

THE HEART OF SUSTAINABILITY

RESTORING
ECOLOGICAL
BALANCE
FROM THE
INSIDE OUT

ANDRES R. EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF *The Sustainability Revolution*

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new society
PUBLISHERS

Introduction: **Looking Within to Seed an Enduring Vision for the Future**

What's needed now is neither fatalism nor utopianism, but a suite of practical pathways for families and communities that lead to a real and sustainable renewable future We need inspiring examples, engaging stories, and opportunities for learning in depth.

— Richard Heinberg

We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Faith is not about finding meaning in the world, there may be no such thing — Faith is the belief in our capacity to create meaningful lives.

— Terry Tempest Williams

THIS BOOK COMPLETES AN EXPLORATION of the three main facets of the sustainability movement. *The Sustainability Revolution* examined the principles and bedrock values of sustainability, describing the aspiration of the world community to create a life in harmony with the Earth's living systems. Then *Thriving Beyond Sustainability* investigated the individuals and organizations implementing these ideas through large and small initiatives in rural villages and urban centers throughout the world. Now *The Heart of Sustainability* considers the personal

aspects of sustainability, with insights into how we can maximize our positive impact on the economic, social, and environmental challenges we face.

Two of the most significant factors shaping our well-being today are the consciousness and the technological revolutions. They affect us individually on a daily basis and call on us to make choices that can either enhance or diminish our well-being. We see the consciousness revolution in the scientific advancements in neuroscience, which have led to a widespread interest in topics ranging from brain research to meditation, mindfulness, positive psychology, yoga, qigong and other martial arts, and awareness exercises. The technological revolution is changing how we check in with ourselves and communicate with our family, friends, colleagues, and the world at large. The expansion of social media through Internet software platforms such as Facebook, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and a plethora of other applications, blogs, and email programs has transformed the way we interact. While our ubiquitous devices have made it simple for us to stay “in touch” and share our experiences, this hyperconnectivity has taken its toll on our connection to nature.

At the confluence of the consciousness and technological streams, we stand as individuals attempting to adapt to an increasingly rapid pace of life and make the best choices for ourselves and our loved ones. Three insights may guide us as we navigate the future: (1) we are part of nature, not separate from it; (2) we will benefit from taking a regenerative approach to the challenges we face; and (3) now is the time for us to step up and take leadership roles on behalf of all beings and the planet.

Bridging the separation from the natural world that many of us feel begins by reconnecting to ourselves and to where we live. Mindfulness often yields clarity in our interdependence with all natural systems. By going within, we sense our connection to the web of life, beginning with our backyard.

A regenerative approach builds on our connection to nature by integrating nature’s abundance, resiliency, and adaptability into our perspective of the world. The glass is not half full but is overflowing with possibilities. The mindset is one of abundance rather than scarcity, possibility rather than limits, and embracing the unknown rather than fearing

it. Using a regenerative approach allows us to create conditions where the goal is to thrive rather than merely to minimize our negative impact. So our homes are built to produce more renewable energy than they use; we improve the biodiversity of places previously destroyed by development; and we give back to others many times what we have received.

Taking a leadership role means that we look no farther than ourselves to see what is needed and to act. We are the leaders we have been waiting for. Instead of looking for “heroes” to solve the problems we face at the local, national, and global levels, we must look at our own gifts and talents and take the leap to gather our friends and neighbors and take action on issues important to us.

The exponential rate of technological advancement will undoubtedly continue. Indeed, many environmental and social solutions have already emerged. Our challenge lies in reaching our own personal potential to live a life in which we demonstrate our highest selves — first to tap deep within ourselves to discover what we are called to do in our lifetime and then to manifest this calling with the enthusiasm, care, and compassion that are in us, yearning to be shared. For this shift in awareness to occur, we need to be still and listen quietly to what stirs us, as a wildlife photographer stands still and observes the beauty of nature emerging. Subtle light changes during a sunrise, the wing flaps of a dragonfly, the majestic breaching of a whale — these moments arise sometimes dramatically and other times gradually, but we are able to capture and integrate their essence after opening our hearts to the beauty and awe of life in all its forms.

The journey of discovery in *The Heart of Sustainability* begins with the significance of our cultural narrative and how we are currently between stories. The old story of dominating nature and turning her resources into material possessions is quickly reaching a dead end. Since the new story of living a balanced, conscious, and compassionate life in harmony with the planet’s living systems has not yet taken root, we find ourselves with only glimpses of the future.

Personal myths, such as “I’m not good enough” and “I’m only one person with limited power,” often stunt the ways we can create meaningful change. These myths emphasize that we are separate from nature rather than an integral part of it; that we are ruled by a scarcity mindset

rather than one of abundance; and that fear rather than assurance has become an essential motivating force.

What is necessary for living a fulfilling life in harmony with natural systems? Our well-being is integrated with the well-being of the Earth. A focus on the environmental, economic, and social elements of sustainability is insufficient without an accompanying focus on our own characteristics: our capacity for being conscious of our activities, creative in our endeavors, compassionate toward others, and connected to ourselves and all life forms.

Our current geologic period is described as the Anthropocene — *anthropo*, or human, and *cene*, or epoch. This time in Earth's history is marked by the tremendous ecological devastation caused by humans and our failure to recognize our interdependence with all life. What we do to the benefit or detriment of other species comes right back to affect our own well-being. Although we are playing a "leading role" in shaping the Anthropocene, we are not the only "actors" on the world's stage and are continuously co-evolving with other life forms. Perhaps sharing the stage with more grace and humility will allow the flourishing of other species and benefit us all. As Richard Heinberg reminds us,

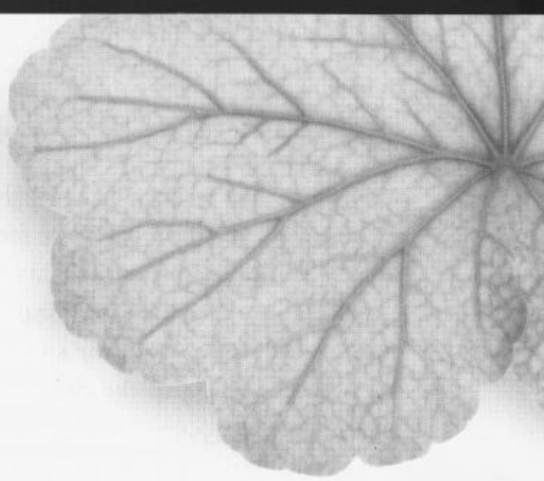
In the end, the deepest insight of the Anthropocene will probably be a very simple one: we live in a world of millions of interdependent species with which we have co-evolved. We sunder this web of life at our peril. Earth's story is fascinating, rich in detail, and continually self-revealing. And it's *not* all about us.¹

What is our role and how do we leave a legacy that will inspire our children and grandchildren and support their well-being and the health of the planet? As biologist Janine Benyus writes, life creates conditions conducive to life. As humans who aspire to reconnect to the web of life, we can turn to nature to help us reconnect to our hearts. We can then move toward understanding the impact of our actions in an interconnected world.

Implementing positive change in the world requires leadership, and there are a variety of leadership styles. Numerous forms of activism

complement various temperaments and personalities. Understanding our own strengths and weaknesses helps us see how we may work to inspire others with our passion for reaching a common goal. What motivates us? What will get us to change course? What are the values that will guide us toward the compelling future we all long for?

To answer these questions, we need compassion, openness, understanding, regeneration, action, gratitude, and empathy. The encouraging news is that these qualities are already seeding initiatives worldwide. Now is the time for all of us to join in and help these initiatives grow.



Chapter 1

A New Story

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The Old Story — the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it — is not functioning properly and we have not learned the New Story.

— Thomas Berry

Storytelling is how we survive, when there's no feed, the story feeds something, it feeds the spirit, the imagination. I can't imagine life without stories, stories from my parents, my culture. Stories from other people's parents, their culture. That's how we learn from each other, it's the best way. That's why literature is so important, it connects us heart to heart.

— Alice Walker

It has been said that sometimes we need a story more than food in order to live.

