Where do you want to take this knowledge?”

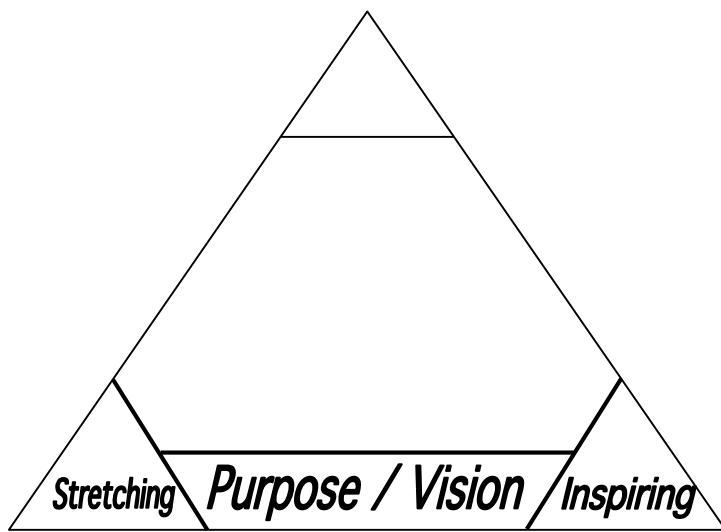
“I want people to know about this. It’s so important.”

“Why don’t you document it? Put it into a form where other people can see the evidence you’ve gathered.”

He wrote an article and included photographs of various stages of his own healing, and the managing editor at a prestigious journal has just agreed to consider it. The point is that my friend had all the material, and my questioning his purpose suddenly created a container to hold all his experiences. He got inspired and, once his experiences became objective, they made a big difference to other people.

We all have a purpose whenever we do anything in life. Some of us are clear about our purpose, while others find it by the process of rejecting everything that is not their purpose. Either way, identifying and visualizing our purpose helps us to stretch beyond our usual autopilot patterns to help create a more exciting future.

Nurturing is the base for stretching, and stretching then interacts with inspiration, in a co-creative or co-emergent process, to bring us our sense of purpose, a vision for ourselves. We know when we identify our unique purpose because it inspires us, challenges us, and gives us direction when we feel lost.



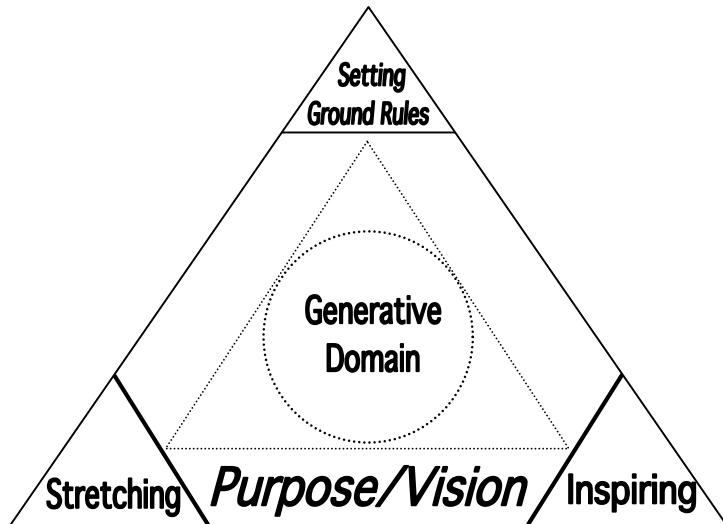
Stretching moves us beyond the perimeters of our current knowledge, which is paramount to deep learning. We sometimes need to explore freely, without focusing in on any particular direction. However, unless we ultimately do find inspiration, we may become restless and discontent. Without feeling inspired, stretching loses its appeal.

For example, with the accelerated change and increased competition of the 1990s, many companies grew nervous about their product offerings. In one popular strategy to face these changes in the marketplace, companies demanded that employees increase innovation and reduce product-cycle time. Unfortunately, creativity levels do not shoot up on demand.

What happens instead is that people feel fear and desperation. Many managers welcome these as powerful motivators, not realizing that feeling pressured is usually antithetical to creativity. As productivity stalls rather than climbs, some executives turn to command-and-control behavior, which aggravates the situation.

People who are afraid, respond with their survival skills. Sensing that security is at risk and feeling unsafe, they put all their energy into survival. Many simply hunker down until the situation improves. The goal is to keep their jobs, not necessarily to take innovative risks or raise productivity.

In the same market conditions, other companies offer training in creativity skills but do not change their fear-based culture. Actually, many employers do not even see the connection between the culture and employee behavior. They think that fostering skills and asking people to perform is sufficient to produce results.



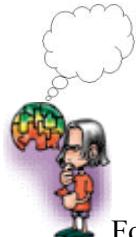
Requesting, dictating, or demanding innovation increases stress and illness rather than productivity. Although we may have creative skills, we do not have access to them when we're afraid. When we downshift our brain functions into survival mode, we tend to feel and behave like victims. We blame the danger or potential danger for our actions and results. Rather than taking personal responsibility or ownership of our choices, we justify our defensive approach.

Innovation comes, by contrast, from the hearts and souls of people who feel inspired to create. The energies of stretching and inspiring combine into our vision of who we can become or where we are heading. Suddenly, we recognize a purposeful path for ourselves. In turn, this clarity invigorates us toward manifesting that vision.



*Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. . .
. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated.
Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to
implement it.*

—Viktor Frankl



Food for Thought:

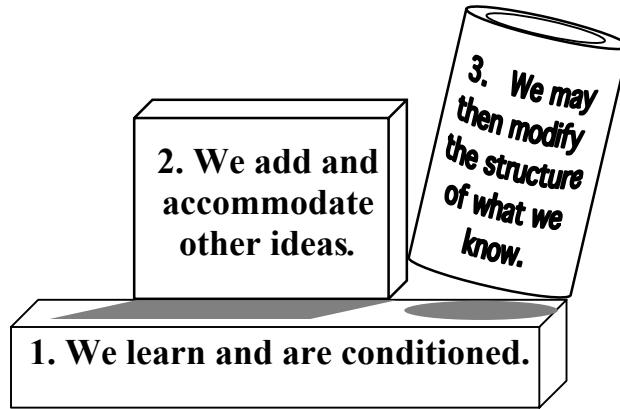
- What is my process for envisioning my path?
- What is my current vision or sense of purpose at work?
- What is my vision for my private life?
- How do my personal and professional visions affect each other?
- How do I support others in creating a sense of purpose or vision?

**We can only see what we have already seen, unless
we learn to see all over again.**

Our need to stretch beyond our current knowledge reflects the nature of our brains. One fundamental ability of the brain is to recognize patterns within the data we collect. Strange shapes, sounds, and smells can be discomforting until we discover similarities with previous experiences. Our brains constantly look for these similarities, which provide some satisfaction when we perceive them.

Metaphors are a higher order of pattern recognition, in which we notice similarities between things that are normally not connected. They help us ascribe meaning to the patterns we detect, and this is often how we arrive at a vision or sense of purpose.

As adults, we occasionally add new patterns and revise existing ones. Elise Estrin, a renowned educator, reminds us that the constructionist approach to knowledge suggests that we base our knowing only partially on what we already know (or think we know). Although we assimilate new ideas or concepts into our existing knowledge structures, we modify those structures according to new experiences and information. The psychologist Jean Piaget called this *accommodation*. This is all part of what this book refers to as *conditioning*.



Whenever any two people look at the same scene, they perceive it differently. This is because we see things in terms of our previous experience. Essentially, we see what we want to see. In a classic early study by Hastorf and Cantril about how prior expectations alter perceptions, two groups of Princeton and Dartmouth students watched a film of a sports game between their schools. Researchers asked them to keep track of any infractions of rules.

Most of the Princeton students thought the game was “rough and dirty.” Ninety percent believed that Dartmouth athletes had started the rough play, and they recorded twice as many penalties against Dartmouth as Princeton. The Dartmouth students also described the game as “rough” but blamed the two sides equally, and recorded equal numbers of penalties to each side.

