



Resource Packet
for Your
Deep Dive into Spirituality

Session Two Preparation Materials

Luke 10:25-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Practically Divine*

Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day is a mentor to people longing to deepen their conviction to love the world. She is one of the most practically divine saints of the 20th century. I was introduced to her work while still in seminary. She was born in Brooklyn, New York on November 8, 1897, the third child of Grace and John Day. Her nominally religious family moved to the San Francisco Bay area and then to Chicago where she was baptized in the Episcopal Church. In 1916, she moved to New York City where she worked as a journalist on socialist newspapers, participated in protest movements, and developed friendships with famous artists and writers. During this time, she also experienced failed love affairs, a marriage, a suicide attempt, and an abortion.

Dorothy had grown to admire the Catholic Church as the “Church of the poor” and her faith began to take



form with the birth of her daughter Tamar in 1926. Her decision to have her daughter baptized and embrace the Catholic faith led to the end of her common law marriage and the loss of many of her radical friends. Dorothy struggled to find her role as a Catholic. While covering the 1932 Hunger March in Washington, D.C. for some Catholic magazines, she prayed at the national Shrine of the Immaculate Conception that a way would open for her to be able to serve the poor and the unemployed. The

following day, back in New York, she met Peter Maurin, a French immigrant and former Christian Brother, who had a vision for a society constructed of Gospel values. Together they founded the Catholic Worker, which spawned a movement of houses of hospitality and farming communes that has been replicated throughout the United States and other countries.

In the book “Selected Writings of Dorothy Day,” edited by Robert Ellsberg, he sums up much of her practically divine theology in his introduction, including an incredible story about a diamond ring. He writes:

Toward the end of her life, Dorothy began to receive the kind of attention often accorded venerable survivors. Her picture appeared in *Life* and *Newsweek*, accompanied by flattering profiles. She was cited by *Time* magazine in a cover story devoted to “Living Saints.” She did not take these developments as signs that her principles had found widespread acceptance. To the contrary: “Too much praise,” she observed, “makes you feel you must be doing something terribly wrong.” She did not draw her hope from the trends and fashions reported by the media. She had learned from the Gospels that the most important events occur on the margins of history, in obscure and unexpected places. Because her hope was ultimately in God alone, she could dispense with naive optimism as to human ashiq. But, in the face of all the horrors of history, she retained her faith that God has found in this world enough good to die for. And without underestimating the reality of evil, it was our task to seek out that good, to nurture and cherish it with all our strength. Often, she quoted the confident world of Julian of Norwich, “The worst has already happened and been repaired.”

Dorothy possessed what Peter Maurin (her mentor and friend who died) called “the art of human contacts”: an ability to take people as they came, to reach out to them, to show her care, to connect in others with that, according to the Quaker phrase, “which is of God. Still, she called her autobiography, “The Long Loneliness”. All of us, she believed, have yearned for love. Deep down, buried beneath the clutter of our days, there was in every person the longing for community. But there was a loneliness that persisted even in the midst of others, the essential isolation that belonged to any commitment or

vocation. There was a kind of loneliness to which Christ invited his friends. "Yet of this long loneliness," she wrote in the words of Mary Ward, a seventeenth-century English nun, "the pain is very great, but very enduring, because he who lays on the burden also carries it."

She knew that needed to be taken seriously. But she was never too serious to forget what Ruskin called "the duty of delight." In the face of the desperate suffering in the world, she felt we had a special obligation to attend to life's joy and beauties: "We would be contributing to the misery of the world if we failed to rejoice in the sun, the moon, and the stars, in the rivers which surround this island on which we live, in the cool breezes of the bay." Frequently, in her column, she cited Dostoevsky's words. "The world will be saved by beauty."

Though resentful of the ambitious building projects of various bishops and religious orders, she never begrudged the poor their beautiful churches. Yes, certainly much of the money that went into these churches could have been spent elsewhere. But Dorothy saw in the church a place of refuge where the poor had access to beauty in their lives, as well as quiet, peace, and rest---qualities not to be undervalued in the ghetto. Tom Cornell, a former editor of the paper, has related this story:

One day a woman came in and donated a diamond ring to the Worker. We all wondered what Dorothy would do with it. She could have one of us take it down to the diamond exchange and sell it. It would certainly fetch a month's worth of beans. That afternoon, Dorothy gave the diamond ring to an old woman who lived alone and often came to us for meals. "That ring would have paid her rent for the better part of a year," someone protested. Dorothy replied that the woman had her dignity; she could sell it if she liked and spend the money for rent, a trip to the Bahamas, or keep the ring to admire. "Do you suppose God created diamonds only for the rich?" she asked.

There is a kind of extravagance that belongs to any proper act of charity. Tillich called it "Holy Waste", a term Dorothy would have appreciated. One thinks of Dorothy Day along with those great women of the Gospels who often seemed to know with an extra sense, lacking in the more self-conscious men, the significance of the event unfolding in their presence. There was the woman who wasted a large quantity of expensive oil anointing Christ's body beforehand for his burial. Another woman bathed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. It was such women as these who remained on Calvary, watching their Lord die on the Cross. Dorothy died on November 29th, 1980. She was 83 years old and she was laid to rest on Staten Island in a plain pinewood coffin.

Session Two Spiritual Practice:

Mini Retreat on Loving Our Bodies

Love Our Imperfect Bodies as a Way of Loving the World

Begin by reflecting on this passage:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. -
Deuteronomy 6:5 ESV

How do we love God this way?

Take some time thinking, writing, and talking about how this passage has shaped religious traditions and individual lives. Take this passage as you go about your day. Let it stir a thought as you sit at a traffic light, exercise, work, and pray. This passage is meant as a way of life. As a timeless teaching to put deep into our hearts and to place on the hearts of our children.

Loving God in this way isn't something we accomplish. It's like a marriage. It's something we live into all the days of our lives. So we take this passage into our hearts and weigh all the other decisions we make with this passage close to us.

But how can I begin today to live into this tall command to love God? Leviticus tells us "love our neighbors as ourselves."

All of the Gospel writers record that Jesus connected the two ideas and said they were the central teachings of faith. In five words it is LOVE-GOD-NEIGHBOR-AS-SELF.

Does that mean then as I love myself, I love my neighbors and the world? Does love abide by the reflexive property? In mathematical terms it means if $a=b$, then $b=a$. So if $a=b=c$, then $c=b=a$. Loving self, neighbors and God equals loving god, neighbors, and self.

We could explore this in depth, but for the purposes of a short retreat, the point is simple. To love our bodies, in their imperfections, in the aging, in their differences, is an entry point to loving our neighbors and God.

Faith never teaches only love your body, or only love your neighbor, or only love God. It teaches us they are related. A bold and faithful thing to do is to love ourselves as much as possible, so we can all in good measure love our neighbors and God.

As an act of radical faith, we are going to love ourselves. I have a few suggestions of how to engage your body in this retreat, but you are welcome to practice in whatever way the Spirit leads you.

1. Take a bath with an essential oil. Close your eyes and give thanks for all the amazing things about your body. Feel your breath and remember all the things your body has allowed you to do. The things your body has survived. The things your body has taught you.

2. Take extra time brushing your teeth and look at yourself in the mirror. What do you see? Who do you see? Can you recognize ancestors in your features? Can you see any lines and how they relate to your wisdom?

3. Hold your hands. Clasp them together in a prayer like fashion. Feel your fingers touch each other and the full circle of connection as your thoughts circle through you. Give thanks for every finger on both your hands and all the amazing anatomy that allows you to feel and think and have your being.

Such simple rituals remind us we are practically divine. They remind us to be gentle with ourselves and grateful for ourselves. They ground us in a place to treat our neighbors with gentleness and compassion as practically divine friends. And they invite us to love God with our whole selves.

Session Three Preparation Materials

Luke 17:11-19 Jesus Cleanses a Leper

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And when he saw them, he said unto them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? They are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." And he said unto him, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

Read Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of *Practically Divine*

The Reverend Doctor Howard Thurman

Dr. Howard Thurman was a mystic and activist. He lived as a contemplative justice leader who knew that intention in our actions would lead us to live more practically divine lives. Howard Thurman's story is one of resiliency, bravery, and hope. It began in Daytona Beach, Florida at the turn of the century on November 18, 1899, where he grew up under Jim Crow. Thurman attributed his success in life to his family's courage and sacrifice. Howard was only fourteen years old when he left for boarding school because there was no high schools for black children in Daytona Beach. When he arrived at the train station to make his trek north to Jacksonville, he was shocked to learn that while he had enough money for the fare, he needed more to check his trunk. Thurman thought his adventure was doomed to end on that platform until an "anonymous stranger" approached him and asked him why he was crying. This stranger changed the trajectory of Thurman's life, giving him the funds he needed to get to Jacksonville. Thurman never forgot that act of kindness, and dedicated his autobiography to the man on the platform who "restored his broken dreams."

Thurman attended both Morehouse College and Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Thurman began his career as a faculty member, first serving as the Director of Religious Life at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, and then as the first dean of Andrew Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Thurman believed in the Power of Non-Violent Direct Action

As Thurman's profile grew in America, he and his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, were asked to lead a Negro delegation to Southeast Asia in 1935. It was on this trip that he met Mohandas Gandhi and, in discussion with India's emancipator, explored the power of non-violent direct action as a mechanism for social change. He is considered one of the grandfathers of the civil rights movement. By the time the civil rights movement took shape in the United States, Thurman was a nationally recognized human rights advocate. Though he did not take to marching and mobilizing on the streets, he preferred to serve as a caretaker and spiritual advisor to those who did, among them Jesse Jackson, Marian Wright Edelman, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1944, Thurman cofounded the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco—an interracial congregation intentionally designed to break through the barriers that separated people on the basis of race, color, creed, or national origin.

Thurman's work in San Francisco attracted the eye of then-Boston University President Harold C. Case, who recruited Thurman to Massachusetts because of his unifying philosophy. Thurman accepted, moving to Boston in 1953 to serve as Dean of Marsh Chapel. With this appointment, Thurman became the first African American dean at a predominately white institution in the United States. He came determined to test his ideas of common ground and community at a pluralistic community, and Boston University would serve as an ideal laboratory. In his twelve years at Boston University, Thurman engaged with national luminaries on campus like James Baldwin, Arthur Ashe, and, most notably, a doctoral student named Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59)

Thurman dedicated his life to the pursuit of a society that could acknowledge its differences yet elevate its common human ties. He visualized a world where racial, ethnic, or religious barriers did not serve as a roadblock to creating meaningful relationships. He called on us to do what makes us come alive, and it's his collective story, philosophy, and vision that drives Boston University to create a community filled with openness, generosity, and fellowship.

He wrote about his relationships with an old oak tree that offered him solace as a child. He never stopped searching for the deeper truth and the power of meditation. In his book, "Meditations of the Heart," he

describes how in being silent together we can learn to be more intentional in walking together towards justice and peace:

We do not know each other yet, we have not dared to be silent together. What a priceless possession is the gift of speech! To be able to make sounds convey specific meanings and deliberate notions, to be able to put at the disposal of another the feelings that nestle within the inner life, to be able to reveal one's self in symbols which make clear and do not betray - this is the miracle and the gift of the spoken word. It is with the word that man becomes human and thus makes possible the circles of relationship which make fast his sense of self. It is the word that gives him the power to hurt where no panacea can touch, to harness the wild horses of the mind and make the burden bearers of the heart, to give wings to earthbound values until they lose themselves on far horizons-it is the word that can create or destroy, splinter or make whole, redeem or damn.