— Rachel Naomi Remen

STORYTELLING HAS BEEN PART OF THE HUMAN experience for over 100,000 years and in that time we have evolved to create meaning from stories. As researcher and storyteller Kendall Haven points out, “Evolutionary biologists tell us that 100,000 years of story dominance

in human interaction [have] rewired the human brain to be predisposed before birth to think in, make sense in, and create meaning from, stories."¹ Stories help us understand our identity and affirm our values, giving us purpose and meaning. Reflecting on our personal life story and on the stories from the surrounding culture can help us define the path ahead, giving us the strength and courage we will need to create a livable future.

The questions that emerge for the individual and for society as a whole are: what are our old, our current, and our future stories? How are our old stories still relevant and how are they limiting our growth? Are our current stories leading us toward the best future we can envision? Before delving more deeply into these questions, let's explore the anatomy of a story. What makes up a story? And how does a story fit into our aspirations as self-realized human beings, as citizens, and as members of the human family?

Anatomy of a Story

Haven describes a story as "a detailed, character-based narration of a character's struggle to overcome obstacles and reach an important goal."² He includes five elements necessary for a story: (1) character, (2) intent (goal or motive), (3) actions, (4) struggles, and (5) details.

The character drives the story through motives, actions, and struggles. When we expand the notion of a story's character to society at large, we delve into the development of the human family. For many years, social researcher and writer Duane Elgin has been asking audiences from around the world: "What is the life-stage of the human family: toddlers, teenagers, adults, or elders?" The predominant response from audiences is that if we take the social average for the human family we are in the teenage years. Remarkably, Elgin has found overwhelming cross-cultural agreement that as a world community we are at the teenage stage of social development: impulsive, moody, peer-oriented, rebellious, creative, living in the moment, irresponsible, selfish.³

Our shortsighted, selfish actions have led to wars, destruction, and social, environmental, and economic crises around the world in the last several hundred years. Perhaps we see ourselves as navigating through uncertain times, trying to find our purpose and place in the world. We

know that the teenage years are often difficult ones with a mix of dangers and opportunities.

The intent for the story of the collective human family is probably as diverse as every individual's aspirations and is shaped by the cultures of the storymakers and storytellers. At the individual level, Abraham Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs provides a template outlining our needs as human beings. His pyramid of needs begins at the base with physiological needs (food, drink, sleep ...) and moves upward to safety needs (health, employment ...), love and belongingness needs (receiving and giving love, friendship, family ...), esteem needs (esteem and respect for self and others), cognitive needs (knowledge and meaning), and aesthetic needs (beauty, symmetry, balance) and concludes with self-actualization ("becoming everything one is capable of becoming") at the top of the pyramid.⁴

On a global scale, we can see that much of humanity falls near the bottom of Maslow's pyramid, attempting to meet basic needs. A child dies from a water-related illness every 21 seconds;⁵ one third of the world is considered to be starving;⁶ and one in three women aged 15 to 49 years will experience physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some point in her life.⁷ These dire circumstances illustrate the desperation of millions to survive in a safe environment with enough food and water. Because so many people are simply not in the privileged position to focus on self-actualization, it is especially urgent that those who *are* devote more energy to this pursuit, putting themselves in a position to work toward the paradigm shift our world so desperately needs.

At a societal level, futurist and visionary R. Buckminster Fuller set a global intention to "make the world work, for 100% of humanity, in the shortest possible time, through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone."⁸ Fuller's intent visualizes a world that is inclusive, cooperative, fair, and ecological. In addition, he recognizes that we must take action promptly.

Both Maslow and Fuller articulate a vision for humanity propelled by a powerful intent that includes a goal and a motive (the *what* and the *why*). Maslow used a psychological lens while Fuller had a more objective and pragmatic perspective.

The actions in a story describe what the characters do to achieve their goal. During the Industrial Revolution these actions involved the extraction and shipment of natural resources for manufacturing. Petroleum, natural gas, and steam powered automobiles and railroads, coal fired power plants, and modernized cities and factories produced goods and services in the industrialized countries. Employment opportunities and migration patterns shifted to centers of mass production.

As these actions expanded over time, they encountered struggles, the fourth element of a story. Struggles challenge the characters to overcome difficult circumstances and, because we are not sure the characters will succeed, there is an element of suspense. At the dawn of the 21st century, we find ourselves in one of the most challenging struggles of all time. We have: rising human population; the greatest mass extinction of species since the demise of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago; dwindling supplies of cheap fossil fuels and available fresh water; increasing economic inequity between rich and poor that is fostering violence; desperate migrations to urban megacities with limited services; and greenhouse gases that are raising global temperatures and wreaking havoc on the planet with massive floods, droughts, wildfires, famines, hurricanes, and the melting of the ice caps with the dire consequences of sea level rise.

The repercussions of climate change are outlined by author and journalist Bill McKibben, who stated: "The biggest thing by far that's happened in the lifetime of anyone alive today is that we've left the Holocene Period — this 10,000 year period of benign climatic stability that underwrote the rise of human civilization. That's by far the biggest story of our times and yet, in real terms, people don't know it."⁹ We will all pay a price for our lack of awareness. Just as it's damaging to our personal lives when we fail to revise life patterns that don't serve us, the results of our inattention to damaging collective patterns will be devastating.

Details are the final element needed in a story. These are the descriptions that fire up our imagination and curiosity. In the case of our personal story, they are the seemingly small elements that make up our days, weeks, and years. The details put "flesh on the bones," engaging us in the story. Smells, textures, sights, sounds, and tastes all combine

to create an image that illustrates a compelling story. Although they may seem unimportant, together they shape the final outcome of any story.

Neuroscience research shows that stories incorporating vivid descriptions stimulate many parts of the brain. As Annie Murphy Paul points out, stories “stimulate the brain and even change how we act in life. Words like ‘lavender,’ ‘cinnamon’ and ‘soap,’ for example, elicit a response not only from the language-processing areas of our brains, but also those devoted to dealing with smells And there is evidence that just as the brain responds to depictions of smells and textures and movements as if they were the real thing, so it treats the interactions among fictional characters as something like real-life social encounters.”¹⁰ The remarkable connection that the human brain makes between descriptions in stories and real-life experiences shows the power of an engaging story. That is how an idea in our imagination becomes a reality.

Our Role in the Hero's Journey

How does the human family fit into the stories that define us? Mythologist Joseph Campbell described the three stages of a hero's journey: departure (or separation), initiation, and return. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell expanded on the archetypal hero's journey, saying, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”¹¹

The hero's journey encompasses universal questions that we ask ourselves: Who are we as individuals? Who are we as a world community? What are our individual and our collective purposes? Where do we find meaning and how does it benefit us all?

In the departure stage of the hero's journey, the hero hears a call to adventure. Perhaps because of fear, insecurity, or denial, the hero initially refuses to listen to the call. For our human family today, the call is loud and clear. Accelerating global trends are diminishing the life support systems and social fabric of the planet. Pollution, social inequality, climate change, overpopulation, and loss of biodiversity are some of the alarm bells ringing in our biosphere.

Some individuals are hearing the call, stepping up, and taking whatever action they can to reverse these destructive trends. The sustainable agriculture and green building movements, for example, are transforming their industries. Individuals throughout the world are heeding the call by organizing community gardens, farmers' markets, and microloan programs, digging wells for safe drinking water, and undertaking myriad other initiatives. While the mainstream press does not usually report these stories, they are nevertheless quietly taking place and gradually making positive changes at the local level.

During the initiation stage of the hero's journey, he undergoes a series of trials that begin his transformation. As Campbell said, "The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed — again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land."¹² In our hero's journey we are precisely in the initiation phase. We are facing many environmental, economic, and social "dragons" to be slain and "barriers" that we must overcome. We have "momentary glimpses" of solutions that can indeed improve lives and change the world.

In the building industry, for example, the Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design's LEED Dynamic Plaque, the WELL Building and Living Building Challenge Standards, and the LENSES Framework for buildings are transforming the built environment. Implementing an integrated design process whereby professional engineers, architects, interior designers, contractors, owners, and occupants come together in the initial phase of a project to discuss common objectives and clarify their vision has revolutionized the construction process. This holistic approach, combined with new technologies for energy and water conservation and improved indoor air quality and using sustainable materials, has resulted in high performance, healthier buildings. People enjoy the buildings they live and work in, are more productive, and stay longer with their employers. The LEED standard has now spread to more than 90 countries worldwide, making it a dominant force in the green building industry.