From the combined reports, it is difficult to believe that all the students watched the identical piece of film. The point, again, is that our expectations affect what our brains perceive and interpret about the world (and ourselves). We do not stretch automatically, so feeling inspired to move toward a vision or purpose helps tremendously when we are learning.

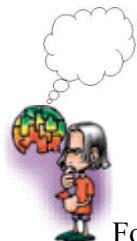
In another experiment, Professor H. H. Kelley told his students that they would be listening to a guest lecturer that day. He handed out a brief biographical note about the speaker, but there were two versions of the note. Half included a sentence that described the lecturer as a “rather cold person, industrious, critical, practical, and determined.” The other note was identical, except that “warm” replaced “cold.”

This single difference had an effect. Students who read the “warm” note liked the lecturer better and volunteered more in the discussion. Similarly, the rest of us are only too enthusiastic to create a frame of reference around any subject. Certain words act as strong catalysts to set the scene. To function otherwise takes awareness of our natural tendencies and the desire to stretch beyond them. Awareness is dynamic. It requires being continually vigilant against our complacency by reassessing where we are, where we want to go, and where we were yesterday.



The eye obeys exactly the action of the mind.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Food for Thought:

- Which words influence or set my expectations?
- To what extent do I conduct my personal and professional lives by recognizing patterns?
- How much of my learning begin with tenuous equilibrium?
How much of my coaching?

**To go vaguely in the right direction is to go
in the wrong direction.**

There is no such thing as a vague intention to change. If any intention is vague, it is not an intention. Every large bookstore has self-help bookshelves full of exciting exaltations such as “Do it now!”, “Take charge!”, and “Turn your goals into a winning formula for success!” Their gist is, “If you don’t know where you’re headed, how do you expect to get there?” They are right, of course.

This book avoids the breathless prose of the instant-enrichment genre, but the intention to change is still a necessary ingredient of the process. It is easy to go through the motions of planning something when we have no real intention of carrying it out. We may do such things out of vanity, or we may be fooling ourselves. We may like the concept of learning or growing, but today may not be a good time to start.

We might, for example, buy a language tape but leave it on a shelf, unused. The publishing industry reports that this is a common phenomenon. Alternatively, we might even play the language tape and still not learn from it, because without a genuine intention to learn, information flows over our heads. Grim repetition fails.

We need to want to learn so much that we enjoy the process itself. We can therefore increase our rate of learning dramatically if we periodically revisit our original inspiration to learn, perhaps by visualizing not only the benefits we anticipate but also the pleasure of learning something new.

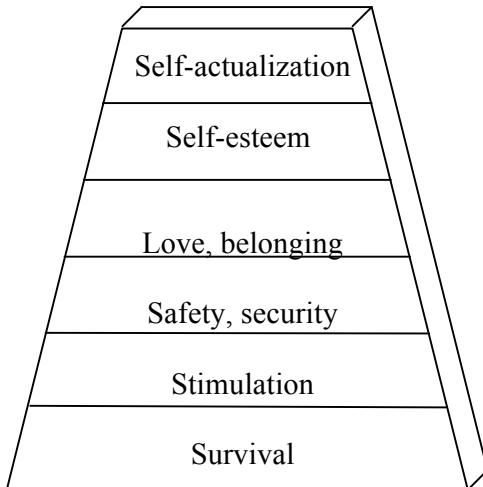
Rather than feeling inhibited by the language tape and considering the course a chore, say, we might do better simply to play it one day and see if it is interesting. We can do so without attaching any heavy agenda and, consequently, with no possibility of failure.

Needing to know is also no guarantee. When we travel by plane, how many of us pay attention to the flight attendant’s instructions on the right ways to buckle up and where to find oxygen masks and flotation devices? The routine bores us. Learning about the equipment holds no inherent pleasure, so the mind wanders.

However, if the plane developed serious engine trouble in mid flight, everyone would suddenly pay very close attention indeed.

Although such motivation could hardly be higher, in survival terms, some people would still miss many of the instructions because of the situation's stresses.

We relate to information only when it matches what we need. Abraham Maslow suggested that human needs change and grow. We begin with basic survival needs, and only when they are satisfied do we progress to stimulation needs (activity and exploration), then safety and security, followed by love and belonging, self-esteem and, finally, self-actualization.



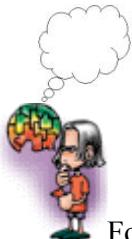
As a direct function of our interest in the subject, our ability to learn generally parallels these levels. During moments of transformation, however, we can leapfrog entire levels in a moment. We can quickly revert to lower levels, too, as in an emergency or illness. We might trade our homes and all our wealth for a life raft or a cure for a life-threatening sickness.

This conscious living-at-the-edge is vital for deep, discontinuous learning. Unless we are aware of our inborn resistance to change, let alone the boxes we build to preserve our sense of continuity, we cannot stretch enough to follow our inspiration fully. Like a strong rubber band, our homeostatic pressure to maintain the status quo pulls us back to our current ways of thinking.



Every time you teach a child something you keep him from reinventing it.

—Jean Piaget



Food for Thought:

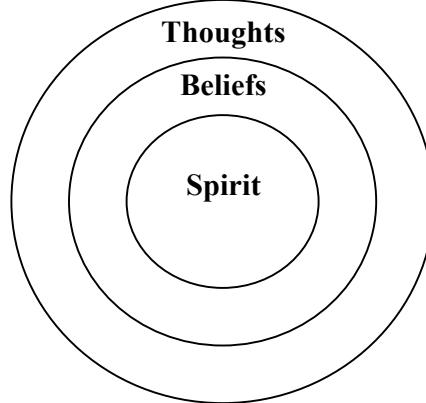
- What homeostatic pulls do I feel most strongly when I learn something new?
- How do I respond when someone else lives at the edge, momentarily free of inertia?
- How can I move beyond my resistance to learning?

**Values give us structure. Structure gives us freedom.
Freedom gives us our values.**

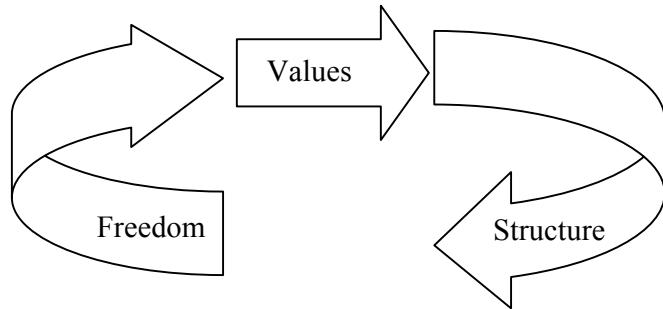
We all have opinions on thousands of topics, many of which we do not think about consciously from one year to the next. How do we remember all our views?

The answer is that we have at our disposal a deeper level of understanding: values and beliefs. In a sense, we are what our values and beliefs are. If someone asks our opinion and no answer comes to mind immediately, we simply look to our values to find one.

One changed value, one altered belief, and a huge array of changes sometimes follows automatically. In this way, we construct our own vision of reality. As Antonio Machado wrote in *Juan de Mairena*, “Under all that we think lives all we believe, like the ultimate veil of our spirits.”



Our values give structure to our lives and help us form a sense of purpose. This gives us the freedom to not remember every opinion in detail. We are free to think about other things, referring to our master table of beliefs and values when necessary.



This freedom is a significant step up from, say, the logical and factual world of the typical computer. It offers us a chance to shape our personality and foster the very values we wish to adopt. This circularity is both a strength and a weakness, however. Unless we reassess our conscious and subconscious beliefs from time to time, we go around forever in predictable circles. Like reverting to our biological homeostasis, we content ourselves rather than stretching toward a newly inspired vision.

One of the most uplifting and empowering concepts available to us is that we can systematically change our beliefs and values whenever we want to. This has enormous transformational potential. It means we have authority, if we choose, over our own lives. We can opt to author our valuing, perceiving, thinking, and acting. We may have to unlearn some of what others have authored, and it may be worthwhile to do that.