It is small wonder that man tends to worship the sound of his voice and give to it an authority greater than anything that remains when all words have been said. If he can put together the words of conveyance, then he thinks that communication has fulfilled itself. Silence is not trusted; it is subversive; it must be hidden. Fear of silence is the offering which we place upon the altar of words. This is in part due to the richness of the experience of speech, and we do not wish to let it escape from us lest we descend once again into the vast empty region where there are no words, where there is no speech.

It is important to remember that it is out of the silence that all sounds come; it is in the stillness that the word is fashioned for the meaning it conveys. Here the sound without sounds can be most clearly heard and meanings out of which all values come can be plumbed. Thus Maeterlinck writes, "If it be indeed your desire to give yourself over to another, be silent.... Some there are that have no silence, and that kill the silence around them, and these are the only creatures that pass through life unperceived. To them it is not given to cross the zone of revelation, the great zone of firm and faithful light. We cannot conceive what sort of man is he who has never been silent. It is to us as though his soul were featureless. We do not know each other yet.... We have not yet dared to be silent together.

Mini Retreat on Tea

This mini retreat for tea can be a beautiful part of our commitment to immersing ourselves in the work of justice. The basic principle is called *Chado*, or *the way of tea*. It means that when we act with intention and create ritual, insight and beauty arise. Enjoy the very simple ceremony, and maybe share it with a friend.

Tea has helped usher in astonishing economic growth over its 3,500 year history. It has been central to rituals within three of the world's oldest religious and philosophical traditions. But tea has also been part of the oppression of women. Tea is linked to human trafficking, the drug trade of opiates in China, and sexual violence in the fields of India and other colonies of the 19th century.

The hope of this tea ceremony is to remember the amazing and horrific history of tea, while celebrating its rightful place in rituals and symbolism as a companion for cultivating justice. Whether being dumped into a harbor, served by Gandhi as he negotiated freedom, or fundraising for the Women's Suffrage Movement, tea has played a part in every revolution since the 1700s. You are invited in this simple ceremony to cultivate your palate for justice and sate your thirst for meaning.

This simple ceremony helps to create a ritual that offers dignity to the producer as well as the consumer so that healing is possible. Our hope is that this ceremony will inspire us to believe change can happen, one cup at a time!

1. PREPARATIONS

a. Choose Your Blend

Pick a tea blend that is connected to a mission that is important to you. Blends that support ethical tea growing processes and fair wages for tea workers are important considerations. Not all Fair Trade certified tea ensures the ethical treatment and payment of tea workers. We can endorse the following tea producers as justice enterprises empowering and protecting women: Three Mountains and Moringa Madres at ThistleFarms.org, Ajiri Tea, Three Teas, and Fire Pot Tea.

b. Select a Meaningful Teacup

Gather tea ware that is meaningful to you. This could be a family heirloom, a gift from a loved one, or a new piece that you connect with.

c. Surround Yourself with Intention

Fill the space with objects that are meaningful to you and consistent with your intention. *Chado* is translated from Japanese to "The Way of Tea." *Chado* is about serving and drinking tea from a deep place of love and heart.

2. OFFERING THANKS

Begin by reflecting about the people who are most important in your life. Offer thanks for the vessel you will drink from, for the people who produced the tea, and for the tea itself.

3. REMEMBERING AND ENLARGING THE CIRCLE

Take time to remember someone with whom you wish you could share a cup of tea - someone who taught you to love tea, a friend who could use a healing cup of tea, or perhaps someone you miss and long to see.

4. STEEPING WITH INTENTION

Place your tea in the cup. As you pour the water and let it steep, think about your intentions for this tea. Are you hoping for comfort? Inspiration? Or maybe peace?

5. GIVE A TOAST

Mark the occasion with a celebratory statement. One of hope, remembrance, celebration, or intention. Here is mine:

Tea steeps in justice while women raise their glasses.

Let us drink to survivors and celebrate women around the world.

Let us praise tea growers, pickers, and producers who awaken our palates for justice.

Let us honor the crafters and artisans who offer beauty and economic freedom.

Let us harken to the voice that calls us from farm to table to story.

Let us bow to advocates and troublemakers who clear paths for new generations,

Let us be brave enough to sip tea and claim there is healing from violence and oppression.

Let us toast women who conjure a dream of freedom with more courage than fear.

Raise your cup to the mother line of love that is the most powerful force for change in the world.

6. DRINK YOUR TEA

Take a sip as if it's the first time you've ever tasted tea. Don't worry about whether you like it or not, just appreciate it and savor the sensations. Can you taste the earth? Can you see the leaves? Can you imagine the person who picked it? Savor the flavors, the texture, and the warmth of the tea. Should any unwanted thoughts, feelings, or sensations arise, acknowledge them gently and return your attention to the tea.

A tea ceremony is a perfect example of how to experience the divine in the most ordinary activities of your everyday life. Whether you're drinking tea alone or with a friend, be fully present and open your heart to the world around you. Learn how to do this and any everyday activity can be transformative.

Session Four Preparation Materials

Exodus 30:22-38 The Anointing Oil and Incense

The Lord spoke to Moses: Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred fifty, and two hundred fifty of aromatic cane, and five hundred of cassia—measured by the sanctuary shekel—and a hint of olive oil; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand; you shall consecrate them, so that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, in order that they may serve me as priests. You shall say to the Israelites, “This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. It shall not be used in any ordinary anointing of the body, and you shall make no other like it in composition; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an unqualified person shall be cut off from the people.” The Lord said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; and you shall beat some of it into powder, and put part of it before the covenant in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy. When you make incense according to this composition, you shall not make it for yourselves; it shall be regarded by you as holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from the people.

Read Chapters 5 and 6 in *Practically Divine*

**READ TWO PDF ARTICLES attached:
“POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH” and “COMMUNITY”**

A History of the Concept of Posttraumatic Growth in Psychology and Related Disciplines

The term “growth” rather than “benefits” is used in referring to PTG. In their earlier work in the 1980s and early 1990s, Tedeschi and Calhoun described the reports of growth in trauma survivors as “perceived benefits.” However, they came to appreciate that this term might indicate that reports of growth might be untrustworthy, and that the changes might be beneficial without representing growth or transformation. Although there are different degrees of personal growth that can be seen in the aftermath of trauma, and there are different trajectories of PTG, we also prefer the term “growth” because the changes people report are experienced by them as indicating positive, transformative development.

The terms “perceived benefits” and “benefit-finding” are most often seen in the literature that examines physical health and illness (e.g., Antoni et al., 2001), and these perceived benefits are sometimes described as equivalent to PTG. However, they include changes such as improved health behaviors (e.g., stopping tobacco use), which for most people are beneficial but not experienced as personally transformative. In the health-related benefits literature, we might see true PTG or other less transformational change.

Some pathways may involve profound changes in perspectives on living that will promote changes in health and social behavior that yield better health outcomes. Others may involve changed life perspectives that reduce stress responses and have effects on immune system functioning. Other pathways to better health outcomes might proceed from more specific changes in health or social behavior that yield health benefits, without more general personal transformation.

(Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010, p. 7)

Changes analogous to PTG have also been investigated in the context of changes that occur in the aftermath of positive events, as well as those resulting from self-initiated challenging experiences. For example, Suedfeld, Kjærgaard, and Leon reported on the personal changes that occur in the aftermath of space travel (Suedfeld, Legkaia, & Britc, 2010), solo circumnavigations by sailing (Kjærgaard, Leon, & Venables, 2015), and arctic exploration (Kjærgaard, Leon, Venables, & Fink, 2013). These scholars used the concept of PTG and found that persons who choose to endure such challenging environments can be changed in ways that are very much like those changes reported by people who are forced to endure traumatic events. These findings suggest that changes analogous to PTG can happen in people who have not been exposed to events defined as traumatic. However, by definition, PTG is a result of processes initiated by a significant challenge to a person's assumptive world—a challenge to their core beliefs.

The specific term *posttraumatic growth* is relatively new. It was first published in 1995 in an early version of the PTGI in the appendix of *Trauma and Transformation* (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995) and measured using the PTGI in 1996 (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). However, PTG as a phenomenon is not new. The history of mankind is the history of trauma and the history of PTG. As Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004b) have discussed, for thousands of years there have been stories of positive changes in individuals and societies in general as a result of suffering and distress. The potential for transformative positive change from the experience of great challenge and despair is referred to in the texts and teachings of all major religions and is reflected in the writings of ancient philosophers and scholars of other disciplines. Drawing on this wisdom, old and new, and combined with contemporary knowledge gained through empirical evidence of various types, it is clear that a majority of people who experience trauma recover, are resilient to the impact of potential trauma, or experience growth.

Philosophical and theoretical positions from scholars in more recent decades have articulated their thoughts about processes that parallel PTG. For example, Maslow's humanistic stance about human life has been made clear. He wrote:

human life will never be understood unless its highest aspirations are taken into account. Growth, self-actualization, the striving toward health, the quest for identity and autonomy, the yearning for excellence (and other ways of phrasing the striving “upward”) must by now be accepted beyond question as a widespread and perhaps universal human tendency . . . growth is often a painful process.

(Maslow, 1970, pp. xii–xiii)

Similarly, Rogers repeatedly wrote about how painful personal growth is, even though in the long run rewarding” (Rogers, 1961, p. 14). Dabrowski (1964) described a process of personality development called “positive disintegration,” where dissolving mechanisms challenge a mediocre life cycle that may then give way to a more creative emotional and intellectual development. Existential theorists such as Frankl (1963, 1965) have clearly focused on the theme of creating meaning in the midst of trauma, and PTG theory owes much to

this theoretical perspective and the reports in the existential literature of how people not only survive trauma but are transformed by it. The historical roots of PTG theory in religion, philosophy, and literature are explored in detail in Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995).

PTG—the Beginnings

Although reports on *posttraumatic growth*, under that rubric, were first published in the 1990s when Tedeschi and Calhoun introduced the term, their previous studies of the potential positive impact of the struggle with stressful events appeared in the 1980s. The book *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering* (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995) provides an overview of the studies of PTG that had been performed to that point using different terms, such as perceived benefits (which these authors used themselves in previous work; e.g., Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1991). Tedeschi, Park, and Calhoun (1998) also examined the development of the PTG concept, and conceptually related ones that predate it, with a chapter by O'Leary, Alday, and Ickovics in that volume particularly relevant. Some terms conceptually related to PTG include strenuousness (Finkel, 1974, 1975), positive psychological changes (Yalom & Lieberman, 1991), construing benefits (McMillen, Zuravin, & Rideout, 1995; Tennen, Affleck, Urrows, Higgins, & Mendola, 1992), stress-related growth (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996), adversarial growth (Linley & Joseph, 2004), flourishing (Ryff & Singer, 1998), positive by-products (McMillen, Howard, Nower, & Chung, 2001), discovery of meaning (Bower, Kemeny, Taylor, & Fahey, 1998), thriving (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995), positive illusions (Taylor & Brown (1988), positive reinterpretation (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986), drawing strength from adversity (McCrae, 1984), and transformational coping (Aldwin, 1994; Pargament, 1996). Tedeschi and Calhoun first used the term *posttraumatic growth* (PTG) in print in 1995 and in an article in 1996 describing the development of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI).