Similar transformations are occurring in the food, education, and healthcare industries. There has been an expansion of demand for more local, organic foods; an explosion of online education opportunities now available to a worldwide audience through the Internet, including MOOCs (Massive Open Online Classes); and a rising interest in complementary, alternative, and integrative healthcare, including the use of herbs, supplements, acupuncture, and meditation.

In the final stage of the hero's journey, the return, the hero comes home to share the knowledge he gained on his journey and "bestow boons on his fellow man."¹³ We each must undertake our own heroic journey, being willing to modify aspects of our lives that do not serve our collective goal of change; initiate activities we have identified as necessary for our personal growth; and share ways of implementing what we have learned.

Millions of citizens worldwide face the challenge of balancing the omnipresence of technology (such as computers, mobile phones, television, digital cameras, and email) with activities that help us reduce stress and give us a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves (such as volunteering, time with family and friends, and spiritual pursuits). Individuals living in some of the most remote villages, for example, complete important business transactions through their cell phones and also yearn to maintain their spiritual traditions. In developed urban centers, long working hours and "keeping up with the Joneses" have left many feeling isolated, uncared for, and wondering what real wealth is. As Mother Teresa pointed out, "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty."¹⁴

The final stage of the hero's journey may be realized when as a world community we have learned to live in peace, made war obsolete, joined together to care for each other, and, as Buckminster Fuller suggested, discovered how to "make the world work, for 100% of humanity."

Living Between Stories

Our old story was marked by historical events that have shaped our worldviews. After World War II, the Cold War highlighted an "us versus them" paradigm, with Western democratic values led by the United States opposing the Soviet Union's communist ideals. These two

worldviews clashed for over four decades until the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union signaled a new period of reorganization.

New democracies emerged in Europe and other regions including Latin America. In the Middle East, the Arab Spring's demonstrations gave a voice to millions of people living under authoritarian regimes. The rise of China and India as economic powerhouses in the late 20th and early 21st centuries signals another shift, with Asia an increasingly dominant force in what has become a global economy. The end of the Cold War also brought the devastating consequences of global terrorism caused by conflicting worldviews.

New measures of economic progress have emerged, such as ISEW (Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare), GPI (Genuine Progress Indicator), and GNH (Gross National Happiness). These metrics show a concern for the values that instill meaning and purpose in our lives.

Another shift from the old story to the new one is the global migration from rural to urban areas. Over half the world's population now lives in urban areas. This change is creating numerous megacities such as Tokyo's metropolitan region with over 37 million people and Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, with 26 million. The New York metro area with eight million ranks eighth among the megacities.¹⁵

For me, hope for a better world comes from the times I've seen the totally unexpected happen: the Cold War's end, the Iron Curtain gone, Nelson Mandela released to be head of state, Barack Obama's two election victories. These events were the result of positive energies working deep within the stream of history, invisible to mainstream media, a process always going on, even when things look dark. My inspiration comes from love of Earth's beauty and creatures. And I believe our young people will shape a livable future in creative and sustainable new ways.

Susan C. Strong, Ph.D.
Founder and executive director, The Metaphor Project,
Author, *Move Our Message: How to Get America's Ear*

We now find ourselves collectively living between stories. The old story is coming to an end and a new one has yet to be born. In the old story, our reliance on science and technology to solve many of humanity's problems has proven its limitations. The Green Revolution, agribusiness, large hydroelectric projects, nuclear power, harmful chemicals in products and foods, and our fossil fuel-based economies, for example, have had unintended repercussions ranging from carcinogens in our bodies to extreme weather events resulting from climate change.

The quintessential American dream has come into question. In 1931, in *The Epic of America*, James Truslow Adams defined the American dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better, richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement."¹⁶ However, polls now show that Americans are evenly split on whether they believe the next generation will have a better life than their parents.¹⁷ Perhaps these doubts point to a realization that quick fixes to environmental and social problems are not as readily available as we once thought. Moreover, our "teenage" attitudes have led to accidents such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011. These events illustrate a pivotal point in the hero's journey, when the hero has a choice to continue on the same path or take personal responsibility for meaningful change.

We find ourselves in a similar predicament during this time between stories. On a personal level we may be familiar with this transitional time when we experience a breakdown in our lives and need to reassess and reinvent ways of moving forward. Whether it's a personal health issue, a traumatic event, the end of a relationship, or a career change, these are moments to look within and reexamine our values and objectives. This is also a fragile time when we are susceptible to being influenced by others' views. We may yearn for a quick solution to get through this uncomfortable and vulnerable period. However, having the patience and stamina, sometimes described as "sitting in the fire," to work through this transitional phase often leads to new openings. By "sitting in the fire" we also have a chance to heal the wounds from our past, learn from our mistakes, and find new ways of dealing with our challenges. Similarly, at a global level we have an opportunity to take

stock, examine our old story, and then look ahead at the possibilities for creating a new story.

Themes of the New Story

The backdrop for the new story includes a more numerous and more elderly population living in a hotter world with severe droughts, storms, and floods. The world's population is expected to reach eight billion by 2025, nearly 10 billion by 2050, and 11 billion by 2100. The less developed countries have the largest population increase, with children under 15 years accounting for 26 percent and young adults (15 to 24) an additional 17 percent of the total in 2013.¹⁸ The youth from these regions are searching for educational and job opportunities, which are scarce in these economies.

The world is aging, with people 60 and older expected to reach two billion by 2050 and three billion by 2100. Sixty-six percent of these older persons are currently living in the less developed countries and that number is expected to increase to 79 percent by 2050 and 89 percent by 2100.¹⁹

In addition to the demographic trends, there are currently dozens of armed conflicts around the world and almost 30 million slaves (with 60,000 in the US), including forced laborers, forced prostitutes, and child soldiers. In the West African nation of Mauritania, for example, it is estimated that four percent (one in 25) of its people are enslaved.²⁰ On the upside, literacy rates and life expectancies have increased worldwide and millions of people have risen out of poverty. The number of countries with electoral democracies has also risen from 69 in 1990 to 117 in 2012.²¹

The new story has numerous facets and each one incorporates a theme dealing with the transitions we are experiencing. These themes include global communications, economic shift, protecting the commons, reconnecting to the land and community, and awakening to self-consciousness.

Global communications arise from a rapidly evolving technological revolution that is giving us speed and instant free or low-cost connection from nearly anywhere at any time through the Internet, iPads, iPhones, Skype, Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and more. These new capabilities and thousands of new software programs

or apps being developed daily by entrepreneurs worldwide are creating huge challenges and opportunities. Web-based services ranging from Airbnb, which provides travelers with affordable lodging throughout the world, to Foursquare, which finds entertainment options, to Lyft and Uber for ground transportation are changing the way we work and play.

These technologies also have eliminated many jobs that are now being replaced by software programs providing services including online travel and banking. In a global economy, job recruiters are extremely selective since they are able to attract the very best talent because the pool of applicants has now expanded to participants around the world. As author and columnist Thomas Friedman reminds us, "In the hyperconnected world, there is only 'good' 'better' and 'best,' and managers and entrepreneurs everywhere now have greater access than ever to the better and best people, robots and software everywhere."²² For the first time in human history, being hyperconnected through the Internet, mobile phones, and other devices allows billions of people to have access to a wide network of individuals and a repository of information that is continuously being updated. Thus we are now able to tap into a "global brain" that is quickly spreading its knowledge to all corners of the Earth.

The theme of economic shift in the new story involves moving from our current growth-based economy to a steady-state economy. Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill, co-authors of *Enough Is Enough: Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources*, define a steady-state economy as one that "aims for stable or mildly fluctuating levels in population and consumption of energy and materials. Birth rates equal death rates, and production rates equal depreciation rates."²³ The steady-state economy seeks a balance between the human economy and the larger ecosystem that provides the essential life support systems and resources for our survival.