In that direction, another reason to assess our values and beliefs periodically has to do with success. If we achieve what society calls greatness, the prize might not mean much to us unless it is closely aligned with our inner fundamental principles.

This strikes at the heart of many psychological difficulties, because many people work hard to fulfill family, business, or social expectations, often at great personal sacrifice, only to realize too late that it relates little to their core values. It is easy to forget these values when other people's agendas distract us. Even as society applauds and rewards us, our peace of mind, health, and potential for learning and growth break down.

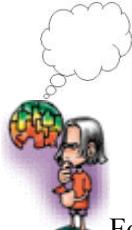
Part of discontinuous learning, then, entails recognizing and then unlearning or deconstructing the patterns and automatic pilots

we once devised to make our lives more efficient. Clearing the decks of these again frees us to identify our values, envision our path anew, and stretch toward a purpose more aligned with our essential self's core principles.



We are so constituted that we believe the most incredible things; and, once they are engraved upon the memory, woe to him who would endeavor to erase them.

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Food for Thought:

- What beliefs and values do I take for granted?
- How aligned are my core values with my personal script?
- How aligned are my core values with my professional script?
- How does the alignment differ?
- How do I help others change a belief systematically?

Why we do something determines its effectiveness.

Why do we do what we do? Engaging with this question clarifies our purpose and its relevance to the current marketplace. It can help identify ineffective work, allowing us to engage in efforts that yield results and satisfaction. From our clarity of purpose, we create our future. Just as the oak sleeps in an acorn, our future rests in capacities that we have yet to identify, recognize, or manifest.

Reflecting on and finding a higher purpose often leaves us unwilling to put up with any conditioned responses that no longer fit. In the context of a larger purpose, we can discern what works and what doesn't. Rather than making this be about right and wrong, we simply bring our essential self or spirit to observe how things are happening.

Creating our futures consciously brings no guarantees. We still need to explore possibilities at some length before gauging whether it pays off. Exploring has no substitute, as we cannot judge the potential of a new opportunity by using an old mindset. Such assessments fail miserably, which makes capacity building and discontinuous learning relatively difficult. Why risk changing something that works?

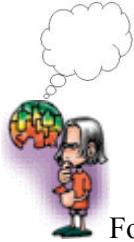
Creating a culture that embraces many possibilities and opportunities is no guarantee, either. It merely means that we fail in some of them. The significant tradeoff, however, is that we succeed beyond expectations in others. In almost any of life's endeavors, it only takes one success to beat 99 failures.

Five principles matter for creating a culture that fosters discontinuous learning, builds capacity, and unleashes creativity. We need to appreciate what works, explore what is missing, acknowledge what is true, and remain open to what happens. Finally, we need to synergize and integrate capacity from a systemic and holistic perspective. We cannot analyze or synthesize it from the past.



The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.

—E. M. Gray



Food for Thought:

- Why do I do what I do at work?
- Why do I do what I do at home?
- What would it take for me to break out of this?
- When and how do I pay attention to my insights?

We visualize the future and then live it into being

Setting goals usually starts from the present and extends into the future. We end up extrapolating what we want now, wishing for a better or faster version of what we already have. This process often depresses us because it reminds us that whatever we have now is not good enough. Another way is to start by clarifying our purpose. This takes a discontinuous leap: launching into some future time—twenty or thirty years, say—and visualizing where we'd like to be then and what we'd like to be doing. At work, this may mean envisioning a future version of our careers or organizations. At home, this may mean a new picture of our future selves or relationships.

Setting goals then becomes more meaningful. Once we identify and articulate our destination, we can describe our path clearly. Seeing where we want to go helps us set the priorities and interim goals that support us in getting there. These specifics also make it easier to map the connections between our desired future and current reality.

Once we are clear about our desires for the future, we can explore ways to manifest it. Another way to think of this is that, once we know our unique aspirations and ambitions, they somehow pull us toward materializing them.



*Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.*



—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Food for Thought:

- Does my purpose inspire me, especially when I feel down?
- Does my purpose challenge me when I feel smug?
- Does my purpose give me direction when I am lost?

14. Love and Commitment



14. Love and Commitment

The Xerox Corporation once had a program called Miles and Miles of Smiles. In learning about it for delivering a keynote speech at a conference, I was deeply touched. This extraordinary program was demonstrating an unusual form of love and commitment not only to Xerox employees but also to their customers, suppliers, and truck drivers.

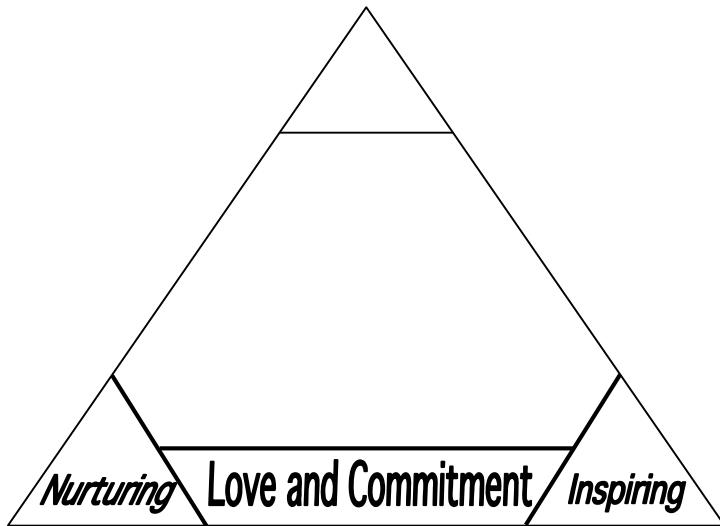
Corporate leaders had figured out that they could use non-Xerox people to deliver many of the mid-sized and office-sized copying machines, which were quite large at the time. They had also recognized that they did not always need to send along technical people because installing some of these machines was fairly simple. So they turned to their outsourced truck drivers.

These drivers were willing to get the training and do the work because their contracts with Xerox included incentives linked to the kind of commitment, love, and caring that drivers showed and buyers reported in their five-point customer-satisfaction evaluations. The Miles and Miles of Smiles motto reflected the idea that happy, smiling drivers generated not only superior customer satisfaction but also safety on the street. The less stressed the driver, the better for everyone.

With the kind of feedback system Xerox had created, they also gave drivers the freedom to go above and beyond the call of duty. For instance, drivers were encouraged to throw in extension cords, if customers ended up needing one to plug in the machine. Drivers would haul away old copiers, if that was needed. They really got into the spirit of the program, and many delighted customers sent in glowing letters about how helpful these drivers had been.

The drivers could clearly see that when Xerox said, “We are committed to you,” they demonstrated a practical kind of caring, love, and affection that benefited and inspired them as well as the people they served so well. Xerox then organized a conference to share stories among drivers, suppliers, and customers about how they felt nurtured and inspired. It was a true win-win-win situation.

To stretch fully into our own authority and toward our visions requires a foundation of love and commitment, as the preceding story shows. This foundation arises out of the dynamic dance between nurturing and inspiring.



Until we are nurtured adequately, we cannot hope to move into the world under our own power. Stretching without nurturing does not work. In terms of learning, this means needing enough care and attention to open and orient ourselves in a new area of study. Once we find our bearings, we can navigate our own way, if we choose to.