Interdisciplinary PTG

Before systematic research examining PTG began, the theme of personal growth from life crises had been addressed in the arts, literature, philosophy, history, sociology, economics, biology, and psychology. Philosophical inquiry, as well as the work of novelists, dramatists, and poets, has focused on understanding and discovering the meaning of human suffering (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004b). Since the term PTG was coined in 1995, this phenomenon has become recognized as a powerful aspect of human nature, and it has been studied in various disciplines interested in the phenomenon of trauma response, including psychology, gender and sexuality studies, cultural studies, medicine, military studies, nursing, and social work.

As more studies have been conducted, it has become clear that PTG research can benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective. Interdisciplinary research is

two or more disciplines, uses study design and methodology that is not limited to any one field, and requires the use of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines throughout multiple phases of the research process (Aboelela et al., 2007). As also encouraged by grant agencies, such as NIH (National Institutes of Health) or NSF (National Science Foundation), more studies are being conducted under the name of *interdisciplinarity*.

PTG is, and should be, an area of interdisciplinary interest, because it has clear links to a variety of disciplines. PTG researchers, theoreticians, and clinicians will better understand this human experience and ways in which to facilitate its application to clinical settings and everyday lives by considering PTG from the perspective of other disciplines. PTG is also better understood when taking holistic views of knowledge. For example, the combination of researchers and practitioners from psychology and creative industries may approach interventions for trauma survivors that are verbal or non-verbal, such as art therapy and art groups, performance-art, music, and/or drama.

Interdisciplinary research on PTG can focus, for example, on how experiences are affected by the use of language with trauma survivors by working with researchers who have backgrounds in linguistics and anthropology. Considering PTG within a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework requires familiarity with several disciplines. As demonstrated in this book, the possibility that people can change in a positive way from their struggle with a traumatic event can generate questions that may be better approached within one discipline or another. Instead of relying on one specific discipline, it is ideal to study this complex experience from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Cacciatore and Flint (2012), for example, reported a case study supporting the PTG framework in the bereaved by using an interdisciplinary paradigm for health-care professionals, including physicians, social workers, therapists, nursing staff, and other providers. As they indicated, many mental health providers face the reality of patients' requests, which often include alleviation of symptoms; this forces them to take pharmacologically based approaches, but at the same time, they see the hope and possibility in patients who are experiencing psychological growth. Even in patients who are dying, it is possible to see a glimpse of PTG, which may not make sense if we assume PTG and recovery are synonymous. PTG is better understood when the traditional biomedical model is combined with other models such as existential models, social-personality models, spiritual-philosophical models, and so on.

One thing we have noticed is that, although PTG research may be best studied in an interdisciplinary way, it has predominantly been conducted by psychologists and clinicians such as social workers, nurses, oncologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health specialists. So far, there has been almost no study of PTG in the humanities other than references to the concept of growth as noted above.

Another emerging approach in this area is transdisciplinary research. Rather than drawing on experts with different discipline orientations, theories, methods, etcetera, transdisciplinary research reflects the creation of a new holistic way of approaching a question—an approach that transcends traditional disciplines

challenging as members of a research team learn about each other's disciplines on the road to creating new ways of thinking and approaching important research questions of the time.

PTG and Psychology

PTG research is found in a variety of psychology subdisciplines and is rooted in a variety of theoretical perspectives in psychology, including cognitive, developmental, existential, health, humanistic, narrative/constructivist, personality, trauma studies, social, and clinical psychology.

Cognitive Psychology

PTG can take the form of changes in a person's cognition. Historically, the cognitive tradition emerged in contrast to the objective tradition. PTG research fits within cognitive psychology well because it emphasizes how the structure of one's cognitive framework can be challenged or shattered through confrontation with extreme adversity and rebuilt as a result of the psychological struggle with life crises. Ultimately, because there is no "objective" scale to universally assess personal growth (PTG is not like height or weight), the experiences of PTG are essentially "cognitive," as reflected in the PTG model (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006) with key words such as cognitive challenges and cognitive processing. Notions of transformation through effortful rumination embody the idea of cognitively engaging with unhelpful or distressing thought processes.

Developmental Psychology

PTG is consistent with the notion that any developmental change includes the joint occurrence of gain (growth) and loss (decline) in adaptive capacity (Baltes, 1987). Developmental psychology aims to obtain knowledge about principles of life-long development from conception to death, and about the patterns of positive and negative changes throughout a person's life. PTG is an example of these positive changes under one condition: They occurred due to the psychological struggle with some highly stressful life event/s. As we will discuss later in Part II, Chapter 12, findings have been accumulating in this area.

Existential and Humanistic Psychology

The primary concern of existential psychologists is to understand human beings' lives from the broad perspective of meaning in life and the inevitable reality of death. This viewpoint can be traced back to philosophers Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre. Perhaps the most relevant discussion to PTG can be seen in Victor Frankl's work (1946/1965, 1963). The work of Irving Yalom has also been greatly influential in the developments in this area. The existential perspective tends to focus on questions of life's meaning, and how meaningful living allows for suf-

humanistic approach to psychology is often viewed as close to existential psychology because it has roots in phenomenology. As Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, two main founders of humanistic psychology, described, human beings have the potential to set goals, seek meaning and values, and, for a minority, experience self-actualization. If this occurred with trauma, the goals and meaning and values concepts would be understood as the PTG process and self-actualization as an outcome.

Health Psychology

Trauma is found in health psychology when studies are focused on health conditions that involved great suffering, personal challenge, and changed life circumstances. Highly stressful and traumatic life events can have detrimental health effects. And yet, PTG studies have demonstrated that one can change in a positive way and grow psychologically even while still experiencing extreme difficulties. Much of research on PTG in health psychology has been conducted with cancer patients and has shown positive health behavior changes a significant positive cognitive restructuring in many patients.

Narrative and Constructivist Psychology

A significant contribution has been made in PTG research from researchers studying narrative psychology or those subscribing to a constructivist view of reality. Neimeyer (2006), for instance, proposed the PTG experience as a form of meaningful reconstruction in the wake of crisis and loss. He suggested that human beings develop personal narratives on three levels: personal, interpersonal, and social, which fit to the PTG theoretical model. "I hope that others who share a fascination with the growth often engendered by great suffering will find in a narrative framework a set of conceptual and practical tools with which to understand, study, and foster this life-enhancing process" (Neimeyer, 2006, p. 78). Researchers who focus on narratives have described how the form of narratives is challenged and disrupted in the face of highly stressful life events, as well as how the new, revised narratives are reconstructed, developed, created, and maintained.

Personality Psychology

Because PTG can be seen as personality change or personality transformation, it has been of great interest to personality psychologists. Recently, for example, Jayawickreme and Blackie (2014) outlined the ways in which personality psychology can be enriched by studying PTG and vice versa, by rephrasing PTG as positive personality change. Perhaps the most challenging part is the notion that it is difficult to arrive at a universally agreed upon set of "positive" personality traits (Trull & Widiger, 2015) that would indicate that PTG has produced a lasting change in personality. Further, conceptualizing PTG as personality change is contentious within the broader personality psychology literature, much of which proposes fun-

1993; McCrae, 1984). PTG can also be considered from the point of view that certain personalities may be better equipped to experience it; indeed, there is research that demonstrates relationships between personality dimensions and PTG (e.g., Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Shakespeare-Finch, Gow, & Smith, 2005).

Trauma Psychology

Historically, systematic research on PTG was developed based on a thorough review of the literature on crisis and trauma available at the time (1980s and 1990s), and on clinical and qualitative work with people who had experienced major stressful events; thus, it has a close relationship with trauma psychology. PTG research aims to further understand those who experience a highly stressful or traumatic event, and identify ways to help people move through the difficulties associated with such experiences; this aligns with the aim of trauma psychology. With an accumulating number of texts, trauma psychologists now have a growing set of resources to inform their practice (e.g., Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999, 2006, 2013; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 2004a, 2006; Tedeschi & Moore, 2016a).

Social Psychology

As reflected in the model, PTG has an important interpersonal aspect, and the PTG phenomenon can only be fully understood when the surrounding contexts are fully recognized. The relationship between dyads and larger systems and groups in a person's life can exert significant influence over the potential for PTG; for example, social support networks, peer support, and responses of loved ones to disclosure of the experience. PTG can also be experienced at a societal level, which we will discuss in Chapter 17. PTG research has been advanced in the past two decades using research methodologies common to social psychology.

Clinical Psychology

PTG has a close relationship with the area of clinical psychology, because it targets those who may be distressed in reaction to an encounter with highly challenging and traumatic life events. Research in clinical psychology involves developing ways to measure the outcome of clinical interventions—that is, assessment of changes in symptoms of clinical disorder, along with ways to develop more effective interventions. The psychological processes observed and shared by clinical psychologists and their clients often parallel PTG processes. Many clinicians, including psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, dieticians, counselors, and general practitioners, understand that if the difficulty for which a client or patient has sought assistance is not explicitly about a traumatic experience, there is often a history of trauma beneath the presenting problem. Clinical interventions that are strengths-based, and therefore mindful of the potential for PTG, are an extremely important resource for those struggling with a spectrum of manifestations of their distress (e.g., somatic or emotional).

PTG and Positive Psychology

PTG first appeared in the literature as a named construct in 1995 (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995), whereas positive psychology was not explicitly defined until 2000 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000); thus, research on PTG predates the positive psychology movement. The call for researchers to focus on positive aspects of human behavior could be traced as far back as the work William James, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers (Froh, 2004)—long before Seligman introduced the phrase “positive psychology” at the American Psychological Association in 1998. In other words, PTG and positive psychology are related constructs but are not the same.

Because PTG and positive psychology have both been developed partly with the assumption that in the past researchers and clinicians focused too much on deprivation and the mental ill-health of human beings (e.g., how we could repair damage, rather than how we could support each other to grow as human beings or to live meaningfully), they have much common ground.

It is very clear, however, that the scope of PTG goes beyond that of positive psychology and can be better understood with a broader perspective that does not rely solely on ideas within the scope of positive psychology. One reason is that the process of PTG contains psychological struggle initiated by major life crises, which are, in themselves, unpleasant and negative aspects of life, but the key is that people often report both positive and negative experiences when reflecting on experiences of PTG.

PTG is not the same as concentrating only on positive aspects of the human condition. In other words, although positive psychology shares a strengths-based approach to research and understanding the human condition, it does not retain the inevitable distress and difficulty that is inherent in life (Antonovsky & Sagy, 1986; Antonovsky, 1987) and that brings many people to see mental health professionals. Unlike the theory and research on PTG, the emphasis on positive psychology may lead some to artificially dichotomize the study of behavior and of the human condition as either only positive or only negative.

Aspinwall and Tedeschi (2010) raised concerns about the creation of a sub-discipline of positive psychology. They asserted that understanding how people respond to highly challenging experiences, and helping people to negotiate their path through them, has been a core focus of psychology as a discipline. Such a focus includes the investigation of concepts such as growth, resilience, and adaptation more broadly because these impact psychological and physical health. As they suggested:

We caution that we should not conceptualize these variables that have a “positive flavor” as contained within something we call positive psychology. If we divide the world into positive psychology and not and designate specific concepts as “positive” or “negative,” we may create artificial barriers in our communications, the development of our theoretical models, and our decisions about variables to include in our research and interventions.

(Aspinwall & Tedeschi, 2010, p. 4)

As we have indicated, research on PTG should not be confined within the domain of an exclusively “positive” psychology—PTG fits better when examined under the umbrella of a variety of theories and subdisciplines of psychology, including humanistic, existential, clinical, trauma, cognitive, social, personality, developmental, health, and narrative psychology, as well as other social sciences and humanities disciplines.