Since our current growth-based economy has degraded the planet's ecosystems through pollution, species extinction, deforestation, and so forth, achieving a steady-state economy requires reducing harmful economic activities. This approach foregoes growth-at-all-costs and instead aims for an appropriate scale of economic activity. Slight fluctuations in economic growth and contraction are recognized as normal. The

objective is to find the “sweet spot” where extremes are eliminated and a steady state is achieved through trial and error, regulation of markets, fair distribution, allocation of markets, and political will.²⁴

The new story’s theme of protecting the commons speaks to valuing and safeguarding the ecological and social networks that are owned by all of us collectively. As Jonathan Rowe describes in *The Common Wealth*, “the commons includes our entire life support system, both natural and social. The air and oceans, the web of species, wilderness and flowing water — all are parts of the commons. So are language and knowledge, sidewalks and public squares, the stories of childhood, the processes of democracy. Some parts of the commons are gifts of nature, others the product of human endeavor. Some are new, such as the Internet; others are as ancient as soil and calligraphy.”²⁵

We must first identify the commons and then devise ways to protect it before it is destroyed. Protecting the commons is essential in an age when multinational corporations aim to privatize natural resources such as drinking water and acquire patents for seeds including basmati rice from India and medicinal plants, such as the Neem tree from Nepal. Air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, melting sea ice in the Arctic, water pollution, oil exploitation, and overfishing are the results of competition for natural resources. The commons story has a moral imperative since as members of the human family we have an obligation to fight the forces that aim to privatize and destroy what belongs to all of us.

The theme of reconnecting to the land emphasizes our relationship to nature and our appreciation for the cultural and biological heritage of local places. The new story recognizes that every place has a personality. As author José Stevens points out, “In order to understand land you have to spend time with it just like with a person whom you hope to get to know. All land has a personality just like people do. We differentiate between people and we differentiate between places on the land.”²⁶ As we get to know the character of a place we learn to acknowledge the land and may honor its unique qualities by praying, singing, and making offerings. Similarly, reconnecting with community calls on our ties with our culture and our neighbors.

Since multinational corporations are beholden to shareholders who have little connection to local communities, we experience a

disconnection from the land as these corporations extend their global reach. Maintaining a strong "sense of place" comes from local appreciation of the land and its ties to the people.

Being disconnected from the land is associated with behavioral and addiction issues. In *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv describes the negative effects on children of spending too much time indoors away from outdoor activities. Louv calls this new phenomenon nature deficit disorder and, although not officially recognized as a medical disorder, excessive "screen time" and media consumption are common complaints by parents in many households. In 2012, the South Korean government estimated that 2.55 million Koreans were addicted to smart phones, using them eight or more hours a day, and 160,000 Korean children between five and nine years old were addicted to the Internet through smart phones, tablets, and computers. In an extreme case, a three-month-old girl died when her parents fed her only once a day because they were consumed by playing online games.²⁷ These addictive behaviors are increasing in many countries as more and more people have access to online entertainment and services.

The new story's theme of awakening to self-consciousness can be traced back to the idea of the Earth's noosphere in the work of Russian mineralogist Vladimir Vernadsky and French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Similar to the geosphere (from *geo*, or Earth) and the biosphere (from *bio*, or life), the noosphere (from *nous*, or mind) describes the impact of human thought at a planetary scale. As the human family evolves and complexity increases, the mind sphere grows and we awaken to our role in the universe. In a sense, the mind sphere is the global version of our individual brain's neural network, which fires the signals that trigger our thoughts.

We use our connectivity to tap into the "global brain." This greater context, in turn, allows us to understand our role as part of an evolving human consciousness. As author and social innovator Barbara Marx Hubbard points out, "As universal humans, we are consciously integrating our social, spiritual, technological, and scientific capacities with our highest aspirations to create a world that works for everyone."²⁸

Experiments to verify the effects of global consciousness include the Global Consciousness Project, an initiative of the Institute of Noetic

Sciences, in which random number generators are used to measure global responses to major world events, such as the death of a world leader or a terrorist attack, in order to explore the correlation between such events and global consciousness. The results "show considerable evidence of a correlation between particular events and the data from our network of random event generators Thoughtful examination of the accumulated evidence shows something very remarkable, and the most parsimonious and elegant interpretation is that a global consciousness is at work."²⁹

Visions of the New Story

The themes outlined above comprise the key elements of our new story. As we begin to create that story, arriving at a clear vision based on our values is essential. Our task is to elucidate both our individual and our collective values and align our efforts with them. What are our values? And how do we articulate them in a meaningful way? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and the Earth Charter, launched in 2000, are examples of basic values for the world community.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born out of the atrocities of World War II. As Article 1 states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."³⁰ Similarly, the Earth Charter's mission, which emerged from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, aims to "promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace."³¹

To get to the core of these lofty ideals, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Instead we can look back to the values of indigenous peoples from around the globe, who have stories describing how the world came to be, where they came from, and how to govern themselves and live in harmony with nature. For example, the songlines of the Aboriginal tribes in Australia have for millennia told the story of the features in the landscape. People can find pathways and navigate long distances

by singing these songs. The songlines act as both a compass to navigate the land and a cultural thread that links the history of a people to the land. In North America, the comprehensive system of governance of the Iroquois Confederacy, made up of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca tribes from upper New York State, is thought to have influenced the US constitution.

What do we value in modern society? Unlike indigenous peoples, we no longer have a mythology or system of values that we were all initiated into in our youth. Although modern society promotes many values, many more are left to families and individuals to choose and create. Once we have our basic needs such as housing, employment, education, and food met, most of us value spending time with friends and loved ones, a slower pace of life, time for creative pursuits, and managing stress. All of these qualities have an aspect of simplicity — leading less complex lives with a local focus — but they leave us with the task of discovering the purpose of our lives and where it fits in with that of our “tribe.”

To create the new story we must define the role of each community member. How do individual goals, growth, and development serve the health of the community? How do we help the younger generation discover their passion and purpose in life? How do we rediscover our own passion and purpose during periods of personal upheaval? How do we encourage the development of leadership skills and instill a sense of love for all living beings? The new story will continue to emerge from within us, finding expression in our work and our interactions with others.

Additional fundamental questions involve our view of an ideal community. What does its downtown look like? Is it pedestrian friendly? Is public transportation easy and effective? Where does the community's food come from? Its energy? Its water? Where does its waste go? What are the crime, education, and healthcare statistics and programs? Do the neighbors know each other? How are the homeless, the veterans, and the mentally ill taken care of? What is the governance structure? What are the traditions that bring people together and promote their cultural heritage and creative expression? Answering these questions, using well-defined bedrock values as our guide, will prompt us to create an enduring vision for a new story that is compelling and alluring.

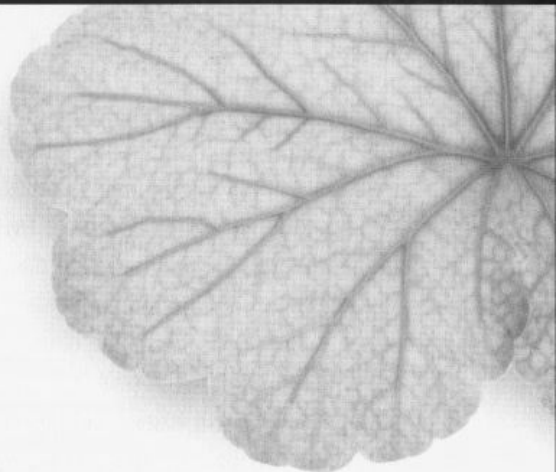
Underlying these questions is a renewed sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves, making the link between personal responsibility and community and global awareness. As former Czech president and playwright Vaclav Havel said, "I always come to the conclusion that salvation can only come through a profound awakening of man to his own personal responsibility, which is at the same time a global responsibility. Thus, the only way to save our world, as I see it, lies in a democracy that recalls its ancient Greek roots: democracy based on an integral human personality personally answering for the fate of the community."³²

The new story will guide the human family to its next stage. As the old story fades and the new one emerges, we have two important tasks: storymaking and storytelling. Storymaking involves those of us called to imagine a new era for humanity — envisioning the story's political, economic, environmental, and social characteristics. Storymakers are creating the new businesses, nonprofits, and government institutions that are leading the changes.