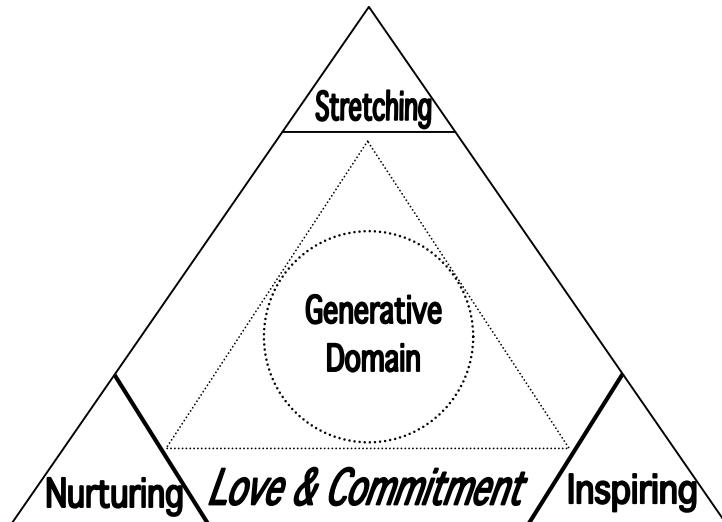
Choosing to pursue something relies on feeling inspired to do so. Idle curiosity takes us only so far. Over time, if we do not continue feeling enough inspiration or appreciation on a daily basis, our enthusiasm fades. Nurturing the spirit is vital because, once the waters turn rough or rocky, we need love and commitment if we are to continue sailing.

Inspiration can fuel our love of a subject, and when we engage with what we appreciate, we develop a certain attachment. When we attach to something we value, respect, and draw inspiration and nurturance from, love emerges. This bond is far more personal than those characterized solely by care and empathy.

However, love is as reliable as the wind that fills our sails. Steam, internal combustion, and nuclear engines came into being because committed travel or transportation needs more than wind to power ships. In terms of learning, commitment is the counterpart. To commit means that we keep our word while we also remain

empathic and nurturing with our own needs and point of view. We commit, first, to ourselves.

We also commit for life unless it is a conditional commitment, meaning that our promise holds under specific conditions in a particular context. Conditional commitment stands until the agreement ends or we renegotiate. It involves appreciating something but does not necessarily evolve into loving it.



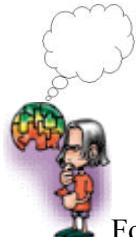
Like love, however, commitment is inadequate on its own. Once we lose our love of a topic or process or field, no amount of commitment engenders deep or discontinuous learning. Sometimes we persist anyway, hoping that our love of it will return. At other times, our self-criticism or self-reproach takes over and undermines our self-worth.

Sometimes we persist simply because we feel trapped within the box we've built and announced to people whose opinions matter to us. This is a far cry from learning because we love and keep our commitment to ourselves.



Many persons have the wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.

—Helen Keller



Food for Thought:

- How do I form my personal and professional commitments?
- When I want people to love and commit to something, how do I support them?
- What do I do when my learning hits a sandbar?

Expectation is reality

Once we gain strength and orient ourselves in response to nurturing, we can find inspiration that leads us to pursue a goal with love and commitment. This inspiration and nurturing is important because, as other sections show, our expectations are self-fulfilling.

The more we fear, for instance, the less we learn. With either positive or negative outlooks, we can always say to ourselves: “There, I told you so.” This is why techniques to improve learning are perhaps not as important as our attitudes and beliefs toward embracing new information and experiences.

As children, we often compete furiously among ourselves, almost as if to prove who we are. Most of us enjoy this as long as the competition conforms to our newly formed world view. We refuse to compete on issues that threaten our precious sense of reality.

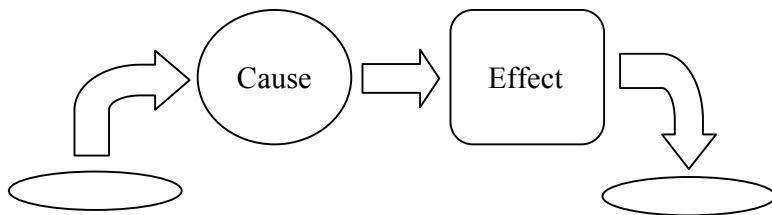
On a larger scale, this system of developing a world model is also much the way communities and even entire cultures develop. Once developed, these expectations about how the world “should” work appear eternal and rather sacred to those who hold them. Every culture believes itself to be at the heart of the universe. Every city that displays a map of itself shows a “You are here” graphic, with an arrow pointing to the center.

The U.S. government sees itself as the undisputed leader of the world. Similarly, India believes that it is far beyond the West in spiritual matters. France perhaps believes it is one of the globe’s most civilized countries, and so on. All cultures believe that they are right and expect everybody else to recognize this, sooner or later. Even countries torn apart by war remember their original culture and fight for many decades to protect it.

What does this say about individual identity? After all, it is not a nation that fights for its culture, but its people. Once we establish an identity and sense of belonging, most of us carry that with us throughout life, no matter how much we later learn or travel. Many of us have a passionate view of our heritage even if we have no contact with the countries of our ancestors. Many immigrants fantasize about retiring to their homelands even after decades abroad.

Human history is littered with wars over local or national boundaries, which persist today. Is it possible to evolve a mental model that everyone can respect, if not adopt? What kind of script would let us coexist in peace?

Infants may live entirely in the present and see the world as an extension of themselves, rather than having separate causes and effects, yet children and adults do not. With various levels of comprehension, we make models of how some cause creates an effect, which in turn influences the next cause. At earlier stages in life, we tend to think that we can cause or prevent most things according to how well-behaved we are. As we nurture and develop our comprehension, we consider multiple factors that contribute to—and are affected by—any change.

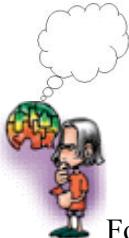


This perspective, in itself, can inspire us to commit to something or someone we love, align our choices with those purposes, and learn quickly from any surprises that develop as we proceed.



*Innocence dwells with Wisdom,
but never with Ignorance.*

—William Blake



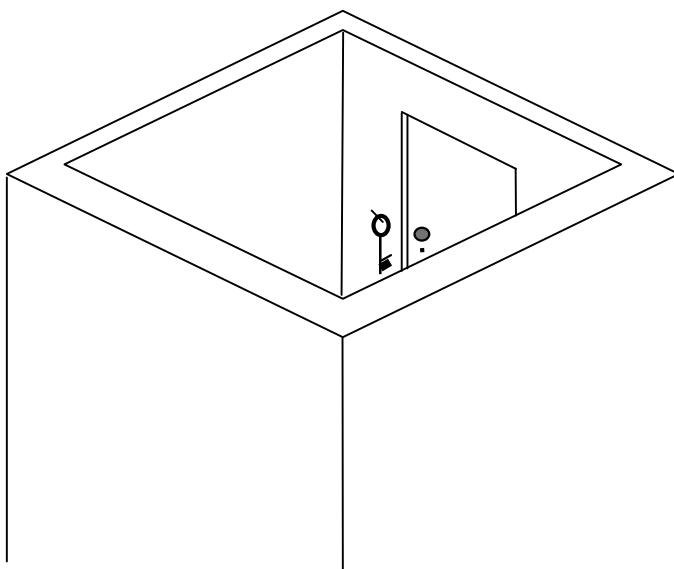
Food for Thought:

- In various contexts, how do I react to new experiences or information?
- How do others I work with/live with react to new experiences or information?
- What circumstances contribute to my reacting differently?
- What process do I use to come to terms with another person's beliefs, expectations, and realities?

**If all the world's prisons, the most difficult to escape
is the one at which we are the jailer**

Love and commitment grow out of nurturing and inspiring. Part of nurturing is knowing how to esteem ourselves, even when we are feeling uncertain or making mistakes. Unless someone in childhood taught us how to approach new food for thought, the anxiety of not knowing can turn learning into an ordeal.

Self-esteem and self-confidence are very much part of the boxes in which we imprison ourselves. This contributes to the difficulty—not impossibility—of breaking out. Even with self-esteem and self-confidence, only we hold the key.



At one of my workshops in India, a woman told me that she had attempted to learn to drive twice and then gave up. Why? The car stalled three or four times while she was changing gears manually. She had not mastered the interplay between the clutch, accelerator, and brake pedals. Not having enough tolerance for these “mistakes,” she decided that she was not good enough to learn how to drive a car.