It is important to note that PTG research does not neglect what are dichotomously termed either positive or negative components of the human condition. As we will describe later in the process depicted in the model of the development of PTG, the current model does not explicitly include the role of positive emotions. However, Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) considered that the appropriate place to include positive emotions might be in the characteristics of the persons pre-trauma. While neuroticism, or negative emotionality, has not been found to be correlated with PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), positive emotions might be an indicator of success that allows for reflection in the presence of psychological discomfort.

The emergence of PTG requires a complex interaction between intrapersonal processes and interpersonal processes, following exposure to highly stressful and traumatic life events. Positive psychology alone, although a positive influence, is not a sufficiently comprehensive framework within which to understand the phenomenon of PTG.

Religion, Philosophy, and Posttraumatic Growth

Religion can play an important role in PTG in multiple ways. A number of studies have examined the role of religion and spiritual beliefs in PTG. Religious participation may prime people for PTG. People who are involved in religious organizations are likely to report greater PTG than those who do not identify with a religious doctrine (Currier, Mallot, Martinez, Sandy, & Neimeyer, 2013). Longitudinal studies have demonstrated that baseline faith predicted an increase in PTG (Yanez et al., 2009). Even with adolescents, identification with a religion has been associated with PTG (Milam, Ritt-Olson, Tan, Unger, & Nezami, 2005). However, other studies showed that openness to religious change, rather than the mere amount of religious participation, is more likely to predict PTG (Calhoun, Cann, Tedeschi, & McMillan, 2000).

A second way religion is involved in PTG is when religion acts as a trigger for PTG. One key element that provides the foundation for PTG is a challenge to one's fundamental core beliefs. Religious beliefs can be one such core belief framework. A highly stressful event, especially an unexpected one, may shatter or shake one's religious beliefs. Serious challenge to one's central religious beliefs may lead to emotional distress, which in turn activates the cognitive processing that may foster PTG. Indirectly, religion may also play a critical role as a distal cultural element. As a distal element, religion can create an environment and culture to develop PTG by affecting the narratives, definitions, and meanings of PTG.

A third connection between PTG and religion is when religion is viewed as an outcome. As illustrated by one of the five factors of the PTGI, profound religious or spiritual changes are sometimes reported as part of the experience of PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Yanez et al. (2009), for example, measured faith among cancer survivors twice with one year between measurement points, and found that an increase in faith over time predicted an increase in a person's reports of growth. There are, however, differences in the extent to which people endorse religious or spiritual change, both at an individual level and at the level of broader cultural contexts. For example, this dimension of the PTGI is the least endorsed change in Australian populations (Shakespeare-Finch & Morris, 2010).

For those with an existing religious commitment, beliefs inherent in that religious doctrine can provide a way of coping and creating meaning around the challenging experience/s. Religiosity affects PTG processes through the discovery of

The key to creating or transforming community, then, is to see the power in the small but important elements of being with others. The shift we seek needs to be embodied in each invitation we make, each relationship we encounter, and each meeting we attend. For at the most operational and practical level, after all the thinking about policy, strategy, mission, and milestones, the structure of belonging gets down to this: How are we going to be when we gather together?

From: Community: The Structure of Belonging

by Peter Block

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Insights into Transformation

Social fabric is created one room at a time. It is formed from small steps that ask "Who do we want in the room?" and "What is the new conversation that we want to occur?" In community building, we choose the people and the conversation that will produce the accountability to build relatedness, structure belonging, and move the action forward. It is in this process that accountability is chosen and care for the well-being of the whole is embodied. Individual transformation is not the point; weaving and strengthening the fabric of community is a collective effort and starts from a shift in our mind-set about our connectedness.

A series of core insights informs us how to answer these questions. These insights include ideas about focusing on gifts, on associational life, and on the way all transformation occurs through language. Also critical are insights about the context that governs the conversations and the willingness to speak into the future.

Two additional strands in the fabric of community explored here are the need for each small step to capture a quality of aliveness and be an example of the larger world we want to inhabit. There is an established method for accomplishing this aliveness that values all voices in the room, uses the small group even in large gatherings, and recognizes that accountability grows out of the act of cocreation. The essence of creating an alternative future comes from citizen-to-citizen engagement that focuses at each step on the well-being of the whole.



Major influences on the belief system underlying this methodology of communal transformation come from several disciplines and people whose work has been radical in many ways; their insights are foundational for our purposes. There are many others who inform us and are mentioned in this book, but these five touch the core: John McKnight, Werner Erhard, Robert Putnam, Christopher Alexander, and Peter Koestenbaum. The sixth collection of insights is from a group of wizards who have given life to large group methodologies—some of whom are Marvin Weisbord, Kathie Dannemiller, Dick and Emily Axelrod, Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Barbara Bunker, Billie Alban, and David Isaacs and Juanita Brown.

There are two more people whose insights are important to understanding how the world changes. One is David Bornstein. His book *How to Change the World* analyzes nine social entrepreneurs who created large social movements around the globe. David's summary of why they were successful is worth our attention. Finally, I too briefly include the thinking of Allan Cohen. He translates the world of emergence and complex adaptive systems into language that once in a while I begin to think I understand.

I chose all of these people because I personally know most of them, and they are the ones who have shaken my own thinking; their ideas have, for me, endured the test of time and experience.

What follows is a summary of the aspects of these people's work that are useful to this enterprise. I'll summarize their insights briefly here and then weave them throughout the rest of the book.

The McKnight Insights: Gifts, Associational Life, and Power

John McKnight is a leading light in the world of understanding the nature of community and what builds it. Three of his insights have permanently changed my thinking.

Focus on gifts. First and foremost, he asserts that community is built by focusing on people's gifts rather than their deficiencies. In the world of community and volunteerism, deficiencies have no market value; gifts are

the point. Citizens in community want to know what you can do, not what you can't do.

In the professional world of service providers, whole industries have been built on people's deficiencies. Social services and most of medicine, therapy, and psychology are organized around what is missing or broken in people.

McKnight points out that if you go to a professional service provider and say you have no deficiencies or problems, that you just want to talk about your gifts and talents, you will be shown the door and treated as though you are wasting their time. Go to an association or a group of neighbors and tell them what your capabilities are, and they get quite interested.

This insight is profound if taken seriously, for it eliminates most of the conversations we now have about problem diagnosis, gap analysis (if you do not know what this is, be grateful), weaknesses, and what's wrong with me, you, and the rest of the world. It also underscores the limitation of labeling people. McKnight knows that the act of labeling, itself, is what diminishes the capacity of people to fulfill their potential. If we care about transformation, then we will stay focused on gifts, to such an extent that our work becomes simply to bring the gifts of those on the margin into the center.

John's focus on gifts has led to his founding a worldwide movement called Asset-Based Community Development. Simply put, this movement declares that if we want to make communities stronger, we should study their assets, resources, and talents. It is in the attention to these things that something new can occur.

Associational life. The second insight that is relevant here has to do with the limitations of systems. John sees a system as an organized group of funded and well-resourced professionals who operate in the domain of cases, clients, and services. As soon as you professionalize care, you have produced an oxymoron. He says that systems are capable of service but not care. Talk to any poor person or vulnerable person and they can give you a long list of the services they have received. They are well served, but you often have to ask what in their life has fundamentally changed.

The alternative to a system is what John calls "associational life": groups of people voluntarily coming together to do some good. In the disabilities

world, John's work has been enthusiastically received. This has led to a widespread effort to take people with visible disabilities out of institutions and systems and bring them back into neighborhoods. Support groups are created, slowly, voluntarily, with a lot of phone calls and requests, so that ordinary citizens come together to support their new neighbors. This strategy brings generosity back into a neighborhood, and in the doing, citizens whose disabilities are hidden (all of us) experience a transformation in their own lives.

Power in our hands. The third insight for community building is John's faith in citizens to identify and solve problems for themselves. He finds that most sustainable improvements in community occur when citizens discover their own power to act. Whatever the symptom—drugs, deteriorating houses, poor economy, displacement, violence—it is when citizens stop waiting for professionals or elected leadership to do something, and decide they can reclaim what they have delegated to others, that things really happen. This act of power is present in most stories of lasting community improvement and change.

To summarize these insights from the work of John McKnight and his partner, Jody Kretzmann: Communities are built from the assets and gifts of their citizens, not from the citizens' needs or deficiencies. Organized, professionalized systems are capable of delivering services, but only associational life is capable of delivering care. Sustainable transformation is constructed in those places where citizens, not institutions or experts, choose to come together to produce a desired future.

The Erhard Insights: The Power of Language, Context, and Possibility

For over thirty years, Werner Erhard has created thinking and learning experiences that have affected millions of people's lives. Many of the ideas he has worked with derive from the work of others, but Werner has named and integrated them into something more powerful than where the thinking began. His work lives through the Landmark Corporation and other

licensees. What I select from his work here is a small part of his legacy, but these are the ideas that have changed my life and practice.

The power of language. Werner understands the primal creative nature of language. Many of us have focused for years on improving conversations. We have known that dialogue and communication are important tools for improvement. Werner takes it to a whole new realm by asserting that all transformation is linguistic.

He believes that a shift in speaking and listening is the essence of transformation. If we have any desire to create an alternative future, it is only going to happen through a shift in our language. If we want a change in culture, for example, the work is to change the conversation—or, more precisely, to have a conversation that we have not had before, one that has the power to create something new in the world. This insight forces us to question the value of our stories, the positions we take, our love of the past, and our way of being in the world.

The power of context. Another insight is in the statement, "The context is decisive." This means that the way we function is powerfully impacted by our worldview, or the way, in his language, that "the world shows up for us." Nothing in our doing or the way we go through life will shift until we can question, and then choose once again, the basic set of beliefs—some call it mental models; we're calling it context here—that lie behind our actions. Quoting Werner, "Contexts are constituted in language, so we do have something to say about the contexts that limit and shape our actions."

Implied in this insight is that we have a choice over the context within which we live. Plus, as an added bargain, we can choose a context that better suits who we are now without the usual requirements of years of inner work, a life-threatening crisis, finding a new relationship, or going back to school (the most common transformational technologies of choice).

The way this happens (made too simple here) is by changing our relationship with our past. We do this by realizing, through a process of reflection and rethinking, how we have not completed our past and unintentionally keep bringing it into the future. The shift happens when we pay close attention to

the constraints of our listening and accept that our stories are our limitation. This ultimately creates an opening for a new future to occur.

The power of possibility. Changing our relationship with our past leads to another aspect of language that Werner has carefully developed. This is an understanding of the potential in the concept and use of *possibility*. *Possibility* as used here is distinguished from other words like *vision*, *goals*, *purpose*, and *destiny*. Each of those has its own profound meaning, but all are different from the way Werner uses the word *possibility*. Possibility, here, is a declaration: a declaration of what we create in the world each time we show up. It is a condition, or value, that we want to occur in the world, such as peace, inclusion, relatedness, or reconciliation. A possibility is brought into being in the act of declaring it.

For example: if you declare that you are the possibility of peace in the world, though peace may not reign at this moment, the possibility of peace enters the room just because you have walked in the door. Peace here is a future not dependent on achievement; it is a possibility. The possibility is created by our declaration, and then, thankfully, it begins to work on us. The breakthrough is that we become that possibility, and this is what is transforming. The catch is that possibility can work on us only when we have come to terms with our story. Whatever we hold as our story, which is our version of the past, and from which we take our identity, becomes the limitation to living into a new possibility.