Storytelling involves those of us called to inspire others by sharing the new story with the widest possible audience. Storytelling is the critical endeavor of engaging others and having them take ownership of the visions for the new story. By sharing the enticing details of the new story, storytellers are spreading the possibilities for a world that works for everyone. In this way, storymakers and storytellers complement each other. Although we are still between stories, we see glimpses of the new story emerging through initiatives worldwide.

Questions to Ponder

- * What are the themes of your current life story? (What do you value? How do you spend most of your time?)
- * What are the themes of your "new story?" Have your values changed over the years and do your current activities and life structure reflect any changes?
- * How do the values of your culture compare with your personal values?
- * How have the major events in your life shaped who you are?
- * What are the characteristics of your ideal community?



Chapter 4

Reconnecting to Ourselves and to Nature

The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it Intuition or what you will, the solution comes to you and you don't know how or why.

— Albert Einstein

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

— John Muir

In the end, it is not new laws or more efficient solar cells that will play the leading role in solving humankind's environmental and social problems, it is our awakened and caring hearts. When our hearts awaken, our resolve quickens, our courage grows, our compassion stirs, and our imagination expands.

— Christopher Uhl

IN 1987, THE UNITED NATIONS' BRUNDTLAND REPORT, *Our Common Future*, defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ This report provided the seeds for the ongoing global conversation about sustainability based on three components: ecology, economy, and equity (the three Es). Since the

publication of the Brundtland Report over 25 years ago, research has shown that we must also look inward and become conscious, creative, and compassionate (the three Cs) if we are to live fulfilling lives within the means of nature.

Ecology

The ecology component of the three Es highlights the intricate web of life. Our old story has led to increases in world population, pollution, and consumerism, with a worldwide decline of marine and terrestrial habitats, and forced us to face the critical importance of respecting the limits of nature. These limits, or thresholds, are seen in the extraction of natural resources in sectors such as fisheries, forestry, and mining. They also are seen in the pollution of our rivers, oceans, and aquifers and in the onset of climate change caused by greenhouse gases, which are heating the atmosphere and leading to catastrophic floods, droughts, and storms.

Scientists have identified nine planetary limits: (1) climate change, (2) biodiversity loss, (3) excess nitrogen and phosphorus production, (4) stratospheric ozone depletion, (5) ocean acidification, (6) global consumption of fresh water, (7) change in land use for agriculture, (8) air pollution, and (9) chemical pollution. Of these nine limits, three — climate change, biodiversity loss, and nitrogen production — have already been exceeded and several others are approaching their thresholds.²

Part of the challenge of recognizing these ecological limits is that patterns of cause and effect are difficult to pinpoint and, alarmingly, the rate of change is much faster than originally expected. In the case of climate change, for example, the melting of the polar ice caps is a stark reminder of the speed at which these changes are taking place. By 2040, new shipping lanes across the North Pole, including the fabled Northwest Passage along the Canadian and Alaskan coasts, are expected to be accessible during some summers to normal ships without specially adapted ice-breaking hulls, and by then the melting ice is expected to make it possible for ice breakers to take the shortest possible route directly across the North Pole. Scientists warn that the rise of global temperatures threatens to melt the permafrost in the northern latitudes, releasing massive amounts of methane that could further heat the planet. Similarly, the rate of irreversible species extinction is estimated at a

thousand times faster than normal, threatening 10 to 30 percent of the mammal, bird, and amphibian species.³

The ecology component of sustainability also includes the value of nature's processes or ecosystem services. These include the species and natural cycles that for millennia have provided us with clean air and water, pollinated plants, decomposed waste, and detoxified soils. These services assist with controlling pests, erosion, floods, and droughts and with sequestering carbon. In essence, ecosystem services describe the natural cycles that continuously regenerate themselves and sustain life for all species on the planet. When economists attempt to put an economic value on ecosystem services, it runs into the trillions of dollars. As the demand for the planet's limited natural resources increases and poor management practices result in habitat destruction, ecosystem services are quickly becoming recognized as critical for our survival.

We have been treating the Earth's living systems as an inexhaustible supply closet filled with resources for the taking. The six natural resources now experiencing severe pressure worldwide include: water, oil, natural gas, phosphorus (essential for plant growth), coal, and rare earth elements.⁴ What is behind our appetite for consumption? Until we address this question, we will continue our mindless devouring of Earth's resources. Clearly we are attempting to fill something that is empty in our lives and perhaps in ourselves. To replenish this emptiness without causing destruction we need connection to something greater than the self. As we begin to recognize that we are an integral part of the web of

There are numerous ways to consider time, ranging from geological time in the billions of years, to civilization time in the hundreds of years, to a full human lifetime of 80–100 years, and, of course, much shorter periods of time. With focus and effort in some cases, issues that seemed critical just a few decades ago are no longer of concern today. This is not to say we should ignore ecological challenges, but rather we should recognize that over longer periods of time issues come and go.

Rand Selig
Environmental steward

life, we may assume our role as stewards who not only protect but also regenerate the natural resources and living systems that support us and all other species.

Economy

The economy component of sustainability focuses on the issues of a growth versus a steady-state economy, the interdependence of the economy and the environment, and the trend toward revitalizing local economies. The growth-at-all-costs approach to economic development has revealed the constraints of finite natural resources and ecological limits. Many developing countries, including China and India, are discovering the challenges of maintaining unending economic growth. Studies show that after a certain point more material comforts do not make people happier.⁵ The alternative is a steady-state economy operating within the boundaries of natural systems.

All economic activity is dependent on the resources and ecological processes of nature. Our well-being, which requires access to safe drinking water, healthy foods, clean air, and material necessities, depends on the health of the Earth's ecosystems. For our long-term survival, we must develop a cultural story that respects the limits of these natural systems. Creating such a story requires a shift from the current narrow minded quarterly returns perspective to a multigenerational one. As a study by 500 scientists from 44 countries points out, "Humanity is pushing humanity's life-support systems rapidly toward a tipping point that will likely imperil society's well-being."⁶

Communities around the world are recognizing that building a stronger local economy will make them more resilient. A local approach includes developing action plans to prepare for climate change, supporting local farmers to ensure food availability, controlling access to local renewable energy sources, and protecting aquifers and regional water resources. Localization supports local economies by providing local jobs and ways for neighbors to support each other.

Equity

As the income gap between the rich and the poor has widened worldwide, the equity component of sustainability has come to the forefront.

In the 34 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the gap between the household incomes of the richest ten percent and the poorest ten percent has grown.⁷ With over seven billion people in the world, 2.5 billion earn less than two dollars a day and two percent of the adults in the world own more than 50 percent of all household wealth.⁸ These statistics describe the economic disparity that is placing added pressure on the world's ecosystems as nations continue to unsustainably extract natural resources for economic development.

As the world becomes more connected, the sharp contrast between the haves and have-nots is becoming more apparent. On a 24/7 schedule, hundreds of television and cable shows broadcast the glamorous, idealized lives and material wealth of Hollywood celebrities to the billions barely scraping by. Together with a quest for a better life, these images have shifted migration patterns, with more than half of the world's population now living in urban centers, where millions search for basic necessities. In a wired world, they aspire to a life carefully crafted by the entertainment industry of the Western developed societies.

Education

Since knowledge provides the foundation for making change, an education component should be added to the three Es.⁹ Education is essential for raising awareness and gaining the skills needed to solve our global problems. One of the most encouraging developments is the education revolution that is currently underway. The Internet and related technologies are expanding educational resources to a worldwide audience. The popularity of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and online degree programs (see Chapter 7 for more details) validates the global demand for education that for the first time is accessible to a large segment of the planet's population.

Extensive offerings attest to the widespread interest in educating ourselves in order to cultivate undeveloped capacities and talents. From podcasts such as Shrink Rap Radio ("All the psychology you need to know and just enough to make you dangerous") to online meditation schools and workshops to fit any self-development need, there are many

ways to dig deep and develop the inner capacities to create a purposeful life.

The External Es and Internal Cs

The three Es of the sustainability framework (plus education) describe the “outer” landscape that involves our relationship to the environment, the economy, and the social aspects of sustainable development. There is an equally important “inner” landscape that deals with the traits that are essential for helping us find solutions to the challenges we face. This inner landscape, which highlights the tremendous potential that we are being called on to manifest, is best described as the three Cs, namely, consciousness, creativity, and compassion (plus being connected).