I also remember meeting a brilliant young doctor who was absolutely petrified of writing down answering machine messages

for other people. Whenever she attempted it, her mind froze and she either wrote down incomplete messages or simply did not listen, despite knowing that some messages might be urgent.

She believed adamantly that she could never master this, and she remained totally unwilling to be coached or helped.

The solution to such blocks is usually not more practicing. No amount of repetition automatically improves low self-confidence. Our expectations get in the way of learning. Only when our attitudes change do we achieve a breakthrough.

When my son Pravin was learning to swim, he used air-wings to support his weight. One day, I was cleaning the pool, and we both were getting ready to swim. When I turned my back, he jumped in without remembering to wear his wings. He swam for about a minute before noticing the extra effort he was exerting to stay afloat. Then fear took over and he shouted frantically. He also stopped swimming. Luckily, I rescued him right away. I also tried to get him back in the water so that fear would not create a box around his mind.

Self-confidence has many faces. Sometimes, for instance, we meet people who seem driven. When they say they are going to do something, we know it will happen because they are so sure. Something larger than desire or motivation seems to be at work in these people. The strength of their conviction gives it its force. They have learned to make something happen by believing it will. This is another facet of love and commitment.

This positive determination applies to learning as much as anything. I once heard the story of a young boy in a small village who spent years in the same grade. The villagers had given him up as mute and retarded. Then a new teacher joined the school and, taking note of the child, spent a long time studying him.

Committed to helping him, this teacher attempted to engage the child. One day, the teacher drew a figure on the blackboard. It was the boy's dog.

Visibly moved by the image, the boy asked whether the teacher was drawing the boy's dog. Encouraged by this response, the teacher spent the next few minutes finding out more about the dog. Then he wrote "Rama," the dog's name, below the drawing.

The student puzzled at this and asked what it was. "It's the dog's name," the teacher told him. "Please write it down."

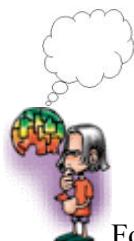
The boy burst into tears and confessed that he did not know how to read or write. It was clear that he was deeply ashamed of his lack of progress at school, and that he had given up long ago. To commit to change, he needed to unlearn this opinion of his capabilities.

The teacher gently guided the child in writing *Rama*. Once he wrote it, the boy's transformation was undeniable. He went on to advance through the school effortlessly in the ensuing few years and then became a scholar.



It is we that are blind, not fortune.

—Sir Thomas Browne



Food for Thought:

- How do I feel about being a rookie while I learn something new?
- Which of my expectations interfere with my learning?
- At home and work, how do I foster love and commitment to learning? For myself? For others?

Results come from committing our attention to what we love

Attention is critical to all learning, skill development, clarity, achievement and, ultimately, enjoyment. Committing ourselves to pay attention is especially important in areas of our core incompetence. As one executive said, “I know that I have to improve my procrastination of every thing to the last minute. I am aware that the stress is building up—not only in me but also in others who support me, and of course my clients. The problem is that I do not pay enough attention to this issue. So the problem continues and every time I curse myself saying that I will pay attention the next time. But the next time never seems to come.”

Paying attention means focusing on something in a relaxed way and allowing that focus to shape our awareness. It means allowing ourselves to compensate for our core incompetence, without judgment. For example, close your eyes and pay attention to your breath for a minute. Are you breathing in using the right nostril, the left nostril, or both?

The purpose of paying attention is to increase our awareness and concentration. Awareness is like light that shines and brings objects into our field of view. It is what we develop by reading this passage, for example. Attention and focus then allow us to see things with greater clarity and definition.

Paying attention is the master skill that gets us into state of flow in whatever we are doing. Confusion lifts and clarity increases. Playing in this zone of full attention is responsible for magical performances and effortless excellence. In *The Inner Game of Work*, Tim Gallwey says:

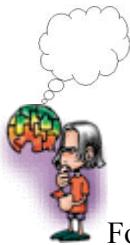
The simple fact is that we do our best when we are focused, whether we are riding a bicycle, drawing a plan for suspension bridge, conceiving a global strategy for multinational company, negotiating a contract, selling a product, cutting sushi, tasting a glass of wine, appreciating a sunset, throwing a ball, or writing a book. And when focus is lost, we simply do not perform at our best.

Discovering the nature of full attention allows us to manage our energy very well. It also helps us move toward our purpose effortlessly. We perform better, learn faster and more fully, and enjoy ourselves in the process.



Our acts of voluntary attending, as brief and fitful as they are, are nevertheless momentous and critical, determining us, as they do, to higher or lower destinies.

—William James



Food for Thought:

- Where in my life do I focus and pay total attention?
- Where am I easily distracted?
- What do I keep putting off until the last minute?

Part IV The Learning / Unlearning Process



Photo courtesy of Thong Q. Dang

PART IV - THE LEARNING / UNLEARNING PROCESS

A colleague of mine, Dan, came with me to a meeting in Japan. He had grown up in the United States but spoke Japanese perfectly. He had learned Japanese from his parents, who were from Japan. During our visit, he spent the weekend meeting his aunts, uncles, and cousins. When he came back, he was very quiet. "What happened?" I asked. "Couldn't you communicate with them?"

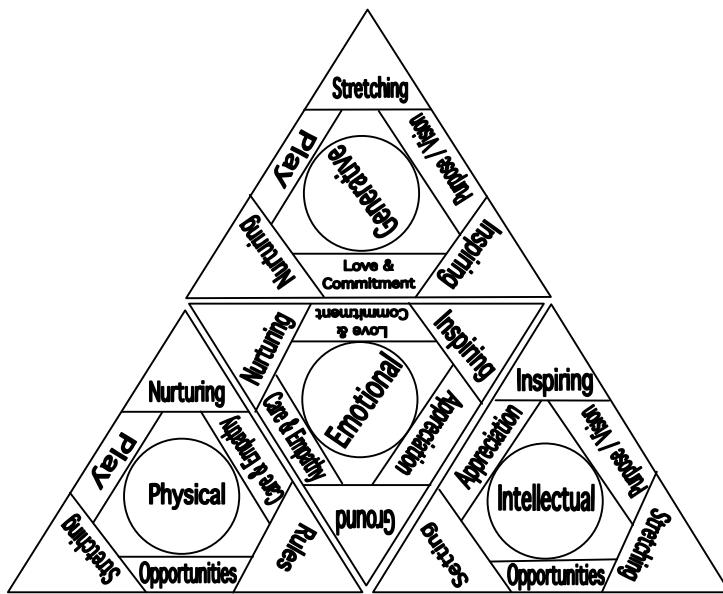
"No. I found out that they wanted me to speak English, not Japanese."

"Why?"

"They told me my manner is so American that when I speak perfect Japanese, it is jarring to them. 'You look Japanese,' they said, 'And you speak Japanese, but you behave so outside our culture that we're having difficulty. If we just speak in English, we can relate to you much better.'"

They were getting double messages because of this perceived lack of congruence, the lack of alignment. To him, it felt like rejection, but it's also an example of a sudden departure from the current level of thinking.

Discontinuous learning comes when we are balanced but are not enmeshed with any one of the pyramid's intentions, domains, or competencies (discussed in the previous three parts of this book). This means developing competencies (edges) by dealing with the tension that arises between any two intentions (cornerstones). It also requires that we develop capacities by discriminating or identifying the domain or field (the tetrahedron's faces) that's created among any of the three tension points.



The three-dimensional model of learning is a systemic concept. Each part affects every other part, so finding an appropriate balance among the system's many components is essential. If we focus solely on grounding ourselves through rules, for instance, we create a military culture. Such cultures or organizations work well for protection, safety, and security, but they do not promote discontinuous learning.

To integrate the many elements, dynamics, and dimensions of learning may seem daunting. Simply bearing them all in mind is quite a feat. Again, relaxation is the key. Deep and discontinuous learning occurs naturally, especially in infants. The point of this model is to help remove barriers we've acquired through our conditioning. Understanding that we wrote our own scripts and can therefore revise them, we claim our own authority.