Werner has described this with more precision in personal correspondence:

I suggest that you consider making it clear that it is the future that one lives into that shapes one's being and action in the present. And, the reason that it appears that it is the past that shapes one's being and action in the present is that for most people the past lives in (shapes) their view of the future. . . .

[I]t's only by completing the past (being complete with the past) such that it no longer shapes one's being and action in the present that there is room to create a new future (one not shaped by the past—a future that wasn't going to happen anyhow). Futures not shaped by the past (i.e., a future that wasn't going to happen anyhow) are constituted in language.

In summary, (1) one gets complete with the past, which takes it out of the future (being complete with the past is not to forget the past); (2) in the room that is now available in the future when one's being and action are no longer shaped by the past, one creates a future (a future that moves, touches, and inspires one); (3) that future starts to shape one's being and actions in the present so that they are consistent with realizing that future.

Werner Erhard's way of thinking about language, context, and possibility are key elements in any thinking about authentic transformation. As with the other insights here, they are about a way of being in the world first, and then they can be embodied in concrete actions.

The Putnam Insights: Social Capital and the Well-Being of Community

Robert Putnam wrote *Bowling Alone* and amplified the conversation about the role that social capital plays in building community. As one part of his extensive research, he studied a fair number of Italian towns and tried to understand why some were more democratic, were more economically successful, had better health, and experienced better educational achievement.

His findings were startling, for he discovered that the one thing that distinguished the more successful from the less successful towns was the extent of social capital, or widespread relatedness that existed among its citizens. Success as a town was not dependent on the town's geography, history, economic base, cultural inheritance, or financial resources.

Putnam shows how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and our democratic structures—and how we may reconnect. He warns that our stock of social capital—the very fabric of our connections with each other—has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.

As earlier mentioned about Putnam, geography, history, great leadership, fine programs, economic advantage, and any other factors that we traditionally use to explain success made only a marginal difference in the health of a community. Community well-being simply had to do with

the quality of the relationships, the cohesion that exists among its citizens. He calls this *social capital*.

In the book *Better Together*, Putnam and coauthor Lewis M. Feldstein explain that “*social capital* refers to social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness. The central insight of this approach is that social networks have real value both for the people in those networks . . . as well as for bystanders. Criminologists, for instance, have shown that the crime rate in a neighborhood is lowered when neighbors know one another well, benefiting even residents who are not themselves involved in neighborhood activities.”

They go on to distinguish between “bonding” and “bridging” social capital. Bonding social capital comprises networks that are inward looking, composed of people of like mind. Other social networks “encompass different types of people and tend to be outward looking—bridging social capital.” It is primarily the bridging social capital that we are interested in here. As Putnam and Feldstein put it: “a society that has *only* bonding social capital will . . . [be] segregated into mutually hostile camps. So a pluralistic democracy requires lots of bridging social capital, not just the bonding variety.”

The Alexander Insights: Aliveness, Wholeness, and Unfolding

Christopher Alexander speaks from the world of architecture, but his thinking applies equally well to the creation of community. He grieves over the fragmented and mechanistic way we currently operate. In *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe, Book 1: The Phenomenon of Life*, he writes,

In discussing what to do in a particular part of a town, one person thinks poverty is the most important thing. Another person thinks ecology is the most important thing. Another person takes traffic as his point of departure. Another person views the maximization of profit from development as the guiding factor. All these points of view are understood to be individual, legitimate, and inherently in

conflict. It is assumed that there is not a unitary view through which these many realities can be combined. They simply get slugged out in the marketplace, or in the public forum.

But instead of lucid insight, instead of growing communal awareness of what should be done in a building, or in a park, even on a tiny bench—in short, of what is good—the situation remains one in which several dissimilar and incompatible points of view are at war in some poorly understood balancing act.

Aliveness and wholeness. The alternative to this fragmentation is to create structures that are defined by what Alexander calls “a quality of aliveness.” The absence or presence of this quality has profound impact on the experience of being in that structure. Also, for that quality of aliveness to be present in the final product, it must be present in each step in the design and creation of the structure.

This aliveness grows out of a sense of wholeness. Wholeness is made up of a collection of separate centers, where each center has “a certain life or intensity. . . . We can see that the life of any one center depends on the life of other centers. This life or intensity is not inherent in the center by itself, but is a function of the whole configuration in which the center occurs.”

To connect this to our discussion, we must ask whether every single step in our work holds this quality of life or intensity. Whether we’re talking about a strategy, program, invitation, dialogue, gathering, or the building of a master plan, the human experience of aliveness in each choice or step has as much significance as any technical, economic, or purely practical consideration.

This aliveness also is most often found in surprising places. Often in irregular structures, all with aspects of imperfection. Alexander identifies fifteen properties that create the wholeness and aliveness. It would take us off track to list them all here, but some are clearly to the point. Listen to the language he uses, and you get a feel for the world he is naming: Deep Interlock and Ambiguity, Contrast, Roughness, Simplicity and Inner Calm, Not-Separateness.

It is easy to take these words, which he uses to reflect qualities in nature and in a room or building, and apply them to the world of social capital, human relatedness, and belonging that we are concerned with here. Much

of what follows in the book is just this: bringing aliveness and wholeness to our notions of leadership, citizenship, social structures, and context, which are essential in creating the community of belonging and restoration that we desire.

Transformation as unfolding. One more influence from Alexander is his belief that aliveness and wholeness can occur only through a process of “unfolding.” Transformation unfolds and is given structure by a consciousness of the whole. The task of transformation is to operate so that what we create grows organically, more concerned with the “quality of aliveness” that gives us the experience of wholeness than with a predictable destination and the speed with which we can reach it.

An unfolding strategy requires giving an uncomfortable importance to each small step we take. We have to worry as much about the arrangement of a room as we do about the community issue that caused us to assemble. It leads us to value the details of each step so that each step becomes its own center. For example, each step of a master plan has to be a small example of the qualities we want in the final large thing. Throughout this book, you will see the effort to value the importance of small things; this intention is a direct outgrowth of Alexander’s insights.

In summary, Christopher Alexander moves us toward aliveness, embodied in those places and moments that give us the experience of belonging. In the absence of aliveness, we unknowingly experience an inner conflict, a feeling of something unresolved.

The Koestenbaum Insights: Paradox, Freedom, and Accountability

For several decades, Peter Koestenbaum has brought the insights of philosophy to the business marketplace. His work on the Leadership Diamond paints a holistic and practical landscape of what is required of leaders to achieve greatness in the world, both personally and for their institutions.

Appreciating paradox. One insight that informs our exploration of communal transformation is Peter’s understanding of how we can come to

terms with the paradoxical nature of human affairs. He values ambiguity and anxiety as the natural condition of being human. The painful choices people make in their lives and for their institutions are an affirming aspect of their humanity. These choices are not the sign of a problem or weakness or the world gone wrong. It is out of the subjectivity and complexity of life that transformation emerges. As a philosopher and consultant, Peter has always given voice to how profound the right question can be.

It is the willingness to reframe, turn, and even invert a question that creates the depth and opening for authentic change. Questions take on an almost sacred dimension when they are valued for their own sake. This is in stark contrast to the common need for answers and quick formulaic action.

Choosing freedom and accountability. A second thread that courses through this book and has given coherence to all of Peter’s work is the search for human freedom—freedom being the choice to be a creator of our own experience and accept the unbearable responsibility that goes with that. Out of this insight grows the idea that perhaps the real task of leadership is to confront people with their freedom. This may be the ultimate act of love that is called for from those who hold power over others. Choosing our freedom is also the source of our willingness to choose to be accountable. The insight is that freedom is what creates accountability. Freedom is not an escape from accountability, as the popular culture so often misunderstands.

One more aspect of Peter’s work that has informed my thinking about community is the idea that our willingness to care for the well-being of the whole arises when we are confronted with our freedom, and when we choose to accept and act on that freedom.

The Insights of Large Group Methodology: Designing for the Experience of Community

Over the last thirty years, a rather small group of people has become quite sophisticated in bringing large groups of people together (from fifty to five thousand at a time) to create visions, build strategy, define work processes, and set direction for institutions and communities. This body of knowledge

has many names, but is generally called *large group methodology*. Although it is well established among expert practitioners, it has not found its way into the mainstream of how most leaders do planning and bring people together. These methods tend to be relegated to something that is pulled out on special occasions for special events. We treat these methods like sterling silver and use the stamless every day. This is a shame, for the difference between this kind of practice and the conventional way we bring people together is more like the difference between using sterling silver and eating with our hands.

These large group methods are too profound and too important to remain primarily in the hands of specialized experts. They need to be in the regular practice of community and institutional leaders. They are more than simply tools; they are the means of creating the experience of democracy and high engagement, which we say we believe in but rarely embody. As this thinking and practice grow, they have the potential to fundamentally change the nature of leadership, which would be a good thing.

Four of the innovators whose work is highlighted have been friends and teachers of mine for years. I reflect their thinking here only because I have been in many rooms with them. There are many others who have also changed the world and our thinking about bringing large groups of people together: Harrison Owen, Barbara Bunker, Billie Alban, Fred and Marilyn Emory, and Carolyn Lukensmeyer come to mind.

Future Search. Marvin Weisbord has created Future Search with Sandra Janoff. This structure begins with a scan of the environment and brings people into a conversation about the future they want to create. Marvin and Sandra have long understood the importance of the right question, the way to balance expert input with communal dialogue, and how to structure the flow of small group discussions into a collective outcome. They have also codified the distinction between solving problems and creating a future.

Conference Model. Dick and Emily Axelrod are design geniuses. They realized early on that if we can change the way we meet, we can change the way we live together. They know that learning best occurs when we structure meetings in a way that puts people in contact with each other so that they experience in a conference the same dilemmas they face in life. The

Axelrods create experiences that simulate the democratic, self-governing principles that, if taken seriously, can create large communities of committed and powerful people.

Whole-Scale Change. The late Kathie Dannemiller was another innovator in this movement. "One heart—one mind" was the spirit that she lived, and her goal was to bring that into an event where people assembled to create a new future. She had a faith in the collective capacity of employees and citizens that would put Thomas Jefferson to shame.

Her guiding question was "How will the world be different tomorrow as a result of our meeting today?" Like the others, she valued the question and held deep skepticism about answers. She also knew that the questions with the most power were the ones that touched the heart and spoke to what people were experiencing. If "What did you know and when did you know it?" defined the Watergate hearings, the question "What did you hear and how did you feel about that?" was at the core of her work.

Kathie wanted the whole system in the room, and then she constantly broke it into small groups. She advocated that the small group worked best when it was maximally diverse—meaning that each small group was a microcosm of the large system. This composition plus a broad-enough question results in people momentarily putting aside their own individual interests and beginning to care for the well-being of the whole.

The World Café. Finally, I want to talk about the work of Juanita Brown and her partner, David Isaacs. Their structure is called the World Café. Its gift is in its sophisticated simplicity. They begin by defining a large question that gets at the purpose of the gathering. Each small group focuses on the question, but in the Café method, the group sits at a round cocktail-sized table.

On each table is a flip-chart sheet or butcher paper and a marker for each person. As people talk, each writes on the paper in large letters the ideas worth retaining. At certain intervals, as in musical chairs (except that there are enough seats for all), one person stays as host at the table and the others go to different tables. The host summarizes for the new group what is on the paper, and the discussion continues. Eventually, the ideas from the tables are shared with the whole group. It is an elegant model to create convergence for a large group.