Many of the solutions to our current challenges call for a more enlightened approach — one that goes beyond technological fixes into how we reach our potential as humans and work effectively together. Being conscious of our daily behavior in the workplace, for example, has a big impact on energy conservation with simple acts such as turning off lights, fans, and computers when they are not in use. Coming up with creative solutions demands an openness and playfulness to brainstorm new ideas. Acts of compassion and empathy lead to personal and professional development and flourishing communities. These three traits, in turn, help us feel more connected to ourselves and to one another.

Consciousness

Being conscious is “perceiving, apprehending, or noticing with a degree of controlled thought or observation” and “acting with critical awareness.” By extension, consciousness applies to “being aware especially of something within oneself” and “being conscious of an external object, state, or fact.”¹⁰ As we grapple with our global challenges, being conscious and cultivating awareness generate benefits for identifying solutions.

Being conscious means tuning in to our external circumstances as well as our feelings and perceptions. It is helpful to develop practices that bring us into contact with our unconscious. As the Swiss psychoanalyst C.G. Jung taught, “The collaboration of the unconscious is intelligent and purposive, and even when it acts in opposition to consciousness its expression is still compensatory in an intelligent way, as if it were trying

to restore the lost balance.”¹¹ Becoming curious about what motivates us and what truly enriches our lives and our relationships serves both our own life satisfaction and our ability to contribute to our community.

According to the National Institutes of Health, Americans spend \$4 billion on mindfulness-related medicine annually.¹² Mindfulness may be defined as “maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment”¹³ and is a goal in several sectors including education and business. The urban dropout rates in US schools approach, and in some instances exceed, 50 percent. In addition, many students have a hard time focusing and act impulsively, causing high stress levels for both students and teachers. These behavioral issues are major obstacles to the students’ ability to succeed.

One of the leading nonprofit organizations tackling these issues is Mindful Schools. In 2007, California educators Laurie Grossman and Richard Shankman started Mindful Schools “to teach children how to focus, manage their emotions, handle their stress, and resolve conflicts. Instead of simply telling children to do these things, we show children how — through direct experience. It allows children to make wiser decisions in the heat of the moment, rather than only in retrospect.”¹⁴ The course helps children to become more aware of their thoughts and emotions, to cultivate empathy, and to control their impulses.

Since its inception, Mindful Schools has reached over 200,000 students in schools throughout the world. In addition, teachers, school administrators, social workers, and related service organizations from all 50 states and over 60 countries have taken courses in Mindfulness Fundamentals, Curriculum Training, and the Yearlong Certification program offered by Mindful Schools.¹⁵

A recent study involving over 900 children and nearly 50 teachers in three Oakland public schools by Mindful Schools and the University of California, Davis, showed that after a six-week mindfulness course the students had a significant improvement in their behavior and an increase in their attention span, self-control, class participation, and caring for others.¹⁶ What is remarkable about these results is that with minimal instruction time (each student received four hours of instruction over the six-week period) significant improvements were achieved. I

have had the opportunity to experience some of the exercises of Mindful Schools and they are remarkably simple yet powerful. Mindfulness training programs for schools are rapidly expanding nationally as their research-backed benefits become more widely known.

The interest in mindfulness is also expanding into the legal profession with training and education for lawyers on meditative practices and alleviating stress and depression. There are several pioneers in the business community who are creating programs that promote a more conscious way of being in the workplace. One of them is Google employee number 107, Chade-Meng Tan, known as Meng, an engineer by training, who spearheads Google's Search Inside Yourself education program. Meng's title at Google is the Jolly Good Fellow and his dream is world peace. As he points out, "I believe world peace can and must be created from the inside out."¹⁷

Meng's ambition for world peace led him to create the Search Inside Yourself program as part of Google University. To offer the 16-hour course that started in 2007 he teamed up with Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of *Emotional Intelligence*, Zen teacher Norman Fischer, Mirabai Bush, founding director of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society. The Search Inside Yourself course has been taken by over 2,000 Google employees and since the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute was established as a separate entity in 2012 the program offerings have spread to over 5,000 total participants through corporate, public, and teacher training programs.¹⁸

Search Inside Yourself has three phases: (1) Attention Training, (2) Self-Knowledge and Self-Mastery, and (3) Creating Useful Mental Habits. Attention Training aims to create a "quality of mind that is calm and clear." The Self-Knowledge and Self-Mastery phase provides tools for objectively observing "your thought stream and the process of emotion with high clarity." The third phase, Creating Useful Mental Habits, illustrates habits that promote positive interactions with others. By focusing on five areas — self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills — this scientifically based program has increased the productivity and well-being of participants.¹⁹

Participation in mindfulness and meditation continues to gain in popularity worldwide. Not only do these practices produce real health benefits (reducing stress, blood pressure, and insomnia, improving immunity) they also foster a sense of well-being and a feeling of unity with others. Centers providing workshops and classes are expanding around the globe and are within the reach of just about anyone who is interested.

Other pioneers committed to bringing conscious values to the business sector include John Mackey, cofounder and CEO of Whole Foods Market, and Rajendra (Raj) Sisodia, professor of marketing at Bentley University. Mackey and Sisodia are promoting the Conscious Capitalism movement, which “challenges business leaders to rethink why their organizations exist and to acknowledge their companies’ roles in the interdependent global marketplace.”²⁰

While acknowledging widespread public skepticism of corporate behavior and intentions, Conscious Capitalism points to the historical benefits (including reduced poverty, improved healthcare, increased lifespan, and education) of free enterprise capitalism. As Mackey and Sisodia state in *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, “Conscious businesses believe that creating value for all their stakeholders is intrinsic to the success of their business, and they consider both communities and the environment to be important stakeholders.” Conscious Capitalism distinguishes itself from Corporate Social Responsibility, which it claims is “based on the fallacy that the underlying structure of business is either tainted or at best ethically neutral.”²¹

The Conscious Capitalism model comprises four key areas: Higher Purpose, going beyond merely maximizing profits; Stakeholder Orientation, including customers, employees, investors, suppliers, and the larger community; Conscious Leadership, focusing on leadership that stays true to the organization’s purpose, delivers value to stakeholders, and sees profit as an aim of the organization but not the sole aim; and Conscious Culture, defined through the acronym TACTILE: Trust, Authenticity, Caring, Transparency, Integrity, Learning, and Empowerment.²²

There are dozens of businesses implementing Conscious Capitalism values including: Google, Whole Foods Market, Icebreaker, Costco, UPS, Intrepid Travel, and Southwest Airlines. Southwest Airlines

transformed the airline industry by pioneering low-cost airfares, multiple flights, and a new level of customer service. In 1967, cofounders Rollin King and Herb Kelleher began their enterprise by offering flight service to three cities: Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. After winning legal battles and growing through multiple acquisitions, Southwest is the third largest airline in the US in terms of passengers and over decades has consistently ranked in the top tier in safety, customer service, and profits. With nearly 46,000 employees, Southwest has been profitable for the last 40 consecutive years, an industry record. Among Southwest's innovations, which have been emulated by other low-cost carriers worldwide, are: the first airline to sell tickets through the Internet, the first profit sharing plan in the industry, increased savings through reduced aircraft turnaround times at the gate, group boarding procedure, and Wi-Fi, live TV, and video on demand for passengers.

Southwest's higher purpose is its "dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit," along with its commitment to its employees, who "will be provided the same concern, respect, and caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest Customer."²³ Legendary customer service stories abound. I recall flying Southwest to Los Angeles and after arriving at my hotel remembering that I had left a package in the terminal's passenger pick-up area. I called Southwest Airlines and one of their employees found the package. He then volunteered to drive it to my hotel at the end of his shift, and a few hours later my package arrived. Now that is customer service.