We are then free to invent or adopt new approaches for ourselves, it is even possible to let go of our original vision about a specific destination. Passionate about the path we are on, intensely curious, and having invested so much time, money, and energy, we may not want to walk away from our journey, even when it looks discouraging. Perhaps we're not getting anywhere, there's too much chaos, or it's not leading us where we thought we wanted to go.

The cause-and-effect relationship breaks down, and that's why learning becomes discontinuous. It is not a linear path, and we cannot draw a one-to-one correspondence between what we did and what we ended up with.

Among many of the people I interviewed, this phase was where the wheat and the chaff separated. In such situations, good leaders make a major difference because they are able to see clearly, distinguish, and make appropriate decisions about which path leads to something meaningful. Most recipes about how to improve something do not work in this kind of situation, where people need to go ahead as pioneers. To do so, they explore multiple options, and without necessarily looking for an immediate answer, they are exploring in a strategic way ("What will bring me the highest return on my investment?").

Then, in discontinuous learning, we fall into a state of openness. Not looking for an immediate solution, we find ourselves engaged in something because it seems to have some juice for us. This is where transformations, breakthroughs, and discontinuous learning come alive. How long we are in this openness, this gap is often directly proportional to how much intentionality we brought at the beginning.

We come away with new clarity, insights, and a creative spark, and we follow it. Because we have deeply engaged with our own genius, we instantly know how to implement our insight. We build our capacity through action, developing competence by acting on it instead of reading or theorizing about it. We turn into bulldogs, and we just don't let go. We pursue and implement and manifest our ideas until they become a reality.

Then we step back and coach or mentor others. When we engage with people to produce that kind of discontinuous learning, we come up with even more insights, or unique theories of business, or distinct ways of doing something. This happens with venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, and many other leaders who discuss their "Aw, shucks, it's not a big deal" kind of approach. For the rest of us, it's an extraordinarily big deal.

To summarize, these are the five steps I found in the discontinuous learning process:



Intending to learn or change ("shaking up the old box")

- ! - Unlearning
- ! - Leaping into the gap and transforming our thinking
- ! - Creating anew, or manifesting what we have just learned
- ! - Mentoring or coaching

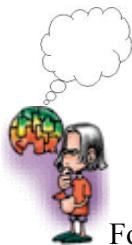
Each stage has a part where we ground ourselves or get grounded, a relationship in which we nurture ourselves or get nurtured, and an anxiety we need to stretch beyond to find inspiration. In other words, the learning pyramid shows up in each stage of discontinuous learning.

Ensuing sections touch on each of these five stages so that, along with feeling thoroughly familiar with the components of the learning pyramid, we can also have a general sense of how they dance together in the process of discontinuous learning.



The true sage brings all the contraries together and rests in the natural balance of heaven.

—Chuang-tse

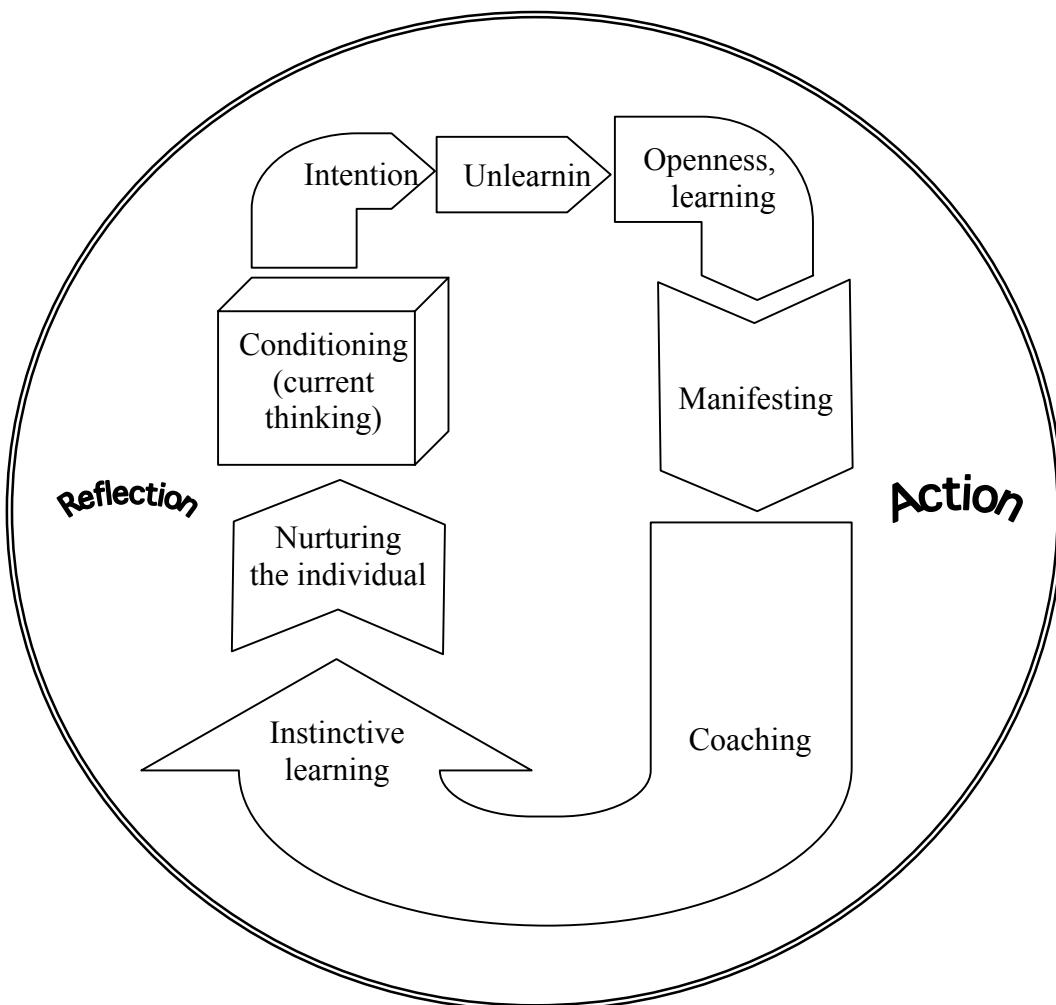


Food for Thought:

- What aspect of learning draws my attention?
- What barriers to learning do I wish to erase or decrease?
- How can I manifest what I am learning here?

- ❶ How can I support others to expand their barriers as they desire?

The Learning and Unlearning Process



Shaking up the old box is our first step toward learning.

Imagine life as a kaleidoscope. We study the first random pattern so carefully that we do not want to change it. It might well be attractive, but we have become so used to it that we assume it should always look like that. We never think to turn it once in a while to see what other patterns might exist. In this way, we develop a frozen lifestyle, relationship, job, and attitude.

We may have focused so long on earning money, climbing the corporate ladder, buying the right house in the right area, and so on, that we forget exactly why we do all this. We were supposed to find happiness once we accumulated the correct ingredients, right? When we “arrive” without feeling happy, we may feel disillusioned and trapped. Some of us panic.

Sometimes the pattern falls apart before we arrive. Perhaps we lose our job, the stock market crashes, a relationship ends, or someone close to us dies. Suddenly, we see our lives disintegrate. The familiar shape in the kaleidoscope is gone. All we see in its place are chaos and randomness. In our stress, we are unwilling to wait for the pieces to fall into a new pattern which, although strange at first, will have just as much beauty as before, perhaps more. To the kaleidoscope, each pattern is equally valid.

Research shows that, in the 1970s and 1980s, most people did not often change radio frequencies in their homes, yet did switch stations while driving. The reason? Preset buttons were not yet common on home radios, and people feared losing their preferred stations. Now that most radios are digital, with many memorized settings, people are more open to experimenting.

Perhaps we all could benefit from shaking up our kaleidoscopes and seeing what emerges. To explore new options, we might stir things up as soon as we recognize the first signs of curiosity, boredom, discontent, or restlessness. We might watch as creative tension develops between our desire to change and our resistance to it, our conditioned fear of the unknown.