Now, my intent here is not to describe the full process for any of these innovative large group methods—I know that I do each a great injustice in my minimalist descriptions and acknowledgment. The intent is to define some of the essential elements that form the design basis of the large group work that informs our thinking about community transformation.

Each element of each large group method has profound implications for how people meet, how they create an alternative future, and how community can be developed in a sustainable way. What we may once have relegated as useful but incidental little “training exercises” now have a power beyond our imagination. They form a way of thinking and operating in community that, when matched with the philosophical insights of the others, give us the structure of belonging that we seek. Here is a brief summary of the power of their thinking:

Accountability and commitment. The essential insight is that people will be accountable and committed to what they have a hand in creating. This insight extends to the belief that whatever the world demands of us, the people most involved have the collective wisdom to meet the requirements of that demand. And if we can get them together in the room, in the right context and with a few simple ground rules, the wisdom to create a future or solve a problem is almost always in the room. All you need to ensure this is to make sure the people in the room are a diverse and textured sample of the larger world you want to affect.

This insight is an argument for collective intelligence and an argument against expensive studies and specialized expertise. That is why this thinking finds a skeptical ear from the academy, most expert consultants, and the leadership that espouses democracy but really only trusts patriarchy and cosmetic empowerment.

Learning from the stranger and one another. The key to gathering citizens, leaders, and stakeholders is to create in the room a living example of how we want the future to be. This means we need as much diversity in the room as possible. The more strangers the better. One of the principles is that all voices need to be heard, but not necessarily all at one time or by everybody. What makes this succeed is that almost everything important happens in a small

group. This expresses another principle, that peer-to-peer interaction is where most learning takes place; it is the fertile earth out of which something new is produced. In this small group, you place the maximum mix of people's stories, values, and viewpoints, and in this way each group of six to twelve brings the whole system into that space.

Bias toward the future. The insights from large group methods have a bias toward the future and devote little or no time to negotiating the past or emphasizing those areas where we will never agree anyway. The most organizing conversation starter is “What do we want to create together?” So much for in-depth diagnoses, more studies, argument and negotiation, and waiting for the sponsorship or transformation of top leaders.

How we engage matters. The most important contribution of those who have developed these principles and insights is the idea that the way we bring people together matters more than our usual concerns about the content of what we present to people. How we structure the gathering is as worthy of attention as grasping the nature of a problem or focusing on the solutions we seek.

The gift to us from these masters of large group work is the belief that transformation hinges on changing the structure of how we engage each other. It is the insight that authentic transformation does not occur by focusing on changing individuals or being smart about political processes, which are based on advocacy of interests, hardball negotiation, or finding where the power resides and getting them on your side. The insights of these masters represent a dramatic shift from much of our conventional thinking, which, by the way, is not working that well.

The Bornstein-Cohen Insights: Scale, Speed, and Emergent Design

David Bornstein is a journalist who has written about the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and other social innovations that have become large movements. Within the stories he tells in his books are some radical thoughts about how successful transformations came into being.

Small scale, slow growth. Not one of the examples David describes began as a government- or large-system-sponsored program. Each was begun with very little funding, no fanfare, and little concern about how to measure the outcomes. Each had a deeply committed and self-chosen leader with a commitment to make a difference in the lives of however many people they were able to reach.

Bornstein concluded that well-funded efforts, with clear outcomes, that spell out the steps to get there do not work. Changes that begin on a large scale, are initiated or imposed from the top, and are driven to produce quick wins inevitably produce few lasting results. This may be a clue to why our wars, such as those on drugs and poverty, have been consistently disappointing and sometimes have even produced more of what they sought to eliminate.

If you reflect on the stories of the successful leaders whom Bornstein documents, you realize that these entrepreneurs were committed enough and patient enough to give their projects time to evolve and find their own way of operating. There were years spent simply learning what structures, agreements, leadership, and types of people were required to be successful.

It was after the model had evolved and succeeded on its own terms that it began to grow, gain attention, and achieve a level of scale that touched large numbers of people.

This means that sustainable changes in community occur locally on a small scale, happen slowly, and are initiated at a grassroots level.

Emergent design. Allan Cohen is a brilliant strategy consultant who combines a deep understanding of the power of conversation with insights about the organic nature of design. A winning combination. Allan makes even more intentional and explicit the strategies that Bornstein has documented. Allan distinguishes between emergent strategies and destination or blueprint strategies. He says that effective change strategies obviously begin with a strong sense of purpose plus a commitment to bring something new into the world.

The key is what you do after that. Allan talks of two things: one is recognizing that organizations are always adapting and learning, even in the absence of big change initiatives. So a good place to start is by asking why the organization hasn't been moving naturally in a more desirable direction.

Then take modest steps to impact the conversations and relationships that are shaping the direction of change inherent in the organization. Watch what emerges, pause, reflect, and course-correct—then watch what emerges again. This is a crude definition of emergence.

The second insight from Allan is about changing the conditions under which an intention is acted on. He claims the ability to herd cats, which many have said is impossible. He does this by tilting the floor, which changes the conditions under which the cats are operating. Emergent strategies focus on conditions more than on behaviors or predictable goals. Ironically, the act of predicting the path may be the obstacle to achieving the purpose.

Allan's work on emergent design strongly emphasizes becoming clear on the purpose, the key to which is opening wide the possibility for a different future. He also gives importance to relatedness being the foundation of all achievement.

Combining the Insights

David Bornstein's stories are an expression of all the insights summarized here and woven throughout this book. For example, the efforts he talks about demonstrate the conditions leading to Alexander's quality of aliveness. They unfolded slowly and with great consciousness; then they became small whole centers in and of themselves, which finally, organically, began to combine with other centers to achieve some scale.

These efforts also had leaders who chose to live into Werner Erhard's concept of possibility. The ends seemed unachievable, and the commitment was not contingent on results. Each project created a new conversation about the people involved. Take Grameen Bank as an example. The founder declared that poor people were creditworthy and excellent entrepreneurs. This was simply a declaration of possibility and began a new conversation about poverty that shifted the context within which loans were made.

By this shift in context, Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen, embodied McKnight's observation that development is based on gifts, not deficiencies.

Grameen Bank also counted on the power of community and relatedness. Yunus and his bank created teams of borrowers (they called them

chapters), in which each person's ability to receive a loan was dependent on the repayment by others in the group. A portion of each repayment went to fund the loans to other chapters and the well-being of the community. These small groups were the basic unit of borrowing, four women to a group. Not individuals, but the small group. Each small group also was required to operate as part of a larger community, so that the small groups could not become insular and act as if the boundary of their group was the edge of the earth. This is the essence of the large group methodologies.

There was for each team of borrowers a set of requirements that went beyond the money. They were accountable for producing a successful life for themselves and others, which is a correlate of Koestenbaum's understanding of freedom—that freedom and accountability are one and the same.

And all of this resulted in the wider benefits of having created social capital, as Putnam would term it. The participation of the women in the entrepreneurial venture affected all aspects of their lives and of their village. Eventually it would impact a nation.

Another example of these principles in action is the Family Independence Initiative (FI), which tracks the self-reported strengths, gifts, and initiatives of participating families and helps them see what they can create with a little help. FI provides matching funds and support for the progress that marginalized families produce on their own. They carefully avoid giving advice or thinking that they, the professionals, know what is best for a family. They are prescription-free. And it works.

So in this brief snapshot we have the core elements of the methods of collective transformation that follow. Integrating these insights gives us some basic conceptual elements for transforming communities. The reason to keep reading is to gain more form and depth to these ideas and apply them to our world, however large or small we may define it.

Shifting the Context for Community

The context that restores community is one of possibility, generosity, and gifts, rather than one of problem solving, fear, and retribution. A new context acknowledges that we have all the capacity, expertise, and resources that an alternative future requires. Communities are human systems given form by conversations that build relatedness. The conversations that build relatedness most often occur through associational life, where citizens show up by choice, and rarely in the context of system life, where citizens show up out of obligation. The small group is the unit of transformation and the container for the experience of belonging. Conversations that focus on stories about the past become a limitation to community; ones that are teaching parallels and focus on the future restore community.

The move toward authentic community entails a shift in context. Context is an expression of the mental models we bring to our collective efforts. It is the set of beliefs—at times beliefs that we are unaware of—that dictate how we think, how we frame the world, what we pay attention to, and consequently how we behave. It is sometimes called a *worldview*. The existing dominant context is that we live in a world of scarcity, competition, and individualism.

Scarcity means that no matter how much we have, it is not enough. Whatever is needed, there is not enough to go around. Competition means

Mini Retreat for Creativity

Hold Space for Creativity

I have written extensively about the need to be creative in our justice work. I spend much of chapter five in *Practically Divine* talking about the revolutionary nature of crafts for small groups of women around the world. But I thought it might be fun to dream of how you can carve out a few hours to delve into your creative side.

The first step is to know your creative time! When is your mind most active? At night? Predawn? Afternoon?

Whatever it is, block it on your calendar as "My Creative Justice Time." Why put it on a calendar? Because if you don't, it doesn't happen. There are always dishes to do, emails to answer, and people to feed. None of that ends.

I used to say if you want me to clean my house, tell me to write a book. I will do everything in my power to get distracted from the hard work of deep divining into creativity.

Put it on the books and you can save the rest of this retreat until you are ready to come back and bring with you the supplies you need to create something.

Instructions for some of my personal favorite crafts are included:

1. Pine Cone Fire Starters
2. Dryer Balls
3. Bath Bombs
4. Blended Healing Oils
5. All Natural Laundry Detergent

P.S. These not only open up the creative space, they make excellent presents.

Session Five Preparation Materials

Read Matthew 6:28-34 Consider the Thistle

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Read Chapters 7 and 8 in *Practically Divine*

READ PDF ARTICLE by David Whyte

D a v i d W h y t e

If the Sun and Moon should doubt,

They'd immediately go out.

Blake said, sure of the brilliant and reflective nature of faith. Not that any life is free from doubt, especially when it comes to our work and the places we work. Many's the time we gaze into the mirror in the course of a long work life and see our own faces shaded and eclipsed by a complete loss of connection with our striving. The eyes dimmed, the professional smile false and forced. We pick up the phone and make the call, though we have nothing to say.

Whatever doubt we have, Blake asks us to put that doubt in conversation with grander, more eternal, more essential parts of ourselves. Underneath the face, underneath the surface professionalism, underneath the brief obituary in the paper, there are forces grander than any individual human life at play. To lose contact with these forces is to lose a real sense of living, and especially of living a life we can call our own. Suicide, literal or metaphorical, is the loss of conversation with these forces. Any life, and any life's work, is a hidden journey, a secret code, deciphered in fits and starts. The details only given truth by the whole, and the whole dependent on the detail.

II

The Mountain Farm:

A STRANGER AT THE DOOR

Years ago, in my early twenties, on a mountainside in North Wales, at the far end of Cwm Pennant, I found myself alone, lighting a fire in the grate of my friends' farmhouse, waiting in vain for their imminent arrival. I had walked the long Welsh miles up the wet road, in rain and cold wind, but no car had passed me in the darkening winter light the whole length of the valley. I had hurried past the old tower in the woods that gave this remote place a strange fairy-tale aspect, then struck up the narrow hill lane and emerged on the ridge. Ahead of me, I could see the ancient farmhouse that always seemed, at first sight, to grow out of the mountain.