Southwest's environmental sustainability practices include modernizing their fleet with more fuel-efficient aircraft, remodeling their airplane cabins with recycled materials, and using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard for their buildings. As a result of these and other measures, since 2009 Southwest's greenhouse gas emissions have remained flat or decreased slightly despite their growth. Southwest's Green Team and Green Ambassadors initiate the company's numerous sustainability programs. In the LIFT coffee program, Southwest donates two cents for every pound of coffee consumed by passengers. Since the program began in 2009, Southwest

has raised over \$53,000 for renewable energy projects in coffee growing communities in countries such as Guatemala and Peru.²⁴

Another organization committed to Conscious Capitalism is the Australian touring company Intrepid Travel. Founded over 20 years ago by two college friends, Darrell Wade and Geoff Manchester, Intrepid Travel pioneered the responsible travel ethic. As Wade says, "We've always been about people and experiences first and foremost, that's what motivates us and that's what motivates our company. What has happened over the years is that [the] rest of the market has come around to that."²⁵ Among Intrepid Travel's practices are: traveling in smaller groups; using public transportation whenever possible; staying in smaller accommodations; buying local food and supporting local artisans; and avoiding the exploitation of the vulnerable members of cultures, such as women, children, animals, and endangered species.

Intrepid Travel's Conscious Capitalism values, outlined in its Sustainable Development Policy, include:

- **Environmental Responsibility:** To have our trips designed in a way that limits the physical impact on our planet and the places we visit so that they may be enjoyed by many generations to come
- **Social Responsibility:** To work with our stakeholders to tackle issues that act as barriers to responsible practices in order to promote equity across our global community and protect our most vulnerable societies
- **Economic Responsibility:** To ensure our wealth is distributed in a way that is beneficial to our staff, host communities, suppliers, shareholders and other key stakeholders while achieving sustainable growth of Intrepid and our associated companies²⁶

Intrepid Travel's environmental responsibility policy includes a Carbon Management Plan that made Intrepid a carbon neutral company by 2010. Through this plan Intrepid offsets the carbon emissions of their buildings, tours, and customer flights. At their offices and stores, they use 100 percent renewable energy where available, automatically shut off computers at night in their head office, use Skype for conferences to reduce travel, and implement waste reduction plans. Since

2007 they have offset over 27,000 tonnes of carbon emissions from their customers' flights.²⁷

Intrepid's social responsibility measures involve training their employees and customers in social issues affecting the cultures they visit, such as HIV/AIDS, porter policies, religious customs, and community projects they support. Intrepid's economic responsibility centers on promoting local employment and services, encouraging their clients to patronize local eateries, and investing in local renewable energy initiatives.

One of the ways that Intrepid Travel gives back to the communities they visit is through the Intrepid Foundation, which has given over AU\$3 million to more than 70 NGOs since 2002.²⁸ The foundation supports approximately 40 local NGOs in the countries they visit. Projects include assisting the disabled in Morocco; working with the Nepalese on environmental and cultural protection programs; training blind children in Tibet; providing nutritional support to disadvantaged communities in Peru; and giving medical care to street children in Tanzania.

In addition, the foundation established the Intrepid Perpetual Fund to give donations to partner organizations such as Greenpeace, Médecins Sans Frontières, Plan, Amnesty International, and TRAFFIC. Half of the money from the Perpetual Fund is distributed to partner NGOs and the other half is retained to grow the fund. Intrepid Travel's revenues contribute significantly to the Perpetual Fund by covering all administration costs and matching all donations dollar for dollar up to AU\$5,000 per donor and AU\$400,000 per year.²⁹

Through its conscious business approach, Intrepid Travel has earned numerous awards and recognition in its industry. Not bad for a travel company started by two college students with a vision for a better world. As Darrell Wade recounts, "We also thought by offering a product that no one else was doing, we might make a semi-sensible living out of it and have a few good trips ourselves."³⁰ They have achieved that and so much more.

Within the business community, the rise of the chief sustainability officer, who focuses on sustainability programs for an organization, has increased the public's awareness of conscious business objectives. In addition, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher

Education promotes sustainability initiatives in hundreds of US colleges and universities.

Creativity

In addition to being conscious and mindful in our actions, we must be creative to find solutions to the challenges we face. One of the more enlightening definitions of creativity came from Ruth Noller, former professor of Creative Studies at Buffalo State. Noller defined creativity in a formula: $C = fa(K,I,E)$. Creativity ("C") is a function ("f") of one's attitude ("a") times knowledge ("K"), imagination ("I"), and evaluation ("E"). A key element in Noller's formula is "a," our need for a positive attitude, which is essential for creative inspiration.³¹ Having a formula for creativity may appear simplistic — and as Noller reminded us, "Don't memorize formulas; work them out instead." According to Noller, we obtain knowledge through our life experiences; imagination inspires our ideas and ability to make connections; and evaluation involves discerning between an idea's benefits and its drawbacks.

Creativity is inherent in all of us but our attention is needed to access it fully. As Noller's formula suggests, to engage creatively we must first educate ourselves in order to build on what has already been discovered. We then can use our imagination, which Einstein reminded us "is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited to all we now know."³² While some people seem to be more in touch with their imagination than others, we can all recover it. Artistic expression of any kind jumpstarts the imagination (writing, drawing, photography, collage making, dance, dream work) but it's important to remember that when the goal is to engage creativity only the process matters. Making space for unstructured activity, such as walks in nature or relaxing on a park lawn, is equally important because new ways of seeing most often present themselves in an uncluttered mind. Evaluation, the last element of Noller's equation, is the essential final step before implementing our ideas.

In *Innovation is Everybody's Business: How to Make Yourself Indispensable in Today's Hypercompetitive World*, Robert B. Tucker emphasizes the importance of taking a creative approach in everything we do. As he points out, "Instead of approaching a single task with the

attitude, 'Okay, now I've got to get creative,' the innovator approaches everything in life with this attitude. Instead of looking at 'being creative' as something you need to do consciously, see it as something you do unconsciously, like breathing."³³

A couple of organizations that have successfully encouraged "breathing" creativity are the software firm Atlassian and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Atlassian's ShipIt Day (formerly FedEx Day) gives employees a chance to voluntarily work on any project that is not part of their day job but has some link to the company's products. The goals of ShipIt Day are to: "foster creativity"; "scratch itches" (resolve something that bugs employees about certain products); "spike" (explore radical ideas that are not developed because the benefits are not clearly defined); and "have fun."³⁴ Every quarter, employees participate in a "24-hour hackathon." Starting Thursday after lunch until Friday afternoon, workers set aside their traditional responsibilities and let loose their creativity on something they are passionate about. Then on Friday at 3:00 p.m. they have three minutes to present (either individually or as a team) their ideas to their CEOs, founders, managers, and peers, who vote for the best project. The winner doesn't get a monetary reward, but instead receives admiration, respect, and as one employee says, "the thrill of showing your idea to your peers." By 2012, ShipIt Day had spawned over 550 projects and delivered over 47 features or products to its customers, and the innovations have increased as the company has doubled in size to nearly 1,000 employees in seven locations worldwide.³⁵

Atlassian's objective is to be as open as possible with the outcome of their ShipIt Day and share its process with the world through websites, blogs, and wikis. As Atlassian's Jonathan Nolen says, "We don't think of [ShipIt Day] as a distinct competitive advantage. We want to share it and spread it. Our view is, we're software developers, craftspeople and artists, we're not just cogs in a machine — and the more people on the planet who get to express that kind of creativity, the better."³⁶ Atlassian's wish is being granted as numerous organizations such as Flickr, Hasbro, the Mayo Clinic, and elementary and high schools have organized their own versions of ShipIt Day.

Another way in which creativity in organizations is encouraged is by using the special design of office buildings to facilitate chance

encounters of employees. When Steve Jobs was designing Pixar's headquarters building he purposely placed a central atrium with mailboxes, meeting rooms, the cafeteria, and bathrooms so that workers would go there, meet unexpectedly, and interact with each other. As Pixar's Darla Anderson recounts, "Steve said, 'Everybody has to run into each other.' He really believed that the best meetings happened by accident, in the hallway or parking lot. And you know what? He was right. I get more done having a cup of coffee and striking up a conversation or walking to the bathroom and running into unexpected people than I do sitting at my desk."³⁷

Another well-known building where creative collaborations flourished for decades was MIT's Radiation Laboratory (Rad Lab), known as Building 20. Rushed into construction as a radar institute during World War II, the 250,000-square-foot structure was initially considered a design failure because of its poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, leaky roof, and thin walls. However, scientists and engineers produced groundbreaking radar technologies through collaborations in Building 20. Then, over the years, people with a variety of interests and campus departments such as the linguistics department, the R.O.T.C., a cell culture lab, a particle accelerator, and a piano repair facility moved into the building.