Turning the kaleidoscope gently or firmly—whatever fits our particular situation—brings us back to life’s flow. Experimenting creates options, while memory freezes us.



There is nothing more difficult for a truly creative painter than to paint a rose, because before he can do so he must forget all the roses that were ever painted.

—Henri Matisse



Food for Thought:

- Which of my accomplishments have felt most fulfilling?
Which felt the hollowest?
- For each one (most fulfilling and most hollow) - what was the initial driver, the deeper purpose for pursuing them?
- How does the initial driver differ from the feeling that came with accomplishment?
- How frozen are my work styles, relationships, and attitudes?
- How could I “shake up my kaleidoscope at work?
- How could I support others to do the same?

To create a new box, we must leave the old one or expand it.

If being aware of discontent, discrepancies, or restlessness help us take our first steps toward discontinuous learning, the next phase is to detach from our autopilot habits and thought patterns. I once heard about an expert on Buddhism. A scholar and professor, he wrote several books. Then he had an opportunity to go to Tibet and meet with an enlightened master. Our professor was so happy that he presented the master with a set of his books and a list of questions.

The master offered him tea, and the professor accepted. While pouring, the master did not stop when the cup was full and was overflowing but continued until the bewildered professor stopped him and asked what he was doing. The master told him the cup resembled his brain. Unless the professor was willing to empty it, nothing more would fit inside.

Unlearning customary patterns is far from easy, but old ideas or skills are sometimes barriers to new ones. At first, this concept seems contrary to the idea that the brain is limitless in its capacity for facts. However, as mentioned, our mental models cannot accommodate ideas or outlooks that conflict with each other in some fundamental respect. If we want to adopt the new idea, we must discard our allegiance to the old one. As André Gide wrote in his *Journals* in 1928, “Each wave owes the beauty of its line to the withdrawal of the preceding one.”

One common obstacle to discontinuous learning is cause-and-effect thinking. History books sometimes lead us to think a particular result was inevitable in a particular situation. Yet most of us know better than to say that somebody or something else “caused” us to react the way we did.

Relationships break up and companies fail when we seek or assign an external cause for every effect we notice. If we can unlearn this model of how the world works, we open ourselves to more effective ways of thinking, or creating a fun and profitable future.

Tomorrow’s joy is possible only if today’s pleasure makes way for it. Sometimes, through loyalty to the past, our minds refuse to

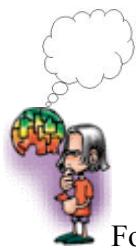
realize this. Instead of learning from our arrival and then unlearning the route, we let success go to our heads. Clinging to our old maps, we develop core incompetencies.

We often avoid change because we fear failing in it. Alternatively, we sometimes assume (incorrectly) that if we experiment with change, we'll lose the option of returning to our current way of thinking or doing. Once we unlearn an unrealistic assumption or idea, on the other hand, we take the first step in our adult manifestation of discontinuous learning.



Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.

—John F. Kennedy



Food for Thought:

- Do I seek out or avoid new ideas?
- What is my response to “being a rookie” in a new topic or field?
- How are past triumphs contributing to my opposition to change (including expansion)?
- What new beliefs might improve or replace my current thinking patterns?

Every mental model has gaps.

Many of us have experienced noticing some difference between our mental models and what actually happens. The more we examine this gap, the less the model makes sense. The gap widens, and we feel compelled to stare into it.

On one side of the gap lie our perceptions and interpretations—the basis for our mindsets or models of the world. Our models are only as strong as the weakest parts of our thinking, so it is fortunate that we can abandon them.

Stephen Covey tells a story of a father and his unusually noisy children. Everyone within earshot felt irritated until they found out these kids had just lost their mother. “Those brats are awful” gave way to compassionate understanding that the noise was part of not knowing how to deal with such a loss.

This demonstrates one way to recognize our own world views: by considering what new information or circumstances might shift our outlook. In this way, we eventually realize that our perspectives are not sacrosanct. Unlearning them in favor of something better suddenly seems more appealing.

Creating that “something better” lies across the gap from our current sense of reality. After any leap to a new mental model, much new learning transpires rapidly. Likewise, a paradigm shift in any field or discipline creates a wave of reassessments and updates. These are like a series of aftershocks or afterthoughts.

Direct experience is our only access to the gap left by such a shift. What we call *learning* might simply be transcending the gap. When we are open, we are free from the ego for a precious moment. That’s all the time it takes, but changing a mindset also entails a difficult path, as George Bernard Shaw describes in “Maxims for Revolutionists”:

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends upon the unreasonable man.

Our consciousness expands while we are in the gap. We have a sudden new awareness, as though we were waking up from a dream

or emerging after a good movie. In the gap, we know that what seemed quite real only moments earlier is not. Only after the event does it all seem so obvious.



Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator. And change has its enemies.

—Robert F. Kennedy



Food for Thought:

- What breakthroughs have I already experienced in my perspectives, dogmas, or paradigms?
- What new skills or ways of thinking did I develop as a result?
- What aftershocks came later?

With discontinuous learning, we design our fullest future

Our experiences denote where we have already been, yet they need not bind us to the past and prevent us from going farther. The purpose of learning is to inspire ourselves toward something larger than what we have done from within the limits of our current mental boxes. This requires that we identify and clarify:

- ⌚ The boundaries created by our conditioning
- ⌚ Our intentionality*
- ⌚ What we need to unlearn
- ⌚ Ways to nurture ourselves and to be nurtured
- ⌚ Ways to stretch

* An *intention* is some specific aim that I experience, and *intentionality* is the state in which I hold it. When I have intentionality, I am open to moving in a general direction; it is in “soft focus.” When my destination becomes specific, I have an intention.

If we clarify these before we leap into the gap, we discover we know how to manifest the rest of our vision.

The spirit of discontinuity does not suggest that we should take up risky activities on a whim. Tragically, much smaller feats and fears are the ones that usually inhibit and disable us. It is a sad life that dribbles away in frustration and a fear of “barriers” that seem insignificant to us. It is not the wildly dangerous and exotic adventures that we regret missing, so much as the years wasted in mundane existence.

On later analysis, we realize we could have lived much more fully by taking small but timely leaps of faith. It is not dramatic circumstances that prevent us from growth, but more subtle killers, such as a slight lack of self-esteem.

As my friend Anne Stadler once said about discontinuous learning: “It is like white-water rafting. You are not in complete control. This certainly does not mean that you can leave everything to chance; you have to paddle, and hard. But whenever you realize you are moving in the direction you want, you sit back, watch it

happen and go with the flow. Sometimes a minor movement of one oar is enough to keep on track, but at other times you need to paddle furiously. Either way, the river is really in charge of your exact position at any time, yet you are the person responsible for the trip's ultimate success."

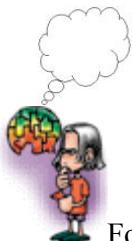
We thus have a choice over our destiny. We may not be able to choose our exact position at all times, but we can decide which river to take and, indeed, whether to travel at all. Even when we act on reflex and intuition, choice makes its mark. We each are a product of our past decisions, which shape our current beliefs and attitudes. These govern how we react to the events taking place.

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice, as George Eliot wrote in *Daniel Deronda*. Leaping into the dark is very much our choice. We may know some of the likely possibilities, but we do not know the outcome. Openness and learning are both about not prejudging things.



Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier.

—Charles F. Kettering



Food for Thought:

- What part of my identity keeps me from learning discontinuously?
- How do I detach from that part? How can I expand other more useful parts?
- What can I do to clarify my intentionality about the future I want to create?

The spirit of who we are informs what we do

Do you remember reading this paragraph towards the end of Chapter 0?