I was cold, and I looked forward, in that freezing wind, to joining my friends, to their warm welcome and the hiss of a kettle. But the farmhouse was dark and silent as I walked through the gate. That day the house seemed to be waiting for someone in its slate-gray stillness, but there was no answer to my knock. I finally pushed the door open and went in. The kitchen was empty, cold, and lightless,

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Random House: © 2001

From: *Crossing the Unknown Sea: work as a Pilgrimage of Identity*, David Whyte

as if the walls were used to the coming and goings of whole generations and one day of human absence was nothing in the span of centuries; but I was glad to be there, even alone. At least I would be dry in the midst of this arriving storm. I listened to the wind now beginning to tear at the trees, and shook off my coat and the rain. Here, alone in the place it seemed as if the farmhouse had taken on the essential character of a timeless and sheltering roof. It had been here for centuries, immovable, and today it seemed both generous and indifferent to me, a lone stranger waiting for his friends.

I entered the living room, saw the empty grate in the fireplace, and looked out of the window onto a familiar landscape: the lowering valley shadowed by cloud, the cold, blue, snow-rimmed hills, all announcing the coming of a very wet and very Welsh winter night. Beyond the mouth of the valley the dark slate of the sea surged ominously, lit by the final slants of evening light flung across its surface.

LOOKING FOR A VISION

I couldn't help thinking, looking over the grand display of mountain and sea, that I was looking for an equally grand perspective for my coming work life. I needed, in Blake's words, a firm persuasion, a conversation with something larger than my own personal hopes for a career. I was about to step out into the world from the shelter of my studies for what seemed like a forbidding journey. There were no jobs available in my chosen field of marine zoology, and thousands of unemployed graduates at that time to tell you that your dreams were to no avail.

In short, I was in the difficult place most of us find ourselves whether we are beginning biologists or bankers, aspiring academics or hopeful carpenters. I had a vague image inside me of what I really wanted to do—which at that time, in my single, young existence, was to live in some marvelously exotic place studying the life of the oceans—and an even vaguer idea of how I should go about it. Looking back, I realize now that I had far more than I could appreciate. To have even the least notion of what we want to do in life is an enormous step in and of itself, and it is silver, gold, the moon, and the stars to those who struggle for the merest glimmer of what they want or what they are suited to.

One of the keys to any possible happiness in work must be the little self-knowledge it takes to know what we desire in life, how we are made, and how we belong to the rest of the world. But at this stage in my life, just prior to stepping out into the big world, I felt I was losing any faith in myself and what I wanted. I felt old, precious images of a work and a life that I had nurtured since childhood slipping through my open fingers.

WORK, WORK, WORK

Work is difficulty and drama, a high-stakes game in which our identity, our esteem, and our ability to provide are mixed inside of us in volatile, sometimes explosive ways. We may have a difficult but outwardly calm day at work, and then find ourselves bawling at family members the moment we get through the door. We may be unhappy in our marriage but find our inchoate despair erupts only with co-workers. "Sara had a meltdown," we say, describing our

supervisor's tirade, or "John finally lost it," remembering yesterday's confrontation. We describe dramas in the workplace as though we were outlining alchemical reactions or intuiting the ability of individuals to both find and then lose themselves in the midst of seemingly hardheaded decisions.

Work is where we can make ourselves; work is where we can break ourselves. It is a making and an unmaking that can ultimately never be measured by money alone. In work we can indeed, and in a moment, build or ruin our fiscal fortunes, or we can slowly and imperceptibly, over long years, destroy the inner complexion of our character. Sometimes to our despair, we know instinctively that work is never done. At its worst we are Sisyphus, pushing the boulder over the last incline only to see it fall back and away, out of our grasp, to the very bottom of the slope, to be pushed back up with the same despairing effort the following Monday morning.

At its best, work seems never-ending only because, like life, it is a pilgrimage, a journey in which we progress not only through the world but through stages of understanding. Good work, done well for the right reasons and with an end in mind, has always been a sign, in most human traditions, of an inner and outer maturity. Its achievement is celebrated as an individual triumph and a gift to our societies. A very hard-won arrival.

Seen in the light of a pilgrim's journey, work takes on a greater significance than merely paying the bills and keeping the ever-present wolf from the door. With something larger in mind, something yet to be fully imagined, something to be looked for, then the hazards and the hopes, the trepidation and the triumphs of work are magnified and given import and meaning.

It is very hard to say no to work. We may courageously resign, take a sabbatical, or retire to a simpler, more rustic existence, but then we are engaged in inner work, or working on ourselves, or just chopping wood. Work means application, explication, expectation. There is almost no life a human being can construct for themselves where they are not wrestling with something difficult, something that takes a modicum of work. The only possibility seems to be the ability of human beings to choose good work. At its simplest, good work is work that makes sense, and that grants sense—and meaning to the one who is doing it and to those affected by it.

The stakes in good work are necessarily high. Our competence may be at stake in ordinary, unthinking work, but in good work that is a heartfelt expression of ourselves, we necessarily put our very identities to hazard. Perhaps it is because we know, in the end, we are our gift to others and the world. Failure in truly creative work is not some mechanical breakdown but the prospect of a failure in our very essence, a kind of living death. Little wonder we often choose the less vulnerable, more familiar approach, that places work mostly in terms of provision. If I can reduce my image of work to just a job I have to do, then I keep myself safely away from the losses to be endured in putting my heart's desires at stake.

To view work as a pilgrimage is to put our hearts' desires to hazard, because by merely setting out, we have told ourselves that there is something bigger and better, or even smaller and better—above all, something more life giving—that awaits us in our work, and we are going to seek it. We look around to see what we have for the journey and find at bottom that we possess only intuitions and imagination. We look for courage and as yet find little of it.

FINDING THE COURAGE TO BEGIN

We say to ourselves that we need more than ordinary courage, but really there is no ordinary courage. Either we are courageous or we are not. But the key is in the word *courage* itself. The word *courage* arises from the old French *cuver*, meaning heart. To be courageous means at bottom to be heartfelt. To begin with we take only those steps which we can do in a heartfelt fashion and then slowly increase our stride as we become familiar with the direct connection between our passion and our courage. Without some kind of fire at the center of the conversation, a sense of journey through work, life becomes just another strategic game plan, a way of pulling wool over the eyes of reality while we get our own way.

Once we have kindled our desire for something better in our work, we have immediately raised the stakes. Once we have taken the first tentative steps toward worthwhile creative work, we have brought to life embers inside us that would signal some kind of inner death should they then go out. In taking our work seriously as an expression of our belonging, we hazard our most precious—sometimes our seemingly most fragile hopes and dreams, in a world that is more often than not associated with a harsh and destructive bottom line.

Alone in that cottage, all those years ago, I had begun to shiver not only with the cold of a Welsh mountain winter, but with an awful sense that I was suddenly about to play by different rules. That the inner light of youthful imaginings might be smothered by hardened adult notions of work, inherited generation after generation.

There are deep wells of loss, bitterness and exploitation when

it comes to our human history around work. I realized that these wells could erupt and flood over any youthful individual hopes, whatever age I was, and drown them. The world of work I was about to confront was a mighty inherited sea of hard-won experience, and I was just a small vessel coasting for the moment among its inshore inlets and bays.

A STRANGER AT THE DOOR

I set to lighting the fire, carefully nestling the coals among the burning kindling and had just finally brought it to life when I heard a knock at the old weather-beaten door. I opened it to find another stranger to the house, drenched by the same walk up the valley and looking, as I was, for my friends. I invited him to the fire, and as the evening slipped by, and he began to dry out, we found ourselves overcoming our initial wariness, and the strangeness of the situation: two unknown quantities in an unknown home, beginning to tell each other, as strangers do, a little of our life stories. We covered a lot of ground very quickly, but as I was soon to find out, in the first round of conversation, he held back from the central drama.

As we moved on from our brief introductions, our conversation roved over the particular atmosphere and character of the wooded valley of Cwm Pennant directly below our window. We both loved the mountains and valleys of Snowdonia, and I was glad to talk with someone who shared the same enthusiasm for this rugged corner of Wales, but his was no ordinary appreciation. I was

struck by his detailed knowledge of woodlands, trees, and animals. Not only his knowledge but his storyteller's ability to articulate and reframe the natural world around us so that I began to glimpse it again in his words as if for the first time. Despite my own hard studies in biology, I found in listening to him that I was beginning to see it all again with new eyes. As the hours passed, I began to feel that this stranger was a very singular man, both in his work and his way with words. He was both a landscape gardener and a self-taught expert in the study of woodlands. His work also had some literal ground under it. He managed planting projects all over England and Wales.

ASKING THE QUESTION

It is always a privilege to see in one person, knowledge, imagination and articulation combined, and a double privilege to be in conversation alone with that synergy of talents. I couldn't help but warm to him, and I couldn't help but open the small bottle of brandy I had brought to share with my friends. I was sure now they would never arrive that night. As I opened the bottle, I asked him how he had come to all this knowledge, and more to the point of my curiosity, how had he come to do the work he loved? I found myself telling him, as I would not have told many closer to me, that I felt stopped at a crossroads, looking for direction, unsure of my next steps. I told him I was beginning to feel a few icy tendrils of cynicism around what work might actually mean to most of the adult world, and with a long work life still ahead of me, I wanted to know what it took to find a life and a work such as he had found, a work into which you could really put your heart and soul.

"So, what took you into all this?" I said as innocently as I could, pouring and holding up to him in the firelight, a half-filled glass.

He took a deep breath, and at the same time, if I remember correctly, a swift, warming draught of the brandy, and said,

"Do you really want to know?"

Did I want to know? I looked at him, I looked at the brandy. I said that we had plenty of time and as it was now approaching midnight, little chance of our mutual friends coming back to disturb us. He nodded back quickly in agreement and started straight in, the beauties of North Wales faded quickly in his first words.

"I was entirely and utterly desperate," he said. "Living in a dingy North London flat with people I couldn't trust and who couldn't trust me. That's a story in itself, how I got to that point, with those kind of people in that kind of place, but I was one of them. I was a druggie, a dodo, a complete addict." He looked me in the eye to see how this knowledge registered with me. I could see that he wasn't worried what I would think, he was looking to see if I was worth the telling of the tale.

"I was at the end of my tether and ready to end it all. I sat on that scuffed floor, looking at the open twelfth-floor window in my flat, coming to terms with the sheer bloody awfulness of my life and the way I had made a complete mess of it all. I felt sure that everything had abandoned me, and because of that I had abandoned everything in turn, including the little faith I had in myself."

"That brandy," I said. "Perhaps we shouldn't?"

"Thank you," he said, with an airy wave of his hand, "and don't worry, I can take this now or leave it; it was much harder stuff than this that brought me to the point of wanting to jump out of that window."

He paused for effect, and the wind now howling outside the walls seemed to emphasize the silence he had created in the room.

"Jump?"

"Jump. I got myself onto the window ledge with every intent of going through with it. I wanted to jump. It was a bloody long way to the ground, at least high enough to do the job, but I was too weak. I barely fed myself at the time, and there was this huge unempt flower box across the whole length of the window."

"You obviously didn't do it."