The layout of Building 20, including the floor and wing numbers, was so confusing that occupants often got lost, wandered unexpectedly into each other, and started impromptu conversations. As electrical engineer Henry Zimmerman recounts, "In a vertical layout with small floors, there is less research variety on each floor. Chance meetings in an elevator tend to terminate in the lobby, whereas chance meetings in a corridor tended to lead to technical discussions."³⁸ Occupants also freely remodeled their spaces, taking down walls and altering ceilings to suit their needs. In developing the first atomic clock, for example, physicist Jerrold Zacharias removed two floors to make room for an oversized cylinder.

By the time Building 20 was demolished in 1998, it had become a legend as "the magical incubator." Amar Bose, a graduate student in 1956 and founder of the Bose Corporation, designed the revolutionary wedge-shaped Bose speakers after numerous discussions with his neighbors doing research in the nearby acoustics lab. Subsequent

breakthroughs in high-speed photography and microwaves, the first video game, and Noam Chomsky's linguistics work emerged from discussions and collaborations in Building 20. As journalist Jonah Lehrer points out, "The lesson of Building 20 is that when the composition of the group is right — enough people with different perspectives running into one another in unpredictable ways — the group dynamic will take care of itself. All these errant discussions add up. In fact, they may even be the most essential part of the creative process."³⁹

Compassion

Derived from the Latin roots *passio* (suffering) and *com* (with), compassion is suffering with another, or the "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it."⁴⁰ Buddhist scholar Jack Kornfield describes compassion as "the heart's response to the sorrow."⁴¹ As part of the human experience, compassion involves caring for the suffering of another person and doing what one can to help. Compassion also includes how we care for and comfort ourselves when we are going through a difficult time.

Social researchers have identified three elements of compassion at the individual level: noticing someone's pain; experiencing an emotional reaction; and responding to their pain by taking action. Compassion can also be extended to the organizational level when the members collectively notice, feel, and respond to the suffering of someone in their organization.⁴²

The thousands of daily stories that highlight compassionate acts include the one about a bus driver from Winnipeg, Canada, who on a rainy winter's day noticed a homeless man on the street. After speaking to him, the driver removed his shoes and gave them to him and then returned to his seat to continue his bus route. When asked by an eyewitness what had motivated him to act, the driver replied, "I couldn't stand seeing someone walking barefoot in this temperature like this I just saw him walking and thought, 'Hey, I could do something.'" And according to a passenger, "There wasn't a dry eye on the bus. All the passengers were moved by this bold and selfless gesture."⁴³ In another instance, I recall years ago learning about a local street person's birthday and deciding to acknowledge it by giving her a pastry. She was filled

with joy and ever since reminds me of how special that gesture was for her. What may seem like a very simple act can have a lasting positive impact.

Compassion is essential for dealing with our global challenges. In the climate crisis, for example, the people living in the poorest communities of developing countries have the least resources and stand to lose the most from the impacts of severe storms, droughts, and sea level rise. How will developed nations with resources respond to their needs? And how do we as a world community notice, feel, and respond to the most vulnerable members of society?

One of the pioneers extending compassion throughout the world is Karen Armstrong, whose wish after winning the \$100,000 TED Prize in 2008 was to develop and promote a Charter for Compassion. Armstrong, a former Roman Catholic nun who has published several books on comparative religion, incorporated suggestions from 150,000 people from over 180 countries, including a panel of religious scholars, to create the Charter for Compassion in 2009. The charter, signed by over 100,000 individuals worldwide, is "a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking but, more importantly, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral and political life. Compassion is the principled determination to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, and lies at the heart of all religious and ethical systems."⁴⁴

One of the ways that the Charter for Compassion is being implemented is through the International Campaign for Compassionate Cities, which encourages leaders from around the world to increase compassion in their communities. In 2011, Louisville, Kentucky, declared itself a Compassionate City and created the Compassion Games: Survival of the Kindest as a way to engage community members. Louisville's mayor Greg Fischer's goal was to generate 55,000 acts of service in a one-week period. To his surprise, there were over 90,000 acts recorded and shared online through stories and photos including: packaging 33,570 meals, 9,000 volunteers picking up litter, 3,200 donated books, and 950 blood donations.⁴⁵ Fischer declared Louisville "the most compassionate city in the world." Not to be outdone and in the spirit of friendly competition, the mayor of Seattle then organized its Compassion Games in 2012 and in 30 days the people of Seattle generated over 150,000 hours of

community service. When asked who won the Compassion Games, organizers pointed out: "Everybody wins when someone makes an effort to treat others more kindly, respectfully and thoughtfully. So the short answer is everybody won!"⁴⁶

Organizational compassion is emerging in the business community through policies that address the suffering of individuals in the workforce. At Cisco Systems, for example, through a company policy CEO John Chambers is notified within 48 hours when an employee or immediate family member is ill or passes away. This approach recognizes Cisco's commitment to their employees and attempts to help alleviate the pain and grief that may affect them. When an executive at a market research firm unexpectedly passed away, its CEO personally visited every member of the management team to share his grief and support them during that time. These policies and acts of compassion illustrate how organizational leadership and values can effectively promote compassion within our institutions.⁴⁷

Learning to feel compassion for the suffering of ourselves and others leads us to feel compassion for the suffering of the planet.

Connection

One of the results of being more conscious, creative, and compassionate is a greater sense of connection — an internal connection to self and

Humanity is and has been a huge problem-solving machine. There's not one challenge today that we don't have at least the beginning of an answer for. Seven billion people means seven billion unique talents that are increasingly working together through the Internet. Talents keep meeting new talents, developing new solutions and opportunities in an ever-faster way. We have everything we need — technology, money, ideas — to steer the world clear from any climate disaster. We should realize and trust our innovative power. There are just not enough problems for the solutions that we have.

Jurriaan Kamp
Co-founder and editor-in-chief, *The Intelligent Optimist*

an external connection to others. Brené Brown, social scientist and author of *Daring Greatly*, defines connection as "the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment."⁴⁸ Feeling connected to ourselves involves awareness of our physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual well-being. Our connection to others gives us a sense of belonging to something bigger.

In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam says that Americans have become increasingly disconnected. He has analyzed nearly 500,000 interviews conducted over the last 25 years showing that Americans "sign fewer petitions, belong to fewer organizations that meet, know our neighbors less, meet with friends less frequently, and even socialize with our families less often. We're even bowling alone. More Americans are bowling than ever before, but they are not bowling in leagues."⁴⁹ One survey shows that 25 percent of Americans have no one they feel close with to share important issues.⁵⁰ Putnam describes how the decline of connection has come about because of numerous factors such as less civic-minded generations, family members living farther apart, urban sprawl, two-career families, and the impact of television and computers.

There are several initiatives aiming to counter these trends by creating possibilities for further connectedness. In order to promote the value of social networks, Robert Putnam initiated The Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America, a multiyear project at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. After numerous meetings over several years, a diverse team of 33 practitioners and academics from government, religion, business, industry, and education completed the *Better Together* report. Putnam and his colleague Lewis M. Feldstein subsequently published *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, in which they highlight stories of people rebuilding communities and social networks across America.

The Better Together initiative continues to do research on social capital and describes various ways to get involved and stay connected through its "150 Things You Can Do to Build Social Capital." Examples include: #1. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor; #61. Ask a single diner to share your table for lunch; #82. Sign up for

a class and meet your classmates; #86. Log off and go to the park; and #120. Make gifts of time.⁵¹

While ecology, economy, equity, and education provide the traditional sustainability framework, the explosion of research into consciousness, creativity, compassion, and connection shows a collective interest in understanding our potential and working more effectively together. Many of the solutions to the challenges we face will emerge from the conscious, creative, compassionate, and connected dimensions of sustainability.

Questions to Ponder

- * What makes you feel part of your community?
- * What are the values that act as your inner compass?
- * What is the role of nature in your life?
- * How are consciousness, creativity, and compassion expressed in your life, your home, and your workplace?
- * How do you nurture your creativity?