Finally, there is the union point that we have not yet addressed. The center of the tetrahedron, invisible to us because it is inside and not on the surface of the tetrahedron, represents the essence or DNA of who we are and informs all our intentions and actions. This is the central point that remains unchanged and unmoving while all the changes take place around it. All intentions are generated from this point and pull away from it. All domains remain equidistant from this point and polarities and interactions take place around it but never affect the union point. This point represents the shared truth, the seed of our consciousness or essence and holds the key to building our capacity.

It is at this point that igniting the genius within takes place. It is also at that union point that true alignment within us (words, feelings and actions) and without us (self, work, family and community). How we do that and how we tap into the spirit of who we are is the subject of this section. Be warned, there are no recipes that I can give to practice or ignite your genius. You have to find a way to answer the questions that book raises yourself or ask others who also read the book. You are welcome to go ahead and create a book reading group and explore your questions, insights and reflections and discover your own answers and next steps.

You might not know this, but it took coming to the end of the book for me to discover many things about the book. I realized that I am a major contributor to the book and many others co-created it with me. Rain has been the “mother” who grounded herself in my research work, my writings, a 10-year old manuscript and recent articles that she brought to life. Once the book was birthed, she excitedly handed it back to me expecting me to nurture it, engage with it and participate in the development of it. For whatever reason, I could not and left Rain to work with it single-handedly only

occasionally giving input, making clarifications etc. Because Rain had created clear ground rules, when I did not follow them, she let me and the book go and she moved on.

I knew that my strengths are inspiring and stretching and many times I can even set and follow clear ground rules. My core incompetence is in the nurturing part. It applies to nurturing ideas one at a time to unfold them completely, nurturing people on an ongoing basis and to work with a project during its ups and downs to completion. When Rain moved on with her life leaving the book project for me to complete, it became clear that unless I nurture stuff to completion, there will be no satisfaction. It is not just with this book, I began to pay attention to nurturing cornerstone in all aspects of my life. I started practicing what I mentioned in the book: Pay attention to love and commitment in each relationship, practice care and empathy in each interaction, and bring playfulness to others and myself (The three edges that connect nurture cornerstone to other three cornerstones).

I began by asking myself the following questions to get a baseline measure.

- Where am I in terms of bringing love and commitment in my relationship with others?
- Where am I with respect to providing care and empathy in each of my interactions?
- Where am I with respect to bringing playfulness to others and myself?

I used a 0-10 scale, 10 being the highest and 0 being the lowest rating and gave myself ratings in the family and work scenarios.

In family, I gave myself 6 out of 10 because there was a lot of improvement I can make in terms of my availability to family because of my travel schedule, my paying attention to family when I am with them, managing my temper and intensity that could spark defiance, fear or resistance in others etc. When I rated myself in the work scenario, I gave myself 9 because I enjoy my work so much that I am more committed to my clients and coaches. I also am passionate about what I do and it automatically brings commitment.

When I rated myself on care and empathy, I gave myself 5 in family again and 8 in work situations. When I am stressed, I realized

that I am not that empathetic in family and in work situations, I am much better in the majority of the situations.

In terms of play, I gave myself 7 in family and 8.5 in work situation. There is more freedom for me in playfulness and I am able to bring more of myself in alignment both at work and home.

Based on that, I realized that I have considerable work to do on the home front in order to bring discontinuous learning at home with my family. My lowest rating was 5 and the highest rating was 7 at home with family while at work, the lowest was 8 and highest was 9. I felt more constrained and was not able to nurture my family as well as I could nurture my clients and coachees. Once I had numbers I picked my lowest rating and want to work on it for next 90 days and see what I could shift during that time.

I decided to improve my score from 5 out of 10 to 7 out of 10 in the area of care and empathy. I created a list of all the things that my family mentioned about demonstrating care and empathy in my behavior with them. Then I identified key behaviors that would help multiple situations and started paying attention. Each week, I practiced one of the behaviors at least 7 times out of every 10 opportunities. Then I chose to either continue it for the next week or take on the next behavior. Over time, I began to develop more awareness out of paying attention to this area. I specifically watched responses and feedback of my family whenever I felt comfortable asking them. Then I made appropriate course corrections and got to work again.

After several such 90 day experiments, I am beginning to feel more comfortable about my nurturing cornerstone. I am currently working on my ground rules to strengthen my ability to follow them myself and honor them when I am with others.

How about you? Where are you strong and where are you still developing? Do you have clarity on what you have to work on? Where are you fully integrated (in terms of words and actions) and where do you not walk the talk? As you went through the book and reflected on the questions at the end of each chapter, you might have developed that clarity already. If not, here is the summary of the process that I described above.

Rate yourself from 0-10 on all the six edges. You can rate yourself separately in the work, family, community dimensions or just rate yourself as a whole person. Then find your lowest number and see whether you are committed to working on that edge. See

whether you have one cornerstone that has uniformly high numbers for the edges that connect to it. If so, maybe that is where you are naturally strong. Similarly find your strengths and weaknesses with respect to cornerstones and begin working on them.

On reflection, I have discovered my own authentic connection to the book only after reading it many times. My energy shifted radically thanks to the wonderful dialogues I had with others and my own discontinuous learning shifted to high gear. I realized that the ideas might be mine in the book only when practice them to transform myself that this book becomes useful. Otherwise, it is another framework or the model that is not worth the paper on which it is printed. I also realized that when others read, reflected, dialogued with me, they were seeing facets that I did not see myself. It is very clear to me that discontinuous learning is not an individual process but it is co-creative process. Only when I explore it and reflect on it with others, I begin to internalize and change myself while helping others to do the same.

My journey into the discontinuous learning is just beginning because I am interested in using my own medicine to help me move forward. The spirit of who I am is continuing to inform what I do, what I feel and what I think.

I will add to this book as I have more to share and I encourage you to share what you have learned along the way too. We are creating a website where you can share your own aphorisms, stories connected with any of the aphorisms, comments, questions, quotes and suggestions and change the book to suit your passion and interests.

Finally, the bell calls me. I grew up longing to ring the huge bell in Kadiri temple in India and I am yearning to ring the bell again as I continue the process of self discovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this journey and look forward to what you have to say and do with the book. As I said earlier, this book is incomplete and you, the reader can make it complete by integrating it with your journey and modifying this book to reflect the spirit of who you are to inform what you do. That is when you ignite your genius within and align your life, work, family and spirit.

Prasad Kaipa
April 200

APPENDIX

USING DISCONTINUOUS LEARNING IN GROUPS

To get the most out of this book, as I said repeatedly, you have to make this book your own by changing it, modifying it and making it useful to you. The most effective way to do that is through dialogue and exploration with other readers who are interested in igniting their genius. At work, within the family, or within our circle of friends, we can create our own learning community or community of practice to explore discontinuous learning.

By reflecting on one chapter at a time and holding a weekly group to discuss the questions that accompany each section, you may find unique solutions, discover a lot about who you are, and learn about others and their reflections. Who knows -- team learning, deep friendships, or entrepreneurial ventures may come out of it.

Begin with the questions and answer them by yourself first and then reexamine the aphorisms, stories, quotes and questions. When you reflect with others and discuss your answers as well as suggestions for modifying that section (and why you want to do that) you begin to make this book your own.

Here are some preliminary questions about creating a group based on the framework presented in the book so far.

How can we ground the group in something that our members are passionate about, something we share?

- What inspires us?
- What calling aligns with the group's nature?
- What are we going to nurture?
- How does this stretch beyond our past glory, core incompetencies, and previous paths or accomplishments?

- What is the biggest project our group can undertake?
- How much time do we have, individually and as a group?
- What resources, skills, and capabilities do we have collectively?
- What will bring us into our full stretching?
- How can we manage these assets to keep from getting overwhelmed or discharged?
- How will we do something that energizes us?
- What are the first steps?

Create your own pyramid:

Images of the pyramid model discussed in this book and images for constructing your own pyramid can be found at:

<http://www.kaipagroup.com/books/pyramid.html>

I have done what I can to provoke you, and now you can engage with other excellent people in your life and out in the world. You can contact me at prasad@kaipagroup.com if you are interested in sharing your insights, modifications and questions.

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