"Not for the want of trying. I couldn't get over it. I still can't get over it. I've never been so humiliated. I couldn't even kill myself properly. The edges of the box were so high, I ended up with my chin in the mud and knees under the box. I have to laugh now, but it wasn't much of a laughing matter then. My sweater was caught on a nail, my knees wouldn't come over the inside of the box, and I had a cramp in my leg. I ended up sprawled across the wooden trough with the rain falling on me, my hands in the dirt, the tears running down my face in absolute frustration. I must have looked a sight, but nobody saw me. I suppose at that time I wouldn't have cared if they had; the great thing was, I just gave up. There was nothing waiting for me back through that window, in that awful room, so I just lay there for the longest time, my arms out and my face down in the mud."

A T U R N O F T H E T I D E

"Facedown in the mud, something happened I hadn't felt for years. I think that there are some experiences you can only crawl

into on your hands and knees in order to understand them. A psychiatrist once told me that suicide is not one event but a confluence of many happening all at once, and all of the conditions have to be right for the person to go through with it. First of all, you need despair, and yet strangely enough, while you are in despair the second thing you need is the will to do it, which, when you think about it, is a strange combination. Third, you need the weapon; fourth, you need to be alone; and fifth and last, you need the opportunity. Stuck in that planting box, I had lost my weapon; looking down at the soil in that box, I lost my despair. And suddenly I didn't feel alone anymore. When the passion for ending myself had receded along with all those necessary conditions, I felt incredibly peaceful spread-eagled on the cliff edge of that muddy box. There was nowhere else to go and I was at least halfway out of the home I hated, halfway toward something better. It came over me, sudden, like. That's suicide, you know: You get stuck and it's time to move on, but you make the simple mistake of thinking you have to kill yourself to do it.

"Suddenly I felt as if everything was in its proper place. I couldn't quite believe it. I had literally opened a window and taken a little breath of freedom and entered a stillness I hadn't felt since I was a child. You know, when you could look out of your window at the street and everything seemed to be waiting for you. As if there was a special kind of invitation waiting for you, and you alone, and you just had to listen hard to hear it. Well, there I was again. Oh, I hadn't felt like that for years. First I was weeping with frustration, and then I was weeping because there was nowhere I needed to go. I was having a good cry for that young fellah inside me, waiting all those years to hear his name being called.

"It had been raining nonstop for days, part of why I wanted to chuck myself out the window, I suppose. I looked down and noticed that the rain had been running into one end of the flower box and carved a little river valley the whole length of the window. There was a miniature world right beneath my nose, a little Montana in that scene beneath me. On the banks of the tiny river, in the brown mud, there were green plants and shoots growing along its edge. It was the only world I had at that moment, so I took a good long look at it. Sometime in the next hour or so of lying there in my newfound peace, I began to mold the muddy earth into little hills and banks with my hands. I started to form little side branches of the river, and I began to lift some plants out carefully and put them in different places.

"I must have lain there, wet through, working the ground with my hands, for a very long time, but for the first time in a very long time I had a glimmer, just a glimmer, of something I could do, something I could literally get my hands on. I felt as if God had looked at me again, and in that hour in the rain, in that tiny little world, halfway out of a twelfth-floor window, I had looked back at Him. Not that I'm formally religious or anything, but something had given me back an old memory, a sense of creation, a way back into the world.

"I had my hands in the soil and I was molding the ground on a small scale the way I do now on a larger scale. I was landscaping, damn it. I was working the ground of my future life. That's how I got here. I went back through the window, into that flat; I washed myself without thinking and with a determination I hadn't felt for months; I went straight out. I fixed my eyes right on the ground, walked

straight past my local dealer on the corner and knocked loudly on the door of a friend. He wouldn't believe my little epiphany but he was a good friend and he helped me check me into detox. When I came out at the other end I enrolled in a landscape course. A year later I moved to Wales. He believed me then, and more important, I believed me. It was the first courageous thing I'd done in years. I've never touched the hard stuff again—no, no need for it now, just a glass like this now and again; I have my work and I don't want any other life but the one I have."

I must have been staring at him with my mouth open, because he leaned forward, looked me directly in the eye, and said, "We all have our own ground to work, you know. You have yours, too. You just have to find out what it is. But you know what? It is right on the edge of yourself. At the cliff edge of life. That's the edge you go to. Put yourself in conversation with that edge no matter how frightening it seems. Look down over that edge. It's a bit terrifying to begin with but then you'll recognize a bit of territory that you can work, something you can step out onto. It was there all the time for me, when I look back, just on the other side of a too, too familiar window, out of which I had *not* been looking."

L O O K I N G O U T T O S E A

Our mutual friends never appeared at the farmhouse that night, and we were left with each other and the remnants of the half bottle of brandy until we fell asleep in opposing armchairs, just as the moon was beginning to show itself after the storm. I remember

the conversation as a kind of gifted revelation, as if in that listening I had been rejoined with familiar but forgotten voices essential to my own life and work. I had listened so intently that I felt as if I had lain in that flower box along with him.

In the wee hours of that night, by the fire, on a rainy Welsh mountainside, I began to work the clay of my own life again, to mold the territory of my own belonging. In the intimacy of the stranger's story and the conversation that followed, I found myself beginning to articulate and reshape my history and felt newly emboldened for the waiting future that might lie ahead of me beyond that winter night.

By dawn, I was staring out over the far sea, involved in a strange inversion of the stranger's experience, for I felt as if I was new ground and the vast sea was reaching into my contained territory and molding and shaping a future life. All the hours of the early morning, I looked out, feeling a kind of magnetism to that far windswept ocean, as if aware of the forces in my future that would draw me into my work, whatever form it would take, over the horizons and unknown seas to the west.

MEMORY AND MAGIC

Looking back to that mountain farmhouse in the early 1970s from our present brave new technological world, I feel as if I am gazing on a primary, almost mythological layer of experience. The encounter in the farmhouse seems storybook, other-worldly, outlined and dramatized by memory and the pivotal nature of

the encounter. Work centers so much on technology today, and the imagination mediated through technology, that it is easy to forget that the Dow Jones, the NASDAQ, the hardware, the software and the shareware are all meant to be good servants to the individual human soul's desire to belong to the world. Not that it was any easier to find good work in the early seventies than it is now. Quite the opposite. I am gazing, I suppose, into a period of youthful aspiration in my own history, when my desires and my needs of the world were more touchable and urgent. But the more I look back into those youthful energies, the more certain I am that they are needed in all the stages of pilgrimage in a work life. We need, at every stage in our journey through work, to be in conversation with our desire for something suited to us and our individual natures.

To my mind, one of the great disciplines of any human life is the discipline of memory, of remembering what is essential in the midst of our business and busyness. The human soul thrives on and finds courage from the difficult intimacies of belonging. But it is almost as if, afraid of those primary intimacies, we have unconsciously created a work world so secondary, so complex, and so busy and bullied by surface forces that embroiled in those surface difficulties, we have the perfect busy excuse not to wrestle with the more essential difficulties of existence, the difficulties of finding a work and a life suited to our individual natures; the difficulties that would lead us to an older, intimate, and more human sense of belonging. In the farmhouse all those years ago, I stumbled into conversational intimacy with a stranger and felt the whole course of my life pivot in the encounter.

A MIDNIGHT CONVERSATION

In writing *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, I have attempted to re-create that special and privileged intimacy which occurs in the sudden encounter between strangers. A time when paths cross at exactly the moment when both writer and reader are ready for a greater perspective. A moment when both might be ready to know something of the territory through which they have passed and a glimpse of the unknown future which might lie ahead.

Crossing the Unknown Sea is meant to be an exploration and a midnight conversation, a look at our present vision of work and our ability to reimagine ourselves; a sea voyage into both our inherited notions of what work means to us and our experiences and intuitions of what lies over the horizon. A reminder that work is not a static endpoint or a mere exercise in providing, but a journey and a pilgrimage in which the core elements of our being are tested in the world.

Whether it be the Berlin Wall, apartheid, the bad old coercive Soviet system, or our own bad old coercive business systems, it seems that any foundations not now built on the realities of human relationship are being swept away by the forces of our time. In the same way, our notions of work are undergoing an enormous sea change, and because of that, our workplaces are themselves being worked on, molded and often scoured away by the same enormous tidal forces. We are moving from a familial, parent-child relationship in the workplace to an adult-adult relationship with our organizations, with all of the shock, difficulties, triumphs, and fears that entails. Unknown hands and as yet barely articulated tidal forces,

are molding and scouring not only the ground on which we stand but the very shape of our identities.

Crossing the Unknown Sea hopes not only to chart the journey into work itself and our present sense of power and powerlessness, but to offer something of a journey, an arrival, and, if we are lucky, a little insight through its poetry, its memories, and its stories. All good storytelling is reshaped by the listening and attentive imagination. This book is an invitation to an imaginative conversation about life and work. In the attentive ear of the reader is the echo of the reader's own story, joined invisibly to the conversation.

Like the stranger I met that night on the mountainside, we mold the clay and ground of our lives and the territory of our work every day by what we do and how we do it. At times, many of us find ourselves hovering over precipitous heights, wondering if we should end it all—literally, like my mysterious friend, or metaphorically, by leaving our present work and its seeming entrapment. No matter, work in one form or another awaits us, whatever step we take, and probably, by its everlasting presence, even after death. Work, after all, at its best, is one of the great human gateways to the eternal and the timeless.

In work we are constantly attempting to remember ourselves and reimagine ourselves at the same time. We change ourselves and our world every day by the way we are on the phone, in the office cubicle, or across the carpenter's workbench. We may find our sense of belonging through investing millions in a millisecond in a myriad of countries, or more slowly by investing our time in a cluttered city office working with the local dispossessed. Wherever we work, we need courage: both to remember what we are about and,

according to the tenor of our times, reimagine ourselves while we are doing it. We are not alone in this endeavor but secretly joined to all those who struggle out loud where we have not yet begun to speak or, when publicly, we are loud and vociferous, to those who labor painfully and secretly beside us. We are joined especially to those who have come before us.

We are immensely privileged even to inquire about the meaning of our work. Many of our ancestors pined for good work as they would for a lover, and remained unrequited and stricken by want. Many of our ancestors died while working in dangerous or desperate conditions. Some left good work and found none to replace it. A few, a very few, left little, crossed oceans, and found abundance beyond hope. Others worked hard or traveled to new shores and dutifully sacrificed for their sons and daughters, while their hearts and minds were elsewhere, their own dreams unfulfilled, their innermost selves left high and dry, disappointed by time's fleeting tide. Whatever our inheritance of work in this life, we are only the apex of innumerable lives of endeavor and sacrifice. Where we have come from, the struggles of our parents, our ancestral countries, their voyages, and hardships are immensely important.

This book is meant to breathe upon and ignite the embers of our own memory and our own courage. In it, I hope to bring the powers of the imagination to bear on our present vexing, strategic questions about work and to call upon a deep, shared memory of the greater story of which we constantly forget we are a part. It is meant to get below our present preoccupation with the Dow Jones and the NASDAQ and begin an invisible conversation with all those who have gone before us and those who will inherit what we make of ourselves. It is, for the most part, a personal story, and as I have

spent much of my life wrestling with unknowns, it is meant to be a dedication to that unknown. Our great hope, in wrestling with that unknown we must learn to call our life and our work, is to find a way to call on our courage for all the unknowns yet to come. I wrote this book based on my perception that at the threshold of our new century, we are attempting to gather whatever courage we have dormant in our hearts, individually and collectively, for a great journey across a difficult and unknown sea.

Session Six Preparation Materials

Micah 6:8 What God Requires

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Matthew 22:1-10 The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.